



For more African books please visit
<https://novelsguru.com/>

INTRODUCTION

The taxi dropped me off a few minutes ago. I'm coughing and trying to eliminate dust that the taxi left me with. When I left here I had big dreams but today after my failed marriage I'm back with nothing but my green suitcase which is stuffed with my clothes. I watch my father's house that is just across the street "Emzini wezimango" that's how people call my home. It's a big house surrounded by mango trees. My father, uMlambo is the most feared man around here. He is rich but with not my understanding of rich. But people here say he is rich. But they think his richness comes from a dark place. I left home soon after my mother's sudden death. I didn't just leave but I got married. My father wasn't happy when I got married. He gave me away for free. No lobola was paid. He only told me one thing "You will come back Sebenzile". He was right.

I fix my Bantu knots one by one before I cross the street. I see him walking out of his small rondavel. No one is allowed to enter that rondavel except him. Some people say there's a baboon inside that rondavel and some say there are tokoloshes. There's an enamel bowl in his hand. He puts it down and shields his eyes with his hand.

Mlambo : Sebenzile?

Me : Baba

He shakes his head and picks up his enamel bowl. He walks away. I feel tears blurring my eyes.

I look around my room. Everything is still the way I left it five years ago. There's my piano behind my door. I smile looking at it. This is my first love. I run my hand over it while I look around. My shoes are still on top of my antique wardrobe. I open it. There's a smell of camphor blocks. I look at my mother's picture next to my bed. I sit down and take it. I release a sigh and run my fingers over the frame.

Me : I failed MaMnqayi.

I place it on my floral pillow and get up. My father is standing with his hands at his back in front of his big kraal. He is watching his cows. I stand next to him and cross my arms.

Mlambo : You came back.

Me : I did. You knew I was going to come back.

He chuckles.

Mlambo : What were you expecting from that boy? He is from the city.

Me : You cursed my marriage Baba. You told me it was never going to work. You told me that I would come back home.

Mlambo : You were young. What were you thinking? That marriage is a game? Awuyona insangu umshado.

Me : When I left I was 21 years old. I knew what I was doing.

Mlambo : Then why are you back here?

I swallow.

Me : I couldn't give him kids.

Mlambo : I told you before that no man would marry you but you didn't listen, Sebenzile. Go back to school.

He shakes his head and walks away.

2 weeks later I managed to get myself a place to stay. My father paid my fees in full but I'm too depressed to stress about University. I wish he would stop trying to dictate my life. He loves teaching and I love music. I'm not going to be a teacher. It's music or nothing.

It's been a week here. My flat is just one big room with a small bathroom. When you step out there's a sink where we all wash dishes as second floor tenants. I don't know how many of us are living here on the second floor but it's four rooms here and four rooms downstairs. So all these 8 rooms belong to one landlord. Our landlord added me to a Whatsapp group. It's not a friendly Whatsapp group. They are always fighting over one clothing line that we are all using dogs and cats or dirt on the steps that are going downstairs to the exit.

There is nothing much here. I haven't seen other tenants face to face. I'm always indoors. I avoid going out because what if I bump into my father who thinks I'm in school? Whenever I want to laugh I go to the Whatsapp group. But other than that I'm a loner. I've been alone all my life. Even in my marriage. Menzi and I were a couple for a few months and after that we became strangers that were living in the same house. I couldn't handle the thought of coming home after a failed marriage

but years went by. I became Menzi's punching bag. He came home with different women and his parents tolerated his behavior. They called me a useless wife who couldn't give my husband kids. They accused me of terminating my pregnancy. I stayed. I was waiting for him to kick me out and he did. My father was my only hope. He is the only person I have and home was my only place left for me.

Today it's one of those days. I pull my chair and sit in front of my piano. This piano is the only thing that makes sense. Ave Maria is playing in my head, the notes keep going on. I bleed on my piano. My fingers are failing me. Tears are burning in my eyes. I stop playing and let my tears fall. I bury my face with my hands. My hands slowly lower from my face. I get up. There's a sound of piano coming from next door. We are only separated by a wall. I didn't know I had a neighbour. I mean that door is always closed. It's not just any neighbour but the person plays piano like me. The person continues from where I left off. The sound stops. I wipe my tears and play. I stop playing and my neighbour continues. We go on until we reach the end of the song. I smile and look at the wall that is separating us. A lot of things are running through my head. Is it a woman? Is it a man? How old is he or she? Have they always been here or they just moved in?

Chapter 01

I heard the door closing next door and I grabbed my plate and rushed out to the sink to wash it. I was hoping to catch a glimpse of my neighbour, my piano friend but nothing. The door is now closed. I'm hoping that whoever that is living in there will step out again before I finish washing my plate. I continue to wash the plate while keeping my eyes on their door. There's a lady coming from my far left. She is one of the tenants. She is coming with a pile of dishes. Should I go back to my room? Should I go and help her? I don't want to be seen as rude but what if she doesn't need my help? Life might have been hard on me but I was raised well. I come from a village and if you think everyone changes with time you are wrong because in my village basadla ngoludala. To this day they still go to the bush to collect woods. They still fetch water from the river and they still use cow's dung to keep their floor clean. It's a lot and we have things like respect, care and kindness, those were like traditions to my mother. She would sit down with me almost every morning and just tell me stories about kindness and respect until one morning when she didn't wake up. She wasn't sick or anything but she just died in her sleep. After her death I might have forgotten her teachings along the way but some still live in me.

I wipe my hands on the jersey and make my way to her.

Me : Hi

Lady : Hey

She is a very beautiful Indian lady.

Me : Let me help you with that.

She smiles. Her smile is combined with confusion.

Lady : Oh thanks

I take half of her dishes and we both head towards the sink.

Me : My name is Seh. I live right here

I point to my door.

Lady : Seh?

I giggle.

Me : Sebenzile

She laughs while trying to pronounce my name.

Me : Stick to Seh.

We both laugh.

Lady : Seh, you are very kind. I am Mrs Roxanne Abdool.

Mrs? Okay.

Roxanne : I live in room 103 with my husband and our two beautiful kids.

I'm only realizing now after 3 weeks that we have numbers on our doors. Mine is 100 and my neighbour's is 101.

Me : I'm pleased to meet you Roxanne.

Roxanne : Likewise.

I help her wash her dishes.

Roxanne : You are new here.

Me : Yeah. I moved here 3 weeks ago. I haven't met other tenants.

Roxanne : You are always indoors.

I giggle.

Roxanne : You are really kind.

I smile.

Roxanne : How old are you?

Me : Turning 26 on the 08th of February.

Roxanne : That's in 2 weeks. What are your plans for your birthday?

Me : I'll probably go home and spend it with my father.

She smiles

Roxanne : Where is home?

Me : Eshowe

Roxanne : Nice. Do you have kids?

I shake my head.

Me : No

Roxanne : I'm 28 and I have two. You should meet Dylan.

Me : Dylan?

Roxanne : My husband. You can come later and have supper with us.

Me : That's really kind of you. Thank you Roxanne.

Roxanne : Here we are family. Yes we fight there and there but we are family.

Me : That's good.

I clear my throat.

Me : And who lives in this room? 101.

Roxanne : I'm really not sure hey but I heard it's a guy. He hardly comes out of his room. I've never met him but he moved in a week before you.

Me : Oh, it's a guy?

Roxanne : I'm not sure. That's what I heard.

I look at his door. Him and I have been playing piano together since that day. Sometimes he wakes up and plays in the middle of the night. I wake up and play with him too because that's what he does as well. He never leaves me hanging. Now I know that it's a guy. Hopefully we are going to meet soon.

Roxanne : Are you okay?

I've been staring at that door for too long without noticing anything else. Without noticing that I've dropped Roxanne's dishcloth inside the sink.

Me : Jesus!

I quickly grab it from the water.

Roxanne : It's okay, Seh.

Me : I'm really sorry. I'll dry it

She laughs.

Roxanne : No need. Come on.

Me : Eish

Roxanne : What? Are you scared of your neighbour?

Me : Scared? N-no

Roxanne : He is acting creepy. So I'll understand if you are scared. Look, I'll speak to our landlord and see if he can....

Me : No no. There's no need. I'm fine here. I like my room.

Roxanne : Are you sure?

Me : Certainly

Roxanne : Are you working?

Me : I'm still looking.

Roxanne : Do you need a job?

I hope she is not going to ask me to look after her kids.

Me : I am.

But I'm not desperate.

Roxanne : At Spar they are hiring. They are looking for packers.

Me : Really?

Roxanne : Uh. I know someone who works there so if you are interested...

I hug her and she laughs.

Me : I am. I am interested.

All my life I've never worked, not that I wasn't looking for a job but I was just never lucky. I remember how that was a joke for Menzi's family. I've been through hell in that marriage. I don't know how I survived for five years.

Me : Thank you so much. Can I give you my CV?

She giggles.

Roxanne : Yeah, sure.

I ran to my room and opened my drawer. I searched for my CV inside my file and ran back to Roxanne.

Me : Here it is. Thank you Roxanne. I really hope that I'll get this job.

Roxanne : You will, trust me.

I rub my hands together.

Me : Thank you

Roxanne : No problem. I'll see you later. It was lovely to meet you Seh.

Me : Same here. Thank you

She smiles and walks away. I release a sigh. I don't want to depend on my father anymore. Can God do this one thing for me?

oooooooo

My prayers were answered. Two days after I gave my CV to Roxanne I got a call and that's how I got the job at Spar. It's in Mount Edgecombe. For someone like me who lives in Mountview I feel like Mount Edgecombe is a bit far. But I need money. Our landlord is coming today to collect rent. I was expecting him to ask me to pay upfront but he didn't. I only have R1 000. R700 is for rent and the remaining R300 will not be enough to cover my transport costs. I'll have to call my father and ask him to help me. I'll tell him I'm sick or something.

My neighbour has been quiet for the past three days. I don't think he is around. I've also been busy so we haven't played for three days. I always come back tired and go straight to bed.

I just came back from work. I finish washing my clothes and go hang them. The clothing line is only free during the night and I use that opportunity to wash my clothes. I come back and put rice on the stove. Today I'm not so tired. I sit on the bed and go through our Whatsapp group. There are 8 members. I wonder which one is my neighbour. They are fighting again. I'm already laughing at their conversation

WHATSAPP CONVERSATION.

Someone left their torned bin on the steps. Can they please go and get rid of it? It's a mess : Roxanne

Can we all familiarize ourselves with cleaning the sink after using it? : Terry

I'm going to ask again. Who broke Bob's leg? My dog can't walk. I found a big stone in my yard. Clearly someone hit him!! I need answers!! Last week someone poured wine on his face and today he can't walk!! : Rian

Oh man, why would anyone do that to Rian's dog? Rian stays in the rooms downstairs.

Who is the owner of a fat brown cat? : Yekisha

That's it. I only live with Indians here and you know what? I love all of them.

I'm talking about this fat cat!! : Yekisha

She sends a picture of a beautiful brown cat. I don't have a cat. I only have a piano.

This cat pooped on my doorstep. SOS!!! : Yekisha

SOS? My stomach hurts from laughing. I notice that it's only me and this one contact who are not saying anything in the group. This must be my neighbour. I click on their contact. There's literally nothing. No display photo. No status. Nothing.

I'm going to ask for a footage : Rian

I laugh and put my phone away. This will take all night.

I finished cooking and ate. Our landlord finally arrived. He comes personally to collect his rent money. What is taking him so long now to knock on my door? I want to sleep. I open the door and see him passing by.

Me : Excuse me, Mr Sheik.

He stops walking and turns around with a smile.

Mr Sheik : Seh.

I smile.

Me : I see you forgot to come to my room.

I hand him the envelope that has my name and my room number. There's rent money inside the envelope. He looks at the envelope with creases all over his forehead.

Mr Sheik : I actually didn't forget.

Me : Oh?

Mr Sheik : Someone paid your rent.

Me : Excuse me?

His phone rings.

Mr Sheik : I really need to take this. Don't worry, your rent is sorted.

Me : But....

Mr Sheik : I'll call you, okay?

Me : Okay

He taps my shoulder and answers his phone. I can't describe how confused I am. Who paid my rent? I know it's not my father. He doesn't even know where I stay.

Chapter 02

I think Mr Sheik made a mistake regarding my rent money. He is an old man so I think he made a mistake somehow. I decided to let go of the rent issue. I'm broke and I need money. If I keep questioning him about it he will realize that he made a mistake and ask for his money. Money that I don't even have. This is God coming through for me, I can feel it in my bones. I never believed in miracles but lately I do.

I'm in a good mood. I have a job. Tomorrow it's my birthday. I'm thinking of going home but I'm not sure. There's nothing to look forward to back home. I know my father will be asking me about school until I come back and I'm not ready for that. DUT has been trying to contact me ever since schools opened and I ignored their calls. I hope they are not thinking of contacting my father.

I walk up the steps while taking out my keys.

Me : My feet are killing me.

I whisper to myself. There's something in front of my door. It's a washing basket. I frown.

Me : And then?

There are my clothes inside the basket. This morning I woke up early than usual and I decided to wash my clothes. I was going to hang them when I came back from work but when I saw that the clothing line was empty I decided to hang them. I asked Roxanne to bring them in for me. I thought I'd go and get them from her room. Wait, they are nicely ironed and packed perfectly inside the basket. I smile.

Me : Ah man, Roxy!

I open the door and lift up the basket. I close the door using my foot and place the basket on my bed. I unpack them one by one. I smell them. They smell different. They have a smell of lavender. I'm sure that I didn't use Sta soft or anything else because I don't have any. Wow. I take off my tekkies and rush to Roxanne's room to thank her. I knock. Dylan opens.

Me : Hey Dylan.

Dylan : Seh

He is holding his daughter. I think he is trying to put her to sleep.

Me : I'm sorry to bother you. Can I please see Roxanne for a minute?

Dylan : Oh, sorry but Rox is not here. She went to see her mother. She is not feeling well.

Me : Oh no. I'm so sorry. I had no idea

Dylan : It's okay. She will be fine.

Me : I wanted to thank her for ironing my clothes.

He raises his brow.

Dylan : Clothes?

I smile.

Me : Yeah. I found them at my doorstep and they were perfectly ironed.

Dylan : Seh, I'm really not sure what you are talking about. My wife left early this morning soon after you. So I....

Me : What do you mean? I... I....

I stutter.

Dylan : Are you sure it's your clothes?

Me : I'm sure.

Dylan : No, Rox didn't iron them. I would have seen her.

Me : Yeah... yeah

Dylan : But you know what? Maybe she asked somebody else to do it.

He is making sense.

Me : Yeah, you are right.

Dylan : Yeah, just ask around. Make use of the Whatsapp group as well.

Me : Will do. Thanks Dylan.

Dylan : Sharp

I walk away. I get to my room and take my phone. I type in our Whatsapp group.

Hi everyone. I found my clothes at my door but I'm not sure who left them. I just wanted to return the basket and thank that great tenant personally. Thanks.

I sent out the message. I wait for response but nothing. Everyone is quiet. Now I'm confused. I decide to give up and cook my rice and tin fish.

I suddenly here the sound of the piano coming from next door. I don't know the song. I try to remember it and finally I get it. He is playing Burning House by Cam. He is so good with piano. I swallow as I feel a burning lump in my throat. I sit down and just listen. He is getting to my favorite part.

🎹 Flames are getting bigger now in this burning house. I can hold on to you somehow in this burning house, Oh, and I don't want to wake up in this burning house. 🎹

He stops. I wipe my hands and finish the last part. I start the notes from the beginning. I stop and allow him to continue but he doesn't. I turn my face to the wall and play again. I stop and expect him to continue but he doesn't. I get up and head out. I look at his room number and start knocking on his door. I knock and knock. No reply. I give up and go back to my room. He is also going through something that I'm not aware of. Let me give him his space.

Chapter 03

Last night I only cooked but I couldn't eat. I was worried about my neighbour but as I was busy cracking my head trying to figure out what could be wrong with him I saw four guys passing by, going to his room. I guess those were his friend. They stayed till late. They were laughing and playing music but what impressed me was when I switched off my light, their noise also died down. They turned down the music and spoke softly. They respected my time to sleep. I slept with my heart full, knowing that he was fine.

Well today is my birthday. My birthday means a lot to me, even though it's just like any other days, but this one is different. I have something to celebrate for once and that's my job. This morning before I came to work I bumped into Roxanne. She wished me a happy birthday. If I had money I was going to buy myself a piece of cake but....

"Seh, can you please come to the kitchen?"

That's my manager, Grace.

Me : No problem. Let me finish here and come.

Grace : Sure

She smiles and walks away. I finish packing toothpastes on the shelves and make my way to the kitchen.

"Surprise!!!"

They all scream the moment I walk in.

Me : Jesus!

This is a very shocking but beautiful surprise. Firstly I had no idea that anyone else except Roxanne knew that today is my birthday and secondly I didn't expect a surprise party. I mean I'm still very new here. This is rather romantic. I don't know how many roses are surrounding my beautiful cake. "Happy 26th birthday Sebe"

Me : Sebe?

I mumble. No one calls me Sebe. In 26 of my life I've never had a cake that has my name and the roses? I don't even know how they smell. I'm crying tears of joy.

Me : Wow guys, this is amazing. Thank you so much.

I hug them, my colleagues. Sandy Samke, Nicole, Natasha, Sizwe and others.

Samke : Girl, I thought you were a divorcee.

I don't know what that has to do with anything. Anyway Samke is the bubble one. She just speaks her mind and sometimes she doesn't even make sense.

Me : I am.

I giggle.

Samke : Your boyfriend really loves you. Happy birthday sweetie.

Did she say boyfriend? She is crazy.

Nicole : Happy birthday Seh.

Me : Thank you, thanks everyone.

After all the birthday wishes Grace handed me a gift box.

Grace : This is for you.

Me : Come on guys, this is too much.

Sandy : Open it.

I giggle while opening the gift box.

Me : Wow, it's a necklace!

A beautiful gold necklace. It has a heart.

Me : Guys, thank you. I love this. I can't believe you guys did all of this for me. God bless you all.

They look at each other in an awkward way. Weird! Don't they believe in God and blessings?

Grace : It's okay. Let's finish here and get back to work. Time is money

We all laugh. She is all about work.

Me : Okay, okay.

I share my cake with all of them.

Sizwe : How are you going to carry all of these roses?

I laugh.

Me : I don't know hey.

Nicole : Don't worry, my husband and I will give you a lift.

Me : Thanks Nic.

Nicole : No worries.

We finished eating and packed the rest of the things. I thought my wedding day was the best day of my life but this day takes the cake.

After work Nicole and her husband gave me a lift home. I couldn't wait to tell Roxanne about my day. In my room I found a perfect spot for all my roses. Unfortunately Roxanne wasn't home. She was at the hospital to see her mother.

I sit on my bed and look at my necklace. It slips from my hands to the floor and the heart opens. I quickly pick it up and notice a piece of paper falling from it. It's a small piece of paper. I take it and open it.

"Sunflower" the paper reads.

Me : Sunflower?

Why would they write that? I love it though. I smile while putting the piece of paper back into the heart. The piano sound starts from next door. I didn't know he was here. The notes are screaming a happy birthday song but how? He doesn't know that today is my birthday.

Maybe it's all in my head. He goes on and on. I just let him and stare at the wall. He reaches the end.

Me : Thank you

I whisper. I thank him knowing very well that it wasn't directed to me. At least today he is not in a "burning house ".

Chapter 04

I pack my food inside my lunchbag. Today I overslept. I'm late. My phone rings.

Me : No, no,no.

Why is my father calling me? Eish.

Me : Baba

Mlambo : Sebenzile, how are you??

Me : I'm fine, Baba. Ninjani?

Mlambo : Ay, all is well. You've been very quiet. Is everything okay?
How is school?

Me : School? School is fine. There's so much work, I hardly get time to relax.

Mlambo : But you need to make time to call your father at least.

Me : I'm sorry. I was going to call you today.

Mlambo : I see. Akukho okunye okwenzekayo?

Me : What do you mean?

Mlambo : I'm your father Sebenzile, I need to know everything that is happening in your life. Unyoko wakushiya nami ukuthi ngibe yiso kuwe and take care of you.

Where does all of that come from?

Me : Everything is okay Baba.

Mlambo : I see. Abakaze bexhumane nawe lapha kaNdlovu?

I'm definitely not going to talk about Menzi and his family. I'm not up for it.

Me : No.

Mlambo : I don't want them to ruin things for you. They better leave you alone.

Me : Which things can they possibly ruin for me kodwa Baba?

Mlambo : Everything. Isikole, uthando ne....

Me : Love? Dad, please.

I laugh.

Mlambo : Why are you laughing?

Me : Kodwa Baba. Why are you telling me about love?

Mlambo : You are not 62 years old. You are 26. Usabhakuza ukhakhayi wena.

Me : I know I'm still young but uthando...

Mlambo : You just need the right man, which I believe you will meet soon.

Is he drunk? But it's too early for imfulamfula.

Me : Ay, I don't need a man mina Baba.

He laughs.

Mlambo : When are you coming home?

Dammit!! Time! I grab my handbag and lunchbag. I run out of the door.

Me : I don't know when they will give me a day off but as soon as they give me I'll come. Dad, I need to go. I'm late for wo...for class.

Mlambo : Class? Did you see the time?

Me : Uhmm yeah.

I run down the steps. If I had wings I'd be flying. The taxis go all around before they actually take you to your destination.

Mlambo : It's 05h30 Sebenzile

Me : Yeah. And I'm late.

Mlambo : Ayke, happy birthday.

What? My birthday was yesterday. My father doesn't know when my birthday is. I'm so disappointed.

Me : Bye Baba.

I hung up and opened the gate. God is good. There is the taxi coming.

ooooooo

After my lunch break Grace asked to see me.

Grace : Seh, you may sit down.

Me : Thank you.

She laughs.

Grace : Fix that long face. You did nothing wrong.

I smile. I'm still nervous though. Why would she ask to see me?

Grace : Are you okay?

Me : I'm good thanks.

Grace : That's good. Do you enjoy working here?

Me : A lot. I thought it would be hard but it isn't. I have an amazing team behind me and they are always willing to help.

She smiles.

Grace : Excellent. Now the reason why I called you here is regarding your off days. We didn't discuss that.

Me : Okay

Grace : Tomorrow is Thursday. So you will be off tomorrow, Friday and Saturday. Sunday I need you back here.

I rub my hands together.

Me : Thank you so much.

Grace : Every week you will take off Thursday, Friday and Saturday but during our busy days I might ask you to come in.

Me : Of course.

Grace : That will be all. You may get back to work.

Me : Thank you so much Grace.

Grace : I'm going home now. I guess I'll see you on Sunday. Please get some rest and don't drink.

I laugh.

Me : I don't drink at all.

She laughs.

Grace : Aah! Seh, I see you.

I laugh and get up. We shake hands.

Me : I'll see you on Thursday.

Grace : No problem.

I went back to work and later I went home.

I search for my keys inside my handbag while walking up the steps.

Me : Aibo!

I put down my bag and take everything out. My handbag is a mess. It's full of papers that I don't even need, tissues and countless lipsticks. I can't find my keys.

Me : Aibo! Aibo! Baphi labokhiye?

Maybe I left them at my door. How could I be so reckless? Damn! I don't remember locking my door. When I walked out I was talking to my father over the phone and I don't remember closing the door. I rush to my door and push it. I look around. My room is spotless.

Me : What the.... Aibo!

My pots are shining. I touch them and they are still hot. I open the lids and my eyes widen. Someone cooked. It's beef curry and rice. The curry smells so heavenly.

Me : Kwenzekani la?

I'm shocked. I see Roxanne passing by with her dishes.

Me : Roxanne!!

She stops and smiles.

Roxanne : Hey, you are back.

Me : Please come in.

Roxanne : Let me leave these in the sink.

I shake my head. I sit down and wait for her. She walks in.

Roxanne : Sup?

Me : Roxanne please look around.

Roxanne : Okay... Uhmmm, what exactly am I looking at?

Me : Don't you notice anything different?

Roxanne : Uhmm it's cleaner than usual.

Me : My point exactly! Who was here? Was it you?

She narrows her eyes.

Roxanne : Why would I clean your room?

Me : What do you mean?

Roxanne : Seh, what's going on? Are you okay? Did you hit your head somewhere?

Me : No! Roxanne, someone was here and that person cleaned and cooked for me.

She laughs.

Roxanne : You must be fucking kidding me. Who would do that?

Me : I don't know!! You know what? I'm moving out.

Roxanne : No, you are serious. Seh, wait, wait. You say what happened?

Me : Okay, this is what happened. This morning I was late and I forgot to lock my door and now I....

Roxanne : What is that?

Me : What?

Roxanne : Is that a note or something? On your table.

I frown and take the piece of paper from my table. What a terrible handwriting!

"The door was opened. I figured you'd be tired when you get back from work ngathi ukuwaqazisa."

I finish reading the note and lift up my eyes to Roxanne.

Roxanne : Where is it coming from?

Me : I don't know. It doesn't state anything. You know, Roxanne. I think this is the same person who ironed my clothes.

Roxanne : What are you talking about?

Me : Was it you?

Roxanne : Who did what?

Me : My clothes, I found my clothes by my doorstep. They were inside that washing basket.

She looks at the washing basket and raises her eyebrows.

Roxanne : No, it wasn't me.

Me : That's it. I'm moving out because clearly this room is haunted.

Roxanne : Do you think someone died here?

Me : Oh my God, I don't want to think about it.

She laughs.

Roxanne : Seh, wait. I think we are exaggerating.

Me : How? Roxanne, how do you explain all of this?

Roxanne : Come on, a ghost that irons your clothes? Clean?

Me : And cook.

Roxanne bursts into laughter.

Me : Stop laughing and tell me where I can get another room.

Roxanne : Are you sure it's not one of your relatives or friends?

Me : No!

She bites her lips and looks around.

Roxanne : This is serious.

Me : Now you get it. Let me call our landlord.

Roxanne : Maybe someone saw something. Let's use the Whatsapp group first.

Me : No, no. I want to move out.

She ignores me. She is busy typing on her phone.

Me : Tomorrow I'm off. So I'll go home.

Roxanne : Now?

Me : Yes, now.

Roxanne : It's late.

She is right. I sigh and sink into my bed.

Roxanne : No one saw anything.

Me : Roxanne, I can't sleep here.

Roxanne : Everyone is responding except one person.

Me : Who? Me?

She rolls her eyes.

Roxanne : No, 101.

I slowly lift up my head.

Roxanne : But that guy never says anything. I don't even know his name or his face.

Me : Do you think it's him?

Roxanne : Maybe. I don't know Seh.

Me : So there's no ghost?

Roxanne : What if he is the ghost?

Me : No, his friends were here the other day. They talked like normal people.

Roxanne : Ghosts can visit each other and talk like...

She giggles.

Me : Shut up Rox.

Roxanne : You know what....

She sits next to me.

Roxanne : None of us know this guy. I think this is your chance to get closer to him and get him to open up. Find out if he is not a ghost.

We both laugh.

Me : He is not a ghost. I think he has issues.

Roxanne : Why would he clean and cook for you?

Me : I don't know. But I'll find out.

Roxanne : You will?

Me : Uh. I'm sure he is a depressed young boy who just wants my attention.

Roxanne : So what are you going to do?

Me : Come

Roxanne : Where are we going?

Me : Woza

She laughs and follows me. I knock on my neighbour's door.

Me : Do you think he is here?

Roxanne peeps through the door and quickly steps back.

Roxanne : He is here. There is a key.

Me : Okay, let's leave him.

Roxanne : Are you going to be fine?

Me : Yeah. I'll be fine.

Roxanne : Are you sure?

Me : Yes, don't worry.

Roxanne : Call me if you....

Me : I will.

She hugs me and goes to wash her dishes. I go back to my room.

I finished bathing and ate. His food was so delicious. I lean against the wall that is separating our rooms and clear my throat.

Me : I know it was you. Thank you for cleaning my room and cooking for me. I think it's only fair for me to do the same for you too. So if you don't mind ngicela ushiye uvulile kusasa lapho endlini.

He is quiet. I sigh.

Me : I don't know if you heard me or not but if you did ngizobona ngokuthi ushiye uvulile. Goodnight 10...

What? I almost called him 101.

Chapter 05

I woke up and made breakfast. I ate in my bed and went back to sleep. It's boring here so I think maybe I should go home and visit my father. But I don't want to. My father and I once had a connection but after I got married we lost it. I can see that he is trying to make up for lost time and revive that connection. We can do it but what I know is that he will be angry when he finds out that I'm not in school.

Today I need to buy a few things. My fridge is almost empty. I get up and clean my room. I wash the dishes. On my way back I noticed that my neighbour's door was open. I leave the dishes in my room and go to his. I slowly open the door. My heart is already pounding. There's a bitter taste in my mouth. I walk in. The room is dark. Really dark. I swallow. I can see where the curtain is. I rush to open it and look around. The first thing that catches my eye is his gold piano. Very beautiful. His room is clean. I love the arrangement. That space is his kitchen and then there's a double bed with a brown bedding. A flat screen TV, computer and a big speaker. It's neat but there's a basin full of dirty dishes and pots. I take the dishes and go wash them. I come back and sweep the floor. Why would he buy a black carpet? His room is... Dark.

I open his fridge. It's full. Judging by his fridge I can say with my chest out that he is a kid who loves junk food. His fridge is full of goodies. Oh there's a pack of black label beer. He is a kid who loves alcohol. I guess he hangs out with the wrong crowd. I saw his friends and they were not

young. I take out the braai pack and throw a few pieces of chicken inside a bucket. I'll leave it to defrost. I move my eyes around. There's nothing, no pictures. I was hoping to find his picture or even his ID.

I stole a slice of cake from his fridge and went back to my room. I took a bath 2 hours after I was in Verulam. I don't know why this butchery is closed. I love their meat and burgers. They are going to open in the next thirty minutes so I'll wait. I stand in front of their door and call my father just to pass time.

Me : Baba

Mlambo : Sebenzile, are you okay?

Me : Hawu Baba, I'm fine. I was just checking on you.

Mlambo : Ngiyaphila ndodakazi yami. How is school?

Eish!

Me : School is fine Baba. Ngicabanga ukwehla ksasa.

Mlambo : Really?

Me : Yes, not today though. Tomorrow

Mlambo : What about school?

Me : We are not that busy. I can come home and come back on Saturday morning.

Mlambo : I would love to see you
ndodakazi.

Me : But I don't have money. Ngeke ngithenge nekabishi.

He laughs.

Mlambo : Sebenzile I'm not poor. You don't need to have money for you to come home. Akungenwa ngoshekhazi layikhaya.

Me : I hear you Baba. Ayke let me see you tomorrow.

Mlambo : No problem ndodakazi. Unayo kodwa eyokuza?

Me : It will be enough for me to come home kodwa....

Mlambo : Come home Sebenzile. Don't worry about money.

Me : Ngiyabonga Baba.

Mlambo : Take care of yourself.

Me : I will.

I hang up. Thank God. My financial issues are now out of the way. I'm going to buy everything I need without worrying about transport money.

"Sho, Mlu. Ukhuluma no Sbani. Where is Sphiwo? I can't get hold of him."

Someone says behind me. I'm busy playing games on my phone. Can Rattan Butchery open already? The weather is changing. I think it's going to rain. I really need to finish and go back.

"... Ekseni. Ufuna ngize ngingethwe vele la? You can see that it's going to rain...ey, ey Sphiwokuhle please. That's nonsense!"

Ay he is fighting. I lift up my eyes to the glass door in front of me and see a reflection of the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. My mouth gape open. I'm going to be honest. Growing up I was scared of Albinos. I always ran away whenever I came across them but I'm not running away from this! He has blonde dreadlocks that are tied up not so neatly but fuck!! My heart is jumping. He looks like a dream in that black hoodie. I turn around. He lifts up his eyes to me. My heart stops. His eyes are pink. I don't know if it's me but they are sparkling. His lower lip has black spots all around it but his skin is so clear. This doesn't exist. He is a creature. He lowers his phone from his ear and licks his lower lip. His eyes move side to side, up and down and in circles. We are staring at each other. I want to speak but something is in my throat.

Him : Sebe

I'm frozen, I can't speak. What is wrong with me? It's almost like I've been struck by lightning. The rain starts and he immediately runs away. What? Did I do anything wrong? Did I even speak? Woooah!! Did he say

Sebe or hey? No, I'm sure he said hey. We don't know each other so how would he know my name? It's all in my head. Where did he go? I look around but the rain is getting heavier. The butchery opens and we all run inside but my heart remains outside.

Chapter 06

Instead of buying a braai pack I bought a tray of chicken. You know why? Because I wanted to buy an umbrella. I wasn't planning on buying an umbrella but after I saw that guy I needed to search for him and since it was raining I needed an umbrella. I searched for every man wearing a black hoodie for almost the entire Verulam and after I was done with my crazy search I decided to go back home.

I'm busy cooking for my neighbour. My mind keeps taking me back to a man that I saw in Verulam. The more I think about him the more my heart races. I've never been so attached to a stranger before, especially not a stranger that I only saw for less than 10 minutes. Maybe it's because I've never seen someone like him in my whole life. He was different like he didn't exist. He was a true creature. I wonder if people don't treat him differently. Wait! Why the fuck am I worried about a stranger? Why am I torturing myself? Jesus! You know what? the sooner I forget about him, the better. Let me just pretend that it was all a dream, that he was just a dream and nothing that truly existed. Let me continue to cook for my piano friend, at least he exists. I look around his room. Oh he works. There's an WBHO construction overall that is hanging outside his wardrobe. I sigh and sit in front of his piano. His piano is so stunning, I'm even scared of touching it. But who cares? Truly speaking I am not scared of my neighbour. There is just something about him, like he is somebody I've known all of my life but yet we haven't even met. Maybe the reason why I'm not scared of him is because I think he is just a kid. I bounce my fingers on his piano and blow out a sigh. I get up. I'm feeling really down. A part of me wishes

that I didn't see that guy because after my search for him failed I felt drained soon after that. Mxm. I throw myself on the bed. This is the most comfortable bed ever. I can sleep here for the rest of my life without waking up. I grab my phone and bite the corner of it.

Me : Kambe what did he say? Ukhuluma no...

I try to think.

Me : Scelo? No. Dammit!!... Oh Mlu. He said Mlu.

I log onto my Facebook. I don't even remember when was the last time I opened my Facebook. I am searching for Mlu. Only 3 profiles pop up and not even one of them is an albino. Fuck!!

I go to Google and search "Where are most albinos located in Verulam?" The results are ridiculous. What the hell am I doing anyway? I am definitely losing my mind. Hell no! Look at me sleeping with my knees up on someone's bed. When did I do this? I immediately jumped out of bed. What the heck is wrong with me? This is pure disrespect. I know I'm not scared of him but sleeping on his bed with my knees up, now that is crossing the line.

I finished cooking and went back into my room. I know what I cooked for him is a mess. I wasn't even focusing on those pots but luckily his fridge is full. So if he finds my cooking that bad he will find something else to eat.

"Seh, are you here?"

That's Roxanne. I get up and open the door for her.

Me : Hey

She frowns.

Roxanne : What's wrong?

No, no, no , am I that obvious? I quickly try to pull out a smile.

Me : Nothing, come in. How is your mother?

Roxanne : Aaaah! She is getting better. Do you have juice? I'm thirsty.

Me : Yeah. Check in the fridge.

Roxanne is not like most Indians I know. She doesn't only give and give but she takes as well. She is different.

Roxanne : And? Did you see 101?

She asks while opening the fridge.

Me : I didn't.

Roxanne : Is that the reason you are sulking?

I giggle.

Me : I'm not sulking.

Roxanne : If you say so.

Me : His keys are here and when he comes back he will come to collect them.

Roxanne : You locked the door?

Me : Uh! It's the only way to lure him.

Roxanne : Good girl! You are sharp.

I shrug.

Roxanne : Seh, are you sure that everything is fine? You don't look good.

I release a sigh.

Me : You won't understand.

Roxanne : Try me.

Me : But you'll laugh.

Roxanne : I'm not stupid.

Me : Fine

I sit up.

Me : Today I went to Verulam, right?

Roxanne : You told me.

Me : Yep. And while I was waiting for Rattan to open I saw this guy.

Roxanne : Guy?

Me : Yes. He was so white

Roxanne : He was a white man?

Me : Albino

Roxanne : So?

Me : He had blonde dreadlocks

Roxanne : Most albinos have blonde hair.

Me : His eyes were pink.

Roxanne : That's normal.

Me : Is it?

Roxanne : Yes, that's because of not having enough melanin.

I shake my head.

Me : He was the best thing I've ever seen. His skin was spotless and so smooth. The black spots around his lower lip were so perfect, like some

sort of makeup. And his eyes were sparkling Roxanne. His dreadlocks were long yes he tied them up messy but they were clean. He was simply perfect Roxanne! I'm sure if you were there you would have asked to take a picture of him. He was like an angel and....

Roxanne : That's it. You are high.

She laughs.

Roxanne : Angel?

Me : Okay maybe not an angel but he didn't look like someone who existed.

Roxanne : You are worrying me, Seh.

Me : Why?

Roxanne : I think you are losing your mind and it's scary.

I laugh out loud.

Me : I'm not. I'm just telling you what I saw. I knew you were not going to believe me.

Roxanne : I do but I feel like you are exaggerating.

Me : I'm not.

Roxanne : Okay. And? What happened after you saw that angel?

Me : He said Sebe.

We both burst into laughter.

Roxanne : Seh, stop it.

Me : I'm kidding, he said hey but in my head it was like he said Sebe...I don't know what he said Roxy but he said something.

Roxanne : So you didn't hear him?

Me : I didn't. My body and my mind were frozen. After I was done with my shopping, you know, I looked for him.

Roxanne : Why?

Me : Because....

Why did I look for him?

Roxanne : Because?

Me : Because... He.... I...

Roxanne : Take a deep breath.

Me : What I'm trying to say is that he is the kind of person that you would love to look at more than once.

Roxanne : Uhhhh! I see.

Me : What do you see?

Roxanne : Uh-huh, nothing. Look, I need to go. Thanks for the juice

Me : You are welcome.

She smiles and walks out. She thinks I'm crazy.

ooooo

After Roxanne had left I packed my clothes. Tomorrow I'm going home. These clothes should be enough. I pack some of my old books. I still need to cover the "student" part. I need to leave early tomorrow.

There's noise coming from next door. How did he get in? His keys are here. Ay let me leave this guy alone. I continue to iron my clothes. I expect him to come and collect his keys, but I suddenly hear a strange noise, a growling sound. I pull out the plug and lean against the wall. Someone is groaning.

"Bhunu? Bhunu!! Letha amanzi Sphiwe!"

Someone shouts. My eyes widen.

"Lindo, let's call Baba. He is getting worse"

Someone else says.

"Fakof!! UBaba wani? You knew this was going to happen when you let him wait in the rain! What were you thinking Sphiwe? Huh? Uyasazi isimo sika Bhunu! You know!... Bhunu, drink this. Open your mouth bafo, open your mouth.. Bhunu!!! "

That man shouts again. Something terrible is happening next door.

"Ndlela kaSompisi. Khuboni, don't do this. Come on Bhunu!!"

The grunting sound gets louder.

"Sphiwe, call Baba. Call him!!.... Bhunu? Bhunu!!"

Whoever Bhunu is, he is dying. I run and open the door. I ran to Roxanne's room. Knocking will waste time. I push the door.

Roxanne : Seh, what's wrong?

My body is shaking. I try to speak but I fail.

Roxanne : Seh? Seh? Are you okay?

I shake my head.

Me : Som- someone is dying in room 101.

Roxanne : What?

Chapter 07

I don't know what happened in room 101 after I went to Roxanne's room. I asked Roxanne if we could go and see what was going on but she said no. She was scared, not that I wasn't but I was worried.

I'm busy getting ready. I'm going home today.

Roxanne : When did he get back?

Me : I don't know. I was probably sleeping when they got back. I'm glad he is fine.

We are both whispering. The music is playing softly next door.

Roxanne : Poor kid.

Me : I don't think he is a kid - kid

Roxanne : Kid-kid?

Me : He is working. I saw his work overall.

Roxanne : Then how come we've never bumped into each other?

Me : I guess he doesn't want to be seen... maybe he is not the one who was sick last night.

Roxanne : Maybe. How many of them were there?

Me : I think 3 or 4.

Roxanne : No, it wasn't 101. If it was him then his family would still be here.

Me : Do you think that was his family?

Roxanne : I think so.

Me : I just hope he is fine.

Roxanne : Who?

Me : Bhunu

Roxanne : Who is that?

Me : The person who was sick. They kept saying "Bhunu, Bhunu"... Rox, I need to go. Please keep your eye around.

Roxanne : Don't worry, your room is safe. Anyway, you look good. I thought you were going to the rural areas.

Me : I am.

Roxanne : Then why are you looking all sexy?

Me : Sexy?

Roxanne : Uh! You look different.

Me : Oh please.

She rolls her eyes.

Roxanne : Seh, I'll tell you why you look this sexy. You are hoping that you'll bump into that goddess...angel.

I don't like how she reads my mind. I smile.

Roxanne : Seh!!!

Me : What?

Roxanne : I'm right. You are hoping to bump into that guy you saw in Verulam.

Me : I'm not even going to Verulam. I'll take a taxi to town.

Roxanne : But....

Me : I'm not going to see him. I'll never see him again.

Roxanne : Yes, you won't. Now stop acting crazy.

Me : Do you think this dress is too short?

Roxanne : No, it isn't.

Me : Come, I need to go.

Roxanne : Take care of yourself, okay?

She hugs me and kisses my cheek.

Me : I will. Please do the same and also keep an eye on my neighbour.

She laughs.

Roxanne : I will.

ESHOWE

I arrived home around 10h00. My father is busy mixing his African beer.

Mlambo : Sebenzile

I'm glad you are home, mntanami. Pass me the pineapples.

I take the pineapples and give them to him. I don't know how he drinks this thing. It looks dirty and he is also mixing it with his dirty hands. Look at those long dirty nails. My father... ey, my father is a different type of person. Sometimes he disgusts me. He knows nothing about hygiene. But at the end of the day he is still my father.

Mlambo : How is school?

He looks at me with his yellow teeth all out. Some are missing. When last did he brush his teeth?

Me : School is fine.

Mlambo : That's good.

He laughs. Why is he so excited?

Me : But I'm going back tomorrow.

Mlambo : Really?

Me : Yes. Umsebenzi wesikole muningi kakhulu Mdineka (sigh) I have a lot of assignments.

Mlambo : Are you okay?

Me : I'm fine Baba. Would you like some tea?

Mlambo : Sebenzile sit down.

I sigh and sit down. Here comes a lecture.

Mlambo : Udliwa yini?

Me : Nothing, I'm fine. Ukuthi nje kunento eyenzekile lapho sihlala khona.

Mlambo : What happened?

Me : There's a guy owumakhelwane wethu. His brother wasn't feeling well and we couldn't help him. Kungenza umuntu onjani lokho?

Mlambo : You can't go around helping sick strangers.

What the hell was I thinking? He is nothing like my mother.

Me : Sure

Mlambo : Sure?

Did I say sure?

Me : Baba?

Mlambo : Sebenzile yini angathi inyuvesi iyakushintsha? Okanye abantu bakwa Ndlovu who turned you into.....

Me : I'm not going to talk about the Ndlovus.

Mlambo : Sebenzile....

Me : Cha Mdineka!!

I shout. He slowly gets up.

Mlambo : Who do you think you are talking to?

Me : Ngazi kahle ukuthi uwubani but what I don't know ukuthi uqale nini ukukhuluma ngabantu bakwa Ndlovu. Kade ngihamba la I told you angifuni ukukhuluma ngo Menzi nomndeni wakhe.

Mlambo : Sebenzile you....

Me : You didn't care Baba! You never called, not even once.

Mlambo : Sebenzile...

Me : They abused me. UMenzi engishaya abazali bakhe bebuka. Menzi left me wayosebenza lapho ngingazi khona and when he didn't send money home ngangingadli for days! Because his parents wouldn't let me eat! Ukungasebenzi kwami babekwenza ihlaya.

He narrows his eyes.

Me : And whenever Menzi came home he came with different women. Engishaye! I needed you Baba. I kept hoping that you would come uzongibheka but you didn't!

Mlambo : Sebenzile ngangizokwenzelani lokho? I told you that marrying that boy was a mistake!

Me : Ngoba wuwe owaqalekisa umshado wami. Ekukhuleni kwami konke you kept telling me that ngiyofela layikhaya, that I wasn't capable of being someone's wife!

Mlambo : And you wanted to prove me wrong?

Me : You don't get it.

Mlambo : You did, washada ngenkani wakuhlula umshado and here you are trying....

Me : Coming here was a bad idea.

I get up.

Mlambo : No it wasn't. Why don't you take responsibility for once and admit that you were wrong? Why are you blaming me for ukuhluleka kwakho?

Me : I didn't come here to fight with you. Angazi nokuthi sifike kanjani la.

Mlambo : Sifike ngoba wena you don't want to talk about your mistakes khona ngizokubonisa njengoyihlo ukuthi ikuphi lapho waphambuka khona.

Me : Oh come on, Baba.

Mlambo : Uthi khemani kimi?

Me : Mdineka....

Mlambo : Shut up!!

He grabs my hand and I suddenly feel a pain in my hand. He squeezes my hand and I see blood dripping inside the bucket of his beer. He is staring at me while doing this. I pull away and look at my hand. There's a small cut. He cut me with the knife that he was using to slice the pineapples.

Me : Baba? Baba ungisikile. Look...

Mlambo : Look what you made me do!! Do you see why ngingakufuni kulomuzi? I knew the moment ungena ngesango ukuthi mina nawe ngeke sihlalelane. Uzibona uwumfazi kodwa uzokwenza ubufazi emzini wami. This is my house Sebenzile!!

This cut is nothing. What did he say?

Me : Wait, wait. Is that why you sent me to the university? That was your way of kicking me out. Am I wrong?

He looks away.

Me : Baba why wenza angathi uyangithanda? You were busy calling me ungibuza about when am I coming home kanti awungifuni? Pho ubuthini? Why are you acting like you care?

He keeps quiet. I shake my head and walk away. I go into my room. I'm going back to Mountview. I don't even know why I bothered myself coming here. I tighten my doek around my bleeding hand. I know he didn't mean to hurt me but he meant it when he said he doesn't want me in his house. I put on my sandals and lift up my bag. Fuck! Where am I going to get the money for transport? I was counting on him. There's no way I'm going to ask him for money. I would rather walk all the way to Mountview.

I step out of the house and see him going to his rondavel with a bucket. He walks inside the rondavel and closes the door. I ran to his room. I get in and open his jar. He has a small jar full of R5s. I take the whole jar and put it under my jacket. This plus the R150 in my purse is going to be enough to get me to Mountview.

I walked out of the gate. I expected him to scream for me and beg me to come back but all my hopes were gone the moment I got into a taxi.

MOUNTVIEW

I'm tired and drained. I didn't think that I'd be back so soon. What the hell happened between my father and I? Everything happened so fast. It still doesn't make sense.

I'm sweating from all the walking. I unlock my door and walk in. I switch on the light and I throw my bag on my bed. I blow out a sigh while taking off my jacket. If I had alcohol I'd be drunk by now. My heart is literally painful. I sit in front of my piano and start playing. My neighbour joins in. I don't need him to be part of this. I want to do this alone but we are playing together so well. Tonight I'm the one in a burning house. I break a loud scream and bury my face in the keyboard. Suddenly I hear a loud bang. Someone is breaking down my door. I immediately lift up my head and turn it towards the door. My knees tremble. My heart beats faster. I can't believe what I'm seeing. He is standing on my door. He is shirtless. His blonde dreadlocks are all over his face. He slowly pushes them back and his pink eyes flashes before me. I get up.

Him : Sebe, are you okay? I... I heard noise....

He stutters while pointing outside. I swallow.

Me : Who are you?

My eyes scan all around him. His body has small bruises. The bruises are so red, so visible.

Him : Sbani...Sbanisokuhle Ntuli.

Me : What?

My mind races back to the first time I saw him. That's what he said "Mlu, ukhuluma no Sbani." Oh my God, It's him. It's him. I feel my throat closing up. There are tears burning in my eyes. For what? I don't know.

Chapter 08

I wipe the tears and look away. I have so much that I want to say but my body is too frozen for me to speak. He is getting closer. I feel his hand touching my arm but he immediately moves it away as soon as I look at it.

Sbani : I'm sorry. I just wanted to check if you were fine.

His hands move to his back. He probably thinks that he disgusts me or that I hate him. I feel so bad. I didn't mean to offend him or anything. I clear my throat and open my bag. I start unpacking my clothes. Not exactly what I want to do but being in one room with him is too much.

Me : I'm fine

He sighs

Sbani : I'll leave.

He heads out. Dammit! No.

Me : It was you. I saw you in Verulam.

He turns around and smiles. His eyes are moving ridiculously.

Sbani : I know.

He smiles. I thought he was nervous but now I'm starting to think that I was wrong. He seems relaxed.

Me : How do you know my name?

Sbani : Ngeke ungishaye kuqala?

He is so cute mahn. I shake my head.

Me : No

He laughs. His voice is so tiny but yet charming even when he laughs.

Sbani : I heard you talking to your friend the other day.

He gets closer and stands next to me. He helps me unpack. Ooookay.

Me : Roxanne?

Sbani : I don't know their names. Bengithi ngizoza ngizobingelela but....

He stares at me. We stare at each other.

Me : It was you. All this time it was you.

I didn't think I'd be able to stare in his eyes but here I am staring right at them.

Me : You cooked and cleaned.. Wadlala i piano nami. It was you.

His eyes move in circles. He sighs and licks his lower lip.

Sbani : Yah.... When can I put these?

He is approaching my wardrobe. Hell no. I quickly rush to block him. There are my clothes in here and if he opens they will fall out of the wardrobe. I'm the only one who knows how to operate this wardrobe.

Me : Don't open. Leave them on the bed.

Sbani : Khonani kanti la?

Ay Sbanisezwe! Is it Sbanisezwe?

Me : Nothing

Sbani : What happened esandleni?

I move away from the wardrobe.

Me : Nothing serious. I was cooking and I cut my hand.

Sbani : Okay, ngicela ungi-phakele nami.

He is too comfortable now.

Me : What?

I lift up my eyes to his face and find his eyes staring down at me.

Sbani : Food. I know upheka kahle so please dish up for me.

Me : Oh Cha. Bengingapheki la. I was cooking for my father back home.

Sbani : When did you go home?

He talks too much. Why is he not scared of me?

Me : Yesterday.

I lie and look away.

Sbani : I see. Nami ke I didn't cook.

Me : Oh

Sbani : Shuthi ngiyakukhipha.

Me : Excuse me?

Sbani : I want to take you out.

Me : On a date?

Sbani : Date? What is...

Me : Cha ngeke ngikwazi. I just had a long day. Nawe uyaqhamuka lana uqhamuka uwumuntu ebengingazitsheli nje ukuthi uwuyena. My mind is still.... paralyzed. I need time to....

I'm explaining too much. That's because I'm nervous.

Sbani : Come here.

He pulls me by my arm and hugs me. I feel every organ of my body shutting down. I close my eyes. The warmth of his skin fades away the moment he breaks the hug.

Sbani : I just want us to get to know each other. Bengikusaba nawe ungisaba but silana manje. Can we.... (sigh) Sebe please.

Me : Were you scared of me?

He laughs.

Sbani : No

Me : Fine. You can take me out but I don't have money.

He laughs and walks out. It feels like I just woke up from a dream. I sit on my bed and scratch my head. Everything is sinking in.

Me : What?

I almost jumped

hearing loud music coming from his room.

Me : Okay, okay. What am I going to wear?

I open my wardrobe. A few minutes later I had my favorite dress on. It's a red scotch dungaree dress. It's vintage. I love it so much. I match up with my red and black wedge heels. I need to look smart because I know that he is taking me to KFC or Hungry Lion. Those are two fancy places that open for 24 hours. I'm so excited. I comb my afro and put on my earrings.

"Sebe, let's go."

He says outside the door. I ran to get the door. I thought he broke this door but it looks fine. Going out is what I need and from what I know I have nothing to lose.

Me : Oh hey.

Gosh, he is still wearing the same jeans that he was wearing when he was playing Batista with my door. On top he is wearing a red t-shirt. Red looks good on him.

Sbani : Ushaye obhut'ngiqwebe.

He is talking about my earrings. He is forward I see.

Me : Yini ngingavele ngiwakhumule ke Sbanisokuhle?

Now I remember his name. He smiles.

Sbani : My name sounds good coming out of your mouth.

I roll my eyes and take off my earrings because clearly he doesn't like them. He shakes his head and holds my hands.

Sbani : No, don't take them off. Umuhle

Me : Oh. Thanks.

He takes my keys and my handbag.

Sbani : Ngizokuphathela. Let me lock the door.

Me : Ngiyabonga

I step away and let him lock my door.

When we got outside he scanned his eyes around the sky.

Me : Are you okay?

Sbani : Yeah, yeah.

Me : I see.

He stops the taxi and we get in. Only a few people are inside the taxi. I think they are working the night shift. Sbani knows the driver.

Taxi driver : I'm happy to see you Bhunu, ngakugcina nini nje.

Sbani is staring at me with a smile on his face. I still can't believe that the guy I saw in Verulam, a guy who almost drove me crazy, is now sitting next to me.

Sbani : Yah.

Taxi driver : Ubani ke lentokazi enhle kangaka?

Sbani : Eyami

I raise my eyebrows and look away.

Taxi driver : Is that her name?

Sbani : No, she is mine Ngwazi.

The taxi driver looks at me through the rear view mirror.

Taxi driver : Aybo Sompisi, are you serious?

Sbani is still staring at me.

Sbani : Impela

Taxi driver : Ha! Ha! I'm proud of you Sbani. Bazojabula ekhaya.

Sbani : I know.

Taxi driver : Umabani yona intokazi?

I look at Sbani out of the corners of my eyes and he looks away. He doesn't know my surname.

Me : Mlambo

Taxi driver : Uh! Mdineka.

I smile.

Me : Yebo.

Taxi driver : Waliqoma nje ngempela lelibhunu elihlanya kanje?

I laugh.

Me : No, he is lying. We are just friends.

If Sbani's nickname is Bhunu that means he is the one who was sick last night and now I'm breaking his heart. I see that his mood has dropped. The driver is laughing.

Taxi driver : I knew he was lying. U Bhunu ulisaba kabi ithanga.

Me : Ngiyadlala. He... he is my boyfriend.

Sbani smiles. His mood improves again. Why is he lying? I'm sure he has a girlfriend or even girlfriends. So I don't know why is acting like an ugly bachelor. Our fingers interlaced and he kissed my hand.

Sbani : Ngikutshelile Ngwazi.

Taxi driver : Kade sengicabanga ukutshela u Mzwakhile ekwenzele igobongo.

They laugh. I wonder who Mzwakhile is.

Finally the taxi dropped us off by the bus rank. Sbani is holding my hand. Wait, why are we going to the rank?

Sbani : I need to get to know you better kukhona abafowethu bezokholwa phela that you are my girlfriend.

Me : But I'm not futhi angisoze.

Sbani : Why? Is it because of how I look?

Me : Don't give me that. Sbani singaba abangani nje kuphela.

Sbani : Aw

I laugh.

Me : Are you really scared of thighs?

Sbani : Ukungena phakathi kwawo?

I laugh. I can't believe I thought he was an innocent boy.

Me : Yeah

Sbani : I am. Where I come from kuyicala ukungena phakathi kwamathanga.

Me : Really? How?

Sbani : Yeah.... Sawubona Mah

There's a woman selling food here. He goes to her. Most people call her "mama".

Mama : Bhunu, unjani Baba?

Everyone calls him Bhunu.

Sbani : I'm fine Mah.

Mama : How are you feeling now? Lindo told me that....

Sbani : I'm fine. Ngicela ama plate awu two.

Mama : Oh..... Ntombazana. Unjani?

I smile.

Me : I'm fine mama.

Sbani smiles and kisses my cheek. He is taking this joke way too seriously.

Mama : That's good. Umuphathe kahle ke u Bhunu.

I'm tired of lying. I keep quiet. Firstly I don't like this idea of letting everyone believe that he and I are dating. Secondly I know he is joking but I really do like him and I'm scared that if I spend more time with

him or continue to joke like this I'll catch feelings and burn. Sbani seems like a player, a womanizer.

Mama : Bhunu, I'll call you as soon as I'm done.

Sbani : Thanks.

He wraps his arm around my neck. I'm sure we are going to KFC now. I didn't dress up for nothing. I remove his arm. There is a big connection between us but it needs to stop. He puts back his arm.

Sbani : Manje bafuna izinkomo ezingaki kwa Mlambo ukuze indoda ikwazi ukungena phakathi kwamathanga akhona?

I laugh out loud.

Me : 15 cows.

I continue to laugh.

Sbani : Okay.

Me : You said you were taking me out.

Sbani : But this is out.... Wait, I'll be back.

Me : Okay.

He goes and comes back with two plates of food and a plastic bag.
Inside the plastic bag there are two cans of coke.

Sbani : Woza

Me : Where are we going?

Sbani : Come

There is a bus parked here. He is going in.

Me : Aibo Sbani.

He laughs.

Sbani : Woza

I shake my head and follow him. We get in and sit down together. The bus is empty, it has curtains.

Sbani : Do you like it?

Me : Sbani sisebhasini. But yinhle.

He smiles

Sbani : I know....heh! Yazi ngangikusaba kanjani Sebe.

Me : Why?

He gives me my food. It smells good.

Sbani : Ngangicabanga ukuthi uzongixwaya

Me : And why would I do that?

Sbani : Why do other people do that?

I chuckle

Me : Is that why you always lock yourself up? Is it because of your albinism and ubona ukuthi sizoxwaya ?

He raises his blonde eyebrows.

Me : What? You want me to say sorry? Ngeke ngixolise mina Sbani ngixolisele umbhedo.

He sighs.

Me : Tell me, uyawuthanda umculo?

Sbani : Not really, ngithanda ukudweba.

Me : But you play piano.

Sbani : Yeah, for fun.

Me : Mhmm. Okay. Mina waqala nini ukungibona?

Sbani : First day ufika. Ngangimi ngasewindini and ngathi nje ngikubona ngathi nangu umfazi ka Sbani.

We both laugh.

Me : Awukho right kodwa Sbani, ngeke.

Sbani : And you? What did you say uqala ukungibona? Wathi isishawa esinje!

Me : Cha ngathi nasi esibani sami.

His face turns pink. I laugh. He is blushing.

Me : I'm joking.

Sbani : Liar. Vele washo njalo

Me : No. Kodwa yazi ngiyabonga mngani. I needed this. Namhlanje I had a fight with my father.

Sbani : Why? What happened?

Me : I don't know. We just fought.

Sbani : Is that why you were screaming?

Me : I was angry at him.

Sbani : Unamanga ubufuna ngizwe ukuthi uyakhala mase ngiyeza.

We both burst into laughter.

Me : Uyafisa! Bhunu you don't even know me ngoba usungiphaphela nje

Sbani : Kodwa sizoshada one day

I laugh.

Me : Uyagula serious. How old are you?

Sbani : Sebe umdala ukunami. You are my sugar mama

I laughed and hit his shoulder.

Me : Unamanga.

Sbani : Serious. I'm 25 kodwa sizoshada.

Me : Mxm. Do you have kids?

Sbani : Yes, I have 20 kids.

We both laugh.

Sbani : Kodwa zona aziwona amabhunu zi right.

Me : And wena awukho right?

He shrugs.

Me : Do you know how... Never mind.

I shake my head and drink my coke.

Sbani : Talk to me.

Me : No. Why aren't you eating?

Sbani : Ukuba nawe kuyangisuthisa

I laugh.

Me : Sbani uzongidina yezwa?

We both laugh.

Me : Ekabani le bus?

Sbani : Eka Mzwa.

Me : Mzwa?

Sbani : My father. Unamabhasi

Me : Really?

Sbani : Yes. This is one of them. Ishayelwa uNkaw'eyosiwe

I laugh and almost choke.

Me : Who?

Sbani : u Nkawu. Uzomubona

Me : Who gave him that name?

Sbani : Bamuqamba e rank.

Me : And you? Who named you Bhunu?

Sbani : Nami ngaqanjwa e rank. Bayaqambana lapha

I laugh.

Me : And what were you doing e rank?

Sbani : I was driving a taxi.

Me : What?

Sbani : Yah. But ngayeka ngoba I was always sick whenever it was hot.

Me : Kanjani manje?

He shakes his head.

Sbani : Wena, how is work?

Me : Sbani, come on. Ubuphethwe yini izolo?

Sbani : Lutho. Do you want ice cream?

He asks and looks away. I sigh.

Me : Yeah

Sbani : Let's go.

Me : Aren't you going to finish your food first?

Sbani : Ngizodla ngendlela. Let me tell Sphiwo to bring the car.

Me : Who is that?

Sbani : My brother. I have two brothers. U Lindokuhle no Sphiwokuhle.
Imina omncane

He smiles. I laugh.

Me : Uyakuthanda ukuba mncane!

Sbani : But I am.

He takes out his phone and dials.

Me : And your mother? Where is she?

He runs his finger across his neck.

Me : Dead?

Sbani : Yeah. She was shot... Sho Sphiwo. Ukephi wena hlamo?

He is really crazy. He is nothing like what I had in mind. His mother was shot. Geez!

Sbani : Please bring the car

He says while blowing me the kisses and winking at me. I laugh.

Sbani : Sho

He hangs up.

Sbani : Let's go. Uzoza u Phiwo.

We get up.

Sbani : Ngangizalwa umama sgebengu mina Sebe. But she died when I was still young. She was my father's side chick, e driva amataxi akhe uBaba.

Me : She was a taxi driver?

Sbani : Yah, and at that time my father was still a taxi owner. UMah edla imali ka Baba no Maka Lindo.

He laughs.

Me : Lindo? Your brother?

Sbani : Yeah, umawakhe akangifuni kuze kube imanje ngoba u Mah wathatha i boyfriend yakhe. They always fought and almost killed each other ngenxa yendoda. But my mother always won. Phela umawami wewufaka u right, Sebe.

We both laugh.

Me : And you think that was cool?

Sbani : It doesn't matter.

He sighs and rubs the back of his neck.

Me : I'm so sorry, Bhunu.

Sbani : Nah, it's okay.

He wrapped his arm around my waist and we finally went to KFC. But we are here for Ice cream only. Sbani is still digging his food. He is eating right inside KFC.

Me : Is that even allowed?

Sbani : What?

Me : Ukudla ukudla kwakwenye indawo? Especially chicken. Ngeke bedinwe la?

He shrugs and continues to dig in.

Sbani : I don't know. My wallet is here, please take it out.

Me : Where is it?

Sbani : La ephaketheni.

I take out his wallet and join the queue.

Sbani : Sebe, uthenge nokudla esizohamba nakho!

Why is he shouting? Now all eyes are on him. He leans back against the wall and eats the bones of his chicken like nobody's business. I want to laugh? Who does that? There's no doubt that I'm going to enjoy having him as a friend.

ooooo

Sphiwokuhle's friend brought us back. We came back and stayed in his room. We aren't talking about anything that makes sense. We are just laughing like we've known each other for a long time. How can two people who met a couple of hours ago get along so well?

Tomorrow he is going to work. I'm ironing his overalls and he is lying on the bed, playing a game on my phone. I don't even remember giving him my phone.

Me : WBHO. What exactly do you do? Yazi angathi ngiyayazi lendawo.

I ask while looking at his blue overall.

Sbani : Inkontileka. Ngisebenza ezinkontilekeni

He says with a singing tone. I burst.

Me : Sbani uyagula wena. You are more crazy than I thought.

He looks at me. His eyes are turning red. He rubs them.

Sbani : Please give me my glasses. Angisaboni

I laugh.

Me : What?

Sbani : Serious Sebe. My eyesight is bad during the night.

He groans and rubs his eyes. Aibo he is serious.

Me : Zikephi?

Sbani : Lapha, lapha e drawer. Eish

I quickly open the drawer and search for his glasses. I grab them and help him put them on.

Me : Are you fine now?

Sbani : Kahle dokotela

We both burst.

Me : You are starting.

Sbani : Starting what? Woza uhlale nami.

He taps the bed and crosses his arms. He still looks good in his glasses.

Me : Weee zibukwana!

He laughs and takes them off.

Me : I'm joking. Put them back on

Sbani : Ay hawu

Me : I'm leaving ke

Sbani : Okay, okay.

He puts them back on. I climb on the bed.

Me : Let me fix your hair. Kade ngihalela

He laughs.

Me : Do you smoke weed?

Sbani : Do you have a problem with weed?

Me : No, so you do?

Sbani : For fun.

I laugh. I kneel behind him and tie up his dreadlocks. The bruises are also around his neck. I clear my throat.

Me : Who was scratching your neck?

Sbani : No one.

He clearly doesn't want to talk about all these bruises. I let go.

Me : I need to go now. Kufanele ulale uyavuka ksasa.

Sbani : Yeah.

It's better I leave now while we are still laughing. I don't want to press his wrong buttons.

Chapter 09

Last night I slept late. He also came to my room and we stayed till late. Even after he had left I couldn't sleep. My head kept repeating everything that happened yesterday. How he walked in, how he asked me out. Everything.

Someone is knocking. I lift up my head and look at the door.

Me : Who is that?

Silence. I check the time on my phone. It's 04h30 am. Who the hell is knocking on my door at this time? I get up and open the door. Oh shit!! I quickly close the door. He laughs and pushes the door.

Me : Sbani no!

Sbani : Yini?

Me : I don't want you to see me nginje.

He is overpowering me. I let go of the door and he walked in. You know what? I don't care anymore. Let him see me like this. I'm not wearing a bra. My pyjama has a big hole around my butt.

Sbani : Yah mfazi ka Sbani

I roll my eyes.

Me : Bhunu, ufunani mfethu?

Sbani : I want coffee

Me : Okay

I yawn and get back to bed. He puts his backpack on my bed. He is wearing his work uniform. Every color looks good on him. He looks so tall and more handsome in those blue overalls and work boots.

Me : Uhamba ngalesikhathi ukuya emsebenzini?

Sbani : Yeah, before the sun comes out.

Me : Early kangaka kodwa?

Sbani : Yeah.

He plugs the kettle and sits on my bed. He opens his arm.

Sbani : Give me a hug.

Me : Did you see the time?

Sbani : Yeah. Woza, Sebe.

Me : Kodwa ngizwane kanjani nawe?

We both laugh. We hugged.

Sbani : I'm going to treat you well...

He stares into my eyes. His eyes are literally glowing. He has long blonde eyebrows.

Sbani : Okunye sokubona ngendlela.

Me : Nezinkophe zembuzi

We both laugh and he squeezes my arms.

Me : Ngiyadlala Mphemba omuhle. I'm joking.

He smiles and lets go of my arm.

Sbani : Mina angidlali kodwa

Me : Mhmmm.

I nod. I don't even know what he is talking about. He gets up and makes coffee.

Sbani : Uyawubona ukhiye lapho?

Me : Where? Oh yeah, here it is. Yazi khona omunye futhi la. You need to take it.

Sbani : I'll leave it. Mawufuna ukuya ngale uye.

Me : Okay mngani.

Sbani : I'm late now. Here is your coffee. Ube nosuku oluhle, yezwa?

Me : Aibo Bhunu kanti elami futhi leli coffee?

He laughs.

Sbani : Buka ngiku spoiler kanjani Sebe. Weeh mfethu wena awazi lutho.

We both laugh.

Me : But it's still early. Kodwa ngizoliphuza. Ngiyabonga mngani wami

He opens his wallet and leaves R50 on my table.

Sbani : Uthenge isinkwa

I smile.

Me : Uyabona wena!! No one like you.

He laughs out loud.

Sbani : Sebe, bhabhayi mfethu.

He kisses my cheek and walks out.

Me : Thanks for the coffee!

I shout and hear him laughing.

oooooo

I woke up and cleaned my room and his room. Roxanne came to visit me.

Roxanne : So he is the same guy you saw in Verulam.

Me : Exactly. I almost fainted when he walked in.

Roxanne : I was definitely going to die.

I laugh.

Roxanne : And you two are friends now?

I smile.

Me : We are neighbours. He is really cool and funny too.

Roxanne : Uhhh... I see. Did he tell you what happened that night? Who was sick?

Me : I tried to ask him but he wasn't clear about it.

Roxanne : Maybe they were on drugs.

Me : Aw kahle bo.

Roxanne : I need to see him.

Me : You will.

Roxanne : I hope you are not falling for him

Me : Will that be a problem? Not that I'm falling for him but I'm just asking.

Roxanne : What if he hurts you? Sebe you need to understand that nowadays you only get married once and if your marriage fails you only come across men who want to get inside your pussy with no intentions of marriage.

Me : And trust me, Sbani is a player. I saw how he kept looking at me.

Roxanne : See? Don't let him charm you.

Me : I'll tell him that you want to see him.

Roxanne : I'm going to tell him exactly where to get off. See now he is using you. You are cleaning his room....

Me : No, that's extreme. He is not using me. He didn't even ask me to clean his room. It's me who....

Roxanne : Stop it. He will see you as a weakling and start using you and he will use his same pretty face to use you.

Use

use, use. I've heard enough of this word.

Me : Okay

Roxanne : What! And your father? Dude, what the hell happened?

Me : Yooo uBaba! I absolutely have no idea of what happened. One minute we were fine and the next, we were on each other's throats.

Roxanne : Was he drunk?

Me : That's the thing, he was sober and that's why I failed to understand his behavior.

Roxanne : My father loves fighting whenever he is drunk. I'm telling you that one day he came home drunk and guess what? He came with another woman.

Me : What? Knowing that your mother was home?

Roxanne : Yep. When my mother asked him why he brought home another woman, he said he forgot that he was married.

I burst into laughter.

Me : Our fathers are crazy.

Roxanne : Especially ours.

We both laugh.

Me : But I'm hoping that mine will call and apologize.

Roxanne : He better. What he did was terrible. What time did you get here?

Me : Before 6pm.

Roxanne : That's late. Imagine if something bad happened to you. He was going to blame himself for the rest of his life for kicking you out.

Me : He didn't really kick me out, I....

Roxanne : What he did was wrong. Don't try to defend him.

Ay Roxanne.

Me : I'm not de.....

My phone is ringing. Hopefully it's my father. But I don't recognize this number.

Me : Sebenzile speaking.

"Sunflower"

My heart races. It's Sbani.

Me : Oh Bhunu, it's you.

I start pacing around.

Sbani : Kanti ubulindele ukufonelwa ubani?

Me : No one. Where did you get my number?

Sbani : Ngizibhazile izolo ngefoni yakho.

I laugh and sit down. I play with Roxanne's hair.

Me : Oh okay. How is work?

I can hear the noises of different machines in his background.

Sbani : Busy.

Me : Ngiyabezwa o ti ti ti lapho. Uzobuya ngasikhathisini?

Sbani : Do you miss me that much?

Me : Kahle Bhunu. I was just asking

We both laugh.

Sbani : I know you are bored. Go and watch a movie in my room.

Me : I'm not bored. Uzobuya nini?

Sbani : I'm not sure yazi. Kodwa ngizobuya ungakalali

I smile.

Me : Okay

Sbani : Ngizokubona ntambama. Ube right.

Me : Nawe ube right.

Sbani : Sho

Call ended. Roxanne shakes her head.

Roxanne : You are catching feelings Seh.

Me : Me? No way. I'm not catching anything.

Roxanne : Did you see how you were blushing while talking to him?
How you were playing with my hair?

Me : So what?

Roxanne : You are in love.

Me : Oh please. In love? Roxanne the last time I was in love was.... I
can't even remember.

Roxanne : Are you sure that you two are just friends? Did he not speak
about love?

Me : No! Of course he didn't and neither did I.

Roxanne : Ay, I don't know what to think anymore Seh.

Me : Then don't think. It's that simple, really.

She shakes her head. I don't care. Why do I feel like she is trying to
control me like my father does? Aibo.

Chapter 10

I'm honestly enjoying all the attention that Sbani is giving me. I've even forgotten about the fight I had with my father.

Today it's Sunday, I'm back at work. Sbani was also working but he finished at 12h00 and now he is here at my workplace to bring me lunch. He came with his work vehicle. We are sitting inside. I thought the lunch was mine alone but we are eating together now.

Me : Sbani!! ungayithathi le... Hawu

He just took a bigger piece of meat. He laughs and puts it down.

Sbani : Okay, I'm sorry. Hawu don't kill me.

We are both laughing.

Me : Ngizohamba nayo. Buka futhi, my lunch break is almost over. I need to go back.

Sbani : Bayaxoshana mawuhamba ungashilo?

I laugh.

Me : That's a serious offense. Uyaxoshwa. Cabanga ke sengibaleka after Grace just borrowed me money for transport.

I laugh and shake my head. He stops eating.

Sbani : Wenzeni? You borrowed money?

Me : Oh yeah. I was hoping that my father would give me money kodwa saxabana ke. So I didn't have money ngabolekwa u Grace.

His face changes.

Me : Yinindaba?

Sbani : I hate what you did. Why did you ask strangers to borrow you money ngikhona?

Me : Hhaibo kahle Bhunu. Grace is my supervisor. She didn't mind.

Sbani : But I do. Look, I know who she is but I don't like the idea of you borrowing money from her.... Or anyone else.

Me : Nangu umafika izolo esengishayela umthetho.

Sbani : What do you mean Sebe?

Me : Friends don't control each other.

He chuckles.

Me : I need to go. Ngibongile ngokudla

Sbani : Wait. How much did you borrow from her?

Me : That is none of your business.

Sbani : No you are going to give her money back. They just hired you but you are already asking them for favors, aibo awuzihloniphe Sebe.

I raise my eyebrows in disbelief.

Me : Respect myself?

Sbani : I don't mean it in a bad way. Ukuthi nje angifuni umfazi ka Sbani eha....

Me : I'm not your wife. Ngicela singadlalisani kanjalo.

Sbani : Awungifuni wena? Ngoba mina ngiyakufuna nje.

He places his hand on his chest. I laugh.

Me : Please go ngoba usuyaqala.

He laughs.

Sbani : Starting what?

Me : Ukusangana.

He sighs.

Sbani : I'm not crazy and soon you will see that. Did your father call you?

Me : To apologize? No, he didn't. Shuthi akayiboni into e wrong ngalokhu akwenzile.

Sbani : What are you talking about?

Me : Did I not tell you ukuthi sixabene?

Sbani : You did.... Sebe, ngicela uyiboleke kumina phela imali.

He opens his wallet and takes out R650

Sbani : I'll give you the rest later.

Me : No

Sbani : Yinindaba uzama ukungibukanisa nabantu? Ngiyisishawa esinamehlo abomvu ngakho vele bayangibuka. Look at me.

We both laugh.

Me : Ngeke ngisayithathela lokho imali yakho.

Sbani : Okay I'm joking. Please take it.

I look at the money.

Sbani : Please. Ngizoze ngikhale phela manje.

I burst.

Me : Okay fine. But I'll pay you back as soon as I get paid.

Sbani : Okay.

Me : Ngiyabonga. I need to go now.

I open my arms and we share a hug.

Sbani : I'll see you later. Uzobuya sengiphekile.

I smile.

Me : There's no one like you.

Sbani : Jikelele?

Me : Jikelele mngani wami.

We both laugh and I get out of the car.

Me : Hamba ke.

He laughs and drives off. Where was Sbani all my life? I wish I could turn back the hands of time.

I gave Grace her money back. She didn't even ask why. I'm ready to go home now. I hope there is no queue at the taxi rank. My phone rings. It's Mlambo. Can you believe it?

Me : Baba

Mlambo : Sebenzile is that you?

What the hell?

Me : Yes it's me.

Mlambo : Eish, network. Can you hear me?

Me : I can hear you Baba.

Mlambo : Good. What do you think you are doing?

Me : Baba?

Mlambo : You want to get married again after lesihogo somshado ophuma kuso?

Me : Ngifuna ukushada? Baba, what are you talking about?

Mlambo : You know exactly what I'm talking about! Ngokushesha okungaka? Akuwena owathi you want nothing to do with love?

Maybe I need to take a taxi to Showe because clearly my father has lost his mind.

Me : Imina Baba

Mlambo : Then how do you explain this?

Me : What?

Mlambo : This!

Me : Phela Mdineka sikhuluma ocingweni so I can't see what you are talking about.

Mlambo : Lencwadi efike layikhaya. Nayi esandleni sami.

Me : Letter? What letter?

Mlambo : I was waiting for you to call me kodwa ngibona sekushona ilanga awufoni. This morning three man came here ehamba nekhehla.

Me : Amadoda akuphi? Baba ukhuluma ngani?

Mlambo : I'm talking about the letter that was delivered by the Ntulis this morning.

Me : Abantu bakwa Ntuli?

Mlambo : Yes. Ikhuluma ngendaba zelobola. Ilobolo lakho. They want negotiations.

Me : What?

Mlambo : Sebenzile who is Sbanisokuhle?

Me : Sb.....

My phone drops out of my hand and falls to the floor.

Chapter 11

NTULI HOMESTEAD

MaNzilo is busy packing clothes inside the wardrobe when Mzwakhile Ntuli, her husband walks in.

Mzwakhile : Dali

MaNzilo : Baba, you are back. What is that?

Mzwakhile : Bhunu's overall. I bumped into them at the taxi rank banginika.

MaNzilo : Was he working today?

Mzwakhile : That's what they told me.

MaNzilo : Othi ngimuwashele.

Mzwakhile sits down and takes off his shoes.

Mzwakhile : Today was a long day. Kukude eShowe.

MaNzilo : Is it that far?

Mzwakhile : Kukude impela. Awuphekanga angithi inyama yenkomo?

MaNzilo : No, why? Is Bhunu coming?

Mzwakhile : Uzozwa phela ukuthi how did we go ekhweni lakhe.

MaNzilo smiles.

MaNzilo : How did it go?

Mzwakhile shakes his head.

MaNzilo : Mzwakwe you are scaring me. Batheni kanti kwa Mlambo?

Mzwakhile : No, everything went well. I just hope that they won't return the letter. Umlambo uthe naye kusafanele elinde abafowabo bebonisane before he gets back to us.

MaNzilo's smile widens.

MaNzilo : Hhayke, that means everything went accordingly. So why are you sad?

Mzwakhile : Ukuthi nje I'm asking myself if Sbani knows what he is doing.

MaNzilo : He is 24 years old Mzwakhe and maduze nje uzobe ehlanganisa u 25. He knows what he is doing. UBhunuza uhlakaniphe kabi, nawe uyakwazi lokho.

Mzwakhile : We haven't even met with this girl kodwa u Sbani usefuna ukuyishada? Thandokazi I don't know what Sbani is doing and I don't think he understands either.

MaNzilo : They've been together for years.

Mzwakhile : Pho kungani e....

MaNzilo : Khuboni, weren't you the one who told our boys ukuthi umfana walayikhaya uma esebona intombi kufanele eyobingelela kubo kwayo ngezinkomo before nje elale naleyontombazane?

Mzwakhile : Do you think Sbani hasn't had sex with that girl? Emuva kwaleminyaka athi sebethandane yona? UBhunu ugange kabi. Who knows? Mhlampe kunengane nje abayifihlile ingakho sebegijimela ukushada.

MaNzilo : Sompisi, abafana bakho bayakuhlonipha. You told them not to bring girls la ekhaya nangempela abakwenzanga lokho. Bayayilandela imigomo nemibandela yakho njengoBaba wabo and lento eyenziwe u Bhunuza isakhombisa kona ukuthi how much he respects you.

Mzwakhile : Bhunu is still my little boy. Ngiyazi izingane zamanje zikhula zidlule iminyaka yazo but my boy is only 24 years old, Dali wami.

MaNzilo shakes her head.

MaNzilo : Mzwakhe, for how long are you going to cage Sbani?

Mzwakhile : That's not what I'm doing.

MaNzilo : It is Baba ka Lindokuhle. Empeleni umufukamele njengeqanda legolide.

Mzwakhile : If that was the case then I wouldn't have allowed him to move out of this house.

MaNzilo : Wavuma emuva kwezinyanga ezingaki?

Mzwakhile : Sbani is different. Uyagu....

MaNzilo : Cha Baba! You know very well that this has nothing to do with his sickness or his age!... Yazi ingane uyiphathisa okwe... I don't even know.

Mzwakhile : I don't treat Sbani any differently. Abafana bami ngibaphatha ngendlela efanayo bonke.

MaNzilo : Deep down you know that isn't true.

Mzwakhile glares at her.

Mzwakhile : It's true! I'll tell you where your problem lies. Wena you want to get rid of my son!

MaNzilo : What?

Mzwakhile : You are using Sbani to punish me for cheating on you kuze kuzalwe yena. Uzonda ukuthi he is the result of what I did to you. His mother died Thandokazi, ngeke esaphinde ebuye so stop it!! Iyanyanyisa lento yakho, it's disgusting.

MaNzilo's eyes widened in disbelief. Her lips start quivering.

Mzwakhile : Ungahlali amehlo. You know very well that I'm right. Uyamubandlulula wena umfana wami.

MaNzilo's eyes welled up with tears.

Mzwakhile : And you know that if he gets married he will leave this house for good usale ke wena uthole ukuphefumula ngoba nakhu phela uBhunu ukuncisha wonke umoya wokuphefumula.

MaNzilo : No, no, no.....

She shakes her head.

MaNzilo : You don't mean that. You are angry and....

Mzwakhile : I'm not angry! I'm telling you the truth!!

MaNzilo : Truth? Truth, Mzwakhe? Mzwakhe the truth is wena wahamba layikhaya.

Mzwakhile : Here we go again.

MaNzilo : Oh yes we are. Wahamba wangishiya nezingane wayokipita ehostela. Uyokipita noskhotheni womfazi. Wamunika amatax akho nadla imali. Wabuya ungenalutho Mzwa!

Mzwakhile : Thandokazi....

MaNzilo : You couldn't even buy a single nappy for Sphiwokuhle! And whenever I asked you ukuthi ikuphi imali wawubhodla umlilo, ungibhangqe nalezindonga! I stayed and endured. Ngama ngelokuthi what's done in the darkness will come to light. And it did! Wazalwa u Sbani.

Mzwakhile looks away.

MaNzilo : Zafika izitha zakho zaravaza umaka Sbanisokuhle ngemvula yezinhlamvu. Do you remember how young Sbani was? He was only 6 years old. Who took him in? Me. Mina lo oseysisitha namhlanje. I raised your son Mzwa! Ngangimgeza

Advertisement

ngimufunza ngiphinde ngimuphiphe. Eqala ukugula who was there?
Me. Ngawa ngivuka naye. And where were you?

Mzwakhile cracks his fingers.

MaNzilo : I'll tell you. You were in Gauteng, killing people, wenza ubugebengu! Ugingqika nezifebe. Wabuya nani? You came back with nothing. Into owangibuyela nayo ingagara yengculazi.

Mzwakhile : Maka Lindo....

MaNzilo : Ungangidakelwa mina Mzwa.

She clicks her tongue and gets up. She walks out. Mzwakhile rubs his face and blows out a sigh. He stands up and steps out of the house. One of their cars is approaching the gate. His sons are here. Sbani is the first to get out of the car.

Sbani : Hheyi!

Mzwakhile : Ehhe?

Sbani : Ay

That's how they greet each other sometimes. Don't mind them.

Lindo : Tayma

Mzwakhile : Where is my grandson?

Lindo laughs.

Lindo : Nangu. Woza Skhalo

A little boy gets out of the car and runs to Mzwakhile. He throws himself on his legs. Mzwakhile laughs and lifts him up.

Mzwakhile : Mfana kamkhulu. How are you my boy?

Skhalo giggles and tightens his arms around his grandfather's neck. Sbani joins them.

Skhalo : Sbani

He points at him and licks his little finger.

Mzwakhile : Ehhe nangu u Baba.

Sbani : Yah wena. Tayma uphi u Mah?

Mzwakhile : Ulapha ka round.

Sbani : Let me check on her.

Skhalo opens his arms for Sbani to take him. Mzwakhile laughs.

Mzwakhile : You are going with Bhunu now?

Skhalo shakes his head.

Skhalo : Mhmm-Mhmmm

Sbani : Come

He takes Skhalo from Mzwakhile and goes to the rondavel. They find MaNzilo taking out the plates from the cupboard.

Sbani : Mawami

MaNzilo wipes her tears and turns around wearing a smile on her face.

MaNzilo : Bhunuza

Sbani frowns.

Sbani : Yini manje?

MaNzilo laughs.

MaNzilo : Nothing. Nifika nini? Hello Skhalo.

She kisses Skhalo's cheek.

MaNzilo : Where is Lindo?

Skhalo : Uhleli kwimoto

MaNzilo : Hawu and where is mommy?

Skhalo : Uyofaka izipho zakhe

Sbani and MaNzilo laugh.

MaNzilo : Oh she went to do her nails. Bhunu anilambile?

Sbani : No, I'm fine mah. Manje why are you crying?

MaNzilo darts her gaze to Skhalo and smiles.

MaNzilo : Hhaibo, who is crying?.. Have you spoken to your father?
Angathi kuhambe kahle kwa Mlambo.

Sbani : Where are my uncles and Mkhulu if everything went well?

MaNzilo : They had to go. Uyamubona u Nqobile? Lo owaqamba amanga ukuthi uhlala e America? She is back. Bazomenzela umhlonyane manje omalume bakho had to go and see if everything is coming together before the ceremony.

Sbani : Okay

MaNzilo : Yes khehla. Uthini ke yena umakoti wethu? Uthi batheni ekhaya about the letter?

Sbani swallows and looks away.

Sbani : Ay uthi bajabulile.

MaNzilo : That's good. That's really good. That means we have nothing to worry about. Yazi Bhunuzu khehla, I'm proud of you.

Sbani pulls out a not so wide smile.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga mawami.

MaNzilo : You are a man now. I can't wait to see your wife.

Sbani releases a long sigh.

ooooooo

Later they were all gathered around the table, eating dinner.

Sbani : Baba, sekufanele nginyakaze nami manje. Bengithi ngizozwa nje ukuthi how did everything go with the... You know... Mlambos.

Mzwakhile lifts up his eyes to Sbani.

Mzwakhile : I thought you were going to sleep over.

Sbani : Cha, I need to go. I'm working tomorrow.

Mzwakhile shakes his head and puts down his spoon.

Mzwakhile : She comes from a very dry family. Uyise angimuqondanga nje kahle.

Sbani : What do you mean?

Mzwakhile : We found him all alone. Ungithusile ke naye u Mlambo esethi ubengazi that his daughter is seeing someone. Okusho ukuthi lentombazane yakho ayikaze ibaxoxele ngawe.

Sbani clears his throat.

Sbani : Her family is very strict. Umawakhe....

Mzwakhile : Her mother died Sbani. Akasekho umawakhe kodwa wena you told us that she has both parents.

Sbani : Eish.

Sbani looks at Lindo and Lindo stops eating.

Lindo : Ngingabeka nami amabili Sompisi?

Mzwakhile : Go ahead.

Lindo : Gwabini, u Bhunu no Sebenzile love each other and they respect each other.

Mzwakhile : How long have they been together for?

His sons look at each other.

Sphiwo : 4....

Lindo : 5... 5 years.

Sbani : Yeah, yeah. We've been together for five years. Sathandana esikoleni.

Mzwakhile : Five years yonke? Five years is a long time Bhunuh manje why lentombazane ingatsheli umndeni wayo ngo mfana wami? Is she after your money?

Sbani : No, no, akunjalo. Yiphi imali kodwa Baba?

Mzwakhile : I don't think this is a good idea.

Sbani : Baba ngiyacela. I love Sebe and I know that she is the only woman I want to spend the rest of my life with.

Mzwakhile : She doesn't mind that you are sick? That you look like a Zebra uma uke wanethwa imvula? That...

MaNzilo : Mzwa, that's enough.

Mzwakhile : I deserve to know. Bhunu is my son. Uthunjana wami.

Sbani : Don't worry, she... she knows.

He says and looks away.

Mzwakhile : Mina kodwa angiyizwa lento.

Lindo : We need to support him Baba. He knows what he is doing.

Mzwakhile : I know that but I'm still worried. I'm asking myself if that girl is really willing to spend the rest of her life with someone like Bhunu? We all know how bad he... (sighs) Is she aware of what she is getting herself into? Usuke wagula phambi kwakhe?

Silence.

Mzwakhile : I'm sure that she is still young ngoba ethandana no Bhunu ovele naye eyingane. So my question is uyayazi yini lento ayenzayo?

Sbani : Yes she knows.

Mzwakhile : Do you love her that much or....

Sbani : I love her, Baba. I love her so much. Angisaziboni ngiphila ngaphandle kwakhe. Futhi ngiyasaba ukuthi uma singashadi manje someone else will take her away from me.

Mzwakhile : Do you know how many women love you? Amanye asazalwa, azokhula ethande wena nawo.

Sbani : Mina ngithanda u Sebe kodwa Baba.

Mzwakhile sighs.

Mzwakhile : Ngiyezwa. But we need to follow tradition. Awukwazi ukushada umawakho engashadanga.

Sbani : What? Mah is dead, nje.

Mzwakhile : It doesn't matter. Kufanele silandele usiko.

MaNzilo chuckles.

MaNzilo : Yazi indlela ongafuni ngayo ukubona u Sbani ejabulile Mzwa angathi awumuzali. Why can't you let your son be happy for once? After everything akwenzele yona?

Mzwakhile : I'm trying to protect him!

MaNzilo : Nonsense.

MaNzilo gets up and walks away.

Chapter 12

Sbanisokuhle Ntuli is sick. He is mentally unstable and he needs my help. That was my conclusion. I get out of the taxi and cross the street. Roxanne is coming with her plastic bin. She leaves it on the side of the road and dusts her hands.

Roxanne : Seh?

Me : Hey you.

Roxanne : You are late today.

Me : Am I?

Roxanne : Are you okay?

Me : I'm good. I'm just tired.

She opens the gate.

Roxanne : Wait until you have kids and then you'll understand the word tired. Being a mother is a full time job.

I smile and shake my head.

Roxanne : You look drained. Is Grace....

Me : No, no.

I sigh.

Roxanne : Okay. Did you talk to 101? I need to see him today.

Me : Not today.

Roxanne : Why not? Is he....

Me : Rox please, Mah. I am really tired.

Roxanne : Uh... I see.

I'm really not in the mood and thank God she can read between the lines. I open my door. My room is so warm and clean. Sbani was here and he cooked. The divine smell says it all.

I took a shower and dished up for the two of us. I walked out.

Me : Sbani, please open.

The door opens and I walk in. He is covering his face with his hands. His eyes sparkle between his fingers.

Me : Stop that.

He sighs and uncovers his face. He throws himself on his bed.

Me : Hello Sbani.

I put down the plates and put my hands on my waist.

Me : Hello

He smiles and gets up.

He opens his arms and hugs me. Different emotions take over me.

Sbani : Are you okay?

He kisses my cheek and holds my hand.

I swallow the burning lump in my throat. I feel sorry for him.

Me : Yeah. Ngilethe ukudla

We both sat on the floor and faced each other. He is not eating, he keeps digging his food with his spoon. I put my plate aside and cross my arms.

Me : Sbanisokuhle?

He lifts up his head.

Me : Something happened today before I knocked off.

He swallows and puts his plate next to mine.

Me : I got a call from my father. Uthi kunencwadi esuka kwa Ntuli efike lapha ekhaya. Do you know know about it?

He clears his throat.

Sbani : I do.

I feel chills running down my spine.

Me : Kanjani Bhunu? We both know that you and I are just friends. Abangani nje abaqale ukukhuluma less than a week ago. Amalobolo angena kanjani?

Sbani : Sebe, I love you.

Me : What?

He holds my hands, I try to fight him but he tightens them.

Sbani : You know I do. Sebe you want to tell me that phakathi kwami nawe awuzwa lutho? Awuliboni lelilangabi eli.....

Me : I don't. Ngicabanga ukuthi there's something wrong with you. What you did is not normal.

Sbani : But I love you. Sebenzile, ngiyakuthanda.

Me : You don't even know me, Sbani!

Sbani : Engikwaziyo kwanele kanti engingakwazi ngeke kungivimbe ukuthi ngiqhubeke ngikuthande. It's not going to stop me.

Me : Why are you doing this? Why are you complicating ubungani obuhle kangaka ebesizama ukubakha?

Sbani : I'm not. We can still be friends.

Me : You don't get it! Sbani ngicabanga ukuthi kukhona inkinga onayo and it's serious.

Sbani : I don't have a problem. Yes I'm an albino kodwa umqondo wami usebenza kahle. I know what I feel and I know what I'm doing.

Me : You don't. Ngisho kungathiwa siyathandana but akwenziwa kanje. I don't know if you understand what you did. It's madness Sbani wasuka lapho wafaka ngisho abantu abadala kuwona. Why did you do that?

Sbani : Because I love you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you.

Me : No!!!

I get up immediately.

Me : No! Uyahlanya and I'm not going to be part of your madness. Ukuzwana nawe kube yiphutha elikhulu! Kanti awudlaliswa Sbani? Ngokudlala nje nawe umzuzwana usuyagijima wenza lomsangano?

Sbani : Don't you love me? Ufuna ukungitshela ukuthi awuzwa lutho nje ngami?

Me : It doesn't matter! Noma yini engiyizwayo ayichazi ukuthi sengifuna ukuthatha igxathu elingaka.

Sbani : So you do feel something? You love me Sebe.

Me : Kodwa nkosiyami... Sbani lento oyenzile is not a joke. Impilo akuyona i game. Why is everything a game to you?

Sbani : Usho ukuthini? Yini ekufanele ngiyenze to show you that I'm serious? Tell me and I'll do it! Sebe angisafuni ukuphila ngaphandle kwakho. Yes mhlampe ngenze izinto ngokuxhamazela but I don't want to lose you. You are the most beautiful woman I....

Me : Stop it Bhunu!!! Just stop! Uzama ukulawula impilo yami manje and I won't allow that. Wazi ngani ukuthi mina anginayo indoda? Ubani khona okutshelile ukuthi kukephi kithi?

Sbani : I love you

Me : Awulazi uthando. You were right uyingane ngempela.

Sbani : This is simple. Ngitshele ukuthi awungithandi and I'll walk away.
Tell me and I'll leave you alone. Ngiyakuthembisa.

Me : Bhunu why are you doing this to me?

Sbani : Tell me Sebe

He is getting closer. My heart races.

Me : I....

Sbani : I'm not going to let another Menzi take you away from me.

My brain freezes.

Me : What? Menzi? Ukhuluma ngo....

Sbani : I know him. I know what he did to you. Sasisebenza ndawonye
and...

My mind switches off. When I saw his WBHO overall I knew that I've seen it before. Menzi used to work there when we started dating but three years into our marriage he got a job somewhere else. My mind snaps back to reality. No my mind didn't switch off, the electricity actually went off. Sbani is still talking in the dark.

Sbani : Ngaqeda u matric late, because I was sick. Ngaqeda ngina 19 ngashayela ama taxi but I was studying at the same time. Ngathola i learnership e WBHO and that's when I met Menzi. Uyena owayengifundisa izinto eziningi. He was my boss. He used to call me his little brother. Engitshela about everything that was happening in his life and he told me about you, he showed me your pictures...Sebe you probably think that I'm stalking you but I'm not. Bengingazi nokuthi...

Me : You know him? You know Menzi?

Sbani : I do kodwa wena ngakubona kanye. It was Valentine's day. Izithombe kuphela nje into ebenginayo. I only realized kade sengikubona ufika uzohlala la ukuthi uwena. Sebenzile, angiqali manje ukukuthanda, kade ngakuthanda and my brothers know that. Kodwa uthando ebengikuthanda ngalo kwakufanele ngilugcine luyimfihlo yami. But I always told Lindo and Sphiwo about you, nangendlela umphathi wami ayekhuluma kabi ngayo ngegama lakho. Some days I was there

when you called him. Do you remember when you called him umucela ekuhambisele izingodo zokwakwa isibaya sakini?

Nooo!!! Oh, no he is right. He knows Menzi.

Sbani : I was there and he asked me nabanye esasibenza nabo to deliver them. Asificanga muntu kini sazishiya ngaphandle kwesango.

My body is frozen like it did the first time I saw him.

Sbani : One day it was Valentine's day. Kwathiwa abaphathi abafike with their wives. They prepared lunch kodwa u Menzi akafikanga emsebenzini that day. You came and he wasn't there. You were so sad. Ngahamba ngaya e Shoprite and I bought a Valentine's card and a rose ngacela u sisi owaye cleaner emsebenzini ukuthi ethole indlela yokungifakela esikhwameni sakho....

Everything he is saying is playing in my head. I remember every detail but I don't remember him. I burst into tears and run out of his door. I get inside my room and lock the door.

"Room 101, it's your turn to buy electricity! "

One of the tenants says.

Sbani : And you think I don't know that? Inkinga yenu niyaphapha, nithanda nezindaba. Did you have to come here uzongitshela lokho?

Tenant : But....

Sbani : Fakof. Fakof.

I hear his door slamming. A few minutes later the lights were on again. I'm staring up at the roof. Sbani wasn't supposed to tell me all of that. He was supposed to let go and let us be friends. Why did he have to complicate things? What if Menzi sent him to screw my life even more?

Chapter 13

NTULI HOMESTEAD.

It's just after 15h00, Sphiwokuhle and MaNzilo are washing the dishes.

Sphiwo : He said he will knock off at 17:00 mase edlula la.

MaNzilo : Kungcono. I don't like how he left last night.

Sphiwo : UBaba uthathe izinto ngesinxele

MaNzilo : I will never understand your father. Ufike ethi ufuna lokhu kodwa evele enze okunye. He drains all my energy.

Sphiwo : Maybe the problem is the money. Angithi he'll have to assist Bhunu with the lobola money.

MaNzilo stops washing the dishes and looks at Sphiwokuhle.

MaNzilo : Uzobe esiza u Sbani ngezimali zakhe vele. UBaba wenu akanalutho Phiwo ningavumi enikhohlise. All that he has today amafa

ka Sbani awashiyelwa unina. Mzwakhe had nothing. His first bus wayithenga ngemali ka Celiwe.

Sphiwo : But it's not like he stole that money from Bhunu. UBhunu uyena owathi uBaba akayisebenzise imali.

MaNzilo : I didn't say he stole from Bhunu kodwa ngithi if it wasn't for Bhunu kungabe thina sidla imbuya ngothi. You wouldn't have finished your degree. Ngiyabona ke ubhuti wakho ungcono....

She takes a dishcloth and wipes her hands.

MaNzilo : Wazitholela i bursary. Nginamanga?

Sphiwo laughs.

Sphiwokuhle : Hhaibo, uqinisile.

MaNzilo : So your father shouldn't be giving Bhunu a hard time. Kufanele angabe uyena nje ogqugquzela ingane eyinike umdlandla kulento eyenzayo. Did you hear what he said last night? How he spoke

about marriage? Wenze umshado wezwakala njengento embi. U Mzwa inkinga yakhe uthatha izinkinga zakhe ezenze ezawowonke umuntu.

Sphiwokuhle : You need to talk to him.

MaNzilo : Ubani? Mina. Weee ngikhathale kabi mina. UMzwakhile akenze akubonayo ngengane yakhe no Celiwe. Angithi mina angimuzali u Sbani?

Sphiwokuhle : No, don't say that.

MaNzilo : That's what your father said. Please go and fetch the mop from outside.

Sphiwokuhle : Okay.

MaNzilo : Did you see Sbani's girlfriend yesterday?

Sphiwokuhle goes outside and comes back with a mop.

Sphiwokuhle : Mah?

MaNzilo : Nimubonile?

Sphiwokuhle : No, she was at work. UBhunu uthe uzophuma late.

MaNzilo : Where is she working?

Sphiwokuhle : Spar... Yazi Mah I saw Scelo yesterday kade ngiphuma emsebenzini.

MaNzilo : Really? Ngagcina phela ebhale ku Whatsapp ukuthi "Girls are Gold diggers" ngazibuza ukuthi uScelo wazini ngamantombazane.

Sphiwokuhle : Ayke umithisile

MaNzilo : Ini?

Sphiwokuhle : I'm telling you. Ngake ngayizwa leyonto kancane kodwa ngazitshela ukuthi amanga.

MaNzilo : Scelo is going to be a father? Wazini uScelo ngokumithisa? He is 16 years old.

Sphiwokuhle : Uyazazi izingane zamanje.

MaNzilo : Ayke ukumithisa kwakhe is none of our business. Scelo made it clear that he wanted nothing to do with this family. Komalume wakhe bajikisa u Lindo nembuzi ethi uzogeza umuzi umfana wami. Babukisa ngaye.

Sphiwokuhle : He said he wants to change his surname to Ntuli ngoba akafuni ingane yakhe nayo ibize isibongo sakomalume wakhe kwa Khumalo.

MaNzilo : Who told him to use his mother's surname? ULindo akazamanga ukukhuluma naye ngendaba yesibongo, yanqaba? He did. Ngoba isihlume isende isifuna sizwe ngayo.

Sphiwokuhle : That's what I told him.

MaNzilo : Ubedakwe iNyaope le ayidlayo.

Sphiwokuhle : Uthi manje ucela ngimukhulumele noLindo ngoba yena uzamile kodwa inkinga u Lindo uyamuziba ku Facebook. Ngithi mina uBaba wakho akanawo u Facebook. Uthi yena ay wazama futhi ukufona but Lindo didn't pick up his calls.

MaNzilo : Ay Ay engasidakelwa nje yena.

Sphiwokuhle : Ey asazi

Sphiwokuhle stretches his arms and yawns.

Sphiwokuhle : Ngisayowasha imoto la ka Matomela.

MaNzilo : Okay.

Later Sbanisokuhle arrived.

Sbani : It broke down on the freeway ngavele ngasangana.

MaNzilo : Ngelinye ilanga iyokujamela usemahlathini wedwa kufike abantu bekubulale. Is that what you want Bhunu?

Sbani laughs and wraps his arm around his mother's neck.

MaNzilo : Angidlali Bhunuza. It's clear that you want to die ngoba kunini sikutshela ukuthi lemoto indala ayisalungele ukuhamba emgaqweni kodwa wena usahamba ngayo.

Sbani : I love this car mawami but I promise ukuthi ngeke ngisahamba ngayo. Now look what I bought for you.

MaNzilo : Mangoes? Usekhona u Mango ngalesikhathi sonyaka?

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Yes

MaNzilo : I thought uphele wonke ngo December. Siyabonga mfana wami.

MaNzilo takes the two plastic bags that have mangoes.

Sbani : No Mah, don't take that one. Akuwona owenu loyo.

MaNzilo laughs.

MaNzilo : Uma kungewona okamawakho okabani?

Sbani : No one, Mah. Eish.

MaNzilo : Oh my God, my son is blushing. Sbani you are blushing. Yaze yanenhlanhla intombazane yakwa Mlambo.

They are heading inside the big house, hand in hand. Sbani sighs.

Sbani : Kuyafana kodwa ngoba mhlampe ayikho lento yethu.

MaNzilo frowns.

MaNzilo : Yini ekwenza usho kanjalo? Is it because of what your father said last night?

Sbani : Ukushadisa u Mah? Really? She is dead. So how is she supposed to get married? Usiko olunjani lona lolu?

MaNzilo : Likhona mfana wami ukuthi nje alunangqondo. Amanye amasiko awawenzi umqondo kodwa kufanele enziwe ngoba we don't want to invite trouble.

Sbani : It doesn't matter. Vele u Sebe angiboni ukuthi uzimisele ngokushada futhi.

MaNzilo : Futhi? What do you mean?

Sbani swallows.

Sbani : What I'm trying to say is that she is having second thoughts.

MaNzilo : Why? Did you tell her about the conversation you had with your father?

Sbani : Not in so many words.

MaNzilo : Uyakuthanda?

Sbani : Yes.

MaNzilo : Akakuthandi ngokwanele uma esangabaza ukushada nawe. You need to work really hard ukumenza ekuthande. Mfana wami kulula ukuzakhela uthando kumuntu wesifazane.

Sbani : Ucabanga kanjalo?

MaNzilo : Ngazi kanjalo. Kanti ke okunye ekufanele ukwazi ukuthi uma abantu ababili bethandana ubudlelwano babo buba impumelelo enkulu uma kungowesifazane othanda indoda kakhulu. Ikhaya elinomfazi onothando lihlale lifudumele.

Sbani sighs.

Sbani : Ngiyakuzwa Mah.

MaNzilo : UwuKhuboni wena. UGodide uNdlela ka Sompisi. You are undefeated. This is the time for you to fight for your woman, okay?

MaNzilo smiles and kisses his cheek.

MaNzilo : Okay?

Sbani : Okay mawami.

MaNzilo's phone vibrates. She takes it out of her bra.

MaNzilo : Awubuke i battery lalefoni libheda kanjani. Isiyaphela futhi.

Sbani : I'll buy you a new phone

MaNzilo : U Mzwa uthe uzonginika enye kulawa akhe ayinqwaba ahlale eshiwa abantu lapha emabhasini akhe.... My boy, please charge it for me.

Sbani : Okay... Yashisa kanje pho? Mah nifaka amafoni avutha kanje emabeleni.

MaNzilo laughs.

MaNzilo : Bhunu please behave yourself, noma ikanye nje mfana wami.

They both laugh.

MaNzilo : I'm seeing smoke lapha emnyango. Ngisayothula izingubo before zinuke yonke leyantuthu.

Sbani : Okay Mah.

MaNzilo walks out. Sbani put her phone on the charger and sat on the couch. He reaches for a TV remote but he stops and looks at his mother's phone. He looks at the phone and looks outside. What is he thinking now? He gets up from the couch and goes to stand by the window. He looks at his mother who is taking clothes from the clothing line. He quickly runs back to where the phone is charging and unplugs it. He unlocks his mother's phone and goes to messages. Is he paging his mother's phone? Uhhmm no. He clicks on a type message and begins typing.

Sawubona mntanami ngiyathemba uyaphila thina asiphili. We are worried about our son, Sbani. He is not well ever since you two broke up. He can't even eat kanti ke izolo ebusuku ungifonele ekhahla esika Nandi. I'm scared he might do something stupid ngoba akakwazi

ukuphila ngaphandle kwakho. Sbani loves you so much ngane yami.
Sicela ungayenzi lento kuthina. Sicela nihlale phansi nilungise izinto.

He lifts up his head and looks through the window. His mother is still standing by the clothing line. He continues to type.

Please give him a chance to show you how much he loves you.
Angiyena umuntu othanda ukugxambukela ezindabeni zothando lawamadodana ami kodwa lana I had to intervene ngoba ngiyabona ukuthi kuyonakala. Please don't do this to my son. If something happens to him ngeke uzixolele mntanami. So please sit down with him nithole isixazululo kunoma yini le enihlukanisile. We love you my baby and we can't wait to see you.

From Maka Sbani.

He finished typing his message and added Sebenzile's number. Message sent.

He sighs and lifts up his head to Lindokuhle's car parked in front of the house.

Lindo : Likuphi pho ibhunu?

MaNzilo : He is inside. I think ubuka i TV.

Lindo : Wenzani?

Sbani sprints and puts the phone back on the charger.

Sbani : Hheyi!

Lindo : Ehhe. Iphi lendoda?

Sbani looks at his mother's phone and runs outside to his brother.

Sbani : Bafo

Lindo : Bafo let's go and fetch Baba.

Sbani : Okay let me get my jacket.

Lindo : Mah, sisahlangabeza u Baba la eduze.

MaNzilo : Okay

Lindo : Yini kanti le oyibuka kangaka esangweni?

MaNzilo : Cha

Advertisement

ngibuka lapha kwa Nyembe ukuthi bayawucima yini lomlilo wabo. My clothes are still wet, angifuni ukuzingenisa.

Lindo : Manje unqena intuthu.

MaNzilo : Ehhe Lindo. Uyayibona kodwa imunyama kanjani?

Lindo : Yeah. Ay bazowucima.

MaNzilo : I hope so. Did you see Phiwo at the car wash?

Lindo : I saw him. Kugcwele kodwa ngeke ebuye manje.... Bhunu yini manje?

Sbani : I'm coming. I'm coming.

Sbani comes back. He is busy putting on his jacket.

Sbani : Let's go.

Lindo : Siyabuya

MaNzilo : Okay.

They both get into the car and Lindo drives off.

Lindo : Manje?

Sbani laughs and looks at him.

Sbani : Manje ini bafo?

Lindo : After all the lies, you want to tell me that it was all for nothing?
Uthini u Sebe? Sifuna ukuyolobola bhuti. Isikhathi asikho.

Sbani rubs his face.

Sbani : Uyabona bhuti uma nje ngikhuluma iqiniso at this point I don't
know. I think I messed up ngokuvukuza indaba ka Ndlovu.

Lindo : How?

Sbani : I told her that I know Menzi.

Lindo : You told her that you know her ex-husband kodwa
wangamutshela ukuthi "Ungibona nje Sebe kade ngakuthanda,
ngakuthanda usashade no Ndlovu but I was a coward and I couldn't tell
you that?"

Sbani : Wena bafo namanje awuyiboni lento. It wasn't that easy. Ndlovu
was my boss and at that time I was still young.

Lindo : Waba mdala. Yafika lentombazane yazohlala kwi building
eyodwa nawe engasekho u Menzi but it took you decades ukuthi

ukhwele phezu kwayo. Shuthi uyabathanda labo blind date. Yini u blind date.... Secret admire? Secret love? Yini igama lalento oyenza nalengane ngoba phela kade wayiqala.

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : What? Blind date? Aybo kahle bafo. Ayikho leyonto.

Lindo : Uthi ngithini bhuti? Phela wena lengane wayithanda uzalwa nje ungakavuli namehlo. Wathi uphuma esiswini sikamawakho wawukhala ngo Sebe.

They both burst into laughter.

Lindo : Do you remember when you stole her wedding picture from Ndlovu's office? Wahamba wayosikhulisa wasifaka odonge....

Lindo cracks up and hits the steering wheel.

Sbani : Bhuti, that's not funny.

Lindo continues to laugh.

Lindo : Ey ushimile Bhunu. Uthanda intombazane eyodwa isikhathi eside kangaka? That's insane. But ngalena kokuhleka you two are definitely meant to be together. Ukufika nje kwakhe ezohlala kwi building angazi ukuthi ihlala wena, that's Lord's work mntakababa. She is yours. Fight for her.

Sbani releases a sigh.

Sbani : Ukuthi nje I come with so much baggage. Ukukhuluma iqiniso nje bafo I wish I was different...normal. Njengawe nobafo.

Lindo : No, no, no. Don't say. Uyabona manje usuwahlulela uNkulunkulu uqobo.

Sbani : Fuck God! Why yena evumela ukuthi ngigule kanje? And what is more crazy ukuthi ngiguliswa imvelo yakhe.

Lindo : Come on Bhunu.

Sbani : You know what? Baba was right. I am selfish. Intombazane engisuke ngifuna ithandane nami ngisuke ngingayicabangeli. Mhlampe I deserve to be alone.

Lindo : Now that's bullshit.

Sbani : Ay.

He says and looks out of the window.

An hour later everyone was home. They ate and after that Mzwakhile and his sons had a few beers.

Mzwakhile : They need to get back to us besazise ukuthi izingxoxo zamalobolo ziyaqhubeka yini noma cha ngoba phela there's a lot that needs to be done before umshado.

Sbani takes a sip of his beer.

Sbani : Yebo

MaNzilo : Phiwo awuphuzi angithi wena?

Sphiwokuhle tucks his phone into his pocket.

Sphiwo : No, no, no. I'm fine today.

MaNzilo : Okay, awungibukele le message engena la. Nakhu amehlo ami emnyama.

Sbani's eyes widen and he jumps from his seat.

Sbani : I'll read it for you, Mah. Don't worry bafo.

Mzwakhile : Bhunu usungaze uphuke nje ujahe ukuyofunda ama message.

They all laugh. MaNzilo laughs and gives her phone to Sbani. Sbani realizes that the message is from Sebenzile and reads the first few lines in silence.

Message : Ngiyabingelela nami Mah. Mah nami ngiyamuthanda u Sbani kodwa inkinga ukuthi.....

MaNzilo : Ithini Bhunu?

Bhunu quickly deletes the message and clears his throat.

Sbani : Oh ithi... Ay Ay ikhuluma ngokufa Mah.

MaNzilo : Wee! Delete it. Delete it. I hate those messages.

Mzwakhile : Yiwo lama funeral policy....Life policies anyusa isibalo sokufa kwabantu. Angithi nani niyongibulala uma umshwalense wami usuvuthiwe?

Sbani : Nakanjani Sompisi.

Mzwakhile hits Bhunu with the cushion.

Mzwakhile : Satan!!

They all laugh.

Sbani : Ngiyadlala Baba.

They continue to laugh but someone yelling from outside interrupts them.

"Ngizozibulala. Vele nina aningifuni!! You never raised me. Anikaze ningithengele ngisho i anda noma eyodwa nje ebomvu"

Phiwo : Hhaibo, who is that? Ungene kanjani?

Mzwakhile : Ngisaphuma, I didn't lock the gate. Sbani open the door ubone ukuthi ubani.

Sbani goes and opens the door.

MaNzilo : Who is it?

Sbani : Aibo Sce.... UScelo weBaba. Scelo what are you doing here ebusuku kangaka? Uhamba nobani?

Scelo : Suka

He pushes Sbani out of the way and walks in. He is stumbling. On his shoulder he has a guitar. He sits on the coffee table and faces his grandparents.

Scelo : I'm going to kill myself. Uyezwa Mkhulu? Uyezwa nawe Gogo? Yes ngizozibulala. Ngoba aningifuni nangiphika.

Mzwakhile : This boy is drunk.

Lindo : Scelo? Scelo?

Scelo shrugs.

Scelo : Yini Baba? Vele ngizozibulala uphumule imina. Vele you hate me. Ngiyisiphoxi sengane esihamba simithisa. Naku Facebook awungiphenduli kuze kuphela i data lami.

Tears streamed down his face.

Scelo : I'm going to kill myself.

Sbani : Scelo, who gave you alcohol?

Scelo : Thula! Thula ke wena nomlomo angathi kade uqabula ingwe mabalabala.

Sbani laughs out loud.

Mzwakhile : Uyazi ukuthi uBaba omncane wakho lo okhuluma naye kanje? U Sbani akayena untanga wakho ungaboni ngoba ehlale ekuhlekelala!!!

Scelo : Buka umkhulu uyangithethisa. I'm going to kill myself.

He cries even more.

Sbani : Scelo hamba kini! Go to Khethiwe!

Scelo : Ekhaya ila Baba omncane.

Lindo : Sekuyikini manje? Sekuyikini ngoba usumithisile.

Sphiwo and Sbani are laughing.

Sphiwo : Idakwe kanje lentwana.

Sbani : He is finished... Scelo hamba ku Khethiwe!

Scelo : Niyamuzwa ke uBaba omncane? Vele ngizoya ku Mah. Nina aningifuni. Aningondli futhi.

Mzwakhile : Udakiwe!

Scelo : Sbani I'm here to drop off your guitar. I thought you loved me Baba omncane but you don't. Nasi isigingci sakho.

Sbani : Ngizovele ngikufake ibhande. Hamba uye ku Khethiwe! Goduka!

Scelo : I.....

He vomits and messes up the floor. Lindo closes his eyes and covers his face with his hands.

Sbani : I need to go.

He laughs and runs out the door.

MaNzilo sighs.

MaNzilo : Ayke Lindo this is your son. Your son, your mess. Ake ngiyogwinya ama ARVs ami ngilale thixo.

She gets up and goes to her bedroom.

Chapter 14

Grace told me to go home five hours earlier than my normal time. I'm not sure if that is because she saw it in my eyes that I wasn't well or what. But it didn't matter, I wanted to come back. I came back and cleaned my room. I turned everything upside down and cleaned. I don't know how many times I took Sbani's keys and put them down. I finally took them and went to his room.

He didn't even make his bed. I miss him, I miss our friendship and I miss how he makes me laugh. I sigh and open his curtain. I don't want him to find me here. So I better finish quickly. I take his duvet and pillows. I put them on the couch. I start making his bed and while I make his bed I notice that the base of his bed has drawers. I keep ignoring them but my mind is telling me to open them. I finally team up with my mind and open them. The first one is empty. I open the second one and find what seems to be a big drawing book. I take it out. It's a bit heavy. I dump it on the bed and open it. The first page almost gives me a heart attack.

Me : Hhaibo! Yimi mos lona.

I look closely at the drawing. It is indeed me. Sebenzile Mlambo. I'm wearing the same crown I was wearing on my wedding day. This is amazing. There are small diamonds added on the crown. I run my fingers over them. They feel real. This face looks real. I remember asking Sbani if he liked music and he said no he loves drawing. Could

this be one of his drawings? No, no, no. I closed the book. My hands are already sweating. I almost jumped when I heard my phone ring. It's my father.

Me : Oh, no. Not this.

I take a deep breath and answer.

Me : Baba

Mlambo : Wathula angathi akuzange kwenzeke lutho.

Me : Oh nkosiyami Baba. Sengenzeni ke manje?

Mlambo : I'm talking about the letter. Yazi awuthi vu! Sebenzile, what's going on? Am I supposed to be worried?

Me : About what?

Mlambo : Ngazi ngani? Mhlampe lamadoda abefike lana abezozama ukungihlasela but my ancestors said no. Should I involve the police?

Me : Sekuyihaba lokho. There's no need for that.

Mlambo : Do you know them? Labantu abafike la emzini wami uyabazi?

I don't know why I'm opening this drawing book again. The second picture is very creepy. It's a drawing of a woman lying in the pool of blood. She has a gun in her hand.

"Sebenzile!!!"

My father roars in my ear. Shit! I'm on a call.

Me : Baba? Baba ngiyaxolisa. Kukhona okungiphazamisile. What were you saying?

Mlambo : Uyabazi abantu bakwa Ntuli?

Me : Yes I do... I do. Kodwa lokho yinto esingeke sikwazi ukuthi siyikhulume ocingweni. Can I come home sikhulume ubuso nobuso?

Mlambo : Ufuna ukuzolwa nami?

Me : Ngifuna ukuzocacisa.

Mlambo : Clarify what exactly? Sebenzile yini le ekusanganisa kangaka. You are jumping from one marriage to another. Yini udinga usiko?

Me : Cha Baba. Can you give me some time?

Mlambo : Ngikuthumele esikoleni wena uyongilandela izincwadi zamalobolo? Are you crazy? Yini engakutshela yona ongayizwanga? I don't want you to get married!!

Me : Ngiyakwazi lo....

Mlambo : I need you to come home as soon as possible!

Me : Yebo Baba.

He drops the call. I sigh and look at my phone screen. I throw it on the bed and continue looking at the book. I move to the next page. There is a young boy lying on the ground. Judging by the colour, the boy is an albino. He has a big blonde afro. It seems like it's raining here. He is crying and tightening his arms around his body. His body... There is something about his skin. His skin is black and white. Like.... I don't know what this is. Why would he colour the body skin like this? Jesus! My skin shivers just by looking at it.

I immediately hear Roxanne's voice and I quickly close the drawing book.

Roxanne : Seh, where are you?

I open the door.

Me : I'm here.

Roxanne : Oh there you are. Cleaning for your boyfriend?

Me : He is not my boyfriend.

She giggles.

Roxanne : So you say. I have what you asked for. Trying to convince Rian was a mission but here we are. You owe me.

I smile

Me : I do.

Roxanne : This has our personal details, you know us as tenants and in case of an emergency....

Me : Uh! Sbanisokuhle Ntuli. Just what I need.

Roxanne : And in case of an emergency we contact these people. See? Mother. And here is his mother's number.

Me : Let me see.

Roxanne : Is it the same number?

Me : Let me check. Where is my phone?

Roxanne : Here.

Me : Thanks. Let's see

I go through the sms that Sbani's mother sent me.

Me : It is. The message was really from his mother.

Roxanne : Now I'm interested. What exactly did she say?

I clear my throat.

Me : Nothing serious. She was just inviting me over for lunch. You know, as... as her son's friend.

Roxanne : I see. And why were you two fighting? I heard....

Me : We were not fighting. Rox, thanks for bringing this diary

Advertisement

I really appreciate it. But I think we should go now. We don't want Sbani to find us here going through his personal things.

Roxanne : And what is in this big book?

Me : Part of his personal things. Thanks Roxy

I push her to get out. She is laughing.

Roxanne : Why are you kicking me out?

Me : Because you want us to get caught.

I giggle.

Roxanne : Fine. Anyway, I cooked your favorite food.

Me : You! I love you.

She laughs and walks away. I close the door and let out a sigh.

Sbani's mother didn't respond after the message I sent her. But I didn't mention anything that might have upset her , I was just being honest. I sit down and go through my message again.

Message : Ngiyabingelela nami Mah. Mah, nami ngiyamuthanda u Sbani kodwa inkinga ukuthi wenza izinto ngendlela engihlulekayo ukuyiqonda. Him and I don't know each other. I love him as a friend naye uyakwazi lokho. I don't know why he did what he did eze efake nina abantu abadala kuyona yonke lento. Mah, I don't know what Sbani told you kodwa ngicabanga ukuthi kube nephutha. Kodwa eqinisweni nami sengibona angathi ngiyamudinga umuntu ozongibonisa ukuthi ngenzeni kulesimo esinje because I really don't want to lose him. Ngimuthanda kakhulu, mhlampe indlela enze ngayo izinto engingayithandi. Bekufanele ekhulume nami. Mah, I don't know. May I please call you?

That's the message I sent her but she didn't respond. Is there anything wrong that I wrote? I don't think so. I thought this was one of Sbani's tricks and that's why I asked Roxanne to help me and she did just that. Now the question is why did Sbani's mother not respond? Maybe she got caught up and she forgot about me. I put Bhunu's book back in his drawer. I'd love to go over it but time is not on my side. Let me clean and go back into my room.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

MaNzilo is already in bed. Mzwakhile walks in and sits on the bed. He stares at the side lamp.

Mzwakhile : This thing of Sbani will have to wait. We need to sort things out with the Khumalos.

MaNzilo keeps quiet.

Mzwakhile : This is more important. U Scelo umzukulu wethu. Unegazi lakwa Ntuli ngoba esemithisile nje ingane yakhe kuzofanele ilazi ikubo.

He says and looks at MaNzilo who is still quiet.

Mzwakhile : Asikwazi ukuphinda iphutha elilodwa izikhawu eziningi. The truth is we've never been there for uScelo. Ingane yomfana iyamudinga uBaba wayo. No wonder Scelo's life is so messed up. Ukhule ngaphandle kwesandla sika Baba.

MaNzilo nods.

Mzwakhile : Is that all you can say?

MaNzilo : Ufuna ngithini Mzwakhile? Abakwa Khumalo bafika belethe uScelo layikhaya, bamuletha enezinsuku ezimbili nje ezelwe and what did you tell them? Wathi akuyena uScelo owayikhaya. Wathi itotoloji lakhe litshekile akulona elakwa Ntuli. According to you he was not Lindo's son because his penis was not straight. Ingane encane encu wayiphika ngenxa nje yetotoloji. Manje ufuna ngithini? Wayezosithathaphi isandla sika Baba ekubeni aphikwa kubo?

Mzwakhile : Kodwa angithi nina nangihamba ngemumva. Wathumela u Lindokuhle ukuthi ehambe eyohlawula ka Khumalo ngembuzi eyayikhihliza amafinyilo.

MaNzilo : Oh hhayke kwazi wena ukuthi yayinamafinyilo leyombuzi.

Mzwakhile : So why did they return the goat if it was fine?

MaNzilo : I don't know but what I know is that I did what I thought was right for my son. Like I always do. Uyahliphiza wena ngiqhamuke mina ngilungise. It has always been like that.

Mzwakhile : Like disclosing your HIV status in front of our sons?
Ubatshela ukuthi usayophuza ama ARVs? Nalapho ubusalungisa ngoba kwahliphiza mina.

MaNzilo snorts.

MaNzilo : Now I see what this is all about. Akuhlangene no Scelo okanye amalobolo ka Bhunu. Konke lokhu wuwe nje ufuna impi nami like you always do.

Mzwakhile : I asked you a question. How is that fighting with you?

MaNzilo : Mhlampe sekuyisikhathi sokuthi zazi lezingane ukuthi mina nawe sidla amaphilisi engculazi. Ingculazi eyafika nawe because who knows? Mhlampe the day I die ngiyobe nginalezingane ungekho wena utshakadula emgwaqeni.

Mzwakhile : Thandokazi stop it.

MaNzilo gets up.

MaNzilo : Lezimfihlo ezingaka wena azikusindi Mzwakhe? Yazi ufihlela izingane zakho ngisho into encane nje elula.

Mzwakhile : What am I hiding from them?

MaNzilo : That Bhunu's mother died because of you! Wawuzothini kuthiwa u Bhunu naye wafa that day ngoba unina afa phambi kwakhe nje?

Mzwakhile : Kuyoze kube nini ngiphendula umbuzo owodwa?

MaNzilo : Your day is coming, Mzwa. Wena uNkulunkulu ulubekile olwakho.

Mzwakhile gets up and opens the wardrobe.

MaNzilo : Wathatha ibhantshi, uyaphi?

Mzwakhile : That's none of your business.

MaNzilo : Hamba futhi uyilande enye ingculazi skhohlakali sekhehla. Go and fetch the same HIV that you and Celiwe gave to Sbani, the same HIV that you gave to me!!

Mzwakhile : That's bullshit!

MaNzilo : Is it Mzwa?! Is it?

Mzwakhile shakes his head and takes his jacket.

MaNzilo : When are you going to tell him that....

Mzwakhile opens the door and walks out.

MaNzilo : Go on, hamba uyilande ubuye uyichele layikhaya, like you always do!! That's what you're good at!! You bastard!

Chapter 15

Last night when I slept, I left my door unlocked. I kept saying I'll lock it after I've seen Sbani coming back from work. I cooked and dished up for me. I left his food inside his microwave, hoping that he would see it. I didn't really sleep well, I kept waking up and went to check if he was back. I must have slept somewhere around 1 or 2am.

I feel his lips on my cheeks but my eyes remain closed. I hear his footsteps going towards my door and I open my eyes to a bowl on a table that is next to my bed. The bowl is filled with water and four mangoes. Next to the bowl there's R50. I hear the door opening and I immediately get up and call out his name.

Me : Sbani?

He closes the door and tightens his hand around his backpack strap.

Sbani : Sebe

I clear my throat.

Me : I was waiting for you last night. Ngithi uzobuya, uzobuya kodwa....

I shake my head.

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa bengi....

Me : Can you stay for a few minutes? Ngicela nje ukuhlala nawe Bhunu.... I mean I need us to talk..

He puts his backpack on my chair and rushes to sit on my bed.

Sbani : Hey, what's wrong? Are you okay?

I shake my head. Sometimes I feel like I'm the weakest woman in the whole world. My tears are always ready to come out.

Me : Yes

I shake my head. Sbani wraps his arm around me. I wanted us to talk but the only thing I can do now is cry.

Sbani : Sebe, what happened?

I shake my head.

Sbani : Okay, okay. It's... It's okay.

I continue to stay around his arm until....

Sbani : Sho Sphiwo...no, ngi right. I need your help. Lomjita wakho usazikhipha izincwadi zikadotolotela?

I lift up my head to his face.

Sbani : I need a sick note.

He laughs.

Sbani : Yeah ibhabhalazi akuvukeki... Bafo, I'm serious. I need it for work. Angiyi namhlanje.

I wipe the tears and shake my head. He is also shaking his head and staring at me.

Sbani : R200 incwadi yomugunyathi?

He laughs.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga, Mphemba. I'll see you later.

He laughs.

Sbani : I'll do that... where is Scelo?

Who is Scelo?

Sbani : Okay... Sharp.

He hung up.

Me : Bhunu, no. You need to go to work.

He takes off his work boots and makes himself comfortable in my bed.

Sbani : I'm not going to work.

He wipes my cheeks.

Sbani : Sebe, we need to talk.

We do, but now?

Sbani : Don't worry about work. Ngizokunika incwadi kadokotela.

Me : Le yomugunyathi?

He laughs and pulls me onto his chest.

Sbani : No

Advertisement

they are legit ukuthi nje loya dokotela uyazidayisa.

Me : No, am I not going to get in trouble with my bosses? I don't want to lose my job, Bhunu.

Sbani : I promise, you won't.

Me : And if I do?

Sbani : Uzothatha owami umsebenzi ke mina ngibe umahlalela.

We both laugh.

Me : No I'll go vele ngingena ngo 09h00 namhlanje.

He sighs.

Sbani : Sebe, ngiyaxolisa. Indlela engenze ngayo izinto. I'm not sorry for loving you. Lokho ngikwenze almost half of my life and I'm willing to love you for as long as I live.

Me : So you know my ex-husband?

Sbani : I do.

Me : Why didn't you tell me?

Sbani : Ukwazi u Menzi akuyona ingxenye yezinkinga zami futhi akukona okungivimbe ukuthi ngikuqonde ngendlela engizizwa ngayo ngawe. Kodwa ngiyabona ukuthi ngenze iphutha ukukutshela ngaye.

Me : I don't care about Menzi. Into enginenkinga nayo ukuthi ungithathe wangibuyisela la ebengingafuni ukubuyela khona. Eyencwadi yona? Oh, I don't even want to talk about it.

Sbani : I didn't think. Ngilandele inhliziyo yami.

I sit up and keep my head bowed because right now I can't even look at him.

Me : Sbanisokuhle, ngiyalusaba uthando and lesivinini esisuka ngaso siyangisabisa. This is not normal.

Sbani : I love you kodwa ukukuthanda ngingedwa ngeke kungisize ngalutho.

Me : Ukukuthanda akuyona into enzima.

There's silence. Isn't that what he wanted to hear? I lift up my head. He is not smiling. His face is blank. His eyes are just moving side to side.

Me : Did you hear what I just said?

Sbani : Am I not hard to love?

Me : What?

He puts his arm over his head and closes his eyes.

Me : I thought this is what you wanted to hear. Ukuthi nami ngiyakuthanda.

Sbani : It is.

Me : But your reaction...

Sbani : I'm just....

Me : You are just what Sbani?

Sbani : Kuningi.

Me : Angisazi ke.

I throw my hands in the air. I'm defeated. What do men really want?

Me : I should have known. Lena yenye nje yemidlalo yakho. Sbani, why yonke into iwumdlalo kuwe?

Sbani : This is not a game. Ayikho into eseke yabaluleka okudlula lena kumina Sebe kodwa manje ngoba nakhu isiyenzeka sengizizwa nginovalu futhi.

Me : And you think mina anginalo uvalo? Sbani ufana nomuntu ohijacke ama feelings ami. One moment I was single and the next senginendoda esithumele izincwadi kithi ka Mlambo. Here I am trying to....

Sbani : Sebe, I love you.

Me : Really?

His eyes shut open. He stares at me for a very long time.

Me : This was a mistake. Please go to work

He sits up and the next thing we are kissing. He breaks the kiss and holds my hands.

Sbani : Yiphutha ngempela?

I swallow while shaking my head.

Me : No.

Sbani : I'm all in Sebe. Ngingene ngakho konke engiyikona. Engiyikona nami kuyangithusa kwesinye isikhathi lokho kungenza ngisabe ukuthi wena uzokwenzenjani.

Me : Please stop.

He kisses my hands.

Me : I don't know what we are doing kodwa ngizimisele ukubona ukuthi kuyaphi. Ngeke ngizincishe ithuba lokwazana nothando just because I'm scared.

He smiles.

Me : Kodwa umshado? Sbani ngiphuma kuwona umshado and engikufundile ukuthi angisafuni ukushada futhi.

Sbani : Kodwa ubungashadile nami.

Me : I know but.... Can we slow down?

Sbani : Sthandwa sami, it's too late. Sengifake abazali bethu kuyona yonke lento.

Me : Uzimisele ngempela ukuthi....

Sbani : Ukuthi ngiphile impilo yami nawe? Yes. Noma yiziphi izihibe zempilo ngicela zisifice khona.

Me : What if I'm not what you really want?

Sbani : Lokho ngizokufunda emshadweni, uma ungekona engikufunayo ngizofunda ukuthi ngithande engingakufuni.

I laugh and shake my head.

Me : Useyingane, angifuni ubophezele impilo yakho emshadweni. Umshado awubona lobukhazikhazi esisuke sibubona ngosuku lwawo.

Sbani : Then believe me when I say you are what I want ngoba usuyakwazi lokho. Sebe, awusifuni nje wena isidididana ekuzoba esakho wedwa sthandwa sami? Noma abantu bekubuza ukuthi "uthandani ke kulento?" uthi ngithanda umoya wakhe.

I'm already laughing. Sbani is crazy and stupid too. What shocks me is how he can't see the amazing creature he is or he is just being.... Sbani.

Sbani : Awukufuni lokho sthandwa sami?

I giggle and lick my lips.

Me : I do. Kodwa awusona isdididi.

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda.

It's still hard to get it out but loving Sbanisokuhle is so easy.

Me : I love you too.

Sbani : Sesingaqhubeka namalobolo?

Me : Kujahwephi kanti?

Sbani : Sijahe ukuphila impilo ka Sebe noSbani. Kodwa sthandwa sami awusasizweli isi aramu sakho?

I laugh.

Me : Isi aramu?

Sbani : Ehhene.

I laugh and wrap my arms around him. If he breaks my heart, fine. I'll take the risk. I'm going all in. After all the shit I've been through, it's only fair to give love a second chance and here it feels like I'll be doing it with my best friend.

Chapter 16

ESHOWE

It's time to face the music. If my father thinks he is going to show me the same flames he showed me when I told him about Menzi then he can disown me, again.

You know the first few days of the relationship are bliss. It's no surprise that Sbani wants to spend every minute with me. Menzi did the same thing when we started dating. The red flags started exposing themselves after a few months but I ignored them, but with Sbani I'm not going to ignore them.

Mlambo : Hlala phansi ke ntombi kaMlambo.

I sat down. We are sitting under one of a hundred mango trees.

Mlambo : Ubani lo okulethe ngemoto?

Me : A friend. Sifunda ndawonye.

No, it was Sbani. He brought me here. When we left Mountview it was raining a bit but when we got here, the sun was scorching the grass. Sbani acted weird. He took out something like lotion and he applied it all over his skin. He closed all the windows of the car and switched on the aircon that almost left me with a blocked nose. He couldn't wait to drive back. I understand that some or maybe all albinos are sensitive to sunlight. But I think he was dramatic about it.

Mlambo : Oh, ngoba kubhalwe sithithithi la esiphongweni sami?

Me : Baba?

Mlambo : I know that car. It's the same car that the Ntulis came with.

I look away. He hisses.

Mlambo : Lenkungu egcwele amehlo akho iyosuka nini? Yazi Sebenzile you are a fool for love mntanami. Ngiyazibuza ukuthi ufuze bani ngoba ake... Oh, ufuze u Aunt wakho. Wayengeve eyesifebe. Eqome wonke amakhehla ayephuza nawo lapha kaSandlaphansi.

Is he calling me a slut?

Me : Yiliphi iphutha engilenzile? Ukuthanda umuntu ongithandayo?

Mlambo : Ukhuluma njengaye ngqo. Naye wayemubuza kanje unyoko "Yini eyiphutha ngokuthanda amadoda akwazi ukunakekela umphimbo wami?" You and her niyizithupha ziya ogwayini.

I shake my head.

Mlambo : Did you even consider isithunzi sami? Abakwa Ndlovu bona? Ucabangile ukuthi bazothini ngalelihlazo?

Me : I don't care about the Ndlovus. Nawe awunandaba nabo. Uyabazi bona abantu bakwa Ndlovu? You set dogs on them kade bezolobola. Bahamba behefuzela bebaleka.

Mlambo : And that's exactly what I'm going to do the next time those men come back here. Bengibuze kwa Ndlovu.

Me : Baba, that is not something to boast about. Yihlazo leli owalenza.

Mlambo : Awulazi ihlazo wena Sebenzile.

Me : Why can't you let me get married? I'm a woman. Abantu besifazane bayashada. Umama ongizalayo wamushada wena.

Mlambo : You are not your mother!! Sebenzile, you are not going to marry that Ntuli boy. Akungene lokho kugxile emqondweni wakho ngoba uma kungenjalo uzozisola.

Me : Ileziqalekiso zakho ke ezimosha yonke impilo yami. Uyasazi isiqalekiso ukuthi sinzima kanjani? Akuyona into yokudlala le. You are getting old, uzofa ungishiye naleziqalekiso zakho. Do you understand....

Mlambo : Watch your tone!! I'm not your friend. Ngithi kuwe ngeke ushade. Lelo elokugcina and if you are against that, izinto engikutshela zona njengoyihlo ngithi ngiyakuvikela, naliya isango. Get out and never set your foot here ever again. Uyobe usufile kimi. For good this time!

I get up.

Me : Umuzonda kanjani umuntu ongamazi nokumazi? You don't even know Sbani. Batheni kubo? They told you that he is an albino and you thought hell no! Naye akayifanele indodakazi yakho? Ubani kanti Mdineka lendoda ofuna ngiyishade ethandwa uwena? Indodana ka Mzila? Isishadile nje. Baba, why do you hate me so much?

He slowly gets up and looks around.

Mlambo : Keep your voice down. Wait, what did you say? You said the boy is what? Albino?

I sigh.

Me : Lokho akuchazi lutho. Uwumuntu.

He is busy looking around. He takes my hand.

Mlambo : Come, let's go inside.

Me : Baba?

Mlambo : Come

He tightens his arm around my wrist. This time he is going to kill me.

Me : Baba, you are hurting me.

Mlambo : Ngiyaxolisa mntanami. Asihambe, come.

This is my father. So Why am I so scared?

Me : Baba please, let me go.

Mlambo : Yinindaba? Ubona ukuthi ngizokwenzani? Are you scared of me? Mina uyihlo?

Oh yes I am.

Me : Cha, Cha, I'm not scared of you Mdineka. Ngicela nje ungidedele ngihambe. I promise ngeke ngimushade u Sbani. Ngicela ungangi....

Mlambo : Sebenzile, don't be stupid. I'm not going to do anything to you? I want us to talk kude namehlo abantu.

Since when does he give a shit about people? Besides people can hardly see us here. This entire house is buried by the trees.

Me : Okay.

We go inside. I managed to send Sbani a message. "Baba is angry. I don't know what he will do."

Mlambo : Uthini, uthi he is an albino?

Me : Y-yes.

His face brightens up. I see his yellow teeth revealing themselves.

Mlambo : That's.... That's a blessing.

Me : Blessing?

Mlambo : You have my blessings.

Me : Oh, I do?

Mlambo : Phela uma singamamukeli lomfana kuzoba angathi ngingqaba ngoba nakhu emhlophe.

Me : Emhlo.... Baba, what are you saying? Are you saying that uyalwamukela uthando lwami no Sbani?

He laughs.

Mlambo : Accepting? Hhaibo mntanami, ngikunika zonke izibusiso. Come here. Oh, I'm proud of you Sebenzile. Ekugcineni waze walilandela igama lakho, usebenzile ngempela.

Okay? Am I supposed to be happy?

Me : Oooh, ngi-ngiyabonga.

Mlambo : No, thank you. Lalela, I need to go.

Me : Where are you going?

Mlambo : Don't worry about that. Wena nje tshela umfana kaNtuli ukuthi konke kume ngomumo.

He left in a hurry. I don't know where he went. It's getting dark now and I'm still alone. This is my home but being home alone, especially in the dark, makes me more scared. I finished cooking and stayed outside. Outside is better than inside.

My phone is ringing in the living room. I go in and take it. It's Sbani.

Me : Sbani

I'm not used to calling him with all those sweet names. But I should start soon. We've been in an official relationship for almost four days now. Surely it's not early to start, I mean he's been calling me "Baby" "Sthandwa sami" before we even started dating.

Sbani : Baby, kade ngifona. Where are you? Are you okay?

Me : No, I'm okay, love. Mina no Baba sibe right.

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa, ukuthi nje bengilinde kushone ilanga.

Me : Why?

Silence.

Me : Sbani?

Sbani : I was waiting for Sphiwokuhle to come back with the car.
Ngicela uze la emgaqweni

Me : Are you here?

Sbani : Yes, I was worried about you. Please come.

Me : Okay.

I hung up and got out. Guess what? He came with the entire bus.

Me : Bus? Hhaibo.

I find him sitting on the steps.

Me : Wavele wafika ngebhasi mbhemu.

He shrugs and stretches his arm.

Sbani : Uphi uBaba? Woza singene.

He gets up and helps me in. We go and sit down.

Me : UBaba usaphumile.

He looks really drained. His eyes look different. They are red, very red.

Me : Are you okay?

Sbani : I'm fine, sthandwa sami. What happened?

I sigh.

Sbani : Eish.

He closes his eyes and digs his fingers in his dreadlocks. I look at him and smile

Me : Are you ready to come and pay amalobolo?

He lowers his hands and opens his eyes.

Sbani : What?

Me : Everything went well. UBaba uvumile. Usungakhululeka manje sthandwa s....

He hugs me tightly.

Sbani : Thank you. Ngiyabonga, ngiyabonga kakhulu sthandwa sami. You have no idea how much this means to me.

Me : Sbanisokuhle Ngiyakuthanda. Ngicela ungangiphoxi. Ngicela futhi ukungazisoli.

Sbani : You won't. You won't regret it baby, I promise.

I hug him again and kiss him. I can never get enough of these lips.

Chapter 17

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Mzwakhile : Anisasazi IsiZulu? Lempilo isishintshe kakhulu naze nazikhohlwa ukuthi ningobani. Have you all forgotten our traditions?

Sbani : Mah is from Tanz....

Mzwakhile : Wena shut up.

Sbani : Okay

Mzwakhile : Usuka la uyontshontsha umfazi womuntu?

MaNzilo : At least he was honest with us. Walimela iqiniso.

Mzwakhile : Elami iqiniso lithi, izinkomo zamalobolo ka Sebenzile ziyahamba ziya kwa Ndlovu. We are paying them back amalobolo abawakhipha kwa Mlambo.

Sbani : They didn't pay lobola for Sebenzile. Her father refused.

Mzwakhile : Asihlangani nalokho. We want peace.

MaNzilo chuckles and looks at Lindokuhle who is leaning against the couch with his eyes closed.

Mzwakhile : And that is final. Uyabona Bhunuh uma uthandana nomfazi oshadile usuke uzibizela olude udweshu. This is the process that you must follow. Feelings aside.

Sphiwo : Kodwa Baba, going back to the Ndlovus will bring Sebenzile all the unnecessary problems. She is done with those people.

Mzwakhile : This is not about Sebenzile or Sbani. This is about us, igama lakwa Ntuli. Nina angazi noma niyayibona yini lenkinga esesiyibizwele u Sbani.

He looks at each of them. He sighs and shakes his head.

Mzwakhile : Anginazi nina ukuthi naqhuma kusiphi isihlahla.

He wears his cap and takes his car keys. He walks out.

MaNzilo : Bhunuza did she agree?

Sbani : I'll talk to her uma ngifika endlini.

MaNzilo : Please my boy. We want to see her. Ungavumeli ke zonke lezinto ezikhulunywe uyihlo zihlale enhliziyweni yakho.

Sbani : Yebo.

MaNzilo : Usuyahamba?

Sbani : Yebo Mah.

MaNzilo : Okay, let me get your muffins. Bengibhakile la.

Sbani : Thank you mawami

MaNzilo goes to the kitchen and comes back with a big food container.

Sbani : Thank you Mah.

MaNzilo : Uzodla no Sebe.

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : You are bribing her with your muffins now.

MaNzilo : I hope it works.

They all laugh.

Sphiwo : Bhuti, ngicela ungishiya lapha e rank.

Sbani : Wena bafo, uyasala?

Lindokuhle opens his eyes and stretches his arms.

Lindo : What time is it?

MaNzilo : It's 14h00.

Lindo : Lomgqibelo wadonsa kanje? Ay bafo, ngizohamba mekufona u Fezile esethi ngibalande la e Pinetown.

MaNzilo : She is doing groceries?

Lindo : Angimazi

MaNzilo : Asisamazi naye umakoti

Lindo : Uzofika maduzane.

Sphiwo : Sbani, let's go. Mah, I'll see you later.

MaNzilo : Okay, nihambe kahle.

Lindo : Sbani, I'll call you.

Sbani : Okay, bafo.

He wraps his arm around Sphiwokuhle's neck and they both walk out.

Lindo : Eish I'm tired. Skhalo was crying all night engazi nokuthi utetemelani.

MaNzilo : Hawu, kwakubi lokho. Go and sleep uzofona u Fezile mase eqedile.

Lindo : Wena u right?

MaNzilo : Yes, uBaba wakho nje lo with his drama that never ends.

Lindo : But he is right, Mah.

MaNzilo : Ay phela wena you always defend him ngisho e wrong.

Lindo : I don't see how he is wrong. noBhunu uyakubona lokho

MaNzilo : Bhunu is just a kid. Noma yini eshiwo u Baba wakho uzoyilalela. Mina ke I'm going to defend him and be his voice.

Lindo : You speak as if Baba has always been hard on Sbani. UBaba umsekile uSbani.

MaNzilo : Really?

Lindo : Hhaibo, kade uBhunu ethola ukuthi uyagula akuyena uBaba owahamba wayomulwela kuloyamuzi wakubo kwalentombazane eyamugulisa?

MaNzilo : Lindo....

Lindo : No, Mah. Ngicela uyeke ukwenza angathi uBaba akamufuni uSbani.

MaNzilo : Sbani was abandoned here 3 days after his mother was killed. Umawakhe owabulawa phambi kwakhe. Do you remember how lost he looked? Wayengazi muntu layikhaya, ezizwa angathi ulahliwe. We couldn't even give him the fancy life ayeyijwayele because umawakhe lo owayemenzela yonke into was gone. Wafika ekhaya elaligcwele ububha. Ngimuncenga ukuthi edle iphalishi lempuphu yeNyala into ayengayazi. Where was your father? He left. Washiya indodana yakhe eyayina 6 years nabantu engabajwayele. Eyishiya enhluphekweni. Was that love?

Lindo : But....

MaNzilo : No, it wasn't. Yagula ingane ngangazi nokuthi ngihlanganise ini nani, umzimba wayo kungathi uthelwe ngamanzi abilayo. I called your father wathi nginehaba and he continued to stay eGoli. Azi kahle ukuthi ingane yakhe iyagula....Lindokuhle do you honestly believe ukuthi u Sbani ingculazi wayithatha kuleyantombazane?

Lindo : What are you saying?

MaNzilo : You know nothing. Engizokutshela kona ukuthi your father has a special place in hell.

Lindo : Mah uthini manje?

MaNzilo : Umdala kabi uma umungaka. 34 years akuyona insangu. Use your head Lindokuhle, uvule namehlo ubone ukuthi uBaba wakho inhloboni kapende. Umdala mahn Lindo.

^

^

^

^

Sbani told me that his family wants to see me. I'm nervous. But it's time to meet them. The lobola negotiation day is getting closer. My father is now more excited than I am about this whole thing, which is really good. I have his full support and that makes everything easier.

Roxanne : What? You think they won't like you?

Me : That's not what I'm worried about. They know that I've been married before. So what if they use that against me? Things are different with us Zulu people and being a divorcee is a shame.

Roxanne : They have no right to judge you.

I shake my head.

Me : I feel like I'll be eating Menzi's name in that house. Did I tell you that they want to return the lobola that was never paid to Menzi's family?

Roxanne : What?

Me : I think his parents are too strict and I'm not going to like them. I understand what they are trying to do. It's tradition

but Menzi and I situation is different. I didn't walk out of my marriage. They kicked me out. Menzi didn't pay lobola for me. My father handed me over on a silver plate, like I was sort of a slut. I wish the Ntulis can back off.

Roxanne : Seh, I'm sorry.

Me : No, it's fine.

Roxanne : So you two are going to wait for marriage until you do... You know. The deed.

I smile.

Me : We haven't really spoken about it. But I think that's what he wants and I'm going to respect it, even though I can't hold myself anymore. Being next to him makes my blood mhmhhh.. You know? I crave him.

Roxanne : Tell him. You are both adults, so why wait?

Me : You are right. We should discuss it when he gets back from work.

Roxanne : Yeah sweetheart

Me : Now back here. What am I going to wear tomorrow? I need to look decent but not too decent.

Roxanne : Wear your jeans.

Me : What? No. I can't wear pants when I'm meeting with my in-laws.

Roxanne : Yah, yah. But I still think that we should go and celebrate.

Me : No, I don't think Sbani will like that.

Roxanne : You are still his girlfriend, not his wife. Even if you were his wife that doesn't mean that you should...

Me : No, Rox. I don't like going out.

Roxanne : You are boring. Anyway you need to give him kids as soon as possible.

Me : Why?

Roxanne : Don't you want to keep that?

Me : That?

Roxanne : Him. He is good looking and....

Me : Sbani is not that type.

Roxanne : Since when do you know his type?

Me : I am his type.

I giggle and take my phone to check the time. There are three missed calls from Sbani.

Me : Eish, eish. My phone is on.....silent. Kade efonile u Sbani.

Roxanne : What?

Me : There are three missed calls from Sbani. Eish, why didn't I hear my phone?

Roxanne gives me a weird look.

Roxanne : Okay, you need to calm down.

Me : No, no, no.

I call Sbani. He is not picking up.

Me : I'm sure he is angry. He is not answering.

Roxanne : Angry? Why would he be angry?

Me : Eish nkosiyami, Sbani please answer your phone.

Finally he answers.

Sbani : Baby

Me : Hey, love. I'm sorry ifoni angiyizwanga. Bengingazibi, baby, bengingazibi ngempela.

I'm pacing around. Roxanne blocks me and looks at me with her eyebrows raised.

Roxanne : Breathe

She whispers.

Sbani : Akunankinga sthandwa sami.

Me : Oh, ngempela?

I sigh in relief.

Sbani : Usudlile?

Me : No, baby. Ngilinde wena.

Sbani : Okay sthandwa sami. I'm on my way. Bengifuna ukuku checker ukuthi u right yini.

Me : I'm fine, my love. I miss you.

Sbani : I miss you too baby. Sengiyeza kodwa.

Me : Okay. See you now... I love you.

Sbani : I love you, manakazi.

I laugh.

Sbani : Mncwa! Mncwa!

I laugh.

Me : Mncwa! Mncwa!

Sbani : Isho futhi baby.

I giggle.

Me : Mncwa! Mncwa! Baby.

Sbani : I'll see you now.

Me : Okay

He ends the call..

Roxanne : And? What was that?

Me : What?

Roxanne : You, acting all weird just because you missed his calls.

Me : I wasn't acting weird.

She sighs and shakes her head.

Chapter 18

NTULI HOMESTEAD

MaNzilo is in the garden watering her plants. She is not looking good. The level of her breathing is worrying. She is struggling to breathe. She is holding a watering can with one hand and balancing her other hand on her knee. Bathong, what is wrong with MaNzilo? She is sweating. It's summer and the sun is already out, even though it's still early in the morning but that sweat is too much. There's a car at the gate. She slowly stands up straight and fixes her straw hat. She smiles seeing Sbani getting out of the car and opening the gate.

MaNzilo : Umfana wami

She whispers to herself. Sbani opens the gate and gets back inside the car. He drives in and parks in front of the garage. He lowers the window a bit more.

Sbani : Yah mawami

MaNzilo : Yah Bhunuza. Where is Sebe?

Her breath is running out between the words. Sbani realizes that something is wrong with his mother and jumps out of the car. He rushes to her and takes the watering can from her. He puts it down and helps his mother sit on the garden chair.

Sbani : Mah, what's wrong?

MaNzilo : Nothing my boy. Iphika nje kodwa lizodlula.

She is mouth breathing. Her chest is bouncing up and down. She coughs again.

Sbani : Mah you are sick. Ukubonile kodwa uBaba ukuthi uyagula? Kona wenzani emnyango ekuseni kangaka? You should be in bed Mah.

MaNzilo : Bhunuza angiyona ingane and I'm not sick, my boy. The reason I woke up so early yingoba my daughter-in-law is coming home ngakho kufanele ngiqinisekise ukuthi konke kulungile nokuthi yonke into ihlanzekile mfana wami.

Sbani : Mah, come on. You are always ensuring that the house is clean. Into ezokwenzeka ukuthi umalokazana wakwakho uzovele efike usufile uma ugula kanje.

MaNzilo : Wuwe ozofa ay mina.

They both laugh. Sbani sighs.

Sbani : Kodwa ke Mah, I'm serious. You don't look good, maybe we need to go to the clinic.

MaNzilo shakes her head.

MaNzilo : Cha, Cha, asikho isidingo salokho. I'm not going anywhere. Ngizohlala la ngilungiselele ukuza kwentombi yebhunu lami, angi.....

She coughs.

MaNzilo : Angithi, my boy?

She brushes her son's dreadlocks.

Sbani : But you are not okay, mawami. Look at you.

MaNzilo : I'm fine, iphika nje leli kodwa lizophela.

Sbani : Iphika lani lona lelo? No mah. Where is Baba?

MaNzilo : Wait, asibe nesivumelwano ke. If I don't get any better kuze kushaye u 10:00, I'll go to the clinic.

Sbani : Do you promise?

MaNzilo : I promise my boy.

She presses her lips at the back of Sbani's hand.

MaNzilo : My most handsome boy.

Sbani laughs and shakes his head.

Sbani : Ay usile wena Mah

They laugh.

MaNzilo : You are, ukuthi nje ufana noyihlo.

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Usuqalile... Please go and get some rest. I'll continue with this.

MaNzilo : Where is Sebe?

Sbani smiles.

Sbani : Don't worry, she is still coming. Empeleni ngiphuma ukushiya yena emsebenzini. Grace gave her half day, uzophuma ngo 12:00.

MaNzilo : Hawu, they couldn't give her a day off? Usuku nje olulodwa beluzoba nani?

Sbani : Grace refused. Uthe ku busy, but at least bazomudedela early.

MaNzilo : Sesibonga lokho. I can't wait to see her.

Sbani : Naye futhi uselangazelele ukukubona. Come, let me help you in.

MaNzilo : Thank you, my boy.

^

^

^

Lindokuhle and Sphiwokuhle arrived. The kitchen is very busy. They are cooking for their little brother's girlfriend since MaNzilo is sick and can't handle moving around a lot or even stand for too long. She is complaining about shortness of breath. But she is sitting in the kitchen with her sons and showing them where to find what they need. Luckily, Sphiwokuhle is a professional chef so everything is going in particular order. Even though he was working the entire night, he had to come and help when he heard that their mother was not well.

MaNzilo : Kodwa Phiwo you look tired.

Sphiwokuhle yawns.

Sphiwo : Sisebenze kakhulu izolo. There's this big event happening today manje bekufanele siqede yonke into izolo ebusuku. But I'll be fine.

Lindokuhle : Singeke sithi uzoqeda la ucele imama lithi ukukubotoza ngoba phela alikho.

They all laugh.

MaNzilo : WeLindo, please leave my son alone.

Lindokuhle : No, Mah, when is he going to introduce us to his girlfriend? Usengaze ehlulwe uBhunu ingane encane kanje? Aybo bafo.

He and Sbani laughed. Sphiwo rolls his eyes and continues to chop the onions. He chops them like a true chef. Fast fast.

MaNzilo : He is only 29 years old awumuyeke umfana kaMah. Mncane nje yena.

MaNzilo mimics a baby's voice. They all burst into laughter.

Sphiwo : Oh gosh, can you all leave me alone? Continue with that salad
Lindo and leave me alone

Advertisement

please.

He laughs and shakes his head.

Lindo : Ushimile lo bafo

Lindo laughs and wraps his arm around Sbani's neck.

Sbani : Ushimile

They laugh.

MaNzilo : Okay that's enough. Wena Bhunu awukho late manje? It's almost 12:00. Please go and fetch ingane yami bakithi. Your brothers will continue here.

Lindo : Ehhe, Phiwo will continue. His place is in the kitchen, ngoba abafazi uyabasaba.

Sphiwokuhle laughs.

Sphiwo : Uyahlanya

"Tell them you love other men wena mfana wami"

Mzwakhile says while walking in. Sphiwokuhle raises his eyebrows.

Sbani : U gay?

Sphiwo : Aibo.....

He swallows. He is sweating.

Mzwakhile : There's nothing wrong with being gay.

Mzwakhile is quite something, isn't he? We need more men with this mindset when it comes to LGBTQ. He goes and kisses his wife's cheek.

Mzwakhile : Dali wami, how are you feeling now?

MaNzilo : I'm fine

She responds and looks away. Why does she look annoyed?

Lindo : Phiwo, are you gay?

Sphiwokuhle smiles.

Sphiwo : What? No.

Mzwakhile : No? Mfana wami, being gay doesn't make you less of a man.

MaNzilo : Mzwa awuyeke ingane yami.

Mzwakhile : But I'm telling him the truth.

MaNzilo : No, babah. You are making him uncomfortable.

Mzwakhile goes and wraps his arm around Sphiwokuhle's neck and pulls him onto his shoulder.

Mzwakhile : Don't listen to her mfana wami. Mina ngithi if you have a boyfriend, bring him home sizomubona. If you're happy, I'm happy. Kunini silindile Godide?

They all laugh.

Mzwakhile : Noma usungaletha intshebe sizojabulela kona lokho.

Sphiwokuhle is blushing. Is he....

Sphiwo : Eish, yazi wena Baba.

MaNzilo is laughing and coughing.

MaNzilo : Mzwa awuyeke ingane ungiphe amanzi.

Mzwakhile goes and opens the fridge. He takes out a bottle of water and opens it before giving it to his wife.

MaNzilo : Ngiyabonga sthandwa sami.

Mzwakhile : Bhunuh kanti where is your girlfriend?

Sbani : No, no, no, she is coming.

MaNzilo is looking at Sbani with a smile on her face. She looks like a proud mommy.

MaNzilo : Cabanga Mzwa uyaphuma u Sebe ngo 12:00 but Bhunu is still here.

Sbani : Mah, I'm going. Ngisaqeda la.

Mzwakhile : No, go, my boy. I'll finish with the dishes.

Sbani : Are you sure?

Mzwakhile : Yeah, yeah. Go

MaNzilo slightly shakes her head with a smile. She loves this side of her husband. But it's so unfortunate that they only get to see it when she is only sick.

Sbani : Sengiyahamba ke. Thanks Baba

He kisses his mother's cheek while taking the car keys. He runs to the car.

MaNzilo : Ubefuna kona ukuhamba esegijima. Lindo awumufonele engenzi izingozi emgaqweni.

Lindo : No, he won't. Kuse early futhi. He'll make it on time.

MaNzilo loved seeing her husband and her sons cooking and cleaning together. It was exciting but what was more exciting was seeing Sbani walking in hand in hand with their daughter-in-law.

SEBENZILE

I felt my knees hitting each other the moment we got out of the car. I'm wearing my Spar uniform and a doek around my head. My man thought the doek idea was a bit extreme since he hadn't paid lobola for me. But I don't care. It's enough that I'm wearing a skirt that is above my knees, so maybe a doek won't make them notice my short skirt. I don't want to disappoint Sbani. I love this man. He takes my hand and we head in. I see everyone's face brightening up the moment we walk in. I feel my pounding heart slowing down. They look like nice people.

I've seen Sphiwokuhle once. So those must be the parents and that must be Lindokuhle. Sphiwokuhle is the first to get up and hugs me.

Sphiwo : Sis'Sebe.

Me : Unjani bhuti?

Sphiwo : Siyaphila sisi.

MaNzilo : My baby, come here.

She is sitting on the couch. Sbani told me that she's not well. She opens her arms for me. I bend over and she hugs me. Her hug is warm and full of love, just like Sbani's touch.

MaNzilo : Hawu umuntu ofuna simubone ngoba nakhu sesiyolobola.
Akafuni ukusivakashela.

I laugh.

Me : Bengizofika Mah. Umsebenzi nje obungibambile

MaNzilo : I understand sthandwa sami. You are so beautiful. Hawu,
hawu, umuntu omuhle kangaka Bhunuza.

Bhunuza? What? Is that how she calls my boyfriend? I'm going to laugh
at him later.

Me : Thank you Mah

She kisses my cheek and we finally break the hug. She is also beautiful. I
thought she was a very old woman but she looks younger and very
much fresh. And the father? You see there, I only see an old dark
version of my man. He is a very handsome old man. But that pink stain
on his lower lip. Does he drink that much? The people I know with that
pink stain are people who drink a lot, especially hot stuff.

Mzwakhile : Ndodakazi yami.

He gets up and shakes my hand.

Me : Baba

I bow my head and bend my knees a bit.

Mzwakhile : Sbani, I'm proud of you.

I hear Sbani laughing with his tiny voice.

Sbani : Thank you Mphemba

Lindokuhle also stands up and gives me a hand shake.

Lindo : Makoti wakithi.

Me : Bhuti

I say with my head bowed. This is the big brother.

We finally sat down and ate. They asked me a few questions. Nothing heavy though. I must say that I feel welcomed.

Me : He is strict kodwa wathi ukusithambisa kancane isandla emuva kokudlula kuka mama emhlabeni.

They nod with smiles on their faces. Sbani is sitting right next to me with his arm wrapped around my waist. I love him, I love him so much and I love his family.

MaNzilo : I'm sorry about your mother.

I smile.

Me : It's okay Mah.

Mzwakhile : Yah. Asifuni phela ukuzibona sesihlawula ngoba nakhu sikufake ngaphansi kophahla lwethu singakakhiphi nelobolo.

We laugh.

Mzwakhile : Kahle kahle lezinto zo introduce izinto zabelungu thina olwethu usiko aluhambisani nalokhu kodwa ke times have changed nathi kumele sishintshe naso. Singabe sesidla ngoludala kukho konke.

MaNzilo : Mhm! Mhm! That's true. Sometimes we need to move with time. Mina ke mntanami ngiyabonga ukuthi ufikile but more than anything ngibonga ukuthi uthanda indodana yami. Ngiyabona ukuthi both of you are still young kodwa uma ngicabanga iminyaka esenithandane yona ngiyabona ukuthi impela nobabili niyayifuna lento.

Years? Sbani and I have been dating for years? Wow. I look at him out of the corners of my eyes. He brushes my back.

MaNzilo : Age is just a number. Okubalulekile othandweni uthando kanye nokuthatha izinqumo eziphusile.

Me : Yebo Mah.

Mzwakhile : Bhunu you are done being naughty, right?

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Mina angikaze ngahlupha

We all laugh. I believe him. He is so innocent. His father clears his throat.

Mzwakhile : Lilonke nje sithi siyabonga futhi siyakubongela ntombi yakwa Mlambo. Uyabona ndodakazi uma indoda ifuna ukukuthatha ikwenze umfazi lokho kuchaza okuthile ngawe. USbani ubone wena ufanele ukuba umfazi eningini lamantombazane. Not every woman is going to be a wife. So be proud of yourself. Nawe futhi Sbani ngokunjalo.

Sbani : Yebo Gwabini

Mzwakhile : We welcome you mntanami futhi ngifuna wazi ukuthi siyakuthanda.

MaNzilo : Kakhulu

I smile.

Me : Thank you so much. Nami ngiyanithanda futhi ngiyabonga kakhulu.

Mzwakhile : Manje ke we are heading forward. Phambili akulula, people will talk. They will talk ngoba abantu abayifuni into enhle.

MaNzilo : Futhi abantu abayifuni intombazane ethandwa indoda yayo futhi ethandwa emzini. They might want to see you happy but not more than them.

Mzwakhile : True. Ndodakazi izinkinga zakho seziqale ungena lapha ngesango no Sbani wakho lo. Kunabantu vele akade sebenibuka ngamawindi. Those people will try to get closer to you bezofuna izindaba. Bekubuze ngayo yonke into le. They will tell you about Sbani's sickness izinto abangahlani nazo.

Sickness?

Mzwakhile : You have nothing to worry about ukugula kwakhe siyakulungisa. You don't have to worry about his status. He is taking his HIV treatment and he...

Hi...What? What treatment? I immediately turn my head to Sbani. He slowly removes his arm from me. He looks at his father and shakes his head.

Mzwakhile : What? You didn't tell her?

Sbani tightens his jaw and walks out. My body remains frozen on the chair.

Chapter 19

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Mzwakhile and MaNzilo are sitting in their bedroom. MaNzilo is sitting on the bed, staring at a blank TV screen. Mzwakhile is sitting on the sofa. He keeps cursing under his breath and shaking his head. Lindokuhle knocks.

Lindo : Qo-qo

He gently pushes the door and walks in. MaNzilo gets up immediately.

MaNzilo : Niyamuthola? Where is he? Lindo where is my son?

MaNzilo eyes search behind Lindokuhle.

Lindo : Mah, relax, he is here. He didn't even go anywhere, he was sitting in the garage this whole time silokhu simucinga thina.

MaNzilo sighs and stares up.

MaNzilo : Ngiyabonga Baba onamandla. How is he kodwa?

Lindokuhle shakes his head.

Lindo : Not good, Mah. Kodwa ngishiye u Phiwo ekhuluma naye lapha e garage.

MaNzilo : My God.... Where is Sebenzile? Yazi angazi nokuthi zombili lezingane ngizozibhekelwa ubani.

Lindo : Sebenzile is in the dining room. Uthe ngisho ukuthi usecela ukuhamba.

MaNzilo : No, no, no, they can't go. Ngithe khuluma naye nje Lindo umutshele ukuthi abahambe ksasa. She can sleep in Bhunu's room uBhunu elale kusofa noma endlini yakho.

Lindo : I spoke to her about that. Akanazo izingubo zokushintsha futhi uthe ungena u 06:00 ksasa.

MaNzilo : Uke wakhuluma naye kodwa yena u Bhunu?

Lindo : I don't think he is ready. Akasafuni nokungena layindlini ke manje.

MaNzilo : Oh my goodness

MaNzilo rubs her face.

MaNzilo : How did such a good day turn into an absolute disaster?

Lindokuhle shakes his head while looking at his father.

Lindo : Ay layikhaya.

He continues to shake his head and walks out. MaNzilo sits down and tilts her head.

MaNzilo : Are you happy now? You have ruined Sbani's life, again!! Are you happy? Huh, Mzwa?

Mzwakhile remains silent.

MaNzilo : Ubufuna ukubukwa ubani ngempela? Yini le ebisikwenza ukhulume kangaka?

Mzwakhile clears his throat, but that was just that. He is quiet.

MaNzilo : When I left Tanzania ngifika la ngiyitshitshi lika 15 years ngihlangana nawe I thought you were a good man. You made so much sense, ukhuluma izinto ezakhayo. You were able to convince me ukuthi ngiyeke isikole. Wafika esikoleni wangintshontsha nge break wahamba wayongishadisa nawe e Home affairs. I let you. I was only 16 years old kodwa I gave up my dreams, ngadela ikhaya, ngadela u Aunti wami ngakhetha wena. Kanti ngikhetha ikhehla elidala eliwutsotsi. Isigebengu, umbulali! Indoda engazi nokuthi uyini umndeni. Indoda ekwazi ukwenza into eyodwa kuphela nje! Ukubhidliza iksasa lezingane zayo.

She closes her eyes as tears threaten to come out. She shakes her head and chuckles.

MaNzilo : Mina Mzwa anginendaba nabo bonke ubuhlungu ongizwise bona, amaphupho ami owangibhidlizela wona kade ukhetha intombazane egunda i cut, intombazane eyayigqoka izixebelendu zamacici egolide, ifake u okapu emabeleni. Usikhotheni wentombazane eyayishayela amatekisi. Wakhetha yona ukudlula mina umfazi wakho. Mina owakuvusela umuzi kayihlo, wakuthwalela amadodana amabili.

You chose her over me kodwa I forgave you ngaze ngakhulisa ingane yenu. Namanje ngisakuxolela ngobuhlungu owangizwisa bona nosangizwisa bona kuze kube inamhlanje. I forgive you, even though you've never asked for my forgiveness.

Mzwakhile cracks his neck.

MaNzilo : Sengicela ukuthi ube uBaba ke manje ezinganeni zami. Ngicela uvikele izingane zami kungabi uwena omosha injabulo yabo. I'm begging you Mzwakhile. Please give Sbani a break.

Tears roll down her cheeks.

MaNzilo : Ngiyakucela. What he has gone through is more than enough. Ngicela uyeke ingane yami manje Mzwakhe. Ngiyakuc.....

She breaks down.

Mzwakhile : Thandokazi, mina angiliboni iphutha engilenzile. Do you remember what Sbani said? Wathi he told her everything. So how was I supposed to know ukuthi u Sebenzile akazi? Bekufanele ngibhule?

MaNzilo's blood is probably boiling. She gets up and wipes her tears.

MaNzilo : Uze ubhule nje ube uhlanganaphi? It wasn't your place to disclose Sbani's HIV status!! Wena awufuni kukhulunywe ngeyakho ingculazi kodwa eka Sbani yona ufuna lonke izwe lazi ngayo! Why do keep torturing him? Are you punishing him for his mother's sins? Ufela amacala kamawakhe u Bhunu? Is this about what Celiwe did to you?

Mzwakhile : Thando....

MaNzilo : Was it not enough ukuthi wamuhudula layikhaya kugcwele abantu lonke leligceke wathi akahambe eyokukhombisa lentombazane emugulisile? Wahamba wayohlasela umuzi womuntu wathuka intombazane yakhona wathi she infected your son with HIV but knowing very well ukuthi u Sbani wazalwa egula nathula wena noCeliwe yacisho yafa ingane. Zonke lezinto ozenzile ubona ukuthi azikaneli?

Mzwakhile : Hey! Hey! Don't you dare try to....

MaNzilo : Yenzeni ingane ka Celiwe kuwena?!

Mzwakhile stands up and kicks the door, closing it.

Mzwakhile : Please keep your voice down. Sinesivakashi.

MaNzilo : Sebenzile is not a guest here. She is Sbani's girlfriend.
Mhlampe kufanele ezwe ukuthi wena uyindoda enjani.

Mzwakhile : Thandokazi

Advertisement

I love Sbani. Ngiyayithanda indodana yami. I didn't mean to hurt him.
Konke ebengithi ngiyakwenza bengicabanga ukuthi ngiyamuvikela.
Please forgive me Dali.

He wraps his arms around her and MaNzilo cries even more.

oooooooo

Lindokuhle drove us to Mountview. Sbani was sitting in the back seat all by himself and I was sitting in the front with his brother. I couldn't even look at Sbani. The drive was silent. We were all quiet. As soon as Lindokuhle dropped us off at our gate Sbani rushed into his room.

Lindo : He is... I hope he is going to be fine.

I nod. To be honest, Sbani's feelings are the least of my concerns right now.

Lindo : I'm sorry about everything, sengisho ngendlela izinto ezenzeke ngayo lapha ekhaya.

I shake my head.

Me : It's okay.

I put my handbag under my arm.

Lindo : Okay. Nisale kahle

Me : Uhambe kahle bhuti.

I begin walking.

Lindo : Makoti wakithi?

I stop walking and turn around.

Lindo : Ngicela ungibhekele ubafo.

I bite my lower lip, trying to stop myself from crying. I nod and walk away before my breaking point.

I got inside my room and cried until my chest went dry. I lift my head up. I can't fucking believe it! Sbani has the nerve to play his piano. I sniff and get up. I put on my sandals and head to his door.

Me : Sbani open this....

Oh, the door is unlocked. I get in and close it. He is sitting in front of his piano. He is wearing tracksuits that have all the rainbow colours. He looks really warm.

He stops playing and stands up. He goes and sits on his bed. His face is literally pink and his eyes are blood red. My heart shutdown. No, this is not the time to feel sorry for him. I need to brave up. I cross my arms.

Me : Sbani

Without a word, I see him opening his drawer and taking out a container of pills.

Sbani : Yes it's true. I'm sick. I'm HIV positive, nawa amaphilisi. Ngiyaxolisa ke.

Me : Uyaxolisa ke?

Sbani : Look, Sebe. I know why you are here. You are here to break up with me ngakho ngeke ngikuvimbe kulokho. Asihlukane.

My throat closes up.

Me : So all this was a trap. Ubufuna ukungidoba ngomshado Sbani. Ubufuna ngazi ngokugula kwakho sengiphakathi emshadweni. What was going to happen Sbani?

He puts his hands inside his hood jacket and continues to stare at the wall with his eyes moving all over.

Me : Ubufuna ukungigulisa nami Sbani. Was that your plan?

He narrows his eyes.

Sbani : What? No.

Me : So why didn't you tell me?

I wipe my tears and sit next to him.

Sbani : I was planning to tell you uma sesibuya ekhaya. Sebe, bengingafuni ukukugulisa.

Me : Is that why ubungafuni ngisho ngikuthinte mesilele? Ungafuni ngilale layindlini ubusuku bonke?

Sbani : Bengazi ukuthi ukuthintana kuzosiholela kuphi. But that was not the reason. Inhloso yami bekuwukuthi sishade ngaphambi kokuba senze ucansi. Ucansi ebengike ngilenze nawe ngingakutshelile ukuthi nginalento.

Me : Nalento? Sbani I thought you were responsible. I thought uhlakaniphile. Withole kanjani ke LENTO ngoba sihlale sifundiswa ngayo?

Sbani : Ey Sebe, I don't know. Please leave.

He fixes his pillows.

Me : Oh ngihambe nje kanjalo? Bhunu awunandaba? You don't care. Into onendaba nayo uwena. Everything is about you mina akubalulekile ukuthi ngizizwa kanjani. Ubulindele ukuthi ngizojabula when I found out about this?

Sbani : No. Sebenzile, angisho ukuthi hamba ngoba nakhu anginendaba kodwa angifuni ukukhuluma. Ukukhuluma kwami ngeke kushintshe lutho.

I sniff and take out his hand from his pocket.

Me : Sbani, I love you. Okay ngiyaxolisa, ngiyaxolisa ukuthi ngidiniwe. Ukuthi nje yonke lento ivele yangehla esithubeni sthandwa sami. Bhunu? Sbani?

I lift up his chin.

Me : I love you. Please don't break up with me.

He lifts up his eyes. His face is written with confusion. What does this mean? No, he can't break up with me.

Me : Bhunu, no.

I shake my head with tears streaming down my face. He cups my face.

Sbani : I don't want to hurt you. Ngikuthanda kakhulu ukuthi ngingakubona usebunzimeni ngenxa yami. Sebe, uthando lwakho blinded me, ngaphila kulona kuphela. Ngakuphoqa ukuthi ube ingxenye yempilo yami ngakhohlwa wutaku lwempilo ebuthakathaka engiphila phansi kwalo.

Me : I don't care. I want to be part of that life. Sbani, HIV is not a death sentence. Please, my love. Ngicela ungangivaleli ngaphandle ngenhla nje....

Sbani : Sebe it's too much. I'm too much.

Me : Kodwa ngiyakuthanda. Why ungijezisela ukuthi sengiyazi manje ngoku...

Sbani : I'm not.

Me : Is it her? Lentombazane athi ubhuti wakho wawuthandana nayo nakhu uze uthola ukuthi you are HIV positive? Is it her? Are you two still together?

Sbani : No, no. This is complicated.

Me : Asikho isidingo sokuthi kube njalo. Okay, okay, let's pretend angathi akwenzekanga lutho. Let's pretend angathi angazi lutho then senze izinto ngalendlela wena obuhlele ukuzenza ngayo before siye kini.

He smiles and shakes his head.

Sbani : Baby....

Me : I love you. Please don't break up with me. Sengikuthanda kakhulu manje Sbanisokuhle. Please, don't leave me. Please Sbani.

I hug him and we both break into tears. He tightens his arms around me.

Chapter 20

I feel like every trouble is out of our way. My relationship with Sbani is perfect beyond words. When I'm happy my body becomes my evidence, I just gain. But the more I gain weight the shorter I feel. I am short. My mother used to call me "Shoti odivile". You see now, I wish she was still alive to witness my happiness and see my handsome man. She would have been so proud of me.

Today it's Thursday, I'm off. Sbani is on leave, so he says. We are heading to the big weekend. The Ntulis are coming to pay my lobola this coming Saturday. Tomorrow I'll be going home. Sbani is quite concerned about how my family does things. He thinks we don't follow tradition. According to him I should have gone home at least a week ago. To be honest I don't even know what to do. I really wish that my mother was still alive. Ay it doesn't matter anymore, mina as long as I'm next to my man I'm good, traditional wise or not, just let me be next to my man, please.

We just woke up now. Sbani's back is leaning against his headboard and I am sitting on top of him. We are holding each other's hands. For the first time we spent the whole night together in one bed. Sbani was against the idea of us sleeping together. You know what the problem is with Sbani Ntuli? Every time I touch him he grows a third leg between his legs. Tjo! Uyaqhanyelwa uSbani. So besides everything else, the problem is his penis. Mina ke, I'm sorry because I can't keep my hands off him and he feels like I'm torturing him. I can't wait for the lobola

negotiations to be over, so that I can give my man what belongs to him.

Sbani : Ikhaya elingenaye umama nje sthandwa sami alikho right. A lot goes wrong ngoba umuntu wesilisa akanaki.

I kiss each of his hands.

Me : I know baby. Do you think we are breaking a certain tradition ngokuba ndawonye sekusondele amalobolo?

Sbani : Angazi sthandwa sami. Kodwa vele ke akukho esikwenzayo

I smile

Me : Yeah. Ngizohamba ekseni kakhulu futhi ksasa.

Sbani : I'm going to miss you

Me : Mina ngizofa fi. Manje uti why did you get a whole two weeks leave?

Sbani : Oh, usho ilobola honeymoon yami?

He asks and yawns. What did he say? I laugh out loud.

Me : Lobola what?

Sbani : Honeymoon.

Me : Njani bhabha?

Sbani : Phela mina baby ngisebenzela i construction company enswempu. They know ukuthi ngiyolobola and they gave me leave ukuthi nje uyabo... Ngihlele.

Me : Lobola honeymoon?

We both laugh and I bury my face in his chest.

Me : Kodwa baby nakumina u Grace ube fair. Uthe angoze ngibuye Wednesday next week. That means she gave what... Is it two?

Sbani : Three days. Angithi u Sunday, Monday and Tuesday mase uyabuyela Wednesday.

Me : Yeah it's three. Uyabo akufani kodwa?

He sits up a bit and smiles. I run my fingers over his chest.

Sbani : So you are not working on Sunday?

Me : Mhmm-Mhmmm

I peck his lips. He wraps his arms around me and I tighten mine around him. I smile and kiss his neck. Being with Sbanisokuhle makes me so happy. Loving him comes with so much joy. I smile effortlessly around him, he doesn't have to say or do anything to make me smile. This is the feeling I've never felt before.

Sbani : Shuthi siyahlabana ngempela Saturday after the negotiations.

I laugh out loud.

Me : Why Saturday?

Sbani : Phela ngizobe sengishilo ukuthi eehh Baba! ka Mlambo.

I laugh.

Me : Manje kusho ukuthini ukuthi angisebenzi baby?

Sbani : You will see.

He kisses my neck. I smile and inhale his chest.

Sbani : Uthini ke manakazi, uyavuma?

I look at him.

Me : Ngiyavuma baby.

He pulls my chin and sucks my lips. He breaks the kiss, leaving me wanting more.

Me : Uh-huh baby.

I pull him back and kiss him. He is laughing.

Me : Yah sengidelile ke

Sbani : Usudelile?

I nod. We stare at each other. He is smiling, yeah I'm smiling too.

Sbani : Let's go out. Akushisi namhlanje.

I think he hates the sun and the rain. If he hates it, I hate it too. LOL.

Me : Go where?

Sbani : You'll see. Kunento engifuna ukuk'khombisa yona

Me : Yini leyo?

Sbani : Hawu, Sebe it's a surprise phela baby.

Me : Surprise?

Sbani : Yeah

He kisses my hand.

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda Sebe

I smile.

Me : Ngiyakuthanda bhabha

Sbani : Aw ngoba usuzwa kusho mina

Me : What?

I tickle him and we both laugh. We played around the bed and kissed a lot.

^

^

^

Around 11am we got inside the car. I don't know where he is taking me. I'm playing with his dreadlocks while he drives. Today he let them out unfastened. Everyday Sbani gets more and more handsome. He is wearing this camouflage jacket and he is... damn! He is dashing. Clothes were not made for Sbani, but Sbani was made for everything he wears. Everything he puts on just stands out, even though his body is not big like Menzi's. No, I'm not saying my man is skinny. He is not, but between Menzi and he, I'd say Menzi has the body and Sbani has the looks.

Me : 50. Ay Bhunu, are you sure?

Sbani : Uh! Baby u Mah una 50. Osi base Tanzania abagugi phela.

I laugh. Ey

Advertisement

this man is crazy.

Me : And your father?

Sbani : Mudala uBaba. I think uhlangene manje u 60.

Me : But akabonakali. Does he drink?

Sbani : Yeah

Me : Kakhulu angithi?

He laughs and hits the steering wheel.

Sbani : Why? Wabona lo polony osemloveni wakhe ongezansi?

Me : Why do you call that thing u polony? Is it because it's pink?

He laughs.

Sbani : Uh. But akasaphuzi manje kakhulu baby, futhi ugologo akasawuthinti. Usezishayela ubhiya nje once or twice in a week.

Me : That's good. UPhiwo yena? Does he drink?

Sbani : Mhmmm?

He opens the door while the car is moving. What is he looking at?

Me : Why are you doing that? Uzokwenza ingozi.

Sbani : UScelo loya.

Me : Who?

He slammed the door and revved the engine, reversing the car. There's a boy running on the pavement. He stops next to him and lowers the window. I see fear in the boy's eyes. Who is he and what has he done to Sbani?

Sbani : Uyajogga noma uyajahwa?

What? What kind of question is that?

Boy : Baba omncane?

Uncle? Wait, they are related. Who is he?

Sbani : Baba omncane wani? Scelo where are you running to? Ugijimela ukuyontshontsha emzini yabantu noma usubuya khona?

He steals?

Scelo : Uyabona ke Sbani usuqalile.

The way he speaks makes me want to laugh. He is so slow.

Sbani : I'm asking so that I can prepare myself. Angithi wena uhlale ushawa umphakathi sigijime thina sesizokulanda abantu sebekuphihlize ngezitini.

I frown.

Scelo : Baba omncane angisabhemi

Sbani : Usuyaphuza? Huh?

He gets out of the car.

Sbani : Uzoba uBaba onjani unje Celo?

Scelo : Angisabhemi, Sbani.

There's a taxi coming. Sbani stops the taxi.

Sbani : Yey, Manqina. Ongibekela lentwana e Verulam.

Manqina : Okay bafo

Scelo seems to disagree. He keeps shaking his head, he is going to run. Oh my God, he is going to run. Sbani sees that and grabs him by his arm.

Sbani : Get in. Ngena ngingaze ngikufake ibhande.

Scelo : Sbani, no! No!

Sbani pushes him inside the taxi and closes the door. Manqina drives off. Sbani gets in and clucks. He looks angry.

Sbani : Nxi! Umuntu elokhu esibukanisa nabantu la.

He starts the engine and closes the window.

Me : Are you okay, love?

Sbani : Ngi right baby. UScelo nje lo osanganayo.

Me : Owakini?

Sbani : Yeah, umfana ka Lindo omdala.

Me : Uyahlupha?

He sighs.

Sbani : Too much. Khona amanye amadrugs asanda kufika abawadlayo. Abaqedile abafana lapha kwaNdengezi. Yena ke oku worse umithisile manje.

Me : What? He is going to be a father?

Sbani : Yeah.

Me : Aibo sthandwa sami, isn't he young to be a father?

Sbani : He is 16 years old.

He takes out his phone and dials.

Sbani : Kancane nje sthandwa sami

Me : Okay

Sbani : Sho bhuti... Kade ngibona u Scelo la ngase Trenace.... Oh, he called you? Yeah ngithe u Manqina akamushiye lapha e Verulam. Ibhasi ka Nkawu iphuma u 12:00, please call him uthi akamuthathe emushiye noma iseMansenseni uzoqhubeka ngezinyawo. I don't have airtime mina.

He shakes his head.

Sbani : Okay bhuti.

He hangs up and puts his phone on my thighs.

Sbani : Sorry baby, beku Lindo loyo.

I smile.

Me : Manje, were you really going to beat him up noma ubumuthusa?

Sbani : Bengizomuthrabha blind.

I laugh.

Me : Ngizokuzalela ezakho izingane ozozishaya uyeke ezabantu.

Sbani : Ezami izingane ngeke ngizilokothe ngisho zingantshontsha ama cable kagesi

I laugh. Sbani is crazy. He speaks whatever that comes out of his mouth.

Me : Kumele sizenze ke, uyabo?

He smiles and shakes his head.

Me : What? You don't like having kids?

Sbani : Izingane ngizithanda ngenhliziyo yami yonke.

Me : I'm going to give you three.

He smiles and blows out a sigh. I know what he is thinking and he needs to stop.

Me : I can't wait to carry your kids.

Sbani : Are you sure?

I shake my head. Yes I'm sure, certainly.

Me : Yes.

Sbani : Kodwa baby ngiyagu....

Me : Oh kahle Bhunu, please.

He sighs.

I don't know where this is or why we are here. There's a house in front of us, but it's still under construction.

Me : And then?

I look at him.

Me : Ekabani lendlu?

Sbani : Uyabona lo umuzi, owakho sthandwa sami.

He tightens his arm around my waist and kisses the top of my head.

Me : What? What do you mean?

We walk inside. It's a four room house plus a garage. It's going to be a really stunning house once it's finished.

Sbani : 3 months after I joined WBHO I started building this house.
Ngisakhula kwakuyiphupho lami ukuthi ngakhele umawami umuzi.

Me : Your step-mom?

Sbani : No, my biological mother. Noma ngangazi ukuthi akasekho but ngangifuna umuzi engizothi okaMah. Ngakhe la engizobiza khona ngokuthi ikomalume wami.

He laughs and looks at me. I wrap both of my arms around him.

Sbani : But I kept failing.

Me : Why? Kwakuyimali?

Sbani : Money was not the problem. I kept asking myself why I wanted to build a home for someone who chose crime over me? Umuntu owakhetha ukufa engishiye why kwakufanele ngimakhele?

Me : Ngoba umawakho sthandwa sami.

Sbani : I know. Kodwa noBaba wayecabanga ukuthi it's a bad idea ngakho ngayeka phansi yonke into.

Me : Yeah?

Sbani : But when I saw you ungena lapha e flatini I found a reason to continue. Ngakusasa ngavuka ngafonela abakhi ukuthi bezoqhubeka.

My smile widens. He pecks my nose.

Sbani : Ngicela sizohlala la sthandwa sami uma siqeda ukushada.

Me : Emzini kaMah?

Sbani : Komalume wami.

We both laugh. I move and stand in front of him. I hold his hands.

Me : Mina lapho kukhona wena nami ngikhona Sbani sami.

He lifts up my chin and crashes his lips on my lips.

oooooooo

On our way back we drove past KFC and bought food. After that Sbani asked to drive past Lindo's house to check if Scelo was there but unfortunately there was nobody home. We are now on our way home from Lindo's house. Lindo is married by the way and I heard he has kids all over SA.

Sbani : Baby ngicela ukuthenga i airtime la khona ngizofonela u Lindo.

Me : Nami ngihamba nawe kodwa.

Sbani : Let's go.

We get out of the car and head inside this small Indian shop. We are wrapping our arms around each other.

Me : Ikephi ke la?

Sbani : Lana sthandwa sami iseGoli.

We both laugh. I pinch him.

Me : Ave uphapha.

I look around. They sell kotas and there's a place to sit down as well.

Me : Ama sausage lawa anuka kahle kanje, baby?

Sbani : Weee!

I laugh out loud.

Me : I didn't say I wanted them. I was only asking.

Sbani : And angishongo ukuthi ngeke ngikuthengele sthandwa sami. Do you want them?

Me : Uh

Sbani : Okay

He kisses my cheek. He buys airtime and then we wait for our kotas.

Sbani : Nayi i airtime yakho baby

Me : Thanks bhabha. Ngiyakuthanda, yezwa?

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda nami. Ngicela ungifakela le eyami, amehlo ami asebulungu.

Me : I'm sorry, baby. Abaqede sihambe manje.

I load his airtime.

Me : I'm done, my love.

Sbani : Please dial Lindo's number.

Me : Ilena ebhalwe ukuthi Bhuti2?

Sbani : Igcina ngo 12...what the...

Me : What's wrong?

I lift up my head to his face. What is he staring at? I follow his eye direction and my heart stops. What is Menzi Ndlovu doing here?

Sbani : Ndlovu?

Menzi : I thought my eyes were deceiving me. What the hell is this?

I feel my whole body shaking up.

Chapter 21

Continuation.....

Me : Sbani please let's go.

I pull Sbani by his arm. Menzi pulls me by my hair, I feel my head burning. I scream.

Sbani : Ndlovu! Ndlovu!

He keeps saying while banging Menzi's shoulder. His face is turning pink.

Sbani : Ngizokubulala.

He says with his teeth gritted. Menzi narrows his eyes in disbelief. He laughs and claps his hands.

Menzi : Sssss....

He hisses while moving in circles around us. He is looking at Sbani from head to toe.

Menzi : "Sbanisethu" Sydwell Ntuli. Usukhulile ngempela mfana, awusasiphuphi isalukwazi uma ulele. Huh? So people were right about you. Everything they told me was true. Ubufuna umfazi wami sonke lesikhathi ngisebenza nawe? Ubufuna umfazi wendoda ebiyenza sure ukuthi ukwazi ukubeka ukudla etafuleni!!!

He pokes Sbani's chest with his finger and then he pushes him. Sbani sighs and takes a step back. He stares up.

Menzi : I made you Sydwell. When everyone else treated you like shit I was there holding your hand kanti ngisiza inyoka!! Umfazi wami? Umfazi wami Sbani? Who do you think you are? Uyini wena?

I close my eyes and cover my ears. My body is trembling. Sbani pulls me and presses my forehead on his chest. He wraps his arm around my neck. Hiding under his jacket is better than anything else.

Sbani : You see right there! right there uqinisile and that's exactly the reason you held my hand, because you thought I was nothing! Ubukisa ngami emsebenzini. Uthi ubukisa ngami kodwa ube usineka wenza angathi you were joking. You didn't care about me, the only thing you

cared about was the power you had over me. Wawufuna ukunakwa ngami emsebenzini! Ufuna i attention engasile ngami! You thought I was nothing!!!

He yells. I hit his chest. My heart is pounding.

Me : Sbani, please let's go

I say with my voice trembling.

Sbani : You thinking that I was nothing gave you the power to control me. Wangenza ngacabanga ukuthi nothing will ever work out for me, wangenza ngazizwa ngiyislima. You know why? Because you were jealous! Because you saw me as a threat emsebenzini wakho! Waze wazama ukungixoshisa emsebenzini! You tried to kill me Ndlovu!

No, no! This is getting out of hand.

Menzi : You are still nothing but a piece of shit. Ucabanga ukuthi ungadla izinsalela zami? Wena kade ngikusula amafinyila izolo lokhu ufika lapha e WBHO ungazi ngisho nokuthi yini ama initials. Come on Ntuli!! You are nothing! Umfana omncane wena and right now udlalela ezitsheni ezifayo.

Menzi is still a rude, arrogant bastard.

Sbani : I don't care.

Menzi : Listen here. This woman here is still my wife and you are going to stay the hell away from her. Uyangizwa?

My blood boils. I'm going to explode. I glare at him.

Me : Menzi, I am not your wife! Sbani, let's go. Ngiyacela.

Thank God there's just a few people witnessing this drama.

Sbani : No, relax baby, I got this.

He moves and stands right in front of Menzi. He stares right into his eyes.

Sbani : If she is your wife then you are going to watch me as I take her away from you. For real this time. I want you to watch me as I come for everything you thought I couldn't have. Including Sebenzile.

Menzi : Sydwell you are playing with fire.

Sbani : Ungangisabisi Godlove.

Not Sbani calling Menzi by his English name. I know how much Menzi hates that name. He is going to kill Sbani. Menzi sucks his teeth and looks at me with his brow raised.

Menzi : Really Nzile? Lo? Lo pho? Lo mfana omncane?

He points at Sbani using his head.

Sbani : Keep my girlfriend out of this. Wena ngifuna ubuke umfana omncane ekufundisa ukuthi umuntu wesifazane uphathwa kanjani, okay? Yah.

He takes out a white cloth out of his pocket and gives it to Menzi.

Sbani : For your sweat. Uyajuluka Ndlovu.

He leaves the white cloth on Menzi's shoulder and turns around.

Sbani : Baby? Let's go.

He kisses my cheek. I wrap my hand around his arm and we walk out.

Sbani : Are you okay?

I shake my head. By the time we get inside the car my face is already covered in tears.

Sbani : Dammit, ukudla.

I quickly reach for his hand and shake my head.

Me : Leave it. Please don't go back.

He stares at me.

Me : Ngiyakucela Sbani

He stretches his arm.

Sbani : Woza la, sthandwa sami.

He hugs me and I cry more.

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda.

I'm crying, I can't speak. He breaks the hug.

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa.

He sighs and starts the car. I cover my face with my hands and continue to cry. I'm crying because I saw Menzi. I'm crying because he had the nerve to call me his wife after how he treated me. I'm crying because of how bad he spoke to Sbani. But amongst everything else, I'm crying because I'm remembering the past.

I cried until we got to Mountview. The last time Sbani spoke to me was when he asked me not to go to my room and after that we were both silent. I took out two pieces of meat that we bought at KFC and four slices of bread and put everything on the plate. I left it on the table next to him and put the rice on the stove before I went to the shower. 20 minutes later I step out of the shower and find him sitting on the floor. For the first time he is smoking weed and the smoke is burying his face. His food is still on the table, untouched. I cough and cover my nose. He gets up and opens the door.

Me : You can leave the door closed, I don't mind.

Sbani : Usuqedile ukukhala?

What the fuck?

Me : Uyakhuluma Bhunu?

He sits on the chair in front of his piano with his blunt of weed in his hand. He pulls me to stand in front of him. I fix the towel that I'm using to cover my body and sit on his lap. He crushes his weed inside the ashtray while staring at me. There's a silly smile on his face. He is so cute mahn. I giggle softly and shrug.

Me : What?

Sbani : Sesiqedile ukukhalela u Menzi?

Is he for real?

Sbani : Huh baby?

Me : Love, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to....

Sbani : Imina engixolisayo ngokuthi siye lapha. I didn't know he was there.

Me : It's okay.

I sigh.

Me : You said he tried to kill you.

Sbani : Yeah.

Me : How? I thought you said you two were close.

He shakes his head.

Me : What happened?

Sbani : It's a long story.

Me : Hawu baby, tell me. Cut it short.

Sbani : Khona omunye umshini omkhulu esasibenza ngawo. Wawungena kuwona uhambe ngawo phezulu emoyeni and then there was somebody else on the ground controlling it. That person was responsible for moving it around. One day it was my turn ukuthi ngisebenze ngawo ngi scout, we called it scouting. Ngangisebenza no Menzi ke that day. I was going to scout and he was going to control the machine from the ground. Kuthe sekufanele ngiyongena emshinini kwabakhona ama last minute changes. Ngathunyelwa kwenye i site. They asked another white guy ukuthi kube uyena ongena emshinini esebenze no Ndlovu.

Me : Yah?

Sbani : Sathi nje siphuma kule site yethu siya kule enye wawa umshini.
Sezwa umsindo omkhulu and there was smoke mixed with dust
everywhere. Kwanuka insimbi. Uyayazi insimbi ukuthi inuka kanjani?

I giggle.

Me : No

Sbani : Inuka njengomlungu owa phansi nomshini.

Me : Bhunu usudakwe insangu?

He laughs.

Sbani : Ngiyadlala. Sthandwa sami angifuni uMenzi engene phakathi
kwethu.

No, no, he can't leave me hanging. I want to know what happened.

Me : Ngeke, my love. What happened after that?

Sbani : Umlungu wanqamuka umlenze. Soon after the accident

Advertisement

Menzi called my family wathi bephuthume emsebenzini ngoba mina sengishonile.

My eyes widened.

Me : What?

Sbani : Yeah kwafika u Lindo no Baba. Bangifika ngakwi Exit and they were shocked to see me. Bathi aibo wena ushonile nje, usuyapoka fast kanje!

We are both laughing.

Me : Baby, please be serious for once.

Sbani : I'm serious, sthandwa sami. Bafika ngempela and they were shocked to see me nokubona ukuthi ngi right. Ey uBaba wakhala sthandwa sami, wangibamba. Bangitshela ukuthi they got a call... Blah blah, u Menzi uthe ngishonile angazi kanjani.

Me : Yeah

Sbani : Ay sisuke lapho sithi vru ku Ndlovu. Simufice lapha ubambe i meeting nabanye abafethu engangisebenza close nabo. He was busy telling them to pray for my family. Sivele sitheleke kusenjalo. Uyabona lapha baby, ay he almost fainted engibona.

Me : He thought it was you? Wayecabanga ukuthi umshini uwe nawe?

Sbani : Yeah. Plus akuyena owaye controla umshini that day, naye wathuma omunye umuntu. Waqamba amanga wathi ukhishwa isisu kanti usethenge lomuntu ukuthi ewise umshini and he promised him a good position. Waboshwa loyomfana. And before he was transferred to Westville prison he asked me to come and see him. I went there and he confessed. Wangitshela lapho ke ukuthi wayethunywe uMenzi ukuthi engiwise nomshini, engibulale.

Me : But why?

Sbani : Ngenxa yento ebheda kanjani baby. Ngoba nje ngase ngithandwa emsebenzini kodwa ngibe ngafundiswa uyena umsebenzi. Kodwa futhi sengihola ukudlula yena.... All that nonsense.

Me : Menzi is evil.

Sbani : Wayedlala isilwane esibhedayo loya. Wasuka lapho wazama ukungixoshisa emsebenzini. Efaka amathuluzi asemsebenzini kubhakha wami kube angathi ngiwantshontshile. Ey loyamjita wayehlanya. Ngathi ngiyezwa kwathiwa he resigned.

I sigh and shake my head.

Me : Yazi Bhunu ukubona u Menzi kungikhumbuze isihogo sempilo angidlulise kusona. What if he ruins things for us? Umzwile ukuthi utheni love?

Sbani : Ngeke enze lutho. Ubesabisa.

Me : You don't know him. Unenhliziyi kaSathane u Menzi.

Sbani : I'll talk to him. Sengicela ukuhlala nentombi yami manje ngingakhulumi ngo Menzi.

I smile.

Me : I'm sorry bhabha. Ukuthi nje usuku lwethu luvele lonakala.

Sbani : Ngenzeni ukulilungisa sthandwa sami?

I giggle.

Me : Ukuba nawe kulungisa yonke into sthandwa sami. I love you Sbanisokuhle.

Sbani : Uthandwa imina baby. Noma nje ukhale waze waduba ama sausage.

He laughs out loud. I hit his arm. Everything is a joke to him.

Me : Bhunu unesdina yezwa?

Sbani : Ay, Ay woza la. Woza la

He pulls me for a deep kiss. We are kissing and laughing at the same time. Thank God for this man.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

The boys are sitting in Lindo's room. Lindo is lying on the carpet and laughing with his phone. He is listening to Sebenzile's voice notes. Look what love is doing to Mzwakhile's son. Sphiwokuhle and Lindokuhle are sitting on the bed. Sphiwokuhle is busy counting some coins.

Lindo : Mina anginamali bafo. U Maka Olwethu ungifonele ekuseni kusa engitshela ngezicathulo zengane.... Hhaibo webafo noMbali, yazi uthini?

Sphiwokuhle laughs.

Sphiwo : Uthini?

Lindo : Angithenge ama cornflakes nama weetbix engane. And I was like what the fuck? Didn't I buy that last week?

Sphiwo : But you did. Nganginawe e Pinetown

Lindo : Exactly. Uthi yena aibo phela u Ayakha uyagula akakufuni ukudla. Ngathi udakiwe ngizomuthengela ama multiVitamin.

Sphiwo : Mbali is crazy.

Lindo : Sizogejana mina naye. Uyabo nalento yokuthengela ingane izingubo zamahlobo nobusika. That's bullshit. Ayakha is not my only baby.

Sphiwo : Bhunu? Awubuke lo undwaze nefoni.

Lindo shakes his head. His eyebrows are furrowed.

Lindo : Uthi yena uzofonela umfazi wami ke ngoba angisondli. Uthi wathi uZah simufonele vele mase uhlulwa izingane zakho.

Oh he is still on about his baby mamas.

Sphiwo : Mbali loves attention

Lindo : Sizogejana ngempela bafo, ngifunga o Sompisi.

Sphiwo : Ey

Sphiwokuhle seems not to be interested. He is worried about alcohol.
He gets up and kicks Sbani's leg.

Sphiwo : Bafo, awufake u R200 la sithenge i 24.

Sbani : Anginamali mina bhuti. I gave all the money to Sebe kade egoduka.

Sphiwo : Eish, niyizinja mfana nina. Aninamali kanje?

Sphiwokuhle steps out and looks around. Sbani sits up.

Sbani : Ucabangani?

Sphiwo : Ukucela i tayma. Ngiyazi naye womile.

They laugh.

Sphiwo : Wee! They are coming here.

Sphiwokuhle gets back inside and sits on the bed.

Lindo : Uza nomalume?

Sphiwo : Yeah, shh! Faka lelibhodlela phansi kombhede.

Lindo hides the bottle of beer under the bed. Mzwakhile and their uncle Skhona walk in. Sbani darts his gaze to Lindo.

Mzwakhile : Yey bafana.

Sbani : Ehhe

Sbani gets up and sits on the chair.

Skhona : Nenzani la?

Lindo : Ay siyala nangu oyolobola ksasa

They laugh.

Mzwakhile : Bhunuh awubeke leyofoni kancane Mphemba.

Sbani quickly puts his phone in his pocket.

Sbani : I'm sorry.

Mzwakhile : Ukhuluma nomalokazana?

Sbani : Yeah kade ngisamu checker la

Mzwakhile : That's good. Ay siyeza ksasa kwa Mlambo sizomulanda.

They laugh. Mzwakhile clears his throat.

Mzwakhile : Aningilandele ke bafana sithi ukuyokhuluma.

Lindo and Sbani look at each other. They all stand up and follow Skhona and Mzwakhile to the big house. They find MaNzilo sitting in the living room.

They all sat down in complete silence. Lindo, Sbani and Sphiwo kept stealing glances among each other.

MaNzilo : Kanti sibizelweni bakithi? ay mina ngiphethwe ithumba. Ngicela ukuyolala bandla.

Mzwakhile : Kahle kancane Thandokazi. Eh, bafo? Please

Skhona : Uh.... Bantabami alikho elibi. Mzwa told me ukuthi u Sbani usebheke endaweni yobudoda, sengisho umshado. Unfortunately he can't just get married. Kunezinto ekufanele zenziwe kuqala.

Sbani lifts up his head.

Skhona : Mzwakhile told me ukuthi useke wathi ukuyithi hlamuzi indaba yokuthi kufanele kushadiswe u Maka Sbani.

Sbani closes his eyes and rubs his face.

Skhona : He was right. It has to be done.

MaNzilo shakes her head.

MaNzilo : Bhuti mina namanje ngiyahluleka ukuqonda ukuthi kungani kufanele kushadiswe uCeliwe engasekho.

Skhona looks at Mzwakhile. Another silence.

Skhona : Makoti kunodaba la okufanele luhlale obala.

MaNzilo : I'm listening.

Mzwakhile leans back and buries his face with his hands.

Skhona : Something happened. Kunephutha esalenza la.

Lindo : Mistake?

Skhona : Yes. Mzwakhile paid....paid lobola for Sbani's mother.

MaNzilo freezes. Everyone is shocked.

MaNzilo : Ini?

Skhona : Two years after Sbani was born Mzwakhile asked us to go and pay lobola for him lapha kubo kaCeliwe kwa Ngema.

MaNzilo closes her eyes and processes everything.

Skhona : UCeliwe ushona nje base belungiselela umshado wesintu.

Sphiwokuhle stands up and walks out. MaNzilo blows out a sigh.

Skhona : Siyaxolisa makoti.

MaNzilo : Mzwakhile, were you going to marry Celiwe behind my back?
Wahamba wayokhokha ilobolo ngingazi mina?

Mzwakhile : Thandokazi ngi....

MaNzilo : It's a question. Yes or no?

Mzwakhile : Yes

MaNzilo : Thank you

MaNzilo stands up and goes to her bedroom. Mzwakhile follows her. She finds her packing her clothes.

Mzwakhile : Thandokazi? Thandokazi what are you doing?

He locks the door.

MaNzilo : Ngenza into ekufanele angabe kade ngayenza. But you know why I didn't do it? Yingoba ngangisakhulisa umfana wakho enangishiya naye wena no Celiwe. But he is old now, so I'm going back to Tanzania.

Mzwakhile : Dali. Please don't do this. You can't leave me.

MaNzilo : Watch me. Ucabanga ukuthi ngalahlwa yini mina ekhaya? No, Mzwa. I have a home and ngicabanga ukuthi umndeni wami ungilinde ngezandla ezifudumele.

Mzwakhile grabs her bag and throws it on the couch.

Mzwakhile : No, no, please don't go. You can't Thandokazi. Okay, I'm sorry. Ngenze amaphutha amaningi kodwa ngiyakuthanda.

MaNzilo : Stop lying!! Awungifuni wena. Mzwakhile wawuzimisele ngokushada uCeliwe ungishiye mina layikhaya.

Mzwakhile : No, no! Ngangingafuni ukwenza lokho. Thandokazi uCeliwe wayengidlisile. Konke lokhu engangikwenza ngangidlala idliso lakhe. Everything I did....

MaNzilo : Stop it. Just stop. Ngisize!

Mzwakhile : I'm telling you the truth.

MaNzilo : Unamanga!! You loved her! Wakhetha yena ukudlula mina. Futhi nginesiqiniseko sokuthi kuthiwa akafanga angabe wena ulele emabeleni akhe kuyimanje.

Mzwakhile : That is not true.

MaNzilo : What is true? Mzwakhile I don't know you anymore. Yazi bengithi ngiyakwazi but I don't.

Mzwakhile : Imina lo Thandokazi. Please, don't go. I love you.

MaNzilo : Uthanda u Celiwe. Noma esesethuneni usakhetha yena. Ufuna ukumshada ngisho esefile! You are still choosing her.

Mzwakhile : Imithi yakhe eyadala ngikhethe yena, ngangithanda wena Maka Lindokuhle wafika u Celiwe and she bewitched me. Wasuka lapho waqoma and that's why I killed her!

MaNzilo takes a step back.

MaNzilo : What? Utheni? You did what?

Silence.

MaNzilo : Mzwakhile!!

Mzwakhile : It was me. I shot Celiwe. Ngathola ukuthi uyajola sesizoshada and I confronted her. Wathi asihlukane and she threatened to take Sbani ebaleke naye. Thandokazi ngangingeke ngilahlekelwe indodana yami. Ngangidlisiwe uthando luka Celiwe lungivale amehlo. So I killed her.

He whispers the last part.

MaNzilo : What?

Excuse the errors.

Chapter 22

ESHOWE

I didn't expect to find my aunts and uncles but they are all here. The Mlambo clan is so big but I've only seen them once or twice in my life. Why? Family drama, but if you ask me then I'll tell you that my father is the problem. I don't know what is wrong with my father. He doesn't get along with anyone in his family but when he needs them they always avail themselves. Seeing him with his brothers and sisters under one roof shows me how important these negotiations are. I am truly impressed with my father. He seems genuinely happy as well. I wish my mother was here to see all this happiness. She prayed for happy days, but she didn't get to live long to see them.

My aunt, uThembela, the most energetic one, is with me in the kitchen. She suggested that we peel and chop all the vegetables tonight. She throws the dead chickens inside a big enamel basin that is full of boiling water.

Thembela : Inkukhu yasekhaya iqinile, ngisho izimpaphe zayo ngakho we need to keep them in boiled water for a while ngaphambi kokuba sizichuthe.

Me : Sizozichutha khona manje ebusuku aunti?

Aybo! Aybo! I'm tired now and I miss hearing my man's voice. He's been trying to call me and I kept telling him the same thing "Ngicela ubuye ufone baby"

Themabela : Hhaibo uthini u Sebenzile? Yes. Mntanami, uma ungaphika nokulala ngeke wenze lutho. Don't worry about sleeping, you'll get enough sleep in your grave.

I roll my eyes. At first I was enjoying this but not anymore. I'm tired now, my feet are killing me.

Me : Yebo

Themabela : Give me that basin, ngixove lo flour.

No, she is crazy. Why is she cooking dumplings at this time?

Me : Will they still be fresh tomorrow morning?

Themabela : Very fresh, you'll see.

The time is 22:00. Yo! Yo! It's going to be a long night.

Themabela : Sizakele wanted to come and I told her ukuthi akuwona umshado lo.

Sizakele is her daughter, her first born. She is 28 years old. I do have their children's numbers but we don't talk.

Me : She called me. Wathi angisababizi mase ngilotsholwa.

Themabela : Ubedakiwe. Yena akalotsholwa ngani?

I laugh and shake my head. My phone rings. No, let me answer my man.

Me : Can I take this?

She sighs and raises her hands that are covered with flour.

Thembela : Of course... But, don't take too long. We need to finish up here ngoba uma kungenjalo bazofa indlala abantu bakwa Ntuli.

I leave her and go outside. I answer my phone and go stand behind the mango tree.

Me : Love, ngiyaxolisa.

Sbani : It's okay, sthandwa sami. Uyaphila?

Me : I'm fine baby, wena? You sound tired.

Sbani : Ngikhathele umoya sthandwa sami. I wish you were here.

Me : Sbani what's wrong? Are you okay?

There's silence.

Oh no, they are canceling everything. What am I going to tell all these people? My father? No! My heart is pounding.

Me : Abasezi angithi?

Sbani : No, no they are coming, baby. They are coming.

I sigh in relief.

Me : Besengisho ukuthi sengipheke kangaka.

Sbani : You cooked?

Me : I'm still cooking and I think I'll cook till tomorrow.

Sbani : What?

I laugh.

Me : I'm joking baby. Sesiyaqeda

Sbani : Okay

He is so down.

Me : Talk to me baby, what's wrong?

Sbani : Eish... No, it's nothing bad sthandwa sami ukuthi nje sekumosheke ama plans ami.

Me : What happened?

Sbani : My father told us something today, something that none of us was aware of.

Me : Yeah?

Sbani : He paid lobola for Celiwe and he paid it without telling Ma.

Me : What? He paid lobola for your mother?

Sbani : Yes. When Celiwe died they were preparing for their traditional wedding. Nalokho futhi u Mah akakwazi.

Me : Oh my God, that is... I don't know. Shuthi uBaba wakho ubefuna isithembu?

Sbani : I don't know and to be quite frank I don't care. I'm just worried about my mother and what pisses me off is that I now have to put my life on hold for someone who chose crime and decided to die.

Me : Sbani, no.

Sbani : Sthandwa sami, I'm sorry ukuthi this thing is frustrating. Bengifisa sishade before the end of the year.

Me : My love, there's no rush. Sinesikhathi sonke. Yini yona kanti le ekufanele yenziwe that will put your life on hold?

Sbani : I need to follow their stupid tradition. Bangitshela ngosiko sthandwa sami, bathi mina I can't get married u Celiwe engakashadi.

She is not even calling her "Mom" today. She is Celiwe.

Sbani : They are saying she is angry.

Me : Why is she angry?

Sbani : Because apparently no one is taking her in ezulwini. The Ngemas are telling her to go to the Ntuli ancestors and the Ntulis are telling her that they don't recognize her ngoba washona engakafakwa edlozini. Sebe, how the fuck is that my problem? How did she even get to heaven? Nalento yezulu iyi scam nje or maybe she bribed G.....

Me : Sbani!

Sbani : No baby, she was a criminal, ebulala abantu, wazama uBaba ukumshintsha wamenze umfazi but still, she chose crime. What happened after that? She messed with the wrong people bamudubula wafa and she left me to fix her bullshit. Sekufanele ngimise impilo yami mina manje. Ayngeke Sebe

Me : So kufanele kwenziwenjani manje?

Sbani : Kufanele esishade phela uBaba isipoki sakhe.

Me : Hhaibo Sbani

He sighs.

Sbani : I'm sorry. Sthandwa sami, sengiphile isikhathi eside ngaphandle kwakho, angisafuni ukuphila omunye unyaka ngaphandle kwakho. I want to make you mine, I need you to be my wife. Kodwa ngiyabona ukuthi ngeke kwenzeke konke kulonyaka njengezifiso zami because my father thinks we can't do everything in one year.

Me : Bhabha, wena usiko uluqonda okudlula mina. You know this needs to be done, for your mother sthandwa sami. She needs to rest in peace. I know udiniwe kodwa ngicela wehlise umoya. Nokukhuluma kakhulu sifaka abantu abangasekho kugcina sekusibangela imikhuhlane.

He sighs.

Sbani : I know and ngiyaxolisa. I'm just tired, Sebe, but I feel better now ngoba sengikhulume nawe.

I smile.

Me : I miss you. Usuwaphuzile amaphilisi?

Sbani : I did sthandwa sami, ngiwaphuze ngo 20:00. Ngihleli la emnyango manje emotweni. I'm thinking of going to Mountview kodwa manje I forgot my glasses so I won't be able to drive nalamehlo ebusuku.

Me : Why do you want to leave?

Sbani : They are drinking and I don't want to drink. Bengizobuya ekuseni.

Me : No, don't go love . Why ungafuni ukuphuza?

Sbani : No, baby angisafuni.

Me : Why? Wena futhi awuphuzi kakhulu.

Sbani : I do ukuthi angidakwa.

We both laugh.

Sbani : Kade ngibatshela nabo oSphiwo ukuthi mina ngiyashada manje, so indaba yeplaki ngiyayehla.

I laugh.

Me : And what did they say?

Sbani : They said I need prayer.

I burst into laughter.

Me : Oh man. I miss you

Sbani : I miss you too sthandwa sami. Impilo yami isivele ithule nje kube angathi imi ndawonye uma wena ungekho eduze kwami.

I'm blushing. I'm already picking mango leaves one by one from the tree.

Sbani : Sengijahe ukuqala impilo yami nawe. Noma nje....

He sighs. I know where that was heading.

Me : Sbanisokuhle ngiyakuthanda. I know this may sound insane but the truth is, I can't imagine my life without you. I don't want a life without you in it. Akukho engingeke ngize ngikwenze. Ngifuna ukukuthanda, ngikuhloniphe. Ngiyakuthembisa ukuthi ngeke ngize ngikuphoxe. Ngiyabonga futhi ukuthi uyangithanda Mphemba.

Sbani : Awazi, awazi ukuthi ngikuthanda kanjani Sebe kodwa ngiyasaba. I'm praying that God gives you strength kanye nesibindi sokumelana nempilo yami because I can't lose you.

Me : You are not going to lose me. Mina sengijahe ukuzibiza ngo mfazi ka Sbani.

We both laugh.

Sbani : Bayeza omalume nabafowethu ksasa.

Me : And you?

Sbani : No, sthandwa sami. Mina no Baba asizi.

Me : Oh yeah, tradition. Pho ngizokubona nini?

Sbani : Tomorrow, ngizofika ntambama, sthandwa sami.

Me : Kusasa kuzofika bani?

Sbani : Lindo

Advertisement

Sphiwo no Malum'Skhona kanye no Malum'Khaya.

Me : Okay.

Sbani : Sthandwa sami, nangu uBaba. Ngicela ukubuye ngifone.

Me : No, problem love. Ungibhaze mase ulala, I'll call you.

Sbani : Okay baby. Ngiyakuthanda

Me : I love you more Khuboni.

Sbani : Mncwa! Mncwa!

I smile.

Me : Mncwa! Mncwa! Baby.

He ends the call. I look at my phone screen and smile. Someone clears their throat behind me and I almost jump.

Me : Oh, Baba, it's you. Ungithusile

Mlambo : Ngiyaxolisa ndodakazi, ngibone usakhuluma nocingo.

Me : Akunankinga. Ingabe konke kuhamba kahle?

Mlambo : Yes, everything is fine. U Aunt wakho ukhala ngokuthi usubaqhuba ngamadolo ulibele ucingo

Me : Kodwa u Aunt. Ngimucele kahle nje ukuthi ngiphume kancane ngizokhuluma noSbani.

He brushes my back.

Mlambo : Don't mind her. Uyaphila umkhwenyana?

Me : Yes, yes, he is fine.

Mlambo : That's good. Asikaze phela sikhulume selokhu ufikile

He looks at his brothers who are still drinking umqombothi outside the rondavel.

Me : Yes.

Mlambo : Usukulungele kodwa ukuba umfazi ngokusemthethweni ke manje?

I smile.

Me : I am ready. Futhi kulokhu ngijabulile kanti no Sbani ngiyamethemba, Mdineka. Uyangithanda.

He slightly shakes his head.

Me : Ukuba kwakhe yingxenywe yempilo yami kube nokukhanya.

Mlambo : That's good. I'm happy to hear that. And the dreams? Are they still bothering you?

I've never been comfortable with talking about those dreams. I sigh.

Me : Cha asathuli

Mlambo : Mhmmm?

Me : Mhlampe ayenziwa ubungane.

Mlambo : Exactly. Awayona into ongazikhathaza ngayo.

Me : Ukuphupha wopha umzimba wonke every night kungathusa noma ubani. Kodwa ke sekudlulile. Nakhona kwa Ndlovu ayengasangihluphi kangako.

Mlambo : Yah, yah. Now, tell me. Wena nalomfana senike nahlangana?

Me : What do you mean?

Mlambo : I mean, sexually.

Hhaibo uBaba. I frown.

Mlambo : No, you can talk to me. I'm your father Sebenzile. Khuluma ungasabi.

Me : Kukhona akutshela kona uBaba kaSbani?

Why is he asking me about my sexual life? Could it be that the Ntulis told him about Sbani's HIV status?

Mlambo : Something like what?

Me : No, I'm just asking. Cha mina no Sbani akukho esisakwenzile. Sikhethe ukulinda umshado before we do anything.

Mlambo : Wow, that is excellent. Mntanami ngiyaziqhenya ngawe.

He hugs me tightly. That was unexpected.

Mlambo : Come, I need to give you something.

Me : What?

Mlambo : Uyabona Sebenzile, ngiyazi ukuthi ucabanga ukuthi ngoba nakhu awuthelwanga ngenyongo yakwa Ndlovu lokho kuchaza ukuthi ubungeyena omunye wabo kodwa iqiniso ukuthi ubuwomunye wabo. Idlozi lakhona belikwengamele. We need to get rid of it.

Me : Oh, ucabanga ukuthi kunezinto ezimbi.....

Mlambo : Cha, Cha, akukho okubi obuye nakho kwaNdlovu. Lokhu nje yinto engicabanga ukuthi kufanele siyenze. It's like cleansing.

Me : Shuthi kuzofanele ngiyogeza?

Mlambo : Not exactly, kunento yokuphuza that I will give you. Isiqunga nje, asiyona ingozi. Sizosusa imimoya yabantu bakwa Ndlovu le ehleli kuwe.

Me : Okay, okay, I understand.

Mlambo : Kukuwe ke uma ufuna ukugeza. Ngingakuthengela intelezi ugeze.

Me : Mdineka ngiyabonga kakhulu. You have no idea how much your support means to me.

Mlambo : Iphutha engalenza phambilini ngeke ngiliphinde. When your mother died, she trusted me with you.

I smile and give him a hug.

Mlambo : Woza ke ngikunike.

Me : Oh, you are going to give me tonight?

Mlambo : Yes, Sebenzile. We don't have time. Isikhathi sesidliwe yinja mntanami

Me : Kulungile Baba

I follow him to his small rondavel. I've never been inside it before. Aunt Thembela came with Sizakele's daughter. Her name is Khanya. She is 8 years old, but she is still wide awake. She is jumping on the veranda.

Khanya : Aunty! Aunty? Where are you going?

Me : I'm coming baby girl. Ngisakhuluma nomkhulu.

Khanya : Don't go inside that house.

Me : Why?.... Bazokuncinza omosquito ngena endlini.

Khanya : Khona inunu ekade imi ngalapho. Inja enkulu yathi "Mhmm! Mhmm!"

She makes a strange sound. I laugh.

Me : Oh, so you are scared of dogs?

Khanya : It was big. But it ran away, yabaleka ngezinyawo zayo ezu...

She shows me three of her fingers.

Me : Three?

Khanya : Uh

Me : How can a dog have three legs?

She shrugs. I laugh and shake my head. My father steps out of his small rondavel.

Mlambo : Sebenzile I thought you were following me.

Me : Ngiyaxolisa Baba. Bengisakhuluma no Khanya.

Mlambo : Forget about kids. Come in, woza.

I step in and look around. The rondavel is empty. I can't believe people thought there were tokoloshes and baboons inside this rondavel. There's nothing, the rondavel is literally empty.

Mlambo : This is the muthi I was telling you about, Isiqunga. Just drink, ithi shaqalazi nje.

Me : Does it taste bad?

Mlambo : Sibaba kancane. Drink, Sebenzile.

I look inside the cup.

Me : This looks bad.

Mlambo : Sebenzile, I'm trying to help you.

Me : Okay, okay.

I lift the cup and drink. My face changes, what the heck did I just drink?
I rub my tongue.

Me : Ngeke Baba, this is bad.

He laughs.

Mlambo : Aw amanzi nje.

Me : No, it tastes like... Like blood.

Mlambo : Finish it. This is not blood. Finish it

I shake my head and finish drinking. I give him the glass. I need water.

Me : Ay ngiyasibonga isiqunga sakho.

He laughs.

Mlambo : Inkinga uyigwala.

I laugh and walk out. I leave him in his rondavel and go to the main house.

Me : Khanya, when are you going to sleep ngempela?

Themabela : She doesn't want to sleep. She says she is scared of the dog.

I laugh.

Me : She told me about the dog.

Themabela : Wena ke, usuqedile ukukhuluma nesoka lakho?

I smile. I open a bottle of water and take a sip.

Me : Aunty I didn't take long.

Themabela : Sekuze kwavuthwa izinkukhu kuloyabhavu. Ngicela uzichuthe.

I laugh.

Me : Fine, I'll do it.

Thembela : Let me go and put Khanya to sleep. Khanya, woza kuGogo

Me : I'll sleep with her. Uthe wena uzolala ekamereni elincane angithi?

Thembela : Yes, ngibona kugcwele manje lapha phansi e dining room.
Mina bengingazi ukuthi sonke sizogcwala la emzini ka MaMnqayi

She is whispering. I laugh.

Thembela : Uyahleka uSebenzile. I'm serious. Abantu abasizi nokusiza,
bafika bayadla bayalala Ay mina bayangidida odadewethu.

She lifts up Khanya and goes to my bedroom. Let me chat with Sbani
before she comes back. I pull the chair and sit down.

Baby : Me

He is not replying. I moved to Facebook and found the biggest surprise. Firstly, I don't remember getting Sbani's Friend request on Facebook but I remember that he told me that we are friends. He posted my picture. He took this picture when we went on our first date, yes at the taxi rank. Oh wow!! The caption is "Livumile icamagu, ngiyathatha la kusasa." So many likes and comments. I want to jump and scream.

"Sebenzile, the chickens"

Aunt Thembela shouts from my bedroom.

Me : Oh shit, the chickens.

Chapter 23

ESHOWE

After 30 minutes of the Ntulis shouting our clan names at the gate and my uncles pretending not to hear them, the Mlambos finally let them in. To enter the gate required money so the Ntulis paid. Imvulamlo has been paid. My father was called for the negotiations and money was paid to coax him down from the tree. Everything was done. The negotiations are finally over. My father is happy, everyone is happy and I am blessed.

The Ntulis are done eating and they are ready to leave. I miss Sbani. The last time we spoke was this morning, around 5am. I take my phone, but before I dial his number my phone rings. I don't recognize this number. I pray it's not one of my cousins.

Me : Hello

"Makoti wakithi"

The person says. I smile, it's Lindokuhle. He is the only one who came with his two uncles. Sphiwokuhle couldn't make it due to work related issues.

Me : Bhuti, sawubona.

Lindo : Niyaphila sisi?

Me : All is well bhuti.

Lindo : Sisi kunomuyalezo engiwuphathiswe ubafo la. Bengicela nje uvele kancane.

Me : Kulungile bhuti, ngizoqhamuka nje manje.

Lindo : Ngiyabonga.

He ends the call. Uhmhm why was I in this room? Oh, drink, drink. Aunt Lucia asked for Coca cola. I check myself in the mirror first. I still look good in my dress and the scarf around my shoulder. Oh and the doek of course, to conclude the "Mrs Sbani " look. I fix the doek and smile.

Me : Okay, let's go.

I take the 2Ls of Coca cola and step out of my bedroom. Oh there is Nduna. He is one of my many cousins. I'm starting to think that the Mlambos thought this was a wedding because why would they all come here?

Me : Nduna?

Nduna : Yebo Mzala

Me : Please give these to Aunt Lucia. They are sitting in my mother's room. Ubatshela ukuthi i drink iyashisa kodwa.

Nduna : Okay, mzala.

I give him the drinks.

Me : Senidlile kodwa?

Nduna : Uma kudle abantu bangaphandle mzala ilokho okulungile.
Thina singadla late

I smile

Me : I hear you, mzala and thanks for coming.

Nduna : We are family. Once again, congratulations.

Me : Ngiyabonga Mdineka. I'm going to step out for five minutes. Uma kukhona ongidingayo.....

Nduna : Don't worry, I'll let them know.

Me : Thanks.

He walks away. I walk past my uncles in the dining room. They are still talking about how well the negotiations proceeded and how much they respect the Ntulis. I greet them for the hundredth time and step out. There is Lindo standing next to the car. I smile and make my way to him. He is smoking.

Me : Bhuti

He quickly hides his cigarette and turns around.

Lindo : Oh, sisi uwena.

He takes a few pulls and throws away the cigarette.

Lindo : I'm sorry.

I giggle.

Me : It's okay. Emuva kosuku lanamhlanje, you needed that.

We both laugh. He opens the door of the car.

Lindo : Cisho saquleka ilanga simile lapha esangweni.

I laugh. I furrow my brows seeing his hands coming out with a bunch of red roses and a big brown envelope. I swallow.

Lindo : Ngithunywe ubafo la. Uthe ucela ngikunike lokhu.

I laugh. I'm feeling emotional at the same time.

Me : Kodwa uSbani, nkosiyami.

I can't hide my tears of joy anymore. They squeeze out of my eyes.

Me : Ngiyabonga bhuti

Lindo : It's okay. Empeleni kubonga thina. Uyabona ke la leliyabhunu lakho lingidonse ngamadlebe ukuthi nje uma kuphela izingxoxo zamalobolo ngize ngikunike la.

I laugh and wipe my tears.

Me : Kodwa nkosiyami

I take the roses and the envelope.

Me : I hope these are not divorce papers.

We both laugh.

Lindo : Angifuni ke ukuba la uma usuthola ukuthi iwona. Sasicela indlela.

I smile

Me : Kulungile bhuti. Nihambe kahle

He smiles and bows his head. From there I went straight to my room and closed the door. The roses are so beautiful. They remind me of the ones they bought me at work for my birthday.

Me : Indoda yami nkosiyami

I smile while opening the envelope. I search inside the envelope. There's a white paper, but there's another envelope. A small blue one. I take it out and open it. It's a letter. I take a deep breath and begin reading it.

Dear Sthandwa sami.

Ngiyathemba uyaphila Thembalami. Uma uthola lencwadi kuyobe kusho ukuthi izingxoxo zamalobolo seziphelile kanti futhi zibe impumelelo. Sesilithathile igxathu lokuqala sthandwa sami. MaMlambo ngiyabonga. Ngibonga ukuthi uyihloniphile inhliziyo yami ngokuthanda wena wasondeza eyakho zashaya kanye kanye. Looking back I thought it was impossible. Thanks for making my life easier. Thank you for being mine

Advertisement

manakazi.

Imina owakho.

Me : Sbani

I finish reading it and press it over my chest. I stare up at the roof.

Me : My God, thank you. And if I ever doubted you, ngiyaxolisa. Thank you for trusting me with Sbanisokuhle. Nami futhi ngiyakwethemba ngakho konke ngoba nawe ungithembile.

I sigh and take out the white paper.

Me : What is this?

My eyes narrow as I look at it. It's a drawing, a beautiful drawing of a man and a woman. I laugh. This is actually me and him. My mouth gape opened as I read the drawing more carefully. Sbani is kneeling before me with a ring in his hands. There is a piano next to us.

Me : Will you marry me?

He is asking. Next to me there's a question mark and above there's "Fill out the missing words. Yes or Yes?"

Me : Oh my God.

I laugh. I take my phone and click on his number.

Me : Khuboni

Sbani : Sthandwa sami.

Me : Bhabha, is this your way of proposing?

He laughs.

Sbani : Proposing? Sthandwa sami, I'm not proposing. Ngicela ukuthi ungishade.

We both burst.

Me : Impendulo yami ihlale iwu yebo kuwena Sompisi. So yes, I am going to marry you. Ngingakushada umzuzu nomzuzu wokuphila kwami.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga Manakazi. Ngiyakuthanda Manu, uyezwa?

Me : I love you too bhabha, ngikuthanda ngenhliziyo yami yonke. Thank you for loving me Sbani sami.

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda ngempela.

Me : I know my love.

Sbani : Manje le ring iyangena?

I laugh.

Me : That's the thing Sompisi, I don't see the ring.

Sbani : Ikhona baby wami

I laugh

Me : Where is it?

Sbani : Ayikho ehlathini elibomvu sthandwa sami?

Me : Ehlathini eli...

I look around my bed and laugh out loud. The bunch of roses must be the red forest he is talking about.

Sbani : Awabheke phansi amahlathi sthandwa sami.

I laugh and turn the roses upside down. A small box fell out. I picked it up.

Me : Bhunu?

He laughs.

Sbani : Yah baby

Me : I found a box

We both laugh.

Sbani : Imali noma ibhokisi?

I burst.

Me : Ngikhetha ibhokisi sthandwa sami

Sbani : Open it.

I open it and my eyes widen. The last thing that blinded me like this was Sbani's face when I saw him for the first time in Verulam. This is amazing. This ring is amazing. My lips are quivering.

Me : Bhunu this is.....

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda Sebe. Ngiyabonga futhi.

After that he ended the call. I throw my phone on my bed and put my ring on. I fail to hold myself and break a loud scream of excitement. Immediately my door opens and everyone barges in. My eyes search for my father among the crowd.

Me : Baba? Baba!!

Mlambo : Sebenzile, what's wrong?

I jump with my hand up.

Me : Sbani, Sbani...

The words fail me. I show them the ring on my finger and hear everyone cheering.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Today is actually Sbani's birthday. All the lobola negotiations and him proposing, he did it all on his birthday. After Lindokuhle and the uncles came back from Eshowe they had a small braai to celebrate his birthday and everything else. The boys are still outside celebrating. MaNzilo and Mzwakhile are already in bed.

Mzwakhile : Labafana ngeke belale namhlanje.

MaNzilo nods.

Mzwakhile : Bhunuh is too excited. He wanted to go and fetch Sebenzile from eShowe but I stopped him. Izinto kufanele zenziwe ngendlela.

MaNzilo : Mhmmmm.

Mzwakhile : Akamutshelanga u Sebenzile ukuthi uyazalwa.

MaNzilo : Mhmmmm. Ungitshelile.

Mzwakhile : Ay, I also reconsidered the welcome ceremony for Sebenzile. I think it is a good idea. Singawenza yize ke noma bengeke beshade maduzane.

MaNzilo : So uzowenza?

Mzwakhile : Sizowenza Thandokazi.

MaNzilo : Did you tell Sbani that the lobola wasn't paid in full usabakweleta kaMlambo?

Mzwakhile : I don't understand why Sbani is willing to pay fifteen cows for Sebenzile because.....

MaNzilo : Mzwakhile please.

He sighs.

Mzwakhile : Besengisho nje. Ay kusale izinkomo ezine kanti nazo akukona ngoba nakhu zisihlulile, besenzela ukuhlonipha u Mlambo nje. Sometimes paying the lobola in full doesn't seem right. Kuke kubukeke njengokuchomela enye indoda.

MaNzilo : That's new. Mina angifuni uBhunuza ebukeye njengesahluleki kwa Mlambo. Kuze kube angathi indodakazi yabo igane isahluleki. They need to see that Bhunu is financially fit.

Mzwakhile : The rest of the cows will be paid before the end of next month. Ikhona imali ka Sbani akekho oyidlile.

MaNzilo : That's good.

There's silence.

Mzwakhile : I found the Ngemas.

MaNzilo's heart shutdown.

Mzwakhile : Udadewabo ka Celiwe omncane lo wase Lusikisiki uvumile ukuma endaweni ka Celiwe.

MaNzilo : So you are going to marry Celiwe's sister?

Mzwakhile : Uyibeka kabi ke manje Thandokazi. I'm not going to marry Lihle, uzobe ebambele udadewabo. Usiko, Thandokazi. U Celiwe akasekho ngakho kufanele kube udadewabo odlala indima yakhe ngosuku lomshado.

MaNzilo : Uzobe ushada no dadewabo kaCeliwe?

Mzwakhile : Ah! Ah! Ah! Sekufanele ngithini ke manje?

MaNzilo sits up.

MaNzilo : Nothing, don't say anything Mzwakhile! Ngazile ukuthi ngoba ushiya izingane nje emnyango ungilandela ufuna ukuzongitshela amasimba.

Mzwakhile : Dali, ngicela singaxabani. Thandokazi, uyazi ukuthi ngijabule kanjani ukuthi usekhona la emagcekeni akwaNtuli awuhamba. So can we not fight? Bengithi mina nawe we are making progress. Nami sengizama ukuba neqiniso kuwe kodwa manje ngibona angathi iqiniso lifuna ukusixabanisa.

MaNzilo : Let me tell you something. Uyabona into esangihlalise la emagcekeni akwa Ntuli akulona uthando lwakho Mzwakhile. I am here because of my kids.

Mzwakhile : What ab...

Me : It has nothing to do with you or uthando lwakho!!

MaNzilo gets out of bed and wears her slippers.

Mzwakhile : Thandokazi, where are you going?

Me : Ay that is none of your business!

She takes her gown and puts it on while making her way out.

Chapter 24

Sbani was supposed to fetch me from eShowe on Sunday. I don't know what happened to him because from Saturday night I wasn't getting hold of him. I can't describe how angry I am. Maybe love is not for me. Clearly there's something wrong with me.

It's Wednesday and I'm back at work. When I arrived last night Sbani wasn't in his room and when I went to check it seemed like he hadn't been there for days. Sbani is a player. That doll face of his means trouble. I wonder why he bothered with the lobola and that ring. I'm ready to go back to that empty flat, even Roxanne is not there. She went to visit her family so I'll be all alone. After all the congratulations I received today, I'm ready to go to my house and sleep. I'm drained. My phone is ringing.

Me : U Sbani akahlukane nami bakithi.

He's been calling all day today. He is done with whatever he was doing and so he remembered that there's Sebenzile in the picture. No, I'm not going to allow him to treat me like shit. Menzi was enough. There is a knock. It's Grace. I switch off my phone and put it inside my handbag.

Grace : Hey you

Me : Grace, Hi.

Grace : I thought you'd be gone already.

I laugh.

Me : No, I'm still here. I'm changing these shoes then I'm off.

Grace : I'm so happy I found you. I came to congratulate you about the engagement. I heard that "Mr" popped the big question.

I smile

Me : He did.

I show her my ring and her eyes widen. She holds my hand with her mouth wide open.

Grace : Oh my God, this is stunning Seh. Congratulations sweetheart

Me : Thank you, thank you.

She let go of my hand.

Grace : I'm sorry I couldn't come earlier. My day was very busy.

Me : It's okay, I understand.

Grace : I knew he was a gent when he came directly to me and asked me to throw a surprise party for you. He came right here and asked to speak with me. To think he thought I was going to say no is straight crazy. How can one say no to him? He is so pretty.

Pretty? Okay. We are both laughing. No, wait. What?

Me : Grace, wait. You say he came here to do what? Can you kindly repeat that?

Grace : Your fiance, he came.... Wait, you didn't know?

I swallow and try to pull out a smile.

Me : Oh yeah, the birthday party. No, I know about it. I thought... I thought you were talking about something else.

Grace : All good. Congrats Seh.

She hugs me.

Me : Thank you.

Grace : I'll see you tomorrow...wait, are you coming tomorrow? It's Thursday.

She is asking me. I laugh.

Me : I don't know.

Grace : Mhmmm

She smiles.

Grace : You know what? Let's call it off for now. I'll call you if you are needed.

Me : Oh my God, thank you so much sister Grace.

Grace : You are welcome sweetheart.

She smiles and walks out. I'm happy about working one day this week but what the hell did Sbani do? I'm dumbstruck. I am now sure that he is the one who paid my rent the first month I moved in as well.

The clock hit 17h00 and we knocked off. From work we normally walk to Cornubia Mall and from there we catch a taxi to Gateway. It's always me and some of my colleagues. Today we are walking together again. There's this one, his name is Thabo and he's been trying his luck with me ever since he started working with us. He started 2 days after me.

Thabo : Kodwa wena shoti ngisahalela ukubamba lama hips akho.

He says looking at my bums and licking his lips. Jeck! I roll my eyes.

Me : Oh please. You know Thabo to be honest with you angiyithandi lento oyenzayo. I really don't like it.

Nsiki : Oh come on usuke edlala!

Nsiki is that one girl who likes poking her nose every time I'm talking to Thabo. I think she likes him.

Me : I don't like his jokes.

Nsiki : Oh hhayini! Waze waneconsi bo namhlanje Sebenzile. Is it the ring?

Me : Ingenaphi i ring?

Nsiki : Hhaibo! Wena Sebenzile inkinga ucabanga ukuthi every guy wants you.

She is childish. I'm not going to entertain her. My phone is vibrating again. I know it's Sbanisokuhle. I shouldn't have switched it on, but it's fine I'm going to ignore him.

Nsiki : Hhaibo amanye amantombazane anenkinga emhlabeni.

She snorts and shakes her head. I don't know what's her problem with me. Something big is coming behind us.

Thola : Yaze yagijima ibhasi ezayo. Ngicela nigudluke emgaqweni.

The bus drove past us at a high speed. I've seen a bus written "Amadoda amabili ahlange ngami" at the back and this is it. But where did I see it?

Nsiki : Iyaphi i MNT ngala?

Nsiki knows everything. The MNT she is talking about is written in bold on the sides of the bus.

Thabo : Amadoda amabili ahlange ngami. What the fuck?

We all burst into laughter. But seriously why would anyone write that on their bus?

Thabo : Nayi ibuya futhi.

The bus comes back and stops right in the middle of the road.

Me : Is this driver crazy?

Before I swallow my words, Sbani jumps out of the driver's seat. He is running on his way to us. He is still in his work uniform. My light in the dark. My vanilla. He looks so clean. His work boots are shining. I almost smile but then I remember what he did.

Sbani : Sebe? Ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami.

He grabs my hand. Thabo, Nsiki and Thola are already staring at me.

Sbani : Sanibona

"Yebo"

They say in unison. They seem surprised by... I don't know what.

Sbani : Ngizolanda u baby... I mean ngicela ningiboleke lo sisi kancane.

Thola : No, problem.

Sbani : Baby

He whispers and kisses my cheek.

Me : Sbani what are you doing here?

He pulls me away from the rest.

Sbani : Sthandwa sami, I was worried about you. Awubambi ama calls ami usuku lonke.

Me : You are being unfair right now and you know it.

Sbani : I am. Can we please go?

Me : Fine

He takes my handbag and wraps his arm around my waist.

Me : Guys I'll see you on Sunday.

Nsiki : Okay, oe uhambe kahle.

Thola : Bye babes

I'm not going to introduce Sbani because I'm not sure if he is still my fiance. But I'm still going to wrap my hand around his arm because honestly I missed this bastard.

Me : Bye

We walk away. As soon as we get to the bus I immediately remove my hand.

Me : Can I please have my bag?

Sbani : Sebe, ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami.

Me : I hear you Sbani. Sengicela isikhwama sami.

He sighs.

Sbani : Ngicela ukushiya le bus e Verulam sithathe imoto kuPhiwo.

Me : Whatever Sbani.

He blows out yet another sigh and hands me my handbag. He kisses my hand and I get inside the bus. He goes to the driver's seat. I don't know how he drives such a huge bus. I sit down and close my eyes.

We left the bus in Verulam and he took a car from Sphiwokuhle. From there he drove to a hotel. In 26 years of my life I've never set foot into a hotel. Our hotel room is really beautiful and very romantic with those red rose petals around. There's dinner set on the floor. I love the candles they smell good, with a bit of lavender.

We are sitting on the floor and both of us are still in our work uniform. We are eating in silence. I'm the only one who is actually eating and Sbani is playing with his food while stealing glances at me. He clears his throat.

Sbani : Umtshelile uBaba ukuthi awufundi, uyasebenza?

He is trying to be funny. Let me ignore him.

Sbani : Okay, Manu ngiyaxolisa phela sthandwa sami. Please talk to me. Ngishaye ke Sebe or something but ungangizibi sthandwa sami.

Me : Where were you, Sbani?

He swallows his Adam apple.

Sbani : Ngashiya ifoni emakhaya, baby. Ngize ngayithola namhlanje ekseni.

Me : Ungakhulumi iphutha Bhunu. Emakhaya akuphi?

Sbani : Le

Me : Le kuphi Sbanisokuhle? Ayikho lento oyishoyo. Mphemba, kade ungilobola Saturday and after that you just vanished. You didn't return

my messages. You weren't picking up my calls. Wagcina usuvale ucingo.

His pink eyes move all around my face. He runs his hand through his dreadlocks.

Me : Iyona surprise obungitshela ngayo leyo? Ukuthi wena uzonyamalala right after the lobola negotiations?

Sbani : No

Me : We were supposed to be together on Saturday night. I even shaved. Ngashefela amahhala.

We both burst into laughter.

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa manakazi, ngiyaxolisa ngempela swidi lami.

Me : I don't like what you did. Uqede yonke injabulo ebenginayo.

Sbani : I'm trying to make it up to you sthandwa sami. Ilokhu ebengifuna sikwenze ngomgqibelo but....

He raises his hands and sighs.

Me : What happened?

Sbani : Huh?

I know he heard me.

Me : Don't say "huh". Ungizwile. What happened?

Sbani : Nothing baby, can we just enjoy the night?

I smile. He moves and sits right behind me. I'm now between his legs.

Sbani : Can we do that?

Me : Yes

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa, manu.

He whispers in my neck and I feel my whole body sweating. My heart starts pounding. He kisses my neck. My head falls on the side. He runs his hands on my breasts and squeezes them. His wet lips are all over my neck. He unbuttons my shirt and I feel my heart beating together with my clit.

Me : Sbani

I whisper. He gets up.

Sbani : Woza la sthandwa sami.

He helps me up. My eyes stare up at his eyes and his stare down at mine. His hand is at the back of my head. I lick my lower lip and he kisses me. He unclips my bra and I take a deep breath. My shirt drops to the floor followed by my bra. I'm nervous, one would swear I'm a virgin. We take the kiss to the bed. What confuses me is that I'm now butt naked but he is still fully dressed. I unzip his top overall and his body tenses up. I stop.

Me : Are you okay?

He flashes a smile.

Sbani : Yah.

We continue kissing. The kiss is getting rough. He takes off his overall. He is wearing a white vest underneath. I pull it up but he grabs my hands.

Sbani : Please don't.

His breathing is heavy. This is serious. I sit up.

Me : Sbani what's wrong?

I ask while my eyes search all around him. They stop at his arms. His arms have round dark circles. They are all over his arms. This is new.

Me : What is this?

His jaw tightens. He blinks and looks away.

Me : Sbani?

I pull back his face.

Me : What happened?

He swallows hard and takes off the vest. My eyes widen. His whole body is like his arms. My skin shivers. He jumps out of bed.

Sbani : I'm sorry.

I take his overall and cover my vagina.

Me : No, don't be... Don't be so... Sorry.

Jesus! This is scary.

Me : Why are you like this?

He rubs his face.

Sbani : I was sick.

Me : Sick?

Sbani : Ingakho ngingakwazanga ukuza kuwena. I tried Sebe. Ngazama ukuza kuwena but the rain got heavy, ngaze nganethwa ngithi ngiyolanda imoto e carwash and after that ngagula.

Me : Wagula? Waguliswa imvula?

He turns and looks at me.

Sbani : Yes. Enye yezinkinga zami leyo. My body can't handle the rain and the heat.

Me : W... what?

Sbani : Sebe, I wanted to tell you kodwa lento angi.... Iyangi.....

He stutters. He stares up at the ceiling and tightens his hands on his dreadlocks. I see tears rolling down to his ears. I drop everything and run to hug him. As I hug him I get this unusual pungent body odour from him . It's quite unpleasant. It must be these things on his body but who the fuck cares? This is my man and I'm going to love him with all that he is and all that I am. I hold him tightly and break into tears.

Chapter 25

Continuation....

We are both calm now and his mood seems to have improved compared to when we arrived. We are sitting in our favorite position. He is lying on his back and I'm sitting on top of him. We are both naked. At this moment it's like his body belongs to somebody else or a certain animal while his face looks like one of an angel. His face is so clean, absolutely spotless and his lips look like they were designed with those small brown dots. His body compared to his face looks crazy at this moment. This thing starts from the back of his neck all the way down to his body . Even his penis is like this. I'm slowly getting used to it now, but I'm trying my best to concentrate more on his face.

Sbani : Doctors call it a rare genetic disorder. According to them, I carry the wrong genetic material.

Me : What? What does that mean? Isn't that dangerous?

Sbani : No baby it's not. I'm just at increased risk of getting skin cancer just like any other person with albinism.

Me : No! Cancer?

He laughs.

Sbani : Relax sthandwa sami, I'm not dying.

I let out a sigh.

Sbani : Angithi uyazi ukuthi Sunburn is one of the most complications of albinism?

I shake my head.

Me : No

Sbani : It is. Yingakho ngilizonda ngenhliziyo yami yonke ilanga

I think everyone with albinism does.

Me : Kodwa wena awufani namanye ama albino. Engiwaziyo ahlukile.

He laughs

Sbani : What do you mean?

Me : I don't know but you look normal and you do normal things.

He raises his eyebrows

Sbani : I don't understand. How?

Me : Don't get me wrong bhabha, but amanye ama albino ngathi awaphilile kahle ekhanda namehlo abo ngathi anenkinga.

He smiles and kisses my hands.

Sbani : Manu, we have different types of albinism. I have what is called Ocular albinism, Which primarily affects the eyes. Do you see how pink my eyes are?

Me : Very pink.

Sbani : They have no melanin at all. But if you look at my hair, they are blonde kodwa u blonde....

Me : Awukho mhlophe, unobu brown. It's different.

Sbani : Yes baby. And what you haven't noticed is that I can see out of both eyes but I can't see the same object with both eyes at the same time.

He laughs.

Me : What?

Sbani : I'm serious sthandwa sami. Nginehlo elilodwa elisebenza kahle as in perfectly.

Me : Love wait, are you looking at me with one eye right now?

He is laughing.

Me : Are you?

I can't help but laugh too.

Sbani : No, lalela baby. Ukubuka nje udlulisa amehlo akufani nokubuka ugxile entweni. Uyabona thina people with albinism, if something really catches our attention or has our full attention uboke unake siyibuka ngehlo elilodwa leli elinye mase liyavaleka. Uyabona ke lapho sisuke sigxilile. Awukaze uwabone ama albino uma ebuka? Enza nje.

He closes one eye in half. We both burst into laughter. I bury my face on his chest.

Sbani : Awukaze uwabone baby? Sometimes I do that too, especially when I'm drawing. Yazi yinindaba baby? Yingoba amehlo ethu awaboni ngendlela efanayo. There's always that one blurry eye.

Me : Really?

Sbani : Ehhene sthandwa sami. Manje if we are looking at something angathi singalivala leli elingaboni kahle ukuze uyabo? Sibone kahle nathi nkosiyami.

I can't stop laughing. What he is saying is not funny but the problem is how he says it. My man knows how to make me laugh.

Me : But I've never seen you looking at me or something else with one eye. Uhlezi nje ubuka kahle.

Sbani : That's because emini angibi nankinga. During the day amehlo ami abona kahle womabili inkinga ibakhona mengike ngabuka umubala ogqamile or a bright light without my glasses. But otherwise ngisuke ngi right emini. Inkinga isebusuku. And what I did is, I trained my eyes when I was growing up. Umawami u MaNzilo owayengisiza, she helped me a lot. Wayengithethisa mengivala elilodwa. Nalento yokuhlekwa ke ebholeni mawudlala nezinye izingane. Zingibiza ngo One Eye kuvele kuthi angife.

He laughs.

Me : Oh man,I'm so sorry baby.

Sbani : That's how I mastered ukuvula amehlo ami womabili almost all the time. As painful as it was kodwa ngazama. Yize ke phela engafani nawomuntu ongenayo inkinga yamehlo.

Me : I see nothing wrong with them. They look perfectly fine to me. At first I thought you were wearing lenses.

We both laugh.

Sbani : No, they are not perfectly fine. Uma ngidweba noma ngithunga or even reading angathi ngingasondeza amehlo eduze naleyonto engisuke ngiyenza. Ilapho ke elinye ihlo elivaleka khona involuntarily.

Me : And then when you are driving, do you struggle to see?

Sbani : Only at night. My vision is completely blurry during the night. Ingakho nje imoto yami ihamba u Sphiwo most of the time yingoba uyena who drives me around ebusuku.

Me : So your eyes are mostly sensitive to light during the night?

Sbani : Exactly. And my face. My face skin is not sensitive at all. Angikaze ngibe ngisho nesilonda esisodwa ebusweni bami.

Me : Awugcobi lutho?

Sbani : No, baby. Even my doctor was shocked eqala ukungibona. Uyabo ilanga noma imvula doesn't affect my skin ebusweni. But uma sengingenwe ilanga noma imvula esikhumbeni somzimba wami ubuso bami ibona obungitshela kuqala. I become too white, ngizwe izinhlungu ebusweni kuqala and after that, the pain strikes my body. Sometimes it gets really bad, Sebe.

Me : U bad odlula lo?

He chuckles and shakes his head.

Me : Baby, manje does albinism affect one's behavior or their mind?

He shakes his head.

Sbani : I believe it doesn't. Let me tell you according to my perspective neyabanye abantu esengike ngasondelana nabo abaphila ne albinism njengami. You see us , people with albinism tend to feel more pressure than other human beings. Mina ngikhula I don't even think ngangibona ukuthi I have albinism until kushona umama ongizalayo kwayilapho ngiqala impilo entsha nabafowethu no mawami... I mean my step-mother and lapho ngase ngiqala ukubona ukuthi aybo labantu bonke ba dark and I'm white. My question was why? Noma ngiphuma ngiyodlala I was the only one white. Ay ngabona ukuthi i wrong lento.

He has started. We are laughing again.

Sbani : Ngaqala manje ngathi wemah what's going on? Why am I white?
Wathi u Nzilo that's because uyibhunu. Nabantu mebekubuza ukuthi
why umhlophe ubatshele ukuthi uyibhunu.

We laugh.

Sbani : Kwasho ukuthi utshele uhlanya. I went on tell everyone ukuthi
mina ngu Bhunu.

We laugh. He sighs.

Sbani : Our appearance makes us very distinct and that on its own can
create psychological problems. Ukukhula ngimhlophe ngedwa ekhaya
and in my community messed up my head but I got used to it ngoba
umndeni wami was there for me. Bangenza ngazamukela. To answer
your question, sthandwa sami ngingathi, I believe we don't have mental
problems. The problem is the pressure that comes with albinism. We
are too sensitive and we tend to over analyze things. We take
judgments too personally . Into oyisho kumina manje ingahlala kumina
impilo yami yonke, especially if it's a bad thing. We suffer from poor
self - esteem and stress most of the time. Indawo kanye nabantu

umuntu ophila ne albinism ahlala nabo iyona e affecta i behavior yakhe.
You understand?

Me : I get you

Sbani : Ugcina usuwenza izinto ngehaba because the pressure is high.
So senza izinto ngehaba nangamawala because we want to prove that
we are normal and we want people to see us as normal. Uma wenza
izinto ngokutatazela nangehaba ugcina usubonakala njengomuntu
ophazamisekile emqondweni, which is not real.

Me : So what would you say to parents who are raising a child with
albinism.

Sbani : I'd say tough.

We both laugh.

Me : Sbani awukahle.

Sbani : Aaaah, what would I say? Phew! I'd say never make them feel
like outsiders or treat them like outsiders. Treat them like normal

people. The reaction of other people to those with albinism can have a negative impact on people with the condition. And also offer them emotional support. Thina sihlale si complaina baby and when we do sifuna umuntu ozosilalela. As much as we hate attention, but we love it at the same time. Imibono esiyibekayo ibalulekile kuthina and we want to be heard.

I smile.

Me : Do you know how much I love you?

He smiles and shakes his head.

Sbani : Mhmm-Mhmmm

I laugh.

Me : I love you so much

bhabha. Ibhunu lami.

He laughs.

Sbani : Vanilla

I laugh out loud.

Me : You got my message?

Sbani : I did.

We laugh.

Me : Yes, you are my vanilla.

I giggle. He is staring at me with a smile on his face. I shrug.

Me : What?

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda

Me : You do?

Sbani : Ngangolwandle. Woza la

I laugh and throw my lips on his. We kiss and he moves his hands to my butts. How he is playing with my buttocks is dangerous. He is like closing and opening them while he lifts them up and down. I feel wetness soaking my vagina. I squeeze and stretch it. I'm moaning softly. He breaks the kiss.

Sbani : Awufuni ngiyogeza?

Why is that question breaking my heart? I know what I said about his body odour, but I don't want him to say it. I look at him and shake my head.

Me : No, my love.

Sbani : Are you sure? Baby ngiyazi ukuthi umzimba wami uya....

I kiss the last words. I'm getting wetter. He grabs his work pants and takes out a box of Lovers Plus condoms. We are staring at each other and laughing while he puts on the condom. His love of laughing is

rubbing in on me. Sbanisokuhle is a sweetheart, always laughing or smiling.

Me : I want to be on top.

We both laugh.

Sbani : Ngempela sthandwa sami?

Me : Uh! Uzongikhotha inkomo?

I ask and laugh out loud. He is also laughing.

Sbani : No. Kanti baby unjani nje ngempela? Sebe lomlomo ngithandaza ngawo ngiphinde ngikhulume nedlozi.

I laugh.

Me : Uthandaza ngomlomo nje, ay ngolimi.

We laugh.

Sbani : Sebe no, no, no.

I burst. He kisses my lips.

Me : Oh my goodness

I mutter as his penis slides into my vagina. I'll have to make peace with the fact that he is not a "vagina eater". I lie flat on top of him and move my butts slowly with his penis inside me. He pounds me. He is the rough type I see. He is already doing all the work under me and I'm screaming his name on top of him. You know what? Fuck this condom. I slip out his tall penis and grab it. I snatch the condom and roll it around my finger. I'm about to pull out the condom when he stops me.

Sbani : Sebe, no, no. Huh-huh baby, don't do that.

Me : Hawu love ngobani? Ngiyakucela.

Sbani : No

Me : Why? Usaba ukuthi uzongigulisa?

Sbani : No. That's not what I'm scared of. My viral load has been undetectable for over six months ngakho ngiyazi ukuthi amathuba okuthi ngikuthelele mancane. But I'm not going to take that risk ngoba iqiniso ukuthi, I'm HIV positive. Ngiyagula Sebe.

I peck his lips.

Me : Nami ngifuna ukugula nawe.

Sbani : What? No,Sebe.

Me : Bhunu....

Sbani : I said no, sthandwa sami. Please don't do that.

Me : Okay. Sala ke.

I climbed off him. He blows out a long sigh.

Sbani : Yini ke manje Sebenzile?

Me : Nothing

Sbani : Talk to me.

Me : No, ukuthi I don't understand. Imina engizisholoyo ukuthi ngifunani. Angisho ngoba ngihlanya or something, but isinqumo sami. Is my decision wrong? Ngi wrong kuphi?

Sbani : Isinqumo sakho siyabheda Sebe. Uyazi ukuthi kunzima kanjani ukudla amaphilisi impilo yakho yonke? The side effects?

Me : Exactly. Sbani isifo sengculazi yinto ozophila nayo impilo yakho yonke. So you want to tell me that we are going to use condoms for the rest of your life? What about what I want?

Sbani : Sebe...

Me : Mphemba, you are being selfish right now. But it's fine, I understand.

I fix the pillow and sleep. He exhales sharply and climbs on top of me.

Sbani : Ngibuke phela sthandwa sami.

I open my eyes and look at him.

Sbani : Baby, angifuni wenze into ongayicabangile noma ozosisola ngayo lapho mina ngingeke ngisenza lutho.

Me : Ngeke ngizisole

Sbani : Are you sure?

Me : Yes, I'm sure.

He sighs.

Sbani : Okay.

He sits up and takes off the condom. He looks at me and throws it on the floor. I'm smiling. He chuckles and shakes his head.

Sbani : Your love is so stupid sthandwa senhliziyo yami.

I laugh.

Me : I love you too, bhabha.

He spreads my legs and inserts his penis. Nothing beats having sex with the man that you love wholeheartedly. I moan loudly with my breasts bouncing. What is funny is that every time I open my eyes I find Sbani staring at me in disbelief, but he is still pounding me like nobody's business. It's like he is saying "You are unbelievable but I'm going to fuck you". He is staring at me deeply. I wonder what he is thinking. Does he understand how much I love him? His head finally falls against my shoulder and he goes harder.

Sbani : I love you manakazi, I love you so much.

He keeps whispering the same words in my ear. I clench my teeth and my body stiffens.

Sbani : Dammit!

He pulls out.

Sbani : Cisho ngachamela kuwena.

We both laugh while gasping for air. I run my hand through his dreadlocks. He closes his eyes and kisses my breasts. We are still trying to catch our breath when someone knocks on the door.

Me : Who is that?

Sbani : Eish Phiwo.... Sho bafo!

Me : U Sphiwokuhle?

He lifts up his head and rubs his face.

Sbani : Yeah. I'm feeling dizzy.

Sphiwokuhle continues to knock.

Sbani : Fuck

He says and jumps out of bed. I laugh.

Me : Uzonzani u Phiwo?

I really don't understand why he would follow his little brother all the way to the hotel.

Sbani : Baby, udayisa ama Energy drink uPhiwo.

He says while wrapping the towel around his waist. I giggle.

Me : Energy drink? Lana?

Sbani : Ngiyeza bafo. Ngiyeza.

He goes to get the door. I pull the duvet and cover myself, even my head. I hear them talking.

Sphiwo : Ngifake awu 20

Sbani : Okay. These flavors are new

Sphiwo : Uphi uSis'Sebe pho?

Sbani : Ulele u Sebe

Sphiwo : Kungabe uhleli nesinye isfebe la njalo wena Bhunu.

Sbani : Uyahlanya. Why uthenge amanye ama flavor? Ngeke beyiphuze lento emsebenzini.

Sphiwo : They will drink it. Bafuna amandla kanti bona noma bafuna ubumnandi?

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Uyiphuzile kodwa wena?

Sphiwo : Angihlanyi phela mina. Bhabhayi, ungikhonzele ku koti.

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Sho

Sbani is coming back. I pull off the duvet and look at him. He is looking at some cans.

Me : Is he gone?

Sbani : Yah sthandwa sami.

Me : What is that?

He places the can on the table and comes back to bed. He climbs on top of me and kisses me all over my face.

Sbani : Phiwo is selling energy drinks manje nami ngibuye ngimudayisele lapha emsebenzini.

Me : Wow, that's nice.

Sbani : Yena akawaphuzi uthi ayagulisa kodwa thina uyasidayisela.

We both laugh.

Me : Manje mina Uzungishiya ngedwa uye emsebenzini ksasa?

Sbani : No, you are coming with me. Ngizosebenza nawe ngikubelethile.

I crack up.

Me : You are so crazy.

He smiles.

Sbani : Sebe, ngiyakuthanda.

Me : I love you too, baby.

I wrap my arms around him. I love him so much, God knows.

Chapter 26

I wake up from my very deep sleep and my eyes shut open. My mind is telling me we overslept. Shit! Sbani needs to go to work. I sit up immediately and look around the bed.

Me : Sbani!

I shout once and he appears from the bathroom side. He is wearing a huge smile on his face. He is already getting dressed for work. The first things that catches my attention are fading dark marks on his body.

Sbani : Good Morning sthandwa sami.

Me : Hey baby, what time is it?

Sbani : Four fifteen. Cisho ngaselwa

I yawn while scratching my arm. He laughs softly.

Sbani : Go back to sleep.

I shake my head.

Me : Uh-huh. You are getting better

He looks at his arms.

Sbani : Yeah, kuqale kube bomvu like subcutaneous bleeding and then it turns into black and after that it fades away.

Me : I see it's better than last night.

Sbani : It will be completely gone by tomorrow.

He gets closer and lifts up my chin. I pull out my tired smile. He kisses my lips.

Sbani : You look tired.

Me : Wena waze wamuhle. Ubani okubophe ekhanda?

His dreadlocks are so clean and long. He kisses me again.

Sbani : Me. Ulale kahle?

Me : I did my love. And you?

Sbani : Oh me? Me, I love you.

I laugh.

Me : I love you too bhabha, kakhulu.

He goes and opens the closet.

Me : You brought an extra work uniform?

Sbani : Ngiqale la nje mina sthandwa sami and I checked in. Ngaphatha izingubo zasemsebenzini because I knew we were going to spend the night here.

Me : What about my work uniform?

Sbani : It's Thursday.

I yawn and throw myself back to the pillow. I can't believe sex did this to me.

Me : So from here you are going straight to work?

Sbani : Yes, that's why Sphiwo brought his energy drinks last night yingoba ubazi ukuthi ngeke sibonane manje ekseni.

Me : Kusho ukuthi uzongishiya endlini mina.

Sbani : Why? Ngizophuma emsebenzini ngize la nje.

Me : No, I'll be bored here without you. Kungcono eMountview.

Sbani : Vuka ugqoke ke baby, ngingaze ngibe late. Uzogeza eflatini.

I stretch my arms and close my eyes. Waking up feels like a mission.

Sbani : Uyezwa baby?

He sits on the bed and zips up his work overall. I place my head in his lap. He kisses my cheek and gently scratches my hair.

Me : Mina ngikhathele

Sbani : Lala sthandwa sami. Uma usuvukile you'll give me a call mina ngizobe sengifonela u Lindo ngimcele ezokulanda la ekuyise eflatini.

Me : But I'm scared of Lindo. Kungcono ngisho u Phiwo.

Sbani : Ngeke baby, Phiwo was working the night shift. Uzobuya ekhathele manje ekseni elale. U Lindo akanalutho.

Sbani is just saying because Lindo is his brother but Lindokuhle is really scary, even though he is always laughing.

Sbani : Kuthiwa awukho futhi ugesi e Mountview.

Me : Wee! Ay angiyi.

Sbani : Okay baby. Nami ngizosheshe ngibuye emsebenzini, uyezwa?

Me : Okay love.

He presses his lips on my cheek.

Sbani : Lala ke sthandwa sami

He fixes the pillow for me and I place my head. He covers my body with a duvet and kisses my forehead.

Me : Akushisi namhlanje?

Sbani : No, I don't think kuzoshisa baby.

Me : What if it gets hot?

Sbani : Ngizosebenza ngaphakathi.

I smile.

Me : Uphathe isigqoko kodwa

He laughs and kisses me

Sbani : I love you, woman.

Me : I love you too, Mphemba omuhle.

Sbani : I'll ask them to bring your breakfast at 09:00, yezwa?

He pecks my nose.

Me : What are you going to eat at work?

I didn't even hear his reply. Right there I fell asleep. I wake up to my phone ringing and someone knocking on the door. I didn't see Sbani

leaving for work. It's now five minutes after 09 am. I'm sure that's my breakfast at the door. Roxanne is blowing up my phone.

Me : Hey Rox, can you please call me in 3 minutes? I need to take care of something.

Roxanne : Sho, no problem.

Me : Cool.

I hung up and ran to the door. I fix the towel around me while looking around the room. Sbani threw away that condom, good. I open the door.

Me : Hi

I greet the lady that is bringing my breakfast.

Her : Hi sisi. Your breakfast.

Me : Thank you so much. You may come in.

I open the door for her and she walks in pushing a serving trolley.

Me : Thank you.

Her : You are welcome. Can I help you with anything else?

Me : No, thank you.

She smiles and makes her way out. I close the door and call Roxanne back.

Roxanne : I was about to call you.

I laugh.

Roxanne : Did you move out or something?

Me : Move out? No. Why would I move out?

Roxanne : You tell me. You are very scarce these days, where are you?

Me : With my man. He booked us into a hotel last night.

Roxanne : Wow, hotel. Where? Greenpoint?

Why the fuck would Sbani booked us into Greenpoint? This is pure disrespect.

Me : No, Coastlands.

I'm sure she is getting a heart attack. She thinks only Dylan can afford to do good things for her.

Roxanne : You lie! I don't believe you.

Me : I'm being honest.

Roxanne : Wait, I'm in Gateway. I was dropping my sister off for her interview.

Roxanne is unbelievable. She thinks I'm lying.

Me : Oh my God, really?

Roxanne : Yeah, let's have breakfast.

Me : Forget breakfast. We are actually checking out today. Sbani has gone to work and I'm all by myself waiting for his big brother to pick me up.

Roxanne : Okay, let's go home together then.

Me : Excellent. Thank you

Roxanne : There's another call coming... I'll see you now.

Me : No problem.

I hung up. Thank God I won't be going with Lindo anymore. I jump inside the shower. I don't even have clothes or clean underwear. This is a disaster. I'll just wear my work skirt and vest. I finished showering and

packed Sbani's uniform that he was wearing yesterday. I'll eat while waiting for Roxanne.

I'm almost done eating. Let me just call Sbani and tell him I'm going with Roxanne. I take my phone but it rings before I call Sbani.

Me : Rox

Roxanne : Please hurry.

What's wrong with her now? Her voice is shaky.

Me : Are you okay?

Roxanne : Seh, just come!!

I widen my eyes. She ends the call. What the hell? I sigh and shake my head. Ey women are something else. I put my phone inside Sbani's bag and lifted up the bags. I'm rushing on my way out. I leave the card that they gave me at the reception and walk out. I find Roxanne waiting. She is using her husband's car. I put the bags in the back and I sit in the

front. She is staring into space. Her face is red. This is worse than I thought.

Me : Gogozi what's wrong?

Roxanne : It's Dylan.

Me : What happened to Dylan?

Roxanne : Dylan has been shot.

She says while looking at me out of the corners of her eyes. She blinks a couple of times and I see tears rolling down her cheeks.

Me : Roxanne hhaibo, how? What happened?

She blows out a sigh and wipes her tears. She blows her nose.

Roxanne : I don't know, I got a call from one of his friends. He is telling me that they were shot by the police, but they managed to get away. I don't even know where they ran to.

Me : Why would the police shoot them?

Roxanne : Because they are Wanted. You know what? I am sick and tired of Dylan and his stupid dealings. Dylan doesn't listen. He doesn't!

She bangs the steering wheel. I didn't know that Dylan was troublesome.

Me : Rox, I'm so sorry.

Roxanne : If he wants to die and leave his kids then so be it.

She starts the car.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

MaNzilo is busy grilling the chicken in the kitchen. Lindokuhle barges in.

MaNzilo : Oh my boy, I didn't know you were coming so early.

Lindo flashes a smile. He doesn't seem okay, does he? Poor babymaker. Is he dealing with another baby mama drama?

MaNzilo : I'm happy you are here. I'm making your favorite. Grilled chicken and roasted vegetables.

Lindo wraps his arms around her.

Lindo : Umawethu osithandayo. Siyabonga Mah.

MaNzilo : Ngiyabonga nami mfana wami.

Lindo : U.. UPhiwo yena ukuphi?

MaNzilo : Akalele yini ngale e dining room ku sofa?

Lindo : I didn't see him when I was walking in.

MaNzilo : He was complaining about the heat in his room. Wena, are you okay? You seem nervous.

I'm with MaNzilo on this one.

Lindo : I'm fine Mah.

MaNzilo : Where is Bhunu? Ngibona sekuhlwa engakafiki.

Lindo : He is probably on his way. Let me check on Phiwo.

MaNzilo's face crunches.

MaNzilo : Are you sure you are okay?

Lindo : Yeah. Ngiyeza

MaNzilo : Okay. Nifonele uBhunu bandla

Lindo : Okay

Lindo goes to the living room and finds Sphiwokuhle fast asleep on the couch. He shakes him.

Lindo : Phiwo?

Sphiwo : Mhmmm.

Lindo : Sphiwokuhle awuvuke bafo. Sphiwokuhle!

Sphiwokuhle opens his eyes to Lindo staring right at him.

Sphiwo : Yini wena?

Lindo laughs.

Lindo : Ugrand? Awuvuke, awuvuke.

He taps his shoulder. Sphiwokuhle sits up.

Lindo : Ulele endlini eshisa kanje. Uyicimeleni i fan?

Sphiwo : Sinus

Lindo : Eish, kambe. Awuze la emnyango sikhulume kancane.

Sphiwokuhle grabs his t-shirt and uses it to wipe the sweat off his face. He leaves it on the couch and follows Lindokuhle. Sphiwokuhle is a teddy bear of the family. He is chubby. Lindokuhle is a gym rat. Amongst the three of them, Sbani is the skinny one and the taller one. Just like Mzwakhile.

Sphiwo : What's wrong?

Lindo : Ey, bafo, awukaze ukhulume noSebe?

Sphiwo : Kanjani? What happened?

Lindo : It looks like she is missing.

Sphiwo : Missing?

Sphiwokuhle is shocked.

Lindo : Please keep your voice down. I don't want Ma to hear us.
Uyamazi nje ukuthi unjani.

Sphiwo : Ulahleke kanjani? They were together last night.

Lindo : I know. And this morning Sbani woke up and went to work, washiya uSebe ehotela. I was supposed to go and fetch Sebe from the hotel ngimuhambise eMountview.

Sphiwo : Manje?

Lindo : Nangoke umakoti wakini akasatholakali efonini. Bhunu has been trying to contact her kusukela ngo 09:30 kodwa akamutholi, ngoba seku 16:00 nje manje. Ehotela bathi she checked out before 10 am. Nalapha abahlala khona kuthiwa akakaze efiki. Kukhiyiwe endlini kaSebe nasendlini kaSbani.

Sphiwo : Aybo, this is serious.

Lindo : Yey wena! Sbani is losing it. Usangene okwangempela. Uze wacela emsebenzini bemudedele ngo 11am.

Sphiwo : So where is he now?

Lindo : Bahambile baya eShowe noMabhiza. He thinks that maybe she went home. Manje bayobheka.

Sphiwo : Nibuzile e rank?

Lindo : We searched everywhere. Saze sabuyela ngisho e Coastlands siyocela ukubuka ama footage, but nothing. Uyabonakala yena ephuma ehhotela. Ama footage alapha eParking yabo awasebenzi.

Sphiwo : Hhaibo

Lindo : Phiwo, what if ilabantu baka Baba laba abathathe uSebe? Sebefuna ukusihlukumeza ngokuthatha intombi kaBhunu ke manje.

Sphiwo : No, no, no. Don't even think that.

Lindo : How can I not? Labantu babulala umuntu wesifazane phambi kwengane ena six, bafo. They are ruthless.

Sphiwo : Ay ay into endala leyo. Awukahle Lindo.

Lindo : Wemame! Wena ucabanga ukuthi uBaba akasenazo izitha?

Sphiwo : He does but....

Lindo : Wait, my phone.

His phone is ringing. He takes it out.

Lindo : It's Bhunu.

Sphiwo : Put him on a loudspeaker.

Lindo : Bafoz

Sbani : Bhuti

Advertisement

anitholi lutho?

Sbani sounds devastated. This is serious.

Lindo : Sothole, ngiyaxolisa bafo kusabheda. Kodwa kunabantu engithe bengibekele amehlo.

Sbani sighs.

Sbani : She is dead. Intombi yami ifile, bhuti. I can feel it. Igazi lami liyangilahla.

Sphiwo : No, no, Sbani come on.

Sbani : uSebe ngeke ethule isikhathi eside kanje, ngiyamazi owami. She is dead. Lezinja zibulale intombi yami!

Sphiwo : No! Sebe is alive and we are going to look for her until we find her. Uma kufanele simubheke ubusuku bonke sizokwenza lokho.

Sbani : I don't know anymore. Angisazi ukuthi ngicabange ini.

Lindo : Seniyabuya kodwa nina? Uphi uBhiza?

Sbani : He is driving. Sesiwabuya.

Sphiwo : Qina bafo, qina!

Sbani ends the call. Lindo releases a long sigh.

Lindo : Akekho naseShowe.

Lindokuhle looks at Sphiwokuhle.

Lindo : Uyazi angithi ukuthi kuzokwenzekani uma ngempela kuthiwa uSebe useshonile la akhona? We are going to lose Sbani.

Sphiwo groans and rubs his big stomach.

Lindo : You know how he is when it comes to that woman. We were able to save him a couple of times but this time I'm scared we.....

Sphiwo : Lindo awukahle! We are going to find Sebe. Siyahamba manje and sizomubheka size simuthole uSebenzile.

Sphiwokuhle makes his way back to the house.

Lindo : Ngizolinda emotweni.

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

I don't even know what happened today. From wherever we were Roxanne drove to Mountview. We stopped by the gas station and upon our arrival to the gas station, Sbani's car pulled over out of nowhere. He seems to be completely losing it. He bangs the bonnet of Dylan's car.

Sbani : Sebe, get the fuck out of this car!

I've never seen him this angry. I'm scared of getting out.

Sbani : Sebe, ngikhuluma nawe!!

He is banging the roof now. Roxanne jumps out of the car.

Roxanne : Hey! Hey! What is wrong with you? Are you trying to damage my car? Are you mad?

Sbani : Wena Skebereshe ngizokubulala, uyezwa?

He is pointing at Roxanne while getting closer to her.

Roxanne : I understand you are angry and I'm sorry about...

Sbani : Sebe!!

I open the door and get out. Tears are streaming down my face.

Me : Baby, I'm sorry. I can explain.

He grabs my arm roughly.

Sbani : Oh, I'm sure you will. Ukuchaza kona usazochaza kodwa okwamanje hamba ungene emotweni.

Me : Sbanisokuhle, ngiyaxolisa.

Sbani : I said get in the car!! Yinindaba, angizwakali? Ngiyangingiza?

Me : Cha, Cha Bhele elihle. Awungingizi.

Sbani : Hamba.

Me : Let... let me take our bags.

Sbani : I will handle the bags. Go.

I shake my head and make my way into his car. As I get in I spot a green Velocity pulling over. Sphiwokuhle and Lindokuhle get out and they both run to Sbani. There's chaos. Sbani is trying to hit Roxanne. I never thought Sbani had this terrible side. What have I done? I cry.

They are coming. Lindo is dragging Sbani.

Sbani : Did you hear what she said?

Lindo : Muyeke bafo, please.

Sbani opens the door and sits next to me in the back seat while Lindo goes to the driver's seat. Sbani looks at me and shakes his head. Oh God, I disgust him. He sighs and looks out of the window.

Lindokuhle drove us to our flat. Sphiwokuhle was following us with the green Velocity.

Lindo : Nizoba right, angithi?

Sbani : Sho

Lindo : Sebe?

I shake my head.

Lindo : Good. I'll call you guys later.

The three of them stand up and shake hands.

Sphiwo : Sikhipha emakokorosheni phela.

They laugh. Sbani is faking it.

Lindo : Ngoba izinja azikho la.

Sbani walks them out. I sigh and get up. Let me take a shower. It's better he finds me in the shower because I don't know how to face him. I unzip my skirt and take it out. The door swings open just after I've taken off my skirt. Mind you I'm not even wearing underwear. I sit on the bed and cover my thighs with my skirt. He walks in and locks the door with his eyes fixed on my face. My heart is going to burst. Tears blurry my eyes. I'm sweating.

Me : Sbanisokuhle, I can explain. Ngiyacela, Khuboni.

Sbani : Sebe, Can I ask you something?

I shake my head.

Me : Yes, my love. Anything... Anything.

Sbani : So the whole day you were walking around naked? Uhamba ngezinga nje phakathi kwabantu?

His question strangles my throat. He shakes his head.

Sbani : Damn.

Me : Ngiyaxolisa, iphenti lami belimanzi and I only had one. I even told you yesterday.

He leans against the wardrobe and crosses his arms.

Sbani : Uphumaphi, Sebe?

Me : Sbani, ngiyathembisa bengingahleli nabafana. I was with Roxanne.

Sbani : Where the fuck were you been?

Me : Roxanne called me and asked if I had moved out of the room and I said no, you booked us into a hotel. She then told me that she was in Gateway, dropping her sister off for an interview at Outworx. I asked her if she could pick me up and she agreed.

Sbani : Didn't we agree that you were going to wait for my brother to fetch you?

Me : We did .

Sbani : What happened after that?

Me : She got a call from Dylan's friend bemutshela ukuthi u Dylan udutshuliwe, udutshulwe amaphoyisa.

Sbani : When did she get the call? Before or after senisukile ehhotela?

Me : It was after I checked out.

Sbani : Sebe, besenisukile yini ehhotela?

Me : Cha.

Sbani : Okay. What did you do after usuzwile ukuthi indoda yakhe idutshulwe amaphoyisa?

Me : She was crying, so I tried to comfort her.

Sbani : Great.

He is mocking me now.

Me : We left the hotel. We were... just before Ottawa. Yeah by Ottawa and a taxi came and blocked our car. Two Indian men and one African man got out of the car. They asked us to get out of our car.

Sbani : Why?

Me : Bathe asiphephile. They said something about a snitch that was following Roxanne and wanting to kill her.

Sbani : And then?

Me : I asked them to let me go kodwa banqaba bathi it's not safe. Kukhale ifoni yabo and after that call they told us to get into the taxi quickly. I was confused Sbani, ngangena kwi taxi ngashiya izikhwama emotweni ka Roxanne. My phone was inside the bag neyakhe u Roxanne.

Sbani : Yah

Me : They took us into some house, endaweni eyama suburbs and they told us to stay there until they came back.

Sbani : Imoto ebinamafoni ihambe nobani?

Me : With an Indian guy. Baze bayibuyisa manje ntambama. Baxabana no Roxanne, wathi u Roxanne asambeni and we left. And then sadlula e garage.

Sbani : Sebe yini ekuhlanganisa namandiya adutshuliwe?

I sniff and wipe my tears.

Me : Lutho baby.

Sbani : Uhamba kanjani nomuntu esekutshelile ukuthi indoda yakhe idutshulwe amaphoyisa? Awunalo uvalo?

Me : Nginalo.

Sbani : Yini ebikuhlula ngokuthi uhlale ehotela ulinde ubafo?

Me : Ayikho. I didn't think at all.

Sbani : Do you have any fuckin idea of how much I was worried about you? What was I going through the moment ngingakutholi efonini? Sebe, I had to lie emsebenzini ngithi ngiyagula ukuze bengivumele ngigoduke. Ukuze ngikwazi ukuphuma ngiyobheka wena!!

He is shouting. Tears fill up my eyes all over again.

Sbani : You are going to stop that shit! You are going to stop fucking crying ngoba awazi ukuthi ukhalelani. I spent the whole fucking day ngibhekana nawe angathi angisile ekhanda lami. Ngiphuma le eShowe ukuyobheka wena Sebe. Yini ekuhlulayo ukuthi uhlale wedwa uma ngingekho? Yilento obuyijahe la e Mountview? Labangani bakho abangasile?

Me : Cha baby, Cha.

Sbani : Do you even know Roxanne? Lomuntu othi umngani wakho uyamazi?

Me : Angimazi kahle.

Sbani : When you do something, uke ungcabangele mina noma awunandaba? Sebenzile what if you died? What if you got shot and died?

I cry even more.

Sbani : Stop that shit and talk!!! What if you died? What was I going to do? What the fuck was I going to tell your father?

There's a scene playing in my head. My body is already shaking. I can't talk.

Sbani : Can you fucking talk?!!!!

He yells and punches the wardrobe. I cover my eyes and scream.

Me : I'm sorry!! I'm sorry!!

Sbani : Baby.....

Me : I know I'm stupid. Ngiyazi ngiyisidomu futhi angilaleli. I know wangithatha ngingeyilutho wangenza umfazi.

Sbani : What?

Me : Ngiyaxolisa, ngicela ungangishayi. Ngiyaxolisa. Please don't hit me, please don't hit me!!!!

Sbani : Sebe, no. Sthandwa sami angikaze ngikushaye mina futhi angisoze. Baby, I'm sorry. Ukuthi ngidiniwe.

He hugs me. But it doesn't feel like a hug, not with the horror playing in my head.

Me : Please don't kill me!!

I'm screaming.

Me : Ngiyaxolisa.

Sbani : Sthandwa sami, please calm down. Don't do....

Me : No!!!! Stop, stop!! Menzi ngiyaxolisa!!!

The sound of someone kicking the door brought me back to real life.
When I open my eyes I open them to SAPS filling the room.

Officer 1 : Let her go!!!

Officer 2 : Beka izandla zakho phezu kwekhanda lakho and get up.

Sbani is slowly breaking the hug. He raises his hands and places them at the back of his head. We are both staring at each other in disbelief. What the hell is happening? Sbani got up and one officer grabbed his hands and cuffed him.

Me : I can explain.

I get up and the skirt covering my thighs drops down. I'm literally naked. I see the Detective shaking her head.

Detective : It's okay. You are safe now.

She squeezes my shoulder and wraps the towel around my waist.

Me : W... what?

Detective : Sbanisokuhle Ntuli, ngiyakubopha, ngikubophela icala lokushaya kanye nokunukubeza ngokocansi. u Nkosazana, Sebenzile Mlambo.

Me : No, no!! I can explain. He... He

I can't talk. I'm struggling to breathe. Sbani's jaw tightens. His eyes are becoming moist. All the tenants are lined up outside our door.

Detective :.....an attorney. One will be provided to you. Take him away.

Me : No... No. Sbani.

Chapter 27

I look around this dark room. There's one small window. Being in a small place like this makes me feel like I'm drowning, especially since I've not been feeling well all day. The Detective who ordered the police to take Sbani away is sitting on a chair in front of me. They asked me to come with them to this police station. I want to see Sbani. I keep hoping that I'll see him walking through that door and tell me that we are going home. I'm also worried about his family. I don't think they know that Sbani is arrested. These people are not allowing me to call anyone. I left our phones in Sbani's room and with everything that was happening I left the door unlocked, which I think is a good thing now because when we walked out with the police I saw Roxanne standing with other tenants. I'm counting on her to call Sbani's mother and tell her what happened. There's a diary with her number in case of an emergency. So, it shouldn't be a problem getting her number.

Me : Detective Dube, I need to see Sbani.

She sighs.

Dube : This is not going anywhere.

She pulls her chair closer.

Dube : You keep saying the same thing. "I want to see Sbani. I want to see Sbani " Sebenzile, you don't need that man. Listen, you did nothing wrong. You are not here because you did anything wrong. You are here because I want to help you. Amadoda afana no Sbani amadoda adinga ukuvalelwa ejeli.

Me : Sbani did nothing wrong.

Dube : He abused you. Honey, don't let love blind you. Indoda iyakwazi ukukuhlukumeza kodwa ibe ikutshela ukuthi iyakuthanda. Let me tell you a secret. Do you see what you are going through? I've been there. I once had a Sbani in my life and he almost killed me. Nami ngiyisisulu, so I understand what it's like. Ukuzama ukuvikela indoda ekuhlumezayo, I've been there, but I won't allow you to do the same thing that I did. I want to help you. I am here to help you and I need you to work with me. Now tell me what really happened today.

Me : Sbani did nothing wrong. He didn't rape me and he didn't even try to hit me. When you all walked in, he wasn't hitting me.

Dube : But you were screaming for help. The whole neighborhood heard you crying out for help.

Me : I thought he was hitting me, but it was all in my head.

Dube : Sisi, sikufice unqunu and Mr Ntuli was all over you, trying to strangle you.

Me : No, he was trying to hug me.

Dube : Hug? That wasn't a hug. You know abusers have this beautiful way of messing up with your head. Bayakuhlukumeza kodwa futhi banendlela yokwenza angathi.... Oh shit.

She mutters and tightens her fist. Someone just walked in. It's a man, his face is dark like this room. She gets up.

Dube : Detective Ndaba, you are here.

Ndaba : I heard we have a special guest.

Dube : We do.

Dube grabs a file and they both step out. Soon after that, Ndaba came back alone.

Ndaba : Sebenzile Mlambo.

I keep quiet.

Ndaba : Why is it so dark here?

He sits down and pulls a small chain that is hanging just above our heads and a bright light blinds me. I shield my eyes.

He sighs.

Ndaba : Don't look at it and you shall be fine. Sebenzile, a very interesting name. Oh yaya!

I uncover my eyes and my skin shivers immediately. His right eye, not that there's an eye. It's a very deep hole. My knees are shaking.

Ndaba : Do you believe that your name is interesting?

I shake my head.

Me : No

Ndaba : Well I believe it is. I believe that you put in the work.
Hahahaha...

He is laughing. There's something about his laughter, it's scary. He stops laughing and stares at me with his single eye. He is blinking with one eye. I sweep my eyes off his face.

Ndaba : You know patience is really important in life. Not everything deserves you to walk out and look for it because some things have a way of coming to look for you and past is one of those things. That's why it's important to just sit back sometimes. I am Detective Maqhingana Ndaba.

He grabs some recording that Detective Ndaba was using from the table.

Ndaba : Do you know me?

Me : No

Ndaba : Your father in law does.

He lifts up his eyes and shakes his head.

Ndaba : We are going to delete everything here and try doing this again. Okay?

I swallow.

Ndaba : And where is the delete button here... Oh there it is. Perfect. Let's start again. Why did you lie to Detective Dube?

Me : I did not.

Ndaba : Awungithathe ungibeke kukona konke okwenzeke osukwini lwanamhlanje.

Me : I've already explained everything to Detective Dube.

Ndaba : Really? No you didn't. Into oyenzile uqambe amanga. Do you know ukuthi kuyicala ukuqamba amanga, uqambela abantu bomthetho? Singakubopha nokukubopha khona manje.

Me : I didn't lie.

Ndaba : You did but I'm going to forgive you because I'm a generous man.

He takes out his cigarette and lights it.

Me : What do you want me to say?

Ndaba : I want you to confirm this statement.

He pushes a document towards my direction. I've already seen what this is.

Me : I'm not going to lie. Sbani didn't do any of this.

Ndaba : So when the police walked in he wasn't hitting you?

Me : No

Ndaba : Stop lying!!!

He bangs the table and I almost fall with my chair.

Ndaba : She was right. You have every sign of an abused woman. Look at you.

He hisses. I tighten my hands on the chair and shake my head. Tears squeeze out of my eyes. He takes a pull of his cigarette and looks closely at it.

Ndaba : I know them. Bafana noyise. They are ruthless. Inhliziyo, unembeza kanye nozwelo yinto abangenayo.

Me : Sbani wasn't hitting me. I'm telling you the truth.

Ndaba : Kodwa wonke umuntu umuzwile ekuthuka, ekushaya. Even downstairs tenants heard him and they heard you begging him to stop but he didn't.

He coughs.

Me : Everyone got it all wrong.

Ndaba : How?

I close my eyes as I feel a sharp pain in my lower stomach.

Ndaba : He started hitting you lapha e garage and his brothers came to support him. They even drove him home to make sure that he finishes you off where no one could see him.

Me : N... No.

Ndaba : Yes, yes. Akagcinanga lapho kodwa uphinde walala nawe ngenkani

Me : He didn't rape me.

Ndaba : Then why were you naked? Why did the officers walk him in on him ephezu kwakho ungagqokile?

It's like something is stopping me from breathing. There's a smell of blood coming from my throat. I want to vomit.

Me : I need water.

I whisper.

Ndaba : Miss Mlambo

Advertisement

the person who phoned us had no reason to lie. In fact, that is somebody who cares about you. Awunaso isizathu sokuvikela uNtuli. Yazi abantu abafana nawe ilabantu abenza ukuthi amaphoyisa kubenzima ukuthi enze umsebenzi wawo mase ke siyagxekwa kuthiwe we are useless kanti inina nivikela izigebengu.

I clench my teeth and try to squeeze my stomach.

Me : I'm not feeling well.

Ndaba : No, you are lying. Listen to me, you are going to press charges against Sbanisokuhle Ntuli. You are going to help me put him behind bars. Do you understand me?

Me : I need water.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

It's just after 2am. Things are tight at the Ntuli homestead. MaNzilo is pacing up and down. She hears a car outside and she runs to open the door. Mzwakhile, Lindokuhle, Sebenzile and Sphiwokuhle get out of the car. MaNzilo runs to hug Sebenzile.

MaNzilo : My baby.

Sebenzile : Mama

Mzwakhile : She is not feeling well.

MaNzilo breaks the hug and looks around.

MaNzilo : Where is my boy? Where is Sbani?

Lindo : He is not here. Banqabile ukuthi simubone.

MaNzilo : What? Why? Bavumile nje ukuthi esifonele.

Lindo : They didn't, Mah. Kunephoyisa eliboleke u Sbani ifoni ngasese.

MaNzilo : Kodwa nkosiyami, I thought....

Mzwakhile : Dali, please calm down.

MaNzilo : I am not going to calm down. You said you would come back with him.

Mzwakhile : Can we go inside?

They all head inside. After MaNzilo prepared a warm bath for Sebenzile she helped her to bed.

MaNzilo : Are you sure that you don't want anything to eat?

Sebenzile : Mah, I'm sorry.

A single tear rolls out of the corner of her eye.

Sebenzile : I am so sorry.

MaNzilo : Sssh! It's not your fault, mntanami. Sbani will come back home.

Sebenzile : Bafuna ngimubophise ngenkani Mah, they are forcing me to lie.

MaNzilo : We will sort it out. Now, get some sleep.

Sebenzile : Banqabile ngimubone

MaNzilo : Uzobuya ekhaya ksasa u Sbani. How is the pain now?

Sebenzile : Better.

MaNzilo : Now sleep, my baby.

Sebenzile : Okay

MaNzilo brushes Sebenzile's hair and gets up. She switches off the light on her way out. The living room door is open. Lindokuhle and Sphiwokuhle are talking outside.

MaNzilo : Nisahleli?

She walks closer to them.

Lindo : Yes, Mah. Sizolala ka two room.

MaNzilo : I can't even sleep. I don't think I'll be able to sleep.

Lindo sighs.

Lindo : I don't understand. Angazi nokuthi yini ekufanele ngiyikholwe nekungafanele ngiyikholwe.

Sphiwokuhle : I know he didn't do it. Unawo ama anger issues u Sbani but come on, ukushaya? Ukushaya umuntu wesifazane? No.

Lindo rubs his face.

Lindo : Yeah, inkinga ke umthetho awukwazi lokho.

MaNzilo : But they need to listen to Sebenzile.

Sphiwokuhle : Right now uSebenzile ufana nento engekho. Umqondo wakhe angathi uphazamisekile and that is working on the police favor.

Lindo : Mina, I still don't get it. U Sbani no Sebe sibashiye be right and then dukuduku sekwenzeka lento. It doesn't make sense.

Sphiwokuhle : Bafo. Yazi I understand that tenants got scared bafonela amaphoyisa ngoba bezwa umsindo, but sebengafonela amaphoyisa nje zisuka? Kungabi khona ngisho oyedwa nje ongqongqoza endlini yabo ebone ukuthi what is really happening? Hhayi man. Ilento

engangitshela u Bhunu ukuthi impilo yasemqashweni ayikho right. This is exactly what I was talking about. There is no bloody privacy!

MaNzilo : Kodwa uSebenzile uyasho ukuthi ubengamushayi.

Sphiwokuhle : It doesn't matter. Iqiniso lithi iziqashi zimuzwile ekhala and when the police came in afice u Sebenzile engagqokile kodwa u Sbani eggokile and they believe he was strangling her.

MaNzilo : Oh Nkulunkulu ngengane yami.

Sphiwokuhle : And to be honest sobathathu siyazi ukuthi icala lizovuna u Sebenzile because she is woman. Ubazwile labo Detective esibafice lapha, they just laughed bathi sililindele nje ukuthi u Sbani is going away for a very long time.

Lindo : No, no, no kukhona into e wrong ngalelicala. This is more than a case, but it is personal.

Sphiwokuhle : Nangoke u Lindo nalezinto zakhe. Wena kuvele kuthi ku serious uvele ubone izinto ezingekho. Your brother is facing serious charges and wena..... Yooo! Lindo.

Lindo : I am telling you. Something is wrong kuleya police station and I don't trust that Detective. Bathe ubani? Detective Ndaba? I don't trust that man.

MaNzilo : Why?

Lindo : I don't know, Mah. Indlela abekhuluma ngayo... No. Ubani kahle kahle ofonele amaphoyisa kuleziyaziqashi zalapha?

MaNzilo sighs.

MaNzilo : Only God can help us now. I'm going to bed. Ningakhohlwa ukuvala isango.

Sphiwokuhle : Okay Mah

MaNzilo goes back into the house. Mzwakhile is sitting on the floor, crying. MaNzilo walks in, grabs a pillow and a blanket.

MaNzilo : I'll sleep in Sphiwokuhle's room.

Mzwakhile : Maka Lindokuhle please don't....

MaNzilo : I don't know how you'll do it but I need my son out of that prison cell ksasa lokhu okusayo.

Mzwakhile shakes his head.

Mzwakhile : Okay.

MaNzilo : U Sbani owahlala efela amanyala akho. I wonder what Celiwe is saying.

She says and walks out.

Chapter 28

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Sphiwo : Was that Skhalo's mother?

Lindo : Mhmm. She wanted to know how we are doing nokuthi siya ngasikhathisini ukuyobona uBhunu.

Sphiwo : Yeah?

Lindo : Eish my head is killing me.

Sphiwokuhle : We literally slept for 3 hours, that's why.

Lindo : Yeah. How is Mah?

Sphiwo : She is not well and mina lento yakhe is starting to stress me. UMah usegula njalo.

Lindo : Uthi yini manje ebuhlungu?

Sphiwo : Iphika and her glands are swollen.

Lindo : Yoo!

Sphiwo : I'm done with breakfast. Please take this to Sebe.

Lindo : Sho.

He takes the tray from the counter.

Sphiwo : Ubuye uzolanda lezinto zetiye

Lindo : Okay

Lindo goes to the bedroom where Sebenzile is sleeping. He knocks and gently opens the door. She finds her sitting on the bed, biting her nails.

Lindo : Nqo-Nqo

Sebenzile smiles and gets up.

Lindo : Makoti wakithi

Sebenzile : Bhuti

Lindo : Asidleni kancane

Sebenzile : Ngiyabonga bhuti kodwa angilambile.

Lindo : No, please eat. Izikhathi ezinzima empilweni zidinga amandla.

Sebenzile : Yebo

Lindo : Let me go and get you some coffee. Oh and uma kukhona odinga siku ayinele kona or ofuna sikuwashele kona unganginika.

Sebenzile raises her brows.

Sebenzile : No, no. I'm... I'm okay.

Lindo smiles.

Lindo : Okay

He heads out.

Sebenzile : Bhuti?

Lindo : Yebo sisi.

Sebenzile : Angazi noma kuzoba inkinga yini kodwa nami bengicela ukuyobona u Sbani.

Lindo clears his throat and swallows hard.

Lindo : O-okay sisi.

Sebenzile : Ngiyabonga bhuti

Lindo walks out. He goes back to the kitchen.

Sphiwo : Where are you going to clean? Here or the living room?

Lindo : Living room.

Sphiwo : Okay

Lindo takes the coffee to Sebenzile while Sphiwo prepares to wash the dishes. Lindo comes back.

Lindo : Sebe wants to come with us

Sphiwo : Eish

Lindo : I don't know how I'm going to tell her ukuthi kwayithina akafuni ukusibona uBhunu.

Sphiwo : This is fucked up.

Lindo : Ay onginika umshanelo lapho

Sphiwo : The mop is outside, ngiyineke eduze kwe tank. Uyiwashe nawe
Lindo mawuqeda

Lindo : Okay

MaNzilo comes in dragging her feet. No, MaNzilo is really sick today.

Sphiwo : Hawu Mah, what are you doing here?

MaNzilo : Aibo sengingaze ngifele embhedeni

She coughs while pulling a chair.

MaNzilo : Have you boys made breakfast for Sebenzile?

Sphiwo : Yes

MaNzilo : Good. Lindo, please get me some water. I need to drink with these pills.

Lindo : How are you feeling kodwa manje?

MaNzilo : I'm going to be fine. U Mzwa ngithe akangiphathele ne spray.

Sphiwo : But you need to go and see a doctor esho ukuthi what is really wrong with you. Asikwazi ukuqhubeka nempilo angathi asiboni ukuthi uyagula.

MaNzilo : What time are you boys leaving?

Lindo : UBhunu akafuni ukusibona, but sizohamba.

MaNzilo : He doesn't want to see us?

Sphiwo : Are you also coming with us?

MaNzilo : Nganitshela ukuthi ayikho ingane yami engiyoke ngiyivakashele ejeli.

Sphiwo : Maybe you need to convince Sis'Sebe to stay with you.

MaNzilo : She wants to go with you?

She looks at Lindokuhle.

Lindo : Yes. Kanti ke ukuhamba kwethu siyobona uBhunu ngenkani akukho lula manje ke uma sesifika no Sebe kungenzeka engakuthathi kahle lokho.

MaNzilo : Oh, it might lift up his mood.

Lindo : Sonke siyazi ukuthi ukuthi unjani uBhunu. He is too proud and it's clear that akafuni uSebe emubone evalelwe kuleyandawo.

MaNzilo : I'll go and talk to Sebenzile.

Sphiwo : Siyabonga Mah.

They both look at MaNzilo as she drags her feet towards the room where Sebenzile is.

Lindo : She is not well. Awufonele i tayma Phiwo.

Sphiwo : Okay.

SEBENZILE

I can't eat. I'm sitting here going through my pictures with Sbani. I miss him so much. Someone is knocking. I get up to open the door quickly. It's Sbani's mother. She is not looking good. Is Sbani's arrest hitting her this much?

MaNzilo : Lamboz

I stretch my lips to a wide smile.

Me : Mama

MaNzilo : Come, let's sit down. Hhaibo why didn't you eat?

Me : I'm still fine, Mah. I'll eat later.

She shakes her head. We both sit down and she brushes my hand.

MaNzilo : How are you feeling?

Me : I'm fine. Angikaze ngizwe izinhlungu namhlanje.

MaNzilo : It was probably stress.

Me : Nami ngicabanga kanjalo. UMah naye ubonakala angathi akaphilile.

She smiles and shakes her head.

MaNzilo : Oh no my baby, ngiphile saka.

Me : Yebo

I know she is lying.

MaNzilo : UPhiwo ave ezophatheka kabi uma ebona ukuthi awudlanga ukudla kwakhe.

Me : Ha! Uyena owenze konke lokhu?

MaNzilo : Yes. Uma nje kukhona okudingayo bazokusiza. Angithi wena you are not allowed to go to the kitchen as yet, so you are going to stay here and they will take care of you until Sbani comes back home.

Me : But they are men Mah.

MaNzilo : No, no indoda ayikho layikhaya. Laba benza yonke imisebenzi. Uyabona nje ngoba ngila, I left them cleaning.

Me : Aibo Mah

MaNzilo : Yes. no Bhunuza naye uyapheka, ehlanze indlu, bewashe lapha emnyango.

I laugh.

MaNzilo : You see, ngoba uselana nje u Lindo naye uzoke ethi ukubuya emzini wakhe. Their little brother needs them to look after you ngoba mina ngibuye ngibe buthakathaka.

Me : I understand, Mah.

I actually don't, but what can I say? Every family has a way of doing things.

MaNzilo : Bayasho ukuthi uthe nawe ucela ukuyobona uBhunu.

Me : Yes

MaNzilo : Oh my baby.

She brushes my hair.

MaNzilo : But that won't be necessary because Sbani is coming back home today.

Me : Ngempela?

She smiles.

MaNzilo : Yes, sthandwa sami. ULindo no Sphiwo bazomulanda.

I smile and rub my hands together.

Me : Okay, okay.

MaNzilo : Everything is going to be fine. You will see.

Me : Yebo, Mah.

MaNzilo : Yazi uBhunuza is a very strong man. Ngikhumbula efika la, engakwazi ngisho ukukhuluma IsiZulu.

Me : Really?

MaNzilo : Yes. Uyabona u Celiwe, umama ka Sbani? Oh she loved her son. Wayemuphathisa okwegolide leli ayilo u Sbani. U Sbani wayehamba ama creche abelungu. Ehlala kuma suburbs. Lafika ifu elimnyama lahamba nayo yonke impilo ayeyazi. The life he knew was taken away from him....

She sighs.

MaNzilo : When he came to stay with us he was only six years old. He looked so lost, but when he walked in I had no doubt that he was Mzwakhile's son. Empeleni u Sbani ufana no Gogo wakhe, wathatha ngisho unwele lakhe. Mzwakhile's mom had beautiful curly hair, noboya obabulele kahle ezingalweni. Njengoba ubona u Sbani nje. Naye ke efika wene afro ka Gogo wakhe eyayigcwele ikhanda kungathi iyamusinda.

We both laugh.

MaNzilo : UMzwa wafika naye, I think wahlala 2 days u Mzwa wamushiya nathi. I woke up and made porridge for them but Sbani didn't eat.

She laughs and shakes her head.

MaNzilo : Ngiqale nginganaki mina but zihambe izinsuku ngize ngithi no, let me feed him. Ngikutshela ukuthi wayengakwazi ngisho ukuligwinya. Ubhontshisi wona? Wayebaleka eziphule uma nje eke wabona indishi enawo.

I burst.

Me : Why?

MaNzilo : He was scared of it. Eth i zinunu. Wayekhala ecishe ukusha izwi leli lakhe elingekho. Umzimba wakhe ugcwale uhlevane.

I can't stop laughing. Sbani was dramatic, I mean who is scared of beans?

MaNzilo : Ngathi kodwa u Celiwe ungenzani? What did she do to this child?

Me : Kufanele Mah, it was too much.

MaNzilo : And then there's this day that I'll never forget. There's a two room house la ngase khoneni.

Me : I saw it.

MaNzilo : Leyondlu kwakuyiyona kuphela layikhaya. Kwakuyikamero lami kuthi kule enye indlu kube ikhishi, silihlanganise ne dining room. U Sphiwo no Lindo babendlala khona kule enye indlu belale phansi and then u Sbani yena elale nami embhedeni because he was still a baby, esadinga nokuvuswa ebusuku ukuthi eyochama. Ayke one day silele nengane. Bhunu was a deep sleeper esakhula. Wayevuka kugcina nje but that day when I woke up I heard him talking to himself. He was busy saying "Let me call my mother. I know my mother's number"

Me : Eish

MaNzilo : I decided not to interrupt him. Nangempela ngathi ngivula ihlo elilodwa ngamuthola elele ebheke phezulu nefoni yami and he was busy dialing on my phone. Ngithe ngimubona wabeka endlebeni. "Hello mah. Where are you? When are you coming to fetch me? Did you wash the blood? Please bring me Corn flakes"

She swallows as tears well up her eyes. Tears are burning in my eyes as well.

MaNzilo : I heard him laughing and talking to himself "My mom is talking." I opened my eyes and pretend to laugh. I asked him if I could speak to his mother too and he said yes. I was shocked when I realized that he was speaking to Celiwe's voicemail the whole time.

Me : Hawemah

MaNzilo : It was hard ngoba iyona into ayesezenza leyo. He would just take my phone and go outside ethi uyofonela umawakhe.

Kwasekufanele ngihlale ngine airtime ye voicemail ka Celiwe.

Sometimes I wonder how many messages he left for his mother and what were some of the things he said because leyonto yokushiyela umawakhe ama message uyenze waze wabamdala.

Tears are pouring down my cheeks.

MaNzilo : Ngafisa ukube nganginemali to give him at least half of the life his mother gave him. But I had nothing. Imali engangithola ngangimthengela lawoma Corn Flakes nethoyizana lemoto. Sbani ke always had a "why?"

We both laugh.

MaNzilo : So waqala umfana ka Mzwa he wanted to know why he was the only eating Corn Flakes. Why this? Why that? Ethi u Lindo phela wena uyingane.

I laugh.

MaNzilo : He finally got used to the life that we were living. Wayengasananda nama Corn Flakes, izimoto wayesezakhela ezakhe ngama tin.

I laugh and wipe my tears.

MaNzilo : Uyena owayesakhela yonke ingane inqola yokudlala la endaweni.

We both laugh and she blows out a long sigh.

MaNzilo : Ngathi ngisajabulela ukuthi he is adjusting wagula. I've never seen anything like that. He got sick out of nowhere. Yagula ingane

Advertisement

umzimba wayo waphenduka isilwane. Wakhala uBhunu wazibhonqa. When he started getting sick I was alone and I had no idea what to do.

Ngake ngahlala phansi sengingazi ukuthi ngenzeni ngathuka UNkulunkulu because I was so angry. I asked why he was allowing a kid to suffer like that? I asked myself ukuthi u Nkulunkulu uyivumela kanjani ingane iphathwe isifo esinjeya?

Me : Mah. I'm so sorry.

MaNzilo : Mntanami, I'm not telling you this because I'm seeking sympathy for my son or because I want you to feel sorry for him, no. The reason I'm telling you this is because I want you to understand where Sbani is coming from. Everything that he's been through from a very young age, but he managed to overcome everything and every pain life threw at him. He is strong so nalokhu kuzodlula.

Me : I know, Mah.

She brushes my hair and smiles.

MaNzilo : Now, please eat. Kancane nje, okay?

Me : Okay Mah

She gets up.

Me : Mah, thank you for taking care of him.

She smiles.

MaNzilo : He is my son.

She smiles.

MaNzilo : Now please eat and get some rest. Umfana wami uzobuya elambile, angifuni ekufice ukhathele.

She laughs and walks out. Oh my God what? I laugh and throw myself on the bed. Sbani's mother is one naughty mother in law.

^

^

^

I'm done packing my things. I'm now waiting for Lindo and Sphiwo to come back with Sbani. I miss him and I can't wait to have my arms

around me. I miss everything about him. Maybe I need to do something nice for him, but what? I need to speak to Roxanne about it. She is always full of ideas. Speaking of Roxanne I called her earlier, but she was too busy to talk. I jump as I hear a knock. It's Lindo, but where is Sbani wami? Lindo is alone. I search behind him.

Me : Bhuti, u....

He shakes his head.

Lindo : He is not here.

He sighs and walks in. He puts a Pick 'n Pay shopping bag on the table.

Lindo : We bought you these.

I spot a yogurt inside the plastic bag

.No, that can wait.

Me : Bhuti, uphi uSbani?

Lindo : Banqabile

He says while searching inside his jeans pockets. He takes out a paper and hands it to me. It's not a paper, it's a letter. I lower myself on the bed and open it.

Dear Sthandwa sami.

Ngiyathemba uyaphila thembalami. Ngiyazi ubunethemba lokuthi ngizobuya ekhaya namhlanje kodwa akwenzekanga. Ngicela kungakuphathi kabi lokho, Manu because I will be coming home, even though I don't know when. I haven't been charged with anything kodwa abafuni ukungidedela. My father is still looking for a good attorney and I hope he will find one soon. Kukona konke okwenzekayo, I'm worried about you. I want to see you but, I don't think I'm ready to see you leaving me here.

Tears are becoming heavy in my eyes. I swallow and continue reading.

Udokotela uthe uzongenzela incwadi yesonto yasemsebenzini. My supervisor might call you and ask you some questions. I'm hoping that by the end of the coming week I'll be out but for now ngicela unginikezele uLindo amaphilisi ami. I'm also experiencing a skin reaction, I think it's because of the cold water. Ngicela umnikeze

nomuthi wokugcoba onesivalo esi green. Ise drawer yokugcina. There's money in my account. It's not much but it should last you until I get back. Ngiyakuthanda kakhulu futhi ngiyakukhumbula. Uziphathe kahle thembalami.

Imina owakho

Sbani Ntuli

By the time I finish, tears are already dropping over the letter.

Me : I got him arrested. I ruined our lives.

Lindo : Sebe....

Me : He wasn't hitting me and he didn't force himself on me.
Ngangiyogeza and he walked in and... And...

Lindo : It's not your fault.

Me : Uzoboshwa

Lindo : Icala lakhe libucayi and I feel like khona umuntu khona ngaphakathi owenza isiqiniseko sokuthi u Sbani akaphumi. We have an enemy, isitha esingasazi kodwa and I think isona esikhokhela amaphoyisa.

Me : You think so?

Lindo : I do but no one wants to believe me. You see, if we drag our feet about this, Sbani might go to jail for a very long time.

Me : They won't listen to me. Bangifunela inhlolo ngqondo. Bhuti, I'm not crazy.

Lindo : I know. What exactly did you tell them?

Me : I can't remember. Ngivele ngaquleka before I confirmed the statement.

Lindo : Good. No, I don't mean ukuquleka kwakho. I mean by not confirming the statement.

Me : So who do you think is behind this? Menzi?

Lindo : Ngike ngamucabanga, but I'm not sure. Do you think he is capable?

Me : He threatened us. And he once tried to kill Sbani.

Lindo : Yeah, yeah, but uhlala kude. Umuntu obize amaphoyisa I think it's somebody who saw us at the garage.

Me : Yeah

Lindo : And that person is someone close to the police. Don't you remember anything else eshiwo u Detective Dube? Akaphahlukanga mhlampe wakutshela ukuthi who called them?

Me : Bathi iziqashi.

Lindo : Was Sbani that angry? Ukuthi ememeze kuzwe wonke umuntu?

Me : He was. He was angry and we were both screaming at each other.

Lindo : Eish, this is bad.

Me : Detective Ndaba did mention something though.

Lindo : Ndaba?

Me : Detective Maqhingana Ndaba. He said Sbani... empeleni uthe you are all cruel like your father.

Lindo : Maqhingana, Maqhingana. That name. Kambe ubani u Maqhingana?

Me : Unehlo elilodwa. Elinye alikho kunembobo. He was tall and very dark skinned.

Lindo : Oh shit. Ngiyeza manje.

He runs to open the door.

Lindo : Sphiwo? Sphiwo awusondela. Woza.

Sphiwo : What's wrong?

Lindo steps outside and closes the door. No, I want to hear too. I tip-toe to the door and listen secretly.

Sphiwo : What happened?

Lindo : Where is mom?

Sphiwo : Balele. Yinindaba?

Lindo : Uyakhumbula siseyintwana, kunendoda eyayifika la emnyama? Ifika iphethe amakhekhe nalesinkwa esasi yellow sinama raisins?

Sphiwo : Which man?

Lindo : Hawu Phiwo, the policeman. Don't you remember him? Lo owasithengela i bicycle lantshontshwa abafana baseMansenseni.

Sphiwo : Oh, the guy who claimed to be Sbani's father? And he wanted to steal him?

What?

Lindo : Yes... Ey Keep your voice down. Ey wena Sphiwokuhle!

Sphiwo : Wenzeni?

Lindo : Angithi ilona esamubona kwi TV kwi Cutting Edge kuthiwa uhlaseliwe bamukhipha ihlo?

Sphiwo : It's him. UBaba u Maqhinga. Wenzeni? Ngoba kuthiwa washona.

Lindo : Do you remember the Detective we saw last night? He was wearing shades. Elokhu ethi silungise ama tin ka fish nesinkwa esiBrown because Sbani is going away for a long time.

Sphiwo : Lo enixabane naye, I remember.

Lindo : Bafo, that was Maqhinga Ndaba.

Sphiwo : What?

Me : What?

I mutter with my eyes wide.

Excuse errors.

Chapter 29

NTULI HOMESTEAD

MaNzilo is wiping the counter after she finished cooking. Mzwakhile walks in.

MaNzilo : Who were you talking to?

Mzwakhile : Njapha, udukelwe imidlwane yakhe.

MaNzilo : Oh.

Mzwakhile : Can I help you with anything?

MaNzilo : No, thanks. I'm done.

Mzwakhile : How are you feeling?

MaNzilo : Don't even ask.

Mzwakhile : Then why aren't you resting?

MaNzilo : My kids need to eat.

He sighs.

Mzwakhile : USebenzile ubuyile?

MaNzilo : No, uthe uzolala e Mountview. Ufuna nokuvula ezindlini kushaye umoya

Mzwakhile : Okay.

MaNzilo : Ihamba kanjani indaba yommeli?

Mzwakhile blows out a sigh.

Mzwakhile : Bayabiza abameli engibatholayo

MaNzilo chuckles.

MaNzilo : Mzwakhe, are you really worried about money right now?

Mzwakhile : Kunomshado ozayo, empeleni imishado.

MaNzilo : Mhmmm.

Mzwakhile : Can you stop doing that?

MaNzilo bangs the counter. Woooo!

MaNzilo : Stop doing what?! My son is in jail kodwa wena ulana ungitshela ngomshado wakho no sisi ka Celiwe.

Mzwakhile : Please calm down

MaNzilo : Mhlampe kufanele kube yimi ofonela u Maqhinga ngimcele ukuthi ekhulule ingane yami.

Mzwakhile : Thandokazi you are not going to do that.

MaNzilo : I will.

Mzwakhile : I thought we agreed not to talk about Maqhinga, especially not here.

MaNzilo : You are not taking any action! Mhlampe sekufanele ngitshele u Lindokuhle iqiniso. He is the only one okhathazeke ngokuboshwa komfowabo!

Mzwakhile : If you tell him about this, he will go and confront him. Maqhinga is a dangerous man. U Sbani usengakuye vele, usufuna ukufaka no Lindokuhle?

MaNzilo : What happened?

Mzwakhile : I don't know. Ngicela ukulala before ngiye edepho.

MaNzilo : We are still talking.

Mzwakhile : No we are not. Ukugula kukubangela inhliziyo encane and you want to fight unnecessarily.

MaNzilo : Mzwakhile, I can't do it anymore. Ngizwa angathi ngithwele okuningi emahlombe ami. I am sick and I feel closer to death. Manje ngiyazibuza ukuthi ngizofa kanjani nalezimfihlo engizithwele?

Mzwakhile : You are not going to die. Wena kufanele udle amaphilisi akho ngendlela. Every time you think usungcono you stop taking your pills, which is wrong. You are stressing my boys.

MaNzilo rubs her face in disbelief.

MaNzilo : Do you really want to do this now? Ufuna ukuthatha yonke into engikutshele yona uyiphendule ibe ngokugula kwami?

Mzwakhile : No ukuthi lento oyenzayo iyangidina. Uyayithanda i attention. Ukulokhu ubuzwa ukuthi usunjani. Nokulokhu usibelesela ngokuthi uzofa. It's annoying Maka Lindokuhle!!

MaNzilo : Please go

Mzwakhile : Okay, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to....

MaNzilo : It's okay. You can go.

Mzwakhile : Thandokazi I'm really sorry. Kushelele ulimi. I'm stressed, lento ka Sbanisokuhle ingiphathisa ngekhandu.

MaNzilo : Can you please try to talk to Maqhinga?

Mzwakhile : Th....

MaNzilo : Please. Please, swallow your pride and do this. Uke uyeke nje ukwenza yonke into ibengawe kodwa ucabangele ingane yakho. That place is not good for Sbani and you know it.

Mzwakhile sighs and takes out his phone. He squeezes his phone with his eyes closed.

MaNzilo : Sothole, please.

Mzwakhile : This man will think that.....

MaNzilo : Do it for Bhunu. You owe him, Mzwakhe.

Mzwakhile : Kodwa angenzani amaBhele? Why? Why, Thandokazi?

MaNzilo : Maybe they want to see you standing up for your son.

He sighs and begins scrolling through his contacts. He places the phone on the counter and rubs his hands. The call is on a loudspeaker. It's ringing.

Mzwakhile : He is not going to answer.

MaNzilo : Wait

Mzwakhile : No, I'm not going to....

"Detective Ndaba"

He answers. Mzwakhile looks at MaNzilo and shakes his head.

Ndaba : Hello

Mzwakhile : Ndaba, it's me.

Ndaba : It's you. Who are you?

Mzwakhile : Cut the crap

Advertisement

Maqhing. You know who I am.

Ndaba : If you don't know what to say, please drop the call.

Mzwakhile : It's Mzwakhile Ntuli

Ndaba : Which Mzwakhile Ntuli?

Mzwakhile : Can you cut the bullshit? Wazi kahle ukuthi nguwubani.

Ndaba : I must say ukuthi kukuthathe isikhathi eside ukuthi ungifonele.

Mzwakhile : I want my son, Maqhinga. USbani akangeni empini yami nawe. Stop being a coward and face me like a man. Uyeke ukusebenzisa izingane zami to get to me.

Ndaba : Did I?

Mzwakhile : Wazi kahle ukuthi uwena obambe u Sbani lapho.

Ndaba : Let's say it's me. Uzokwenzani?

Mzwakhile : Maqhinga....

Ndaba : What? Are you going to kill me? Oh no you won't.
Uzongikhipha elinye ihlo ungidlise lona like you did?

Mzwakhile : Free my son!

Ndaba : He is not your son! Celiwe told you that he is my son.

Mzwakhile : Because she was a bitch! Isfebe esasihlanyiswa imali. She lied ngoba efuna umondle! Celiwe was all about money and a soft life.

And that's exactly what you promised to offer her! She lied to you. She played you ngoba efuna imali yakho. Sbanisokuhle is my son.

Ndaba : Impilo yami yonke ngiyiphilele u Celiwe. I left my wife because of her. I did everything for Celiwe. I was paying for everything. Lelifa uCeliwe alishiyela u Zizwe wena wathenga ngalo amabhasi, that was my fuckin' money!! I was paying all her policies every damn month, ngemali yami! U Celiwe akakaze ekhiphe ne cent, but I didn't mind ngoba ngangenzela u Zizwe, indodana yami.

Mzwakhile : His name is not Zizwe, igama lakhe uSbanisokuhle Ntuli. That boy is a Ntuli.

Ndaba : UZizwe uwuNdaba. UMwelase, uMthiyane, uLongode and I'm going to prove that to you. Mzwakhile, I am back and I am going to take back every fucking thing that you stole from me! Ifa lika Zizwe uzolikhokha!

Mzwakhile : I didn't steal anything from you. If Sbanisokuhle was your son, you wouldn't be torturing him like you are doing. Ubungeke umuvalele lapho. Akekho uBaba ongenza lento oyenzile enganeni yakhe.

Ndaba laughs.

Ndaba : You think I'd let my son suffer in jail? My one and only son?
Come on Mzwakhile. No I'd never. Think of this as what? An act. My son
will be out in a day or two.

Mzwakhile's breathing grows louder. He is going to explode.

Mzwakhile : Ndaba, what are you up to?

Ndaba : Do you remember what I told you 18 years ago after you
finished feeding me my eye?

Mzwakhile : I want my son or I'm going to kill you!!

Ndaba : You don't remember. I told you that it wasn't over. I told you
that I'd come back stronger and ready. Ngangikhuluma ngalolusuku
Ntuli. Bye.

Mzwakhile : Ndaba? Ndaba!!

MaNzilo : He hung up.

Mzwakhile : I'm going to kill him!!

MaNzilo : Mzwakhile, did you really force him to eat his eye?

Mzwakhile : This time ngizomudlisa amasende!!

MaNzilo : Hhaibo Mzwa!

Mzwakhile : Sbani is mine. He is not his son. He knows that Sbani is not his, so why is he doing this?

MaNzilo : Uyakwazi ngempela lokho? Mzwa, uMaqhinga wakwenzela izinto zabalula wathi akwenziwe i DNA, uzokhokha but no, wanqaba wena. Wabona kungcono ukuthi uhambe uyomukhipha amehlo.

Mzwakhile : Thandokazi u Sbani owami. Alukho usiko esingazange silwenze for uSbani. Uma kungeyena owayikhaya idlozi laliyophika.

MaNzilo : What are you going to do?

Mzwakhile : Ngifuna ukubona lomuntu okuwuye obize amaphoyisa.
Ngifuna ukumubamba ngalezi ezami izandla.

MaNzilo : Mz....

Mzwakhile : Ngimubulale!!

"Hhaibo, umsindo ongaka kwenzenjani?"

Lindokuhle asks while rushing in.

Mzwakhile : I want the person who called the police. Uyangizwa
Lindokuhle?

Lindokuhle looks at MaNzilo with a frown on his face.

MaNzilo : Ithi okay.

Lindo : Oh - okay

Mzwakhile : Good! Lesifebe esuCeliwe sisafeba ngisho ethuneni! Isifebe esithanda imali!

He grabs his keys and walks out. Lindokuhle raises his eyebrows.

Lindo : And then? What's wrong with him?

MaNzilo sighs.

Chapter 30

I'm sleeping in Sbani's bed. Everything smells like him. I hug the pillow and inhale deeply. What if he never comes back? I'm scared. I need someone to assure me that everything is going to be okay. Right now I want to call my father but Lindo asked me not to tell him what happened. I roll the tissues and wipe my tears. Someone is knocking. I get up and open the door. It's Roxanne.

Me : Hey, Rox. Come in

Roxanne : Hey, are you good?

I shrug.

Me : I haven't seen you in a while gogozi, where were you?

Roxanne : Around.

Me : I last saw you on that day.

Roxanne : I know. It's been hectic. Where is Sbani?

Me : Still inside. They are just keeping him there for I don't know what.

Roxanne : What do you mean, inside?

I don't understand. What does she mean?

Me : Hhaibo, Sbani got arrested that day.

She is shocked.

Roxanne : What?

Me : Ye.. Yeah. I thought you knew, I mean you were here.

Roxanne : Me? Here? No.

Me : But I saw you.

Roxanne : No, you were probably confused. You guys left me at the garage.

No, I don't get it. I'm sure that I saw her when we walked out with the police but what can I say?

Me : Maybe.

Roxanne : Girl, what happened?

Me : To be honest, I don't know. Someone heard me and Sbani fighting and they called the cops.

Roxanne : Was he hitting you again?

Me : No, what do you mean again? Sbani never hit me.

Roxanne : I don't believe you.

Me : Why?

Roxanne : You don't have to try and protect him. The way he called you out there by the garage? That was scary.

Me : He was angry.

Roxanne : I guess he has anger issues and it scares you. I remember how you were worried because you missed his calls the other day.

Me : When was that?

She shakes her head. She looks pissed off.

Roxanne : Stop pretending.

Me : I don't know how I'm pretending when I'm asking.

Roxanne : He needs to understand that not everyone is his punching bag. If you are his punching bag then fine but he can't go around beating up other women. I will fuck him up. He better not mess up with me, again! I hope he learnt his lesson.

Her nose is literally sweating. She is angry.

Me : Rox, oh my God, I'm sorry.

Oh no, she is crying. I hug her.

Roxanne : No, you should stop tolerating bullshit.

Me : I'm sorry.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

MaNzilo, Lindokuhle and Sphiwokuhle are watching one of those Saturday night movies.

MaNzilo : It's coming behind you! Run, run! Aw ngengane yomfazi. Izomudla Sphiwo!

Sphiwokuhle and Lindokuhle are laughing.

MaNzilo : Mina ngingamane ngiquleke. Inyoka engaka? But why are they walking inside the riv.... Yamudla!!

She screams and grabs a cushion to hide her face. Lindokuhle laughs and takes his phone that is ringing on the table.

Lindo : Eish, eish, it's Khethiwe.

Sphiwo : Wololo! Uzokutshela ngo Scelo

Lindo : I know. Please

Advertisement

excuse me.

He walks out.

MaNzilo : UKhethiwe?

Sphiwo : Yes

MaNzilo : Kade ngicabanga nami la that maybe it's time Scelo comes back home. Kufanele sizame ukukhulumisana nomndeni wakwa Khumalo ukuze bezokwazi ukusinika ingane.

Sphiwo : There's a lot going on at the moment.

MaNzilo : I know. Niyazi ukuthi ubeletha nini umawengane ka Scelo?

Sphiwo : No, I don't know.

Lindokuhle walks back in.

Lindo : Nangu uBaba

MaNzilo : Where is he?

Lindo : Nayi imoto yakhe lapha esangweni.

MaNzilo : Uthini uKhethiwe?

Lindo : Uyahlanya lo. Ufuna sihambe thina siye emndenini kamawengane kaScelo siyosho ukuthi uScelo umithise indodakazi yabo. What is that? Yenziwa kanjani into enjalo?

MaNzilo : Aibo, uyaganga uKhethiwe, we can't do that.

Lindo : Uthi ufuna ba undurstande ukuthi yena she is a single parent, so she won't be able to pay the damages, ephinde ebatshele ukuthi u Scelo uyahlupha.

Sphiwo : UKhethiwe uthini ngempela? Yini kahle kahle inhloso yakhe ngokufuna ukuya kuloyamuzi?

Lindo : Uthi yena, she thinks it's better if the girl terminates the pregnancy ngoba ngeke ekwazi ukondla ingane ka Scelo ephinde ondle u Scelo.

MaNzilo : Wait, she wants to go and ask them to tell the girl to abort the baby?

Lindo : Ufuna umoya wami uKhethiwe. Uthi no mama we ntombi ka Scelo useyingane so she will understand. Ufuna umsindo obhedayo nje uKhethiwe.

MaNzilo : Ay you know how to pick them mfana wami. Omama bezingane zakho bonke bayafana.

Mzwakhile walks in.

Mzwakhile : Sanibona

MaNzilo : Yebo

MaNzilo looks at Lindokuhle and Sphiwokuhle.

Mzwakhile : Sisekhona isiqunga layikhaya?

MaNzilo : Isiqunga?

Mzwakhile : Yes.

MaNzilo : I don't know, awubheke karound. Wenzani ngesiqunga Mzwa?

Mzwakhile : Ngigeza u Sbani.

'USbani? '

They all ask in unison.

Mzwakhile : Yes. Ulapha emotweni

Everyone got up from their seats.

MaNzilo : What? He is here? Uphumile?

Mzwakhile : Yes

Lindo and Sphiwo storm out. MaNzilo rushes to Mzwakhile and hugs him tightly.

MaNzilo : Thank you, ngiyabonga Mphemba.

Mzwakhile : It's okay, Dali. Ubuyile manje umfana wethu.

MaNzilo : Ngiyabonga Nkosiyami.

She wipes her tears.

MaNzilo : So, you want to cleanse him?

Mzwakhile : Yes, ekhiphe wonke lamabhadi asejeli.

MaNzilo : Okay, let me go and look for isiqunga in the rondavel.

Mzwakhile mixed everything into the bucket and he went to give it to Sbani for cleansing. He is back indeed and he looks fine.

Sbani : Bafo, uzongihambisa, angithi?

Sphiwokuhle laughs. MaNzilo is watching them.

MaNzilo : Uthini uBhunu?

Sphiwo : Uthi ukhumbule u Sebe.

They all laugh.

MaNzilo : He will see her tomorrow

Sbani whispers a lot of hahaha! While shaking his head and rubbing his neck behind Sphiwokuhle. He is not having it.

Mzwakhile : Is he complaining?

Sphiwo : Ye....

Sbani : Cha

Mzwakhile : Sbanisokuhle awukwazi ukuhamba manje. We have a lot to discuss. Ksasa siyoqedela ilobola kwa Mlambo and after that we need to plan the ceremony to introduce Sebenzile to our family ngendlela.

Sbani : Kodwa lokho into esingayikhuluma nakusasa Baba.

MaNzilo smiles.

MaNzilo : Mkhulule Mzwa ehambe bakithi.

Mzwakhile : Fine, he can go. Emsebenzini ithini indaba yakhona?

Sbani : I lied. Ngithe ngiyagula.

Mzwakhile sighs and shakes his head.

Mzwakhile : What happened? Uboshwe kanjani?

Sbani : I don't know, namanje ngisadidekile.

Mzwakhile : Lomuntu obize amaphoyisa usifake kolukhulu ubishi. Lapho ngiyomthola khona uyofisa ukubuyela esiswini sikanina.

MaNzilo : Mzwa, please.

Mzwakhile : No, uma kuthiwa amaphoyisa awabizwanga, I wouldn't be in this mess.

Lindo : What mess?

Sphiwo : Sbani, let's go.

Sphiwokuhle stands and Sbani follows him.

Chapter 31

When I opened the door and found Sbani standing there I couldn't believe it. I just broke down. When I arrived at work this morning I spoke to Grace and I told her what happened. How Sbani got arrested. I didn't expect her to let me go home early, I was just telling her because I'm more open with her. Well she became kind as usual and told me to go home at 12:00.

Sbani also decided to go to work today. I don't know what he is going to tell them since he was absent for so many days. Guess what I decided to cook today? Beans. I just want to see his reaction. I roasted some meat as well. The time is now 18:00. I'm lying on the floor on his small balcony. It's hot inside the house.

'Sebe?'

I smile. He is back.

Sbani : Manu, where are you?

Me : Emnyango. Woza baby

Sbani : What are you doing there?

Me : Woza

The door opens and he steps out. He looks so beautiful, not handsome but beautiful. Sbani is beautiful.

Me : Sit here? What is that?

Sbani : Guess

He laughs and goes back inside.

Me : Kuyashisa lapho, woza.

Sbani : I'm washing my hands

Me : Okay

He comes back and sits down. He places his head on my thighs. I opened the paper bag.

Me : Wings. Wow, baby. How did you know that I wanted this?

Sbani : Because you live in my head 24/7.

He starts singing some song that I don't even know. I laugh and kiss his cheek.

Me : Thank you, baby.

Sbani : Are you okay?

Me : Uh! Wena, how was your day? Batheni emsebenzini?

Sbani : They believed me.

Me : They did?

Sbani : Yeah.

We finished eating the wings and I unfastened his dreadlocks

Me : I was worried about you. Ukucabanga ukuthi khona abantu abasejeli for amacala abangawenzanga got to me.

Sbani : Yeah. Icala liyalivula ingubo lingene.

Me : I just don't understand. Uyakhumbula baby sikhuluma ngelinye ilanga ukuthi umuntu engafa lana kungekho muntu ozwayo because everyone just mind their own, but mase kuxabana mina nawe sekuzwa wonke umuntu? Njani?

Sbani : Mhmmm.

Me : Roxanne and Dylan are always fighting kodwa akekho oke ebize amaphoyisa.

Sbani : Mina baby it's you that I'm worried about. I don't care about what happened.

Me : Me?

Sbani : Sebe, wait. Ngiyeka kancane.

He tries to sit up but I stop him.

Me : No, why?

Sbani : Baby ngiyacela. I want us to talk.

Me : Siyakhuluma nje.

Sbani : Do you remember what happened that day?

Me : It doesn't matter.

Sbani : Wangibiza ngo Menzi.

Me : No, I didn't.

Sbani : You did sthandwa sami, wathi ngiyaxolisa Menzi.

Me : No, you just want us to fight again. Why would I call you Menzi?

Sbani : Ngakushaya?

Me : No

Sbani : Then why were you begging me to stop beating you?

Me : Ay Sbanisokuhle, come on. Isikhwele esibhedayo nje lesi osenza manje.

Sbani : Isikhwele sani?

Me : Sika Menzi.

Sbani : Ngihlanganaphi no Menzi mina?

Me : I don't know!!

Sbani : Asilwi

Me : No, we are fighting. Uma ukhuluma ngo Menzi ulwa nami. Ngicela ungangifaki esikhweleni sakho.

Sbani : Why would I be jealous? Angikubangi no Menzi. You are mine.

Me : Then what is all this?

Sbani : We have a problem and we need to address it.

Me : Address it alone. I don't have time for this.

Sbani : Why ulwa sthandwa sami? Ufuna bebize amaphoyisa futhi?

Me : Abawabize mebebona. I don't have time for this. Please get up, ngifuna ukungena endlini.

Sbani : Sisakhuluma.

Me : No, mina angisakhulumi.

Sbani : Okay

He lifts up his head and I get up. I'm going to leave him here alone. I switch on the light and iron his work uniform. I hear the door to the balcony closing. I lift up my eyes to him. He smiles.

Sbani : Udiniwe?

Me : I'm going to sleep in my room.

Sbani : So you are angry.

Me : No, I'm not angry.

Sbani : OBaba bayoqedela ilobolo ksasa kwa Mlambo.

Me : Okay

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa phela, Sebe.

Me : Ay

Sbani : Hawu kodwa thembalami, Ngiyakucela.

He wraps his arms around my waist and kisses my neck. I giggle.

Me : I forgive you baby

I turn around and wrap my arm around his neck while rubbing his penis.
He laughs.

Sbani : Usuqalile

I giggle.

Me : Started with what hawu? Ngicela ungiyapha.

He pecks my lips.

Sbani : Ngikuphe ini sthandwa sami?

Me : Inqantiza

We both crack up with laughter. He stops laughing and stares at me. He is so cute even when he is sulking.

Sbani : Ngicela uyiyeke Sebe. Idedele

I laugh.

Me : Ini?

Sbani : Inqantiza yami, please leave it.

Me : I don't want to.

Sbani : No, leave it. You say it's small, so please leave it alone.

We are both laughing.

Me : I love you so much.

Sbani : I love you too, thembalami.

Me : Ngicela ungipha ke baby

He laughs.

Sbani : No

He kisses my neck and pulls away. I hate how Sbani is not addicted to sex when I am so addicted to his dick. Last night we didn't do anything.

Sbani : Uyaphupha ebusuku uma ulele sthandwa sami?

Me : Yes I do. Why?

Sbani : Ngiyabuza nje baby

Me : I do but ngiyakhohlwa ukuthi ngiphupheni uma sengivukile.

Sbani : That is not good.

Me : Really?

Sbani : It isn't. You need to do something about it. Or maybe write them down, soon after you wake up.

Me : Dreams are not that important to me.

Sbani : I see.

Sbani : Sizobe senza umcimbi wokukwazisa emndenini maduzane sthandwa sami.

Me : Umcimbi?

Sbani : Yeah lapho ngikwazisa khona emndenini wami ngokusemthethweni.

Me : I've never heard of such.

Sbani : We do it.

I look at him and smile. Oh he is about to draw something. His drawing book is on the bed. He puts on his glasses.

Me : When is the ceremony?

Sbani : I'm not sure okwamanje baby. Ngizokhuluma noBaba kusasa.

Me : Okay. Who are you drawing? Me?

We both laugh. I continue ironing his uniform. I finished and went to wash a few dishes in the sink. I come back and he is still drawing. I miss him now. I stand in front of him and look at the sketch in front of him. I can't believe how fast he moves with his pen. He is using ink today, red and blue.

Me : What if you make a mistake? Uzorabha kanjani?

He laughs.

Sbani : Never

Me : What is that?

Sbani : Mhmmm?

I look closely. He is drawing a bunch of cows.

Me : This is blood, right?

Sbani : Yes

Me : So why is this cow peeing blood?

Sbani : I don't know but this is what I dreamt last night.

He sighs.

Me : Maybe that because kade ulapha esitokisini. Jail does that sometimes, uphuphe izinto ezisabisayo.

He laughs.

Sbani : And how do you know that?

Me : I just know.

He pulls me to bed and he climbs on top of me.

Sbani : You just know?

He kisses me.

Me : Mhmmm.

I run my hand under his jacket. He stops kissing me.

Sbani : What did you cook?

I laugh.

Me : You will see.

He laughs and looks at my hand that is now going down to his penis.

Sbani : Wenzani?

Me : Hawu baby

Sbani : Ngilambile nje mina

Me : Nami ngilambele wena

He laughs and gets up.

Me : Manuna?

Sbani : Yah sthandwa sami

Me : Can I ask you something?

Sbani : Yeah

Me : Do I bore you or does having sex with me bores you?

His face drops. Right now I feel like I have broken his heart, which wasn't my intention.

Me : Woza lana.

I tap on the bed.

Me : I'm just asking baby.

He comes back and sits down. He wraps his arm around me.

Sbani : Yinindaba ungibuza into enjalo, baby?

He lifts up my chin and stares at me. I smile and he smiles back.

Me : Ngibone singenzi lutho izolo and now you just got up while we were still kissing, so I... I decided to ask you ngoba wathi if I feel like there's a problem or if something bothers me I must come to you sik....

Sbani : Sikhulume, yeah.

He finishes my last sentence while shaking his head.

Me : Yeah.

He sighs.

Sbani : Sebe, there's is nothing wrong. Awungibhori sthandwa sami. Empeleni I love everything that I do with you. Lokho angikusho because I'm trying to impress you or yingoba ngikhulunyiswa uthando or i obsession enginayo ngawe, no. But it's true.

I giggle.

Me : So you are obsessed with me?

Sbani : Very much, manakazi.

He pecks my lips.

Me : So what is the problem? You don't like sex.

Sbani : I love sex, ngiyakujabulela ukulala nawe. I love having sex with you but the problem is that I don't enjoy sex with you.

My mouth drops. Wow!

Sbani : Don't do that. Ngilinde ngichaze sthandwa sami.

Me : Chaza Sbani ngilalele.

Sbani : The problem is not you, it's me. Uma sisuke siheva ngisuke nginemicango eminingi ekhanda lami. Angithi uyazi baby ukuthi imizwa

nemicabango kuyahambisana. Mina ngicabanga ukuthi imicabango yami inamandla okudlula imizwa yami.

Me : Why?

Sbani : Because when we are having sex I think too much, imicabango yami ize igcine isiqeda imizwa yami.

Me : Yini osuke uyicabanga Sbani?

Sbani : A lot of things. Ukuthi waht if ngiyakugulisa? What if I fail to pull out, ngichamele kuwena and you fall pregnant uzale ingane ene albinism njengami? Worse ezogula njengami? Yonke leyomcabango isuke iphithizela ekhanda lami.

I chuckle.

Me : Oh wow, you are unbelievable shame.

Sbani : No, Sebe wena you don't understand. Raising a child with albinism is not easy. Umthwalo engingakazimiseli ukukuthwesa wona.

Me : Ay shame.

Sbani : Sebe, ngiyayithanda ingane ngenhliziyo yami yonke. Angisaphathi ukuba nengane nawe, ngingavele ngihlanye straight. Sekunengane ekuthiwa ekaSebe no Sbani? Lokho kungabe kusho ukufezekiswa kwamaphupho ami.

I want to smile but I'm not going to smile.

Sbani : Ingane ngiyithanda ngaleyondlela. But I cannot be selfish ngizicabangele mina kuphela, I need to consider all the facts. Ingane ezobuya njalo izokhala kuwena for different reasons nawe ugcine usukhala because it hurt. I'm going to be honest you. Living with albinism is like a curse sometimes, especially for kids. The bullying, dealing with a low self esteem. Ukhule unovalo ukuthi uzobulawa kwenziwe umuthi ngawe. People telling you scary stories about people living with albinism, bekutshela ukuthi awufi njengabanye abantu, uyabuya uzopoka. Baby kunzima.

I understand where he is coming from but I don't think he understands how much I love him. I don't think he understands how deep I'm in. I don't know what to say to him anymore and I feel like nothing can change a mind that has everything figured out so I'll just keep quiet.

Sbani : Ukhule uthi uzitholela intombi, kuvele kufike oRoxanne
bekwenze ubone angathi you don't deserve love.

He laughs and playfully bites my cheek.

Sbani : Angithi? She thinks I don't deserve you.

Me : That is not true.

He sighs.

Sbani : Ongibuka ke

Me : No

Sbani : Come on baby. Look at me.

I sigh and lift up my eyes to him.

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda.

Me : I love you too.

Sbani : We are not perfect sthandwa sami and our love is not perfect. Kunezinto ekusafanele sizilungise, we have demons to fight. Mina ngizozama ukuthola usizo because I want us to be happy. I want you to be happy.

Me : And I'm also willing to meet you halfway. Whatever way you see fit.

He sighs.

Sbani : I'll deal with it. Woza la baby wami

He kisses me and places my hand on his penis. I giggle and we continue kissing.

Chapter 32

Roxanne : It's going to be fun. We can go for ice-cream and after that we will go and play games.

I shake my head. She is busy trying to convince me to go out with her.

Roxanne : Come on, it's Friday. You need to unwind.

Me : I don't need to.

Roxanne : Sbani must be bored with you. You are so uptight.

She is confirming everything that I think I am.

Me : What time are we going to come back?

Roxanne : Early.

Me : But I can't. I don't have money and Sbani's salary will only reflect at midnight.

Roxanne : We don't need a lot of money. What I have is enough for the both of us.

Me : Okay, okay, I want to go.

She screams in excitement and hugs me.

Roxanne : You're about to have the best day of your life.

I giggle. Now I'm also excited about this.

Me : Wait, I need to ask for Sbani's permission first.

Roxanne : Permission?

I smile and take my phone

Me : Yeah.

Roxanne : Oh wow, I guess, go ahead.

Me : Let me call him. I hope he is not busy.

I dial his number.

Roxanne : Is he ever busy to take your calls?

We both laugh.

Roxanne : No, no way.

Sbani : Manu

Me : Yah baby

Sbani : Yazi kade ngikhuluma ngawe nje manje la komunye umjita, ngithi kade sigcinile ukukhuluma and lokho akungiphathi kahle. Ngiyaxolisa baby, work is hectic today.

Me : It's okay love.

Sbani : Usungikhumbule? Mina ngiyafa.

I laugh.

Me : Yes bhabha, I miss you but that's not why I called you.

Sbani : Ooookay

I laugh.

Me : Don't do that.

Sbani : Talk to me sthandwa sami.

Me : I want to tell you ukuthi sengiphekile.

Sbani : Okay. Wadla?

Me : Yes, I ate baby. Ngawasha futhi izingubo zethu

He laughs.

Sbani : Thank you thembalami.

Me : Nga ayina izingubo zakho zomsebenzi.

Sbani : Aw manakazi, ngiyabonga swidi lami.

Me : Ngakufakele nezintambo ematekwini akho.

He laughs.

Sbani : Ay, kumele ngiyokhokha elinye ilobolo ka Mlambo.

Me : Yes.

I laugh.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga baby.

Me : So, I....

I laugh and rub the back of my neck.

Sbani : Talk to me, baby.

Me : Ay yeka. Ngiyazi ukuthi you'll be angry.

Sbani : Angry? Ngidinwa yini kodwa Sebe?

Me : No, let's leave it. What time are you going to be home?

Sbani : I don't know. Kwenzenjani, Sebe?

Me : Okay, bengithi ngicela ukuhamba.

Sbani : Uhamba uyaphi ubaby wami?

Me : Roxanne wants to take me out.

He let out a long sigh. I knew he wouldn't like it.

Sbani : Ukukhipha kuyiwaphi?

Me : We are going out for ice cream and after that we will go and play games. But uma ungathandi ngeke ngihambe.

Sbani : Manu, angisoze mina ngakunqabela ukuthi uhambe uyojabula. Inkinga yami u Roxanne. I don't like her but she is your friend, so I have no choice but to warm up to her. Uphi yena?

Me : Ukhona

Sbani : Okay, thank you for letting me know.

Me : So, can I go?

I look at Roxanne and pop out my tongue.

Sbani : Baby, come on. Of course you can go.

Me : Thank you, Khuboni, thank you so much.

Sbani : Uyayibona lemali engithe ngizobanika yona ekhaya if my salary comes late?

Me : Ehhe

Sbani : Yeah. You can use it sthandwa sami. Sebengiholelile laba. So ngizodlula ekhaya ngibanike late.

Me : No, don't worry, love. Roxanne will give me.

Sbani : No. Use our money. Isephaketheni le jacket ebengiyigqoke izolo ebusuku kade siya estolo.

Me : Okay, manuna. Ngiyabonga.

Sbani : Sofonelana ke.

Me : Okay baby.

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda

Me : I love you too

Sbani : Mncwa! Mncwa!

Me : Mncwaaa!

He ends the call.

Me : Yes!!! We are on

We hug each other and jump up and down.

Roxanne : Okay

Advertisement

okay. What are you going to wear?

Me : Let's see, let's see.

I open my wardrobe and take out my jean dress.

Me : This one. I love it.

Roxanne : What? No! This is ugly.

Me : No, it's not.

Roxanne : Okay, move away.

She pushes me away from the wardrobe. She takes out leggings.

Me : No, no, Sbani doesn't want me to wear leggings in public.

Her eyes widened.

Roxanne : Did he tell you that?

Me : Not directly, but I know he doesn't. Traditionally, I'm already his wife so I can't go out wearing tights.

Roxanne : Oyoo!

Me : What?

Roxanne : You are allowing him to control you and it's not fair.

Me : He doesn't control me.

Roxanne : Come, let's go to my room. I'll give you a nice little number.

Me : What?

Roxanne : Come.

I laugh and follow her.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

MaNzilo : Thank you, thank you so much mfana wami.

She hugs Sbani and then holds the pharmacy bag over her chest. She seems genuinely excited. She can't stop thanking Sbani. Lindokuhle and Sphiwokuhle walk in.

MaNzilo : Look what Sbani bought for me.

Sphiwo : What is that?

MaNzilo : Oh, wawungekho wena Sphiwo. Ngangitshela u Lindo ukuthi indodakazi ka Njapha le eyi nurse recommended some pills to help with my glands but yasho ukuthi ayabiza. Guess what? Yiwo lawa. Sbani bought them for me.

Sphiwo smiles and wraps his arm around Sbani's neck .

Sphiwo : Siyabonga Godide. Usukhulile mfana omncane.

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Kahle wena sdudla

Lindo : Ey uyaqhuma u Phiwo. Look at his stomach.

They all laugh.

Sphiwo : Angazi ukuthi ngifuthwa yini kanje.

MaNzilo : Umsebenzi. You are happy

Sphiwo : Ayngeke ubhiya lo. My stomach is full of beer, iwona lo ongenza ibhelunde.

MaNzilo : Then you need to quit drinking.

Sphiwo : Ubani? Ngingafa nokufa. Siyobugaxa nje kuyimanje lapho angivuki ksasa.

They laugh.

Lindo : Where is tayma?

MaNzilo : I don't know. Akakabuyi. Selokhu kwaphuma u Sbani akahlaliseki, he is up and down.

Sbani : Kanjani manje?

Sphiwo : Don't worry about it bafozi. Asambeni phela madoda.

MaNzilo laughs and stretches her arms.

MaNzilo : Before nibugonxa ningakhohlwa imali yokudla bafana. Angithi you all heard your father ukuthi uthe kulenyanga umpintshekile.

She yawns.

Sphiwo : Mhmmm.

Sbani : Yeah.

MaNzilo : You need to help him bafana bami. I know ukuthi nani ninezidingo zenu but siyanidinga.

Sbani : Relax Mah, we all know that we have to contribute this month. Sayikhuluma lento last week ngakho angiboni ukuthi kukhona onenkinga.

MaNzilo : Ngibona ningibuka kabi phela.

She laughs.

Sphiwo : Aibo, that's not true. Sizoyikhipha imali.

Sphiwokuhle and Sbanisokuhle take out their wallet and each of them places R2000 on the coffee table, except Lindokuhle who is busy on his phone like he doesn't see what is happening. Sbani and Sphiwokuhle look at each other.

MaNzilo : WeBaba ka Khalo.

She laughs.

MaNzilo : Kambe, who used to call him that?

Sphiwokuhle laughs.

Sphiwo : Umkhulu waseMtuba.

They laugh.

MaNzilo : Yes, ethi "WeBaba kaKhalo womile umphimbo"

They all burst. Baba ka Khalo is not interested. He is still busy on his phone.

Lindo : Mina ngicela ukuyifaka ksasa eyami ingxenye. There was a delay with my salary.

He finally says.

MaNzilo : Okay

Lindo : Angithi vele u Maka Skhalo ozoya email for our grocery shopping?

MaNzilo : Yes, ngoba mina angiphilile. Ungcono yena ujwayele ukusenzela i grocery.

Lindo : Yeah, so I'll give her my share tomorrow.

MaNzilo : Ayke, siyabonga boGodide abahle. UNkulunkulu enibusise zingane zami.

Sphiwo : Ayke siqedile.

MaNzilo laughs.

MaNzilo : USphiwo usebizwa utshwala

They all laugh.

MaNzilo : Ningaphuzi kuze kweqe Phiwo.

Sphiwo : Chillax, Mah. Bafo, onginika le charga

He taps Sbani's back.

Sbani : Oh, the charger. Let's go

MaNzilo : Sebe must be so lonely.

Sbani : Ay akekho uhambe nabangani bakhe, basashawa umoya kancane.

MaNzilo smiles.

MaNzilo : That's good. Phela usemncane she needs to live a little.

Sbani : I know. Ngiyajabula nami uma naye ezijabulisa.

MaNzilo : Yeah

Sphiwo : Sbani woza phela. My battery is running out.

Sbani : I'm coming. Othi nginike u Phiwo le charga

MaNzilo : Okay

Sbani follows Sphiwokuhle. Lindo laughs.

Lindo : Charger my foot. Sebeyohleba ngami

MaNzilo : Hhayi Lindo, why would they gossip about you.

Lindo : Ngihlale ngibabamba behleba ngami.

MaNzilo : Ay suka.

Lindo : Wee u Mah. I'm telling you.

MaNzilo : Ay udlala ngabo. Manje wena awuphuzi ke namhlanje?

Lindo : Mhmm-Mhmmm

MaNzilo : Take R500 from this money. You'll replace it tomorrow.

Lindo's lips spread to a wide smile.

MaNzilo : Stop smiling and take the money bengaze babuye abafowenu.

Lindo : Bengihlebe futhi

They both laugh. Lindo takes the R500 from the contribution money and puts it inside his pocket. Sphiwokuhle and Sbani are in the two room house.

Sphiwo : What I don't understand is why Maka Skhalo has to be the one doing our grocery every month kodwa uma sinezinkinga akafiki layikhaya. This is nonsense. I can't wait ukuthi uSebe ebe umakoti walayikhaya ngokusemthethweni. I want to see what will happen. Ngoba le ka Maka Skhalo inobutsotsi phakathi.

Sbani : Do you think bhuti will contribute anything?

Sphiwo : He won't and he knows that we won't see. Njalo uma kufanele sise layikhaya u Lindo yena uthi uzofaka late eyakhe imali. Always!

He goes and checks the coast outside.

Sbani : I understand ukuthi ubafo unomndeni kodwa this is wrong.

Sphiwo : What family? U Lindo akazondli izingane zakhe. We both know that. Ngo December wabaleka waya eMtuba because he knew ukuthi omama bezingane zakhe bazofika begcwale la and press his neck bezofuna imali yezingubo zikakhisimusi.

Sbani : Ubhuti uyenzani ngempela imali?

Sphiwo : I don't know. U Lindo uholo ngaphezulu kwami nawe but uyena ohlale enezinkinga. This is bullshit!

Sbani : Ubhuti uyinkinga

Sphiwo : Uyabona futhi lo R4000 esiwukhiphile? Maka Skhalo won't use it all to buy groceries. She will keep some for herself. Mhlampe uzothenga ngo R2000

Sbani : Then she will tell us that food is expensive.

They both laugh.

Sphiwo : Uke umuzwe mase esho njalo?

He chuckles and shakes his head.

Sphiwo : Thina nje we need to prepare ourselves for another contribution before the end of the month. Ngoba lokudla okuzothengwa kuzo phela in one week. Plus ngoba uBaba efelwe amabhasi awu 3 nje akanalutho. Plus kuphinde kwayoqedelwa ilobolo ngemali.

Sbani : Eish

Sphiwo : ULindo uyasidakelwa nje straight! ULindo uwutsotsi ngisho kubantu bakubo. Uqhubana ngamadolo. We also have our.....

He pauses as someone walks in. Speak of the devil and he will show up.
He walks in whistling. Oh, no did he hear them?

Sbani : Hheyi.

Lindo : Ehhe. Ay I'm here to take my jacket.

He opens the wardrobe and continues to whistle and then boom! He starts singing.

Lindo : Utsotsi, Utsotsi. Aw utsotsi

Somebody come and shoot Sbani and Sphiwo now!

Sphiwo : What the fuck..

He whispers. Sbani wants to dig a hole and hide.

Lindo : Anisho kambe who was starring in that Tsotsi movie?

Oh, no he heard them. Sbani takes out his phone and dials Sebe's number. He walks out.

Lindo : Hawu niyangiziba?

Sphiwo : Ey angazi mina.

Sbani walks back in. He looks worried.

Sphiwo : What's wrong?

Sbani : I can't get hold of Sebe. Ifoni yakhe ivaliwe.

Chapter 33

The dress that Roxanne wanted to give me didn't fit me. It was too small. After a long argument about what I should wear she finally convinced me to wear my mini skirt with creases all around it. She calls it a pleated tennis skirt but back home we call it "Dunusa". Mine is white. I only bought it but I've never worn it because Menzi called it a shit skirt the moment I showed him. I know Sbani won't like it either because it's too short. I'll wear it though, but I need to come back and change before he sees it. Yeah I ended up wearing my dunusa with a black vest and flat strappy sandals. I love this outfit and I'm confident in it but my only worry is Sbani. What If someone who knows Sbani sees me in this short skirt?

Well my outing with Roxanne started off very well. We went for ice cream and after that we went to the park and fed birds, but as to how we ended up in a club, I don't know. I'm here now in the middle of drunk and sweating people. And also the loud music. I'm already feeling sick. I feel dizzy. I think it's the crowd and noise. I'm not used to this. I take out my phone and I almost faint when I realize it's off.

Roxanne : What's wrong?

Me : We need to go. My phone is off.

She takes a sip of her beer and then brushes my shoulder.

Roxanne : Chill, it's only 17:45. It's still early!

She screams on top of the loud music.

Me : No, no, you didn't even tell me that we were coming to the club.

She laughs.

Roxanne : Darling, this is not a club. It's a tavern.

Me : It doesn't matter. I want to go home. Sbani won't....

Roxanne : Woooo! Don't even start. Why does everything have to be about that man? This is your life, not his! Every time we are having fun you spoil it.

Me : Can I at least use your phone to call him? My battery has ran out.

Roxanne : Yeah sure. Here is mine.

She gives me her phone. I take it and run to the toilet where there is less noise. I dial Sbani's number. It's ringing.

Sbani : Ehhe

He doesn't have Roxanne's number that's why he answered like that.

Me : Sompisi imina uSebe. Ngiyaxolisa Babana, my battery ran out.

He blows out a sigh.

Sbani : Sthandwa sami, thank you. Yazi sengikhathazeke kanjani. Kuyimanje ngisemotweni no Phiwo sithi siyobheka ukuthi anikakabuyi yini endlini. U right baby wami?

Me : I'm fine, my love.

Sbani : Where are you kodwa mamana?

I swallow nothing.

Me : Toilet. Roxanne is waiting for me outside. Sesizobuya manje

Sbani : Are you enjoying yourself?

Should I say yes or no?

Me : Ngikhumbule wena

Sbani : Uzungibona sthandwa sami, okwamanje please enjoy yourself, okay?

I smile

Me : Okay baby

Sbani : Ngizokulanda mase uright. Ungibhaze ngaleyofoni and I'll call you. Ekamngani wakho angithi le number?

My heart is already racing.

Me : Yeah.... Wait, uzongilanda?

I ask while looking at my skirt.

Sbani : Yeah, yinindaba, awuthandi?

Me : No, no, no ngiyathanda manu.

Sbani : Okay I'll see you later. Ngiyakuthanda, uyezwa?

Me : I love you too baby

Sbani : Mncwa! Mncwa

Me : Mncwa! Mncwa baby.

He hung up. I try to pull down my skirt and take a deep breath.
Dammit!

I go back to the club. Oh Tavern. Roxanne has been talking and dancing with different men. Right now he is drinking with other two that I don't even know.

Man 1 : That motherfucker is a bloody snitch. He is snitching on Dylan.

Man 2 : We need to burn those stupid buses and teach him a lesson.

They laugh. I don't know if I should join them or sit alone.

Man 2 : He is not even in the taxi industry anymore. But he is busy poking his nose in our fucking business! What if those cops killed Dylan?

They are talking about that accident. Let me sit here and not disturb them. Thank God the music is soft now. Roxanne turns her head. I think she is looking for me. I wave my hand but still she doesn't see me.

Roxanne : Shh! Listen, I think it's his son that is staying with us in the flat. Do you guys remember the room I told you about? That it's always locked?

Man 1 : Yeah, yeah.

Roxanne : The thing is now, ever since Dylan's accident, he is no longer hiding himself. But, but.....

She looks around and taps her fingers on the table.

Roxanne : I am still uncertain. What I know is that their surnames are the same.

Man 2 : Oyoo!

Roxanne : I'm still collecting more evidence though. I'm on it. Oh the Detective, did you guys hear about the Detective?

Man 1 : He told us. Oyoo! What a coincidence. But which Detective? because I know all the Detectives working there.

Man 2 : That one is laying low and apparently he wants his blood. It seems like they have a bitter past.

Roxanne : But when Dylan confronted him about it, he denied everything. I think he wants to take it solo.

Man 2 : Dylan thinks he is not ready to take him out and that's why he is playing idiot. He wants to torture him before he takes him out.

Man 1 : If that is the case then we can't form an alliance with him. We want to strike soon and put him six feet under. The world will be a better place.

Roxanne : I know. But I also told Dylan to not rush anything. Missions like these need you to put down your emotions. You need to work with your head and not your heart.

Aibo Roxanne. Why is she talking like a very experienced gangster? That is not her language. Whatever they are talking about must be serious.

Roxanne : I'm just glad that I bumped into you two. I'll give Dylan his message. For now let's keep our eyes and ears open.

Man 2 : Yeah and find out if the guy is related to him. I mean if he is, that means we are all in danger.

Roxanne : You think he was sent by his father to spy on us?

Man 2 : Exactly. Why else would he hide his bloody face? He is Mzwakhile's son. but we just need to confirm that. What I know is that Mzwakhile is sharp. We should never underestimate die man. He is always 10 steps ahead.

Did he say Mzwakhile? That name sounds familiar. My mind is just blank, I can't remember how I know that name.

Roxanne : He won't do shit! Look you two need to go now. I'll talk to Dylan. He is hiding in Glebe for now.

Man 1 : That's good. Keep well hey?

Roxanne : Sharp

The men get up and walk away, leaving Roxanne finishing her beer. I stand up and join her.

Me : Ro.....

She jumps and almost touches the roof.

Roxanne : Holy.... Oh my...Seh, you gave me a fright.

I laugh.

Me : Sorry.

Roxanne : I thought you were in the ladies.

Me : I was.

I pull the chair and sit down.

Me : Here is your phone. I spoke to my man and he is fine.

I sweep my tongue over my lower lip. She narrows her eyes. I laugh.

Me : Why are you looking at me like that? Did I really scare you off that much?

Roxanne : How long have you been standing behind me?

Me : Not for long. Who were those men? I'll tell Dylan that you are cheating on him with gangsters who wear gold earrings.

I laugh.

Roxanne : You saw them? I mean you heard... What am I saying? I mean those men are.....

I laugh out loud.

Me : Relax, I'm joking.

She sighs.

Me : I think you are drunk now. We need to go.

Roxanne : What exactly were those men saying? I am so drunk, I don't even know what they were saying.

She laughs and rubs her face. She is drunk.

Me : You guys were talking about Dylan and other things.

She stops laughing and raises her brows.

Roxanne : Dylan? My husband?

Me : I think so. Look, I didn't hear well. Anyway Sbani wants to fetch me.

Roxanne : You didn't hear?

Me : Is that a problem?

She smiles.

Roxanne : Of course not. I'm just.... Don't worry. So your man wants to fetch you and?

Me : Look at this skirt. It's short.

Roxanne : There's nothing wrong with that skirt. Do you want biltong?

Me : Uh!

Roxanne : Great.

She opens her wallet and pauses.

Roxanne : Oh my wo.... Is that... It's her. Tash? Tash! Come here.

And that's how her squad joined us and surrounded our table . The time is now 18:00. I want to go. I don't want to make Sbani angry.

Tash : Girl, are you okay? Do you want something to drink?

Me : No

thanks. I'm just tired.

I am tired. Drinking? I can't even eat. The biltong is still in front of me. It's too dry and salty for my liking. This one is a fake biltong. I want to go.

Tash : Come on, have one beer.

Me : No, I think I should get going.

Roxanne laughs while hitting the table.

Roxanne : See girls? This is why I always encourage you to stay away from abusive men. Look at her, she can't even have innocent fun.

I hate the fact that she thinks Sbani is abusive. I'm not going to argue with a drunk Roxanne. I'll wait for her to be sober.

Me : No, I still need to cook when I get home.

Roxanne : Why are you lying? Seh, you cooked.

Me : Ey Roxanne, please. Please lend me your phone.

She shakes her head.

Roxanne : Take it, but please don't finish my airtime.

Me : I won't.

I get off the chair and go outside. I called Sbani's number. He is not answering. I try again but still it's just ringing.

Me : Oh my God.

My heart is already pounding. I rub my sweaty hand on my vest. His phone is just ringing and goes straight to voicemail after that. I feel tears burning in my eyes. Someone must have told him that I'm in the club, wearing a mini skirt. What the hell is wrong with me? Why do I keep looking for trouble? Menzi was right. I'm stupid and I keep ruining good things for myself.

Me : Mphemba, please pick up. Please, please.

No answer. Dammit! There is an annoying drunk man now in front of me. He is trying to touch me. I want to slap him.

Him : Hey my sweet potato. Are you here alone?

Who the hell is his sweet potato?

Me : Bhuti awukahle kancane bandla please.

Him : Come on, I want to buy you a drink.

Me : Ngicela ungangibangeli iscefe ngiyacela.

Him : But I love your skirt.

Me : Yo! Waze wanesdina ndoda yabantu.

I leave him and go back inside. Roxanne and her friends are really enjoying themselves.

Roxanne : Did you get him?

I shake my head and look at her friends.

Me : Yes

Roxanne : And?

Me : He is on his way

Roxanne : Prrrr!

She rolls her eyes. They all laugh and continue talking and drinking. I keep looking at Roxanne's phone. I'm feeling really sick. The dizziness keeps getting worse. I don't know if it's stress or being here. Sbani is really stressing me out.

Me : What am I going to say to him?

I mumble. Okay, I'll apologize first and then tell him that I didn't know that we were coming here. Fuck! Why am I so stupid? Why did I even come here? I can already picture Sbani angry. The more I think about it the more my chest bounces up and down. I'm pacing around

Roxanne : Ping!!!!

I turn around and look at her.

Roxanne : Finally, she is back.

They laugh. I feel like an idiot right now.

Me : Wh.. What?

Roxanne : Are you okay?

Me : No, I want to go.

Roxanne : You know what? I am sick and tired of you. If you want to go then go.

I sniff.

Me : Where can I get taxis to Verulam here?

Tash : You.....

Roxanne : Tash, shut up! No!

She bangs the table.

Tash : Sorry

Roxanne is unbelievable. It's fine I'll walk until I get home. I shake my head and take my handbag.

Me : Here is your ph....

Her phone rings before she takes it. This is Sbani's number.

Me : It's him.

I smile and run to the loo.

Me : Godide

Sbani : Sthandwa sami ukephi? Yazi mina ngikephi manje?

Me : Where are you?

Sbani : BP garage.

Yo! I don't even know where I am.

Me : Khuboni, I need to tell you something.

Sbani : Yah sthandwa sami.

Me : Dylan came to pick us up from the park and he left us here. Uthe uyabuya. Ngiyaxolisa Sbani.

Sbani : Ikephi lapho?

Me : It's... It's Ty's Tavern or something like that.

Sbani : Ty's Ta..... Oh, yeah, yeah ngiyayibona. Ningalapho?

Me : Yes

Sbani : Okay baby, ngiyeza. Stand where I'll be able to see you.

Me : Okay

Sbani : Sho

He ends the call. I ran to give Roxanne her phone.

Me : Sbani is here. Let's go

Roxanne : Bye. Tash, what did you do after that? Wow, this is interesting.

Wow. I shake my head and walk away. I'm trying to pull down my skirt. This skirt is stressing me out.

Minutes later Sbani's car pulled over. He climbs out of the car with a huge smile on his face. He licks his lower lip.

Sbani : Sawubona sthandwa sami.

Me : Hey

I try to cover my skirt with my handbag. He whistles and takes my hand.

Sbani : Woza la baby

I smile

Sbani : Awujike ngibone Dali

I laugh. He is singing.

Sbani : Jika ngibone manakazi

He spins me around and hugs me. He kisses my neck.

Sbani : Mhmmm waze wamuhle manuna

Wow. He loves my outfit. I don't know but this feels like a dream.

Me : Thank you, my love.

He takes my handbag

Sbani : Asingene emotweni. Ubungasabi ukuma wedwa la?

Me : No

Sbani : Where is your friend?

Me : I left her

He smiles.

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda

Me : I love you too baby

He kisses my lips.

"Enough with the kisses. Let's go"

I quickly pull away. Oh, no Sphiwokuhle is here.

Me : Awusho ngani ukuthi uhamba no Phiwo?

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : He is going to drive us. He is drunk but he can see and I am not drunk but I can't see.

We both laugh. We get inside the car and sit in the back seat.

Me : Bhuti, sawubona.

Sphiwo : Koti, koti.

He is drunk. I hope we are going to make it home safe.

Sbani and I are talking and kissing in the middle of our conversation. He can't stop talking about how beautiful I look and I can't stop blushing.

Me : Won't he get arrested?

Sbani laughs.

Sphiwo : I heard that. Ay khululeka koti, thina sihamba nedlozi.

We laugh. We drive across one of their father's buses.

Sphiwo : Nayi ibhasi kayihlo

Sbani : Awume Phiwo. Akuyena u Nkawu lo?

Sphiwo : No, Ilena ehamba u Sbo le.

Sbani : Mhmmmm

He smiles and kisses my hand.

Sbani : Umfazi kaSbani madoda

I giggle

Me : Baby why lamabhasi ebhalwe u MNT?

Sbani : It's Mzwakhile Ntuli Transport

Me : Ooooooh

My mind immediately runs back to that conversation and my heart almost stops. The buses? Mzwakhile?. Were Roxanne and those men talking about Sbani's father?

Sbani : Yinindaba baby?

I pull out a smile and shake my head.

Me : No, nothing.

Sbani : Webafo awutshela u baby ukuthi why ekhaya senza lomsebenzi wokubingelelisa umakoti.

Sphiwo : Oh. You mean when we introduce her to the men of our family?

Men? What does he mean?

Sbani : Yeah

Sphiwo : Ay wena koti lolusiko lusuke lenzelwa ukuthi wena njengomakoti wazi abafowabo bendoda yakho nawo wonke amadoda alapho uganele khona.

Me : Why?

I've never heard of such tradition.

Sphiwo : Elders know that marriage may be haunted by temptations. Kubuye kufike izilingo emshadweni nigcine senifuna ukuntshontsha ngaphandle. So, the purpose of the ceremony is to introduce you emadodeni okungafanele ulingeleke ngakuwona ngisho kungathiwa uyalingeka.

He burps.

Sphiwo : Excuse me. Is for you as a Ntuli bride to know which men not to mess with la emhlabeni mhlazane kufika isilwane senkanuko kuwe. Because siyafika.

Me : I don't like it.

They both laugh.

Sphiwo : Nami ngihlale ngisho. Umsangano nje

Me : And what if yena ke u Sbani uvukwa inkanuko ezilahle kodadewethu?

Sbani : Hawu baby, I'll never do that.

Me : I know but I'm just asking.

Sphiwo : Mhlampe nakwa Mlambo kufanele belugane ke lolusiko.

We all laugh.

Me : Kahle kahle usiko lwakwa Ntuli lolu?

Sphiwo : I'm not sure ukuthi bakhona yini abanye abalulandelayo kweminye imizi, but kwaNtuli lungolunye olubaluleke kakhulu.

I feel like this tradition of theirs is low key disgracing women. I mean why would they think that I'd cheat on Sbani or even throw myself on his brothers? The thought of it leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. Let me just get over their silly tradition. Roxanne? I'm mostly worried about the conversation that Roxanne was having with those men. Are they planning to kill Sbani's father? No, maybe I got it all wrong.

Sbani : Manu, are you sure you are okay?

Should I tell him what I heard or not?

Me : Yes, yes I'm fine, my love.

Chapter 34

His alarm is ringing but he is not even moving an inch. His leg and arm are still wrapped around me tightly. This is the same man who used to wake up at 3am and got ready for work like taxi drivers do. But since we've been together he can't wake up any more. His alarm is ringing for the 5th time. I nudged him with my elbow.

Me : Love, wake up.

Sbani : Ngizovuka ngo half past

I laugh.

Me : That's what you said 40 minutes ago. Vuka Sbani.

Sbani : Hhaibo Sbani?

I laugh.

Me : But that's your name.

Sbani : No, that is rude. Ngitshele kahle baby.

I laugh out loud.

Me : Rude how? Okay, vuka love wami omuhle.

He lifts up my nightie and pokes my bums with his hard penis. I giggle.

Me : Why are you fighting with me?

Sbani : Why are we even working, baby?

I laugh. Shame man, I feel sorry for him. He hardly gets any rest. They are always working.

Me : I'm sorry baby

He kisses my neck and jumps out of the bed. He stands in front of the bed and scratches his dreadlocks like a cute little baby that just woke up. I can't stop smiling. My cheeks hurt.

Sbani : Eish, Eish, Eish!!!!

I laugh.

Me : Baby, since when do you hate waking up?

Sbani : Since I met you sthandwa sami. Akuvukeki uma ngilele eduze kwakho.

Me : Awwww. I love you and I'm going to make porridge for you sthandwa sami, uyezwa?

He smiles

Sbani : Ngempela baby?

I laugh.

Me : I thought you hated it. UMah wathi wawulizonda usemncane.

He laughs and goes to the shower.

Sbani : I did but not anymore. Ngangihlanya nje baby. Sengingasaba ubhontshisi baby, ubhontshisi wonke pho?

Me : Baby are we still talking about the normal beans here noma sesikhuluma ngalobhontshisi wakho olana kumina?

We both burst. I get out of bed and try to get up but my head starts spinning. Maybe I got up too quickly. I sit down and take a deep breath.

Me : Baby ngiyagula

He won't hear me anymore. He is showering now. When he baths or showers it's chaotic. I'm still shocked that his skin hasn't lost colour because of the way he scrubs his body. If you can go to that bathroom you will find his body covered in foam. He doesn't play with soap, he uses it like crazy and then he'll be splashing water everywhere. When he showers I always put the towel in front of the shower door because he opens the door when showering and water splashes all over the floor. When he washes his face he makes all different sounds "Phew! Mhmm! Aaa!" all those sounds. One will swear that he is masturbating. LOL.

Today I'm feeling weak. I wash my hands and switch on the stove. I'll make his sandwiches while cooking his porridge. He normally carries sandwiches for lunch. No, not only sandwiches. His appetite is huge these days so we are back to packing everything like before. Snacks, fruits and there's always a piece of his favorite chocolate cake. Now I understand why his fridge is always full. But I love how he spoils himself. I'm sure this is close to the life that his biological mother taught him when he was a little boy.

Me : Baby finish up. You are going to be late.

Sbani : I'm done. Ngicela ungivezela ithawula eli clean baby.

Me : Okay. And please come with that one. Khona ngizoliwasha. Kodwa yazi namhlanje ngizowasha ebusuku.

I yawn.

Me : Because it's Saturday and everyone is here. The clothing line will be full, full, full..... Baby, which one do you want? Blue or white?

Sbani : Hawu manuna, usungenzele isinkwa. Bengithi ngizophatha ukudla baby.

I turn around. He is standing next to the table butt naked. He is wet. I look at the carpet and his wet feet.

Me : Uphume umanzi futhi?

He smiles.

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa.

Me : Lo carpet kufanele siwukhiphe ngoba uyawumanzisa. Uzogcina usunuka umswakama, love... Buka njena. Woza ngikusule.

I dry his body with a towel.

Sbani : Ngicela ukudla.

I laugh

Me : Your appetite, love wami. Ay it's top notch.

He laughs. I bend down and wipe his legs.

Sbani : Mengingadli uyakhuluma futhi

Me : Idla wena sthandwa sami khona uzokhuluphala ube ngango Phiwo

Sbani : Ngeke baby phela u Phiwo uyi jumping castle, uke umubone?

I laugh out loud.

Me : He needs to slow down ku beer.

I get up and wipe his penis and bums while he dishes up his food.

Sbani : Aibo Sebe! Go easy on my balls. Girl, what's up with you?

I burst into laughter.

Me : Bhunu, I like your English.

Sbani : Ungizwile kodwa baby?

Me : Angathi owaphesheya sthandwa sami.

We both crack up.

Sbani : Manu awungibuke

Me : Yinindaba?

Sbani : Sondela sthandwa sami

He cups my face and I look at his pink eyes searching all over my face.

Me : Your hands are cold.

Sbani : I'm sorry, sthandwa sami. Are you okay?

Me : Ubonani?

Sbani : Your eyes. Unezigobhe and your skin is dry. Uwaphuzile amanzi.

Me : No

Sbani : Akubhulungu ndawo?

Me : No, I'm just tired. Kade nginenzululwane ekseni

Sbani : Wangasho ngani sthandwa sami, huh?

He kisses my forehead.

Sbani : Sit here ngikunike amanzi. Your skin is dry. Zibuke lapha esibukweni uzobona.

I go and stand in front of the mirror.

Sbani : Uyabona?

Me : Ehhene, siphaphathekile.

Sbani : Phuza amanzi baby

Me : Thanks

I take and drink.

Sbani : Let's go and see a doctor. Ngizocela ukufika late emsebenzini.

Me : No, love. There's no need for that.

Sbani : Pho why unje?

Me : I don't know but ngizoba right. I think sihlale elangeni kakhulu izolo siphakela izinyoni no Roxanne.

Sbani : Uzongifonela kodwa angithi if you...

Me : I will call you sthandwa sami.

Sbani : Okay, lala kancane.

Me : Okay

Sbani : I love you

I smile

Me : I love you too bhabha

I climb on the bed and he covers me and kisses my lips.

Me : Ufonile u Phiwo izolo?

Sbani : Yeah ufone usulele sthandwa sami.

He wears his boxers and dishes up the porridge.

Me : Seli right?

Sbani : Yeah, do you want it?

Me : No, it's too early for me to eat.

Sbani : Okay. Baby ku right uma ngingayigqoki i overall yangenhla namhlanje ngigqoke isikibha sasemsebenzini kuphela?

Me : Yeah ku right sthandwa sami.

Sbani : Okay, ay lama overalls amasha ayashisa.

Me : Ngikuzwile Usho izolo. Wear the t-shirt only, love.

Sbani : Okay

I yawn.

Me : Webaby u Baba uyamazi u Dylan?

Sbani : u Dylan lo oshade nomngani wakho?

Me : Yes

Sbani : I think uyamazi because his father and my father used to be friends kudala.

I sit up.

Me : Friends?

Sbani : Yeah but that was before Dylan's father got shot.

Me : His father died?

Sbani : No, he is on a wheelchair. He was badly injured and both legs had to be amputated.

Me : Oh my God.

Sbani : But he is still a king. Everyone respect that man baby. Uyabo uma ifika e rank lapha e Verulam, ey kuyacaca. Uyasatshwa loyamuntu ngisho engasenayo imilenze.

Me : Wow. Is he a taxi owner?

Sbani : He owns a lot of taxis. Babezwana ke noBaba kade naye uBaba esenamataxi. They were best buddies. Kwakudumile ukuthi bayazwana, efika u Abdool lapha ekhaya, no Baba ehambe eyomuvakashela. Angazi ukuthi kwenzekani but abasazwani manje.

Me : Wena no Dylan kodwa anijwayelene.

Sbani : No, angiboni ukuthi uyangazi futhi. OBaba ababezwana ay thina. Nami I only found out late last year that he is Abdool's son. Yinindaba uzweni?

Me : Hee! Yazi izolo baby ngizwe u Roxanne ekhuluma namanye amadoda. Bekhulume ukuthi kufanele beshise amabhasi kaBaba ngoba angazi umpimpe u Dylan kanjani.

Sbani : What?

Me : I don't know if they were speaking about your father but bakhulume ngamabhasi bafaka negama lakhe. Ingakho izolo kade ngikubuza ukuthi why amabhasi ka Baba ebhalwe MNT.

He frowns while finishing all the body spray on his body.

Sbani : Ubekhuluma kephi nalabo bantu?

Me : Laphaya. Baze bakhuluma ngisho nangomunye u Detective. Bathi bazosebenzisana naye ngoba naloyo Detective uyisitha sika Baba.

Sbani : Aibo

Me : I'm telling you. Ngize ngakhumbula ngalolusuku ngizwa u Lindo no Sphiwokuhle bekhuluma. Wawusaboshiwe wena.

Sbani : Babethini oLindo?

Me : They were talking about Detective Ndaba.

Sbani : Ubani u Detective Ndaba?

Me : Awumubonanga lapha? Lo ongenalo ihlo. Onembobo nje. He is very dark skinned.

Sbani : u Detective Ndaba? Ubani u Detective Ndaba? Usebenza la engangiboshwe khona?

Me : Yes. Kuthiwa wayevakasha naye kini niseyingane. Ephathe izinkwa namakhekhe... Is that sunscreen?

Sbani : Yeah

Me : Woza manuna ngikufake. Wenzela ngoba ngeke uyigqoke i jacket?

Sbani : Yes

He comes and sits down. I kneel on the bed and start applying the sunscreen from his neck.

Sbani : Manje kusho oLindo ukuthi lomuntu wehlo wayefika elethele thina isinkwa?

Me : Yes

Sbani : Aibo, ekephi u Mah? Yazi mina angikhumbuli umuntu oyichide owayefika ekhaya elethe izinkwa namakhekhe.

Me : Bona bayamukhumbula. Mhlampe yingoba wena wawuseyingane. Give me your arm.

I apply it on his arms.

Me : Kuthiwa wayethi uyena uBaba wakho.

He gives me a dead stare. Ouch! I shouldn't have said that one.

Sbani : Ini?

I shrug.

Me : Angazi phela. Mhlampe angizwanga kahle.

Sbani : Yeah, maybe. UBaba wami? UBaba wami wani ngoba mina nginaye uBaba.

Me : Please don't ask them. Uzongiqhatha

He chuckles and kisses my cheek before he gets up. He takes his porridge and eats it. He finishes eating and goes to the fridge. He takes out a bottle of Coca Cola.

Me : Are you okay, baby?

He smiles. I know he is not okay after what I told him.

Sbani : Ngi right mina sthandwa sami

He drinks the coke from the bottle.

Me : Indlela ophuza ngayo i drink iyang'stressa sthandwa sami.

He stops drinking and burbs.

Sbani : Excuse me.

Me : Excuse you baby.

Sbani : Thanks. Awuyifuni nje wena baby.

Me : That's my problem and wena u 2l uwuqeda in two days uwedwa.
That is not good for your health.

Sbani : Ngizoyiyeka. Ngiyagcina namhlanje, sengizophuza utshwala
kuphela.

He laughs.

Me : Ngizokuphoxa.

Sbani : I'm joking, sthandwa sami.

He goes to brush his teeth and comes back.

Sbani : Are you going to manage to go and do our grocery?

Me : Yeah, I'll be fine when I wake up.

Sbani : Ungazise. But I'll leave my card.

Me : Okay. Yazi kade ngicabanga that paying rent for my room is actually a waste of money now ngoba sesihlala la endlini yakho zonke izinsuku.

Sbani : But you love your room baby wami. Manje ubucabanga ukuthi senze kanjani?

Me : No, I was just thinking nje. Kuyafana uma ngiphuma lezinto ezingale ngizozibekaphi? My piano? My bed... Nokwenza usemusha kanje.

We both laugh. Yeah

Advertisement

he bought me a very beautiful bed a couple of weeks ago.

Sbani : No, leave it. Our house will be complete very soon, mase siyaphuma vele.

Me : I thought about that too. Yeah, I'll leave it.

Sbani made breakfast for me before he went to work. I'm only seeing it now. I didn't even see him leaving. I was sleeping. I woke up now and I was actually woken up by the noise that I'm hearing in the passage. I don't know who Roxanne is fighting with but I can hear her screaming.

Roxanne : This is disgusting. We are all adults here but I don't understand why some people are behaving like toddlers!!

I grab a remote and switch on the TV. Whatever is happening out there, I don't want to hear it. I'm not in the mood.

Roxanne : I know she is here. Let me call her.

She knocks. I take a deep breath and get up to open the door.

Me : Gogozi

Roxanne : Hey

Judging by the look on her face, I am definitely not the only one who is not in the mood today. It seems like we all woke up on the wrong side of the bed.

Me : Who is making you angry?

I giggle and lean against the door frame. I don't want her to come in. I'm too tired to talk.

Roxanne : It's actually the things that you guys do. Please go and fetch your dirty bin from the steps. It's stinky and full of used pads.

No, maybe it's me with a hearing problem.

Me : Excuse me?

Roxanne : Now, please!!

She snaps and walks away. Roxanne clearly doesn't know me. I close the door and go back to bed. 3 minutes later someone knocks again. I'm not even going to bother myself opening the door. It's Roxanne banging the door.

Roxanne : Seh, open the door!!

Me : Mxm

Roxanne : Sebhenzhile!!!.... Do you see how rude she is? Seh, was never like this. I blame that boy! She is full of useless pride now. I don't know if she thinks she is married to a president or what.

I increase the volume of the TV. I don't know when they left. I got up and took a shower. I don't have an appetite. I only ate mushrooms. I packed all the dishes in the basin and cleaned the room. I am now on my way back from the sink. Shit! Here is Roxanne.

Roxanne : There's a meeting downstairs. Please avail yourself.

Me : Okay

I finished packing dishes inside the cupboard and took our black plastic bin. I made my way downstairs. Oh everyone is here, even our landlord, Mr Sheik. I sit down and put the bin next to my feet.

Me : Hi

Mr Sheik : Seh, hi.

I cross my arms.

Mr Sheik : Is Mr Ntuli coming?

Roxanne is the first to respond.

Roxanne : No, he is at work.

Mr Sheik : Alright. Let me just get straight to the point. But first let me thank all of you for coming to this meeting. I know you are all tired and Saturdays are for you to rest.

Roxanne : Yes

Mr Sheik : But we have a problem. I don't know how we got to this point. The fighting and other stuff. This flat used to be peaceful but lately you are on each other's throats. It's disturbing. Huh? What kind? What's happening?

Mrs Naidoo : See here, everything was fine until we started allowing pets in the building.

Me Sheik : But pets are not the only problem. If it's not pets, it's the clothing line. If not the clothing line, it's dirty bins. Which I don't understand. You are all grown ups here. Huh? Am I wrong? No. We can't be dealing with such small problems that we can handle within ourselves.

There's silence.

Me : Before we go any further, can Roxanne show me the stinky bin that I left on the steps.

Roxanne : I don't know who took it.

Me : Was it mine?

Roxanne : I don't know.

Me : This is our bin, so which one did I leave on the steps?

Roxanne : I thought it was yours.

Me : You thought wrong. You saw a bin that was full of used pads and you concluded that it was mine. Why? Yingoba mina ngopha njalo noma yingoba ngiyinuku kakhulu? I don't understand.

They look at each other.

Me : What breaks my heart even more is that Sbani takes our bin out every night and you are always there to witness that. But today you had a nerve to knock on our door and accuse me of bullshit!

Yekisha : Seh, please calm down.

Roxanne : She is not going to calm down. This is who she is now, she is always ready for violence.

Mr Sheik : I will not condone violence in these apartments. That is also one of the things that I wanted to address. I heard there's been a lot of fighting going around in these flats.

Roxanne : Her boyfriend is the abusive one. He tried to assault me. I'm not even going to talk about the abuse he throws at her, physically and emotionally.

Roxanne is crossing the line.

Mr Sheik : Seh, is that true?

Me : With all due respect, but I am not going to discuss my relationship. But for everyone concerned, Sbani is not abusing me in any way. If he was abusing me then he would be in jail.

Roxanne : And she always protects him. I tried to save her and fish her out of the burning ocean but she keeps going back.

Me : What makes you think he abuses me?

Roxanne : All the signs are there and everyone has seen them.

Roxanne is here to embarrass me so I might as well just let her.

Me : What signs?

Roxanne : I told you Seh. You always seem shaken. You become worried whenever you missed his calls. Yesterday it took a lot of convincing to let you wear what you wanted to wear because you were worried about what he would think. It's clear that he decides what YOU wear. Guys you should have seen her. She was up and down... I don't even have words to describe her behavior. It was scary.

Mr Sheik : Seh, do you need help?

Me : No

Mr Sheik : Look everyone, I am going to put a suggestion box. If any of you is concerned about something they are going to write it down

together with what they think is the best solution to the problem. I don't want violence in my building and I will not tolerate it.

Me : Roxanne, don't you and Dylan argue sometimes?

Roxanne : We do, but like normal couples do.

Me : Have you ever seen me knocking on your door and telling you how to handle your problems or telling everyone when you two fight?

Roxanne : No

Me : Let me make this clear. I am not going to let anyone understand my relationship with Sbani because it's none of anyone's business. But for everyone's information, Sbani is my fiance. I choose to respect him the way I see fit. What I choose to wear, not only represents me but him too. Where I hang out and who I hang out with describe my marriage. THAT is MY opinion and what I choose to believe. Before I do something I put myself in my fiance's shoes and think about how he would feel if I do one and two. The only person I'm trying to impress in my life now, is Sbani, not you Roxanne, not anyone else but him. Ngeke ngilalele omunye umuntu engitshele ukuthi ngiziphathe kanjani emshadweni wami or in my relationship. The only person that I will listen to and consider before I do something is Sbani because he is the

man I am going to marry, not you Roxanne and definitely not the whole of South Africa. I am telling you to respect what I want to do and how I want to do it. Indlela engiziphethe ngayo noma engenza ngayo ayicindezeli neloyedwa ilungelo phakathi kwenu.

Roxanne : Please speak Eng...

Me : No, I am not going to speak English when it fits you. Izindaba zami ezisuke zikhulunywa ngesizulu uyazizwa angithi?

She is staring at me.

Me : Roxanne, angizotshelwa uwena ukuthi indoda yami ngiyihloniphe kanjani. Sbani is my man and if me choosing to respect him the way I do seems like some sort of abuse related then fine. Mr Sheik I give you our blessings to kick us out of your apartment. Mina angifundiswanga onyoko ukuthi indoda iphathwa kanjani ngakho angizoqala manje sengina 26 ukufundiswa omunye umuntu wesifazane ukuthi ngiziphathe kanjani. Sorry kabi.

Roxanne : Seh, I'm so....

Me : Last but not least, I think it's time you mind your own business and stay out of mine because trust me, I am so close to exposing my other side that none of you is going to appreciate.

I get up and throw the bin in front of Roxanne.

Me : I don't wear pads, I wear tampons.

I say and walk away. Fuck all of them. Who said I need help?

NTULI HOMESTEAD.

MaNzilo : Uthi uBhunu phela uzwe kukhulunywa e rank izolo ebusuku.

Mzwakhile : E rank? Kusho bani?

MaNzilo : Aw nkosiyami, angithi ngiyasho ukuthi kusho uBhunu etshela u Lindo.

Mzwakhile : He must have heard wrong. I didn't even know that Dylan and I were enemies. His father was my best friend. He was a taxi tycoon

ngalezozikhathi but we never fought, so I don't understand why his son would think that we are enemies.

MaNzilo : Kodwa angithi uyakhumbula ukuthi kwathiwa u Abdool udutshulwe uwena?

Mzwakhile : And I cleared my name. U Abdool ephuma esibhedlela yimi engamugodukisa and his wife welcomed me.

MaNzilo : Mzwa wena ukwazi ukukhohlisa UNkulunkulu uqobo so who knows? Maybe you....

Mzwakhile : No! Maka Lindokuhle if Dylan and I were enemies, so why would I allow my son to go and stay under one roof with my enemy?

MaNzilo : Ngiyakuzwa

Mzwakhile : Come on, yini engingayibanga no Dylan umfana omncane kanjeya? Dylan is nothing. Into asayithwele nje igama likayise.

MaNzilo : Ngiyakuzwa Mzwa, but please try to fix this. U Maqhinga yena uthini?

Mzwakhile : He wants his money back. Ufuna lonke lelifa elashiywa u Celiwe elishiyela u Sbani.

MaNzilo : Uyahlanya. We are talking about millions here. Uzoyithathaphi leynomali?

Mzwakhile : I don't know. Ngisanganelwe yikhanda kuyimanje.

MaNzilo : Uyabubona kodwa Mzwa ubufebe ukuthi abulungile. Look at the mess that Celiwe left you with.

Mzwakhile : I curse the day I met Celiwe. I hope she is burning in hell.

MaNzilo : Manje what will happen if you fail to pay him?

Mzwakhile : He is going to take Sbani. Uyangisabisa ngokuthatha u Sbani.

MaNzilo : Kahle kahle lengane kanti ekabani weMzwa?

Chapter 35

NTULI HOMESTEAD

The ceremony to introduce Sebenzile was held yesterday. Some of the family members left after the ceremony and some left and came back this morning. Mzwakhile comes from quite a big family. It has been said that he has 12 brothers in total but unfortunately 10 died, so Mzwakhile is only left with 2. They both came for the ceremony and yeah they have aged pretty badly. Even though Mzwakhile is the last born, it seems like he is aging way better than them.

MaNzilo is sitting with Sphiwokuhle in her room.

MaNzilo : Ungasadakiwe kanje Phiwo izolo.

Sphiwo : Ayngeke Mah udlala ngami.

MaNzilo : Usufuna ukuhamba noMbuso uye Shepstone. Aibo ubudakiwe Sphiwokuhle.

He laughs.

Sphiwo : Why did I want to go to Port Shepstone?

MaNzilo : Ngikwazelaphi? Ngathi kodwa nkosiyami lezingane zingangiphoxa yini zidakwe ukudlula wonke umuntu ekubeni ngizicele kahle ukuthi zingaphuzi zihloniphe lomsebenzi ka Bhunu no Sebe.

Sphiwo : But I wasn't that drunk.

MaNzilo : Ubungcono ukuno Mbongeleni. Yey! U Mbo was so drunk, engazazi negama. I found him sleeping on my bed. Ngithi lendoda egqoke amabhuzu embhedeni wami eyaphi, aw mengithi u Mbo udakwe! Usho unanenkwici.

They both laugh.

Sphiwo : Do you know that he left wearing the same clothes that he was wearing yesterday? Lezi akade ewa ngazo phansi?

MaNzilo : Don't lie Sphiwo.

Sphiwo : I'm telling you. Lapho ugibele ama taxi. Angithi uyamazi nale pride yakhe "Angincengile mina ukugibela ezimotweni zabantu"

He mimics his voice.

Sphiwo : Kwathiwa hambake. Nangempela he took his bag and left.

MaNzilo : He came to me. Wathi legenge yasoLundi ayifuni ukumthatha.

Sphiwo : UMbo ubedlala ngo Aunty. Uthe u Aunt Phili akalinde u Mbo okungcono besuke ngo 11 la ay u Mbo yena ufuna kuhanjwe ngo 7 ekseni.

MaNzilo : Wagcina edubile?

Sphiwo : Waduba. Wantshontsha ibhodlela likamkhulu waseMtuba wahamba nalo.

They both laugh.

MaNzilo : I heard about that bottle. Aw kodwa ubemuhle umsebenzi wezingane. Engasemuhle noSebe bakithi. Itonqwana lika Bhunu elimikahle. Ay yinhle intombi ka Bhunu.

Sphiwo : She is.

MaNzilo : Uyamudlula nje u Maka Skhalo

Sphiwokuhle laughs.

Sphiwo : Ave uyixoki.

MaNzilo : No but she really is beautiful. USebe is a natural beauty.
Nginamanga?

Sphiwo : Ay uqinisile. Ukhala ngaphansi uMaka Skhalo.

MaNzilo : Did you see the gifts they gave her?

Sphiwo : Forget about the gifts. Did you see the money?

MaNzilo : Ay the Ntulis really showed up and showed off.

Sphiwo : Bamuthandile bandla.

MaNzilo : Kakhulu. Sesilinde wena ke neyakho intombi.

Sphiwokuhle laughs.

Sphiwo : Eyami ise fridgen ivivile intombi emnyama.

They both laugh and throw themselves on the bed. These two can laugh. Suddenly Lindokuhle barges in. They both sit up.

Lindo : Where is Baba's phone?

MaNzilo stands up.

MaNzilo : Lindo what's going on?

Lindo : Iphi ifoni kaBaba?

He is sweating. He looks around the room.

Sphiwo : Aibo Lindo yini manje?

Lindo : Let's go. UBaba no Maqhingaba.... Where is the phone?

MaNzilo : U Maqhingaba wenzeni? Lindo uphi uMzwa? Uphi umyeni wami?

Sphiwo : Lindo, talk!!!

Lindo : UBaba noMaqhingaba bakhombana ngezibhamu. They want to kill each other.

MaNzilo : Ini? Baphi?

Lindo : Ngibashiye ngaseskoleni e Bhongo. Sphiwo let's go.

MaNzilo : I'm also coming.

Lindo : Sheshani Mah!!!

They all run to Lindo's car. Lindokuhle drove to Bhongo Primary School. They found Maqhingana and Mzwakhile pointing guns at each other. People are watching.

MaNzilo : Mzwa!! Mzwa, please stop!!

Mzwakhile : Ngeke ngizwe ngawe mina Maqhingana!! I raised that boy. Iminyaka engamashumi amabili nanhlanu ngimukhulisa! Ngamufundisa!! Wena uzongitshela ngo 2,5 million? 2,5? After everything?

Ndaba : Who asked you to raise him? You stole my son!!

Mzwakhile : He is my son!!

Detective Ndaba laughs and lowers his gun. He goes to his car and opens the door. He shakes his head and gets in. He starts the car and drives off.

Mzwakhile : Msunu kagogo wakho!!

MaNzilo : Mzwakhile please let's go.

Mzwakhile : Lenja le izongilwisa ngokuthi ngenzele u Sbani umsebenzi. Uzotshela mina ukuthi ngingayenzeli ingane yami amasiko akwa Ntuli?
Who the hell does he think he is?

Lindo : Baba, please let's go. People are watching.

Mzwakhile : I don't care!! Uphi yena u Sbani?

MaNzilo : Hhaibo Mzwa. U Sbani uhambe izolo nje.

Mzwakhile : Ngimudinga ebuyile kulawamakotishi amandiya!
Usedakiwe u Sbani.

MaNzilo : Please calm down. Yenzi ingane?

Mzwakhile shakes his head and goes to his car. He gets in and drives off.

Sphiwo : Ay angisazi. Let's go back home.

MaNzilo sighs. They get inside the car.

MaNzilo : Lindokuhle what happened? What did Sbani do?

Lindo sighs.

Lindo : He went to the police station to look for Ndaba.

MaNzilo : What? When?

ooooooo

To think that I was against the entire introduction ceremony, feels crazy right now. Not after all the money and gifts that I came back with last night. Yes, the ceremony was to introduce me to the males of the clan that aren't married yet. It was nothing really formal but it was more of a game. I entered the gate covering my head and my face with a scarf and each one of them came to me with a gift and courted me while teasing Sbani for failing to marry me. For instance, the first one came with an umbrella and sang "My brother can't even afford to buy himself an umbrella so how is he going to marry you? Let me take you and I promise that with this umbrella awusoze wanethwa izimvula" And what

I did was, I took the umbrella and then I turned him down. Turning him down meant that he had to pay a fine for courting his brother's girlfriend. The fine is called "imvalamlomo". Basically it is to shut my mouth and not tell Sbani that his brother courted me. Honestly, It was fascinating.

We are looking at my gifts. I laugh and pick up a reed mat.

Me : Kambe who gave me this one?

Sbani : Ndumiso. He said I don't have a bed.

We both laugh.

Me : Aah! Man, yesterday was full of joy. Your family is amazing. I didn't know that you come from such a huge family that is full of men.

Sbani : Ooooh men?

I laugh.

Me : And I only have eyes for one.

Sbani : Don't ever forget that. Yesterday you had a choice to choose your type. Kuphelile manje, you are stuck with me forever.

I laugh.

Me : Because I chose you and I'll choose you over and over again.

He kisses my cheek.

Me : But, seriously. Bengingazi ukuthi nibaningi kangaka.

Sbani : UBaba kunabafowabo abawu 10 abasashona and they all left a bunch of kids ngoba abanye babenesithembu. Most of those kids abafana. But they are men now and most of them have grandchildren. Labantu besilisa ebebegcwele lapha, eqinisweni isizukulu nesizukulwane sakwa Ntuli.

Me : Wow, and they are all grown men.

Sbani : That explains ukuguga koBaba bethu.

Me : It was amazing. Ngizizwe ngisekhaya. Ngiyabonga, Khuboni for everything.

He sighs.

Sbani : Mina ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami. Ngixolisela ukuthi namanje angikakakushadi.

Me : Come on, my love. Phela mina nawe akusikhathi nje esingakanani sithandana.

Sbani : Sebe, wena akuk'fanele ukufaka indandatho yesithembiso somshado for more than a month. That's a long time.

I hug him. The fact that he thinks so highly of me reminds me of how blessed I am. He kisses my forehead.

Sbani : I'm serious. The ceremony that we held yesterday is meant to be held a week or two before the traditional wedding. Kodwa manje inkinga ukuthi kunezinto ekusafanele ngizilungise noBaba.

Me : I know. And believe me when I say you have nothing to worry about. I don't mind waiting.

He smiles.

Sbani : Uzolinda enhliziyweni yami angithi?

Me : In your heart and soul.

Sbani : I love you.

Me : Kodwa awungitshelanga that the day you proposed to me was your birthday.

He laughs.

Sbani : But you said you forgive me.

Me : I do, baby.

Sbani : How are you feeling now?

Me : Much better. I was just tired but I'm fine now.

Sbani : So what do you want to do today?

Me : Am I allowed to use my money?

Sbani : Yes, manu. It's yours. Yinindaba?

Me : Please use me and eat my money.

We both laugh.

Me : I'm serious Bhunu. Ngicela ukukukhipha.

He laughs out loud.

Sbani : Ucela ukungikhipha?

Me : Uh! Angithi I'm rich and I want to spoil you. I want you to eat my money.

He laughs.

Sbani : Eat your money?

I giggle.

Me : Mhmmm!

Sbani : Okay.

Me : Don't miss out on this opportunity. It's not everyday you get to have a rich fiancée.

He laughs.

Sbani : It's going to be a long day.

I burst and pull away from him.

Me : Baby

Advertisement

don't be jealous.

Sbani : Hha! My breadwinner

I laugh.

Me : And don't ever forget that. Kukwami la!

We both laughed. We got up and cleaned our room. After that we got ready to go on our date.

I'm sitting in the car, talking to my father over the phone. Sbani forgot his phone charger so he went to fetch it. My father is busy telling me his weird stories as usual.

Me : Ay kuhambe kahle kakhulu, Baba.

Mlambo : Sekufanele bephuthume indaba yomshado ke manje.

Me : We are working on that. Kodwa kufanele sikhumbule ukuthi izinto azikho ezandleni zika Sbani njengamanje. Naye ulinde uBaba wakhe ukuthi eshade and then siqale ke nathi si....

I take a deep breath. These days I struggle to breathe, even though it comes and goes.

Me : Silungise owethu.

Mlambo : They need to hurry. The sooner they do it, the sooner you can get married.

There is Sbani coming. It's time to dismiss my father.

Me : I know. Ay sizobuye sikhulume ke. Ngiyakubongela nangezinkomo zakho.

He laughs.

Mlambo : Thank you mntanami. You have no idea how happy I am.

Me : I know. Ay uphile ke Baba.

Mlambo : Uphile nawe mntanami. Ufone, please. Wena awufoni Sebenzile.

I laugh.

Me : I'm sorry.

Mlambo : Ay Ay Ay.

He hangs up. I laugh. Sbani gets in and adjusts his seat.

Me : Sengize nqaqeda ukukhuluma no Mlambo.

He smiles

Sbani : Ongiqabula

Me : Woza

He charges his phone.

Sbani : Woza

Me : Kanti ubani onemali?

He laughs out loud.

Sbani : I'm in trouble la.

I laugh. He leans over and we kiss.

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda, uyezwa?

Me : I love you too, baby.

Today we decided to go to Gateway. I bought him a pair of sneakers. The one I always catch him looking at on his phone. I know he loved them and he wanted to buy them, but I judged him because they were expensive. Today I bought him a pair and R5200 was nothing, spending it on a man I love. We are sitting at Spur, eating. He keeps checking out his sneakers. I love knowing that I'm the reason he is so excited.

Sbani : Sthandwa sami, ngiyabonga.

I've lost count of times he has thanked me.

Me : You are welcome, my love.

Sbani : You have no idea how happy I am.

I laugh.

Me : Washo njengo Mlambo. Naye ujabule uyafa.

Sbani : Why? About yesterday's ceremony?

Me : No. Angithi uyazi ukuthi uBaba unezinkomo ezu 32 and they are all female cows?

Sbani : Yeah, you told me.

Me : Apparently all 32 of them are pregnant.

Sbani : What?

Me : Imagine. All 32 at the same time.

Sbani is truly amazed by this.

Sbani : Hhaibo baby 32? Yenzeka kanjani leyonto?

Me : He said it's their breeding season.

Sbani : But aren't cows reproductively active all year long?

Me : I don't know. But even if it is, zonke pho? No, that is weird.

Sbani : Damn! Mina bengizovele ngizidayise.

Me : My father would never. He would rather kill them.

Sbani : Really?

Me : Yeah. I remember when I was still a little girl. Zagcwala isibaya izinkomo zakhe, mhlampe zaziwu 40 or 50 and people used to come home bezocela ukuthi ebadayisele and he refused. You know what he did? Wazibulala. He killed 5.

Sbani : But why?

Me : Because he didn't want to sell them. But this time ay he is over the moon. Uthi nje this is worth celebrating.

Sbani : But he is right. This is big.

Me : I think it's crazy.

Sbani : Is it the first time zimitha kanye kanye?

Me : I think so ngoba indlela ajabule ngayo uBaba.

Sbani : But this is big. I don't think into enjengale isike yenzeka.
Umlambo engenza umlando uma angase ngempela lendaba ifike
kubantu bamaphephandaba.

Me : Mina kodwa ngizokholwa uma sengifike ekhaya ngazibonela.

He laughs.

Sbani : You don't believe him?

Me : I do but ngifuna ukubona. Ngimuphoxile esengibuza indaba
yomsh.... What are you looking at?

Sbani : Is that.....

Hhaibo it's his father. He is walking out with another woman.

Sbani : That's my father.

Me : Yeah. Were they here this whole time?

Sbani : Kubukeka kanjalo. Ubani lo ahamba naye?

He stands up.

Me : Please don't follow them.

Sbani : No, ufunani nabanye abafazi e Spur?

He walks out. He is following them. I pay our bill. As I'm about to walk out, he comes back.

Me : Baphi?

Sbani : I don't know. They just disappeared. Let's go

Me : Okay.

We drove back to Mountview. He is bothered by seeing his father with another woman but it didn't affect his mood entirely. He is still excited about the sneakers of course. We are walking up the steps and he is walking behind me with his arms wrapped around my stomach.

Sbani : Thank you for taking me out.

Me : You are welcome my love.

Sbani : I appreciate you, sthandwa sami.

I smile. Wait, what is....

Sbani : Ezani manje lezijumba ezihleli phambi komnyango?

Me : Uyabona?

He pulls away.

Me : Aibo Sbani, abantu. See?

Sbani : Aibo! Scelo?

It's Scelo and a girl. They are sitting in front of Sbani's door. They both stand up. They look nervous, both of them.

Sbani : Scelo, what are you doing here?

Scelo removes his beanie hat.

Scelo : Baba omncane.

Sbani : No, what are you doing here ebusuku kanje nengane yabantu?

Scelo : U... uThembeka uxoshiwe kubo because she is pregnant.

My mouth gape open.

Sbani : What?

Scelo : Uthe uMah ngize kuwena ngingayi kuBaba.

Sbani looks at me and rubs his face.

Chapter 36

Thembeke is in my room. Sbani asked her to stay there because he wanted to speak

to Scelo. Me, Sbani and Scelo are in Sbani's room.

Sbani : Scelokuhle, what happened?

Scelo : Her grandfather found out that she is pregnant and they kicked her out.

Sbani : Where is your mother?

Scelo : Uvakashele uBaba wengane yakhe. Uthe simufonele uma sesifike kuwena.

Sbani : Call her.

Scelo : I'll send her a please call me.

Sbani : Call her with my phone

Scelo : Okay

He takes the phone and dials Khethiwe's number.

Sbani : Put her on the loudspeaker.

Scelo : Hello Mah

Khethiwe : Scelo, yah. Senifikile? Nihambe kahle?

Scelo : Yes.

Khethiwe : Uphi uBaba omncane wakho?

Scelo : Nangu, khuluma naye.

Scelo gives the phone to Sbani.

Sbani : Hello

Khethiwe : Sbani, how are you?

Sbani : Ngiyaphila Sis'Khethiwe

Khethiwe : UThembeka uxoshiwe kubo. Ngithe abeze lapho, ngoba uwena umuntu engimethembayo ngo Scelo. Ngakutshela ngathi umfazi ka Lindo angimethembi eduze kuka Scelo. Umfazi ka Lindo is the reason Lindo doesn't have a relationship with Scelo. Loyamfazi akangifuni. UScelo ubengeke futhi ehlale nomawengane yakhe kwa Khumalo because nami kwa Khumalo ngicushisiwe ngokwami. You know my story.

Yo! She talks and she speaks like those village girls from Eshowe. And her voice is loud.

Khethiwe : Bengingeke futhi ngithi u Scelo akahambe eye kubo because he told me that u Gogo akaphilile.

Sbani : Yebo

Sbani looks at me. I feel him. This time he doesn't know what to say and to me it's like Khethiwe is not asking him but he is telling him that he will stay with Scelo.

Khethiwe : Ngiyamubonga UNkulunkulu ngawe ngoba angazi ukuthi u Scelo engaba yini. I always tell him to respect you. Ngithi Scelo wena awunamuntu kaNtuli ufana nentandane. Uma uke walahlekelwa uBaba omncane wakho kuyobe kukuphelele, so please respect him umunikeze indawo yakhe.

Sbani : Nguyikuzwa sisi kodwa inkinga.....

Khethiwe : Ugogo naye ngisazomufonela ngimutshela.

Why is she cutting him off?

Sbani : Yebo

Khethiwe : Ngiyabonga ke uma behambe kahle. I was worried about them.

Sbani : Ay bafikile.

Khethiwe : Thank you for always being there for him. I gave him his Sassa card, bazozithengela ukudla.

Wow!

Sbani : Yebo

She ends the call.

Sbani : Useyivalile. WeScelo indaba yesikole what are you going to do about it? Nike nayi khuluma kodwa yona nomawakho? Ngoba phela u Thembeke is doing Matric. Isn't it?

Scelo : She is. We didn't talk about school.

Sbani sighs.

Sbani : Okay. Hamba Scelo uye ku Thembeke.

Scelo stands up and walks out.

Me : Let me dish up for them.

Sbani : Sthandwa sami ngiyaxolisa.

Me : Come on, come here baby.

I hug him..

Me : You have nothing to apologize for my love. Why are you even apologizing?

Sbani : I want nothing to come between us. This is our safe space.

Safe? I wouldn't be so sure. Roxanne and I are not even on speaking terms as we speak because that's how toxic this place is.

Sbani : I know what you are thinking and I need you to believe that people outside these walls have no power to break what you and I have.

Sure he knows. I smile.

Sbani : Sebe you are my home. You are what I want to come back to every day. And now this?

He points at the wall that separates our rooms and shakes his head vigorously.

Sbani : I don't know if I can take it. That's too much Sebe and I don't like it.

Me : Listen, my love. Let's keep them for a few weeks. They are just kids and I'm sure abazali babo basenziwa ukudinwa nje okwamanje. They will calm down babone ukuthi benze iphutha and then ask them to come back. Akekho umzali ongavumele ingane yakhe ukuthi ikipite incane kanjeya.

He snorts and shakes his head.

Sbani : I don't know about Thembeka's parents but Khethiwe won't change her mind. She has found a perfect way to finally get rid of Celo.

Me : But why?

Sbani : Because naye ufana no bhuti. They don't care. Bayafana bobabili. Uma nje bethola ingane nomunye umuntu bayakhohlwa lina enye ingane bethande eyalomuntu abasuke bethandana naye. Bephinde futhi bezale ingane nomunye umuntu behlukane, beshiye phansi leyongane bethande le ezelwe and then the same thing happens again. They don't give a fuck about their kids. Ubhuti Lindo uma eke ahlukana nomawengane yakhe uhlukana nanengane yakhe. Same as Khethiwe, she broke up with Lindo and she stopped giving a fuck about Scelo. She got herself a new boyfriend wamitha wathanda ingane yakhe entsha wakhohlwa u Scelo. Yamushiya leyondoda wathatha leyongane wayoyilahla kubo wahamba wayozalela le ahleli nayo manje. It's like the love for their kids is determined by the love they get from their baby mama or baby daddy. ULindo no Khethiwe bayafana!

Me : Unengane nalendoda ekuthiwa uyivakashela?

Sbani : Yeah isanda kuzalwa leyongane. Nayo usazoyilahla uma eke ahlukana noBaba wayo. NoLindo naye uSkhalo kuphela ingane yakhe ayithandayo ngoba nakhu ushade nomawakhe. Lezi ezinye izingane zakhe kufanele zize zigule before they get his attention. It's sickening!!

Me : Love, I'm sorry.

Sbani : Uma ngingase ngimufonele manje u Lindo ngithi bafo nayi ingane yakho la

he won't do shit. Engangitshela ngo Maka Skhalo because yena wenza uma kuthanda uMaka Skhalo or if they want to show off.

He is so pissed off.

Me : I'm sorry, Khuboni. But kungcono bazohlala ngale endlini yami and mina nawe sihlale la.

A smile pops out of the corner of his mouth.

Sbani : Yeah?

Me : Yes baby. Please don't be sad phela mlungu, uyezwa?

He laughs.

Sbani : Sengiwumlungu manje?

I giggle

Me : Are you sure you are not? Umlungu onamadreads. Umlungu ohleli ekhaya

We both laugh. He pushes me and climbs on top of me.

Sbani : Ngicela ukungena phakathi kwamathanga phela.

I laugh

Me : Ngena

He smiles and bite his lower lip. He kisses me again and runs his hand under my top and up to my breasts. He plays with my nipple while kissing me. I'm still enjoying that when we hear a knock. I hear Sbani whispering 'Fuck'

Sbani : Yes Scelo, what do you want?

Scelo : Baba omncane ngicela ungiboleka umentshisi.

Oh no, why now?

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Mzwakhile called a family meeting. Sbani was the last to arrive. He walks in and sits next to MaNzilo.

Sbani : Mawami

MaNzilo : Bhunuza ka Mah.

Sbani wraps his arm around her neck and pulls her onto his shoulder. MaNzilo squeezes his hand.

MaNzilo : Are you okay?

Sbani : Ngiyaphila Mah.

Mzwakhile is busy cracking his fingers.

Mzwakhile : Where is Scelo?

Sbani : Basendlini

Mzwakhile : Oh, endlini? And why is he not coming here?

Sbani : Uthe akafuni.

Mzwakhile darts his gaze to Lindo and back to Sbani.

Mzwakhile : He is an addict. Uma esefuna imali yalento ayidlayo he won't even think twice before stealing from you.

Sbani : What was I supposed to do? Baba awukho umgqomo wokulahla umuntu. That's my brother's son ngeke ngimulahlele emgaqweni nengane yabantu ekhulelwe. They have nowhere else to go.

Silence.

Mzwakhile : Mina ngeke ngifuye isela emzini wami. Isela elintshontsha izinsimbi? Never.

MaNzilo : Kodwa uKhethiwe yena uyafona?

Sbani : Ugcine ukufona kade befika. Imina futhi ofonile.

Mzwakhile shakes his head. One would swear that the conversation is not about Lindo's son. The man is unbothered on that couch.

Mzwakhile : Isizathu esenza nginibize la namhlanje yingoba sesiqedile nabantu bakwa Ngema, so we can start with the wedding's preparations. Sidlule kulento no Sbanisokuhle eshade naye, iqhubeke impilo yakhe.

MaNzilo : Mhmmm.

Mzwakhile : Uvumile usisi kaCeliwe lo owuthunjana ukuthi uzoma endaweni kadadewabo.

MaNzilo : Yibaphi abantu bakwaNgema okhulume nabo ngoba kwaNgema kwathiwa akusekho muntu or you mean you spoke to Celiwe's sister?

Mzwakhile : Cha I spoke to her elders, umndeni wakoninalume okuyiwona osunezwi ngezinto ezenzeka kwaNgema.

MaNzilo : I see.

Sbani looks at her.

Sbani : Who are these Ngema people?

Mzwakhile frowns.

Mzwakhile : Konyokolume.

Sbani : Are those the same people who asked me not to visit my mother's grave ever again because I'm making their children uncomfortable ngendlela engibukeka ngayo? Ukhuluma ngalabobantu Baba?

They look at each other.

Mzwakhile : Who told you that?

Sbani : I just happen to know that.

Mzwakhile : No! Have you been talking to Maqhinga behind my back?

Mzwakhile gets up and Sbani gets up too with his jaw tightened. This is the first time he seems like he is not going to back down. Sbani respects his parents but it seems like the devil whispered today. Mzwakhile is fuming.

Mzwakhile : Sbani I asked you a question!!

Sbani : Is he my father?!!

He yells back. Dead silence.

Mzwakhile : What? No, no Sbanisokuhle he is not your father mfana wami. Imina uBaba wakho nawe uyakwazi lokho. How can you even doubt ukuthi ubani uBaba wakho? Look at you, Sbanisokuhle wena uyimina uzihlalele nje and people always tell you that. Ukuthi ufana nami. Whatever that man told you amanga wodwa.

Sbani swallows and his eyes move rapidly. He swallows hard and shakes his head.

Sbani : You are not going to get married.

MaNzilo's mouth gape open. Sphiwokuhle and Lindokuhle look frozen.

Mzwakhile : Sbani...

Sbani : No!! Ngingamane ngingashadi ukunokuthi ngibone wena uhlukumeza uMah again. Celiwe was enough. Those women were enough. Mah doesn't deserve what you are doing to her.

Mzwakhile : I don't think you understand Bhunuh. Akekho umuntu wesifazane ozongena la emzini kamama wenu. This wedding is just to follow tradition. Lomshado wenzelwa wena kahle kahle, ukuthi ukhanyise izinto zakho. Isikhwele sikamawakho sokuthi yena akashadanga singaweli kuwena.

Sbani : I don't care. Let her do whatever she wants to do to me. Uma ukushada kwami kuchaza ukuthi nawe kumele ushade omunye umuntu wesifazane who will come here and abuse my mother then fine. I don't want to get married.

Mzwakhile : Sbani are you.....

Sbani : No Baba! Just stop it! Please.

He takes his keys and kisses MaNzilo's cheek.

MaNzilo : Are you okay?

Sbani : Yeah. I need to go

MaNzilo : Ufone, okay?

Sbani : Okay

He says while shaking his head. He heads out.

Mzwakhile : Sbani? Sbani, sit down. Sbanisokuhle!!!!

He is gone. Mzwakhile rubs his face and his nose in disbelief.

Chapter 37

Me : Sbani... Huh! huh! baby.

He kisses me while thrusting my vagina.

Sbani : Ssshhh.

He shushed me while going deeper.

Me : Sbani.... Sbani!

Sbani : Bazokuzwa sthandwa sami, please stop making noise.

Me : Okay, okay.

He strokes me and I bury my face in his neck. He stops and laughs.

Sbani : Why are you making noise?

Me : Uwena hawu.

We both laugh and he kisses me.

Sbani : I'm going to be gentle. Please don't scream and traumatize the kids.

We are both laughing and he is taking me slowly. I start feeling his penis rubbing my clit while I feel it inside me at the same time. He wants us to finish. This is him pushing me to my orgasm by force. He feels that I'm about to cum and goes faster. My voice is like a strangled chicken. My body stiffens. He moves his hand to the pillow and grabs a towel. He is one making noise now

Sbani : Fu... fu... FUUUCK!!

He pulls out his penis.

Sbani : Dammit. Yaphalaza inyoka.

I laugh.

Me : Iphalazele kuphi?

He laughs and pecks my nose. He gets up holding his penis with a towel.

Sbani : Iphalazele phakathi

We both laugh.

Sbani : Ngiyadlala baby. Buka nje izingane zami ziphelela ethawuleni. Sebe, this is unfair.

He shows me his sperm on the towel. I'm laughing because the sadness on his face makes this even more funny.

Sbani : Yazi izingane ezu 4 zonke lezi.

Me : Who asked you to pull out?

Sbani : Ay hawu. UBaba uyaxolisa niyezwa?

Sbani is going to kill me. He is apologizing to his sperm now.

Me : Bhunu, please stop.

Sbani : Ngelinye ilanga uBaba uzoniyeka nibe abantu, niyezwa?

We both laugh.

Me : Sbani shut up okwangempela ke manje.

He laughs.

Me : Oh, no. Wathathwaphi kodwa wena? Please give me the towel

Sbani : Let me get you a clean one

Me : No, I want that one.

I don't know if everyone living with albinism or with HIV does this but I have a problem with Sbani. I'm certain that he thinks that I hate sharing things with him. Things like, spoons, towels, cups, just to name a few. Even if I find him eating and I grab his spoon. He is always quick to ask

me if I don't want a clean spoon. He thinks he disgusts me and I don't know what to do anymore because I tried to address it and he said he would stop.

Sbani : Are you sure?

Me : Yoh! Yes. Ey uyangicika Sbani mase wenza lento yakho mfana.

Sbani : Yiphi sthandwa sami?

Me : Le oyenzayo and you know I hate it.

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa.

Me : Whatever. Give me the towel.

Sbani : Hawu, ngiyaxolisa thembalami. Let me clean you.

I smile

Me : Okay

Sbani : Lento ekhalayo le. Sebe, you are going to traumatize the kids.

I laugh.

Me : Yini abangayazi uScelo no Thembeka?

Sbani : No baby, they are still kids. UCelo akufanele azi ukuthi uBaba omncane wakhe uyabhebha.

I laugh.

Me : You really think that Scelo is stupid.

He laughs and throws the towel in the basket.

Sbani : I'm hungry.

Me : Nami yazi. Why kanti kungalaleki namhlanje? buka sekuyoshaya u
00 : 00.

Sbani : Ngempela baby ulambile?

He is looking at me with a wide smile on his face. My appetite has been very poor for the past 2 weeks. I couldn't even finish 2 slices of bread but right now I'm hungry. It's 00:00 but we are going to eat.

Me : Yes my love

Sbani : What do you want to eat, sthandwa sami? Noma kungathiwa ikaMhlaba uyalingana leyonto, Jesu ngizoya khona ngezinyawo.

I burst.

Me : Wena Bhunu awukho right. I'm telling you.

Sbani : What would you like to eat sthandwa sami?

Me : Did you fry that fish yesterday?

Sbani : Eish no baby. I only took it out of the freezer, ngakhohlwa iwona. Do you want it?

Me : Wena do you want it kuqala?

Sbani : Yah

He wears his joggers and goes to the bathroom to wash his hands.

Me : How did the meeting go? Ubusangitshela izolo.

Sbani : Siphazanyiswe yini kambe?

Me : I went to hang clothes ngabuya sekukhona uThembeka no Celo bezodla.

Sbani : Yeah. Ey, I was pissed off, sthandwa sami. Ngiqale ngacikwa uBaba engibuza ukuthi why am I keeping Scelo here ngoba uzosintshontshela.

Me : What?

Sbani : Nginyanyeni baby. Ngizomulahlaphi mina uScelo? That's my brother's son. Uyigazi lami, yeah as much as he pisses me off sometimes but useyingane and I understand where the fuck he is coming from. Scelo was a bright kid kodwa wabhayiziseka kungekho muntu futhi obonayo ukuthi uyaphuma endleleni and that's because he had no one.

Me : And right now it looks like you are the only person he has.

Sbani : Ngifisa angathi engaba grand. Eyeke lama drugs, ebe uBaba o grand enganeni yakhe. Ngifisa ukuthi yena no Thembeka bebe grand.

Me : I know, my love. And they will be fine. ULindo yena ubekhona?

Sbani : Uvele wahlala nje kwangathi akezwa nokuthi kukhulunywa ngengane yakhe. And the whole time I kept asking myself ukuthi umuntu onjani lo.

Me : Mhlampe wathi u Maka Skhalo uma eke wathanda izingane zakhe uyomushiya.

Sbani : Maybe. Vele uyena othatha izinqumo noma lezingane ezinye zika Lindo zigula omama bazo abafoneli u Lindo but they call Skhalo's mother.

Me : Yes, so maybe Lindo knows that if he starts showing that he loves his kids, Maka Skhalo will leave him.

Sbani : That is bad. NoBaba naye usibizele umsangano nje we meeting. Do you remember what I told you? Ukuthi kufanele kushadiswe uMah before I get married?

Me : I remember.

Sbani : UBaba kade ekhuluma ngokushadisa u Mah, I thought he was talking about slaughtering a goat nje echele inyongo emsamu or something. Kanti yena ukhuluma ngomshado wangempela.

Me : But how, when your mother is.....

Sbani : Kuzoma usisi wakhe endaweni yakhe. I told them ukuthi ngingamane ngingashadi ke mina uma umshado wami uzokwakhiwa phezu kwezinyembezi zika Mah. I know how Celiwe destroyed umshado ka mawami. Ngeke ngivumele omunye umuntu futhi wakwaNgema

ezohlukumeza uMah. That woman has been through hell and back because of my biological mother

but still wangithanda. She raised me. UBaba engasekho ese Goli. Where were the Ngemas ngaleso skhathi?

I understand his frustrations. I really do.

Me : Does it really have to be udadewabo kaCeliwe oma endaweni yakhe?

Sbani : That's what they say. Mina sthandwa sami ngingavele ngishade e Home Affairs uma kukuthi kanjani. But this is not happening, not after I saw them at Spur.

My eyes widened.

Me : So that was her? That was your Aunt?

Sbani : Yes. Ileyonto engidinayo ngoba bobabili benza uMah isilima. What the fuck were they doing at Spur? UMah akakaze ekhishwe ngisho nakanye, ekhishwe uBaba. Kuze kube ithina esimukhiphayo. My father doesn't care. Loyamuntu unendaba nento esuke ijabulisa yena kuphela. Ukuthi who suffers in the process, he doesn't give a fuck. Right

now he is trying to play all of us. That wedding is no longer about Celiwe, usezishadela yena uBaba no sisi kaCeliwe.

Sbani really has no relationship with the Ngemas. When he speaks about them, you can see his blood boil.

Me : No way. Do you think they are dating?

Sbani : Trust me, sthandwa sami. I forgot to tell you that the other day wangifonela.

Me : Who? Your father?

I get up and go to the bathroom to wash my hands.

Sbani : Yeah.

Me : Let me help you. Wathini?

He wipes his hands and goes to sit on the bed. I thought I was helping him but I see I'm about to do this alone.

Sbani : Wathi udlule lapha kwi stand sika Mah. Ubonile ukuthi indlu isiyaphela. Ngathi mina yeah, akufani.

Me : Ehhe

Sbani : Wangibuza ukuthi kuzohlala bani uma isiphelile indlu.

Me : Hhaibo

Sbani : That was my reaction. Ngathi kuzohlala mina no Sebe.

Me : Yeah. Wabatshela angithi ukuthi indlu usuyakhela wena?

Sbani : I did. And that day ngamutshela futhi and then he said ngiyabheda. There's no need ukuthi mina nawe siye ukuyohlala lapha. Kufanele wena uma usushadile uye ukuyovusa umuzi wasekhaya lapha kwa Ntuli ngoba yena no Mah sebeyaguga.

Me : Kodwa ULindo uhlala emzini wakhe nje.

Sbani : That's what I asked him. Wathi leyonto ayenza uLindo i wrong. Thina uma sishada kufanele silethe abafazi bethu ekhaya, kungabi ithina esihambayo ekhaya ngoba ukushada kusho ukuthi sisuke sivusa umuzi wakwa Ntuli, but thina we are doing the opposite.

Me : I think he has a point kuleyondawo.

Sbani : Wangibuza ukuthi kuzokwenzekani mhlazane yena no Mah bedlula emhlabeni. Shuthi kuyosala uPhiwo yedwa ekhaya or kuvalwe.

Me : And what did you say?

Sbani : Ngavuma phela ngoba I didn't know what to say. Ngase ngifuna evale ifoni. Kanti useza nesilima senkulumo. Wathi loyamuzi kufanele kuhlale umuntu wakwa Ngema ngoba vele kade ngiqala ukuwakha ngangithi ngiwakhela uMah. Wathi esuka lapho wathi I need to sell him that house.

Me : What? Sbani unamanga.

Sbani : I'm telling you. Manje lento kade ngiyicabanga indlela yonke kade ngi driver ngiza la. Ngavele ngabona ukuthi bayajola ngempela and they want to stay in that house after their wedding.

Me : Yeeeeeah! That's why ethi indlu kufanele ihlale umuntu wakwa Ngema.

Sbani : Exactly. Lomushado unobutsotsi.

Me : But we are not certain about that.

I leave the fish frying and I go sit on his lap.

Me : Njengamanje siyasola ukuthi bayathandana. We are not sure and we have no proof except that we saw them together at Spur.

Sbani : I know that. But njengamanje angithembi lutho, especially after lento ka Detective Ndaba. I'm angry and my emotions are controlling me.

Me : Please don't allow Detective Ndaba to mess with your head.

Sbani : No, Sebe. Something is not right here. That cop knows too much. Lazi nokuthi uCeliwe wangishiyela imali. Leyomali kwathengwa

ngayo amabhasi. Wazi nokuthi ngangifunda kephi. Wazi nabobonke abantu bakwa Ngema.

Me : And that's all he told you. You are paying him to give you information and what scares me ukuthi uzogcina esekutshela izinto ezingekho ngoba efuna imali. What if Iona leliphoyisa lihlange no Detective Ndaba badla imali yakho?

He sighs.

Sbani : Kungashi ukudla.

Me : Oh, yes. Thanks.

I get up and go back to the stove.

Me : Do you really mean to tell me that awusakholwa ukuthi wena owakwa Ntuli?

Sbani : I do, but at the same time I don't. Sebe, iqiniso ukuthi ngangizalwa uskhotheni. And that's what everyone is telling me ukuthi

uCeliwe wayewuskhotherni ezwana nabantu besilisa abaningi abahlukene.

I sigh.

Me : Okay, my love. You know what? Mhlampe sekuyisikhathi sokuthi wena mathupha uziyele ku Detective Ndaba. Tell him ukuthi uzwile ukuthi uhambe etshela abantu ukuthi uyena uBaba wakho and then ask him ukuthi nenze i DNA test.

Sbani : I don't think I'm ready. I don't think I'm ready to know that all of my life is a lie.

Me : Are you not ready to know that all this time you were stressing over nothing? Over a man that is not even your father?

He smiles.

Me : I'm sure yonke indoda ifisa ukuba uBaba wakho. Look at you, ubani ongeke efise ukuba nendodana enhle kanje?

He shakes his head and chuckles.

Sbani : Sebe, awukahle.

Me : I'm serious. Awugcini lapho, Kodwa futhi unenhliziyi yegolide. You are smart and responsible. Sbani izinto osuzenze at your age, all your achievements, konke kuyamangaza. Ukuba nendodana efana nawe kuyiphupho lawo wonke umuntu onenzalo.

He laughs.

Sbani : Kodwa uBaba onehlo elilodwa?

We both crack up. He gets up and wraps his arms around my waist.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga sthandwa sami.

Me : I thank God for you. Ngifisa nje konke kulunge. Kuningi esibhekene nakho my love. As much as we sit here and laugh like nothing is happening, kodwa iqiniso ukuthi kuningi. Mina kwayikona ukuhlala la angisakuthandi. Lamadoda ahlale engena ephuma endlini ka Roxanne ephethe izibhamu awanginiki ukuthula emoyeni wami. Sometimes I get nervous. Do you remember what happened the night before

yesterday? Kade ngithi ngiyavuka and you asked me where I was going?

Sbani : Yeah, wathi uyobheka ukuthi sikhiyiwe yini isicabha.

Me : I heard someone moving our door handle.

Sbani : What?

Me : Ngiyakutshela. Inyakaze kabili. I even coughed kukhona bezozwa ukuthi sivukile. Kade ngvuka, I wanted to go and see ukuthi ubani, but you stopped me.

Sbani : Why ungashongo ukuthi someone was trying to break in?

Me : Bengazi ukuthi uzofuna ukuphuma. No, love. No one was trying to break in, lomuntu obenyakazisa isicabha umuntu obezama ukusihlukumeza. Mina nje Sbani angisafuni ukuhlala la. Ever since I heard Roxanne talking to those men about your father nokuthi bafuna ukuthola ukuthi wena uyindodana yakhe yini angiphindanga ngaba right. What are they going to do if they find out that you are his son?

Sbani : Ufuna senze kanjani?

Me : I don't know Sbani. Ukhumbule ukuthi asisahlali sodwa manje la. Kunezingane zabantu esihlala nazo. If something bad happens to those kids, who will their parents put the blame on?

He blows out a sigh.

Sbani : Us. I'll speak to a few people ukuthi besibhekele indawo eqashiyo esizohlala kuyona for a couple of months kusaqedelwa leyandlu.

I hugged him.

Me : Thank you.

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda.

Me : I love you too baby.

Chapter 38

NTULI HOMESTEAD.

MaNzilo and Mzwakhile are also struggling to sleep. It's 12:10 am and they are still up.

MaNzilo : I just don't want to fight anymore. All the noise is draining me.

Mzwakhile : I don't want to fight too. I want Maqhingga to stay the hell away from my son.

MaNzilo : Lempi yakho noMaqhingga isiqala ukungena phakathi kwakho no Bhunu. I'm not sure if you see that.

Mzwakhile : Ayikho into engingayiboni Thandokazi.

MaNzilo : Then I'm sure that you see that Maqhingga is winning. You are doing exactly what he wants. He knows that if you fight with Sbani yena he'll be on standby elinde u Sbani ezokhala kuye.

Mzwakhile : He is not his father.

MaNzilo : Do you really believe that? Because it doesn't look like it. You say something but your face is telling me something else.

Mzwakhile : I'm tired now. Sengikhathele okwangempela Maka Lindokuhle.

MaNzilo : Tired of what? Of running away from the truth?

Mzwakhile : The truth is, Sbani is my son.

MaNzilo : Futhi uyohlala eyindodana yakho. Ephuma esendeni lakho okanye ephuma kwelika Maqhinga but iqiniso lithi uwena obe UBaba okudlula uMaqhinga ku Sbani. Yes, you are not perfect Mzwa kodwa you fought for Sbani.

Mzwakhile : Kodwa ngicabanga ukuyohlangana noMaqhinga kusasa sikhulume indaba ye DNA. Ngidinga ukuphumula manje.

MaNzilo sighs.

MaNzilo : What if he is his son?

Mzwakhile : Ayikho mina imali engizoyikhokhela uMaqhinga. Leyomali ngakhulisa ngayo u Sbani for 25 years. What was Sbani eating for 25 years? Ubeya ngani kodokotela kade egula? Esikoleni kona uye ngani? Maqhinga is not getting a cent from me!

MaNzilo : I'm talking about Sbani.

Mzwakhile lets out a very deep sigh.

Mzwakhile : Sbani is a man now. Angikwazi ukumulawula. Uma efuna ukuya kwa Ndaba after the results, ngeke ngibe namandla okumuvimba. Ndaba doesn't have a child. So I know very well that he won't allow me to keep his son uma ama results e DNA ebuya ethi he is the father. He will need Sbani to come home and carry the Ndaba legacy.

There's so much pain in his voice.

Mzwakhile : I killed his mother. He will never choose me.

MaNzilo : Akakwazi lokho futhi kuzohlala kunjalo. Do you hear me?

Mzwakhile sniffs while shaking his head. When it comes to Sbani he is not scared to show his tears.

MaNzilo : We are going to be fine. Mzwa sesidlule ezintweni eziningi kabi.

Mzwakhile : I know.

MaNzilo : So, I'm going to need you to calm down. Akekho uMaqhinga ozoya kuyena ksasa. Izikhali zakho olwa ngazo noMaqhinga ngizodinga uzibeke phansi ksasa. Tomorrow I want us to remind ourselves ukuthi uyini umndeni. You and I are going to cook for our kids and our grandchildren. Umfazi kaSbani nomfazi kaLindokuhle bazobe belana nabo. We are going to sit down, eat and laugh like we used to.

Mzwakhile : Ngiyakuzwa Dali

MaNzilo : Kuningi osekonakele kulomuzi and we need to fix it. Uyabona Mzwa uma isitha sifika nibambene, nimunye! Kulula ukuthi nisigingqo phansi. Njengamanje sihlukane. Lindo is living his own life nomndeni wakhe. Sbani is building his life no Sebenzile. USphiwokuhle ubhukuda otshwaleni ke manje, angazi noma uyamubona yini. Akakwazanga

nokuvuka eye emsebenzini izolo. UScelo udla izidakamizwa because we failed him.

Mzwakhile sighs.

MaNzilo : We did. Scelo is not okay. Siyizathu sokuzinikela kwakhe kumadrugs. This family is falling apart

Advertisement

Mzwakhile.

Mzwakhile : You are right.

MaNzilo : Tomorrow I want to spend time with my kids, all of them. Ngicela ukhulume noLindo umtshele ukuthi elethe wonke umzukulu wami la ksasa.

Mzwakhile : I'll do that.

MaNzilo smiles. Mzwakhile presses his lips on her hand.

Mzwakhile : I love you, Thandokazi. I know I don't say this as often as I should, but ngiyakuthanda ngenhliziyo yami yonke and I appreciate you. Thank you for taking care of this family, nokuhlale uyinsika yawo. Thandokazi ngeke ngisaphinde ngikuzwise ubuhlungu. It's all done. Nomshado uma kukuthi awuhambisani nawo asiwuyeke.

MaNzilo : No, what about Sbani?

Mzwakhile : I'm not even sure if he is my son. Asengiphelele wonke amathemba manje, Thandokazi.

MaNzilo : You can't lose hope, not now. This is the time to gather all your strength. Lomndeni uzokudinga.

Mzwakhile shakes his head.

Mzwakhile : I can't lose my son.

Tears squeeze out of his eyes. MaNzilo sits up and pulls his head onto her chest. She presses her lips on his bald head and her tears fall.

MaNzilo : It's okay.

Chapter 39

We literally slept for 3 hours. As usual Sbani is looking fresh like he didn't stay up all night. He is nothing like me. Sleeping late hits me in the morning, but not Sbani. It doesn't affect him at all, in fact it gives him more energy.

Sbani : Sebe uzoselwa

Me : I won't.

Sbani : Vuka kancane

Me : No. Please ask Celo to wake me up.

Sbani : What time?

Me : Mhmmmm

I'm falling back into sleep.

Sbani : Baby come on, are you really that tired?

Me : No

I lie.

Sbani : Vuka ungixoxise phela sthandwa sami.

Me : It's 03:45

Sbani : But you always do. Come on baby, talk to daddy.

He tickles me. I laugh.

Me : A whole 25 year old daddy.

Sbani : Okay ke sugar mama.

Me : Wh.....

I grab a pillow and by the time I'm thinking of throwing it on his face he is already running to the bathroom. The pillow lands on the floor.

Me : Ungijwayela kabi

I get up and try to push the door but he has locked it. He is laughing inside the bathroom.

Me : Sbani vula.

Sbani : No

Me : Uhlale lapho for good. Ubiza mina ngo sugar mama?

He laughs out loud.

Sbani : Are you not older than me?

I want to laugh but I cover my mouth with my hand.

Me : I am kodwa akumina engathi shela u sugar mama.

Sbani : My heart betrayed me.

I burst into laughter.

Me : Okusalayo ontanga bakho ngeke bekunuke. You are stuck with me forever. You are mine and you won't do shit about it. Ngu sugar mama wakho.

Sbani : Okay sugar mama wami.

Me : Hawemah, Sbani I hate you. Lo Ben 10

He laughs and opens the door.

Sbani : UBen 10 wakho wedwa.

I'm blushing.

Sbani : Come here

He lifts my chin up and kisses my lips.

Sbani : I love you.

Me : I love you too baby.

Sbani went to work and I also got ready for work. I'm done now. I gather my handbag and my lunchbag while looking around.

Me : Uhhmm. Yini engiyishiyayo? Let me see, let me see. Phone, lunch... oh earphones.

Oh Sbani took them.

Me : Aww Sbani.

My phone rings. Speak of the devil.

Me : Baby, you took my earphones.

Sbani : No I didn't.

Me : Angiwaboni kodwa. Okay, akunankinga.

Sbani : Awukakaphumi namanje Manu?

Me : Sengiyaphuma my love.

Sbani : Please. Don't be late

Me : I won't. Wena usufikile emsebenzini?

Sbani : Sengizofika manje sthandwa sami.

Me : Okay, I'll call you.

Sbani : Okay mamah.

Me : Mncwaaa mncwaaa

Sbani : Mncwaaa mncwaaa

I hang up and lock the door. I run to my door and knock.

Me : Celo, please open.

What is taking them so long to open? I keep tapping my foot on the floor while waiting for the door to open and it finally does. This is embarrassing. Scelo is showing all the evidence that they were having sex. His old and dirty Levi's jeans are not zipped and his penis is showing. He is not even feeling the air hitting it. There's a condom wrapper that is sticking on his arm. I'm not sure he sees it. What the hell are they still doing with condoms because they failed to use them right from the start.

Me : Celo.

Scelo : Sisi usuyahamba?

Ay noThembeka naye. I mean look at Scelo, look at him. Look at his feet, they are so dirty. No, I'm judging her. I really am.

Me : Yes. Ngilethe ukhiye. Imali yesinkwa iseduze kwe bread tin. Izinto zesinkwa e fridgen. Ummm what else? Oh, the TV remote is not working. Ngizobuya nama battery ntambama.

Scelo : Okay sisi.

Me : Kambe yini enye ebengifuna ukukutshela yona nkosiyami besides indaba ye remote? Ooo yes! Nihlale nikhiyile layindlini Celo and uSbani uthe nginicele ningazuli.

Scelo : Ngeke siyendawo sesteri.

Oh hhayike "sesteri".

Me : Good. U right uThembeka?

I give him the keys.

Scelo : She is fine.

Me : Good. I'll see you guys later. Nigeze bandla Celo nibe clean. I nail clip ise drawer, please use it. I don't like your nails boy boy.

Scelo : Yebo

Me : Okay. Nithenge ngoshintshi weCelo

Scelo : Thank you.

I'm already running on my way down the steps.

12 : 00

This morning when I arrived at work I was fine. But around 10:30 I started sweating and feeling dizzy. The sun is all out today so maybe that's why. Grace booked me a sick leave and she told me to go and see a doctor. I'm here now in the doctor's room. The dizziness is no longer the problem, but my period pains are. I've been experiencing them since last night but dololo blood. The doctor has stepped out so I'm alone. My phone rings.

Me : Eish, Sbani.

No, I'm not going to tell him. I don't want him to stress over this because it's nothing serious.

Me : Khuboni

Sbani : Manuna, are you on lunch break?

I swallow.

Me : Uhmm yeah.

Sbani : Good. Kade kufone umawakho uthi ucela sifike ntambama for dinner.

Me : Dinner? On a Tuesday?

Sbani : Cabanga baby. Uthi uphekile and today she wants to spend time with all of us.

Me : Ayke okay baby.

Sbani : Yeah. Awukaze ukhulume noRoxanne?

Me : No, why?

Sbani : Ngifice i missed call ka Yekisha efonini yami but when I tried to phone her back akayibambanga ifoni.

Me : When?

Sbani : Manje nje.

Me : Ay mhlampe ukufonele ngephutha.

Sbani : Maybe. OScelo nabo kade ngithi Ngiyabafonela angibatholi bobabili.

Me : They are probably sleeping. Kade be busy ekseni.

He laughs.

Sbani : Busy with what?

Me : Ngizokuxoxela ntambama.

I laugh.

Sbani : Okay baby. Mhlampe balele ngempela, plus ne TV ayikho.

Me : Exactly. I'm sure they are bored.

Sbani : Yeah. Ngizokubona ntambama ke sthandwa sami.

Me : What time are you knocking off?

Sbani : Ngo 18 : 00 cabanga, baby. I told my mother that we are going to be late.

Me : Okay. Uzungifica endlini kodwa mina. Ngizophuma ngo 3. Ngiku ayinele ini?

Sbani : Noma yini baby.

Me : Okay, I love you.

Sbani : I love you too, sthandwa sami.

Me : Mncwaa

Sbani : Mncwaaa

He ends the call. The door opens and the doctor walks in, smiling.

Doctor : Can I come in now?

I laugh.

Me : Oh my God, you were waiting for me to finish?

Doctor : But I'm not complaining. That was soothing.

We both laugh.

Doctor : Let's get back to business. Miss Mlambo I see absolutely nothing wrong with you. Except.... Oh, you said when were your last periods?

Me : Uhmm

Advertisement

last month and.....

It hit me that after my first sex with Sbani my periods have not been normal and I've been sick constantly. My eyes widen and my heart races.

Doctor : Miss Mlambo?

Me : I.....

I swallow.

Doctor : Is everything okay?

Me : I think I'm HIV positive.

Doctor : Oh, okay. What makes you think that?

She pulls her chair and sits down.

Me : Because my partner is living with HIV.

Doctor : Okay. But you do know that having a partner who is HIV positive does not mean that you are also HIV positive?

Me : Yes, I know, but I've been sick lately and I think it's HIV. And I don't have a problem with that. I can start with my treatment right away.

She smiles and shakes her head. I'm stuttering and anyone can hardly believe that I mean what I'm saying.

Doctor : Look, I think it's better we do a test before jumping the gun.

Me : No problem.

Doctor : Alright?

Me : Yes, yes.

She suggested that we do a pregnancy test as well. If Sbani wasn't pulling out every time we are having sex then I would have a glimpse of hope that maybe, just maybe I'm pregnant.

Doctor : How bad are those cramps?

Me : Not bad. They come and go.

Doctor : Good. I have all your test results.

I take a deep breath.

Me : Okay, so when can I start taking my treatment?

Doctor : What treatment?

Me : For HIV.

Doctor : Oh no no. Your HIV test results came back negative. But that does not necessarily mean that you don't have HIV. This is because of the window period. The time between when you get HIV and when a test can accurately detect it.

Me : Okay

Doctor : Yes. The window period varies from person to person and depends on the type of HIV test you take.

Me : But the results are negative?

Doctor : However, your pregnancy test came back positive.

My mouth gape open and my eyes widen.

Me : What?

Doctor : Yes, you are pregnant.

Me : I'm pregnant, I'm pregnant. Oh my God I'm pregnant.

I touch my stomach and get up from my seat. I want to jump, I want to run. I want to scream.

Me : Are you sure? Are you sure dokotela?

She smiles.

Doctor : 100 percent. You are 4 weeks pregnant.

Me : Oh my God, I'm going to be a mother. Sizoba nengane. Sbani and I are going to have a baby!!

I jump up and down. Doctor stands up and hugs me.

Doctor : Wow, Congratulations Miss Mlambo.

Me : Thank you, thank you, thank you.

I'm literally crying. I wipe my tears.

Me : Thank you so much. Ngicela unginikeze ikhadi elishoyo ngempela ukuthi ngikhulelwe because Sbani won't believe me. Please, please.

She smiles.

Doctor : No problem.

Me : He is going to be so happy. Please, ngicela ungenzele ikhadi.

She smiles.

She confirmed my pregnancy in writing and I took home my two pregnancy test kits. I can't wait to get home and look at them again but more than anything I can't wait for Sbani to come back from work. I can

already picture his excitement. People in this taxi probably think I'm crazy based on how I'm smiling every minute.

I finally jumped off the taxi and why on earth did it have to be Roxanne that I bump into? She is standing with Yekisha and Rian. They seem to have a heated discussion. Roxanne is screaming as usual. I can hear her from here.

Roxanne : I caught him right inside my room!! I still can't believe it!!

Who?

Roxanne : He climbed out of my window. I don't know when and how he removed my burglar.

She explains while hitting her hand with the back of the other. She sounds enraged. I can't hear Yekisha because she is soft spoken. Roxanne screams again.

Roxanne : He stole my money!!! He stole my things!!!

I'm about to walk past them. Let me greet and pass.

Me : Hi

Only Yekisha and Rian reply.

Yekisha : Seh, please wait.

I stop walking.

Yekisha : How are you?

Me : I'm good. What's going on here?

Yekisha : It's bad, my friend. Your little brother stole Roxanne's money and laptop.

Me : My.... what? You say what happened?

Yekisha : He got away. This is where they were beating him up.

I look behind me. There are broken bricks and sticks. Who was beaten up? I'm confused.

Me : There was a thief here?

Roxanne : She is talking about Scelo!! That fucking hobo stole from me!!! He...

I can't capture the rest. Hearing Scelo's name freezes my mind.

Yekisha : But I think he is fine. Your boyfriend.....

I open the gate and run all the way inside. My room is locked. Sbani's door is opened a bit. I push it and see the most shocking thing. My handbag drops to the floor. My body freezes and I immediately feel something warm running between my thighs.

Me : Sbani?

Sbani is on the floor, topless. His body looks like someone who was poured with boiling water. His body is full of scalds. Small and big

boiling water burns. He is rolling on the carpet like a snake. When he rolls I see some of them burst. He is in extreme pain.

Me : Sbani!!!!

I throw myself next to him. I don't even know where to touch him.

Me : Sbani? Baby?

His eyes are blood red. The way he is breathing is scary. I need to go and look for help. I try to get up but my lower body fails me. There's a pain in my lower stomach. I think I need a toilet. I want to push, I want to fart. I feel wet. I'm in pain, Sbani is also in pain. I crawl towards the door. Sbani groans louder. I lift up my head and look at him. He is crying. There's blood here. I don't know where it's coming from but it's all over me.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Sphiwo : Is that noise coming from your chest?

MaNzilo : I'll be fine. That looks really good. Ungafaki upelepele omningi ngoba kuzodla nezingane.

Sphiwo shakes his head.

Sphiwo : Chillax. Give me the wine.

MaNzilo : My favorite

They both laugh.

Sphiwo : Ay wena Mah.

MaNzilo : Uyamubona ke uBaba wakho? Uthe uzobuya manje but where is he now?

Sphiwo laughs.

Sphiwo : Call him

MaNzilo : He left his phone. Uyishiye lapha embhedeni.

Sphiwo : ULindo naye ayingeni ifoni yakhe. I wanted to ask him ukuthi ngimulandele yini ingane lapha Etsheni elimnyama.

MaNzilo : Buka nje ubuzobe umusizi.....

She coughs.

Sphiwo : Sit down, Mah. Where is your spray?

MaNzilo : Sikhona. I don't want to use it every time ngoba naso sibuye silimaze isifuba.

Sphiwo : But you are struggling to breathe.

MaNzilo : Iphika nje lizodlula. Ey kwaze kwashisa namhlanje.....

She coughs.

Sphiwo : Sit here. Let me get you some water

MaNzilo : Unginike afudumele Phiwo

Sphiwo : Okay

MaNzilo : ULindo ubuzobe umsizile ngokumlandela u Olly.

Sphiwo : Yes but angimutholanga efonini. So I couldn't just go there ngithi ngizolanda ingane ngingazi noma uLindo uyicelile yini kumama wayo.

MaNzilo : That's true. Uthi uthe uLungani ubone u Sbani kephi?

Sphiwo : Le ngase Verulam egijima. Lungani is crazy. I told him that Sbani is at work uphuma ngo six.

MaNzilo : Bazohlangabezwa uwena noma uLindo?

Sphiwo : Me. Uthe ngifike ngo 19 : 00 u Bhunu ngizobalanda.

MaNzilo : Kufanele efunde ukushayela manje u Sebe.

Sphiwo : I told Bhunu.

Mzwakhile walks in with his head facing down.

Mzwakhile : Where is Sbani?

MaNzilo : Akakafiki. Are you hungry?

Mzwakhile shakes his head.

MaNzilo : Mzwa, I see you.

MaNzilo laughs. Mzwakhile smiles and shakes his head while making his way to the living room.

Sphiwo : Wenzeni uBaba?

MaNzilo : Awumuboni edlula la enamahloni? He knows that he lied to us.

Sphiwo laughs.

Sphiwo : Mah, did you really believe that Baba will stay here all day esize thina ngokupheka?

They both laugh.

MaNzilo : Mzwa uyamuzwa uPhiwo?

They wait for Mzwakhile to respond but he doesn't.

Sphiwo : Akakuzwanga. Usengale e dining room.

MaNzilo : Kuvaliwe yini ngale?

Sphiwo : Yeah, ngikhiye i gate.

MaNzilo : Oh ngiyabona uBaba wakho engena ngala ekhishini. I'm just glad ukuthi ubuyile. Bengithi he won't join us for dinner. Phela uBaba wakho akanendaba nalezinto.

Lindo barges in. This one is always barging in. He looks confused. He is looking at the ground outside and on the floor inside the kitchen, like he is tracing something.

MaNzilo : Yini?

Lindo : Where is all this blood coming from?

MaNzilo stands up.

MaNzilo : What blood?

Lindo : Look, nali. Lize lingena layindlini.

MaNzilo : Aybo.

Sphiwo : Let me see.

Lindo : Where is Baba?

MaNzilo : Ungale e Dining room.

Lindo runs to the dining room.

MaNzilo : Awuhambe Phiwo ubheke emnyango ukuthi ayikho yiniinja ephethe isilwane esifile.

MaNzilo says and follows Lindo.

Lindo : Baba?

Mzwakhile is sitting on the couch with his head pressed on his lap.

Mzwakhile : Where is Sbanisokuhle?

Lindo : Baba awusukume

Mzwakhile : Please call Sbanisokuhle and tell him to come here n...
now.

Lindo runs to him and kneels in front of him.

Lindo : Baba what's wrong?

He touches him all over. He looks at his father's hands and then looks at his mother.

MaNzilo : Lindo what's wrong?!!!

MaNzilo screams. Mzwakhile sits up.

Lindo : UBaba ulimele. Sphiwokuhle!!!! Mah call, Sphiwo. uBaba
udutshuliwe

Mzwakhile : Call Sbani

He finishes saying that and his head falls back.

Chapter 40

Short Continuation

^

^

^

^

^

^

^

I did. I cried for help but no one came. I called his brothers, his mother and even his father but no one answered. I held him in my arms and watched him crying helplessly until I saw his pain slowly dying away.

Three hours later we are still sitting on the floor. I'm still holding him. There's blood in my hands. The scalds on his body are still bursting, each at a time. But he is not crying anymore. He is sleeping peacefully with his beautiful eyes closed. I can still feel the stabbing pain in my lower stomach but I feel empty. I take a deep breath and press my lips on Sbani's lips. One of his hands is still holding on to my arm. I feel it squeezing my arm and I giggle with tears raining down my face.

Me : You are a very strong man. I'm so proud of you, baby. It's okay now. All the pain is gone now.

When he told me that he hated the sunlight, I thought he was being dramatic but after today, Oh God I don't know what to say. I can't believe the heavens can let someone go through that pain. I still can't believe that Sbani is breathing and that he is alive after what I walked into. I didn't give him anything, not even a single pain killer, not because I didn't want to but my brain was just not functioning. I think this thing drains him because as the pain got better he started falling asleep bit by bit and now he is hardly moving. I wonder where Scelo is. I kiss Sbani's cheek and wipe my nose with my hand while looking around. The pillow seems too far. I gently place him on the carpet and I crawl to the bed. I stretch my arm and take the pillow. I crawl back to Sbani. I lift up his head and put the pillow under his head. I switch on the fan. He is still wearing his work pants and boots. I remove the boots. It's time to force myself up. I go to the door, holding my knees with my hands. Standing up straight is difficult. I lock the door and go to the shower. I stand under the shower and take off each of my clothes until I'm butt naked. My thighs, legs and feet are soaking in blood. I open the shower and my eyes close. Flashbacks start playing in. There was a time in my life where I was certain that I was pregnant. For nine months I didn't see my periods. I saw my stomach growing every month

Advertisement

everyone saw it. Menzi saw it. I felt baby kicks, I saw the movements of the baby but scans didn't see shit! Menzi's family started laughing at me about it. As we approached the end of the 9th month my stomach

suddenly became flat like there was never a baby growing inside it! I became a joke and when they were finally tired of laughing they accused me of killing Menzi's baby.

I let out a sigh as I try sweeping off the flashbacks.

But this time it was different. I'm not crazy, I heard what the doctor said. She confirmed my pregnancy. I have two pregnancy test kits that also confirm that. When she broke the news of me being pregnant I immediately felt the bond between me and my baby, my junior Sbani. But I don't feel it anymore, my lower stomach feels absolutely empty.

What happened today all feels like a terrible nightmare. From a good, sweet dream to a terrible nightmare. My eyes shut open and I see the blood that is still running down between my legs. I see blood clots going down the shower drain. That is my baby. That is Sbani's baby, the baby he never met.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

The ambulance has arrived. People are standing outside their houses. Everyone wants to see what is happening in the Ntuli homestead. The paramedics asked everyone to stay outside while they were busy trying to save Mzwakhile's life. The paramedics are inside. Sphiwokuhle is

sitting on a milk crate, he is staring into space. Lindokuhle is pacing around the yard with his hands at the back of his neck. Skhalo's mother had to drag the wailing MaNzilo to the car because she didn't want to leave Mzwakhile's side. Someone must have called the police. There's a police car coming. Two police officers and a Detective get out of the car. One police officer goes to where Sphiwokuhle is sitting.

Officer : Mr Ntuli

Sphiwo nods.

Officer : We apologize for arriving late. We had to rush to the scene where Detective Ndaba's body was found.

I don't think Sphiwokuhle hears anything that is coming out of the officer's mouth. Officer sees that he is not listening and then squeezes his shoulder.

Officer : It's going to be okay mfana kaNtuli.

Soon after the officer finishes saying that, two paramedics walk out of the house. Lindo looks at Sphiwo and back at the paramedics. One of

the paramedics lifts his eyes up to Lindo and shakes his head while taking off his gloves. Sphiwokuhle closes his eyes and rubs his face.

Lindo : No.... No!!!!

He yells while running into the house.

Lindo : Baba!! Where is my father?

He asks while pushing the Detective out of his way. He runs to the dining room and the moment he gets there his eyes widen. He takes steps back until his back touches the wall. His fingers are digging the wall. His body is trembling. His father's now lifeless body is lying on the floor with a white sheet covering it. He starts shaking his head vigorously.

Detective : I'm sorry about your father.

Lindo : No, no, no.

He whispers and suddenly screams on top of his voice.

Lindo : No!!!!

Chapter 41

It's 20:30. Sphiwokuhle was supposed to pick us up for dinner at the Ntulis, but he is still not here. None of them are picking up my calls. After speaking to Rian an hour ago I want to believe that Scelo is fine but not knowing where he and Thembeke are makes me nervous. After hearing the story, I think there was no need to beat up a kid like that. Some people really have a vile temper. I still have so many questions but no answers.

Sbani is still sleeping on the floor, not moving. Every 2 minutes I check if he is breathing. His scalds are watering every 10 minutes. There's a basin with water and a towel next to him so that whenever I see them watering, I clean them. His face is the only thing that is perfect in this room today. He doesn't even have a small scald on his face. His face is white and spotless. I brush his dreadlocks and listen if he is breathing. I smile and kiss his lips.

Me : Baby?

I wonder if he is not hungry. It doesn't look like he is going to wake up anytime soon, so we are going to sleep on the floor. I dry his wounds that are watering yet again and get up. I feel a little bit better now but I feel really weak. I'm still bleeding but not as heavy as I was for the past four hours. I pick up my handbag from the floor and open it. I take out the two pregnancy tests, but I suddenly hear a knock on the door.

Me : Ubani?

'Sisi imina uSphiwo'

Eish!

Me : Okay bhuti, ngiyeza.

I quickly put everything back inside the bag and close it. I rush to Sbani's wardrobe and squash my handbag inside one of his drawers. I look at Sbani and head to the door. I take a deep breath before opening the door. I look side to side and find him leaning against the wall with his eyes closed.

Me : Bhuti

His eyes shut open. He is not looking good. He has bags under his eyes. He looks like someone who's been crying for quite some time. Something tells me that Scelo is behind this miserable look on his face.

Sphiwo : Sisi.

Me : Please come in

He walks in and I see his body freeze the moment he sees his brother on the floor. He throws himself on his knees next to him.

Sphiwo : Bafozi.

He runs his hand over his dreads and lifts his head to me.

Sphiwo : Limuthole kanjani ilanga?

I shake my head.

Me : It's quite unclear. When I came back I found him here all by himself. He was in pain and I didn't know what to.....

I break down. Sphiwokuhle gets up immediately and hugs me.

Me : I didn't think it was this bad. This thing is bad Phiwo. This is bad.

He tightens his arms around me.

Sphiwo : I know and I'm sorry we didn't tell you. I'm sorry you had to find him the way you did.

I pull away and wipe the tears.

Me : Akavuki.

Sphiwo : It's still early. After the pain it normally takes him 12 hours to wake up.

Me : This is not right, bhuti. USbani akakwazi ukubhekana nento enje impilo yakhe yonke.

Sphiwo : We tried everything. Odokotela nezinyanga bahlulekile ukumusiza.

I shake my head.

Me : I tried to call you. Nonke ngizamile ukunifonela kodwa angitholanga muntu. I thought he was dying.

He sighs and kneels next to Sbani again.

Sphiwo : Ingane kaBaba madoda. You don't deserve all these pains, Godide. I'm sorry bafo.

He stares up at the roof and sighs.

Sphiwo : Kukhona okubi osekusehlele sisi.

Me : Oh nkosiyami, uScelo, angithi?

He swallows.

Me : What happened bhuti? You know Rian was here an hour ago but I didn't let him in. Ngime naye lapha emnyango wangitshela ukuthi kwenzekeni. Angikholwa ukuthi ingane isingashawela u R2500.

Sphiwo : Bathi kwenzekeni?

Me : Is he alive?

He blows out another sigh.

Sphiwo : Yes. They are both fine.

Me : Ngiyabonga nkosiyami. Bhuti, kuthiwa uCelo untshontshile. Roxanne found him in her room and he climbed out of her window esathi uzama ukumubamba. Waphuma ngewindi wabaleka.

Sphiwo : What?

Me : Uthi u Roxanne kade emufica endlini ubengaphethe lutho futhi uphume ngewindi engaphethe lutho but when she searched in her room. She found that her laptop was missing, nemali engango R2500.

Sphiwo : UScelo kuthiwa lemikhuba uyigile ngasikhathisini?

Me : Bathi yonke lento yenzeke ekuseni nje mina ngisanda kuhamba ngiye emsebenzini ngoba uRoxanne uthi ubephuma ukuyoneka izingubo ezansi.

Sphiwo : So how did they come to a conclusion that Scelo is the one who stole the laptop and the money?

Me : Someone saw him esephuma la and he was carrying Roxanne's laptop bag mabesho. They think uphose yona kuqala phansi before ephume ngewindi. He ran away. URoxanne asked her friends ukuthi bemujahe but abamutholanga.

He shakes his head.

Sphiwo : Ey u Scelo

Me : After that they saw Thembeke ephuma ngale baya kuyena and they asked her ukuthi uphi uScelo.

Sphiwo : He left his pregnant girlfriend wahamba wayontshontsha. Who the fuck does that?

Me : Imagine. Bamunike ifoni ke bathi akamufonele uCelo emubuze ukuthi ukuphi but his phone was off. Bamuthusa bathi bazomushaya, wagcina esebanike inamba kamngani wakhe bafona nangempela

bamthola u Scelo. Thembeke lied to Scelo wathi sebumuxoshile endlini akeze uScelo ezomulanda.

Sphiwo : And he came?

Me : He did. He came around 11:00 and he tried to sneak in ezolanda u Thembeke. Bamubamba kanjalo ke baphuma naye baya la ngasemgaqweni. Uthi u Rian the plan was not to hurt him but they wanted him to bring back the money and the laptop. Kodwa waziphika izinto uScelo.

Sphiwo : Where was Dylan?

Me : Ubengekho. It's been a while engekho u Dylan la.

Sphiwo : Ubani oshaye uCelo?

Me : Kuthiwa bathe besakhuluma naye kwama ama taxi awu two. Kwaphuma amandiya awu two nabantu abamnyama abawu three. Babuza ukuthi kwenzekani and they told them. Ibona ke osomatekisi abathe akashawe u Scelo khona engeke ephinde entshontshe. Kuthiwa bakhiphe nezimvubu.

He is slightly shaking his head with his eyes glued to Sbani.

Me : Khona elinye indiya ekuthiwa u Yekisha liqashe kulama room ase downstairs. She is the one who called Sbani wamutshela ukuthi naba abantu bebulala uScelo. Ngicabanga ukuthi USbani ucele ukuphuma emsebenzini and he came here. Kanti kuyashisa emnyango

Advertisement

watholwa ilanga.

Sphiwo : Dammit! Yazi uBhunu ekseni kade ezothatha ama energy drink ufike kumina ehamba ngemoto and he asked me to drive him to work khona ngzobuya nemoto because yena ubezophuma ngo six engeke ekwazi uku driva.

Me : Kube ibhadi nje bhuti. Uthi uRian ufike ngemoto kodwa and he took Scelo and Thembeke. But I don't understand how he came back alone ngoba mina ngimufice eyedwa la.

Sphiwo : Who's car was he driving?

Me : I don't know.

Sphiwo : I think ileyomoto ehambise u Scelo no Thembeke kwa Ndengezi ngoba mina ngihlangane nomunye umfana kade ngiza la wathi ubone u Scelo manje ebusuku elimele ebusweni. I thought he was lying ngoba mina ngazi ukuthi oScelo balana.

Me : So Scelo is fine?

Sphiwo : Yes. Kuthiwa ulimele kodwa uyakwazi ukuhamba ngoba umuntu omubonile uthi umubone ehamba nabangani bakhe.

If Scelo is fine then why does he look so miserable because I know he knows nothing about my miscarriage.

Me : Okay

He sighs.

Sphiwo : But something else happened.

Me : What happened?

He looks away and his eyes close.

Sphiwo : UBaba ushonile.

Me : What?

Sphiwo : Akasekho uBaba Sis'Sebe. Udutshuliwe.

My heart stops.

NTULI HOMESTEAD.

MaNzilo froze the moment she saw the paramedics walking out of her house with her husband covered with a white sheet. She didn't drop a single tear. She just stood there and watched. For some reasons she was against sitting on the mattress but eventually she agreed. She is sitting on the mattress in her bedroom. She is sitting with two other women. Two candles are burning next to the mattress. Tonight they were supposed to be having dinner as a family. How did things get to this point?

In the dining room, Sphiwokuhle walks in carrying Sbani in his arms. Sebenzile is following him with two bags. All eyes are on Sebenzile. It looks like neighbours are judging her for being here. Why? Is it because she is not officially married yet? Oh well, Sbani is really not looking good and when he wakes up and finds out that his father is no more, he might get even worse. So maybe her being here might be good for Sbani. Neighbours must mind their own business for now.

Lindo follows them to Sbani's bedroom.

Lindo : What happened to him?

Sphiwo : Ilanga.

Lindo : Eish

Lindo brushes Sbani's forehead.

Lindo : Ulale nini?

Sphiwo : Awukakapheli u 12 hours.

Lindo : How bad are the wounds?

Sphiwo : Eish, bekunzima ngisho ukuthi simugqokise isikibha. Sibuke namanje sinamathele.

Lindo : I see. Let's try and take it off.

He rolls his shirt sleeves.

Lindo : Makoti wakithi, angisakubingelelanga.

Sebenzile : It's okay bhuti

Lindo sighs.

Sphiwo : Ubani osefikile ngale?

Lindo : Akekho. Kodwa bonke basendleleni. Ilaba baseGoli abathe bazofisa ksasa.

Sphiwo : Is Skhalo's mother sitting with Mah?

Lindo : No, she left. Uthe ukhathele ufuna ukuyolala.

Sphiwo raises his eyebrows in disbelief.

Lindo : Plus noSkhalo akekho right manje ukuthi ehlale endaweni enabantu abaningi, noBaba wabuye washonela layikhaya. That's not good for him. I told them to go.

Sphiwo shakes his head and sighs.

Sphiwo : Ay ngiyakuzwa.

Sebenzile is staring at the wall, not blinking.

Lindo : Lesikibha sika Bhunu ngeke siphume.

It won't. It's stuck on the wounds.

Sphiwo : Let's cut it from here.

Lindo : No, uzothunukala. Let's leave him for now. Sizobona uma evuka.

Sebenzile : What happened to Baba?

She asks out of nowhere. Lindo and Sphiwo sit down and inhale deeply. Lindo's jaw tightens.

Sphiwo : Okwamanje we are not sure. The police are still investigating. Bathathe nefoni kaBaba. What we know for now ukuthi uBaba usuke la eya e Pinetown. We think he was going to meet up with Detective Ndaba.

Sebenzile : He was with Detective Ndaba?

Sphiwo : Yes. Abantu ababonile bathi kuqhamuke imoto kwaqhuma izibhamu. Baba managed to run. Wangena emotweni wadriva weza la.

Lindo buries his eyes with his hands.

Sphiwo : uBaba ungene singale ekhishini no Mah and we didn't see anything wrong with him. Angisazi usibuze ukuthini, wasuka lapho wayohlala e dining room. Saqhubeka sazihlalela no Mah. Kufike ULindo soon after that. Uthi uLindo yena ubone izibombo zezinhlamvu ezu two ewindini lemoto kaBaba langemumva. Wathuka esebona igazi phansi.

Sebenzile : Badutshulwe bobabili no Detective?

Sphiwo : Yes, I think uBaba ubaleke vele esedutshuliwe because I don't think lezibombo ezisemotweni yakhe ilezimbobo zezinhlamvu ezimudubulile. Detective couldn't even run. Kuthiwa bamudubule lapho washona same time.

Lindo sniffs. His father's death hits him more than it hits Sphiwo.

Sphiwo : Kuthiwa uLindo akafikanga, thina besizomufica eseshonile uBaba ngale e dining room. What I don't understand ukuthi yinindaba uBaba engashongo ukuthi ulimele kade engena la. Ufihlele thina ukuthi ulimele. Why?

Lindo : He saw that it was too late.

Sphiwo : No, Lindo!!! That was selfish of him!

He bangs the bed and stands up.

Sphiwo : My mother was right! Now I understand why she was against this thing of sitting on the mattress. Baba hated our mother. We all saw how he abused her! But that wasn't enough. Ngisho eseshona uncamele ukuzoshonela layikhaya. Wazofela layindlini phambi kuka Mah. We couldn't even help him.

Lindo : Sphiwokuhle stop it.

Sphiwo : No! He knew what he was doing! Ubefuna mina no Mah sisale nonembeza wokuthi asikwazanga ukumusiza.

Lindo : That is not true. UBaba Ubefuna ukuzoshonela emzini wakhe.

Sphiwo : No, ubefuna ukuzovalelisa emadodaneni akhe awathandayo. You and Sbani were his favorite. And guess what? Ulinde wena ukuthi ufike khona uzomusiza ubize i ambulance. You got to touch him before he died. And guess who he wanted to see before he took his last breath? Bhunu! Uthe akeze la. Akangibuzanga mina. Angikwazanga ngisho ukubona ukuthi ulimele kade engena and he didn't even bother to tell me! Namhlanje mina no Mah sisele nonembeza wokuthi asikwazanga ukusiza uBaba kusenesikhathi. That man hated me!

He says and walks out.

Lindo : Phiwo!

Sebenzile : Bhuti, please give him some time. Umoya wakhe usephezulu. Njengamanje asiwudingi umsindo. UMah uyasidinga. USbani ngoba elele la akazi ukuthi uBaba no Maqhingga abasekho.

Lindo's eyes welled up with tears.

Lindo : Ngiyezwa sisi. Siyaxolisa.

Chapter 42

NTULI HOMESTEAD

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

I couldn't sleep. Whole night my eyes were literally open because every time I closed them I remembered everything I lost in just a single day. My baby, my short lived happiness. Sbani losing his father, that is my loss too. But the main reason I couldn't sleep was the fear of sleeping and Sbani dying next to me while I'm asleep. I was watching him for the whole night. At 04:30 I woke up and took a bath. The bleeding is a bit heavier this morning. At 05:10 I was done. I'm sitting on the bed. I think other family members have arrived because I can hear car doors closing outside. I feel his warm hand touching my arm and I immediately turn my head.

Me : Sthandwa sami

He smiles with his eyes closed.

Sbani : Am I dead or alive?

I giggle. I can feel tears burning my eyes. Be strong Sebenzile, don't do this. I get up and press my lips on his. He caresses the back of my neck.

Me : Qagela ukuthi sikephi?

He softly laughs and opens his eyes. He is so tired, it's all in his voice.

Sbani : Home

Me : Yes, home, my love. How are you feeling?

He looks at his arms. The wounds are now dark and dry. They look like they want to peel off.

Sbani : Like burnt toasted bread.

I laugh.

Sbani : That was supposed to be served to very prominent guests for breakfast.

We both laugh.

Me : Baby, stop it, man.

He sighs.

Sbani : I love you.

Me : I love you too manuna, ngenhliziyo yami yonke.

Sbani : How is Scelo?

Me : He is fine.

Sbani : Sifike nini la?

A part of me wishes that he heard about his father but I see that he has no clue. Something big is about to hit him. Sbani doesn't deserve this.

Me : Last night.

Sbani : Ungifihlelile ukudla ekade nikudla izolo?

I laugh and shake my head.

Me : No

Sbani : Indoda iyafihlelwa ukudla manu.

I laugh.

Sbani : Come and sleep with me. Ngiyagodola.

Me : Ngizokuthunuka

Sbani : You won't.

He opens the duvet and I get in.

Sbani : Usugezile ekuseni kanje?

Me : Uh

Sbani : Nami ngiyacela.

He runs his hand down to my vagina and somehow I feel terribly nervous.

Me : No, baby

Sbani : Angikwenzi lu.....

Someone cries out loud from the living room. It's a woman.

Sbani : Who is that?

Me : Sbani, I need to tell you something.

Sbani : Is that person crying or laughing?

I get out of bed.

Me : There's something you need to know.

Sbani : What?

Me : Ngeke ngikwazi. Ngicela ukufonela uBhuti wakho okungcono

Sbani : Manu, what's wrong?

I take my phone. The woman is wailing. Sbani tries to get out of bed.

Me : Sbani, please don't. Uzozithunuka.... Hello.

Sphiwokuhle : Sisi, is everything okay?

Me : USbani usevukile, please come.

Sbani : Sebe, what's going on?

I hang up and shake my head.

Me : I can't tell you. I can't.

The door opens and Lindo walks in with an old man. I sit down and fix my doek. My body is trembling.

Man : Zingane zami, Sanibona.

Me : Yebo

Sbani : Malume

Lindo : Bafo

Sbani : Bhuti, what's going on? Ubani okhalayo?

He tries to get up again. Lindo stops him.

Lindo : Bafo? No

wait. Sbani!

Sbani : No, uphi uMah?

Lindo : Mah is okay.

Sbani : So what the hell is going on? Malume?

Malume : Something happened, mfana wami. Sehlelwe ifu elimnyama.

Sbani : Kanjani manje? Lindo, uphi uScelo?

Malume : It's your father.

I close my eyes.

Sbani : My father? Wenzeni uBaba?

Malume : uBaba akasekho, my boy.

There's silence.

Sbani : Akasekho?

Malume : uMzwa udutshuliwe izolo layikhaya.

Sbani : I don't understand. Udutshuliwe? Udutshulwe ubani?

Lindo : We don't know, bafo. Akadutshulwanga layikhaya. He was with Maqhing. Kwafika abantu babadububula.

Silence

Lindo : uMaqhing ushonele lapho. UBaba uzamile ukubaleka, wafike washonela layikhaya.

Sbani : Bashonile?

Lindo : I'm sorry bafo.

I open my eyes and look at Sbani through the mirror. He is searching around the bed.

Lindo : Sbani....

Sbani : No, I'm fine. Ku right.

He gets up and opens the wardrobe. He takes out a shirt and puts it on.

Sbani : Sebe, ziphi icalutho zami?

I wipe my tears and look for them but he heads out. Lindo tries to stop him.

Sbani : Lindo, I'm fine. Ngiyasho nje! Ngicela ukuphuma.

Malume : Lindo...

Malume shakes his head and Lindo lets go of Sbani's arm. Sbani opens the door and walks out barefooted. Lindo sighs and scratches his head.

Malume : Makoti, are you okay?

Me : Yebo

Malume : Lindo, let's go.

They walk out. I don't know what to do. I take my phone and call my father.

Me : Baba

Mlambo : Sebenzile, are you okay?

I sigh.

Me : Yes

He laughs.

Mlambo : That's good. What a surprise.

Me : Yeah. Baba kukhona okwenzekile

Mlambo : What?

Me : Kwa Ntuli. Akasekho uBaba ka Sbani

Mlambo : What happened?

Me : He was shot. Udutshulwe izolo.

Mlambo : Aibo Sebenzile, yini le ongitshela yona?

Me : Kubi Baba. I don't know what to do. Ngikhona la kwa Ntuli and I don't even know ukuthi lokho kuyinto e right yini?

Mlambo : No, that's wrong. You shouldn't be there. Ubani other woza lapho?

Me : No one. USbani ubegula and we....

I sigh.

Me : Besingazi ukuthi senzeni Baba.

Mlambo : No, wena awukakashadeli kwa Ntuli. Hamba lapho.

Me : Ngiyezwa.

Mlambo : Yes, awushadile wena. Ukhokhelwe ilobolo nje kuphela.
Ukuba lapho kwakho kuzokubizela amabhadi amabi kabi.

Me : Ngiyezwa. I'll talk to Sbani.

Mlambo : Good. How are you feeling?

Me : I don't know but it's not good.

Mlambo : Kuzodlula. Come home okwamanje.

Me : Okay. Kusanele ngifonele nasemsebenzini ngibazise.

Mlambo : Emsebenzini?

Oh no.

Me : Kunetoho engi.... I'll explain everything when I get home.

Mlambo : Angisakuzwa kahle.

Me : I think it's a network. Baba? Baba, can you hear me?

Mlambo : Ngikuzwa kahle, into engingayizwa ile oyishoyo.

Me : Yo! I can't hear you. Yimbi i network.

I hang up. Dammit!

Chapter 43

NTULI HOMESTEAD

All other family members have arrived. MaNzilo is not looking good. She seems to be losing weight every hour. She is coughing non-stop. Slindele and Mabongi are close relatives to Mzwakhile. They are with MaNzilo in her room. Sphiwokuhle and Lindokuhle walk in with Sbanisokuhle who has been sitting in his car since they broke the news to him.

Mabongi : Bhununa

Sbani : Aunt

Mabongi : Come here, my boy. Ahh! Ingane ka Mzala. It's okay mfana wami. It's okay.

She says while pressing her lips on Sbani's forehead. Slindele wails once again.

Mabongi : Kuzolunga, uyezwa?

Sbani shakes his head.

Sbani : Yebo

Mabongi : Yes. Usunjani manje? Awukhumule i shirt ngibone.

Sbani takes off his shirt. Ey, this thing is really not good. What is all this?

Mabongi : Aw kodwa Jesu. WeLindo usizwa yini u Bhunu kulento mase inje?

Lindo : Iyaziphelela yona.

Mabongi : Mhm! Mhm! Ngeke. Kanti yini le ngempela?

MaNzilo wipes her tears and blows her nose.

MaNzilo : I don't know, Bongsi. Ayikho into esingayizamanga ukusiza UBhunu.

She coughs.

Slindele : Kodwa iyashesha ukuphela?

Sphiwo : Yeah. In 3 days usuke ese right.

Mabongi sighs.

Mabongi : Ay bandla. Kudela owaziyo.

After some time discussing Sbani's confusing sickness Mabongi gets to the real reason why they called them.

Mabongi : Into ayenzile uLindo izolo ebusuku, ethatha izibhamu ethi uyofuna umuntu obulale u Mzwa ayikho right. This is not the time for revenge. We need to respect your father. Nizodlula ngezikhali Lindo ngoba asiphakanyiswa isikhali kube kushoniwe ekhaya.

Slindele : That is true. You can't be running around, carrying guns kodwa uBaba wakho esemakhazeni.

Lindo : Yebo. I'm sorry.

Mabongi : We are all angry ngendlela u Mzwa ashone ngayo kodwa kufanele sehlise umoya.

Lindo : Yebo

Mabongi : People want to know about the funeral. Your mother thinks there's no reason to wait.

Lindo : Yeah, it's Wednesday angithi namhlanje?

Slindele : Yes

Lindo : Yeah, she is right. Singangcwaba Saturday. Nibona kanjani nina? Bhunu? Phiwo?

Sbani shrugs.

Sphiwo : Akunankinga.

Lindo : Yeah.

Slindele : Ayke shuthi umgqibelo.

Mabongi : Yes. Okunye okungiphethe kabi ukufica uThandokazi enje.
Your mother is sick and ungitshela ukuthi akakaze eye kudokotela.

Sphiwo : UMah kade sasimucela ukuthi eye kudokotela kodwa akafuni.

Mabongi : No, Thandokazi. That is wrong. Awukwazi ukungcwaba
umyeni wakho ugula kanje. Tomorrow we are going to see a doctor.

MaNzilo : I can't le...

She coughs.

MaNzilo : I can't leave the candles.

Mabongi : You can. Yini engcono ukuthi ufele kulamakhandlela,
ukunokuthi uthole usizo? Musa ukuganga Maka Lindo.

Slindele : Look at you. Uyagula okwangempela.

MaNzilo : Fine, ngizoya kusasa kodwa ay namhlanje.

Mabongi : That's fine.

Lindo : Amabhasi kaBaba sithe odriver abawamise. Azofika ntambama.

Slindele : Oh azolala la?

Lindo : Yes kuze kudlule umngcwabo.

Slindele : That's fine. Ikhona indawo angithi?

Sphiwo : Yes

Mabongi : Good.

Slindele : Okunye esikhulume ngakho indaba yentombi ka Sbani.
Everything needs to be finalized, kushadwe. Lomuzi awunamuntu.
Thandokazi is all alone.

Sphiwo : Yebo

He shakes his head.

Slindele : Mina angimusabi u Lindo

Advertisement

so I told him ukuthi umfazi wakhe akumfazi walutho. She is not even here, umuntu okhona ingane esakhiswelwe ilobolo nje kuphela. Yena umfazi owathelwa ngenyongo yakwa Ntuli akekho uhleli la ahleli khona.

Lindo : Skhalo is not.....

Slindele : Angifuni nokuyizwa ke leyo.

She raises her finger.

Slindele : I don't want to hear it, please.

Gulps.

Slindele : Sbani, shada khehla. Umuzi kayihlo uyawa bhu phansi.

Lindo chuckles.

Lindo : We don't even know uma ngempela umuzi ka Baba wakhe yini lo.

Oh! Oh!

Sphiwo : Aibo Lindo

Lindo : But it's true. Nginamanga yini? Mhlampe uwuNdaba.

Sbani gets up and walks out.

Mabongi : Really Lindokuhle? Usungalahla umfowenu just to protect your wife? Loyamfazi o useless?

Lindo : She is.....

Mabongi : Aghaaa mahn!

Mabongi stands up and walks out.

MaNzilo : Nizongibulala kodwa Lindo.

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

Sbani walked in a few minutes ago. We are both sitting in silence. He smiles.

Sbani : What?

Me : Ngani?

Sbani : Ngibona ungibuka, sthandwa sami.

Me : Are you okay?

He frowns with a smile on his face.

Sbani : Yeah, I'm fine.

He sighs.

Sbani : It is what it is. Kodwa ngiright mina sthandwa sami.

Me : I know you are not. Baby, I'm sorry about your father.

His jaw tightens.

Sbani : It's okay. Bengingazitsheli ukuthi uBaba uzoshona. Bengihlale ngithandaza ukuthi kushone mina kuqala.

Me : Oh baby, I'm sorry.

Sbani : No, it's fine. His death hits hard but what hits more harder, it's the mess angishiye kuyona. Yena noMaqhinga

Me : Yeah

Sbani : You know what this means right?

Me : What?

Sbani : You are the only person I have. Umndeni engiwaziyo is starting to doubt me. Owakwa Ndaba wona angiwazi nokuthi ukuphi. This is the end of everything.

Me : No, don't say that.

He smiles.

Sbani : I'm telling you.

Me : Why ucabanga into enjalo?

Sbani : I'm just...

He sighs.

Sbani : Come here. Yinindaba wangisaba kanje? Is my body scaring you?

He laughs.

Me : I'm not scared of you, baby. I'm just....

I shrug.

Me : I need to go. Angithi uyazi ukuthi, I can't be here?

He blows out a sigh and closes his eyes.

Sbani : Yaaa.

Chapter 44

"INGEBHE BEVUKA KUNETHUNA EGCEKENI"

I read the article on the front page of Ilanga newspaper. The owner of the newspaper is the man sitting next to me in the taxi to Mountview. Sphiwokuhle dropped me off in Verulam and he spoke to one of those taxi drivers that they are friends with to drop me off exactly at our gate. He actually wanted to take me to Mountview but I told him not to worry because I know he was needed back home. Grace said I must take all the time I need. I'm not sure if I want to go to eShowe or stay in my flat. I think I'll just stay in my flat. I need some alone time.

The man opens the newspaper. That's enough for me to peep through and read just to pass time. We just left the taxi rank. Oh he is reading the story that I saw on the front page. Let's see.

"Usashaqekile namanje umndeni kasomatekisi odumile womdabu wasendiya uMnu Karen Abdool emuva kokuzithela phezu kwethuna ebelimbiwe phakathi egcekeni labo namhlanje ekuseni. Lesigameko silandela emuva kokubulawa kwesicebi sakwaNdengezi ebesinabhasi aziwa nge "MNT" uMnu Mzwakhile Ntuli....

My eyes widened. What!

"Kanye nomseshi wamaphoyisa obethandwa kakhulu Detective Maqhingana Ndaba obaziwa kakhulu ngelika "Bra Dark. Abezindaba bathole ukuthi..... "

He closes his newspaper while I'm still reading. Into yomuntu umhluzi wempisi ngempela. I should have bought my own newspaper. Damn! I want to bite his finger.

Him : So they want to kill Abdool now?

He is talking to other passengers.

Passenger 1 : Really?

Him : Yes, I just finished reading the newspaper now and they say this morning the Abdools woke up and found a grave in their yard.

Everyone is shocked.

Passenger 2 : Are you serious?

Him : Yes, look. It has a headstone with Abdool's name and face on it.

He shows them the tombstone picture that is in the newspaper.

Passenger 2 : Abdool is a top dog. How did they get in and dug that grave?

Him : A person who did that is what you call a Pro. A real OG that moves in silence.

He laughs. I don't think this one likes Abdool. The way he is enjoying this.

Passenger 3 : I wouldn't call him a Pro but rather a reckless risk-taker. No one messes with Abdool. Ntuli is dead and who is the last man standing? Abdool. Now we all know that Abdool has always been bigger than Ntuli. He is the top dog in the game.

Him : Last man standing? Standing with what when the same Ntuli who you refer to as a small dog chopped his legs?

He says and cracks up with laughter.

Him : Come on, my friend. Put some respect on Ntuli's name.

I can't believe they are speaking about my father in law. It's like they are speaking about soccer and their favorite soccer teams. We all know how those conversations end. With a fight.

Passenger : Khulekani was a real OG.

Him : You can't put Khulekani, Abdool and Ntuli in one sentence. That's like comparing Christmas to New year's eve and Diwali. And when I say Diwali I'm not talking about Abdool, but I'm talking about Khulekani, a real bomb.

Everyone laughs in the taxi. I guess I'm the only one who missed the joke.

Him : And Abdool is the Father Christmas.

They all burst again.

Passenger 2 : You can't compare one to the other. They are all powerful in their own way.

Me : Smiles, please.

That's our stop name. The driver looks at me. He wasn't planning to drop me off exactly at our gate, did he? No, Phiwo was joking.

Driver : Are you going to be okay here?

Me : Yes

Driver : Okay

He stops the taxi and I jump off. There's Roxanne taking her clothes from the clothing line. I miss her. I miss how we laughed together. I miss how she was always there when I needed to vent. I want to talk, not about my problems but anything else. After that Article I know that Roxanne wants to talk too.

Me : Hey

She stops taking the clothes.

Roxanne : Seh, hi.

Me : Hi

Roxanne : Are you okay?

I smile while shaking my head.

Me : I'm good.

I say and walk away. I take out the keys and open Sbani's door. I stand by the door and everything comes back.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

The boys are sitting in the two room house and of course they are drinking and talking about Mzwakhile amongst other things.

Mbuso : It's crazy how our fathers who were broke had more kids than uncle Mzwakhile who had more money. Buka nje umalume ushiye 3.

They laugh.

Lwazi : You are right. Imagine my father left 8 ngomngcwabo kwaqhamuka 3.

Sphiwo : Impilo ayinayo i balance. Mina nje ngihlale ngisho ukuthi ingane nentombi izinto ezimbili that I can't afford. So I don't want them.

They all burst into laughter.

Sphiwo : Ahh! Girlfriends are expensive but the baby is more expensive. Awu chillax uma unengcosi. Uthi uphuza u bhiya ube ucabanga ukuthi ey yazi ibingahlangana i Pampers la.

They laugh. It's good to see them laughing under obvious circumstances.

Sphiwo : Wathi uBhunu uyoyeka ukuphuza the day he becomes a father.

Lindo laughs and shakes his head.

Lindo : Because he'll be saving money for private school.

Sbani : Mina I'll start saving the day uSebe engitshela ukuthi ukhulelwe.

Lindo : That's typical for anyone ongakabi nayo ingane. Bonke ubathola besho njengawe, but the moment the baby is born kuyashuba.

Sbani : Mina bhuti ngeke ihlupheke eyami ingane. I'll make sure of that. Ngingamane ngigqoke ophaqa abanezimbobo ngaphansi noma ngicwile ezikweletini just to give my kid a good life. Eyami iya e private school. Izoyiphila ngenkani impilo e grand.

Lindo chuckles.

Lindo : Uyayazi Ibiza kanjani i private school?

Lungani : Plus kuyafiwa

Lindo : And at the end of the day, education is education.
Asingazihlanyisi nje bolova.

Sbani : Cha bhuti. Private school education is beyond education.

Lindo : How?

Sbani : Asilinde kuzalwe u Azwindini, ngimuthathe ngimuyise e private school u Skhalo eye e public. Uzobona lapho ke ukuthi kanjani.

They all crack up. Sphiwo stretches his arm for a fist bump with Sbani.

Sphiwo : Ngiyaphakamisa mina bafo

Lwazi : Wait, who is Azwindini?

Sphiwo : Ingane ka Bhunu, uthi uyoyibiza ngokuthi u Azwindini.

Mbuso : Azwindini from Muvhango?

They all laugh. Boniza walks in.

Lindo : Hheyi Aunt

Boniza : Bafana, niyaphila?

She asks with a smile on her face.

Sphiwo : Ay siyaphila

Boniza : Bhunuza, awuze ukhulume no Aunt kancane.

Sbani : Yebo

He gets up immediately and zips up his jacket.

Lungani : Aw uBaba ka Azwindini.

They all burst.

Lungani : Sbani uyagula bafo

Sbani laughs while walking out, following Boniza.

Boniza : I want to talk to you.

She smiles.

Sbani : Yebo

He says while laughing and rubbing the back of his neck.

Boniza : It's cold here. Asingene la emotweni ka Phili.

They get inside the car.

Boniza : How are you feeling, mfana wami?

Sbani sighs.

Sbani : It's not easy but I'm going to be fine.

Boniza : That's good. And the wounds?

Sbani : They are slowly going away.

Boniza : Excellent. Yazi ngiyakuzwa lapha ukhuluma nabafowenu and in my mind I'm saying "Baze bazishiya abazali bakho kuwena"

Sbani smiles.

Boniza : I don't know if you know how close we were mina nomawakho. If there's one person owazi uCeliwe noMzwa, imina.

Sbani frowns with a smile.

Sbani : Okay

Boniza : Let me tell you a story. My mother and your grandfather were the only kids kuGogo noMkhulu wethu. Kuthiwa they were very close kungathi amawele. Our mother gave birth to six girls, only girls. Labo uSlindele the first born, kube Mabongi, uZinhle

Advertisement

uPhili, imina then the last born was Zanele. UZanele uyena yedwa ongasekho emhlabeni.

Sbani : Yeah

He shakes his head.

Boniza : Umkhulu wakho waba nezingane ezu 13 and they were all boys. Your father was the 12th child and Khulekani was the last born. UKhulekani naye washona nalaba abawu 10 kwasala u Mzwakhile, uSkhona noMbhekiseni.

Sbani : Okay.

Boniza : Growing up, Me, Mzwakhile and Khulekani were very close. Kwakuthiwa sifuze abazali bethu ngokuzwana.

They both laugh.

Boniza : Khulekani was the first to move to Johannesburg. Uyabona bonke laba abahlala eGoli bafika ngo Khule.

Sbani : Yeah?

Boniza : Yes. Wahamba ke uKhule waya eGoli ngasala no Mzwa. UMzwa wathola indlu ehostela wahlala khona. That time he was a taxi owner. Waqala nge taxi eyodwa, anyuka and he ended up with eleven taxis. That's when he met your mother. Umawakho eshayela ama taxi akwa Nzuzi.

Sbani is slightly shaking his head.

Boniza : Your mother loved danger. She was attracted to dangerous men and Mzwa was exactly that. Dangerous. Babethandana kakhulu and to be honest I wasn't against their relationship. Babefika la engangihlala khona sihlale, sidle, siphuze. Umawakho lapho ke wayeseshayela ama taxi ka Mzwa. Ay bathandana kwaba right. Waqala uKhule wabiza uMzwa ukuthi eze eGoli.

Sbani : Yeah.

Boniza : Lapho ke mfana wami kwakuhlangenwe ngobugebengu.
UMzwa uma eya eGoli kwakufike kuchitheke igazi.

Sbani knows about his father's unholy ways.

Boniza : Sebehlala ngokubaleka ngoba babehlale befunwa amaphoyisa.
Suddenly your mother was involved. Naye engasapheli eGoli. One day efike no Khule bezocela ukucasha endlini yami then next day efike no Mzwa. It was chaotic. Ngize ngihlale phansi no Mzwa ngelinye ilanga. Mzwa was different, wayelalela but Khule? No wayengezwa lutho. Khule was hot- headed. Ngikhumbula kahle kwakusanda kushona uManelisi, omunye wabafowabo baka Mzwa. Ay ngahlala phansi no Mzwa ngathi Mzwa uzofa eGoli. Hlukana phansi nobugebengu.

Sbani : Yebo

Boniza : Ethi uMzwa ay uyangizwa. Angithi ngalesikhathi ebusy eGoli wayeshiya amatekisi akhe enganakwe muntu?

Sbani : Yeah.

Boniza : And that's how his taxi business collapsed. Zafa izimoto, zangakhandwa muntu. Kwaphela kanjalo nge taxi business. Eqhubeke uCeliwe nobugebengu eGoli. UMzwa ebuyele kwa Ndengezi kuMaNzilo. Lapho akasenalutho. He was bankrupt.

Sbani : Wayesehlukene no Mah?

Boniza : No, they were still seeing each other. Mzwa was crazy about your mother. Wayehlanya. Inkinga uCeliwe wayehlanyiswa yiGoli nobugebengu. Bengezwamshini benoKhule. IGoli lincane ke mfana wami for isigebengu. Labaphelela and they came back.

Sbani : Who? My mother and Malum'Khule?

Boniza : Yes. They came back. Waqala ke uKhule wahlupha la e KZN. Eyisigebengu esaziwayo. That time your father was busy with Abdool. Kunendoda ekuthiwa u Karen Abdool.

Sbani : I know him.

Boniza : Yes, I heard he is still alive. Yena ke no Baba wakho kwakungamathe nolimi. He helped him to get back on his feet. Kwaqala izingxabano ke lapho phakathi kuka Abdool, uMzwa no Khulekani. It

was bad. Wadutshulwa uAbdool, kwaduma ukuthi udutshulwe uMzwa abanye bethi uKhule.

Sbani : Why were they fighting?

Boniza : To be honest I don't know my boy. But I know Khule was wrong. After Abdool was shot Khule moved back to Johannesburg. Life went back to normal. Ngathi ngiyezwa usemithi uCeliwe. I remember Mzwa coming to my house. Wathi Mzala u MaNgema ukhulelwe.

Sbani smiles.

Boniza : Wayesaba, esaba uMaNzilo. Elokhu engibuza ukuthi enzenjani ngathi wena ucabangani. Wathi ngicabanga ukumshada ngimenze umfazi wami wesibili. I gave him a go ahead. I told him to marry her because ngangilazi uthando lwabo ukuthi lusukaphi nokuthi lwalu strong kangakanani.

Sbani : Yebo.

Boniza : When your mother was 3 months pregnant zaqala izinkinga. Mzwa came to my house everyday to complain about Celiwe. Ethu Mzala uCeliwe useyahlupha, she is cheating on me. Ngimufice nendoda

embhedeni wami. Mzala uCeliwe akasabuyi endlini. It was a lot, Bhununa.

Sbani : Eish

Boniza : Wayehlupha umawakho. Ekhonjwa no Maqhinga, nawo wonke amadoda ayizigebengu. Ngimduduze u Mzwa ngithi muyeke isisu esimenzisa lezinto. She is going to be fine. Kuthe esahlupha kanjalo kwashona u Khule. Wabulawa eGoli uKhulekani.

Sbani : Ilo owanqunywa angithi uMalum'Khule?

Boniza : Yes. They butchered him. Kwenzeka isibhicongo sangcwaba umuntu o wrong.

Sbani : How?

Boniza : Ukunganaki nje. Kade kufika isidumbu sibuya eGoli oMzwa ababekhona and they confirmed that it was him. Sangcwaba kanti singcwaba indoda esingayazi. Kwadlula u 2 months wafika umndeni wendoda uzomba isidumbu sawo. Kwayimpi ende.

Sbani : Aibo, what?

Boniza : Yey, weBhunu sisuka kude thina.

Sbani : Haaa! But namuthola u Malume?

Boniza : Yes, we did. Noma samuthola esewumlotha.

She sighs and her eyes well up with tears.

Sbani : I'm sorry aunty.

She smiles and wipes her tears.

Boniza : Your mother loved you Bhununa. She did everything ukuze wena ube nempilo engcono. Wawungongxiwa oBaba abawu 10 kungabindaba zalutho kuyena, as long as you had a soft life.

Sbani shakes his head.

Sbani : No

Boniza : Yes, yes mfana wami. She was a human, she wasn't perfect. Konke ayekwenza wayenzela wena. And your father protected you. U Mzwa wayengakufela. Abazali bakho bakuthandile mfana wami and you should never doubt that.

Sbani : Uthando luka Mah lungenzeleni? Aunty, I don't even know who I am.

Boniza : Thina siyazi. Maqhinga is not your father. Uwu Ntuli wena. Ibhele elihle. Isibani soNdlela kaKhuboni oSompisi.

Sbani sighs.

Excuse errors.

Chapter 45

The funeral is tomorrow, however the body will be arriving later today. I've heard people talking about Sbani's father but not even once did I think he was this big. Almost everyone is talking about his death. Even school children. Since the Ntulis are mourning I've also tried to show my respect the only way I know. Back home when a family is mourning we don't turn on the TV or radio. So that's what I've been doing to pay my respect. Not that I'm interested in either TV or Radio. No, I'm dealing with my own shit. I woke up at 04:45 and bathed. After that I did laundry and cleaned our rooms. I then bathed for the second time, only because I'm bleeding, not because I wanted to. Who the fuck like bathing two times in one morning?. After bathing for the second time I slept. I've been sleeping the whole day. I'm up now and I'm busy googling if a woman can bleed while pregnant. Some results are giving me a piece of hope but some are real and giving me exactly what I already know. Deep down I know that was a miscarriage but my heart won't take it. I Google other things. Things like, how long does the bleeding take after miscarriage? How soon can you fall pregnant after miscarriage? How to ease the pain after miscarriage? All those things. I sigh and look at the time. It's almost 14:00. I last spoke to Sbani at 12:30. I get up and open his fridge. Let me make a fruit salad to keep my mind occupied. I take out the fruits. If Sbani was here he would be educating me about these fruits. "Watermelon consists 99 what - what of water" he would say. I forgot the percentage.

Me : I miss you man.

I look at the door. Someone is knocking. Let me get that door and come back to my fruit salad. I open.

Me : Oh hey Roxanne.

Roxanne : Seh, how are you?

She is carrying my clothes that I hung this morning.

Me : I'm good.

Roxanne : Your clothes. The sun is burning them.

Me : Oh my God, thank you so much.

She steps in. Oh she is coming in. She puts my clothes on the bed.

Me : Thank you, gogozi.

She smiles.

Roxanne : How are you?

I sigh.

Me : You know how it is. It is what it is.

She rolls her eyes.

Roxanne : I know. People are dead Sebe, it's scary.

Me : Eish.

Roxanne : First it was that bus owner and the Detective and boom! We are receiving threats out of nowhere.

Me : Threats?

Roxanne : Yep. Look what my in-laws found yesterday in their yard.

She takes out her phone and shows me the picture of the grave that I saw in the newspaper.

Me : I saw this picture.

Roxanne : Where? Did your boyfriend show you?

Me : What? No, not Sbani.

Roxanne : It was them, right?

Me : Who did what? Who are you talking about?

She shrugs.

Roxanne : Nevermind.

Me : Roxanne are you....

The door opens and I scream. I run and throw myself in his arms.

Me : Sbani wami

He laughs.

Sbani : Manuna, sawubona sthandwa sami.

He is looking dapper. I kiss him.

Me : I'm okay my love. Why didn't you tell me that you were coming?

Sbani : Because I wanted to surprise you. Look what I bought for you.

I laugh.

Me : What is that?

He shows it and hides it.

Me : Baby yini? show me.

He opens his hand and I laugh.

Me : Yogueta.

It's a lollipop. I hug him.

Me : Thank you sthandwa sami.

Sbani : Hi

Oh I've forgotten about Roxanne.

Roxanne : Hi

Sbani looks at me and smiles.

Sbani : Baby wami, sawubona. Woza kuBaba.

I laugh as he lifts me up. I wrap my legs around his waist and my arms around his neck. We kiss. I hear Roxanne coughing. She is still here.

I unwrap my legs.

Me : Yazi baby, Roxanne was telling me here ukuthi her in-laws found a grave in their yard.

Sbani is confused.

Sbani : What grave?

Roxanne : Some people were brave enough to go inside my in-laws and do shit. Some people are not scared of death.

Sbani : Oh yah. Baby angihleli ngiyahamba. I wanted to see you and change these jeans before we go.

Me : Niyaphi?

Sbani : Silande uBaba.

Me : Oh yes, my love. Bengithi awuhambi

Sbani : No ngiyahamba, manje le jean ayikho decent.

Yeah it ripped around the knees but it suits him perfectly.

Me : Okay, let me iron something else for you.

Sbani : What are you eating?

He washes his hands.

Me : Nothing. I didn't cook.

Sbani : Awusadli futhi?

Me : No ngizodla baby.

Sbani : Are you making fruit salad?

Me : Yep. Please cut the watermelon for me

Sbani : Why are you adding watermelon?

Me : I don't know. Ngicela ungenzela ke

Sbani : Okay

I open the wardrobe and look for proper pants for him to wear.

Roxanne : So as I was saying. We are going to Cape Town because we don't feel safe. But I know it's not for long before my father in law catches people who did that.

She is talking but she keeps stealing glances at Sbani. Sbani is busy whistling and making my fruit salad.

Me : People are evil. How can someone do something like that? A whole grave with a headstone. Wow. So there was nothing inside?

Roxanne : Guess what? There was a box full of letters and other useless things. The police took all of that to help with their investigation.

Me : Yoo!

Roxanne : Seh, I fear for your life. I even told Dylan that I wish you could go away from here or even go to school. Do you remember when you got here? You were planning on following your dreams and all this was never part of your plan.

She says while pointing at Sbani. I suddenly hear a slamming sound coming from the table where Sbani is making salad. He turns around.

Sbani : Woman, I see what you are doing. I know that the only thing you are good at is spying for the Abdools and giving them information. You know that they hate you, but you are trying so hard to prove that you fit in and that's why you do all this shit. And what fucks up everything is that you've been using my girlfriend to get that information.

Roxanne : Who....

Sbani : What you are doing is not worth it. They will never love you. But you know what? Let me give you what you are looking for so you can

back off. I am Mzwakhile Ntuli's son and I know who killed him. Go and tell Dylan that I know it was him who killed my father and I'm not going to let it slide. I will make sure that he ends up behind bars.

Me : Sbani, no. Please stop

He is getting closer to Roxanne. I put my hands on his chest and beg him to step back.

Sbani : No, Sebe. What the fuck is she doing in my house? My sister, leave my house and go tell your boyfriend that I'm not scared of him. I'm not going to move out, he can bring the whole army of his Indian friends. I don't give a shit!

Me : Sbani stop it!! What's wrong with you?

Sbani : She is using you, Sebe. Ekse, get out of my house. Akahambe la.

Me : Roxanne, please leave.

She stands up and walks out. Sbani locks the door and clucks his tongue.

Me : What was that about?

Sbani : No Sebe, ifunani lentombazane la? Sekumngani wakho futhi?

Me : Ubezoletha izingubo zami, Sbanisokuhle.

Sbani : No, I don't want her in my room.

Me : I'm sorry she found me in your room.

Sbani : Baby, I'm sorry for saying my room. Ukuthi ngidinwa ukuthi awuboni ukuthi ukwenza islima.

Me : But that was unnecessary. Sbani I don't know if you understand what you did. Unikeze uRoxanne isizathu sokuthi bekholwe ukuthi inina enimbe ithuna lapha ka Abdool.

He laughs : Kanti lento yethuna i serious yini?

Me : Aibo, you think it's a joke? It's serious. Igcwele emaphepheni.

Sbani : I thought it was a joke.

Me : No. Sebezothi uwena ke manje

He laughs

Sbani : Bengangisanganeli mina, ngihlanganaphi namathuna?

Me : They don't know that. Please go and apologize to Roxanne

He laughs out loud.

Sbani : Soze sana lwami. Forget it, thembalami.

Me : They are going to kill you.

Sbani : Never. Come here

He hugs me.

Sbani : UMaka Skhalo uthi ucela umuvakashele.

I pull away and look at him.

Me : What?

Sbani : Yeah. Akezi emlindelweni

Me : Why?

He shrugs.

Sbani : I don't know. Uzoya?

Me : No

He laughs.

Sbani : Why?

Me : Angimjwayele mina

Sbani : She hardly speaks. Uhlale esembhedeni egqolozele ifoni.

We both laugh.

Sbani : But I'm serious, baby. Ucela ufike namhlanje.

Me : No, love. I don't think that's a good idea.

Sbani : She is my brother's wife, sthandwa sami. You two will have to get along sooner than later.

He is right.

Me : Is she not going to the funeral?

Sbani : She is going but she'll come back tomorrow.

Me : Bengithi ngizoya eShowe kusasa but it's okay ngizomuvakashela.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga sthandwa sami.

He kisses my forehead.

Sbani : Please pack your bag singabi late.

Me : Uzungishiya khona?

Sbani : Yeah.

Me : Okay.

Sbani : Do you want me to pack for you?

Me : No, it's okay. Ngenzele phela i salad.

He licks his lower lip and touches my vagina. My body reacts immediately. I remove his hand.

Sbani : What's wrong?

Me : It's that time of the month.

He laughs.

Sbani : I'm sorry, sthandwa sami. Zinjani izinhlungu?

Me : Not bad. I'm just running out of pads.

Sbani : Pads?

Me : Acishe efane nama tampons lawa esihlale siwathenga.

Sbani : Show me, ngihambe ngiyokuthengela while you pack.

Me : Uzohamba? Akufuneki nje nina nigcaluze.

Sbani : It's not gallivanting ukuya estolo.

Me : Okay, but we can buy them on our way.

Sbani : Are you sure?

Me : Yes baby

He smiles and kisses me. He hugs me.

Sbani : I'm sorry thembalami. Bengingazi ukuthi uyagula.

The way he takes my periods seriously. Sometimes it's funny but today it isn't.

Me : Please

finish with my fruit salad. I'll pack.

I don't want him to open the wardrobe.

Sbani : Okay.

He goes back to the table and I open the wardrobe. I look at my handbag that is squashed in his drawer and then I look at him. I take a deep breath and start taking out my clothes.

NTULI HOMESTEAD.

Mzwakhile's body has arrived. The family is done with body viewing. After Sbani finished viewing his father's body he went straight into his car. That's where he is puffing weed like nobody's business. Almost everyone else is inside the tent. They are singing and talking about Mzwakhile. Everyone is given a chance to talk about Mzwakhile. Good or bad. Sphiwokuhle and Lindokuhle are amongst those that are inside the tent. MaNzilo is in her bedroom sitting on the mattress next to her husband's coffin.

In the tent Nkawu is talking. He is one of Mzwakhile's drivers that Mzwakhile really adored.

Nkawu : Mina ke lendoda esihlangene ngayo bengingayibizi ngo Baba. I called him Bra Mzwayi. Wangikhuza waze wahluleka.

He takes off his jacket.

Nkawu : Bra Mzwayi loved us. He loved people. Uma izono zakhe zizimbi ngaleyondlela, kodwa ukuthanda abantu ngalendlela abathande ngayo abantu emhlabeni kwanele ukumubonisa amazulu. I can say that without a doubt.

People nod.

Nkawu : Mzwayi didn't hesitate to buy food for everyone he found at the rank. And I'm not talking about drivers only. I'm talking about everyone ngisho bona osisi laba abasidayisela ukudla. He had a thing for youth. Ubengafuni ukubona umuntu osemusha ehleli ekhaya engasebenzi. All fourteen of his buses abeshayelwa abantu abasha and bonke ubathole emgaqweni wabathatha wabafaka ka Msweli driving school. Baphuma nama license, wabafaka emabhasini akhe. He did all of that with the money that was coming out of his pocket.

There's a lot of mhmm! Mhmm! Coming from people who are seated.

Nkawu : But lokho akakaze nangolulodwa usuku ezikhukhumeze ngakho. UBra Mzwayi ubethi uma ezwa kuthiwa kunecompany eqashayo ememezele e rank.

He laughs.

Nkawu : He used to brag about Sbani a lot. Ethu sihlulwa ingane ena 22 iyasebenza thina sicela amashumi.

Everyone laughs.

Nkawu : Everyday it was Sbani is this, Sbani is that. Emubiza ngomlungu wakhe wase Jamaica.

*Laughter.

Nkawu : He reminded us everyday ukuthi yena uphilela izingane zakhe. Mzwa was so unpredictable. He wasn't a saint. Uma kufanele ebe yinja ubevele efane ne pit bull,inja ejikela ngisho umnikazi wayo and when he loved, he loved hard.

Lindo shakes his head. He agrees with him.

Nkawu : Mase kuba iconsi ke. He was moody.

*Laughter.

Nkawu : One day it was a Friday kuphele inyanga. Yenzeka strong e rank. Sibona ngempela ukuthi lizogcwala isokisi.

*Laughter.

Nkawu : Sathi sisaneme kanjalo yafona inkunzi. 'Ngicela wonke amabhasi ami eye edepho'

He says, imitating Mzwakhile's voice. Everyone laughs.

Nkawu : Bengithi nhla isikhathi akukashayi no 15:00. I wanted to die. Ngithi Bra Mzwayi siyasebenza nje. Ethu I want all my buses to be in the depot in the next hour. Wathi esuka lapho wabe evala ifoni. Ngasho ngathi umuntu ubhekene nesambane.

He shakes his head.

Nkawu : I called other drivers and they told me that they were all going to the depot. Nami ngavele ngabona ukuthi angihambe. Ngathatha ibhasi ngayihloma edepho. Kwathi around 20:00 he called us wathi size e rank sizohola. We arrived at the rank safica engekho. Kwadlula 15 or

20 minutes sabona ama MNT engena one by one. Angena lapho asega xwe amakhethini angathi amabhasi amandiya.

Sphiwokuhle and Lindokuhle laugh while clapping their hands.

Nkawu : Efike epake elandelane ebheke le. Uma sithi nhla ngemumva ashaya ngombhalo. "Amadoda amabili ahlange ngami". Akugcini ngombhalo kwakukhona umdwebho wamadoda amabili ngempela ayemile ekhombana. I don't know if any of you remember that.

Some are saying yes, some are saying no.

Nkawu : Yeah. MNTs were not only written Amadoda amabili ahlange ngami, but there were pictures too that supported the message. Two men were there pointing at each other. Khona lebhasi ehamba uNgebhe, if you look closely asabonakala kancane lawomadoda. Amadoda amabili ayegqoke amakepisi. We all look at each other sabuzana ukuthi obani manje laba? Yini manje le ebhalwe u Mzwayi? We were all confused. And we wondered who were those two men scheming against him because the drawing wasn't clear. To him it was but to us who didn't know who those men were, it wasn't. Some people made their own conclusions bathi u Abdool no Maqhingana

*Laughter.

Nkawu : Yes they did.

He shakes his head.

Nkawu : You know, Bra Mzwayi's buses were very close to his heart. What he wrote or designed on his buses was like tattoos on his own skin. And nobody wants nonsense on their skin. So into ayenza kulamabhasi asemnyango I knew it was deep and very personal to him. As much as we joked about it, but yena kwakubalulekile kuyena. One day I decided to ask him about it. I still remember the reaction on his face when I asked him. Ngagcina sengizisola ukuthi ngibuzeleni.

*Laughter

Nkawu : After a long silence he said, yazi akekho umuntu oseke wangibuza lento ongibuza yona. Not even my family.

He laughs.

Nkawu : Ngazisola even more after that. Ngathi lendoda izothi ngiyaphapha because imagine, not even his family asked him and there I was, asking him.

He smiles.

Nkawu : But that's not what he said but instead he told me something that I least expected. Something very disturbing.

He bites his lips while shaking his head.

Nkawu : Wayikhomba ibhasi ngemumva and he said yes, these two men are scheming against me and one of them will take my life one day.

Lindo and Sphiwo look at each other.

Nkawu : I asked him who those men were and he laughed and shook his head. Wathi ngiyobona ngelinye ilanga. Kwadlula two weeks ngathi ngiyabona awusekho umdwebo sekusele imibhalo kuphela. Le esekhona namanje.

He points at the buses that are parked in the yard.

Nkawu : Mzwayi didn't die because he was sick. He didn't die because he was involved in some car accident. No. He was shot and killed. Ebulawa umuntu and iningi lenu liyamazi loyomuntu. Most of the people who are here tonight abantu abazozwa ukuthi kuthiwani nokuthi kusolwa bani. Most people here bathunyiwe namhlanje and I want them to know that we know. Lomuntu enimaziyo nathi uyena kanye lo esimaziyo. We know who killed Mzwayi and that person is going to pay dearly, yena nobhululu bakhe. Detective Ndaba wasn't supposed to die, bebefuna ukulahla umkhondo. Yeah, we know that.

He swallows hard.

Nkawu : And zisazokhokha izinja. History will repeat itself. Mark my words. Sizilile okwamanje, izikhali zethu ziphansi, zingcolile. Sizongcwaba uBra Mzwayi, siwashe izikhali zethu, ziphakame, ebese iyahloma iyahlasela.

He pauses and moves his eyes around people in the tent.

Nkawu : Lindo?

Lindo lifts his eyes to him.

Nkawu : I know how you feel. Ngiyazi igazi liyabila and I want you to know that mine is boiling too. But I need you to take it easy. I need you to know that we got you.

Lindo shakes his head.

Lindo : I know.

Nkawu : Sphiwo?

Sphiwo shakes his head approvingly.

Nkawu : Don't blame yourself for your father's death. UMzwayi ufike esedutshuliwe la. Umuntu onecala obulale uBaba wakho, not you. I need you to.....Oh Lindo. Uyanicela uMah emnyango.

Lindo and Sphiwo get up and walk out of the tent.

Mabongi : Please come.

Lindo : Yini manje futhi?

They follow their aunt into their mother's room. MaNzilo is coughing. In her hand there's a tissue that has blood. After they walked in, Sbani followed. He panics immediately.

Sbani : Where is Mah?

Mabongi : Umawenu uyagula. She needs to go to the hospital right now. She is coughing a lot of blood. Asikwazi ukumuyeka ehlale kulamakhandlela while she is dying.

MaNzilo is looking terrible.

MaNzilo : Bongsi please. I can't....

She coughs. Tears are streaming down her cheeks. She looks like she is running out of breath.

MaNzilo : I can't....I can't leave my husband alone, please. Please, angifuni ukushiya u Mzwa.

Mabongi : If you don't go to the hospital uzofa zisale zodwa lezingane. Zisale zingasenabazali, Thandokazi.

MaNzilo : They won't. Please, ningangihambisi.

Mabongi : No! Bhunu, take her bag.

Bhunu walks out and goes to the room where they are keeping the wardrobe and other things for Mzwakhile and MaNzilo.

Slindele : Maka Lindokuhle, stop it. Umdala uma umngaka. Cabangela izingane zakho. Look at this!

She points at Mzwakhile's coffin and bangs it.

Slindele : Nangu u Mzwa la akhona. He is gone! Uma kufa wena lezingane zisola nobani?

Mabongi : Lindo, take her to the car.

MaNzilo : No, no! Mzwa, please. Mzwa!!!

She grabs the blanket that is on top of the coffin.

MaNzilo : Baba wezingane zami!

She cries out louder.

Slindele : Lindo, take your mother to the car.

Lindo : Okay

MaNzilo : Lindo, don't. Please don't. I want to bury your father. Please let me bury my husband. I'll go to the hospital on Monday. Please, I'll go on Monday. I promise.

Lindo : It's okay Mah, sizobuya. Sizobuya nawe namhlanje.

MaNzilo shakes her head vigorously while staring up at Lindo.

MaNzilo : No, no!!

Lindo lifts her up and carries her to the car. Sbani is following with her handbag and Sphiwo is following with her shoes.

Mabongi : Sbani wena uzosala mfana wami ukuze oAunt laba abanye uma bedinga usizo kubekhona okhona. Mina no Slindele sizohamba no Sphiwokuhle no Lindo.

Sbani : Yebo

Mabongi : She is going to be fine. Bazomunika into ezomusiza eyeke ukukhwehlela and after that we will come back.

Sbani : Okay aunt.

Mabongi : Is this her bag?

Sbani : Yebo.

Mabongi : Okay. Sekufike noScelo nimugade engasintshontsheli.

Sbani : Okay

Mabongi takes the bag from Sbani and Sbani goes to MaNzilo who is still wailing inside Lindo's car.

Sbani : Mah uzobaright, uyezwa?

He wipes her tears. MaNzilo grabs his hand and presses it against her chest.

Sbani : Don't cry Mah. It's going to be fine. Bazobuya nawe.

MaNzilo won't stop crying and Sbani can't take it anymore. He pulls away and goes straight to MaNzilo's room. He gets there and sits on the floor with his knees up. He is sitting next to his father's coffin, his head is between his legs and his tears are watering the floor.

Chapter 46

NTULI HOMESTEAD

2 hours after MaNzilo was taken to the hospital Sbani's phone rang. It's Lindo.

Sbani : Bhuti

Lindo : Bafozi, sila kwaNdengezi clinic. They are taking Mah to the hospital. She needs to be admitted immediately.

Sbani : What?

Lindo : I'll explain everything when you get here. Ngicela uzame ukuza la e Clinic

Sbani : Okay bhuti.

Lindo : And please pack a few clothes for her. And things like underwear, toothbrush and cosmetics.

Sbani : Okay, okay.

Lindo : Are you going to be able to drive?

Sbani : Yeah, kuseduze.

Lindo : Okay. And don't forget to take your medication bafo, please.

Sbani : No. Ngiwaphuzile

Lindo : Sharp

Sbani : Sho

Sbani dropped the call and ran to the other room. He took her mother's bag and packed everything. Before he left he went and stood next to his father's coffin. He ran his hand over it and he took a deep breath. He left, leaving no one but an empty room with burning candles, empty mattress and the coffin.

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

I wake up and hear Skhalo crying in his room. I run to his room and find him trying to get off his bed.

Me : Boy

I rush to him and lift him up.

Me : Hey, what's wrong?

I ask him while wiping his tears.

Skhalo : I want to pee.

Me : Oh, okay.

There's a cute bathroom in his room. I took him there. He pee while rubbing his eyes.

Me : Are you done?

Skhalo : Yes. I want mommy

Me : Okay baby, come.

I lift him up and take him to his mother's room. His mother is sleeping.

Me : Sisi uSkhalo uyakufuna

Silent. She is not moving. I frown and peel off the duvet only to find a big teddy bear wrapped with a doek around its head.

Me : What?

Skhalo laughs.

Skhalo : Udoli

He points at the teddy bear.

I smile.

Me : Yes, udoli but where is your mother?

I'm confused. Where is she and why did she leave a teddy bear in her bed?

Skhalo : Wenza i "cotet" umawami

Me : Cotet? What is that? Food?

He shakes his head.

Skhalo : No, YouTube cotet

I don't know what he is talking about. There's a car outside. I look at the time. It's 04:00 am. I open the curtain. She gets out of the car and I see a man also getting out. They move and stand in front of the car. They are hugging. Wait, that is not Lindo. That man is old. I immediately put Skhalo down the moment they started kissing. What the fuck? I close the curtain fast. My body is trembling. What did I just see?

Me : Uhhmm

Advertisement

boy. Come, let me take you back to your bed.

I take Skhalo back to his bed.

Me : Are you okay now?

Skhalo : Uh!

I smile.

Me : Good. Your mother is... She is coming.

Skhalo : Okay.

Me : Sleep now.

Skhalo : I'm scared.

He whispers.

Me : Why?

Skhalo : UMah uthi uMkhulu wami uyipoki

Wow Fezile.

Me : No, your grandfather is not a ghost. Listen, baby....

My phone rings. It's Sbani.

Me : Baby

Sbani : Sthandwa sami ngiyaxolisa ukukuvusa.

Me : No, angilele. Are you okay?

Sbani : No

I get up.

Me : Sbani, what's wrong?

Sbani : It's my mother.

Me : Wenzeni uMah?

Sbani : She is sick, Sebe. Njengamanje silana esibhedlela and sebemu admittile kuthiwa ngeke ephume any time soon because she needs to take her treatment engaphakathi esibhedlela.

Me : What? What treatment and why kufanele eyidlele esibhedlela?

He sighs.

Sbani : She is HIV positive unane TB oku worse and i TB yakhe...

He sighs.

Sbani : I don't know, manu. But kuthiwa akawadli ngendlela amaphilisi and now they need to keep her here eze ebe right. That will take 6 months or even more months.

Me : Yoo! Sbani. Uthini kumina?

Sbani : It's bad. Ngeke emungcwabe uBaba.

Me : Oh my God.

Sbani : Yeah. Siyasuka manje esibhedlela sibuyela ekha.... Yeah, ilapha ngemumva.

Me : Sbani?

Sbani : Sorry baby, khona into engiyiyalela u Lindo. I need to go, manu. Sizokhuluma.

Me : Okay, my love. Ngicela ube right baby, uyezwa?

Sbani : I'm going to be fine thembalami.

Me : I love you, baby.

Sbani : I love you too. Mncwaa

Me : Mncwa Mncwa baby.

He ends the call. I sigh. Skhalo's mother walks in. Guess what? She is now wearing her gown like she just got out of bed. She is wearing the same doek that the teddy bear was wearing. There's a roll of tissue in her hand. This woman!

Me : Maka Skhalo

Fezile : Hey, is everything okay?

Me : No

Fezile : What's wrong? Yazi ngiyakuzwa ngise toilet ukhuluma. Angilele isisu.

Wow.

Me : Lindo's mother is in hospital and Sbani said they are going to keep her there for a very long time.

Her eyes widened.

Fezile : What?

Chapter 47

Fezile woke up at 08:00 and she told me she was going to the gym. She was wearing her gym wear when she left. We haven't really spoken ever since I got here but I've been bonding a lot with Skhalo. I thought she was going to come back sooner, considering that she is still going to the funeral but it's after 10:00 now and she is still not here. She just sent me a text, asking me to bath Skhalo for her. I'm busy begging Skhalo to get out of the bathtub but he doesn't want to. He is busy with his bubble gun toy. This kid is too spoiled.

There's a Telephone in this house. It's ringing and I don't know if I should answer. Maybe it's Fezile. I wipe my hands.

Me : Skhalo, I'll be back. Ungachithi amanzi phansi

I warn him and run to pick up the phone.

Me : Hello

'Makoti wakithi, uyaphila?'

It's Lindo.

Me : Bhuti, siyaphila. Is everything okay?

Lindo : No, no. Everything is okay, I just can't get hold of Maka Skhalo. Sebesukile lapho?

I grit my teeth and clear my throat.

Me : Uhm... no. She.....

Thank God. There is her car coming through the gate.

Me : They are still getting ready. Ubephethwe isisu ebusuku so she woke up feeling a bit weak. But she is fine now.

Lindo : Okay, please give her the phone.

Me : Okay, let me call her. Hold on

I put the phone down and rushed to call Fezile from outside.

Me : Sisi, Baba kaSkhalo is on the phone.

Fezile : Really?

She climbs out of the car immediately. Damn! She went to do her nails and they are so long. She runs into the house. I follow her. She pops out her tongue and picks up the phone. I giggle.

Fezile : Lindo

She rolls her eyes.

Fezile : Siyeza. Phela mina ngingengane angivele nje ngingene emotweni ngishaye imoto.

Let me go and check on Skh....

Fezile : Don't shout at me!!

She yells and my body freezes.

Fezile : No, don't. Ngiyasho ukuthi siyeza.... Oh hhayke!

She puts the phone down aggressively.

Fezile : Ungazongidakelwa la. Akumina engigulise unyoko.

She speaks to herself while making her way to her room. I'm shocked.

I take Skhalo out of the bathtub and dry him up with a towel. She walks in.

Fezile : Which one should I wear?

She is carrying two pairs of very high heels. Green and Red. They are both stunning.

Me : Uhhh, what is the colour of your dress?

Fezile : Blue skinny jeans and I'll wear a coat that will match any of these....

Wait, she said jeans? She is going to wear jeans at her father-in-law's funeral?

Me : Oh, jeans?

Fezile : Yes, jeans. So which one? Green or Red?

I take her hand and we both sit down.

Me : Sisi, I don't think it's appropriate to wear jeans at your father - in - law's funeral or any other funeral.

Fezile : Why?

Me : There's nothing wrong with it kodwa akukhombisi inhlonipho ukufaka iblukwe emngcwabeni, especially for you ngoba uwumakoti wakhona.

Fezile : Really? Am I?

Me : What do you mean?

Fezile : KwaNtuli abakaze bangibona njengomakoti. Kumina babona isfebe nje esidla imali ka Lindo, so I'm going to do what is expected of me. It's a pity ngoba angazi ukuthi isfebe sigqoka kanjani. So.....

She raises her hands and snorts.

Me : Maka Skha....

Fezile : Sebe, you know nothing. Ufike izolo kuloyamuzi. Green or Red?

Me : I... I.. I don't know. Green? I guess green.

She smiles and stands up.

Fezile : Thank you. Ngicela ungigqokisela u Skhalo. You are the beeeest!

She says while walking out. I'm left dumbstruck.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

The funeral is over now. Mzwakhile has been laid to rest. There's a cleansing that is done soon after the funeral. Not everyone went to the river for that cleansing but most of the family members went and obviously his sons.

Mabongi : Nigeze kephi?

Sbani : E Cutshwayo river.

Mabongi : Ngizwa kuthiwa the Ndabas were here.

Sbani : Yebo. But it was only Maqhinga's brother.

Slindele : Where was he sitting and when did he arrive?

Sbani : Before we went to the cemetery.

Mabongi : Bathini?

Sbani : He called me, sahlala emotweni and he asked me ukuthi nginjani. Wangitshela ukuthi bazongcwaba next week because Maqhinga will have a state funeral.

Slindele : Hhaibo uhlanganaphi wena Bhunu nalokho?

Sbani : Angazi. That's what I asked him. Wathi uMaqhinga ubekholwa ukuthi uwuBaba wami. He then asked me if I'll come to the funeral and I said no. Wathi why? mina ngavele ngathula because I didn't know what to say. I don't know if my silence rubbed him off in a wrong way ngoba uvele wadinwa wathi bazozwa ngami mase ngifuna usizo lwabo noma ngifuna ukuza ekhaya. Ngeke bona belokhu bengilandela ngoba ngimdala but I should know ukuthi ngizobadinga one day.

Zinhle : Ubadinga amasimba yini. Akangenanga ngani layindlini ecele ukukhuluma nathi abantu abadala? Does he even have proof that his brother was your father? Ubezele ukuzobukwa nje la.

Mabongi : Vele. I'm glad he left ngingakamuboni because I would have strangled him to death.

Sbani laughs. Lindo walks in, carrying Skhalo.

Boniza : Ave ingangifuni ingane kaLindo. Skhalo

Advertisement

come here.

Skhalo shakes his head. They all laugh.

Skhalo : Sbani!

Mabongi : Nangoke umuntu amuthandayo.

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Yah, what do you want?

Skhalo opens his arms for Sbani while looking at everyone in the house. They all laugh. Sbani takes him from his father.

Boniza : Khalo? Hey. Where is Fezile?

Lindo : Akalazi ke lelo. Umubiza ngo Zah umawakhe.

Boniza giggles.

Boniza : Oooo. Khalo, where is Zah?

Skhalo : Kwimoto

Boniza : Smart boy!

They laugh.

Boniza : WeLindo akamubizi ngo Mah?

Lindo : He does. Sometimes he calls her Mah and sometimes Zah.

Mabongi : uZah ugqoka iblukwe emugcwabeni kamkhulu? No, no, no boy boy. No, no, no. She is wrong.

She says while kissing Skhalo's cheeks. Lindo scratches his head. Sphiwokuhle walks in, carrying a box. He is followed by Lindo's other kids, Ayakha and Olwethu.

Slindele : Here comes my favorite. Wozani ku Gogo.

Ayakha and Olwethu run to hug Slindele.

Sphiwo : Lindo uthi uMaka Skhalo ucela ingane, useyahamba.

Lindo : Oh, okay. Skhalo, come.

Mabongi : Aw, they are leaving?

Lindo : Yes. U Olwethu no Ayakha engicele ukuthi belale behambe ksasa.

Mabongi and Slindele look at each other. Lindo walks out with Skhalo.

Mabongi : Phiwo, you guys really need to talk to your brother. ULindo ubheda ngempela ke manje. USkhalo owalayikhaya and we all agreed ukuthi izingane kufanele zilale layikhaya zonke.

Sphiwo : Eish. Sizothini?

Mabongi : No, he is wrong ngokuhlulwa umfazi kanje. Look at his kids, angathi azinaBaba. Into ayaziyo ilesiyasinokwe sengane aphume naso.

Slindele : Mina ngibone ngomfazi wakhe efika egqoke iblukwe emzini ezongcwaba uBabezala wakhe.

Zinhle : Hhhaibo Slindele!! I wanted to hide when I saw her walking inside the tent. Ngathi abantu bazothi siyahlanya.

Boniza : Something is wrong with that girl.

Sphiwo : There's nothing wrong with Maka Skhalo. She is just plain rude.

Mabongi sighs.

Mabongi : Wephiwo ninoBhunu kade nginicabanga ukuthi nizoba yini now that your father is gone and your mother is in hospital.

Boniza : And it's going to be hard. Especially for wena Phiwo ohlala layikhaya.

Sphiwo : It's really going to be hard without my mother. Mina ngibuye ngisebenze ebusuku, plus uma ngisebenza ebusuku most of the time ngilala ngale e town.

Mabongi : Uzovalwa lomuzi ayikho into ezokwenziwa. Uzovalwa kuze kubuye uMaNzilo because Lindo's wife is useless. Kwadlalwa ngezinkomo zakwa Ntuli nje kulotsholwa loyamfazi.

Slindele : Kanti bekuzobalula because yena noLindo were going to stay here until MaNzilo comes back.

Mabongi : That's what I'm saying, kodwa ngeke umbone. I'm going to be very honest, Mzwa and MaNzilo failed. ULindo ubahlulile. ULindo ayikho neyodwa into ayenzayo elungile. Izingane zakhe zimuhlulile zonke, look at Ayakha and Olwethu. They came here looking like homeless kids. Scelo is drowning in drugs. Uyena uScelo obengahlala la no Thembeka but they can't ngoba ningabuya uScelo edayise lomuzi ngoba efuna imali yalento ayidlayo.

Slindele : No, Scelo can't stay here.

Sphiwo and Sbani shake their heads.

Mabongi : Kodwa kuthiwa uMzwakhile ulungise izinto esaphila wahlala phansi no Lindo wamutshela i role yakhe njengenkosana yalomuzi, we wouldn't even be having this conversation. Ihlazo nje ukuthi sikhuluma indaba yokuvala umuzi u Mzwa ebe eshiye amadodana amathathu.

Boniza nods.

Mabongi : Ushona ushiya uSbani engashadile. We don't even know where to start ukuze kushade uSbani ngoba u Mzwa engasekho nje.

Slindele : And Sebenzile is a good girl. Ubezowuvusa lomuzi.

Mabongi : Izowuvusa kanjani ke ingane yabantu sisayikhiphele ilobolo nje kuphela?

Sphiwo sighs.

Mabongi : Shadani wePhiwo. Noma nithole izintombi enizokipita nazo okungenani ngoba lomuzi uzophela nya.

Boniza laughs.

Boniza : Musa ukudlala ngo Sphiwo.

Mabongi : I'm serious. Noma azokipita nayo nje. Vele kuyakipitwa manje.

Sphiwo laughs.

Mabongi : What is in that box?

Sphiwo : I don't know. I found it lapha etendeni.

Mabongi : Awuvule sibone.

Sphiwo opens the box and takes out a blanket.

Sphiwo : Ingubo

Wow, that's a high quality pelt blanket. It's plain black.

Mabongi : Ingubo emnyama?

Slindele : Ubani kodwa ongambathisa u Mzwa ngengubo emnyama?

Boniza : Who brought it?

Sphiwo : I don't know. I found it inside the tent, under one of the chairs.

Sbani : This is confusing. Ayibhaliwe ukuthi isukaphi?

Sphiwo searches inside the box and looks around the box.

Sphiwo : There's nothing.

Mabongi : Hhaibo.

They are all confused. Where is this black blanket coming from?

Chapter 48

NTULI HOMESTEAD

The blanket issue has been set aside. No one is worried about it anymore. Even though the funeral was yesterday, some people are still coming to share their warm condolences.

Slindele : Nayi ke imali yomunikelo. Including imali ekhishwe e rank, the total amount is R17 515.

Sphiwo : Hheyi that's a lot of money!!

Sbani : It is.

Mabongi : Anizodlala ngalemali. I suggest that you save it. Nikhumbule ukuthi kusazonkwenziwa umsebenzi wokubuyisa u Mzwa.

Lindo : Ngempela. No, I'll save it.

Sbani and Sphiwo look at each other.

Slindele : Good. I don't know what we are going to do about your mother. I guess we will have to wait until she is discharged.

Lindo : Yeah.

Mabongi : Niziphathe kahle ke and remember that you are still mourning. Lenzilo eniyifakile niyihloniphe.

Sphiwo : We will do that.

They start talking about other things. Mostly things that were happening at the funeral.

Sbani : Aunt, ngicela ukuphuma kancane, ngizosheshe ngibuye.

Mabongi : Uyobona uSebe?

Sbani smiles while touching his ear.

Sbani : I'll be back soon.

They laugh.

Slindele : Fine, usheshe ubuye.

Sbani : Okay

He walks out. On his way to his car his uncle, Skhona asks to talk to him. They go and lean against the wall.

Skhona : Hhayi, umsebenzi kabafo uhambe kahle.

Sbani : Kahle kakhulu.

Skhona : We are now praying for his protection to be upon us. Enibheke nani, enivulele izinhlanhla.

Sbani nods while shaking his head.

Skhona : Ehhe! Hhayi, everything will be fine mfana wami. UMzwakhile ashiye engakulungisanga we will fix it.

Sbani : Yebo

Skhona : Our main focus now is your wedding. Ngiyazi osisi banitshela izinto eziningi ezahlukene, izinto eziniphithanisa ikhanda.

Sbani laughs.

Skhona : But the truth is uwena umuntu osele nalomuzi. Uyabona mfana wami ngokwesizulu phakathi kwenkosana nalabo abalandela inkosana umagcino uyena ongafanele ukuphuma ekhaya. You as a last born isizulu sithi awuphumi ekhaya. When you get married umfazi wakho uyabuya ezohlala la kini.

Sbani frowns. He didn't know that.

Skhona : It's true. Last borns can't leave home when they get married. They bring their wives home abafazi befike bezovusa imizi yoyise. What Lindo did is not wrong. He is the first born and it is within his rights to move out and build a home for his family njengoba akwenza nje lokho. UMzwa walandela isizulu ngokumuvumela ukuthi ephume inxiwa lakhe. Same thing applies to Sphiwokuhle. When he gets married unelungelo lokuphuma layikhaya, but not you because you are the last born.

Sbani : I understand.

Skhona : I'm glad you do and I believe that you are capable of carrying on your father's legacy. Uvuse lomuzi.

Sbani nods.

Skhona : Now back to what happened. At first our concern was your mother dying engashadile noyihlo kodwa esekhishelwe ilobolo kodwa manje sesikhuluma olunye udaba oluthi abazali bakho sebashone bengashadile.

Sbani rubs his face and crosses his arms.

Skhona : What do we do now? Huh?

Sbani : Eish, mina Baba angazi ukuthi entweni ekanjalo senza kanjani.

Skhona : Yilapho ke ekungena khona umfowenu omudala okuwubani? ULindo. He will need to step in endaweni kaMzwa. KwaNgema besho ukuthi ubani ozomela unyoko.

Sbani : I don't think Lindo will agree.

Skhona : Uzobe engacelwa kodwa uzobe etshelwa. That is the only way ukuze nawe ube nomshado oyimpumelelo. Lokhu esikwenzayo sikhlonipha siphinde silandele imiyalelo yabaphansi. Noyihlo uzobanenkinga uma efika ngale. So this is no longer about you only, kodwa zekungena noyihlo.

Sbani : I understand that.

Skhona : And I will make Lindokuhle understand. Yinto yosuku olulodwa le ngakho ngeke ibeyinkinga.

Sbani : I hear you, Baba.

Skhona : That's good and that's all I wanted to tell you. Ningasanganiswa oAunt amakhanda. Uyabazi abantu besifazane nokuxhamazela.

Sbani laughs and shakes his head.

Sbani : I know them very well.

Skhona : Good. UMah yena nike naxhumana?

Sbani : We did but we didn't speak for long. Ubesakhathazwe imijovo namaphilisi.

Skhona : Ay, she is going to be fine. Ningakhathazeki bafana.

Sbani : Yebo

Skhona : Hhayke usungaqhubeka nohambo lwakho.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga Baba. Ukwazi nje ukuthi we are not alone during this time brings hope.

Skhona smiles.

Skhona : We are family, Mphemba and family stick together.

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

Sbani is here to see me. He called me and asked me to come out. Fezile and Skhalo are napping in Fezile's room.

Sbani hugs me and we kiss. He opens the door for me and we both sit in his car. I see his family put on those small black cloths on their shoulders as a symbol of mourning.

Sbani : Manuna, ngaze ngakukhumbula.

Me : I miss you too baby.

Sbani : How are they treating you here?

Me : Not bad

Advertisement

hey. Maka Skhalo is a good person but she doesn't speak much.

Sbani : She is always on her phone.

Me : Ey izinto azenzayo kodwa

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Ngixoxela phela. Wenzani?

I laugh and shake my head.

Me : No

Sbani : What? Ubuka i porn?

I burst.

Me : What? No. Why would you even think that?

Sbani : Because I caught her once.

We both laugh.

Me : And what did she say?

He laughs.

Sbani : I can't remember. Woza kuBaba phela baby. Yazi kade ngikukhumbula kanjani mfethu.

He wraps his arms around me and kisses my forehead.

Me : Mhmmm, you smell really good.

Sbani : I do?

Me : You do sthandwa sami.

I kiss his cheek.

Me : Banjani uLindo no Phiwo?

Sbani : No, they are doing fine. Kodwa phela ngeke kufane uma sesisele sodwa. For now we still have people around, so...

Me : Yeah, yeah.

Sbani : Yeah.

I sigh.

Me : I know what's it like. Kuvele kube angathi ulahliwe nje, but everything is going to be fine, Khuboni. Isikhathi sinendlela yokupholisa ubuhlungu.

He presses his lips on my forehead.

Sbani : Wena unjani sthandwa sami?

Me : I am fine. Uma wena uright nami ngi right.

He heaves a sigh.

Sbani : I'm fine.

I pull away and look at him. He smiles.

Sbani : Yinindaba wangibuka kanje baby?

Me : Are you sure you are okay?

Sbani : I am.

Me : Uthe uMah uright angithi?

Sbani : Yeah, yeah, she is fine.

Me : But you are not. I can feel you. Uyindoda yami angithi uyakhumbula?

He smiles and pecks my lips.

Sbani : I know thembalami.

He sighs.

Sbani : Yilento yasekhaya nje engifakela i stress. In a few days sonke sibuyela emsebenzini and that means kuzofanele sivale ekhaya ngoba uPhiwo ngeke ehlale yedwa.

Me : Eish, that.

Sbani : Angithi uyayibona leyonto. It's hard.

I shake my head.

Me : It is.

Sbani : Angifuni ekhaya kuvalwe Sebe. I don't want that but I don't know what to do.

Me : U Sphiwo yena uthi uyasaba?

Sbani : Not that he is scared. Uthi naye akekho ready ukusala yedwa.

Me : So what do you think? Ukuhlala naye?

Sbani : No, no, I can't live without you.

I smile.

Me : So what are we going to do?

Sbani : I don't know sthandwa.

He laughs and looks at me.

Sbani : Ngicela uyohlala nami ekhaya, just for two weeks manu.

I laugh.

Me : Aaaa! No. I'm not allowed to do that.

Sbani : Ngobani? Come on baby, just for two weeks. Ngeke uye kuloya round ekushiswa kuwona impepho.

Me : No, Sbani. Mina angivumelekile ngisho ukungena kulelikhisi eliku main house.

Sbani : Eish. Okay, baby.

Me : Kuyafana futhi, what will happen after two weeks uma sesihambile thina? Ngeke kube khona umehluko

Sbani : It's not the same. Ukuvala manje sihambe ekhaya uBaba esanda kushona uMah esesibhedlela akufani. Okwamanje it hurts. It hurts a lot, Sebe. But it's okay, baby.

He blows out a sigh and covers his face with his hands. I can see how sad he is. I feel my heart breaking. I'm going to say yes. I don't know what I'm doing but I'm going to say yes. He blows out another sigh.

Sbani : It's okay. Kuzodlula.

I remove his hands from his face.

Sbani : It's okay baby, nami ngiyazihlanyisa nje. Ukuthi nje it's still hard okwamanje.

He smiles while staring at me. I shake my head.

Me : We will go. Sizozahamba siyohlala kini for two weeks.

He looks surprised.

Sbani : Sebe.....

Me : It's okay really. Ngiyavuma.

Chapter 49

NTULI HOMESTEAD

It's been 3 days already since Sebenzile arrived. Having her around is so warm. Sbani clearly knew that having her around was going to be good for him and his brothers. Tomorrow everyone is going back to work.

Sphiwokuhle and Lindokuhle are sitting on the chairs just in front of the veranda. Sbani climbs out of the car. He is coming from the shops.

Sphiwo : Did you bring beer?

Sbani : No, my girlfriend doesn't drink beer.

They all laugh.

Lindo : Woza la.

Sbani : Okay. But let me give these to her first.

Lindo : Okay

Sbani goes inside the house. Sphiwo sighs.

Sphiwo : We need her here. Kulo 3 days nje sengibonile ukuthi she is what we need. Angathi simuthunyelwe uBaba yazi Lindo.

Lindo shakes his head.

Sphiwo : I already can't picture ourselves engekho yena. Omunye umuntu engacabanga ukuthi ngiyagagamela because if you look at it kuseyizinsuku ezintathu nje kuphela.

Lindo : No, you are not exaggerating. Iqiniso, iqiniso nje bafo. Nami ngikubonile lokho for the past three days ngifika la.

Sphiwo : Ubonile. That's what I'm saying. I'm just hoping that Bhunu will see it the way we see it. Kungabi angathi manje... uyabo?

Lindo shakes his head.

Lindo : Yeah, I get you.

Lindo's phone rings. He takes it out and stands up immediately.

Lindo : Eish, it's Zah. Kanti uphi u Sbani yena manje?

Sphiwo : I think they are still talking. Ufuna ukuhamba?

Lindo : Ngithembise labantu ukuthi ngizosheshe ngibuye.

Sphiwo sighs.

Sphiwo : No, it's okay. You can go.

Lindo : Are you sure?... Mgabadelo ngisendleleni Mah.

He answers his phone while raising his thumb to Sphiwo.

Sphiwo : Go

Lindo : Ngisendleleni ngempela, Nyazitha. Senigezile?

He walks away while talking to Fezile over the phone. Sphiwo watches him as he gets inside his car and drives off. Sphiwo shakes his head and picks up a small stick. He breaks it into pieces while blowing out sighs in between. Sbani appears and squeezes his ear.

Sphiwo : Ashhu! Bhunu ibuhlungu lento oyenzayo.

Sbani laughs and grabs a chair. He sits in front of Sphiwo.

Sbani : ULindo usehambile?

Sphiwo : Yeah. His wife called.

Sbani : Oyah. Ugrand?

Sbani rubs his hands together.

Sphiwo : I'm good bafo, I'm good. Umuphathelile u chocolate u Sis'Sebe?

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : I did. Oh, uthe size sizodla.

Sphiwo sighs and sits up. He crosses his arms and his legs. He stares at the gate.

Sphiwo : Bafozi, siyamudinga uSebe layikhaya. Uyakubona lokho?

Sbani : Y... Yeah. Yinindaba?

Sphiwo : Lomuzi udinga umuntu wesifazane. I don't know about you kodwa mina ngihlale no Mah kakhulu ngajwayela isandla somuntu wesifazane and I feel like Sis'Sebe is that ngoba uMah engekho nje. And I'm not saying this because I want her to close my mother's gap or ezoba umama kuthina enze izinto ebeziniwa u Mah. No, what I'm saying is that I feel her presence and it makes this house a home njengoba kade kukhona uMah. I'm not talking about cleaning and cooking but I'm talking about her presence. Ukuhlala nje la emnyango sazi ukuthi kunomunye umuntu endlini that is.....I don't know how to put it and I don't know if I'm making sense.

Sbani : I hear you but I don't understand where this is going.

Sphiwo : What I'm saying is that we have no one. Ngoba sekushone uBaba noMah esesibhedlela it's just you and I. Ngeke ngikhulume ngo Lindo. Lindo has his family and clearly that's where he stands. So we need Sebe.

Sbani sighs.

Sbani : We do and you know ukuthi kuthiwa yonke into esazandleni zami angabe sengishadile manje no Sebe.

Sphiwo : I know. ULindo uvumile lendaba yomshado kaBaba.

Sbani : He had no choice. But now everyone is gone and what if ubhuti uyayijika yonke lento uthi akayingeni? Akasekho phela manje umuntu omdala ozongikhulumela. Plus uyamubona kulezinsuku he is busy nalento ye revenge.

Sphiwo : Leyo ngeke ngiyingene mina Bhunu. If Lindo wants to go for revenge that won't even bring back our father then he can gladly go for it alone.

Sbani : Kodwa angithi uyazi ukuthi le revenge izofaka nathi engozini.

Sphiwo blows out a sigh.

Sbani : But regarding indaba yomshado nokuhlala la ngiyakuzwa but that is not the decision that I can make alone. Ukhumbule bafo ukuthi nginomuzi manje ozophela noma inini and the reason I built that house ingoba bengifuna ukuhlala no Sebe khona.

Sphiwo shakes his head.

Sbani : Okunye uSebe akuyona ithekeni engiyithole emgaqweni. Unekubo and unoBaba. Angifuni ukuzithola sengisemasimbeni ngoba ngithathe ingane yabantu ngayikipitisa layikhaya ngaphandle komshado.

Sphiwo : But you two stay together in Mountview.

Sbani : Ayikho impepho engiyishisa e Mountview. Layikhaya naseMountview kunomehluko omkhulu kabi. Kwayikhona lapho uMlambo angase ezwe ukuthi we are staying together I'll be in trouble. Angisaphathi ezwe kuthiwa ingane yakhe ilayikhaya.

Sphiwo : Ngiyakuzwa.

Sbani : And once uLindo wabona uSebe eshleli layikhaya lendaba yomshado ngeke eyinake but if he sees you here alone uzobona ukuthi ibaluleke kanjani.

Sphiwo : But Sebe was going to stay here for a month before umshado. That is what our parents said. Am I wrong?

Sbani : That's what our family does but this is different, Sebe is not here to do her wife duties before our wedding. Ulana ngoba bengingeke ngikwazi ukukushiya wedwa.

Sphiwo : Let's turn this into that then. We have money for your wedding. Asihlanganise imali yalomshado kaBaba nakwa Ngema and then get you married.

Sbani : Asikwazi ukuchitha igazi lesilwane sisazilile and our mother in hospital.

Sphiwo : Mah is going to be fine. Ancestors will have to understand why we are doing this.

Sbani : Bafo, I don't know. I think siyaxhamazela manje. Izinto zami mina ngifuna zihambe ngendlela. Angifuni ukuzithola ngisobishini.

Sphiwo sighs and shakes his head.

Sphiwo : Fine.

Sbani : We need umuntu omdala ozosibonisa ngayo yonke lento before we take further action.

Sphiwo : I'll call Malum'Mbhekiseni.

Sbani : Okay.

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

I finish dishing up for them and put warm water inside a large bowl for them to wash their hands. They are still sitting outside. My phone vibrates. Someone just sent me a R100 airtime. This must be from Fezile, she promised to send me airtime but I didn't expect this much. Hooray! I needed this. Earlier I was speaking to my father and he finished all of my airtime.

Sphiwo : Look, there is nothing.

Sphiwo says while walking in with my beautiful man. They are showing each other something on their phones.

Sbani : No, check your balance. I transferred it. Ngeke ngidlale ngawe.
Mhlampe isazongena

Sbani : Yah baby wami.

I smile and take off the apron.

Me : Bhele elihle.

He blows me a kiss and goes back to his phone.

Sbani : Aaaaaa! Eish, eish.

He laughs.

Sphiwo : What's wrong?

Sbani : Ngifakele uSebe

They both laugh.

Me : Ungifakele ini?

Sbani comes and wraps his arms around my waist. He kisses my neck.

Sbani : Sphiwo wants to call our uncle, so he asked me ukuthi ngimufakele i airtime ka R10. I thought I transferred it to his number but ngiyifake kuwena.

Me : So it was you.

We laugh.

Me : Love, it's not even R10. You transferred R100.

Sbani : What?

He laughs and looks at his phone.

Sbani : Ngempela. Eish, bafo sorry.

Sphiwo : Ay ay.

We laugh.

Sbani : No

Advertisement

the problem is umuntu engijwayele ukumufakela i airtime uSebe and ngigcine ngaye ukumufakela. Mina I forgot to add your number ngavele ngathi send again kwi number ka Sebe.

Sphiwo : Cabanga sisi lendoda yakho isithi imina engiqamba amanga.

We laugh.

Sbani : Ayngeke baby, ngicela uyibuyise i airtime yami.

Me : Oh me? No. I didn't ask you to buy me airtime.

Sbani : Baby it was a mistake.

Me : Bhuti do you hear what he is saying? because I don't.

Sphiwo : Bhunu what language are you speaking now? Huh bafo?
Bengithi uwumzulu kanti awuyena umuntu?

Sphiwo hisses while shaking his head and looking at Sbani. I burst.

Me : Bhunu kanti awuyena umuntu? I'm so disappointed.

Sbani : Aningiyeka. Wena Phiwo ngeke usayithola i airtime.

Sphiwo : Ngiyadlala hawu. Uwumuntu Bhunu uwumuntu.

We laugh. Sbani kisses my cheek and pulls out a chair for me.

Sphiwo : Sis'Sebe where is your food?

Me : No, no mina, I ate and I'm....

Sbani : No, Manu. You are going to eat with me.

I honestly don't have appetite. I think it's because I'm bleeding again. I don't know when this blood will stop. It comes and goes and the weird thing now is that when I burp, I can literally smell blood in my mouth.

Sbani : Open your mouth

Me : No, don't feed me.

Sbani : Fine.

He gives me his spoon and grabs another spoon.

Sbani : Let's eat together.

Me : But... Okay, okay, fine.

I say, raising my hands in surrender.

We ate, talked and laughed. Sphiwo went to his room after that. He said he wanted to speak to their uncle. I don't know when this happened but Sbani is now sitting on my thighs. His arm is wrapped around my neck. Is this even okay? I mean we are not in Mountview where we can even walk around the room naked.

Me : And tomorrow are you going to drop me off at work?

Sbani : Wait, uthi kade ukhuluma noMlambo?

Me : Yeah, I did. But I didn't tell him that we are here. Uyamazi ukuthi ubezokhuluma. Anyway ngimuthembisile that on Friday ngizofika eShowe

Sbani : Uzobuya nini?

Me : Saturday

Sbani : Mina ngizolala nobani?

I laugh.

Sbani : I'm joking sthandwa sami. Umutshele ukuthi ethungise ngoba ziyawushaya maduzane.

I smile.

Me : Really?

He shakes his head.

Sbani : Yeah thembalami.

Me : I'll tell him....manuna uyasinda, please stand up.

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami

He stands up.

Me : It's okay love.

I stand up and put together the plates that we were using. I go to the sink.

Me : I can't believe I'm going back to work tomorrow. Lapho ngingenani.

Sbani : Baby come here. What is that?

I look at him.

Me : What?

Sbani : Unegazi baby wami. Come here

Oh no. Dammit!

Sbani : Hhaibo, baby, Are you still on your periods?

I swallow.

Me : Yeah

Sbani : No, baby. Side manje lesikhathi noma imina engisanganayo?.
Come let's go and change

He takes my hand and we head into his room.

Me : No, I'm fine. Sometimes they take longer.

Sbani : But that's not okay. We need to go and see a doctor.

Me : Sbanisokuhle, I'm fine. Please, baby.

He looks at me with his eyebrows furrowed.

Sbani : No, this is not fine.

Oh lord!

Chapter 50

ESHOWE

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

Sbani wasn't happy with me coming here. In his mind he thinks that I'm sick and I told him that periods don't make any woman sick. He dropped me off in town and I took a taxi here.

I climbed out of the taxi. My phone rings immediately after that. It's him.

Me : Khuboni

Sbani : Baby usufikile?

Me : Ngehla manje etaxini sthandwa sami.

Sbani : Ngibona ungasho lutho, awubhazi, awufoni. I was getting worried.

Me : Ngiyaxolisa, I was going to call you uma sengifike ekhaya.

Sbani : Okay, mina sengikukhumbule.

Me : I miss you too baby. But ngizobuya ksasa.

Sbani : Don't change your mind njalo

I giggle.

Me : No, I won't.

Sbani : Nathi kade sikhuluma nomalume la and there are things that we need to do. Angithi uPhiwo ubecabanga lendaba yomshado but the problem is that sisazilile and with Mah in hospital lendaba yokuzila might take longer than we think.

Me : Okay, uthini umalume?

Sbani : He thinks kungcono siye kumuntu obonayo kuqala.

Me : Like a sangoma?

Sbani : Yeah sthandwa sami.

Me : Ay mina angikholelwa kwizangoma ngoba eziningi zinamanga.

Sbani : I know but we have to do this. Enye into ukuthi uBaba ushone eseshilo ukuthi umshado lo wabo ufuna ube next month and baby, thina we believe ukuthi umshado awuhlehliswa. Ukuthi nje phela yonke leyonto siyikhohliwe because of everything that happened.

Me : Yeah I've heard a couple of people saying umshado awuhlehliswa.

Sbani : Yes, but sozwa kulomuntu ukuthi senzenjani entweni ekanje. But before siye kuyena sizoqala ku Mah esibhedlela.

Me : Can she talk now?

Sbani : Kuthiwa usafana nje nalokhu esikufice kuthangi. I feel like she is getting worse usuku nosuku kodwa odokotela bathi i treatment.

Me : They are right, sometimes treatment does that kube angathi umuntu uba worse ngoba esedla amaphilisi.

Sbani : That's what they said baby. Silinde uLindo manje and after that we will go to the hospital.

Me : Oh, you are going today?

Sbani : Sicabanga kanjalo. I was lucky ukuthi basheshe bangikhipha emsebenzini, noSphiwo naye ungena ngo 22:00 namhlanje so I don't think sizobuye silithole elinye ithuba eli right lokuya if we don't go today.

Me : That's true. And it's still early. Nizokwazi ukukwenza konke.

Sbani : Uma singalibalanga nje esibhedlela.

Me : Hopefully you guys won't.

Sbani : Wena u right baby wami?

Me : I'm fine, my love.

Sbani : That's good. Igazi?

I laugh.

Me : There's no more blood.

Sbani : Ay, I don't trust you. Sebe uma ubuya lisekhona, we are going to see a doctor.

Me : Why are you rushing my periods to finish, Manu? Ngoba vele asigangi since usazilile.

Sbani : This is not about sex. I'm worried about you.

Me : I know baby. I'm fine, I promise.

Sbani : Okay, ngiyakuthanda.

Me : I love you too, my love.

Sbani : Mncwa!

Me : Mncwa!

He ends the call. I put my phone inside my handbag and open the gate. I don't think my father is here. It's so quiet. As soon as I enter the gate all my father's cows start mooing inside the kraal. I look at them and they all look heavily pregnant. Mlambo didn't lie. They better stop that fucking noise though. I don't know but I hate cows. I love their milk and meat but I honestly hate them. Especially when they make that noise, I just cringe.

I look at them and they are staring back at me. I always forget to ask my father how they mate and actually fall pregnant because they are all females. Anyway it's not like I care. Oh my father is really not here. All doors are closed. He knew that I was coming so I hope he left the keys. He normally leaves keys under the carpet. I bend down and search under the carpet that is outside the main door.

Me : Hawu uBaba. Kanti uphi lokhiye?

As I'm busy searching for keys, the cows in the kraal start mooing more and more. Their sound begins to sound abnormal. I slowly get up and look at them. I make my way towards the kraal to see what's wrong. I stand there and watch. I see nothing wrong but immediately they all start throwing themselves on the ground. My whole body freezes. Never in my life have I witnessed cows giving birth all at the same time. It's like a horror movie. My eyes widen. Their loud mooing sound deafens my ears and my brain. I suddenly feel a shooting pain in my lower stomach. The pain is strong enough to bring me back to reality. I press my lower stomach and I feel something running between my legs. When I look at my legs I see blood. Not the normal red blood, but this one is pure black.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Mzwakhile's sons get out of the car one by one. Each three of them. They look.... How are they looking? I'd say tired.

Sbani : Finally, we are home. I just want to sleep, yazi angifuni ngisho ukudla.

Sphiwo : Mina lapho ngiyongena but at least I'll get an hour or two of sleep.

Lindo : Wena Bhunu uzikhumbulele uSebe nje. Awusafuni nokudla.

They laugh.

Sbani : Speaking of Sebe, yazi loya mkhulu ungididile esengibuza ukuthi ukephi lomuntu engithandana naye.

Sphiwo : I heard him. Wena ungibulale usuthi usho muphi Mkhulu.

They laugh.

Sbani : I got confused ngoba manje ukhulume izinto eziningi. Ungitshela ukuthi kumele ngiyogeza umuzi walentombazane uBaba ayithuka and ngala ungibuza umuntu engithandana naye. It was too much.

Lindo sighs.

Lindo : Akumele siyithathe kancane futhi leyonto. We all know who the sangoma was talking about. As much as we were still young but siyakwazi okwenzeka. UBaba ukuthi esuke layikhaya and go to the Mngunis eyothuka uBaba wakhona eze emubeke isandla ngoba nakhu indodakazi yakhona infected you with HIV kwaba wrong. That wasn't a

way to do things. I understand that emotions were high but what he did was wrong. Obvious amadlozi akuloya muzi asadiniwe ngomsindo owafike wenziwa uBaba khona. Ancestors don't forget the shit you do to them.

Sphiwo : And guess who is left now to clean all of that? Us.

Sphiwo shakes his head.

Sbani : Kodwa mina namanje ngisasho that me and that Mnguni girl never had sex. Yes she came to visit me, but asikaze silale.

Lindo : Maybe you were drunk. Lezinto ziyenzeka. Because she was your first girlfriend and wagula kade uthandana naye. Bhunu you were wilding at the age of 16 bafo. When it comes to girls

Advertisement

wawungabambeki.

Sbani : But I still remember ukuthi intombazane engaqala ukulala nayo eyangale eMandeni. I forgot her name but it wasn't leyangane yakwa Mnguni. U Sihle? No bhuti.

Sphiwo : Bhunu when did you start ukugqiba ikhekhe?

They all laugh.

Sphiwo : Come on, talk to us. Sizama ukuthola isixazululo la.

Sbani : At the age of 17 and lapho I was already taking my HIV treatment, so this shit doesn't make sense.

Sphiwo : Yah, but uMah....

He sighs.

Sphiwo : No, let's leave it.

Lindo : Ufuna ukuthini? UMah wenzeni?

Sphiwo : Nothing, ngicabanga ezinye izinto. Bafethu asenzi lento. Niyabona nalelizulu lihlome kanjani.

Sbani : Yeah, where is the money?

Lindo : Here it is

He shows them the brown envelope. What they did today was they went to see a sangoma regarding their father and Celiwe's wedding. The sangoma told them that they can go ahead with the wedding because their father also seems not to be resting in peace and that could be caused by only one reason, which is the traditional wedding he didn't have with Celiwe. They have spoken to the Ngemas and Celiwe's sister will stand in for Celiwe and Lindo will stand in for their father, Mzwakhile. The sangoma couldn't stop thanking them for coming and wanting to proceed with the traditional wedding. He even told them that he's been having dreams about their father but the dreams were not clear. The sangoma then instructed them on what they needed to do before the wedding. Firstly each of them had to contribute money that they will use to buy a cow for isidwaba, which is for Celiwe. That money must stay emsamo from tonight until the day they go to buy the cow. Secondly no kind of animal must be slaughtered inside the house or even in the yard. Everything must be slaughtered outside the gate on the day of the traditional wedding.

Well only Sbani had money to contribute for the cow but Sphiwo thought it would be unfair for Sbani to buy the cow alone. So what they did is they took the money that they got after their father's funeral "imali yomnikelo". They will use it to buy inkomo yesidwaba.

Lindo : He said I must burn the incense and leave the money next to.....

Sphiwo : Impepho, yeah.

Lindo's problem is that he is not good when it comes to talking to the ancestors. He just keeps repeating the same thing, over and over again. Same thing happens when he is praying. He just sounds distracted.

Lindo : Siyacela ke boSompisi ukuthi niyisingathe imali. Siyacela, siyacela.

Sphiwo : Baba ngalokhu siyakukhombisa ukuthi we are willing to do what you wanted. Tell him.

Sphiwo and Sbani are sitting with their knees up behind Sphiwo and correcting him and telling him what to say.

Sbani : Sicela ukhanyise. Siyaxolisa nokuthatha imali yakho yomunikelo

Lindo blows impepho.

Lindo : Njengoba besho nje obafo. Baba, we apologize for using your money. Inkinga sixakekile, you know what you left behind, asinamali. Nasemsebenzini abafuni ukusinyusela imali.

Sbani : Yes, tell him ukuthi esikhanyisele ngoba nathi besizomukhanyisela kuthiwa siyidlozi. We....

Sphiwo : Sbani stop it

Sbani : Wouldn't you do the same if you were his ancestor?

There's a bit of silence and after that Lindo and Sphiwo burst into laughter.

Lindo : Bhunu, awukahle. This is not the time.

Sbani : But it is also very important to remind them.

Sphiwo covers his face with his hands and continues to laugh. Lindo clears his throat and tries hard to suppress his laughter.

Lindo : Siyaxolisa ngokuhleka. Baba as I was saying. Besifisa ukusebenzisa imali yethu but we are broke. Lena imali yenkomo yesidwaba sika mam'ncane. Ngoba siyibeka la eduze kwenu sizama ukukukhombisa that we have taken the first step to grant your wishes. Okuwumshado wesizulu phakathi kwakho no mamncane. Sicela nikhanyise, kukhanye, kukhanye. Nawo umshado ube impumelelo.

He places the money emsamo, next to a burning incense. They all stand up.

Lindo : Ayke, we are done. Ngicabanga ukuhamba nami manje kungaze kunethe imvula.

Sbani : Yeah. Ay siyabonga bhuti

Lindo : I'll see you guys tomorrow. Phiwo don't forget to call malume and update him ukuthi sihambe kanjani nokuthi uMah usenjani.

Sphiwo : No, I'll call him now.

Lindo : Mlungu....

He wraps his arm around Sbani.

Lindo : I'll see you tomorrow. Ubuya nini uSebe?

Sbani : Uthe uzobuya ksasa. Kumele ngimufonele naye

Lindo : Do that. Ayke ngizoni.....

Lindo doesn't finish. A sound of thunder hits the roof and while they find their way to sit down a very shining ball like lightning rolls in and goes straight to strike umsamo, causing a big flame. Sbani, Lindo and Sphiwo run out of the rondavel. They run all the way into Lindo's car.

Lindo : We need water ukucima umlilo.

Sbani : I am not going back inside that rondavel.

Lindo gets out of the car and runs back inside the rondavel. Sbani and Sphiwo look at each other and they also get out. They follow Lindo and find him standing emsamo with his hands over his head.

Lindo : The money... the money is all gone.

Sbani & Sphiwo : What?

They all run towards Umsamo and when they look down there's no sign that there was ever any money. There's nothing, except for ashes.

Chapter 51

ESHOWE

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

My head feels heavy. I need to go to the toilet but I feel tired. I can't remember when I slept, but I remember opening the door but I can't remember what happened after that. I am sleeping on my bed and I'm wearing the same clothes that I was wearing yesterday. I feel dirty. I get up and open my bag. I take out my phone. There are 6 missed calls from Sbani.

Me : Dammit!!

I look at the time. What? It's 02:20. I can't call Sbani at this time. My stomach is growling and I'm feeling cramps in my feet. I really need a toilet. I switch on the lights. I still have some dry blood stains on my feet and legs. I sigh and grab a tissue roll. I put on my shoes and make my way out, where the toilet is. I wonder if my fat.... wait, what is that? My heart races. There's someone inside the kraal. The person is holding two burning candles.

Me : Vimbani!!!!

My mouth goes off without me even thinking. But that is what we say here in the village. If someone feels like they are in danger or seeing a thief they shout vimbani!!! and then neighbours come. But right now it feels like no one heard me. I reach for the door, heading back inside the house but....

"Sebenzile!"

Someone shouts my name. I stop and look behind me. That's my father.

Mlambo : What are you doing emnyango ebusuku kangaka?

He asks while making his way to me. I look in the kraal and the person is no longer there.

Me : There was someone inside the kraal.

Mlambo : Someone? No, it was me.

We walk in and I switch on the dining room light. It was him indeed. I see two red candles in his hand.

Me : I thought umthakathi or something. When did you come back?

He laughs.

Mlambo : No, it was me. I came back around 21:00. You were already sleeping.

Me : Baba wenzani ebusuku esibayeni namakhandlela?

He looks at the candles.

Mlambo : No, I was checking on my cows. Ngizwe zenza umsindo engingawuqondi nje kahle and I decided to go and check. Kumnyama ke esibayeni ngakho I needed these candles.

I sigh in relief.

Me : Ungithusile Mdineka. Nami bengithi ngiya endlini yangasese.

Mlambo : I'm sorry mntanami. Uyazi ukuthi lezinkomo ziyigugu kanjani kimi especially ngoba nakhu phela seziphindaphindekile.

He laughs.

Me : I saw. I was there when they gave birth.

He smiles.

Mlambo : Really?

Me : It was scary Mdineka.

He laughs.

Mlambo : There's nothing scary about it. Wena udlala ubugwala nje.

I press my forehead against the wall and cross my legs.

Me : Sengisaba nokuya e toilet.

He laughs.

Mlambo : Ave uyigwala. Come, ngizoma la emnyango ngikugade.

I sigh and open the door.

Me : Ngiyabonga

Mlambo : Sebenzile?

Me : Baba

Mlambo : Are you okay?

My throat closes up. I want to tell him everything that happened but my mind and heart won't let me. Something tells me not to tell him anything. I sigh.

Me : Yebo ngikahle, Mdineka.

Mlambo : Hhayi ngiyabona

He puts the red candles together and rubs them against each other.

Mlambo : Asihambe ngikuphelezele.

Me : Ngiyabonga Baba

We walk out.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

After what happened last night they didn't sleep at all. They stayed up all night. Sphiwo couldn't even go to work. It's now the early hours of the morning. They are sitting in Sphiwo's room. Sphiwo is sleeping in his bed. Lindo and Sbani are talking.

Lindo : This could only mean one thing.

Sbani : But which one is it

Advertisement

uBaba akafuni kuthengwe inkomo ngemali yakhe yomunikelo or umshado nje wonke angasawufuni? I don't understand mina bhuti.

Lindo rubs his face.

Lindo : I don't know bafo. I don't know.

Sbani : What are we going to do now?

Lindo : Umuzwile umalume?

Sbani sighs and leans back on the couch. Lindo chuckles and shakes his head.

Lindo : He sounded like somebody who doesn't give a shit anymore. Niyakhumbula nginitshela ukuthi ningayilaleli into eshiwo yizihlobo uma kushoniwe? All that "We are here for you. Anisoze Baba nodwa" They were lying Bhunu! Umzwile umalume utheni? Uthi akasazi ukuthi ethini. Wathi nathi sibadala manje asibone ukuthi senzenjani. How can he say that?

Sbani : These things happen. Mina umbuzo wami ukuthi sithini manje?

Lindo : Sizobuyela kwi sangoma ntambama and hear what he says. And we'll take it from there.

Sbani : Nelendaba yaloyamkhulu angisayikholwa because why couldn't he pick up what happened last night?

Lindo : Izangoma aziboniswa yonke into.

Sbani : Yah, I guess.

Lindo : Sebe is coming back today, right?

Sbani : That's what she said. Izolo I tried to call her but she didn't answer. I think ubeselele.

Lindo : Yes. Are you picking her up?

Sbani : Yeah, ngizomulanda khona eShowe.

Lindo : It's raining a bit. Please be careful.

Sbani : I will. Ngifuna ukufonela nasemsebenzini

Lindo : Me too. Ngifuna nokuyolala lapha ku two room kancane.

Sbani : Okay bafo

Sbani gulps down his beer.

Lindo : Wena uzolala la?

Sbani : No ngizoya ngale. What time is it now?

Sbani's phone rings. Sphiwo sits up from the bed

Lindo : It's 03 : 30. Aw yavuka i jumping castle.

Sbani laughs and answers his phone. Only Sphiwo is not laughing. His eyes are wide open.

Sbani : Yah baby

Sebenzile : Mphemba, ungaselwa. Usuvukile?

Aibo Sphiwo is taking off his clothes until he remains butt naked. Sbani and Lindo look at each other with a frown on their faces.

Lindo : Phiwo, are you okay?

Sebenzile : Sbanisokuhle? Are you still there?

Sbani : Yeah sthandwa sami, I'm here. I just.....

He pauses when he sees Sphiwo positioning his hands like he is holding a steering wheel. He starts making a car sound with his mouth. Sbani looks at Lindo and shrugs. Lindo is also looking confused.

Sphiwo : They want the child. We need to give him his child. Let's go and look for his child.

He makes that Voom-Voom car sound and makes his way out. He is naked and he is sounding like a car.

Sbani : Sebe, there's a problem here. Can you call me later?

Sebe : What problem manje?

Sbani : Sphiwo is acting weird. Ngicela sibuye sikhulume

Sbani hangs up and follows Lindo who is running after Sphiwo. He finds them outside.

Lindo : Sphiwo stop it!! What is wrong with you?

Sphiwo : Ingane

Lindo : No! What baby? Look at you, awugqokile Sphiwokuhle kodwa ufuna ukuhamba.

Sphiwo sits down and laughs out loud.

Sphiwo : The baby.

He laughs while scratching his head and kicking like a baby. Lindo puts his hands on his waist and looks at Sphiwo in disbelief. He turns his head to Sbani who has his hands above his head.

Lindo : Do you see what I see?

Sbani : It can't be. No, bhuti.

Lindo : It is. USphiwo ulahlekelwe umqondo. He is crazy, Bhunu. Look at him!

Lindo is right. Damn! What the fuck is going on?

Chapter 52

NTULI HOMESTEAD

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

I was still confused by Sbani not taking my calls after he hung up on me like that. The next thing I got was his call, telling me he was outside the gate. When I saw his face I thought MaNzilo was gone but he told me something else. Something very strange. He just said "UPhiwo useyahlanya" and I was puzzled. Sbani jokes about almost everything in life, so I thought that was one of those. But when we arrived here I was so shocked. Sphiwokuhle was sitting on the floor next to the fridge with a box of eggs and he was eating them raw, together with their shells. Not only that but he was fully naked. When they try to dress him up, he literally tears up his clothes with his teeth. It's scary.

We had no choice but to force him to take sleeping pills. We gave him four and he was out. He is sleeping now.

Sbani : I don't trust that Mkhulu anymore. If he is a real sangoma then why didn't he pick up all these things? Why engabonanga indaba yalombani ongene endlini? Why engabonanga ukuthi u Sphiwo uzoba nje?

Lindo : What do you want us to do? We can't just sit here and do nothing Bhunu.

Me : Sbani, I think Lindo is right. USphiwo akaye kwi sangoma and if he doesn't help him uzoya kwesinye.

Sbani : Fine

Lindo : Makoto wakithi, sihamba nawe. You can't stay here alone.

Sbani : Yes, baby. You are coming with us.

I don't want anything to do with izangoma but this is not about me anymore.

Me : Okay

Sbani kisses my cheek.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga thembalami.

Lindo : Let's go, isalele nje lendoda. Bafo let's try ukumugqokisa.

Yoh! I can't believe I'm seeing Sphiwo's penis. This life mara.

I gave them space to dress him up and after that we went to the sangoma. It's not far from their home. It's a few minutes away. They call him uMkhulu. Lindo carries Sphiwo into Mkhulu's hut.

Me : Am I supposed to go in?

I ask Sbani.

Sbani : You don't want to?

Me : No, I'm just asking.

Sbani : Let's go

Me : Fine

I fix my doek and we head in. We find Mkhulu burning impepho already. He gives Sbani and Lindo a small bag to blow inside. They finish blowing and he throws the bones. I don't even know what I'm looking at, except for a piece of dice.

Mkhulu : What is your surname?

Why is he looking at me? This is not about me.

Me : Mlambo

He looks at Sbani.

Mkhulu : Do you believe in your dreams?

Sbani : Me?

Mkhulu : Yes

Sbani : I don't.

Mkhulu : You need to start taking your dreams very seriously. They are the answer to almost everything eyenzeka empilweni yakho.

Sbani : Yebo

Sbani is confused and so am I.

Mkhulu : There's nothing wrong with your brother. Akathakathiwe. Idlozi nje elidlalela phezu kwempilo yakhe.

Lindo : Is it my father? Is he not happy about what we did?

Mkhulu : No, amadlozi akwaNtuli nje ewonke. This is about him.

He points at Sbani using his eyes.

Mkhulu : They are using your brother to fight his battle.

Lindo : Wenzeni uBhunu?

Mkhulu : Everything will make sense very soon. Lena akuyona impi yenu.

Sbani : I don't understand.

Mkhulu : Where is your father?

He is looking at me again. What did I do to this old man?

Me : Home

Mkhulu : And your mother?

Me : She died.

Mkhulu : I see. Hhayi bafana lena yinto elula nje futhi izozilungisekela yona.

Lindo : When? Sphiwokuhle needs help. Usegula ngekhanda Mkhulu.

Mkhulu : He is going to be fine.

Lindo : And what are we going to do for now?

Mkhulu : Nothing. Ningabe nisenza lutho. Stop everything, stop the wedding.

Sbani : If we stop, is he going to be fine?

Mkhulu : No, not until the truth is out.

Sbani : What truth?

Mkhulu : About the baby that your ancestors are crying for.

I feel my heart pounding. I know which baby he is talking about. God, this is not happening.

Sbani : What baby? There is no baby.

Mkhulu : Abaphansi bayayazi into abayifunayo. Things will work themselves out.

Sbani closes his eyes.

Sbani : I knew it.

Oh God, he knows. He knows about the miscarriage. I was only trying to protect him from the pain. He was already facing a lot.

Me : Sbani, I can.....

Sbani : I knew that coming here was bullshit. Let's go.

Oh, that.

Lindo : Sbani, no.

Sbani : What? I don't even understand what he is saying. Ukhuluma isi anonymous lobaba. So why must we stay here?

Mkhulu : I understand his anger.

Sbani is already making his way out.

Mkhulu : He is going to be fine. Naye umfowenu lo.

Lindo : Makhosi

Mkhulu : Please, also remember to go and apologize kuloyamuzi.
Yilokho nje eningabe nikwenza sisalindile.

Lindo : Kuzwakele Mkhulu

I think we are done. I stand up and follow Sbani. He is sitting in the back seat with his eyes closed.

Me : Sompisi, please go and help bhuti with Sphiwo

Sbani : Are they done?

Me : Yes

He gets out of the car. I watch him walking away with his bow-legs. I think I love his legs more than anything. No, I love his face or maybe his penis. No, I love everything about him. Now back to the baby issue. Should I tell him?

They are making their way back.

Lindo : Makoti wakithi, please sit in the front.

Me : Okay

Sphiwo is awake now but he is calm. Sbani is sitting with him in the back seat. Lindo is driving.

Lindo : He didn't give him much. Umnike izinyamazane nje that will calm him down.

Me : That's better

Lindo : Yeah

He takes his phone and calls his wife.

We arrived home. They are in the dining room and I'm sitting in Sbani's room. I can hear Sphiwo laughing and making weird noises. My heart is already in pieces. I always think that death is better than losing your mind. This thing is painful.

Sbani walks in and climbs on top of me.

Sbani : Yah baby wami.

Me : How is Sphiwo?

Sbani : He is going to sleep anytime from now.

Me : Do you think it's a good idea to keep drugging him?

He sighs.

Sbani : It's not. But it's better than watching him walking around naked.

Me : Yeah

Sbani : Are you okay?

Me : I'll be fine. I heard Mkhulu saying you guys need to go and apologize somewhere. Ikephi lapho?

Sbani : Oh that. Don't worry about it.

Me : Are you sure?

He kisses me.

Sbani : Tomorrow I'm going to Mountview. Ngiyobona nje ukuthi kuhamba kanjani. Do you want to come with me?

Me : I don't know. I'll see. Here is another thing

Advertisement

Grace sent me a message, telling me to come to work on Sunday and that she needs no excuses.

Sbani : She said that?

Me : Yes. Let me show you. Angazi but ushintshile nje ever since I took that leave.

Sbani : And you? Are you still happy working under such an environment?

Me : It doesn't matter. Look..

I showed him the message.

Me : And to think that I was still thinking about asking her to give me a few more days off. Uvele wangicoba ama bones usisi wabantu.

Sbani : Ufuna ezinye izinsuku?

Me : Yes. I'm worried about Sphiwo ukuthi ubani ozosala naye when we go to work.

Sbani : Eish, yazi angiyicabanganga leyo.

Me : It's going to be a problem. He needs all the attention.

Sbani : I know.

He runs his fingers through his dreadlocks. They don't have a plan.

Me : I'll speak to Grace and if they fire me uzongondla.

I laugh but he looks at me with a straight face.

Me : I'm joking. Ngizozondla

Sbani : Would you do that for us?

Me : What?

Sbani : Look after Sphiwo?

I raise my eyebrows.

Me : I don't know what you mean, but I don't mind looking after Sphiwokuhle until he is fine.

He is staring at me without blinking. Only his eyes are moving as fast as I've ever seen them.

Me : What's wrong?

He shakes his head.

Sbani : I'm shocked.

Lindo walks in. No knocking, nothing.

Lindo : Bafo, it's time we become real men and take care of umakoti wakithi. I know that is not enough compared to what she is willing to do for us. Ngiyakubongela Godide.

He looks at me and I see his eyes filling up with tears. He clears his throat and walks out.

◦

◦◦

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

"Did you kill my baby?"

Me : No, no, I didn't. Please don't kill me.

" Where is my baby? Siphi isisu? You were pregnant, weren't you? Bitch you aborted my baby!!"

He kicks me. He goes and grabs a golf stick and hits me with it.

Me : Please don't kill me!! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I don't know what happened to the baby. Please forgive me.

" Did your man tell you to abort my baby? Ukutshele ukuthi ingane izokubambezela wathi ikhiphe?"

Me : I'm not cheating on you. I'm not, I promise.

He hits me again with a golf stick. He is hitting my thighs.

" Ilamathanga akufebisayo. Bakutshela ukuthi u fresh? Huh? Ufebiswa Ilamathanga nalelizinyo engikufake lona ngemali yami? "

Me : No, no, I'm not.

"Take it off now"

Me : Please don't do that. Please, I'm begging you.

He slaps me.

" Take it off now!!!"

I try to take off the silver teeth that he gave me money to fill up a month ago. I'm trying to take it out using my fingers. My hands are shaking. I can't. He throws a hot slap across my face and he gets up. He locks me inside his room and walks away. He comes back with a toolbox and he takes out a Plier.

"Say it."

Me : I'm stupid. Ngiyislima esingafanelwe yizinto ezinhle. Wangithatha ngingeyilutho and you tried to make me a better woman kodwa ubulima bami abupheli. I'm sorry you fell in love with a stupid woman like me. I... I don't deserve you.

"Now open your mouth"

Me : Please don't kill me. Ngiyakucela ungangibulali. Ngiyaxolisa ngakho konke engikwenzili. Ngicela ungixolele, ngiyacela, ngiyacela. Please.

He punches me and forces me to open my mouth. He forces the plier inside my mouth. He is taking out my silver teeth.

Me : Kubuhlungu! Please, stop. I'll do it myself, please stop!! No!!!

'Sebe? Sebe wake up!!! "

I open my eyes and see him standing in front of me. I jump out of bed.

Me : Menzi, please don't kill me. Ngiyakucela. Ungangishayi, please don't hit me.

He is getting closer. I cover my face with my hands.

Me : Menzi, Ngiyakucela!! Please stop!

'Sebe stop it. It's me, Sbani. Hey, look at me.'

Sbani?

I slowly lift up my head to his face. It's not him. It's Sbani.

Sbani : Baby, hey. It's me

My God, I was dreaming. I wrap my arms around Sbani and break down into tears.

Sbani : I'm sorry, sthandwa sami. I'm sorry. It's okay now.

He presses his forehead on mine and wipes my tears. He kisses my forehead and pulls me back onto his chest. His heart beat is too fast. I pull away and wipe my cheeks.

Me : I'm sorry.

I sit on the bed. My body is still shaking. Why can't my past let me go?

Excuse the errors.....

Chapter 53

NTULI HOMESTEAD

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

In life I know there are people who are doing better than me. They've never been through half of the shit that I've been through. I've been in so much pain that I can't even remember the happy days of my life before Sbani. If God trusts me so much to carry all this shit over my shoulders then the least he can do is to give me strength to carry it. Give me strength, deny me fear. Let me believe that you are walking this journey with me because lately I feel like I'm walking with the devil.

I feel someone wrapping their arms around me. My body shakes up. The iron falls on top of my feet, almost burning my feet. My mind snaps back to reality. I've burnt Sbani's work overall. Shit!

Me : I'm sorry. Ngiyaxolisa Sbani. I didn't mean to.... Please, don't be angry.

He shakes his head and unplugs the iron.

Sbani : Awuzishisanga?

I shake my head.

Me : No. I'm sorry about your uniform.

He takes my hand and we sit on the bed.

Sbani : Sebe, you do realize that I'm not Menzi, right?

Me : Yes

Sbani : Ngeke esaphinde ekuhluphe. It's all over now.

Me : I know. I just keep having flashbacks of everything that he did to me. Yesterday morning when you woke me up I was going through one of those flashbacks. I don't know how to stop them.

Sbani : There are people who are trained to help with such things.

Me : No, I don't want to talk to strangers.

Sbani : But you know that these flashbacks are the reason I went to jail? People thought I was beating you up. That's how the whole thing started if we're being honest. You thought I was beating you up when I wasn't and people came to their own conclusions.

He is right.

Me : Sbani.....

Sbani : Next time I won't be so lucky. Bayongivalela ejeli for the rest of my life. People get arrested for different crimes that they didn't even commit. Is that what you want for me too? For us?

I shake my head.

Me : No

My eyes welled up with tears.

Sbani : We need help thembalami. We are dealing with serious shit here and we can't take it for granted.

Me : I understand. I'll get all the help we need.

He pulls me onto his chest and kisses the top of my head.

Sbani : I love you so much.

Me : I love you too, baby.

Sbani : You can go back to bed. I'll iron my work uniform.

Me : No it's okay, love. I want to do it.

I wipe the tears and get up.

Me : Kade ngicabanga nokuyobona uMah esibhedlela. But that if Bhut'Lindo is still not going to work. Angifuni esale yedwa u Sphiwo.

Sbani : Are you sure? She is not looking good, sthandwa sami.

Me : It's okay. I'm ready to see her now.

Sbani : Okay. Lindo is not going to work. I'll ask him to take you there.

Me : I'll take a taxi.

Sbani : Did you tell Grace that you are not coming back?

Me : I did, but she didn't reply. I'm sure udiniwe.

I sniff.

Sbani : Have you thought about going back to school?

Me : I did and I'm going to do it.

He smiles.

Sbani : Classical music?

Me : That or nothing.

Sbani : You have my full support.

I smile.

Me : But ngifuna umuntu ozongisiza ngalento ekade sikhuluma ngayo kuqala. Nokuthi uSphiwo ebe right and I'll take it from there.

Sbani : Sebe, I appreciate you. Kakhulu.

I smile.

Sbani : Come here.

He hugs me. Somehow I feel safer in his arms.

ooo

Sbani went to work. Whilst I was making breakfast, Scelo walked in. I guess he was here to see Sphiwo. He didn't stay that long, around 10:00 he left.

I'm cleaning the stove in the kitchen. Lindo walks in.

Lindo : Makoti wakithi

Advertisement

usebuyile uScelo estolo?

Me : Oh he was going to the spaza shop?

He raises his brow.

Lindo : Yeah.

Me : No, I think he left.

Lindo : Dammit!!

He runs to the two room house. After that I see him running into his car and he drives off. I wonder what happened.

I finish cleaning and go check on Sphiwo in his room. At least he doesn't have a problem with clothes now. He is sitting on the bed and looking around like he is looking for some flies or mosquitos.

Me : Maphiwana?

I don't think he can hear me. I move and sit next to him.

Me : Are you hungry?

He shakes his head.

Me : You are not?

He is continuously shaking his head and he is not going to stop now.

Me : I'll give you yogurt.

Yogurt is his favorite thing lately.

Me : Do you want it?

He is still shaking his head. I sigh and get up. I need to go to the hospital.

I'm done bathing. It's been 2 days without blood coming out. I'm grateful. I'm busy dressing up when I hear Lindo's car. He is back. I open the curtain. I can't see clearly but I can see him. He opens the boot of his car and my eyes widen, seeing him dragging his own son out of the boot.

Me : Hhaibo!!!

I fix my dress and run outside barefooted. He is hitting Scelo.

Me : Bhuti, please stop.

Lindo : Where is my phone and my wallet? Huh? Ziphi izinto zami?

He punches him. He is sitting on top of him and he is punching him on the face.

Scelo : I don't know Baba. I didn't steal from you.

Lindo : I'm not your father!!!

Hhaibo!!

Me : Baba ka Skhalo? Please stop. Uzolimaza ingane!

Scelo : Sebe please help me. Uyangibulala, uyangibulala!

Me : Baba ka Skhalo!!

He is not hearing any of it. He gets up and kicks him..

Lindo : Uzozikhapha izinto zami Scelo!!! Uzozikhapha? Uyezwa? Lohobo untshotshe ifoni yami no wallet wami. He even stole Bhunu's sneakers akade enekwe phezu kwendlu.

Scelo : I didn't. I didn't steal anything.

Me : Please forgive him, bhuti. Ngiyakucela.

Lindo : No!! I'm tired indaba yalengane. Come here!

He lifts him up and carries him into the two room house. He closes the door. I can't, I can't deal with this. It's too much. I put my hand over my head. Jesus! I'm not covering my hair with a doek. I run back into Sbani's room. I'm going to the hospital, if Lindo wants to kill his son, he can go ahead.

I finish putting on my shoes and gather my purse and my handbag. I check on Sphiwo and find him sleeping. Thank God. I go and knock on the two room house. He is still beating up Scelo.

Me : Lindo, I'm going to the hospital.

I say and walk away, hoping he heard me.

THE CROMPTON HOSPITAL.

On my way to MaNzilo's ward I bump into a man walking out of her ward. He is wearing a red oversized hoodie. It's covering his face. He walks past me and I turn around and look at him. He looks shady. I shake my head and make my way in.

The moment my eyes land on Sbani's mother my throat closes up immediately. She is vanishing right under these sheets. I sit on the chair and hold her dry hand. She is ridiculously aging and her complexion is changing to dark. She looks like she's been here for months already.

Me : Mah, I know you can hear me. Please fight. I need you, but your sons need you more. Phiwo is.....

I swallow.

Me : I'm scared mama. This is too much for me. They are grown men and angikwazi ukubatshela ukuthi benzeni. I'm also going through so much and I don't know who to talk to. I lost Sbani's baby. I kept hoping that I didn't but I did. I bought another pregnancy test and the results were negative. I lost our baby. Ngihlulekile ukugcina umzukulu wakho.

Tears stream down my face.

Me : I couldn't tell Sbani. It was going to break him. Their father's death is still taking a toll on them. Kuningi esisabhekene nakho and you being here is..... I just couldn't.

I sniff.

Me : I need you to wake up and come back home. Angizokwazi ukuwuthwala ngedwa lomuthwalo. Ngidinga ihlombe lakho lizongithwalisa. Sphiwo is not doing good and sometimes ngizibuza ukuthi what if noSbani uyagula naye one day uLindo engekho. What will happen? Ngiyokwenzenjani mina?

Her thumb brushes the back of my hand. I quickly lift up my head. She slowly removes the oxygen mask. I get up.

Me : Mah? Mama uvukile.

I wipe my tears and smile.

Me : You're awake.

She whispers something. I get closer so that I can hear her.

Me : Mah?

MaNzilo : Mzwa was here.

I frown.

Me : Mah?

MaNzilo : Mzwa.....

She coughs. I reach for her mask and put it back. She closes her eyes. What does she mean Mzwa was here? I look around the room and in the corner there's a table. On top of the table there are flowers, a fruit basket with a black balloon. I look at Sbani's mother and make my way to the table.

Me : And then?

There's a card. It's also black. I take it and open it. I look at MaNzilo's bed before I read it. The handwriting is terrible.

"I HOPE YOU GET WELL SOON, KANZILO . THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING. TELL MY SON I'M COMING HOME"

The card reads. I put it down with so much confusion.

Chapter 54

After I left the hospital I got a message from Sbani telling me to come to Mountview. The message simply stated "When you are done, take a taxi to Mountview. We are spending the night there"

Maybe some time with him alone is what I need. I don't know how I'm going to face Lindo after I saw him beating up his son like that. Roxanne is in my room as always. Every 10 minutes she reminds me that Sbani can't find her here.

Roxanne : I thought you guys left.

Me : No

I have a lot on my mind. I can't even pay attention. That man I saw walking out of MaNzilo's ward still haunts me. The flowers, the card, MaNzilo saying Mzwa was there. Mr Mzwakhile Ntuli died and they buried him, so who was there? When I asked the nurses none of them gave me a straight answer. They couldn't even look me in the eye. No, MaNzilo is not safe in that hospital.

Roxanne : A lot happened hey.

Me : Tell me about it.

Roxanne : Dylan's father left.

And Sphiwo, I wonder how he is doing. I'm here but I'm not here.

Roxanne : Not that he left but he ran away.

I need to take out that handbag and leave it in my room before Sbani opens his wardrobe and finds it.

Roxanne :rous. He asked the police to drop the investigation.

No, I'm not listening to Roxanne and that is unfair. She seems really concerned.

Me : You say what happened?

Roxanne : Do you remember what happened with the grave and all that?

Me : Yeah.

Roxanne : Yes, there was an investigation going on but Dylan's father asked the police to drop that investigation. He came to say his goodbye to the kids and he left that box here. He told me to keep it here and not show it to Dylan.

Me : But Dylan stays in the same room.

Roxanne : But our room is the last place he can think of the day he decides to look for it.

Me : Kanti what is it about that box?

Roxanne : Just letters. Let's go, I'll show you.

Me : Let me finish here.

Roxanne : Oh and there was a man here looking for your boyfriend.

Me : A man?

Roxanne : A very gorgeous old man but he looked scary.

Me : When?

Roxanne : Two days ago.

Me : Yeah?

Roxanne : I asked who he was and he said he is one of the bus drivers.
He wanted to query about something regarding work.

Me : Oh yeah, I see. But the buses started operating 2 days ago. Didn't he know that?

Roxanne : I don't know.

I sigh.

Me : I'm done here.

Roxanne : Let's go.

We walk out.

Me : And how are things going around here?

She sighs.

Roxanne : Same old. You know I really missed you Seh. When it comes to friendships I suck. I quickly lose interest but with you it's different. I feel like we were trying to create something good but your boyfriend misunderstood me.

Me : Did he?

Roxanne : He did. But I don't blame him, in fact I think he is the best boyfriend in the world. He didn't mean any harm and all he wanted was to protect you. I salute that.

What is Roxanne up to now?

Roxanne : It's not everyday I get to witness that. I wish Dylan was different.

She opens her door and we walk in.

Me : Where are the kids?

Roxanne : Creche. I needed a break.

She looks really drained.

Me : Is everything okay?

Roxanne : I'm just tired. I feel used and....

She swallows.

Roxanne : My marriage is falling apart.

Me : What?

Roxanne : I tried to save it but it's time to let go. I'm tired.

She opens a big tin of baby formula.

Me : What happened?

She takes out a lot of letters. Some are inside envelopes and some are not. I thought she said the letters were in a box. I guess this is where she is hiding them from Dylan.

Roxanne : Dylan never really loved me. He was just here for the sake of his kids.

She sighs

Roxanne : That's an arranged marriage for you, right? Always full of surprises.

She laughs sarcastically.

Roxanne : You know, I just wish my parents were honest with me. But no!

I nod. I don't know what to say. I've learned not to trust Roxanne. She is such a great actress.

Me : These are the letters?

She sniffs.

Roxanne : Yes. Please don't open these ones. They came sealed.

Me : Okay.

They are dirty. They do look like they came from the grave.

Roxanne : This is the reason why Dylan's father left. Does this make sense to you?

I take the first letter and open it.

"Dear Ndodana yami

Ngibhala lencwadi ngilele ngomqolo emathafeni ezintaba, uthando lwakho ngiluthwele ngesifuba. My boy, today you are turning 10 years. You are a big boy now and I know ukuthi nalezincwadi engikubhalela zona usuyakwazi ukuzifundela. Zizwe, ngiyakuthanda mfana wami. Incwadi nje noma eyodwa evela kuwe iyolibuyisa ithemba eselingilahlekele. I keep checking the post, hoping that I'll find at least one letter from you but I find nothing. I hope umhlaba onyathela kuwo ukuphethe kahle mfana wami. I hope to hear from you soon..... "

I stop reading and my eyes narrow.

Roxanne : Are you done?

I look at the latter again. There's something about it. I need to keep it but Roxanne won't let me and I know it. I need to think.

Me : Where are these letters coming from?

Roxanne : Dylan's father won't say but he knows and to tell you the truth, they scared the shit out of him. I saw it all in his eyes.

Me : But why? Please give me some water.

She stands up and I quickly put the letter in my bra and hold another one.

Roxanne : That's what I would like to know. He doesn't want to be found. He doesn't want Dylan to know the truth because he will cause havoc.

Me : This is confusing.

She gives me water.

Roxanne : I'm done being worried about the Abdools. I've proven my loyalty to them repeatedly and that got me nowhere.

Her tone about the Abdools is really changing but again, if there's one thing that Sbani taught me about Roxanne is to never trust her.

Me : Rox I'm sorry gogozi. This life is not easy but we keep pushing.

Roxanne : I just want to focus on my kids. We are slowly learning to live without Dylan.

Me : Where is he now?

Dylan : He is never here and when he is finally here, he is never alone.

Me : I'm sorry.

Dylan : No it's okay. He is still taking care of me and his kids.

She smiles while shaking her head.

Roxanne : When I'm done with that bastard he will not know what hit him.

I nod. We are all dealing with our own shit. I get up.

Me : I need to go and start cooking before Sbani comes back.

Roxanne : Yeah. Let me go and fetch my babies from creche.

Me : I'll see you ke

I hand her the letter. She can't suspect anything.

Roxanne : You guys are back for good, right?

Me : Not really.

Roxanne : Ow?

Me : But we will talk.

Roxanne : Okay

I make my way out.

Roxanne : Seh?

Fuck! She is realizing that there's a missing letter. I smile and turn around.

Roxanne : You are a good person. Thank you for always giving me your ear.

Great! I smile while shaking my head.

Me : You are welcome.

I walk out. I want to run into Sbani's room. I open the door and step in. I lock the door and run to my handbag. I take out the card that I found in MaNzilo's ward. This card is the only thing I took. I left the flowers and the rest of the things.

I take out the letter and open it. I place the card next to the letter. My heart stops. I knew there was something about this letter. The handwriting is exactly the same as the one on the card. There's no doubt that this card and this letter were written by the same person. Now the big question is, who is that person?

^

^

^

Sbani is back from work. After a long argument with myself I decided to keep the letter and the card in my room. I think that was a good idea because Sbani seems really down. He is sleeping on the bed. He is still in his work uniform.

Sbani : Baby?

Me : Mhmmm.

Sbani : Ufuna ngikwenzeleni?

Me : Huh?

Sbani : Tell me. Noma yini

Me : I don't understand.

I look at him. His eyes are closed.

Sbani : Do you want us to go out?

I shake my head.

Me : No, I want to stay here with you. Even though I'm worried about Sphiwo.

Sbani : They are fine. Maka Skhalo is with them.

Me : Oh, I didn't know.

He gets up and sits in front of his piano and he starts playing with his eyes closed.

Sbani : Tell me what you want me to do for you thembalami and I'll do it. Whatever it is.

He tells me while playing the piano. No, my man is not okay. I leave everything and I go stand behind him. I massage him.

Me : Godide, are you okay?

He pulls me to sit on his lap and he continues playing.

Sbani : Do you think society will ever accept people living with albinism? Will they ever think that we are capable?

Me : Kusukaphi konke lokhu?

He laughs.

Sbani : Emsebenzini siphumile sayothenga i drink e mall, yeah?

His eyes remain closed.

Me : Yeah

Sbani : Cool. Singene lapha estolo. Singene and I realized that there's a woman following us. Uhamba nezingane ezu 2. These kids are crying.

Me : Zombili?

Sbani : Yeah. I think those were twins because bebefana. Sharp

Advertisement

sithenge i drink nesinkwa. Lezingane ngiyazizwa zisakhala. I got frustrated because everyone was looking at me. Sihambe siye kwi queue nalamajita engisebenza nawo.

He laughs and shakes his head.

Sbani : Sifice abanye omama bekhuluma. They were talking about the kids that were crying. Lo omunye uyasho ukuthi yena she hates albinos and that they disgust her

She feels like they carry some type of bad spirit.

My mouth gape open.

Sbani : The other one agreed with her, uze wathi kids can sense umoya omubi and that's why those kids were crying. Uthi mina I was supposed to walk out of the store ngoba ngibonile that the kids were scared of me but I didn't and that was unfair. She kept repeating the word unfair.

Me : Baby, I'm sorry.

My heart is bleeding.

Sbani : The other one was saying yena uma angase ezale i albino engalishiya esibhedlela.

Me : What? Are you serious? Bakubonile kodwa ukuthi umi nabo kulayini?

Sbani : No. But there's nothing wrong with what they were saying. Most people hate people living with albinism and that's fine. My problem was them saying bekufanele ngiphume esitolo ngoba bengisabisa izingane.

I'm already on my feet. I'm fuming.

Sbani : The queue moved but kuthe sesizofika lapha kwi cashier, I heard those kids crying again. When people started looking at me again nalabomama bangibona and they started telling me ukuthi bacela ngiphume.

Me : Please tell me you didn't.

Sbani : Why would I? The last shit I would do is be apologetic about who I am. I will never do that shit. I will not apologize for living with albinism. I will not apologize for anything. I don't care if you are a kid or an adult or allergic to people living with albinism. I will never apologize.

He shakes his head.

Sbani : I will never apologize for being a human being. I don't care how anybody else takes that shit.

Me : My love, I'm sorry you went through that.

Sbani : Angiphendulanga lutho, ngiqhubekile ngama. Saqeda ukukhokha and on our way out the mother of those kids started calling me wathi her kids are crying because they want a picture with me.

Me : Hhaibo really?

Sbani : Yes. Uthi ubenqena ukungiphaphela phakathi kwabantu.

Me : Did you take a picture with them?

Sbani : No, I played with them and when they were done crying and all happy, I left.

I laugh.

Me : Why did you do that?

Sbani : I wanted them to understand that my skin colour is expensive. If I gave them a picture then they wouldn't be that excited when they saw me in future.

He smiles and opens his eyes.

Me : Oh wow. Oh my God yazi awazi ukuthi sengidinwe kanjani.

Sbani : Don't be.

I smile.

Me : Kids really love you.

Sbani : No, they don't. They just love my face, especially my eyes. Kids love bright colours. But those ones were old. I think baneminyaka ewu 7 or maybe 8

Me : I'm just glad ukuthi akubanga ilento abantu abebeyicabanga. That they were scared of you.

He sighs.

Sbani : A lot happened today but it was nothing new.
Bekuyisikhumbuzo sokuthi some things will never change.

He stands up and wraps his arms around me. He blows out a sigh and hugs me tightly. No, telling him about those letters is not a good idea, he is having a really bad day.

Me : Talk to me.

He shakes his head and kisses me. This kiss no.

Me : Love, stop. Uzilile.

Sbani : It doesn't matter. Ngizokhumula inzilo.

I laugh.

Me : You are crazy.

He kisses my lips and looks around.

Me : What?

Sbani : God forbid, I'm about to commit serious murder. Families are about to cry.

Me : What?

He goes and takes out Doom from the drawer. I laugh. He is back to his old crazy Sbani.

Me : Wait, let me open a window.

Sbani : You want to invite more mosquitoes.

Me : But leyo Doom izogcwala layindlini and I want to eat now.

He puts back

Sbani : Fine, I'll kill them later. What are we eating?

Me : Uzobona

He kisses me.

Sbani : I love you

Me : I love you too, baby.

I dish up for us and he takes off his work uniform.

Me : Please, let's eat before you shower.

Sbani : Okay baby

Me : Thank you. Yazi angikholwa ukuthi khona u Fezile kwa Ntuli .

Sbani : Yeah, naye kumele enakekele u Sphiwo. Awusona isisebenzi salapha. Ukuthi uyeke umsebenzi akusho lutho.

Me : But ngasho ukuthi I want to look after Sphiwo.

Sbani : I know, kodwa nami ngifuna ukuhlala nentombi yami without distractions. Naye u Lindo uyakwenza lokho, esishiye eyohlala no Maka Skhalo.

Me : Kodwa Khuboni, I.....

Hell no! What is he doing in that wardrobe and why is my handbag on the floor, open? No, no, no, I need to distract him.

Me : What are you looking for?

Sbani : Something to wear.

He wears the t-shirt and lifts up my bag. Something very dangerous is about to fall. My body is shaking.

Me : Yazi, kade ngiyobona uMah ungitshela ukuthi your father was there.

Sbani : My father?

Me : Yeah.... yeah. And I want to show you something.

Dammit!

Me : Please give me that....

Fuck! One pregnancy test falls out of my bag.

Sbani : What do you mean? Is that what she told you?

My voice box is broken. I'm staring at the pregnancy test and before I know it, he picks it up. He looks at me before he looks at the pregnancy test. I swallow hard.

I see his lips stretching out to a wide smile.

Sbani : Sthandwa sami?

Oh no!

Sbani : Baby, you are pregnant. Is that what you wanted to tell me?

I shake my head.

Me : Mhmmmm....

I don't know when he got here. I'm in his arms now and he is spinning me around. I've never seen him this excited. Menzi was right about one thing. I am stupid.

Chapter 55

Sbani is taking this pregnancy thing way too seriously. The sad part is that it doesn't even exist. It's 01:00 am and since last night he's been doing some research. He announced my pregnancy to everyone. I'm sure everyone in South Africa got a call from him last night. He was telling everyone that he is going to be a father. Guilt is eating me up but I'm trying my best to pretend like I'm happy as much as he is. I'm looking at him under duvet and he is still sitting in front of his computer. There's a wide smile on his face. He rubs the back of his neck and his smile grows wider. His phone rings. Who is calling him at this time? I hope Sphiwo is fine.

Sbani : MaDladla

It's Fezile. Oh lord, I hope this call is not about Sphiwo or MaNzilo.

Sbani : Usike izinwele zakho?

There's a long silence.

Sbani : Uyamazi uLindo kodwa Maka Skhalo. No, don't leave. Make sure he is sleeping and then relax his hair.

Hhayi Sbani!!!

Sbani : And tomorrow put all the cars in the garage and hide the keys and all his caps. Uzobona uzoba right.

I can hear Fezile laughing.

Sbani : Yeah, don't go now. Relax him, waking up as Velaphi will humble him.

Wow. Let me go and pee. I don't want him to know that all this time I wasn't sleeping because he begged me to stay with him. He removes his glasses and looks at me with a frown on his face.

Sbani : Uyaphi baby?

Me : Toilet

Sbani : No no, no ngikhuluma no Sebe.

He stands up. I swear he even wishes to carry me into the bathroom. He is busy putting my slippers on my feet while talking to Fezile. He laughs.

Sbani : I'll tell her.

He stands up straight and help me up. He then goes to open the bathroom door.

Sbani : Sharp

He hangs up and throws the phone on the bed.

Sbani : That was Skhalo's mother. Uthi ukukhumbule.

I laugh.

Me : Shame, I miss her too.

I step inside the bathroom and he goes back to his computer.

Sbani : Lindo cut her new weave into pieces.

Me : Why?

Sbani : Uthi uyithengelwe enye indoda.

Lindo is not my favorite person these days but on that one, I agree with him.

Me : So uysisikile?

Sbani : Yes

Me : Maybe he will buy her a new one. Yena uFezile uzithathaphi leziyazinwele?

Sbani : They order them from overseas. They are very expensive sthandwa sami, ungangilokothi.

I laugh.

Me : Don't worry about me.

Sbani : Usile u Fezile ubesefuna ukuhamba eshiye uSphiwo khona thina sizobuya. No, I told her not to go.

Me : Wathi akenzeni?

He laughs.

Sbani : Nothing, I told her to relax.

Me : You told her to relax or to relax Lindo's hair?

He laughs out loud.

Sbani : Bengimudlalisa

Me : After how Lindo beat up Scelo I hope she do it.

He laughs.

Sbani : No, she won't.

I wash my hands and get out. He looks at me.

Sbani : Are you okay Manu?

Me : I'm okay baby

Sbani : Did I wake you up?

Me : No, I wanted to pee.

Sbani : Are you hungry?

Me : No. Please sleep manje, uzozela emsebenzini.

Sbani : No.....

He types on his computer.

Sbani : Yazi manuna I saw something here. It say here, when our baby reaches 23 weeks uzokwazi ukuzwa ama voices ethu and other sounds. Bathi he/she may even respond by moving around.

I fake a smile.

Me : Wow

Sbani : They say at 24 weeks I need to carve out a regular time each day to read to my baby. They also recommend that I choose rhythmic language. But mina I want to know how I can start bonding with my baby right away. Manje la abangivezeli u 4 weeks. I want to train my baby's brain kusuka manje, khona uma esezalwa.....

He scratches his eyebrow. While looking very closely at his computer screen.

Me : My love, please put on your glasses.

Sbani : No, I'm almost done here.

He hates glasses shame, I won't lie.

Me : Why ufuna ukuqeqesha umqondo wengane ingakazalwa?

Sbani : Because life is fucking unfair. I want to give my boy or my princess heads up before they step on these ugly streets of this earth.

Me : You are already worried, aren't you?

Sbani : About what, sthandwa sami?

Me : About us having a baby with albinism.

He heaves a sigh and shakes his head.

Sbani : No

I just want to be a good father to my baby. I want professionals to guide me and that's why I'll be attending weekend classes because there's so much I want to know.

Me : Classes?

Sbani : Yes.

He looks at me and looks back at his computer screen. Wow.

Me : I think you are being extra ke manje Sbanisokuhle. Ama class? Really? Ay sthandwa sami wenza kakhulu. It's too early for all of this. Usakhumbula kona ukuthi I'm 4 weeks pregnant. Isisu sami siselula, sidinga ukuhlonishwa. Hhayi ukuthi uhambe utshela lonke izwe ukuthi ngikhulelwe. I didn't like what you did last night.

His face drops.

Sbani : Eish, you are right thembalami. I shouldn't have told all those people.

Me : Exactly. People are jealous and what if bangifisela okubi ivele iphume lengane.

I feel like I've just brutally stabbed his heart.

Sbani : Sebe, no

I smile.

Me : I'm joking, but please slow down. I know you are too excited and I am too but we need to slow down.

Sbani : You have no idea how happy I am. UBaba kade esanda ukushona nje usengenzela into enkulu kanje.

Lord intervene. Guilt won't let me look at him anymore. I kiss him. We kiss and I run my hand around his penis. He laughs and cups my face.

Sbani : Baby, wait. Wena futhi?

I know what he mean. Deep I don't want us to do this because he is still mourning. But the sooner I get pregnant, the better. For Sbani to have sex with me while he is still mourning won't bring me any bad luck because I'm already drowning on my own. I had a miscarriage and no cleansing was done. Let the bad luck meet.

Me : Ngiyakucela

Sbani : Are you sure about this? Phela uwena ohlale ungikhumbuza ukuthi ngizilile.

Me : I know but I really need.....

He kisses me and wraps my leg around his waist. God bless this sexual intercourse that I'm about to have. Amen.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

I thought Sphiwo was getting better but he seems to be getting worse. He and Lindo are outside. Sphiwo is pacing around the yard topless. I'm sure we all position our arms the same way when imitating chickens. That's how Sphiwo is holding his arms right now , like a chicken. He does that while pacing around and looking around the sky as if he is seeing it for the very first time. However, with everything he is going through he is not losing weight, but instead he is gaining more because look at that belly. Lindo is sitting on the veranda, watching him. Pain is written all over his face. They grew up with Sphiwo and all their lives he was fine and out of the blue he just turned into this. This is hitting Lindo. His eyes are moist, he keeps biting his lower lip with his eyes glued to Sphiwo. He takes out his gun for the 5th time. This time he is not cleaning it. He takes it out and cocks it. He points it at Sphiwo. Lindo don't do it.

Lindo : Just one bullet and you'll be free from all of this.

He whispers and blows out a sigh. He lowers the gun and puts it back under his shirt. He continues to watch Sphiwo who is not even aware that there was a gun pointed at him. He scratches his head. Wait, why is he wearing a scarf around his head?

Lindo : Sphiwo?

Sphiwo is busy looking at the sky. He tilts his head.

Lindo : Sphiwokuhle!

Sphiwo looks at him and points at the sky.

Sphiwo : Igwebu

Lindo : No, akuwona amagwebu, those are clouds. Come here. Come and sit with me.

Sphiwo moves his head side to side while looking at the clouds.

Lindo : Uyezwa Sphiwo? Woza la, I want to tell you something. Bhunu is going to have a baby.

Sphiwo is not interested which frustrate Lindo even more. Lindo presses his forehead on his lap. He lifts up his head and see Sbani's car at the gate. He stands and goes to open the gate for him. Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Why are you covering your head?

Lindo : Awungene Bhunu

Bhunu laughs drives in.

Lindo : Whole day I've been trying to call you kodwa awuyibambi ifoni.

Sbani : Calling me?

Lindo : Usungenza umampara manje

Sbani laughs and gets out of the car with Spar plastic bag.

Sbani : Ushuquleleni?

Lindo : Awukahle

Lindo tightens his hands around the scarf.

Lindo : Ngifuna ungigunde

Sbani : Ugundile nje

Lindo : I want chiskop

Sbani : Chiskop? Why?

Lindo shakes his head.

Sbani : How is Sphiwo?

Lindo shrugs.

Sbani : Sphiwo buka ngiphethe amasi

Sphiwo hears the word amasi and he smiles.

Sbani : U grand bafozi?

He caresses Sphiwo's head.

Lindo : Bafo awudle khona uzongigunda

Sbani : Why?

Lindo : Fine. Zah drugged me and she relaxed my hair.

Sbani : She relaxed your hair?

Lindo : I'm sure that she drugged me before enze loshidi ekhanda lami.

He removes the scarf. WHAT! He looks like a cat that has been walking in the rain. Even Sphiwo is shocked by this.

Sbani : Ukwenze i perm bafo. Fezile is crazy.

Lindo shakes his head. He is not happy with his perm.

Lindo : Ize yangenza isilonda manje lento ekhanda. Izwa la.

Sbani wants to laugh so hard. He keeps putting his hand on his cheek to suppress his laughter.

Sbani : Akusona isilonda. Wena bhuti kahle kahle ushiswe i relaxa.

Lindo : Nx! Yazi u Fezile madoda. How am I supposed to go to work with this tomorrow?

Sbani : Wena wenzeni?

Lindo : It doesn't matter. This is wrong.

He shakes his head.

Sbani : Uzobagrand bhuti. Ngizokugunda. Yazi mina bengithi ngiyamudlalisa

Lindo : Who?

Sbani clears his throat.

Sbani : No, you. I thought uyadlala uma uthi une perm.....ngicela singene endlini, I want us to talk about something important.

Lindo : Sphiwo woza sizodla amasi.

Sphiwo follows them.

Lindo : What happened? What were you thinking?

Sbani : Bhuti, I'm not going to have Azwindini out of wedlock. No.

Lindo rubs his neck.

Lindo : Eish yah. About that.

Sbani : Yeah. Things are different now. My baby is on the way.

Lindo : I know bafo. Shuthi lomshado kaBaba nomawakho uyafuneka ngempela. We need to go ahead with it ngoba phela abaphansi basinika zonke izizathu sokuthi siwenze.

Sbani : That's true.

Lindo : And lento yalenzilo futhi. I think one month is enough. Singaze senze izinto ezi wrong sigqoke lezindwangu

Sbani : Do you think one month is enough?

Lindo : It is Bhunu. Yini engcono phakathi kokuthi sikhumule inzilo early ukunokuthi size sigange sigqoke inzilo?

Sbani : I guess you are right.

Lindo : Yeah. Going forward we are going to do things our way. Vele sisele sodwa manje.

Sbani : Ngiyakuzwa bhuti

Lindo : Yeah. Sizokhumula senze lomshado kamawakho no Baba. We know what we need to do after the wedding. Sigeza usisi kamawakho and after that we can all move on with our lives. Nawe ushade, silindele umshana wami in peace.

Sbani smiles.

Sbani : Umshana wakho?

Lindo smiles and wraps his arm around Sbani's neck.

Lindo : Yes umshana wami no Phiwo. I'm happy for you bafo. I know how much you needed this.

Sbani sighs.

Sbani : Yeah. But now I'm scared. What if ngiba uBaba obhedayo enganeni yami bhuti?

Lindo : You are going to be an amazing father to Azwindini.
Angikungabazi lokho

Sbani smiles.

Lindo : Our father did say ukuthi uwena ozovusa lomuzi and manje sengiyabona ukuthi wayesho ukuthini. That's why there's no need ukuthi silinde abantu abanemizi yabo ukuthi bezositshela ukuthi sizenze kanjani izinto layikhaya. Those people don't care. Akekho noyedwa kubona osafikile ukuzobona u Sphiwo.

Sbani nods.

Lindo : What are you thinking?

Sbani shakes his head.

Sbani : No, ukuthi ngoba ukhuluma ngoBaba khona into esivele yafika emqondweni wami.

Lindo : Ini leyo?

Sbani : You guys said before Baba died he was asking for me.

Lindo : Yeah

Sbani : Bhuti uma ucabanga uBaba wayefuna ukuthini mina?

Lindo heaves a sigh.

Lindo : I have no idea mfanakithi.

Chapter 56

NTULI HOMESTEAD

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

I look at the three pregnancy tests that are lined up on Sbani's bed and all three of them are negative.

Me : Dammit!!

I scratch my face. I thought I knew what pain was but nothing compared to the pain that I've been feeling ever since I lied to Sbani. Nothing compares to the pain of desperately wanting to fall pregnant. Every night I'm on top of Sbani, begging for his penis. Yesterday he even said, we are feeding his baby more sperms and less food. He is already starting to complain and I know that sex is not his favorite thing. It's crazy how men who are good in bed don't like sex and we have abo Menzi who can't live without sex but they can't do shit in front of a vagina.

Nx! This thing is starting to frustrate me. Maybe I'm rushing the whole thing and I need to relax. I grab a glass that has lemon. I told Roxanne that Sbani and I are trying for a baby and girl gave me a long list of things I need to buy. I can't buy all these things and I don't want Sbani

to have suspicions. I'm going to focus on the lemon water that she recommended. Luckily the Ntulis have a big lemon tree right here in the yard. Now I need to throw away these pregnancy tests. No, I'm not even going to throw them but I'm going to burn them. I need to do that before Sbani and Lindo come back. I don't know where they are. It's only me and Sphiwo. Speaking of Sphiwo, here he is coming. I don't even hide the pregnancy tests because Sphiwo is like my 3 year old baby nowadays. We have accepted his condition but honestly we can't wait for him to get better. We all miss the old Sphiwokuhle.

Me : Maphiwana, what is that?

I put the tests inside the plastic and tie up the plastic bag.

Sphiwo : Bible

Me : That's a very big Bible. Let me see.

He is coming. His walk is starting to bother me. He is walking like someone who suffers from a stroke. I need to talk to Lindo and Sbani about this. He puts his Bible on the bed. This is not a Bible, this is Sbani's drawing book that I saw in Mountview.

Me : Where did you get this?

Instead of answering my question he opens the drawing book. He stops at a drawing of cows. I remember when Sbani was telling me about this dream. He dreamed of a bunch of cows that were peeing blood. Sphiwo wants to go to the next page but I stop his hand. Why is this drawing taking me back to my father's cows? No, no, I'm being delusional. I close the drawing book.

Me : Come, asihambe siyobheka u paraffin. I need to burn this.

I hold his hand and we walk out. We went to the back of the house and burned the tests. When we got back inside the house I found my phone ringing. My father.

Me : Siyaphila Baba.

I wouldn't be surprised if the reason he is calling is because Sbani told him that I'm pregnant.

Mlambo : That's good. Phela wena awufoni

Me : No, I've been busy. I told you that Sbani's brother is not well, so nami ngibuye ngifike ngizobasiza.

Mlambo : That's the reason why I called. Ngicabanga ukuthi kufanele uthi ukuqhelelana nomfana kaNtuli ngoba esazilile nje. Sebenzile kuloyamuzi basabhukuda emanzini amunyama and for you to be there esikhathini esinjengalesi akulungile. Anginayo mina indodakazi ezokipita.

Mlambo is not happy today.

Me : Asikipitile baba.

Mlambo : Good. And you can't be sleeping with that boy so soon. Stay away from him for a month or two.

I know what he means by "sleeping".

Me : Yebo

Mlambo : I will tell you uma sekulungile ukuthi nenze lezinto zenu.

Mlambo doesn't know how desperate I am and giving sex a break is not an option right now. I know everyone respects the mourning period but this time it will have to wait.

Me : No, we are not doing anything.

Mlambo : Sebenzile stop lying to me!! I know ukuthi kukhona okwenza naloyamfana and I'm telling you to stop!

He is shouting. I sigh.

Me : Ngiyezwa. Lindo will give you a call soon. Kukhona afuna ukuthi nikukhulume mayelana nomshado.

Mlambo : Oh ngiyabona

Me : Yes, I need to go now. Kukhona engimatasa ngakho.

I hang up. Whenever my father shouts at me, I feel like I could just strangle him to death. It's crazy how I love him some days but some days I wake up and just want to send inkabi to finish him off for absolutely no reason.

Me : Maphiwana let's go and eat.

He shakes his head. He agrees to everything shame.

KWA MNGUNI.

Lindo and Sbani are sitting in the car. Their car is parked a few feet away from the Mnguni gate.

Lindo : You are scared, I am not.

Sbani : I'm not scared.

Lindo : Then let's go.

Two girls walk out of the house with a chair. One sits down and the other combs the hair of the girl sitting down.

Sbani : Wait, wait. USihle loya

Lindo : Lo omile?

Sbani : Yeah. Let me call her

Lindo : You still have a number?

Lindo is shocked.

Sbani : Yeah

Lindo : Call her.

Sbani scrolled down on his contacts. He puts the call on the loudspeaker. It's ringing. They wait for her to answer while watching her. Sihle laughs and runs away. The other girl is chasing her. Sihle is showing her something on her phone.

Lindo : Why is she so happy?

Sbani : No, why is she not answering?

Lindo : Because she is still celebrating your call.

Sbani : Celebrating?

Lindo laughs.

Lindo : Look at her.

Sihle : Hello

Sbani : Shhhshh! Hey, Sihle....Hi.

Sihle : Unjani?

Sbani : I'm good. Look, ngila ngakini.

Sihle : Really?

She looks around. She sees the car and runs inside the house.

Sbani : Aibo

Lindo : And?

Sbani : She hung up.

Lindo : Hhaibo why?

Sbani : I don't know.

Lindo : Fona futhi.

Sbani calls Sihle again. But she doesn't answer.

Lindo : Let's go in.

Sbani : Wait. Nangu ephuma.

Lindo laughs out loud.

Lindo : Useshintshile.

Lindo is right. She was wrapping something like a scarf. But now she has changed into a white vest and black skinny jeans.

Lindo : Wadla Bhunu

Sbani : No

no, don't start bhuti.

Lindo : She is coming.

Sihle comes and stands by the window.

Lindo : I need to smoke.

Lindo gets out of the car.

Lindo : Sphongo

Sihle laughs.

Sihle : Ngizokuphoxa weLindo.

They both laugh. Sihle gets in and sits in the driver's seat where Lindo was sitting.

Sihle : Sawubona

Sbani : Hey, uyaphila?

Sihle : Ngiyaphila. Angisakwazi

She crosses her arms over her chest and smiles. She is a woman with confidence.

Sbani : No, ngikhona.

Sihle : That's good. Why ungashongo ukuthi uyeza?

Sbani chuckles.

Sbani : Khona kuzobanjani?

Sihle : No just nje.

Sbani laughs and shakes his head.

Sihle : Waze wamuhle ke. Ngezwa kuthiwa usuthole umakoti waseShowe.

Sbani : Aw ubani lo okutshela izindaba ezingaka?

Sihle : Hhaibo izindaba azihlali phansi zisaba amazolo.

Sbani : Oh yah.

Sihle : But I see it's true. You are glowing impela.

Sbani smiles and shakes his head.

Sbani : Kahle kahle ngizobona uMnguni

Sihle : My father? Ngobani nje kangaka?

Sbani : Hawu akakutshelanga ukuthi we are best friends manje?

She laughs.

Sihle : No, he didn't.

Sbani : Kusho ukuthi akafuni wazi

Sihle : Ngoba mina ngizokona ubungani benu?

They both laugh.

Sihle : But seriously though, if you told me that you guys were coming I would have cooked for you.

Sbani : Aw kusho ukuthi labantu abakutshela izindaba zami abakutshelanga ukuthi intombi yami iyangiphekela.

Sihle laughs but her laughter is mixed with a little bit of disappointment.

Sihle : Ay bandla, iyakuhlanyisa ngempela intombazane yaseShowe.

She laughs and claps once.

Sbani : Uyabona kanti nawe?

Sihle : Kahle kabi.

Sbani : That's good.

Sihle : Mhmmm - Mhmmm

There's a look of disgust on her face.

Sbani : Is your father here?

Sihle : I don't know.

Sbani : Awazi kanjani manje?

Sihle : Phela mina angihlale ngibelethe uBaba emhlane.

Ouch!

Sbani : Umuyekelani ungamubelethi?

Lindo gets in and sits in the back seat.

Lindo : MaMnguni sizobona uBaba. Ukhona?

She looks at Sbani and rolls her eyes.

Sihle : Yes, ukhona.

Lindo : Sicela ukumubona bandla kuyaphuthuma.

Sihle : Okay.

She gets out of the car.

Lindo : Let's go.

They all head inside the house. Mnguni is watching TV in the living room. Sbani and Lindo sit down. Sihle grabs a TV remote and turns down the volume.

Sihle : Baba, they are here to see you.

Mnguni : Obani laba?

Sihle : Zichazeni

Sbani chuckles. Lindo clears his throat.

Lindo : Baba thina singamadodana ka Mzwakhile Ntuli.

Mnguni : Yes

Lindo : Yebo, lo osanda kushona.

Mnguni : Yah bafana nginganenzelani?

Lindo : Eh, empeleni Baba la sizokwenza into ekufanele engabe yenziwa uyena uBaba kodwa ngoba manje isikhathi sasemhlabeni asifani nesasezulwini, kufike esamazulu uBaba engakakulungisi okwasemhlabeni.

Mnguni : I'm listening.

Lindo : Sithunywe abantu basekhaya abadala mayelana nomonakalo owenziwa uBaba khona la ekhaya. We understand that what he did was wrong.

Mnguni : Kuphi kona kukona konke lokhu okwenziwa uyihlo?

Lindo : About what he said to your daughter emsola ngokugulisa umfowethu omncane kanye nokukubeka isandla.

Mnguni : Why now? Yini le esinenze nabona ukuthi sekuyisikhathi sokuthi nize layikhaya after all these years?

Lindo : UBaba akasekho. Asifuni amacala akhe ewele kithi njengoba nesisho sisho ukuthi izono zabazali ziyowela ebantwaneni. Yilokho esizama ukukulungisa. We want to start over.

Mnguni : Start over kanjani?

Sihle laughs.

Sihle : Ay shame.

Lindo : My brother is getting married soon. He is expecting a baby. Asifuni imikhuhlane ingene nasenganeni because of what happened.

Sihle narrows her eyes.

Mnguni : Ngiyakuzwa.

Lindo : Yes, so we are here to find out from you ukuthi yini esingayenza ukuze sishwelezele uBaba nokuthi kuthelwane amanzi.

Mnguni : I forgave your father. Ngamuxolela kudala u Mphemba, yize noma yena engazanga ukuzoxolisa kodwa mina ukuze ngikwazi ukukhulula inhliziyo yami, ngizisuse umthwalo, I chose to forgive him.

Lindo : Siyabonga ukuzwa lokho Mnguni kodwa izinto ezikanje zidinga ukuthi zenziwe ngendlela ngoba umsindo odaleka ekhaya awugcini ngokuthinta abaphilayo kuphela kodwa uthinta nezidalwa.

Mnguni : I know but as I've said ngimuxolele uyihlo no thixo uwufakazi kodwa ngiyasizwa isicelo senu. I will speak to the rest of the family, ngizwe ukuthi bathini. Umama kaNosihle naye akekho okwamanje so kusafanele ngimuthinte ngaloludaba.

Sihle stands up.

Sihle : No, there's nothing to talk about here. Yimi owayehudulwa emini ilanga libalele ngimenyezwa phakathi kwabantu kuthiwa ngithelele

uSbani ngengculazi and no one came to apologize. Now suddenly sekufanele ngixole because Sbani is getting married?

Lindo : Sihle.....

Sihle : No, angifuni ukuxola ke mina self and no one is going to force me. Please leave.

Sbani : Can you please calm down?

Sihle : Ngicela ungangisukeli. You didn't tell your father to calm down when he was embarrassing me in front of the whole country engibiza ngomahosha. You didn't tell him to calm down. Wathula wamubuka kodwa wazi kahle ukuthi ungiqambela amanga. Now listen, angizidingi izimbuzi zenu zenhlambuluko. Please leave.

Sbani : Let's go bhuti.

Sihle : Habe, kanti nizodakwa la. Get out! Aziye! Nibone enifike ngayo.

Sbani is the first to walk out. Sihle is following them with the insults.

Sihle : Ubuyele kule sfebe sakho saseShowe esasikuthakathe ipipi ungakwazi ngisho nokulala nami. Ngifike kini ningangiphakeli ngisho iphiko. Get out!!

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : This girl is crazy.

Sihle : Ningaphinde nibuye la. Loluxolo eniludingayo niyoluthola emome.

Lindo and Sbani get inside the car. They look at each and they both burst into laughter. Lindo shakes his head and starts the car.

Lindo : Why didn't you give her food?

Sbani : Ey bhuti.

Chapter 57

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Lindo parks the car and turns off the engine. Sbani's phone rings.

Sbani : I don't know why she's calling me now.

Lindo : Sihle?

Sbani : Yeah.

Lindo : Mhlampe ufuna sibuye

Sbani : Or maybe she wants to throw more insults.

Lindo laughs.

Sbani : Eish! noBaba kaSebe kade efonile.

Lindo : Really? Why ungayizwanga ifoni?

Sbani : I don't know yazi.

Lindo : Call him back

Sbani : No. I'm scared of that man.

Lindo laughs.

Lindo : Why are you so scared of him? Wakuzalela umfazi loyababa

Sbani : I'm not scared of him, mhlampe ngiyamunqena nje. Loyamuntu unesinye nje isithunzi

Lindo : Kanjani?

Sbani : I don't know. Our energies clash somehow.

Lindo : Mhlampe ukumsaba kwakho kuhlangele nokuthi uyamuhlonipha.

Sbani shrugs

Sbani : Maybe. Look, Sihle is calling me again.

Lindo : Answer her

Sbani : No, iyangijwayela lengane.

Lindo laughs and gets out of the car..

Lindo : Saluhambela ke ubala.

They go inside the house and stop by the kitchen.

Lindo : Baphi kanti abantu balayikhaya?

Sebe laughs outside. She is laughing with Sphiwo.

Lindo : Naba

Sbani : If Sihle doesn't stop calling uzongiqhatha noSebe. I hate explaining bullshit.

Lindo : Answer her uzwe ukuthi ufunani

Sbani : She doesn't know what she wants. Sihle is childish, lento yakhe yobungane ayipheli.

Lindo : Useyingane uSihle bafo and I was expecting her to behave the way she did.

Sbani : Ngicela ukhulume naye bhuti ngoba mina naye sizovele sixabane.

Lindo : Fine, give me your phone.

Sbani : Ngicela ukhulume naye emnyango.

Lindo : Okay

Sebenzile and Sphiwokuhle walk in. Sebe is carrying clothes and Sphiwokuhle is carrying a bag of pegs.

Sbani : Yah baby

Sebe smiles.

Sebe : Sanibona

Lindo : Makoti wakithi

Sbani hugs Sebenzile and kisses her.

Sbani : Are you okay?

Sebe : Uh! Wena? You look tired.

Lindo places a bag of pegs on the counter and he walks out with Sphiwo.

Sbani : I look tired?

He rubs his face.

Sebe : Yeah, tired but cute.

She giggles.

Sebe : Ngisayobeka lezingubo. Niphumaphi?

Sbani : E car wash.

He follows her with pegs. Sebe puts the clothes on the bed. Sbani stands behind her and rubs her stomach. Sebe clears her throat and tries to maneuver herself.

Sbani : Iqala nini ukunyakaza ingane?

Heavenly Father, please.

Sebe : It's still early.

Sbani : Your father tried to call me.

Sebe : Really?

Sphiwo and Lindo are in the two room house. Lindo is talking to Sihle.

Lindo : Sesisekhaya. He asked me to talk to you. Akekho la.

Sihle : Okay

Lindo : We didn't mean to upset you. Besizama ukuzolungisa izinto.
What I didn't know ukuthi wena no Bhunu niyizitha.

Sihle : Siyizitha kanjani mhlampe?

Lindo : No, the way you kicked us out. Mina ngikwazi uyintombazane e
right kodwa indlela owenze ngayo namhlanje ingiphoxile.

Sihle : Lindo, I loved Sbani. You out of everyone else know that. Mhlampe ubhuti wakho uyakufihlela indlela ayengiphethe ngayo. Sbani never loved me ngikutshela. And what he did today felt like uzoshayelela isipikili zokugcina enhliziyweni yami. He was here to brag ukuthi yena usenomfazi futhi uzoba nengane.

Lindo : That's not true.

Sihle laughs

Sihle : It is true.

Sbani walks in.

Sbani : Uthini?

Lindo shakes his head and puts the call on the loudspeaker. He points at the screen.

Sihle : He just loved the idea of having me around while he waited for the love of his life to come around.

Lindo : What makes you think that?

Sihle : You are a man and you know that when a man loves a woman it shows. I never felt loved ngithandana no Sbani. Wayencamela ukuphuza yonke imali yakhe ukunokuthi engithengele something.

Sbani raises his brow.

Sihle : I went all out for his birthdays ngenza sure ukuthi ngiyamujabulisa, even though I wasn't even working. Mina kodwa ngangingamuboni nokumubona uma kuyi birthday yami. I saw all of my friends being spoiled by their boyfriends kodwa eyami yayingakaze ingithengele ngisho u chocolate.

Lindo : Again, that is not true and you know it.

Sbani signals Lindo to give him the phone.

Sihle : Mind you, I was the one running around ngimulandela izincwadi zakhe zaka WBHO lapha eposini. Kuyimi omuhambisela ezinye. Ngishiswa ilanga Lindo but what did he do after that?

Sbani : I got a job and I left. What did I do with my first salary?

Sihle : Ay kahle Sbani. Usuqhamukaphi ke wena?

Sbani : No, what did I do?

Sihle : Ngikhuluma noLindo ay nawe.

Sbani : I gave it to you ukuthi ukhokhele i registration e DUT and what did you do?

Sihle : I was sick.

Sbani : You are lying. You know what you did. Stop bullshitting my name.

Sihle : Wena wabona ususebenza usu right wabona mina ngingaseyona i type yakho.

Sbani : Fine. I did. Ufunani ke manje?

Sihle : I just want you to admit that....

Sbani : Admit what?

Lindo : Bhunu

Advertisement

calm down.

Sbani : Uyangidakelwa lo. Uthe akasifuni kubo and we left. Why is she calling me now?

Sihle : I want to tell you that ngeke ngixulolele. Not after what you did today, uzobukisa ngami phambi komndeni wami.

Sbani : Then fine. Now stop calling me.

Sihle : Sbani I was there for you. Ngisho uBaba wakho esengithukile but I never left your side. I tried to make our relationship work ngisho usuhambile.

Sbani : So what? Kusho ukuthi kwakumele ngibe nawe ngingakuthandi just because you were there for me? Nosihle stop acting like you are innocent in all of this. I asked you ukuthi wayenzani imali ye registration? Huh? Did you or did you not cheat?

Sihle : Don't....

Sbani : Did I catch you or did I not?

Sihle : Wawufuna ngenzeni? Wait? Wait for what? Wena wawucheata kangaka ngikubamba.

Lindo grabs the phone from Sbani and ends the call.

Lindo : Lento yenu ayiyindawo. Lengane isenomqondo wobungane and you need to let her be. We all know that she will never get over you. It's time to move on.

Sbani sighs.

Lindo : She won't forgive you but we tried namadlozi akhona abonile. Let's focus on the wedding. Bathe abantu bakwa Ntuli bayeza.

Sbani : Yeah.

Lindo : Skhona asked if we will be able to do the cleansing ceremony for your aunt after the wedding. Ngoba kumele egeze soon after the wedding, nami futhi ngigezwe.

Sbani : Yeah, that's true.

Lindo : Yes. I told him ukuthi sizokwazi. I want this whole thing to be over. So if it means that we touch our savings, we will do that.

Sbani : That's what I told Sebe.

Lindo : Good. Angisafuni manje into ezosibuyisela emumva. Ukuthi amadlozi akabani athini, awafuni ini asisayingeni yonke leyo. We are already suffering ekhona lawomadlozi and awenzi lutho so fuck it. Look at Sphiwo. Why aren't they doing shit?

Sbani sighs and shakes his head.

Lindo : They don't care.

Sbani : I just want to do things the right way. Uyabona nje lokugula kwe olady kungimoshele izinto. I really need Mah.

Lindo : Ukuthi ebekhona emshadweni wakho?

Sbani : Yeah, nalokho.

Lindo : We are going to be fine mlungu, uzobona.

Lindo squeezes Sbani's shoulder.

Sbani : I really hope so. I want the best for me and my family. Kukona konke nje ingane yami bhuti. Angifuni kubekhona ngisho into eyodwa eyihluphayo.

Lindo smiles and shakes his head.

Lindo : Look at you mfana kaMah omncane. Yazi bafo, I know I don't say this as much as I should kuwena no Sphiwo njengobafo wenu omdala. But ukuthi angisho akuchazi ukuthi angiboni imisebenzi yenu emihle. Bhunu ngiyaziqhenya ngawe bafo. I am extremely proud of you.

Especially because I still remember very well ukuthi uhambo lwakho lubenzima kanjani bafo. I remember ufika la una 6.

They both laugh.

Lindo : Nezinwele ezigcwele ikhanda. Sithi uBaba ufike nengane yomlungu.

Sbani chuckles.

Lindo : We saw you grow. We saw it all. How you kept being yourself when life treated you like shit. How you remained kind even on the days where life was so unkind towards you. But you kept it together. You walked with your shoulders high, wenza izinto ekwakuthiwa ngeke uzenze. You made living with albinism look so easy when it wasn't and never will be. I'm proud of how you always stand your ground and how unapologetic you are for who you are.

Sbani is smiling while shaking his head.

Lindo : You didn't allow anyone to bring you down. Bafo, I know how worried you are ngoba uSebe ekhulelwe nje. I know ukuthi usabela intwana yakho.

Sbani's jaws tighten.

Sbani : I have a lot of questions. What if it's a girl and she is born with albinism?

Lindo : Don't do that.

Sbani : I'm just scared. But I'm not going to allow uvalo ukuthi lungicishe injabulo enginayo ngokuthi uSebe ukhulelwe.

Lindo smiles.

Lindo : Cabanga nje Bhunu. Who would have thought? Wena bafo, uyashada and you are expecting a baby. It.... It sounds so surreal. I'm sure noPhiwo uma ese right ngeke eyikholwe le.

Sbani laughs and looks at Sphiwo who is just busy studying the roof.

Lindo : We all didn't see this Sbani coming. You proved them all wrong bafozi.

Sbani : When David became a King no one saw it coming. Even David himself didn't see it coming but God did.

Lindo : Wadla ndodana kaDavide.

They burst into laughter. Sbani's phone rings.

Sbani : Umawengane yami. Eish, ngithe ngizobiza nina la.... Yah baby.

Sebe : Anisabuyi? Ngicime, ngilalele?

Lindo and Sbani laugh.

Lindo : Siyeza makoti wakithi.

Sbani : Ngiyakuthanda, uyezwa?

Sebe : Ay ungishiye ngedwa.

She says and hangs up. Lindo laughs.

Sbani : Sphiwo let's go bafozi. Uyakubiza uSebe

He takes his hand and they walk out. Lindo leans against the door frame and watches them going to the main house. He smiles and slightly shakes his head while taking out his cigarette.

Chapter 58

NTULI HOMESTEAD

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

It's Wednesday. The wedding is on Saturday but some family members are already on their way. Some are coming tomorrow. This is a Ntuli thing and I have no business being here for the wedding since Sbani and I aren't officially married. Today all roads lead to Mountview where I'll be alone for the next 3 or even 4 days. I finally understand what people refer to when they say I can't live without you. Today I am feeling it. I didn't know I was this attached to Sbani. Tears are literally coming out of my eyes. I don't want to go.

I'm sleeping on top of him and I'm busy trying to block my tears from wetting his t-shirt. He is humming his favorite song. It All Comes Down To Love by Bebe Winans. I didn't even know the song but now I know it more than he does because he sings it almost everyday. You will always find him listening to such songs. I guess that is his taste in music. You can tell that this one once grew up in suburbs, he exposes that side now and then. He is caressing my back while humming. He shakes my arm.

Sbani : Babe wami?

I know what he wants to say. I ignore him. He laughs.

Sbani : Manu? No, Sebe vuka khona sizogeza sihambe.

It's still 2pm, can't we leave at 5pm or 6pm?

Sbani : Vuka sthandwa sami. Kade ulele.

Me : Mhmmm

He kisses my forehead.

Sbani : Wake up.

Me : Can't we wake up at 15:00?

I wipe the tears while laughing, so he won't notice.

Sbani : But I need to be at the airport ngo 17:00. Ngiyolanda labantu baseGoli.

Me : Oh yes

I sit up. He grabs my arm and laughs.

Sbani : Look at me.

Me : No. Why?

Sbani : Baby, are you crying?

Me : Why would I even cry?

Sbani : I don't know but my t-shirt is wet. Look.

Me : Umjuluko.

He laughs.

Sbani : And you don't want to look at me.

Me : Yes, I don't.

Before I know it, he is on top of me and he is kissing me all over my face. I try to stop myself from laughing but I can't anymore. I laugh. He stops and looks at me. I stare at his beautiful eyes. He heaves a sigh and kisses my lips.

Sbani : I'm sorry. You know I want this too Manu. I want to stay here with you and have you in my arms all day. But you know ukuthi izinto zimatasa.

Me : I know.

Sbani : Nami ngifuna ukuhlala nani lana. Wena no Azwi.

He goes down and kisses my stomach. Every time he does that I just want to cry. I don't know how long I can keep up with this. I pull him back.

Me : I'm going to miss you.

Sbani : I'm going to miss you too thembalami. But I'll see how everything is going and if my eyes are good and everything else is good, I'll come ngizolala nani e Mountview.

I smile.

Me : Okay, love.

Sbani : I love you Sebe. Wena no Azwindini nginithanda ngenhliziyo yami yonke.

I swallow.

Me : We love you more.

He kisses my hand.

Sbani : I want everything to go well. I need my parents' wedding to be a success but I have this bad feeling about it.

Me : Bad feeling?

Sbani : I don't know how to put it. But I feel like we are doing something wrong. NoLindo akafuni silalele abantu abadala. Ufuna senze izinto ngendlela yakhe nje and he's rushing this whole thing.

Me : What do you think you guys are doing wrong? Umshado noma indlela enenza ngayo umshado?

Sbani : Both. Lindo has made this whole thing to be about him. He wants to go back to his normal life. Everyday uyabalisa. If he is not complaining about being here all the time. He is complaining about Sphiwo. And enye into ucabanga ukuthi uma kuke kwadlula umshado Sphiwo is going to be fine, which I don't think is true. Sathi isangoma singawenzi umshado, so what if we do it and Sphiwo gets worse?

Me : Bhut'Lindo just misses his family and usejahe ukubona uSphiwo elulama. Sonke sifuna lokho.

Sbani : No, he is putting my life on the line. A dangerous line. This wedding might affect my life ekugcineni. Yonke lento esiyenzayo senza imishado sizilile doesn't make sense.

Me : Umalume unqabile ukuthi nikhumule inzilo?

Sbani : Yeah. He said it's too early. ULindo kodwa yena akacabangi kanjalo. Uthi siyakhumula next month. Elders are telling him that what we are doing is wrong but he....

He closes his eyes and sighs.

Sbani : It's a lot Sebe. I wish our mother was here.

Me : Maybe if your uncles get here they will be able to speak some sense into his head.

Sbani : It's too late. The wedding is on Saturday. Lindo threatened labantu be insurance ukuthi bekiphe imali kaBaba before the waiting period. Ey ubafo

He chuckles and shakes his head.

Me : Kodwa naye usenza ngamawala.

Sbani : Yazi sengifisa ngisho ukuzihlanyela njengo Sphiwo.

Me : Hhhaibo Bhunu!!

He laughs.

Sbani : USphiwo akazi nokuthi lidumephi.

I snatch his dreadlocks. He laughs.

Me : That is not funny.

Sbani : Ngiyadlala. Ngiyadlala baby.

I let go. He exhales deeply and runs his hands through his dreadlocks.

Me : Manuna, come on. Everything is going to be fine.

Sbani : It has to thembalami.

I smile and bite the corner of my lower lip. He immediately jumps out of bed. I laugh out loud.

Me : Yini hawu?

Sbani : No

Advertisement

no. Please behave yourself. Usufuna ukufuqa ingane yami ngepipi futhi.

Me : Just once

Sbani : Nooo. Ngeke kulunge. Ngizochama amanzi phela manje.

Me : Mxm, okay.

Sbani : Sorry.

Me : Sbanisokuhle ngicela ungiyeke.

Sbani : Okay

I get up and open the wardrobe.

Me : Uggokani bhuti?

He laughs.

Sbani : Wait, are you angry?

Me : And why would I be angry?

Sbani : Aibo baby nami bese ngisho ukuthi ungadinwa yipipi. Never.

Me : Cabanga nje selingidina kungelona ngisho elami.

Sbani : Imagine, udinwa yinto yami. Elenga kumina.

Me : Manje ingangidinelani?

Sbani : Never sthandwa sami. And it's not like yinto oqala ukuyibona osekufanele uyibelesele everyday. Aliyindawo elakho forever.

Me : Sengizwile bandla. What are you wearing?

Sbani : No, no, no udiniwe yazi sthandwa sami. Othi ngivele ngihambe.

He walks out and I laugh. I put my hand on my stomach and take a deep breath. Can I please be pregnant?

^

^

^

Sebenzile has gone to Mountview. Family members have started to arrive in groups but not all of them. Some won't make it.

Skhona : What your brother is doing is very wrong. Kodwa uLindokuhle akezwa. Uwukhanda limutshela okwakhe.

Sbani : Nami ngizamile ukukhuluma naye Baba kodwa....

He shrugs.

Mbhekiseni : Yena uSphiwokuhle unjani uma enje? Wenziwa kanjani umcimbi layikhaya umfowenu enje?

Sbani : Ey Baba, It's hard to change Lindo's mind uma esesithathile isinqumo. He hopes that Sphiwo will be fine after the wedding.

Skhona nods.

Skhona : Yena unjani uMaNzilo?

Sbani : We went to see her today and she was fine. Ubekhathele nje. Asikhulumanga but she was fine.

Mbhekiseni shakes his head.

Mbhekiseni : Your mother is in hospital. Umfowenu akaphilile. Yithina sibilile kodwa nakhu kuyashadwa. Bazothini bona abantu? This is a disgrace. Ihlazo!

Skhona : It's too late now. Umshado uyangena kusasa. Mina angazi webafo. Sekwazi uMzwakhile emazulwini.

Scelo walks in. The only Ntuli young man that is always hunted down like a wild animal. His eyes are always sharp.

Mbhekiseni : Yah wena. Ngizwa kuthiwa uyahlupha.

Scelo : Cha Mkhulu. Ngiyaxolisa

He is already protecting his face with his arms. Sbani laughs.

Sbani : What's wrong?

Scelo lowers his arms.

Scelo : Kunabantu abakucelayo lapha esangweni Baba omncane.

Sbani : Who are those people?

Scelo : I don't know. Bathe ngikubize.

Scelo : Where are they?

Scelo steps out.

Scelo : Naba beza noBaba.

Sbani and Skhona also step out. There are two men coming with Lindo.
Sbani blows out a sigh.

Skhona : Who are those men?

Sbani : They're Maqhinga's brothers.

Skhona : Maqhinga Ndaba?

Sbani : Yebo malume.

Sbani shakes his head and walks away. Skhona shouts.

Skhona : Lindokuhle show them in.

The Ndabas are here. No one knows why but we are about to find out. Everyone is in the living room now, including the Ndabas. These are Maqhinga's brothers. Mvumo and Nathi.

Mvumo : Siyabona ukuthi sifike ngesikhathi esibi.

Mbhekiseni : Yes, your timing is very wrong. Simatasa silungisela umshado kamfowethu.

Nathi : Yobe, Ndlela kaSompisi. Ukuthi nathi bekusiphoqa ukuthi sifike namhlanje.

Skhona : What was so urgent?

Mvumo takes out an envelope.

Mvumo : Nali icala.

Slindele : Icala?

They look at each other.

Mvumo : Nina bakwaNtuli niyasikweleta thina oNdaba. Mzwakhile died knowing very well that he owes our brother. Icala ke aliboli. We are here to collect our debt.

Skhona : What debt?

Mvumo : Lena imiphumela ye DNA test ekhombisayo ukuthi uSbani lo bekungeyona indodana kaMaqhingga umfowethu.

Sbani rubs his face.

Mvumo : Lena incwadi evela kummeli eqinisekisayo ukuthi ngokondla ingane iminyaka eyisithupha, umfowethu uMaqhingga ondla ingane ekungeyona eyakhe sidinga isinxephezelo.

Skhona : Compensation my foot! Who asked him ukuthi ondle ingane okungeyona eyakhe? Mzwakhile was always a present father. Akakaze

emlahle u Sbanisokuhle. Your brother knew very well ukuthi wondla ingane yenye indoda.

Mvumo : Your brother built his legacy ngemali yefa ekungelona elakhe. Ifa okwakufanele kube elalengane umfowethu ayezitshela ukuthi eyakhe. Leyomali uthi umthetho ekamfowethu.

Mbhekiseni : This is bullshit!

Mvumo : Singayenza ibelula lento noma ibenzima. Sinikezeni amabhasi amathathu njengesinhlephezelo okanye ibonane enkantolo.

Slindele : Hhaibo!

Mabongi : Hhayi ibhadi inkosimpela.

Mvumo : It is that simple. Nathi lana silandela izifiso zikamfowethu ayenazo before eshone.

Skhona : Yona i sample ka Sbani yokwenza i DNA niyithole kanjani? Nintshontshe izinwele zengane yami? Huh?

Skhona stands up. This is about to get heated.

Mvumo : No one stole Sbani's hair. Musa ukuthatha lento uyiphathise okomudlwembe. We are not here to fight.

Mbhekiseni : What do you mean anizile ukuzolwa? Nizolwa! Ukufika layikhaya ngalendlela enifika ngayo ukuzohlasela lokho.

Nathi stands up too.

Nathi : So what?

Slindele : Skhona please calm down.

Lindo : Malume is right. They are here to fight. And if it's war they are looking for sizobanika yona ngqo!

Lindo's eyes are burning with anger.

Mabongi : Kahleni! Kahleni!

Lindo : I said get out!!!

There's chaos. They are pushing each other and suddenly a man walks in. He is wearing a hoodie jacket and a cap. He is carrying a bag. Silence covers the living room.

Skhona and Mbhekiseni look at each other.

Man : Mvumo, take this bag and leave.

Everyone seems to be panicking.

Mabongi : Hhaibo

Man : Now!!!

Mvumo grabs the bag from the man and he walks out. Nathi takes one look at the man and he runs out of the living room, following Mvumo. Everyone is shocked but Sbani and Lindo seem rather confused.

Man : Lelitende elisemnyango, I need it gone and stop this entire bullshit. My son doesn't need this wedding for him to get married.

The man comes closer and stands in front of Sbani. He removes the hoodie and the cap. He smiles.

Man : My boy, I'm home.

Mabongi : Khu... Khu...Khul

She stutters and her eyes cross before she collapses to the floor. Slindele wails and there is Mbhekiseni running outside like a maniac.

Apologies for any errors.

Chapter 59

At first I thought I was dreaming but I wasn't. Someone is knocking on the door. The knock is weird. I take my phone and look at the time. It's after 2am. There's no way that Roxanne would come here and knock at this time. Only the worst starts crossing my mind. What if someone is here to attack me? The first person I think of is Sbani. I dial his number but his phone is still off. It's been off since 6pm, yesterday. I'm sure they got busy and he forgot to charge it. Let me call Roxanne. The person knocks again.

'Sebe, vula.'

I cannot believe this. My eyes widen and I jump out of bed. I run to the door and open it. He is sitting on the floor. There's a pack of beers in front of him and he has one beer in his hand. He spits inside our bin that stays outside and says a lot of "Mhm" "Mhm".

Me : Sbani?

He presses his forehead on his lap.

Sbani : Yah baby

Me : Ngicela ungene, ngifuna ukulala.

Sbani : Okay

I've never seen him this drunk and at this point he is irritating me so much.

Me : Please get up.

He laughs and lifts up his eyes to me.

Me : Uhlekani? Ngicela ungene bandla.

He takes a deep breath and gets up. He almost falls. He leans against the door and laughs.

Sbani : Daaamn!

I cross my arms and look at him. He goes and sits on the corner of the bed. I sigh and pick up his beers that he left where he was sitting. I put them on top of the fridge and lock the door. He is busy trying to take off

his jeans but alcohol won't let him. He is wearing a green hoodie jacket and a shirt that looks like our dishcloth on top of the hoodie. His dreadlocks are tied up so untidy. I wouldn't be surprised if Skhalo tied them up but he is still so gorgeous.

Sbani : Shit.

He throws the car keys next to the side lamp and almost hits the lamp. He throws himself on the bed.

Sbani : Sorry

He is definitely apologizing to the lamp because he wouldn't dare try me.

Sbani : Yah baby.

Me : Uphumaphi?

Sbani : Le.

Me : Le kuphi, Sbanisokuhle? How did you get here?

Sbani : Car

Me : Wow. So you drove all the way here?

First of all he is drunk, very drunk and secondly, his eyesight is terrible at night. I'm fuming right now.

Sbani : I'm only living with albinism, you know. I'm not disabled, so cut me some crap baby.

Me : And you are being very rude right now and it's disgusting ngikutshele.

Sbani : Fine. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, okay. Maybe.....

He sits up.

Sbani : Maybe I am disabled. Maybe this is some freaking disability because who the fuck has three different fathers?

He laughs.

Sbani : Me.

Me : What are you talking about?

Sbani : I'm sorry. Okay? Yah.

He takes off the shirt and the hoodie. He is left with a white vest and unbuttoned jeans.

Me : Lotshwala bakho buyakudelelisa. Ngiyabona udakelwe mina.

Sbani : Sthandwa sami ngiyaxolisa.

Me : No, please leave me alone.

He sighs and switches on the TV. He goes to his computer. I go back to bed.

Sbani : Do you believe in dreams?

I ignore him but I'm looking at him. He opens the drawer and takes out a book. That's a diary. He blows out a sigh and scratches his dreadlocks.

Sbani : Dreams are just bullshit. The shit you create in your head cannot be turned into goals. Lindo lied to me. I told him I had goals and not....dreams.

He sighs. That's it, I hate a drunk Sbani. God he annoys me. I cover my head with a blanket. I can't even look at him. I hear him tearing up some papers. I don't care.

After a long silence he removes the blanket from my head.

Sbani : Manu ka Sbani

Me : Sbani ngicela ukulala bandla, please.

Sbani : Do you want me now or can I go and shower first?

Me : Want you for what?

He laughs.

Sbani : Mina, Sbanisokuh....no, apparently it's Zizwe now.

Me : Zizwe wani? Sbani ngicela ungiyeke.

Sbani : Wait, ngifuna ukungena phakathi kwamathanga.

Me : No.

He sighs.

Sbani : Fine.

He presses his head on my stomach.

Sbani : Can you hear that?

Me : What?

Sbani : My baby's heart beat.

Definitely not this conversation.

Me : Ngicela ulale bandla, I want to switch off the light. Sbani abanye bethu abaphuzile. Uwena wedwa ophuzile.

I remove his hand. He kisses my stomach and stands up. He tries to kiss me but I push him.

Me : Please don't.

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa.

Me : No

Advertisement

wena awucabangi. Mina Sbani uma kukuthi uzodakwa kanje ngeke ngiyithande leyonto. Ngoba awucabangi uma usuphuze utshwala. Wenzisa okomuntu onganendaba.

I look at him and find him closing his eyes. He is laughing. Wow!

Sbani : You know baby, I had this friend, yeah?

Mxm.

Sbani : Okay. When I got my internship ngahamba ekhaya for six months ngahlala no Lindo. So I met this guy. He used to work night shifts. Uma ebuya emsebenzini ebuye elale. His neighbour had a dog.

He laughs. Yey Sbani is irritating.

Sbani : One day whilst he was sleeping this dog started barking so loud. He got pissed off and he woke up. He went outside wathuka lenja. Wayixosha. The dog ran away yayohlala phansi kwesihlahla khona egcekeni lakhe and he went back to sleep.

He goes and sits on the chair in front of the computer. I guess that was the story.

I roll my eyes and close them.

Me : Please switch off the lights uma usulala.

Sbani : And then two days later. He came back from work and he slept as usual. When he woke up his TV, cellphone and other things were gone.

I thought this story was finished.

Me : Mhmmm.

Sbani : When he checked outside, the dog was lying under the same tree. The dog saw him and ran away. He got pissed and he thought the dog was useless because how did someone break in kukhona inja egcekeni? He was angry at the dog for not barking when someone was breaking in.

Me : Your food is in the microwave. Sengiyalala.

Sbani : You know sometimes people try to tell you things that you are not aware of. Izinto ezinye ezenzeka ungaboni, ulele but because they are telling you things that you don't want to hear, you get pissed off and dismiss them kanti bayakusiza ukuthi uqaphele. And then what do people do if they see that you don't want to listen? They leave you alone beqhubeke nezimpilo zabo. And when shit starts to happen you get pissed all over again. Udinelwe bona labantu ebebezama ukuk'siza ekuqaleni. Usudinwa ukuthi kungani bengakutshelanga kanti they did try to warn you but you didn't listen, instead you got pissed.

There's a long silence. Is that the smell of weed? I lift up my head. It is. He is smoking. He is sitting on the chair and placing his feet on the table like a real owner of this room.

Sbani : Sometimes getting pissed is not an option but listening is.

He says that and music starts playing. Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me by Elton John and George Michael.

Sbani : Although I search myself, it's always someone else I see. I'd just allow a fragment of your life. Don't let the sun... to wander free. But losing everything is like the sun going down on me.

He sings along on top of the music. Whoever told Sbani that he can sing, lied. That's it, I really hate a drunk Sbani.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Everyone is worried about Sbani and Lindo. They just left.

Mbhekiseni : Uphi yena uKhulekani?

Skhona : He disappeared.

Slindele : Of course he disappeared. He died and we buried him. That was not Khulekani, that was his ghost and that's what ghosts do, they disappear!

She wails.

Skhona : Give her more sugar water.

Slindele sniffs.

Slindele : I don't need sugar water, I need answers. Ngifuna ningitshele ukuthi lomlotha esawungcwaba emathuneni ase Marianhill eduze kwethuna lika Mzwa okabani uma uKhulekani esadla anhlamvana?

Boniza : Please excuse me

Slindele : No one is going anywhere. Ngidinga izimpendulo! Skhona? Mbhekiseni? Who did we bury?

Boniza : I need to go and look for Khulekani. I need to find him before he does something stupid.

Slindele : Yibuphi obunye ubulima angabenza obudlula lobu asenzele bona namhlanje? Ukufika la ngezinyawo zakhe zombili kodwa thina sazi ukuthi samungcwaba akubona ubulima obanele? Him coming here and claiming to be Sbani's father is not stupid enough? He traumatized the poor boy! Ngeke ngimangale uma uSbani engaduba lelikhaya engaphinde ebuye, singamazi nokuthi ukephi. That boy has suffered in this house! He has suffered esibongweni sakwa Ntuli!!

Mabongi is moaning and groaning like a woman giving birth.

Skhona : What exactly did Khulekani tell Sbani?

Boniza : Akukho akushilo eningakuzwanga. Now please, I need to go because if I don't go now, leligceke lizogcwala amandiya and we are all going to die.

Slindele wipes her tears and gets up.

Slindele : Boniza, you knew about Khulekani? All along you knew that he was alive, am I wrong? Please tell me I am.

Boniza : I don't have time for this.

Boniza walks out. Skhona heaves a sigh.

Skhona : Who is going to tell all those people that the ceremony has been canceled?

Slindele : Bazotshelwa uBoniza nobhululu wakhe.

Chapter 60

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Sbani has been missing since last night. Today they still couldn't get hold of him. Even Lindo was worried. He said last night they were at a tavern but he did not remember how they separated. No one knew where Sbani was. Sebenzile said when she woke up this morning Sbani was gone. The hospital said he came to visit his mother but he didn't stay for long. After that no one saw him. Lindo and Khulekani were worried sick. They are the two people who were going crazy and they are the only ones who were looking for him the entire day, Oh and Boniza as well.

Whilst everyone was still worried Sphiwo shouted out of nowhere "Uphi uBhunu ngoba mina sengimukhumbule?" Lindo cried after Sphiwo asked that. No one remembers the last time Sphiwo spoke some sense so they found that shocking and it gave them different emotions. Lindo thought that was a sign that Sbani was dead because why would Sphiwo ask that and even emphasized that he missed him?

When they saw Sbani's car coming through the gate everyone was on their feet and when they saw him getting out of his car, they all sighed in relief. Sbani hasn't said a word. He came and he stayed outside with Sphiwokuhle and after that he went to sleep in MaNzilo's room.

For the past four hours Khulekani was undecided on what to do but eventually he decided to throw himself in. He finds Sbani sleeping on MaNzilo's bed. There's a picture of MaNzilo that is placed on his chest.

Khulekani : Sbani? Mfana wami?

Sbani opens his eyes and moves them around the roof.

Khulekani : My boy, it's me. I need to talk to you.

Sbani clears his throat and sits up. He places the picture on the dressing table. Khulekani looks a bit hesitant. There's a part of him that wants to go and sits next to Sbani on that bed but maybe the chair is better. He settles for the chair. He sits down and sighs.

Khulekani : How are you?

Sbani : What do you want from me?

Khulekani swallows roughly. He was told that his son was kind but that doesn't sound kind.

Khulekani : Zizwe, I know y.....

Sbani : Sbanisokuhle. Igama lami ngu Sbani, not Zizwe.

Khulekani heaves yet another sigh. He thought this was going to be easy.

Khulekani : I know you have a lot of questions and I'm here to.....

Sbani : You are wrong. I don't have any questions. What I know is okay with me.

Khulekani : At least let me explain. I owe that to myself if not you.

Sbani shrugs. Khulekani smiles.

Khulekani : Mfana wami wena awulona iphutha. Ukuzalwa kwakho kwakungelona iphutha. It wasn't a one night stand or a mistake that happened. No. You were planned.

Sbani shakes his head.

Khulekani : Yes you were. I know I betrayed my brother but I loved Celiwe so much.

Sbani : What happened?

Khulekani smiles while shaking his head. His eyes are becoming moist.

Khulekani : If I were to write a book about Celiwe and I love story then believe me I would title that book the "Blind Date"

Sbani : Blind Date?

Khulekani sniffs.

Khulekani : It was winter. It was drizzling. The smell of the earth when the rain was hitting the soil reminded me of how much I missed home. I remember that I took the first bus that was available and when I got here I called my brother and told him ukuthi sengifikile. He told me to come to the taxi rank. It was still so early in the morning. Isiphithiphithi sase rank singakaqali, omama babesalungisa amatafula abo abadayisa kuwo. Before I went to the taxi rank ngadlula ethilomu.

Sbani : Where is that?

Khulekani : Uma uya lapha e rank yamatekisi aso Tongaat kwakune passage lapho, kulelo passage kwakunendawo edayisa itiyi.

Sbani : Of course, you mean a Tea room.

Khulekani : I went there to buy tea for me and my brother. When I got there I saw this beautiful, beautiful woman. She had a bad girl look and attitude but shit, she was beautiful. When I saw her I realized that I was missing out a lot ngokuhlala eGoli. She was my type. Everything about her attracted me. She was a true African queen with her big, black afro hair ezazigqinqwe kahle.

He softly laughs.

Khulekani : She was wearing big gold earrings. She had on a brown leather jacket and under that jacket she had a white Pointer t-shirt. Isikibha esifake ngaphakathi kwi Jean yakhe e blue ayeyigqoke nebhande elimnyama. I looked at her and she wasn't even looking at me. She bought a cup of tea, airtime and I don't remember what else. She finished and she walked out. I said to hell with the tea that I

wanted to buy and I followed her. But I lost all hope when my brother came out of nowhere and started hugging and kissing her.

He sighs.

Khulekani : Seeing my brother with her dropped my entire mood. I suddenly felt down and I regretted coming to Durban. Maybe I wasn't feeling down but I was disappointed and angry. Inzondo nje eyafika ngokuphazima kweso yahamba ibanga elide kakhulu. On the very same day ngathenga ithikithi lebhasi ebuyela e Johannesburg. Ngabuyela emuva ngingasamubonanga umfowethu.

Sbani : Were you really that jealous?

Khulekani : Yes.

Sbani : Jesus.

Sbani mumbles and shakes his head.

Khulekani : Time went and for so many times he tried to introduce me to her but what was the point of him introducing me to the woman I

had already met and fell in love with? So I refused. Luckily benghlala e Joburg bona behlala la e Durban but still, my feelings for her kept getting stronger. I kept coming to visit but I refused to be introduced to her until Mzwa finally gave up.

Sbani nods.

Khulekani : Mzwa had a friend, owayenamatekisi. You know, Abdool?

Sbani : Yes

Khulekani : That bastard was a rich motherfucker. Whenever I was here to visit my brother would ask him ukuthi ngihlale emzini wakhe where I'd be comfortable. I started spending more time with Abdool. One day I found myself confessing about the feelings I had for my brother's girlfriend. To my surprise he found it interesting. He told me to follow my heart and he told me that he was willing to help me. He asked me what I wanted to do and my answer was simple. I told him that firstly I wanted to find out if Celiwe loved my brother as much as my brother loved her.

Sbani : I see.

Khulekani : That was when I started writing love letters to her and left them in her taxi every morning.

Sbani : My father's taxi?

Khulekani : He is not your.....

He sighs.

Khulekani : No, Nzuza's taxi.

Sbani : Right.

Khulekani : For months I wrote to her but she never replied. I didn't give up. Uma ngiseGoli u Abdool wuye owayengibhalela engihambisele. Six months passed and I even thought of giving up but just when I was about to give up she replied. That first and only letter she wrote showed me that she didn't love my brother as much as he loved her and all I had to do was to love her more than my brother did and win her over.

Sbani : Incwadi eyodwa akubhalela yona yakukhombisa ukuthi akamuthandi u Baba?

Khulekani : Yes. It showed me that even if she loved him

but something was missing. Your mother wanted more. She was more than what people saw. Your mother loved a flashy lifestyle. As much as she exposed a simple girl character but there was more to it. She wanted more and I was willing to give her that.

He sighs.

Khulekani : Ngangazi ukuthi uma umfowethu engaphelelwa yimali, kuwe nama business akhe uCeliwe would leave him. So I found an easy way, I invited my brother to the big city of Jozi and big city lights blinded him waduba ikhaya. And when they did I knew it was only the matter of time before Celiwe followed him and she did. We operated hard eGoli, siphila impilo yangempela. UMzwa wayethi uma esephuzile utshwala behlele esendeni and for a ladies man that he was, amantombazane ayeziwela nje ezinyaweni zakhe. You see, at that time Celiwe and Mzwa were over and I was ready to step up and step in. Ngathi ngilindele ukuthi behlukane kwavele kwenzeka isimanga. Uthando lwabo lwaqala phansi. UMzwa waqala phansi wathanda uCeliwe like he was seeing her for the first time. I don't know what your mother did to him but she did something. I had to act fast. I spoke to Abdool wathi uzongisiza siqumbe phansi ama business ka Mzwa and we

did. Wonke ama taxi akhe akhala phansi. Your mother told him to come back here ezozama ukuvusa ama business akhe.

Sbani : Wasala wena nentombi yakhe walala nayo?

Khulekani : No, I didn't. Your mother was not interested. I don't know how many times I tried to tell her ukuthi yimi owayemubhalela izincwadi but something stopped me. Abdool called me ebuza ukuthi kuhamba kanjani and I told him ukuthi ngiyayiyeka yonke lento. I was angry at my brother ngoba ngangibona sengathi uzenza ngcono nokuthi ubona ukuthi izinto ezinhle zifanele yena yedwa but at the same time I wanted to give up.

Sbani : So you gave up on her?

Khulekani : I did. Letting go of someone you love is not easy, I needed to heal. Ngamutshela ukuthi ebuyele e KZN ku Mzwa but two days before she left I got a call that was inviting me to some business deal. Kwakufanele ngihambe ngiye e Cape Town for that business deal.

He smiles.

Khulekani : I went to Cape Town. Ngafike ngafakwa ehotela elihle ukuwadlula wonke. Ngafika ekseni ehotela and later that day I heard a knock. When I opened the door I found your mother standing at my doorstep with a bag. She was confused and so was I.

Sbani : She followed you?

Khulekani : No, she didn't. After I left your mother also got the same message regarding a business deal. She didn't know that I was also in Cape Town because nami angimutshelanga. We just met in the hotel room. Ngamungenisa, sahlala salinda ucingo olwaluzositshela ngomhlangano. We waited for hours and hours until it got really late. Sazama ukulungisa indaba yokulala emagumbini ahlukene but all rooms were fully booked. Kwacaca ukuthi sizolala egumbini elilodwa. Around midnight I realized that there was never a business meeting. I realized that Abdool was behind everything. He was trying to bring us together.

His smile widens.

Khulekani : We ate and drank together. We laughed and talked. One shit led to another and yeah, we slept together.

Sbani : You had sex with her?

Khulekani : We made love.

Sbani stands up. He is ready to leave. He heads towards the door.

Khulekani : Sasithandana mina no mawakho. Yes sasintshontshana because my brother was still in the picture but she loved me as much as I loved her.

Sbani rubs his face.

Khulekani : Shit happened Zizwe. Kwakungafanele ngithande intombi ka mfowethu but I did. Uthando luka mawakho lwalungihlanyisa. I went as far as trying to kill him. I don't know what happened that night. Kwakumele ngimubulale but Abdool came out of nowhere and he took those bullets for him.

Sbani : You shot Abdool?

Khulekani : It was an accident.

Sbani : It wasn't an accident! Wawufuna ukubulala uBaba. For what? Over a woman that was not even yours?

Khulekani : Okay fine, I was wrong! I admit that I was wrong. Ngazisola ngesenzo sami, Ngazisola ngokuthanda umawakho and I left. I went back to Joburg. And... And then I got a call emuva kwezinyangana nje. Your mother told me that she was pregnant. I was so excited. I came back ngijabulile nginjalo kodwa ngangazi ukuthi injabulo yami eyesikhashana.

Sbani turns around and looks at him.

Khulekani : Mzwa was going to kill us if he found that the baby was mine. Kanti nami ngangingafuni ingane yami ikhuliswe uMzwa nokuthi azi nje that Celiwe and I were dating. So your mother, Abdool and I made a deal. Umawakho wayezohamba izinyanga until you were born. U Abdool yena wayezokuthatha uma usuzelwe uhambe uyokhuliswa umawakhe eNdiya.

Sbani : Jesus.

Sbani scratches his dreadlocks while shaking his head. He seems really frustrated.

Khulekani : That's why I gave you the name Zizwe. Ngoba ngangazi ukuthi uyokhuliswa abantu bezizwe ngingekho mina.

Sbani : No, no, no!!!

Khulekani : Listen to me!! Ngangifuna ukulwa but your mother and Abdool didn't let me. Ngahamba ngabuyela eGoli. I think Celiwe was three months pregnant kwafika uMzwa eGoli. He was crying. Ngangingakaze ngimubone umfowethu enjeya. Wangitshela ukuthi useyazi ngami no Celiwe and that he knew about the pregnancy. Seeing my brother like that killed me. Ngabubona bonke ubuhlungu engimuzwise bona and I regretted everything. I was willing to do whatever it takes to make him feel better. All he wanted was for me to stay away from Celiwe. He told me that Celiwe was missing and I knew ukuthi our plan worked. Wabe esengicela ukuthi ngiphume ezimpilweni zabo. He asked me to leave the country ngingaphinde ngibuye.

Sbani lowers his hands from his face.

Khulekani : He promised me that he would take care of you and Celiwe. Wangicela ukuthi ngihambe. Into eyangenza ngivume yingoba ngangizitshela ukuthi vele akasoze akukhulisa. I knew that Abdool had my back and that he was going to take care of you. So I agreed. We faked my own death.

Sbani : What?

Khulekani : I moved to Angola. My family thought I was dead. They buried me, bangizilela ngiphila.

Sbani sits down.

Khulekani : Before I moved to Angola I contacted Abdool and he assured me ukuthi u Celiwe u right nokuthi akekho owaziyo ukuthi ukephi. I didn't tell him ukuthi u Mzwa ufikile nokuthi i plan yethu iyiphi. All I was concerned about was you. I left with a bleeding heart.

Tears fill up his eyes.

Khulekani : Ngakubhalela mfana wami. Ngakubhalela izincwadi kusukela uzalwa. I sent those letters to the address that Abdool gave me but angizange ngithole neyodwa ebuya kuwena. Yahamba iminyaka. My life stood still. Ngangizizwa ngingedwa ngihamba i Africa yonke kodwa ngingakwazi ukubuyela ekhaya. Kukhona konke, I couldn't stand seeing my brother in pain because of me. Kuningi kakhulu engase ngimudlulise kukona.

Sbani : Why did you come back?

Khulekani : Last year I decided to come back to South Africa and I hired a PI eyangitshela izinto ezishaqisayo. Yangitshela ukuthi uCeliwe akasekho emhlabeni and that she was killed nokuthi ubulawe ubani.

Sbani : Who killed her? Who killed my mother?

Khulekani : Yangitshela ukuthi u Abdool wuye owatshela u Mzwa ngami no Celiwe. Abdool hired Mzwa to come and kill me in Johannesburg. Wathi akeze ezongibulala khona ezomutshela ukuthi uCeliwe ucashephi. Abdool wanted my body in pieces. Zonke lezincwadi engangikubhalela zona impilo yakho yonke ngithi uyazithola ngangidlala ngesikhathi sami.

Sbani : You are not answering my question. Who killed my mother?

Khulekani swallows hard.

Chapter 61

THE CONTINUATION.....

Sbani : Did Dylan's father kill my mother? Huh?

Khulekani : No

Sbani : Was it you? Did you kill my mother?

Khulekani : Zizwe don't be stupid!

Sbani : Did you kill my mother?

He pushes him. Sbani has lost all his cool. He pushes him until his back locks against the door. He bangs his chest. Khulekani narrows his eyes. This is exactly him in his early twenties. Sbani is indeed his replica. He is stunned, he can't even move.

Sbani : I'm going to kill you! Ngizokubulala Khulekani, uyezwa?

Khulekani : Zizwe stop!!!!

Sbani swallows and takes a step back.

Khulekani : The person who killed your mother? I took care of him. Who killed your mother is none of your business! Ngeke ngikuvumele ube nalenzondo enginayo mina la ngaphakathi. Umuntu okufanele elwe izimpi zikamawakho yimi, not you!!!

He fixes his shirt.

Khulekani : Ukuthanda umuntu kungakwenzisa izinto eziningi ezingasile. Love is dangerous. No one is perfect and at a certain level we all did stupid things in the name of love. Maybe what we did was just out of the ordinary. Me falling in love with my brother's girlfriend was stupid! Celiwe falling in love with Maqhinga and giving him my son was stupid! What Mzwakhile did was stupid!

Sbani : No you are stupid!

Khulekani sighs.

Khulekani : I agree. Maybe I am stupid. Mfana wami ngiwenzile amaphutha but this is me ngizilahla phambi kwakho njengoyihlo and I'm begging for your forgiveness. I don't bow for anyone, not even God but believe me, I'm going to go down on my knees and bow my head to your feet.

He says while going down on his knees in front of Sbani.

Khulekani : Ngixolele, Bhele, Khuboni, Sompisi, Ndlela, Godide. Mphemba, phemba ngamabele abafokazane bephemba ngezibi. Gwabini, ngiyakucela Ndodana yami. I'm not complete without you. My family is not complete without you. Unezingane zakwenu ezimbili, amawele. Everyday I tell them about you. I tell them ukuthi banomfowabo omdala and they are looking forward to seeing you. They need their brother and I need my son.

Sbani is staring up at the roof. Khulekani searches for something inside his pocket. He takes out a photo and smiles.

Khulekani : The first thing that Boniza told me about you was that you also loved piano and I said that boy is indeed my son(sighs) I want you to have this picture. It's the first picture that your mother and I took together years ago.

He hands it to Sbani. It's a picture of Celiwe laying on top of the piano with Khuleka sitting in front of it. The picture looks really old. Khulekani laughs and sniffs. Tears are pouring out of his eyes.

Khulekani : This was one of many visits. We were sitting outside my house and we saw a camera man passing by and we thought why not?

He laughs.

Khulekani : If I knew that this picture would stay this long then I would have at least smiled.

He laughs and lifts up his eyes to Sbani.

Khulekani : Zizwe?

Sbani's eyes drop to the floor where Khulekani is kneeling.

Khulekani : Please take it.

Sbani takes the picture and without even looking at it he tears it apart.

Sbani : I'm not Zizwe. My name is Sbanisokuhle Ntuli and I am Mzwakhile Ntuli's son. My father died and I buried him. I don't need you. Never have and never will!

He throws the two pieces of the picture on Khulekani's face and he walks out. Khulekani blows out a sigh and gets up.

Sbani is heading into his car. He finds Boniza already waiting for him. Boniza is smoking, the door next to her is opened. Sbani gets in and sits down.

Sbani : Aunty

He looks away and wipes his tears.

Boniza : We have enough chairs inside the house and there's no one in your room.

Sbani : I need to go. Sebe needs me.

Boniza : Or maybe you are running away from your father.

Sbani swallows. Boniza blows out her cigarette smoke.

Boniza : He is your father. That is one thing that you can not run away from.

Sbani : I really need to go.

Boniza : At some point you are going to have to forgive him. He was only 23 years old. He was young and he didn't know what he was doing. He fell in love with the wrong woman at the wrong time.

Sbani : It doesn't matter anymore.

Boniza : Abdool played them. He played a really good game, I give him that. When Mzwa came into my house his body was trembling. He showed me pictures of Celiwe and Khulekani together. The first thing he said was "She is really happy with him, look at her". I didn't know what to say because I saw that relationship coming. I saw how Celiwe was spending more time with Khulekani and it was dangerous. Celiwe was missing and Abdool knew where she was.

She chuckles.

Boniza : The fact that Khulekani couldn't see right through Abdool still shocks me to this day. I mean he shot him wamubeka kwi wheelchair and there he was scheming with him against his own brother. It backfired. For Abdool to release Celiwe

Advertisement

he wanted Khulekani's blood. He wanted his body in pieces. Major decisions had to be made. Mzwa went to Johannesburg and he found Khulekani.

Sbani : Why didn't he just kill him and save us all this mess?

Boniza glares at Sbani.

Boniza : Because he was his little brother. Khulekani was still young and he had so much ahead of him. Akuyena wonke umuntu owenza iphutha ofanele ukufa. Mzwa loved Khule and that's why he didn't kill him. Mzwa loved you and that's why he didn't kill your father, Sbani!

Sbani closes his eyes and presses his head on the steering wheel.

Boniza : Well someone had to die.

She throws the cigarette and picks up a bottle of vodka from her feet. She opens it and gulps it down. Sbani shakes his head.

Boniza : Uma kwakufanele sise uKhulekani, someone else had to die.

She closes the bottle and wipes her mouth.

Boniza : Isilima engasizalela ingane, sangishiya nayo first day izalwa. Sahamba saya eGoli. But guess who came back 2 years later when he found out that his son almost drowned to death inside a bucket full of water?

He looks at Sbani out of the corners of her eyes.

Boniza : The sperm donor himself. He came back with a whole army of social workers and they declared me as an unfit mother. My boy was taken away.

Sbani knows this story and every time it breaks his heart.

Boniza : For years I fought for his custody. And when I was so close to winning the case that bastard knocked off my son with his car. Tell me, who on earth with decades of driving experience knocks off a big five year old with a car in broad daylight and claims it was an accident? What are side mirrors and rear view mirrors for?

Sbani : Aunt, I'm sorry.

Boniza : Mine was an accident. Ngangiwasha ngingaboni but his wasn't an accident. Wayishayisa ngamabomu ingane yami because engafuni ngiyithathe. Court declared me as an unfit mother and I declared him as an unfit father. I paid with my son's life and he paid with his own life.

Sbani raises his head.

Sbani : What?

Boniza : Let's just say he is the person who deserved to die, not Khulekani.

Sbani : You mean...

Boniza : We fought for Khulekani's life. Sakulelwa ukuthi wena ube noBaba. Don't take that for granted. Eventually you are going to have to swallow this anger and move on. We all did.

She takes her bottle of vodka and gets out of the car. Sbani looks at her walking away. He is shocked. He narrows his eyes and swallows. He looks around and starts his car. He would rather be anywhere else but here.

^

^

^

Later Boniza made her way to the two room house. She finds Khulekani taking some pills. She closes the door and goes to sit next to him on the bed.

Boniza : Go on, don't worry about me.

Khulekani slowly grabs a glass of water and drinks together with the pills. He swallows.

Boniza : Was it worth it?

Khulekani : Bekufanele ngimutshele iqiniso.

Boniza : Ngokujwayelekile uyangitshela uma wenza izinto but kade wenza lamanyala owawenza you decided not to tell me.

Khulekani gulps.

Boniza : You knew I would have stopped you.

Khulekani : Yeah.

Boniza : Do you blame him? I mean do you really blame him for what he did?

Khulekani : Wabulala umawengane yami.

Boniza : The same baby mama owamugxisha ngengculazi waze wathelela yona leyongane yakho. Akuphelanga lapho, that same baby mama wagulisa no Mzwa uMzwa wagulisa u MaNzilo. The whole family is sick because of you ngenxa yakho ungakwazi ukuziphatha. Wona

lomndeni owawugulisa took care of your son. Mzwa, MaNzilo, they raised your son.

Khulekani inhales and exhales slowly.

Boniza : Mzwa never betrayed you. You betrayed him, your own flesh and blood. You fell in love with his girlfriend, impregnated her and tried to kill him more than once. Yini yena ayenzile kuwena embi? Nothing. He found out that he was sick and your baby mama rubbed it on his face ethi uguliswe wuwe, he must deal with it! Mzwa made peace with everything, waxolisa inhliziyo. Wathanda ingane yakho kwangathi eyakhe eyilwela emadodeni afana noMaqhinga. Ngoba uCeliwe lengane yakho wayeyipha wonke amadoda abonayo ukuthi anemali. Kodwa uma isigula leyongane eyilaxaze kuMzwa. She heard that you were alive wakhohlwa uMzwa no Maqhinga wamisa amaphiko njengempigogo esethi uyobheka wena e Angola. She threatened to take Sbani, the same Sbani that she knew very well ukuthi uyiyona yonke into ku Mzwa.

Khulekani blows a very loud sigh.

Boniza : What was he supposed to do? Engamubulali uCeliwe? Emuyekeleni because she was ready to leave him? You would have done the same thing. You know that. The worst part is that you and I both know what Celiwe did to Mzwa. Wamudlisa ngoba efuna ebe

imbuzi yakhe eyenza noma yini. Linjalo ke idliso, angithi she didn't want him to live without her? Efuna ebheke yena yedwa? So Mzwa knew he wouldn't be able to live without and he killed her.

Khulekani : UMzwa no Maqhinga babengeke bevume ngibe nobudlelwano nendodana yami.

Boniza : And that's why you killed them?

Khulekani gulps.

Boniza : If Sbani finds out about all the shit you did uzokubulala and I'll be there to give him a hand. So I really hope that you'll be able to live with all that you did and become a good father to that boy.

Khulekani : Do you blame me sisi?

Boniza : Yes I do. And manje sengiyaqonda ukuthi lamadoda amabili uMzwa ayethi ahlngane ngaye uwena no Abdool and my brother knew that one of them would take his life. You did.

Boniza stands up and walks out. Khulekani throws himself on the bed and scratches his head.

Chapter 62

The prodigal boyfriend has finally returned home. I open the door. He is standing there with a grin on his face. At least he is not drunk. He is hiding his hands behind his back. I cover my eyes with my hands.

Me : Uphetheni?

Sbani : Taaaada! Sunflowers for a sunflower.

I lower my hands and giggles.

Me : Flowers.

I didn't expect him to buy me flowers. Especially sunf.... Two bees fly out of them. I throw them on the floor and drag him inside the house. We are laughing and rolling on the floor.

Me : You bought me bees, wow.

Sbani : Baby, I don't know where they came from. Trust me.

We laugh.

Sbani : So it's true that sunflowers attract bees.

Me : Oh you knew?

He laughs.

Sbani : I forgot.

He kneels and kisses my stomach over and over again. I fear for my heart. The way it's pounding, it's going to explode. I need to stop this.

Me : Your ex-girlfriend told you to buy me bees.

He stops and looks at me. He raises his brow.

Sbani : Ex? What ex?

Me : I don't know. Kade udukile phela wena, so maybe you went to fix things with someone's daughter.

I get up and dust my dress. I sigh.

Sbani : No

Me : Okay. Are you hungry? Mina ngilambile.

I leave him sitting on the floor.

Sbani : I don't do love backs. When we break up we are definitely done. And you know that nothing is fucked up as breaking up with somebody and having regrets after.

Me : And you? Do you regret any of your break ups?

Sbani : No. Women I broke up with continuously proved to me that breaking up with them was a good idea. Breaking up with somebody and having no regrets about it, is pure bliss. I hate regrets.

Me : I get you. Uphuma ekhaya? How is Maphiwana?

He is sitting with his knees up. I don't know what he is writing on the carpet.

Sbani : He is fine.

Me : That's good. And the wedding?

Sbani : I always speak my mind. I'm not afraid of talking about my feelings. But I always go back and reflect. And when I'm done I always find myself wrong. Like everything I say feels wrong. Sometimes I try to mend things. But this time.....

He shakes his head.

Me : Manu, are you okay?

He lifts up his head and smiles.

Sbani : Someone will take your flowers.

Me : Please stop. Are you okay?

I go and stand in front of him. I give him my hand and lift him up. We go and sit on the bed.

Me : What happened?

Sbani : My father is alive.

My eyes widen.

Me : What? How? I thought he was...

Sbani : That wasn't my father. Umfowabo.

Me : Ini?

I'm confused.

Sbani : Khulekani Ntuli is my father.

Who is Khulekani Ntuli?

Me : Khulekani Ntuli?

Sbani : It doesn't matter. My father lied. I'm actually starting to think that the whole thing was a lie. The whole thing about me being unable to get married before my mother does ngoba wayesekhishelwe ilobolo? They were lying. My father was just delaying things for me ukuze ngingashadi.

I'm even more confused now.

Me : Sbani wait, you have a father? UBaba wakho uyaphila?

Sbani : This is it. Maybe it's time for me to cut all ties with the Ntulis. Sizoshada e Home affairs and then move to our house siqale khona izimpilo zethu.

My brain is cracking up, trying to figure out what Sbani is saying.

Sbani : I thought I knew those people but I don't. Bonke bayafana. Men, women, they are all the same. Isihluku abanaso is something else.

He gets up and goes to stand in front of the window. He blows out a sigh.

Sbani : Ngingafa uma ingane yami ingakhula phakathi kwabantu abanjeya. No.

He shakes his head. No, not this baby thing again. I get up immediately.

Me : But you can't reject your family ngenxa yengane engekho nokubakhona.

Sbani : What do you mean?

My mouth. Dammit!

Me : What i mean is, awukwazi ukulahla umndeni wakho ngenxa yengane engakazalwa nokuzalwa. Those people raised you Mphemba, ngeke ubalahle manje ngoba nakhu wena usuzoba uBaba.

Sbani : You don't get it.

Me : Yes I don't. Sbanisokuhle ngeke ngivume ingane yami ikhule njengami. The only people I knew when I was growing up were my parents. Izihlobo zami zonke ngangingenabo ubudlwelano nazo. You have no idea how hard that was, ukungabi namuntu. Impi kaBaba ayenayo namanye amalunga omndeni got me involved.

Sbani : Maybe he was trying to protect you.

Me : No. I needed a sister. Namanje kunezinto engidlula kuzona that I wish I could share with at least one of my cousins but I have no relationship with them.

Sbani : But I'm here. I'm always here, thembalami. You know that.

Me : Sthandwa sami kunezinto ezidinga ukuthi uzikhulume nomuntu wasekhaya, umuntu ongangawe. Nawe kunezinto okhululekayo uma uzikhuluma noSphiwo or Lindo. Noma ngikhona mina.

He sighs.

Sbani : Ngiyakuzwa.

Me : I don't know what really happened but I need you to think carefully before you make any decisions. Sbani you are blessed ukuba nalomdeni onawo. Don't take that for granted.

He smiles.

Sbani : No

Advertisement

I am blessed to have you.

I'm blushing.

Me : Come

I open my arms and he comes. We hug each other.

Me : I love you so much, my love.

Sbani : I love you too thembalami.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Boniza finishes dishing up for Slindele and takes the food to Manzilo's room where Slindele is. She finds her laying on the bed, staring up at the roof. Tears are rolling out of the corners of her eyes.

Boniza : Mafungwase wakithi, you need to eat.

Slindele shakes her head.

Slindele : Cha!

Boniza sighs.

Boniza : Zinhle said you are leaving tomorrow.

Slindele : Do I have a reason to stay? Umshado ebengiwuzele la awusekho. Le unveiling uKhulekani azenzele yona I'm not going to be part of it. I'm going home to my kids, they need me.

Boniza : What unveiling are you talking ab.... (sighs) Sisi izingane zakho izintombi ezindala namadoda amadala. They don't need you. But you know who does. He is still trying to put his life together. He needs us to be here for him.

Slindele : He needs you, not us. UKhulekani uhlangene nawe kuyona yonke into ayenzayo, not thina. Wena naye aninendaba nomunye umuntu. You only care about yourselves. I know that all this time you knew that he was alive and that he would come back but you didn't bother to tell us. I'm asking myself if you ever considered us and our feelings. Ukuthi thina esamungcwaba siyothini mhlazane ebuya. Did you even consider us?

Boniza : I....

She swallows.

Slindele : No, you didn't because you don't care!

Boniza : Sisi, ngiyaxolisa.

Slindele : Bengazi ukuthi uBaba no Mah bazala indoda enamabele la kuwe kodwa ukuthi nawe ubenenhliziyo elukhuni njengeyendoda? Hhayi Boniza! Yazi ufana nse noKhulekani.

Boniza keeps quiet.

Slindele : Are you going to tell me ukuthi okabani lomlotha esawungcwaba or you don't care?

Boniza takes a deep breath.

Slindele : What was I thinking? Of course you don't care. Angikholwa ukuthi mina nawe savundla esinyeni esisodwa, ngakushiyela ibele. Indlela owenza ngayo ungafunga ukuthi.....

Boniza : It was Mahlobo's father.

Slindele : Who did what?

Boniza : The ashes, those were his ashes.

Slindele's eyes widen.

Slindele : Mahlobo? You are not talking about Zweli. Are you?

Boniza : Him. I killed him.

Slindele jumps out of the bed. She runs to lock the door.

Slindele : You did what?

Boniza : I killed him. I stabbed him to death and when he was dead, I chopped his body into pieces.

Slindele : Are you listening to yourself?

Boniza : Mzwa and Khulekani were there. I wanted him dead. He killed my son.

Slindele : It was an accident!

Slindele says with her teeth gritted.

Boniza : No, it was intentional.

Slindele : Wayengamuboni uMahlobo. He was standing behind the car. It was an accident!

Boniza : I don't care. I killed him and I enjoyed every second of it.

Slindele : Boniza!

Boniza : We all thought he had no one. And when his family started looking for him and asking questions about Khulekani's body, we had to come up with a plan. We sent people ukuthi beze layikhaya bezoqamba amanga ngokuphambana kwezidumbu.

Slindele : Oh my goodness.

Boniza : Khulekani knows people in high places. So it made the whole thing easier. Wambiwa umzimba and we burned it. Umlatha owangcwatshwa e Marianhill owakhe u Zweli.

Slindele : Jesu!!

Boniza : I hate that we buried him. Ngangifuna umzimba wakhe udliwe izintuthwane.

Slindele : Boniza, you do know that his family died looking for him?

Boniza : Who cares? Amaxhegu amadala yini ayengayenza?

Slindele : Have you forgotten? Lawomaxhegu amadala iwona lawa afika asongela wena no Mzwa. Afunga agomela ukuthi.....

Boniza : Please stop.

Slindele : Boniza don't take this lightly. You're the one who told me ukuthi waya enyangeni yakutshela ukuthi uBaba kaZweli uphatha umuthi omubi kabi nokuthi ufake inkunzimalanga yesichitho phakathi kwakho noZweli. That old man hated you, Boniza. Don't ever forget that.

Boniza : He is dead. He died years ago.

Slindele chuckles.

Slindele : He is dead.... Of course he is but did he die before or after you and your brothers killed Zweli?

Boniza swallows.

Slindele : How many kids did you have after Mahlobo?

Boniza narrows her eyes and clears her throat.

Boniza : After I lost Mahlobo I didn't want to have anymore kids.

Slindele : Who are you fooling? You know that is not true. UBaba kaZweli kukhona akwenza ukuze wena ungazitholi izingane. Waqalekisa isibeletho sakho. Waze wathi sizokhokha ngo Sbani, wafunga phezu kwengane. Do you....

Her eyes widen.

Slindele : Oh my goodness.

Boniza : What's wrong?

Slindele : Sbani... Sbani's sickness. Lento kaBhunu yokugula uma enethwe imvula noma eshiswe ilanga. Boniza... Oh Nkosiyami, Boniza what if iziqalekiso zaleliyakhehla lezi ezithwelwe ingane? What if that old man have something to do with it? Uzothini uma kuwukuthi uBaba kaZweli wasebenzisa imithi yakhe kuSbani ukuze ehlukumeze uMzwa?

Boniza : Slindele that is crazy! Lona umsangano engingeke ke ngiwulalele.

Slindele : Please listen to me. Mlambo was a.....

Boniza : No!!!

She yells and walks out. Slindele puts her hands on her waist and looks around the room while biting her lower lip.

Chapter 63

ESHOWE

It's been two months already since I broke the fake pregnancy news to Sbani. Supposedly I'm 3 months pregnant. Soon I need to start showing and I have no idea how I'll cross that bridge. Everyday it's getting tougher. I needed a break so I decided to come and visit my father. Lately Sbani has been on my face more than usual. If he is not singing for this non-existence baby, he is reading a book for it. His books are always so deep and serious. I couldn't anymore. I arrived last night and today I'm going back to Mountview. Sbani phoned me this morning and he told me that he would pick me up.

When I arrived last night my father was already sleeping and when I woke up he was not home. There's so much that I needed to talk to him about but I see that he is busy (sigh) I'm used to dealing with my own shit alone so this too shall pass. When I woke up it was quiet as usual. Only cows and chickens were making noise. Two of my father's cows were sitting outside the kraal and their breasts looked so heavy. They seem to be in pain. I decided to grab a bucket and went to do one thing that my father excelled in teaching me. Milking cows. The kraal is full of cows, the young and old. There's literally no space. I'm glad my father is building another kraal because these cows will soon suffocate to death or cause stampede.

I pull up my jacket sleeves and begin milking the first cow. I actually love doing this. No I hate cows, I really do but I don't mind milking them. My mind starts traveling miles away. When I bring my eyes back inside the bucket I almost get a heart attack.

Me : Jesus!!!!

I try to run but I fall on the ground. There's blood inside the bucket. Not milk but blood. I look at the two cows next to me and their breasts are also licking blood.

Sebenzile!!

I immediately turn my head towards the gate. Thank God it's Baba uMzila. He is one of the men who has a strong relationship with my father in this village. I get up quickly.

Mzila : Sebenzile what's going on? Is everything okay?

I'm running on my way to him.

Me : Cha Baba. There's a problem with my father's cows. Ziphuma igazi emabeleni.

He shakes his head and blows out a sigh.

Mzila : Your father knows about this. Listen, ngizothatha konke lokhu okungamankonyane ngihambe nakho.

Me : Oh

Mzila : Yes, your father knows and he told me to come. Open the kraal.

He points at the kraal with his knobkerrie.

Me : Uphi yena uBaba?

Mzila : Uyokhendla

Me : Khendla? Kuyini ke lokho?

He laughs and looks at me.

Mzila : Don't worry, one day when your father is gone isigodlo sobumnyama siyosala nawe. Izikhwama ziyophathwa nguwe njengoba noyihlo zamufuna zaze zamuthola.

Maybe this is a new disease. When people talk I just fail to understand what they are saying.

Me : I don't understand.

He laughs out loud and limps his way towards the kraal. I find myself laughing too but not knowing what I'm laughing at.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Only Zinhle and Boniza are still around. Sbani has finally made his decision.

Zinhle : Bhunu? Bhunu, listen.... Listen to me! Ayenziwa lento oyenzayo. Lento oyenzayo ayenziwa.

Sbani : Let me deal with the results. Now please allow me to take my things and leave.

Boniza : So you are done with us?

Sbani : Precisely.

Zinhle claps once.

Boniza : Sbani you are only 25 years old. Lento oyenzayo awuyazi Babah. Please calm down.

Sbani : I know exactly what I'm doing. If Khulekani is moving in then I am moving out futhi ngeke ngiphinde ngiwubeke umcondo wami layikhaya.

Boniza : Hhaibo Sbani!! Uyazi ukuthi uKhulekani yena lo omugagula ngegama uyihlo? The only father you have!

Sbani : Well, I am so sorry. Sengicela ukuhamba ngempela ke manje.

Zinhle : If you leave ubani ozonakekela uSphiwo? Ubazwile odokotela bethi isimo sakhe somqondo ngeke siphinde sifane so tell me

Advertisement

who is going to look after him ngoba phela uFezile uthe ngeke emumele emzini wakhe?

Sbani : I'll take him. Sphiwo take your suitcase and let's go.

Sphiwo goes to his rooms. His fingers are always positioned like roots lately. He doesn't say much, he only listens but his condition is getting better.

Zinhle : Is this about your step-mom? Do you hate that much? Ukuthi uzohlala lana noBaba wakho yikona lokhu okukucika kangaka?

Sbani : No, my step-mother is in hospital. Anginaso esinye..... Sphiwo let's go!!

Boniza : Then why are you leaving?

Sbani : Because me and Khulekani can't stay under the same roof, aunty.

Boniza : Fine... Fine! Let's say you leave and kube khona into embi ekwehlelayo okanye ingane yakho le ethwelwe uSebenzile? What if you die, Sbani? Ufuna ukubuya ngebhokisi? Huh? Uzongcwatshwa ubani ngoba ulahla umndeni wakho nje?

Sbani : No one. Sphiwo!!

Sphiwo comes running with a suitcase over his head. He dumps it in front of Sbani. Sbani bends down and squashes all the clothes inside. He zips the suitcase.

Zinhle : Lento oyenzayo uzilandela izinkinga ongazidingi.

Sbani : Okay. I need to go now.

Boniza : Why do you hate your father so much? He is your father lokho ngeke kushintshe ngisho ungakhala igazi. Lo Khulekani omzonda kangaka uzomudinga one day.

Zinhle : Your father is trying. He is trying his best to get closer to you and build a relationship with you but you are pushing him away. Kanti

sekufanele enzeni uKhule ngane kaCeliwe? Hang himself? Ekuthengele ibhanoyi?

Sbani : That wouldn't be such a bad idea kodwa ke into engiyidingayo ukuthi ehluwane nami phansi.

Boniza clenches her teeth in frustration. If there's one person she hates right now, it's Sbani.

Zinhle : Hhaibo ngane kaCeliwe akwenziwa kanjena. Ngiyakhuza Sbani.

Sbani : I'm sorry.

Sbani puts his big drawing book under his arm and lifts up his bag and Sphiwo's suitcase.

Sbani : Let's go bafo.

Zinhle : Sbani? Sbani stop it.

Sbani : Please aunty. I need to go, kusafanele ngiyolanda uSebe eShowe.

Zinhle : That can wait.

Boniza : Let him go Zinhle. Uma efuna ukuhamba muyeke ehambe.

Sbani : Thank you.

He walks out. Sphiwo giggles and follows him. Zinhle and Boniza look at each other.

Sbani walks out to his worst nightmare. Khulekani's car is parked in the yard, which means he is here. This is the last person he wanted to see.

Sbani : Fuck

He curses under his breath. Khulekani gets out of the car. He smiles while removing his expensive shades.

Khulekani : Zizwe.

Sbani's jaw tightens. He ignores him and goes straight to the back of his car. He opens the boot and puts everything inside. While he is busy putting bags inside the boot he hears tiny voices screaming "bafo! Bafo!" in excitement. He closes the boot and turns around. Two little boys are running to his direction. They look like twins but not so identical.

"Here is bafo!!"

One of the twins is screaming with so much excitement. Sbani is stunned. He doesn't know what to do. They come and both of them hug his legs.

Sbani : Hey

He finally whispers. He looks at the two cute boys and then lifts up his eyes to Khulekani. Khulekani shakes his head and smiles. Sbani goes down with one knee.

Sbani : Hey

The little boys smile and look at him. They look so excited. Their eyes are searching all over Sbani's face. He also notices something about them. They look like Khulekani but there's something else.

Sbani : Sanibona

The twins smile and look at each other. They see it too. Khulekani clears his throat.

Khulekani : Lwando? Lwazi? Nangu ke ubafo wenu uZizwe.

They both giggle exposing some of their missing teeth. It's them. Sbani's throat burns and closes up. He buries his face between their little shoulders and suddenly feels emotional. These are the two little boys he met at the mall and they were crying. People thought they were scared of him but the truth is they were crying for their blood. Tears start pouring out of his eyes. He tightens his arms around them.

Khulekani : Zizwe, these are your brothers mfana wami. Abafowenu laba engakutshela ngabo.

Sbani : I know them.

Sbani says with his voice trembling. His face is still buried between their shoulders. Khulekani is confused.

Khulekani : You know them? But how?

Chapter 64

We have a new obsession. Sbani's little brothers, twin Lwando and Lwazi. They can't live without Sbani and Sbani can't leave without them. When Sbani came to pick me up from Eshowe three days ago he came with them. Meeting up with his brothers that are from his biological father was heartwarming. They are only six years old. Their love for Sbani is written all over them. I can't believe they are the same little boys he met at the mall. Blood is something else. Last night they spent their first night with us. It was chaotic. I love them so much but the headache they give me is out of this world. They slept on Sbani's bed and we slept on the floor. They are up now and they are already jumping up and down on the bed. My head is already pounding. Maybe they are hungry. I try to get up but Sbani tightens his arm around me.

Sbani : Mhm-Mhm

I smile and look at him. I peck his lips. The thief of my heart. I love him so much, sometimes it makes me nervous.

The twins jump from the bed to the floor. I quickly close my eyes and pretend to be sleeping.

Lwando : Bafo?

I open one eye. They are both on top of Sbani and they are busy trying to open his eyes. Lwazi is busy with Sbani's dreadlocks.

Lwazi : He is sleeping. Bafo? Bafo, are you sleeping?

I'm about to burst. Every time they refer to each other as "bafo" I want to laugh. This bafo thing among the 6 year olds and the 25 year old is actually funny to me.

Lwando : I told you that he's sleeping.

Lwazi : Bafo

He presses his tiny lips on Sbani's forehead and hugs his arm. My heart melts. Sbani brushes his back.

Sbani : Yah bafo

Lwando and Lwazi scream with excitement. Their loud scream will break every glass in this room one day.

Lwando : He's not sleeping!!

They both hug him. Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Yah bafo nifunani?

Lwazi : We want to make breakfast for you.

Sbani frowns.

Lwazi : No, we can. Do you want to see?

I want to laugh.

Sbani : Uhmhhh yes... I mean no. You can't.

Lwando : We can. Come, I'll show you. Do you want eggs?

Sbani : How about we get up? I can't breathe.

He laughs. He can't, they are all over him.

Lwazi : Sorry bafo, sorry.

He brushes Sbani's cheek. How old are these kids because wow. They get up.

Sbani : Wait, ningagxobi intombi kabafo phela.... Lwando... Jesus! Okay asivukeni.

These kids will be the death of Sbani. I laugh as they get up. Lwando runs to the stove.

Sbani : Lwando, wait. Nizongihlanyisa nina, niyabona? Lwando don't touch that.

Lwazi : Bafo? Bafo look, my tooth came out.

Sbani : Good. We will give it to Hloyile

Lwazi : Who is that?

Sbani : No one important. Come let's go and wash our hands.

Lwazi : But the tooth fairy collects our teeth.

Sbani : Tooth fairy? Who is that?

I cover my face with a pillow and laugh.

Sbani : Lwando go and wash your face.

Lwando : I did.

Sbani : Go and wash it again. Lwazi you too.

They run to the bathroom. I laugh.

Me : Love

Advertisement

are you okay?

Sbani : No, manu. We don't need a boy child sengibonile. No more Azwindini, we need Magret.

Me : Mag.....

We both burst into laughter.

NTULI HOMESTEAD.

Boniza and Khulekani are sitting in the two room house. Khulekani finishes talking to Sbani and ends the call with a wide smile on his face.

Boniza : Uthini?

Khulekani : He was asking if his brothers are allergic to anything.

Boniza smiles and shakes her head.

Boniza : That's good. Uthi balale kahle?

Khulekani : They did.

Boniza : So? This means you are still coming back home.

Khulekani sighs.

Khulekani : I'm married, remember? Ukubuya kwami layikhaya kusho ukuthi ngibuya noMaThusini. Yena loMaThusini uZizwe angafuni ngisho nokukhuluma naye efonini. It's clear that he is not interested. Into anendaba nayo abafowabo.

Boniza : Which is good. A relationship he has with Lwando and Lwazi is bringing him closer to you. Akakaze ekufonele but today he did ngoba enabafowabo. Isn't that something?

Khulekani : It is. It's actually everything.

Boniza : Exactly. We can't expect him to accept everything and everyone at once. We need to take it slow. Kulena yokushada kwakho angiyiboni inkinga. MaThusini is one of the most understanding and patient women I know.

Khulekani : Angifuni ukumubona ephatheke kabi. I love her too much to see her stressing over this ngoba ngiyazi ukuthi lento ibaluleke kanjani kuyena. Nanoma uyangibona ngilana kungenxa yemizamo kaMaThusini. She was my hope when I was hopeless. And right now uZizwe umenza ezizwe njengomuntu ongalungile. She feels like my own son hates her.

Boniza : No, no, she needs to give him time. Utheni yena uMaNzilo? Did you manage to talk to her?

Khulekani shakes his head.

Khulekani : I didn't want to stress her out. She is making progress manje ukumutshela zonke lezinto kuzovele kumugulise kakhulu. I think we should wait.

Boniza : Yes, that's true. Nami kade ngidla amathambo engqondo la.....
Smoke?

She hands him a box of cigarettes.

Khulekani : Not now. What were you thinking?

Boniza : Do you remember what I told you? That Zinhle and I had a conversation?

Khulekani : Yah, yah. I remember but was it Zinhle or Slindele?

Boniza : Yes Slindele! Awuzwe sengithi Zinhle.....

She lights a cigarette and starts smoking. She crosses her legs.

Boniza : Do you remember what happened ngosuku lwami lamalobolo? Imoto eyayisuka kwaMlambo eNsuze?

Khulekani : Yes. Imoto eyayihamba abakhongi yagingqika bonke abakhongi bashona.

Boniza is slightly shaking her head.

Boniza : And after that everything was put on hold kwathiwa abantu bakwa Mlambo bacela zimiswe izingxoxo zamalobolo.

Khulekani : Yes. Ngiyakhumbula.

Boniza : And you remember that I told you ukuthi ngahamba ngayobona isangoma salapha Embo uBaba uCele?

Khulekani : Yes.

Boniza : The sangoma told me ukuthi lengozi eyenzeka yenziwa umuntu. Sangitshela ukuthi kwakunesandla semfene. He even told me about Mthukebona ukuthi uphatha umuthi omubi.

Khulekani : Mthukebona?

Boniza : Zweli's father.

Khulekani : Yeah, yeah.

Boniza : Ngiyaphi ke Khule nalendaba ngiya la kulendaba yokugula kuka Sbani. We told you that Sbani has this sickness that is very rare.

Khulekani : Yes and I told you ukuthi ngicabanga ukuxhumana nodokotela bakwamanye amazwe abangaba nolwazi olunzulu.

Boniza : Lalela ke ngikutshele. After the mission kwadlula iminyakana nje and then Mthukebona and his sons came here bazoqalekisa mina no Mzwa. Basongela ngisho uMzwa ngengane yakhe.

Khulekani : What?

Boniza : Yes they did. They came to my house ngisahlala eTsheni elimnyama. Sbani was still a baby, elele kusofa. Mthukebona stood up and went to the couch where Sbani was sleeping. He crossed his fingers phezu kwengane.

Boniza stands and tries to give a picture of what happened. Khulekani's mouth gape opened.

Boniza : Wathi uma uZweli ningamukhiphi nizobona ngalengane. After that baphuma ngomnyango bahamba.

Khulekani : Ini?

Boniza : Wasiqalekisa thina uMthukebona

She goes back and sits on the bed.

Khulekani : Do you think my son's sickness has something to do with that? Ucabanga ukuthi kukhona akwenza?

Boniza sighs.

Boniza : Leyo yinto ebengingakaze ngiyicabange but after the conversation I had with Slindele (sighs) Leyankulumo kunenkungu eyisusile emehlweni ami.

Khulekani : Okay, let's say they did something. Ikhona indlela esingasiza ngayo indodana yami?

Boniza : I think so. Bengicabanga ukubiza inyanga izekhona layikhaya kodwa ke siyazi ukuthi wena nendodana yakho inkukhu nempaka. Sbani will refuse to come here.

Khulekani : I know.

Boniza : I need to find a way ukuthi u Sbani eyobona uMagaye ngoba lenyanga kaMzwa ithatha kude.

Khulekani : Magaye is still alive?

Boniza smiles.

Boniza : Yes, yize noma engasaboni emehlweni kodwa umsebenzi wakhe usancomeka kakhulu.

Khulekani : Embo is too far.

Boniza : I know but kuzomele eyekhona uSbani.

Khulekani stands up and paces around.

Khulekani : Is he still alive?

Boniza : Calm down Khule. I know what you are thinking kodwa ke cha abasekho. Umuzi wakwaMlambo usuwavalwa ngehlahla. They all died.

Khulekani nods.

Khulekani : We need to help my son.

Boniza : I will. Now let me go and help Sphiwo with his medication.

Khulekani : Okay.

Boniza squeezes his shoulder and walks out.

Chapter 65

Today when I woke up I wasn't feeling well. I have discomfort in my stomach. Sbani is not here. He said he wanted to do something nice with Lwando and Lwazi. My man didn't even bother asking me if I wanted to come with them. But I get it. He is too excited. The bond he has with his little brothers makes him happy and if he is happy, I'm happy. I miss having him on my face 24/7 though but this is the break I need. Roxanne is here. She is actually on her way to see her mother but she decided to come and greet.

Roxanne : I saw him going downstairs with two little boys.

I nod.

Roxanne : Shame man, you are really tired.

Me : I am hey. But there's no specific pain, I'm just tired.

Roxanne : Get some rest and I'm sure you'll be fine.

Me : Yes. But I need to get up and cook.

Roxanne : No problem. We'll chat.

Me : Hey, how is Dylan? I forgot to ask.

Roxanne : Uh! He's fine. He's still looking for his father.

Me : You guys still don't know his whereabouts?

Roxanne : Yes and to be quite frank, I don't even care.

She laughs. She seems free and happy.

Me : Roxy....

She giggles.

Roxanne : Not now. I'll call you, okay?

I smile.

Me : Sharp

She kisses my cheek and walks out. I get up. The room is not so clean today. One can tell that we have two new members. Let me go and wash these pots. No, I need a toilet.

I put the pot down and head into the bathroom. My stomach is making weird noises. I sit on the toilet seat. I don't know if I want to pee or do number two. I push and feel these heavy things coming out. I listen to the sharp pains as they come and go in my lower stomach. I was really hoping that I'm pregnant since my periods were late and light last month. Plus it was only for one day. I was wrong. I try to get up but the pain gets stronger. I leave my underwear on the floor and crawl out. This is death, I'm dying. I manage to take my phone and dial Sbani's number.

EMBO

Sbani is not an easy man to convince. So for Boniza to actually be able to convince him to come here took a lot of convincing. She had to support his idea of buying clothes for his unborn baby. Even though she knew it was wrong because Sebe is only 3 months pregnant. But she had to keep his mood top tier. When they were done shopping for the baby she pretended to be speaking to someone over the phone. After the fake call she asked him to drive him here.

He is busy looking at his baby's clothes.

Sbani : Now Lwando and Lwazi will believe me when I tell them that I'm going to have a baby.

Boniza nods. She is waiting for Cele's call. As soon as he calls, Sbani needs to go in. She keeps looking at her phone.

Sbani : Kanti, why are we here? Ey kukude la.

Boniza : I know. Angithi loBaba walana uyena lo ozosiza uSphiwo. Manje angisazi ukuthi uLindo uphi noSphiwo.

Sbani : Maybe they are on their way.

Her phone rings.

She steps out of the car. She whispers and immediately raises her voice.

Boniza : Yah Lindo. What? Niyaduka?

Sbani looks at her through the window.

Boniza : Wait there, I'm coming.

She puts her phone in the pocket.

Boniza : Bhunuza please go in ungilinde khona ngaphakathi. Lindo and Sphiwo are getting lost.

Sbani : Let me come with you.

Boniza : No

Advertisement

no, kuyagcwala la. We are next but if you come with me kuzofika abanye abantu besingenele. And angifakile neduku ekhanda, so I can't go in now. Lindo is coming with my scarf.

Sbani : Okay aunty.

Boniza : Don't worry. Magaye is a good man futhi unamancoko uzokuhlekisa.

Sbani chuckles.

Sbani : Fine. Are you taking the car?

Boniza : Yes please. Angazi laba ukuthi badukiswa yini ngoba bayakwazi lana.

Sbani gets out of the car and without him noticing his phone slips out of his pocket. As soon as he steps out, his phone screen flashes with "Maka Azwindini" Sebe is calling. The phone rings a few times and switches off. Battery shut down.

Boniza : Ngizosheshe ngibuye.

Sbani : They know that we are coming, right?

Boniza : Yes, Magaye knows everything.

Sbani : Okay

Sbani ties his boots laces and makes his way in. Boniza dials Khulekani number while getting in the car. She starts the engine.

Boniza : Khule, he is going in.

Khulekani : Ngempela?

Boniza : Yes, ngibone kungcono engene yedwa ngoba unenkinga yokuduba ehambe. Ngeke edube elapha yedwa noMagaye.

Khulekani : You did well sisi. Thank you so much.

Boniza : Sharp

She hangs up and waits for Sbani to get inside the rondavel before she drives a short distance away and parks the car.

Sbani walks in and sits down. There's an old man staring into space in front of him.

Sbani : Sanibona

Magaye : Mphemba

Sbani : Yebo Mkhulu. Ngithunywe uAunt uthe ngimulinde khona la.

Magaye : Another life has been lost.

Sbani : Baba?

Magaye : Elinye igazi lakho selishabalele.

Sbani : I don't understand.

Magaye : Mfana wami inzalo yakho iyashabalala.

Sbani : Inzalo yami?

Magaye : Your girlfriend lost a child and she just lost another one.

Sbani : What?

Oh-oh that is not what they brought Sbani here for. Magaye.

Magaye : Bathwele ngesibeletho sakhe. Inzalo yesibeletho sakhe.

Sbani : Who? Ubani othwele? Baba I don't understand.

Magaye : Izophela yonke inzalo yakho.

Sbani : Please tell me what to do.

Magaye : Ngibona indoda la. This man is dangerous. If you don't fix this, he will kill her.

Sbani runs his face. He is trying to think hard but if he thinks a bit more his head will explode.

Magaye : Lendoda ithwele ngesibeletho sakhe. If it's her you want to be with then you will never have kids with her and eventually she will die.

Sbani : Who? Sebenzile?

Magaye : Yes

Magaye is not moving. He is staring into space.

Sbani : Who wants to kill Sebe? Is it Khulekani?

Magaye : Do you really want to know?

Sbani : Yes. Please!

Magaye : Angikwazi ukukhipha igama lomuntu but I can help you. The man behind all this will expose himself.

Sbani : That's what I want.

Magaye : Hhayi ngalendlela ocabanga ngayo.

Sbani : Noma ingayiphi indlela. Noma iyiphi, I want to do it.

Magaye : This is not a game.

Sbani : I know. Please, I want to do this. Sebe can't die. Khulekani can't kill my wife. No!

Magaye grabs a stick. He hits a bucket with it.

Magaye : Open this bucket.

Sbani is only realizing now that Magaye can't see. He swallows and opens the bucket.

Magaye : Take out one apple.

Sbani frowns and takes out one apple.

Magaye : Take out the needles.

Sbani swallows roughly and takes out a packet of needles.

Magaye : Give me those things and close the bucket.

Sbani does. Magaye starts inserting the needles in the apple. He grabs the stick and hits another bucket.

Magaye : Open this one. Ukiphe ibhodlela elibomvu

Sbani shakes his head and opens the bucket.

Magaye : Keep that bottle. Now take this apple. When you are ready ukwazi ukuthi ubani owenza zonke lezinto uzothatha lowomuthi uwuthele kuleli aphula. When you are done, you will take the apple uhambe nalo ulilahle emgaqweni ohamba izimoto.

Sbani : And?

Magaye : You will see.

Sbani's eyes widen and his heart races.

Chapter 66

CONTINUATION.....

I tried to call Sbani. But when I couldn't get hold of him and everybody else, my aunt, Thembela was my last hope. I called her and she came running all the way from Entuzuma. I told her everything, including my miscarriage that happened months ago. I told her that I didn't go to the hospital after that miscarriage and I suspect that this bleeding might be the cause. Instead of her taking me to the hospital she asked Skhumbuzo to drive us to a sangoma. Skhumbuzo is her neighbour's son. He has a car so she asked him to bring her here.

I'm not sure of the exact location that we are in. I don't even like the idea of me being here. I still think going to the hospital would have been a good idea, not this.

Thembela : Usungcolile futhi. Here, take my jacket and put it around you.

Me : Thank you.

I tie her jacket around my waist. We enter the living room. It's a beautiful living room.

Themabela : Sit down.

Me : What if I mess the couch?

A woman walks in. She is wearing a long white dress. Her shoulders are covered with something like leopard cloth.

Woman : Sit down mntanami

Aunt Themabela and I sat down. The woman goes and sits on the couch opposite us.

Themabela : Thokoza Gogo

The woman nods. She doesn't look like a Gogo to me.

Gogo : Did you bring the candles?

Themabela : Yes

Gogo : Nika umntwana isibani esikhanyise.

Aren't we going to some hut for all this process? I look at Aunt Thembela. She gives me a white candle and asks me to light it up.

Gogo : Hold it like that.

She takes out some beads from her pocket. She closes her eyes and starts counting them. Oh, she is praying. She finishes praying and opens her eyes.

Gogo : Kukabani eNsuzi?

I look at my aunt. I don't even know where that is.

Thembela : Ohhe, kambe ngizothini? ENsuzi ilapho kwaqala khona umlando wakwa Mlambo. Angithi nje inzalo yakwa Mlambo. Lapho kulele khona okhokho nokhokhokazi bethu.

Gogo : Ubani owayephatha umuthi kwaMlambo?

I'm about to choke. What kind of question is that? I see my aunt's body tense up.

Gogo : This is a safe space. Be free ukhulume okungaphakathi kuwe. It's the only way you can help lentombazanyane engenacala.

Aunt Thembela blows out a sigh.

Thembela : Okuningi kwenzeka singakazalwa kanti okunye sasisebancane kakhulu. But I do remember a few things. Ngiyakhumbula ukuthi umkhulu wethu uMacija wayesolwa kakhulu ngokuthakatha esigodini sakithi eNsuze. He was spotted a few times emzini yabantu ethakatha. Ekukhuleni kwethu abathakathi babeshiswa okanye bedingiswe esigodini. One day he was caught egcekeni lomunye umuzi and the community got angry and burned his body to death.

What? I'm shocked. My heart is pounding.

Gogo : What happened after that?

Thembela : We moved to the other side of the village. Kodwa kwakusekhona endaweni yaseNsuze.

Gogo : Abadala abafuna ukukwazi ukuthi ubani owathatha izikhwama after your grandfather passed away.

Aunt Thembela clears her throat.

Thembela : Abakithi ababekhona nabaziyo bathi zadluliselwa kwindodana kamkhulu uMthukebona naye osendela kwelomkhulu.

Gogo : Tshela undodakazi wakho ngo Mthukebona.

Thembela : I don't remember much but engikukhumbulayo ukuthi wayenesithembu. Abafazi abahlanu. His fourth wife didn't get along with the other wives because they thought she was the favorite. They tried to poison her kaningana but she survived. Uthi uBaba osizalayo when she found out that she was pregnant wabaleka ngoba esabela impilo yakhe neyengane yakhe eyayingakazalwa.

Gogo burps.

Gogo : Thokozani bantu abadala.

Thembela : No one bothered to look for her. Mthukebona had other kids. Ukubala engibakhumbulayo nje kwakungu uMandlakayise

Advertisement

uZweli kanye noThembisile. Abanye angisabakhumbuli. Kunezimpi ezasuka eNsuze and we left.

Gogo : Who left?

Thembela : I don't know who else left. Kodwa thina uBaba wasithatha wahamba nathi. Omunye owahamba umfowabo kaBaba omncane uMthengiseni. Naye wahamba namadodana akhe amabili namadodakazi. After that I don't remember anything else ngomlando wakwa Mlambo.

Gogo : Tell me about her father.

She points at me with her eyes.

Thembela : His name is Joni. Uzalwa umfowabo kaBaba ongizalayo. Akukho okuningi esikwaziyo because we didn't grow up together naye uJoni. Sikhulele ezindaweni ezahlukene but our fathers told us that Joni is one of us. None of us bothered ukwakha ubuhlobo naye. He was just "the other kid" esasingazi nokuthi uzalwa ubani kahle kahle. We lost

contact. Sakhula and kuthe sesibadala that's when we learned that Joni was Mthukebona's son ezalwa umakoti wesine owabaleka ekhaya. Konke lokho sikwaze sesibadala naye uJoni eseyindoda enomuzi eShowe. We tried building a relationship with him kodwa wayelokhu esikhumbuza ukuthi esemncane akekho owayenendaba naye. Kunzima ke ukwakha ubudlwelano nendoda endala ethwele igqubu. Even now he is still angry ngokwenzeka kudala.

Yo! This is the longest journey that I didn't even know about. Now I understand why my father wants nothing to do with his family. He literally grew up with no one.

Gogo : Her father is the son that the fourth wife ran away with. Uthi umoya kuhambe kwahamba kwalehlaka umphefumulo emndenini. Who is Zwelinzima?

Thembelela : Zwelinzima is one of Mthukebona's sons.

Gogo : Was. Uthi umoya kuthe uma kuphuma lomphumulo kwaneziqalekiso nemithi ebekwa phezu kwezimpilo zabantu njengesiphindiselo sokulahleka kwalomphumulo. His father wanted revenge. Ntombazane uganele kusiphi isibongo?

I clear my throat.

Me : Kwa Ntuli.

Gogo : Sathi isibopho impi yakwa Mlambo neyakwa Ntuli impi engasoze yaphela. These two will always cross paths. Lapho kuphela khona izindlela kodwa ezabo mazihlale zihlangana kuchitheke igazi, kushabalale inzalo.

She opens her eyes. I'm hoping that she will make sense now.

Gogo : Uyise kaZwelibanzi wasebenzisa umuthi kowesifazane owayezwana noZwelibanzi. Uthi umoya lo wesifazane owalapho uganele khona.

Hhaibo. I swallow.

Gogo : Inzalo yakhe bayiqeda nya emuva kokudlula kukaZwelibanzi emhlabeni.

Thembela : UZwelibanzi akasekho?

Gogo : After what they did endodakazini yakwa Ntuli zathukuthela izidalwa zakwa Ntuli. Uthi umoya kwabonakala izulu lizamazama esigodini sase Nsuze. Lelozulu elashiya kukhala isigodi sonke. Uthi umoya, babhubhile bonke pho ubani ozomba lezikhwama esale nazo?! Hhheeyi!!

She groans and shakes her shoulders.

Gogo : Leave those bags! Those bags don't belong to you, leave them!! Hhey!!!

She groans louder. I'm going to run away.

Gogo : Uthi umoya amuhlasela amaphupho uBaba walomntwana baze bamunqoba ubumnyama. He goes back to Nsuze to look for the gift ayishiyelwe uyise kanti lesosipho inyoka eluhlazana umabonwa abulawe. He digs up the bags and takes them home. Kukhona okufanele eqhubeke nomsebenzi.

Wait, those witchcraft bags were passed down to my father?

Gogo : Uyakhala owesifazane uthi Mdineka yini le ongibuyele nayo emzini wami na?! Isililo salona wesifazane simumbela ithuna and just

like that she died. Ufuna ukuphazamisa umsebenzi wethu? Indodana yethu isizamukele izikhwama zethu but she wants him to those bags back? Who does she think she is? Let's kill her. She dies.

Is she talking about my mother? My heart races.

Gogo : Uthi umoya lezikhwama oziphetha uzoziphatha kanjani na? Uyawazi na umsebenzi? He agreed. He told himself that he knew what he was doing. He goes to the wrong people. Ziyaphambana izinkomishi. Nasi isiqalekiso esasibekelwe izingane zakwa Ntuli siwela kweyakhe indodakazi. Hheeeeyi!!!

She groans.

Gogo : Uthi umoya oyingcwele what are you going to do now? Your daughter is carrying the curse that was not meant to be hers! What are you going to do?!

She yells. I look at Aunt Thembela who looks like she was watching a horror movie.

Gogo : His father visits him in his dreams. He shouts at him
"Lezikhwama aziphathwa kanjena! Usumosha impilo yomzukululu wami

ngenxa yomuhobholo!" He gives him two options. Reverse the curse and die. Or let her continue to carry it and if you let her ukhona umvuzo omuhle. Uzoceba. Lesi esakho isibaya sizogcwala while she loses her kids. Izingane zakwa Ntuli. She will pay ngezingane zakwa Ntuli ngoba esethu isibopho nendodakazi yakwa Ntuli ususiqaqile. Now your daughter will pay the price while you benefit from it.

Aunt Thembela and I look at each other. My mouth drops. I'm defeated.

Gogo : What happened to your marriage?

Me : Sahlukanisa ngoba ngingabatholi abantwana.

Gogo : When you got married did you get blessings from your father?

Me : No

Gogo : That's because kwakufanele kuhambe kufike la. Izindlela zakwa Mlambo nabakwaNtuli ziyohlale zihlangana.

Thembela sighs. I'm already weeping.

Themabela : So this was a miscarriage?

Gogo : It is.

Themabela : How can I help her?

Gogo : She can reverse the curse. Ebuyisele lesiqalekiso kumnikazi waso. But if she reverse the curse kunabantu ababili abazoshona kwaNtuli and both of them were involved ekufeni kukaZwelibanzi okuyikona lokho kufa okwasusa konke loluthuthuva.

Haa! Die? I don't even know who was involved? We are talking about Sbani's family here for goodness sake.

Themabela : You have to do it Sebenzile.

I wipe the tears.

Me : And if I don't?

Gogo : Only your father's death can put an end to this whole thing.
Ukufa kwakhe kungaqeda yonke into.

Me : No, no! My father can't die. Please, not my father.

Gogo : Kuzofanele wenze lokhu engikutshela kona ke. If you don't do it
lento izogcina ibulele wena.

No, anything else can be done but not my father. He can't die.

Me : I'll do it.

Gogo : I'll be back.

She gets up and walks out.

Thembelela : Mntanami usuhlupheke kangaka kanti sidlala abantu bakwa
Ntuli.

Me : My father is not innocent in all of this.

Themabela : Are you going to choose the Ntulis over your own father?

Me : No

Themabela : Good!

Gogo comes back.

Gogo : If you do this, there's no going back.

Me : Yebo

Gogo : Take this paper and buy what I wrote there.

Me : Rope and needles?

Gogo : Yes. Uzothatha into yakho enegazi noma iyiphi. I would recommend that you use your used pad or underwear. Uzothatha lona ulihlome ngezinaliti. Uma usuqedile uzolifaka ku plastic uwubophe. Uzobe usuhamba ubheke umfula ohambayo. Eduze kwaloyomfula you need to make sure ukuthi kukhona isihlahla. You will throw the plastic

inside that flowing river and after that you will take the rope
uyibophele esihlahleni ibe isihibe. When you are done you'll go home.
Uhambe ungabheki emumva.

Me : That's all?

Gogo : That's all. After that you'll see.

I swallow hard.

Chapter 67

From Gogo's house we went to Aunt Thembela's house in Ntuzuma. I told her that I need time to think before I do anything. Whenever Aunt Thembela is stressed she drinks. She bought Smirnoff spin ciders. I bathed and changed into clean clothes, her clothes. When she was drunk and unable to stop me from drinking, I started drinking. Alcohol is something I never thought I needed until this day. Around 10pm Skhumbuzo drove me to Mountview.

The door is unlocked, this means Sbani is home. I push the door and walk in. He is laying on the bed smoking his weed. He is playing music from his phone.

Me : Hey

I'm trying so hard to sound and look sober. He is staring at me.

Sbani : Hi

Me : Where are your kids?

He knows who I'm talking about.

Sbani : Uphumaphi Sebe?

Me : ENTuzuma

I take his wallet and open it.

Sbani : What are you doing?

Me : Ngithatha imali Sbani. I need to pay Skhumbuzo imali yakhe ka petrol.

He shakes his head slightly. I take out R400

Me : Ngiyabuya

Sbani : Mhmmm.

I rolled my eyes and walked out. I went to pay Skhumbuzo his money. I come back and the first thing I notice is a big Ackermans plastic bag next to him. His drawing book is also next to him.

Me : Where are your brothers? Did you buy them clothes? Let me see.

He is glaring at me. I laugh and shake my head.

Me : Why are you angry?

Sbani : Kusho bani ukuthi ngidiniwe?

I take the plastic bag and open it.

Me : No, ngibona u....

Oh shit, it's newborn baby clothes. My heart sinks. I immediately put them back and throw the plastic back where it was. I think my brain is shrinking because what is that sensation? I scratch my head. Why is Sbani doing this to me?

Me : Zinhle

Sbani : But you didn't bother looking at them.

Me : Ngizozibona late.

He chuckles while smashing the weed on the ashtray.

Sbani : Are you drunk?

Me : No

He gets up and my heart starts pounding.

Sbani : Come here

Me : No

My back is leaning against the fridge.

Sbani : Uphumaphi Sebe?

Me : Angithi ngiyasho ukuthi ngiphuma e Ntuzuma.

Sbani : Are you drunk?!

I don't like the tone of his voice.

Me : Yes I am. So what?

There's a reaction on his face. Not a friendly one.

Sbani : Sebe.....

Me : So what Sbani? Uzungishaya? Go ahead. See this tooth? Lacisho laphuma uMenzi engikhipha izinyo lakhe legolide ngempentshisi. Engishaya! So I don't care anymore. Go ahead, ngishaye.

He shakes his head.

Sbani : What's wrong with you?

Me : You! Uwena into e wrong ngami?

Sbani : Ngenzeni mina?

Me : Please leave me alone.

Sbani : Are you not pregnant ngoba uphuza utshwala nje?

Me : Since when do you care? Usuqedile ukudlala ubhuti omdala kulamawele akini anezisini usuyaqala manje uzozenza u best father of the year? No. Buyela ezinganeni zika Baba wakho and play big brother kuzona.

Sbani : No

Advertisement

this is not about Lwando and Lwazi. Uyayayazi inkinga yakho. Tell me.

Me : Tell you what? Aybo awungixolele ngescefe Sbanisokuhle.

I make my way to the bathroom.

Sbani : Are you pregnant?

I freeze.

Sbani : Yes or no?

I turn around.

Me : No, I'm not.

His jaw tightens. He swallows hard. I walk closer to him.

Me : I'm not pregnant. Abantu bakini yibo ababulele ingane yami.

He lifts up his eyes and glares at me.

Me : Noma ungadinwa uqhume kodwa iqiniso lithi abantu bakini yibo ababulele ingane yami. Two Sbani! Two bloody miscarriages! Ngenxa yabantu bakini!

Sbani : What the fuck are you talking about?

Me : Abantu bakini babulala umalume wami Sbani! They killed him.

Sbani : Uyahlanya!

Me : Really? Am I crazy? Isangoma singitshela yonke into. Ngithwele isiqalekiso esasibekelwe u Aunt wakho wakwa Ntuli. She is supposed to be losing her kids, not me!!

Sbani : U aunt wami wakwa Ntuli kanjani? U Aunt akuyena owakwa...
(sighs) Are you really going to blame abantu basekhaya ngamasimba nokukhohlakala okwenziwa uBaba wakho?

My eyes widen. He knows.

Sbani : You know it's him. Your father is busy killing all my kids ngenxa yezinkomo. Uceba ngezinkomo esebenzisa igazi lami. Igazi lezingane zami!

He is losing it. I'm losing it too.

Me : Sekuyangicacela manje ukuthi ngihleli nesitha layindlini. Ngidla nesitha ngiphinde ngilale naso.

Sbani : Isitha esikhulu ilesi esakuzala. Isitha esikhulu ilesi osibiza uBaba!

Me : Who told you all this? Uhamba izinyanga behind my back? Izinyanga eziqambela uBaba amanga?

He swallows.

Sbani : No.

He goes to the bathroom and comes back with my underwear and my dress that has blood all over it.

Sbani : This is enough. This is enough for me to know that you lost my baby!

He opens his drawing book.

Sbani : This is enough for me to know that your father is behind this. My dreams? My dreams are not useless Sebenzile. Ahlale njalo enencazelo futhi engixwayisa.

He is pointing at that drawing of cows.

Sbani : These are your fathers cows. You fell pregnant kwamitha nezinkomo zika Baba wakho. I had this dream and after that you lost my child?! That is no fucking coincidence! Ubani umuntu oba nezinkomo eziwu 100 eyedwa ziphinde zimithe zonke kanye kanye?

I never said 100. Sbani is going to drive me crazy.

Me : Uthi uBaba wami uyathakatha?

Sbani : That is not what I'm saying. Engizama ukukusho ukuthi kunendlela aganga ngayo engalungile.

Me : It's the same thing! Just say it!! Isho ukuthi ngizalwa umthakathi!

Sbani : Don't push me!!!

Me : Or what?! Uthini ngabantu bakini laba abangababulali? UBaba wakho yena ke? He is a murderer! I wouldn't be surprised uma kuwuye owabulala Umalume wami. He tried to kill his own brother for fuck sake!

Sbani : UBaba wakho uyathakatha. Uthakatha ngisho ingane yakhe ayizalayo! Your father is stupid! Ubani oncamela ukuba nezinkomo okudlula ingane yakhe? His only child?

Me : Umndeni wakini wonke ubolile ngisho nawe waduba kini ngoba ubazi ukuthi abalungile! Wabaleka ngoba ubasaba! You know that they are evil! Izinja! Ababulali! I don't even feel safe with you anymore because who knows? Mhlampe nawe bazokuthuma ukuthi ungibulale the moment bethola ukuthi ngiwubani.

Sbani : I also don't feel safe with you anymore because who knows mhlampe ngizovuka sengiyinkomo ksasa ngoba phela kini cows are everything! Nincamela izinkomo ukudlula yonke into. Sebe yazi I can't believe that you are defending your father kuyona yonke lento. He killed our child!!

His eyes welled up with tears.

Me : Kini babulale umalume!

Sbani : What fucking uncle are you talking about?!

He sighs.

Sbani : Sebe please. I don't want to fight with you. Ngifuna ukwazi ukuthi ingane yami yokuqala iphume kanjani.

Me : It's too late.

I open the wardrobe.

Sbani : Where are you going?

Me : Nginendlu yami mina Sbani.

Sbani : Can we please talk?

Me : Talk about what? Hlukana nami Sbani!!

Sbani : Fine

Me : Sizobona uyezwa? Utshela abantu bakini ukuthi sizobona ukuthi kuzogcina bani kuyona yonke lento. I lost everything ngenxa yamasimba enziwa abantu bakini.

Sbani : Amasimba maphi? Don't be ridiculous! Akubona abantu basekhaya abafundisa uBaba wakho ukugibela imfene.

Me : Sizobona ngalokho.

Sbani : Am I supposed to be scared now?

Me : No, don't be scared. Yizwa lento engikutshela yona nje kuphela.

Sbani : Ey fakof ungangisabisi mina Sebe.

Me : I'm not trying to scare you. Ngikutshela iqiniso nje kuphela.

Sbani : Phuma. Get out of my room.

He pushes me out.

Me : Ungangibambi ngizoziphumela.

Sbani : Yeah, get the fuck out.

Me : Don't push it Sbanisokuhle.

Sbani : Or what?

Me : Sbani you are going to regret this.

Sbani : I won't. Hamba

Me : Hhaibo Sbani.

Sbani : Go!

Me : Sbani ngizokubonisa amabele enyoka

Sbani : Mina ngizokubonisa isipoki

Me : Awuyazi lento oyenzayo

Sbani : Sizobona

Me : Yeah, sizobona.

He slams the door on my face. I make my way to my room. I throw myself on my bed and begin crying. I don't know what happened to the alcohol but I'm very much sober now. Everything feels like one hell of a nightmare. The blood is now flowing, especially when I cough. The more it flows, the more I get angry.

Chapter 68

I know that it's him knocking. I was expecting him to knock at midnight but he didn't. It's 06 am, I get up and open the door. I open the door and quickly try to make my way back to bed but he grabs my arm and tightens his arm around me.

Sbani : Uyaphi?

He kisses my neck and I feel my knees growing weaker.

Me : Please let me go.

Sbani : No.

Me : Sbani, please.

Sbani : Sekuphelile ukuhlanya?

His voice and warm breath hitting my neck makes my vagina vibrate. I'm bleeding for christ sake and normally when there's blood involved I usually have zero interest in sex but what is this? I want to devour this man behind me.

Sbani : Mhmmm thembalami? Sekuphelile ukuhlanya?

Me : No.

He laughed and let go of me. I go back and climb on my bed. Where is he going looking this good? My heart breaks as my eyes land on his face. His eyes are swollen and red. His eyes are pink and when he's been crying they become extra red. Sometimes it's a bit scary like today. This is what I was trying to protect Sbani from when I lied about the pregnancy. I was trying to protect him from this pain but currently it feels like the way he found out the truth is even worse.

Sbani : Woza uzolala endlini yakho.

I shake my head.

Me : No thanks. This is my room.

Sbani : Ngizodla nobani mina pho?

Me : I don't know. Didn't you think of that when you kicked me out of your room last night?

Sbani : Sebe, I'm sorry about what happened last night.

We both exchanged some very harsh words.

Me : Ngiyakuzwa

Sbani : Angifuni ukuxabana nawe thembalami. I love you so much, angifuni ukulahlekelwa uwena.

He comes and sits on the bed. He smells like Protex soap. I love the smell. He brushes my head.

Sbani : Mawezingane zami?

My whole body reacts. I don't know if hearts smile. But mine is jumping with so much excitement. That "Mawezingane zami" is everything.

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa, uyezwa mawezingane zami?

He repeats and then kisses my cheek. He sighs.

Sbani : A lot happened yesterday.

He takes a pillow and puts it on his lap. He pulls my arm.

Sbani : Woza ulale kumina

With all the love that I'm carrying, I'm not even going to fight this. I move and put my head on his lap. He caresses my arm.

Sbani : You came home drunk sthandwa sami. And you said a whole lot of things that didn't even make sense. Khona lapho izolo I found that you lost our baby. Ngingena ngale endlini Sebe Ngifica ingubo enegazi phansi namahluli phakathi e toilet. It was....

His voice is trembling and breaking between his words. He swallows.

Sbani : I'm sorry.

Me : How do you feel?

Sbani : Me? I don't even know how I feel anymore. But what I'm sure of is that I'm losing everything. Everyone I loved, I lost and now I'm losing my kids. What if I lose you too?

I swallow as my throat starts burning up.

Sbani : Engifuna ukukwazi ukuthi kwenzekeni ezinganeni zami? When did it happen and why didn't you tell me?

Me : I couldn't stand seeing you like this. What I feared the most is now right in front of me. Bengisaba ukubona lo Sbani onjena. You were so happy.

Sbani : I deserved to know. Imina uBaba wabo.

He says and heaves a sigh.

Me : I wasn't feeling well when I woke up. My stomach was upset, like I was bloated. I felt tired. I felt this pain and discomfort kungathi ngingaya e toilet and I did. Uma ngifika e toilet....

I swallow.

Me : Sbani I tried to call you. Your phone rang a few times and after that the call went dead. I had no one else to call.

Sbani : Was it painful?

Me : Yes

Sbani : That's what kept me awake the whole night. You losing my baby ulapha endlini wedwa, crying for help, ngingekho mina umuntu okumithisile. That shit kills me Sebe. I feel dead.

His single tear falls down to my cheek.

Sbani : Ngi...ngicela uphakame.

He wants to leave.

Me : No

He covers his face with his hands.

Me : My aunt took me to a sangoma yesterday. Isangoma sithi lento eyenzeka kimi kungenxa yentombazane yakwa Ntuli eyayithwele isiqalekiso sakwa Mlambo. Abakwa Ntuli baqalekiswa ngoba babulala omunye womalume bami. This is something that happened years ago.

He lowers his hands.

Sbani : Intombazane yakwa Ntuli?

Me : Yes. I don't know which one, kodwa isaphila.

Sbani : Intombazane?

Me : Yes

There's silence.

Sbani : Bakutsheleni okunye?

Me : Nothing else.

Sbani : Sithe yini ezokusiza kuyona yonke lento?

For a moment I kept quiet.

Me : Nothing. She said we will never have kids of our own.

He sighs.

Sbani : Nami a sangoma was called ekhaya. Besizogeza umuzi njengoba nawe wazi ukuthi uBaba washonela ekhaya. Siphinde sigeze noBa.....noKhulekani.

Me : Yeah?

Sbani : Sibe sesingibonela. Sabona ukuthi kunomuntu oganga ngenzalo yami.

I get up.

Me : See? Besikhuluma ngalentombazane yakwa Ntuli. Abantu bakini are behind all this.

Sbani : You are probably right.

Me : I am. My father has nothing to do with all of this.

Sbani : Yeah.

Me : So sithe sizokusiza kanjani?

Sbani : Nothing. Sithe ngeke sikwazi ukungisiza.

Me : Do you see what I'm talking about? Nawe bakutshela into efanayo.

Sbani : He did. He told me the same thing that you were told.

I sigh in relief. As much as I believe all the things that Gogo told me but I don't believe that my father uses umuthi.

Me : And what did your family say?

Sbani : Nothing. We were all confused.

Me : Sbani I'm sorry about what happened last night. I don't know what got into me. I love you. You know I love you.

He presses his lips on my cheek.

Sbani : And I love you more

I kiss his lips and hug him tightly.

Me : I'm sorry baby.

Sbani : No

I am sorry. I really do.

He kisses my hands.

Sbani : I need us to go and see a doctor. I want to be sure that you are fine.

I smile and shake my head.

Me : Okay.

Sbani : Come to your room.

I giggle.

Me : Okay. But let me take a shower here. Ngicela ukugeza ngedwa.

He sighs.

Sbani : I get it. Ufuna ngikwenzeleni?

Me : Your fancy hot chocolate.

He laughs.

Sbani : Okay baby.

I peck his cheek.

Sbani : Ngifuna ukuyobona uSphiwo lapha emzini ka Lindo. Do you want to come with me?

Me : I'd love to but I can't baby. I don't want to go out yet.

Sbani : I understand.

Me : My hot chocolate please.

He laughs and gets up. I hate seeing his face like that.

Sbani : Yes ma'am

He kisses my cheek and heads out. The Ntulis are going to pay for all of this. I don't care who else is involved, as long as it's not MaNzilo. I take my phone and text my aunt.

"I'M READY TO DO WHAT GOGO SAID. I'LL SEE YOU ON SATURDAY SITHENGE LEZINTO. "

I finish and press send.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Sbani's visit was least expected. He just came and demanded to see Khulekani and Boniza. Boniza was actually ready to leave, going back to her house but what Sbani wanted to talk about sounded really urgent.

Sbani : Aunt ngomoya wesonto ngicela ningitshele ukuthi what happened.

Boniza darts her gaze to Khulekani.

Boniza : What happened where?

Sbani : Ubani intombazane yakwa Ntuli eyaqalekiswa ngenzalo iqalekiswa abantu bakwa Mlambo?

Boniza swallows.

Boniza : Who told you all that? Kusewuye uMagaye?

Sbani : Please answer me or I'll leave.

Boniza : It was me.

Sbani blows out a sigh.

Sbani : Kodwa aunt nina ikomalume wenu nje kwaNtuli akukhona kini. So it's not you.

Khulekani : Babiza uNtuli o Aunt bakho. Bonke laba abangashadile babiza uNtuli. Umawabo owu Aunt wethu kanye no Baba wabo uTembe bashada kodwa abaphambanisanga izinanzi. Lokho kubenza abakwa Ntuli.

Sbani looks so bored listening to Khulekani. His father is really not his favorite.

Boniza : He is right. Lokho sikuthole sekushone uMah and we had to change our surname back to Ntuli ngoba isibongo sakwa Tembe sasivala izinto zethu eziningi ezinhle.

Sbani : So it was you?

Boniza : Yes

Sbani : Why?

Boniza : Can we not go back?

Sbani : Nenzani kwaMlambo?

Boniza : Bhunu, leyo ke mfana wami idinga abantu abadala.

Sbani : Right, abantu abadala. Aunt ukhuluma ngabo labantu abadala abangimoshela impilo yami. I'm suffering because of you!!

He yells.

Khulekani : Zizwe....

Sbani : Don't call me that. Angiyena uZizwe!! Umosha impilo yami ubuya lapho uzothi Zizwe, Zizwe! UZizwe wokunuka?

He tries to push Khulekani. Boniza stands up immediately and grabs him.

Boniza : What do you think you are doing? Ufuna ukubeka uyihlo okuzalayo isandla? Huh Sbanisokuhle?

Lindo walks in.

Lindo : What's going on here? Umsindo ongaka owani?

Sbani : Ask him. Lendoda le engingayazi imosha impilo yami. This bastard is ruining my life!

Lindo : Bafo calm down.

Sbani : No! Lenja le kungcono ukube yafa!

Boniza puts her hands over her head in disbelief.

Boniza : Hhaibo! inja? UBaba wakho lo umubiza ngenja?

Sbani : Umgodoyi! Fakof Khulekani, uyezwa?

Khulekani : Okay

Sbani chuckles.

Sbani : He said okay. Did you hear him bafo? Uthi okay...

Sbani jumps out of nowhere and tries to land a punch on Khulekani's face. There's chaos. Lindo manages to grab Sbani and force him down to the couch.

Lindo : Usuyahlanya bafo? Baba omncane is not the enemy here. Izitha zethu zingaphandle! Izitha zethu ilabantu ababulala uBaba.

Usukhohliwe? He is not the enemy. Igazi lakho leli, uBaba wakho. Igazi lethu Sbani!!!

Sbani : No, no!! Elakho igazi, ay elami.

Boniza : Listen here! Lenja le uBaba wakho. UBaba wakho ekwafa abantu ukuze wena ube noBaba after your mother died! Angabe uyintandane wena kuthiwa thina asikulwelanga ukuthi wena ube no Baba. We fought! Lendoda yakwa Mlambo saqalekiswa thina ngenxa yayo. Leyondoda yafa ukuze wena ube noBaba!

There's silence.

Boniza : Usuyazi ke manje. Yes we killed him. Sayibulala leyondoda yakwa Mlambo and trust me Sbani if I had to kill that man again I would. Umfowethu lo ombiza ngenja! Inja? Inja Sbani?

Sbani : You killed him?

Boniza : Yes we did!

Sbani narrows his eyes.

Sbani : Niyamazi lomuntu enamubulala ukuthi ubani?

Boniza : It doesn't matter. He is dead. Nangu uyihlo angabe ubonga UNkulunkulu ukuthi usenaye!

Sbani : That man was Sebe's uncle.

They look at each other in dead silence. No one knew anything about that.

Boniza : Who?

Sbani : And today we are paying for your sins.

His eyes welled up with tears.

Sbani : I'm losing all my kids, igazi lami! Ngenxa yenu!

He gets up.

Sbani : Nizongisiza ningigezele uSebe for wonke lama miscarriage ingane yabantu esidlule kuwona ngenxa yenu.

He says and walks out. Lindo looks at his aunt and walks out, following Sbani. Boniza sighs and sits down.

Boniza : Do you see where your hate for your brother has brought us?

Khulekani : I regret the day that Abdool hooked me up with Celiwe. One night, just one with Celiwe in Cape Town changed everything. That one Blind Date has brought us to this point.

Chapter 69

ESHOWE

I decided to come and see my father. This is not a normal visit. I'm here to confirm a few things before I do something that will haunt me for the rest of my life. When I arrived my father wasn't home as usual. I dial Sbani's number.

Sbani : Yah manu

Me : Hey love. Sengisekhaya

Sbani : Okay, uhambe kahle?

Me : I did, my love. Usuphumile emsebenzini?

I doubt it because I'm hearing noise in his background, which means he is still at work.

Sbani : No, I'm still here. Ngizophuma ngo 18:00.

Me : Did you ask Lindo to pick you up?

Sbani : I did. He is on his way.

Me : Shame sthandwa sami. I'm sure ukhathele.

Sbani : Ngiyafa straight.

Me : Uzofika endlini ulale. I cooked and amabhodwe ngawafaka ngale endlini e fridge lami ngoba elakho beligcwele. Benginqena izintuthwane.

Sbani : Okay, ngiyabonga mama.

Me : Wait i... what is this?

Sbani : Ini leyo?

Me : Your work t-shirts. I didn't iron them. Besengi late. Uzowabona phezu kombhede namasokisi akho.

Sbani : No it's okay, baby. Ukhiye wona?

Me : I left it with Rian. Ngingene ukuwushiya engoja because bekugcwele labantu be plumbing.

Sbani : Yeah wenze kahle.

Me : Uthe u Rian uma ubona engavuli umufonele uzobe ekhona ngaphakathi elele.

Sbani : Okay thembalami. Wena u right Kodwa? Linjani igazi?

Me : I'm fine. Sengizophuza amaphilisi manje ngilale. Nawe Bhunu please don't forget to take your ARVs.

Sbani : I won't. Manje uzolala mina ngingakalali?

I giggle.

Me : I'm bored here. Kuthuli.

Sbani : Sikulande?

I laugh.

Me : No please. I'll be fine

Sbani : Okay. Ungalali ke manuna, I'll call you when I get home.

Me : Kulungile Khuboni

Sbani : Sharp. Ngiyakuthanda ke

Me : I love you more.

Sbani : Sho.

He hangs up. There's someone at the door.

"Sanibona ekhaya kwaMdineka"

Oh, it's Baba uMzila. I put on the flip flops and make my way out.

Mzila : Hawu ndodakazi kanti ukhona.

I smile.

Me : Yebo. Ngiyafika nje nami.

Mzila : That's good. Is your father home?

Me : No he is not here kodwa ngicabanga ukuthi usendleleni ebuyayo.

Mzila. Olaydi. Tell him I was here, okay?

Me : I will.

He smiles and fixes the knobkerrie in his hand. Baba uMzila's left leg is paralyzed. When he walks it almost seems like he is going to fall. He limps. I just feel sorry for him when he walks but I think he doesn't feel any pain. I sigh and my eyes just move to the kraal. I try to sweep them away from the kraal but they take me back.

Me : Uh... Baba uMzila uxolo.

He stops walking and turns around.

Mzila : Yebo ndodakazi yami

Me : How do these cows mate?

Mzila : Ukubuziswa yini lokho?

Me : I'm just curious. I mean they are all females. So kwenzekani kanjani?

He coughs.

Mzila : They are females and I have males. That's why your father and I are best friends.

Me : So they mate with yours?

Mzila : Yes

Me : And how many cows do you have?

He sighs.

Mzila : 30.

I smile.

Me : Ngiyabonga Baba.

Mzila : Sebenzile why are you suddenly curious?

Me : Empeleni angiqali manje. I've always wanted to ask my father but every time uma sekufanele ngimubuze bengivele ngikhohlwe.

Mzila : Mhmmmm , I see. Ay sengicela indlela nami nakhu kuhlwa.

Me : Kulungile Baba.

He walks away. Now I have to ask my father why that rondavel is the only rondavel that is always closed. I make my way back into my room. I look at my baby's clothes one more time. I smile looking at them. Oh Sbani!

My father finally came back. I stayed up until he arrived.

Mlambo : Bengicabanga ukuthi uyadlala uma uthi uyeza

Me : No I wasn't. Kuningi okwenzeka empilweni yami Mdineka and I can't do it alone anymore.

Mlambo : What's happening?

I get up and go to my room to collect my baby's clothes. Sebenzile when you show him these clothes keep your eyes on his face. If he looks guilty that will mean he knows something. I take a deep breath and make my way back to the living room.

Me : Baba?

Mlambo : Kwenzenjani?

Me : Look at this.

I put the plastic on his lap and sat down opposite him. I want a clear view of his face. He opens the plastic and takes out a comfy baby romper. It's my favorite one. He smiles and lifts up his eyes. His teeth are so yellow, even at night. Ey noBaba kodwa naye.

Mlambo : Is this what I think it is? Are you pregnant?

I shake my head and his face drops.

Me : I was but not anymore. I lost the baby a couple of days ago. It was the second baby engiphuphumelile.

No reaction at all. He nods.

Me : You don't seem shocked or anything. Ngiphunyelwe isisu Baba. Izingubo lezi eziphambi kwakho izingubo ezithengwe u Sbani ezithengela ingane engazi ukuthi ayisekho.

Mlambo : What am I supposed to do? Cry? No, mntanami. I'm not going to cry just because you lost umzukulu wami. Ukukhala kwami kuzobe kufana nokufaka usawoti esilondeni. It will only remind you of the pain you went through when you lost the baby. These things happen, ikakhulukazi kunina bantu abasebasha. There are always complications ezinganeni zokuqala.

He puts the plastic bag next to him and slides in his hands into his pockets.

Mlambo : Ngiyaxolisa mntanami ukuthi lento yehlele wena. You don't deserve it kodwa kuzolunga. You just have to keep trying. Take a break wena no mfana kaNtuli and try again. Nizame nje ningayeki.

Me : Ngiyakuzwa Baba.

Mlambo : Don't worry, these things happen.

Me : Yes. Uhmhhh... kukhona okunye ebengifuna sikhulume ngakho. I wanted to ask you something.

Mlambo : Really? Go ahead and ask me. I'm here.

I try to think but my mind is blank and my head suddenly feels heavy.

Me : Uhmhhh....

Mlambo : Go ahead. Ask me.

Me : Ngiyaxolisa kodwa angisakhumbuli. I can't remember what I wanted to ask you. Kuyacaca ukuthi bekuyinto engabalulekile.

He smiles and shakes his head slightly.

Mlambo : Good.

I think the pills are kicking in. I'm feeling drowsy.

Mlambo : Sebenzile Mlambo?

Me : Ba... Baba.

Mlambo : Sebenzile Mlambo?

Me : Baba

Mlambo : Look at me.

I lift up my eyes to his face.

Mlambo : I'm not a bad person. Nanoma yini le oyisolayo manje ayilona iqiniso. I'm your father and I will never hurt you.

Me : Yebo Baba

I say while shaking my head.

Mlambo : Good. Now go and get some rest.

Me : Kulungile Mdineka.

I get up. Now I'm sure that whatever it is that the Mlambos did to the Ntulis, my father had nothing to do with it. He was never involved from the very beginning. I don't know how the curse was switched but my father was not responsible. He may be a lot of things but using umuthi and destroying people's lives is not it. Now it's time to take care of Ntulis and put an end to this whole thing. I look at the rope and the needles. Rope

Advertisement

needles and used pad, all checked. As soon as my father leaves tomorrow I will go to the river.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

It's just after 11pm, and Sbani is not sleeping. He is tossing and turning. He thought coming here would help him but no. In his flat he struggled to sleep. This happened after he tried to throw the apple on the road. He tried, he wanted to throw it but he couldn't. Something stopped him. He went back to his flat and tried to sleep but he failed. That's when he called Lindo to come and pick him up.

Sbani : Mhmmm... Dammit! Dammit!

He hits the pillow and clenches his jaw. He is restless. He takes his phone and tries to call Sebenzile but she is not answering. Someone knocks on his door.

'Zizwe, are you okay son?'

Sbani rolls his eyes. Definitely not this man.

Sbani : I'm fine

Khulekani : Your light is on.

Sbani raises his brow.

Sbani : So what? Just go my bro, please.

Khulekani : Ngicela uvule isicabha Zizwe.

Sbani : Fuck...

He curses under his breath with his teeth gritted. He gets up and opens the door. Maybe this is the person he needs to take out all his frustration on.

Sbani : What do you want Khulekani?

Khulekani steps in and looks around Sbani's room. His hands are tucked in his sweatpants pockets. His top less and for the first time Sbani notices that he has a tattoo on his back, just by his left shoulder. It's tattooed "Zizwe" and above the name Zizwe it's Sbani's date of birth.. That is exactly his date of birth. He turns and looks at Sbani.

Khulekani : Why aren't you sleeping?

Sbani : Khulekani angizele wena layikhaya.

Khulekani sits down and cracks his fingers.

Khulekani : Mfana wami Uyabona manje ayisekho into engingayisho noma ngiyenze ukuze wena ungithande futhi ungamukele njengoBaba wakho and that's why I won't even try to win you over.

Sbani : Thank you.

Khulekani : Ngizoqhubeka ngiphile impilo yami ngendlela yami.

Sbani : I don't care what you do.

Khulekani : Umamncane wakho uyeza uzohlala nami layikhaya.
Sengikhulumile no mfazi kabafo uMaNzilo.

Sbani's blood boils.

Khulekani : Your brothers are going to boarding school next year, so they won't be here for long.

Sbani : Mina ngafunda eBhongo. I'm sure my mother would have taken me to a private school because she wanted only the best for me. But no, she was killed and she died with the life I knew. My father was broke and he couldn't take me.....

Khulekani : Zizwe don't do this.

Sbani : Ngafunda eBhongo. I told myself ukuthi lempilo ebingizifunela yona ngizoyinika izingane zami. Kodwa manje sengiyabona ukuthi nalokho iphupho nje elingasoze lafezeka, a goal I'll never reach ngoba izingane zami ziyafa because of you!!

Khulekani : My boy, listen.

Sbani : I never wanted to have kids but when I met Sebenzile bengazi ukuthi ngifuna ukuba nayo yonke into naye. When I found out she was pregnant, I was so happy kanti angazi ukuthi injabulo yami nayivala kudala.

Khulekani seems rather chilled now.

Sbani : I don't care. Buya uzohlala kini nomfazi wakho. Izingane zakho uma uthanda uhambe uyozufundisa nabafundi baka Jesu eJerusalema or whatever. I don't care!! I don't give a fuck Khule... I don't....

He is losing his voice. When he is angry he loses it a lot and it frustrates him. He climbs on the bed and throws his head on the pillow. Tears start pouring out of his eyes.

Khulekani : It saddens me ukubona ukuthi mina nawe asisoze sakha ubudlwelano obuhle njengoBaba nendodana. You know Zizwe, ngiphile emazweni isikhathi eside ngingalazi ngisho izwi lakho. I craved your voice. I wanted to hold you in my arms. I wanted to feed you, change your diaper and play with you. I saw fathers walking around with their kids, holding hands and it killed me because I couldn't have that with you. I wanted to sing for you until you fell asleep. Uma ungangibuza manje ukuthi yini engiyikhumbulayo ngalamazwe ase Africa engiwahambile ngizokutshela ukuthi angikhumbuli lutho because I spent all of my life there trying to create a picture of you in my head. All that I remember are the days I slept on my back and wrote letters to you. Izincwadi ezahamba zangabuya nampendulo. And when you didn't write back ngakuphilisa emqondweni wami. I created a life in my head. Impilo yami, nawe noCeliwe and I lived that life. Ngase ngikhuluma ngedwa, ngihleka ngedwa. Seeing things that other people couldn't see. Ngaxoshwa emsebenzini kwathiwa ngiyahlanya bangithatha abaphathi benkampani enkulu yase Nigeria engangiyisebenzela bangiyisa esibhedlela sezinhlanga. Everyone thought I was crazy but I wasn't. All I needed was you and your mother.

Sbani swallows.

Khulekani : So uma kufanele ngibekezelele wena ungiphethe ngalendlela ongiphethe ngayo kodwa useduze kwami ngizobekezela. I would rather have you insulting me everyday than live one more day without you in my life.

He sniffs and stands up. He walks out and closes the door. Sbani punches the pillow in frustration. He takes a deep breath before he gets up. He wears his tracksuit and puts on his glasses. He takes his car keys and a small black plastic bag. He walks out.

20 minutes later his car is parked on the side of the road. He is staring at the window and watching cars pass by one by one. He looks at the clock. It's a few minutes after midnight. He finally sighs and opens the door. His feet touch the ground but he remains seated. He grabs a black plastic bag and takes something out. He brings his eyes back on the road. Another car passes by. There's another one coming from a distance. He looks at the apple in his hand. One throw and the apple rolls all the way to the center of the road. Before it stops rolling a car comes and smashes it. He hops back in and drives away.

Chapter 70

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Sbani puts on his backpack and walks out of his room. He will use the kitchen door to get out. He finds Khulekani washing the dishes in the kitchen. Damn! He should've used the main door. He walks past him and heads out.

Khulekani : UBaba wakho noMaNzilo abakufundisanga ukubingelela?

Sbani clenches his teeth and turns around.

Sbani : Sawu.....

Khulekani : Sit the fuck down and eat.

Oh so he is going to cut him off like that? Sbani can't believe it. He removes his backpack and hangs it over the chair. He sits down and Khulekani places a bowl of porridge and sugar in front of him.

Sbani : Thanks.

Khulekani : Where did you go last night?

Sbani eats and licks his spoon before lifting up his eyes to Khulekani.

Sbani : To get rid of you.

Khulekani chuckles.

Khulekani : Really?

He asks and goes back to washing the dishes.

Khulekani : Does your girlfriend call you every morning to wake you up?

Sbani nods.

Sbani : And you? Who woke you up in Nigeria? Is it Nigeria or Angola?

Khulekani : No one.

Sbani : I thought you were going to say "Pen"

Khulekani raises his brow.

Sbani : You know? Since you spent your whole life there writing to me.

That sounds like a mockery. Khulekani turns around.

Khulekani : You don't believe me when I say I wrote letters to you. Do you?

Sbani shrugs.

Sbani : I don't and I don't even care.

Khulekani : Right

He continues to wash the dishes.

Sbani : Why do you wake up so early? Did you learn it in Nigeria?

Khulekani clenches his teeth and closes his eyes.

Khulekani : No.

Sbani : I see

Khulekani : Ahlala kuphi amabhasi kabafo?

Sbani : Why are you asking? Do you want to take them to Nig....

Khulekani : That's enough!

Sbani puts down the spoon and crosses his arms.

Sbani : You told me to sit down. Ubulindele ukuthi sikhulume ngani?

Khulekani : Zizwe there's so much I can tolerate but I will not tolerate this kind of disrespect. I will not let you joke about my pain. You have no idea of what I went through in Nigeria. So I will not let you get comfortable with disrespecting me about Nigeria. Got it?

Sbani : Whatever

Khulekani : Now finish your porridge.

Sbani : No

Sbani drags out the chair and gets up.

Khulekani : Fine. Take this.

Khulekani hands him a food container.

Khulekani : Isikhaftini sakho sasemsebenzini.

Sbani : I don't want it.

Khulekani : Fine. You can have it later.

Sbani : Did you cook?

Khulekani smiles.

Khulekani : I did. I thought we were going to have supper together.

Sbani : Ay no I'll have it later.

He sighs and puts his backpack over his shoulder.

Sbani : Pity you won't be here to see me eating the last supper you cooked.

Khulekani : Ngizobe sengikuphi ke mina because I told you that I'm not going anywhere.

Sbani : You'd be dead.

Khulekani chuckles and shakes his head.

Khulekani : That was good. That was really good.

Sbani : You think I'm joking?

Khulekani : No

Sbani : Good.

Khulekani sighs.

Khulekani : Pity you won't be here to see me dying.

Sbani : Really? How do you know that?

Khulekani : Because I know how fast my poison is.

Sbani's body heats up immediately. He swallows hard.

Sbani : What poison?

Khulekani : I hope you enjoyed your porridge. I guess we will meet on the other side later.

He smiles and taps Sbani's shoulder. He walks away. Sbani looks at the bowl of porridge and when he realizes how much he ate his heart pounds.

Sbani : That was really funny but if you think I'm scared then you are wrong.

Khulekani : Bye Zizwe.

He says from the living room.

Sbani : I'm not scared, okay? You should be scared.

He looks at the remaining porridge in the bowl and sees the colour of it changing.

Sbani : No

He swallows all his saliva and closes his eyes. He opens them and realizes there's nothing wrong with the porridge. He blows out a sigh and rubs his face.

Sbani : I know you are trying to scare me.

He walks out and goes into his car. Khulekani is watching him through the window in the dining room. His car door closes and immediately opens again. He gets out of the car and looks around before he runs to the tap and opens it. He drinks a lot of water. He is even gargling. Khulekani burst into laughter.

Khulekani : Ah mfana wami. I love you so much.

He mutters and makes his way back to the kitchen. He takes his phone and sends a message to Sbani.

"Milk is way better than water if you want to get rid of poison, of course. Try it"

ESHOWE

My father is knocking.

Mlambo : Sebenzile are you still sleeping?

Me : Cha baba. Ufuna ngikwenzele itiyiye?

Mlambo : No, are you okay?

I smile. This is so nice of him. Trust me, I don't hear it often.

Me : Yes I'm fine, Mdineka.

Mlambo : That's good. Ngisaphuma kancane

Me : Okay

Mlambo : Don't forget to eat kukhona uzothola amandla.

I laugh.

Me : Yebo Baba

Mlambo : Ngiyabuya ke mntanami.

Me : Kulungile Baba.

I hear his footsteps going away and I get up. I need to go to the river now. This is the perfect time for me to go there. It's still so early in the morning so no one is there. But if I delay I'll find people with their cows and I won't be able to do this. I'm not even bathing. I put on my dress and wrap a doek around my head. I put everything inside the plastic. My phone rings.

Me : Oh Sbani

Advertisement

not now my love. Eish!

I sigh and take my phone.

Me : Godide

Sbani : Sebe

Okay something is wrong. I sit down.

Me : How is Mah?

MaNzilo is the only person who crosses my mind every time Sbani sounds down.

Sbani : Umawami u right.

Me : Okay. So what's wrong?

Sbani : I'm fine baby

Me : No you are not. Tell me what's going on.

He sighs.

Sbani : Okay, I'm not fine.

Me : What happened? Ulwe noBaba wakho futhi angithi?

Sbani : Something like that. Sebe I did something terrible last night. I was angry and ngivumele imizwa yami ingilawule okungcine sekungenzisa izinqumo ezibhedayo.

Me : What did you do?

Sbani : What if he dies okwangempela, Sebe? Or ehlanye?

Me : Come on love, he won't. Wena kanti utheni kuyena?

Sbani : I know I hate him but he is still my father and uyazama uKhulekani. Imina nje ongafuni ukumunika ithuba.

Me : So you guys fought again?

Sbani : Uvele wangidina izolo. He is always trying to defend himself. Akafuni ukuvuma amacala akhe. He is trying so much to make everyone understand his bullshit!

Me : Bhunu ngiyathemba ukuthi awumtshelanga ukuthi kungcono ukube wafa futhi. You didn't tell him that, right?

Sbani : What I did is worse than that. This thing is eating me up Sebe. Bengizitshela ukuthi ngiyamuzonda uKhulekani kodwa manje sengiyabona ukuthi angimuzondi kangako.

Me : Call him and apologize

Sbani : No

Me : Kodwa Mphemba alikho iphutha ngokuzehlisa uma ubona ukuthi wenze iphutha okanye wakhuluma kabi.

Sbani : You don't get it.

Me : I do. Yazi uma kungakhona into embi eyehlela uBaba wakho uyosala nonembeza oyokudla impilo yakho yonke. Sbani ngifuna

ukhumbule ukuthi abazali bethu ngisho bengababi kangakanani emehlweni omunye umuntu kodwa iqiniso lithi abazali bethu. I always tell you that sometimes I hate my father so much.

Sbani : Yeah.

Me : Kodwa iqiniso ukuthi uwuBaba wami. Noma kubuye kungabikhona ukuzwana phakathi kwethu kodwa impilo yami angiyiboni ngaphandle kukaBaba. He is the only person I have. Noma ngigoduka ngiza la ekhaya ngisuke ngazi ukuthi ukhona uBaba and lokho kuyisibusiso esikhulu kumina.

He sighs.

Me : Angifuni ukuthi ulahle ithuba lokwazana noBaba wakho.

He blows out another sigh.

Sbani : Fine. I'll talk to him when I get home.

Me : Usufikile emsebenzini?

Sbani : Yeah.

Me : Kungcono.

Sbani : Sharp

Me : Sbanisokuhle?

Sbani : Yah sthandwa sami

Me : Ngiyakuthanda

Sbani : Nami ngiyakuthanda, manu.

Me : Mncwa! Mncwa!

Sbani : Mncwa!

I hang up and release a sigh. I get up and take the plastic bag. I walk out and head down to the river. Looking at the grass that is going all the

way down to our river I can tell that there was someone walking here. Whoever it is can't witness what I'll be doing in that river.

I arrive at the river and find cows drinking water. Oh it was these cows. And where is the owner? I don't even know these cows. This is going to be a problem because I know the owner is around here and what I'm about to do needs me to be alone here. If I move down it's going to be risky because there's a waterfall. A big one. Dammit! Why would someone bring their cows so early to drink water? I look around and notice something familiar. I know that coat.

Me : Ijazi lika Baba leli.

Is my father here? If his coat is here that means he is also here. Did he come with these cows?

Me : Hhaibo uBaba. Uphi yena? Let me take his coat.

On my way to fetch his coat I notice his shoes under the tree.

Me : Hhaibo.

I lift up my head to the tree and my heart stops. He is hanging on the tree. His pants are wet. I drop everything on the ground and climb up. I climb up while screaming for him.

Me : Baba! Baba!!!

Chapter 71

NTULI HOMESTEAD

After the shocking call Sbani received from Sebenzile the first person he tried to call was Khulekani and when he didn't pick up his calls he panicked and drove all the way here.

He gets out of the car and races inside the main house. Khulekani is lying on the floor. His brain freezes. His tongue grows larger and sour. He throws himself on his knees next to him.

Sbani : Khulekani? No, no, no no!!!!

He starts shaking him.

Sbani : Khulekani wake up!

He shakes him a bit more.

Sbani : Baba vuka. Baba!

Tears fill up his eyes.

Sbani : Please don't leave me. Please vuka Baba. Ngiyakucela vuka. I'm sorry, I'm sorry about everything. Please wake up.

Khulekani is not moving.

Sbani : Baba! Baba I'm here, please wake up.

He gets up and clucks his tongue when he sees Khulekani dying with laughter. He puts his hands over his head and paces around. He almost lost his mind.

Khulekani : Baba vuka. Vuka!

He mimics Sbani's voice and cracks up.

Tears stream down Sbani's face. Khulekani stops laughing immediately.

Khulekani : Zizwe, come on mfana wami. Bengikudlalisa. I'm fine, look. I'm fine.

He pulls Sbani onto his chest.

Khulekani : Okay, that wasn't funny. I'm sorry.

Sbani pulls away and sits down.

Khulekani : I'm sorry.

Sbani : I don't know how I'm going to face her.

Khulekani : Who?

Sbani : I said a lot of bad things about her father but I didn't mean any of those things. I was angry.

Khulekani : Okay, calm down and tell me what's going on.

Sbani : I was angry. Ngafica igazi lengane yami e toilet. Amahluli engane yami Baba. Her dress was on the floor, covered with blood. My

emotions were high ngahlanganisa izinto ezingahlangani. Ngathuka uBaba wakhe. I didn't mean it.

Khulekani : Okay, okay, it's fine. I'm sure she understands.

Sbani : No she won't.

Khulekani : Ukhuluma ngentombi yakho angithi?

Sbani : Yes. Her father is gone. He is dead.

Khulekani : What?

Sbani : He is dead. He committed suicide.

Khulekani : Haa! When?

Sbani : I don't know.

Sbani gets up and goes to his room. Khulekani is left to digest the news.

ESHOWE

The police were the first to arrive and they pronounced him dead. My whole world came crashing down. He is gone. He is now lying on his back in some cold mortuary. His body will only spend one night here and the following day it will be buried. He will be gone for good and I'll have no else to come home to. This is the end.

Thembela : I don't understand. Indoda endala ingavele isuke nje ivuke ekuseni ishiye umuzi wayo ihambe iyozikhunga ngentambo emahlathini kungonakele lutho? Ngoba kwenzenjani ngempela?

Sipho : Mina sisi angiyikholwa yonke lento. I'm still waiting for someone to wake me up engitshela ukuthi umdlalo wonke lo.

Thembela : Usilinga ngani uJoni? Sebenzile awukhulume. Kukhona mhlampe akutshela kona? Did he say anything to you or maybe show any signs of depression? Izimpawu nje ebezikhombisa ukuthi akajabulile?

I shake my head.

Thembela : Did he leave any suicide notes behind? Akukho nje okutholwe amaphoyisa?

Me : No

Sipho : Dadewethu I think this is too much for the poor child. Naye usashaqake njengathi. She needs some space.

I actually do. I need to be alone. I need to breathe but every room seems to have someone in it. I get up and walk out. I walk around the yard until I find myself inside my father's rondavel, the one that is always closed. I open and step in. It's a bit darker. There's nothing inside except an empty bucket at the center of the rondavel. I look around. There's something hanging on the wall. What is this? It's a baboon's hand. A very old baboon's hand. I touch it. It feels very dry. Why would my father keep a....I quickly cover my mouth with my hand. I try to run to the door but it's too late. I vomit. Nothing else is coming out except blood. Stinking blood. My stomach growls. I need a toilet.

NTULI HOMESTEAD

MaThusini is here with the twins. She came with her bags, which means she is not leaving any time soon. MaThusini will confuse the hell out of you. She and Fezile are quite the same person. The only difference is, you will find MaThusini on her knees polishing the floor or next to the fire stirring big pots but you know what? She would still be having on her very long weave, long nails and eyelashes. Not forgetting her expensive makeup that she pays monthly installment for. Fezile would never. Telling her to wash the dishes with her long nails sounds like an insult. If Khulekani is 10 years older than MaThusini that means MaThusini is 38 years old.

When MaThusini arrived last night Sbani was already in bed and he didn't bother waking up to greet her.

Khulekani : Lwando, don't make noise. Ubafo ulele. No noise, okay boys?

Lwazi : Okay dad

Lwando : But the sun is out now.

Khulekani shushes him and gently pulls down Sbani's door handle. He slowly pushes the door.

Khulekani : Zizwe?

Lwando and Lwazi are already climbing the bed. Sbani opens his eyes to them and smiles.

Sbani : Aw obafo bami.

They giggle and hug him. They really die there by Sbani.

Lwazi : Are you sick bafo?

Sbani : Yes but I'll be fine bafo.

Lwando : Is it a headache?

Sbani : Yes

Lwando : Mommy will give you pills. Do you want pills?

Sbani clears his throat.

Khulekani : Yes my boy, Bafo would really appreciate some pills from mommy. Right bafo?

Sbani glares at him.

Sbani : Yeah right.

Khulekani smiles.

Khulekani : Good. Now you boys can go and tell mommy that bafo is not feeling well and that he is asking for some painkillers.

Lwando : Okay

The twins smile and jump out of bed. They run out the door. Sbani sits up immediately after they have left.

Sbani : That was.....

Khulekani : We need to talk.

Sbani sighs.

Khulekani : Lindo is here. The Mlambos called.

Sbani : About what?

Khulekani : You will find out. Okwamanje awuvuke ugeze Zizwe.
Breakfast is ready.

He says and walks out. Sbani woke up and made his bed. He bathed and joined others for breakfast.

They are sitting down and eating in silence. MaThusini keeps stealing glances at Sbani. She can feel that she is not his favorite step-mother. She wraps her thin fingers around her glass of wine and lifts it up. Whenever she eats there's always a glass of red wine. She takes a sip while looking at Sbani.

MaThusini : I love your dreadlocks Zizwe. They are so beautiful.

She is right, Sbani's dreadlocks are beautiful and well taken care of.

Sbani : Thanks.

Lindo : Everyone loves his dreadlocks. Abanye baze bemucele ukuthi ebadayisele.

Khulekani : What? Ebadayisele?

Lindo : Yes. Most people do that now. They sell their locks.

Khulekani : You mean to tell me that there are people who buy other people's hair and put it on their own heads?

Lindo laughs.

Lindo : Yes.

Khulekani : Now I understand why the world is so fucked up. Uzifaka kanjani izinwele zomunye umuntu ekhanda lakho? Uyazi ukuthi izinwele ziyinsila embi kanjani?

Sbani chuckles.

Sbani : Is that your wife's real hair?

Gulps.

Sbani : And the eyelashes? Nails?

Silence. Sbani snorts.

Sbani : You are the last person to be having this conversation.
Ungaphinde nje ukhulume ngama makeup uzohlekwa abantu.

MaThusini swallows hard. Khulekani clears his throat and drinks his juice.

Khulekani : Lindo, how is Phiwo?

Lindo smiles.

Lindo : He is making progress. No Zah uyamuthatha ehambe naye beyokwenza lezinto zakhe zama yoga. He is really doing well.

MaThusini : Your wife sounds like a really good woman. I can't wait to meet her.

Lindo is blushing.

Lindo : You'll meet her tomorrow.

Sbani : She is going to love her. They both have a lot in common. Both glamorous and both look very expensive. Luckily bobabili banamadoda anemali, men who can maintain their expensive and flashy lifestyle. Mina uSebe ngeke elunge la kumina.

Lindo looks away and MaThusini squints her eyes looking at Sbani.

Khulekani : Zizwe that is.....

MaThusini : Khule it's fine.

Khulekani heaves a sigh.

Khulekani : Anyway, the Mlambos called. Bathi kunenkinga ngomzimba kaMlambo so they need to bury him as soon as possible.

Sbani : What?

Lindo : Yes bafo, they called besibikela ngokudlula emhlabeni kwakhe uMlambo. Babe sebengitshela ngenkinga ababhekene nayo regarding the body.

Sbani : What about the body?

Lindo : The body is decomposing. Uyabola nje umzuzu nomzuzu. Bathi emqaleni kaMlambo kwasala isibazi nje esincane sentambo le azilengisa ngayo. Inkinga ke manje nalesosibazi sesiphenduke inkebenkebe yesilonda esiphuma izimpethu.

Sbani's body shivers. He pushes his plate forward. He just lost his appetite.

Sbani : Jesus!

Lindo : Wonke amakhaza ayahluleka ukugcina isidumbu sakhe so they are burying him tomorrow.

MaThusini : Oh my God. Kusho ukuthi wonke lama mortuary ukubanda kwawo akwanele to prevent his body from decomposition.

Khulekani : Exactly

Sbani : Please excuse me. I need to call Sebe.

Khulekani : Your brothers were in your room. Please tell them to come and eat.

Sbani : Okay

Sbani gets up and walks away. Khulekani blows out a sigh.

Lindo : He is going to be fine.

Khulekani : I hope so. Err

Advertisement

Maka Zizwe ikhona enye inkinga. KwaMlambo banenkinga yemali.

He looks at her. Wow, so he calls her Maka Zizwe?

Khulekani : Mlambo didn't have a funeral policy. Manje bazama ukudayisa ezinye zezinkomo zakhe ukuze bekwazi ukungcwaba but no one is buying. The time is running out.

Lindo : That's true.

Khulekani : So we need to help them.

MaThusini : Of course sthandwa sami. Of course. We are going to help them.

Khulekani : Yeah, namhlanje sizohamba siyobona sino Lindo ukuze sikwazi ukushiya umnikelo. Are you working the night shift kambe namhlanje?

MaThusini is a doctor at King Edward Hospital.

MaThusini : Yes. But I can always find someone else to fill in for me uma kukuthi uyangidinga.

Khulekani : No no, it's okay baby. UZizwe uzosala nabafowabo ngoba vele yena akahambi.

Lindo : Yes the kids will be fine. Singabayisa naku Zah uma kukuthi ubafo akakhoni ukubabheka.

Khulekani : No, he will look after them. It's fine.

When Sbani took longer to get out of his room MaThusini decided to go and check on him.

Sbani : No, I'm fine.

MaThusini : Did you get hold of Sebe?

Sbani : Yes

MaThusini : Oh. And how is she?

Sbani : Fine.

This is not working out. MaThusini sighs.

MaThusini : Zizwe, I know I'm not your favorite person but I really wish that one day you and I could have a bond.

Sbani shrugs.

Sbani : Why? You don't even need me. Unendoda yakho enemali, unezingane zakho kanye nayo yonke into oyidingayo. Whenever you feel lonely, I'm sure a trip to Mauritius is nothing kumyeni wakho. Manje ke what bond do you want from me?

He asks while looking at her from her head to her long fingernails. MaThusini notices this and chuckles.

MaThusini : You probably think that this is all your father's money. You think the reason I'm with him is because he is loaded.

Sbani : That is not what I said.

MaThusini : It doesn't matter. What I want you to know is that you're wrong. Akuyona imali kaBaba wakho le. I work for my things. UBaba wakho wangishela ngisebenza, nginezimali zami. I'm a doctor, Zizwe. Nginamabhizinisi ama eceleni angifakela imali. Angidingi ukuncika ngendoda ukuze ngikwazi ukuthenga izinwele or ukuze ngikwazi ukuthenga izinto ezinhle. I can afford myself and my lifestyle.

MaThusini is really offended.

Sbani : Okay

MaThusini : Yes, baby boy. So ungalinge nje ucabange ukuthi umamncane udla imali kaBaba. Ungangicabangela noma yini enye, you are more than welcome but don't ever think that I'm dependent on your father, financially.

Sbani : Even if you were, I don't care.

MaThusini blinks rapidly and stares up. She is crying. Sbani sees that and slowly sits up.

Sbani : I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you.

MaThusini sniffs.

MaThusini : Yazi ingane uyithande ngenhliziyo yakho yonke kodwa ivele ikudelele.

She wipes her tears and looks at Sbani.

MaThusini : I am upset. You know why? Because I fought to be where I am today. UKhule uyangitshela indlela omuphethe ngayo layikhaya. But mina ngeke ngikuvumele ungiiphathe kanjalo and ngeke ngikuncenge ukuthi ungamukele Zizwe. Ukuncenga kade kwangiphelela. Ukuncenga kwami konke kwaphelela kulendoda ese dining room. Leyondoda ewuBaba wakho.

She wipes her nose.

MaThusini : I begged to be loved. Ngakulwela ukuthandwa. Ngalukhalela uthando, ngaluncenga, ngaluthenga, ngaluzilela, ngashintsha ngaba umuntu engingeyena ngoba ngincenge ukuthandwa. Ngoba ngincenge ukuthandwa uBaba wakho.

Her head is shaking. She is fuming.

MaThusini : This is not me. All this is not who I am. But I had to adopt this life and live with it ukuze uKhule engithande. I had to become someone else. A woman that I didn't even know ukuze uKhule engithande. And you want to insult me? Ufuna ukungidelela ngalokho?

Sbani : I didn't.....

MaThusini : No, this is not me. Angiyena umuntu wama weave nezinzipho kanye nayo yonke lento. This is not me. This is all your mother. UBaba wakho ukuze engithande kwafanele ukuthi ngenzise okwalomuntu wesifazane ayemthanda. Wangishintsha uBaba wakho wangenza uCeliwe ngavuma nami because I love him. Ngazila ngizilela intombazane engingayazi but because your father was mourning I had to do it too.

Sbani looks sad now.

MaThusini : Zizwe if you are going to judge and drag how I look or how I dress ngifuna wazi ukuthi umawakho owayenje. This is your mother.

She gets up and walks out. She bumps into Khulekani.

Khulekani : Hey what's wrong? Baby kwenzenjani?

MaThusini : No, Khule ngeke ngikwazi mina ukuncenga ingane ukuthi ingithande. I'm sorry but I can't do it. Kade ngaqala ngincenga mina Khule, you know that. I have nothing left in me. Nothing!

Khulekani hugs her tightly.

Khulekani : Okay, okay.

He kisses the top of her head.

Khulekani : Let's go to your car and talk. Do you want that?

She sniffs and pulls away.

MaThusini : Fine.

MaThusini : It's okay baby. Look at me.

He wipes the tears from her cheeks.

Khulekani : It's okay. He'll come around, okay?

MaThusini shakes her head.

Khulekani : Let's get some air. Do you want us to go and buy ice cream?

MaThusini giggles.

MaThusini : Yes

Khulekani smiles.

Khulekani : Come here. Where are your car keys?

He wraps his arm around her neck and kisses her. They proceed to look for her car keys.

Chapter 72

NTULI HOMESTEAD

It's been seven months since Mlambo was buried. Everyone is moving on with their lives but Sebenzile's life seems to be standing still. Girl is going through it. She is drinking like nobody's business. She drinks from sunrise till sunset.

Sbani just picked her up from one of the clubs in Durban and he drove past home.

Sebe : Uyangihlanyela wena. Ufuna ngihlale endlini ngenzeni?

Sbani : What is wrong with you? Usuhamba ama club ke manje?

Sebe : Leave me alone! I said leave me alone!!

Khulekani walks in.

Khulekani : Zizwe what's going on? I thought we spoke about this. Let her sleep nizokhuluma ekseni.

Sebenzile is typing on her phone while chewing her bubblegum like no one's business.

Sbani : She says she is leaving. Akalali, she is busy calling her friends ukuthi bemulande. Ask her.

Sebe : Uzwe ngami ukuthi ngiyahamba?

Sbani : Didn't you just call Roxanne wathi ekulande.

Khulekani : Ndodakazi what's wrong?

Sebe : Nothing Baba. Inkinga kaSbani ukuthi he is trying to control me. Awungishadile mina Sbani. I'm not your wife.

Sbani rubs his face.

Sbani : Lomshado ongawufuni?

Sebe : Vele angiwufuni.

Khulekani : Lomsindo eniwubangayo awulungile. Ngicela nihloniphe thina.

Sbani : Akanendaba uSebe. This is how she speaks to me now. Ilento ke mina Baba engiyibekezelela lapha endlini. Uhamba eyophuza utshwala ebuye engazazi ngisho igama lakhe.

Khulekani : Sebe that is wrong ndodakazi yami. Kufanele nihloniphane.

Sebe : Am I drunk Sbani? Ungibona ngidakiwe?

Sbani : I picked you up from a club! A club Sebe!

Sebe : So what!? Ngidakiwe yini?

Khulekani walks out. This is above him.

Sbani : What were you doing e clubbini?

Sebe : That is none of your business! Ubungilethele lamasimba la kini?
Ufuna ukubukisa ngami. Telling your family ukuthi mina ngiyisidakwa?

Sbani : Can you calm down?

Sebe : No, I want to go.

Sbani : Sebe please. Uhamba uyaphi manje. Did you see the time?

MaThusini walks in.

MaThusini : Sebe, please come with me.

Sebe : Ngiyaxolisa Mah kodwa ngeke ngikwazi. I want to go.
Sengikhathele ukudelelwa uSbani.

MaThusini : Baby, please. Ngicela uzolala nami. Asimushiye uZizwe
layindlini elale yedwa and you won't have to deal with him.

Sebe : No. I want to go to my house.

MaThusini sighs.

MaThusini : Seku late kodwa manje.

Sebe : It's fine. Roxanne will pick me up. Sengimutshelile.

MaThusini : Kodwa Sebenzile uyenzelani lento oyenzayo?

Sebe : I told Sbani that I didn't want to come here. Ngimutshelile lo.

Sbani : Sengiwu lo manje. Usengibiza ngo lo.

Sbani chuckles.

MaThusini : Oh nkosiyami.

Sbani : Usenjena ke uSebe. This is what I deal with everyday.

Sebe : I don't care. Tell them everything. Igugu labazali. Angithi phela mina ngiyintandane, I can't report to anyone.

MaThusini : Hhayi Sebenzile.

Sebe gets up and puts on her jacket. She searches inside her jacket pockets and takes out Clorets. She eats that every hour. There must be more alcohol in it because geez!

Sebe : Where is my bag?

Sbani : Nasi

Sbani gives her while putting on his flip flops.

MaThusini : Zizwe manje uzokwenzenjani?

Sbani : Ngizohamba Mah. What more can I do?

Sebe : Angishongo ukuthi hamba nami mina. Mina u Roxanne uzongilanda. She is on her way.

Sbani : U Roxanne wamasimba? Nx. Ungazongidakelwa wena.

MaThusini : Are you going to be able to drive?

Sbani : Yes.

MaThusini : Okay boy. Ungifonele uma senifike endlini.

Sbani : I will.

MaThusini sighs and walks out.

Sebe : Usufuna ukungiqhatha nabantu bakini kube sengathi I'm abusing you. It's fine Sbanisokuhle. Yenze lento yakho.

Sbani : Let's go

Sbani steps out and holds the door handle.

Sbani : Umeleni manje? Let's go.

Sebenzile rolls her eyes and walks out.

Sbani switches off the light and closes the door. They go to his car. He opens the door for Sebe and she gets in. His father is calling him.

Sbani : I'm coming

He goes to Khulekani.

Khulekani : Are you leaving?

Sbani : Yes. Kuyafana ngeke silale.

Khulekani : Please go easy on her. Uyazi ukuthi lento kaBaba wakhe isamudla angithi?

He moves closer to Sbani and zips up his jacket. He finishes and taps his shoulder.

Sbani : Yes

Khulekani : Yah. Just give her some time.

Sbani : Okay

Khulekani : Call me, okay?

Sbani : I will. Ngizonibona ksasa.

Khulekani : Okay mfana wami.

Sbani goes back to the car.

^

^

^

When we arrived here I found out that it was happening in Roxanne's room. They were also back from the club and they were drinking in Roxanne's room. I joined in and we drank till 3 am. That's when I came back and slept.

Shit has been happening ever since my father died. During the day I struggle with my depression and at night the dreams keep coming back. I don't understand these dreams. They are scary and crazy. It has gotten to a point where I can't handle them. If I stop drinking I'll go insane.

Sbani is up and getting ready for work. You see Sbani? That one irritates me so much. Whenever he opens his mouth I just want to give him a hot slap. The only time I need him next to me is when I'm horny. His penis will never irritate me. Never!

His phone rings and I peep under the duvet. He abandons the call and continues getting dressed. I cannot believe it! I push away the duvet and sit up immediately.

Me : Who is calling you?

Sbani : No one.

3 months ago I found a message on his phone. " I miss you. What we had was special but we both ruined it. I'm taking accountability for everything. I'm sorry" The message stated. The message was from Nosihle. I searched for her and found her on Facebook. She is his ex. I

saw their pictures together on Facebook. He told me what happened and we went past that. But I'm not sure if we did anymore

Me : Uqambelani amanga?

Sbani : I don't know what you want me to say.

Me : Are you cheating on me? Usubuyele kwi ex yakho?

Sbani : Mxm.

My blood boils. I can't believe Sbani is doing this to me while I'm going through the most.

Me : Roxanne was right. Ungitshelile u Roxanne ukuthi ngingazitsheli ukuthi ngingedwa la kuwena.

Sbani : Ey Sebe ngicela ungiyeke. I don't have the energy to talk.

Me : Uwena lo osuphatha mina kanje Sbani? After everything uwena lo?

Sbani : There we go again. Playing victim. Sebe yini engiyenzile?

Me : Who was calling you?

Sbani : No one called. That was my morning alarm. ULwando angimazi ulenzeni ngoba selikhala kanje.

Me : So you really think I'm stupid?

His phone rings again. He picks it up and shows me the screen.

Sbani : i alarm. Are you happy now?

Oh. Yes it is. I'm so embarrassed. I go back to sleep in silence.

Sbani : The furniture will be delivered today. Ngicela ube ususendlini around 12 : 00.

Our house is complete. If the furniture is coming today that means we will be moving there very soon. I love our house. It is the most stunning house I've ever seen but I'm just not ready to move out yet.

Sbani : Uyangizwa Sebe?

Me : Ey Sbani ngiyakuzwa nkosiyami.

Sbani : Someone will pick you up.

Me : No

Sbani : What do you mean ke manje?

Me : I want to drive myself there.

I got my license. I'm a driver now so I don't need people picking me up.

Sbani : Imoto ngihamba nayo nje ngiya emsebenzini.

Me : Ayke kusho ukuthi ngeke ngikwazi.

Sbani : Sebenzile if I leave the car ngizoya ngani mina emsebenzini manje because you know that there's only one car here?

Me : I don't know.

He sighs.

Sbani : Fine

He finished getting dressed and packed his food. He took his backpack and walked away. I look at the table. He left the car keys. My mouth, no. I grab my Clorets and chew. I get up and open the fridge. The two ciders I left last night are still here. I take one and gulp it down. Alcohol is so good to me. I take my phone and call Roxanne. I know she is sleeping but I hope she answers.

Roxanne : Njova

I like it when she says "Njova" . That's what we refer to each other now.

Me : Hey Njova. Hangover is killing me. I need something hot.

She laughs.

Roxanne : I'm warming up the chili boerewors we left last night.

Me : You guys didn't finish it?

Roxanne : No, come.

Me : Open the door.

We both laugh. I put on my gown and rush to her room. We eat while chatting about last night.

Me : I don't remember calling my man but the next thing he was there.

Roxanne : I was so shocked when I saw him walking into the club and I was like oyoh! My bitch is in trouble.

We laugh.

Me : But last night was a banger.

Roxanne : Full blast, I tell you my friend. And guess what? Tonight one of my friends is throwing a party for his girlfriend. Look at the lineup of the musicians.

She gives me her phone. I don't know any of these musicians.

Me : Wow

Roxanne : Girl, this is your chance to shine.

Me : Okay?

Roxanne : You want to do music so I'm going to introduce you to all of them. You need to start mingling with these types of people.

Me : What kind of music do they play?

Roxanne : It doesn't matter. Music is music.

I guess she is right.

Me : I'm in.

Roxanne : Yes!!!

She hugs me and we both laugh. Roxanne is the one of the best things that happened to me.

oooo

We went to buy our dresses that we are wearing tonight and after that we went to do our hair. I'm busy getting myself ready when Sbani walks in coming from work.

Me : Hey

Sbani : Unjani?

Me : Good.

He throws his backpack on the bed.

Me : Angiphekanga but there's bread if you are hungry.

He sits down.

Sbani : Wenzenjani?

I stop doing my eyelashes and look at him through the mirror.

Me : Ngani?

Sbani : People who were delivering furniture called me bathi bafice kungekho muntu endlini.

Ohhhhh no, the furniture. I totally forgot about it. Eish! I clear my throat and continue doing my eyelashes.

Me : Ngikhohliwe

Sbani : Okay. Where are you going?

Me : I'm going out with Roxanne. Umngani wakhe une party.

Sbani : Manje ebusuku?

I raise my brow.

Me : Obviously. Why would I get ready now kodwa i party ibe ikusasa?
Imanje ebusuku i party.

Sbani : Ngicela ungahambi.

Me : Ngeke ngikwazi ukungahambi.

Sbani : Why not? Is this about alcohol? Sebe utshwala
ngingakuthengela bona uphuze nami layindlini. Just stay, please.

Me : Ngicela ungangiqaleli bandla lezinto zakho. I'm not in the mood.

Sbani : You are always not in the mood. Uba kwi mood uma usemaclubbini kuphela.

Me : Vele

Sbani : What happened to you?

Me : Ey awuhlukane nami phansi Sbani.

Sbani : Okay fine. Ngihamba nawe

He opens the wardrobe. I laugh out loud.

Me : Uhamba nobani?

He keeps quiet and takes out his clothes.

Me : Ngicela uyeke ukuzihlanyisa. You are not coming with me.
Sengibona ngifika nendoda yami ema partini abantu. Ama party
ongamenyiwe ngisho ukumenywa kuwona. Aibo awuzihloniphe Sbani.
Where is your pride?

Sbani : I'll show you my pride.

He goes to the bathroom and takes a shower. I chuckle. This man is
crazy. I finish with my makeup and put on my heels. He walks out and
gets dressed. Hhai! He is really going all out. Look at his fit.

Me : Sbani awuhambi.

Sbani : Okay

Me : I mean it. You are not coming with me to the party.

Sbani : Why? Ikhona indoda yakho ozohamba nayo?

Me : You sound really stupid right now.

Sbani : Answer me!

I stand up.

Me : Yes ikhona.

He can't stand my answer. He is fuming.

Sbani : What?

Me : Yes hlukana nami ke manje.

Sbani : What do you mean ngihlukane nawe?

Me : I mean exactly that! Hlukana nami Sbani. Go back to your ex and leave me alone!

Sbani : Are you breaking up with me?

Me : Yes. I'm tired of this nonsense.

Sbani : Nonsense?

Me : Angisakufuni Sbani.

He opens the drawer and takes out the knife. He points it to his stomach.

Sbani : Say that again.

Why am I nervous?

Me : Beka loyommese.

Sbani : Phinda lento oqeda ukuyisho.

Me : So you want to kill yourself?

Sbani : If you break up with me ngiyazibulala Sebe.

His eyes welled up with tears.

Me : Okay.

I put my phone in my purse and make my way out.

Sbani : Sebe? Sebe ngizozibulala ngempela.

Me : Ngithe okay.

I open the door and walk out. I don't know what he is breaking and I don't care.

Chapter 73

It wasn't my plan to stay out all night. But we were vibing and the next thing it was 4 am. Time really flies when you are having a good time. Roxanne is drunk, drunk! She can't even stand without holding onto something. We are no longer wearing our heels. We are carrying them. I take out the keys and put my purse back under my arm. Roxanne falls for the 100th time. We both burst into laughter.

Me : Roxy, sshh! My man is sleeping, okay?

We burst again.

Me : Look at what beer is doing to my stomach.

Roxanne : I told you to stick to wine.

We laugh. We are literally on the floor laughing.

Me : I swear I'll end up looking like a jumping castle.

We crack up.

Roxanne : Like your brother in law. The crazy one.

I quickly shush her and burst into laughter.

Me : Roxanne, leave. Hamba ngempela ke manje

She laughs and crawls to her room.

Me : Don't go to the wrong room

She stops crawling and laughs. I get up and knock.

Me : Baby?

Silence.

Me : Manuna, please open. It's me.

Silence.

Me : Mxm

I put the key in the keyhole. I try to turn it but it's stuck.

Me : What is going on here?

I try to push the door. I rub my eyes and take a step back. I laugh out loud.

Me : Roxanne! Roxanne, wait. 101 changed the lock.

Roxanne : He did what?

I check my door. Wow!

Me : And mine too. He changed all of them.

Roxanne : Come. Let's sleep in my room.

Me : But why would he do that?

Roxanne : Because you drive him crazy.

We both laugh. I take out my phone.

Me : Let me call him.

I dial his number. He answers and keeps quiet.

Me : Sbani!!!

Sbani : Sebe please

Me : I want my keys!! Do you hear me?

Sbani : Where are you?

Me : I want my keys!!!

I'm crying now.

Sbani : Uma usuyeke ukuhlanya ungifonele.

Me : Uhleli nesfebe sakho lapho nidlala ngo khiye bami? I hate you
Sbani, uyezwa? I hate you!!!

He hangs up.

Me : Mxm

Advertisement

msunu ka sometimes.

I throw the keys on the floor and go to Roxanne's room. Why the fuck
did I fall for Sbani?

NTULI HOMESTEAD.

MaNzilo is back home. She still looks fragile but she is fine and
everyone is happy to have her back home. It looks like she has been

updated about everything that happened whilst she was gone. They threw her a very warm welcome home party.

She is still weak so she asked to be excused early. But before she sleeps she has to speak to Sbani. She called him to her room.

MaNzilo : I'm just happy to be back home to people. MaThusini is what I need right now.

Sbani : Yeah. She is a great woman.

MaNzilo : She really is. Kulesimo engikusona ngoba ngisebuthaka nje ukuba nodokotela ekhaya kuyisibusiso.

Sbani : It is. Uyasisiza kakhulu nango bafo.

MaNzilo sighs.

MaNzilo : Ngibonga ukuthi nithi niyawubona umehluko Bhunuza. Indaba kaSphiwo iyona engishaqise kakhulu.

Sbani : He is getting better.

MaNzilo : NoMaThusini usho njalo.

Sbani : You really love her.

MaNzilo : I do. Wena, how do you feel about her? Uzizwa kanjani nje ngayo yonke lento?

Sbani : Ekuqaleni bengingaqondi ukuthi kwenzekani but ngiyajwayela usuku nosuku.

MaNzilo : Mfana wami ukukhuluma iqiniso nje nganginakho ukusola ukuthi uKhulekani akashonanga. When all of us were denied to view his body lokho kwangisolisa kakhulu. But I decided to keep quiet ngoba ngingafuni umsindo.

Sbani sighs.

MaNzilo : He is your father.

Sbani : Lokho ke ngikuzwa eziqwini zami zoboya.

MaNzilo : UNkulunkulu unendlela yokuhlela izinto. When I left home I left no one here, ngasho ngathi Nkosi ngaze ngazishiya zodwa izingane zami. I thought I was going to come back to an empty house but I came back to a full house that is filled with joy.

Sbani smiles.

Sbani : Bengikukhumbula kakhulu mawami.

MaNzilo : I missed you too, my boy. Kodwa ukhona umuntu ongidukele. Selize lashona ilanga ngithi uyangena uyangena kodwa lutho. Uphi ngempela umakoti wakwami?

Sbani : Ey Mah uSebe u....

MaThusini walks in.

MaThusini : Sisi wami is everything okay?

MaNzilo smiles.

MaNzilo : Konke kulungile sisi.

MaThusini : Ngicabanga ukukwenzela isobho kukhona uzofudumala.

MaNzilo : I would really love that.

MaThusini : My boy, are you okay?

Sbani : I'm okay Mah.

MaThusini : That's good. Uzolala nathi angithi?

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Yebo Mah.

MaThusini : Sharp.

MaThusini walks out.

MaNzilo : She is amazing.

Sbani : She really is. UBaba unenhlanhla

MaNzilo : Nawe unenhlanhla.

Sbani shakes his head.

Sbani : Sebe hates me. Akasafuni nalapho nginyathele khona.

MaNzilo : Hhaibo!

Sbani : Things changed after her father's death. Angathi kukhona isichitho nje esavele safakwa phakathi kwethu.

MaNzilo : Ungayisho leyonto.

Sbani : It's bad mawami. Indaba yomshado nje akasafuni nokuyizwa. My father tried to talk to her wathi yena ngeke eshade esazilele uBaba wakhe.

MaNzilo : But that is true.

Sbani : It is. But kunalento nje elokhu ivimba umshado wami noSebe. Noma kuthiwa akangalanga we weren't gonna get married.

MaNzilo : She broke up with you?

Sbani : She did. Last night she....

His phone rings. He takes it out while explaining to MaNzilo.

Sbani : She told me ukuthi akasangifuni. Nangu umngani wakhe engifonela.

MaNzilo : Answer her.

Sbani : Roxanne

Roxanne : Sbani you need to come now. Sebe is in labor..... No, no, no.
Don't give her water.

She instructs somebody. Sbani can hear Sebe screaming in the background.

Sbani : What labour?

Exactly! What labor?

Roxanne : She is giving birth. Sebe is giving birth. Oh my God Seh!!!!

What?

Sbani gets up.

Sbani : She is giving birth? What do you mean she is giving birth?

Sbani looks at MaNzilo. He is confused and I understand. I'm confused too.

Roxanne : Why didn't you tell me that she's pregnant?

Sbani : Because she is not.

Roxanne : She is. I swear to God she is. She is about to give birth. Sbani please hurry!!

No, this is serious. Roxanne is crying and Sebe is also crying in the background.

Sbani : Are you drunk?

Sebe : Sbani!!!!

Sebe screams his name in the background. Sbani runs out of MaNzilo's room.

Chapter 74

OSINDISWENI HOSPITAL

I'm dying. I've felt pains in my life but this one is on another level. I want to die. I want them to drug me and end it all.

Nurse : Okay calm down. Where is her card?

Roxanne : What card? Please help her. She is dying, can't you see?

Nurse : She is not dying. Look, we need to know which....

I scream.

Sebe : Ahhh!!

Nurse : Okay you need to wait here. Doctor!

I don't know where they are taking me now. They put me on the bed and close the curtains that are surrounding me.

Doctor : Hold your legs and take a deep breath.

Me : No

Doctor : Sisi, hold your legs like this.

I hold my legs. My body is trembling. She inserts her fingers.

Doctor : Okay, the baby is close.

What fucking baby?

Doctor : I need you to give me your best push.

Me : I'm not pregnant. I'm not.

The doctor and the nurse laugh.

Doctor : Okay. Take a deep breath and push.

Me : I need a toilet.

Doctor : This is your toilet. Now push.

I hold on to my legs and close my eyes. I give my best push.

Doctor : There we go. Good girl. Phusha futhi.

Me : Aaaaaah!

I push.

Doctor : One more. Give me one more.

Me : Aaaaaah!!

I push. Wait the fuck up. What is that? It touches my thighs and cries in a tiny voice.

Doctor : Hello baby girl. Look at that. Wow!

Nurse : The most beautiful nunu I've ever seen.

They both laugh. I must be dreaming. I'm sure I'm dreaming.

Doctor : We are sucking fingers already. Ulambe kanje umuntu.

I slowly lift up my head and my eyes widen. A whole white, big baby just came out. I just gave birth. What on earth is this?

Doctor : Meet your baby girl.

I shake my head.

Me : No

She laughs and puts her on my chest. No, it's a human being. A whole human being. She is sucking two of her fingers. Her eyes are just like Sbani's. I don't see albinism here, I see a white baby. Look at her hair. My body is frozen. Where is this baby coming from?

^

^

^

Roxanne is sitting outside. She is up and down. Sbani comes out of nowhere.

Sbani : Roxanne what's going on? Uphi uSebe?

Roxanne stands up.

Roxanne : I don't know where they took her.

Sbani : What do you....

Sbani runs inside. Roxanne follows him.

Sbani : Nurse, I need to see my girlfriend. Ungeniswe la egula.

Nurse : When?

Sbani : I don't know....I don't know. When Roxanne?

Roxanne : Uhmhhh...Uhmhhh. 30 minutes ago? I can't remember.
But she is pregnant.

Khulekani, Lindo and MaThusini walk in. The nurse smiles.

Nurse : Dr Ntuli. It's good to see you here.

MaThusini smiles.

Sbani : Hey! Are you going to help me?

Nurse : Bhuti angikwazi ukunisiza uma nani ningazi ukuthi nifuna bani.

MaThusini : Sister Mwandla, this is my son.

Nurse : Oh

Advertisement

I'm sorry. I had no idea. Nithe anikhumbuli ukuthi ungeniswe nini?

She opens the file.

Sbani : She said 30 minutes ago.

Khulekani : Son, are you okay?

Lindo : Bafo bathini labantu.

Sbani shrugs.

Nurse : You said what is her name?

Roxanne : Seh

Sbani : Sebenzile Mlambo.

Nurse : Okay. Please wait here. I'll check.

MaThusini : Thank you sister Mwandla.

Nurse shows them the chairs and walks away. Sbani won't even sit down.

MaThusini : My boy, have some water.

Sbani : Cha ngiyabonga Mah.

Khulekani : She is going to be fine.

Sbani : Roxanne what happened?

Roxanne : We were washing dishes and she started complaining about back pains. She said they were light but they started getting worse. On our way back from the sink her water just broke.

Sbani : Water?

Roxanne : Yes. She showed me all the signs of someone who was in labor. But she assured me that she wasn't pregnant.

Sbani : She is not.

MaThusini : Maybe she is. Kuyenzeka kwiningi labantu besifazane. Befike enyangeni yesishagalolunye bengazi ukuthi bakhulelwe futhi kungekho zimpawu ezikhombisayo.

Sbani : No way.

Khulekani : Are you serious?

MaThusini : I've seen it. But let's wait for the doctor. There she is coming with Sister Mwandla.

They all stand up.

Sbani : Where is she?

Doctor : She is fine. She and the baby are fine.

Sbani : Baby?

Doctor : Dr Ntuli. It's good to see you.

MaThusini : It's been a while. What's going on?

Sbani is so confused.

Doctor : No, everything is fine. Well, based on the information that was provided to us by the mother. Ingane izele before the 37th week, which makes her a premature baby. We were expecting one or more complications but to our surprise there are none. The baby is perfectly fine and ready to go home.

Sbani : No, no. I want to see Sebe.

Doctor : There is more.

Khulekani : Yini manje?

Doctor : The baby has albinism.

Sbani's world seems to be shutting down.

Sbani : What?

Doctor : Precisely. We also suspect that the baby might be carrying a rare genetic material. But we still need to run necessary tests to confirm that. However the baby is fine and healthy.

Sbani : Can I see the baby?

Doctor : Of course. Please follow me.

They followed the doctor.

SEBENZILE MLAMBO

The mystery baby is sucking the hell out of my breast. I don't even know what to say to her. What kind of baby is this? She closes her eyes with every gulp she takes. Girl stops sucking and stares at me. Why is she looking at me like that? Wait, how old is this baby? Her gaze is so intense. She is staring at me. I'm so embarrassed.

Me : Hey

I don't know if she understands Zulu. She looks white to me. I've seen white babies and she is exactly like them. No, how am I going to go around with this baby in public? People will think I slept with a white man. Aunt Thembela will laugh at me. Her face crunches. She wants to cry. Hhayi she can read my mind. I quickly pull out a smile.

Me : Don't do that baby.

I lift up my eyes as I hear people walking in. My eyes lock with Sbani's. His mouth is wide open.

Me : Here is your father.

I whisper. MaThusini laughs.

MaThusini : Hhaipona, ubani lomuntu? Umuntu evele efike nje kungazi muntu. Yey wena Smanga. Come to Gogo. Oh my God, Zizwe!

She lifts her up. I giggle.

Me : Akagqokile

MaThusini : Yaze yayinhle ingane. Khule look, baby.

Khulekani has a wide smile on his face. I look at Sbani. He is frozen. He blinks and a tear rolls down. My throat burns.

Me : I didn't know Sbani.

I whisper to him while shaking my head. He is staring at the baby. He moves his eyes back to me. He is coming. He kneels down and holds my hands. We both burst into tears.

Chapter 75

It's been 3 weeks since I've become a mother. I don't think this could've been any easier without Sbani. I'm failing. I feel like there's no bond between my baby and I. She is more happy with her father than me. She always makes that "Nqa" sound with her tongue when her father is holding her but she never does it with me. I think she can feel how heavy my heart is.

Sbani : Wamandla, look princess. Say nqa.

The Azwindini name had to be canceled. After a whole week of Sbani calling her Magrett he finally gave her name. She named her Wamandla. Wamandl'omdali. She is the power from God.

Me : Love, please try to give her the formula again before I bath her.

Sbani : She doesn't want this thing.

Me : No kuzomele eyifune.

She has to. Next year I'm going to school and she will depend on the formula.

Sbani : Your mother is going to school. Are you ready to go to creche?
Huh, my princess? Open your mouth.

Me : She is promising. Let me see.

She sucks the bottle once and pushes it out with her tongue.

Me : Hhaaaaaa!!

I bite the pillow in frustration. Sbani cracks up laughing.

Sbani : She doesn't want it. My baby doesn't want this.

Me : Uzoba nenkinga sisi angifuni ukukukhohlisa. Mina I'm taking these breasts to school with me.

Sbani laughs. Wamandla is looking at me. Girl is not even bothered.

Sbani : Let's try this.

Sbani places her bottle under his t-shirt. I burst into laughter.

Me : Ucabanga ukuthi she will think that it's my breast?

He laughs.

Sbani : Yeah. Wamandla, nayi incence.

She opens her mouth and sucks. She lifts up her eyes to her father's eyes and pushes it out. God, this baby!! I stand up. I'm done.

Me : Sbani lengane yakho izongidina.

We both laugh. I'm actually trying to hide my tears. I don't want her to struggle when I go to school but if she doesn't want the formula she will struggle and then hate me even more.

Sbani : Relax baby. Sisekhona isikhathi.

He stands up with his daughter and hugs me.

Sbani : I love you, okay?

Me : I love you too, manuna.

He kisses me.

Sbani : Get some rest, I'll bath her.

Me : Are you sure?

Sbani : Yeah.

I sat down and watched a movie while he bathed Wamandla. He finished bathing her and massaged his head. Wamandla seems to enjoy this massage.

Me : Why are you massaging her forehead?

Sbani : I did some research. And this helps with her brain development

Advertisement

constipation and....

Someone is knocking.

Me : I'll get it.

I get and open the door. Hhaike the whole Ntuli clan is here. I smile.

Me : Sanibonani

They hug me one by one. Oh man, I missed Maphiwana. It's good to see him. I hug him tightly.

Me : Maphiwana unjani?

Sphiwo : Unjani?

He is still not well bakithi. But he looks healthy.

MaNzilo : Uphi u Magrett kaGogoo?

We laugh.

Sbani : Hawu abantu bavele bazogcwala emqashweni.

We laugh.

Khulekani : Angithi anifuni ukuphuma kulomqasho. So here we are.

They come bearing gifts. A lot of them. My baby has enough clothes but I'll never say no to more. I hate doing laundry. All the attention is on Wamandla now. Everyone wants a piece of her. Most of them are seeing her for the first time. The last two weeks I was not well at all with the stitches and all. So we couldn't visit the Ntulis.

Fezile : Sisi are you okay?

Me : I'm good mama.

Fezile : Kunjani ukuba umama?

I sigh.

Me : Hectic

We both laugh.

MaNzilo : She looks like Sbani.

Me : No Mah, only the eyes. She looks like me.

We laugh.

MaThusini : She does. Lendlu incane kodwa Zizwe. When are you guys moving out?

Sbani looks at me and laughs.

Sbani : Akafuni sihambe

Khulekani : Hhaibo why?

Me : Ungangisukeli Baba kaWamandla mfana.

Sbani : I'm joking baby. No, we are moving out on Wednesday. See, our boxes are already packed.

Lindo : Kwangcono bafo. You can't raise a baby emqashweni onje.

Sbani : I know bhuti.

MaThusini : Her eyesight is so perfect.

MaThusini smiles and kisses Wamandla.

Sbani : It is. Bengiyisabelani ingane yami lapho Mah. Ngithi izofaka izibuko zamehlo.

MaThusini : No, they are perfect. Are the results back?

Me : No

Sbani's biggest worry is that his daughter might be carrying the same rare genetic material as his and then suffer like him when exposed to the rain or sunlight.

MaThusini : Senimuqalisile i clinic?

Sbani : Uyakhona ksasa.

Me : Tell them that you are scared ukuthi bazomujova.

We burst. He is scared.

Sphiwo keeps smiling and looking at Wamandla. He is not saying anything.

MaNzilo : Bhunuza akalambile manje? Look at how she is sucking her fingers.

Sbani : She is always hungry. Awumncelise baby.

I ignore Sbani. His baby is always sucking my breasts, it's no longer nice.

Me : Kodwa where is Lwando and Lwazi?

Khulekani : They visited their grandmother.

MaThusini : Bazofa if they find out that we came sazobona ingane bengekho.

We laugh.

Sbani : Manu, ulambile, look at her.

MaNzilo : USebe uzozaca ilesidudla esingaka esincela njalo.

Thank you MaNzilo.

Me : Lapho asifuni nebhodlela weMah

I take Wamandla and breastfeed her.

MaThusini : Maybe you need to change her formula. Mhlampe iyona angayithandi.

Sbani : That's what I thought. Ngizomuthengela olunye. Kodwa inkinga uvele ezwe nje ukuthi ibhodlela eyeke ukuncela.

Fezile : uSebe needs to try and....

Wamandla's body shakes up. Her face looks like I just gave something very sour. She let go of my breast. There's blood in her mouth. Did she bite her tongue? May.....no what the fuck? Wamandla doesn't even have teeth. The blood is dripping from my breast. My mind shutdown. I can't speak. I look around the room, hoping that someone will notice that something is wrong but no one is looking at us. Not even Sphiwo. I try to speak but it's like someone is pushing my voice back.

Chapter 76

Sbani and Wamandla are up. Wamandla is crying, which means Sbani is combing her hair. There's nothing she hates as someone touching her crown. I would say she hates it because it's not that it's painful when we comb her. She has silky but curly brown hair.

Sbani : I'm done my princess. Uyaxolisa uBaba.

I don't understand why we have to go to the clinic so early.

Sbani : Manuna, awumncelise baby, uyakhala.

He removes the duvet that is covering my head. I open my head.

Sbani : Ngiyaxolisa ukukuvusa baby. She is crying.

Me : But she is not crying anymore.

He laughs.

Sbani : Yingoba ngimuphethe. As soon as I put her down she will cry.

Me : Put her down here.

He places her next to me and she cries.

Sbani : See? Please give her.

I laugh.

Me : Give her what?

Sbani : Ibele

He bursts. Since last night I've been scared of breastfeeding Wamandla.

Sbani : Mncelise baby, I'll make breakfast for you.

Me : Aren't you going to be late for work?

Sbani : No I told them I'd be late. Ngizonihambisa e Clinic.

I smile

Me : Siyabonga

He kisses me and goes to switch on the stove.

Me : Thank you for bathing her.

I'm holding my breath as I breastfeed Wamandla. Judging by how she is moving her eyes she is enjoying it. She coughs and I see the milk. Thank goodness. I finally breathe.

Me : Were you fighting with your father last night? Nginibone emnyango.

Sbani : Last...No we were not fighting. I was just telling him how I felt.

Me : About what?

Sbani : Uyakhumbula ngithi ngidlule ekhaya?

Me : Yeah

Sbani : I was with mamncane lapha ekhishini. Egqoke iphinifa neduku. Khulekani walked in benze lezinto zabo zokubambana ke and then I heard Khulekani asking her what she was wearing.

Me : Aibo

Sbani : Wayehleba but I heard him elokhu e busy ethi "Yini manje le oyigqokile mina angimazi lomuntu" . And I thought he was just teasing her. Ehleke no mamncane ethi "uLebo ke lo" .

Me : Her name is Lebo, angithi?

Sbani : Yeah. Ethu uKhulekani aibo u Lebo wani angimazi mina uLebo. Go and change. I started realizing ukuthi lento yabo i serious when mamncane went and changed. Wabuya esegqoke ingubo wakhumula neduku.

Me : What?

Sbani : I'm telling you. And I asked why she changed wathi liyashisa iphinifa. I then told her ukuthi no, I know why she changed. Walokhu ephika and I told her ukuthi ngimuzwile uKhulekani ethi akashintshe.

Me : Do you think he controls her?

Sbani : He does. Umenza umuntu angeyena. I even told her that. Ngathi if you carry on comparing yourself to a ghost you'll end forgetting who you are and that shit will fuck you up one day.

Me : Ay naye she is putting herself under unnecessary pressure. Uzophila impilo kamawakho kuze kube inini?

Sbani : Ileyonto ebengikhuluma noKhulekani. I told him ukuthi lento ayenzayo i wrong. Celiwe is dead and mamncane will never be her.

Me : Good.

Sbani : He pisses me off okwangempela.

Me : Do you think he loves her noma uzibonela umawakho?

Sbani : I don't know. Imagine marrying somebody and even giving them kids. Umuntu ongafuni ube uwena? That is fucked up. Khulekani doesn't deserve that woman.

Sbani is really pissed off.

Sbani : Naye uyathithiza ulokhu ethi yena u right and she is happy.

Me : The day she realizes that she is not happy uyomushiya uBaba wakho.

Sbani : That's what I told him.

Me : Wathini?

Sbani : Uthe he will fix it. I don't know what he will fix.

I really feel for MaThusini. Spending your whole life living someone else's life just to keep a man is crazy.

oooo

Sbani left us in the clinic. He came in with us and stayed a bit before he went to work. I think him coming in was a bad idea. It drew unnecessary attention. Sbani's love language is physical touch. He loves touching and kissing whether we are in public or not. Well he was doing that in the clinic and people seemed to be irritated about it. As soon as Sbani left my suspicions were confirmed. the 6 women that I was sitting with suddenly changed. They told me that my seat was reserved for someone else. After almost an hour of me sitting there and suddenly I was sitting in the wrong place. It was six against one so I couldn't stand a chance. That's why I decided to stand up with my baby and we became the last in the very long line going in. The line is not moving. I'm starving. We've been here since morning. Nurses are just walking up and down but I don't see what they are doing except being on their phones. Sbani is calling again.

Me : My love

Sbani : Sthandwa sami seniqedile?

Me : No, asikakangeni nokungena.

Sbani : What? Namanje?

Me : Yeah. Ngilambile mina manje Bhunu.

Sbani : I know sthandwa sami. My father is bringing food for you. I think uyangena manje lapho.

Me : Hhaibo Sbani.

He laughs. He knows that I'm scared of his father.

Sbani : Relax, my father is soft.

Me : Okay

Sbani : Ngizokufonela uma esefikile.

Me : Okay

Sbani : How is my baby?

Me : She is sleeping. She is tired.

He laughs.

Sbani : Ngizonibona ntambama. Ngiyanithanda kakhulu.

Me : We love you too Mphemba. Mncwa! Mncwa!

Sbani : Mncwa baby.

I hang up. I can't believe the mystery pregnancy made me hate my man like that. The thought of it makes me cringe. I look at the sleeping Wamandla. My baby is tired of being here. I play with her chin. I miss her now.

Me : Hey, wake up.

Someone taps my shoulder and I quickly lift my head. It's the lady sitting next to me.

Her : The nurse is talking to you.

Me : Oh

I stand up.

Nurse : Sime ke thina silinde wena usakhuluma nefoni?

Me : I'm sorry I didn't hear you.

Nurse : Of course you didn't. Angithi you think you are special ngoba nakhu unengane yomlungu.

Everyone burst into laughter. My heart sinks.

Nurse : Come dear. I don't have all day. Ukhumule leyongane.

I thought this nurse was nice. She was the one who registered me when we walked in and she was nice. What happened? I undress Wamandla with my hands trembling. Tears are burning in my eyes. I can still hear her talking.

Nurse : No

Advertisement

it's everyone onengane eyi albino. They think they deserve special treatment. Now she is going to waste everyone's time ngoba nakhu phela unengane eyi albino kumele simuzwele. Sisi wee! I don't have all day.

I lift up Wamandla and cover her with her blanket.

Nurse : Awuzwanga nje ngikumemeza ngithi woza uzokala ingane?

Me : Cha

Nurse : Uhleli ngamadlebe. Why are you looking at me? Put her on the scale.

I'm about to put Wamandla on the scale and she drags my arm.

Nurse : Awulaleli ntombazane. I said wait!

There's a white cloth on the scale. She removes it.

Nurse : Mubeke

Why is she removing it when it's Wamandla's turn? I swallow and put my baby down. She cries. I think the scale is uncomfortable and cold.

Nurse : Shut up wena. Ududwa ukuthi sikubiza ngomlungu, huh? And you think you are special? Mawakhe hold her feet eyeke ukuqhusha ngoba uzobulala leskali. Hhaibo sisi uyaqala yini ukuza e Clinic? Awazi ukuthi ingane ibanjwa izinyawo? Ay waze wayinkinga ntombazane.

No, I can't. Not anymore! I lift up my baby and walk away.

Nurse : Hhaibo where do you think you are going dear?

I take Wamandla's bag and her clothes. I walk out of the clinic. I saw some chairs near the parking lot and that's where I'll dress up Wamandla. I bump into Sbani's father. He is standing next to his car and talking to someone over the phone. He's probably talking to Sbani. He can't see us, let me go to him. As I get closer I pick up the conversation. I stand behind him and wait for him to finish.

Khulekani : If I was able to kill my own brother Mzwakhile then nothing will stop me from killing Abdool. Find him. I want him alive. I want to skin him alive and wear his skin over my shoulders phambi komndeni wakhe.

My breathing grows louder. My heart is touching my throat.

Khulekani : But before I do that. I want him to sit in that wheelchair and hold his own funeral service. I want him to stand in front of me and his family eshumayele ngempilo yakhe and how he played me. Lapho ngiyobe ngimufake ukhololo wabefundisi. And after the service I will lead him to the cemetery and watch him digging up his own grave. There will be no cremation. Umndeni wakhe uzongibuka ngimungcwaba while I'm wearing his skin over my shoulders. I want you to remember all this as you continue with your search because if you don't find Abdool konke lokhu ngizokwenza kuwe.

I look around, I don't know where to run to. You know what? I'm taking a taxi.

I took a taxi home. I switched off my phone and when I got here I called Sbani and lied. I told him my battery ran out. This day is traumatizing. I need to talk to someone else I trust.

When Wamandla is sleeping on her stomach she wants her back to be tapped until Jesus comes back. The pillow always works. I grab it and place it on her back. I slowly get up. She is out. I take my phone and search for Aunt Thembela's number.

As soon as she answers I hear dogs barking. She is at work. She works as a domestic worker and those dogs are always barking.

Thembela : Sebenzile is everything okay? Is the baby okay?

Me : Hi aunt. Yes Wamandla is okay. I just wanted to talk. Are you busy?

Thembela : Ngiya ayina but I can do it later.

Me : Thanks.

Thembela : Uyiletha nini ingane kanti Sebenzile? You don't want us to see her. You don't want to send us her pictures. Awufuni lutho nje kanti kwenzenjani?

I don't want them to bully my baby. I know how they are.

Me : Sizofika maduzane

Thembela : Nini? Shuthi yimbi lengane uma usaba nayo kangaka. Ay uzele ikhonde ntombi.

If only they knew how beautiful and unique my daughter is. This baby is beautiful, my problem is her hair. I wish she had normal african baby hair. I don't want people to confuse her albinism with being white.

Me : Muhle kabi ke uWamandla ngikutshele.

Thembela : Send us her pictures.

I laugh.

Me : Okay.

Thembela : Anyway, are you okay?

I sigh.

Me : There's something I need to tell you.

Thembela : Yes

Me : Izolo ntambama ngithe ngincelisa ingane kwaphuma igazi emabeleni.

Thembela : Sebenzile!!

Me : I'm really stressed.

Thembela : As you should. Listen kufanele uyobona isangoma ngokushesha.

Me : Yes. And please come with me.

Thembela : I would love to but I can't. Ngiyi sleep-in this week. Umsebenzi muningi.

I sigh.

Me : I understand.

Thembela : Ask Sbani to come with you. UwuBaba wengane yakho, kufanele umufake ezintweni ezinjengalezi.

Me : You are right. I'll tell him.

Thembela : Good.

Silence.

Thembela : I know there's more. Talk to me.

She knows me too well.

Me : Aunt uma ungezwa ubabezala wakho ekhuluma kabi ngoBaba kaMatu noma ekhuluma into engamuphatha kabi ungamutshela uBaba kaMatu?

Thembela : Something like what?

Me : Into enokubulala phakathi.

Thembela : Ohhe! that one is tough. Uyabona Sebenzile mntanami kunezinto okuthi uma ufika emzini uzizwe kodwa ungazilaleli.

I raise my brow.

Me : I don't understand.

Thembela : Mhlampe uke uzwe kuthiwa uma ushadele emzini ekuthakathwa kuwo awubuzi lutho ufika nawe uphakele imfene uthule phansi. Mntanami kunezinto ongathi uma uzikhuluma zibhidlize umuzi kanye nomshado wakho imbala. Yingakho kubalulekile ukuthi before ukhulume something uyibheke ukuthi iyakha noma iyabhidliza yini. Akufanele uma ufika emzini ufike kuxabane umndeni kanti futhi akufanele ubuke umndeni ubhidlika kodwa ube ulazi iqiniso ekwiyilo elibhidliza umndeni. Indawo yomfazi ijulile emzini Sebenzile.

Me : But Sbani and I are not married.

Thembela : Oh, I didn't know that we were talking about you and Sbani. Isho ke ukuthi uzweni ntombi.

NO I can't tell her. In fact I'm not going to tell anyone about what I heard. The Ntulis are happy, happier than before. Sbani already has a strong relationship with his father and I'm not going to break that.

Me : No nothing. Ngizokutshela ukuthi sihambe kanjani esangomeni.

I hang up. I don't even know why I called her.

Chapter 77

Everyone is gathered in Sbani and Sebenzile's new house. They have finally moved out from the flat in Mountview. Sbani decided to throw a Braai. In his words he is celebrating life and how far he has come. But more than anything he is celebrating his daughter.

Sbani : Ukuzalwa kuka Wamandla kusangithusa namanje. No one suspected anything. No one spotted any signs. Sebe didn't show any signs of pregnancy.

Roxanne : She did. She hated you.

Everyone laughs. She is right.

Sbani : Yes she did

He laughs and shakes his head.

Sbani : With Wamandla I wasn't prepared, which reminded me that babies are truly a gift from above. Nanokuthi in life don't be too prepared for anything.

He swallows.

Sbani : The truth is, Wamandla is not our first child. Akayona ingane yethu yokuqala okanye yesibili. Before her kunezingane ezimbili esezadlula. Some of you know that but some don't.

Those who were not aware are shocked.

Sbani : With our second baby I was too prepared. Ngangizilungesele ngayo yonke indlela ukwamukela ingane yami yesibili. But this time around I wasn't prepared. I didn't even know that Sebe was pregnant but here is our beautiful daughter.

Everyone cheers up.

Sbani : More than anything I want to thank God. Ngilandele ngawo wonke umuntu othathe isikhathi sakhe wazoba kanye nathi namhlanje. Roxanne and your friends, thank you for coming.

Roxanne raises her glass.

Sbani : Ngibonge uSebe. This woman really loves me. She loves me on my worst days and amazing days. Thembalami ngiyabonga for walking this journey with me. Ukungena kulomuzi nawe is everything I've ever wanted.

Sebe blows him a kiss.

Sbani : Last but not least. I want to thank my family. Abafowethu uLindo noSphiwo. Ngibonge umawami kanye nabazali bami uMaThusini no Khule.....

Khulekani : Yey!!

Laughter*

Khulekani : Ufuna ukubiza uBaba wakho ngegama?

They laugh. Everyone comes and hugs Sbani one by one. Khulekani wraps his arm around his neck and they take a short walk.

Khulekani : Zizwe, that was beautiful mfana wami. Ukhulume kahle kakhulu

Sbani : Ngiyabonga Baba

Khulekani : I'm sure that my brother is proud of you.

Sbani laughs.

Sbani : Come on.

Khulekani : I mean it, Zizwe.

Sbani : Leligama elithi Zizwe ngalizwa ungakafiki. How is that possible?

Khulekani : Walizwa kubani?

Sbani : Maqhinga

Khulekani : Oh yes. Before I left South Africa ngahamba sengikuqambile igama. Only Celiwe and Abdool were present when I named you. So your mother told Maqhinga.

Sbani : I see.

Khulekani : You don't deserve all the confusion that you went through. I blame myself ngokuba kuka Maqhinga ingxenye yempilo yakho.

Sbani : Why?

Khulekani : Imina engafundisa uCeliwe lempilo engasile yobukhazikhazi and when I left usale wafuna leyompilo kubantu abafana noMaqhinga. Celiwe was all about money and a soft life.

Sbani : I've heard that.

Khulekani : The only way I won her over was to introduce her to that kind of life. And she fell in too deep.

Sbani sighs.

Khulekani : I want to thank you.

Sbani : For what?

Khulekani : For speaking some sense into my head. Ukukhuluma nawe made me realize ukuthi angimazi umfazi engishade naye.

He is talking about MaThusini.

Khulekani : Angikaze ngazinika ithuba lokumazi. When I met Lebo ngangisathwele umawakho enhliziyweni yami. I had hope that she and I would end up together again, sishade. Ngangilandela abantu besifazane abafana noCeliwe ukuze ngithobise inhliziyo yami. But it never worked out.

Sbani : They saw through you.

Khulekani : Most of them did. I finally gave up ngathi ngizohlala ngilinde uCeliwe wangempela. That time I had no idea she was dead.

Sbani : Yeah?

Khulekani : One day we were at the airport. That's when I met Lebo. She kept looking at me but I wasn't interested. Ibhanoyi lethu laba

nenkinga and we had to wait for over 8 hours. Lebo came to me nokudla wathi asidle. I told her I was fine.

Sbani shakes his head.

Khulekani : Akumina owashela uLebo kodwa uyena owashela mina.

Sbani laughs.

Khulekani : I'm serious. She asked for my number and I gave her. 3 days later she called me wangitshela straight ukuthi uyangithanda.

Sbani : Damn, that's.... Wow.

Khulekani : Yazi mfana wami it's very easy to take advantage of a woman who loves you. Especially when she is the only one in love in a relationship. Iqiniso lithi uma umuntu wesifazane ekuthanda ngempela ayikho into ongasoze wamenzisa yona okanye yena angasoze akwenzela yona. When a woman is deeply in love she can't think straight. She uses her heart and feelings in everything. And she forgets her head. That's why it's so easy to fuck up a woman when she in love. Because when she is not in control of her head, a man takes control.

Sbani nods.

Khulekani : Yingakho uma sekuphele uthando uthole iningi labantu besifazane bekhala ngemizwa nezinhliziyo zabo. Some cry about time wasted but none of them ever cry about how a man fucked up their head. Imizwa nenziziyo izinto ezimbili ezijulile umuntu wesifazane angena ngazo othandweni and throughout the relationship you often find them searching if their hearts and feelings are satisfied. But they often forget their brains. They forget one important thing

Advertisement

umqondo.

He sighs.

Khulekani : Ngidlale ngomqondo kaLebo isikhathi eside. When I look back at izinto adlule kuzona ekanye nami. Even after I found out that Celiwe was dead. Wazila nami uLebo. Iqiniso ukuthi she doesn't deserve any of the things I put her through.

Sbani : I'm glad you finally realize that. Baba ayikho into e wrong ngokutshela umuntu wesifazane ukuthi awumthandi than to watch her losing herself. Karma is something else. Ungakukhohlwa lokho.

Khulekani sighs.

Khulekani : I love her. I really do futhi yingakho ngizimisele ukulungisa izinto.

Sbani : That's good.

Khulekani is now staring at Roxanne.

Sbani : She is married.

Khulekani : What?

Sbani : Roxanne Abdool. She is married and useyingane Baba. You don't stand a chance.

Khulekani : Zizwe stop it.

They both laugh.

Khulekani : She looks familiar.

Sbani : You've seen her before. She is Dylan's wife.

Khulekani : Dylan. Abdool's son?

Sbani : Yeah

Khulekani : Ooooh I see. Let me go and greet her.

Sbani : Baba please don't.

Khulekani : Why not? She's a guest and I want to thank her for coming.

Sbani : Ay, okay. I need to talk to Lindo

Sbani walks away. Khulekani is making his way to Roxanne. Sbani shakes his head and gets inside Lindo's car. He finds Lindo smoking.

Lindo : Hheyi bafo.

Sbani : Hheyi. Usuyindlela yini?

Lindo : No, not yet. Ngizolinda uZah ephume emsebenzini.

Sbani : Oh okay.

Lindo : This house is beautiful. Usebenzile mfanakithi.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga bhuti.

Lindo : UsuwuBaba kaWamandla ngempela ke manje. UBaba onendlu yakhe yokulala. Ay izindaba zomqasho.

They both laugh.

Lindo : Uthi ulele nomfazi wakho kanti kukhona umuntu onilalele.

Lindo laughs. Sbani is not laughing.

Lindo : Yinindaba? Kukhona into e wrong engiyishilo?

Sbani : No, no, nothing. Ukuthi nje lento oyishoyo isingibuyisela kulento engake ngayikhuluma nawe.

Lindo : I think I know what you're talking about. Namanje awukho umehluko?

Sbani : No okwamanje ayikho into esiyenzayo ngoba ingane isencane.

Lindo : Yeah, yeah, yeah. Shit! I forgot.

Sbani : Yeah. Kukona konke I feel like I'm not being honest with her and that's wrong. Last night she spoke about how much I hate sex. Ethingiyajabula ngoba singenzi lutho nje.

Lindo : Eish

Sbani : Angithi uyayibona leyonto? She thinks my drive....

Lindo : I get you. I get out. Damn bafo!

Sbani : That's what I mean.

Lindo : No, but I think it's better she thinks you are the problem.
Imagine if she knew the truth.

Sbani : Damn

Lindo : Mina kuyangijabulisa ukubona how you've been handling this issue from the very beginning. Buka manje kukhona uShanozi irregardless of the situation.

Sbani smiles.

Lindo : Sibheke phambili manje. What flows, flows and what crashes, crashes. NoBaba omncane la ungibuza ukuthi ziphi izingane zami.

Sbani : Ngempela?

Lindo : Ngiyakutshela. Uthathe zonke izinamba zomama bezingane zami.

Sbani : He is going to call them.

Lindo : Straight. And they are going to tell him everything. Ukuthi angondli. Welele!

Sbani laughs and gets out of the car. Lindo is going through it.

Chapter 78

"ABDOOL BEGS FOR DEATH AFTER BEING FLAYED ALIVE"

"ABDOOL ADMITTED IN MOUNT EDGECOMBE HOSPITAL AFTER HIS SKIN PEELED OFF"

"KUGCINE KUYANELE INKALAKATHA YAMATEKISI UMNU KAREN ABDOOL"

"ISILILO KUDLULA EMHLABENI INGQALABUTHO YAMATEKISI UMNU KAREN RAJESH ABDOOL"

"ABDOOL DIES"

These are all the articles that are all over social media. No, Sbani's daughter will have to wait. I snatch my breast out of her mouth and she cries. I leave her crying and sprint to the living room. I grab the remote and switch on the TV. Sbani is already shouting my name from the bathroom.

Sbani : Sebe ingane iyakhala.

I ignore him and switch to the morning show.

Hostess : Right now in our studio we are joined by Mr Mduduzi Zulu from the Phepha Association. Mr Zulu welcome and thank you for joining us.

Mduduzi : Thank you for having me.

Hostess : I know that for you to be here is not easy at all. Considering the fact that you were one of the closest people to the deceased, Mr Abdool, also known as Thee Abdool.

Mduduzi : Abdool was more than a friend. He was my mentor. My hero.

Hostess : Mr Zulu, most people... with myself included are wondering what happened. Can you take us through?

Mduduzi sighs.

Mduduzi : Abdool and I haven't been in contact for the past 8....9 months. I'm not sure if most people noticed how he just disappeared. When he disappeared no one got hold of him. Umndeni.....

Hostess : Ngixolise ukukungena emlonyeni but ngizwa uthinta indaba ebaluleke kakhulu, which is Mr Abdool disappearance. While we are still on that I'm going to read some of the tweets from our viewers.

She takes her tablet.

Hostess : There we go. @Simbazn says "Where was he all this time?" @Amaponi666 says " I thought he died long time ago. So sad" Mhmm sad indeed. And our final tweet is from @Chrisexcel, he says "We all know that Thee Abdool was a drug dealer and more. This time a deal went wrong and he met his match."

She puts away her Tab. Sbani walks in holding Wamandla.

Sbani : Sebe washiya ingane yami ikhala yodwa ka....

Me : Ssshh!

I point at the TV.

Hostess : Chrisexcel thinks it's a deal gone wrong. Mr Abdool met his match. What is your take on that? Do you agree?

Mduduzi licks his lips and narrows his eyes. I wrap my hand around Sbani's arm. My heart is pounding.

Mduduzi : I wouldn't say a deal went wrong or anything like that. But there is someone behind this. Umuntu onesihluku. Umuntu ononya.

Hostess : Usakhuluma ngesihluku, sibonile emaphephandabeni umndeni unxusa ukuthi at least umuntu owenze lento akabuyise isikhumba somzimba ka Mnumzane Abdool. How true is that?

Mduduzi : Uhm yes. As much as it's painful to say this but it is true. The Abdool family is pleading with the killer to at least return his skin. If you look at it, the family is already going through a horrible pain. It's already hard that they saw him in that state. It's already hard that they had to ask the hospital to switch off the machine. It's already hard that he is dead. Ukungcwaba uMnumzane Abdool nezicubu zakhe zomzimba ziphelele siyakholwa impela ukuthi kungawududuza umndeni.

Hostess : This is a tragedy indeed. Ukucabanga ukuthi sikhuluma ngesihluku esingaka esenziwe kumuntu ophilayo kuyashaqisa. Kusenza sizibuze ukuthi inhloboni yabantu esiphila nabo kulomhlaba. Mr Zulu

thank you for joining us. We really hope that justice will be uhh...
Served. Sithumela namazwi enduduzo kunina njenge association
ebisebenzisana kakhulu no Mnumzane Abdool.

Mduduzi : Sibonge kakhulu nkosazane.

Hostess : That was Mr Mduduzi Zulu from the Phepha Association. And
of course if you just tuned in

Advertisement

we are having a discussion following the death of the taxi tycoon, Mr
Karen Rajesh Abdool. Abdool was rushed to the ICU last night after
being flayed alive. It is said that a white Isuzu with a number plate "KN
506 GP" was spotted dumping Mr Abdool just a few feet away from his
home. Abdool passed on this morning after his family pleaded with the
hospital to switch off the machine that was keeping Thee Abdool alive.
Umbuzo omkhulu ke manje uthi kwenzekeni? Who killed Abdool? We
don't know. No one knows. But you can tell us your thoughts on all our
social media networks. On Twitter it's KusilewithRee. Our Facebook
page is KusilewithRee or you can drop us an email. Our email address is
KusilewithRee@myshow.co.za. Please hit us up and share your
thoughts with us.

I turn down the volume.

Sbani : Abdool is dead?

Me : He is gone.

Sbani : Jesus!

Me : I need to call Roxanne.

Sbani : Of course baby. Don't worry, I'll look after Wamandla.

He kisses my forehead and I walk away. I head back into our room. My body is trembling. Tears stream down my face.

After a few minutes Sbani walks in.

Sbani : Manu uyamuthola?

I shake my head.

Sbani : Come on baby, Roxanne is going to be fine.

Me : It was your father.

Sbani : Huh?

Me : Your father. Your father killed Dylan's father.

His face changes immediately.

Sbani : What?

NTULI HOMESTEAD

Sbani came and stayed in his room. Khulekani walks in.

Khulekani : Ey Zizwe. Bengingazi ukuthi ukhona. I'm glad you are here. I actually wanted to talk to you about the wedding. Umshado wakho no Maka Wamandla. My boy it's time.

Sbani : Was it you?

Khulekani : No, I'm saying sekuyisikhathi sokuthi nina nobabili nishade.

Sbani : Did you kill Abdool?

Khulekani : No

Sbani : Don't lie to me!!!

Sbani yells and stands up.

Khulekani : Fine, it was me. But I didn't kill him. I didn't kill anyone. His family asked the hospital to switch off the machine. Ubulawe umndeni wakhe.

Sbani : Oh come on!!! You know that is not true!

Khulekani chuckles.

Khulekani : I actually gave them a chance to do the right thing but the Abdools didn't listen.

Sbani : And what is the right thing?

Khulekani : I tried to be nice. I sent them an invitation to come for the funeral service but they didn't show up. Do you know how expensive funerals are? I wasted my money ngomngcwabo ongazange ubekhona. They stood me up.

Sbani : Khulek....

Khulekani : I wanted to keep it professional. I wanted them to send their goodbyes properly.

Sbani : You wanted to invite Abdool and his family to come for his own funeral?

Khulekani : Why not? I was....

Sbani : Uyisilwane esinjani wena somuntu? Unayo kodwa yona inhliziyo? Do you understand what you did? What about his kids? His wife? Ubacabangelile bona?

Khulekani glares at Sbani.

Khulekani : What about me? I lost everything because of Abdool. My brother! My family! Celiwe! Ngalahlekelwa ithuba lokukhulisa indodana yami! Abdool knew what he was doing! What about me engabuya uCeliwe esefile?! What about me engalahlekelwa iminyaka ewu 25 nendodana yami? Huh? What about my brother?

Sbani : You don't....

Khulekani : No!! You don't understand! Zizwe listen here. uAbdool ubefana nenja nje,inja efana nami. And ke mfana wami kulomhlaba esiphila kuwona inja nenja inosuku lwayo. But we get to decide ukuthi usuku lwaleyonja lufika nini! You know nothing about us! You know nothing about me, Abdool and Mzwakhile! So don't feel sorry for him. Don't feel sorry for his family.

Sbani : What about me? What if you get arrested? Ufuna ukungishiya futhi. Was that your plan all along? Is that the reason why you came back? For Revenge?

Khulekani : No, no. Of course not.

Sbani : Don't lie to me! Ubungabuyele mina angithi? The only reason you came back yingoba ubufuna ukuziphindiselela.

Khulekani : No

Sbani shakes his head.

Sbani : You are fucked up Khulekani. You are....

Khulekani grabs Sbani's arm and hugs him tightly. They both break down into tears.

Khulekani : I'm here my boy and I'm not going anywhere. I love you Zizwe. I love you so much mfana wami.

Chapter 79

Aunt Thembela won't let this thing of seeing a sangoma go. She is really pushing it. Sbani walks in. He has joined a local soccer team and my man is serious about it. Today he had his first game but I couldn't go and watch him because no one was going to stay with Wamandla. But his whole family was there to support him. I heard they won and he scored the winning goal. As soon as he walks in I grab a Vuvuzela and blow it. I'm fumbling with the Vuvuzela. This is not the sound it should be making. Sbani laughs and takes the Vuvuzela away from me. He hugs me and we both laugh.

Sbani : Awukwazi

Me : But I tried. Baby, congratulations.

Sbani : Thank you sthandwa sami

I remove his gym bag from his shoulder.

Sbani : Where is Wamandla?

He asks, already heading into our bedroom.

Me : Leyo diva yakho is finally sleeping..... Bhunu please don't wake her up!

He laughs and walks away. I open his bag and take out his jersey. Yep, they wash their own soccer kits. I smell it and smile. I'm so proud of Sbani. He comes back and wraps his arms around me. He kisses my neck.

Me : I'm so proud of you. You know that?

Sbani : I know thembalami.

He sighs and pulls away. For someone who scored a winning goal he is not happy.

Me : How was it ukuwinisa iqembu lakho?

He unzips his tracksuit and shrugs.

Sbani : There was nothing special about it.

Me : Hhayi Bhunu.

Sbani : Sebe impilo yami yonke bengifuna ukudlala ibhola.

Me : So why uqale manje?

Sbani : I didn't. I started playing at a young age. But my eyesight was bad so I struggled a lot. Nezinye ke izinto ezazenzeka e groundini uma ngiyodlala discouraged me so much and that's why I stopped. Kuthe sengina 18 I wanted to join our local soccer team but they refused. Not that they didn't want me to be part of their team but because they were scared. The argument was "We've never seen a person living with albinism playing soccer"

Me : Eish yeah neh.

Sbani : We have boxed ourselves so much because of the colour of our skin. Thinking we are not capable and not good enough kuncishe abantu ithuba lokuthi bazi ukuthi Albinos are born with talent. People with albinism have so much talent but we are scared of showcasing our talent because we are often full of doubt. We are always doubting ourselves, thinking we are not good enough. There's actually nothing

we can't do but you know what the problem is? We are scared to start.
Do you get me?

Me : Scared to start? No I don't.

Sbani : I know I'm good with soccer but because I've never seen an albino playing soccer so I'm not going to do it. Do you get me?

Me : Oh yes. Ukusaba ukuba owokuqala owenza lokho.

Sbani : Exactly. We are usually scared to pursue our talents due to fear and rejection. Sometimes you overcome fear and give it a try. Like I did. Ngalulandela uthando lwami lwebhola. I fought to become the part of that team yase Pinetown. My father uMzwakhile had my back naye engilwela ukuthi ngingene. They finally signed me. I defeated my fear but the community rejected me. Ngangifika e groundini ngidabule i net ngamagoli but I had no supporters. Ngangishaya igoli kusukume abantu abawu 3 kuphela beshaye ivuvuzela. 3 out of 100 people supported me. Ukuthi lawomagoli azowinisa iqembu labo they didn't care. They hated that I was the one who made the team won. I was dragged kwathiwa ngisebenzisa umuthi.

Every time Sbani tells me these things I fear for my daughter. I thought Sbani was exaggerating things but after what happened at the clinic I

knew he wasn't exaggerating. I couldn't even tell him how those nurses treated our daughter because it would've killed him.

Sbani : I ended up regretting joining Pinetown FC. Sengizikhumbulela ukudlala ngedwa ibhola emuva kwendlu yasekhaya where no one dragged or judged me.

He laughs and heaves a sigh.

Sbani : Kusakela lapho ngalizonda ibhola ngenhliziyo yami yonke. I spoke to our coach ngamutshela ukuthi I wanted to quit. Wathi i contract yami iphela in six months so I couldn't leave. Ngagoduka ngayotshela uLindo ngikhala. 6 months felt like years ngangike ngikwazi. Lindo tried to speak to my coach. Wathi ithina esamuncenga ukuthi engithathe kodwa manje mina sengifuna ukuhamba.

Me : He had a point.

Sbani : He did. Some unfortunate luck happened. Ngagula egroundini one day. It was too hot and I got sick. And that's how my contract got terminated. It was dangerous to keep me.

Sbani's rare genetic material is the reason for his sickness. Wamandla is carrying the same material but with the power of God hers is treatable so she won't suffer like her father.

Me : Babeqala ukukubona ugula?

Sbani : Yes. Sasingakaze sidlale kushisa or kunetha imvula.

Me : You've been through a lot wena.

He chuckles.

Sbani : You have no idea. So yeah uthando lwami lwebhola lwangiphelela lapho.. I lost interest in soccer. But when they called me again this year I decided to go back.

Me : You did well. People need to see that people living with albinism are capable of doing almost everything. We need to break the stereotype. We are hoping that more people with albinism are going to pursue amathalente abo.

Sbani : That's the thing. Albinos are scared of everything. We are even scared to support one of our own.

Me : Sbani.....

Sbani : I'm not playing soccer to break any stereotypes. I'm not doing this for anyone but myself. Doing things for people will never get you anywhere because people don't care.

Me : Manuna

Advertisement

I'm sorry.

Sbani : It's a day life thing. Everyday a person with albinism goes through something worse and that is not going to change. My only concern now is my daughter. She might not be able to handle the heat so I need to toughen her up.

Me : Speaking of our daughter kunento engifuna ukukutshela yona.

Wee! The way he is already looking at me right now, he is going to lose his mind if I tell him what happened.

Sbani : What's wrong with my daughter?

I smile.

Me : No, nothing. Bengicabanga ukuthi simutholele intambo or something yokumuqinisa nje from imimoya emibi.

Sbani : Eish yah. Why didn't I think of that?

Me : No it's okay. Owethu sobabili uWamandla.

He smiles and wraps his arms around me.

Sbani : Wena ngabusiwa ngawe. Noma umdala nje ukunami.

We both burst into laughter.

Me : Hawemah Bhunu.

Sbani : I'm joking, sthandwa sami. I'm joking.

I know he is.

Me : Cabanga ngikuphekele kahle kanjani ngoba ungeyisa nje.

Sbani : Ngiyezwa kunuka u "Come aunty" layindlini.

That's what he calls all Indian food. He thinks ever since I became friends with Roxanne I cook like Indians.

Me : Awufuni?

He laughs

Sbani : Ngiyawufuna thembalami. Cabanga ngilambe kanjani.

Me : Let's go and eat.

I really went all out today. After all the goals my man scored, he deserves this treatment. He looks at the table and smiles.

Sbani : You did this for me?

Me : My one and only

Sbani : Ehhene! Woza la

He pulls me by my waist and kisses my lips. I giggle.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga kakhulu sthandwa sami.

Me : You are welcome Khuboni. Now please take a seat my King.

I pull out a chair for him and he sits down.

Sbani : Can we do this everyday?

He is testing me.

Me : Never

We both laugh.

Sbani : So baby sizomutholela kuphi intambo uWamandla?

I give him a bowl to wash his hands.

Sbani : Ngiyabonga mamah.

Me : I spoke to Gogo and she said we can come tomorrow.

Sbani : What time?

Me : I don't know. Do you want to come with us?

Sbani : Of course.

Me : Don't look worried now. There's nothing wrong with her.

Sbani : I know. I'm just confused ukuthi kwenzeka kanjani singayicabangi indaba yentambo kuze kube yimanje.

Me : A lot has been happening.

Sbani : Ey yah.

Me : Did you hear the Abdools?

Sbani : I didn't but I heard people talking about it. Indaba yabo yokubonga uKhulekani?

Me : Yes. Apparently imoto eyaletha uAbdool eka Baba wakho. Bayabonga ke manje ngokuthi wamuthola wamuletha ekhaya.

Sbani : He killed him.

Me : They don't know that.

Sbani : They know. I think he threatened them. And yingakho ethe ababize i media bebonge ukuze abantu bengasoli ukuthi uyena obulale u Abdool. Khulekani is a bastard.

Me : Dylan was the one talking. He asked people to give them space to mourn. And he said their family is not going to be part of the police investigation because there's nothing to investigate. Imagine!

Sbani : Khulekani is behind all that.

Me : Your father is really good at this. No wonder people praise him so much. But just I'm shocked ukuthi akakabatholi namanje ababulali baka Baba uMzwa

I look at him out of the corners of my eyes. He stops eating. I clench my teeth.

Sbani : Akuyona ingane yami le ekhalayo?

Wow. I just dropped a bomb and he's only worried about his daughter.

Me : No

Sbani : Okay. The food is nice sthandwa sami. Thank you so much.

He continues eating.

Me : You are welcome.

Sbani : You were saying something.

Me : Oh no. I was saying I'm shocked that your father hasn't found people who killed Baba uMzwa.

Sbani : I wouldn't be surprised if he did and he decided not to tell us. Who knows? Mhlampe wabathola wathi abazingcwabe. My father is evil Sebe.

I nod.

Sbani : Mina uma engisize ngokuthi engafi nje or eboshwe ngi grand. I need him. Kunezinto zami eziningi kabi that I need him to fix.

See? I'm glad I didn't tell him that his father is actually the one who killed Mzwakhile.

Chapter 80

Sbani won't be coming with us. Scelo has been arrested. They need to go and bail him out.

Me : Why would Khethiwe get her own son arrested?

Sbani : She is tired. Uthi ukhathele uScelo emuhlupha eshawa abantu. Ucabanga ukuthi ijeli lizomushintsha uScelo.

Me : That is ridiculous.

Sbani : Uma sikwazile ukumukhipha uthi uKhulekani uzomuthatha ezohlala ekhaya.

Me : Wow. Really?

Sbani : Yes. He is taking all Lindo's kids ukuthi zizohlala ekhaya.

Me : Yoo! Uthini yena uLindo?

Sbani : He is okay with that. Inkinga yakhe uScelo angafuni ezohlala ekhaya.

Me : Unamanga usaba ukondla.

He laughs.

Sbani : Baby let's go. Ngizonishiya lapha kaGogo.

Me : But I told you that you don't have to.

Sbani : No, I want to.

Me : Fine.

He lifts up Wamandla and I take her bag.

Me : Uzohamba nokhiye?

Sbani : Ngihambe nawo? Do you think ngizobuya kuqala?

Me : I don't know. Let me take it.

Sbani : Yah manu, take it.

Me : Okay let's go.

^

^

^

We arrived at Gogo's house.

Sbani : Are you going to be fine?

I laugh.

Me : Yes we are going to be fine.

Sbani : Okay. Ngiyanithanda.

Me : We love you too.

He kisses Wamandla and fixes her blanket.

Me : Sizokufonela ke uma siqeda.

Sbani : Please, manu. Mhlampe ngizobe sengiqedile nginilande.

Me : Okay.

He kisses my cheek and gets in the car.

Me : Bye

Sbani : Mncwa!

I giggle.

Me : Mncwa!

He watches us walking all the way in and he drives off.

Gogo shows me in. I walk in and sit on the couch. Wamandla is already moving her pink eyes all around the roof. Gogo walks in wearing her long white dress and a leopard doek around her head.

Gogo : Yeye! UGogo ulethelwe umakoti namhlanje.

I laugh. She takes Wamandla and goes to sit on the couch opposite me with her.

Gogo : Sawubona MaNtuli.

She bumps her on her thighs. I can hear Wamandla's tiny laughter. Oh she loves being bumped like that.

Gogo : Sawubona ntombi emhlophe. Waze wamuhle.

I smile.

Me : Ngiyamubongela

She sighs and holds Wamandla as a baby that she is. She takes out her beads and rolls them around Wamandla's hand. She holds the rest of the beads. She closes her eyes and begins praying. She finishes praying and looks at me.

Gogo : What is wrong?

Me : Ey Gogo kuningi. Ngihlushwa amaphupho. Ngelinye ilanga ngithe ngiyamuncelisa kwaphuma igazi.

She nods.

Gogo : What happened to your father?

I swallow. My father's death still hits me.

Me : UBaba akasekho. Wathatha impilo yakhe.

She groans.

Me : After his death ayikho into.....

She raises her hand.

Gogo : Moya oyingcwele kwenzenjani na? Uthi umoya oyingcwele kwenzeka okufanele kwenzeka. Uma kubekwe izinkemba ezimbili egadla kuqala iyona enqobayo. Umile owesifazane uthi nami kwanele ngendodana yami isidlule kokuningi. Is he didn't do it, she was going to do it.

I don't understand.

Gogo : Kwa Ntuli abazona izithutha. Nabo bebezicuphile. UBaba walengane was told ngemikhuba kaBaba wakho. He was told that the reason why elahlekelwa inzalo yakhe it was because of your father. Isithelo esisodwa sasiphethe impilo kayihlo. Sathi singashabalala waphuma umphefumulo kayihlo.

Me : I don't understand. Are you saying my father was killed?

Gogo : The same way you were planning to kill umkhulu walengane but they beat you to it. Eyabo inkemba yagadla kuqala.

What? The Ntulis killed my father?

Gogo : He is not aware of what he did and he will never be aware.

Me : Kwa Ntuli nabo bebecuphe uBaba? They killed my father? Who killed him?

Gogo : Your father wasn't innocent. Nganitshela nifike la that he is the reason for all the babies that you have lost. Uma kuchitheka igazi lezingane zakho ibiyanda eyakhe imfuyo esibayeni. UBaba wakho ubethwele ngesibeletho sakho. The Ntulis know that. Umuntu Abaya kuye wabatshela wona kanye lamazwi ami. Into abangayazi ukuthi bahamba nomuthi wokubulala uyihlo. Ukufa kukayihlo ubufakazi bokuthi uyena ngempela oqede inzalo yakwaNtuli owabusiswa ngayo wena.

Me : So you were right? UBaba ubethakatha? Ubethwele ngenzalo yami?

Gogo : Kodwa nansi ingane. Umbuzo omkhulu uthi ifike kanjani lengane?

Me : After he was dead. That mean konke lokuthwala kwakhe kuphelile

Gogo : But his cows are still alive. Have you ever asked yourself why uBaba walengane engakuthokozeli ukulala nawe?

I sit up.

Me : What do you mean?

She sighs and shakes her head.

Gogo : Kuningi. Athi amadoda akwaMlambo eyethu indodakazi ayisoze yashada ngoba ukushada kwayo kusho ukushabalala kwezikhwama zakwa Mlambo that she has now inherited. Uma eshada lokho akusamenzi owakwa Mlambo.

Me : Inherited?

Gogo : Tell me about the dreams you've been having.

Me : Bengiphupha uBaba enginika isikhwama esimnyama. But every time I refused to take it.

She laughs.

Gogo : Those dreams are clear. UBaba wakho ufuna uqhubeke nemisebenzi yakhe. Izikhwama zakhe zokuthakatha sezisele nawe.

My heart pounds. I stand up.

Me : Ini?

Gogo : This baby is a gift from the Mlambos. Lengane indlela yabo yokukuncenga ukuthi wamuleke lezikhwama olokhu unikwa zona emaphupheni akho.

Me : I can't. No no I can't.

Gogo : Singabazali senza izinto not knowing that those things will affect our kids eventually. That's what your father did. He chose to be greedy wakhohlwa izingane zakhe. Mntanami akekho umuntu ozokwazi ukukusiza kulento. Impi yakwa Mlambo nakwa Ntuli isihambe yafika la.

Me : Please, I can't do this. I can't. Ngiyakucela Gogo ungisize.

She shakes her head.

Gogo : I can't and no can.

I sit down.

Me : What does this mean?

Gogo : You have two options. Uma unqaba ukwamukela Izikhwama zokuthakatha ezishiywe uyihlo ezishiyela wena lokho kusho ukuthi your daughter will die kanti uma lengane ingashonanga she will go through what you went through. Kungenzeka ethwale isiqalekiso sakwaNtuli sokungabatholi nhlobo abantwana okanye izingane zakhe zichitheke njengezakho.

My eyes widen.

Me : No

Gogo : But if you accept what your father left, all will be over. Kuzoba nesiqalo esisha.

Me : So my baby won't die?

Gogo : Akukho okuzokwenzeka enganeni yakho.

Me : What if ngiyazamukela lezozikhwama ukuze ngivikele impilo yengane yami but ngiphinde ngishintshe umqondo emnyakeni eyisihlanu ezayo?

Gogo : Do you remember what I said? If you change your mind this baby will go through what you went through. That's why they gave you umntwana wentombazane.

I clench my teeth and tears pour out of my eyes.

Gogo : And the day you die uyena lomntwana oyothatha lezikhwama. This thing will never end. Ngiyaxolisa mntanami.

Me : Yini ekuzofanele ngiyenze ngalezikhwama.

Gogo : Vala umlomo wakho and they will give you all the instructions. What I can tell you is that it's not going to be an easy one.

She stands up and gives me Wamandla. She walks out. My whole body shut down.

^

^

^

When I walked out of Gogo's house my head was heavy. We went to Aunt Thembela's house. Later Sbani picked us up. When we arrived I slept.

Mlambo : Angisekho ndodakazi kodwa umsebenzi kufanele uqhubeke.
You have accepted my request.

Me : Yes

He walks out and a very old man walks in.

Old man : Usuwamukele umsebenzi.

Me : My daughter....

Old man : Kulomsebenzi awuhambi wedwa. You need something or someone who will do most of the work. Isandla sesibili. UBaba wakho uhambe nakho konke okwakhe. Sikukhethela esakho isikhali esizokusebenzela. You need to go home and finish what we have started for you. Finish him off.

I suddenly see Sphiwokuhle passing by walking like a zombie.

Me : No

Advertisement

no, no.

Old man : Izindlela zakwa Mlambo nakwaNtuli ziyohlale zihlangana. Go home and finish him off. Usewumkhovu wakho. Umkhovu wakho. Umkhovu wakho.....

He keeps repeating and I keep screaming. I get up and jump out of bed. I look around. I was dreaming but this is not just a dream. Tears burn in my eyes but they refuse to come out. I walk out and find Sbani sitting in the living room. He is sitting on the couch, holding Wamandla. His eyes are closed but he is not sleeping because he is talking.

Sbani : This world is so dark and vile. When you carry this golden skin you have to toughen up, my princess.

He sighs.

Sbani : It's not going to be easy but I'll always have your back. And when I'm no longer here and the heat gets too much, I want you to always remember that WHEN HEAVENS FAVOR YOU, THE EARTH AND ITS PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS LOOK DOWN ON YOU. Albinism is part of you and it's beautiful but it's not all of you.

When God chose a father for me he chose the worst but at least he gave my daughter the best. Exodus 20:5 clearly states that the sins of the fathers will be passed down to 3rd and 4th generations. And today I believe that is true but why did they have to involve Sphiwo in all of this? I break a loud scream and hit the wall.

Sbani : Sebe what's wrong?

BLIND DATE BY NOMFUNDO MBHELE

THE END.

