

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 01

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I live my life in circles, the starting point is the ending point and from there I repeat again, it's been my life since I can remember but it's not a life I want for myself, I hate this box we are in but I don't know how I am going to make it out. To tell you the truth I have always felt different and I knew that it wasn't something I could voice out to anyone because of our beliefs and religion. So I have lived to be who they want me to be rather than who I know I am, it's tough living a lie and being afraid to just blossom into exactly who you are meant to be, I can only live my truth in my own imagination because in there no one can peep through and invade my privacy but my father has always said that God sees and knows what is in our hearts and minds and I guess it's not entirely a secret. My

family is not rich or poor we are just financially okay and can afford most things, both my parents are teachers and important members of the church, my sister is married and lives her life with her husband far away from this place, even though they are both from here they managed to make it out from this small town where everyone knows the next persons business. We are located in a small town away from all the major cities and nothing really happens around here. Well my family and I, like everyone else around here spend our time at church and if you are living differently to us you are judged and told you will never see heaven, if I didn't know any better I would say the church is a cult in disguise. Our lives are basically planned out for us here, they already know which university course we are going to pursue after matric and who we are going to marry and have children with. The church insists that we marry within our own congregation in order to uphold the beliefs and rules of the house but I just find this whole thing

absurd and some form of abuse. I am 17 and currently doing my last year of school where both my parents work. I have never been a troublesome child but I haven't been an angel either, my best friend Zipho and I have experimented a bit, we once tried cigarettes and a bottle of wine but our parents found us and the whole church prayed for us and we had to fast and pray for two weeks so we can be pure for the Lord to accept us again. So if parents can freak out on two teenagers for being kids imagine what they would do to me if they found out about me being something they condemn. I am in my room listening to one of my favorite songs, Hell of a night by Travis Scott I make sure to listen to my music through headsets so that my parents don't hear me listening to the "devil's music" like they call it, everything that has nothing to do with the church or with God is prohibited in our home. My bedroom door opens and my mom walks in and I stop my music and look at her.

Her: Lwandle are you done with your school work? You don't want your father finding you with that phone coz he will definitely take it from you

Me: I am done mama

Her: your father wants to have a word with you baby

Me: about?.

I ask coz I know it's never great news when he wants a one on one

Her: I know better than to question my husband and so should you Lwandle, your father wants to talk to you, you will find out as soon as you go and hear him out.

She says tone defensive. I sigh and get up and head towards the door.

Her: show some respect.

She says dragging me back. I grab my cardigan and cover my bare shoulders. According to the church we should never expose our body to anyone but our husbands, not even my father is

allowed to see any part of my body, hence we always dressed in long skirts and long sleeves to cover up everything. I don't mind dressing like a granny at home but going to school like this is just crazy coz of the constant jokes the other learner's who are not part of our religion throw at us.

Me: am I decent enough?

Her: yes you are, let's go we have wasted enough time already.

We both walk out my room and he is sitting on his chair jaws clenched, I hate this side of him it's just scary, makes me wonder what he is about to say to me.

Me: Bab'Zulu.

I say bowing a bit

Him: Lwandle take a seat

Me: ngiyabonga (thank you).

I join him at the dinning table and cast my eyes down. He clears his throat and my heart starts beating very fast.

Him: you know you will turn 18 soon Lwandle and that means you will be at your prime, you are almost a woman now and soon enough you will be going to university.

He says and I nod hoping he would just get to the point quickly

Him: it's unfortunate that you are going to have to go to university while you are in your husband's home.

He says and my heart drops in my stomach, I shoot my eyes up and my mother gives me a warning look I quickly drop them down.

Me: who is this husband Bab'Zulu?

Him: I have been having conversations with the Pastor for years now, his son Banele is the one who's rib you were made from.

He says and I swear I want to cry, yes Banele is a handsome guy and all the girls around here go crazy over him but he is not what I want. I don't like man and right now I wish I could just scream that to my parents

Me: oh I see

Her: that's all you have to say Lwandle? Banele is a fine gentlemen and every parent wanted him for their girls but he chose you, you should be happy mnatanami (my child).

My mom says but I don't look up.

Him: and we will have the best positions in the church Lwandle, you know how much I have always wanted to be an elder in the church. This is a blessing for everyone in this family.

My father adds and I can't talk coz I feel this huge lump in my throat.

Her: are you hearing us?

Me: yebo ma.

I manage to say

Him: Good then, he will be coming around to see you tomorrow so the both of you can start getting to know each other.

Me: may I please be excused.

I ask coz I can't contain these tears any longer.

Him: okay but just be ready for him tomorrow and please show the good qualities your mom and I taught you remember this is not only about you but the entire family so don't make him change his mind about marrying you.

Me: I won't Bab'Zulu I promise.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

From a very young age I always knew that I was not like the other girls, I was never into dolls and playing house, I couldn't even stand being in the presence of little girls my age they would just annoy me, most of my friends growing up were boys and I felt like myself when around them. My mom noticed this but she didn't think much of it until I started choosing my own clothes, I would only buy from the boys section and I would cut my hair. When I was old enough she sat me down and asked me about my sexuality and I explained it to her and she has been supportive ever since and

even more when I was almost raped by a group of guys at some chisa nyama, it was a really dark time in my life but with her support I managed to get through it quicker and went back to living my life unapologetically. I don't think I have ever been in a stable relationship in my life yes I have dated exclusively here and there but I never saw a future with any of those girls. I just turned 26 and I had a crazy bash at the end of that night a group of my friends and I got into a fight with some guy who insulted us, we fought and I broke my leg. I haven't been going to work as the doctor booked me off, the guys we fought with have threatened to come after us and my mother has been scared for me ever since. She walks in with some groceries.

Me: why didn't you call me to come help you out ma.

Her: with what leg again?

I laugh shaking my head

Me: you won't let this die down ne?

Her: I just want you to hear me please.

She says and I know what she is referring to

Me: ma they were just bluffing, I know their types, they are all noise and no action

Her: can you just do this one thing for me please for my peace of mind please?

She asks and I sigh

Me: you really are stressing ne?

Her: you are my only child and it would kill me to have anything happen to you so please Indi.

She says and I know she is really having a hard time thinking about those punks

Me: okay I will go to Grams.

I say and she takes a deep sigh

Her: oh thank God, I will drive you down there on Friday.

Me: come on mama I can drive myself.

She rolls her eyes.

Her: Indigo you have a cast on and it's a distance driving down there. It's not like driving yourself to the supermarket around the corner.

Me: if I am to go down there I am definitely going to need my car.

I negotiate

Her: fine so long as you are getting out of here.

Me: Thank you

Her: I will go start with the pots. I don't want to starve you my husband.

She says and I laugh

Me: yeah I love you too ma.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I didn't sleep most of the night and when I finally did I just had the most terrifying dream, I was married to Banele and I hated every minute of it, I was stuck with him in this place going to church every single day, and living by these

outrageous rules that are just meant to cage us. I don't want this for myself, this is not who I am. I am not a woman who wants to be married to a man. I couldn't focus at school and teachers kept on drawing me back from my train of thoughts but my mind wasn't here at all, I thought of the huge responsibility my family has placed on my shoulders. It is lunch time and Zipho and I are sitting at our usual spot with our lunch boxes.

Her: Lwandle what is going on with you?

Me: I am sorry friend.

Her: I have been talking to myself the entire time, what's going on with you today?

Me: I just have a lot on my mind

Her: clearly so spit it out already.

I sigh

Me: someone has already picked me as a wife
Zee

Her: you don't say, who is the lucky guy?

Me: Banele.

I answer in a low voice and she narrows her eyes

Her: Banele who?

Me: Thwala, the pastor's last son.

She screams in excitement making other learner's look at us

Me: Zipho keep it down you are causing unnecessary attention.

Her: how are you not excited Nolwandle? Do you know how lucky you are? I mean every girl, me included have sent a prayer up there asking God to direct that fine specie our way and he gives him to you and you are not even excited?.

She says and I roll my eyes

Me: I don't want to be married Zipho, at least not now and not to him. I want to go to the big cities and see how it is there, attend university and just be young and wild like they show on TV. I am too young to tie myself down to one

person and bare him kids and stick to some old rules that oppress us and elevate man.

Her: Lwandle, where is all this coming from? You knew from a very young age that this is our life Lwa, and you know if you don't follow the rules and leave this place without your families support you will never be allowed back here.

She reminds me of yet another sick law forced on us.

Me: I know that and I hate it as much as I hate everything happening here.

Her: what is going on with you Lwa, don't let your father hear you speak like this.

She says shaking her head

Me: he would find a verse in the Bible he would use to justify him killing me.

I say and laugh at my own joke but she keeps a straight face

Her: That's not funny I swear. I don't know what is happening with you but I suggest you snap out of it and soon.

Me: it's not like I have a choice Zipho, I am a puppet controlled by the puppet master my father and this damn religion.

Her: let's just eat and stop talking about this because you are just scaring me.

Me: oh come on.

I push her elbow playfully and she shakes her head

Her: finish up before the break ends

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I am finally at home and I still can't believe that Nolwandle got picked by the pastor's son and she is not showing appreciation but rather she is questioning our beliefs and religion. This has always worked for our people and it will surely work for us. If she knew how lucky she is to have been picked by Banele, the pastor and his family are loved and respected by the majority of people in our town they are financially stable

and everything, she wouldn't struggle with anything but like always she has to complain. One thing I have noticed about Lwa is she thinks she is better than everyone in this town. She always wants to questions things that were in place before we were even born. I have no idea why she thinks she is special but it's starting to annoy me. The door opens and my sister walks in, I hate sharing a bedroom, she must just get married and leave.

Her: and then wena, why do you look like you are carrying the world's problems on your shoulders

Me: I have to share a room with you and have a friend like Lwandle.

She laughs

Her: you are going to miss me when I get married I swear.

Me: can't that day be soon enough?

Her: mxm and what did princess Nolwandle do this time?

Me: she is bitching about how our religion sucks and how she wants to be a free bird.

Her: why?

Me: Bandile Thwala chose her as a wife.

I say and my sister is shocked

Her: what? why would she be complaining? I mean Bandile is thee guy for the girls your age, he is to you what his big brother was to us, why does she like acting like she is breathing flavored air.

Me: this is exactly what I told her, but she told me about wanting to be young and wild in university.

Her: let her pass by this great opportunity some of us are praying for sis, she will regret it at 30 while her age mates are leaving with their husbands and kids, she thinks she will be young forever

Me: she needs a wake up call.

Her: poor Bandile if only he knew that he chose someone who still wants play.

I sigh

Me: I wish I could let him know shame.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I packed my bags and drove to my grandmother as much as I hate this place I am doing it for my mother's well being and spending a little time with my grandmother won't hurt. The only thing I hate about the place is the damn religion, I don't know how these people changed the Bible and came up with these dramatic rules and everything. My grandmother was kicked out of the church because she didn't force my mom to marry someone in the church and they further condemned her after they found out I was lesbian. Shops that belong to members of the church around here are not allowed to sell anything to her and she doesn't have a problem. I get there and park taking my bags

out and start limping inside. I find her basking in the sun. She smiles soon as she sees me.

Her: Indi

She says

Me: sure grams, how are you?

Her: I am fine mntanami (my child) just happy to see you.

I get to her and give her a warm hug

Me: me too grams, it's been a while

Her: a long while my makhulu

Her: usathandana nama ntombazane? (Are you still dating girls?).

She asks and I laugh

Me: it's not going to change makhulu

Her: manje umletha Nini umakoti (when are you bringing a wife)

Me: as soon as I find her Makhulu
ngiyam'lobola (I am marrying her)

She laughs out loud

Her: hai Indigo you are making us experience things my child.

My grandmother didn't understand all this when my mom explained it to her and as old school as she is she never judged but she constantly tries to understand me and my world better and I couldn't be any happy to have a family that loves and support me and the life I live. I don't think I would have been able to fight society and my family at once.

Me: where is Sphiwe?

I ask about my cousin who lives with her

Her: I send him to town to get the money your mother deposited and asked him to pick up some groceries.

Me: oh okay it's better I go pick him up then.

Her: how do you drive with that thing on your leg.

Me: it's not a hustle Makhulu.

Her: okay, let me call your mother and tell her you're here and I am surprised and happy.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 02

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I am starring at myself in the full length mirror in my bedroom, my mother went as far as getting me a maxi dress and a denim jacket to cover up, today she insisted that I put on a doek and I couldn't feel any more suffocated in this outfit, in this situation in this damn life. I just don't know what to do really. If I had anywhere to run to I would, but I can't run to my sister's place that is the first place they would look for me and knowing Siya she would send me straight back, she doesn't love drama at all. My mom walks in with a wide smile

Her: oh Lwandle look at you.

Me: is the doek necessary kodwa ma?

Her: of course it is look at how it compliments the whole look. You look like a true wife.

I roll my eyes

Me: ma can I ask you something?

Her: of course you can sthandwa Sam

Me: do I really have to do this? I mean I am so young and I want to do a lot of things with my life and being married will just block everything. After all I don't love Banele mama, I just want to be my age and enjoy life coz I know it has so much to offer me.

Her: Nolwandle that's not how things work and you know this. Why are you talking like a possessed child? We are going to need to fast and pray to cast out that spirit of confusion in you.

Me: but ma-

She quickly cuts me off

Her: but nothing Lwandle, don't let your father hear you speak like this coz the consequences would be far greater, kneel down and ask for the Lord's forgiveness and come out Banele is here. You have 5minutes.

She says and walks out. I let out a deep sigh and fight off these damn tears.

Me: I will not cry...I will not cry.

I repeat and fix myself before walking out. I get to the lounge Banele is sitting in there with my father.

Me: sanibonani (greetings)

Baba: Lwandle.

Me: yebo Bab'Zulu.

Baba: you know who this is?

He asks

Me: yebo baba, it's Banele.

Baba: umyeni wakho Lwa (your husband).

He says with a smile.

Me: yebo baba.

Baba: Thwala.

He says looking at Banele

Me: here is your future wife, you make take her so you guys can talk and get to know each other.

Him: thank you sir. I promise to bring her back.

My father laughs

Baba: don't worry about it son, take your time with her, after all you two are going to be husband and wife.

Him: siyabonga (thank you).

He stands up from the chair and comes near me

Him: Lwandle singahamba (we can go). I nod and follow him out. His car is parked outside our gate, it's a sleek beautiful BMW. I wonder what he does for a living really.

He opens the door for me and I get inside. He goes around and gets in his side and starts the engine. He drives a while and I can see he is taking the direction of town. We haven't said

anything to each other and it feels so awkward no lie. We get to KFC the only restaurant we have and he goes by their drive through and orders, I am shocked that he didn't ask me what I wanted but just decided for me. He drives again and parks at some secluded spot around our neighborhood.

Him: this small place doesn't have much but I hope you do eat KFC.

You only asking now really? I say to myself

Me: yes it's okay thank you.

Him: so tell me about yourself a little

Me: there isn't much to tell but I will be studying education next year in university just like my father chose for me, my wish was to study Biomedical Technology but that will just be a wish as we have rules to follow here. I have always wished to move to one of the big cities and explore everything there. I am passionate about public speaking, like I said there isn't much to tell.

I say and he nods

Him: maybe you are just shy, I will give you some time to warm up to me.

Me: maybe. So what about you? Who is Bandile?

Him: well I am the pastor's son like you know, but I live in Johannesburg, I work in a Tech company since I studied Information Technology in varsity. My spare time I watch soccer and hit the gym. I am obsessed with keeping fit.

He says and I nod.

Me: Johannesburg has been one City I wanted to visit.

Him: now you don't have to only visit but you will live there and it will be your home.

He says and that reality hits me.

Me: I guess so.

Him: let's eat before it gets cold.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I am sitting with my cousin Sphiwe outside having a few beers. Music bursting from my car, him and I are very close and I hate that I take time coming down here to check on him or inviting him to come to Jozi for a weekend or so. Sphiwe is 2 years older than me and growing up he wasn't book smart but he has always been good with fixing cars, he is a mechanic and that's how he makes his crown (money) he has a little workshop on a land my mother bought him, it's not far from here and he has never had a problem with his clients cars being stolen, crime rate around here is very low.

Him: grootman you must come down here frequently.

I laugh

Me: definitely mfethu, nawe you should visit us more.

Him: I sure will bafo, I haven't been there in the longest time I don't even remember how your house looks like.

Me: that's not okay Phiwe.

Him: so Monday I want you to borrow me your car so I can go fetch my girl from school.

He says and I laugh

Me: you are busy with under age kids Phiwe

Him: ai nawo lama 2000 a busy man.

Me: ei vele amaUber man. They know more than their sisters.

Him: so will you borrow me the car?

Me: you will drive but I am coming with, I just want to feed my eyes.

He laughs.

Him: no problem grootman sizo vaya sonke (we will go together)

Me: so your girl is not a part of these crazy churches?

Him: ai no we know they don't want us so their kids are playing far from us plus they only marry within their Church.

Me: I will never understand how things work with them. They use the Bible verses that benefit them and their crazy.

Him: Gogo now laughs at herself for ever being part of them.

Me: it's a cult man they know how to brain wash these people. It's sad really. Makhulu is just blessed to have survived all of this and so did the rest of us.

Him: that's very true.

Me: how many beers do we have left? I ask and he looks inside the cooler box as he is sitting on top of it.

Him: ngathi boma 12.

Me: hai we should go get some more then.

Him: sure ntwana. We pack up and get in the car and rush off to find more booze.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

After finding out that Lwa is getting married I just couldn't understand how God works really, I mean I am more understanding and respectful of his laws and ways yet she always questions everything and she doesn't even want to get married but she still gets to have Banele. That is not fair I have prayed for a man like him but he is given to someone who wants a totally different life to the one we live here. Nolwandle always gets everything that I want without even trying. I am sitting outside in the shade, I feel someone walk towards me, I quickly wipe my tears but it's too late.

Her: hao Zee why are you crying?

My sister asks

Me: I am not crying, something got in my eye that's all.

She chuckles and takes a sit next to me.

Her: we both know that is a lie so come on tell me what is going on with you.

Me: I just don't understand why Lwa has to have everything I ever wish for, nothing never happens for me.

Her: I totally understand what you are saying Zee, but what I've come to realize is that Nolwandle is a go getter she goes for what she wants and you have to do the same .

Me: but she doesn't want Banele so why did God bless her with a man she doesn't want, a man some of us prayed for? How fair is that?.

She sighs

Her: you know better than to question the Almighty. If you really want Banele you are going to have to fight to get him.

Me: how will I do that kodwa sis. He has already chosen Lwa

Her: find a way to shift his attention to you Zipho, after all the man can still change his

mind. Don't end up like me 26 and still in my parents house.

My sister is right it's time I fought to get what I want too. Nolwandle can't always be the only one who gets nice things.

•MONDLI ZULU

My father and his father before him attended the church and it worked for them and it's proving to work for my family too, my first daughter is married and living well with her husband, who is also from a family that is part of the church. The union I am most excited about is the one between my daughter Lwandle and Banele if this marriage sticks I will be an in law to the pastor and I will have the benefits to show for it. I am a bit concerned about Nolwandle, she has a problem of questioning everything and once in a while she needs to be reminded of our ways. I just have to sit down and have a serious talk with her and make her

understand what would happen if she messes this for us. My wife walks in with a tray of tea and home baked cookies and places them in front of me.

Me: thank you my dear

Her: it's a pleasure Bab'Zulu.

She attempts to walk away

Me: join me please.

I ask and she pulls out a chair and sits down

Her: you look stressed mnyeni wam (my husband).

Me: I am worried about Nolwandle. You know your daughter can be difficult at times

Her: I know baba but this time around she understands what needs to be done.

Me: she always understands but she ends up going South and doing the exact opposite

Her: I will talk to her once again baba if that will make you feel better.

Me: please do we don't need her messing up everything for us, my father and his father died wishing to have been in laws to the family of the pastor of their time and they couldn't but I have that opportunity now, to sit amongst the elders of the church and make decisions make the rules and go down in the history of our church.

Her: she will not take this from you baba I will talk to her.

Me: please do coz it won't be nice to punish her into submission.

I say and my wife swallows hard

Her: that will not be necessary I promise.

Me: I trust you will make her understand

Her: with no doubt.

Me: you are excused.

I dismiss her and she stands up and hurries back to the kitchen.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I was suffocating for the few hours I spend yesterday with Banele and to think this is the man I am expected to live with for the rest of my life gives me anxiety, I don't want this and I wish my parents can understand it. I am not sure how I am going to get myself out of this mess but I need to because I can't be trapped in a life that is not mine, a complete lie, I would rather die if I am not given a chance to live my truth. My phone rings and it's Siyamthanda my sister. I smile and quickly pick up.

Me: Siya

Her: muntuza, how are you?

Me: I am okay sis how are you?

Her: I am fine thanks, well congrats I heard the good news.

I sigh and roll my eyes

Me: it's not good news Siya this is not what I want.

Her: oh muntuza, I know it's hard but you will learn to accept it and live happily trust me.

Me: No Siya it won't. I don't want to settle, this is not who I am, if I go on with this I swear my demons will haunt me for the rest of my life.

I blurt out and I wish I could swallow my words

Her: hao what do you mean?

Me: nothing

Her: don't lie to me muntuza, I know you and you are not having this marriage thing because of something really serious, so talk to your sister.

Me: I just wish everyone understood that not everything is black and white.

Her: you are confusing me more now and I know talking about it on the phone will not even help one bit so I will just drive home next weekend but until then please behave

Nolwandle I know how you can get and we don't want Bab'Zulu to lose it on you. He is excited about the marriage between you and

that Banele boy so don't burst his bubble, wait on me so we can talk properly.

Me: I am not ready to die so I will just do as he says.

Her: Good now I love you and I will see you next week

Me: I love you too Siya and greet sbare (brother in law) for me.

Her: I will muntuza

Me: okay bye

Her: bye.

She hangs up and I just sigh and drop on my bed.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 03

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I open my eyes and I feel like a rack fuck Phiwe and I went in too hard on the booze I swear I am not touching alcohol ever again. If my mom found out that I am on booze 24/7 she would call me back home immediately, I honestly wish that my mom had more kids coz maybe she would lay off me a bit but I appreciate her even when I feel like she is being annoying. I mean non of us would be anywhere if it wasn't for our mothers prayers and as much as some people want to make me feel like an abomination I know God loves me just the way I am. I check my phone and it's just after 12:30 pm. Fuck I over slept I quickly get up and make my bed and walk out of the room I use. My grandma is in the lounge listening to some loud gospel music.

Me: makhulu

I greet her and she smiles at me

Her: hee Indi udakwa nje ngo mfana mntanami
(you get drunk like a boy my child)

Me: I hope you didn't call my mother

Her: never she would have ordered you to go
back and I am still enjoying having you around
and so does Sphiwe

Me: speaking of which where is he?

I ask and she laughs

Her: Indigo uPhiwe uvuka naba thakathi (he
wakes up with witches) he can't afford to sleep.
He has to work and finish fixing people's cars.

She says and I laugh

Me: Makhulu unehaba man (you are
exaggerating).

Her: not at all.

Me: let me quickly take a bath and go see him
at the workshop, he is probably hangover and
hungry, I will buy us some spicy food on the
way.

Her: don't forget that some shops around here don't sell to us.

Me: I know mama and I still remember which one's.

Her: I don't want them taking this opportunity to judge you and embarrass you.

Me: thank you makhulu. I got this.

I take a quick bath and wear all black like most days. I only wear shorts these days coz of the cast on my leg but I am still rocking fresh kicks on one leg, that I can't compromise the drip. I pick up something to eat on my way to the workshop and buy just a 6pack. I get there and he is hard at work under a customer's car.

Me: grootman

Him: ntwana, give me a minute I will be right out. He says and I don't waste time I just make myself comfortable on the chair and open a beer. He gets out from under the car greasy,

proof that he has been hard at work since morning.

Me: are you not hung over wena, I wake up and you are gone.

Him: I have work Indi but the hangover is showing me my mother in her grave.

Me: I just came with a six and some spicy food.

Him: you are sent from heaven, let me go wash my hands.

He quickly goes and comes back. We show no mercy to the food

Me: we still getting your girl from school?

Him: yes boy, I just need to splash real quick, what time is it?

He asks and I check my wrist watch

Me: 13:20

I respond to him and he nods

Him: there's still time. Let me quickly play with the water

He takes a beer and disappears to the one room here in the workshop.

•BANELE THWALA

I just want to go back to the city and get on with my life. I honestly don't like being around here but I need the situation in the city to die down first, my father is taking long to fix all of this because he wants me working on getting to know Nolwandle, and the girl is dull I won't lie but she was the better candidate than most of the girls I had to chose from in the church. She is beautiful and under those granny dresses I can see that there's a booty.

Him: you need to get your act together Banele.

Me: it was a mistake baba

Him: no it wasn't because this is not the first girl you beat a girl lto a pulp. How many more must I pay off not to press charges against you?

Me: I just lost it, she kept pushing and pushing

Him: you need to learn to control your temper
Banele.

Me: I know baba, I promise I will do better.

Him: good thing you have Nolwandle you will stop it with all those city floozies with no morals. Focus on getting to know your wife and making this marriage a success.

Me: so will you pay the girl off?

Him: the lawyer is still trying to convince her to take the money but like all others before her she is being stubborn.

Me: mxm she will give in soon.

Him: don't be a cocky bustard, she might be real and serious about pressing charges against you and what will I say to the congregation? You were arrested because you were fornicating with girls who are not part of our church?

Me: I swear it won't get to that baba.

Him: you better pray it doesn't Banele, coz if I can't control my own son how will I be able to control a church. Don't bring shame to me and the church because I will put you out like a dog.

He sneers and I must admit I have never seen my father like this. He has always cleaned up my mess without complaining.

Me: I am sorry dad.

Him: the Bible says you must respect you father and your mother so you days on Earth can be extended. Listen to the word of God Banele.

He says and walks away. Fuck he is pissed, I really have to make this thing with Nolwandle work.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I don't know if I am seeing things but Zipho is acting strange and she is a bit cold towards me, I honestly don't know what I did but I will find out. She is the last person I want to hurt. Zee is

a good friend and if I did her wrong I need to know so I can ask for forgiveness. The last bell rings and I get out of class, we are doing different subjects we only meet for english and isiZulu. When we are not in the same class when school comes out we wait by the taps. I get there and she isn't waiting. I notice her walking to the gate and I call out after her running. She stops

Me: hao friend, what's wrong? Were you going to leave me behind?

I ask and she sighs

Her: no never I just wanted to go to the toilet before we leave.

She responds but I don't buy her story.

Me: Zee you haven't been yourself this whole day, you have been cold and distant, did I do something?

Her: not everything is about you Lwa.

She says with an attitude

Me: I know that I just wanted to know why you are not okay.

Her: I am sorry I just didn't have a good weekend that's all. I shouldn't have come with my problems to school

Me: oh friend, it's okay. Do you want to talk about it?

I ask but she shakes her head

Her: I would rather not.

Me: it's okay but if you need an ear to listen don't hesitate to call me.

Her: thanks Lwa.

Me: now let's go and buy some ice cream, just to cheer you up.

She smiles and takes my hand and we walk to the gate. There is a white Golf 8 parked and it's playing amapiano, I can only recognize the guy that fixes cars around here, but I have never seen the lesbian he is with. My eyes couldn't move from her, I have never seen a lesbian living so freely around here. She is wearing all

black and those shorts are exposing her beautiful leg, the other is covered with a cast, I just wonder what happened to her. She is built like a guy, even the gestures she makes, you can tell she is comfortable with who she is. They are talking about something with the guy she's with and out of nowhere she just smiled, I gasp for air. She looks my direction and our eyes meet, I don't know why but I hold her intense gaze until Zipho pulls me.

Her: what are you staring at?

Me: who is that, at the white car.

Her: oh that's Indigo from the city. She is confused and she thinks she is a man. She is disgusting and she must burn in hell for questioning how God created her.

She says and my heart sinks

Me: Zipho don't talk like that.

I quickly reprimand her

Her: the church taught us this Lwa. God created Adam and Even not Eve and Ruth or even Adam and Steve. What she is doing is a sin.

Me: let one without sin cast the first stone.

Her: why are you defending her

She asks in annoyance

Me: because she is a person, and she deserves to be able to live her life without judgement or fear.

Her: hai Lwa, let's go.

She pulls me but I look back at her, Indigo what a beautiful and rear name she has. To my surprise she is still looking at me. I smile and look forward. I am having all these thoughts in my head that leave me smiling from ear to ear.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I don't think I have ever been taken like I was a few minutes ago, why did she have to be a part

of that damn church though, but the way she looked at me and smiled tells me that she is one of us but can never allow herself to explore it more because of the teachings of her church. She is so beautiful and when those lips curled up to form a smile her eyes lit up. I am sitting in the back seat while my cousin drives and his girl sits in the front. We pass by the girl I had a moment with enjoying ice cream and laughing. She notices the car and looks in the front but doesn't see me.

Me: mfazi ka mfwethu (my brother's wife)

I say and she giggles

Her: Hi Indi.

Me: tell me, who are those girls we just passed.

Her: oh the two stiffs. That's Lwandle and Zipho.

Me: I want to know about the tall light skinned one.

I say and Sphiwe laughs

Him: you know she will never give you the light of day right?

Me: I know that but I just want to know her name, is that a crime.

Her: her name is Nolwandle, both her parents are teachers at our school and they are a part of that crazy church. Rumour has it that she has been chosen to get married.

I frown

Me: by who?

Her: Banele, their pastor's son.

I shake my head

Me: why the hell would she get married, how old is she 17 or 18. She hasn't lived.

Him: those people are crazy grootman

Me: crazy is an understatement sure sure.

Her: I tell you

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Zipho and I just parted ways at the junction, we live a distance apart so we don't walk all the way together. I am listening to Katty Perry's song, I kissed a girl. It's one of my favorite songs, I can picture myself and the Indigo girl holding each other close, our lips moving together like their slow dancing, I can imagine how great she smells, and how warm her arms are when wrapping around my body. I let my imagination run Wilder with me until I feel my vagina pulsate. I've always had imaginations but nothing as intense as this. My day dreaming is disturbed by a car stopping near me, I notice that it's Banele. My mood goes south immediately. He gets out of his car and comes to me.

Him: sthandwa.

Me: hi.

I say faking a smile

Him: I was on my way to your house

Me: oh okay, is everything okay?

Him: yes everything is good just wanted to see you and spend some time with you.

Me: I understand

Him: I should get you from school while I am around

Me: that won't be necessary, I don't mind walking

Him: you are going to be my wife so we need to spend time together and get to know each other, I will soon go back to the city then we won't have time like I do now

Me: okay.

Him: you will just let me know what time your school comes out and I will definitely be at the gate.

Me: thank you Banele.

Him: come, let's go find something to eat and go chill somewhere.

He says and opens the door for me to get in.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 04

•MONDLI ZULU

I have been trying to call Lwandle for hours now but her phone is off, I don't know where she could possibly be at this time, I know for a fact that she isn't at school for extra classes because no teacher scheduled any for this week. Her mother and I even drove to her friend Zipho's house to find out if she knows anything but she says she last saw her after school when they parted ways at the junction, she even tried calling her but it went to voicemail, she better be laying somewhere in a ditch because If she isn't I am going to punish her until she understands that this is my house and she must obey my rules. What If Banele arrives here

looking for her then what will I possibly tell him?
The front door opens and she walks in and I
make way to her and slap her so hard

Her: Bab'Zulu

She places her hand on the stinging cheek.

Me: where the hell have you been Lwandle
what is wrong with you acting like a lose child
with no morals

Her: Baba I was

Me: don't talk when I am talking or do you want
me to give you another slap. What is the matter
with you? You want to bring shame to me isn't
it?

I scream at her

Him: I am so sorry for bringing her this late
baba, I got her on her way home from school,
and we have been together since, we should
have called but both our phones died.

He says walking in and I look at my crying
daughter

Me: oh so she was with you

Him: yes sir and I am really sorry

Me: I just thought she is gallivanting out there and disrespecting you and me

Him: she wasn't I promise you

Me: it's good to see you two spending time together.

Him: we are trying to build a bond after all we are going to be husband and wife soon.

Me: that's very true.

Her: please excuse me. Banele thank you for the day, I will see you tomorrow.

Him: okay sthandwa have a good night.

She walks away.

Me: do you want to sit and have a drink?

Him: I wish I could sir but I really need to go home

Me: okay son, greet your father for me

Him: I will, stay well mam'Zulu.

Her: okay son. Bye

My wife responds and Banele leaves

Her: you need to go apologize to Lwa baba

Me: I will do no such thing. She is a child I believe I was reprimanding her.

Her: but she wasn't disrespectful she was with her soon to be husband

Me: why are you questioning me Bongeka?

Her: I am sorry Bab'Zulu.

She leaves the room and I go back to sit down.

Maybe I was too harsh but I will not apologize to a child never.

•INDIGO NGCOBO

I haven't been able to get that Nolwandle girl out of my mind, I swear I can still see her smile at me, she is the most effortlessly beautiful girl I have ever laid my eyes on, and I wish she knew it. I know it's not in any ones best interest to

pursue her but I can't ignore that I saw her and liked her, I am just going to do my thing and see where we are going to end up if she will even like me.

Him: grootman

Phiwe says walking in

Me: ntwana Yami

Him: Gogo finished with the cooking, wozo gaula (come eat).

Me: quick question

Him: shoot.

Me: what's the worst that could happen if I go after Nolwandle.

Him: she will never give you attention man, they are taught to hate everything that doesn't go with their beliefs.

Me: I suspect that she is playing for the team but isn't aware yet or she is but afraid to embrace it because of her stupid church.

Him: I highly doubtful that Indi. Don't attract unnecessary drama for yourself and her, because she will have it harder than you

Me: I just never felt something like this Phiwe and you know I have felt almost everything in the book. What if this girl is my soul mate?

He laughs

Him: don't be selfish Indi, let her be.

Me: you don't understand

Him: I understand that she is different and chasing her would be thrilling for you.

Me: that's not what this is about I swear

Him: I might have last seen you ages ago but I know you well very well.

Me: aow Phiwe.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I can't believe my father lost it like that even before he could hear my side of the story. My

cheek is really on fire, I applied something to sooth it but it still hurts, I don't know why he insists on being so difficult on me. I mean I am doing what he wants I am getting to know Banele but he hits me because of it. Some days I wish I could just pack my things and just run away from it all. It's too much for me. I wipe my tears but they just continue streaming down my face. My door opens and a second later my mom sits next to me and rubs my back

Her: I am sorry baby.

Me: is this life mama?

Her: he was just worried Lwa

Me: why are you defending him?

Her: I am not Lwa it's the truth.

Me: if he was worried he would have given me a chance to explain myself not attack me like that.

Her: He is sorry I promise.

Me: then why isn't he the one coming in here to say so.

Her: he is a proud man Nolwandle. Please understand.

Me: you always take his side, you always protect him. When will you do all those things for me?

She closes her eyes and sigh deeply.

Her: I am doing the best I can

Me: no you are not, you are letting this man abuse me all in the name of religion, he is doing it to you too but you are blind to it all. All the other families attend the same church but they don't live in fear like us.

Her: every family has rules, your father is the head of the house, the provider and protector so let's leave him to do his job.

Me: I just wish you could love and defend me the same way you do him.

Her: please don't talk like this please

Me: the truth is always bitter to hear mama I understand.

Her: I know you are hurting but don't be disrespectful.

I smile

Me: mama please excuse me, I want to be alone.

Her: dinner is ready.

Me: I will not be joining you.

Her: you know that will just anger him more

Me: I will wait for him to march in here and give me another slap forcing me to eat. That's how he does things anyway.

Her: oh Lwandle

Me: just go mama.

Her being in here and taking her husband's side is annoying and infuriating. She should be a mother first but it's clear she is a wife first. If she could just stand up and fight back we would

be free, I mean she works and can afford to start a life with just us her children.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I couldn't wait for break, so I can ask Lwa where she was yesterday, her father came to my house breathing fire not knowing where she was, I am sure wherever she is she received a good punishment, her father is a scary man and everyone is just scared of him. The bell rings and I quickly pack away my books even before the teacher could stop talking.

Him: Ms Mhlongo do you have a more important place to rush to?

He asks and I look down embarrassed.

Me: I am sorry sir.

I say my eyes still down. I listen to him until he says we can leave. I take my back pack and head to our spot and she is already waiting,

looking like she is carrying all the world's problems on her shoulders.

Me: mgane (friend)

Her: chommie

Me: where were you yesterday Lwandle, your father was so angry.

Her: I was with Banele.

Me: then why was he that angry if you were with your future husband.

Her: I didn't tell them, Banele picked me on the way and we went to get food and went somewhere to chill both our phones died and we lost track of time.

Me: oh okay. So did he do something to you?

Her: this is my father we talking about so yes he slapped me so hard on my face

Me: I am sorry Lwa, your father can be hectic.

Her: that's putting it lightly I swear.

Me: you are going to be fine man, nothing puts Nolwandle down not even your dad.

Her: I am just tired of it all Zee.

Me: don't talk like that chommie.

Her: you would understand if you were in my shoes.

•BANELE THWALA

I just got out of my bedroom looking and smelling good. I am going to fetch Nolwandle from school, so we can just continue getting to know each other and to show my father that I am growing up and acting it. He is pissed at me for hitting Bridget and I understand why, I've messed up so much and cleaning my mess gets tiring. I check the watch and it's 13:50. Lwandle did say she gets out at 2pm. I walk out my room and pass my parents in the lounge discussing something about the church.

Ma: you look nice

Me: thanks mama

Baba: where are you off to?

Me: I am going to get Nolwandle from school and spend a few hours with her.

Ma: I am loving this. I thought it was going to be difficult.

Me: No we are doing good.

Ma: that's great son.

Me: okay I will see you later.

Ma: you should invite her over sometime

Me: all in due time mama

I walk out and I get in my car and drive to school and some kids are already walking home. I park at the gate and a few minutes later she gets in

Her: Hi.

Me: sthandwa.

Her: I normally walk home with my best friend, do you mind giving her a ride?

Me: not at all babe, I mean you walk with her and I am ending that so I might as well just drop her off

Her: okay thank you.

She walks out the car and comes back with her.

Her: uhm Banele this is my best friend Zipho, Zee this is Banele.

Zee: it's really nice to meet you, your car is so nice.

Me: thank you and it's nice to meet you too. But babe you just introduced me as Banele but she got the best friend title so what am I.

Her: uhm you are uhm, my future husband.

She says and I chuckle

Me: that's better.

Zee: I wouldn't have hesitated mentioning that you are my future husband.

Her: I didn't hesitate Zipho, I just didn't want to be forward.

Zee: I would be forward shame if I got the man every girl in this town wants.

The friend says and I really feel like this is inappropriate to say especially in front of me.

Her: Zipho.

Lwandle tries to caution her

Zee: what? its not like he doesn't know this or I am lying Bands?

I laugh

Me: I don't know about that, I have Lwandle and that's enough for me.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 05

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

My foot has been in my mouth the entire way to Zipho's place as if I am I am the one having verbal diarrhea, I have never been embarrassed like I am now, the things she keeps on saying with her own mouth are just horrific. Banele just keeps on laughing but I can tell he is annoyed out of his mind, I don't know why she is acting like a dog in heat and it's disrespectful to both me and Banele. I exhale deeply soon as we park outside her place.

Her: thank you for the ride Bands

Him: it's a pleasure

Her: I will see you guys tomorrow. Bye mngane.

Me: bye Zee.

I say in a low voice as she opens the door and walks out.

Him: wow.

He murmurs reversing his car to join the main road again

Me: I am so sorry Banele.

Him: what for now?

Me: for Zipho's behavior I honestly don't know what got into her today

Him: you don't have to apologise Lwandle you did nothing wrong. I am just shocked at how she indirectly made passes at me with you in the car. It honestly says a lot about her character.

Me: I will understand if you no longer want to give her a ride.

Him: I wouldn't want to seem rude, it's okay I will suck it up so long as you are comfortable.

Me: thank you but I promise to have a word with her tomorrow morning.

Him: I would really appreciate that.

Me: so what did you want to do today.

Him: the usual, I just wish we were in the city, there is a lot to do there.

Me: so I've heard.

Him: by the way my mother asked me to invite you over.

I swallow and look at him.

Me: oh I-

He cuts me

Him; don't worry I told her it will happen in due time, they must just let us be comfortable around each other first.

Me: I feel the same way.

Him: let's go find something to eat then.

•BONGEKA ZULU

I didn't have a good day at all, I couldn't focus on the lessons and I didn't get much work done, what my daughter told me last night in her bedroom got to me and in all honesty she was definitely telling the truth, I always stand for my husband but that is what I was taught and saw as a child and it was made clear that no one

and nothing comes before your husband but God. Our church has strict rules and we follow them in hopes of having eternal life but sometimes I tend to question it obviously as an educated woman but it's all I know and it's worked for years and years and If my daughter were to just give it a chance she would see how easy and drama free her life would be. Bab'Zulu my husband went to the man's meeting at church and these things normally take hours, Nolwandle is out with Banele so I am alone in the house, I had sometime to relax after work and now I have to start preparing for supper. I stand up from the couch as the front door opens and Lwandle walks in. I check the time and it's 5pm.

Me: hao Lwa, you are back early?

Her: yes

Me: I thought you would come back late again, you did say you will be with Banele.

Her: I was with him, he just dropped me off. I have a lot of homeworks to do.

Me: okay Nana. So what do you feel like eating I was about to go prepare something for dinner.

Her: anything your husband would appreciate is fine with me.

Me: Nolwandle.

I say feeling defeated

Her: what mama?

Me: I am trying here please meet me half way please

Her: no you are not trying.

Me: what do you want from me?

Her: I want you to be my mother, to love and put me first, to protect me from your husband and this sick religion.

Me: why are you making everything hard

Her: I will be studying in my room.

Me: we are still talking njena

Her: we are definitely not going to get anywhere.

She walks away and my mood just go further south, what is that Nolwandle wants me to do honestly. She is making it seem like I am a bad mother but I am trying my best I wish she could see this.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I have decided and I am going after Ocean, if I die I die but I am not just going to sit back and ignore my feelings, I am not a person who likes regretting things, I will cease the moment and take it from there, I don't want to have to sit and wonder how it would have played out because I was too scared to go after her. Phiwe and I picked up her girl and this time I was the one who suggested it because I was hoping to see her again but nothing she was nowhere to be seen. It's around 5 pm and I am still chilling with the couple at the workshop. My cousin had an

emergency client so he had to reopen just for him. He is busy with the car and I am with his girl under the tree.

Me: mfazi kam fowethu.

She smiles and looks my way

Her: what do you want Indi when you call me like that?

I chuckle and shake my head

Me: what I am about to ask you please keep it between us?

Her: so long it doesn't hurt Sphiwe sure.

Me: oh come on Lucy, I would never hurt him you know he is my G.

Her: okay shoot then.

Me: I can't stay away from Ocean.

Her: who is Ocean?

Me: I am sorry I mean Nolwandle that girl from your school.

She laughs

Her: Indi you know she is from the church right?

Me: I know that but I don't care.

Her: what do you want me to do for you?

Me: Just get me her phone number please Lucy
I will owe you big time.

Her: you are playing with fire

Me: I am ready to get burnt

Her: if you say so then, I will work my magic

Me: you are a star.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

Another day another depressing day at this school, but at least I get to see Banele and ride in his car again. So it's no bother, after school has become something I look forward to now. I get to school and Lwa is already there. She doesn't look like her bubbly self and I can only

think that maybe she fought with Banele
otherwise why would she be so sour so early.

Me: mgane

Her: hey.

She says and I narrow my eyes

Me: hao Lwa is everything okay?

Her: you do know that Banele is my future
husband right?

Me: yes I know that, everyone does

Her: so why were you acting that way
yesterday.

Me: hao I was just making conversation

Her: well he didn't like it one bit, and saw it as
disrespectful to him and most importantly me

Me: I don't understand Nolwandle

Her: you were making sexual remarks and
constantly hinting what you could have done
differently if you were the one getting married to
him Zee.

Me: hao yini nidlaliswa nge Mali? (So a person must give you money before playing with you two?)

Her: this is not a joke Zipho.

Me: yoh I didn't think you would take it so seriously. I apologize mngane and I will do the same to him later on if he still won't mind dropping me off.

Her: thank you and yes we will drop you off.

She says and deep in my heart I want to strangle her, I even doubt that Banele had a problem with it coz he laughed the entire time but the jealous Nolwandle Zulu just couldn't take that the attention wasn't on her for a change mxm. We are disturbed by Lucy, one of the lose girls around our small town, her and her family don't follow the church, they call themselves free nation. They drink alcohol, smoke, have sex before marriage they are just evil and they must know that hell fire is waiting to consume all of them.

Lucy: hi girls

She says and Lwa and I exchange looks

Me: what do you want you demon.

She rolls her eyes

Lucy: phola mubinyana (calm down ugly one) I am not here to talk to you.

She says and I hold myself from giving her a hot slap

Her: what can we help you with?

Lucy: you know as a young girl I love how you conduct yourself and I want to learn from you Lwandle and like your church preachers say that it's never too late to repent so I want to change my ways and I want you to advise me so please give me your number so I can communicate with you.

She says and I laugh

Me: who are you trying to fool wena.

Her: Zee please.

She says and opens her bag, takes out a paper and pen and writes her number on it.

Her: here you go.

Lucy: thank you Lwandle. You see what beautiful people do to others Zipho they are kind and calm. So wena your attitude is as ugly as you.

She says looking at me

Her: Lucy walk away please.

She blows Nolwandle a kiss and walks away

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No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 06

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Zipho has been mad at me for giving out my number to Lucy, I honestly don't know what's wrong with her, I mean we are allowed to accept people who want to repent and follow

the teachings of the church and that is what Lucy wants. Zee only preaches the laws that suit her better and that's annoying. I just wish I can advice Lucy out of it because it's just a trap, she is going to cage herself and regret it. This is noway to live at all. We are walking to the gate and I spot Banele's car already waiting and to my surprise the white car that belongs to that Indi person is also there, my heart starts beating very fast I swear I am so excited to be seeing him, even from afar. Lucy is standing with them laughing at whatever they are talking about.

Zee: does that seem like a person who wants to change?

I sigh

Me: stop being judgemental

Zee: I am not judging I am simply stating facts that's all

Me: we are allowed to help those who are astray I don't understand why you feel like Lucy is not worthy of it.

Zee: she is a bad person and it's hard to believe that she wants to change after all she mocked us for being a part of the church.

Zee: I just can't talk to you when you are like this.

I say and move my eyes to the white car and she is looking at me, I can't help but smile at her. I open the door and get in.

Me" hey

Him: Sthandwa

Zee: hey Bands

Him: hi Zipho

Zee: uhm I wanted to apologise for yesterday, I am truly sorry for being forward and making you uncomfortable with my words.

Him: thanks for apologizing.

Zee: I just hope it won't be awkward between us. I am truly sorry for it.

Him: we cool now.

Me: thanks mgani.

•INDIGO NQCOBO

Seeing her has become my favorite thing ever, she is just so beautiful, the kind you don't get used to, I can already see her sleeping in my bed looking like an angel. I freaked when I saw her getting in that BMW and it's clear that it's the guy she will be getting married to but not if I have anything to do with it, I refuse. Phiwe is driving and Lucy is in the front seat. He suddenly stops at some fast food joint.

Him: Indi, what do you want in your Kota?

Me: just make sure it has a Russian, egg and cheese grootman

Him: okay.

Me: thanks man.

He gets out without asking his girl and I assume it's because he already knows what she wants

Me: Mfazi ka bafo.

She laughs

Her: She refused giving me her number, I tried but she is just a tough cookie.

Me: oh come Lucy man. You can't give up I really need to talk to her.

Her: I understand but it's just going to be difficult.

I sigh

Me: Fuck I'll just approach her myself, but it's going to be damn hard.

She giggles

Her: I am kidding Indi, I know my staff I told you I will get the number and I did. Here you go.

He hands me the phone and I punch in the number super excited.

Me: I owe you big time, I promise you. Anything you want just shout.

Her: I will remember that.

Me: I am getting my wifey

Her: don't be ahead of yourself, she might not be into girls.

Me: even if she isn't I will make her fall for me so hard I swear.

Her: I hope this whole thing doesn't blow up in your face.

Me: if I die I die Lucy.

She chuckles

Her: this is going to be interesting to see.

Me: this is my life my emotions not some reality show.

Her: don't tell Phiwe about me getting you the number, he really doesn't want you messing with Nolwandle coz her father is a drama queen.

Me: my lips are sealed don't sweat it.

•MONDLI ZULU

My wife has been acting really wierd these days, she is always lost in her train of thoughts and it's just not who she is, something big is bothering her and I have to find it out.

Her: Baba Siya says she will be coming home this weekend

Me:is everything okay?

Her: yes she just misses home that's all.

Me: will she be coming with her husband.

Her: no she said he is going to work.

Me: okay. We will prepare for her arrival.

Her: yebo Bab'Zulu.

Me: I was thinking

Her: about what?

Me: we should invite Banele over with his parents so we can show how grateful we are that they saw our family worthy for their last son to marry our daughter.

She swallows

Her: I think this is a good idea but not for now because the kids are getting to know each other.

Me: what are you saying Bongeka?

Her: I am saying we should let them be for now until they are comfortable around each other, we do not want them to feel like they are being forced into this marriage.

Me: Nolwandle has to marry that boy, whether she wants it or not. This is not only about her but our family, the good name and benefits it would bring me.

Her: I hear you Bab'Zulu.

Me: is this why you have been acting up? Did Nolwandle say something to you about the marriage?

I ask and she sighs

Her: no baba she didn't say anything I just didn't want them to feel any kind of pressure.

Me: There is no pressure here. They are getting married come hell or high waters.

Her: I will go prepare supper.

Me: okay you are excused.

The fact that she doesn't want this dinner proves that Nolwandle has said something to her to make her feel guilty.

•BANELE THWALA

I am honestly over this pick her up, buy food, park at some secluded spot, talk and talk about stupid things but I don't have a choice I have to suck it up for my father's sake, so he can work harder in making the situation in the city to go away. My father is a man of God but he can also be ruthless that I know so being in his bad

side won't do me any good. He would take it all and leave me like a dog.

Me: do you think you are comfortable enough to visit me at my place?

Her: uhm I uhm don't know coz.

She mumbles

Me: I would understand if you don't trust me.

Her: it's not that.

Me: I am not going to do anything to you we will just talk and watch some movies or series. This whole parking at these spots thing is not for me, I feel like I am a little boy Sthandwa.

Her: I understand what you are saying.

Me: so my place from now on?

Her: okay your place it is.

Me: at least my mother will see that I am not lying about spending time with you

Her: why would she think you would lie.

Me: you know how mother's are.

Her: that's true.

Me: say I could do anything for you in the world what would it be?

I ask and she smiles

Her: as my husband to be I would ask you to talk to my father and tell him that I want to study Biomedical Technology and not Education.

I smile

Me: you really want this ne?.

Her: you have no idea, if I ask him myself he would just see it as me being disrespectful.

Me: I've noticed that your father can be difficult so I will do this for you.

I say and she attacks me with a hug.

Her: thank you so much Banele thank you.

She says and pulls out but still leaning in. We are eye to eye and I just seal the moment and take her lips into mine but she doesn't kiss me back so I just stop.

Me: I am sorry.

Her: it's okay really, I just don't know how, uhm how to.

I close my eyes, obviously she hasn't had a boyfriend before she can't kiss. I should have known this

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I can't stop thinking about Banele kissing me, it's not that I don't know how I just didn't know how I would explain not kissing him back. Yes I haven't kissed anyone before but I watch TV and I've seen how it's done plus I have practiced on the mirror a couple of times, don't judge. It's him I just didn't want to kiss. This is torture to me because it's not who I am. I just don't know how I am going to be able to go through with this marriage. I am sitting in the lounge watching TV with my father and the aura in this room is not pleasant just heavy and frustrating.

Ma: supper is ready come eat.

Baba: finally I am so hungry.

Me: can I please skip supper and go do my homework.

Baba: don't be rude Lwandle. Your mother spend time making this meal for us.

Me: I know baba just that Banele and I had a heavy meal before he brought me back.

Baba: oh that's understandable. How is everything going with you two?

Me: we are doing well baba. He asked me if it's okay if we can start spending time at his home rather than in the streets in the car.

Baba: that's good. Banele is not a little boy and you two are getting married so it's only fair.

Me: I am glad you approve.

Baba: okay then you can go do your school work.

Me: mama I will have my meal in the morning I am sorry.

Ma: it's okay Lwa, I will keep your plate in the oven.

I walk to the bedroom and find my phone ringing. It's a number I don't know so I quickly answer.

Me: hello

Caller: Hi Nolwandle

Me: uhm, who is this?

I ask because I can't recognize this voice

Caller: I don't think you know my name but I am Indigo.

She says and I swear my heart starts racing so much I just can't believe she called me

Me: Indigo the one who likes parking at the school in the white Golf.

Her: yes, that one. How are you?

Me: I am very well thanks, how are you?

Her: now that I am talking to you, I feel better.

Me: how did you get my number?

Her: I am a resourceful guy Ocean.

He says and I blush, did she just give me a nickname

Me: I can see that, so to what do I owe this phone call?

Her: I just wanted to know if you are okay and you said you are.

Me: I guess the call has served it's purpose.

Her: not entirely.

Me: uhm okay?

Her: do you think you can make time for me anytime this week?

I smile

Me: you do know me like know me well right?

Her: you referring to your membership at the church?

Me: yes I am.

Her: I don't care about that sweetheart. I just wanna see you?

Me: it's going to be a bit difficult to do that.

Her: would you want to see me too?

Me: yes I think so.

Her: well you will have to find a way Ocean. I believe in you babe.

I close my eyes feeling these butterflies go crazy.

Me: I will see what I can do then

Her: that's my girl. You will contact me here when you've decided on the when. I am available for you 24/7.

Me: okay.

Her: well have a great night beautiful.

Me: you too.

Her: I just spoke to you so my night is great.

Me: goodbye Indigo.

She chuckles

Her: good night Ocean.

I hang up and throw myself on the bed and start wiggling my legs up high, my excitement is sky rocking. I can't believe she just called me and wants to meet up. This has to be the best day ever.

NO EDITS

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 07

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I didn't sleep a wink last night, I just kept on thinking about the call with Indigo. I want to see her so bad and understand why I feel the way I do when I see or think about her. I just want to explore this even if it's for a while, let me know how good it feels to live my truth even if it's for a while. My parents keep an eye on me all the time. I had to find a way to meet up with her

and the only way is to fake being sick so I don't go to school and be home alone. I plugged in my electric blanket so I can sweat and run a high temperature, it's after 7am and I know my mom will walk in to check on me. Just on time my door bursts open and she gets inside

Ma: No no Lwandle you can't be asleep at this time, you are going to be late for school"

Me: I am not feeling too well ma.

I say in a low voice as if I am sick.

Ma: What's wrong?

She asks coming to stand by me

Me: I am running a temperature and I am just so weak.

she places the back of her hand on my forehead and gasps

Ma: Nolwandle you are burning up, why didn't you tell me when you woke up

Me: I am sorry mama.

Ma: I will call in sick to take care of you

Me: no mama there won't be a need for that.
You have to push your classes, all I need is bed rest

Ma: If you are not better by the time we get back tomorrow I am taking a day off and taking you to the doctor.

Me: okay.

My father stands by the door

Baba: and then?

Ma: she isn't feeling well Bab'Zulu I think she needs to stay home and relax, we have some flu medication she will take some.

Baba: That's a shame. Lwandle never gets sick, but I don't want you thinking you can do as you please here in the house. You are only staying behind alone coz your mom and I have a lot of work to do at school.

Me: yebo Bab'Zulu.

He walks away and I look at my mom

Ma: I will bring your meds now.

Me: thank you mama. She walks out and I take my phone and text Indigo.

Good morning, I am free to meet up with you today i send and seconds later my phone beeps

Good morning beautiful, it feels good waking up to your text. Where and what time can we meet?

Anytime between 9am and 1pm

You should be at school but I will ask no questions and hear no lies so the where? I smile at her response

I don't know but any place discreet I text back

Okay send me your location and I will park near it then we can go to my house

Cool

I will definitely be there by 9 I smile then send my location and lock my screen putting my phone on the pedestal.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

If I knew it was going to be so simple to get her attention I would have done it a long time ago, I am not saying she is easy I am just saying I appreciate that she doesn't like wasting time like me, but maybe it's the excitement, I don't know but whatever it is I appreciate it. I just got out of the shower and I made sure to look my best and smell it too. First impressions lasts and I want to make it impossible for her to forget me, I want her to think about me even

when she is with that BMW guy. I look at the time and it's 8:45. I take my keys quickly and drive to the location she send and I am glad to see that the is an open space, I decide to park there and call her.

Her" Indigo

She answers almost immediately

Me: I am at the corner, at some open space.

Her: oh okay I will be right out.

Me: cool babe.

I hang up and a few minutes I see her walking towards me, she keeps looking back like she wants to see who is watching her. She has on the longest skirt and long sleeves T-shirt, I just wonder what lies under those granny clothes, I am pretty sure she has a beautiful body that is dying to be seen and embraced with clothes her size and age. She opens the door and gets in. She hasn't looked at me and I am just smiling

Me: you don't have to be shy around me.

Her: I am not shy. I just don't know what to say or do.

Me: can you at least look at me and greet me properly.

She moves her eyes from her fingers and they meet mine. Right there and then I am lost in her gaze.

Her: Hi Indigo.

Me: hey babe. Thanks for faking sickness just to see me.

She narrows her eyes

Her: how did you know?

I laugh

Me: I have been around sweetheart, I know these tricks.

Her: I still can't believe I did that.

Me: just know that this was a once off next time we just gonna have to find a way to meet, you are not bunking school again.

Her: okay.

I start the engine and drive excited out of my mind

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

We get to her grandmother's house after starting at town to get food and some snacks. I am just glad we made it to her bedroom without the old lady spotting us, I have never done this in my life it's both scary and exciting and I just want to relax and enjoy this day. Her room is nice and boyish. But it's on a minimal. There are lot of sneakers lined up by the wall, why does she need so many shoes, the top of the chest of drawers is filled with toiletries and it's also a lot. No wonder she looks clean each time.

Me: Do you really need so many shoes though?

She chuckles

Her: it's drip babe, you will understand one day

Me: I doubt that very much

Her: feel at home Ocean, relax and just go with the flow.

I nod and remove my shoes and sit on the bed.

Her: what do you like? Movies or series?

Me: anything you like.

She nods and press her laptop for a while till something plays

Her: come here.

She says and my heart starts beating faster but I go in between her legs and relax. This feels so right I won't lie.

Her: You are so beautiful.

Me: I am sure you've seen more beautiful girls in the city.

Her: you wouldn't understand. Tell me?

Me: tell you what?

Her: are you lesbian?

She says bluntly putting it on the table

Me: uhm i, mmh. Honestly Indigo I wouldn't call myself a lesbian coz I am afraid to allow myself to live my truth coz of my family, the church and the whole community. So for now I don't know what to call myself.

Her: fair enough but let me rephrase.

Nolwandle who gives you butterflies and excitement between me and that BMW guy?

Me: Indigo I have never felt anything for a man. Banele is what is expected of me yet you, you are just a complete stranger that somehow got my number and said a couple of words to me then boom I am in her bedroom being free to talk about my sexuality.

Her: since we are going straight to the point I might as well just go for it and hope for the best. Ocean will you be my girlfriend? I want you to live your truth with me, I don't know how it might play out weeks or months from now but I want to explore it.

Me: just like that huh?

Her: honesty is the best policy babe.

Me: you got me excited from the very day I saw you outside the school and you made me fantasize about you in a way I never did before. My life is full and I want to know how it feels to live my life the way I want even if it will still be in the complete dark but you would know and I would be happy in a way.

Her: you are so bold, so beautiful and strong. I am going to enjoy every second I spend with you.

Me: me too.

Her: just tell me you not sleeping with that guy.

Me: I can't even kiss him Indi.

Her: then kiss me.

She says and something in her statement just got me feeling some type of way. I tilt my head back to the side and she brings her lips to mine, they are soft and juicy, our lips love and start dancing together slowly and sensually.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

Lwa didn't come to school today and it was the longest day ever, somehow she makes this whole place bearable and she gives me the confidence to avoid those who always mock us. I just wonder why she didn't give me the heads up. It has been a long and tiring day and I am glad the day is over. As I walk to the gate I see Banele's car parked. I go towards it and knock on his window. He opens it

Him: hey Zee

Me: Banele hey.

Him: where is Nolwandle?

He asks looking behind me and I narrow my eyes

Me: I honestly don't know

Him: what do you mean now?

Me: she didn't come to school and she didn't tell me

Him: what she didn't mention it to me either.

Me: ouch, that's very inconsiderate of her imagine your patrol.

Him: patrol is nothing I would have done something with my time

Me: I am sorry Bands

Him: arg it's cool.

Me: bye then.

Him: don't be silly hop in I'll drop you off at your place.

Me: oh that's very sweet of you, thanks.

I say going round the car to get in the front passenger seat.

Him: I am so mad at her right now.

Me: I suggest you get used to it.

Him: what is that suppose to mean?

Me: Lwa is selfish sometimes she has no concern for other people, their time or resources so long she is good.

Him: well I will not have it, she will learn.

Me: thanks for the lift, you are kind.

Him: at least I didn't drive here for nothing.

He says and I smile.

Me: mind if I play the radio?

Him: go right on.

—

•BONGEKA ZULU

My husband and I just got home and Lwandle is nowhere to be found in the house, I am so angry at her for faking being sick to skip school. Her father is so mad at her too and I know he is definitely going to punish her for lying to us. I am already scared for her coz she knows Bab'Zulu is a disciplinarian.

Baba: i am going to kill her Bongeka

Me: maybe she has a valid reason.

Baba: like what huh?

Me: Banele might have come and took her

Baba: you better pray that's the case because if it's not I am going to kill her Bongeka.

Me: just calm down first and let her explain. You don't want to hit her for nothing like that other time.

Baba: are you trying to make me feel stupid or what?

He screams at me

Me: I could never do that Bab'Zulu.

Baba: Good.

The door opens and Lwa walks in holding a 2 liter of stoney ginger beer and some disprin and med-lemon

Baba: where have you been?

He asks already walking towards our daughter.
Who starts coughing

Her: I went to the shop to get this mixture. A classmate of mine told me it works magic in getting rid of flu and fever.

She explains and I can see she is scared out of her mind.

Baba: tell me the truth Nolwandle

Her: I swear baba even if you can go to the shop to ask they will vouch for me I swear.

Baba: you and your God know the truth but let me find out that you were lying to me I will definitely punish you.

Me: how are you feeling baby?

I ask my daughter trying to lighten the mood

Her: I feel better mama, but the cough is too dry.

Me: I can tell. Go lie down a bit and I will fix you some soup

Her: I would really appreciate that ma.

She walks away but my husband is watching her intensely like he wants to see something that would make him believe that Lwa just lied to our faces.

Me: I will go make her something fast

Baba: khululeka Bongeka.

I sigh and walk to the kitchen

—

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 08

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Indigo and I were so lost in each other so much that I lost track of time, when I realized I knew my parents were home and I was in deep shit, but Indi had a plan, the stoney and meds thingy was her idea and it worked like magic, even

though it's clear that my father doesn't believe me he can't really say much because he didn't get me in a compromising situation. To say I had the best day would be an understatement, I don't think there is a word that I can use to express my excitement and the fire burning deep inside of me. The girl I was today is who exactly my heart longs to be. This is me in every possible way. From the lengthy chat to the passionate kisses I am happy. My phone rings soon as I get in my room. It's Indi, I blush as I pick up.

Me: Indi

Her: Girlfriend.

She says and make my butterflies go crazy

Me: thank you for today, I had a wonderful time

Her: I am glad to hear that babe, so they didn't give you a hard time?

Me: nope your plan worked thanks

Her: good coz the last thing I want is to get you into trouble.

Me: I appreciate that, so when I am going to see you again?

I ask and she chuckles

Her: can't get enough of me already huh?

Me: is it a bad thing?

Her: it can never be Ocean, this is exactly what I want, my girl to always want to be around me.

Me: So?

Her: you can't really fake being sick again so don't worry I will definitely come up with something babe.

Me: make it quick.

Her: I will call you later on okay?

Me: okay bye.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

Can the Queen of Shiva always skip school because it comes with blessings for me?

Today's drive was amazing, it was just the two of us and God knows there was a spark between us, soon he will realize the kind of person Lwa is and each time she messes up with him I will be around to offer my support and it will just naturally bring us closer as he will see me for a good wife that I can be to him and just leave that self-centered brat. The bedroom door opens and my sister walks in to me humming the song I was playing in Banele's car.

Her: you are in a good mood shame

Me: I had a great day dearest sister

Her: we all know you hate school so it can't be school that made you this happy so out with it

I laugh

Me: you are so nosy Mbali.

Her: you know you are dying to tell me so you might as well.

Me: okay, okay so Queen Lwa didn't come to school today.

Her: and that's a good thing because?

I roll my eyes

Me: I would get there if you just let me speak

Her: okay I am sorry, continue.

Me: well after school I find Banele waiting obviously to pick us up but I am surprised as to why he would come when his so called wife to be is not there, so I greet him and and the poor guy wasn't aware that Leave didn't come to school.

Her: no way

Me: I swear, so he offers me a lift and on our way I am subtly planting doubt in his head and the guy is eating it right from my hand.

She laughs and high fives me

Her: now you are being a go getter sis, you do anything to secure a good future for yourself.

Me: very soon Mbali, Banele Thwala will be mine.

Her: hai I yes you dade you don't waste time.

Me: let Lwa sleep on her man and I will keep him company.

Her: Zizipho.

She says clapping once and I feel so on top of the world right now.

•BANELE THWALA

I am so mad at Lwandle right now, I hate inconsiderate people who don't have respect for other people's time. I could have done something productive with my time earlier on, than driving her lose panty friend back home. If she is going to be my wife then she is going to have to learn how to behave and conduct herself so she doesn't piss me off, coz I swear she doesn't want to see me lose it. I walk out of

my car outside her parents house and go knock. Her mother is the one who opens

Ma: Banele

Me: mam'Zulu

Ma: how are you?

Me: I am very fine ma, how are you?

Ma: I am well thanks.

Me: is Nolwandle in?

Ma: yes she is please come in so I can go get her for you.

Me: thank you

I step in the house and luckily her father is not around, that old man can be annoying yoh. She comes back with Lwa who's smile disappears when she sees me.

Me: hey sthandwa

I say getting up from the couch

Her: Banele hey.

Ma: I will leave you kids

Me: no need ma, I want to take her for a drive.

Ma: oh okay then.

I extend my hand to hers and she takes it, we walk out and I open the door for her she gets in and I go around to my side. I start the engine without saying anything to her and drive to the secluded spot we normally park.

Me: come out let's go watch the sun set.

Her: oh okay.

I get to her side again and pull her to me hugging her from behind, her whole body stiffens

Me: so why didn't you go to school today babe?

Her: uhm I woke up very sick

Me: so sick that you couldn't let me your soon to be husband know about it Lwandle seriously

Her: I am sorry Banele, it was wrong of me.

Me: not only wrong but selfish and inconsiderate.

Her: I am so sorry I promise it will never happen again.

Me: it won't coz I won't let it.

I move my hands to her waist and hold her skin so tight

Her: Banele ouch you are hurting me.

Me: next time Sthandwa you will remember me always and you will act right. I won't be marrying a girl that doesn't think about me or put me first. Have you forgotten the law of the church? I should come first before anything and anyone except for God.

Her: I know that, it was an honest mistake.

Me: which will never happen again babe.

Her: yes yes yes. Never again I promise.

She says crying.

Me: you learn fast. Next time I am going to do worse than this. I let go and hug her again tight kissing her cheek repeatedly as she sobs.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

The girl is mine, she is so mine and before she knows it she would have forgotten all about this BMW fucker, this is not a life she deserves, she is supposed to go out there and explore have some fun and be her age. This is the time she is meant to make mistakes not tie herself down to a man she doesn't even love or care about. I have been in the best mood ever since I dropped her off. My grandmother walks in my room without knocking and I sigh.

Me: makhulu no man we spoke about this

Her: get over yourself

She says sitting on the edge of the bed.

Me: you look so serious what's up?

Her: Indigo what were you doing with Zulu's daughter.

Me: Gogo

Her: no Indi, what do you want with that girl? You do know that she is part of the church. I don't want trouble. Her father would rain terror on you if he found out.

Me: Gogo Ocean and I have something, I think I am in love with her.

Her: you know I support you and the life you are living because I love you, but this right here will never end well.

Me: Gogo have a little Faith in me.

Her: its not worth the drama, she is already chosen to marry that pastor's son.

Me: I know but that's not what she wants ma, she is lesbian and she wants me too.

Her: oh Indi, out of all the girls in the world it had to be her.

Me: I know it's not ideal but she is the one I can feel it.

Her: it's going to course a lot of problems for us.

Me: Gogo please I need you on board for this one please.

Her: what you are asking of me mntanami is suicide I also need to think of Phiwe.

Me: magriza I am begging you. I will be discreet about it I swear it will only be known by us I promise.

Her: oh God.

Me: do this one thing for me and I swear I will ask you of nothing in my life.

Her: i am sure there are a lot of girls who live the same life as you in the city, chose one of them.

Me: but it's Nolwandle I love magogo

Her: it's a forbidden love Indi. It will hurt and destroy a lot of people especially her.

Me: I am begging you please.

I say getting off the bed and attempting to kneel down but the cast on my one leg is making it difficult.

Her: I will think about it.

Me: thank you Gogo I love you.

Her: Hai

She says standing up and walking out of my room.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

The tone in his voice when he told me that next time he will do something worse terrified me, it's like he was a completely different man, i am scared that he will be physical with me more intensely than he did today. It's still painful were he held me and after the incident he just switched like he didn't just hurt me. He drops me off at home

Me: thank you

Him: you are welcome and I will see you tomorrow after school.

Me: definitely, bye.

Him: goodbye sthandwa and get rid of that sour face we don't want your parents asking questions now do we?

Me: no we don't

I say taking a smile

Him: okay love goodnight

Me: night.

I walk out the car and he drives off. I sigh deeply before walking inside the house. My parents are in the lounge

Me: I am back Bab'Zulu

Him: how is your husband?

Me: he is very well baba, he sends his regards

Him: send mine too when you talk on the phone.

Me: I will, may I be excused.

Him: Bongeka you don't need her for anything?

He asks my mom

Me: no nothing at all baba

Him: very well then you may be excused Lwa.
I walk to my bedroom and go to the mirror, I remove my T-shirt and I am bruised where he held me, the pain still stings. I sigh and wonder if this is the kind of life my parents want for me, their own flesh and blood. Fight Lwa fight and leave this place you deserve better. I give myself some motivation.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 09

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

As I got to school I saw Lwandle already there and my mood just went down south, having her back here means I won't have time with Banele, it's a bam I was hoping whatever that she was going through continues till the end of the week,

but I am not going to let her stand in between me and my dream.

Me: mgane (friend)

I say sitting on the desk

Her: Hey Zee

Me: and then what happened to you yesterday

Her: you could have checked up on me yesterday like a best friend

Me: I didn't have airtime Lwa

Her: I see

Me: come on don't be like that so tell me what was going on with you.

Her: I woke up very sick

Me: seriously? you never get sick Lwa

Her: the is definitely a first time for everything.

Me: I guess so, but why didn't you tell your husband about it?

She looks at me and frowns

Her: how do you know I didn't tell Banele?

Me: coz he was here yesterday after school and he gave me a lift

Her: oh yes right.

Me: so you two are good?

Her: yeah he just didn't appreciate that I didn't tell him but we are okay.

She says and I fake a smile

Me: that's good coz he was really not okay.

Her: he can't stay mad at me forever now can he?

Me: yeah hey. Okay let me go to class i will see you later.

Her: bye babe.

•MONDLI ZULU

I am glad that my daughter is not being difficult about this whole marriage thing with Banele, for

once she is doing exactly what is expected of her without being stubborn or trying to fight it. I honestly hope she will keep to this level and not give us unnecessary drama and stress. I need to move quickly in forming a friendship with the pastor and his family so they can see how serious and happy we are about the marriage between our daughter and their son. I am sitting in the staff room alone as my colleagues are out attending their last classes, I dial the pastor and he answers after the 3rd ring

Him: Zulu

Me: Baba, unjani (how are you?)

Him: I am very well thanks, your side?

Me: I am well thanks.

Him: Banele tells me that everything is going well with your daughter

Me: very well, they are spending time together and they seem to be getting along very well.

Him: ahh that is impressive, means we will be paying lobola pretty soon.

I chuckle

Me: that is possible baba

Him: can I help you with something Zulu?

Me: my wife and I were wondering if you and your family would join ours for dinner some time?

Him: oh that's very thoughtful of you, we would love to

Me: great news

Him: let me just talk to my wife and I will call you and tell you when we are all available is that okay?

Me: it's perfect Baba. I will hear from you then

Him: soon, take care of my daughter in law

I smile

Me: always Baba.

Him: okay then goodbye

Me: bye.

I say and hang up smiling. Now that was a fulfilling call. I have made it to this point there is no stopping me now from getting into an important role in the church, my family will be amongst the most important people in our community. Soon as he calls me with a date Bongeka has to go all out to cater for them, we must not disappoint at all.

•BANELE THWALA

I let my emotions get the better of me yesterday and I never wanted Nolwandle to see that side of me, if she tells father and it somehow reaches my father I am completely fucked. I need to do something nice for her so she can forget yesterday's incident. I am already parked outside the school gate with flowers and a box of chocolates. I see her and Zipho approach and I sigh, the friend is the first one in the car.

Zee: oh these are nice

I roll my eyes

Me: thanks, they are Lwandle's

I say as she gets in.

Her: what is mine?

She asks and I take the flowers and chocolates from the back and hand them to her

Me: these are sthandwa

Her: oh okay, thank you.

Zee: what is the special occasion

Me: I don't need a special occasion to spoil my woman.

Zee: right, you are very thoughtful. You are blessed mgane

Her: I am indeed.

She says without looking at me and I know she is still thinking about yesterday. I start the car and drive the friend home and we go to her place.

Her: thanks for the flowers they are very beautiful.

Me: you are welcome and I am sorry about yesterday sthandwa, I was just going through something and it was wrong to take it out on you.

Her: I understand but please let it not happen again.

Me: I promise it won't.

Her father's car parks behind us and he comes to the window

Him: Banele

Me: Baba

Him: it's good to see you.

Me: baba can I have a word?

Him: yes come on inside.

I get out the car and follow him inside.

Him: what can I do for you son.

Me: Baba I will be marrying Lwandle and she will be my wife

Him: that's very true

Me: I want her to be happy always and we are getting to know each other she has mentioned what she loves and enjoys and I wanted to ask you to allow her to study what she loves and not Education.

He nods

Him: is there life for her after studying this? Will she find work?

Me: she wants to study Biomedical Technology baba she will work in pathology.

I explain

Him: oh I never knew this, so would you be comfortable with it?

Me: definitely baba it would make her happy and that's what I want for her.

Him: in that case it's granted.

Me: thank you sir

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I don't trust his explanation of why he handled me like that yesterday. Something really tells he is abusive and wants everything to go his way or the high way and that's already a red flag, but It won't be easy getting away from him or dodging this marriage because of Bab'Zulu. After having a talk with my father he left looking so excited and said he will come back to see me later. I decide to call Indi since I missed her calls when I was in the car with Banele. She answers at first ring it makes me smile

Her: Girlfriend

Me: hey, how are you?

Her: I am mad at you love

Me: what did I do?

Her: tried calling a couple of times but you ignored my calls and I know for a fact you weren't in class

I sigh

Me: I am really sorry

Her: why weren't you picking up Ocean

Me: I was with Banele.

I say in a low voice and she chuckles

Her: I see.

Me: I am sorry

Her: you don't have to be, I know what I signed up for.

I close my eyes

Me: when will I see you Indigo?

Her: I am working on it and I know it will be soon, I miss you.

Me: I miss you too, so much.

Her: hold on baby girl it's all going to work out okay?

Me: okay.

Her: I will call you later yeah?

Me: I will be waiting. Just don't be mad if I don't answer and don't read too much into it. It's only you Indigo.

Her: I am glad to hear that babe.

Me: okay later then.

Her: sharp.

She hangs up as my door opens and it's my father.

Him: can we have a word Lwa

Me: yebo Bab'Zulu.

He sits on my vanity chair and I take the bed.

Him: I had a talk with Banele regarding your education.

I frown

Me: I hope all is well.

Him: everything is okay, he just wanted me to allow you to study Biomedical Technology at University instead of Education.

To say I am shocked would be an understatement. My father never wanted to hear me out on this issue.

Me: really?

Him: yes he wants to see you happy Lwandle and he says this makes you excited so I agreed.

He says and I smile not believing my ears.

Me: thank you so much baba thank you.

Him: thank your husband.

He says standing up and leaving my room.

I can't believe this, for once my father has allowed me to do one thing that I want without making it seem like I am ungrateful nor disrespectful.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

My grandmother allowed me to be with Nolwandle but said I should only do it

discreetly. Grandma loves me and wants to see me happy in everything I do and I appreciate her looking past everything and allowing this to happen in her home, it wasn't an easy decision but she took it for my happiness, just like she did when she accepted that both my mom and Phiwe's mom refuse to marry in the church. I appreciate this woman and her strength and for her sacrifice I will make sure things between Ocean and I work out. Lucy was around to see Phiwe at the house and she is sitting under the shade while Phiwe takes a quick shower.

Me: Mfazi ka mfowethu

Her: Indigo

Me: thank you so much for getting me the number.

Her: it's a pleasure so how did it go?

I smile

Me: I told you it would work out. We together now, she came through yesterday and we spend the whole day together.

Her: Indi! That's why she didn't come to school
I laugh

Me: you know how it goes man Lucy, I am sure you've missed school a couple of times to be with Phiwe.

Her: I just didn't think Lwandle had it in her.

Me: everyone has that bad bad just takes the right person to unleash it, and I am that person for her.

Her: I honestly thought this was going to be hard but hey you the man.

Me: I am the man sweetheart, one more favor and I swear I will owe you all my life.

She laughs

Her: I am listening

Me: I need you to befriend her so I can have access to her through you. Make yourself so

lovable that her parents trust you and see you as the perfect friend.

Her: hai hai Indi you see now

Me: come on now please you will be the one giving a speech at our wedding telling everyone how you helped us be together against all odds.

She laughs

Her: you are such a smooth talker. I hate you

Me: is that a yes?

Her: on condition that you tell Phiwe about this, I don't want to keep secrets from him.

Me: consider it done

Her: then I will get you your girl.

Me: see why Phiwe is going to marry you sooner than you think?

She rolls her eyes

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 10

•INDIGO NQCOBO

It was time i told Phiwe about Ocean and I and I know he is going to blow up but I need to come clean about it. Secrets won't get us anywhere, and I am sure once he sees me and her together he will warm up to us and gradually accept our relationship. I won't press it on him because I understand how they are living here because of me being a lesbian and more judgement will come should they learn that I am with Nolwandle, they will condemn me and my family more. I am at the workshop and each time I want to call his name he starts talking about something distracting me.

Me: Lwandle and I are together.

I blurt it out and He shoots me a deadly look

Him: Nolwandle Zulu?

Me: yes the one and only.

He chuckles

Him: damnit Indi man, do you have any idea of what you've done? The chaos all this could cause?

Me: I know grootman I know trust me, but I just couldn't leave her alone.

Him: we are already going through the most, these damn people make 85% of the population here, they own most spaza's and shit, we can't do anything around we have to go to town, so imagine what would happen if they knew you are with one of their own.

Me: I understand your frustrations, I really do.

Him: no you don't, coz if you did you would have just stopped this but you are going to create a mess then run back to the easy life in Johannesburg.

Me: I don't have an easy life in Jozi, just coz I chose not to let my problems control me doesn't mean I have it easy.

Him: tell me? Do you even care about Nolwandle?

Me: I love her Sphiwe, so yes I care about her, about what they might do to her if they found out, I am not sure which level of crazy they go up to but it scares me because she will be more at the receiving end but I just can't walk away it's even harder now.

Him: did you just say you love her?

I sigh

Me: fuck I said that out loud but yes I love her

Him: yoh this is hectic.

Me: I know but I am not turning back. I know it's selfish of me but I can't.

He is silent for a while

Him: Magriza (grandmother) always said if it's from a place of love then you take, support or bless it coz love is pure.

Me: I am sorry Phiwe.

Him: I just hope we not gonna go through shit for you to be with her then you end up breaking her heart

I laugh

Me: have some faith bro.

Him: how the hell did you even get her to fall for you?

Me: it was effortless it was mutual.

I say smiling.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Ever since my father told me I can study what I wanted next year I have been in high spirits, I can't believe Banele did that for me, even though I know for a fact that he did it to make me forget about him getting physical with me. Zee and I couldn't meet at lunch coz she was behind with her work her teacher told her to finish up and submit the book before school out so she used the lunch break to cover, my friend

hates school and doesn't even hide it. We are walking home today coz Banele had to run to the city, he asked me not to tell my father so he doesn't tell his.

Her: why are we walking again?

Me: because neither of us have cars

She clicks her tongue

Her: come on Lwa you know what I mean

Me: He is busy today babe.

Her: that's why he got you flowers and chocolates yesterday?

Me: nope he didn't have a reason to buy me those he felt like doing something nice.

I say coz I don't want to mention the incident with her, she kind of has mouth diarrhea.

Her: but Bands is such a gentleman, I could just imagine him being my husband yoh I would just be a house wife to a guy who works hard and comes from a family with money.

The smile on her face as she narrates this is alarming, I raise an eyebrow.

Me: Good thing we are two completely different people

Her: what if he asks you to not work?

Me: why would he do that when he already made Bab'Zulu change his mind about what I'll study in varsity?

She gasps

Her: he did what? And your father agreed?

Me: his "son in law" is his weakness Zipho, he would agree to anything he suggests

Her: wow just wow.

She says and her facial expression changes completely leaving me surprised, she should be happy for me, what's wrong with Zipho these days. We walk in complete silence until we reach the intersection.

Me: I will see you tomorrow friend.

Her: Bye Lwa.

She walks away and I sigh. I start walking too, I don't want to think about her changing moods, I won't let her ruin my mood. An idea hits me quickly and I smile. I change direction to the taxi stop, why not use this opportunity to my advantage.

•BANELE THWALA

I overheard my father speaking with our lawyer on the phone and it's not looking good, Bridget is being stubborn, she is refusing to accept the money and walk away, that's why I always hated dealing with educated bitches, they don't need money and that makes it hard to control them, if I stuck to my own rule I wouldn't be in this damn mess. I had to drive up here to settle the dust while my father thinks I am with Nolwandle. I get to the hospital and she is in her private suit looking real bad, fuck I really did rearrange her whole face. I get in and close the

door. She looks my way and I can see the fear in her eyes

Her: I will press this panic button if you don't get out of here.

Me: why are you being so stubborn Bridget? Just take the money and we will go our separate ways.

Her: I should have listened to those girls trying to warn me about the monster in you but you know how to hide it so good.

Me: you made me do it.

Her: you are sick in the head Banele.

Me: listen I honestly thought you'd be a good little girl, heal, take the money, sign the papers and leave but nope you want to cause chaos.

Her: you almost killed, can't you see what you did to me, you almost made my daughter an orphan.

Me: speaking of which, I think you should call your mom ask about your princess.

Panic hits her and she takes her phone

Her: mama where is my baby...No mama no...how could she just disappear...let me call you in a minute...I will.

She hangs up and looks at me.

Her: what did you do you son of a bitch?

Me: my mom a bitch? Nope a saint that one.

Her: where is my child Banele?

Me: I am not sure but I know she is safe, but where she ends up is all up to you my love. Take the money and sign the damn Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) and your child will be returned to you, simple really.

Her: I hate you and I curse the day I met you.

Me: I've heard this before it doesn't scare me. So what's it going to be?.

She wipes her tears

Her: fine I will call your lawyer.

Me: and a favor please, don't mention that I was here.

Her: just get my daughter home.

Me: just call my lawyer sign and I swear by the time you put the lid back on the pen your daughter will be walking in and everyone has a happy ending.

Her: every dog has it's day remember that.

She says taking her phone and I smile. My father should really let me handle my own shit hey.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I took a taxi and got off the way near her cousins workshop, I am hoping she is here because that's where they both spend their time. Luckily this place is isolated from the houses and no one can really see me coming here. I spot her car and blush out of control, she doesn't know that I am coming but I hope she appreciates the surprise. As I walk in the compound I spot them in the shade, Indigo is

wearing black like every other day and her cast free leg is on the chair while the one with a cast is stretched out, she is holding a bottle of beer in his hand and I see her cousin on the other chair with Lucy on top of him, they are also drinking. They didn't notice me until I stand behind her.

Me: Hi

I say in a low voice.

Lucy: Hey Lwandle, what a nice surprise.

Indigo looks back quickly and her eyes land on me, and the beautiful smile creeps on her face making me smile back at her. She stands up and comes to me, and like we are the only people here she pulls me to her and gives me a kiss, just like the first time, it's soft slow and passionate. Someone clears their throat and we stop but look at each other in the eyes

Her: how did you get here?

Me: I took a taxi. I miss you.

She side smiles and pecks my lips

Her: I miss you too babe. You just made my day, I am going to have an amazing weekend.

Me: I am glad to hear that, we have until around 8pm to ourselves.

Her: and your father?

Me: They all think I am with Banele but he's not around he went to Johannesburg.

Her: I don't like that fucker but hey we thank him for going to Jozi I get to have my girl to myself.

I blush

Me: I am sorry this is how things are going I am sure you not used to dating girls in the closet.

Her: they were not you babe. I am happy to have you anyway I can, someday things will be okay for us.

Me: that's true.

Her: do you want us to go home and just chill in my room, or you cool chilling with us here?

I have never been in the midst of people who are living their lives it would be nice to experience it with my girlfriend here too. I smile at the thought, she is really my girlfriend.

Me: I would love to chill with you

Lucy: yes Lwandle. Now I have a girl on my side, these guys can get too much at times.

We all laugh.

Her: come babe.

She sits down and makes me sit on her lap

Him: I should go get her some juice quickly.

Her cousin finally speaks and I sigh, I was starting to think he hates me.

Me: no, can I please have what Lucy is having?

Her: Ocean love that's alcohol, I don't think you ever had any. I don't want you getting home and getting in trouble with your father.

Me: I know for a fact that one bottle will not get me drunk drunk.

I defend myself but Indigo is not buying my story. Lucy doesn't ask no questions, she opens the bottle and hands it to me. I take a sip and it's really nice, I read the name and it's Strongbow red berries.

Her: just one babe

Me: yes only one.

She kisses my cheek and brings her lips to my ear

Her: I love you Nolwandle.

I swear my heart almost stops. I look at her and she can see the joy in my eyes so she just smiles and drinks her beer, starting a conversation with Lucy and Sphiwe.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I honestly need to find something that will make Banele lose interest in Lwandle and see me the way he sees her, he is giving her everything that I always dreamt my husband would be. I

mean not only is he handsome and financially stable but he is also romantic. I imagine my future with him and no one else. I don't know how I am going to cause a rift between them but I have to find one.

Her: you are always sour these days, you should be happy it's weekend and you don't have to go to school.

My nosey sister says and I roll my eyes

Me: yoh Mbali, you are everywhere.

Her: I live here, so what's up with you?

Me: Lwa and Banele seem to be going strong with each passing day.

She sighs

Her: you don't use your brain it's sad.

Me: Don't insult me.

Her: there is a church rule that says a man that lays with a woman that is not married to him will have to marry her for her purity is now his.

Me: why the hell is that rule important to me? I am a damn virgin Mbali.

Her: this is why I said you are slow yoh Zipho.

Me: make it clear to me

Her: get Banele to lay with you Zee geez.

She snaps and I move my eyes to her and smile

Me: Oh My God.

Her: and while at it get pregnant, make it hard for him to deny and tie yourself to him forever.

Me: you are a genius.

Her: I know.

She says walking away and I am so happy it feels like all my problems will be solved in one go.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 11

•INDIGO NCQOBO

My girl showing up here was a real surprise, a good one at that, being able to chill with her like that gave me some sense of hope that things between us will be okay, we just have to both be in this with everything we have and we will surely come out victorious. This has had to be one of the greatest days for me. I am parked at the corner of her street to drop her off and its dark outside.

Her: Thank you for today, I don't think I've ever had so much fun.

Me: No baby thank you for showing up, you don't know how much I appreciate it.

Her: I am glad you did.

Me: so you'll be okay? Like your old man won't be fighting you?

I ask really worried

Her: Relax Indigo, they think I am with Banele, even if I came at 10 he wouldn't even question it, so long it's with him.

Me: I hear you babe. So listen I need you to really befriend Lucy babe.

Her: why?

Me: it would give us an easy chance to meet up you know.

Her: She isn't part of the church, we are not allowed to have anything to do with non believers.

I sigh

Me: trust me, Lucy will go the extra mile just to help us out even if it means being a part of the church.

She laughs

Her: that I will have to see.

Me: we are going to be okay Ocean I promise you.

Her: I hope so really.

Me: let's not waste any more time, go home and call me so I know you okay.

Her: okay I will.

She opens the door and attempts to get out. She stops and looks back at me.

Her: Indigo

Me: Yes Lwandle

Her: I love you too.

She says getting out and I just smile, this is a great way to end the night. I start the engine and drive off

•BANELE THWALA

I should have done this a long time ago and I would have gotten on with my life, back to work and back to just being free from my father's house with his endless rules and shit. I just drove into the town and I wanted to drive by

Lwandle but that would raise Bab'Zulu's suspicions. I will just see her tomorrow. A few more minutes I get home and they just finished eating dinner.

Ma: Tell Lwandle to borrow me my son one evening, I miss having supper with you Banele.

Me: the wife comes first ma.

My father smiles

Him: that's my boy, you getting the hang of things now.

Ma: or better yet just come over with her, she will be my daughter in law soon and it's only fair I also get to know her.

Me: all in good time mama I promise.

Ma: hai okay, let me go fix you a plate.

Me: thanks mom.

She gets up and disappears to the kitchen.

Him: Banele

Me: Baba.

I say sitting down

Him: the lawyer called

Me: tell me it's good news

I say trying not to show that I already know

Him: that girl signed and the money will reflect in her account tomorrow.

Me: oh thank God. I appreciate it baba.

Him: this is the last mess I am cleaning and you will never lay a hand on Nolwandle do you understand me?

I swallow

Me: I hear you baba. I will treat my wife good I promise

Him: Good, let's get ready for prayer.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I can't stop blushing and thinking of the amazing day I had, the whole thing was playing

in my head making it impossible for my lips to not curl up and form a smile. I am pretty sure I am red from all the blushing. I can still smell her on me and I swear I can still taste her lips, the taste of Corona beer and the smell of hubbly. I stand out the front door and sigh deeply before walking in. My eyes land on my sister and I scream in excitement.

Me: Siya

Her: muntuza.

I quickly go to her and we hug so tight.

Me: I can't believe you are here sis

Her: I promised you I was coming baby.

Me: when did you arrive?

I ask letting go

Her: a few hours ago and I was told you only get home around this time. You and Banele are hitting it off huh.

I sigh

Me: yeah, we learning.

Ma: that's all it takes baby, ask Siya it was the same for her and for everyone else

Me: it was not the same for Siya mama, she was already in love with her husband.

Her: She is right mama, it's not the same. For me love was already involved but muntuza has to start from scratch.

Baba: don't encourage her to see this as a taboo Siyamthanda, she has to see this through.

Her: it wasn't like that Bab'Zulu I was merely explaining.

Baba: well don't, you know Lwa she will just decide to use your words and fight this whole marriage.

Me: do you always have to think the worst of me.

Baba: don't back chat me.

He quickly says in a stern voice.

Her: hai I forgot how hectic things can get in this house. Come muntuza let's go catch up in your room.

I smile coz ever since Siya got married she isn't afraid to speak up to our father.

Me: tell me you brought me something from the city.

Her: I would never come empty handed.

We giggle walking away from our parents.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I get back home and find Lucy and Phiwe still drinking and smoking hubbly, it's gonna be awkward now that my girl has gone home but at least she came through and we spend some time together. I take a sit and open a beer. A text from her comes through.

I am okay, my sister is around so you don't have to worry. I miss you already

I smile and text back

I miss you too beautiful, call me later on

Him: lonely already?

Phiwe asks

Me: you have no idea.

Her: but at least you know she is into you too making an effort to come see you and spend some time with you.

Lucy adds

Me: yeah that's true I really appreciated her showing up like that.

Him: Grootman?

Me: sure

Him: you really do love her don't you?

Me: I do Phiwe and I wish the circumstances weren't this bad.

Him: nothing worth having comes easy.

Lucy: that's very true baby and Indigo whatever you need from us to help you with your relationship we are here.

Me: thank you so much guys I appreciate it.

Him: I just never thought I'd live to see you falling in love.

Me: love is like a thief bro waka, it creeps in without warning.

Him: Definitely but I am happy that you found your girl, things will work out after all we can't fight or change fate. What's meant to be will always be.

Me: case closed.

We all laugh, and our grandmother walks in.

Ma: Lord they have started again smoking this kettle.

We burst out laughing.

Me: Makhulu this isn't a kettle.

Ma: you drink alcohol, smoke drugs yazi nizofa (you are going to die).

Him: mama man hai.

Ma: don't even start with me Sphiwe, and you must take Lucy home I don't want to advocate for a pregnancy.

Me: makhulu go watch the Queen it has started already.

Ma: yoh let me go then before I miss it

My phone beeps and it's an event notification on Facebook.

Me: eish fuck.

Him: what's wrong grootman?

Me: the Jozi Pride is taking place next weekend and I was supposed to be going.

Him: ahhh hade (sorry)

Her: I would love to go there, we should all go Indi man.

I look at my cousin and he sighs sipping on his beer.

•MONDLI ZULU

I was hoping Siya would be a voice of reason to Lwandle but what happened earlier proves that she is just going to fuel her in the wrong direction. I can't have any of them messing this up for me. I walk in the bedroom and find my wife applying lotion on her arms

Me: Bongeka

Her: Bab'Zulu

Me: when is Siyamthanda leaving?

She frowns

Her: hai kodwa baba, she just got here.

Me: you are not answering my question

Her: she didn't say.

Me: well find out and make sure that they don't spend too much time together.

Her: with all due respect, they are sisters and they have always been close.

Me: are you indirectly refusing to follow my order?

I ask walking towards her.

Her: never baba, I could never disobey you mnyeni'wami (my husband).

Me: so do as you are told.

Her: I will, I will.

I sigh and nod.

Me: Good then because you know that I will crash everything that stands in my way.

Her: it won't get to that I promise you.

Me: sizobona ngawe (we will see).

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 12

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Having my sister around is liberating for me in a way, i don't have to be scared or fear that my father will get physical with me or just become a monster for nothing. Siya and I even slept in the early hours of the morning just catching up, she was telling me about work, her husband, their friends and the good life they have built for themselves far away from this hell hole and it's rules. We just woke up a few minutes ago and we haven't gotten out of the bedroom.

Me: Siya

Her: muntuza.

Me: I don't want to marry Banele.

Her: I know sis and I won't lie this is not the life I want for you either.

Me: take me with you please

Her: Lwa I would trust me but you are still not 18 and they are your legal guardians and if I

take you Bab'Zulu would rain terror on me and the law would be on his side.

Me: I just want to live my life, be happy and just be my age, make mistakes, go to parties and just be a child before I commit myself to someone I don't love and be the person I am not.

Her: I want that for you too trust me muntuza

Me: this marriage can't go through sis coz I swear my demons would just haunt me forever.

She narrows her eyes and I sigh

Her: This is the second time you are saying this to me Lwa, what do you mean?

Me: I am just saying all that I want to be will haunt me in that marriage.

Her: are you sure that's all?

Me: I am sure Siya

Her: you know you can trust me right?

Me: I know that and I am happy you are here.

Her: I am glad I came, I can see you are suffocating and I will talk to ma to help us hold off this marriage a while longer.

I laugh

Me: mama will never go against her husband.

Her: let's hope deep down she can reason and she loves us more than she let's on.

Me: I honestly wouldn't bet my money on it.

The door bursts open and our father walks in.

Him: you can't be sleeping at this time, who is suppose to clean this house and make the food?

He roars and my sisters shakes her head I am already shaking from fear.

Her: Bab'Zulu is that how you burst into Lwandle's bedroom? What if she was naked? The church said her body is only to be seen by her husband.

She says and I see my father swallow, I raise an eyebrow.

Him: This is my house Siyamthanda if you don't like the rules then you are free to go to your husband's house.

Her: it's your house yes but does that make it okay to break the church rules or you only follow those that benefit you?

She continues and I can see my father is now mad as hell but Siya is not backing down.

Him: you might be married and all but you are still a child to me and I will not have you disrespect me.

Her: I guess I should go ask the pastor if it's okay for her daughter in law to be treated like this, you know what from now on Lwandle lock your door, they want you to get married right? Now they will give you the respect and privacy you deserve as a soon to be bride.

I am shocked, yes my sister spoke up to my father but this here is extreme but it's really nice seeing my father tongue tied.

Her: excuse us Bab'Zulu we want to get up.

He gives us one more killer look and walks out the room leaving the door open. Siya smiles looking at me and goes to close the door.

Me: Siyamthanda!

Her: just lock your door from now on you deserve privacy. Nawe learn to use these damn church rules against them.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

It was our turn to go clean the church for tomorrow's service, I notice that Banele's parents are around with some elders but he wasn't around, this means he is left alone at his parents house, this is the perfect opportunity to make my intentions known to him. I walk out the church real quick and make my way to their house. It's not far from here. A part of me is scared but another one desperate to get this over and done with so I can claim my man. I see his car parked outside the garage so I walk in the yard and head straight to the door and

press the bell and a minute later a shirtless Banele opens up and I must admit he had a very nice body. He is frowns at me.

Him: can I help you?

He sounds so bored

Me: Hi Banele

Him: Hello Zipho. Can I help you with something?

Me: can I please come in? I have something important to discuss with you.

He moves aside to let me in and I sigh

Him: This way.

He says after closing the door and I follow him to the lounge and this house is state of the art. I can imagine waking up here when we come to visit the parents.

Me: I am sorry to just show up unannounced.

Him: it's cool, what's this about? Is Lwandle okay?

I roll my eyes

Me: forget about Lwandle Banele.

Him: excuse me? What do you mean forget Lwandle? You do know that she is going to be my wife right?

Me: I know that but It doesn't have to happen.

He laughs

Him: hai hai what is this all about?

I can't explain so I just stand up and start undressing.

Me: I want to be with you, I deserve you more than Lwandle, she is undecided and selfish. I would make you more happy Banele just give us a chance.

Him: bitch are you being for real right now?

Me: Take me Banele however you want I am here for you.

His hand moves to his manhood and he rubs it while shaking his head

Him: little girl you seriously don't know what you are asking for so I suggest you keep yourself for a guy who will care.

Me: no I want it to be you. Deflower me and take my purity.

He chuckles and nods. He disappears for a while and I am starting to regret this. I shouldn't have come here and embarrassed myself like this God. As I was thinking of picking up my dress he walks back in completely naked and his man spear standing firm and it has on a condom. I know it from all the sex education at school. I swallow hard

Him: this is what you want right?

I nod vigorously and he smirks walking towards me.

Him: okay then Zipho, who am I to not grant you your wish.

He grabs my arms roughly and pull me to the single couch, he turns me and makes me kneel on it exposing my ass to him. I am getting scared now coz he is not being gentle like Mbali

described how it would be. He parts my thighs and removes my head wrap. I feel his fingers at the entrance of my private part and before I could even get used to it he shoves two fingers inside of me.

Me: Banele that hurts

Him: you did say however I want you are here for me.

I close my eyes and take in the pain. He is moving his finger in and out of me roughly. I want to protest but he must never see me like a weakling, I want him to see me worthy of him see that I am a strong woman who deserves to be his wife more. He positions me and parts my thighs further apart and bends my back. I feel something big enter me and the pain is too much I scream.

Him: shut up shut up, you said you wanted this right? Now suck it up.

I muffle my cries and he pumps into me harder and faster, he is pulling my hair roughly and the whole experience is too painful, I don't want this

but I can't stop him, I can't risk my plan. I am sending prayers up there for him to stop already. It goes on for a while until he makes a deep sound and stops. He takes out his penis out of me and the fire that is between my legs I was never prepared for it.

Him: you are tight I'll give that to you but there's a lot you still need to learn. Get dressed and leave you got what you came here for.

He says and leaves me in the lounge alone. Out of nowhere I just felt tears stream down my face. I don't think I have ever felt so dirty and cheap in my life but at least I achieved my goal, with time he will be gentle and loving, we just need to get Lwandle out of the picture.

•BONGEKA ZULU

My husband left here boiling with anger and thank God he opted for leaving than being physical with any of us, when he is like that he can do anything. Its clear that the girls made

him like that coz he was in there talking to them and after that he was that mad. I need to find a way to talk to Siya because it seems like she is the one coming with trouble, Lwandle has been behaving as of late and honestly we don't need drama here. I find her in the kitchen making food.

Me: Siyamthanda

Her: Hey mama

Me: why are you causing trouble

Her: excuse me?

She says turning to face me

Me: I can only guess that you are the one who angered your father.

Her: I only told him the truth the church he always shoves down our throats taught us

Me: you will not talk like that about him

Her: it seems like you and Bab'Zulu are allergic to the truth, why is that?

Me: Don't cause problems for us here coz at the end of the day you will get in your car and leave us to deal with him.

Her: you should be able to stand up to him but nope you let him treat you like his slave, this is not marriage mama when will you realize this?

Me: He is my husband Siya I do whatever he wants

Her: that's not true ma, I am also married and my husband doesn't treat me like this, he is my friend, he talks to me about everything, he isn't afraid to show me when he is vulnerable. He is okay with me being my own woman, can you say the same about your husband.

Me: don't you dare judge me Siya, you turned out fine from being raised by us.

She laughs

Her: no I didn't I am still healing from your husband's abuse and your failure to protect me from him, and now it's happening to muntuza and I can't do anything to help her out. You failed your children mama because you cared

more about that monster that couldn't even care if you are okay or not.

Me: Stop Siyamthanda.

Her: when will you be a mother to us? When will you chose us? Chose yourself?

I let my tears fall from all the hurtful words she is saying to me, first it was Lwandle now Siya, why can't they see that I am really trying.

Me: I am trying my best.

Her: like when ma?

Me: how will you realize when you are just looking at my shortcomings?

Her: I came here for my sister not this unnecessary drama.

Me: you guys mustn't spend too much time together at least be apart when he is at home.

She laughs

Her: wow jus wow now I have to stay away from my own sister? and you tell me you can't see him for the devil he is?

She walks away even before I can say anything.

•INDIGO NQCOBO

I am planning on attending the pride, Lucy spoke of it the entire night last night that Phiwe agreed to tag along with us, now I can only hope that Ocean can somehow be able to come with us, I would love for her to see and be a part of others like us who aren't afraid to live their truth, maybe that will show her that it's not just us and she must not feel ashamed of who she really is. My phone rings and it's her.

Me: girlfriend

Her: baby, how are you?

I smile coz this is the first time she isn't calling me Indigo, she is warming up to me and our relationship.

Me: I am good, I did tell you yesterday that you made my whole weekend

Her: yes you did, what are you up to?

Me: nothing much was just planning on attending the pride.

Her: what's that now?

Me: oh sorry it's an event where all the LGBTQ community meet to celebrate their sexuality.

Her: LGBTQ?

I giggle and sigh

Me: you still have a lot to learn baby, let's say I will school you when we meet.

Her: okay fair enough. So when is it happening?

Me: this weekend in Jozi, and I was hoping you could come with me but I know it's not possible.

Her: I am coming with you.

I narrow my eyes

Me: baby it's okay, your father would freak if you were to disappear the whole night.

Her: I don't care Indigo it's time I just did something that will make me happy.

Me: you don't have to do this and cause drama for yourself.

Her: I want to do this, I want to attend this with you and be happy.

Me: are you sure?

Her: positive, whatever plans you make include me please.

Me: yes ma'am.

I say smiling.

Her: I have to go, we will talk later okay?

Me: later babe

Her: I love you.

I blush

Me: I love you too beautiful.

I hang up and smile like a lunatic.

Ma: so your relationship is there already.

My grandmother disturbs my moment

Me: yeah we are ma.

Ma: I just pray this is not a phase, I hope this is serious because we are risking a lot for your relationship with her.

Me: like I told Sphiwe mama I am not playing, I love Nolwandle and I am going all the way with her.

Ma: in that case I suggest you tell your mother about it so that she doesn't feel left out, you know she always wished for you find one girl and stop changing them every other week.

Me: Phiwe and I will be attending a party in Johannesburg next weekend I will tell her then.

Ma: good coz you know I can't keep a secret for long from your mom.

I laugh

Me: I understand ma.

—

•BANELE THWALA

I shouldn't have fucked that girl, I played right into her hand, I shouldn't have underestimated her, she is like a green snake in the grass and I must be super careful of her, if this comes out in the open, I am fucked. I shouldn't have created another mess right after getting rid of Bridget, I can't seem to get out of trouble, or does trouble follow me everywhere?. I just arrived at the Zulu house to see Lwandle. It feels crazy being here after fucking her friend I must admit but I must check in. Her sister appears from the corridor and she follows behind.

Me: sthandwa

I say standing up.

Lwa: hey.

Me: how are you you?

Lwa: I am okay thanks you?

Me: I am super.

I look at the sister giving me an intense look.

Lwa: uhm Banele this is my sister Siya, sis this is Banele.

She introduces us and I hold out my hand

Me: it's nice to meet you Siya.

Her: likewise Banele. Muntuza let me go check on that thing.

She walks away and I look at Nolwandle smiling.

Me: she doesn't seem to like me.

Lwa: of course not, she just wants to get to know you first before being too friendly you know.

Me: I understand babe.

Lwa: how was your trip to Johannesburg?

Me: it was fruitful hey. I fixed the mess that was happening that side.

Lwa: I am happy to hear that.

Me: I am sorry I didn't get you because of it, hopefully Zipho didn't give you a hard time.

Lwa: it's okay, I understand you have other engagements, and Zee was just being Zee.

Me: have you spoke to her today?

Lwa: no not at all, honestly she seems to be pulling herself from me.

Me: really why do you say so?

I ask trying to understand the person that girl is and if I am going to need to do something drastic to get her to keep what happened earlier between us.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 13

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

After my encounter with Banele I couldn't go back to the church, so I went straight home to bath the blood and sooth myself from the pain I

was feeling between my legs. I was trying by all means to convince myself that what happened would get me closer to my dream but a part of me still felt dirty and cheap. He didn't care, he just used me and left me like that. Is this the kind of men I really want for myself? This is all painful but then again it's the only way to secure my future since I don't want to go to university. I am in bed fighting my emotions when the door bursts open and Mbali starts shouting.

Her: where the hell did you disappear to Zipho? Why must we always do the cleaning for you?

Me: Mbali please

Her: no Zee, soon as our parents walk in I swear I am telling them.

Me: I went to see Banele okay.

That seems to shut her up coz she quickly comes to sit on the edge of the bed with a smile.

Her: and? How was it? How did it go?

Me: it was horrible Mbali, it was painful and he was not nice at all.

Her: of course first times are painful sis

Me: he was not as gentle as you said.

She sighs

Her: it's different with every guy and remember this one is not your boyfriend or betrothed.

Me: I guess you are right.

Her: of course I am. Now tell me he offloaded his seed inside of you.

Me: no he used a condom.

She frowns

Her: oh shit, you shouldn't have given him a chance to think of protection, now it's going to be tough.

Me: what do you mean? I laid with him.

Her: yes you did but he could deny it.

Me: so what are we going to do now?

Her: let's wait to see if he will reach out to you and make his intentions known.

Me: let's hope that will happen.

Her: he better coz if not you will start singing like a canary.

Me: thank you for helping me with this.

Her: it's a pleasure sis, we can't both be in our parents house Zee, one of us has to make it out.

Me: I appreciate it very much and I promise never to forget you soon as I am married to him.

Her: I hope so. How are you feeling?

I sigh.

•MONDLI ZULU

I got home late after driving around for hours trying to calm down from Siyamthanda's words. If I had stayed in that house I would have been

physical with one of them hence I decided to leave. I didn't leave because I am weak I just don't want to give them any reason to be hostile and end up making Lwandle to resist this marriage coz as it stands Siya is whispering in her ear. My phone rings and it's the pastor. I clear my throat and answer.

Me: Baba

Him: Zulu unjani (how are you?)

Me: I am very well thanks how are you?

Him: I am fine thanks.

Me: we thank the Lord.

Him: I am calling with regards to the dinner you once proposed to me

Me: yebo baba.

I say crossing fingers

Him: well I have spoken to my wife about it and she thinks it's a great idea to get to know one another as we will soon be family.

Me: that is great news baba

Him: so can you expect us next Saturday?

Me: Saturday it is baba, we will be ready and waiting for you and the family.

Him: very well then. Goodnight.

Me: Goodnight.

He hangs up and I punch the air in victory, this dinner will just lay down the foundation to everything, I will push for an earlier day to introduce our children to the church and the payment of the dowry so she can be tied to the Thwala's. This call couldn't have come at a better time.

Her: Bab'Zulu

My wife says entering our bedroom.

Me: nkosikazi (my wife).

Her: are you okay?

She asks and I know it's because of the sudden smile on my face since I walked in here sour.

Me: everything is perfect, I couldn't be any happier.

She frowns

Her: not to sound disrespectful baba but what has suddenly made you so happy?.

Me: I just got a call from the pastor.

Her: okay?

She says with a smile forming on her face.

Me: they will be coming here for dinner next Saturday.

Her: oh that is great news

Me: very great news, now listen I need you to clean this house and turn it upside down, I want to see myself everywhere in the house and you must prepare a feast.

Her: consider it done my husband.

Me: this is the begging of great things for our family.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

My sister and I are driving back home after the church service, she was bored through the whole thing, and her remarks were just hilarious but if anyone else heard her I swear she would have been asked to go to the pulpit so they can pray for her to rid the demon that is using her. I didn't see Zipho at church and I wonder why coz she never misses it even when she is sick.

Her: should we start at town to get something to eat?

Siya says dragging me from my thoughts.

Me: I have that every other day with Banele I swear I will turn into a chicken.

She laughs

Her: it's the only restaurant here though.

Me: I know but your father would kill us if we don't join them for Sunday lunch.

Her: that man is just sickening I swear.

Me: tell me about it sis.

Her: and did you see how happy he is?

Me: I thought I was the only one who noticed it.

Her: I wonder what's going on.

Me: me too, his excitement is doom for someone else so I know for a fact that it's going to go down.

Her: we will just wait and see.

She decides to drive to town anyway and we get to KFC and just buy Krushers and go back home. My father's car is already parked. We walk in and my mom is placing the last bowl of salad on the table.

Ma: oh girls you are just on time. Sit down please.

Him: where did you two go to you were the first one's out of the church.

Her: we went to buy ice cream Bab'Zulu.

Siya says sitting down. We wait for my mother to dish up for her husband and have him take a

few bites before we can start dishing, I don't know when this law started but I grew up to it.

Him: you may dish.

We dish and it looks appetizing, I don't doubt my mother's culinary skills. I wish she excelled like this in standing up for us to her husband.

Him: I have some great news Lwandle.

The smile on his face is alarming. My heart starts to race.

Me: yebo Bab'Zulu.

Him: well my dear daughter your future in-laws will be joining us for dinner next Saturday.

My world came crumbling down from that sentence. That is the day I am going with Indigo to the city.

Ma: hao Lwa you are not happy?

I fake a smile

Me: I am ma, I was just not aware that we extended an invite to the Thwala family.

Him: well just be on your best behavior that day and I am going to give you money to go buy a beautiful dress.

Me: thank you Bab'Zulu.

I say fighting tears. This is not happening God No. I can't disappoint Indigo and I can't miss the dinner. To say I am caught between a rock and a hard place would be putting it lightly.

—

•INDIGO NCQOBO

My excitement is on another level, I don't think I have ever been in a hurry for any event like I am for this year's pride, maybe it's because my girl is attending with me. I have already booked two rooms at the hotel for the 4 of us and I am planning on going to the next close town with a mall to get Ocean and I matching outfits. I want her to be looking hot in clothes that fit her, I already know which kicks I am getting her, I am introducing her to drip now. My friends back in

Jozi would be laughing so hard at me if they saw how whipped I am.

Phiwe walks in.

Him: so grootman it's all systems go for next week?

Me: listen here be ready for a lit weekend.

Him: I trust you bruh.

Me: Good coz I am about to make you addicted to Johannesburg nightlife.

Him: bring it all Indi. So your girl?

Me: she is in, fully in baba.

Him: are you sure she won't drop you at the last minute?

I sigh coz that possibility has been heavy in my thoughts too.

Me: I don't want to think about it Phiwe, after all she is the one who said she is coming with. It was not forced.

Him: say she couldn't go would you be mad at her?

Me: I would be disappointed yes but not mad. I understand her situation man and I knew what I got myself into.

Him: you really love her grootman.

Me: I do Phiwe and I don't think it will ever change.

Him: ya ne, at least I got to live to see the day you fall in love.

I laugh.

Me: mxm listen tomorrow we going to shop for some drip.

Him: good thing you are here you'll help me choose good shoes.

Me: sweet.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 14

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I didn't sleep a wink last night and concentrating at school today was a struggle, a few of my teachers even complained about my non participation in class. I am trying to think of how I am going to split myself into two this Saturday, is it even possible to even be at two places at once because if there is I would really appreciate if anyone told me about it. Zipho isn't herself today even at lunch she was quiet and I didn't bother to ask coz I was lost in my troubles too but now that we are walking to Banele's car she seems to be losing it.

Me: are you okay friend?

Her: mmmhhh?

Me: are you okay you seem to be far away.

She sighs and fakes a smile

Her: yes chommie I am okay.

Me: come on Zipho, it's me you don't have to pretend. What's going on?

Her: it's nothing really, just that my period pains are showing me flames.

Me: oh shame I am sorry friend. You should take some pain killers when you get home and sleep.

Her: I will do just that.

We get to the car and she is the first to get inside, I walk to my side and get in. I don't find her already speaking out of turn, proof that she really isn't feeling well.

Me: Hey.

Him: Sthandwa.

He says taking my hand into his, this is a first. Reminds me of Indigo the friday night when she was driving me home, she drove with my hand in hers the whole time giving it squeezes and kisses.

Him: it's nice seeing you blush like this.

I giggle

Me: oh umh.

Him: it's okay sthandwa you don't have to be shy. You just look so cute when you blush, I should hold your hand frequently.

I smile but mentally rolling my eyes. He starts the engine and drives, everyone is silent only the radio playing. I don't know why but I sense some tension between these two but I thought they were cool after Zee apologized, maybe I am reading too much into this. We get to Zee's street.

Her: uhm Banele can you please drop me off at the corner.

Me: hao chommie why? I ask looking back at her

Her: I need to get that painkillers you spoke of Lwa.

Me: oh yes and be better okay? I'll call you later on to check up on you.

Her: thanks love.

She gets out the door and Banele drives off.

Him: Sthandwa listen I can't spend time today I was busy with something at home.

Oh hallelujah thank you Jesus. I am twerking right now.

Me: oh okay I understand.

I say sounding disappointed but deep down I am happy to have this breather.

Him: I promise to make it up to you.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

The whole day I was worried about seeing Banele after our encounter, I was wondering how he would treat me in front of Lwandle and for a few minutes there he made me feel that Lwandle is the one he is going to marry until my eyes landed on the paper he glued at the back of his seat. It was instructing me to wait for him to come back from dropping her so we can talk and I won't lie it gave me a bit of hope and my mood has improved slightly. I am still standing

by the corner where he dropped me off hoping that nobody from the church or my house sees me getting back into his car. A few minutes pass by and I see it appear, I smile as it approaches, he parks near me and I hop in quickly.

Me: Hey Bands

Him: Zipho.

He says cool and it stings a bit, I thought he would be gentler now that it's only the two of us. I sigh and he speeds off my street. He goes to park at some open veld where no one passes not even cars use the road near by. He parks and we are silent for a while.

Him: why did you do that Zee?

I look down and start fondling with my fingers.

Me: Banele I am sorry.

Him: okay I hear you but why? Be honest it's just us here.

Me: I am in love with you that's why.

Him: I am with Nolwandle you know this.

Me: I know but she doesn't deserve you at all.

Him: what makes you so sure?

Me: all she wants to do is go to university and live her life free from all of this, the last thing she wants is to get married.

Him: she has never gave me any reason to believe what you are saying.

Me: she is trying to keep the peace with her father that's why.

Him: okay I hear you so what do you want from me?

Me: I just want you

Him: you can't have me, I already belong to someone else Zipho your friend for that matter.

Me: has she sacrificed for you the way I have Banele?

He narrows his eyes and mine are already shining with tears I am trying so hard to hold back.

Him: she will when the time is right.

Me: only because she will be told to, not because she wants to.

Him: so you are the better candidate?

Me: I know I am.

He nods a couple of times before he looks out the window.

—

•INDIGO NCQOBO

Sitting here looking at Phiwe and Lucy gets me jealous but in a good way, if there is anything as such. Jealous in way that they get to see each other each and everyday without getting bored, they can even fight but they still meet up and just be sour together. I want this for my girl and I but truth is it's going to be a long way and many fights with everyone until we get there, it's sad to think about it but it's worth it coz I love

her, if it was the old me or I didn't feel love for her I would have long given up.

Lucy: why are you starring like that?

Me: I am just admiring you two.

Lucy: we look good together huh?

I laugh and nod

Me: definitely hey, you both were made for each other.

Phiwe: you are so sentimental yini you missing Lwandle?

Me: I always miss her bro.

Lucy: oh sorry Indi, it's all going to be okay.

Me: yeah it will be.

Lucy: and check up on her, she was just besides herself today.

I frown

Me: is it?

Lucy: yes she was not the same Lwandle I swear.

Me: did you maybe have a chance to talk to her?

Lucy: no not at all.

Me: fuck it's days like these where I wish I could just show up at her place.

Phiwe: don't do that, don't give into your frustrations.

Me: I am trying not to right now but it's damn hard coz even if I call her she'll just say she's okay.

Lucy: and if you were with her you'd see she isn't okay right?

Me: exactly hun.

Phiwe: don't let these things get the better of you grootman it's all going to work out.

Me: I feel like it's going to be way harder before we get to our Canaan.

Phiwe: like I said before ntwana yam, nothing worth having comes easy.

Lucy: it's true Indi hold on, you and Lwandle have love on your side and it always wins and on the bright side you are spending the whole of Saturday with her in a space that is welcoming and warm to who you guys are and we will be there to support you.

They try to lift my spirits but I just miss her and now I am worried that Ocean didn't seem okay.

—

•BANELE THWALA

I can't and I won't leave Lwandle for Zipho, not only because my father would kill me dead but because she proved to be the lose panty I always thought she was, she dropped her panty and gave me her virginity without thinking twice it shows how desperate she is and that's one thing I hate in my woman, a little hard to get has never hurt. Nolwandle and I won't be sexual

until we get married and I don't want to be with other woman back in the city just after we cleaned up the Bridget mess, so one candidate left and it's sitting on the passenger seat. The only logical thing is to keep fucking her until Nolwandle and I get married, it's free and available pussy and I won't say no to it. I look at her and her eyes are cast down.

Me: you want to be with me huh?

Her: yes only you.

Me: you would do anything to remove Lwandle from the picture.

Her: Banele I am better and I have proved it.

Me: you need to show me how much you want me, how much more you are willing to sacrifice to have me.

Her: what do you mean?

Me: I won't be able to leave Lwandle before I am sure of you. Would you always be available for me? Anytime i need want you? Would you

travel to the city just to take care of me without giving away our situation to others?

She swallows

Her: I would do anything Banele i promise.

I smirk.

Me: take off your clothes and come here.

I say already unzipping my jeans and she takes off her half jersey and her clothes follow one by one. I recline my seat back and take out a condom from my wallet, put it on carefully and take a look at the naked Zipho next to me.

Me: come on top of me.

I see her hesitate but she pushes whatever thought she has to the back of her head, and she comes to sit on me.

Her: you are not just using me right?

Me: no I am not, but you need to prove to me that you are better than Lwandle.

Her: I really do love you.

Me: then it won't be hard for you to do everything in your power to make me happy.

I jerk her up a bit and direct my manhood inside of her and she screams. I don't have the energy to foreplay this is just sex not for her but for me.

Her: Banele it's painful.

She cries

Me: you will get used to it with time, I promise.

I start moving her up and down and the tightness is driving me insane fuck. If I was trusting I was gonna hit it raw but I am still not sure what he game plan is so it's better safe than sorry.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I am in the dining table doing my homework, Siya is just on the couch watching the news, I will never understand why she is obsessed with current affairs. My mind is not in this homework at all, infact I can't think about anything else but

this Saturday, it's a mess I need to think fast on how I am going to fix this because wow, if I don't go with Indigo she will be hurt and disappointed especially since I am the one who insisted on going even when she tried to talk me out of it on the other hand my father would murder me for missing the dinner. I feel like crying, Indi has been trying to call for hours now but I am just scared to answer her calls and hear her excitement about the event and me being there.

Siya: what's wrong muntuza?

Me: mmmhh?

Siya: where were you?

She says pulling the chair near me

Me: trigonometry is just frustrating me, I am trying to figure this out

Siya: oh I am sorry babe, I wish I could help but I hated mathematics with all my heart.

I laugh.

Me: I will find it at the end I always do.

Siya: I am leaving tomorrow.

I feel my heart drop into my stomach

Me: Siya no please, you are the reason why I am able to breathe again in this house.

Siya: I am sorry Lwa, my husband is sick and they only gave me two days leave at work.

Me: how will I get through that dinner without you? I won't be able to Siya please.

I am already crying

Siya: hey hey look at me?

She says holding my hands.

Siya: you are a strong little lady muntuza and you are going to hold your head up high, play their game until you are old enough to walk out of this place to go and live your life and I will be out there waiting for you, waiting to help you navigate through life far away from this hell hole.

Me: I don't think I will be able to hold on until then.

Siya: of course you can Lwa, you've survived till now 8 more months and you are free.

I let my tears fall.

Me: I wish you didn't have to leave.

Siya: I hate that I am leaving you too but I promise to call each and everyday.

Me: please do please. I hear footsteps approach and I quickly wipe my tears

Ma: Lwa.

Me: yebo ma?

Ma: I am trying to make a grocery list for the ingredients I am going to use for the dinner.

Me: oh okay.

Ma: yes so I was wondering if Banele has mentioned what they like?

Siya: are you serious right now ma?

Ma: yes Siya, your father wants everything to be perfect.

She laughs and claps once

Ma: can't you see she is busy with school work?
You are the one who is worried about the stupid
dinner so you make the damn list and decide on
what those stupid people are going to eat.

Ma: watch your mouth.

Siya: hai mama please leave the child alone.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 15

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

Banele kept on going and going, he was
enjoying himself so much but all I could feel
was pain, so much pain. I hate sex with all my
heart but I don't have a choice I will hang in
there, after all a lifetime with him is worth it and
I am sure it will all change soon as we get

married or so I pray. I am putting my uniform back on coz he has ran out of condoms and it's already late, I don't even know what I am going to say at home.

Him: come on hurry Zee, I need to call Lwandle. He says and I feel like crying. Why must she be important, this is about us.

Me: you can start driving.

Him: just put on your jersey first come on.

I fix myself one last time and he starts the engine.

Him: before I forget take my phone and save your number.

I take it and it doesn't have a password, I go to the call log to access the keypad and I see Lwandle's number saved as Sthandwa.

Me: what should I save it as?

Him: good thing you asked just save it as Two.

He says and I shoot him a look

Me: why a number Banele?

Him: because I don't want to be explaining to Lwandle why I have your number.

Me: oh I see.

Him: don't read too much into this Zipho, you also have me but not fully coz you need to prove you deserve me more.

Me: I guess so.

Him: and don't share our relationship with anyone just yet please.

Me: you've already said that Banele.

I wasn't aware how fast he was driving coz the car comes to a halt at the corner of my house.

Him: I will call you and we'll arrange on when to meet next.

Me: okay I will be waiting.

Him: and please don't be awkward when we are around Lwandle.

I roll my eyes.

Me: goodnight Banele.

I open the door and get out, as I am walking home I am trying to come up with a story of where I was. I get in and to my surprise my parents are not in the lounge it's only Mbali who stands up soon as I walk in.

Her: where the hell have you been?

I sigh

Me: I was with Banele, where are our parents?

Her: They went to the church meeting the elders called.

Me: didn't they ask about me?

Her: of course they did but I said you had extra classes.

Me: oh thank God.

Her: I understand why you need to meet up with Banele but you need to tell me about it so I can cover for you.

Me: I am sorry sisi and thank you so much.

Her: now tell me how it went with Banele.

A DAY LATER

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I am back to being the scared little girl now that Siya is gone, but now that I lock my room I feel some sense of freedom and I will start enjoying my space without fear of anyone walking in without knocking, she really came through for me with the idea. It's a few days until Saturday, the big Saturday that everyone is waiting for, my father has been the happiest this week and more so since Siya left because no one will defy him. My phone rings and it's Indigo, I sigh and answer.

Me: Baby.

Her: Girlfriend, how are you?

Me: I'm good, you?

Her: I am great love. I am on my way back from the mall, I got you outfits for Saturday and Sunday.

I close my eyes hearing the excitement in her voice.

Me: Oh Indi that's very sweet of you love, thank you so much.

Her: anything for you babe, so do you think you can sneak out and come fit them, so I can go change them if they are not your size.

Me: uhm I honestly don't know love.

Her: I could give them to Lucy, and she will bring them with to school and you'll fit.

She says but I feel bad that she has to go to all these lengths for our relationship but I barely meet her half way.

Me: you can come to my place tonight.

She laughs but stops as she realizes I am not joking.

Her: are you for real?

Me: yes I am babe. Come through around 10pm they are normally asleep at that time.

Her: Ocean are you hearing yourself?

Me: I am, get here around 10pm and leave before they wake up.

Her: and what if they walk in your room and find us, he would kill us I swear.

Me: Indigo I lock my room and we won't make noise. You will use my window to come in and go out.

Her: fuck okay I am down.

I smile

Me: okay just call me when you are outside my place tonight.

She chuckles again.

Her: we really doing this?

Me: definitely.

Her: okay then I will be there I love you Nolwandle.

Me: I love you too Indigo so much.

Her: later then.

She hangs up and I realize what I just did and I smile, fuck what has gotten into me. Who the

hell am I becoming? And why does it feel so good living on the edge.

•BANELE THWALA

I am left with a week before I have to go back to the City, they have started to complain at work and I promised I am wrapping up everything and coming back that side. I just need to come up with a schedule of how I am going to be between the city and here and between Lwandle and my side piece, speaking of which I honestly have to find a way to get in Zipho's head to fully control her so she doesn't get out of order and starts doing as she pleases, the first thing she should always remember is Lwandle is respected and she comes first. This situation between us should just remain between us coz if a word reaches my father it's game over for me and everything I've built. My father would destroy it all with me in the process and burn it up in flames, he

might be a good caring man of God but to me he is as ruthless as they come but I can't really blame him, I've been a problematic child to him and it threatens his rule at church coz if the congregation could find out about my shenanigans they would lose trust in him.

Baba: Banele!

He shouts from the corridor and I get up from my bed to go open.

Me: yes sir

Baba: a word please.

He sounds so serious I just sigh.

Me: is everything okay?

Baba: it all depends on you son.

Me: I don't follow?

Baba: we are going to dinner at the Zulu home in a few nights.

Me: I am aware Baba.

Baba: I need you on your best behavior.

Me: relax please they are already eating out of my palm.

Baba: don't be cocky son, that's what put you in those damn situations before.

Me: with all due respect dad, I know what's at stake here so I will deliver a good performance to that family.

Baba: I don't need you to perform I need you to be the man I constantly try to make you, I need you to show them the kind of husband you will be to Nolwandle.

Me: I promise I will.

Baba: one mistake son I swear I will rain down on you and you won't see me coming.

Me: I don't know how to assure then.

Baba: just pray everything goes smoothly and they hand you their daughter because if it fails you would have tarnished my name and reputation. Your brothers all lived up to their duties and not once have they failed me and your mom. Not once did I have to clean up a

mess they made. For once Banele just make me proud.

His words hit and I realize that I've been seen as the black sheep in the family and I need to change that narrative.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I still can't believe I am doing this, what Ocean and I are doing is suicide coz if her father finds us we are both dead, but fuck it I am doing it, I miss her and this is our chance to spend time together and any chance that presents itself I am taking it. It's 10 after 10 and we just parked at the corner.

Phiwe: I am going to wait here a bit in case it all goes wrong.

Me: just leave Phiwe I will call if I need you.

Phiwe: grootman man this is crazy.

Me: the things we do for love.

He laughs

Phiwe: so vele uLwandle uyok'valela.

Me: it's crazy I know but it is what it is.

I was about to call when a text from her comes through.

Come through the passage love, I left my window open I smile.

Me: that's my cue.

Phiwe: don't do anything I wouldn't do.

I laugh.

Me: just be here by 5 bro.

Phiwe: have fun.

I wink at him and get out the car. I get to her house and all the lights are off, I open the gate and walk in the yard and move to the passage, indeed there is a window open and good thing it's not too high and it's big enough. I peep through and she is sitting on the bed tapping her foot, she is nervous.

Me: baby.

I whisper and she jumps from the bed and comes to the window, I hand her the plastics and jump in through the window. She closes it quickly while I admire her girly bedroom, it's super cute, I just didn't imagine it this way though. I turn and she attacks me with a hug and it just warms my heart.

Her: I miss you so much.

Me: I miss you too baby, but I am here now.

Her: I can't believe we are doing this.

Me: me either, it's shocking. Are you sure you locked your door?

Her: I checked a million times.

We are having this conversation whispering but not so much.

Me: I really appreciate you taking this risk so we can spend time.

Her: I just want you to know that this is a two way street.

I take her lips into mine and like a few times we've kissed, it feels magical, it's real and it's filled with love. I love this girl and if I wasn't sure today proved it coz I am in her father's house kissing her and ready to sleep over.

Me: oh I am so excited to see you in the clothes I got you.

I let go of her and sit on the edge of the bed and she starts removing her pyjamas and fuck I knew it, I knew she had a fine ass body. I bite my lip and stare at those pecky boobs, she hasn't looked at me and I assume she is shy. She fits the first outfit and she looks amazing, I love that she feels good coz she is posing in front of her full length mirror with a smile.

Her: I feel so beautiful, thank you babe.

Me: you are beautiful Ocean. Try the other one.

She fits it too and she looks more breathtaking, the kicks I got her look amazing with this outfit.

Her: wow you have taste, just look at how I transformed.

Me: now this is the outfit you are wearing on Saturday babe.

Her smile disappeared and I narrow my eyes

Me: are you okay?

Her: I am fine babe, just nervous about Saturday.

She says but I can tell there's more to this.

Me: I'll be there with you baby and we are going to have so much fun.

She nods and I stand up and take her in my arms. She holds on to me and I tighten my hold on her small waist.

Her: it's all going to work out, it has to.

She utters and from the mere statement I can tell something is going on with her, I wish she can just open up to me.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 16

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I open my eyes to the warmth of her arms and her scent intoxicates me so bad, I wish we could stay like this but our reality is harsh and we need to go back to it even after the perfect night we had. I try to move slowly and gentle enough so I don't wake her up, I need to check the time so we don't find ourselves in a mess. As I try to move my hand she speaks

Her: morning beautiful.

I smile and look at her

Me: morning babe, how did you sleep?

Her: I don't think I've had a more peaceful night.

I chuckle

Me: are you sure you didn't have nightmares of my father strangling you?

She smirks shaking her head.

Her: not even thoughts of your scary father could taint the perfect night I had.

Me: well I am happy to hear that.

Her: what's the time babe, we don't want your father to break down this door and find me in here now do we?

I reach for my phone and fuck we overslept

Me: it's five thirty Indi.

Her: fuck!

She curses getting out early of bed and putting on her clothes, I don't know why I find this amusing.

Me: slow down before you break your other leg

Her: why are you so calm.

Me: nothing can bother me today.

I get out of bed to open the window and peep through and the coast is clear so I go to hug her.

Her: thank you for taking such a huge risk for us to be together.

Me: I am glad I did honestly.

Her: I love you Ocean

Me: I love you too. I am seeing you again later tonight right?

Her: slow down tiger, we should be careful.

I sigh.

Me: we will be.

Her: I will call you later babe and we'll talk about it okay?

Me: okay.

She pecks my lips and takes the plastic of my new clothes and heads to the window, leaving me blushing from ear to ear.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

We needed this night and I will forever be thankful for the risk she took to meet me half way in making our relationship a success, we slept at around 1am talking about anything and

everything, and I must admit she has defined goals and objectives for a seventeen years old and I can only pray and hope that she achieves them all with me by her side. I manage to get out of the yard without being seen and I see my car parked at the corner of the street, I pick up my pace and reach it, I get in yawning.

Phiwe: you said 5am Indi man.

Me: the sheets were too warm.

Phiwe: I lost sleep to come through for you.

Me: I know and I am sorry grootman we just overslept.

Phiwe: mxm you owe me big time.

Me: and I will pay up.

Phiwe: so how was your night?

Me: it was amazing. We needed it to just cement our relationship.

Phiwe: and her parents?

Me: ai their bedroom is a bit far from Lwandle's so they didn't hear us or anything that was happening in her room.

Phiwe: you too are brave.

Me: just get me home before makhulu wakes up.

Phiwe: if she isn't already, you know she is an early bird.

Me: eish she would freak if she learned that I didn't sleep at home.

Phiwe: Don't worry grootman I already have a story to tell should we find her awake.

Me: thanks man, see why you are my favorite.

Phiwe: Suka, so you two doing this again soon?

I sigh

Me: she actually wants me to come back tonight.

Phiwe: you must have really showed her a great time if she wants a repeat so soon.

I just laugh and look out the window. I won't bother trying to clear the air coz I know he won't believe me so I let him believe what he wants. He drives a few minutes and we get home. Soon as we walk in we find our grandmother in the kitchen holding a cup of tea

Ma: and then Nina?

Me: morning makhulu.

I say looking at Phiwe to come with the story.

Phiwe: O'lady, one of my clients called me, his car wouldn't start and he has to drive to the city so I went to help, Indigo was just driving me there.

Ma: oh that's very nice. God will bless your heart and yours too Indigo for helping your brother.

Phiwe: ahh thanks ma.

Me: amen makhulu.

I say walking passed her going straight to my room, I laugh soon as walk in. Phiwe is good.

He messed up my bed to make it look like I slept here.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I slept with a heavy heart, I honestly thought Banele would at least call me goodnight but nothing, even now I haven't received a good morning text, I know I am the one who should be doing all the work to prove to him that I am worthy to be his wife but a little motivation from him would really go a long way. I am putting on my uniform, hating every minute of it

because I just hate having to go to school, that place is just depressing for me and I don't see it's importance in my life really. Mbali wakes up and sits up right as I comb my hair.

Me: I would kill to be you right now.

She laughs

Her: being at home is depressing Zipho, you will feel it next year, you move with the sun, hungry all day wondering where your next cent will come from.

Me: it can never be me sis I will be in the city with Banele.

Her: yes wena girl.

Me: I must dream big sis.

Her: very true babe. So are you meeting up with him again today?

Me: I honestly don't know, the terms are up to him.

Her: we need to find a way to make you in charge of how this relationship goes.

Me: please coz the first thing I would condemn him from is ever meeting with Lwa.

Her: your love hate for your so called best friend is just funny.

Me: trust me now I just dispise her, all the love I thought I had for her it's all gone.

Her: hai, so back to the PK.

Me: what's that now?

Her: Pastor's Kid, under which rock do you live?

Me: mxm what about him?

Her: next time you two have sex, insist on putting on the condom coz it's clear that he won't go raw with you.

Me: and?

Her: find a way to burst that condom and fall pregnant coz without his seed you can't fully tie him down.

I sigh

Me: Banele is very aware Mbali but I'll try.

Her: don't try just do it.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I swear nothing is going to ruin my mood today,
I had the best night and great start to my day,

even my stress levels about the whole pride and dinner thing has decreased a little. I will think of something tonight and fully commit to it. I get to school and meet up with Zipho at the gate.

Me: hey friend.

I say hugging her and kissing her all over her face.

Her: why are you so happy?

I smile

Me: how can I not, look the sun is shining the birds are singing it's just a beautiful day Zee.

Her: I know there's more to what you are letting on, so out with it.

Me: it's nothing really.

Her: did Banele do something nice for you maybe?

I laugh

Me: oh Zee, I-

I couldn't finish my sentence as someone pulled me from Zipho, I look and it's Lucy.

Lucy: we need to talk.

She says with a smile.

Her: how rude, can't you see we are still talking?

Zipho roars at her and I sigh.

Lucy: Relax mubizana yoh. You'll have her back in a few.

She pulls me away

Me: Zee I will come find you.

I shout and the look on her face is scary.

Me: where are you taking me?

Lucy: I want to hear everything that happened?

Me: what are you talking about?

Lucy: don't act dumb with me Lwa, Phiwe told me Indigo slept over at your place.

I laugh out loud.

Me: you two are gossip mongers

Lucy: whatever, so? How was it? Is it true that lesbians give more orgasms?

I laugh

Me: oh my God no no no.

Lucy: Don't be shy friend hai

Me: we didn't do anything we just slept.

Lucy: are you serious?

Me: yes we talked and slept.

Lucy: you two are boring.

Me: sorry to burst your bubble.

Lucy: but you are giving it up this Saturday right?

Me: I don't know.

I say my worry coming back again.

Lucy: you have to I mean this is a big night for the both of you and she is so excited to be doing this with you.

I fake a smile guilt eating through me, the thought of disappointing her is just too much to bear.

—
•MONDLI ZULU

My wife and I went to town to pick groceries for the meal she will be preparing for Saturday's dinner, it's only one day left until the big day, the day I get to seal the union between the two families, the day I get to be one of the most influential man in the church that has been around for generations. My father and his father before him must be proud of the achievement I am about to bring to our surname. I don't think anything can ruin my mood. We finished with everything on time and head home, as we drive in our street I see Banele's car driving off and it's good to see him and Lwandle working on their relationship, I am just happy Siya left and won't be giving Lwa any ideas of ditching this

arrangement. I park in the yard and we both get out the car. Bongeka goes to the boot to retrieve the groceries.

Me: khululeka I will do it.

She looks at me like I've just spoken gibberish

Her: Bab'Zulu?

I smile and shake my head.

Me: I said you can leave the groceries I will bring it inside.

Her: oh okay, thank you.

She is shocked to say the least. I never do this, I don't handle food it's a woman's department but I am happy so I don't mind bending the rules a little. I take out the plastics and go to the house. My daughter is nowhere to be seen

Me: where is Lwandle?

I ask Bongeka as she unpacks

Her: I think she's in the bathroom.

Me: okay. I stand there until the bathroom door opens and a minute later she walks in the kitchen

Lwa: sanibonani.

Her: Lwandle.

Me: MaZulu, unjani?

She frowns at me.

Lwa: I am okay thanks unjani wena?

Me: ngiyaphila ntombi (I am well thanks my girl) are you ready for Saturday's dinner?

Lwa: I am baba.

Me: that's good to know now I promised to give you money for a dress, here it is.

I hand her a couple of R100 notes.

Lwa: thank you, did you have a dress in mind?

Me: no no, anything you like just make sure it's appropriate and respectful to your husband and his people.

Her: Baba are you okay?

I laugh at my wife's question.

Me: yebo Bongeka I am well. So Lwandle you can skip school tomorrow and go to town to find the perfect dress, I will bring you everything they did in your classes.

They both look at me like I am a mad man and I just smile.

Lwa: alone?

Me: yebo Lwa, I can trust you right?

Lwa: yes you can baba fully.

Me: you will go alone then.

I say and walk out the kitchen. I am doing all this so they can relax and be in check for Saturday.

no edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 17

•BONEGEKA ZULU

I couldn't sleep a wink trying to figure out why my husband is suddenly nice to Lwandle, Mondli never does anything if it's not beneficial to him, something tells me that I should really worry about Lwandle and the freedom he has given her for the day. It's unsettling and somehow I just wish I can accompany her to town so I can make sure she makes the right choice of dress and comes home straight after to avoid drama. We are on our way to work and his mood is jolly, in years of marriage I don't think I've seen him so excited about anything.

Him: Bongeka you seem worried

Her: it's nothing Bab'Zulu.

Him: come on talk to your husband.

See what I am talking about? He is never this nice and he never pays attention to my feelings most times.

Me: are you sure about allowing Lwandle to miss school?

Him: yes I am sure, it's not like it's for nothing.

Me: I hear you and I ask this humble as I come but why are you being so nice?

He chuckles

Him: is it a bad thing that I am?

Me: I am not saying it's a bad thing. I am just asking.

Him: well when you show a child that you trust her, they do everything in their power to make sure they don't disappoint you.

Me: so you are doing all this so she can behave for tomorrow?

Him: exactly Bongeka.

Me: but she was still going to behave, she has been behaving for some time now.

Him: Lwandle tends to go south when you least expect it. So I want her to warm up to my soft

side for tomorrow so we can show the Thwala's that we are a warm United family.

Me: kodwa Banele saw you hit her that one time.

Him: and so, that proved that I am a responsible father.

I nod not understanding his reasoning but I will flow with it, the last thing I want to do is ruin his good mood. We can do with a cheerful Mondli even if it's this once.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

This will be the first time I have ever been to town on my own, or even choose clothes without my parents approval, this is new to me and it's exciting, I wonder what made my father decide on giving me a free pass, I know tomorrow is important to him I just didn't know this much. I am strolling up and down the town

excited to be on my own, this temporary freedom is nice it's exciting, I look at my watch and it's after 12pm. I should buy the dress and just leave before they get home, I walk into one of the few clothing stores around here and look around, I see an outfit similar to the one Indigo chose for me to tomorrow's event and realise that I still don't know what I am going to do and worse part I haven't even told her about the dinner with Banele and his family. I freeze on the spot thinking of what I am going to do. My eyes land on a t-shirt with a message. Live your Life and there and then I knew where I wanted to be tomorrow. I take my phone and call Indigo who answers almost immediately.

Her: Lover.

Me: Indigo.

She laughs

Her: so formal baby.

Me: it's just your name, what are you doing?

Her: I am with Phiwe and Lucy, just bought a few drinks.

Me: Lucy didn't go to school?

Her: yes, she is way to hyped up about tomorrow, are you calling me from the school toilets?

I chuckle and roll my eyes

Me: no I didn't go to school too, I am in town.

Her: why didn't you go again?

Me: long story babe, I'll explain, so I was thinking?

Her: I am listening my lady.

Me: let's leave for the city now, I want to see it today before the big day tomorrow.

Her: are you serious?

Me: why do you always ask me that.

Her: just that, uhm and your parents?

Me: Indigo leave my parents to me, can we go today? As in now?

Her: hold on a minute.

I hear her deliberate with Phiwe and Lucy and a second later cheer erupts making me anxious.

Her: okay Ocean, everyone is game on leaving right now, good thing I haven't had anything to drink yet. Give us 30 minutes will be there, we just need to pack.

Me: Good then, you'll find me by the KFC junction.

Her: sharp babe and Ocean?

Me: Indi?

Her: don't take it the wrong way but are you sure about this?

Me: 100% I want this, I want to be with you this whole weekend.

Her: I appreciate you babe.

—

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

Nolwandle did it again, she missed school and didn't care to tell me again, she knows that I can't stomach this place on my own but she does this, so much for being my best friend. I noticed that Lucy is also not around and that's something to raise my eyebrow on, I mean they have been buddy buddy lately and trust me I hate every minute of that ungodly friendship. I spot Mam'Zulu and quickly make my way to her.

Me: good afternoon ma.

She looks back at me and smile

Her: Zipho baby, how are you?

Me: I am okay mama, how are you?

Her: I am very well thanks.

Me: is Lwa sick again?

Her: oh no baby nothing like that.

Me: why didn't she come to school?

Her: Lwandle went to town to find a dress for tomorrow.

Me: is there anything special happening tomorrow?

She narrows her eyes.

Her: Lwandle didn't tell you anything?

Me: no ma, since she's started befriending Lucy she hasn't been the same.

Her: Lucy Zikode?

Me: the one and only mama.

Her: that girl is a non-believer why would she be her friend, I will have to talk to her about it.

Me: please don't mention that you heard it from me, I don't want her to think I am selling her out.

Her: I understand baby, you are a good friend.

Me: so what is happening tomorrow?

I fish and she gladly dishes.

Her: Banele and his family are coming over for dinner just so we can start forming a

relationship as the two families will soon be joined through our children.

To hear this stings me, so Banele will be playing happy families tomorrow while I am doing everything I can to show him that I love him, why is he doing this to me.

Me: that's great news ma.

I say with the fakest smile masking the pain and envy I feel inside.

—

•INDIGO NCQOBO

Oceans call surprised me like always but what she had to say got me for a minute but knowing she wants to be with me the entire weekend is fuelling my love for her, I just hope the heat won't be too much when we get back with her parents, I mean we would have all had a great time but she will be the one to feel the wrath of her father, but now it's not the time to worry

about that, I don't want to depress her coz obviously she knows this. Lucy and Phiwe are super excited to be leaving today, we are on our way to where she said she will wait and as soon as we reach there I am left with a huge surprise.

Phiwe: is that your girlfriend?

Me: it's her.

I say failing to take my eyes off her. She is not in the usual long skirt, long sleeves attire hiding her beautiful body, she is wearing a really tight ripped pair of skinny jeans with a white vest and I can't see exactly what she has on her feet but it seems like push in's. Phiwe parks in front of her and I open the door for her, she quickly jumps in.

Me: you look amazing.

She smiles and comes in for a snuggle and I am glad Phiwe is driving.

Lucy: wow Lwa, I didn't know you were hiding such a fire body.

Her: thanks guys.

Phiwe: hey Ocean.

Her: hey, can we get out of here please.

Lucy: yaaaaaaaasss makube lit.

I laugh at the carefree spirit Lucy has. She increases the volume and Amapiano play louder just not loud enough to make it impossible for me to talk to my girl.

Me: baby are you sure about this?

Her: I love you Indigo, and when I am with you I feel alive, you ignite a fire in me I can't ignore, I don't know what my father will do when I get back but I know I would have experienced a new thing with you.

Me: I love you too girlfriend, and I will never forget all the sacrifices you are making just to be with me.

Her: we are going to be okay right?

Me: we are going to be okay love I promise.

I take her in my arms to reassure her. She took a huge risk for us and if I hurt this girl I would be the biggest fool coz I'd never find another one as real as her.

Her: you didn't forget my clothes right?

I laugh, amused by her question.

Me: I packed them first babe.

Her: I need to do my hair.

Me: I know the perfect place I'll take you soon as we get to Jozi.

Her: can I drink just to calm my nerves.

I sigh

Me: I am going to be buying you alcoholic beverages and non alcoholic okay, you are going to be drinking one alcoholic then one non alcoholic so you don't get too drunk.

She smiles

Her: but even if I get too drunk, you'll take care of me.

Me: always. Grootman can you stop so I get Ocean a drink in the cooler.

Phiwe parks and I quickly get out and take a few drinks for each of us.

Me: shaya imoto baba (start the car let's go).

Lucy: to a great weekend!

Her: to a great weekend.

My girl follows and the joy in my heart right now I can't explain.

—

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 18

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I am on my second can of this cider and I feel a little tipsy, Indigo is not being too careful with

how I drink and I am grateful she is letting me be, I just want to have mad fun this weekend so I can die in peace when we get back coz my father is sending me straight back to meet my maker but good thing I would have lived a little and enjoyed my life. I still can't believe I am doing this, where did I take this courage again? Somebody please tell me coz I'm shocked myself even. The mood in this car is on a 100 but I just want to get to the big bad city and just live like tomorrow doesn't exist.

Me: baby how far till we get there?

Indi: 2 more hours to go love and we are there.

Me: and you wanted us to drive tomorrow? We would have been tired as hell to go to the event.

Indi: I guess you did right by suggesting that we drive today.

Me: so where will we be sleeping?

Indi: I don't think we will be doing a lot of sleeping tonight, I want to show you guys my

territory, but obviously we need to rest so I will book us into a guest house coz tomorrow we are booked at the hotel.

I smile coz I've never slept anywhere else but my house.

Me: I am so excited.

She pecks my lips with her arm still draped over my shoulder.

Indi: I can see that babe and it's getting me more excited.

Me: where have you been all my life though.

Indi: I would ask you the same question love.

Phiwe: okay love birds it's your turn to take the wheel now.

Lucy: yes please we also want yo be lovey dovey.

Me: but guys you are always lovey dovey. Can you just hold the fort for today.

I ask making my puppy face and Phiwe laughs

Indi: Ocean is right grootman, we deserve sometime to just be glued together.

Phiwe: but when we come back you are driving coz I will be damn sloshed.

Indi: yeah deal.

Lucy: emotional blackmail wow you two.

Indi: aow Mfazi ka mfowethu I thought you were our number one supporter.

Lucy: I am just not at my expense, I also want some kisses.

Me: Phiwe can just park aside a while and give you some.

Indi: that could work.

Phiwe: yaz Ocean you are proving to be Indigo's girlfriend.

We all laugh.

—

•ZIPHO MHLINGO

This was just a shitty day, these non believers were at it today, they teased my kind the whole day making this day more shitty. With them on my case and the story of the dinner I was just wondering how I am still standing. The school bell rings and I quickly pack my things, Banele is at the gate I want to give him a piece of my mind for not telling me about that stupid dinner he and his family will be attending tomorrow. I walk to the gate and notice that his car is not parked, my heart drops to my stomach, why wouldn't he come to get me? This guy's seems to enjoy hurting me when all I want to do is love and appreciate him. I start making my way home with my broken heart and I am disturbed by my vibrating phone, I quickly take it out from my pocket and it's a wrong number.

Me: hello?

Him: Hey Zee.

I smile and stop as I hear his voice.

Me: Bands is that you?

Him: yeah it's me.

Me: why are you calling with a private number though?

Him: oh really I wasn't aware.

Me: okay now you know so remove it and call again so I can also have your number.

Him: I will just text it to you.

Me: why didn't you come get me?

Him: Nolwandle didn't come to school.

Me: what about me?

Him: Zipho do you use your brain kodwa?

Me: what is that supposed to mean?

Him: I knew that Lwandle wasn't coming to school why would I come get you? Do you want to raise suspicions?

I roll my eyes

Me: I guess I understand.

Him: learn to think man, that was simple logic.

Me: you don't have to insult me, and why didn't you tell me about the dinner thing tomorrow?

He laughs

Him: yoh yoh Zizipho, you do know what a side piece is right?

He asks and I swear tears form immediately in my eyes

Me: Banele, I uhm.

Him: Nolwandle is not this nagging and she is my wife to be. Don't cause me stress when my main doesn't.

I just can't listen to him telling me all these painful things.

Me: is there a reason why you called?

Him: I wanted to see you but you've already bored me with your inability to stick to your lane. He says and hangs up.

Me: Banele? Banele?

I say looking at the screen and putting it back on my ear but why coz I heard him hang up on

me. Fuck Zipho you can mess up Fuck. I mentally kick myself.

•MONDLI ZULU

Bongeka and I drive into our yard and I want her to start cleaning up and making small preparations for tomorrow, I don't want her falling behind and the Thwala's arrive here to mediocre things, everything must be exceptional, they must see us at the same level as them even though they are rich. We both walk out and I lock the car. We walk to the front door and it's locked, I thought Lwandle would be home by now. I unlock and we get in.

Me: Bongeka

Her: Bab'Zulu?

Me: please check if Lwandle is in her room.

Her: oh okay.

She disappears in the corridor and I settle on the single couch and turn on the TV to watch some current affairs

Her: Baba

Me: yebo?

Her: she is not at home.

Me: oh she must be enjoying the town then.

She frowns

Her: I should call her to find out where she is.

Me: don't do that Bongeka

Her: kodwa Bab'Zulu.

I hold out my hand to silence her.

Me: leave her be she will come home. A child that is shown trust behaves in a good manner.

Her: finding out where she is won't hurt.

Me: she might be with her husband for all we know, after all they are always together around this time.

Her: maybe you are right.

Me: of course I am.

Her: i just wanted her to help me with a few things for tomorrow.

Me: just continue she will help when she arrives and don't call her.

Her: I won't Bab'Zulu.

Me: can I have something to refresh.

Her: okay

—

•INDIGO NCQOBO

We finally drive into Johannesburg and I take the wheel from Phiwe, he isn't really familiar with the the driving style of this place and we don't want any problems. The girls are super silent looking outside the window admiring the concrete jungle. I am happy that my girl will finally see this city she so badly wants to live in and I will be the one showing her. I make my way to the more silent and porch side of the city

to the guest house I trust. I press the intercom at the gate and a voice comes through.

Voice: Palms guesthouse how may I help you?

Me: uhm hi, I was hoping to book 2 rooms for night rest and a few hours for tomorrow.

Voice: okay please drive in and make your way to the reception.

Me: okay thanks.

The gate slides open and I drive in, I am glad to find parking under the carport.

Me: I will be right back, you can take out the bags in the mean time.

Phiwe: sure grootman.

I go to the reception and make payment and the girl behind the desk gives me two keys. As I walk back to the car I find Phiwe snapping a few pictures of the girls, posing, laughing and dancing. It's really good seeing my girl so happy and carefree, this is how I want to see her

always, I wish I didn't have to drive her back to that depressing place.

Me: I got the keys guys, we are nextdoor neighbors let's go.

I help Phiwe carry the things and hand him their key. We walk to the rooms

Me: 1 hour to refresh and we hitting the streets yes?

Lucy: yes yes yes. I can't wait.

Me: cool, baby come.

She walks in first and I follow behind her, I place the bags near the door and close the door, as I turn she attacks me with a kiss and I can't help but move my hands to her ass, I've been dying to squeeze it since I saw her at the junction. The kiss gets heated so we break it, we haven't really spoken of sex and I want to explain it to her first before we do it coz she is clueless about this life.

Her: this place is beautiful, I am happy to be seeing it with you.

Me: I love you so much Ocean.

Her: I love you too baby and I want us to have a great weekend.

Me: That's what I want too babe, and not to burst our bubble but your parents?

She sighs heavily

Her: Tomorrow Banele and his parents are coming to my place for dinner and I won't be there obviously coz I am where my heart is happy.

Me: Lwandle.

I say closing my eyes

Her: he is probably going to kill me but I don't care coz I am with someone I love and I am about to have the best weekend of my life and I will die a happy woman.

Me: Baby.

I say softly not knowing how to react to what she just said.

Her: Don't do that Indigo don't. We are not going to stress, I knew what I was doing and I would do it again. I will worry Sunday night.

Me: Ocean I just.

She shakes her head.

Her: be on the same page with me, no talks about my family, promise me.

Me: okay I promise.

She smiles and brings her lips closer again.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 19

•MONDLI ZULU

It's after 10pm and Nolwandle is still not home, I won't lie I am starting to panic now, I don't even think she is with Banele because the latest he

has ever brought her home is 8:30pm so this is really drastic, I just hope I didn't shoot my self in the foot with giving her the freedom and trusting her. A part of me wants to call Banele to just be sure of her whereabouts. My wife walsk in the lounge and sigh deeply.

Her: Bab'Zulu I know what you said but this is worrying you have to admit.

Me: I know Bongeka I know.

I snap at her.

Her: I am not trying to make you angry.

Me: what do you suggest we do?

Her: we don't have a choice but call Banele.

I sigh and take out my phone and dial his number he picks up after forever.

Him: Bab'Zulu.

Me: oh Banele I called you?

Him: yes sir, is there a problem?

Me: oh not at all son, I thought I dialed Bongani, Siya's husband.

Him: the B confused you, I understand baba.

Me: yes son, next time I should just ask Lwandle to help me dial.

He laughs

Him: speaking of Lwandle can you please ask her to call me sir coz I have been trying to reach her all day but I can't go through.

Hearing him ask that of me literally send me to an early grave, she is not with him.

Me: she is sleeping right now son, but first thing in the morning I'll tell her.

Him: Thank you baba.

Me: okay then goodnight.

I hang up, and Bongeka has her hands on her head already.

Me: she's not with him.

I say feeling my heart beat so fast and I am failing to breathe. I move my hand to my chest and Bongeka quickly comes to me.

Her: Zulu, breathe please Breathe. In and out, in and out yes just like that.

She helps me normalize my breathing but I am raging with anger I am literally shaking.

Me: where the hell could she be at this time Bongeka.

Her: I don't have any idea myeni'wam.

Me: I am going to kill her, with my bare hands I swear I am going to squeeze the life out of her tiny body.

I say standing up pacing up and down.

Her: please calm down Bab'Zulu.

Me: don't tell me that, she is not home and she is not with her husband, where could she possibly be at this time if she didn't run away.

Her: she wouldn't run baba, maybe something serious happened to her, this was the first time time she was alone at town.

Me: Don't make stupid excuses for her, I shouldn't have allowed her to go alone, the pastor and his family are coming tomorrow.

Her: she will be back by then.

Me: don't be stupid Bongeka.

I say holding her shoulders and shaking her.

Her: Baba please!

She cries

Me: oh this is a mess, what am I going to tell the Thwala's. Nolwandle messed up my plans.

Her: baba calm down you will have a heart attack.

Me: I would rather be hospitalized to avoid the shame your daughter has brought to me.

Her: let me call Siyamthanda and ask if she hasn't reached out to her.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I feel so good, I am having so much fun my father is even the least of my worries right now. Indigo brought us to some place they call Maboneng, this place is filled with restaurants, clubs you name them. We are drinking at some place called Shakers Bar and it's super packed, it's even difficult to move around but the vibe is just on another level, I am so glad that I dressed like everyone here so I don't feel out of place. The music is bursting off the speakers and the alcohol gallo. I am drunk and it's a miracle I haven't passed out, Indi has even started me on water. My bladder feels like it's about to burst, I attempt to stand up to go to the toilet but my girlfriend quickly holds my wrist

Her: where are you you going babe?

I smile, she is very territorial tonight.

Me: I need the bathroom love.

Her: okay let me accompany you.

She stands up and signals to Phiwe and we walk to the bathroom, she stands outside the

door and I go in and there is a queue but it's not so bad. As I am waiting in line my phone vibrates and I know it's not anyone from back home because I blocked them all, I don't want anyone ruining my mood and my weekend. I take it out and it's my sister.

Me: Siya

Her: muntuza, where are you?

I giggle.

Me: I am in line to use the bathroom.

Her: Nolwandle are you drunk?

Me: yup, I am having the time of my life sis you won't believe.

Her: Muntuza are you safe? Where are you?

Me: please don't worry about me sis I am safe with people I know. I can't tell you where I am coz you will have to tell our parents but I promise you I am safe.

Her: you need to go home, Bab'Zulu is breathing fire, he is so mad Lwa, go home please Nana.

Me: I know he is, and I will face him Sunday and I will die a happy girl, just don't worry I am safe okay?

Her: Nolwandle at least tell me where you are please?

Me: I am far from home that's all you need to know, I will go home just not today or tomorrow. I am safe and I will call you tomorrow.

Her: Muntuza!.

I hang up and giggle. I am sorry but where did I get get this courage from?. It's finally my turn and I get in the cubicle and lower my pants, soon as I am down on the toilet seat I just giggle.

Me: ya ne I am drunk and this place is banging with fun.

I whisper to myself eyes closed. I finish up and go out, wash my hands and walk out.

Her: I thought you flushed yourself down the toilet.

I giggle and snake my hands around her neck.

Me: I love you.

She smiles and kisses my lips and it goes on a while. The taste of the hard liquor she is drinking stays on my tongue.

Her: I love you too Mami, are you having fun?

Me: I am having the time of my life baby thank you for bringing me here.

Her: we going to go sleep soon okay?

I nod and move my lips to her ear to whisper.

Me: I want you to love me when we get home.

She moves her head quickly and looks at me in the eyes.

Her: babe? Are you saying what I think you saying?

Me: yes I am, I know I don't know much but teach me Indigo, have me in all aspects of the content.

Her: Ocean.

She says in a low voice, and it's arousing me. Every second with her makes it worth the risk. If I die on Sunday let me die a happy girl.

•BONGEKA ZULU

Its just after 7am and I didn't have a good night rest at all, I look behind me and notice that Zulu never came to bed because his side is not wrinkled, I quickly get up to check on him and see if Nolwandle is not back home. I start in her room and it's still the same way I left it last night, where could this child be oh Lord. I make my way to the dining room and I find him still sitting on the couch and he is sleeping, clearly only slept now. I shake him a bit and he jerks up.

Him: is that harlot home?

He asks and murder laced in his voice.

Me: no baba she isn't.

Him: Bongeka this is the day of the dinner what am I going to do?

Me: I really don't know baba I am sorry.

Him: how do I even explain this whole thing to Banele and his family? Nolwandle has brought shame to me and my home.

Me: I am sorry Zulu.

I say fearing for my daughter coz when she gets back home her father is going to punish her so server she will wish for death.

Him: Siyamthanda knows where Lwandle is.

Me: why do you say that baba?

Him: when she called us back she sounded less worried and she hasn't called even now to ask if she is home, they are too close for her to just take this light.

I sigh

Me: that's very true baba.

Him: let's go prepare we are driving to Durban.

Me: Kodwa baba what will we tell the Thwala family?

Him: let's go I will think of an excuse to cancel this whole thing.

Me: okay, I will go prepare a bath for you.

I hurry out to the bathroom praying silently that we find Nolwandle at her sisters house.

—

•BANELE THWALA

A few hours to the dinner and my union with Nolwandle will be sealed for life, I am going to make sure that things between us works out, I also want to make my father proud of me like he is of my brothers. I have made a lot of mistakes in my life and most of my messes he

had to clean up so it's time I did something to make him proud of me too. I am getting this marriage right and nothing will stand in my way. I am in my bedroom trying to find the perfect outfit for tonight when my mom walks in.

Me: kodwa mama what happened to knocking?

Ma: I am sorry son.

Me: do you need anything?

Ma: your father asked me to come get you, he wants to talk to us?

Me: is everything okay?

Ma: I don't know we will find out together come.

I follow her out and we get to his office. He is sitting behind his desk.

Me: Baba?

He sighs

Him: I just got off a call with Zulu not too long ago.

I narrow my eyes

Me: is everything ok?

Him: unfortunately not Banele, they had to cancel the dinner to drive to Durban. His first daughter is seriously sick, his son in law informed him last night and they didn't think it's anything serious but he called again and she is worse even hospitalized.

Ma: oh that's very sad.

Me: oh man that's a bam, hence he called me instead of his first son in law the stress got him confused last night.

Him: we need to kneel down and pray for his family.

Ma: that's a good thing to do baba.

Me: we praying now?

Him: yes Banele.

I sigh as we kneel down. It's about to be a long ass praying session.

—

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I have been up for a while now thinking about the early hours of this morning, I honestly didn't think we would have sex this early in our relationship, I thought she would want me to verbally educate her before it but she preferred to be taught practically and man I sure damn showed my skills coz my hun was like an open tap, her clit is very sensitive it doesn't take long to make her cum all over my face. She will learn more as we go coz I don't want to overwhelm her, baby steps for her, for us. She is sleeping peacefully facing up, her thigh and one breast exposed, I go to her and start sucking it.

Her: mmmh

Me: wakey wakey sleeping beauty.

She opens her eyes

Her: I feel like I have been hit by a truck.

I laugh.

Me: it's called a hangover baby.

Her: how do we get rid of it, i don't want to feel this way.

Me: get up take a shower and we will all go buy something greasy before we come back to prepare for the event.

Her: what time is it?

Me: 11am babe.

Her: you said we leaving for the event at 3pm right?

Me: yes ma'am. Now go shower I will go check on Lucy and Phiwe.

Her: okay okay.

She gets up and closes her eyes and I smirk, her head must be heavy.

Her: I am not drinking alcohol again.

Me: we will see about that babe.

She gets out of bed and goes to the bathroom but stops at the door.

Her: Indi?

Me: yes babe?.

Her: what you did to me when we got home, I really enjoyed every minute of it, I've never felt so much pleasure before.

I smirk and she disappears before I can say anything but I will admit I feel like a boss my girl complementing me like that. I walk out of our room and find Phiwe smoking.

Me: grootman.

Him: ola malumes.

Me: is Lucy up?

Him: yes she is just putting on her clothes.

Me: let's go get some food before we prepare for the pride.

Him: now you talking, last night was hectic and when we get home thinking we'd rest your girl screams this whole place down.

I burst out laughing.

Me: was she that loud?

Him: Lucy was even mad that I didn't make her cum so many times.

This statement just finished me off.

Me: such exaggeration grootman.

Him: I kid you not, you must just give me lessons once.

Me: I don't mind.

We fist bump and he laughs too.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 20

•MONDLI ZULU

In no time I drove into Durban, I just thank God and my ancestors that there weren't any traffic police on the way because my driving was bad, I could even see Bongeka holding on to her

seat belt and I can tell that she was holding her breathe the entire way but I don't have anytime to waste, I need to find Lwandle and teach her a lesson she won't forget in a hurry, each time she thinks of crossing me she will definitely remember what I am about to do to her. I take the wrong turn and bang on the steering wheel.

Me: shit shit shit.

Her: language Bab'Zulu. You will need to pray for forgiveness.

Me: hai hai don't give me that, I am stressed out because of your lose daughter, the Lord will understand.

She sighs and shakes her head.

Her: We are going to find her mnyeni wam.

Me: you got that right and do me a favor Bongeka and don't even think of stopping me when we get there, siyezwana (are we clear?)

Her: yebo Bab'Zulu.

A few more minutes we are parked outside my first daughter's house and I get out without even caring to lock. She runs behind me but I know she won't dare standing in my way. I bang on the door and Siya is the one who opens.

Siya: Baba?

Her tone questioning. I just hold her by her throat and walk inside towards the wall and press her to it. She is struggling to breathe and busy hitting my strong arms

Me: where the hell is Nolwandle?

I roar and she tries to speak out but I am not intending on letting go of her throat. Bongeka is next to us with her hands covering her mouth and crying.

Me: don't just stand there and cry like a bastard child look for Lwa in every room, bring her out here Bongeka.

I scream at her and she attempts to walk, when a sudden push moves me from Siya and setting her free from my hold, I look and it's her husband Bongani.

Him: with all due respect baba you will not come to my house and get physical with my wife. I will not allow that.

He says standing firm and tall facing me. I look down at the coughing Siyamthanda. Her mother tries squatting in front of her to comfort her but she roughly wiggles her whole body to warm her.

Siya: don't you dare even touch me.

Her: Siya please.

Me: get up Bongeka you won't be begging a child, get up.

I roughly pick her up.

Him: Bab'Zulu please leave my house and come back when you are ready to respect that this is my house and this is my wife.

Me: listen here boy I am not leaving here without my daughter.

Him: Siyamthanda is my wife, she is not going anywhere with you acting like an animal.

Me: where the hell is Nolwandle? Bring her out now or I will burn this house down.

Siya: I told you that Lwa isn't here.

Me: if that's the case you and this boy wouldn't mind me checking for myself.

Bongani chuckles

Him: leave before I call the cops and have you arrested for trespassing.

Siya: no babe, leave him to see for himself. Go on, check even in the closets check every little place, go on ma help your husband.

She says getting up with one hand rubbing her neck.

Me: Good then.

I say and go towards the other rooms and check each and everyone of them thoroughly and she is nowhere and there isn't evidence of the 3rd person in this house. I sit on the bed and bury my head in my hands feeling my temperature rise. Where could Nolwandle possibly be.

Siya: Get out of my house your filthy old man.

Her: Siyamthanda please don't talk like this. We are just worried about your sister.

Siya: will you stop making excuses for this man mama, will you just stop. He almost killed me right in front of you and you did absolutely nothing about it, you just watched waiting for me to drop dead.

Her: that's not true please.

Siya: just leave my damn house leave.

She screams crying and I get up and take Bongeka's hand and walk out the bedroom.

—

•BANELE THWALA

I had to leave the house and I needed to do it fast. I honestly can't stay there coz they will be praying each and every hour for Lwandle's sister to heal and I won't stand for that I just can't. Lwandle's number still takes me straight

to voicemail and that's just frustrating. I called Zipho to meet me by the other street. I have been parked here for a few minutes now and she still isn't here. She should have just told me if she can't come. The door opens and she gets in, oh she came from the back as I was expecting her to come this way. She folds her arms and says nothing.

Me: such attitude?

Her: Hi Banele.

I chuckle.

Me: you really need to be schooled yoh.

She looks at me with an eyebrow raised, my palm is twitching to just give her one slap to behave like a side chick.

Her: what is that supposed to mean?

Me: baby girl if I were you I would drop the attitude coz I wouldn't mind beating it out of you.

Her face quickly falls

Her: Banele you just have to start treating me right, you can't make me feel like a worthless piece of meat.

Me: that is exactly what you are though. Listen here if you are going to act like Lwandle the main chick I mean, then we can just stop this shit right here right now.

Her: just listen to how you are speaking to me.

Okay she is trying me now. I hold her hand and start squeezing her fingers

Her: Banele you are hurting me.

She cries.

Me: listen here, if you want to keep me you are going to stop being annoying, you are going to stop asking me about Nolwandle and our relationship, you don't have the right to have my number, if I want to talk to you I will call you simple. You don't even have the right to ask me about my whereabouts, you can't even be mad at me because I am not yours to fuss over siyezwana?

She nods vigorously.

Me: no say it, you have a mouth and a voice so say it.

Her: Siyezwana Banele.

Me: and stop talking so much, there is nothing attractive with a woman that runs her mouth even if she is a side thing.

Her: okay.

Me: Now do you think you can spend the night with me?

Her: I thought you were having dinner with Lwa and her family.

I sigh.

Me: Zizipho what did I just say?

Her: I am sorry I am sorry.

Me: so can you spend the night?

Her: let me call my sister.

Me: you can go make arrangements and I'll call you in an hour to find out if it's all systems go.

Her: okay.

Me: make sure you have an answer in an hour coz I am going to need to call and book a room with the guesthouse in town

She smiles.

Her: okay let me go prepare.

Me: sure.

She gets out and I start my engine. What I have planned for her won't be able to happen in the car, the space is too limiting. I am just crossing fingers that she can come through.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I don't think I have ever seen anything more beautiful, same sex relationships are the order of the day, straight people are also here supporting their friends and everyone is just comfortable in their own skin, it's colorful and joyful and exciting. People are holding the

LGBTIQ flgs, placards and banners with messages about the community. They take pride in who they are and they are not ashamed at all to live their truth in front of the whole world and it's an honor for me to be a part of this beautiful thing. I look and feel amazing in this outfit and the colorful wings Indigo bought me gives me extra confidence. We didn't participate in the whole parade coz Indi has a cast on, now everyone is gathered at the venue where the festival is going to happen, there is an artist performing at the stage and the mood and atmosphere here is HAPPY AND FREE and I am super glad that I came here. I am on top of Indigo drinking a non alcoholic cider, I want to start drinking later so I don't get drunk quickly I want to be awake for the whole night and see everything we get up to tonight. I am on Indigo's lap and she is holding a glass of cognac in her hand while the other is snaking my waist.

Me: This is beautiful babe.

Her: I know, this is one place where no one can judge us for who we are.

Me: can we live like this everyday?

She laughs

Her: We can only wish babe, still not ready to drink?

Me: no not yet love maybe around 6.

Her: I am just happy you are happy.

Lucy: But those lesbians are hot God why Mara.

Phiwe: you see now? We will leave kanti.

We all burst out laughing.

Lucy: i am just saying baby hai.

Phiwe: your eyes have to be here only here.

He says pointing to himself.

Her: jealousy makes you nasty grootman.

Indigo jokes

Me: it's not too late to join the team friend.

I add.

Phiwe: I would burn this whole place down,
kunyiwe manje.

Indigo is laughing out of his mind.

Me: You just added happiness to my day
shame Sphiwe.

He winks at me

Phiwe: But in all honesty thanks for inviting my
girl and I to come here, I didn't think I'd have so
much fun malumes

Her: ahh Grootman, thanks for the support.

They click glasses.

Me: okay now I think it's time I started drinking.

Indi gives me a look, I just pecks her lips and
take out a cider from the coolerbox. I take her
glass and hand her my bottle so she can open
for me.

Lucy: Ocean come let's dance.

Me: oh no I have two left feet.

Lucy: no one will care, just look everyone is lost
in the moment.

Her: she's right babe, show your baby some moves.

I blush and look around, what the hell I am here to have fun.

Me: let's do this.

I get off her and take Lucy's hand and we start dancing. To live your life and your truth will always be the best feeling ever. Nothing beats this moment for me. THIS IS ME.

•BONGEKA ZULU

Things really got out of hand back at Siya's house and it happened hours ago but I am still shaking. The image of my daughter struggling to breathe because her father was choking her is disturbing and it just hurts my heart because I stood there and did nothing, what kind of mother does that, what kind of mother am I? I don't think I even deserve to call myself a

mother, I've done nothing but fail both my children. Zulu decided to book us into a place coz he was too angry to drive back home. I am sitting outside trying to gather my thoughts.

The sliding door opens and he walks out.

Him: will you just stop crying like a child who lost some candy.

I cease crying and wipe my tears

Me: I am sorry mnyeni'wami.

Him: have you tried Nolwandle's number again?

Me: it still takes me straight to voicemail.

Him: She is really asking for my wrath.

Me: I think something really serious happened to her, I believe we should go to the police now.

Him: it hasn't been 48 hours Bongeka and Nolwandle is not missing or anything drastic. She ran away and deep down you know it too.

I sigh.

Me: just that she hasn't done this before, no matter how much she didn't want to do anything.

Him: Just stop talking before I deal with you.

Me: Baba.

Him: get inside and go wash your face, we are going out to find something to eat and some toiletries.

He orders me like a little child and I sigh deeply before getting up.

—

•INDIGO NCQOBO

Last night was mad fun, I got so drunk I still wonder how we got back to the hotel, good thing I booked the hotel closer to the venue were the event was. Ocean was living her life last night I swear she was having fun like this was the last. I am happy that she got to see that there is life beyond that hell whole and that it's

not just us but there are millions around the world. I open my eyes and she is sitting on the couch and it's obvious her thoughts are a million miles away. I get out of bed and go towards her and sit next to her.

Me: babe.

She looks at me and fakes a smile.

Her: oh hey I didn't see you wake up.

Me: you wouldn't have coz your mind is not here what's wrong?

Her: I'm just hangover love.

Me: come on Ocean, you would still be in bed if you were babalazed.

Her: Reality just kicked in.

She says tears forming in her eyes.

Me: oh my love come here.

She holds on to me and I hear her sniff and she just breaks my heart.

Me: I am so sorry baby

Her: he is going to kill me Indigo.

Me: I could stage a kidnapping. I have a police friend back there.

She shakes her head

Her: no no I don't want to take it that far, he would follow it to the last detail and it will be a lie and your friend would be in so much trouble.

Me: I can't just sit here and do nothing knowing very well that he is going to lose it on you.

Her: I took a decision Indi and I will face the consequences, he is a monster but he did teach me accountability.

Me: Ocean please let me do this.

Her: I had the time of my life and even if he beats me to death he wouldn't take that away from me.

Me: Don't talk like this please. What are you gonna say?

Her: I won't say anything to him. My silence will have to get me out of this.

Me: let me help you please.

Her: no, just give me the best last few hours of my freedom in this beautiful city.

Me: I won't be able to enjoy it baby.

Her: do it for me please.

Me: I admire your bravery so much Nolwandle Zulu and I love you with all my heart, I am blessed to have met you and to get to call you the love of my life.

Her: I love you too Miss Ncqobo.

The thought of what that man is going to do her makes my skin crawl, I wish she can let me help her with this but Lwandle is head strong once her mind is made up there is no changing it.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 21

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

The pact that was made on Friday when we drove here dissolved without us even discussing it, Phiwe took the wheel again without complaining, I think he feels bad for me so he is letting his cousin have a moment with me, we really need it coz I won't lie I am shit scared but I have a plan and I hope it works out in my favor but to be sure that I can stick to it I have to turn on my phone and make a couple of calls. I am laying on Indigo's lap and she is brushing my back, I am crying silently, crying because after today my father will make it his mission to keep me his prisoner and the thought of not seeing the only person that makes me feel alive like this hurts to the core. She helps me up and makes me sit on her so we are face to face, she kisses my tears and I can see the worry and hurt in her eyes. The jolly mood from Friday is gone and replaced by

sadness and fear of the unknown that awaits me at the Zulu home.

Indi: Baby come with me tonight and I will arrange that kidnapping.

Me: I need to face this love, I wouldn't be me if I let someone else get into trouble because of my actions

Indi: he won't mind Ocean please.

Me: trust that I can handle this my love.

Indi: I just don't want him to hurt you, I wouldn't be able to live with myself.

Me: you gave me a beautiful experience I will never forget in my life. I love you and believe that we will be okay. After all tough times don't last but tough people do, it's time I toughen up so I get through this.

Indi: I love you so much, my strong, beautiful little lady.

I smile.

The car comes to a halt and we realize we are at a one stop.

Phiwe: let's go pee guys and find something to eat.

He and Lucy are the first out the car.

Indi: come baby.

Me: I will be right out.

She kisses me and I get off her and she gets out the car I take my phone and soon as it's on my sister's call comes through. I sigh and answer.

Me: hello.

Siya: oh thank God, muntuza where are you?

Me: I am on my way home sis.

Siya: please don't go there. He is so mad Lwandle he is going to hurt you.

The panic in her voice scares me to the core, my heart starts beating so fast.

Me: I need to face the music.

Siya: muntuza please at least wait for me to come there and help you face them.

Me: no please allow me do this, I don't want to involve anyone in my problems.

Siya: I know you are a strong girl but Nana please.

Me: I love you Siya and I'll call once I am there.

I hang up wiping my tears. I take a moment before dialing Banele, he is the one who will give me answers as to whether or not I should go home and carry out this plan. He answers almost immediately.

Banele: Sthandwa, thank God.

Me: Hey, I am sorry.

Banele: don't worry it's okay. I understand your head is all over the place.

Okay what is he on about, let me just go on with the flow till he gives me something to work with.

Me: yeah it's just crazy.

Banele: I can understand love, you and your sister are close.

Me: so my father has already told you?

I am fishing here careful not to seem clueless.

Banele: yeah he called and told us about her being hospitalized hence you had to cancel the dinner. How is she?

He takes the bait and I sigh in relief.

Me: she is much better, the doctors there are good.

Banele: that's great baby, tell me when you get home so I come see you okay?

Me: I will I promise, later.

Banele: later.

He hangs up and relief floods through my whole body, he didn't tell the truth and that is going to work in my favor. Thank whatever that is working in my favor today. I see my girlfriend approach with a plastic and I switch off my phone again and get out the car to go pee quick.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

Banele took me yesterday after Mbali promised to cover for me, I don't know what story she cooked with our parents but she told me to just enjoy and worry only about making Banele happy, and I won't lie coming here was good for the both of us, he has been sweet enough and making me feel like his woman, even though the sex was entirely painful as he turned me in different ways but after he would be caring, it's better than the bastard he is when we are doing it in the car. I just got out the bathroom and he is on the phone, soon as he sees me he places his finger on his lips signaling me not to breathe a word and I instantly know that he is on the phone with her. Why is Lwandle such a thorn God, things were perfect without her name being mentioned now the call damn this moment was suppose to be about me. I sit on

the edge of the bed thinking about how to speed up the process of getting pregnant, since the plan I had to puncture the condom didn't work out, he is very careful when it comes to that he wouldn't even let me touch them. They finally end the call and he is smiling.

Him: are you ready?

Me: I would like us to talk about something.

He sighs

Him: I just pray this has nothing to do with Nolwandle.

Me: you've already addressed that Banele.

Him: good, we had a good time don't ruin it. So what's up?

He folds his arms

Me: you are my first sexual partner and I don't know much but I can tell that the condom is very uncomfortable.

He narrows his eyes.

Him: oh is it? What do you feel?

Me: I can't really explain it.

I say and it's the truth, how can I explain something that is a lie, I am trying to get him to stop using protection here.

Him: okay then, we will stop using it.

The joy in my heart sweet Lord that was very easy.

Me: Thank you.

Him: just free up your Thursday, I am taking you to the doctor for tests and you starting on birth control injection.

The Rome I just built comes crumbling down with me inside. This whole thing just blew up in my face. How the hell am I supposed to fall pregnant now.

Me: I will tell you then.

Him: cool let's go check out.

He takes his car keys and wallet on the table.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

It's dark already and we just dropped off Ocean and the corner of her street. It took us a while to break apart coz I just didn't want to let her go face the fire alone I mean we did this together but me showing up there with her would only mean more problems for her. I can't even send my police friend to go claim she was kidnapped coz I am not sure what story she would have told her family, this is just painful I won't lie. Loving a person mean taking all their emotions, the sadness and fear she is feeling was evident and I can't help feel the same way too. I am trying so hard not to cry again.

Phiwe: she is brave malumes.

Me: and stubborn, she should have allowed me to stage the kidnapping.

Lucy: at least you know you have a soldier for a girlfriend.

Me: fuck guys I am scared, what if he is already beating her black and blue.

Phiwe: I know it's impossible but just try to believe in her.

Me: I do and I know she can take whatever he throws at her but she doesn't have to grootman, I just don't know which level of crazy her father can go.

Lucy: that's the saddest part.

Me: did you hear how heartbreaking her cries were? I am suppose to protect her but look at me driving home.

Phiwe: don't do that to yourself please ntwana yam.

Me: I can't help but blame myself, if it wasn't for me she wouldn't have been in Johannesburg.

Lucy: did you see how happy and carefree she was? Yes she is in trouble for now but the memories of this weekend with you will live

forever in her heart and mind. She loves you Indigo and she was happy to have risked it all for you and your relationship.

I smile

Me: I love that girl too. More than I thought I would anyone.

Phiwe: I can attest to that. Now trust in your warrior and be there when she needs you.

Me: Thanks guys.

I appreciate them trying to cheer me up but nothing can make me worry any less but talking to her.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I walked in a few minutes ago and my father and I have been having a starring contest, we are both shaking, him from the anger he is feeling from the deepest pits and me from the fear of what is about transpire. I don't think I have seen my father looking this evil, he could

kill me and I think that's why he hasn't approached me or said a word, he is in conflict with himself. He knows if he touched me he wouldn't stop and he would kill me dead so he is trying to fight himself not to but a part of him wants to chop me into pieces. My mother is crying and I know I shouldn't even count on her to help me out, it's always Bab'Zulu first. He walks towards me and the murderous look is still on.

Him: where have you been?

I keep quiet and he gets closer to me.

Him: I asked you a question, where are you coming from dressed like a harlot. What level of disrespect is this Nolwandle.

I keep my silence and I feel him hold me by my neck, I pee on myself immediately.

Him: Khuluma Nolwandle before I snap your little neck like a twig.

Ma: Bab'Zulu please stop please don't hurt her.

My mother cries going on her knees and if I wasn't fighting to breathe I would admire her right now, she's never done this before, like my mom hadn't said anything he doesn't even look at her but I feel his grip getting tighter, I feel like I am dying, I can't even hit his arm anymore to fight because I feel the air being squeezed out of me. As I feel like I am about to faint he let's go and I drop to the floor coughing like crazy trying to get in as much oxygen back inside of my body to survive. My mother crawls to me and takes me and places me on her lap but in a speed of light she fly's across the room and I hit my head on the cool ceramic floor. I hear my mother cry in agony from the pain, I am not even sure what he did to her it all just happened so fast, I am brought back from my thoughts when I feel a serious kick to my ribs and the pain is excruciating, I cry silently and curl up my body to protect myself but he continues with the kicks until I remember my plan.

Me: you lied Baba you lied to the pastor and his family, it's an offence in the church.

I scream loud enough so he can hear me and stops instantly and I close my eyes relieved that it worked.

Him: you go out for days and come back dressed like a cheap harlot and you have the nerve to try and threaten me what do you think would happen if they knew what you did.

Me: I would be scared Bab'Zulu but they don't know kodwa if you continue hitting me like this I will get injuries and Banele will ask questions and I will have to tell him the whole truth because I was taught to never lie to my soon to be husband by the church and they will know you lied to them as well.

He chuckles.

Him: you think you are smart Nolwandle.

Me: No Bab'Zulu.

He walks away angry and I sigh I lay the taking in the pain of his kicks when I hear something

like a cage being dropped on the floor, I look at it's the cage he used for his chickens when he had them back when I was a child. He comes to me and takes his belt and roughly puts it on around my neck and drags me to the cage and shoves me in it, he ties the belt to the cage.

Me: Baba what are you doing.

I ask crying coz I am in pain and this cage is not big enough for a fully grown human.

Him: you went out there and behaved like a female dog in heat now I am going to treat you like the bitch and dog you want to be. You will sleep in that cage Nolwandle and think of what you want in life and if it's not aligned with what I want for you then that cage will be your home.

Me: Baba please No.

Ma: mnyeni wam please don't do that let her out Zulu please.

Him: I can't punish you physically because you threaten to tell Banele if he asks about your injuries but this will not leave any injuries so it's

punishment enough to keep my name clean and my ties to the Pastor's family untainted, and my dear daughter your marriage with Banele will happen one way or another. You will wish you never came back to this house and remained wherever you were.

He sneers and I just cry. Watching him going to my mother and dragging her by her clothes and I know she is going to receive the wrath that was meant for me and for defending me.

I have never seen an evil human being like my father.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 22

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I am woken up by cold water splashing over me, I try to get up but hit the cage that is closing

me in, I am breathing heavily shaking from the coldness of the ceramic floor I have been laying on for what seems like forever and the water just added to my freezing point, I don't even know when I finally dozed off because I was so cold and in so much pain. I look up and my father is standing over me looking at me like a dog. I don't say anything and he disappears to the kitchen. Last night I managed to text my sister and Indigo since my father didn't confiscate my phone, I assured them that I am okay and I'll call when it's clear but now I think it's dead from the water he poured on me. He comes back and empties another bucket on me and I scream a bit.

Him: Get up you are going to school.

He sneers and I close my eyes. I hoped that he would let me skip school today.

He kicks the cage and it makes noise.

Me: I am up Bab'Zulu.

He unties my neck from the cage and opens it, so I can get out, I am shaking cold as hell.

Him: you will take a lift from your mother and I and come back with Banele only. You will never see the freedom that made you run off to God knows where.

Me: yebo Bab'Zulu.

Him: don't you dare breathe anything that happened to anyone Lwandle or I swear your mother will be receiving all my wrath because I can't touch you.

He threatens and my body freezes remembering my mother's painful moans and cries from his abuse last night.

Me: I will not cross you Baba. I promise you.

Him: we will see Nolwandle and for your mother's sake I pray you keep to your promise.

Me: can I see her please.

Him: see my wife for what reason? go get ready for school.

I sigh and nod and make my way to my bedroom.

Him: and listen here.

I look back at him.

Him: tell Banele he can't come get you today, we are going somewhere. Soon as school is out go wait for your mother and I at the car siyezwana?

Me: siyezwana Bab'Zulu.

I walk away and sigh in relief when he doesn't request me to hand over my phone.

—

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I tossed and turned the whole night worried about Ocean, yes according to her text she is okay but I will believe it when I see her coz now I am not at ease but at least he didn't kill her. I am never putting her in this situation again even if she begs me I will never, for both of our

peace of minds. My phone vibrates under the pillow and I quickly grab it and disappointment floods through me, I was desperately hoping it's my girlfriend but it's my mom.

Me: hey Ma.

Her: you don't sound happy to be hearing from me this morning.

Me: no ma it's not that, I just woke up.

Her: so you come to Johannesburg and you don't even tell your mother?

I sigh

Me: I was just there attending the pride and I drove back to this place.

Her: you should have just came to say hi, I would have loved to see the young lady you were photographed with.

She says and I narrow my eyes

Me: Photographed by who? Where did you see the picture?

Her: Oh Indi, they posted the pictures of this years pride like they do each year so I just went to see the pictures on Facebook and I see my child with a girl and I didn't even know you were attending.

Me: it's probably an old photo.

She laughs

Her: nice try but you didn't have an orthopedic cast on then, now who is she?

I mentally slap myself.

Me: well I was going to tell you that I got a girlfriend now, a serious one but it's just too complicated ma.

Her: what is complicated Indi?

Me: she belongs to the church mama, no one knows about her sexuality but me, Gogo, Phiwe and his girlfriend.

Her: Oh my God Indigo, this is a mess.

Me: I know that but we love each other.

Her: what is your plan?

Me: for now mama i honestly don't know.

Her: I suggest you figure it out and soon coz you need to be back home to remove the cast and report back to work.

Me: Oh Fuck, I totally forgot that I even work.

Her: well you do and watch your tongue.

Me: sorry ma, when is my date to see the doctor?

Her: you are having it removed next week Thursday and you going back to work the following Monday.

I sigh.

Me: okay mama thanks for reminding me.

Her: okay then, find a way forward with that girl you are seeing and treat her good Indi.

Me: yeah I will.

Her: I love you.

Me: I love you too ma.

She hangs up and I look at my screen and there's a text from Ocean I sigh in relief.

I am okay, I managed to get myself out of this situation but he is going to be watching me like a hawk, for now let me be the one who makes communication. I am going to school, I will call you when I get there at least that's one place he can't watch me intensely. I love you Indigo

I smile and power off my screen.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I am late today, I don't know why I overslept but I am here running to the gate as one of the teachers is standing there flogging the late learner's. I am going to be given lashes for a place I even hate this is just crazy. He is looking the other direction so I just slip in without being notice and run to the assembly where everyone is gathered for morning prayers that are only

held on Mondays and Fridays. I arrive as they are starting prayer and once done we move to our classes. The first class is English and Lwa and I attend together.

She is already at our desk looking lost in her thoughts, what's eating up the princess I wonder.

Me: hey Chom chom.

I poke her playful on her ribs but she winces and cries in pain, I frown.

Her: ouch Zipho.

Me: haibo Lwa, I didn't even poke you that hard.

Her: I wouldn't have said ouch if it wasn't painful now would I?

Me: yoh what's with the attitude.

Her: I am giving you attitude stop seeing things.

Me: tell me mngane

Her: tell you what Zee?

Me: do we now keep secrets?

Her: of course not.

Me: then why didn't you tell me you weren't coming to school on Friday coz you went to get a dress for the dinner with Banele?

She sighs

Her: I have a lot going on Zee I probably thought I told you. I am sorry.

Me: if you say so.

Her: but wait how did you know about it if I didn't tell you?

Me: your mom mentioned it when I asked why you weren't at school.

Her: oh okay and today you gonna have to walk alone, Banele is not coming and my father and I are going somewhere.

Me: I see, so how was the dinner?

I ask wanting to see if she would lie since I am the one who spent the night with her so called husband to be. She was about to answer when Lucy stands in front of our desk.

Lucy: Hey.

Me: can't you see we are in the middle of something here?

I ask and she doesn't answer me but keep her eyes on Lwandle who stands up.

Her: I will be back just now Zee.

They walk away talking about something really deep. There is more to these talks than what meets the eye. I need to find out why they are suddenly so close, if it had anything to do with the church I would know about it but this here is top secret and I will find out what it is.

•MONDLI ZULU

She came back to threaten me, Lwandle thinks she is smart, she thinks she will take away my chance to be an elder in the church well I will fight to my grave before I let that happen, this is a life long dream only she can give me and

whether she likes it or not she will hand it to me on a silver platter. I am very worried because she left for days and came back dressed like a harlot, it's obvious she went wherever with boys and if she has lost her purity I am going to kill her with my bear hands because she has to be a virgin when I hand her over to Banele coz her purity only belongs to her husband. Bongeka has been awfully quiet today and I am glad she has learned her lesson and she will keep to her lane and that's being my wife. We get to the car and Nolwandle is already waiting like I instructed. I unlock the car and we all get it and I drive in silence. I didn't tell them where we are going so they are probably wondering. We drive to a neighboring town about 45 minutes outside of ours. We arrive and I am the first one out the car.

Me: why are you still in the car come on.

They quickly get out and I lock. They follow behind me and I knock on the wooden door and the lady I came to see opens.

Her: Mondli?

I smile.

Me: Zenzi how are you?

Her: I am very well thanks, you?

Me: I am well thanks, this is my wife Bongeka
And our last daughter Lwandle.

Her: it's nice to meet you both.

They shake hands and she invites us in.

Her: to what do I owe the visit.

Me: I am here for your service, you know when you are a father to a girl you have to always check.

She laughs and I join her looking at the confused Lwa and her mom.

Her: I understand what you mean, and she is indeed beautiful I would also keep a close eye.

Me: I am happy you understand where I am coming from.

Her: woza sisi.

She calls Lwa and she follows her as confused as she is and they are closed in the room a while, I can tell Bongeka is dying to know what we came here for but she will not ask coz I would rain down on her it's good that she has remembered her place. The door opens and Nolwandle walks first looking down in shame and my heart drops to my stomach, I get up quickly.

Me: Zenzi?

I say as she follows behind my daughter closing the bedroom door.

Her: you have nothing to worry about Mondli, her purity is still intact.

She says connecting the knuckles of both her index fingers. I smile and start whistling.

Me: asbonge, thatha nayi ye cold drink.

I hand her R500.

Her: thank you.

Me: we can't stay long, we will be on our way and believe me I will be back.

Her: you are welcome here anytime.

We get in the car and drive back home, I am still on time to go see the pastor and reschedule the dinner.

—

•BONGEKA ZULU

My whole body is aching and none of the pills are helping with the pain I am feeling. I had to endure it the whole day at work and now I have to stand to cook him dinner, my attempt to stand up for my child had me beaten back into submission and it was really intense. I just couldn't stand there again and watch him strangle the life out of our daughter but my voice is powerless and it's all my fault, I am just glad Nolwandle found a way to disarm him coz

he would have hurt her so bad. I wish I had her strength and courage but in all honesty I am too far gone.

Her: mama I am sorry.

She says standing by the door

Me: what for?

Her: you got beaten for trying to stand up for me.

Me: it's okay Nolwandle I deserved it for not standing up for you and Siya.

Her: no one deserves the abuse we receive from Bab'Zulu.

Me: it's alright I deserve it I am a horrible mother and maybe that's Karma dealing with me.

Her: you can still stand up to him mama, it's not too late.

Me: I wish it was that simple baby but it isn't and maybe someday you will understand.

Her: you deserve better.

I shake my head.

Me: where were you Lwa?

Her: I can't tell you mama but just know that I had the best time of my life.

I smile genuinely at her while smiling.

Me: I am so happy to hear that baby. I wish everything was different. I am so sorry Lwa from the bottom of my heart I am.

Her tears fall and she walks to me and I fold her in a hug.

Her: it's okay mama, you tried yesterday and I appreciate that very much.

Me: I know I am a bad mother Lwandle but I love you and Siya very much.

Her: I love you too ma.

Me: I admire your courage Nolwandle Zulu.

I kiss her forehead repeatedly and she just cries painfully in my arms.

Me: it's okay my brave girl it's okay Nana it's all going to be okay. I wish I was a better mother but I am far gone Lwandle and I am sorry.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 23

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

The emotional moment I had with my mom last night was just on another level, I have never had that with her before, she has never been vulnerable near me or my sister and it felt really good to be in her embrace and have her tell me it's all going to be okay, I just wish she can break the chains of mental slavery, the church and her husband have placed her under, I never understood my mom but last night I had a glimpse of her and in all honesty she is in

bondage and it's sad because she doesn't know how to free herself.

Him: stop playing with your food and eat.

My father says getting my attention. We are sitting on the breakfast table eating.

Me: I am sorry Bab'Zulu.

Him: just eat we have to leave for school.

Ma: can I clear up and go start on the dishes?

My mom asks without even looking at him, it's sad to see this, I am pretty sure this is not how marriage is suppose to go.

Him: it's okay Bongeka, enjoy your breakfast, you will clean up when we get back.

She sits back down

Ma: Thank you Zulu.

The front door opens and Siya walks in and I immediately rush to her and we hug.

Siya: are you okay muntuza?

She asks panicking, looking all over my body to see any injuries I might have and I nod vigorously.

Me: I am okay sis I am okay.

Him: what the hell are you doing in my house Siyamthanda, you have the nerve to show up in my house after throwing me out of yours.

Siya: I am here to see my sister.

Him: I don't want you in my house, near my wife and daughter.

Siya: mama and Lwa are not your property Bab'Zulu.

Him: Get out before

She quickly cuts him.

Siya: before you choke slam me again? That was the last time you laid your hands on me.

I see my father swallow.

Him: I am not having a back and forth with you, get out we are going to school.

Siya: like I said I am here for my sister and I will be here a few days.

Him: like hell you are!

He shouts but Siya looks at him like a toothless dog.

Siya: I will see you after school muntuza okay?

Me: okay later sis.

She walks right passed him and I swear Bab'Zulu doesn't know what to do with himself.

Him: why are you standing there gawking at me go get your things we are leaving.

I hurry off to go get my school bag, happy that my sister is home.

—

•MONDLI ZULU

Siyamthanda is a thorn, she is a distraction and whenever she is around Nolwandle misbehaves, I honestly don't know how I can

cut those wings, ever since she got married she grew some and it's just to annoy me, man like her husband are a disgrace to manhood for failing to keep their wives under control, she probably wears the pants in her house that's why she thinks she can just come to my house and play hero. My phone rings and it's the pastor, I sigh and make my way out of the classroom to answer.

Me: Baba.

Him: yebo Zulu, how are you?

Me: ngiyaphila mhlonishwa, unjani wena? (I am okay sir how are you?).

Him: I am okay nami. How is your daughter?

Me: she is very well Baba, she is even at home to be taken care of by her mom.

Him: ahh that's great news and they are never old enough to not need their mothers.

I chuckle

Me: that's very true Baba.

Him: well my wife and I accept the invitation to the dinner tomorrow night.

Me: thank you for allowing us to make it up to

Him: you had a valid reason in cancelling the dinner so it's okay really.

Me: thank you baba and can you please tell Banele not to mention this to Lwandle I want her to be surprised, she was crying when we had to cancel.

He laughs

Him: that's very nice to know that she really wants this marriage to work, I will let my son know.

Me: she really does baba.

Him: okay we will see you tomorrow then.

Me: okay bye.

I hang up and excitement returns to me. I don't go back to my class I quickly go find Bongeka. I find her in the staff room putting together her lessons.

Me: Bongeka.

Her: Baba.

Me: the dinner with the pastor's family is tomorrow night.

She sighs

Her: I will prepare for them.

Me; and don't breathe a word of this to Lwandle and Siya. I will know if you did and I will punish Lwa for that.

Her: I will not cross you Zulu.

Another teacher walks in.

Me: okay then later, remember what I said.

She smiles and nods. Good to see she still knows the rules.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

Love makes us do crazy things, she did crazy and now I am doing it, I am basically trespassing but I need to see her to hold her and to just take in her scent, talking on the phone is not enough I had to make this happen with the help of my cousin and his girl. Phiwe helped cut the wire that barricades the school yard so I can make my way in through the back, Lucy said no one ever goes that side coz the classes at the back burnt years ago and they never got repaired. I am sitting on the old desk waiting anxiously, I can still see my car parked just outside the opening we made. Voices approach and I smile hearing her.

Lwa: why do we have to talk in this creepy place though.

Lucy: it's more private, your friend won't find us.

Lwa: if I get bitten by a snake it's on you.

Lucy: idrama Lwandle.

They walk in and her eyes land on me.

Me: hey beautiful.

She let's her tears fall, and I open my arms and she gladly comes to me, I envelope her and smell her hair closing my eyes

Lwa: I am so happy to see you.

Me: I know my love, I missed you too so much.

She let's go and looks at Lucy.

Lwa: Thank you friend.

Lucy: pleasure babe, I will keep guard.

She walks out and I pull Ocean to me and give her a kiss.

Lwa: I love you so much Indigo.

She says in between the kisses.

Me: I love you too baby, with all my heart I swear.

Lwa: he locked me in the cage and tied up my neck like a dog Indi. I have never been so scared.

She admits in between the wet kisses and I stop immediately feeling my heart drop. She is crying.

Me: baby No. I am so sorry Ocean, this is all my fault baby I shouldn't have taken you there, ever since I came into your life I brought you problems and made you a liar.

Lwa: Indigo No, ever since you came into my life I became me, you brought me this happiness and love I have been longing to feel all my life. This is me Indigo and it's because of you, never feel like this. I love with all my heart it's true.

Me: Your heart is my home Nolwandle, I will love you for infinity and beyond.

Lwa: I wish it was a different time.

Me: it's all going to work out I promise. Nothing worth having comes easy. Hold on for me a little longer and once you are done with matric I am taking you away.

Lwa: you promise?

Me: I promise, this is not life. You deserve better than his abuse and I will make sure you get it.

Lwa: I will hold on a little longer.

Me: You are strong, you are powerful and nothing can break you down, I want you to remember this each time you are in a situation that is meant to shut you down, to take control of you. You are strong Ocean.

She holds me and brings her lips to mine and we kiss again, both crying. My heart is literally aching, something in me feels off, I just don't want to leave her, I want to shield her from everything and love her enough to heal all the pain she's ever felt.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

i have had it up to here with this damn friendship between Lwandle and that loose girl.

I need to find out what connects them, they now always talk in private and their talks seem deep, for two people who just became close they have more than a lot to talk about and her mood improved alot this afternoon when she came back to God knows where with that Lucy girl. They even missed a few classes to top it all Banele was all lovey dovey with her in the car when they came to drop me off. I bought enough data to stalk Lucy on Facebook and I will find whatever that might link them. I created a fake account and invited her hours ago, I log in and luckily she has accepted. I go through her wall and I see she recently checked in at Johannesburg and tagged Phiwe and that demon Indigo. I go down and see a picture of shoes with the caption "my friends kick game is strong, couple goals" she tagged Indi again and curiosity gets the better of me I click on Indigo's profile and go through her wall she really thinks she is a boy, she even wears man's clothing. I go down to last year's timeline and she is tagged on pictures by a page called

Johannesburg Pride, I click on it and notice new pictures posted from this past weekend. I go through them just to understand what this is all about and I am shocked to see Lwandle on these pictures, the is one where she is alone and the other she is on top of Indigo kissing. To say I am shocked would be an understatement, Nolwandle is filthy and she is a demon in disguise acting hollier knowing fully well she is living for the devil. This is my ticket to getting my man. I save the pictures and the joy in my heart is beyond.

—
No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 24

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I got to see my girlfriend today and that really improved my mood, I appreciate her risking it just to see me coz if we wait for things to die down then we will wait until kingdom comes, Bab'Zulu isn't letting me out of his sight any time soon so it's really up to us to come up with ways to meet up. I will never forget Lucy and Phiwe for the support they show us and also putting themselves at risk just so we could meet and be happy, I owe them a lot honestly. I am humming a nice melody in my bedroom while organizing my closet, the door opens and Siya walks in.

Her: you've been in a great mood ever since you got back.

Me: really?

Her: oh come on muntuza.

I laugh and she sits down

Me: Thank you for being here Siya.

Her: I needed to see for myself that you are okay, I know how evil baba is and I am sorry for what he did to you.

Me: it's okay sis, I am trying not to let it scar me for life.

Her: in all honesty Nolwandle where were you?

I sigh and stop what I am busy with and go sit next to her, taking her hands into mine.

Me: I pray you don't hate, reject or judge me after I tell you this.

Her: I would never hate you muntuza just talk to me.

Me: well I was in Johannesburg.

She narrows her eyes

Her: how did you even get there Nolwandle.

I remain quiet for some time, battling with myself to tell her the truth or not, but I need someone from my side to know too and who better than Siyamthanda.

Me: I went with my girlfriend.

I say in a low voice eyes cast down.

Her: I didn't know you had a friend in Jozi.

I sigh coz she doesn't understand.

Me: Siya I said I went there with my girlfriend not a friend.

I say and she looks at me a while trying to process what I just said and my heart is beating so fast I swear it could jump out of my chest any second now. She gasp for air soon as she understands what I meant.

Her: muntuza you are?

I nod vigorously.

Me: yes Siya, I am lesbian.

Her: that's what you meant each time you said your demons would haunt you forever should you marry Banele.

Me: I am sorry Siya.

Her: no no don't be sorry Nana. Oh Nolwandle.

She attacks me with a hug and I just cry.

Me: I can't marry Banele, I love Indigo Siya I love her so much.

Her: Oh muntuza.

She brushes my back and it honestly feels like a heavy weight has been lifted off my shoulders for sharing this with my sister, we have always been close and her knowing about my sexuality and not hating me means the world to me.

—
•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I am so excited I don't even know what to do with myself, I didn't believe it would be so easy to get Nolwandle out of the picture, I didn't have to raise a finger to do it, Lwa eliminated herself from the equation. All I have to do is break the news to Banele, the church will never allow the pastor's son to marry a demonic girl. Oh dearest best friend thank you for handing me my man. Tomorrow when we meet I am telling him everything so we can start having a way

forward with our relationship. My phone rings and it's a private number, it can only be Banele. I answer with a smile.

Me: Baby.

Him: Zipho how are you?

Me: I am fine, you?

Him: I am okay. What are you busy with?

Me: nothing much just chilling, what's up miss me? Tomorrow too far for you?

I ask blushing while looking at myself in the mirror.

Him: eish about tomorrow.

My smile disappears

Me: no Banele we made plans.

Him: I know but I have dinner with Lwandle and her family.

Me: this is not fair.

Him: Don't be like that Zizipho, I will see you some other time.

Me: whatever!

Him: excuse me, who do you think you are talking to?

His tone is serious, I close my eyes

Me: I am sorry. I understand that you have an engagement.

Him: now you talking like a matured woman who knows her lane very well.

I roll my eyes

Me: sorry again.

Him: cool, I got to go now.

Me: okay then.

He hangs up, and instantly an idea hits me. Since everyone will be gathered pretending to be one big happy family I will arrive and give them the sad news.

•BANELE THWALA

Zipho can be tiring at times, she constantly wants to be reminded of her place and it's annoying, it feels like I am dealing with a kid, this is why I hate virgins they become too clingy, I am starting to lose interest in this whole arrangement because she is failing to keep to her role and also because I think I am falling in love with Nolwandle. I don't know when or how but I am falling for her that I know. I didn't want this whole thing in the beginning but who knows maybe this is exactly what I need to be a better man and Lwandle is not so bad, she is ambitious, respectful and I can see she is bubbly and cheerful she just needs to warm up to me more and we will be okay. Now I need to work towards making her feel the same way I do. I need advice on what to get her, how to spoil her and staff and who better to ask but my mom. I find her in the garden watering her roses she is obsessed with roses and gardening.

Me: hey ma

Her: Nele

Me: you got a minute?

Her: do you need to sit down for that minute?

Me: no anywhere is cool.

Her: okay you have that minute my baby.

Me: Don't ask me a million things but I think I am starting to feel love for Nolwandle.

Her: are you serious?

The wide smile on her face makes me roll my eyes, I knew she would love hearing this.

Me: serious as a heart attack ma.

Her: oh that's really good baba, it will make this whole thing easy.

Me: that's very true.

Her: now I seriously can't wait to get to know my daughter in law better.

Me: I need your help making her fall for me too.

Her: that's easy just be the romantic type, flowers, chocolates, random calls and texts, be helpful with the little things you know.

Me: only that?

Her: just make her feel like the only girl in the world.

Me: I will do my best.

Her: I am so proud of you Banele, your father will be pleased to know you are serious about this marriage.

Hearing my mom say she is proud of me really felt good, I've always disappointed my parents and knowing that I am doing something right, something that makes them happy and proud of me brings me joy.

Me: Thanks ma.

—

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I will sleep better tonight knowing that she is okay, spending those few hours with her made a huge difference, and hearing her endless I love yous brought about peace to my heart. She is my angel on earth I swear. I just got home from town, I wanted to get something for Lucy just to show my appreciation for all the help and support she has shown me with my relationship. I got her flowers and a gift card from a clothing store. She deserves some spoils. I get in the house and my grandmother is not home, I wonder where she would be this late. I go knock on Phiwe's bedroom door.

Him: come in.

He shouts from inside and I walk in, they are laying on the bed cuddling, these two are crazy about each other.

Me: hey guys.

Him: sure malumes.

Her: hey Indi, those are beautiful flowers.

Me: like them?

Her: I love them, someone has to take notes.

I laugh

Me: I am happy you do cause these are for you and also this.

I hand her the things and the smile on her face.

Her: oh Indi seriously, oh my God thank you so much.

Me: no Lucy thank you so much for all you've done for me and Ocean. I really appreciate it from the bottom of my heart.

Her: I am just happy to be a part of this beautiful love you guys share.

Me: thank you.

Him: and where is mine?

I laugh

Me: yours still needs to fly here.

He laughs

Him: I am just kidding malumes. Thanks for appreciating my madam but eish you putting me under pressure here.

I chuckle.

Me: ai no step up your game grootman.

Her: tell him please Indi.

Him: I am not wasting money on white people things.

Her: why does it feel like I am with the wrong Ncqobo.

Him: uzok'nyisa uOcean (Nolwandle will beat you up).

I burst out laughing.

Me: you two are crazy. Let me excuse myself.

Him: vele hamba before you give her more ideas nje.

I walk out laughing.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 25

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Something is okay deep down in my heart, my sister knowing about my sexuality made everything okay, I am so glad I came clean to her and her support and understanding means the world to me, she even wants to meet Indigo before she leaves, her only worry is my father finding out before I finish my matric and leaving this place for good but I will hold on and tread carefully until that day. I will be 18 and he will have no legal rights over me. Banele dropped me off early today and he was so weird, he opened my door and gave me pecks on the lips which made me feel so guilty, feels like I am cheating on my girlfriend. I just want this whole nightmare to come to an end, I want Indigo to take me away from this place for good. My mother has been in the kitchen cooking and

according to Siya she has been at it ever since they got back from work.

Me: Sis why do you think she is cooking up a storm?

She shrugs her shoulders.

Her: maybe Bab'Zulu asked her to so he can apologize to us.

We burst out laughing.

Me: that would be the day.

Her: a girl can dream Lwa.

A knock comes through the bedroom door and I go open, it's my father he has his hands buried deep inside of his pockets.

Him: Lwandle.

His baritone says in an intimidating tone.

Me: Bab'Zulu.

Him: get ready we have guests in an hour.

I frown.

Me: oh okay.

I dare not ask who the guests are.

Him: It's Banele and his people make sure you look presentable.

With that said he walks away and I close my door.

Me: Siya!

I am already panicking, this dinner happening means things are just going to move faster.

Her: calm down muntuza, I am here to get through the dinner with you.

Me: he lied to them about you, this is going to be a disaster.

Her: I am aware of that and for your sake i am going to play along to his lie. We need to give him an impression that we are giving him what he wants until you are done with school and you get away from this place.

Me: okay okay I can do this.

Her: of course you can, now let's pick out your outfit.

She attempts to move from me, I hold her arm

Me: Siya thank you so much.

Her: I am my sister's keeper Nana.

—

•INDIGO NCQOBO

My girl hasn't called today and I know she is heavily guarded when she doesn't, this whole thing is taking it's toll on me and the fact that I have to go back to Jozi isn't gonna make things any easier, it seems like all the odds are just against us in all directions, we push 2 steps forward and get set back with 10 steps it's just hectic I swear, but we will survive everything thrown at us. I am busy peeling the veggies my grandmother asked me to help her with when she decides to break the silence.

Her: where is Zulu's daughter?

Me: she is at her house makhulu.

Her: are you two still together?

Me: we are ma, kodwa it's hectic.

Her: did you think it would be easy, Mondli is not to be taken for granted.

Me: yeah that man is the devil I swear.

Her: where do you plan to end up with this girl considering that she is betrothed to their pastor's son?

Me: Lwa doesn't love that boy ma, her heart is with me.

Her: I hear that Indigo, but I am saying what is your plan with her?

Me: all I know is I need to get Ocean out of this place first mama.

Her: and then?

I sigh, my grandmother with her 21 questions.

Me: look makhulu, Lwandle and I are in love and in my world that is really hard to find, I am

blessed to have found my one. She wants to go to university and I will help her out of this place and then she will attend and be her own woman and my wish is to be a part of that till the end.

Her: I am not asking you this to make you feel bad, I just don't want you to take her away from this place and go dump her in Johannesburg and she ends up being those good for nothing girls that have resorted to drugs.

Me: I hear you makhulu and thank you for being so concerned. Nolwandle is ambitious so she wants to go to school with all her heart.

Her: it's good to know, now Indi tell me?

Oh boy whatever it is it's not good.

Me: yebo makhulu.

Her: how will you give me great-grandchildren because you are both woman.

Me: well ma, we have something called artificial insemination. She will have to get pregnant both times with her egg first and then after with mine, we will use the same sperm donor.

Her: yoh yoh explain to me easily Indigo yoh.
You know I didn't go to school like you and your
mother.

I laugh and sigh, it's going to be a long evening
stru.

—
•ZIPHO MHLONGO

Today is D-DAY and everything is going to
come crumbling down for princess Nolwandle,
everything I have ever wanted and she had will
finally be mine, she will stop thinking she walks
on water. After tonight I will no longer be in
Lwandle's shadow like I am not good enough. I
have endured it for years and years but no
more it ends tonight and for good. I am in the
most appropriate and respectful outfits I have to
my name and the pictures are printed and
ready to be seen by all of them. It's just 6
o'clock, I am waiting for 6:30pm so I can start
walking to her house, I want to find them sited

around the table thinking that have it all figured out. Mbali is helping me put on my head wrap.

Her: all done.

Me: thank you sis

Her: you look really nice, I swear Banele will want to wife you up almost immediately.

I chuckle

Me: now that would be a dream come true.

Her: I am proud of you mntasekhaya, you managed to do this all on your own.

Me: come on Mbali if it wasn't for you I wouldn't have been this bold.

Her: oh well let me just take my shine then.

We laugh both laugh and high five.

Me: but in all honesty sisi thank you very much.

Her: just kill it today mama kill it dead and bring that rich family home.

Me: most definitely, you might land yourself one of his brothers too.

Her: haibo Zee they are all married?

Me: is that stopping us now?

She smiles

Her: I guess not.

Me: good, you can't be living at home because the man you want is married, you told me to go for what I want, you probably should just take your own advice.

Her: kodwa Zizipho you are a monster yaz.

Me: ai suka, let me leave.

I take the pocket file with the pictures and walk out of our bedroom. I just hope this is all going to work out in my favor.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I finish getting ready and my mood is already down, I just don't want to sit on that table as if I am happy with all that is happening, suffocating with each passing minute, but I am holding on so I can leave this place and live my truth. I take my phone and quickly text Indigo what is happening, I don't want her to worry from not hearing anything from me tonight. I check my watch and it's 6:30pm. I walk out of my room and go to the lounge, the table is already set and my mom is doing the final touch Up's. Her eyes move up and meet mine.

Me: it looks good and smells great.

Ma: I am sorry Lwandle I couldn't tell you about the dinner, he-

I cut her quickly.

Me: mama it's okay. I understand very well.

Ma: you look beautiful.

Me: Thank you.

My father walks in and the tension just gets thicker. I attempt to walk away but his voice stops me as Siya gets in.

Him: good you are all in here, I just hope you will all behave tonight and this dinner goes on well, I am seriously not in the mood to rain terror on any of you.

Ma: we will behave, right girls?

My mother says and we are disturbed by a knock on the door. My father goes to open and Banele walks in with his parents and we exchange greetings for a while, his mother fusses over me, it's cute but suffocating

MaThwala: you are very beautiful Lwandle, and please give me that head wrap baby.

I smile

Me: thank you Mama.

Banele: ma don't fuss over my lady like this, can I have her back please.

They all laugh including Siya, she is really selling this night. I go hug him and he whispers in my ear.

Banele: you look extra beautiful tonight sthandwa sami. I love you Nolwandle.

My heart drops to my stomach. It feels like I just freezed. Good thing he is hugging me and I am facing away from everyone or they would have seen my facial expression change.

Me: thank you.

Bab'Thwala: aahh look at that beautiful moment. Zulu siya shatisa manje (we are marrying our children).

Bab'Zulu: definitely Baba. We can sit.

MaThwala: Bongeka you really went all out, it smells Devine and looks good too.

Ma: Thank you mkhozi.

Banele opens my chair and I sit, he takes one near me.

MaThwala: sisi how are you feeling? Your father was so worried about you.

She asks looking at my sister

Siya: eish mama I am just glad to be recovering and coming home for my mother to nurse me back to health.

MaThwala: oh Nana we thank God and it's good you came home.

Ma: I am glad to have her home too.

My family is pretending very well it's sickening, why can't it be like this all the time? Look at my father coming across as this nice guy who cares about family.

My mom and Banele's mother dish up for their husbands and I am told to dish for Banele as well. I hand him a plate and the rest of us dish as well, the conversation goes on and on and I am giving out fake smiles here and there. To say my father is happy would be an understatement, the man is over the moon. A knock disturbs us.

Bab'Zulu: let me quickly get that.

He goes to the door and we hear someone crying as he opens, he moves aside and Zipho walks in. I hear Banele cuss under his breath as I stand to attend to my crying best friend.

Me: Zee what's wrong?

I try to touch her but she moves away.

Zee: oh Nolwandle, how could you be so deceitful.

Her sobs grow louder.

Me: what are you talking about friend.

Zee: you need to confess Nolwandle confess so the church can help you. I am crying because I can't lose my best friend to the devil and his demons.

Bab'Zulu: little girl what are you talking about? We are in the middle of an important family dinner.

Zee: Baba I am here because of the respect I have for you, the church and my love for uLwandle. She needs help she is possessed, Lwandle has been secretly dating another girl

called Indigo Ncqobo from Johannesburg, she even went with her this passed weekend to attend an evil parade of those who sleep with the same gender.

She says and I swear my heart stops, how could she possibly know and why is she doing this to me. I let my tears fall and Baba just laughs

Bab'Zulu: we don't have time for this sick joke.

Zee: I am telling the truth. Here is the proof.

She hands him pictures and I wish the ground could split open and swallow me. He scans the pictures and turns red immediately, his jaws are clenched and his breathing spikes, I don't know when but Siya is already in front of me shielding me. He shoots me a look.

Bab'Thwala: Zulu what is happening here? Is it true? Is your daughter possessed with that evil spirit?

Bab'Zulu: I don't know baba I am yet to find out myself.

Banele: wait wait, did Zipho say she was in Johannesburg this past weekend? You said you are in Durban coz your daughter is sick. Baba you lied to us?

He sighs mad as hell, I am shaking from fear of my father who looks ready to murder me.

Bab'Thwala: Zulu did you lie to my family and I? He nods still looking at me.

Banele: unbelievable fucken unbelievable.

MaThwala: Nele watch your tongue and I don't understand why you are focusing on this, it's clear that Lwandle is possessed, we should be preparing to help her not asking about who lied to who.

Siya: my sister is lesbian she is not possessed.

Bab'Thwala: I can't believe this, Zulu get your damn house in order, you are all a mess. You lied to my face and to the Lord.

Bab'Zulu: I am sorry baba I just didn't know where she was and I swear I had no idea she is possessed.

Banele: Lwandle?

I don't even look at him. He is the least of my worries right now.

Bab'Zulu: out of everything you could have done Nolwandle you chose this?

He says with so much anger in his voice and I laugh.

Me: you all think that I woke up one morning and chose to be gay? Why would I chose to fall for another woman when I know I live in a society that is judgemental, backwards and live by strict rules. Why would I choose to be lesbian in a society that even kills us for being this way? Who in their right mindset would want that for themselves. I didn't chose this baba I didn't but this is who I am.

I say crying

Bab'Thwala: oh God, she is indeed possessed.

Zee: please help her please.

She cries and I look at her shaking my head.

Me: I thought you were on my side but today I see you for the snake that you are.

Zee: I am only trying to help you here.

Banele: Zipho please leave, we need space to deal with this as a family.

Zee: Banele I-

Banele: just leave Zipho.

She walks out

MaThwala: this is beyond us, only God can help with this, we need to turn to prayer. Zulu we will leave and go discuss this then we will communicate tomorrow.

My father just nods and the Thwala's leave. Soon as their car drives off my father approaches us.

Siya: BABA! stop what you about to do.

Him: get out of my way Siya.

Siya: If you want to touch muntuza you will have to start with me and I will get you arrested.

Him: you have just brought shame to me
Nolwandle. My dreams just shattered right in
front of my eyes because of you. Do you have
any idea what you've just done? do you Lwa?

He shouts stamping on the floor.

Me: I am not going to apologize for my truth
baba.

He looks around a couple of times, I know for a
fact that he wants to punish me but Siya's threat
is just too strong to keep him away. He moves
to the table and starts smashing everything
while screaming from the top of his lungs. I am
glad for my sister's presence because he would
have killed me by now. He walks out cussing
out and we are all scared my sister turns and
hugs me tight I breathe out. A third person joins
in on the hug and I know it's my mom. Even
though I am scared I am happy that my truth is
out in the open and no matter what they do they
can't change me.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 26

•MONDLI ZULU

If they truly believe that I am backing out of this thing they clearly don't know who I am and what I stand for, a little possession won't keep me away from my goals, Nolwandle will be rid of that demon and everything else will go on as planned, my wife and I will go into fasting and praying for lying to the pastor and the Lord and all shall be forgiven. To say I am not mad or embarrassed would be lie but right now is not the time let my emotions get the better of me, I need to be rational to execute each and every plan I have right now to get that train moving again. I didn't go to work today, Siya even went to drop Nolwandle and Bongeka at school and I didn't even protest I am just glad she is alone now at home to make this much easier. I get out of my car and go to the charge office at the

police station, I need to get rid of Siyamthanda and fast. I find a police woman behind the desk and luckily she is from the church this is going to be a lot easier

Me: hello.

Her: Bab'Zulu, unjani? (How are you?)

Me: hai I wish I could say I am okay but i am not, I need help because I don't think I can handle this on my own anymore.

Her: what's wrong baba, how can I be of help to you?

Me: My eldest daughter Siyamthanda is causing problems at my house, she doesn't want to leave and she is physical with us I don't know what is wrong with her but I really need a protection order against her for me and my under age daughter Lwandle.

She nods vigorously and asks no questions.

Her: that's very sad Baba, let me work on something really quick and I will go with you to serve her.

Me: oh my daughter thank you so much.

Her: we are going to make affidavits and fill in a few documents then I am going to drive you to the court so we can file with the clerk so they can have it reviewed by the judge then they will give us an interim order so long we wait to appear in court with Siyamthanda.

Me: won't that take long?

Her: good thing the clerk is my friend and she can push everything and we will have it fast.

I smile and nod vigorously.

Me: thank you so much.

We fill in and we are done in no time, she drives us to the court and she doesn't even queue she goes to the office talk to another girl about my situation and the girl looks at the documents nods and Staples them with something and goes out the office and comes back after a

while hands us a paper and they bid each other goodbye.

Me: you really need to know people to have things done so fast.

Her: yes baba but you need to keep this between us.

Me: my lips are sealed.

She smiles and we drive back to the station to take my car and then drive to my house. We find Siya cleaning.

Siya: and then? You weren't to open a case against yourself?

I shake my head and look at the police officer.

Her: Siyamthanda You are served with this protection order and you are to leave this house immediately and not return to it, you must also keep away from your father, mother and Lwandle. If you come anywhere near them you will be arrested.

Siya: what? Baba you went so low just to keep me away from my sister?

Her: sisi please go take your things and leave.
Baba if you spot her anywhere near here and your family just call me.

Siya: you can't keep me away from muntuza.

Me: Siya just leave we are tired of your abuse just leave.

Her: you have 15 minutes to pack everything and leave.

Siya: You are the devil Mondli Zulu and whatever it is you are planning the real God is watching and he will avenge us.

She wipes her tears and walks to the bedroom.
One obstacle down one more to go.

—

•BANELE THWALA

Just when I started to fall in love with her, this comes out, how the fuck do I compete with another woman for her, this is just insane. My

parents believe that she can be helped and saved from this demon that is possessing her and they agreed to forgive Bab'Zulu for lying, my mom is the one who convinced us that it happens for people to lie in order to protect their name and family and she made reference to our family with how they've constantly cleaned up my mess. I guess I should just step back and allow them heal Nolwandle and soon as she is okay we are getting married, I won't be losing her to a woman that's not going to happen no one is born gay they choose this life because they run away from something, I believe Lwandle decided on this because she might have feared to have a husband like her father who obviously abuses them in private and acts like a good man to the world, but I promise I will change for her I will work on myself constantly to not lay a hand on her and have her be reminded of her father the monster that made her chose to be with another woman. My parents are right we can help heal Lwandle. I will love her enough she will forget this

confusing time in her life. I am so fucken mad at Zipho, I know for a fact that she didn't do this to get Lwandle help she did it to eliminate her and be the last woman standing and if she thinks that's going to happen then she is a fool a bigger fool than I thought. I asked her to meet up with me at the guest house I took her the other time, I was going to be late so I paid for the room via EFT and told them Zipho will be coming through I need to address this fast before school comes out, I need to be at the gate when my wife comes out. She must see that I am her biggest supporter through this difficult time. Upon arriving at the guest house my anger returned full force, from last night seeing her walk in to her giving fake concern and crocodile tears for my woman's predicament. I knock on the door and she opens with a smile.

Her: my love.

I walk in and close the door behind me and lock it. I turn back and a hot slap lands across her face and she screams and I place my index finger on lip to signal her to shut up.

Her: Banele why would you hit me?

Tears are streaming down her face.

Me: are these the same crocodile tears you showed us last night?

Her: I was sincere.

Me: do you think I am stupid as you bitch?

Her: why must you be so rude to me though? I am doing all I can to show you that I love you but you keep shoving it back in my face. I gave you my virginity, my heart and soul. Why won't you love me?

I laugh out loud.

Me: who would love a woman as loose as you Zipho? You are weak and easy no effort went into getting in your pants because you came to my house and offered it on a silver platter. You are not my taste nothing about you is appealing

to me, baby girl you are nothing but a cum dump and that's all you will ever be. I am not leaving my lady for you, your stunt didn't work but it just helped us.

Her: Banele please.

Me: concerntrate and be obsessed with school like you are with me but always know that you will never have me. You will never be Lwandle and you will never have her life.

I sneer and attempt to walk away but she holds my arm and goes on her knees

Her: she doesn't even love you.

Me: a woman job is to respect me I will do all the loving.

Her: Banele don't do this please. I kick her on the chest and she falls down crying, it's taking everything in me not to beat her to a pulp, I promised my father I would never lay a hand on another woman again and have him clean it up. I walk out before I can give in to my anger.

- INDIGO NCQOBO

My heart has been racing ever since I got off the call with Ocean, she told me her best friend exposed her in front of her family and that pricks family last night at dinner, this would have been good if it happened towards the end of the year but right now it's chaos, we don't know what her father is going to do to her but she told me not to worry because her sister is around and nothing will happen to her. I just hope she moves home until her last exam just to make sure their father doesn't hurt my girl. The kitchen door bursts open and I hear commotion in there so I quickly get up and go see what is going on. Oceans father is here screaming at my grandmother. He notices me and he hurries my way breathing fire. He holds me by my t-shirt.

Him: you come from that evil city and come here to confuse my daughter.

Me: Nolwandle is just living her truth she is not confused.

Him: Don't talk back at me you demon.

Ma: Get your hands off my granddaughter.

Him: Salukazi (old woman) stay out of this.

Ma: this is my house now get out.

Him: a house full of demons and evil spirits.

Ma: then leave before we possess you too get out Zulu hamba. You won't come here and think you can abuse my child in my presence.

Him: tell her to stay away from Nolwandle, tell her to leave this place, tell her to not even think or dream of my daughter, or I will rain terror on all of you.

He says looking at me straight in the eyes.

Ma: we have heard you now go.

Him: pray hard for this demon before the Lord gives up on her soul.

Me: no matter how hard you pray baba you will never pray away the gay and you can never make her love me any less. He forms a fist and puts it in front of my face.

Ma: I dare you to Zulu I dare you and see yourself in prison.

My grandmother threatens and he let's go of me and just screams his anger and walks out. My grandmother quickly comes to me and hugs me.

Ma: oh Indigo, have you spoken to his daughter? Is she okay? If he was this livid with you I can't imagine what he's done to her.

Me: I spoke to her and she is okay makhulu.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I don't know what could have happened to me if my sister was not home, I swear I would be laying in a mortuary fridge cause of death being

Bab'Zulu. I don't know what's going to happen to me now that everyone knows about my sexuality and my girlfriend but I know that this marriage can't continue and I am just grateful for that. The traitor Zipho didn't come to school and she did herself a favor coz I was going to give her a hot slap and a piece of my mind, I never thought she would do this to me, the least she could have done is come to me and let me explain. Its school out and Siya did say she will be at the gate, I get there but her car is nowhere, I call her and it takes me straight to voicemail, I go to my whatsApp to text her when a car stops near me I look and it's Banele, why is he here? he gets out the car and comes straight to me, what if he hits me oh God. He takes me in for a hug and confusion floods through me.

Him: Sthandwa Sam.

Me: Banele what-

He cuts me off

Him: it's okay love, we are going to get through this, I am here for you. I love you so much.

What the hell is going on here? Didn't he hear me last night?

Me: Banele we need to talk.

Him: I know baby, and everyone is already waiting for us at your house.

I sigh and decide not to say anything, I just need to find my sister and she will tell me what is going on.

Me: okay we can go now.

Him: where is your friend?

Me: she didn't come to school today.

Him: that girl is a snake baby you really should stay away from her.

Me: yeah.

We get in the car and he drives to my house, we arrive and I see a car I don't know outside as well as my father's car. I don't see Siya's car my heart starts to race. We get out the car and

he insists on taking my hand into his. As he opens the door and I walk in first, I see my parents, my mother is crying silently, next to them is Banele's parents in their church attire and there is also a young couple I assume because they are also in a church regalia I don't recognize. What the fuck is this? My father nods at Banele and he goes to lock the door

Me: what is going on? Where is my sister?

Bab'Zulu: Nolwandle, you are not the first to be possessed by this demon and like the others we've seen you will be healed from it and become a living testimony. We love and care about you that's why we are doing this. The Thwala family have prayed about this and decided to forgive me for my trespasses and to help you with this as their dearly loved daughter in law.

Me: I am not possessed baba please.

I cry.

Bab'Zulu: this is not you talking baby, the devil is using you to cause destruction but we will

never allow him to have his way with you.
Everything will be okay. You are going to go
away for a while to receive help and when you
come back all the confusion will be gone and
your husband and family will be waiting for you.

I shake my head vigorously crying.

Me: baba please don't do this please, love me
and accept me for who and what I am please. If
you love me you will not send me away please,
Banele please.

I beg but they don't seem to be moved. They all
stand up and come circle me and start singing
church songs. It feels like my life is a movie
right now, it feels like I am losing my mind, I
can't leave this place, I have school, I have
Indigo my whole life is here. I look at my father
with pleading eyes but he doesn't seem to care
my mother stretches out her hands to me but
the pastor stops her.

Me: I am begging you please baba please.

I am forced to kneel down and they start
praying for me in tongues I don't understand

and they smear oils and sprinkle water all over me while at it. I can't do anything at this minute I can't even attempt to run, even if I scream no one will come to help me. I kneel there for what seems like eternity until the younger pastor I don't know comes to me with an injection, I quickly get up and try to move back but Banele holds me back, but I kick and scream trying to free myself.

Me: no no please no!

Banele: Baby stop fighting us please we are only trying to help you please.

The pastor injects me and soon enough I feel drowsy and it's lights out for me.

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No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 27

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

My father is the devil himself, to go as low as going to cry victim at the police station and even get a protection order against me proves that he is desperate and he will do anything to get what he wants even if destroying his own children. This is a whole new level of evil I swear. I haven't stopped crying ever since I got to my house, my husband hasn't even tried to get it out of me, that's one thing I appreciate about him, he let's me cry it out and explain when I am better. I couldn't even hide somewhere to catch Lwandle after school coz the cop lady that served me made sure I drive straight to Durban, she only drove back when I got in the town, there was no network on the road so it was really difficult to call or text Lwandle what was happening. I need her to run as far as she can and I will pick her up there, I am no longer waiting for her to turn 18 or finish matric, she can always write next year but if he kills her then of what importance is the certificate? I tried calling her when I got here but it rang until it

went to voicemail but now it's off. I can only hope that she is okay. I break free from my husband's warm embrace and wipe my tears.

Him: ready to tell me who's neck I am breaking?

I giggle. Only Bongani can make me feel this way when I am going through something shitty.

Me: My father.

Him: I don't want to lie but I've heard it up to here with Zulu, what is wrong with that man?

Me: can you believe he got a protection against me?

Him: he what? Why the fuck would he do that?

Me: because he knew he would have never had his way with muntuza with me there.

Him: what does he want with her now?

I sigh.

Me: Lwandle confessed to me that she is lesbian a day ago and last night at dinner Zipho

came in and told everyone. If I didn't kill that girl nxa, now everyone believes she is possessed.

Him: Oh fuck babe, this is not good.

Me: I know baby I am so worried about my sister it's just crazy, her phone is off I don't know what to do coz if I step anywhere near them he is going to have me arrested without thinking twice.

Him: we have to find a way to get her out of that hell Siya.

Me: but how baby I am just so blank.

Him: tomorrow when you know your mom is at school away from your dad, call her and beg like crazy to just help you out for once, use the best emotional blackmail lines you can think of and get her on board with taking Lwandle away from that place.

Me: my mother is my father's puppet.

Him: I know that but something deep down inside of her must love you guys more than her

husband you just need to tap into it love and make her flip sides.

Me: I will try.

He nods

Him: you will do it love, my wife is not defeated by anything not even this.

I smile and go in for a hug again.

Me: I love you Bongani.

Him: I love you too Mrs. Bhengu.

—

•BONGEKA ZULU

I am a failure, a disgrace to both womanhood and motherhood. I hate myself and I don't think I would ever forgive myself for allowing Zulu to toy with my children, he told me what he did to Siya and he threatened to do worse to me, I know he would and he wouldn't even feel bad about it. Worse part is I don't even know where

they took my child, he won't tell me anything because he doesn't trust me. I have been weeping in Lwandle bedroom praying in my heart for God to give her strength and protect her from whatever they are going to do to her. The door bursts open and he walks in.

Him: what is your problem wena!

He shouts at me and I stand up quickly.

Me: nothing Bab'Zulu.

Him: then why are you crying like a widow? Am I dead?

Me: no Baba you are not.

Him: then what is it because you are starting to seriously piss me off.

Me: I am just worried about Lwandle Zulu.

Him: why would you worry about someone who went to get help?

Me: can you at least tell me where they took her? Please.

Him: so you can tell Siya and you both back stab me.

Me: no baba just for my peace of mind, I mean she is my daughter Zulu, I gave birth to her and what kind of mother would I be if I didn't know if she will be okay, if they will feed her?

Him: are you trying to say I am a bad father?

Me: I wouldn't dare.

Him: I told you what you needed to know. Or do you want her to remain with the demon controlling her?

Me: Baba it's not that I just want to know if she will be alright and what they will do to her.

Him: you are really annoying me Bongeka and I am not too tired to show you your place this minute.

His tone is intimidating and serious so I quickly just look down to avoid being beaten to a pulp.

Me: I am sorry.

Him: get out of this room and keep out of it.

I hurry off and pass by him closing my eyes for a slap that he might just give me, but it doesn't come leaving me sighing in relief. My heart is heavy and right now I can only wish death upon myself after all I am the most useless mother in the world.

•ZIZIPHO MHLONGO

My heart is aching I won't lie I don't think I have ever felt such pain, and worse it's emotional and there isn't medication to heal the pain I am feeling, It feels like my heart is broken into pieces because my chest is burning up. The words Banele said to me kept on playing and playing in my head and I can still see the annoyance on his face. He meant every word he said and to me they felt like someone was twisting a knife they plunged into my heart. I don't know why but i had a feeling that I had to record our encounter just to have proof when I decide to tell his family but I didn't think it would

be this sore, I thought it would be with him on top of me enjoying the sin between my legs. I am even afraid to look at the video, I just saved it with it's hurtful content. I have been curled up in bed crying my eyes balls out. I don't even want to talk to Mbali about what happened at least not today.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I open my eyes and I am still a bit drowsy, I hold my head as it feels heavy and adjust to the light, I notice that I am in the car and immediately remember what had happened back at my house. I quickly try to jerk of my seat but the seatbelt holds me back in place. The young couple looks back at me.

Me: where are you taking me?

I ask panicking.

Her: oh Lwandle you are awake?

Me: please just tell me where you are taking me.

Her: we are almost there you will see.

Me: please just leave me here and I will disappear I will not even go to the police.

Her: why would you want to run away Lwandle, all we want to do is help you.

Me: there is nothing wrong with me, I am lesbian not demonic just let me go please.

Tears are just streaming down my face.

Her: you will soon learn that God only created Adam and Eve the rest is not Godly.

Him: stop talking to her like she is a princess, we were handed over a demonic child to straighten her. Don't make her feel superior to the others.

The pastor guy says in a serious tone and the lady just shuts up. I cry silently in the back thinking about Indigo and Siya, my disappearance is going to kill them. They are

both going to take this hard, I don't know what awaits me where we are headed but I am scared I won't lie. I try to at least see where the road leads but there's nothing, it's a gravel road and there are no signs. This is pointless. The car drives a while and houses starts to appear from nearby, this place looks like a ghost town, it's worse than where I come from. Their town is one street and I still can't tell where I am.

everyone on the streets is dressed in long skirts and dresses and they are fully covered, the men are just dressed normally like the man from our church, could it be that the church back home has a sister church and this is their pastor?. The car stops at a big house with so many rooms. I must admit it looks clean and well kept, there are two guys working in the garden but they quickly stop and run to the car. They only bow at the pastor and take out the things in the boot. Could they be their children or workers? They look terrified maybe they are here just like me.

Him: come Lwandle.

I follow them inside and find a little girl carried by a girl a little older than me.

Her: This is our home Lwandle, and these 3 are here to receive help just like you.

Me: I just want to go home please.

Him: stop nagging you are starting to sound annoying and I will beat it out of you. This is not a hotel this is our house and a place where you will receive conversion therapy, when you are done with our program you will understand that you were possessed and the life you led was demonic, you will go back to your family as a woman who will marry a man not the filth you were doing. Just be a good girl and follow the rules and allow the Lord to work in you so you be better. How long you are here depends on your participation in our activities. We don't mind keeping you here for years and years until you are who you were meant you be.

Hearing this man speak like this made my heart drop to my stomach.

Her: my husband has explained well. You will share a room with all of them, you will do the introductions yourselves and they will explain how things are here. My husband's name is Gabriel and I am Dina.

Me: can I have my phone I need to call someone.

Gabriel: oh my God this girl. You 3 just teach this brat how things are done here, she is annoying me and i am seriously not in the mood to deal with her.

Dina takes the baby and they disappear. The first guys speaks

Him: My name is Mpilo, this is Zanda and Paul.

Me: why are we here? What is conversion therapy.

Zanda: She is all yours Fire.

He sighs and they walk away, and we are left together.

Mlilo: the first thing you need to know is this is hell and you must do as they say or you will feel

their wrath. Conversion therapy is them basically trying to change our sexuality.

Me: what! how will they do that?

Mlilo: Honey I don't want to scare you but brace yourself, channel your inner bitch to get through this.

Me: you seem to be okay.

Mlilo: I am everything but okay, I just chose to hold on to my happy memories.

Me: we can find a police station and report them.

Mlilo: what is your name again?

Me: Lwandle.

Mlilo: you have a lot to learn but you will get it with time, come let me go show you where we sleep.

Me: why are you guys okay with all of this?

Mlilo: Lwandle the first rule to survive here is to keep your mouth shut and do what is expected of you.

Me: I have never been able to do that.

Mlilo: well you are going to have a huge problem and you will always pay for it, let me leave you to get burned so you know you shouldn't play with fire.

I don't want to be here, I can't be here, my girlfriend and sister won't cope without knowing where I am. How the hell do they even plan of changing my sexuality when I didn't chose to be this way. We walk in to a room full of matrasses and blankets, it doesn't look good at all and it's so different to the rest of the house, this is basically slavery and I don't think I can stand for it at all.

—
No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 28

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I just couldn't sleep last night, I was trying by all means to run from this place but the windows in this room are high and they lock the door when we sleep, worse part I heard dogs barcking outside and even a fool would know that they did it on purpose, so we don't even try to run. We were woken up at 4am and that's when sleep tried coming to me, my whole body is sore and my eyes are burning from lack of rest. I don't think I can survive this place, it's just too much for me really. I am helping Zanda clean around the house and I must admit this girl has succumbed to the therapy, but it has left her bear, her lifeless eyes just sells her out, what exactly do they do here? I am disturbed by Gabriel's voice calling out my name.

Him: Lwandle

Me: morning

Him: stop what you are doing there, you are coming with Dina and I to town to get some groceries and your toiletries.

Me: oh okay.

I put down the mop and follow him out, his wife is already in the car, I get in the back and remain quiet, I am going to use this opportunity to get help and get the fuck out of this hellhole. The drive to the one street town is not long, he parks outside the grocery store and we get out.

Him: grab the trolley.

I quickly grab one and push it behind them, they greet a few people in the store and I am looking closely at everything they are doing.

Her: Nolwandle go grab 3 soaps, a roll on, lotion and wash cloths.

Dina says and I hurry out to find the toiletries aisle, I find an older woman in there and I look back to see if they didn't follow me, and they didn't it's just me and the old lady, I go to her.

Me: please help me please, they are holding me here against my will, I don't want to be here, can I please use your phone please?

Lady: child what are you talking about?

Me: I need your help, please borrow me your phone so I can call my sister to come get me please.

She smiles shaking her head.

Me: please I am begging you.

Him: Nolwandle!

His voice startles me.

Lady: Oh Pastor Gab, she is with you?

Him: yes ma'am, we received her yesterday.

Lady: I see she still hasn't figured it out.

Him: She will soon. I will see you at church this Sunday.

Lady: yes sir and thank God for the good job you are doing restoring God's order.

Him: Amen.

He takes my hand and roughly pulls me away, I am screaming for help but everyone in the store is just looking at me like am crazy. What the hell is wrong with these people.

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

I can't focus on my job and I have been taking a lot of days off my boss is starting to look at me somehow, I really need to put in effort on my work but my worry about muntuza is just heavy and draining. I still haven't been able to get a hold of her and Bongani has already set up with his friend to drive her to us as we asked him to accept her when she manages to run from home, soon as she arrives here we will ship her off to Richards Bay. I look at the time and I believe my mom is far from that evil man. I move to the restroom at work and dial my mom who answers almost immediately.

Her: Siya.

Me: mama, where is muntuza?

Her: He won't tell me Siya, he just won't tell me where they took Lwandle.

Me: mama what are you saying?

Her: the same day he got rid of you, he came here with the Thwala's and another pastor with his wife. I don't even know who or where they are from, they took her and said they are going to give her the help she needs

Me: what! And you let that happen?

Her: what was I to do Siya?

Me: be her mother! Protect her! What is wrong with you?

I shout and I hear her cry

Her: Siyamthanda I already feel bad so please.

Me: you make me sick Bongeka, you are the most useless parent I've ever known.

Her: please stop please.

Me: and you are going on with your life just like that but your daughter is Good knows where.

Her: I am so sorry for being a bad mother to you girls I am sorry.

Me: mxm.

I click my tongue and the door opens my boss walking in.

Her: personal calls at your own time.

Me: I am so sorry Doreen.

Her: I advise you to get your act together and start delivering or I swear I am going to give you a warning.

I blink a couple of times

Me: I am sorry I will deliver.

Her: Good then.

She walks out the bathroom and I sigh. Where the hell am I going to start looking for my sister.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I don't see why I should continue going to school if I won't be needing it in my life plus I have more pressing matters to attend to, my heart is still aching from the whole Banele situation, I can't seem to get over all he said to me, but a part of me truly believes that he said all he said because I am the one who destroyed the picture his family was trying to paint for him, but that's not what he wants or he wouldn't have entangled himself with me. I get to the pastor's house and contemplate whether to do this or not, before I can even knock the door opens and Banele appears, he quickly looks back and close the door.

Him: what the fuck are you doing here Zee.

He whispers, roughly pulling me towards his car.

Me: I just need to talk to you.

Him: get your fucken ass in the car now.

He snarls and I quickly get inside he gets in too and starts the engine and rushes out his

parents yard. He doesn't say anything to me. We get to the open veld and he gets out and comes to my side. He pulls me out and pins me to the car, I have never seen him so mad.

Him: you now have the balls to show up at my house?

Me: I just needed to talk to you babe please.

Him: I don't have anything to say to you Zizipho, I've already said my peace and that's that. Get it in your fucken head.

Me: I love you why is that not enough?

He laughs

Him: I don't love you, I don't want you and it's never going to change.

Me: you are rejecting me because of Lwandle who wants to date other woman?

Him: exactly, that's my wife right there and once she is healed she will come home to me and I will marry her and give her a beautiful life something you will just dream of having.

He pushes the dagger deeper in my heart and I just cry.

Me: you used me Banele.

Him: you used yourself baby girl.

He walks away and get into his car and starts it, I try opening my door but it's locked

Me: Banele open the door!

I bang on the window

Him: I think you could use the time to walk and clear your head, understand and process what I said to you.

He speeds off and I cry screaming his name. This guy thinks I have done everything in vain, he can't just use and dump me and think I will sit back and watch him.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I am with Phiwe waiting anxiously outside the school gate, I asked him to drive us here to pick up Lucy and maybe get a chance to see Ocean even if I don't see speak to her, I am super worried now coz she didn't call yesterday or today and I just took it upon myself to call but her phone took me straight to voicemail. I just want to see if she is okay. The BMW guy hasn't even arrived and that just takes me down deeper, in the pits of my fear. Lucy gets in the car and they exchange a peck.

Her: hey Indi.

She says looking at me with pity.

Me: hey babe, did Ocean come to school?

She sighs and shakes her head.

Her: no she didn't come, I tried calling her and it took me straight to voicemail.

Me: Fuck, what have they done to her.

Him: don't think of the worst malumes.

Me: she didn't call and she didn't come to school Phiwe does that sound like nothing happened?

I snap

Him: I know you are worried about your girl malumes but try to calm down so you can think.

I nod

Me: I am sorry for snapping at you.

Him: you can snap all you want I understand.

Me: her father is crazy Phiwe

Him: I know but not crazy enough to kill her.

Her: Your grandmother used to be a part of that church maybe she might have an idea of what they do to gays and lesbians.

Me: you have a point.

Her: Let's go talk to her then, babe drive.

Phiwe starts the engine and an idea hits me, I go on Facebook and go to Lwandle's page to find her sister she would know where she is. I just pray she checks her inbox.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

When we got back to their house earlier on they tied me to the tree with my back bare and I have been in this position for hours. I am hungry and thirsty and the others are not even allowed to look my way, I cried till tears couldn't come no more. I hear the door open and footsteps approach me. I look back but I can't see entirely, a church song starts as they sing it surrounding me and I wonder what they are about to do to me. Fear creeps in...

Him: you want to learn the hard way and I don't mind teaching you.

Me: I don't want to be here I don't.

Him: you don't have a choice and I am going to remind you of that.

Me: please let me go I beg you please.

Him: I would let you pull a stunt like you did today but I don't have the energy to deal with that, so I will tell you now it's no use trying to find help around here because everyone knows me and they appreciate the work I am doing. You can get as crazy as you want but you will receive the treatment and you will be better.

Me: pastor Gabriel please.

Him: I am going to strike you with this whip to restore the respect lost in you.

Me: no no no please!

Just on time he strikes me and I scream in agony.

The second one comes and it hits my exposed flesh making me feel on fire.

Me: ooohhhhhh please stop please.

I cry louder but the song gets louder too. My cries and pleas fall on deaf ears as he continues to strike me.

Him: come on Lwandle pray out as loud as you are screaming and ask for forgiveness.

Me: please.

I say with a fading voice. The pain I am feeling might be physical but I know for a fact it's aiming at my soul, and I am not letting that one go no matter what they do to me.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 29

•INDIGO NCQOBO

It has been a couple of hours and Ocean's sister hasn't gotten back to me and it's really making me feel uneasy, I was hoping she would answer quickly and put me out of my misery but with each passing hour I feel drifting more and more into my worry. On the other hand my

grandmother wasn't home when we got in she only just gotten back in and she's been in the bathroom a while now. Can they understand the urgency of this? She finally gets in the lounge and I stand up.

Me: makhulu can I please have a word?

Her: I need to start with the pots Indigo, you and Phiwe will be crying hunger just now.

Me: mama please it's serious.

Her: your face says it all.

She takes a sit and I sigh.

Me: makhulu when you were a part of the church, did you encounter lesbians or gays?

Her: yes we did and a few of them, that was before I could better understand them.

Me: I haven't seen or spoken to Lwandle ma and she hasn't been to school either.

Her: Zulu might be locking her up as punishment.

Me: I doubt he would let her miss school makhulu.

Her: anything is possible at this point Indi.

Me: I understand that ma, but in the time of the church what did you do to them

Her: I won't lie to you mntanami I don't know but I've heard they take them to conversion therapy.

My heart stops.

Me: they what?! Mama that is serious. I've read about it and it's hectic. They play on their psychology.

Her: I don't know much about what happens all we know is they try to change them to what they believe God made them to be either a straight woman or straight man.

Me: so I guess you don't even know where they take them?

Her: I am sorry Indigo but the locations are kept secret to protect them for the next person who

might be sent there so they don't know the place to escape.

Me: in other words I can't find her until they are done playing with her head and release her?

Her: I am sorry but that's how it is. We can only pray that she holds on and doesn't succumb to it all.

Me: this is messed up makhulu.

Her: I know, this whole thing is sad honestly. I am sorry you are going through this.

Me: worse part I have to go back to Johannesburg this Thursday makhulu, how do I even begin to move on with everything when I don't know where she is and if she is alright?

She sighs

Her: the all seeing God will help her pull through.

Me: isn't it the same God who is allowing these crazy people to hurt and destroy innocent souls?

Her: I know you are hurt and stressed but please don't talk like that.

Me: Ocean is my heart ma, and without her i just don't know if I'll be able to go on.

•BONGEKA ZULU

The whole day I've been replaying my daughter's hurtful words in my head, I know to them and the rest of the world I might seem heartless and useless and I agree with them but I love my children with all my heart, they are my life. I just don't know how to stand up for them. How do I stand up for others when I can barely do that for myself, i want to be the mother they deserve but where do I even begin? How do I stand up and claim a voice when I've never had any before? The whole day I have been thinking of it and I can only save my self and save my children if I kill Zulu. The thought of becoming a murderer leaves a bitter taste in my mouth but at least we will be free from it all. I

have been tossing and turning since I got to bed and it's now around midnight and still sleep seems to be a rumour for me. I look at Mondli next to me and he is dead from sleep, I move slowly getting out of bed and moving to the kitchen, opening the drawer the large sharp butcher knife is staring back at me, a tear falls from my face as I am about to do something that will change my life forever. I send a short prayer and take it with me back to my bedroom where the devil I call husband is sleeping like there world has no problems. I am shaking and a part of me just wants to stop this and leave everything to God but I've done that all my life it's time for a different course. I raise the knife higher and I am about to plunge it into his heart when his big eyes shoot open.

Him: Do it.

He says and I just freeze, how did he know?

Him: you would be doing yourself and your children a favor so do it Bongeka.

He hits his chest with a feast.

Him: Do it and you'll never see Lwandle again.

He threatens and I stop and drop the knife.

Me: just leave us be please Zulu.

He laughs and sits up straight.

Him: you are weak Bongeka this is the closest you'll ever be in trying to get rid of me, next time I won't be sleeping with one eye open but I will open the pair.

Me: Mondli why are you so evil to your own flesh and blood?

Him: because I come first dear wife, I take care of me before anyone else.

Me: why are you so messed up?

Like a speed of light he pulls me by my nightware and I gasp for air.

Him: who are you calling messed up?

Me: ngiyeke Mondli! (Leave me).

I say hitting him with my hands and he is shocked I have never tried fighting for myself

ever, I have always submitted but I just can't anymore.

Him: ushaya mina Bongeka? (You are hitting me).

He asks getting out of bed, still firmly holding on to the silk I have on. He drops me to the ground and puts his foot on my chest pressing me down to the cold ceramic floor.

Me: you better kill me because I am done sitting around and watching you abuse me and my children.

He laughs an evil laugh I've never heard from him and presses me down more, my chest is closing in making it difficult to breathe.

Him: so you have grown wings now?

Me: I am choosing my children Mondli.

He nods with a smile and removes his foot.

Him: stand up now and fight me like a man. You want to be the man right? Get up now.

I stand up and move towards the wall as he walks towards me. He finally gets in front of me

and I am blocked between him and the wall, no escape and the only way is to fight even though I know it's a losing battle.

I slap him first and I know I just unleashed a beast but I have to stand up for once. He returns a punch and it lands on my left eye, I scream, he gives me a slap in the face and I cry. The blows follow to my ribs like a punching bag I take them all. He manages to get drop me on the ground and that's when he drag's me with my leg out of our bedroom, I am kicking and screaming not caring who hears me. He gets me to the lounge and drops my head a couple of time I immediately feel my head spinning. He walks away but comes back quickly and starts restraining my legs together with a tape.

Me: Mondli no no don't do that.

I plead.

Him: you think you can stand in my face and disrespect me? You think you have wings now

right? You will be nothing but my prisoner now you fool.

He puts a tape on my mouth silencing me and drag's me again to the small closet in the corridor where I keep my curtains and beddings. He closes me in that dark confided space.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I am laying on my stomach on the matrass with no top on because my back is on fire, I have felt pain in my life but what Pastor Gab showed me is nothing I've ever felt before. The pain is excruciating and they gave instructions to the others not to even try to give me pain medication. Mlilo has been cleaning the wounds and trying to treat them but it's not helping infact it's even more painful but he insists that we should clean them out so I don't get an infection. It's probably around the early hours of the morning and another day I am deprived of

sleep, I am in purgatory. I can't stop sobbing in my pillow and I muffle my cries as I hear someone wake up.

Him: you seriously need to listen to what they say Lwandle.

Mlilo whispers.

Me: but how do I just accept being here without even trying to put on a fight?

Him: I really understand what you are saying babe but you need to pick your battles wisely and I promise you this is not worth it.

I cry at his words

Me: I've just accepted everything in my life, I've let people hurt me but I just can't anymore.

Him: I have been here before and I did all of this and trust me babe it didn't work in my favor but infact it destroyed me and caused me pain and anguish.

Me: so I must just let them do whatever with me?

Him: no make the believe they are having their way with you.

Me: I honestly don't know, I just want to go home.

Him: then do as they say please. I don't know why I care about you when I let these two go through the same shit but you seem sweet and amazing don't allow yourself to feel more of their wrath.

Me: does it work? The therapy? Are you cured?

He chuckles

Him: in their heads it does but babe this whole thing is psuedoscientific practice. I am not cured but I need them to believe I am, I am still very much gay.

He snaps his fingers making me smile.

Me: I don't think I've seen people as sick as this.

Him: I don't mean to scare you but Lwandle you seriously need to channel your inner bitch to survive what they are about to do to you. You

will survive just hold on to the strength you are showing now, save it and use it later.

I look at him and he is dead serious.

Me: Thank you very much Fire.

Him: when they wake us up just be a yes sir no sir girl it's the only way.

I nod. He goes to his space and comes back, he shoves two pills in my mouth.

Me: what is it?

Him: something to numb the pain and give you a few hours of sleep keep it between us.

Me: I really appreciate this.

He nods and he goes to sleep before we wake up the two others.

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

My husband saw the strain I was under with the whole muntuza and work situation and he said he will look into my sister's disappearance

starting with his parents as they are also a part of the church, he believes they might know where she is being given the so called help. I am to focus on work but my heart is just not in it right now. I am having my lunch and I decide to go on my Facebook and I realize I have an inbox, after opening the messenger app the name Indigo Nqcoobo pops up and I quickly remember muntuza saying her girlfriends name is Indigo. I open the the text and read

Hi Siya, I am Indi Ocean and I are very close friends, I haven't spoken or seen her in days and I am seriously worried about her. If you know something please let me know because I am losing my mind here. My number is 075564123 you can hit me up.

I don't waste time I quickly dial her number, poor thing must be dying my sister did say they are in love so I can only imagine how devastated i would be if Bongani went missing.

She answers after forever.

Her: sure.

Her tone is bored, I just sigh.

Me: hi Indigo, this is Siya speaking, Lwandle's sister.

Her: oh yes, how are you? Thanks for calling me.

Me: it's okay, I just saw your message just now.

Her: I appreciate you getting back to me in a hurry, do you have any idea where she would be?

She asks with so much hope in her voice.

Me: I am sorry Indi but I am in the dark as you, my husband is trying to find something but...

I stops as I hear her sigh deeply.

Her: my grandmother spoke of conversion therapy they send gay people to.

Me: what is that?

Her: it is a therapy where they try to change her sexuality.

My heart drops to my stomach.

Me: oh my God no Jesus. Does she know where the place is maybe?

Her: nothing, I feel so helpless.

Tears threaten and I blink them away quickly

Me: I feel the same way.

Her: thanks for letting me know. I will save your number and keep you updated if I hear anything.

Me: please do and I will do the same.

Her: okay keep well.

Me: you too, bye Indi.

Her: bye.

I hang up and bury my head in my hands.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 30

•MONDLI ZULU

I feel a punch on my tiny face, as I try to cover my face the blows started coming to my ribcage. My father is angry so angry for finding me helping out my mother in the kitchen. He hates it so much, he told me never to be in a woman's space because I will never be a manly man so in order to straighten me out he beat it out of me, I loved helping in the kitchen but Zulu senior made sure that I hate to even step in the kitchen. He took off his belt and started hitting me with it, I am crying from the pain I am feeling but he doesn't seem to care infact it's making him more angry.

Him: you want to be a sissy Mondli?

He asks the 9 years old me.

Me: No no Bab'Zulu I don't

Him: then why do you always defy my orders and help your mother in the kitchen.

Me: I am sorry baba sorry.

He continues to hit me hard

Him: I told you to play with your friend outside, drive cars, practice indlamu (dance) and just be a boy but you just can't stop being in the kitchen you can't Mondli.

He screams louder and I fear telling him that I hate those things I hate my friend and I hate playing boy games. All I want to do is help my mother and learn things from her.

Me: I will start doing as you say baba I promise.

Him: the next time I find you behaving like a girl I promise I will hit your mother so bad and it will be all your fault.

I get up breathing heavily and sweating, I haven't had this dream in a very long time, I move from the bed and realise that I've messed myself. I sigh and sit on the edge crying , the little boy in me is still scared and crying out for help but my father said I should never show my vulnerability to anyone. He beat me up until I was the man he was proud to call son but this

was never the man I wanted to be. I have come this far and I can only carry out and finish what I've started. I look at the time and it's 6am, shit I overslept. My mind hurries to Bongeka and I remember how I lost it with her. I change my pyjama bottoms and remove the sheets on the bed taking them to the laundry. I make my way to the closet I closed her in and she is in the same position i left her and she is shivering. I sigh and remove the tape from her mouth.

Her: Your evil heart will be your doom Mondli. You can abuse us for years and years but one day just one day you will pay for it all.

She snarls and I just look at her blank. Her eye is swollen and green, the is no way we are going to work. I will have to think of something to get us a few days off work.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I open my eyes and wonder how strong the pills Fire gave me are, I was knocked out a few minutes after chewing them and I am grateful because I didn't feel the pain, or think of my situation. I processed what Mlilo said to me before I passed out and I realized that he is right and I should listen to him after all he has been here longer than me, I don't see why he would lead me astray.

Him: and she is finally awake.

His voice says and I realize he likes startling me. I just sigh.

Me: yes I am awake.

Him: I hope you prayed for the spirit of obedience to be instilled in you.

Me: I tried.

Him: Get up we have an activity.

I slowly rose up from the matress and he hands me an oversized t-shirt. I don't even try to protest and say it will touch my wounds I just

put it on. I follow him out and pass the three others in the kitchen, they are looking at me with pity and I wonder what is about to happen to me. We Walk down the corridor and he opens the door on the far left room. I walk in and it's just the projector and its white cloth screen, a couch and chair facing the screen, in front of the chair is a bucket, I start panicking.

Him: sit down Lwandle.

I follow the instruction cautiously and he comes to stand behind me and injects something on my neck. I just close my eyes waiting to pass out but I don't get drowsy but I feel nauseated immediately. He comes and sits on the couch and looks at me intensely.

Him: Nolwandle Zulu!

Me: pastor Gabriel.

Him: be truthful so you can be healed.

Me: I will.

Him: okay then have you ever had sex with the same sex?

I swallow remembering the intimate fulfilling experience with Indigo, I remember the pleasure she made me feel.

Me: yes I have.

Him: did you enjoy any of it?

Me: I did.

I stick to my short answers because I don't know where all this is leading.

Him: I see, now let's watch and I want your eyes on the screen till the end.

I nod and he checks his watch and look at me for a while, I am feeling more and more off and I wonder what he injected me with, he then presses the projector remote and lesbian porn starts playing. I close my eyes feeling embarrassed.

Him: eyes on the screen the entire time
Lwandle.

He orders and I shoot them open. The scene plays and plays and as it goes on and on I feel the need to puke like what I am watching is

disgusting me. The more I watch the more I have the need to vomit. I am trying to hold it in but I fail. I quickly pull the bucket and put my face in it and puke out. I hurt my back and the pains from the wounds rise. I cry, why would they be this cruel? Why are they so messed up. He clearly gave me something to nauseate me and make me puke while watching some sex erotica to make me believe that it is disgusting. I cry some more shaking my head.

Him: this is disgusting Lwandle and the true you knows and sees it hence you vomiting like this. Did you enjoy watching it?

Me: no, no I didn't.

Him: you will watch this until the demon in you knows that your body can't be it's host anymore. Now look up and watch. It's going to be a long day.

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

My husband should be home any moment now, he drove early in the morning to go and see his parents to ask them about this conversion therapy thing and I pray he comes home with some answers I am having problems sleeping at night and concentrating at work. I just need to find my sister and get her away from all of that evilness my father got us into. I hear the garage opening and I stand up and wait for him to walk in. After a few minutes he walks in through the door that connects the garage and the lounge.

Me: baby!

I say launching into his arms and he gladly receives me.

Him: Mfazi wam (my wife).

Me: how was your drive?

He sighs

Him: long babe long.

Me: and what did they say? Did they tell you anything?

Him: I am sorry Sthandwa Sam but it's not anything we can use.

Me: What do you mean Bongani?

I say in a trembling voice.

Him: my mom says they know of the conversion therapy, but where they keep them and what they do to them is not made known to them.

Me: so you telling me I won't find muntuza?

I let my tears fall and he closes his eyes, I know his heart is breaking. My husband hates seeing me cry, hence he always goes out his way to make me happy.

Him: baba says we will only see her once she is released from the treatment.

Me: oh nkosi yam. (Oh my God).

Him: I am sorry baby.

Me: I just can't sit back and wait for them to do as they please with her.

Him: I know love I know and I won't stop trying to find her I promise.

Me: it's all going to work out right?

Him: I believe so. Come let's go rest you don't sleep much these days Siya.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

It's time I hit Banele with the bomb and bring him back down to earth. He has to learn that he can't just use and discard woman like old shoes. He will marry me whether he likes it not and he will give me a beautiful life too. I asked my parents to sit down with me because I have something to tell them. I am initiating the first step to my plan. I am crying in front of them and they are all looking at me with worry.

Ma: Zizopho talk to us, what's wrong?

Me: I just don't want you and baba to be disappointed in me ma.

Baba: just talk so we can work through it.

Me: please don't hit me please.

Ma: we have never laid a hand on you and Mbali so why would we start now.

Baba: just say your peace please we have been sitting on this table watching you cry.

I sigh and wipe my tears.

Me: I am no longer pure.

I admit and my father's hands move to his head.

Ma: oh Zipho no no no.

Me: I am so sorry mama I am sorry.

Ma: who deflowered you?

I swallow and play with my fingers

Baba: khuluma man (speak!)

He shouts and I jump a bit.

Me: it's Banele baba.

Baba: doesn't he have a surname?

Me: Thwala, Banele Thwala.

Ma: the same one that is tied to your best friend Nolwandle? Our pastor's son?

Me: yes ma.

I say in a low voice and my father whistles a bit

Ma: what kind of evil is this. How do you do that to a friend, a friend that has been nothing but true to you since you were little girls?

Me: Banele lied to me and said he will marry me but he just played with me and Lwandle.

Ma: does Lwandle know about this?

Me: qha ma she doesn't know. Banele told me to keep it a secret and then he turned on me and told me hurtful words.

I took my phone and played them the video.

Baba: Ave ahlaza lomfana (the boy is rude).

Ma: what are we going to do Mhlongo?

Baba: it's out of our hands now, the church has rules and we follow them. The boy who deflowers a girl should marry her because her purity is now his. Now the pastor's son has to

do right by Zipho. He took her purity let him man up and take responsibility.

My father says and I am dancing in my heart.

What Zipho wants Zipho gets.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 31

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I have to leave and go back to Johannesburg but my heart is heavy, not knowing where she is and if she is okay is killing me with each passing day, I hate that I have to go back to work I hate that I am failing at connecting the dots and finding her. I can only hope and pray that she remains the strong and brave young lady I know her to be. Whatever they are trying with her may it not work and may she come

back the same Ocean. At least I will be in contact with Siyamthanda with every new development. I am putting my things in the boot and my grandmother is watching me with sadness, I also don't want to go but I don't have a choice. Phiwe is doing the last touch up's to the car. It car was dirty and I couldn't travel such a distance with such a car. I look at my grandmother and give her a side smile and she opens her arms and I go in for the hug.

Ma: don't take too long before coming back.

Me: I won't ma, I will be back soon to try and find Lwandle.

She sighs

Ma: only they know where she is Indi. I don't want you in Zulu's reach he might hurt you.

Me: I just can't sit and do nothing.

Ma: do you want her to come back with you gone? Who will give her hope then? Who will show her her true self then?.

She says and I sigh hating that she is right.

Me: I guess so.

Ma: Phiwe and I will put our ears down to the ground and let you know of any development.

Me: please makhulu, no matter how small.

Phiwe: don't worry malumes, we will be your eyes and ears.

Me: I truly appreciate you guys. Coming here was exactly what I needed I even got to meet the love of my life it's just sad that I am leaving under such circumstances.

Ma: it's all going to work out I promise you.

Me: I am holding on to faith here ma.

She smiles

Ma: pray and pray and pray.

Phiwe: Malumes you better hit the road before it's starts raining.

I look up the sky and he is right the weather is changing.

Me: I will call soon as I arrive.

I fist bump him before the side hug.

Ma: give these to your mom.

She gives me a huge Tupperware container with home made cookies.

Me: I will. I love you guys.

I get in my car and sigh heavily.

•BONGEKA ZULU

He got me out of the closet and gave me food but he was watching me like a hawk the entire time, I know I will be a prisoner for some time until he gets me to submit to him again but that isn't happening anymore, I am done being that weakling he walks on like a door mat. I am starring at myself in the mirror on the bathroom wall. My eye is green and practically shut, I can only see blurry with it, I touch each and every bruise he left all over my body and I will admit he did a number on me. How did I stick around

this long? How did I let him abuse me and my children like this? I mean I am an educated woman we teach the learner's these things but I allowed myself to be a victim. The door unlocks and he walks in holding my dress and a pair morning slippers.

Him: wear this.

He throws them down.

Me: for how long are you planning on keeping me here?

Him: for as long as you decide to act like an errant child.

I laugh shaking my head.

Me: what do you want me to do? Take your abuse till I go to the grave?

Him: we did say till death do us part.

He says with so much arrogance.

Me: you don't deserve to be a husband or a father. You should be locked up in an asylum somewhere far away.

Him: you have a mouth Bongeka. Do you want me to close the other eye.

Me: it wouldn't be the first time you make me temporarily blind, so go right on if it makes you feel more of a man.

Him: your strikes keep on increasing. Get dressed.

I pick up the dress and put it over my head and step in the slippers. He takes my arm and pulls me to the kitchen. There are ingredients on the kitchen counter.

Me: since you tried to kill me, I no longer trust you. I will watch you cook till you finish. You might just poison me.

Me: Right.

He sits on the high chair where he will see me do everything.

Him: get on with it.

He orders and I just go cook because I also have to eat.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I couldn't stop crying, what they did might sound like nothing but it was cruel and sad. It proves that more is yet to come and they will go to any length to get me in order. If you think physical pain is excruciating try emotional and psychological anguish and trauma then we will talk, there is no medication to numb it, you have to feel it all until it decides to go away and I doubt it will ever go away. Each time I close my eyes I remember watching the erotica and getting sick to my stomach. The door opens and I feel someone kneel besides me, I turn my head and it's Fire.

Me: you shouldn't be in here. You will get into trouble.

Him: it's okay babe, they went out.

Me: where to?

Him: it's a Wednesday so they to house calls, praying for sick people and staff.

Me: who would have thought.

I say and he gives me a faint smile.

Him: I am sorry Lwandle. It's not easy the first time.

He says and I know he is referring to the activity that happened earlier.

Me: I have never felt so sick.

Him: I know and it's easy to turn to what they want this is the time you hold on to the strength you showed when you got here. Remember someone who made you happy as a lesbian woman.

I smile thinking about her.

Me: Indigo, her name is Indigo. She is from Johannesburg and a few weeks ago when I met her I have never felt alive like I did.

Him: living your truth is never easy just be grateful for meeting her and experiencing the beauty of who you truly are.

Me: that's very true, but I don't think my soul will survive all of this. I got a glimpse and it nearly broke me.

Him: you can't let them win Lwandle. The trick is to make them believe it's working just don't let it work. Think of Indigo.

I let out a tear.

Me: I will try.

Him: promise me you will never let yourself go.

Me: I promise, I will try.

Him: good now let me tell you about me.

Me: please I don't want to think more of what is happening here.

Him: wait let me go get water and the ointments to treat your wounds.

He gets up.

Me: Fire thank you so much.

He smiles sweetly at me.

Him: I got you chommie.

Hearing him calling me like that reminded me of my supposed best friend and that I am in this place because of her. If she didn't tell anyone about me I wouldn't be here and we would still be sticking to the plan of leaving with Indi when I was done with school now I don't even attend my education is affected. I am stuck in this hell hole abused and my dreams are denied and i wish I knew why she did this, she was supposed to talk to me first.

—
•BANELE THWALA

I am just praying that Lwandle is not fighting treatment so she can come back home and we can start preparing for our wedding and our future together. I was told that a part of her treatment will require me coming to where she is, I am not sure for what but I will definitely go if

it will help her. I am in my bedroom going through my work emails and responding to some, it's the only thing keeping me busy around here and I'll admit I miss work and the freedom I have when I am at my place. The knock on my door disturbs me.

Me: it's open.

I shout loud enough and the door opens, my mom walks in with a straight face.

Her: come to the lounge now please.

I raise an eyebrow.

Me: mama are you okay?

Her: you always mess up everything Banele what is your problem.

I quickly get up narrowing my eyes.

Me: what have I done.

Her: go to the lounge and you will see the shame you've brought us.

She says and I hurry passed her and go to the lounge, and soon as I walk in my heart drops to the floor. My father is sitting there with Zipho and her parents. She gives me an evil smile and in that moment I regret ever starting anything with this bitch.

Baba: with the way you are looking at her I take it you know why she is here.

I am denying everything I am not about to lose it all because of this girl I refuse.

Me: I am not sure what you are talking about baba.

He chuckles shaking his head.

Baba: don't embarrass yourself more, we've seen the video.

I close my eyes wondering what video he is talking about.

Me: can I see the video.

They hand me the phone and I press play and soon as recall the incident I stop it.

Baba: did you tell them you are the one who came here to this very house and gave yourself to me in this very room?

I ask.

Baba: we are aware we heard everything on the video and regardless of how it went down you shouldn't have laid with her.

Me: kodwa baba.

Ma: be quiet now Nele.

I shut up and give that tramp a killer look.

Baba: Mhlongo, we have heard you and we will get back to you soon.

Bab'Mhlongo: fair enough baba, but we already know what should happen. The church has already spoken.

Baba: of course, we jus need to discuss this as a family.

Bab'Mhlongo: we understand. We will hear from you then.

They walk out and I am let with my parents.

Baba: you are such a disgrace Banele.

Me: Baba I am sorry really sorry.

Baba: now you have to marry Zipho.

Me: I know I messed up but I am not wifing up a whoe after all I already belong to Nolwandle.

Baba: you have already laid with with the Mhlongo girl.

Me: it doesn't matter to me Thwala I am sorry but it's either Lwandle or no one.

Ma: you are in no position to make threats.

My mother warns but I shake my head.

Me: I am sorry mama but I am already in love with Nolwandle and that's that. I am sorry.

The look at each other a while and the is awkwardness looming.

Baba: fine then. You will take them both.

Lwandle will be the first and Zipho the younger wife. I am not changing the church rules not even for you. It's time you dance to the music.

He says serious and I am left standing there trying to make sense of what he just said. What me Banele in polygamist?

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 32

•MONDLI ZULU

I tied Bongeka to the chair and gagged her, I don't trust my wife anymore and I don't think I can ever make her submit to me again. I had to find a way to just minimize the speed she is going at or else she will be my doom. I have been trying to forge her signature for an hour now and I believe I got it right now, I typed her resignation letter and it's ready to submit to the principal who will forward it to the district manager and then it will finally reach the top. Without her job she won't have anywhere to go

and that won't raise suspicions and get people asking why she isn't coming to work. My phone rings immediately after I put the ink on the typed letter, its Bab'Thwala. I quickly clear my throat and answer him.

Me: Baba.

Him: Zulu, how are you?

Me: considering the situation i am trying. What about you?

I ask and he sighs deeply leaving me with narrowed eyes.

Him: hai I am just defeated hence I called you.

Me: can I be of any help to you?

Him: I just pray you will understand.

Me: you are scaring me now Baba.

Him: do you think you can come by to the house when you get back from work?

Me: my wife and I have taken a few days off, she isn't taking this whole Lwandle thing well.

Him: understandably so, tell her to hold on to her faith and Lwandle will be healed and come home.

Me: I will pass on the message to her.

Him: so what time should i expect you?

Me: I will be there in an hour baba.

Him: okay thank you so much.

Me: okay see you now.

Him: bye.

He hangs up and I try to think what he could want to discuss with me that requires my understanding, I just pray they are not canceling the wedding between our children because everything would have been for nothing.

—

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I finally got what I wanted and it's a done deal the pastor called last night and confirmed that the marriage will happen but my father had to go and hear the conditions and quite frankly I don't give a damn about conditions so long as I am his wife it's very fine with me. He might be mad at me right now but he will get over it and we will be okay and we will be happy together. I have decided to drop out of school even though my parents were not happy with my decision there is not much they can do because soon I will be in my husband's house. I am at home alone watching TV when a bang comes through the kitchen door. Who could it be with such disrespect, banging like a soldier. I go open and Banele is standing out there facing me.

Me: dearest husband.

The words are out of my mouth.

Him: you conniving slut!

He insults me casually and I sigh

Me: you really need to stop with the insults Nele
I am your wife now.

He laughs shaking his head

Him: my wife you say?

Me: Banele just stop this stop it because it's
starting to get really annoying. No matter what
you do or say it's done, I am yours you are
mine.

Him: you came to my house that day to seduce
me because this was your goal?

Me: let's say each and every move I made was
seriously calculated.

Him: I just hope you also calculated the hell you
just entered.

He sneers and I swallow hard wondering what
he means by that.

Me: what do you mean by that?

Him: it's a surprise and I hope you enjoy it.

Me: can you please just come in and we talk about this like two adults who are about to become husband and wife.

Him: what would you seriously think we have to talk about.

Me: we can't take this energy into our marriage.

Him: baby girl listen you are basically going to my house to be my maid and sex object. My wife, the one I am marrying because I want to, because I love her will be the one I talk to about marriage and everything serious.

My heart starts beating faster.

Me: what wife is that? Your father said we are getting married.

Him: for formalities yes but there is nothing here I told you before and I meant it. Lwandle will always be the one above you in everything.

I let my tears fall.

Me: we are fighting like this because of Lwandle? Someone who doesn't love you? Nele wake up please. I am here I love you, I am

giving myself to you, I sacrifice for you and you still stand in front of me and talk to me about loving that demon.

He closes his eyes and I step back.

Him: I came here to congratulate you on a game well played, I thought I was playing you but you were beating me at my own game I give you that but dear second wife I hope you know what you just signed up for.

He repeats and that statement sends shivers down my spine. His tall self turns and walks away, i am still standing there trying to make sense of what he just said.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Today is the worst day for me, I woke up missing Indigo with all my heart and I am wondering what she is probably doing right now, if she misses me as much as I miss her, what I know and sure of is that she is seriously

worried and scared for me, i am scared for my life too. I always thought my father was a monster but this Gabriel guy is the devil. I was told to cook for everyone and the others are out doing the other chores. Gabriel went out and Dina is somewhere in the house. I am chopping the cabbage while humming one of the songs Indigo loved playing in her car. Thinking about her makes me forget a little about my horror that is my life right now.

Him: Mfazi ka Indi.

I blush and look back at Fire who walks towards me.

Me: I was just thinking about her.

Him: your face is so red from all the blushing. You must really love her babe.

Me: I love her with all my heart I don't think it will ever change.

Him: just work on getting out of here and go get your girl coz I heard there are a lot of predators in Johannesburg.

He says and I laugh

Me: I would kill for my girlfriend.

We hear someone laugh behind us and we turn quickly and my heart drops to my stomach. It's Dina, fuck she heard us.

Her: so you are just hear to make fools out of my husband and I right? You are not willing to let go of the demons possessing you?

Me: no no it's not like that I promise we were just making small talk.

Her: I've had a few clients of your kind Lwandle I know how you operate, i am no fool.

Him: we would never do that, we were just making small talk.

Her: you should know better Mlilo. Zanda!

She shouts for the other girl and she walks in.

Zanda: yes sis'Dina?

Her: bring the bags please.

he nods and walks away but comes back holding two back packs that look heavy.

Her: take those and carry them on your back. Go stand outside on that blazing hot sun until I tell you to rest. I want you standing straight until I say stop you dare bend you will add an hour to your punishment.

I carry the bag and I don't think I've carried anything so heavy in my life. I swear it's stuffed with rocks. She pushes us out and makes us stand under the hot sun making sure we are at a distance.

Her: until I say it's enough you stand there firm and straight for thinking you can play us.

She walks back to the house and I just let a tear fall.

•BANELE MHLONGO

My father told me to be available for the meeting with both Lwandle and Zee's father's, I know Zulu is going to flip and I won't really blame him, I mean no man thought his daughter would get into a polygamous marriage at such a young age. I am just praying he doesn't cancel this whole arrangement and leaves me with Zipho for my sanity that's the worst thing to happen but for my heart it's suicide, I mean I have already fallen in love with Lwa and this is honestly the first time I've ever wanted to act right for a woman so losing her is not an option because I feel she is the one to tame me and get me to act right.

The helper walks in with the two gentleman and I can see a thousand questions running through Zulu's eyes as he is wondering what Mhlongo is doing here.

Baba: welcome madoda, please sit.

They both take a seat on the same couch and I am on the one facing the both of them.

Zulu: Baba, you sounded very worried on the phone.

Baba: I am Zulu because I don't know how you will take what I am about to disclose to you.

Zulu: I am listening.

He says with a straight face and I am holding my breath.

Baba: well Banele here laid with Zipho, Mhlongo's daughter and he took her purity.

Zulu: what? Haibo no. Is this why the girl exposed Lwandle? To have you all to herself.

I decide to speak for myself.

Me: Baba I am ashamed of what I did but the girl seduced me because she is jealous of what Lwandle and I share.

Zulu: now where does this all leave my daughter? Because you have to marry the Mhlongo girl as the church requires.

He asks and I can hear the disappointment in his voice.

Baba: well Banele says he is in love with your daughter and he wants to continue with the marriage.

Zulu: Kodwa-

I quickly interject.

Me: I will take Lwandle as my first wife and Zipho as the second.

He looks at me and I can't read his expression.

Baba: we were hoping to pay Lwandles lobola in her absence because Mhlongo says he can't continue with a deflowered girl in his home.

Zulu: I truly understand Baba, but one question.

Baba: go on please.

Zulu: what about the elders position in the church? I mean non of your son's has taken two wives so it only means only one chair is open.

I sigh coz that is not my concern let my dad handle it.

Baba: I am sorry Mhlongo but the chair belongs to Zulu as he is the eldest in-law since his daughter will be the first wife.

I see Lwandle's father smiles with relief.

Mhlongo: I understand baba I was never after positions I just wanted Banele to do right by my daughter that's all.

Baba: thank you for understanding, so Zulu we will come to your house next Saturday and pay your daughters bride price then the following day we pay for Zipho.

Zulu: that's great baba I will inform my wife then.

Okay that was easy I honestly thought he was going to breathe fire.

•INDIGO NQCOBO

I finally got this damn cast off my leg and I am grateful, but my leg looks disgusting, I spend half of this day in the bathroom scrubbing it

clean but it will take a while till it gets back to normal and until then I am sticking to to my jeans. It's good being home but it's empty aswell, I was now used to being around my grandmother and Phiwe with his girl but it's back to reality, a reality without Ocean, all i am left with is pictures of her and of us and texts that told me how much she loves me but even with that it's not the same. I decide to call Siyamthanda just to find out how she is holding up. Her phone doesn't ring long till she answers.

Her: Hi Indi.

Her dead voice says and I close my eyes.

Me: hey, unjani?

Her: I am taking it a day at a time, what about you?

I shake my head as if she can see me and balance my it with my hand.

Me: I am not coping at all.

Her: that means we both haven't heard anything.

Me: nothing Siya, I am loosing my mind.

Her: I am trying to hold on to faith and believe that she will survive, she is a strong young woman.

I nod and my lips curl up and form a smile.

Me: I don't think I've met anyone as strong and brave as her.

Her: let's believe in her to fight to survive whatever she is going through.

Me: I will try to.

Her: have you seen my mother around that place? Have been trying to call her but her phone is off.

Me: I am back in Johannesburg, going back to work. I am sorry.

Her: it's okay I understand. Thanks for the call Indigo.

Me: it's a pleasure, keep in touch.

Her: bye.

I hang up and go to my gallery and look at the picture of us happy and carefree and the pride.

Me: Ocean baby where are they keeping you. I hope you are okay and being my strong brave girl.

I say to myself.

Ma: Indigo.

My mother shouts from the corridor. I get off my bed and go open my door.

Me: mama?

Ma: your food is ready.

Me: I am cool thanks.

She sighs

Ma: I know you are going through a lot but I understand you say you love that girl and she loves you two and I am sure she wouldn't want you to starve yourself like this. Have faith please, she will come back.

She says sweetly and I know she means well but I am so tired of hearing people telling me to have faith. I take the plate from her.

Me: fine I'll eat.

—

No edits.

Sorry for posting this late guys, load shedding is a nightmare.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 33

One week later

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

It went from bad to worse, this is no longer purgatory but straight hell and the fire is burning so bad I don't think I can hold on anymore, they are almost at their goal, that is to break my soul. I don't find life worth living anymore. They

have made me feel disgusted with myself and what I am. They dope me with drugs and tell me all these Bible verses that condemn me and my sexuality. They continue to make me watch homosexual erotica and I just puke until I feel my guts wanting to come out my mouth.

Recently they've told me to write all of my sexual fantasies and read them out to the church elders but I couldn't do that, it was embarrassing. I refused and I wish I didn't coz they stripped me naked and put me in the middle of a blazing fire while telling me that it's nothing compared to hell, where I will be going if they don't rid the demon in me. I can't sleep nor eat, all I want to do is just die and forget about this painful experience that is dehumanizing. I am sitting under the tree looking at the veld covering the house.

Memories of my free life are becoming distant and I am loosing myself slowly but surely.

Gabriel and Dina went out hence I am free to sit down like this, if they were here I would be

locked up in a room with them praying for me.
Fire sits next to me with a plate of food.

Him: Lwandle please.

I can hear the sadness in his voice.

Me: I am not hungry.

Him: you need your strength please.

Me: I don't want to fight Mlilo I just want to die.

He shakes his head vigorously

Him: please don't do this to me, ever since you arrived here you've given me hope please Nana without you I don't know.

He let's his tears fall.

Me: you are strong, you are the one who gave me hope.

Him: I was just trying to put on a brave face Lwandle coz you were new here I wanted you to see that there is a possibility to escape this. You've seen what they do to us and like you I

am falling apart but holding your hand makes it more bearable.

Me: it's hard Fire it's hard.

Him: I know but you have me I have you. Let's just hold on to our truth and be a voice to fight this once we are out of here.

Me: my soul is almost taken.

Him: we can still pull it out. Don't give up little sister please.

Hearing him give me so much hope reminds me of Siya and I pull him for a hug. We cling to each other crying.

Me: I appreciate you so much.

Him: me too now it's time to hold on tighter soldier. We bend but don't break, promise?

He let's go and show me his pinkie finger and I show mine.

Me: I promise.

We wipe each other's tears.

•BONGEKA ZULU

My daughter has been gone for days and I don't even know where she is, if they are feeding her or if she is even alive. I can't do anything because Mondli has me tied up on this chair and let's me free when i bath, cook and eat. I even sleep next to him with my wrists tied up and door locked. I haven't been going to work and he has been leaving early and coming back late which proves that he is back to work. I haven't been talking to him hoping that would make him human at least but it's playing out against me so I should just try find out what his plan is. I have been holding on to my pee and my bladder is about to burst any minute now. The front door opens and he walks in whistling, he has been in a good mood this past week. I rattle my chair and he comes and removes the tape on my mouth.

Me: I need to use the bathroom please.

He quickly removes the tape on my legs and arms and I practically run to the bathroom and soon as I sit on the toilet I feel relief flood through me. There is something satisfying about emptying a full to capacity bladder. Once I am done I get dressed and wash my hands. I walk out and he grabs me taking me back to the chair.

Me: can I please just stretch my legs a bit.

Him: you better not try anything.

Me: I haven't tried anything for more than a week now.

Him: let's move to the kitchen so you can make something to eat.

He walks behind me and sits on the high chair like he has been doing to look at me cook making sure I don't pour any poison.

Me: what did you tell people at work?

He chuckles

Him: what can I tell them when you've resigned?

He says and I narrow my eyes

Me: I never resigned Mondli what did you do?

I ask panicking at the devious smile he has on.

Him: I took it upon myself to type it and submit.
Your paperwork is going through as we speak.
Your pension fund will be in your account soon.

Me: you can't do any of that without me.

Him: then you seriously don't know what we call
connections my dear wife.

I let my tears fall.

Me: what you did is fraud Mondli, how could
you be so evil.

Him: listen here, the Thwala's are are coming
here to pay for Lwandle bride price on
Saturday, I need you to be on your best
behavior.

Me: forget it, i am done helping you sell my
child.

Him: then I will call Gabriel and tell him to do
this more to your daughter.

He presses his phone a while and slides it to me. I take it and it's a picture of Lwandle facing away, her back has open wounds from a sjambok. I gasp for air and move my hand to my mouth dropping his phone.

Him: watch it! You break you pay.

Me: you devil. What are you doing to my child.

Him: what needs to be done but if you don't play along with this resignation thing and the lobola then I will keep her there longer and tell them to increase the heat on her and send pictures so you can see what you disobedience is doing to her.

Me: why are you so evil?

I ask softly feeling my heart shutter.

—

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

We have known for a week that we are going to get married but Banele hasn't been to see me

and he hasn't even cared to call me. I don't know what else to do to show this man that we belong together. I am even starting to doubt this whole thing. Maybe I should just forget this it really plus he said a few scary things to me making me wonder what kind of man Banele really is. I get home from going to clean up the church for the very last time as I will be a part of the important family as of Sunday. I find Mbali packing my clothes in the suitcase, I frown.

Me: why are you packing my things?

Her: haibo Zipho Sunday you are leaving with your husband's people.

Me: Mbali eish.

I say sitting on the edge of the bed.

Her: what's wrong? Why is your face like this?

Me: I don't think I want this anymore.

She stops immediately and sits down next to me

Her: haibo why?

Me: have you seen him here ever since we've known about getting married? Or have you heard me speak with him on the phone?

Her: no but the guy is still shocked Zee he wasn't expecting this worse part he's getting two wives in one weekend.

She says and laughs but I keep a serious face.

Me: it's not funny Mbali.

Her: maybe you are nervous it's normal to feel like this days before you get married, so I've heard.

Me: no it's not that too trust me.

Her: no Zipho you have to go through with this. You already disappointed our parents by sleeping with him when you knew he belonged to Lwa on the other hand you dropped out of school, don't bring them more shame.

Her words hit home and I just sigh.

Me: you are right sisi.

Her: just relax everything is going to work out.

—

- INDIGO NCQOBO

Work is a good distraction I am even taking on extra shifts just to keep busy, sitting around makes me think more about Ocean and how I've messed up her life and now she is nowhere to be found all because I was selfish, I shouldn't have approached her and her life would still be simple and she would be home attending school. She would have found a way to survive her father and lived her truth but I just had to mess it all up and here I am in my PPE being the electrical engineer I studied to be but what about her? Her future? Her dreams?. I am smoking a cigarette at the smoking area at work away from the plant when a female colleague of mine joins me, she happens to be Bisexual and annoying.

Her: hey.

She says sitting down and crossing her legs

Me: Bridget, what's good?

Her: nothing much just can't wait for my shift to be over, join me let's go have a young drink afterwards

Me: no i can't, I am doing double shift.

Her: what why? You've been doing that since you came back. The leave you took left you broke?

I puff out the smoke shaking my head.

Me: nah I just need to keep busy.

Her: I can keep you busy Indi I don't mind.

Me: Bridget I have a girlfriend.

I say making it clear before she tries anything.

Her: you want to invite her for drinks too?

Me: pssh mxm.

Her: come on I also have a kid, baby daddy the works. I am not asking you to give me orgasms here at least not yet.

I sigh and drop the cigarette and put it out with my safety boot.

Me: I should get back to work.

Her: you know where to find me when you change your mind.

I look at her and walk away. Wasn't she in a relationship before I left here? She was talking about the guy left right and center now what happened to him when she is trying me like this, I wouldn't do that to Ocean even though I don't know where she is and when she is coming back.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 34

•MONDLI ZULU

Bongeka is scared out of her mind and its beneficial to me, I love this new caring mother because I can simply just threaten her with Lwandle's well being and she will dance to my music without me having to punish her for it, I still don't trust her enough not to run or go to the police but with regards to tomorrow i know she will be a good little wife and make sure the negotiations go extremely well. I get to work late because I had to make sure she bathes and eats and she took her sweet time. I get to the staff room and there is a meeting.

Principal: oh Mr. Zulu thanks for joining us.

Me: I am sorry sir for being late. I hope I didn't miss much.

Principal: not at all I was only about to address our colleagues.

Me: oh that's good.

My eyes move to the gay guy next to him and I instantly get uncomfortable. He is still very young in his mid or late twenties I assume. I

look at the principal with the urge of walking out of this meeting but I will put my feelings aside after all this is my work place not my house.

Principal: okay then everyone, since we received Mrs Zulu's resignation last week, we went short of an Economics and Business studies teacher. We advertised the post and we received a few applications but one stood out and his work spoke for himself, he hasn't been a teacher for long but I can assure you he is the best addition to our team. He will take over all Mrs Zulu's classes. I hope we all welcome him with open arms and we give him the support he needs to make his job easy and bearable.

Please welcome Mr Theodore Mokwena.

The colleagues give him a round of applause and the ones close to him give him hugs.

Theo: thank you very much everyone, I am happy to be a part of this team and I hope we will work well together.

Principal: well thank you Mr. Mokwena. Uhm Zulu I am going to have to ask you to assist him

as you both teach the same subjects and grade.

I swallow hard and blink a couple of times. This is not happening no Jesus.

Me: is that necessary sir?

Principal: very, you need to keep him up to speed, or is that a problem?

Me: no, no not at all. I just didn't want him to feel like we are undermining him and his potential.

Principal: no I have already explained this to him. You both must be on the same lesson plan and activities. I want the classes you teach to be moving at the same pace and that can only happen if you both communicate.

Me: very well.

Principal: okay everyone you may leave and attend your classes.

They disburse and this boy comes to me.

Theo: hello sir.

He holds out his hand and I take it for professionalism's sake and what I feel makes me loath myself at this moment. I quickly retract my hand and give him a faint smile not to seem rude.

Me: we can go discuss at my table.

I say and he follows me. What hell have I unleashed on myself by resigning on my wife's behalf, this is not going to work not at all.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU.

I am trying to remember myself before this place, I am trying to remember the bravery I had and the undying spirit of hope and courage that resided deep inside of me and with that I believe I will be able to pull myself out of the pits they almost thrown me into. The memories of her beautiful smile and warm arms remind me to never lose myself so I can be able to go back to her and love her as fearlessly as I did before. I am eternally grateful for Mlilo, without

him I wouldn't have survived this hell. I am on cooking duty and the painful cries of one of the guys I found here with Fire and Zanda. I don't know what he did but Zanda went quickly and reported him to Gabriel and the poor guy got a beating of his life. This girl is far gone, they have managed to win her over to their side and it's sad to see honestly. She is looking at Gabriel with eyes that are not appropriate and that's alarming really. I see Gabriel and Dina go to the car and the poor guy follows them. They drive out and Zanda walks in the house humming a nice Melody. Fire gets in the house and pulls me outside.

Me: what's going on.

Him: Zanda is evil Lwandle.

He claps once.

Me: what did she report?

Him: she saw the poor guy masturbating in that evil room, watching gay porn. She went to get Gab that's why they beat him up like that.

Me: oh my God she just took him back to the first step of this treatment.

Him: exactly, did you see how happy she is?

Me: no babe did you see how she looks at Gab?

Him: I thought I was the only one who saw this, she seems to be doing all of this to be seen by him, I think she has feelings for him, I bet you they are sleeping together.

Me: Stockholm syndrome, damn.

Him: if Dina finds out she would rain hell on them.

Me: you think so? She looks like the typical submissive wife.

Him: trust me she is crazy that girl.

An idea suddenly hits me.

Me: that's it.

Him: what? What Lwandle?

Me: if they are really sleeping together, we can use that to our advantage. Get them fighting

and preoccupied and we steal his car and run the fuck away.

Him: that's good sis, but I don't know how to drive, do you?

I close my eyes but quickly remember seeing the other guy drive Gabriel's car when he washes it.

Me: the other guy, what's his face? He will drive it.

Him: you are a genius friend. We drive to a town far from this one.

Me: I will call my sister and she will come get us.

Him: we need to find a phone too to navigate the direction out of this hell hole.

Me: yes yes.

He pulls me into a hug and ever since I got here I feel a glimpse of hope. I hope it's true. I hope Gab and Zanda are sleeping together behind Dina's back. That is adultery and the church condemns it.

•BONGEKA ZULU

The day has come where Zulu finally sold my daughter for a seat in the church. I don't think I have ever seen him this happy. His heart has to be jumping for joy in his chest. He brought a girl from our church who is also a police officer to pose as Lwandle as someone had to accept the Thwala's on her behalf as she is not here to do it herself. I just cooked and served them smiling here and there. My heart is against this but what can I do? I want my daughter to be safe wherever she is with those evil people and until she comes back I won't do anything to jeopardize her safety. This girl isn't here to only pose as my daughter but she is also here to keep an eye on me coz she is watching me intensely, every move I make she is watching.

We are in Lwandle bedroom waiting for the Thwala delegates to leave.

Me: are you sleeping with Mondli?

I ask and she chokes at the unexpected question.

Her: what no, mamZulu, why would you think that?.

Me: then for what reason are you helping him do this, you must know the kind of monster my husband is.

Her: I promise he just asked my parents for me to do this and we agreed.

Me: well I assume you also helped him with the protection order against Siyamthanda.

Her: yes I did.

I laugh.

Me: you have helped this man abuse and control us I hope you are proud.

Her: Baba did say you would try to paint him like a bad man and he was right. He is just trying to give the best to his children that doesn't make him a bad man at all.

Me: then where is my child? Why did he resign for me? Why is he keeping me a prisoner?

Her: mamZulu please don't include me in your marital affairs, I am not here for that.

I nod realizing that my husband has the upper hand in this game he is playing. The door opens and he walks in with the widest smile ever.

Him: everything is done, they have left.

Her: that's good Baba, congratulations.

Him: thank you for the part you played my daughter I will never forget you.

Her: I am glad I helped out. Can I leave now? I have other engagements to attend to.

Him: that's okay, I will keep in touch.

Her: okay sir, stay well ma.

Him: goodbye.

She walks out.

Him: rejoice Bongeka your daughter is now Mrs. Banele Thwala. You should be proud that

all of your daughter's are out of this house and they never disappointed you with unplanned pregnancies out of wedlock and it's all thanks to me you should be worshipping me not this.

•BANELE THWALA

I am nervously pacing up and down in the lounge waiting for my father and uncles to walk in through that door and tell me that MaZulu is now my wife. I am super excited to start my journey with this girl and show her and everyone else that I can and I will be a good man and husband. I hear the car parking, I peep through the window and it's them, my heart starts beating at an unusual pace. My father is the first one through the roller door.

Me: Baba? How did it go?

Him: Banele can we sit down first.

He says chuckling.

Ma: oh come on Thwala we are dying here.

My mom also says impatient.

Him: you look very much alive to me
nkosizakazi.

Me: Baba please tuuu!

Him: before you kill me, everything went very
well and she is yours now, soon as she is back
she is coming straight here.

Me: nope I am taking her straight to her house
in Johannesburg.

My parents laugh.

Ma: I never thought you'd be so excited to be
married.

Him: to two woman at that.

I sigh.

Me: I am sorry but the only marriage I recognize
is the one with Lwandle. I couldn't care less
about the other one.

Him: Banele don't start mistreating that girl when she gets here tomorrow and when you take her to your house.

Me: good thing I won't be here tomorrow when she arrives.

Him: what do you mean?

Ma: Gabriel called and said Lwandle is progressing and it's time Nele came to do his part.

Him: oh that's good news.

Me: when I come back Monday my wife will have fallen in love with me too.

Ma: that's the spirit.

Him: make me proud son please no more hiccups please.

Me: I'll try my best.

Him: so when are you leaving?

Me: right now, I am all packed was just waiting for you to tell me the good news.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 35

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Gabriel and Dina got back an hour ago and the boy was not with them. They came back with different herbs and powders that got us all wondering what they are for. Mlilo and Zanda were told to go to our room and not come out unless they are told to and I got more than nervous because I was the only one left. Dina moved me to a very beautiful room that has a bathroom to it and I wondered why they make us sleep in that hideous place like prisoners. I am nervously tapping my foot on the floor waiting to hear why I am in here and not with the others. Just on time Dina walks in with a long glass of something that looks like a concoction and she is holding something silky on the other hand.

Me: what's going on?

Her: here drink this.

She hands me the glass and the smell is horrible.

Me: what is this?

I ask making a face.

Her: it's just herbs to balance your hormones.

I say and I nod and gulp down the entire thing. I feel it making it's way up my oesophagus.

Her: hey hey hey you better not vomit that.

She quickly warns and I put a hand on my mouth relaxing so it can stay where it is.

Her: go take a quick shower in there and make sure to scrub properly. I moved to the bathroom without saying anything open the shower taps getting in the hot water cascades down my naked body and soothes every inch. The lavender shower gel helps me come down, this is exactly what I needed but what good did I do

to get this privilege. I take my time in there until a bang comes through the door and I quickly close both taps and walk out the shower wrapping the towel on my naked body. I walk out and find a body lotion, roll-on and perfumes on the bed.

Her: use those so I can start with you.

I frown but not ask any questions. I quickly lotion and once I am done she gives me a silk gown and tells me to sit on the vanity chair, she opens the drawer and takes out a make up bag.

Me: I don't use make up.

She rolls her eyes

Her: just shut up will you.

She says sounding annoyed, so I let her be. She takes her time with my face and moves to my hair.

Her: look at you, I will admit you clean up pretty good, wear this.

I look back and it's a lace panty with a matching bra. My heart rate spike up the roof.

Me: sis'Dina why what's going on.

Her: Lwandle do you want me to go call Gabriel because he will put it on you.

I let a tear fall and that seems to anger her.

Her: you better not mess up that face I swear.

She walks out and I take the things and wear them slowly. It's been thirty minutes since she went out and now I am feeling some type of way. I am feeling too hot and bothered in a sexual way, my clitoris is throbbing longing for something to put out the fire. Could she have given me something in my drink to make me this uncontrollably horny. I press my thighs together tightly hoping it would take away the unsettling feeling but it doesn't. I am flushed and my breathing is uncontrollable. I am holding on to my tears and fear because why would she give me aphrodisiacs if they are not planning on raping me, corrective rape and make it seem like I wanted it. Why would she allow her husband to sleep with me? Is she also the one allowing him to continue sleeping with Zanda?.

The feeling, my sexual desire spikes and I am like a Dog in heat now I can't even sit down at all. I remember seeing how they masturbate so why not try it out just to quench the thirst between my legs. I go back on the bed and try to lie down to touch myself but the door opens and she walks in alone I get up quickly.

Her: what were you trying to do?

Me: nothing sis'Dina nothing.

Her: you will never try to pleasure yourself do you understand me never.

She shouts mad and sits on the vanity chair watching me like a prisoner.

Me: what did you give me?

I ask letting my tears fall because I can't I don't think a human body can stand such high libido.

Her: something to make you ready for intimacy, you might not want to do it so the herbs will make your body crave it so bad that you won't be able to resist it.

Me: you people are evil? Why are you doing this Dina?

Her: you will thank us someday.

•BANELE THWALA

I am driving at 160km/h the road is open and the music made the drive seem short. This place is a bit far but according to my GPS I am 20 minutes out. I can't wait to see my wife and and just have a good few days with her. My goal is to leave here with her in love with me too. I want her to see that I can make a good husband and I will make her happy always. A few more songs play and my excitement goes up as I drive in the small quiet town, fuck this place is dead how the hell do they survive this ghost town. Their house is secluded from the rest and it's big I must say. I drive in and the couple walks out the house holding hands. I park under the tree and walk out heading to them.

Me: Sanibonani.

I say and shake Gabriel's hand and Dina just bows in acknowledgement.

Gabriel's: how was your drive?

Me: this place is far but I had a good drive, you know couldn't wait to see the wife.

The both laugh.

Dina: and she is ready for you. Let me go check on her.

She walks away.

Gab: she is responding well now, she was stubborn at first but now she is accepting.

Me: what brings me here then, what can I do to help?

Gab: well your role is simple, just be her husband and try intimacy with her.

I narrow my eyes.

Me: I don't think she is ready for that.

Gab: we have to see if she will recoil from a man's touch and if she does it means she isn't rid of the demon and her treatment will have to start from scratch.

Me: so if she is completely fine, she will want me too?

Gab: correct.

He says firm with confidence and I nod.

Me: okay then, we will see.

Gab: let me show you her room.

We walk in and he knocks on some door and Dina walks out and I get in. I walk in and she is facing away from the door.

Me: Sthandwa sami.

She looks back and it looks like relief just floods through her entire body. She runs to me and hugs me tight.

Her: please tell me you are here to take me home.

Me: not yet my love but I promise you it's soon.

Her: I am fine now I swear I am okay.

Me: Gabriel says you are responding well to the treatment.

She let's go and I have a proper chance to look at her, she looks flushed and her breathing is not normal, she is looking so beautiful but I don't like make up on her face coz I know it bare. She is in a silk short robe.

She doesn't look like her normal self and she keeps biting her lower lip.

Me: are you okay?

She shakes her head and starts crying.

Me: hey what's wrong?

I cup her face. She keeps silent for what seems like forever, like she is fighting a battle with herself. After a while she removes her robe and she is in an amazing matching number. Her yellow skin is just glowing, I get an erection instantly.

Her: take me please.

She asks but these words are not from her it's like she is even forcing herself to say it.

Me: we don't have to baby if you are not ready.

Her: Banele please or I will lose my senses please.

Me: we can talk first you know.

Her: After please.

She removes her robe completely and helps me take off my T-shirt, tears are streaming down her face.

Me: Lwandle you are crying it shows this is not what you want, I will wait till you ready I am in no hurry.

Her: I am happy to see you that's all. Please lay with me please.

The urgency and plea in her voice gets my erection steadier.

Me: are you sure?

Her: please Banele please.

I sigh and unbutton my jeans and she pulls them out so quickly, I never thought she would want me so bad, but I wish she could stop crying. I kick off my sneakers and my jeans follow. I take her lips into mine but it feels like I am the one kissing her more than she is kissing me.

Me: Lwa, we can wait.

Her: Please.

Let me give my wife what she wants and take her purity to seal our union. I lay her down on the bed and my hand move between her legs and I don't think I have ever felt so much arousal from one woman it's driving me insane at this point.

Me: I love you Lwandle, I love you mkami (my wife). I promise to try my best.

I whisper in her ear and she sobs in mine.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I get up to get ready for my night shift and I don't know why but my heart is heavier than most days. I didn't have a pleasant dream and it felt like it was real, she was crying so painfully calling out for me to help her and I tried running and running to her but no matter how much I increased my speed I just couldn't reach her even though the distance between us wasn't that much. I take out my PPE and other things I use at work before I take my toiletries to head to the bathroom. I meet my mom in the corridor and she sighs.

Ma: where are you going?

Me: I am working night mama.

She closes her eyes feeling defeated.

Ma: you can't continue to do this to yourself.

Me: it's a good distraction and I will use the money I am making to pay for her therapy sessions when she comes back.

Ma: I understand what you are saying but fatigue is dangerous.

Me: I rest enough mama don't stress.

Ma: Indigo don't kill yourself trying to keep yourself sane.

Me: dying is better than not knowing where the love of your life is and if she is still alive and all that.

Ma: don't you dare speak like that.

She let's her tear fall and I sigh.

Me: I am sorry ma, I just love this girl with my life.

Ma: Now I know for a fact you do, but just take it easy.

Me: I have never had to deal with something like this in my life. Please allow me to deal with this the best way I can?

Ma: okay but I am here if you need to talk Indi.

Me: I know Queen and I appreciate it so much.

Ma: let me go prepare you some food.

She walks towards the kitchen.

Me: Mama.

She looks back

Ma: yes baby.

Me: I love you.

She smiles

Ma: I love you more than life itself my baby and hold on she will come back to you.

I nod and get in the bathroom.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU.

I can't stop crying, I feel so dirty not even this hot water can clean me and what I did. I gave myself to Banele all night while Indigo is out there worried about me. I hate myself so much but my body was in control, my heart just hated the whole experience but my body kept on asking for more. Soon as the herbs wore out my system I got out of bed and I have been

sitting in this shower under the water trying to wash off the filth and shame. This is not who I am this is not what I wanted. What evil is Gabriel and his wife and everyone else who thinks it's okay to put us through such pain and humiliation?. My father should be proud he got me to sleep with a man and not only any man but his favorite son in law in the whole world, he even married me off without my presence that's how desperate he is and the shock I got when Banele told me this. What's worse in this whole thing is I have to pretend like I am okay with all of this so I can go out of this place and start my life afresh. I will never be same after this experience. The door opens and Banele walks in. I quickly get up and turn off the taps and get out taking the towel quickly and covering my naked body.

Him: shower so early baby?

He says and I fake a smile.

Me: I was in pain down there.

It's not far from the truth.

Him: you sure have an appetite babe.

He says with a smirk and I want to shout "They doped me up with all sorts of aphrodisiacs Banele so I didn't have a choice".

Me: I am shocked myself.

Him: I enjoyed myself so much Lwa. I loved every minute of making love to my wife.

The words make me sick to my stomach.

Me: I should remove the bloody sheets.

Him: I was told to bring back the bloody sheets with me should we do what we did last night?

Me: by who? Why would they want to see that?

Him: proof of your virginity. Sick if you ask me too love, they should take my word for it.

Me: did they also ask to see Zipho's sheets since she is becoming your wife too?

He swallows.

Him: Love, eish I don't even know what to say but I am sorry.

Me: this is why she has always been forward with you? Because you two were sleeping together? She ruined the dinner to expose me coz she wanted you for herself?

Him: love I know we have to talk about this at some point but can it not be today please, we just had an amazing night let's not let her ruin it for us. I love you and not her.

He says and I shake my head, my best friend sold me out to have a man, if she had just told me how much she wanted him I would have helped her get him all to herself after all I never wanted him or this life but she decided to expose me and get me thrown in this hell pit just to remove me from the equation, it's all making sense now, the moods the comments it's making sense.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

My lobola went all well and my anxiety and second thoughts went out the window. I can't

believe I am finally here, I am Mrs. Thwala and all I ever did to get to this point didn't go to vain. I am just so happy and excited that I made it out of my parents house as a wife at such a young age and to a wealthy family with status for that matter. We are on our way to his house and I can't wait to see my husband, saying that feels surreal. His uncle's park and they get out and tell me they will come get me. They take out my bags and walk inside. I fix my face and a moment later his mother appears and opens my door and I get out.

Me: sawbona Ma

Her: Zipho, welcome.

Me: Thank you so much.

Her: come inside.

I follow behind her but we use the kitchen entrance to avoid the elders in the lounge.

Me: you have a very beautiful home.

Her: oh thanks.

She opens a door to a bedroom.

Her: you will be sleeping in here sisi.

Me: is this Nele's room?

Her: no sisi his room is that side.

Me: I am sharing with my husband?

Her: Zipho Banele has two wives sisi so you can't share.

I want to scream at the top of my lungs but I compose myself.

Me: oh I understand.

Her: make yourself at home.

I smile walking further in, I can work with this.

Me: thank you Mama kodwa where is Nele I was hoping he would be here showing me around.

Her: he is not around sorry dear.

Me: where is he?

I ask annoyed, I mean what is more important than welcoming your own wife home, that one is just out of order.

Her: he went to see umnakwenu (your sister wife) Lwandle. He will be back tomorrow later on the day.

Me: oh.

That's all I manage to say.

Her: please go prepare some refreshments for the elders.

Ma: yebo mama.

We walk out together and I don't even have a chance to go crazy at the fact that he once again chose Lwandle over me.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 36

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I have been drowning in the past few days, drowning in a life that is possibly mine forever, with a husband I didn't want, the one I gave myself fully without meaning to. Things will never be same with me again, all I wish for is an escape from this damn place and maybe away from my parents and Banele. Speaking of which he has been talking about how much he loves me and his hopes and dreams about our future. I had to force myself to smile and laugh so he can give positive response about me to Gabriel. I am just happy he didn't insist on having sex with me after I told him my private part is on fire. I am sitting on the bed watching him putting on his clothes. He was supposed to leave earlier on but he kept on shifting the time, it's almost 2pm and I just want him gone so I can have a moment to myself.

Him: baby.

Me: mmhhh

Him: I had the best time with you Lwandle.

Me: me too.

I fake a smile and he sits next to me and takes my hands into his.

Him: thank you for accepting this help sthandwa sam.

Me: I am glad I did too. We don't always know what we need until we get it.

Him: exactly, I hated the fact that I had to chose a wife from our church but now that I did and it's you I couldn't be any happy.

Me: that's great.

Him: I know this Zipho thing is not sitting well with you babe, you probably never wanted to share your husband with anyone but because of my stupidity we are in this situation.

Me: it is what it is Banele.

He sighs deeply.

Him: my marriage to her is just to respect the rules baby. You have me I am yours and I love you only MaZulu.

Me: I hear you.

Him: when you get out of here I am taking you to your house and we can start our lives there okay.

I nod vigorously.

Me: okay.

Him: please finish off the last remaining activities and I promise the day you are done I will be here waiting to take you away, I think we should even go on holiday.

Me: that sounds good.

Him: I love you, I don't think I've ever loved a woman the way I love you Lwandle.

The sincerity in his voice scares me and he is looking at me intensely to hear those words back, but I've already cheated on Indigo with my body I am not doing it with her love too I just can't, so I just cup his face and force myself to

give him a passionate kiss. He pulls me to him and deepens it, he moans in my mouth and squeezes my waist a little then pulls out.

Him: I should get going before I am tempted to spend one more night here.

I fake a giggle and he stands up fixing himself.

Me: go well and greet your parents for me.

Him: I will babe. I will see you soon okay?

Me: definitely.

He kisses my forehead and walks to the door but stops and looks at me with a smile before walking out. I let out a deep sigh of relief and curl myself on this bed.

•MONDLI ZULU

I had the most amazing weekend and yesterday at church, the pastor made the announcement to the congregation about the lobola ceremonies that happened and he introduced

me to the church as an elder and the day for my official placement has been set. Everyone at church was genuinely happy even though they were questioning why Banele was taking two wives, the pastor decided to omit that from them so he protects Zipho's honor but I wish he could have told them so they know that she seduced my son in law like Delilah did to Samson but I don't care about that, my daughter is the first wife and I have my elders chair. School just came out but I have to stay back and draw up a plan with Theo the new teacher but I am really not looking forward to it because that boy makes me really nervous and uncomfortable. I get in the staff bathroom to ease myself and find him inside washing his hands.

Him: oh Mondli.

Me: can we stick to Mr. Zulu please.

He chuckles

Him: why so formal?

He asks closing the taps and drying his hands

Me: you are my first daughter's age and she doesn't call me by name.

He rolls his eyes and I clench my jaws.

Him: I am not your daughter, I am your colleague.

Me: respect is respect.

He walks towards me and I move back.

Him: why are you so uncomfortable around me.

Me: you are seeing things really.

Him: I don't think so. It's either you hate my kind or you are one of us.

He says and I charge to him and pin him to the wall but he isn't fazed by my reaction.

Him: I guess it's the latter then.

He moves his hands to my private part and starts massaging it, It shocks me but I don't move away or stop him. Infact it feels so great, the sensation it's sending down my spine is salivating.

Him: I saw you for who and what you are the first day and it's a shame you have to live a lie.

He says

Me: you don't know what you are talking about.

Him: if not why are you enjoying another man holding your balls in his hand.

He asks and stops what he is doing.

Me: this is a mistake Theo and let it stay between us.

He moves from me and goes to lock the door.

Him: let's see if it is.

He strips off his clothes and his nakedness is something I have dreamt of all my life.

Me: put on your clothes now Theo.

I say firm hoping he doesn't listen to me.

He bends and takes out his wallet and takes out a foil packet.

Him: This is a lubricant, have me now.

His statement makes my already hard erection harder, I am standing there looking at him with total admiration but I am conflicted, I keep seeing my father in my head with a belt but this boy is in front of me looking as good as sin and offering me a chance to know the true side of myself.

Him: if I put on my clothes you will never have this chance again.

He threatens and I just walk towards him already unbuckling my belt.

•BANELE THWALA

Chorus]

(Number one)

Sex that we're having

Here girl

Ooh (this is, this is number one)

Sex that we're having here girl, ohh

[R. Kelly]

Hands down you the best

Ain't no competition

You and me in this bed

Just what I was wishin

Them other girls was cool but it's somethin they
was missin

And i don't call them back ever since we hit it in
the kitchen

That night

At my home

Trench coat

Nothin on

Your sex

Got me gone

Went straight

To my dome

And i love it woo

Girl i love it woo

And i love it woo

Girl i love it woo

Girl it's somethin about you that thrills me

That's why after we lay you get to know the real
me-e-e-yeah

And it don't stop you keep going from the night
onto the day

And i love it when you take me down and make
me say

Eyyyyyy

I have been bursting this song from that town
and it's on repeat and I am singing at the top of
my lungs thinking about the amazing love
making session we had all night on Saturday, I
never thought she had it in her really, she
exceeded my expectations and made all those
before her non existent. She allowed me bend

her in all directions and her energy was everything. I got the entire package in my wife really, but it's not only about the sex bruh, I found myself talking about the future like a young boy but would you blame me? Lwandle makes me want to be the best version of myself and for her I will try with each passing day. I finally drive in my street so I stop the music and sigh, after the amazing time I had I am going to face that evil girl. I open the gate with my remote and drive in. I don't bother taking out my bags in the car but I take the plastic with the sheets that have my wife's blood on like my parents asked me to if we ever make love. I just walk in and find my parents and Zipho already sited having supper.

Me: oh hello family.

I say and you can't miss the excitement in my voice.

Ma: someone is happy.

I smile

Me: I just came back from visiting my wife ma how can I not be happy.

Baba: I take it the treatment is working.

Me: wonders Baba, she is coming along very well, she will soon be out of that place.

Ma: that's great news Nele.

Baba: I can only believe you brought what I asked for coz you seriously can't be that happy for nothing.

I chuckle.

Me: as wierd as all this is but I brought the sheets.

My mother starts ululating.

Ma: Nele you couldn't wait till she was out of that house.

Me: Mama she is my wife and we both couldn't wait.

Baba: you are a real man son.

He shakes my hand and I have this huge grin plastered on my face.

Zee: mnyeni wam (my husband).

She finally says and I sigh

Me: Zizipho.

Zee: Can I fix you a plate?

Me: yeah sure and please get my bag from the car when we done here.

Zee: okay I will and welcome home.

She stands up and goes to get my plate from the kitchen.

Me: does she really have to be here.

Baba: you made your bed son it's time you lie on it.

Me: can she at least be the wife that stays here with you guys.

They both laugh.

Baba: why must I stay with your wife when I have mine. Carry your wife and leave.

The continue laughing.

Me: MaZulu is not happy with all of this.

Baba: get your house in order sir, I can't advice you on polygamy son you see I only have one wife.

They crack up some more annoying me.

Me: you enjoying this ne?

I ask at the same time Zipho walks back in.
Eish this is just a mumish.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I just stepped out the shower and I am tired as hell not even the hot water and the shower gel could relax me. I am starting to think that my mom is right, working like this is doing me more harm than good but I just can't sit and do nothing coz I am going to lose my mind entirely. My phone rings on top of the chest of drawers and i dread to go pick it up not really in the mood to talk to anyone so I just let it ring but the person is persistent coz they call again, I have no choice but to go pick it up. It's Phiwe at least.

Me: Grootman.

Him: malumes, skhiphan? (What's up?).

I sigh

Me: nothing much man, I am dead tired I just want to sleep now.

Him: stop working like a new age slave man Indigo.

Me: yeah I know. So what's good, how's Makhulu.

Him: she's good man we just worried about you.

Me: you don't have to I am doing good. Any news on Ocean that side?

I ask

Him: that's why I called actually.

My heart starts beating very fast so I sit down.

Me: is she back? Is she good? I am coming there now.

Him: come down Indi, she is not back but we just heard that they paid lobola for her in her absence.

He says and my heart sinks.

Me: no man, no they can't just marry her off to that guy.

Him: well they did bafo I am sorry.

Me: are you sure Phiwe?

Him: yes Gogo heard this from someone who attends the church.

Me: fuck this is not happening.

Him: I will look out and tell you when she's back.

Me: please do coz I am coming to take her when she's back.

Him: make sure you plan this properly though okay?

Me: definitely I'll start thinking about all the logistics. I am not losing my girl to them, to a life she clearly doesn't want.

Him: I'm here if you need anything.

Me: I appreciate everything Phiwe.

Him: you are my blood. later then I am out of
airtime.

Me: later bruh.

The line goes dead and I bury my head in my
hands.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 37

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

They let me spend the night in this bedroom
last night and Zanda came to give me my food
and I appreciate the moment they gave me
because I was really not in the mood to be
around people, I am not happy with myself at
the moment and I don't need anyone looking at

me somehow because I slept with him. I check the watch on the pedestal and it's just before 6am. A knock disturbs me and I sit straight and cover properly.

Me: come in.

Gabriel walks in with his wife and I sigh.

Gab: good morning.

Me: good morning.

Dina: I hope you had a great night to yourself.

Me: I did thank you.

Gab: that's great coz it's back to reality, we just came to tell you that Banele spoke highly of you and your progress so we commend you too.

I nod with a smile, can they just tell me I am leaving this place already.

Me: thank you.

Gab: you have a few more activities to go through and then you'll be out of here.

Me: not to sound somehow but how long will it be? I need to finish with school.

Gab: probably a month but if you don't respond to it well it's extended you know this.

I want to scream but I just nod.

Dina: uhm get up and clean this room so you can help the others. I am leaving later on and I want to leave everything accordingly.

Me: may I ask where you are going?

Dina: I have an all night prayer at church and I would take you with but you engaged in sex with Banele and the prayer session requires that you abstain a while. I've taken Zanda before but maybe you will come along next time.

Me: oh okay, next time.

Gab: get up then and be busy.

Me: yes Sir.

They both walk out and it hits me that Gab has been sexually starving and with Dina away the whole night, he is going to have his fun with

Zanda, Tonight is the night Fire and I escape this hell hole. I quickly get up and start cleaning the room.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

My mother inlaw is turning out to be a monster and I don't like this, she is normally a sweet lovable lady and I thought in her I would find comfort but that's not the case. She is making me turn into a 50's makoti, can you imagine she woke me up at 5am to go sweep outside, I mean who still does this in this day and age, I didn't even do this at my parents house. I yawn as I enter the house and she is sitting in the kitchen with a cup of tea in front of her.

Her: oh are you done?

Me: yes ma.

Her: you'll start with breakfast then.

I gasp

Me: I thought the helper does that.

She chuckles

Her: MaMhlongo you are the daughter in-law here so you must do your duties in this home.

Me: I understand ma.

Her: if you were going to school I would understand but you dropped out right?

I nod.

Me: yes I did.

Her: so you will help out with the chores.

I go put the broom back in the utility room and go wash my hands and take out the ingredients from the fridge and she stands up and walks out the kitchen. I don't think I have ever been pissed off by an elder like this old hag is doing right now. Banele walks in wearing his gym gear.

Me: sthandwa sam (my love) when are we leaving this place.

Him: good morning to you too Zipho.

Me: there is nothing good about the morning Nele. When are we going to Johannesburg?

He sighs

Him: what's the rush?

Me: I can't live like this, waking up to sweep and prepare meals like a maid no I just can't.

Him: you said you want to get married right?

Me: yes I did but-

He cuts me off.

Him: no but here just do your makoti duties with grace after all this is your dream your ambition.

Me: is this how you gonna treat me? Talk to me like this? Refuse to share a bedroom with me?.

Him: I told you you'll be married to yourself sweetheart why are you shocked.

He walks out the door and I am left there feeling hurt really hurt. The door opens again and and he peeps through.

Him: by the way we are leaving tomorrow morning so prepare.

He closes it again and I sigh in relief. Things will be much better between us once we get to the city.

•MONDLI ZULU

I have been in high spirits ever since yesterday, that experience was one I wanted all my life and having to experience it was just a dream come true. A part of me is mad for giving in to something I have worked so hard to kill but the truth can't be hidden forever and I think it's okay for me to explore it and if it doesn't work out I will go back to my straight mediocre life. My dear wife was wondering what could have made me extra happy but she couldn't bring herself to ask me and she did good because I wouldn't have spilled the beans on myself. I haven't seen Theo since I arrived and for the first time ever since he got here I am annoyed

because I want to be in his presence, he has made me feel like a small boy again full of life and excitement. I am walking around the school yard waiting for the first class to start, the learner's are arriving and greeting me as they pass by. I see a car park and Theo gets out and opens the boot, I practically run to him.

Me: Good morning.

I say and he looks at me with a straight face.

Him: Mr. Zulu.

Me: why so formal Theo?

Him: you did tell me to respect you didn't you?

I frown.

Me: and you decide to do that now after giving me sex.

He sighs and looks at me in the eyes.

Him: I just wanted to be sure of what I was suspecting and you proved me right coz you chowed the chocolate box clean.

I clench my jaws

Me: you just used me Theodore?

He smiles

Him: don't be so angry hao you got to experience your true self.

Me: Are you listening to yourself right now?

Him: hee bathong ntate o (my goodness this old man) are you not listening to me?

Me: no one can give off their body for fun just like that.

Him: well I did didn't I?

Me: what games are you playing here?

He claps and folds his arms

Him: Mondli don't tell me you've caught feelings? 1 round 5 minutes already making you this obsessed?

He asks

Me: you didn't feel anything in that experience?

Him: love I have been gay since I was in diapers so this is not my first rodeo.

He closes the boot and walks away leaving me there boiling with anger. Does this boy think he will just use and discard me like that? After all he is the one who came for me why is he acting like this now.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I am having my lunch in the canteen, listening to the playlist we were jamming to when we were coming to the pride, these songs remind me of our happy days and I think it's time I held on to those until she comes back to me and I help her through whatever trauma she will be experiencing. Someone bangs on the table startling me and spilling my drink, I look up and roll my eyes.

Me: What The Fuck Bridget.

Her: What are you thinking about so deep?

Me: None of your Godam business.

She laughs

Her: you really don't have to be like this you know?

Me: What do you want entlek?

Her: I just want to be your friend.

Me: I am sure you have a lot of friends.

Her: not anymore, they are just full of shit.

Me: then befriend your man or something.

Her: I am single thank you very much.

Me: hao where is your prince charming, you used to suffocate us with him.

She sighs

Her: He is the reason why I am done with man.

Me: you don't say.

I say dramatically and she rolls her eyes

Her: come on I respect that you have a girlfriend and all I just want to be friends.

Me: just friends?

Her: yes I promise.

Me: okay but you try anything I am cutting you off.

She laughs.

Her: Got it, so drinks after work?

Me: sure we can have a few.

Her: seen that wasn't so hard now was it.

I frown and shrug my shoulders.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Like I anticipated Gabriel got back from dropping Dina off and we served him his food, I personally did so I can pour him the herbs and powders they gave me to be horny out of my mind. Luckily he keeps his car keys in the drawer in the lounge TV stand and I saw him do it tonight too. After eating I went to wash the dishes and and he told us to head to our room

and and I had already put gum on our door so it doesn't lock. I had the whole day thinking about and planning this escape and nothing is going to stop us now. I am counting the minutes to him walking in here and asking for Zanda but it's long now, the herbs have to be working by now. What if I was wrong and they are not sleeping together? I bite my lip and rock myself back and forth.

Fire: chommie are you okay?

He says dragging me out of my train of thoughts.

Me: yes I am fine I am perfect in fact.

Fire: you've been acting wierd this entire day Nolwandle man what did they do to you this weekend?

Me: something that made me want to get out of this place fast.

The door opens and I hold my breath crossing my fingers.

Gab: why are you not asleep?

He sneers at us

Fire: we are sharing Bible verses.

Gab: Good. Zanda!

He shouts a bit and I am jumping in Glee, it's working, he is horny and he came to get his mistress who quickly gets up from her matras.

Her: Pastor?

She tries acting and I want to scream "don't bother go play with Dina's husband girl we all know you two are committing adultery".

Gab: I need your help with something.

Her: okay.

She nods and they both walk out and I smile.

Fire: they are so going to fuck.

I chuckle.

Me: I made sure they do.

Fire: what do you mean, what did you do Lwa?

Me: I will explain later but we need to leave this place tonight friend.

Fire: I don't understand.

Me: you don't have to just do as I say and I will explain on the other side.

Fire: okay okay, so what's the first thing?

Me: we need to convince him to escape with us so he can drive.

I say and she sighs.

Fire: consider it done.

I frown and watch him go to the guy and wake him up gently, they talk a while and I see him shaking his head and my heart sinks, without him there is no getting out of here at all, he is the only one who can drive. I am looking at them intensely and he doesn't seem to budge but Mlilo is working on him. After forever they both stand and come to me and I quickly stand up too.

Fire: let's get out of here friend.

Me: okay you go unlock the kitchen door Fire, and you go open the garage slowly and I will get the keys.

Fire: what about the dogs?

Him: don't worry they are fond of me I will go lock them up.

He says and I nod vigorously.

Fire: Lwandle but how are we going to make it out of this room?

Me: the door locks automatically friend so I put a gum where it locks so it doesn't click and close us in.

I see him sigh and we move to the door and I open it slowly. We all get out and i close it again and Fire is already at the kitchen door opening it as I rush to the lounge to get the key, Zanda is screaming at the pleasure a married man is giving her and I can't believe she is doing this, I don't want to touch on Gabriel he is filthy. I am about to run out when I notice Gabs phone on the charger, I grab it and rush to the kitchen. Fire is standing there biting his nails. He sees

me and holds out his hand to me and I gladly take it. After a while the guy comes back.

Him: you two will need to push the car till the gate so he doesn't hear it start.

Fire: smart, come Lwa.

I close the door and lock the security door. We run to the garage and he gets in and Fire and I starts pushing the car and it moves with ease, we get to the gate far from the house and I am breathing heavily.

Him: this is good, hop in let's go.

I quickly get in and he starts the engine and drives off. I sigh in relief and let my tears fall.

Fire: oh my God Lwandle you did it friend, you got us out.

He says and I just cry.

Him: don't cry sisi you helped us a great deal. The only thing we need is to navigate our way out of here.

Me: I got his phone too, we can use Google maps.

I wipe my tears and power the screen on and it has a password.

Me: it has a password guys.

Him: try Dina.

He says but it doesn't work.

Fire: try Bible.

We all laugh but it doesn't work too. I sigh and try to think, he is selfish, self centered and a definite narcissistic so I try his name and it opens.

Me: Got it.

Fire: where to now?

Him: I think the closest town is Durban.

Me: we can't go straight there with his car, they will know where we are, let's find a town closer and I will call my sister to get us.

Fire: I don't know how I will ever repay you for what you've done for us my friend.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 38

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I am literally holding my breath hoping that Gabriel hasn't realized that we are gone and tracks down his car with the police, we can't go back to that place, I for one know that another minute at that house would take my sanity seriously. I can't stop looking back and each car that drives behind us gets my blood pressure high. We have been driving for almost 2 hours and according to Google maps we are 15 minutes away from the next town between that hell hole and Durban.

Me: Uhm Paul, from here you just drive straight and we will park at any safe place.

Him: Good coz we are running out of gas.

Me: will it last another 15 minutes though?

Him: Definitely.

I sigh in relief.

Fire: Friend please call your sister.

I nod and dial Siya hoping she answers coz it's almost 10pm. It rings until it takes me to voicemail so I try again and when I am about to lose hope she picks up and her voice is low.

Siya: Hello.

Me: sis'wam (my sister).

I say trying so hard not to cry.

Siya: muntuza? Is that you?

Me: yes it's me

Siya: oh thank God, Nana where are you?

Me: we managed to run away Siya.

Siya: where are you can you tell me?

Me: let me send you the location coz I need to get rid of this phone

Siya: yes yes, Oh Lwandle.

Me: please hurry, I am so scared.

Siya: Bongani and I are leaving right now. I will see you soon okay?

She says and hearing her voice calms me down and gives me so much hope.

Siya: just make sure you wait for me in a place I can easily spot you.

Me: we will wait at some patrol station.

Siya: yes that's good do that.

Me: hurry please.

I hung up and quickly save my sister's number and go to whatsApp, as we drive we see a patrol station and I sigh in relief.

Me: Paul park here at the garage.

He gladly does and and I send the location.

I don't know why but I open his gallery and go to his camera pictures. There are nudes of Zanda in their matrimonial bed and a few of him and her too after sex. An idea hits I quickly select them all and share share with whatsApp, I send to the contact saved as "my wife" and after a few minutes she sees them and

responds "Gabriel what filth is this?" She includes angry face emoji and I gasp.

Me: Friend look at this.

I hand him the phone and he gasp for air too.

Fire: Oh my God, she is going to freak. Let me just destroy this sim card once.

—

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

To say I was hopeful would be an understatement, I wasn't expecting this but I am so relieved that she managed to run away from wherever they had kept her. I wish my husband could step on the accelerator some more but he is already driving at 160km/h and more than that would be suicidal, I want to get to her as quickly as possible before those people can think of looking for her but for that I'll need to be alive. I look outside the window saying silent prayers in my heart.

Bongani: baby we are almost there.

Me: Thank you for being here with me love.

Bongani: I am your husband baby, wherever you are I will be there with you.

Me: how long till we get there? We've been on the road for long babe.

Bongani: thirty more minutes my love. Relax for me please.

Me: I am trying.

We go back to being silent and I continue praying in my heart. The silence starts getting to me so I put on some music and it's much better. After another eternity the car drives into the town and my husband makes a few turns and we finally get into view of a filling station, soon as he parks I am out the car. Screaming my sister's name I get the attention of attendants and motorist who are looking at me like a crazy person.

Me: Nolwandle? Muntuza?

I shout at the top of my lungs and she appears from a car parked on the side.

Lwa: Siya, I am here.

We literally run to each other and soon as I feel her in my arms I just cry.

Me: Oh Nana.

I say squeezing tighter.

Lwa: it's me, I am fine now I am here.

Me: I can't believe you are here.

Lwa: please take me home.

Me: of course but whose car is that?

Leave: Pastor Gabriel's we stole it to escape, I am with two others please give them shelter for the night.

Me: definitely get them let's get out of here.

She runs to the car and my husband is next to me.

Bongani: we should take this car and go park it someone else so when they find it no one can give them any answers.

Me: that's a good idea love.

•BONGEKA ZULU

I don't know what could have made Mondli's mood die down from the happiness he had from Saturday but I know it's something that happened at work because he got home looking like he ate hot peppers. It's late at night and we are still in the lounge and the television is watching him as his mind seems to be a million miles away. I am already sleepy but I can't go to bed without him as he is still holding me prisoner to this day, It would be better if the television was playing something interesting but it's on some church programme.

Me: Zulu?

I say in a low voice but he doesn't come back from his train of thoughts.

Me: Mondli!

I shout louder and his head moves to me immediately

Him: yini? Why are you shouting like a straatmate.

He says with annoyance and I raise an eyebrow.

Me: when are we going to bed?

Him: when I want to Bongeka.

Me: I am tired Mondli, I spend all day tied to a chair and I just want to lie down now.

Him: you are the most annoying woman in the world, how the hell did I get married to you?.

Me: you married me because the church told us to but it's not too late to leave me.

Him: I might just.

He snaps

Me: that would be the happiest day of my life.

Him: watch your mouth or I will break your neck.

Me: udliwa yini wena? Bak'lahlile na?(What's going on with you? Did they dump you perhaps?)

I joke but he quickly comes to me and holds me tight by my shoulders.

Him: what did you just say to me? Do I seem like an adulterer to you?

He says shaking me and I keep my eyes shut not wanting to see the monster in my face.

•BANELE THWALA

I am packing my clothes in the suitcase coz tomorrow I am going back to the city and I am taking Zipho with me, I just don't know why my parents are refusing to stay here with her, I mean some wives are left behind and they would be doing me a huge favor if they take that annoying girl off my hands. I am listening to the same song I came back bursting in my car, it kind of reminds me of my wife even though it's

never played with her near me but it reminds me of the moment we had and the intimacy we shared as a newly married couple. I should send R Kelly and Keri Hilson gifts to appreciate this song, it's a master piece. The door opens and my father walks in.

Baba: you listening to the devil's music.

I laugh.

Me: This is art Baba, there is nothing evil with this type of music.

I say and he sits down on the couch behind my door.

Baba: Banele you are a pastor's son and an example to many young boys around this place.

Me: kodwa I am in my personal space la.

Baba: walls have ears son, sooner you learn this the better.

Me: why do I have a feeling that you came to talk about something else and not the kind of music I play.

I say sarcastically and he chuckles.

Baba: I did actually son, I don't know why I had to remember this at this hour when I am suppose to be with my wife in our matrimonial bed.

Me: I am all ears Bab'Mfumdisi.

Baba: I know you are not happy with marrying this Zipho girl son but I hope and pray that you treat her right in the city.

Me: eish Baba-

He cuts me off.

Baba: I am still talking Banele, don't mistreat her and bring trouble to yourself coz I meant it when I said Bridget was the last mess i cleaned up.

Me: I won't lay a hand on her baba I promise.

Baba: that's all I needed to hear.

My door opens and Zipho walks in wearing a lace number under her short gown and I sigh.

Me: Zipho cover up, my-

Her: baby shhhh, I am in here to take care of my husband's needs.

Me: heii wena stop.

Her: Banele please just let me please. I am your wife and-

Me: My father is behind you stupid.

I roar at her and she quickly turns and covers as embarrassment floods through her. I sigh and the moment is too much for her she quickly walks back out and my father laughs.

Baba: I should have been the one to leave son, your wife was in here for your pleasure. Go after her.

Me: you can cock block me all you want when it comes to that girl.

He frowns.

Baba: what is cock block?

I chuckle shaking my head.

—

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I can't believe we made it out of the that hell hole alive and intact even if not fully as some parts will never be restored no matter what. I couldn't sleep a wink but I am glad the others are still asleep, I am in the lounge with a cup of coffee in my hand, thinking of what Dina might have done to Zanda for sleeping with her husband but would she understand that Zanda is suffering from Stockholm syndrome and that the only person to blame in that situation is Gabriel. My sister and her husband walk in all ready for work.

Bongs: morning Lwa.

Me: bhut'Bongani.

Bongs: love let me fix you a cup of coffee so long.

Siya: I would appreciate that so much babe.

He goes to the kitchen and I am left with my sister.

Siya: how long have you been up?

Me: I haven't slept a wink sis.

Siya: oh muntuza.

Me: I tried but it felt like if I sleep I would wake up in that house back in that cold dark room.

I admit and she is looking at me with pity.

Siya: you will never go back there, I promise you.

Me: It was horrible sis.

She takes me in her arms for a warm hug.

Siya: it's all going to be okay I promise you.

Me: I don't think it would ever be the same again, I will never be the same again.

Siya: it might seem like it now but trust me with time and professional help you will heal and your story will give hope to many.

Me: please don't send me back to our parents.

Siya: I will never send you back to that house so he can send you back to those sick people.

Me: what about school?

Siya: you can still enroll to write when you are ready and in the right frame of mind.

Me: thank you for coming through for us.

Siya: Always sthandwa sami.

Me: let me go check up on my friends.

Siya: will you guys be okay alone? I can't miss work my boss is watching me like a hawk.

Me: we will be fine Siya go to work.

She smiles at me and I stand up to go check up on Fire and Paul.

•MONDLI ZULU

Even today at work Theo stuck to avoiding me and pretending like nothing happened between us like that isn't enough I saw him talking to the other male colleague, smiling and laughing with

him and I just got so mad wondering if he did to him what he did to me. I just don't understand why he insists that he didn't feel anything for me during that moment. He is driving me completely insane and I hate how he already has a hold over me in this short period of time.

Baba: Zulu are you listening?

The pastor says

Me: oh I am sorry Baba, you were saying?

Baba: is everything okay with you?

Me: no my wife is not doing okay.

Baba: what's wrong? Can we help?

Me: she misses Lwandle and she just wants her home.

Baba: oh man, tell her my daughter in law is doing good and she will be back home soon.

Me: I've tried assuring her but you know woman baba.

He chuckles.

Baba: overly sensitive.

I nod and my phone vibrates on the table and it's a number I don't recognize.

Me: please excuse me.

He nods and stand up going to pick up in another room.

Me: Zulu.

Him: so cranky.

His voice says

Me: Theo?

Him: yes it's me.

Me: what do you want?

I say trying to sound like I am not happy he called

Him: I don't mind hanging up my phone and going back to ignoring you.

Me: no no no don't do that.

Him: exactly, are you busy?

He asks and I yes I am attending a meeting about my placement as an elder but I can't say that to him.

Me: not really, what's going on?

Him: I want to see you, can you come to my house where I am renting?

Me: yes I can, where is it?

Him: in town at those flats.

I smirk.

Me: I will be there in 30 minutes.

Him: hurry up daddy and call me when you are at the gate okay?

I smile as my good mood gets restored.

Me: do you want me to come with anything?

Him: just bring me wings and a bottle of vodka.

Me: okay I am coming.

He hangs up and I walk back to the pastor to tell him I need to run, we can reschedule this for another time.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 39

•PASTOR GABRIEL

I knew my wife was insane but I just didn't think she would take it this far, and how did she even know that I would be in bed with Zanda, to say I have touched the tail of a black mamba would be an understatement, I don't know what I am going to tell Zanda's parents and the thought of that alone increases my anxiety. We have been in this bedroom since last night with Zanda's corpse on our bed. Dina arrived here to find us in the throes of passion and she lost it with a butcher knife and stabbed this girl I don't know how many times, on the other hand the other 3 have been locked up in their room and I am pretty sure they are hungry and wondering what

is happening. I am naked in the corner watching my wife pacing up and down with that knife in her hands and I am so scared to even utter a word.

Her: See what you've made me do Gabriel, see what your cheating ass has led me to?

Me: I'm very sorry my love. I don't know what came over me.

Her: don't give me that bullshit Gab.

Me: I swear this girl came into our bedroom and started seducing just like Delilah.

Her: You piece of shit you think I don't know this wasn't the first time you had her in our bed. Stop lying.

She screams waving the knife around and I hold out my hands in defeat.

Me: okay okay I am sorry baby please. We need to take care of this body.

Her: we are going to dig in the yard and bury her there and no one will ever know.

Me: Her parents know she is here Dina what will we tell them? Where will we say she disappeared to? Come on think.

I say and she chuckles

Her: If you weren't fucking this child we wouldn't be in this position and those 3 wouldn't have escaped.

Me: what do you mean escaped?

Her: you fool your car is gone, they are gone too. Who knows they already went to the police to report us.

Me: we were given permission by their parents and Lwandle was the only minor so the is no case.

Her: I don't care about that, they clearly stole your phone too Gab and send me pictures of you and this corpse, they might share them on social media too and everything we've worked so hard for will just go up in flames.

She says and I put my hands on top of my head

Me: Oh Fuck you are right, I messed up Dina I am so sorry.

Her: We are going to bury her and when they ask we say they all escaped after drugging you.

Me: it could work.

Her: Get dressed and let's go start with digging her shallow grave.

She says and I can't find remorse in her voice which makes my whole body go cold. Is she even aware that she killed a human being.

Me: but what do we tell their families in the mean time?

Her: nothing yet, we try find them and if we fail we will let them know.

Me: find them how?

She rolls her eyes

Me: you can't use your brain but your dick can do all the cheating. We find your damn car idiot.

No lie I am scared of her right now, how do you kill someone and act like nothing happened? Like it's not a big deal.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I am starring outside the car window amazed by what I am seeing, these buildings are so tall, and the chaos of people going up and down, some are selling in the corners of the streets, while some are going in and out of the retail shops, the buzzing sounds of a million taxis and music playing catches my attention to the core and I know this is where I am supposed to be, I am distant to be in this City and to live my best life. The car drives through the city from the busy side to a more calm and posh side, only a few cars cruising by, I see white people jogging down the street and I smile thinking how it will be me doing all these city things. He presses a button and drives in the yard of a beautiful big house and my excitement grows.

Him: We are here.

He says and I jump out the care failing to contain my Glee.

Me: Oh my God Nele this place is amazing. Look at the garden.

Him: watch out for snakes these coming few days.

Me: you have snakes here?

I ask panicking, I hate those things.

Him: I haven't been here in a while and the pesticide company has to come and spray the repellent.

I sigh in relief.

Me: please make it quick please.

Him: they'll probably come on Saturday.

Me: Can I see the inside please.

He looks at me distastefully and leads the way. Soon as he opens the door I practically run inside and look around and he is behind me. I

get to a huge bedroom that has a sliding door leading outside to the garden.

Me: I love this room.

Him: it's my bedroom.

Me: I am comfortable more on the left side of the bed just so you know.

Him: then you will sleep on the left side on your bed in your room.

I sigh.

Me: what is that suppose to mean Nele? We are still not sharing a bedroom even in our own house?

Him: Zipho why is it so hard for you to understand that I married you out of obligation? stop thinking this is some sort of fairytale.

Me: just stop hurting me Banele stop it.

I cry.

Him: you can chose any bedroom in the house just stay out of mine and my wife's.

Me: you are sharing with her?

Him: Pizza or ?

He says walking out and my earlier mood shoots out the window leaving me with a broken heart. What do I have to do for this man to see me? To love me?

•MONDLI ZULU

Theo is laying on my chest and I have my hands wrapped around him. This moment feels perfect and it's definitely what I want in my life, what I've always wanted and it doesn't matter that I am experiencing it in my adult life because this boy is making me feel so young and alive something my wife has never made me feel. I don't think I even want to go back to my house tonight, I mean who would want to leave this comfortable happy place and go back to the cold depressing house with a nagging wife?.

Him: what are you thinking about?

I smile

Me: I am thinking about you.

Him: hao what did I do?

Me: why were you avoiding me like that? I was losing my mind.

He chuckles and gets out of my embrace and sits up to look at me.

Him: You are a married man Mondli.

Me: Theo you knew that the day you decided to bend over for me in the bathroom.

Him: I told you I was just trying to confirm my suspicions.

Me: what about now?

I ask raising an eyebrow and he smirks.

Him: well let's just say you know how to lay down the pipe and I needed some of you again.

To say I wasn't happy to hear that would be a complete lie, I am rejoicing knowing he enjoys me as much as I enjoy him.

Me: I don't want to be your casual sex fling
Theodore, I am too old for that.

Him: monna motho butle pele (someone's
husband wait a minute).

Me: stop with that, am I with Bongeka or with
you?

Him: you are with me because Bongeka won't
let you have it from the back.

I shake my head

Me: even if she did it wouldn't be the same.

Him: Mondli what do you want?

Me: I want you Theo, I don't want to see you
flirting with any other man. Stop that I dont like
it.

Him: you want exclusivity?

Me: One hundred percent.

Him: Juggling a wife and a mistress.

I laugh.

Me: yes mistress I will take care of you
Theodore please.

He smiles and folds his arms.

Him: I am very high maintenance mister.

Me: okay I hear that so what is it going to be?

Him: okay boyfriend.

I smile and lean in for a kiss.

Me: I don't want to see anyone near you.

Him: you need a stiff drink shame.

Me: Theo I don't drink alcohol.

Him: you were not chowing ass a few days ago but look at you now.

I chuckle shaking my head.

Me: you are going to get me out of line.

Him: you said you wanted a bad bad and now you have it so brace yourself love.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I just got out of the plant, it has been a long ass day and I just want to hit the sack when I get

home. Production tripled today and we had to break our backs for real, I decided to shower here at work so I don't go through that when I get home. I am in the shower room applying lotion to my built thighs and I realize I need to start hitting the gym again. The door opens and Bridget walks in.

Her: damn girl you are sexy.

Me: cut it out Bree.

Her: it was just a compliment geez.

Me: don't be awkward.

Her: hai "Ms I have a girlfriend" sifelani.

I chuckle and I am disturbed by my ringing phone. I take it out of my locker and it's Siya.

Me: Hey Siya.

I say and Bridget's gets in the shower.

Her: Indi, baby it's me.

My heart stops as her voice hits my ear.

Me: Ocean baby is that you?

Her: it's me my love, how are you?

Me: Fuck Nolwandle baby where are you?

Her: I am in Durban, my sister's house.

Me: send me the location now I am coming there to see you.

Her: okay I will.

Me: where have you been? Where did they take you? Are you okay? When did you come back?

I asks not knowing which question to ask first and she chuckles but it's not her usual carefree sound and that breaks my heart.

Her: so many questions Indi, I will tell you everything when you get here.

I smile

Me: okay I am leaving Jozi right now I will be there in a few hours okay.

Her: I can't wait and drive safely.

Me: Nolwandle I love you so much babe.

Her: I love you too.

Me: I don't want to hang up.

Her: I am not going anywhere, you'll find me waiting I promise.

Me: okay I coming now.

Her: okay now hang up and come see me.

I smile and hanging up, I put on my clothes so quickly and grab my things heading out of the locker room. I need to feel up my tank and get two cans of energy drink and press the accelerator.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 40

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I didn't want to call Indigo not after what I did with Banele, I feel so guilty but Siya convinced me to call her so she can be out of her misery

and worry and she was right I couldn't let her continue to think that I am still missing or anything that her mind was selling to her. I haven't told my sister what happened in that house and I don't know if I am ready to share it with anyone else yet, that's a dark part of my life that happened really quickly and I just wish I can get over it the same way it happened, fast. I am all alone in the house pacing up and down. My eyes land on the clock every 5minutes, we spoke on the phone almost 3 hours ago and she should be here now right? Or am I in a hurry?. I am alone in the house with no one to help me with my anxiety, Siya wanted us to be alone so we can talk that's why she took Fire and Paul to get clothes then to the guest house where they'll stay till they figure out their next move. I go to the kitchen and gulp down 2 glasses of water, as I walk back to the lounge a knock comes through and I feel all the air leaving my body, I take a deep sigh and go to open and there she is on the other side of the door, as her eyes meet mine she sighs in relief.

Her: Oh Ocean.

She says attacking me with a hug and I just hold on to her for dear life, taking in her scent up my nostrils. I wasn't aware of how much I missed being in these arms. I let my tears fall as I sob on her chest.

Her: it's okay sthandwa Sami, you are home now you are safe.

Me: I love you so much Indigo.

Her: I love you too baby.

We stand like that for what seems like forever and I remember my manners.

Me: you had a long drive please come in.

I say letting go and she wipes my tears.

Her: I didn't even feel the distance I just wanted to be here.

I smile and she pecks my lips. We move inside and sit on the couch eye to eye.

Me: you look tired love.

Her: you look as beautiful and innocent as the last time I laid my eyes on you.

She says and innocent part just tore me into shreds with guilt eating through me completely, I just can't help but cry shaking my head.

Me: I am so sorry Indigo I just hope you will find it in your heart to forgive me.

Her: this wasn't your fault baby.

Me: you don't understand Indi.

I say shaking my head.

Her: understand what Lwa, baby talk to me please.

Me: They took me to a conversion therapy and it was horrible, my worst nightmare, a horror movie.

Her: oh my love, we don't have to talk about it now.

Me: I just can't keep this from you, I feel guilty already.

Her: you are scaring me Lwandle.

She says getting closer and I swallow.

Me: Banele came and-

I can't finish my sentence and I feel her freeze next to me.

Her: Did that bastard rape you Nolwandle?

I wish I could say yes but I can't lie with such a horrible thing many woman are victim of, it would be so low and disgusting of me so I just shake my head slowly.

Her: then what is it?

Me: I gave him my body willingly Indi.

Her: make sense baby what are you saying?

I sob a while wishing I didn't go through this, wishing I could be able to keep this a secret but I just can't.

Me: I gave him my virginity.

She gasps for air.

Her: Nolwandle no.

Her voice says dying down.

Me: I am so sorry baby it's just that-

She cuts me standing from the couch.

Her: I was out there failing to cope worried sick about you Lwa, praying that you make it out alive and strong but you were there giving him your body?

She says in a voice that scares me, but she isn't shouting, it's just laced with pain and disappointment.

Me: Indi please.

Her: I understand you were going through the worst but to give yourself up like that? To cheat on me like that Lwa with a man for that matter? Did I even cross your mind?

Me: every minute of the whole thing I swear.

She shakes her head.

Her: you don't do that Nolwandle, you don't betray love like that you just don't.

Me: You don't understand.

Her: I can't I just can't.

She says going to the door.

Me: Indigo where are you going?

Her: I am going back to Johannesburg
Nolwandle.

Me: Let me explain please.

She doesn't stop she just storms out and I follow her out trying to get her to listen but she isn't having it, she gets in her car and speeds off and I am standing there shaking, I can't believe this is happening to me, I shouldn't have told her what happened I should have just taken this secret with me to the grave, now she hates me Oh God Nolwandle you are stupid.

•BONGEKA ZULU

Zulu is supposed to be home by now, I don't know where he could be knowing very well that he has tied me up to this damn chair. Imagine a fully grown woman like myself urinated on herself because my bladder was too full and I

couldn't hold it in any longer. I don't even want to talk about hunger, the last time I ate was before he went to work and it's already dark outside my stomach is even making noises now. The door opens and he walks in whistling holding a take away paper bag.

Me: what kind of evil is this Mondli?

He gets near me and looks at my urine

Him: eish I am sorry I got held up somewhere.

Me: Just kill me Mondli just kill me because this is not life.

Him: don't be dramatic Bongeka hao.

He unties me.

Me: dramatic you say, you are holding me hostage, I eat when you want, I sleep when you want to so tell me is all this fair?

Him: just go bath and you'll find a plate of food ready for you.

He says and goes to the kitchen, I am left confused, isn't he going to follow me this time? I let it go and rush to take a quick bath because I am so hungry. I finish and slip into a comfortable dress and go to the kitchen and there is plate on the kitchen island. I take a sit and start devouring the food.

Him: you can have more if you like.

I stop chewing and look at him.

Me: why are you so nice.

Him: I am a monster you complain, I am nice you complain, what exactly do you want from me?

He asks and I just roll my eyes and continue eating.

Him: listen I am done holding you prisoner, so I am not going to tie you up or anything and things will go back to normal, you will get your money and what you chose to do with it is your business, but if you try to kill me or run to the police to report me then you will never see

Nolwandle again and no I am not threatening you, it's a promise.

He says and I blink a couple of times.

Me: just leave my daughter out of this please.

Him: just act right and I won't have to involve her.

Me: it's fine Mondli, just allow me to talk to her please.

Him: you pushing it now.

He says and I sigh as he walks away. I am just glad he won't be tying me up anymore.

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

I just hope seeing Indigo will do her good and maybe give her the courage to face and accept what happened to her and work on it to put it behind her. It's late at night and Bongani and I are driving home after watching a movie, I wanted to give them some time alone and thank

God for my husband he didn't act somehow.
We get home and there is no car outside, could they have went out maybe? My husband parks in the garage and we get in the house.

Me: it's awfully quiet here.

Him: what if the are, you know.

I chuckle.

Me: babe no yaz usile.

Him: I am just saying love.

He goes to our bedroom and I go knock on Lwandle's door but she doesn't respond so I walk in praying I don't walk in on them doing their thing, but nah she wouldn't have sex in my house. I get in and she is in bed curled up and sobbing painfully. I sit on the bed and place her on my lap.

Me: muntuza what's wrong.

I ask really concerned.

Her: it hurts Siya it hurts so bad.

Me: what happened didn't she come?

Her: she did but she didn't stay after I told her what happened.

Me: what happened Nana?

Her: I just couldn't keep it a secret but she wouldn't let me explain.

Me: secrets destroy relationships so you did right disclosing it to her, maybe she needs to cool down and digest it first.

I say trying to make her feel better but the big question on my mind is "what is the secret" but I don't want to ask her, she must tell me willingly so she doesn't leave anything out.

Her: You don't understand Siya.

Me: then make me muntuza.

She sobs some more and I am brushing her back comforting her.

Her: This passed Saturday they gave me a drink and it was filled with all those aphrodisiac herbs and powders Siya.

Me: oh my God Lwandle no.

I say feeling my heart sink to my stomach. They raped my sister God no.

Her: I don't think I have ever felt that way at all. So Banele arrived Siya and I couldn't control myself I tried but I just couldn't, he didn't even ask me sis, I just threw myself at him, I gave him my purity Siya and I did that the whole night. I feel so guilty and dirty.

The pain in her voice haunts me.

Me: oh mntakama I am sorry Lwa so sorry. You didn't give yourself willingly baby they gave you something to want him it's not your fault.

Her: it doesn't matter Siya it just doesn't, Indigo hates me now.

Me: oh baby I am sorry my love.

What kind of monsters are those people. To give libido enhancing medicine to a child. I let my tear fall.

Her: I have lost a part of myself now I have lost the love of my life.

Me: Indigo is just shocked baby but she loves you so she will come around I promise you.

Her: Siya you didn't see how disappointed and hurt she was.

Me: Nolwandle don't do this to yourself please baby.

Her: Siya help me please I don't want to feel this pain, it feels like someone is ripping my heart out of my chest please.

She cries and I know she is no longer talking about Indigo alone but the whole experience.

How do I help her? How do I take away her pain?

•PASTOR GABRIEL

Somebody please tell me who I am married to? I haven't been myself the entire day trying to come to terms with the fact that an innocent girl died because of me, I feel so bad and I don't think I will be able to sleep tonight but I can't

say the same about Dina, she dug that grave with so much ease like she had done it before and I got more scared and after we buried Zanda like a dog she was on her phone the entire and when she was done she rained insults at me for not shaking it off and going on with my life like a girl didn't die in our house. She has been gone this entire day and I don't have any idea where she might be. My phone rings and it's Banele. I dread answering but that would raise suspicions and that boy would just show up here.

Me: Banele hello.

Him: Gab, what's good?

Me: very well thanks, yourself?

Him: not too good man.

Me: can I be of help?

Him: actually yes, please discharge my wife from treatment now.

I fake a laugh.

Me: I can't do that man or she will relapse if she doesn't finish all the activities.

Him: I was kidding don't stress but can I at least speak to her?

Me: that's prohibited too, you know this.

He sighs on the other side and I am grateful he can't see my nerves.

Him: I just miss her that's all.

Me: she is doing really well man and she will be back home soon.

Him: I guess so.

Me: just hang in there.

Him: okay Gab thanks man.

The door opens and I stand up

Me: I need to go speak soon?

Him: sure.

I hang up soon as my wife appears.

Me: Dina where have you been?

Her: trying to clean up your mess.

I sigh and rub my forehead.

Me: and?

Her: I found your car on a high way. We can't tell where they headed because the highway leads to Gauteng and a million other places.

Me: they must have made their way to Johannesburg, Mlilo has a brother like him there.

Her: I will call the church that side to keep an eye out for them.

Me: Thank you love.

Her: don't thank me yet this could still go south. We need to find them.

Me: can I ask you something Dina?

Her: what is it?

Me: why are you not fazed about killing Zanda?

She laughs

Her: what do you still want that bitch so you can continue to fuck her? Do you want me to cut you too?

I shake my head no and she leaves heading to our bedroom a crime scene.

I have been married to Dina for 10 years now she was a pastor's kid and their family visited my church and that's how we met, her parents disappeared soon after we met and the police investigated until it was deemed a cold case and that's when we got married and she gave me her fathers church, she has always had a temper but I never thought she was capable of murder. I am scared for my life I won't lie.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

All I can think of is him touching her and giving her pleasure in a way I can only dream of, how do I compete with a man for her? She gave herself willingly to him and it means she is developing feelings for him, could it be that they managed to turn her? The thought of it alone leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.

I love Ocean so much that's why this is breaking me like this, I don't trust easily nor give my heart out like that but it was so easy with her that's why this betrayal is hitting so hard. I can't believe I drove in and out Durban like I was going around the corner to Soweto. I have been in this club drinking my sorrows away and a tap on my shoulder catches my attention, it's a pretty yellow thing that's been at my service.

Her: I am sorry but we are closing.

Me: so early?

Her: it's after 2am.

She says sounding annoyed and I look around and there is no one here the music has even stopped playing. I must have really zoned out.

Me: Fuck I lost track of time.

I say slurring my words, this bottle of hennessy worked on me.

Her: let me get a cab for you.

Me: nah sweetheart I am driving.

Her: you can't drive like this, let me help you.

Me: you can only help me with one thing.

Her: what's that?

Me: go home with me, let me rock your world.

She clicks her tongue.

Her: uphambene (you are crazy). Get up before I call the bouncer on you.

She threatens and I stand up missing a step.

Fuck I am drunk. I walk out and go find my car, the streets are silent and I am the only one staggering in the road, I get in and from nowhere I just break down. Why is love so painful, why was it easy for her to betray me like this, after everything we've been through she does this to us.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 41

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

I am conflicted, caught between a rock and a hard place, I don't know whether to quit my job to be able to be at home and take care of my little sister but on the other hand that would put financial strain on my husband. After the way she broke down last night I felt so useless and I don't know what to do to help her but I think getting Indigo to hear her out would be the best step. I dial her number on my work phone and she answers after forever in a low voice.

Her: yes!

She snaps and I close my eyes.

Me: Hi Indi, it's Siya here.

Her: Oh hey there.

Me: How are you doing?

Her: Not too good hey.

Me: I understand coz Lwandle told me what happened yesterday.

Her: yeah it's just so messed up.

Me: You honestly didn't let her finish explaining herself though.

Her: it was clear from what she said Siya, I don't take betrayal well, I love your sister and you know I was losing my mind with her disappearance but she was there having sex with him.

Me: I understand you are hurt and I don't blame you kodwa you really are hurting yourself here.

Her: what do you mean?

Me: I can't be the one telling you, but give her a chance to explain to you.

I hear her sigh on the other side.

Her: I just need a minute Siya and I will come around.

Me: I understand you but once she explains you'll realize that you are hurting yourself.

Her: How is she?

Me: She is going through a lot. Her time in that house and What they gave her-

I suddenly stop talking when it hits me.

Her: Siya?

I exhale closing my eyes.

Me: Indigo I have to go now.

I hang up and go to my colleague and friend.

Khemi: oh hey need anything?

Me: can you cover for me please I have an emergency chommie.

Khemi: oh my God go go I will deal with that one.

She says and I sigh rushing back to my cubicle and taking my things rushing outside. I just pray it's not too late for her.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

My stay in this house and this City is not pleasant at all and Its definitely not what I was hoping for. Banele becomes a monster with each passing day and I can only imagine how dirty he would play once his believed MaZulu comes here. I am trying harder to be a good wife he can love and appreciate but it's just not happening. He doesn't even sit down to watch TV with me and yes he hasn't been in my bedroom too to do his duties to me as my husband and that was one thing I was hoping would bring us closer as a couple. I am looking at magazines and the clothes here are beautiful, I should stop dressing like I am still in that backwards place. He walks in the lounge with a washing basket full of clothes.

Him: Zipho.

He says casually

Me: hey babe.

Him: I am going back to work tomorrow so I need you to iron all these for me.

He says and I nod.

Me: okay I'll do that for you, anything else?

Him: nah not yet but I'll let you know if I need anything.

Me: okay my love.

He attempts to walk away but I quickly call out his name.

Me: Nele wait!.

Him: what's good?

Me: umh I hope this is not too much to ask but I was hoping to get new clothes.

He raises an eyebrow.

Him: what's wrong with the clothes you have?

Me: Banele these clothes make me look like an old woman. I am just 18 years and I need clothes that match my age.

Him: eish okay I'll take you to the mall tomorrow then.

I smile and hurry to him and attack him with a hug.

Me: Thank you my husband.

Him: it's cool Zee.

He escapes my embrace and walks away. He has never been this civil towards me, I thought he would have made a big deal out of this, could this be him accepting how things are now? I smile to myself and go to the utility room with the basket full of his wrinkled clothes.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I am empty, I am just an empty soul and I thought being at home would do me good but nothing will, The emotional pain is just too much for me to bear and I honestly would take the lashed Gabriel gave me over this. It's better to feel physical pain because you can treat it but this I don't know, I did life sciences at school but a heart break makes you forget the logic of science, I honestly feel like my heart is located in my guts and my soul is being squeezed out my wind pipe, it's just so painful I can't even

describe it, I don't even have anymore tears to cry. So honestly where to from here? I am sitting in front of the TV and I am not watching it I just need it to feel the silence that was sending me to even more darker places. The door bursts open and Siya walks in.

Her: muntuza?

Me: are you okay?

Her: with your situation with Banele did you too use a condom?

Me: no we didn't, why do you ask?

My heart is about to jump out my chest as I see her close her eyes in defeat.

Her: did those people give you something after that maybe, a pill or something?

Me: no nothing, Siya what is going on?

I ask panic laced in my voice and she counts with her fingers and hits her forehead in frustration.

Me: SIYA!

I shout and she just takes me in her arms hugging me tight.

Her: Oh muntuza.

She cries and I just wish she would tell me what is going on right now coz I can't connect the dots myself, I suddenly feel stupid.

Me: you are scaring me please.

Her: come with me let's be sure.

She takes my hand and we walk to their bedroom and she leads us to the ensuite bathroom, she opens the mirror on the wall and takes out two boxes, my eyes land on the labeling and I just cry.

Me: Siya no no I can't be no please.

I sink down and she catches me on time.

Her: muntuza we need to be sure please.

Me: that would be the final nail to my coffin please no.

Her: oh sthandwa'sam we need to know to make a decision.

I sob in her arms hoping to wake up from this horrific nightmare.

Her: Please Lwandle please.

She says and I stand up feeling more dead inside than I was before she got here. I can't be pregnant, that child would be a constant reminder of my shame and the trauma I went through.

Her: please urinate on both these sticks.

She hands them to me and I go to do it as she sits on the bath tub biting her nails. I finish and hand them to her and she looks at them intensely as fix myself and flush. A few minutes later she looks at me with pitiful eyes and I just feel my head spin and before I know it i go blank.

•MONDLI ZULU

Now that I let Bongeka free I don't have to feel rushed to go back home to go give her food and make sure she gets to bed, Theo told me to come sleep over and I went to my house after work to get a change of clothes for tomorrow and toiletries too. He asked me to bring something to eat too and that bottle of vodka, the people in the liquor store were looking at me like I just murdered someone in cold blood, haven't they seen a person buy a bottle of vodka before. I get to his gate and call him.

Him: baby?

He answers his phone.

Me: I am outside open please.

Him: okay.

He hangs up and a second later the gate opens and I drive in and park behind his car. I take out the things from the back and walk up to his flat. I open and find him only in his underwear dancing to some girl singing. I go decrease the volume.

Me: this music is just not good on the ear.

He laughs and gives me a look.

Her: This is Beyonce love she is good for my soul.

Me: hai suka, you look nice.

He smirks and spanks his butt making me chuckle.

Him: what did you tell the wife?

Me: I don't answer to any woman Theo.

Him: I just hope that doesn't apply to me shame coz we gonna have a problem.

I roll my eyes.

Me: where will I even start taming a bully like yourself?

Him: it's good that you know babe, did you bring the vodka?

Me: yes in the plastic, why do you drink on a weekday, we have work tomorrow.

Him: We only live once Mondli, this is part of dating a 28years old.

Me: Right, it's going to drain everything in me.

He laughs and pours two glasses and mix with some juice then hand it to me.

Him: this place is going to kill me with KFC yoh, it's things like these that make me miss Johannesburg really.

Me: I was meaning to ask why did you move from a big city to come to this small place.

He sighs.

Him: I just needed change and I am glad I came coz I got to meet you.

He says and I blush sipping on the mixture. It's going to take a while to get used to alcohol but I'll get the hang of things.

Me: I am glad you also came, what about your family?

Him: my parents want nothing to do with me because I am gay I just have my brother Mlilo he is five years younger than me, we keep in contact secretly but if my parents found out they

would kill him. We haven't spoken in a long while though.

He says and I remember my daughter Lwandle, I am doing the same thing to her but it's not the same right? I have valid reasons I believe I do.

Him: what are their reasons? are they Christians?

Me: they belong to a church but I tell you that thing is a cult and babe can we not talk about this? It's just so depressing really. Let me dance for you, he goes to increase the music and starts dancing to the song.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 42

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I open my eyes and I am laying in bed with Siya and Bongani watching over me, my sister is still wearing the same face that made me faint and I just let my tears fall, I was really hoping that this would all go away the minute I wake up but it's my reality and I guess there is no running from it. Where to from here? How do I even pick up the pieces of my life? I curl up to the side and I feel my sister touch me from behind.

Her: I am so sorry muntuza.

Me: Isn't there anything I can take Siya?

Her: I would go and buy you an emergency contraceptive pill kodwa it's only effective if taken in 72hours and it's been more than that since he deposited his seed in you.

I close my eyes feeling like all hell has been unleashed on me.

Me: I can't have this baby Siya it will be a constant reminder of what I've been through, I will be tied to Banele for the rest of my life.

Her: I understand what you are saying muntuza but there is nothing we can do.

Me: no Siya no I can still abort right?

I feel her freeze and there is silence in the room.

Her: Baby can you give us a moment please.

She says to her husband and a second later the door opens.

Me: please don't try to convince me to keep it Siya please.

Her: Lwandle look at me please.

I turn and look at her in the eyes and she is at the verge of crying her own tears and she has on a face I do not recognize at all.

Her: abortion is not an option please.

Me: you don't understand Siyamthanda.

Her: I do trust me but you need to look beyond right now Lwa, see me now? How long have I been married?

Me: long I don't even remember.

Her: and do you see any child running around? I pray everyday for a child Lwandle but nothing, it might not feel like it but this child you are carrying is a blessing Nana, most woman including me would do anything to just carry a life even if it's just once. Lwandle anything can happen and who knows this might be the only child God blesses you with and you terminate then years later you are successful and you have it all but you just need one more thing, a baby.

Me: Siya please.

Her: I may not know what you are going through mntakama but I can see your pain and I am hear with you and I promise to walk this journey with you until you are okay I promise.

She begs me some more and I can hear the pain in her voice even though I am consumed by my own I can tell this subject is a sensitive one for her and a part of her is broken because of it.

Me: I just don't think I will love it like it deserves.

Her: there is no way you can't love a part of you Nana, no pressure just take these few days to think about what I just said.

Me: okay.

Her: I just need you to know that you will not do this alone my love.

I nod

•THEODORE MOKOENA

I came here for a distinct purpose. my parents hate me with every fiber of their being for being gay and I have been on my own since I can remember. I got by on my own and fought to make it in life and I did my degree in education, I live on the edge and I have fun each chance I get because to me life is just too short. Back to my distinct purpose, well my younger brother Mlilo has been missing for weeks now and a while back my aunt told me that my parents sent him to some conversion therapy when they

found out he was also gay, they are a part of a church that seems to go way deeper than I thought and I started doing some research and I found out about the other sister church here but I am yet to find someone who knows a lot about them because I can't just talk to the members because they are not allowed to talk to my kind. I am hoping that they are keeping him somewhere around here hence I jumped at the opportunity to come work here to search for answers and get my brother. I am stable enough to take care of him now and help him to find his feet. I got a chance to get away and be happy and free in who I am and I want the same thing for Fire.

Things here haven't been as bad as I thought they would but it's not Johannesburg and I am a proud Joburgger, having Mondli is making it more bearable I must admit, the guy is whipped and obsessed with me but he is not my first married man but I like him more than the others and it's nice showing him his true self but I have

a lot to work on there, he still thinks we are living in the 50's but I am not one to shy away from a challenge after all.

I got back from work and I am relaxing in the balcony wearing nothing but my boxer briefs and having my usual vodka and some Hubbly, I am watching video's of Mondli and I from last night and he was trying to smoke but yoh he cracks me up, oh poor boyfriend. I haven't posted anything on social media since I got here man I am becoming boring my followers must be asking where I am. I go to my Instagram and I have a DM from a Siya_Bhengu, he must have seen video's of me twerking and now he wants to meet typical insta man time he has a profile picture with his girlfriend or wife. I open the DM *Hi please DM me soon as you see this, I have news on your brother Mlilo, he was at the same conversion therapy with my sister but they managed to escape and I have them at my house in

Durban* I didn't even wait to read twice I text him back. Oh thank you Jesus.

•BANELE THWALA

I am walking around the mall with Zizipho as she wanted to get some new clothes and I'll admit she needed some these granny clothes are not cutting it at all, I am even ashamed of walking around with her coz I am well known around here and I might bump into some of my friends. I should just start buying some for my wife so she finds a complete wodrobe when she gets home coz we are going to be going out a lot me and her so she must look the part as Mrs. Thwala as I always look great, so my wife should match me.

Me: I think you have enough now.

I say looking at the plastics she is holding.

Her: I believe so too my love thank you.

Me: let's go back back then I've had a long day at work and this shopping thing too I am tired.

Her: don't worry I will run you a bath when we get home and cook you some delicious food to show my appreciation.

Me: sure.

We walk towards the exit/entrance and fuck my squad walks through and TJ is the first to see me and signals Zakes.

TJ: defuq, dude when did you come back?

He says soon as we are in range and I fist bump them.

Me: two days ago my guy.

TJ: we should totally hang this weekend poi.

Zakes: straight up dwag plus there's an event at club Genesis this Saturday.

Me: now that's my spot count me in.

I say and they nod and look at Zee.

TJ: who's this bro?

Her: Hi my name is Zizipho I am-

I quickly interject.

Me: she is a girl my mom got me to help around my place, she is from back home.

I say and they nod.

Zakes: mom's are the best bro, least you won't be eating take aways everyday.

I chuckle

Me: uyazi poi, y'all should come by she makes a mean ass plate.

They chuckle.

TJ: Sunday we camping by your place kao.

Me: I'll see you then boys.

Zakes: sure bra we just came here for a bite before we go turn up with some huns from Braam.

Me: some witsies?

TJ: fresh from the boat broer.

Me: damn and I can't join you boys just got back to work.

Zakes: no sweat sisonke weekend.

I nod and we conclude then they walk away.
Zipho is looking at me like she will just murder me in cold blood right here.

Me: what's up manje?

Her: your maid really Banele? Such disrespect to your wife in front of me your friends and the nerve to talk about girls in my presence.

I roll my eyes.

Me: idrama sis, let's go.

I leave her standing there as I whistle making my way to the car.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

My life has been a perpetual night ever since Ocean told me how she gave herself to that man, a man I know her to not want, a man I know her to dispise and want nothing to do with, she turns around and gives herself to, and

her sister calls me and confuses me more, I wish she could have just straight up told me what she meant coz I am just lost between the betrayal and my love for that girl, but I can't help but think that she has fallen for him hence it was easy to give him her body.

Bree: I swear I am going to leave you here.

Me: hai why?

Bree: I would be at home with my daughter but here i am having drinks with someone who's clearly not here.

Me: I am sorry man I am just fatigued.

Bree: told you to stop working like a modern day slave.

I chuckle.

Me: yeah yeah you did.

Bree: we should order some shots to get you to relax babe.

I stand up and go to the bar to get 12 shots tequila, why the hell not.

Bree: yaaassssss let the party begin.

I down 3 and she does the same.

Me: fuck this thing slaps.

Bree: that's why I love it.

I laugh and clear my throat.

Me: tell me, do woman have sex with a man if they don't feel anything for him?

Bree: if she is a bad bad yes but if she is your sweet angel, you know those girls that you wish you'd shield from all the bullshit then nah, they sleep with guys who they are attached to they just don't give it up for the sake of it.

She says and my heart drops down to my stomach. Exactly what I've been battling with Ocean wouldn't just sleep with him for the sake of it, she has fallen for him.

Me: I told my cousin exactly this but he has another opinion.

Bree: he's just crazy then.

I laugh, but it's fake coz hearing her say this just kills me further.

•PASTOR GABRIEL

I won't lie but it's time my wife and I called the children's parents to tell them their kids escaped because the longer we wait the more it's going to be tough to explain it and I honestly don't want any problems either with their parents or the law. I go to the kitchen to find Dina and she is doing the dishes, I lean on the fridge and she stops and look at me.

Her: what do you want?

Me: I think we should inform the parents about the disappearance of their children.

She sighs

Her: wait a bit until we get a response from the Johannesburg church.

Me: we are running out of time here.

Her: don't you think I know that Gab?

She screams and I sigh.

Me: I just feel like you are taking this lightly honestly.

Her: don't drive me insane Gabriel don't dare.

Me: that's not what I am trying to do Dee come down.

I say walking passed her and walking out.

My wife seems to be always out for blood these days and she is scaring me I won't lie, I take out a smoke and stare at the two trees growing side by side near the fence. I haven't smoked since I became a pastor but I need something to calm me down.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 43

One Week later

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

The situation with Lwandle seem to be going from bad to worse and I don't know what to do anymore, I am just so stressed out and it's time like these I wish our mother cared enough about us but I have to help my sister through this by myself and no matter how hard it is I will definitely do it. It's a weekend and I've just finished cleaning the entire house and my husband is in the lounge watching something that has to do with soccer. I go join him and soon as I sit he mutes the TV and looks at me.

Him: Siya.

He says and the tone is serious.

Me: Bhengu?

Him: I am really worried about uLwa.

He says and I sigh.

Me: I am seriously loosing my mind I don't know how to help her.

Him: we need to find her a good therapist coz I don't think she will get through this without professional help.

Me: you are right babe she will end up being depressed and that's the last thing I want for her.

Him: if she isn't already Siya. What did you say you her that other day about the pregnancy?

He asks and I sit properly.

Me: I just advised her against abortion love, and told her about how we are struggling to convince.

Him: oh sthandwa'sam you shouldn't have, that's emotional blackmail, you might not have intended to but it is.

Me: what do you mean?

Him: Siya she is the one going through the pain, she is the one who feels it and we have to support her in whatever she decides my love.

I understand this is sensitive for you because we are struggling to have our own child but don't use that to make her decide on keeping the baby.

He adds and I sniff my tears.

Me: I wasn't trying to love, just that most woman who've had abortions say you carry the guilt all your life and it just doesn't go away futhi I am scared that she aborts then struggles to conceive when she truly wants a baby.

Him: that's why I love you baby you are so considerate and you think forward but right now just be her sister and be there for when she has to cross those bridges.

He says soft.

Me: I didn't mean to blackmail her.

Him: I know that baby and I want you to know that we will have our baby when God approves

yezwa? I am here and this is both our journey but for now we support her in whatever decision she makes.

Me: okay I will make sure to tell her that it's okay to chose what she wants.

Him: Thank you.

He kisses my forehead.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

My head is pounding like shit, Bridget is just bad influence but she is a good distraction I won't lie. Yesterday after work we went to club Genesis and it was lit, when they closed at 2am we moved to some house and it went down strong, I only got home after seven in the morning drunk as hell. I still feel drunk even though I've slept it off a little. I get up from my bed and go to one of my drawers to find headache pills, I take two and pop them in my mouth, the is an open Corona on my pedestal I

drink it to take the pills down, I am about to hit the sack again when my door opens and Phiwe walks in.

Me: are my eyes deceiving me?

Him: nah fokol, it's really me

Me: when did you get in?

Him: about thirty minutes ago.

Me: why didn't you tell me you are coming.

Him: what's going on with you malumes?

Me: nex jaive grootman.

Him: your mother is worried Indigo.

Me: so that's why you are here?

Him: why are you drinking and living recklessly like this?

Me: I am just trying to cope Phiwe that's all.

Him: when Lwandle comes back she is going to need you don't do this.

He says and I chuckle.

Me: oh Ocean is back alright.

Him: oh that's good news mos, but now why are you loosing it like this?

Me: because she decided to sleep with Banele when I was out here worried sick about her, she was enjoying herself.

Him: that's bullshit Indi, who fed you that crap?

Me: she told me.

Him: explain this to me coz I am not getting it.

I tell him what happened.

Him: I understand why you are hurting but have you stopped for a minute and thought of why she would do that? Maybe she didn't have a choice maybe it was a part of the act to get herself out of there.

Me: maybe she caught feeling for him and realized that she is not a lesbian.

Him: that girl has sacrificed alot to be with you Indi, and you know this. The least you could is hear her out, let her explain why she did that.

Me: you don't understand.

Him: I understand very well. You are used to girls full of shit and you thought Ocean was about to bullshit you too but I've seen you two together and I've seen that she loves you. Put your smelling pride aside and hear her out.

He says and I swallow. He is definitely pointing me out of my shit right now. I am scared of serious heartbreak that's why I ran at the smell of it. He is right I need to hear her out, I can't be speculating before I hear the entire story. She wouldn't have come clean to me if she wanted to hurt me. I just pray I am not too late.

Me: let me call her.

Him: just sleep and talk to her when you are sober man.

I nod and he takes my phone before heading out. I feel like kicking myself.

•THEODORE MOKOENA

I think I'm loosing my mind, it's been over a week now and that Siya guy hasn't gotten back to me, I've been stalking him on every social media platform but his accounts haven't been active in days and just like on Instagram he only posts pictures with his wife and I can't find her tagged on any picture so I can DM her. I just want to find my baby brother, I was so excited that I told my friend to not rent out my room back at the flat where I stayed in Johannesburg because I want him to stay there, he will get help there and it will be easier for him to pick up the pieces of his life because he isn't going back to my parents. It's a Saturday and I am with Mondli, he is spending the weekend with me.

Him: what's going on with you?

He asks and I snap out of it.

Me: mmh?

Him: my point exactly Theo, what are you thinking about?

Me: about my brother that's all.

He sighs.

Him: maybe your parents are watching him closely so much that he can't go to the phone to call you.

He says and I don't want to mention the DM coz I am starting to feel like the guy is just playing a sick game on me.

Me: yeah maybe hey.

Him: don't worry it's all going to be okay, I am sure he is fine and he misses you too.

Me: I hope so too babe.

Him: come here.

He says opening his arms and I gladly go in for a hug.

Me: thanks for being here.

Him: there's nowhere I'd rather be.

I honestly hate the fact that I am falling for this man. I have avoided love and feelings for a long time because of my issues but he is just making

me drop the guards I have up and it's scary I won't lie.

Him: I'll even let you listen to Beyonce and smoke hubbly if that will make you feel better.

He says and I chuckle.

Me: oh wow, just say baby please mix the hubbly, bring the vodka play some Beyonce and twerk for me.

I say and he laughs carefree holding me tighter to him.

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

I dish out for Lwandle and go to her room, I want to apologise for what I said to her that time, my husband made sense and a lot of it, she just needs me right now not my opinions and my advices just me. I sigh getting to her door and open hoping she will hear me and believe that I am here for her no matter what. I get in and the horror on the bed makes me drop

the tray with her food and drink, tears already running down my face I make my way to her and feel her pulse, it's there but it's faint. I see a suicide note on the bed and shake my head.

Me: BONGANI!

I scream from the top of my lungs and take the pillow case tearing it into two to wrapped both her wrists so she can stop bleeding. My husband walks in and gasps at this horrific scene.

Him: Fuck, what happened.

Me: she cut her wrists love.

Him: does she have a pulse?

Me: yes but it's faint.

Him: we need to go now.

He picks her up from the bloody bed and runs out with her and I follow them out crying. I lock and rush to the back where Bongani placed her and he starts the engine. The drive to the hospital seems long because of my nerves. I

don't think I have ever been so scared in my life. We get to the hospital and my husband doesn't waste time he gets out from the front and takes her running inside. I follow behind again crying and get there as the nurses and doctors in the emergency room hover around her with needles and machines, everything is happening so fast as they wheel her away.

Me: she tried to kill herself Bongani, I failed at helping I failed baby.

Him: She is going to be okay I promise you.

Me: How when all she wanted was to die.

Him: we will get her the help she needs baby. This was just a cry for help I promise.

He tries to make me feel better but nothing will ever. My sister is broken and she almost died.

•BONGEKA ZULU

I've been making plans to leave this house, but that will only happen soon as Nolwandle gets

home, I am not leaving anything to chance again, with my pension fund money my daughter and I will survive somewhere far from Mondli and this hell hole and I will let her live her life the way she wants I just hope and pray she will be able to forgive me for failing her all her life. I have been trying to get a hold of Siya but it just rings until it takes me to voicemail, I guess she really doesn't want anything to do with me. I finish eating my take away as I didn't bother to cook coz Mondli doesn't spend much time here anymore and trust me I am not complaining, I just wish it continues even when Lwa gets home so our escaping is easy. I stand up to go throw away the takeaway container and a sharp pain hits me straight in my heart and I wince and hold on to the couch taking it in. I bend down for a couple of minutes and I am disturbed by a knock on my door. I exhale deeply and go open and it's Pastor Thwala.

Me: Baba.

I say

Him: unjani?

Me: I am very well thanks, yourself?

Him: I am well too.

Me: please come in.

I move to the side and he walks in. We go sit down and I wonder why he is here.

Him: where is Zulu?

Me: I honestly don't know baba but he isn't here he left yesterday morning going to work and he just told me he will be back Monday afternoon.

I say and he sighs

Him: what is going on with him these days?

Me: I don't know baba I really don't.

Him: yazi he hasn't been answering my calls and he doesn't even bother calling me back. We haven't finalized anything regarding his placement as an elder at church.

I frown.

Me: hai that's shocking considering how much he wants this.

Him: exactly that's why I am shocked.

Me: I can only tell him that you were here looking for him.

Him: please do and tell him to come see me ASAP coz the set day is approaching.

Me: yebo baba, can I get you anything?

Him: no I am in a hurry, I just came back from a meeting in Durban and I passed by here.

Me: okay sir.

He stands up and I see him out. I get back in the house wondering what is wrong with Mondli, he is seriously acting out of character here.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I open my eyes and just cry, realizing that I am not dead but in a hospital room. A part of me is happy that I didn't but I was hoping to find

peace in my death as my life is a living hell. It's like I am locked up at Alcatraz and I can't escape no matter what. I try to move but both my hands are strapped to the bed and I close my eyes. A voice clears behind me and I turn to a white lady with glasses holding a book.

Her: hello my name is Dr Roberts and I am a psychologist. Apologies for the restraints but you are on suicide watch.

Me: where is my sister?

Her: she is in the waiting room.

Me: I didn't mean to, I was just fed up with everything.

I admit and she smiles at me and comes closer.

Her: the pain just became too much to bare the peace that came with sleep seemed to be the only option so what better than the permanent sleep, death?

She says and I nod vigorously, she understands this.

Me: yes, yes.

I cry and she sits there watching me intensely not even offering a word but letting me cry it out.

Me: I just feel like no one will ever understand what I am going through.

Her: you are right Lwandle no one will understand except for you, you are the only one who went through whatever that made you believe that death was the only way out.

Me: I just want peace.

Her: and you can find it while living you only have to face your demons and defeat them.

Me: but how Dr.

Her: I don't know yet but the first step is for you to decide that you need help.

I sob and she still doesn't try to touch me or say words of comfort and I appreciate it.

Me: I need help Dr Roberts please help me, I hate feeling this way please.

I beg and she nods.

Her: I will help you Lwandle thank you for not seeing it as a sign of weakness.

Me: can I see my sister?

Her: okay let me get her, we will talk later okay?

I nod and she walks out. A few minutes later my sister runs in my room and she breaks down as she sees me.

Siya: I am so sorry for blackmailing you into keeping the baby, I am sorry Lwandle but I promise anything you choose to do now I will support you.

Me: Siya I am sorry I didn't mean to I am sorry I say from the bottom of my heart and she comes to me and folds me in a warm embrace and I wish I can hold her back, but my hands, I can't.

Siya: I am sorry too Lwandle I should have seen how hard it was for you.

Me: it's not your fault Siya, I need help.

Siya: and i promise to get it for you and I will be there every step of the way.

Me: thank you for saving me, I didn't want to die.

I admit and she just tightens her hold on me making me cry harder. I notice Dr Roberts at the door and she stepped in further.

Her: I am sorry to disturb but I need to finish my psych evaluation.

Siya let's go and wipes her tears.

Siya: oh okay, I'll be right outside.

Her: Thank you.

The doctor says and my sister walks out closing the door behind her and I am left with the doctor.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 44

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

I couldn't do anything last night when we got home from the hospital, I was just numb and hurt with what happened. I am so worried about Nolwandle, before I used to believe that people who commit suicide were cowards but now that my own sister that I know to be strong and brave tried taking her own life I fully understand that the pain consumes them to a point where they believe nothing will ever work out no matter what and it's sad honestly. No one deserves to feel like death is the only choice out of the situation. I have been dreading going to her bedroom because that's where I saw her almost lifeless body laying in it's own blood but I need to clean it up. I walk in after gathering my strength and my eyes land on the suicide note and I pick it up and sigh deeply before reading.

~I never thought my life would come to an end in such a shameful way and it's a pity because I

had so many plans for my future but I guess they are right when they say when we make plans God laughs. When this year started and someone told me this would be my life I would have laughed till I couldn't no more because I have always had direction for my life. I never thought a person would be crucified and broken down like this for simply living their truth and being who they are. I have always been a lover of life but these past few days it has been hard because I can't seem to find something worth holding on to because I am battling with myself, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. All the forces within me want to be heard and I am loosing my mind because of it, I need peace and the world isn't making room for me to do that and I don't think that's going to change so I need to go. My mind is loathing the child growing inside of me because it will be a constant reminder of what I went through but again my heart and soul are telling me that if I kill this innocent soul I would be robbing it off a chance to life something that is been done to

me and how am I different to Bab'Zulu, Banele, Gabriel and Dina if I go on to abort half of me? See why I am conflicted? Every part of my being seem to be at battle here so which one do I listen to? Hence I can't continue living because I am at the crossroad and I don't know which direction has a better offer but from where I am standing they are all hell fire. I am scared of what I am about to do but I hope they were right that purgatory exists then I will still have a fighting chance to make it to heaven maybe. I am sorry for being so selfish and I hope one day you will understand why I need to go. I love you Siya and God will bless you with many children and your life will be complete. Please don't hold on to the hurt live your life beautifully and fully. I don't deserve a proper burial so don't waste your money on it just hold a private ceremony for me and say your goodbye and let it be forever for I don't want you coming to my grave as it will be a constant reminder of your pain. Please tell Indigo that I never meant to hurt her, I love her too much to

even do that. She showed me how amazing my truth was and I will forever appreciate the amazing time I had with her. Tell her to put her heart out there and find love again. I hope you all forgive me.~

I stare at the note with my tears streaming down my face. I can't imagine how it would have been if I hadn't come in when I did, I can't imagine life without Nolwandle. I kneel down to say the Lord's prayer to thank him for saving my sister's life.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I am trying to search for where I will find solace in my heart but I just can't find anything at all. I asked the doctor if I had lost the baby but he said no and I wish I did, I am sorry for sounding so evil but it's just what my mind wanted but my heart I don't even want to touch on that, it's telling me that I would be a hypocrite with

double standards for wanting people to allow me live my life the way I want when I want to rob an innocent soul of a life that might blossom into something beautiful, what if they become a great gift to the world? But what if it's a curse again? I asked Dr Roberts to help me make a decision but she smiled politely at me and said that's something I have to decide for myself. I always thought Therapists/Psychologists were depressing people who made you talk and talk about what they want but in all honesty they just listen to you and give inputs based on what you are telling them. The door opens and she walks in, they even work on Sundays?

Her: Good morning.

Me: Dr Roberts.

Her: How did you sleep?

Me: I was knocked out because of the meds but I wouldn't have slept without any.

She nods.

Her: why do you think so?

Me: I just have a lot on my plate that's all.

She takes a seat and crosses her legs before adjusting her glasses.

Her: would you like to talk about it?

Me: I am pregnant.

Her: we've established that so you can't sleep because of it?

Me: because I don't know whether to keep it or terminate and as my shrink you won't tell me what to do.

She giggles

Her: it's not my job to tell you what to do.

Me: you've already said that.

I sigh and wonder why it's so easy talking to this woman, I mean just yesterday I just wanted to die and not even 24 hours has past I am hear talking.

Me: why is it so easy to talk to you after trying to kill myself? Shouldn't I be emotional, depressed maybe?

She shakes her head.

Her: I told you the only thing you needed to do was to admit you needed help and you've done that already and you meant it because you are not closing off. Nonsense you were not trying to kill yourself, it might feel like it and you might have tried but this was just a cry for help hence you are not questioning why you are alive this minute.

She hits the nail right on the head.

Me: that's true doctor.

Her: let me ask you this, As a lesbian woman, did you want to have children at some point?

Me: yes with a sperm donor I wanted that.

Her: and that would have happened later on in your life right?

Me: yes I imagined myself to be married working my dream job and my wife and I having a warm home.

Her: but now you don't have either of those things and you are pregnant with a baby of a man you don't love or like, hence you are considering abortion?

Me: yes.

I say ashamed.

Her: let me tell you something Lwandle you have a right to terminate this pregnancy because it's not something you wanted or planned, how you conceived this life inside of you is painful and I would understand why you don't want it, no child deserves to be looked at as a reminder of a tragedy, on the other hand you can also carry on with the pregnancy and give the baby to someone who has always truly wanted and prayed for a baby and in that way you have served both the forces fighting inside of you like you said. You don't get to keep a

child you don't want and you don't get to feel guilty for "killing an innocent soul" like you put it. She says and I am staring at her.

Me: but how do I continue with a pregnancy when I feel nothing for the child?

Her: that would make it easy in giving the child up for adoption because you will not have any attachments to it. It would be like being a surrogate all you have to do is look after yourself and make sure the baby is healthy then when the time is right you hand the baby to a loving and caring family who will love and care for him/her.

Me: you see you've told me what to do, was it so hard?

She laughs out loud.

Her: no Lwandle I didn't tell you anything I gave you two options that will make you fulfilled however you look at them, one might be favourable to the other based on what you want to achieve with yourself and that's your choice to make you could also chose to not pick any of

the options and decide to keep the baby and love it, see?

I smile.

Me: you are right.

Her: that's all for today, I will see you tomorrow.

Me: Dr Roberts thank you so much.

Her: thank you for opening up to me it makes everything easier and by the way I don't find you suicidal so you passed your psych evaluation and you won't need to be admitted to our psychiatric ward. The medical doctors will tell you when you can be discharged and you and I will talk about how we will have our sessions when you are back home.

I nod vigorously.

Me: okay.

Her: and don't be hasty, take your time and think and make sure whatever you choose is exactly what you want don't take people's opinions and feelings into your decision

because it's you who's going to live with that decision.

I nod vigorously and she walks out.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I have been trying to get a hold of Siya but her phone is taking me straight to voicemail and that's just frustrating coz I finally see that I acted childish and I needed to give Ocean a chance to talk and say her peace before I stormed off like that, it's no way to act in a relationship I want to be a success. I am glad that my mother hit Phiwe up without their intervention I wouldn't have noticed my short comings in this whole situation. I took my cousin out for a bite and after that we went to Chisa Nyama at Ghandi Square for a few cold one's.

Me: I think we should hit N3.

Him: what for?

Me: Their phone is off and I need to talk to my girl so going there is the better option.

Him: not after how you acted the last that Indi. Talk to her over the phone and ask if it's okay if you come, that's another man's home and you can't disrespect it like that.

I sigh and sip my beer.

Me: you are right, I just wish I didn't act that way.

Him: it's understandable malumes, don't sweat it just focus on making things right.

Me: I will I will cuz.

Him: you better coz you don't find a love like that twice in your life.

Me: very true Grootman.

I feel someone hug me from behind and kiss my cheek, I turn back and it's Bridget.

Her: hey babe.

Me: Baby girl, what's good?

Her: I am mad at you why didn't you tell me you were coming here?

Me: I just came to chill with my cousin you know some quiet time.

Her: are you trying to say I am loud?

I laugh.

Me: never!

She smiles

Her: okay let me get something to drink I'm coming.

She walks in to go buy and the girl is in a short that exposes her butt cheeks with a crop top and mad sneakers.

Him: she could've just walked out the house naked then.

Phiwe says with a disgusted look.

Me: welcome to Jozi poi.

He shakes his head.

Him: hai no, is she a prostitute?

I chuckle.

Me: no she is a friend of mine and a colleague.

Him: you have no business with girls like that.

Her: I am not going to cheat on Ocean Phiwe
come on.

Him: does the prostitute know that?

I sigh.

Me: of course she does, I told her I have a
girlfriend so chill.

Him: hai okay.

•MONDLI ZULU

I came to work with a massive hangover and I was tired, still am. Theo is going to be the death of me I swear but I honestly enjoy every moment I spend with him. He is a breath of fresh air and he is exposing me to things and I'll be honest I enjoy everything he's made me do so far. Yesterday he shocked me when he

cooked me delicious food and I am still shocked at how he can mix ingredients, I even helped him out and it reminded me of my younger self when I would help my mother. I am driving to my house and depression and boredom are slowly creeping in and I wish I wasn't going back to Bongeka. I park and take out the bag with my things and the black plastic with a six pack of premixed gin cider. Theo says in order to rid the devil you should unleash more evil, meaning the only way to get rid of a hangover is to drink some more. I get in the house and she is on the couch watching TV.

Me: Bongeka.

I say passing her to go to my bedroom.

Her: Where have you been?

She asks and I turn to look at her.

Me: what makes you think you can ask me that?

Her: listen I don't care about your movements and all but start answering your phone so that people don't come here looking for you.

I narrow my eyes.

Me: who was looking for me?

Her: Bab'Thwala.

I close my eyes, fuck I've missed our meetings too.

Me: I'll call him.

Her: what's wrong with you lately, you starting to neglect the chair you so badly wanted and abused us for, my daughter is nowhere I know because of it and you now neglect it? Then what was all this for?

Me: I never said that I am neglecting it, I just need to take care of a few things.

Her: whatever Mondli.

I don't even bother trying to scare her or threaten her because of how she is acting so I just walk away to drink plus I am dog tired. I'll just go and talk to The pastor tomorrow and

finish these arrangements for my placements. I'll just have to find a way to juggle everything Theo included.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 45

•MONDLI ZULU

After work I didn't go home or go with Theo to his place because I wanted to go and see the pastor, I have been negligent these past few days and it's time I got my head back in it and just focus on other things too, after all Theodore isn't going anywhere so I don't see why other things have to take a back seat. I get to his house and his car is parked outside and I just sigh before walking out the car. I get to the door and knock after a few seconds MaThwala opens and she smiles.

Her: Zulu, how are you?

Me: I am well how are you?

Her: I am fine thanks, you are scarce these days man.

She says and I chuckle.

Me: alot has been going on but I am good now, you'll see more of me again.

I say just to put her at ease.

Her: that's good, Thwala is in his study you can go through.

Me: thank you I'll come find you before I leave.

Her: okay baba.

I walk to the study and the door is open, Baba is behind his desk reading from his Bible. I knock and his eyes shoot up and he raises an eyebrow.

Him: Prodigal son.

Me: Baba, hai angi'xolise (let me apologize).

Him: where have you been mfoka'Zulu?

Me: eish baba I have been having disturbing dreams about my appointment as an elder in our church yaz, like some people are not happy with this and some have gone the dark spiritual way to block it.

I say and he is looking back at me in shock.

Him: haibo! Are you sure?

Me: I truly believe so, you know you can feel darkness looming and I felt it.

Him: that's bad kodwa why didn't you come to me?

Me: I just wanted to deal with it myself.

Him: I hear you, so where did you go this past weekend?

Me: I packed my things and drove out to the mountains to fast and pray.

Him: yes! Like a real man of God.

Me: I went on my knees and defeated the devil.

Him: you will make a great elder of our Church. You know where to run to when things get tough and I am glad that my son has married in your home.

Me: Amen baba Amen.

Him: I was really worried that maybe you no longer want the chair.

I chuckle.

Me: yoh Zulu senior would turn in his grave.

He joins in the laughter and hold out his hand for a shake.

Him: very true. I am just glad everything is on track now let's talk your about your official placement.

He says and I am relieved that he bought the story, and I am really surprised at how lying has become so easy I don't even have to think about it.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I just had my meds and I am sitting on the chair next to the window looking outside, they set me free from the restraints after Dr Roberts cleared me on suicide watch, I have been thinking a lot and I even got a headache from it, I have decided to give this baby a chance to live but it won't be with me, I will give him/her to people who will love and care for it because I know I will never be able to. I would really like to give it to my sister but it's just too close as I will see the baby anyway and that's the thing, I want it far from me, I want to heal from my scars and not have a reminder of my pain growing with each passing day calling me aunty. Let me stop thinking about this coz I'll get a headache again. I haven't had a visitor today I think Siya and bhut'Bongani will only come after work, I want to inform her about my decision. I just hope she understands where I am coming from. The door opens and in walks Fire and Paul, I stand up from the chair and hurry to him.

Me: my friend.

I hug him and he returns it chuckling.

Fire: I missed you too babe.

Me: Gosh I haven't seen you in such a long time.

Fire: not that long but I guess I understand.

Me: I thought you'd be in Johannesburg by now.

His face falls and he let's out a deep sigh.

Fire: I don't think he has responded to your sisters DM on Instagram and I am starting to feel bad.

Me: why?

Fire: Lwandle we are living off your sister at that BnB it's not fair.

Me: I understand but I don't think they would have taken you there if they couldn't afford to.

Fire: how are you?

I look down in shame coz it's clear they know what I tried to do coz here they are in my hospital room.

Me: it just got too overwhelming.

Fire: You'll be fine right?

I nod vigorously.

Me: I have a good therapist and she assured me that I will get there in time.

Fire: I am happy to hear that.

Paul clears his throat and we both turn to look at him.

Me: Paul hey.

Him: hey Lwa I hope you get better.

Me: thank you.

Him: and thank you once again for helping us get out of that place.

Me: it's just a Pleasure.

I say and he looks at Fire with a questionable look I raise my eyebrow.

Him: I need the bathroom.

Fire : okay.

He excuses himself and I smirk at Fire.

Fire: and then wena?

Me: I sensed a vibe and I saw a look.

He chuckles

Fire: you have a 3rd degree eye no man.

Me: out with it.

Fire: hai man Lwandle it is what it is, he is a top
I am a bottom we share a bed and boom!

He says and I chuckle.

Me: poor Paul.

Fire: trust me the is nothing poor about him.

I chuckle and he moves to sit on my bed. I am
glad he is hear I feel somewhat lighter, it might
not last long but it's a good destruction.

•THEODORE MOKOENA

Without Mondli here the flat is dull and just plain
cold, that old man is growing on me and I hate
how I open up more and more to him, if I don't

stop and breathe I'll end up in love with him and get hurt after all he is married and married men never leave their wives no matter how much they tell you she's boring and annoying, trust me it doesn't matter how sexy you can twerk or the monkey styles you do in bed they just never leave their wives for you, so falling in love with him would be suicide. I brought home my students books to push the marking. My phone pings a notification and its Instagram, a DM from that Siya guy.

I am really sorry for taking so long, a lot has been going on the text reads and I type back quickly.

Please call me on these numbers 0785432123 so we can talk properly or text me yours I'll call you I reply but he doesn't respond 5 minutes pass and I'm starting to lose hope with all of this, I don't know what this person is trying to achieve by hurting me like this? It's just cruel. Maybe it's my parents playing a sick game with

me. I was about to put my phone down but it rings and true caller says Siya Bhengu my heart starts beating so fast I freeze a while but quickly snap out of it and pick up the call.

Me: Hi Siya hello uhm.

I mumble.

Her: Hello, is this Theo?

A female voice says

Me: yes it is, you have information on my brother?

Her: yes, they are in Durban they escaped a while back with my sister and another boy. My house is not big enough so I booked them at some BnB but it's totally safe I can guarantee it.

I sigh in relief and let my tears fall.

Me: so Mlilo is definitely with you?

Her: not right now but he sure is in Durban and I know where.

Me: oh thank God, can you please send me your location and I will come there tomorrow after work. I am still new so I can't really skip a day of work.

Her: it's okay I understand, is this number also for whatsApp?

Me: yes and thank you for taking care of him.

Her: it's okay, i am happy I could help. I will see you tomorrow then?

Me: definitely.

She hangs up and I just cry my eye balls out.

I've been looking for a way to take my brother out from my parents hold and give him a chance to live his life and be a success in his own right.

•PASTOR GABRIEL

It's been days now since the patients disappeared and Dina just told me that the

Johannesburg church went out searching for them but nothing, I don't know what to do next but I know for a fact that we need to let their parents know of this situation before it gets worse and we land in hot water. I am pacing up and down wondering how I am going to put this to them because they trusted us to look after their children and give them the help they needed but what did I do oh God.

Her: stop that before you give me a headache.

She sneers and I sigh stopping.

Me: we honestly need to let the parents know.

Her: obviously and you are talking to them.

Me: what do I say?

Her: you are good at lying and deceiving I didn't know you were cheating on me with a demonic child so you come up with something

She says and I roll my eyes in frustration.

Me: fine.

Her: just start with Banele the rest will be easy to manipulate.

I nod taking her phone and dialing Banele. I just hope this boy doesn't lose it on me, him and his father would be a serious problem for us, Lwandle seems to mean a lot to them so I am truly scared of how it could play out.

•BANELE THWALA

I don't know why I am subjecting myself to this bullshit in my own house, I am sitting on the couch with my leg on the couch holding a glass of Hennessy watching something about cheaters and shit and it's hosted by that guy who used to be a musician before he went to jail for racing his car, what's his face? Whatever you know who I am talking about and I swear she was watching it last night volume up but I am not in the mood to fight with her so I'm just going to let this slide. My phone rings and it's Dina, pastor Gab's wife.

Me: Zee decrease the volume.

She does and I answer.

Me: Hello

Him: Banele it's Gab here.

Me: oh okay how can I help you Gab is everything okay?

He sighs and I sit properly.

Him: it's about Nolwandle.

Me: what about my wife? Is she finally done with treatment? Should I come get her tomorrow?

I ask all at once making Zipho mute the sound completely and look at me intensely, I roll my eyes.

Him: unfortunately it's not good news.

I quickly stand up making room for my nerves.

Me: what do you mean is my wife okay?

Him: no she and the others escaped after drugging us, it's been hours now but nothing I can't find them.

Me: hours and you only telling me now, yeiii wena dont make me mad.

I scream.

Him: Banele please come down.

Me: don't fucken tell me to calm down find my woman before I get to you because I swear I will snap your neck like a twig.

I threaten.

Him: I promise I am on it and we need to work together not fighting like this.

Me: Find her Gabriel or what I do next I will not be held accountable for.

I hang up and start punching the air in frustration.

Zee: baby what's wrong?

Me: ai voetsek wena!

I say walking passed her going to my office to call my father. He needs to talk to that guy before I go to that damn place and kill that man. I want my wife here and I want her as in yesterday or I am going to cause havoc if they don't find her.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 46

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I don't know why Siya isn't getting back to me but I sure hope Ocean didn't told her to avoid me because of what I did and how I reacted I mean she probably feels like I will always do this every time and not be there when she really

needs me, she just came back from a really dark place in her life and she needed love, understanding and support, and what did I do? I ran when she told me the truth. I should have appreciated her honesty and loyalty but I took that as a betrayal, I need to make things right and fast. I am with Phiwe who is thinking of moving to Johannesburg but he feels bad because that would mean makhulu will stay alone but our grandmother has always wanted him to move here for a better life and staff. I am doing night shift so no booze for me but grootman is going in hard at it. My mother walks in holding my phone and I frown.

Ma: your phone has been ringing in your bedroom.

She hands it to me before walking away.

Me: eish thanks ma.

I take a look and it's 3 missed calls from Siya, I don't even think twice or hesitate I dial her and

it rings forever until she answers as I was about to hang up.

Her: Hi Indi.

Her voice says and it's low, shouldn't she be happy though coz Ocean is back home?

Me: Siya, how are you?

Her: I am well thanks sorry for not getting back to you it's been hectic here.

She says and I sigh.

Me: I understand, is Lwandle okay?

She goes silent for a while I almost thought the line went dead but a glance at the screen proved that we are still connected.

Her: not really, Lwandle is going through a lot right now.

Me: I know and I feel so bad for how I reacted I just want to talk to her and make things right.

Her: I understand that.

Me: so can I?

Her: maybe later on I am not with her at the moment.

Me: okay then I will wait for your call.

Her: okay later then.

Me: cool.

We cut the phone call and I sigh looking at Phiwe.

Him: what's happening?

Me: she isn't okay bruh.

Him: obviously so why didn't you speak to her?

Me: uhm she is not with her sister right now.

Him: oh yeah it's still office hours.

Me: yeah she'll call me soon as she is with her.

—

•BANELE THWALA

I don't think I have ever been so angry in my life, last night my father tried to calm me down

and assured me that we will find Nolwandle and bring her home to me but I just felt like he was just saying, I didn't feel the sense of urgency in his voice. I need to find my wife myself. What infuriates me more is why Lwandle would run away when she was doing so good, I mean the girl gave me her body willingly and passionately so, I worshipped her temple all night long like I've never done any woman and her body felt it too and sex is never that passionate without love, so I know for a fact that she has also fallen for me, what I don't understand is why she would run now. It can only mean that Gabriel and Dina didn't treat them right hence they ran but she should have come straight to me and I would have protected her. I love her and I would destroy anything that dares to harm her. You have to understand that I've never loved a woman before and I believe from the bottom of my heart that Lwa was made from my rib. I am in the balcony of this damn hotel looking at the beautiful view, my mother suggested that I leave the house as I was

angry, she feared that I would take it out on Zipho and trust me I would have because she kept on nagging me, one more hour I would have beat her to a pulp I swear. I am battling with myself here, I want to drive down to Gab and squeeze out answers from him. My phone rings and I walk back in to go pick it up. It's on the bed so I sit down and answer it.

Me: mama.

Ma: Nele how are you?

Me: I am trying to keep calm but I feel baba isn't doing everything to find my wife.

Ma: he already has his people looking for her, I promise she will be home with you soon.

Me: I need her mama, I need her to keep sane.

Ma: I know Nele, just don't be impulsive and leave the hotel.

Me: that won't do me any good but I can't stay here forever.

Ma: I know that fana but if you go back to the younger wife you will lose it coz that girl can't hold her peace.

I sigh.

Me: that's true.

Ma: so calm down first Nele we don't want another one girl hospitalized and your wife for that matter, she will tell her family and your affairs will be known all around this place.

Me: I'll be cool ma, I promise.

Ma: okay then I'll check on you later.

Me: wait! Have you told my father in law?

Ma: Nolwandle is a Thwala now, we are going to try and solve this alone first but if they don't find her before today ends then we will let him know.

Me: okay fair enough.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I walk back in my room and I won't lie I can't wait to leave this place, I am tired of the tasteless food really, the only thing that I enjoy are my therapy sessions with Dr Roberts, that woman has made me realize a lot of things about myself but most importantly she made me realize that I have lost love for myself because of what I went through and I understand now that I can't love anyone else until I am able to love myself again with all my scares and flaws and she is right how do I offer someone else something I don't have myself? I need time to just start afresh because in all honesty I will never be the same again, I can only hope to be a better version of myself by accepting what happened to me and turning it into something positive.

Her: muntuza.

Siya startles me from behind I jump a bit

Me: I was expecting you much later.

She smiles.

Her: I managed to get off earlier at work coz Theo is coming to get his brother.

Me: oh that's great, Fire will be so happy.

Her: he was over the moon when I told him, they spoke on the phone briefly.

Me: oh man, but I won't get a chance to say goodbye.

Her; don't worry he is going to get them at the BnB then come here.

I sigh in relief.

Me: great then.

Her: Indigo called.

My face falls and guilt eats through me.

Me: oh okay.

Her: that's all you going to say? What's wrong muntuza?

I sigh and look at her.

Me: I realized that I need some time to be myself again, or at least to find who I am after what happened to me and a relationship is

something I don't have in me. Don't get me wrong Siya I care deeply for Indigo but how do I love her when I don't even love myself at this point?.

Her: oh muntuza.

Me: I want to have a future with her trust me but I am just too broken and she doesn't deserve this at all.

Her: so you are ending things?

Me: I am taking my time to heal and I hope when I am okay she and I can find our way back to each other.

Her: This is so sad.

She wipes her tears.

Me: I just pray she won't hate me.

Her: she loves you Nana and she will understand and you are right you can't give what you don't have.

Me: I am not being selfish?

Her: not at all, you are being selfless for that matter, you care for her enough not to give her your brokenness.

Me: I need healing first Siya and it's going to take me facing my demons to do so. It's hard I won't lie, I find it hard sleeping because I dream of them doing all those things to me.

Her: you are safe now and you will never go back there anymore.

Me: I know just that I still have scars that need healing.

Her: you are the most brave and strong young woman I know.

She hugs me and I also fold my arms around her.

Me: thank you for everything Siya.

•THEODORE MOKOENA

I was besides myself the whole day at work and when I spoke to him over the phone I just couldn't wait to see him, it's been so long and I am excited out of my mind. I have already called my friend from Johannesburg and he will be expecting him tomorrow and I want him to start with therapy soon, he needs help and I am happy he agreed. Soon as the school bell rang alerting that the 7hours is done I gathered my things and left. I couldn't even wait to explain to Mondli and I don't think I am going to let him know about this, I mean soon as I start telling him about my emotions and personal stuff so deep I will start being emotionally needy and what happens when he leaves me? I will be drained and I don't need that, I've been through it and it's not a nice place to find yourself in. I just need to keep my feelings to myself and remember always that he is a married man who might just up and leave once he has had enough of my sex. I have been on the road for sometime now and according to maps I am almost at the BnB. 5 more minutes I am at the

gate and I explain to the security at why I am here and one of them goes to get Mlilo from the room. My heart is racing and soon as I see him approach I quickly get out of my car and he runs to me, my tears weren't that far as the moment I see him joyful my heart was complete. I open my arms for him and he fits in properly and just cries his tears.

Me: it's all going to be okay now, I am here now.

Him: I am so glad you came.

Me: always ngwaneso. You know we've always needed a chance to get you to me.

Him: I am never going back to our parents.

Me: I wouldn't allow you to go back to that environment, they wouldn't think twice before returning you to that place.

Him: am I going with you back to your house today though?

Me: definitely, my friend will come get you tomorrow and I promise he will take good care of you.

Him: thank you for arranging everything.

Me: I just want you to have the best life.

Him: so you moved from Johannesburg I still can't believe.

Me: I can't believe it myself but I needed to track you down.

Him: so you gonna stay in that small place you spoke of?

Me: my contract was not yet permanent, the principal put me on probation first, and he was going to make me permanent after 6 months so I am going to try to get back to my old job coz you are back.

Him: please coz I never want to live far from you.

Me: will be together soon I promise.

Him: let's go take my things so I can go say bye to Lwandle.

Me: yeah let's go.

•MONDLI ZULU

I am not in the best of moods today, Theo left work before talking to me and I've been trying his phone for hours and he isn't picking up his phone, I drove to his flat and I got someone who lives there driving out and he says his car is not there, I don't think I ever felt so many emotions at once. Could it be that he is back to his games or he is cheating and for his sake I hope it's not the latter because I would lose my mind. I don't like sharing and with him I don't even want to see a man in his direction. He is mine and mine alone. Bongeka didn't cook and she did good because i don't have an appetite. A knock comes through the front door and I go open. It's Bab'Thwala, what is he doing here so late though.

Me: baba.

Him: Zulu can we have a word?

Me: please come in.

Him: where is your wife?

I narrow my eyes.

Me: she is in the lounge.

Him: let's speak outside.

He says and I start to worry now. I walk out and he buries his hands deep in his pocket.

Me: is everything okay?

Him: I am afraid not Zulu, I didn't want to tell you before I got her but my people can't find her so it's not fair keeping this from you

Me: I am not understanding.

I confess.

Him: Zulu last night I got a call from my son Banele and he told me that Gabriel had called him and he told him maZulu and the others escaped from his house after drugging them.

Me: what does he mean escaped? Lwandle is no longer at the treatment center?

Him: Don't scream we don't want to alert your wife and she starts to freak out she is already taking this whole thing hard.

Me: Why would she escape when she was getting help.

Him: we are also wondering, but we need to find her Banele is losing his mind he wants his wife home with him.

Me: I understand that Baba.

I say suppressing my anger, if I lay my hands on Nolwandle she will feel my wrath.

Him: who would she run to?

I sigh.

Me: her sister, Siya.

Him: okay okay, I will check there.

Me: don't worry baba, I will go there myself and if she is there I will bring her with me.

Him: okay then we will wait on you.

I nod and we shake hands before he leaves. I am driving to Durban right now, what nonsense is this.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 47

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

I am just happy that Fire reconnected with his brother and soon he will also get the help he truly needs to get over the trauma they went through at that so called therapy. Lwandle seems to be in the right path but it hurts that she has to let go of her girlfriend but she made valid points and it makes me proud as a sister that she is not selfish to offer her broken self to someone until she has healed and I for one have learned a lesson from her and I bow down to her courage of protecting Indigo I just pray

she sees this for exactly what it is and not as a sign that muntuza never loved her or she was never lesbian to begin with. I wipe the last plate dry and run the water in the sink out, my kitchen is clean so I can go sit with my dearest husband now. He has the channel on Super Sports 3, I roll my eyes and he chuckles.

Him: you don't have to do that babe I was going to move the channel to Isibaya woman.

He says and I take a seat next to him and relax.

Me: it's okay you have 5 more minutes.

Him: how is Lwa?

Me: she is not okay babe but she has opened up herself to getting help and i honestly think she likes Dr. Roberts her therapist.

Him: oh that is great babe, when will she be discharged again?

Me: I am getting her tomorrow.

Him: I was thinking that she should go to Richards Bay like we had planned.

Me: she needs close watching babe you know after the suicide attempt.

He sighs and nods.

Him: I understand but your father is going to suspect that she is here baby and with that protection order it's going to be a sticky situation for us.

I was about to answer when a loud bang hits our door and the person walks in before we could even say anything. It's my father. It hasn't been a minute since Bongani mentioned him and here he is barging in here like he owns the place, the fuck?

Me: how did you get in? Our gate is locked.

Baba: give me my daughter Siya.

Me: what?! What are you talking about?

Baba: don't play stupid with me Siyamthanda!

He says making his way towards me and my husband steps in front of me.

Him: Bab'Zulu have you forgotten the protection order? It states that my wife should stay away

from you and she has been, you are the one here provoking her.

Bongani says calmly.

Baba: I don't care about that just give me my daughter.

Him: Baba we don't have Nolwandle here please leave.

Me: you know what love let him go feed his eyes. Go ahead look for her even in the closet go ahead Zulu man yerrrr.

I yell trying to sell our story of not knowing where muntuza is. I know my father is "Thomas" to him seeing is believing.

He looks at me intensely searching for the truth deep in my eyes but I stuck to my act, I had to protect my sister at all costs.

Baba: well you better call me immediately if she reaches out coz if you don't tell me and keep her here I will make sure you rot in jail for kidnapping of a minor.

He threatens me before walking right out the same door he burst open without permission. I look at my husband with the "you were right" look

•THEODORE MOKOENA

I really can't believe my brother is here with me and it feels like I shouldn't be far from him so I can shield him always but he really needs psychological help and I can't offer him that myself so knowing that he will be receiving the help he needs will makes me feel better and after all I will be returning to Jozi myself coz I am definitely not renewing my contract here, I am tired of eating KFC and having no decent place to go party. I miss my city life but if it were up to me I would take Mondli with me as the man in Jozi are just pure evil shame but Earth to me HE IS MARRIED. We got in earlier on and I made sure to buy something appetizing to eat at some mall in Durban and of course I

didn't forget my bottle of vodka, Fire and I will be up most night talking and talking and I am going to need the power of the beverage to keep me up but I swear I am going to regret not sleeping tomorrow at work but it's all worth it. He walks back in my bedroom from taking a shower and he has a smirk on.

Me: whaaaaaat?

I say sitting straight.

Him: whose underwear is in the bathroom.

Me: obviously mine.

I say rolling my eye but he shakes his head.

Him: you have never been a parachute type of guy, those are grandpa undies.

I burst out laughing coz I remember I made a mental note to buy that man nice boxer briefs because huuuuu those full trunks make him look like a little boy who is being taught how to pee on his own, you know the transition from a nappy to an undies?

Me: well you are right it's not mine little brother.

Him: you have a boyfriend?

He asks sitting and crossing his legs.

Me: sort of.

I sigh

Him: it's either y'all together or not.

Me: I really really like that old man Fire but it's really complicated.

I admit and he leans in.

Him: is he an after 9?

Me: that's the thing with him, I truly believe that he is gay just haven't had the chance to be himself. I am his first boyfriend coz he is married.

Him: I just feel sorry for the wife for being stuck in a marriage with a man who simply wants another man but Theo what I went through at that hell hole proved that life is short and anything can happen, I have learnt that we should cease the moment and choose

everything that makes you happy. Instant gratification is the new norm.

Me: I hear you but I feel like he is not feeling me the same, I mean he might just be enjoying the experience but I doubt that he would leave his wife for me, he has built his life the way society wants him to and he has grown in it you know.

Him: you making sense but it's just assumptions so just go on with the flow and enjoy each and every moment you have with him, it's not everyday a gay guy is genuinely happy in a relationship so just flow with it and if you die you die simple.

I smile and raise my glass.

Me: you are definitely right hey. If I die I die.

Him: so tell me more about your sugar daddy.

Me: let me rather show you our escapades.

I say going to my gallery and then to our videos folder. I hand him the phone and wait patiently for a comment.

Him: he is definitely not what I had imagined hey. I pictured him with a pot belly, brentwood trousers and glasses.

I give him a look and he laughs

Me: definitely not, he is a looker uBae.

Him: but Theo why are you making this poor old timer to smoke hubbly.

I smile.

Me: boyfie does whatever I want him to, it's always fun when he is around here.

Him: and I am going to sleep on the same bed you do the nasty nasty.

Me: you ate from the same kitchen counter we've done it on mos so you late.

I say joking but he stands up attempting to vomiting and I burst out laughing. He runs out I assume to the bathroom and I am still dying with laughter a minute later he walks back in with a sour look.

Him: are you serious?

Me: you are so dramatic yoh, I am just kidding I promise you.

I assure him and he clicks his tongue as I prepare to talk about more serious stuff, oh but that was a good laugh.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

It's time I spoke to Indigo now and tell her what I've decided on, it's not fair that I keep her hanging like this wondering what is going on with me but most importantly with our relationship. I am sitting on my hospital bed waiting to drink my meds before I go to sleep. I like nightshift nurses they are the sweetest you'd swear they are not about to spend the whole night with their eyes wide open. The door opens and a nurse I have grown fond of walks in with her ever so beautiful smile, these are the people who knew the specs of this profession I swear, she is never rude or cranky like others who did nursing to just be employed.

Her: Lwandle.

Me: nurse Thathi.

Her: feeling good?

Me: 100% I can't wait to be out of here.

Her: oh I thought you liked your stay with us.

Me: no offense but this is no 5 star hotel.

She laughs.

Her: you got that right. Here take your meds.

She says handing them to me with water and I gulp them down.

Me: thank you.

Her: okay good night then I'll see you in the morning before I knock off.

Me: can I ask for a huge favour.

I say hoping that I'm not overstepping it.

Her: okay?

Me: can I please use your phone to make a call, I'll replace your airtime.

She nods and takes it out of her pocket and hands it to me.

Her: here you go, I'll get it when I'm done with my rounds.

Me: okay and the pin?

Her: it has non.

She says before walking out and closing the door behind her. I take a moment to fully be and stand by my decision as much as it hurt. I dial her number and she answers making my heart beat a little extra more.

Her: Indi here.

Her voice comes through the gadget connecting us. I try to talk but I have this huge lump on my throat.

Her: anybody there?

She says sounding annoyed so I quickly clear my throat.

Me: Indigo.

Her: Ocean baby?

Me: hey.

Her: fuck it feels good hearing from you. Baby I am so sorry for how I acted that time. I was a fool and i want you to know that I love you so much and I am sorry from the bottom of my heart and I am here for you babe.

He says in a hurry and I can't help but let my tears fall.

Me: I understand why you reacted that way. I am really sorry I didn't sleep with him because I wanted to but my body needed it Indi, those people fed me things to make me want to sleep with him, I should have explained better that day but I've been through hell my head isn't in the right frame of mind and I'm sorry for that.

Her: it's okay my love you don't have to apologise, I am coming to see you this weekend.

She says and my heart breaks further. How do I do this? How do I shutter her like this? I don't want to do this but I need to for both our sakes.

Her: baby are you still there?

She says drawing me back from my thoughts.

Me: I am sorry. I am here.

Her: are you okay?

Me: no I am far from that hence I am about to do this, please don't hate me Indigo, I need this and with time you'll understand why I am doing this, but please don't hate me.

Her: I could never hate you baby.

She assures me.

Me: I care for you deeply but at this point in my life I am in a deep dark pit and I am suffocating And I am the only who can help myself out, I'm scarred and at this point in time I don't love myself I am not happy with where I am emotionally, mentally and spiritually. I need time to find myself again.

I force the words out my mouth before I take a breathe.

Her: I will help you every step of the way baby.

Me: that's the thing, I don't want to be that selfish and expose you to the person I am now.

I am not who you met a few months ago and I want to be that girl again. I don't want you to have a broken version of myself please Indi, allow me heal and I hope when I am okay we can find our way back to each other.

Her: no no no Ocean no please no.

She begs and I close my eyes

Me: I don't want this too.

Her: then don't do it please.

Me: I really need to Indi, I was in hell and I didn't come back with just a demon I came back with legions.

I admit and she sniffs

Her: Lwandle please at least let's meet and talk face to face.

Me: that will only make it harder. I am so sorry Indigo.

Her: baby please.

Me: I have to go now, always know that I care for you so deeply and I pray our paths cross again in the future.

Her: I love you so much don't do this please.

Me: you have shown me how beautiful life can be when you are true to yourself. I am very grateful and I will never forget you in my existence. I love you and take care.

I say and hang up the phone feeling like my already threaded heart is being ripped out of my chest. This was more harder and painful than I thought. She calls back and I am tempted to pick up and say I was just joking but I just can't, I am dead inside and before I can love and accept myself with the scars of what I've survived I can't be with her. I block her number so she doesn't go through anymore and bother nurse Thati.

•MONDLI ZULU

I didn't go to work today because I needed to talk to bab'Thwala and tell him that Lwandle wasn't at Siya's place, I would've known if she was lying in my face but I looked her deep in the eye and she was telling the truth, Lwandle wasn't at her house and she hasn't made contact. I just wonder where she could have ran to, Bongeka shouldn't know of this as yet because she would be out the door faster than I can spell DIVORCE, I mean she is still in our house and married to me because she desperately wants to protect Lwandle, I need her in check till I am placed as an elder. I park outside the pastor's home and my cellphone rings it's Theo, I feel my blood boil after his phone was off the whole night he only gets back to me now. I will deal with him after my meeting here. I get out the car and go inside, I knock and their helper is the one who opens and tells me to find the pastor in his study. As soon as I walk in he stands up.

Him: tell me you found her.

I sigh and shake my head no.

Me: I am sorry baba but she isn't in Durban.

Him: are you sure?

Me: one hundred and one percent sure baba.

Banele. What?! if she isn't there then where is she?

He roars and I look around wondering where he is until my eyes land on the cellphone on the desk, I wasn't aware they were on a call and it's on speaker.

Him: Banele! Calm down son.

His father says.

Banele: that's going to prove difficult because my wife is missing, anything could have happened to her. I will be calm once she is found and here with me.

Me: you have a point with the rate woman and children disappear and die it's alarming.

Him: God forbid, my daughter in-law is safe and she will be home and safe with you just be hopeful and pray.

The pastor says.

Banele: you know what baba tell that fucker Gabriel to organize photos of the other 3 she escaped with. I am going to put it out there in the press with a reward and we will surely find her, once they spot either one of them the person will lead me to Lwandle should she be not spotted first.

Me: that's very clever, it will definitely work.

Banele: Bab'Zulu please find me a picture of Lwandle and send it to me ASAP.

Me: okay.

Him: okay I will also contact Gabriel son.

Banele: okay then, let me contact th press so long.

He hangs up.

Him: I am sorry for his behavior.

His father says.

Me: it's okay baba, he is stressed out just like any loving husband would.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I don't know what to do with myself, to say I am losing my mind would be an understatement, I can't believe she ended things just like that, over the phone even. I understand that I acted like an asshole but I promise it will never happen again, I will never turn my back on her again when she needs me. I will never again I promise just one more chance that's all I am asking for and I will be the best girlfriend ever. I didn't go to work because my head is all over the place and those machineries would have surely given me serious injuries. A knock comes through my door it's either my mom or Phiwe, they both are trying to find out what's wrong with me since I didn't go to work and I won't come out of my room.

Phiwe: I swear Indigo I will break down this door.

He threatens and I ignore him as I did from earlier this morning but a kick to my door makes me jump from my bed and I go open for him.

Me: chill out.

Phiwe: what the fuck is wrong with you? You didn't go to work and you are just closing yourself in here like you are suicidal.

Me: dying wouldn't be such a bad idea.

Phiwe: fuck you Indi man. What's wrong malumes.

Me: she called me last night and she dumped me, she said a lot of things of which I am trying to make sense of.

Phiwe: no man no.

Me: well yes, I tried to call the number she called me from but it's blocked and so is her sisters number.

Phiwe: aahhh hade poi (sorry boy).

Me: I don't know how I'm feeling honestly.

Phiwe: this is hectic, at least she could have done it face to face.

Me: exactly, I wanted to drive to Durban but I can't concentrate i can't risk an accident.

Phiwe: let me drive you now.

I quickly look back at him.

Me: you wouldn't mind mfethu?

Phiwe: get ready.

I sigh in relief and attempt to walk to get fresh clothes when my phone rings, I frown but pick it up quickly as I see it's Siya.

Me: Siya can I please talk to her.

Her: she tells me you guys spoke last night.

Me: she ended things Siya but I am not having it, I am coming there to talk.

Her: don't bother Indi, she won't see you plus she is leaving Durban in an hour.

Me: where is she going? What's going on Siya?

Her: I am sorry for the pain this is causing you Indigo but she is doing this to protect you, you might not understand and it won't make sense for now but some day it will. She is not okay at all.

Me: just tell me where she is I want to talk to her.

Her: I can't, but just know that she will be receiving the help that she needs and maybe when she is okay you guys will find your way back to each other.

Me: I can help her through this, I know I can.

Her: what they did to her is beyond what you and I can understand. They messed her up in all ways possible and we can't help her and trust me it's killing me too but we can just support her and make this journey of healing and self discovery for her easy. She will never be same again but she will come back a better version of herself.

She says and I wish I knew exactly what those people did to her so I can fully understand the depth of her pain.

Me: just tell her I love her so much.

Her: I will and take care now.

She hangs up and I break down right in front of my cousin. I never thought I'd short live my time with the love of my life. This is heartbreaking.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 48

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I still can't believe what my life has turned into, it's crazy how things can change so drastically within a few weeks and you find yourself stuck in the Cross road with everything as ambiguous as they can be. I just wish I can sleep and when

I wake up it's months later and everything is looking up for me. I mean a month or two ago I was just a 17 year old girl doing her matric with dreams so big they got me so excited but look at me now, I am pregnant, confused and moving away from my sister as my monster father has started suspecting that I might be with her so to save myself I have to move away. I am moving to bhut'Bongani's cousin in Richards Bay and I will remain there until I am 18 years and my father doesn't have any hold on me since I'll be an adult officially and that's in 4 months, I can't wait because it means I will stop running. My therapy sessions with Dr Roberts will continue via video chats and i am just happy I don't have to change therapists. I am in the back of the car my sister and her husband in the front driving me to my new home of which I pray becomes my peace in a way.

Siya: oh my God.

My sister exclaims

Bongs: what's wrong babe.

Siya: I can't believe they took it this far.

Bongs: who babe what's going on?

Me: sisi what's wrong?

Siya: your pictures are trending on social media muntuza, they are saying you are missing and any information on the 4 of you would be appreciated, there is even a reward.

Me: what no Siya no.

I cry coz this will just make everything harder for me, I won't be able to move about freely because I will have a price tag.

Siya: They saying your distraught husband would appreciate their help, why are they so desperate for this marriage.

Me: can't I catch a break now I will have bounty hunters after me.

Bongs: don't worry nana my cousin will look out for you.

Me: I am going to have to stay indoors too.

Siya: please do muntuza please.

Bongs: but wait did you say 4 pictures? It was only the three of them.

Me: that's true it was just the three of us, who's the fourth?

Siya: A Zanda, do you know her?

Me: yes but she didn't escape with us, we ran as she was having sex with Gabriel.

Bongs: why would they lie like that though.

Siya: what if they did something to the poor girl.

Me: oh my God Siya, I sent Dina the pictures of Gab and Zanda what if she found them in bed and killed her?

Bongs: oh fuck. Makes sense why they would say she escaped with you.

Me: I can't let them get away with this and I can't allow myself and others to live in fear of being found and returned to that hell hole.

Siya: what are you thinking?

Me: I want to make a video telling the people that I am fine and they shouldn't look for me and tell them we didn't run with Zanda, explain that she was having an affair with Gab and she is probably buried somewhere like a dog plus they have a huge yard far from other houses. I will upload it on Twitter.

Bongs: that's a good idea.

Siya: baba and the Thwala's will trace the tweet Lwa.

Bongs: not if other people post the video and we ask them to tag South African Police Services.

Siya: makes sense in that way. Are you sure Lwa?

Me: I need to do this. Bhut'Bongani please stop so we can record.

He slows down and parks on the side.

•THEODORE MOKOENA

My brother arrived safely in Johannesburg and he assured me that he will be okay, he said he likes the flat and he will be starting with therapy in a day. I am just happy that things will finally look up for him. On the other hand Mondli has been avoiding me and I know he is mad at me and I will explain when I see him coz he didn't come to work today. I just finished preparing a hearty meal and I popped two bottles of dry red in the fridge so I'll enjoy with my meal. My phone rings as I take off my clothes, I sigh and pick it.

Me: Baby, Zulu waka.

I say trying to disarm him.

Him: open the gate Theo I am outside.

He says with a serious tone I sigh and go appear by the balcony and press my remote, the gate slides open. I take off my clothes quickly and I am left in my underwear. I quickly pour myself a glass and go pose on the couch.

He walks in a minute later looking like he is about to kill me. I stand up and go to hug him.

Me: I missed you so much.

Him: are you cheating on me?

He asks and I am shocked.

Me: no never I am only with you, why would you think that?

Him: why weren't you answering my calls yesterday?

Me: I had a long day baby I came here slept and then I took a drive you know the stress of my brother.

I lie and he looks at me with intensely.

Him: why didn't you at least tell me you needed a minute, I thought you were going back to your old games.

Me: I could never and I won't cheat on you I promise even though you have a wife.

Him: stop that you know I love you Theo, Bongeka is just what I thought I needed to be.

Me: you love me?

Him: why do you sound suprised?

Me: I just thought this was just sex and fun for you.

Him: never I love you I thought you already saw that I do, I mean I came here ready to kill you but seeing you I got tamed.

I giggle and kiss him. I won't lie it feels good knowing he feels this way, the is hope after all.

Me: so there is a possible future for us?

Him: definitely I just need you to be patient with me.

Me: I just hope you are not selling me dreams

Him: I promise you never.

Me: sleep over then.

Him: who says I wasn't?

I smile.

Me: okay then let me go dish up for you.

He spansks me.

Him: I was hoping to eat you first.

I laugh.

Me: Zulu down boy.

I say amused and he just pulls me to the bedroom.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

My dearest husband hasn't been home in days and he hasn't even cared to call me to check on how I am doing. I don't know what's wrong with Banele but he needs to snap out of it and soon, I can't lose him not after everything I went through to get him and to get to this point. I am definitely not leaving my marriage and going back home to be the laughing stock, already some people hate me because of how I got Banele and they will be quick to make my situation their entertainment. I tried talking to his mom about this whole thing but that woman told me to be grateful that he isn't here and she told

me straight that I should be out of Banele's face when he comes home. With what she said I can only believe it has something to do with Lwandle, he only loses his mind like that when it has anything to do with that annoying bitch, Nolwandle is like a cat with nine lives I can't get rid of her. I settle on the couch and check my Facebook account, I reply to the comments on the picture I posted of myself looking like nothing they know back home. They would pass me in the streets that's how much I've transformed. I come across a video of Lwandle and watch it to the end, it has hundreds of thousands of shares and I am shocked as to what she had to say but I am rejoicing because she doesn't want to be found she will let me have my husband in peace and I didn't even have to lift a finger. The door opens and a second later Banele walks in whistling a Melody.

Me: hey baby.

Him: Zipho.

Me: I've missed you love.

Him: listen Lwandle will be home soon so make sure that this house is ready for her.

I raise an eyebrow.

Me: is it?

Him: yes I put out a reward for people to help me find her. It's a lot of money and they will hunt to find her.

Me: why can't you accept that she doesn't want you?

He laughs.

Him: have you accepted that I don't love you?

I swallow and laugh.

Me: well forget about your wife coming back. She is trending telling people she is not lost.

I say flashing my phone in his face and he snatches it and presses play.

"Hello everyone, my name is Nolwandle, a lesbian girl who has been through hell these passed few weeks, I was sent to a conversion therapy but the circumstances were dire we had to escape. I am not missing or anything as you can see, I am just deciding on staying away from the people who are looking for me. I have been through a lot and I would appreciate it if people ignored the missing persons report with the reward as we are all fine, but what shockes me is that they said all 4 of us escaped but in actual fact it was just the 3 of us, the other girl Zanda was completely turned so much that she started having an affair with the Pastor who headed the therapy and I believe the wife found them the night of our escape because he had took her from the bedroom we were using and went to have his way with her not caring that Zanda was suffering from Stockholm syndrome. I urge the police to go there and search for Zanda because she never left with us. Their address is"

he stops the video and throws my phone to the wall screaming and I am so scared at this point. He looks at me and he is unsure of what to do to with me so he just walks away breathing heavily.

•PASTOR GABRIEL

My household hasn't been the same ever since Dina killed Zanda. I am scared of her coz she doesn't seem like herself. We haven't even been to church ever since as she says she doesn't trust me around girls. She watches me like a hawk and I just feel like I need an out of this marriage. She isn't who I thought, she is slowly showing her true colors but I am glad it will not end up with me buried somewhere in the yard like a dog too because now I know what she is about. A knock comes through the door and she looks at me and back at the TV. I sigh and go open. I don't think I ever seen so many cops. Some are already looking around

our yard, I am so scared, my mouth has gone dry.

Police: we have a warrant to search your home.

I clear my throat.

Me: what for?

Police: read the document sir.

They push me to the side and flood my home going to different rooms.

Me: what are you looking for?

I ask but they just ignore me completely.

Dina: what are you people doing here, you don't have a right to barge here and start going through our things.

Police: the courts gave us the right.

For the first time since all this started I see fear all over my wife's face. I am standing outside our bedroom door and I see the other cop closing the curtain so it's darker and puts on a torch that lights blue, they start on the floor but

it's clear they don't find anything until they move to the headboard and the wall.

Police2: I have blood in here.

He shouts at the top of his lungs and Dina attempts to run but the two cops in the lounge catch her before she can even get to the kitchen door.

Police3: okay take samples and we will take it to the lab soon.

Dina: leave me alone!

She screams like a crazy woman.

Me: just calm down

Police1: if you don't tell us whose blood that is then you are making everything harder for yourselves.

I am scared and I am not about to go to prison for something I didn't do. I attempt to say something but that earns me a kick in the nuts but it's not so bad.

Dina: shut the fuck up.

Me: No Dina, I am not a murderer like you, I can't sleep at night the horrific thing you did to that girl haunts me to date.

Her: you fool after everything I did, I got rid of my parents so you can get their church. They didn't see you worthy for me but I loved you enough to fight now you want to do me this way.

Me: I never asked you to do that.

She laughs like a psycho.

Police1: save yourself man, whose blood is that?

I let my tears fall, I am so scared.

Police1: we will tell the prosecution of your participation I promise.

It's now or never I can't continue keeping this secret, it's too heavy.

Me: it's Zanda's, my wife found us in bed and she butchered her to death and we buried her outside.

Police3: and what did she mean got rid of her parents?

Me: I don't know I swear.

Police2: it's clear she killed them too.

Police: take them to the station and bring equipments for us to detect if she didn't bury two more bodies. Sir show us where you buried Zanda.

I nod as the other cop cuffs us while reading us our rights. Dina is kicking and screaming and I don't know why but I feel a sense of relief, I don't have to carry this secret anymore. I don't have to live this life any longer.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 49

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I arrived in Richards Bay a few hours ago and bhut'Bongani's cousin was not yet back from work but she left the house key under the door mat. My sister and her husband couldn't stay long as they had to drive back coz it was already late, plus they were both tired coming from work, though it took me 30 minutes to assure them that I will be fine waiting on the cousin alone. I think they are still scared from my suicide attempt they probably think I'll try it again but I won't I am getting help now and with time I'll be okay. This house is cosy nothing too big or too small. It's a 3 bedroom, bathroom and open plan lounge and kitchen. I am sitting in the lounge alone and I can hear myself breathing, i didn't want to be forward and start switching on things without permission. I don't have a phone yet so I can't even browse through social media just to keep busy. The kitchen door opens and a pregnant lady walks in holding another baby who seems to be asleep, that one is around 4/5. I quickly stand up and she smiles at me and hurries to one of the bedrooms, I start

feeling out of place wondering whether to sit down or just wait for her, she walks back in after a few minutes while I am still debating with myself.

Her: hey Lwandle.

She says coming towards me arms open and I return it calming down.

Me: hello.

Her: I am sorry for just walking past you like that. I just wanted to put my son down, he is heavy that one.

Me: I understand.

Her: why are you sitting in silence like this?
Weren't you bored?

Me: no I didn't want to be rude.

Her: oh no please feel at home love, you are not a guest here okay?

Me: thanks I'll remember that.

Her: my name is Brenda, I am Bongani's cousin.

She introduces herself but Siya had already told me.

Me: thank you so much for welcoming me into your home I really appreciate it.

Her: it's okay sweetheart. Just focus on getting better okay?

I nod.

Me: okay.

Her: so I work 6 days a week, my son stays at his father's sister while I am at work I only pick him up later when I knock off. You will be alone most of the day.

Me: understood.

Her: eat anything you want, watch the TV just be free and comfortable.

Me: understood, so what's your son's name?

Her: his name is Nhlakanipho but we call Nipho, warning though he has a mouth of an elder.

I giggle and she smiles.

Me: kids ne.

Her: the biggest blessings ever.

She says and my mind quickly goes to the child growing inside of me. I close my eyes thinking about this whole thing.

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

I feel so bad that I shipped my sister to someone else in a time where she needs to be surrounded by the ones she loves, she needs all the support she can get but that's something we don't have a luxury of at the moment because my father will find her and shove her back to Banele and I will land in jail since there is a protection order so this is the best option until she is 18 years and is legally deemed an adult by law and my father can't force her into anything she doesn't want.

Him: she is going to come back baby this is not forever.

My husband says and I glance at him with a smile.

Me: I know I just feel bad you know.

Him: I understand but she is in good hands.

Me: yeah I trust Brenda.

Him: and you will be talking to her everyday.

Me: speaking of which I need to send her some money to buy a new phone.

Him: I'll ask Brenda for her account details so we can deposit it there.

Me: alot still needs to be done hey, I need to help her get a new ID and everything coz she is not setting foot back at that hell hole so long as my father is alive.

Him: I am still trying to figure out why your father is like this really.

Me: he is evil baby it's really that simple. Don't crack your skull trying to understand him.

Him: have you spoke to your mom?

Me: that one nje ai, the is no hope for her Bongani. Nothing will ever make my mother leave that man I promise you.

Him: this is sad really.

I roll my eyes.

Me: not really love, mama is an educated woman who makes her own money she could easily get out of that toxic loveless marriage.

Him: I understand your frustrations babe but we can never really fully understand what your mom is going through.

Me: ai man love.

Him: at the end of the day Siya, only the pot knows how hot the fire is.

I look outside the window failing to sympathize with my mother. All I know is that woman failed us as her children, she let Zulu do as he pleases and she has never even once try to stand up for us.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

...(Why?)

Why you wanna do this to me?

(We)

We were supposed to get married

Did you ever stop to think at all

This will tear a hole in me

Did you ever even care at all

That I'd be questioning

(Will I ever love again?)

Will I ever love again?

(Will I ever trust again?)

Will I ever trust again?

(Will I ever feel again?)

The kinda of love that I felt for her

Until then I'll just be a broken man...

Anthony Hamilton's Broken man bursts through the headsets I have in my ears as I feel the pain of loosing Ocean hit the deepest parts of my soul. My first real love gave me the most horrific heart break, I knew it wasn't going to be easy but I didn't think we were going to part ways like this. We haven't had enough time to be happy freely and what if we never do? The thought of this alone leaves me with a bitter taste in my mouth. My song stops playing and my ring tone comes to life. I sigh and look at my screen, it's Bridget eish if I ignore her she will continue to call,. This girl is persistent so I might as well.

Me: Bree.

I say and the is loud music playing in the background.

Her: hey babe.

She shouts so I can hear her through the music.

Me: what's up?

Her: where are you?

Me: I am in my room at home.

Her: Boring just come to club Genesis it's going down.

She says and I sigh.

Me: I am really not in the mood.

Her: trust me babe you will thank me that you came.

Me: nah I'll pass.

Her: come on Indigo, don't make me party alone tu.

Me: I am going through something at the moment I need a breather.

Her: whatever it is tonight we will solve it with alcohol and tomorrow will solve it like adults.

She says and I sigh.

Her: being locked up in your room crying and stressing about it won't change the fact that it's happening, come on.

She insists and I know she is right I could use a few hours of not hosting a pity party for myself.

Me: okay I'm coming.

Her: yaaaaaaaaaasssss! Call me when you outside.

She hangs up and I get out of bed and find a proper outfit. A few minutes later I am out my bedroom door and I meet my cousin in the corridor.

Him: Bafo what's good?

Me: I am going to link up with Bridget, let's vay (go), it's gonna be lit.

He narrows his eyes.

Him: you know going to clubs with ratchet girls won't make the pain any less painful?

I roll my eyes.

Me: I know Phiwe, but I can at least just try to forget about it for a few hours can't I?

Him: do you grootman, after all we all deal with pain in different ways.

He says and I walk away before we get into an unnecessary argument.

•BANELE THWALA

The video of Nolwandle is trending and it has blocked all attempts of finding her and bringing her home, I don't know how I am going to find her and bring her home where she belongs. I just need to prove to her that being with me is not really such a bad thing, I want to prove that I am worthy of her love and I will live my life trying to make her the happiest woman to ever grace this world. I am stressing I won't lie and hurt so hurt I don't know what to do with myself. I keep on replaying our last encounter and I still can't see any sign of her not wanting me so I am struggling with why she wouldn't want to

come back to me her husband. My study door opens and Zipho walks in holding a tray of food.

Me: I am not hungry.

Her: my love you really need to eat.

Me: are you deaf?

Her: Nele please.

I sigh.

Me: you don't listen do you.

Her: you are going to starve yourself for someone who clearly doesn't love you?

She says and I close my eyes.

Me: you don't know what you are talking about so just shut up.

Her: I am tired of competing with someone who isn't here. I have proved time and time again that I love you and I want this marriage to work but you just insist on holding on to that demon that wants to be with another woman. You do not have a vagina Banele she will never want

you she will never love you. Get that through your thick skull because the faster you get on with the program the faster you can understand that I will be the only wife you will have. Get your head in order and start treating me right damn it!

She roars and I am livid at this.

Me: you harlot, who the fuck do you think you are talking to?

I say banging once on the desk and walk to her

Her: you heard me well. I am tired of this bullshit tired of you treating me like trash.

She continues talking to me like she is getting off a tree. I grab the ceramic sculpture and hit her on arm and drops the tray and screams.

Me: you will never ever talk to me like that or talk about my wife like that.

Her: I am also your wife man Nele!

She shouts louder and I just lose it. I punch her so hard on the face she falls on the plate of food and cries. I start to kick her on the ribs and

curls up to protect herself. The floor is slippery so I pull her by her leg outside my study and we are in the corridor, the small space is enough for me to kick her from wall to wall. Her screams infuriates me further. I go down and sit on top off her dropping her head a couple of time.

Her: Nele I am sorry please baby.

She begs me and I was about to give her one more blow but I hold myself and walk away shaking with anger. I've tried avoiding this but Zipho just knows how to get under my skin. Her talking like that has made me more determined to find Nolwandle and bring her home.

No edits..

Sorry for posting so late, I had pressing personal matters to attend to.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 50

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

My whole body is aching, Banele has been physical with me a couple of times but it has never been this bad, could his parents know that he is abusive? Is this why his mother told me to keep my distance when he is mad? I can barely recognize myself in the mirror, he rearranged my face and I don't think I will recover from the shock and fear he instilled in me. I should have just kept my mouth shut and let him deal with this alone and he would have eventually calmed down and realized that Nolwandle doesn't want him and he would fall back to me. Last night after he beat me up mercilessly he left and I haven't seen him since, maybe he went back to where he had been these past couple of days and for the first time I am happy for his disappearance coz I don't want him near me until I am better. My phone rings and it's a video call from Mbali. We

normally do this once a week to catch up, but with me like this how do I even explain to her and if I don't pick up she will just keep calling until she gets worried, my sister knows everything about my marriage so I should just let her see this and maybe she will tell me what to do after all she helped me bag Banele. I accept the call and her face appears on my screen and her hand moves to her mouth in shock.

Her: Zizipho what happened?

I sigh.

Me: Banele happened sisi.

Her: God Zee what did you do to him.

She asks and I laugh.

Me: why must I be the one who did anything to him?

Her: he wouldn't just beat you black and blue for nothing. So what did you do?

I can't believe Mbali is asking me what I did, so because I did something it's okay for him to beat me beyond recognition? Let me not even dwell much on it so we can stop talking about it more.

Me: Nolwandle's video made him lose his mind, I said a few things which were true and he just attacked me.

Her: hai we all saw that video, everyone is shocked I must say.

Me: hai she must just stay where she is and give Nele and I a chance to grow into each other. Without her he will realize that I am here and I have the capabilities of making him the happiest man.

Her: just learn to shut your mouth nawe, if you want Banele to find solace in you be his peace. No man wants a loud woman in his house.

Me: you are right sisi.

Her: I am going to send you a few items for you to buy then bath with them and apply them to your bruises so you heal quickly.

Me: Thanks Mbali and please don't mention this to our parents.

Her: never babe don't worry. Just take care of yourself and close your big mouth and you'll be fine. You have been friends with Lwa for the longest time and you surely know how she behaves try to mimic her and how she does things until he sees her in you and in that way he will fall for you.

I nod in agreement as I said Mbali would know what I should do.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

Last night was mad fun, It always is with Bridget around, she is carefree and lives in the moment, the perfect person to have around me so I don't die in the pain of loosing Lwandle. We went in too hard and her place was closer to the club so we came back here together, once thing led to the other and we ended up sleeping together. She is more experienced than Lwa so

we went all the way but I honestly feel bad for doing it, even though she broke up with me I feel like I am cheating on her and I also didn't want to cross the line with Bridget, sex complicates things and I doubt it will be any different with us. I am still at her place and she went out an hour ago to where I don't know. My phone has been ringing but I avoided it coz I know it's either my mother or Phiwe, I take it from the pedestal and it's my cousin, let me just text him so they know I am safe.

Slept at Bridget's, was too lit to drive all the way. Responsible man here, check you later

I send and at the same time the bedroom door opens and she walks in wearing one of the shortest dresses she owns, she has a banging body so why not.

Her: hey babe.

Me: Bridget.

She frowns and I sigh.

Her: so formal after our steamy sessions.

I close my eyes.

Me: eish about that.

Her: listen here you got skills I think you just made my bisexual ass lesbo straight up.

I chuckle shaking my head.

Me: we shouldn't have though.

Her: why? Because you have a girlfriend?

She says rolling her eyes.

Me: because we are friends and this will just complicate things for us.

Her: I'm sure you've heard of friends with benefits and it will only be awkward if we allow it to, it's just sex Indigo.

She says casually and rub my forehead.

Me: you are bound to catch feelings at some point, I mean look at me.

He says and she burst out laughing.

Her: oh wow keep calling yourself and see you be the one asking me to marry you.

Me: mxm tell me you brought food.

Her: yes I did but I regret it coz I figured we could go out to eat and have a few drinks also to get rid of the babi (hangover).

Me: yeah eish coz it's too bad.

Her: but quick question.

Me: shoot.

Her: you said we shouldn't have been sexual and I asked if it's because of your girlfriend but you bypassed it and said because we friends, what's up trouble in paradise?

I exhale sharply and look at her.

Me: you don't miss much ne?

Her: not when something can benefit me nope.

Me: well she broke up with me.

Her: TF! Is she out of her mind?

Me: no she is just going through a tough time right now, I wish she would let me be there for her though. I love that girl Bree and I going crazy.

Her: arg shame.

She says and it's clear she has heard enough and she is cutting the conversation.

•MONDLI ZULU

I am loosing my balance now, I thought I had things under control but Nolwandle always has to be the reason why I am derailed from my plans, the video she posted of herself saying all those things has not only made it harder for us to find her but it has made me the center of attention around here, people now know of our business and they are starting to gossip and talk behind my back and I hate every minute of it. I am known to be a firm parent but Lwandle just made people question that, how will they respect me as an elder when I've failed to get

my house in order. This matter needs my undivided attention but with Theo in the picture I can't because he also wants me around and I can't neglect him, if I do he will just rebel and go back to playing those silly games of ignoring me and that would just send me straight to an asylum. The last thing I need right now is Theodore moving to some other man because I have fallen in love deeply with that boy.

Being around Bongeka now is more depressing that it was when my father told me I'd be marrying her all those years ago. I am back to feeling trapped and I want out more than ever but without her I can't have the position in the church, I just wish I could let go of all these church things and go far away with Theo but my father will haunt me harder than he already has for not fulfilling his and his father before himself life long dream of having a Zulu as an elder in the church, that was one thing he made sure to imprint in me so hard to make it hard for me to want to not see it through. I am sitting with

Bongeka watching some church channel I have grown to hate, Theo would be making us listen to music or watch movies and I enjoy that so much. My phone rings and it's him, I look at my wife who is looking back at me. I sigh and stand up to answer my phone outside, I've never done this before but then again everything has changed.

Me: Theo.

Him: Baby.

I won't lie he makes me feel somehow when he calls me like that.

Me: are you okay?

Him: you left me so early I just miss you. I hate it when you are not here.

Me: I know trust me I want to be there with you too.

Him: then what's stopping you from coming back?

Me: I just need to take care of a few things first and I promise I'll make it up to you.

Him: you can only make it up to me if you spend a whole week here.

I chuckle.

Me: okay that won't be a problem.

Her: greet wifey for me.

Me: ai suka, ngiyak'thanda yezwa (I love you okay).

Her: I love you too.

Who said man like me don't blush?

Me: okay I'll call you later.

•BANELE THWALA

I was so mad last I needed to get away from Zipho far away so I wouldn't be tempted to go back and give her more, I don't know how to get rid of that girl and for good at that. I drove and drove until I found myself outside my parents

house. It was already after midnight and everyone was asleep so I used my own key to get in and I went straight to bed, though I failed sleeping instantly I just kept on looking at the video of her that is trending all over social media. Yes I hated the message of the video but the sound of her voice was enough to make me calm down and fall asleep and if that's not proof enough of how much I need Lwandle then I don't know. My bedroom door opens and ma walks in.

Ma: I knew I heard the garage and front door open but your father insisted that I am just being paranoid.

Me: hey mama.

Ma: Nele, why did you come in like a thief in the night?

Me: I just needed to get away from Zipho.

Ma: I told her to give you your space.

Me: clearly she didn't listen to you coz she just kept on pushing and pushing, shoving all the things Lwandle was saying on that video in my face.

Ma: just tell me you didn't lose it like that.

I close my eyes hating that I going to disappoint my parents once again.

Me: I am sorry mama I just couldn't help myself, I got so angry I lost it, but I stopped before it got bad.

Ma: Oh Nele.

Me: I am sorry mama.

Ma: your father mustn't hear of this, he meant it when he said that Bridget girl was the last mess he cleaned up.

Me: I know mama. I'm trying to be better I want to stop being this impulsive but I can't I need Lwandle ma.

Ma: I know you do but you need to keep it together until she is found and you can prove

your love to her and make her realize that you two are meant to be.

Me: but she doesn't want to be found.

Ma: it's clear she went through a lot at that place after all we trusted her life in the hands of murderers and rapists, maybe she doesn't trust us to have her best interest at heart. She will come around I promise you.

Me: I love that girl ma.

Ma: and she loves you proof is the bloody sheets you came home with after she gave you her husband her purity.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I still have the nightmares but they are not as hectic as before, Dr Roberts said it will take a while till they are completely gone but since dreams come from a unconscious mind I should limit thinking of that hell hole and myself as a prisoner but I should remind myself that I am

free and I am a survivor. I am not completely comfortable being here but Brenda seems to be a lovely lady and all but having her child around and seeing how happy she is with the one on the way makes me feel so guilty for I am pregnant but want nothing to do with my child, I feel like a terrible human being but the circumstances are just not allowing me to be happy with the life growing inside me. I have already hindered my progress by incubating the foetus inside of me to allow it to have a chance to live with people who have prayed and who will love him/her beyond everything, so this has to count for something and make me better right? But why doesn't it? Why am I still feeling like this? I shake my head to rid myself of these depressing thoughts, I hate being all alone for this reason, being lost in my train of thoughts is not helping me but rather sets me back. The door opens and Brenda walks in alone.

Me: hey.

Her: hey doll, how are you?

Me: I am okay, wena?

Her: ngi right just had a long day yoh.

Me: where is Nipho?

Her: his aunt told me to leave him with her for a while coz I am tired, she is just a God sent I don't know what I would have done without her.

She says settling on the couch opposite me.

Me: where is their dad?

I ask and realize when she sighs deeply that I might have crossed the line.

Me: I am sorry I shouldn't have asked.

Her: no it's okay, well he is married with Nhlakanipho I didn't know until I found out I was pregnant and he told me to abort coz he wasn't going to have a bastard ruin his marriage and I almost did coz I didn't see myself raising a child on my own especially with no family coz I was disowned by my parents for refusing to marry in the church like they wanted, I was scared and I did go to the clinic but when the Dr was about

to do it I just couldn't I ran out of there so fast and that's been the best decision ever, I don't see my life without my son. Then with this one let's just say I was naive and plain stupid he came to visit his sister and I was taking Nipho there for a night coz I was going out with friends, we saw each other and he acted like he didn't know me, it hurt but I left then later on I got back here and he took the keys I leave for his sister to come take anything she needs here when I am at work, he was emotional telling me they are divorcing with the wife and he regrets what he did to me and our son and how he wants to make things right, I loved him and he was there saying all the right things to me one thing led to the other and here I am 7 months later with yet another child he told me to abort because I am just a loose woman with no morals, he used me yet again but I couldn't get rid of my child because of that, his wife doesn't know about the kids but his sister wants to tell her so badly but I told her not to.

Me: I am sorry to hear this.

Her: it's okay Lwandle, I have my own little family now and I am not alone, I get to be the parent I always wished my parents were to me. I just learnt to forgive myself for being a fool once again but this baby and his brother are my biggest motivation and my only family beside my cousin and your sister hence I choose to see the positive and live by it rather than dwelling on the negatives that will just hurt me and make me look at my children like mistakes.

Me: you are a strong woman.

Her: it really depends on how you look at it, the next person would say I am a fool for not seeing red flags and keeping a married man's children.

Me: you shouldn't care what people think.

Her: trust me I don't, if I did I wouldn't have my kids and I would still be that girl that didn't have stability.

I nod looking at this woman with pure admiration.

Me: you are doing a great job I can tell by how happy your son is.

Her: thank you doll, I try.

Me: let me get you something to drink.

Her: join me for some pregnancy yoga tomorrow, I've always wanted to go but with no partner it's just awkward.

She asks and I freeze, would I be comfortable going to a place full of pregnant woman who are happy and excited with the life they are carrying?

Me: I don't think I am ready to be out there yet with the video still doing rounds on social media, people will recognize me.

I give her an excuse.

Her: that's understandable love and oh before I forget your sister sent some money to buy you a phone. I hope you like it.

She takes it out of her bag and hands me the plastic.

Me: thank you.

I take out the box and it's a decent brand an upgrade from my last phone.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 51

5 months later

•MONDLI ZULU

The past months have been total bliss, I finally got placed as an elder at church and now I can balance my things properly, I attend church every Sunday and I am at each and every man's movement meetings and head them as their chairperson, the only thing out of place is Lwandle but it's good that the Thwala's have taken it upon themselves to look out for her as she is their daughter in law which makes her their responsibility and I am grateful they removed that burden from my shoulders, Bongeka has started asking me endless questions with regards to Nolwandle and my

answer is always the same "she is still at the therapy center because she is not responding to treatment" and I think she buys it. I spend more time in this flat with Theodore than I do at my own house but can you blame me as this is where I am at my happiest. We have been together a while now and I am content.

Him: I don't feel like cooking.

He says coming out of the bedroom drawing me back from my thoughts.

Me: the only available thing is KFC and you've made it clear that you hate it.

Him: I can't eat anymore chicken or I swear I will turn into one.

He says and I laugh.

Me: you and exaggerating hai.

Him: if you love me you'll drive me to Durban to get something decent.

Me: I'd rather not love you Theo never.

He rolls his eyes.

Him: they you'll settle for bread and butter.

Me: I'd rather. Pour me a drink and stop asking me crazy things. I watch him walk to the kitchen to mix me something then comes back and hands it to me sitting on top of me.

Him: so babe.

Me: how much Theo.

He chuckles.

Him: hao who said I wanted money?

Me: I know you phela.

Him: well sorry for you not this time around.

Me: I can breathe so what's going on?

Him: My friend and my brother in Johannesburg are hosting a braai this coming weekend and I'd like us to go.

Me: Theo you know Sundays I have church.

Him: and the church walls won't crumble down if you are not there come on now.

I sigh shaking my head.

Me: I don't know.

Him: Please Mondli, you also need to see where I am coming from, what my life is like and get a sense of where we will be living in the future.

He adds and he is right I need to also do things he loves, he already is stuck in this town that has nothing to offer like where he is originally from.

Me: okay fine.

I agree and he kisses me all over my face making me laugh.

Him: one more thing and please don't say no.

Me: you see now?

Him: please babe, I will show you my hidden talents.

He says and I laugh out loud.

Me: I am all ears.

Him: i am dressing you for the entire weekend.

Me: only that?

Him: yeah only that.

Me: okay you just no crazy colors or shorts.

He smiles.

Him: thanks baby but I am going to need your card so I can go to Durban during the week.

I roll my eyes, Theo and my card are two peas in a pod.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

Things with Bridget went from 0 to a 100 real quick, one minute we were just fucking and the next we are in a solid relationship, matching outfits with her and her daughter, picnics and theme park dates, I won't lie this isn't what I signed up for and each time I try to let her know she finds a way to get me out of the thought and it's really annoying. A few months ago all I wanted to do was to just have some harmless

fun and get over my heart break but here I am tied down playing happy family.

I am off work today and I just want to use this time to relax and have a couple of beers with Phiwe who finally moved here and got a job at one of the best automobile company, his skills got him the job but he still fixes people's cars at his own time. He is making enough to take care of himself and send my grandma and Lucy some money too. She comes here twice in a month and each time I see them together I miss Ocean so bad, I remember all the good times the four of us had together, I thought I would be over her by now but it's hard getting over her, Lwandle left a mark in my heart and my life that will be hard to remove and I will never forget her. My car drives in the yard and I shift to the side with the camp chair, the music ceases and he gets out and goes to the boot and takes out the plastics from the bottle store.

Me: I think you weren't coming back.

Him: I almost had to work double shift.

Me: my day off would've been for nothing mos.

Him: nah malumes you know I have a great boss, I told him I had other engagements so he let me go.

Me: he is a good one bosses are normally monsters.

Him: yeah and thanks for borrowing me your car.

Me: any time Grootman.

He walks in the garage and comes back with a cooler box and another camp chair.

Him: asib'shaye ntwana (let's drink).

Me: to a messy weekend.

I say already opening my beer, my phone rings and I take it out my pocket and it's Bree.

Me: yoh yoh this girl.

He laughs

Him: answer your baby mama, I told you it will get messy but wathini wena? "It's just sex".

I roll my eyes and answer.

Me: sure.

Her: oh wow, is that how you answer your girlfriend?

Me: I just woke up Bree, what's up.

Her: listen I am tied up at work and I need you to go get our daughter from school.

She says and I just want to explode.

Me: Phiwe went to work with my car.

Her: can't you request an Uber Indigo?

Me: come on Bridget just ask your mom to get her like she always does.

Her: She is suppose to sleep over at the flat coz the three of us have an outing.

Me: outing that's news to me plus I can't I am busy tomorrow.

Her: what is your problem today Indigo.

Me: listen I got to go.

I hang and Phiwe laughs.

Him: what a complicated it's just sex situation.

Me: ai Phiwe don't add to my stress please.

He laughs and gulps his drink.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I tried what Mbali suggested and took on Lwandle's personality but that seemed to get me more beatings coz since then I have been his punching bag and some days I pray to God to bring Lwandle back so it can all stop but the thought of having her in the same space will just mess it up more. It's been a few months but nothing seems to change I have even resorted to drinking alcohol so I can cope with all that's been happening here he treats me like trash and later comes to my room sleeps with me then leave me like that, I am basically his live in sex object. I have two options really, to pack my bags and go back home or to stay and fix my marriage, make this work at all costs and I am choosing the latter. I will not rest until I finally

get my home standing after all umfazi uya bekezela, our mothers did it and their homes are still standing strong years later so why would I fail. We were born for this role and no matter how hard it gets we continue soldiering on to better days. It's 19:30 and he is due home anytime now so let me just have one more drink. I go to the kitchen and take out my bottle of tequila in the sink cardboard, I drink straight from the bottle and the door opens and I freeze. He once asked me if I drink alcohol and I lied and said I have never tasted it before and this here proves otherwise.

Him: and you said you have never touched liquor.

Me: Nele welcome home love.

Him: lies are a part of your DNA I see.

Me: it's not like that I promise you.

Him: then how is it like?

Me: I just needed it to get the edge off Nele I am always stressed out.

Him: oh I'm stressing you out now?

Me: no no not at all I promise.

He nods looking at me intensely.

Him: do you see your life Zipho?

Me: what do you mean?

Him: you left school to come to my house to force yourself on me and it's months later and it hasn't happened now you are an alcoholic in the making.

He says with a distasteful tone and I look down embarrassed.

Me: Nele I.

He quickly interjects.

Him: get ready tomorrow around noon I am taking you somewhere so you'll see how useless you are.

He says and walks away leaving me there ashamed. I gulp from the bottle again and the

burning sensation on the throat makes me cringe.

—

- NOLWANDLE ZULU

Its been a few months since I escaped from that hell hole and and I sleep better at night knowing that my captors are in jail and they will never do this to another person and that justice for Zanda has been served. I turned 18 last month and that meant I am an adult now and I am free from my father, I don't have to run anymore. Siya was excited to have me back in Durban but I have grown to love Richards Bay and I just couldn't go back as yet maybe until I have given birth, speaking of which Brenda gave birth to a girl and the whole experience changed my view on life and my pregnancy. I am so in love with this child it is shocking how I went from wanting to give her away to wanting to protect her from everything and be the best mother I can be. It's

funny how priorities change and you love someone you've never even met. My daughter - I assume it's a girl- has shifted my focus and has made me realize that the both of us can grow up together. Dr Roberts says my baby has become my motivation, I now see this whole thing positively hence I am healing from the hurt so quickly and she is completely right. My Outlook on life is not the same as the 17 year Nolwandle who was a victim but I have become a young mother to be who knows that behind every dark cloud there is a silver lining, I have become an aspiring advocate for childrens Rights and the LGBTQ community. All I want to do is just get my matric then go study Social Work and offer my services to those who need them the most, I don't want to see anyone go through what I went through and it all starts by educating the larger community and address the elephant in the room. I go check on Brenda and her daughter and they are both still sleeping peacefully. I rush back to the lounge

when I hear my phone ring. I check the caller ID and it's Fire.

Me: chommie.

Him: my friendship.

Me: it's been a minute. I miss you.

Him: I miss you too babe, how is the baby.

Me: she is doing well hey, growing everyday.

Him: I am gald to hear that.

Me: how is work?

Him: I am enjoying it more and more, you know I love people and being on the phone so it's the perfect job for me.

I laugh coz he is definitely right. He is the perfect person to be working at a call center.

Me: that's very true love.

Him: I called to invite you to Johannesburg this weekend.

Me: what's happening.

Him: well we have a braai with Theo's friend, just to celebrate life and give thanks you know after what we've been through.

Me: yeah hey we have a lot to be grateful for.

Him: so what do you say?

Me: I will definitely touch down Johannesburg on Friday.

Him: yaaasssssssss friend, I am so excited. With you coming everything is perfect.

Me: will communicate throughout the week then.

Him: okay friend, will talk later then.

Me: okay bye.

We hang up and I am glad I said yes, I need to go out there and just be my age you know live again.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 52

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I woke up early to clean around the house so I can be ready at noon like he had said, I wonder where he is taking me and I won't lie i am not looking forward to it, I don't need him showing me how useless I am, he has already made me feel worthless now he wants to stamp it in my head to make me believe it. If I had a choice I wouldn't even go there but I don't want to infuriate him anymore than I already have with the alcohol saga. I finish getting ready so I move to the lounge to wait for him, it's not long until he joins me and I must say he looks good as always. I stand up and he looks at me from head to toe then sigh.

Him: I take it you are ready?

Me: yes, we can leave.

Him: let's go then.

He says leading the way.

Me: Nele where are you taking me?

Him: you'll see when we get there, don't worry it's a short trip.

He says not giving anything away. I follow behind him until we get to his car and I take my front and buckle up. The engine of his Bemeer comes to life and he drives out and we make our way to the destination. He drives out of the posh neighborhood and after a few minutes were get to another side of town, it has tall buildings I assume its flats and it's very busy and vibrant, girls my age are in beautiful outfits with long hair and they are walking in groups, I won't lie they really look nice. He drives until he stops and we get to a place called neighborgoods market, I don't think I've ever seen a place full of people, young people for that matter.

Him: what do you see?

Me: people obviously.

He chuckles.

Him: these are your age mates, from near and far. They came here to this city to attend universities and colleges, to have fun and enjoy their youth. They are chasing their dreams living their best life and what did you come here for?

I swallow and look at him without saying anything.

Him: I'll tell you then, you are here being a nuisance, trying all you can to make me fall for you. Even going as far as trying to be like Nolwandle so I can fall for you.

I gasp for air and close my eyes.

Him: what you thought I didn't notice? I pay attention to everything little girl. Look around and be inspired, see how your mates are living life while you are a 18year old wanna be house wife with no matric, goals and ambitions.

I let my tear fall as his words hit deep.

Me: Nele.

I manage to whisper but the pain that is laced in my voice doesn't shake him.

Him: see why I say you are useless? You robbed yourself off the most amazing phase in your life to become my cum dump. How sad.

He shakes his head with disgust.

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

I just got off a call with Muntuza and she was asking if I can send her a little something coz she wants to go to Johannesburg to visit Fire and I am glad that she is going to a different scenery to just get her head straight, you know being confided in one space can be hectic. I wish I could go with her but my husband and I already have plans for that weekend. My worry was her bumping into Banele and him seeing that she is pregnant then have him in her space again and make her want to give the baby up for adoption but she promised to stay inside and not move about and risk him seeing her. I

understand why she doesn't want him to know about the baby and when she is ready to let him know I will fully support her but for now we are moving at her pace to get her right. Bongani walks in from the car wash and he narrows his eyes.

Him: why are you smiling like that Siya.

I laugh

Me: is it a crime?

Him: yes because I am not the cause of that beautiful curve on your face.

I blush.

Me: oh well husband I just got off a call with Lwandle.

Him: how is she and the baby?

Me: they are very well hey, she can't stop talking about her bundle of joy.

Him: that's really great love.

Me: she is going to visit Fire this coming weekend.

Him: that's great stuff, she has been in one place long enough. It will do her some good.

Me: I thought so too.

Him: so did you talk about what's going to happen once she gives birth?.

Me: uhm not really but I am hoping she comes here so I can help her?

Him: are you emotionally ready to see your sister with a child?

I shrug my shoulders.

Me: I think so, my feelings will take a back seat because I have to be there for her.

He comes to me and envelopes his arm around me and kisses my forehead.

Him: I know it's hard baby but I need you to keep believing that our time to be parents will come. Remember dreams delayed are not dreams denied.

I sigh deeply and hold on to him.

•BONGEKA ZULU

I am up to here with Mondli now, he better tell me where my daughter is and take me to see her or I will just start singing like a canary to everyone who will listen. I will destroys his reputation and the people will see him for who he really is. It's been months and months and each time I ask he tells me that Lwandle is not responding to treatment hence she isn't being discharged. I am damn tired of just sitting by and taking all the things he tells me without requiring proof. The more time I waste sitting by I loose a chance to be a better mother and it has to come to a stop. Mondli must know that I am not going to stand by and watch him walk all over me. He thinks I am stupid and I don't see what is happening, he doesn't sleep at home for days and when he is here he is on his phone laughing and blushing, he now drinks alcohol

coz I find bottles hidden in the closet, he cares too much about his appearance it can only mean that he has stepped out of this marriage and with a younger woman for that matter because he is trying to impress her in all ways, not that I am complaining I just wish he could let me and my children go so he can enjoy with whoever the woman is, why would he want to leave a double life when it's clear that he is happy outside?. He left in a hurry this morning with a bag and I know he will be back days later and he will find me waiting to give him a piece of my mind. I have already made arrangements all I want is Lwandle and I am out of this house and this damn town.

—
•INDIGO NCQOBO

I had an amazing day with Phiwe yesterday we just had to have a repeat so we got enough beer and got some meat to braai, my darling

mother said she will make us salads, later on we are hitting the streets, he hasn't been to Club Genesis and that is a sin, you can't say you are a joburgger if you haven't been to that place. We in comfortable outfits just shorts, vests and flip flops and we are chilling at the back by the pool and braaing while smoking hubbly. I must say these vibes are always the coolest around this time, chaos is for the nightlife. My mother appears from the sliding door with a seriously pissed off face, Phiwe and I even exchange looks, I am about to ask what's wrong when Bridget and her daughter appear from behind her. My cousin laughs as I close my eyes in defeat.

Me: Bridget what are you doing here?

I ask eyeing the bags and her daughter next to her.

Her: we are here to spend some time with you babe. We missed you.

She answers and I am silently praying for the ground to open and swallow me.

Me: I didn't invite you here.

Her: Indigo do I need an invite to show up at my girlfriend's place?

Me: obviously Bree honestly this is not on.

Her: can you at least show us your room so we settle in and then we will talk about this preferably not in front of our daughter.

What the actual fuck!

Ma: Indigo a word.

My mom says in a low voice but I know she is mad as hell. I am shaking my head following my mother inside. She walks to her bedroom and I get in after her.

Me: I didn't know she would show up here.

Ma: what is going on here? When did you get into a relationship with a mannerless girl who just shows up uninvited to my house with a child I don't know and calls her your daughter.

I sigh because I don't know how to explain.

Me: ma I am sorry.

She chuckles.

Ma: where did you even pick that forward disrespectful girl from?

I stay silent coz I am embarrassed.

Ma: INDIGO!

She half shouts.

Me: I am sorry mama, let me take care of this.

Ma: I don't want her here. Get rid of her.

She says and I walk out heading back to find her already settled on the camp chairs.

Me: let's go.

Her: I hope your room is big enough. Do you have another room for our daughter to sleep in coz she can't be sharing a bed with us.

Me: you are not sleeping here. This is my mother's house and I will not disrespect her like that.

I say firm and she shoots me a serious death stare but I don't back down instead I take the bags and hold her daughter by hand before heading out. I seriously need to set the record straight.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

A week goes on by very quickly I must admit, but I am not complaining at all, I am excited to be going to Johannesburg, I miss Fire and I needed to get out of the comfort zone I've created in Richards Bay and go have some fun with my age mates. I have been sitting in this Greyhound bus for 6 hours straight and in 1 hour I'll be in Johannesburg at or atleast Google maps says so. I've already told Fire and he said he isn't too far from where the bus stops but I should tell him soon as it drives in the city so he can come get me. I watch some videos on YouTube to get the clock ticking and in no time

the bus drives in between the concrete jungle, the city that I've always wished to chase my dreams in. This place is beautiful no lie, or at least some parts of it, I send Fire a video of the bus cruising through the streets and he responds with a thumbs up. It finally gets to park station and people get out, he sees me before I see him because I hear him scream my name, I just smile and go straight to him and we share a hug.

Him: oh friend.

Me: you look amazing, I've missed you.

Him: I missed you too babe. Thank you for sitting in a bus for hours just to come see me.

Me: I am happy I did.

We let go and he looks at me from head to toe and makes me twirl.

Him: you are so beautiful, you are even glowing. This pregnancy suits you.

Me: hence I believe it's a girl.

Him: Don't start with those old wives tales
I giggle.

Me: let's leave before I see people I am not
suppose to bump into.

Him: yes let's go this way.

He takes my bag and I follow him. He looks
amazing I must say, more handsome and
classy. We cross the street and go to a car
parked, I am shocked when Paul walks out the
driver's side , remember him?.

Paul: hey Lwandle.

Me: hey you. It's good to see you.

Paul: you too, you are glowing.

Me: all thanks to the person renting my womb
I say and they giggle. I look at Fire who has a
smirk on.

Him: babe can we start somewhere to get some
food and drinks.

He asks giving him my bag to put in the boot

Paul: sure.

I quickly go near Fire.

Me: and you two?

I whisper to him

Him: I will tell you all about it when we get to the loft.

He says and I nod, impatient to know how they happened. We all get in the car and Paul drives off with me in the back admiring my surroundings.

—

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 53

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I haven't seen Bridget in a week, I am happy that her shift changed and we don't even meet up at work, she has been calling non stop and I

couldn't bring myself to answering her coz she just drains blood from my whole body. I honestly didn't appreciate what she did that day, coming to my place with her daughter knowing very well that I stay with my mother. The least she could have done was call to ask if it's okay but not Bridget I swear that one lives in her own head. My cousin made me realize that the lines are completely blurred and we are definitely not on the same page so I just got to her place and I am parking outside trying to gather some strength to go in so we can talk about this whole thing and possibly just draw back and forget about this whole thing. I get to her door and knocked and after a while she comes to open and soon as her eyes land on me she rolls them and goes back inside leaving me standing there. I sigh and walk in.

Me: hello

Her: what are you doing here?

Me: we really need to talk.

She laughs.

Her: oh now you want to talk after ignoring me flat out for a week?

She says folding her arms giving me attitude.

Me: I needed to breathe dude yoh.

Her: oh I am suffocating you now?

Me: Bridget you are moving at the speed of light, this is not what I signed up for.

Her: we are grown ups Indigo, we are bound to be in a serious relationship.

Me: a serious relationship I never wanted. I am not over Nolwandle and I doubt I'll ever be.

She gasps for air.

Her: you were using me Indi?

Me: I never used you, we said this would only be sex when it started months ago.

Her: are you doing this because we showed up at your house without telling you?

Me: my mother's house Bridget. This whole thing is out of order now really we just need to step back.

Her: you could just get your own place, I mean you are working you can afford it.

I shake my head.

Me: this was pointless.

Her: okay fine we can go back and start dating then. Take things slowly at your own pace until you reach my peak coz I am already there with you Indi, I want to go all the way.

She says calmly and I want to scream. What kind of shit did I get myself into though.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I only just woke up and it's after 10am on Saturday, Fire and I stayed up until late catching up on what's been happening on both our sides and I must admit I am happy we are

both at a better place, he is with Paul now and they are very stable, apparently before he went to the therapy he was already working and had his own place, he went to conversion therapy willingly to get help as his parents threatened to disown him if he didn't rid of the "demon", but he has clearly seen that it's all a sham and he is happy to just do this life thing with Mlilo and be his true self in the process. I had so much fun yesterday and he understood that I couldn't go out galavanting because I could bump into Indigo or Banele and I don't want to see either at least not at this point. I just can't wait to have more fun today and just laugh and let loose even though I won't be drinking like the others.

Him: oh you are awake my friend.

He asks walking in his bedroom, one he was kind enough to let me use alone as he went to share with his flat mate.

Me: yes and I slept so peacefully.

Him: I am glad to hear that my love, so do you need me to iron anything for you?

Me: yes please I am going to wear my summer dress to accommodate my tenant in here.

He laughs.

Him: okay I'll do that for you. So Mpho (flat mate) went to get us breakfast, you'll eat soon okay, I just hope you don't find anything smelling foul or what not.

Me: thank you Fire and no yaz I eat everything without a problem, she is a well behaved child.

Him: just like her mother.

I laugh

Me: I doubt my father would agree.

Him: ahhh that one yena must just go to hell and just burn to ashes. I swear I would strangle him if we ever met.

Me: you would be doing justice I swear.

He laughs.

Him: okay let's get ready people will arrive around 2pm. I just can't wait to see Theo's new bae.

Me: yeah hey the brothers found love at the same time.

He laughs and twerks in excitement and I get off the bed and make it then put everything where it belongs, I give him my dress to iron and sit down to call Siya just to let her know that we are fine.

•THEODORE MOKWENA

Let me not lie guys, it's really nice kwa Love lives here. I have been around and I've been with all sorts of guys but truth be told non of them are a match for Mondli this man is what I've been praying for and I just can't wait to have him all to myself so we can start living truthfully without hiding for the rest of our lives. We are enroute Johannesburg in his Fortuna

and I can't wait to be in my circle and for them to meet my man, I just hope they all hit it off. I know Mondli can be a bit tough but he promised to let loose and have fun. I know the question on your mind and yes, we are in matching outfits honey. He is in long black ripped pair of jeans with black spikey sneakers from a well known designer and he completes the look with a red gold t-shirt and I am in something similar with shorts though, I have a body for days and when I get a chance to show it off I don't think twice. I allowed him to choose some music today and I must admit I never thought I would enjoy some Kenny G. We are 2 hours away from our destination but it's cool even though we gonna get there an hour late coz Mlilo said they are starting at 2 but you know us mos blacks 2 is 4 so I doubt it will start at the time scheduled.

Him: you think your brother will like me?

Me: oh baby calm down I told you they are all dying to meet you.

Him: I just hope everything goes on smooth.

Me: it will just relax and have some fun with everyone outlwa.

Him: I'll try.

Me: you look amazing.

Him: I feel fresh, you must just style me once.

I smile.

Me: right call babe, you will always look dashing trust me.

Him: but not expensive clothes like these ones hai Theo we will go broke.

I burst out laughing.

Me: I will calm down, today I just wanted you to exceed everyone's expectations, they are probably thinking I'm coming with some man with a pot belly or something that wears check shirts and sharp nose shoes.

He chuckles.

Him: you are the master of exaggeration.

I roll my eyes and sip on my drink.

•BONGEKA ZULU

I couldn't stay in the house one more minute, I honestly had to go out to get some fresh air so I went to town to do some shopping and eat at the restaurant just to gather my thoughts.

People have been looking at me like I just fell from a spaceship maybe it's because I am not with Mondli coz I am forever with him when I am out even now when things haven't been the same he still insist on driving me to town to get some groceries and everything else I might need. I'm enjoying my meal when a girl I used to teach sits down. She is not a church member and last I heard she was Lwandle's friend.

What's her name again?

Her: Mrs. Zulu.

Me: can I help you

Her: my name is Lucy, you used to teach me business studies at school and I was close with Lwandle.

I nod hoping she could get to her point fast enough.

Me: okay, can I do anything for you Lucy?

Her: not to be disrespectful ma but I just wanted to know if you've tracked down Lwandle after the video?

She says and I frown.

Me: what are you talking about, what video?

She looks at me like I am some sort of foreign creature.

Her: you haven't seen the video? it was trending on social media a few months ago.

Me: I don't have social media, Lucy what was the video about?

I ask now panicking, she shakes her head and takes out her phone and navigates through it for

a while and then hands it to me. It's Lwandle, my heart starts beating so fast I swear it's going to beat out of my chest. I am watching her and listening to everything she is saying attentively. When it ends i feel broken, myself hate escalates, I have been sitting on my ass listening to Mondli make a fool out of me once again. I wipe my tears and hand Lucy back her phone, she is looking at me with pity and I hate it. I quickly get up and fix myself

Me: thank you.

I walk out boiling mad, hell hath no fury like a woman scorned and Mondli will know this. I take a taxi home and ask the driver to wait for me and when I get in I just pack my things and all important documents, I leave nothing that holds sentimental value. I take them to the car and get in but I just can't leave everything I helped him build when I am going to start afresh. We should all just start from scratch 0-0 score. I get out the car before he could start the engine. I head straight to the bedroom Lwandle used and take the gas heater and loosen the

pipe that moves gas from the cylinder to the heater and switch it on. Let this house go up in smoke like this damn marriage. The hoe he is with will help him build it all. I run back to the waiting can and get in.

Me: please take me to Durban.

He nods and sets the meter for the billing but I don't care I will pay anything so long as I am far away from here.

•MONDLI ZULU

we get to the city and Theo gives me directions to the place we are going to, this is my first time here and it's nothing I imagined, It is beautiful and everything Theo said it will be I won't lie, the cars driving around the people walking up and down it's chaos and vibrant nothing like back home where I was born and bred. Theo looks excited and you can tell he is happy to be in a place he calls home and I promise I will

bring him here frequently until we move here permanently.

Him: and we are here.

He says pointing to where I should Park.

Me: we leaving the car on the street like this?

He smiles.

Him: my brother will come sign it in with security babe.

Me: oh okay then.

I park properly and we both get out

Him: leave everything will take them out when the car is inside.

He takes my hand and we walk to the pedestrian gate, he punches the code and the gate opens.

Him: this used to be my place.

I nod and he greets almost everyone until we get to the apartment we came to, the music is bursting and I can hear people laughing inside.

He opens without knocking and screams everyone looks back at him and they scream too obviously excited to see him as he is to see them. It goes on a while and I am just standing behind them looking around the place, after eternity he pulls me to the group and introduces me to his friends after he is done it's just us and his brother.

Me: it's really nice to meet you Fire.

Fire: like wise, please treat him good.

Me: don't worry he is in good hands.

I assure him and Theo blushed next to me.

Him: Fire where is your friend kante?

Fire: relax she is here, she's just putting on her clothes.

We converse a while and Theo asks Mpho to go check in the car and drive it in. I am starting to feel comfortable, he was right they are good people and they are not in your face. I think I'm going to have a great day, I sip on the cider Fire offered me when a voice I know well speaks

behind me and I turn quickly and it's her it's my daughter Lwandle, our eyes meet and she freezes, my heart starts racing and I wish the earth could open and swallow me whole.

Fire: friend come.

He says pulling her close and Theo just gives her a warm hug, I don't know what to do with myself, it's like I am stuck to this floor.

Him: oh baby girl look at you glow. You look amazing, how have you been? How's Siya?

Theo says hugging her and I wonder how he knows my children, this is about to explode in my face.

Fire: Lwandle are you okay?

He asks finally noticing the gaze Lwandle is giving me, and Theo let's her go to attend to his brothers question.

Lwa: how do you know this man?

Fire: This is Mondli Theo's boyfriend.

She gasps for air

Leave: what? Boyfriend? Wena Bab'Zulu?

She let's her tears fall.

Me: Nolwandle

I say trying to, I don't even know what I am trying to do.

Him: okay what the hell is going on here?

Babe? Lwandle?

Me: baby i can explain but we will need to leave so it can be the two of us.

My daughter laughs

Leave: you hypocrite! After condemning me for being true you are living the very same thing you abused me for, you make me sick.

Fire: friend what's going on?

Lwa: this is Mondli Zulu my father.

They all look at me anger replacing confusion, I look at Theo and he is disgusted with me.

Him: is this true? Did you send your daughter to conversion therapy for being lesbian?

He asks and I look down embarrassed

Him: MONDLI!

He screams and now everyone is looking.

Me: I am sorry Theo I promise I can explain please.

Him: you evil man, you sent your own flesh and blood to be abused for something she never chose for herself and you are here living it with me? What kind of sick bastard are you?

Me: baby calm down please. I love you and I can explain please.

He laughs and starts loosing it. He takes empty bottles of alcohol and starts throwing them to me.

Him: fuck you and fuck your love. Leave you sick bastard, get the fuck out you devil.

He is completely crazy but I just can't leave without him, I need to explain. I can't lose Theo like this no.

Me: Theodore please.

Him: look at your daughter see the damage you've done.

He says trying to break free from the hold of his friend. I look at Lwandle who is looking at me with hate and anger tears streaming down her face. I notice her pregnant belly and I close my eyes.

Him: Get the fuck out.

He continues to scream through his own tears too.

Fire: you should leave you are not welcomed here.

He says pushing me to leave and I just want to take Theo and make him hear me, we can't end like this. I mean we just found each other. The Mpho guy escorts me to the car and takes Theo's things out. I am trying my best not to cry but I am failing at it. I never thought my demons would catch up with me like this and destroy the love I've found.

no edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 54

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I can't wrap my head around what happened a few hours ago. Bab'Zulu is gay? But why would he condemn me if he is sailing in the same boat as me? This is all so confusing really because he was supposed to be the one to love and support me coz he clearly understood more than anyone else. My hate and anger towards him just multiplied and I wish his dirty secret would come out in the open and he loses everything, infact let him also go to conversion therapy and see the humiliation he subjected me to all because of his selfish reasons. I have so many questions but I don't want to bombard Theo with them because I can see the pain he is feeling, it's clear he had fallen in love with my father and he never for a second thought he would be the type to do this. The braai got ruined obviously and everyone left leaving the 3

of us shocked to say the least. Theo and Fire have been drinking and the jolly and happy ambiance from earlier on gone and replaced with sadness and hate pure hate.

Theo: I am sorry Lwandle, I didn't know he was your dad.

Me: it's okay Theo you don't have to apologise.

Theo: to think I was ready to spend the rest of my life with him, a whole hypocrite.

He says taking a shot.

Me: maybe he was totally different to you than he was with us, I mean I have never seen my father beg but he did with you.

Theo: it doesn't matter Lwandle, I know what you guys went through all because of the place they decided to sent you and Mondli is worse because he wanted to straighten you when he was as crooked as they come.

I sigh nodding slowly.

Me: I am sorry it turned out this way, Fire told me how happy you were with him.

Theo: it's better now hey, I'll get over over it.

Fire: That's very true hey, so Lwandle have you told Siya?

Me: yes I told her and to say she was shocked would be a complete understatement.

Theo: I should just expose that mother fucker to world so they know his ass is as fake as they come.

Fire: what do you mean?

I look at him with curiosity and he laughs

Theo: you know the videos of us smoking hubbly, dancing, kissing like the works. I have a whole lot of compromising things for a man in his position.

I blink a couple of times and bit the inside of my cheek.

Me: Do it! Expose that man.

The words are out of my mouth

Me: no infact give me the video's and I will post them in the church youth group on Facebook in that way it will trend faster than you can say hypocrite.

I say and they are both looking at me like they don't believe I just said that.

Fire: are you sure?

Me: Mondli Zulu has to know how it feels to be in boiling oil, he has put me in it for the longest time let's see how he would handle it.

Theo: okay then let's do it, teach him a lesson he will never forget.

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

I still can't believe all my sister had to say about our father, it's shocking, its infuriating in every aspect of the word, how does he stop Lwandle from being herself and turns around to be what he condemns, or what the rules didn't apply to him at all? That might be the case because you

will never know how his tiny brain operates. A part of me wants to call my mother and just tell her to run, run from that devil but I feel like she should just get herself out of this one. My husband hurries to me with his phone and the shock on his face gets me anxious.

Me: Bongani what's wrong?

He laughs

Him: Lwandle is savage babe.

Me: what did she do?

Him: see for yourself.

He hands me his phone and watching this my heart is jumping for joy.

Me: destroy him muntuza.

Him: he is finished babe, it's a matter of time till these videos get to the Thwala's.

Me: can I call them and tell them to go on the group.

Him: let it play out let's sit back and watch.

Me: oh it's nice seeing KARMA hard at work.

Him: your mom is going to be broken.

He says and I roll my eyes. He was about to say something but I am saved by a knock on our door and he goes to open up, my mother walks in with bags and I stand up from the couch.

Him: Mama how are you?

My husband says and I know I would have closed the door in her face.

Ma: I am fine thank you son, how about you?

She says looking at me.

Him: we are well thanks. Please come and sit.

He says closing the door and I shoot him a look of disapproval, he knows I don't want Bongeka here.

Ma: Siya unjani?

Me: what are you doing here?

Ma: I saw a video of Lwandle.

Me: you are 5/6 months late hey.

She closes her eyes and sigh.

Ma: I am sorry Siyamthanda, but your father claimed she was still at the therapy.

Me: where is your husband ma?

I ask and her facial expression change.

Ma: he is probably with his mistress.

She says and I raise my eyebrow and look at my husband who is looking at me too.

Me: well he is with his toy boy in Johannesburg or he was until he met with Lwandle and he got exposed.

Him: Siya!

Bongani warns and I know its because I wasn't polite enough but I don't care about my mother's feelings, she never cared about ours mos.

Ma: what do you mean?

Me: your husband is gay and he has been sleeping with the boy who replaced you at work

while you sat in your house waiting for kingdom come.

She closes her eyes digesting what I just said and my husband gives me a disapproving look, but he has to understand the damage this woman has caused me and muntuza and I won't hold back at all.

Me: so it wasn't a woman? I knew he had stepped out of our marriage but with a boy after he did what he did to Lwandle?

Him: I am sorry ma, we just found out today from Lwandle.

Ma: wow I don't even know how to feel.

Me: he is probably on his way home now.

Ma: what home I burned it down, it's probably ashes now.

She says and I gasp for air.

Him: you literally burned it? Ma that's arson.

Ma: I honestly don't care anymore Bongani, that man took everything and gave me nothing, I am

just a shell, I am the walking dead, emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically i am tired.

She says and let's her tears fall.

Him: I am really sorry ma please go lie down a bit, I'll show you a room you'll use.

He takes her bags.

Me: Bongani No.

I say shaking my head.

Ma: it's okay son I'll go book at a guest house.

Him: we have plenty room ma, come on.

He totally disregards me and walks her to the bedroom.

—

•MONDLI ZULU

I just can't believe I have been exposed like that, my dirty laundry is out there and in the midst of everything I have lost someone precious to me, someone who made me happy

in my own truth, I don't know how I am going to fix this, to make Theo realize that I love him and I made a human error, I let my past and my dead father influence the man I became and I never wanted that. I never thought I'd feel so much pain, I have always been such a tough person who could handle my emotions but this whole situation broke me, infact Theo's reaction is the one making me this way. I can't think straight and I just want to go home and think of how I am going to win him over to my side again I can take and deal with it all just not loosing him. I got lost trying to exit Johannesburg and that delayed my journey back home. I just drove into the town and I am tired from driving and I am drained from the events of earlier. I just pray Bongeka doesn't annoy me because I will just lose it with her. As I get to the neighborhood I see black smoke covering our area, something huge is burning, maybe they burned the grass at the open veld at the corner of our street. As I drive in our section I notice a lot of people running around

and the more I drive closer I see it's near my house, I start to panic and step on the accelerator and God it's my house it's blazing, the whole place is on fire and people are trying to run around to pour soil but it's no use it's far gone, my tears fall and get out of my car hands on my head. I go nearer and jump around, I can't believe this is happening God. My neighbor runs towards me

Him: Zulu!

Me: what happened? Where is Bongeka?

I ask in the lowest voice I am barely audible.

Him: we haven't seen her I am sorry Mfo ka Zulu.

Me: could she have been in the house?

The thought of her burning in the fire adds to my pain.

Him: I would be lying if I said I knew. We all came out when we heard an explosion.

Me: I need to call the Fire department.

Him: I've already done that but they haven't arrived.

I don't care if people are looking, I am looking at my hard work going up in flames, a place I called home for all my life gone just like that, today has to be the worst day of my life, first it was Theo now my home and possibly Bongeka's death. God is this not too much for one man? People are looking at me with pity as my my tears roll down my face. I feel numb I honestly do and I don't know where to from here. My phone rings pulling me back from the sorrow, I take it out and it's Bab'Thwala, he must have heard about the fire. I sigh before picking up.

Me: Baba

Him: where are you?

Me: I am outside my house.

I answer trying to figure out why he is so cold towards me.

Him: okay please make way to my house immediately.

This time his tone goes back to normal and I sigh.

Me: okay.

He hangs up and I take one last look at my property before walking to my car, my neighbor is calling out for me but I don't respond, I can't just stand there watching it all happen knowing I can't do anything to stop the fire. I've lost everything in less than a day, maybe my in-laws will help me think about a way forward because I can't think straight at this moment my head is all over the place.

•BANELE THWALA

As soon as I saw the videos of my father in law doing all sorts of nasty with another man trending on social media, I just lost it, this is very embarrassing not only for him but for my family as well I mean I married in that family and everything that they do reflects on mine, I don't know how much more I can take from

them. We are a loved and respected family and their shenanigans will soon affect our reputation, the only way to redeem this situation is to get Zulu help and find my wife. I called my father and we have been on a video call waiting for my father in law to arrive so he can answer for himself. My father and I are face to face on the screen when he walks in.

Zulu: Baba.

He greets

Baba: Zulu, what is going on?

Zulu: I also don't know really, I was out and when I came back my house is on fire, I don't even know if my wife was inside or not. I don't know what to do.

He says and my father looks at me, oh that's really sad.

Baba: that's a shame, but that will be fixed, have you tried calling your wife?

Zulu: I haven't thought about that but I'll get to it. The fire department people haven't even arrived I just lost everything just like that.

Me: we feel for you but you have more to worry about.

Baba: Banele is on the phone.

He says placing it where I can see them both.

Zulu: oh son.

Me: baba can we get on with it please?

Baba: Zulu what is this?

He gives him another phone to watch himself being inappropriate for the whole world to see.

I see him swallow and squirm in his seat.

Zulu: This is not me, who uploaded this?

He says and I roll my eyes.

Me: baba please don't lie, those are not photoshopped it's you and my wife uploaded them to expose you.

I say and he shakes his head and stay silent a while like he is thinking of a way to save himself.

Zulu: Banele.

Me: Bab'Zulu please don't try to run from this, you have to explain to us so we can explain to the church.

Zulu: did you lay with my daughter?

Me: how is me sleeping with my wife appropriate?

Zulu: please just answer me and you'll see why Nolwandle is trying to discredit me.

Me: yes I have taken her purity.

Zulu: well you left your seed in her and she is growing it. I saw it myself as I went to Johannesburg this afternoon, she is hiding there at some flat with her friends. I was going to come tell you but I found my house burning. She framed me with the boy on the video because he is the one hiding her.

He says and I don't care about all he said but the fact that my wife is pregnant.

Me: Lwandle is carrying my child?

I ask standing up my heart beating so fast.

Zulu: yes she is with a child. Your child.

He confirms and I smile.

Me: where is she?

He sighs.

Zulu: I don't know the place exactly but it's a flat.

Me: uhm I am an IT guy I can track her down, do you have a number of someone who is there with her?

Zulu: yes yes I do.

I sigh in relief

Me: send them to me now before she thinks of running.

He nods vigorously.

Baba: make quick Banele and be gentle with her.

Me: I would never hurt even a strand of hair on her head baba that's my wife and now the mother of my child.

He smiles nodding and I end the call.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 55

•BONGEKA ZULU

It has been a few hours since I got to Durban and my son in law has been trying to make me feel at home but Siya is just not happy with me being in her house and I can't exactly blame her, I've never been a mother to her and Lwandle so her reaction doesn't pain me much, I just wish she could see my heart and have a

clue of how much I regret everything and wish I was a better mother to them both then maybe just maybe things would have turned out better but it is what it is. Mondli has been blowing up my phone and I guess he saw the house in flames, I don't want to say talk to him so I just texted him and told him to go to hell. I need a glass of water and Bongani hasn't been to check on me, I am afraid to be in every corner and make my daughter uncomfortable but I am really thirsty. I sigh before walking out and head to the kitchen, she is in there cooking so I just freeze by the door and gawk at her, she looks my way making me feel uncomfortable.

Me: I just need a glass of water.

Her: I am sure you can see a tap and glass.

She says with less interest.

Me: Siyamthanda I will forever be sorry my child, I know I have always hurt you and Lwandle but I want to change this I promise.

Her: and you though you'll come to my house and recite me a poem about how you are now ready to stand up for us and I will cry and say mama I forgive and I love you?

She says stopping what she is doing and looking at me arms folded.

Me: no Siya, I didn't think it would be that easy and I am ready to jump every hoop to earn your forgiveness.

She laughs.

Her: I've learned to live my life without a mother what makes you think I need you now?

Me: you don't need me Siya, but I need you and your sister.

Her: you've always needed Bab'Zulu more so don't let that change.

Me: Siyamthanda I've always wished to be a good mother I swear but circumstances weren't allowing me.

She laughs.

Her: mama you are here because of my husband who's heart is big and welcoming, if it weren't for him I would have kicked you out. I don't want you in my life.

Me: I understand that I've only hurt and disappointed you in more ways than one but please your forgiveness is all I need.

Her: okay then I forgive you, will you leave my house?

She asks raising an eyebrow and I sigh.

Me: Life has a way of beating us down Siya, some people get favour but some just like me find themselves in difficult situations we just don't know how to get out of them because we are programmed in a certain way. I never wanted to be this kind of mother but life happened and I allowed it and I was wrong.

Her: 9 months you carried us, you felt us kick inside of you, you felt pains of bringing us to this world yet you allowed that man to abuse us, what kind of mother does that?

I let my tears fall.

Me: one that thought was protecting you but I know better now I swear.

She shakes her head and let her own tears fall too.

Her: I might not be a mother and I pray to God every day for that gift and I know in my heart that I would do anything for my children even if it means I have to spare my life for theirs I would defy all the odds to be everything they need.

She says and I can feel the pain laced in her voice, I've done more harm than I thought. My children are broken and it's all because of me. How do I fix this? How do I fix our relationship?

She walks pass me and I try to hold her arm but she yanks it off quick. I balance by the wall and cry until I feel a hand on my shoulder, I look to see and it's Bongani.

Him: she is still hurting from it all ma, it was a lot and it's still a lot and all she ever needed was her mother give her some time she will

come around, behind that tough cookie is a girl who longs for her mom.

He says and walks away leaving me with more guilt.

—
•MONDLI ZULU

I didn't think Theo would do me like this? Did the love just die so quickly that he would throw me under the bus like that and allow Nolwandle to post such explicit videos taken privately for the whole world to see, if I didn't see that she was pregnant I wouldn't have had anything to save myself with from the embarrassment and shame upon me. The pastor and Banele will find out the truth soon as their minds are off Lwandle and the child and I need to come up with something solid for them to buy more into coz the one I sold them has serious cracks. This day was just the worst ever, I lost everything all at once and I will admit it feels

like someone keeps plunging a dagger deeper and deeper in heart causing this unexplainable pain I am feeling right now. It's clear Bongeka has something to do with my house burning up as I tried calling her but she responded telling me to go to hell, I would deal with her but I have more pressing matters to attend to right now like clearing my name and winning Theodore once again. The Thwala's offered me a place to stay but I couldn't accept as I would always be under their surveillance and they would notice something's I don't want them to so I went with the option of staying at a guesthouse. I just hope the issue with Lwandle will keep them preoccupied for a while till I can come up with something solid to make everyone believe me and my story.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

It hit me as we were chilling talking about how selfish my father is that he would sell me out to

the Thwala's and tell them about my pregnancy just to get back at me and to spite me for exposing him. I needed to leave Johannesburg and fast before they can think of finding me. Fire helped me pack what's mine and Theo said we will go see if there is no bus either to Durban or Richards Bay if that doesn't work he will just take me to a BnB until tomorrow morning. I am scared I won't lie, I wasn't expecting this to happen so I didn't have a proper contingency plan hence the panic, I can't allow him back I'm my life at least not now, he will want to be a part of my baby's life and I can't have that as yet. I am trying to keep my blood pressure down coz if it spikes I will give birth prematurely and I doubt babies born at 6 months survive and I would die if anything happens to this baby even though I felt indifferent then but everything has changed now, I live for my daughter I don't think I've loved anyone like I love her.

Theo: sweetheart are you done?

He asks walking in Fire's room.

Me: yes we can go.

Theo: I am sorry your weekend got ruined.

Me: it's okay, atleast the truth is out in the open now.

Theo: yeah that's one positive thing.

Fire: I promise to come visit you soon as I have a few days off ne.

Me: I will hold you to it friend.

I say and we hug and go out to leave.

Theo: I just pray there is a ticket to either of the two places.

Me: me too, I'll be less anxious.

Fire: just as long as you are not in this flat I will breath.

Theo opens the door and I swear my heart drops to my stomach. He found me, I was late.

Him: Sanibonani.

He says and I close my eyes

Fire: I am sorry the braai is cancelled.

Him: oh that's not a problem coz I am not here for that.

He says and I already have tears in my eyes.

Theo: then who are you? How can we help?

Him: I am here for my wife.

He says calmly.

Fire: I think you have the wrong place.

Him: I don't think so coz I am looking at her, MaZulu sthandwa sam.

He says and if I didn't know any better I'd say this guy loves me. The brothers shoot me a look of shock and when they see my tears I see pity replace all other emotions.

Theo: is he?

I nod and let my tears falls.

Theo: you are not welcome here. I don't want you anywhere near her and so does she.

Him: I don't know who you are but that one is my wife and the mother of my child so I have every right to be here to talk to her. Lwandle?

He says calmly.

Fire: I am calling the police.

Him: that's dramatic really. I just need a word mkami that's all.

Me: Banele please.

I finally say after listening to them exchanging words.

Him: I can see you are leaving baby I won't be long I promise.

He says and I sigh.

Fire: we are in the lounge Lwa scream this place down if he makes you uncomfortable.

I nod and they both walk back and I walk out with Banele leaving the door open.

Him: you look beautiful my love.

Me: why are you here?

Him: I just had to see for myself and it's true, you are growing my seed.

Me: it's not your baby.

I try to save myself.

Him: I am the only man you've been with Lwandle so don't do that.

Me: what do you want?

Him: come home with me love, let's start afresh and just take it slow fall in love with each other and raise our baby in a warm loving home.

He says and I am just shaking my head.

Me: that's not what I want please. Allow me to have a smooth pregnancy and when I've delivered I'll tell you and we can co-parenting but me and you we just can't be together.

He nods.

Him: I just love you Lwandle and I wished to have a life with you and no one else. I will accept your wishes and wait for your call, that's in?

Me: 3 months.

I reply shocked, why is he just accepting this so easy, what is he playing at.

Him: okay I will see you in 3 months then.

Me: why are you not mad?

Him: I want you to have a smooth pregnancy you don't need stress baby, so I will accept everything that you want so long as you are happy.

I narrow my eyes.

Me: okay then.

He nods and hugs me tight but I don't return his embrace, he kisses my forehead and looks at me in the eyes.

Him: I love you and whatever that makes you happy I will accept it.

He hands me his phone and I punch in my number and as expected he calls it to confirm. I take it out to show him and he smiles.

Him: I was just doing that so you have my number too. Remember MaZulu I love you.

He walks away and I know I am going to change this number before I leave Johannesburg because he might track me with it. When I am ready I will accept him in our lives and only to co-parenting nothing more.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I have heard and read of crazy woman I just didn't think I would have one on my hands, I swear Bridget doesn't listen when I speak, she only hears parts that she wants and even with that she twists it to suit her. I am tired of repeating the same thing to her like I am talking to a child. I've decided to let her live in her own head while I do my own things. I won't touch her and I won't even give her attention until she gets the message and leaves me alone. I am having a smoke at home outside when her car parks at my gate, ah am dealing with a psycho

here. I don't even open for her to drive in rather I walk out to talk to her.

Me: this is getting old.

I say as she rolls down her window.

Her: Hello to you too babe.

Me: not in the mood Bridget, what are you doing here?

Her: I came to see you obviously.

Me: you can't just show up here unannounced.

Her: but you can? Why is it because I don't live with my mother?

Me: Bree this is getting tiring, you are becoming clingy it's not attractive.

She starts to cry painfully and I look at her confused.

Her: I have been through hell because of relationships Indigo, I almost died leaving my daughter because of love, I met you and thought you were different and I can trust you

with my heart and life but you have just proved to be the same. Be friends first they said, relationship that you are first friends works out they said but look at me getting my heart broken once again. Here I am looking like a fool loving someone who doesn't love me back. My poor daughter is now attached to you and you want to leave her like her father did, why didn't you reject her before it went this far? Why are you also hurting her Indi? She loves you and I am here because she asked for you as she is sick and believes seeing you would make her feel better but we are both wrong. I guess man are not the only trash.

She says and I feel so guilty.

Me: what's wrong with her?

Her: she has tonsils and she wanted to see you and have you confirm that it's okay if she has an operation to take them out.

She says and now I am so conflicted. Hurting a child is not the same as hurting an adult, the pain and rejection will shape them and I can't

be the reason why that little girl has trust and attachment issues, so fuck my feelings.

Me: eish take me to her.

I say and she wipes her tears and I go round to get in the car. Phiwe is going to have my head for this.

•BANELE THWALA

Baba: you did what?!

He screams at me after I explain that I let Lwa go yesterday.

Me: I don't want to complicate things and put the pregnancy under risk.

Baba: Nele you let your wife whom you have been looking for, for months go and not just her but your child my grandbaby.

Me: baba I said I will never hurt Lwandle and I tend to keep my promise.

Baba: I don't agree with what you've done really.

Me: I understand but trust me, this is all going to work out.

Baba: what if she disappears with the child Banele? Then what?

I sigh.

Me: she won't please trust me baba. She promised to call once she gives birth and I trust her. She is my wife and she will keep to her promise.

Baba: I just pray you know what you are doing.

I smile.

Me: just 3 months baba only 3.

I can't believe I am going to be a father and to have Lwandle be the one to give me this gift makes it more special. The only woman who's firsts leave me in awe.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 56

•SIYAMTHANDA ZULU

They say a girl is her mother's best friend but I never got that chance, I have never been close to my mother because she didn't extend that offer to me or Lwandle, her attention has always been on my father, what he needs, what he wants, how he would react, how the church demands us to do things and what not, never about us, even with the smallest of things she would put him first and with no notice that broke us as we had to learn to do things by ourselves but we say we have a mother, my sister and I might have had anything, a beautiful house to live in, food on our table and clothes on our back but emotionally we were and still are starving especially for our mothers love and affection but she was never there hence I don't see why i should open my home and my heart

to accept her when I've managed to get through life without her love and support. I have been ignoring Bongani from yesterday and I intend to keep it that way until he understands that I don't want my mother here. I just finished getting ready to go pick my my sister as soon as her bus arrives in Durban, I am happy she is coming here I am just not sure how she is going to take our mother being here. Our bedroom door opens and he walks in, I stand up to leave the room for him.

Him: Siyamthanda stop this!

He says with a serious tone.

Me: No, you disregarded me in my own house, offered that woman a room in my home knowing very well how I feel about her.

Him: baby she is your mother.

I shake my head.

Me: she has never been a mother to me
Bongani, she is just a woman who brought me

into this world. You've seen her stand and do nothing when her husband tried to kill me in this very house I call my home.

He sighs

Him: I know my love and I am sorry she failed you.

Me: Then why is she still in my here?

I ask coz I feel like he doesn't understand why I am feeling like this, I don't get why he wants me to accept my mother and go on as if nothing ever happened. You can't expect me to forget it all just coz she cried and said she is sorry no. I was at the receiving end of it all so I can't forget the hardships.

Him: Because I just can't kick a dog while it's already down. I understand your pain very well because you are my heart and I sympathize with your mother too because we can never understand what it was like for her in that marriage babe.

Me: you are forcing her down my throat and I am not ready.

Him: I love you Siya and I am doing this because I want to see you heal from the pain and the first step to it is to forgive my love.

Me: I don't have forgiveness in me for that woman maybe someday.

Him: I understand and I will give you space to digest all of this just don't recoil from me please, we've never went to bed not talking to each other and it happened last night and I hate it.

He says and I swallow.

Me: I am sorry.

Him: I am sorry too, I will move at your pace with regards to this issue okay?

Me: okay thank you.

He pulls me to him by my hand and folds me into a warm embrace a husband can ever give his wife.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I don't know if I did this because I have a good heart or I am just plain stupid, but come on how do you hurt a little girl like that? Yes she is not mine and all but I allowed myself to be in a space where she can get attached to me and think I will always be there for her and I just can't take that away from her without hurting her, I need to come up with a way to make her understand that I can't be in their life like I was a few months ago and give her some kind of hope so she doesn't grow up to believe that people will always reject her. Bridget drops me off at my place coz I slept over her house yesterday and no we didn't do anything. She parks at my gate and kills the engine.

Her: Thank you Indigo.

Me: Sure.

Her; she really loves you and i can never show my appreciation for what you did for her.

Me: she is good kid.

Her: we are very blessed to have you.

I shake my head.

Me: Bree No man.

Her: hao and then?

Me: don't ever use your child as a weapon to get my attention or any one else's for that matter, you will scar that little girl because of your own selfish reasons.

She blinks a couple of times and swallow

Her: Indigo it's not like that please I-

I put my hand up to stop her from talking.

Me: don't bother and I am going to come by to talk to her and I'll you during the week to tell you when I am coming.

Her: about what?

I open the door and walk out without answering.

Her: INDIGO!

I ignore her and walk in the yard, I find my cousin sitting outside the garage drinking.

Him: is her pussy that good?

He says and I roll my eyes

Her: I didn't sleep with her man come on.

Him: the last time I checked you were smoking
next thing you are at her house.

Her: her daughter wanted to see me.

He laughs

Him: I didn't take you for a fool Indigo. She
clearly-

Me: I know and I called her out on it Grootman.
I just didn't want to do that little girl bad but I
also can't give her hope of being in her life
forever hence I am planning to tell her that I
won't be around anymore.

Him: Good man coz if you don't you'll find
yourself in deeper shit.

Me: yeah hey.

Him: beautiful sexy girls are psycho's I swear.

I chuckle

Me: definitely, I've learned my lesson struuu.

Him: have a beer.

•MONDLI ZULU

I didn't sleep last night, I kept tossing and turning. I tried to calm down but my mind just kept on playing yesterday's scenes in my head, I still can't believe I lost it all in one day. No home, no wife, no Theo, and my seat at the church is compromised as well. I don't know how I am going to pick up the pieces of my life to move past this and rebuild all I've lost. I have tried Theodore a million times but he just ignored my calls but now it doesn't even ring it takes me straight to voicemail, so frustrating, but I'll see him tomorrow at work and try to apologize profusely for everything, I would do anything to get him back absolutely anything. I am parked outside of my house or what used to be my house at least and the is smoke still coming from the place, I can't even walk around to see what might have been saved from it all, I would appreciate even a photograph just

anything that is of sentimental value. My phone beeps and I take it out of my pocket.

Please make your way to the church now

It's the pastor, I sigh wondering what this could be about, I skipped church on purpose because I just couldn't face anyone and have them look at me with disgust. I start the engine and make my way there. I am happy when I see his car only, at least it's not a jury trial. I walk straight to the office and he is with Mhlongo.

Thwala: ahh you made it, please sit.

Me: ninjami? (How are you?)

Mhlongo: very well Zulu, singezwa kuwe (how are you?)

Me: I am coping considering everything that's happening.

Mhlongo: eish we heard the sad news, it will all be well, we are just thankful that neither of you were inside.

Thwala: that's very true, the Lord saved the most important thing, their lives. The house can be rebuilt but their lives aren't replaceable.

Me: I am very grateful.

Thwala: please sit.

I pull the chair and sit down.

Me: is everything okay?

The look at each other and sigh.

Thwala: so the church couldn't ignore the videos of you circulating, you say they are not real but people are not believing it hence we have decided to take it to a specialist to tell if their fake or not. If they are fake you will retain your position and if they are real and you lied you will have to go to conversion therapy and Mhlongo will take your position because he is also my in-law.

He says and my mouth goes dry immediately, I have this huge lump in my throat. I am finished, I am so finished I am not going to that place I just can't.

Me: okay I understand.

I say dying inside, after working so hard to get to this point and now it is all crumbling down and I can't do anything to save it.

Thwala: you are suspended with immediate effect from the church and it's operations. You can only come back when your name has been cleared or after you've received therapy to rid the demon.

I nod and stand up.

Me: thank you.

I say walking out without their response because even for a tough man like myself loosing it all just like that hits hard and it's heart breaking but I just couldn't cry in front of them especially not Mhlongo who is beneath me in every way possible.

—

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I still can't believe that Banele took this well, something tells me that he is playing on something and it won't be good for me, it doesn't make sense to let me go after trying everything to find me. I decided to go to Durban to be with my sister and just spend some time with her. I didn't leave Johannesburg until this morning coz yesterday we didn't get a ticket to either Durban or Richards Bay so I slept at the BnB as I still couldn't trust Banele's calmness of the situation, call me paranoid but I'd rather be safe than sorry. Siya picked me up and yes she was happy to see me but I could tell something was bothering her and I learnt that my mom is at the house. I can tell why she is like this coz I am also starting to regret why I just didn't go back to Richards Bay coz I honestly don't want to be in my mother's presence.

Her: please don't leave early because of her muntuza, I've missed you.

She says as she parks her car outside her house.

Me: I honestly don't want to be where your mother is but I also want to spend some time with you.

She nods.

Her: I'll make sure she gives you your space.

Me: thank you sis.

Her: This is the first time I am hating my husband's good heart really.

I smile.

Me: he has always been the sweetest person ever.

Her: I know right, my sweet baby.

Me: on the other hand I still can't believe Banele.

She sighs

Her: yaz from what you told me I am still shocked but we should be on the look out, we

can't believe him so easily to keep to his promise.

Me: exactly. Let's get in, I need a shower and food, princess is hungry.

Her: I always tell you it's a boy Lwa.

I laugh and we both get out the car and head inside. Soon as we open the door I land on my mother in the lounge watching TV. She quickly gets up soon as she sees me.

Ma: Lwandle.

I look at her and it feels like I am stuck to the floor tongue tide.

Ma: Oh ntombi yam. Oh I am sorry I didn't know know anything until recently I am so sorry.

Me: you never do sis'Bongeka

I walk passed her.

Ma: Lwandle just a minute.

She says before I am completely out of the lounge.

Me: I am tired I need to rest.

—
No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 57

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

it has been a few days since I got here and my mother has is trying to get me to talk to her but I just can't really, I finding it difficult to look at her and not see the woman who failed me for most of my life. I don't need stress at this point in my life, the last thing I need is complicating my pregnancy with such things... During the day it's just the two of us here so I am always locked in the bedroom I use so I don't bump into her, the only time I go out is when I need to use the bathroom or get something to eat...I look at my phone and notice it's almost time for my session with Dr Roberts, I lost track of time God...I

prepare quickly to look presentable since I was just lazing around and just on time my phone rings and it's a video call from her...

Me: Hey shrink.

I say and she giggles shaking her head.

Dr: Lwandle, you look amazing.

Me: Thank you and you know you do too.

Dr: how are we today?

I brush my belly and sigh.

Me: we are both doing very well hey, just that with each passing day I love my daughter more and more, I think I am obsessed.

Dr: I am happy to hear this but you always insist that it's a girl, would you be disappointed if it's a boy?

She asks eyebrow raised.

Me: no not at all, I would love him the same, I just love the pinkness that would come with a girl.

Dr: Pink was never deemed a girl color you know.

I chuckle.

Me: I would argue that one hey Doc.

Dr: like you do everything Nolwandle.

I gaps for air and act shocked dramatically.

Me: I am hurt Dr Roberts.

Dr: Oh well, so how's everything with your mother there?

I sigh and shake my head.

Me: well I am still doing my level best to ignore her coz I just don't want to hear her excuses.

Dr: now that you are going to become a mother and you feel so much love for your offspring.

What do you think you would have done if it was you and your child in the situation that happened with you and your parents?

Me: obviously I would put my child first, I would fight tooth and nail to make sure my child is protected.

Dr: and you feel like your mother didn't do that?

Me: I wouldn't be broken like I am if she did.

Dr: I understand but I am sure we can both agree that there is no black and white rule or guideline that tells parents how to protect their children.

Me: okay?

I say wanting her to speak further on her point.

Dr: I mean hasn't she even for once tried to stand up for you?

I close my eyes remembering something.

Me: she once did, when I got back from Johannesburg with my ex girlfriend but my father gave her a serious beating.

Dr: let's take it from there. Your father was abusive to her in fact to all of you, not only physically but emotionally and mentally as well so that alone is a serious reason why she wasn't vocal in defending you. Her silence might have been perceived as doing nothing by

you and your sister but it could have possibly been her way of protecting you.

I sigh.

Me: I don't understand.

Her: listen Lwandle, your father was dominating all of you and the church rules didn't make it easy on you guys too, so your father might have always used abuse to make her side with him, either threaten to abuse her but most likely you her children hence she kept quiet most times to shield you from more intense wrath.

I sigh closing my eyes.

Dr: of course I am not saying this is the case all I am saying is there is always more than 2 sides to the story. Normally your side the next persons and the truth and unless you sit down with your mother and hear her out you will never know her reasons and you will forever hold on to unnecessary hurt and pain.

Me: I hate it when you make sense.

She smiles.

Dr: you've always made that clear and I appreciate you for it.

Me: I guess I have nothing to lose if I sit down with her.

Dr: please do not for her but for yourself and your healing and to complete this journey of self discovery you are on.

Me: okay I will communicate with my heart and soul.

Dr: that's where it all starts. I see you are taking the lessons we do seriously.

Me: always...

•MONDLI ZULU

It has been hell for me, the only thing I have left has become something I don't enjoy anymore, my colleagues whisper behind my back and the learner's look at me like I am their mate and the respect is just gone and I don't think it will ever

return... Theo wasn't at work the past three days and this morning he showed up and there was a meeting in the staff room, the principal was informing us that Theo will be working with us for the last time this week as he declined a permanent position here with the school and my heart just dropped to my stomach, the news were obviously not pleasant for me because it will be difficult trying to win him back if we are kilometers away from each other... I didn't get a chance to talk to him at work coz he was avoiding me and I didn't want to cause drama so I decided to wait for him by his flat, the people there already know as they've seen me a couple of times so one of the tenants was driving in and I ask to get in and it wasn't a problem, I made sure to park where he won't see my car and possibly drive back. I've been standing outside his door and after what feels like eternity he appears from the stairs singing but frowns when he lands his eyes on me...

Him: heeee ke ya lekwa, monna moholo o wa moZulu o sebetae saopholla Tau marete.

(I am being tested. This old Zulu man has the courage to touch a lions testicles.)

He says and I don't know what he said because Sesotho is not spoken around here and he is the only sotho person I know, I sigh.

Me: you say?

Him: Sesotho hase tolokwe. (You don't translate Sesotho).

I sigh defeated coz he lost me more.

Me: Baby I just need to talk to you please.

Him: do you see how calm I am?

Me: yes I can see that.

Him: if you don't disappear right now I will get on you and fuck you up they will need jaws of life to get you from under me.

I close my eyes and go on my knees.

Me: Theodore please, I made a mistake and I will live to regret it for the rest of my life please.

He laughs out loud while clapping hands like a psychopath but I am not scared to grovel and beg because I love him, I live this boy with all my heart.

Him: Mondli I am warning.

Me: and I am begging you please.

I remain on my knees praying he hears me.

Him: I loved you and I wanted to spend my life with you but right now I loathe you and if I would kill you and not face the consequences trust me you'd be 6 feet under right now o jere mobu ka sefuba ntate ke wena.

He says hitting his chest

Me: I know I wronged you but-

Even before I could finish what I wanted to say, he gives me a serious kick to the chest and I fall back hard. It stings I won't lie I am even coughing. He clicks his tongue and opens his door locking it after making his way in. I am still on the ground trying to figure out what just

happened, he is always so feminine and didn't expect such powerful a strike from him...

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I woke up today missing Nolwandle so bad, I didn't even think I'd survive half the day coz I was even dreading getting out of bed in the morning, but adulting wouldn't give me a break to breathe as I had to go to work...To be honest I never never gave myself time to actually heal from the heart break of our break up as I moved to Bree in a minute and now the feelings are back to haunt me as my fun with the distraction called Bridget is over... Reality is harsh man because I am about to walk in Bridget's apartment and talk to her daughter, I don't know what I am going to say to this little girl but I am going to say it and I pray I don't scar her for life... I knock and her mother is the one to open and she is in an outfit I've always loved on her

body but not today satan, the temptress you're placing in my way will not win not today...

Bee: Babe.

Me: is she here?

Bree: yeah come in.

She says walking back in and flips her weave dramatically in my face, swaying her hips, I can't help but roll my eyes.

Me: can I be alone with her?

She narrows her eyes.

Bree: first things first can you please just tell me what all of this is all about?

I sigh.

Me: can I be alone with her?

Bree: not if I know first what you are going to say.

I walk passed her and go to the lounge and the little girl is watching TV.

Me: Hey doll.

I say and she smiles coming to me and she gives me a warm embrace.

Me: what are you watching?

Her: Masha and the bear.

Me: oh okay, do you mind if we mute it a bit so we can talk.

Her: it's not a problem.

She is such a good little girl. Bridget might be a lot of things but she is a good mom.

Me: thank you doll.

Her: is everything okay?

Me: I want you to know that you are a very special girl and you deserve all the best in your life, I want you to remember this for the rest of your life and live by those words okay.

Her: okay I will.

Me: I am sure that you know there's time for everything right?

She nods.

Me: good, I care deeply for you and I will never forget you in my life but like everything my time to go has come.

Bree: Indigo no!, Baby girl please go to your room a bit.

Her: mommy it's rude to talk over someone.

I smile looking at Bridget who is boiling mad.

Me: so what I'm saying is my friendship with your mother didn't work out like we had hoped and we don't bring happiness to each other anymore and in that way we won't bring happiness to you and that's not fair hence we have to go our separate ways to make sure you are happy.

Her: I won't see you anymore?

Me: I am afraid not sweetheart and I am so so sorry.

Her: that's sad but can we at least talk on the phone.

I sigh.

Me: when strings remain attached doll the is no room for growth or healing so I need to go completely but I need you to know that I really care and I want all that is good for a princess like yourself.

She smiles.

Her: I guess I understand.

Me: you are such a good girl, I am lucky to have met you, can I get a hug.

She nods and brings it in. I swear Bridget is only calm because her child is in the room.

Me: you can go back to watching TV, goodbye doll.

Her: goodbye.

She says and increases the volume of the TV.

Bridget marches passed me to the kitchen door and I follow her, she already has the door open.

Me: It was neces-

Bree: FUCK YOU INDIGO!

She shuts the door in my face and I sigh feeling relieved.

•ZIZIPHO MHLONGO

Things are beginning to look up for me and my family, Bab'Zulu messed up just like his daughter and that earned my father his rightful place in the church. My sister says he is low-key excited but doesn't want to show it and I know my dad he likes being modest...on the other hand my dear husband has been the happiest since Sunday and he treats me better, no belittling, no insults. He greets me every morning and compliments my cooking too. It's safe to say we are on the right track...This morning before he left for work he left his card for me to get groceries and my necessities and I spend almost the entire day at the mall I am only just getting home. The Uber drops me off and I see a van parked behind his car. Who could it be this late... I carry the plastics inside

and go get the rest until everything is in. I go further in the house and there are man in coveralls packing their tools and painting materials.

Me: hello.

I greet them.

Him: Hello Ms. We will be out of your way just now.

One of the guys say politely.

Me: what were you doing here?

Him: we came to pain the room.

Me: oh I see.

I say peeping through and the furniture that used to be in this bedroom is gone and the room has neutral colors, different on each side of the wall.

Me: do you have any idea of what is going to happen in this room.

Nele: stop pestering these gentleman Zipho.

My husband says from behind me.

Me: I was just curious.

Nele: it killed the cat, beware.

He says and I sigh.

Him: Mr Thwala, we are all done, we will be on our way.

Nele: Thanks for the service.

He says walking them out and I walk in the room wondering what he is going to do in here.

He walks back in.

Me: so? What's this room going to be with such warm colors?

I ask and he smiles.

Nele: a very special room hey, it's a surprise so you'll see soon.

He says and I get excited. Surprise for me, oh God thank you for changing my husband into this man I prayed for.

Me: oh okay, here is your card. I hope you don't mind. I bought a few things for myself.

Nele: don't worry about it. Can you cook phuthu please I want to have amasi for supper.

Me: okay love, let me get to it.

I say walking to the kitchen. I need to inform my sister of our progress tomorrow when we video chat to catch up.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 58

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I couldn't get what Dr Roberts said to me with regards to my mother out of my head, the harder I try to push it to the back of my mind the more I think about it and if we could just say God's truth, she is right in every way possible... Now that I have my own child to consider and feeling how difficult it can be to be carrying a life

and how fulfilling it feels at the same time I don't think any woman would just stand back and watch as the love of her life, a person who knows their heartbeat from inside to suffer while they do nothing... I now fully understand that my 6 can be someone else's 9 depending on how we look at the situation and from which point we speak from... I for one heard my mother's cries some nights and I've seen how Bab'Zulu would break her down in front of us so a part of me can say that I've been selfish and I don't think I'd survive if my unborn child would just not want to hear my story, she deserves an ear I will admit that much but let's not touch on the topic of forgiveness and moving on as yet, baby steps that's all I am offering right now...

Siya: you did say you are craving ribs, now why are you playing with your food?

She asks drawing me back from my train of thoughts.

Me: I am sorry sisi.

I say trying to get my head straight. I mean she did take me out to feed my craving even though she was tired after work.

Siya: muntuza what's wrong?

She asks and I shake my head with a forced smile.

Me: nothing, thank you for bringing me here.

Siya: you forget that I know you yaz, so out with it.

She says and I close my eyes.

Me: I've been thinking about our situation with sis'Bongeka.

Siya: arg, she will soon get the hint and leave us be.

Me: don't take this somehow but don't you want to know why she has always taken his side?

Siya: not anymore hey.

She says taking a spoonful of her meal and I sigh deeply.

Me: I had a conversation with Dr Roberts and from that I figured that we could lend her an ear and hear her out then decide.

Siya: no thanks I'll pass.

Me: this is not for her sis but for us. I mean to move on and be completely happy we need closure.

Siya: ai muntuza.

Me: Siya please we have nothing to loose please. We just sit and let her do all the talking and if we don't hear it worthy we can go back to uhm not needing her or whatever.

I say hoping I could reach to a part of her heart that still feels love for our mother. I know that woman hurt us but again we don't fully understand how broken she also is.

Siya: yoh fine muntuza, and I am doing this for you that's it and please don't force me to forgive her after all this.

Me: Never I just want us to hear her out you know.

She nods.

Siya: now that your chest is clear, can you give my nephew what he craves for?

She says and I roll my eyes.

Me: yes ma'am.

I say cutting through my perfectly done pork ribs.

•BANELE THWALA

I am super happy, so excited that I am going to be a father. The news has made me so calm I swear it would take something very serious to get me mad. I just want to be in the right space, mentally, emotionally and spiritually for the arrival of my child and the return of my wife, they both deserve a great man and that's what I will be to them... I never thought I would love Lwa like this considering that this was an arranged marriage I hated in every way but I got to know her and the person she is and I

realized a diamond in the rough that was her...I have always fucked up in my life when it came to relationships, I've never seen woman the way I see my wife hence I believe she somehow healed me from the irrational and impulsive guy I was before...I want to get this right for a gazillion reasons and no matter what I will have my own family not only to make my parents proud but to prove to myself that I can be more than an animal I was to all my ex's... It takes one woman just one. I get to my house after my evening jog and it's smelling nice, as annoying as she can get Zipho can cook I give her that.

Me: I am back.

Her: had a good run?

Me: yeah like always.

Her: that's great, dinner will be ready soon okay?

Me: thanks I'll just shower quick then.

Her: before I forget your mother called the landline she wanted to talk to you apparently your number took her to voicemail.

Me: oh yeah I keep my phone on flight mode when I go jogging to listen to music peacefully without disturbances.

Her: please ring her back.

I nod and head to the study to call her with the phone in there. She answers almost immediately.

Me: mama kaBanele.

Ma: Nele, how are you?

Me: I am very great, had a good run.

Ma: oh okay, everything going well with Zipho.

Me: we cool.

Ma: have you told her about her sister being pregnant.

Me: nope she will know when the baby arrives.

Ma: Nele that will cause problems really, it's better we deal with her reaction now before my grandbaby is born.

Me: I can handle Zizipho mama so don't worry.

Ma: if you say so then. Have you spoken to maZulu?

Me: no I don't plan to until she calls me when our baby is born.

Ma: Banele, you need to check in please.

Me: I promised her space to have a smooth pregnancy and that's when I am doing, you and your husband should chill really.

Ma: I hope you know what you are doing.

Me: Trust your son mama.

Ma: okay, let me go Nele before Thwala complains about not getting my attention.

I laugh, that sound like my pops.

Me: okay goodnight.

she hangs up and I go shower.

•INDIGO NQCOBO

My heart is heavy, I am longing to see and hold her, to hear her tell me she loves me and that we can make it this time. Loosing that girl wasn't easy for me even though I tried to get over it quickly it back fired, I spend this whole day stalking her page on Facebook and she has been inactive for months. I decide to go to her sisters wall and to my surprise she posted a picture of them earlier this evening at a restaurant in Durban, she has gained weight but she is so beautiful, more beautiful than the last time I can remember. The smile on her face still gets butterflies in my stomach go a tad crazy. I am still madly in love with Ocean that I can admit without shame. I go to the comments and there's one in particular from a Fire Mokoena it reads.

Lwandle's glow though, I swear the love of her life is doing the most. 2 and a half months count down!!!

My heart sinks into my stomach and tears well up in my eyes and I feel this huge lump in my throat as my mouth goes dry, it feels like someone is pulling my soul out of my body. The love of her life? She has moved on? I shake my head hating the thought as it leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. I remove my vest and I am left in my sports bra. I am suddenly feeling so hot and a second later I am having troubles breathing, at that moment my door opens and Phiwe walks in. He rushed to me soon as he sees me in this state.

Him: malumes what's wrong.

I am shaking my head trying to get oxygen in my nostrils to my lungs.

Him: Indigo you are scaring me! What's wrong man?

Me: water please.

I manage to say and he runs out and comes back with bottled water, he opens the bottle and hands it to me I gulp down the content and hydrate but lose some through the tears I let fall.

Him: okay now you are scaring me I won't lie.

Me: it hurts grootman.

Him: the little girl will be okay Indigo I promise you.

I shake my head.

Me: it's not that.

Him: talk to me please.

I hand him my phone.

Me: look at that picture and go find a comment from Fire.

He looks at the phone while I try desperately to be okay. He gasps for air and looks at me with pity.

Him: yoh Indi, I am sorry cuz.

Me: she belongs with me grootman this can't be happening, we deserve a second chance.

Him: I won't lie I don't know what to say, I always thought you two would find your way back to each other after it all.

Me: me too but just look at how beautiful and happy she looks it's clear whoever she is with is making it possible, I failed her and I lost her forever Phiwe yoh.

Him: I cannot begin to imagine the pain you are feeling, I know for a fact that Ocean is the first and only woman you've loved this way.

Me: why does love hurt so bad?

Him: I wish I knew I am sorry.

He says and I know he doesn't know what to do with me, he is not the type of guy to talk about deep emotions or comfort in such situations.

He is a G so I don't take it badly but it still stings, I wonder who she's with, if she is better than me? I already have a picture of them in my

head and I hate it as it makes me sick to my stomach. Her heart is mine I swear it's true.

•BONGEKA ZULU

My presence is only making my children uncomfortable and that's one thing I don't want, they already hate me and this will only make things worse. I will accept defeat and leave them in peace and pray that one day we will mend our relationship... I caused the tension between Siya and Bongani and with Lwandle pregnant I can't risk putting her under pressure and have her facing complications with her baby, though I wish to be helping her with this phase in her life I can hope that she finds strength to go through motherhood swiftly and be everything I was not to her and Siyamthanda...I packed my clothes and I am leaving to stay at a guest house till I find myself a small house around Durban to keep a close eye on them. I am about to place the letter I

wrote on the TV stand when the door opens
and they walk in laughing...

Me: oh you girls are back.

I was hoping to do this while they were out.

Siya: oh you were running away?

I sigh.

Lwa: Siya please.

Me: I was going to leave this letter explaining
everything.

I admit.

Lwa: we are here, tell us your side ma.

I narrow my eyes.

Me: my side? I don't understand.

They look at each other and my heart starts
racing.

Siya: why was it always him and not us?

Me: it has always been you, it might not seem
like it but it's true. My silence was your

protection. Like yours and all of the church members my marriage to your father was arranged by our parents. Your father never wanted me and I didn't too but I learned to accept it because I didn't have a choice, I was raised in this environment, I was taught to respect a man and know even in my sleep that his word is law even when I knew it was absurd I did because it's all I knew, my mother did it her mother before her and every other woman in our community so who was I? Who would I have looked up to for something different? Mondli was always the devil even before you two were born... The first years of our marriage we didn't even share a bed and I understand why now, it was until his father started pestering us about grandchildren he got close to me and from there he became a monster and I his fearful victim. I know I should've done better for you two but how when he was always a step ahead. He threatened you to keep me in check, if I didn't behave he would have resorted to hurting you two because he knew my heart was

in 2 halves, you girls and what better way to make someone do as you want than threatening what she holds dear to her. So I had to zip my mouth hoping that he leaves you out of his anger and whatever he was going through. I could have ran I could have done a lot of things to save myself and my children you might say and I agree but mental slavery is real and he made sure that I am his prisoner by capturing my mind. I would believe he would find us and be harsher than he already was on the other hand that life was all I knew and where would I run to? What would I do? I didn't make decisions for myself or for the both of you so how would I have survived out there? These are some of the things that made me stay and hold on. When you got married Siya I was relieved and more so when I realized that for you and Bongani love was involved, I knew one of my children had found an escape. I had one more to look out for until she could make it out of that house but she was stubborn, strong willed and incredibly head strong she just

wouldn't let Mondli have his way and that meant I had to increase my submission and worship that man so you don't get the maximum harshness and his full wrath for it. I became his prisoner, he held me hostage in my own home, I was tied to a chair from morning till night without food and a grown woman like myself would even mess herself because he wasn't there to release me in time to use the bathroom. Humiliation and shame I carried on my shoulders to protect you the best way I knew how and if I had to I would do it again, I know it's not much but it's the only way I knew how and I am sorry it wasn't the best choice but it's all I knew it's all I had it's all I could think of considering all the aspects, I am so sorry to the both of you. I will leave my life hating the reflection that stares back at me in the mirror for failing you the way I did. I don't deserve your forgiveness but I am asking for it, I am asking for a real chance to be a mother a grandmother please.

I say and now I am barely audible coz I am so emotional. They are looking at me with an expression I can't read, Nolwandle is crying but Siya nothing. I sigh deeply and wait for minutes but they say nothing back.

Me: just know that I love you both so much and I want you to be happy always. Thank you for listening. Lwandle be the best mom to that beautiful gift growing inside of you. Siya each time you give thanks and count your blessings, count your husband 10 times, you are very blessed.

I take my bags and walk to the door where they are standing. My elderst holds my wrist to stop me from walking out and I look at her with hopeful eyes and she attacks me with a hug and just breaks down. I have never seen Siyamthanda cry like this and hearing her weeping so painfully is heart breaking. Lwandle tries to walk further in but I quickly pull her to get in the hug and she doesn't deny me as she gladly comes and my heart releases all the pain it has ever carried.

No edits.

Happy woman's day ❤️ ✨

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 59

•SIYAMTHANDA BHENGU

I open my eyes and my husband's arms are wrapped around me like ivy, he is so warm not just physically but being in his arms like this feels great because I know I am safe with him... Last night was very emotional as my mother opened up and put her story on the table and I will not lie as much as I had told myself I was doing it for Lwandle, I also needed it and I am glad she was the bigger person than i was...A lot was said and the three of us are broken and it's all because of Mondli Zulu, I can only pray that we all heal and just move on from this

painful part of our life, it shouldn't even define us but it just has to reference our strength and courage...

Him: are you awake?

My husband asks kissing the top of my head.

Me: yes love, Good morning.

Him: slept good?

He asks and I sigh.

Me: better than I thought I would hey babe, what about you?

Him: yeah I slept but I was worried about you. You cried a lot last night and I've never seen you that emotional.

Me: my mother bared her chest to us Bongani and I can't believe she endured so much yet I thought she was being useless, I am such a horrible daughter.

Him: don't beat yourself up, you didn't know the truth.

Me: I've learnt to never judge a person even in a situation I feel has the simplest solutions.

Him: lesson learnt Siya.

Me: very true, my mother is proof that woman endure it all just to make sure their children are okay. She stood in the firing line to protect us and we didn't show appreciation and in all of this that's what kills me more.

Him: you have the chance to do right by her now babe, the three of you can start afresh and build a relationship.

Me: that's true, God gave us a chance here.

Him: I am just glad the bad blood is over. I am happy you and Lwandle will have your mother.

Me: Thank you for being so supportive babe, I love you so much and I am sorry for how I've been acting these past few days.

Him: I love you too my Mrs Bhengu.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I don't think I have ever felt so numb, heart break is something else, it makes everything else worthless, all I am thinking about is Lwandle, how she might be kissing her new girlfriend, if they've went all the way. I have even created a face for that person and I hate how my mind has made her perfect... On the other hand I am thinking what if she decided to stay with Banele but that's not an option because it's simply not who she is... I am cracking my skull and every scenario I come up with leaves me emotionally crippled. I have fought myself a million times not to call Siya and ask to talk to Ocean because I am afraid of further rejection, loving someone who has moved on hits harder than chasing a new girl playing hard to get...The bedroom door opens and my mom walks in with a tray of food, she places it on the chest of drawers and goes to open the curtains making the sun illuminate the room.

Ma: Indigo what's going on with you?

Me: I'm good.

Ma: clearly not Indi talk to me you know you can.

She says so sincerely I sit up right.

Me: how do I make it all go away?

Ma: make what go away?

Me: Nolwandle mama, I love her so much.

Ma: oh Indigo, after it happened you were supposed to have given yourself the time to just deal with it all you know, moving on to another girl just made it worse.

Me: I just didn't want to feel this way.

Ma: and you weren't feeling like this what changed?

Me: she has someone new, and she looks happy, happier than she was with me.

Saying those words shutter the little left in me.

Ma: There is no way you can dodge a heart break baby but you can learn to accept the new

reality, just hold on to the good memories you and that girl shared and love her enough by being glad she has found happiness.

Me: I can't be happy because I want her, I love her more than I thought I did mama.

Ma: problem is she has moved on, she took her time and moved on after.

Me: I just need to fight for her.

Ma: that would be bringing confusion to her and that's not what you do to someone you love.

Stay away and if you two were ever meant to be then you will surely find your way back to each other.

I bury my head in my hands

Me: I wish you would have met her maybe you would understand why I am losing my mind like this.

Ma: I would have loved to see the girl that captured my daughter's heart.

She says smiling and I wish I could offer her a genuine one but I am going through the most this moment.

—
•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Self inflicted pain and hate is what my sister and I did, we thought my mother didn't care but she did, in her own way, in a way only she knew how and because we wanted it to show it differently we thought she wasn't doing anything at all, the lessons I have taken from our situation will definitely make me a better mother and daughter also a good person in general... What we lacked back then was communication and our environment didn't offer that to us hence everyone was concluding on their own... I am just glad we are at a better place now and we have an opportunity to heal together and have a relationship based on good qualities and the truth and of course the absence of my

father will make everything better... Siya and bhut'Bongani went out to get groceries so it's just mama and I, she has been cleaning around the house while I stuff my face with food in front of the TV...

Ma: Lwandle, do you need anything else?

I chuckle.

Me: kodwa mama do you want to make me fat.

Ma: you are pregnant baby you need all the nutrients you can get.

Me: maybe I'll have something later.

Ma: okay then, what are you watching?

She asks settling down next to me.

Me: Come Dine With Me, it's a cooking competition.

Ma: you know I've never got to watch anything besides church channels.

I laugh

Me: that's all over. You don't even have to think about it now, live your life how you've always wanted.

Ma: speaking of which, what are your plans? You know with the baby and school?

Me: I just have to go and rewrite then after go to university to study towards a degree in Social Work.

Ma: what about Biomedical Technology?

I smile at her amused that she knows what I've always wanted to study.

Me: I will revisit that dream but after what I went through I just want to fulfil my purpose by helping others through dark times.

Ma: that's very Noble of you Lwandle and the baby?

Me: I am keeping her mama, I can't imagine my life without my daughter, I know I am young and a child myself but we will grown together, I will raise her and so will she.

Ma: I can help with the baby, I will look after her when you go to school and you want some time to yourself.

Me: I would really appreciate that.

Ma: I will start helping you with finding a good institution to rewrite your NSC exam and in return you help me find a house for the three of us.

She says and I narrow my eyes.

Me: you want to buy a house?

Ma: yes for me, you and my grandbaby. We can't stay with my son in law longer, he was kind enough but we shouldn't over stay.

Me: that's true.

Ma: but if you don't want to move in with me I will understand, I'll rent for you somewhere.

I shake my head.

Me: no no mama, I want to live with you.

She let's out a sigh of relief

Ma: thank God. We will go house hunting soon just need to tell your sister.

I nod

—
ONE WEEK LATER

•MONDLI ZULU

He left and he didn't even say goodbye, he just took what belonged to him and disappeared. I am loosing my mind here, I don't know how to focus... On top of everything that is going on Thwala just had to add to my stress, the results came and they proved I lied and the videos are real so I was given two choices, to loose my chair forever and never return to the church or go for conversion therapy and we all know I am not going there... The next logical thing was to take myself out of this damn place, I don't have anything left for me here so I resigned a few days ago and went to claim my pension funds. I am moving to Johannesburg to be close with

Theodore and work on having him back in my life, it's time I fully accept myself and live my truth... I am ready to fight tooth and nail to get him back and get us back to where we used to be before that day... I drink the last of my vodka and prepare to go buy another bottle, I am celebrating my freedom in a sense and the good life that awaits me in Johannesburg after jumping through a few hoops Theo will put in place... The drive to the bottle store is not long, I make a purchase and as I drive back I see the road that leads to the free way, if I was sober I would stick to my decision of leaving tomorrow but what the hell I can make it there today it's not like I have anything at the guest house. I join the road and make my way to Johannesburg immediately, from now on I am a firm believer of instant gratification...I am cruising at 160km/h listening to some songs Theo loved, I am drinking straight from the bottle as I don't have the time to be stopping to mix... I move my eyes from the road and it's all it took for me to lose control of the car it's dark

now and trucks from Johannesburg to Durban use this road, I am in the lane of the oncoming traffic failing to control the car back to my lane, the driver of the huge truck is flipping the lights and tries to shift to my lane but it's too late to avoid this head on collision and I am practically going under this gigantic truck...My see my life flashing before my eyes and then everything goes blank.

•BONGEKA ZULU

This is a second chance to be more than I was to my children and this past week has been total bliss, mothering openly and freely feels good and being needed and appreciated by my children is fulfilling in every way possible... It will take us a while to be fully on the same page but we are on the right path and they both suggested that we attend therapy and that's a great idea honestly, healing is a process that needs nurturing...Nolwandle and I found the

perfect house, it's here in Durban but a distance from Siya's neighborhood, she was sad that we will be leaving but she fully understood my reasons, we will be moving in this tuesday as we waiting for the smell of paint to fade...we are sitting in the lounge watching some nice programmes. My phone rings and it's a number I don't recognize.

Me: hello...yes I am...when?...what happened?
Yoh yoh yoh...which hospital again?...okay.

I hang up and my children are looking at me intently they even put the TV on mute.

Lwa: mama what's going on?

I am still shocked but I surprisingly I am not feeling sad or any emotion of pity and sympathy.

Siya: Ma?!

I snap out of it.

Me: it was a hospital here in Durban, they are telling me that Zulu was involved in a very bad accident and he is in a bad shape.

Lwandle gasps for air.

Siya: why are they telling you, let them call the Thwala's.

Me: they say I am his next of kin and I have to come sign some papers to allow them to do things to save him life.

Lwa: hectic.

I look at the both of them and they are also not crying or anything that shows that the news hurt them.

Siya: wow hai. Ku rough shame.

Bongani: mama do you need me to drive you there?

I look at my daughters

Siya: it's okay mama go and sign whatever, I'd tell you to let him die but I can't be that evil.

Bongani: baby!

Siya: I am not saying she should love.

Lwa: let's go with ma Siya, she can't do this alone.

Me: thank you Nana. I'll grab my bag.

Bongani: where are my keys babe?

He asks his wife as I walk to the bedroom.

•No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 60

•BONGEKA ZULU

We have been at the hospital for hours now and I am tired, we've been drinking coffee, a cup after a cup just to keep awake but it's not working, poor Lwandle couldn't have any because she is pregnant...They made me sign a few documents giving them a go ahead to operate, the toughest one was deciding on an

DNR order (Do No Resuscitate) but after deliberating with my children we decided against it, because we want him to live and face his demons, death will just be too easy for that bastard plus I was not about to have his death on my conscious...Soon as he is okay I want a divorce I won't be in a place like this again where I have to make decisions on his behalf I just can't... After eternity two Doctors walk in the waiting room and you can just tell how tired they are...

Dr: Mondli Zulu?

The first one asks and I stand up.

Me: yes doctor, how is he?

Dr: it was touch and go for a while, the next few hours will be critical, he will be in ICU and we will monitor him closely.

Lwa: so he will fully recover?

Dr: unfortunately it's going to take a long time for Mr Zulu to heal completely, he has lost all functions of his limbs.

We all gasp for air.

Siya: he is paralyzed?

My daughter is the first to seek clarity.

Dr: Yes he is, I am sorry.

Me: wow that's uhm, oh my God.

Dr: once he has recovered his wounds and surgery he is going to need extensive Physiotherapy to try and give him back his functions.

Siya: hai thank you doctor.

Dr2: you can see him if you want.

He says and I feel embarrassed that we didn't even ask, we are probably the first family who didn't ask to see the patient.

Me: Yes please.

Dr2: okay follow us please.

We all follow them and reach the most quiet section of the hospital, only the beeping sounds of machines.

Dr2: you can't walk in but you'll just see him from the window here.

He says and I nod before they walk away. There he is laying on the bed covered in bandages and so many machines attached to him.

Siya: how the mighty have fallen.

Lwa: you can say that again.

Me: I still can't sympathize with him.

Siya: God understands mama.

I nod and we just stand there looking at him for a while.

Bongani: I should take you home, you need to rest now, you'll come back tomorrow.

My son in law says

•ZIZIPHO MHLONGO

We are at a better place in our marriage now, we talk more and there are no insults or him attempting to bring me down. He has become a gentleman and it's a bliss to witness. I think it's time I use this phase he is in to get things that I want, that will surely benefit our marriage as well... I woke up early and did all my chores then prepared his favorite for breakfast just to soften him up and make it a little hard for him to deny me...I check the time on the watch on our dining wall and it's just a little after 9am, Nele can sleep when he wants God the food will get cold now, I should just go and wake him up...even before I can walk out the room he appears in his shorts and vest bare foot, I will admit my husband is a looker shame...

Me: morning love.

Him: sure Zee.

Me: how did you sleep.

Him: like a baby hey, what about you?

Me: great thanks, made your favorite.

He smiles.

Him: I could smell it from my room, thank you.

Me: sit down so I can dish up for you.

I smile saying this and he does as I ask and takes a seat.

Me: so I was thinking.

Him: about what?

I swallow

Me: we are at a better place now right?

Him: I guess so why?

Me: just that I have been thinking you know, we only are husband because you paid lobola.

Him: your point?

Me: I would like to have a wedding Nele like be in a white dress have everyone come to celebrate with us as we make it official.

He laughs.

Him: Zipho ai I have a little going on right now a wedding will just add to my stress so just hold off that though.

He says and I sigh.

Me: oh I see but at least give me this one thing.

Him: which is?

He asks as I give him the plate of food and he pours juice and takes a sip.

Me: give me your seed to grow Banele, I want a child.

He chokes on his drink and coughs

Him: excuse me?

Me: I mean we are married and the next logical thing is to have a baby, I am ready to make you a father coz I believe you will make a great one and let's be honest our baby will bring us closer together.

Him: yoh girl, you are asking me of something really big. It's too early for such heavy conversations.

Me: but it's necessary conversations.

Him: I will eat in the garden.

He stands up and takes his food.

Me: Kodwa Banele.

Him: yoh Zipho just chill.

He walks away and I seriously don't know how to feel, why is he holding off if we are at a better place in our marriage?

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

So in this situation do we say the Lord is vindicating us or the Lord wouldn't punish his own like this? To be honest at some point last night I was desperately hoping that the doctors would walk in and tell us that they did everything they could and he didn't make it but I realized death would be so easy man, he needs to live so he can see us do better without him, he needs to see that we survived after he tried everything to bring us down... He just added

unnecessary stress and pressure on to my mother because she is legally his wife and all decisions regarding him are left to her and that's really not fair, the church should be in this position because he lived for it, he didn't care about his family but we are expected to stand up and be there for him, what bull shit... I just wonder what is going to happen when he wakes up, where will he live, who will take care of him? I just pray that's not another responsibility they will place on my mother...

Ma: Lwandle did you finish packing?

She asks walking in my bedroom.

Me: I just need to pack my shoes, I just find it hard to bend over.

She laughs.

Ma: I will help with that sisi don't worry.

Me: thank you, I just can't wait to be at the new house.

Ma: my excitement has died down because of this thing with your father.

I sigh and she sits on the bed.

Me: don't do that to yourself ma, this is your achievement this is your way of taking control of your life after he took it don't allow him to do it again.

Her: why must all this be on me when he was never a good person?

Me: you have options, divorce him and send him to a inpatient physiotherapy center.

Her: that's what I was thinking too, I can't put my life on pause again because of him.

Me: exactly ma you deserve to go on with your life too, he has already taken too much from you don't give him more.

Ma: I will talk to the doctors to find out if they know some places.

Me: yes you do that.

Ma: now let me pack your shoes. You are so big at almost 7 months one would swear you are the last lap.

Me: she is heavy even.

Ma: wait and see how tiny she will be and you'll wonder why on Earth you were so big.

I chuckle.

Me: I will be so mad at her I swear.

Ma: you will be too taken by her to even care about anything else.

I smile and brush my belly.

•THEODORE MOKOENA

I have been back in Johannesburg for a while now and honestly nothing feels the same anymore, I was hoping to come back here with him so we can build our life but it all came crumbling down and because of that I am failing

to get my self together, yes I hate him and what he did but in the same light I love him, and it's heart breaking as I saw this man as my forever... My situation has proved that there is a thin line between love and hate. I haven't went back to the school where I was teaching to find out if I can come back, a friend of mine there told me that they didn't advertise my post but rather they assigned my classes to my colleagues. I want to be in the right frame of mind when I decide to go back to work, that's a private school and I can't go there while my emotions are all over the place because if I lose it with the students I would be out of a job before I can say MJOLO...My routine has been the same, eat, drink, bath, cry then sleep and I have grown to love my pity party, nothing is expected from me in this comfort zone...

Fire: okay no this has gone on more than it should have.

My brother says walking in

Me: you won't understand.

Fire: I understand that you love him Theo but you can't continue like this.

Me: I don't know how to go back to normal.

Fire: of course you do babe, you just need to snap out of it please. You are a strong person and not even love will strip you off that.

Me: I had already laid my life for him Mlilo it's not easy getting over that man.

Fire: no one is expecting it to be easy but you just can't stop living because he was a hypocrite. Do you think he is drinking like a fish missing work or missing his church meetings?

I sigh and shake my head.

Me: No he isn't.

Fire: exactly now get your ass off that bed tomorrow and go to that school and tell them you want your job back.

I nod.

Me: you are right I've cried enough.

Fire: yassss honey now be the baddest Gay Beyonce and claim back your life.

I giggle and nod.

•BANELE THWALA

I should really stop sleeping with this girl now that she has mentioned wanting a child, it's clear that she would refuse to abort if I were to nut in her by mistake... I can't be expecting two children at once, firstly I don't want anything that will tie me to Zipho forever and a baby will ensure that, and lastly I won't risk Lwandle hating me for it and possibly not wanting to come back home...The only child I am having is the one coming with my wife and she is the only one who will give me children, so Zee must just stop dreaming and snap back to reality soon, me acting right shouldn't confuse her it's all for the life I want to give MaZulu and our baby nothing to do with her... My phone rings and it's my father...

Me: Baba.

Him: Nele unjani?

Me: well thanks, unjani?

Him: great son. Have you heard?

Me: heard what?

Him: your father in law got into a car accident and he is not looking good.

I sigh.

Me: I have two pops so which one are you referring to?

Him: Zulu of course.

Me: what?! Is he okay?

Him: not really sure, I heard from someone who was at the scene of the accident.

Me: where did all this happen.

Him: the freeway that leads to Johannesburg.

Me: Hectic!

Him: check on maZulu she might be taking this hard.

Me: I'll text her and extend a line of communication should she want to pour out her heart.

Him: I am so proud of the man you are becoming for her and your son.

Me: thanks Baba.

Him: how is maMhlongo.

I sigh.

Me: she asked me for a baby earlier today.

He laughs.

Him: life of a polygamist, just don't get her pregnant yet it might cause too much drama when your eldest comes home with a baby, focus on Nolwandle first.

Me: exactly baba, I will hold off her bed for a while.

Him: good son.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 61

2 MONTHS LATER

•INDIGO NCQOBO

The saying "time heals" only makes sense to me now, I never thought I'd get over Ocean but with time it hurt less and less until it didn't anymore don't get me wrong I still love her and if she comes around and says she wants us to go again I'd jump at the opportunity but for now I am good, I am accepting of the reality in front of us and I want nothing but the best for her... I am pouring my energy into my work and I've been doing a killing in that department and it didn't go unnoticed as I am no longer in the plant but the office, I got a promotion and I am now a senior, the guys at the plant report to me and I do all the planning and everything...I am

enjoying it because it's out of my comfort zone and I am growing, with how things are going I would have achieved all I dreamt of before age thirty...The is a knock on my office door and I look up, it's Bridget...

Me: come in.

I say leaning back on my chair and she makes her way in wearing the compulsory PPE.

Her: uhm we have a problem in the plant, the melting machine is malfunctioning.

Me: where is the engineer on duty?

I ask because she was supposed to go to him first.

Her: He isn't in his office that's why I came to you.

Me: let me try his cell.

She takes a sit and I dial the guy, but it takes me to voicemail how the fuck is a company cell off, some people don't respect their jobs.

Me: I don't know where he could possibly be but I will deal with him later.

Her: so what are we going to do now coz production is at a stand still?

Me: I don't have a choice but to do it myself.

I say standing up and wearing my reflector as you are not allowed on site without it.

Her: this job really suits you man

Me: thanks.

I say coolly making sure that I am not too friendly, knowing her she would blow it out of proportion.

Her: do we have to be like strangers though?

She asks feeling defeated.

Me: we are at work here Bridget, do you mind?

Her: yes I mind, I miss you and you are treating me like someone you never shared anything special with.

Me: let's go to the plant.

Her: Indigo please.

Me: no Bree, we've been here before and I ended up being a step mother, no more, we can't be friends we are not getting back together, I am your boss that's it.

Her: oh wow just like that?

Me: will I need to report you for harassment?

She gasps for air and stands up.

Her: there won't be any need for that.

Me: good, now shall we?

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Last night a flood of water came down my thighs and it was time, we don't live far from the hospital so my mother contacted them to send an ambulance and I was rushed here, labour is painful I won't lie but it's worth the perfection that comes out of you with a piercing cry that brings tears of joy to your eyes, the minute they laid him on my chest everything was okay, I felt an overflow of love, happiness and fulfilment

and like he felt the same he stopped crying immediately and started suckling on his tiny hand, and there he was finally here, the love of my life... I am still in awe, still can't believe he will call me mom and bring girls around my house, the thought of that alone makes me smile and sad at the same time, I wish he could be this little for the rest of his life so I can always shield him from the harsh world... He is one day and so tiny like my mother once said, I am afraid I will break him but the nurses said I am doing good... My phone vibrates under the pillow and I reach for it, it's my sister, she hasn't had the chance to see him but mama informed her and I also send her a picture of him...

Me: mamkhulu.

She laughs out so loud in excitement.

Her: I told you it's a boy, Lord I am so happy.

Me: yeah right whatever.

Her: oh Lwandle Nkazimulo is so perfect.

Me: I know right, I can't believe he is mine Siya.

Her: oh muntuza, I am so happy for you baby.

Me: thank you, so when are you coming?

Her: after work obviously.

Me: but we are being discharged today, any minute now mama will come get us.

Her: I will see you later, I can't even focus at work I just want to hold him. uBhutiza ka mamkhulu.

I smile and the happiness laced in her voice is not one you can't miss.

Me: he will be waiting for you don't worry.

Her: how is he like? Does he eat a lot? Is he a cry baby?

I chuckle

Me: nix he is forever sleeping. He is such a sweet baby.

Her: Ncooow Lwandle, yena bakithi.

Me: I am yet to get used to breast feeding.

Her: please make sure he is well fed.

Me: yes ma'am.

Her: Lalela I need to go back to work, I will see you and boy boy later.

Me: okay later.

I hang up at the same time the nurse brings Nkazi back from his bath.

Nurse: we are back mommy.

Me: I am sure he is hungry now.

Nurse: yes please feed him.

She hands him to me and he flickers his eyes with a smile making me melt.

Me: okay let's feed you my little man, let mama give you some good good.

I say directing my breast in him mouth and he suckles on it for dear life.

•BONGEKA ZULU

The whole Mondli thing was taking it's toll on me, he hasn't woken up from his Coma the doctors are starting to talk about switching the machines off and maybe it's for the best you know coz it would save us a lot of stress and energy... Until last night I kept going to the hospital for him but it changed coz Lwandle has brought my grandson into this world... He become a calm after a storm and God's glory hence the name Nkazimulo become befitting for him... I just finished preparing for them here at home and I need to go get them from the hospital, I am so excited it feel like he is my second chance you know, to make right all the wrongs I did with his mother and Siyamthanda... A car hoots outside my house and I go peep by the dinning room window and it's the meter taxi I always use, he was fast today. I quickly grab my bag and the car seat as well as Lwandle's change of clothes...The drive to the hospital is not long. I walk in and I am met by Mondli's doctor going to the reception...

Dr: Mrs Zulu.

Me: hello doctor.

Dr: I was actually going to tell the nurses to call you.

I frown

Me: is everything okay?

Dr: After such a long time and us almost giving up hope, your husband woke up a few hours ago.

Me: huh?

I ask but it's not really a question but it was out of my mouth before I could even think.

Dr: I am saying your husband has woken up from the 2 months Coma he was in.

Me: uhm wow, how is he?

Dr: he was asking for you. Infact you were the first thing he asked for after waking up.

Me: are you sure?

I am shocked, why would he ask for me when we were not even on speaking terms when he

got into this accident, I mean he didn't even know where I was.

Dr: very sure Mrs. Zulu, this way please.

Me: I am actually here to get my daughter and grandson.

Dr: it won't take long.

He says and I sigh following him. We walk in his bedroom and there is a nurse with him, he turns to me and he looks like a shadow of his old self, he has lost weight and he has black coloration around his eyes. I don't remember the last time he didn't have tubes in his mouth and nose.

Him: Bongeka.

My name comes out of his mouth in a whisper.

Me: Zulu.

Him: Forgive me please, I was wrong I was very wrong. I see this now and I am sorry from the bottom of my heart.

I laugh as tears form in my eyes.

Me: you mean to tell me that you never for once knew what you did to me and my daughters was wrong?

Him: I was just in my own world Bongeka, my demons were just-

I quickly cut him off.

Me: Today is a happy day for me and my children and not even you can take that away from us. To me you are still in coma and I will deal with this some other day.

Him: Bongeka please.

I shake my head and look at the confused nurse and doctor before walking out.

•BANELE THWALA

I was hoping she would call me this morning to tell but nothing, I gave her the benefit of doubt and thought maybe in the afternoon but still nothing, could it be that it was never her

intention to call me when she gave birth?
Imagine if I didn't hire someone to follow her that day from the flat i found her i wouldn't have known where she was the entire time with my child... I love her but it's clear she intends to keep my child away from me and that's just not fair, I am fighting to be a better man for her but she does this to me? I take my phone to dial the number she gave me but it tells me it doesn't exist. I close my eyes to calm down so I don't act on impulse.

Me: calm down Banele calm down.

I say to myself and take deep breaths. I feel myself cool and go back to being rational. I dial the guy that has been on her tail since she left Jo'burg and he picks up immediately.

Him: grootman?

Me: where is she?

Him: at home she was discharged this afternoon.

Me: is the baby with her?

Him: yes, her mother got them both.

Me: I see and stay on them, every move she makes especially with my child.

Him: sure thing Grootman.

Me: I am giving her just a week to reach out to me if she doesn't I am coming down there.

Him: okay we will communicate on the phone.

Me: sweet staff.

I hang up hoping that she reaches out to me because if I am to go to Durban it won't be pretty I swear, Lwandle knows I love her and she uses that to her advantage but I hate people who make a fool out of me, I hate it with all my heart. MaZulu better come through

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 62

•MONDLI ZULU

If I could take back the hands of time God knows that I wouldn't have tried driving to Johannesburg as drunk as I was, if only I had waited for the next day until I was sober to drive but there is no point in thinking about what I could have done differently... I have no one and I have nothing, I am just a man not even a man I am just a cripple that will need help doing the smallest of things and who will help me, because I have alienated my family? I regret everything I have ever done to Bongeka and our children, they didn't deserve anything I have ever did to them, they didn't know the kind of demons I was fighting within myself and I shouldn't have taken my frustrations out on them and after all the person who made me this way died a long time ago I could have been truthful to myself and my family but I chose to be the monster and I have no one to blame but myself for how the universe is dealing with my wickedness... I am so thirsty but I can't even

reach the glass of water next to me, I try to raise my hand hoping for a miracle but it doesn't even move, the frustration just get the better of me I let my tears fall... The nurse walks in and I quickly look away because I can't have her see me crying like a baby....

Nurse: can I get you anything?

Me: water please.

I say and she takes the glass and puts in a fresh draw and helps me drink.

Nurse: you okay now or would you like some more?

Me: I am fine thank you.

She nods and starts checking on me.

Me: has my wife showed up here?

Her face falls.

Nurse: not until the day you woke up.

Me: so she hasn't been back since that day.

Nurse: I am afraid so but the doctors have called her to inform her about your discharge since the therapy center couldn't come get you as there was a mix up with some documents, and your room isn't ready yet.

She says and I frown.

Me: what do you mean therapy center?

Nurse: Mrs Zulu got you into an inpatient physiotherapy center.

Me: she is basically throwing me into a home.

Nurse: don't look at it that way, the staff there is trained to work with people like yourself, to help them back to health.

Me: I understand.

I say with a broken heart but what did I expect? After everything did I really think she will be the one to look after me herself?

•THEODORE MOKWENA

I went back to the school and the principal was so excited to see me, apparently she has been dreading to advertise my post and she doesn't even have a valid reason, I guess the universe saw this whole thing coming... Well I will be starting with work in two week coz she has to reinstate me and do everything with the department again then I will start with the new month, my old colleagues were really happy about my coming back... I have been trying to get over Mondli every day and I am winning day by day I will get there soon... I am parked outside Fire's workplace as I needed some fresh air so I decided to pick him up and treat him to late lunch... He walks out the building and I hoot so he can notice me, he smiles and runs to my car...

Him: are you not a life saver?

I smile

Me: can I interest you in a late lunch just us?

Him: I could never say no to some spoils.

Me: where do you want to eat?

Him: any place just near the mall, I want to get some gifts for baby Nkazimulo and courier them to Durban.

An idea hits me.

Me: why don't we just just take them to her and see the baby.

He smiles.

Him: that's a good idea plus I am 4 days off starting tomorrow.

Me: then we can go tomorrow.

He gets excited and it hypes me too, I need to just clear my head and what better way than an open road, good company and seeing a new born?

Him: I'll just inform Paul then and we can go, she is going to be so excited.

Me: don't tell them, let it be a surprise.

Him: let's go baby shopping then honey.

I start the engine and we hit the road, I am thinking Sandton city.

•BONGEKA ZULU

I don't know what to do really, the center where I booked Zulu has a few glitches and they can't take him in until next Monday and the hospital is discharging him tomorrow, they asked me to come get him and I don't know if I am comfortable with having him in my house and I don't think my children will appreciate it too. Can't they just keep him for a couple of days till the center can go get him, who will bath and feed him while he is here coz it's definitely not me... I sigh and walk back to the lounge where both my daughters are, Siya is forever here because of Nkazimulo, she is happy for her sister yes but I can see the longing in her eyes to hold her own seed like that and I know the good Lord will bless her too...

Me: Girls

They both move their eyes to me.

Lwa: is everything okay ma?

Me: that was the hospital on the phone.

Siya: what do they want?

Me: they asked me to come get Mondli tomorrow from the hospital.

Siya: haibo the center is supposed to pick him up right?

Me: his room there isn't ready so he has to wait until Monday before he can go there for rehab.

The both sigh.

Lwa: yoh so now what's going to happen?

Me: I honestly don't know what to do, I am not comfortable having him here but I don't have a choice.

Lwa: I don't think I want him in our space too. Who will take care of him?

Siya: I know a lady who was a hospice nurse and she can come here for a few days until he leaves for the center

Lwa: that might work, so long as he will be in the bedroom where we won't see him.

Me: we just can't seem to get Mondli out of our lives, it's tiring.

Siya: just a few more days mama and you won't have to be bothered.

Me: I guess so, please talk to the nurse.

Siya: soon as I leave I am headed to her place, she could really use the money, their hospice closed down and life has been difficult, but at least she is all alone and doesn't have kids.

Me: at least we are helping someone in the process.

Lwa: very true, but I still maintain the Thwala's should be doing the running around after all he lived for them.

Siya: speaking of them muntuza are you planning to call Banele?

I look at her and she sighs.

Lwa: I don't know, I just feel like I need to protect myself and my son especially from those people.

Me: they will never do anything to you, and to just avoid drama just tell him and then work on co-parenting, at least he hasn't been a nuisance you know.

Lwa: I'll think about it.

•BANELE ZULU

She hasn't called me and it's clear I should just prepare to go to Durban and get them myself, Lwandle wants to play dirty and I don't mind that, that is also my baby and she doesn't have a right to keep him/her from me... My parents are already telling me that I shouldn't have let them leave the first time and I let them think so because I didn't want to mention that I got someone to follow her, I wanted them to see

that she will do right by me but I guess I was being delusional... I can barely focus on anything because I just want to see my child and be there and not knowing if it's a girl or boy and the name is just not fair on me... I get up from my bed to go get something to eat from the kitchen and my phone rings before I can even reach the door, who the fuck could it be? I am honestly not in the mood, I go take it and it's a number I don't recognize...

Me: yes!

I snap and the person goes silent a while I roll my eyes, I am about to sneer at the person when her voice comes through.

Her: Hey, it's Lwa.

I close my eyes and just like that her voice soothes me and calms me down.

Me: maZulu, sthandwa sam, how are you?

She let's out a deep sigh.

Her: I am okay wena?

Me: I am very well now that I heard from you.

Her: like promised I called to inform you that I have given birth.

My heart starts beating so fast, excitement taking over me.

Me: that's great news, when did it happen?

Her: 5 days ago, sorry I didn't call then, my hands were just full, and I couldn't think about anything else.

I am shocked that she is being honest, maybe I was just being unnecessary thinking she will do me bad.

Me: I totally understand baby.

Her: yeah he is just perfect.

That statement just completes me.

Me: we have a son maZulu?

You can't miss the emotions and joy in my voice, tears even flood my eyes.

Her: yes I named him Nkazimulo.

Me: such a beautiful name, thank you so much
Nolwandle you seriously don't know what you
have done for me, thank you so much.

I let them fall.

Her: I need to go, I have to feed him.

I smile envisioning them.

Me: please send me a photo of him.

Her: I will.

Me: I will be coming to see you two, I will call
later to discuss it.

Her: okay then goodbye.

Me: goodbye.

She hangs up and I drop my phone on the bed
and run around the house screaming, Zipho
walks out of her bedroom to see what's
happening, I pull her to me and give her a tight
hug,

Zee: what's going on Nele?

Me: Nkazimulo Zee Nkazimulo.

I say and go to my study to call my parents leaving her with a million questions unanswered.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 63

•INDIGO NCQOBO

Remember I mentioned how I'll have all I ever wanted before age 30? well I've bagged the first thing which is property, I bought my own house and even though my mother was sad that I am leaving she had to understand that she can't baby me forever, at some point I had to cut the umbilical cord, one day God will remember her and what will become of me? She understood that I want my own space and I want to become my own woman in every way possible... Luckily the estate agent had an offer on certain houses

for free interior design with your own furniture though, so my home is ready and waiting for me to move in, I sent a few invitations to my friends and close colleagues to come through for my house warming tomorrow afternoon coz I want then gone in the evening so I can just relax and get used to my having my own space... I had a long day and all I wanted was to go home shower and sleep, but mama wasn't having it, she wanted to see the house and she wanted to see it now so I had to pick her up at home and go show her my joint...As I drive in she starts ululating, are y'all's mom's this dramatic? I park outside the double garage and we walk out...

Ma: Indigo this house is big baby.

Me: I plan on having a lot of children so space is necessary.

She laughs.

Ma: my God I am so proud of you.

Me: thanks ma, that means a lot coming from you.

Ma: we have to go get your grandmother so she can see this achievement.

Me: I wanted her to come with Lucy but public transport for her eish.

Ma: that's true she wouldn't survive being cramped in a taxi.

Me: I'll go get her when I am off and have her stay with me for a few days.

Ma: that's good baby, she is going to be as proud as me.

Me: that's all I've ever wanted to do ma, make you proud after everything you've sacrificed for me and your undying support.

Ma: you are my blessing and miracle baby I could have never thrown you out to the wolves.

Me: I love you so much Queen.

I say going in for a hug

Ma: I Love you too Snegugu.

I pull out the hug quickly.

Me: you see now aa mama.

She laughs carefree.

Ma: I honestly don't know why you hate such a beautiful name...

I shake my head.

Me: let's go inside ai.

I take her hand so we don't continue with this conversation, I hate this name and I doubt it will ever change...

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I know a lot of mom's complain about their new borns not sleeping enough but Nkazimulo can sleep yoh I even wake him sometimes just to see if he is still breathing but he would just flicker his eyes a bit then drift back to lala land, he is just a peaceful baby... On the other hand Banele said he will be coming through

tomorrow to see Nkazi and I will use this chance to talk to him about co-parenting and visitations, I just pray we reach an amicable agreement, only thinking about our son and nothing else... The door opens and my mother walks in followed by the nurse Siya got for Zulu, she is pushing his wheel chair, and soon as my eyes land on him my whole body just freezes... He looks nothing like the bully he is, infact he looks so vulnerable but in my head I still see that man that terrorized us like we didn't have the same blood running in our veins...

Him: Lwandle.

He says and tears blur my vision.

Him: I don't know how I'll ever show you how sorry I am.

Me: you don't get to talk to me about being sorry Bab'Zulu.

Him: I know I was evil and I can't change it, I can only pray that you find it in your heart to forgive me.

I wipe my tears and Nkazi cries on the couch where he is sleeping, he looks at him and gasp for air. I quickly go pick him up.

Him: you've already put to bed?

I shake my head warning him not to talk or look at my son.

Him: He is more reason why you shouldn't harbour anger and hate in your heart, I did that and it got me nowhere Lwandle, infact it made me an abuser.

Me: don't do that, just don't even try to do that..do not manipulate me into forgiving you, do not even use my son to get what you want with me... You are only here until the center can come get you, while you are here only talk to your nurse and stay in the bedroom, no one here wants to see nor talk to you.

I say with a firm voice.

Him: Nolwandle please.

Ma: Zulu stop it, she has said her peace so let her be, you can't force any of us to let go and

forgive you, you've never done anything for us that will make us see you worthy of our forgiveness, for once in your life don't be selfish

He nods looking down

Ma: please take him to the room we showed you earlier.

Nurse: okay sis'Bongeka.

She wheels him away and I exhale deeply, I wasn't aware I was holding my breath.

Ma: Don't let him replace the joy and fulfilment in your heart with anger and resentment.

Me: this man just has a way of taking away people's happiness by just being in the same room as them.

Ma: we will not allow him to do that, we have worked hard to reach this point to just allow him steal it like a thief in the night.

Me: that's very true mama.

Him: now place my baby down coz I don't want him getting used to being carried.

I do as she says and place him back down.

•BANELE THWALA

My son, my boy, he is more than the word perfect, he is everything I've ever dreamt of, I don't know how to explain my love for that boy, I haven't even seen or held him but my heart he has already stolen... I don't know what I will give maZulu to show my appreciation for making me a man amongst man, not every man gets a chance to know this phase in life but she welcomed my seed and grew it inside of her and for that she will always be a queen... I am busy packing my bags coz I am driving home to my parents so I can be near Durban tomorrow, I don't want to get there tired because of the long drive... I forwarded my parents the pictures Lwandle sent me and my mother lost it, you'd swear this is her first grandchild but my siblings have given them plenty before Nkazimulo...

Zipho walks in my bedroom and frowns looking at the bag I am packing...

Her: are we going somewhere?

She asks

Me: I am going home to my parents.

Her: you didn't tell me this Nele.

I sigh

Me: I just got the call last night.

Her: does this have anything to do with iNkazimulo you were shouting yesterday?

I smile

Me: yes it does, it definitely does.

Her: must I ask what that is about as well.

She says exasperated and I raise an eyebrow.

Me: step back and remember who you are talking to Zizipho.

Her: I am sorry just that you keep me in the dark so much I don't feel like your wife at times

Me: you will be filled in on everything when I come back on Sunday, everything will make sense.

Her: if you say so and Nele.

Me: yes?

Her: please use this time to think about my requests.

I frown.

Me: which requests again?

Her: giving me a baby and us making it official.

Me: don't be that person Zee yoh.

Her: what person am I being now?

Me: kill joy that's who you are right now Jesus Christ.

Her: you know what I've said my peace think about it and I am walking away now coz I don't want any bad blood between us.

She walks out of my room and I laugh, this one has drama for days.

•THEO MOKOENA

I knew an open road was what I needed, my head is clearer now and I think I will go back to Johannesburg knowing what I have to do. Fire was the best entertainment I didn't even feel tired of the long distance, we drove into Durban five minutes ago and we called Siya to give us her address but she told us that Lwandle and their mom now live in their own place and gave us the address, I don't know how I feel about meeting the woman whom I slept with her husband, what if she knows me and kicks me out of her house? Siya said she will come soon as she knocks off from work... Google maps take us straight there without any hassles, we both get out the car and take everything we bought baby Nkazimulo... My brother is the first one in the yard going to the door, his excitement is just contagious making my little anxiety about Lwa's mom disappear, I get in behind him soon as a woman I don't recognize opens the door...

Her: hello, can I help you?

She asks with a voice so soft and polite.

Fire: Hello, is this where Lwandle lives?

Her: yes it is, I am her mother, Bongeka.

She is so beautiful and sweet I feel very bad.

Fire: I am Mlilo her friend from Jo'burg.

She smiles.

Her: she has mentioned you, please come in.

We walk in and she leads us to the lounge where the new mommy is breastfeeding.

Fire & I: Hey mommy surprise.

We say in unison and her eyes hoot up and her lips curl up to form a beautiful smile.

Lwa: You guys.

She says standing up and if it wasn't for the baby in her arms she would have jumped on us.

Me: congratulations baby doll, he is so beautiful.

I say and kiss her cheek

Lwa: thank you baby, but why didn't you tell me you were coming I would have prepared for you guys.

Fire: it was meant to be a surprise babe.

Her: I will get some refreshments, please feel at home.

Her mother says and goes to the kitchen.

Fire: can I hold him please.

Lwa: ok baby you have visitors here to see you, wake up please wake up Nkazi and see your gifts.

She says kissing him and its a bliss to see and feel her joy. The baby opens his eyes and flashes her his smile. Oh God look at that. She hands him to Fire.

Fire: Lwandle! I have baby fever.

Lwa: you and Paul can start trying mfazi.

We all laugh.

Me: you should, and I will have a chance to be mamogolo (aunt).

The mother comes back with glasses of juice and snacks.

Her: please manage this while I prepare something for you to eat.

Me: oh thank you so much.

I say and she gives me a warm smile before leaving the room. We exchange the baby between us until he sleeps deep and stops charming us with his smile. Lwandle places him down. We just catch up on how everything has been with each of us

Me: can I use the bathroom.

Lwa: go through the corridor, it's the second door on your left.

I stand up and head there and I do my business taking my time.

• MONDLI ZULU

I knew my family hated me, I just didn't think it would be this deep but who am I kidding I made their lives a living hell and it's very selfish of me to expect that they put it passed them and forgive me just like that after all forgiveness is earned and not demaded or manipulated out of a person... Let me just be grateful that they didn't throw me out there to fend for myself, maybe when I am back to being myself I will come back to make amends... I can hear banter and laughter from the lounge, and it's clear that they have visitors, hearing people talk and laugh while I am confided in this room on this damn chair is frustrating... A person passes by my room and I recognize the figure but no what would he be doing here? the bathroom door closes and I keep my eyes glued to the door to see who it is when they walk back, the toilet flushes and the door opens, he walks by and it's him, my heart stops for a nano second and I just can't let him go without saying anything...

Me: Theodore.

I say loud enough and the footsteps ceases. He comes back and peeps through and gasps for air.

Him: Mondli?

He says in a low voice, the horror on his face makes me look down in embarrassment.

Him: my God what happened to you?

I can hear pity in his voice and it strips me off the last piece of dignity I had as a man. No man wants the person they love to see them as a weakling.

Me: I got into an accident a few months ago. I was coming to Johannesburg and-

I stop talking as he closes his eyes and I see tears fall.

Him: and the same woman you mistreated and abused welcomes you in her home and nurses you back to health?

I sigh.

Me: I was unconscious in a coma for 2 months so they reached out to her but she is sending me to something like a home for me to recover at.

Him: My God.

Me: My love I am so sorry please.

Him: no Mondli please no.

He holds out his hand.

Me: I know you hate me and it's okay I just want you to know that I was and still am genuinely in love with you and I am sorry for hurting you and especially Bongeka and our children. I will never ask you to take me back because you don't deserve half a man but I need you to know it was real if you ever questioned it.

Him: I uhm you mxm no

He wipes his tears with the back of his hand and walks out. What have I done with my life besides hurting everyone like this? I should have just died maybe it would have been easier

for everyone because having me here is a constant reminder of my torment.

•BONGEKA ZULU.

I finish dishing up for them and place the plates on the tray, walking back in the other one is not on his seat. He walks in immediately as I place the tray on the coffee table.

Him: uhm Lwandle baby it was really nice seeing you but we have to go now.

He says with a shaking voice and I look at him and tears are streaming down but he keeps wiping them with the back of his hand.

Lwa: what's wrong Theo why are you crying?

Him: I just didn't prepare myself to the possibility of seeing him here.

He says and I frown.

Lwa: I am so sorry T I should have told you, I was just so excited to see you guys.

I am so lost in this conversation but worried about the crying one too.

Him: it's okay love it's not your fault, I just need to leave to get air.

Fire: I am sorry we have to leave like this friend, but I am happy I saw this little man, I will call you later okay?

Lwa: thank you for coming guys and I am sorry again.

Theo: will talk later, sis'Bongeka thank you for the warm welcome and I am so very sorry for the part I played in all of this.

Me: it's a pleasure and you don't have to apologise

I manage to say even through my confusion, they hug my daughter and then leave. I look at Nolwandle and she sighs.

Me: what just happened here?

Lwa: That's Theo mama, the one that took over your position at work and he is the one Zulu was seeing.

My eyes pop out the socket.

Me: he is your father's lover boy?

She nods

Lwa: yes, I think that's why he left, he probably saw him and the hurt came back. He was in love with him.

Me: oh my God.

I say settling down. So that was what the apology was about.

Lwa: I would understand if you don't want him here again.

Me: I don't have anything against him Lwandle I just didn't think I'd meet him and see him as a good child and friend to you.

Lwa: I am so sorry mama.

Me: it's okay baby, I have put everything that has to do with Mondli behind me and even if

they want to continue I won't stand between them.

She looks at me trying to see if I really mean it and yes I do Lord knows I do...

—

No edits

A call from the past chapter 2 available on VW.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 64

•THEODORE MOKOENA

I have been curled up in this bed ever since we checked into this room at the Guest House, the image of him is haunting me I swear and the fact that he got into the accident that crippled him coz he wanted to come see me breaks me even further... Seeing him made me realize how

I've been lying to myself saying I am over him but truth is I will never be over Mondli because just like him I am very much in love with him that's just God's truth... I am caught up between my feelings and loyalty to my brother and Nolwandle, I don't want to be seen as a traitor but the heart wants what it wants and mine wants him so really how do I have them both in my life? This is extremely painful and all the progress I made a few days ago out the window...Fire sits down on the edge of the bed and rubs my back, I told him what happened back at Lwandle's house and like me he was shocked...

Him: please stop crying.

Me: it hurts so bad Mlilo.

Him: I understand that you loved him and seeing him like that will make you sad of course but don't allow yourself to lose it again.

Me: I love him Fire, I never stopped and I don't think it will change at all.

Him: oh Theo I am sorry.

Me: I wish things didn't turn out this way, I wish he wasn't that man that sent his own daughter to that damn place. He is no different to our parents.

I admit and he looks at me with empathy

Him: Theo be honest with me, do you want to be with him still?

Me: with all my heart but I feel I will be betraying you and Lwandle if I did.

Him: I won't lie I loathe that man for what he did but you love him and all I want is for you to be happy, I might not be 100% in favor of him but I am 100% behind you and what makes you happy and if it's him then why not.

I am shocked to say the least.

Me: you won't hate me?

Him: I could never hate you, you are my brother and my only family, you want me happy Theo and it would be selfish of me to condemn you for loving him, I mean if we look at the positive

side of what he and our parents did then we would be grateful.

I wipe my tears and sit up straight.

Me: you are right.

Him: now choose your happiness whatever it is I will support you. Happiness and love is not something we easily find in the gay community and when you find it you hold on to it and nurture it to grow so you can grow in it as well.

Me: they want to send him to some home where he will recuperate and I don't blame them for that but I don't want him going there.

Him: it's their decision T, I mean he hurt them and they've helped him this far.

Me: I agree hence why I want to take him with me to Johannesburg.

He gasps for air.

Him: you want to look after him?

Me: yes I do.

Him: that's a huge responsibility though plus you have work.

Me: I will get him a live in nurse.

Him: this is a life changing decision babe, I suggest that you sleep on it.

I nod but deep down I know for sure that I am doing this the only thing I pray for is his family's understanding and permission.

•BANELE THWALA

I don't know what to expect from my reconciliation with MaZulu today but I pray it is a happy one, I am excited to see her and our son, my little champ is on demand as my parents asked me to come home with them before driving to Jo'burg but It will all depend on my wife's mood, the last thing I want to do is overwhelm her you know, a new born, moving to another place having to think about sharing me and her house with Zipho is already a lot for

her so I will do everything I can to reduce the pressure and stress... I park at the destination from the location Lwandle forwarded to me... I take a deep sigh before before getting out the car and walking to the door, I anxiously hit my knuckles on the wooden door a few times and after a minute or so, Lwandle opens and the beauty that is in front of me is breathtaking, she looks like nothing she was before, her body has matured so much and the aura around her more warm, she is Mrs. Thwala for sure now.

Me: maZulu.

Her: hey, please come in.

She says moving to the side and I walk in and wait for her to lead the way. We walk into the lounge and there he is sleeping on the couch so peaceful, my heart starts racing and I can't begin to explain the fulfilment that floods my heart and soul.

Me: oh my God.

I say going to kneel down in front of him.

Me: Thwala, Msani, Mtimande mfana ka bab'wakhe.

I praise him a little and a tear escapes my eye.

Her: you can pick him up if you like coz if you wait for him to wake up it will never happen.

I chuckle and stand up to look at this woman who has blessed me so much, my gaze is too intense for her so she looks down but I cup her chin and make her look at me.

Me: I don't know how I will ever show you my appreciation sthandwa sam, Nkazimulo is the best thing to ever come from me and without you it wouldn't have happened. Thank you so much.

Her: he is the most perfect thing my eyes have also landed on.

I pull her to me and kiss her forehead before I turn back and pick my son who makes a few funny faces leaving me with nothing but love at it's purest.

Me: I wish I was there for you during the pregnancy but I didn't want to stress you out.

Her: thank you for that, it was a smooth one

Me: I am glad to hear that, my parents can't wait to see him but they will have to come down to Johannesburg for that.

I say looking at her and her smile disappears.

Her: Johannesburg, why? coz Nkazi and I are staying here?

I narrow my eyes.

Me: Baby your home is with me and that's not here, I didn't come with anything for our boy coz we are leaving tomorrow right.

Her: Banele I am not sure what you thought was going to happen here.

She says and I raise an eyebrow.

Me: the obvious baby, I am here to take my wife and son back home with me.

Her: Banele no, I am not your wife I can't be with you I don't know how many times I've said

this but I am lesbian, the only thing that will tie us together is the son we share and I will never keep him away from you never, we just co-parent but that's all.

I place my son down not understanding the gibberish coming out of her mouth.

Me: Nolwandle what are you saying?

Her: I am not your wife I am just the mother of your son, I am not into man please I am a lesbian and that's what I will be forever.

Me: Nolwandle you gave me your body and Nkazimulo is the product of that.

She closes her eyes.

Her: that was not willingly please Dina and Gabriel gave me aphrodisiacs to want you like that, why do you think the next day I couldn't allow you in me?

She says and I freeze not only that but what she is saying to me is making me mad.

Me: Nolwandle I love you and I have paid your lobola, our home is in Johannesburg and waiting for you guys to come.

Her: I am sorry Banele but I don't love you back. I care and want what's best for you because it will make you a good father to Nkazi but that's it.

I chuckle shaking my head.

Me: listen Lwandle pack everything that belongs to you and Nkazimulo coz I am coming to get you tomorrow.

Her: No Banele you are not hearing me.

She shouts and that wakes up my son as he cries, I pick him up.

Me: you are scaring our son Lwa, why are you being stubborn?

Her: coz you are not listening to me.

I close my eyes trying to calm down.

Me: huuuuu okay, how much do you love our son and how much do you want to raise him?

Her: that little boy is my life Banele I would do anything for him. I am going to raise him to be a good man.

Me: if that's the case you will pack and be ready to leave tomorrow coz my son is a Thwala and only in a Thwala house he will stay, if you want to stay behind cool but my boy is coming with his father.

Her: over my dead body.

Me: that can be arranged baby as much as you love this boy I do too. I will cripple you Nolwandle to get my son, if you think you will run to the courts then that would just be easier for me because my pockets are deep and my influence reaches higher than you can think so it's your choice, raise our son with me babe or he will be a memory to you.

Voice: get out of my house you devil.

A voice says behind me and I look back it's my mother in law. I look at Lwandle again and she is crying.

Me: be packed tomorrow or be prepared for war, as much as you are the love of my life this boy comes first.

I say as calm as possible but she can sense my seriousness.

Her: Banele please.

I hand her back our son.

Me: don't fight me Lwandle, I love you and I will take care of you just stop fighting this.

Her: please!

It comes out her mouth in a whisper

Me: and don't bother running people are watching your house already.

I walk away hating that this had to come down to me threatening her to act right but Lwandle is stubborn she needs to be shown what she needs, she will be happy with me and she will see that...

•INDIGO NCQOBO

The ambiance is amazing and everyone seems to be having a good time, it's not a lot of people and we are all in the garden, my mother and Lucy came through with the food and I must say it looks and smells good and I know for a fact that it's going to taste even better... I still can't believe I own this place, it looks amazing and it even suits my style, the interior designer heard me straight... I am walking around talking to my guests to make sure everyone is still okay and having a good time... Someone taps me on my shoulder and I look back and close my eyes in defeat...

Me: I don't remember inviting you here.

Her: I tagged along with one of our colleagues.

Me: you are everywhere I swear.

Her: I am just here to celebrate this achievement with you Indigo, is that such a bad thing though?

Me: definitely is because I am trying to completely remove you from my life.

Her: oh wow, what evil did I bring into your life for you to hate me like this?

Me: I don't hate you, I simply don't want you in my life that's all.

Her: you are being dramatic yaz but no stress coz you and I will get back together.

Me: you are being delusional honestly.

Her: I am just in love that's all and you are the perfect person to be a parent to my daughter so why would I just let you go that easily?

I laugh.

Me: let me get my mother to come throw you out coz I don't want to be the one to embarrass you in front of everyone.

Her: Come on Indigo I will behave.

Me: you are not welcome here.

I walk away to get Lucy and my mom, they will handle it quick coz I can't, Bridget is crazy no lie...

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Its been hours and I still can't believe Banele is threatening to take my child from me just because I don't want to be with him, he even admits that he will bribe to get what he wants and we all know what money can do, I can't lose Nkazimulo that little boy is everything to me and my life without him is one I can never live but I can't be married to that man it's not who I am and even if I was into man I wouldn't marry him still because I simply don't love him... Why is he being this stubborn, I don't know what I am going to do but I know for a fact that no one will take Nkazimulo from me... My mother called Siya almost immediately after Banele left and she got here as quick as possible, mama explained everything and she

is shocked as well... They are trying to comfort me but they didn't see him or hear his tone, he is serious and he will definitely do it...

Ma: I have money baby we will get the best lawyer.

Me: please help me fight him mama, I can't lose Nkazi, that would just kill me.

Siya: No one is taking your son from you muntuza, over my dead body, we will fight tooth and nail, they might be rich but they are not above the law.

Me: I am so scared Siya, I know I didn't want him at first but now he is my entire life.

Siya: I know this baby doll don't cry it's all going to be okay.

My phone rings and it's a number I don't recognize, I wipe my tears and answer putting it on speaker.

Me: hello.

Caller: is this Miss Nolwandle Zulu?

Me: yes, who is this?

Caller: my name is Thierry Mphela from Mphela and associates, I am Mr Thwala's lawyer.

All the air leaves my lungs and Siya gasps for and places her hands on her head.

Me: How can I help you?

I say trying to sound confident.

Caller: I just got off a call with my client and he just told me your situation from begging to end you can imagine how long the call was.

Me: are you going to tell me why you called.

He sighs and I look at my sister who has her eyes closed, she is scaring me I won't lie, does she know anything about this Mphela after all she is a paralegal and she knows law firms.

Caller: I honestly don't feel like ruining your life because from what I'm told you've been through a lot already, so my advice is to just give him what he wants, you will be doing yourself a huge favor.

Ma: Go to hell with your client you called my daughter to threaten her more.

Caller: I am not threatening her ma'am I am simply trying to keep her sanity intact Banele and I play dirty is your daughter ready to play in the mud with pigs?

He asks and tears stream down my face more.

Me: Mr Mphela please talk to him, I can only offer him co-parenting.

He chuckles.

Caller: Nolwandle be ready to leave tomorrow nana because if you don't a surprise will show up at your door step on monday, I have contacts everywhere, I am also a magician, I make things appear where I want them to and make them disappear again. Like Banele told you earlier people are watching your house, let me show you what I mean. Go to the kitchen and check your bread bin. Then tell me if you wanna play and please it's nothing personal I am just doing my job.

With that he hangs up and we all hurry to the kitchen, my mom opens the bread bin and there is a block wrapped in foil.

Siya: oh my God, cocaine.

She says and I sink down to the floor and cry. None of us bother going out to check because it's clear whoever is watching the house is the one who snuck in to plant this.

Ma: what kind of evil is this, Jehovah.

Siya: That lawyer plays dirty mama the lawyers at work hate him and we've lost each and every case against his firm not because they are good but because he is not afraid to do anything for his clients.

Ma: Oh Siyamthanda.

My sister kneels in front of me and takes me into her embrace. This is just so painful, I can't lose my son I just can't, now I see why my mother allowed Zulu to have his way, now I see and feel how difficult it is to be a mother.

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 65

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

It all came down to me packing my things as well my son's things, after the stunt they pulled planting drugs while we were in the house I knew they would do worse... I didn't have anything more to think about, I made a promise to myself to be everything I wished my parents were to me and the first is to protect Nkazimulo with everything that means putting myself and my needs last to his... Banele and his whole family are sick and I could never allow my child to grow up with them, on the other hand Zipho would kill him without thinking twice... I can only pray to God to see me through this until my child is old enough for me to leave that man and never look back... I don't think I've ever seen my mother nor Siya that emotional, she

even slept over last night. I am trying to hold it in so they can see I will handle this journey but deep down I am dying, I am holding on by the last straw called Nkazimulo...

Ma: you don't have to do this baby.

Me: for my son I really do.

Ma: we can try fight them Nolwandle, I don't want you walking in my shoes.

I sigh

Me: mama, now that I have that little boy in your arms I fully understand why you stayed and why you did everything you did, I know now that a mother endures it all just to keep her own safe and that's what I am doing, I will find a way to better my life in this situation and be a better version of myself.

Siya: oh muntuza, I hate how your happiness is short lived, you just had a baby you should be the happiest person on earth but that devil is here stripping you off the joy.

Me: maybe I am just serving my purpose in this world and I'm not one to be happy you know.

Ma: get that idea out of your mind Lwandle, you deserve to be loved and you deserve to be happy never think otherwise and God will surely vindicate you in this.

Me: where is he mama? Where is your God? Is he not seeing my situation? Is he turning a blind eye or is he just sleeping on me?

I say allowing my tears fall for the first time since this conversation started.

My sister quickly comes to me and gives me a hug. A knock comes through the door and my heart stops, I know it's time.

•BANELE THWALA

I hate that I had to involve Thierry and I hate myself even more for playing dirty like this, the only thing I ever wanted to do is to love MaZulu and protect her always but now I've showed her

the monster in me and that is going to make it harder for her to love me after this... She is stubborn and she needed a push to know that our son deserves to be raised by two parents who love him and each other as well. I don't know what she chose to do but I pray she is just waiting for me to pick her up. I get to her mother's house and I walk to the door... A while after I knocked the door opens and it's her, her eyes a puffy and red, proof that she has been crying... My heart sinks into my stomach, I feel so bad...

Me: MaZulu.

Her: we are packed and ready to go Banele, you don't have to threaten me more.

I let out a deep sigh.

Me: Baby I am sorry it had to come to this, I just-

Her: let me get Nkazimulo, please help with our bags.

She walks back inside and I follow her, she is so cold and the hate in her voice hurts. I get to the lounge and her mother and sister are hovering over our son crying, Lwandle is near them with a blank expression.

Me: Sanibonani (greetings).

Siya: shut the fuck up Banele, don't you even dare just don't.

She hisses at me and my lips form a thin line.

Me: I know this might seem like an evil act, but I love Nolwandle and I just want to love and give her a great life with our son and you as her family are welcome to our home to see them.

Ma: I am sure you heard Siyamthanda.

I decide to just take their things to the car, the mood in here is just too tense proving that I am going to have to work extra hard to win them over to my side and that means loving MaZulu like she is the only woman in the world. I finish squeezing everything in and the car seat... I turn and she is already next to me with our son in her arms.

Me: should we strap him in?

Her: no I'll hold him so long.

I nod and open the back seat door for them and she gets in. I get in the driver side and start the engine but I feel the need to apologise to her before we drive to Johannesburg.

Me: Baby I know I scared you, I know and I am sorry very sorry. I just love you so much and I wish to show you everything the world has to offer, I understand that I might have killed any chance with the stunt I pulled but I promise to be the best husband to you and an amazing father to our baby. With time you will see how much you mean to me and we will have a beautiful life and maybe more children.

I say looking at her but her eyes are on the sleeping Nkazimulo the entire time. I guess I should just give her some time to wrap her head around this whole thing. I bring the engine to life and I drive away headed to our house.

•THEODORE MOKWENA

My brother and I have to leave Durban because I am starting work tomorrow but I just can't leave him here to be taken to a home, let them allow me to take him and care for him until he is back to his old self... I don't know how Lwandle and her family are going to take this whole thing but I pray they understand and grant me my wish... I am so grateful to have Mlilo on my side and his full support with this even though he is not a huge Mondli fan but because I love him and he makes me happy he supports it... I am so anxious as we arrive at their house and my heart drops to my stomach when I see Siya and her mother outside near her car, this in now or never...

Me: Dumelang (hello)

I greet them without looking up their faces.

Fire: How are you?

Siya: hey guys we are okay thanks.

Bongeka: hao you two are still around I thought you've gone back to Jo'burg.

Me: I couldn't drive there as I also had something I wanted to discuss with you.

I say.

Siya: it sounds serious hey.

Me: firstly I would like to sincerely apologise to you sis'Bongeka for having an affair with your husband, I helped him mistreat you in a way.

Bongeka: I hold nothing against you Theo but your apology is accepted.

Siya: It's okay babe, we don't see you in any bad light so just take it easy ne?

Me: Thank you so much.

Bongeka: let's go inside and have a some refreshments.

Me: I don't want to step foot in you home before I ask this of you. I know it might be a lot and I'd understand if you hate me after this.

Bongeka: you are scaring us now, what's wrong

Me: after I saw Mondli here we had a brief conversation and he mentioned that he will be going to a home.

Siya: yes my mother got him space at a good physiotherapy center.

Me: I was hoping that you will allow me to take him with me and help him.

They both gasp for air looking at me with shock.

Bongeka: are you serious?

Me: yes I am, I am sorry that-

Siya: wait T, you would put a hold on your life just to care for my father?

Me: I love him and I wish I didn't, yes he was a monster to most people but he was so sweet and gentle with me. I am so sorry.

Siya: I don't know what to say.

Bongeka: is he the one?

Me: huh?

Bongeka: do you think he is the one for you?
Do you see a future with him?

Me: always sis'Bongeka.

I admit and she is looking at me intensely.

Bongeka: it's a huge responsibility and you are still so young.

Me: I've done all things I am expected to do at my age and I am ready for this.

It's silent for what seems like eternity, you would even hear a niddle drop.

Bongeka: you can take him then it's fine, I just hope when he gets better he knows how lucky he is to have someone love him even at his lowest and I can only pray that he treats you good, if it gets too much don't feel bad just take him where he will get professional help. I was in control of his finances so we will arrange everything properly.

Me: thank you so much from the bottom of my heart thank you so much.

Siya: I guess we can ask his current nurse if she will have a problem leaving with you guys, I know you want to do this but you'll need help from someone who's done this.

Me: I appreciate you so so much.

I say kneeling down in front of sis'Bongeka.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

My husband is coming home today and I made sure to cook his favorite meal and get this house clean, I also went out to do my hair and nails yesterday even bought a sexy lace number, If Banele won't take me seriously with words then I will use the art of seduction and get him to give me a baby... The faster I get this train moving the faster we can all be happy, I have been patient enough with him so it's time I took matters into my own hands... I have been waiting for him to arrive and I am starting to be impatient but this is for a good cause, my future and stability depends on this... I go to the

kitchen to pour myself another glass of wine just to keep me occupied... After another hour a car drives in and I know it's him, I quickly run to the bathroom to make sure I look good, mouth wash to get rid of the smell of wine and I go back to the lounge and stand by the door my body exposed in this sexy piece... The door opens and in walks in Nolwande first followed by Banele holding a new born in his arms. I quickly cover myself with the robe on the couch...

Me: Banele what's this?

I ask with a trembling voice.

Him: what is what?

He asks annoyed and I chuckle.

Me: don't act like a fool you know exactly what I am asking you.

I scream.

Him: This is my wife and our son coming to their home and keep your damn voice down Nkazimulo is asleep.

He warns and I lose my senses.

Me: Go to hell you son of a bitch, you knew she was pregnant and you didn't tell me, this is why you refused me a child Banele?

I scream at him and he is giving me an evil eye

Him: Zizipho I won't ask you again.

He says and I move my eyes to Nolwandle who is looking at me like I am crazy...

Me: you just refuse to be out of my life.

Her: Banele where will I be sleeping with my son.

She asks completely ignoring me and that only infuriates me more.

Him: Mulo's nursery is not yet done, I just need to bring in the furniture and it will be done, but he can share with us so long.

Her: She is sharing a room with you? Banele you are a polygamist no wife shares a room with you, you rotate between our rooms.

Him: Nolwandle is my wife and she will be sleeping with me her husband.

Her: you know what Banele keep your crazy wife away from my son and I, she is screaming and my baby is now awake, I need quiet I need peace, this here is a new born.

Him: I am sorry sthandwa sam, this way.

He leads her to the corridor.

Me: if you think I am going to let this slide then you are very much mistaken. You will treat us the same.

Him: continue this shit and I will take you back to KZN and you will stay with my parents don't try me.

He threatens in a low voice before they disappear to his bedroom. To say my heart is broken would be an understatement, why must

I always be in Lwandle's shadow, why must she always have everything I want without trying?

No edits.

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 66

•MONDLI ZULU

I don't know what will become of me in a place where no face is familiar, I am uneasy with going to that physiotherapy center because of the stories of how those people treat their patients, what if they mistreat me and I don't receive the help I came for at the end of the day? the thought of that drains hope out of me but I don't have a choice I need to go as I just can't expect Bongeka to take care of me after everything that has happened... I have hurt and broken her and me leaving is me allowing her to live her life freely and be happy... I made my

bed and now it's time I lie on it, tomorrow when those people come here I will say my last words to my children and their mother and live them with the utmost peace of mind they deserve... An unexpected person stands at my door and my heart starts to beat very fast...

Him: Hey

Me: Theo, what are you doing here?

He sighs deeply, walks in and settles on the edge of the bed looking at me.

Him: are you not happy to see me?

He asks and I narrow my eyes

Me: no it's not that I am not happy I wasn't expecting you.

Him: how have you been?

Me: considering my situation I am just happy to be alive.

Him: yeah hey that's the biggest gift, you still have another day to fight and make things right

Me: that's very true, so why are you still in Durban?

Him: I am still here because of you Mondli Zulu

Me: I don't understand.

Him: I want to take you with me back to Johannesburg and take care of you.

He says and I am shocked to say the least.

Me: huh?

Him: I've already spoken to sis'Bongeka and Siya and they gave me their blessing, it's just up to you now.

Me: Theo, I am back to being a child, I can't do anything for myself now, it's a huge responsibility I can't just allow you to take up.

Him: I know the magnitude of this all I've thought about it extensively.

I sigh not believing what I am hearing.

Me: why? Why do you want to do this?

Him: because I love you so so much.

I gasp for air.

Me: you, you love me?

Him: more than words can ever express.

I let my tears fall.

Me: even in this state?

Him: you will go back to being the Mondli I know, you will stand up and walk, do things you normally do.

Me: I love you too Theo so much.

Him: then allow me to help you baby.

He says in a low voice and I sigh.

Me: just promise that if it gets harder for you you'll send me to a center like the one Bongeka had already got me.

Him: I've already made that promise to her and I promise you too.

Me: okay then.

He smiles and sits on top of me and kisses me all over my face, I can't believe that Theo loves me even in this state, I can't believe he chooses not to see me like a cripple, if this isn't love then

I don't know. I will live my life trying to please him always, I will use this second chance life has given me to be a better man to my children as well as Bongeka.

Me: when are we leaving?

Him: now now.

He says with excitement laced in his voice.

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

I can just tell that my stay in this house will never be pleasant, I can't believe Zipho was someone I ever considered a best friend, she has always been a snake in the green grass just waiting on the opportunity to bite and she did, if she didn't expose me that fateful night I wouldn't have gone through all the hell I went through but lessons were learnt and even though my son was conceived in a painful way he is my biggest blessing... I just finished bathing him with the lavender baby soap and it

knocks him right out, Banele walks in with a tray of food and places it on the pedestal.

Him: I got you something to eat.

Me: I hope it's not something Zipho cooked

Him: no love, I actually ordered this.

Me: okay, thanks.

Him: MaZulu I am sorry.

Me: just stop that Banele please, you knew what you were doing and you knew what you wanted the outcome to be and you have us here rejoice.

I say and he shakes his head.

Him: Its not how it seems baby please.

Me: it is exactly how it seems, if you really love me the way you claim to then let me go.

Him: I can't Lwa, my love for you can't allow me to.

Me: this is not love, it's obsession.

Him: I don't want us to fight please.

Me: okay.

I say and take the food and start eating, he is looking at me intensely.

Him: you and our son will have a great life Lwandle I promise with time you will learn to love me as much as I do you, I promise.

I sigh and just decide to let him be.

Him: look at him please doesn't he deserve to be in a warm home with both his parents married and available for him 24 hours?

Me: Banele we can still love him while living separately.

Him: he deserves a warm home Lwandle, not traveling between us.

He insists and I know he will not hear reason, this conversation is just pointless.

Him: I am going to shower but before that can I get you anything?

He asks and I shake my head. He moves to the bathroom ensuite.

•ZIPHO MHLONGO

I just can't believe my life, I keep going in circles but I never get a chance to hit a mark even if it's once, white wedding he refuses to give me, a child he refuses as well but I bet you if Lwandle says he should kill everyone in this city he wouldn't even think twice I swear... All I know is life won't be the same with that girl and her child here, every chance to get with my husband is blocked so far and to tell you the truth I don't know where to start getting back on track... He didn't even eat my food, he ordered take aways for them and ever since they have been locked up in his bedroom, could it be that he is on top of her enjoying their reunion? The thought of Banele sleeping with her while I am in the house hurts me so much... I need to talk to someone so I don't lose my mind, and who

better than Mbali, my sister... I dial her number and she answers after eternity.

Her: Mfazi ka Banele (Banele's wife).

She says and I just cry my eyes out.

Her: what's wrong Zee? Why are you crying sisi?

Me: everything is just a mess Mbali, I will never get anything I want.

Her: I don't follow Zizipho.

Me: Banele is just-

I can't even finish the sentence

Her: I thought you guys were in a better place now what happened?

Me: Nolwandle and her son happened.

Her: what do you mean son sisi?

Me: he left Friday saying he is going to his parents but he went to get Nolwandle and their new born can you believe that he has been

living with me here and he didn't even tell me she was pregnant.

Her: no way Zee, I am so sorry.

Me: will I ever get rid of Nolwandle though.

Her: yoh now that they have a son it's going to be close to impossible.

Me: it hurts it hurts so bad. You should see how gentle he is with her Mbali, it's like he is walking around eggs.

I hear her sigh on the other side of the call.

Her: I don't even know how to console you.

Me: you should know what I have to do to save my marriage.

Her: I wish I knew but this one is just too complicated.

Me: Mbali please help me please, I can't lose my husband please.

Her: I can only advice you to not cause problems coz that will only give him more reason to want to get rid of you now that

Nolwandle is back and with his first child worse a son to carry on his name.

Me: why does love have to hurt like this though.

Her: It will all work out I promise you.

Me: Mabali I got to go.

I say as Lwandle walks past me to the kitchen, I follow behind her.

Me: you just had to trap him with a child.

Lwa: excuse me?

Me: we were doing so well without your interference but you and that bastard just took us 10 steps back.

She bites her lower lip.

Lwa: keep my son out of your mouth Zipho.

Me: he is my husband Lwandle, this is my life not yours just disappear.

Lwa: it was never your life sisi, you slept your way to it so please just stay in your Lane and I will stay in mine after all the house is big enough.

I blink a couple of times as I watch her sway her hips out of the kitchen, a part of me wants to grab her by her ponytail and wipe this floor with her flat ass...

•BANELE THWALA

Me: I am sorry baba, but I didn't have another choice.

Him: I know I just wish you didn't use Thierry in all of this.

Me: but she is here with me where she belongs.

Him: how is she settling in?

Me: she is closed off Baba, it's been two days already but she is forever in our bedroom with Nkazimulo.

Him: eish Banele, this is just so complicated.

Me: what do I do Baba, I want her to feel at home, to warm up to her new life.

Him: she is your wife Banele, before everything what did she love, dreamt off, aspired to be?.

He asks and and an idea quickly hits me.

Me: Bab'Thwala, let me call you back.

I hang up my phone and walk out of my study, Zizipho is in the lounge watching another useless programme, I go straight to the bedroom and Lwandle is feeding Nkazi, while they are looking deep in each other's eyes, these two have a bond so strong... I grab the chair and pull it near her.

Me: MaZulu

Her: Banele.

Me: I know you are still a new mother and our son is not even a month old, but I don't want this to be the reason why you don't chase your dreams, I know you to have big dreams and they were all paused when you went to therapy.

I say and that gets her attention coz her gaze is now on me.

Me: you didn't get to finish your matric and I want you to go back to school should you wish.

Her: that's what I want.

Me: well good then, I can get you a teacher who will help you here at home so you don't leave Nkazimulo or you can go attend at a school while we get him a nanny, whichever you want.

Her: I will really appreciate that Thwala, I will think about it.

She says and I smile, this is the first time she calls me by my surname.

Me: okay let me shop around for options then and once you have made a decision you can choose from what I got.

Her: Thank you.

Me: it's pleasure my love, I just want to see you do good and be everything you have ever wished for because I love you so much.

She looks back at our son. This is a step in the right direction, if I keep this up my wife will surely fall for me, slowly but surely.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

Why did my mother retire from her job again? I mean who even retires at 50? It's not like she was working hard labor or long crazy hours like some of us, she has so much time on her hands, she doesn't know what to do with herself, at least if she was still teaching she would be at work preparing for the new academic year but her new mission is fussing over me more than she did when I was still living with her... She is forever at my house and that has to stop coz I might get a girlfriend someday and we are going to need our privacy... She appears from the corridor...

Me: I think your house misses you.

Her: are you trying to kick me out of yours?

I chuckle

Me: no mama but you you are forever here, it's like I never left your nest.

I admit and she sighs.

Her: I know baby just that I have so much time on my hands.

Me: why did you retire then?

Her: honestly I don't know and I regret it.

Me: you can still try to go back or get a new hobby

Her: I was thinking of registering to be a home school teacher you know, the hours are flexible, the rate is great and it's just one student so no stress.

I laugh.

Me: please get to that soon.

She laughs

Her: I will baby and sorry for being in your face all the time.

Me: It's okay mama, you mean well so its cool.

Her: I will get on with my new plan going forward then.

Me: so long as it will make you happy mama I am all for it okay?

Her: Thank you Snegugu.

I frown.

Me: now I will really throw you out of my house.

She giggles and I roll my eyes.

Her: let me cook you some food and leave your space.

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 67

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

In the midst of all of this mess I have my son and soon I will start chasing my dreams to

shape a better life for us both, because this is not a life I envision for myself, I am not happy in this situation and in turn I will not be a mother my son deserves, but a step in the right direction will get us where I want us to be... It's been an entire week this side and nothing has changed really, I am forever in this bedroom only go out when I need something to eat and that's all... I am avoiding Zipho in every way possible especially when Banele is not around, I take it as far as locking the bedroom door... I have been up an hour now and Nkazi and his father are not in bed, he was restless last night but he managed to sleep sound at around 4am and I don't know when I dozed off... My phone rings and it's my mom...

Me: mama

Her: Lwandle, how is Nkazimulo?

She gets straight to and I smile.

Me: he is fine sthandwa sam, just that he was restless at night.

Her: why didn't you call me?

Me: we got him to calm down and he slept.

Her: that's good but next time call me no matter what time it is.

Me: I will and thank you.

Her: so how are you? How is everything at that house?

I sigh

Me: I am fine mama, it's still tense but I will make it work.

Her: just play far from Zizipho please, she has shown us that she is a snake.

Me: I am doing my very best to avoid her.

Her: and that boy?

Me: he is good to his son I will admit to that, but I am not happy to be here.

Her: I know Lwandle and I hate that you are living there, walking to the same path as me.

Me: it will all work out in the end mama.

Her: just hold on to hope Lwa.

Me: definitely plus I am starting school soon, it will keep my mind preoccupied and it will be a way for my son and I to find a way out.

Her: that's great news, I am proud of you for not allowing this to box you.

Me: that will just delay me and I promised myself to do everything I can to be all Nkazimulo needs me to be.

Her: you are a strong, resilient, brave young woman baby and you will get out of that situation and live your own life the way you want and deserve.

Me: Thank you.

Her: have you been in touch with Theo?

Me: no not yet ma but I will soon as I am settled in this city to my satisfaction.

Her: don't give him a tough time with this.

Me: I am not mad at him I am just shocked.

Her: okay baby, let me leave you to give boy
boy attention.

Me: okay bye.

We hang up and I get out of bed and head to
the bathroom.

•BANELE THWALA

My favorite thing to do on weekends is walking
around the yard with my son in the mornings,
this boy has completed me in everyway
possible, I am happy to have them here with me
and I can only pray that things will continue
looking up for us, she is starting to warm up to
being here, she is always confided to our
bedroom yes but she talks to me more now
even though it's all about our son but she talks
to me non the less... We take our last stroll from
the the garden to the pool area before we head
back to the house and we find Zizopho standing
there, her eyes immediately look up at us and
she frowns, I don't need her negativity and

toxicity near my son, I attempt to walk away but she stops me in my tracks...

Her: so you are going to pretend like I am not here?

I sigh

Me: I just don't trust you near my son.

Her: you are aware that I am your wife Nele?

Me: your point?

Her: my point is treat us the same, you can't give Lwandle all the attention and pretend like I don't exist.

Me: Lwandle is the one with a little child.

Her: then give me a child too.

Me: okay I guess I should just spell it out for you, I am not going to give you my seed to carry.

She blinks a couple of times.

Her: why did you marry me if you were going to treat me this way?

Me: should I remind you how you made me marry you?

She gasps for air.

Her: what you are doing is not fair Banele, that's all I am saying.

I walk away without saying anything, I should check on maZulu she was still asleep when we went off to walk, I walk in without knocking and my eyes land on her very naked self, I quickly look back as she tries to hide her body with her hands.

Me: I am really sorry baby, I thought you'd still be sleeping.

I apologise sincerely because I don't want her feeling like I am invading her privacy, yes we are husband and wife but things are still rocky between us, I want her to trust me again and enough before we can start talking about intimacy.

Lwa: I am decent now.

She says and I look back at her, she is wearing her robe and it's tightly tied around her left waist.

Me: I think he is hungry.

Lwa: okay bring him here let me feed him.

Me: okay little champ go to mommy and eat so long as I go shower.

I say handing him to her and she takes him with a smile.

Me: my love I was thinking we could go to the mall to get you guys everything you need.

Lwa: oh okay, when?

Me: whenever you are keen.

Lwa: okay we can go when you are done, he needs a few things.

Me: okay let me take a quick shower then.

I walk to the bathroom with a smile, I am just happy that we are taking steps forward, a day at a time my wife will fall in love with me.

•MONDLI ZULU

My heart is still heavy but I am happy that Theo loves me enough to look passed my flaws, being with him here is a dream come true for both of us, it's just sad that it had to happen like this, some days I feel bad thinking this is too much pressure on him but he reassures me that it isn't, I am just grateful that the nurse came with us and she helps him especially during the week when he is at work... I need to talk to him about getting our own space coz right now we are sharing a flat with his brother and their friend plus my nurse, and they might tolerate me because of Theo but I can see that I am making them uncomfortable... I have money, my pension fund, savings and Bongeka said insurance from our house paid up, I told her to take half of that amount and send through the other to my account... He walks in the bedroom with a tray of food...

Him: love you need to eat before we go to you physio session.

Me: okay but I wanted us to talk about something.

Him: sounds serious.

Me: it is please sit down.

He puts the tray besides me and sits down.

Him: okay I am all ears.

Me: I know you can see that the house is crowded.

Him: I know baby I know, I am trying to find us a flat to rent.

Me: I don't want to be living in flats baby, it's already difficult with my wheelchair, what if the lifts don't work then I can't attend therapy and all our appointments for that particular day.

He sighs

Him: you have a point, so what were you thinking?

Me: I have enough funds to live by and take care of us, so it's only logical that we buy a house.

I put my idea on the table.

Him: are you serious? You want to buy us a house?

Me: yes I do, we need a home Theo and flats won't cut it, so start shopping around for something you like just not too big or too expensive.

Him: I already have one that is perfect, it's near my work and I admire it everyday when I drive by, you are going to love it I promise.

He says sounding excited.

Me: good now find out everything about it and make necessary arrangements.

Him: on it and thank you so much love.

He says kissing me.

Me: okay now let me eat so we can go.

He takes the bowl and starts feeding me.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

I am glad my mother got her license to practice as a home school teacher, it means she will have her hands full and she will give me the space to enjoy my house more on my own and maybe I'll start dating again... I have put my love life on hold for a while now and I can safely say that Ocean and I had a good thing going and as much as I'd love to be with her for the rest of my life, fate had other plans for us, she will always have a place in my heart and I wish she is happy and healthy wherever she is.... I finish attaching all required documents to this job application for my mom and send the email through... I hope she gets this job soonest, besides wanting her out of my hair I also want to continue doing what she loves with less the stress attached to it, I walk out of my bedroom to the kitchen where she spends time cooking my weekdays meals.

Me: Queen.

Her: Indigo, I will be leaving soon please.

Me: hao I wasn't trying to get rid of you.

Her: mxm then what do you want?

Me: I just submitted your application for the job like you asked me to.

Her: you must be praying in tongues for me to get the job ne?

I laugh carefree

Me: you have no idea I swear.

She hits me with the dish cloth.

Her: you will eat your mother I tell you.

Me: MrD foods and Uber eats have my back love.

Her: don't tell me about take aways, I wish they make you so fat and you start gaining curves.

Me: you didn't just say that o'lady, I'll be out here looking like a slay queen no man.

She laughs.

Her: I am kidding my baby. I am almost done, I should go back home and cook for Sphiwe.

Me: ahhh my poor mother.

Her: you two should get married man and stop abusing me like this.

Me: yah ne, let me go shower.

•ZIZIPHO MHLONGO

I am staring at this Facebook post about some traditional healer that can bring back lost lovers, the is a lady who said the healer helped her well when her husband started cheating on her and being abusive towards her and the children, according to this review she has been living happily ever since... I have never set foot at a traditional healer before, I have always been a church girl who believes in nothing but prayer, but they say that desperate times calls for desperate measures... Am I ready to walk

down this dark path? Yes I want my husband's love and attention but this way really? I need to think long and hard before I decide on anything, I screenshot the post so I can have the number of the healer in case I decide on this... I walk out of my bedroom and see Nkazimulo sleeping on the couch, I look around and there is no sign of Lwa or Nele, I quickly go stand by him and he is sleeping, he looks so much like Banele, his complexion, the pointy nose, you can tell he has his big eyes too even though his eyes are shut, if it was another time I would appreciate how cute he is but he is the reason my life is turning up side down... I don't feel anything but hate for him and his mother... I eye the cushion on the couch and think of how it could end my sorrows in a few minutes, before I can even reach for it a voice startles me and it's Nolwanlde, she drops the shopping bags near me and picks up her brat...

Her: what are you doing?

I frown.

Me: what did you see me do besides looking at your child.

Her: Zipho play far from him do you understand?

Me: if that's what you want then don't leave him anywhere in my house.

She smiles.

Her: I went to get his things from the car, you could have just avoided him...

Me: I needed to make sure that Banele is not taken for a ride, fathering another man's child.

She raises an eyebrow.

Her: unlike you I don't just open my legs to anyone.

I gasp for air.

Me: what did you just say to me?

Her: you heard me loud and clear.

Me: you think you are better than me don't you?

She laughs.

Me: you proved that I am better than you sweetheart, you are after everything that is mine, you so threatened by me you can't even hide it...

Her words hit home and I feel myself get angry.

Me: I will fuck you up Nolwandle try me.

Her: why would I want to stoop low to your level?

She asks stepping back and I attempt to launch to her but Banele's screaming voice stops me in my tracks.

Him: didn't I tell you to stop screaming in my son's presence Zipho?

Me: your little miss perfect started it.

She doesn't even try to dispute it rather she just chuckles.

Him: Baby please go put Nkazimulo down, I'll bring the shopping bags.

She walks away.

Me: that's all she gets?

I ask furious as hell.

Him: you were the one trying to go at her why should I reprimand her?

Me: are you serious right now?

Him: when it comes to you my patience is running out.

Me: I can say the same about you, shit better change around here or you will all feel it I promise.

I walk away quickly so he doesn't respond...

No edits

THIS IS ME

CHAPTER 68

1WEEK LATER

•NOLWANDLE ZULU

Banele has insisted that I sit in and help with interviewing possible teachers, no one has lived to his expectations because he has gotten rid of them by saying "we will keep in touch" and I know it's just to be polite, we have one more person and I just hope she cuts it, I just want to start with my studies and waste no more time... I look at him as he reads through the last document and he is nodding as he goes and after forever he places it down and looks at me...

Him: one more candidate, are you still energized?

Me: I just hope this one will lick your invisible boxes.

Him: I just want a great teacher for you sthandwa sam that's all.

Me: we can see the last teacher now, I am sure Nkazi is wondering why he is getting absolutely no attention today.

Him: you are right let's just get this over and done with.

He stands up to get the last teacher, they walk back on and he has this smile on his face and I suspect it has something to do with the ladies age, coz the previous candidates were younger ladies and some were man. I stand up to offer my hand and she takes it looking at me like she knows me from somewhere, it's very unsettling.

Her: Good Afternoon, my name is Queen Ncgobo.

She introduces herself and hearing her last name reminded me of someone I try very hard to keep out of my head to keep sane.

Me: Hello, my name is Lwa, I am the one who is in desperate need of a tutor.

She smiles sweetly at me.

Him: and I am her husband Banele Thwala looking at your CV Miss Ncgobo I am very impressed, and I think you are the perfect person for the job.

Me: just like that?

Him: yes baby or do you have reservations?

He asks

Me: no no she is perfect, I am just shocked you aren't grilling her like the others, not that I have a problem with her infact I like her if it were up to me I'd ask her to start now.

She chuckles.

Her: I would love to, my daughter wants me out of her hair but we still need to apply and register with the department of education.

I smile nodding.

Him: so when will we get that done?

Her: I can come pick her up on Wednesday and we head there.

Me: I will be ready.

Him: Thank God coz I'll be at work, so you will be coming here for classes.

Her: yes for now yes but with time we will start going to parks, libraries and such just for a change of scenery.

Me: I am so excited to start.

Her: that's good to know dear, an excited learner makes a well performing one.

Him: can we discuss rates and other technicalities?

Her: by all means.

•THEODORE MOKOENA

I've been eying this house for the longest time and I was forever wondering why it was still in the market but now I know it's because God kept it for my baby and I, immediately after we bought it Mondli insisted that we move because he didn't want to inconvenience the others more and you won't believe that we just moved into our home with nothing but beds, we just bought necessities, mostly kitchen necessities... Mlilo

promised to go with me this weekend to window shop for furniture so I can take pictures for Mondli to see and help me pick... I get home from work and he is in the garden taking vitamin D from the sun, something happened last night and I think we should talk about it...

Me: hey love.

Him: hey, you are back.

Me: yeah the day dragged just happy to be back here to just relax.

Him: work can get like that.

He says and still hasn't looked at me.

Me: Mondli we can talk about it you know.

Him: just leave it Theodore.

Me: we don't need this tension please, communication is key.

He sighs.

Him: discuss that I can't get an erection to satisfy your sexual needs?

Me: Baby don't look at it that way, your spinal cord injury is incomplete meaning you will heal.

Him: but right now I am failing you Theo.

Me: that's what you think Mondli but you aren't, we just need to focus on your physio and once you are better we can start being intimate again.

Him: it was embarrassing.

He says in a low voice.

Me: I understand that but please love don't put pressure on yourself.

Him: you don't understand Theo.

Me: then make me.

Him: I can't do anything for myself, I can't touch you, I can't drive you to work, I can't help you with furniture shopping and that's so exciting for you but I can't share in that because I am a damn cripple.

Me: Mondli no please.

Him: you don't deserve this at all.

Me: stop thinking for me just stop, I love you and I believe you will be fine and that's enough for me understand that.

He remains quiet and looks at me with tears shinning in his eyes.

Him: I am just scared that you will wake up some day and realize that you deserve much better than me. Who will I have left because I have pushed away my children, they hate me and you are all I have.

He let's the tears fall and I sigh and sit on top of him.

Me: don't even think about that please. I wouldn't have taken things this far to just let you some day please.

I hug him and now I understand his deepest darkest fears.

•INDIGO NCQOBO

Here I am again driving to my mother's place after telling her to cut the cord, am I that far gone with being a Mama's baby? Nah I am just here to check on how her interview went...I just pray she got the post so she can start doing what she loves and also afford someone the opportunity to do well in their studying, my mom is good at what she does and I know because some of her students from way back still come back to check on her and thank her for not only being a teacher but a parent too... Queen is a blessing to many especially me, I get home and her car is in the drive way, she just arrived I can tell because she never leaves her car out like this... Walking in my nostril is hit by a mouth watering aroma and I know she is in the kitchen...

Me: can you please dish up for me.

Her: and then wena?

Me: I just came to check on how your interview went.

She laughs.

Her: your phone doesn't work anymore?

I roll my eyes.

Me: come on ma.

Her: it went well though I feel like I knew the girl from somewhere.

Me: you probably just know someone who is her look alike.

Her: yeah maybe.

Me: so they hired you?

Her: yes baby they did, she is so excited to start but Wednesday we are going to register her with the department and I left my documents at your house.

Me: congratulations my love and I will bring your documents by tomorrow.

Her: thank you, and how is everything at work?

Me: I think.i am going to report Bridget for sexual harassment.

She sighs.

Her: you should have done that a long time ago.

Me: I honestly thought she will get the hit and back off.

Her: get to it soon before he turns the story around and make it seem like you are the one harassing her.

Me: you are right, she is sick in the head that one.

Her: the kind of girls you go for hai.

Me: that situationship was forced on me.

Her: mxm go wash your hands let me dish up for you.

Me: now you are talking.

•BONGEKA ZULU

The house is lonely without Lwandle and Nkazimulo here, they have been gone a while but the void they left is very much felt... I am

planning on going to visit them this weekend just for a few days and see how Theo is doing with Mondli, speaking of them Theo called to inform that they bought a house and I couldn't have been happier for them and I never thought I'd be in contact with a boy that is my ex husband's boyfriend and like him, it's crazy I swear but he is a good person and Mondli is really blessed to have him... The front door opens and Siyamthanda walks in with a suitcase.

Me: haibo and then?

Her: I need a few days away from Bongani mama.

Me: why? What happened?

Her: I don't know but he just annoys me so much these days.

Me: that's extreme baby, what did he do?

Her: he did everything ma, his presence just annoys the living hell out of me.

I chuckle.

Me: that's crazy Siya you can't just feel annoyed by someone when they did nothing to you.

Her: yoh mama don't take his side.

She says emotional and walks away to the bedroom and it suddenly hits me. Let me call her husband and find out more. He answers after a few rings

Him: Ma, is she there?

Me: yes she just got in, what happened?

Him: I honestly don't know, Siya has been impatient with me for a while now, everything I do seems to annoy her and she snaps at me for the most stupidest things.

Me: I don't want to get you excited and then it turns out to be nothing, it will hurt you but it will break her more.

Him: what do you mean?

Me: she might be pregnant, her skin tone is perfect, she is glowing, she is an emotional wreck and she has gained a bit.

Him: you think she is?

He asks and the hope in his voice breaks my heart, I know how much they both this.

Me: I suspect my son but please don't put your hopes high up.

Him: I just pray she is mama, Siya prays for this everyday and night I just pray he has finally heard my wife and I.

Me: Bongani thank you for being the most loving and supportive husband to my daughter, most man would have left because of this but you loved her even more, God will bless you with a soccer team.

He chuckles.

Him: thank you ma. I will let her be today and come see her tomorrow.

Me: okay son, bye.

Him: bye mama.

I hung up and go check on Siya, I pray she is with a child, this will wipe her tears and bring her so much joy.

No edits

Chapter 04 of A call from the past is available on visionary writings