

GUGULETHU, MY HUSBAND'S WIFE



Insert 1

Grocery shopping is honestly the worst thing I've ever had to do. It's the same as washing dishes for me. My aunt has always said that she doesn't understand the kind of child I am. I mean I always have to whinge and grumble everytime I have to complete my chores but I know I'm a neat freak at the same time. According to me, these type of things should just find a way to do themselves. Anyway, today is a Saturday meaning it's laundry day. So I put the laundry in the machine and prepare myself to

take a shower because I'm starting to feel irritated by this honey mask on my face. It's 37°C in Polokwane so you can imagine how I feel. After I take my shower, I put on my orange and short jumpsuit with my gold Kelso sandals. I don't feel like a wig today so I opt for a light brown straw hat with no make-up. I'm not a big fan of make-up anyway. I requested an uber before I lotioned so it should be here any moment from now, which gives me some time to lazy and scroll around on Instagram. The car arrives when I was starting to

get comfortable, making me question if I really need these groceries anymore. I hurry downstairs after I'm done being silly and get driven to the mall. I was listening to some classic RnB when a random thought tiptoed into my daydreams to remind me how unsafe requested cars are. I removed my earphones so I can 'see' quite clearly where we were headed and I'm pretty sure I'm not the one person who does this. I even take them out or lower the volume of speakers should I need to smell something. It might sound crazy but I've

actually read somewhere that the 5 senses actually work together as a team. Believe or not. Anyway, we eventually get to Savannah mall and I do what needs to be done. I'm not the kind to zigzag and draw cross bows with my movements in a grocery store. I was in the dairy aisle when it hit me that my steam iron is slowing handing in it's resignation letter. After getting the cheddar cheese, I made way to the aisle with appliances. I got there and scouted around and eventually found the one I liked. Only, my height kept doing me

injustice. I looked around looking for anybody who works in the shop to help me out. After a good and ripe 3 minutes, I turned my head and was met by a box of iron and a panty-dropping smile. But I'm not for relationships. I've never been. So I quickly get the thought out of my head. I compose myself and I finally (after about 9 decades) say thank you. He widens the smile and says "You're welcome". And boy do I not melt? I quickly take the iron and turn away. He hastens to come stand in front of me and puts his hands on my shoulders.

Him: Hawu, Ka njalo nje sekuphelile?

I blush

Me: You can go charm somebody else cause I'm really in a rush

Him: Nkosazana my day is really going well. In fact it just got better. You're too pretty to be a demon so please.

Me: Well this is not my real face oh!!

That just involuntarily came out and I actually acted like that Emanuella kid. I know I'm not a funny person in general so I did not expect him to laugh that much so I figured he has seen

the video somewhere. When he finally pulled himself together he looked at me with his pure and beaming eyes. He's beautiful.

Fara Guard was really just showing off here.

Him: Okay... I'd really like to 'meet' you properly. Can we start with your name and please... for the love of the country of KZN can we not argue over that cause I can feel it coming?

Me: Are you a prophet?

Him: Part time.

I laughed and saw that he's not about to give up soon so I gave in.

Me: Well you're lucky you found me in a good mood today but first, what's a Zulu guy like you doing in Limpopo there's not many of y'all floating around

Him: Y'all?

He raised his eyebrow and looked down on me, trying to intimidate me I'm guessing.

Me: Arg you know what I mean.

Him: Ngiyadlala. Well I'm here on business and I'm actually 10 minutes late to a meeting.

Me: And you're still here bekhozzzzz?

Him: Something more important came up.

He flashes his beautiful smile and takes out his phone, unlocks it, takes my hand and puts it in it. I look at it and back at him.

Me: You're too trusting. What if I'm one of these nyaope people who rip people off?

Him: Haibo angizang ngal bona iphara elifana nawe mina. Anyway, you don't look like you'd outrun me so it's chilled.

(I've never seen a nyaope smoker that looks like you)

Me: Wanniyatsa shem. (You undermine me hey).

I say this as I dial my numbers and save them as "Boikokobetso"

to ensure that he doesn't misspell it. He looks at me as I type.

Me: Yours?

Him: What? Digits?

I roll my eyes and he laughs

Him: Call me Yise. Muzikayise.

Me: I like Muzi best.

I give the phone back to him and push my trolley forward. He holds my arm with his left hand and dials the number I just gave to him. My phone rings from my side bag and we both hear "Baby shark" and then I remember my nephew had my phone this past weekend. If he's not changing my wallpapers, or depleting my data

on Playstore then he's setting new ringtones. Muzi tries to hold in a laughter while facing the floor and turns to me with a look that says "Explain?"

Me: Don't even.

I take out my phone from my bag and I exit that aisle pushing the trolley with one hand, leaving him there with that silly smug on his face!

A brief.

Before we get carried away, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Boikokobetso Motlhabane. We

are originally from the Northern Cape but I grew up (mostly) in Limpopo because my mom got married to her now late Pedi man. This means I speak both pedi and tswana. My "mom" is not my biological mother. My mother died in 1996 while giving birth to me. My mom is actually, by tradition and technicality, my aunt. She's my mom's identical twin sister. I've long concluded that this is where the ease of comfort and friendship stems from so I'm not really an orphan, if you look at it carefully. I have a sibling, Boikgantsho. She's 4 years older

than me and I'd say our relationship is fine but it's not exactly on fire. My dad is not what you'd call a deadbeat but I doubt anybody would soberly nominate him in 'Father of the year' awards should they exist. He has other kids but none of us live with him. I've been getting an allowance from him since I finished high school but I never really spend time with him. He once called and asked that we go for ice cream years back but I ended up being sent back home because he had met a lady during our date. I still find solace in the

fact that he cared enough to accompany me to the taxi rank but I no longer waste my breath trying to build a proper relationship with him. Not all of us can have that. Him and mom don't get along. She says she has never liked him, even at first sight.

"I'm not for relationships. I've never been." What I meant by this is, I've never been in a proper, stable relationship. And no I'm not your typical "7 Bs" kinda Betty but the guys I like are always either too young or taken. I've fooled around and wasted

time in a few interactions that ended with just kissing but that's about it. Not having a lot of friends helped so I've never been in any kind of pressure. I'm a self-proclaimed and certified loner. But I do have a best friend.

Boitumelo. He has multiple personalities. An entire squad in one so I never really feel the need to supplement our friendship with other people. I recently moved to town because of my job and he went to go study medicine in Cape town but contrary to common expectations, we get closer by the minute cause we text all day

every day like we're in a relationship, of which we have been accused of a plethora of times until everybody actually found out that he's anything but straight. Him and I first met in grade 9.

Let me give you a mini skirt description of myself. I'm not light skinned and neither am I exactly dark. Not tall nor short, average height. People always compliment my hairline and say I have a nice, beautiful and long black afro. I'm not responsible for the good health of my hair. My mom deserves all the accolades

for that but I've recently been feeling like it has to go since I live alone now. I've always undermined how much of a full time job it is taking care of hair. She's the one who did the washing, moisturizing and protective plating. The only thing I'm good at is tying it up in a bun. I've once had short hair when I was in primary school but looking at all my old pictures I see how it accentuates and exaggerates my big eyes. My sister always mocks me and says I sleep while my eyes are awake because sometimes they don't fully shut, especially

when I sleep without intention while seated or something of that sort. I didn't like them while growing up because I always got teased about them but now, they're my favourite facial feature and they're actually very beautiful and white. The long lashes also work overtime to make sure of this. I believe you now have a picture of what I might look like right? Right!

Insert 2

I got everything I needed and was driven back to my place. On

the way, I couldn't stop thinking about Muzi and smiling to myself like an idiot. The driver adjusted his rear view mirror and smiled to himself as well. This made me feel stupid and uncomfortable. I felt like explaining myself to show that I have all my screws intact and am actually not crazy. I was put out of my misery when the trip ended.

I got to my place, unlocked the door and closed it with my foot after entering. I put the plastics on the kitchen counter and went back to lock the door. I can never be comfortable and at ease

knowing that my door is unlocked. My imagination is my biggest enemy. But I appreciate this OCD cause one can never be too safe, considering the GBV stats in this country. After changing into my fluffy slippers, I make my way to the kitchen while checking my texts. I have about 8 unread messages on WhatsApp. One from Tumi (he prefers it pronounced as "Too me" by the way, the drama bahlali. The drama!). He sent two texts updating me about the date he went on last night and asking if I'm okay because I've been absent from the app since

last night around 23h00 but he called me while I was at the mall to check up on me so I don't reply to that one. Another important text was coming from Kgantsho. She had sent a screenshot as proof that she paid me back the R450 I borrowed her last week. My sister is the most punctual person I know. She doesn't need to be reminded about anything, especially paying back money on time and she's usually the one to arrive first should we agree to meet up somewhere and I honestly love this trait about her. She's reliable and honest. I scroll

through the other messages as I unpack my groceries and test my iron if it works. The rest were just replies to my status update I posted saying I'm need of a haircut and people should recommend the best barbers they know of. Instead of that, a lot were against my decision but I have only one mother. As if she's gonna agree. She's also gonna give me hell but I'm prepared for it. I was kinda disappointed that Muzi hadn't texted but I didn't want to admit it to myself. I kept saying it out loud that even if he doesn't ever contact me it won't

sting any where. I'm certainly the only person who lies to themselves this way. I am sure of it.

The time was now 16h47 and girl had no ambition to get into the water and actually bath. I ordered a large box of triple decker pizza when I arrived and I had it all by myself with some wine and I was now paying for it. I've never felt this lazy and full. Tumi and I are honestly the only ones that know that I drink alcohol. The family that my mom got married into is very religious. Me and my sis were actually

forced to wake up every Sunday morning to prepare for Sunday school. But I eventually became a Sunday school drop-out because of all the tantrums I threw and the noise I made when I got there. Kgantsho completed the 'course' and actually got a certificate but now that papa (Our step father) is gone we both don't even go to church anymore. Mom does but she's a firm believer of one making their own decisions. She's always preaching that if something doesn't make you happy, never set yourself on fire to keep others

warm. Never bend over backwards to make others comfortable. I'm not worried about her finding out that I do drink cause she won't be dramatic about it. She'll only tell me to have limits. Anyway I'm rambling. I opt for a shower instead of a bath cause it's quicker. While I'm in there, my phone beeps. I quickly took a towel from where I hang them, turned off the faucet with the most speed and jumped out to my bedroom like I was expecting a message from SA lotteries. I get disappointed upon the discovery that it was just a

mere "Thanks sis" from Kgantsho. I sink my wet self on the bed and scroll through my WhatsApp. Ever looked for something you knew very well that it isn't there? That was me. That was me going to the bottom of my chats thinking I might've archived his chat by mistake. There was nothing there. I locked my phone and threw it back on the bed. I dried my self up, lotioned and got into my pyjamas. A tank top and silk pants which went up to just half my leg. I took off my shower cap and put on a black hair band just above my hair line. I went

back to the kitchen to tidy up and
and finish up the bottle of wine I
opened and the movie (Girl's trip)
I was watching on Netflix. It
got very late and I had gotten
Muzi out of my mind. Tumi kept
saying "Men are not worth it and
you been knew". We kept talking
until his minutes ran out and we
continued our conversation on
WhatsApp, exchanging voice notes.
I could never get enough of bes
to be honest. I was starting to
feel really sleepy and my eyes were
shit heavy. I switched off the
screen and unplugged my phone
charger from the socket. I went

to check if my door was still locked (do not judge) and switched off the light in the living room/kitchen. I received a call from an unknown number and I was actually very pissed because I hate people who call me between 22h00 and 05h00. I ignored the call and after my phone went silent it immediately hit me that it might be Muzi. I started praying in Egyptian tongues that the nigga calls again. I closed my bedroom door and sat on my bed. I continually tapped my phone on my left palm waiting for it to ring. It did. I

screamed and danced "pouncing cat" with the phone in my right hand before I composed myself and actually answered.

Me: Hello?

Him: Nkosazana. Ulele yin?

Getting into 'sleepy voice gear' mode.

Me: Uhm.. yea. Who's this?

Him: Ngiyaxolisa mommy shark. It's Yise.

(I'm sorry)

I laughed at him mocking me about ringtone, which I forgot to change.

Me: Hey. It's okay. I've been asleep for a while now.

Him: I'm sorry for calling you this late. My day was just refusing to end because I wanted to wrap up everything I came here to do today so I can be free tomorrow.

Me: Oh you're leaving tomorrow? I said this hoping and praying with my butt cheeks tightly pressed that he'd say no.

Him: No, Monday. I was actually hoping that I could see your "real face oh" k'sasa.

I laughed and blushed.

Me: what if ke busy? (what if I'm..)

Him: Busy with what on a Sunday? Demons don't go to

church. Or do they?

Me: Who do you think is responsible for the nasty thoughts you get while you pray ko kerekeng? (.. at church)

He laughs. I'm happy that I can make him laugh to be honest

Him: On a serious note though, I'm taking you out tomorrow. My battery is about to die and I left my charger at home. I'll get a new one and call you tomorrow morning. Ulale kahle yezwa?

That "Yezwa" drove me insane and I ended dropping the call by mistake. I didn't know whether to call him back or text him. I

believe I'm a lady and no lady wants to appear as desperate. As I was battling with my thoughts, he sent me a text saying "Please don't haunt me in my sleep. Goodnight.". And then my night was made.

Unedited.  

Insert 3

Can somebody please remind me why I have an alarm for 5am on a Sunday. Jizasi! I quickly pressed the huge button at the top of the alarm, switched it off and let

it fall off of the bed. I tried to get some more sleep but I knew I wasn't going to succeed because according to my biological clock, I should be up and out of bed and having my first cup of coffee by now. Kgantsho and I call it petrol because we legit won't function if we don't have coffee in the morning but my 'condition' is quite mild compared to hers. She drinks more coffee than she does water. I only need to have it once in a single day. I pull my phone with my thumb from the bedside table and lay on on my back. I first go on Instagram and then figure I

should just call bes

Him: Bitch you had better have a darn good reason why you're waking me up at 5am on a Sunday morning. Did you receive a DM from Christ announcing his arrival?

I laugh. I knew he was gonna go off at me but I called anyway.

Me: Good morning to you too

Him: What's so good about this morning? You hit the man jackpot?

Me: I wouldn't say so buuuuuuuut... I could literally hear him getting up from his bed and screaming in my ear.

Him : Hoe you don't say!?? Spill.
Spill the beans before the tin
explodes.

Me: There's nothing much in the
tin anyway. Only that I have a
date today.

Him: Oh my word. Where is he
taking you?

He said. Sounding more calm and
soft spoken now.

Me: He didn't get into details
because his battery was dying.

Me: But I like him friend! He
makes me laugh. And I can make
him laugh too.

Him: Ncao. Send the pics and I'll
do the deciding. (He always picks

out my outfit whenever I have an important meeting to attend). Now you need to do some serious body scrubbing. And make sure your ass smells good.

Me: That sounded so wrong.

Him: Arg fuck outta here grandma you know what I mean. And even if it meant whatever you brick head is thinking, it would still be correct. Bih if your vag had a password, you'd have forgotten it by now.

I laughed so hard and told him to find the earliest bus to hell.

I then got up from the bed and went to brush my teeth and

wash my face. I felt like a huge breakfast so I went straight to the kitchen to go make toast, eggs, bacon and sliced tomatoes with black pepper. I always have my coffee with milk and a truckload of sugar. According to me, people who have coffee black with no sugar are psychopaths tbh. I switched on the news, had my breakfast while replying to texts on my phone. I checked my emails and I had no events lined up. As a tired businesswoman who was looking forward to a date, this was a relief to me. Working as a P.A for a very demanding boss and

at the same time running an events-management company is no child's play I tell you. I somehow zoned out on the couch and was woken up by call from Muzi.

Him: Boikhokhobhetso.

Me: Are you sure you have the right number Sir?

We both laugh and he says "Come on. I tried. Alright alright Ngizo vele ngik'bize uMaKhumalo iphele lendaba"

(I'll just call you MaKhumalo so this issue can end)

Me: I'm actually a Motlhabane, sir.

Him: Not for long.

I almost choke on my saliva and decide to have this conversation seated.

Him: Are you okay over there?

Me: I'm fine. I'm perfectly fine.

Him: Look, I need a few essentials before heading back home

tomorrow. Mind coming with?

It was around 09h07 and I hadn't taken a bath.

Me: Bad idea. I'm in no state to be seen walking around in public.

Him: I don't mind.

Me: Uh..

Him: I'm coming to pick you up in an hour max. Could you kindly send

me your location?

Me: You outchea giving me instructions and yet you don't know where I live.

I scoff.

Him: You're now left with 58 minutes to get ready.

He dropped the call before I could reply. The nerve! He's probably used to abusing his charm and getting his way. Hence the arrogance. I pull my fleece and go back to sleep. Whoever has the location shall have the last laugh.

Insert 3 cont...

Before I could catch some sleep, he sent me message saying "Uyayithumela leyo location or ufuna uk'bona ngami sengfika lapho?" which directly translates to "Are you sending me that location or you want to see me arrive there?" I've heard stories about how demanding and bossy Zulu men can get but the kind of liver Muzi has can never be found in any butchery in South Africa. I ignored the text and went back to sleep. I don't do well with instructions, especially when coming from a man. I'm not so sure I like this guy anymore. I

got woken up by a call telling me that he is outside my building and I should come down. Initially I thought he was joking until he described the vicinity. Normally, I would be freaked out by this gesture but instead I'm turned on. I love a man who defies all odds to get what he wants. Okay that was a bit deep and dramatic. I slide into my slippers and rush to my bathroom to see if my face is okay. My hair is in a messy bun and I still have my sleeping band on. I'm not changing my pyjamas cause I know he's gonna force me to go with him to

the mall if I look decent. He will just have to deal.

Once I get downstairs I see him leaning against a Mercedes busy typing on his phone with his legs crossed. I slowly walk towards him and he looks up and stops typing to stare at me instead. He lifts his hands into the air indicating that I should come to him for a hug. I haven't showered yet so I slowly shake my head and blush. He laughs and says "woza", pulling him into his arms. He smells so so good! I could totally stay here forever. I feel safe. I get intoxicated by his

scent and my mind drifts away without my permission. He gently pushes me back and looks at me. Him: Waze wamuhle umuntu ekseni bo!. (You're so beautiful in the morning.) I blush and look away

Me: Nxa stop being silly.

Him: Not that I mind but..I give you an entire hour to get ready and this is the outfit you decide upon? He says and laughs, mocking my pyjamas. I thin my eyes and just say "Mcim" , deciding against clapping back. It's too early for this.

Him: Ngiyadlala haw. Anyway, you

look beautiful. Honestly, I wouldn't mind waking up to this sight each and every day for the rest of my life.

I instantly feel butterflies fluttering in my stomach. I blush and let out a smile. I can't look him in the eye for long. I get lost in his eyes. He keeps dropping hints about wanting me in his life. I hope I'm not being taken for a ride. It would break my heart cause I already day dream about having babies by this man. I'm having all these thoughts until I remember that I'm still in a stranger's hands and the

stranger is holding my waist. I pull away and say "Uhm...", feeling all types of awkward. He opens the passenger door to his car and indicates with his hand that I should get in.

Me: You honestly cannot still be expecting me to go shopping with you. I haven't showered.

Him: Yiphutha lika bani lelo? (And whose fault is that?)

Me: I'm honestly not doing this with you, not today. I can't go to the mall looking like this.

Him: Well I'm not taking no for an answer.

I exhaled in defeat.

Me: Okay okay. Give me 30 minutes to get ready.

Him: 20.

Me: 30. Or we're not going anywhere.

Him: Ave une nkani. Okay. (You're so stubborn)

I walk back and he locks his car and follows me. I stop and ask where he is going.

Him: You are not expecting me to sit out here and wait for half an hour. Are you?

Me: But you can't come with. I'm going to bath for heaven's sake.

Him: Look if you don't trust me you'll lock your bathroom and come

out only when you're done and fully dressed. Masambe. He says and pulls me by hand.

While we walk to my apartment I ask him where he's going to leave his car cause he said he's catching a flight back home.

He said he rented it out and we carried making small talk until we got to my place. We got in and I told him to make himself comfortable. I get to my bedroom and I shower. After I'm done, I put on a sky blue knee length tight dress and my gold push in sandals. I battle with choosing between my natural hair and a

wig. I opt for my Peruvian wig instead. I'm a lover of inches but it's not that long. Just 18". I put on lip gloss but not too much. I've already said that I'm not a lover of make-up so I prefer looking as natural as possible. Unless I'm really in the mood. I take my cellphone and head out. I find him looking at this quote I have in a frame in my living room just next to my door that goes "Always carry a flagon of whiskey in case of snakebite. And furthermore, always carry a small snake" by W.C Fields. He laughs and says "Interesting." He didn't

see me come out of my room.

Me: I'm ready. I say this letting my hands fall to my sides.

Him: Yoh! He says and his mouth hangs open.

Me: Yini?

Him: Waze wamuhle bo.

Me: You're telling me this for the 2nd time today I'm starting to think you're lying. I say and laugh. He laughs as well. He's really beautiful maaan.

Him: I can't help it. Honestly. Umuhle ngempela.

Me: Let's get going before you lie some more.

We head out and go to the mall to get his things. He asked me if I need anything and I said no. He's considerate. I like that. We play some games at the mall until I'm hungry and sluggish. I don't know how to tell him that I'm hungry. He sees my sudden disinterest and suggest we go to get some food. I was hoping that we'll get some KFC. I kept my disappointment to my self and we walked to Woolies. While on the way, he got a text on his phone. He replied and put back in his pocket and held my hand. We get there and get some wine, grapes, wine glasses,

strawberries, a big tub of yogurt and some snacks. I was surprised at his choices for lunch but we pay and head out. I finally get the guts to ask him that we go to KFC because this is not all I'm having, not when I'm this famished. He laughs and says we'll go to a drive through. We get to the car and he opens the boot. I see a picnic basket and a light throw. This fucker planned all of this! He looks at me and closes the boot with a smug smile on his face.

Once we get settled in the car, he receives a call and declines it. The

caller calls again and he exhales and finally answers. I wonder who has him this annoyed.

Him: Gugu

Him: But I replied and said I'll call you back when I'm free.

Him: Haike kuzofanele ukhulume noMa cause I can't help you right now. (You'll have to speak to Ma..)

Him: Of course I care about him..

Him: Now you're just being unreasonable

He hold his forehead, exhales and tells her that he'll call her back and drops the call.

He looks to me and says that was his baby's mother. He has a child?

I ignore all these questions in my head as he drives while making small talk to a park. It's actually not too far from where I live and there's also a museum close by. This just showed me that I'm always indoors if there's no good need for me to be outside. We get there and sit, talk and laugh. A lot. I end up teaching him how to play Animal rescue, a game I love and have on my phone. It's getting really late and we head back to my place and I was starting to get itchy from mosquito bites. We get there and sit in the car. He suddenly looked

like he had a lot on his mind. The silence after he parked was too loud and awkward for me. I decided to break it.

Me: I enjoyed my day today.

Thank you. He shakes his head once like he just got woken up from a bad dream and smiles. He holds my hand with both of his and kisses the back of it. His lips are soft and cold.

Him: I couldn't have my Sunday any other way. Ngiyabonga, Mrs Me. I laugh and finally release what's been heavy on my chest

Me: Mciim why didn't you tell me you have a child?

Him: You didn't ask.

Me: Yeah right.

Him: But what did you expect
vele? I'm 32 years old. Show me
any man at this age who doesn't
have a kid?

He has a point though. We only
met yesterday. Maybe he was
gonna tell me.

Him: Look sthandwasami. It's a
pity I have to go back home
tomorrow otherwise I was gonna
iron out everything for you so we
start on the same page. But
ngikholve when I say I loved you
the first time I saw your big
eyes wandering in that shop

looking for help. You stole my heart and you didn't even know it yourself. I want you to be the first thing I see when I wake up and the last person I smile to before I sleep. I'm gonna make you my wife, whatever the odds. All I ask is for you to walk this journey with and most importantly, to trust me.

I've never felt this way. I mean I knew he liked me and he kept dropping hints but I didn't think it was this deep. He got out of the car, got to my door and opened it. He held my hand and helped me out only to scoop me

into his strong arms. He moved his head from my neck, looked at me and leaned in for a kiss. I started feeling tense and nervous. He laughed briefly and told me to relax. He kissed me so slowly and so passionately I became wet in an instant. He had his hands on my waist, softly holding me. I broke the kiss because I definitely needed to breathe. I exhaled and he let out a smile. I looked at him and leaned against his car.

Me: Okay I understand the baby part. But how come a fine man like you is not yet taken?

He gently pulled me back into his arms and put his forehead against mine. He kissed me once and said "Ngithe ku wena, trust me. Ngicela ungithembe?" and continued kissing me.

Insert 4

I've been kissed before but whatever was happening right now is something I've never experienced. He smiled in between the kiss and pecked my lips one last time and told me he had to leave. I've never been more sad. I didn't want him to go and

wished he could stay a little longer. I had lost track of time but I knew it was late. He watched me walk into the building before getting in his car and driving off.

I got to my place, closed the door and stood against it, smiling and shaking my head at what just happened. His scent was all over me and yes I couldn't stop smelling my dress. Muzikayise Khumalo is driving me insane!

I went straight to my bedroom and charged my phone. I found one missed call from mom and decided to text and inform her

that I'll call her tomorrow because I was kak tired and my feet were killing me. I just knew it was just a check-up call because if it was an emergency I would've received a minimum of 37 missed calls from her. The time was 23h12. I took a quick shower and slipped into my pyjamas. I got a call from Muzi while I applying night cream on my face.

Him: Sthandwasami

I could get used to being addressed this way. It's not what he says to be honest. It's how he says it.

Me: Sawubona bab'Khumalo

He laughed and it sounded like he was blushing

Him: Who taught you how to speak Zulu ?

Me: Haisuka that's the most basic Zulu ever.

Him: But you pronounced it like a proper Zulu girl. This is all the signal I need.

We both laughed cause he was being silly.

Me: Have you arrived?

Him: Yeah and ngikhathela ngiyafa(I'm tired and dying). And I still have to pack.

Me: Shame man. What time is your flight?

Him: At 8. I'm not looking forward to it.

I suddenly felt my heart cracking.

Me: I'm gonna miss you though.

I didn't mean to say this out loud.

Him: Please say that again.

Me: No man. I laughed, feeling embarrassed.

Him: Ngiyak'cela. Isho sthandwasam. (Please. Say it my love)

Me: Ngizoku khumbula Mbulazi

Him: Hawu madoda! (I could literally feel his smile growing via the phone)

Ngadla mina Mntungwa!

Mbulaz'omnyama

Abathi bedl'umuntu,
Bebe bemyenga ngendaba.
Abadl'izimf'ezimbili,
Ikhambi laphuma lilinye.
Lobengula kaMzilikazi,
Mzilikazi kaMashobana
Shobana noGasa kaZikode!!!
Siyashada mina nawe next month.
Utjel' abazali bakho mina ngizo
khuluma moMalume. (You and I
are getting married next month.
Speak to your parents and I'll
speak to my uncle).

Hearing him praise himself like
that just made me wet. I'm
falling for him by the second. And
hard!!

Me: But you barely know me. I say and laugh at his silly self cause I know he's just joking. Who marries somebody they've barely known for less than 48 hours?

Him: But I know you were made for me.

I swear, if I received a rand for each time he made me blush and messed with the tempo of my heartbeat, I wouldn't even need a job.

Me: Mcim let me get some sleep because some of us have work tomorrow. Ulale kahle.

Him: Nawe. Ngiyak'thanda yezwa?

The butterflies in my stomach were fighting to be let loose.

Me: Hm? I say and blush cause I have no idea how to respond to that without looking stupid and awkward.

Him: Ung'zwe kahle. Ngithe ngiyak'thanda ntombi yakwa Motlabane.

If somebody was ever looking for the worst pronunciation of my name and surname, this is it. The search is over.

Me: Let me sleep before you assassinate my grandfather's name even further.

He laughs and we continue

speaking till 02h10 in the morning.

I'm going to have a hard time waking up for work but I have absolutely zero regrets.

Insert 5.

I struggled with waking up this morning but it eventually got done. I couldn't have my coffee because all my sockets were not working. But nothing could ruin this day for me, not even a rude taxi driver mntakabawo. I got to work and tried to have my coffee there. I scooped 3 spoons of

instant coffee and as I was about to put in some sugar, Mr Moko walked in and told me that he's having a meeting with J&K inc. in 20 minutes and he needs me there. Jizas Krasss what happened to warning a girl beforehand? He honestly could've told me this on Friday. The amount of work I do around qualifies me to be more than a P.A to be honest.

Me: Sure. But my laptop is dead.

Him: You'll use mine. I'll use the desktop in the office.

And please send me the minutes from Friday's meeting with

Khululeka. Com. Preferably before midday.

Me: Consider it done. I said as we both made way to his office. On the way there my phone beeps. I look at the screen and it's a text from Muzi. I purse my lips inwardly, look at Mr Moko and start walking slowly behind him. I read the text and smile to myself. It read "My love. I'm already at the airport and I'm about to leave. We'll talk properly when I get to KZN. I love you. A lot." My smile grows till I see Mr Moko now standing a distance in front of me in the corridor with a "Are

you coming or not?" look on his face, which was enough to reprimand and make me lock my phone and keep walking.

The meeting went really well and Jason, the founder of J&K mentioned that I have a good business mind. Twice. He actually warned my boss to keep me close because I'm more than just an assistant. That boosted my confidence, considering the fact that I also have a small business which I have big plans for. I don't intend on being an employee for the rest of my life.

It was now lunchtime and I had

completed all the tasks I had to do for today. Masedi walked towards me and stood in front of my cabin, folded and supported her hands with the partition and gave me a naughty smile.

Me: Hawu. Ke eng? (What?) I say as I sip on my cranberry juice.

Her: Wa jola wena aker? (You're now dating right?)

I almost choke and I hit my chest several times, trying to catch my breathe.

Me: What?

Her: It's no use denying it. Ke go bone maobane at the mall with your snack. (I saw you

yesterday...) Damn girl! I was honestly wishing to walk up to you so I can have a close look at him. Atla a baba monna t!he! (He's so hot!)

I started feeling uncomfortable and jealous by this conversation. Masedi is the Energy FM of this office. She's has files on almost everyone here, including Mr Moko's wife except for me. I always make sure to separate colleagues and friendship. The only person I truly get along with here is Amo. She and I are no different. But she's away on maternity leave now so I'm basically bored in this

office. I tell Masedi that I have work to do and turn chair to face my desktop and put my hand on the mouse, although I have no idea what I'm doing on this screen. She takes the walk of shame back to her cabin and I continue eating since I'm now out of her sight. Mr Moko walks in and asks if I have emailed him the document he asked for this morning.

Me: It's already in your inbox sir.

Him: Good. You're free to take the rest of the day off. My face beamed.

Me: For real boss?

Him: Yes. With that he walked away.

This gives me enough chance to finally go get my long wanted haircut. As I make my way out of the office it hits me that I promised my mom that I'm gonna call her. Which I should've done this morning. Shoot! I take out my phone, settle on one of the benches outside the offices and dial her number and it rings for a while before she answers.

Mom: Kene kere o lahlegile jaanong. Dumela Pankunas (I was starting to think you're lost. Hello..)

Mom still calls me with the same pet name she did starting from when I was 6 and she knows very well that I hate it. It used to make me feel cute and all that but I'm a grown-ass woman now.

Me: Aowa mama. Oitse sentle gore akelebatle leina leo (No mom. You know very well that I don't like that name).

Her: Nnana, I also grow as you grow, meaning you'll always be a baby to me. I'm never winning this argument so I let it go.

Me: Go siame ge. How are you? (it's fine then)

Her: Go lla ago thusi. How are

you?(Crying has never helped)

Me: I'm fine. Ebe o simulla(You're starting)

My mom literally says this everytime somebody asks her how she is. Even if she has nothing to cry about.

Her: Aowa kante go thusitse mang? (But honestly, who has it ever helped?)

We continue talking and laughing. I've said it. She was just checking up on her baby last night. Nothing was on fire.

I quickly make my way to the salon that one my W/App contacts referred me to and I find it

almost empty, just one girl doing box braids. I get there and greet and they all warmly greet back.

Hairdresser: Otlo loga le wena sthandwa? (Are you also here to plait your hair love?)

Me: No actually I'm here for a haircut. I heard you also do them.

Her: Yoh o nyaka go cut moriri omobotse so? (You want to cut such beautiful hair)

Lady getting her hair done: Why though?

She says, taking out a chunk of the hairpiece she has in her left hand. I've honestly had enough of this conversation but I don't

want to be rude.

Me: I'm just tired of it.

Hairdresser: Alright. Sit on that chair. Thabo went out to get chips. He'll be back in a minute. You can call me Ntebo. Short for Nteboheng.

The girl getting her hair done said she's Dineo and I also introduced myself.

I'm guessing that's the barber.

I remove the towel from the chair and take my seat in front of the mirror.

Dineo: Nekesa go hlaloesetsa (As I was saying..), I'm done with him. Actually I'm done with

babydaddies in general. I love him but his baby momma is too much for me. Last night she called him re robetse (while we're sleeping) and said the baby is having bad dreams and he should come over. Eno mpotsa fela.. (Just tell me/imagine)

Ntebo burst out laughing and shooked her head until Dineo started laughing as well but I could see she was upset.

Dineo: Ska tshenga hle wena (Don't laugh). I'm being serious. She can keep him.. I can't.

Me: Did he go?

I was thinking out loud and my

mouth snitched on me.

Dineo: He did! That's why I'm so upset. He jumps each time she snaps her skinny fingers and expects me to understand.

Ntebo: Ge re eya nneteng it's very rare to find a man without a child these days.

She says as she plaits

Ntebo: But what's important is him creating a boundary for the baby momma. If he doesn't demand that she respects you as the current mastene (Landlady) then she's going to do as she pleases. Nna papa wa ngwanaka ompoditse dinako tse nka founang

ka tsona (My baby daddy stipulated the times on which I'm actually allowed to call) and I sometimes speak to Lerata about the baby instead of him. I won't say I'm lucky but I appreciate this relationship we have between the 3 of us. Not all baby mommas have drama. Take me for example..

They carried on speaking but I trailed off in my own thoughts. Thinking about my relationship with Muzi and what's actually in store for me. I mean I'm falling for this man but I don't need drama in my life...

Unedited. Excuse the errors. 🤖🌟

Insert 6.

Thabo did come back after a minute as Ntebo promised and he did a pretty good job if I must say. I looked like a proper gentleman. Jokes. I looked really pretty. He even offered to open a "Long walk to freedom" on the side and swore it would suit me. I asked that we make a deal. If it does suit me then I'm always gonna come to him for haircuts and pay R20 extra everytime,

including today. If it doesn't I'm paying half the price. I was legit gambling with my appearance here. He laughed at my negotiation skills. He agreed (as expected) because I know I'm very good at convincing people. If I wasn't this empathic I would've made a great con artist. I was happy after he was done. He took me pictures for marketing purposes and also forwarded them to me. I kept my end of the deal and went back home.

I got there and admired myself on the mirror. Everything is

popping. My eyes, skin, hair, everything! I suddenly felt like I needed to go out. I didn't care where but I just knew I looked really really pretty. If my mom was here right now she'd say ke sebogwa (I'm an attention-seeker). Speaking of my mom, I need to call her, report and hand myself in and serve my jail time. I dialled her and she didn't pick up. I swear, if somebody was to walk in here and point me with a gun demanding that I call someone and if they pick up I die. If they don't they let me go and I live, my mother would definitely save

my life.

I dial for the second time and she finally picks up.

Mom: Pankunas

Me:

Her: O didimaletse eng? She says and laughs

Me: Anyway, I got a haircut.

I say and tightly close my eyes. I don't even know why I'm even feeling like a kid caught with their hand deep in a sugar jar.

I'm grown for heaven sake.

Her: Wareng Boikokobetso

Remofilwe Motlhabane?(what did you just say...)

She said this with the most

calmest town I've ever heard her maintain

Me: Eya mama. I got a haircut. She kept quiet for like 10 seconds and then exhaled.

Her: Geke bua kere le batla go mpona ke shule gothwe hee hee mama onale drama hee hee mama onale drama. Letlo nkgopola bana ke lona keale bolella. (When I say you kids want to see me dead you say blahs blah mom is dramatic mom is dramatic. You are gonna miss me one day kids I tell you) If you think you've seen drama, you haven't met my mother.

Me: Really mom? Really?

Her: Oseke ware really Kokobetso!
Oseke wanthaa ware really. Ke
tsaa gore ofeditse se neotlile ka
sone mo founung. Go botoka ke
ithwale nna ngwana Mantsienyane
keye go apaa before onameletsa
high high yaka. (Don't you dare
say really Kokobetso! Don't you
dare say really. I take it you're
done with the agenda that
brought forth this phone call. It
will be better if I carry my self,
I, the daughter of Mantsienyane
to go cook before you raise my
hypertension)

I was holding in laughter cause of
course I couldn't laugh out loud.

I'm trying to apologize for draining 7 years worth of her hardwork here.

Me: Intshwarele +the mma
(Please forgive me mom)

Her: Go siame. Go lokile in fact.

The bottom line is that it's okay. It is well with my heart at the end of the day. Afterall it is well with my soul.

Me: I'll bring you the largest box of choice assorted biscuits ka weekend ge. (During the weekend then...)

Her: Promise?

Me: I swear.

Her: Biscuits won't solve anything

mara tsona keadi batla (But I still want them). Goodbye.

She then dropped the call on my ear. Kubi laph'emhlabeni bahlali

After I recovered from laughing at how dramatic my mom actually is, I dragged my self to the kitchen to make dinner. The time was now 16h34. I haven't had proper food in a while I was starting to feel a bit sick. I decided on pap and chicken drumsticks. I initially wanted to roast the chicken but I changed my mind and boiled it with potatoes instead. Old school. After my dinner was done I

prepared myself to take a bath. I wanted to soak myself in there for a while. Blessed is the boss who decided to give me a day off today. Can the church please say amen? I really needed this. I haven't properly recovered from the exhaustion I have accumulated during the weekend and also, Monday is my least favourite day of the week.

My water is ready and I'm in my towel. But go shorta sengwenyana mo man (This set up is short of something). I say as I look at my bubble filled tub and hold my chin as I think. Ah yes!

Holy water. I say as I slide into my slippers and make my way to the kitchen. I get there and take out a large glass of wine and look for a corkscrew. I find it and open a fresh bottle of red wine. I then take my things and walk to my room. My phone beeps as I was about to walk straight into my bathroom. I hold both the wine and it's accompanying glass in one hand and take the phone with.

I get settled into my bath and pour myself a generous amount of wine. It's a text from Muzi, alternatively saved as Mbulazi with a heart emoji.

Him: I've arrived sweetheart. I wanted to call you but I'm guessing you're still at work. Text me when when you're free.

Uyathandwa yimina.

I decided to reply him on WhatsApp. I just felt it would be better that way because I was also texting Tumi at the same time.

Me: I got a half day today. My boss was in a good mood when he came back from lunch.

I replied and got two ticks. He came online a minute later. My heart did a young voshho. We all know how that transition from

'Last seen at ...' to 'Online' makes us feel. I'm not the only one and I know this for a fact.

Him: He probably got good head from wherever he went for leyo lunch

Me: Haibo!

I laughed.

Me: This is my boss we're talking about here. Who happens to also be an older man.

Him: Hawu. Kanti kthiwa older men don't get head?

This man is nuts and I can't believe we're talking about this.

Me: I'm officially terminating this conversation with immediate

effect.

Him: Isingisi sakho siyangi sinda mina so .. Oksalayo (You English is heavy so...)

Me: Oksalayo? Really? Honestly !?

Him: Wee sisi, iskhathi seEnglish sphele ngo 12 la ekhaya.

I can't with him. He calls me while I'm still trying to put and assemble together a clapback.

Me: Hey.

I say while still laughing

Him: It fills my heart to hear you laugh yaz.

Me: Is that why you called?

Him: Of course yes. How was your day?

Me: It was fine. Except for the scolding I got from my mom for getting a haircut.

Him: How old are you konje?

Me: 23. It's a long story for another day. Don't ask.

Him: Okay (He laughs softly). Let me at least see you ke?

Me: What's in it for me?

Him: Are you aware that you won't die if you let things slide without trying to negotiate?

Me: Oksalayo

He laughs and I smile. Making him laugh is my favourite thing tbh.

Him: Okay. How about.. a weekend

away?

I was scared to say yes but I loved the idea of spending an entire weekend with him so I said yes anyway.

I ended forwarding him all the photos Thabo took of me and he couldn't believe his eyes judging from the multiple texts he was sending me. He said I look freakishly different. In a good way. Well according to him. I told him I'm never growing my hair again, testing the waters and he said I shouldn't. I've been told that I'm beautiful in short hair (which was also a long time

ago) but hearing him say it is a different kind of high. The water started feeling really cold and I was hungry too so I got out, lotioned and went to eat. I don't like hot food so I didn't even put it in the microwave. I was on WhatsApp as I ate and the first status update was Muzi's. I saw before actually viewing it that he had posted one of the pictures I had sent to him. My heart literally forgot it had to beat for a second. I finally opened it and the caption read " Mrs Khumalo(Pending). Ntokazi, There's a feeling I get from you,

that no other woman can ever trigger."

Did I not melt? No amount of doubt (WhatsApp status settings cause I could be the only one seeing this) was going to stand between me and my happiness right now. I cared more about the caption than the actual post.

I replied with a heart emoji and he sent me a screenshot of his brother replying to the update saying "Bring her home for the braai bafo" and said "You keen?". Is Muzi actually asking me to come meet his family?

Unedited. ☐🌀

Insert 7.

Meet his family? I'm starting to feel overwhelmed by all of this. I'm falling in love with this man but I feel like this train is moving a pace I'm not ready for. I want to get to know him first. Imagine if I change my mind and his family already likes me? That, that would be a disaster and it would break my heart as well. On the other hand, I also don't want to disappoint him. But

no, if my decision of being more cautious will chase him away then I'll accept and acknowledge that he wasn't meant for me in the first place. I've ended relationships just because I felt like I was being put under pressure. This wouldn't be the first.

I finally gain the courage to subtly reply to his text, careful not to turn him down harshly.

Me: When is it?

Me: The braai

Him: 3 weeks from now. It's more of a get together tupa vibe. And you needn't worry about my

family overwhelming you.

Phew! For some reason I thought it was this weekend. Let me just go with the flow and prepare to land wherever the wind will blow me.

Me: Alright. I thought it was this coming weekend

Him: I thought I'd told you that you and I are going away this weekend. Have you changed your mind?

Me: You didn't tell me when aker.

Him: Okay. I just did.

This man!

Me: That's short notice. I have a baby shower to plan.

Him: Tell your friend she'll have it only when you're back from your baecation.

I laugh and shake my head.

Me: Kahle kahle who do you think you are Khumalo?

Him: The future head of the house you'll soon be calling yours. I'm speechless.

Me: Don't start.

Him: If this is your idea of me starting then I'm beginning to feel sorry for you.

Yoh! The turbulence in my heart!! I can't. I decide to swiftly change the topic.

Me: Mciin it's not a friend that

I'm planning a baby shower for.

I'm running a business here.

Him: You're into events planning?

Me: And management yes.

Him: Impressive! I'm proud of you mommy shark.

I don't know why that just made me take myself more serious. I barely know this man but his opinion means the world to me.

Me: Thank you.

I say and giggle.

Him: I just wish it was set for another date. Can't you delegate or something?

Me: Unfortunately not. My sister is not used to working all by

herself I don't want to strain her.

Him: I can't say I'm not disappointed but I'm proud of the goal-getter and the goal-digger I sense in you. Ngicela umsebenzi bandla. (Please hire me)

I laugh!

Me: Speaking of which, what do you do for a living Muzikayise?

Him: Construction baby.

Me: Mind telling me more?

Him: Come with me this weekend and find out for yourself. I'll fetch you?

Me: Don't corner me cause we've already spoken about this.

Him: Okaaaay. It was worth a shot. I have a proposal I need to have a look at here sthandwasam. I love talking to you but I also need to make money to marry you.

Nina!

Me: Okay. Ulale kahle.

Him: Ngiyak'thanda.

I dropped the call.

Days went by with me going to work, coming back to speak to Yise and repeating till it was Friday.

My boss wasn't coming in today so I was gonna take my chances and give myself a day off. I really miss my mother and I don't feel

okay knowing she's mad or disappointed by me or my actions. I woke up in the morning and took out my smallest suitcase to pack. I put in just sweatpants, t-shirts and hoodies because I was planning on being nothing but comfortable this weekend. I left it open and went to shower because I still needed to put my toiletries in there after that. For my outfit for today, I opted for plain black jeans, a white hoodie and black ankle airforce sneakers because it was a bit chilly today and it looked like it was about to rain. I was willing risk it because

home is like 20 mins away with taxi driver who doesn't have a death wish. I wanted to slay with my haircut but I needed my wig for warmth. I took my cellphone and pulled my suitcase out.

As I was outside my apartment trying to lock, my neighbor came out of his room with his bin bag. I'm seeing him topless for the second time this week and I'm not comfortable with it. He's generally a nice human being and he greets me first each time he sees me but he needs to practice public decency. My eyes landed on

his abs when he came out so I immediately looked away, and took out my key from the door.

Him: Hey neighbor

Me: Hi.

I said, trying keep my eyes away from playing in his direction.

Him: Going home?

Me: Yeah

Me: Yeah actually! I say and try to get down the stairs. He quickens to take my bag and says "Please. Nkombela ku kupfuna" (Let me help you). I'm really uncomfortable with walking with him in just his shorts.

I allow him to take it and walk in

front of him. We get to the entrance and I bid the security woman goodbye. There's a huge bin just outside our building so he throws his trash in there from a distance and I'm saved by a call from Muzi.

I answer impulsively and let out a soft "Baby" hoping to cast my neighbor away. I silently say thank you to him hoping he can read my lips and take my case from him.

Muzi: You've just made my whole week.

What I have done? I laugh and continue with the conversation

nonetheless

Me: Unjani? (How are you?)

Him: Ngiyaphila. How are you?

Him again: Already on your way to work at O6h00? I need to have a word with your boss.

I'm guessing he can hear the cars hooting on the road.

Me: I'm actually on my way to the taxi rank. I'm on my way home.

Him: Missing your mom?

Me: Yeah that and the baby shower.

Him: You could've told me. I would've organized transport for you.

Me: I'm fine thanks. Let's talk

when I get to the rank cause anything can happen in these streets if you're careless with your phone.

Him: Be safe.

I got the to the rank and taxi was short of one person. In the front. My phobia for advanced taxi mathematics was not gonna get in the way of me getting home early as I anticipated. I climbed in and it took off. The counting wasn't as bad as I thought. Actually no let me stop being modest. I crucified it and asked if there's anybody who's short of change. Everybody was

sorted so I continued trying to find Muzi on Instagram with no luck so I put in my earphones and listened to Amapiano.

I got home and battled between knocking and letting myself in because I have the key I knocked instead. My nephew screamed "Geole motho tsena" (Enter if you're human) and it sounded like it was coming from the living room. He's 11 by the way. I entered and he came running to me in his short Spiderman pyjamas which looked new. I hugged and brushed his head.
Me: Kemang ago kerileng

letwadi(Who cut you a bald?) I say and laugh. He smiles and says "Mxaaaaaa"

Me: Aren't you cold?

Him: Spiderman doesn't get cold. I rolled my eyes, laughed and told him to take my suitcase to my bedroom. I followed him down the passage. He entered in my room and I went straight to the main bedroom. I opened the doo, jumped on top of the blankets and screamed "Mommyyyy!!". My mom took out her sleepy head and gave me the widest smile

Her: Hawu baby! Goreng osa buwe gore o tseleng? (Why didn't you

mention that you're on the way?). She says as she embraces and hugs me, giving me countless kisses all over my face. I was enjoying being a big baby.

Me: I wanted to surprise you.

Her: Alright. Di biscuit tsaka dikae?

Shit! I look at her and purse my lips together, trying to hard not to laugh.

Her: Wena lege nka tsena ICU gompieno okase tlise le mageu!

She says and claps once!

My mom's drama has no full stop. And what kills me most is that the tswana woman in her comes

out each time she feels like the pedi makoti is too soft.

Me: Ketlanya go direka ao tlhe mma. I promise.

Her: I'm hearing this for the second time. Ntswele ka kamora oye go bona ngwaneno le yena otlile. (Get out of my room and go see your sister she's also here). She says and pulls her blanket.

Me: Mara mama

Her: Etswa Remofilwe...

Me: So aobatlle go bona thlogo yame? (So you don't want to see my head)

Her: Etswa le thlogo ya gago e

maswe hle (Please get out with your ugly head)

I kiss her cheek fast and run out. I get to my sister's room and knock. She doesn't answer. Why is everyone still asleep at 07h30 in the morning? Oh. It's this cosy and cuddle friendly weather. I knock again and she says

"Gomolemo akemo di moodung tsa di game tsa gago ngwana ke wena!" (Gomolemo I'm not in the mood for your silly games child!). I walk in as she's about to yell further. She sees me and blushes. Her: Hey you

Me: Mashata!! (Noise!!) I say and

point my head at her and smile.

Her: Ereng glow on the baby sis?

(Look at your glow)

I blush and close both my eyes with my palms.

She sits up and taps the other side of her bed, indicating that I should come and sit beside her.

I go and sit on top of my one leg and hang the other.

Her: You look happy man. She and says squeezes my cheek.

I softly slap her hand off of me.

She laughs.

Me: What can I say?

I say this brushing my chin with my thumb and index finger. This in

our streets indicates a man.

Her: O maaka! (You lie). She says and hits my chest with back of her hand.

Her: Who? When? Ha-ha-how!?

Me: Arg I'll tell you all about him this weekend. We have work to do.

Her: At least show me a picture ge.

Me: Would you relax? Look if it wasn't for this baby shower I would be somewhere at a place only he knows, sipping cocktails in a bikini. Manjeeeee

I say and roll my eyes

Her: You turned down a baecation because babyshower nyana e!? (You

turned down a baecation because of this little baby shower!?). She says and drops her jaw. I raise my shoulders and drop them.

Her again: If this man is capable making glow like this then I suggest you call him and take his offer. You still have the whole day. I'll be fine. This is not our first babyshower.

I look at her and think. My sister is more than capable of planning this event by herself to be honest. I'm just a sucker for perfection. I never feel satisfied unless I've seen and overlooked everything. Maybe I should go. No

man. She's actually very right. At this point I don't know if it's the hoe in me trying to find reasons to be in a man's arms or she indeed has a point. I'm fine with both so I take out my phone and dial his number...

Insert 8.

My heart rate was beginning to rise as I waited for him to pick up. I dropped the call.

Me: He's not picking up. I raised my shoulders and dropped them as I told Kgantsho this.

Her: He-eh leka gape (No try

again)

Heban. This perso. I did exactly as she suggested. The line was busy. He called me back as I was about to tell Kgantsho that I'm giving up. I put him on loudspeaker.

Him: Bambolwam.

He said, sounding calm and collected.

Kgantsho almost screamed but immediately put herself on a leash by holding her mouth tight.

Me: Does you offer still stand? I say and tightly close my eyes, fearing what he might say.

Him: Offer?

Me: The weekend away?

Him: You've changed your mind?

He sounded excited. I giggle and say yes.

Him: I was actually on my way to JHB and the booking ...

Me: It's fine we can always make it another time. I quickly interject and prevent having to hear him reject me.

Him: I'll see you later. He said and dropped the call.

My sister screamed so loud after she was sure that he hung up. So much that my mom and Gomolemo came running in to her to see what's going on.

Mom: Gorileng!? (What is happening?)

We both laughed and she shakes her head, said "Nxa" going back to her room. Interrupt my mom from everything BUT her sleep or else she's going to be grumpy for the whole day.

Gomolemo: Can the two of you keep it down? I'm trying to watch a show. He said this holding the sides of his waist and then left. My sis and I looked at each and burst out in laughter.

Her: Bana badi model-C. (Model-C school kids)

She says and claps once.

Me: Tlogela ngwana cause you're also one.

Her: But I was never like this.

Her: Anywaaaaay, back to the phonecall. Oh my God did you hear his voice!?! Lord!

Me: You have no idea.

Her: Who is this person?

Me: Some guy I met at the mall. His name is Muzikayise Khumalo. He's from KZN.

Her: I've always wanted to date a Zulu! She says and mimics a cry.

Me: Why did you marry a Pedi then?

I say and laugh.

Her: Ora senokwane seo. (You

mean that crook). She suddenly looks bored.

Me: And then?

Her: Today is not about me. You should be leaving wena. Or is he fetching you from here?

Me: Ketla tsamaya kabona ma-ten. (I'll leave around 10). It'll take him a while before he gets here.

We continue talking about men, her husband's side chick,

Gomolemo's progress at school and mom cornering the man next door to re-do her bathroom tiling for free. I spent my whole morning at home and lied to my mom that I need to go back to

work because my boss needs me urgently. She was surprised because it's the end of the week and she knows I don't go to work on weekends but Kgantsho advocated for me and she understood because she trusts her better. I took the dumpling and beef stew I cooked for the family in a small Tupperware and left.

I got to my apartment and opened the door. Xikombelo came out of his room looking like he was going somewhere.

Him: Hawu. Back already?

Me: Yeah something came up. See

you later. I flashed a fake smile and locked my door from the inside. The first thing I did was to take off my bra, shoes and wig. The relief!

I decided to shower again, get into my black short pyjama pants and a sleep tee. I caught a glimpse of my self on the full-length mirror and admired my flat stomach and how my squats were paying off. My butt was getting more and more round by the day. My sister doesn't understand my obsession with my bullet hole and I'm not even trying to make her to. I watched movies while I

waited. He called and alerted me that he is 30 mins away and the time was now 13h43. I wished I could nap but the excitement was just too much. Ever felt so anxious that you can't sleep or eat?

There was a knock on my door as I was about to change into something decent. I prayed that it wasn't my neighbor. Don't get me wrong. I like him but from a distance. I got out of my blankies and walked to the door in my sweet pink socks. I opened the door and there he stood, looking all types of gorgeous in all black. He

was wearing a black ripped jean, a long sleeved t-shirt which he pulled up his elbows and sneakers. Did I mention that I love a man with a watch? He looked like he had just gotten a fresh haircut. iClean lendoda bafethu. His eyes landed on my thighs. He looked up to me, smiled and bit his lower lip. He pulled me by my waist into his arms and kissed me as he entered and closed the door with his foot with his foot. His hands were slowly moving towards my butt as if he was looking to see it I will pull back. I didn't. I wanted him to touch me there. He did and

squeezed my ass. I've never had a kiss this heated. I giggled in his mouth, he smiled, and softly said "Sawubona" with our lips still touching. Wheew! What a greeting!

Unedited.  

[SNEAK PEEK!!]

"I break the kiss and push him away gently.

Me: Muzi I..

I say and pause, with my hands still on his bare chest

Him: Did I do something wrong?

He says, suddenly filled with worry in his eyes which now looked a bit red. I looked down and he cupped my chin and raise my face so he can look me in the eye.

Him: I'm sorry love. I'm really sorry. It's too soon and I'll understand if you're not yet ready. Okay? I look away and he brings my face back in his direction. He looks at me and says "Okay?"

Looking for confirmation that I've heard and understood him.

Me: It's not that. It's just... I'm still... I'm not... I haven't...

Him: You haven't...??? He asks and the look on his face is

shouting "You haven't what woman!?" .It takes 3 seconds for what I said to register in his brain and he pops his eyes.

Him: You mean? You're still? You haven't? You're a virgin?

I purse my lips in embarrassment and nod my head slowly, three times.

He drops his jaw and holds my face with both of his hands and sincerely says "why didn't you tell me!?"

"I don't know", I say, in almost a whisper. He whispers back and says "Baby I'm terribly sorry" and hugs me, tight. He's probably

thinking that I don't want to do this. That's where he's completely wrong. I was just giving him a heads up so he doesn't expect me to perform like a pornstar whereas I'm completely clueless and end up embarrassing myself. I break away from the hug and look at him. He looks at me too, like he's waiting to see my next move. I kiss him and say "But I want this." with my hands on his broad shoulders. His bulge was now poking my stomach. He looks away and gently removes my hands from his shoulders and

pulls me by hand so we sit on his bed. He holds his closed mouth area in between his thumb and index fingers, bending the other 3 into the palm of his hand while looking at me. He turns his whole body to look at me. At this point I'm regretting why I didn't just sleep with Kgokagano in grade 11 when he was nagging me and popped this cherry then. All of this wouldn't be happening. He takes my hand into both of his and attempts to speak. I interrupt

Me: I'm sorry.

I say, dropping my face and

playing with the laces of his sweatpants that he gave to me to wear.

Him: No no no no... I just..

He exhales and wipes his face with his hand.

Him: We need to talk. This has been haunting me since the day I met you and I think it's high time I got it off my chest.

I suddenly felt like my intestines are intertwining and tightly tangling into a knot!"

Insert 9.

Him: Sawubona

He still had his soft lips on mine.

Me: Hey. We both smiled.

He held both my hands with each of his and we locked fingers. I

felt like his eyes were magnetic because I should've looked

anywhere else except for directly in them by now. I honestly cannot look Muzikayize in the eye for too long. He makes me nervous.

Him: Unjani?

Me: Ngiyaphila Zikode. He smiled with his mouth closed, looked down and closed his eyes for a second.

He looked proud of himself. We were having this conversation

while he was slowly pushing me towards the other end of the room. I was walking in reverse. I kept looking behind me so I don't trip into anything.

Him: Buka mina. (Look at me)

Me: I don't want to trip and fall.

Him: I won't let you. His face changed from being lovey dovey to suddenly serious. We're no longer talking about my falling in this room anymore. I felt my back against the wall and he raised our locked hands and pressed them on the wall above my head. The weather was kinda cold but not in Betso's world. It was scorching

hot this side. I began burning up. I tried to open my mouth to speak but he just looked at me with his beautiful smile and said "ssshh". He looked at me and slowly, and I mean slowly leaned in to kiss me. This man was in the most calmest form I've ever seen him in and I was jumpishly nervous. I was sure of it. I slightly parted my lips and got ready to receive his but shifted his face and kissed the side of my lips instead and went down to my neck. Yoh! He continued kissing it as I bent my head to the side to expand his working surface area.

Nigga went down and kissed my arm and went down with it. My eyes were tightly shut as he was doing this. When he got to my wrist, he paused. I opened my eyes and looked down to see what he was doing. He smiled at me. I smiled back and looked away. He kissed my lower left thigh. I gasped for air and tightly closed my eyes again. He continued planting wet kisses coming back up. When he got to where my short began, paused again. I looked down at him with one eye closed and a slight smile. He laughed and kissed right thigh

once and quickly got up and said we have to go, he then turned and walked towards the door. He got there, opened and held it and looked back at me and said "Uzong thola emotweni neh?". He bit his upper lip and smiled at the same time. I nodded quickly and he laughed softly and left.

WHAT THE FUCK JUST HAPPENED!?

After I catch my breath, I hold my chest and compose myself. I won't be defeated by a man. I walked to my room and took off my pyjamas. I had to change this underwear because I rained on it.

I did what I had to do and opened my suitcase to pack properly for the vacay. I packed my toiletries properly and zipped my vanity bag. As I was looking through my wardrobe, my phone beeped and it was him. I opened the text and read:

"Nothing these days lasts forever. My love will. What's gonna keep us together? My love will.

P.S: You only need your toiletry bag for this weekend. Come down already or else uzo igibela isihamba le moto" (You'll get into this car while it's on motion).

Guys!

I dressed up in a black see-through body suit (Long sleeved) with a bralette on the inside. I put on a tight below the knee black skirt with an elastic waist. I put back on my sneakers and combed my wig. I then put on mascara and red lipstick. As I was still putting on my lipstick Muzi called. Not so patient are we? I picked up.

Him: My love. I love you. So so much but don't. Don't make me come up there because kuzoshuba (Things are gonna get ugly).

I giggled and promised him that

I'm coming. I put on my Midnight cologne cause I trust it to speak for me before I can even open my mouth. This is the perfume I wear when I tag along to Mr Moko's meetings. I took my handbag and shoved my toiletry bag in there, my charger (because we don't use the same phone. He uses the latest hotplate iPhone 😊 and I use a galaxy S10+), wipes, and some mint. I get to the car and he opened the door for me from the inside. Me: I'm here now. Are you happy? He looks at me, opens his mouth to speak but ends up making a

"Ihe!!" sound in disbelief. I raise my hands and ask

Me: What?

Him: Uthi yini? (You're saying what?) I'm guessing you're telling yourself that u qcedile ukudcoka ka style se? (..you're done dressing in this manner)

Me: Hawu.

I say and look at my self.

Him: Ki ing ye oi apering sthandwasam? He says with his broken pedi and I laugh. He's seriously shocked!

"Haibo!!" He says and turns to his back seat, pulls his sweater and says "Mi!" which means 'take'

I'm not wearing that. I say and look outside. It's now silent in the car. I'm even afraid look back at him. I keep my head glued outside.

Him: Wee sisi..

I almost burst out in laughter but I hold it in and purse my lips very tightly so he doesn't see that I'm quarter to laughing. I manage to send the laughter back to where it came shooting from and look at him, keeping a serious face.

Me: Mbulazi.

Him: Sthandwaswam

Me: Mntungwa

None of us is willing to let go of their serious face.

Him: Bambolwam

Me: Zikode

He almost smiled but he snapped out of it and threatened me with his eyes.

Him: Mfaz'wam

Me: I'm not wearing this.

I say and slowly shake my head, looking at his hoodie

Him: Want to see a trick? He says. Still threatening me. I remember what transpired in my room earlier and I quickly come back to my senses, say "Okay okay!" and take it.

He keeps his serious face and starts the car and takes off. I'm still putting on my sulking face till he puts on a song by Aubrey Qwana which basically says "Seng'ze ngadonywa ngakithi" and smiles to me and focuses back on the road, driving with one hand and the putting the other on my thigh. I'm not from his hood as the song suggests but it was more than enough to make me smile, giggle and shake my head. Him: By the way, we're no longer going to the Maldives because somebody here cannot make up her mind, which means all bookings

had to be cancelled. You said you wanted to know what I do?

Masiye ke! (Let's go then)

This man is honestly going to be the death of me!

UNEDITED ☐ 🌟

Insert 10. (UNEDITED. NEVERMIND THE ERRORS IF ANY.)

The trip to his house was long. I kept falling asleep on the road. When we stopped at some Engine garage for gas and some snacks he showed me pictures of myself

sleeping in the car. I found them cute so I posted them. Masedi asked who's car I'm sleeping in and why am I wearing what looks like a man's hoodie. I blueticked her and blocked her from viewing my status. I hate religiously nosy people. I just don't understand why you'd dedicate so much of your time to study other human beings whereas you could be doing something useful like reading or playing sport. Muzi left me in the car and went to into the shop to get us some snacks for the road. I was starting to feel irritated and moody because I hate

travelling long distances. He apparently found this "adorable" and I'm quoting. If you could have a human being as a hobby I would surely be Muzi's.

I ended up falling asleep again and after a while he woke me up and said "we're here sthandwasami) while unbuckling his seat belt and adjusting his car seat. I woke up and looked around. I was met by a black wall so I figured we were maybe already in his garage. He came to open my door and I got out. I looked in awe and asked why he has black paint in here. Does this

nigga collect German cars for living?

Him: What? He says and raises his shoulders as he locks his car.

Him: Black is a safe color.

Me: Arg true but not as a paint. This looks like somewhere a great witch would be comfortable living in.

He laughs and hugs me from behind as I walk around slowly in his garage. We walk together in this position until I come across a deep red Jeep wrangler with "GJK 584 GP" registration number. I don't know what caught my attention with this

car in particular but decide to
tease him about it

Me: I love this one. It would suit
me.

Him: Usho? (You think?) He says
and laughs. He has a beautiful
laughter and his dimple is not
making things easier.

I laugh too and say yes.

Him: I'll get you yours.

Me: I want this one cause it was
pre-owned by you.

Him: Don't you want to get into
my comfortable clothes instead?

You must be feeling cold. He says
and kisses the back of neck and
that alone calls upon the gods of

goosebumps all over my body. He turns me around and kisses me on my lips. He has his hands on my curves and I can feel my tight skirt moving up. I allow him. This has never felt right with everybody I've been with but with him it's different. If we're sitting close to each other without him touching me I feel like he doesn't love me as he says he does anymore. It feels so good and it feels so right. He lifts me and continues kissing me with my legs wrapped around his waist. He walks with me into the house and once we're in he puts me on the

dining table. He attempts to lay me down but I slowly push him away with my right hand, the other was behind his upper arm. I could literally feel his veins around this area.

Me: I need a shower. I say and get off the table. He smiles and says "Your wish is my command." He takes my hand and I follow him up the stairs. I honestly don't like all the black I'm seeing in this house. His light grey curtains are the only thing that seems to be trying to liven up this place.

Me: Your house honestly looks like

a fancy dungeon.

He laughs and says "If you hate this paint so much you can always change it at your own time. But please leave my study alone.

That's all I ask". I don't know why this made me feel so wanted and secure. We kept walking till we got to what looks like the main bedroom. It's also no different to the rest of the house. His bulbs are very dim.

Me: Is it always like this in here?

Him: Like what? He has a curious look on his face.

Me: This dark. I say and I look around. He claps his hands three

times and bulb turns very bright. Him: Is it okay now? He says, looking down and smiling to me. He comes closer and I already know what he wants. Muzi's ears are just there for decoration to be honest. He never listens. He pulls me into his arms and has his way with my mouth. The kiss gets so heated that I no longer know what to do with myself. I don't know where to touch him. He takes off the hoodie from me and it comes out with my wig. I'm lucky that my hair is in good condition otherwise I would've insisted I take it off myself. He

packs my lips and says "You're so beautiful yaz." I don't know if he genuinely meant this or he wanted to comfort me and make sure I don't feel embarrassed because he took off my wig. I take off his t-shirt because that's the only thing that made logical sense at that moment. He continues sucking on my lips. I break the kiss and push him away gently.

Me: Muzi I..

I say and pause, with my hands still on his bare chest

Him: Did I do something wrong?

He says, suddenly filled with worry in his eyes which now looked a bit

red. I looked down and he cupped my chin and raise my face so he can look me in the eye.

Him: I'm sorry love. I'm really sorry. It's too soon and I'll understand if you're not yet ready.

Okay? I look away and he brings my face back in his direction. He looks at me and says "Okay?"

Looking for confirmation that I've heard and understood him.

Me: It's not that. It's just... I'm still... I'm not... I haven't...

Him: You haven't...??? He asks and the look on his face is

shouting "You haven't what

woman!?" .It takes 3 seconds for

what I said to register in his brain and he pops his eyes.

Him: You mean? You're still? You haven't? You're a virgin?

I purse my lips in embarrassment and nod my head slowly, three times.

He drops his jaw and holds my face with both of his hands and sincerely says "why didn't you tell me!?"

"I don't know", I say, in almost a whisper. He whispers back and says "Baby I'm terribly sorry" and hugs me, tight. He's probably thinking that I don't want to do this. That's where he's

completely wrong. I was just giving him a heads up so he doesn't expect me to perform like a pornstar whereas I'm completely clueless and end up embarrassing myself. I break away from the hug and look at him. He looks at me too, like he's waiting to see my next move. I kiss him and say "But I want this." with my hands on his broad shoulders. His bulge was now poking my stomach.

He looks away and gently removes my hands from his shoulders and pulls me by hand so we sit on his bed. He holds his closed mouth

area in between his thumb and index fingers, bending the other 3 into the palm of his hand while looking at me. He turns his whole body to look at me. At this point I'm regretting why I didn't just sleep with Kgokagano in grade 11 when he was nagging me and popped this cherry then. All of this wouldn't be happening. He takes my hand into both of his and attempts to speak. I interrupt

Me: I'm sorry.

I say dropping my face to my thighs.

Him: No no no no... I just..

He exhales and wipes his face with his hand.

Him: We need to talk. This has been haunting me since the day I met you and I think it's high time I got it off my chest.

I suddenly felt like my intestines are intertwining and tightly tangling into a knot!

Him: I don't know how to tell you this in a way that will make you understand and not freak out.

Remember when we were in the car and..

His phone ring from his pocket and he rolls his eyes before taking it out to look at the caller I.D.

Him: Bafo

Him: Liyanetha and wena
ungaphandle kwendlu yami?

Uphumaphi? (It's raining and
you're outside my house?) He
laughs as the caller keeps talking.

Him: U-YA-LA-YE-KA (Serves you
right)

He continues laughing.

Him: Uyangi phazamiza bafo
yaz (You're disturbing me you
know?)

He looks at me, smiles and takes
my hand and kisses it as he
listens.

Him: Suyahlanya ke manje
akhuluma ka njani ngo

mfaz'wam (You're starting to go crazy how dare you speak about my woman like that?)

My curiosity grows as he says this.

Him: Fuseg akuzudliwa muntu la (No one is going to get fucked here)

Boys!!

Him: Nxu yazin? Awume ngiyeza! (Wait I'm coming).

He picks up his t-shirt from the floor and wears it as I admire his firm and well toned body.

Him: Woza

He holds out his hand indicating that I should come to him. He

holds my hand as I follow behind him going downstairs.

We get there and his brother opens the front door before anybody could let him in.

Muzi: Kuya ngdongdowa la ekhaya njalo (we knock around here). He says and points at his brother who was now closing his dripping wet umbrella.

Muzi: Kahle kahle wena ucabang' ukuthi kuse tarven la why ungayishiyanga ngaphandle lento yakho Mandoba? (I see you think my house is a tarven why didn't you leave this thing of yours outside?) We were still standing

at the bottom of his stairs when as he was busy buzzing to his brother.

Mandoba put on a huge smile and approached me with his hand held out for a handshake. As my right hand was about to meet his, he retracted and said "Ima kancan". I looked and his brother who was standing next to me and back at him, surprised. He wanted to wipe his hands with his t-shirt first before he could greet me. How cute. His brother just stood there with his palm in his face. The handshake finally happened and he said "Sawubona makoti". He

said this leaning in for a hug. His brother was about to protest but he suddenly started shaking, vigorously so. Mandoba immediately let go of my hand and caught his brother before he fell. My baby eyes were now turning and I couldn't see his pupils anymore. He started releasing white foam from his nose and mouth. I've never been so scared and freaked out in my life. I couldn't control the tears that were streaming down my face. It was that bad! His brother lifted him up and went to the couch area to put him there. He

pressed a button on the side and the sleeper couch fell back. I wiped my tears and asked him what's going on. He asked me not to panic and also to stay with him and said he'll be back. He ran upstairs and came back like a lightning bolt. He came down the stairs untying a small black plastic and took a pinch of the brown powder that was inside and put it on Muzi's tongue and closed his mouth. Muzi's seizure had seized but he was still unconscious as this was happening. Mandoba proceeded to put the powder in his nose and his ears. What the

actual fuck is going on here!!? He then called his clan names and prayed to his ancestors to guard his brother. After he was done, he took out his phone and dialled. Him: Ma. Ngila ku Phakamani and iqalile futhi leya nkinga.

Him: Manje?

Him: Okay.

He dropped the call and said him and I are taking Muzi home, which I concluded to be KZN...

Insert 11.

KwaZulu-Natal!!? Wait what? I just stood there gobsmacked

because I didn't know what I want. A part of me didn't want to go and another knew that I'd literally go crazy because of worry if I didn't.

Him: Uyangizwa yini!?(Do you even hear me?) He said, rapidly waving his hand in my face. I shook my head to reset my ears because I wasn't listening.

Me: Hmm!?

Him: Ima la I'll go fetch them myself.

Me: Fetch what?

Him: The car keys

Me: No I'll go.

I ran past him and went

straight to the bedroom and took the keys from the bed because Muzi threw them there when we got in here. As I was about to run back downstairs I remembered that I'm wearing a see-through and judging from Muzi's reaction his family was definitely not gonna smile and give me an award for style and fashion. I picked up my wig and his hoodie from the floor, put them back on and ran back. As I was still running down the stairs Mandoba screamed "Si sese under manufacturing leso skhiye yini!?" I finally got down and said "I'm

here I'm here!". He picked Muzi up from the couch and I went ahead of him to unlock the car. He put him in the backseat and I also got in so he can sleep on my thighs. I handed Mandoba the car keys and he drove out.

I took out wipes from my handbag and put it on my feet. I cleaned up Muzi's face and fixed his legs so he can be comfortable. I wiped my tears and continually brushed his head. There was complete silence in the car as Mandoba fixed his eyes on the road. I looked out of the window and watched the falling rain. The

car was flying but I still felt like he wasn't going fast enough. This is the moment that made me realise that I love Muzikayise Khumalo with all my heart and that I'd also rather die if he wasn't gonna wake up. I opened my mouth to speak but closed it again in doubt. And then I was like fuck it and asked Mandoba if we shouldn't maybe go to the nearest hospital instead. He said they won't be able to help us in any way. This took me by surprise but I kept quiet and said a little prayer in my heart. God will have to forgive me for rocking up on his

door like this after donkey years because at this point, He is my only hope.

After a while we finally arrived in KZN judging from the boards I kept seeing on the road. It had stopped raining but the ground and grass by the side of the road looked wet meaning it was also raining here. Mandoba received a call and immediately answered.

Him: Ma?

Him: Ja ngisayi khumbula indlela so son'fica khona? (Yes I still remember the way there so we'll find you there?)

Him: Ja ngihamba naye. (Yeah

I'm with her)

Him: iDoek? He turned to me and asked if I have a head wrap in my possession. I shook my head in shock. Why does it sound like these people already know of my existence and that my presence was expected?

Him: No akanayo(She doesn't have it)

Him: Okay k'lungile(Alright).

He continued driving and I was afraid to ask so I kept my mouth shut. He seems like a nice guy but also like somebody whose nerves you wouldn't want to step on. The car kept shaking us as he got off

the gravel and onto a rocky road. We finally parked outside a small, old and dilapidated rondavel.

There was another house at a distance in the same yard. An old woman was doing laundry outside of it but stopped to raise her head and stare as we drove in.

Mandoba got out of the car first and the woman approached us. I just stayed in the car because it was a more safer option. I didn't want to step on any toes. They spoke and the woman ran back to the house screaming "Baba!

Baba!" A dark grey Aston Martin shortly drove in and I just

couldn't stop looking and admiring the beast. After it parked behind us, an old man with grey hair came out followed by a slender woman I just assumed to be his wife. The man was dressed in a blue works suit but the woman looked like she came to attend a classy event. She had a purple two-piece suit on, black red-bottom stilettos, a 36 inch weave with a black and white silk doek on top. She took off her shades and came running to Mangoba. She had another brown headwrap in her hand and her cellphone in the other. The man

followed but it looked like they left someone in the car I just couldn't distinguish if they were male or female.

An elderly man came out from the house , rushing to the rondavel. He looked like a sangoma judging from how he was dressed. He said "Ngilandeleni!" (Follow me!) as he entered. The woman looked like she was asking Mandoba something. I could tell from how she had her hands raised in the same manner that you would when asking somebody where something is. He pointed to the car I was in with his head and

his mom looked in my direction and she came marching towards me. I felt like my heart was fighting to rip my chest open. She came to the window and knocked. I opened the door slightly and she slowly pulled it wide open and held out her hand so I can come out. I took it and went out of the car, careful not to hurt Muzi's head. She looked pleasantly surprised. Her: I honestly thought uBoykie was exaggerating how breath takingly beautiful you are ntombazana. Welcome.

She said. I was shocked! Muzi told her about me already!? She

held my shoulders and kissed my cheek. I just stood there and smiled awkwardly with my hands dropped to my sides. She had a beautiful British accent I could listen to her speak all day and the day after that. Mandoba and his dad came to the car, took Muzi out and headed to the small house. The woman gave me the doek and said "Here, put this on quickly". I did as she said and then she instructed me to follow her as she followed the men.

We took off our shoes and got into the rondavel. I was left in my black and lacey secret socks and

her barefoot. She has nice toes and her red nail polish made this worse. Muzi was put to lay on the floor as the healer sprinkled what looked like water mixed with ash and I don't know what else on his whole body. The men were kneeling and sitting on their heels. We got in there and sat down. I started coughing as the smoke that was burning up in there was suffocating me. Muzi's mother brushed my back until I stopped. The sangoma continued until Muzi started looking like he was coming back to life. He then stopped after that but Muzi was still not

awake. Can somebody please tell me what's going on here?

The healer came to kneel, put his hands on his knees and started talking.

Him: Se sifikile lesa skhathi nkosiyami. (That time has arrived my king). He said as he was looking straight into the old man's eyes and he responded by saying "Makhosi" and bowed his head.

The sangoma then turned to look at me. My heart almost stopped beating. He looked at me for a good 2 minutes without blinking while positioning his head side ways. He then finally spoke and

said "Ngicela isandla sakho". I hesitated and looked at the woman who then said "It's okay", assuring me. I gave him my hand and he started tracing the 3 lines inside of it. I was looking at him as he did this. My mom once told me that I have abnormal hands because I have an extra connecting line between the one that curves towards my wrist and the one that goes out of my hand. Nobody else has this. The woman was also looking and she said "It is her! Muzikayise also has these lines!", looking at Yise's father. The sangoma then

shouted and told her to shush.
She did exactly that and sat back.
The sangoma let go of my hand
and "Uphi unyoko?"

Me: She's at home. Limpopo

Him: Ang'khulumi ngo mamkhulu
wakho. (I'm not talking about
your aunt).

Me: I don't have an older aunt.

Him: Ntombi, lo mama lo
akukhulisile ngu mamkhulu wakho
ngoba yena no mawakho ba
amawele kodwa yena ubelethwe
kucala. Lokhu ku menza abe yena
omkhulu. (Girl, the woman that
raised you is actually your older
aunt because her and your mother

were twins but she was born first, making her the older one.) How does this man know all of this? I tensed my eyebrows and looked at him.

Him: Umawakho wa shona e beletha wena ngoba umsebenzi wakhe la emhlabeni bese uphelile. Umsebenzi woku letha wena la emhlabeni ukuthi uzokwazi ukufeza isthembiso lesi ukhokho wakho asenza ku Phakamani Bedlabedlula Khumalo ngo 1918 le e mayini. (Your mother died while giving birth to you because her job in the world of the living was done. Her purpose was to give

birth to you so that you can grow to fulfill the promise that your great grandfather made to Phakamani Bedlabeledlula Khumalo in 1918 in the mines.)

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Insert 12.

Muzi's father: Your great grandfather and my grandfather were both mineworkers at Witbank. One day, the mine started shaking and everybody was warned to vacate. They did that but after some time my grandfather, Phakamani, started

noticing that his friend was not among them. He asked everyone and apparently they all shrugged and claimed to not have seen him come out. The mine was still shaking but he attempted to go in. Their senior tried pulling him back but it was too late. He went in looking for his friend and found his yellow helmet first. When he finally found him, he had a huge rock on his chest. He removed the rock and carried him out of the mines coughing out blood. He put him down and he thanked him for saving his life and told him he would owe him his life. My

grandfather said he replied by laughing and saying he doesn't want his life but a tswana makoti because they are so beautiful. He was saying this as a joke. Your grandfather was taken to the hospital and he unfortunately died the next day. If this is some kind of a sick joke then it is not funny! I tried finding the right words to express how I feel. But I couldn't. Now it was starting to make sense how Muzi kept saying he wanted to marry me right from the start. His words kept ringing in my head. "But you don't know me?" I said.

"But I know you were made for me", he said. So he knew all along. Is that what he was trying to tell me all along? Everyone was quiet. Seemingly waiting for me to digest this and pull myself together. I wiped my tears and asked if Muzi is going to be okay? Sangoma: uPhakamani akaguli. (Phakamani is not sick).

The woman: He has never been a person who has a problem with seizures or convulsions. The last time this happened was a day before he got married to Madlamini.

Me: Eng!?(What!?)

Mandoba: Hayii ma akazi lo muntu ukuthi uMK ushadile. (No mom this person doesn't know that MK is married).

Ma: Yoh ! Why anga mtjelanga naye? (Why didn't he tell her?)

His dad: Wena wa tjelwa ngu ma or yimina? (In your case who told you? Was it my mom or myself?)

He said. Looking and sounding irritated.

I felt my entire world crumbling down. Muzikayise fucking lied to me!?

Me: He lied to me?

Mandoba: No he didn't. He just didn't tell you the whole truth.

What in the skydiving f**k is Mandoba saying? I have a huge amount of respect for him as Muzi's older brother bueet right now I felt like punching him in the face. I dropped my jaw and looked at him, appalled!

Sangoma: Asikho isdingo sa yonke lento. Lento ewunayo ifana no bizo. Angeke wayi balekela unomphela. (There's no need for all of this. What you have is the same as a calling. You can't run from it forever.)

Me: I've never been this confused in my entire life.

I looked at Muzi who was

starting to cough and felt like strangling him to death so he can die for real this time and stop acting. I was so pissed I could easily release smoke from my nose and ears.

After a while of some silence,
Me: If ushadile lo muntu nje ngoba nisho nje, nna ke kena kae golo fa? (If he's married as you say, where do I feature in all of this?)

Sangoma: Angiyizwa ipart yokugcina. (I didn't get the last part)

Me: What am I doing here ?

The father: Madlamini also has a

purpose in Phakamani's house. I'm not the one who's supposed to tell you this but the throne will, at some point belong to the baby boy she's currently carrying. We knew about you the first time he had a seizure. Bab'Ngema said it is going to happen again if the two of you meet and we don't bring to him within the first 24 hours he was going to be paralyzed for life.

Whoa whoa whoa wait!!! Muzi did not only deceive me about being married but he's also a prince from a royal family? Wonders are legit refusing to end! The woman

crawled to where Muzi was coughing and I looked away. His father continued speaking.

Him: Muzi and Madlamini are high school sweethearts. But recently they've been fighting like cat and mouse so much that Madlamini moved out of the house in Johannesburg and came back here. She's been living with us for 3 months now.

The sangoma then said he can't work in such tension and suggested we go home. Mandoba held and helped Muzi walk to his car. I got out and wore my shoes. The sun was already out. Muzi's

mom came and held my shoulder.

Me: Ma can you please..

Her: Please. Call me Evelyn.

I exhaled and looked down.

Her: Let's go home so you can bath, eat and get some rest.

Me: My mom wouldn't allow that.

It's against my traditional laws for a girlfriend to behave like a wife whereas she is unmarried.

Her: Nonsense.....

A very beautiful pregnant woman came out of the car and started speaking to Mandoba. My mind trailed off from ma to her. She looked like she was somewhere in her 1st trimester. She was

wearing a tight knee length, long sleeved black dress and rose gold slip on sandals with a nude head wrap. She was looking at me as she was speaking with Muzi's brother but I couldn't read her face. I was looking at her too.

Evelyn: Can you even hear me?

Me: Ma??

Her: Ngithi you're already married in our eyes. She took my hand and we walked to the cars. Madlamini couldn't stop looking at me. I still couldn't read her face. I got in the range rover we came in and found Muzi in the car. He tried to

Speak and take my hand but I said no as Mandoba drove out.

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Insert 13 (NEVERMIND THE ERRORS!)

Him: Baby

Me:

Him: Sthandwasam

Me:

Him: Bambolwam.

Me: Don't make me say or do things I don't want to do.

Me: Actually please take me home.

Mandoba: Hawu makoti.

Sizohamba ksasa sonke (we'll all

leave tomorrow)

I don't know how to argue with Mandoba so I resort to keeping my mouth shut and looking out the window. I started thinking about how much thought I finally found the man of my dreams but he turned out to be a liar like the rest of them. He holds an entire doctorate in that department. Muzi knows how charming he is and that's what upsets me the most. If he really wants a thing he's gonna get it. If I get away with something then that means he let me. But not this time. I miss my mother. I miss my

bestfriend. I miss my personal space. My sanctuary. This weekend has been the craziest and it's not even over. I wiped my tears and made sure he didn't see me. I love him so much that I'd rather let him go than watch him love another woman.

He ended up falling asleep and balancing his head with the car window. It was understandable because he didn't look like he had much energy. This entire seizure saga drained the life out of his fuckboy self. I watched him sleep and felt like waking him up with a varaam clap. But who was I

kidding? I was livid but that didn't change how I felt about him. I need time to think about all of this and digest it. Me? A second wife? A lot of things were going through my mind. For example, what if he muffs/performs cunnilingus on her and comes back to kiss me? Argies man. How does this sharing dick business work? Does he sleep with me today and her tomorrow? Is there a timetable or a roster used for alternating turns? It hurts me how two people decided to have sex 23 years ago and

now I'm here having to share a penis!

We finally got to his home and Mandoba packed and got out of the car because apparently me and his brother need to talk. Muzi woke up and massaged his shoulders. He groaned in pain and I just thinned my eyes and watched him. He turned and caught me giving him a death stare.

Him: You do know that I never meant for any of this to happen right?

Me: What exactly? My great grandfather making ridiculous

promises or you lying to my face?

Him: What exactly did I lie about?

Me: You kept a whole human who's carrying your child a secret! You made it sound like you were not in a relationship but just co-parenting.

Him: I did not lie about anything. I just postponed telling you everything because I knew you were gonna run for the hills.

Me: Damn straight I wa...

Him: Ngicela sikhulume kahle mina nawe ngaphandle ngo ku delelana sthandwasam. (Can we please talk without disrespecting each other my love)?

This sounded like a threat which turned into a staring contest but my heart betrayed me and I smiled from within. There's something that turns me on with seeing him in instructive and boss mode. I've said this before and I'm gonna say it again, this man is gonna be the death of me. However, I don't want to die. So I have to leave today because he might manage to worm his way into my heart like he always does if I stay here a minute longer. I got out of the car and he did the same. I needed some air. He stretched his hands and yawned.

He tightly closed his eyes for like 20 seconds and said "Eish". He looked very tired shame. He had his hand on his neck when Madlamini came out of the house pulling her yellow and black suitcase. Mandoba came out shouting from the house saying "Okay ithi ngik'size ke!" (Let me help you then). Muzi looked shocked at what was happening. He rushed to her and said "Uyaphi Gugulethu Khumalo?" (Where are you going?). She wiped her tears with the tissue paper she had in her hand and sniffed. Her: Do you even care?

Her voice was breaking as she said this and this kinda broke my heart. She's pregnant for heavens sake.

Him: Okay. I understand that this hard for you but ngicela ungangambi Samkethe. Ngiyakcela mommy. (.. please don't go Samkethe. Please mommy)

He said, pleading with her.

Her: You missed your son's ultrasound but you always claim to care about us. Awusangi thandi Khumalo and it's about damn I accepted it. Hlala no nkosikazi wakho omusha. There are men who can treat me way better.

Him: Manje sewufuna ukung' hlanyisha ayikho enye. (Now you just want to drive me crazy, nothing else.)

Her: Ngithini makunje mina? (What's expected of me?) I pleaded with you. Ngak'cenga ukuthi uzamshada mase uboy a fikile (I begged with you to only marry her when I've given birth) but because you love her so much you couldn't wait, you just had to bring her here.

Him: Waz'kahle ukuthi none of this my decision. (You know very well...)

Wow! Okay so he feels forced loving me?

Her: She started crying and he took her in his arms and hugged her. He had to bend his knees a bit like he does with me because he's taller than the both of us. He raised his head to look at her with her head on his chest.

Him: Musa phela nawe ukuyihlanyisa. (You should also stop being this crazy)

He said, softly. She laughed.

Him: Ngiyakthanda nawe and ngizohlezi ngikthanda. (I love you as well and I'll always do).

She nodded.

Him: Mm?

He said, wanting her to confirm that she heard him.

This hurt. It broke my heart into several pieces and I could feel the blood dropping to my stomach because it was now turning and feeling cold. I didn't mean to shut the car door but I did and it happened. Everybody turned and looked at me, frightened by what just happened. I looked at Muzi once, opened the door and took my handbag. I was about to walk to the huge gate and I saw the guards standing. I assumed they wanted to stop me but they don't

know me. My sharp tswana tongue always gets me out of shit and my ass-kicking pedi self always puts people in their place. I was fuming and ready to fight. Muzi attempted to follow me but his mother stopped him and she was the one to follow me instead. She got to me and pleaded that I take a walk with her. I was reluctant but she said she just wants to talk and that I'll leave afterwards if I still want to. I was honestly kak tired, needed a shower and 10 litres of red wine. I had no appetite and at this point I'd even take 40 vodka

shots by myself without pause. What is my life turning into? I feel like my great gran sold me before he even met me. This is the fuckeriest of all betrayals known to mankind. I dropped the bag on the floor and agreed to walk with her. She was now in white slippers, the purple skirt and a white sleeveless top. We went behind the house and kept walking towards what looked like a golf course. It was well taken care of and the grass was so thick and clustered together you couldn't see any soil. It was beautiful. We were walking in

silence as I admired her yard. She held my hand and we finally got to a pond. It had a bench and shade roof. I like this woman. She has this contagious calm about her. We got there and sat down. I heavily breathed out because I was really exhausted and my eyes felt like 5Kg marbles. I couldn't take it anymore and I broke down into a pool of tears. She took my head and put it on her lap and brushed my hair. I cried so much my voice burnt out. I don't want to love Muzi but I do. Shouldn't I have a choice in all of this?

When I finally got a grip of my calm, I kept quiet and watched her yellow crossed legs. I listened to her subtle singing. Was this woman singing me a lullaby? I've never heard this song before but she sang so well. If it was one then it was a Zulu lullaby. She finally kept quiet and exhaled. I wiped my face, sat up and looked ahead. I could feel her eyes on me.

Her: You do know that he didn't ask for any of this too right?

Me:

Her: Look, isthembu is not as bad as people always badmouth it to be. The people who are always

talking about the worst case scenarios concerned with polygamy are people who have just seen it on TV and never actually been in one.

Me: Are you in one?

Her: I was. She died last year. May her precious soul rest in peace.

Her: I'm not gonna lie to you and say we started sharing recipes and went shopping together on the first day but we found a way to make it work because we loved the same man and we both wanted to see him happy. We were two different character

unlike you and Mabuyi. She was what people describe as "wife material" even though I have no idea what the hell that is supposed to mean. I see a lot of Madlamini in you. You both are stubborn and pig headed but you have one important thing in common. You both love my son. I can see it in your eyes and I also love how he looks at you.

Muzikayise is capable of making the both of you equally happy.

Please trust him?

He probably got this trust word from being breastfed.

Her: He's a special human being.

I'm not just saying this because I'm his mother but the chances of you running into a man like him almost equated to zero.

A smile escaped my lips before I could stop it and she saw it. It's true. Muzi is a special man from the little I've seen. I decided to ask since I was curious about this from morning.

Me: Why does he have the same name as his great grandfather? She smiled and took my hand. This woman behaves a lot like her fuckboy of a son.

Her: When Muzi was born, it was raining cats, dogs and ice cubes,

with lightning, thunder and everything in between. We had a shed house over there, she pointed as she said this. That heavy and destructive rain ripped the house apart. It was that bad. Muzi couldn't stop crying. Me and his step mother (His father's first wife) even thought he was scared of the thunder. The rain stopped and he didn't stop crying. He cried from 2 in the afternoon till 3am. I was scared that I was losing my child. His father was not here but his late bab'mcane was. Bab'Ngema came banging on our door and when we

opened, he shouted that the name of the child is Muzikayise Phakamani Khumalo because of his guardian angel who continues to live through him. His father named him Muzikayise and I had initially named him Sbusiso. I had to change that name. We slaughtered a goat for that and ever since then my baby stopped crying. Indefinitely. Even if he needed to be fed or needed a nappy he just threw his tiny fists around. As he grew, he didn't cry like other kids when he fell or hit his head on the wall. He just broke anything he came across

and stormed into his room to sleep. I was afraid that he was going to have anger issues and become abusive as an adult. He proved me wrong and grew to be the most gentle man in the household. He just cannot cry.

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Insert 14.

My love for Muzi is eventually going to turn me into a mad woman and I'm not going to allow it. My mom doesn't even know that I'm here. I miss her so so

much. I wish I could lay on her chest so she brushes my head and tell me that everything is going to be okay like she has always done ever since I was a kid. It was nice listening to Muzi's childhood stories but I have to go now. I tell this to Ma and stand up from the bench. She quickly stands up as well like she's expecting me to say something else.

Me: Ma, thank you so much for welcoming into your home and the warmth you've shown me. But unfortunately I need to go home now. There's a lot I need to do.

I say and hug her.

Her: Please don't give up on him.

I know akenzaka izinto nge ndlela (He didn't do things the right away) but please be patient with him.

I just smile because I don't want to argue. I just want to go home.

We walk to the house and she suggests we go through the back door. I agree and we find

Mandoba and Muzi sitting in the couch and TV area. I couldn't see everybody else. They were

watching soccer. Mandoba had a Heineken bottle in his hand. There was another one on the coffee

table. He drinks beer? Muzi immediately stood up from his seat when we walked in. He looked more energetic and alive now. Like the Muzi I know. I was more calmer and less raged. We looked at each other for a second before I spoke. Mandoba sat there like he was waiting to see what my next movie is going to be..

Me: Please take me home.

Muzi: Baby please..

Me: I don't want to argue. I'm really tired. Please take me home. I could feel tears brimming up in my eyes and I looked up trying to push them back. I wiped the

corner of my eyes with my index fingers.

Him: Ngicela siyo khulumela ngaphandle (Can we please go speak outside?)

In all honesty, I did not have the energy for all this.

Me: Bag yaka e kae? (Where's my bag?)

He approached me and said "Can we please talk about this?"

Me: There's nothing for us to talk about. Stay here and take care of your wife and baby. And also, take care of yourself too.

I said and kissed his cheek. He dropped his face to the floor and

closed his eyes, looking defeated.

Him: I am begging you

Siphakamile. Please don't go
sthandwasam.

Sphakamile!?! Clouds began closing

in outside as I was trying to

digest why he'd call me that. I

looked outside and the sun was

busy taking it's presence away.

It didn't look like it was gonna

rain when we walked in here. The

sky was as clear as clean water.

It than started raining as I was

looking to see what's going on

outside. Ma smiled and then said

"Uyabona nawe ukuthi nedlozi ali

vumi" (You can also see that the

ancestors are also against you leaving) she said as she went to close the glass sliding door.

Muzi: Ngicela nje ithuba elinye vo to explain myself. Masambe. (All I'm asking for is one change to explain myself. Let's go).

He said as he took my hand and made me to follow him. I did so he can get it over and done with and then take me home.

We went upstairs and got into one of the rooms. I asked him where Madlamini is and he said she was taken to a spa. It must be nice. You get cheated on and thereafter get shipped off to a

spa as an apology. I thought to myself.

He got in first and sat on the bed. This house was mad beautiful. Everything is either cream white or gold. I was still admiring Evelyn's sense of style when Muzi tapped his thigh indicating that I should come sit there. I went over to him but sat by his side instead. I'm not putting myself in any position to be manipulated by him. He exhaled and said "Fair enough."

We both kept quiet as he balanced his elbows on his knees and arched his back forward. He wiped his

face with both hands and exhaled again. He really looks tired. We're all tired. He turned to and looked at me for a few seconds before he said "Ubuhle bakho sthandwasami.." (Your beauty my love..)

Me: Don't start.

I said as I flipped all my hair to the back and looked away. It was still raining and there was no sunlight. The full length windows were open but the room was dark.

Him: Ngiyaxolisa ngempela baby (I'm really sorry..) I would never hurt you this way with intention. What you saw earlier,

shouldn't have happened in front of you and it never will again.

Ever. I just couldn't let Madlamini leave like that. She's carrying my baby.

Me: Do you love her?

He kept quiet for a bit before attempting to speak. I stood up and said "Then there's nothing for us to speak about. If you don't want to take me home, I will leave this house and I will get there by myself."

He quickly stood and held me by waist from the back. He came to stand in front of me and tried to hold me. I fought him to let me

go but he didn't. He held me tightly till I felt like I've depleted all of my energy. I said "Muzikayise ntlogele" (Let me go). He just kept quiet and looked at me but didn't let me go. I once promised myself that I'm never crying in front of a man but I was about to break that promise. I couldn't keep it together anymore. I was so so tired so I broke down and cried. He covered me up with his whole body and tried to comfort me. My head was hot. If crying was lethal my mom would be organizing my funeral right now.

I finally calmed down and he kissed my forehead. This is every man's backup plan when everything is failing. This is how they suck all the sense in your head. I just stayed in his arms. He raised his head and looked at me.

Him: Ngiyaxolisa bambolwam. Ngicela ungixolele (I'm really sorry. Please forgive me...) for making you feel like I don't love you anymore. I am sorry for lying to you. Ngiyavuma. (I admit). I went about this the completely wrong way. It's just... angifuni ukulahlekelwa nguwe. (I don't

want to lose you). I wouldn't survive that. Ngiyanithanda no Madlamini but wena ungu bambolwam. (I love you both but you're my soulmate). My heart belongs to you. And I'm gonna spend the rest of my life proving this to you. If you could just give me that chance. Eyodwa nje ngikbonise ukuthi ngikthanda ka ngakanani. (Just one chance to show you how much I love you). I just kept quiet. He cupped my chin and made me to look at him. We both looked at each other without saying a word. He brought his face closer to mine

and put his forehead against mine.

Him: Please believe me when I say I love you? I'm not a fan of having more than one woman. Yes I fucked around when I was still a kid but that was just part of me growing. I am not that person. But at this point I have no choice.

Me: Well you'll have to choose and I've already made that choice for you. Dula le Mabuyi (Stay with...). I'm not the kind of woman who would destroy another's marriage deliberately.

Him: Did you plan uku mshaya nge

stina yini? If no then this is far from deliberate.

Me: Oksalayo.

I didn't mean to make him laugh but he did. It was honestly the last thing I had on my mind. I smiled and looked away.

He followed my face with his and looked at me. There was so much sincerity in his eyes. He touched my lower lip with his thumb and continued looking at me. I closed my eyes and he held the side of my face with his left hand. He leaned in to kiss me. He put his lips on mine but I didn't respond to the kiss. He opened his eyes

and looked at me but didn't move away from me. He sucked on lower lip and held my butt. I started heating up and responded to the kiss. It took everything in me to break it. I pulled away and said "Please take me home, Phakamani".

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Insert 15

Muzi refused to take me home and said we're going to leave tomorrow morning. I left my wallet at home because I'm stupid and I barely think. What

else? A thought of catching lifts from KZN to PLK crossed my mind but it's just too unrealistic and risky. I'm gonna soldier on till morning but if he thinks he can trick me into marrying him then he has another think coming. Both him nedlozi lakhe (and his ancestor). I was given a guest bedroom by his mom so I was able to shower. I was starting to feel mushy and sticky. I shouldn't have listened to Muzi when he said I shouldn't pack and that I should only bring my vanity bag. Now I have nothing to wear. Before I took a shower, I was

sitting with Ma in this room after she showed me where everything is. We talked and laughed about a lot of things. Including how dramatic my mom is and how Muzi once went on a 2 day hunger strike because he spotted an ant in his food when he was 8. I was feeling a lot better after we spoke. She didn't even once try to convince me to stay and I appreciated the space she was giving me. I hate being pressure with a passion. She left my room with my clothes to go put them in the laundry machine.

After I was done showering I washed my underwear and hung it. The time was around a few minutes behind 7. I felt weird with being in just a towel and no underwear. I've heard that there's a number of women who walk around without it. Could never be me. I'm not judging but that's just not me. As a kid, my mom was always scolding me if I sat with my legs wide open. She ended up buying me trousers because I apparently sat like a boy. But I outgrew that. Maybe this comes from that. And the

shortness of this towel is not helping my case in any way.

Anyway, I lotioned my body and sat on the bed. I haven't been speaking to Tumi that much because it's exam season. And I don't even know where to start. I'll fill him in when I get to my place because this needs a lengthy phonecall. I stood up and packed my toiletries back into my bag and there was a knock on the door. I was expecting it to be Ma because she said she'll be back when I'm done so I shouted "Come in!". It wasn't her. He opened the door and said

"Sthandwasam ngicela..." (My love can you please...) and then paused with his mouth hung open. I fastened my towel because no man has ever seen me naked. Or semi naked in this case. But it is still naked to me because I felt like it.

Me: Ucelani? (Please what?)

He just kept staring at me.

Me: Ngi.. He said this and closed his eyes looking like hes trying so hard to remember what he was about to cela. I stood there waiting for him to speak.

Him: I... He said. Still trying to think. What is wrong with this

man today?

Me: While you think, can you please get me something I can be able to sleep in because I didn't bring any clothes thanks to you.

Him: Okay ngiyabuya manje.

Me: And underwear!

He turned with so much speed and looked at me like I'm crazy. His eyes then dropped to my pubic area. I was highly uncomfortable without it and I knew I wasn't gonna be able to sleep. I always see when he lifts his hands or bends that he wears those boyshort-like underwear I've once heard someone call briefs and I

didn't mind them. I saw this on separate occasions. He slightly smiled and said "Okay then". I then said "No boxers please". He laughed, shook his head and left. Ma came back and asked me what I'm going to eat because there's roasted chicken, beef stew and steak. Muzi walked in with the clothes in his hands before I could respond.

Ma: Oh? She said with a naughty smile. I looked at Muzi with a puzzled face and it immediately hit me what she was thinking.

Me: No no no..

Her: No no. It's okay. She said

this and pursed her lips, forming a smile.

Muzi just laughed and shook his head instead of clearing this confusion!

Ma: Will it be chicken, stew or steak? She said this with the same face she had on.

Me: This is not what...

Her: Chicken!?! Alright. She said. She then walked towards Muzi and stood by his side with her body facing the opposite direction and her eyes on him, with her hands holding each other. She looked at it him from top to toe and back up, in slow motion. She

smiled harder, told me to come downstairs when we're done, got out and closed the door.

Muzi blushed with his face looking down and shook his head. He then held out his hand so I can take the clothes.

I marched to him and grabbed them from him and told him to get out.

Him: Ngenzen manje? (What have I done now?)

He said this raising his hands and laughing.

Mw: Why didn't you tell your mother that...!?

Him: That what?

Me: Etswa!(Get out)

He continued laughing at my frustration. I ended up laughing too. His laughter is very infectious. He raised his hands in surrender and left. I put on his black t-shirt, his underwear and shorts. I'm officially diagnosing him with an addiction to the colour black. I took the white gown I found in the cupboards and put on the slippers. Gabotse ke hoteleng mo(I'm actually in a hotel here).

I took my phone and called Muzi to come fetch me cause I couldn't go down there by myself. He

laughed and came up.

Me: Remove that smile from your face.

I said and laughed at the fact that I was behaving like a teenage girl.

Him: Why couldn't you come by yourself downstairs?

He's still laughing.

Me: What if I bump into your wife?

Him: Stop behaving like a side chick.

Me: I'm actually one.

Me: Actually no. I'm not.

I say this trying to make my way to the door and he quickly blocks

me.

Him: Please give us a chance? I promise to take care of your heart and I won't let it break.

Me: Isn't it a little too late for that?

Him: This was beyond my control. Allow me to prove myself.

Me: What if we don't get along?

Him: Wena no Mabuyi?

Me: Yes. I hate drama.

Him: Ufana nawe. Akayi thandi irass (She's like you. She doesn't like making noise).

Me: Let me think about it.

Him: Okay. But for the record, I'll never let you go. Whatever you

decide.

My heart smiled but my mind immediately told it to sit the fuck down. We went downstairs and had dinner. Madlamini was not there. I kept wondering if she's going to walk in. She did not.

Dinner was nice. Everybody was ganging up on Muzi, teasing him by telling his childhood stories and he didn't like this. I found it funny so he ended up laughing too. After we were done eating, they all went up to their separate rooms and I was left with only him. He suggested that I come sleep with him in his room. I told

him not to take chances and left to the room that his mom assigned to me. It was now around 22h00 in the evening. I got in the room, got on top of the bed and switched between Instagram and Pinterest because I didn't feel like speaking to anybody on WhatsApp but I wasn't sleepy. I had expected that I'd be long gone by now because my whole body was in pain due to the exhaustion but my anxiety kept me awake. I started feeling thirsty and texted Muzi that I needed water.

Him: You know where the fridge

is. [?]

Arguing with him was not an option. Not when I was this tired so I decided to take my chances because everybody went to sleep according to my knowledge so this shouldn't be that hard.

I put on slippers and took my ass downstairs. When I got to the kitchen, I found Mabuyi sitting on the kitchen counter stuffing her face with a very huge slice of chocolate while scrolling on her phone. She raised her head and looked at me. I still couldn't read her face. I freeze for a moment until I just saw it logical to say

"Hi".

Her: Sawubona. She said and slowly put her fork down.

Me: I just came to get some water.

Her: Okay?

I opened the fridge and took out bottled water.

I stood with the fridge door still open for a few seconds, wanting to speak but I decided against it. I decided to close it and leave instead.

Her: Boikokobetso?

I froze before slowly turning towards her.

Me: I'm not gonna marry him.

Her: Can we talk?

She said and she got up, taking her plate and glass of orange juice with her. She was heading towards the living room and I just stood there. I didn't intend to. My mind just shut down. She turned and said "Come?". I followed her. I feel like Muzi trapped me and he was gonna pay for this because it is hella awkward.

We got to the living room and sat down. She put all her food on the coffee table and replied to a text on her phone. I was just looking at her wondering what she has

to say. I was also ready to counter-attack if she tried anything funny. She locked it and put it away.

Her: Unjani?(How are you?)

Me: I'm... fine. I guess.

I didn't expect that.

Her: You must probably be thinking that I hate you. Right? She said and picked up her chocolate cake.

I exhaled and sat back.

Me: I don't know. I don't know what to think.

Her: Angik'zondi (I don't hate you). I have no reason to. It's just... You just came at a

completely wrong time.

Me: What do you mean?

Her: Look, I have no problem with you. My mom is also a first wife.

This is a norm to us. And I knew what I was getting myself into when I got married to a prince.

However, I hate the stress that this is causing me and my baby.

It might be a norm but that doesn't make it any easier to accept. No woman can

comfortably watch the man she loves love somebody else. Especially a man like mine.

I felt like I got pricked with a needle on my heart when she said

"Mine". How is this supposed to work?

Her: What do you mean you won't marry him? Are you willing to be single for the rest of your life?

Me: What do you mean? I can always meet another man and start over. I love Muzi but this is not going to work.

Her: It doesn't work that way. See, this is not the first time something like this happens here kwa Khumalo. Although the circumstances are different. I don't know if you have been told but apparently, some hundred years ago, a woman refused to

follow an ancestral order to marry into this family. She eventually got married to 3 different men, who all died within the first three months of their marriage. I felt a thick lump forming on my throat.

Me: Why does it feel like I don't have a choice in all of this?

Her: Do you love him?

Me: Why are you pushing me towards him? Do YOU love him?

Her: I love him. That's why I don't want to lose him.

I kept quiet for some time. She did the same but dug in her cake.

Me: Do you think this is going to

work?

Her: I don't know you. You don't know me. Only time will tell. She was avoiding eye contact as she ate.

Me: Is he a good husband?

She blushed before she spoke.

This is about to get interesting...



Insert 16

She blushed before she spoke.

This is about to get interesting...

Her: Look, obviously our experiences won't be the same even if we get married to the

same man. But for me, he's very gentle and kind. He does his best to avoid conflicts and arguments. Which is something I highly appreciate.

I didn't know what to think about her saying our experiences won't be the same. Is she suggesting that he's going to be less loving towards me and more towards her? I don't know if I'm twisting her words deliberately because under normal circumstances, we shouldn't even be sitting and having such a conversation. My life is going to be empty but yet peaceful without

him. And I don't think there's ever going to be a man who can make me feel like he does. These thoughts were flooding my already hot head so I decided to change the topic because it was never going to end nicely.

Me: So... is he the next king in line?

I'm asking this question because I was told Mabuyi is carrying an heir to the throne.

Her: No. That's Mandoba. Muzi's job is to build the family empire. He was put in school and got trained for it. He has managed to open 4 branches of MaloCon.Inc in

different parts of South and he's also planning on going global. Both of them are passionate about their distinct duties in the chieftaincy.

This woman sounds so proud of her husband. It kinda hurts me that there are a lot of things she knows about him that I don't. Nevermind that she has known him for years and I for only a week. It just hurts. I wonder what she does. Is she a housewife? I so hope I'm not gonna be forced to stay at home and bake babies should I decide to allow this man to marry me. But

something doesn't quite make sense.

Me: So, why is your child supposed to be king at some point and not Mandoba's?

She waved her hand nonchalantly and said Mandoba only has two twin girls so she's guessing he won't be having boys. She says she doesn't know the real reason for sure. This family is a huge mess. A proper nyovadam! I wanted to ask more questions but this is not my friend and I'm not planning on making her one. All of this is none of my business anyway. I need to get some sleep

so I can be fresh for the road.

Me: Okay. Goodnight.

I said, then stood up and left, not leaving any opportunity for Mrs Khumalo here to speak but I could feel her eyes piercing my back as I kept walking.

I got to the bedroom and hit my head against the pillow. I don't know when and how I managed to sleep but I did after I set an alarm for 4am. The sooner I am out of here the better.

The alarm rang when it was time to wake up and I was so annoyed as if it had set itself. But I managed to pull myself out of bed.

I called Muzi because I needed my clothes and he also needed to get ready. While the phone rang, it then hit me that what if he's with his wife? I didn't want to aggregate this whole YizoYizo any further. I just wanted to leave without stepping on any toes. He answered in his sleepy voice before I could drop the call. His voice was deeper and he sounded really tired and languid.

Him: Bambolwam. Are you okay? Good question. This is my chance to get him here because I felt really uncomfortable with the thought of her listening to us

Speak or even waking her up.

Me: No I'm not.

He suddenly sounded a bit more awake.

Him: Kwenze njan? Ngiyeza manje.

(What's wrong? I'm coming now)

I dropped the call.

He came and knocked. I went to open because I didn't want to

shout and risk waking everybody

up. I'm not sure if this room is

sound proof. He got in with a

concerned look on his face. His eyes

are so white and so clear but they

looked sleepy and he kept rubbing

them and blinking. He walked to

the bed and went to sit on one

corner and tapped his side so I can come sit with him. I've noticed that he likes to engage in conversations while seated.

I went there and my alarm went off again. I most probably snoozed it. I switched it off.

Him: iAlarm eyani ekseni ka ngaka?(what is the alarm for this early?)

Her: I want to bath but I need my clothes. They got washed yesterday can you please to find them for me? And also go get ready because I want to leave. You promised that we'll leave early.

Him: Yes. Early. Hayi ngeyi nkathi zabathakathi. (Not in the happy hours of witchcraft)

Me: Ngi serious njalo (I'm serious) I said and pointed my finger at him. He pulled it and kissed the back of my hand. He yawned afterwards.

Him: You don't know how you make me feel each time you speak Zulu. It's like it was made just for you. I laughed and said "Haisuka".

Him: Is this why you said you're not okay? That you want to leave?

Me: I didn't want us to wake your wife with our phonecall.

He rolled his eyes and threw his hands in the air.

Him: Ngilala ka njani no Madlamini ukhona wena la endlin? (How do I sleep with Madlamini when you're here?) I would never disrespect you like that. My love. I asked you to come sleep in the same bed with me wanqaba (You said no). So you think I'd just call her to be your standby just because I have "alternatives" now nje ngoba esho uMandla? (... as Mandla says?)

Me: Who's that?

Him: Phuma lapho aka balulekile uk'dlula lento esifanele siyi lungise la. (Forget about him he's not

more important than the issue we need to address here.)

I've never seen him this serious. I mean I have but not THIS commanding it was scaring me. I just kept quiet. He seemingly noticed my change in demeanor since he dropped his shoulders and exhaled, taking both my hands into his.

Him: Bheka. Angik'thethisi (Look. I'm not shouting at you). I'm just heartbroken by all of this. Everyone is looking at it in the "You now have options" kind of angle and it pisses me off because I can't be with you right now

since you've locked your heart in a cage that you rattle each time I try to come close to free you. I'm never gonna hurt you. I wish things were different but they're not and there's nothing I can do about it. If I knew earlier what I know now I would've waited for you. And if I could hand in all these royal responsibilities just to be with you, trust me, I would. But I can't. So take me as I am because I'm really tired and exhausted of this whole thing. A tear escaped my eye. Why did I have to be the one to carry Boikokobetso Remofilwe

Motlhabane's cross for sins that even she didn't commit?

UNEDITED. [?]🌀

[WHAT BETSO AND MUZI'S RELATIONSHIP WOULD LOOK LIKE IF SHE AGREED TO BE HIS WIFE.]

My face was beat to the gods and my outfit was also on dot and point. I also got my nails done. Muzi insisted on importing a new 36 inch Malaysian weave for me because I couldn't stop talking about this party. That's how

excited I was. This was my sister's anniversary celebration so I had to look the part. She even said it herself that people should smell and see that the lil sis has arrived. I wasn't even planning on going overboard like this. She and Tumi are to be held accountable for this mess. I got in the car and Tumi called. He asked (or commanded rather) that I make a live video on Instagram so he can complement or shame me in public, according to the standard of the outfit and facebeat because he gave me direct orders. I laughed and did it to shame the

devil and his vice because I knew he was gonna lose this one.

Masedi joined the live along with 13 others. The numbers kept increasing.

Her: Where to?

This girl is really adamant and determined to be all up and below in my business. We are not even friends to begin with. I even told Yise about her but he just said I shouldn't give people the power to upset me. I read her comment and replied.

Me: Hubby sent me to buy bread. ☐☐

After a few moments Muzi also

replied.

MZK_K : Albany angithi baby. Half loaf

mfaz'wam. 😂😂😂😂😂😂😂😂👉

👉🔥

Oh my God I didn't even see that he was here. People started laughing and responding to his comment. The live was no longer about me and my spotlight. It just turned into one big joke. I hate this man. 😂

Insert 17.

I got done bathing and packed all my things around 05h17. Muzi came knocking and said he's done. He was wearing a short sleeved V-neck t-shirt, some cargo shorts and those striped Adidas slip-on sandals. All black. Again. He was dressed like a boy and I found it cute. He has beautiful masculine legs.

Me: Okay. Let's go.

We went downstairs and bumped into his mom in her silk gown and slippers. She had shoulder long relaxed hair but it was a mess. She had a glass in her hand and was drinking milk. She took a sip

and then started talking. Muzi touched the outside of his pockets including the ones on the sides and said "Ngiyabuya manje" (I'll be back just now). He probably forgot something upstairs.

Her: Leaving already? She looked heartbroken.

Her: Okay okay I won't force you to stay but please stay for breakfast.

Me: I really have to go ma. I have a lot of work and planning to do.

She exhaled and put her drink on some small glass table and raised

her hands in show that she wants us to hug. I cooperated and she held on to me for a while. She then gently patted my back three times and wiped the corner of her eyes with her fingers. Is she crying?

Me: Dont worry ma. Everything will sort itself out. I just need some air and time to myself to think about this whole thing. She nodded. Muzikayise returned downstairs but he was now walking and laughing with Mandoba, who was in his pajamas with an unfastened gown on top and slippers

Ma: Aren't you supposed to be leaving?

She was directing this to Mandoba. I listened to her and wondered to myself why this woman speaks English with such a perfect British accent. Her Zulu is fine though.

Mandoba: Angiyi e interview mina. Angaz bajahelephi laba (It's not like I'm going to an interview. I don't know where these two are rushing to). He said this and tried to brush Muzi's head in an attempt to mess up his hair.

Muzi ducked and pointed him with his finger and said "Yabona

wenzan manje?" (See what you're doing now?). Mandoba laughed and Muzi said "Nxa".

Ma: Yekela ukungi hlukumezela ingane weh Nathi. (Stop abusing my child Nathi)

She said and laughed lightly.

Mandoba's other name is Nathi?

I love how nobody here has an

English name. I've never

understood the concept of black

people giving caucasian names to

their kids whereas there's an

abundance of African and very

meaningful names to play around

with.

Ma then smiled to Muzi and said

"Woza ku mama", wanting him to hug her. Muzi protested and complained that he's no longer a baby and that she should stop treating him as such. Mandoba laughed and said "Uyohlezi uyi lastborn laph' ekhaya, Boykiiiiie". I couldn't stop laughing at this. This family is really abusing Muzi and it's hilarious because he hates it.

Muzi bent and arched his back forward to hug his relatively short mother. There was nothing wrong with his t-shirt but she still fiddled around with and 'fixed' it.

Her: Drive safely and take good care of her.

He turned to look at me and smiled.

Him: I will ma.

Her: Alright Boykinazi ka ma.

He rolled his eyes in annoyance and said "Ahh ma..."

He held my hand, took my handbag and said we should get going. We asked that they say goodbye to uBaba on our behalf and then left.

The weather wasn't that cold and it wasn't hot either. Muzi opened the car door for me and I got in. He walked around the front of

the car and also got in. He went out again and back into the house. He came back shortly with four 500ml bottles of drinking water. He told me to put my seatbelt on as he buckled his. I hate seatbelts. They suffocate me but I knew better than to argue with him. It never ends. He turned on the radio, switched to Metro FM and drove out. I looked out the window but I could feel him stealing glances at me.

He suggested we pass by a mall so he can get me some food. I told him I'm not hungry but he kept on insisting. He finally gave

up because I was no longer replying to him. He switched off the radio. He said he wanted to play me a song. The title of it was "New Edition-Can you stand the rain?". He played it from his phone via bluetooth. I've never heard it before.

"Ooh. Yeah. Ooh

On a perfect day I know that I
can count on you

When that's not possible, tell me,
can you weather the storm?

'Cause I need somebody who will
stand by me

Through the good times and the
bad times

She will always, always be right
there

Sunny days- everybody loves them
Tell me, baby, can you stand the
rain?

Storms will come, this we know
for sure

Can you stand the rain?

Love unconditional I'm not asking
this of you

And, girl, to make it last I'll do
whatever needs to be done

But I need somebody who will
stand by me

When it's tough she won't run

She will always be right there for
me

Sunny days everybody loves them
Tell me, baby, can you stand the
rain? Can you stand it, oh?

Storms will come, I know, I know,
all the days won't be perfect

This we know for sure. But tell
me can you stand it?

Can you stand the rain?

Can you stand the rain?

Can you stand the rain? No

pressure, no pressure from me,
baby

'Cause I want you, and I need
you, and I love you, girl

Tell me, baby, can you stand the
rain?

Will you be there for me?

Come on, baby, let's go get wet
Can you stand the rain? Will you
be there, girl?

Storms will come for sure. Can you
stand the rain?"

I cried so much I didn't realise he
had stopped the car on the side
of the road. He held me and I
rained on his shoulder. While this
was happening, he was quiet but
stagnantly had his lips on my neck.
He finally and softly said into my
ear: "Ngiyak'thanda.

Ngiyak'dinga. (I love you. I need
you). Allow me to have your heart
and I'll show you that I'm more

than capable of taking care of it.
I'll never let it break. Ever."

UNEDITED.

Insert 17 continued...

The song was on repeat but I managed to calm down and pull my shit together. I stayed on his shoulder as he held me tightly in silence. I was wondering what was on his mind. I was also enjoying how good he smelt. Muzi always smells good. He has that 'You have no choice but to look at me twice if not three times or more' scent that makes his

presence to be felt without him saying a word. And I was still wearing his sweater. I eventually managed to speak.

Me: Muzi?

Him: Hm?

Me: I don't want to share you. I can't share you.

He exhaled. I felt my emotions starting to get the better of me again. Just the thought of him making another woman happy?

The thought of him on top of her? This was enough to put me in a psychiatric ward. My insecurities were acting up. She's definitely more experienced than

me. She already knows which buttons to press. What if I'm not able to satisfy him sexually? What if she's able to make him laugh harder than I ever could. Maybe I should just adopt a cat, walk away from this whole mess and prepare myself that I'm gonna die alone. But Mabuyi said something that got me thinking. "Within the first 3 months of their marriage". Marriage? Marriage? I could just meet someone I love enough to spend the rest of my life with and we'd just date for the rest of our lives without getting married. That

way he won't be recognized traditionally so the ancestors won't be able to touch him.

Right? My head was literally buzzing with all these questions and possible solutions. But even if I do find him, he still won't be Phakamani.

Him: Okay mfazi ka Muzikayise Khumalo. Ngenzen makunje? Tjela mina. (Alright Muzikayise Khumalo's woman. What should I do. Tell me)

I sat back on the car seat and kept quiet while thinking. He kept looking at me. I wanted to tell him to divorce her but that would

be evil of me. Especially because she never gave me any reason to look at her as an adversary. Had she done that, she would have given me enough ammunition to break them apart. I've never been so conflicted in my entire life. I asked for water. He turned back to his backseat and pulled one bottle and gave it to me. I drank up and felt a bit better. Him: Baby. Ngempela ngempela you're willing to let go of what we have JUST because I'm already married to another woman?

I kept quiet.

Him: Look, I'm never gonna tell

you how you should digest and address your pain ,more especially because I'm the one who inflicted it. I should have been more honest with you but..

Me: But what?

He kept quiet for a few seconds before speaking.

Him: MQ once asked me what my biggest fear is about 3/4. years back but I couldn't answer him because nothing came to mind.

I was puzzled as to how that is related to what we are speaking about here.

Me: And?

Him: Now I know.

Me: What's your biggest fear?

Him: Losing you. I can't lose you sthandwasam. When you walk away from me, you would definitely be taking a huge part of my heart with you and I'm obviously not gonna be able to function hence I'll never let that happen. I'm going to give you the time you need to decide but only because it will make you feel better. But in my head se sishadile mina nawe I just need to put a stamp on it.

This man! I couldn't help but smile. I tried to stop it but my smile grew wider.

Him: I'll make sure that Madlamini stays out of your way and your house. Just as much as you'll have to stay away from hers too. That's if ubungane buya nehlula. (...yall can't be friends).

Me: How can I be friends with the woman who knows my man sexually and otherwise?

He said "Ish!" and looked out the door as if I had dropped a bomb he never expected. He bounced back though.

Him: Yingan uMa no MaShandu were friends?

Her: Oksalayo.

He laughed and said I've started

with my stunts. I had so many questions and I was willing to ask them, no matter how awkward they made me feel. He pursed his lips and looked at me. He likes doing this.

Him: Were you the first person she slept with?

He pursed them harder and popped his eyes in confusion.

Him: Uhm.. why?

I bowed my head to my thighs because I didn't know how to start explaining the origin of this question.

Him: I see. Please don't take this as a competition. That's the

number on thing that's gonna
cause this whole thing to collapse.
But if you must know, no. She and
I met in Std 9. What you
probably know as grade 11.

I laughed at how old this made
him sound. He laughed as well and
told me to focus.

Him: She wasn't all over the place
but she wasn't new to it.

Me: Have you ever cheated on
her?

Him: I'm not proud of it now but
yes.

Me: How many times?

Him: Haiyi baby.

He said as he took a bottle of water and started drinking.

Me: Alright. How many girls have you slept with then?

He laughed and almost choked on the water. He started hitting his chest to stop the coughing. He closed the bottle and sat back on his seat. He took his phone and changed the song to Tevin Campbell's Dandelion. He bit the side of his lower lip but not in a seductive manner.

Me: Well?

He turned his face like he was shocked that I'm asking him for the 2nd time.

Him: Are you really really really really expecting me to answer that?

Me: Okay. When did you start dating and having sex then?

Him: I was 14.

I laughed and wasn't so sure I should carry on with the conversation anymore. He stopped laughing and suddenly looked serious. He put his head against his seat and took my hand.

Him: You do know that you shouldn't even be worried that you've never had sex before. You know that right?

Me:

Him: I'll teach you everything.
He had a naughty smick on his face. I laughed and quickly took my hand back then told him to leave me alone.

Me: Have you slept with a...?

Him: A what? Say it.

I thinned my eyes and threatened him. He laughed.

Him: Yeah I have slept with a virgin before but it was in my teenage years. Three times.

Me: How many mothers do you owe cows weh Khumalo?

He laughed so hard and said

"Angiy bizanga mina ingane zabo they submitted themselves. On a

platter." He said this handling his gear and started driving.

After the long hours in the road we finally arrived in PLK. He suggested that he should sleepover and that he will leave tomorrow morning. I knew I would probably give in to him if he did so I said no. He didn't argue cause he knew he was taking a fat chance with me. He said he's walking me up to my apartment then and it wasn't up for discussion. We got up there with my handbag in his hand. My neighbor came down from upstairs with his laundry on his shoulder.

He was, as always, topless. I think he's one of these skinny niggas who like to advertise their abs and can't keep a t-shirt on for more than 3 minutes. Muzi's smile slowly faded when he saw him.

Mbelo: Hey there

Muzi: Ja

Me: Hey neighbor

Mbelo started looking uneasy but still asked if I'm back from home, making conversation. I wanted to laugh but I stopped myself.

Me: Yea how have you been?

Muzi: He's fine. Masambe(Let's go)

He took the key from me as I was trying to unlock and did it himself within half a second.

Mbelo got the message and went into his room and I also got in my apartment after Muzi.

I closed the door and that's when I began laughing. He kept his serious face and asked me what was funny.

Me: What was that all about?

Him: I have no idea what you're talking about.

He said as he put my handbag on the floor and my keys on the coffee table. He sat down. I looked at him with a smile and an

inquisitive look on my face. I took off his sweater because it was starting to burn me up.

Him: Yini? Le sphukuphuku sibusy sihamba sinqunu phamb ko mfaz'wam and you're expecting me to smile and brush his thin stupid abs?

I burst out laughing and sunk on the couch next to him.

Me: So the 6 packs are the cause of this whole drama??

Him: Pshhh please. Baby I have 8.

He said this so arrogantly and threw off his slides from his feet. I couldn't help but get into fits

of laughter. Not that I didn't believe him because I've seen them before but the fact that he's still jealous is what I don't quite get.

Him: Or you want to see them? He said this as he bent towards me, leaning in for a kiss. He kissed me once, paused to look me in the eye and I whispered "I have seen them before", running out of breath because I become a nervous wreck when he starts being his horny self.

Him: But you haven't felt them. He whispered. Lord! (Removed)

UNEDITED.  

Insert 18.

The quotidian alarm I've set for 05h00 went off and as usual, it drove me insane. I switched it off and pulled my blanket hoping to get some more sleep in. Just for 30 minutes. Today was a Monday and I was immensely exhausted. I literally felt like I slept with weights on my shoulders. I also had a pounding headache. My eyes couldn't stay open. My whole body wasn't functioning. I wasn't functioning. My 30 minutes elapsed while my brain cells were

still holding a board meeting in my head, holding my sleep hostage. I decided that I'm gonna wake up at 06h00 and do my things as quickly as possible, which also meant I'm not gonna be able to eat breakfast or even watch the morning news. I was okay with all of it. Just as long as I get some sleep.

After some time, which felt like a very long time, I finally woke up on my own accord. I sat on my butt and stretched my hands hands while I yawned. The thought that I was most probably late hit me across my

face. "Shit!!". I got up real quickly and checked the time. It was 09h34. Why does the universe hate me so much? I was never a bully in primary school and I always give the lady down the street money for bread whenever I could. So why? Why does the universe hate me this much. I also saw two missed calls from Muzi but I pretended I didn't and went straight to the shower. I took off my clothes on the way there. I got in and turned both faucets so I can get the right temperature. Hot but not boiling hot. I can never bath with cold or

warm water. It's as good as doing absolutely nothing to me. I reached for my shower gel and it wasn't there. I remembered that it was still in my handbag in the toiletry bag. Now I had to get out of here and go get it. Great! Just great! On a normal day this wouldn't fuck me up but I literally sunk down the tile wall and my butt hit the wet floor. Did I not cry? I cried so much I began feeling a physical pain on my heart. How and when did my life become such a mess? Why can't he be mine? Mine alone? Kgantsho once said one can never find a

perfect man. Muzi is. Muzi is perfect. His only flaw is the possession of a marriage certificate.

My phone rang twice and I ignored it. Muzi said he will give me space but here he is doing the complete opposite. It rang again. I decided to take a towel and go get it. It wasn't him. It was Mr Moko. Crap! I said as I clenched my teeth together and finally faced my crimes. Boikokobetso is not well today. She is suffering from soulmate withdrawal symptoms but that's not what Mr Moko wants to hear. So we

are coming up with a story. I'm pulling all my convincing guns out today because I can't lose my job.
Me: Sir.

I said and coughed terribly like TB had claimed my last day on earth.

Him: Motlhabane. Where are you? You were supposed to be there in the meeting with Plug'aways. You know very well that they love consulting with you in their rebranding campaign. This is unlike you!

Forget that I'm just a PA in this company.

Me: I am so so sorry sir. I woke

up with a bug. I'm really not in good health and I was afraid of infecting the whole office because I'm not yet sure what I've caught.

I said and coughed some more. You'd swear I graduated Cum Laude from Coughing & Tussis Academy. He exhaled.

Him: Alright I'll let this one slide. Don't let this happen again and make sure you get that cough checked. Bring the proof on Wednesday if you're feeling better by then. Do recover.

He said and dropped the call.

Wheew!! Now I'm left with the

difficulty of buying a doctor's note. I've never done it before so I don't know where to start.

I will gladly take this as a day off because I never even wanted to go to work in the first place but I'm gonna put this day to good use and do the laundry. I take out my basket and head to the kitchen in my pyjamas. I plug some water for coffee. While it boils, I put the laundry in the machine. I need a bigger mug this morning because I'm feeling like a walking and talking corpse. A crappy corpse.

After I'm done making the coffee I take out a box of rusks from the cupboard because this girl is not making any proper breakfast today. I don't have the amount of energy required to complete that task.

The machine does what it was invented for as I sit my ass on the couch and cross my legs on the coffee table. My mom doesn't like people who do this. I also didn't until I realised that life is too short. You could be well-mannered and good-hearted all your life only to end up having to marry a married man. My phone

rang. I rejected the call and switched it off.

The time was now around 12h00. I took my basket and walked up to the rooftop where our washing line is situated. I'm very grateful for this setting because Lord knows I wouldn't be at peace with leaving my clothes to hang outside.

I get there and start hanging all my white items first. I was clipping a peg on the corner a t-shirt when I suddenly felt like there's someone watching me. I've been like this ever since I was a kid. If I happen to feel

like there's eyes on me then there's definitely eyes on me. I quickly turned to see who it is and there was no one. Hmm. Strange. Maybe my mind is playing tricks on me. I hallucinate a lot when I'm stressed. So I ignore it.

After I'm done, I take my peg sack and throw it in the empty basket and head downstairs. I get in my room and lock. Standard procedure.

I got a little sun-burnt when I was at the rooftop so I definitely need a shower, a proper shower. But first, I clean up all the mess I made in the kitchen when I

was doing laundry. I wiped the table top and the washing machine and put everything where it needs to be. I switched on my phone and was met by a message from Muzi. He sent it at the time I rejected his call. It read "Baby please talk to me I'm going insane here. At least let me know if you're okay and I'll leave you alone for today I promise." I marked it as read, put my phone on the charger and went to my room to get cleaned up. I took the much needed shower and got into t-shirt dress and slippers. I was running away from it but

finally made my bed. I can't stand an untidy place when I'm clean.

I spent the entire day watching movies and doing absolutely nothing worth writing home about. My mom called and I hesitated answering the phone but because I knew she was gonna walk here if I kept ignoring her I had no choice. I swear, if I was a brand, having no choice would my slogan.

Me: Mama?

Her: My baby girl.

Just hearing her voice made me feel like she was so close yet so far away. Far away to help me

out of this mess. It's a mess because I love a man with my whole heart but I'm not willing to share him. I don't deserve him any more than Gugu does so I won't fight for their separation. It's not in me. I'm not that woman. All these thoughts were floating in my mind until I realized that my mom is still on the line and I wasn't listening.

Her: Filwe!?

Me: Ma???

Her: What is the problem my baby?

Me: I'm fine mama.

Her: There is nobody who knows

you better than I do. Not even Moratua. So out with it.

My mom calls Tumi Moratua. I have no idea why. All I know is that they are very close. So close that they even call each other sometimes.

Me: Ah mama

I said and exhaled. I couldn't find the right words.

Her: Bua tthe mma(Speak)

She softly said. My mom's voice soothes my heart. It honestly makes me feel like nothing can hurt me, just as long she stays on the line. I couldn't keep it in anymore. I broke down.

Her: Let it all out my baby. Let it all out.

My mom is dramatic but when it comes to my feelings she is always patient.

Me: I can't mama
I cried louder.

Her: Okase kgone eng? (What can't you do?)

Me: I love him.
I sobbed.

Her: If he's the reason behind these tears then you probably shouldn't.

I kept quite. I'm not sure if I want her to know this because my mom hates anybody that hurts

me in any way, shape or form.

Her: I'll be there baie vroeg
kaosane.(.. early in the morning
tomorrow). Aker?(Alright?)

My heart jumped for joy. All I
need is to be held by her. Nothing
more. I agreed and she told me
that she has to go cook then we
said our goodbyes.

Muzi called and I was honestly
tired of rejecting his calls plus a
part of me wants to speak to
him. I slid my finger across the
phone screen and put the phone
on my ear.

Me: Hello?

Him: Thank God! Are you okay?

Me: Perfectly fine. How are you?

Him: I need to see you.

Me: Not happening. And shouldn't you be JHB?

Him: I'm not leaving this place until we've sorted this out.

Me: Look I need to go get my laundry before it gets too dark otherwise ke tlo tshaba (I'll get afraid)

It was now around 18h30. The rooftop is kinda creepy because it's too quiet. My hair stands in such places plus how I felt while I was up there this afternoon did everything but help.

Him: Take me with then you'll be

fine.

Me: Take you with?

Him: Yeah let's carry on talking.

You won't think about it too much.

I did as he said and went to fetch my laundry while talking to him through earphones. He was making jokes and I couldn't resist laughing. If you think you know what mixed emotions are then I've got news for you. He was right though. I fetched all my laundry with ease and not even once did I think about my surroundings.

I got to my room and packed my laundry into my drawers. Muzi said he's on his way here. I tried to stop him but how do you even get through to somebody who has ears meant only for decorative purposes? The only reason why he had them is because mother nature didn't want him to look weird without them. I was sitting on my make-up chair facing my white chest of drawers. I managed to pack and put everything away till I was left with only my underwear. The bottom drawer was the only one left open because it was meant

for this purpose, underwear. I always fold my private garments nicely to create a neat space. As I was doing this, I noticed that my favourite black and lace undies were not part of the pack. I'm very certain I put it in the machine this morning and I saw myself hanging it on the washing line. I was well aware of this. Am I hallucinating more than I usually do when I'm stressed? Maybe this whole Muzi Gugu thing is indeed driving me up the wall. Muzi called and said he's downstairs when I was still

trying to put the pieces of this puzzle together...

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ERRORS. 🤔👉

Insert 19.

I don't know which one I'm more worried about. The fact that my underwear is missing or that my mental health might be deteriorating. There was a knock on my door and I just knew it was him. I put on my slippers and went to get the door. He had changed clothes. He probably bought them here because he

didn't pack anything when we left KZN. He was wearing a simple white t-shirt, black jeans and his slip-ons. He can never be caught without a watch. Muzi is effortlessly beautiful and sexy. I'm saying beautiful because there are handsome and then there are beautiful men. I wasn't surprised though. With parents like his how could he not look like this?

I let him in and he came to sit on the couch. I tried sitting beside him but he put his hand on the seat and I sat on it instead. He pushed me up so I can stand. I

looked aside and rolled my eyes. He pulled me so I can sit in between his legs and use his right lap as a chair. I did so without any dissent. I meant it earlier when I said I have no energy. I'm even surprised I managed to get through all my laundry. He removed whatever he was seeing on my chin and started talking.

Him: Unjani?

I exhaled and dropped my shoulders. His eyes kept darting on and off my legs because this dress gets shorter when I'm seated. I told him I'm tired.

Him: I know.

We both kept quiet for a little while. His phone rang as he was about to say something. He had put it on the armrest along with his car keys when he sat down. He took it and answered the call. The caller I.D was written "M Queue". It was Mandoba.

Him: Bafo angijoli nawe mus'ukung founela wonke la malanga ung' bangela iscefe (we are not in a relationship bra stop calling me every day you're getting on my nerves)

MQ: Hayi fuseg ukephi? (... where are you?)

His speaker volume was higher

than usual today so I could hear
Mandoba but vaguely
Him: Kusha kuphi
mhlampe? Akekho ofile angithi?
You're not stuck anywhere and
akekho ok'khombe nge sbhamu.
Angithi???? If impendulo ya
wonke le mibuzo ngu "cha" then
qcofa u one lapho ususale u
khuluma wedwa. (Is anything on
fire maybe? Nobody is dead right?
.... and there isn't anybody that's
pointing a gun at you. Correct???)
If the answer to all these
questions is "No" then press 1
there so you can stay on the line
speaking to yourself.)

Mandoba laughed. Muzi smiled.

MQ: Ngi serious njalo. Ngila endlin. Ukephi boykiiiie? (I'm serious. I'm here at your house. Where are you boykiiiie?)

Him: Net for lelo gama lelo, la ngik' bamba khona kuzo vuth' umlilo ngaphansi kwa manzi ngiyak'tshela mfanawam. (Just because of that name, fire is going to start under water when I catch you my boy).

Muzi and I laughed. If I didn't know better I'd literally be sure these two are the same age the way they disrespect each other.

Muzi: Let yourself in like you

always do but ungayi thinti
iFridge ne PS yami(.. don't touch
my fridge and my Playstation)
Him again: And uyekel' ukung'
tshontshela ama condom wena jou
swine. Zidura kabi lezo zinto(and
stop stealing my condoms your
swine. Those things are bloody
expensive.)

Mandoba laughed hysterically.
Muzi cut the call.

I just looked at him and laughed.
I told him I love his relationship
with his brother even though
I'm certain they gave their mom
a headache as kids.

Him: You honesly think le mbuzi

yingane ka ma? (..my mom gave birth to this goat?) Haibo

He said and we laughed.

Him: I'm kidding man. We grew up in the same house but we are not from the same woman although we looked at both our mothers as one but they had different roles.

Ma is the advice wizard.

Everybody in the house runs to her when things go left. uMommy yena was the mother hen. Making sure everybody has eaten and cleaned up. She was also the peace-maker in the house. Ma scolded us alot whereas

uMaShandu allowed us to get away with a lot of things.

Which reminds me. I've always wanted to ask him this.

Me: Why does your mom speak English with a British accent?

He laughed lightly

Him: She spent all her high school and varsity years in the UK. She keeps saying if she didn't have the responsibility of a being a queen she would just permanently move there and come to SA only for visits. She wanted to when MaShandu was still with us but her husband, the whole family and the entire community said no.

Me: They love her?

Him: Too much. She's everybody's sweetheart. She's not only an advice wizard in the house. Even in the community too.

Me: She's nice. I love her.

His eyes glistened and beamed as he smiled

Him: Yeah she is.

Me: You and your dad are not that close right?

Him: Not really. He's a great father but he's very strict. He has his teddy bear moments but they don't last for the whole day.

Me: Do you have other siblings?

Him: An elder brother from

MaShandu and a baby sister from my mom.

Me: Where are they?

Him: Baby sis is at CPT and my brother moved to the UK after he completed his accounting studies.

His family dynamics are interesting. I could listen to him speak for the whole day. It's just that I have a lot on my mind right now. I'm very worried about my underwear. I swear I saw myself hanging it this morning. And why is it the only thing that's missing? I noticed that I was no longer listening when Muzi

was laughing but I had no idea at what. He went quiet and his smile faded. A look of concern grew on his face.

Him: Baby is polygamy that bad that it messes you up this way? Awukho la nami phela wena. (Your mind is far away).

Me: Hm?

Him: Out with it. What's the problem?

Me: It's nothing really.

I faked a smile. He didn't return it.

Him: Now I'm sure that this isn't about Gugu because if it was you would've said it.

I kept quiet.

Him: Khuluma phela (Talk!)

He was getting impatient.

Him: I don't want to force it out of you because you're definitely gonna end up pregnant if I do.

I laughed. He's nuts. I exhaled and just decided to tell him everything.

He was listening to me quietly and nodding as I narrated what had happened today. The frown on his face kept growing.

Him: I don't want to scare you but you have a stalker baby.

My heart stopped. This thought was at the back of my head but

I didn't want to entertain it in fear that I might attract it into manifestation.

Him: You're not sleeping here tonight. Go pack your bag we're leaving.

Me: I can't come with you. My mom said she's going to be here early in the morning.

Him: Okay. Then I'm sleeping here. I'll leave tomorrow before she arrives.

Me: I can't risk her finding you here Muzi.

Him: What's so wrong with that anyway?

I turned and looked at him. Has

he lost his mind?

He said "Okay okay" and took his phone.

Me: What are you doing?

He didn't answer. He scrolled in his phonebook and called a number saved as "Bafana". He answered.

Bfn: Bozza yam.

Him: Grand? (You okay?)

Bfn: Kabi kabi (Very well). Wena?

He sounded like a very relaxed and chilled human being

Him: Bheka man, do you have operations around PLK?

Bfn: Yessir

Bfn: But... when will you need my help?

Him: As soon as yesterday.

Bfn: Ish...

Him: I'll pay you double the price.

Bfn: Nah man it's not about that you know I always come through for you but this is short notice.

Very short notice.

Him: Triple the price then.

Bfn: R150K!?

Him: Yekel' ukung' moshela iskhath ung'tshel ukuth uyang siza noma cha? (Stop wasting my time and tell me if you're helping me not?)

Bfn: Give me two minutes.

Him: Sho.

Me: Who was that?

Him: You're gonna be safe. Don't worry. Yours is to just keep your door locked alright? I'm gonna sort this out.

He said and kissed me on my lips. His phone rang. He picked it up.

Him: Sho?

Bfn: All systems go. Wena just send the picture, phone number and the location.

Him: Njayam. (My man!)

They cut the call and he got up. He kissed me on my forehead and said he has to leave. I wanted to accompany him downstairs but he insisted I stay in the apartment

and lock after he gets out. But who is Bafana?

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Insert 20.

I did as Muzi said and locked the door. I couldn't help but feel creeped out by this whole situation. I suddenly felt like he shouldn't have left. It was hot but I went to quickly close all my windows and curtains. I barely use a cooling fan because it triggers my sinusitis. But did I have choice? As always, no. I took it out of it's box and switched it

on. I went to the fridge and took out a jug of orange juice that I had put in there last night. I poured it into a glass and downed all of it at one go. I don't have wine here and I can't go out to get it. What if this mysterious person wants to traffic and harvest my body parts? We hear about these things everyday but we never take them to head until we find ourselves in a potentially life-threatening situation. I seriously need that bottle of wine. I decided to call Tumi because I needed a distraction. I wasn't planning on telling him about this

because he was going to panic and recruit my mother as well. I dialled and he picked up.

Him: Ma chommie chommie. Malaisha-laisha. Matlakala hethiya.

He answered and sang.

Me: Are you ever going to grow up?

Him: For who? For what? What for?

I laughed. He's anything but normal.

Him: O kae monna wa rena?(where's our man?)

Me: Heee. Mpotsise(Ask me!)

Him: Spill. The tin is about to

explode.

Me: He's married.

Him: So?

Me: What do you mean so?

I can't believe this.

Him: So what? Mpontshe monna o a kgilweng mohlareng (Show me any man that was once picked from a tree).

Me: I'm being serious.

Him: Ka dlala man. Married men are 'a no go' area. He'll just preach that he's going to leave his wife for you but it will never happen sisi. Etswa ko meetsing pele ga fa ago belela ko maotong. (Get out of the water before it

boils on your feet).

You'd swear he's tswana from the manner in which he speaks.

Me: It's not that simple.

Him: Oh dear! She has caught feelings. Feelings have been caught. Mayday mayday, heartbreak do you copy?

I laughed. I'm surrounded by idiots to be honest.

Me: It's not that simple.

Him: You're advocating for side-chickism? Honestly?

Me: Says the chairperson

Him: Is you me? Me is you?

Me: There's sangomas and ancient promises involved I don't know

where to start

Him: Ha! Omojisitse!? (You gave him a love portion?)

Me: Are you nuts?

Him: Kereng? (What can I say?)

A commotion started in the background and I just figured he's at school.

Him: Babe look I'm gonna call you back okay? I gotta go. Kego rata ratii, makhwapheni ke wena. (I love you so much, side chick)

I replied "mciim", laughed and dropped the call.

There was a knock on my door and I froze. Surely if it was Muzi he would've called. He always does.

Plus he wouldn't scare me this way knowing how delicate this situation is. I just stood there and kept quiet. The person knocked again and I still did not reply. The person tried to turn the knob and found it locked. I tiptoed to the kitchen and took the largest knife from the knife stand. If somebody has to die today, somebody is going to die. And that person is not going to be me. I held on tightly to the knife and went to take my phone from the couch and texted Muzi. I wrote "Somebody is at my door" and he called immediately. I

silenced the call because I didn't want this person to know I'm in here. I wasn't even sure they were still at the door anymore. Muzi kept calling. I went to my bedroom and answered the call in a whisper.

Me: Please come.

I began crying. It sounded like he was driving.

Him: Ng'se ndlelen baby. For now, push your couch towards your door and block it. Ngiyeza.

I said okay and wiped my tears.

Who have I wronged on this planet? If they're still alive I'm ready and willing to apologize.

I pushed the couch as Muzi suggested and I waited. The time was now 22h44 and I still had the knife in my hand. Tightly gripping on it. He arrived but he didn't knock. He just sent me a text telling me to open the door. The couch was difficult to pull it backwards and away from the door but I managed. I opened the door. He quickly got in and took me in his arms. I cried so badly he kept saying "Shhh shhh I'm here now" and brushing my head. I finally calmed down and he pulled the couch to it's original

position and told me to come sit. I did.

Him: When last did you see your neighbor?

I tensed my eyebrows and said "The time we were together outside". He said "Okay"

Me: Why do you ask? You think he's behind all of this?

He unlocked his phone and gave it to me. I looked at him and then at the screen. This picture looks like it was caught on camera. Our building doesn't have cameras.

Where did he get this? The picture also had a time and date. This was just a couple of minutes

ago and this looks like Mbelo. I began having heart palpitations. Mbelo is my stalker? No it can't be. Maybe he was just knocking to check up on me or he needed help with something. But why try to open the door knob? Muzi's phone rang. It was written Sabelo. I gave it back to him.

Him: Hello?

Him: Downstairs?

Him: Ngiyeza manje (I'm coming just now)

He asked me to put on something appropriate because he can't leave me in here. I was also going to refuse to stay behind. I went

to my room and put on a black tight dress. I didn't change my shoes. I took my phone and keys. He told me to give him the keys. We got out and he locked the door. He turned to Mbelo's room looking like he wanted to say or do something but seemingly changed his mind because he held my hand and went down the stairs with me. This building needs an elevator.

We got downstairs and there was a man outside a blue BMW 320i which was parked behind Yise's car. Muzi got to him and they fist-bumped.

Sabelo: Lo muntu kade umsola vele vele hiyo iculprit MK. (The person you were suspecting is indeed the culprit.)

Muzi exhaled and briefly looked away. I'm guessing this is Mbelo they're speaking about.

Muzi: Except for the recent pictures what else did you find?

Sbl: Eish it's not good yazi

Muzi: Uyakhuluma noma

uyaxoshwa? (Are you going to speak or you want to get fired?)

He calmly said.

Sbl: Okay okay bheka la

He said as he opened the door to his passenger seat and took out a

white A4 envelope.

Muzi said "Yini lokhu?" (What's this?) He said as he opened it. He pulled out the contents and quickly shoved them back. He held his mouth and asked Sabelo where he got them.

Sabelo: Mandoba said I should be the one to give them to you.

Muzi: So he managed to hack the bastard's phone?

Sabelo: Waz' kahle ukuthi amanz' amancane ku MQ lawa. (You know that such a job is nothing to MQ).

Muzi: True. But how?

Sabelo: Buz ubhut' wakho bafo mina sek'fanele ngihambe manje

ispan sam se siphelile la. UBafana
uyang'dinga e P.E (Ask your
brother bro. I have to go.

Bafana needs me at P.E). He
turned to me and subtly clapped
his hands once, kept them
together and "Bafokazi,
iyobonana" which loosely
translates to "Bro's woman, I'll
see you around". I smiled and said
"Drive safely." He then went
around his car, got in and left.
Muzi looked like he was deep in
thoughts trying to put pieces
together.

Me: What's in the envelope?

Him: It's nothing important baby.

I was about to argue when he took out his phone and made a call.

Him: Sho ukephi? (Where are you?)

Him: Great. Phuma I'm outside

Me: I want to see what's in the envelope Muzi.

He rolled his eyes in defeat and gave it to me. He knew very well that it was never going to end. I opened it with my eyes on him. I took out the pictures and I was appalled. WHAT IN THE HELL???

It was pictures of me photoshopped with Mbelo. They looked like genuine wedding

pictures. I dropped my jaw to the floor. Mbelo is sick in the head!!

Some guy came out from my building. He was dressed in blue beach shorts, a black tropical vest and flip flops. He looked like he was in his mid 20s.

He greeted me first and said "Madam". He turned to Muzi and said "Bozza?". Muzi handed him his car keys and took out 5 hundred rand notes from his wallet and gave it to him. said "Take her to a safe place and get some food. Wait for me to call you".

The guy: Sure.

Me: Where are you taking me and why wena o sala? (... are you staying behind?)

he held my shoulders and looked me in the eye.

Muzi: You're gonna be fine baby. I'll be with you within a couple of hours. Okay?

He said and kissed me on my forehead.

Me: Who is this?

I said and looked at the guy. He excused himself and got in the car.

Muzi: One of your guards.

I would have never guessed. A guard that dresses this way? So they were in the building all this

time?

Me: Come with me then

Muzi: I will join you after I'm done here. Let's not argue about this ngiyakcela?

He said and pulled my chin so he could kiss me. I almost got lost in that kiss till he broke it.

Him: Ngiyakthanda.

He said and pecked my lips one last time.

He opened the passenger seat and I got in. I saw him walking back into the building. The guy drove off. What am I going to say to this person? Awkward.

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Insert 21.

The trip wasn't at all awkward. It was actually very short, coupled with the fact that the guy kept telling me far-fetched stories that were obviously lies but I was entertained by them. I asked him where we were going and he said his home. He said his mom is a mean cook and she makes the best dishes so we'll eat there. I laughed because it was clear he wanted to bag all the money Muzi gave him for himself but I didn't mind. He

laughed as well and said child maintenance has him by the throat. He's a nice person. I wasn't expecting such an aura from him.

We got to his place in the village and I asked who he stays with because I didn't feel comfortable disturbing people in their own home. He told me not to worry. We got in the living room and I was told to have a seat as he went into the kitchen. A woman came out of one of the rooms wearing an ankle-length cotton nightdress with a doek on her head. She looked like she was woken up from

deep sleep. The guy came out of the kitchen with a dishing spoon in one hand and a cloth in the other.

Her: Tebogo.

Her: Hello my girl.

I smiled and greeted back. This is when I've realised that I've been travelling and laughing with a guy and I don't even know his name. I found this funny.

Him: Mama? Neresare rago tsosha (we didn't meant to wake you)

Her: Aowa go lokile. Mara banenyana ba dula ka kua morago ge ose nyala aker ngwanaka? (No

it's fine. But girls should be kept at the back if you haven't married her you know this) I'm guessing the "back" is somewhere in what we call a "Boys room", where a boy moves to when he's old enough to bring girls into the yard and/or come back at ungodly times to avoid disturbing the people in the house. He laughed.

Him: Aowa mama ase kgarebe yaka ye. Monna wa gage otlotla atlomo tseya enoba ele gore o tshwaregile mogongwe ga bjale. Aka mpolaya ge aka mohwetsa ka kua morago (No mom this is not

my girlfriend. Her man is going to come take her. He just got held up somewhere. He'd kill me if he found her in there.)

These people are busy conversing about me as if I'm not here.

Her: Go lokile. O time mabone geofetsa mo. Ngwanenyaka, ke thabela go go tseba aker? Bona o botse jwang. Motho akaba are ohlapa ka lebese (Alright. Switch off the lights when you're done.

My girl, it was lovely meeting you. Look at how beautiful you are, it's as if you bath in milk).

I laughed, thanked her for the compliment and bid her goodnight.

She then went back into her room.

He went back into the kitchen and I continued playing animal rescue on my phone. He then came back with two plates on a tray. He put them down and fetched a 2 litre bottle of cold water and 2 glasses. He gave me the wet cloth to wipe my hands. I wanted to wash them instead but I settled for what I was being offered. This is not my house. I took the plate and put it on my lap. It looked very appetizing. There was brown pap, two chicken thighs, soup, cabbage and

atchaar. This reminds me so much of my grandmother. He turned on the TV, lowered the volume and I dug in. Tebogo went out of the house and I was left to be by myself. I continued eating. After I was done, I took the wet cloth and wiped my hands and drank some of the water.

He came back into the house looking like he was nowhere in this yard. Probably went to briefly see a girlfriend or something. He received a call as he was eating. He went to fetch his phone on the charger next to the TV and answered.

Him: Sho?

Him: Sise ndlini. E khaya(We're at the house. At home)

Him: Nah Stixx knows where I live khuluma naye. (... speak to him)

Him: Eita.

I looked at him waiting for a report but he carried on with his life like he doesn't see me. After about a minute,

Him: Did you enjoy the food?

Me: I loved it thank you. Better than any take away we could've gotten.

Him: See? Win-win.

I laughed. He genuinely looks like a fun soul to be around.

From the outside, you wouldn't tell that this is the same house I'm sitting in. It looks like your average maid-pay house but it's very beautiful and clean on the inside. I didn't want to ask a lot of questions so I just kept quiet and admired the interior in silence. A car parked outside, stopped for a while and then left afterwards. I just guessed who it was dropping off. The woman came out of her room again. I hope this is not going to be awkward. I don't commend being with a

boyfriend around elders, any elder. I was raised to know that any old person is my parent and I should therefore treat and address them as such. She opened the curtain to see what was going on outside. Tebogo told her not to worry and said it's my "husband". That actually had a nice ring to it. Honestly.

He finally arrived and knocked. The woman opened the door and he walked in.

Him: Dumela mama. He brought his hand forward. She held it with both of hers. It wasn't a big deal but it was beautiful to

watch. Tebogo laughed. He's probably hearing him speak another language except for Zulu and English for the first time. Muzi looked at him and smiled but as a warning. He continued laughing as he packed the plates away with a toothpick in his mouth. Every black person knows that chicken thighs come with toothpicks.

Ma: Dumela le wena.

She said and smiled. She then said we should drive safely and that the Lord should protect us. She further reminded her son to lock the door when he also leaves.

After that, she went back into her room. Muzi said we have to go and I stood up. Both him and Tebogo 'saluted' each other goodbye, with the index and the middle finger.

We got to the car and got settled. I wanted to ask but he interrupted me and "seatbelt" as he buckled up his. I did as he requested before I could speak.

Me: Are you going to tell me what happened?

Him: He's not going to bother you anymore. And you're never going to see his ugly face again.

I hope he's not saying what I

think he's saying.

Me: You didn't..?

Him: I didn't what?

Me: You didn't kill him did you?

Him: Maybe I did. Maybe I didn't.

Me: Mazi!!!!!!

Him: Will you relax? These hands were not made to spill any blood but to be used as a compass on that body.

I didn't mean to laugh and blush but I did. He glanced at me and smiled.

Me: I don't buy this.

Him: I wasn't selling it.

Me: Mciim.

We kept quiet in the car till we got to his hotel. This was not part of the deal by the way. He parked the car and heavily exhaled. He looked tired. We walked to his room and he kept kissing and hugging me from behind in the corridor. I can't stay angry at this man and I'm afraid he might abuse this power he has over me.

We got to his room and he opened. He waited for me to get in first and he followed. I honestly wanted to go to my place because I wanted to shower. It was hot and I was sweating. The time

was around one AM. I was still curious about what happened between him and Mbelo but he wasn't budging.

Me: Thank you for everything you've done for me but you really need to take me to my place. I need to shower and my mom..

Him: .. is coming the morning. I know I know. I can also fix that. And you can shower here. Baby I'm tired. I promise I won't bother you. I'll even close my eyes till you're done.

Me: Fix it how?

He turned away from me, took my phone from the bed and I jumped

on his back. My phone doesn't have a password otherwise I wouldn't be panicking like this if it. He held me with one hand on his back so I couldn't move and searched for my mom's contact details till he found them. I was screaming that he gives me my phone while this was happening and he was laughing. He typed "Hey mommy. I have a deadline I need to meet tomorrow morning my boss ambushed me so I really need to finish this. Please come in the afternoon. I love you". He pressed send and gave the phone back to me. I looked at him in

disbelief and he just kept a smug smile on his face.

Him: What's your other excuse so we can address it as well?

He held his ear indicating that he's waiting for me to say something. I sulked and sat on the bed. He took off his sandals, unbuckled his belt but didn't take it off and came to sit with me on the bed. He tried to touch me but I laughed and got off the bed heading to the shower. He yelled "Enjoy!" And laid himself on the bed, sleeping on his stomach.

We were busy talking from the different compartments of the

room as I was showering. I kept praying that he doesn't walk in here because anything is possible with him. I used his shower gel and smelt like a rich man afterwards. All his toiletries were in here so I just went right ahead and used his lotion as well. He stopped replying to me so I figured he passed out. I took a towel and wrapped it around myself to go find a t-shirt I could sleep in. This was risky but I was willing to do it anyway. I didn't have that much of a problem with underwear because I removed the pantyliner I had on and wore

it as it is. I'M NOT WALKING
AROUND WITHOUT
UNDERWEAR NEVER.

He indeed passed out. The black t-shirt he was wearing when we were driving from KZN was on the chair along with his cargo shorts. I took it and sniffed on it. It had no bad odour at all. It just smelt like him. I decided to put it on and sleep because I was also tired. He was on the other side of the bed and had passed out on top of the sheets. I got under the covers because I wasn't about to wake him to he could bother me. I looked the

other way and also managed to sleep.

I was sleeping peacefully until I felt him planting wet kisses on my neck. I think he already knows what this does to me.

(Removed) He was smiling throughout the kiss. He fell off of me to his side of the bed and hugged me from behind. He was in his underwear. I legit felt like I wanted more and I told him this. He replied and said "Trust me, you're not ready for that."

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Insert 22.

I ended up falling asleep in his strong and warm arms. I promise, I can never feel any safer than this. I wasn't sure of the time but I knew the sun was already out. His phone rang. He took it and looked at the caller I.D. I could feel that he's looking at me, doubting whether to take it or not. He eventually answered the call, probably hoping that I'm deep in sleep. I continued pretending to be dead in his one arm.

Him: Mommy

Her: Khumalo.

He was so close I could hear her sobbing and crying on the other line. I continued 'sleeping'.

Him: Kwenzenjan baby? (What's wrong?)

He said and sat up. He sounded really worried. I hope the baby is fine. I was actually praying that the baby is fine. Contrary to common expectations, I have a little unwanted soft spot for her. Especially after the conversation we had.

Her: Ngikhathele

Him: Huh? Ukhala ngoba you're tired? I don't understand baby

Her: Come take this baby of yours

out of me!!

She cried harder. He softly laughed.

Him: Hang in there my love. You have less than 3 months to go.

Bekezela sthandwasam

okay?(Hang in there my love okay?)

What? Her pregnancy looked like it was in it's initial stages to me.

She must be one of those women my grandmother used to say

"Mpa ya bona e tshabela

matsweleng", which means (by direct translation) your pregnancy

hides in your breasts, meaning

instead of the bump growing, you

get bigger breasts instead.

Her: He's making me crave the impossible and he's exhausting me. And I have a little pain on my lower abdomen

Him: When did it start?

Her: Last night. I need you.

Him: I'll be there tomorrow okay?

Then we'll go see your Dr.

Her: Ukephi?

He cleared his throat before he stated that he's with me. She went quiet for some seconds.

Her: I want to come back home.

Him: We both know you don't really want that.

Her: What do you mean?

Him: Baby ever since you fell pregnant you don't want me anywhere near you. My cologne makes you vomit. Everything I say ticks you off. We've been making a lot of progress with this long distance relationship. I can't risk us fighting like we did so much that we almost got a divorce. It's not good for the baby. I'm gonna come see you just as I've been doing and I'll leave as soon as you get sick of me. It works better that way. I'll come take you offically after you give birth. That's if uyavuma u mamazala wakho ngoba uyamaz

unjan (.. your mother in law agrees because you know how she is)

Her: Awusang' funi Khumalo?

He exhaled.

Him: Ung'vuse eksen ka nje ukuth uzolwa nam Samkethe? (You woke me up this early so you can start a fight with me?)

Her: You love her more than you do me right?

She said and started crying

Him: No.

My heart jammed abruptly.

Him: I don't love you more than I love her either. You both occupy a special place in my heart. I just

wish everyone would just get along because these fights are postponing the inevitable. I am gonna marry her eventually.

Him: Why do you insist on hurting me so much?

He got up from the bed and they continued arguing.

I continue laying there thinking about this mess. "Postponing the inevitable". These were the only words ringing in my head. I opened my eyes and stared into space. Muzi climbs back on the bed and I close my eyes really quickly. He kisses me on my cheek and I pretend to have been

woken up by that that simple gesture. I turn to him and fake a smile. He smiles back.

Me: Good morning.

Him: Morning baby.

He made me lay on his chest while he sat up. I was about to speak when he interjected and said

"Baby do you like Madlamini? I

know you guys spoke at some

point in KZN". I didn't know how

to answer this question. I tensed

my eyebrows and bit my lower lip.

Me: I don't have a problem her.

Him: Would I be expecting too

much if I asked you to overlook

and ignore the fact that I'm

married already? I promise to make you happy and divide my attention equally. The only time you're gonna feel like you're sharing me is when I'm not with you, which is something I can do nothing about because I can't break myself into two.

I suddenly started thinking about STIs and my mouth betrayed me. I blurted it out without any intention.

Me: Do you use protection with her?

This was a stupid question because I already know the answer to this.

Him: Let's go buy an HIV rapid home test kit if that's your biggest issue.

Me: What if she cheats on you? Or I cheat on you and the both of you end up infected? See why I'm so worried?

Him: You can get infected by anybody even if it's not through me. This is just you making up excuses.

He had a point.

Me: You said you have cheated on her.

I then mumbled and said "God knows how many times"

Me: Did you use protection? Or do

you use protection when you cheat?

Him: I'm never gonna cheat on you. And yes, always. She's the only one I have raw sex with.

Me: If I do agree, then you and I will always use protection.

I knew this was impractical but I just had to say it. He laughed.

Him: And how do you think you're gonna fall pregnant? You owe me 10 kids.

I burst out laughing and replied "In your dreams"

Him: Besides, first time sex with a condom for a virgin is more painful

Me: Have you ever had a hymen sir?

I said as I raised my head with a questioning look on my face.

He laughed and said "Experience baby. Experience". He's nuts. I laughed as well and shook my head.

I started feeling really pressed and needed to pee. His sandals were the closest shoes I could find so I slipped them on and went to the loo. I got there and emptied my bladder. While I was doing this, I was looking around the toilet. My eyes randomly landed on my feet. I asked myself

questions upon the sight of two dried drops of blood on the white part of one of the Adidas stripes. It then hit me that I saw a bruise on his arm earlier when he was all up in my privates but I couldn't ask him then. What really went down last night? Is Mbelo okay? Is he even still alive? What if? Muzi wouldn't?

I wiped myself and got out of there.

I found him standing in the middle of the room typing on his phone. He was topless but he now had his jeans on. Barefoot. The CK elastic band of his black

underwear was showing. He raised his eyes and asked me what's wrong. How does he know I have something on my mind? I must be looking nervous as hell on a Sunday right now. What if this man is a murderer? If he is then he wouldn't think twice about putting me in a body bag if I'm a threat. I mean I wouldn't have him arrested because he was protecting me but still. Plus, one can never be too sure how the mind of a killer actually works. He tensed his eyebrow and asked again. "Sthandwasam are you

okay?". He still had both his hands on his phone.

I slowly sunk down on the bed. He came to sit next to me. He put his hand around my shoulders and I shivered.

Him: You're beginning to worry me now. You went in there laughing and now you look like you've seen a ghost. What's wrong?

I held on tightly to the edge of the mattress with both hands.

Me: What happened to Mbelo?

Him: Mbelo?

Me: My neighbour.

He rolled his eyes as he briefly looked to the side. He does this

when he's annoyed.

Him: Why are you so concerned about this guy? I thought you'd be happy he's no longer gonna bother you? He had a highly annoyed look on his face, waiting for me to answer.

Me: I didn't say you should go out there and kill the guy.

Him: How many times am I supposed to tell you that I-AM-NOT-A-F**KING-MURDERER? Are we fighting? Is Muzi raising his voice at me? I felt tears starting to brim up in my eyes. He exhaled, looking like he's trying his best to calm himself down. He

stood up and went to the loo. I got up and took my phone. I found an SMS from my mom saying she's going to arrive at around 13h00 and that she's not sleeping over. And that I had better make sure that my boss understands that she has arrived. Oh mother!

I wiped my tears and checked the time. The phone reported 06h17. He got out of the loo and calmly asked me to get dressed. I stood there and glared at him.

Him: Make it snappy. You might miss your boyfriend.

What on earth is he talking

about. I kept quiet and wore my clothes in silence. He pulled the curtains apart, opening them. The room got more brighter. He then put on his t-shirt and said "Ngicel' icathulo zam" (Can I please have my shoes?). We had a stare contest for about a minute and knowing him, he should've laughed by now but he didn't. I took them off and gave them to him. His phone rang as he was about to wear them. He put them on quickly and took it from the bed.

Him: Mbuso?

Him: Ah ngiright bafu unjan

wena?

Him: Wait what? You're home?

He smiled.

Him: Awusho ngani? (Why didn't you say?)

Him: Ahh yabona manje. Wena no Nathi fanele niyifundise ukuth' ku phunywa kanjan endabeni zami.

Hlukanani ne love life yami phansi osatan abancan. (You and Nathi need to learn a method of how to stay out of my business. Leave my love life alone you little devils)

I fixed and made the bed as he was talking on the phone.

Him: Ngithi mina enrol for a short course nyana there by UKZN on

how to stay the f**k out of Yise's business.

He continued laughing. I'm guessing this is the elder brother he was talking about.

After he was done he asked me if I'm ready to go. I couldn't read his emotions. He was way too calm for my liking but not welcoming either. I said yes and picked up my phone. We left the hotel and he drove to my place. I thought he was gonna walk up with me to my apartment but he didn't even offer. He just got there, parked and looked straight ahead. I looked at him and he

wiped his nose with his thumb and index finger. He continued avoiding eye contact with me. Maybe I was too drastic when I called him a murderer. But my pride would take me to court if I grovelled to him. So I got out of the car. He waited for me to get into the building before he sped off.

I went up the stairs to the 2nd floor. When I got there, there were brown boxes, black plastic bags and green storage containers outside of Mbelo's apartment. The door was open and it sounded as if he was

shoving more things into one of the plastic bags. I didn't know whether to stand or run into my room. I still have no idea what goes on in his psychotic mind. So I quickly unlocked, got in and shut the door. I locked it from the inside as fast as I could. He came knocking and my heart swam in ice. I stood against the door, shut my eyes and kept quiet. I could hear him slowly backing away from the door. He took a few steps, stood for like 2 seconds and continued walking into his room. I held my chest and exhaled.

I went into my room and brushed my teeth. As I was busy doing that, I heard another knock on my door. I spit out the diluted toothpaste and looked straight into the mirror, waiting for him to walk away again. He didn't. Instead he shouted "Please open. I need to talk to you and I promise I won't bother you ever again after this." I took in some air and stood still. He continued. "Look, the people of this corridor know about this. Even if I did want to hurt you, I wouldn't succeed. We can talk here outside

I don't have to come in. Just... please open the door."

I turned the faucet on the basin, rinsed my mouth and wiped with a towel. I took some petroleum jelly and applied it on my lips because my lips always feel uncomfortably dry after a mouth wash and I can't stand it. I went to open the door. He was about to knock some more when I did. He looked at me and dropped his hand. The girl who lives right opposite to me came out and said "Sthandwa, don't worry, if he tries anything then he's toast. I have SAPS on speed dial." She then looked at

him, disgusted. Shame smeared his face and he looked down. What really happened here last night? I thanked her and then she went back into her room. I told Mbelo to come in but I left the door wide open.

He brushed the palms of his hands against his jeans twice. I've seen a lot of men do this when they find themselves in awkward situations. He sat down on the couch. I wasn't at all comfortable with having him here but I needed to know what really happened last night. I stood against the kitchen counter and

folded my hands, staring and waiting for him to speak.

Him: I'm really sorry Betso. I'm sorry I scared you. I didn't mean to put you in such a position. I just.. I allowed the crush I have on you to get out of control.

Me: Were you stalking me?

I thinned my eyes as I felt disgust and immense loath filling up the chambers of my heart.

Him: I just followed you twice. I swear.

Me: When and when?

I said, trying to look unfazed as I possibly can. He looked down but continued to speak.

Him: One time when you were going out to get bread, milk and a pack of Doritos and this other time when you were doing laundry. Son of a bi...!!! I felt like somebody was following me on both accounts but I decided to ignore it. What would've become of me if Muzi hadn't intervened? Now I feel guilty. No. I feel more sad than guilty actually. I've only known him for a short while but Muzi has never showed me any signs of him being capable to slaughter another human being. I know that we shouldn't judge books by their covers but he has never

given me any reason for me to believe he could kill Mbelo. Not even in the slightest bit. And Filwe still went right ahead and accused him. But the blood? Where was it coming from? I asked myself this question as I scrutinized Mbelo's face, which looked a hot mess. His lower lip was a bit ripped on the side and he had put a small plaster on his nose bridge. He also had a black-eye.

Me: What really happened last night Xikombelo?

Him: A ngak byelang' munhu wa weh kas? (Your man didn't tell

you?)

He looked taken aback by my question.

Me: Are you gonna answer my question?

Him: Look I'm sorr...

Me: Leave.

Him: But I'm..

Me: If you're not willing to tell me what happened last night then there's nothing left for us to discuss.

Him: Okay yimanyana xana niku hlamusela ke. (wait let me explain).

He breathed out, heavily.

Him: Your boyfriend beat me up.

He didn't even give me a chance to explain. He just went ahead and attacked me. After he was done, he said he knows that I work at Game and that I'm the sole breadwinner at home. And that if it wasn't for my sick mother and my little sister who needs school supplies and shii, he wouldn't think twice about making me lose my job as a manager and also making sure that nobody ever employs me ever again.

Me: And?

Him: He gave me his terms and said I should never show my face

in this building ever again and that I should change paths should I ever run into you anywhere. He also said if you happen to also move into wherever I'm moving to, I should also move out of there as well. He then laughed, sarcastically. My heart broke into 99 pieces. I accused Muzikayise of murder. MURDER!!

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Insert 23.

Xikombelo eventually packed up everything that belonged to him

and left. I was honestly very much unbothered. He made me sick.

I spent most of the afternoon sleeping in my room. My boss called checking up on me. I told him I'm getting better and went easy on the pretentious coughing. He offered me the entire week off but I turned him down. I'm going back to work tomorrow otherwise some of the screws in my head will end up loose. The time was now around 12 in the afternoon. I woke up and made triple sure that my place was spotless. I'm honestly not in the mood for my

mom to buzz in my ears. I love her with all my heart but I was not in the mood for any of that vibe. Andizi. I'm not coming. I shall never arrive for any of that. My neighbour came knocking and asked if I'm okay. I barely speak to her but we always greet and smile to each other. I appreciated her concern and told her I'm okay. She insisted that we exchange numbers because "It's our duty as women to protect one another because we're now on our own". I felt that. Anything could happen to you as a woman currently living in

South Africa. We see these things on TV every passing hour but we always undermine the probability of being part of the forever rising statistics. Before we could part ways, she said she has a gift for me and that I should wait for a sec. I was surprised by this but I did as I was told. She quickly went into her room and came back with a black can of pepper spray. I laughed. She smiled and said I shouldn't take for granted how much this can save me from these roaming perverts. I was laughing at this "gift" but I was grateful for it.

I took the can and hugged her. She hugged me back and went further to say "If it is ever out of reach, grab him by the nuts and twist as hard as you can. While he is still wincing at that, use your elbow to blow him either on the head or on his stomach. Your elbow is the strongest part of your hand. But I use fists sometimes when my boyfriend misbehaves". I burst out laughing and we high five'd. I think I have found myself a neigh-ster here!

I went back into my room because I wanted to start cooking. My

mom loves my lasagne so that is what I was about to make. I heard a knock on my door as I was trying to take out the meat from the fridge. I went to open and I immediately smashed into her. She dropped her bag and hugged me back. I missed my mother so much the feeling was only overwhelming me now. After centuries of being in her arms she began wilding and said "watseba motho otlago tlimarela go ntse go fisha kamokgwa o!" (Some people will cling onto you even in this heat!) I laughed and unwrapped

my arms off her. She held both my hands and smiled. We got in. I went behind the kitchen counter as she went towards the couch, silently surveying my place with her eyes. I just pretended not to see her and laughed to myself because I knew she wasn't gonna find a thing. She finally spoke.

Her: How are you baby?

Me: I'm fine momma! Ke sharp!

How are you?

She slowly dropped her head but kept her eyes on me. She slightly smiled in suspicion. I smiled back and dropped my shoulders. She

sees right through me. She tapped the couch to show that she wanted me to come sit beside her. I put closed the fridge and did exactly that.

Her: Go diragala eng Ponko ponko? (What's going on?)

I laughed at how she's determined with clinging onto this name.

Me: I wonder kemang owe(.. who's that)

Her: Your imaginary friend.

I laughed! But that slowly faded.

Her: I'm not staying baby. I'm expecting visitors ko ntlong(..at the house). You know that

mommy is renovating aker?

I nodded. She gently slapped my thigh and said "Now, what's going on?"

I didn't know where to start. I didn't know what to tell her and what not to. A lot has happened, including this Xikombelo issue. I exhaled. I'm trusting my disorganized brain and my reckless mouth to guide me through this conversation. I just need to take off some of this load that's sitting on my chest because I can't breathe properly.

Me: There's a man asking for my hand in marriage momma.

She popped her eyes, got up and ululated with her hands dancing in the air. If only she knew what baggage this marriage proposal comes with. I just blankly stared at her. She turned, looked at me and slowly ceased with her mini celebration.

Her: No?

She said and shook her head.

I replied "No" and shook my head as well to emphasize this. We always do this when we want the other to stop whatever it is they are doing, especially if it's embarrassing.

She came back to sit next to me.
Her: Haomo rate? (You don't love him?)

Me: Yoh momma I do! Kemo rata ka pelo yame yotlhe!

She suddenly looked bedazzled.

Her: Ake tthaologanye. Nare bothata ke eng yanong? Tlogela go mpollela dikgang kadi half ao tlhe mma (I don't understand. Then what is the problem? Tell me the full story.)

Me: He's married mama! And now we're no longer talking.

I bit my upper lip and looked at her. I couldn't tell what was on her mind. Her face was plain but

deep in thought. She heavily exhaled.

Her: Who is this man Filwe?
Where is he from?

Me: KwaZulu-Natal. His name is Muzikayise Khumalo.

She briefly looked away but brought her face back and held my right hand. She brushed the inside of my palm and started tearing up.

Her: Baby girl. Look, I know I should've told you this a long time ago. I'm sorry.

I looked at her with a look that clearly screamed "Told me what?"
She kept quiet for a second and

then said "Remember when you were in grade 6? When you came back home and found malome Joseph, malom Moseki and aunt Reutlwile in the living room at home? When you were first told that I was not the one who gave birth to you?"

Me: Yes?

I looked at her deep in the eye waiting for her to speak but she wiped her tears with her thumb She briefly laughed, nervously. She always laughs in this manner when she's either furious or intensely stressed.

Me: O bata go nthu oreng

momma? (What are you saying?)
She bent her lips into a frown and pursed her lips with the tip of her tongue sticking out. What is this woman trying to say?

My phone rang as I was trying to dig the truth out of my mother. I don't know this number.

Me: Hello?

The caller kept quiet. I looked at the screen to check if they're still on the line. They were.

Me: He- llo??

Them: Makoti.

Mangoba. He sounded like his spirit was really down. My heart skipped a beat. But I kept quiet.

Him: Eish. I don't know how to tell you this but.. wherever you are, ngicel' uhlale phansi.

My brain went dead for approximately 4 seconds! Can this day get any worse? Ge ele gore ke moleko nthwe, motho o antoileng surely o hwile kgale otherwise neatla fetsa a nkwela bohloko le yena ao busetsa morago...(If this is a spell, whoever bewitched me is certainly dead by now otherwise, they'd end up feeling sorry for me from all the blows I'm getting and reverse it)

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Insert 24.

The phone fell off from my hand because I no longer had any strength to support it against my ear. My mother was brushing my back as I loudly wailed on her shoulder. She kept asking me what's wrong but I couldn't speak. I've never felt so enervated and dispirited. She hurriedly ran to the kitchen area. She grabbed the jar labelled "Sugar" and quickly took down a mug from the top cupboard. She poured some water from the kitchen and scooped a few spoons of sugar into the mug. She

approached me as she stirred her 'skhambelele' concentrate, careful not to spill. I was tightly grabbing onto the cushion I had laid my head on on the couch. My legs were weakly and carelessly placed on the floor. I had stopped crying but my shock had forbidden me from making any movements.

Her: Tsaa babynyana. (Take).

Drink this. It will help you.

I heard her quite clearly but I couldn't entertain her and her glucose-infused concoction. But this is my mother we're talking about, she doesn't give up. She never gives in.

Her: Aowa Filwe tsoga! (No Filwe get up!)

She said as she sat beside me, pulling me by my shoulders so I can sit upright. She helped me drink by tipping over the cup and holding my chin so I don't spill. I had half of it. She allowed me to take a short break then insisted that I finish it all, of course helping me to ensure I fulfilled this instruction. I fell back on the couch and looked up.

Her: Go hlaga eng? (What's going on?)

I kept quiet.

Her: Filwe bolela hle motho wa

Modimo(Please speak. Motho wa Modimo can be loosely translated to "God's person")I can't help you if I have no idea what you're going through.

I turned to look at her.

Me: Muzi was involved in a car accident ma.

She quickly closed her mouth with her right hand. She was shocked.

Her: I'm so sorry baby. Is he okay?

Me: I have no idea. Mandoba didn't go into any details. What if he's dead mama?

Her: He-eh. Both life and death come from the declaration that

our mouths make. You don't know what's going on. Where is he?

Me: Apparently in some hospital here in PLK. His brother said he sent a car to come fetch me.

Her: I'm coming with you!

Me: No mama it's too soon. You said you're not staying. Go home so I can prepare myself.

I didn't want her to come with me because this was going to look awkward from my side. Especially if his family is going to be there. I didn't want it to appear as though I'm already feeling comfortable and considering myself as a part of their family. Bringing

my mom along was going to send exactly this type of message. I explained to her. She took my hand again.

Her: Filwe baby?

I looked at her. I was honestly starting to get annoyed by all of this.

Her: Ka setso (By tradition) you're already his wife.

WHAT THE!??? My jaw fell to the floor. What is my mother saying to me?

Me: Eng? (What?)

Her: His family married you when you were 11 years old. He was 20 at the time but he also didn't

know when it happened.

THIXO WASE

BLOEMFONTEIN!!! It never ends.

I dropped my tears and just stared at her.

HOW?

Her: I can't explain everything right now my baby it's a very long story. Prepare to go to the hospital. You'll find me here. I asked her to leave instead because I wanted to be alone. She tried to protest but I went to the door, opened it and waited for her to make her exit. She exhaled, took her bag from the

couch and approached me. I didn't want to look at her. I couldn't. So I just kept my eyes glued to the ground. She brushed my upper arm and kissed my cheek. I just stood there, motionless. She left. After I closed and locked the door, I sunk down against it and cried my eyeballs out. Who have I wronged ngempela? Not only did he lie about being married to Mabuyi but he also lied about being married to me as well!? Does she even know about this? If he's dead then it means I'm now a widow? Fantastic! A whole bloody eureka!!

After hours of sitting my butt on the cold floor, I finally got the courage to stand up and go shower. I got to my room and caught a glimpse of myself on the mirror. My eyes were all red and puffed up. I am a joke to this entire universe. A whole bioskop. I took a short shower and lotioned my body. It was extremely hot so I opted for a blue and red maxi dress with white push-in sandals. My haircut was no longer fresh and I had no energy to be combing it so I threw my wig on my head. I was also not about the life of gluing it

on. It'll have derive a mechanism of how to stabilize itself on my head.

I received a call as I rubbing hand cream onto my hands and I took it. It was now in the evening around 18h00. My designated driver announced that he's outside and also described the car he was driving. I unplugged my phone from the charger, locked my place and headed downstairs.

I got to the backseat of the car and greeted him. I had no interest in entertaining him to be honest. I'm not here for any

theatrics. I just wanted to get to the hospital. I was grateful for the silence in the car until he fumbled and decided to speak.

Him: Unga khathazeki kakhulu uzoba right uMK (Don't worry too much MK is gonna be fine)

I raised my head to look at him. People who call Muzi "MK" are people who know him well. I couldn't believe I didn't see that Tebogo was the driver until now. I smiled a little to push away the shame from my self. He must be thinking that I'm naturally rude. I apologized but he didn't seem

to mind. He just asked me to stop worrying.

We got to the hospital and he got off with me. I was thinking that he was only dropping me off. We got there and pressed the elevator. I didn't even see which floor we were heading to. I just wanted to get there. We finally did. We found Mandoba sitting on one of the silver grey metallic benches. He had closed his eyes and was supporting his head on the top of the backrest, with his hands in his pockets.

Tebogo got to him, hit him on his thigh and said "MQ!" Then he sat

down next to him. I stood in front of him waiting for answers. He opened his eyes and greeted me. He got up to hug me and I hugged him back. He held both his knees and sunk down on his seat.

Me: What's going on?

Him: Apparently he lost control of his car and sped towards a truck, going underneath it.

Tebogo: But something doesn't quite make sense here. Nje nje out of the green? All of a Sunday? On a straight lane?

Mangoba exhaled and wiped his face with both his hands, falling back on the backrest.

Him: That's what I've been told by the truck driver.

Tebogo: Ukuphi yena? (Where is he?) The truck driver?

MQ: He got examined and discharged. He's totally fine. But MK's car is a write-off.

He took out his phone and showed us pictures. Darkness surrounded my heart. If the car looks like this then what must he be looking like? I'm more concerned about his health now than his transgressions. While I was still trying to get whether I could see him or not, his mom, Mabuyi and some guy I don't know walked in.

Mabuyi and the guy frantically approached Mandoba also looking for answers. His mom held and hugged me. She let go and also went towards MQ. Everybody was busy talking when the guy approached me. Nobody took notice of this.

Him: Sawubona.

Me: Hi

Him: Igama ngu Mbuso. (Mbuso is the name). I don't think I've seen you before.

He said and gave me his hand, looking for a handshake.

Me: Boikokobetso.

I said as I gave him mine. He

held on to my hand longer than he should've. This felt awkward so I tried to take my hand back. He looked lost in my eyes. He then returned back to earth and shook his head when Mandoba said "Mbuso!?", his face was not happy.

The Dr approached us and everybody stood up with their ears in the air. He removed his stethoscope from his neck and put his pen back into the top pocket of his white coat. He looks Indian.

Him: Is everyone here related to the patient?

His mom: Yes! What's going on?

Him: Alright. Mr Khumalo suffered a lot of internal bleeding and he has a few broken ribs.

We've managed to stabilize him though but he's not completely out of danger yet. He also needs blood. The SANBS does not have enough for blood type O negative. Does everybody here know their blood type?

Mandoba said he's a blood type B. He doesn't match. The Dr asked that we all get tested to see who is a match. Everybody went in one after the other. Except Gugu.

The Dr said he doesn't draw blood

from pregnant women. Nobody was a match. I was the only one left. I started panicking. I don't know my blood type. What if I'm not a match either?

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Insert 25.

The pain I felt on my right arm when the blood was being drawn is nothing compared to the thought of losing Muzikayise for life. I desperately want him to wake up. I want him to wake up so I can accept his marriage proposal. I don't know if I'll be

able to live with him but one thing for sure is that I won't be able to live without him. I no longer care about the negotiations that took place expired years ago, I no longer care about Gugulethu being in the picture, I no longer care about the fight we had this morning. I just want him to wake up so I can tell him I love him back. I want him to wake up so he can know that I'm happy with the choice that the universe has made for me. The good about him outweigh the bad so I'm gonna take this chance and run with it.

I'm gambling with my heart but Muzikayise Khumalo is worth it.

These thoughts were running flooding my mind as I felt the needle sucking out my blood.

After it got confirmed that my blood matches his, his mom couldn't stop smiling. Mandoba went out to get me food because my glucose levels were apparently low. The doctor said I need to eat and wait for my body to digest and breakdown the carbs before they can take the blood. I had nothing to eat since morning. My body somehow forgets it has a stomach when I'm stressed.

Tebogo announced that he has places to be but promised Mandoba that he's going to call and check up on MK. They fist bumped and he left. I wonder how these two got to know one another. The Dr refused when we wanted to see Muzi after the blood transfusion and was adamant that he needs to rest. I couldn't read Mabuyi's face. It honestly doesn't shock me any more.

Nobody was willing to leave the hospital to go sleep, no matter how many times Dr Hassan suggested this but ma forced

Mabuyi to go sleep because of her "condition". She was reluctant but she eventually agreed to get driven to a hotel by Mbuso. He took her there and made his way back.

The time was now 03h34. I managed to rest for about an hour after they drew the blood. My body was sleeping but my mind wasn't. Ever felt like your spirit was awake when your body was sleeping? I felt exactly that way. I was afraid that Muzi might die while I'm busy sleeping. I wouldn't have forgiven myself. The only thing that enabled me

to sleep was the energy I did not have.

Tebogo came back to the hospital with a very large Tupperware full of ham and cheese brown bread sandwiches and a cooler box. It was as if he brought water to people who have been stuck on a desert for a week. He further stated that the sandwiches were a courtesy of his mother and that she sends her love to Muzi and that she's praying for the whole Khumalo family. Such a nice woman! I fell in love with her at first sight and I don't doubt for

a second that she'd do something of this beautiful nature.

Mandoba: Ngazile (I knew it) vele that it wouldn't be you because you can't even boil water wena.

He said as he opened a cold can of Coke. Everyone burst out

laughing. Tebogo also laughed, looking defeated. The cooler box

was full of ice and a variety of fizzy drinks in cans, small bottles

of juice and bottled water. How considerate of him. He asked how

MK is and that's when smiles slowly evaporated from everyone's faces.

Ma: We're still waiting for feedback. Kodwa mina I don't trust this doctor with my son.

MQ: Awukahle ma. Dr Hassan is the best doctor in the whole of Limpopo and he comes highly recommended. I'm the one who brought him here and insisted that he takes care of MK. He knows his stuff when coming to the ER.

Ma exhaled in regret and said "Okay. I'm sorry. I'm just worried about uBoykie. I just don't understand how something like this can happen with him at fault. I would understand if

somebody crashed into him but HOW? Muzi is such a good driver." MQ: He's gonna be fine. Muzi is a fighter. A true Mbulazi. It'll take more than just a car accident to get rid of his annoying self.

Ma softly laughed and wiped her tears with the tissue she had in hand.

Hours passed with everyone listening to the other's fluctuating breathing patterns and seeing some pacing up and down. Then there was sunrise. We saw the doctor approaching from one end of the corridor and we all stood up and waited for him to

arrive. He finally did and said "Good morning everyone". All of us looked at him like he had just discharged himself from a psychiatric hospital. Mandoba looked like he was ready to punch him in the face.

Mandoba: Tell me, what's so good about this morning?

Mbuso: Whoa calm down bafo. Doc, any news?

Doc: Pardon me. Wrong choice of words. But Mr K is making good progress. The transfusion was a success. His immune system is not in any way rejecting the new blood and there is no sign of any pyrexia,

which is a common immune response in patients with a failed blood transfusion. And the oedema around his head went down. I'm impressed with both his systolic and diastolic readings. His heart rate...

Mandoba: Ngi quarter to noku mshaya lo. Bekunani uk'khuluma isingisi esi simple and straight forward? (I'm quarter to beating this one up. What's so difficult with speaking simple and straightforward English?)

He said this as he pointed that doctor with his index finger. The poor doctor looked alarmed. Ma

held MQ back by his right hand and told him to relax.

Mbuso wanted to laugh but refrained from it. After he collected himself, he then said "Please. Simple English asseblief." to the doctor.

Doc: All I'm saying is, Mr K is healing quite well and his heart is regaining it's strength. And you can now see him BUT (he raised his index finger), one at a time I beg. I can't have you suffocating my patient. He is still unconscious and heavily sedated though if I must warn.

Ma: Thank you so much.

Doc: I'm just doing my job.

Besides, it would be an ugly pity to let such a hot man die in my hands. He's gonna live. Truuust! He planted a kiss on his fingers and put it on MQ's cheek. He then flapped his eyelids, twirled his skinny self and walked away.

Mandoba and Mbuso were left shocked with both their jaws on the floor. Ma pursed her lips into an embarrassed smile. I did the same and looked away. When my eyes landed on the floor, Tebogo was rolling in laughter. He was literally crying and in stitches.

Mandoba couldn't stop wiping his cheek.

After all that drama dissipated into the air, we were left with the elephant in the room-

Deciding who is going in first. Ma was about to speak when Mabuyi walked in. She smelt good and she had changed clothes as well. She said her good mornings and we greeted back. Ma suggested that I go in first. Mabuyi said "Ini?" (What?) and tensed her eyebrows. Ma: It's only right that she goes in first. If it wasn't for her my son would probably still fighting for his life right now.

Mabuyi: Need I remind everyone here that I'm still the only WIFE to Muzikayise? I appreciate you donating your blood to him but you're still very much a side chick to me.

A what!!? TENSE!! Her words took a short cut via my heart and went straight to my head.

Ketlase betsa selo se sa tlhatsa ngwana nou sio. (I'll beat the crap out of her so much that she'll instantly vomit her child).

I thinned my eyes and the only thing I managed to spit out from my chest was "Heh!" in disbelief. I turned to Tebogo who was now

gawking at us and asked him to take me home. More like an instruction. I didn't wait for an answer. I just stormed out. Ma and Mandoba tried to speak but I am having none of that today. If I don't leave this place at this instant, a pregnant dead body is going to be wheeled out of this hospital.

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Insert 26.

As I was marching my way out of the hospital premises, I noticed both Mbuso and Tebogo on my

tracks. Mbuso got to me first and when Tebogo shortly arrived after him, he asked him to excuse us. Tebogo got in the car we arrived in, took out his phone and sat there.

Mbuso: Ulaka! (So much fury!) He said and slightly smiled. He's too chilled about this whole situation. I looked away and laughed because I did not know how to respond to that. Muzi intimidates me but both his brothers are on another level. Him: Yehlis' umoya phela nawe. (You need to calm down). She surely didn't mean any of the

things she said. She's not that kind of person.

Me: Well I don't appreciate her speaking about me like I'm some hoe that got took off the streets.

Him: Haiyi cha. Kthiwa eya madoda ayipheli kodwa mina ngiyala.

Nina!?! Abafazi?(It is said that one between men never ends but I beg to differ. You guys?

Women?) WORST CASE SCENARIO.

He said and laughed. I had no choice but to laugh as well. His laughter then silently ceased into a smile. He wanted to speak but

I interrupted him

Me: I really have to go.

Him: Ungahambi (Don't go). I'm sure indoda yakho izovuka ifunana nawe la syokthatha phi thina ngob' naye unenkani ufana nawe (I'm very sure your man is going to wake up looking for you. Where are we going to get you because he is as stubborn as you are..) he'd literally walk these streets in his hospital gown looking for you.

Phela he can't stop talking about you every time he calls. Now I can clearly see why.

He said, blushed but didn't remove his eyes from mine. I don't think

I'm comfortable with this conversation. I cleared my throat and as I was about to say that I'm leaving, Mandoba also came out of the hospital.

He looked at Mbuso suspiciously and knocked on the car window. Tebogo opened it and Mandoba told him he can go.

I tried disputing but Mandoba impatiently said "Yaz koti mina ngikhathele uk'hlal ngicishana no mlilo phakath kwa MK na bafaz bakhe. Ngiyak'cela (I'm tired of always putting out fire between MK and his wives), can we not argue?"

Me: If I go back in there there won't be any peace. I'm allowing "The wife" (I said, imitating quotation marks with my fingers) to have all the time in the world with her husband. Besides, I need to get to work and I'm already late.

Mbuso: Awundingi noku'dinga lowo msebenz (You don't even need that job)

Excuse me?

Me: I'm sorry but my leave ends today and I promised my boss that I'll arrive, today. And I still have to go looking for a sick letter.

Mandoba: I'll sort that out, if you stay.

Me: How?

He laughed and asked me to trust him. Is he planning on faking a letter for me? His laughter is suspicious.

We went back into the hospital because my rage wasn't more important than seeing the love of my life. Ma stood up from the bench when she saw us approaching and said she's glad I came back.

Me: I'm sorry for how I stormed out of here. Mabuyi was right. She cleared her throat.

Her: Erh.. about that... we need to talk.

She probably doesn't know that I already know what she wants us to discuss. I just looked at her and told her that I know.

Her: You know?

Me: Yes. I know that I got married without my permission.

Everyone: YOU KNOW!?

I lazily sunk down on the bench. They all surrounded me with curious faces.

Ma: Your mom told you?

Me: Yes. Yes she did.

Mbuso: Then why did you storm out when Mabuyi said she's the

only wife to bafo? I don't understand.

Me: She is. In fact. She's the one who has experienced what he's like as a husband. She knows him. The fact that you bought me like a box of matches does not make me a full wife to Muzikayise.

I blurted that out. I didn't mean to. I instantly regretted it.

Me: I'm sorry.

Ma: It's okay. You have all the rights in the world to feel the way you are.

I was about to reply to ma when Mabuyi came out of Muzi's room. Our eyes met and she froze. When

the ice around her feet finally melted she continued walking towards us.

Her: You can go in.

She said as she settled on the bench, avoiding any form of eye contact with me. I scoffed.

Me: Your permission comes highly appreciated.

I said sarcastically.

Ma hit my thigh and said "Sphakamile!"

This felt exactly how it does when my mom reprimands me for speaking out of turn whenever I have a fallout with Kgantsho. I exhaled and apologized. I may be

the first wife traditionally but she's still older than me.

I stood up and started walking towards Muzi's room. Mabuyi softly said "Hey?"

I slowly turned towards her. She must not test me. Not today. Not when my boxing gloves are out and on standby.

Me: Yes?

Her: I'm.. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have spoken to you in the manner that I did.

That was unexpected. I gently nodded my head and walked away because I didn't know what to

say. I couldn't say I accept her apology because I have not.

I walked in and there he was. My heart immediately broke. This is when it hit me how easily I could've lost him. Imagine losing the man you love at a time where he didn't even want to speak to you. It would've killed me. I was having all these thoughts whilst standing by the door. I carefully closed it and walked towards his bed. I pulled the chair and sat beside him. I couldn't hold back my tears. The more I wiped them was the more they insisted on flowing down my cheeks.

I took his hand in mine.

Me: I'm sorry.

My voice was breaking no matter how much I tried to keep it together. I somehow feel guilty for his accident. Maybe if we hadn't fought it wouldn't have happened. I don't know. Maybe he would've been with me at the time it did such that him and such a fate would go parallel ways and never meet. I want him to open his eyes so he can start being his annoying, usual self.

Me: Baby please wake up. I need you to wake up.

I can never get used to seeing

lying lifelessly and helpless. I remember how I felt the first time he had a seizure. I'm going through the same thing right now. Muzikayise cannot die. He just can't. I kept thinking and wiping my tears with my left hand.

I couldn't stop watching him and thinking of how much of a beautiful creation he actually is. Muzi has beautiful, well fitted features. There was a single knock on the door and the person walked in. It was ma. I wiped my tears so she doesn't see how much of a mess I actually am.

I'm late. She gave me a consoling smile and came to squeeze my shoulder. She fixed Muzi's oxygen mask and his throw with her other hand.

Me: I'll excuse you.

I said as I tried to stand. She gently pushed me back onto my chair and insisted I stay.

Her: He's going to be fine. I just came to check up on you. We're getting coffee. How would you like yours?

Me: Lots of sugar. And milk.

Please.

She smiled and said "Alright my darli." She was about to walk

away when she said " Hayi man. Kodwa niyafana nina" (The two of you look alike) and then she softly laughed. I disagreed and laughed as well.

She continued laughing as she made her way out. I fixed my chair and sat closer to him. I exhaled. I'm honestly tired.

Physically. Emotionally. Mentally. Every fiber of me is just exhausted.

Me: Tsoga. Wake up because you and I have a wedding to plan. I still have to change the paint in that dingy dungeon of yours. You still have to make and father 10

kids. And I'm ready. I'm ready to be your wife and I'm ready to give all of myself to you. Please wake up. Wake up so I can tell you that I love you too and be sure that you're listening...

These tears! Lord! I looked up trying to push them back but that was just plain futile. He weakly squeezed my hand as I was trying to collect my self. He can hear me!?

UNEDITED.  

Insert 27

Everyone managed to see Yise and then we scattered, except for his mother. She insisted on staying at the hospital for a while. This made me feel guilty because it felt like I don't love him enough. I did not want to entertain this feeling because if I allowed it to coerce me into staying, I would've ended up collapsing due to fatigue. Muzi gave me the assurance that he is going to be fine. And I'm gonna trust him.

I was taken back to my place and when we arrived, Mandoba asked me if I have quick access to a printer. I told him yes. I said

this with reliance on the guy down the street. He runs a small internet café. I always go to him when I need to use the fax or the printer when I'm not at work. Mandoba said "Cool" and asked me to keep my eye on my emails this afternoon. I wonder where he's going to get this letter. Mandoba doesn't appear to me as a dodgy character but the fact that he was apparently able to hack Mbelo's phone with ease doesn't sit well with me. Mbuso was the driver of the day. I was sitting with Mabuyi in the backseat. Both of us were

avoiding eye contact with one another by fiddling with our phones. Awkward.

The time was now 09h38. I got to my place and the first thing I did was throw myself on the bed. I had forgotten completely about work when I received a call from Mr Moko. SHOOT. I panicked before I could answer the call.

Me: Sssir?

Him: Motlhabane. Do you still need this job?

Oh God oh God oh God.

Me: Of course yes I do. I'm so sorry I couldn't arrive this morning. I overslept. The

medication I'm taking is making me drowsy. I'm so sorry.

I said as I clenched my teeth together. He exhaled.

Him: How are you feeling?

I hate lying to Mr Moko because of his strict but yet understanding nature. I hate lying in general because I hate being lied to myself. Lies make me feel like my intelligence is being undermined and taken for granted.

Him: Alright . As I've said before, you can take the entire week off and it's no longer up for discussion. The office is already unstable

without you I don't need more stress. See you on Monday.

He cut the call before I could reply. My life gets messier with each passing minute.

I slept for the whole day at intervals. I kept waking up, tossing, turning and going back to sleep till evening. I eventually woke up because my whole body was painful. I slid into my slippers and went to switch on the lights. I then went to the kitchen, opened the fridge and closed it because I had no idea what I was looking for in it anyway. I need coffee. Or wine. Or both.

My phone rings just as kettle stops boiling. It's ma. My heart skipped a beat. What if? I quickly slide my thumb across the phone and put it on my ear.

Me: Ma?

Her. My darling. Please get yourself to the hospital this instant. Uvukile uPhakamani. (He's awake)

Lord thank you!

Me: Okay kealeboga kemo tseleng (Thank you I'm on my way)

I was conflicted between taking a quick shower and bathing like taxi driver. But I opted for the

former. After I was done, I put on a tight knee-length black dress, black sneakers and Muzi's hoodie because it was a bit chilly. I threw on my wig because my haircut was on some andizi. I haven't been taking care of myself lately and it shows. I was lucky to find a taxi that was going to drop me off right outside the hospital premises. The driver kept making unappreciated advances at me but I faked smiles because he was already doing me a favour and I was the only one in the taxi. Risky much?

He asked me who I'm going to see at the hospital. I told him my diabetic aunt. He kept saying "Shem a fole rakgadi hle" (Shame aunty should get well soon). I was very cooperative and generous with false information because we don't want any trouble now do we? This is South Africa.

When it was time for me to get off he asked for my numbers. I told him I don't know them by heart but I can call them out from my phone, which also stood in my defense because it looked fairly new. He probably thought I just

bought and got a new simcard. He took out his phone and I called out Muzi's number and got off. I arrived at the hospital reception and got done with the necessary admin. I then got into the elevator and went up. Muzi's scent from his hoodie unexpectedly hit my nostrils when I bent over to fasten my shoe laces. It's been days since he gave it to me but the scent is still flexing. I haven't washed this sweater and I'm even not planning to. The excitement started building up when the lift door swiftly pulled itself apart for me to exit.

I got to his room and knocked. Ma yelled "Enter!"

I did. I found her helping Muzi drink water with a straw and his hand in Mabuyi's on the other side of the bed. I didn't find this sight cute nor attractive. At all. I ignored however and greeted everyone. They all cheerfully greeted me back, including her. Okay.

Muzi feebly smiled and said "Hey you". I smiled back and asked "You good? Ma nigga?". He weakly laughed and said "Yazi ngiyadelelwa laph' emhlabeni" (I'm being disrespected here).

Mandoba shortly walked in and said "Mubi? Uvukile?" (Ugly one. You're awake?) He said and smiled. Muzi tried to laugh but he coughed instead. Ma insisted that he drinks more water. He obliged. After he composed himself, he replied to his brother and said "Ja satan".

MK: Grand?

MQ: Wena u grand?

They both smiled to each other before he replied "I'm okay.

Angithi you were hoping that I'll die so you can comfortably continue stealing my important stuff". Mandoba burst out

laughing. I'm guessing these "stuff" are the condoms they were arguing over the other day.

Ma: What are those?

MK and MQ: WHAT ARE THOSE'aaa!?

They said, imitating a scene from Black panther before they continued laughing like the idiots they are. We all couldn't help but laugh as well until Muzi held his rib area groaning in pain.

Ma: Nathi, ngizok'xosha ?(I'm close to kicking you out of here)

She said and pointed her index finger at him as a warning. Him and Muzi pursed their lips trying

to compress the seemingly strong urge to laugh.

After all that circus died down, Muzi politely asked everyone to excuse us. Mandoba looked in my direction and said "Mi"

(Take), handing me a brown A4 envelope. I just figured it was the doctor's note. Hawu, I thought he was going to email it to me. I asked him where he got it and he laughed.

Him: Uyayifuna noma cha? (Do you want it or not?)

Muzi: Baby trust me. Awufun ukuzaz izinto zalo skhotheni (You don't want to know).

Mabuyi laughed, stood up and kissed Muzi's forehead. He held her tummy while she did this. I guess I just have to get used to this. I thought to myself as I looked away. They all left.

We both stared at each other and blushed. I'm so glad he's recovering. This whole experience has taught me how to let petty things slide.

Him: Wozá k'mina (Come to me)
I went towards his bed. He softly pulled me by my hand, then my waist and kissed me. I was careful not to revive any of his wounds. I broke the kiss and

tried to pull the chair. He stopped me and asked that I sit on the bed. I've learnt to longer argue with him if it's not necessary. He clenched his teeth and adjusted himself so he can put his head on my breasts. Seeing him in so much pain breaks my fragile heart.

There was complete, melancholic silence after he got settled. I adjusted his pillow and we both exhaled.

Me: I'm sorry baby.

I could see him tensing his eyebrows from above his head.

Him: For what?

Me: I don't know. I kinda feel

guilty for your accident.

Him: Nonsense. It just had to happen.

Me: What do you mean?

Him: I needed to have a conversation with my ancestors. What?

Me: What?

Him: I'll tell you all about it some other time.

Me: Alright. I was worried sick about you.

Him: I was disappointed when I woke up and you were not here. It hurts me that Mabuyi was here for him before I could.

Me: I'm sorry. I left in the

morning.

Him: I thought you didn't come at all.

So him squeezing my hand was just a subconscious reflex. I wasn't even hurt by this because the only thing I cared about right now is him being alive and awake. And healing.

Me: I was here. I thought you could hear me.

He smiled and said

"Bewuthini? (What were you saying?) I can hear you now"

I laughed and said "Mciim".

Him: Were you begging me not to die?

He said and sequentially moved his shoulders up and down in laughter. I laughed as well and gently hit his forehead. He's an idiot.

Me: Yes I was. And that I'm ready to be your wife Mbulazi.

He quickly bent his neck and looked me in the eye, blushing.

Him: Angizwa?(Pardon?)

Me: I'm ready to risk it all and love you with all of me Mntungwa. His smile grew wider.

Me: And I'm ready for my body to grow and nurture all your seeds. He couldn't stop blushing.

Him: All 10 of them?

Me: Ha.ah!!

I said and playfully hit his shoulder.

Me: My body is not strong enough to give birth to a soccer team.

I saw a smug smile on his face before he could reply.

Him: We'll see.

I laughed because he always defeats me.

He bit his upper lip in thought before said "Baby? About you being my wife?"

Me: Yes?

Him: Eish.. we need to talk.

Me: I already know.

Him: YOU DO!?

UNEDITED AS ALWAYS. EXCUSE
ANY ERRORS. ☐ ✨

Insert 28.

Before we could continue with our conversation, the Dr walked in and announced that visiting hours are over. We tried protesting but he wasn't having it. Muzi kissed me briefly then I made my way out. I went to bid everyone goodbye. I saw it best to do so before any bickering could arise. I meant it when I said I'm experiencing all forms of tired and all it's grandchildren. Exhausted is an

understatement. Mbuso arrived as we were still having meaningless conversations. Ma firmly stated that he can't see his brother because he was out to God knows where. She asked why his phone was off and he nonchalantly said something important came up. He then offered to take me home but Mandoba immediately put a stop to that nonsense. I'm not comfortable around Mbuso. I'm not comfortable around Mandoba either but I feel safe around him. Mabuyi and ma darted their eyes between the three of us,

confused. Mandoba immediately announced that he'll take me home, gently pushed me towards the direction of the elevator by my shoulders and we left.

There was awkward silence in the car and I had every intention of breaking it. Curiosity was having it's way with me. I glanced at him a couple of times as he glued his eyes on the road. He didn't look like he was in a good mood but I'm going to walk into this lion's den. If I die, I die.

Me: Mandoba?

Him: Hm?

He said, still keeping his eyes on

the road. My tongue suddenly caught heavy nerves. He turned to look at me briefly.

Him: uRight?(You okay?)

Me: Look I don't want to cause any tension but..

Him: Buut?

He was moving his eyes from the road to me from time to time.

Lord how do I even begin saying this? What was I even thinking? I should've just kept quiet.

Him: Lent' ofuna ukuyisho ngizo yizwa namhlanje or mhlampe ngo 2030? (Am I going to hear whatever it is you want to say today or in 2030?)

Me: How would you describe
bhat'Mbuso?

Me: Iscefe nje so muntu. (A
nuisance of a person)

This caught me by surprise
because I was expecting that
he'd have a more closely knitted
relationship with Mbuso than
Muzi since they share both
parents and are absolute,
brother-german siblings. But
instead his half-brother is his
bestfriend. Weird.

He exhaled and said that Mbuso is
nothing but trouble. And that I
should stay away from him. This

gave me chills. I said "Okay" and went out of the car.

The clock on my phone reported that it was 21h40. I wanted to eat but I had no appetite. I opted for a glass of orange juice and went straight to bed. I honestly need some alcohol in my system.

I'm not setting any alarm today. As much I hate the fact that I've managed to convince Mr Moko that I'm sick whereas I'm not, I'm going to take full advantage of this "sick" leave. Tomorrow I'm heading home. My mom has a lot of explaining to do.

I'm not even going to announce that I'm en route because I know I'm going to find her there with all these renovations she has going on.

I don't know what time my brain decided it was time for it to shut down but I saw myself waking up at 09h32. My body doesn't normally wake up at this time but I wasn't surprised. My biological clock must be broken because of the hell I've been putting it through lately.

I woke up, got to the kitchen and made myself a bowl of cereal. My tastebuds felt dead. My appetite

on the other hand was like "we'll see whether you'll be able to finish this sis". I managed to take in just 3 spoons. I couldn't stomach any more than that. I spilt the milk in the sink and threw the solids in the bin.

I was about to pick out my outfit of the day when Muzi called checking up on me. We spoke for about 7 minutes before my shower. After I was done showering, I got dressed in simple blue, bottom-folded jeans, a blue tank top and slip on sandals. I had no choice but to wear a wig because my hair is still on strike.

I need to go see my barber soon. I put my hair brush down and took out my gold sling bag. I must say, I look 2 times neater than I did the past couple of days. It's not a big deal but I'm proud of the effort I took on my appearance today. I'm a big believer in the fact that one does good when they look and feel good. And I feel a bit lighter today. Happier.

I took a taxi home and found my mom outside yelling at the poor contractors. She's stressed. My mom has a bad habit of taking out her frustrations on people

who know or have nothing to do with her issues. She lowered her voice when she saw me and told them to carry on working. She approached me when I was trying to close the gate. She was looking at me with sad and apologetic eyes. She's sure that I'm mad at her, which I'm far from. I'm just confused and curious.

Her: Filwe baby?

I kept quiet and went to hug her. She returned it and gradually hugged me tighter. She asked that we walk into the house and took my bag. I had my cellphone

in my hand. Under normal circumstances, we should be laughing and mocking each other by now but we were not. We got to the house and sat down on the couch. She rubbed both of her thighs, darted her her eyes around and asked me if I'd like anything to drink. My mom's behavior is weird today. She's treating me like a guest. This is my home. If I wanted anything to drink I would've went straight to the kitchen. I don't need her permission for that.

Me: I'm fine mama.

Her: Filwe beke nyak...(I wanted

to..)

Me: Let's make this simple mom. Look, I am not mad at you. But right now I need answers. So I'll ask and you answer. With honesty. Deal?

She nodded her head and said deal.

I was about to speak when we heard something heavily smashing on the floor and breaking in one of the bathrooms. My mom tightly closed her eyes and slowly exhaled through her nose to stop herself from exploding. I laughed and told her to relax and that it'll be over

soon. I asked her that we go eat somewhere in town because the noise here was unbearable. She was skeptical about leaving the builders here to be by themselves
Me: Mara ntate Sithole o gona mama (But Mr Sithole is around mom)

This is the man we share a fence with. He's the head of this whole renovating mess and I know she trusts him. She finally agreed and went to change her clothes and fetch her handbag.

We walked to town because it wasn't far. She said she's craving for mala mogudu and I'm paying.

When it comes to money, my mom is the greatest opportunist to ever walk the surface of the earth. I agreed and we found the perfect restaurant for that. She ordered what her heart desired and I just asked for a glass of orange juice. My mom instructed the waiter to put in an order of two plates of pap and mala mogudu. I did not even try to argue with her. I knew I wasn't going to win so I let it go.

There was silence for some time before I decided to break it.

Me: Mama what really happened that day?

I remember coming back home from school to find my two grandfathers and my grandma in the living room. When I got in, they were all happy to see me and I ran into my gran's hands. They were having tea and biscuits. She took one biscuit from the plate and gave it to me. After that she instructed my mom to go get me a cup. She came back with my yellow plastic cup that she always used to make tea for me. My gran cooled the tea down by stirring it for a while before handing it to me. I was still on her lap. They continued laughing and having

meaningless conversations while I had my tea. My grandfather looked at her and asked her if she doesn't think it's the right time that I know the truth. That's when it was revealed to me that my biological mother died while giving birth to me. I was not hurt by this information. I was actually very indifferent about it. I've been waiting for the day where I actually break down and cry as I grow but it never arrives. They were all searching for a reaction on my face but I think I never gave them what they were looking for. They took

out an old photo album with my mom and her sister. Or should I say my mother and her sister? They look like photocopies of one another. I couldn't distinguish which one was which. I've never felt like an orphan. I've never felt incomplete. I don't know what it feels like to have a relationship with the mother who gave birth to me but what I have with this woman across the table feels right and enough.

My mom exhaled before she finally attempted to speak. The waiter arrived with our juice and assured us that our order will be ready

soon. We both fixed the glasses on the brown mat coasters on the table. She had a small sip.

Her: Bo malome neba tlile go mpotsa gore (The uncles came to inform me that...) the negotiations went well and they also came because they wanted to see you.

Me: Why did you agree mama? Why did you agree to me being sold like a loaf of bread?

Her: It is not that simple Filwe. It's complicated baby

Me: Uncomplicate it then.

She exhaled and took my hands into hers

Her: When you were born, there were a lot of complications with your chest. Sometimes you'd wake up with a rash all over it and a fever. On other days you'd just start breathing heavily and abnormally out of no where. And you wheezed a lot. You also had random seizures. Especially after it rains. Doctors kept saying your case is unique but they highly suspect bronchiolitis. Until one day koko Reuthwile suggested we take you to a traditional healer. I was highly against this but I did not want to lose you either. You know very well that I'm the only

Christian at home so even if I disputed, I did not have enough back up to help me win that argument. They took you there and I stayed behind. When they came back, they told me that you were born to be married into a royal family and that you and your husband will meet when the time is right but should it happen that the in-laws come to pay your bride price before then, we as a family shouldn't argue.

Our order arrived and I just stared at the food but my mind was not on them. I did not know

whether to digest this as a blessing or a curse.

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Insert 29.

My mind continued pondering at what my mom had just told me while I kept my eyes on the food.
Her: Filwe!!

Her impatience gave the fact that she wasn't calling me for the first time away.

Me: Ma?

She was about to speak when I interrupted her.

Me: Ma if you knew that I was

already married why were you celebrating the day I told you that there's somebody who wants me to marry him?

She inhaled and took her hand off the plate because she was already eating.

Her: My first instinct and thought was that you had finally met him.

Me: And if it wasn't him?

Her: He wouldn't have been allowed to marry you.

"Allowed?" wow. Screw what I want and how I feel? Their luck is that I already love Muzikayise. If it wasn't for that, all

executive sections of hell were going to break loose.

She asked me to eat because my food was going to get cold and thicken up. Mogudu does not have the desired patience for slow eaters.

I began eating up in silence. I could feel her eyes speedily dancing between me and her plate. She had something on her mind. I didn't mind this because I knew I was going to hear it eventually. This is my mother. And my mother cannot keep quiet.

After a good and ripe 3 minutes...
Her: How do you feel? About all of

this?

Me: Do you ever ask your Avon products how they feel after you sell them?

Her: Filwe!! Ke sale mmago!(I'm still your mother!)

I didn't raise my eyes when I said this. I regretted it instantly. The thing about me is that my mouth and the character I'd love to uphold are never in unison. I don't want to be the person that I try so hard to hide and conceal. But she always finds a way to come out and put on a show. I exhaled.

Me: Intshwarele mama (Forgive me mother)

Me: I just.. it's not that I don't want him. I do. I ju..

She interjected before I could proceed with my speech.

Her: Bothata ke eng!?(Then what's the problem)

She's still pissed. I'm gonna need a fire extinguisher for this one. You don't disrespect my mother and get away with it.

Me: Kgopela ontshwarele for go bolela okarr ke fologa godimo ga mohlare. (Forgive me for speaking as though I'm tumbling down from a tree).

She dropped her chest ,exhaled through her nose and continued eating?

Me: I'll buy you biscuits.

She laughed.

Her: You're making this empty promise for the third time now.

We got done eating and the waiter brought forth a bowl of warm water and handwash. We washed our hands and wiped them. He went away and came back with the bill. I wanted to settle it but my mom stopped me and said it was her treat and that she'll pay. This is certainly the last time something like this

happens so I'm going to allow it to. Who am I to stand in between God's plans and his skhothane of a child?

We walked out of the restaurant after she was done paying the bill. She accompanied me to the taxi rank and I left. I went to the hospital because I had promised 'hubby' that I'll come by to see him. When I got to his room, he was playing animal rescue on his phone. I think it's about time I became an official social media influencer. I'm evidently good at this.

He looked better than he did yesterday. There was more life and light in his eyes. He smiled when I walked in. I continued walking towards his bed, got there and hugged him. I pulled the chair and sat next to him. He took my hand into his.

Him: You okay?

Me: Ngi right Mbulazi. Unjan?

The smile on his face grew wider.

Him: Hayi. Ngiyaphila.

Me: How are you feeling? Are you comfortable?

He rolled his eyes and we laughed.

Him: You're beginning to sound a lot like your mother in law. She

was here on some "Let me fix your pillows. Are you eating well? I need to see the menu of this hospital. It needs to meet the right dietary requirements for a patient like your self"

He said, mimicking her British accent. I burst out laughing. He's such an idiot.

The laughter we shared slowly faded into the air. I found this as an opportunity to conduct a questionnaire. I deserve answers.

Me: Baby?

Him: Yes wife.

I laughed.

Me: Were you following me? That

day we met? In the shop.

Him: Hamba VVIP. Me? Follow you?

I laughed out loud and asked him to be serious for a second.

Him: No sthandwasam. I saw you and my heart immediately knew I just had to have you. I followed you AROUND the shop, not prior to that.

Me: How did you know?

Him: Know what?

Me: That I'm... the one?

Him: I didn't. My heart did. A man just knows when he has found his rib.

This melted my heart a bit.

Me: How were you able to marry her then if you knew you were already married? This means you wanted this all along. This thing of having multiple wives.

He clenched his teeth as he tried to sit upright. I quickly stood up from my chair in urgency to help him so he doesn't hurt himself. He raised his hand and said he's fine. I helped him up either way.

When he was finally snug and comfy, he began speaking.

Him: Baby look, this is not as simple as it looks. When your lobola was paid, I had no idea I'm getting married. I was probably

on campus doing an assignment or getting up to no good but I can assure you, I also had no idea.

When I married Mabuyi, I was 29. The family did not say anything about me having a wife. The only time I found out was the day before our wedding. Which I wouldn't have if I did not have a seizure.

His family is fucked up. Mine as well. How do you keep such a secret from the one person who's supposed to know about it?

Me: So why didn't you tell me from the start?

Him: You're very stubborn. Fiesty.

I picked up a lot of belligerence from our very first dialogue. You didn't strike me as the woman who would take all of this lying down. And I didn't want to lose you. So...

Me: So you watched me fall for you in order to trap me?

Him: Does this feel like a trap? He knows the answer to this. I wouldn't be anywhere else. My heart is content. My only problem is having to share him with a woman he clearly loves. If he didn't feel anything for her maybe it would be more tolerable than this.

Me: We've dealt with all secrets and hidden agendas right? You don't have any kids, side chicks or anything of that sort. Right?

He laughed softly.

Him: Sidechicks? No. Kids? As far as I know, nope.

As far as he knows?

Me: How come you and Mabuyi spent all these years together and you don't have a child?

His face hardened.

Him: This could've been our second child.

Me: Oh?

He exhaled and bit his lower lip.

Him: Yeah. Mbuso had.. His... Arg.

She lost her. She lost the baby.
Shame man. It sounds like
they've been through a lot.
Me: I'm sorry to hear that.
He dropped his eyes and said
"Such is life".

****3 weeks later****

Muzi was taken back to KZN as a
therapeutic retreat measure. We
communicated a lot via video calls
and text messages. We've grown
to know a lot about each other's
vices and every other habit. Work
was fine except for always having
Masedi in my presence all the
damn time. This girl has a habit
of dancing to gcom on top of my

most sensitive nerves. Kgantsho and I managed to secure the bag with 2 big events. Now, we're hoping to convince the mayor to allow us to plan his daughter's birthday party but it is virtually impossible getting an appointment with the man.

It was a Friday and I had promised Muzi and his mom that I will come for a weekend visit. They offered to pay for my flight but I said no. I've come to realise that they're comfortable with me being needy and dependent. And I'm uncomfortable with this. I have a feeling that all of this is

steering in the direction of me having to let go of my job.

I finally arrived in KZN around 20h30 and ma assured me that she sent somebody to come fetch me. Muzi has been healing quite well from what I've seen but he's still "not allowed to drive".

I stood at the airport waiting to be picked up. To my surprise, I saw Mbuso walking towards me in a black tracksuit with green stripes on the sides and white sneakers. Isn't he supposed to have already left by now? I kept my cool when he arrived. I'm still not comfortable around him.

Him: Hey you

He said, raising his arms to come hug and me, leaving no opportunity for me to dispute. His huge arms went under mine and my mine hesitantly went over his muscular shoulders. His cologne hit my nostrils. He's also clean and well-groomed. Just like both his brothers.

I broke the hug when I felt like he was beginning to overstay his welcome in my arms.

Him: How was your trip?

Me: Just fine. Tiring.

He pulled up the handle from my

small navy blue suitcase and we went towards his car.

The silence in the car was deafening. He felt it too because he glanced at me and turned on the radio.

Him: You hungry?

Me: I'm fine thanks.

I said and faked a smile. He said "Alright then" and smiled back. He has a beautiful smile. I couldn't help but notice this. He looks a lot like Mandoba. A softened version of MQ's hardcore self.

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Insert 30.

When we finally arrived at the Khumalo house, I was thankful to the god of trips that it was over. I don't know if I'm reading too much into Mbuso's demeanor but I have a strange feeling about him. He parked the car and I made my way out. Ma was outside watering her plants in front of the house. Isn't it a little late for her to be doing this? She clapped her hands in excitement and said "Look who's here". I just smiled and went over to hug her. She was wearing a white, free-flowing maxi dress and slippers.

She also had a worn out blue doek carelessly placed and wrapped around her head. Most of her hair was showing.

Her: Travelled well?

Me: Yes thanks.

Her: Come.

She said and held my hand. We walked in and immediately bumped into Mabuyi. She jammed in her steps.

Her: Sawubona.

Me: Hello.

Mbuso walked in and was instructed to take my case to my room. Mabuyi stood still when it was obvious she was supposed to

make way.

Mbuso was annoyed by this judging from how he said "Suk'endleni MaDlamini". She folded her arms and stepped away. Mom look baffled by everything that was happening in front of her.

Mabuyi shaked her head, vexed by what just transpired.

Ma: Did I miss something?

Mabuyi said no and walked towards me. She touched my upper arm and said "welcome home ",warm in her approach. She then walked out with her water

bottle. My feelings have no idea how to receive this.

Evelyn was about to speak when one of the helps in the house hurriedly approached us and asked if she can have a word with her. Evelyn asked me to give them a moment. She put her hand on her back, directing her towards the dining room area. I saw this as an opportunity to run up the stairs to go attend to the one reason I'm here. I was sure he wasn't with Mabuyi because I saw her going out of the house. This made things easier for me. I still have not gotten the hang of

how things are supposed to work between the three of us.

I got to his room and barged in. The excitement held my manners and etiquette hostage. My tongue immediately got tied when my eyes landed on his wet bare chest. I slowly bit my lower lip, with zero intention. He seductively smiled at me and softly said "Sawubona". I had both my back and hands against his door. My tongue was still not ready to engage in any conversation. He had a black towel lowered around his waist, clearly putting his iliac crest on full display. He continued

dabbing his chest with another towel. I eventually found the means to say "Hi".

He placed the towel on the bed and began walking towards me. My heart ran a marathon. I pursed my lips together to avoid blushing but all of that was futile. It just made things worse. He finally arrived and slowly held my waist, smothering his whole body against mine. I closed my eyes and looked away. His eyes followed mine. I could feel his warm skin against mine. My tight dress wasn't doing me any justice. He finally spoke.

Him: Ma'am. Are you alright?
He said, mimicking his mother's accent. I couldn't hold back the my laughter which my vocal cords insisted on delivering in breaks and pieces, giving away my nervousness.

He continued to persistently lock his burning, glassy eyes into mine. I closed my eyes when his lips slowly approached me. He softly pecked my lips and subsequently sucked on my lower lip. I returned it, still firmly backed against the door. His hands smoothly moved to my butt. He caressed and squeezed both cheeks and I

giggled in his mouth. He smiled. His right hand moved to the door handle and turned the key, locking it. He began kissing my neck and pulling my legs in an attempt to lift me up. I asked him if he's not in pain. He slowly shook his head as lifted me like a feather. I wrapped my legs around waist as he pinned both my hands together above my head with one hand, the other of my breast. I wanted this. I wanted him.

He was licking and sucking on my neck when we both heard a knock on the door. He put his forehead against mine. We both pursed our

lips to stop ourselves from laughing.

Ma: I know you're both in here. I need you downstairs in exactly 2 minutes. AND good people, please, do not break my expensive door.

She walked away. My face was flushed with embarrassment and shame. I slid my way down out of Muzi's arms and fixed my dress. He couldn't stop laughing. I hit his chest and told him it's not funny. I attempted to unlock the door. He held my waist and pulled me back.

Him: Uyaphi?

Me: My room. Your mom just

caught us about to..

Him: About to what?

He was still laughing.

Me: Mciim.

Him: Baby. You and I are practically married. I don't get what the big deal is here.

Me: Still.

He tried to kiss me and I said no. He raised his hands in surrender and I told him to get dressed. I walked away from him and he slapped my ass and gave me a provocative smile. I thinned my eyes, laughed and kept walking. He tried chasing after me but I

quickly got out. He threatened and said "This is not over."

I got to my room and changed my pantyliner

I put on my coat, took off my sneakers and slid into my slippers.

The weather wasn't cooperating.

I walked downstairs and found everyone seated around the table,

including Chief Khumalo. I timidly greeted everyone and they

greeted back. Mabuyi tapped the chair next to her as an indication

that I should come sit next to

her. She's very welcoming today. I

don't know if it's her hormones or

her true, genuine self that's

confusing the shit out of me. I took my seat. Mandoba was nowhere to be found around the table. I just figured he wasn't here.

There was silence as we waited for Muzi to come complete this band around the table. He came down in his black ripped jeans, black short-sleeved t-shirt and maroon sneakers. He looked like he was going somewhere. He took his seat on the table next to his mom and Mbuso, who had also changed his outfit.

Evelyn: Going somewhere?

Him: Hayi ma

Her: Okay okay.

Chief: Makoti. Welcome home.

I smiled and thanked him.

Chief: Now that everybody is here. Let's get this over and done with.

He said this with his hand tangled in his wife's. She nodded and glued her eyes to the table.

Chief: There is no easy way to say this Madlamini...

Mabuyi frowned in confusion.

Chief: This is regarding Phakamani's first wife.

Mbuso choked on his juice and coughed, blocking his mouth with

his elbow, with his phone in his hand.

Mabuyi: Ngenzeni baba? (What have I done?)

Chief: No no. You have done nothing wrong. What I mean to say is that, you're not ..

He clenched his teeth and exhaled. Muzi looked like he was praying for earth to open up so it can swallow him whole.

Muzi: Baby?

Mabuyi: What's going on?

Evelyn: My darling, you're actually not... You're not the first wife.

Mabuyi: I don't understand.

Muzi: Samkethe. Betso got

married before you by my family when we were still in varsity. I also didn't know anything about it. Mabuyi: Is this some kind of a joke?

She laughed sarcastically before starting to tear up.

Mbuso: Unfortunately not.

He stood up and told Muzi that they have to get going. Muzi sharply said "Awume kancane bafu!" (Can you stop?)

Chief: Mbuso, hlala phansi. (Sit down)

He briefly looked aside in annoyance and pulled his chair back and dropped his weight on it.

This is not how I imagined my weekend.

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Insert 31.

The tension around this table was so thick one could've been able to slice it with a knife. The silence as well. My eyes were curious but I kept them on a tight leash and glued them on the table top. Ma finally spoke.

Her: Mabuyi, my child. I know this cannot be easy for you. But it's not a train smash. These are just titles. They don't define the type

of relationship you have with your husband. If you and Sphakamile work together to strengthen your husband's household then I don't see how this cannot work.

This woman is always advocating for her son. I'm starting to wonder if this is not going to pose any problems for me in my marriage in future. She sounds like the type of woman who would, amidst all your tears, heartbreak and headaches, tell you that every man cheats should muzikayise have wandering eyes. The type of woman who believes that mosadi o swara thipa ka

bogaleng (A woman should steadily hold onto the sharpened edge of the knife). Heavenly father, I hope that you hear my prayers because shall You not, the bandit by the name of Muzikayise Khumalo shall arrive and drop on your doorstep before his recorded time.

Mabuyi kept trying to wipe her tears but it was as if she was summoning more of them by this doing this. I didn't know whether to hold, console or leave her alone. I didn't even know if I'm allowed to speak. But...

I held her shoulder. She never

protested. I wanted to speak but I ended up closing my dry mouth instead. I ended up just saying "I'm sorry..." in a low tone. She cried harder. Ma stood up from her seat to come and comfort her. She looked heartbroken on her behalf.

She came and brushed her back. Mabuyi was trying too hard to speak but her tears couldn't allow it. I looked at Muzi wondering why he's just sitting there. He looked at me back with eyes that said "There's nothing I can do". Ma suggested that we help her up. I did as I was told and we

took her to her room. We tucked her in her sheets. As we were both about to leave, she said "Please stay" directing this to me. I looked at ma in confusion and she did the same. She nodded and went out, slowly closing the door behind her.

I got into the sheets with caution and looked ahead. She had a portrait of Muzi and herself in her room. He was lifting her up into the air, both looking like they were laughing hysterically, happy. I took a few plys from her tissue box on the bedside table and gave them to her. She took them. I'm

still wondering what I'm doing in bed with a woman who hates my gut at noon but offers to do my hair at nighttime. She finally got a grip on her calm and managed to speak.

Her: Why didn't you tell me that night? The night you were here?

Me: I also didn't know.

Silence...

Me: Look, ma was right. These are just titles. They don't mean anything. Each one of us will be living in their own house. You make the decisions of your own household and I do the same.

Should a situation arise where we need to consult with one another, we put our heads together and make this work because I'm not going anywhere and you're clearly not either so...

We locked eyes. Until we both exhaled and looked away.

Me: I'm not here to fight with or take anything away from you Gugulethu. I'm all for peace. But if you want to fight then I won't stop you either.

She laughed. I smiled.

Me: All this stress is not good for your baby. You might be expecting

the opposite but I care about him because Muzi does. I don't have the strength to comfort him should anything happen to his baby. This entire situation has drained all the life out of me. I don't need anymore drama.

She bit her upper lip and said "Fair enough". She then politely asked me to take out her pyjamas from her walk-in closet. I got in and a crazy thought of her wanting to lock me in here immediately tiptoed into my mind. I brushed it off and told her I don't see them where she said she had put them. I could hear

her getting out of bed. So many shoes though! This closet is enough to host a high class runway show.

She got in and found them some place else. She apologized and said ever since she got pregnant she's been very forgetful and her memory is quite slippery. I was thinking about this closet and my mouth rattled on me once again.

Me: Why do you need so many clothes?

She laughed and said " Mnaks, trust me, with a husband like ours you're gonna end up like this also because you're never gonna

know what to do with the money. I'm a lover of all things fashion. Expensive fashion. And besides, everybody knows that shopping is every girl's best friend."

This must mean that I am a man then.

Gugu looked a whole lot better after our conversation. Not that it would sting me anywhere, but I'm hoping that she wakes up in the same calm spirits next morning. The time was now 23h40 and my eyes were not having it anymore. She got dressed in her pyjamas and I made my way out to my room.

The house was dead quiet. I missed Yise. So I went to his room and subtly knocked. No answer. I slowly opened the door and the lights were off. His bed was empty. Where the hell is this man? I didn't know how to feel about this so I went to my room and took a hot shower. I then got into sleeper shorts, tank top and got under the thick throw that was placed on my bed. It was not here when I first walked in here so I figured this was all ma's doing.

I was battling with deciding whether to call him or not. I

decided against it and slept. I was thankful for the blanket because I had not brought warm pyjamas with me and it was quite warm. I was half asleep because I managed to hear my phone beep, alerting of a message that just came through. It was an unknown number.

"I can't sleep here so I've left. I'm letting you know because I don't want you to wake up thinking I left because of you. And thanks for the talk last night. This might actually work.
-Your mnaks"

I smiled. I did not expect any of this. At all. Especially after her breakdown at the table last night. I have a good feeling about her so I'm just going to ride with it until she screws it up herself. I checked the time and it was 02h02. I was about to sleep when somebody walked in. I should've locked my door. What if it's not him?

The person approached my bed and I immediately knew who it was, judging from his very potent cologne. He took off his shoes and got under the sheets, hugging me from behind. His hands are cold

and he has a slight smell of alcohol. I turned to look at him.

Me: Are you drunk?

Him: I don't know.

The hell?

Me: What do you mean you don't know?

Him: My drunk and your drunk might not be the same. So, define drunk.

I laughed. I'm speechless.

He began kissing my shoulder, attempting to take off my pyjama top. I thought he said he's never having sex with one wife whereas the other is in the other room. Or does that only

apply to me? I know Gugu said she left but I need to say this to make sure. I'm not even sure he knows that she's not here. I held his hands still, turned my face towards him and said "MaDlamini" He kissed my lips, got on top of me and said "she's not here" in a whisper. He took off my top and (Removed)

After regaining his strength, he slowly kissed me on my lips and asked me how I'm feeling. I smiled and told him I'm fine. I'm fine even though my vagina is on fire. I didn't tell him this though. He got up, went into the bath

and came back with a towel and wiped me clean. I put on my underwear as he wiped himself too. He then threw it on the floor and hugged me to sleep. I'm glad this stage of my life is over. The only thing I'm not looking forward to is Tumi screaming in my ear.

Muzi was fast asleep when I woke up around 5 in the morning. I had slight pains on my lower abdomen. I maneuvered my way out of his hands, got up from the bed and made my way to the bathroom because my bladder was full and therefore impatient. I got there and tried to pee. It

stung. Badly. But I got it done. Slowly but eventually. My eyes dropped to my underwear and I noticed blood. Lots of it. Kgantsho said I might bleed on my first time but this is not the kind of blood she described. Dammit. I'm on my period. Great!

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Insert 32.

I immediately went into my room, fetched my toiletry bag and took a shower. I always have pads in there for rainy days because my

periods are unreliable and full of a lot of backstabbing. They're that friend your mom doesn't like and keeps warning you about. The friend with the bad habits. The jealous friend.

After I was done, Muzi was up and on his phone. He smiled at me as I bid him goodmorning. He was buttoning his jean up but he was topless. I was in a towel. He came to hug me from behind and kiss my neck.

Him: U right?(You okay?)

Me: I'll survive

I sugarcoated and whitewashed how I was really feeling. Period

pains had me by the neck and my vagina was still on fire. The time was exactly 05h41.

Him: Should I get you anything? Neurofen? Aleve? Pads? Chocolate?

I laughed. How does he know all of these things? And imagine an entire Zulu man buying whole pads. Imagine it on my behalf because I'm unable to can. He knew that I was laughing at this and he laughed too.

Him: Hawu. Yini? If uyawadinga amapad ngizoya mina ngiyowathenga. (If you need pads then I'll go buy them). Yall go

through a helluva lot. This is the least we can do as men. The bare minimum actually.

I found this sweet. I've heard stories about them, took them serious and now he's proving me wrong. I assured him that I have enough pads but I think I'm gonna need the painkillers during the day. But how did he know I'm on my periods? I asked. Him: The sheets.

I closed my eyes in embarrassment.

Me: I'm sorry.

He quickly held my shoulders and looked me in the eye. So much

sincerity!

Him: What for? You've done nothing wrong. I'll ask one of the ladies that help us with laundry to wash them and I'll personally change the sheets my self.

Me: I can't expect somebody else to wash my blood that's the most severe case of rude. I'll do it.

He got my point but offered to wash them himself. I said no. If there's anybody in this house suspecting me of giving him a love portion then that will just put a huge, red and capitalized stamp on it.

Muzi went out and I saw this as an opportunity to quickly get dressed. I wanted to wear leggings and an oversized t-shirt for comfort but I wasn't certain that the environment I was in allowed for that. So I opted for a long sleeve black t-shirt, tights and a navy blue, tight denim skirt on top. I put on my sweet pink 'half' socks and slid into my blue slippers. They cover half of my foot so they've quite warm. He came back and said the coast is clear because everybody was downstairs. He carried on to state how he doesn't understand

the embarrassing part about nature taking it's course. I was in no mood to argue so I just kept quiet. He exhaled in defeat and helped me remove the duvet we were sleeping on and the throw. He guided me to the laundry room. I was glad after we were done that the stains were not stubborn and persistent. I have no idea what I would've done with myself. The worst was over now. But were left with the problem of hanging them. Muzi suggested we tumble dry but I laughed and said they won't fit in there. He laughed as well and said

"It was worth a try". He then had a light bulb moment and said we could use the exit in the TV room. Mom walked in as we were still brainstorming and I froze. Muzi looked chilled and waited for her to speak.

Ma: Good morning.

He said as her eyes danced to and fro between the two of us.

Us: Morning.

She looked at us and smiled with suspicion.

Her: What mischief has

Muzikayise recruited you to do

Sphakamile? Muzi and I laughed.

I was laughing to conceal the

embarrassment. Her eyes then fell into the laundry basket that was full of her bedding on the floor. She shook her head and asked Muzi to excuse us. Muzi turned to me and said "Scream if she tries to strangle you". I laughed. Ma tried to hit his naughty head but he ran out laughing and reporting that he's going to take a bath.

She held my hand and we slowly walked out, heading to my room.

Her: You do know that this is your home too. Right?

I nodded.

Her: And that I'm also your

mother. Right?

I smiled and nodded at how she punctuates her sentences with "Right?" to persuade how I ultimately respond to her questions.

We walked into my room and she closed the door. She went into the closet and came out with a different set of bedding. She undid the whole bed and I helped her assemble the fresh one. We then sat on the bed and she held my hand. The words were on her throat. She wanted to say something but she was struggling.

Ma: My darling, do you maybe...have a problem down there?

Me: Down where?

Ma: I mean.. nocturnal...enuresis?
Such big terms

Me: I don't understand.

I was honestly lost. She swallowed and breathed out.

Her: Night.. nighttime incontinence?

Lord save me from this South African British woman. I thought I was good with English but this woman makes me feel like I've only attended 3 classes of the queen's language ever since

I was born. I was confused and my face could not find possible ways to hide it.

Her: Dear God how do I say this? She briefly looked and wiped her brows with her fingers. Whatever she was trying to say was embarrassing judging from the struggle she was going through.

Her: Do you have..

Her: Your bladder.

Her: Yes your bladder.

Her: Can you...

Her: Like.. control it?

Her: When you're sleeping?

I pursed my lips so hard so to stop myself from laughing. I

couldn't hold it anymore. I put my hand on my mouth to stop the laughter that Kgantsho and my mother hate with a passion. Is this woman asking me if I pee in my sleep? She began laughing too and looked away, puckering her lips in humiliation, clearly exposing her deep dimples.

Her: What? I had to ask.

Me: No ma.

I continued laughing.

Her: Then what happened here last night? Did Muzikayise

...

Her: Did he

Her: Deflower you last night?

I didn't know how to answer this. I was still cooking up an answer when Muzi abruptly opened the door. He was done bathing and he had changed his outfit. He's always wearing black.

Him: Oh there you are. Ma can I steal my wife for just 2 seconds?

Uzobuya (She'll come back)

He said this holding up two fingers to emphasize, peeping through the door, holding onto the handle on the outside.

Me: Haa. Awa hlapa wena (You didn't bath). Phela you were gone for only a minute.

Him: Ngithe ku nina "Ngisayo

geza". Angikhumbul ngisho
amazwi wokuthi "Ng'sayo
swimma". (I said to you I'm going
for a bath. I never said I'm
going for a swim)
We all burst out laughing. Muzi is
an idiot.

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Insert 33.

Ma got up from where she was
seated and excused us. Muzi
walked in and as always, his scent
was deadly. He took the spot
that his mother had occupied on
the bed.

Him: Sthandwasami

Me: Yes hubby.

I said, teasing him. He giggled and said I must always call him that instead of calling him by name like he's my last born child. I laughed.

Him: Look, I'm going out and I didn't want to hide it from you.

Me: Mabuyi?

Him: Yes.

I exhaled.

Me: Where is she?

Him: Kubo (Her home). She was taken there last night saying she can't stay in this house because the stress is just too much for

her.

He wiped his face in distress.

Me: So you're going to spend the day with her?

Him: I'm taking her out for breakfast. There's a lot she and I need to talk about.

I told him to drive safely.

He got up from his seat and pulled me up by my hands so I can stand too. He held me tight, and then broke the hug to look me in my eyes.

Him: Call me if you need anything okay? Ungasabi (Don't be afraid) I faintly smiled and told him I'll be fine.

Him: How are the period pains now?

Me: They're getting worse but it's nothing I haven't went through before.

Him: It breaks my heart knowing you're in pain baby.

Her: You should get going. There's nothing we can do.

Him: There is actually.

He said, with his notorious and provocative smirk on his face. I immediately knew what he was thinking.

Me: Oh hell. Hamba hamba hamba. I said and tried pushing him out (Go go go)

He laughed, turned back to kiss me and went out. He shortly came back with his macbook and router, put them on the bed and reported that the wifi in the house is down, hence the router. He said he'll send all the necessary login details as soon as he's in the car. I appreciated him caring about keeping me entertained even though he's off to see another woman. I was worried about the boredom that was going to keep me company during the day. He then picked up his car keys and phone from the bed, pecked my lips and left.

I was worried about the sheets I left in the laundry room. I went in there with an aim of hanging them but when I looked around, they were not there. I didn't want to ask a lot of questions so I went out. On my way back to my room, I bumped into Mbuso. He was still in the outfit he had changed into yesterday. Black jeans with grey discoloured patches, white sneakers and a black shirt which he had folded on the arms. He had now unbuttoned it a bit, with his leather jacket in his hand. He was on his phone so he wasn't seeing me. If there

was a different route I would've taken it. But to my bad luck, there was no way I could get to my room without passing by him first.

He raised his head and immediately flashed a slowly growing smile.

I awkwardly said "Good morning" because I did not want this situation to get more more uncomfortable than it already feels.

Him: Morning.

He still had his phone in his hand when he said this. He locked it and put it away and asked me if

I slept well after that.

Me: Very well thanks.

I wasn't about to ask him how he slept because he clearly did not. His phone rang. He took it, had a quick scout at the caller I.D and flashed it in the air indicating that he has to take it. I nodded and kept walking.

I honestly did not feel like going down for breakfast but I also didn't want to be rude. Or worse be the makoti that wakes up at midday. That is exactly what was going to happen and thought of me if I did not get out of this room. While I was still battling

with my thoughts, there was a knock on my door. I yelled "It's open" and a woman walked in with a wooden tray. She looked like she was in her late 40s. She greeted me and asked me where to put it. I directed her to the bedside table.

Her: Madam, Mrs Evelyn asked that I bring this up to you.

Me: Oh no. Please, call me Betso. Short for Boikokobetso. And, please thank ma for me.

She smiled and nodded.

Her: Will do. She said I should also tell you that she's going out for a while but you can always ask us if

you need anything around the house. The phone is over there. She pointed at the other side of the bed. I've been noticing this phone ever since I walked in here but I wasn't taking the purpose of it's placement there to heart. I thanked her once again. She then walked out and closed the door.

The tray had a bowl of oats, milk, a pot of tea, a cup with its saucer, a bottle of water and painkillers. I had no appetite but I also had no intentions of disappointing anybody here so I ate up. I tried having the tea but I couldn't stomach more than

3 sips of it. It tasted a lot like one of Tumi's horrible herbal concoctions. I took the painkillers and downed half of the water. I did all of this while switching between social media apps. After I was done, I lifted the tray and took it downstairs. These periods have no timing to be honest. Why this weekend?

I got to the kitchen and found the helps laughing their lungs out. Their laughs slowly faded as I put the tray on top of the table top and greeted all 3 of them. One of them said "Hawu. Ngabe u founile besizo zilanda

lezitja madam" (You should've called. We would've fetched these dishes)

I smiled and asked her to call me by name. The one who brought them up was not part of this pack. Mbuso came to stand closely behind me, taking an apple from the fruit basket placed on the table. He was standing way too close but it seemed as though I was the only one seeing this because these women were showing all their teeth to this man as he greeted them like they're old friends. I quickly excused myself to go back

upstairs. Something in me insisted on looking back, when I did, his smile was slowly fading but he was deeply staring at me, while his mates continued conversing with each other and laughing their lungs out. They seemed at home. I moved my eyes from him and kept walking.

I got to my room and locked the door. It was now safe to change into leggings and a comfortable t-shirt. These clothes were suffocating me. I did as my heart desired and slipped under the covers. My mom called as I was about to punch in Muzi's

password on his laptop and I picked up. We spoke for a while but I never told her that I am in KZN. I didn't know how she would take it. We cut the call and I went onto Netflix.

I don't know when I fell asleep but I did. I was woken up by my burning uterus. I took some more of the painkillers and the water that was left. I wanted to check the time but I was met by 2 missed calls from Muzi instead. The time was 13h04. I called him back.

Him: Sthandwasami. Uvukile?
(You awake?)

Me: Yeah.

Him: Alright unlock the door
ngiyenza.

He's back.

I did and walked back to the bed.

The pain was too much I
slithered down to the carpet to
lay on my stomach. This was a bit
calming for me. He walked in
saying something I did not
register and quickly came to squat
next to me.

Him: Kwenzenjan baby? (What's
wrong?)

I lazily raised my eyes and told
him I'm in pain. I held my
stomach as I said this. I wasn't

being dramatic. The pain was literally 10 times more than what I feel on my worst period.

He lifted me up and put me on the bed.

Him: Should I take you to the hospital?

Me: For period pains?

I laughed.

Him: Yeah! You don't look too good right now.

Me: I'll be alright. They only last for a day.

He exhaled and finally sat down, after taking out a Lindt slab from his back pocket. I'm not a fan of dark chocolate but this

gesture by him meant a lot to my emotional heart.

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Insert 33 cont...

Muzi's arms are honestly my safe place. My sanctuary. I feel as though nothing can ever hurt me, even in harm's way. We cuddled under the sheets after he gave me that chocolate. We then shared it. And to my surprise, I ended up enjoying it. He kept kissing my neck and shoulder and caressing my breasts. I stopped him because of how extremely

sensitive they felt. He understood and just put his hands on my butt.

I started feeling mushy and uncomfortable and told him I needed to change my pad. I had initially intended to just say I wanted to use the loo but that came out instead. He offered to help me and I laughed and said "Haibo!". He laughed too and said he missed my laughter. I told him he's exaggerating. He laughed and said I should come back soon from the lavatory. I took a pad and feminine wipes and went straight to the loo.

I got done with my business and went back into the room. I felt a lot fresher than I did 2 minutes ago. I asked him to take off his jeans and he gave me a naughty smile.

Me: No man. Asiyi lapho. They're uncomfortable on my skin. That's all.

He laughed and said okay, taking them off, along with his t-shirt. He then tried to get on top of me, saying he wants to cure my period pains. I laughed and asked him if he wants to wash the sheets for the second time today. He continued kissing me and speaking

into my mouth. He responded by saying he doesn't mind and that he knows how to operate a washing machine.

I laughed and gently pushed him off me.

Me: On a serious note, we can't. And we didn't use protection this morning.

Him: Do we have to?

He exhaled.

Me: Yes. And I also need morning after pills.

Him: Alright baby. Can we ..

His sentence was cut short by his phone ringing for attention. He

told me it's Mandoba then took the call.

Him: Ezweni communications how may I help you?

I couldn't hear how his brother from the other end of the line. He laughed at whatever response his brother threw in his ear.

Him: U right?

Him: Kusho ba'?(Says who?)

Him: Ah uyamaz umamncan wakho is always exaggerating. Ngi right mina. .(You know how your aunt is always exaggerating. I'm okay)

Him: None whatsoever. Ngi right. I'm even thinking of going back to the office on Monday. The cat

has been away for far too long.
The company might collapse and
they're all gonna say they forgot
to let me know.

He said and rolled his eyes. I was
lying on his chest as he continued
with his conversation with his
brother.

Him: Muphi? (Which one?)

Him: She's right here. Ezandlen
zam. Angithi thina 'banye
sishadile bafo. (... in my arms.

Isn't it some of us are married?)

He said as he adorably looked in
my eyes as I raised mine to smile
at him. He playfully tapped my
nose twice with his left index

finger. He continued listening to his brother and then burst out in laughter.

Him: Umona k'phela lowo. (That's just plain jealousy) She was eventually gonna be mine even without the family's help. One way or the other. Nxaiy.

Ungavumi usatan aksebenzise. Ngiyazi uyivolunteer lapha kwa hell kodwa this is just pure exploitation. (Don't allow the devil to use you. I know you're a volunteer there in hell but..)

He continued laughing.

Him: Yeah usese khona. (... he's still here)

Him: Hayi kuyomel ubuze yena ngoba mina akang' tshelang' ukuthi uhamba nini. (You'll have to ask him yourself because he never told me when he is leaving). AND why am I being questioned about Mbuso's whereabouts? Awunayo yini inumber yakhe? (Don't you have his number?)

Him: Indaba yenu ingehlule mina ang'sazi ke manje. (Your matter with him is now above me).

Him: Alright sharp.

What's honestly going on between Mbuso and Mandoba? This silent question in my head gave me enough motivation to ask what

he wanted to say about Mbuso when I asked him about their baby at the hospital. He exhaled and sunk further back on the pillow.

Him: She had a miscarriage baby. Simple as that.

Me: But you made mention of Mbuso that day. He put his hand on the front of his head.

Him: Yeah. I did.

Me: So?

I shook my head to indicate my impatience for an answer.

He breathed in, held it for a short while and then released through his nose. I could feel his chest

moving to the same rhythm.

Him: Mbuso had a girlfriend. The daughter of my father's sworn enemy, Gwala. Indaba yok'lwela umbuso no bukhosi. (The matter of fighting over chieftaincy).

He said and nonchalantly waved his hand in the air.

Him: The whole family was against their relationship. But he insisted on bringing her over during this other family reunion. Mbuso barely listens to anybody here, including our father. Anyway, She and Gugu were very close on that particular day. Everything was fine, those who had booze

continued to drink, music was played, and those who had cooked finally dished up. She was helping out a lot in the kitchen, the girlfriend. She then brought plates to the gents in a tray and handed them to us one after the other. We were sitting outside. I barely drink alcohol and eat at the same time. Mabuyi came to me and sat on my lap, helping herself to my food. To cut a long story short, we had to take her to the hospital a couple of hours from that.

So she was poisoned?

Me: Was it something in the food

that landed her in hospital?

Him: According to Bab'Ngema yes. The poison was initially meant for me. But apparently I cannot be poisoned but if somebody wants to kill me that way, it'll always affect the person closest to me. This is hectic.

Me: So what happened to the girl?

Him: Mandoba tried tracking her down. But she disappeared. It's as if she had never existed and we were dreaming about the whole thing.

Me: Disappeared into thin air?

Him: Seemingly.

Me: I thought Mandoba was good with such things..

Him: He is. That's just one case he couldn't solve.

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Insert 34.

My heart can't help but break for Gugulethu. No woman deserves a miscarriage. But also, we tend to ignore the father when coming to the loss of a child. His feelings are never taken into consideration.

He's barely asked how he feels.

There was a bit of silence in the room after Muzi explained the

whole story to me.

Me: Zikode?

Him: Hm?

Me: How are you feeling?

He dropped his chest.

Him: Ngi right baby. I've dealt with it.

Me: Did you go to therapy?

He laughed.

Him: Uke wayibonaphi wena indoda yomZulu ihamba ama counseling nan' nan' (where have you ever seen a Zulu man going for counseling and whatever else?)

I laughed.

Him: I'm kidding man

sthandwasami. Trust me, I have

great respect for such facilities and what they stand for with regard to mental health but they're just not for me. I can't imagine baring my soul for a total stranger to look into.

Me: Have you at least spoken to Mabuyi about it?

This polygamy business is confusing for me to be honest. I don't know which boundaries I'm not supposed to cross in terms of his marriage with his wife, if there's any.

Him: I have. Don't worry about me. Let's talk about you.

Me: Me??

I retreated my face in confusion.
Him: Yes. You. You've never said a word about your wedding ever since that day at the hospital. I was expecting you to be excited like other brides normally are.

Me: Well this isn't a normal case is it?

He exhaled and looked away.

Me: I'm sorry. I just..

Him: I understand my love. Take your time. All I can say is, when you finally get in the mood, go wild. There's really no budget. I smiled and brushed his hand that he had on my chest. He kissed the top of my head.

Me: It's not that I don't want to get married to you baby. I do. Weddings are just a lot of work. They're nothing like parties and baby showers.

Him: I could get you a wedding planner if that's what's worrying you?

Me: I wasn't even thinking of that. I'm just so used to doing things myself.

Him: I've never seen anybody planning their own wedding mina

Me: People do. And I plan events for a living so I just thought it would make sense.

Him: And I don't want a tired

bride.

He said, kissing the top of my forehead after every word.

Him: Allow me to get you a wedding planner. He's quite good. Want me to show you his work?

Me: Please.

He then took his phone, went onto Instagram and found the planner's business account. He gave it to me so I can scroll down myself. I took the phone and slowly went through the page.

Me: So he strictly does weddings?

Him: Yeah. Ever since I've known him.

Me: He's good.

He really is good.

Him: He's been in the industry for quite some time.

I kept scrolling, admiring in silence.

Him: Hee baby. Awung'buzi yini?

(Ask me?)

I laughed.

Him: Buza phela ziyang'shisa mina leyindaba.

Me: Ngiyak'buzakhe. (I'm asking?)

Him: Heee

He swallowed and shook his head

Me: Khuluma phela mfethu (Speak bra?)

Him: Uyambona ubhut'wakho?

Me: Mang?(Who?)

Him: uMQ maan.

Me: Yes?

I said laughing

Him: He was supposed to be home this weekend. Buz a mina ukuth' yingani engekho lana?(Ask me why he's not here?)

This I have to hear.

Me: Ngitshela(Tell me)

Him: 2 weeks back, kuvuke idrama lapha emall. All three of his women ganged up on him. And worse they're from 3 different provinces. How they met and devised a plan to ambush him? He raised his shoulders and

dropped his pursed lips.

Me: Haibo!

I said laughing.

Him: Yey. Cishe wa trenda umuntu. (He almost trended) Your mother in law had to do some serious damage control.

I burst out laughing.

Me: And then what happened?

Him: Omunye wabo wamshiya nengane. (One of them left him with his baby)

Me: How old is the baby? Actually how many babies does he have?

Him: 2 with his wife. 1 with his baby momma. The twins are 8 years old and the other is a year

old.

He has a wife!?

Me: Where is the wife?

Him: Basa hlukene kwa

manje (They've broken up for now)

Me: What do you mean for now?

Him: Uzobuya. She always does.

They can't keep away from each other for long.

I honestly did not think of MQ as a woman's man. We continued laughing about how ma pulled Mandoba's ear when they got home, telling him to respect women.

We were so caught up in gossip so much that we didn't realise that

the room was dark. It had gotten late. It was probably around 18h00 in the evening and it was still cold and calmly drizzling outside.

Him: Remember when I asked you to join us here at home for a braai?

Me: Yes?

Him: We postponed it because of that accident thingy angithi?

He says "thingy" like it's not a big deal. Nigga almost died and met his maker but he's outchea saying "Thingy" like it doesn't matter.

Me: And?

Him: I'm thinking of hosting it,

but in JHB because I'm going back.

Me: Are you medically fit to go back to the office?

Him: Fit as a bull. Now, back to the braai. I want us to make it happen.

Me: Is Gugu going to be there?

He kept quiet for a minute, thinking

Him: I highly doubt it. She's heavily pregnant baby.

Me: I'll think about it.

Me: Speaking of Gugu, where is she coming back?

Him: She refused to come back home. She's back to not being able

to stand me. I think she was just here because I was sick and tolerated me instead. I don't get it.

Me: It's normal. My sister went through the same thing when she was pregnant.

Him: Meaning the chances of you doing the same are high? JESU!!
I laughed.

Me: Luckily for you, I'm not getting pregnant anytime soon.

Him: Wanna bet?

I gave him a death stare and he laughed.

Him: Will you be okay tomorrow night? I wanna take you out?

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Insert 34 Cont..

I agree to Muzi taking me out to only him and God know where because he won't disclose the location to me. I apparently already have a dress. I laughed when he told me this and asked him how he knows my size and he said he's the expert of my body. Whatever the hell this means.

Me: Okay Mr Expert. Mrs Expert needs a bath now.

He gently holds both my shoulders and kisses the top of my right

one. He then says "Mr expert would love to join the Mrs in that bath."

I laugh out loud. Muzi honestly does not give up. He's incessantly relentless and persistent. But menstrual blood is never anything close to a comfort zone for me.

Me: I'd love to soak myself in hot water today. By myself. For the pain. Heard it helps.

He understood. I love how he never forces and compels me to do things. I stood up for the bed and pulled my leggings up.

I went into the bathroom with an aim of filling the tub with hot

water. I begin by washing it first because I have no idea who has been here before. Hygiene first. Luckily, everything I need is already here.

He comes in as I'm bending over and scrubbing the tub. He's in his jeans. Zipped up but unbuttoned. Barefoot. I turn my head and have a look at him. I find him leaning against the door, wearing his charming yet provocative smile.

Me: Ke eng?

He says "Hmm-mm", meaning "Nothing". I smile and continue with scrubbing using the brush I

found in here. I'm sure he's going to speak eventually because I know for a fact it has everything to do with my ass. I make sure it bobs and bounces just to provoke him. I smile back at him and laugh. He huffs out a laugh, threatening me.

Him: Your periods saved you yaz wena. Not that they're much of a hindrance. Otherwise ngabe ayakhala manje. (You'd be crying by now)

I laugh louder and ask him to leave. He slowly moves himself from the door and approaches me. He turns me around and holds my

waist. I hang my wet hands over his shoulders. He slowly pushes me towards the wall, backing me against it. He quickens the pace of his kiss as he pins both my hands up. He lets them go and moves his hands down my sides till they land on my butt. (Removed)

Me: Slow down tiger.

Him: You know what I've heard?

He whispers back

Me: What?

He kisses me slowly before he speaks.

Him: I've heard that water kinda blocks periods. Temporarily.

I know what he's thinking. I laugh and push him out.

After I fill the tub. I go out to fetch my toiletry bag. I should've just kept it in here. I find him gone. I lock the door and take off my clothes. I soak my self in the hot bath for an hour. Heat does wonders for period pains. I had no doubt this would work. I've just never tried it before.

I get myself out of the bath and wipe my whole body. I then put on my underwear along with a nighttime pad, wrap myself with a towel and clean up the bathroom. I go back into the

bedroom to lotion. I receive a knock on my door. I ask who it is and ma affirms. I go and turn the key, opening the door.

She comes in with a tray of food. I close the door behind her. She puts it down, takes her phone from the tray and asks me how I'm feeling.

Me: A lot better than this afternoon.

Her: Menstrual cramps used to paralyze me too when I was your age. They stopped after giving birth to Phakamani.

Me: Really?

Her: Yes. I even..

Her phone rings before she could complete her sentence. She asks to be excused and then leaves.

I continue with my business and then put another set of leggings on with an oversized t-shirt.

Comfort is a must and an obligation when I'm on my period. I remove the plate cover and check what's on the plate. Pap is a staple in this house. The chicken and veggies look mouth-watering but my appetite has no intention of coming to this party. I'll eat later. I think to myself. I close the plate and go switch on the light. I come back and take

the orange juice from the tray and drink it. I wonder where Muzikayise has disappeared to. I came here with intentions of touring this place but my uterus wouldn't let me. I'm not surrendering to it tomorrow. Which is my last day here. There's a knock on my door. He walks in before I could say enter. He's also clean. He's wearing a black vest, black cargo shorts that go down to just his knees and his Adidas slides. Forget that it's cold. I love how his dress sense is so affordable and simple but still manages to make him look like a

snack at the same time. You'd swear he has an average bank account.

Me: What if I was naked? You should knock.

Him: What is it that you're hiding from me that my eyes haven't seen and my tongue hasn't tasted before?

I laugh. Mciim.

I stand and he comes to hold me by my waist. He smells like his potent body lotion. I swiftly brush the part of his t-shirt sitting over his shoulders twice and say "Baby, would you mind if..."

Him: Weeeeeeee

He says and laughs. I laugh as well.

Him: Ufunani?

Me: I need you to take me to the mall tomorrow morning or at least take a walk with me.

Him: Easy enough.

He says and pecks my lips.

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Insert 35

The next day

My period pains only last for a day and sometimes two. This morning, they were very tolerable so I should be fine by this afternoon. I

think to myself as I put my hands over Muzi's. It's surely still very early in the morning and he's fast asleep. He managed to convince me to sleep in his room when I came in here last night, to bring back his laptop.

I needed to use the loo so I tried to glide my way out of his hands. His grip on me grew a bit tighter. He pulled me back into his arms and breathed out. "Muzi? Baby?" He didn't reply. He was still fast asleep. I tried extending my arm to the bedside table to reach for my phone but because his bed is bigger than mine and our bodies

were placed more towards the centre, I couldn't reach it. I guess I'm going to have to wait for him to wake up because I did not want to disturb him.

Sleep must have managed to charm me off my feet because I was woken up by kisses on my cheek, whereas, I was awake the last time I checked.

Him: Good morning, sleepy head.

Me: Morning.

I say and smile back to him.

Me: What time is it?

Him: Half five. Slept well?

Me: Yes. Yes I did.

I'm still smiling, admiring his

beautiful facial features. He allows my hand to slowly take a shortcut through his face to his hair. Silence. Blissful silence.

He moves his hand from my chest and stretches like a baby who has just been woken up from deep sleep. I tell him we need to get up. He doesn't reply. He keeps stretching and yawning. He puts his hand back and holds me tight and snuggles me. He then takes a deep sigh and begins to speak.

Him: Sthandwasami. We need to talk.

Oh dear. I hate these 4 words. They make up the slogan of doom.

Me: About?

Him: Are you willing to move to Joburg after our wedding?

I exhaled. I knew we had to have this conversation but I did not anticipate it would be this soon. I'm willing to participate nonetheless.

Me: I don't know baby. Move in with you? What about Mabuyi?

Him: I've been thinking about this for a very long time. I know the two of you won't be able to live in the same house and I also don't want to be breaking out fights and putting out fires 3 times a day 7 days a week. So,

because she has been living in that house for a while now and you've also hinted that you don't like that house, you and I will go house hunting to go find the house you'd like to live in but in the same area.

I took a few seconds to think about what he's just said. What about my job? My business? Most of clientele is based in Polokwane and surrounding areas. I stated these concerns to him.

Him: But you don't need a job baby...

I was about to argue and spit fire but he interjected and

interrupted me.

Him: But... but, if it bothers you that much, you could come work with me.

I laugh. He wants me to be his P.A.?

Him: Or, you could become a full time businesswoman. I'm interested in helping you grow your business.

Me: Help me how? As in, a cash injection?

Him: Invest in it. I've seen your work and I believe you're going places.

I don't know if he's buttering me up right now or he's being honest.

But I know my work is good because it's either I put my blood, sweat and tears into an event or I don't do it at all.

Me: I'll think about it.

Him: Fair enough.

I got up from the bed. He tried grabbing me back but I ran and laughed. I took my phone and checked the time. 06h02. My phone displayed. I told him I'm going for a shower and he mustn't follow me. He laughed and asked me if I'm aware that I'm stuck with him for life because it doesn't look like I am. I continued laughing and left him there. The

sun was not out but it wasn't cold either. I got into my room, took a shower and decided on a peach maxi dress with nude slip on sandals. The dress was a bit tight and hugged me around my butt and hips but had a continued flow from there downwards. I took out my weave and brushed it. I have no intention of looking like the crap I'm feeling like today. I sat in front of the mirror and did my make up. I made sure it wasn't too much yet noticeable. My minimal highlight and contour were on fleek. I couldn't decide on whether to put

on a nude or a red lip stick. I decided against both and went with a bronze lip gloss instead. Minimalistic is the theme of the day.

I continue brushing my wig. The hairbrush flows easily as though passing through water. One of the helps comes and yells that breakfast is ready through the door. I acknowledge my receipt of this message and assure her that I'll make my way downstairs in a minute even though I have no intention of having it here. WE have no intention of having it here. I hope Muzi is also ready

because I hate waiting. I think to myself as I dial his number. He picks up on the 3rd ring.

Him: Sthandwasami. Are we not in the same house or ku hlanya mina (or am I the one that's crazy?)

I chuckle. He sounds like he's pacing in his room.

Me: Are you ready to go?

Him: Yeah masambe (Let's go)

I cut the call and continue putting all my necessities into my handbag. Powder, the lip gloss I currently have on, wipes, pads, purse and cellphone. I then stand and try to remember what I'm

forgetting. Earrings! I forgot to put on earrings. I take out the small silver box from my toiletry bag and delicately open it. I value it a lot because it was a gift from my mother on my 21st birthday. She bought them for me when I turned down her efforts to throw me a party. And these are real diamonds. They come with a slim and sassy necklace which accentuates my neckline.

Muzi walks in as I'm admiring my earrings. He's walks in talking and putting on his watch.

Him: Yaz a person would go to

town by foot and come back only
to find you still.. getting...
read...dyyy..

He slows on his tracks. I continue
looking at him and listening to his
speech getting slurred. He looks
severely stunned. His mouth is
still open as he slowly put his
hands in his pockets.

I smile and tell him to close his
mouth before flies fly through. He
quickly purses his lips together
and walks towards me.

Him: Hayi cha. Idlozi lam ling'
thande ngempela la! (My ancestor
really showered me with affection
here)

I softly laugh. I'm getting the exact reaction I anticipated from him and I'm happy. Having Muzi hype me up about how pretty I am makes me feel insuperably gorgeous. My confidence feeds on it.

He takes the small box from my hand and says "Ithi ngik'size" (Let me help you). He plucks out one earring from it and puts the box on the bed. He pushes a chunk of my hair behind my ear on and puts on the diamond knob. I close my eyes. He stares at me for seconds until I've realised that he has

stopped. I raise my head to look at him and he smiles. He finally speaks.

Him: Sonephi? Ngempela ngempela sikwenzen mamakhe?

I burst out in laughter. He's exaggerating now.

He took out the other earring from the box and did the honours. He then carefully took out the necklace. I had zero intentions of wearing it but I wasn't going to argue. He swiftly pushed all of my hair to my side, hooked it on and then kissed my back.

He then turned me around to have a look at me.

Him: Umuhle. All the oceans and the mountains will have no choice but to bow down to you today, my queen.

He said and smiled. I blushed.

He's being too much now.

His cologne reminded me that I didn't put on mine. I took it out of my toiletry bag. I sprayed it on my neck and my wrists, consequently brushing them against each other with the lid in my left hand and the bottle in my right. It smells like a synergized combination of roses and strawberries. I then placed it in my handbag as he continued

watching me with lots of admiration and adoration sparkling from his eyes.

Him: You're ready?

Me: Yes. Yes I am.

I said cheerfully.

He took my handbag in his one hand and my hand in the other.

He was dressed like his usual self.

Black. Jeans. Polo short-sleeved t-shirt and maroon Nike sneakers.

The only badly priced and expensive item on his body was his watch.

We walked downstairs and everyone was around the

breakfast table. Mbuso, in his

pyjamas, was on his phone while simultaneously having a conversation ma, who was having muesli while everybody was having toasted bread, sausages and the junky works. The chief was reading his newspaper with his stringed glasses on.

Ma stood up from her seat when we walked in. If jaws were fragile, Mbuso's would've shattered and broken on the floor. The chief took off his glasses. Ma turned me around with a huge smile on her face.

Her: Ntombi! You're making me feel as though I need to pull my

slay socks up.

I laughed as Muzi laughed and said "Good morning to you too mother. Morning everyone". Ma briefly raised her eyes to him and said "Morning" and brought them back to me.

Her: Where do you shop for your dresses child?

Me: Truworths ma. And online.

Her: Really? Your mother-in-law needs a visit to the mall. And the internet.

I laughed harder. Mbuso has never taken his eyes off of me and just this is enough to prompt me to tell Muzi that we have to

go, of course without making it obvious that I'm running away from his brother.

The chief says "Where to this morning?" with a wide smile on his face.

Muzi: The mall. I wanna show her around.

Chief: Good! Good! Off you go now. Muzi takes my hand and ma quickly shouts "Take care of her now!"

Muzi nods and laughs. When we finally get outside, Muzi finally says "Yaz if my mother had the choice and liberty, she'd adopt you and rather have me as her son-in-

law instead ngendlela ak'thanda ngayo". He laughed and shook his head. I tell him I highly doubt that.

Me: She'd never exchange her boy-boy for anything.

He side-eyes me as a threat and laughs.

Him: Offence number 2. Qhubeka. Angina mona. (Continue. I'm not jealous). I explode in fits of laughter!

We drive to the mall as I enjoy the music he's playing in his car. Particularly when he played 'Kisses in the moonlight' by George Benson. He kept kissing

my hand as he had one of his on the steering wheel, telling me how he wants to show me the soccer field he used to play soccer at when he was a kid. I asked him why he stopped playing. He said he once sustained a groin injury then his mother banned him from playing. It apparently worked in her favour because she didn't want him to play when he started out in the first place but his father kept encouraging it. We continued laughing and having this conversation with the music playing in the background. In between the glances he kept

taking at me, I kept realizing how much of a happy place he is for me. My heart is happy. My soul is content.

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Narrator: Gugulethu

Muzikayise gives the best foot massages but now that I'm home I'll have to settle for the ones I receive from my mother. My feet are always swollen and I'm always suffering from indigestion. Khumalo is trying his best to give me all the support I need but I can't watch him love

another woman right now. I need time to accept and acknowledge my fate especially now that it feels as though I have been demoted.

I've asked him countless times who he loves most between the two of us because I feel I need to know but he keeps saying he loves us both, equally. I still maintain that she came into our lives at a completely wrong time. I feel fat and hippoish every time I look at her. I didn't mind my pregnancy fat before she came along. But now, it bothers me a lot I've even started exercising.

It's something my doctor has been encouraging ever since I fell pregnant but I've just been procrastinating, ducking and diving everytime Khumalo suggests we exercise together. Sharing a man is not child's play. Even my mother confirmed to this but she always ends this statement with "But it's doable". She always says I'm allowing myself to lose my man by running away from this and that one does not relax in a polygamous marriage. She's always preaching about how much I should've taken after her because she

never even once allowed another woman to kick her out of her own husband's heart. I feel exhausted. I have no strength to be in any sort of competition at this point. Hence I moved out of the house.

I like Boikokobetso. In all honesty, I have a good feeling about her. If the liberty of choosing a sister wife was in my hands, I'd choose her. She has a good and mature head on the shoulders. I'm just worried about my baby. My mother says it's necessary to make triple sure that your sister wife loves your

kids to a closer extent to how she loves hers. Hence it is important to get along. People poison kids all the time. She also says raising a future king is never child's play. I don't have the strength for all of this.

Muzikayise asked to meet me for breakfast after I moved back home last night. I couldn't stay to speak to him after he dropped me off but now he's not taking no for an answer. This, in a way makes me feel special because if he was a different man, he would've paid more attention to his new wife. I always have to

have a banana peel to put over my nose for nausea each time I'm around him. Just in case it strikes, which it does 2 out of 4 times. I wish somebody was considerate enough and told me how tough this pregnancy was going to be. I was going to opt for adoption.

I take a quick shower and put on my navy blue maternity dress with white stripes. My shoes no longer fit so whoever is going to have a problem with my slippers will have to swallow a deal pill.

The only change I'm grateful for with regard to this pregnancy is

my hair. My hair is now thicker and it grows faster than it usually does. I dry it, apply hair food and tie in a bun. Always. I haven't been to my hairdresser in decades. He can't stop calling, saying I'm flushing his progress. Do I care?

I can hear my mother and Muzikayise conversing and laughing from the TV room. He's here. I take my handbag and head out.

Mommy: Ngaze nga hlukomezeka ngo mfazi wakho nama foot rub angapheli. Haibo (Your wife is harassing me with her endless

demands for footrubs)

Muzi laughs and says he's here to fetch me so she shouldn't worry much. They continue laughing until they both see me standing by the door.

Me: We can go. Bye mom

Her: Bye baby

He stands up from the couch, bids my mother goodbye and approaches me. He takes my handbag, holds my hand and we make our way out. We get outside and he opens the passenger door for me. I get in.

After he also gets settled in his seat..

Him: Sawubona

He says and smiles.

Me: Unjan?

Him: I'm not okay Samkethe. I need you back home.

Me: So I can watch you be lovey dovey with your wife?

He exhales and hits the back of his head on his seat. He always does this when he's frustrated in the car. He slowly turns his head to look at me.

Him: I thought we've already spoken about this.

I sneer and direct my whole head to face outside.

Him: Okay. Can I speak to my son then?

Me: Since when do you ask for permission to do that?

He attempts to say something but keeps quiet instead. He then bends towards my bump and puts his hand on my tummy.

Him: Hey boy. Sawubona Mbulazi. Sawubona Mntungwa.

Uyak'khumbula uBaba. Please stop abusing my wife's emotions because I need her back home?

Ngiyak'cela fana?

A smile escapes my lips before I can stop it.

But wait. Where on earth is his wedding ring?

Insert 36.

We eventually got to the mall. Muzi asked me to choose where I wanna eat and I couldn't make the choice. We argued with each choice he made until he said "You know what? We're eating at whatever place we come across first". I laughed until he remembered that he has a friend who has recently opened a restuarant and that he once promised to come check out. I

asked him what kind of restaurant it is and he said it's apparently a combination of 5 countries and what they eat. I was interested in seeing this. We got to the place. I looked up and it was written "Joe's". I didn't mean to laugh but I did. At first he was puzzled as to what it is exactly that I'm laughing at. He began laughing too once he caught on. I was laughing because of some tarven of note that once created a stir on Twitter called "KwaJoe". Him: Hayi baby. Khuzeka (Stop being unruly)

He said and continued laughing. I held my mouth to stop myself from laughing as a man in a grey apron written "Joe's" in italics came approaching towards us. Muzi still had my right hand in his.

Muzi: Jay Jay!

Him: Pac man!

They greeted each other like old friends. I'm guessing this "Pac man" name comes from Phakamani.

Him: Fede? I heard about your accident man. I'm sorry. And about your car too. Muzi waved his hand nonchalantly in the air

and said he's fine now. He then turned towards me, smiled before he could say "JJ, meet my wife, Sphakamile". He extended his hand with adoration on his face and said "Its a pleasure to meet you pretty lady."

Him: So..

He darted his eyes looking like he wasn't sure of what he wanted to say or if he wanted to say it.

Him: Ni divorcile no... Buyi?

Muzi cleared his throat and said "No she's still around"

Him: Isthembu!?

He popped his eyes.

Muzi laughed and said "Awume

nawe JJ" (Stop it)

JJ laughed and said "Just like old times huh? Uyinja yeGame konje wena. UGhabadiya"

Muzi laughed and said "Uqalile uyabheda ". Find us a table and stop being unnecessarily extra"

Only then did he say "Welcome to KwaJoe my people!"

We exploded in laughter and he directed us to a table towards the center.

It's still early but the place is fairly full. We got seated as he asked us what we would like to drink before he brings the menu.

Me: Can I please have some gin

and tonic or a mimosa?

Muzi turned abruptly turned his head towards me. I laughed.

A smile grew on his face when he realised I was kidding. JJ was laughing as well.

Him: We'll both have orange juice, please.

Joe said okay and then left.

Me: What is your problem?

I continued to laugh.

Him: Ekseni kangaka wena usufunana nama gin? Haibo (It's too early for you to be ordering alcohol)

Me: There's nothing wrong with drinking alcohol in the morning.

Him: You drink?

Me: Yeah. But mostly wine.

He exhaled and looked away

Me: What? You also want me to stop drinking?

Him: No sthandwasami. I just worry sometimes.

Me: Worry?

Him: Yeah. Your sister wife was almost harassed because she was too drunk. If I had gotten there 5 minutes later...

Me: Where was she?

Him: Some girls night out. 2 years back.

Me: Well I barely drink outside of my place. You needn't worry about

me.

Him: Look, I'm not saying you shouldn't drink. I just want you to be careful. You can drink as much as you like when you're with me but please be vigilant baby. I wouldn't forgive myself if anything bad ever happens to you and I'm not there to protect you. It would kill me in fact.

I smiled. I love how protective he is of me. I assured him that I'm never putting my self in a risk of such a calibre.

JJ came back with our drinks and the menus. We both took a sip and skimmed through to decide what

we want to eat. Muzi took my hand. He always wants to touch me. One way or the other. I allow him. I was about to say something before a skinny woman in stilettos approached our table. She placed her Louis Vuitton clutch bag under her arm and pressed it there. Her red dress was short. Too short. She had her eyes on Muzikayize. She looked everything but impressed. She pushed some hair of her bob wig behind her ear and finally spoke. Her: You can take MK out of the fuckboy squad but you can never take the fuckboy out of MK huh?

Muzi rolled her eyes in great annoyance and said "Ufunani Ayanda?"

Her: I am here to make sure that you don't cheat on my friend!

Muzi: Who died and made you the guard and janitor of my marriage?

I tried taking my hand out of Muzi's but he tightly held on to it. This woman was getting worked up but Muzi was as usual, chilled.

She took out her cellphone, dialled and put it on her ear.

Her: Mabuyi. Guess who I'm seeing here.

Her: Your husband. KwaJoe. With

another woman.

Her: What do you mean you know?

Her: Mabuyi ukhuluma nami ka njalo? I'm trying to look out for you here.

She was about to speak but it seemed as though the phone had been dropped on her ear. She looked at the screen, appalled. She thinned her eyes towards Muzi who was looking at me, I was looking at her.

Him: Are you done? With your performance?

She scoffed and charged off.

Me: What was that all about?

Him: Don't mind her.

He said and kissed my hand.

I pulled it off and retracted it.

Me: Phakamani, what did she mean when she said you can take MK out of the fuckboy squad but.. He interjected.

Him: Okay okay..

Him: She's Mabuyi's best friend.

They've been friends since high school. I told you. I fucked around when I was a kid. My friends and I. That's what she meant. I am not a skirtchaser. Trust me.

Joe came back to take our order. We hadn't even decided what we wanted to eat. Muzi just told him to give us the chef's choice. He

took the menus and left. I wasn't mad but I was no longer in the same spirits I came here in.

We had our breakfast over small talk. I honestly did not want to make a big deal out of this. A waitress came and cleared the table, leaving the bill behind. Muzi settled it but stood up to take it forth. He kissed my cheek and told me he'll be back in a minute. I just assumed he wanted to have a conversation with his friend who was by the counter. I took out my phone only to be met by a string of texts from Tumi crying that ever since I've found a man

I've been neglecting him. I laughed and replied. He sent a VN but Muzi made his way back. I'll listen to it when we get home. He took my bag and asked me what I'd like to do next. I told him it's time for that walk. He wanted to take me shopping but I turned him down. I was really not in the mood.

Him: Okay but you need a sun hat.

Me: It's not that hot.

Him: Ever heard of skin cancer?

Ultraviolet rays can damage your DNA baby. One can never be too safe.

Me: Yhoo okay Mr radiologist.

He laughed and we went to get a straw hat.

We drove back home. He said he'll wait for me downstairs because I wanted to fix my face. When I came back, he wasn't there. I looked around until I heard him running down the stairs. He went to change his shoes and put on his slides. He has beautiful clean toes. I'm in love with all of him.

Him: You ready?

Me: Ready when you are.

He smiled and took out two bottles of water from the fridge and we walked out. I wonder

where everybody has disappeared to.

We walked out of the yard but using a different, smaller gate, which also had a guard. He opened the gate with a huge smile on his face. Him and Muzi fistbumped. He greeted me as well. He whistled and Muzi whistled back and laughed. He realised I was curious and said "That's Bab'Mthembu. I used to chill with him here every 'after school' at this very gate when I was a kid. I'm laughing because I taught him the fistbump and he taught me how to whistle. I'd

forgotten about the whistle." He said as we kept walking. Slowly. I laughed and told him to teach me how to whistle too. He laughed at me but tried to teach me. I kept blowing out air with no sound. He couldn't stop laughing.

Him: If you drink umchamo wenkomo ekseni you'll instantly become a pro. (If you drink urine from a cow in the morning..)

I exploded in laughter. I don't believe this.

Him: Hawu. Awungikholwa? (You don't believe me?)

He asked, still laughing.

Me: Hayisuka.

The land was green all over and the grass was a bit wet. The birds were chirping and the bells around the cows' necks kept ringing. He pointed and showed me the soccer field from a distance. It was so packed. He said it only gets packed in this manner when the boys are having a tournament. I told him I'm not going anywhere near it. I've already seen it. I'm good. He laughed and asked me why. I told him I hate packed spaces. Especially those packed with men. He said I shouldn't feel afraid of

anything when I'm with him. I blushed but still said no.

He said okay and we changed routes and kept walking. We bumped into 3 boys dressed in a soccer gear. They started celebrating when they saw that it's him. He also looked happy to see them. They looked like they were between 15 and 17 years of age. They cheered and said "MK!"
Him: Bafana Bafana.

Them: Hayi hayi, siyi Liverpool thina. (We are Liverpool)

They said as they dusted their shoulders in a flex. He laughed. I couldn't help but smile.

Him: Well the Reds barely lose. So you had better win that game.

Them: We need some monetary motivation.

They said and they all laughed, including Muzi.

Him: Nina ne mali. (Yall and money)

Tell you what? Win the game first and THEN come and collect.

One of them: How much?

Him: 2 clipper each.

Them: Deal!

He laughed and they said their farewells to the both of us. After a short distance, one of them called out.

Him: MK!!

Muzi: Yeah?

Him: Please buy the team.

They all suddenly looked serious as the others began agreeing with him.

He exhaled and told him he'll think about it. He smiled. They smiled back and walked away, turning a corner.

He then turned towards me, pulled me in his arms and cupped my chin. I smiled up at him. He adjusted my straw hat so he could be able to kiss me. He put both his hands on my waist, even with the water bottle in his one

hand and asked me if I'm still okay. I nodded and he slowly put his lips on mine. We heard whistles and cheers. He looked down, laughed and swore under his breath. It was those three boys. We thought they had left. Muzikayise yelled "Snethemba!" and continued laughing. They laughed too and ran away. He shook his head, held my hand and we continued walking.

We came across a woman who was sitting by the side of the road under a huge umbrella. She had one of those ice cream containers by her side, a small cooler box, and

had packed snacks and fruits on top of fruit boxes. Muzi asked me when last I had street ice cream. I laughed and told him when I was a kid.

He said "come" and pulled by hand. We got to her and greeted. She greeted back. Muzi asked about the pricing of her ice cream. She said R4 for the cone and R7 for the cup. Muzi asked me which one I want and I opted for the cone because I loved eating it when I was a kid. She put on her plastic gloves and scooped it for me. I asked for the strawberry sauce. Muzi took it and squeezed it for

me. He asked for the cup. She also scooped it for him and gave him a small plastic spoon. He gave it to me so I can hold it while he pays. He took out one R200 note and gave it her. She asked us to wait so she can quickly run into the house to get us change. Muzi smiled and asked her to keep it. I fell in love with the amazed disbelief on her face. I fell more in love with Muzi's soul.

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Insert 37.

We turned back home after buying the ice cream. We ended up talking about birthdays and other random stuff. I then remembered that he once promised to tell me what he meant when he said he needed to have a conversation with his ancestors. He laughed. Him: You don't forget wena. I'm not sure if this is a good or a bad trait.

I chuckled.

Him: I don't know whether to say I was temporarily dead or I was dreaming. But throughout my unconsciousness, I was spending time with my great grandfather.

Me: The one you're named after?
He tensed his eyebrows and asked me how I know about this.

Him: Ah. Of course. Who else but your newly found bestfriend, ma.
I laughed and nodded my head in agreement.

Him: To answer your question, yes. He was explaining how this whole arrangement between you and I came about. Even though it doesn't feel like an arrangement. He says and smiles. His smile makes me lose all sense. Especially if that's what he's intending on doing.

Me: And?

Him: And guiding me on how to be a fair polygamous man.

All this sounds so surreal.

Listening to him speaking about speaking to the dead like it's normal. I would've woken up from that ICU bed screaming and freaking out.

Me: He was also a polygamous man?

Him: Yeah.

He said and kissed the back of my hand. The ice cream was done.

Me: How many wives did he have? He laughed out loud and asked me if I really wanna know. I said yes.

Him: Eleven.

I popped my eyes.

Me: As in ten plus one?

He burst out laughing.

Him: Yeah. If my basic mathematics still serves me well.

Me: I'd leave you.

Him: I know. That's why I'm never taking that chance.

We laughed and stood under a tree. It was now around midday and it was hot.

He raised his t-shirt and wiped his sweat. His bushman sun hat fell and hung on his neck by the string. I realised I was biting my lower lip and immediately stopped. He smiled and then laughed.

Him: You know you can always touch right? This is your property.

He approached me and pulled me towards him by my waist. He slowly kissed my lips and whispered "All of it". This was enough to cause a flood.

Him: Let's go home and rest. This day is not yet over.

We still have a dinner to go to. He picked me up without warning and I screamed. He laughed and kept walking with me in his arms. I asked him to put me down because I was afraid we'd bump

into people. He slowly did as I've asked and fixed his t-shirt.

We walked home and bumped into Mbuso. He was pulling out his suitcase.

Muzi: Hawu. Uyahamba njalo? (You're leaving?)

Mbuso: Eish yeah. Duty calls.

He said as he went in to hug his brother.

Muzi: So you were gonna leave without saying goodbye?

He came and gave me a brief hug but didn't look at me.

Mbuso: I honestly didn't want to interrupt your time with your wife.

Muzi looked confused but did not argue. I excused them and went upstairs to take a shower. I was sun-burnt and feeling all sorts of toasted.

I walked into the bathroom but I had to pee first. I'm always exhausted when I'm on my period. I remove all my make-up and take off all my clothes for a quick shower. I walk back into the bedroom after I'm done. I put on a knee length free flowing floral dress and slippers. I then comb my hair and head out to go find Muzi.

I can't find him anywhere. I walk into the TV room and find ma watching cartoons, paging through a magazine. I wonder where the chief always is in the afternoon. I take a seat on the couch and hesitate to speak.

Her: Looking for hubby dearest?

She says and smiles. I smile back, embarrassed.

Her: He took his brother to the airport. He must be making his way back by now.

Me: Alright. I was just wondering where he'd disappeared to.

I turn towards the TV screen and try to hide my being surprise

at what she's watching. This was most definitely a failed attempt because she ended up saying "what? cartoons are quite therapeutic. They're good for unwinding and (she raises her index finger), they're a good antidote for overthinking, which is the leading cause of depression"

I laugh and assure her that I believe she has a point.

She laughs and walks out of the room. She then comes back with a jug of cranberry juice with tons of ice and two glasses on a wooden tray. She asks me to follow her outside. We get to the veranda

and she puts the tray on the table outside. I pull out a chair and she says she'll be back in a second, walking back into the house. She comes back with her phone as I was pouring us the juice into the glasses.

She takes hers and subsequently her seat. I also have mine and seat back and listen to her complaining about how hot it is, agreeing with her. It really is hot.

Her: My darling.

I can already tell that she no longer wants to talk about the weather by the tone in her voice.

Her: When are you planning on getting married? I don't mean to pry trust me. I'm just asking from a concerned mother's heart.

Me: Soon ma. I promise.

Her: I'm delighted to hear that. She says, with a smile on her face.

Me: A part of me wants to get married after Mabuyi gives birth.

Her: How considerate of you! I have a good feeling about you two. There's really no reason to fight.

I just keep quiet and smile. I don't know how to reply to this.

She was about to say something until we heard Muzi yelling in the house.

Him: Baby! Ukephi? (Where are you?)

Me: In here!!

She then turned to me and smiled saying "The two of you are inseparable". I laughed.

Him: In here kuphi kule sthabathaba sendlu? (...where in this large house?)

We laughed and left him to continue with his search.

He finally found us. He kissed his mother on the cheek and pecked my lips. I was uncomfortable with

him doing this in front of his mother.

Him: Nihleba ngami? (Gossiping about me?)

Ma: Women barely discuss broke men.

I laughed out loud. He held his chest as if he was experiencing a physical pain on his heart.

His hand went in between his legs trying to pull a chair from behind him but ma stopped him and told him to go bath. He laughed but got the message and left.

Ma: Sphakamile? I'm grateful for the love I see illuminating from your eyes for my son. He's even

glowing.

I melted! I always hear stories about how most mothers in law make it a mission to destroy your soul but myself? I have hit the mother-in-law jackpot. I love her. I love her spirit. Her calm aura.

Me: Thank you ma. I'm also grateful for how he loves me too.

Her: You remind me so much of me when I first fell in love with Khumalo. When I first found out he has a wife, I didn't want anything to do with him. But he soldiered on and refused to take my no for an answer.

Me: Sounds familiar.

I said and we laughed.

We continued talking, sipping and laughing. The time was now around 4. I got up and told her I needed to use the loo. She packed up the glasses and also said her flowers need attention. I lied. I did not need the loo. I needed the boo. I missed my man like I haven't seen him in a week.

Before she walked into the house, she turned to me and said "And Sphakamile, stop being so uptight around your man. Own him and his damn body. God dannit"

I laughed harder than I probably should've because I did not expect this at all. However, it was like she had poured diesel over a rising fire. I ran up the stairs and went up to his room. It was open. He was sitting on the edge of his bed buried in his laptop. He didn't even see me come in. He took his mother's instruction and indeed took a bath. He was wearing khaki shorts and he was topless. His underwear was showing. You'd swear he's an ambassador for Calvin Klein. He also had a black towel around his neck.

I slowly closed the door and locked it. He raised his eyes, smiled at me without showing his teeth but didn't move.

Him: Is this the part where I say my last words and how much I love my mother?

I laugh. He's being an imbecile. As always.

He puts his laptop aside when I finally get to him.

I get on top of him and sit astride, wrapping my legs around his waist. He looked surprised but pleased at the same time. And curious.

He held and squeezed my ass and kissed me. He mustn't dare hijack this. I may be on my periods but that doesn't mean I can't do other things. The only thing I had no clue about was penetration. Thanks to my exes, I have a bit of experience when coming to other things. Of course they taught me how to please them if I can't give them the cookie, and therefore to compensate for that. So these skills are going to come in handy right now.

We continued kissing. I could feel his growing because I was sitting

right on top of his bulge. I got off him and instructed him to lay back as I unbuttoned his shorts. The shock on his face when I knelt down with both my knees is indescribable.

Him: Baby what are you doing?

Are you sure about this?

He probably thinks I'm in the mood to experiment.

I blush and nod my head. Only then does he lay back.

(Removed) when he finally composed himself..

Him: Baby what the fuck was that?

Me: The starter. Are we still on?

He laughed and replied "Yes." I was referring to our dinner.

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Insert 38.

This dress is beautiful. And these shoes? Gosh. I wonder if he's the one who picked out all of these. If yes, then I'm very impressed.

I think to myself as I stand in front of the mirror admiring myself. The dress is red, long and an open-back. Paired with black suede block heels. My hair is glued and laid. My face is beat. The dress hugs my body perfectly. And

I am happy. I lock eyes with my reflection on the mirror for a minute before bringing the both of us to a smile. We are both stunned by what we see in each other.

I had my hands on my hips when I heard ma screaming for me to come down already. Muzi is surely done. I wonder where he's taking me. I think as I keep brushing all my hair to sit on the front of my left shoulder.

I take the black and shiny clutch bag placed for me on the bed, throw my phone and a few necessities in it before heading

out. I carefully walk down the stairs and suddenly hear cheers and ululations. Everybody, including all the helps was downstairs waiting for me. This made me feel shy and caused me to blush. The chief was not there. Luckily, because I'm afraid of him. His presence would've just made me more nervous. Muzi had the widest smile on his face with his hands in his pockets. He was looking all types of dapper in a black suit. Ma had both her hands over mouth. Her teary eyes are going to ruin my make-up because

I can feel it coming. The urge to cry too.

Muzi held out his hand when I reached the second last step on the stairs. I took it. He slowly turned me around and I obliged. He wanted to say something but shook his head instead. He couldn't stop blushing. A whole,entire Muzikayise Khumalo is speechless? How the mighty have fallen.

Ma: Is this you?

She said and giggled.

I laughed and nodded.

Ma: Your mother was surely taking her pregnancy vitamins

Muzi and I laughed out loud. She wiped the back camera of her phone with dress and insisted on taking me pictures. After she was done...

Him: You're ready?

I smiled and said "Yes".

He bent his arm and we cross held. I said bye to everyone as we went out.

He opened the car door for me and I went in. He made sure the tail of my dress was wholly inside the car before closing the door. He then came and dropped his weight on the driver's seat. He looked at me once and loosened his tie. I

laughed and he blew air into his face to show that he was feeling hot.

Him: I can never get used to how beautiful you are sthandwasami. You're a real gem. A sight for sore eyes.

Me: Thank you baby.

I couldn't stop blushing.

He started the car and drove out. He was driving with one hand on the steering wheel and trying to play a song on his phone with the other. Musa's Nomkhitha started playing.

Ndibethwa luvalo xa ndibona wena
Andisakwazi nokuzibamba

Ndincuma kakhulu xa ndibona
wena

Andali ndiyoyika ukuthetha nawe
Kodwa Sphakamile khawundnik'
ithuba

Ndithethe nawe

Ndyakcela mamela (x2)

Ngawe ndyazifela (x2)

Khawuleza sondela (x2)

Ndikthand' okwempela (x2)

Muzikazi hihihiiiihiiii (x2)

I exploded in fits of laughter
when he changed "Nomkhithakazi
to Muzikazi". He laughed too but
continued singing.

Buyandiphambanis' ubuhle bakho
Intliiyo yam igcwel' uthando

Iwakho

Iinkomo zikhona, baph' abazali

bakho

Ndizimisel' ukba ngumyeni wakho.

This man is honestly trying to make my heart explode today. I blushed and looked at him. His lips said "Ngiyakthanda". A message from them to my eyes instead of ears. I whispered and said "I love you too". He took my hand and kissed the back of it.

Me: How come your Xhosa pronunciation is so good?

He smiled and said his childhood best friend, Mandela is Xhosa.

Me: The one you were fucking

around with?

He laughed out loud and said he's not going to dignify my question with an answer. I laughed, shook my head and looked out the window.

We got to what would look like a normal park during the day but now looking like a romantic hotspot. It was a bit dark but there were little lights on the grass along with petals of white roses. He took my hand and we walked to a white table with two chairs towards the centre. There was a truck and group of people at a distance moving up and down,

busy. He pulled out a chair and said "Mi'lady?"

I smiled and took my seat. He went over to take his too. There was a bouquet of red roses on the centre of the table, accompanying plates and champagne and wine glasses. He took out the champagne from a bucket of ice, held the bottom of the bottle and poured just the right amount into the glasses.

I was still bedazzled by what my eyes were seeing.

Him: You like it?

Me: Do I like it? I love it.

I said as I looked around. He took

off his jacket and hung it on the backrest of his chair.

Me: When did you plan this without me suspecting it anything?

Him: I'm a man of many talents baby.

He said with a smirk on his face. I smiled. He sure is.

I took a sip of the champagne and Tyrese Gibson's 'Best of me' started playing. I couldn't see where the music was coming from. We continued drinking, talking and laughing. Or should I say he was the one telling me obvious lies and I was doing all the laughing over

dinner. When it was time for dessert, he said he can't have any because he's allergic to nuts after the Italian chef was done explaining what his dish entails. He apologized profusely but Muzi assured him that it is okay. He continued having his champagne as he watched me eat and lick my spoon with my eyes on him. His tie was still loose around his neck. I couldn't pronounce the name of the dish but that did not stop me from enjoying it.

Muzi looked behind him and signalled to one of the chiefs to turn down the music. They did as

instructed and he got up. What is he doing? He took out a black velvet box from his pocket and got on his knees. I felt like screaming. What is he doing because I've already agreed to marrying him? I looked away and continued laughing like an imbecile with my left hand over my mouth. The people came closer and as we all know and expect, the ladies were screaming. He opened the box and I couldn't believe the diamond rock that was placed before me.

Him: Sthandwasami. Bambolwan.
Isipho sam es'phuma ku dlozi

lami(My gift from my ancestors).
I loved you from the very first
moment I laid my eyes on you. It
was as if something was
whispering "That's her" into my
ears. I know you wish we had
met under different
circumstances but no true love is
without hurdles and obstacles.
You inspire me to be a better man
than I was yesterday. Hours feel
like milliseconds when I'm with
you. I don't have the power to
stop time but if I did, I would so
moments between you and I could
last forever. But I also don't
want to. I don't want time to

stop because I want to create more memories and grow old with you. My main purpose now is to make and keep you happy. Please allow and grant me that chance by making making me the happiest man alive. Marry me?

Our audience kept cheering and screaming for me to say yes. If only they knew that I did that a long time ago. But now, my tongue was tied.

Him: Uyavuma noma? I'm getting a cramp here.

I laughed, wiped my tears and said "Yes! I'll marry you

Muzikayise!" He slipped the ring

on my finger, got up and span
with me in his arms. He put me
down and kissed me passionately,
with his hands on his favourite
spot, my butt.

I haven't told my mom that I'm
officially engaged. Hell she didn't
even know I was in a different
province. But she needs to know.
Before everybody else. Which is
why I have to go home this
weekend. I took my overnight bag
to work. Fridays are barely hectic
so I knew that I was probably
going to be out of here by midday.

It hit 14h00. I wrapped everything up and went straight to the taxi tank. I sat next to some guy who would not stop talking and asking me out. Men are puzzling creatures. Whether you have a ring on your finger or a huge pregnancy bump they pretend to be completely blind and continue hitting on you. They just don't care. He asked for my number and I gave him Yise's. I now know it by head.

I got off before him and walked home. I could hear the noise and bickering from the corner of the yard. What on earth is going on?

I rushed to the gate and holy Mary, the mother of Jesus just couldn't wait. What is my dad doing here? How did he even find us?

Ma: Ntswele ka motse Moloji!

(Get out of my yard Moloji)

Dad: I'm not going anywhere until I see my daughter.

Ma: Can you spell the word daughter!? Bloody hell!!!

She turned the stopper on the hose pipe and shot water at him. He kept ducking but he wasn't running even though he was dripping wet. Everybody had come out of their houses to see what's

going. I just stood at the gate with Ntate Sithole, who was also shocked at the circus that was taking place in my mother's yard. She was livid and furious. I wouldn't be surprised if she started spitting fire and had smoke coming out of her ears. The both of them didn't even see me standing there.

Dad: Violet please!! I know I haven't..

Her: You know nothing stlaela ke wena(... You fool). Jy weet nix!! Fokol!!

He was about to say another word when my mother interjected

and said "I haven't changed Sam. Even a bit. I know I look like her but I am not Vivian whose feelings you used to trample and stomp on. The same Violet that used to smack your stupid big head back in the day is still the very same Violet that will stab your ashy buttocks today!! DO NOT TEST ME! I WILL KILL YOU YOU SLIMY BUSTARD!!"

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Insert 39.

After so many years? Why? Why would he now suddenly want to be

a part of my life? I don't understand. All these questions are floating in my head a week later. I haven't told Muzi about my father's attempted reincarnation back into my life. I keep my head glued to the outside as he plays with my thigh with his other hand on the steering wheel.

Him: Baby? Is everything okay?
I fake a smile and nod.

He looks at me dubiously but doesn't pursue this further. But I know he hasn't let it go. He's going to bring it up at some point.

We are on our way to Johannesburg. The braai or "young chillas" as he calls it is finally happening. He wanted to invite all his friends and colleagues but Mabuyi said a lot of guests are going to overwhelm her. I was also not in favour of throwing a huge thing. He ended up saying we're ganging up on him. Only his brothers, his best friend and their plus ones are going to be there. I redirected my thoughts to my wedding, which the planner is already breathing down my neck for a meeting.

He drove into his yard and everybody was already here doing up and downs, except Mbuso. He parked and we made our way out. A cute light skinned woman walked and warmed up to me. Her: Heyyyy. You're finally here. Yes I am but who are you? I thought to myself as she came in for a hug. I hugged her back. I don't know why this awkward for me.

Her: Mxx excuse my bad manners. Minenhle. Mandoba's wife.

She extended her hand for a handshake. I greeted her back. She is so beautiful! I don't know

if her pregnancy is exaggerating this but I wouldn't mind watching her all day. And she's so jolly. Her bump is small but I managed to feel it when we were hugging.

Me: It's a pleasure to meet you. She smiled and asked me if my lashes are extended. I laughed shyly and said no.

Her: You lie!!

Mandoba came to me for a rushed hug and said "Koti". He gulped his beer and left before I could respond. O-kay.

Mabuyi was sitting on a camp chair outside. She bent her head

so I could see because Enhle was obscuring her view. She smiled and raised her hand. I smiled back and waved back.

Enhle: Hamb' uyobona umnakwenu but please come and help me inside the house mus'qedile. (Go see your sister wife... when you're done)

She said and fixed the stance of her bra with her left hand. Her Zulu clicks are so deep. This woman has curves for days. She was dressed in a long black dress with slits that go up to her knees on both her sides. She looks so innocent and loving. Why would

Mandoba want to cheat on such a beautiful woman? Men.

I walk over to Mabuyi who was now on her phone. She was wearing an oversized white t-shirt and leggings and had black half socks on. She raises her head when she notices me.

Her: Mfazi ka bae

She says, smiles and puts her juice on the beverage holding compartment on her chair.

I laugh and say "Hey". There was another chair next to her. I take a seat.

Her: Unjan?

Me: No how are you? Muzi tells

me you couldn't stop vomiting this morning.

I say. I'm genuinely concerned.

Her: I'm fine now. I just hate him for convincing me to come here.

Me: Err.. I'm the one who's supposed to receive that punishment. I asked him to ask you to come.

She gave a subtle smile.

Her: I appreciate that.

I smile back and tell her I'm needed in the house. She complains about having to be left alone outside. The guys are probably at the back because that's where

MQ and MK disappeared to. I stand and take her hands into mine so she can stand. She does, though with great effort.

We walk into the house and find Ehle with another woman. The woman had her hands deep in a bowl marinating the meat. Ehle was slicing the cucumber on a chopping board. I greet the lady and she introduces herself as Bridgette. She's Mandla's wife. Speaking of Mandla, he walks in wearing a vest and beach shorts dragging his flip flops.

Him: Baby, I need a matchbox or a lighter.

He says, directing this to Bridgette.

Mabuyi: Buzza mina. Angithi yikwam lana. Awubulisi nok'bulisa. (Ask me. Isn't this my house? You didn't even greet)

She scolds as she limps towards a drawer. She takes the braai lighter and gives it to him and says "Mi!". He laughs and apologizes. He greets me passively and walks out, walking past Muzi who comes playing with his car key.

Mabuyi says she needs to lie down and tries to get up the stairs. Muzi quickly gets to her and

offers to help her up. She says she'll manage but he's not hearing any of it. She doesn't look okay, at all. I can also sense the concern around these women's faces.

After they're gone, Bridgette's eyes were dancing between me and her bowl of meat. She wanted to say something. I gave her a questioning look trying my best not to look rude.

Her: Can I ask you a question?

Me: Shoot.

Enhle had her eyes on us in wonder.

Bridgette: How do the both of

you do it?

Me: Do what?

Her: Share a man and still be able to be civil with each other.

I exhaled.

Me: I... I don't know. It's complicated. I'm still trying to get a grasp on it myself.

The look on her face tells me that this is not just a question asked from a place of mere curiosity.

Me: Why?

She then looks around her to check if there's anybody approaching or behind.

Her: My husband impregnated another woman and expects me to

welcome her in our home like she brings good faith.

Enhle: Isthembu neyi baby momma are completely different things. I wouldn't and I won't accept a baby momma slash side chick into my house mina!

She said this with so much aggression holding her knife into the air. The sweetheart is also showing psycho red flags.

Bridgette was terrified. She then calmly and slowly said "Okay. Okay. Put the knife down", trying to take the knife from her. Enhle exhaled and dropped her high chest. She then held on tightly to

the knife and dropped her fist to the black marble table top.

Enhle: I'm sorry. I'm just..

Mbuso walked in looking like he had just arrived.

Him: San'bonani.

Us: Hello.

I couldn't help but notice that Bridgette's "Hello" was draped in flirt sauces sprinkled with crush spices. She was busy blushing to the meat in the bowl, trying too hard to conceal a smile. Mbuso walked past us and went to look for the men. Muzi walked down the stairs in a vest, shorts and slides.

Enhle: How is she?

Him: She says her right leg is painful. She also said something about Tony Braxton something something.

Us: TONY BRAXTON!?

Him: Yes. Something about contractions.

Me: BRAXTON HICKS!!

Bridgette and Enhle exploded in fits of laughter.

Him: Yeah. That.

After the laughter evaporated, Enhle asked in concern, "Shouldn't we maybe take her to the hospital?"

Him: We were on the phone with

her doctor. She says they're normal. Mabuyi also said they're not that hectic. She just wants to nap.

Bridgette: True. They're called false labour pains. I went through the same.

Him: Haiyi that's my cue. Ithi ngin' shiye mina before you start talking about things that'll permanently block and damage my ears. (Let me leave you...)

We laughed and he went out.

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Insert 40.

The laughter from the men outside crept into and filled the house. The same wasn't true for occupants in kitchen. These women were speaking about the difficulty that comes as a tag attached to marriage. If all of this was a television broadcast, it would be expected to be The Perfect Sishebo show. But instead and on the complete contrary, I feel like I am on Relate.

Enhle says, while stirring the chakalaka pot on the stove, "I'm telling you oe, if I had a button somewhere on my body that I

could press in order to shut down all the feelings I have for Nathi trust me, I would." I see Mandoba approaching the door and I try to call out.

Me: Enhle...

Her: Honestly. I swore to my self that I would leave him for good if he started with his rubbish again. Nathi doesn't know me ungfunda emaphepheni(He's only read about me in the newspaper)!

Bridgette and I: Enhle!!

He walks in before we could stop her and hangs his ear in the air, attentively upon the call of his name. Bridgette clenched her

teeth and tightly closed her eyes. Enhle kept stirring and tasting the contents of her pot, blabbing and flowing like a waterfall after a heavy rain. Mandoba put his index finger on his lips, threatening us to keep quiet.

Enhle: Genge ngiyayithanda le ndoda kodwa the things he does? (Gang I love this man but...) He makes cute babies so I'm not mad about this pregnancy but I still pinch myself for the stupid mishap with the morning after pill.

The more she spoke, the more I realised that she was venting to

herself and not us. We were just there but as the audience. She didn't really need our input. She just needed to spring clean her chest. Woman, can you stop talking already? I thought to myself.

Enhle: Kodwa guys ungidlisile uNathi yaz. (He fed me a love portion) Actually no, ungithakathile u-guy. Inkinga yam I cannot resist his dick. (... He has bewitched me. My problem is..)

She then laughed sarcastically and said " But his sex ga..." and turned towards us and

immediately turned red in the face.

Her:... ga... game.

She said and pressed her lips together.

Mangoba smiled and walked towards her. She blushed from shame as MQ softly held her waist.

I laughed internally and looked away, embarrassed on her behalf.

Him: What was that about my sex game?

He smiled with his lips closed and looked her in the eye

She looked down shyly like a teenage girl listening to a boy

declaring his undying love to her.
They're so cute together.

He kissed her forehead and said
"Ngiyaxolisa thandolwami. I was
stupid. I'll never hurt you like
that ever again". She melted.
Game over.

Bridgette: Hayi get a room nina!
They still had their eyes locked in
each other. They didn't turn to
look at her.

MQ: Uyamuzwa lo mthakathi
baby?(Do you hear this witch?)
She laughed and kept her eyes on
him.

Her: Usatan nge skirt(The devil
in a skirt)

MQ: Sibenzani abathakathi kwaKhumalo?(What do we do with witches in the Khumalo household?)

She laughed harder, with her eyes still glued to her man's.

Her: Siyabashisa!(We burn them!)

MQ: Sim'shise?(Should we burn her?)

Her: Asim'bhabhadise k'qala(Let's baptize her first)

I couldn't stop laughing.

Bridgette was both amused and pissed at the same time. MQ

helped himself to his wife's lips

and grabbed her butt. I've never seen this soft, romantic and loving

side of him. It was amazing to watch but they were being a bunch of a lot. They might as well have sex on this kitchen counter! If we were in court as witnesses, we would've ended up behind bars for perjury because of this Mabena, Enhle.

Muzi walked and immediately said "Hayi hayi hayi hayi bafu!! Hayi!!"
Him: Silinde wena ngaphandle and you're in here rehearsing for pornography. Iphi nyama mfwethu? (We waiting for you outside... where's the meat?)
He wasn't impressed. MQ wasn't even affording him a second of his

attention. The sight of this ultimately became the cause of my death on the counter. I laughed until my eyes released tears. Bridgette was on some "Tell him!"

Muzi's eyes fell on me as I was wiping my tears with my index fingers. A smile escaped his lips. I blushed and smiled back.

Bridgette: Not you too!!

She said, throwing her hands in the air and getting off the bar stool. She left.

Muzi moved his lips in silence and I read "Ngiyakthanda". I did the same and told him I love him

back. He then shouted to his brother and said "Nqoba!!" He received no attention from him still. These two were on cloud 9. He turned to me again and whispered "Umuhle yezwa". I whispered back and said "Ngiyabonga Zikode". I couldn't stop blushing. He looked at his brother and shook his head in defeat. He lifted the bowl full of meat on the table, came over to kiss me and left.

I also decided to leave the two to sort out their issues because they now looked like they were

discussing something of considerable weight.

I wanted to go to the loo but I decided to make a detour to Muzi's bedroom to go check on Mabuyi. I got there and knocked to no answer. I was conflicted because I was worried about her. Opening the door would lend me some ease and peace of mind but also invade her privacy at the same time. I knocked once again but there was no answer. I slowly let my self only to find her fast asleep. Her hair was a mess but she was peaceful. I left. I am not ready for pregnancy.

I went back downstairs and found the women back to default settings, carrying on with making the salads, relish and other condiments.

Me: Ahh wena

I held out my hand as any African does to show disappointment.

She laughed out loud and said

"Awungiyeka mina. Eyam lendoda"

(Leave me alone. This man is mine)

Bridgette jumped in and said

"Haibo wenja!!"

"Were you not the one saying

"Nywis nywething mew nywis

nywething mew?" (He's hurting

he's hurting me)

I laughed.

Enhle: Wee oe, this the only man that knows where my g-spot is.

Awukahle. (wait a bit)

I laughed harder. You'd bet she wasn't the one who was ready to slaughter somebody moments ago.

Bridgette and Enhle we still arguing when a pair of people walked in.

Her: Surprise!!

Bridgette and Enhle were excited to see this beautiful young person. Enhle wiped her hands with a dishcloth and went over to hug her, excitedly jumping up and

down.

Enhle: Haibo why didn't you say that you're coming Thando!?

Her: And ruin the surprise? Hell. To the no.

The guy she came with was still standing by the door, supporting his hand on a suitcase handle. He greeted us and we all greeted back. She looked at me mindlessly and then quickly brought her popped eyes back to me.

She then walked over and said "You must be Bhut'MK's wife?". She hugged me before I could respond.

Her: I'm his little sister,

Milisuthando. Waze wamuhle bo.
My brother has an eye for
beautiful women Christ!
I laughed. She's forward. Bold.
She was dressed in a pair of blue
jeans ripped only at the knees, old
school Vans and a black crop top
written "Your man wants my
numbers but I want yours." This
sent some lesbian sirens to me
but I kept quiet. Maybe this is
just an innocent t-shirt. She kept
brushing her weave with her
hands and batting her false
lashes. Evelyn makes beautiful
babies.

MQ and MK walked in following each other and laughing at whatever silly topic they were discussing. Their smiles immediately faded upon the smell of foreign testosterone in the kitchen. Thando screamed and jumped on Muzi. He didn't smile but he caught her with one hand. She's so slender and petite. Does she even eat at all?

MQ: You must be looking for directions. Right?

He said, directing this to the young man, who now looked terrified.

MK: Angidayisi amaGPS mina

bafo. Directions njani la kwami? (I don't sell GPSs. What directions in my house?)

Him: Hayi bendithi.. (I was just...)

MQ: Khathule kwedin! (Shut up boy!)

Shame. He looks so innocent and nerdy with those glasses and his even and short combed hair.

Bridgette: Shushu bird. Ku thafuu. Ku tense. Kubi.

She said before she gulped down her large glass of red wine, trying to stop herself from laughing.

Thando: Can the both of you relax?

MQ: Wena Mrs big bro allowance,

kuzok'siza ukuvala lo mlomonyana wakho omncane if you don't want your cards declining.

She laughed and said " Imagine a whole Milly broke? An entire rich bitch nkosiyam. The founder of class and style. Imajene." She said and dramatically put her manicured and clawed hand on her forehead. She had white and extremely long acrylic nails.

Her: Me and broke cannot be used in the same sentence.

MK: Don't worry. You're not gonna be broke.

He softly said.

Her: I know ukuth uyangthanda

wena bhut'wam. Phela I'll forever
be the apple your eye. (I know
that you love me my brother)
She said and smiled, trying to be
and look cute.

Him: You're not gonna be broke my
love. You're gonna be broqué!

He exclaimed with his eyes on her.
She was still in his left hand. She
said "Mciim" and looked away.

Guy: I'll call you.

He said to Thando and rushed
out.

MK: Phone.

He said to her, holding out his
hand so she can submit it. She
tried throwing a tantrum but

Mandoba said "DECLINED!!". She thinned her eyes at him, pulled it out of her back pocket and aggressively put it in Muzi's hand.

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Insert 41.

We initially wanted to have the braai wholly outside but the weather just wasn't being cooperative anymore. It started drizzling lightly so the guys packed everything and brought it inside, including the meat.

Enhle and I set the table and Bridgette comes in with salad

bowls.

Mandoba looks at her and says "I hope there's pap amongst all that rabbit food".

Muzi laughs and makes his way upstairs.

Enhle: What kind of Zulu wives would we be if we fed you Greek salad mara baby?

Bridgette: Speak for yourself sis. Nditshatwe emaxhoseni mna bhabha.

We laughed. Thando came back because she had went to take a shower. She fixed and pulled down her short black dress which she had paired with gold LV slides.

She was eventually given her phone back but she's not allowed to leave the house.

Mandoba took out a piece of meat from the large Tupperware bowl it was placed in. We, the women all disgruntledly snapped at him to wash his hands first.

Thando: Urghhh microbes!!

Him: Yin' leyo?

Her: Bhuti germs.. bacteria.. pathogens

She was trying so hard to express her level of disgust.

Him: I don't see shit.

Muzi was helping Mabuyi to get down the stairs. She had also

taken a shower. She looked better than she did the last time I saw her.

Thando: Bhut'Nice please stop touching the food'ah. You can't see microorganisms with your naked eye. You actually need a microscope for that.

Him: Why do we need a microscope when we have amehlo ka Spha?

They all exploded in laughter. Is MQ roasting me? Really now?

I continued setting the cutlery, laughing in between defeated smiles while shaking my head.

Muzi was trying too hard not to laugh.

Him: Bafo. Please leave my wife alone.

MQ: Hawu. Yini?

He said and as he raised his hands to show confusion.

MQ: You have beautiful microsc..I mean your eyes. You have beautiful eyes makoti.

Everyone was still laughing.

When the joke finally expired and we were all seated around the table, Enhle insisted on saying grace. Her husband wasn't having it. He was already dishing up for himself.

Enhle: Baby vala amehlo sithandaze. I'll only take two

seconds. (Close your eyes so we can pray)

Him: My appetite cannot wait that long. And my stomach is not a Christian stomach. Mawunga k'thandazela lokudla thina abanye so gula. (If you pray for this food some of us will get sick)

Everyone couldn't stop laughing.

Her: Ngiyak'cela babakhe.

We were all holding hands. The chain was broken between Enhle and Mandla because of an obstacle by the name of Mandoba. He finally gave in to his wife's plea and put the bowl down and impatiently exhaled.

Enhle then started to pray in a low tone.

Her: Our father. Who art in Heaven, Creator of all. The source of all goodness and love, please kindly look upon us and receive our heartfelt gratitude for the food placed before us so it provide our bodies, Your temples Lord with all the nourishment they needs. This we ask in the name of The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Us: Amen.

Muzi: I swear I heard you say "Horny spirit".

These two are definitely seeds

from the same man! Everyone was laughing as Enhle was trying too hard to advocate for herself.

MQ: Baby, I'm the one that's sitting next to you and I'm also certain I heard you saying exactly that. Our ears can't be both faulty ngeke.

Mabuyi: Hayi guys she said HO-LY spirit. Holy.

She said as she also tried to contain her laughter. This argument was still in progress as we were all dishing up.

Mandla: That's not what my ears heard.

Mbuso also couldn't stop laughing.

They were ganging up on her. She eventually said "Yazin? The Lord is my witness. He knows I said Holy"

Bridgette: You lot are going to hell.

Mandoba: If there's alcohol there then I'm not even bothered.

These silly arguments were the only thing on the agenda for dinner.

The light rain had fortunately stopped after we were done packing away the dishes. The gents moved back outside with the chairs and beer packs. Mabuyi insisted on helping us clean up but

we all said no. She then sat on the chair and Bridgette filled her in on the drama that transpired with Enhle in the afternoon.

Her: Ngiyamazi lo (I know this one). She'll tell you how she hates him only to turn a jika on you after he dicks her down. She becomes a skilled sell out this one once she gets dickknified.

She said and we laughed.

Enhle: But indaba zabantu abathandanayo azingenwa guys. (Issues between lovers are not to be meddles in) Everybody knows this.

Mabuyi: Oh!? Oh!? Ku njalo manje?

Hoe'right. I don't ever want to see you here crying on my doorstep.

We continued laughing as Enhle hummed a song pretending like she didn't hear a thing while she packed the leftovers into the fridge.

Mabuyi couldn't stop yawning. The time was somewhere around 21h30. She stood up when we almost done and said she's heading to bed. Enhle asked where Thando disappeared to a minute before she came into the kitchen as we were still asking about her.

Mabuyi: Speak of the devil and she shall appear.

Thando laughed and came to play with her bump and kiss it over Mabuyi's dress. She then stood upright and gave her a mischievous smile.

Thando: Skwiiii?

Mabuyi: Ha-uh. I know that look. Ufunani?

Her: A small, tiny wincy favour.

Mabuyi gave her a "Speak!" look.

Thando: I need the iPhone 11 pro. She said and shyly closed her eyes with her palms.

Mabuyi: But Mandoba recently got you the X.

Her: That was before the 11 pro.

Mabuyi: If they release another one a day after he buys the pro then what?

Her: Then nothing. I promise.

Mabuyi: What do you do with all the money you get from all your brothers plus your parents because you can afford the phone yourself wena.

Thando: Money demands to be spent.

She lowly said and fiddled with her fingers.

Mabuyi: You're only 18 but the number of phones you've had so far equate to your underwear.

Thando laughed and pleaded with Mabuyi to speak to his brother on her behalf. Mabuyi didn't promise her anything but she did not say no either before she went upstairs to sleep. The gents flooded into the kitchen. Mandla took his wife by hand and they left. Mbuso said he's meeting up with friends and also left, walking out with Thando who was trying to sweet talk him into only-God-knows-what. Muzi asked MQ and Enhle when they're leaving and they simultaneously replied and said "who says we are?" He shook his head and laughed.

We went into living room and they chased each other upstairs. MQ stopped halfway the staircase and asked Muzi if his rooms are sound-proof.

Muzi said "Sies man" and we laughed except him.

Muzi held my waist and kissed me on the lips. He then sighed and said "I missed you". I laughed and said "But I was right here with you all day". He exhaled. Deeply. He's not okay.

Me: Baby what's wrong?

Him: Lutho. I'm just...(Nothing)

Me: Just???

He sunk down on the couch and I

went to sit next to him.

Him: I'm just worried about uMaDlamini.

I sighed.

Me: She looks better than she did this afternoon though. She's going to be fine.

He raised his head to look at me.

Him: We can't lose another baby.

My heart began cracking. I'm not used to seeing him in such a

state. I put my hand on his

shoulder because I didn't know

how else to comfort him. I never

thought I'd one day be sitting

and trying to make my man feel

better due to the complications of

another woman's pregnancy. Life is heavily addicted to wonders I tell you.

He shrunk his face and I saw a lot of exhaustion from that. He then got up and pulled me up so he can hug me.

Him: Can I please sleep with her tonight? Please baby? I promise we won't do a thing.

I didn't mean to laugh at his last statement but I did. He smiled in a surprised manner and continued waiting for an answer.

Me: You can. I'll be fine.

Thando walked in and said she'll sleep with me. She was

eavesdropping. I don't know how Muzi and I let that slide but we did. I brushed his shoulders and he kissed my forehead and rushed up the stairs.

I smiled to her as she took the TV remote and went upstairs.

I got there, took a shower and put on my pyjamas. I slid into my slippers and went back downstairs. I went into the living room and found her blushing on the phone. She panicked but I tried to assure her with a smile that I won't snitch on her. I went into the kitchen and poured myself a cold glass of orange juice.

I heard the TV go off and she came into the kitchen.

Her: You look tired.

She said and she took the glass from my hand and drank my juice.

This child! I can't resist her cuteness though so I shook my head and poured myself another glass. We locked the doors and went upstairs.

I moved my toiletry bag from the bed and got comfortable. She suddenly said "You won't tell him right?"

She said as she changed into her pyjamas. I laughed.

Me: No I won't. I don't like how

they're oppressing you to be honest.

Her: Right?

Her: I'm literally not allowed to speak to any boy around them.

They always say I'm not allowed to date. It's depressing.

I laughed.

Me: Is he your boyfriend?

I said curiously. She blushed and asked me why I'm asking.

I said "Mm-mh" and took my juice from the bedside table for a sip.

Her: You also think he's not my type like everybody else?

She says and laughs.

Me: Haha. I didn't..

Her: I know that's what you think. People keep expecting me to rock up with these Skrrs Skrrs with tattoos, piercings and the brain size of a single rice grain.

Well this is interesting

Me: Hawu. Are you not a Skrr skrr yourself wena?

Her: I am but I can't date one. I can't stand them. Xolani is smart, witty. Has a sense of humor for days!! He's a gentleman and I know for a fact that he's not with me for my family's riches because we are no different in that department. AND he cares about me.

She's rambling. She's trying so hard to explain why she's with him and I don't see any problem with their relationship. They're actually a very cute match. He looks like a nerd but he's handsome.

Me: Would you relax? He's hot.

Her: He is?

She sounded shocked by this. I shot out a laugh.

Me: Yeah! He's a hot nerd.

She laughed. She threw herself on the bed and laid cross-legged, with her head at my feet. She sighed. Heavily.

Her: It's just.. my friends make

me feel weird about being with him. The fact that we're in a long distance relationship does not help either. They ask me ALL the damn time why I'd "do this" to myself because he's at Wits and I'm at UCT. They always say he's not worth the wait.

She said and did quote marks with her fingers.

Me: You don't have to listen to them. Always do what makes YOU happy. He makes you happy right?

Her: Yeah. Yeah he does.

I could feel the warmth and the feeling of being loved from her

Voice.

Her: You know what?

She sat upright

Me: What?

She laughed before she spoke.

Her: You're right. You're totally right.

I smiled and continued drinking my juice.

Her: Can I ask you question?

Oh dear!

Me: Sure.

Her: How was your.. you know..

Confused. That was me.

Me: Nnnn-no. I don't.

Her: You know. Your first time?

She awkwardly moved her head

for emphasis. I laughed out loud and ended up choking on my juice.
Her: Don't laugh. I'm legit scared.
I finally composed myself. I honestly did not expect somebody of her nature to still be a virgin. I judged her too soon.

Me: You're serious? You're.. ?

Her: Yes.

She said and laughed.

Her: I. Am. A. Vir. Gin. And. Tonic.
I laughed out loud. She's crazy!

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Insert 42.

I guess it's true what they say.
Judging a book by its cover is
never a logical thing to do.

Thando: I'm honestly not
surprised that you're shocked.

People always perceive me wrongly
at first sight. All the time. Hell I
don't even party.

She says and laughs.

Her: There's absolutely nothing
wrong with partying by the way.
It's just that people often see a
non-existent party animal in me.

Me: But tell me. How did you
manage to get the tattoo on
your wrist with these Hulks as
your brothers?

We laughed out loud.

Her: I just said "if I die, I die" and went ahead and got it. 2 years ago.

Me: How did they react?

Her: They punched holes in a big box and put me there for 3 hours. See those boxes that washing machines come in? Bangfaka lapho bangvalela. Bangthathela ne phone. (They put me in there and closed the box. They also took my phone)

Me: Haibo! Where was your mother?

Her: 'My darling' was not home. She was overseas

I laughed out loud as she shook her head as if she's only digesting how crazy this actually was.

Evelyn's kids get high off imitating her accent.

Her: Luckily, they were considerate enough to give me water.

I laughed harder. I can't believe them. And this is the very same man I'm going to have kids by? I don't think I want a girl child anymore.

Her: If it was up to them, I'd stay at home and attend umhlanga forever.

Me: What's that?

Her: Ukuhlolwa

Me: Ukuhlolwa?

Her: Yeah. Virginity testing.

You've never heard of it?

Me: No. What happens there?

Her: We go there every year to get tested. It's apparently done to protect girls from

pregnancy, HIV and also instill good behaviour. I decided and stopped going. Luckily, my mom understood my point but dad and the rest didn't get it. They still don't.

Me: Why did you stop?

Her: I don't see the point. I don't believe that a woman becomes

any less of a woman if she loses her virginity or simply has sex. I hate how a woman's value is calculated based on the number of sexual partners she has had but men keep getting praises for having high body counts. What about the girls that lost their hymens due to rape and bicycle seats?

Me: But if it helps keep the pregnancy and HIV rates low it must be doing some good, right?

Her: I get that. What I hate is the disrespect that other virgins cast on those who are not "pure". It's not fair.

This issue is clearly close to her heart. How did we get to this hectic of a topic?

I just nodded and finished off my juice. I know nothing about Zulu culture at the end of the day.

Her: Anyway, how does it feel being so pretty? Are you even real?

I laughed out loud. What kind of a question is this? Does it come with a memorandum? Because I have no clue how to answer this.

Me: Stop.

I said as I continued laughing.

Her: No like amehlo wakho, iskhumba sakho, your body, nje,

yank'into(Your eyes,
skin,body,everything)

I can never get a break from
blushing in this house. She and
her brother are taking turns
with me.

I checked the time and it already
00h22. I just knew it was late
from how I was yawning. I told
her it's time for bed but she still
wanted to get ice cream. Her avid
vibrance makes me feel like I'm
old. Too old. I turned her down
and slept on top of the sheets. It
was mad hot. She gave up and
grabbed her phone.

Thando: Sis!?

I could hear her but it felt like it was from a great distance. I was highly intoxicated with deep sleep.

Thando: Sis!???

She said as she shook my entire body. If nature did not make provision for situations like this my lungs would've probably gotten vortexed with my intestines from how she was rapidly shaking me.

Me: Hmm!??

Her: Contractions! U Sis' Gugu!

The baby!!

What? She was panicking and not making sense but I understood. I rushed out of the room and she followed me. The door was wide open and she sitting on the edge of the bed, with her legs wide open. Enhle was wiping her sweat from her neck and faces. Mabuyi was dripping wet. Where is Muzi? I asked Thando and she said he rushed downstairs. What for? She was struggling to breathe so I went to kneel in front of her and held her hands.

Me: Breathe.

She rapidly shook her head indicating that she doesn't agree

with me. She doesn't want to breathe? I looked at her in the eye and "Mabuyi listen to me, breathe in" I said as I also did what I was instructing her to do. She followed suit. "In... and out...". I turned to Thando who was not helping with her panicking and told her to go find her brother. Muzi walked in and said the car is ready. He tried to touch her but he hit his hands and told him to leave her alone.

Him: Hawu mommy angithi..

Her: IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU
AND YOUR STUPID D**K I
WOULDN'T BE IN THIS

SITUATION.

Thando shot out a laugh. We all turned and looked at her and she immediately stopped and darted her eyes around. Mabuyi put her right hand behind her on the bed and arched her back. "Sssss

sssss". She kept hissing in pain.

Her: I can't give birth now. It's not yet time. I'm not ready.

Melokuhle you can't come out now please baby.

She shot out a sharp scream in anguish.

Muzi was just standing there, gawking at us.

Enhle: Don't be silly. You can do

this. Continue breathing.

Why are these people still here?

Me: Lena! Let's get this person to the hospital.

Muzi finally snapped out of it and carried her out. She didn't fight him. Is this even safe for the baby?

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Insert 42 cont..

"Doctor! Any news?"

Muzi yelled out to her as she was rushing to pass by in her blue scrubs. She stopped on her tracks and reversed towards us.

Mandoba: How is she? Has she given birth yet?

The dr exhaled and held on tightly to the brown file she had in hand and flapped it up and down.

Her: I'm afraid not.

She said and fixed her spectacles with her index finger.

Her: I'm not quite happy with her blood pressure. And, the baby is also not in the correct orientation. Meaning we have no choice but to perform a Caesarean section.

We kept quiet and pondered over what she had just said.

Her: If you'll excuse me.

She said and left. Muzi sunk down on the bench and wiped his face in frustration. Mandoba held and squeezed his shoulder.

**** A few hours later****

Thando called to check on how Mabuyi was doing. She and Enhle were left at home. The Dr approached and we all stood up with urgency.

Her: Are you the husband?

She said, directing his to Mandoba.

Him: No he is

Muzi: I am.

They said, simultaneously.

She smiled and said

"Congratulations daddy. You are now the father to a beautiful baby boy. He's doing way better than I expected."

Thank God! He sighed in relief and said "Thank you". Can I see her now?"

Dr: Of course!

With that, she walked away.

He turned to look at me and I assured him that he can go.

I was then left with Mandoba on the bench. He turned to look at me and asked, "How are you feeling?" I smiled faintly and told him I'm okay.

Him: This must be hard for you.

It is. I exhaled and shrugged to show my being speechless.

He came to sit down with me on the bench.

Him: Bheka, this is more than an ancient ancestral promise to MK. Uyak'thanda umjita. (Look... the guy loves you)

I laughed because this is an abused platitude. He laughed too and said "No I'm being honest.

I'm not trying to charm you on his behalf. I remember the first day he met you at PLK. I had heard him so excited to meet a lady before. He couldn't stop talking about your microscopes.. I

mean.. your eyes. He couldn't stop talking about your eyes"

I laughed out loud. Mandoba just wants to deplete the little energy I have left.

Muzi came back and said Mabuyi is going to be kept overnight for observation and said she wants to see me. This came as a surprise to me but I stood up and went over to her room.

Saying she was exhausted would be completely meiotic of me. She gave me a weak smile when I walked in and I walked over to sit next to her.

Me: How are you feeling?

Her: I'll survive.

I nodded.

Her: I wanted to say thank you.

Me: Hm?

Her: The reason I called you here.

I wanted to say thank you

Me: What for?

Her: I didn't expect you to be

that supportive this morning.

I smiled and said it's not a big

deal.

Her: Our husband is lucky to have

you as his wife. I am too.

This I did not expect. We've been

awkwardly nice to each other

lately but I did not expect this.

I smiled and squeezed her hand.

I don't know what to say. I asked her if I can see the baby and she said yes. I stood and went over to his incubator.

Me: Aww. Angise broody. (I'm so broody)

She laughed out loud and said "Good luck. Yise's kids will make your life a living hell. Trust me. I have double the experience". I laughed.

Me: Aww. He's so nunus maaan. He has Muzi's lips and nose.

She laughed and imitated Bridgette and said "Sembi"

I laughed out loud and we argued because Muzi is anything but ugly.

I was still admiring him when she said "Bee?"

Me: Hmm?

I said and looked at her.

Her: Can you do me a favour?

Me: Uhm.. depends. What kind?

Her: Bernini. Just two cold bottles.

I laughed. I can't believe this woman!

Her: I've been craving it for the longest time but everyone including your husband has been watching me like a hawk. Please.

Me: Are you not going to breastfeed?

Her: No. He's going to take baby

formula.

Me: Does Muzi know this?

She looked up and pretended not to have heard me.

I laughed. There's no way in hell I'm putting my marriage in jeopardy for her cravings. I'm growing more and more fonder of her as each day passes but I honestly cannot can't help her with this.

Enhle, Mandoba, Thando and I were playing Monopoly when Muzi walked in at around 17h00.

Mandoba insisted we give Muzi

and Mabuyu some privacy at the hospital so we left him there. He most probably Uber'ed his way back home.

Thando: Hayi hayi bhuti your dice throw gave you a 7. You moved 6 steps. Tronk toe!! Go to Jail.

I laughed because Mandoba was trying to rob his way out going to jail on the board. He's also been cheating and taking extra money from the bank.

Mandoba: Y'all are ganging up on me because I'm the only man around this table.

MK laughed when he walked and

said he can hear our noise from the gate.

Enhle said she's no longer playing because MQ is playing unfairly. I got up and went to check on my pots. Hubby followed me into the kitchen. The pap was ready. I dished it up old school style by using a huge bowl of water and dipping a smaller one into it before dishing up. I love doing this when I dish up for a group of people because it shapes the pap really well. I initially wanted to cook rice but got a big no from Mandoba.

Me: How is she?

He came to hold my waist from behind.

Him: She's fine but tired.

He said as he put his chin over my shoulder. He was watching me as I was dishing up the pap into different plates.

Him: You remind me of my grandmother ngendlela wenza ngayo lepapa (the way you're dishing this pap)

I laughed softly.

He pushed himself against my butt and I felt his erection.

Me: Really!?

Him: What? Ukuk' bona nje, kvuka nezinto ey'lele sthandwasam.

(The sight of you awakens sleeping things)

I laughed.

Thando walked in. Muzi kept his hands around me.

Her: Kdliwani la ekhaya?(What are we eating?)

Me: Kesale busy ka seshebo. (I'm still busy with the relish)

Muzi: Are you still Pilchardterian wena?

I laughed.

Her: PES-CE-TA-RI-AN!

Me: You're a pescetarian Thando? Why didn't you say? I didn't not defrost the fish mina.

Her: Ah it's okay. I'm going out

anyway.

Him: Is it? How lovely.

He said, Sarcastically.

Her: Please, My darling.

Muzi laughed at this imitation of his mother's accent.

Him: Nice try. Take your a** back into the living room and order some seafood. I'll pay. She said "Mciim" and stormed out.

Me: Is this how you're going to treat our baby girl?

Him: That one is going to live on Mars. Angimfun nje around abafana. I don't even want them breathing around her.

I laughed. (I don't want her

around boys)

Me: But ubusy ngami la as if I'm not somebody else's child. . (You're busy with me..)

Him: Exactly. I know what we're capable of angithi.

I laughed out loud and said

"Mciim". I took the wooden spoon and checked on my beef stew.

Mandoba's choice. He's in charge of the kitchen but has not lifted a finger. I tasted it and I was satisfied.

I switched off the stove and

Muzi said he thought I'd never finish. We got upstairs and he

locked the door. (Removed). When

we were done, I laid on his chest and kept kissing the top of my head. "When are we going house hunting?" He asked.

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Insert 43.

One month later

Evelyn and Mabuyi's mother insisted that she comes back home so they will both be able to help her raise the baby since it's her first. Mabuyi's mother also made mention of the fact that Muzi might spiritually affect the baby's health and immune system

because "there's another person he's sleeping with apart from Gugulethu". I felt offended by this but my mom says it works the same way in our culture.

Apparently men were prohibited from seeing a new baby in the olden days. Muzi will not have any of this. She was taken home and he went to see his son after a week whereas he was told that he should only see him after a month. He can't stop talking about Okuhle. The love he has for his son gives me mixed emotions. I'm happy he's portraying great fatherly traits but at the same

time, I feel like I'm not wife enough for him since she gave him something I haven't. I always make sure not to entertain this feeling because I am no where near ready for a child.

Today is a Thursday and I'm struggling to keep my eyes open. I don't know when and how I zoomed out but...

Mr Moko: Motlhabane!!

I jump from my desk and wipe my eyes, frightened.

Him: My office. Now!

I nod my head nervously and immediately get on my feet. He's already out of sight.

Amu approaches with her coffee mug and asks in concern. "Swilo yini wena?" (What's going on with you?)

I exhale. I'm honestly tired. I never sleep on the job.

She hands the mug to me says "Here. You need this more than I do". I smile and ask her to keep it for me as I go attend my hearing. She laughs and says "Goodluck". I scurry off to the boss's office at once.

I walk in and he raises his eyes under his glasses from the file he was observing and fixes them on me. I rush to take a seat and

immediately apologize for my unprofessional behaviour.

Me: Sir I am so so sorr..

He raises his hand and immediately shut my pap hole. He takes off his glasses and squints before he speaks.

Him: Boikokobetso.

I'm in sh**. My job is officially in the pits. Mr Moko never calls his employees by name unless he is ready to fire or slap you across the face with a written warning.

Me: Sir I can expla...

He purses his lips in annoyance, enough for me to eat and swallow a thick and multi-layered shut-up.

He exhales.

Him: Look, you're one of my trusted and valued employees if not the most. But recently I have been feeling like you're slacking. When you first walked into this office asking me for a job, refusing to speak to nobody else but the CEO, I knew right there and then that this is the kind of energy I need around here. And indeed you never took the opportunity for granted. You worked hard. Harder than everybody else including all the executives in this office. You went the extra mile. And I just knew

that I did not make a mistake with hiring you even though you had no experience.

My head was bowed in shame as he uttered these words. They were like a dagger in my heart regardless of all the complements his paragraph was laced with.

This is the moment that made me feel like I'm turning into the girl I swore to and agreed with myself and I that we shall never become and metastasize into. The girl that lets go of her dreams for and because of a man. I've been slacking. It's true. And it hurts.

Mr Moko: MOTLHABANE!!

I immediately snapped out of it.

Dammit Remofilwe!!

I was about to speak when he cut me and said "I don't want to hear it. I'm putting the

Champion Health campaign in your hands. I want you to manage this project and put this company on the map. They are rebranding and they want their brand to be unique and stand out. Mr Miles is not an easy man to please"

What? Champion Health is a huge company.

Me: Sir I can't..

Him: If you stop sleeping on your

self you can and you will. Make me and Mr Miles proud and maybe, just maybe, you might find yourself as the official project manager around here. Now, close the door on your way out."

He puts his glasses back on and swiftly pulls his laptop screen up. He's done talking. I push the chair back and walk out.

It's lunch time and I can't get Mr Moko's words out of my confused head.

Amu: Earth calling Kokobetso.

She says, slowly waving her hand in my face. I smile. She puts the paper bag on the desk and she

wheels the nearest chair and sits next to me.

Her: You okay?

She says as she pulls the sandwiches out and two bottles of juice. She takes the seemingly empty bag and looks into it, taking out serviettes and 2 paper straws.

Me: I'm just tired you know.

Her: Wanna talk about it?

She says and pushes her spectacles back, fixing them.

I love her. I've met kind and sweet people before but this one was cut from a different cloth.

She's also so simple. With her

glasses and neatly combed short hair. A plain Jane defined.

Me: Not really.

Her: Ever since you got engaged you've been weird. Incrementally.

She says and opens the plastic container, taking out two slices sandwiched with ham, cheese and mayo. I exhale.

Me: You would too if the love of your life was in love with another woman.

She pops her eyes with the bread in mouth as she was about to take a bite and almost chokes.

She takes it out and says "Chea.. cheating already!?" She almosted

shouted but lowered her voice to whisper.

Me: No he's not. He's married.
It's complicated.

I say and fall back on my chair, carelessly allowing my head to fall back.

Her: Anik' twisisi (I don't understand)

Me: It's a long story. But in short, we're both his wives.

She was lost. Completely. But I had no energy to be explaining this whole circus I call my life.

She stands and says "we'll talk when you're ready. Okay?"

Putting her hand on my shoulder.

I faintly smile and put mine over hers. She makes two subsequent kissing sounds, picks up her lunch and leaves for her desk. We always know when to give each other space.

Finally. I get to leave. But I can't afford to get excited because I still have a meeting with my wedding planner. These wedding preparations are going to be the death of me. I rush home and take a quick shower. I put on a pair of black leggings and a baby blue tank top. I rush to the kitchen and take out my left over mac and cheese from the fridge

and put it in the microwave, after adding a few extra layers of cheese. I'm not happy with my recent eating habits.

My phone rings just after I'm done setting the timer on the microwave and I rush to answer it. "Hey baby". I say excitedly. I've missed him so much because he's been in and out of meetings since this day started so we couldn't talk. We don't talk as much as we did since he's back at the office now. Full time.

Him: Hey you.

I can feel his smile over the phone.

Me: Unjani?

Him: Yoh! Ngidinga imassage from a set of very special hands.

I laugh. He loves my massages.

Just as much as I love his.

Me: Are you done for the day?

Him: I wish. I'm heading to the site in a few minutes. There's a few things or should I say people I need to sort out there. And the worse part about all of this is that, I'm not going to find you when I get home.

Me: Aw, I'm sorry baby. I wish there wa..

I hear a dramatic knock on my door before I can finish my

sentence.

Me: I have to go baby. There's somebody at the door.

"Ahhhhhhh!!!!!!!" I scream at the sight of him.

Him: Eh Labantwana ba wrongo

Eh Labantwana ama uber

Eh Labantwana ama dumanani

Eh bayithatha bayifaka

emakhaleni ,

bayithatha bayifaka emakhaleni

bay'user. iYeboo!!"

Me: Hee nga lala mina

Him: Hee nga vuka mina

Me: Hee bath ugezele kitchen.

Oku worse endishin.

Him: Nge vaslaap ka mamncan

We burst out laughing after that performance like the idiots we always turn into whenever we are together. He throws his hands around me and I hug him back.
Me: OMG why didn't you tell me you're home.

Him: God!!! You have no idea how much I've missed your fat ass
I immediately push him away.

Me: My fat ass?

I could feel tears filling up the wells of my eyes.

A puzzled yet concerned look grew on his face

Him: Friend I always call you fat but it's never a big deal. The

same you say I have big ears but I never take it to heart. Are you okay?

He's right. I don't even know why I'm even crying. I wipe my tears and look at him. We take a few seconds and then explode into fits of laughter.

He finally walks in and says "D**k deficiency syndrome. Otshwere ke matswaimus" (You're experiencing high levels of salt). I laughed at how he moved from 'Marasmus' to 'Matswaimus'.

He throws his entire self on the couch and takes the remote control. I walk back into the

kitchen and say "Cape Town literally falls in love with you every year. Bona complexion" He laughs and says "No darling. We bath. It's a norm that side". I was about to clapback when I received another knock on the door. That must be my wedding planner. I walk over to the door with the mac Tupperware in one hand and a fork in the other. I walk as I eat and finally get to the door. I was about to greet before he shoved his aqua file in my hands and took my food, letting himself in. Tumi moved his eyes from his phone and

immediately stood up, extending his hand for a handshake.

Him: The name is Boitumelo! Yourself?

He's seeing his next victim. I know this look on his face.

Tlhogi greeted him back with the same energy and said it's a pleasure to meet him. Their handshake took longer than it legally should until I said "Of course. Turn my place into live Tinder why don't you?"

Tlhogi finally, slowly let go of Tumi's hand said "Riiiiiiiiight briiiide! Let's get to work shall we?". They still had their flirty

eyes on locked in each other.

I rolled my eyes in annoyance and took my food back.

I ended up sleeping yesterday after having my late lunch. My visitors took no notice of this because they were both preoccupied with each other.

Tumi slept over and I spent the whole night trying to get him to understand this whole situation with Muzi, ancestors, Gugu and everything in between. He still did not get it but ended the conversation with "This some

black voodoo s***+ but if you're comfortable with it I'm not going to judge you. I'm more comfortable with his wallet". I laughed and said I can't believe him. His comeback to that was "Even Makhadzi said it, munna a naki u naka tshikwama" (Direct translation: A man can never be pretty. Only his pocket can do that.) We ended up falling asleep on the couch after all his madness. He left this morning when I had to go to work.

Work was normal. Mr Moko was not in today. He barely comes to the office on Fridays which was

my luck because I unintentionally fell asleep again on my desk, again! Muzi called me around lunch and told me he's around and that he'll come fetch me after he's done with his meetings at MaloCon. The call was rushed so I knew he was really busy. I couldn't contain my excitement. I suddenly felt like time was not moving as it normally does.

Knock-off time finally hit and I tried calling him. To my disappointment, his phone was off. I held a small crying session in the loo before leaving work. If this man no longer loves me he

should just say so.

After I managed to pull myself together, I took my things and went out to the nearest McDonalds. No matter how much I try to suspend and ignore the craving for their chicken fold over, I always and eventually give in to it. I got there and placed my order, including two big macs and their chicken nuggets. He called me and I rejected his call. He sent me a text saying "Phendula" (Answer). Controlling prick.

He called twice before I finally decided to take his call.

Me: What do you want?

He sharply replied

"Angizwa?" (Excuse me?)

I kept quiet.

Him: Ukuphi? (Where are you?)

Her: Ey'ndaweni zami (My places)

Him: Yonke le nyovadam le

uyiyenzayo yi application yoku

khala sthandwasam and I'm

going to approve it. (All this mess

you're doing is an application to

cry...)

He calmly said. He's not even

apologizing for his wrong doings. I

decided to hold on to my silence.

Him: Where are you?

Him: Actually, send me your

location khona manje. (Right now)
I was about to reply when he cut
the call. I'm not his puppet and
he's gonna know this today.

"O jewa ke bodutu?" (You look
lonely?)

I raised my eyes from my phone,
following this voice.

I smiled awkwardly and said no.

Him: Waiting for somebody?

Me: No I'm just waiting for my
order.

Can he just go away already? Yoh
he's taking a seat.

Him: Whatever is on that phone
must be interesting.

Bathong wena. I thought to

myself. It takes a lot for me to be rude to a person. He hasn't met the requirements yet so I just smile awkwardly and say "Nah not really".

Him: But you look familiar man. I knew this plan B question was coming. What's really wrong with men?

Me: I do?

Him: Aren't you one of the ladies that organized my niece's birthday party? With the Frozen theme? The day it rained and people thought it would be over but yall improvised and took it indoors instead? At Flora Park?

Now that he mentions it, it is not the first time I'm seeing this face.

Me: Ohh I remember you. You were a lot of help with your van that day. For free nogal. I'm still grateful.

I said and smiled

Him: Arg, anything for my niece Arg. He's so sweet. We continued talking and laughing until I noticed that his attention moved to something that was behind me.

I turned my head and I was met by Muzi's unimpressed face.

Unimpressed but calm as always.

He held my shoulders and kissed my cheek. The guy stood up and extended his hand for a greeting. Muzi looked at it, back at him and just said "Sawubona". The guy shamefully retracted his hand and darted his eyes around. Only then did Muzi extend his hand saying "Her husband. And you are?". The guy greeted back and said "James. Pleased to meet you. You have a beautiful wife. What do you feed her? Her glows says a lot". Oh my God he's blabbing. The myötähäpeä I was experiencing could not be described. Muzi: What do I feed her?

His face said he was confused by this question. Cat had caught the guy's tongue.

Muzi again: Good d**k. Is**de.

That's what I feed her

EARTH SWALLOW ME NOW!

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Insert 44.

The level of embarrassment hanging over my head would break a scale. The guy excused himself and Muzi watched him walk away till he was out of sight and then took a seat. I just looked at him and stood up to go collect my

order. I walked out of the shop and he followed me out. Whoever might have been watching us probably thinks he's harassing me or that we both have a few screws loose.

He stopped me outside of the shop and asked to take my things.

Him: I thi ngik' phathise? (Let me help you carry these)

I was struggling to carry the paper bag, my handbag and laptop bag all at once but I wasn't going to allow him to manipulate me.

Me: I'll manage.

Him: Le nkani ewunayo ayizo

sebenza la kimina. (Your stubbornness is not going to work with me)

I exhaled and looked away. How could he speak to me like that?

My tears went ahead of me before I could grant them the

permission to. A concerned look grew on his face. He took

everything from me and

instructed me that we go to his car. I followed him.

He put everything in the

backseat and came to open the

door for me. I got in and he also

did the same shortly afterwards.

I looked but his entire upper body

was facing my direction.

Him: Mkami?

I fixed my eyes outside.

Him: Baby what's going on? Besi right a few hours ago kodwa manje uvutha amalangabe.

Ngenzen? (... now you're flaming in anger. What have I done?)

Me: I'd really appreciate it if you had told me that your feelings changed towards me instead of leaving me hanging.

Immediate confusion fell upon his face.

Him: What are you..? My feelings? Ukhuluma ngan? (What are you talking about?)

Me: You could've just told me that you don't love me anymore instead of switching your phone off when you were supposed to be fetching me from work.

He laughed. This man is testing my patience and I'm quarter to erupting.

Him: Baby?

He was still laughing. I looked away. He took my hand into both of his and said "Sthandwasam. My battery died. I called you immediately after I got to the hotel ubonile nawe it was just a few minutes after your knock off time". He couldn't even articulate

his thoughts properly because he couldn't stop laughing. The tears again! I wiped them and he saw this. He immediately stopped laughing.

He took me in his hands, still confused. I cried louder. He held me tighter.

Him: Hawu ngiyaxolisa baby I didn't know that my battery dying would hurt you this way (I'm sorry)

Me: 30 minutes is not "a few minutes"

Him: Ngiyazi. Ngiyaxolisa nje sthandwasami. Ngixolele phela. Ngizo ilahla le phone I can't allow

it to hurt you this way. (I know. I'm sorry my love. Forgive me. I'm going to throw this phone away...)

I shot out a laugh and moved my body from his. I sat back on my seat and wiped my tears. He was looking me, smiling.

I looked at him and told him I'm hungry. He pulled the paper bag with his left hand from the back seat and gave it to me.

I took out the fold over and began eating. He was still looking at me, more like studying me. I got a bit uncomfortable and asked him "What?" with food in my

mouth.

He widened his smile and asked "U right manje?"

I nodded. He said okay and began driving.

While on the road, he asked "Are you going to finish all of that?" I thinned my eyes and frowned. He ended the conversation by saying "Ngiyadlala." (I'm kidding). I clicked my tongue in irritation and continued eating.

He drove to his hotel because he apparently had work to do and left his laptop there. We got there and he took off his t-shirt and shoes saying he's heating up.

He was barefoot, left in just his jeans.

Me: I need a shower. I feel sticky.

Him: You don't have to ask baby. He said as he took his laptop and sunk down on the single couch in the room, with his knees raised and heels off the floor.

I took off my clothes and went in to take a cold shower. I never take cold showers but I felt I needed it. It was godforsakenly hot. I got done and wore the t-shirt he took off and asked him for clean underwear. He laughed and directed me to his suitcase by

pointing with his eyes. I took it out and wore it. He raised his eyes from his screen and bit his lower lip.

Him: I love how your ass fills that up. And that hole? Lord! I laughed. He was referring to my bullet hole. I threw my towel on him and he ducked while laughing. I told him to focus and threw myself on the bed. I kept pondering over Mr Moko's words. I didn't know whether tell Muzi or not because he wants me to quit my job. He has said it in so many words. My thoughts

ushered me into sleep as I lay on my stomach.

That nap turned into me slipping into a complete coma. I slept around 5 but when I woke up and checked the time it was 23h10. I had 2 missed calls from my mother and 1 from an unknown number. Why didn't Muzi wake me up? I called mom back twice but she didn't answer. I gave up. I was worried but calling a person countless times will not make their phone ring any louder. The door to the balcony was open and

curtain was dancing, allowing the freshest of all air to cruise through and caress my skin. I got up and walked there barefoot. He raised his head from his phone and smiled at me as I approached.

I went to sit on his thigh, parting his legs with my lower body. I put my head on shoulder. He took his phone and put it on the table so he could wrap his arms around me. "You okay?" He softly said.

Me: I'm fine. I just want you to hold me.

I woke up feeling a bit down and

I had no reason to account for it. My mom's calls did not aid and succor my case in any way also. He exhaled and tightened his wrap around me.

Me: O jele? (Have you eaten?)

Him: Yeah. I kept your food for you. I just didn't want to disturb you. You looked so peaceful.

I faintly laughed. Then silence.

Him: You know you can talk to me about anything. Right?

Me: I know.

I said, fixing my head on my pillow, his shoulder. I exhaled before I could speak.

Me: My boss wants me to be in

char...

My phone rang before I could finish my sentence. I immediately knew that it was my mom because I've set a customized tone for her.

I got up and went to attend to it.

Me: Hello mama.

Her: Remofilwe! Le busy ka eng mowe lesa arabe ledi

phone?(What are you busy with so much that you don't answer your phones?)

She said, agitated.

Me: I was sleeping mama askiies. What's wrong?

Her: Why is your sister's phone off? Mofe phone (Give her the phone)

Me: Mang Kgantsho? Boikgantsho ha gona mo.

Her: Filwe Kgantsho left this house around 4 saying she's on her way there.

Me: Geore there you mean my place?

Her: Yes dammit.

I felt my intestines ligating in between themselves into a fast knot!

Me: I haven't spoken to Kgantsho in over a week mama and she never told me anything

about coming here.

Her: Filwe?

She said. She's a minute away from panicking.

Me: Mama?

My heart is swimming in ice.

Where is my sister? I asked myself as Muzi walked in with worry smeared all over his face.

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Insert 45.

I can't help but feel my blood freezing and frosting over this.

Why would Kgantsho want to come all the way here and not say

a word?

Me: Ma let me see if I can't find her. If not then we're calling the police.

I cut the call and suddenly ground to a halt.

Muzi: Baby what's wrong?

I looked at him blankly and sunk down on the edge of the bed. I quickly came back to my senses and dialled Kgantsho's number. It was still off. I called the unknown number with desperate hope that it might be her. It was a 'wrong number'. Dammit!

Muzi came to sit beside me and looked at me.

Him: Ngeke ngikwazi ukukusiza mengabe awungitsheli ukuthi kwenzakalani (I can't help you if you don't tell me what's going on?)

Me: I think my sister is missing. He bit his upper lip. He does this when he's thinking of a solution to a problem at hand.

Him: What makes you think she's missing?

Me: She left home around 4 on her way here. I still haven't received any call from her and she never told me she's coming.

Him: Maybe... maybe she went to see a boyfriend or something.

Me: She's married. Besides, I think I would know about it if she was cheating.

He exhaled. He then took his phone and dialled. He put it on loudspeaker.

MQ: Gaz'lam

MK: Sho. U grand?

MQ: Yeah I'm fine. I can't say you sound the same.

MK: Is it possible for you to track a phone even if it's off?

MQ: Yeah but It'll take longer.

Awuzang' umthole uSpha ngalesa skhathi?

MK: No u baby u right. It's her sis that's missing.

MQ: Since when?

MK: Around 4.

MQ: Uhm.. ng'sendele inumber yakhe and ask Spha the model of the phone she's using to save time.

Me: iPhone 8 plus.

MQ: Ayayaya

He said. This is not what he wanted to hear.

Me: You won't be able to find her?

Him: No I will. I was just hoping that she's using android because its quicker to maneuver compared to IOS. Especially because it is off.

I put my hand over my mouth. I

don't know how I'm feeling.

MQ: Yazin? Give me an hour. Max.

Spha send the number.

He said and cut the call.

I sent him my sister's number.

Yise immediately had a light bulb moment and asked me if my sister drives.

Me: Yeah but I doubt she was using her car today because she said something about her carburetor and mechanic giving her hassles. She had to use public transport. That was a week ago.

Him: It's worth a shot. Ask your mom. If we find her car then we'll most probably find her too.

I called my mom immediately and asked. She said she took a taxi. Arg dammit. I told her that I'm calling the police and she said okay. She was severely down and couldn't hide it.

Muzi asked me to wait for Mandoba to call before we can call the cops. I said okay. Which brought to me to the question.

Me: What does Mandoba do for a living?

Him: Uhm.. why?

Me: I'm just curious.

Him: He's an I.T guru. He used to work for Telkom but quit 2 years ago when he started his own

thing.

Me: Own thing? Tracking people?

Him: No that's more like a side hustle. He's a hacking wizard.

A professional hacker? I don't think I like the sound of this. So he's the one who always gives Muzi my location?

As promised, Mandoba called an hour later and spoke to Muzi while I waited anxiously to hear what's going.

MK: Yoh. U sure mfowethu?

He exhaled and raised his eyes to look at me. I don't like the pity I'm seeing in them.

MK: Okay ithi ngihlanganise

amajita and get them to raid the place then if it is so we call the cops. (...Let me put together a team...)

MK: Sure case.

Me: And???

Him: Sthandwasami, bheka. Allow me to confirm MQ's suspicions first before...

Yey! I felt the crazy worm in my brain recklessly running loose and forcefully drilling a hole into my cerebrum.

Me: Don't try and infantilize me man Phakamani. I am your wife for God's sake stop treating me like a child whenever there's

something important I need to know!! Where the fuck is my sister!?

Him: Yehlis' umoya (Calm down)
He calmly said as he fixed his eyes on the screen, scrolling through his phone. Urrrrrrghh!! I felt like taking his entire self and smashing him against the wall along with his stupid phone.

He dialled.

Him: Sho Tebza?

Him: Ngi right. Uyayazi indawo ekthiwa yi ka Kga-Makganye something something? (Do you know a place called...)

Ga-Makanye? What would

Kgantsho be doing there?

Him: I'm going to send you a location and a picture. I need you to go there, niyi bhekise phansi na phezulu leya ndawo looking for that lady. Understood? (Turn the place upside down...)

Him: Sharp.

I was listening to him as I put my head in between my thighs and my hands over it. Something is wrong and I can feel it.

Something is not right. I couldn't help but cry. That's all I could do. He picked me up and positioned me properly on the bed. He then came to lie behind me and held me

tight. He waited for me to calm down before he could speak. How does he manage to remain so calm no matter the form or delicacy of a situation?

Him: Baby. As indoda yakho, you need to understand that I need to do everything in my power to protect from anything that might hurt you. In any way, shape or form. I'm not undermining you or disrespecting your intelligence when I hide certain things from you. And also, I didn't know that you viewed it like that. I'm not perfect. I'm trying my best to love as correctly

as possible. But I will slip up at some point and it's your duty as my wife to guide me. Ngiyaxolisa for ukuk'zwisa ubhlungu. My heart breaks when you're hurt and worse if it's because of me (I'm sorry for hurting you...)

I appreciate his ability to apologize when he sees that he is wrong. But the elephant in the room is still stepping on and crushing my curiosity.

Me: I hear you Mbulazi. But where is my sister?

He exhaled.

Him: Your sister's phone is in some remote area in some village.

I felt cold in my stomach.

Him: We're hoping that it's just the phone and not her.

By "Remote" does he mean some sort of a forest or something?

His phone rang before I could interrogate him any further.

Him: Yes?

Him: Manje?

He went silent for a little bit.

Him: Niwa bizile amaphoyisa? (Did you call the police?)

Him: Don't touch anything. We're on our way.

He cut the call and I turned towards him.

Him: Qcoka (Get dressed)

I don't like the look on his face.
He got up from the bed and got dressed.

Me: Where are we going?

He dropped his hands with his t-shirt in his hands and took a heavy breathe out. He held out his hand indicating that I should come to him. I did. He took me in his arms and held me tight.

Me: Baby what's going on?

I lowly said.

Him: Your... We need to..

Silence. I had no strength to force him to speak because I was certain I wasn't going to like whatever it was that was

blocking his chest.

Him: We need to go so you can identify your sister's body.

I stood there. In his arms.

Motionless. I couldn't cry. I

couldn't speak. I wanted to

scream. I couldn't. I wanted to

define how I feel, to myself but...

I couldn't.

He held me tighter. I did not

respond. I just stood there. I

gently pushed him away from me

and said "We need to go".

Him: How are you feeling?

He asked. With great concern on

his face.

Him: My sister is dead. How do you

expect me to feel? Tell me so I can execute that as per your vision.

Him: Sthandwasami...

He tried to touch me but I raised my hand to show him that he needs to stop talking. I took my clothes and put them on in silence. I had a lot of questions. I had a lot of questions that needed answers but the strength. The strength to ask them was what I did not have.

He wore his clothes too and we walked out. We drove to the place and my phone was ringing off the hook. Muzi asked me to answer it

and tell her because ignoring her will not help any one's case. I called her back.

Me: Mama

Her: Have you called the police?

Me: Yeah but..

Her: But what?

I couldn't!

Me: Ma can we talk when I get there?

I said and cut the call and put my phone on flight mode. I don't want to do this to her but I have no choice. I can't risk her collapsing over this. I'd rather lose one member than my entire family.

We got there and found the place screaming "CRIME SCENE" from all the tapes and the flashing police lights in the area. A man with blue latex gloves and a gun on his waist pulled the yellow tape up and approached us.

Him: You can't be here I sugg..

Muzi: Look. We just want to see if the person in there is my sister-in-law

This place was very dark and dodgy. It looked like a forest you'd associate with hell and all it's sub-agendas. It was quite obvious that a lot of bad things happen there.

Him: You can do that after we are done collecting the evidence.

Another man came approaching and shook Muzi's hand.

Him: Mntungwa.

They know each other?

Muzi: Detective. Can we see her?

Him: How did you know about all of this?

Muzi: You thought I was just going to sit around and wait for you to give me the run-around with your common "Sisa phenya" tendencies? Ni useless kabi nina.

(... we're still investigating..)

The forensic guy threw his hands in the air and left.

Him: Kahle. Yehlis' umoya.

He exhaled. Muzi exhaled.

Muzi: We just want to see her and confirm if it's really her. That's it.

Him: After the collection of the evidence you can.

Muzi: Uyakhohlwa wena ukuthi umsebenzi wakho use zandleni zami. Ngicela unga ngi casuli Gxhabashe. Ngath uyakhohlwa ukhuthi wa suswa yini le eKZN? (You tend to forget that your job is at my mercy. Please don't post me off Gxhabashe. You're forgetting what made you relocate from KZN to here)

Him: Ngiyazi mfowethu ngithe yehlis'umoya. Ngiyabuya manje (I know bro calm down. I'll be back just now)

He said in almost a whisper.

Muzi: NXN.

I kept my silence. We just stared at one another.

The detective came back and I interrupted him as he was about to speak.

Me: What really happened here?

He exhaled.

Him: There's a group of taxi drivers that's working with foreign nationals to harvest body parts.

Extreme heat escaped my head. I suddenly felt dizzy. Muzi held my hand. Tightly.

Him: A woman has been victimized in that same manner. They took all her vital organs and came to dump her here with all her belongings. We suspect that she's a statistic of such a crime by these drivers.

Muzi: How does something like this happen? Aren't there laws that govern a passenger's safety at taxi ranks?

Him: They take them at the rank and do taxi exchanges along the road claiming to no longer be going

in the same direction as the some of the passengers. When they get into the new taxi, they are drugged by a substance in the air. Him: This is not how we usually do things but wozani. You said you want to see her right? Come. I suddenly had doubts. Is this the last image of my sister I want in my head? I looked at Muzi once and ran to the side to throw up. Muzi came and brushed my back as I held both my knees for balance. I am not emotionally equipped for this hell I call my life.

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Insert 46.

I can't. I can't see her in such a heart wrenching state. I don't want to. I couldn't stop vomiting. Muzi kept brushing my back in silence. When I finally stopped, he took out a clean handkerchief from his pocket and handed it to me. I slowly wiped my mouth but I let my tears continue falling.

Him: Let me be the one to check if it's really her. I don't think you'll be able to handle all of this.

Me: Goatshwana. You've never seen her before. (It's pointless)

Him: You showed me pictures.

Me: Dead people look nothing like their pictures.

Him: Okay. Any special features?

Apart from her naevus mark?

Me: Keng eo? (What's that?)

Him: The mole underneath her lower lip?

Me: Uhm..

I said as I tried to think and clean my messed up face at the same time.

Me: She... she has..

My brain wasn't working.

He took me in his arms and said "Take your time". That was enough for me to crumble in

lamentation. He kept saying "Shh shh" but that too wasn't helping. If it isn't her then what is her bag doing here? We are just curious about the blatant obvious here.

I collected myself and finally managed to speak. I slowly removed myself from his warm and broad shoulders and stood in front of him. He insisted on holding both my hands. I swallowed. Hard.

Me: Kgantsho has a mole under her lip, 2 piercings on her right ear lobe, and... and.. uhm.. her hair. She had a straight up on her last

status update which looked recently done...

Him: That's all?

Me: And a tattoo. She has a tattoo on her wrist written Gomolemo in italics.

Him: That's enough. But I can't leave you here let's go to the car. I reluctantly agreed. I didn't want him to leave me here. For some reason I no longer felt safe. We got to the car and he opened the door. I looked at him and got in. He went above my thighs and reached for his jacket on his driver's seat. He made me wear it and said "Ngiyabuya manje.

Okay?" I sniffed and said okay. He locked me in the car and left. I didn't move my eyes from the scene as I watched him walked towards the police. I couldn't see clearly since it was dark and bushy all over. I was still trying to see when I heard something hitting the car window and made me to instantly jump from my seat. My heart almost stopped. It was a bug. The sound wasn't that dramatic but it was enough to give me a heart attack.

I waited for Muzi to come back but he was gone a while now. He did come back but I couldn't read

his face. He was walking slowly with his hands in his pockets. He got in the car and looked at me. He pursed his lips inwardly and said "I'm sorry baby." He said and slowly shook his head in rath. I looked up and tried to push back my tears. He tried to touch me but I told him not to. I looked out the window and wiped my tears. I was not sure of how I felt. We sat in silence for about 10 minutes. He kept wanting to speak but kept reprimanding himself against it. I don't blame him. I also don't know what to do or how to digest this situation. I

was not even worried about myself anymore. I was worried about my mother. About Kgantsho's husband. About her child, Gomolemo. What am I going to say to all these 3 people?

I turned to Muzi and asked him to take me home. He didn't say a word but his face said "As you wish", speaking on his behalf. We got home and mama's lights were still on. She doesn't sleep with lights on. This means she's still awake. I was hoping otherwise. But indeed. How does one sleep when their child is missing? We parked outside the yard and got

in. She quickly opened the door to see who it was. Another woman quickly followed and scampered behind her.

She saw that it was me and stood at the centre of the yard and waited for us to arrive. Muzi insisted on coming in with me because he was convinced that I wouldn't be able to carry this cross by myself.

We finally arrived to them. Muzi greeted them and they greeted back.

Mama: You must be the handsome Muzikayise I keep hearing about? She said and weakly smiled,

extending her hand for a greeting. She was looking forward to meeting him but given the circumstances, her lack of enthusiasm was well understood. The woman looked at me and expressed her amazement at how I've grown. She's my mom's closest friend. She lives in the next village but here she was, supporting my mom in the wee hours of the morning. The sun was already showing signs of wanting to come out.

Mom finally asked the big question that both our eyes were dodging by running away from

each other.

Mom: Okae Kgantsho Filwe?
(Where's Kgantsho Filwe?)

I exhaled and opened my mouth to speak but my heart influenced my vocal cords to fail me. I could feel the tears flooding their way to my eyes. Muzi held both my shoulders and asked that we go in. Mom shook her head in panic and asked once again where her child is. Muzi explained where we have been and what the police believe had transpired.

Mom: No. No. Ha-uh. That is not my child. Kgantshwana cannot possibly die such a horrible death.

Actually no! Kgantsho is not dead.
Take me there so I can confirm
to the both of you that Kgantsho
is not dead!

She was speaking with so much
force that Mme Maleme had to
hold her back, who also could not
hold back her tears.

Me: I'm sorry momma. Even if we
did fail in identifying her, her
belongings at the crime scene are
enou..

Her: Homola!! Just... homola!!

(Keep quiet)

"Askiies". I said in almost a
whisper. My voice had burnt out.
I couldn't speak no more. She just

looked at me and bent her lips in a frown. She was also trying her best not to cry. She asked Mme Maleme to let her go while removing her hands from herself. She slowly dragged her feet to the stoep in front of the house. She sunk down there and looked up. "Lord how could you fail me this way!? Ketla moreng Gomolemo? What wrong have I done to deserve such a punishment from you God?" (What am I going to say to Gomolemo). She couldn't articulately finish her sentence. She broke down and cried so hard

that she fell off the small stoep and hit the floor with her butt. We all ran to her and tried to get her up. She wasn't having it. This broke my heart even further.

Mme Maleme: Aowa mosadi tsoga hle. Tshidisega samma (Please get up. My condolences)

She said, empathetic.

My mom continued screaming her lungs out until most of our neighbors came out to see what's going on. They got in the yard and the only people who can explain to them were Muzi and Mma Maleme. I couldn't take it anymore so I ran inside the house

and threw my self into Kgantsho's room. My chest was hot. I don't know what I wanted in there but my soul just needed to feel like I'm in her presence because her entire room smells like her. I wiped my tears which just couldn't stop embracing my cheeks and went to her closet. I took out her navy blue, silk nightgown with red lacey details that she usually wore when she was here. I looked at it and went to sink down on her bed. I smelt it so hard because I felt like it was going to give me some level of solace or even a bit of understanding. I

felt eyes on me. I looked towards the door and there he was. I don't know how long he has been standing there.

He walked towards me and lowly said "I'm really sorry sthandwasam". Now I could read his face. He looked hurt also. I just looked at him. He told me that I need to be strong for my mother. I nodded and we went back outside. Everyone was still taken aback by what they've just heard. Most had their hands covering their mouths in shock. It was understandable I guess. Kgantsho was the community

child. The child that
makhwelwane sent to get bread
because she knew she would go
running and quickly come back with
all the change. Even in her
teenage years. I was barely seen
around here because I'm an indoor
mouse. She was the child that
every household wished they had.
She was warm. Welcoming.
Forever smiling. A sister I shall
forever hold dear to my fragile
heart.

Mom insisted on going to the
morgue to see her daughter. Muzi

and I tried to convince her otherwise but it was pointless so Muzi took her there and I stayed behind. All family members were informed of the darkness that had befallen the family.

Today was a Wednesday. The funeral was going to be on Saturday morning. People have been coming in and out to say their condolences. Those who know how to bake did what they knew best. Muzi was taking care of the funeral preparations alongside Tiisetso, Kgantsho's husband. I tried turning him down but gave

up because I know him. He wasn't going to to back down.

Mom has been dead quiet since she came back from the mortuary. Gomolemo is confused. Everyone keeps trying to make him understand without being explicit about how his mother died. His dad is broken. He lost a considerable amount of weight in a matter of just a few days. The only time he looks like he's in better spirits is when he's sitting with Muzi. Muzi has this thing I can't describe about him. The same as his brother Mandoba. They have this "Everything is

going to be okay" aura about them. No matter who you are, where you're from, you can never run from it.

Kgantsho's belongings were cleared and packed away this morning. Her room was now empty and waiting for her quiet arrival. It still had not sunk in that she's gone. In this ruthless manner. The community swore that they're going to take a stand against this whether or not the police prioritize it. I honestly don't care what they do those drivers if they find them.

Muzi texted me and asked me to come to his car which he had parked outside along with others in the street. I walked out of the yard and went to stand beside him, leaning against his car. We couldn't touch or do anything of that sort to show respect for her memory. He looked at me and smiled slightly. I smiled back.

Him: Look, I need to be somewhere but I will be back in the evening. Okay?

I nodded and said "Okay". He took out a small black box from his pocket, looked at it and handed it to me. A gift? He saw that I

was surprised by this gesture and took my hand to place it there. I opened it. It looked very expensive. It was a necklace. It was a beautiful diamond necklace. Him: Ngiyak'cela. In fact I'm begging you, wear this all the time. Never take it off unless you're taking a bath.

He sternly said. He kept his eyes on me, waiting for me to confirm that I've heard and understood him.

Me: I promise baby.

He told me he loves me, got in the car and left.

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Insert 47.

Ever slept hoping that when you wake up, the universe would've changed it's mind about your fate? I haven't sleep since the morning I discovered that my sister was butchered like a stray animal. Kgantsho was killed like it was not a woman who gave birth to her. Kgantsho was murdered like she too was not a woman, a human. What have we really done wrong to these men? Our predators are the very same people who were initially meant to

protect to us. It hurts. It's infuriating to live in fear of one day being a possible statistic. Today is a Thursday. My body forced me to sleep last night because my mind was tired of questioning and answering itself each time. I woke up at 04h44 and stared into space. I could hear the people going up and down and talking outside and inside the house. It doesn't feel real yet. A part of me is still expecting her to barge in here to show me a Twitter post or a funny video she stumbled upon somewhere on social media. But

alas, my door remained melancholically closed. The footsteps I kept hearing were not of hers. I knew when she was coming because she used to drag her feet in her sleepers. My mom hated it so much but she still did it anyway.

My phone rang and pulled me out out of the sticky mud of my depressing thoughts. It was an unknown number. I looked at the time and it was only then when I realised how long I've been sitting here, thinking. It reported to me that it was now 06h34. I slid my finger across it

and put it on my ear.

Me: Hello?

Her: Heyy you

A sincere voice softly called out.

Her: Unjan?

It was Mabuyi. Only she pronounces the word "Unjani?" the way she does. It's sincere.

Always.

Her: I'll survive. How are you and Okuhle?

Me: Forget us. I'm only hearing about this this morning otherwise I would've long called. I'm so sorry about your sister. Such cruelty kodwa!

The one thing I hate about

people sympathizing with me is that they always induce me to cry. No matter how much I think I now have it together. I just kept quiet and tried sending my tears back. The ache and stabbing void in my heart keeps growing.

Her: I'm so sorry mna. I honestly have no idea what to say to you. I wish I could come but you know my situation.

I understood. Women with new born babies do not attend funerals in most black traditions.

We continued speaking until I heard a knock on my door. I bid

her goodbye and yelled for whoever was there to come in. It was my mother. My mom barely knocks. But she did today. I am not surprised. She is not herself. She came and came to sit on the bed next to me. We both kept quiet for a few seconds until I decided to break the silence.

Me: O sharp?

She nodded and asked me for a hug. I gave it to her. She pulled away and exhaled.

Her: She's coming home tomorrow. O ready?

I looked away and kept quiet.

Her: I know. I'm also not.

I was about to speak before she I interrupted me and said "Keago rata wautlwa? Thata le gone" (I love you do you hear me? A lot too)

I teared up and told her I love her too.

She looked down and a tear fell down from her face. She tried wiping it for whatever reason but her black skirt had already absorbed and swallowed it whole. She then shook her head and laughed.

Her: waitse, ke gopola a mpotsa gore o pregnant. I scolded her.

Botlhoko! She just stared at me.

And when I was done, I asked her what she has to say for herself. You know what she said? (I remember when she first told me that she's pregnant.)

I was curious about this story. I stuck my eyes out and shook my head to indicate that I didn't know what Kgantsho had said.

Her: She said, "Mama, lebese lege oka le llela gele phumegile akeke la boela la tlatsa botlolo". Kege a nkgonne. Ka fellwa ke bogale.

("Even you cry over spilt milk, there's no you can get it to fill the bottle again". She had defeated me. All my fury

disappeared).

I laughed! This is something that Kgantsho would definitely say.

Her: Her words keep ringing in my head. She would've wished that we soldier on. There's no bringing her back. So let's just send her off with the love and respect she deserves.

I smiled and nodded.

Her: Are you coming with me to bath and dress her tomorrow?

I shook my head and said "I'd rather not". She kissed me on my forehead and asked me to get out of bed. I did and she made my bed

as I took toiletry bag and headed out to the family bathroom to freshen up. I got done with my all my hygiene processes and went out to be useful outside.

The day we were all dreading is finally here.

I took a bath early in the morning, came back in a towel and packed my pyjamas away. I lotioned and got into an ankle length black, body-hugging dress with long sleeves. I went into my mother's room to go look for a

doek. I found a black one with small nude patches and wrapped it around my head. I went back into my room and slid into gold push in sandals. I put petroleum jelly on my lips, unplugged my phone from the charger and went out.

I greeted all the women in the kitchen and they greeted back. I asked what I can help with and they said there are people who need me outside. Oh? My mom walked into the kitchen using the backdoor with a 20L bucket in her hand. It looked heavy. She put it down and said "Good. You're

dressed appropriately. Your in-laws are outside). Her busybody self was about to turn away from me but she brought her eyes back and look at me suspiciously, from top to toe.

Me: Ke eng?(What?)

She shook her head slowly and said "Mm-mm", which means 'Nothing'.

I went outside and found them under the huge mulberry tree we have in the yard. They came in a silver grey Mercedes G63 and everyone was gawking at them. This made me feel uncomfortable but I felt my heart warming up

because of their presence. I honestly did not expect them to come. Muzi was standing with one foot on a rock, with his hands in his pockets talking to Mandoba and Tisetso. Evelyn was on her phone. She raised her head and immediately stood up to embrace me with a hug.

Her: My darling.

I hate the pity in her eyes and everyone else around her.

I hugged her back. It took all the strength in me to stop myself from crying.

She pulled back and held both my hands.

Her: Kuzodlula yazi? Zivumele ukuth ubuzwe lob'hlungu. Khala makuthi ukhale. Sonke siphola kanjalo but I cannot say ngiyayazi ukuthi uzizwa kanjani. What a horrible way for one to die. (It'll all pass you know? Allow yourself to feel all this pain. Cry if you have to. We all heal like that....I know how you feel...)

I pursed my lips and nodded.

I looked at the men and greeted them all.

Mandoba: Spha.

Muzi: Morning baby

Tiisetso: Dumela.

They all simultaneously greeted back.

Mom came to the tree and handed me a R50 note and instructed me to go buy 2 match boxes. My mom meant it when she said I'll never grow in her eyes. She was about to turn away when Evelyn stopped her and asked her what she can help with. Mom laughed and said "Imagine an entire queen cooking at a funeral". Evelyn laughed too and said "Suka. I'm a woman and a mother before I am a queen. Masambe". She held my mom's hand and they walked away.

Mangoboba: Ku kude la ni thenga khona lo meshisi? I could drive you. (Is it far where you buy this matches?)

Muzi: 'Nga worry bafo we'll walk there.

Mangoboba said okay and turned to Tiisetso and told him that they should both go join the men at the back. They got up and left. Me and Muzi walked out of the yard and walked to the shop. It's 10 minutes away from my house on average walking speed.

Him: He kept stealing glances at me and smiling.

Me: Hawu. Yini?

Him: You get prettier by the day.
Ugeza ngani ngempela? (what do you bath with?)

I laughed.

Me: Ngo thando lwakho. (With your love)

He blushed and laughed softly.

Him: I should set up a meeting with Johnson's so they can package it balithengise. I could make a lot of money.

I laughed. He's still nuts.

Me: Mciim mara o dlala ka nna wena. I've gained so much weight. (You're mocking me)

I was being honest. I have gained weight. I usually lose

weight when I'm stressed but not this time.

Him: Iyakufanela nje?(It suits you)

He said and checked out my ass. I laughed and told him to stop being silly.

Me: I know but still.

Him: Try not to stress about your weight. I would say don't stress about anything but it's inevitable in this case. Just take it easy okay. Your body doesn't need any hard strain.

Me: I'm mourning. I'm not sick.

Him: You're not sick but you're ca...
He kept quiet.

Me: I'm what?

He looked away and picked up a stone.

Him: Are we still far from getting to the shop?

He's already tired?

Me: Since when o tswafa so wena Mbulazi? (Since when are you this lazy?)

He laughed and said he's probably getting old.

His phone rang and picked up.

Him: Baby girl.

Him: Yeah

Him: Yeah nangu la ecelen kwam.

I looked up and gave him an inquisitive look. He then handed

the phone to me. I put it on
loudspeaker and kept walking
slowly. It was Thando.

Her: Hey sis unjani?

Me: I'm alright nana. Don't worry
about me.

Her: I wanted to come but mom
suggested I stay behind and help
usis Mabuyi nge ngani. (... with
the child).

Me: I understand. Don't worry.

Her: Don't see it as me choosing
her over you though nginithanda
nobabili. (I love you both)

I laughed. She's being silly. A
smile escaped Muzi lips and he
shook his head.

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Insert 48.

Muzi and I got back from the shop and went our separate ways. He said he's going to help with slaughtering and I went to give my mom her matches. She was outside talking to my eldest aunt. Even our most distant relatives had arrived with the intention to bury Kgantsho.

I gave mom the matchboxes and walked away. I was about to walk away when Mandoba called out for me. I looked back and saw

him approaching. He indicated with his hand that I should come to him as he was walking to the car.

Him: Ngik'phathele isipho.

He laughed after he said that. I laughed too and said "I wonder".

He took out a black plastic bag from the car and handed it to me.

Me: I wonder what I've done to deserve such an abundance of gifts from you guys.

He laughed and said "who else gave you a gift? It surely can't top mine"

Me: Your brother.

I said and traced my hand along

my necklace.

He suddenly got serious.

Him: This necklace means a lot to him. Don't take it for granted.

And never take it off.

I pondered over the apparent sentimental value that this jewel apparently holds. I then responded and said "I won't."

I opened the plastic bag and I was met by a group of thick and ripe mangos. I laughed. So this is the gift?

He laughed too and said "UMrs me uthe ngikunike lezinto I'm just a messenger"

Ncoo. How sweet of her. I'm

guessing she also couldn't come because of her pregnancy. Enhle is godsent. I have been craving these. I thanked Mandoba and walked back into the house to go put them in the fridge. Hopefully nobody steals or helps themselves to them. Otherwise we're going to have a death at a funeral.

Kgantsho made her final arrival to her home last night around 18h00. It still hasn't sunk in that she's no more. I saw her in her coffin but my heart is still refusing to accept this. Even

after the night vigil. A fight broke out between my mother and Kgantsho's husband due to the fact that he wanted Gomolemo to see her but my mom was adamant that it was going to traumatize the child. My eldest aunt said it'll give Lemo closure but my mother's uncle, my grandfather agreed with mom. He further went on to state that in the olden days, when there was death or a funeral in the home, the children were taken away to a different place and told that the person who died was taken by a wolf in the night.

I walked away from that argument. I had no strength for it. Not at 3 am in the morning. Some women, mostly neighbors and relatives were busy cooking and conversing in the kitchen whereas, the last time I checked, some were outside preparing mogodu and other stuff using ground fire and those large size 30 pots. I walked into my room and took my toiletries. I wanted to bath now to avoid the traffic convoy to the bathroom in the morning. There's many of us here and just 2 bathrooms. Muzi and his family were sleeping over at a

hotel. He kept texting me trying to cheer me up. He didn't sleep as well.

I put on my underwear after lotioning up and as I was about to look for an outfit for today, I heard a knock on my door. I wrapped myself in a towel before I could yell "Come in!". Tami peeped through the door and I smiled at him.

He also gave me a pity smile and there it was again. The feeling I keep fighting and avoiding. I felt myself tearing up. He also looked a minute away from crying. He held out his hands indicating that I

should come to him for a hug. I did. We both weeped in each other's arms.

I pulled away and he wiped his tears with the palm of his hands.

Him: I just landed. I'm terribly sorry I couldn't come earlier you know I couldn't get away.

I know. He found a job in Cape Town at some call centre for the festives and his family needed the money.

Me: I know buns.

We sat down on the bed.

Him: I honestly am struggling to digest the fact that ses'Kgantsho is gone. I kept

stalking her Instagram account the entire week, watching her. Wondering how someone could be so cruel. Yhoo amadoda. An entire dump site.

He said and clapped once in disbelief.

Me: I still can't believe it.

Him: I know babes. Same boat. I remember when she stood up for me there by the soccer grounds when I was being bullied by the boys for my homosexuality when you and I had just gotten to high school.

Ever since she died, I love and find solace in hearing about her. I

looked at him at told him to tell me more.

Him: I was on my way to your house and she was coming behind me with an umbrella and a Score plastic bag in her hand from a distance. They came up to me and started teasing me saying how I want to be a girl so bad I'm even wearing a pink t-shirt. They kept pushing me around and I saw her running towards us. She got there and asked me what's going on. One of them called me a stabane and she exploded. She was like "If all of your were straight here I doubt you'd even

concern yourself with another person's sexuality. I bet you're all afraid that him coming will eventually somehow expose you too with your small penises! Areye gae wena!" (You. Let's go home)

I laughed but I believed him. He laughed too and shook his head. Kgantsho was sweet when unprovoked. She was a sweetheart only in the absence of injustice. Which is one of the many reasons why I love her so much. This statement will never be in past tense because she continues to live in my heart.

I got up and went to the closet to look for clothes. We kept talking as I scoured through my hangers and bottom drawers. He was on his phone as I did this but he ended up locking it and putting it away on the bed. He immediately stood after this and said "Tloga because you have no idea what you're doing here". I laughed and went to sit down on the bed as he went through my clothes. I no longer wear most of them because they're here full time and I don't stay here anymore, although most are still in good condition.

He went through my clothes and took out a grey blouse with black flowers and threw it on his shoulder. He hung off a free flowing, long maroon dress and threw both items at me as he kept blabbing about his recent Indian boyfriend. I couldn't stop smiling and laughing at his jokes. He took a tight black skirt and ravaged through my drawers and threw black stockings at me. He looked at me and said I'll be back just now.

He went out and came back after a few minutes with a plain black doek made of t-shirt material. He

weighed options between the skirt and the dress and said we're going with the dress. He asked me what shoes I'm wearing and I said I came with block heels. He then said "Heels and long dresses are water and oil. A catastrophe. A well orchestrated faux pas! I don't even know how you people manage to sleep at night knowing that you're capable of such a disastrous crime!" He said and dramatically threw his hands in the air. I laughed and he said "Ahhh friend I lost a nail" He had short aqua blue manicures and one was missing. I told him I

have plasters in my handbag and he was relieved. "You're smart. You're loyal". He said and he emptied my bag on the bed. He gets crazier by the day!

After fixing his nail situation, he then said "Now back to the shoes, where are the rest?" I pointed under the bed and knelt down looking for them. He seemingly couldn't see so he took his phone from the bed for torch assistance. He pulled out black suede pointed pumps and said "There there." I haven't see these in a while they were even dusty. He went outside to dust

them and came back. After putting on my day cream, I took off my towel and put on the dress. After I was done, he said "come", directing me to the make up chair in front of the huge old fashioned mirror with wooden cupboards and all.

He told me to sit and started wrapping the doek on my head. It was long so it was easy to wrap and control around my head. After he was done he asked me if I like it. I looked at the mirror and I fell in love. I'm not a huge fan of doeks but I looked pretty. He then said "Now for the jacket. We

need leather. Where is that jacket of yours with 2 silver clip-on buttons on the collar?" I was about to dispute but the clouds were closing in so I will probably need it. Tumi knows all my clothes better than I do. I told him I'm not sure if it's here or in PLK.

"You better pray to your ancestors and the colleagues that it's here". I laughed. I love him!

"O robale ka kgotso Boikgantsho Onalerona Mashego."

That's was the ending of her obituary. The closing line that put

an official stamp on her demise. I looked at it once and allowed it to fall into her grave. Everybody had already done this. Gomolemo and I were the only ones left. I raised my head to the men trying to find Muzi's face but I came across Mr Moko's first. He's here? He gave me an assuring look and I felt comforted.

Gomolemo, My poor baby. His eyes were all red from all the crying he's been doing since the coffin was taken out of the house to the hearse when we were headed to the cemetery. That's when he started crying. He was quiet all

along. Seeing him this way
crushed the remaining dangling
piece that was, of my heart.
When I saw her coffin slowly
being lowered, that's when it
became official to me that she's
no more and no more to be seen.
I've never cried this badly in my
entire life. Evelyn tried comforting
me and my mother at the same
time but she never succeeded. It
hurt. Badly. It hurts having to
let go of my sister. It hurts
having to be forced to let go of
Boikgantsho.

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Insert 49.

"I think it's best if Molemo comes to live with me". My mom's words dip themselves into the silence that begged to be maintained in the living room. She says and looks out the window.

Tiisetso: Ake bone ele kakanyo e botse eo. That will mean he will have to be pulled out of school and that will disrupt his life even further (I don't think that's a good idea...).

Mom: Pretoria is not the only place with good schools. We also have good, private schools here in town. I'll hire transport for him.

I initially did not want to be a part of this conversation but I don't think mom has thought this through

Me: I don't think...

Tiisetso: Molemo loves it there!

He interrupts

Him again: And, I mean no disrespect by this but you don't have a stable job ma. Your husband's life insurance and pension funds are never going to afford the drastic changes you're about to make.

Ma: Leave your accountant self in your office. I'm the only one who knows the depth of my pockets.

Mom is one secretive person when it comes to her finances. She's also a penny pincher of note. She worked as a clerk at our local primary school but she somehow let go of her job and her husband was the only working in the house. When he died, his 'moneys' paid out and she was the sole beneficiary. I send her money every month but she maintains a lifestyle only she knows how she's able to afford it. For example, the renovations, we just woke up one day to her saying she wants to redo her house and she did exactly that. Kgantsho and I had already

learnt how to keep both our mouths shut. She also sent her money enough for groceries and toiletries but still, nobody knows why Mrs Pierre Cardin's money here never runs out.

My phone rang as they were still arguing so I went out of the house to take Mr Moko's call.

Me: Sir.

Him: Motlhabane. How are you feeling?

I dropped my chest and shoulders. I can't say I'm fine. I'll never be. But I'm no longer in denial. It doesn't help.

Me: I'm taking each day as it

comes sir.

Him: It can't be easy. I'm certain.

Me: Yeah.

Him: Eish...

Him: I don't mean to push or rush you but I've called to ask when you think you'll be fit enough to come back to the office?

Me: I'll come through so we can discuss that further sir. Maybe tomorrow?

Him: Perfect. Just not in the morning. I'll only be coming in after 11.

Me: Not a problem.

We said our goodbyes and he cut the call. I briefly looked towards the fence at the back of the house without purpose and brought my eyes back upon the sight of Gomolemo sitting on top of a brick, facing away from the house and watching passersby. My heart sank. I exhaled and walked up to him. I had no idea what I was going to say to him but I felt the need to speak to him. I got there and said "Hey boy", putting my hand on his head, giving him the widest smile. He looked up and smiled back, weakly.

Me: Uhm.. I'm going to get some snacks ko shopong please come with?

Him: Nah I'm cool mangwane (... auntsy)

He teared the grass off the ground and looked away.

I looked around for another brick and found it. I went to pick it up so I can sit next to him. I then put my hand around his shoulder.

Me: Gotla loka. She may be gone but her spirit is always guarding you.

He exhaled.

Him: Guarding me?

Me: Yeah. As in your guardian

angel.

He laughed and said "There's no such thing aunty. You should stop watching South African soapies and start watching realistic stuff". I don't know if this is coming from a place of hurt or he's indeed making an innocent joke.

Me: They do exist. Trust me.

Him: What's the point of having them?

Me: To protect you from evil things.

Him: Where was HER guardian angel when she was killed?

My tongue fastened up into a knot!

I haven't been feeling quite well since Kgantsho's death. My emotional state is affecting my physical health. Everybody has went back to their respective places, including Muzi and his family. He was torn between staying and going back but I convinced him to leave. I know he won't admit to missing his wife and son but I know he does. And I also want to be alone at this point.

"Mama! Haven't you seen my power bank anywhere? My battery is dying and I need to go out." I yelled out from the corridor because the last time I checked, she was in her room. She slowly opened the door with a long towel around her body and another wrapped around her head.

Her: O rasetisa eng? (Why are you making noise?)

If she was an alcohol drinker I'd say she hungover from how she looks. I just glared at her walking past me with the speed of a turtle with gloom in her eyes,

heading to the living room. I followed her. She got there and sunk down on the couch facing the TV. She took the remote and switched it on, yawning immediately after that.

Bathong?

"Are you gonna answer me?" I said.

She raises her head at me and says "Filwe ke rekisa di power bank ousie?" (Do I sell power banks?)

"You could've just said you've never seen it anywhere". I said and attempted to walk away.

"Check in my bedroom bo

spilikaseng. I put it away when Rethabile arrived in case she stole. You know she has sticky hands"

That wasn't so difficult now was it? I kept walking away in silence and went straight to her room. I searched and found it.

I went into the living room to take the charger cable because I had to intention of looking for the short one I always use for the power bank.

Her: Ele gore oya kae o hlapile skoen so? (You look properly cleaned up today. Where are you going?)

I laughed.

Me: So ake hlape on other days?
(So I don't bath...)

Her: I'm speaking about today
nna. I know nothing about other
days.

I laughed harder.

Me: I'm going to the clinic. I'm
not feeling well.

Her: Not feeling well? She looked
at me suspiciously.

Me: Yeah. I think it's because of
anxiety and stress. I just want to
make sure.

Her: Mmm. Okay. Oba botse bago
hlale everything aker baby...before
they prescribe anything?(Tell
them to examine your whole body

before..)

Who died and handed their MBChB certificate to my mother?

Me: Oo'kay Dr Vee.

She laughed and said "Ke tsene le wena creche geotlo mpitsa Vee Filwe?" (Did I attend the same creche with you for you to me Vee?). I laughed and ran away. I went to take my handbag from my room and headed out.

Tumi called and asked me where I am. I told him I'm on my way to the clinic.

Him: Oilo preventa? (Are you going for contraceptives?)

Me: I might as well. I'm just going for a check up. I'm not feeling well.

Him: Oswere ke gala wena.

Nothing else. (You have a lot of bile/gall)

I laughed and said "Maybe". I told him I'll call him back when Muzi's call came through. I answered and we spoke as I walked to to clinic.

Him: Use ndleleni? It sounds like it (Are you on the road?)

Me: Yeah. Ke ya clinic.

Him: Is it far?

Me: It's quite a distance. But I prefer walking because I'm not

going into a taxi anytime soon.

Him: You're not vele. I've been meaning to ask you if you have a license na sthandwasami?

Me: Yeah. I had to get it when I was still looking for a job.

Him: Good. Why are you going there? The clinic?

Me: I'm not feeling well. Why are you asking about my license?

Him: It's necessary that you have it. If that is the case then you should see a private doctor.

Me: I'm just going for a check up. There's GPs there. Necessary?

We were having two separate conversations at the same time

and I found this weirdly funny.

Him: Alright. Tell me how it goes.

I have to go now.

I got the clinic and found a lengthy line pouring from the inside. I took the queue tracking number from the guards and walked in. I asked the last lady in line what they're waiting for.

Her: Vaccination for infants hun.

Her voice sounded familiar.

Me: Agnes!?

She turned her head abruptly and looked at me.

Her: Betso!?

Oh my God! The last time I saw this person was when we were in

grade 10. Her parents had to move so they pulled her out of the school in the middle of the year.

We hugged over her baby in shock of seeing one another. She's still the sweetest innocent girl nobody was expecting to ever have sex.

But here she was, strapping her baby in her front. She looked even more yellow than she did in high school. Still has good long hair.

Everyone thought she was mixed race when she first arrived. Most even called her "Le coloured", which I remember her for taking

offense each time she was addressed in such a manner.

Her: You look so so pretty. Money looks good on you shem.

I laughed. She looks great herself. She scanned me from top to toe and said "You're even married!?"

Me: Hao. You are too.

I said as I threw my eyes on her left hand, which she had on her baby carrier, giving extra support to her baby's neck.

She laughed and said "Ja ja", rolling her eyes in defeat.

I peeped into the carrier and said "Aww. She's so cute". She truly

was cute, with a pink hair band around her fluffy baby afro.

Her: Only because she's sleeping.

Agona cute ya selo ke terrorist motho o (There's nothing cute about this terrorist)

I laughed. She then wiggled her legs around said "Yoh ke tshwere ke moroto omongwe!? Please hold her for me for a few minutes" (I'm so pressed...) she said as she unbuckled the carrier and insisted I take the baby out of it, who was now waking up. I had no chance to say 'no' even if I wanted to. I took her and carefully placed her on my chest.

She was so adorable and chubby in her white dress paired with tight and tiny pink leggings that went only down to her knees. Her matching pink socks made me feel so broody. Babies are so adorable man.

"But agnes is careless. What if I steal this baby?" I thought to myself as I covered her with a light white blankie her mother had placed on top of her perambulator to protect her from the sun. Agnes shortly came back, wiping her wet hands with her jeans. She smiled and said "Thanks" with her golden smile

trying to take the baby from me. And no this is not a metaphor. She had full gold teeth on both of her upper canines. I replied and said "Never do this again. People steal babies these days" I say as I try to hand her back to her mother. The baby cries when she's supposed to return to her mother. Agnes laughs and says "This is a first. I'm even surprised that she never cried because she's very, very selective about who touches her". I took her back and shushed her. She kept quiet. Agnes smiled and said "She loves you". I laughed and

said it's common. Babies do love me.

Baby Bonolo finally slept. I gave her back to her mother and told her I have to go on. We exchanged numbers and I left. I got in and the clinic was a mess. Muzi was right. I don't know what I was thinking coming here. I asked one girl who was on her phone where the line begins and what actually is going on. She raised her head, looked at me and nonchalantly said "Mola" (There) pointing with her head. I can't even see where she's pointing exactly. I looked at her as she

continued destroying the chewing gum in her mouth. One nurse walked into the waiting room and "Yoh yoh yoh if there's anybody wago hloka tsebe mo lefaseng, ke molwetsi!! Di STI tse tsa lena diale gafisha aker? Ke rile baba tlileng skaleng on this bench, ba ba tlileng for veksinii ba dule mo then lena, baimana le ba AIDS, di fever, di yeast infection and whatever else, mokhwi! O number mang wena!?" (... with no ear on this planet, it has to be a patient!! These Sexually Transmitted Infections you have are driving you crazy I see. I said

those who have brought babies for weight recording, on this bench. Those who have come for the vaccine must sit here. Then you, pregnant women, those with AIDS, fevers, yeast infections and whatever else, here! You!? What number do you hold on the queue!?) She said, directing her question to one timid teenage girl. Bathong! Is this even legal? Can't this person be reported. Is this even allowed? I just stood there, flabbergasted!

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Insert 50.

The nurse walked out after she was done rudely rearranging the queues and upsetting everyone. She took one look at me but never came for me. I was ready to put her in her place. She's old but disrespectful. Elders have this tendency of disrespecting kids and expecting the complete opposite in return. I went towards the bench she pointed for sick people. There wasn't many of us. Only 10 of us. The clinic was full yes but mostly of pregnant women and those with babies.

I took my seat next to a granny who smiled at me. I smiled back.

Me: Dumela koko.

Her: Dumela ngwanaka.

She said as she dismally failed to catch her clinic file from sliding off her thigh and falling to the floor.

I picked it up and handed it to her, remembering that I also need one before that Dracula of a nurse comes back for my head. I asked koko where to get a file.

Her: Ke mathomo o etla mo kliniki ngwanaka? (Is it your first time here my child?)

Me: Eya (Yes)

She lowly laughed and said "Kea

bona" (I see)

Her: Ge eba ke mathomo o etla batlogo direla yona ka kua phaphushing ela kua. Reya gona gere tloga mo. Nna ke tlishitse ke high blood mo (If it is your first time here, they'll create it for you in that room over there, which is where we are going from here.

I'm here because of hypertension)

She said and finished off what was left of her overly ripe banana. I said 'Okay' and sat back. We continued speaking about where I come from and whose child I am. She ended up telling

me about how her grandchildren are always the first to know and announce that the mangos have ripened but she, the owner of the tree never gets any assistance when she sows her seeds. I was laughing hysterically. She's funny. And a great storyteller too.

It was her time to go in so I helped her up, picked up the walking stick from the floor and handed it to her. She kissed me on my lips and said I should be blessed. I got emotional as I watched her walk away. She reminded me a lot of my grandmother.

I took out my phone and went on WhatsApp. I replied to all my texts and then viewed the status updates. I had saved Mabuyi's number so I saw that she had posted 2 updates but I wasn't sure whether to view them or not. I did it anyway. The first picture was an Aldo paper bag. She captioned it "Random gifts from Husbae" with a red heart. The 2nd was a picture of Muzi sleeping peacefully on the couch with his son on his chest. I couldn't help but feel chest pains. I don't think I can ever get used to this. Knowing that she's in the

picture is not that much of a problem. The problem is seeing that he really does love her. I'm trying to be as civil and accepting as I possibly can but this is hard. I heard a loud "Next!" as I was busy with my intrapersonal conflict. I got up with my bag and went straight to the room I was being called from. I opened the door, got in and closed it thereafter. I walked over to the desk and greeted her.

She greeted me back without raising her eyes to look at me.

She was writing something on top of a white paper sitting on brown

file. She fixed her glass with her index finger and said "Theeere we go...", finishing up the last bit. She exhaled and said "Dumela" with a wide smile. I greeted her again as she took her 2L Tupperware bottle and drank her water. She got up to pull the blinds open and blew air onto her face. She was heating up. She looked like she was in her 40s but her body was still in it's 20s. A slender with the most round curves. I have a tendency of admiring other women's bodies. Kgantsho used to laugh about it saying I'm not straight. She

wheeled her black leather chair out of her desk and said do you have a file?

Me: No I don't.

She softly laughed and said "I can tell. I've never seen this beautiful face around here". She said and she took a new file from the pile that was sitting on her desk. She perused her desk looking for Lord knows what. "Where is that pen?" She said as she took her Labello from her drawer, smothering it over her thick lips. She brushed the hair line of her plaited and styled dreadlocks twice and said "What bring you

here my love?" She can't keep still. She's a busy body just like my mother.

She found her pen and asked if I have my I.D with me. I took out my purse from my bag, pulled out my FNB card and mindlessly gave it to her. She laughed and said "I don't have speedpoint" . I laughed at what I've just done and continued to laugh harder when she also laughed and said "You want to swipe?". I searched for my smart card and handed it to her. She began scribbling down my details.

Me: I have not been feeling well

recently. If I'm not dizzy then I have a headache or I'm extremely thirsty or nauseous.

I said, answering her question.

Her: Alriiight..

She said as she continued writing

Her: When did all of this start?

Me: Let's say.. it's been about 2 weeks now

Her: Okay. Are you sexually active?

Me: Yes.

Her: Your last time?

Me: I really can't recall. 2/3 weeks ago?

Her: Okay.

She said and sharply put a full

stop to her zigzag sentence and pulled a green and white box from the corner of the table, taking out a stick. She pulled it out of it's packaging and told me to come closer. She gently held my jaw area and said "Open your mouth and raise your tongue." I did exactly that and she inserted it. I then closed my mouth and kept the disposable thermometer in there, waiting for the next instruction.

She carried on with other things before she took the stick out. She looked at it and recorded on my file. She stood up and said come

stand here for me please, pointing to the scale. I attempted to take off my sneakers and she said "There's no need for that". I then did what I was instructed to do and got off. She recorded my weight and checked my heart rate. After all of this, she handed me a cup and said "Go pee into this. The toilet is down the corridor on your left if you're not walking in reverse". I laughed. She laughed too and said "Phela we see things in this clinic".

I came back with the cup and placed it on her desk. She eye-examined my urine and wrote

things done. She then took another stick and placed it in the cup. We chatted as we waited. I began having heart palpitations and missing out on some parts of the conversation, meaning I had to say "Huh?" a million times like a retard. What if I am pregnant? She took out the stick and said "Whoa!" and I just knew. I closed my eyes for 2 seconds and pursed my lips. I was nervous. Scared. Shocked. She held my hand and said "Congratulations. But you don't seem happy. Why?" I shook my head and said "I just wasn't expecting this".

"Your first pregnancy?" She said.

"Yes." I replied.

"It can be stressful at your age. But luckily you're a married woman and hopefully, he's a supportive husband". I'm guessing she drew this conclusion from my ring.

"Unless if you're not sure who the father is?" She asked, looking at me dubiously. I laughed. She joined me. My anxiety didn't stop me from noticing her beautiful teeth and pointy nose.

I got home and found my mom sleeping on the couch. How could she sleep with the door unlocked? I shook her and she immediately got up and screamed "Ska mmolaya!!!!" (Don't kill her!!!)

Me: Mama?

I asked in concern. She was sweating and dripping wet. She swallowed hard and exhaled. She then patted my upper arm twice and said "I'm alright. I'm alright. It was just a bad dream", still trying to catch her breath.

Me: I think you need to see a therapist mommy.

I sunk down on the couch. She

rapidly shook her head and said "I'm fine Filwe. Can't a person have her nightmares in peace?" Trust my mom to say something of this sort during a time like this. "Why don't you.." I was about to argue when she said "Ntlele ka meetse otlogele go mpotsa dipasa le metshelo" (Bring me water and stop asking me about passports and fines) She then inserted her finger into her ear, vigorously moving it up down and making that "nkum nkum" sound that most people who sinusitis make when they're itching from the inside. I give up.

When evening hit I felt like somebody had found a time machine and found pleasure in pressing the "Accelerate" button. I took a nap around 14h00 but it was now 18h54. I had put my phone on silent and found 10 missed calls from Muzi. I rejected 3 of his calls in the afternoon. This is why he was offloading all of his frenzy on the call button. Muzi has been wanting me to get pregnant. He did this on purpose. I hate men who don't consult with their partners if they want kids and just go ahead and score. But who am I fooling? This is my

body and I'm the one who forgot to put it on prevention. I'm the one at fault.

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Insert 51.

For some reason, I hate Tuesdays. They come with this bland and empty energy I just don't understand each morning.

"Stop calling me if you don't want to see yourself blocked". That's the message I sent to Muzikayise last night.

"At least let me know what I've done this time?", him.

"HLU-KA-NA NA-MI!" (LEAVE ME ALONE!), I sent back.

"Yoh. Ngaze ngalithwala idombolo shem." (I'm facing a severe hardship). He said. That forced me to laugh but I did not reply. "U lale kahle ke

sthandwasami?" (Sleep well my love). Still no reply from me. He then sent me 6 heart emojis and I marked it as read. "Senzeni na? Senzeni nah?" He sent this with crying and microphone emojis. I was trying my best not to laugh but my heart's inability to stay mad at him for long keeps

betraying me as per usual. But I am not letting him off easy.

I woke up at 6 am and put a thick red nightgown over my cotton purple pyjamas. It was raining heavily last night I'm surprised that the roof of this house is still intact. I put on my slippers and inserted my phone into my pocket as I dragged myself to the kitchen. I was feeling like liquid crap in a human body as always but I always come alive around 8. I pulled the fridge open and took out some water. I poured it in a glass, drank up and ran to spit it into the dish sink.

Talk about rust in a bottle! I wiped my mouth and saw my mom looking at me, with both hands inserted into the pockets of her grey gown. She said "Mnk mnk mnk" and shook her head. I shrugged and said "What?"

"Nex. Bareng clinic?" (What did they say at the clinic?) I threw my eyes to the sides in annoyance because this is one topic I'd rather not touch. Especially early in the morning. "Okarr akawa mahlo a amagolo a tokologa mo tileng" (I wish those big eyes could fall out and roll on the floor". "Ketlano a topa ka tswela pele ka

bophelo" (I'll just pick them up and move on with my life). This is one of those days me and my mom have silly and unnecessary arguments. We stand and have a stare contest for 4 seconds. She laughs and says "Do you think when you speak?". Okay that was a stupid clapback now that I think about it. I laugh too and head to the top cupboard to pull out a box of cereal. Let's hope milk and my taste buds will both be mature enough to form an amicable alliance.

She grabs the box from me and says sit. She takes down two

white bowls and I pull the chair out of the kitchen table.

"Ke serious jwale Filwe, O mmeleng aker?" (I'm serious now Filwe, you're pregnant right?)

I exhale and give her a blank stare. See, my mom tries to make me feel at ease and comfortable with confiding in her about everything and anything but I just can't seem to be growing into speaking about sex and everything related to it with.

"You are not a child anymore. I'm not gonna go crazy like I did with your sister. She was only 16 when she had Molemo. Although I had

wished that you achieve all your goals before having a baby but if it's here then we can't turn it away. I'm also happy that you did not get pregnant for some boy. Your husband is very responsible and I've seen how he prioritizes you. And I'm happy in a way because I may have lost my daughter but I'm now gaining a grand child."

She clapped her hands and moved her upper body in a celebratory dance. I laughed.

"But I did not confirm your suspicions yet I don't know what you're celebrating"

"I was just asking for formality.
I saw it before anybody else"

"How? And why didn't you say
anything?"

"This is your first pregnancy. I
wanted you to experience all the
emotions that come with being a
new mother by yourself first.

You're a grown woman

Boikokobetso. I can't always hold
your hand all the time."

"So I'm grown when it suits you?"

I thought to myself. I could
never say this out loud unless if I
wanted this house to host
another funeral.

"AND, I wanted you to feel the

panic of having to tell your mother like we all did." I laughed! I love this woman.

But the word "mother" brought me back to some of the questions I always doubt to ask her.

"What was she like mama?"

"Who?"

"My mom. What was she like?"

She took one bowl and placed it in front of me. She then went to the fridge and took out a bottle of milk. I read her face

immediately when she turned in my direction to pour for me. She was not angry. This is a good sign. She then said "Ohhhh.. Vivian...".

A smile escaped her lips and she shook her head and went to get a spoon.

"Bathong, Saka?" (Where is my spoon?)

"Get it yourself. I can't prepare cereal for you and still get you a spoon. What's next? You want me to feed you too? You're too spoilt". I laughed and got up to get my own spoon because she meant it. I took and placed it in my bowl and watched as it scooped some of the milk into its centre. We walked to the living room and sat on opposite couches. We both hate people who sit and rub each other

whereas there's plenty of space. Kgantsho loved doing this. If she found you in the living room she was definitely going to cuddle with you, forcefully so!

She swallows after she's done chewing and says "Everything that I am, Vivian was the complete opposite except for how I look" I let out a gentle smile.

"We used to confuse malome Joseph so much that he ended up giving up and calling random names when he saw one of us.

When we were sitting together and he wanted one of us, he would say "Maitemogelo!" Ke nna owe.

Kamoka rele babedi neres a fetole,
re hupetse ke ditshego! He would
quickly move his eyes between the
both of us and say

"Maitshwaromatile!" That was
Vivian. She would want to respond
because she was quick to crack
but I would nudge her with my
elbow so she doesn't because I
enjoyed confusing our uncle" (...
that was me. The both of us
would not respond, suppressing
the urge the laugh). I was dying
of laughter as my mom narrated
this. "And then what would he
do?" I said through my laughter.
"He would scream for my mother

to come make a distinction between her "photocopies". That is only when we would respond because she hated it when we played tricks on her brother. And she was not lazy to give a child a beating just for being naughty" I was laughing my lungs out as we had our cereals. I've never experienced the fury that everybody kept saying that my grandmother had. She spoilt me rotten! My mom used to say "Nea fedile bogale ge wena o belegwa", meaning, she was no longer that sharp when I was born.

"And my father? What happened there?"

"Trust you to ruin a beautiful moment", she replied.

"Why do you hate him so much?"

"He's a snake. Ha fetwe ke skhethe. The time Matle fell pregnant, 2 other women were also expecting his kids. She was so naive. She once ran away from home and missed an entire week of school because of him. I got the scolding of my life because my family was convinced I know where she was and therefore covering for him. That was the first and the very last time she

hid something from me. I was convinced that they wouldn't last but they actually, till she had you."

True. My mom is nothing like her twin. The woman sitting across me would never do something like this. She pulls men by the nose, not the other way around.

I looked at her for a brief while and asked "How did you feel when I was born?"

A smile grew on her face. "I was broken that she had to die but very thankful that she left you for me to raise. You were so adorable my God. Still are"

I blushed. "I did not care how I was going to be able to afford both you and Kgantsho because I had recently started working at a factory that time but one thing I knew for sure is that I was going to make it work."

I smiled at her and said "You did. You did make it work mama". She smiled back and we continued eating.

"You can wait here so long Mr Moko will be here before you get impatient". The temp said.

I took my seat in front of his

desk. I looked at her walking out and kept my thoughts to myself. Her biggest mistake? Mr Moko doesn't like it when his guests wait in his office in his absence. He doesn't want anybody in his space without any supervision. He walked in and cheerfully said "Motlhabane!" I stood up and shook his hand. The only person I've ever seen my boss hug is his wife.

"I suppose you can clearly see why I need you back?"

I laugh. I knew that he wasn't going to let this slide.

"Unfortunately, I don't think I'll

be coming back anytime soon. I don't think I'll be coming back at all. I'm so sorry for being a disappointment Sir"

His smile fades in defeat and says "You're leaving us to go be a Zulu housewife?"

I'm guessing he already met Muzi at the funeral. Hence this conclusion because if it was gossip around the office, he wasn't going to mention it. Mr Moko does not entertain gossip.

"Aaaactually, I'm going to focus on my business. It's about time it reaches the heights that I've always set out for it. I would

stay but I'm no longer going to be based around Polokwane. I've been postponing this but there's no running away from it"

He exhaled and nodded. "I am just glad that you're still ambitious and determined my child. All I can say is that, you have a smart head to make this work. As long as you do not forget that your man's money is not yours. We men are unreliable creatures. Take it from a man"

I softly laugh and nod. He pulls out his drawer and takes out his cheque book. What is he doing? He flips it open and writes in silence.

He tears it out and hands it to me.

What!? That was my reaction when I took a look at it.

"Sir I can't accept this. This is too much"

"A hundred thousands is technically nothing compared to the money you brought into this company with all your hardwork" he shoved the cheque back and stood up. He came and extended his hands so I can hug him. I walked over to him. Reluctantly. I was very emotional so he brushed my back, pushed me away to hold my shoulders and said "The world

is your oyster. Go out there and make a name for yourself".

Amu was running around like a headless chicken in the office. I was about to speak when I bumped into her and she hurriedly said "Babes I can't talk. Let's do this over lunch okay?" She clicked her heels and she ran to the copy machine and I screamed "I'm no longer coming back!" She jammed in her tracks. She slowly turned towards me and said "Wa tlanga ani?" (You're playing right?) "No babes. I resigned today."

"Wa hembra!" (You lie!)

"I'm seriously not playing Amukelani." I said. I'm gonna miss her.

"Shuuu.." she dropped her hand with the few papers in it, taking off her spectacles with the other. Defeated.

"We're still gonna see each other though. I promise"

"And what am I going to become in this office without you?"

"Don't do this"

"You is a Mabena shem. Anyway, good luck babes. We're obviously going to see each other. Whether you like it or not."

I laughed and we hugged it out. My eyes shot at Masedi who cleared her throat, searching for only-God-knows-what on her desk. She pretended to have been busy but I know she was dying to know what we were discussing. Let her die. There's plenty of space in the cemetery.

I walked out of the office and thought I should head over to the mall. I wanted a few essentials from Clicks but I was doubtful because I knew I was going to spend more than I actually intend to when I get there. I never buy according to

my list whenever I get to Clicks and Dischem. I always see something I'll suddenly need when I get there. These two shops are the archfoes to my bank balance.

I walked there and I wasn't impressed. The mall was full of the world and his wife. I suddenly thought of Muzi and why he's been quiet. I won't grovel to him if that's what he thinks. I am angry at him yes but he should try to speak to me no matter how I react. I don't know what I'm trying to say but I know it makes sense. I paid Mr Sithole to

drive me around in his Toyota even though he charged me an arm and a leg. Better than getting into a taxi. I'm now ready for that and I think it's about time I get myself a Kia Picanto. It's what I can afford without breaking my bank account for now.

I got my essentials and as expected, I also bought other things. I got rice cakes because of the hype around them and a blender. Don't ask me what for. I just know I need it. I was driven back home and I was met by a red Mercedes C63s Coupé when I

got off at the gate. It looks new.
But whose is it?

I thanked Mr Sithole and walked into the house with my plastic bag in my hand and my hand bag in the other. They were sitting in the living room, having the time of their lives. I should've known! I walked past and my mom says "Yey yey yey, bowa." (Come back) I shut my eyes in annoyance and walked over to them.

"Sit". She said and pointed on the double couch that Muzi was seated on. I threw my self there.
"Sawubona". He said and smiled.
"Hello"

Mom stood up and said "Washen yaka enkemetse. It was lovely seeing you mokgonyana" (My laundry is waiting for me...) They smiled to each other and she left.

"Uthi ulunywa yini?" (What's your problem?)

I thinned my eyes at him. He stared back. I exhaled and looked away.

"I'm pregnant."

He popped his eyes and immediately smiled.

"So it's confirmed!?" He got up and picked me from the couch in excitement. I hit his chest and told him to put me down.

"Wait what? You knew about this?"

"I had my suspicions but I didn't want to get my hopes up"

I suddenly got emotional with seeing how happy he is whereas I'm not. Half of my brain doesn't want to see him. The other wants him to hold me tight. I wanted to wrap my self around him and inhale his scent. I also wanted to punch him in the face. He pulled me towards him without warning and wrapped his arms around me.

"Thank you sthandwasami.

There's no bigger gift you could

ever give me than this"

A tear escaped my eye.

"I'm scared baby"

"Scared of what?". He whispered.

"I don't know. I'm just...". I said and sniffed.

"You don't have to be. I'll be with you every step of the way. Okay?"

I nodded once.

"Hm?"

"Okay." I confirmed.

We ended up at Muzi's hotel room. I didn't want to leave my mom by herself but she also insisted. More like got rid of me. When we walked

in, he took off his shirt because he was formally dressed. He took off his belt and asked me if I want to join him in the shower. I said no and he let me be. I took my phone and put it on the charger. I was lazying around on Instagram when Muzi came back and took his lotion. He had a towel around his lower body. I was trying my best not to look.

A fly? Really!?! I hate flies with a passion. I quickly waft my hand in the air trying to get rid of it. It makes that annoying "bbzzzzz" sound till it lands on the wall above the headboard. I take one

of my sandals and climb on top of the bed. It's gonna know me today. Muzi laughs and says "Uzowa baby iyeke lento izozi phumela" (You'll end up falling. Leave it alone it'll eventually get out on it's own).

I turn back at him and say "That's the thing. I don't want it to get out because it has a greater chance of making it's way back in again that way. I need it dead"

He laughs and says "Murderer!" I try to kill it but it manages to get away.

"See? Now you've wasted your

energy over nothing"

What?

"What are you saying?" I shoot.

"Nothing baby I'm just..."

"Are you implying that I'm stupid?" I ask as I put my hand on my chest. I can feel the tears coming. I sniff trying to push them back.

"Ini? Cha bo! Angizange mina ngi...."

You have no respect for me Mbulazi!" I say and sob loudly.

"What do you mean I don't respect you? Where is all of this coming from?" He shouts back.

"For starters, you took your

problems with Mabuyi and made them mine. Secondly..."

"Whoa whoa whoa.. I did what? What are you talking about?"

Confused. He says.

"You went out drinking because of the drama that arouse in KZN and came back to use me as a stress ball. You took my virginity while drunk. I thought you'd be more considerate!" I shout down at him while I stand on top of the bed, throwing his white shirt to the floor.

"Hawu. I thought you enjoyed it" he says and raises his hands to show confusion

"That's not the point. The point is... you were drunk! And I told you how much I don't want a baby but you still did not pull out!" I stomp my foot on the bed and subsequently fall on my back and bounce on the bed. He wipes his mouth and shakes his head while approaching me. He gets to the edge of the bed and pulls me by my feet. I try to fight him but fail. He's 3 times stronger than me. He quickly pulls the rest of my body and climbs on top of me. He looks me in the eye without blinking nor smiling. "What did you say your problem is again?"

"I'm not gonna repeat my self like CD ya goba le scratch! You fucked me while drunk and now.." he interrupts and says "well I'm sober now." and smashes his soft lips against mine.

I receive them with the same amount of energy and match his hunger for me. He continued
(removed)

To be continued...

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Insert 52.

(Removed).

I was happy. Genuinely happy. We got done, lotioned and I got into his sweatpants and his t-shirt. He got dressed in black ripped jeans, a black v-neck short-sleeved t-shirt and pure white sneakers. I was watching and admiring him as he did all of this. Ever enjoyed watching your man just being himself? That was me. Even the smallest things about him charm me to the core. He looked around for his watch and he couldn't find it.

"Baby. Haven't you seen my watch?" He said as he continued to scan the room with his eyes. I

saw it on the bed but I said "Nope. I haven't." I shook my head.

"Hawu". He knelt down to search under the bed with confusion on his face. I quickly slid my hand under the sheets, grabbed it and threw it under my pillow. He saw me. Dammit!

He laughed and said "Ungenelewe yini kahle wena? Letha" (What has gotten into you? Bring)

I said no and sulked. I didn't want him to go. I was still craving more of his attention.

He came to me and said "I'm not going to ask you again. Letha

iwashi lami mommy"

"But baby..."

"Phakamile?" He threatened but couldn't stop himself from laughing.

"I don't want you to go". I mumbled.

"I know and I don't want to go either but the JHB office needs me. If it wasn't for lekhandalakho elishisayo I wouldn't even be here" (if it wasn't for your hot head)

"You can leave tomorrow morning". I said and squeezed my lips out like a baby locked out of a candy store.

"Baby I'm going to miss my flight. Letha bo"

I looked away and shook my head. He got on top of the bed and looked at me once. I thought he was going to hug me but he tickled me instead. I laughed my lungs out and begged him to stop.

"Letha iwash lam" he smiled, with his hands still on the sides of my stomach. I couldn't stop laughing. He tickled me some more.

"Okay okay!!" I said as I raised the pillow for him to take it.

He took it, laughed and said "Nxa". I watched him as he put it on.

"You said you'll miss your flight" I

remarked

"Yes. And?"

"But you drove here"

"Your point is?" He was provoking me.

I said "Mciim" and looked away. He laughed and came to kiss me on my lips.

"Ngiyadlala man." He said as he took the key from the bedside table and said "Konje kthiwan? Nithi Girls with Mercs benze njani?" He said as he waved them in my face.

I looked at him blankly before what he said registered in my brain. I dropped my jaw and said

"No way!!".

He laughed too and said "Yes way!" I screamed to the top of my lungs and jumped onto him. He continued laughing at my reaction. What!??????

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Insert 53.

I couldn't stop bombarding him with strings of kisses. The beast parked outside is really mine? I got overwhelmed with emotion and dropped a tear.

"Hawu. U khalelani ke manje?"
(Why are you crying now?) He

asked with great concern. I was still in his arms.

"I'm not crying. I'm just.. too happy. I can't believe you'd do something like this for me"

"You had better believe it ke sthandwasami. You deserve everything coming your way from me. And please, allow me to spoil you rotten. Don't even try stop me otherwise so xabana mina nawe" (.. we going to fight). I giggled.

"Just don't overdo it" I pointed my index finger at him.

"Suqalile. So xabana..." (You've started. We gonna fight) He

pointed his finger back at me.

I laughed.

"I'm a bit rusty though. The last time I drove a car was 2 months ago, which I didn't do that often"

"Ayihluphi imoto baby. Futhi nine nhlanhla nina ma 2000 because you were born in an era of automatic cars. Beyizok'nyisa nge reverse imanual' (A car is very easy to handle. You're lucky because you're a millennial and you guys were born in an era of automatic cars. A manual car was going to cause you to shit on yourself. In reverse) He shot out

a laugh.

He calls me a 2000 because I'm younger than him. I tried composing myself but as always, his laughter was contagious.

"You're so annoying" I said as I thinned my eyes at him.

He kept on laughing. Idiot. I tried releasing myself from his hands but he tightened his hold on my waist, laughing at me. I was laughing in breaks and sulking at the same time. When he finally got a grip, he kissed me on my forehead and said "You're so cute when you're trying to be angry".

I smiled and told him to leave me alone.

Muzi called Tebogo to come drive me home and asked me to drive around in the village to remind myself what it's like to drive. I'm not that rusty because I used to drive Kgantsho's car but the fear of being behind a steering wheel by myself still haunts me. When I got home that day, my mom couldn't stop crying and thanking Muzi over the phone. She was more happy that I won't ever have to get into a taxi anymore.

What she didn't know is that she also won't have to in a couple of days. The police keep saying they're still investigating whenever we enquire about Kgantsho's case. The community is still not sleeping on the matter. The local mashonisa says he might have an idea of the killers might be but he needs to make sure. I'm not so sure about the contemplation of this revenge anymore.

I called Tumi to "come see something". He came at night when I was already in my pyjamas watching TV with my

mother. He didn't knock. He never does.

"Ke duma eka oka hwetsa handle ela e fisha one day" (I wish you'd find the handle hot someday)

Tumi threw himself on top of the couch she was sitting on and laughed. He was wearing shades. He leaned over to my mom for a hug while seated with his white, leather overnight bag under his arm. She hugged back with one hand with the widest smile on her face.

"There's a reason why those are called sunglasses". I said as I texted Muzi back on WhatsApp.

"Have your litres and mind your own. Mommy.." He said and made a dramatic sniff.

"Yabe ele eng yanong Moratoa?" (What is it now?)

"He dumped me!" He said and took off his glasses

"Which one? Salam Salam?" My mom replied. I shot out a laugh. She's referring to the Indian.

"No. The cashier. Ola wa Checkers" (The one from Checkers)

"And I don't know about this?" I exclaim. He pointed at the glass of water of the coffee table and said "Your litres"

"Mciim." I said and focused on texting my man who was also now taking longer to reply because he was busy. Normally, he wouldn't even be on WhatsApp.

"Does he know that you're graduating?" My mom said to Tumi.

Tumi laughed and I laughed.

"Suka emabhozeni" I said while laughing.

"Wa itebala. Ase ma tsulung mo wena mabhozeni ke gaka"

(This is my house. Not Zululand).

I pointed my tongue at her and smirked.

I showed Tumi the car and he couldn't stop screaming.

"Friend how did you pray for this man?" He was still gobsmacked, confused as to what to touch and what to leave in the car.

"I said "God. I need a man. A provider." I said and laughed immediately.

"I'm going to church on Sunday to copy and paste that prayer shwem!!!" He admired the car and said he's happy for me.

"Arggg fok aba heme ka ma pipe maan!" (They must breathe pipes..) He said after he stepped out of the car in the garage to

admire the exterior some more.

"What?" I said. I couldn't contain my laughter. He's stupid.

"Of course. It's protocol. It's mandatory. Standard procedure. Nyisment!"

"My word!" This car is going to belong to him more than it does to me."

We went back into the house and found that my mom had left for bed. Tumi and I parted ways on the exit from the living room as I went into the kitchen and him to the bedroom. I got to the kitchen and immediately remembered that I didn't ask him what he

wants to eat.

"Bes! Kego tlele ka papa!?"

(Should I bring you pap?) I yelled from the kitchen and even stood on my toes to relay the message.

"Ha-uh. E tla fela kadi sneke" (No. Just bring snacks)

"Le tla go robala ko ntle nyena!" (The two of you will go sleep outside!)

We both laughed and yelled "Sorry!".

I took out a bowl and placed on the table. My phone rang and I answered it.

"Ma we ngane zami" (Mother of my kids) He said and I blushed.

"Mbulazi" I said in a low tone.

"Akufanele ngabe ulele wena?" (Aren't you supposed to be sleeping?)

"I will after I'm done eating."

"It's 4 minutes to 12 baby" He said. Sounding shocked.

"So?" I asked. Without a care in the world.

"Hayi. Udlani?" (What are you eating?)

"Pap and inkomazi" I said.

Excited.

"You're so cute" He said and softly laughed.

"Alright ithi ngiqedelele la ngizokwazi ukulala nami.

Ngiyak'thanda yezwa?" (Let me finish up here so I can sleep as well. I love you hear?)

I giggled and said "I love you too"

"Awungizwa wena. Ngithe ngiyak'thanda mkami?" (You're not hearing me. I said I love you my wife?)

I laughed. "Ngiyak'thanda nami baba!"

"Ja!" He said and firmly approved. I couldn't stop laughing.

"Bye bye. Ungiqedela i-airtime angifounanga nga matshe na manzi lana". (You're depleting my airtime I didn't call using rocks and water here)

I continued laughing even though he had cut the call. I made my food and took out a pack of cheese curls for Tumi.

I went into the bedroom and he wasn't there. He came in shortly after me in his pyjama shorts and a vest, putting away his toiletries.

He laid himself on his side of the bed and grabbed the curls. I was eating and texting Amu at the same time. After I was done, I put the bowl on the bedside table and laid back also.

"Aren't you gonna take that back to the kitchen?" He said as he

raised his eyes from his phone screen, chewing.

"Ah who's going to die if I leave it here?" I said and carelessly waved my hand in the air.

"Bih you is always the one to scold people who leave dishes lying around."

"Life is too short." I said and laid on my side to face him. He looked at me suspiciously and shook his head.

"In other news, I am pregnant" I said and looked up, avoiding his reaction. Silence. I looked back at him. He had dropped his jaw.

"What?" I shrugged and asked.

"Ka speed so? Zulu sperms!" He said and clapped once.

I laughed.

"Tjo hayi nigga doesn't play" He said and laughed as well.

"He said it himself" I said and put on a naughty smirk.

"He did!?"

"Friend! I went off at him and nigga f***ed me till I sang his praises and started praying in tongues"

Tumi laughed and almost screamed.

"Tell me more!"

"I still get butterflies just thinking about it."

"Hayi Muzi is on a lane of his own shem. The Powerball of all man jackpots." I laughed and blushed at the same time. Realizing that even with all the flaws that come with this marriage, I am actually quite blessed. We continued gossiping until 04h30. Meaning we had to sleep in the whole afternoon the next day.

-A week later-

I have a meeting with my wedding planner who arrived last night from JHB. I'm beginning to show that I'm pregnant. I fall in

love with my baby everyday. I know I didn't want him(or her) but there's just something about being pregnant for the man you love and who clearly loves you back and isn't afraid of showing it. He got a parcel delivered to my mother's doorstep and went I opened it, it was a bank card and a K53 book. I laughed at the book and asked him what the card is for and he said it's my "cravings" account. I melted on the spot! Why didn't anybody tell me how nice it actually is spending your man's money?

I've been feeling nauseous lately but I never throw up. I can't stomach tap water. I resorted to spring water instead. It doesn't taste heavenly but it's more tolerable. I got up from my bed and went straight to the bathroom. My mom makes my bed for me these days but when I ask her to do other certain things for me she's quick to say "You're pregnant Filwe. Not paralyzed". She has her days. I put on an extra large t-shirt dress and sandals. I drove to town to meet him there. I brushed my weave

before I got out of the car and stepped out with my handbag.

I scouted around for him in the restaurant and he waved at me.

I went straight to his corner table and we hugged. He typed something on his phone, locked it and put it away.

"Are you well?" He asked.

"I'm good. How are you?"

"Good good. Caught the flu but here we are"

"Askiies"

"No biggie. I'm so sorry about your sister."

"Such is life." I sullenly responded.

"Alright. We may have postponed

the wedding but that does not mean that I was sleeping."

"Sebenza girl" I teased and he laughed.

"Stop. I told you that I'm going to send your measurements to Samora and I am glad to announce that your dress is ready for fitting." He said as he clapped his hands together.

"Uhm.. about that.." I was preoccupied with Kgantsho's funeral when he sent me the SMS so I never replied. Even if I did it wouldn't have helped because I did not know that I was pregnant although I saw the

weight gain. I thought it was just going to be a short phase.

"Do not drive me crazy. What is it?" he said as he hung his hands in the air in suspense.

"Preggies" I said and stretched my pursed lips.

"What!?" He was so loud the whole restaurant turned heads to look at us

"I'm sorry" I said as I buried my head in my folded arms on the table.

"And now you tell me!? The wedding is in 2 weeks! 2 f'ing weeks!"

"I didn't mean to" I sulked.

"Contraceptives are a foreign concept to you aker? And this is the very same person who wanted a tummy hugging dress!" He scolded. I don't understand what his problem is. This is my wedding. I wanted to postpone it but my mom and Muzi convinced me otherwise. I'm lucky because I've been getting compliments of how pretty and light I look these days so I'm sure that I won't be looking like I'm prepping to go act on Wrong Turn on my wedding day. He packed up his magazines along with his macbook and diary.

"Where are you going?" I ask in

confusion.

"Away from you. Far far away! I'll call you when I'm ready! You're lucky your husband is generous with his payments otherwise and I swear to God in his silk robe, I was going to drop your careless a**!" He said and marched out. He forgot his car keys and realized this when he got to the door. He came back to get it and everything he had in his hands went tumbling down.

"Satan onkaparetse solalaphi today! Arg dammit!" (The devil is wearing a coat today. Specially for me!) I wanted to laugh at his

episode but I couldn't afford to. I still need him as my planner.

UNEDITED.  

Insert 54.

I ordered breakfast after
Tlhogi's rampageous egress.

Eating by myself in public weights
all types of awkward on me but I
was feeling lazy to drive back
home at the same time. I ripped
the sweetener sachet open and
poured all of it into my tea. I was
about to stir when a body came
to stand in front of me. I raised

my head and I couldn't believe my eyes. Kgokagano!? I just stood there with my eyeballs hanging, gawking at him.

"Aren't you going to say hi to the love of your life?", he said and flashed his smile. A tool he has always trusted and armed himself with to drop female underwear.

"What? How? Wh..where have you been?" I ask.

"Around. South Africa is too large for a man like myself to sit around in one place" - He said as he provoked the chair in front of me, pulling it out.

"You're even prettier than the

last time I saw you"

"You last saw me when I was in matric. I can't be crusty for 6 years" I replied and stirred my tea. He laughed.

"Still feisty as ever I see" He responded.

Kgokagano is the first guy I almost drowned in love with. He was the boy every girl drooled over at assembly and everywhere he passed in the school premises with his squad. They couldn't stop talking about his "rugby" body. Most of them just joined the chess team so they could be closer to him. He was 3 school years

ahead of me. I was in grade 9 when he was in matric. He never stopped chasing me ever since I got to their school. He is one of the reasons why I never made any female friends in high school because I was apparently was the mafikizolo that only came with the intention to snatch boyfriends. I only honoured his request when I got to grade 11. It was all roses and chocolate until I went away with him in the middle of the night with the intent of sleeping over at his house. We were madly in love. So mad that I even forgot that I

have a mad woman for a mother as well. She came knocking on his father's door with the police.

From there onwards, she kept a close eye on me. Meaning we only had to date at school. He ended up sleeping with the "IT" girl of the school. When I asked him about it, he told me that my being a momma's baby is ruining his street cred and that he couldn't carry on with our relationship. Heartbreak befriended me for the rest of my high school years.

"How did he do it?" He asked. With his eyes fixed on me.

"Who did what?" I asked. He pointed to my ring with his head. I couldn't distinguish if it was sadness, disappointment or indifference that I was seeing on his face.

"What do you mean?" He sat back and put his hands in his pockets. I took a sip of my tea.

"There's no way your mom just allowed him to marry you just like that. So how did he do it?"

"He managed because he's not you"

He dropped his eyes.

"I'm sorry Remsy. I was a boy and I was stupid. I should've

fought for you sooner but it's only hitting me now that letting go of you then was the biggest mistake of my life. That metal on your finger is stabbing through my heart."

"Let's let sleeping dogs lie. What's going on with you? How's life in general?". I said, trying to shy away from the topic that has carelessly placed itself on the center of the table.

He exhaled. "Arg. Life is easy flowing. We go where the wind blows"

I laugh softly. "I heard you have a law firm now".

He laughs and says "O kwele mang?" (Who told you that?)

"Leina la motho ke kgomo" (A person's name is worth a cow)

"Arg yeah. But you know law has always been my dad's dream so.. it is what it is" He says and shrugs.

"You don't sound happy." I raise my eyes at him and drop them back to my tea. If this cup could talk it would've probably told me that it has had enough of kissing the teaspoon.

"No I'm not complaining. The money is good but there's just..." he runs out of words.

"Just what?"

"There's this void in my life that I've been trying to fill. I can't pinpoint what it is exactly but I've been feeling like I have everything but it's still not enough". He says and locks eyes with me.

I clear my throat and raise my hand for the bill. I didn't even have my omelette.

"Are you happy?" He asks.

"Yeah. I am. Happy." He shoots his eyes deep into mine and says "You're hiding something"

"I'm not hiding anything. I have no reason to. You broke my heart after promising me the world and

I moved on. You never contacted me but you're here tell..."

"I tried. Trust me. You don't respond to DMs and I also had no guts to call you. I once asked Boitumelo for your number and he bit my head off."

The bill arrived and I took out a R100 note and shoved it in there. I stood up from the table, took my car keys and my phone and bid him goodbye. I left him seated in the restaurant and he followed me shortly after that. The sun was out to play.

"Remsy!" He said I unlocked my car, walking towards it.

I turned back at him and snapped.

"I am not what you lack in your life. We were kids. There's a reason we didn't last. What we had does not even qualify to be labelled as a relationship. I don't know about you but I'm grown now. Please leave me alone."

I got into my car and left him there.

I called Thogi while I was in there and he picked up. He sounded like he was sleeping. I asked for his location and he sent

it. He wasn't okay at all. I doubt this is just about my dress. When I got there, he was dressed in baggy but light sweat pants and a transparent vest. He opened the door with a bottle of champagne in his hand.

"You okay?" I asked, judging from how terrible he looked.

"Flu, men and bride problems. I'll survive" I closed the door as he walked over to his bed. His sheets were messed up.

"I just figured that you going off at me like that wasn't just about my dress. Wanna talk about it?"

"No no. Do not exempt yourself

from this. You deserved my wrath. What people don't understand is that if I'm the one planning your entire wedding from the decor to the attire and your dress turns out to be a flop, It is going to smear dung on my reputation. I worked hard to be where I am. I don't appreciate it when people don't cooperate"

Shuu. I did not realise that this is how deeply he felt about this. "Askiies hlem. We still have time. I.. think"

He downed his champagne and turned to look at me. He came to stand in front of me.

"Time? H*e if I'm changing your dress that means your husband's suit also has to change. I asked you for a list of bridesmaids and their measurements did you send it? "

He shot his eyes at me waiting for an answer. I pursed my lips and looked away.

"Are you still calculating?"

I laughed. He smiled but tried to suppress it. He then laughed as well and came to sink down on the bed next to me.

" Mciim wanstressa waitsi. And we can't postpone it again because Samora is going to drop

us. He's the only person I trust" he said and raised his bottle to his mouth. He drank half of the bottle.

"We can always buy a dress" I say and shrug. People keep telling me about the nerves that manifest into panic attacks that brides always face but I'm feeling none of that.

"Are you on drugs?" He asked.

"What? My sister bought her dress at a shop and she was stunning in it."

He drank some more and said

"May her soul rest in peace. You are not your sister and I wasn't

the one planning her wedding". He was speaking like he had a peg on his nose because of the flu. He sniffed so hard while rubbing his palm on the opening of his nostrils and "Yoh! Men are like this virus". The mucous was getting to him. I couldn't help but laugh.

"Wanna talk about it?" I asked and subtly smiled at him.

"Not really. Wena just know that I feel used. Nxa" He said as he took his phone and unlocked it.

"Used?"

"Yes. Used. Never support a man financially wa nkwa? Arg who am I talking to? You're married to a

bank"

I laughed out and told him it's also not easy being with him.

"It might not be but I know the man loves you"

"Are the two of you friends?"

"Nope. I only got to know of his existence when he was getting married the first time. You know what he said when he called me for you?" I shook my head and gave him a look that said "Keep talking".

He said "I don't care what it costs. Just make sure that at the end of the day, my wife is going to be a happy bride. Can you

do that for me?"

I melted. I love-hate Muzi's ability to charm me off my feet even in his absence.

It's a new day and Tlhogi forced me to come with him all the way to Joburg to go meet up with Samora. We were honestly running out of time and I was undermining the severity of this. When we got there, they hugged each other like old friends.

"I suppose this is our beautiful bride". Samora said as he kissed me on both my cheeks.

"Yes. The now pregnant beautiful bride!" Thogi said as he pushed both of us out of the way and got into the Samora's shop. I thought he was also going to go off at me but he laughed and placed his head on my shoulder instead. He shook his head and whispered "Don't take him to heart. But you're lucky you found me in a good mood today. Do come in" he held my hand and walked in with me. The shop was a mess. Sewing material and machines everywhere. It looks like he works by himself here. He walked over to the back and I watched

him modeling his way there in his flip flops. He was wearing red and blue summer shorts with his yellow thighs out and a tropical vest. Thogi was seated and already on his phone when I was lurking around. He came back with the dress and said "Alriiight" while placing it carefully on the hanging rail. I couldn't believe my eyes. The dress was a complete dream.

"If my visual measuring skills still serve me well. This dress is still going to fit. You're still going to look like a goddess but (he raises his hand) you're going to be

uncomfortable all day. You're not showing yet from how I see but combined with the corset, you are definitely going to have a miscarriage." He scanned me a bit with a calculating frown on his face and said "You know what? We are not changing the dress. We just going to alter it a little bit." "Am I not supposed to be fitting it?"

"Were you not supposed to be on contraceptives?" Thogi quickly exclaimed. Samora laughed.

Muzi does not know that I am Joburg and I planned on surprising him. I knew he was at the office from what he told me so I asked Tlhogi to take me there. He mentioned that he has a friend at MaloCon so I was sure he knew exactly where it was. He dropped me off and as I was about to close the door after getting off, he said "Monna ha surprise'iwe ausi. If you find him sexing another woman in that office you're welcome to call me I'll come fetch you". I laugh and closed the door.

I got to the reception and found a skinny darkskinned lady with the longest hair.

"Afternoon"

"Hello! Welcome to MaloCon. How can we help you today?"

"Is Muzikayise in?"

"Muzikayise?"

"Pardon me, Mr Khumalo" I figured she probably doesn't even call him by name.

"Oh yeah he is. But he is currently engaged in a meeting. Do you mind waiting?"

"How long is it going to take?"

"They've been in there in here for about an hour now. They should

be out in a few minutes."

"Oh here he comes." She said as the lift pulled itself apart and they poured out. I just stood there admiring his yummy self.

Baby looked dapper in a green suit with a black shirt and a matching green tie. It wasn't too tight. It wasn't too big. Just the perfect fit. I fell in love all over again. He was still talking to the 2 men so he didn't notice my presence. "I'll get the architects on it. They should be done by the end of this week and email the final product to me and if you're also not happy with that then you're free to

take your business else where. My apologies for the inconvenience".

"No need to apologize. We are not responsible for the mishaps that our employees tend to make. We just thought it would be best to speak to you in person". The white man said.

They shook hands and the two walked out. Only then did he turn towards me and wore the widest smile on his face.

"Look who's here?" He said as he came over to hug me. I fell into his arms and his arms embraced me, slightly picking me up. As always, he scent was lethal. He

kissed me once and looked at the receptionist who was also all smiles and said "Why didn't you call and tell me that my wife is here Samantha?"

"She didn't tell me who she was sir"

"Arg it's okay. Thanks neh" he said and he took my hand, heading to the elevator.

UNEDITED.  

Insert 55.

(Removed)

"Baby?" He called out as he tucked in his shirt with a smile on

his face.

"Hm?" I responded to his call.

"Your underwear is inside out". He said and tried by all means not laugh, with his eyebrow raised. I looked down and immediately shot out a laugh.

I shook my head and took it off to fix it. I put my dress on and sunk down on the couch. I was exhausted.

I caught him redoing his tie with the most innocent look on his face. He's a beautiful human being and I wish my baby comes out looking like him.

"Ungibukani umamatheka ngale

ndlela?" (What you looking at, smiling in that manner?)

I didn't even realise I was smiling throughout my staring.

"Nothing. I'm just admiring how handsome you are"

He curved his upper lip towards his nose and blushed. He does this when he wants to hide the fact that he's blushing. What he doesn't know is that it makes him more cuter.

After he was done getting dressed he held out his hand so I can come to him. I told him I'm lazy. He laughed and came to seat next to me. He looked at me once,

dropped his eyes to the floor and smiled.

"What?" I enquired

"Ubuhle bakho abujwayeleki" (I can't get used to how beautiful you are)

I smiled shyly and thanked him for the complement. He had his elbows on his knees with his hands calmly tangled around one another.

"We need to go to KZN by the way" he said.

"Before the wedding?"

"Yes. There's a ceremony that Bab'Ngema needs to perform for the both of us. My father called

me last night and said it should've been done that day we were in his hut"

"Oh. The day he said the tension was too much for him?"

"Yeah" He said and sat back on the couch with his hands in his pockets. His haircut was fresh.

"Are your brows trimmed baby?"

I asked and he immediately laughed, exposing his beautiful teeth.

"The hell?" He asked.

"What? They look like they are." I said and laughed with him

" Ngiyindoda yomZulu mina baby angizenzi lezo zinto. Amasimba

k'phela lawo." (I'm a Zulu man baby I don't do any of that crap) I laughed out loud. He side-eyed me, smiled and said "Nxa", looking away towards the view of the city. The uncivilized Zulu man in him is always ready to defend him. "Okay ke. What's this ceremony for if I may ask baby?"

"Apparently, to protect our kids from seizures that we both suffered from"

"But... I'm already pregnant baby. Is my baby safe? I felt panic brushing it's rough hands on the sides of my head.

He exhaled. "Angazi

sthandwasami" he said and wiped his face with his hand. "I asked my dad the same question and from how he answered me, I shouldn't have impregnated you before that ceremony"

"Yoh" I sullenly said. I honestly had no idea how to express the fear in my heart.

He took out his right hand from his pocket and pulled me into a hug.

"I'll do everything in my power to protect him. Ngiyafunga"

He said as he put his head over mine. I can sense that he's also as scared as I am.

"Thank you baby" He suddenly said.

"What for?"

"Your panicking like this means you love and want him. I was scared you were going to resent him.

Ngizwile kthiwa kwenzeka" (I heard it happens)

I smiled. "I doubt I would be this attached to him if he wasn't yours"

He softly laughed and asked me why.

"Because wena Mntungwa.." I turned to look at him. He was listening attentively.

"Mbulazi, Mzilikazi kaMashobana,

Mpeyana, Ndaba"

He blushed and swallowed both his lips, exposing his dimple. He then slowly shook his head and squeezed my hand. He loves it when I praise and call out his clan names.

"I am sure that even if it does happen, God forbid that you stop loving me one day, my baby is still going to be in good, fatherly hands. You're a very responsible man baby."

He smiled and pulled my chin with his two fingers and kissed me. He then told me to come sit on his lap and I did exactly that.

"Vula le zindlebe zakho ungilalele, ungizwe futhi ungizwisise. I am never gonna stop loving you. You are my heart in human form.

Ungizwile?" (Open your ears and listen to me to understand me... did you get that?)

I smiled and nodded.

"Good. Another thing, I need a meeting with you no MaDlamini"

"Why?"

"Z"

I laughed out loud and playfully hit his chest.

Tlhogi called and said he's going back to PLK. Muzi rolled his eyes and asked me if I have to leave.

I told him my mom needs me. He understood and stood up to accompany me outside. When we got out of the lift, we bumped into Mandla texting on his phone. They cheerfully greeted each other. Mandla tried giving him a handshake but Muzi coughed and put his hands back into pockets. Mandla laughed and said "Uzawufa zimpundu bawo" (You're gonna die from ass one day) Muzi laughed and said "Fseg" Is this some kind of encrypted code or something? I'm not that good in Xhosa so I didn't understand what was going on.

Muzi told him to go up as he accompanies me outside.

I asked him what's going on. He laughed and said nothing. I just knew he wasn't going to tell me.

Boys!

Tlhogi arrived. Muzi kissed me outside the offices with his hands on my waist and told me to travel safely. He only greeted Tlhogi after that and then walked back into the office.

When I got home, my mom was still sitting in the living room watching TV. She's normally

asleep by this time. I arrived earlier than I expected because Tlhogi drives like a maniac that's in possession of a couple of coupons for extra lives.

"Hey ma. Goreng osa robale?" (Why are you not sleeping?)

"Ke robala bjang ole tseleng Filwe? (How do I sleep when you're traveling?)

She was not in a good mood.

"O sharp?" I said as I placed my handbag on the coffee. She immediately said "Hey hey tlosa! Ditshipi tseleng kotlase ga bag yago ditla ntshenyetsa tafole" (Those metals under your

bag are going to damage my table)

I rolled my eyes and removed it. She didn't see me rolling them because the only source of light was the television. Otherwise, the CBD in hell was going to go up in flames.

She coughed and asked me to remove myself before the TV because I don't act better than her Nigerians. I swear, if my mom had to save one person between me and Jackie Appiah, I wouldn't make it out of that predicament alive. I kissed her on her cheek as she affectionately the side of my

face. She loves my cheek kisses. But they still were not enough to move her eyes from the TV and grab her attention. I wanted us to speak about Kgantsho because I felt like she's having a hard time coping. She cleans the house three times in one day if not 4. I'm worried about her. But then again, this is Violet we are talking about. She could ruin my whole year with only one sentence.

I picked up my bag and went straight to my room. I took a quick bath and put on my red silk nightdress. I called Muzi and his line was busy. This saddened me

because I was looking forward to speaking to him. I waited for him to call me back but ended up dozing off instead. He called me out of my sleep and I was pissed. "Yes?" I answered.

He cut the call. I looked at my screen wondering what the hell is going on with him. He called me back after about 2 minutes. I then figured that it has everything to do with how I answered the phone.

"Baby" I answered. I was angry but I still wanted to hear his voice.

"Ungenwe yini?" (What's gotten

into you?) He asked.

"I tried calling you"

"I know" he said calmly.

"You kn... you know what?"

Goodnight"

"Baby. Siyashada mina nawe in 2 weeks. By now you have to know that if I'm not talking to you then ngikhuluma no MaDlamini.

This is not something we should be fighting over. Not at this stage of our relationship" (We are getting married in 2 weeks... then I'm talking to MaDlamini) he said and I dropped my high chest.

"I know"

"Ngitheni ngokuzi hlanyisa?"

(What did I say about your crazy outbursts?) He scolded.

"Uthe ngiyeke" (You said I should drop them) I felt like crying.

"Wenzani wena manje?" (What is it that you're doing now?)

"Ngiyazi hlanyisa" (I'm acting crazy) I said and I sniffed.

"Manje ukhalelan?" (Why are you crying now?) He sharply asked.

"Uyangi thethisa" (You're shouting at me)

"Ngik'thethisa ngoba awungizwa wena mengikhuluma nawe.

Angiyithandi lento yakho yoku loku uvusana nempi na noma ungenaso isizathu. It has to stop.

Angithandi ukulwa nawe because it ruins my whole day." (I'm shouting because you never listen when I speak to you. I don't like this habit of yours of starting a fight without a valid reason... I don't like fighting with you..) I sniffed and told him I heard him. I could hear him exhale.

"Ngiyaxolisa baby. Ungakhali mommy" (I'm sorry. Don't cry) he lowly and sincerely said.

"Go lokile. We'll speak tomorrow because I'm really tired and I can't keep my eyes open"

"Isho kudala ukuthi uyangixolela" (Tell me that you

forgive me first)

"Ngiyakuxolela Mbulazi. Ngicela ukulala manje?" (I forgive you. Can I please sleep now?)

"Uhlale kahle. Ngiyakthanda. Uhlale ukwazi lokho" (Sleep well. I love you. Always know that)

I exhaled and told him I love him too.

I woke up the next day around nine feeling all sorts of tired. I yawned and my phone rang as I was about to stretch out my hands. I pulled it from under my pillow and answered.

"Morning" I said.

"Morning yourself. Ausi wee, do we have bridesmaids?"

"Yes we.. do." I answered in confusion.

"Then where the hell are the measurements?" Tlhogi scolded.

This totally slipped my mind.

"I've been meaning to send them to you but I kept forgetting. I have a lot on my mind" I answered.

"Watseba otlo apara lot on my mind eo ya gago? So far we only have two dresses for you but I'm not worried about the other one because Samora says he will

manage. The other seamstress does not have Samora's patience, which is also the size of a sugar bean. We need dresses for 3 people. If you did basic mathematics you would know that that's nine dresses that need to be done in 2 weeks! Please stop stressing me because I have a very weak heart!"

He said and dropped the phone. I took a very deep breath out. I immediately sent him the measurements and switched my phone off before he called with another rant. Luckily, I don't even

have to lift a finger for the sake of anything.

I got out of bed and went looking for my mom. There was no specific reason for this. It's just something I do when I'm home. The first thing I do is want to see her. I called for her but she didn't respond. I checked in her bedroom and she wasn't there but her bed was made. I walked to the living room and found Tumi there in his pyjamas having the time of his life with the remote in his hand. He was cracking his lungs with laughter, watching Tom and Jerry. He didn't even

notice me walking in.

"And then wena?" I asked.

"Good morning to you too." He said and exploded in laughter, concentrating on the television.

"When did you get here and o robetse kae seeing that you're in your pyjamas?" (Where did you sleep?)

"There's a queen sized bed in this house. There was no way I would sleep ko godimo ga skepe sela sa gago when I was that tired" (...on top of that boat of yours...)

I laughed out loud. He slept in my mom's room.

"O lapa neodirang?" (What made

you tired?)

"I went to town to look for a suit
aker chomi."

"For grad?"

"Yes and your wedding."

"You're going to wear it twice?"

"Yes. I cannot afford two. You're
the one married to Patrice

Motsepe here. Nie ek" (Not me)

I laughed and told him that he
can use the money in the

"cravings account" to get himself
more clothes. There is no way he's
wearing the same suit twice.

He looked at me with emotional
puppy eyes and I told him to
stop. We laughed it out and I

asked him where my mom is. His smile slowly faded as he told me that she went to do some grocery shopping.

"And that makes you sad?" I asked.

"No silly. She wasn't okay when I got here last night. We ended up speaking about Ous'Kgantsho. She's acting strong but she's collapsing on the inside friend." My heart broke. Kgantsho's death still hurts but I've found a way to deal with it. I cry when I need to and move on with my life after that. That's what she always encouraged. She always

said if there's nothing you can do about a particular situation then there's no point in stressing about it. In the process of mastering this coping mechanism, I neglected my mother's pain. I undermined how badly this could've hit her.

UNEDITED.  

Insert 56.

I made breakfast for both Tumi and I and took it to the living room with a tray. We were both still in our pyjamas. There was nothing much to the breakfast.

Just scrambled eggs and bread with orange juice as an escort. I gave him his plate and he sat upright.

"I should've boiled these eggs yazi" I said. I was really regretting why I made them that way.

"Yhuu ha ah. So you can suffocate me with your fart?" He exclaimed. "Friend my fart doesn't smell" I defended my self.

"I can call all our previous G11 classmates so they can testify. He said as he threatened to stand up to go fetch his phone from the charger."

I laughed and lowly said "My fart doesn't stink though"

"On a normal day yes but once you have boiled eggs, you could literally be used as a missile in a world war shem. Remember when you had them ka break..." he said and began cracking up in laughter

"Friend tsek man I'm eating here" I said and suppressed a laugh

"No listen." He was still laughing.

"Remember when you had them ka break and you let it loose ko classing. Mrs Van der Walt kept asking where the smell was coming..." he was dying from

laughter. He even had tears in his eyes.

"Tsamaya mogae" I laughed and threatened him to leave.

"She.. she asked where the smell was coming from and when she made eye contact with...yohhhh"

"Friend fuseg!"

"Hihihhi when she made eye contact with you, you immediately asked to be excused for the loo"

He kept wiping his tears but they kept pouring out. If Tumi laughs at you and cries at the same time, he's never going to finish with his stupidity at a time you'd be happy with.

"Kante keng?" I laughed and looked at him.

"Yoh mara le wena friend. And I warned you and asked you nicely to stop eating mae a mme Mokwena ka break. But did you listen?"

Noooo. You just had to go release your sulphur dioxide and asphyxiate the entire class!"

I laughed and kept chewing.

Paying no attention to his silly self.

Mom came back from the shops while I was watching TV. Tumi was taking a bath. I could hear her dropping the heavy plastic bags on top of the kitchen table.

"Whuuuu". She cried out from exhaustion as she pulled the fridge open. Moments later, she walked in and calmly said "Tlosa maoto godimo ga tafola Filwe" (take your feet off the table) then dropped herself on the couch. I obeyed the instruction.

"You did your hair?" I asked. My mom has the richest brunette hair for decades that reaches the midpoint of her back when relaxed.

"Bus engwadile Moletji wena o butsisa gore eya Benoni na" (The bus is indicated a destination towards Moletji but you're asking if it's headed to Benoni) she said

and drank her water. I exploded in laughter. She looked really tired.

"Fry me I am sausage" I said and changed the channel.

"O presse remote eo yaka sentle aker ao duele madi a dish" (Handle my remote controller with care since you don't pay for the dish/DSTV)

I laughed, stood up from the couch to stand in front of her and said "Tsaa remote yago" (Take it)

She laughed and she glued her lips and eyes into her glass of water.

"O makgakga waitsi" she said

(You're so silly)

She said and we laughed.

"You look pretty Vee" she really did look beautiful.

"Redi thaka?" (Are we the same age?) She asked as she searched surfed through the channels with a slight smile on her face.

"Ao Vivi. Vinolia. Voracious. Vuzu Vuzu. Vuvuzela" she laughed out loud and threatened to hit me. I ran away, laughing my lungs out. She yelled and said "O tlhobole pijama tseo!" (Take off those pyjamas)

I got to my room and found Tumi on the mirror combing his fade on

the mirror. He turned to look at me and said "Your man has been calling you"

"How do you know that because my phone was off? You should learn to leave my phone alone. Ever heard of privacy?" I said as I picked it up from the bed and sat there.

"Is that a wild animal? I don't watch National Geographic phelanna"

I laughed loudly as I tried to concentrate on Muzi's text message. He's an idiot. The message read

"Thembalami. Angazi ukuthi ubusy or vele ungidinelwe na kodwa ngiyaxolisa for ukuk'tshela idiniso. I don't like when you're unhappy because it saddens me, more especially if you're unhappy because of the truth.

Ngiyakthanda nama tantrums wakho. Call me when you cool down" (I don't know if you're busy or if you're angry at me but I'm sorry for telling you the truth)

I laughed. What kind of an apology is this?

My planner called me while Tumi and I were lying on our stomachs under the tree, indulging on mangos he came with last night. My mom was napping in the house. I wiped my hands with a cloth and answered the call on loudspeaker.

"Girlings. Quick question. Do you know anybody who rents out stretch tents in your area to save time or should I contact my people?" He sounded like he was really busy. He was even accelerating his speech.

"Uhm.. let me ask around and I'll call you back"

"That's a no. Toodles" he said and dropped the call. This person is going to be the death of me. Tumi laughed.

"Tlhogi is going to give you grey hair shem you'd swear he's the one getting married"

"Tell me about it!" I said and he continued sucking and taking bites of his humongous mango. I don't even know why he didn't slice into pieces like I did. I looked at him once and brought my eyes back to my plate.

"Bes" I lowly called out

"Hm?" He answered.

"Have you spoken to your mom?"

I asked. He's always avoiding her. Which is part of the reason why he is at his happiest here.

Whenever he gets part time jobs to take care of the family, she always demands more things and orders products from my mom expecting him to pay for them.

Ever since his father died, all financial responsibilities were placed on his shoulders. He says he doesn't mind taking care of his family but they take it too far at times. His brother only sends money on his own terms.

"No I haven't and please, can we not go there?" He said. I know

when to pressure him and when not to. And now was not the time.

"Okay" I said. Silence.

"Anyway, what do you think of him?"

"Of who?"

"Tlhogi man" he laughed out loud and said "I see where this is going. Brika net daar. I like him but I think it's high time I took a break from relationships" (Stop it right there)

I laughed and let it go.

Time usually stalls when you're busy with absolutely nothing but

today it was running a marathon. I was in black leggings and Muzi's black t-shirt with slippers. I walked Tumi out and came back to my mom cooking supper.

"Nchopele onion tuu babynyana" (Please chop the onion for me) she said as pushed the chopping board in my direction and immediately turned away to attend to her steaming pap on the stove. I pulled a chair and sat down. I asked her if she has already dipped it in hot water to avoid eye irritation and she said yes. I began chopping half of the bulb and raised my head to look at

her.

"Mama?" I said

"Akena chelete" (I don't have money) she replied without turning to look at me.

I laughed out loud and said "Can we talk?" Her laughter grew weaker. She knew exactly what I wanted us to talk about.

"Not now Filwe"

"When then?"

"Filwe just..!" She aggressively grinded the pap with her wooded spoon and shaped the top nicely by spirally running the spoon over the pap before putting the lid back on. She wiped her hands on

her apron and exhaled. She then turned towards me and said "Okay. Obatla go bua aker? Are bue" (You want to talk? Let's talk)

She then pulled out a chair and sat across me.

I just looked at her and continued chopping. The only thing both our ears could hear was the buzzing sound of the refrigerator behind me.

"Have you ever thought about going therapy?"

"Ke dilo tsa makgowa tseo" (That stuff is for white people). She and sat back on her chair,

throwing her eyes to the outside.
The door was wide open.

"No it's not. It is going to help you"

"The only thing that's going to help me is if Molemo comes to live with me" she said. I think the reason why she wants Lemo here is because he looks exactly like his mother. People mistake him for a girl whenever he's dressed in unisex outfits.

"Tiisetso will never agree to that and you know it" I said and she ran the top of her fingers across her eyes in stress, breathing out. She kept her silence for a while.

She then finally said "I keep seeing her in my dreams"

"You do?"

"Yes. Ke mmone ga bedi" (I saw her twice)

"What do you see?"

"It was the same dream but in the first one, she was running towards me with a baby boy holding hands. In the same white dress we buried her in. Nea thabile. Rele at an open very rich and green field. But when she had to arrive to hug me, she disappears, leaving the little boy behind" (She was happy)

I frowned. "What does that

mean?"

"Aketsebe Filwe. In the second dream, it happens the same way but when she disappeared, she left a baby girl behind. It looked like the same child but mathomong it was dressed like a boy. Labobedi, she was in a dress"
"Hm!" I exclaimed. I had no words to explain how confused this made me feel.

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Insert 57.

"We are here baby" He says as he gently shook me while getting

himself out of this safety belt. He insisted we do this ceremony as soon as possible so he came to fetch me from home and brought me here. The famous bridal nerves are starting to kicking in. I called Tlhogi last night to ask him if everything is in order and all he had to say was "Finally. She decides to join the party". I did not bother checking the time because it was somewhere around 15h00. Muzi wasn't talking much. I figured he was tired from all the driving he has been doing since morning. We stepped out of the car and walked into the

house. Gugu and ma were cracking laughter from the TV room when we walked it.

"Sanibonani" we both said at the same time. They greeted back with smiles on their faces. Gugu had a sleeping Melokuhle in her arm. I went to sit next to ma when Muzi walked over to her and kissed her on her cheek, taking his baby from her arms.

"Hayi babakhe uzomvuzza you'll see him properly mes'evukile ngokwakhe" (You'll wake him up... when he's up on his own accord)

"Ungaqali. You're always hogging him ngicela elami ithuba" (Don't

start... can I please have my chance)

Gugu laughed because he wasn't hearing it. Okuhle was so grown and much more cuter now. And as his mother predicted, he woke up.

"Sawubona boy. Yes wena. Yes wena Mbulazi. Yes wena Phakamani. Yes wena Muzi"

"Yoh hayi ungabo ibiza ngalelo gama ingane asfuni nje thina ukuzophathwa yikhanda la ekhaya" (Do not call him by that name we don't want to experience endless headaches in this house)- His mother said as she paged through her magazine. Muzi

laughed and continued playing with his son, blatantly ignoring her. Okuhle began laughing when his father made funny faces.

Gugu then said "Bengine sinqiniseko sokuthi uzokhala. Ave e grumpy mesand' kvuka" (I was so sure that he was going to cry. He's always when whenever he has just woken up)

"U grumpy uma enawe. Phela there's levels to this parenting thing"

We all exploded in laughter. He's never going to outgrow being an idiot.

He then carefully placed his son on

his shoulder and asked where Thando is.

"Usa phumile kwa manje" (She went out) his mother replied.

"Uyephi?" (Where did she go?) He sharply asked.

"Awuyiyeki ngani ingane?" (Leave the child alone) Gugu begged and laughed.

"Yaz wena no ma, uma engamitha kuphela uChocho nizongazi kahle ngoba mengithi ngiyalungisa nina nivele nimoshe nje. Nim'yeka kanjani ukuthi ahambe worse anazi ukuthi ushonephi?" (You and ma are gonna know me well it she ever falls pregnant because

whenever I try to handle this situation you ruin everything. How do you allow her to leave and what's worse is that you don't even know where she went?) He said as his eyes danced between Gugu and his mother.

His mother laughed and said "Ukhulile manje uthando. Asisekho isidingo sokuthi ugijimise bonke abafan abamthandayo. And u responsible futhi. Ngeke nje uze ulunge ngoba MUTHLE uSis wakho uyayifanela nje nomawakhe and akahlali nawe full time. Wena no Nathi nidliwa yizono zenu. Ayikho enye" Ma exclaimed while laughing

"Eziphi zona lezo?" He asked with a smile on his face.

"You're afraid that she's going to experience all the ungodly things the two of you had been getting up to with all the girls of this village. Ave ngijabule ukuthi senikhulile manje akasekho nje umzali uzoziphonsa la efunana nengan yakhe" (I'm so happy you're all grown now. There's no parent that's going to throw themselves in here looking for her child)

Muzi had no choice but to laugh as well but I could see that his heart was not at ease.

Muzi asked me to go put on a doek and long dress because we were about to leave. I did as instructed then we walked out of the house. We bumped into his father at the door.

"Awu. Ndodana. Usufikile?"

Sawubona makoti" He calmly said as stabbed the ground with his walking rod. He walks perfectly. I don't think he needs it so I ended up concluding that it's just there for ambience. I humbly greeted him back. Muzi said "Yebo

Mntungwa. Sesiyahamba manje"

"Niyi bhekise ku Bab'Ngema?" His father asked.

"Ehena"

"Hayi. Nihambe kahle" he said as we walked into the house. We thanked him, walked to the car and got settled.

"Seatbealt" he said without looking at me and buckling up his.

"Nthwe ya nkgama nna baby" (This thing is suffocating me) I complained as I reluctantly buckled up.

"Better u kgame iyona than ukuthi uzokgama ukufa" (It's better than death) he said and started the car. If you had looked at him after he said that you would've sworn that I lied

about him ever saying a word. I laughed and looked to the outside. "U right?" He said as he placed his hand on my thigh.

"I'm okay" I said and smiled at him.

"Iyangi phazamisa lento yakho" (This dress of yours is disturbing me) he said as he tried pulling my dress up my thighs. I laughed because he's the one who said I should put it on.

We got to Bab'Ngema's hut and found his wife. She announced that he was not around but he should be back any moment from then from fetching "amakhambi".

Muzi thanked her as she handed us a 'bunk stool' to sit on. We sat and settled under the tree. She then said she would offer us juice but we both know why she can't. Muzi confirmed and told her that it is okay. I did not know and I was curious. She walked away.

"Why baby?" I asked as I crossed my legs.

He laughed as he took out his phone from his pocket.

"Ngazile ukuthi enye i-journalist angeke nje izithule" (I knew that a certain journalist was never going to keep quiet)

I laughed as well and continued

waiting for my answer.

"Well, ngiphuma ebukhosini baby. Asidli noma ikuphi" (I'm royalty baby. We don't just eat anywhere)

"Oh. Okay" I said and shrugged.

"But if that's the case then you shouldn't have gotten served by that girl mus"

"Which one?"

"Mbuso's girlfriend"

"Yeah well. Bekuhlangahlangene that day. This thing of not eating just anywhere was actually taken very seriously from that day onwards. Mina angina nkinga ukuk'tshela iqiniso" he said and went on to play Animal Rescue on

his phone.

"You mean you don't take it that seriously?"

"Naaah" he nonchalantly said.

"Yaz uzofa?" I reprimanded. He laughed.

"Idlozi lami aliy'qoki nje iber muda baby. Aliy'bhemu futhi ne nsangu"

(My ancestor does not wear shorts. It doesn't smoke weed)

he said I laughed out loud.

Bab'Ngema got back and called us into his hut with his hand. I've never seen him laugh nor smile.

We took off our shoes and got in.

There were bottles of herbs

everywhere. We got settled on

the floor as he put his things away. He then came to sit on the floor facing us. He closed his one and rubbed over it. He then looked at Muzi and "waze walenza udaba Mzilikazi". Muzi grabbed his lower lip with his upper teeth and said "Eish".

"Hayi kodwa iphutha ngelami. Ningixolele bantwana bami" he then stood up and started mixing his herbs. He placed them in a newspaper and gave it to me. He said I should head to the house and his wife will know what to do. I left and Muzi stayed behind. When I got there, I found her

chopping cabbage with robot pepper on the side. She immediately put the knife down and covered her vegetables with a clean white cloth. She asked me to follow her, taking the 'package' from me.

After being bathed by her, I felt like a burden had been lifted off my shoulders. I was not sure what was weighing me down but I felt like a different person. I got dressed and walked back to the kitchen with her. I asked her if I shouldn't go back and she said I should wait to be called. They will fetch me if they need

me. She pulled out a chair from her kitchen table and I sat in front of her black coal stove. She continued chopping and asked me where I come from. We conversed and laughed over light topics.

Muzi knocked and said we should we should get going. He then bid her goodbye then we got into the car and left.

While on the road, I asked him if he is okay.

"Yeah ngiright baby" he said but I wasn't convinced.

"What did bab'Ngema say?"

"He says I should go buy a black and white goat and bring it back

before midnight." He kept his eyes glued to the road ahead.

"What is it for?"

"I have no idea. He just said he's going to slaughter it at the crack of dawn and that it is not supposed to be eaten" he said.

"And then our baby is going to be fine? Right?"

"Hopefully" he says, still keeping his eyes glued to the road.

-The next day-

After breakfast that was shared over laughter and Melokuhle's

occasional grumpy cries, ma asked Gugu where her husband is.

"Hayi angazi ma I think usalele. I last saw him around 8 last night" she said as she hushed and rocked Okuhle, begging him to suck the bottle she was gently pushing into his tightened lips.

"Hamba uyom' checka sthandwasami?" She said, directing this instruction to me. The chief was buried in his newspaper as always. I got up and went up the stairs. I didn't knock because I was sure he was alone, I left his other wife downstairs.

"Baby!?" I called out. His sheets immediately announced that he slept in them but he wasn't in the bedroom.

"Hm?" He called out. He was in the ensuite, with his mouth full of what I guessed to be toothpaste.

I didn't reply. I just sat on the bed and threw my eyes to his phone. It wasn't locked. He had left it on the Animal rescue app. I smiled and pulled it into my hand and checked how far he got. What? I'm the one who taught him this game and he's already 21 levels ahead of me? I'm still

stuck because I've ran out of strategies on how to maneuver my way around it. I'm not even surprised. This is what you get when you teach a genius how to play a game that revolves around strategy. He spit out and asked me if I missed him, yelling from the bathroom. I laughed and said yes as I mindlessly shuffled the blocks around. He continued making jokes and I as his loyal audience, laughed my lungs out as always.

"Just got back from L.A. We should do dinner sometime. For old time sake and maybe, somebody

could score himself some dessert afterwards. Call me." The SMS read. I felt the veins around my head throbbing and lava oozing out of and melting the chambers of my heart. Who TF is this?

UNEDITED.  

Insert 58.

"Baby? Ungilalele yin?" (Are you listening to me?)

He yelled from the en suite. I kept quiet and reread the message from the unsaved number. He then came out wiping his mouth with a towel dressed in

only his jeans and underwear,
barefoot.

"You okay?" He asked with
concern, walking towards me.

"Who is this?" I turned the
screen towards him.

"As'dale la. Wenzan nge foun yami
baby?" He calmly asked as he took
his phone from me and read the
message.

"Are you hiding anything?"

"Of course not but I don't
appreciate it when people just go
through my stuff. Had you asked
I would've given it to you. Simple"

"I asked you who that is
Muzikayise" I stood up from the

bed. I'm not even thinking straight. He looked at me and said "Langelihle. An ex"

"If she was really an ex she wouldn't be comfortable with sending a married man such messages"

"The last time I checked, I did not live in her head. And I don't understand why you're so upset anyway" I scoffed in disbelief.

"You don't underst... wow!" I said and tried to leave. He pulled me by my arm so hard that our chests met. We had a stare contest until he said "Uyaphi?" (Where are you going?) He asked.

"Giving you the space you need to attend to your mistress" I said, shooting my eyes at him.

"My what? Did I ever say I need space?" He said.

I dropped them to the floor, along with my high chest.

"Hlala phansi" (Sit down). He instructed. I wanted to protest but the look in his eyes defeated my mission before it even began. I threw my eyes to the side and sat on the bed. He stood before me and pressed his phone. He then handed it to me and said "Scroll up". I was confused by this but took it. He wants me to read

his Instagram DMs? "Scroll up"
he calmly repeated.

I did as he said and I couldn't believe my eyes. The messages were endless. From different women. I thought I would reach the end but it was like my thumb was travelling down a bottomless pit.

"Why are you showing me this?" I asked.

He took the phone from me and threw it towards the center of the bed. He then exhaled and took both my arms into his, wanting me to stand up. He had infected me with his calm but I was still

confused. He held me by my waist and put his forehead against mine. His eyes locked into mine.

"Sthandwasami. Ngifuna ukuk'tshengisa ukuthi ngihlala nginalo mina ithuba loku cheata. Net angifuni because ngikhethe ukuthembeka kuwe no MaDlamini.

But one thing I will not stand is outright being accused of cheating whereas I'm not.

Without proof even. I'm going to tell you this once and you had better hear it the first time because it is definitely the last, if you're going to throw a tantrum each time a woman throws

herself at me then this is not gonna work"

"Are you breaking up with me?" I said. I felt myself getting emotional. The Betso I know and love would have long walked out of this room. I cry a lot these days over the pettiest of things. But this wasn't petty. Not even in the least.

"Nobody said anything about a break up. You would have to kill me first before that could even be a possibility"

The argument with Muzi didn't end well. He ended up telling me to go sleep because "ikhanda lami liyashisa" (My head is hot). I left him there and went to my room. Did I not cry my eyeballs out? I don't have an exact reason why I'm crying because I have no idea what to make of this whole situation. I'm starting to get used to sharing him with Mabuyi but if there's another woman in the picture I am certainly not going to stand for that. I eventually fell asleep but I was woken up by a knock on my door. I woke up and announced for

whoever was at the door to come in. Mabuyi walked in with Okuhle in her arms. She smiled and I smiled back.

"Wa lala emini kushisa ka nje kwenzenjan?" (It's so hot for you to be sleeping in the afternoon what's going on?)

She jokingly said as she walked towards my bed. I sat upright and yawned.

"I'm just tired that's all" I replied. Still yawning.

"Vuka phela sikhulume" (wake up so we can talk)

"Ngivukile hawo" (I'm awake) I said and we both laughed. I was

wearing a basic black t-shirt with no bra on.

She smiled and played with Okuhle, while inserting a pacifier into his mouth.

I couldn't help but smile at the sight of this. I caught her looking at me and smiling back.

"Wanna hold him?" She asked.

I hesitated but I wanted to.

This is awkward. I thought to myself.

"Look Betso, asilwi mina nawe ngoba asikho isidingo. There's no need to be weird" she said. I laughed and said "Okay then" then took him into my arms.

Seeing him up close made me see how honestly cute and adorable he is. He took his dad's facial features except for his forehead and ears.

"Hey you" I lowly said and he immediately laughed.

"Ithi hey mommyyy" she said to Okuhle, imitating Muzi's pronunciation of the word "mommy". I laughed.

"U right?" She asked as she fixed her t-shirt, seemingly feeling hot.

"Yeah. I'm fine" I said. Avoiding eye contact with her by playing with the baby.

"Your eyes say otherwise"

"Mabuyi I said I am fine!" I snapped.

She jacked her head backwards in shock and said "O-kay"

I kept my silence.

She then said it's Okuhle's bath time and attempted to take him from me.

"Look...I'm sorry I'm just..."

She looked at me, dropped her hands and threw her eyes to the door. She then slowly sunk down on the bed.

"Betso... I don't know if you know and realize this but this is hard for me too. I'm reaching out because for some reason, I believe

that it's even harder for you because this is all new to you. I've had my whole life to acclimatize my self to isithembu. I was raised to be a royal wife. And that, usually comes hand in hand with polygamy around here. Everything I did was made to revolve around the kind of wife I'll turn out to be one day. It's not easy but its doable. I just want us to get over this stage of being awkward towards one another because it is exhausting.

"

She made sense. I nodded in agreement.

"I'll understand if you don't want to talk, but just know that I'm here if you need to. I can also recommend a very good therapist" she added.

"Therapist?" I asked.

"Yeah. I don't mean to pry but what happened to your sister has affected me too since I'm a woman, a mother and a daughter" I gave her a weak smile and said "Thanks"

She smiled back.

"Can I ask you a question?" I asked, tiptoeing on the boundaries of this trilogy of a marriage.

"Yeah shoot"

"Has... has he ever cheated on you?" I asked and she dropped her eyes. This was not what she was expecting. She exhaled before she could speak. Okuhle was starting to fall asleep in my arms.

"Yeah. He has"

"How many times?"

"Why? How is this going to help you?"

"I just.. I need to know"

"Okay then. Plenty of times before we got married. Since high school. Only once after we got married. Or at least that's how many times I found out". I felt a slimy lump struggling to slither

down my throat.

"And you stayed?"

"Are we judging now?" She shot her eyes at me and waited for me to reply. I looked down and clenched onto my silence.

"Anyway, where is all of this coming from?" She asked as she fixed the pacifier in Okuhle's mouth who was now sleeping peacefully in my hands. I wanted to keep this to myself but I also felt like I need some sort of answers.

"Do you know anybody by the name of Langelihle?"

She popped her eyes.

"How do you know her?"

"She sent Muzi a text this morning". I couldn't read her face after I told her this. She then asked me what the message said and I told her, word for word.

"And you were crying because of that?" She asked. I thought she would be equally mad as I was.

"What?" I asked. I was genuinely confused.

"Vele. Is that why you are upset?" She shot back.

"So I'm supposed to smile and be happy that he's entertaining other women?"

"Did you read AND understand

that SMS?"

I kept my mouth shut and looked away. I don't have time for this.

"You are getting married to Muzikayise Khumalo. A filthy rich, handsome man and you thought all of this was going to be smooth sailing? Pull yourself together because I am not going to be wiping your tears because skanks!" She then stood up, took her baby then left.

I don't know what happened between me and Mabuyi in that bedroom but whatever it was, it

seemed to have been pushed under the rug when we were sitting in the TV room having ice cream with ma and Thando. The sun was setting and the mood was just chilled. I haven't spoken to Muzi since morning because he was out to only-God-knows-where the whole afternoon. He walked in and greeted us all passively then walked up the stairs. "Manje uyaphi?" (His mother asked).

"Ngisayo geza" (I'm going to take a bath). He yelled as he continued to climb up without looking back. He has been moody ever since we got here but he's now worse. "He

can go shove his moody self where the sun doesn't shine"

I thought to my self as he went up the stairs. Mandoba and his family walked in and there were suddenly smiles and laughs everywhere. His twins are mad beautiful. They also look so freakishly identical. They greeted us one after the other and that's when I noticed that they are both shy. Mandoba was being his crazy self as usual, forcing everyone to laugh. Thando then said "waze wafika kahle. woza" (You did well by coming here. Come). She said as she dragged a

reluctant yet laughing Enhle upstairs.

We continued watching TV and indulging on ice cream in white bowls while ma interrogated MQ about his life in Joburg. Muzi came down the stairs and as usual, his cologne laid out the red carpet for his grand entrance. He was dressed in a simple black t-shirt, black jeans which looked like they were grated on the front of his thighs and legs and clean white sneakers. He was focused on putting on his watch.

"Usuready? Masambeni" Mandoba said as he got up and danced.

Muzi shook his head and laughed lightly.

Mabuyi looked me. I looked at her back. We both raised our eyes at Muzi who was focused on his clown of a brother and back to each other. Clearly duplicating each others thoughts.

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Insert 59.

"Niyaphi ke manje nina nobabili?

The thought of the both of you in the same space gives me a migraine" His mom said.

They laughed as Muzi came to

give the both of us kisses on the cheeks and told us he'll be back.

His scent made me want to wrap my self and tangle my legs around him and his waist. But I just nodded. Mabuyi didn't respond.

"Mind if we catch a lift with you guys?" Mabuyi said.

Mandoba was clearly against this.

"Hayi niyaphi?" He shot out.

Muzi laughed and said "Awukahle bafu. Niyaphi baby? And who's "we"?"

"Mnax and I. Remember I have to get formula for Kuhle? I was supposed to go in the afternoon"

"Can't you do that tomorrow?"

Nizobuya ngani?"

Mabuyi was about to argue when he said "Yazin? Let's go I'll bring you back"

Mandoba said "There's plenty of cars in this house. Angiyizwa nje nhlobo mina indaba yama lift" (I don't understand this lift issue)

Mabuyi said "Arg you're right. Drive safely"

Muzi was clearly surprised by this and said "U right baby?"

"Yeah totally. Nathi has a point"

"Okay then. Ngiyanithanda n'yezwa. Nobabili"

He wasn't in the high spirits that we all know him to always

display. His personality is not as colorful as Mandoba's on an average day but today he was low-battery spirited than the usual, calm Muzi. However, I let it go. They went out and Mabuyi said "Let's go", she said as she quickly got into her slippers. She looked like she was in a hurry. Ma was looking at the both of us suspiciously but resorted to keeping silent. I got up and followed her.

We got to the garage and got in the car. She sat for a few moments she could start the car. After a while I figured she was

waiting for them to drive out.
She then said "Faka i-seatbealt".
Muzikayise part II.

"You don't look like somebody who
is going to get formula"

She laughed and kept on driving.
Their car was out of sight.

"Damn right I'm not" she said as
she tied her hair into a bun.

"Are you being serious?" I asked
her.

"If I was joking you'd still be
seated watching TV right now"
I laughed.

"But wait, if you wanted to follow
them, why would you want to
catch a lift from them?"

She laughed and said "See, men think they're smarter than us. Sometimes you just have to blindside them than attack when they least expect it. If I hadn't, they would've been immediately suspicious why we are BOTH getting into the car after them." I laughed harder.

"But we've lost them. We should just go back home"

"No we haven't. I think I know where they went" she said and held on to both the steering wheel and her silence.

"Well...?" I inquired.

"Mandoba has been hyping Joe's

housewarming party the whole week. If that's not where they at then we'll come back home"

"And I suppose you know where this is"

"Yeah he's a mutual friend. I don't even know why they even called it a housewarming because all he did was to extend and renovate. How do you warm up an old house? "

We laughed and she shook her head.

"What if they see us?"

"Will you relax?" She said. I wasn't sure if following him was such a good idea.

We got there and parked behind a gold mini cooper. The street was packed and full of cars. We could see Mandoba's blue XGM from a distance. There were people everywhere. Some sitting on the street with their camping chairs and beers. Luckily, the car we were in has dimmed windows so there was no way anybody would be surprised at us just sitting in there.

Mabuyi flew her eyes around looking for Muzi. I found him first and said "There he is!". They were seated outside the house on the grass, laughing their lungs out.

It was him, Mandoba and 3 other guys. The music was too loud. Some were already drunk. Some were having the time of their life in and around the swimming pool. Some were busy braaing the meat whereas some were making out. We watched him laughing while on his phone. The others were invested in the conversation but he seemed like he was there but also wasn't at the same time.

"So we're gonna sit here and watch people party for the whole night?"

She looked at me like I was

stupid for asking this question. I stared back. We then exploded in laughter.

"Mxm umbulazi is going to be the death of us yazi" she said and allowed her head to fall on top of her hands that were on the top of the steering wheel.

"Vele vele who is this Langelihle chick?" I asked.

She sat back on the car seat and looked straight ahead.

"She's the girl I stinafied" she said and ran her tongue on her upper teeth. What? I said and couldn't help but laugh. I was feeling a whole lot better than I

did this morning.

"So it's safe to say she's your enemy?" I said

"I was hers. She wasn't mine until this morning"

"Why do you sound so proud of what you did?"

"I'm not. I was but that was just me being a kid"

"Why would you be proud of taking someone's man?" I said and continued laughed.

"You clearly have no idea who you're married or should I say engaged to. Do you?" She said and laughed.

"Mind telling me about him? What

he was like as a boy?"

She laughed and said "One word. Heartbreaker. For some odd reason, that's what made him attractive"

I laughed but felt slightly uneasy about this.

"Don't look so worried nawe. He has grown over the years. A lot. I believe" she said and pulled a packet of Lays from her handbag that was placed on the backseat.

"What happened vele?" I said. She pulled the packet open and offered me some. I took out a few.

"Well.." She said as she chewed.

"Langelihle is also a princess. So you can just imagine. The competition between us was rife. Muzi first went after me. I decided to play 'hard to get'. She heard the rumours because if there was no way Muzi can come after you and people don't find out because he went all out if he was serious about you. She went after him and made sure she published the fact that they slept together. That broke my heart. My mom noticed that I wasn't okay and asked. I eventually told her. She said she has noticed how "the boy is adamant to have me

in his life". She was also impressed by the fact that he's a Khumalo. My dad had always wanted to form some sort of an alliance with Chief Khumalo. She fuelled me to "fight for my man". That very same night, he came to my house and whistled. He had a unique whistle. My mom already knew it was him. She covered for me and I went out. And since that night, the rest became history. I just wonder what she's doing back in South Africa" she said. I've noticed how she blushes whenever she speaks about Muzi. It still stings but it hurts better than

it did in the beginning. I don't blame her though. My man knows his story.

She then concentrated to where the men were seated. The bright lights outside of the house made this easier for her. 2 ladies approached them. One in bumshorts approached one of the guys I don't know and the other in a swimsuit was chatting up Muzi. Mabuyi said "Yaz I honestly don't need a criminal record mnax" "Is that her?" I asked and she shook her head in disapproval. I took a look at her and back at the men. She tried to sit on his

lap but he held the side of her waist and made her stand back up. He then shook his head at whatever she was saying to him. She threw her hand in the air to show how annoyed she was by him and walked away. It looked like the guys were disappointed by this act by him. He laughed and carried on playing with his phone. "Can we go home now? It's late". I said. The time was 20h33.

"There's clearly no sign of this girl we've been sitting here for a while now"

"One more hour then we'll leave. She said and unlocked her phone,

going onto WhatsApp. I did the same.

"Mabuyi" I say in a husk.

"Mabuyi!" I shout for her attention.

"Hm?" She says as she raises her eyes to the front. We both see Muzi walking to and unlocking the car. Could he be going back home?

"CRAP!" We both say as she panics her way into igniting and starting the car.

He drives off and we take a different route. Mabuyi was convinced that it'll get us home quicker but I felt like she wasn't driving fast enough. When our car

was approaching the gate, his was coming from the opposite direction. He drove in and parked after us. We all got out of the car at the same time. We didn't even bother cooking up a story I knew she was going to do all the talking.

"If it isn't the two beautiful Mrs MKs. Nibuyaphi?" (Where are you coming from?) He said with a smile on his face. The charm Lord. The charm!

"I told you angith baby. Formula. Baby formula" she said.

"Iphi yona leyo formula?" (Where is that formula?) He asked, still

smiling.

"In the car" I jumped in when Mabuyi was clearly about to stutter.

"Pho niyishiyelani? Azange nithi iphelile kanti? Ngeke ay'dinge uboy?" (Then why are you leaving it behind? Won't the baby need it?) He said as we walked into the house.

"Hayi isekhona encani" (A little of it is still left) Mabuyi said and looked ahead.

"Olyt. Niyithenge kuphi?" (Where did you buy it?)

"WOOLIES!" "CLICKS!" We said, giving two opposing answers.

He stopped walking, first looked at Mabuyi and then at me.

"I'm just going to assume that two shops have now formed a merger" he said and lightly laughed. We walked into the living room and found Thando watching TV.

"Baby girl, do you mind excusing us a bit?" He said and she immediately stood up and slid into her slippers. I love how she respects him but can still be comfortable around him at the same time.

He then put his stuff on top of the coffee table and sat down on

the couch. He patted the sides and said we must both come sit there. We did.

He took my left hand and Mabuyi's right and caressed them gently before he could speak.

"I don't know how to say this but I am honestly disappointed by the both of you". Silence.

"Number 1. You're bad liars. Very bad liars. So if nifuna ukuzwana nami don't ever pull a stunt like you did today" (If you want us to get along...)

"What stunt?" I asked.

"So you think you could follow me, in MY car, with MY registration

number and I wouldn't be able to see you?"

Mabuyi coughed.

"Something on your throat?" He turned to her and asked.

"Yeah but I'm fine now" she replied.

"Yazi yini?" (You know what it is?) He asked. She shook her head with her eyes out at him.

"Ubumenemene namanga" (Crookery and lies)

I laughed. I couldn't help it.

"Uhlekani wena? (And what are you laughing at?)

I cleared my throat and looked away. Our hands were still in his.

"I'm not gonna cheat on you and if I did anything to convince you that I'm heading out to Lihle than ningixolele. I hate seeing the both of you this insecure. When I first met you, nothing could shake the two of you. And you wouldn't have done something of this sort. Which makes me wonder how bad I actually am at this husbanding thing" I was about to interrupt when he immediately added and said "I've been preaching that I want us 3 to talk and this is not what I wanted to speak about" we kept quiet.

"But I have one thing to applaud you for before we can speak about the real reason why we're seated here. I'm proud of the fact that when you felt like there's something threatening your family you came together and tried to fight it, in unison. These are the kind of wives I signed up for. You have proved to me that even if I happen to die today, this family will not crumble and come apart nikhona. At least that's how I see it. You're doing great. I've never seen you two this close" we laughed and smiled at the same time.

"Now let's talk about the core of this meeting. We can't go on like this forever. MaDlamini, I need you back home. I believe you have learnt all you needed to learn from both your mothers but now your husband needs you. I can't keep travelling back and forth to come see you." She nodded. He turned to me and told me that he bought me a house which is not that far and not that different from Mabuyi's and hopes that I'm gonna like it.

"But I'm looking to buy enough land that's going to allow for the kind of house I want to build"

"What kind of house is that?"

"What type of house is that?"

Mabuyi and I asked simultaneously.

"I want a house with completely identical wings. One of you can take the left and the other the right. The reason for this is that, I want my kids to grow up playing together. If they don't live in the same yard then they will never be close. Tell me what you think about this. Also, divide my time amongst you two fairly and equally in such a way that it is convenient for all of us.

Ngizozwa ngani kodwa if

niyahluleka I'll do it for you.

Ngisayo lala mina I still have to drive tomorrow" he said and kissed both our cheeks, picked up his phone and keys and left us there.

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Insert 60.

The alarm I had set for 06h00 went off and triggered my irritation. I felt like I still needed more sleep because I struggled to sleep the previous night.

However, I got out of my bed and dragged myself to the mirror. I

raised my pyjama top and had a look at my tummy. I feel like I'm showing but my mom and Muzi say otherwise. Mom says I feel like this because I'm used to a flat stomach. But I still feel like if somebody looks at me carefully, they will just know. I don't know if I'm being paranoid or not. I lazily went to take a bath. I felt heavy. Like I had my own whole weight on my shoulders. I got done, opened the windows to allow for some fresh, cold air to fill the room and got dressed. There was a knock on my door as I was sitting on the bed and taking a

breather. I felt really exhausted. I yelled that they should let themselves in and put my hands behind me on the bed. Muzi walked in dressed in black tracksuits, a white top under his unzipped track top and sneakers and came to sit next to me.

He then turned his head to look at me.

"You okay?" He asked.

"I'll be fine. I'm just tired and hungry" I said as I shut my eyes and allowed my head to fall back.

"Baby uzabe unjani when you get to 9 months? Seeing you like this breaks my heart" (How will you be

when you get to 9 months?)

"Hawu. Kanti you still care?" I said. I was honestly not in the mood to entertain him.

"Bheka, I'm sorry my love. I'm really sorry I hurt your feelings" I turned to look at him. Blankly. A mischievous smile grew on his face. I immediately laughed and got up to run. He grabbed me back to the bed and pinned me down. I laughed and moved my face away from him because he wanted to kiss me. I tightly pursed my lips together because he was busy smooching up my face.

"Awungiyeke Mbulazi!" (Leave me alone) I said as I tried to speak and shut my mouth while uncontrollably laughing at the same time. Muzi is such a bully. He stopped and said "Okay ke ngicela ungiqabule babyyy" (Please kiss me)

He sulked and looked desperate. I laughed and asked him to get off me. He finally did and sat upright. I wiped my mouth with the back of my hand. He looked at me and smiled.

"On a serious note, I don't like how you treat me sometimes " I said and allowed his eyes to

magnetize mine into a mutual stare.

"Ngenzen?" (What did I do exactly?) He calmly and lowly said, almost in a whisper.

"I'm very much aware of the number of women that want your attention. I see the looks in their eyes every time I am with you my love. But you know what else I see?"

He swallowed both his lips and shook his head.

"The look in the eyes of the men that would kill to have me sweeping their mothers' yards every morning." I said and stood

up to go get the rest of my toiletries in the bathroom.

Leaving him there with his jaw on the floor.

Muzi got me everything I felt like having for the road. From Zingerwings and a Boxmaster to biltong and chocolate cake. He suddenly changed into a yes-man. I laughed internally and just smiled to myself. I ate and slept on the road. The halt to the motion of the car cut my sleep short. I woke up and my eyes immediately fell on Muzi's screen.

He was checking his emails. I hate this curiosity that was lingering over my head, hand in hand with insecurity and doubt. It took me back to the time when I was with Kgokagano. Each time he spoke to a woman, I wondered what they were talking about. I don't want to be that woman. I immediately took my eyes off his screen and watched him biting his lower lip, concentrating on whatever he was typing. He then turned to me and said "Hey sleepy head" and offered me a soft smile. I smiled back, with my head still on top of

hand, which I had used as a pillow.

"Why didn't you wake me up?" I asked as I rubbed my eyes, trying to get rid of the little sleep I still had in them.

"You were sleeping peacefully. I didn't wanna disturb you"

He said and continued typing. He then locked his phone and put it away.

"How are you feeling now?" He asked.

"Like crap " I said. I honestly felt like crap. My stomach was upset and I was feeling hot. He pulled a bottle of water from the

backseat and handed it to me. I took it and drank up.

"I think we should go see a doctor. Everything has been so chaotic that we didn't get you a proper gynae"

I just looked at him.

"You still hate me? Ngiyaxolisa mommy"

"I don't hate you. I just want to go home"

"Should I get you anything?" He asked.

I shook my head and shut my eyes. He got the message because he started the car and got on the road.

Thogi called me and asked when I'll be back and I told him I'm on my way home as we spoke.

"Good because tomorrow you and I are going cake tasting"

"Yoh I don't think I'll be ab..."

"I was announcing. Not asking.

You don't get to make the rules since you're not the one expected to put together a wedding that's worthy of being on Top Billing in 2 weeks. Good day"

He said and dropped the call. I rolled my eyes and Muzi laughed.

"How is it going?"

"Yoh baby.. don't even ask" I said and frowned in frustration.

"Says the person who wanted to do all this by herself " he said and laughed harder. I hate him.

We finally arrived in Polokwane and I could feel my heart warming up with joy. I called my mom to let her know that I'll be home soon. She asked me to hand Muzi the phone. I said okay and gave it to him. He took it and balanced it with his shoulder while driving.

"Ma?"

"Yes"

"Hayi namhlanje" (Not today

He then laughed and said

"Ungaworry uzovuma" (She's going to agree)

I looked at him suspiciously. I couldn't hear a word my mom was saying.

"K'lungile ma". He was so humble and so soft spoken as he always is when speaking to my mother. He took the phone and handed it to me.

"And?" I looked at him, awaiting an answer.

"Your mom is asking that you come back tomorrow. Not today" he said and kept his eyes on the road.

"Are you being serious? Why?"

"She didn't say"

"Well that's odd. And you just made the decision for me?"

"Was I supposed to argue with her?"

His question sucked all of my strength through a straw. I kept quiet and looked out the window.

"So.. are you coming with me or you wanna go home?"

"She doesn't want me there. Let's just go to my place"

"Sure?"

"Yeah" I said and he drove on.

We got to my place and he sunk down on the couch with both our

bags. He placed his head against the backrest and put his hand over his forehead then exhaled. Deeply. I closed the door and went to my room. I threw my weave on the bed, took off my clothes and got into athlete shorts and a sports bra. It's been a while since I've been there and I sure as hell wasn't going to be able to sleep without cleaning up first.

I got out of the room and found him in the same position. He looked really tired. I asked him if he's hungry and he politely said no. I said "Alright" and went to

fetch the broom from the kitchen.

"What are you doing?" He asked as he stood.

"I'm cleaning up"

"Let me do it" he said as he took the broom from me. I laughed.

"A whole prince? Clean? Do you even know gore letswariwa bjang lefielo?" (... how to hold a broom?)

He laughed and said "Yeah hawu!"

He was genuinely shocked by my question.

"What's next? Don't tell me you can also cook"

"Actually, I can. And I'm bloody good at it"

"Dude how? You grew up in a royal house full of helps! Mxm you know what? Give me back my broom" I said trying to take it back, laughing.

"Uma uthi "dude" usho mina konje?" (When you say "dude" you're referring to me?) He said and laughed. I kept quiet and smiled.

"Okay then. Let me prove it to you" he said and pulled his forever charming smirk.

"Are you even Zulu?" I asked and he laughed.

"There's no way you can do all of those things"

He allowed the broom to fall and

put his hands on my waist. He then pecked my lips and whispered, "You should learn to ask"

"I'm akssing then" I whispered back. He laughed.

"Well, the cleaning part I learnt from living by myself at res. I had no choice. "

"Then the cooking part? Since you're "bloody good at it" " I said as I imitated quotation marks with my fingers.

"Culinary school"

"But you did engineering?" I asked.

"So?" He asked back.

"Why?" I shot back and laughed.

"Boredom" I laughed harder.

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Insert 61.

Muzi insisted on cleaning up and I let it. We were talking but for some reason, I ended up in another dimension without my consent. I sleep a lot these days and it's annoying because the irony is, one would expect me to always feel well rested after some good sleep but I always wake up even more tired. I woke up on my bed but I fell asleep on the couch.

The room smelt divine. The smell of lavender softly flew into my nostrils. He really went in that deep with the cleaning? I thought he would just sweep and end there. I woke up and slid into my slippers. I looked around for my phone and couldn't remember where I left it. I checked the time on my alarm. It was 20h40. I was gone!

I found him in the kitchen and he welcomed me with a smile. The place was squeaky clean.

"Baby?" I called out.

"Hm?" He replied as he dished up.

"You sure you didn't hire anybody

to do all it this for you?" I asked as my eyes continued to scan the place.

He laughed and his phone rang as he was about to respond.

"Baby?" He answered as he walked outside.

I exhaled and tried to not let it get to me. I'm just happy he is here. With me.

I went over to taste his creamy pasta and I fell deeper in love. Heaven literally sat on my tongue. I waited for him to come back but he took his time. I dragged myself to my room for a shower so I didn't grow impatient and start

throwing my toys around. I'm trying my best not to fight with him over things I can avoid if I try hard enough.

I allowed the moderately hot water to hit my back as I placed my wet hands on the tile wall.

That felt good. The water felt amazingly refreshing. I allowed it to run down my face as well as I closed my eyes to soak fully in the feeling. I raised my fingers into my hair and felt his hand on (removed)

We ended up eating cold dinner but it was still delicious. The chicken was also to die for. All I wanted to do was be in his arms and roll back and forth in his attention. He couldn't stop laughing at my cry baby self I snuggled up in his strong arms on the couch. I couldn't help but feel needy. I love this man with my whole heart and I can't wait to officially get married to him. I thought to myself as he kept talking to himself because I didn't hear a word. I was lost in his presence.

We ended up going to bed and as I

expected, he f****d me again before we could officially sleep. Nothing beats waking up in the arms of the man you love. I can bet with whatever. Nothing beats the feeling of waking up cuddled in the hands of the owner of your heart. He had his hands on my tummy, fast asleep as I pulled the fresh duvet to cover us both. My phone beeped as I was trying to drift back into sleep because it was still early and chilly in the morning. The perfect weather to sleep in cuddled up you ask? After a heavy rain.

I take the phone and unlock it. Husbae was still fast asleep. I read the message 4 times before it actually sunk in but it still floated on top of the sea of confusion that was causing a turbulent flood in my mind. I read it again slowly trying to take it in word by word.

"It might be cute roses and love scenes at the moment but let me just warn you. Yes. Muzikayise is a sweetheart. Granted. But trust me when I say he does not have a heart when pushed too far. So gear up baby girl".

First of all, who is this? I ask myself as I felt a fire starting in my heart. I try to turn over to Muzi but the position we're in doesn't allow me. I bite my lower lip trying to figure out who this could be. I want to wake him up and ask but I promised myself to avoid fighting with him. But what does this mean when they say he doesn't have a heart when pushed too far? Where exactly is "too far"? These questions tumble violently in my mind travelling solo, with no answers to any of them. I choose to keep quiet and beg

sleep to grace me with it's presence.

I woke up and Muzi was still asleep. I got into my nightgown and slippers and went to the kitchen. I was feeling really hungry and had a deep craving for last night's dinner. I opened the fridge and took the Tupperware out. I opened it and nausea immediately hit me! I ran to the toilet and threw my guts out. I couldn't stop vomiting. I held my tummy hoping that it'll help. I tightly shut my eyes when it

stopped hoping that it had stopped for good. I could feel his footsteps and I yelled "Don't come in here!"

I didn't want him to see me in that state.

"Are you okay?" He asked as he kept walking. I stood up from the floor and quickly locked the door. I sunk down against it and began crying. He came knocking and asked me to open the door.

"Go away" I said as I sobbed. Muzi shouldn't have gotten me pregnant.

"Baby please open the door" he said. I kept quiet.

"Sthandwasami?" He called out.

"Sphakamile please don't make break this door open. Open the door"

"Baby!" He was starting to get irritated. I know this tone in his voice.

I got up and unlocked it. I then went to the basin to wash my face and rinse my mouth.

"Are you okay?" He asked as he came in. I walked past him and went to sit on the bed. A lot of things were annoying me at this point. When is he leaving anyway? I sat on the bed and took my phone. He came to kneel in front

of.

"Morning sickness?" He asked. I nodded.

"My mom did say it's gonna hit you at some point" he said.

I looked at him for a moment and then asked.

"When are you leaving?"

"Madoda!" He didn't expect that question.

He stood up and smiled. I raised my eyes at him. He laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" I asked. He shook his head and said "Nothing". He replied as he kissed my forehead and I closed my eyes while playing with the soft belt

of my gown.

He then knelt down again and removed my hands from it, pulling it open to gain access to my tummy. He then kissed it and held the sides and said "Mbulazi.

Please have mercy on my wife.

She doesn't deserve any of this my boy". I couldn't hold back my giggles.

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Insert 62.

He got up from my tummy with a smile that slowly got absorbed by the atmosphere and faded.

"Baby where's your necklace?" He asked.

"I looked behind me and said it's on the pedestal.

"Can you listen to me for once?"

"I took it off last night before my shower. I was going to put it on afterwards" I explained.

"It means a lot to me when you have it around your neck. I got it for you so I get to feel closer to you"

Closer to me?

"I don't understand baby" I

asked and he sat down next to me on the ran the palms of both his hands on his face.

"You won't understand. It's just of high sentimental value to me" I found this sweet of him. I then promised to always have it around my neck as I got up to go put it on. He displayed deep disappointment in the fact that I wasn't wearing it.

I asked him to put it on for me. He raised his head to me and gave me a weak smile. He got up but he wasn't enthusiastic about it. After he was done, he took my hands into his and gazed into my

eyes.

"Thembalami ngik'thanda ngenye indlela nami angsazi ukuthi ngichaze ngithini kodwa nkosazana ngethembe mangithi uyikho konke kmina. Umoya wami uzofa la wena ufa khona.

Yingakho nginga funi ungishonele kudala ngoba ngeke ngikwazi ukudhubeka ngempilo ngingenaso isizathu sokuphila. I love you.

Okay? "(I love you in a way that I myself can't explain but trust me when I say you're everything to me. My spirit/soul will die where you die. That's why I don't want you to die before me

because I won't be able to continue with life without a reason to live)

He said and I smiled while nodding.

"Are these your vows Mbulazi?" I said to him and giggled. He laughed and said "Maybe". I laughed too and asked him if he has already written them.

"No baby. And I'm doing no such thing. I'm just going to speak from my heart. I don't need to memorize how much I love you" he said. That made me a little emotional.

"Bheka baby neh? I don't want

to control you. But I want you to be able to listen to me as your husband. I value respect. I need it. You might've noticed this by now but your respect towards me as your partner means a lot to me. And listening to me is part and parcel of that"

I nodded. He kissed my forehead and his phone rang. He picked it up from the bed and answered. "Yes?"

"What?"

"Your signal is very bad Tlhogi angikuzwa mina"

Why is he calling so early in the morning!? Tami's mere existence is

enough for me to call off this whole wedding.

"Oh yeah. Don't worry about that. Mandla is on it"

"Even the playlist. I'll put it together" he said and playfully pegged my nose with his fingers. I hit his hand and laughed at his idiomatic bully self. He smiled and continued with his phone call like he didn't just try to cut my oxygen supply.

"Yeah I'm sure man"

"I mean girl"

"Yey whatever your gender is. You get me"

I laughed out loud as they ended

the call.

"You shouldn't do that baby it's rude" I reprimanded.

"Do what?" He asked.

"You should always ask what pronoun a queer person prefers prefers to avoid offending them. Some might even see this as a homophobic red flag"

"Ahh mara baby you know I'm anything but homophobic"

He said as he slowly shook his head.

"I know but do they?"

"I guess you have a point. I'll keep that in mind". He said and kissed my forehead. I had my

hands on his abs but I suddenly got possessed to slide them downwards. He cupped my face and made me look at him.

"Uzokwazi ukuy'qeda lento owuyiqalayo Mrs me?" (Will you be able to finish whatever you're starting?)

He said and bit his lower lip, still looking deep into my eyes waiting for an answer. I giggled and nodded. He laughed and unexpectedly picked up and laid me down on the bed, kissing and mumbling into my mouth.

Muzi drove me home and parked his car outside of the yard. Wale's 'On Chill' ft. Jeremih was playing on the radio in the car.

"Ungibingelelele ku ma. I can't come in" he said as he kissed the back of my hand. (Greet ma for me)

"Why? I don't want you to go" I said and sulked.

He laughed out loud and said

"Mayinga phela le 9 months ngingeka sangani mina I'll just know that I'm strong. Not so long ago you wanted me to leave" (if this 9 months elapses with me still sane..) he said. Still

laughing.

I laughed as well and hit his shoulder.

"But honestly sthandwasami. I need to go. There's a couple of things I need to take of before the wedding and before I go to France" he stated.

"France?" I turned towards him and asked.

"I didn't tell you? I need to be in France on the 8th"

"That's like a week after our wedding?"

"I'm sorry baby but it has to be done. I've managed to secure a deal with a rising construction

company that side. If I play my cards right, this could be the start of global recognition for MaloCon" he said and I exhaled.

"We will go on our honeymoon when I get back baby" he promised.

"Can't you send someone?" I said as I put my head against the red leather seat.

"I can't. I need to see this through"

"And you tell me now?" I say and look out the window.

"I'm sorry mommy it must've slipped my mind"

"You sure it's just business?" I asked and looked at him straight

in the eyes. I had suddenly accumulated 2 bags of bravery. He was about to speak when his phone rang.

"Nathi Nice"

"Ngiright. Ugrand wena?"

"Bachelor party?"

"Asikho isidingo sa leyonto" (There's no need for that)

"But I'm not a bachelor mus mina"

"Ja ngiyazi kodwa..."

He then laughed and said "Ngithi asikho Isd.."

"Mandoba!?"

He looked at the screen and shook

his head. MQ had dropped the call. He then exhaled and looked towards me

"Is this still about the text I received from Langelihle?" He asked and I looked away.

"If you think I'm going away with her then you're welcome to come with me". Him saying this made me feel stupidly guilty. I'm not allowing this woman to come between me and my man. I exhaled and said "I'm sorry" He exhaled as well.

"I didn't ask her to send me that text baby. The last time I saw this person was 5/6 years ago"

"You don't have to explain yourself. Your actions are responsible for that. But Muzikayise?"

"Yy... yes?" He said, skeptically.

"If you cheat on me, I will leave you wankwa?"

"Loud and clear baby" he said and nodded.

"With your baby, get married to another man and move to another country do you hear me?" I said and his face changed.

"Ngiyadlala" (I am kidding) I said and laughed. He scoffed then smiled while shaking his head, starting the car.

"Wa tsamaa nou?" (You're leaving now?) I asked while still laughing. "Phuma emotweni yam baby" (Get out of my car baby) he said while laughing

"Sorry sthandwasami hawu" I said. I couldn't hold back my laughter. He was being a baby and I found it hilarious.

"Uzoy'hlika isihamba lemoto" (You'll get off this car while it's on the road) he said with his one hand on the gear and the other on the steering wheel.

"Baby ngithe ngiyaxolisa kodwa yini Mbulazi?" (I said I'm sorry). He smiled and laughed before he

could stop himself.

"Sphakamile, awungiphumeli kancane sisi ngiyakcela ngoba ngijahile?" (Please get out of my car a bit my sister because I'm in a hurry). He said and opened the passenger door from the inside. I put my hand over my mouth but I just couldn't stop laughing I even had tears coming out of my eyes. He looked at me and bit his lower lip, trying too hard to stop himself from laughing.

I tried to speak but he quickly interrupted and said "PHU-MA boh! Nangu satan" (Get out! Here's a devil)

I laughed and said "Okay can I have a kiss then?"

"Uthi ufunani?" (What did you say you want?)

He raised his eyebrow with a cocky smile on his face.

"iKiss baba" I lowly said. Shyly. Seductively.

"Uyifuna kubani?" (Who do you want it from)

He said and I raised my head to look at him. He frowned as though he was confused by my question.

"Ku myeni wami" (From my husband)

I said with my head still bowed

to my thighs. He laughed and said
"Ithathe" (Take)

I looked up and laughed. He was
waiting for me to kiss him. I
leaned in, held his chin and pecked
his lips. I then returned back to
my seat.

"Qedile?" (Are you done?)

He asked. I smiled and nodded.

"Musuk'dlala ngami wena woza
la" (Stop playing with me come

here) he said and he leaned over
to give me a French kiss. I

couldn't stop smiling and giggling.

Lord? I love this man!

I got into the house and found my mom wearing a silk gown and drinking juice. Her hair was a mess.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

She continued gulping down her juice and eventually put the glass down.

"Why wouldn't I be?" I briefly rolled my eyes when she looked away and asked her why she didn't want me home yesterday.

"I just felt like being by myself" she replied and went over to the fridge to take out a pack of malana for defrosting.

"Wena nah" I said and looked at

her. She laughed and said "Yes. Nna nah". She continued with her business.



"Are you honestly okay mama?" I asked. I was genuinely concerned. "I'm fine baby. Okae sonny in law?" I laughed and told her that he said I should greet her on his behalf. We continued talking until I told her I need to leave for town for cake testing before Tlhogii skins me alive. She then exhaled and said "The police called", taking out a chair from the table and lazily taking a seat. I suddenly felt a dark vibe surrounding me.

"They've apparently managed to make 3 arrests. They're one suspect short"

"That's... good. I guess"

She nodded and the mood suddenly became awkward.

"Yeah.. uhm I have to to" I said as I rushed to my room to go freshen up and change into comfortable clothes. I heard loud laughs from the kitchen and Tumi's voice. "Great! He's coming with!"

UNEDITED. [?] (we're moving to the bridal shower and the wedding on the next insert  )

Insert 63.

Wednesday

"I love you". He said that immediately when I opened my eyes because I could feel his eyes lingering and hovering over me. I smile and release a light giggle.

"This is rude ". I reply.

He frowns in confusion and says "Yini e rude?"

"Watching people as they sleep.

It's part and parcel of

witchcraft ". He laughed, shook his head and said "I regret the day I taught you that". I shot

out a loud laughter because I could also feel the phrase screaming out for help. I've been saying "part and parcel" more than the prescribed dose by Dr Queen Elizabeth.

I then rubbed my eyes as he took his macbook from the bedside table.

I looked at him and asked "Baby what does you company do entlik do entlik"

He huffed out a light weighted laugh and said "A lot of things.

From designing and constructing buildings and bridges to manufacturing different types of

bricks."

He said without raising his eyes at me, typing.

"Like houses and stuff?" I enquired

"Uhm.. yeah but that's a small division. We mainly focus on things like blocks of offices and apartments. Malls as well. We also design and build malls"

I love how he says "we" instead of "I" to acknowledge all the people involved in getting the work done.

"Interesting..." I respond.

"What about you? What do you do?"

"Parties and baby showers" I responded as I turned to take my phone from the bedside table.

"Just that?" He asks.

"Yeah"

"You should expand baby. Maximize your profits and clientele. Money is there for you to coin. Take advantage of that"

"What do you mean?"

"Firstly, Gala dinners are a thing here in GP. Tlhogi is milking me because of this wedding. Why are you not doing the same to others?"

I laughed at this statement by him.

"Do you even have a website?" He added.

"I only operate from Facebook and Instagram. I've been meaning to though"

"Ngempela?" He asked with suspicion, allowing his eyes to drop and his chin to almost his chest.

I laughed and said "Yes hawu"

"Namanga. Come. Let me show you how to"

"But baby I know how to create a website mina"

"Do you have a website? He asked, annoyed.

I laughed and shook my head.

"Then wozza. We're not getting

out of this room till you have a website"

I laughed harder. This man!

Thursday

"Mama?" I answered my ringing phone as I drove.

"O kae?" (Where are you?) She asked.

"Kesale mo Jozi. How's everything going there?"

"Everything is fine. Everyone is already here." She replied. She sounded excited and a great mood. I haven't felt such energy from

here in a while. It filled my heart.
"Alright. I'll be there tomorrow morning. Baie frug. Now I'm driving retla bua" I reported.
"Alright baby. Be safe motseleng. I love you" she said.
"I will ma I love you more". I said and cut the call. I instantly regretted it because she was going to have my head for lunch for this. She has this rule that says "if I am the one who called you, then I'm the one who's supposed to end the call." I continued driving until I got to the hotel. Tumi had already texted me telling me he'd arrived.

I opened the door and they all screamed "Here comes the bride" I laughed as Thando came to hug me.

Tank's 'When we' was playing loudly but I couldn't hear it from the corridor. Meaning you could only hear the sound when you open the door. 'This hotel room is big'. I thought to myself as I admired the decor which consisted of black and gold helium balloons suspended in the air. There was a lot of them so much that one couldn't see a bit of the ceiling even if they tried. Thogi, Tami, Samora, Thando, Bridgette and

Agnes were all in silk black gowns with the names written on the back in gold. I wondered what was beneath all of them.

Samora came up to me with a champagne glass in his hand and said "Now now, let's get you out of this horrible dress" he pulled me by hand as I laughed while looking at Tumi and Tlhogi who were sitting on the floor having what looked like an intense conversation. We got to the bathroom and he handed me a red string number. There was literally nothing to that underwear. Just a set of strings that insisted on

me being naked.

"Where's the bra? He asked as he perused through the paper bag. I shrugged and he said "Put that on in the mean time. He went out and came back with so I put it on.

"You know you're gonna have to take that off at some point right?" He said, referring to the gown but looking at my bump.

"Do I have to?" I asked.

"Yeah you do. They don't know you're baking?"

"Nope" I reported.

"Don't worry then. I got you" I laughed, lowly said thank you and

hugged him amidst all the noisy laughs we could hear from the bed room.

"These slippers are so comfortable" I said to him as we walked out hand in hand.

"And so cute!" He said.

"Don't get too comfortable wena Samora that is MY bestfriend" Tumi shouted from the carpet and gulped down his red wine.

I laughed.

"If you were not so negligent you would've seen her walking in here"

"Neke sale busy" (I was still busy)

he said as he got up to hug me.

Samora went over to whisper

something to Thogi. Weightless conversations and greetings floated around in the room till Enhle and Gugu walked in.

"PHOYISA!" Enhle screamed as they walked in and everyone laughed. Mabuyi had two packs of Bernini in her hands when she came over to hug me without putting them down.

"U right?" (Are you okay?) She asked.

"I'm fine thanks" I said as we both resigned from the hug.

"Ng'buze phela" she said as I mindlessly hugged Enhle who was also anxious to get to where

everyone was.

I laughed and said "I'm aksssing". She laughed and said "Your mother-in-law bekafuna ukuzala naye" (... wanted to come here as well). We both laughed. "Why didn't you let her?" I asked while still laughing.

"Yhuu ha ah she was going to be it uncomfortable for us to let loose" she said as we walked over to the mini fridge so she could pack up her "stuff". She found it full and dragged a metal bucket and utilized that instead. She ripped the ice pack and offloaded it into the bucket. We continued

talking. We then heard a knock on the door and Enhle, who was already in her gown, said "I'll get it". She opened the door and it was room service with a lot of platters.

Mabuyi then excitedly said "Let me go get changed so we can get this party started". My phone beeped in my hand and I opened the text as she walked away.

"Don't marry him. Don't marry MK"

A text from the same number that texted me the other morning. Who is this and why are they so adamant that I shouldn't

marry Muzikayise?

I walked into the balcony and closed the door. Nobody noticed because everyone was busy with either setting up the food, the alcohol or falling in love. I called him and it rang.

"Ngize ngik'lande?" (Should I come fetch you?)

That is the first thing he said when he answered the phone. I laughed. He didn't want me to attend my shower because he was convinced they'd be strippers.

"No baby. I'm just... are you okay? Where are you?" I asked.

"I'm okay my love. You good? I'm

at some bar nomQ namajita"

He was in a good mood. It sounded like it. I wasn't about to ruin it.

"I'm fine. I was just checking on you" I said, digressing from the true intention of the phone call.

"Isho kahle uthi uyangikhumbula uyekel' ukshona le na le ngathi uyi ex enamahloni kodw ifuna

malovebacks" (Tell me you miss me and stop beating around the bush like a shy ex looking to be taken back"

I laughed. Hard. He sounded a bit drunk.

"Mciim I hope you're not going to

be driving home"

"Baby I can drive with my eyes closed what's a bit of alcohol?" He arrogantly asked.

"Says a person who was in a car accident a while ago"

I responded.

"Ng'file yin?" (Am I dead?) He asked.

I couldn't help but laugh.

"No but if.."

"No. My question is, did I die though?" He was serious and expecting an answer.

"Please don't drive home ngiyakcela?"

"I'm kidding my love. I won't. Joe

is a Bavarian so he's going to be our Uber for tonight"

"Promise?" I asked.

"Ngiyak'thembisa mommy" he affirmed.

DVSN's 'Hallucinations' started playing and he heard it.

"Ish sthandwasami. That song needs you on some 'Chest down a** up' with my hands on your waist, on your soft skin" He seductively said.

I immediately felt strong butterflies recklessly floating in my stomach.

"Why are you doing this?" I cried out.

He laughed and said "Bye Mrs K" and cut the call. Muzi is evil.

Tlhogi opened the door and said "There you are! Etle mosadi". He said dragged me out.

"Where have you been?" Mabuyi asked as she took a bite on her dunked wing while scrolling on her phone.

I laughed and take a seat on the carpet.

"There's prawns friend" Tumi says because he knows I love them.

Ehle hands me a champagne glass and I open my mouth trying to dispute but Tlhogi saved me

instead.

He took the glass and said "No bride of mine is having alcohol before the wedding. We need this skin to glow to the max" he said as he drank it up all at once and put it down.

"Waze wa strict boh!" Enhle said and he laughed and said "Of course!" and threw a wink at me when everyone had moved on.

"Haibo guys yall are wild" Enhle said as bridgette explained how to perform a BJ using honey and grapefruit. Thogi and Tumi agreed with her. The conversation got heated with

demonstrations and all. Bridgette got up and catwalked over to the strip pole. She was already drunk. Samora said "Yesssssssssssss girl!" We all laughed at him employing himself as a hype man. "Iz abouts to gets littty" Tumi added.

"Vala amehlo wena". Enhle said to Thando. She laughed and said "Haibo!"

UNEDITED. 🤔👉👉

Insert 64.

"Betso khaz'apha nontombi" (come here)-I laughed and shook my

head in soft disapproval.

Bridgette said as she took off her silk gown revealing her little red number, allowing her every curve to be exposed. She has a beautiful body. She attempts to climb to the top of the pole with cheers that immediately came to a halt when she fell and hit her head on the carpet.

"Oh my fancy God Bree are you okay!?" - Tumi says as he puts his humongous wine glass down so he can get up and attend to her. At this point, everyone had their hearts beating out of their chests because she wasn't

showing any signs of consciousness. We all got up and Enhle rushed to her. She felt her pulse by placing two fingers against her neck.

"Is she breathing?" Agnes asked dripping in a daze.

Enhle shrugged as she fidgeted her fingers some more to locate her pulse.

"I can feel her pulse so we still have time. Let's get her to the hospital!"

"Uhm.. Hello? Yes! Uhm.. there's a drunk unconscious woman lying here..." Thando was about to finish her sentence when Bridgette

exploded in fits of laughter. We all slowly got up from the floor and glared at her. She couldn't stop laughing.

Enhle placed her little barefoot with red toenails on her privates and told her that she shouldn't play like that. Bridgette was still cracking her lungs with laughter when she tried to remove the foot that was busy pressing onto her ladybits.

"Are you being f***ng serious right now?" Thando exclaimed. She wasn't impressed.

"She's fine now thank you" She said and cut the call.

We then all broke out in laughter. "Ostlaela mosono ke wena" (You're an idiot). Tumi barked at her.

"What did you do that for vele?" Agnes asked with her hands on her waist.

Bridgette got up from the floor and finally pulled her laughing self together.

"I did it to add some spice to the mood. Ni serious gqcithi nani.

Bekfuneka umntu anishukumise kancinci man." (You all were too serious for my liking. There was a need for me to shake yall up a bit) she explained as she took her champagne glass from the table

and drank up. Beyonce's 'Dance for you' started playing. She held her hands up as if in deep worship and said "My jam! Dong...dong dong... I just wanna.. show you how much I appr(burps)eciate you. Yes! Show you..." she sang as she carefully placed her hands back on the smooth metallic pole. Mabuyi then immediately said "Nope! Nope! You are not going back there". She said as he unclipped both her hands from the pole with urgency and pulled her back to the bed. The rest of us couldn't stop laughing.

Bridgette was now laughing like a

mad woman in disbelief that she had actually managed to escape from an asylum. Ehle immediately went into her white overnight bag with rose gold stripes and took out a box of medication. She popped out a single pill and took a champagne glass to place it there. She then poured some champagne and stirred. She handed the glass to Samora so he could pass it to Mabuyi who was supposed to give it to Bridgette. They gave it to her and she gulped it down. 2 minutes was enough for her to be out of it. "Does she always get like this?"

Agnes asked in concern.

"Yup! If she has one to many. Mandla always has to drug her before he can carry her out of any club"

We all laughed before Tumi could interject to say "She's a vibe and a half"

Light laughter continued floating around in the room. Enhle sunk down on the bed and took a sip of her white wine.

"Are you even supposed to be drinking wena?" Samora asks.

"A little alcohol has never killed any baby" she nonchalantly replied.

"Ever heard of FAS" Thando

asked as she raised her eyes from her phone screen.

"What in the underground manure is that?" Thogi enquired in shock.

"Foetal Alcoholic Syndrome"

Thando expands.

"Stop worrying. I'm a nurse remember?" Ehle said as she indulged on another sip.

"Okay nurse" Thando says and she throws her phone on the bed and we all see that she has dialled MQ's number, otherwise saved as "Bhut' Nice" with a red heart emoji. Ehle immediately pressed the 'End call' button repeatedly in a frenzy till Thando's wallpaper

appeared.

We were all laughing at her as she stood up to go spill the wine in the bathroom.

"Mpimpi ndin" (You're such a snitch) she exclaims to Thando.

Mabuyi got up and placed Bridgette carefully on the pillows since she was sleeping on her thighs.

"I have a question guys" Tlhogi called out.

"We're listening" came out from different voices in their respective, varying languages.

"How are you two able to share a man and still be able to be so civil

with one another?" Samora asked as his Bernini bottle danced between Mabuyi and I.

I found this question awkward.

Mabuyi laughed and said "It depends on the kind of man you share. Any born leader can manage to achieve this between two women. Right Betso?"

"Amen kuleyo ndawo" I added.

"Don't lie. You were seriously not mad about sharing such a meal?"

Tumi asked staring at Mabuyi. He has always wondered how she's not throwing tantrums all the time.

"I'm not gonna lie and say I was

happy about it because I wasn't but I was expecting it. It is still not easy but we are both getting the hang around it. Hopefully we'll get there". We looked eyes for a second and I felt some warmth radiating from hers.

"O-kay! This is getting too serious for my liking. Let's talk about something else shall we? Even Peppa pig is fine" Agnes shouted out and drank some of her vodka. She was also seconds away from being tipsy. I don't think I still have bridesmaids. I thought to myself as they continued getting more and more crazy. The

conversation ended up falling into a ditch of who lays the pipe better between Zulu, Tsonga, Pedi and Xhosa men. I immediately signed a form of zero intention for any participation.

"Areyeng bo Micky Mouse!

Tsogang!" My mom shouted and multiplied the noise that was already filling the house assisted by pots either being taken down or getting washed and the wedding songs that were being played outside.

"Wena gape aotsebe selo ka go

hlaba kgomo. Se wa bona kae kgomo e hlaba engwe motswala?" (You know nothing about slaughtering cows. Where have you ever seen a cow slaughtering another dear cousin?) That should be my uncle ridiculing my other uncle like he always does. I can hear the noise from outside, making me wish that the wedding could end before it even starts.

My mom made her way out to go attend to whatever she was being called for in the kitchen. This was after she pulled the duvet off of me and Tumi by the

way.

"My head hurts friend" He cried out as he put two fingers on his temples. He looked like hell warmed up.

"Did you have to drink that much le wena?" I laughed as I asked.

"You were expecting me to say no to free alcohol? Soze mntakabawo" He said imitated Bridgette. He has fallen in love with her and I'm a bit jealous at how cute it is to watch.

"Well look at you now?"

Tekatekaking, crusty and shii" I said to him as I looked him in the eye with my head placed on right

hand. He laughed out loud and said "Mgwet". I exploded in fits of laughter before my phone could interject. I threw my eyes to the screen which reported that Muzi was calling. That was enough to widen the already existing smile on my face.

My mother walked in with a heap of sheets so big that they were obscuring her head. She dropped them on the bed and said

"Tsogang bloody blaksem I need to clean this room. Your in laws are going to be here soon"

She said as she went towards the window to take down the

curtains.

"They're sleeping here?", Tumi and I simultaneously asked.

"Evelyn and her daughter. The men will be sleeping at Protea hotel. Kese ba mpoelletseng sone" (That's what I've been told)

"Nna tshwanetse ke robale kae?" (And where am I supposed to sleep?). I asked as I hung my hand with my phone in the air.

"Orile obatla go nyalwa aker nnake?" (You're the one who wanted to get married my sister) Tumi laughed as he slid into his slippers and took his toiletry bag. My mother pulled my make up

chair to the window to help her with a height extension.

"Tlo ka gartene eo so you can be a child I can be proud to call mine "

(Bring that curtain here..)

I laughed as I got out of bed and fixed my pyjama short which had rolled so much it would've been easily mistaken for a g-strip made out of a thick rope.

I held on to it as I waited for her to finish unhooking the other one.

"O nshebile eng le mahlo?" (What are your big eyes looking at?). She briefly took a glance at me and brought her eyes to where her

hands were extended on the rail. I laughed and said "Nex. I was just worried about. You look like you're in a better mood". She exhaled and said "Well..", pause. "I took your advice. Tlisa" (Bring) I handed her the curtain. "My advice?" I asked as my head succumbed to a single turn forced by curiosity.

"I got myself a therapist"
I dropped my jaw in what I couldn't explain as shock or excitement.

"Close your cute mouth before a fly lands on that tongue"
I laughed.

"I'm happy you finally did it mama!" I said as I hurriedly hugged her feet.

"Ke we fela, otlare pitsa ke spotwana keago botsa" (Should I fall from her, you'll start referring to a big pot as a small pot(direct translation))

I exploded in laughter, forcing her to release the one she's was intending to hide. I then went over to sit on the bed.

"Mama?" I called out

"Yes baby?" She answered without looking back at me, clipping on the curtain hooks with one in her mouth.

"Thank you"

"For what?" She asked in warped speech hindered by the white plastic hook in her mouth.

"For never even once making me feel like I don't have a mother.

For loving me as your own

daughter. It must've been hard

burying the child you gave birth

to but I am proud of the steps

you're taking to deal with it. "

Her face softened as she allowed

her hands to drop with the

curtain in them. She got down

from the chair a moment later

and said "Tlo kwano" (Come here)

I went over to her and she put

her hand on my head, laying me on her breasts.

"Do you know why I gave you the name 'Remofilwe?' "

She asked. I shook my head.

"Remofilwe ke Modimo (She was given to us by God) That is your full name. I gave you this name because God made sure that in the place of the half of my heart that I had to bury, he put something back. And that is you. I do not love you like you are my own daughter. I love you because you ARE my own daughter. If you were listening in biology class and not wasting my school fees

money.." she said and I laughed as I wiped my tears because her words had every intention of making me emotional.

"You would know that your mother and I were initially meant to be one person. We just happened to divide because God felt it would be better for us to exist as duplicates. Even you can't tell the difference between her and I from our pictures. That should tell you something"

I smiled and hugged her tighter. She hugged me back and played with my hair.

"So my dad never came back

looking for me again?" I said as I dived into a crocodile infested river.

"O thabile thata. Go botoka oye go ja" (You're overjoyed. It's better you go and eat). She said as she let go of me and went back to handling her business with her royal blue curtain, which matches both the bedding and the standard fit for her visitors.

"123 ayeye!! Jika!!" I could hear Tumi and the rest making noise outside as they practiced the wedding step dance. My cousins

and other men who arrived in a white van were setting up the tent, laughing their heads off at whatever silly topics they decided to discuss. Rethabile budged into my mother's room and immediately said "Mzala!!"

I laughed and got up to hug her. "O sharp?" She asked as she threw her hands around me. She smelt of what my nostrils immediately picked up to be a man's cologne. She was wearing a 'spoti' and a grey, short body hugging dress coupled with black pumps.

She then wiped her sweat from

her face with her hands, held her waist and said " Ke lapile okarr mpya ya kamo next door. Why e otille so le yona?" (I'm tired like your neighbour's dog. Why is it even so thin?) She was genuinely expecting me to know and therefore answer to why the neighbor's dog is so thin. I laughed out loud and shrugged as she placed her worn out brown leather bag on the bed and took out a bottle of Gordon's and took a gulp, after she got seated on the bed.

"Bana ba kae?" (Where are your kids?) I asked as I marvelled at

the arrival of my favourite cousin.
"Omongwe o shetse gabo tatage
omongwe okantle le mamago. Ke
baratani aker watseba?" (One is
at her dad's and the other is
outside with your mom. You know
they are lovers." She said as she
took off her shoes.

Her 'spoti' was next and she
immediately said "Mzala swanetse
o dire something about my hair.
Nkaseye lenyalong jele so" (You
have to do something about my
hair. (I can't attend the wedding
looking like this)

I laughed and said "Ketlagofa
wig. Tumi otlago loga di line

kagore nna akekgone go loga aker
watseba" (I'll give you a wig.

Tumi will plait your cornrows
because you know I can't)

She jumped out in a hug that
almost landed me on the floor and
I laughed. My phone rang as I
was about to tell Retha to let me
go. She saw that it was Muzi
calling and smiled. She then took
her bottle and got out. She stood
at the door, took a sip and then
closed it. I laughed before I
answered.

"Baby?"

"Thambolam le Kentucky.

Unjani? (My Kentucky bone. How

are you?)

I laughed at how I was being addressed.

"What's next? Sweet lakho lomkhuhlwane?" He laughed too and said "Nah umkhuhlwane yizinto za bafana abancan.

Uyikhambi lam le Ebola wena.

Izinto ezi serious. Life

threatening things. ICU typha vibes" (Nah flu is a disease for small boys. You're my

medicine/herb for Ebola. Serious things. ICU typha vibes)

I exploded in fits of laughter. I am getting married to an idiot!

UNEDITED. 🤔🌟

Insert 65.

"This.." He said and pecked me on my lips with his hands softly placed on my waist.

"... is for the fact that you're now officially Mrs Muzikayise Khumalo". I laughed and blushed at the same time.

"This..." He pecked my lips for the second as I waited for the briefing on the kiss, looking him in the eye.

"... is for the compromise you made when I asked not to change my ring." He said and gazed into my

eyes. I sensed a lot of gratitude in his.

"Madlamini is already bending over backwards to avoid any unnecessary fights. This was the least I could do"

I reply and fix his collar. He had loosened his tie. A sight I could trade a lot for, along with seeing him with a fresh haircut. It always does things to me. It was already dark and it didn't look like anybody was prepared to leave.

The yard was still full as if the wedding was only starting.

Muzi and I were standing against my car outside of the yard

because my cousin was using it when he was being sent around by my mother. Or should I say he was standing against it and I against him?

"Are you happy? Or should I get a 40% refund from Tlhogi?", he asked and I shot out a laugh, placing my head on the top of his shirt laying over his shoulder.

"I'm very much content Mr Kngiyabonga baba". I answered.

"Kwakuhle ke. Kodwa mina angijabule" (That's good. But I'm not happy). He said.

"Yini inkinga?" (What is the problem?) I asked as I lightly ran

my thumb over his chin, brushing his beard. Only then did I realise how breathtaking and well done my nude nails were. Everything about this wedding was perfect. I couldn't fault it from any angle. I was praying that the one that would take place the next day would deliver the same satisfaction. It felt like I was having 2 different weddings in one because today I wore my white gown and the tswana attire because my uncle insisted on it. A lot of things apparently happened when my step father had to officiate me being his

daughter traditionally. Otherwise I would've had a pedi wedding. I apparently wasn't even supposed to get married at my mother's house but knowing her, hell would have to freeze and defrost in slow motion for that to occur.

"Baby!?" ,He said and that immediately brought me back to earth. I was day dreaming in his arms.

"Hm?", I shook my head and said. "Ngith ungiqedela intshebe ngalo munwe wakho" (You're shedding my beard with this finger of yours) I laughed out loud and said "Haibo!"

"Ngiyadlala. You know how much I enjoy having you do this to me I just wanted to catch your attention."

"I know. What did you say was the problem?", I asked.

"Ngifuna udlule lo mshado ngizokwazi ukudla iy'shebo zami mina. I don't even understand why we have to travel in different cars it's killing me. The things I would do to your a** in that backseat? Lord have mercy", he said and bit his lower lip.

I laughed at his facial expression when he said this.

"I also don't understand why the

elders would do this". I said and sulked, placing my head on his chest and wrapping my arms around him.

"Let's book a flight and flee?", he said it like he just had a lightbulb moment. I laughed.

"Mciim stop being silly". He laughed back and placed a kiss on my forehead.

"I love you so much MK you have no idea. I don't think there's ever going to be anything that breaks us apart."

I said and tightened the hug around him.

"Is this a glimpse of your vows

my wife?" He cupped my chin so he can raise my head for me to look at him. He asked this because the wedding at my house was fully under the lead of the pastor. Including the vows which were a "Say after me". Muzi is not a Christian but he respected my wish to have a white wedding. "No it's not. I'm just saying. People can threaten me to hell and back but I'm never leav.." "Wait.. what? He held my shoulders and pushed me back, locking his eyes into mine. That was a complete slip up. I meant to tell him about this after the

wedding but my tongue just couldn't wait.

"Who's threatening you Sphakamile?"

"No one I'm just..."

"Ngitheni ngamanga?" (What did I say about lies?) He said and tensed his brow. There goes the newly wed mood flying out the window.

"Okay okay. It's not really a threat. Somebody sent me an SMS telling me how I shouldn't marry you and stuff"

He looked at me in the eye for a good 5 seconds and inspected my neck as if looking for something.

"That's it?" He asked.

"Yeah. Should I be worried?" I asked. He was suddenly tense but trying to hide it.

"I don't think so. Come here" he said and pulled me into a hug.

"Vuka phela!" (Wake up!) She said in a hurry.

"Hm???" I replied in slumber. I was pretty sure I had only slept for a few minutes. We arrived in KZN at around 3 and I was already being woken up. I felt like I had being ran over by a train.

"Haibo Betso vuka bo!" She

exclaimed.

"Mabuyi yini?" (What is it?) I asked.

"uma uthi kfanele ngikfundise umdanso for uDwendwe. which is going to start kunge k'dala" (Ma says I need to teach you the dance for the traditional wedding... not long from now)

"Do we have to do it now?" I sulked.

"Unfortunately yes. It's nothing much really. The sooner you get up from this bed the sooner we'll get done. Up up up!"

"I'm tiiiiired" I sulked even harder. I was really exhausted

and who in the right mind rehearses a dance at 4 am? I got up nonetheless.

She taught me and explained as she was about to go over the things I needed to do and know an elder woman walked in with a jean apron with red material on the edges and the front pocket. She had a black doek around her head and black block 'push ins' at her feet.

"Ningichaza kabi nina mesenenza nje" (I'm impressed)

We laughed.

"Sawubona aunty", Mabuyi greeted her.

"Yebo Buyi. Sawubona koti"

"Sawubona aunty" I greeted back.

"Siyakwamukela lapha emadcekeni waka Khumalo" (We welcome you here in the Khumalo household"

"Ngiyabonga", I humbly replied.

Evelyn walked in a moment later and said "Skwii bayak'funa

ngaphandle ayasha

amabhodwe" (They're looking for you outside the pots are burning).

Aunty laughed and said "Hayi

mekungekho mina yonk'into

iyaphihlika lay'khaya" (When I'm not around everything falls

apart). Evelyn softly hit her on her shoulder and said "Yebo manje

shona khona. Nje ngamanje" (Yes now head right there this moment". They laughed and aunty went out. Evelyn also had an apron on. Do the people around here ever sleep? I thought to myself as I soaked in regret. I regretted why I didn't sleep in the car.

"Good morning my darlings. Seniqedile?" (Are you done?) She asked as she hugged the both of us one at a time.

"Yebo ma futh' uyakwazi uke..." (Yes ma she even knows how to...) Mabuyi's sentence was cut short by another elderly woman who

swung the door open.

Evelyn tightly closed her eyes in annoyance and as if she was silently saying a desperate prayer.

"Jaaa coconut!!", the elderly woman said.

Evelyn rolled her eyes and Mabuyi held in a laugh.

"Buyi buyi!" She said and greeted Mabuyi.

"Sawubona MaShandu", Mabuyi replied with difficulty because she was clearly with all her might not to crack.

MaShandu walked in staggering with a large 'bhikiri' filled with what I positively concluded to be

traditional alcohol. The smell of it gave everything away.

She took a stand and shot a dubious look at me.

"Uye lo uMastinana?" (So this is the bricklayer)

"Haibo aunty", Mabuyi said and Evelyn immediately said

"Masamb' Thenjiwe"

"Hayi hayi ungangithinti wekhuwa lomzulu. Mus'ukungi bamba

weeElizabethi. Ungaze ungithelele ngalezinto zakho zale British

Ambassador" (No no don't touch me you Caucasian Zulu woman.

Don't touch me Queen Elizabeth.

You will probably infect me with

your things from the British Embassy)

"Ingenaphi iBritish Embassy la weThenjiwe?" (How is the British embassy related to any of this Thenjiwe?) Evelyn asked with her annoyance at peak.

"Ingena shici! La wangena khona wena mhla wamshaya ngestina usis wam. Futhi wena matinina ngiyathemba awufani nalo ngey'nto zakhe zabelungu ngoba mina ngim'nyisa ashaye iskhalanga kathathu umlungu. Shem mara umuhle yaz. Ngiyayiqhenya ngo mfana ka sbari jealous down" (It comes in right where you did when

you took my sister's man. And you
bricklayer I hope you're nothing
like this one with her English
things because I beat an English
person till the rotate thrice. But
you're so pretty shame. I'm proud
of my brother's son"

"I don't think I'll be able to do
this" I say to Mabuyi who was
had a bouncing Melokuhle in her
arms. He was so cute in his navy
blue cargo shorts, sky blue vest
written "I get the charm from
daddy" in the front and no shoes
on.

"Bangak'thusi labantu 90% of

them can't even dance"

I laughed as we walked out of the house accompanied by ululations and traditional songs. I apparently had to dance before I picked out Muzi from his brothers and other men dressed in traditional attires. The breeze in the air felt a bit chilly but nice. One thing I like about traditional weddings is that they're all held in the morning, at least all that I've attended. One would expect that people would prefer to sleep and only come later in the day but no. The yard was so full. Even the helps had their best outfits on.

The cheers from the crowd grew as I continued with my dance and that added some confidence to it. I did everything I was told to do to the tee and I could tell I'm doing everything right from the looks of approval I was getting from Evelyn and aunty who were standing amongst the crowd. The chief was sitting on his high chair nodding at everything. This was the official stamp. I knew I was killing it.

I had to wash his feet while everybody watched and all he did was stare at me with a seductive smile and I immediately knew

what he was thinking. I was even surprised that his genitals remained calm because I knew his brain wasn't. I smiled and ignored. A lot happened, including Mandoba's silly speech which included him requesting that they play 'Ubuntombi' my Airic ft Mandondo and Nolly M. Muzi laughed so hard when my bridesmaid's sang along to me saying "Woyisholo wena ukuthi why ubuntombi ungasenabo" (You're going to explain why your virginity is no longer intact) to my complete embarrassment. Mandoba went on to ask ukuthi

inkomo kababa ngay'qhuba
ngay'shonisa ngaphi! Engabe
ngay'qhubele empumalanga noma
ngay'qhubel'entshonalanga. I was
flushed with embarrassment
when he told Muzi to pay up. He
stood up from where he was
seated and came to shower me
with R200 notes as I bowed and
knelt on the grass, wearing his
trusted smile to charm me off my
feet!

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Insert 66.

The stamp to my being traditionally married and welcomed into the Khumalo family was when I had to place money into the stomach of the cow that was slaughtered specially for me. I also had to give out gifts in the form of blankets to my in-laws. I was told that this ceremony is referred to as "Ukwaba".

"Ngibuye ngikwamukele futhi emaqcekeni waka Khumalo makoti. Into yokuqala engizoyisho mina ukuthi indoda iyaphakelwa mamakhe" (I'll going to welcome you again our bride. The first thing I'm going to say is that a

man must be dished up for"). This is one of the many yet so similar speeches I was given by the female elders of the family.

"Futhi angikhulumi ngokudla k'phela. Ayavulwa amathanga emendweni" (And I'm not talking about food only. A married woman needs to open her legs)

Everyone cheered her on as if she was preaching the correct, truthful gospel. Why am I the only receiving advice on how to keep my marriage stable and he's not? This was a thought that was floating in my mind as I listened. I couldn't help but laugh

along with everyone with my head bowed as if it was nailed to the ground.

"Noma engabuya ek'seni akazobuzwa uwena ukuthi uphumaphi. Uphumaphi mesekwenze njani? Uhlangaphi wena? Ngalokhu ngithi kuwe, indoda yi zembe, siyabolekisana nje nga bafazi. Na noma umnakwenu engazi ukuthi beka kuphi umyeni wenu, akabuzwa ukuthi uphumaphi ngiyaphinda futhi" (Even if he comes back in the morning, you shouldn't ask him where he's coming from. Why should you ask? By this, I'm

saying that a man is like an axe, it is meant to be borrowed from one woman to another. Even if your sister wife also doesn't know where he was, I repeat, you don't ask a man about his whereabouts)

I nodded with my head but disagreed with my mind. Muzi will have to put me under some sort of spell for him to achieve this 'Yes woman' behavior from me.

"Hayi sisi sikuzwile ukushilo okuningi wamlaya no makoti wethu. Ngifike ke mina ngizo khuluma naye uMntungwa, ngimele

oMbulaz' abamnyama, (we've heard
all that you've said my sister. I'm
here to speak to Mntungwa on
behalf of... *clan praises*)

Nina bakaBhej'

eseNgome, (ululations)

Nin' enadl'umuntu nimyenga
ngendaba,

Nin' enadl' izimf'ezimbili ikhambi
laphuma lilinye,

Lobengula kaMzilikazi, Mzilikazi
kaMashobana,

Shobana noGasa kaZikode,

Zikode kaMkhatshwa,

Okhatshwe ngezind' izinyawo
nangezimfushanyana,

uMkhatshwa wawoZimangele,

UNyama yentini yawoZimangele
Mabaso owabas' entabeni
kwadliwa ilanga lishona,
BANTungw' abancwaba,
Zindlovu ezibantu,
Zindlovu ezimacocombela, Nin'
abakwamawela owawel' iZambezi
ngezikhali,
Nin' abakwankomo zavul' indaba,
Zavul' indaba ngezimpondo
kwelasengome
zahamba, (MUSHOOOO Khumalo
!)

Nin' enalukudl' umlenze
kwaBulawayo,
Mantungwa Aluhlaza, Mantungwa
Amahle,

Bantwana benkosi, (Alililililili)
Nin' abakwantokela,
Inkubele abayihlabe ngamanxeba,
Abakhule ngezinyawo
ezimfishanyana
nezimadukulwana, Inyang'
abathe beth' ifil' uZulu kanti
isiyetheswe, (Khuluma Khumalo
khuluma baba!)
Yetheswe ngoNyakana
kampeyana,
UBando abalubande balushiy'
uZulu,
UNTshwintshwintshwi kaNoyanda
noNdaba,
UNKone evele ngobus' emdibini,
Ndabezitha! Madhaw' amakhulu!"

The crowd continued roaring and cheering Muzi's uncle on.

"Ngime ngento eyodwa la mina.

Ngithi kuwe ndodana, umfazi akabekwa nje isandla. Mes'luma isandla sakho bakhona

oNdoba, oMbuso nabo Sabelo.

Intanga zakho. Akashawa

ngesandla umfazi. Ushawa nge

nduku emfanele. Ngisho wona

umthondo Mzilikazi" (I'm

standing here because of one

thing. I'm here to say to my son,

you don't lay your hand on a

woman. If your hand is itching,

there are your brothers and

cousins whom you can fight fairly.

Your peers. You don't beat your woman using your hands. You beat her with a rod that's worthy of her punishment. I'm speaking about your d**k)

Muzi bowed his head and laughed, just as everyone around him was. The men were laughing the loudest. I don't even want to touch on Mandoba. Can this end already? I thought to myself as severe embarrassment tightened itself around my temples.

...

After the whole 'Embarrass Betso' session and everything was done, everyone started walking

away to prepare for the white wedding. I couldn't see Madlamini anywhere. Muzi approached me and hugged me from behind as Sjava's 'Intombi' played loudly from the speakers.

"Wee ntombi
Ng'the a uqonde
Lashoni ilanga
Ngi k'tsheli into uyodwa
Habeee!"

I blushed as he sang along into my ears and pulled away.

"The elders are watching. Stop it". I reprimanded.

"These elders already know that I'm gonna f*** you sideways and

turn that p***y inside out when we're done here". He said, then pulled an arrogant smirk and walked away. I looked at him walking away with my mouth hung open. He looked back from a distance from me, a foot away from an MQ who was on his phone and laughed.

After my shower, I walked out of the bathroom in a towel and checked my phone. I had no notifications. I pulled my toiletry bag from the bed and I subsequently heard a knock on my door.

"Come in!" I announced.

Mabuyi walked in with Okuhle strapped on her back with a blue and purple towel.

"Mnax". She lowly greeted.

"Hey you". I greeted back as I lotioned my foot that I had placed on the top of the bed.

She pulled the chair and placed herself there.

"Are you okay?". I asked. She didn't look her greatest.

She exhaled.

"I'm fine. I don't know how you're going to take this but..."

"But what?" I removed my foot from the bed and sunk down on

the bed and faced her.

"I can't attend your wedding babes"

"Why?"

"It'll only breed hatred. It's best if I don't"

"What do you mean? Are you...?"

"Jealous? To a certain degree, yes. I won't be able to sit there and listen to my husband confessing his love to another woman. We're making progress. This is for the best"

"I then softly placed my hands on my thighs and pursed my lips.

"Uhm.. I don't know what to say..."

"I don..." she said

"I didn't..." I interrupted.

"You go first" I then said. She darted her eyes around.

"Look, I believe it's natural for me to feel anything but happy for the both of you today. It's hard. Harder than I thought. I just hope you won't take this a certain way". She said as she undid the towel, bringing Kühle to her front.

"I understand. Totally. I just hope this won't affect our relationship in any way"

"I'm just in my feels. I'll be alright". She got up and we hugged it out. I didn't know how

to describe the smell of the mood that was in the room. We broke the hug and she walked away.

"Mabuyi?" I called out as she was about to close the door.

"Yeah?"

"Thank you for your honesty"

She offered a faint smile, nodded and then closed the door.

....

"Tswang tswang tswang! Le boneng. Ngwana o tshwana le dinaledi". Evelyn walked in singing followed by my mom and aunty Thandiwe, the one who was in here earlier.

I laughed and asked her who

taught her the song.

"Who else but myself?", my mom answered. Their bestie relationship keeps growing and it's amazing to watch.

Samora was doing "final touch ups" to my dress. It was fine in my eyes but I allowed him to continue sewing it under my armpit. We were both standing in front of the mirror before the window. The sun also marked itself present. The natural beauty of any day. Nature's gift to humankind. Tumi was seated on the bed. Tlhogi was probably somewhere dishing out

instructions.

Thenjiwe walked in and immediately said "Haibo haibo! Afunani amadoda la?" (What are men doing in here?)

Tumi whispered from my side and said "Madoda ke mmao" (Madoda is your mother)

I wanted to laugh but refrained from it.

"Nangu efika uThenjiwe. Masambeni. Sonke!" (Here comes Thenjiwe. Let's go. All of us!). Evelyn exclaimed and pushed her out.

"Ngitheni ngoku ngibamba coconut? Awungiyeka angisiyena

umngani wakho futhi ngizok'sakaza nge...(indistinct chattering)" (what did I say about your touching me coconut? Leave me alone I'm not your friend I'll smack...). She kept complaining as Ma pushed her out as if she wasn't hearing a word she was saying.

Samora pulled the white thread in order to break it. He pricked me with the needle and I immediately flinched.

"Ouch!"

"Arg sorry doll. It's just.. this woman has been getting on my nerves ever since I arrived. "Nywi

nywi madoda madoda". She should get laid!" He exclaimed as he packed away his things.

Tumi laughed and said "At this big age and you still allow homophobics to get to you. You'll die a young, infant death I'm telling you". He then got up from the bed and said "Look at you baby you look stunning! You were right Sam. That veil was going to ruin everything."

"Right! Veils are old fashioned. With child or not.", Samora explained in agreement.

I blushed and thanked him. We continued chatting till it was time

for me to take the big walk down
the aisle.

"Stormy Sunday Blues
Rolling around the room
You seem to hide your smiles
With diamond coloured hughes
And baby, I want to share my
love with you"

The music played in the
background as I prepared to walk
down to get married to the love
of my life. I loved the setting. We
were having an outdoor wedding
at the royal golf course with gold

chairs on either of the white carpet. My uncle was going to 'hand me over' to Muzi. The music was calm. The birds were chirping. The grass was at what I believed was its most green. Muzi did not know how express how he felt as I approached. He finally resorted to putting his left hand over his mouth, covering a smile of disbelief. If he was to collapse, I was sure that Enhle and MQ would catch him because they were the ones most closest to him in standing. We eventually got there and he firmly shook

hands with my smiling, proud uncle.

He smiled and held my hands.

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the presence of God, family and friends to join together this man and the apple of his eye in Holy Matrimony, which is commended of St. Paul to be an honourable estate, instituted of God and therefore is not to be entered into unadvisedly or carelessly, but reverently, joyfully and in the love of God because he who finds a wife, finds a good thing." The pastor continued with his speech. I doubt Muzi heard a

word judging from the seductive eyes he had gazed into mine. If there was no one here, I was definitely going to be toast. I know this look all too well but the intensity that came with it today was something of a new quality.

"Mr Khumalo?" The pastor said as if he wasn't saying this for the first time.

"Hm!? Sorry what?" He asked and I bowed my head in a laugh.

"Your vows?"

"Oh", he said and smiled. Everyone laughed, lightly.

"San'bonani", He said and continued blushing with my hands

in his.

"YEBO MBULAZI!", the crowd's greeting roared in the tent accompanied by the most widest smiles. I couldn't keep myself from laughing. Suddenly he's shy? He laughed before he could briefly turn to them and say "Ninjani?" Everyone began laughing.

"Siyaphila Mzilikazi! Unjani wena?"
(We are well and how are you?)

They cheered and laughed back.

"Hayi. Idlozi lisathanda mengiphila. Kodwa ngine scelo bandla" (My ancestors are still happy with me being alive. I have a plea?)

His mouth continued addressing them but his eyes were buried into mine. His charming smile couldn't agree to get left behind. He brushed the insides of my hands with his thumbs and I blushed. Dropping my eyes to the floor.

The pastor couldn't decide whether to laugh or to just smile at this clown of a groom that was standing before him having a conversation with the crowd instead of saying his vows.

"Silalele thina singabantu bakho. Khuluma phela!" (We are listening as your people. Now talk!)

He pursed his lips and laughed, with his glistening eyes refusing to break the stare into mine.

"Ndoda! Ukhala ngani!?" (Talk man!). That would be Mandoba screaming from behind him. The crowd laughed even harder.

"Olyt iscelo sami nasi. Ngicela nje ningibukise losisi ome phamb'kwami?" (My plea is that you help marvel at this beauty standing before me?)

That, just that was enough to rush my blushing hormones straight to my cheeks. Ululations, clan praises and a bunch of "Awwws" broke up and I could

literally feel my eyes welling up with tears.

"Baby? I am not going to stand here and transform into a Zulu Shakespeare noma ngikuthembise into engekho (Or promise you lies). Not everyone here is going to understand this but being with you is an obligation but loving you is a choice. You define my life. You define the reason for my existence. In one of our conversations, you've once asked me what my favourite thing about you and I don't remember answering you properly..." I was getting all sorts of emotional

when a woman in gold stilettos the size of Mount Kilimanjaro walked in slowly as if wanting to be noticed. She was wearing a black tight dress that went to just above her knees. Her skin was flawless. The black long weave on her head complemented this well. Muzi turned her head towards her and his facial expression immediately changed. He tried hiding his annoyance but this is my man and my man has a bad habit of forgetting that I know him well. She then gracefully took a seat at the back. He brought his eyes back to me

and said "My favourite thing about you is that you were custom-made for me. It's amazing how the universe aligned our paths just because we were meant to be. That's a different kind of high for me. No one is ever going to take your seat in my heart AND my life, no matter how hard they try..."

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Insert 67

I thinned my eyes at him after the lady made her mini grand entrance. I'm saying "mini"

because it wasn't that much of a scene. He tightened his hold on my hands and looked at me dead in the eye like it was just the two of us there till he finally spoke.

"Everything you're expecting me to say, the in sickness and in health, for better or for worse till death do us part, that whole shebang? I'm not gonna say any of it. I'm not going to put boundaries and limitations on my love for you because even beyond death, we will still be one. What I can promise you is that, when you need me, I'm gonna come running. When you're hurt, I'm gonna

comfort you. My duty as your husband is to love and protect you. And I promise to fulfil it to the fullest, even if it's the last thing I do. Ngiyak'thanda Bee, ngakho konke enginakho." (With everything I have).

Who invited these damned tears to the wedding? I wiped the corner of my eye and nervously laughed at the same time. He took out a clean handkerchief from the top pocket of his jacket with an inward smile the slightly projected outwardly. I took it and pinched it to my eye to avoid leaving my makeup in ruins.

I heard several "Take your time" and "We understand" from the crowd. I continued laughing in breaks and pieces.

"Whenever you're ready bride...", the pastor assured.

"Muzikayise..."

"Yes baby?", he interrupted with intention and I laughed.

"Thank you. For both your emotional vows and also for loving me right. Baby you're a king and this is amplified by everything you do. I'm looking forward to writing our love story further than we already have. The ink will run out at times. That's a certainty but

I promise to refill it if you can't. I promise to love you at times where I feel like hating you is easier. I promise to respect you as my husband, the respect that you very much deserve. Allow me to have your heart and I promise to never let it break, ever"

I said and ended my vows by quoting him. I couldn't explain his facial expression but it was something that could easily be rounded off to emotional. I've never seen him cry and from what his mother once told me, I wouldn't have gambled with my last money trying to bet on it. I

couldn't fight it anymore so I allowed the tears fall as they pleased down my face.

"This is beautiful indeed.", The pastor said.

"Now, before we carry on and make this official, is there anyone here who is against the joining of these two in holy matrimony? If yes, may a hand be raised?"

Muzi immediately shot a death stare but masked it as with a straight smile at the back. My eyes traced and followed his. The lady at the back took off her shades and sat cross-legged. She then raised her hand to her head

and gently beat it a few times as if she was itching. If Muzi is cheating on me, we will be having a funeral at the end of this wedding. A thought and its trailer strolled around in my mind and I kept my eyes on him. No hand was raised. No attention was drawn. No scene was caused. "Alright then. May the kids bring the wedding bands closer", the pastor instructed and the twins brought the rings in their cute white dresses, white stockings and straight ups on their heads. Old fashioned if you ask me but hey. I was handed Muzi's polished

ring and him mine.

"With this ring, Muzikayise do you take Boikokobetso Remofilwe Motlhabane to be your lawfully wedded wife till death do you apart?", the pastor laughed after saying the last part because of what Muzi said in his vows. Everyone did the same and Muzi smiled shyly.

"With this ring, I Muzikayise Phakamani Khumalo take this beautiful, most GOR-geous Boikokobetso Motlhabane to be my lawfully wedded wife that even death won't do us apart", he said and slipped it onto my finger.

I wasn't sure if I was attending my own wedding or a comedy show. This is what I get for agreeing to get married to a left-handed idiot.

I obviously did the same and the pastor said "Mr Khumalo, you may now kiss your bride". It was no different to opening the cage and allowing a hungry lion to be on the loose. The naughty smile on his face grew wider as he pulled me by my waist. He then briefly turned his face towards the pastor who nodded as a go-ahead and brought his eyes back to me. He bit his lower lip and Mandqoba

immediately said "Halala! Munca lo muntu bafo!" (Suck this person bro), bringing everyone to a laugh. He softly and gently placed his lips and mine and had his way with them. We both got seemingly lost in it judging from the complaints that were dropping in and immediately out of our ears. It wouldn't have been a Muzikayise that I've gotten married to if he didn't place his hands on my a**!

...

The reception was held in at hotel, after I changed my outfit from the 'boo tube' tummy hugging yet free flowing dress to

another white one with a removable Cape and bearded detail around the waist. Out of all the three outfits, I fell in love with the last one the most. It exaggerated my curves and shaped my boobs well. I didn't know whether to hold the bra responsible as well but all I knew is that this is the bride I always saw in my daydreams.

Everyone was seated and chatting away for them to notice what Muzi was doing to my thigh with his hand under the table while 'Made to love you' by Gerald Levert played in the background.

We were too happy for me to be asking about the lady in black. I think not seeing her around her helped his case as well.

Mandla stood up and made a few gentle hits to his champagne glass in order to catch everyone's attention.

"Good evening everyone. I'm not going to welcome you again because you have been welcomed a million times before me and you're surely tired of hearing it as well so let me get straight to the point. Mna andizuthetha into ezinintsi bawo. Ndifuna nje umphathe kakuhle losisi ohlele

ecam'kwakho. Not that I doubt you will. Everyone knows you have a talent in loving and a PhD in romancing a woman but ahem (laughs from the crowd), just be a man. Take responsibility for your actions and apologize even when she's the one who's wrong (laughs again). Mamele xa ethetha nawe. Sometimes that's all they need. For us to listen. Even though sometimes, (slightly raises his glass and his index finger from it), sometimes all they need is for us to shut TF and hold them." He said this with his eyes deeply gazed into a

smiling and seated Bridgette. She then blew a kiss to him and everybody went "Awwww". He acted like he caught it then put it in his pocket.

"Umphathe kak'hle okanye uzawuva nge ndindi apha emqaleni. Ndiqgibile ke mna.

"(Treat her well otherwise you'll feel a fist up in your throat. I'm done). He then said and handed the microphone back to MQ, the MC.

Muzikayise nodded and laughed, pursing his lips together.

...

"I think about the day I met the perfect stranger; I think about us. And think about the day I got wrapped around your finger, I think about us. The sun was shining on you. The Lord was smiling on me. Love was calling us, I had my mind made up and I can't stop loving you, I can't help myself..."

Kem's 'I can't stop loving you' was playing subtly when Muzi took off his jacket and put out his hand to me so I can join him on the dance floor. I obliged and we walked over with everyone cheering us on, which made me

shy. But I didn't back down because I somehow get this feeling of being invincible (read 'safe' if you may) each time I'm in his arms. He softly placed his arm on my waist and lead the slow dance. Next on the playlist was a song by Jagged Edge titled 'Gotta be'. He pulled a wide smile and closed his eyes as if he's been waiting impatiently for it. He sang to me in lip sync and we danced as if we were the only ones in the room but when John Legends 'When it's cold outside' started playing we both increased the pace of the dance and sang to

each other with him twirling me around but this time, our shoulders did the most dancing. Everyone seemed to enjoy this sight. Mandoba went to pick Enhle up from her seat when 'Let's get married' by Jagged Edge started playing, joining us on the dance floor. Muzi whispered to me and told me it was their wedding song. I found this cute. Muzi had both his hands on my waist in slow dance, occasionally dropping light kisses on my lips. The number of couples on the dance floor began increasing when Maxwell's 'Lifetime' started

playing. I rested my head on my husband's chest as we obeyed to the rhythm of the song. We kept the same energy with Carl Anderson's 'My love will'. When New Edition's 'Can you stand the rain?' started playing he sang out loud. This is his favourite song. The song he played in the car when I wasn't sure whether to leave or to stay. It reminded me how much I chose to choose him. And how I will do it over and over again. The dance continued and by now everyone was minding either their drinks, their lover or the business in general. Muzi and I

shared the longest kiss since this day began as Brian McKnight's 'Back at one' played and set the correct tone with my hands in his empty pockets. He then asked to be excused because he was pressed. I allowed and he sang "If ever I believe my work is done then I'll start back at one" on my lips. I laughed and he kissed my forehead before heading out.

Tumi approached me as I went in the direction of my seat.

"And then? O llela eng?" (Why are you crying?), I asked in obvious worry.

"I've never seen you this happy.

It's making me emotional" he said as he sniffed and wiped his tears with the corner of a serviette. I laughed and we hugged. "Trust you to bring all the drama" "Honestly though, polygamy or not, I'm glad you met this man". He said as he took Muzi's seat. "Not more glad than me though". I said and we laughed. We continued talking as he helped himself to dessert which I concluded to be chocolate mousse because I wasn't having any. I was starting to feel a little bit sick. I told Tumi yhis and all he said was "MK Jnr had better

behave. Not tonight." I laughed it but began to worry about why Muzi was not coming back. I asked Tumi to unclip the cape from my dress because it was too look and too much admin if I wanted to walk in complete freedom. He did and I went out to look for him. I bumped into one of the hotel male staff and asked where the general loo is. He was nice enough to show it to me and I asked him to check for me if Muzi was inside.

"There's no one in here ma'am"

"You sure?"

"Positive. Does he smoke? Try

checking outside"

"Okay. Thank you so much". I said as I made my out, hand in hand with worry in companionship. I heard voices before I could turn a corner and I was sure it was an exchange between two opposing genders. The more I slowly walked towards the origin of the conversation, the more I became sure that I was hearing Muzi's voice.

"What are you even doing here? How did you know about this!?", he asked.

"That's not important. Please give us a chance?" She said. Give

us a chance!? What the...!? I peeped through as I placed my fingers on the corner for balance. He exhaled, looked away and removed her hands from his neck. She then placed them on his waist.

"Lihle stop it! I can't be with you. I'm a married man. I've been a married a man!"

"Baby stop fighting this. I still see the fire and the intensity I used to see in your eyes each time you made love to me. All these other women mean nothing to me. And I'd be damned if I were to give up on you for the third

time...", she softly said with her eyes raised at him. He looked at her in the eye for a few seconds before defeatedly saying "What do you mean?"

"I'm not allowing you to choose another woman OVER me all over again. Not when you've made such a mess of my life"

"Lihle, ngiyaxolisa we didn't work out. But I can't marry you as well. I can't." He said and shrugged with his hands in his pockets. Hers were still on his waist.

"You will because my father is not going to allow you to hurt me all

over again."

"So you think I'm that afraid of Chief Sibeko that I'd shake in my boots and jump back into bed with you at the mention of his name?", he scoffed and removed her hands from him and walked towards my direction.

"Okay then. What about your daughter?"

He quickly turned towards her like he had been spun around by an aggressive tornado. "MY WHAT?"

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Insert 68

Lihle's words pierced by eardrums so badly that the holes resulted in an echo. I put both my hands against the rough wall for balance.

"What daughter are you talking about Langelihle?" He snapped.

"Your daughter dammit!" She said before collapsing into a cry.

"Dont even think about crying because it is not going to work this time. What bulls**t is this?". The last time I heard him shout in this manner was when I threw a tantrum for him missing my call.

"Look I'm sorr..."

"Okay okay let me get this

straight", ge interrupted before she could finish her sentence.

"If I do have a child with you then she's probably 5 years old. Are you out of your fng mind!?"

"You've hurt me Muzikayise. I didn't want anything to do with you until now", she said and sounded as if he was approaching him.

"Touch me and you will regret it", he lowly, calmly said.

She stopped walking.

"I'm sorry baby. I should've let you know sooner. Kodwa nawe yekela ukuba nehaba it's not like uzongishaya or anything" (Stop

exaggerating it's not like you're gonna beat me up).

"You actually qualify to be the first woman I beat to a pulp. Umthetho wakho uyasangana wena. I can't have a child with you. B**** how!? We always used protection. Always." (You're insane)

"Well things happen. And me falling pregnant was one of those things. You can go for paternity testing if it'll put your mind at ease", she said in certainty. The food I ate began announcing their return. I swallowed hard with my left hand tightly over my mouth,

trying my best not to vomit.

There was silence for a while.

"Where is she?", Muzi asked.

"Los Angeles", she immediately replied.

"Your life is all over social media except her. Why? Is there even a child?"

"Believe what you want to believe Kayise. If you want to see her then you know where to find me.

I'll send you her pictures." She said, clicked her heels as she

walked away. I heard Muzi releasing a loud single breath.

"Shit! Baby you'll give me a heart attack"

"Rather it be the one to kill you before I do with my bare hands. You have a child Yise?", I snapped. He shut his eyes and exhaled.

"I thought you said you use protection?"

"I do. Hence, I don't believe that she's telling the truth. Let's go back in, you're shivering", he suggested as he raised his hands to guide my walk in the direction of the entrance.

"Don't touch me. How many women do I have to expect to rock up on my doorstep with kids ah!". I felt a stabbing pain in my abdomen and immediately placed

my hand there.

"Sthandwasami are you okay!?",
he asked in a panic.

"Ahh!" The pain moved to my
right. I reflexively placed my
other hand on my tummy.

"Baby kwenzenjan? Khuluma
namu?", he said as he held me up
for balance because I was a single
bend away from kneeling.

"Okay hang in there okay?

Guard!?" He screamed for help
and the security guard who was
luckily passing by at a far
distance on possible patrol came
rushing to us.

"Kwenzene njan indoda!?" He asked

when he finally got to us.

"Ngicela ungiyele eHall uyofuna umuntu ek'thiwa wu Mandoba.

Umtshele aze neyikhiye zemoto.

Sheshisa mfowethu

ngiyak'cela!" (Please go to the hall for me and go look for somebody by the name of Mandoba. Tell him to come with the car keys I'm begging you)

The guard quickly gave a single nod and went rushing inside.

"Ngiyaxolisa sthandwasami please hang in there baby"

I shook my head in agitation and said "I can't lose my baby Muzi I can't". I had no idea what was

happening, but I was sure it wasn't good even though I was desperately praying otherwise. MQ and Mandla came out running. "Utheni Bee?" (What's wrong?), Mandla asked. A wave of dizziness hit me. I suddenly began feeling light-headed.

I could see my mom running as an older woman should, but the image began fading and appearing hazy...

...

I could hear the hospital machines beeping continuously from afar. It started feeling like the sound was getting closer and

closer. My eyes felt immensely heavy. I suddenly remembered what had transpired and I quickly opened them wide. Muzi was sleeping next to me with his head bowed onto the edge of the bed with my hand in his. My mom was sleeping on the single couch in a far corner with her chin in her right hand.

"Muzi?" I shook him as I called out. He raised his head and said "Thank God you're awake. Uzizwa unjani?" (How are you feeling?)

"Is my baby okay?", I asked.

Most probably wistfully.

He opened his mouth to speak but

subsequently shut it instead.

"Let me call the doctor". That's what he opted to say.

"What doctor Muzikayise is my baby okay or not?" I shouted and woke my mom up as a result. She put the magazine that was on her thigh aside and quickly came to stand on the other side of the bed.

"Hey baby", she said like she was addressing a Filwe she hasn't seen in over 15 years.

The doctor walked in, in her pink scrubs and a neat, carefully plaited 'Benny and Betty' on her head. Her simplicity reminded me

a lot of Amu.

"I'm glad to see my patient is up". She said as placed her stethoscope on the bed, pulled a brown file from the end of the bed and began writing things down. I didn't even know whether to say "Morning", "afternoon" or "evening" because I was time-confused so I resorted to skipping the greeting.

"Is my baby okay Dr?"

"Uhm..." she said as she continued writing, without raising her eyes to me.

"At this point I can't say a definite yes or a no. You had what

we call a threatened abortion or miscarriage if I might say. Your case is quite strange because you suffered a placental abruption which is common in the last trimester of pregnancy and you're in your first"

She said as she placed her black pen back in her top pocket.

"What does this mean?" I asked and Muzi tried to hold my hand. I pulled it back.

"Well, the condition tends to shorten the baby's oxygen and nutrient supply. Some babies do survive. But with some, the mother is bound to have a

complete miscarriage at some point. I'm sorry". Her saying that was no different to her placing my beating heart in front of the blade of a speedily rotating grinder. Muzi was listening as if he had already been told with the zero need to get surprised.

"Is there anything you can do about this? whatever the cost", he asked.

"I'm afraid not. No medical practitioner can save such a pregnancy. Well that's if it'll unfold into a miscarriage that is" He exhaled and sunk back down on the chair he was previously

seated on. My mother had tears in her eyes, but she wasn't going to cry. I knew this for a fact.

The Dr lifted the drip bag from its stand and held it into the air, inspecting it. She then mumbled and said, "why is not moving", talking to herself.

"Oh there we go", she said with a tone of satisfaction and said "Miss Bo..."

"Mrs Khumalo", Muzi corrected. I just glared at him for a moment and threw my eyes back at the doctor.

"Sorry. Mrs Khumalo, your blood pressure is hitting the roof. I

have every reason to believe that this is the cause of all of this. Your stress levels are certainly very high so I'm going to ask that you avoid anything that could place you in a stressful situation. You should drink a lot of water as well we don't want you dehydrated it will not help your case in any way"

"I understand". I affirmed.

"Good then", she said and allowed her white sneakers to transport her out of the room.

"Ma can I please have a moment with my wife?"

My mom thinned her eyes at him

and lovingly brushed the back of mind before she left. She left the door open. Probably waiting for me to call her back if Muzi got on my nerves. I began wondering how much she knew

He bit his lower lip wistfully before he could let any word to leave his mouth.

"Baby I'm sorry. I am terribly sorry sthandwa sami I shouldn't have allowed Li..."

"If I lose this baby Phakamani, consider it as you are losing me too"

His mouth widened in subtle shock. He then closed it and gave

a brief look to the side and said
"I don't even know what to say
right now but I know I messed
up"

"There's nothing I would love
more than a smooth pregnancy
but I don't see myself achiev..."

"Baby look...", he jumped in the
middle of my sentence. He tried
finding words to express
whatever it was on his mind, but
he was clearly struggling.

"Remember that day I had to
buy a goat?"

"Yeah?" I flatly said.

"I think we may be having a girl"

"What?"

The Dr walked in and said, "Sorry if this may appear as me eavesdropping but I forgot this". She said and took the stethoscope from the sheet that was laying over my thigh. "You're actually having twins", she said with a proud smile and then walked in reverse a bit before she could turn and walk properly. Muzi's faced was draped in a salad of reactions. I didn't know whether to conclude if he was shocked, blissful, excited, overawed or even confused. I also did not know how to digest what the Dr had just said.

"Did you hear that?", he said with a growing smile on his face.

"I... did"

"But it's not like I can afford to be excited. Why did you think I was pregnant with a girl? It might be two of them but why would you specifically think that?"

"Well, Bab' Ngema said my girl child could possibly be in danger when we were walking back to his place after the slaughter so I just assum.. you know what?"

Nevermind", he said and offered me a gentle smile. He was suddenly deep in thought.

"Maybe it really is your baby", I

said.

"What?"

"Lihle baby. Maybe she really is yours"

"Let's not talk about that for now"

"Yeah. Please excuse me I need to get some rest"

"Baby I'm..."

"Ngokukhulu ukuyithoba Mbulazi, please leave" (with all due respect.)

I said and he was instantly defeated. He exhaled and got up doubtfully from his seat. I pulled my phone from the drop of the bedside drawer and switched it on.

Tons of notifications came flooding in and I switched it off.

He stopped at the door to look at me. Even if the sadness in his eyes was in a foreign language, I could still read it. His tie was loosened, and his shit was partially tucked out. He looked a mess. He then dropped his eyes and left. So much for being newly wedded.

...

It's been 4 days since the Dr insisted that she can't discharge me. This morning she came and took my vitals and she was apparently happy with them and

said I could go. She referred me to a doctor that specializes in gynaecology and obstetrics in PLK because that's where I told her I was headed from the hospital. My mom brought my suitcase and new navy-blue tracksuits with her so I took a bath a bath and slipped into those and their accompanying slipper boots. The weather wasn't appetizing. It was cold but not freezing. Just an overdose of chilly.

Mabuyi walked in as I was packing my case properly and said "Sawubona ma. Hey you". She greeted us both. My mom gave

her a smile and said she'll excuse us. My mom honestly surprised me. I was expecting her to throw a flaming tantrum when she found out that Muzi is a polygamist, but she did quite the opposite. If this man is a wizard, then he's highly experienced in his field.

"Uzizwa unjani?" She asked as she said on the bed and placed her Louis Vuitton Alma BB on top of the bedside drawer.

"I'm fine. I guess" I said and continued packing.

"You don't have to act all tough. I know the pain that comes with

all of this. Only, I went through it to the end. I hope it doesn't get to that with you". She said and I exhale.

"Wanna talk about it?", I asked.

"I'd rather not". She said and there was immediate silence laced with sadness.

"Uhm... I don't... yoh". She finally spoke.

"What?"

"I don't know what to say"

"Say what's on your chest", I said as I waited for her brutal honesty because that's something she masters very well.

"Why didn't you tell me you were

preggies? I thought we were sisters. And for some reason I think you were intentionally hiding it"

"I didn't know where to start. I didn't want to hurt you. Okuhle is still a baby"

"That won't make it hurt any less. I'm not hurt by the fact that you're pregnant. You were gonna fall pregnant sooner or later this is Muzi we're talking about here", she said and an unintentional laugh escaped my lips.

She smiled as she seemingly thought about what she had just

said. Mabuyi is unintentionally funny. It seems it surprises her too.

"So you're not angry? I'm honestly not competing with you"

"Betso, what happens in your house is your business. Same as what happens in mine. I could fall pregnant again right now and there would be nothing you can do about it even if it hurts. What doesn't sit well with me is that I somehow figure you think I'm capable of witchcraft or something. Were you hiding it because you thought I would place your baby in the hands of

danger?"

"What? No! I just... I thought you will overreact"

"Honey, the only time you're gonna see the savage Mabuyi is when you get in between me and my husband. But whatever you do in your marriage is totally your business. I'm honestly trying to build a relationship here but if there's going to be secrets then there's obviously going to be some backstabbing in the end. I like you. You have this good vibe about you that I certainly wouldn't just find in any sister wife. One of my prayers was that

if Muzi married another wife, it wouldn't be somebody who would disrupt my peace. I'm not your enemy Betso", she said and got off the bed, pulling up her jeans from the back.

"Your kind heart scares me sometimes". I blurted out.

"I understand. You probably think I have ulterior motives. If I wanted to kill you, I would've done that a long time ago". She said and flipped Malaysian her weave. I laughed. She did as well.

"Mciim I have to go", she announced and pulled me into a hug. She smelt really good. She

always emits all these 'rich wife' vibes and tendencies.

"I'll see you at home?"

"Nope. I'm going back to my place", I said.

"Oh?", she said. She was surprised because she was clearly expecting something else.

"Yup". I said and kept to myself.

I wasn't about to start discussing my quarrels with Muzi with his wife.

"O... kay. Whatever it is, I hope you sort it out", she said. She clearly doesn't know anything about what's really going on here

otherwise I doubt she would be this chilled...

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Insert 69

My mother came into the room after Mabuyi had left. She sat herself on the chair and looked at me with a face that alerted that she was asking herself questions in her head.

"What is it?", I asked as my eyes briefly travelled to where she was seated.

"What happened last night?", she asked with her hands folded

across her chest. This is certainly one of the many questions I've tried evading from her but did not succeed judging by the look she has worn over her face.

"Nothing mama", I say as I continue packing only to realise that my absent mind was actually doing the exact opposite.

"Tlogela diaparo tseo ka gonne agona se botoka se ose dirang fao. You and your husband go out of the hall and you almost have a miscarriage? I think I judged this boy way to soon. If I knew he was going to cause you pain I wouldn't have allowed him to

have you. A botsise ka Violet mosimanyana o. Ketla mo tlhatlhamolla!" (Leave those clothes alone because you're just aimlessly playing around them for no reason... He must ask around about Violet. I'll pull him apart), she said in a high-pitched voice. "Can we not do this?", I lowly pleaded. I was genuinely exhausted. I had an ache in my heart. I couldn't pinpoint where exactly it was coming from. If this was an exam and I was asked how exactly I'm feeling I would've failed it and not even qualify for supp. We always hear

and see these things on TV and whatever media, but one can't really relate if they've never had a miscarriage. I don't think I would survive it. It's funny how you move from not wanting a pregnancy to doing everything in your power to protect it. After some highly appreciated silence, my mother made a sound.

"Okay then. Moratou ore omofounele because he says he's been trying to get a hold of you", she reports.

"I will." I flatly said and pulled the other half of the suitcase so I can close it. I immediately fell

into a pool of sad thoughts because I was going to miss my best friend's graduation. He was probably on his way to Cape Town as my mind swam unpleasantly viscous liquid thoughts. I was trying my best not to overthink, but my efforts always concluded in failure.

Evelyn shortly walked in a cream white two-piece suit and suede black heels. She's always dressed like she's going to meet with the president if she's not in her house. Most of the time.

"Darling! How do you do? I'm so glad you're okay", she said as she

rushed to give me a hug after she placed her handbag on the bed. She then looked at me like I just resurrected from dead mode. She placed both her cold hands on my face and said "God you look so pale. Violet hi"

My mom greeted her back.

"And this?", she said as she pointed to my suitcase. I then immediately figured she probably wasn't there when my mom went to fetch it.

"She's coming with me", my mom said with her eyes set straight on Evelyn, who then looked at her like she had a panty on her head.

"I don't think I understand?", she said as her eyes moved from my mom to me and back to her again.

"The doctor says she should avoid stress as much as she can. I don't want to lose my daughter because your son..."

"Let us push the brakes a little bit. From what I gathered, MY SON did nothing wrong. Darling, I'm sorry you had to land in hospital but right now you're overreacting. These are also my grandkids so I wouldn't put them in obvious danger. But I am going to put it to you straight, ihaba

lonke leli. Uwu makoti phela wena manje. And not just any makoti, umakoti wase bukhosini. You no longer have a place in your mother's house", she sharply stated.

"I'm actually going back to my place"

"Same difference. The point I'm trying to make here is that I don't think you're going to last as a wife should you carry yourself in this manner. Fine. There's a lot that needs to be spoken about I know. Even though I had to drag and pull it out of him, but I know about that Sibeko girl and I don't

thin..."

"It's not even 24 hours and your son has his pants down? Areye Filwe", my mom said as she stood to zip up my case. Evelyn pulled from her by the top handle and my mom pulled it by the wheel. I was in the right in the middle of this Tom and Jerry circus.

"Let go of this case you bloody woman!", my mother did not hesitate to bark as she pulled it in her direction.

"You are seriously mad and you have no one to tell you!", Evelyn barked back. I did not know how to even start extinguishing this

rising fire I was in the middle of. "What the flying f**k!?", Thando yelled from the door. She was appalled and her face made triple sure not to hide it.

"Language!", Evelyn snapped at her.

"No mom. This is not the time for your elegance lessons because you're preaching the complete opposite of what you're doing in here! I could hear the two of from down the corridor. This is a hospital for heaven sake!"

She reprimanded, and Evelyn exhaled deeply. She pulled and fixed her buttoned-up jacket and

looked up.

"You right. You're honestly right baby. My apologies Vee"

"Nxn!", my mom said and dropped herself back on the chair. I was too tired to even speak. I pushed the case and sat on the bed.

"Kwenzakalani vele?" (What's going on?), Thando asked as she took out her earphones from her ears and shoved both them and the phone in one pocket of her black track pants. She had a box under her armpit on the other hand.

"Nothing sweet. Can you excuse us for a moment?", Evelyn

requested.

"In a minute. Hi sis unjani?" (How are you?). She asked and I raised my eyes at her as she walked towards me.

"Ecstatic. Evidently", I said as I pulled an obviously fake smile. She laughed and said "Imagine having to break out an episode of WWE between two MATURE women", she said and looked at both of them. They looked away.

What I love Thando is that is that she's a straight shooter. She says what she feels at the time she's feeling it and she says it with her chest.

"Anyway, I brought these", she said as she handed me the black round box written "Flora" in gold on the top.

"What's in here?", I asked as I received it.

"Hawu. Angazi. You open it"

"You didn't? Where is it from?"

"Pucker-money said I should give it to you", she replied. I couldn't stop the laughter that came out due how she pronounced her brother's name. She huffed out a single laugh and then smiled.

"So you didn't open it?"

"Haibo what if it's a bomb?"

Angeke ngifele izono zabanye

abantu mina. It is yours.

Addressed to you. I was just the delivery woman. Open it already I want to see" (I won't put myself in a position to die for other people's sins). I laughed and pulled the lid from it. It was a bouquet of deep red flowers. I instantly melted. I suddenly became emotional. I repeat, the muti that Muzi is using is not from South Africa.

"These are so preeetty", Thando admired. She honestly did not open the box? Such good manners. I expected the opposite.

"Oh and here. He said I must

give you this", she said as she pulled out a small envelope from front pocket of her oversized sweater.

"Is this not my husband's sweater?", I asked and laughed. "Well your husband owes me. Now read the card let's hear", she said and clapped her hands in excitement. My mom and Evelyn had softened up with certainly unintentional smiles on their faces. The shame they were both feeling had them looking like wet and cold chickens that had experienced a heavy rain.

"I'm not reading anything. This is

for my eyes only" I said as I put the card under the pillow. She laughed and said "Okay fine. I knew I was taking a fat chance anyway". She then came and gave me a hug.

"I'm loving and leaving you right now. I still have to run errands". She said and rolled her eyes.

"Did you go to the post office nje ngoba akucelile ubabakho?" (Just as your father asked you to?)

"I'm driving there right now. But ma I don't understand why I'm the one who has to be going up and down whereas there's a person hired specifically for these

type of things". Thando complained.

"UMelusi uyagula. Just be a good child, will you?" (Melusi is sick)

"The day I relocate and never come back, nizongi khumbula ngiyanitshela. Nasi" (You're going to miss me. I swear), she said and crossed her fingers as she went out. Mom and Evelyn laughed at her little rant.

"Byeeee babyyyy", Evelyn mocked her and continued laughing. When Thando had left, she exhaled and also sat on the bed.

"Look, awukho umshado olula. Ngine siciniseko sokuthi no

mawakho angayi fakazela lento
engiyishoyo. If we both happen to
die today, uSphakamile
uyodeqeshwa wuban ukuthi
kwenziwa njani emendweni?
Musukuyi tetemisa ingane ngoba
uthi uyalungisa kodwa umosha
umshado wakhe
ungaboni" (There's no easy
marriage. I'm very sure your
mother can attest to this... who
is going to guide Sphakamile
about how things are done in
marriage? Stop coddling this child
because you think you're helping
her out while in actual fact you're
aiding and abetting the collapse

of her marriage)

My mom exhaled. She kept her silence for a tad while and then said "I guess you have a point".

"My darling, communicate with your husband and stop allowing le sedangwado ukuthi sikuhlanyise" (... allowing this loose woman to drive you insane). I kept quiet as I allowed her words to seep through the pores my brain.

"For the sake of the babies, I'm going to give you the space you need because I also don't like stressing you out. But please don't crucify me for stuff I know

nothing about. Ngiyak'thanda.
Ngiyohlezi ngik'thanda." The card
read...

...

As my mother said, Evelyn had a point. We were driven back to the house by her chauffeur. My mom was driven back home by another one. I wanted her to stay longer but she said she couldn't and that she will call.

"Come home if you feel you can't take it okay?". Those were her farewell words she whispered into my ear before she got into the car and left. When we got there, the yard was still celebrating.

People from around the community were still eating, dancing and drinking like it wasn't a Monday. The chief was sitting with a bunch of old men under a huge Morula tree. I doubt he even saw us drive in. Since this is a royal house, I was expecting that only a certain number of people were going to be allowed entry to the wedding but apparently the chief always invites all his people when there's something going on in his yard. I now see where Muzi gets his spirit of sharing and ubuntu. We got into the house where it was less noisy and got settled in

the living room. The help who assisted me approached us in her black and white uniform. She's so humble. The level of self-effacement she exudes is unmatched. Ever looked at a person and you were immediately sure they had a heart of gold? Evelyn was sitting on the couch opposite the one I was sitting on. She asked if they should give away all the food to the people or they should keep some in the refrigerator. Evelyn frowned in thought and said "Hayi banike konke lokudla. Ngiyazi kuyogqina sekumosheka so... Let them have

all of it" (Give them all the food because it'll end up begging spoiled). She nodded and left.

From what I observed, she must be the head of the kitchen in this house. When she was about to turn a corner, Evelyn yelled "Nokuthula!?"

"Yebo ma'am?", she answered in a humble yet curious tone.

"Ngicela wenzele umakoti wethu okudla ngisure ulambile" (Please make some food for our bride she must be hungry). Mam'Nokuthula smiled with a nod and walked away before I could dispute.

"I'm really not hungry", I said to

her.

"You're no longer feeding your stomach only. There's people inside you that you need to think of". I smiled in defeat and let it go. I was wondering where Muzi was but I wasn't planning on asking. The food finally arrived and I ate because constable stomach keeper was watching me like a hawk. We had trivial conversations including her telling me that Mabuyi went to Joburg to shop for Okuhle as I ate and watched TV. I got done and drank my juice. I told her I needed to lie down and got up.

...

I initially wanted to go to my room but a part of me wanted to talk to Muzi about what happened. I passed the door to my room and went to his. I wasn't even sure if he was around. I've never been married before but I'm certain that this is not how a newlywed is supposed to be feeling. The mood was just gloomy and dark. I knocked and my knock went unanswered. I tried the handle and it gave in to me. I peeped through and there he was. Sleeping on his stomach with just jeans and underwear.

There was half full bottle of whiskey on the pedestal. The room was dark because the curtains were closed. I began wondering how long he had been sleeping there. I closed the door and walked towards the bed. I then shook him so he can wake up. He slowly raised his head and squinted his eyes at me like he was in pain.

"Hey", he sincerely greeted.

"Hey", I greeted back.

He then sat upright, wiped his face with both his hands and turned to look at me with his elbows using his thighs for

support.

"I thought you had already left"

"I'm no longer leaving"

"Oh... That's... I guess...", he said and exhaled. I guess he couldn't find the right words to express himself. His eyes were severely bloodshot.

"Look baby, at this point I don't know what to say to you because I just feel like you're so fragile. Excuse me and forgive me in advance if I say all the wrong things".

He added to his initial broken statement. I just glared at him. His bare chest was making it

difficult for me to think straight. He was a mess but contrary to what might be an obvious expectation, this sight turned me on. There's something about seeing him with a fresh haircut. He kept talking but his words went through one ear and out through the other. I was daydreaming and he thought I was listening. I then stood up and went to sit on his thigh, in between his legs. He was seemingly surprised by this because he suspended his hands in the air but he slowly brought them back to hold me,

doubtfully. When he saw that I wasn't protesting, he tightened his wrap around me and allowed his forehead to stand against my arm with his eyes closed. I held his face and his temperature was high. It wasn't medical-attention-seeking fever high but it wasn't normal either...

TO BE CONTINUED...

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Insert 70. (UNEDITED)

Mixed feelings had their reckless way with my already unstable emotional self as I sat on his lap.

His rigidly grounded leg and his arm ensured comfort without an ounce of fear for falling. We can fight till the sun rises and sets in non-ending cycles but the fact that Muzikayise is my soar and safe haven will remain unshaken. But my safe haven wasn't okay. My safe haven was drowning in thoughts that could easily be interpreted as stress even by a far-from-sober drunkard across the street.

"Baby?", I softly, lowly called out. Silence. If he was a hall, I would be sure he was empty.

"Khumalo?". If attention-seeking

was a brand of cheese, this would be a double layer.

"Hm!?", he finally replied as he snapped out of it.

"O sharp?" (Are you okay?), I asked. He stared into my eyes for a brief number of seconds before breathing out heavily through his nose.

"I'm sorry". That was first thing to come out of his mouth.

"Which part are you sorry for exactly?" I asked as I shot my eyes at him, waiting for a well detailed apology.

"Everything. Bekungafanele ngiphume ngiyokhuluma noLihle.

Kodwa angiy' yenzanga nge nhloso
leyonto. Bengise toilet baby.

Ngathi ngiyaphuma
ngahlangabezana naye emnyango.
Bes' uyangicela ukuthi siphumele
ngaphandle sikhulume. I initially
said no but she was too insistent
and I wanted to get it over and
done with so I could come back
inside to you. Ungixolele mommy?
(I shouldn't have went outside to
go speak to Lihle. I didn't do it
with intention. I went to the loo
and I bumped into her when I
came out. Then she asked that
we go outside to talk) He ramble
as a plea for forgiveness almost

made me laugh. He was like a kid caught stealing in a candy store.

"This is not how I imagined the days after my wedding but th..."

"Ngiyazi sthandwa sam kodw..."

"Let me finish daddy" I said as I raised my hand in the air to call him to order. He then nodded and pursed his lips together.

"I don't want to fight with you. I don't want to stress myself out. I'm just happy to be finally married to the man of my dreams. Whatever happens, can happen. But just promise me one thing?"

"Anything", he promptly assured.

"I don't want this Langelihle

woman in our lives". He kept quiet for a little moment.

"What if the baby is mine? I can't turn my back on her".

I exhaled. I knew very well that he said this with rigid intention and therefore meant every word. Muzikayise does not strike me as the type of man to sit and fold his hands knowing very well that a seed he once planted is out there growing somewhere without his involvement.

"Did she send you the pictures?", I asked. He exhaled. Heavily.

"Yeah", he then lowly replied.

"Can I see her?", I made the

daunting request. What if she looks like him? I thought to myself as he pulled his phone from under the pillow. His fingers navigated his way to WhatsApp. He then clicked on an unsaved number and handed the phone to me. The chat was empty. He didn't even reply to the pictures. Maybe I did. Maybe I did overreact. I viewed the picture and I was left void of words.

"What's on your mind?", he asked. I got up from his thigh and went to sit beside him.

"She has your eyes". I said and he just stared at me.

"And mouth", I added as I fixed my eyes to the dark brown carpet on the floor and supported both my hands on the edge of the bed. He insisted. After eons of dead silence, he finally decided to stop obeying and dancing to his silence. "You think she's mine?", he said and I looked away in a shrug. He then took his phone and scrolled the screen.

"Baby?", said a woman's voice on loudspeaker, answering the call.

"Mus'ukungi biza njalo.

Ukephi?" (Don't call me that.

Where are you?)

"Ngisekhaya. Let's go out?" (I'm

at home)

"Where is she?"

"I told you she's in L.A"

"Well I need her back in South Africa"

"It won't be that easy"

"Ush' kthini?" (What do you mean?)

"We're a package. You can't be a part of her life without her mother. I don't want to destabilize her life. She deserves a stable home"

I swear. If Muzi marries this woman I'm packing every scrap cloth of mine and leaving him for good. I was having a silent

monologue with myself as he continued with his call.

"We'll cross that bridge when we get there. Right now, I need you to bring her back so we can get this paternity test out the way. Ngiyak'cela"

"I don't know how many times I'm supposed to tell you that this is your daughter love. But if it'll put your mind at ease, I'll see what I can do"

Muzi rolled his eyes before he could say "Sharp". He then threw the phone back on the bed and looked at me with mysterious eyes. I couldn't tell what was on

his mind.

"Have you told Mabuyi about this?", I asked. He immediately, anxiously shut his eyes and placed his left palm on his forehead.

"You can't hide this forever. The sooner you tell her, the better". I said and stood up to leave. He held my arm and I reflexively turned back to look at him.

"I'm sorry about all this mess. I really am baby. I didn't mean for our wedding to end in this manner"

"It's okay. I'm here to fulfil my wifely duties to your family because I don't want to be in

their wrong books. All I ask is for peace since you couldn't give me a honeymoon". I said and we locked eyes.

"About that, I have a huge favour to ask"

"I wonder..." I flatly said.

"You still need a break baby. For the sake of the babies. You can still go away while I fix this"

"By myself!?", I shot out at him

"No MaDlamini" (with MaDlamini)

"Are you trying to get rid of us?", I asked in utter disbelief

"No. I just want you to get some fresh..."

"So we can come back to another

wife!?"

"I am not gonna marry her. I promise", he gently said as he stood up to hold both my hands. At this rate, I think I'm going to need yoga classes soon.

His eyes followed mine as he cupped my chin and gazed at me.

"I'd never hurt you like that...", he said in almost a whisper

"Promise?", I desperately needed assurance from him. He placed his cold, soft lips on mine and said

"Ngiyathembisa sthandwa sami" (I promise), he whispered as he placed his forehead against

mine. His hands landed on my waist and (REMOVED)

...

"Wee... wee lokhunja" (You... what's your name), Aunt

Thenjiwe called out to me as I was sitting in the living room after a hot bath. Muzi was outside with the men and it was already night-time.

"Yebo aunty?" I said as she staggered her way in.

"Awungithi type me here ngifuna ukubhalela le mbuzi I i-messenger la" (Please type for me here I want to write a message to this goat). I wanted to laugh but it

took everything from the deeper depths of my soul not to. I want to get out of her bad books.

I removed my feet from the couch and sat upright. She came to sit beside me and handed me her phone. She then looked behind her as she removed the cushion that was disturbing her aim for comfort.

"Ngibhale ini?" (What should I write?)

"Bhala ukuthi angeke ngikwazi ukufika namhlanje ngoba anginayo imali ye transport"

"Ithi ngik'size aunty" (Let me help you with that money aunty?)

"Hawu. Ngempela?" (Really?), she said with a bright and blinding smile on her face.

"Yebo. Uzodinga malin?" (How much are you going to need?)

"Hayi wena ngane yami u-onethauzen fafhandret nje k'phela. Mm" (Just R1500 my child), she said and looked up, having her eyes dance all over the ceiling. So much money just to travel to the next village? This question rang in my head, but I just said "Kulungile"

"Ne four handreti ye petrol" (and R400 for gas). A slight laugh escaped my lips.

"Hawu aunty. Awugibeli amatekisi kanti?"

"Inkinga yakho wena mnini we stina ukuthi ubuza kakhulu.

Yenza lapho u-typee phela" (Your problem is that you're too inquisitive. Type"

After robbing me of R1900 she still wants more? And I'm certain it won't end here. She's probably leaving this house with a bag full of money. I laughed it off and continued typing as I was employed to. She doesn't like me much but for some odd reason, I like her.

...

Mabuyi came back with a load of paper bags and dropped them on the floor. She then sank down on the couch and went into a coma.

"Tired?", I asked.

"That's an award-winning understatement", she said as pulled her leg to take off her shoes. I laughed and continued scrolling my Instagram.

"Ukuphi uMelo?" (Where's baby Melo?) she asked as she looked around.

"Upstairs sleeping", I said and threw my eyes to the baby monitor.

"Uhambile uMalindi?"

"Yeah about an hour ago", I replied. Malindi is Melokuhle's nanny.

"Alright. I bought the cutest onesies oh my God", she said as she pulled two paper bags towards her and took a bunch of clothes out. I got up to sit on the same couch as her. She handed me one black one in excitement and said, "Isn't it the cutest?", I admired it until I saw the price. R800 for a single, tiny onesie? Such a big price for such little material? Barely visible material? I dropped my jaw and turned towards her in shock.

"Haibo don't judge me. Okuhle deserves the very best"

"He will outgrow these in 2 seconds", I argued.

"Then I'll sell them. Simple" She said as she continued admiring the other baby clothes. Muzi walked in and said "Sanibonani". I had completely forgotten to pick my jaw up from the floor. She laughed and said "Ask your husband what he got for him when he turned a month old. You will see that I'm the reasonable one around here". He looked at the both of us, confused as to what we were talking about.

"Baby what did you get for Okuhle?"

He laughed and said "You're gonna judge me just like your sister wife did here so I'm not saying a word". He said as he perused through the clothes.

"Tell me tuu"

"Okay. A private jet". I threw my hands up in the air in complete surrender.

...

The next morning

"Langelihle's parents are here".

That was an SMS from Evelyn at 07h37 in the morning.

"I swear if Muzi marries this woman...", I swore as I made my way out of bed and into my slippers. Sh*t is about to hit the fan.

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Insert 71.

I grabbed my phone and my night gown and hurriedly put it on while walking towards the door. Mabuyi and I almost hit heads when I came out as she was about to knock. I abruptly jammed back on my steps.

"Haibo slow down uyaphi?" (Where

are you going?)

"Uhm... down... downstairs. Yes.
Downstairs"

She slightly laughed, and I
awkwardly laughed back.

"Then why do you look so
nervous?"

"I do!? No no. I'm just... not so
much of a morning person. Maybe
that's why"

"Mmmkay. The reason I'm here is
to ask you out for lunch. I figured
we can spend the day together
since hubby is not gonna be here
for most of it". She said as she
walked in.

I followed her.

"Where is he going?", I asked as we both sat on the bed. She was in her long nude, silk pajamas.

"He didn't tell you? He said something about Bab'Ngema and meeting up with coach Aviwe last night"

My mind pinned my anxiety right on top of the situation that was apparently going on downstairs.

"Mabuyi?" I carefully called out. I didn't even know if what I was about to do was within my job description as a sister wife.

"Mnax?" She replied without paying attention will eyes glued to her phone screen.

"Do you know about...?"

"Do you like seafood?" She interrupted before I could finish my sentence.

"Seafood?", I asked under the instruction of my scrambled brain.

"Yeah. Food...from the...sea?

Praaaaawns and the likes?" She slowly said as if she was addressing a retard. I laughed.

"I'm sorry man I just have a lot on my mind"

"Wanna talk about it?"

I was about to respond when Muzi walked in smelling like a breath of fresh, powerful morning air. His cologne is always in a rush

to speak on his behalf.

"Good morning my loves", he said as he placed his phone in his pocket and kissed both of our cheeks.

"Morning baby", "Morning hubby". We replied as he went to fetch a chair to come sit in front of us.

"Usuready ukuhamba njalo?" (Already ready to leave?), Mabuyi asked.

"Yebo mommy. Bhekani neh, I can't think of a better way to say this so ngizovele ngiyisho nje and ngicela ningiyeke ngiqede before ningibulala" (Please let me finish before you kill me)

"Wenzi manje Khumalo?" (What have you done now?), Mabuyi asked. He moved his eyes from her to me. I already knew what he was about to say. But why pretend as if I didn't already know?

"Lihle's parents are here"

"Lihle's parents?", that was Mabuyi asking with a death stare infused with a bit of confusion.

"Yes. Lihle's parents. She says we have a 5-year-old child together"

"Ini!!!?" (What!?) Mabuyi shot out. I just remained quiet. I wasn't about to have an omnibus of a fit.

"When you say "she says", are you

meaning to tell me that you never knew about her all along?"

"No. I did not", he said, maintaining his calm nature.

"How sure are you that the child is yours?"

"I'm not. That's why I want a DNA test". He said and took out his ringing phone from his pocket. Mabuyi put her hand over her mouth in disbelief.

"Bafu?"

"So she's in South Africa!?", he said, and I popped my eyes at him. So Lihle lied about the kid being in L.A? Mabuyi was still looking like lukewarm hell trapped

in a tightly sealed Tupperware.

"The bi...! Langelihle is about to drive me up the wall", he said as he stood up from his chair and began pacing the room.

"Kidnap? 'Yahlanya ke manje. Wena just find a way to get her tooth or hairbrush somehow"

"Ngithe NO KIDNAPPING wee Nathi! Get that stupid idea out of your fuzzy head"

"Sharp sokhuluma" (We'll talk). His seemingly drained self and came to sit down in front of us. He tried taking Mabuyi's hand, but she sharply pulled it away.

"Ngiyaxolisa sthandwasami" (I'm

sorry my love). He sincerely said. "I thought you always used protection when you get up to your stupid no good ways!?", she snapped with eyes draped in a mission to kill.

"I do. I did"

"If you did as you say, Phakamani! THEN there wouldn't be any product of your infidelity!"

"Baby, angaz ngichaze ngithini ngoba nam angazi kodwa let's just wait for the results before we attack each other, shall we?"
(I don't know where to start explaining because I also don't know but...)

"Ungijwayela kabi yaz wena. In fact ungiwayela amasimb..." (You're full of crap). His face immediately changed from an apologetic meek cat to a provoked tiger.

"Haibo. I am still your husband ngathi isuyakhohlwa?" (...in case you forgot)

Mabuyi pursed her furious lips together and looked aside. I did the same. I could feel tears filling up my eyes. Maybe I do need a getaway. This thought kept me entertained amidst all the silence that everyone decided to make a competition of.

"Uzomshada?" (Are you going to marry her?)

"That's the last thing on my mind"

"Of all the women you could have had a bastard child with, you chose her?"

"I didn't choose anybody or anything. I also don't... ma?"

He said and answered his phone midsentence. He then exhaled after listening to whatever Evelyn was saying.

"Okay k'lungile. Ngiyeza" (It's fine. I'm coming). He then got up slowly and briefly looked at both us. I was still looking away, but I

could feel his eyes on me. He held my shoulders and kissed my forehead. I didn't protest. I had no energy to. He tried doing the same to Mabuyi, but she pulled away. He exhaled from apparent exhaustion and said

"Ngiyabuya" (I'll be back)

He walked out, and the silence remained. I turned to look at Gugu who now had her hand on her hair just above her forehead.

"Are you okay?", I lowly asked.

She kept quiet for a tad bit while. She then turned her head towards me and said, "Are YOU okay?", sending my question back

to me.

"Let's go away" I said as glued my eyes to the floor. She was certainly looking at me like Muzi had left with a few of the marbles that are responsible for keeping me sane.

"Away?"

"Umuzi wakho uyabhidlika and all you want to do is to go on holiday?" (Your home is falling apart and...). She added onto her first question.

"I don't know about you, but I am already tired and I have a pregnancy to worry about. This is not how I imagined the first

week of my marriage. Whether you're coming with or not I'm still leaving. "

"Yeah well... this is what you get for getting married to an imbecile. Sure. Let's go. The Seychelles?"

I turned my head back at her.

"I'm fine with anywhere really.

Just as long as it's far and away from all this drama".

She nodded.

...

"Benimeleni sonke le skhathi ningazo bika isisu uma seni dhamuka manje?" (What were you waiting for all this time to come report the pregnancy for you to

pop up now?), Chief Khumalo exclaimed as they sat out the table in the dining room.

Mabuyi and I were eavesdropping while balancing our backs with the wall just before the entrance.

"Besingazi nathi nje ngo mndeni.

Uye wa baleka ekhaya uLihle.

Khona ebuya manje". A man I just assumed to be Lihle's father reported back.

"Ayihlangani yonke lento eniyishoyo" (Everything you've said doesn't make sense". Muzi said.

"In fact umbhedo wonke le nyifinyifi eniyikhulumayo" (... everything you've said is utter

rubbish). Sabelo added onto Muzi's statement and Evelyn said,

"Language you two!"

"Hayi Mamncane. Uyifihla kanjani ingane iskhathi eside kangaka kodwa ubuye futhi uthi uyamthanda ubaba wayo?

Ayenzeki leyonto never!" (How do you hide a child for so long and then come back and say you love the father? It's not possible)

"Ngimfihle ngoba bengazi kahle ukuthi uMuzi bengeke amamukele uAva" (I hid Avelwe because I knew that Muzi was never going to accept her). That would be Lihle. Mabuyi internalized her

sarcastic yet fuming laugh.

"Ngempela?" (Really?), Muzi asked. From the tone he used to ask this, I just knew he was looking at her dead in the eye.

"Uyayikholelwa wena lento owuyishoyo?" (Do you even believe whatever you're saying yourself?) Silence then suddenly graced the room.

"Thina umesifebela into ey'bonakalayo kufana ne mali nezindlu namadoda ashadile nina nifebela ukumitha. Ave ibhayiza lengane yakho weeSphiwe.

Ayimithelelwa indoda eganile fakhen" (When we mess around

with married men for sensible things like money and houses you mess around with then only to get pregnant. Your child is unfocused Sphiwe. You don't get pregnant for a married man"

"Thenjiwe!!", that was almost everyone at the table calling honorable aunt Thenjiwe to order.

"Futhi uwu makhwapheni onjan wena omitha amithe ingane ye ntobazana? Uyayibona lento engiyishoyo yokuthi ugqocwel' ibhayizment?" (What kind of side chick are you who gets pregnant with a girl child? See what I'm talking about when I say you're

highly unfocused?), she continued to say without a care in the world. She sounded as though she was now taking a sip of what I just concluded to be her famous, signature beverage while humming into the cup.

"Ey ukhona Thenjiwe shem!"

(You're so full of yourself), that was probably Lihle's mother.

"You're not even supposed to be here Thenjiwe please keep quiet", Evelyn reprimanded.

"Ningibona ngila ngimele usisi wami kulo mndeni. Futhi no sbari ngab' uyangishada khona kozophela nya! Ukuphapha lo

kwakho wena ambassador ye
British Airways. Khiphi
khwayethi yamasimba" (As you all
see me here, I'm representing my
late sister. The chief should just
marry me so the ambassador of
British Airways can get off her
high horse. "Keep quiet" is horse
sh*t)

"Yabo wena mhla ngikusakaza nge
mpam...!" (The day I thrash you
across the face with a hot
slap...!)

"Haibo ma!!". Muzi said to Evelyn
who was threatening aunt
Thenjiwe. I lowly laughed at how
fed up she sounded. Mabuyi's mind

seemed far far away. I stopped laughing immediately at the sight of this because it reminded me of the possible fate of a third wife.

"Bakithi, masiyiqeden lendaba ngoba sek'fanele ngihambe mina manje" (Let's conclude this matter because I have to go), Lihle's father announced.

"Ngicela ukukhuluma?" (Can I please say something?)

"Khuluma ngane yami" (Speak my daughter)

"Isizathu sange mpela sokuthi ngihambe yonke le minyaka ukuthi bengisaba ukwenziwa inhlekisa ekhaya" (The real reason why I

left home for so long is that I was afraid of being made a laughing stock at home)

"Inhlelekisa!?" (A laughing stock!?), a woman exclaimed.

"Ehena aunty. Odadewethu bonke ba mithele emendweni ngoba ubaba befuna njalo. Ngenze iphutha ngiyavuma kodwa bengeke ngihlale ukuthi bezobukisa ngami oNokuhle. Futhi neskolo bengaka sisedi" (Yes aunty. All my sisters got pregnant when they were already married because that's what our father wanted. I made a mistake yes, but I wasn't going to stay for

them to make a mockery of me. I also wasn't done with my masters.)

Muzi scoffed.

"Ewu. Yebo kunjalo ndodana.

Kwami ingane ayimithiswa ungekayishadi. Ungenzel' iphutha elikhulu kabi" (It is indeed like that my son. In my house, you don't impregnate any daughter of mine out of wedlock. You have made a very big mistake in my books), the chief said, obviously directing this to Muzi.

"Whoa bakithi. Kuyimanje asazi noma eyala ekhaya le ngane noma cha" (At this point we don't even

know whether this child is our blood or not), Evelyn said.

"Eyenu le ngani. Futhi ngabe se sikhuluma nge lobola manje", the woman insisted.

I heard a chair scratching the floor as if somebody was now standing up.

"Until there is a DNA test, this meeting is over", Muzi said and went to pull the exit to the outside open. Somebody followed him.

"Phakamani! Muzikayise!", chief Khumalo called out but his delinquent son kept walking.

...

"Your food is gonna get cold", I said to Mabuyi as I indulged on the prawn that my fingers clutched on.

She brought her attention from wherever it was wandering in the milky way back to me. She then pushed the plate away from her and exhaled.

"Why are you so calm about this? He could marry her", she asked, and I continued chewing.

"If he does, I'm leaving. Period", I confidently said because I had no doubtful second thoughts. My health along with my babies comes before him and his baby

mama drama.

She looked me briefly before she could raise her hand to wave for the attention of the waiter. He got to our table and she

immediately said, "Can I have your best bottle of red wine?"

"Our best bottle is quite pricey ma'am and you've already finished this one. Would you mind a glass? Which one of you is driving?" The waiter asked as he bent his back a bit, leaning towards us with his hand on his tummy.

"Do I look like somebody who has issues affording things?"

I almost laughed but strongly

decided not to. Mabuyi was taking out her frustrations on the poor guy.

"I am so sorry ma'am. That is not what I intended to imply...". She exhaled and brought her high chest down.

"Forgive me. I'm just... bring that bottle now, will you?"

"Coming right up". When he was about to walk away Thogi walked in.

"What in Skolopad's name are the two of you wearing Jesus!?" He screamed all the way from the restuarant entrance and each and every eye landed on our table.

Mabuyi frowned in annoyance and said "Isn't he supposed to have left already?"

"Evidently not", I responded.

He rushed to our table and as he was about to speak, a guy in a black suit approached him and said "Sir can you please keep the noise d..."

"Can you spell noise!?", Thogi shot out at him.

Mabuyi laughed. Maybe he is exactly just what we need right now. I thought to myself.

UNEDITED.  

Insert 72.

"How are you feeling?", Tlhogi asked as he pulled the chair from the next table, leaving the manager just standing there, ogling at him. He finally gave up and walked away.

"You gave all of us a fright", he added.

"I'm fine now thanks. Why haven't you left yet?"

"And leave all this fresh Zulu meat unattended?", he said and flagged a waiter's attention. Mabuyi and I laughed. Her wine arrived and she impatiently welcomed it into her glass.

"Hello hi. Can I please have your famous chops? Medium? To go", Tlhogi said to the waiter as he was about to leave. He courteously noted it down and left our table.

"Besides, I need a break. And KZN is the perfect place for me to achieve that", he continued to say as he took Gugu's glass and gulped it down. She thinned her eyes at him and he made a satisfied sound by loudly releasing his tongue from the roof of his mouth. She shook her head and went ahead to drink from the bottle.

"I would say you're suffering from my-husband-just-got-married-to-another-man syndrome but since you're even having lunch together, you need to start explaining why you're slowing subjecting us to a show of you turning into an alcoholic?", he rambled as she proceeded to drown her entire digestive system in red wine. She finally put the bottle down with both our eyes on her.

"What?", she asked and shrugged.

"Are you going to tell me what's eating you up? I once did psychology at some point trying to impress my ungrateful parents so

let me put it to good use"

"It's really nothing. I just love my alcohol", she said and continued to drink. The waiter came back with a speed point and a brown paper bag.

Thogi scanned him from top to toe. What came next was him asking "Is the food warmed up or yall cook using black magic?". The waiter laughed and said

"Somebody had made a large order moments before you and they cancelled. They're still fresh trust me"

"Mm-mmm", he replied with no attempt whatsoever to hide his

suspicious. He took out his card and paid and I noticed Mabuyi was in a deep battle with her thoughts.

Tlhogi got up in his thigh-exposing shorts and flip flops. He kissed my cheek and then Mabuyi's.

"I'll see you around zithandwa. Wena, alcohol will not solve any of your problems. If anything, you're most likely to wake up to a doubled load of them once you sober up. Toodles", he said and Mabuyi continued to pour into her glass. She took a sip and said

"Understood". Thogi shook his head and left the table.

...

Mabuyi and I spent the entire day at the restaurant because she was refusing to leave. She was now halfway through her third bottle of wine regardless of much I tried to convince her otherwise. Muzi called and said we should come back home after asking where we were.

"Mabuyi it is now 7 and we've been here since 2. Let's go home", I pleaded.

"One...", she said and raised one finger from her unstable hand.

"One what?", I impatiently asked because I was tired and all I wanted was to take a hot shower and sleep.

"One more... one more second and then... and then sizohamba neeeehh", she said and her head fell towards her chest. She tried pouring some more wine but the glass fell and stained the tablecloth. All she had to say for herself was "Oooops" and laughed. I took the bottle from her and said "Okay that's enough. Masambe". She responded with a "ssshh" as if I was talking when I wasn't supposed to, looked

around and began laughing hysterically. I got up from the table and threw my phone and power bank into my bag.

The manager approached us and said "Ma'am are you okay? Should I call a cab for the both of you?", directing this to me.

"No I'll drive. Thank you so much. I'm sorry about the cloth. How much is the damage going to cost us?"

"No it's okay. We have a budget for moments like these. I'm more worried about your friend here". He said and I looked back only to find her completely dozed off on

the table. I exhaled in exhaustion. "And how am I supposed to get her to the car in this state? Mabuyi!?", I said and tried to wake her up.

"I'll carry her out if that will help". He offered and I thought about it. It was pretty dark outside and struggling with her by myself was only going to bring me criminal attention.

"Okay. Thank you so much. Please bring the bill"

I sank down on my chair. The restaurant was now almost empty except, some woman who was working on her laptop and

another lovesick teenage couple at a far corner holding and kissing hands. I placed my hand on my neck and twisted it. All my exhaustion was concentrated there. As I was doing this, I saw Muzi and MQ walking in. The waiter came with the bill and as he was about to give it to me Muzi took it from him. I could see he was shocked from how much we spent on one table in one day but he took out his card and settled it.

MQ's eyes were on Mabuyi the whole time.

"How much did she drink?", Muzi

asked as he tried getting her out the table-to-chair arrangement.

"Not that much", I lied. He handed his phone and car keys to MQ and carried her in his arms.

Her gold slides fell off her feet.

"Ngempela?" (Honestly?), Mandoba asked, dubiously. I just kept quiet. I took both our bags and her shoes and we walked out.

Mandoba unlocked the car and I got in the backseat. Muzi placed Mabuyi there and her head on my thighs. I placed my hand over her hair and other fell across her chest. They also got in the car and Muzi drove off.

...

We got home and Evelyn was outside watering her plants.

I got out of the car with our belongings and Muzi came to carry Mabuyi out. Saying he was pissed would just be me dividing his mood by 3. He gently took her out and Evelyn said "what happened to her?", she was a second away from panicking.

"Alcohol happened", Mandoba said as he typed on his phone. Evelyn released a flat "Oh" and dropped her hands. Muzi continued to walk into the house and I followed him. We got to Mabuyi's room and he

carefully placed her on the bed and left. I helped her out of her jeans and into her pyjamas. I then closed her windows and left as well.

"Knock knock", I lowly said as I stood at Muzi's wide open door. He turned back and looked at me while taking off his watch. His face softened with a very brief huff of a laugh and said "Ngena if awulumu" (Come in if you don't bite). I laughed and walked in. He gently pulled me by my waist and kissed me on my lips. I didn't respond to the kiss.

"Hawu. Yini manje?" (What is it

now?) He said and dropped his arms.

"I hope you now have a clue of what's going to happen to should you decide to bring this woman into our lives. Asimfuni" (We don't want her). He closed his one eye and exhaled before wiping his face with his hand. He then took off his t-shirt and his sneakers followed. He walked into the bathroom and came back with a wet face.

"Ngicela ning'chazele ukuthi le memo yokuthi ngifunana nomfazi omunye phezukwenu nobabili niy'thathaphi?" (Please explain to me what where you got this

memo that notified you that I'm looking for a third wife?). He asked and looked me in the eye with one hand under his armpit and the other over his mouth in a loose fist. I pursed my lips and looked away.

"Why did you pretend as if I didn't already know what was going on when you told her?", I asked. He dropped his hands and sat on the bed.

"I have enough problems. A fight between the two of you is the very last thing I need right now".

...

"Vula le bag Thenjiwe!" (Open this bag Thenjiwe!)

These 4 words served as my unsolicited alarm in the morning.

"Hamb' uyopractiser lobuntshingilane bakho le kude neskhwama sami Evening!" (if you want to practice how to be a security guard go do it elsewhere, not in my bag Evelyn!), aunty Thenjiwe said, in her blue overalls and black converse sneakers.

Evelyn was still in her night gown. I walked out of my room and saw Mandoba and the chief coming up the stairs. Evelyn managed to snatch the bag and zip it open.

Thenjiwe grabbed it from her and a gold vase fell to the floor and shattered into a million pieces along with her lotions and other toiletries, including lemon lite.

Doesn't she have a toiletry bag?

"Buka wenzeni manje! Uzonginika lemali le bengizoyi thola ngok' dayisa lento swayini!?" (Look what you've done! Are you going to give me the money I would've gotten from selling this!?)

"Haibo kwenzee njani manje? Ma? Aunty?", Mandoba asked as him and the chief came to stand next to the Tom and Jerry.

"Ha! I can't believe you...", Evelyn

lowly said, almost in a whisper.

"Baba she just broke my most expensive vase!", she then shouted as she knelt on the floor to gather the pieces. An equivalent to a dead baby in her eyes. Aunty went on to pick up her things from the floor.

The chief quickly got her to get up from the floor and said "Okay okay kulungile ngizothenga enye" (I'll get you another one), he softly said with his hands on her shoulders.

"Another one? This was a gift baba. And not just any gift. An expensive, ancient, imported gift!

A limited edition!", she said with a breaking voice. The chief looked defeated.

"Kodwa Thenjiwe uyamhlukumeza umfazi wam" (You're harassing my wife Thenjiwe)

"Bekuyi malini le vas?" (How much was this vase?), aunty asked with her hands in her pockets like the gangster she is.

"R85K you uncultured idio...!!", Evelyn stopped herself from finishing the sentence.

"So ngilahlekelwe yimali engaka ngenxa yakho!?" (So I lost that much money because of you!?), she asked with her eyes popped. I

could never understand the logic that aunt Thenjiwe uses to be honest. She lives in a world of her own. Muzi came out of his room and said "Umsindo owani ekseni kangaka?" (Why the noise so early in the morning?), clearly irritated. Nobody paid attention to him. His mother charged off and the chief followed her. Aunty Thenjiwe zipped up her bag and said "Banta'bam, ngizon bona second half", clutching her sportsbag under her arm and the straps over shoulder. We all bid her goodbye and she ran down the stairs. I bet the vase is not the

only thing she stole.

Mandoba laughed while shaking his head and Muzi stretched his arms and neck.

"Ngis'tholile lesa stuff bafo" (I managed to get the stuff bafo). Muzi immediately stopped with his aerobics and looked at him.

"You didn't hurt anyone did you?"

"Ngulube ang'sona islima" (I'm not a fool you pig)

UNEDITED.  

Insert 73.

I feel like a curious kid ran into the time machine meant for my

entire life and existence. The excitement from this new toy results in them pressing it every morning and twice in the afternoon. Everything is a mess. A fast mess. Just 2 minutes ago, I was just a simple single girl going about her life, her job, and her business. Now, I am a chronically stressed, pregnant, married woman. Did I mention pregnant? Pregnant with twins from a polygamous man. Wonders love being in my presence. They enjoy my company.

These thoughts flood my mind as I lay bed in the dark with my

hands over my tummy. It was 4 AM and I had not gotten any sleep. I couldn't stop thinking and worrying about Mabuyi. Which is another wonder I managed to attract and secure. Who would've thought that one of the thoughts I would be having sleepless nights over as a married woman would be if my sister wife is emotionally okay? My life is one big, fat LOL with an afro. I haven't been checking my emails for a while now. So much for a businesswoman. Way to go Betso. You're doing great! That was my meta-self being sarcastic.

I finally snapped out of it and decided to call my best friend. It rang for a while before he could pick up.

"What wrong have I done to God to deserve a call at half-past 4 in the morning? Lord why have you forsaken me?", he complained in his sluggish and sleepy voice. I laughed.

"You sound tired. I'll call you later", I said before I could remove the phone from my ear.

"Wait wait wait...!" He promptly called out.

"Ke eng?" (What is it), I asked

"Your a** is not okay. What's up?",

he said. He sounded more alive.

"Arg, I just miss my mom. I just miss you guys"

"This is something you would've easily texted and not called me at witchcraft closing times for. You call me early in the morning when you have something big to announce or when there's a brick on your chest. Out with it", he insisted. I exhaled.

"I don't know bes. I'm just... arg"

"I would say take your time, but I don't have all day. Some of us don't have the luck of running into rich men. Please speak", he scolded, and I laughed.

"Well there's a possibility we might break up with the rich man", I said, and it immediately hit me that Muzi could genuinely, actually, honestly, really marry this woman.

"Trouble in paradise already?"

"Kinda. Baby momma drama"

"Hours ago, she was mnaax. Now she's baby momma? I knew this sharing-a-man business will not have a happy ending", he said and took a sip of whatever he was drinking.

"No Mabuyi and I are fine. Some woman popped up with another baby claiming she's his", I said,

and he choked.

"Excuse me. What?", he said in between coughs.

"Yeah. A 5-year-old baby"

"Five!? What in the actual somersaulting f**k!?", he exclaimed.

"Yup", I said and played with the top of the comforter.

"How did Muzi react to all of this?"

"To be honest with you, I don't know what's going on in his head"

"He needs to put his sperms on a leash", he said, and I kept quiet.

"And wena? How are you and the baby?"

"Uhm... about that..."

"Yyy-eeass??", he said in anticipation

"It's actually two babies", I said and closed my eyes waiting for him to react. It took him a few seconds for him to digest what I just said.

"You mean... you actually mean... oh my sweet God!", he said in excitement and I laughed.

"We're having twins?", he asked after he was done collecting himself.

"Yes, we are"

"OMG. I can already see the 3 quarter onesies I'm gonna get

them with designer baby shoes". He said and I laughed. We continued talking until I noticed we've been talking for a while and the clock was reporting that it was now 06h07. We said our goodbyes and I got out of bed. I did the most sensible thing to do in the morning, which was to brush my teeth and have a hot bath. A warm long sleeved, blue cotton dress was calling my name because of the weather. I wrapped a brown doek on my head and slid into grey peep-toe slippers.

...

"Knock knock", I said as I softly knuckled Mabuyi's door with my phone in my other hand. She allowed entry and I walked into her sitting with one leg hanging and her sitting on the other on the bed. She had her fingers on her temples, massaging her head. "Good morning" I softly said as I settled on the bed.

"Not so loud nawe. Morning", she said as she continued massaging her head looking like she had been smashed by a train the previous night.

"What happened last night?", she asked without looking at me.

"Let's just say you drank the entire bar, signed a contract, wavula nesekehele" I said as I unlocked my phone. I side eyed her, and she had her eyes popped in a panic.

"Na manga!?! What contract?", she said, leaning towards me, a second away from a frenzy.

"You bought I-Eats last night. Aketsebe go bula mang cause boss lady is still in her pyjamas", I said and kept a straight face. She slowly raised her hand to place it over her open mouth.

"Tell me you're joking Betso. And you let me?", she asked with her

hand over her forehead now.

"How? It doesn't make any sense.

Okay I remember we got there and ate. I had my first bottle at that time. And then after that we..." she said as she tried

putting the pieces together and

I couldn't hold it in anymore. I

exploded in fits of laughter. She

looked at me in defeat and began

laughing as well. She really had

zero energy for anything.

"Ave u-wrong shem. Yaz u-wrong

kab'hlungu kanjan?" (You're so

wrong for this), she said, and I

continued laughing. She threw the

light burgundy cushion at me and

it fell to the floor. I couldn't stop laughing. She resorted to a lazy "Mciim" and played with her manicures.

"But on a serious note though, don't ever drink like that. It's not safe"

"Ubukhona nje wena" (But you were there with me)

"I could've easily paid attention to another person in the restaurant or stepped out for possibly anything. What if somebody took advantage of you?"

"I know I know. U-Hubs ungibonile?" (Did hubs see me?), she asked and bit her lower lip in

fear of my response.

"He didn't only see you. He carried you out of the damn place", I said, and she immediately buried her head in her thighs with her hands over it. She rose up again and said, "I once swore that this would never happen again", she said and bit her nails.

"Yeah well. What's done is done. Just don't drink like that ever again. You should just stop with alcohol in general nje", I said, and she jerked her head with attitude.

"Awuhlanyi perhaps?" (Aren't you crazy?). I laughed and stood up.

"Uyaphi? Don't leave me here. If I had to be carried into this house that means everybody saw what a mess what I was. How am I ever going to leave this room? God!", she said and put both hands on both cheeks in embarrassment. I was about to respond to her when a stench of eggs hit my nostrils. I immediately put my hand over my mouth and ran to her bathroom. I felt my knees hit the hard floor as I began worshipping the porcelain God. I threw my guts out. I heard voices in the bedroom, and she came into the

bathroom after whoever she was talking to had left. She was standing over me brushing my shoulder. After I was done vomiting all the energy, I had in me, my eyes fell on her barefoot. "Morning sickness?", she asked. "I think", I said in almost a whisper.

"Sorry. They brought breakfast. I think it's the eggs. My nostrils were also very strong their function with Okuhle" she said, and I just nodded.

"You'll come out mus'u-right?", she said, and I nodded again. She walked out and I finally gathered

the strength to get up and rinse my mouth and subsequently wash my face. I heard voices again after I closed the tap to stop the swift water from running.

I was about to step out when I heard Muzi saying "I'm hurting you all over again aren't I?"

Mabuyi kept quiet.

"I'm gonna fix this baby I promise. I was not lying when I said I'm done with that life"

"Fix it how Khumalo? What if the child is yours?"

"She is mine"

"What?" Mabuyi said in a 'I dare you; I triple dare you to repeat

that MF' voice.

I walked out and wiped my mouth as if I had not heard a word.

Mabuyi did not move her thinned eyes from him.

"Baby?", he said. He was clearly surprised to see me.

"Yes?"

"Yes, usho mina?" (Is that yes directed to me?)

I desperately wanted to roll my eyes and throw him with an entire block of flats at that point, but I contained it. I chose to contain it. Mabuyi finally turned to me.

"Are you okay now?", she asked.

"Mm", I mumbled to indicate a "yes".

"Okay from what? What's going on?"

"Have some milk. It used to help me. I don't know if it will do you any good though"

" Thanks, I'll try it. If you'll excuse me, I need to nap", I said and never gave either of them a chance to respond, taking my phone from the bed with me. I went out and found myself pacing up and down in the patio. So, it's confirmed? Evelyn walked in wearing a black, tight-fitting knee length dress with gold

stilettos. She had her natural hair styled and deep red lipstick on. She wasn't expecting to find anybody there judging from how startled she was. She held on to her chest and said, "Child you will give me a heart attack" and laughed nervously. I chuckled and apologized.

"It's okay. Have you had breakfast? I ordered for it to be delivered to your room oh thank you darling", she said and took her black jacket with half sleeves and gold handbag from one of the helps. They smiled to one another before she could excuse herself.

Evelyn took her MacBook air from the table and shoved it into the bag while rambling about the feminine health NPO meeting she had to attend. From her ramble, I figured she was the keynote speaker.

"Are you alright? Where are those car keys", said while perusing through her bag? Her busybody self was at it again.

"You're driving yourself today?", I asked.

"Yebo. Ngizwa ngathi sengiyakhohlwa ukuthi kushayelwa kanjani. I can feel the lessons leaving my body through

sweat", she said, and I laughed. Thando walked in.

"You look dapper. Hey sis", she said to her mother and went on to greet me. She was still in her pyjamas.

"Morning", I greeted back.

"Thank you, baby. Now your dapper mother is running late now I'll "

"That's a first", Thando interrupted her. Evelyn laughed.

"I know honey I know. I'll see you kids", she said as she gathered her stuff then left. Thando and I carried on speaking with my mind casually running off resulting in

me missing out on some of the things she said.

"Sis I need a favour", she said as she got up from the chair she was seated on across me and came to sit next to me. I just knew she was up to no good.

I looked at her with a suspicious smile and did not respond. She took my hand and drew circles in it.

"See, I told Puckermoney that I need to attend a chemical engineering expo that is to be held in Joburg for grade 12s on the 22nd to tell them about my experience at UCT so far", she

began stating her case.

"Yes aaannd?"

"Your man wants to drive me there himself, no matter how hard I tried explaining to him that mom has already organized transport for me. He won't hear it"

"Hawu. He wants to because he cares about you. You know how much you mean to him", I said, and she continued drawing invisible circles in my hand. She then quickly ran her eyes around to see if no one was coming.

"Him driving me there is not the problem. The problem is, there is

no expo!", she said with her teeth gritted together. I exploded in laughter.

"Thando what have you done?", I said as I continued laughing.

"I created a fake account and sent myself an email. He is convinced it's from the CSIR. If he finds out I'm gonna be on house arrest for the rest of my life" she said and mimicked a cry.

"Why would you do something like this?", I asked.

"Well I couldn't exactly walk up to him like "Hey bro. Mind if I go on a mini baecation with my boyfriend? I promise I'll be back".

He'd flip"

"If I'm gonna speak to him, it would be me convincing him to not get mad about your lie and actually allow you to go. I can't lie on your behalf. What if something happens to you?"

"Are you out of your mind? This is not Dr Phil we're talking about. Immediately when he hears the word boyfriend attached to my name, he loses it. It's not gonna work"

"Let me try...", I said, and my phone rang. It was an unidentified number.

She got up and said, "if I die, my

blood is going to be on your hands".
I laughed and she left.

"Boikokobetso speaking hello?"

"So, it's official?"

"Whoever taught you phone etiquette had no clue what they were doing. Who is this?", I said, and he kept quiet.

"Are you going to speak this week, or should I hang up?"

"Somebody is in a foul mood", he said, and I picked up that it was Kgokagano. I kept quiet.

"I asked you a question"

"Please repeat it for me"

"It's official? You allowed him to marry you?"

I kept quiet.

"Was it the money? The only thing the guy has that I don't is the fact the he's royalty. Did you marry him because of that?"

"Where were you all this while?"

"In a place where I couldn't stop the love of my life from getting married to a f****ng polygamist"
I held on to my silence.

"The only reason why we didn't speak for this long is the fact that you told me you never wanted to see me again and threatened me with a restraining order. Did you ever love me Bee?"

"I di...", I couldn't finish my

sentence.

"Did you?", he said. He was highly worked up.

"Your wedding pictures are the nicest I've seen by the way. But there's this one picture that caught my attention. You were so distant minded there. Something I wouldn't expect from a happy bride"

"Where did you get them?", I asked.

"Your dear cousin Brian couldn't wait to shove them in my inbox". He said and I wasn't at all surprised. Him and Brian are sworn enemies. Kgokagano

apparently broke Brian's girlfriend's virginity. Brian's first love. He has never forgiven him since. He'd literally spit on every footstep Kgokagano leaves behind.

"Look I'm sorry you feel the way you're feeling right now but I can't help you. Please move on"

"When are you coming back to PLK?"

"Bye KG"

"Okay look. Kagorata wankwa?" (I love you; you hear that?)

He said and it felt exactly the way it did when he said it the first time. I opened my mouth to

respond but I ran dry of words. I resorted to ending the call instead. I stood up with the aim of walking into the house and I found Muzi standing by the door, silent as a grave. A grave which had its hands in its pockets with its legs crossed. His head was leaning on the door along with his shoulder. How long has he been standing there?

"How long have you been standing here?", I asked. It took a moment for him to raise his eyes at me with a nose raised into the air. He wasn't happy.

"Mina? Perfect"

EDITED. [?]

Insert 74.

A few days later.

He got up from the bench we were seated on after he heard the announcement for his plane. I continued stuffing my face with my second chicken mayo sandwich. He inserted his phone into the pocket of his black track pant and zipped it up. He then smiled down at me and said "Ngempela ngempela uyithaphi i-appetite engaka baby" (Where do you get such a huge appetite baby?)

I frowned and continued chewing. "Ngiyadlala bo. Ungaze ungibulale" (I'm kidding. Before you kill me). He said and then laughed. He held out his hand for me to stand up. I put the sandwich down next to the juice and obliged. He then placed his hands around me and covered me with his entire self. I hugged him back.

"Usheshe ubuye" (Come back soon), I said to him, resting my head on his shoulder.

"I will. I have a huge mess to fix and people to take to court", he lowly said. This matter was

stressing him out. Lihle's family is adamant that the Khumalo's need to marry their daughter before they could get their child. I have a strong feeling that this has more to do with just the baby. I can't shake the feeling that there is a hidden agenda here. Muzi is still not aligning with Mabuyi's brand. She is still mad, and no one can talk her out of it.

He kissed me for a good minute before telling me to avoid stress and take care of his children. I smiled and he kissed me on my forehead as we locked hands. He

kissed me on my lips one more time before he could drag his suitcase to walk away. I walked back to the car and got in the backseat. I was driven back home, and I arrived at the same time as Mabuyi. Lord knows where she has been. Her face looked pale and her weave was uncombed. I inspected her with my eyes when I got out of the car.

"Ngime njani khona uzokwazi ukungigwinya kahle?" (what position should I stand in so you can swallow me properly), she asked as she raised her hands with her car keys and her Louis

Vuitton 'Never Full' bag in the other. I laughed and she giggled in defeat as well. I don't think there is any cheap item in her closet. This is the 4th designer bag I'm seeing her use.

"Is your husband gone?", she asked as she walked into the house and I followed her.

"My husband?", I asked in shock of the tone she used to ask the question. We bumped into one of the helps, greeted and kept walking.

"Yes. Your husband", she repeated without remorse. I said "Yes", and she continued speaking about

God-knows-what because I was no longer listening. My mind was wandering as I walked behind her. What have I signed up for? This woman looks like she has been through hell and back with this man. What if dithupa tsaka di meetsing le nna? (What if I'm still to experience the horror she also seems to have experienced?). "Are you even listening to me?", she asked as she opened the door to her room, and I snapped out of it. Two rose gold balloons were the first to softly hit her face when she was about to walk in. They were obviously the few of

many, many, and I mean many more. They flooded her room such they couldn't wait to make their way out. We were both surprised at this sight, but I think we both knew who was responsible for this crime. She slowly walked with a smile that forced it's stretch on her face when she was obviously fighting it. I followed her in and there was a black envelope on the bed and along with a black box with a gold bow on top. Evelyn walked and the first thing she said was "Whose birthday is it?"

"No one's. This is all the work of

the smooth criminal of a son you have", Mabuyi responded as she locked her teary eyes into the A4 note. It was a full page of handwritten stories that I wasn't going to ask about. I wasn't sure I wanted to know.

...

The afternoon sun was calling our names to come bask in it by the pool area. Thando was in her bikini exposing her beautiful petite body. She was the only one who was willing to swim. Evelyn, Mabuyi and I were laid back on grass on top of a picnic blanket having bowls of a variety of

fruits and mimosas. I was having guava juice. We were on a video call with Enhle who couldn't stop saying she wished she was there with us. My phone rang and I excused myself not to interrupt their joyful conversation.

"Bes", I answered.

"Your mother is here in hospital. Otlisitse ke ntate Sithole" (Mr Sithole brought her). Tumi reported. I felt my heart wanting to stop counting beats.

"What?", I asked to confirm whether he has his facts in line.

"She's fine. She had a mini myocardial infarction"

"What's that le wena!?", I asked in aggressive impatience.

"A young heart attack friend. Look, I need to go back to work. Just... get your a** back home", he said and cut the call. It sounded like the hospital was busier than it usually gets when he calls me while on duty. I put my hand on my forehead as I stood barefoot in the sun. Thando wrapped herself with a towel and twisted the water out her hair as she approached me.

"Are you okay? What's wrong? Is Puckermoney okay?", she asked and Mabuyi and Evelyn stood up

from under the shade of the tree and came to us.

"Betso!?", Mabuyi called out as I was about to get deeply lost in my panic and thoughts.

"It's my mother. She had a heart attack", I started.

"What? Is she okay?", They all asked at the same time.

"Apparently. I need to go home"

"I'm coming with you", Mabuyi jumped in.

"There's no need. I'll be fine thanks"

"Sure?", Evelyn asked.

"Yeah. Let me go pack"

"Alright. Let me go speak to one

of the chauffeurs", Evelyn said as she went in a different direction when we headed towards the house. I got there and took a shower. Thando offered to pack for me. Mabuyi helped her. When I was done with everything, they carried the bag for me as we went down the stairs. I got in the back of the car and he took off.

...

"Mama?", I said as I tried to wake her up. I wasn't about to listen to Tumi who suggested I should let her rest and wait for her to wake up on her own accord.

The mere sight of her eyes closed is enough to give me a heart attack as well. Tumi was in the kitchen preparing soup for her. "Mama?", I called out again. I didn't even switch on the lights. There was no time for that. She squinted her eyes and tried to get up. I told her to lie down. She had none of it.

"I won't raise a child only for it to grow so it can tell me what and what not to do", she said as she slowly pulled the pillow up to balance and laid her head on the headboard. I got up to help her. "Kokobetso ntlogele ake

segole" (Leave me alone I'm not paralyzed). She said and I went back to my seat. I was too tired to fight her anyway.

She then switched on the side lamp and smiled at me. I smiled back.

"I am not dead and I'm not going to die now. Okay?", she whispered, and I felt my eyes wetting up. I couldn't stop the tears from falling. She slowly pushed the back of head to lay on their thighs and I wailed my lungs out. She kept saying "sshhh" as she brushed my hair. I couldn't stop. I didn't want to stop. It felt

good to cry. It felt good to cry in the presence of my mother's comfort. I wept for all the hurt I've experienced the past few days. I wept for the mess of a life I just signed up in the name of marriage. I wept for all the times I wanted to cry but I couldn't. I wept for the stress that I'm trying to avoid for the sake of my babies. I wept for the fact that I could've lost my mother. I wept for the possibility of my husband marrying another woman for the sake of his daughter. I love that man, but I don't think I would be able to

stay should he decide to give in to Lihle's demands. I also don't think I will be able to live without him. I wept. And wept. And wept until I felt my chest heating up and my head reporting a fever. My mom was quiet in all of this. She just brushed my head. I wanted her to say something. But that's all she did. She just brushed my head.

I finally ran out of tears, but the hurt was still overflowing. I pulled myself together and just laid there.

"Do you want to cry some more?", she asked. I laughed and said

"No".

"Okay. Now tell mommy what's eating you because I'm pretty sure okase lle gakana nkare ke hwile" (... pretty sure you wouldn't cry like this as if I'm dead whereas I'm still alive), she softly said.

"I'm just worried about my pregnancy ma. I won't survive if they don't make it", I said and wiped my wet eyes.

"Come back home so I can take care of you Filwe", she said with her eyes down on me.

"You mean keep an eye on me", I said.

"Yes. That too. No marriage is more important than the health of my daughter. Let them label you as a bad wife akena taba. Just come home tuu", she firmly said.

"I... I don't know mama", I said, and she exhaled in defeat.

"Where is he anyway?", she asked.

"Who? Muzi?", I sniffed and asked.

"Yes. Who else? Barack Obama?"

"He's overseas"

Tumi came in with a tray and cheerfully said "Dinner is ready.

Bon appetit"

...

It's been a week since I'd arrived here at home. I've been cooped up in my mother's house for so long I don't think I still remembered how the sky looked like. Tumi had promised that he was going to take me to the park for fresh air in his new car. Muzi was supposed to land the next day and I was excited for that. He told me to pack my stuff at my place because my house was ready. I was excited for that too.

Tumi arrived in white shorts, a white vest and shades.

"And then wena? Looking like you're ready for the beach", I

asked. He looked good.

"You talk too much. Hareye" (Let's go), he said and took my handbag. I laughed and followed him outside. We got into his Merc A45 and he drove off.

"Friend you haven't started working for that long. Otsaa kae machankura ago reka koloi e so?" (Where do you get the money to buy such a car?), I asked as I admired his custom-made light brown leather seats with his name of them. The drama.

"Wena gao bula maoto for mohumi ola wago o judge kemang ousie? You thought you were the only one

with the ableness? The khonability? Hm?" (When you spread your legs for your rich man who judges you?) he said, and I exploded in laughter. I cannot believe him. We picked up mojitos and dunked wings from KFC because I was craving them and continued with our journey to the park. We got there and took a stroll till we got to the bench. Tumi does not stop talking so I did most of the listening until we saw Kgokagano walked up to us with his little sister having ice cream.

"She has grown so much!", I said

to Tumi as we watched them approach. Tumi said "It is not her I'm focusing on. Friend is this your ex!?". He was gobsmacked. I would be too if this was the first time I saw him since high school. His Instagram pictures look good, but he's flames in person. He was wearing navy suit pants, with a partially tucked out white shirt and his navy tie loosened. He looked like he had just come out of the office. His sleeves were rolled up his muscular arms. They finally got to us and greeted. Karabelo couldn't stop blushing and smiling. She has always liked me. She

heart reacts everything I post. If she was lesbian, I would be sure she likes me for herself.

"How are you doing?", Kagano asked and we continued with the niceties until he asked to Tumi and Karabelo to excuse us.

"Don't do anything that might land you in a divorce court", Tumi whispered before he could stand up with his cup and strut off to his car. Kagano handed Karabelo his car keys and she went in a totally different direction. He sat down next to me and said, "Your dress looks good on you". I thanked him and continued sipping

on my drink. I've never been able to make eye contact with him and as old I am, I still can't.

"Betso?", he lowly called out.

"Hm?", I responded.

"Look at me", I braved it out and faced him. He glued his eyes to mine and kept a straight face.

"Can you honestly look me in the eye and tell me you're happy?", he asked, and I looked away.

"The love of my life would never settle for second best. We both know that. I've never been in a polygamous marriage but I'm smart enough to know how it works. It's a selfish act if you

ask me", he continued rambling. I kept my face away. Regardless of all the things he was saying that made me mad, something felt right about his presence. He smelt good. He felt... he felt right. He got up and came to squat in front of me.

"You can still get out of this mess. I am here and willing to love you with my whole heart just as I always have. I feel like the man in me deserves a chance to correct the stupid mistakes that the boy in me has made. I love you and you know it too. I've hurt you. Badly. I know that. But allow me

to make things right. That fool doesn't deserve you", he said and insisted on keeping his eyes on me. His stare was burning my face. I brought my eyes back to him.

"I am married now. Pregnant even. There is no way we can be together. I don't know. Maybe if you had showed up a little bit earlier, I don't know... but it's too late", I said.

"It's not. Betso what is it that you don't understand when I say I love you with everything there is to me? We'll raise the kid and make some more. I won't be the first man to raise another man's

blood. I just want you. I need you!", he said as he placed his hands-on top of the material of my dress that rested on my thighs. I immediately developed goosebumps. The chilly PM weather wasn't helping either. The sun was setting. The park was quiet and peaceful. Being with him there felt so wrong and yet so right. He got up and suggested I do as well. I reluctantly did and he pulled me into a hug. His cologne hit my nostrils. He smelt exactly like Muzi smells. I felt myself getting intoxicated and rested on his

chest. Something about that moment made me wish life was simpler. More straightforward. But I love my husband. No matter how controversial our marriage may be, but I love Muzikayise Phakamani Khumalo. I love him but here I am, resting in the arms and chest of a man I would've at some point in my life died for...

Insert 75.

"And?", that is the first thing Tumi said when I got in the car. "And what?", I said as I

strapped on the seatbelt. Both his thumbs were raised from his phone screen.

"What did Mr hunk have to say?", he said as he turned his whole body to face me.

"Don't call him that. He... he just said... arg the usual. What do exes have to say?", I said as I ironed my dress with my hands.

"Friend are you having regrets?", he asked, sincerely.

I exhaled.

"What regrets?"

"I don't know. Marrying young? Marrying young to a polygamous man", he said and shrugged.

"Arg would everyone stop calling him that. His marital

arrangement does not define him!", I snapped. Then exhaled. And flattened back to my seat.

"Oh calm your pecky breasts I was just asking". He said and started the car. Annoyed.

"I'm sorry", I apologized.

"It's fine. I'm just making sure that you're not sitting there depressed whereas I'm carrying on as if everything is fine", he continued to say as he handled his steering wheel, simultaneously guarding his rear view mirror.

"Bes I'm fine. I promise"

"Promise promise?", he said and made eye contact. I avoided participating in it.

"Yeah. Promise promise"

"What do you swear on?", he asked. I laughed.

"My own grave", I said in between indistinct giggles.

"Bit** how the f**k!?", he said as he laughed as well.

"Don't ask me questions", I said and kept my eyes glued to view of the trees we were passing.

"I'm not gonna force it out of you. But once things start falling apart for real for real, I know you'll come running", he said and

continued driving.

"Obv...iously", I said and we laughed the topic into its conclusion.

...

Tumi dropped me off at my mother's gate because he had to go prepare for his nightshift. I walked to the house and found my mother cooking.

"Ah you shouldn't have. Ke tlike kadi take away" (I brought takeaways).

"You didn't tell me. I'm not a dinner prophet", she said and continued turning her pap in it's pot.

She then closed the pot and asked what I bought.

"Twister meals", I responded.

"And you say you brought food?", she sarcastically dropped her eyes with her hands in the pocket of her apron. I laughed.

"Tlisa. They'll serve as appetizers", she said and I laughed harder.

"O apaa eng legone?" (What are you cooking?)

"Bogobe ka chicken. Aker ka itsi matsulu ale ago a apaa phuthu bare ke bogobe. Ke batla oje mpa e tiye vandag" (Pap and chicken. I know those Zulus of yours can't

cook. They cook "uphuthu" then call it pap. I want you to eat until you feel your stomach getting firm today), she said and I laughed my lungs out.

"Ha ah mama those are my in laws you're talking about. AND, umnandi uphuthu wabo" (Uphuthu is actually very nice)

"Utlwang hela. Shetse bago dyile. Surely ge nkare go apeye wena nou otlo apaa lona lephuthu leo la gago" (Listen to you. They've infected you with their ways. Surely if I ask you to cook now you're gonna make that thing), she said and clapped once. She

then pulled a chair out the table and placed herself there. I couldn't stop laughing. I missed her so much!

"Arg stop it mama. It's not like hanke o eja phuthu" (it's not like you never eat it), I said and took out the water bottle from the fridge.

"Ee ka eja mara like normal people do. Ka mmeleke!" (I do eat it but like normal people do. With milk!) I was about to defend my man and his people when she interrupted and said "Phela bona habatswafe go apaa nthwela heba hetsa haa ba beye seshebo

mo. Ke bua maaka?" (It's normal for them to cook it and have it with normal relish like we do with normal pap. Am I lying?), she said as if she was ready to counterattack whatever response I was going to give to her. I continued drinking my water from the glass she was drinking from and laughed, hoping she would let it go. She laughed as well and luckily she did. She let it go.

"I missed you", I said.

"You don't want to come home aker"

"Ah mama...", I impatiently said.

"I'm not going to force you", she

said and bit her nail off.

"Thank you". I continued having my water.

"What happened?", I asked. She rolled her eyes and stood up. She knew exactly what I was talking about. I was talking about her heart attack.

"You're not coping mama", I said as I watched the steam from her pot embrace her face.

"You said I should get myself a therapist. I did that. Ompatlang sentle sentle ngwana ke wena? Ke ineele sefapanong?" (... What exactly do you want from me child? Should I hand myself over

to be crucified on the cross?), she said and I felt like the weight of her words was sitting on my shoulders. I was really tired and in no mood to be going back and forth with my mother. We all miss Kgantsho. I cry myself to sleep sometimes because that's the only thing I can do. It gets better with time but I don't think it's the same situation with her. As worried as I am about her, I knew it wasn't going to end well if I kept pushing. I just need to find a way to get access to this therapist she says she has found.

...

After dinner, I went straight into the bathroom to soak myself in hot water. My exhausted body and swollen legs demanded it.

After I was done, I slipped into my oversized pyjamas because it felt like the correct thing to do. Muzi called as I was massaging my face with night cream.

"Sthandwa sami", he said and I immediately smiled.

"Hey you"

"Delela angithi

ujwayele" (Disrespect me. You're used to it), he said and I laugh

as I threw myself on the bed to

lie on my back.

"How are you?", he softly said. I love him when he sounds this relaxed. France did him good. I didn't want him to go but I appreciate that he did.

"I'm fine. How are you?"

"I'm okay. Are you still having heartburn?", he asked and I said no.

"I'm glad to hear that. How was your day?", he continued to mesmerize me to the pleasure of my ears with his voice.

"Baby!?", he called. I laughed because I was lost.

"Hawu. Yini manje?" (What is it

now?), he asked.

"Nothing. I just love listening to you speak", I said and he gave what I what I call a nose-breath giggle, which is what he usually does when he's blushing but doesn't want to show it.

"Haibo", he softly said. Yup! He was blushing.

"Ngempela. You should've been president so I can record your speeches", I said and he laughed out loud.

"Uthi uyangi charmer yini wee Mrs Khumalo?" (Are you trying to charm me Mrs Khumalo?)

"Maybe", I said and we both

laughed.

"Ngithe ngiyashada kwavela kwathiwa "hayi thatha omunye nomunye okhona kuleyo box ngoba laba abaphilile ekhanda baye baphela bhuti" "(I said I wanted to get married and it was said "Take whichever one you come across in that box because we have ran out of the sane ones"), he said and imitated a woman's voice. I exploded in laughter. Even a week in a foreign country couldn't save him. He's still an idiot.

"Anyway, belunjani usuku lwakho?" (How was your day?). I

felt my heart jump a little bit. I don't know why I instantly felt guilty when he asked me that question.

"Just fine baby. Yours?"

"Nothing interesting. What did you get up to?", he asked sounding like he just got into the bathroom. I concluded this from how his voice sounded.

"Nothing much. I paid my bills because I had forgotten about them and went to the park with Tami".

"You have bills?", he asked in his mocking voice and I laughed.

"Mxm. Of course, I do"

"I'm kidding. Why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you what?"

"That you have bills to pay", he asked. He was now serious.

"Hawu. I can afford my own bills heban"

"Ugezile?" (Have you bathed?)

"Yes I have", I responded.

Surprised by the randomness of this question.

"Nezindlebe?" (Including your ears?), he asked. I laughed.

"Yebo hawu"

"Olyt. Ungimamele khona uzongizwa kahle. Yabona lento yakho yobu independent woman?"

Kwami isala e-gate(ini). Awungeni nayo leyonto emagcekeni wakwa Khumalo. Uyangizwa munt' omuhle?" (Alright. Listen to me and listen to me carefully. You see this thing of yours of being an independent woman? It doesn't feature in my house. Do you hear me, beautiful lady?), he said and I laughed.

"Hawu. Weren't you the one vouching for me to improve my business and stuff?", I enquired, still laughing.

"Ehena. Lenze i-Business lakho ngoba liyaku jabulisa. Ngifuna ukuk'bona ujabule mina. Kodwa

imali leyo uzobona ukuthi wenzani ngayo. Ungaphisana ngayo umuthanda kodwa uzonakekelwa imina. Angithi imina indoda la?" (Yes. Do your business stuff because they make you happy. I want to see you happy. But you'll see what you do with that money. Give it away if you like but I'm the one who's gonna take care of you. Am I not the man around here?), he asked. I couldn't stop laughing.

"Haibo baby", that's the only thing I could mutter out in response to the nonsense he was spewing.

"Yebo. Otherwise umsebenzi wami nje nge ndoda yakho yini?" (Yes. Otherwise what's my duty as your husband?). I don't think I'm ever gonna win this one.

...

I woke up in the morning, got into my grey trackpants and drove to my place, after buying a bunch of foldable boxes and adhesive tape. Yes. I did not bath. I felt it was too much admin. I'm very lazy these days and I'm comfortable with it. No matter how much I tried disputing, Muzi insisted on organizing people for me to help me pack my place up. When I got

there, they called me asking for directions saying they're at the CBD. It sounded like a group of men and I wasn't about to subject myself to that. I told them I'm good, but they insisted and reported that they have already been paid. The agreement was that they would come to my mother's house to fetch the keys and then head to my place to pack because some other brother doesn't want me to do anything. No matter how lazy I get, I wasn't about to have people break my most precious items because that's what people who

get hired to pack do. They break people's belongings. I got there and started by getting rid of all the food that was spoilt in the fridge. While I was busy emptying my cupboards, a call came through from an unsaved number.

"Hello?"

"You're up early. Morning"

"Kagano what do you want?"

"You."

"I will cut this call and..."

"Okay okay. Weapons down. I'm outside your home please come out"

"What are you doing there? My mom is gonna kill you"

"There? Does this mean you're not here?", he asked, blatantly ignoring my threats.

"No I'm not"

"Where are you?"

"My place. Goodbye. And stop calling me". I said and cut the call. He called again and I ignored him. I continued emptying my cupboards. I turned on the radio and increased the speaker volumes. There's a lot to be done but I never start things and not finish them. I ended up packing most of living room into boxes and refuse bags. With endless breaks and sometimes undeserved resting

periods but I felt proud of myself. It was heading towards midday when I heard a knock on my door. I prayed that it was not those guys I turned away. I went to open and there he was. Does he ever give up?

"What are you doing here? How did you even find me?"

"Please just... let me in. We need to talk. After that I'll leave you alone. For good. I promise", he said and I exhaled. I let him in. He walked in and looked around.

"You're leaving?"

"What do you want? How did you find me?"

"I kept it"

"You kept what?"

"Your address. Remember your 'Intimate apartment warming' little party?", he said and laughed at how I had labelled it.

"I took chances. I wasn't sure you lived here anymore"

"You mean the one you never arrived to?", I said and interrupted him before he could respond.

"You never even responded to my inbox. I thought we could fix things at the time. You ignored me and now you're gonna rock up here like you own me?", I lashed

out and he said "I know. I wanted to arrive but I changed my mind at the doorway. You can even ask that security lady if she still remembers me. I wasn't sure if my presence here would be a good idea. Plus, my life was still a mess at that time I wasn't about to hurt you twice", he said and tried to hold my hands. I backed away.

"Listen to that...", he said.

Referring to the song that had started playing on the radio. Trey Lorenz's 'Someone to hold'. It was our song. He once dedicated the song to me on Valentine's, the

day he made an enemy for me at school. Enemies that wanted him for themselves. I tried to keep a straight face when he said "Come on. I know you remember" but failed when he started singing along. Remembering all the drama that arouse during those times. I laughed and he laughed as well. "Since you've made it clear you don't want me no more, share a dance with me for the last time", he said and held out his hands. "No", I said and continued laughing. He unexpectedly then and twirled me around and forced me to dance. I couldn't stop

laughing. He then pulled me into his arms and both my palms landed on his chest. His smile slowly faded as he buried his eyes into mine. He leaned in closer to kiss me and I got lost for a moment. When I finally got the strength to pull away, he had placed his lips on mine.

"How cozy. So, this is why you didn't want company here?", he said and I immediately pulled away from Kgokagano's hold. He was standing at the door with his hands in his pockets.

'I can explain'.

'This is not what it looks like'

These words were playing around in my head, looking for a way to my frozen mouth and stiff tongue. The truth is, I can't explain. I know exactly how this looks like but, I can't explain.

UNEDITED YET. ☐

Insert 76

Pending panic. Fear. Regret and the need to explain one's self. The need to advocate for their innocence. All these emotions circulated and ran around my head so rapidly that one of them surely tripped on the main switch that

enables my cerebrum to think. Kgokagano's eyes moved from me to him and they both held on tightly to each end of a death stare. Kgokagano slowly let go of my hands and also inserted his hands into his pockets. Turning to face him directly. He just stood there. At the door. He just stood there. He stood there with his hands calmly placed in his pockets. But that's where it ended. The calm. In his pockets. His eyes were telling a completely different story.

"Baby?", I called for his attention. He didn't grant me any.

He finally walked in. Dear God! He walked to come stand in front of Kagano. Who also hadn't moved an inch. He wasn't flinching. He wasn't fazed. Kgokagano has always been stubborn. He has always stood his ground. I remember a similar scene in high school assembly where him and the school principal had a stare contest because Mr Van der Riet believed Kgokagano was the one responsible for the noise and careless whispers whereas he was not. His friend, who was standing in front of him was. He stood his ground without a fog of

doubt in his eyes. With his hands in his pockets. But this was not the time and this was not Mr Van der Riet.

"Is it me you're disrespecting, my marriage or both?", Muzi finally said, with his eyes still aligned in a narrow straight line with my ex's.

"I don't see how me being here with the woman I love has anything to do with you", Kgokagano shot back.

"Kgagano please leave", I said when the fear of what might actually break out kept rising. My heart was in physical warfare

with my chest.

Muzi scoffed and looked away towards the open window, which innocently allowed the sound of the hooting cars and chirping birds to come through.

'There's no need for thi...'. The heavy punch that landed on Kagano's nose couldn't wait for me to finish my sentence.

"MUZI NO!", I screamed as Kgekagano staggered to the side and put his fingers on his nose bridge at the same time. His mouth hung open as he raised his face to Muzi. Thick blood started flowing from his right nostril.

Another punch went flying in the air and Muzi spat out blood.

"Please stop. Please just stop!", I screamed louder when they began wrestling one another on the floor. I couldn't stop my tears from falling. I wanted to stop the fight but if I went any closer one of us was going to land in the hospital. Or dead. They were not hearing me. None of them was listening to me.

"STOP!!! JUST F**KING STOP IT!!!", I screamed to the top of my lungs and stomped the wooden floor. Tears now mixed with snot. Both of them turned towards me

and back at each other. Back at their bleeding selves. They let go of one another and stood up.

Kgokagano wanted to say something to me but I raised my hand indicating that he should stop. Immediately. He turned to Muzi and said "You better sleep with one eye open tonight. Stlaela ke wena" (... you fool)

"That's if you're going to make it to your bed tonight, sdididi."

They locked threatening eyes one last time and Kagano intentionally bumped his shoulder to provoke him then attempted to walk away. Muzi immediately grabbed

him by the back of his neck, said "Uzonya la kimi mfana!" and pushed him forward. Kgokagano wanted to retaliate and I jumped in front of them and pushed them apart. I was tired.

"You're not pre-school boys, please. Can you just... argghaa man!", I said and Kgokagano exhaled. Muzi still had his chest in the air.

"I'm not leaving you here with this animal Remsy", he said and looked at me as if he was anticipating an answer.

"Wena advocate Moloji, this ANIMAL is my husband. Please leave", I said and kept my eyes on

the floor. With my hand still on Muzi's chest. He had put his hands back into his pockets. He left. Hurt. But he left.

Muzi immediately removed my hand from him after Kagano had shut my door, also wanting to leave. I held him by his arm with both my hands on his watch and he stood still, looking away from me. He could've beaten me up also. There was that possibility. I probably should've let him go at that moment but I was never going to allow my husband to walk away from me with half-truths. With no truth at all.

"I didn't kiss him back. It's not what it looks like. Cliché...yes but it's really not what it looks like". He wiped his mouth and turned back to me. The frown on his face was enough warning but I kept on.

"Sphak... Betso. Are you listening to yourself?", he asked. I felt each and every word. I saw them string out of his mouth. Between his lips. His lower ripped lip. The inside of his entire mouth was red.

"You can use the bathroom if you like...", I said, sincerely. He thinned his eyes and frowned

some more, giving his nose more definition. He looked away and walked. I had no choice but to let his hand go. He walked to my bedroom and I sighed in relief. For a moment I thought he was going to walk out the door.

I went over to the fridge and took out the tray of ice cubes I keep at the bottom. I had to rip open the box I had placed my utensils in to take out the plastic bags I use to marinate chicken. He came out of the bathroom with a wet face, massaging his jaw, with his eyes on me. I took the ice bag I had created and

walked over to him. I tried placing it on his face but he gently held my hand and took it from me. At least he took it. I found a bit of solace in that.

He placed it on his cheek and walked over to the couch.

I followed him. I sat beside him. "What are you thinking about?", I asked. Stupid but I had to. I had to know what he was thinking about. What was on his mind. He kept quiet for about a minute. Then exhaled. He threw the ice bag on the coffee table. I hate people who throw stuff on my coffee table. I hate people who

carelessly place stuff on my fragile, glass-top coffee table. But I kept quiet. I kept it to myself.

"You haven't been married for that long kodwa se uyafeba?" (You're already wh*ring around?)

"Excuse me!?", I shot out.

"I'm not a child Betso. I know love birds when I see them"

"Love birds? You're the only man I love. The only man I've given myself to. Are you even listening to yourself?", I said, appalled.

"No, I'm not. I'm not listening to myself. I'm listening to the sound

of the ringing image of you locking lips with another man, after staring into his eyes the same way you stare into mine!", he shot back.

"It wasn't..."

"You know what? Save it. All of it", he said and stood up.

"Oya kae!?" (Where are you going?)

"Your emotions are high. So are mine. Your infidelity is stressing you out. I do not want to stress you out some more", he said and asked me to move my legs so he can pass.

"My infidelity? Muzi how do you

stand there and speak as if you're perfect in this relationship?", I said, not moving an inch as I have been asked.

"So uyavuma? I'm not perfect yes. But I would never cheat on you. Please move"

"Wow!", I projected. The fact that Muzi believed I would legit cheat on him renders me speechless. I moved my legs and he went out, leaving me there dizzy with all sorts of negative emotions one can come think of and even come up with. I wanted to cry. And I was going to allow myself to.

...

I was still soaking in my feelings on the couch when I heard knuckles making conversation with my door. I stood up to go attend to whoever was knocking, high key hoping it was him and he was back to his senses and turned back at the doorway. It wasn't. "Hi sesi le kae?" (Hi sister, how are you?). It was the lady responsible for cleaning our building. This is her knock-off time. I was wondering what she was doing on my doorstep. She's like a mother to everyone who stays here but she never goes

knocking on people's doors without a valid reason.

"Ke gona le kae mama?", I asked and wiped my nose with the stuffed and ragged pocket tissue I had in hand.

"Ke gona ngwanaka. Monna omongwe kua fase onkgopetse gore ke gofe dilo tse. O gabotse lovey?" (Some man downstairs asked me to give you these. Are you okay my love?), she asked, and I felt like breaking down right there and there. But I didn't. I wasn't about to air my laundry to a stranger. She wasn't a stranger, but she was a

stranger.

"Ke gabotse mama. Enoba mokhuhlwane. Ke monna omojwang? O bolela se kae?" (I'm fine ma. It's just a cold. What man? What language does he speak?), I said. Kgokagano is about to get on my last damaged nerve.

"Ke lesogana lele botse lago ithata. O bolela seZulu" (Some handsome and clean man. He speaks Zulu), she said and handed the red paper bag to me. I thanked her and attempted to close the door. She put her palm against it and said: "Ke rapela

gore se sego dutsing mo mafahleng se go fologe. Osale omonnyane kudu gore oka rwala mathata a oa rweleng mo magetleng. Ebile wa nkimela. Gotlo loka" (I pray that whatever is bothering you comes to pass. You're still young to have such a huge amount of problems and stress at your age. My shoulders even feel heavy in your presence. It'll all be well). She said, smiled and walked away. Is she a prophet or something? I battled with what she said until I decided to close the door. I looked into the paper bag and it

was a variety of expensive chocolates from France. We had spoken about them when he was still there, and I jokingly said he must bring me 3 chocolates for each day he was spending there without me. I didn't think he would because I even thought he wasn't paying attention. After I told him this, he said: "Baby the meeting is about to start we'll talk later". He actually paid attention? I sunk down against the door and cried my eyes out. How is everything becoming more and more of a mess each day? Who did I wrong and what do I

have to do to make things right?
If this door could speak, it would
tell you about all the downs that
have brought me to tears, right
on this very same spot.

...

I could feel my phone vibrating
but I was in a deep sleep when it
did. My eyes were painful and my
head was aching and pulsing. I
hoped it would be him calling. It
wasn't. I was disappointed but I
wasn't going to be the first to
call him. Not after he insulted me
the way he did as if he's always
getting things right.

"Hello?"

"The first heart attack I had wasn't enough aker? You want to give me another one?", she shouted.

"Ke dirile eng nou?" (What have I done now?)

"Nywe dirile eng nywe dirile eng. OMOKAE NGWANA KE WENA!?"

I've been calling like a mad woman!" (...Where are you child!?!...)

"I'm sorry mama. I'm still at my place. Neke robetse. Katla" (I'm coming)

"Do you realise that you're the only child I'm left with?", she said and sniffed. That further broke the broken pieces of my heart.

"I'm really sorry mama. It's just... a lot happened today. I'll tell you all about it when I get home. Katla nou"

"Drive safely. I am begging you!", she firmly said. I assured her and she cut the call. The time was 19h23. I slept for the whole afternoon. Even my body was complaining because of this sleep abuse. I did not even finish packing up my stuff. I pulled my trainer sneakers and put them on. Then grabbed my phone and car keys and ran downstairs.

I passed by an Engen garage and filled up my tank. The petrol

attendant said, "Banna ba bangwe banale le mahlatshe hle banna" (Some men are lucky) as I was punching in the pin into the speed point. I wasn't in the mood to but I laughed anyway.

"Ka bona ebile o nyetswe. Le nna be nkase senye nako ge nkabe ke hweditse letšoba lago swana le wena. Ring yago swanela sesi ska forwa" (I can even see that you're married. I also wasn't going to waste time if I had found a flower-like yourself. Your ring looks good on you. Don't let them lie to you), he said and I laughed harder. He's so forward. I drove

off and my thoughts were only filled with Muzi's smile. His laughter. I wasn't sure what was happening at the moment with us and our relationship but I was sure that I never want to lose him. I parked on the side of the road next to a chisanyama and dialled his number. It rang and rang and rang. And rang. He didn't pick up. He always has his phone with him. I dialled again and he answered.

"Baby?", he answered. My heart did a young high jump.

"My love. Where are you?", I asked.

"The usual hotel I always go to. Why?"

He said and I cut the call. I texted my mom and told her I will be delayed. I was parked at a dangerous spot and my anxiety kept reminding me of this every passing second. I then drove off to Protea hotel.

...

I got to his door and raised my hand to knock. I couldn't. I withdrew it and started breathing in and out. Yes, I am here but what am I going to say to him? I finally pulled myself together and raised it again. I

was about to knock when he opened the door and startled me. I retracted my hand and took one step backward. He was surprised but not so surprised to see me.

"Sawubona", he said.

"Hi. Going out?"

"Bengithi ngiyothenga ukudla kodwa since you're here..."

"Can I come in?", I asked. He bit his lower lip and looked at me for a brief moment. He released his lip from the grip of his teeth and then said "Sure". He opened the door wider and I went in. He then closed it.

I went to sit on the bed. He sat

on a single couch and faced me. He had just taken a shower and his consuming scent was all over the room.

"Uze la ukuthi uzongibuka emehlweni?" (You came here just to look me in the eye?), he asked after the awkward silence that was in the room. The truth is, I was there but I had no idea what for. I just wanted to be in his presence. I wanted him to hold me. I wanted him to tell me he loved me.

"I hate it when we fight", I finally got the courage to say. "Is that why you're here?", he

asked, his words muffled by his right fist that was buried in his left hand, against his mouth. His eyes were dead straight on me. "Yes", I said. It was the only sensible thing I could say. He then sniffed and stood up. He took out his wallet from his back pocket, walked towards me and gave me one of his bank cards. I was surprised by this gesture but I took it. Doubtfully. He then walked to the door and opened it. He stood there with his eyes on his white sneakers. It was clear that he wanted me to leave. I felt like crying. My heart couldn't

take any more. I walked towards him.

"I'd hate to lose you over something I didn't do", I said. He raised his face and a single tear fell from his right eye. He immediately looked in that direction as if he could see his own eye. His mother said he couldn't cry. That he has only cried once in his entire life and that was when he was born.

"I don't know what happened and I'm not going to crack my skull trying to figure it out. I hired people to help you out because I didn't want you to tire yourself. I

still don't. You're pregnant. You turned them away because you clearly wanted to be all lovey-dovey with that donkey of yours and have some private time. I saw you kissing the nigga and you're gonna come here and tell me you wouldn't want to lose me over something you didn't do? I didn't imagine any of this. And the worst part about all of this is that I've never even once heard you apologize for everything you've done. Look sthandwa sami, take that card and use it for whatever you're going to need. I love you. But we can't be in the

same space right now. It won't be good for either you, me or the babies. You know the pin."

EDITED. [?]

Insert 77.

I pursed my lips and looked up, trying to push back the tears. The gravity in his eyes, with a stamp of zero intention for any negotiation. I sniffed and allowed the tips of my fingers to be the ones to usher my tears back into my eyes. His glance fell to the floor.

"You honestly believe I would cheat on you Muzikayise?", I

asked, with no idea how to digest even a few grains of the situations. He raised his face to look at me.

"If it looks and sounds like a cat?", he gravely asked. I scoffed before I could stop myself.

"Then it is a cat...", I answered. He then gently pulled me by my shoulders. I did not protest. Was this the end?

He kissed my forehead and left his lips there for a moment. His eyes were shut. I was certain of it. I pulled away, took his hand and placed his bank card there. He had no intention of taking it back.

"If you don't take it then you'll have to pick it up from the floor", I said with my eyes on the very same floor I was threatening him by. Ever felt like your heart was bleeding and you could feel it? By the coldness that fills your chest? The physical pain that takes over and messes your breathing pattern? I tried unhooking the necklace I had on my neck and he immediately stopped me.

"Keep it", he softly said with his hands around my neck.

"There's no need for it anymore", I said as I continued with my mission. He held on tightly to both

my hands, the end result had to be me being unable to move then.

"There is honestly no need for yonke le drama. I am tired. I want to sleep. Maybe we'll talk when both our heads are in a better and sane state tomorrow but can you please stop behaving lik...", his ringing phone interrupted the completion of his sentence. He exhaled and took it out of his pocket.

"Yes?", he answered. Impatiently.

"Bafu this is not a good time for umsangano. Ufunani?" (... for madness. What do you want?)

"Kahle kahle kahle. Yehlis' umoya.

Uthi kwenze njani?", he said, with a frown of confusion on his face.

(Wait wait wait. Calm down. What?)

"Kuphi MQ? Ukhuluma ngani? What contract?" (Where? What are you talking about?)

He continued listening until he popped his eyes at what Mandoba was saying.

"Whoa whoa whoa! Where are they?"

"Just... control the situation, for now, ngiyeza" (...I'm coming)

"Ngithe ngiyeza dammit!", he said and immediately shoved the phone in his pocket. He searched for his

car keys in a frenzy only to realize he had them in his pocket.

"What's going on? Is everyone okay?"

"Angazi Betso just... get home safe okay?", he said and prompted me out of the room.

"I am not leaving here until you tell me what's wrong?", I said and he ignored me. He quickened into the room and placed his suitcase on the bed. He shoved his MacBook in there and went into the bathroom to collect his toiletries. He also shoved them in there and zipped it up.

"I honestly don't have the time

to be going back and forth with you", he said and dragged the suitcase out. I followed him. He checked out and I waited by the entrance.

"Where are you parked?", he asked in a hurry. He wanted to accompany me to my car.

"I'm coming with you!", I said without thinking.

"What?", he raised his brow.

"Let's go. You'll tell me all about it in the car", I said and pulled him by hand. He reluctantly moved from he was standing and led the way to his car.

...

"Are you gonna tell me or should I pester you until you get sick of it?", I asked, drilling a hole into the wall of silence he was insisting on building between the two of us. He concentrated on the road with his jaws tightly clenched. I exhaled. After a moment,

"You're not even supposed to be here. Seat belt", he flatly said - with his eyes still on the road.

"Can we put our issues aside for the sake of whatever is eating you up right now?", I pleaded. He glanced at me and continued driving. He then took a heavy

breathe out.

"Avelelwe is being held hostage.",
he finally confessed.

"What? By who?"

"I don't have the full details yet.
Can you please buckle up?", he
said- with his eyes still on the
road. He wasn't driving. He was
flying.

I opened my mouth to speak but
immediately shut it instead. The
dots were severely scattered.
Nothing made sense.

...

I scurried behind him as he
marched to the house when we
finally got to KwaManzini. He

didn't even drive into the garage. He just parked outside and hurried into the house. He flew the door open and went straight to the dining room. We found Evelyn, Enhle, and Mabuyi sitting around the table in the dark- in awful silence.

"Ukuphi uMandoba?", Muzi immediately asked when Evelyn stood up to hug him.

"He went out. With your father?", she said in a whisper.

"Just the two of them? What's going on? His story didn't make sense and now his phone is off", he reported.

Evelyn was about to speak when heard the door forcefully open.

Muzi turned his head to see who it was and MQ walked in.

"Bafo. Ubuyaphi? Where is she?" (where are you coming from?), he said, approaching a seemingly exhausted Mandoba. He slowly went to sit down on the couch and wiped his face. Exactly how Muzi reacts when he is highly stressed and severely under siege.

"Khuluma mfowethu!" (Speak bro!), Muzi snapped.

"Lihle has Ava", Mandoba finally said, distraught. Muzi laughed in

what I couldn't count as confusion or disbelief.

"Lihle has Ava?", he repeated in question.

"Yes. Lihle has Ava", Mandoba stressed and put his forehead against the top of the triangle that the tangle of his fingers had formed.

Mabuyi and Enhle creaked their chairs and approached.

Muzi went to sit next to MQ.

"I'm seriously not following.

Ukuphi ababa? Why would Lihle...?

Awukhulume MQ nawe", he rambled. Mandoba exhaled.

"Okay. Uthi kade ek'fonela

lomuntu emini ungawabambi
amacalls wakhe. Yamaz
uyantringa kancan. She lost it.
She then took uAva to amanye
amaflat le e town. She's locked
herself in there saying she won't
come out until you come and sign a
contract. Ungang'buzi ukuthi
eyani ngoba nam angazi" (She says
she's been calling you all day and
you've been ignoring her. You know
she's a bit crazy so she lost
it...don't ask me what for because
I also have no idea), he said and
raised his arms to exempt himself
from further interrogation.
Each and every one of us was

confused.

"Is she bipolar?", Evelyn asked.

"I think so. There's no other logical explanation", Mandoba said. Muzi was dead quiet, obviously trying to piece everything together.

"Umshiye kuphi uMntungwa manje?", Evelyn asked.

"They're waiting outside the building", MQ responded.

"Call the cops", Enhle suggested.

"Are you out of your mind?", Muzi immediately shot out.

"That's not a good idea baby. She could hurt her", Mandoba said.

"Hurt her own baby?", that was

Mabuyi.

"Yazin. Let's go. I'll try to speak some sense into her", Muzi said and Mandoba stood up. We then heard a violent knock on the door. Before we could respond, the person barged in. Evelyn reached for her handbag, placed her hand in there but didn't take anything out. I figured she was reaching for a gun. Muzi looked at her and his mouth slightly hung open. He probably didn't think his mother walks around with ammunition. Bab Ngema walked in and said "Indodakazi yenu isengozini!" (Your daughter is in danger), his eyes

clearly dancing between Muzi and Mabuyi. Mabuyi was inarguably confused. To cut a long story short, Bab'Ngema explained how Mabuyi never lost her first baby. She apparently had a premature birth but the midwife that was attending to her was bribed with heavy cash to lie and say she gave birth to a stillborn.

"So it wasn't a miscarriage!?", Mandoba shot out. Mabuyi was hyperventilating. Muzi rushed past Mandoba and went to quickly catch her from behind.

"Breathe sthandwasami. Please breathe", he begged. He was also

masking away waves of panic.

Evelyn was dumbstruck. Enhle still had her hand over her mouth.

"Bab'Ngema bewuthuleleni sonke les'khathi?" (Why were you silent about this?), Muzi finally managed to put together a sentence.

"Abaphansi basebenza ngendlela yabo, ngeskhathi sabo. Okwami ukulandela futhi nokwenza lokho ebangitshela kona hiyeyi!!! (The ancestors work in their own mysterious ways, at their own time. Mine is to just follow and do what they tell me to), he said as continually moved his shoulders up

and down as if possessed by a certain spirit. He continued to say he feels like a storm is coming but everyone was still lost in what he had said about Ava. Mabuyi exploded and let out a piercing cry. She was still in Muzi's arms. He tried all to comfort her but nothing was working. She tried to escape his grip but it seems too tight.

"Shhhhh shhhhhh. Ngizoyi lungisa yonke le nyakanyaka ngiyak'thembisa Samkethe" (I'm going to fix this mess I promise you), he said with his head against her neck and his hands

around her waist. I could never get used to this sight.

She couldn't stop wailing and it was clearly breaking his heart.

"We have to go", Mandoba said to Muzi. He tightly shut his eyes and looked up. Evelyn went to relieve him of his comforting duties and took Mabuyi in her hands.

"Does this mean her parents were in on this?", Enhle asked. Each and every one of us started searching for answers from the nearest face our eyes could land on. Where is Bab'Ngema?

"I hope for their sake they're

not", Evelyn said with her hand on Mabuyi's shoulder, who was now seated and lay her head on her folded arms, on top of the tabletop.

"Mfethu, masambe!", that was MQ to a confused MK. He then grabbed his car keys from the table and they rushed out. Evelyn looked guilty of contemplating murder. She then shot out a sharp "Nxu!", grabbed her handbag and headed out as well. "Ma uyaphi!?", Enhle screamed as she followed behind her. Mabuyi looked two grieving widows in one. I slowly approached her and

hugged her shoulders. She began shaking her head slowly and then collapsed into a loud cry. I couldn't hold my own tears back. She was breaking my heart. We stayed in that position for about 7 minutes until I felt my back-breaking. She was then quiet. I got up and held her shoulder. I didn't know what to say to her.

"Let me go get you some chocolate cake", I said the first thing that came to mind. I've noticed she likes having it when she's going through things. She kept still.

"Should I?", I pestered. She

sniffed and gave me a flat and very low "Sure".

I switched on the light and walked into the kitchen, praying in Egyptian tongues that I find it in the fridge. Luckily, it was there. A perfectly cut, fat and lonely slice. I took it out and grabbed a fork. I went back and I found her standing next to the window, slightly pulling the curtain to the side. The sun was coming out.

"Here...", I said and she turned towards me. Her big eyes were bloodshot and swollen. She offered me a faint smile and her face

immediately changed as if she was seeing a ghost.

"Mbuso? Betso ruuun!", she screamed and I subsequently saw blood free-flowing from her mouth. I quickly turned my head and it was indeed him. She had been shot and the bastard was smart enough to use a silencer! I tried running but he immediately grabbed me by my waist and the saucer fell to the floor and shattered into pieces, along with the brown cake. He tightly placed a foul-smelling wet cloth against my nose and I felt myself drift away into unconsciousness,

watching Mabuyi bleed from her stomach...

EDITED. [?]

Insert 78.

I felt like I was asleep for a very long time. My head was achingly heavy. My eyes were painful. My throat was severely and coarsely dry. I tried moving but my hands were tied to my back. There was tape tightly sealing my mouth. Duct tape. I tried screaming but it was all futile. The room was empty. The light was coming through from a small window at the top. It felt grey. It smelt

like cement. The only piece of furniture was the single bed I was placed on- on top of a grey, itchy, jail blanket. It all came flooding back. I remembered that Mabuyi was shot and she could possibly be dead. Tears fell from my eyes as I tried untying myself with 100% fail. It was too tight, painful and uncomfortable. I felt cold. Lonely. Scared of the unknown. I don't know what people who are about to die feel like but it has to be something close to what I was feeling.

The door opened and he walked in, with a tray in his hands.

"You're awake?", he said with a smile. I felt disgusted and nauseous at the sight of him. Something has always been off about him. I couldn't place my finger on it. I couldn't place my finger on the fact that he's a psychotic bastard. I just laid there and watched him come closer. He put the tray on the floor and pulled me so I sit up. I didn't fight him. He slowly removed the tape from my mouth. Partially that it was left hanging on my other cheek. To my luck, he didn't just rip it off me. I could finally breathe properly. I

just stared at him.

"There's no need to cry. You're safe here", he said and brushed my shoulders. Is he insane?

"Safe?", I asked. My voice wasn't cooperating. Whatever he drugged me with must've burnt my larynx. He must've noticed this. He rushed to pour me some water and helped to drink. After I was done,

"Please untie me", I said. He thought about it for a second.

"I can't risk that", he ultimately said.

"Please...", I begged. I trusted my puppy eyes to come to the

rescue. They won.

"Okay. Just don't try anything stupid", he said and I quickly nodded. After he was done, I rubbed my wrists.

He came to sit beside me.

"Why?", I asked, without making any eye contact with him

"Why what? Why are you here?", he asked while scrolling on his phone.

"Why did you shoot her?", I enquired. He stopped scrolling and raised his face to the front.

"It had to be done", he finally said and continued with whatever it was he was doing on his screen.

"Are you gonna shoot me too?", I asked, and swallowed.

He quickly raised his face to me in concern, put his phone on the bed and came to kneel in front of me.

"No sweetheart. Look, this will probably come as a shock to you but I love you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you by my side", he softly said. Is he nuts?

"How? Muzi is never going to allow that", I said. Softly. I was being careful not to grate any of his nerves. The nutcase.

"Forget about him. You're never gonna see him again. We're going

to start a new life in a new country. We leave tonight", he said and my heart immediately went cold. Leave? Leave to where? I tried my best to remain calm.

"Leave to where?", I asked.

"Bangladesh", he said with a sparkling smile.

"Why.. ho... why there? I'm pregnant. It's not..."

"Don't you worry about any of that. An experienced doctor is waiting for us there. You're gonna have surgery and ...", something made a noise somewhere outside and he jammed. He slowly got up

and took out a gun from the back of his waist. He slowly went out and I glanced at the phone next to me. I hesitated but the panic in me quickly grabbed it and went straight to the dialer. I wanted to dial Muzi's number but my brain was working with him. My hands were shaking like a destabilized tower under the influence of an earthquake. I heard footsteps and I quickly placed it back and looked ahead. "Ah, it's a bunch of stray cats. Nothing to worry about", he said as he placed his gun back. I nodded. He glanced at the phone

screen and his face quickly changed. He looked at it and it was still on the dialer. The only thing I managed to type in was "082" and he saw it, then lost it. I felt a thrashing hot clap on my left cheek and I immediately felt like my right eye was burning to blindness. I immediately placed my hand there to comfort my skin from the trauma.

"WHAT THE F**K ARE YOU TRYING TO DO HUH!?", he furiously shot out.

"I'm... I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking. I'm just...", I panicked my way around a senseless

explanation.

"Don't test me, little girl. DO NOT F**KING TEST ME!", he exclaimed with his index finger pointed out to me. I quickly nodded.

He then took the rope and tied my hands again. He wasn't gentle.

"Please don't. I'll behave I promise", I begged as I cried.

"You don't deserve my trust. He said after he was done and picked up the bowl from the floor. He forced me to eat. I had no choice but to allow him to feed the horrible porridge he had made. I was also hungry. He fed me in

silence. With a hard face. I ate in silence. When the bowl was almost done, he exhaled and his face softened a bit.

"Look, I'm not a bad person. I just... I become heartless when pushed too far", he said and the words resounded in my heard.

"Heartless when pushed too far". They sounded familiar. The SMS! The SMS I once received.

"It might be cute roses and love scenes at the moment but let me just warn you. Yes. Muzikayise is a sweetheart. Granted. But trust me when I say he does not have a heart when pushed too far. So

gear up baby girl". Was it him?

"Was it you?", I asked.

"Who did what?", he asked as he wiped the corner of my lips. I hated every travel of his touch on my skin.

"Who sent me the SMS. Was it you?", I asked. The resemblance in the choice of words was too much of a coincidence. We locked eyes. He removed his hand from my face. My burning face.

"Yes. It was me", he said with unwavering confidence.

"What did you mean?", I asked.

"It doesn't matter anymore. He's no longer a part of our lives", he

said and got up to put the bowl on the floor.

"I'm curious", I pestered.

"Curiosity killed the cat", he said without raising his face, squatting on the floor.

"I'm not a cat", my tongue was, as usual, quicker than my ability to put it on a leash.

"It's a metaphor", he said- Still not raising his face to face me.

"Well, a cat has 9 lives", I added. He laughed.

"Luckily for you, I only have 8 bullets", he said and came back to sit down on the uncomfortable bed. Silence.

After an annoying while, he finally decided to speak.

"It's true", he let out.

"What is?", I asked.

"That he doesn't have a heart", he said and kept his eyes sharply in mine. I braved it out and stared back. He looks so much like Mandoba. His doppelganger.

"I don't believe that", I dropped my eyes then looked away. Where is this place?

"When last did you speak to your ex?", he asked and a siren went off in my brain.

"Kgokagano?", I quickly asked.

"Yena loyo. You're honestly sitting

here naively thinking he's still alive?", he pressed his question onto my face.

"What do you mean?"

"Let me tell you a little story while we wait for your paperwork", he said balanced his elbows on his knees.

"What paperwork?"

"Fake I.D, passport, and the works. So here goes...", he said without a care in the world and I just sat there, waiting for my life to start falling apart officially.

"Storytime storytime your so-called husband once killed his own brother", he said and waited for

me to react. I froze.

"What?", I asked.

"Yup. Let me rephrase. Your precious Muzikayise once killed MY twin brother", he continued with his storytime with his teeth gritted. I could feel and sense the hatred in his voice.

"You had a twin?", I asked.

"Yeah. The only person in the world who got me. Thanks to that f**ker you call a husband he's now gone"

"I thought you guys had a good relationship"

"He thinks we do. He thinks I don't know what happened to my

brother because I wasn't around when he murdered him with his bare hands", he said and my stomach turned. I can't even place a mere image of Muzi killing a person in my head. Worse his own brother? Muzi loves his brothers!

"He killed him and his precious mommy and daddy helped him cover it up. Including Mandoba! Mandoba was supposed to be on our side!", his fury was starting to warm up. He even got up on his feet. Clearly frustrated. He started pacing up and down in the room.

"Please sit down", I begged. I was afraid.

"Don't tell me what to do"

"Okay", I meekly said.

"You know what ticks me off about this whole 'Operation Protect the Lastborn' thing?"

"Muzi is not the last born", there goes my tongue again.

"Thando is not a factor. Ekhaya we don't count women when counting the kids", he attended to my statement.

"Why?", I lowly said.

"They're gonna get married.

They're just temporarily there.

Where have you ever seen a Zulu

female heir wena?", he asked and I shrugged.

"As I was saying, what ticks me off is the fact that they're trying with all their might to keep me away from the throne. I'm the older one. But no, abaphansi this. Abaphansi that", his vexed self continued to vent.

"But... you wanna go away now. How are you going to fight for your throne if you're far away?", I asked- hoping to drill some doubt into his warped decisions and choices.

"They can all go to hell with their royalty. All of them. As long as I

have you, I'm good. I'm gonna be with the woman I love and at the same time crush his stupid spirit. Two birds with one stone", he said and winked at me. Nothing about all he has been doing suits him. My sister has always said that handsome men are not to be trusted. The arrogant wolf smells and looks like a decent human being.

"I'm sorry", I said. Hoping to puncture some holes into the cold layer of his heart.

"What for?", he stopped pacing.

"Everything you've been through. You deserved none of it. You're a

nice guy", I rambled and he smiled. "Urggh... you're so innocent. So beautifully made. I wish we had met under different circumstances. But it is what it is ain't it?", he asked and I had no choice but to nod.

"Where is this place?", I carefully asked.

"Somewhere in Limpopo", he said and came back to sit next to me. So I was right at home and nothing could save me?

"Please go close the door. I'm feeling cold", I politely asked. I was indeed feeling cold. The weather was starting to feel

gloomy and the sun that was dancing on the window was no longer in the mood to play.

He placed his hands in his pockets and got up. He was about to say something to me until I heard a gunshot. My instinct immediately forced my eyes shut. When I opened them, Muzi was charging towards him. He tried reaching for his gun at the back but he was late. He can't nurse a bleeding arm and want to shoot at the same time. Muzi grabbed him by his tracksuit top and pushed him towards the wall. He punched him like a madman on

the wrong prescription until he bled from both his nose and mouth. That didn't stop him from injecting more punches into his stomach. Mandoba ran to me and untied my hands. He was the one with the gun so I figured he's the one who pulled the trigger. I tried approaching Muzi to stop him but Mandoba pulled me back by my shoulders.

"You're gonna kill him!", I screamed. Screamed to deaf ears. He was like a possessed wild animal. I turned to Mandoba. "Do something", I pleaded. I begged.

"Something efana nani? You should be whoa whoa whoa. Wait a f**king minute, did he do this to you!?", he said while pointing to my eye. Muzi stopped beating the crap out of his big brother. He turned towards us and got up.

"You had better be f**king kidding me", he said as he inspected my face.

"Baby it's nothing just let him g...",

"Nothing!? Betso I never touch you as indoda yakho. No matter what f**kery you may get up to but I will never lay a hand on you!!!", he screamed. I was about

to reply when he charged back to his brother, picked him up and threw him against the wall. Judging from the sound the collision made, there was definitely more than one bone broken. He was unresponsive. Was he already dead? I've never seen this side of Muzi before.

"Mandoba do something!", I screamed and he exhaled.

He walked up to him and said "That's enough. Take her home. I'll take it from here".

Take it from here? Take what from here?

"Please call an ambulance?", I

begged. My whole face was smeared with tears. I kept wiping them but they insisted on coming out. They began whispering. I decided to stop sniffing and listen carefully. Muzi was now squatting on the floor with his hands on his head.

"Angazi. I'll get him cremated or something", Mandoba said. What on earth? They both turned to look at me. Muzi wiped his face and got up...

Edited. ☐

Insert 79.

"You're quiet...", he says and looks ahead after he parks the car in the royal house garage. None of us bothered with saying a word to the other the whole trip back. My head was buzzing with endless questions without answers.

"Let me take you to a doctor?", he pressed. Keeping on to my silence was an easier option. He then exhaled and got out of the car.

"You have blood on your neck", I said before he could close the door. He paused for a second and finally walked away. I was still

struggling to digest all I've been told and what I saw. His eyes were no longer bright and white as I knew them. There was a shade of darkness and not an inch of regret. Who did I agree to get married to? Whose kids exactly am I carrying? I wasn't confronting him because I was afraid he'd hurt me too. Regardless of what I saw, there's no nerve of terror in my body that makes me think he'd hurt me. I was treading carefully because I didn't want to upset him and lose him any further because I was already on

that path. But I still needed answers.

I finally made my way out of the car and walked into the house. I found Evelyn feeding an innocently seated Avelwe in the kitchen. She was trying too hard not to fall apart.

"I'll take over from here", I said as I took the oats bowl she had in her hand. She tried to resist but I insisted. She then nodded and patted me on the back. It wouldn't have been good for her to fall apart in front of the child. She then looked around like a confused deer, brushed both her

thighs twice and walked away. It was now me and her. Is she aware of what just happened? What do I even say to her? Where is Thando? She would probably know what to do. I smiled to her as I took a seat beside her and she awkwardly smiled back. I tried feeding her one spoon but she shook her head. "Ususuthi?" (Are you already full?), I asked. She just stared. I doubt she likes me. She was eating with ease before I walked in.

"Ava?", I said.

"Huh?"

"Are full?", I tried another language.

"Yes thanks aunty", she replied and I sighed out of relief. The last thing I needed was to be stuck with a child with an attitude. I had zero strength for it. So she can't hear Zulu? I trailed off in a series of thoughts about her childhood, how she was kidnapped, whether she was treated with care, where Lihle was currently and and and and and.

Muzi came down the stairs. He had taken a shower and as usual, wearing all black like the

murderer he is and smelling good. I couldn't read his face. He came to kneel in front of his daughter and scanned her for a second. He raised his arms so she can decide whether she wants to hug him or not.

Her cute tiny self got off the couch and innocently fell into his relatively gigantic self. He placed his chin on her shoulder and closed his eyes shut. He deeply exhaled and my heart broke. He was internally falling apart and he thought he was mastering hiding it well.

"Are you okay daddy?", she asked.

He slowly pushed him away from him and looked her in the eye.

"How do you know who I am?", he softly asked. She immediately let out a cute laughter and said she has his pictures. He kissed her on the forehead and held on to her shoulders for a while. I've never seen him so confused, with no idea of what to do. He always knows what to do. He then took out his phone from his pocket and showed her a picture of Gugu.

"Do you know who this is?", he asked and she shook her head. He bit his lower lip. Hard. Then nodded.

"I'm happy to meet you finally. Mom says..."

"Baby girl, that woman is not your mother", he quickly interrupted. She looked at him and kept quiet. Obviously confused.

"Baby can I speak to you outside?", I asked as I put the bowl down. I walked out and he followed, after handing Ava his phone to play with and placing her on the couch. We stepped out and I closed the sliding door.

"Do you think it's a good idea to bombard her with everything all at once?", I softly asked.

"I don't think there's anything that makes sense at the moment Betso. I don't know what to do or what to say. I've failed as a father and a husband. I've failed as a man!", he says and I can't help but tear up. I quickly take his hands and rapidly shake my head.

"You're the best dad and husband anybody could ever ask", I say, at the same time trying too hard not to cry. The tears do as they please and fall, as always.

"If that was true I wouldn't have missed out on 5 whole years of my daughter's life and my wife

wouldn't be in ICU"

"You can't control everything Muzikayise you're not God. Some things just have to happen. Now we look for solutions to the problems we're faced with. There is no time for regrets. Okay?", I say and we lock eyes. I could feel his softening at the sight of mine. He then says "I have to get to the hospital and walks back into the house. I put my hands on my waist and watch him converse with his daughter. It's a cute scene to watch. I walk back in as well and I gather she doesn't want to give him his

phone back. He tickles her and she laughs hysterically. He finally smiles. Genuinely.

...

Evelyn sent people to get me clothes because I hadn't packed. She tried digging the reasons for that but I managed to evade her questions. We honestly had bigger problems to deal with. She knocked on my door and I allowed entry. She walked in with a paper bag and smiled. I smiled back. Her presence is just so... warm. She has that 'Everything is going to be fine' thing about her energy. I was in a towel as I had just

gotten done lotioning up. I was marvelling at how my linear nigral was darkening by day before she walked in, after receiving a tongue-lashing from my mother. "You remind me of me when I was pregnant. Everyone was saying I was carrying a girl child because of how pretty I was. It was only with Thando when I looked like a Godzilla", she said and handed me the bag. I laughed and took it. It was a few cotton dresses. The laughter we shared was quick evaporate. The whole house was filled with sadness and melancholy in the air. Did she even know

what happened to Mbuso? Just thinking about it made my brain scream trauma. I was yearning for a proper conversation with Muzi. She sat down on the bed. She was clearly fatigued.

Mentally. Everyone was.

"What did Lihle's parents have to say?", I asked as I put away the rest of the dresses after choosing which one I was going to wear.

"Apparently they did not know their daughter had a child", she bent her lower lip.

"What?", I asked.

"Exactly. But in a way, it makes a

little bit of sense. They would've long come to work their way into this family if they did"

"Worm their way?", I prodded.

"I had to find out at gunpoint that their main aim was to acquire shares in MaloCon. The idiot of a man saw his life flash in front him and cracked", she said in annoyance, with her famous British accent. For some peculiar reason, I had an urge to laugh. At such a moment and I, had an urge to laugh.

"This is a mess", I said and looked ahead. She did not reply.

"Why do you have a gun ma?", I

looked to her and asked.

"Have you seen the GBV stats in this country? If you haven't, I suggest you make Google your friend and book shooting lessons while you're at it", she said with no regret.

"Does the chief know you have one?", I asked.

"I wouldn't have it anymore if he did", she said I kept quiet.

"But you're always guarded mus", I said.

"Not always. It's irritating having people around you all the time", she says and gets up. She then says "I need to get to the

hospital. Don't be freaked out by what happened. It had to be done". She says and walks out. So she knows that her son killed his own brother?

...

It has been 24 hours and Muzi was still not back. I also want to go see Mabuyi but apparently her doctor won't allow me to. Even Evelyn was turned away. Muzi, as usual, had none of it. Ava was slowly warming up to me. I wondered why she wasn't asking about what "her mother" did. A part of me thought since she's a smart child, she probably picked

up that something was wrong. The child doesn't watch cartoons. She watches news and learning channels. She asked me if eating pineapples was a good idea for bumpy bump when she saw me peeling one. When I looked it up, I found out that pineapples can act as an abortifacient. I was now worried about the type of content she watches and reads.

I heard his voice because my door was slightly open. He was on the phone. I quickly got off the bed and pushed my feet into my slippers. I walked towards the door and when I stepped out, I

saw him walking towards his room.

"You can't be calling me to consult about such minor decisions otherwise I may have to reconsider your position as a managing director", he says and keeps walking.

"Tony! Tony! Tony! If I'm gonna run this company all by myself then please email me your resignation!", he said and I just knew he mental state was now tiptoeing around it's breaking point. He's barely rude to his employees and colleagues if never. He walked and shut the door

without looking back. I got there and knocked. He kept quiet. I knocked again and he didn't respond. I wasn't about the life of knocking all day so I braved it out and opened the door. I was immediately met by his flaming eyes. He wasn't happy to see me. That was for sure. He continued taking off his sneakers and was left with his white socks. He took off his top and walked into the bathroom. He came back with a wet face.

"Do you wanna go back home?", he finally said.

"What?", I asked and he went to

sit on the footstool, facing me.

"Can we talk?", I requested.

"Before this gets far, please forgive me for what you saw

sthandwa sam. I've had a

moment to think about it and I was wrong. I'm sorry", he said

and waited for me to respond.

"What were you exactly wrong for? For killing your brother or for killing him in front of me", I asked.

"Would you have preferred that he killed you first?", he asked and kept his face straight.

"How are you so calm after carrying out such a gruesome

act?", I lowly asked. He then stood up and placed the palm of his left hand on his forehead.

"I'm not enjoying this Betso. You know how much I loved umbu! I thought he was my brother but he obviously saw me otherwise", he explained.

"Why is that?", I also stood up and approached him.

"Did I live in his brain?", he sarcastically asked. I scoffed.

"What happened to his twin?", I asked.

"What exactly did he feed you?", he shot back.

"Answer me and stop beating

arou...!"

"I'm not gonna entertain your crap because knowing you, you already have a conclusion in your head!", he shouted back and I walked to stand close to him. Too close.

"What are you hiding Muzikayise?", I asked and looked him in the eye.

"What do you want from me Boikokobetso?", he raised his brow.

"I want to know the kind of animal I'm married to", I shoot back.

"Do you really want to find out!?",

he lowly threatens.

"Yes. Show me your true self!"

"Are you sure?", he asks, with his brow still raised.

"As sure as a cold-hearted murderer", I say and he says "Okay". He then expectedly and hungrily smashes his lips against mine and I try to fight him but he has none of it and lifts me up instead.

Insert 80.

(REMOVED)

....

I woke up and it was 4 minutes past 6 in the morning. I turned back to greet him but he wasn't in bed. The room smelt of his cologne so I figured he's probably not anywhere in the house as well. I sighed because I was hoping we would talk some more. I got out of bed and looked around for my clothes. He had carefully placed them on the couch. I got dressed and went to my room. I then took a shower and got changed. There was a knock on the door as I was about to head out. It was Nokuthula, one of the helps. We greeted each other

before she could tell me that there's a request that I should make my way downstairs. We both walked down the stairs and parted ways at the end of the stair case. There was a gathering around the dinner table and I went to take my seat. Muzi was there, sitting quietly with his back against the backrest and his hands in his pockets. Evelyn was sitting next to chief and Mandoba across his brother. Both looking like they're innocent of any imaginable crime. Enhle was sitting next to her husband. The windows were open and a very cold

breeze was freely flooding in.

"I'm not going to waste any time. A lot had happened in a couple of hours and I am not proud of myself for not being able to contain any of it. Makoti, I'm sorry you had to go through such a painful experience but as much as Mbuso is my son, I will make it my mission to find him so he can explain to me what had gotten into him", he said and I shifted my eyes to Muzi. He bent his tight lips to the side and kept his eyes on the table. Evelyn gave me a "If you dare say anything..." type of look.

"I'm just glad to be alive. I hope umnakwethu makes it too", I said to the chief and he nodded. Sadly, "I bought a goat. We're going to have a cleansing ceremony sike sisuse wonke lamabhadi akulomuzi" (So we can remove all the bad luck in this household), he said.

"Asikho isidingo sa lokho mbulazi" (There's no need for that), Mandoba said.

"Uyazizwa ukuthi uthini we Nathi? Umfowenu cishe..." (Are you listening to yourself? Your brother almost...")

"Ngiyazi. Kodwa..." (I know but...),

MQ continued to defend the case. "There's no buts. Kufanele siphahle sikhulume nabaphansi ngoba ngathi se bes'fulathele" (... we need to do this ceremony and speak to the ancestors because it looks like they've turned their backs on us), the chief said and Mandoba fell back on his chair. Then there was silence. Muzi was dead quiet, with his eyes still fixed on the table top. The chief's phone rang and he let go of Evelyn's hand to stand up. He went outside and left behind severe silence for each of us to inherit.

Enhle got up and said she was going to make breakfast for everyone.

"I'll come with you", I said and got up from my chair.

"Are you okay doll?", she asked after she politely got rid of the two helps in the kitchen.

"I'll be alright. I'm just worried about Mabuyi", I said and she sighed, putting the pan on the stove.

"I'm honestly hopeful that she will pull through. Gugu is a fighter man. Ngifuna kutholakale lo mgulugudu khona ezoboshwa lo swine" (I just want this scumbag

to be found so he can be arrested), she said and I coughed. The secrecy was interrupting my respiratory flow. "I hope they find him too. Ukuphi uLihle?"

"Uboshiwe loyo. I hope she rots in jail", she says and we see Ava walking down the stairs in her white pyjamas.

"Heyyy princess", Enhle says and approaches her. The little girl laughs and says "Hey aunty". I smile and greet her back.

"Princesses wear pink or purple. Why are you wearing white?", she says and frowns in pretended

confusion.

Ava laughs and says she's not a baby and that pink is for babies. "Little Miss Grown-up", I say and she comes and tries to sit on the bar stool. It was too high for her. I help her up and hand her a banana. She was about to take it and when I took it back and asked if she had brushed her teeth. She nodded and said it's bad manners to leave the room and go speak to people with a set of unbrushed teeth. Ehle and I laughed and I handed her the banana.

"Yaze yafana nomawayo lengane

yingakho nje loya satan bengafuni siyibone" (This child looks so much like her mother. That's why that devil of a woman didn't want the family to see her)

"Ngempela yazi" (That's true), I said as I inspected Ava's face. She's looks like a combination of both of her parents. She's that kid who people claim she looks like her father when she's with him but immediately change their minds when they see her with her mother. Enhle and I continued making breakfast while Ava was kept busy with her banana. Muzi and Mandoba walked in and

Mandoba immediately said "Sawubona wena. Sawubona" at the sight of Ava. He picked her up and hung her in the air. She laughed hysterically and Enhle reprimanded him.

"Haibo baby ngitheni ngestyla lesi sakho sok'phonsa iy'ngane emoyeni? Uzohlanza unana" (What did I say about this habit of yours of throwing kids in the air? She's going to throw up)

"Hayisuka", MQ said and continued laughing with his niece. Muzi had a faint smile stuck on his face as he stood against the fridge. Mandoba put Ava down and

squatted in front of her.

"Unjani?" (How are you?), he said and she just stared.

"Awufuni ukungikhulumisa?" (You don't want to speak to me?), he said and gave her a sad frown. I laughed and told him she can't hear him. They all looked at me like I had lost half of my marbles. I stared back at them in confusion.

"You're telling me you haven't picked this up yet?", I asked and they all shook their heads.

"Baby I thought you were aware. You speak to her in English though", I said to Muzi.

"I didn't think it was that deep. I thought she's just comfortable with it since she grew up with white kids and shii", he defended his case. He was clearly astounded that his daughter is zero percent in touch with her home language. Ava was just staring around at whoever was speaking at the time. Mandoba and Muzi looked at each other with their mouths hanging.

"Waze walenza udaba uLihle nkosiyami", Mandoba said as he picked Ava up to sit her on the kitchen counter.

"We'll find her a tutor", Enhle said.

"Nah I'll teach her myself. I'll get to know the princess in the process", he said and smiled to her. His smile slowly faded.

"U right?", Mandoba asked.

"Yeah I'm fine. I just wish her mother could wake up", he said and Mandoba's face changed. I've noticed that he'd jump into an open fire for his little brother. Made me wish my own sister was still alive. If Kgantsho was still alive and I happened to kill someone, she would've probably responded the same way Mandoba did. The only difference would've

been that she would've crucified me afterwards.

...

I was sitting by myself, basking in the afternoon sun, allowing the warm rays to dance with my skin when Thando walked in looking like she finally found the factory where glow is manufactured.

"Hey you", she said and came to sit next to me. She was clearly worried.

"Are you okay? I'm so sorry you had to...", she said and I interrupted.

"I'm fine. Don't worry. I'd rather not talk about it if you don't

mind", I said and she nodded.

"Where the hell have you been anyway?", I ask and laugh at the same time. She laughs as well.

"I'm glad you can still find it in you to laugh", she says and I smile.

"You won't get away with changing the topic so easily.

Where on earth were you?", I ask and point my index finger at her.

She releases her ugly naughty laughter and I just know she was up to no good. She then looks

around to see if nobody is

approaching and covers my whole ear with her hand says whispers,

"Let's just say, your girl is now a bottle of vodka. Undashed", she says and looks at me with a naughty smile. I was left confused. I then remember her "vir-gin and tonic" statement and I laugh!

"You lie!", I almost scream.

"I don't wish I was", she says and laughs.

"Oh my God Thando how did you manage to..."

"Well, it didn't take that much convincing really. It was easier than I thought", he says and I'm still left with my mouth hanging.

"Wait wait wait... when you say

undashed, do you mean... did you?"

"We only used protection once and I said f**k it. I desperately wanted to feel every bit of him", she says and covers her eyes with her palms.

"TMI!" (Too Much Information), I say and she laughs.

"But that is just plain risky", I add. Acting saint. I also did not use protection the first time I did it.

"I know. But we bought the HIV rapid test kit. The only thing I'm worried about is pregnancy now", she says and cringes.

"Did he at least pull out?", I ask.

"Most of the time...", she says and cringes in embarrassment some more.

"Most of th... how many times did you guys...!?"

"I ended up losing count", she says and I can't help but pop my eyes. This child!

Insert 81

Gugu is finally allowed, visitors. She's apparently not completely out of danger yet. "Critical but stable". I picked out an outfit for my visit to the hospital. Nothing fancy. Just the dresses Evelyn got for me. I was in my towel

after a hot shower. After getting dressed, I went to Muzi's room to check on him. He wasn't there. I went downstairs and found Muzi feeding Ava some fruit salad.

"Good morning", I cheerfully said. He smiled. Ava greeted back.

"Let me take over?", I said, offering to relieve him of his daddy duties. He didn't look his best. Emotionally. He then laughed and said "You think I'm going to push the spoon too far and end up choking her?", he asked. I laughed too.

"No man. I just... let me help you",

I said.

"Thank you, isthandwa sami kodwa si-right? Princess here...", he says and gently taps her on her tiny nose with his index finger.

"... was just telling me about her first time in Disneyland", he adds. I've noticed he avoids calling her by her already assigned name. I let him be. I then tell him that I'm visiting Gugu at the hospital and he just nods without turning to look at me. He's an emotional mess and it's confusing for me but still, I let him be.

...

I see Thando having a what I guess to be a latte, since it's her favourite watching her mother's flower garden outside, in her pyjamas. With her gown just hanging and unfastened.

I walk over to her and greet her. "Hey you", I say. She's not in her usual sky spirits.

"Hey sis", she says and gives me a weak smile.

"Are you okay?", I ask before one of the chauffeurs comes from behind the house and screams that the car is ready. I acknowledge their information and they disappear.

"Yeah I'm fine", she says and releases a light giggle, trying to contain whatever it was that was digging at her peace from the inside.

"Thando?", I say and drop my face to my chest in suspicion. She then looks around before she says "Okay okay. It's only sinking in now that I've been reckless the entire past week", she says and throws her beverage right onto the flowers.

"Did you buy morning afters?", I enquire

"We did. At some point. I'm trying to figure out if I took them

correctly or not and nothing makes sense. The alcohol we had also doesn't make things any easier", she rambles in panic.

"Well, there's really no point in stressing out right now"

"Woman. Do you know who my father is? My brothers? I am a walking corpse!", she says.

Emotional. I pull her into a hug.

"We don't know for sure that you're pregnant"

"I can already feel the baby moving", she says and I almost laugh. I decide not to.

"As I said, there's no point in stressing. Let me go see your

sister in law and then... I don't know. We'll figure it out. Okay?", I say and she nods.

"What's wrong?", Muzi asks from behind me. Thando quickly wiped her tears.

"Uhm... she's just...", I try to explain

"Who hurt you Thando? What did I say about that Xhosa boy?", he sharply says. Thando purses her lips cheekily and looks away.

"Please excuse us?", I asked from Thando. She walks away.

"Was there any need for that?", I asked.

"What's going on with her?", he

blatantly ignored my question.

"Feminine stuff", I say the first thing that lands on my tongue.

"Feminine stuff?", he presses

"Yes! I have to go, AND leave the child alone", I say and walk away.

He was stepping on my nerves.

...

I thought about how pale Mabuyi looked in that hospital bed with all those machines hooked to her.

Pale and lifeless. These thoughts circulated my brain as I was

being driven back home from the hospital. For some reason, I

thought about how relieved I

should be should she die. But I

wasn't. I wanted her to wake up. I've already gotten used to having her around. In our lives. Sometimes her being there is a pain in the neck but I don't think my marriage would be the same without her. She's not dead yet but Muzi is already anything but fun to be around. He even forgot about our fight in Polokwane to a certain extent. He thinks I don't know it but she's all he thinks about. He blames himself for not being able to protect her. If she dies, a part of him will definitely die too. He said I'm the one who he wouldn't survive living without

but she's a different kind of special to him. It's almost impossible to put it in words. I know for a fact that if I were to die he'd be shattered but if she dies he'd be broken. Does he love both of us the same? Is it even possible for him to love both of us the same?

We arrived home and I received a text from Evelyn telling me that she was at the hospital and asking about my whereabouts. I called her to let her know that I had already left. I walked into the house through the connecting door which was wide open and I

heard Mandoba's voice in the TV room. I walked closer in that direction.

"Can't we bribe Bab'Ngema or something? UMBulazi akayijiki lendaba yok'phahla. If we don't do something he's going to disown the both of us", Mandoba says. I peep through. I see him down all his drink at one go. There's a bottle of Hennessy on top of the coffee table. Muzi was just playing around with his glass, gently turning and moving it around the hand. He kept quiet for a moment.

"I thought I'd told you that I

never want to speak about this ever again MQ. Especially not here", he says and keeps his eyes glued to his glass with his back against the couch.

"Well kuyofanele uqine ke mfana sekhaya ngoba we have a problem on our hands" (You'll have to be strong because....), Mandoba presses.

"Awume nawe. Umbulazi ngeke ak'disowne. If there's one he can get rid of it's me" (Stop with your nonsense. Dad will never disown you), he says, still in the same position.

"K'dala ngiyibona lendaba yokuthi

lo b'cophonyana bakho b'sebenza part-time and it closes on Saturdays. You killed him, yes but I had him incinerated!" (I've been suspecting that your brain doesn't work sometimes...), Mandoba says. They probably think they're alone in the house. "I was there. I know that", Muzi says.

"Manje wa nethezeka ngath umsulwa?" (Why are you so relaxed as if you're innocent?)

"Ai Nathi. UMntungwa cannot disown the next chief in line.

Relax", Muzi states.

"Okay ake sithe uqinisile. Why are

you okay with being disowned wena?" (Let's say you're right...), Mandoba asks. Muzi turns to look at him, seemingly annoyed.

"Even if I run around naked screaming and chanting that I don't want to be disowned if he wants to disown me, that's exactly what he's gonna do.

Uyamazi unjan" (You know how he is), Muzi says and falls back on the couch.

"And if he takes us to the cops? MK mfowethu let's contain this before it gets out of hand. I wouldn't survive in jail. You wouldn't ", Mandoba says and

Muzi laughs.

"Uyangbhedela ke manje angisona isiyoyoyo mina" (You're out of line now. I'm not a weakling)

"Sizoboshwa yaz" (We are getting arrested here), Mandoba threatens.

"No ways. UBaba can do everything but take us to the cops. You know this. Even if he does, we'll find our way out"

"Kodwa nawe mfowethu. Bengithi mhlampe uzom'dubula or something, ukumbulala ngezandla? You need to be locked away at a Zoo. In Australia. Then have the key thrown away at Zim in a

remote lake somewhere" (I thought you'd maybe shoot him or something. To kill him with your bare hands?), he says and Muzi doesn't respond. I took an eggshell walk to my room. I wasn't sure what to think of their conversation.

...

"Bes", I said after sliding my finger across the screen to answer his call.

"Babes. Why didn't you stop me from studying medicine? I would've been better off as a stripper", he says and I laugh. He sounded really tired.

"O ko kae?" (Where are you?), I asked. He sniffs before he could tell me that he just got to his place.

We continue talking and gossiping about his patients without revealing names. Just the drama he sees on a daily at the hospital.

"Have you heard or kea phapha?" (I'm forward?)

"Heard what?", I ask. With this persistent smile, I always have on my face whenever our energies mix.

"Your ex. He's at the hospital. Intensive care", he says and my smile immediately fades. I

thought Mbuso was joking or pulling my leg but, how did he even know about my ex? The creep was probably stalking me. My skin begins crawling when I start to think about how long it could've been happening.

"Are you still there?", Tumi prods.

"Yeah yeah. What happened to him?"

"Car accident. His little sister was discharged today"

"That's... yoh I don't even know what to say". I honestly had no idea what to say. My brain cells were scrambled. Everything in my mind was fuzzy. If brains could

overheat as phones do, mine would've probably exploded by now.

...

I closed my windows and curtains when the sky began catching darkness. Muzi let himself in.

"Did you leave your manners downstairs?", I ask and fix the curtain at the same time. The sound of the metal hooks running across the metal rain tempered with my hearing for a second.

"What?", I wanted him to repeat what he said.

"It's 'Excuse me?' or 'Pardon?', Mrs. Manners", he says and sits on the bed. He was wearing a

white vest, blue jeans and his favourite pair of slides. He's in a bad mood. I am too. My bad mood is in no mood to be nursing his bad mood. I attempt to sit but he places his hand under my butt and I sit on it instead. He wants me to sit on his lap. I roll my eyes but do as he rudely requests. He then opens his legs so I get in between. I sit and he attempts to kiss me. I could smell the potent smell of the alcohol he's been drinking. His eyes were red. They become like this when he has too much to drink. I allow him to have his kiss. He's an a**hole

but a damn good kisser. He then exhales and places his hand on my tummy.

"This is not the kind of pregnancy I wanted you to have sthandwa sami", he says and drops his forehead on my shoulder. I was speechless. He then raised his head and made a purr sound with his lips.

"I don't know how to say this but I want it to come out right so you don't take it the wrong way", he says and everything stops in my brain, in anticipation.

"At the moment, an environment with me in it is anything but good

for you", he says and stops. Is this man breaking up with me? "I'd hate for... I'd hate for you to lose our babies because of me and the negative energy I bring to you. I'm not myself right now. If I could, I would go away to some empty island to clear my mind but that would be cowardly of me. A man doesn't run away from his problems. He fixes and moves past them", he says and I keep quiet. Allowing him to continue with his speech.

"Your house is ready and fully furnished. You can move in there. You'll have your own chef, a help

and a masseur on standby. I want you to be as comfortable as you possibly can, while I sort my crap out", he says and looks at me.

"Are you breaking up with me?", I finally ask. He exhales. His left hand was now on the small of my back and the other was on the inner corners of his eyes.

"I'd never do that. Apart from the fact that I love your unapologetic a**, it's not possible. I'm not in the mood for suicide", he lowly says. We were sitting in the dark. The curtains were closed and the light was not on.

"Then what is this?", I asked. He kept quiet.

"And what do you mean unapologetic? Is this what it's about? Are you still punishing me?", I add.

"That's the last thing on my mind right now. Do you see this?

What's going on here? This is the exact reason why I'm doing this.

Peace is a foreign concept

between you and me at the

moment. You don't trust me and

until you teach yourself how to,

we will forever be in each other's

throats. You don't need this.

THEY don't need this", he says

and puts his hand back on my small tummy.

"I can't help but feel like you're hiding something from me", I say and look away. He then shoots a brief stare at me and tells me to get up. I refuse. He exhales.

"You want to fight. I'm not in the mood. Can I please leave?", he lowly says.

"Do you know anything about Kgokagano being in hospital?"

"Him again!?"

"This is a simple question"

"How do you even know that he's in hospital?"

"What are you saying?"

"Exactly what I'm saying. How do you know that he's in the hospital?"

"You can't still be thinking that I'm cheating on you"

"That's it", he said, got up and held me so I don't fall. I stood up straight. He then walked out and never looked back.

Insert 82.

I continued sitting in the dark, swimming in a thick, viscous pool of confusing yet stabbing emotions. I can't swim so, more like drowning.

"Knock knock", Evelyn's sounded

from outside the slightly open door. Due to my luck, Muzi didn't bang it closed when he walked out. I told her to come in and quickly wiped the lingering drops of tears from both my eyes. She reached for the switch.

"Please. Don't", I said. She dropped both hands and exhaled like a concerned mother.

She then closed the door and patiently walked towards me. She came to sit beside me on the bed.

Silent. After she was done gathering her words,

"I am sorry", she finally says. I turn to look at her.

"For what?", I lowly ask. She then exhales deeply.

"I've been a very bad mother to you. See, it is natural for a hen to want to protect all its chicks, regardless of who gets hurt in the process. For a person who has went through somewhat something similar to what you have, I'm certainly doing a bad job at this mother-in-law thing" she confesses.

"Where is all of this coming from?", I had to ask. She then stands up from the bed and slowly walks towards the window. She pulls open the curtains, slightly.

She then looks drops her eyes to the ground outside, with the pine trees on guard, waiting to catch them. It was grey dark outside. The little light mother nature was kind enough to borrow made its way in.

"See, I've not gotten this far as the queen because my marriage was smooth sailing. Hell I was always fighting for my spot in this kingdom", she says, and places her right hand under her left armpit and her left hand on her necklace, playing with it. I decide to just listen.

"Ngimi la ngiyacabanga. Yeses

bekanonya loya mfazi" (I'm standing here thinking. That woman was bitter and full of hatred), she says as she clearly travels down deep memory lane.

"Ubani ma?" (Who?)

"UMakankosenye", (Nkosenye's mother), she said.

Mathematically, that would be the chief.

"Yaz...", she says and scoffs.

"I remember this one day where I happened to break the frame that had his picture as a little boy. It was a genuine mistake. The woman went off at me like I had destroyed the entire kingdom.

Telling about how unworthy I am of being married to her son. How I should take my English "le engiyikhipha ngamakhalala" and go crawl back to the hole I came from. She never missed a chance to smear my name with dirt and crown MaShandu with a golden perfect wife title", she said and kept her eyes outside.

"But you know what?", she said and sharply turned once to face me, with a slowly stretching smile on her face.

"My man made sure that she knew my place in his heart. Whether she liked it or not", she

said and I wonder about the direction of this conversation.

"I see that in Muzikayise", she finally steered it in the relevant direction.

"Even if I was a monster-in-law to you, he would've definitely stood his ground and fought for you. He's not with you because he was told to be. He is because you're the sunshine that brightens up his heart. I see how he looks at you. He keeps looking at you even when you walk away, leaving the room. Only a man that loves you does that", she says and I just keep my silence.

"I am apologizing because I'm realizing that even before I know what's going on, I am always ready to take his side. In that regard, I am a monster-in-law. Baby you're still a child.

Everything that's going on around you is definitely not easy for you. I know what it feels like to be a young wife with so many painful responsibilities. I have a bad habit of sticking my nose in my sons' marriages. I had to hear it from Mandoba that I need to step back a little. My relationship with umbalenhle is currently unattractive and I don't want

that with you as well", she says and my immediate thought is what they fought about. I just nod.

"You're in a relationship with my grandfather in law. It's only respectful that I step out of his business", she says and I laugh.

"The chief also likes saying being in the same room with Muzikayise feels like being in the presence of his grandfather. Apparently he walks like he used to", I say and we laugh.

"It is true. Even his voice, his calm and some habits. His grandfather also had this thing

of pulling the legs of his pants from the inside of his pockets then raise his toes to stand on his heels when standing and bored", she said and I laughed at how correct this information was. "It's like he died and was physically reborn. I wish he was alive in the era of smartphones so you can see a video of some sort. It's a pity I only got to know him for only 6 months before he left us. Come, let's go look for the ancient photo album so I can show you that you're actually married to an old man, she says and I laugh harder. We then

walked out. I wanted to ask her about Mbuso but, words kept failing me.

...

No matter how good you may be at mastering pretence, everything you run away from during the day will always find a way into your brain through some unknown entrance. I laid in bed and thought about everything that transpired between Muzi and I. We're not the same "us" anymore. The us that can just look at each other casually and laugh at nothing. The us that can deliberately get into silly

arguments just to pick into each others' brains. I missed his compliments. His scent is still the same but it smells completely different. Off.

These thoughts carelessly ran through my mind as I continued to hold on tightly to my pillow. Wetting it with my tears. I took my phone and scrolled through the phonebook. I went straight to Kgantsho's number. I hadn't forgotten about her passing neither was I naively expecting her to answer for some reason, like in the movies. I just wanted to hear her voice through her

voicemail. It rang and sounded like it was picked up. My heart did not even jump because I was expecting it. She made her voice mail to sound as if she had taken the call then after a few seconds, it goes: "Got ya. I'm not available at the moment but please leave your name and number and I will definitely get back to you. Enjoy the rest of your day and hey? Remember to smile". I listen to it and allow my heart to break further. That was the intention. I emotionally hurt myself because I believe it's a coping mechanism. I listen to sad songs when I'm

hurt and I replay bad memories in my head. This was also a coping mechanism. To hear her voice and ultimately breakdown. It was deliberate and intentional. She would probably tell me to leave him, whatever the consequences. I can hear it ringing in my head. In her voice. When I cry I look for other reasons to cry some more because I barely do. It takes a lot for me to actually break down and cry. A very tiny lot.

...

I got up in the morning and sat buttstill on the bed. I yawned and

wiped the corners of my eyes. I could feel they were swollen and heavy. I had a glimpse at my phone and saw that I had a message from Thando. Received at 4:15 am.

"I know nothing about pregnancy but I know what I feel like. I'm a dead woman walking", it read. With a truckload of crying emojis. I got up from the bed, took out the white robe from the closet, pushed my feet into my slippers and walked out. I got to her room and knocked. I received an amplified "come in" and I knew she wasn't alone. I walked in and

found her sitting on top of her crossed legs on the bed with her face in her hands. Her hair was a mess. Evelyn was also in her night gown with a doek carelessly wrapped on her head.

"I'll come back later", I said and turned away

"No come in. I know you already know", she says with her eyes on her daughter.

I jam a bit before I slowly close the door and go sit on the other side of the bed.

"I allowed you to go be with your boyfriend because I trusted that you are a responsible young lady. I

had to lie to my husband and your brothers for you!", she scolds and Thando continues with her muffled cry.

"I don't know. I really don't know. The secrets that you kids force down my throat are going to be the ultimate death of me", Evelyn says and we both keep quiet. Her fury also dies down in silence. She then stands up and paces the room. The carpet absorbs all the sound from her footsteps.

"Alright. We haven't done a pregnancy test yet but since you've already conducted it with your panic and suspicions, what is

your way forward should we establish that you're really pregnant?", she asked. Thando sobbed before she could respond. "I don't know mommy but I don't want a baby mina", she then says. Evelyn exhales. Deeply.

"You don't want it because you're afraid of your fear for the men in this house or you genuinely don't want it? Have you thought this through?", she stops pacing and puts her hands on her waist.

"Both. You know they might cut me off in all sense and I don't want it. I'm not ready", she says and wipes her tears. Evelyn

throws her eyes at me as if looking for a solution in mine. I look away and allow them to find refuge in Thando's purple walls.

"I should've put you on contraceptives the moment I thought of it. My problem is, I trust you more than you've now proven to deserve", she says and dead silence revisits the room.

She starts pacing again.

"Let's say I do take you to abort, are you going to be able to live with yourself?"

...

"Ma'am, you need to an escort. You cannot walk these streets by

yourself", one of the guards at the gate says after I tell him I am going for a walk. I don't need them. The walk was going to serve zero purpose if I was being watched getting fresh air.

"I spoke to my husband. He says if I don't want to come with me then it's okay", I say. He laughs as if he can smell the foul smell of my lies.

"Ayiyezeki ke leyo" (That's not possible), he says before he takes out his phone from his pocket.

"He says he doesn't want to be disturbed", I quickly say. He completely disregards my

statement and continues to dial. He brings the phone back from his ear to look at it as if something is wrong.

"Umakhale khukhwin wakhe ucimiwe" (His phone is off)

"See? I told you he's busy and doesn't want to be disturbed.

Please let me out. I'm getting sunburnt", I said and made sure to sound irritated. They tiptoe around us so much, I had to abuse their fear for me and my power.

"Olyt. Ungahambeli kude kakhulu angithi uthi ufuna ukushawa umoya. Ngiyathemba

awungicambeli amanga ngoba
uzongixoshisa emsebenzin" (Don't
go too far. Isn't it it's only fresh
air you want? I really hope you're
not lying because you'd get me
fired), he said and then opened
the gate. I thanked him and
walked out.

I walked aside the tar road and
within the first 5 minutes, 3 cars
had already hooted and honked at
me. I don't know if the people
here are overly friendly or it was
just men being themselves. It
felt great being outside the
house. Outside the yard. Muzi
had gone to the hospital. I didn't

even see him leave. I just heard this from his mother. Who shortly followed him there with Evelyn in the morning. The gate guards always change shifts at midday. I waited for that moment so they I could easily trick the new one for the day. I just wanted to be by myself and watch the mountains, by myself. Mandoba's car speedily passed by and I just knew he wasn't going to pass and let me live my best life. He got off the road at a distance behind and then drove towards me. I waited. When it parked, I realized it wasn't him. It was one of the

chauffeurs. The window rolled down and I put my hand over my forehead to protect my shade my face from the sun.

"Sawubona madam. Ngena ngikuphelezele lapho uyakhona" (Get in so I can accompany you to your desired destination)

"Ngiright ngiyabonga. Ngiyazihambela nje" (I'm okay thanks. I'm just taking a walk)

"Haibo, baphi oonogada?" (Where are the guards?)

"Ungayihluphi kakhulu. Actually, kukhona lapho ngifuna ungiyise khona?" (Don't worry too much.

Actually, there is a place where I want you to take me), I said and he waited for me to speak, with his hand on the steering wheel.

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Insert 83.

"Ungayihluphi kakhulu. Actually, kukhona lapho ngifuna ungiyise khona?", I said and he waited for me to speak, with his hand on the steering wheel.

"Ku bab'Ngema?", I say and he nods. I get in and he drives towards the same different he was coming from.

We get there and I see

Bab'Ngema closing the small gate to his yard. He stands and stares in our direction. The driver parks the car outside the yard and I get off.

"Sawubona baba", I say once I get to the gate. He greets back and opens it. He then walks towards his hut and I do the most sensible thing there was to do at that moment, which was, to follow him. He then stops at the door and points to the side to remind me that I must take off my shoes. I do as instructed and we walk in, and sit.

"Ngikusiza ngani ngane yami?", he

says as he inspects the little jars behind him.

"Uhm... I have... nginombuzo baba" (I have a question)

"Mm-huh?", he says in a throaty voice, indicating that I should carry on speaking.

"Kuyiqiniso ukuthi mesinga hlukana no Phakamani uzoshona yena? Kanye namadoda wonk..." (How true is it that if Phakamani and I break up he's going to die? Along with all the men...)

"Yebo kuyiqiniso" (Yes it is true), he interrupts.

"Bengikulindile ngoba bengazi

ukuthi usendleni" (I was expecting you because I knew you were coming), he stated. I just keep my head bowed. I had to ask. I needed to be sure and get further clarity on this matter.

"Iimpilo kanye nemiphfumulo ibophiwe. Abaphansi benu ngeke bajabule uma ningahlukana kodwa khona kukhona eningakwenza ukwehlisa ulaka lwabo uma ngempela ningasafunani" (Both your lives and spirits are tied together. Your ancestors won't be happy if you decide to break apart. However, there is something you can do to calm

their wrath if you truly don't want each other anymore), he explains and my ears immediately stand.

"Yini lokho?" (And that is?), I inquired.

"Lento engizoyichaza manje isebenza kuphela uma nonke ningasafuni okuhlala emendweni. Uma kusekhona othanda ukudhubeka angeke nje iz'isebenze", he says and I nod to show that I'm following.

"Kuzofanele nize la ekhaya nembuzi emnyama. Lembuzi izohlathshwa uyena umnyeni wakho. Masededile, ngizonisika

kancani laph' ezandleni, ngithathe igazi lenu nobabili ngihlanganise na lembuzi khona nizoliphuza.

Kodwa phambi kokuthi konke loku kwenziwe, kufanele kushiswe imphepho uPhakamani azokwazi ukukhuluma nabadala" (You'll have to come here with a black goat.

This goat is going to be slaughtered by your husband.

When he's done, I will cut you somewhere in your hands, take your blood and mix it with the goat's so that the both of you can drink it. But before all this is done, we will have to burn some incense so Phakamani can be able

to speak to the ancestors), he explains and I shiver at the thought of drinking blood.

"Kodwa lesi akusisona isizathu esikulethe la. Angithi?" (But this is not the reason you're here.

Right?), he says and I nod.

"Iyingane zakho ziphephile.

Abaphansi bahlezi bezivikela kuyoyonke imimoya emibi

nezingozi" (Your kids are safe. The

ancestors are always protecting

them from all bad spirits and

accidents), he says and I pop my

eyes. How did he know what I'm

here for? But oh! Of course. How

could I expect any less from a

person who's career is speaking to the dead?

"Kodwa esbhedlela bathe..." (But at the hospital they said...)

"Khohlwa ngesbhedlela", he firmly stated and I immediately kept shut.

"Kodwa ngoba ngiyawubona umoya wakho uhluphekile, ngizokugeza ukuthi uthole ukuthula" (But because I can see that your spirit is unsettled, I will give you a bath so you can find peace), he says and I nod. The last time I had one of his baths I came out feeling like a newborn baby. I would've been very disappointed if

he didn't agree. We then heard a car park outside,

"Umnnyeni wakhe naye usefikile.

Futhi ni iyeke lento yenu

yokuqcinelana imfihlo ngoba

izonilimaza nobabili" (Your husband

is also here. The two of you must stop this habit of keeping secrets

from one another because it's

going to hurt you both), he says

and stands up, leaving me seated

there. He then comes back with

Muzi, who was surprised but not

so surprised to find me there. He

probably found everything out

from the driver waiting for me

outside.

He takes his seat and maintains his silence. The healer exhales before he can speak.

"Abaphansi abaneme neze ngawe nezandla zakho ezigcwele igazi Mntungwa" (The ancestors are not happy with you and your hands that are full of blood)

He says and Muzi bows his head. He's not proud of what he did. I kinda find some solace in that.

"Uze la ngoba ufuna ukungicela ukuthi ngiyigcine imfihlo yenu no mfowethu ngosuku lokuphahla angithi?" (You're here to ask me to keep your secret between you and your brother on the day of

the ceremony right?)

"Yebo baba", Muzi shamefully agrees and purses his lips.

The healer exhales. Deeply.

"Inkosi izodhubeka ngalomsebenzi nithanda ninga thandi kodwa ke, abaphansi ngeke bavume ukuthi ubukhosi bushabalale ngenxa yegazi elingekho lwabo" (The king is going on with this ceremony whether the two of you like it or not but, the ancestors will never watch the chieftaincy to fall apart because of blood that isn't theirs), he says and bewilderment immediately falls upon Muzi.

"Umbuso bekungeyena

umfowenu" (Mbuso was never your brother), he stated and we both pop our eyes. So MaShandu cheated on the chief? I pondered over this while at the same time, it made sense why Mbuso was never the chosen upcoming chief!

...

When I got out of the hut, there was only one car parked outside. Muzi probably told the driver to go. I left him in there because the healer asked that I excuse them. When he finally got out, we got to the car and got in. His head immediately hit the backrest of the car. He clearly

had no idea how to digest what he had been told.

"Are you okay?", I asked. He then turned his head to look at me.

"Are YOU okay?", he asked and smiled. A scene I haven't seen in a very long time.

"Iyakufanela idol yazi" (A head wrap looks good on you), he says and I smile. He then cups my face with his hand and runs my chin with his palm.

"I'm sorry", I let out. He closed his eyes and exhales.

"Let's go home", he whispers before he can start driving.

...

We get home and make our way out of the car. I walk in first and he places his hands on my shoulders.

"Daddy!", Ava cheered and ran into Muzi's ready and open arms. He tickled her and she laughed.

"Grandma took me to the shops. Come see what we got", he says and drags him by the hand immediately when he puts her down. She's so cute.

They walk into the living room and I follow them. Evelyn was seated on the couch with her face in her hand. She was exhausted and it was obvious. I say beside

her as Ava and her dad went through the bags.

"Remind me to never go shopping with a child on steroids ever again", she whispers and I laugh. Ava is a ball of energy when she's in the mood. Once she gets into that state, no one can keep up.

"UGogo ongothungele..."

"Ungi-THE-ngele, say it", Muzi immediately corrects.

"Ungothengele", she tries again

"UNGI. NGI Ava. NGI. Say it again", teacher Muzi was at it again. Ava laughs with her hand on her mouth. She was embarrassed.

"Zama futhi sthandwasami
ngiyak'cela" (Try again my love I
beg you)

"Okay. UngiTHengele! There!",
she says and Muzi immediately
screams "Yay!" as if Liverpool had
scored a goal. They high five and
celebrate. She couldn't stop
laughing. Ava loves her father
and it's evident that she has
been waiting to meet him. I
wonder what else Lihle was
feeding to the child.

...

"Yes wena", Mandoba says and
brushes my head. He's such a
bully. I swallow my juice and put

my glass down as he takes a seat.
"Ugrand?" (Are you okay?), he asks.

"I'm fine. How are you?", I ask and he looks around to see if anyone is approaching. We were sitting in the patio.

"Bheka man. You probably think you've married into a dysfunctional family of hooligans whereas that's not the case. We just take putting family first very seriously. If it means killing for our blood then so be it", he lowly says. So he knew?

"So you knew that Mbuso was your half brother?", I say and he

turns his head once in confusion.

Oh oh.

"What are you talking about?", he eventually asks.

"It is not my place. I thought.. you know what? Nevermind", I say and get up.

"Spha!", he yells for me and I keep walking. If he is meant to find out, it is not going to be from me.

...

A family meeting was held after dinner, where the chief announced that he has hired men to look for Mbuso and that the ceremony would go on as planned. I sat and

wondered why Bab'Ngema hasn't said anything all these years. Is he loyal to the chief in particular or the chieftaincy? If I am making sense.

We dispersed. Muzi went outside and I went to tuck Ava in, in bed. "They said I should call you mom", she said before I could walk out. I stand at the door and close it. I walk back to the small bed and sit by her side.

"Who said that?", I softly asked. "Grandma. She said aunty is Enihle and you are mom", she said and waited for me to speak.

"True but...", I try to gather the

right words. She keeps still.

"Not now okay baby? Let's wait for mommy to come back from the hospital", I said. It was a difficult conversation. I don't mind her calling me her mother but at the same time, I didn't think it would be right that she did it to me before Gugu experienced it first. It did not feel right nor fair.

"What happened to her?", her curious self digs. Lord. At that point, I did not know whether she thought I was talking about Lihle or Mabuyi. I did not know how much she already knew.

"Look princess, get some sleep okay? It's way past your bedtime", I say and kiss her forehead. She smiles and closes her eyes. I switched off the light on my way out and closed the door. I then travelled back downstairs and there was no one. I opened the door from the TV room to see it Muzi was still outside and he indeed was. At a distance. He was taking a walk at the golf course. I went to him. He was so absentminded that he didn't even hear me approach. I wrapped my hands around him and placed my head on his back. He gently pulled

me so I can be in front of him. He then pulled me into a hug and I hugged him back. We stood in this position for an exhausting while.

But it was worth it.

"I've never thanked you for saving me from Mbuso", I say.

"By now, you should know that I'd do anything for you", he says and kisses my forehead. I go back into his body and hug him again.

"I've thought about it", I say.

"It?", he asks.

"Moving into my house", I say and he kept silent for a few seconds.

"And?"

"I'll fetch the rest of my stuff

from home", I let him know and he squeezes me.

"I am not abandoning you. We'll still spend time together but we can't be in the same space all the time. We both need to get to get our heads straight because I want this to work"

"I also do", I say and he doesn't respond.

UNEDITED. [?]

Insert 84.

We took a silent but peaceful walk on the golf course back to the house. He then picked me up without warning and I screamed

and laughed at the same time. He gave me a quick hickey on the top of my shoulder. He then put me down and we continued walking. When we got in the house, I asked him to go wait for me upstairs in his room. He was surprised but he patiently ran up at the stairs. My eyes took a look-see at the clock placed high up the wall and it was 23h22. Everyone was most probably fast asleep by then. I took out a cold bottle of cranberry juice from the fridge and a tub of icecream. I grabbed two wine glasses and went upstairs.

He hadn't closed the door completely so I just pushed open with my elbow and walked in with the tray. I found him laying on his back on the floor, on his phone. He got up and smiled at my efforts. He got up to take the tray from me and put it on the floor.

"I forgot the spoons. Give me a minute", I said and turned back to go get them.

"I'll get them", he said and went out. I then connected my phone to his bluetooth speakers and the first song I played was by J.T Taylor and Regina Belle titled 'All

I want is forever'. I closed the door so the sound wouldn't reach other rooms even though it wasn't that loud. He came and I immediately pulled him into a dance. He laughed as we danced and both sang along.

We eventually got tired and sat on the carpet. I was sitting buttflat with him raising his knees.

"Juice in wine glasses?", he mocked me and I laughed.

"Do not judge okay. Maybe the wine craving will go away because I can't have it now", I say and continue giving a muffled laugh.

"Okay then. Here...", he laughs and hands it to me after pouring it into the glass. The next song I played was 'Spend my life with you' by Eric Benét ft. Tamia as we indulged on the blueberry cheesecake ice cream.

"When I first met you I thought you didn't drink at all", he says and I tell him that a lot of people think so. I ended up asking about when he started drinking.

"Yoh!", he said and almost choked on his icecream.

"Ithi ng'bone..." (Let me see), he said and started thinking.

"I think I was 12 or 13.

Somewhere there", he says and I was the one to actually choke.

"What?", I asked and he laughed.

"Yeah. That stand in the living room? With ma's flowers?", he says and I nod.

"That was my father's whiskey and brandy stand back in the day", he smirks and takes another spoonful into his mouth.

"Let me guess. You helped yourself to it?", I ask and he laughs.

"Mandoba is completely to blame for that part of my life in all honesty. One day when ubaba was attending his council meetings and it was only me and him in the

house, he poured each of us a glass and refilled the bottle with rooibos tea", he explained and my laughter influenced him to laugh as well, he couldn't finish the story.

"Did he find out?", I inquire.

"Yeah he did. Our punishment was manufacturing bricks with the men that were building that storage house at the back. And that's where my love for construction was conceived", he says and I go all "Awww".

"Hayisuka", he says and laughs. He hates it when I baby him.

The next song I played after the

last had been repeating for a number of times was 'I found love' by BeBe and CeCe Winans. We managed to finish the tub and it was way past midnight. He took my feet and gave me a massage as we argued about when Nelson Mandela really died.

"He died in 2013 baby man"

"Ngiyala mina. What died in 2013 was a clone, not the real Rolihlahla", he argues and I laugh.

"I mean think about it, why wasn't Winnie allowed to visit him in jail? Then when he came out he got married to a woman who was

hired by the apartheid government AND he no longer knew how to speak Xhosa. Hayi ngeke baby", he continues to argue and I laugh.

"You're making valid points but cloning an entire human being baby?"

"Ehena! Phela cloning humans is not impossible, it is just illegal because it would cause chaos.

Unlike cloning your Dolly the sheeps and what not", he says and I shake my head.

"I still maintain that the real Nelson died in 2013"

"You'll die young wena", he says

and I explode in laughter. We didn't take note of time till 04h55.

"Let's get some sleep before breakfast baby", I say and get up.

"Or we can just sleep in", he gives me a naughty smile and gets up.

"We don't want to be giving people ideas", I say and he laughs. He comes to kiss me on my lips, my nose and lastly my forehead.

"I needed this. Thank you sthandwasami", he says and my heart gushes with blood. We get in bed and he spoons me to sleep.

We slept for about an hour and then had to wake up for breakfast. Both our eyes were heavy but we had to get up. We got cleaned up and inevitably made out in the shower.

...

"Daddy, let's go play soccer outside", Ava says and drags him towards the door.

"Soccer Ava?", Muzi asked, puzzled. He clearly wasn't expecting that. Speaking of which, I have never seen Ava play with dolls ever since she got here.

"Yes. Soccer daddy. We can play

rugby if you wish", she says and Mandoba explodes in laughter.

Imagine a tiny figure like herself going head to head with Muzi.

He laughs as well and says soccer is fine but they first had to go buy a soccer ball. Evelyn comes down the stairs in a navy suit and red stilettos.

"Bye kids", she says and walks out. She was obviously late to whatever she had to attend with the chief, who was waiting for her outside.

I was then left with Mandoba in the TV room. I tried to avoid him by leaving but he quickly said

"Muzi told me. There's no need for you to be playing hide and seek anymore", he says and switches the channel. I jam in my steps before I could turn back to face him.

"And how do you feel?", I ask. He exhales and puts the remote down.

"Angazi to be honest. I feel like everything is starting to make sense", he says and there's silence.

"I still have a lot of questions though", he says, and there's silence again. I could hear the birds chirping outside.

"What was your relationship

like?", I manage to ask.

"He was pretentious motherf****

but I could see right through him. That's why we didn't get along. Muzi thought otherwise but I've always felt that there was just something off about him. I wonder if ubaba knows about this. All of this is f**** up to be honest", he explains.

"He was still your brother though", I carefully say.

"Half", he states.

"Huh?"

"Half brother", he emphasizes.

...

A few days later

It was a Tuesday afternoon when Mabuyi was brought back home in a wheelchair. Everyone was just so happy to have her alive. A woman I immediately guessed to be her mother wheeled her in with Muzi's help. She was brought to the lounge and I helped them place her on the couch.

"Haibo yazi I can still walk and sit by myself", she softly laughs. "We are not taking any chances. You shouldn't exhaust yourself", her diva of a mother says. Mabuyi was wearing black velvet track pants and just white socks. With

her natural hair tied up. I immediately noticed that she had the same necklace as mine. It wasn't exactly the same but the design gave away the fact that it was made from the same store and range. An adorable hello came from behind us and we all looked back. She was wearing navy blue shorts, a white t-shirt and sneakers. Mabuyi immediately put her hand over her mouth as her eyes filled up with tears. She couldn't believe that Ava was standing right in front of her. "Umntwana ka gogo maaniii" (Roughly put: So this is gogo's

baby?), Mabuyi's mother said as she picked Ava up. Mabuyi immediately prompted her mother to hand Ava to her.

"Be careful. Your wound is still fresh and..."

"Mlethe ma!" (Bring her ma!), her teary and emotional self grew impatient. Muzi hid his being emotional very well but even through the deepest abditory of his soul, I could still see it.

...

Ava eventually fell asleep in her mother's hands and that's when they look the most alike. When her eyes are closed. Evelyn and

Mabuyi's mom took her upstairs. "The doctor said you should encourage blood flow on your legs by taking small walks. Are you too tired or shall we?", Muzi asked and Gugu smiled, shaking her head.

"Let me go fetch your slippers then", he said and got up because he was squatting in front of her. I went to sit beside her and she just looked at me and smiled.

"I'm so glad you're alive. The last thing I remember is that crook taking you away", she says and squeezes my hand. I squeeze hers back. I had no words because I

was trying my best to lock the trauma away. I did not want to think about it nor entertain anything that has to do with it. UNEDITED. [?]

Insert 85.

Muzi came back with Mabuyi's slippers. He carefully helped her put them on and also to stand up. "I'll be back okay?", he said and I nodded. They slowly walked out with their hands crossed at their elbows until they disappeared out the house. I sat there as the image of them walking out reverberated in my head.

"Bengisacela ukushintsha amashidi ma'am?" (Can I please change your sheets?), a voice coming from the entrance arch cut in between my thoughts. It took me a second to digest what they said and nod in agreement. They then walked away.

Have you ever dressed up in somebody else's clothes? No matter how good you look, there isn't a minute where they'll comfortably feel like they belong to you. Somehow, I felt like I was living inside a borrowed body. I had never felt so out of place. I'm not the same person I was a

few months ago. I don't even remember the last time I checked my emails. I probably have a heap of them gathering dust in my inbox. The thought of having metastasized into the girl I once swore I would never become revisited me. My husband can afford to buy me this whole world and I think that's what made me slip and fall into a dangerous comfort zone. As each day passes, my dreams fossilize even further. I continued to sit and ponder about the becomings of my life until Evelyn and Mabuyi's mother came back

downstairs.

"I really hope she'll be able to adjust. Usemncan yena so hopefully it won't be that hard", Mabuyi's mother says.

Evelyn nods in worry. Their sense of style is almost the same. I noticed.

"Let's hope so. Unjani uKuhle?" (How is Melokuhle?), Evelyn asks. Mabuyi's mother beams before she can respond. They both take a seat on the couch across the one I was seated on.

"URight yena shem considering...",

she proceeded to speak and I asked to be excused.

...

I treaded my way upstairs. I found the help making her way out with a washing basket full of white linen. I thanked her and she smiled before she could walk away. I walked in so I can charge my phone. After inserting it on the charger I walked over to the window to go wash my eyes with the beauty of the outdoors. I don't know much but I knew there was something dampening my spirits with that place. Maybe Muzi was right. We do need some

time apart. The phone rang and I quickly, reflexively turned my head in its direction before I could walk towards the pedestal.

"Hello?", I curiously answered but the caller replied with pure silence.

"He-llo?", I reiterated to ascertain that the problem did not lie with the network coverage, which was something I already knew because the background wasn't dead quiet. There were actually people talking and sounding like they were passing by.

"Ey make quick we also want call!",

a grating voice managed to get to penetrate the line and I picked up a sound of heavy patting.

Twice.

"Okay okay. No need to push me around", the caller responded to whoever was there with them and took a moment before she could speak.

"Hi Betso it's Lihle please don't hang up", she said and my heart immediately hit against my ribcage.

"What do you want? Where did you get my number?"

"Look I don't have much time. Please come see me. I am at

Westville prison. We need to talk. I'm begging you", she rambles before the call gets cut. Her voice sounded high-pitched towards the end like she was trying to get a few sentences in before having the phone taken away from her. I look at my screen and my eyes fall to my bed as I wonder about what just happened.

...

The next day

Muzi and I are were meant to go shopping together but he seemed preoccupied with Gugu I doubted he even remembered. I made my

way upstairs after having a tiny portion of breakfast because my appetite was the size of a single rice grain. I had already taken a bath before breakfast so all I had to do was change my outfit into a proper sun dress and slippers. Whoever was going to judge would've exhausted their own energy and time. I did not give a toss. I went back downstairs and found Thando and her mother standing around the counter in kitchen. Evelyn watched me make my way down till the very last step. They both had morose and sullen looks on their

faces. The test results are probably back.

"Milisuthando. Ngithe ngitshela ukuthi sokwenza njani manje?" (I said tell me what the next step is), Evelyn irritably asks before dropping both the sides of her on the white counter.

"Not so loud nawe ma", Thando tries to hush her down.

"You look pretty", she then says to me before she could pull a chair to sit.

"Uhlezi emuhle uSphakamile" (She is always pretty), Evelyn says in an annoyed tone, trying to get a Thando who is clearly avoiding her

to focus on her question. I bid my goodbyes and walk out. I had no energy to be putting out fires. Thando just had to forgive me. I got driven to the mall and went straight to Joe's. I needed a cold drink and a place to sit while I focus on my emails. As expected, the dreaded pile was waiting and ready for me. Amongst all, there was one that specifically broke my heart. This woman went on a rampage about how unprofessional I am and that I should leave the business of event planning to those that have the passion for it. My fingers were

itching to reply but I ended up deleting everything. She was well within her right. I missed out on a plethora of events. I replied with apologies to all and noted down the three ones at the top in my phone. Two of them were sent a week ago and one landed in the inbox last night. I finished off my soda and flagged for the bill. Joe was no where in sight. I then went out and collected a some items in a few clothing shops. I might as well spend the money my husband randomly sends into my account because I barely touch it. As I was separating the

hangers, the odd phonecall I received let itself into my mind and queued for processing. I decided to ignore and continue with my retail therapy. It then just sat there, at the back of my mind noticeably crossing its legs and casually waving for attention.

...

I ran my fingers on the table I was seated on while waiting for her to arrive and looked turned my hand to see for any dust particles. I have no idea why I did that but I was anxious. I had no idea why I was there in the first place. The drivers generally

mind their own business, which is more than I can say for the guards at the gate. I got into contact with curiosity and as always, it won. She was brought by a female warder in khaki uniform with her hands cuffed to her front. She across me and the glass that separated us was my only insurance against an unstable woman. She did not look appetizing. She looked like she was interrupted out of a boxing match. A boxing match she was clearly losing judging from how her eye was covered in black.

"Hi", she lets out a tremulous

greeting. I just stare. My brain was blank. I did not have any idea how I should greet her back.

"You're probably wondering why I called you here", she says and immediately lets out a nervous smile, which shortly transitions into a very brief laugh. I was about to have a conversation with crazy in human form.

"You look... what happened to you?", I couldn't help but ask. If she goes on like this she will not exit this prison as a breathing organism. She placed her hand on her eye, carefully but still flinched anyway. I then realized I was

unintentionally frowning then straightened my face.

"Don't worry about this. My girlfriend protects me now", she says and fidgets around on her chair, trying to find a comfortable sitting position. She looked nothing like the woman I used to see before she got arrested. She looked very sane and kept together before prison.

"You have a girlfriend?", I inquired.

"I had no choice. Listen, I need you to speak to Muzi and Mabuyi on my behalf. You're the only one they'll listen to", she says and I

immediately swallows.

"Is that way you called me here?", I ask and she drops her head. She definitely is not used to begging.

"You and Mbuso...", I almost shout and I immediately pull myself together. I get closer to get her.

"You and Mbuso plotted to have me kidnapped and taken out of the country and you exp...", I say with my teeth clenched

"I swear. I know nothing about your kidnapping I just know he wanted Mabuyi dead", she confesses with her hands up in surrender

"Stop lying or else I'm gonna get up from here and leave", I threaten.

"I swear. You say he wanted to take you out of the country why would've I called you if I knew you were not here?", she goes on and I thin my eyes at her.

"Please. My parents want nothing to do with me and Muzi is the only who can get me out of here.

Please I really need to get out and I can't get a hold of Mbuso", her eyes were starting to tear up.

"I don't even know what I am doing here", I say and get up.

"I'm pregnant!", the words are quick to jump out of her mouth as I was about to leave. I turn back and looked at her askance. She swallowed.

"You're pregnant?", I repeat her statement, seeking clarity.

"It's Mbuso's", she reveals with her eyes out like a traumatized stray cat. Holy gravy!

...

I was driven back and all I could mull over was the bomb Lihle called me to prison to drop right on top of my head. I got out of the car and the driver took the few plastic and paper bags that

belonged to me out of the boot. He walked in front of me and into the house. I signalled that he can take them upstairs.

"Yiliphi igumbi lakho ma'am?" (which one is your room?), he asked.

"Just leave me on your right when you get to the end of the staircase", I instruct and he nods. I take a bottle of water out of the fridge and gulp it down. I could hear the family in the living making noise, probably playing a boardgame of some sort. Muzi walks into the kitchen and immediately smiles.

"Hey you", he says and kisses me on the forehead. I close my eyes and open them when he moves his face from mine.

"I forgot. I'm sorry", he lowly says and I just nod with my slightly stretched, pursed lips. I've already dealt with it emotionally because he sent an apology through text before this live one.

"Why didn't you tell me you were leaving?", he asked.

"You were nowhere to be found and besides, I think I needed the time alone", I say and he presses my shoulders.

"You could've called. I'm just glad you got out for some air"

"Yeah. Kea tsamaya kamoso" (I'm leaving tomorrow), I said. He exhaled.

"I thought you were leaving the day after tomorrow?", he says and raises his brow.

"You need some time with your wife and I need to move in"

"I hope I didn't hurt your feelings in any way", he gently says and I softly shake my head.

"A single day won't make a difference. Plus, I need to start with my regular check ups.

Everything has been so chaotic",

I say and wrap my hands around him. He places his hand on my hand and we just stand there and hug, in silence.

UNEDITED. ☐

Insert 86.

"Somebody is really hungry", he said before he could drive off from the drive through at McDonald's. I dug into the paper bag immediately after receiving it. The cravings had me by the neck. He had a smile stuck on his face. He's really a beautiful human being. Made me wonder what my babies would come out looking like.

I continued to eat while we listened to the morning radio. He looked really tired and the fact that he had to drive back left a few cracks on my heart. He could've easily sent me away with a driver but he insisted on taking me home himself.

"Muzi?", I lowly call out.

"Baby?", he responds without turning to look at me. Keeping his eyes on the road. I kept quiet while my brain processed the quality of my sentence. He then turned towards me with a curious look on his face.

"Are you okay?", he asked.

"Yeah I'm fine. It's just... there's nothing going on between Kgokagano and I. That day was...", I explain. Sometimes when he's dreadfully quiet, I tend to think that this forms a part of his thoughts.

"I'm over that", he interrupts and continues driving. I keep silent. He then turns his softened face towards him and takes my hand. Luckily, the road wasn't as busy as it usually is.

"I trust you. Okay? I choose to. If you say there's nothing going on then there's nothing going on. I'm just going through the most

right now but I'm gonna fix everything so all our lives go back to normal and we can also go away siyoshawa umoya" (... we can get some fresh air).

He brushed my hand and I nodded.

"I know this is hard for you.

We've been dealing with one thing to the next since we our wedding night whereas we should be at our happiest. I promise, it'll blow over. Okay?", he assures and I smile. He sighs continues driving.

...

We finally get to my mother's house and he brings the car to a

halt, shortly resting on the backrest of his leather seat. I do the same. My mother called during the trip to let me know that I might not find her home. The doors and windows were closed so I just knew she was not yet back.

"Do you know that you have a beauty spot at the back of your neck?", he mentions while caressing my hand with both of his.

"What? No", I reflexively disagreed and immediately turned my head to 'see' it. He cracked into a fit of laughter and I joined.

What was I thinking.

"So your smart a** thinks you can actually see the back of your neck?", he continued to have a field day with me. I laughed, sucked my teeth and looked away.

...

"Ungibingelelele ku ma ngoba it doesn't look like she's gonna come back soon" (Greet your mom for me...), he informs after taking a quick glance at his watch. We had been sitting in the car for about an hour. He kissed me for the last time and made sure to leave a hickey on my collar bone. He yawned before he could drive off.

I offered that he comes in and has a nap before he could leave and he turned me down. His reason being that he can't sleep in my mother's house. I knew there was no convincing him so I let it go.

I bent potplant in the corner of the porch looking for the house keys and I found it there. I've been trying to get my own key but mom says you can't have a key to somebody else's house. I did not even try to argue any further after she stated her reason why I shouldn't have a key to my own home. I unlocked the door and

stepped in. I immediately pulled the curtains open and also opened the windows to allow the natural light to come through. The thought of Mbuso tried to cross my mind but I immediately blocked it out. My next steps led me to the living room where I sat and called Tumi hoping that he would be free. He rejected my call and immediately sent me a message saying he's on call.

I had been sitting on the couch for about 40 minutes with absolutely no intention to get up when mom came back. I could hear the contents of her grocery

bags carefully colliding with the table top.

"Filwe!", she yelled from the kitchen.

"Ka fa!" (I'm in here), I yell back. She shortly appears with a wide smile and I just knew she was about to provoke me.

"Gatwe "Ka fa" ? O itshwanna le bona ba bareng geba kokota bare "Ke nna!". KE WENA MANG?" (What's the meaning of "In here?". You're no different to the people who always say "It's me" when they knock on the door. WHO ARE YOU?) she says and pushes my feet off the couch so

she can sit.

"Aowa tsamaa go nna go ela couch hle mma" (Go sit on the other couch), I complained.

"Aowi! Tota o bata go ntirela molao ka ntlung yame, kadi couch tsame!? Ga bago loya?" (You honestly want to set rules for me in my own house with regard to my own couches? Are you not somehow bewitched?), she says and a smile forms on my lips, which later transitions into a laugh. I missed her. She then pulls me into a hug and I wrap my hands around her. She smelt of a bunny chow.

"Bareng Matsulu?" (How are the Zulus), she says and I laugh some more.

"Stop calling them that", I called her to order.

We spent the remaining few hours of the daytime together and had buttered bread and tea for supper. None between the two of us was willing to slave away on the stove nor chop anything.

After washing the dishes, she went to her room and came back with a mass of wool and a needle to do my hair, which was a hot mess under my wig. I sat in between her thighs. She was

watching a Nigerian movie and fixing my hair at the same time. "You've lost weight. Are you okay?", she unexpectedly drops the question in front of me. I dart my eyes around before I can tell her I am fine. She sighed and continued to part my hair with the comb she had in hand. I kept my head bent to the side while sitting ontop of a cushion on the floor. I knew she wasn't convinced but she let it go. It is going to back though.

"Mom?"

"Hmm?", she responds with her eyes on the screen.

"Do I have a beauty spot on the back of my neck?", I ask and she laughs.

"Why o botsa nkarr ke cancer?" (Why are you asking as though it's a sign of cancer?), she says and continues handling my hair. I flinch when she pulls too hard.

"Askiies. You do", she reports back and I laugh internally.

...

"RISE AND SHINE SLEEPY HEAD!", Tumi screams in my hear and I pull my whole face.

"What the actual f***? It's 7 in the morning", I scold after

squinting at my phone for time.

"Don't tell me about numbers bit**

I haven't seen you in 2 complete decades", he says drops his whole weight on the bed. His feet land on my butt.

"Come on get up. Let's go make breakfast", he prompts and pulls my sheets off me. I release a scream through my tightly clenched teeth.

"Yes I am a demon. Tell me something I don't know. Now get up", he was already on his feet, fetching my robe from the closet. He takes it and hands it to me. I had no choice but to drag my

sleepy self to the kitchen with him. I pulled the chair out of the table and collapsed on it. Half of my brain was still asleep and he was already breaking eggs.

"You brought wings?", I say as I pull the Chicken Licken plastic on the table. I was already chewing on one before he could respond.

"Yes I know you like I know Carl's drawer for underwears", he says and switches on the stove.

"And you didn't brush your teeth missy", he adds before he could open the top cupboard to take out the bottle of cooking oil.

"Who's Carl? What happened to

Thomas?", I interrogate.

"Let's not go there. He has a banana shaped penis. I cannot for the life of me begin to deal", he says and I explode in laughter. Mom appears from the corridor and greets us both. We greet her back.

"Where's my hairdryer wena Moratoa?", he immediately shoots and takes out 2 wings without permit. Tumi laughs and closes both his eyes with his palms.

"Ota le go lla" (You're gonna cry soon), she threatens and Tumi laughs louder.

"Mara ga o llisha nna mogosi otiao

topa kae mmagowena?" (When you intend to make me cry where do you suppose you'll get the latest scoops?)

"Hey gakena sepe le mogosi" (I don't care about gossip), she says and smiles into the cup of water she had in hand.

"Aoww! Ka nnete!?" (Is that correct?), Tumi prods and I laugh at their episode. Mom finishes off her water and leaves. We both don't bother to ask where she is going looking all dapper because we knew better.

After Tumi was done making breakfast, we migrated to the

living room with a tray of two plates. I was having tea and coffee for him.

"Mama wa jola", he stated after he placed the tray on the coffee table and crossed his fingers to show that he meant whatever he just said. I looked at at him and burst out a loud laugh.

"Helang. You don't believe me?", he says and switches on the TV.

"And, she's not only dating but the man is loaded. Mark my words", he said and I continued laughing as I patiently blew air onto my tea so it can be cool enough to drink. Muzi called and I

answered. We spoke for about 15 minutes with Tumi rolling his eyes every second, wanting me to wrap up the call and pay attention to him.

"Finally!", he said in annoyance before he could take a huge bite off his toast. I laughed.

"But on a serious note though, are you good? You didn't sound like yourself over the past few days on the phone", he said and I sighed.

"Ah friend. What can I say? We'll be alright", I say and continue chewing and scrolling my Instagram.

"I knew getting married to a rich snack like him was a bad idea.

Especially in polygamy", he says and slurps his coffee.

"Don't start. It's not like I had a choice", I defend my case.

"If you did, would you make the same decision twice?", he says and waits for me to respond with his cup hanging in air.

"I don't know. I love him. But sharing him kinda gets tough", I said and have some more of my tea, with one hand on the hand and the other hugging the side of the cup. He was forcing me to

think about stuff my brain does like entertaining.

...

We later drove to Protea hotel to go fetch my car that I left donkey years ago before I abruptly left for the Zulu mountains. The plan was that he was going to drop me off and drive to work. He did that and we hugged before I can get out of the car.

"Halaview" (I love you), he says dramatically before I can close the passenger door.

"Halaviewtoo" I say and we both laugh. He drives away and I make

my way in. On the way, I was rummaging through my bag to find my car keys.

"I am so sorry", he says after bumping into me. We share a 2 second eyelock before he can go down and pick my bag up and place the fallen contents back inside.

"I should look where I'm going. I'm sorry for this", I say when he gets up and hands the bag to me. Only, he kept the book that fell out in his hand.

"How life imitates chess?"

Interesting...", he says and curves his lip to meet his chin as he marvels at the book.

"You play?", he asks before he could hand to me.

"What? Chess? Oh no. This was a gift and I've just kept in here ever since, hoping to read it somehow, somewhere", I say awkwardly and he laughs. His eyes light up when he does. His smile complements his fairly dark skin.

"It's by Garry Kasparov. You should read it. Wise man that one", he soft spokenly says and places his hands in his pockets. I laugh. He laughs too and says "That reaction tells me you're never reading that book", he says and a sharp laughter shoots out

my lips.

"I will man"

"There's nothing with admitting that it's not your kinda scene. Can I have it and buy you one that you will ACTUALLY read?", he tries to cut a deal. I can't help the laughter that my vocal cords insist on producing at length.

"You play?", I ask.

"Yeah I do. You should too", he says and I nod.

"Vilakazi. Mphathi Vilakazi", he extends his hand after he announces.

UNEDITED. ☐

Insert 87.

I just gave a random stranger two personal things in less than 10 minutes. My number and a gift that was meant for me. He promised to get me another one but now that I think about it, I should've just let him keep it and left at it that.

A trail of these thoughts invaded my mind as I drove back home. I got at the house and my mom wasn't home.

"Where is this woman?", I mumble my way to the bedroom to go change. I then went to the kitchen to get started with

dinner. Dumplings and stew.
That's what we're having for dinner. I kept hoping that she would walk in and keep me company as I cooked but wasn't and her phone was off. It was just me, the pots and vlogs on Youtube.

Muzi called and we spoke for a while till he "had to go". When I lifted my phone from my ear, I noticed a text from Thando.

"Sis. I don't think I can do this", the text read.

"Do what? The abortion?", I replied. Just typing the word 'abortion' made my stomach turn

a bit. She did not reply. I tried calling her but she wasn't answering.

"Why is everyone insisting on driving me insane today?", I was pissed because I couldn't call Muzi to check up on her. I called Evelyn instead and she said she will handle it, and also reminded me to keep it to myself. This family eats and lives on secrets. It's simply their way of life.

...

"Halo my darly!", that was my jolly good mom walking as I dished up, slowly dancing around with a wide smile on her face and her hand

hanging her red silk scarf in the air.

"Where have you been? Ke a. It's late!", I went off at her. I was beginning to worry about her safety.

"He-eh. Aotlo nkgadimutsa okarr ke ngwana" (Don't yell at me like I'm a child), a fierce frown pushed the smile off her face. We both breathed out to calm down.

"Otswa kae?" (Where have you been?), I inquired.

"Ke tswa diplekeng. Go jewa eng?" (Places. What's for dinner?), she said as she picked up some meat from one of the plates and

chewed. I just shook my head and went to grab a knife in order to slice the dumpling.

"Let me go freshen up. I'll join you in a bit", she informed and I kept my eyes on the food I was working with.

"Hee mosadi. Obe moody ko KZN. Not in my house. Awa preggisa ke nna" (Go be moody at KZN... I'm not the one who made you pregnant), she said and left the kitchen. A light laugh blessed my face.

...

"Let's go on a holiday. All expenses paid.", she says and interrupts the harmony of the silence that was in the room. I raised my face to her.

"Holiday to where?", I asked, wondering about this sudden idea for a retreat.

"I don't know. Somewhere... refreshing maan", she then responds with a passion.

"Cape Town?", I suggest.

"The Bahamas", she says and I almost choke on my stew.

"You said all expenses paid?", I reiterate with the back of my index finger against my nostrils

with a folk in my hand. She continued chewing.

"My brain and mouth are in partnership. They don't work independently. I heard what I said", she states and I shoot out an immediate laugh.

"Are you coming or not?", she adds "Mama otlo patala ka eng?" (How are you going to afford such a trip?), I inquire. In total shock. I even questioned the sobriety of her state of mind.

"Tlogela go mpotsa dipotso ake thakago" (Stop questioning me I am not your peer), she says and picks up the remote to switch on

the TV. I just stared.

"Okay ge we can..."

"He eh didimala. The offer no longer stands. Onale molomo" (No keep quiet... You have too big of a mouth), she interrupted me midsentence.

"Bathong...", I was speechless.

After dinner, I went to my room and immediately attended to my phone that I had left on the bed. I had two missed calls from Muzi and one from an unknown number. I tried called him back but he didn't pick up. Twice. I then called the unknown number.

"Sawubona", a deep, husky voice

greeted from the other end of the line.

"He-lllo. I'm sorry but I missed a call from this number. Who's this?", I asked.

"It's Vilakazi, miss", he reported and I immediately remembered.

"Oh hi. And it's Missus", I corrected.

"Hawu. How did I miss your ring then?", he questions and i exhale.

"Because I wasn't wearing it", I flatly state.

"O-kay. I take it your husband is not home"

"Why would you assume that?"

"Because, we wouldn't be having

this conversation if he was", he says and I exhale, again.

"How can I help you, Mphathi?", I said and he huffs out a low laugh.

"I didn't get what kind of books you like to read?"

"It's okay. You don't have to get me anything."

"That was not our initial agreement though", he calmly says.

"Well I'm changing it now", I say and pull the comforter for me to get in bed.

"For an agreement to change, all parties involved have to be

INVOLVED in changing the agreement", he says and I laugh.

"Look, I am tired and I need to get some sleep. Goodnight"

"Get some sleep?", inquisitively he asks.

"Yeah"

"Without the husband?"

"Yoh motho wa Modimo. Bye", I say and cut the call and slip into thoughts that usher me to sleep.

...

A call from Muzi woke me up from deep sleep.

"Hey baby", he greeted.

"Hey love"

"Were you still sleeping? Haibo it's

9 in the morning vuka bo!", he mocked and laughed.

"Awungiyeka Mbulazi" (Leave me alone), I said, still half asleep. He continued laughing. I could listen to this man laugh all day and never get tired of it.

"Ngiyadlala. You can sleep for the whole day if you want", he says, sounding like he's getting settled and seated. The sounds in the background made it obvious that he was outside.

"You're still enjoying home? I've booked you an appointment with a gynae in Joburg for next week", he said and I got up, yawning. My

body felt heavy.

"You did?", I lazily asked.

"Are you even listening to me?", he asked, laughing.

"Yazin? Qhubeka ulale.

Sizokhuluma yezwa?" (You know what? Continue sleeping. We'll talk okay?), he said, still laughing at how much I was battling with sleep. I laughed as well.

"Ngiyabonga sthandwasami", I said and settled my head back on my pillow. I had no energy, even for a mere conversation.

When I finally got up, it was midday and hot. If it wasn't for sheets baking my skin then I

would've woken up a while later than that. I wasn't feeling well. I wasn't sick sick but I was feeling like marinated crap. I attended to my phone and found a text message from Tumi which read "B**** I'm trying to call you". He called again before I could collect myself and call him back. "You were still sleeping? You can't. You honestly cannot!", he said, sounding like he was pacing the hospital. The noise behind him alerted me of his location. Hospitals have this unique and obvious echo to them. An echo that includes baby cries and

disembodied conversations.

"I was. I'm not feeling too good",
I lowly say. My voice was also not
cooperating.

"You sound like a sick drunkard.
Come. I'll check you out", he says
and cuts the call. I drag myself
out of bed and make my way to
the bathroom. I instantly knew
that my mom wasn't around
because she would've woken me up
3 centuries ago. Whatever top
secret that calls her name every
morning must be very important.

...

"Your blood pressure is
satisfactory but your

temperature is 4 degrees higher than normal. You're probably catching a cold", Tumi says after he pulls the thermometer out of my mouth. I was seated and he was standing over me in his navy-blue scrubs.

"And you need a haircut", I say and he laughs, brushing his hand over his hair.

"Life's kak. There's no time for that", he says and continues with his writings. I laugh lightly.

"Your ex was asking about you", he says, pulls a chair and wheels himself around in it.

"How is he?"

"I can't disclose that", he says and fixes his pen into the top pocket of his top.

"Since when?", I ask and he drags the pretentious zip on his mouth. I laugh.

"Okay okay. Can I see him then?", I ask and drops his face to look at me suspiciously.

"I just wanna know what... I just wanna see how he's doing", I say and get up, taking my bag from the table.

"Okay. I'll take you to him. Just... you know what? Nevermind. Let's go", he says and we leave the room.

Tumi just showed me where to enter and passed. When I got in, he turned his head towards me and immediately smiled.

"Hey you", he weakly said and I just stared before I could remember that I need to greet back.

"Hey"

"Come in", he said and I walked towards him.

"How are you?", I asked as I pulled a chair to sit.

"Alive", he said and laughed. I didn't.

"Were you afraid you were gonna lose me?"

"Stop it. I just came to see how you were doing", I said and he nodded with a downwardly curved lip.

"What happened?", I asked. I needed to connect the dots between Mbuso's theory and the accidents. If they were any dots to connect.

"Why?", he asked and I cleared my throat.

"Because you know that he's responsible for my accident.

That's why you're asking", he said and kept his eyes on me.

"Who?"

"Stop playing games Betso. You

were there when he threatened me!"

"If you're talking about Muzi you're heavily mistaken"

"Were you not there when he said..."

"I WAS but... you threatened him too!"

"I didn't act on it but because he's a coward he sent his brother to come threaten me and ultimately do his dirty job for him!", he argues back. His brother?

Insert 88.

"Which brother are you talking about KG?", I lowly asked and fidgeted on the seat of my chair. He also brought his chest down and swallowed. Then kept quiet. Mbuso wouldn't have fought Muzi'a battles. If it was him then it means he was pushing his own agenda. If it's Mandoba then Muzi definitely knows something about this accident.

"Which broth..."

"Please leave", he made sure my sentence was short-lived. I exhaled then got up to leave.

When I got to the door,

"Are you gonna get him

arrested?", I couldn't help but ask.

He kept his eyes on the black TV screen. It was off but he attentively kept them glued there.

"No. Your precious husband is not going to jail", he said and I felt some air of relief immediately circulating my lungs.

"But this is not over, not by a long shot", he added. What?

"What do you..."

"I mean exactly that. Bye Betso"
Kgokagano's words (read as threat) baptized my brain in a pool full of stress as I drove

home. If he is planning something malicious then I have to warn Muzi about it but, I have to be smart about it because I can't exactly tell him that I went to see my ex. An ex that almost dropped an ink, a stain that would've served as the full stop to my marriage. I got home and my mom was still not home. I wasn't even about to bother myself with her secretive whereabouts. I had bigger problems to deal with. I called Muzi and he picked up, surprisingly, never said a word. "Baby? Are you there?", I

checked.

"Yeah. Yeah I'm here", he finally responded. He sounded distracted.

"You good?", he asked.

"No are YOU okay?"

"Why do you ask?", he replied. He was rather, distant. Aloof.

"No you just sound besides yourself. Are you okay?"

"I'm alright", he said and sounded as if he just downed a glass of something. Most probably whiskey.

"U grand wena?" (Are you okay?), he asked. Something about his mood was making me nervous.

"Yeah I'm fine. How was your

day?"

"The usual. How was yours?", he asked back.

"Uhm, the usual", I had to say.

"Mmm", he muttered.

"Is your laptop okay now?", he asked. I had told him that it freezes and jams whenever it feels like.

"Yeah it's fine. It's been behaving since the last time we spoke"

"Are you ready to move tomorrow?", he asked.

"Yeah", I replied.

"Excited?"

"Yeah but..."

"I know I know. I'm gonna join

you soon. The break was a bad idea", he states and my heart smiles.

"I miss you", I'm quick to respond.

"I know my love. Everything is gonna go back to normal soon", he says and I immediately think back to the plans he had to have me and Mabuyi in the same yard.

"What time are the truck guys coming?", I enquired.

"Don't worry about them. Just pack your suitcase and I'll have somebody fetch you okay?"

"What about my car? I can drive myself", I state in vindication.

"Hell will have transform to a

garden of roses first", he calmly says and I laugh.

"I'm an adult. You tend to forget this"

"A pregnant adult. Bheka I have to go. Ngik'thanda ukufa yezwa?" (I love you to death), he rushingly said and ended the call.

...

I did most of the packing the previous day. My mom helped me finish up in the morning around 5. "I thought you were gonna be against me moving and stuff", I said as I folded the jean which no longer fit me, against my chest. She exhaled and continued zipping

up one of my suitcases.

She then sunk down on the bed and pulled me by my hand so I sit next to her.

"You know I love you right?", she said and brushed my palm with hers.

"But? Are you giving me up for adoption?", I jokingly said and she released an immediate laugh.

"O makgakga kana" (I tend to forget that you can be silly sometimes), she said and continued laughing. Her laughter always forces a smile from my lips, no matter the type of mood it may be buried in. Her laughter will

always find a way to unbury it from the deepest wells of any type of depression.

"Listen, this is your home. I'm still your mother. But, you're somebody's wife now. It's about high time I accepted it. I needed an earful from Ro...", she then abruptly cut her statement short.

"From who?", I prodded.

"All I'm saying is, you're still my child but I'm butting out of your business now", she states.

"That's a first", I said.

"There's a time and place for everything"

"Wena nah. Wise woman", I mocked and she softly hit the top of my hand.

"Can I ask you question?", I asked. Risking my whole life.

"Depends", she said, looking at me with suspicion.

"On?", I stared at her back.

"Just ask motho wa Modimo"

"Wa jola?" (Are you dating anyone?)

"Is that something to do with Marshall arts or a cooking show?", she says and starts whistling.

She just admitted without even realizing it. I laughed in disbelief.

"Momma!", my eyes followed hers,

which were running a marathon on the ceiling.

"Ke eng!?" (What is it?), she loudly exclaimed.

"Ke mang?" (Who is he?)

"Let me go pack you food for the road okay?", she says and stands up, trying her most extreme best to conceal a smile.

"Heeee...", I say and she walks out. I could hear her disembodied laughter disappearing with her down the corridor.

...

"Would you like to stop by the shops ma'am before we proceed with our trip?", he asked but

kept his eyes on the road. He's so professional. He's even wearing a suit.

"No thank you. I have everything I need here", I say and pat the plastic bag full of snacks as I devoured my mother's toasted sandwiches. She was generous with the bacon. And the cheese. The only thing that made me impatient with the trip was my back. My back was aching. I had ran out of adjustments to my sitting position. Even the pressure pillow I had placed behind me was fed up with doing me favors. Muzi kept texting to

check up on me ever since I told him about the back pain. I know he's panicking and he's doing a very terrible job at hiding it. I ended up locking my phone and putting it away. The driver's phone rang minutes later and because my ears did not come with lids,

"Ta?"

"Vandag?"

"Nou?"

"Hao"

"No ayikho inkinga" (There's no problem)

"Alright sure"

I keep my eyes fixed at him

hoping for an update. He glanced at the rear view mirror and continued driving. I eventually fell asleep.

...

"Ma'am?"

"Mrs K?", he repeatedly said, trying to wake me up.

"We're here already?", I said and a yawn escaped my lips.

"Yes", he said and made his way out of the car. I looked out the window and my eyes stuck on a board above a concrete building.

'Dr Masingi. Gynaecology and Obstetrics', it read. He indicated with his hand that I should come

out. I did, with my handbag.

"Mr Khumalo said to bring you here. You'll find me waiting for you here outside", he muffled due to the cigarette in between his dark lips and set it alight, walking away from me. The sun was out and I'm guessing he was taking advantage of his now free time to bathe in its warmth. I got in and completed all the paperwork I need to at reception and was guided to her office. The waiting area was empty. I purposelessly inspected. The inside of the place was cold. I got in and she immediately stood up with a smile,

taking off her glasses.

"I was expecting you. How do you do?", she cheerfully said, pulling me into an embrace.

"I'm okay. How are you?", I greeted back like a normal person.

"I'm okay. Are you really?", she interrogated. I laughed. It sounded like she had been briefed.

"I am but my back is not"

"Mm I see. Back pain is normal in your condition but come this side", she said and led me to her evaluation bed. She made me lie on my back and applied a very cold gel on my stomach. I flinched a bit. She laughed.

When we were done, she went back to her chair and I sat up to get dressed.

"I'm gonna draw some blood and send it to the lab neh? Don't panic. Nothing is wrong. I just like to make sure", she said and I nodded.

"Is there any history of genetic birth defects in either yours or your husband's family?", she asked with her pen over her folder, waiting to jot down.

"Not that I know of"

"Oookay", she said and wrote down. She asked a couple of questions and I tried to be as

transparent as I possibly could. She then instructed that I stay away from caffeine and I nodded. "Do you have any questions?", she asked and closed the file at the same time.

"I've been experiencing a lot of heartburn and indigestion lately. I've been one to suffer from these"

"Those are normal too. See, when you're pregnant, your body is going through **HEAVY** hormonal changes and imbalances. It's like a paradigm shift from how it used to operate under normal circumstances, resulting in your

digestive system feeling a little out of place. What you can do is, include a lot of fibre in your diet and please for the love of the Gods of babies, avoid acids. A majority of pregnant women tend to give in to this craving for cola fizzy drinks. Don't allow the devil to use dear mom", she said and I laughed. We ended up talking about a whole lot of other things unrelated to the appointment. I like her.

"Thank you doc"

"Please, call me Masingita. I'll email you with your appointment dates"

"So your name is Masingita Masingi?", I asked and she laughed.

"Yes yes I get that a lot. My parents can rhyme", she said and we both exploded in fits of laughter.

"Here's my card. Should you encounter any problem, do call me. Any time of day", she said and handed it to me.

...

When I was done with Dr Masingita, I went back outside and we continued with our trip. It took as approximately fifteen minutes to get to the house. I

instantly fell in love with the garden and how serene the neighborhood seemed. All I could hear was birds chirping. No traffic. No hooting. He unloaded the bags from the boot and the front door went open. A lady came out and greeted us. I just concluded that she was the help from her attire. She introduced herself as Nombuso. It was at that very moment where I realized that I did not catch the driver's name. I waited for him to come back from the house to ask. He laughed before he could tell me. His name is Bangizwe. He

told me he had errands to run, got into his car and left. I was left with Nombuso. She was all smiles and had a ready laugh. We walked into the house and she showed me around. I had to ask if she was going to be here full time. It made everything awkward. She might've perceived it as me disliking her.

"When I got hired, one of the terms were that I would move in so I can be at your service should you need me", she said and I nodded.

"You speak such good English", I complimented.

"Oh thank you. A lot of people always get shocked at this.

Considering the kind of work I do", she said and got me thinking. She's definitely older than me but way younger than Muzi.

"How long have you been working as a maid?", I asked.

"6 months. I completed my bachelor of nursing 5 years ago", she informed, placing both her hands in the large front pocket of her apron.

"Why aren't you a nurse?", I investigated. It didn't make sense.

"Ah sisi. Witchcraft", she said, I

could sense that I was somehow peeling wounds. We walked over to the living room. The house was well designed and thought through but, I had no chance to marvel at it considering the nature of the conversation. We sat down and she exhaled. Deeply. "What do you mean?", I prodded. "Apparently my maternal aunt made dead sure that I don't amount to anything. I was working for uBhut Sabelo before I came here. He said it's an emergency and your husband made it clear that it's temporary", she explained and I tried to trace her

thoughts and feelings.

"Where to from here? You're going back to Sabelo?", I asked.

"Yes", she firmly confirmed.

"Do they know of your situation?", I asked.

"Who? My bosses?", she asked.

"Yes"

"Ah bhut Sabelo is always on the road. He's barely at the house and I doubt he even knows my name.

With Mr Muzi, the phone call interview I had with him was very brief and it sounded like he was way too busy for niceties", she said.

"Do you still want to be a nurse?"

"With all my heart. And ultimately become a doctor", she beamed with excitement and I couldn't fathom the sudden feeling that had overcome my heart.

"Okay. You can go", I said and she quickly stood up to leave.

...

I met the chef, exchanged greetings, gave him a list of things I don't eat then proceeded upstairs to the bedroom. I needed a hot shower. When I got in, I found a macbook on top of the bed, a planner, flowers and a box of chocolates. I picked up the bunch of white roses and nasally

took in the scent. I noticed there was a note stuffed in there. When I opened it, it read,

"Hope you love our new home Mrs Me. Hopefully, I didn't stuff up with my choice in the interior decorator but if I did, let me know so I can something about it. My biggest flex is being able to make you happy. If I lose that, I'd have failed as a man. Should I fuck up, please bear with me. Love always.

The worst hubby who's only willing to love you the best way possible"

I read it thrice and was emotional each time. I wiped my tears and called my husband to thank him for the gifts. He rejected the call and sent a message a minute later, alerting that he is in a meeting with the family adults. I placed the phone on the bed and went to wheel my suitcase closer so I can take out my toiletries.

Instead of a shower, I opted for a hot bath instead. Refreshing is an understatement. I felt like a completely new person afterwards. When I was busy lotioning my hands with a white

towel around my body, a call came through from an unknown but familiar number. I ignored.

Nombuso knocked on the door and announced that dinner was ready. I told her to put my food in the microwave. I needed a power nap before anything else.

...

I've never been in a desert before but this was it. This is what I always see on TV. But there was an endless, continuous stream. Clear blue water as if extracted from the big blue sky. It calmly and steadily flowed in the direction I was headed in. I

could hear it. I was barefoot and wearing a white dress. When I raised my eyes to the other side, there was a large collection of trees, enough to classify the place as a forest, in a dessert. When I brought my eyes back, I was immediately met by Muzi's charming smile and beaming eyes, only, he had grey hair.

"Sawubona", he said and I laughed. He shortly joined me and the sound of the laughter grew and amplified. I asked him if he was trying to charm me all over again. He pursed his lips into a smile and shook his head.

"Ngifuna nje ukukunika loku" (I just want to give you this), he said and suspended a string of colorful beads from his hand and extended it to me. His other hand was in his pocket and he was also barefoot. The bottoms of his trousers were folded. We locked eyes and I extended my hand to take it. He did not release it. We held both ends, with our eyes still locked in one other's. A huge and violent tornado approached out of nowhere. I could see its funnel shape twisting in our direction but he was unfazed. I was a second away from panicking. We

were still holding on to the beaded string and I looked away as it engulfed the both of us. I waited for it to pass but I could feel that the string was coming apart at the same time. The sharpness of the dust and soil attacked my face and it passed. When I finally opened my eyes, I realized that I was left with only two beads in my hand and the others had obviously fell into the water. The string was just aimlessly floating above. The water was now soiled and unappealing. When I looked ahead, I saw Muzi slowly and patiently

walking into the dark forest, with his back against me and his hands, as usual, in his pockets.

Insert 89.

It has been 3 days since I moved in and I have settled in well, even though all I do is eat and watch Grey's anatomy. Muzi is coming home tomorrow and I can't wait to see him. The last time I spoke to him was about 2 hours ago on the phone. I sat on my bed all snuggled up in a dark grey throw, which complements my white bedding well. I'm officially an adult. Jokes. I've never

understood the hype around white sheets but these are a comfort zone for my soul. This is the second party pack of Lays I'm having today. My weight is none of my business at this moment. Whoever feels they need to mind it can be my guest.

Winter has officially began and it started on an aggressive note. It's mad cold today and I am not impressed. My windows have a good relationship with the position of the sun. When the sun is out my room gets full, maximum exposure. Today, it's not even 4 pm yet but it's already

amateurishly dark. I heard strong footsteps coming up the stairs. Patiently running up the stairs. I waited to see who of such insolent boldness was coming to disturb my me time. I was waiting for them to knock but the opened the door instead. He walked in and pushed his hood off his head. I jumped out of bed and ran to him. He immediately laughed and opened his arms wide for me to fall into them.

"Careful", he whispered when I finally got to him. I wrapped my arms around him. Tightly. He reciprocated by squeezing one arm

around me. The other had his black sports bag in it. I smelt and took in every particle of his scent. My man smells good. He always smells good.

I tightened the hug even further. He dropped the bag and wrapped both arms around. Mixed emotions started overpowering me and I began sniffing.

"I'm sorry", he huskily said.

"For what?", I asked.

"I don't know. Everything. You know how much I hate seeing you cry", he explained. A laugh escaped my lips.

"But you don't know why I'm

crying", I said, with my head still on his chest.

"Kodw' uyakhala. That's what I'm concerned about" (But you're crying...), he sincerely says and I laugh harder.

"I just missed you", I expressed. He put his hands on my shoulders, gently pushed me away and looked me in the eye.

"I missed you too mkami", he says.

"Iring pregnancy mongwanneng. Would you have a look at how gorgeous you are?", he says and I laugh at his skewed pedi accent.

"I know what you're laughing at

and I'm not going to entertain your ass. One more word about how Zulu people don't want to learn other languages and hmmm! Hmm! Ngempela angazi" (I honestly have no idea), he threatened and tried to conceal the fact that I was infecting him with my laughter. He was having a hard time keeping a straight face.

"No baby it's not that...", I tried explaining and he ran a verbal scissor in the middle of my sentence.

"Then yini? Yini!???", he raised his voice and exacerbated the

intensity of my laughter.

"Mciim!", he says when I struggle to contain my laughter and balancing on my knees. He then picks up his bag and says

"Umuntu ak'delele endlini yakho.

Imagine the audacity" (A person

will disrespect you in your own

house...), he complains as he walks

away, still trying to conceal a

laugh.

"Baby wait. I wasn't...", I tried

explaining as I followed him to

the walk-in closet.

"Thula satan" (Shut up), he said

and walked in. I followed. He put

it down and sat on the foot stool

to take off his sneakers.

"I was laughing at your pronunciation baby man it's just...", I said and ran out of deception bundles.

"Just!? Just what? Chaza phela ngilalele" (Explain I'm listening), he said and stood up, taking off his hoodie. The black light sweater he was underneath rised to his chest, exposing his abdomen. A tool the devil can use at any time of day to tempt even the strictest of nuns. He threw the hoodie in the basket and fixed his top.

"Yini sisi? Suyangi rhalela

manje?" (Are you now craving for me?), he said and released a cocky laughter. I wasn't even aware that I was lustfully looking at him. He continued laughing as he put his shoes away. I laughed as well and tried to approach him for a kiss. He held both my hands that were approaching his chest together. His were 'dammitly' cold.

"Unfortunately, I'm Christian", he dead set looked me in the eye to tell me nonsense. I laughed out loud when he walked out and left me in there.

"Khumalo!", I yelled as I followed

him. He was heading to the bathroom.

"Here they are lord. Here to derail your kids and lead them astray", he proclaimed as he walked. I laughed as I walked.

He got there and raised the faucet to allow for the flow of hot water. I hugged him from behind and pillowed my face against his back. He released some handwash from the bottle and washed his hands. I slipped my hands under his top and slowly raised up.

" Nkosiyam uyangizwa na? Ngithi lead us not to temptation but

deliver us from evil" (Lord are you listening?), he said as he continued to wash his hands and I exploded in laughter.

"Stop it", I said and he grabbed a towel to dry his hands. With my hands still around him.

[REMOVED]

...

Our showers together list as one of the things that set our marriage on fire. Muzi cannot keep his hands off me. After we were done getting cleaned up, both of us got dressed in HIS tracksuits and headed downstairs.

He was eager to cook for me after he found out that I have never had fried rice in my life. "You're missing out", his exact words. I asked him if we shouldn't consult with the chef and he said he already spoke to him and the help. I got settled on the chair because I wasn't about the life of touching anything. He took out his ingredient and pre-heated the stove while telling stories about the adorable Ava and that she has been asking about me.

"Baby. How well do you know Nombuso?", I enquired.

"Who's that?", he asked.

"Hao. The help you hired"

"Oh yeah. To be honest, a lot was happening when we spoke so I kinda ...", he explain.

"Forgot her name!?", I laughed.

"I did not "forget" her name. My brain just happened to misplace it", he said and shrugged.

"Yeah right. She needs a job. She's qualified in nursing", I state.

"I'm lost", he says and slighty squints.

"The English I just spoke is straight forward", I said.

Intentionally provoking him.

"Well excuse the f**k out of my gaddam french. I don't understand it.", he retaliated as he opened the fridge. I laughed.

"She has a degree in nursing but is struggling to find a job"

"Ngiyaqala ukuyizwa mina ke leyo" (That's a first)

"I know. I also thought every nursing and teaching student goes straight to work after varsity but after my research, that's not always the case. But with this one as I've said, it's a long story", I further explain.

"You can't give me half-baked stories and expect me to help. Cut

the long story short", he says as he opens the bottom cupboard and scans around.

"Ifihlwaphi irice la ekhaya" (Where do yall hide the rice in this house?), he says as he goes on to open the top.

"She says it has a lot to do with aunts and witchcraft baby man. Are you helping or not?", I ask and drops my palms on the kitchen counter. He turn turns to look at me, standing against the cupboards. He places his hands in his pockets, biting his lower lip. Seemingly thinking.

"Aish. Angazi baby. Most of my

contacts are either in construction, law or retail. I'm trying to think of something but...", he says and crosses his legs. Then bites his lower lip again.

"I'll speak to uMadlamini. Maybe she might be able to help"

"Does she know anybody in the department of health or...?"

"She's a non-practising but qualified doctor. She might be helpful angazi", he says.

"What?", I was astounded. All this time I've been sitting here thinking that the only title to her was a rich, "slay queen" of a

housewife. He laughs at how shocked I am.

"What?", he asks.

"I thought... why is she not practising?", I ask.

"She doesn't like medicine. She has a phobia for blood", he says and continues looking for his rice.

I'd've help him if I knew where it was.

"Why did she study for it then?", I enquire.

"Her father. That man was strict bengimsaba nami. It was either his way or the friggin high way", he said and I was still left in awe. I wasn't surprised that I

didn't know. Generally, she's not a boastful person.

...

To my severe irritation, Muzi's phone was rude enough to wake the both of us up, forcing him to loosen his grip around me because he had been warmly cuddling me. As he continued to speak, I established that it was his mother and whatever it was, it was not good. After he cut the call, he jumped out of bed heading to the bathroom. I followed him, barefoot.

"What's wrong?", I asked as he squeezed some toothpaste onto

his brush.

"Ava is in hospital. Seizures", he says and continues to brush his teeth.

"What? Is she okay? Are they contagious kanti?", I unintentionally bombard him with these questions. He shrugs and continues brushing. He then walks out to the closet and comes out having changed. I grabbed my robes and put it on as he fetched his phone and car keys from the pedestal. It was still unpleasantly cold.

"I'll be back soon okay?", he informs and kisses my forehead.

"Drive safely", I say. He exhales.

"I will. I love you", he says and plants a kiss on my lips.

"I love you too", I say and he stops to look at me for a moment then leaves. As much as I was looking forward to spending time with him and am sad to see him leave, Ava needs him more.

...

"This TV will end up exploding", Nombuso says from behind the couch. She gave me a fright.

"I'm sorry", she apologizes when she notices this. I have been switching and changing channels because nothings interests me on

the television. Not that I was attentively watching but maybe I would've if something caught my attention.

"It's alright. I just didn't hear you come in", I assure.

"Is that The Harvard wife?", she asks, pointing to the book I had placed on the table.

"Yeah it is. I'm reading it for the fifth time but today I can't seem to concentrate", I say and continue to abuse the remote. She laughs.

"Why do you people do that?", she asks.

"Do what? Read a book more than

once?"

"Yeah. I can't read something when I know how the events will unfold", I laugh.

"It happens when you read a good book", I defend.

"Nope. I've read a lot of good books including Nomaswazi, The Royal Mistress and Naledi-His love. I don't read a book more than once", she argues.

"Apart from the book being good, it kills all the anxiety when you know how the book ends. You don't read with a tight chest", I say and we both laugh.

"Hayi qhubekani. Andizi. Do you

mind borrowing it to me? I've been meaning to get it but my cash flow is a bit..."

"Oh no problem! You can have it. I'll get another copy", I inform.

"Thank you so much!", she excitedly expresses. I can't keep my smile away.

"It's a pleasure", I say and grab my phone.

"Hey, she's launching her new book tomorrow. Are you keen?"

"Who? Busisekile?", I take my back off the couch and turn to look at her.

"Yes!", she loudly affirms.

"Thee Busisekile Khumalo?", I

reiterate to make sure.

"Yes!", she laughs at my disbelief.

"Of course I'm keen! I've been wanting to meet her for the longest time. How did I miss that? She surely posted about it on her social platforms right?"

"Search me. All I know is I'm going on an all expenses paid trip tomorrow.", she says and dusts the top of the couch with a smirk on her face and leaves. I laugh in astonishment. So calculating and sneaky!

Insert 90.

Later on in the evening, I ordered takeouts because I had for some reason given the chef 3 days off. The fact that this house is occupied by random people but my husband maims my sanity. The chef doesn't live here but still. Nombuso and I agreed on days where she would sleep over. I don't think I'd handle having here 24/7/365. She can babysit me when I'm in need of company. Yes babysit. That's what Muzi euphemistically hired her for. He didn't want to outright insult my intelligence. Today, she is sleeping over. I have shy demons. They

hate company. Whenever there's people, they refrain from forcing me to confront things I wouldn't be caught thinking about in broad daylight.

My phone rings as I was busy looking for a snack in the cupboard. I'm left with a single box of Oreos and Rice Krispies. The krispies make more sense without milk to me. I need to restock.

"Hello?"

"Evening. It's the delivery guy"

"Oh hi. Are you outside?"

"Yes ma'am. Please make it snappy. My fingers are freezing",

he begs and I laugh. I drop the call and run upstairs to fetch my purse. I then run outside to the gate. He must be really freezing, otherwise, he would've easily been patient enough for the intercom. I get to the gate and walk out to meet him. It's 5 pm but it already looks like mother nature did not settle her electricity bill. "Dumela", I greet him with a smile as he gets off his motorbike.

"Hao. wa bua. I was expecting a white person", he confesses and I laugh.

"Why is that?", I ask as he unclip

my purse to take out my card. "I don't know. I just did", he laughs and hands me the speed point. After I am done, I hand it back to him he gives me a receipt and 2 boxes of pizza. I first put the purse on top before I could take them so I can hold everything properly. He hops on to his transport and I abruptly tell him to wait. My one leg was already in so I placed the boxes down on the yard pavement and opened my purse again. There was a R200 note in there so I took it and gave it to him. I couldn't allow him to leave me

with all that guilt. Muzi instilled this habit in me without even realizing it. Sometimes I even think money loves him for the simple reason that he's always keen on introducing it to new people, for the great price of nothing.

When I reached the house, Nombuso was already done with her bath.

"You smell good", I said as I walked past her. She followed me to the living room. She smiled and asked me if I'd care for a cup of tea or coffee. She instantly regretted the latter option. I

laughed and assured her that it is okay. She then walked out and in a few moments, I heard the kettle boiling and mugs kissing. I grabbed my phone and texted Muzi to check on Ava.

Me: How is she?

Him: She's okay now. Still trying to get to the root of the problem. Her blood has been sent to the lab for testing. How are you guys? I miss you.

Me: We're okay. Missing daddy too. Nombuso came back with the tea and a random thought of Mbuso barged into my mind simply due to her name. I ignored it. I chose to.

I've been doing well in blocking it out and there's nothing that's stopping me from progressing further. I quickly rushed upstairs to fetch a throw. The weather was still insistent on projecting hatred.

She was already digging in when I made my way back. We made conversation from books to childhood memories. She ended up explaining the story about her aunt further.

"But how can blood family be so vile?", I said, bewildered.

"It happens. It's actually quite common in my village", she

explained and slurped on her coffee. I just stared.

"You look shocked. Family CAN be your biggest enemies of progress", she firmly added as I digested her matter.

"So how did you meet Sabelo?", I pry.

"He's actually my ex", she informs and I almost choke on my pizza. She laughs and nods repeatedly.

"So you're your ex's help? I don't mean to sound..."

"Yeah I am. See, what had happened was, we fought a lot during the peak of when things fell apart in my life and I cheated

on him. He found out and broke up with me. One day, we came across one another at the mall and we spoke about life, that's when he found out that I'm unemployed and ready to take anything", she explained and took a bite of her pizza.

"And then he hired you? And you agreed?", I asked, gingerly.

"Yes I had no choice. I don't think he needs me actually. He was just glad to have a valid reason to see my face often but not actually have me in his life", she explained then shrugged.

"Why do I get the feeling that

you've badly hurt the poor guy?", I ask and laugh lightly.

"No. I humbled him", she says and keeps her eyes on the busy TV screen and I just stare.

...

Deciding on a perfect outfit as a pregnant woman has got to be one of the toughest things I've ever had to do in all the years that I've existed. The cold weather wasn't helping. I ended up settling for black tracksuit, a white vest and sneakers. I did not care. The only perfect thing on me was how my wig was laid. I made my way downstairs and

found Nombi waiting for me in the kitchen.

"Haibo! Is that what you're wearing to the launch?", she gives the exact reaction I was expecting. I do not bother to reply. She was all dolled up like she was on hotspot for the weather from another continent. She kept pulling and fixing her gold dress, clicking her block heels on the floor. You can just guess how short it was. Luckily, she had enough logic to put a blazer over her shoulders. She looked so different. So gorgeous! We head out to the car. Bangizwe was no

where to be seen so I drove us to the location.

When we finally got there after getting lost twice, Nombi was evidently more excited than I was. We got to the entrance and got welcomed by the author. She was courteously standing there waiting to receive each and every one of us. The decor was obviously done by a professional. I couldn't help but silently take some colour combination tips. Nombi asked to be excused immediately when we took a seat, seemingly eager to go greet somebody she was familiar with. I began feeling out of place.

I never attend events by myself for the very reason that I don't want to be that odd-looking lonesome duck in the pond. I took out my phone and aimlessly opened and closed apps on it. A waiter approached me with a glass glasses of wine, champagne and orange juice. I opted for the orange juice and did not bother to alert him that I have a partner. I wasn't sure of her intentions of coming back to this table.

Everyone was mingling amidst the soothing music except for me. I suddenly felt a firm hand on my shoulder as I was drinking my

juice with disinterest, waiting for the launch to officially start. I turned back and he smiled.

"Hi there", he greets.

"Hello", I greeted back. I wasn't expecting to see him there. He grabbed a chair.

"I wasn't expecting to see your face here", I say and keep taking light, consecutive sips of my juice.

"Yeah I wasn't too", he says and I laugh.

"What?"

"I was on my way to someplace else and I ended up here. Women", he grumbles and places his phone on the table.

"What have we done this time?"

"It's a woman who brought me here", he says and signals for a lady who was walking and rubbing her hands together. I just guessed she was coming from the loo.

She finally arrived.

"B, meet Siphokazi. Siphokazi, B", he introduced me to her with his hand travelling between the two of us. The widest smile grew on her face and we shook hands. She then took a seat. Is she his wife? I did not ask. My phone vibrated and I attended to it. "Having fun?", that was a text

from Muzi. I had told him about attending the book launch.

"Yes thanks. How are you?"

"I'm okay. Please keep away from mimosas. I know how much you love them", he replied with laughing emojis. I did not find it funny.

"I am not irresponsible", I sent back.

"Hawu baby. Ngiyadlala" (I'm just kidding). I hate it when he treats me like a kid. When I took a glance at Nombi, she was all smitten and getting buttered up by a man. I shook my head but

laughed internally. I'm getting wild cat vibes from her.

...

I managed to get a personalized signed copy from Busisekile and that was enough to make my entire month. Siphokazi had a little too much to drink. I later discovered that she is Mphathi's little sister and that we're age mates. She didn't even have that many glasses but she was struggling to keep her eyes open. "See why I couldn't allow her to come here by herself?", he said and shook his head. It was already evening and the place was

getting emptier by the minute.

The waiters were already packing up and my eyes couldn't find Nombi anywhere.

"You look troubled", he said.

"I am. I came here with a friend of mine and now I can't find her.

I don't know how she will get home", I say and unlock my phone to call her.

"Surely she's a big girl. She'll find her way. Let's get this one to the car please?", he says and points at the Siphokazi who was sitting on the table with her face in her hands.

"Will you please stop talking about

me as if I'm not here", she releases a muffled statement, with her face still buried in her hands. Her head was surely pounding. She had a variety of alcoholic beverages and that's never a good idea.

"Okay since you're sure you're here, you can afford to get your a** up from there so we can leave", he commands.

"Mm-mm bhuuuti", she complains in slurred speech. I laugh at how confused she is.

When we finally got her into the passenger seat, Mphathi asked where I'm parked so he can take

me there.

"It's not that far from here I can manage", I say and walk. He locks his car and walks with me.

"You do know that a lot can happen to you in a parking lot right? Especially if you're female and a South African citizen", he walks and talks.

"Yeah one of them being attacked by a stranger", I say and challenge him with a look.

"True. So you shouldn't... no wait. When you say stranger, are you referring to me?", he asks and immediately laughs. I laugh as well.

"Took you long enough", I say and continue laughing.

"Wow!", he says in humor-filled disbelief.

"Do I honestly look like somebody who's capable of attacking women?", he asks.

"It's always the handsome ones", I say and stand against my car to call Nombi.

"So I'm handsome?", he cheekily asks and I squint to threaten him with my phone against my ear. She's not answering.

"She's not answering", I say and dropped my hand.

"I told you. She's a big girl. You're

stressing yourself over nothing".
I sigh.

"Anyway, since you insist on not telling me what book I should buy, mind coming to the bookstore with me? As friends", he states and gestures surrender.

"What else can we be apart from that?", I question.

"A lot. If only you would allow", he says and insists on staring into my soul.

"I am married. How many times am I supposed to tell you this?"

"On paper", he says and fixates eyes on me.

"What do you mean?"

"He's barely with you. What kind of a husband is that?"

"You don't know me well enough to make that conclusion"

"But I know that he's never there each time I call. Where is he now?"

Insert 91.

"You know what? This girl is an adult. If she was clever enough to disappear then she's clever enough to find her way back home", my fed up alter ego says to me before forcing me to throw my phone on the passenger seat

as I drive back home. I finally arrived home and switched on the lights. As I was treading my way upstairs, I received a call.

"Hello?"

"Don't hang up please it's me!", the caller begged from the other end of the line and I immediately knew who it was.

"Not you again?", I could feel exhaustion already surmounting my shoulders like a monkey getting on top of a tree branch.

"They're gonna kill me in here Betso. Please. I am begging you. Just speak to him on my behalf. Even if he doesn't listen. Just try

and I'll stop bothering you", she begs sullenly.

"Why don't you call him yourself?", I was somehow convinced that she knew his numbers by heart. There is no way the intense crush she had on him did not motivate her to study them.

"He won't listen to me. If he had it in him he would've gotten me killed a long time ago. That's how badly he hates me right now"

"You're fully aware of how he feels about you but you think I can somehow perform a miracle? Sis' I am not a magician"

"I know he listens to you. Please.

If I die in here you won't be able to live with your self. That's two lives on you couldn't save", she says with certainty. Her head is definitely not screwed on properly on those skinny shoulders. I throw my buttocks on the bed with my phone against my ear as I take off my shoes.

"Are you still there?"

"What do you want me to say Lihle? You're untrustworthy and a danger to this family. As much as I feel for your baby, I can't help you", I say and she keeps silent.

"You're gonna be a mother soon. Imagine if you were the one

trapped in here?", she tries to guilt-trip me.

"That is the exact reason why I am a law-abiding citizen. We are not the same", I defend and and I could feel it in her voice that she's running out of tactics and the energy required for them.

"I've done a lot of bad things but my baby deserves none of this", she sobs.

"Ava deserved none of the twists you introduced into her life"

"I loved her. I love Ava"

"If you did, you would stop pestering me about her dad who already has too much to deal

with, including her being in hospital", I said and tried to get off the phone.

"WAIT!", she screams and my eyes roll.

"Is she having seizures again?", she asks with a voice laced with concern.

"Yes. Has she always had them?"

"The last time she did was-", she says and immediately stops.

"Was? Speak Lihle I don't have all day"

"Look. Just tell her doctor she once came into contact with butisol if it's going to help. Don't forget to speak to Muzi for me. I

am begging you. Bye."

"Lihle wait!", I shout for attention and she drops the phone on my ear. Butisol?

I thought about going to the net but opted for a call to my walking and talking medical dictionary.

"Bes. Take your insulin shots exactly how I described so you and I don't have to see each other's faces unless if it's necessary.

Goodbye. Chommie?", he finally attends to me after making me wait for him to be done with his patient.

"I'm not gonna take much of your time. Ke eng butisol?" (What's

butisol?)

"Why are you asking? It's a nervous system depressant"

"Huh?"

"Look, you know what sedation is right?", he asks as if tutoring a handicapped 7 year old.

"It is one of the drugs used for that purpose", he adds. I want to laugh at how he explains.

"Why would? Okay thank. Chat later", I say in a rush

"Whoa whoa whoa missy. Who do you want to drug?", he asks reprehensively.

"Nobody. Honestly. Chat later", I

assure and cut the call. I then dial Muzi but he doesn't pick up.

"Please call me as soon as you can. Lihle told me something very disturbing. It's about Ava."

I press send and take off my earrings. My phone rings and I pick it up from the bed with great speed. It's Mabuyi.

"Hey", I answer.

"Have you been talking to Lihle!?", her exasperated self sneered through gritted teeth, almost in a whisper.

"Where's Muzi?", I investigate. I do not appreciate him letting her know about stuff I tell him

specifically.

"I asked you a question. Have you been talking to that b****?"

"Are you still coming to join me in here or have you changed your mind?", that would be Muzi's voice probably yelling from the ensuite.

"Ngiyeza babakhe!", she lovingly yells back. I felt the bottom of my heart sit on an aggregate of red coals.

"This conversation is not over", she hisses back and cuts the call. I am utterly annoyed by a lot of things today!

I get up from the bed and one earring falls to the floor. I scan

for it with my eyes and can't see it. I couldn't care less about playing hide and seek with a piece of jewellery. I don't know if the irritation that's filling my heart is also affecting my eyesight but whatever. I make my way to the closet to change my clothes and slip into my pyjamas. I then grab some fluffy socks and a warm night robe. Food has done nothing to me and my stomach deserves no punishment. I pick my phone up from the bed and head downstairs.

I warmed up the left over pizza and made some rooibos tea, with

milk. Tumi's consistent and unerring judgment over this mixture hangs over my head as I stir but I couldn't care less at this moment. His finicky self is not here here to spill it down the drain so I will enjoy my rooibos, with milk. I try to distract myself with YouTube vlogs and Instagram. I was just switching between the pausing and double taps when it hit me that maybe I should also start a YouTube channel after giving birth? People are making money by just putting themselves out there for people to watch, from the comfort of

their own homes. I don't see why not? I allow the thought to float around in my head before a WhatsApp text from Mphathi disturbs me.

Him: Nkosazana

I read it and fingers get hit by a bit of uncertainty before I can type to reply.

Me: Hi.

The message gets instantly viewed and he immediately starts typing.

Him: You good?

Me: I'm okay. How are you?

Him: I'm freezing.

Him again: If a certain man did not insist on hogging the love of my life I'd be cuddled up and warm right now.

Me: What?

Him: What?

Me: Lol stop this. I refuse to believe that you're single.

Him: Not a lot of women deserve me.

He replies and I laugh. Arg I am done feeling guilty. I can't be sitting in this house moping around because my husband is with his wife and I'm here alone. There's no harm in laughing with a friend. The opportunity

presented itself and I am taking it. I put my phone on the free white space of the plate and pick up my dinner to head to the living room. I get there and turn on the heater then the television. I continue to multitask between my food, Mphathi and the TV screen. I then hear the kitchen door turning. The smile, that I was completely unaware of disappears as I slowly stand to go see who it is. It can't possibly be a thief they wouldn't have made it past Bangizwe. Or could they? I start to feel my heart my heart race until I see Nombi walking in

looking like she was about to tip toe her way into the house. I drop my chest due to relief. I am not relieved that she's back but I am relieved it's not somebody else.

"Well well well. If it isn't the prodigal son", I say and cross my arms on my chest. She almost freezes.

"Ma'am I am so sorry I-", she says with her shoes in her hands and pulls the skimpy dress down her curves. She's even shivering.

"Are you not cold? Anything could've happened to you out there", I ask and immediately feel

the intentional irritated expression on my face.

"I am. I'm sorr-"

"Just, just get yourself in hot water and some warm clothes please", I mutter and look away. I don't have the energy for this. She quickly walks past me and I sigh. Hopefully, there is no girl in this bump.

...

After finishing up my dinner, I somehow fell asleep on the couch waiting for Nombi to make her way downstairs, which she clearly never did. I got woken up by a call from Muzi.

"Hey baby", he says after I press 'Answer'.

"Hey hubby", I lowly say. My voice is still heavily draped in sleep.

"Bewulele yini? Ngiyaxolisa mommy" (Were you already asleep? I'm sorry), he sincerely whispers and I patiently get up from the couch.

"It's okay. Did you get my message?", I enquire.

"Ngiwubona manje. Bengisa busy" (I'm only seeing it now. I was still busy), he says and I can't help but shrink my face.

"Busy f***** Mabuyi...", I mumble as I place my dishes in the wash

sink before turning the faucet for hot water.

He releases a sharp "Huh?"

"Nothing. How's Ava?"

"She has been discharged but her doctor can't pinpoint what exactly is wrong with her. What did Lihle say?"

"She said something about butisol. Tumi says it's a drug. A sedative"

"Whoa are you trying to tell me that Lihle has been drugging Ava?"

"I think so. Her nervous system is still probably reacting badly to it. I don't know her reasons for

drugging her"

"But first, why are you two even talking?", he asks. Calmly.

"I've just told you what's making the baby sick and you're concerned about why I'm talking to Lihle?", I stop with rinsing the plate, place my hands on metallic edge of the sink and wait for him to reply. He exhales.

"I'll be home in a few days. We'll talk then", he says and my wet hand removes the phone from the ear-shoulder support so I can finish up with the dishes.

I yawn and drag my feet to the bedroom after I am done.

Mphathi calls after I push the door into its frame and it assures me that it's closed.

"Hello?"

"Hi beautiful"

"Beautiful? You're so cheesy", I say and put him on loudspeaker so I can get myself out the heavy night gown.

"Beautifuler", he says and I laugh as I get in between my sheets.

"Don't say it. Don't say what I know you want to say next. Please don't say it", I reprimand and laugh at the same time.

"BEAUTIFULLEST", he exclaims

with his chest and I laugh harder. He laughs too.

"I couldn't resist", he adds.

"Arg you're excused"

"You have such a beautiful innocent laughter. If age was determined by giggles you'd be 6"

"What?"

"What?"

"Stop doing that!", I playfully scold.

"Anyway, tomorrow you'd and I going to the bookstore. I am tired of this guilt that's always sitting at the back of my head ready to remind me that I have a debt I need to settle. There's a

reason why I don't own any credit cards", he firmly states.

"Mpha-"

"Not up for discussion. Goodnight", and that, that was him ending the call. He's so... urgh.

Insert 92.

Tossing and turning. I couldn't find the right position to sleep. I kept thinking about the exchange between Mabuyi and I. Should I call her and apologize? But what for? I did not ask Lihle to call me. I never did. She called and I happened to find out useful

information from that call. If she thinks I'm in cahoots with my husband's madling ex then she's just as insane as that jailbird.

Six hit and I was still awake. It was pointless staying in bed so I got up to shower, after making my bed. I needed to do some grocery shopping so it made sense to do it in the morning. After getting warmly dressed up, I felt my eyes forcing to shut themselves. My brain wants to be awake but every muscle in my body is tired. I climbed onto the bed and pulled the fleece over me. A young nap will do.

My phone rang minutes after I was gone. It was Bangizwe.

"Ma'am. Sisaya eyitolo or?" (Are we still going to the shops?), he asked. He's not a very patient man I've noticed. I completely forgot to let him know that we will go later. His purpose is driving me around regardless of the fact that I insisted to Muzi that I can drive myself.

"I got defeated by sleep. I am sorry. Do you have plans? I don't think I'll be going out today so you can take the whole day off", I instructed and he sounded very pleased to hear what I've just

said but tried his best to mask it away. I pulled my pillow and got comfortable, preparing to go back to sleep. Everybody knows the satisfying feeling that comes with finally shutting down after a restless night, especially on a cold, dusky morning.

...

A call from Muzi woke me prevented me from being consumed by sleep. I think I would've slept for the whole. "Hey baby", I answered sleepily. He laughed.

"I knew you were still sleeping. Please wake up and eat", he said

and I weakly laughed. I was honestly tired. My body felt crushed.

"Ke lapile bohloko jwang" (I am so tired), I complained.

"Ngeke unga lapi. Ulala kanjan imini yonke?" (There's no way you wouldn't be tired. How do you sleep for the whole day?), he continued to laugh at me. I just sucked my teeth and laughed as well.

"Please go and eat. Stop starving my babies", he instructed. I sighed and assured him that I am heading downstairs. He made me swear that I really am. I

laughed and asked if he could not hear me walking. We ended the call and I noticed 2 missed calls from Mphathi. He was probably calling about the bookshop issue. I ignored and kept walking.

I heard whistles on my way down to the kitchen. The chef is obviously in a good mood. I appeared and he flashed his brightening smile. He raised both his arms into the air to indicate that I should come for an embrace. I blushed my way into his warm body and covered me with his whole self.

"Why didn't you tell me you're

coming?", I released a muffled statement. The corner of my mouth was against his chest. "Sengifanele ngibike futhi ngimemeze ukuthi ngifuna ukubuya endlin yam? Ku mfazi wami?" (So I must now scream and alert when I want to come back to my house? To my own wife?), he calmly said without a shadow of uncertainty in his voice. He's in his raw and Zulu moments. "It's good manners", I say and laugh.

He held my shoulders and gently pushed away from him to look me in the eye.

"Ufihlen laph' endlin ungangifuni kangaka wee Mrs K?" (What are you hiding in this house?), he asked with a suspicious smile on his face which sparked an unintentional laughter in me.

"Lutho hawu!" (Nothing!), I defend and chortle.

"Mmm wena..."

"Ithi ngiyithole into yakhona. Ngizoyikhipha amazinyo nge spade" (Should I find it, I'm going to knock its teeth out with a spade), he jokingly says and I laugh.

"I'm just saying. You should've told me you're coming. You

would've found me wide awake waiting for you", I say and caress his chin covered in a trimmed bush.

"And where's the fun in that? I made you breakfast", he says and pushes the fruit salad bowl from behind him. Quite colorful.

...

I somehow managed to go back to sleep. I can't resist or fight sleep these days, especially if I have too much to eat. Muzi feeds me every two minutes no matter how much I vent about weight gain. I woke up and he wasn't in bed with me like he was when I

fell asleep. The light in the room was on. I stood up yawning from the bed and allowed my slide into my slippers. I checked my phone and my eyes landed on a message from Mphathi.

"Are you okay? Is he home? Text me"

My heart skipped two when I realized that Muzi could've seen the pop up of the text. I also felt like my phone wasn't in the same position I had left it in. It could be paranoia but no man. Why am I carrying such immense guilt like I slept with this man? I deleted the message and walked

out of the bedroom. The door to his study was slightly open so I knocked once and walked in. He was in the balcony, on his phone with a glass of whiskey in his left hand.

"I don't understand why you didn't come to me?", he softly said and took a sip, with his back facing me.

"I'm only hard on you because I hate feeling helpless when you get into trouble. I've always felt like it's my duty to protect you. Ever since you were born. Please come back home nana"

"What's done is done Thando. No

amount of regret is going to put the baby back in your tummy.

Come home so we can talk about this", he said and sighed.

"Forget dad and Mandoba. Yes they're disappointed but I will speak to them. Try and make them see reason"

"Are you still there?"

"I behaved that way because I was disappointed too. I still am. I am never going to applaud you for nonsense but having you out there in the wild is not what I want"

"Yeah I'm in Joburg. I'll book you a flight"

"He's here as well"

"Running is never going to save you. I'm politely opening the door for you. Woza or else I'm gonna find you eventually and it won't be cute"

"I hope you're not with that boy for both your sakes"

"Sharp. I love you"

I walked as though I had just entered so I wouldn't have to go to court for eavesdropping. He turned back and finished up his drink.

"Hey you. Sleepy head", he affectionately said. I went over to him and he made me stand in

front of him so he can hug me from behind. He then exhaled deeply.

"Are you okay?", I asked as we watched over the lit up neighborhood.

"Thando ran away from home and I have no idea where she is", he said and placed his chin on my shoulder as I placed my hands over his. He still had the empty glass in his hand.

"Why did she run? Can't you use her phone to find her?"

"She left it at home and she keeps throwing away simcards. I'm giving her 24 hours to make

it here"

"Baby?", I gently placed one foot into the lion's den.

"Hm?"

"Don't you think... if you were more gentle with her then she would've ran to you first when things went left?"

"What do you mean?", he said with his chin raised from my shoulder. It sounded like he had even stopped breathing.

"The two of you are so hard on her to be honest. She's growing. She won't be your baby girl forever. You need to allow her the space to grow but still protect

her at the same time otherwise she's still going to f*** up and run", I said and he let out a heavy sigh.

"I don't know Betso. See, Thando once got lost when she was 8. Mandoba and I were sitting in the backyard and she was playing around the yard. We were supposed to be babysitting but instead we paid attention to beer and music. That time, the high fencing at home hadn't been installed yet and gate guards had this tendency of just knocking off before the next one on shift could arrive. So if he was late, the

gate would be left unattended...", he explaining as I kept nodding to each sentence.

"I think that's when she managed to open it and leave. She's generally a curious and naughty kid so I think she had it planned. It wasn't long till her friend's parents of brought her back. They lived just a few houses from ours. We almost went out of our minds searched the whole yard and we couldn't find her. So ever since then, I think we both don't want to be reckless with her in fear that something might happen"

"I understand but how long are you planning to do this for? She has to date someone at some point, get married, have kids", I say and turn my head to face him. He drops a kiss on my lips and frowns.

"Does she have to?", he asks and I laugh.

"Yes she does"

"On a serious note though, I just want her to come home so we can fix this mess", he said and took out his vibrating phone from his pocket. "M Queue" was calling.

"Bafo?"

"Yeah she called. We spoke and I

think she understood me"

"Ai angazi ikhanda lami liyashisa nami. Uthin uMntungwa?" (I don't know. My head is also hot), he continued to speak to his brother with his other hand around me.

"Vele k'fanele bahlawule" (Of course they need to pay up)

"Okay kulungile sizokhuluma" (It's okay we'll talk). They cut the call and he put the phone back into his pocket. He grabbed my a** and nibbled on my neck.

"Dad wants damages for Thando. He also wants to perform a cleansing ritual for her", he informed.

"How do you feel?"

"I don't know. I feel like I messed up. She doesn't have sisters so maybe if I wasn't so focused on keeping her in the house and concentrated on guiding her so she knows how to take care of herself, we probably wouldn't be in this mess. I'm worried about her emotional and mental health. She's so young to have something like this sit on her conscience"

"You did your best baby"

"Hopefully she listens and comes back home. I don't want a brat for a little sister. Who even

taught her these running-away-from-home tactics?"

"I thought we were making progress?"

"We are but no honestly. UBaba has never given her a hiding and I don't think he ever will. We are the only people who should've ran away from home because yey!", he said and we laughed.

"Why do I get the feeling you're exaggerating?"

"Have you ever seen what a sjambok looks like?"

"No but-"

"Have you ever held and felt it?"

"No baby but-"

"Then thula ngoba awaz lutho" (Then keep quiet because you know nothing), he said and we both continued to laugh.

...

DAYS LATER

Muzi, Mandoba, Sabelo and some guy I did not know were downstairs watching soccer over beer. I could hear their occasional loud cheers and explosive laughter from the bedroom. Yesterday, he accompanied me to the doctor's appointment. I keep expecting him to bring up the Lihle issue but he doesn't. I personally don't know where to start. I was

sitting on the centre of the bed with my laptop on my thighs, replying to emails. I've decided that I'm gonna start working properly after I give birth. Why has Kgantsho forsaken me?

He walked into the bedroom with his naughty boy smile pasted on his face. I could still hear the others making noise downstairs. I kept my eyes on him and he did the same till he climbed on the bed in his grey sweatpants.

He didn't say much. He took my laptop, closed it and then grabbed by my legs and made me fall on my bed on the bed.

"Baby!", I laughed and screamed at the same time.

"The door is wide open?", I added.

"So?", he said as he slid my underwear off of me.

"Go close the d-", I couldn't finish my sentence before he could stick his warm tongue into me.

"You were saying?", he kept his eyes on me the whole time.

"But you have visitors nje"

"I know. I'm just here to have my lunch and leave. Is that okay with you?", he said and continued to dig into me with his wet muscle.

"Ookay", I managed to lowly and

weakly say as my head led itself to the top of his head.

...

Later on in the evening I came out of the shower and found him on the bed. Buried in seemingly deep thoughts since he didn't even see me approach. I tried playfully startling him and he just looked at me, after coming back to earth. He laughed and asked me what I'm trying to do. He then pulled me to come sit on top of his left thigh, with my legs hanging in between his.

"Are you okay?", I asked. I was concerned.

"I'm okay but I'm confused", he said and continued to think.

"What's confusing you?", I asked and he bit his lower lip in thought, then sighed.

"The time I was in KZN, the parking lot at Malocon caught fire. Luckily, only two cars were there so those were the only ones the company had to replace", he said and continued to explain with a baffled frown on his face.

"Now, I just received a call that the one in Bloem also caught fire but in the reception area. I now have enough reason to believe it's

arson but why? And who's responsible for it?"

Insert 93

He stands up and says he needs to make some calls. I sit o the bed waiting for him to return. He shortly comes back and comes to squat in front of me.

"I need to go", he says with caution. I roll my eyes and remove his hands from thighs.

"Baby I know I always-", I knew he was going to try butter me with excuses so I raised my hand to get him to abort his mission.

"You always have to go somewhere or attend to something or somebody apart from me. When am I ever going to get undivided attention from you? Or do I not deserve it?!", I vehemently shoot out with the strength of every muscle in my throat. He looks at me with a 'That's not fair look' pasted on his face.

"Honestly. Ever since we got married it is always one thing if not the other. I am sick of it!", I express before I can shove my fists under my armpits, my hands across my chest. He gets up and

comes to sit next me, take my hand into his warm ones. At this point, my cheeks were already wet.

"Okokudala, I will not have you raise your voice at me. Secondly, I am not blame-shifting but out of all the things that have been happening, none of them is my fault. I haven't been an awarding winning husband but I am trying. I am still getting the hang of this polygamy thing. You never asked for this but I did not too. Please work with me here", he calmly says and I scoff.

"This polygamy thing? Do you

even love me Muzikayise? Have you ever loved me?", I say and keep my eyes on him. He frowns in confusion.

"Now what is the meaning of that?"

"It's a valid question. Did you marry me because you love me or did you marry me because you need me to stay alive?", I ask and take my hand out of his.

He scoffs in disbelief.

"You once said you don't have a death wish and that you're not in the mood for suicide when I asked if you're breaking up with me.

This statement speaks volumes",

I persist in my pursuit for answers.

"If it bothered you so much then why didn't you ask me then?"

"Please put on some warm clothes it's cold in this room", he added and I glanced at him before I could stand up. I went into the closet and came back when I was done putting on a fresh set of warm pyjamas.

He exhaled loudly through his nose when I dropped my weight on the bed next to him. Silence.

"Look, I love you okay. I always have. Even as a stranger I still loved you. My soul recognizes yours

with the full approval of my heart. I'm hurt that the hurdles in our relationship place you in that state of mind. If we had been married for a year or more and you complained like this I would understand. Yes our marriage had an awfully rough and bad start but that does not mean it's the end of it", he goes on with his elbows on his knees and his fingers tangled up in one another.

"You're good with words but your actions mean something else"

"And you're committed to being stubborn. Give me the chance to

prove myself before you discredit me based on catastrophes I had absolutely no control over"

"You had control over going overseas after we had just gotten married before you chose something else instead of me like you always do", I state and continue to look away, with my eyes fixed on the velvety grey head board.

"I work this hard so my family can be comfortable. I couldn't afford to mess up that deal.

Please give me a break?"

"Granted. Please get out I want to sleep", I command before

getting inside the sheets and pulling them above my head to sleep. Pulling them along with his weight at the corner of the bed. He just sat there, then shortly got up to kiss me on my forehead. My eyes remained forcefully shut until he left and closed the door.

...

The single message beep from my phone demolished the little of the light sleep I had been trying to salvage. I lazily took my phone and squinted at it with a single eye.

'Please come have breakfast with your husband before he leaves.

Ngiyacela."

I read it and sighed. I mourned for my lost sleep as I dragged myself out of bed. I would've appreciated some rest extension but I also wanted to see him before he left. I walked all the way downstairs in my socks.

"Good morning baby", he said when I appeared in the kitchen.

"Morning, hubby.", I said and carefully placed myself on top of the bar stool. He pushed the plate of eggs and fried bacon in my direction.

"Bon appetit". He softly said and grabbed a seat. He helped himself

to the bowl of grapes he had placed on the table. I've noticed that he is not a very big fan of breakfast when it is too early in the morning. He'd mostly rather have a fruit.

"I no longer eat eggs. Well for now. They make me nauseous. You would know this if you had time for me", I flatly said and pushed the plate back to him. He dropped his face and sighed.

"I hate it when we fight. Can we not? Please? I am sorry I haven't-", my ringing phone hindered the completion of his sentence. I took a quick glance at

it and placed it turned it screen down. That was my first immediate instinct.

He raised his brow and fixed his eyes on me.

"Aren't you gonna answer that?", he inquired with one uncrushed grape resting on the surface of his lowered tongue.

"It's not important", I said and took a sip of the orange juice that was innocently placed on the counter.

The phone rang again and my nerves took into rough and grating travel down an impatient slide. I decided I should just

answer. Something in me does not want Muzi finding out that I speak to Mphathi. Something equally else lowkey enjoys speaking to him. When I turned the screen, it reported that it was Thando calling. My heart was relieved. "Hi Thando", I made sure to state who I was speaking to. She arrived days ago and now she's sleeping at Mabuyi's house because the meeting between her and her brothers ended on a sour note.

"Is he there? I need to speak to you", she sounded like somebody who had been recently crying.

"Yeah. What's wrong?", I asked and she sniffed.

"I'll call you later. Bye", she said and cut the call.

"You knew didn't you?", he asked, with his eyes still fixed on me.

"What are you-"

"Stop it this instant because you know exactly what I am talking about. The pregnancy, the abortion. You knew and you did not tell me?!"

"It wasn't my place to-", I tried explaining.

"Entlik wena no ma niyafana.

You're both secretive as f*** for no reason!" (You're no different to

my mother), he snapped before he could get off the chair to walk upstairs.

"Muzi I-"

"Save it!", his topless self walked up the stairs and never looked back. What was he expecting me to do? Spill his little sister's secrets she trusted me to keep?

...

He came back and found me watching TV with a throw on my elevated feet, on my phone. His scent immediately filled the room. He tells me he's leaving and tries to kiss my chin and I retract. He sighs impatiently.

"You're honestly leaving when you can just send someone to overlook all of this?"

"You know very well that I believe in doing things myself. Someone is out there trying to sabotage me and I won't rest until I find out who the hell it is. I have to put a stop to this crap before it gets too far", he says and struggles with taking his phone out of his pocket because he had his mini sportsbag in his other hand.

"It's forensics", he says and turns to leave. He really is

leaving...

...

2 days later.

I watched Muzi going on and off WhatsApp. We had another fight over the phone. I wanted to text him but Mphathi called.

"Hey"

"Are you still coming or should I go back home to my FIFA?", he says and I laugh.

"I'm in the car. I'm on my way", I say and open the door. The underestimated the cold front. It's unbearable. I pulled the brown coat I had placed on the passenger seat, lock the car and

walk towards the coffee shop. I could tell from outside that it was moderately full. I could even see him at his table, on his phone. He got up to hug me and damn he smelt good.

"Finally", he whispers into my ear. I laugh and break the hug. I then take a seat and a waitress approaches us.

"FIFA? Really?", I mock as I take my coat off and he laughs. It was pretty warm in the shop. "Like how old are you?", I continue to mock.

"32. Is there a problem?", he says with a confident smug smile

on his face. I shake my head. The waitress couldn't resist laughing. Lightly. Her pen was ready to take our order on her mini notebook.

"What will you be having?", she addresses me with the sweetest smile.

"Uhm...", I say thoughtfully while scanning the A4 laminated menu.

"I'll have a decaf please", I finally say and Mphathi adds with "Make two of those".

"Twooo... de... cafsss", she says while jotting down and walks away.

"And she finally agreed to come to

a date with me", he says and I quickly correct.

"Uh uh uh. We agreed that this is just a coffee date between friends"

"But that's what I said", he says with that sneaky smile on his phone. I decide to study the menu some more and ignore him. He laughs and it fades slowly when his phone rings on the table.

"Please excuse me", he says and goes to take it outside. I take out my own phone and go onto Whatsapp.

Tumi: Why are you suddenly all quiet? Do not tell me you went

there?

Me: What if I did? It is just an innocent coffee date

Him: Please get out of there before Muzi kills you both. I have exhausted my tears on that slime mould of a man. I won't be able to cry for you. Do you want people to say I never loved you?

I read his text and reply with a truckload of laughing emojis.

Him again: And besides, I don't have an outfit for your funeral. It is not yet month end.

I raise my head to the outside when I feel eyes on me. I feel eyes on me. I feel watched. I

never feel watched unless if somebody is indeed watching me. I quickly turn back and scan the place. Everyone there was conversing and minding their own business. The waitress comes back with a tray of our order and I give her an anxious smile. I could see Mphathi outside still on the phone and even using hand gestures. He was invested in that call. Must be important.

Insert 94

The anxiety of waiting and wanting Mphathi to be done with

his call so he could come back. A thought of calling Muzi to alert him visited my mind but I couldn't exactly run to him solely based on a hunch. Also, how am I going to explain my being here? Mphathi came back rubbing his apparently cold hands.

"You okay?", he inquired as he placed himself back on his chair across me.

"Yeah. Yeah I'm fine", I tried to convince but he kept a dubious look on me, then took a sip from his cup.

"Okay then. What did I miss apart from you stealing my

coffee?", he says and an immediate laugh escapes my lips.

"Excuse me what?", I say defensively, still laughing.

"Look, there's lipstick here", he says and points to his spotless cup. I laugh harder and suck my teeth instead of entertaining his provocations. He then places his elbows on the table top, temples his fingers together and stares.

"Hawu. What?", I ask and sip on my decaf. He clearly had something on his mind.

"You don't strike me as a woman who would settle for second best so I'm-", he says and I roll my

eyes. Placing my cup back on the saucer and they click.

"No honestly listen. I am intrigued by this marriage. Why are you with him? Its truth hour. This is a safe space. Is it the money?", he begins sounding like therapist and I laugh.

"Well...", I say and circle the edge of the cup with the tip of my finger.

"It is said that ubuhle bendoda zinkomo zayo so that also wouldn't that appalling if it was the reason", I jokingly say and huffs out a laugh.

"That statement has

progressively been taken out of context over the years. Trust me when I say it doesn't mean what you think it means", he says and confidently falls back on the backrest of his wooden chair. The cafe has a vintage, peaceful feel to it.

"Then what does it mean? Educate me", I tilt my head to side.

"Well, mi'lady... Back in the olden days, as a boy, I would receive a cow from my father as a token of him accepting me in manhood or rather young adulthood. They didn't have these 21st things

then to symbolize such things"" ,he explains and I begin listening attentively in silence.

"So, the more he sees that I'm taking care of the first one, the more he would keep giving me an increase in livestock. The more livestock I have, the more responsible I would be perceived to be. And a responsible man was said to be attractive. That's where the "Ubuhle bendonda zinkomo zayo" phrase was coined", he elaborates and I nod repetitively.

"Interesting. But I was obviously just kidding"

"So you love this nigga?", he says as if I just leaked information about a soon-coming alien invasion.

"Why is it so hard to believe?", I shrug and keep my shoulders suspended.

"HECTIC!"

"No I have to respect his d*** game because it can't be love and attention", he says and I blush. Unintentionally.

"So it is?"

"I never said that", I defend and look away.

"Well there's absolutely no reason for you to stay with him because I'm pretty sure I have the same

size wallet as him and I probably lay the pipe better. Plus, I am completely single. In every sense of the word"

"You can have all of that and still not be him. Plus, you're arrogant wena", I state and he places his palm against the left side of his chest as if I just shot a sharp arrow into his heart and says "Ouch! That hurt", he says and I laugh.

"Honestly. He's humble. Well, most of the time", I say and he shakes his while swallowing his beverage. "YOU, are afraid of change. You've gotten used to this monotonous

disrespect that you now enjoy it", he says and I thin my eyes at him. I had been ignoring the plea for relief from my bladder but it was growing impatient. I asked to be excused.

"You'll find me right here", he says with a gentle smile and pulls his phone out from his pocket.

I walk towards the direction of the lavatory and that feeling that's always successful in spooking my anxiety comes back. I inhale and keep walking. I take a corner into a dimmed passage and immediately decide that I can't walk all the way. Their light was

hanging from the ceiling so I figured it was being maintained. At this point, my nerves were super sensitive. If a simple fly were to surmount my skin I'd most probably scream. I went back to the table and told Mphathi that I have to leave. His facial expression was somewhere between confused and disappointed. I took my coat and handbag then left the place. He followed me outside and turned me with my shoulders to look at him. "What happened in the loo? You weren't even gone for that long", he says and I release a heavy

breath.

"I think someone is watching me", I say and remove his hands from my shoulders.

"What? Who could possibly...", he says and frowns as if half of all my screws are loose and unstable.

"I always know when someone is watching me Mphathi I am not crazy. It's just a psychic thing I happen to have!"

"I never said you're crazy. I'm just...Ah I know. Your husband", he says and drops his hands as if bored.

"What? No. Muzi is no where here"

"As always yes but he could send other people to do his dirty work for him", he says with rigid surety.

"Muzi would never do that. There's no good reason for him to. Anyway, I need to get home", I say and attempt to walk away. He quickly grabs me by my arm. "I can't let you drive away whereas we don't know who exactly is following you. What if you find them waiting for you in your drive-way or something?", he says and creeped out shivers rush down my spine.

"It's fine. I'll call my husband he

will know what to do", I say and take out my phone. I was hoping. Mphathi bites his upper lip and places his hands on his waist impatiently.

"Go home Mphathi", I say as I dial Muzi's number and place the phone against my ear. The phone rings and is not attended to. I look at the screen and Mphathi says "And?!"

"He's not answering", I say and drop the hand with the phone in it.

"Why am I not surprised? Give me your car keys", he says and holds out his hand.

"Why?", I say and look at him to answer.

"You're coming with me until I find out who exactly is looking to harass you. Just... Give the keys", he says and I doubtfully place them in his hand. He takes my hand and we walk to my car. A random thought about how it wouldn't so bad to be in a relationship with him jumps into my head and I squash it immediately, the same way one would squash random morally-illicit thoughts in church. He pulls the passenger seat open for me after unlocking it and I get it. I try

calling Muzi again but it continues to ring unattended.

"Where are we going? What about your car?", I ask as he reverses out of the parking spot.

"Don't worry about my car. I'll uber back and come take it. We're going to my place", he says and I immediately stand against that decision.

"I can't go to your place. Thank you for your support but please take me home", I command and he sighs.

"You sure?", he says and takes a glance at me.

"Positive. Take me home". I say

and he sighs again. Heavily this time.

"Okay cool. Punch in the coordinates"

...

When we get to my house....

"You said you could find my stalker? You can park here it's okay"

"I am not leaving you here Betso. I did say I can find them and that is what I'll do. They've probably tapped into your phone or something stupid. I just need to find their technical footprint then we'll take it from there", he says and handles the remote to

my gate to open it.

"You can do that?", I ask and he packs in the drive way.

"Sure I can. I just a strong internet connection, a laptop and your cellphone", he says and unbuckles the safety belt. I also make my way out of the car and we walk to the house. I'll wait here, he says when we get to the kitchen. I quickly make my way upstairs to fetch my laptop. I rush back downstairs and tell him to follow me to the living room because the WiFi strength is more convenient there. We get there and I hand it to him as I

sat to his right. He starts typing and his fingers were sure as hell running like Sonic the Hedgehog on that keyboard.

"Phone", he said and stretched out his left hand for me to place it there. I gave it to him and anxiously sat on top of my hands. What if Mbelo is back to get his revenge?

"Are you okay?", he said after taking a quick worried look at me.

"Yeah I'm fine. Would you like something to drink? Coffee? Tea? Hot chocolate?"

"Coffee will do thanks. Black. No sugar", he kept his eyes on the

screen and Usain Bolten fingers on the keyboard.

I stood up and went to the kitchen. I focused on my business with the coffee machine and he did the same with the laptop. I could hear the keyboard taps from the kitchen. I took out a box of Cheerios to snack on. I walked back to the living room and he had stopped typing. He had his loose fist against his mouth and his other hand under his armpit, staring at the screen with careful consideration.

"Now this is strange...", he says and turns to look at me.

"What is?", I say and hand him the coffee mug, careful not to spill.

"Thanks. There's nothing. These kind of people are always bound to slip up somewhere. Unless if they followed you from here to the cafe. If that's the case then you're most likely to be dealing with an inexperienced amateur", he says and I take a sit, dipping my hand into the box and looking at the screen.

"Are you sure you-", he adds and I snap.

"Yes Mphathi! I've always been like this ever since I was child! I

never miss!", I say and frown at him. He then releases his bottom lip from the tight grip of his teeth.

"Okay. I believe you"

"Maybe they're just good at covering their tracks...", I say and chew on my dry cereal.

"No ways. I've been doing this for YEARS. No one can hide their footprints on the net from me", he says and takes a sip from his cup.

"Oh? And by "this" you mean?", I ask and he keeps his concentration on the screen. He then quickly placed the cup on the

coffee table like he was having some eureka moment and slowly says "wait a minute...", he says and comes to sit back properly on the couch.

"Do you know this number?", he says and turns the screen to me to show me the hyperlink of what looked like a cellphone number. I look closely and shake my head. He takes my phone and finds that it has locked itself again and asks me to unlock it. I quickly do that and he dials the number onto my phone. It wasn't saved. He then calls it and puts it on speaker.

"The subscriber you have dialled is not available"

"Dammit!", he shoots out and goes back to typing.

"What are you doing now?", I ask and get closer to see.

"Trying to see if this number is attached to any social media account", he says and keeps his eyes fixated on the screen. After a few minutes less than 5, he turns the screen towards me and says "Do you know this nigga?", he says and I squint at the small Instagram profile picture.

"Isn't there a more clearer picture?", I ask as I try to make

sense of the vague picture since the person shot a selfie of themselves looking away.

"Nope. It doesn't look like an active account. Let me zoom it. It will be very blurry but maybe it will make do", he says and does exactly that. I study the picture even more then notice a tattoo at the back of his neck.

"This tattoo...", I say and begin running out of breath.

"So you know him?", he says and studies the picture with me.

"Yes this is Mbelo!", I say and put my hand on my mouth.

"Dafud is that?!", he says and

places the laptop on the coffee table.

"Some guy who was once stalking me oh my God!!""", I say and drop my chin. This is all too much for me. All the memories came tumbling back and flooded my brain, including those of the kidnapping by that filthy Mbuso! I wipe my tears and try to get my breathing on track.

"Hey it's okay. I'm here. He'll have to get through me first before he can get to you", he softly says and moves closer to hug me. He tightly hold on to me wit his one hand under mine on

the top and the other on the small of my back. I am inconsolable.

"You're breaking my heart come on...", he pleads and I sniff trying to get a grip.

"Now this is cozy...", a familiar masculine voice says from the entrance arch of the living room. I immediately let go of Mphathi and quickly wipe my tears. Crap!!!

Insert 95

My heart was racing back and forth in my chest so much that the skin around my forehead

began itching. Mphathi turned towards him and whispered, "You're not supposed to be here". What?

Muzi's straight face shrunk into a fierce frown.

"And what the hell are you doing here?!", he shot out and tilted his face waiting for Mphathi to answer.

"The two of you know each other?", I asked as my eyes danced between the two of them. Mphathi relaxed his body, dropped his chest and stood up. He then rubbed his hands on the jean material that covered his thighs.

"Hi old friend", Mphathi said with that sneaky smile of his. Usually, it would look innocent and harmless but at that point, it looked creepy, cunning and calculating.

"Ungihlahlela amehlo. I asked you a damn question", Muzi calmly asked.

"What am I doing here? You had to pay at some point, or you thought otherwise?", he says and walks towards him.

"So you thought setting my buildings alight and sleeping with my pregnant wife would achieve that for you?", he scoffed.

"Can somebody please explai-", my emotional self lowly asked and Mphathi snapped saying I should stay out of it.

"You don't get to speak to her like that. Awusho, after all these donkey years, you're still delusional namanje?", Muzi asks and walks towards the stand with his whiskey on it.

"You owe me you son of b***! I am sick and tired of you pretending like you don't know this. You've hurt me Muzikayise and I will never forgive you", he rants and Muzi pours himself a shot and gulps it down. He briefly shrinks

his face, grits his teeth and stretched his lips when the potent taste passes down his throat. I could actually see his Adam's apple moving up and down as he swallowed.

He then walked towards the couch across us with his empty glass and sat himself there, balancing his elbows on his knees.

"Hurt you? You don't say. Which part?", he says without making eye contact, rotating the whiskey glass in his hands. What on earth is going on here? Mphathi was still on his feet.

"You ruined my life you piece of

sh**!", Mphathi spits with great vehemence, with his index finger pointed out at Muzi. I don't like the look in his eyes. Their emotional states are polar opposites and it seems Muzi's calm aggravated Mphathi even more.

"I am waiting for the part where you say you asked for it", Muzi says and raises his eyes at him.

"You're a piece of filth you know that?", Mphathi hisses. Muzi laughs and looks away. Within what could easily be mistakenly estimated as the speed of light,

Mphathi already had a gun pointed out to Muzi.

"Mphathi please don't I am begging-!", I begin pleading with him

'SHUT UP! This has nothing to do with you!', he says and I get on my knees. Muzi still held on to his calm and cold state of face.

"Betso get up from there...", Muzi instruct while his eyes are locked in Mphathi's.

"Please put the gun down whatever the two of you-", I try pleading with him and he shifts the gun from Muzi to me.

"You wouldn't dare", Muzi says

and Mphathi throws his eyes to him but the direction of the gun remains towards me.

"What are you gonna do? Jump in front of the bullet? From there?", Mphathi says and laughs. Muzi sighs impatiently.

"One wrong move and Siphokazi and Lubanzi will miraculously transform into minced meat. Try me", Muzi says and stands up. Mphathi laughs.

"This time, I am 2 steps ahead of you. You won't find them smarty pants", Mphathi laughs and cocks the gun. I tightly shut my eyes and raise my hands in

surrender.

"You mean 4 steps behind? I know how your fuzzy little mind works. That mine could easily collapse on top of them and I wouldn't have to lift a single finger", Muzi says and I open my eyes. What exactly is going on here? I keep asking myself this question and I still bare without answers.

The smile on Mphathi's face disappears and he points the gun back at him, this time, Muzi's phone rings and he takes it out of his pocket.

"Bafo", he says like nothing is

wrong. How could he remain this calm while an angry man has a gun pointed at him? Is this his usual way of life that he is used to it?

"Yeah ngiright. Look I'll speak to you later. There's no need for that location anymore", he says and cuts the call.

He then exhales and says "It's either uyayidonsa lensimbi or you quit wasting my time" (It's either you shoot or...), Muzi says and Mphathi narrows his furious eyes at him.

"I know you're only computer smart which to me means you're

stupid if you ain't streetwise so since I'm the smart one around here, lemme make the wise decision for you and that would be, getting the f*** outta my house", Muzi says and slowly moves the gun away from his forehead. Mphathi then bends his lower lip into the cavity of his mouth and drops his hand.

"This is not over", he says and walks a few steps in reverse.

"And if I don't find my son and my sister where I left them I swear...", he says as his chest moves back and forth involuntarily.

"I am not promising anything", Muzi says and Mphathi shoots a death stare at him. He was breathing fire. He then rushes out of the house and I heard the door slam shortly. I'm even surprised it didn't break. Tears started streaming down my face. Muzi began texting on his phone. I looked at him and he looked at me back.

"Nxn!", he shot out and rushed upstairs. I need answers. I followed him there as I wiped my tears. I went into the bedroom to look for him but he wasn't there. I went out and went to

his study. I got there and found him sitting in the semi dark with his forehead placed on the top of his desk and his hands on his head. I looked towards the window and that sun had mostly set.

"Are you gonna tell me what's going on?", I grab a chair and sit. He sits in the same position and doesn't respond. I also keep quiet and look at him. After a drag of a moment, he raises his head and lets it fall on his leather chair. He sighs. I don't like the look in his eyes.

"You don't learn do you?", he says

and doesn't stop to blink.

"How do you and Mphathi know one another?", I ask and fold my hands.

"You mean how does your husband know your boyfriend or is it vice versa?", he says and picks up the whiskey bottle from the table. He never drinks straight from the bottle.

"He is not my boyfriend", I defend and he scoffs before he could take a gulp of his alcoholic beverage. He then swings the wheeled chair to the side and stands up. He walks towards me and swings mine as well so that I directly

face him. Muzi has never laid a hand on me. He promised that he wouldn't. He wouldn't dare start now. He then places the bottle on the table and places his hands on either side of my body, on the armrests, locking me into the chair. We get into a stare contest and he finally speaks. I could smell the alcohol in his breath.

"What is wrong with you ngempela?", he whispers directly onto my face.

"I'm sorry I brought him here but I wouldn't have had you answered your phone. I was scared! What if Mbelo had

cornered me?!", I defend..

"Mbelo got the message the first time around. If he was stalking you, trust me, I would know", he says lowly.

"I saw the proof. If you had your phone with you when I called you would've--"

"Mphathi played tricks on you and you fell right into the trap", he flatly says, still in his calm.

"So he was the one who was watching me? Why didn't you answer your phone Muzi? I needed you!"

"No he wasn't. I was. He just capitalized on the situation", he

said and my mouth hung open.

"What? How could you do that to me?", I say as my eyes well up.

"You're a liar Betso. And liars need to be caught red-handed so their bulls*** comes to a halt", he still had his hands on the armrests.

"I can't believe you...", my voice breaks. I say and he pulls away to go sit on the couch.

"Woza. You said you wanted to know what's going on isn't it?", he says and I exhale in disbelief. I eventually get up from my chair and walk to sit next to him. He then places his hands in his pockets in places his head on the

top of the leather couch which matched his chair, looking up.

"Mphathi was my once my bestfriend. In varsity", he states and I just sit there looking at him, waiting for him to go on.

"We were very close. He was one of those friends you get because of a more or less the same socio-economic status and shii. I met him at the library then we clicked. We shared a lot of things, including dreams and whatever else. One day, his sister came visit on campus. She was still in high school then. She liked me and it was obvious so I went in for the

kill and smashed her. She wanted a relationship and I didn't. I was already in a relationship so I explained to her then she got mad. I made it a point that I apologized then we just became simple friends, or at least that's what I thought"

"You mean Siphokazi?"

"So he introduced the two of you?", he says and gives me a side eye.

"I met her at a book launch", I say and he laughs.

"Siphokazi and books are condoms and a long term relationship. They don't mix", he explains and I start

putting two and two. I'm getting a negative seven.

"Anyway, Mphathi found out that I smashed his sister and he ended our friendship. He didn't talk to me for a straight two months and later showed up at my dorm's door and kissed me. I punched him and he started explaining how he fell in love with me at first sight and kept trying giving me hints that I apparently ignored "

"Wait. Mphathi is gay?!"

"Bisexual. Our friendship officially ended there and he pulled stunts like telling Mabuyi that I

cheated. She left me and he came to gloat in my face. He kept saying how I wasn't a true friend because I ended our friendship based on his sexual identity while in actual fact I ended it because he kissed me. We got done with varsity and I got MaloCon off the ground. I called it Kayise's bricks then. He then approached me claiming that I stole his ideas when all I did was run them past him because I trusted him as a friend. We got into a physical fight. I was tired of his crap so Mandoba and I made sure that he was locked up and put away

for 4 years. For simple assault. I've never heard of him till I saw his name on your screen asking about my whereabouts.. I wasn't even planning on going to Bloem till I saw that SMS. The call you ignored was the official go ahead for my mission", he explains and I'm left dumbfounded. I heavily breathe out.

"My thing is, the disrespect of bringing another man into our life wasn't enough that you also had to bring him into my house?", he turns his head and asks..

"If only you had been here none of this would be happening", I say

and sniff.

"Let me get this straight. Your inability to ignore other men is my fault?", he asks and I feel my chest getting hot.

"I've never cheated on you!"

"You would have if you were married to a fool. Twice"

"You barely have time for me Muzikayise you don't get to sit there and accuse me of cheating. Even if I was, you'd still have no right to say s*** about it!"

"Raise your voice at me one more time...", he says and I drop my chest and look away.

"We won't sit here and discuss

why I have to work and also attend to my other wife at the same time. We are way past that"

"Well I don't think this relationship is gonna work", I say and look away. He keeps quiet.

"There's something that Bab'Ngema told me the last time I was there", I say with my eyes still kept away from him.

"You mean the last time you secretly went to consult with him and I arrived?", I turn to look at him. That statement was enough to raise my curiosity so I put pieces together.

"How do you always find me?", I can't control the certainly suspicious look on my face. He keeps his eyes magnetized to the roof.

"You keep going on and on about how I don't care about you and stuff can happen to you. No danger can befall you on my watch. How do you think I found you when Mbuso had abducted you?", he says and things start to make sense. My hand travels to the diamond necklace he always insists it should always be on my neck.

"You've been tracking me all this

time?", I say in almost a whisper. I cannot believe this...

"You opted to believe that the villain in this whole equation was your knight in shining armor and that I was a bad husband who couldn't take your call right?"

"Muzi this is all too much", I say and place both palms on the couch"

"You reckon?", he coldly says, still seated in the same position.

"You said you have something to tell me?", he prods.

"I love you but this is not going to work. Bab'Ngema says there's probable way we can actually

break our ancestral soul tie", I say and roll my eyes to the roof to avoid crying.

"I honestly cannot do this anymore. It's always on thing if it's not the other with us. It's like we're cursed", I say and he keeps quiet for a few.

"Tell me something new", he says and I turn back towards him

"So you knew?!", I shoot out.

"Yes I did. I found out way before you. So no, my staying alive was not the reason why I was with you. Even before I found out I wasn't with you because you were some kind of life support for

me. I genuinely loved you woman. Hell I would've DIED FOR YOU had the need presented itself!", his vexed self shoots at me and then storms out. A series of shredded shambles, if this chapter of my life had a name.

*****THE END*****