



MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#01

AYANDA

I'm walking around the beach of Richard's Bay enjoy the sand dipping in-between my toes thinking about my life. My life that has turned out to be a nightmare. I didn't want my life this way but my sister had it all planned out for me. Do I hate her....no I still love her regardless of the decision she made for my life. I wish she spoke sooner that she was not okay, that she needed medical attention, that's she's dying! But what was done was done. She chose to die and leave me in this cruel world. My sister was the sweetest of them all, how I wish sometimes she was still alive. I wonder what was running in that head of hers when she kept quite knowing fully that she's about to die. I need to visit her grave soon, that's where I get solace and comfort. Sometimes I wish I was the one who was dead. She left me with a duty, a duty that I will forever regret agreeing to it. I thought I was doing her a favour by making her wishes come true but clearly I was lying to myself. What's the use of pleasing the dead when the one who is doing all the pleasing is suffering, suffering for the sin she knows nothing of! I feel into a deep trap, a hole I'm unable to get out from. Will I ever heal with all the scars I'm suffering from. 'sighs'! Being copped in that house all alone makes me have suicidal thoughts. I miss my carefree life, I miss my friends, I miss my alcohol. Growing up I was always told that I'm one of thee most rebellious kids my mother has come across. Exaggerating as much, I miss being a party animal. I look at my writs watch and I know the monster is about to be back from his business trip. Atleast I cooked. I caress on my flat tummy imaging the possibilities of being pregnant again! I look at the ring on my left finger with so much of pain. I have to go back home before....I don't even want think about it. Spending more time here won't kill me.

I'm enjoying the fresh breeze and new people. Seeing kids running around playing with a ball got me wondering how my son was going to look like. Who was he going to look like? I didn't even know I was pregnant until....until,

'sighs,' wiping a tear drop falling off my face. I sit down on the mat I brought along relaxing my weak self. How did my life get here vele?

I look at my surroundings and everyone is happy out and about with their families having fun. "Will I ever have a family of my own?" I ask pity parting myself. Did I really ask myself that stupid question? What if I don't? What if I'm bound to suffer?

Two kids mistakenly hit me with a ball and I get hold of the ball.

"Mam I'm really sorry, I do apologize on behalf of my kids." A white man begs. Atleast there are some sweet men out there who look after their families. I wonder if his married or not. My eyes jog to his left hand and there's that shinning band.

"It's okay," I half smile.

"Please don't hurt my kids, I can even pay you for the trouble. Just name-...." I look at the man who's taking non-stop in fear.

"No really it's okay don't trouble yourself. Kids where just playing." I think for a second, " would you like to play some ball with me?" I ask the kids. Looking at them they look like five or six if I'm not mistaken.

"Ye....yes," the shy girl answers and I love how over protective the brother is around her. Cute kids. "Come let's play this ball." I stand up throwing it in the air for them to catch it. The father disappears infront of the kids eyes throwing Himself on my MAT! Does he know how much it cost? I doubt he does, he is a man I'm sure he doesn't do shopping for basic stuffs!

"What are your names?"

"Ronald and Ramona," the boy answers. "What's yours?" I like the enthusiasm in this boy. He is going to be so over protective of his sister.

"Ayanda but you can call Aya," I say. We continue to play soccer until my weak self gave in. I'm tired and drained. The father is sleeping, unbelievable!

"Sir," I shake him and he lazily opens his eyes he frowns and scans his surroundings.

"I'm sorry," he says getting up. "I'm just tired had a hard time sleeping." He adds, I'm not interested in his stories. I just want my mat that he is standing on. "We should get going." He tells the kids.

"Never trust strangers," I tell him. I pack my belongings and marched to my supposed car without looking back. When was the last time I ever felt that way, carefree without any regrets of the decision. Now it's time to go face my demons.

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Driving from Richard Bay to Eshowe looking at the valley of a thousand hills. When was the last time I had a refreshing moment like this. The sun burning my skin feels like a dream, a smile creeps on my face, I can't smile with my cracked dry lips are hurting. I drive along listening to Ukhozi FM, talking about situations of women abuse. I switch the radio off, somewhere somehow it triggers something off. "Fakhi," a lump tightens around my throat making it hard for me to breathe.

I haven't noticed that I'm already home. His not yet back, my body eases down. I look at my surroundings, eMlalazi has always been my favourite place, my birth place to be precise. The town is very small but I love it regardless. Walking inside of this house has me ticking off the edge, I tilt my head looking at my sister's big portrait on the wall. "I love you. MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#02

AYANDA

Waking up after having that rejuvenating sleep made my blood flow. It's morning not scratch that it's midday. I cannot believe that I slept that long. I hardly get sleep, when given an opportunity I use it wisely to relax my body. I yank the blankets off my body heading to the bathroom to wash my face and brush my teeth. I look at my reflection on the mirror tearing my heart into tiny bits of pieces. I'm still wondering how did I survive all this while? Am I strong or a weakling? This is definitely not me, not how I pictured my life. A door bell rings bringing me back to life. I sigh feeling annoyed. Who can possibly be here at this time of the day. I quickly fix myself just incase if it's one of his family members. Everything joint is aching, I still have injuries I encountered the last time, my face is still

bruised and the marks are hard to hide since I'm not a make-up person. I open the door finding his mother and two sister's waiting patiently.

"Sanibona," I shyly greet letting them in. These people are very comfortable to be around. The mother is not the monster in-law but she's very strict.

"Makoti," she greets hugging me and I felt like breaking down and cry. But I don't want to unleash the beast of my sister's husband!

"Please do come in,"

She looks around the house and looks back at me. "Where's is your husband?" That came out as a shocker. If Mrs Myeni comes around, she never requests for her son cause she knows he is hardly around. Now with her asking has gotten me weak.

"H...he went out for an early meeting." I lie through my teeth and she frowns looking at me. "I will go make breakfast." I swept my feet running to the kitchen finding the devil there humming a song with headphones on. I pass his presence and make Mrs Myeni and her two lovely daughter's breakfast. And I just love how they like me. Guess I remind them of my late sister. I feel burning stares on my back and wonder who the hell is looking at me. I turn my head slightly and I catch a glimpse of Ntokozo looking at me. I finish making breakfast and serve my guests.

"This looks lovely," Nontokozo says in joy. Ntokozo is still in the kitchen making two plates and I just don't know how I'm going to handle this situation. Stupid him doesn't even know that his mother is here.

"Baby!" The female voice shouts from the passage and we all turn to look at where the noise is coming from.

"Hehehe mihlohla," Mrs Myeni says standing up. The girls is literally wearing nothing! "Where did my son get this prostitute? Makoti what nonsense am I seeing right now?" She looks at me and I just continue to eat my breakfast without care. I'm only allowed to eat once a day in this house. Now seeing this food makes my stomach grumble in joy.

"mah," the big guy is astonished.

Mrs Myeni chucks in disbelief. "WeNtokozo Myeni, you now bring skanks into you wife's house in her presence! Wena nondindwa get the hell out of my son's house!" She roars.

"Ntokozo didn't tell me he is married. He told me he leaves with his maid." The girl says walking away.

"Hehehe, ngiyalingwa ngisehlane. Ntokozo this is the life you want to live? Nci nci nci, you are definitely not my son but a monster. I wonder what changed you. Why do you keep hurting us like this kodwa hehe. Is it nice seeing your mother shed tears because of you?" She sinks down in the chair and cries. My heart breaks because this woman accepted me for me and the way I am.

"Buti Ntokozo, I'm highly disappointed in you. I think we should leave." Nombulelo his oldest sister says already standing on her feet. That means more breakfast for me.

"Mah," Ntokozo looks at his mother with begging eye's. "Nontokozo," Nontokozo is his twin sister.

"You seized to be my child Ntokozo. I no longer recognise you." His mother looks at him for a full good minute. "This is my goodbye, from now onwards you are no longer welcomed in my home. Count yourself famililess." She grabs her bag and walks out leaving Ntokozo with his mouth half open. Serves him right, I wish I could rejoice right now.

The girl comes back carrying her overnight bag and walks out without saying anything. Now if she goes than that means I'm in deep shit. I stand up trying to calculate my steps, my aim is to walk out of the door and run for my life. The arsehole bit me to it, he runs to the door locking it shoving the keys in to his pocket. Trouble has began. "Please just let me go. I promise never to look back." I beg with pleading eyes. Right now I'm not looking at Ntokozo my sister's husband and also my 'husband' but a monster. God where are you when I need thee most. If it's the punishment for pleasing the dead may the God's of our land please forgive me. He marched towards giving me one hell of a slap making my head to turn. I held my burning cheek with my heart sinking. "Ntokozo please," it came as a whisper. He pulls me by my brand new box braids not caring about the pain I'm feeling on my burning sculp. He yanks the box braids so hard and roughly purposely making some of them to peel off from my scalp fall. I place my hand on my scalp and it's torn. Blood coming out dripping off my forehead. "This is what you made me become!" He yells in my ear and continues to drag me until we've reached his bedroom. He picks me up tossing me on the bed full of his and his mistress cum. Just two weeks ago I had a miscarriage, he didn't spare me any time. He violated me through the pains I was going through. He didn't care about blood, my abdomen was very weak and fragile. But he had his way with me the way he wanted the whole night. Mind you that day he violated me was the same day I lost my baby. "Ntokozo, please. Not in my sister's bedroom." I plead but it was falling into dear ears. He grabs the chains that were under his bed and tied me on the bed with my legs spread apart widely. "You want my attention I will give you my attention!" He hisses taking off his clothes. I have no fight left in me, I'm beyond broken and no amount of love or words would fix me. My mother will never know peace in her life! I close my eyes letting the tears fall on the side. He shoved himself roughly, I winch in pain sucking it all in. This is how my virginity was taken away from me. He violated me without care. For two years I've been living with this monster. If I have to leave where will I go? I don't know anyone. The woman I called my mother made sure that no family member takes me in if I come crying to them. She basically believes that I'm rebellious and I'm not being the submissive wife like my sister used to be. She blames me for all the wrong going wrong into my life. I will never forgive her for turning her back on me when I needed her the most, she was suppose to protect me and be a mother. But no to her males are always right and females are the ones always wrong. He is on top of me groaning pumping me hard. His cock is hitting my abdomen so painfully. I can't do a thing at this point I'm tied on a bed. He moves faster and faster as I cry

silently begging for God to have mercy on the child I'm carrying. How did I know I'm pregnant again? A mother will always know her body

my body didn't recover from the miscarriage. I miscarried and got pregnant right away not willingly. He stops moving and lifts my legs up and groans loud. I still have my eyes closed crying silently. This is too much and it hurts, I can't take this pain anymore. He caresses his dick around my butt hole. "Please Ntokozo not my behind." He spans my butt and shoves himself in moving slowly in and out of me. What did I do to deserve such punishment? I scream in agony as he went deeper and deeper. "Ow yes scream for me. You like it don't you?" What's the use of screaming. If I scream I'm giving him power, power to move on and on. "Your shit is warm, ow yes," minutes later he releases every bit of his cum inside my behind. He slowly pulls out. I'm loose I can feel myself. He unties me without saying a word breathing heavily. "Get yourself cleaned up!" He walks out of the room banging the door leaving me to sob painfully. "Nkanyezi where are you when I need you the most. I can't take the pain anymore, I can't!" I'm laying on top of my own pool of shit listening to the burning sensation on my behind. Today is the day I will never forget in my entire life. I feel empty, alone, lost, confused. Minutes later he comes back smelling and looking all fresh. He packs some of his clothes and walks out whistling. I know he locked me inside of this house. There is no escape!

## ROMEO

"Kids let's go!" I'm late for work and the kids are also running late. My shirt is so untidy, the kids uniform is creased and looks untidy. But what matters the most to me as a man is their stomach. As long as they are full the rest shall follow. I left my mother alone in the house. I'll just drop off the documents and attend to the important meeting and come back home. My mother needs me.

Driving my kids to school is one of the most things I enjoy doing even Rose knew that this was my favourite hobby. "Bye dad." I watch my kids as they enter the yard holding each other's hands. An emotional smile crept on my face thinking of how much Rose has missed out on her kids. I know wherever she is, she is definitely watching over us probably smiling or crying. I sigh driving off with tears burning my eyes. I look at my ring band and tears came out gushing. I park on the side of the road and let every ounce of pain out. I thought I have healed and moved on but clearly I was lying to myself. How do I move on from someone who held and still holds a special space in my heart. I calm myself down leaning back. I can't go to work today it's one of those days for me. I make a U-turn going back home. I will send an email informing them I'm not well. And besides, I'm the owner of my own company. We started this company from scratch with so much sweat and almost giving up. But Rose pushed through making me a man amongst men. And for that I will always forever cherish her.

AYANDA

I pushed through the pain getting myself cleaned up. There was no use of washing that bedding, it was a mess. I burnt it and threw away the remaining pieces. I'm looking at the poisonous substance with my heart beat rate on high. Ending my life will be one of the most best decisions I've took so far. Maybe reuniting with my sister and son will bring closure and happiness in my life. I sigh feeling discouraged thinking of the little human in me. I push the poison aside dropping my head looking down. "Nkanyezi mtaka mah, what you requested from me is too much. I thought I would handle the pain and hold on. But I can't anymore more. It hurts beyond measures, I'm beyond broken my other half. Nothing can fix me at this point, no one can fix me right now. How do I get out of this situation?" I slid down on the floor sitting on the bathroom tiles crying all my lungs out. If I fight where will I even begin? Do I even have strength to fight, to fight the Lucifer himself. I doubt I have that strength in me, my whole soul is reaped out of me and there is nothing left. A cold breeze passes right through making me to shiver. Maybe I've been sitting on this tile for far too long lost in thoughts. I look at the time and indeed I've been here for hours. My arse is numb from the pain and coldness. Winching in pain trying to stand up as hard as it is. Am I still a woman after what happened to me? Will any man look at me the same? I shake my head in disbelief thing of the terror that's about to rain in this house. No matter how blazing hot the sun is, inside this house, it's always raining.

I slowly swift my aching self to make something eat. My sister's portrait fell breaking into pieces. "No,no,no,no." I put my hands on my head. This can't be happening. That portrait is the only thing that kept me alive, kept me pushing, kept me to have little faith. Without it I'm nothing! Why does God hate me so much, my little sanity is gone! The door flung open and the devil walks in whistling. He just walks right past me without saying a word as if he has ever said anything for the past two years. A man who didn't even mourn the death of our baby! I finally gathered myself and cleaned the little pieces that were left. "What the hell do you think you doing?" His voice startles me making me to drop the pieces that I've picked. "It fell," I respond softly not looking at him. Now I have to start all over again and clean this mess. He is still standing watching me intensively burning my skin. Lord please not today I've had enough of it. This man made me shave my head bold and that will be a scar that will always be a constant reminder of my marriage. Of how I got married. What made me get married to this monster of a man. I dust my hands and go make food for myself, a light meal will do. I don't even feel like eating, but the little human growing inside of me that I have to think about. These days I rely on bread, not that I like it but it's something that I can push down my throat without wanting to throw up. "When you done wasting my food follow me!" I felt my body freeze. I'm not ready for yet another encounter in one day! MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#03

## AYANDA

I've been locked up in this room for the past three days with no explanation what so ever. Atleast I get to eat and sleep through out the day. I'm starting to loose myself and I can feel it. There's nothing in this room besides this big bed and the bathroom. No TV, no radio. I can't even listen to Ukhozi FM, a radio station that keeps my mind going. A radio station that brings my groove back. My head has been aching since, I think I have blisters and I doubt they will heal anytime from now. The room is dark, there's no light, no windows. I breathe my own fart, I can smell my own scent even on the bed covers. A door cracks open and my heart beats abnormally. He is carrying a tray full of food. This is the first. I freeze looking at the tray that has varieties of food. "Come eat," he commands me, I'm hesitant, what if the food is poisoned? This man can not be trusted. My grumbling stomach betrayed me, my saliva filled my mouth in excitement. The smell is not making it easier for me. Ow Lord heavenly father, if I die today please accept my soul. Let me reunite with the two people who have ever cared about me. My father and sister, my father named me Ayanda. I still remember his blessings before he passed on. "My daughter.... whatever you touch with love shall nourish into gold, whatever you wish for you shall desire, whatever you touch with your own hands shall ever remain blessed abundantly. Give me your hand. I stretched out my hand to him, I watched him as he spit on my hand and closed it holding on to it tight. He was very weak, and very fragile. I know that someday you will change your parting ways and be the daughter that I want. Someday I want to look down at you and smile proudly. I will be joining my ancestors anytime from now and I will be resting in peace." He told me and my heart broke into pieces, I looked at him as he slept peacefully. My heart was aching in pain. The love I had for my father was beyond and above. The following day the devastating news of my father's departure. Yes he was sick and he was sick for a very long time, but him leaving me behind felt unreal.

"Yey I don't have all day!" I'm still standing day dreaming about my life, I completely zoned out unexpectedly. I sat down carefully, my arse still hurts and I've never healed for the past few days. Maybe I'm beyond damaged who knows. I eat in comfortable silence with him watching me without shifting his gaze one me. I wipe the plate clean and I'm full. I know I will be having another set of this warming food tomorrow. He grabs the plates off my hands roughly and walks out. He forgot to lock the door, my mind runs wild. This is my escape, but if I escape where will I run to? Leaving on the streets while pregnant, will my baby survive? I place my hand on my stomach and exhale out loud. I decided to lay down a bit and let my body relax. I feel my eyes getting heavier and heavier until I feel into a deep slumber.

## ROMEO



After dropping the kids off from school I drove straight home to tidy up a bit. The house looks better, I wouldn't compare my hand with a woman's. My mother has bathe and eaten, now I can relax and take a nap before the kids come back. My mind is not functioning, so working will be no option for me. I lay on the couch wanting to rest a bit.

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I look at this woman playing with my children, her smile, her laughter.... everything is just innocent about her. Behind those scares she's beautiful.

"Daddy look," the twins says kicking the ball. I smile looking at how my life has lightened after two years of mourning my wife.

"I scored," the woman says cheering, this woman happens to be my wife. Her big baby bump looks extremely cute on her. "Rita look," Rita is her baby girl, I met her whilst she was still pregnant. Rita grew up knowing me as her father. She rolls down trying to catch the ball but it passes right infront of her. She's just learning how to walk. And the wobbly walk is just cute. My wife appears wearing a white dress looking beautiful as ever.

"Happy family," she smiles and stands beside me.

"Happy family indeed," I've never been this happy in my entire life.

"You will find her, you will cross paths again. She's way too broken and only your mother can bring her sanity back." She tells me, I look at Rose and her eyes are fixed on the woman I call my wife.

"What do you mean?" I'm confused obviously.

"Just hang in there, you know I got to know that we don't plan our lives as we wish but there's a book above that has our destiny written on it. My destiny was never with yours

you are not mine to begin with. I found my soulmate on the other side of the world and I'm happy. You will soon be happy but the happiness doesn't come cheap. Treat her right and you will flourish." She taps on my shoulder and walks barefoot passing right through them.

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I wake up detrenched from sweat and confusion. This is the third time having this same dream over and over again. I sigh getting up looking at the time. Flip! did I sleep that long? It's 1:15 and the kids were out at 1:00. I rush off speeding to go fetch them and luckily they were not alone I sigh in relief.

"You late again!" Trust Rebecca can be a drama queen at times.

"I'm only 15 minutes late baby." She roles her eyes and looks outside the window. Her attitude gets to me at times and I cannot stand it! "How was your day at school?"

"Daddy," Ramona and her endless questions. I asked them a question and they don't Burge to answer.

"Yes," I respond focused on the road.

"Where's mommy?" I mistakenly press the brakes harshly. The unexpected question made me losse my senses. "She's....erm. A, I will take you to her." I hate lying. But how do I tell a five year old that their mother passed away! Tears veil my eyes I guess my kids are also in pain. Here I was thinking I'm the only one who has problems! The drive is filled with silence, Rebecca has never been the same after the death of their mother. She had to grow up at the age of eight to help me take care of the twins and my mother. "Do you guys want ice-cream?" I want to cheer them up.

"Yes," they all scream loudly in joy, atleast I will manage to take their minds of the issue of wanting their mother.

AYANDA

I feel pressed like someone or something is holding me back. My arms and legs are held back. I try opening my eyes but everything is completely dark. "No,no,no." I have come to realisation that I'm again tied up on the bed and my eyes are blindfolded. I hear shuffling's, "Nto....Ntokozo." I whisper afraidly. I trying moving my everything in me is just stiff. "Shhh," he says and I keep quite already in tears. The bed dips and he gets on top of me shoving himself in me and starts moving in out of me slow. "Ow yes," I'm hurting, it's painful. I suppress my lips together trying to hold any screams and cries coming out of my mouth. "Fu\*\*k!" He moves faster, his rough and has all of his weight on top of me. I can't do anything at this point all of my limbs are tied up. "Shit!" He collapse on top of me. I'm used to this life but it hurts more than anything. I'm all naked, that I can feel. A cold substance land on my clit and that got me wondering what is that metal. He fiddles with my folds opening them wide and painfully. A hard cold substance is being shoved in my nuna. I try to fight by wiggling myself but the chains were to tight. "Ntokozo stop!" I half scream, my virgina is stretching so painfully. He shoves it deeper and deeper sucking the little life that's left in me. "P....please stop it hurts." The pain I'm feeling is beyond any pain I've ever felt. Even my anus didn't hurt this bad, I feel my body getting tired and weak. He pulls the thing out and I can feel that my virgina hole is bigger than my own head.

I'm still trying to digest of what just happened. My soul is reaping apart bit by bit. For two years I've endured this pain, I can't take this anymore. My sobs are now becoming dry, I've wet myself. I feel hot liquid being dripped on my virgina. The burning sensation is too much, a terrible moan escapes my mouth and my lower lip trembles. It hurts beyond reasonable doubts. I can't cry any longer, I have no voice left in me. Everything is being reaped apart. I let out a soft chuck shaking my head. "God, if you are listening to my cries. I beg you to take my life, I beg you to save me and take me out of this misery and take my life once and for all. End all the pain please God." I feel the chains statlling, my hands are now loose. I'm sleeping on the bed like a vegetable. The blindfold is being pulled off my face. I let the tears fall off my face, I still have my legs wide open. Where do I even began to close them. I glance on the side of the bed looking at the burning candle and Mr Min. My heart breaks into piece realising that how damaged I am. He walks out of the room making sure he locks it leaving me bursting into tears. My whole body is numb, so he shoved Mr Mean inside of me and waxed me with a candle. I look a the burning candle and a thought comes to my mind. I slowly push my body towards it getting hold of it. "God accept my as your child." I lit up the mattress and it immediately catch flames. I lay on the bed waiting for the worst to happen.

ROMEO

After feeding the kids ice-cream and seeing how happy they are made me my heart at ease but not completely. My mind keeps on drifting the dream I keep on having continuously. I tuck my kids to bed and thank God it's Friday. Now what's left is for me to nature my mother. The sight I'm seeing brakes my heart, that is why Rebecca has a cold heart and she's just a child. She knows exactly what's going on. She can see but doesn't have a say. "Babe," I take her hand. She's crying, "did someone hurt you in school?" I ask panicking. She's a female child and girls are always victims. I would never forgive myself if something like that has happened to her. "I miss my mama," she finally says. I pull her placing her head on my chest. "I know she went to heaven and she's with the other angels." I let out a soft breathe. Yes she was young when her mother passed away, she was eight and she knew exactly what was going on. "You know that your mother always loved you," she nods her head. "You were so important in her life that she was living to survive for you and your siblings and sometimes I got jealous. Know that your mother is watching over you and will always be with you in spirit." I say. "I miss her," that soft voice in her remind me so much of her mother. "I know and I miss her too babe." I say kissing her head giving her a tight hug. I wouldn't trade my kids with anything. They are my pride and joy. Sometimes I feel like I'm making my burdens hers. Am I failing to be a father? Am I failing Rose? What's that I'm doing wrong? Is it safe to ask her questions? "Is there something I'm doing wrong?" She shakes her head no. "Tell me babe so that I can fix that mistake that's hurting you." Maybe the problem is me, just that I don't know yet.

"Daddy I'm serious. I just miss mommy." I nod my head in agreement, I miss my wife too. She was the sweetest of them all. "Let's go see granny before we go sleep." I tell her and she nods happily. The way she loves my mother it's enourmous. We take out time feeding and bathing her. Thankfully for today she didn't mess herself. "And we are done." She tells me placing her hands dramatically on her waist. I smile looking at her innocent face. I love my girl more than anything. "I'm off to bed." I leave them still bonding. I guess she will be reading her a bedtime story as usual. I throw myself on my bed and close my eyes. My body is so strained and tired, I felt giving in sinking into a deep sleep.

"Rome," Rose walks towards me smiling. Wait she's with my brother.

"Brother!" I squeal in excitement hugging him.

"Your Juliet, soon she shall be yours. I'm with my happiness." She holds my brothers hands and my heart sinks. "Don't be heartbroken we were not meant to be. I was just there to put your life on track for a purpose. It's time to free me, let me go." She tells me I am confused and hurt.

"We will always watch over you." I watch them as they walk through the passage hand in hand.

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Something brakes scattering on the floor making me to wake up from my yet again weird dream. The wedding picture has fallen off, what does that mean? I slowly get up from the bed looking at the pieces scattered on the floor. I sigh rubbing my face. I look at my ring and everything comes back flooding. I slowly take it off and the

strangest thing happens. My body feels lighter and relieved. I glance at the ring with mixed emotions. "I guess it's time I truly let you go." I place the ring in my safe and clean the glass that are on the floor. Guess the picture will be placed in the safe along with the rest of her stuff. It's now time to clean all of her belongings. Guess there's no turning back from this. It's a step to healing. I've been holding back for far too long. It's time I claim my life back!

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#04

AYANDA

I woke up in the sounds of beeping machines. My eyes are heavy, my heart is pounding abnormally against my chest, my vision is fuzzy. I press my eyes together shutting them tight trying to regain my sight, finally I can now see clear. I glance on the side and I see my mother sitting looking at me with an unreadable look on her face. She hurries up next to my side faking tears. If those tears were coming from a good place I would have let her embrace me. I would have let her help me heal through the pain I'm feeling at this point. How does one live a life in a way that I'm leaving? How do I heal from all of this tragic I'm facing. I hate my mother more than anything! "Fununani la?" That came as a whisper asking her. My throat is dry from all the smoke. Instead of her answering me she lets out a loud sob. Why didn't I die again? "Mntanami...." She tries touching but I remove her hand so roughly making her to gasp in shock. "Those thugs, I swear they will pay!" She hisses and I just look at her blankly. "They almost took my last baby girl from me." She wipes her fake tears making me to chuck in disbelief. What a mother I have. "MaNtombela wake up and smell the coffee! There were no thugs! Your beloved son-in-law did this to me! I'm in this mess because of you, because of your greed! I pleaded with you to not allow the Gumede's to make me a second wife to Ntokozo. You all listened to my dead sister who is leaving peacefully in heaven. You only care about money! You agreed to the nonsense because money comes first to you. As long as I get to leave with that monster you will be earning! I hate you with passion! No wonder my father left you, he didn't see a wife in you. You are just a gold digger!" An unexpected slap landed on my face.

"I don't care if you kill me, my spirit is already broken and it's because of you. I'm like this and it's because of you! I lost my first child and his blood will forever be on your hands! You will never know peace in your life Patricia Gumede!" Another hot slap lands on my face but all that goes into vein. I'm more than livid, I'm boiling in anger. "Do what you do best hit me! Vele you never cared about me, my father and Nkanyezi are the only two people who will forever love me even in their next life. I don't have a mother and I never got to have one!" I sigh leaning back on the hospital bed letting it all out.

"Excuse me mam, this is highly unacceptable. You cannot harass my patients in hospital." The doctor tells my so cold mother. "Mam if you don't leave I will have to call security on you."

She chucks looking at me all murderous as if I care. Her eyes don't scare me I've been way much worse than that.

"You are not...."

"No need to tell that I'm not welcomed in your home. You seized to be my mother and I wish nothing but pain and misery for you." Cursing her was never an option but she left me no choice. Talking out of anger presents bad luck, right now I don't care about nothing! She grabs her bag and walks out marching. "Would you like me to book you into any facility?" Trust this doctor with their concern and I appreciate that alot. But I don't want any one meddling in my broken material marriage. Is this even marriage? Ntokozo only paid the bride price for me nothing else. Atleast I didn't get to change my surname on my ID. All I need right now is to go pack every shit that belongs to me and get the hell out of that house without turning back. I'm sorry Nkanyezi but this is not the life I planned for myself. "For how long am I going to be here?" Not that I mind staying here but I need to get my life back on track. "Just for today, just making sure that you are well and healthy. You are lucky that you were saved in time." The doctor tells me and that got me thinking. "Is my baby safe though." I smile brushing my tummy. This is what I'm staying strong for.

"Miss Ntombela I'm sorry to bare such news to you but you are not pregnant." This doctor can play pranks but I'm in no mood to play. I just want to know if my baby Rita is okay. If it's a girl I will be naming her Ritabile and if it's a baby boy I'm definitely naming him Ratolaka. I know I sound ridiculous at this point but I'm sure for that if you're pregnant it's the most exciting news ever! I laugh my lungs out through the pain and discomfort I'm feeling. "You have jokes for days." I him and the nigger looks at me like I'm sort of crazy. He clears his throat and looks at me worriedly. "Miss Ntombela, I understand that you are going through alot of trauma right now but all tests were conducted and there was no sign of pregnancy. When you feel the desire to get pregnant, which may be the repeat of miscarriages or desire to get married. Your body may produce some pregnancy signs. Your brain practically misinterprets those signals and pregnancy and triggers the release of hormones that lead to actual symptoms." I know my body and I know myself, he is totally uttering nonsense!

"No, you lying, I know for a fact that I am pregnant. I'm two weeks pregnant!" I snap feeling my chest closing up. I know for a fact that I am pregnant. "I'm suggesting some counselling for you in order for you to heal and close those wounds." I don't need to heal, I know that I'm pregnant! My subconscious never lies.

NTOKOZO

"Mr Myeni," one of the clients snap his finger right in front of my face. I'm deep in thoughts, the screams and cries are giving me no rest. After the death of my wife, I have never been the same again. I literally lost myself in the process. Ayanda, Ayanda \*sighs\*. I don't even know why I'm doing all those things to her. But after my wife died her only sister was shoved right down my throat and my family subjecting to it made me lose all of my senses. How will I heal if there's someone who looks exactly like my wife, who talks, laughs like her. Everything about Ayanda just screams Nkanyezi and I can't take any of that. Me abusing her is a way of me healing through the process. I feel happy when she feels pain, I feel like a man but then again that happiness is short lived because I got back to that sink hole of reality. Do I hate Ayanda no, I'm hating myself for falling in love with her and I'm falling for her deeply with her not even realising. Do I need help? We all heal in our different ways. "Yea sure, can we postpone this meeting I'm not feeling okay." Indeed I'm feeling under the weather. I'm not okay, Ayanda's screams and cries are making me weak and vulnerable. It has only come to realisation that I've hurt her beyond any recognition and pain. How did she hold on and stayed for so long? Being home will bring all the memories of the past I'm trying hard to bury. Bringing sluts in this house, it's not because I'm disrespecting my late wife but I'm trying to find ways of making myself heal. Her passing turned me into a monster I do not even recognise. I drive around the small town looking at the crowded places of Eshowe. I have no other option but to go home. I wonder if Ayanda is around.

Minutes later I'm parked outside my house which used to be my wife's house now belongs to her sister Ayanda who is also practically my wife traditionally. Walking inside the house make my heart heavy. Ayanda almost burnt the house down. Luckily only half of the mattress got burnt on the side. I found her unconscious and rushed her to the hospital. I wonder how much damage I've caused her down there. I need a little bit of sleep, I've been restless for the past few days. I throw myself on my bed closing my eyes lead me into a deep slumber forgetting the matters of my heart.

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"You will never know peace Ntokozo," that's my wife's voice. I'm in a dark hole trying to find my way out but I'm literally stuck for worse. It's cold and there's no light. The voice keeps on repeating the same thing over and over again. I hear a ringtone from afar until my eyes flung opened and I noticed that I was dreaming and my phone is ringing non-stop.

"What," I answer the security guard. "WHAT! NO....WHEN? I'M COMING!" This can't be happening

not my garage please Lord. I search for my slippers. Driving back to town felt like a life time failure. Thank God no traffic cops were around or I would have gotten myself a ticket. "No, no, not my garage." I sink kneeling down with a heavy heart. This can't be happening. First my wife now my garage. Can't God give me a brake! "Don't come any closer!" One of the fire fighters say pushing everyone back. People are watching like they are watching a movie that's being casted. I'm still kneeling down letting the tears dropping down my cheeks. God can't do this to me, he can't let me suffer this much. "If this is for tormenting Ayanda I apologize. Please I will be a better man for her, I

promise to change." My lips tremble making me to sit down losing balance. "You will never know peace Ntokozo," that little voice in my head kept on repeating those same words over and over again. I watch my only garage, my hard work and sweat just crumbled and crashed right before my eyes.

## ROMEO

I'm at the hospital pacing up and down in fear and anxiously. My baby girl can't die. What will I be if Ramona were to leave me? She's only five and just a baby. She doesn't know anything. The doctor comes back holding a file fixing his glasses. My heart skips a beat looking at him. I found my daughter passed out turning blue. I panicked and drove like a maniac to the hospital.

"Mr Dickson, your daughter is dehydrated, the symptoms show that she has a rapid heartbeat, lack of energy and dizziness." Indeed for the past few days she has been crying non-stop and I paid no mind to it. I thought that maybe it's because she is seeking for my attention as always. I'm hurt, how can I be this reckless neglecting my own blood. I was busily mourning crying my lungs out because of the woman that occupied my heart and later lost her. "We will have to keep her overnight for observation and make sure she's okay." I sigh in defeat feeling all sorts of emotions. Am I a bad father. "Will she be okay? What's the cause of all this if I may ask?" My baby girl is going through the most, I could have prevented it, I could have paid more attention to my kids. "Children are at highest risk of dehydration when they are sick or when it is hot outside. Since it's summer you should know the signs and symptoms of dehydration so you could help your child to rehydrate. Our bodies need water, in fact our body is made up with water. Next time just make sure that your kids drink too much water." The doctor taps on my shoulder and turns to leave. I'm hurt no lies. I look at my baby girl connected in cubes, she looks pale like she's hurting. I kiss her tiny hands, as much as I love to sleep here I can't I have a mother at home that needs me full time. I guess I will come back early tomorrow morning. I walk out of the corridor slowly minding my business until I collided with someone. "Sorry sir I didn't see you." A woman's voice says, the way I'm so tall I had to bend my head slightly down to look at her. My breathing stops, my heart beats rapidly. This is the same woman I've been seeing in my dreams. She's....she's changed, like I can't even explain it. Her head is bold and looks thinner from the last time I saw her. This is the same woman that has been tormenting me in my sleep, I have been having sleepless nights because of her! "You," I finally managed to say still looking at her. She shifts uncomfortably with her eyes still fixed on me. No one is breaking the eye contact. "I said I'm sorry," she whispers with her tiny soft voice, she looks like she's been crying. "You don't remember me do you?" I ask and surprisingly she shakes her head no. I'm not good in explaining. "Follow me," I say and she just looks at me like I'm mad. "I promise, I'm not going to hurt you, and I can't kidnap you from the hospital in broad daylight. I just want to show you something that will make you remember where you first saw me or shall I say met." She's first hesitant, "fine, but I still say I don't know you." I



chuck looking at her short self, "this way," she follows me behind slowly with me taking giant steps in front of her. I stop and turn to look back and she's walking very slowly. I patiently wait for her and we took baby steps until we reached our destination. "You don't remember her?" I ask, she slowly makes her way to the bed and slight frowns looking at my baby peacefully sleeping. She takes a further close look at her and she gasps in shock. "Ow my God, it's you!" she says with tears threatening to come out of her eyes. "What happened?" Now she recognises me. "The doctors say that she is dehydrated." I say swallowing a big dry lump. "Ow my goodness, is she okay? Will she be okay?" The fact that she is fussing over a baby she only saw once shows that she is truly the woman I always dream about. "The doctor's will be keeping her here for more observations. But they promise me that she will be fine." I sigh thinking of the possibilities that I just might loose my daughter. "Have faith, she will be fine. Now I have someone to spend time with in hospital." She says and guilt stricke me. How selfish can I be? MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#05

NTOKOZO

Never in my wildest dreams I ever thought that one day I would actually see my world crumbling down before me. My life which I worked so hard for has burnt from Ashes to Dust. Looking at my business, it cannot restore all that I've lost. It can't get me back up immediately. I've been blowing money on all those one night stands for what exactly.... I've never been this disappointed in myself, I'm sure Nkanyezi I looking down on me loosing all hope. Stupid me even claimed for the insurance, at that time my garage was alive as a horse. I slowly stand up feeling defeated. From heroin to zeroin.

AYANDA

I never knew, let alone think or thought that one day I will be seeing this man with my two naked eyes. It turns out or I got to know that I'm in Richards Bay hospital. I was shocked to the core realising how far I am to a place I used to call home. A place where I grew up in. The only place I will never miss in this my entire life. I'm now laying on my bed listening to the aching stiches down my nuna, Ntokozo really did a number one me and I yes him. But what I know is he will never know peace as long as I still pray on his misery. Call me cold hearted, call me the she devil I

wouldn't careless. I want him to feel the wrath of the pain that he made me feel for the whole two full F\*\*ken years. As for the woman I call my mother, I put everything in God's hands. She will know that all glitters are not Gold. "You seem very deep in thoughts." Argh can't this doctor leave me alone. Yes I'm deep in thought so what! "It's not good for your health," he further adds, what's the use of leaving if my life has crumbled before it can even began. "Says someone who failed to see that I'm pregnant." I scoff, whenever I think of this my mind and heart just sinks. But the inner me still concludes that I'm still pregnant. "I will not argue with you. I'm just here to look at the stitches than give you your medication." I sigh and decide to look outside the window. He put on his gloves and comes towards me. "Kindly open your legs for me." I slowly open my legs without looking at him, I'm ashamed and shy of the damage Ntokoza has caused me down there. I won't pity party myself with it because these scars will forever remain as always. "All looks good, you not bleeding which is a good sign. You will be discharged tomorrow." My heart skips a beat think of possibilities of being homeless but first I need to go back at Eshowe to collect whatever shit that belonged to me and start my whole life afresh. No family no friends, I'm all alone and afraid in this world. If I had a problem who would I run to? I wish I knew my father's extended family. I know that they live in Empangeni KwesakaMthethwa. Whenever I get back on my feet I will definitely look for my father's family. Maybe they will accept me who knows. I don't even have transportation for tomorrow, how will I even find my two feet in Eshowe? Guess icebo liyozakha. "Are you okay?" God dammit this doctor is still here parading up and down. I'm lost in my zone world of thinking not realising he is still here. I didn't even notice that my face is wet with tears. "I'm fine...just that, you wouldn't understand." I say trying to avoid the direction he is taking me to. "You know you can talk to me or rather I can book you to a psychologist." He suggests and I thank him for his concern. "Thank you, I'm a soilder, I'll be fine. I've been through way worser things in life." I say closing my eyes picturing my life in heaven. "Still not comfortable into telling me what happened." He sits next to me. If I knew better I would say he is into me but I can feel and tell that he is gay. "That won't be necessary." A voice echo's by the door making our heads turn. "You again." I'm shocked, this is unbelievable. How did he even know I'm in here? Atleast Ntokoza is paying for all of the medical expenses. "Yes me." This white tall huge man, damn Jesus took time building him. You know yesterday I didn't even get time to look at him and here I am today salving over a white married man!

"Let me bounce, see you tomorrow chomza." He winks at me and walks away. This doctor is very weird I tell you. So now I'm no longer his patient but his Choma. The upgrade within two days since I've been here. "How did you find me?" Stupid question I know. He chucks and sits next to me, "that's not important. I bought you these. Hope I didn't cross the line." He hands me a plastic filled with different items. I smile shyly feeling....I don't even know how I feel. But I won't let pride take over me, I really need this. "Thank you," I say softly. I've been surviving on the limited food here in hospital which really sucks. "You welcome. So when are they discharging you?" I raise my eyebrows looking at him. Why is he so concerned about me being discharged? "Tomorrow,"

"So soon," he moves further closer to me making himself more comfortable. Hebana he is also taking off his shoes! I do not like this one bit. "Where's your daughter?" He chucks and closes his eyes, "that one is fast asleep." He chucks and smiles. "Can you believe that I've been here almost for the whole day but girly is still fast asleep." He sighs sadly and I pity him but atleast they managed to diagnose the issue. "She will be fine, good thing it's nothing extreme." I say trying to cheer up the spirit. I don't even know this man but the way he is so comfortable around me makes me feel uneasy and uncomfortable. "I failed her, how come I didn't take notice to my own child that she's not okay? Am I a bad father?" He chucks and let the tears out. "You know loosing my wife made me lose half of my brain. I'm not functioning well. And there's another case, my mother just became bedridden out of the blue. Doctor's can't seem to find out what seems to be wrong with her. My life is just upside down." He sighs

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who am I to him? Wait a minute did he just say he lost his wife? "Loosing your wife, are you guys separated for the time being?" He is being unclear on that part.

"She's late." Damn you Ayanda, are you really that stupid!

"I'm so sorry." Indeed I am. He faintly smiles, he still had his eyes closed. "What baffles me is my first daughter Rebecca. That girly has been through alot and I'm afraid that she's bottling her feelings up. She is going to be a cold hearted human being and I don't want that. A lot has happened right before her. Her mother's passing, my mother's unknown illness and me being an absent father." I turn to look at him. "What do you mean when you say you are an absent father?" I ask and he rubs his face in frustration. "My body is there with them, I am practically there with them physically but my soul and heart is still hung up on my late wife." This is touching, I thought I was the only who was facing dilemmas in their life but I guess there are some strong people out there who don't show their pain for the whole world to see. "Have you ever thought of therapy?" I ask, I also need therapy myself.

"I've never thought of it. I think I should consider it, but I will talk to her first and see if she agrees to this whole scenario."

"I'm sure she will agree and besides it's for her own best. This will help her in the future." He nods his head in agreement. I'm tired and sleepy but how will I sleep if there's this white dude on my bed. I don't even know this man's name for crying out loud! Let me just close my eyes for a bit, with the loads of medication I'm taking it makes me drowsy. This bed is very small to accommodate two people. I look at the side and the white man is fast asleep even snoring slightly. "I guess I will be not sleeping," I say to myself, but who am I fooling? I'm dying because of sleepiness. I slid down the bed positioning myself sleeping on side carefully not to fall and break my skull. I give him my back and try to relax my weak body.

ROMEO

My body is pressed, infact my legs are pressed. I flung my eyes open in panic and scan my surroundings until I noticed I passed out on the hospital bed. "Shit!" I come to realisation that my kids are all alone at home including my mother! She has her leg on top of me fast asleep. How am so this comfortable around a stranger, a woman that I only saw once. This cannot be possible. I sigh getting slowly off the bed making sure not to wake her up. I look at her body with all those wounded marks. Some are starting to fade away and some are new. I'm busy talking about my problems not even asking her about her well-being. I pull the sheets of her body and got the shock of my life. Who on earth does this to another human being? I quickly cover her body with my heart pounding rapidly. I wasn't suppose to see that in the first place, what was I even doing on her bed instead of me being with my daughter. "Ow she's still asleep. Mr Man that was a one time acception for you to sleep with your woman on the hospital bed. Next time I will charge you a fine." The male doctor tells me. I nod my head and walk out without turning back. I

passed by my daughter's ward and surprisingly she was wide awake but not strong enough to hold long conversations. The doctors have been keeping a close eye on her for the past couple of days and that alone makes my heart at ease. How I wish I could just divide myself twice but unfortunately I cannot. "Daddy will see you tomorrow baby." She's already asleep again. I look at my wrist watch and it's 10'O Clock on the dot. Since morning I've been here and I haven't eaten anything. What about my kids at home? I sigh feeling defeated, I walk out of the hospital with a heavy heart. When I get home I won't even eat, I will just check upon my mother and kids then throw myself on the bed. I park my vehicle on the driveway and look at the house Rose admired. I think it's time I look for my own house, I will rent this house. Moving out of this house will be the first step of letting go of her. I walk inside of the house and it's dead quite. What did my kids eat? I rush to the kitchen and the bread crumbs are scattered on the table. So they ate bread, I need to ask Rebecca. The whole house is upside down, what matters is that they are safe. I find Rebecca sleeping on my mum's bed with a story book on the side. My mother looks clean and she was feed, looking at the plates on top of the table counter broke my heart. She went all out to cater for her siblings and my grandmother. For a 10 year old it's just alot and I don't like it. I close the door and checked on Ronald, he is also fast asleep. I close the door and go throw myself on my bed.

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"In due course son," I'm looking at my wife, brother and father standing right infront of my eyes.

"What's in due course?" I'm clearly confused as to what they are saying. I've never been this confused in my entire life.

"Soon you will know my son, just so you know I'm proud of you." They all leave me hanging. Again I watch my wife and brother holding hands laughing and giggling as they are walking with my father on their side. Somehow I'm not hurt by this, I actually feel relieved. How can I accept such abomination!

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I wake up panting and gasping for air. The dreams have been on my neck constantly and I'm failing to understand what they mean. My time at the hospital felt peaceful. I didn't have any nightmares, I felt peace and alive. How is that possible that I cannot sleep in my own house? I drag my feet to the kitchen to get a glass of water trying to sooth my dry throat. These dreams keep on weighing me down. It's past midnight and I can't fall asleep. Rather do paperwork.

I'm trying so hard to forget everything but mind is working overtime. I can't concentrate, how is it possible that one is connected to.... "f\*\*k!" I push the papers aside. I stare at late wife's picture that's on top of the table. "I loved you with everything in me. Why is it this hard to forget what we had? Why is it this hard to move on and forget about you? You keep appearing in my dreams not making sense. How do I move on from this?" I push the picture back and a little voice creeps inside my head. "Follow your feelings," my inner self spoke making my heart pound a million time. Could this be.... could this mean? Maybe my thinking is rumbling with my thoughts. "F\*\*k this shit!" I

grab my car keys heading out. I'm ready for anything, I don't even know what I'm going to do there but what I know is I am never backing down. I'm driving hoping and praying that the I see the light on the journey I'm about to embark. MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#06

AYANDA

I yawn stretching myself waking up from my peaceful dream land. I can feel and smell an unusual fragrance within my surroundings. I scan my surroundings and notice a white man on the same bed as me. "Jesus!" I half scream jumping off the bed forgetting the painful stitches I have down there. This mulungu was gone when I went to the toilet in the wee hours of the morning. He didn't even hear me scream my lungs out. I'm sure the whole hospital stuffs including the patients heard my loudful scream. I gather my strength getting up from the floor after I landed painfully. "Mr Man," I shake him gently but the dude is deadly asleep. "Mr Man!" I say a bit louder. Instead of him jumping for his life he groans turning to the side continuing with his sleep. You know what I'm going to his daughter's ward to have maybe an hour nap. "Nxa mpofana." I scoff feeling as mad as hell. Who does the hell he think he is. Firstly he invades my privacy by sleeping on the tiny bed as me. He doesn't even know me for crying out loud! Going to the children's ward felt like a year. Now I regret why I'm here in the first place. I find the bed empty and my heart skips a bit thinking that maybe they stole her. But her father is there occupying my bed, that means she is somewhere around the hospital. I patiently wait on the chair beside her bed praying and hoping that she will come out from wherever she's hiding. I sigh in relief when I see a nurse carrying her. I stand up in a hurry thinking that maybe she's sick. "Is she okay?" I ask out of panic. The nurse just smiles at me placing her on the bed. "She's fine, she just wanted to use the loo." She tells me covering her tiny body in blankets. I gawk at the watch on the wall and it's 4am in the morning. "Can I sleep her for a little while." I know it's not allowed but they can pull a few strings that I know. "Because I like you, I will let you sleep for an hour, hope that will be enough." She walks past me and stops on her tracks. "What happened to your bed?" She looks at me waiting for me to answer. "Trust me you wouldn't want to know." I say already snuggling myself next to small mlungu coloured. My feet are pepping and the bed is half the size of my body. What have I gotten myself into vele? I left my comfortable mini size of me to squash the baby. I sigh trying to close my eyes but it's difficult, I'm cold and shivering. Miss here is fast asleep and she even cuddled me. What am I? A fluffy teddy bear? I listen to the wind and the trees humming. It sounds ridiculous I know but hey my mind is rumbling with my hilarious thoughts.

The sun has risen and I didn't get a winks of sleep. Today is the day I'm being discharged and I'll be going back that monsters house. I want to steal the money from the safe so that I could go into hiding. But I bet he would ever look for me. That man didn't even come to check up on me, not that I expected it in a way but showing sympathy would do, probably it could have made me better. Ntokozo is one heatless human being I've ever come across and I don't wish to live with him in that same house ever again. Leaving in the streets is far more better than to be abused and torched for the changes in life. Whenever I think of this my heart sinks into a deep blue ocean where no one can find it. But right now I want to reclaim my life and rise up.

I finally reach my ward and nigger is still asleep, aibo it's morning njena. "Sorry Mr Man," I roughly shake him. I need to bath and leave. Of the nurses find him here he will definitely be in one big trouble. He flung his eyes open, the little bit of sunshine is shinning directly into his eyes. He takes his time yawing and I just stand there looking at him. "What time is it?" He finally spoke. I didn't realise his voice was this deep, deep to a point that it made my imaginary run wild. Ay futhi cut, cut, what am I thinking vele? "It's almost six," I say and he sits up straight still stretching his arms comfortably. "If the nurses find you here you would be dead meat." I tell him.

"When was the last time I had such peaceful sleep? I'm still sleepy, I just wish....never mind." He gets off the bed leaving me confused as hell. What did he mean by that. "Yea," that's all I managed to say. Honestly my spirit is down today, going back is just not on for me but I have to go pack everything that is called me. "So you leaving?" I'm packing the things that he bought me. It was thoughtful of him. Without these items I wouldn't have survived. "Yea," I sigh trying to hold myself. "I have to, I don't want to but I have to." I reply and he nods his head. "When are you coming back?" I raise my eyebrows looking at him. Is he seriously asking me this question? "I honestly don't know. As much as I love to start my life afresh....I don't even have a dime on me. I don't even know where to begin. I have basically nothing." I'm still learning to manage the hurt. I won't sugar-coat the amount of time and energy it takes for the power of pain to subside. However, over the past two years, I have also learned so much about myself through my pain. And these lessons are important. Mr Man here digs in his pocket and comes out with a huge stack of money. "This is for the road, and this is the card I hardly use but it will keep you going until we meet again, the pin is 2015. This is my business card, call me anytime." He walks out without saying a word leaving me in disbelief. I open my hand and look at this huge sum of money. "I will miss you choma." It has been confirmed, my doctor is into other men. "I will miss you." I tell him and he decided to squeeze me with a hug. "I will miss you too. We should keep in touch." I agree, I would definitely keep him as a friend.

"I don't have a phone now but later today." With this money that I have I will definitely purchase myself a phone and save the rest. I still have the card and the money in my hand. "OMG! Mr Mlungu is such a blesser! Which love portion did you give him?" He looks excited and I'm extremely not. How will I enjoy money of a man I don't even know let alone knowing his name. "Hold onto him baby girl, he is for keeps." He tells me and walks out smiling. I look at the business card

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"so Mr Man is Rome Osman.

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I'm at a taxi rank, everyone is looking at me in a funny way. I know I'm wearing an old dress that my mother brought for me. Talking about this old dress, I need a new dress that will make me more comfortable. I look across the road and I see PEP and my eyes immediately lights up. I hurried my legs towards the store and luckily it's not full. I managed to get myself five new dresses, shoes and new underwares. Mr Man....I mean Rome really helped me alot even though I didn't thank him. I fill bad and guilty. Right now I can't purchase a phone because of the proof of address and my ID. I didn't know that you now present proof of things when you purchase certain items. South Africa will amaze you. Eating these hot wing from KFC made me crave for more. I think I've just found something I love eating. When was the last time I ever had this? I mean eating all these goodies just made my heart jump in joy forgetting all of my troubles. I'm in a taxi and I'm very sleepy but we are half way through the journey. Let me just close my eyes a bit and rest.

## ROME

It's almost midday and I've been checking my phone constantly. I feel stupid, I do give people money but not that huge some amount of cash including my credit card on top! Only Rose had access to my credit cards. I seriously don't know what happened there. It's like she makes me weak, funny enough I would like to see her for the second time. My body feels relaxed and I'm still working from home up until I find someone I trust to take care of my mother and kids. When was the last time I had such peaceful sleep. This just sounds absurd, I left my bedridden mother and my kids to be with the woman I don't even know. I spent the night at the hospital because my subconscious wanted me to. "I'm hungry," my son Roland cries. He is forever hungry these days. Guess I will have to go to the shops and just order full meals for everyone. My spirit is down for cooking and I just don't feel like it. "Let's go something to eat." I say picking him up. His hair has grown, I will have to take him to the salon for a hair cut. Rebecca also needs to wash her hair. It's starting to look pretty bad. "We going to the shops for food." I tell Rebecca who had herself snuggled next to my mother. I was advised that my mother could hear but cannot answer you. I buckle up Ronald on his favourite car seat and drove having a conversation more like I was being interrogated. I wonder how mother's manage all these questions! Sometimes they just ask you questions that they don't even make any sense.

## AYANDA

"Vuka sisi, sesifikike Eshowe," a woman who was sitting next to me woke me up. I can't believe that I slept throughout the entire time. I wonder if my car is still available and in good shape. I jump off the taxi and reality kicks in. I'm in my hometown, a hometown that hold no good memories of me. Growing up has always been a challenge, being compared to your sibling. We were supposed to hate each other but Nkanyezi and I always had each other's back. My mother really never liked me that much. I chuck wiping the tear drop and head to the taxi. I'm praying and hoping that Ntokozo is not at home cause right now I can't stand him. There's nothing more I need than to just pack my belongings and go far away to a place that know one knows me. But I will start for looking for my father's family. I wonder why mother never like us to visit him?

The drive was short lived, I was still admiring izintaba zangakithi. I sigh getting off the taxi with my heart pounding messlesly. My breathing escalated to another rhythm of breathing. I'm walking minding my own business and suddenly a cold breeze passes through me. I look around to be sure whether it's me or the weather is changing. I cling on my plastics as I am walking. The sun is so hot but yet I'm feeling so cold. Maybe that medication is having a different effect on me since I'm walking in the sun. A faint smile creeps on my face thinking about the white man. I thought Ntokozo was the cutest but boy I was totally lying to myself. That broad chest and shoulders, he is so damn long and fit. He has an African structure in a white man's body. How I wish I could admire my husband someday, if only there's a man who could marry a scary me. I finally reach the compound and thankfully the man is not here making me to sigh in relief. The first thing is to pack every item that belongs to me. I don't have much clothes because I never go shopping cause I'm not earning any shit or getting any money from my so cold husband! Rage and hate, I hate this man with passion. Atleast I'm done packing. I pick my bags up and turn to walk out of this house for good. "Going somewhere wifey?" He walks towards me and I tremble in fear. All the pain and misery he has put me through played like a grand piano. I thought he was not here! If I knew he was a round I would have booked myself in a hotel or something. "N....Nto....Ntokozo," his name came out as a whisper. I move backwards as he continued to come closer to my direction. My bags drop on the floor, I have no energy, my knees are weak. "Yes it's me. So tell me where are you going?" He looks scary more like a monster. His eyes are burning my skin to a point that I felt like I could just pass out. He grabs my waist so badly putting pressure. I flinch trying to remove his hands. "Ntokozo, please. I'll just go and never look back. Please I beg you." I look at him with pleading eyes. He scans my body and smells my head and starts reaping my brand new dress off. I try fighting him but a painful aching pain stung my cheek. He slapped me. He pushes me on top of the bed and I just know shit is about to happen. I'm only left in my underwear, I'm a crying mess. "Ntokozo please, I beg you in God's name. I'm hurting, I still have stic...." Another slap lands on my face, I curl myself into a ball looking at him taking his clothes off. The bed dips as his heavyweight crawled on top of the bed. He roughly parted my legs at this point I have no strength left in me. My vagina is still healing from being stretched out by Mr Min. Episiotomy stitches are the most painful stiches you could ever come across. I can feel the tip of his penis in my entrance. I try wiggling myself but he is way too strong for me. He forcefully pushes himself in. I let out an excruciating cry, I'm in pain, digging my nails on his arms. Tears, stitches

significant pain. I felt every inch of my body being sliced into pieces. I can't cry any longer. I have undergone challenges but continues to thrive despite everything I've gone and been through. Sometimes, I don't recognize a broken soul until it's too late. Right now I'm beyond broken, he is groaning and pumping ignoring my pleads and painful cries. Where did I ever go wrong!

MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#07

AYANDA



Never thought in my wildest dreams that I would think of harming myself. I'm having suicidal thoughts, what's the use of leaving if I'm this broken? When my spirit breaks, everything else falls with it. Whether it's my love for others, love for myself, my emotional stability, or my self-confidence... everything is affected to some degree. This is because my spirit is the intangible, invisible central pillar of my being that houses everything. For two weeks I've been in this hell hole. Now I regret ever coming back here. There's no life left in me. I'm just a shallow walking zombie in my sister's house. I've been bleeding since the day he forcefully slept with me. I'm beyond damaged and no one can fix me. I've ran out of sanitary pads, I can't even go out, the monster makes sure that he locks every door and windows. I'm standing in the middle of the room not knowing what to put on. I'm looking at the blood dripping down my legs. The floor is a mess and I'm thinking maybe I got a discharge due to the amount of smell. Urinating has been an issue. It hurts to a point that I wish not to use the toilet. But most of the time I'm leaking urine. I have a hard, painful lump on or near the wound making it hard for me to sit. I hardly sleep I'm always laying on my stomach. The pain does not go away it gets worse, even after I take painkillers just to make myself better. Maybe this is the way I will die. My body has never known rest. It's either I'm beaten for something that has gone wrong on his side or he forcefully sleeps with me. I can't stomach anything at this point, everything just gets stuck up on my throat. I'm surely but slowly loosing alot of weight. I hear his car park on the drive way. I close my eyes tightly letting the tears stream down my face. "Ayanda!" He shouts for my name roughly. Jehova what did I ever do to this monster? Why is my life so complicated? My voice is stuck, I feel like running away but where will I even begin to run for my life? The door cracks open and I just know it's the devil himself. "I'm calling you and you are here doing your own thing." He hisses and I just want to fight him. I've had enough already of this torcher. I look down and blood still dripping down my legs, I'm not even ashamed my whole spirit has died down. "Yaz Ayanda you surely do know how to make me something I'm not. I blame you for making me look like this. I'm loosing my business partners because of you!" He move closer pointing his finger at me. I stand still frozen on the spot. A hard full slap crosses my face making my vision blurry. I keel down on top of my own blood mixed with urine praying to God.

"Let him be filled with patience and joy in your presence as he waits for your healing touch. Please restore your servant to full health, dear Father. Remove all fear and doubt from his heart by the power of your Holy Spirit, and may you, Lord, be glorified through his life, Amen." I'm praying for him to be a better man if I die today. I'm praying for him to see the light someday if I die today. I want him to heal, have a family with someone and rebuild his life. I know the God's will accept my soul today. I've been trying to hold on for far too long and everything is just way too much for me. I hear his belt unbuckling, I immediately thought even in death this man will always have his way with me. Being beaten with a belt is excruciatingly painful physically and emotionally. It can also be humiliating. It can leave lasting scars and can leave the person beaten feeling worthless and confused. It can break the bonds of a relationship and may never be repaired. When this high speed belt lash touch bare back on my skin it literally teared down and the cut felt like a razor cut. I'm now curled into a ball with now strength to cry nor scream. If I die today let me die in peace. He stops whipping me and clicks his tounge. He starts to pace up and down with his hands on his waist. He drags me by my arm forcefully making me to stand. I'm running out of breath, my whole body is aching and bleeding. I can feel that some wounds are cut open. I manage to stand on my own, little did I know that I will be pushed backed down hitting my head painfully at the corner of the dressing table. My voice got more weaker unable to scream. I lay hopelessly on the floor looking at his shadow walking out of the room. As painful as my body was I dragged myself reaching for something useful under the bed.

ROMEO

My energy is down, like something bad is about to happen or it has already happened. The last time I felt like this was the time when I lost my brother and my late wife. I checked on the kids and they are doing just fine. My question is, who is troubling my soul this much. I ignore the felling and continued to work. Decided to be at the office today just to change the environment. If I'm at home I hardly work. My phones chimes and it's an unsaved number. I normally don't pick up calls that are not saved from my phone. Maybe it's those people who sell insurance. It stops ringing and it immediately rings again. I guess it's not insurance after all. I sigh sliding to answer, "hello," heavy breathings and lightly sniffs. I remove the phone from my ear and slightly frown looking at it. The line is still on meaning the person is still on the line. "Listen if you don't talk I'm dropping this line." I say.

"He....help me," that's all I hear after that the line goes dead. I tried calling the number back and it's unavailable. Help them? Who could possibly seek for my help? Maybe it's one of those people playing pranks on me. I continue to work but my subconscious is not letting me to rest. Something is definitely not right here. I decided to call my friend Steven, maybe he can crack his head here. I dial his numbers and luckily he picks up.

"Long lost son," he says, he has always called me names ever since we met since high school.

"Look bra, I need your help." I say going straight to the point.

"Shoot

" I like it how he always have my back and always available if I ask for any assistance.

"Is it possible to track down a number that has been switched off?" I ask hoping and praying he says yes.

"IMEI & GPS call trackers can be used to track the location of a phone call. Apps like GPS Phone & Locate Any Phone are great with tracking mobile phones, even when the phone is not connected to the internet. You can know the GPS coordinates of a phone number within seconds." He tells me which is great.

"Can you track down a number for me please, it's urgent. I think this person is in danger."

"Send me the numbers." He tells me and I didn't waste anymore time sending them digits. Five minutes later my phone beeps, I view the message and I see a name I've never seen before. "Nto...." Fuck I can't even pronounce it. Okay this is some kind of a sick joke.

"Dude, this number here called me, the woman said help me."

There's some silence on the line, "I want you to think carefully and deeply. Is there anyone you know who might need your help. I mean anyone?" I think but no one comes to mind.

"There's literally no one dude." I respond.

"Did you give anyone your number's recently?" He asks again and now that he mentions it. The lady in my dreams! "No, no. Please Lord let it be not her. Let it be not her please." I say already packing my stuff. "I need you to drive me to this place as in right this minute." I drop the call cause I know for a fact that he is going to drop the call cops process on me. I'm driving like a manic heading to a town I don't know. I've been here once for a business meeting. It didn't even take us an hour since we were flying. We drive around with the GPRS on. Technology of today will amaze you. "You have reached your destination." The GPRS says and we stop the car finding ourselves parked in a huge beautiful simple house. "What do we do?" I ask out of fear, what if we drove here all for nothing? But no my fears are definitely not for nothing. I storm out of the car marching to the gate and Steven follows behind. "You should have brought the cops with us," he tells me but I ignore him. Noisy neighbours with their hands on their waist and some peeping through their windows. Right now I don't care about anything, I just want what I want and I'm not even sure if that something that I want is here to begin with. The door is wide open and we see trails of blood foot print. We stop on our tracks and look at each other. We knock countless time but no one answers. I enter the house without being instructed to. I decided to follow the blood foot prints and it eventually lead me into one of the bedrooms. Bloody room, bloody body. I crouch next to the body feeling the pulse. "It's too faint. Who is this woman?" I can't see her clearly, the clothing she's wearing is torn. I slowly lift her face up and got the shock of my life. Not Mr Man, "shit! Don't just stand there help me!" I half shout at Steven who was looking at me like he has just seen a ghost. "D....do you know her?"

"Stop asking me useless questions and just help me carry her." Steven can be a coward at times, I sometimes don't know how his mind operates. He finally helped me pick her up.

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My heart is racing non stop. Being in hospital gives the creeps out of me. I'm busy pacing up and down anxiously wondering what is taking them so long. "It's been three fucken hours, three full fucken hours!" I kick the plastic chair and trust me I felt it, I think my toe is broken. I sit down trying to calm myself down. Finally the bloody doctor decided to embrace him with his presence after long waiting.

"Ayanda Ntombela?" The doctor looks at us and I assume her name is Ayanda. I agree unsurely. "How do you know this young lady?"

"She's a family friend." Steven answers saving me." The doctor nods her head and reads through the file and sighs. "This woman has been in and out of this hospital for the past two years." She tells us and I look at her confused. "What do you mean?" I asks.

"Her husband is sexually and physically abusing her. But today is worse than other days." She stops talking and I see her eyes getting teary. "It looks like he violated her through the previous stitches she once had. It looks pretty bad and she has a very bad odour which is an infection. She has a Foul-Smelling Pus also known as purulent drainage, this pus is distinct from ordinary drainage, which is typically clear or slightly yellow and usually clears up after a few days if she on medication which she has started minutes ago. Her perineum (the area of skin between the vagina and the anus) was torn to a point that we have her 17 stitches. She had Episiotomy and Perineal tears, which is very confusing. As a woman you normally have these kind of tears when an episiotomy takes place, meaning the doctors do the opening of the vagina a bit wider, allowing the baby to come through it more easily." She explains and I feel like fainting. I'm listening to each and every detail she's informing us. "The burns on her vaginal area....she has tiny blisters and her folds are damaged. Basically her vaginal area looks bad and I don't think she will ever heal from this. By the way I do know that she is not a family. Please get help for her. She lost her baby just a year ago due to this physical abuse."

I'm dumbfounded, who on earth does this to another human being? "Is it possible for her to be transferred as in today, I mean now since she has been operated?" I just want to get her as far away from this hell place as possible.

"I will have to have a word with the Matron and see what we could do." She drags her feet going to the Matrons office I assume and minutes later they both come out of the office. This Matron has a serious look on her face, who ever told her that she looked beautiful when serious was totally toying with her feelings. "Gentlemen," she greets us and we nod our head in agreement. "Let me not waste anymore of your time. What you are making me to do now is very risky and I could face huge Penalties. If I could get caught that I transferred the patient without their consent I could lose my licence and severe violations and that can lead to termination of the hospital or provider's Medicare Provider Agreement. I will pay a Fine, a Fine that can reach 100,000 per violation, and hospitals may be held liable for civil lawsuits, either from patients or from transferring or receiving hospitals. I'm doing this because I know miss Ntombela, she's been with us more than any other patient. If this is for her well-being then why not." She looks at us sharply, "please take good care of her, she has been through a lot. I may not know your true intentions about her but please keep an eye on her. And tell her to visit me once she's well and fit. Let me go draft those papers." She walks away leaving me still stunned. Life is definitely a vicious cycle!

MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#08

NTOKOZO

I went out to the bar leaving Ayanda helpless on the floor. My mind is not functioning well, my mind is all over the place making it hard for me to focus on myself. I didn't mean to hurt her, I swear on my wife's grave. Hurting Ayanda was never part of anything. "Keep them coming." I tell the bar tender. I'm drinking my last money. I've lost everything! Whenever I think of this my mind just goes blank not believing I have fallen. Why am I such a failure. I think of my wife while gulping down the whiskey. Her last words will forever haunt me. Why did she have to put me in an awkward position? Why did she have to go and hurt me to an extent of making me to wife her only sister. A sister who is more like her, a sister who is basically her. At first I thought that maybe they were twins but no they are 10 years apart. "Ntokozo, when I departure from this world....I want you to love my sister like your own. I want you to have a family with her, build a legacy with her. Treat her right and you shall prosper. If you loose her to another man you will loose yourself. Make me happy and make my wish come true. You will thank me one day." The following morning I got the devastating news ever that my beloved wife is no more. I sank into depression mourning her. She was the love of my life, she was the air that I breathe, she brought happiness to my life. She made me the man I am today, we built this life together and she just leaves me behind to enjoy it all alone. Ayanda was forced down my throat after three months of my wife's funeral. I agreed to whatever I was subjected to just to please my wife. At first everything was good, we didn't talk much but you can tell that she is one humble human being. A wife material that any other man can gun for her. She is a very free spirited woman who loves nature. What I've noticed is whatever she touches turns alive. The flowers in the garden were blossoming until she let go of them.

Things took a turn when she prepared my favourite meal. Part of me was convinced that she was trying so hard to be her sister but I was wrong it's just the way they are. It's something that's in their genes. Even her taste of cooking is same as my late wife's Nkanyezi. Ow how I miss that soul everyday. Months passed and I've grown to love Ayanda but was not ready to show any affection towards her, I was not ready to share my bed with another woman. Basically I loved Ayanda from a distance, I thought of letting her go but I thought of my wife's words. I thought of my feelings towards her. I thought of how much I've grown to love her.

And then this happens. Losing my own business is worse than losing a salaried job. Being your own boss can be exciting, challenging and sometimes stressful. Long hours, unpredictable cash flow, significant changes in your industry and having responsibility for employees can leave you feeling mentally exhausted, stressed, anxious or depressed. This in turn could affect your ability to run your business, and have an impact on your relationships with family, friends, employees, suppliers and customers. But non the less I loved every moment of it. I loved how my phone would receive huge amount of payments every month end. "Last round," I need to go back home drinking my sorrows won't fix the damage I've caused.

Driving home brought me back to reality, entering my yard brought me back to reality, seeing blood brought me back to reality. "What did I do?" I rush inside the house to search for her and Ayanda is no where to be seen. "Ayanda!" I scream for her in panic. "Ow God," reality has kicked in. What if I killed her? What if.... I don't want to

think for the worst. I rush outside going to the neighbours to check if they didn't see anyone or and ambulance atleast.

"Ngiyeza Hai!" I've been banging the door and this old woman is not opening. I'm standing impatiently outside the door and finally she opens up. "Yini uzongibulalela umnyango. Ufunani la kwami?" This granny has never liked me ever since so I'm not surprised to her response. "Sawubona mah, awukaze umubone uAyanda?" I ask and she looks at me with her eyebrows up. "Ubumubeke Kimi?" She puts her hands on her waist. "Cha ma." I look down shamefully. I'm even afraid for Ayanda wherever she is. I know what I did can never be undone. "Two white men came here and took her. She was covered in blood. Ngyathemba umntana bantu akafile." She looks at me intensively making me to step back. "Uke wayihlukumeza ingane yabantu, yoooh ay!" She shuts the door on my face leaving me shocked. So the whole neighbourhood now knows that I'm a monster. I slowly turn to walk outside the gate with the tales in between my legs. I've never faced such humiliation, what did I do to myself? To my late wife, and her sister? What did I gain after hurting the poor girl so badly. If I were to look for her where will I even begin? I know for a fact she is not well wherever she is. My heart breaks when I have flashbacks of what I did to her. Flashbacks came like a lightning striking my mind. All the pictures of her being beaten by me, being hospitalized because of me

being half dead because of me. I close the door and slid down on the floor bursting into tears. "God please forgive, I didn't know what I was doing." I knew exactly what I was doing, I knew exactly why I did it but I'm ashamed of it. I take out my phone remembering my mother's words. Hearing her voice will maybe bring back my sanity. Maybe hearing her voice will assure me that everything is okay. "Mah." She answered her phone and kept quite. "What do you want Ntokozo?" She asks harshly and my heart breaks even more. I need my mom to comfort me, I need my mother to tell me that everything will be okay. I need my mother to be my pillar of strength. "Mama I need you. Everything is just going South for me, my Garage got burnt down and I basically have nothing at all. I'm sorry mama, I need you." I say already sobbing like a little child.

"Uphi umakoti omncane?" She asks, I don't even know what to say or even answer. "Judging from your silence you have finally killed her. What did that young woman ever do to you Ntokozo? When did you become this heartless. Your father left me and I was forced to marry his elder brother but I grew to love him! Why do you enjoy seeing me cry? What will I even say to Ntombela family. I promised them that I will take care of their daughter but you go and do the total opposite. I should have done something the first day I noticed those marks on her cheeks but I thought yourl fought like every other couple. Little did I know that umnatanabantu was suffering into your hands. I hope you are happy now, this is what you wanted from the beginning." The line goes dead leaving me swimming in my own tears. I showed my affection to Ayanda the wrong way!

ROMEO

"How is she?" I asks the doctors as they were still checking her wounds. It was a long distance so they had to make sure that everything is okay. Seeing her this helpless makes me more helpless. I feel guilty for not asking her about her life. I kept on going on and on about mines, that made me blind for not noticing her feelings. That made me blind for not letting her open up to me. I don't know her yes....but there's this something about her which I cannot put my finger on. For the fact that she thought of me as her night and shinning amour makes me, some how happy. Which means she thought about me at times and not even once she used the credit card I gave her.

"We have stabilized her. Good thing the stiches are still intact and their is no infection but we will have to keep a close eye on her." She smiles more like a charming smile. I kept a straight face, woman who smile at you in this manner normally want you. "Thank you." I say and she swallows nodding her head. I don't have time for young girls. My life is already complicated and I don't need anyone complicating it any more further. "Is there anything else?" The doctor is still here, "can I have some privacy?" She finally walks out.

"I don't like her. She is more like.... Nevermind." Steven tells me, I never thought I will ever lay my eyes on this woman ever again. "I will be outside." Steven taps on my shoulder and walks out. I sit next to her on the tiny space on the hospital bed. She has lost weight tremendously. Her cheeks bones are visible, her whole face is swollen. Not to talk about her body that is covered in bandages. Worstly her pinky pee is beyond damaged. What will she say when she looks at herself on the mirror. Looks like this woman has suffered alot in the hands of a 'supposed husband'. How can you treat a woman like this? Most woman go through alot and they die because of silence. "Miss Woman," I chuck because I don't know what's her name. It's funny how she called me Mr Man without fear. "Pathetic me, I don't even know what's your name. You know I have a weird feeling, a feeling I cannot describe. I feel like I've known you forever, even though we just met!.... It's sounds absurd I know but it's the truth. When I'm at home I never sleep at all. But the last time when I was here occupying your tiny bed I slept throughout without any nightmares." I stop talking and I look at her breathing through the machines. "You look beautiful by the way." I chuck thinking of my silliness. "I want you to recuperate and bounce back. You know my back has been quite bad recently, but it's getting better slowly. It's the results of me squashing you. I will be back." I stand up walk out of the room running out of words already. I was even rumbling not even knowing what I was saying. I walk down the passage and bump into the doctor. I hate people who are all over my space. "I'm so sorry, I didn't see you." She says already blushing. I just stare blankly at her and just walk right past her. I don't have time for nonsense.

NTOKOZO

I have no other option but to report Ayanda as a missing person. It's been hours, I've been waiting for her patiently for her to come back with no luck. I've cleaned every trail of blood in the house as tipsy as I was. My phone chimes I drop everything I had in my hand thinking that maybe it's her but no it's this gold digger. I don't understand why she is always annoying me demanding money. "Hello," I answer already feeling annoyed, one thing I know she will be here asking for money. "Vula igate!" I don't even know why she's here. I'm sure she's the one who hid Ayanda. This all adds up, Ayanda goes missing and she's here demanding me to open the gate for her. I let her in and I can tell that she's fuming in anger. "Where is my monthly allowance?" That's all she knows. I pay no mind to her and I just walk to the kitchen to go drink my sorrows away. I hear her from the kitchen banging every bedroom door looking for money I assume.

I'm drunk as hell and I can't stand on my own. My vision is becoming blurry bit by bit making my eyes heavy. I walk upstairs to my bedroom and find her mother bent over looking under the mattress. I stare at her elderly butt and my member immediately misbehave. I touch my crouch and damn I'm hard as a rock. He spans her butt and she gasps in shock. "Mkhwenyana," MaNtombela holds her face out of fear. This is not the Ntokozo she knows. He grabs her cookie jar and she uses her hands hiding it. She staggers back until she reached the wall. All this while Ntokozo was looking at the reflection of his wife. The more he looks at this woman the more his blood rushes. "Come to daddy," he says making his way towards her. He grabs her neck and roughly kisses her while MaNtombela gave him sloppy kisses. He sneaks his hand underneath her skirt reaping her petticoat. He fiddles with her folds and the heat is the volcano. Clothes flying and they were now left in their birthday suits. He throws her on the bed and gets on top of her opening her legs wide. MaNtombela's eyes widen in shock seeing Ntokozo's cock pumping veins. He caresses on her pubic area, "shit," he exclaims. He taps his member before sliding it in. MaNtombela was laying their like a wet chicken enjoying the moments of pleasures. Her husband is not this good in bed. "Mmmm," she moans grabbing her doek throwing it aside. He throws her legs off his shoulders and being to pump her faster than before. "Fuuuu," he grabs her bouncing boobs. This feels so wrong in many ways and yet it feels so right. He pulls out splashing his cum on her stomach. She feels satisfied and felt like a woman. Her nuna is throbbing in excitement, she haven't felt like this in ages. Ntokozo flips her over and makes her lay on her stomach. He opens her butt area showcasing the butt hole as he shoved himself inside of her. She screamed for dear life trying to get off the grip but it was too tight. The more she wiggles herself for escape the more he enjoys. MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#09

MaNtombela

He realises his last packet of cum inside MaNtombela. Never in her wildest dream she ever thought that she would be tossed and turned like this in her age. At first she'd admit that salt was confusing her mind, Ntokozo is very young. He is basically here son but her he is pumping his mother-in-law like some cheap prostitute. "Malo,"



MaNtombela cries, what has gotten into her? She now find pleasures in young men old enough to be their birth son. She finds herself very disgusted, hurt and drained. Her whole body is paining, her lower abdomen felt paralyzed and numb. "We are not done. Angithi you took Ayanda away from me! You will suffer the way I made sure she suffers daily!" He hisses and bangs the door walking out leaving MaNtombela bursting into tears. The son in-law that she always admired and loved has now turned into a monster-in-law.

Tears came out flooding like a water fall burning her cheeks. "Ow Jehovah," she can't move her legs every inch of her body is beyond pain. She finally gathers her strength to wear her clothes and lay on her stomach on the bed waiting for him to come back. Even if she did want to escape how will she jump off the window? It's way to high for her age, what will the neighbours say? She sighed and looked at her daughter's picture on the wall. "Ngixolele mntanami," she says in an apologetic voice. Her mind trails back to her daughter Ayanda. Was she ever telling the truth about what Ntokozo use to do to her? How did Nkanyezi survive this monster? Who is he? At this point she is beyond hurt that she betrayed her husband in that manner. How the hell did she degrade herself like that? Did she loose manners for herself in that manner! The door cracks open and the devil walks in holding a plastic reeking of brewery. "Take a shower and get the hell out of my house." He throws plastic right at my face. "Don't look at me like that I have alot of issues going on right now. Yazin uzogeza kwakho." He drags her out of his house and throws her outside spitting venom. Her behind is burning beyond any measures.

AYANDA

"Mntase," I throw myself in her arms. My sister has been one person that loves me without any doubt including my father. Being with them here makes me alive and carefree. The old Ayanda who loved clubbing and drinking. The old Ayanda who cared about nothing else besides alcohol. "Look at you," I say looking at her. My sister will forever be my happily ever after. She smiles hugging me for dear life. "Mtaka mah," she breaks the hug and looks at me with a widest smile ever. I look at this place and it's so peaceful and refreshing. "Where do you stay?" I ask her, I bet her house is exquisite. She just laughs at me warmly. "We don't have houses here," she tells me. "Come there's something I want to show you." She drags me buy hand. I see papa from a distance and I gasp in shock. I rush my legs towards him and he swings me into a beautiful hug. "Look at you." He looks at me from head to toes cupping my cheeks. "Mntanami," his eyes become teary. I'm so happy to see him....wait if I'm here that means I'm....

"Am I dead?" I look at him and they both just crack in laughter.

"Don't be silly, come I want to show you something." My father tells me. We walk along the way full of soft green grass barefoot. We stand next to a pond listening to the birds chipping so beautifully. "I wish I could stay here forever. Can I come live with you dad?" I look at my father who was concentrating on the beautiful pond. "It's not your time yet my daughter. Come see this." He leaves me stunned and confused. What's not my time yet? "What's not my time papa?" I ask, my father is that kind of man that you never get to question. He is one hell of a serious guy who takes life way too serious. Growing up was a challenge but with my father next to me made my life very simple and possible to live enjoying it. He didn't care much about the 'other' life I'm leaving as long as if I respect him. "Look at this." The old man decided not to answer my question. I look at the pond and I see myself surrounded by a lot of children I don't know. I slight frown looking at him clearly confused. "I'm lost," I say.

He smiles and squeezes my hand. "This is your future, it's not an easy part of journey you are about to embark but he will be there through thick and thin. Lean on him and you shall rise again." The reflection slowly fades away, other flashes of me sleeping helplessly on the hospital bed. "Is that me?" It's obviously me.

"He has hurt you beyond measures but your sister chose him for you. He may have landed you in this hospital bed but he also needs you. You are the only one who can heal him, help him get back on his feet. Once his back on his feet than you will decide whether you will stay holding on and make your sister happy or you will follow your heart and happiness." My heart pounds rapidly in fear then another reflection appears. "The one for you, was and is still meant to be yours. You will have to choose what takes out the best in you."

My mind is all over the place, "this is all a dream, how can one dream of being in heaven?" I ask

"Dreaming of going and being in heaven can mean there are new opportunities coming your way that will take you closer to your goals. Visiting heaven in a dream can symbolize reuniting with the people you love who have crossed over. This means you need to reconnect with friends and family in your waking world." My father tells me but still I am not sold.

"Does God talk to your mind?" I ask, "why hasn't he come through for me knowing fully that I'm swimming in pain?"

"God can speak to you through your mind, but it comes through your spirit. This is a primary way that God speaks. The ability to tell which thoughts are from God and which thoughts are just from yourself will get easier with experience." And then again he speaks in riddles.

"So tell me something, will there ever be a man that will fully accept me with those scars and how do I know if God wants me to be with someone?"

"When your falling in love, everything is likely to become about you. He won't stop thinking about you and would rather be spending time with you than doing anything else. He may feel scared about the relationship and where

it's headed or he might just have a comfortable feeling about the entire thing." He talks like he has known this guy for year's.

He turns to look at me and smile, "no matter what you are going through today, look in the mirror, smile and say to yourself God did not create you for nothing. Do not give up my child the best is still yet to come. You have to go back now."

ROMEO

Getting the hospital after that phone call has made me weak and vulnerable. I don't even know what to say or do. What if she dies? There's something about that woman. Me sitting looking straight at her closed eyes makes my nerves calm. The electronic sensation that passes through my blood when touching her says alot. 'Sighs,' why does life have to be so complicated? I drove like a maniac because she was having an episode. "She will be fine," one of the nurses tell me. How will she be fine under those brutal bruises. Just by looking at it you could tell that they will never heal. "I hope so." Indeed I hope and pray. My princess is being discharged tomorrow and I can't wait for her to be out so we could spend alot of time together. "I'll just go and check up on my daughter. " I tell her already on my feet. I will come back later

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maybe I could squeeze myself and sleep and hour or two.

NTOKOZO

I feel like shit, I feel like a curse that has no life. When did I ever become this hurts less? When did I become this monster I do not even recognise? I'm looking at the reflection of myself in the mirror not believing. "Ayanda," my mind trails back in pain, the cries and screams. Her pleads, those tears.... everything is coming back into the memory lane. When the feeling of guilt is asked I guess I am the correct person to answer that question. How do I get over the guilt of breaking someone's heart, body and soul? Physical abuse can have lasting effects on your physical and mental health. I'm thinking of the damage that I've caused her, the damage that I made to her body. The damage will have an effect on her for the rest of her life. I don't even know where she is, how she's doing, whether she's alive or dead. What if I finally killed her. I drive slowly heading to the police station with my heart pounding. What if they see right through me? Part of me just wants to turn back and go to an empty house and part of me wants to do the right thing. I park my vehicle on the parking lot and step out of the vehicle. Luckily it's empty I'm sure they will use their resources to help me look for her.

"Awu mnumzane," an old police officer greets me. I'm a nervous wreck.

"Baba," I place my hands together showing respect.

"What can I do for you today?"

I sigh out of fear, "my fiancé ran away from home." I tell him looking down. Why can't I just man up to my own mistakes just for once.

"When did she run away?" He is already pulling the file jotting down everything I say.

"I last saw her yesterday."

"If someone close to you is missing, you should report it to the police as soon as you know they are missing. You do not need to wait for 24 hours."

"What," I sink down on the benches not believing. It's not yet 24 hours. "Is there anything you can do? I mean I don't even know where she is." The officer kept quite for a while looking at me.

"Produce a recent photograph of her, give a complete description of the missing person's last whereabouts, clothes that they were wearing, and any information that can assist the investigating officer. Please sign this SAPS 55(A) form." He places the form and black pen in front of me.

"What is this for?"

"The form safeguards the SAPS from fake reports and indemnifies them to distribute the photograph and information of the missing person." The officer explains. I nod my head in agreement and filled out the form without hesitation. " If a missing person is found or returns voluntarily, inform the investigating officer immediately. A SAPS 92 form must be completed to inform the Bureau of Missing Persons that the missing persons report can be removed from the circulation system. Make sure that you do notify us if she comes back. And if we find something we will let you know." I walk out of the police station feeling exhausted. I hope the picture I produced will be well enough. I'm just glad that he didn't ask any suspicious questions cause if he did I would have been locked up by now.

MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#10

NTOKOZO

Every ounce of my body part hurts to the core of no return. I feel warm and comfortable. I slowly gather the strength to open my eyes, opening my eyes alone is a mission. I'm laying on my back looking at the roof. I panic in fear thinking maybe I'm in a ghost house. I carefully look closely again and I notice that I'm in some house filled with muthi's. The door cracks open and here comes a short man with a long beard carrying a wooden stick. "Ow you are awake," he says placing down the wooden stick and walks right up at me. "You seem better," he says removing his hand from my forehead.

"How....how did I end up here?"

"I found passed out on the side of the road. What were you doing in those bushes in the first place? No one walks there at night."

"My car broke down and I got a lift from...." I keep quite swallowing the hard lump stuck up on my throat.

The man laughs his lungs out, "let me guess ghost rider gave you a ride." He continues to laugh and walks out leaving me shaking. I decide to follow the man outside, what if he is planning to make me for one of his ritual. I saw crocodiles skulls in that hut. I guess I'm still around my hometown judging from the mountains. It's a hot day in KwaZulu-Natal and the sun is beating down on dusty roads. A lone dog crosses the path and scrapes under the fence of the yard where three graves are lined up in front of a small house. "Beautiful day it is." This man is creepy, I'm starting to think that he is also a ghost rider. How can one disappears and reappears or is it because he is too short, or is my mind still raving? I'm still glued on the same sport. "You can have a sit." He points out the bench that was outside. How will I sit again with this aching arse. I'm still wearing the same clothes, the breeze on my butt indicates that my butt is in the open.

"No thank you I'll stand." I say.

"Suit yourself then." He starts humming mixing his muthi. I wonder which part of the world I'm in.

"Where am I?"

He looks at me and shakes his head, "KwaNongoma." He leaves me stunned. How the hell did I find myself in KwaNongoma?

AYANDA

I slowly open my eyes, the sounds of beeping machines, an awful smell, the coldness around it. "She's awake!" Someone screams in excitement. Everything in me is just a mess, I look at the suppose room in confusion waiting for atleast someone to be here looking straight in my eyes. A white man stands next to my bed....I try so hard to relieve my voice but it drowns back inside. My voice doesn't want to come out.

"Finally you are awake." He says, that voice, that blond hair. I try speaking up but words fail me.

"Ms Ntombela can you hear me?" A man wearing a white coat asks which I assume it's a doctor. My mind is working perfectly just fine, I know the reason of me being here in hospital. So the man came to my rescue. The doctor removes the mask off my face. "Miss Ntombela blink twice if you can hear me." I blink twice and he smiles in relief I guess. "Blink twice if you could feel the pressure underneath your legs." I do as instructed. I feel, hear, see but I'm unable to move not talk. "Looks like my patient has a sleep paralysis."

"Sleep what! What the hell is that?" Mr Man with his dramatic voice sends weird sensations.

"A temporary inability to move or speak while falling asleep or upon waking. Sleep paralysis most often occurs in people who have narcolepsy or sleep apnoea, but it can affect anyone." The doctor explains, so basically I'm paralyzed.

"So is she paralyzed or something?" I'm glad Mr Man asked on my behalf.

"No she is not paralyzed.

Episodes involve not being able to speak or move while falling asleep or upon waking. This usually lasts one or two minutes and is often frightening. To explain it further....Sleep paralysis is a feeling of being conscious but unable to move. It occurs when a person passes between stages of wakefulness and sleep. During these transitions, you may be unable to move or speak for a few seconds up to a few minutes. Some people may also feel pressure or a sense of choking. Sleep paralysis may accompany other sleep disorders such as narcolepsy. Narcolepsy is an overpowering need to sleep caused by a problem with the brain's ability to regulate sleep." There are so many things I want to ask but I can't talk. My voice won't come out.

The doctor starts searching only for God knows what on my body. My whole body is covered in bandages. "Sleeping on the side, instead of on the back, as the condition is triggered while sleeping on the back for most people.

During a sleep paralysis attack, try to stay calm and concentrate on your breathing.... Focus on making one small muscle move....

Concentrate on your breathing. I'm turning you to lay on your side now." I'm being turned aside like a vegetable, I grizzle in pain.

"It's okay to cry Miss, let those tears out. Now I want to relax, calm down and exercise your breathing. I promise you will be fine in no time. There you go." And indeed my lungs opened up, fresh air visiting my system. I started doing slow breathings as instructed and I must say it's coming my nerves down.

"I...I need to use a bathroom." I say in a low voice. A female nurse came forward smiling warmly.

"Come let me help you." She supported my lower back and asked me to place the curved edge of the bedpan under the buttocks. She then raised the head of the bed until I was in a comfortable sitting position. Sitting upright makes having a bowel movement or urinating much more easier. "Thank you." The embarrassment in me, the shame I'm feeling, the hurt I'm feeling. Is this now my life? Is this how I'm going to feel? Why not die of in going to leave my life in this manner. The doctor and the nurse leave the room and I'm left with Mr Man. He comfortably sits besides me, "shift aside he commands me. I slid aside giving him little bit of space since the hospital bed is too small.

"Who are you? I mean where you from?" He asks looking up on the ceiling.

I sigh cause I know I'm about to talk about the past I want to bury and don't even remember. "Ayanda Ntombela 25 years of age. Born and bred in Eshowe. Well there's nothing much that I could tell about myself beside saying that I'm traditionally married to a monster, my sister's husband."

He turns to look at me in full speed. "Sister's husband? But how?"

"My sister hid from us, her family that she was diagnosed with cancer. There's nothing much we could do because she only told us when it was on the last stage. Fast forward she called for a family meeting and told everyone if she ever departures I should take over and marry her husband. Lobola negotiations took place after three months we buried my sister. I was forced to go live with him since we are now married and the ancestors approved. Down the line things changed from better to worse and that's where it has landed me."

"Then why didn't you go back home if the situation was that bad?" He asks.

"I tried having a meaningful conversation with my mother but money comes first to her. She told me to suck it up marriage was never easy. I stayed thinking and praying that the situation gets better but it got worse. What hurts me the most is I don't know what my sin is, I held on for years until I lost my baby unknowingly that I was pregnant." I sniff wiping my tears of pain. Everything is just too much, too much that I cannot stomach it. "Even if I wanted to leave that house I couldn't because I was always locked up like a prisoner."

"How heartless is your husband?"

"I thank God I'm just out of that hell hole." I honestly say. "The time I called you

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you were my last hope."

"And I'm glad I came right in time. Well, atleast you are still alive. You're going through a thought time and I believe someday you will bounce back up. I hope you know that I'm here for you during this tough time. Enough about the weeping moments, so what's the plan after you are discharged from here?"

I shrug my shoulders, I haven't thought of that. "I don't know hey, I will just see where life will take me."

"Okay, Ramona has been asking about you." I smile faintly remembering the day I snuggled myself on her tiny bed. Hospital bed with an appropriate mattress is safer and more comfortable than a traditional mattress. The only thing that's annoying in hospital is the lightning in the rooms, it is way too bright at night and too dark during the day. "Why are you smiling?"

"I remember the last time you slept here on my bed. I was mad as hell, you know I literally marched out and went to snuggle myself on her tiny bed next to her." I smile.

"Why didn't you wake me up." He is in stiches, I don't see anything funny in just what I've said. He ambushed my bed and now home is making it a joke.

"It's not funny,"

"I'm sorry, it's just that...." He continues to laugh. "Where did you put you feet in that tiny bed."

"Trust me you don't wanna know." For a moment I forget the trouble and the traumatic experience I've been through. I wonder what's underneath these bandages, will I ever cope after seeing those scars?"

"Don't think too much, trust me you will heal." He smiles revealing those perfect lined up white teeth. Ow heavens why am I drooling over a stranger. "Everything will pass, it's funny how total strangers we are but yet we are comfortable around each other."

"And how do you know I'm comfortable around you?"

He looks at me like I'm sort of crazy, "you body language says it all dahh," he roles his eyes dramatically making me to laugh and the stiches down there are giving me no mercy.

"Yea right." We fall into comfortable silence, we have ran out of topics.

"I think I should get going," he tells me and somewhat I feel bad. "Don't sulk I will be back. I'll bring you a huggy bunny." He winks at me getting off the bed and confidently walked out. His back is totally something else. How does God create such handsomeness heh?

"Time for your meds," argh I miss my old doctor. I didn't even get his name the last time. But I'm sure someone knows him ow I will have to ask Mr Man when he comes back with the buggy bun.... whatever that is.....

"It's good to see you smiling not crying." She is still here, I hate noisy people.

"Something's always there to put out a smile on your face no matter what you going through in life." I answer her.

"Yea," she injects something on my drip and I feel my eyes getting heavier by the second.

ROMEO

Driving back home made me feel some how....I don't know free, a bit of happiness. My kids are delighted to see me, Ramona is recovering slowly but surely. "Kidos," they run towards me and hug my legs. I just want to bathe them, feed them and tuck them in. My house looks like a zoo, I should probably hire a company that will clean my house thoroughly during the weekend. "Pick me up." Ramona with her ordering. I do as instructed and she smiles like she's sinking in water. My poor babe loves me alot and I don't think there will ever be a day that will pass without them being by my side.

Trying to tidy up the house was a mission, getting them to sleep was also a mission. The are now peacefully sleeping, my mother is still the same no change. The fact that I look at her private part every single day cracks my heart into pieces. My soul is reaping apart and it's something I cannot take any longer. Will she ever fully recover? Will her self-esteem rise back up when she is full well and okay? I sigh fasining the diaper closing her legs. Atleast

she went to the toilet during the day she won't mess herself at night. I pass by Rebecca's room and she is fast asleep, shame my poor baby. I leave the lights open and head to my car. Passed by a few stores and got something's for the lady. I hope she will like what I bought her. If I'm passing boundaries than she has to forgive me. My excitement is over the moon.

Arriving at the hospital has gotten very cold, the breeze is a bit scary. I sometimes think that a ghost will pass by. I carry her items finding the madam fast asleep. I place the huggy bunny next to her. I like her how her lips are, they may be cracked but one can tell that she has beautiful lips. "I'm back." I say looking her hoping and praying that she wakes up. Man she's fast asleep let me not wake her up and leave her to rest. I'm also sleepy I want to go home so bad but my conscious won't let me. I will just spend an hour here and later on go home. I sleep better when she's beside me, the nightmares go away. I become alive, happy and carefree. How does one feel like this next to a stranger? Is it normal? Maybe my imagination is hallucinating and running wild. I just need an hour of sleep, I have been having sleepless night for the past few days. Hope my kids won't wake up and find me not home. I snuggle myself next to her and I feel my body heating up. This is one hell of a strange reaction. Hope I'm not hurting her at some point. One day I will definitely get arrested for harassing a patient but hey a man can't stay away now can he? She's so warm, I wonder how is the warmness down there. What am I even thinking, I look down on my pants and I'm already hard as a rock. Why would my phallus do me this bad in the middle of no where! MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#11

NTOKOZO

It's been two full awful month's, I think my house is being haunted. For two months I haven't had a decent sleep for a very long time not forgetting that I'm swimming in debts. How will I pay out so much money. R1.2 mill is no child's play.

My late wife and I decided to take a loan from a bank. Everything was fine until she passed away and left me in this lonely world. How does she think I'm coping? She hasn't even visited me, let alone bless me. All she does is to take everything we've worked hard for. I had to sell my other car just to keep life going. I wish life was not like this, I wish my life would be the same again peaceful and happy, but how will I be happy when everything is just falling apart? Everything is just a mist. My life is a shallow shadow I can't even explain. How does one get to enjoy their life when things are this complicated. How, where do I even begin to pull myself together? And there's an issue of Ayanda's disappearance. I've turned Eshowe upside down looking for her with no availability. Where the hell could she be? Even the police are F\*\*ken useless as my dead wife! Instead of them informing me where she is they bloody telling that she's fine and doesn't want to be found. How did they find her? Up until today I have no clue. My whole arm is

surrounded by this concrete, I'm a one hand man. I feel useless and hopeless, the more I notice that I'm useless the more I become frustrated. I'm thinking of selling this house and option for a 4 room house. What's the use of paying high bills when I can't afford them. I need to contact my lawyer and see if will it be possible. I just need to find myself and be a man I use to be, I think I've mourned enough for Nkanyezi and I'm sure she's not happy with me wherever she is. Her words came buzzing in my ear, I remember this day like it was yesterday. The day she told me that should marry her sister and I shall treat her right. If I treat her right I will gain more. And I did the total opposite, what happened? I lost everything I've worked hard for. Now I regret ever claiming that insurance money. I was more than stupid, infact I'm beyond stupid. \*sighs\* I need to do something to keep my mind busy since I can't have a peaceful sleep without being haunted!

I think this house is inhabited by disembodied spirits of the deceased. I mean how do you explain all those creepy sounds? The coldness that comes with it, things falling on it's own. I could be hallucinating but no I know myself.

Have you ever picked up a ringing phone, only to hear silence on the other line? Do your lights flicker periodically? Does your television suddenly turn off, or switch channels on its own? These are classic clues that reveal a ghostly presence. I think these ghost are more than my kitchen trash. One of the most common ways to identify the presence of a ghost is through scent, so I have been told. Ghostly smells will usually be somewhat familiar, such as perfume, cologne. And indeed my wife's scents is all over this house. The sheets, my clothes, literally everything. I sometimes feel like she's near only to find that there is no one there.

The grief of losing a spouse or partner affects not just emotional and mental health, but physical health as well.... I have this thing which is called a "widowers' syndrome." I don't know how doctors manage to pick up such drastic silly diseases. The doctors say I'm very lucky for being alive for such a very long time, I was suppose to die in three months after the burial of my late wife. Being a widower is hard, loosing the own that owns my heart turned me into a complete monster. Just days back I was trying to hook up with one of my booty's but surprisingly guilt about experiencing pleasure without my wife, or even the fear that my deceased wife is "watching," lately I have been preventing man's erection. At the opposite extreme is a kind of sexual restlessness, which motivates me to score multiple encounters with no thought of commitment. But who am I fooling, there's Ayanda who I'm trying so hard to bury but it's totally impossible. With Ayanda everything is just sweet but it took me time to notice that. Her presences says it all. I don't even want to think about the child we lost, a child I was trying so hard to make with my late wife!

MANTOMBELA

"I will ask you for the very last time, who does that bastard child you carrying belong to?" My husband asks calmly. For the past months I have been feeling a bit offish and as a carrying husband he took me to the hospital only to find out that I'm pregnant with my son's in-law child. We haven't been intimate with my husband for the past five months. When he asked the doctor how far I was and the doctor confirmed that I'm two months pregnant and that was a nail in the coffin. How do I still lie straight to my husband's face and say that the baby is his? Why don't I have consciousness and just tell him the truth? Ntokozo damaged me, he damaged my body and soul. After what he did to me I haven't been the same. And that got me really thinking about Ayanda, my daughter. My only daughter I am left with was suffering in the hands of that man, she confided in because she trusted me as her shield to protect her. But what did I do? I never listened to her cries

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I was more interested of the monthly allowance I was getting. "MaBuyi Ntombela Mhlongo!" Mhlongo bangs the table making me to jump in fear. I actually zoned out unexpectedly. "Baba," I whimper letting the tears roll down my almost wrinkled face. I cover my face with my hands and burst into tears. This was never suppose to happen at all. I never meant any of this. I love my husband no lies but he hardly satisfies me in bed. He stands up and walk right past me without saying anything. I'm still glued on the same position thinking deep of my next move. What if I terminate it? I won't die right? I don't see myself having a child with my son in-law. What will people say? What will our families say? I never thought how deep this is until now. A luggage has been thrown in front of my face. "Since you don't want to talk, I want to gone with immediate effect. You services is no longer needed in this house." He spits venom and walks out banging the door. Where will I go? I can't go back home that house is occupied by my brother and his family.... Over my dead body if Mhlongo thinks getting rid of me will ever change the situation. I'm pregnant so what! I'm not the first woman who cheated and got pregnant by another man! He must grow some balls we will raise this child together whether he likes it or not!

It's in the middle of the night and this man is not yet back, where could he be? It's almost 00:00 midnight and I'm awake as an owl. I can't sleep without knowing where my husband is. I hear his car outside with a roaring engine. He always leaves the engine running and I always have to switch it off which is very annoying for me cause he never allows me to drive his car. His singing loudly and the house smells like brewery, the smell of it just makes me want to puke all of the food I had.

"Baba," I fasten my gown making my way to him, how did he drive in this state. I should inform the cops of South Africa to arrest every man who's drinking and driving, he would have died for God sakes!

"Isifebe sami sisakhona," he walks stumbling leaning against the wall. I sigh looking at him knowing fully that I'm the cause of this. I switch off the engine and something catches my eyes, "a bra," I pick it up taking a close look at it. Anger piles up, so he was out and about cheating on me. I bang the door marching to the house ready for war and I find him already snoring. I shake him vigorously until he woke up.

"Yini!" His annoyed and I don't care I need answers.

"Were are you coming from? You know what don't answer that. Who does this belong to?" I toss the bra on his face and he just looks at me emotionless.

"This should be the first and the last time you ever ask me questions like that." A stern voice sends chills down my spine. He disembarks from the bed and stripped naked. I'm looking at his hard rock stick. Within split seconds he is right in front of my face licking me like a dog. I gag holding my vomit down my throat. Mhlongo has always been bad in romance let alone kissing me. He throws me on the bed and gets on top of me. I haven't healed properly from behind. I'm still paining and I don't think I will ever heal. Instead of healing I'm having painful warts. He open my legs widely and shoves himself inside. I don't even know when my nuna became so moist. As old as I am my body betrays me just like that. Him moving in and out of me so slowly made my blood rush. I open my legs wider giving him full access placing my hands on his sweaty back. "Ow baba," my wrinkled husband is hitting it hard. I've been married with this man for years and not even once he made me feel this way. His cursing and moving fast and minutes later he collapses on top of me. We both are breathing heavily. He pulls out and rolls over falling into deep sleep. Great now I'm left with a job to clean myself. Something tells me to look at the sheets, blood stains. When I touch my nuna it's completely dry and something says I should place my hands on my behind and I did. "Jesu!" I look at my bloody hand, that means I'm bleeding from behind!

I can't sleep, I've been tossing and turning throughout the whole night. My spinal cord is paining and cold. It's like I'm being poked by sharp needles. I've snuggled myself next to my snoring husband but still I can't get warm. Even after having a hot shower still my lower abdomen hurts. What if I'm having a miscarriage? I haven't even started the antenatal clinic as yet. I had no other choice but to overdose some sleeping tablets, an hour time will do me.

ROMEO

Looking at the stranger inside my house feels like a dream. Weird enough I've stopped having dreams, for the past months I've been sleeping peacefully throughout the night. Ramona has found a friend, my mother has found someone who takes care of her fully. Of course she's not doing it for free she works for me. Her words not mine. My kids get to eat proper meals, they get to wear clean uniform and be neat in school. I myself can see a huge difference. My house has become a home, it's warm and has that smell of welcoming aroma. I don't even want to mention the garden it's blooming. My mother use to do the flowers in the garden when she was still well and Kicking. How I wish this moment could last for infinity, how I wish that this woman.... I don't mean to sound forward but, her, herself alone is twice a woman. Everything that she touches turns alive. She's not yet 100% back in health but she's heading there. "Dad look!" Ramona wearing a dress I didn't even know she had and her hair is braided so perfectly.

"Look at you," I pick her up placing her on top of the kitchen counter. "You look beautiful my princess. Who did your hair?"

"Aunty A," that's how Ayanda is being called or rather addressed in this house. I smile looking at my little princess being all smiles touching her hair non-stop. She really does like it. When was the last time I saw my kids this happy. Even Rebecca has changed to the normal child she was years back.

"Dad!" Rebecca's voice gets my attention, why would be screaming for me? "Daddy!" Okay I hope it's something good imagine running around being call by your own daughter. These kids treat me like I'm their mate of fella. I descended the stairs with Ramona in my arm. This one will brake my back one day, can't she see that she's old and heavy. When I get to my mother's bedroom I got the shock of my life. I even forgot that I had Ramona on my hands, I let my poor baby slip right through.

"Ouch," she's on her butt already in the verge of cry. WTF! I pick her up and place her gently on the bed.

"Mah," I whisper walking close towards her bed. I can't and don't believe my eyes. My emotions are high. I touch her not believing the sight I'm looking at. "Ow God," I sink down on the floor crying my pain out. They say men don't cry guess what I'm not strong enough! MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

12

ROMEO

"Mother," I hug her legs thanking the Lord for this day. I'm still stunned, "how did this happen? I mean when did she start taking baby steps?" I'm looking at my mother leaning her whole weight of her body against Aya.

"Just weeks back," Aya helps her sit down on her wheel chair. Everyday Aya makes my mum watch her as she does magic with her garden. The fresh air that I have been denying her....I always thought that maybe she will contact another. Stupid of me, a sick person also needs fresh air, sun and new environment. What was I thinking keeping my mother all cooped up in this house.

"And you didn't tell me." I'm beyond excited.

"We wanted to surprise you, guess Rebecca couldn't wait any longer." Aya has that voice that just takes you straight to walls of heaven if there's any.

I look at Rebecca who is all smiles, it hurts my heart to know that my baby was suffering all this while. I take Aya's hand walking out of the room. I don't know what happened I found myself kissing her like there's no tomorrow. Her soft tiny soft lips, her short height is just a turn on.

"I'm sorry, it's just.... I couldn't help myself." I sigh stepping back looking at her. "I'm not going to go around the bushes with you running around in circles. I feel something for you. The more I try to hide it the more I'm hurting myself. After loosing my wife I never thought that one day I ever look at another woman." I stand in front of her face leaving no gap between us. I lowered my head and lifted her head to look at me. "Take your time and just a friendly warning I don't take rejection very well." I kiss her lips and walk out of my room leaving her dumb stuck.

Now that I have let out what's have been bothering me out of my chest I feel lighter. I walk back to my mother's room and I find her smiling something I've never seen from her in years. I heavily sigh and sit right next to her. I didn't even know that she could now sit on her own.

"I'm happy that you are well." She reached out for my hands shaking, guess the muscles are in shock. She held my hands so gently something I've been longing for in a very long time.

"I...I....like he....her for you....you." She tells me and my heart just warms up immediately. Look at her giving me relationship advises. Ow how I missed having conversations with her whether they had a meaning or meaningless. A mother's love is beyond everything, I wonder what Aya did to my mother that I failed to do. Indeed she's something I've been searching for all these years.

I help my mother sleep and walk out of her room finding the girls cooking. I stand by the passage looking at them admiring the sight that's right in front of my eyes.

"Daddy come look," you will never play hide and seek with Ramona, her mouth is always blabbing non-stop.



"Smells nice in here, what are you guys making? Maybe I can help." I say already folding my long sleeve t-shirt.

"You can chop the onions." Aya can't be this heartless. Why would she give me such a hurtful tasks in the kitchen.

"You do know that's one of the horrible things I hate doing."

"You asked to assist and we allowed you. Now grab the knife Mr Man and start chopping." She commands me, who the hell does she think she is?

I'm not even half way through the chopping and I'm already crying my balls out. This is pure torcher. Who made onions were never okay upstairs. I mean who literally makes a vegetable that makes you cry....makes no sense at all.

"This is definitely not my kind of size." I say placing the knife on top of the counter. "I'll just go watch soccer." I wash my hands leaving them fitting with laughter. Mxm one day I will teach them who is the man of this house. And that lesson will start with Aya.

NTOKOZO

I think I'm now going mad, how can I explain the breathings behind me, the warmness in the bed like someone is or wash there. The shower is constantly running water and there's a woman singing in the shower. The voice, I can never mistaken it with anyone's voice other than my late wife's voice. That woman loved to sing more than anything but girly was thee horrible singer ever.

I'm sitting at the corner in my room rocking myself back and forth. The bedroom window closes roughly, I can't take this torture any longer. Everything is falling apart and I can't put the life of my pieces together. Whatever is going on with me please Lord remember me as I am still your son.

AYANDA

I'm standing looking at the reflection of myself in the mirror. I don't believe that Ntokozo demolished my body this bad. I can't even stand to look at my virgina. "A virgina with burnt folds," I chuck swallowing the bitter taste in my mouth. The marks, the sores....it's just too much. No man will ever want a woman who looks like a mascerate. I'm a shame to woman kind, I'm standing here saying I'm ashamed to call myself a woman. People may see me as a strong person but deep inside I'm dying bit by bit. I'm hurting, I'm broken. No matter how hard I try not to think about that past, the situation I was living under, the abusive I've endured, the loveless home I grew up in. My mother is the cause of all this, that woman will never see sunshine. She made my life unenjoyable, I don't know what a mother's love taste or feels like. Mhlongo was there but he was not my biological father. He was and still is a husband to my mother. \*Sigh\* the bedroom door opens, I swear Ramona will be the death of me. I hide my private part because it's one of the area's I won't like anyone to see. I run to the wardrobe still naked in search for my gown.

"Looking for this?" I freeze on the spot. I swear I locked the door, that's the most important main part because I don't want anyone invading in my privacy. I quickly pull the duvet that's on top of the bed leaving the bed naked.

"What the hell are you doing here?!" I half yells still covering my damaged body.

"I live here remember." The confidence in him

ow how I wish I could just knock his teeth off.

"Have you ever heard of knocking." I seethe my teeth, just because it's his house doesn't mean that he shouldn't give me privacy.

"It's not like I haven't seen you naked before." He lays on the bed with his shoes on. I don't understand why white men always get on the bed with shoes on. I should consider dealing with this tradition once and for all.

"Wait, what did you just say?"

"I said I've seen you naked. So no need to hide from me I know the whole you." He looks at me more like reading my thoughts. I don't like this one bit.

"Your definitely a pervert! Get out of my room."

"I'm sleeping here. My eyes are not in good afternoon chopping that onion. I will be having an allergic reaction later this night."

"There's no such!" I'm still standing covered in a duvet.

"Can I have the duvet I'm feeling cold and I want to sleep. I have an important meeting tomorrow." This mlungu can't be serious.

"Okay sleep here and I'll sleep with Ramona."

"Big mistake." He gets off the bed locking the door throwing the keys inside his pants in the front area. This man can't be serious.

"Mr Man," he is so right in front of my face making it hard for me to breathe. He slowly strips off the duvet and I'm left naked. I'm standing still with him scanning my body from head to toe. I'm stuck, frozen on the spot, confused and lost. What do I do in a case like this? Why can't I fight him? Why can't I just tell him to back off? This morning he expressed his undying love for me. That left me shocked, I tried so hard not to think about it the whole day. The more I force myself into forgetting the more my heart pumps in fear. I'm truly afraid of men, what Ntokozo did can never be undone. No man will ever fall for a woman like me. My thoughts are being disturbed by a hand caresses on my arm. Those goosebumps I'm getting are beyond significant. A pool of hot liquid gushes out my nuna area. I hold my breath thinking of my next move but everything is just blank. He bends down and kisses my neck giving me warm wet kisses. A slight moan escapes my mouth unexpectedly. This can't be happening, an embarrassment flushes over.

"Hey look at me," he pulls me closer and I feel his hard rock. "Don't ever, I mean ever look down upon yourself. Tell yourself everyday that you are beautiful." He smashes his lips against mine. His lips are warm and so soft not forgetting slippery. I never knew that white men have such taste mouths. He squeezes my left boob making me to flinch. My boobs have gone wider in just two months, but I think it's because of the different medication I've been taking lately. He gently picks me up with me wrapping my legs around his waist. He places me gently on the bed and gets on top of me. He continues to kiss and his hand lingers around my pubic area. I hold his hand noticing where this is heading to.

"Don't stop me." His voice came out as a warning. "Relax woman I got you." He continues to kiss me. No man has ever said those words to me, no man has ever made me feel special more as a woman. With Romeo on top of me makes me nervous and scared. What if he becomes....I don't want to think the worst. His finger slips inside my virgina and I tense a bit. Ntokozo really damaged me the last time. What if I'm beyond damaged. "Relax your muscles." Again he commands, it's seems like I can't say no to this man. Everytime I try to dispute I just let go. I never knew that being fingered is this f\*\*ken good. He inserts two finger and deepens the kiss. He continues to move in and out of me giving me more organisms. "Hmmm," I grab his arm relaxing my body. He stops kissing me and stands up taking off his clothes. I close my legs shyly thinking of the damage that's down there. I cannot imagine what he is looking at, at this moment.

"Open your legs for me, I want to see that entrance." He takes off his boxer shorts and his dicks springs free. His is so damn huge. I press my legs together thinking of the possibilities of me being unattractive. "I said open your legs." He says sternly, instead of me saying no, my stupid body betrays me. I open my legs wider for him. His smiles a conveying smiled getting into of the bed. I had my eyes closed not wanting to get the disappointment of my life. His tapping his cock against the entrance.

"I love what I'm seeing." He says, he slid the tip of the head in and starts moving slowly in and out of me. He holds my legs up high and pushes in more further.

"Open your eyes." He gives me gentle strokes.

"I...I," my blood is boiling in happiness. I never knew that sex could be this great.

"Open them, I want to see you." He strokes deep and hard making me to flung my eyes open. He looks deep into my eyes making my heart to melt. No man has ever looked at me in that manner, no man has ever made me feel this special just by looking at me. I let my whole body loose accommodating him. He drops his head giving me a smooth one. "Ready?"

"For what?" If he is talking about death then I'm not and never ready.

"To make love." He doesn't give me time to respond, he goes in deep making my eyes to roll back. I'm scratching his arms, grabbing the sheets, biting myself.

"Ro....hmmm." I don't know what to do with myself. The strokes are getting deeper and harder.

"Look at me," I open my eyes to look at him. Everything in his eyes is just pure lust and love. I may not know what love is but I know when I see one. His groaning failing to control himself. I let out a loud scream while his playing with my clitoris. This feels so damn good.

"Yes mummy," he rocks me releasing every bit of his cum inside of me. That was....wow. I watch him as he slowly pulls out laying beside me.

"I will be back." He walks butt naked to the bathroom and comes back with my face towel. This man can't be serious.

"Out of all the things you decided to take my face towel." He laughs wiping himself then wipes me. He places the towel on top of the plastic chair that I have in my room. He snuggles himself next to me and kisses my forehead.

"You taste nice." He tells me and I find myself blushing. "So what's your decision of what I told you earlier today?" Does he really have to go there. Am I ready to be in a relationship?

"I'm scared." Indeed I am.

"Of what?" His deep voice is just making me to melt in someway.

"My scars."

He looks at me with his eyebrows up. "What did I tell you Aya? Didn't I tell you that behind those scars you are beautiful. Those scars shows and symbolises what you've been through. If you referring to my carrot cake, that's mines alone to see and to eat. I will cop every dick that will enter here."

"I didn't even say yes."

"Ow trust me you did. Goodnight." He pulls me further close to him. I'm left in confuse mode, so what does this mean for me? Am I dating him? Am I even ready for anything? But what just happened felt so good that it ended too soon. His too good for me, he is way to handsome for myself. If I agree won't I be hurt in the process? Won't he find someone better? If only I had a mother to share this with I wouldn't be this lost. She would have told me what to do and how to do it. But guess what, I'm motherless! MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

"Keep the good work up guys!" I look at my team excitedly. Rose really made to be the man I am today. Without her, I wouldn't be this business minded man I am today, who knows maybe I would be working in some company slaving around, taking commands. "You all may be excused." I tell them, I need to call my woman I left way to early in the morning. I'm sure she's thinking just because I got the cake I'll be giving her a cold shoulder. I'm serious about Aya and I mean to make her happy in ever possible way. A knock disturbs my thoughts, can't people read the sign that's outside my office. A DO NOT DISTURB sign in bold red writing is very visible for everyone to see.

"Come in," I groan in annoyance. How dare they disturb the peace I'm having. My door flung open and Zimbini walks in with her hills echoing in my office. I stand up giving her a wide smile and a hug.

"Sbari Sami," that's how she calls me. Her and my wife were never that close. Zimbini is just full of herself in so many ways.

"Look at you, you've grown." Her and my wife are just two years apart.

"How have you been?"

"I've been doing pretty good and what about yourself?" I ask.

"Ahh life, nothing much." She smiles sitting down more like seductively. I chuck shaking my head, this one has been eyeing me since the first day she set my eyes on me. "So any new woman in your life?"

I look at her with my eyebrows slightly up. I fold my arms leaning back on my chair giving her full attention. If she thinks I'm going to fall for her just because I was dating her sister she got another thing coming. "Why the concern?" I ask.

"Just making sure you don't fall for the wrong woman who's going to abuse my niece's."

"Not that it's any of your business but yes I am seeing someone."

"Ow," she kind of look disappointed and I don't care. She must know never to cross the line.

"I'm sure you didn't come all the way from Eshowe to ask me about my personal life. What brings you to my office?"

She clears her throat and looks at me, "mother wants the kids to visit her during the holidays."

"Doesn't your mother know the ways of communicating me whenever she want the kids?" I hate being bullshitted on. I hate it when people take granted of my kindness!

"She must have forgotten." She says dismissively.

"Next time I won't take this nonsense. The kids will be sent on the last day of school closing. If you don't mind I have a lot of work to do and close the door on your way out." I open my files without care getting to work.

"There's one problem." She says.

"What?" I'm annoyed as hell.

"I don't have a place to sleep." This girl is gotta be kidding me!

"And my house is full, I'm sorry I can't accommodate you."

"Ow okay," she stands up looking disappointed. "I'll pass by tomorrow to come see the kids." Last time I checked she hated my kids with passion. Whatever poison she's drinking she better stop cause I can't let someone near them who despises my kids like used toilet paper.

"Don't bother, they have a busy schedule." Indeed they really do have a busy schedule. Aya is keeping everyone busy on their toes. People now clean after their own mess. At first I didn't like it but then again I thought for a second, Rose would have done the same the way she was so strict. So I understand African culture with their strictness. If you play with your toys put them back where you took them from. When you done eating put your plate on the sink. Wash your hands before you eat and after eating. You know those little basic things. I love how much my kids are open minded about the new setup and quite frankly they are enjoying it more than me. When was the last time to find my set of outfit for tomorrow neatly hanged? Neat, clean and not forgetting the most

ambrosial lunchbox. Look at me crimson over last night. Damn she was tight as f\*\*k, I've never tasted a pussy that's so sweet. I'm sure it has a scrummy taste down there.

"Halo,"

I've completely zoned out thinking about the Velvet Aya dished for me. I need to f\*\*k her hard to put some senses into her small head of hers. I can't believe that this girl is actually here.

"What!"

"Woah no need to bit my head off. I'm gone." She stands up pulling her tight short dress that's revealing way too much but not appetizing at all.

"Next time wear something that accommodates your body." I stand up packing my stuff. I just want to go home and be buried deep inside of my woman but right now I need to pass by the flower shop and purchase her a bunch of roses. I once heard that woman and roses are one.

I pass by the reception with this 'thing' following me behind. "Amarie, transfer all calls to Mike I'm off for the day."

"Yes sir," she answers. Mike is my gay PA who's so consequential towards his work. He just makes my life so easy. I hop in my car and the b\*\*ch hops in the front seat.

"And then?" I ask.

"You will drop me off at the taxi rank." She twinkles her eyes like a clown cash that she is.

"I'm not going to town. I'm going home." I say and she just looks at me disappointedly.

"I would love to see the kids you know." Really now.

"Whatever you are trying to do will not work for me. Get out of my car!" I roar making her to jump a little. Sometimes you got to be a monster to let someone to lay off your back. She slowly jumps off the car banging the car.



"Stupid b\*\*ch." I reverse my car from the parking leaving her standing. I'm going straight to the flower shop and I'm a nervous wreck.

"Goody," an old man greets me. Old men don't like resting.

"Greetings, I'm looking for beautiful flowers for a beautiful woman." I say already smiling like a dead rat.

"Someone special I see, you can tell by the way you smiling."

"Trust me she's one of a kind." I answer.

"Follow me." The old man says. "These are fresh from the ground and I'm positive that she will love them." He bends down and pick a bunch of yellow and white flowers.

"Sunflower," I fit with laughter, this man cannot be serious.

"Ow son you still young, you have alot to earn. You see these," he smiles admiring the flowers and I just continue to laugh. "You see these Daffodils they symbols New Beginnings. You see son the beginning of a new year, love, life

family always evokes the feeling of a new beginning and a fresh start. It is a time when we each reevaluate our lives and decide on what we would like to change and improve. As a result, many of us decide to send flowers to family and close friends in order to celebrate the prospect of a New Beginning. I know choosing the right flowers in order to symbolise the message can be difficult at times."

"Why are you not giving me red roses. I really wanted those." I whine. I love red roses for my woman to be precise.

"Are you ready for commitment?" He asks and I frown.

"Commitment?"

"Yes commitment. Red roses.... They carry a meaning of passion, true love, romance and desire. It conveys a message of commitment. Now my question is are you ready?" Am I ready? We just started dating hours back. "You see I was once young. I know how you youngsters mind operate. How far is the relationship?" He asks and I'm so embarrassed to respond.

"Couple of hours." He chuckles and cuts the flowers and neatly wraps them.

"Next time you will be buying red roses for your woman. Don't rush anything." He hands me the flowers and I thank him politely. Honestly speaking the meaning of flowers has never crossed my mind. I just buy what my heart wants to buy. I know she loves chocolates not any other than Cadbury Lunch Bar KitKat. I bought her a box of chocolate. I'm sure she will now stop munching over kids chocolate. And I'm pretty sure she will love this huge teddy bear that I also bought for her. She must watch out for Ramona, that one can't be trusted. Last time she destroyed my important business papers, if I didn't have a copy stored in the USB I would have been doomed for good! I'm driving home with a happy spirit forgetting the encounter that happened earlier today. I just hope Zimbini won't cause havoc in my life!

AYANDA

I knew that this would happen, no man can ever stand this disgusting body. All the scars that I have on my body are not appealing one bit. I'm sure he wanted to vomit all night. I'm sure at the back of his head he couldn't wait for morning so he could walk out of the mistake he just did. No message has been sent indicating that I mean something to him. But who am I fooling, no man will fall for a masquerade.

I wipe the tears gushing down my face. My hair will never grow back ever again, I'm always bald, hardly wear weaves cause I don't go out. What's the use of going out when I look this unattractive. I've gained weight yes but I still wish I could just depart from this world.

This creates strain in social interactions that I've noticed, resulting in stunted communication, reduced intimacy, and avoidant behaviours. I'm just too inside of the box and I'm afraid to be out of the box. At least I don't have any scars on my face. My scars had made me grow into a shy young lady, something that I was not before. I try to avoid contact from people I meet, such as the instance when I am afraid to accept a hug from anyone. I lack confidence in myself, I don't love myself the way I use to. My scars are literally the inscriptions upon my body of the ruthless journey of life...

But what I felt yesterday made me realise for the first time of me understanding what a feeling meant. For those two seconds I got to feel how it feels to be cared for, validated, and closely connected to another person. Romeo left a mark that will be permanently there. But everything is short lived because of me, myself and I.

"I hope you day dreaming about me." A males deeps voice disturbs my mind making me to drop the shovel. What is he doing here at this time of the day?

"Ain't you suppose to be at work?" I ask with a slight frown on my face.

"Is that how you greet your man?" He smiles a mischievous smile making me to melt. Forgetting that just seconds ago I was depressed to hell.

"I'm sorry, my man how are you doing?"

"That's more like it, come give daddy some sugar." I smile shaking my head in disbelief. I wonder at what time God made this man. I walk my way towards him. I pull off the gloves throwing them aside, I'm sandy from doing the garden and I hope he won't mind my dirt. Look at me thinking all positive. I tip toe shyly giving him the perk on the lips.

"Here, I bought you these." He hands me some flowers and a box of chocolates. No wonder he had his hands behind his back all this while.

"My favourites, thank you."

"I'm glad you love them." He kisses my forehead than dropped his head giving me one hell of a smooch. Our moment is being disturbed by someone who is clearing their throat. We both stop and turn to look at the direction of the disturbance. A woman who has her noise flared looking at me with murderous eyes.

"I'll be inside." I say and turn to walk away but Mr Man holds my hand firmly.

"You not going anywhere." He looks at me than looks back at the lady who had her arms folded in attitude. "What do you want Zimbini?" He asks calmly.

"So this is what happens to my sister's house? Is this how you disrespect her memory? By bringing sluts into your house for the kids to see all th...." A loud clap landed on her cheek. I step back holding my chest not believing my eyes. Please Lord don't tell me that Romeo is another Ntokozo.

"Don't you ever, I ever call my woman a slut in this existing life of yours. What the hell are you doing in my house? Was it not enough for you that you were terrorizing me at my work place!" I've never seen Romeo spitting venom like this.

"Daddy." Ramona, I'm sure the noise woke her up. We decided not to send them to day-care today since it's Friday.

"I'll be with the kids," I rush my legs towards Ramona picking her up. I hope she didn't see that cause if she did it's something that will traumatize her for the rest of her life.

"I hate her she's mean." She tells me.

"Who baby?"

"Aunty ZimZim." She pulls her face making me to laugh. I think I need to have a word with Romeo about this. The kids cannot be affected by all this. I'm sure there's something that she did to the kids that made them be afraid of her. "Let's go take a shower," she jumps upside down. It's already late night as well take one also. I walk to my room finding a huge teddy bear on top of my bed. I smile to myself already squeezing it for dear life.

"Mr Man," I laugh to myself, he probably thinks I'm 15 because of my shortness.

"Aunty A!" Ramona shouts for me from the bathroom. There goes my mood no matter how hard I try to dodge this bullet it always comes haunting for me. Ramona will seriously be the death of me. I don't want her seeing all my scars. Being in a bathtub is okay cause I get to hide myself in water. But in the shower how will I hide this shameless body! I strip naked and wear a gown. Change within policy I'm opting for a bath in a bathtub, I can't afford to answer a million questions regarding my macerate body! If only she could understand how insecure I am but no Ramona is the little devil that I love and the fact stays! MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#14

AYANDA

"Woman if you don't have any work in this house you might as well f\*\*CK off. I don't tolerate nonsense, ivila into engingazwani nalo!" For the past week our lives have been a living hell. Romeo just got sick out of the blue through

food poisoning. I don't know how that happened and when it happened. Last week this woman was here and I'm pretty sure that she sneaked in without being noticed. What's strange is she said Romeo asked her to bring him his lunchbox which I find it very odd. If Romeo forgets his lunchbox he comes personally to collect it. He doesn't trust anyone around his food other than me and his mother. I really don't know what happened or maybe he ate somewhere and got food poisoning? This thing is just too much for me. Now Romeo won't trust me with his food, will he ever trust me around the kids? I just have too much on my plate right now. I'm just glad that today he is being released out of the hospital and he pleaded me not to say a word to anyone. The kids have been really down and it hurts me a lot. The way they are being punished around the house being ordered like they are slaves in their father's house. This woman is really a devil. How do you treat your niece's, your sister's kids which you claim to love dearly like this? Yesterday Ramona had bruises on her arm and I thought that maybe it's something that happened from school. I even wrote the teacher a longer letter claiming that the child is being abused in day-care. The school contacted me and assured me that Roman came with the bruises this morning and when was asked she said ZimZim. My heart was torn into pieces and I blame myself for it. If only I didn't go do groceries yesterday Ramona wouldn't be like this. I should have been there protecting her.

"Yey Wena stop looking at me like a lost case. This house won't clean itself!" She barks, I have no energy to fight with her. I have been in the worst case ever. With her barking at me is just small water's. I'm just tolerating her until Mr Man comes back. I can't take this bullshit any longer. I want the kids to be happy again. A car drives in and I smile widely and I know it's him. We communicate everyday, he forbidden me coming to the hospital to see him. And he told me he will tell me the reasons later on and I trust him. At first I was hurt but he told me to trust him in which I do. She looks at me more like reading me. A door unlatched forcefully and there is my man looking all sexy and yummy. I couldn't hold myself, I just threw my tiny body on to his large body.

"I'm back poonky." He tightens the hug and that made me melt.

"Hay sbari Sami, welcome back." The devil makes her way to Romeo but Romeo just pushes her away like some sort of dirty laundry.

"Where are my kids?" He diverts the question to me and I smile.

"With Nana," that's how his mother is being addressed in this house. He holds my hand with me running behind him since he is taking giant steps. He leads me to his room and closes the door locking it. He turns around in full speed kissing me for dear life. Ow Lord how I missed these slippery soft wet lips.

"I missed you so bad." He looks down at me full of nothing but pure lust. That deep voice just twinkles my burnt clit.

"I missed you too," I say shyly.

He smashes his lips against mine, his hand travels to my nuna. I'm only wearing a dress with nothing underneath. I've tried so many times to wear under-wares but it just hurts making it unbearable. If it happens I go to my periods I will option for tampons. Talking about periods I haven't seen them in two months. Maybe my body lost alot of blood the time Ntokozo....I brush that thought off. Let me enjoy what I have right infront of my eyes. They say enjoy it while it lasts. He unbuckle his belt pulling the pants down just a little below his knees. He picks me up making me to wrap my legs around his waist. He positioned himself and entered. This is just almost as steamy as my favourite film, The Diary Of A Mad Black Woman. He presses my back against the wall still inside of me with my hands around his neck. This is how it's done in the movies, right? I feel like a porn star right now. He makes sure he finds an angling position that is most comfortable and pleasurable for both of us. Damn the girl down there is happy and joyful. He starts moving in and out of me very slowly, my lips escapes a soft moan making me to scratch his back. He sucks my neck making me weak still moving.

"I got you," that voice assuring me that 'I've got you' makes my heart accepts him wholeheartedly. He bites my earlobe groaning. "I love you," he whispers in my ear. Not given a chance to answer he begins to pump me hard and faster making me to screams all my senses out.

"Ow y...yesssss!" He hits my cervix in every corner and offloaded every thing in him. He catches his breath still deep inside of me. He kisses me and slowly pulls out placing me gently on the floor landing on my both feet. He walks to the bathroom and comes back with yet again my face towel.

"I'll replace it." He tells me already wiping himself. "Spread your legs apart." He commands, and I do as I'm being told spreading my legs apart. He gently wipes me making me to giggle.

"What's funny?" He asks concentrating on what his doing.

"You wiping me this way feels weird." I say.

He chucks and makes me stand properly. " You are still yet to do the undoable." He pulls his pants up. "come let's go see the kids." He pulls me yet again by hand and I'm running after him. I don't know why tall men take giant steps. They are all squeezing Nana on her king size bed. The gasp, shocks and cries. The clinging as if Mr Man is going to run away. This sight is just magnificent, how I wish to have my family some day.

"You back!" Rebecca cries tears of joy. She's has been cooped in this bedroom ever since her father was hospitalized.

"Yes I'm back baby."

"What did you bring me." Ramona always wants something.

"Wow, clearly I was not missed her." Romeo laughs his lungs out. He squats in front of his mother touching her hands. She is not as shaky as she was.

"Mother,"

"Son," she smiles warmly, this woman has a smile that just capture your heart. I look at them as they stay in each other's embrace, how I wish I could have this kind of relationship with my mother.

"Were you truly in hospital or are you back into your old ways?" She asks him and I just wonder what old ways she's talking about.

Instead of responding the man just clears his throat and looks down scratching his head.

"Erm, I'll be in the kitchen." He dashes out leaving me in total lost. What is Nana talking about here? I look at her thinking maybe she will hint me up.

"Can you help me lay down, my back is paining." She says and I just know that something huge is going on!

ROMEO

"All set....just tell the guys it will be delivered later this evening." I disconnect the call and head to the kitchen finding Zimbini swaying her unattractive body in Aya's kitchen. I fold my arms and just look at her trying to understand the reasons why she's her.

"Ow sbari,"

"Tell me Zimbini....what are you doing in my house?" I ask her and she just looks at me confused.

"Am I not allowed to be here? I came to check up on my niece's." That's the card she always pull. If only she knew I was watching each and every move of this house she wouldn't be blabbing this nonsense in such confidence.

"The same niece's you hate with so much passion? The same niece's that you could beat up to death without any remorse? No wonder you had an abortion you have no love for kids. Rotten womb." I walk past her grabbing a bottling of water in the fridge. "When you done cooking your poison make sure you wash my pots and eat all that food. Only one woman cooks in this house and that's My Woman! Get that through you thick skull." I walk and stop on my tracks wanting to offload. "Remember

you not my type. Never have and never will. Stop obsessing over me cause you will definitely never have me." I smile leaving her looking like a fool. She can't even cook for that matter. I will punish her in a way that she wishes that she never crossed paths with me.

"In my study," I tell Steven who follows me behind without saying a word. "I'm running out of business and looks like we have big bosses who are gunning me down."

"I hear you, I know just one person that will sort this whole mess out." Steven tells me and that leaves me hanging. Last time I checked Steven had no connections but hey let me not judge the book by its cover.

"I'll tell you when I get hold of him." He looks at me more like reading me. "So you and Aya are official?" Aha my friend and gossip.

"Yes we are. She's mine and mine alone." I proudly say.

"Hmmm, so the kids."

"What about them?" I raise my eyebrows.

"Do you think they will accept her, I mean Rebecca more especially?"

"They too young to understand and for Rebecca I will find a way to tell her and make her understand." Steven nods his head in agreement.

"I like her, keep this one. Entlek what is Zimbini doing here?" I shrug my shoulders annoyed.

"I don't know but what I know is I will make her life living hell." I sip my voda mixed with ice and lemon.



"Is it what I'm thinking?"

"Exactly that my friend." I tap on his shoulders. "Help me pack Roses stuff." I quickly change the subject avoiding a lot of questions. Steven and Ramona can ask questions for the whole continent. How does one never run out of questions?

"Hmmm," I know that sound he still wants to fish for more but I'm not giving him that satisfaction to ask me more questions ever. "Tell your woman not to scream next time." I stop packing and look at him. No matter how hard I try to be angry with Steven he always knows how to be stupid at times.

"You crazy," I laugh shaking my head. If my woman screams that means I'm hitting it in right places.

NTOKOZO

I decided to go out today just for a fresh breeze. I can't stand the pain and torture I'm getting in that house. I tried convincing my lawyer into selling the house but he completely turned down the offer. I'm even up for selling it in a lower price. I don't know why he would decline my request. \*Sighs\* I'm sitting inside my car looking at what I use to call my garage. I'm sure Nkanyezi is looking down on me weeping her tears out. It's raining terror in that house and I can't get any peace no matter how hard I try. Little drops of rain starts to pour, I have to go back home before it rains maybe I will be able to get some sleep today. The clouds begin getting darker by the minute. I try starting my vehicle but it seems to be jammed. "Great just great!" I had run out of options. A lightning storm lit up the sky while I sat bleary-eyed in my pitch-black car at some unknown hour. When did my car become this dark? Is it because of the rain? It doesn't make sense at all. Lord knows I'm so afraid of thunder.

Then, the sensation descended – not as a possibility, but an absolute certainty, the way you know it's raining because you are suddenly wet: there was a young woman sitting next to me. When? How? My eyes scoured the contours of darkness for shapes, silhouettes. Petrified, I felt a maternal sixth sense alerting me to danger. It took every ounce of reason and self-reassurance to return my mind back. I tried to rationalize away the ghost as a manifestation of my anxiety as a weak man. My brain is uncomfortably awash with post-fear. I fiddle with the door trying to open but my door is stuck. Suddenly my vehicle roars engine on its own making it to move. Within the

blink of an eye the steering wheel swayed so roughly with the car losing control. My body is frozen on the spot without possibility of moving. Everything just becomes fuzzy unexpectedly. I felt it, the car was forcefully pushed over and rolled down on the slippery road multiple times.

"Take him out! The car is burning!" I hear voices from afar as I feel into a deep dark hole.

MANTOMBELA

"Anal warts are caused by the human papillomavirus virus, the most common sexually transmitted diseases. The warts affect the area around and inside the anus, but may also develop on the genital area. They first appear as tiny spots or growths, often as small as pin head." I don't even know what this bloody doctor is saying. Maybe I'm going crazy or something, but I feel like I have a lump inside the anal area. Sometimes it's painful, I would scratch until I bleed. At least I still get to use the toilet.

"So what will happen now?" I ask out of fear. I don't know what's next.

"You need a biopsy, it's...."

"A what!" I didn't even let him finish the sentence.

"It's just a sample of tissue from a wart for further testing. We just want to make sure that we don't end up giving you the wrong treatment for it since you're pregnant. And your pregnancy is at high risk. Meaning you are still in your first-trimester so the percentage of you miscarrying is 75% to 95%."

This is definitely shocking, I can't stomach it down. The baby is here now I can never hate it and I've grown to accept it. "So my baby might die because of the two possibilities."

"Regarding the warts situation we may consider treatment using duct tape, cryotherapy or salicylic acid. Salicylic acid may be used to treat warts during pregnancy, as long as it is used on a small area for a limited period of time." The doctor closes the file and looks at me. "Try not to scratch them, don't stress you will be fine." He assures me, who wouldn't stress over this pandemic I'm facing. This is beyond total stress, how will I survive this? And there is an issue of the son-in-law that impregnated me! Ow God of Messiah can someone justify me now! MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#15

NTOKOZO

Neck pain, stiffness, headaches,

changes in Function....Numbness.... Constant back Pain. You know the pain of being told that you will be paralyzed for the rest of your life, what will I do with a damaged spinal cord. The pain of being told that the nerve of your spinal cord is severely damaged and can't be repaired. After the accident I don't recall anything. I don't even know how I landed to this hospital in the first place. I wish nothing but death at this moment. How will I move on fully knowing that I can't do anything by myself, I can't even wipe my own behind. Is it bad luck? My life doesn't have a sense of meaning anymore, my life just went down the drain and there is no road to recovery from this. Maybe if I was a man that my wife wanted me to I wouldn't be here. How do I even begin to turn my life around. Being in this hospital taught me alot of things, life gave me a hints of the highlights of life I never knew it existed. Today I'm being discharged and I don't even know how I will go about catering for myself. Going to the Care Facility....not because it's by choice but it's by the situation I'm in. My mother bluntly said she can't take me in and I don't blame her after all the trauma I've caused my family.

"You know forgiving yourself is more is than just putting the past behind you and moving on. It's about accepting what has happened and showing compassion to yourself. Facing what you have done or what has happened is the first step towards self-forgiveness. It's also a hardest step but I know you're a strong man." That voice....I try turning my head forgetting I'm a vegetable.

"Ouch," I bite my tongue not subsiding the pain.

"Careful," she says.

"Yo....you came back." She looks way more beautiful than the last time I saw her. She gained weight in the right places. What do I call her? Is she still my wife traditionally or?....

"Hi Ntokozo," she sits down besides me. My throat dries up immediately, flashbacks of me beating her to a pulp without care. Me having my ways with her anyhow I want. Everything is coming back like a horror movie.

"I'm.... I'm sorry." I whisper choking on my own tears. "How do I let go of the guilt? How do I?...."

I feel my chest close up unable to breathe. Ayanda hurried to get me a glass of water and helped me to drink. She's so gentle and she looks out of this world. Her bold head suits her perfectly.

"To let go of the guilt is to forgive yourself first. If you want to be forgiven you must forgive those who offended you. The death of my sister wasn't planned by any of us, but you need to heal from that stage, close that chapter and move on. You have been holding a burden of resentment to people who have done absolutely nothing to you....the fact is, when you come to the last point of your life, you are going to be aware of your faults, your imperfections, your weakness."

She tells me, it's not easy as she says. The guilt of carrying the pain and burden everywhere you go. But she's right, I let her suffer for the death of her sister. I made her go through hell because I didn't want to accept that my wife is no more. I failed to contain myself and be a man that I was. I failed myself, failed my late wife, failed my family.

I still hate myself for what I did to her, I will forever hate myself in every way. GBV was and still is never a solution to any problem. Channelling my anger through Aya made the pain go away for the time being. Every feeling I'm trying to burying are resurfacing. Feelings for Aya that I've been hiding making a joke of myself. I have nobody else to blame but myself alone.

I look at her wondering where was she? How was she coping? When did she become this wise? I have some many questions to ask her but I'm afraid.

"What happened the day I...." I clear my throat not wanting to cause the pain I once made her feel. I want to change for her and myself and be a better man.

"My b....I called a friend," I nod my head trying to digest what she just told me. I'm wondering who is that friend of hers that I don't know.

"Mr Myeni, are you ready to go home?" Home? How can I call that Facility a home. I'm basically going to be thrown there and possibilities of me ever coming out are slim. I hold back my tears of shame feeling less of a man. "It's going to be okay. Just tell yourself you will walk again. You know it does happen that us doctors tend to make mistakes by informing our patients wrong information." I'm not believing the bull he is telling me right now. "Just hang in there, the fact that miss here is willing to cater for you....just think positive in this situation." The doctor leaves me dumbfounded. Did I hear him right?

"Time to go Mr." Ayanda tells me and I just look at her astonished. Are my ancestors making a joke of me right now?

"But I was told I will be shipped off to a Facility." I tell her.

She bluntly ignores me and continues to do whatever she's doing.

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The drive to the house was filled with silence. I didn't even know how to react or what to even begin saying. My house still looks the same but the difference is that it's looks much more cleaner compared to the last time. I'm sitting on my bed thinking about my life, how it turned out to be a joke. I am a crippled with basically nothing. From hero to zero but I don't have anyone else to blame but myself. It's like my mind is no longer functioning, I'm singing the same verse over and over again.

"I'll run you a bath." Ayanda says walking out of the room. The shame in me weakens my strength and my manhood. Do you know the pain of being dressed and undressed like a new born baby. Difference is I can't even move a muscle like how new born baby's does. She takes her time stripping me naked. Have you ever seen a vegetable that's being tossed and turned around like it's useless? That's how I feel right now. There is simply no hope in me, no life. My life is just a standby with no point of direction.

"Do you feel anything?" She asks as she helps me with in the bathtub. The shame is me is eating me up. I sigh swallowing a painful lump stuck up my throat. I never knew that one day my life would be this empty.

"No," I whisper looking down at my dick floating. So no more sex for me? She begins to scrub my body so gently taking her time. How did she know I was in hospital? "How did you know I was hospitalized?" I ask out of shame and guilt.

"News," she continues to scrub me. I can't even feel my own poop, that's how useless my lower body is.

I feel free and smell fresh too. Will I be able to get any sleep?

"Please don't leave me alone, please sleep here....just for tonight." I beg, the last days of me in this house were horror. This house was raining terror. Ghosts.... I don't even want to think of it. Maybe I'm hallucinating or something. What if there were never ghosts in this house it was just my imagination running wild. But than again everything felt so real

like there was someone else in this house.

"Why?"

"Last time this house was haunted." I reply, what if the ghost is here watching. I suspect Nkanyezi, everything just points her.

"Ghost?" Her face slightly frowns looking at me. "Okay fine." She replied. Phewww, I don't think I would have survived the night alone. She slowly gets into the bed and sleeps facing the other way. I'm hurt no lies but I don't blame her. Atleast she's here with me.

MANTOMBELA

Mhlongo has been giving me a cold shoulder to a point where he hardly sleeps at home. It hurts, I'm heartbroken and I don't blame him. I wasn't the best of wife to him and maybe he found comfort in another hands of other women. How will I even face my family at this point? Yenake ubaba wengane ngizomuthini? I heard he is a vegetable soup in hospital. How will I take care of this baby alone? If Mhlongo doesn't forgive me than means I will have to raise this baby alone. I can't afford that, I'm not working and the pension money is not enough. Atleast we were surviving with the monthly allowance from Ntokozo. With him now being crippled everything is just tight. I've got to learn leaving on a tight budget.

"Baba," Mhlongo is back after two days of his disappearance. It pains to know that my husband is no longer eyeing me, begging me for sex, let alone touching me. I sigh as I look at him disappearing out of my sight. He no longer acknowledges my presence. Tear dribble down my cheeks. Atleast the warts are disappearing bit by bit. It's no longer that painful as much. I get to sit without flinching badly of pain. Mhlongo comes back with an overnight handbag whistling. I just have to accept that my marriage is over just like that and there is no amount of anything that can save it. Maybe it's time I accept that everything has vanished. I think it's better if I give him space and focus on myself. The doctors did advise me that I don't need stress since I'm at high risk. If I don't loose this baby I might give birth to a stillborn. I'd rather have a stillborn baby than to loose him. I've grown to accept and love him. From now onwards I'm giving him space, I'm no longer going to be on his face constantly. Maybe moving out will do us both.

"Whatever I touch I just ruin." I say to myself wiping off the tears gushing down my face. Life!

I wonder where's Ayanda. Everything I've been ignoring is now in the open. Am I a bad mother? Maybe Nkanyezi was also suffering but kept quite because she loved her husband through thick and thin. Baqinsisile mabethi imali impande yesono. God! I was never like this, I use to fear God and cherish him. I believed in him and honestly I don't know where I've gone wrong with myself. Maybe I was bewitched who knows. I know my neighbours were never happy for me. Argh! I'm just looking for something or someone to shift my problems on. My life is falling apart in no point of return!

AYANDA

You know when you have to pretend the whole time. I'm boiling in anger and I want to take it out on Ntokozo so badly! I don't know why would Romeo put me up to this shit! 'I'm doing this because I trust you' landed me here back into the MONSTERS house. He told me I will get the closure I need and it will help me to move on. In which I'm finding it hard to believe. Part of me says he is trying to get rid of me and another part of me says I should trust Romeo. My heart was a hard rock closed wall until he came into my life and softened it. I don't think I will ever see myself with another man. I mean who would want to have a wife or a girlfriend who has a burnt clit. You know how men are, they love sucking and playing with it. Imagine dating that person who won't be able to rub his dick against my half clit. Talk about my pink folds. I sigh getting off the bed having mixed emotions.

Maybe hearing his voice will calm me down.

"Pooky," I forgot that I was angry just a couple of minutes ago. Hearing his sleepy voice just made me melt. Whoever made his voice box deserves an award winning. I mean a man with this deep voice that just sends shivers down your spine!

"Mr Man,"

He chucks and I'm sure his even shaking his head smiling. "You won't stop calling me that huh?"

"Not any time soon." I say.

"Babe is preferable you know." Mr smarty pants.

"I prefer Mr Man." I sigh remembering the reason for this phone call.

"Talk to me." He says and I hear shuffling's over the phone.

"I just feel like killing him. Whenever I touch him everything just comes back flashing. The amount of pain he put me through can never be erased." I sniff.

"I know baby, trust me one day you will thank me. I know three months without seeing each other is very long time but you have to get rid of the nightmares you have. You dream and talk about everything you went through. When you cry at night it hurts me knowing I cannot take the nightmares away. The best thing is to fight your demons so you can heal. I'm not happy that you are there but your health comes first." He makes sense, I didn't even know that I cry at night. "Now be strong my girl, I need you and JD can't seem to sleep." I blush when he mentions JD. I just miss how he moves in and out of me.



"I will,"

"Promise me that once you leave that house you will come out stronger than this."

"I promise to be stronger than this when it happens we meet again." I say feeling heartbroken. It's like I will never see him again.

"Have faith, you will see me again Poonky. That's why you have a phone now, call me at any time, any day, any hour and any minute. That card is for yours to use, unlimited. It will bring joy to my heart to know that you are using it."

"I promise to use it."

"Seems like you like making promises these days. What else do you promise me?" I'm smiling like an idiot.

"Everything."

"Hmmm I like the sound of that. I would hold on to it trust me and I shall remind you."

"Goodnight babe."

"Goodnight Fancy Face." I blush disconnecting the call going back to the room. Romeo loves me, and I keep telling myself that. They say it's spirit. I miss Ramona and her constant nagging with a dollar questions. Rebecca with her endless homework's and Ronald with his annoying bedtime stories. I may be stone cold hearted but those kids really bought nothing but joy into my heart.

ROMEO

Making Aya leave was the hardest decision to do. I want her to be able to stand on her own two feet. I want her to be strong and independent. I miss her so bad that she's not her. I'm doing this for her, therapy wouldn't have helped reason being they are not facing the person who damaged her. Once she heals and finally able to move on, I will be taking further steps.

"Hope you won't regret this decision." Steven warns me, I have my reasons for taking such a hasty one.

"I know what I'm doing trust me." Indeed I do know. They say your fears will always haunt you until you face the root of it.

"Hmmm,"

"You will not understand even I explain it you. So rather leave it." I gulp down my whiskey. This house is so quite without my woman and her sheep voice singing. I grab my phone on top of the table and send her a text;

\*\*\*Goodnight Poonky, take care of my cake\*\*\*

\*\*\*I'm here in this house with a monster and you are only worried about your precious cakes. So my safety doesn't matter, so much of dating a mulungu\*\*\*

I read her reply smiling. Atleast she's not angry with me. One thing I learnt from Aya is....never go to bed angry without resolving the issue. No matter how mad you are at me I still want you to cuddle and dribble me with sex like there's no tomorrow. She's one hell of a sweet tiny cute thing I've ever met. Look at me smiling like a mad with my friend looking at me with a worried look on his face. He must leave me alone he will never understand until he gets to be in a relationship with a woman he admirably loves wholeheartedly.

"If you say so, back to business....any plan?"

I get up from the chair trying to calm my nerves down. Loosing is just not in me. I love winning but this is just not Romeo Osman.

"Right now I don't have any. I'm stuck with no way forward. I can't keep losing clients like this man. Something is definitely not right here." I'm looking at the figures and nothing corresponds.

Steven looks at the figures and whistles, we've been trying to crack our heads looking for answers onto how on earth will the money just vanish like that?

"Damn this is one fucked up situation. But again I still tell you, let the big dogs enter baba. You need this man and his goons more than anything plus they are the best in business. You see when I talk about talk dogs I'm talking about them."

"I hate losing." I hate it when I lose! Losing is for losers!

"Take my offer ke and stop whining like Ramona." He smirks.

"Make that call." I instruct. He happily pulls out his phone dialling the numbers.

"Spikes my man, I need Stone on board." He disconnects the call. "Unbelievable!" I lean back in disbelief. So now my friend rolls with big dogs in the business!

MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

#16

AYANDA

I couldn't sleep at all throughout the night. I've been having nightmares of me being beaten, constantly raped. Nightmares are vividly realistic, disturbing dreams that rattle you awake from a deep sleep. They normally set your heart pounding from fear. I still have paralysis sleep of which I'm now used to.

It's true when they say:- they define nightmares as dreams that evoke 'fear', anxiety or sadness. I'm sleeping next to a person who made my life a living hell in this house. Romeo sent me to the lion's den straight. I'm afraid of what Ntokozo might do to me in the middle of the night. Part of me says he will wake up in the middle of the night and harm me and part of me says he is not. I don't know what to believe at this point. I'm looking at my naked self on

the bathroom mirror.... "I'm stronger than this." I softly say to myself, I need to prove to myself and my fears that I'm stronger than what I look.

It's 8:00 am in the morning and I just know that my life will be a cycle of the same routine for the next three months. I sigh sadly thinking of my life, if only I had a relationship with my mother....maybe my life would have been better. I wear my summer dress, I have to try and find a comfortable panty that I could wear. What if I sit somewhere and get an infection. I still have the lowest self-esteem ever. I'm trying so hard to flush the negativity away but it just bounces back making me to lose myself. You know the feeling of feeling incompetent, unloved or even inadequate. I'm always letting Romeo down. One minute I'm positive and the next I'm having doubts feeling like I could just quit. My mouth always slips criticism about myself, I'm always focusing on the negatives forgetting what I'm trying to achieve. Maybe he got tired of me and decided to let me go without hurting my feelings. I step out of the bathroom feeling down and a bit hurt.... Romeo can't do me this bad or is it just me and my negativity again?

Beyond the wounds of the child and the scars of the man, there is something in the heart of love itself that makes love pathetic. I still remember his words ringing in my ear like a record on repeat.

"A man that truly loves you will love you unconditionally. Every bump roll, stretch mark, scar, he will love you effortlessly. The parts of your body you don't like, he will cherish and appreciate. Your happiness will be his concern." Those were the exact words that he sang into my ear everytime we made love.

Taking care of Ntokozo has been a drag. Sometimes I'm feeling like drowning him in water and watch him die. Part of me wants to see him suffer to a point he's been admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Whenever I touch him my anger just bottles up. My hate escalates to another level. I find myself as a devil, how does one change characters in splits seconds. I'm looking at him blowing bubbles inside the bath tub and I have no heart to save him. He is slowly losing consciousness. I wish I could just turn and walk away and leave him to die. I click my tongue pulling him up helping him to sit.

"You know.... I always lie to myself saying I have moved on and I have forgiven you. The truth is I hate you!" I pace up and down with tears occupying my eyes. "All I ever wanted was to be a good wife to you! But what you did, you sucked my soul bit by bit without remorse. Do you have any idea what you did to me? my body?" I ask swallowing a bitter taste in my mouth. I strip my dress off my body and stand in front of his face.

"You see this," I point out my burnt nuna. "This is what you left me with, this is what you did to me! Ntokozo why?...." I roughly put my dress back on and take him out of the bathtub. I help him get dressed with him looking shamefully down. I wheel him to the kitchen to prepare for breakfast. I push his wheelchair next to the dining room table. I'm craving for a green salad with chicken ticker on the side. The aroma itself just make my lungs fill up with excitement. I dish up for my ONLY self. I go settle down on the table with all smiles looking at Ntokozo who was

looking down. He lifts his head and his eyes are bloody red shot. He looks at me without blinking, I careless and decide to munch my salad gulping it down with my favourite juice Daily's guava flavour.

"Ayanda," he calls my name more like whispering. I tilt my head and look at him with nothing but rage. The hate I have for him cannot be compared to anything.

"What!" I snap making him to sigh desperately.

"I'm hungry," he says. I laugh my lungs out until I laughed a bitter laugh with tears veiling in my eyes.

"You are hungry hmmm, you say you hungry. Remember when you forcefully made me eat once a day! Remember that?" I bang the table and he startles. "I use to beg and beg you to stop but you didn't. You continued to break my spirit until I lost all hope in life!" I push the plate towards him, it hit his chest and the plate fell on the floor and scattered into pieces.

"Oops....you should have caught the plate. Agrh! I tend to forget, you are limbless." I laugh getting off the chair. "I will see you midday when I come back from town" I walk away leaving him swimming in his own pool of tears. I need to have a fresh air before I burst in that house. If he thinks his crocodile tears will soften me up he has another thing coming!

I drive out of the yard with a heavy broken heart. I miss my mother but I don't want to be the one to reach out to her first. I need to pass by my sister's grave. I'm sure the grass has grown, I used to clean her grave whenever I got a chance. Approaching where she was buried brought back all the pain. She was buried in my father's house....you know how farm julia people are. I don't recall Eshowe having a cemetery where they bury people, maybe we do have it it's just that I didn't know. I park in front of a locked house, I wonder where is his wife and step children. I step out of my car, it's actually Romeo's car. I walk straight to her grave that was under a mango tree with my father's grave besides her. I keel down not knowing what to say. I have a lot to take out of my chest but I don't know where to begin.

"Sisi nawe baba. Angazi ngithini kunina, my life is a mess. I'm falling apart and no one seems to notice. The only person who cares about me is Romeo. He loved and loves me with all of my scars. Sisi, you gave me a task a heavy one for that matter but it didn't work out the way you wanted. I decided to choose me, I put myself first. I want to be loved by the person who will love me effortlessly. I don't want to be with a man that will be loved by me, I was beginning to love Ntokozo until he became something I didn't recognise. What hurt me the most is I don't think I will ever move on from what I've been through. I don't know....I'm hurt, broken, a sad soul that needs a mother's love. I wish you where here papa." I let my tears fall, I stand up dusting my hands and knees. I looked at there graves crying and walked away feeling a little bit lighter.

After the grave yard I drove straight to town to buy a few items that we don't have in the house. Everyone is looking at me in a weird way. Maybe it's me thinking everyone is looking at me. I push my trolley rushing to the car

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now I regret coming to town. Next time I'll just ask someone to do the groceries for me. I pack the plastics neatly in the boot closing it. I leave the trolley in the parking lot, I know bazoza abafana begigadla to collect it. I just don't have the energy for all those stares I've been getting from people. I drive straight home, I glare at my watch. Shit! I left home around 10 am, right now it's 14:45 pm. Damn I'm sure Ntokozo is dead because of hunger. I drive through the gate and park my car. I step out and take out the groceries from the boot. Upon my arrival I find Ntokozo passed out on the floor. His mouth was next to the meat I made earlier on. My heart broke into pieces but contained myself. I help him up and his shivering, I don't know whether it's fear or his cold. I piggy back him to his bedroom, this dude is heavy. I throw him on the bed and noticed his face turning blue. I did Life Science in school and I just know that Ntokozo is facing Cyanosis, this normally occurs when there's little oxygen in the blood. I lay him on the bed covering him with one of the heaviest blankets. I need to make him soft porridge, that will boost him.

It only takes 30 minutes for the porridge to boil, I add Rama and sugar in it. I sigh looking at him feeling sad and happy. "Open your mouth," I instruct him and he does. I feed him taking my time not wanting to rush him. Thankfully he finished the porridge, "I'll be in the kitchen." I walk out of the room leaving him warm. I sat on the couch and decided to watch television. Everything is just boring, decided to play music. Channel O will keep me busy while I clean this mess I made in the morning. Maroon 5 Memories blast through the speaker's.

Here's to the ones that we got

Cheers to the wish you were here, but you're not

'Cause the drinks bring back all the memories

Of everything we've been through

Toast to the ones here today

Toast to the ones that we lost all the way

'Cause drinks bring back all the memories, memories bring you back

I held on the kitchen counter trying to control my breathing exercises. Everything came back flooding. I tried so hard to bury these memories, memories of losing my father and sister. Memories of being abused in this house. I get hold of the broom and started smashing everything in the kitchen. I'm literally breaking every ounce of the cardboards. I'm not yet satisfied, I madly run to the sitting room area and destroy every appliances in this house hold. I stop and look around of the damage I've caused. I sink down on the floor and let it all out.

"God, do you really hate me that much? What did I do to deserve this? I'm beyond broken and hurt. These memories disturbance create a vivid involuntary memories that cause me to re-experience the same pain again. These traumatic events are very hard to shake. They say stronger connections make stronger memories. "I'll clean this mess up tomorrow." I say to myself. It's already late and I'm emotionally exhausted. I walk to the bedroom and the whole room smell like shit. I block my nose using my hands not wanting to inhale shit.

"You stink." I tell him, the dude is wide awake shying away from my eyes. I ran to the bathroom running a bath for him. "Ntokozo I won't stand you shitting yourself. Umdala mumngaka, isn't it enough that you are crippled? Yes, yes maan." I lick my tongue yanking the blankets off him. How am I going to pick him up? He is shitty as hell. He is softly sobbing making my heart pump in vein.

"Just shut the f\*\*k up! Remember when you molested me and left me all shitty after that! Angizukutetemelwa uwena mina. Uyazinyela ufuna ukuphishwa mina." I chuck helping him off the bed. I drag him to the bathroom and the whole room smells of shit. I will be burning his clothes along with the bedding. I can't wash this with my hand. I pour in a battle bath, now I have to bath him again times two. Ngeke phela ngiyalingwa impela ngisehlane.

After bathing him again for round two, I decided to make him watch soccer. Last time I checked he loved it. I'm looking at him and he is just starting into thin space. I pay no mind to him and continue to clean the mess I made. I wonder which brandy I drank that made me vandalise every bit of appliances in this house!

## MANTOMBELA

Applying this ointment..\*sighs\*..never in her wildest dreams has she ever thought that one day her life would be this miserable. She now regrets her actions more than anything. If only there was a button that you could press to erase all the unwanted images. Making things worse Mhlongo is always away not giving her any attention. She took it upon herself to finally let go and go start her life afresh. But first she needs to see Ntokozo and tell him about the pregnancy. As crippled as he is he needs to man up and take responsibility of his actions. She wouldn't be here if he didn't drill her like a prostitute the whole night. She has finally finished packing all of her belongings, she looks at the place for the last time and wheels her suitcases. She stops on her tracks when she looks at her soon to be ex husband fiddling with the pots.

"WeMamhlongo aku...." He tilts his head and looks at his wife who had her hands full with her luggage's. "Hau, uyahamba yini?" His face furrows confusedly with a blank expression on his face.

"Yebo, ngyabona ukuthi angisadingeki. Ngyoqala impilo Yami kabusha." She says and walks past him with tears blurring her vision. This is not how their marriage suppose to end. They swore in front of people that they will stick with each other through thick and thin, in sickness and in health. "Usalekahle."

Mhlongo takes a deep breath looking at his wife seriously leaving. He still loved her but sometimes love is not enough. She was a nagging woman yes.... But she was and still is a very strong woman. If only she can be honest with him and tell him who is responsible for the baby she's carrying.

"Who is the father of the baby you carrying?" He asks hoping that she answers. She turns to look at him in the eyes.

"Ntokozo Myeni." She answers, Mhlongo's world closed up as the room sprung making him dizzy. He bends down and held on his knees wheezing unable to breathe. "Baba," she rushes towards him handing him a glass of water. He stands straight and gulps down the water.

"Ntokozo," he says softly. He inhales sharply and holds the bridge of his nose. MaNtombela took a few steps back.



"I have to go," she softly says hoping that maybe he will stop her somehow. She wheeled her bags until she was out of his sight. She burst into tears waiting for a taxi. Minutes later a taxi approaches.

"Uyaphi mah?" The taxi conductor asks.

"Elokshini." She answers.

"Gibela oledi." The conductor helps MaNtombela with her bags as she sat down with a heavy heart. The drive was quick which made her heart pounded.

"Ngicela ukusala kuleyamoto epakile kuloya muzi." She points at Ntokozo's house. She gets of the taxi with the help of the conductor.

"Uhambe grand maOledi." The taxi drives off as she looked at it getting out of her sight. This felt so unreal, how will she look at Ntokozo and his family? What if the mother is here? She's not about to humiliate herself in front of everyone. She doesn't even know who is inside the house. She's looking at the expensive car that's parked outside of his house. It's starting to get dark and she's very much afraid of the dark. She forces her body towards the house and knocks at the door. She hears footsteps approaching and held her breathe praying that it's not the mother. The keys unlocks and she wondered if will she be able to tell her son-in-law that she's pregnant with his child? Hearing the news that I'm pregnant was definitely a shocker but I've learnt to control my emotions. I finally don't let finances be my concern. Finances are important but I make sure that it's not the only factor I base my decision on.

God will help me pull through every obstacle in going to face, the humiliation I still have to go through. I'm mentally prepared for the judgement good thing is I am emotionally prepared for it. I decided to take a step beyond and visualise each of the options I have. I know is life is yet to throw stones at me, I'm still yet to face my judgement day. I just want to be far away from everyone probably live in an abound place. Having my peace of mind will make me have a smooth pregnancy.

The door widely opens and there she is....my daugh....Ayanda.

"Ayanda," I softly say, a huge lump stirs up my throat making it hard for me to swallow. My saliva fills up my mouth as she stood there looking at me with no expression on her face. I feel hot and suffocated. Everything became dark instantly, the next thing I know my legs got wobbly making me to lay flat on the ground. MY SISTER'S HUSBAND

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AYANDA

Okay she fell, I place my tiny hands on my tiny self tapping my foot down looking at her.

"Let me know when you done playing hide and seek." I tell her fainted body and walked back into the house leaving the door wide open. These people really think I have time to play. The way I'm so mad my heart feels heavy. I haven't spoken to Romeo the whole of this day. He is the only person/man that makes me feel a little bit alive. Atleast I'm done cleaning the mess I made. I look at Ntokozo who was half dozed on the couch. \*Sighs\* now I have to drag his huge body to the bedroom. Will it be wrong if I leave him here? Honestly I'm tired. Still thinking about him I should consider buying him elderly diapers. That will help since he can't feel anything coming in and out of him. I hate my life right now!

My mind trails back to Romeo and that got me thinking....why did he fall for a woman like me? Even I wounded woman cannot find the answer to the questions I'm asking myself. I just hate him for bringing me her....no he didn't bring me here but he FORCED me to drive myself. Nxa bloody mlungu.

Argh ROMEO! I feel like squeezing his balls. I fish for my phone in-between the couches.

"Found it," I say loudly in excitement. Great it's on 15%, just hearing his voice will calm me down that I know for sure.

"Poonky," ow God that voice, Jesus must come back. Did he really have to give him such a very nice voice?

"Romeo ka Juliet," see what I mean, his voice alone just sends me to could 9. Already I'm thinking of him sucking my cli....ay futhi cut! cut! My mind is playing dirty.

He chucks over the phone, I'm sure he is even smiling. "Fancy face. How are you?" He asks.

I sigh thinking of the long day I had, I don't want to bore him with the details. "Boring, I miss you."

"We talked about this my love. Just hang in there and be a better woman for yourself and myself. I know what I'm doing and trust me you will thank me one day." He says.

"I just don't understand why you would dump me in this place and don't care," I sniff. "You don't even know what I'm going through! I'm hurt Romeo, I can't sleep at night without having any memories. I feel like killing him! His sight makes me go mad."

"I know my lady, that's why I sent you there to deal with the demons you have been bottling up. I want you to channel all of your anger out and close that chapter for good. You can't move on if you are still holding on to your past. I love you, don't even doubt that for a second." He tells me and that just warms my heart.

"Okay I hear you. I promise to deal with whatever demon I'm facing. Once I'm healed I promise to come back and once I come back I will be coming back for good. WeRomeo Osman you are mine and mine alone." I disconnect the call feeling calmer. Now I have to go attend that woman that just decided to fake fainting on the door step. She must just go ask for a position in Scandal she will be a perfect fit. The way she loves drama you would swear she was born in hospital full of drama students!

NTOKOZO

You know when you have reached a breakdown to a breaking point, you know when you have given up in life and ready for anything that comes your way. This is a feeling he gets to feel when he was a monster behind closed. Violence has never solved anything, no woman would like to be treated like sort of used toilet paper. Today's events were a final straw, a straw he never knew existed. His life was way too perfect in those days when his beloved wife was very much alive. If only he could turn back hands of time to wake his wife from the dead, give her a last kiss, get to feel her last breath....it all happened suddenly and way too soon. They were just a happily young married couple enjoying their lives and building a legacy for their kids in the near future. Why does God always have a of lemon twist someone's life and make it a horror.

Looking back to all the mistakes I made, the wrong choices I made I would NOT most definitely be here. Ayanda is a broken woman who needs to be healed. I broke her beyond repair, will she ever heal from this? I was suppose to be a man, husband and a friend, but let all that in vein. I can't even begin to think of all those hurtful doings I did to her. I didn't know that I caused this much damage, her body....there are scars, scars that remain and will always be a constant reminder of what she went through in the hands of a man called Ntokozo Myeni.

"You're mother-in-law is here." She says wheeling the suitcases to the guest room. What is this woman doing here? Doesn't she know when she's not welcomed and needed? I can't even face her after the shameful act I did that night. What a sin he committed. Will God ever accept his spirit after he departs from this world? Minutes later she's walking in looking all tired and drained. I can't even shift of turn to walk away. The shame in me couldn't allow myself to look at her. She throws herself on the couch releasing a huge devastated sigh. I wonder what trouble she brings today.

"Ntokozo," she greets me and I nod my head under the blanket as if she could see me. "Hau weNtokozi ngiyakubingelela." I don't like where this is going.

"Yebo mah," you know that response that tightens your voice making it hard to talk. She chuckles releasing another sigh. I can't even tilt my head a little and look at her.

"Ngizwele kithiwa awusahambi." She says, why would she ask me a rhetorical question. She knows that I don't walk and I don't know whether she's awaiting for a response.

"Yebo,"

"Kuzokunga akukho okibgadluli." She says as if she cares. The only thing that this woman cares about is nobody but herself!

"Hmmm," that's all I manage to say cause honestly I don't have the time to entertain her. Ayanda comes back after some time with a bowl in her hand. Does this woman ever eat real food? Is she a rabbit? I don't understand woman and I will never understand them. Us men love meat and pup with beer on the side and when it comes to them it's just grass after grass. She sits next to me.

"Ntokozo wake up," she shakes me gently. I'm not asleep I'm just pretending to be asleep. "You have to eat." I shoot my eyes open and look at her.

"Me! I can't eat this. I want meat." I really miss meat, it's been long since I last ate it.

"Meat," she looks murderous and I just shrink.

"I will eat," my voice barely came out.

She sighs and places the bowl aside, "okay fine I will make you one....it's so God damn late!" She hisses going to the kitchen and I side smile. I lift my head up looking at the watch on the wall and it's not even 7pm. She really did damage most of my things and I don't blame her. We all handle our anger in different ways. If this is the way of making her heal than so be it. I'm just grateful that she is here with me.

"I'll go lie down." Her mother says already on her feet. Pheww can she leave already even Aya is paying no mind to her. The footsteps disappear and I sigh in relief.

"Let me help you," great she's back. The smell just makes my stomach grumbles in excitement. "I didn't make this, I bought it earlier." She says.

"Thank you." I mutter already being fed. The way she's so tiny I wonder how she manages to pick me up like I'm just a piece of paper. I'm looking at her not shifting my gaze, she's beautiful no lies and that bold head makes her even more prettier.

"What?"

"You beautiful," it slips out of my mouth. If my legs were to carry me, I would have been long gone.

She exhaustedly smiles and continues to feed me. "I know sorry won't change the fact that I made your life a leaving hell. It won't change the fact that you have scars that remain, scars that will always...." I take a deep breath swallowing the meat that's in my mouth. "I'm sorry Ayanda

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please find it in your heart to forgive me." She puts the plate down and covers herself with her hands and bursts into tears. I'm hurt and it pains me that I can't do anything. I can't even lift my own hands up, I feel frustrated and useless!

"Come here," I call her and she shifts more closer to me. "Lay your head on my chest." She does without protesting. I'm just a vegetable that only sleeps on their back till Jesus comes back. If Aya doesn't change my position than I get to sleep like that until she does. I wish I could just hold and squeeze her into a tight but I'm just a dough cake. "I won't lie and say everything happens for a reason. I'm full of anger, pain, sadness of losing a woman that truly meant a lot to me. What I've learnt is to lose someone you love is to alter your life forever....the pains stops eventually but there are new people out there I meet, but the gap never closes. This hole in my heart is a shape of the woman I lost and no one else can fit it." I say, it's an honest truth. I also love Aya but she can never fill the void

in my heart. "You know love is stronger than death even though it can't stop death from happening. But no matter how hard death tries it can't separate people from love. It can't take away our memories either. But at the end love is stronger than death. One day I will reunite with my wife in the next life."

"I'm hurt, she left me all alone. God knew that Nkanyezi is the only source of hope and happiness I once had. But who am I to question God about his decisions." She says, we fall into a comfortable silence just staring at the ceiling board with no words being exchanged. I'm glad we got to talk even though she hasn't forgiven me. I will keep on apologising until she forgives me.

"I'm feeling cold." My feet are freezing, I don't know if I'm going mad or what.

"Let's go to bed." Aya stands up and puts me in her back with my legs dragging behind on the floor. I wonder where she gets all of the strength and energy.

"Lord help me, if being piggy backed is this nice, please I beg don't put my legs into good use." I say and she laughs laying me on the bed.

"Uyahlanza wena, so awufuni ukuzihambela?"

"With me behind your back it's a definitely big no sisi." I tell her and she just smiles shaking her head.

"I'll bring your meds, maybe they also have the effect of you blabbing such nonsense." She walks out of the room and comes back with a pack full of medication. I just hate every bit of it. But I have no choice....shoving them down my throat always leave a bitter taste in my mouth, a taste I hate with passion. Even Grandpa taste much more better than this!

AYANDA

Here I am snuggled next to a man that caused me heartache and pain. I'm focusing on healing and picking myself up as Romeo instructed. It will take time for me to forgive him. With my mother that's another case, I just don't want to see her at this moment.

"What are you thinking about?" Ntokozo startles me, I thought he was asleep. I have my head on his chest drawing unnecessary circles and I'm just finding it hard to sleep.

"Just thinking," I say.

"About?" He asks and I sigh moving away from him.

"My life," I respond honestly. I wonder where will I be if I furthered my studies.

"You can still chase your dreams nothing is stopping you," I don't think I will or can after everything I've been through. I just feel like a total failure strue. "Don't let the devil use you."

"I hear you," I softly say and turn to sleep on my left side.

"Can you turn me please, my back is paining." He pleaded, I groan feeling annoyed, if only he knew how heavy he is he wouldn't be asking for such.

"Look at me and then look at yourself. Who's bigger than who?"

"Siyalingana embhedeni masilele." He says grinning like a stupid mad man.

"Mxm," I smile making him comfortable. "You good?"

"Thank you," he says and we fall into comfortable silence. "Goodnight,"

"Goodnight," I respond closing my eyes. A picture of me and Romeo flashes and I smile thinking of him in-between my legs. That 'I got you' alone makes me weak.

"Can I cuddle you?" He asks now he is beginning to be asking for too much. Sleeping on his chest doesn't change the fact that I still hate him. "Please," he whispers, I exhale audibly. I shift towards him with my back facing him. I get hold of his hand placing it on my waist.

"Thank you," he muttered. If Romeo could find me cuddling with another man all hell will break loose. Guilt strickens as I try to close my eyes but I'm totally failing dismally. My body is having a foreign language I don't like. Ntokozo is now fast asleep, I guess the medication knocked him off. I remove his hand slowly making sure not to wake him up. I get off the room tip toeing out of the room. I'm hungry and I can't stand this hunger. I'm craving for that salad again, I don't know what's up with me and the green leaves but this is definitely not me. I swear I'm being hypnotized by a demon. Who wakes up at this hour to make salad! Not even meat. What a waste of chewing! I look at the time on the digital clock on the wall and sigh feeling defeated and frustrated. Honest truth I'm escaping the constant nightmares I've been having. Everytime I close my eyes I find myself sinking back....the pains, the pleads and cries of me are just too much to handle. I drop the fork on the counter dropping a few tears. Everything is just hard, why can't I have a normal like every other person? Loosing your loved ones is better than the feeling I'm feeling right now. I wipe the tears with the back of my hand containing myself but I fail, everything just floods back. I shut my eyes and cried my heart out. Lord please take me I can't take any of this. The situation I'm facing is just beyond me!

ROMEO

Whoever is stealing from me knows how I operate and which contacts I deal with. Looks like he is not alone there is someone who is closer to me. I suspected Steven but the guys did a background check on him and his clean. This person knows every move of mines. He dines with the people I dine with.....I just believe that he is not far from me.

"Manje awume grand sharp they are marketing you?" Spikes asks Steven and Romeo who just looked at him dumbfounded.



"What are you talking about?" Romeo asks in total confusion. Sanele sighs defeatedly looking at his brother. He now regrets coming with him instead of Zenzele!

"Hehehe mlungu do you want to know why I don't trust stairs, because they are always up to something. I don't even trust my 8 children. They are also thieves. Can you believe Ntwenhle stole cheese yesterday." Spikes clicks his tongue thinking of the crèche he has. He will forever be grateful to have a woman like Blessing in his life.

"He meant they are pilfering from you." Sanele tells Romeo.

"I didn't say paraffin I recommendedly said...."

"Spikes please keep quite." Sanele begs him.

"So what's the way forward? I just want to know who is stealing from me. My diamonds are missing and the cash is not popping in." Romeo sounds desperate. If only he knew who is stealing from him things would have been much more easier.

"Give us two days to look into it."

Romeo sighs leaning back on his chair. Some how he trusts them, even though the crazy one is always talking non-stop, he definitely has a running mouth. They shook hands agreeing to the conclusion of the day.

"By the way stone is away on business he will be back later today." Sanele,

"As long as this gets sorted I will be more than pleased." Romeo says looking at Sanele with all hope.

"You know Neil Armstrong once said, the first restaurant to open on the moon had great food but no atmosphere." The all look at each other and cracked into laughter.

"We are here talking business and diamonds Wena you talking about space. I swear your father's sperms went missing when he created you. I sometimes find it hard to believe that we are related. No Myeza behaves like this."

"It's the power of pleasure. Real men behave like an octopus Sanele, but you wouldn't understand because you are she." What a day to end the night! MANTOMBELA

I heard her, she cried all night long and I was here locked inside this room. I can't even bring myself to be in front of her presence. Why is regretful so painful?

The pain of regret can result in refocusing and taking corrective action or pursuing a new path. Just as you would with other people, after saying you are sorry you must ask to be forgiven. There is no special prayer you have to pray to earn forgiveness from God. All you have to do is ask him to forgive you, through Jesus Christ, and believe that he will forgive you. My inner self screams. Something in me says I should just kneel down and pray to God.

"1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Forgive me ow Lord for the sins I have committed. The hearts that I've broke and forgive me for breaking my own marriage. I surrender myself to you as I am. I come with nothing but a dirty soul. Cleanse me dear father and wipe away all the bad energy surrounding me. Amen." Meditation prayer is different from praise, and praise is different from praying for others. When you pray, you begin to see the good in your situation. All the worry and panic disappears, because God will do everything to make the end of the story one to make you joyful and not miserable. Makes me feel not afraid of death anymore. Feel of relief when I'm done with a prayer. That's how I feel right now.

It's 10 am in the morning and I'm still in bed, I don't even want to face any of them. I did a deep thinking yesterday....and I decided to keep it a secret. It hurts to keep secrets but I have no choice. I don't want to hurt my daughter's feelings which I have already broke in the past. By keeping something this big, I'm trying protect my reputation and my relationships with close others. Yet, when people choose to keep secrets, they run the risk of feel isolated from other people. Will I also feel isolated. Maybe I'm thinking deep into this. I hope I will be able to take it with me to the grave. I slowly get off the bed, there's no use of me hiding in here. I have to face them one way or another. Having a bath first will do preparing for my day.

AYANDA

Done with the chores for the day. Can't wait to relax my body in a warm bubble bath sipping my cold Daly's guava juice. The sun is blazing hot, kuyasho ukuthi ubusika sebuphelile. I wish I could walk around naked but I can't show off my scars now can we? I'm glued on the television watching channel 135 TLC - I Didn't Know I Was Pregnant.

Do these things really happen. I'm looking at them sharing lies to the world wild. I mean who doesn't get to feel their baby kicks? Here I am still watching their annoying program full of China lies.

"I felt a little ill. Not knowing why I'm so queasy, I always had excruciating stomach pains. So one day the pains were so unbearable to a point I felt like dying. So my husband calls for an ambulance and shortly after it arrives, I gave birth on my way to the hospital -- to a baby that I never knew I was pregnant with," the woman on the television explains. I laugh my lungs out imaging this whole pathetic act. Why not just cast a movie straight instead of filling us babukeli with absolutely....I don't even want to bash their hard earned work. Nabo bazenzela imali yabo, I wish they could just call me. I will actually be a perfect fit for this position. Imagine me pretending to be in labour.

"Seniyashaya shaya manje ngeke," I laugh my balls out. My phone chimes noiselessly making me to groan in annoyance. Who the hell is calling me? I grab my phone from the coffee table and answer it with even checking who's calling me.

"What," I say still looking at the TV.

"Is that the way to greet you future husband Fancy Face?" His voice makes me to sit up straight in full speed.

"Mlungu," I squeal in excitement turning the down volume from the television.

"If you ever answer your phone like that ever again....even God himself won't be accountable for my actions." Says a man who always threatens me but action dololo.

"Yea right, how are the kids? How's Nana doing?" I miss them no lies especially Ramona with her annoying questions. I imagine being asked why do birds fly, like really.

"They all fine we just miss you." He sounds very down and I wonder why.

"You are not the Mlungu I know, so what's bothering you?" I ask hoping that maybe he will open up and tell me.

He sighs and I can tell he is depressed.

"I still haven't found the culprit. I'm losing a lot of money Aya and I don't know what to do."

I think for a second, "Do you have anyone in mind?" I ask.

"At first I suspected Steven but turns out he's clean."

"What about the creepy guy that once came into the house the time you were in HOSPITAL?" He still doesn't like to tell me where he was the time he lied and said he was hospitalized. The line goes quiet for a second.

"Shit! Genaro!" The line goes disconnected leaving me in total shock. Well I guess case closed. On a second thought I should study Criminology cause damn I've just solved a case without any resources. Ain't I a bad b\*\*ch!

"Ayanda," oh hell no, I forgot we have the devil's advocate herself in the house. She's even right behind me. She's not even respecting my ancestors!

"Yes," I don't even want to look at her. Part of me yearns for her love and another part of me really hates that she never cared about me when I needed her the most.

"Can we talk," hehehe is she serious. Ngizokengizwe namhlanje.

"About what cause the last time I checked we had nothing to talk about." I cringe my face still looking at the same spot. She comes around and sits on the couch opposite me and looks at me with begging eyes. I shift my gaze giving her my full attention. I wanna hear what she wants to say to me. This would be definitely no fun at all.

"I know you hate me right now and I don't blame you. I failed you and I let the devil get in me." I scoff after just hearing her putting all of her blames in poor Satan. I'm sure wherever he is his ears are burning in itchiness. "I know I wasn't the best ideal mother for you but...." I cut her short already fuming in anger.

"You say you were not the BEST IDEAL mother but you were always there and ideal for Nkanyezi. Her wrongs were always perfect right in front of your eyes. I know a lot of things but I rather let God deal with you in the most cruel way." I click my tongue flipping the channels non-stop.

"I know and that is why I want to correct my wrongs whilst I'm still alive. How can I repair this relationship? In spite of all of my efforts to be perfect, I'm not perfect. I'm not a perfect parent. But I still feel compelled to have a mother and a daughter relationship. I'm sorry that I treated you differently when you need me the most."

"You know what breaks my heart, is that you were never there, you never cared

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you treated me like I didn't exist. Do you want to know the reason of me turning into alcohol...it's because of you. You made me find comfort in alcohol because when you never catered for my feelings no matter how much I would beg you. Alcohol was the only source of my happiness but you were too blind to see that! I'm sure at some point you even regretted giving birth to me. I'm still hurting and destroyed on the inside. Ntokozo killed me but you told me to say so that I can be broken more! I hate you with everything in me!" I scream and stormed out of the sitting room. I can't stand her lies even her apology is not even sincere.

#### MANTOMBELA

I will not give up on her, she's now the only daughter I'm left with. So Ntokozo really did damage my poor baby. I drop a few tears feeling ashamed of neglecting my baby. What kind of a mother neglects her own child. If only I had money I would have booked a psychologist for her. I don't like the hate that she has in her eyes. It's all fire, fire that can cause danger. I now believe that she was never happy and it's all because of me a woman who calls herself a mother. Growing up I was always treated as an egg, I still remember those events vividly. A maternal bond is the relationship between a mother and her child. I always had that relationship with my mother. Even if I made mistakes I was always right in front of her eyes. There were eight of us but my mother made sure that she loved us equally. When parents accept, love, and show affection to their children, even when they make mistakes or fall short of expectations, this is unconditional love. In other words, it is a form of love with no strings attached. Therefore, parents love their children for who they are, no matter what. Love is not a static emotion, you have to nurture it for it to thrive. If a mother and her child do not nurture their bond, it will wither away over time. Such a bond being broken is downright painful to watch, but it does happen. I'm the cause of our broken relationship. I'm put the blame all on me.

AYANDA

Changing An adult diaper without assistance is very tiring. It would have been better if Ntokozo felt something or anything but all of his feelings and veins are numb. He looks ashamed, broken and disgusted. I'm more disgusted by the amount of shit I'm looking at. It smells like a rotten egg. I want to puke so badly.... Imagine going one on one with someone's kak.

"Let me get the wipes," I get off the bed, he made a mess for the whole nation. He doesn't eat much but the way he poops terrifies me.

I gently ease him onto his side, facing away from me. I don't even want to see nor look at his face. I wonder if would he have done the same if it was me. I guide him by his hips. Once on his side, I gently bend his knees towards his chest. Rolled the diaper inwards while pulling it back. I gently wipe him using Johnson and Johnson baby wipes. Atleast he will not smell that bad. I fold the diaper shaping it into a small size disposing it in a plastic. I need to spray air freshener to ease the smell.

"Done, I'm going to dispose these than make you food." I tell him and he looks down looking embarrassed. I walk out of the room not wanting to get things awkward.

#19

NTOKOZO

Ayanda is always crying in her sleep, she mumbles, fights. "I'm sorry you got scared," are the only words I could mutter since I can't even give her a hug and assure her that everything will be fine. I'm the one who put her in this position in the first place. Kuze kwasa ngibheke ngawomabili with a broken heart. I once heard that she is caused by traumatic events, nightmares are by death of a loved one, sexual abuse, or a car accident can also cause vivid dreams. It makes all sense, Ayanda is suffering along and she's hiding her pain.

"Still awake?" She takes a sit next to me and applies lotion on the scars on her body. Some scars are starting to fade away. There's only one thing that I can't look at. Her private part....I can't believe I did so much damage to her.

"Couldn't sleep," I can't bring myself to say I'm hurting because of the constant nightmares she's been having.

"Okay, I'll run you a bath. Today we starting the session the doctor recommended." Argh! What's the use cause I can't bloody walk! "Don't give me that look, you will do it whether you like it or not!" She's mad, if she's mad I decide to be quite and let her be.

"Okay," that's all I manage to say. I don't want to press the wrong buttons, she really did have a rough night.

"Learning to walk again is hard--the hardest thing I've ever had to do," I say with my eyes burning in tears. It's like I'm walking in thorns full of needlessness.

"You getting there." Ayanda assures me but it's just hard.

"As long as I'm not damaging anything, I would push myself to get back on my feet. I have things I needed to do." I put myself in positive mode. I'm floating in the swimming pool juggling with my feet like I'm shoving a bicycle with Ayanda helping from the back making sure I don't drown.

"I'm letting go of you," she slowly let go of me but I drown before I could even do anything. "Ntokozo don't be lazy maan!" She's mad I don't want to press any of her buttons. She helps me start the process all over again supporting me. "There go," I shove my legs like a baby. I'm floating and it's very relaxing.

"I'm doing it!" I scream in excitement. Everything in me feels lighter, funny enough I can move my hands underneath the water. Having a pool really did me good even though I don't even use it. Nkanyezi was the madam of this area.

"You did it!" Ayanda screams in excitement. I swim alone across the pool and I felt really good like I accomplished something. She wraps her tiny hands around my waist giving me a hug. For a moment I found myself very much attracted towards her. I bend my head a little and she lifts her head up looking at me. Her eyes are cold no sign of happiness. I bend a bit further down towards her lips. Our lips touch with our tongues tangling against each other. Her mouth is warm and slippery. We break the kiss and suddenly she avoids eye contact. She gaps stepping backwards looking down. Damn my member is up but I feel nothing.

"Do you feel anything?" She points at my awake dick. I laugh shaking my head in amusement. She looks so innocent and I just had to break her.

"No, I don't know how's that even possible." I say,

"Okay," she pulls me out of the water which was a very one hell of a big struggling but she managed. "If I don't die today than ahhh I'm strong." I like her sense of humour. If only I gave her a chance maybe we would be far in life.

After taking a bath we stayed in bed. I was exhausted and she was worse than any exhaustion you could ever find.

"Do you think I will ever walk again?" I find myself asking with a very much concern.

"You know exercise can help you with paralysis of your lower body,

the timing of recovery will vary from you as an individual on how you are invested in this. If you want to walk I again I believe you can if only you can put your mind into it."

"Thank you,"

"For what?" She furrows her face looking at me.



"For being here after everything I did to you. I'm not sure if I can ever make up for what I did to you but believe me, it haunts me everyday. I am not perfect nor do I pretend to be, but what I do know is, if I had the chance to do everything over again, I would have hugged you instead of hurting you. See, when I saw you I saw a light so bright that I couldn't ignore. You, in all your brilliance made me want to be as close to you as possible. I wanted to know you. I wanted to be with you. I wanted all of these things and I had no clue how to get them and I didn't think I deserved them. I lashed out at you because I thought you would never see me the way I see you. I hurt you because I was hurting. I wanted to show you love but I don't know how to give that." I pour my heart out.

"So I was your escape tool?" Her disappointment in her voice says it all.

"What happened had nothing to do with you. You did nothing wrong. I know my words were like lashes to you. Please let it go. They meant nothing. Everything I said was really how I felt about myself. I wanted you to feel what I was feeling. I wanted you to be like me because I know I could never be like you. I don't want to be alone in this pain. I tried to drag you with me."

"I'm still hurt and I'm far from healing. You really did hurt me Ntokozo and I don't know if I will ever forgive you." She sniffs.

"I know and I apologize. I won't stop apologizing until you forgive me. Even if it means eating your poop I would trust. That's how desperate I am."

"Oy time will tell. I'm gonna go make some snacks for us." She gets out of the bed and I watch her As she walks out of the room. It's time I make things right and be a man she always wished for.

ROMERO

"Stella can you come to my office," I drop the phone. I'm trying so hard not to think of the possibilities of Genaro being the thief. Stella comes in looking all hot but she's not my type. "Cancel all my meetings for the day." I say already packing my things. I have an appointment with the guys.

"Is that all?" I can't believe that she's still here.

"Yes," I answer in dismissive mode.

"Okay

" she walks out. I can see where the trouble is, it's me looking at her all the time makes her think that I have the hearts for her. I chuck thinking about it, shame she reminds me of my late wife.

Arriving at a taxi rank took me a couple of minutes. They preferred we meet in a public place cause they have enemies all over. Arriving I find the talkative brother with a woman who I assume is the sister. Damn she's very much pregnant and fat too. Not that I'm picking up on her it's just that I've never seen a fat person pregnant.

"Mlungwana," he acknowledges my presence and I nod my head responding back. "This way, go home teddy bear, I'll go haunting for a rhino's head I promise." He smiles a mischievous smile looking at this woman.

"Okay," she laughs and walks away.

"My wife is always stupid when pregnant. Who haunts for a rhino's head." He shakes his head smiling. I assume today he will be serious about the matter. I follow him behind whilst his whistling. This champ walks like the world owes him something. I'm even finding it hard to believe that he is married. "You can take a seat." He points out the couch that's in a fancy office. It's small but quite cosy. A man with dreadlocks approaches talking with the phone, he looks like those serious kind of men who don't take bullshit. Look at me analysing another man, God forbid!

"Yes buttercup....love you more," he disconnects the call and turns to look at me.

"We meet again." He says and I'm taken back at what he just said. I've never met him before, point of correction I've never met either of them.

"Sorry, but I think you mistaken me for another person." I say.

"Stone doesn't ring a bell." Shit! How come I don't recognise him.

"Thee Stone?" I ask for confirmation.

"What's up?" He asks making his way to me. We fist bump signifying the man's handshake. Me and Anathi used to be one of the most troublesome kids in school. We were close in primary school until we went to the same high school together. We used to call ourselves Stone and Ginger, sounds pathetic I know right.

"Were have you been all these years?" We lost contact when he moved to Durban with his family. I used to steal food for him and his family from home. My mother wouldn't notice because she was hardly home and never cooked. Until one faithful day I was caught with a bag full of tin stuff everything went South. I got the most traumatic hiding of my life but still continued to steal for his family regardless the punishment I would face the following day.

"Durban, but recently moved this side in Empangeni. My mother got tired of the city life. Whiskey?"

"Ow hell yea," plus it's my favourite.

"So how's everyone?"

"They all good, Sanele was amused that you can't recognise him."

"His is all grown up man and he has changed alot. Even you....you are not the same Anathi I know." I gulp down the bitter taste of the whiskey.

"It's life, I heard that your goons are stealing from you." He says looking at me sharply.

"Yeap and this person steals a huge some of money including the diamonds." I lean back crossing my legs. He takes out an envelope and pushes it towards me.

"Have a look,"

I take the envelope stripping it open. I get the shock of my life. "Steven?" A person whom I trusted with my entire life backstabs me like this.

"He is working for Genaro and works for you at the same time. Your family is not safe because he knows every information about your ins and outs, who you dine with and your associates. I would say eliminate him but there's a person here who is in danger." He takes out another envelope.

"Not my Fancy Face," I bang the table in frustration. "How come I didn't see this? So Steven sold me out, not only me but my family including." I want to cry so bad. I trusted Steven with everything in me.

"No time to mop around and cry. First things first. Move your mother and your kids somewhere safe and come up with a plan to protect your woman."

"I can't believe this." Indeed I can't. I'm still finding it hard to believe everything. Steven out of all people. My phone chimes and the devil himself is calling.

"If it's him don't pick it up, he is trying to locate you. Just switch it off." Anathi commands and I do as he says with no questions asked. "It's better to have an enemy who slaps you in the face than a friend who stabs you in the back." I'm sitting there with my heart out pumping in anger and fear. Why would Steven do me like this? It's true when they say fake friends don't usually appear overnight.

"Betrayal brings up a lot of emotions for me. When I put my trust in someone, I expect them to honour that trust. I don't just throw my trust around like it's nothing, and you probably don't, either. When I can call someone a friend, then I know my secrets are safe with them. But when I'm betrayed by a friend, I feel a lot of emotions at once. I feel hurt that someone I thought cared about me could turn around and stab me in the back. I feel mad at myself for opening up to someone so easily (even if it wasn't my fault and wasn't as easy as I think). I feel lost because now I've lost someone I thought was my friend." I'm beyond hurt no lies.

"Word of advise, never befriend anyone in this existing life other than me. We lost contact yes but our friendship still stands. What is your next move?"

"I sit and wait." I tell him, I don't have any plan right now my mind is totally blank.

"Romeo when did you become a sissy. Where is the strong thief friend I once had? there to offer other people advice, comfort, support, and a helping hand when needed.... The strong friend is one who rarely talks about the moments when they are sad. I want that guy who wasn't afraid of anything. Use your mind and follow your guts. If you need help I will be there to support you every step of the way. Just tell what you need and I will have it prepared."

I keep quite for a second. He is right I wasn't this weak before I don't know what happened to me. "Keeping my family safe first and going for the diamonds that belong to me!"

AYANDA

I decided to drive around relaxing my body and mind. Having my mother around weighs me completely down. Worstly I kissed Ntokozo unintentionally and I feel sick about it. Instead of me moving forward I'm taking five steps back with no progress. On the way I bought hot wings, I just feel like having it. I've been having these weird awful smells I don't even know where they come from. Romeo and I didn't use protection and I believe I might be pregnant but I might never know until I take the test right. I make a U-turn heading to the pharmacy. Luckily it's not full and the sun isn't that bad like this morning.

"Hello how can I help you?" The sales assistant asks me with a bubbly happy face.

"Can I have two pregnancy test." I say biting my nails. She laughs looking at my facial expression.

"Don't worry once she's here you will love her beyond anything." She tells me and I'm very much afraid. Imagine having a mlungu child. She hands me two pregnancy test and wishes me luck. I walk out and I feel like I'm being followed or something but I brush that thought off. As I'm driving I'm seeing this black car that has not number plate on it and my heart skips a beat. This car is the exact same car that is always parked across Ntokozo's houses ever blessed day. I press the accelerator and the car behind me moves faster following me behind.

He intentionally hits the back of the car pushing the car forward. Ow God I can't die now! Please be with me. #20

AYANDA

"Stay calm Ayanda and be in control of your fears...." I don't want to think the worst. I press on the accelerator driving fast as I could.

I decided to take a detour to confuse my follower.... Going somewhere public, I'm hundred percent sure that he or they won't kidnap me in front of the police. I park my car in front of the police station and jumped off running inside the station. I turn to look back the follower as his car passes by. I sigh in relief, I know I'm not safe but I have to report this issue.

"Sanibona, I'm here to open a case." I tell one of the police officers who was at the front desk.

"Hlala odabeni Sisi, I don't have the whole day." Cocky as much, I thought to myself.

"There's a car that has been following me around. Sometimes I could see the car parked across from where I live." I lay out my issue.

"Do you know that car?" Is that a trick question? I don't know the bloody God damn car!

"No I don't,"

"Number plate?" He flickers with the pen on his hand.

"It doesn't have one." I look so stupid right now.

"WeShenge, usisi unestalker." They all laugh out loud. "Wesisi, once you have full information come back to us. We can't waste government resources for people being chased away by their psychopaths so cold boyfriend. Shift ngyasebenza la. Next!" I'm dumbfounded, if I say I'm hurt will be an understatement, I'm beyond embarrassed. I walk back to my car with a tale in-between my legs. I try Romeo's phone and there's no success. Maybe he is in a meeting or something. I drive back home feeling defeated and shaken. I can't believe South African police services would do me like this. It's true when they say you gotta have connections if you want to make your case stronger. No wonder our youth is dying left right and centre. It's because of the poor justice and it has been proven and confirmed that sometimes handing izinkinga kwezomthetho you basically waste your precious time. No wonder some people take matters into their own hands and I don't blame them. All the way I've been driving looking over my shoulder but luckily I went home safe and sound. Romeo's phone is still not going through and I'm starting to

get worried. Let me park this car in the garage for security purposes. I find mum arguing noNtokozo and what ever it is sounds serious.

"Sanibona," they both get startled by my presence, I don't have the energy for them.

"Your food is in the microwave." MaNtombela tells me and I just look at her astonished. When did she start serving me? To remember correctly she has never had the time to cook for me. So what changed?

"So I could die, no thank you I still want to leave." I head to the upstairs room. There's nothing that I need now other than privacy.

I'm sitting patiently waiting for the results and surprisingly they both come back negative. I've never been so confused in this my entire life. That means I no longer able to bare any kids. I mean Romeo's sperm produce a photocopy of him which means he his beyond healthy. After loosing my pregnancy I assured myself that I was yet again pregnant but turns out to be a faults alarm. I sit down on the toilet sit thinking of my possible situation of being barren.

"Ow God, why do I have to go through the worst situation possible?" I cry, I have that urge of braking something. I close my eyes calming myself down until I was fully calm. God remember me as you remember everyone who cries to you. Why do I have to go through the worst situation possible as eve!

It's time for Ayanda's meds and I don't want him to see me braking. I act so strong infront of his eyes but truth be told I'm far from healing. Scars and wounds are way too deep for me. I look at myself in the mirror and my eyes are bloody red shot. I have bigger issues to deal with, for instance that car.... I sigh stepping out of the room finding Ntokozo alone.

"Where's your friend?" I settle on the couch opposite him.

"Gone to her room." I nod my head, I'm just glad she's not infront of my face throwing her weight around.

"Okay, it's time for your medication." I'm already placing the tables out of its container.

"Ngathi maningi nje namhlanje." Ntokozo complains and indeed the tables are not the usual dosage. "Are you okay? If this is about the kiss I'm sorry for...."

"It's not about the kiss. I was be....never mind I don't want to talk about it." I don't want to share every little detail I go through. If only I knew who is following me and why? Last time I checked in had no enemies, I was a friendly bubbly person who helped where I'm needed.

"Are you sure you're okay?" His starting to annoy me with his sudden change of concernity.

"For God dammit! I said I'm okay! Which part don't you understand." I snap. "I'm sorry I didn't mean to."

"It's okay, I'm sorry." He shrinks back looking hurt. I don't have time nursing his heart I'm also hurt. If only Romeo was here with me I would have known that I'm safe in every way possible without any doubt.

MANTOMBELA

That was a close one, I don't know whether she heard us or not. My chest was burning I couldn't hold the secret any longer. I didn't want to die and leave my kids to suffer because of a secret I decided to keep. But Ntokozo surprisingly surprised me with his reaction. I expected him to burst, lash out, snap but he did nothing of those. He told me that he would accept the baby if it's truly his. The conversation was very intense when Ayanda walked in on us. Tomorrow I'm starting my antenatal, I'm two months pregnant and I've been delaying to go, but the doctor told me and advised me that I have to visit the doctor frequently due to my high risk pregnancy. But I'm here stressing myself. If this is the price I got to pay for not catering for my daughter than so be it. I accept my sins as they are. I wonder what will Ayanda say when she gets to learn that I'm pregnant and not only that. I'm pregnant with my son-in-law's child. Everything is just completely messed up.

Something in me said I must pray deeply to the Lord. I sit up straight closing my eyes taking a deep breath:-



"Loving God, I pray that you will comfort me in my suffering, lend skill to the hands of my healers, and bless the means used for my cure. Give me such confidence in the power of your grace, that even when I am afraid, I put my whole trust in you; through our Saviour Jesus Christ. I bring my daughter forward Lord, I come to you today to pray for my daughter and companions on this earth. I pray that you give them the strength to overcome their battles as well as the insight to help us overcome ours. Amen." I remove the blankets and stand up feeling a bit lighter. I want Ayanda to be a better person, to be a woman who loves herself through whatever obstacle she's facing. I pray that one day she forgives me so we can move on from this.

Sometimes I find myself having an urge to call Mhlongo but my pride pulls me backwards. I'm looking at his numbers on my bhopopo phone having that thing that's totally pulling me into calling him. I press ok and it rings for a couple of times before he picked up breathing heavily.

"MaNtombela," he still respects me and I thank that.

"Baba," I pause for a minute not knowing what to say. I love my husband no lies. "Am I disturbing you?" He doesn't respond

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but the breathings are there getting intenser by the minute.

"Ahhh," I heard that, that's how he groans when he is emptying his empty packets of seeds. So I called him and he has the audacity to let me listen to his love session. I disconnect the call without wanting to hear anymore of what I've just heard. I'm sad and hurt, I thought that maybe we could fix our marriage and fight for what's left but I guess I was wrong he has already replaced me. I know I'm the one who wronged him but I'm trying so hard to rebuild what we've lost and he is not even bothered meeting me halfway. I have to admit my life and marriage is over. I just have to focus on my life, and the human I'm carrying. And on another hand I'm fighting the battle of winning my daughter back. Mhlongo can go to hell for all I care. Maybe serving him with the divorce papers will be a first step to forgetting about him if that's ever going to happen. I need to do me and the baby I'm carrying.

I find Ayanda already in the kitchen making pancakes humming. Her character changes like a weather. Since she's in a good mood I'll just let her be I don't want to be the reason for her foul mood.

"Good morning," I say walking past her to get a glass of milk.

"Sure," she doesn't even look at me and that hurts. I want us to hug, talk, chat, laugh and fight like every mother and daughter out there. I want us to have a relationship. My head feels light headed. All of a sudden I'm seeing double of what I'm looking at. My knees get weak and wobbly. The glass I have in my hand slips and broke into pieces. I can't hold on any longer. I fall on my knees and everything became dark.

AYANDA

Great, just great now she wants to die on me and apparently tell the whole world how much of a bad daughter I am. Mxm she will wake up like the last time. I continue to make breakfast for me and Ntokozo without care. Call me cold hearted, that's definitely the least of my worries. Romeo's phone still takes me straight to voicemail, the landline no one picks up. But something very weird happened yesterday, when I called Steven picked up and said they went on vacation that's why his phone is off. Which I find it very odd. So what is he doing in his house if the family went on vacation? Romeo would have updated me right? I wanted to tell him so bad about me being followed but something in me said I should not do so. Steven has always had that creepy look on him, I once told Romeo about but he brushed it off and told me I'm being dramatic over nothing. I'm definitely sure that there is something wrong...I hope the kids are okay wherever they are. I've signed up for the boxing classes and I can't wait to begin. By 14:00 pm sharp I will be at the door step waiting to kick some ass. I just feel so exited.

"Breakfast is ready," I tell Ntokozo who was looking at the television, soccer to be precise.

"Thank you." He says not looking at me and I know why. He feels some kind of sacred to be around me but I won't apologize for lashing out. He made me like this now he should man up and stop whining!

"Your mother-in-law fainted again in the kitchen." I stuff myself with the pancakes and feeding him on the other hand.

"Fainted?" He sounds concerned and I'm not.

"If she thinks I will carry her than she has another thing coming." I say without care. I'm just hating this woman in everything in me.

"What if she is sick?"

"Well then good riddance to rubbish. How I wish she could die." I click my tongue with Ntokozo looking at him unbelievably. "Don't look at me like that, people change you for the worst. I wasn't this cold hearted growing up. Everyone has a breaking limit point and guess what I've reached mine and no one is liking it one bit."

"I'm not blaming you Aya, but atleast check out if she's fine and the rest will follow." Did he really just tell me what to do, I don't believe this at all. I walk out of the room going to the kitchen feeling vivid. I stop on my tracks when I see her white dress stained with blood. Maybe she is really sick, not because she is fainting this drastically just because of my presence. I sigh lifting her dress up. What if she dead. She can't die in this house now can she? I ran back this the room where Ntokozo is.

"I'm sending her to the hospital. Will you be okay being alone?" I'm panicking.

"I will be fine. You've bathe me, fed me and took my meds. I'm all good. Just don't go for too long." He says, I nod my head in agreement. I cover him with a blanket cause I know he is always cold.

"I will be back," I run out, how will I put this woman in a car again. She's twice my size, tall and fat. Miss huge large fainter. Now I have to drag her to the car.

I turn her around putting all my effort in. "Damn woman," I pant wiping the sweat off my face. I put my hands underneath her arms and drag her out of the room leaving the trails of blood behind. I'll wipe that later, atleast it's tiles. I make her lean on my legs while I open the back door. Now I have to come up with a strategy to pick her up.

"Ey Jesus umuntu aqulekele mina la. Angazi uxhoshwe yini emzini wakho." I say to myself sounding all mad. I turn to face her holding her head so she won't fall backwards. I pull her legs towards her chest and pull her using my last energy. I fart mistakenly due to the pressure I'm forcing on my body. Her whole weight is hanging over my shoulder and I swear I felt my spinal cord brake a little. I forcefully push her into the backseat and she falls on her back hitting her head.

"Mxm you won't feel pain angithi uqulekile." Now the problem is her legs are hanging out and I can't put them in. What do I do now? I pull her legs up closing the door. Her legs are spread wide open leaning against the window. I laugh at the scene I've just made. "Jah Neh." I hold my aching back as I flinch in pain. I shake my head and drove off.

I don't have the numbers of her husband cause if I did I would have called him along time ago to come sort out his sick wife. Angithi bathi in sickness and in health. I don't have the time to help someone who didn't give a fuck about me. I'm looking at the doctor who standing in front of me.

"We managed to save the baby an...."

"Woah, baby? What baby?" I'm sure he doesn't have MaNtombela's file this one. How can someone who is about to turn 50 be pregnant?

"Yes, she is 8 weeks and 5 days pregnant. That's what the results say." My chest is beating abnormally, so she was still doing the deed. Didn't she reach that stage of menopause or something?

"Wow," that's all I can manage to say at this point. But she doesn't look like someone who is pregnant. Shouldn't she be happy? "So why was she bleeding?" I ask.

"Her high blood pressure was very high but we managed to stabilize her. We will keep her for further observations."

"Keep her and do what you do best." My heart dances a victory dance. I wonder if will she be able to love the child she's carrying. I didn't want to hear anymore of the news cause honestly they bored me to death. I can't wait to share the news with Ntokozo.

"Hehe, MaNtombela is pregnant like preggies. Wonders shall never end shame." I shake my head in disbelief.

I'm constantly checking over my shoulder and thankfully there is no one following me behind. I'm driving as fast as I can because I'm still scared. Luckily I'm home safe and sound. I find Ntokozo still wide awake.

"Nginomgosi," he looks at me with a nervous smile.

"What happened."

"MaNtombela is pregnant." I hold my waist still finding the news hard to believe. "I didn't know that Mhlongo had it in him. So they waited all these years to have a child. Shuuuu." I clap my hands once still laughing. I sit down on the couch with my weak knees. "I wonder if her husband Knows." I turn to look at Ntokozo who was biting his inner cheek. He does that when he's stressed. "What's eating you." He looks puzzled.

"Who? me? Nothing." He doesn't sound sure of his response and I won't force anyone to talk if they don't want to talk.

"Okay, I have to prepare for my gym lessons." I walk out leaving him in thinking mode. I wonder what's up with him. After I found them having an intense conversation with MaNtombela he hasn't been the same again. I wonder what was that all about, but for sure it's something big and huge. Where there's MaNtombela there's fire on the mountain. I don't trust her next to me and I don't think I will ever. Kazi izozala nkonomi! #21

AYANDA

Romeo is really stressing me out. I am now convinced that he no longer needs me or maybe he blocked me? I try so hard not to think about him and push the day through. Another thing MaNtombela's pregnancy is really bugging me. Not that I care about her, I don't even know uphuma nini and quite frankly I don't care shame. I wonder how she will be able to take care of the baby alone cause mina Ayanda Ntombela angizi shame nakancane. Konake ukukhanula uzokwazi? Ay bandla, kuyasinda kuyehlela.

My boxing lessons....I'm yet to find out about it. I'm so excited about and I can't wait.

ROMEO

"Romeo, I thought you were past this life. For how long are we going to go into hiding?" My mother hates my hustle more than anything but hey it brings in more money than my own company that deals with Logistics. Rose made me quit my diamond business and build a legacy with her. At first I was reluctant but we pulled through. Honest truth I don't love what I'm doing I was just pleasing my wife. Talking about things on papers is not my style.

But hustling and seeking where danger is definitely my kind of lifestyle. It makes me a man but I had to think of my family the time I resigned and swore never to get back to that life ever again. But here I am playing hide and seek with the person I thought was my friend. I can't even call Poonky to check up on her. I swear if she has any single scratch on her....Steven will wish he never messed with me!

"But it brings me in more money mama."

"In the expense of our lives!" She runs out of breath, she keeps quite and glares at me dangerously. I don't fighting with my mother but sometimes she pushes me to the limit.

"No ma!" I rub my face in frustration. She's getting better everyday and I don't want to be the one who sends her back to that hell hole. I want her to fully recover.

"If something ever happens to Aya I swear I will have those pit-bulls eat you alive. I don't care whether you my son or not!" She walks away leaving me shocked. I never knew that one day my mother will threaten to call the dogs upon me. It's kind of funny how I really missed being scolded at. I really need to call Aya but I can't turn on my phone cause they will be able to track the location of my whereabouts. It's funny how they looking for me high and yet they can't find me and I'm very much under their nose. Stupid fools. The buzzer beeps indicating there's somebody at the door. My house has a basement only my family knows about including Aya. Anathi walks in with his whole soccer team of brothers. I'll never get used to calling him Anathi.

"Gents." I acknowledge their presence. There's this one with brackets, looks pretty much scary if you ask me.

"I'm sure you haven't meet my other brother Mnqobi."

"Mncobi," damn even his name is very hard to pronounce. Why can't he have a name like Spikes, Sanele even Malindi sounds simple.

"Mnqobi, but I forgive you." He chucks making himself comfortable on my couches crossing his legs. I swallow looking at him, he just had this dark aura side of him that just makes you want to poop on yourself. Rose really turned me into a ssisy.

"My brother's are your brother's. Our brotherhood is very important and we don't befriend any other, other than one another. Let's get down to business." Stone can be very serious when he wants to. What happened to the old naughty Stone who always got into trouble?

"But we need to have very good strategic plan before we go attack. I think I would like to get into this diamond business. Owning taxi's is really good. I mean I make huge amount of money but I want more. I know I'm greedy so your opinion is valid and invalid."

"Sometimes I wish you guys never brought Spikes along." Mngqobi says looking at Spikes who was eating an apple more like murdering it. He still loves food more than anything!

"Heh yaz I lost my laptop that has such valid information." Spikes suddenly remembers. For three days he hasn't found his laptop and it holds his life and his family's lives including their business.

"Nawe you so careless. How can you leave your laptop in your taxi and go buy food to fill up your JoJo tank." Anathi teases him.

"To whoever stole my copy of my Microsoft office, I will find you because you have my Word! And when I find you I will squeeze my technology information out of you." He sits down and plays with the remote like he never said anything. The brothers have gotten used to him, when his wife Blessing is around kuvele Kube isemahlanyeni.

ABOUNDED BUILDING

"What do we have here?" Genaro asks already opening the laptop.

"Laptop moss, can't you see? Sometimes I forget that you dumb." Steven chucks stepping back.

"Say that one more time and I'll blow your brains off. No me jodas (don't fucken piss me off)!" He roars in anger making Steven to jump in fear. He has never seen this other side of Genaro. What happened to the sweet guy he met days earlier. Maybe this is the real him but brushed that thought off. That factor is that he will be making more money on the side even if it means betraying his best friend.

"I'm sorry." Steven takes another step back.

"Encuentrame especialista en TI justo en este momento, (find me an IT specialist right this minute.) Genaro commands Steven who just stood there frozen.

"What about my money? I did my job. Actually I did most of the job while your goons were getting high!"

"¡Medio trabajo! Incluso estás fallando en localizar a tu amigo. ¡Te dije que me traerías a la chica, pero fallaste estrepitosamente!

(Half job! You are even failing to locate your friend. I told you to bring the girl to me but you failed dismally!)

"I can't believe this, so I risked my life for nothing?" Steven's voice comes in a low. He is finding it hard to believe this.

"Demuestra lo estúpido que eres. ¡Encuentra a la chica!"

(It shows how stupid you are. Find the girl!)" Genaro roars leaving Steven dumbfounded. He watched him as he disappeared into one of the cars as they drove off leaving trails of dust behind.

"Wow I can't believe this, I've just got played." He kicks one of the stones hurting his toe in the process. "F\*\*k!" He bends down pressing the pain. If he definitely worked for the law he would have reported him for being treated unfairly but here he is doing a dangerous job at his OWN RISK!

AYANDA



"What angers you the most?" My personal trainer asks as she was holding a punching bag.

"My mother that she is constantly on my face! My sister's husband that happens to be my husband! I wake up everyday to face his ugly face." I punch the punching in full force. These gloves are bigger than my hands hope it won't slip and fall out.

"Go on I'm listening." She's so damn calm and I'm boiling in anger!

"My mother didn't love me growing up. My sister was her pride and joy in everything. I was basically a curse in front of her eyes! I was forced to marry that monster." I stop punching and catch a break. "I'm damaged inside out and no one cares. I was abused severely and my mother didn't care because I was never good enough in everything I do. I lost my child in the hands of that man! I have hidden scars that I'm afraid to show in public. Look at this!" I yank the bandana off my head showing her the scars I have. "I will have to live with this for the rest of my life!" I slid down on the floor panting and she pulls me back up roughly.

"When you hit a punching bag, it requires a lot of physical exertion and tests your strength and stamina. I want you to channel all of your anger on this punching bag and stop bottling your feelings up!" She hisses looking straight into my eyes.

I want to move with the bag. It's telling me where to go. Working my knees I can mark in my face. Creating angles working my defence. Working your range moving forward back side to side pivoting. All the events came back flooding like a waterfall. My arms are paining, my head is spinning and my throat is very much dry from the constant panting's.

"Take a break." She instructs me, akangcengani enjalo mxm. She gives a bottle of water and I waste no time gulping in down and burped.

"What's your name?" I asks, she looks very cute to be a lesbian. Not that I have a problem with them but she could make very cute girl.

"That's not important, what's important is you taking out the anger in you. Come see your next task." She helps me stand up and I quietly follow her behind taking a good look of her body structure. Damn she's hot no lies!

"Sit," she points out on the mat that was on the floor and I sit patiently wondering what's the next step.

"Start with Acceptance. Yoga is more than just a form of exercise...." She sits next to me still not shifting his gaze on me. Guess it's her hobby to look at a person like she does. Wait a minute did she say yoga, ow hell no she can't be serious!

"Yoga?" I ask to be sure of what she just said.

"Do we have a problem with it?" Her serious face is really making me a bit uncomfortable. What kind of a human that doesn't smile at all? I shift uncomfortably and shook my head no looking down. Her voice has so much authority. "Good, let's get down to business." She helps me sit in a Lotus position, a position I didn't even knew it existed.

"This thing I mean position hurts." I'm not Beyoncé who sits comfortably with one leg on top of the other.

"Relax your muscles, close your eyes

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breath in and out slowly and tell me what you want." Her voice is calming and soothing. My body eventually adjusts to this whole set up position.

"How do I get over the anger and hate I have for the people surrounding me?"

"Get active. Regular physical exercise can help you decompress, burn off extra tension and reduce stress that can fuel angry outbursts. Recognize (and avoid) your triggers. Give some thought to the things that make you mad." That's not the response I was waiting for, I wanted her to tell me to definitely kill them!

"Times up," she tells me, that was the longest minute ever.

"How do I release myself from all of this?"

"Release the pose by very slowly and gently extending both legs along the floor in Staff Pose. Repeat the pose for the same amount of time with the opposite leg on top." She advises and I do as told. My legs feel funny and kind of wobbly. "Tomorrow same time same place." She leaves me hanging. What a jerky goodbye!

After that workout I decided to pass by the bottle store and buy myself some wine. I just want to forget everything has been happening around me. I won't rely on sleeping tablets everyday. This thing becomes a drug and trust me once it becomes a drug it hardly works on your system. I thought of passing by the hospital but thought against it. But the conscious in me says otherwise.

I can never get used to this smell.

"Ayanda!" Someone shouts, I turn to look back finding the Matron looking at me with her all eyes out. Tears veil in her eyes and she rushes towards me. "Is this really you?" She gives me a bone crushing hug making me unable to breathe. Great now I totally feel like the Presidents daughter. Look at all the stuff with all smiles like they are waiting for an autograph. "I thought I'd never see you again after your mlungu took you." I laugh at the word mlungu cause that's how I call him too.

"I'm back for a while. I'm also happy to see you guys." I say hugging them all one by one. This is damn tiring. How does Malume Cool Kat hug all of his crushes at once? I should ask for lessons since he is also my crush. We talk some more sharing jokes here and there and I ended up ordering pizza for them. All of these six people were there by my side through thick and thin. Not even once they judged me for going back and forth with the monster himself. I found a family in them.

I walk inside MaNtombela's ward find her sniffing and blowing her nose. This woman has mucus for the whole world. Why am I here again?

She stops blowing her nose the minute her eyes land on mine.

"A.... Ayanda," she mustn't emotional blackmail me with those damn crocodile tears!

"Hmmm," I don't even know how to respond to her. She opens her arms confusing me.

"Woza kumama," I turn back just to be sure if she's really talking to me and indeed she is. Jesus!

"Me?" I double check, maybe she's seeing Nkanyezi next to me. Phela ukuguga akumemezi. She nods her head vigorously with tears streaming down her face. Okay that's the first. I push my tiny legs towards her like a robot standing beside her bed. She pulls my hand and makes me lean on her chest. Ow bawo whatever it is that I have committed, please forgive me I'm about to die for a sin I didn't commit.

"I'm sorry," who ever told this woman that her cries are sweet they were definitely lying. She cries like a train honk when it goes tshutshuuu. I'm tense as hell, phela this woman cannot be trusted.

I sigh still tensed on her chest, her embrace it so warm, something I've been yearning for growing up but now it's too late. "I'm sorry for everything Aya, I wish I could reply the events I put you through and delete them but I can't. I'm hurt that I can't get to feel what it feels like to have a mother and daughter relationship. I'm hurt that you got hurt in the process of my negligence. I want you to be happy, be the old Aya who was carefree, the Aya who thought nothing but happiness and alcohol." Now she's insulting me. I pull back in full speed and look at her. "Not that I'm giving you permission to be a drunkard but I'm giving you permission to be yourself without me being selfish."

"I don't know MaNtombela, my heart is still heavy and dark. I hold a heavy grudge and I don't know how to offload it. I'm in the dark and I can't seem to get out." My life is far from being okay, far from being normal. Will I ever have a normal life with all of these scars?

"You look beautiful and you've gained. Are you pregnant?" She scans my body and tries to pull my vest up but I block her.

"I lost my baby remember," I say raising my hands in the air dramatically. Why would she bring such an insensitive topic!

"I'm a mother and I know that you are."

"Ow wow and I'm not?" I fold my arms looking at her.

"Not like that Sisi, what I meant is just that your body making is changes drastically. You may not notice any symptoms at all but I can tell that you are. You know symptoms of early pregnancy can include a missed period, an increased need to urinate, swollen and tender breasts, fatigue, and morning sickness. Wena ulwa ngisho nanempukane izidlulela." I laugh my lungs out, not because of the last statement but because she's so fit\*\*ken serious into explaining this myth of hers.

"Jesu I bought you these." I hand her a plastic with different food varieties.

"Ngathi uyazi ukuthi ukudla kwalana akunasawoti." She grabs the chicken wings from KFC. She devours without wasting time."iyavuma," she talks with her mouth packed. I won't lie KFC wings are the best. I just fell in love with them recently and I don't know how. Now my mouth is salivating over them. My stomach grumbles sadly.

" I should get going." The smell is making things hard for me. I can hear that crunchiness whenever she takes a bit of it.

"Asidle bese uyahamba," if she's pulling my leg than that's not how to joke around. And beside she wouldn't finish the whole 10 wings with herself with me standing and watching her. Heh all this while I was standing ay cha what do I call myself.

After the hospital visit I drove straight home. I've tried Rome countless times on his phone with no success. I just hope and pray that he is okay where ever he is. Something in me says that there is definitely something wrong with him and I can't put my finger on it. Let me not put my mind into it once he is done playing hide and seek he will resurface and face me. Or maybe I'm no longer needed in his life? He can't just dump me like that now can he? A black car approaches and passes by. I look at the dark heavily tinted windows and I'm unable to see fokon. What's up with this car? I increase my speed flying to my way home. I sense trouble and danger! What if these people deal with human trafficking and I'm one of the targets!

#22

MANTOMBELA

I've been looking at door constant waiting and thinking that Aya can come in anytime. Yesterday she really surprised me and I was indeed shocked beyond measures. The first time me and Aya spend a day without fighting and scratching each other's back. We actually are from the same packet of hot wings.

Mukhulu uJehova, I never knew that he still loved me. Ow how I will worship this man.

It's midday and I doubt she's coming. What was I thinking? This is Aya and her mood swings change within a blink of an eye. I bet that she regrets coming here yesterday but I wouldn't blame here. I made her life hell after all and she is still hurting and far from healing.

Two figures stand in front of my eyes. My throat dried up, I felt my body getting weaker than before. He stands right before with his hands buried deep in his pocket.

"I told your husband you are hospitalized." Aya says and dashes out without giving time to respond. How will I face this man?

"Uhlala nobaba womntana wakho heh?"

"Bengizoyaphi?" Truth be told I still love this man more than anything. He shrugs his shoulders and sighs.

"You have a house but you run around like a beggar." He can't be serious right now.

"Really Mhlongo? You can't stand my sight, I disgust you and you never home. I decided to give you the space that you need." I defended myself. He looks at me without saying a word.

"How will we solve this if you running away?"

"In my head I've already concluded a divorce, I just want to free you so you can be with your woman peacefully." I say and he raises his eyebrows. I wonder why he no longer trims his beard.

"So you are leaving me?" Is that a trick question? Out of all of the things he prefers to ask me this? Like really!

"Mhlongo can I ask you this.... okay let's say I come back home, are you willing to work with me into fixing our marriage?" I ask and he looks so uncertain. "Exactly my point so I don't want to hold you back. I'm definitely not proud of what I did, but recently I decided to put myself and this pregnancy first and also have a relationship with my daughter.

"You don't get it do you, you cheated on me and on top of that got pregnant by another man's child! A cheating mine can be survived but if the mine is in the form of a child then it will come in the path of our marriage again and again and it will spoil my life at some point. Just come back home, you know our ancestors never approve of divorce." Is he begging me? He won't understand my reasons so what's the use of me explaining myself to him!

AYANDA

"Do you love him.... Ntokozo?"

"Yes, no! Argh, why the hell will you ask me that?"

"You can't be in a relationship but still stuck up on the past. Before getting into a new phase of life or relationship you need to forgive. Forgiveness is the only key to letting go. Forgive yourself for mistakes you made in the past because nothing will change what has already happened, the only thing you control is what you do in the future. Forgive others who have hurt or disappointed you, holding onto anger and sadness only multiplies those feelings." This trainer is seriously shitting on me. I'm hurting and boiling in anger. And these punches are just a waste of time!

"How do I know when to end a chapter?" I ask, I want to bury what I have inside of me.

"Any chapter that doesn't further the overall story in some way should be cut. This means that every chapter has a little part of the story to tell. And as soon as the chapter has told its part of the story, it should end." Here she is speaking in riddles. How will I understand if she decides to speak such terms. I'm not in any English class for crying out loud!

She lets go of the punching bag, it came back in full force and hit my face.

"Ouch," I cry rubbing my face with the boxing gloves.

"Follow me," she didn't even sorry and now she's ordering me around like she didn't hit me.

"Aibo yoga again? Awungeke, impela ngiyalingwa. My legs still hurt from all the yoga from yesterday." I whine. I can't do the same process over and over again. She looks at me sternly sending shivers down my spine. "Okay I'll sit." I swallow sitting down. What kind of a woman that doesn't smile vele? Noma she's eating a die hard bubble gum.

"Meditate and talk to your inner self." She instructs. Great now I must talk toy intestines!

After all that hard work I deserved a little treat nyana. I needed knew clothing my wardrobe was starting to be a turn off plus most of my cloths don't fit me anymore. Some time around this weak I should donate to some organisations for the women in need. Mlungwana told me to flaunt his money and that's what I'm doing without any regrets. I actually found thee most comfortable under-ware. Everyday Silk G-String. why didn't I think of them before? Now I feel like walking around naked. As I'm walking feeling myself like I'm floating in water I mistakenly bump into someone.

"Great, just great!" I say picking up my shopping bags from the ground. The idiot just walks past me without even saying sorry. "Jerk!" I scream and people turn to look at me as if I'm crazy. I collect and calm myself then continued with the way.

That feeling again, the feeling that always creeps you out. Why do I always feel like I'm in the Twilight Zone, and I always feel like somebody's watching me? And I have no privacy. Woh, I always feel like somebody's watching me! Tell me, is it just a dream? Maybe I'm going mad who knows. Did Ntokozo damage my brain?

When I'm in the shower, I'm afraid to wash my bold head. Because I might open my eyes and find someone standing there! People will definitely say I'm crazy, just a little touched. But maybe showers remind me of "Psycho" too much. I quickly jump I'm my car reversing hitting the trolley and drove without looking back.



Arriving at home I find Ntokozo sitting on the couch, same position, I forget that he is a mute at times. So much of a waste!

"Yin you look like you've seen a ghost," is he now checking me out cause if yes then only God knows what I will do to him.

"I have a feeling that someone is stalking me." I say placing my shopping bags on top of the coffee table.

"Are you serious?" He starts laughing his balls out. Did I perhaps say something funny? Last time I checked I wasn't related to any comedian!

"Mxm," I go to the bathroom just to look at my new sexy thong. Damn I feel so comfortable. I look at my boobs and they are quite bigger than the last time. My mind trails back to what MaNtombela said, "I know I'm not pregnant." I convince myself. Part of me wants to have a baby so bad, maybe it will ease the hard core heart that I have. Who am I fooling maybe I can't concieve.

"Ayanda your phone," Ntokozo screams from the bedroom. My phone doesn't have a ringtone like this. Maybe I pressed somewhere without noticing. I sigh fixing myself and walked out. I search my bag but my phone has no miss call, now that's strange. The phone rings again,

"Check your shopping bags." Ntokozo tells me, what if someone broke in? Ow God I'm not ready to face jail. I search through my shopping bags until I find it. I've never seen this phone before. I'm looking at it as it's ringing, panic rush over, fear starts kicking in. What do I do.

"Answer it," what's up with Ntokozo being Mr commander.

"Ha....halo," I softly say out of fear.

"Poonky," ow hell no! I drop the call with my all eyes out. I grab my phone and try his numbers but nothing instead this stupid phone rings again! I walk out of the room. I don't even know where I'm going. I answer the God damn ringing phone and wala, it's him.

"Poonky do you really want me to kill you?" Ow my God.

"Mlungwana

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Romeo is that really you?" I feel like crying right now.

"It's me Fancy Face. Look I don't have much time. Don't trust anyone that comes your way. Never, I mean never talk to anyone! I will tell you all about it once I get time. I love you." Why is he doing this to me.

"What's going on?" I ask.

"In due course you will know. And another thing don't trust Steven at all cost. I'm in this mess because of him." I don't even know what's going on for crying out loud!

"Ow okay," I'm kind of disappointed no I'm actually hurt. "How are the kids?" He doesn't answer but rather passes the phone over to them. They all speaking at once and that made me very teary. How I miss these souls. Nana was beyond ecstatic to talk to me. I miss them so badly.

"Times up Mlungu," I hear someone from the background, my heart is happy and sore.

"I love you keep that in mi...." I cut him short.

"Before you go, some car has been following me." The line goes dead. "No, no, no, Romeo don't do this to me," I felt my knees getting weak. I try this bloody phone and the f\*\*ken robot speaks.

"The number you have dialled does not exist." I feel like throwing this phone and crack it into pieces. Atleast he called me, there's something positive right?

Wait a minute how the hell this this phone end up in my shopping bags? I crack my head trying so hard to remember but my mind is totally blank beyond measures. It's a must that someone actually has a hand of putting this phone in my stuff. This explains it all, Romeo wanted to be in contact with me....the man at the mall. He collided with me and this phone lands in my stuffs. There is no any other logic explanation into ways just conspired.

## ROMEO

It's been two day since they have been trying to crack their heads.

"Right now he is waiting for you to strike and what makes me excited in all of this is that he doesn't know that you have brother's." Anathi tells Romeo who was sitting uncomfortably on his couch stressing. His main concern was Aya, but hearing her voice brought back all the positivity in life. That woman is everything to him. He made sure that Anathi's goons watch Aya from a distance. The phone incidence was a perfect plan to accumulate. He can be able to call her but she can't call him, sounds selfish but it's for the best

This is the time he fights for what's his. He had to pull a few strings just to be back at the top of the game.

"Mina nje I'm loving the house that has underground gang." Spikes proudly say and turn to look at the guys who had pen and papers in their hands.

"Nxa," Sanele clicks his tounge feeling defeated. It gets worse when his wife Blessing is around the house just becomes a Psychiatric hospital.

"Spikes zip it okay." Mngqobi says taking out his phone calling his wife. "Mfazi wami...." He dissapers to one of the rooms talking to his phone.

"Mxm udlisiswe uMngqobi, kancane, kancane mfazi wami. We all have wives moss. Duduzile must sure find herself another husband. Mngqobi is just useless for sweet nothing including those fake brackets." Spikes mouth has has no filter it's always running non-stop.

Anathi sighed looking at his brother who looked like someone who didn't say anything just couple of minutes ago "did you find you laptop?" He diverts the question to Spikes.

"Genaro has it." He follows Mngqobi to one of the rooms. He stops and turns to look at Anathi, "Anathi I'm straight ndoda stop looking at me like I'm some meat." Anathi throws a book towards his direction and Spikes runs for his life.

Romeo is amazed by the Brotherhood he is seeing. Knowing that one person you trusted with your whole life betrayed you and still has the guts to play along as if nothing happened. I've accepted that being betrayed by a friend is deeply hurtful.... It's harder to go rekindle a friendship after you've hit the brakes. But I don't feel guilty about cutting ties when a friendship that's isn't worth it. Steven proved and showed me that he is totally no worth me tears. Degges-White once said "you've given the friendship a fair chance and you are just not getting what you need from the friendship, it is absolutely okay to move on," and that is what exactly doing. I'm moving on like a dude that got dumped by his girlfriend.

"All set for tomorrow?" Malindi asks the gents who all nod at once.

"If they fire?" I ask feeling uneasy about tomorrow's journey.

"We go red." Sanele.

"What about white?" Spikes comes forward smiling like a rat that just stole cheese.

"Spikes can one have a meaningful conversation with you?" Romeo asks out of concern. He has never seen anyone behaving in this manner.

"I'm tangible mlungu." See what he means!

"You should see his wedding video, I never knew you could cry like that. Aibo isililo ndoda." That happened two years ago but they still find a way of teasing him. Who wouldn't cry seeing their telly tuby walking down the isle.

"You wouldn't understand." He defends himself. "Snacks anyone?" He changes the subjects making the boys fit with laughter.

Later that afternoon everything was set to the midnight operation.

"Do silencers on guns really work?"

"Yes spikes, it reduces the noise of a firearms." Spikes nods his polishing his gun. It's been long since he used one. Actually all of them, they swore that they were past that life, they didn't want to put their families in danger. But when one is in need bayasabela. And he decides to do what he does best, singing.

👉Iba nami Baba

Ndikhokhele Baba

Ndikhokhele mama

Ngbe mno la n'ime nsogbu eh

You no let them laugh at me eh

Oluwa Chineke

Nobody feed me like you oh

Nobody know I go take a pain

Bawo ndiyabonga ngoba, usandigcinile

Na you dey ginger, mah, ginger oh, 📺

"Jub Jub cela usimele tu." The message send shivers down Sanele's spine. Last time spikes sang before the heist mission Anathi and Mqobi were shot!

"Zenzele, khuza ubuti wakho." Sanele works out having mixed emotions. "Hope no one gets hurt." He say to himself standing next to the window listening to the night cold air.

NTOKOZO #23

ROMEO

The synchronization of attacks can be critical, particularly when using distractors. We will likely need to cause a distraction closely times with our actual attack and will need to be able to do so in a timed manner. When we are planning attacks to go off simultaneously, time is the best trigger that we can use.

In this case they cannot predict what will happen inside. They might come back alive or dead.

"Is everyone's ear piece working?" Zenzele wants to make sure before the attack. They all double checked and everything was fine. "Good, how many guards are well looking at?" They are all in position waiting to attack.

"All guards are down let's go in." Spikes whispers for everyone to hear through their ear piece.

"Wait....what!" Of cause this is shocking, Anathi didn't expect any of this how did Spikes managed to take all eight guards down without anyone's help? As everyone were still shocked and wondered, they saw Spikes climbing up a fence and falls down.

"Shit!" He curses, that was a painful landing. All of the guys followed jumping the fence and lay down waiting for another plan.

"I think I'm paralyzed from my waste up." Spikes whines.

"But your legs work right?" Romeo asks.

"Yes, but the important part here is that I'm paralyzed upwards." Spikes responds dramatically. Romeo scans his eyes around and spotted a guard with some sort of pin on his back.

"What happened to all of them?" Romeo points out using his head.

"Midazolam injection."

"What the hell is that?" Anathi asks.

"You wouldn't know. Someone is coming." Spikes warn them whispering. They all stand up dusting themselves. They saw Steven driving through and Romeo chuck I'm disbelief.

"Let's follow him." Romeo suggests and they all sneak behind each other. They saw Steven talking to some man as he was handing him the envelope. They shook hands and he drove off. The man noticed one of guards on the ground. He crouched next to him feeling his pulse but found a needle. The man took about his phone making a phone but the phone was snatched from his hands.

"Don't even think about it. Where's you boss?" Mnqobi has a gun pointed on this man's head. "Do something stupid and I'll blow your brains off."

"What do you want?" The man asks trying to be brave.

"Your boss." Mnqobi tell the guys and the guys swallows. He can't compete with this man right infront of his eyes. The rest of the guys appear and the man starts to shiver. These men are here for business.

"Man cave," he answers. Spikes took out a needle from his backpack and injected him. The man collapsed on the floor still holding his neck.

"Let's go." They walk around the house with guns in their hands.

"The door is locked, any plan?" Anathi is frustrated he hates it when things are not in order and right now everything is just wondering around. Spikes is a man with action, his mind already knows what's the next step and he came prepared. He pulls off his backpack from his back taking out a screw driver. Without saying a word he started doing what he does best.

He first pushed the screwdriver far as he can into the hole on the doorknob. Then he turned and twist until the screwdriver caught on a groove and the lock clicked.

"We in," Spikes says feeling excited. They all walk into the house pulling the balaclava down their faces. Mnqobi, Zenzele and Malindi were outside guarding the entire place. The house have too many rooms and it's confusing. Spikes took out his tracking device trying to locate his laptop.

"Kennel," he frowns, why would his laptop be in a kennel.

"Don't go it's a trap. I know how his mind operates." Anathi warns Spikes.

"What do we do now?" Spikes asks as they have ran out of options. Anathi seems to be more frustrated because he can't seem to put the pieces of the puzzles together.

"The dungeon," Anathi suddenly remembers. That's where all of the shit happens. "Follow me," he instructs them and they all sneaked their way down to the dungeon. Genaro's voice was echoing all the way down hall way. The place is very dark making it hard to locate each other.

"Sé que estos perros me están buscando ya que tengo una de sus pertenencias y pronto tendré a esa niña. Quiero romperla y convertirla en mi perra." (I know these dogs are looking for me since I have one of their belongings and soon have that girl. I want to break her and make her my b\*\*\*h.) Genaro's voice echoed with his evil laugh.

"Soy un hombre anal, un culo me servirá. (I'm an anal man, an arse will do for me.) One of his associates say gulping down the bitter taste of the whiskey he was drinking.

"This laptop has coding codes and it's hard for me to crack it. Who ever created this had time." The IT says as he wiped his sweat in fear. These men are very ruthless.

"Tu chico de TI es inútil! (Your IT guy is useless!) Genaro roars banging the table making the glass on top of the table spill the whiskey. He keeps quite hearing footsteps and took out his gun and signal for everyone to be quite.



"Alguien esta aqui con nosotras." (Someone is here with us.) He whispers. The footsteps stop and there was silence. Spikes cocked his rifle and took aim. A bullet flew across shooting one of Genaro's associates on the forehead spilling his head into pieces.

"Damn that was a shot." Sanele says searching for his brother in the dark. Genaro marches towards their direction but stops when he recognised that he is outnumbered.

"Quién está ahí?" (Who is there?) He asks as fear takes over. He has too many enemies to even know who is trespassing his territorial.

"Your worst enemy." He recognises Anathi's voice but doesn't know which direction it comes from. Anathi steps forward with Romeo following behind. They all take off their balaclava and Genaro's eyes widen in shock.

"You," he points out at them in disbelief. He was too focused into finding the girl and cracking this bloody laptop and forgot about his guards. He tilts his head to the left and glares at the screen. He is surely outnumbered!

"Mira, podemos hablar de esto." (Look we can talk about this.) Genaro takes a step back he aimed for Anathi's chest but Spikes outsmarted him and shot Genaro's hand and he dropped the gun down.

"F\*\*k!" He groans holding his bleeding hand.

"Lo último tiempo que pensé fue que te dije que te mantuvieras alejado de mi familia

pero nunca me escuchaste." (The last time I thought I told you to stay away from my family but you never listened.) Anathi fires a hard fist breaking Genaro's jaws.

"Lo siento hombre, no sabia que es uno de los tuyos." (I'm sorry man, I didn't know he is one of yours.) He holds his broken jaw and groans painfully.

"What are they saying?" Romeo asks with so much curiosity.

"I don't know man. What language is this?" Sanele refers the question to Spike who was out of site. "Where's Spikes?"

They all search for him and he is no where to be seen.

"Kennel!" Sanele rushes out to go look for him. Genaro is weeping like a baby that was in a lot of pain.

"Where are the diamonds?" Anathi calmly asks him. Genaro shook his head but still holding his hand.

"No sé!" (I don't know!) He answers sniffing.

"Wrong answer," Anathi shoots his shoulder on another arm and Genaro let out an excruciating scream full of pain.

"Okay! Okay! There are in the cellar." The boys wasted no time as they destroyed every bottle of alcohol they found. Until Romeo noticed a bottle that was shining brightly. He got hold of it and smiled emotionally.

"Got them," Romeo smiled emotionally. That was quick and easy he said to himself.

"Let's go!" Anathi orders them but Romeo had some unfinished business. He cocked his gun and shot Genaro right in-between his eyes.

"Now we can go." He proudly walks leaving the guys in shock.

"What happened to Romeo?" Anathi asks smiling, guess the spirit is back. He turns to look at the guy that was with Genaro. "Go home kid and next time don't mix yourself with the wrong crowd." He sternly warns, the guy nodded his head vigorously packing his things and walks out running. Seeing two people being shot dead right in front of your eyes is no child's play, who wouldn't pee on themselves! A loud scream echoes from the hallway and they listen attentively.

"Sizani! Sizani!" Spikes' voice buzzing in their earpiece. A dog barking! Sanele comes in running almost out of breath.

"Ow hell no," Anathi runs for his life to go hide behind the couch. He has always been afraid of dogs. He can't get bitten a second time around now can he.

Romeo laughs at the scene, now this is the Anathi he knows. He stops laughing when Spikes came in running holding his laptop followed by a dog almost his size.

"Ow shit!" Sanele's heart beats abnormally and steps back.

"Siberian Husky," Romeo says in a low voice noticing that this is one fucked up situation. The Siberian Husky is a medium-sized working sled dog breed. It is recognizable by its thickly furred double coat, erect triangular ears, and distinctive markings.

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Meanwhile the guards outside woke up one by one as the drug was starting to way off their system.

"What happened?" One asks still drowsy trying to get back up. Their knees are weak and they see double than their usual sight.

"I think we were drugged." One replies.

"Shit! The boss!" They all gather their strengths marching towards the house.

Mnqobi notices from a distance without warning the other guys he starts shooting. Malindi also cocks his gun and shots fire. For the guys it was very easy to spot them since the guards were standing under the light.

"Five down three to go," Malindi whispers not wanting to disclose their location. The three guards ran behind the house with their guns in their hands. One of them jumped through the window where Anathi were. He ran along the whole way calling Steven on the other hand.

"We are under attack, code red. Shoot to kill." He drops the call and continues to run. He turns left following the foot prints with his torch so bright. A gun shot fired and Mnqobi was shot in the arm.

"F\*\*k," he holds his gun wound and groans family. A picture of his wife Duduzile flashes right before his eyes. He can't die and leave his two sons and a daughter behind. He will try to stay strong for his wife and kids.

"Zenzele go down!" Malindi warns him, a bullet flied slightly across his dead.

"WTF!" Zenzele's heart pounded in fear as he thought of his wife Simthandile and his two daughters. He almost lost his life! The shooting stops as Malindi emptied his bullets on the two guards.

"One is missing." Malindi whispers and his mind quickly works. The Dungeon! He heard the boys mentioning it. "Zenzele take Mngqobi to the car." Malindi instructs, without any questions asked Zenzele scooped Mngqobi up helping him to stand. Mngqobi wrapped his arm around Zenzele's shoulder for support.

"Don't hold me romantically I'm not your wife." Mngqobi teases him as they walked towards the gate that was wide open.

"Wasn't this gate tightly closed when we came in?" Zenzele asks and something doesn't add up. He scans his eye around and notices a car he saw earlier.

"Steven is here and I think he is not alone." Zenzele speaks through the earpiece making the rest of the guys aware. "Look I'm going to leave you in the car to help the guys. Do Not Leave this car!" He closes the door without waiting for Mngqobi to respond. He runs back inside and spots Steven running towards the house with a gun on his hands. Without being noticed he follows him behind, if he follows him surely he will lead him to where his brothers where.

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Steven froze looking at the dog attacking Romeo. It had his teeth deep in his shoulder and it looks like it had been dislocated. Anathi still being behind the couch he had no other choice but to come out and help his brother's. Steven notices a man behind the couch and aims to shoot but Spikes notices first. He searched for his gun and

quickly remembers that he dropped it while being chased by a dog. Steven shoots toward Anathi's direction but Spikes jumped in and was shot multiple times on his chest.

"Noooooo," Anathi screams in pain. He can't lose his talkative brother not like this. He still has a lot to live for. His chest was covered in blood and there is no sign of living. Steven tries to aim for another shot but he has run out of bullets. Zenzele saw his brother laying in a pool of blood from afar and his knees instantly got weak. This was never suppose to happen. Anathi marches towards him punching him on his neck and he gagged for air dropping his empty gun. Zenzele finally reaches to where his brother's where and shot the dog multiple times until the dogs teeth let loose on Romeo's shoulder.

"Can you walk?" Zenzele asks Romeo who was losing a lot of blood laying unconditionally on the floor. Without saying a word Sanele picks up his beloved brother and walks out carrying him like a baby. Just like that they lost one of their own. He cried along the way heading to car where Mnqobi is.

"He can't be dead." Mnqobi weakly says as he became more dizzy. "Spikes is not dead." His voice came out as a whisper. Sanele has always been an emotional one. Sitting with a shot person who looks like will die in no time and a dead brother he never thought he will lose someday. Zenzele came out carrying Romeo who was groaning in so much pain. The dislocated shoulder is visibly on the outside. Zenzele gently throws him at the back seat and puts the diamonds next to him. Malindi comes out running pulling a heavy bag and the guys wondered what's inside. Anathi is nowhere in sight.

"Where's Anathi?" Zenzele asks with a huge lump stuck up on his throat.

"He was following me." Malindi turns to look back there was no sign of him. They all wait for him patiently in the car. Minutes later the house erupts in explosion.

"WTF," Zenzele says with all his eyes out.

"This can't be happening." Sanele says sobbing. "I can't lose my brothers."

"No one is dead." Zenzele tries to assure him but all of this is just way too much for him. A shadow knocks on the widow covered in blood and ashes.

"Anathi!" Sanele recognizes him and jumps out of the car. He notices that his legs are basically burnt and injured. He helps him in the car as they drove off in silence as the car was sour. Sanele's sniffs made the situation more worse.

"Am I in heaven yet?" Zenzele harshly presses on the brakes looking at the Ghost. They all went mute.... Malindi slightly slaps him and he coughs holding his chest.

"I'm die hard." He says raising his thumb as the boys jumped in happiness.

"Ghost!" They laugh as the disappeared leaving the house behind in flames. AYANDA

I'm seriously tired of hospital's. Kanti when will I ever get a brake mina heh. If it's not Ntokozo it's my so cold mother, if it's either of them it's certainly Romeo with his constant disappearing. I decided to take a step back, he will back to me if he is serious about us. I miss Nana, I miss the kids. Sighs.

"Miss Ntombela," I slept on the chair day dreaming. My back is aching, angisayiphathike eyomuqala. My whole body is sore beyond anything.

"Yes," I stand up flinching holding my back. I guess carrying Ntokozo around also made matters worse.

"Mr Myeni is having what is called Neuropathic pain. The...."

"Nutrition what?" Yey I feed this crippled man every healthy food you could find with Romeo's money. He can't tell me his nutrients are missing. Where did they go to?

"It's Neuropathic pain MaNtombela," I can see he is trying so bad to hold his laugh but later laughs out loud. I don't see anything funny in what I asked! "You just made my day, anyway is caused by abnormal communication between the nerves that were damaged by your spinal cord injury and the brain, where nerve signals that inform your brain how your body feels are interpreted." The doctor further explains. And I'm just lost as hell.

"Okay, so what will the doctor do since he now knows that MR MYENI has nutrition disease?" I ask folding my arms. Honestly I don't care what happens to Ntokozo. I have alot on my plate.

"Adopting healthy eating and exercise habits is important because it keeps blood sugar levels under control. In addition, studies show that lifestyle changes can prevent the development and slow the progression of neuropathy. And exercises that improve circulation, like walking, can help relieve pain." Did he just say walking.

"Walking you say," I fit with laughter, Ntokozo and walking are two different things. "Doctor this man can't walk, he shits on himself and I have to clean all of that shit! So tell what will make him walk all of a Sunday?"

"You see mam these pains are often described as a shooting or burning pain. It can go away on its own but is often chronic. Sometimes it is unrelenting and severe, and sometimes it comes and goes. It often is the result of nerve damage or a malfunctioning nervous system. The impact of nerve damage is a change in nerve function both at the site of the injury and areas around it. Which means he will walk again in the near future. He just needs to exercise his legs three times a week." Why is he seriously explaining this to me?

"Oh okay," I don't have any energy in wanting to know more because it's definitely non of my business.

"I will prescribe Anticonvulsant and antidepressant drugs. Unfortunately, neuropathic pain often responds poorly to standard pain treatments and occasionally may get worse instead of better over time. For some people, it can lead

to serious disability. A multidisciplinary approach that combines therapies, however, can be a very effective way to provide relief from neuropathic pain."

"Hayike now I'm confused. Tell me something important, are you keeping him over night cause seriously I'm tired I just wanting to go sleep." I say feeling angered all of a sudden. Maybe him walking will release me to be with the man of my dreams, Argh I tend to forget that, that man is way to busy playing hide and seek with his friend.

"We are conducting more tests so it's a must we keep him overnight." He responds.

"Make it a week," I tap on his shoulder and leave him still stunned. I decided to pass by the Matrons office and surprise her. This woman is always delighted to see me. I wish I had a mother like her. Why was she not my mother vele?

"I can still see anger in your eyes. Why are you still helping him cause it's setting you back?" I like how she is always concerned about me. A woman who didn't give birth to me loves me like her own and I hardly see her.

"I will be fine ma," that's how I prefer calling her because of the side of love she has shown me.

"No you are not! And don't you dare try to sweet talk me." She says looking straight into my eyes. It's sad how a woman who never gave birth to me cares this much.

"You right, I'm not okay emotionally." I want to cry, but big girls stay strong.

"What's the next step in your life?" She asks. Do I know what I want in life? Right now I'm confused as hell, sorting my life out is one of the last things on my mind. I'm hell bent into focusing on healing forgetting about every other thing.

"I honestly don't know." That's the truth, I don't know what I want to do with my life right now.

"Find yourself Ayanda be a woman that can be able to stand by and for herself. Don't let anger pull you back." She says brushing my arm. She likes doing that whenever she gives me an advice. Ow how I wish I could have a meaningful conversation with a woman who birth me.

I'm in-between, I want to see her and on the other hand I don't want to see her at all cost. I'm standing by the door with mixed emotions. Will I ever heal? No human went through what I went through and survived. I'm just grateful I wasn't admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

"Ayanda," it's her, I can never mistaken her voice with any other. I turn to look back and their she was smiling like a retarded. I wonder how she does it, she use to hate me with passion but today she here smiling like a stupid person. Is this all pretence or is she really sincere?

"Hey," I greet back giving her a faint smile. I regret coming to this ward.

"I thought you were not coming." Looks like she's not faking it. For someone who once hated me really looks very much happy to see me. How do I fake seeing her too?

"I brought Ntokozo so I decided to pass by." I shrug my shoulders looking down.

"Ntokozo, unani manje?" Atleast she still cares for her son-in-law.

"Ey angimazi, but he has been admitted." She frowns looking at me. I don't have time to explain nonsense. "Look I have to go." I say taking out R200 out of my breasts and handed it to her. I'm avoiding her to ask me anymore questions.

The house is so quite, no Ntokozo no MaNtombela. I'm happy that I'm all alone but I'm sad that I'm so lonely with no Romeo. Ever since I came back I've never been into the room I once called mine. Sometimes loneliness can be caused by something else going on in our lives.

I've been sharing the bed with Ntokozo in his room and it was the worst experience ever. The thought of him getting up in the middle of the night abusing me made me....I don't even know how to explain it.

I walk past a room I use to call mine. I wonder who cleaned all the blood that was here? I'm even afraid to open the door. What if....but I need my important documents, I want to start applying for jobs then later looks for a school. Matron really knocked some sense into me. How come I didn't think any of this? Am I that dumb? I sigh slowly opening the door, the back of my hair stands making me to shiver. This is the same room that made my life hell and miserable. This is the same room I almost died in. I still remember every event like it was yesterday. I'm looking at the bed that is half burnt. Why did Ntokozo keep this mattress, is he crazy?

I wanted to commit suicide in this room not so long ago. I need to get out of here before I go crazy.

Atleast I got what I was searching for but my mood just died down. But what was I expecting clouding myself with such pain of entering that room. Maybe watching some TLC will wash off the memory and thoughts that I have on my mind.

"No please stop, I'm begging you...." I'm woken up by my ringing phone after a painful dream. My body feels heavy and tired. I glare at the screen with sleepy eyes wondering who's calling me cause I can bet with 10 cents it's not Romeo.

"Halo

Advertisement

" I lazily answer.

"Be here in 15 minutes!" You gotta be kidding me! Where did this woman Tom get my number? Ow stupid me I forget I registered and they have my contact details. I won't even was my mouth I'll just go as I am. Luckily it's just exactly 15 minutes away.

"You late!" She roars, what's up with her, him whatever she is.

"Please not today I'm not in the mood of your sourness." I sit down. I even forgot my gym wear, I'm still wearing the dress I've been wearing since morning.



"I don't have all day. Get to work." Again she orders, doesn't she have a life. If this is what I have to go through than I'll quit!

"I said I'm tired!" I back fire unawarely, if I say I'm not in the mood ngisuke ngingadlali neygane.

"Lalela la, we all have issues and problems but you won't see me taking out my anger on the wrong people! If that's how it is than I should be taking out my anger on you for being raped and having a fatherless child!" She screams with her chest rising up and down I'm taken back about she just said.

"You were raped?" I'm shocked, I thought that maybe I'm the only one who's facing issues In this South African world in the mountains of Eshowe.

"I think I've said too much. You know what just go home I need to be alone." She walks out leaving me dumbfounded. She can't tell me such news and leave me hanging.

"Where are you going?" I stand up following her behind.

"I told you to go home." She doesn't even want to look at me. I also want to be there for her, maybe sharing my side of the story will make her talk.

"I was also raped multiple by my sister's husband who happens to be my husband. I don't have a clit and my folds are burnt. Basically my virgina is all out in the open." I tell her whilst laughing. She turns to look at me with a facial expressions I cannot explain.

"Don't joke about such sensitive things."

"I'm not joking, I didn't tell you the whole story I told a bit of it "I say looking at her. She is so focused on the dancing trees.

"Welcome to my world, atleast you didn't get pregnant by a man you don't even know." She says in a low sad voice.

"How old is your child?"

"My daughter is five," she looks down and wipe her tears. I want to hear more of what went down.

"What happened?" I pull her towards the benches making her to sit.

"I was doing grade 12 attending afternoon classes. On my way home a group of boys came out of no where and raped me, well I was raped by one of them while the others stood and watched cheering for their friend." She drops her head and silently cries.

"He took my only pride and joy leaving me with a child. I was only 18 and he made me a mother. My parents never believed me that I was raped even the evidence of the blood was their but they were still in denial. I started having dreams about him being on top of me forcing himself on me. That was the most crucial pain I've ever felt. You know what's funny, when your parents start believing when you become suicidal. I tried killing myself twice after hearing about the pregnancy. I would scream in my sleep and fight who ever is waking me up. I was torn, sad and hurt. But what hurt me the most is that my parents never believed me at first. To cut the story short I decided to be a lesbian because I hate men with passion. They say mountains don't meet but people definitely do meet. One day I will meet him and once I do only God knows."

"Wow I don't even know what to say." I'm mute, she went through the most no wonder she's so bitter. "What's your name by the way?" What I've noticed is she, he doesn't like to be questioned.

"Mapule," I look at her more like scanning her. "What?"

"Are you THEE Mapule the rain Queen?" I want to scream and jump and down.

"What I you talking about?" Clearly this girl is confused.

"You never read a book about Mapule the rain Queen? Which planet do you live in?" That book made me see myself dating my imaginary boyfriend.

"You crazy," she chucks leaving my thinking about the male characters.

NTOKOZO

The smell of pills and medication makes me totally nauseas. I wonder how doctors manage to work in hospital's 24/7. I'm sure they also smell like pills themselves. I'm thinking deep about my life, Ayanda.... whenever I think of her a smile just creeps on my face making me to blush. I didn't notice that she has such effect on me. Her tiny self just makes me want to scream my lungs out. If I get better I want to f\*\*k the senses out of her. My heart drops whenever I think of the damage I caused her down there. But I've gotten used into seeing her naked. Her body just changed into a pattern I don't like. When she's out alone fear in me kicks in that she will eventually see someone better than me, someone who will love her for who she is and with all the scars she has.

"Mkhwenyana," you got to be kidding me. Even in hospital there's no peace. I wish I had money, I wouldn't be stuck in government hospitals. No offence the stuff is great and they know what they are doing but I just want to get away from this woman!

"Mah,"

"Unjan?" As if she cares.

"I'm okay?" I respond and look outside the window. This is the moment that I wish I had my own two feet.

"Nathi siyaphila even though you won't ask your child I'm carrying." She sits down. Her stomach is still flat I don't know what the hell she's brushing it for.

"What do you want?" I ask in annoyance I suddenly can't stand this woman.

"Hau mkhwenyana, that's not the way to greet your mother-in-law who happens to be the mother of your child." She smiles, this woman is totally sick. Who becomes happy for being pregnant for her son-in-law?

"Ey awungiyeye wemama, angikuthumanga ukuthi uzongivulela imilemze yakho enuka umchamo unoshukela!" Great now all eyes are on us.

"Wow," she stands up and walks out without turning back. Can she just leave me alone.

Minutes later is see Ayanda approaching carrying takeaways. My heart skips a beat, maybe she heard me shouting. How will I face her?

"I brought you food." How thoughtful of her. I'm truly blessed to have her in my life.

"You look beautiful," I smile admiring her.

"Ow please," she rolls her eyes and sits where her mother was sitting.

"What was MaNtombela doing here?" She saw her, I swallow a dry lump and clear my throat.

"She just came to check up on me." I just lied, I can't bring myself to tell her the truth. If I do will she manage it? Will she forgive me? I don't want anything ruining what we have.

"Ow," just like that she believed me. I'm falling deep for Aya and it scares me to death. This is now that I cannot imagine my life without her. Falling in love is the development of strong feelings of attachment and love, usually towards another person. The term is metaphorical, emphasizing that the process, like the physical act of falling, is sudden, uncontrollable and leaves the lover in a vulnerable state, similar to "fall ill" or "fall into a trap. Aya has trapped me and my heart into hers. I wouldn't mind waking up to this pretty little face next to me all the time.

True love feels like security and stability. You don't worry about breaking up or your partner leaving you abruptly. When they go out of town, you might miss them, but you are also happy for them, because you want them to travel and have new experiences. Your love has balance and no sense of suspicion or possession.

"It's like you read my mind." She takes out burgers and starts feeding me.

"Don't get used to it sir." She smiles and continues to feed me. No woman would stand by you when you this vulnerable.

"You are a remarkable woman don't forget that." I say and she frowns looking at me.

"Ntokozo maan sies don't talk with food in your mouth." I know just how to make her mood sour. I pretty much enjoy seeing her mad for the silly mistake I say or do with my face.

"I love it when you mad at me. I would say you turning me on but I'm feeling less." She fits with laughter shaking her head. If I'm making her laugh like this then that means I'm on the right track. It's now time to correct the wrongs I made to this woman.

"Awusile Ntokozo," she continues to laugh with that sweet soft voice. My heart pumps in happiness seeing this wide smile on her face. 25

ROMEO

He has been out for two days and the boys have been by his side all this while. A true brotherhood. Romeo suffered a separated shoulder. Despite the name, this injury doesn't directly affect the shoulder joint. Instead, a fall or blow tears one of the ligaments that connects the collarbone to the shoulder blade.

Since it's no longer anchored, the collarbone may move out of position and push against the skin near the top of your shoulder. Although separated shoulders can cause deformity, people usually recover fully with time.

"I bought you guys food." Spikes the Ghost smiles looking at his tired brother's. Romeo has been in hospital for full two days without a possibility of him waking up.

"I still can't believe I mourned a very much a live person. All the tears I wasted." Sanele clicks his tongue stuffing himself with fried chips in his mouth.

"It shows how much you truly love me. Next time you come bring your own proofing vest." He says looking at the sleeping heavily sedated Romeo.

"Bulletproof buti wami." Zenzele corrects him but Spikes brushes that off signalling him to keep quite.

"Yeyeye, but I'm alive. Entlek where's that money that you stole weMalindi?"

"In the cabin," Malindi.

"How much?" Spikes and money!

"None of your business." Malindi answers playing games on his phone. "We will meet at the cabin later on. Wifey needs me." He stands and walks out of the hospital room. They all stand in comfortable silence looking at Romeo breathing through the machines.

"Hope you feel better soon, brother. Find the strength to keep strong during your recovery. You still need to come back, you have a family and a wonderful woman waiting for you." Anathi says in respect and the guys nod their heads in agreement.

"Don't worry, you'll get well soon. Viruses will get tired of you pretty soon.

You must be enjoying all the attention of people towards you. I need some attention too. We are all waiting to know how hospital food tastes like. Look I told your mom that I'm praying for your quick recovery. So, get well soon and make my prayers true, otherwise, I'll stop doing so." Spikes puts his hand on his chest and bends his head down in respect with all of his brothers looking at him in disbelief.

What a brother they have!

AYANDA

I'm looking at the nurse changing my diaper disgusted.

"Woah ay ngeke Buti uyanukisa shame." I'm too ashamed to even answer her. I can't do anything for myself after all.

"Manje uma enukisa umusizelani?" My heart sighs in relief hearing her voice. "I will inform your superintendent that this is how you handle patients in this hospital. Move!" Ayanda hisses as she placed a bowl of jungle oats on top of the counter.

"Thank you," I muttered shamefully. This is the same woman I damaged months ago but today she is hear holding my hand through it all. I will forever be grateful. She wiped me clean and covered me with a sheet.

"I will be back." She tells me. I look at her as she walked out leaving me with the nurse that was assigned to me.

"You can leave," I say and she looks at me.

"I...."

"Angisakunkeli manje? I ask and she looks down in disappointment. She said I'm stinking so I'm just doing her a favour in telling her to leave.

"Ngyaxolisa Buti." She's still here, I sigh closing my eyes praying that nothing comes out of my behind since Ayanda didn't put any diapers on. The pains are getting more intense and I can't do anything about it. I can't even use my God damn hands!

"Don't let her get to you." Great she's back, I was starting to get worried thinking that maybe she got tired of my shit and left me.

"It hurts thought, to literally know that you can't do anything for yourself. I feel less of a man right now." My heart is breaking.

"There will always be people who will always has that negativity to always bring other people down." She advises and I agree with her. You cannot hang around negative people and expect to live a proper life. Negative attitudes can also affect your intelligence and ability to think. — A warm towel lands on my face unexpectedly. Why didn't she warn me that it's time for bath.

"Did you bribe the nurses or something cause it's not yet visiting hours." I say as she continues to wipe my body gently and smoothly.

"I got connections, ungapihiki nami." Indeed ngeke ngiphike naye because she comes and goes as she pleases.

"Yes mam." She places the bucket aside and applies lotion on my whole body. I love how her tiny hands go up and down my body.

"You look fresh now." She combs my hair, "you totally need a hair cut." She neatly pats my hair making it even. She takes out Listerine out of her bag and makes me to rinse my mouth.

"Thank you," I say,

"You have to eat before they feed you that sugarless oats." As if she knows how much I hate it. But yet she walked in with it.

She's wearing a very short dress today, well it's not that very short just something bellow her knees. Her phone rings and she smiles picking it up. My heart sinks instantly, I'm hurt no lies. I had hopes that maybe she feels the same about me that little bit. I'm looking at her as she talking, if my hands were functioning I would have grabbed that phone out of her hands and smashed it against the wall.

"Okay by girl." She drops the call, the last statement caught my attention "I'll be leaving in a few, someone wants me to baby sit for her." She says feeding me wheat bread with cheese, basically I'm eating a cheese sandwich. I can't wait to be well so that I can be able to eat anything I want.

I'm left alone and bored, I'm tired of watching the walls of this hospital. Ayanda is making friends and I'm so happy for her.

"Mr Myeni, I come with good news." The doctor tells me, I wish he could just tell me that I will be able to walk for myself again.

"I hope it's good news," I say hoping for the best. He laughs and opens the file he is holding in his hand and reads through it. I look at the watch on the wall and it's almost 2 O'clock.

"I'm back," Ayanda says holding a little cute baby girl. The doctor tilts his head and looks at them and smiles.

"Look at what we have here. You look so much like your father. She's totally a spitting image of you" He says to the little girl. "You have a very beautiful family." I look at Ayanda who was trying so bad to hold her laugh and shrugged her shoulders.

"Thank you I guess." What do I say vele. I had to play along plus I had no choice.

"Pleasure, as I was saying you are getting discharged today. You are fine and healthy. The pain will subside if you keep hard on those exercises." He smiles and walks out. If I were a walking man I would have done a victory dance.

"Very well then let's go home." Ayanda looks and sounds different and that scares the hell out of me.

Arriving home felt unbelievable, spending the night in hospital made me so uncomfortable. I'm sitting in my comfortable bed surrounded by warm blankets watching soccer.

"What's your name?" I ask the little girl next to me who was playing games on Ayanda's phone. Ayanda is in the kitchen cooking dinner

that woman and pots are so inseparable.

"Mbalienhle," her tiny voice just makes her even more beautiful.

"You look beautiful," she pays no mind to me and continues to play her game. Kids!

"If I knew better I would say you are the father," Ayanda steps inside the room with food on the tray.

"I wish," indeed I wish I had a child to make matters worse my mother-in-law is pregnant with my child!

"So you're feeding two people?" I ask feeling sad for her. I don't want her to overwork herself. Her body is very tiny to be working this hard.

"Have no choice," she sighs and starts feeding us.

"Where's the mother?" I ask. I don't want the kid to feel unsafe around the crippled man.

"She just texted she is on her way." I nod my head understanding her answer. I loud knock bangs on my door....

"What will the cops be doing outside my house this late?" There's only one explanation to this knocking, I watch too much Hollywood movies and trust me the cops knock is never a pleasant one. Ayanda laughs as she walks out of the room carrying the little girl that was already sleeping.

"She's gone already? That was quick." I say to Ayanda who was already getting under covers.

"Yeap, such a sweet baby. It's a pity her mother was raped and she was born." She lays down on her back facing the ceiling.

"She is a product of rape?" My voice barely came out when I ask her.

"She was 18 doing matric and on her way home a group of boys came out of no where and raped her. She said the rapists friends were cheering for the guy. How can men be this wicked vele!"

My chest dried up as I struggled to breathe. I did the same to her and it's unfortunate that she lost her baby, I mean our baby. I don't even know what to say at this point I feel the hurt in her voice and it's all because of me and my selfishness. She clicks her tongue getting up. I'm still sitting like a statue that I am. She roughly pulls me down making me to lay down on my back. She sits on top of my flat dick surrounded by a diaper and starts punching my chest with her tiny hands. I'm feeling slight pain since I'm numbness.

"I hate you! I hate you!" She cries and tries to strangle me. I don't blame her she's still hurting and the memories trigger at times. I wish I could hold her and tell her that all will be well.

"Ayanda," I soft call her, she's still sitting on top of me with her hands on her face crying so painfully. What have I done! "Sleep on my chest and wrap my arms around your waist." I instruct, I may not feel anything but I do feel the pressure of something. Without dispute she does still crying, she lays on my chest and wraps my arms around her chest and sob. "I'm sorry Aya, but I promise to make it up to you one day." I whisper kissing her forehead. She calms down and dozed off immediately after that.

"I will do everything in my power to make you heal and that's a promise I'm making." I sigh thinking of the things I did in the past. I finished my last grade which is grade 12 when I was 23. I met Nkanyezi when I was 18 and at that time and I was a very bad boy. I was into drugs, partied like an animal, repeated grades like it's nobody's business. Shit hit the fan when my father passed away and my mother had to marry babomncane. That man hated my guts and still does. My sister's were angels and I was the devil. I decided to do a short course from the help of Nkanyezi, she was there for me and never lost hope. I studied business management and later applied for a funding. That's how my business blossomed. But lost that all today because of my recklessness. Every body turned their backs on me when I need them the most. I will forever cherish Ayanda for being there for me. Her and her sister Nkanyezi are cut from the same cloth. I wonder how the mother gave birth to such humble beautiful daughters.

MANTOMBELA

Ayanda seems to be falling for Ntokozo slowly without her recognising it. My biggest fear is when she gets to learn about the paternity of the baby I'm carrying. Now I regret telling that big headed Ntokozo that he is responsible for this pregnancy. Why didn't I just keep my mouth shut! Now look at me about to ruin my daughter's happiness.

"They said stress is not good for your baby." What the hell is Mhlongo doing here? I thought I made it clear that I don't want anything that has to do with him even though my heart says otherwise.

"Death is better than what I'm feeling right now trust me." I say and his eyes widen in shock.

"So you now wish death upon yourself?" Did he have to ask me again?

"Yebo Mhlongo, right now I wish nothing but death for myself." He wouldn't understand what I'm feeling right now. My whole life is just turned upside down.

"Anything to make you feel better?" There's nothing that will make me feel better.

"I doubt," we fall into comfortable silence and stare at each other. I still love my husband no lies but it's better for us to separate.

"I just came to check up on you." He says still standing. I never knew that one day I will have a meaningless conversation with a man I call my husband.

"Thank you," my heart feels heavy, I'm hurt, sad and disappointed in myself. Why did I ever sleep with Ntokozo in the first place. Ow my God this is totally embarrassing. When I turn to look back and think of all the things he did to me the whole night makes my heart shiver in fear.

"Usalekahle," he walks out leaving me in tears. Maybe this is a goodbye to us, our marriage. I have to accept my fate and move on.

AYANDA

I regret entering that room. Every event is playing in my mind like a record placed on repeat. I can't sleep. Whenever I try closing my eyes the worse comes in vein. Kanti mina ngoneni? kubani?

I'm sitting in the dark rocking myself back and forth. It's 2am on the dot and I can't get a winks of sleep. Where is Romeo when I need him the most? He would have know what to do. I hate him for leaving me without any further explanation, maybe....what if he is dead wherever he is? Or maybe he has a problem and can't reach out to me? Mxm let me not rank myself with questions cause obviously I will not find any answers.

I feel like drinking Amasi, I don't know how this have suddenly become my favourite. The way I use to hate them growing up.

"Ya Neh," I look at the glass after gulping every bits of Amasi in it. Now this is what I call African cream. Who ever created this needs to be applauded.



## AT THE HOSPITAL

The doctor pressed the shock button simultaneously located on the paddles upon delivery of the shock.

"Come on we losing him!" He shouts sweating trying to bring the man back to life.

The automated external defibrillator (AED) is a computerized medical device. It's battery powered with adhesive defibrillator pads that are applied to the chest to allow an electrical current to pass through to the heart to reset the heart's normal electrical current. The machines start to beat normally and everyone sighs in relief.

"We did it!" Says the doctor in excitement. There's nothing exciting like bring a dead person back to life.

"Is he breathing?" Another asks in disbelief. It's totally a miracle that one survived such a tragic incident.

Indeed the man was breathing on his own which was a blessing in disguise. His whole body is covered in bandages.

"Doctor, a police officer is looking for you." One of the nurses say and walked out of the room.

"Clean him up and apply Polysporin or Neosporin ointment, which you can then cover with a non-stick dressing like Telfa pads." She takes off her gloves and write notes on the file and walked out.

"Officer's, to my office please." Everyone one knows that in cases like these the law has to do investigations.

"Doctor Jali," the officer reads her name tag. "What do we have?"

"The patient is badly burnt and also has a gunshot wound on the chest. He is awake now but still in shock which means he won't be able to answer any questions. Regarding the evidence there is non but we sent his blood to the pathologist for further process." She answers confidently and leans back looking at them in the eyes.

"Are you hiding something? I don't remember asking you all of those questions?" The officer suspiciously looked at her but the doctor wasn't backing down.

"What will I possibly hide? I didn't know sharing information with the law paints me the bad guy that's hiding information." She defends herself. "Is there anything else? I have to get back on my patients." She says standing up.

"We will be back," the cop chucks looking at her and walked out of the hospital. The doctor took out her phone and made a phone call.

"Any update?" She just want to find out the patients name and luckily for her she managed to withdraw blood from his system.

"Steven Davis, we are unable to track anything else that links to him."

"Okay thank you. Please forward me that information I will look into it." She disconnects the call. She hopes and prays that it's not going to be one of those patients who are family less, talking about people who come to South

Africa illegally and end up being mixed up in the wrong crowd. She sighs walking back to her duties and notices the police officers were still around.

"I wonder what I could possibly hide." She says to herself as she walked away to do her rounds. 26

AYANDA

For this whole week I've been having morning sickness like a pregnant woman. At first I thought that maybe I was pregnant but than again it could be a false alarm. I decided to pass by the doctor's maybe they can be able to determine what is wrong with me. I can't stomach anything, and my stomach is getting bloated bit by bit. Atleast I'm almost there, my phone rings and I know only one person who could call me Mapule, and indeed it's her.

"Mageliza!" She hates it when I call her like that I don't know why. I find it cute.

"I need your help, I have to be somewhere. Can you look after Mbalienhle for me?" She doesn't have to ask me. She knows very well that I can never say no to that little creature. Now I will have to postpone my trip, but I hope I didn't contract any major disease that's incurable.

"You don't have to ask me. Mbali is my favourite." I say making a U-turn going back home

"I owe you big time, ow and Ayanda...."

"Yes," I know what she's going to say.

"Her name is Mbalienhle not Mbali." She disconnects the call. It's the same difference moss. I don't know why she gets all worked out if I shortlist her babies name. One day I will end up biting my tounge.

"You back?" Why is he shocked?

"Ain't you happy to see me?"

"Of course I am, who would ever get tired looking at this tiny cute round little face. What did the doctor say?" Atleast he cares, I wonder what happened to the monster that was inside of him.

"Babysitting," I say throwing myself on the couch stretching my legs putting them on top of the counter.

"You seem to be attracted to that little girl."

"I like babies it's unfortunate God took mines too early. Salad?" I'm already on my feet.

"Ay ngeke ngikhathele mina amahlamvu." Ntokozo mumbles to himself. I'm doing this for his own health. Decided to spice it up with a salad dressing today. You know that crunchiness that just makes you want to have more and more. I have a glass of Amasi on the side and damn what a great combination.

"I never knew that this is one hell of a snack." Ntokozo is looking at me with so much disgust on his face. "What?"

"Are you sure you're okay cause lately I'm not understanding you?" What the hell is he saying. If he doesn't understand me than he must go to hell! I've just lost my appetite.

"You know Ntokozo...." I just let it all out and he just looks at me surprised. I'm mad that he is making fun of what I love.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make you angry." His voice is filled with panic and I just realise that I over reacted. Why was I even crying in the first place? The door bell pings and Mbalienhle walks in running towards my direction. Mapule is seriously mad, did she just leave her baby without having a word with me? I intend to forget Mapule is Mapule and no one else.

ROMEO

I'm looking at the diamonds that almost killed me. Steven....where ever you are I hope you are dead and buried. It's been a week I got discharged and I'm hating every bit of this house. I decided to do house hunting and I just found the perfect one for my family. It's just houses away from where I used to live. I'm not fully well recovered but I'm trying to stay strong for my family. I will not sell this house but will leave it for Aya when she comes back. Even if it takes years I will be waiting for her. I miss that soul everyday and the fact that I have people guiding her without her knowledge put me at ease. I still love her beyond anything and I just hope when she comes back after three months she will be a better person.

"Done packing your belongings?" I ask Rebecca who has been sulking this entire time. I'm grateful for the boys to be here helping me. It's true when they told me that brotherhood means alot to them and they have made me apart of them.

"Yes Daddy," I kiss her forehead and leave her to do what ever she's doing. What I'm grateful for is that the house I got also has a basement and by the look of things the previous owner didn't know that that house has a basement. I'll just have to work my magic and clean it up just for safety.

"The truck is here," Spikes screams in excitement and I just look at him luck a nut case. I wonder what happened to his screw head.

We arrive at the new house and to be honest it's better than the previous one. The master bedroom takes the cup for me. The kitchen wouldn't be an idle deal breaker for me cause I hardly cook but I know for women it's always the first. So I made sure that this kitchen will accommodate my mother and my woman.

"Everything is in order," Zenzele says after we have neatly placed every item where it belongs. I must say I'm taken by this house. "And your neighbours are noisy." He further adds settling down next to me grabbing a can of beer. These people almost lost their lives for me. Now that my diamonds are back I need to get back into the business.

"That mosquito?" I laugh mentioning her. I bet she is looking at them guys like snacks it's a pity because the are all taken and happily married. And I'm in a very much blessed relationship.

"Food is ready boys." My mother is a God saint and all thanks to Aya that my mother is live and healthy today. "Someone has been banging the door, I'll go see who is it ." She turns to attend to the door and she comes back with the girl. Great just great.

"Sanibona," she waves her hands in the air I don't know whether it's excitement or what. "This house looks much more better." Can she go already. What did I do to deserve such an annoying neighbour! I've never even spent a day in this house and already there are people parading like they own it. Aya must come back as in yesterday!

"What brings you here child?" My mother has time for everything.

"I just came to welcome my new neighbours." And the gum she's chewing is definitely such a turn off.

"Okay, help yourself out." Did my mother just offer her food? I don't believe this one bit! I look at this hideous girl sitting opposite me with so much....I wouldn't say with so much hate cause I just met her.

"Can't you see we having a family time?" I hate it when someone disturbs my people.

"Bettina is the name," she winks at me dishing for her self.

"Ha ngishilo sister Bettina febelina." Spikes claps his hands once and held his mouth. Everyone turns their attention to him. "What, she's sister Bettina moss which means she is a easy come easy go target." He says without care and Bettina looks at him a little hurt. She always gets that reaction whenever she introduces herself to people. That's why she prefers using her African name Wandle. She sighs getting off the table maybe she wasn't supposed to be this forward but it's just who she is.

"I'll take my leave," Mother insisted, Bettina sat down and Romeo lost all his appetite.

"It's getting late, I'm sure my lovely wife is wondering why I'm late." Zenzele says already on his feet. He was uncomfortable sitting with a complete stranger. "Thanks for the lovely food ma." He bows his head in respect.

"I think my one is pregnant, she's going all psycho on me, thank you." Mngqobi stands up. He is wearing a vest that shows his upper well built body. That Tattoo woman's face on his arm suits him perfectly. Damn those brackets, the walk, that scary aura made Bettina press her legs together has her clit throbbed. All of these men are so damn fine even the talkative one, his pink wet lips. She was not supposed to be here, her inner self says. Romeo was looking at her as she was salivating over every guys that's in the house.

"They are all happily married, what you have in that head of yours take it out. Ow and they don't cheat." He stands up and leave her shamefully looking down as her cookie was soaking wet.

"I miss my woman," I say to myself, this is totally torture. I just want to here her voice and that will ease my heart.

AYANDA

I decided to bake since I have nothing else to do and this stupid cellphone rings and it's a number I don't recognise. I swipe the phone and keep quite.

"Some things don't change," that voice, is it him? I look at the screen and still I don't recall this number. "Say one reason for me not to shoot you."

"Cause you love me," I bite my lower lips in excitement. How I have been waiting for this day for almost a month.

"You got that one right. How are you?" Did he really have to ask me after disappearing on me for so long!

"I'm suffocating

" honestly I am. "I hate every minute in this house, I hate Ntokozo with passion but I try so hard to pretend that I'm well but deep down I'm dying." I want to cry but I can't brake down in front of the child.

"All will be well my love. I really miss you." He tells me and sighs deeply.

"Did you manage to sort out the mess that you were on?" I ask hoping he will say come back to me.

"Yes love, but that doesn't mean you should trust everyone you meet. I know you, it's like you were born to bless the country." I laugh at his statement, but I can't help it if someone needs help.

"I meet a friend though. I'm tired of looking at Ntokozo's ugly face." I said that out loud, maybe he heard me cause I don't care.

"I know," I frown hearing his response. "How do you know cause I never told you," I want to hear this from the horse's mouth.

"I know each and everything that you do women. I even know that you wake up in the middle of the night to drink that white thingy from the container." Now that's creepy. We talk for some time making me blush, laugh, smile and cry. This man was brought by God himself, he was custom made for me. No man will do what he does.

"I'll be sending you money every month. I love you keep that in mind." He drops the call without waiting for me to respond. I wanted to ask about the magic phone but I didn't get time. That phone has no service at all, probably it's the network.

I'm exhausted from all the baking and cleaning I've been doing. Mablienhle is totally knocked out fast asleep, maybe I over worked her. But she did nothing other than messing herself with flour.

"Thank you," atleast he still have manners, I wonder what happened to that old jerky Ntokozo who only knew himself.

"You welcome," I wipe his mouth and help him to drink water. "You look happy today,"

"I just feel like being happy." I say thinking of my man who makes me feel like the only woman on earth.

"I'm happy that you happy." If only he knew what's behind that happiness. We fall into an awkward silence not knowing what to say to each other further.

"I've been thinking of trying this garage thing again." He tells me and I look at him with shock written all over my face.

Atleast with this brainless of his he still thinks of something useful.

"I will help you," I wish I could slap my right now, why on earth will I bloody say that! Look at his face brightening with excitement.

"I don't even know what to say," the excitement in his voice says it all. "If my legs were alive and kicking i would have danced a victory dance for you. I don't even know how you do it."

"Hehe limbless," I crack with laughter, that statement doesn't bug him anymore. He is here laughing his lungs out. We stare at each other and I see his eyes sparkling in happiness. I don't like this one bit.

"Let me help you to your room." I help him seat on his wheelchair and wheeled him to his room which has turned out to be our room. I help him sleep on the bed and mistakenly fall on top of him. He smiles revealing his teeth. He is not bad looking just his heart. Something stupid in me pulls my head down and I find myself kissing him. This is the first time we kiss passionately without aggregation and force. A picture of me and Rome flashes right before my eyes and I jump off Ntokozo with so much fear. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done that." I say biting my nails. I can't betray Romeo like this, that man has been nothing but good to me.

"Your lips taste sweet by the way." I help him change into his PJ's, it's late and I don't even know if Mapule is coming back or what. I gently pick Mbalienhle up....she will be sleeping where my mum use to sleep. I hope she's not afraid of the dark. I'll just keep the lights on just incase. I tuck her in slightly snoring, I wonder how will my baby would have looked like if he or she were born. I walk out of the room leaving the door half closed. I don't know what she prefers. The dinning room door opens and MaNtombela walks in dragging herself with her feet covered in sand or shall I say dust.

"Can you please make me some food." She sits down and I just look at her confused. Make her food, where is she coming looking all this dirty.

"Did you escape the hospital?" I want hear this. I thought people only escaped prison not hospital's.

"I got discharged, I didn't have any money so I walked." I don't respond, I decided to dish up for her without asking any questions.

"Here," I give her a plate of food and she starts digging in without washing her hands. I want to laugh so bad but hey I'm that cruel. "I'm off to bed, there is someone in that bedroom uzolala naye." I leave her not wanting to answer any questions which I'm not prepared to answer and besides I don't even know what to with her.

MANTOMBELA

Every part of my body hurts. My feet are aching and my lower abdomen hurts. It was stupid of me to walk from the hospital to the house. I ate like I haven't eaten in days that I ended up dishing for myself more. Ayanda is really a good cook and it hurts me that I'm not the one who taught her the way to the kitchen. The scorns are mouth watering, why can't I get full. I intend to forget that I eat for two people. Walking to the bedroom was a mission but I'm grateful it's not upstairs, I wouldn't have survived all that. The first thing I want to do is take a shower to wash away all this sweat and sleep peacefully. I will even sleep naked the way I'm so tired I can't even lift my arms. I throw myself on top of the bed and look at the replica of Ntokozo sleeping next to me. Does this mean he cheated on my daughter? This doesn't make any sense, or did Nkanyezi hide that she has a baby with Ntokozo? I'm cracking my mind with all sorts of confusion. Maybe it's a family member....I place my hand on my stomach and smile a bit but that smile quickly vanishes away when I think about the possibilities of losing my daughter for good. I've just found her I can't lose her now. How will I explain everything when the baby is born? Oh my goodness- I don't want to stress myself about this. They say everything happens for a reason. So right now I don't want to stress myself a lot I will cross the bridge when I get there. That reminds me, I will have to be in touch with the lawyer tomorrow, I meant it when I said it's time I moved on and left the life I use to live behind for the better. But how will I move on if I know very well that I have this huge secret that I'm hiding from my daughter. This will brake her even more. Taking my own life is out of the equation I cannot be that selfish. I will have to own up to my mistakes and fix them. Ain't I tired of singing the same old song? I've been singing this song close to a month now and there are no changes from me. God where are you when I need you the most. I always thought that dying is the best and it will solve all of the problems but I'm clearly lying to myself. This is not the life imagined at this age. I'm sure my mother is highly disappointed in me wherever she is. I'm sure in heaven she doesn't even want to say I'm her daughter. But I have nobody else to blame but myself!

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MANTOMBELA

I've been tossing and turning throughout the night thinking of this baby sleeping peacefully next to me. Call me crazy this is definitely Ntokozo's child but I know I ain't mad not even one bit. I chuck getting off the bed and the girl wakes up. Jesus even the black shining eyes are exactly like his. Maybe ukufana kwabantu, if kunjalo then God truly took his time creating people who look alike. She gets off the bed and opens the door walking barefoot. Even the ugly toes are exactly like his! Suddenly I feel, I think I'm going to have a running stomach.

AYANDA

I had a hard time sleeping yesterday. The guilt in me was killing me. I shouldn't have done what I did.... kissing Ntokozo out of all people. God has truly turned his back on me. What's funny is I didn't feel any feeling towards the kiss even though it was passionate and slow. Maybe it's because he is feeling less or maybe it's the guilt in me? I'm making eggs and all of a sudden I have this urge to throw up. The toilet is too far by the time I get there I would have messed the whole floor. I bend my head on the sink balancing my hand against it and everything came out. I felt my intestines turning about to come out and damn I feel so dizzy. Why am I always sick in the morning. I drink cold water straight from the bottle and burp. Now I feel better, I quickly clean the mess I made in the sink before MaNtombela comes and see this mess. Not that I'm scared of her it's because I just don't want to hold any conversations with her.

"Aunty," she's awake. Her soft voice just melts my heart in a way. I wonder if will I be able to have kids with Romeo in the future?

"Yes babe," I squat in front of here being the same level as her and she smiles shyly looking at me. She throws her hands around my neck and we fall with her on top of me. "Wow, what was that for?" I ask and she just giggles. Now she doesn't want to move on top of me, how will I stand up with her on top of me. I swear Mbalienhle and Ntokozo like killing me with their weight.

"Aibo!" Did MaNtombela have to scream such dramatically? Can't she see that we playing wrestling unplanned. Something catches my eyes, MaNtombela running like a mad woman.

"The pan is burning!" She removes it from the stove placing it in the sink. I totally forgot about that. I'm sure the egg is crispy black. "Why are you being so careless!" Is she really shouting at me. Ain't we pass that stage? I roll my eyes still on the floor with Mbalienhle on top of me. I remove her gently getting up. My alarm blows off and I remember something instantly.

"Shit!" I rush to the bedroom where Ntokozo is at with Mbalienhle following me. "It's your appointment day and I have totally forgotten." I say stripping myself naked. I quickly hide my private part realising that Mbalienhle is behind me. "Go to the kitchen baby I'm coming." She shakes her head no already in the verge of crying. I sigh pulling her by hand. That means I can't take a shower I'll have to use a bathtub.

I'm driving and keep on checking Ntokozo and Mbalienhle on the rear mirror. They are both sitting at the back looking outside the window. These two are so the same and it scares me. Yesterday I took my time analysing them while they were still asleep. They even same the same black sport just behind the ear. This cannot be a coincidence. Could it be that Ntokozo....I don't even want to think about it.

"And we are here," I say parking the car. Luckily they were male nurses outside the parking smoking. I asked for assistance and they gladly helped me to put Ntokozo on his wheelchair. I wheeled him with all eyes on us, I'm used to this kind of attention and it annoys the hell out of me.

After registration we patiently waited for someone to come fetch us.

"I'm hungry," I whine. It's like I have a hole in my stomach.

"Haibo, didn't you eat 30 minutes ago?" Is he really asking me?



"Angisuthangake," I fold my arms suddenly feeling annoyed. First of all I don't want to be here. I would be home eating whatever I like with Romeo's money. It's funny how they don't bother to ask me where I get all the money because I'm not working.

"You can go to the cafeteria," he says as if he gave me money.

"Mxm," the devil smiles. I think he enjoys annoying me and he is definitely annoying.

"Mr Myeni, the doctor is ready to see you." The nurse informs us.

ROMEO

I'm staring at her pictures jerking myself until I released.

"Shit," I'm panting out of excitement. I don't know what kind of excitement is this. Aya is really messing up with my mind. The door bell rings, I wonder who that is now cause yesterday we had an uninvited guests. I'm not up into seeing any guests. If this man who lived here was famous than he should put a notice in the newspaper and inform everyone about that he no longer lives here. The house is very quite, the kids are in school. I have to make a mental note that I look for a maid, I cannot have my mother doing all the house chores and besides she is not fully recovered. I open the door there she was wearing the skimpiest dress.

"I'm on my way out can I help you?" I look at her with a bored look and she smiles. Ow God could my day get any better!

"My mother baked cakes and she thought she could share." She lets herself in. "Your name is Romeo right?" What is she a journalist now?

"No Rambo, if you don't mind I was on my way out." I'm still standing by the door.

"I'm just going to put these here," she places the lunchbox on top of the counter and walks out and waits for me by the door. My phone rings and my heart jumps in joy. You know when. You smile like a mad person, that's me right now.

"Poonky," the excitement in me is beyond.

"I swear I will sue this hospital!" I wonder what went down. I know she's at the hospital with that punk.

"Tell your man what happened," I moved aside and the zombie follows still looking at me.

"They said Ntokozo is not crippled, they mixed up the medical records. I don't even know how that happens. You know what annoys me the most, I've been carrying this limbless around and he is enjoying it. Ow heavens I just want to come back!" Is she crying? I think she's over reacting.

"Sue the hospital if that will make you happy my love. Remember I got your back." I want to laugh, I really don't know what is wrong with Aya these days. If she's not shouting she's crying. One would sware she's pregnant.

"Bye,"

"I love you," I say.

"I hate you!" The line goes dead and I just laugh my lungs out shaking my head. "Yah neh."

"Girlfriend?" WTF! This girl can't be serious, I even forgot that she is here.

"Wife," her smile vanishes off her face and I smirk proudly. "You will see yourself out." I walk to my car and drove out with her still standing like a lost case. I'm just going to spend time with the boys than later on fetch my minnie me's.

NTOKOZO

I'm seriously lost, how can I be told that I am a crippled and I won't be able to walk again? But today they are telling me nonsense. After the news Aya barged out without saying any word and left me with a child I don't even know. Is this punishment or what?

"We apologize for the inconvenience sir." This doctor is not explaining anything other than apologizing. I want answers and straight one for that matter.

"You made me believe that I will never be able to walk again and today you are telling me that you mixed my medical reports with another Ntokozo Myeni? This is totally ridiculous!"

"I understand but here's the thing....look on the bright side, those pains you have been having are the signs of your muscles functioning again...."

I cut him short, "Kahle, Kahle what disease do I have?" I'm having mixed emotions, if I was a walking man I would jumped at him killing his balls out.

"You have what is called Pinched nerves, this causes pain from neck downwards. Your system becomes weak, numb and tingling among other systems. A compressed spinal cord can cause weakness in the arms and legs, numbness

balance trouble and difficulty with using the hands."

"Is it curable?" My voice came out in a low.

"Physical therapy, and rest. Another possible nonsurgical approach in injection therapy. Cortisone injections may help reduce inflammation and remove the pressure on your nerve and stem cell injections may help you body heal." I nod my head vigorously understanding.

"So I was being feed treatment for the wrong thing," I chuck in disbelief.

"We apologize, and we thank the Lord for finding it sooner. I don't know what would have happened if we were to diagnose this issue in a later stage where the damage has been done already." I feel like crying, even if the doctor explains that they do also make mistakes they are human after all.

"I'm just glad that you found the route of the problem."

"Right now we need to flush the pills out of your system to start with the new treatment." This is definitely absurd but for a mere factor that they finally found the route of the problem.

NTOKOZO

Later that day we were sitting comfortably in silence not knowing what to say to each other. I clear my throat and look at Aya who has zoned out looking, more like staring at the cartoons.

"May I please have a glass of water." I'm pressing my arse together praying that she doesn't lash out on me. She surprised me and fetched me water and helped me to drink. "Thank you," I say burping. The little one has fallen asleep and sleeping comfortably on my lap. I told her to do so because Aya wasn't around so I just wanted her to feel safe.

"Let me put her to bed," she picks her up and comes back drinking Amasi. I shake my head in amusement and smile.

"Did you tuck her in well?" I find myself asking and she frowns looking at me.

"What do you take me for? I'm a pro babysitter." She rolls her eyes at me and I find it so damn cute. I laugh and suddenly my heart beats abnormally. I don't know why I'm having this feeling but it's not good.

"Ay cha kona niyafana noMbali," she gets undercovers.

"People look the same moss," I say,

"To a point that she has your mark behind her ear." Now that's something I haven't noticed.

"Are you serious?" I ask in shock. There is no way I didn't notice that. Every Myeni has that mark!

"As a heart attack. Did you ever I mean ever cheat on my sister five years ago?"

"I did and I made sure I played safe." Now this topic is shifting me into an awkward position. What if the baby is really mine. Phelan ngangiyisoka lamanyala.

"Think deep Ntokozo, everywhere I go they say this is your blood." Aya tells me and I can't think of anyone. All my smashes I made sure I wore a glove.

"My mind is totally blank Aya," and indeed it is.

"Maybe if you see her mother maybe the memory might come back." Maybe, but what if it's someone I use to full around with? I don't want to bring my past to the present. All that I did is in the past now it has been dead and buried!

"Eish," I wish I could scratch my head right now but I can't. A sharp pain shoots at the back making me to moan painfully.

"What is it?" Panic is written all over her face. Out of all the things I did to her she still has the care and love for me. I wish I wasn't the monster that I was. Maybe if I treated her like an egg we would have had beautiful kids.

"My back is painig," I close my eyes sucking all the pain in as a man. If I knew that my life will take this route I wouldn't have did the things I once did before.

"Okay," without anything further questions she strips me naked and applies baby oil all over my body.

"I love this," I'm sleeping on my stomach and baby girl is massaging all over with her tiny hands. I feel a little bit of feelings and that means one thing I'm healing.

"Don't get used to this." She turns me over and makes me sleeps on my back and does her magic. She's sitting on top of me and I can feel her moving up and down. I close my eyes imaging her being on top bouncing and riding me for dear life. I'm not wearing a diaper cause the doctor advised us to try a different routine of me trying to force myself to the bathroom. Her hand trails down to my abdomen, I lift my head a little and I can see my member up already but the feelings are barely even there. She lowers my pants and my torso springs up. I close my eyes trying to be deep sexually minded, probably I might enjoy something.

"Do you feel anything?" She asked and I'm so embarrassed to even answer.

"A little," I whisper still with my eyes closed shut. I feel her weigh on top of me making me to flung my eyes open.

"What are you doing?"

"Shh," she hush's me and begins to move in circles. I can feel a little bit of sensational pleasure. She has her head up with her eyes closed. I wish I could move from underneath and give it to her senselessly.

"Ow," she moans softly as she played with her tiny boobs. A knock on the door disturbs our moment or shall I say her moment. "Shit," she quickly jumps off me and covers me with a sheet and walks out of the room. After a while she comes back and she is avoiding eye contact.

"Are you okay?" I find myself asking.

"I'm fine!" She snaps just like that, okay my mind works over time like Google she regrets what she just did and I just know it.

ROMEO

I'm gulping down the whisky letting it burn my throat. It's almost midnight and I can't sleep. What Aya did really hurt me but I don't want to put it to heart. Everyone is asleep and I can't seem to sleep. I decided to stand outside the cold and listen to the cold breeze. It's almost 9pm and I'm half naked in the yard. If people could see me they would definitely say that I'm a witch practicing witchcraft.

"Maki," this girl is starting to be a nuisance. She's wearing a very short silky nightdress revealing her thick thighs. No lies she has a body to die for just a shame that she is not pretty. She's those type of girls that you would fuck with a pillow on top of her face and avoiding her kisses.

"What!" I respond feeling annoyed. I pour myself another whiskey in the glass adding ice.

"Goodnight," I just look at her standing over the fence. My eyes are glued on her thighs and I just wonder how she taste like.

"Come here," I call her with my two fingers, she kneels down and slides under the fence. I chuck in disbelief. This girl is a total disgrace to womanhood.

"What are you drinking?" She asks grabbing the glass out of my hands and gulps down the whiskey. She pours another glass and throws it in her mouth without even flinching. "Don't look at me like that, these stuffs are my favourite." I just look at her as she helped herself and she's starting to get tipsy.

"Stay right here I will be back," I walk inside the house stuffing something useful inside my pocket. I find her still drowning herself in my whiskey.

"You back," she beams in joy, "I wish I could slap her but damn I want to offload it's been long. I spank her butt and she giggles. She's very fast and loose, her hands are already traveling on my torso making it harder. I pull my pants down and order her to kneel down.

"Ow yes," I'm thinking of Aya's tiny tight hot pussy. She's sucking my dick and playing with my balls on the side sending tingling sensations on my body. I pull back and wear a glove. I pull her by her hair roughly and she winches in pain. I make her hold her knees with her arse facing me. A beautiful sight to see, I rub myself against the entrance and she is already wet. Ow damn Lord, I want to fuck her so bad that she will never seduce me next time.

I'm dribbling her without care, I'm enjoying and that's all that matters.

"It hurts," she tries pushing me off, my nails dig deeper against her waist. I know when you in too deep in this position it becomes uncomfortable. I'm humping her thinking about my Aya and later release.

"You can go home." I dismiss her coldly without care. She stands straight and wipes her tears and limps going back home. Pull out the condom disposing it and walk back to the house. Maybe now I would get some sleep. 28

NTOKOZO

When Aya is not around I make sure that try by all means to make myself useful. The medication is really helping alot and the results came back sooner than expected. I now can move my hands, I can now take baby steps without Aya's assistance. I want to surprise her. That woman has done alot for me and I will forever be thankful for it. We are still waiting for the investors to reply to the emails I've been pestering them with. I just hope and pray that they accept my offer. I'm ready to bounce back with the strongest woman by my side.

It's time I build myself again, it's time I prove to Aya that I'm more than a man. She has been very distant lately and I just know why. She's ashamed of what she did and I don't judge her at all. All I want is for her to be happy that's all.

I'm forcing my legs to the bathroom and it's hella painful. It's like I'm walking in needles filled with ice. I do my business feeling relieved I no longer mess myself. This is just music to my ears and I feel proud like I've achieved something big.

MaNtombela is still around sticking her nose into my business that does not concern her. For the last two weeks she is still hell burnt on say that baby is mine.

"Mkhwenyana," I find her in the kitchen making a snack. I just walk right past her without saying a word and grabbed a bottle of water.

"When are you leaving?" She sounds shocked with my question, "I'm just asking because I want to have my space back. I want Aya to be free in her house." I say and she keeps quite without saying anything.

"Once I give birth." Is she kidding me. What was I thinking sleeping with an oldie.

"Look here woman, you will not destroy my happiness with Ayanda that has just started. I will appreciate it if you go back to your husband's house." I suggest, I don't want Aya finding out about the paternity of the baby her mother is carrying.

"Sooner or later the truth always has a way of coming out and trust me when it comes out my daughter will be hurt the most now that she falling for you." She walks away leaving my heart beating abnormally against my chest. Did I hear correctly, - Aya is falling for me? How did she notice all of this? I thought that maybe Aya still hates me but I was hell bent into making her happy again. If MaNtombela says Aya is falling for me so that will be easy for me to win her back right?

MANTOMBELA

"There's the tiny heart beat." The doctor points out on the screen. "Your 16 weeks and still going. I honestly didn't know that you would reach this stage since it's a high risk pregnancy." I smile emotionally looking at the screen and thought about the possibilities of being a single parent. I have come to realisation that Ntokoza does not want my baby and I've made peace with it. I'm tired of shoving the baby topic down his throat. If he wants to be part of the baby's life he is more than welcome.

"You need to rest alot and try not to stress." He scribbles down on my chart. The doctor prescribed the multi vitamins for me and advised me to eat more healthier.

Walking out of the hospital had me deep in thoughts. I can't look for a job now since I'm being supported by the social grant. Imagine a 55 year old woman being impregnated by her son in-law. I sigh looking at the money that's left in my hand bag. This money is not enough, what will I buy my baby's clothes with? Government should really consider upping the money a bit. Nghola imali yezalukazi kodwa ngimithi! I'm such a huge joke in South Africa.

The town is fully packed and I'm sure people slept in town just because of this money. But some people are really relying on it.

"MaNtombela!" That's Mhlongo's voice. I would never mistaken it with anybody else. I turn around and there he is looking all handsome. He has gained a little bit of weight and that shows he is happy. I haven't seen him after I filled for the divorce. "I've been screaming your name." He tells me and his eyes travels down to my stomach.

"Sorry- I didn't hear you." I respond avoiding eye contact.

"How have you been?" Is he really going to ask me that?

"Trying." I lie, I don't know how I'm doing.

"I was on my way to the shops can you accompany me please." He looks at me with begging eye's. I sigh and obviously he knows I would never say no to him after the way he just looked at me. Eshowe is a very small town, every corner has a store and it's very much easy for everyone to shop.

After doing all that grocery shopping we went to were I use to call home. Everything looks pretty much the same and the picture of our wedding has been taken down the wall and that hurt a bit. It stung like a bee stinging my skin.

I don't even know why I'm cooking for him but I offered and he allowed me to. I don't want to find myself snooping around the bedroom. So I will just respect boundaries and stay in my lane.

"Nakhu ukudla," the plate of food is neatly dished out. I still know my way around the kitchen. His face lits up when he sees his favourite dish infront of him. White samp has always been his favourite. I dish up for myself too and eat like my life depends on it.

"Thank you," he smiles and folds his arms looking at me. "How is your baby?" My heart beats faster than normal.

"He is fine, still a high risk pregnancy." I shyly smile.

"So it's a boy?" He sounds hurt. I nod my head looking down shamefully. How do I bring myself to forgive myself for what I did to this wonderful man.

"Congratulations," he stands up leaving me still seated. Let me wash the dishes and leave this place. Minutes later he comes back holding a packet.

"Happy birthday." My eyes pop out in total shock. I have totally completely forgotten that today is my birthday. How did I miss my own birthday? Tears pile up making m to burst into tears. It's not that I'm crying tears of joy but I'm crying tears of hurt. How can I forget my own birthday!

"It's okay," he embraces me into a warm hug.

"Thank you." I muttered, he grabs me forcefully giving me sloppy kisses and I gladly accept. My blood rushes all over in excitement.

"Let's take this to the bedroom." He pulls me by my hand with me following him behind.

After that steamy encounter he gave me money and I feel like a prostitute. He didn't give me in a bad way but I just felt like I'm being subjected to one. I pass by the shops to buy a few things before going back to Ntokozo's house. I find him watching soccer and the kitchen is full of dishes...

"Ntokozo," he ignores me and continues to watch television. "Ntokozo Maan!" I half scream and he turn to look at me.

"Yini! What! Yini wayisicefe? You want to tell me that the baby is kicking. I didn't ask you to get pregnant." He clicks his tongue and continues to watch soccer. Wow I'm hurt no lies. I decided to let him be and clean the house. The doctor advised me not to stress and that is what I'm exactly doing.

AYANDA

For the past two weeks I have been avoiding Ntokozo like hell. I shouldn't have done what I did, I just thought of Romeo and my imagination ran wild. Today I decided to pay him a surprise visit and I pray that he doesn't know about what I did. But I think it will be the best if I tell him my mistakes. I should consider moving this side cause I can't be driving these long distances.

Arriving at my destination I find the gate wide open, now that's odd. Romeo never leaves the gate open no matter what. There are kids around and it's for safety reasons. The yards looks dirty like it hasn't been swept in days. The door is slightly opened and everything is still in the same position. I look at the portrait of me on the wall and smile. A country club music is playing in the bedroom and I hear some voices. Maybe he has a visitor or maybe he is renting the place. That's the only logic explanation. I follow the music and it leads me to his bedroom. I push the door and got the shock of my life. I freeze on the spot as I looked at my man dribbling another woman with his eyes closed. I watch him as he release his cum inside of her and watched as he pulled out of her with a condom full of his seed. My heart is broken and sore. Ntokozo hurt me but this is beyond, I'm beyond hurt. He made me feel so special and lovable but today he has proven another side of him. What was I thinking anyway, dating a handsome successful man? He stops moving when his eyes land on me. I have no tears to shed but hatred towards him.



"Poonky, it's not what it looks like," he says wearing his clothes and I'm still standing on the same spot.

"I'm sorry for disturbing you. I'll just go back where I come from." I turn my heels to walk and he follows me fastening his zip.

"Aya, babe." I stop and turn to look at him a smile full of hurt and betrayal.

"You know I came here to tell you the wrong I did. You know the pain of doing something cause you were thinking of someone close to your heart. I drove all the way to tell you that I mistakenly slept with Ntokozo because I was thinking about you only to find out that my man or shall I say the man I use to date is doing the same and seems to be enjoying it." I walk out of the room and left him standing in one place.

Driving back home with mixed emotions made my heart stopped beating. My vision is blinded by my tears. A cow came out of nowhere, I tried ducking it but lost control. The car rolled down repeatedly the hill with me inside of it. Something hit my head so hard that I lost my memory instantly. The car is upside down with me inside. I can't move, I can't open my eyes. The only best thing to do is to just let my body give in. Maybe reuniting with my family and child will do me good.

ROMEO

What have I done? What have I done? Ow goddess of my heart. That look

that fake smile.

"Roms," this haliot, I turn around in full speed giving her one hell of a slap. I don't hit woman but she's too forward and it's annoying.

"Don't you ever, I mean ever in this life of yours call my name. Get dressed and get the hell out your services is no longer needed." She's till holding her cheek unbelievably and I don't care. I need to look for her good thing that car has a tracker. I shouldn't have competed with her, I'm the one who pushed her to be in that hell hole again. I remember when she refused but I pushed her anyway now look at the results. She's broken and vulnerable and I just broke her more. Bettina is getting dressed and I can't wait for her to just leave this house.

"What am to you?" She has a nerve asking.

"Fuck buddy nothing more. You are just a slut that I use to offload when I'm stressed. As you can see I need to find my woman. Hope you got the answer loud and clear." I hiss and she widens her eyes in shock.

"Wow," she storms out and I follow her behind with my heart felt on 120. I shouldn't have did what I did. The fact that she only did it once and later regretted it says alot. She drove all the way to share the news that heavy her heart. I am such a fool!

"Get out of my car and use you legs." She slowly step out with tears dripping down her cheeks. Her tears don't move me, there's only one woman that will make me shake and that's Aya.

"Atleast give me money for transportation."

"You mad, tell that to you loose virgina." I lock every gate and drive off leaving her still standing. I'm not heartless but we have to do heartless things for people to lay off your back.

I'm driving like a manic to the destination where my car is. It has been in that position for almost 30 minutes. I press on the accelerator before she moves. Upon arrival I see glasses scattered everywhere.

"No, no, no" I jump off my car following the tyre scratches until I spotted my car written off down the hill. This cannot be happening not when I just found you. Blood everywhere and I can't seem to sport her.

"Aya!" I want to scream so bad. This happened because of me. If I wasn't selfish she would still be alive. Let me not think negative. I have to stay positive until I find her. I know she is not dead wherever she is. I search the entire the place, there's even nothing to search here. This place is in the open. I put my hands on my head with tears blurring my vision. The car is empty and there's no sign of her? What if she was hijacked.

"Ow God," I bend own trying to control my breathings. This can't be happening, I lost Rose I can't loose Aya too.

MANTOMBELA

I've been having this unsettling feeling like something bad is going to happen. Aya is not back and it's in the middle of the night. I sigh getting off the bed marching to Ntokozo's room and I find him on his cellphone.

"You are here talking to only God knows who when my daughter is out there. Maybe she's in danger, angikhululekile. I just have this unsettling feeling I cannot explain. This is how I felt when I lost my daughter." I sit on his bed and let the tears roll down my cheeks.

"I've been trying her number and it rings unanswered. I'm also worried. Aya is not that type of person who goes out till late." He says, I feel bad I do not even have my daughter's mobile number. What kind of a mother am I?

"Try again please," I'm already wet on my chest by my own tears.

I look at him as he punches the numbers putting the phone on loud speaker but no one answers.

"Shit," he curses looking angry. "Something is not right with Aya wherever she is. I don't even have a bloody car!". My mind trails to Mhlongo and I immediately inform him.

"Mhlongo is on his way." I say as I ran to my room to where descent clothes.

Minutes later a hooter honks outside, Ntokozo limps taking all the pain in as he was groaning in so much pain. I feel bad but right now my daughter might be in danger.

"Uthe uyaphi?" Mhlongo asks as he drove around town praying that maybe we spot her car.

"She said she's going to Richards Bay for fresh air." He looks like he is being honest at this point. I sigh leaning back thinking of her. For the first time in so many years I'm afraid of losing Ayanda.

We literally drove the entire neighborhood but there is no sign of her.

"I've lost hope," I say bursting into tears. "I should have protected her, all she ever wanted was a mother's love."

"No need to look at the past what we can do now is fix the future." Mhlongo is right I can't undo what I did but I can correct my wrongs.

A call comes through Ntokozo's phone and he answers.

"What! I don't believe you give her the phone....I said give her the bloody phone! Aya babe where are you?"

He turns to look at us with defeated eyes, "she's at the hospital."

"What! Which hospital?" I ask out of fear.

"Eshowe hospital," Ntokozo's eyes immediately turn red.

"Mhlongo take me to my daughter right now." Without asking anymore questions he makes a U-turn and drives straight to the hospital.

I jump out of the car as it was still moving leaving the door wide open. Mhlongo uyanginyonyozelela I want to see my daughter. I rush to the reception for assistance.

"Sisi, I'm looking for my daughter." A hard rock lump sticks up my throat. She looks at me and back to the PC.

"Name of the patient?" Professional nasebusuku.

"Ayanda Ntombela, Myeni. Just search for those two surnames." I'm not even asking her ngyamutshela.

"Ayanda Ntombela, she was admitted 3 hours ago." My heart sinks making me to grab the chair that was next to me.

"How bad is it?"

"I don't know mah my shift just started an hour ago. She's in ward 24." The receptionist responds. I wait for Mhlongo and Ntokozo who was walking like a ugly duckling. "She's in ward 24," I tell them and turn to leave rushing to the ward.

My eyes wander around until I spot my baby with a bandage around her head. I rush towards her....the minute her eyes landed on me she burst in to a painful sob making my lips to tremble.

"It's okay baby mama is here." I shush her to calm down and eventually did. "What happened?" I scan the rest of her body thank heavens no damage was done.

"I don't want to talk about it." That came out with a low and I understand. If she's not ready to talk then I'll wait for her to fully recover.

"Babe," Ntokozo's voice makes Ayanda to start crying all over again.

"It's okay babe your man is here." They look at each other deeply and hugged each other without saying any word.

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AYANDA

MaNtombela and Mhlongo are already gone and I'm left with Ntokozo. I'm still shocked that he can now be able to walk on his own and I ruined the 'surprise' his words.

"Still don't want to tell me what happened?" I'm not ready to share any information regarding what I just went through. Imagine them celebrating my broken heart. And besides what will I even say? I wanted to surprise my boyfriend and I found him deep in another woman's pussy.

"I'd rather not talk about it." I wipe the tears off my face. He nods his head understanding what I've just said and I'm grateful that he won't be asking me any further questions.

"My whole body hurts, I feel like laying down and relaxing." He says already getting on top of the bed. "Shift,"

"Haibo Ntokozo this is a hospital not a romantic getaway." I say and he just laughs at me.

"Wherever there's you there's always a romantic gateway." He smiles a mischievous smile and I shift for him. Now everyone in the ward is looking at me like some kind of weirdo. I let him be I will be saved by the doctor's, they will probably chase him out of this ward. I'm not in a good space of mind to be around people. I wish I was at home cuddling with my doll.

It's 3am in the morning and I'm still wide awake shivering due to the amount of coldness in this hospital. The air cons are doing a serious number on one me. I never knew that I would find myself back here again. So my life is basically back to square one. After the drama I saw I'm moving on with my life. No man will obviously appreciate me, no man will ever stand my virgina. I might as well stay single for the rest of my life. No money, no cellphone.

"Ntokozo Vuka," I gently shake him and he squints his eyes opening them.

"What, yazi wangiphazamisa ngisathi ngiyakubhebha." He clicks his tounge slowly getting up. I'm left shocked, he just said that freely without care.

"Ntokozo, have some manners." I warn him but nigger just looks at me with his sleepy eyes. He is just lucky that he slept here for this long without any nurse barking telling us about the rules and regulations. "You need to leave

before those nurses wake up." Ow I know them very well. Those nurses sleep like it's nobody's business especially when it's night shift.

"Uyangixosha?" Is he being for real right now. How can he ask me such a dumbest question of them all. Of course ngiyamutshela.

"Ntokozo...." I look at him with warning eyes. He lifts his hands for surrender and flinches in pain.

"Ouch, this disease hurts."

"Mina I'm still surprised and shocked that you can walk. I give it to you, you are such a very good pretender." I say and he smiles looking at his feet.

"Angithi you decided to ruin the surprise nje. And besides I enjoy it when you wipe my lower body especially my balls." He smirks looking at me and I gasp in shock looking around to see if anyone heard us. This man will truly kill me with his silliness. When did Ntokozo become this crazy? I look at him and smile shaking my head.

"Yazini, please just go before I kill you." I say, he kisses me before slowly walking out. He walks out walking like a grandpa and I laugh my lungs out. Serves him right for saying that dirt to me after wiping his arse full of shit.

"MaNtombela sekusile phela," someone shakes me gently and it's the Matron.

"Ma," I respond in a sleepy voice. I'm dead tired I had a hard time sleeping throughout the night.

"Angithi phela you were camping in the hospital." She tells me and I blush covering myself with the sheet.

"That's not true." She smiles warmly and places a container filled with scrumptious smell. That aroma killed me already.

"Eat so you could go home," I uncover myself and look at her. Maybe she's joking.

"Are you serious?" I feel like screaming and jumping up and down.

"I assume the doctor didn't update you. Yes you going home. Come see me before you leave." She walks away leaving me to scream a little in excitement. This woman sure knows how to make my day.

I didn't even wash my face and already and I'm eating. Looks like everyone is awake and I'm the only one who was sleeping. The meal is so damn good, what did I ever do to have a woman of a mother figure like Matron in my life.

It's almost midday and no doctor has come to check up on me beside those student nurses who have been checking my head every 30 minutes and I'm starting to get annoyed. I know I hit my head but I didn't lose any memory. The fact that I crawled out of the squashed vehicle says a lot about me. I crawled all the way up the mountain to seek for help. Imagine after hitting my head I collected for my important belongings first even though my phone is beyond repair. I'll have to take one of Ntokozo's cell phones and use it. I can't stay phoneless maybe!

"I must say you love hospitals," my crush says looking at me.

"That's not true hay." I blush looking down. I wonder how I look right now.

"Miss Ntombela you are all good to go. You didn't suffer any head injuries and your memory loss seems to be working just fine. About the stitches you will have to come back after 10 days so we could remove them." He says jotting down whatever he is writing.

I passed by the Matrons office ready to bounce back home. That woman sure knows how to make my cheek hurt. She's so loving and caring. I don't know why she contacted Ntokozo to come fetch me. I'm looking at his twin sister Nontokozi looking at me with worry written all over her face.

"Relax he is not responsible for my accident." I say stepping inside the car.

"Ntokozo begged me to come fetch you. Ay cha bengisasho ukuthi uyakwazi ukubekezelela amasimba sisi," Nontokozi has always been the quietest one of them all.

"Being crippled changed him I guess." I shrug my shoulders. If she didn't come I would have been parading in the street of Eshowe with bandages on my head. Imagine walking around town with bandages on my head that's just low now everyone will know that I had an accident. We pass by Debonairs buying two largest pizzas celebrating my survival.

"Don't stay if my brother becomes a monster again. You need to put your foot down and stand up for yourself or better leave if it becomes too much to handle. I like you Ayanda but my twin can be a jerk at times

Hope he really changed for the better." I keep quiet after taking down what she just said. Do I still want to be with Ntokozo after everything he has put me through? Was Romeo the man for me or just someone to make me feel what love is What if Romeo decides to come back? On the other hands Ntokozo seems to be very much inlove with me. I sigh placing the pizza down on the plate.

"Will see how it goes. If he gets back to his old ways I'm gone." I'm in-between, must I give him a second chance or must I wait for Romeo?

Later that day Nontokozi drove me home finding Ntokozo asleep on the couch. Just me not being here for couple of hours he has lost so much weight. Maybe it's because I never pay much attention regarding his weight. He slowly open his eyes and smiles widely.

"Finally you back. I was starting to think that Nontokozi kidnapped you." He says trying to stand up but groans in pain. I sit down next to him and hold his hands.

"Thank you for informing your sister to come fetch me."

He smiles even wider and comes close to me. "It's my job to look after you." He smashes his lips against mine. Our tongue dance to the tune of the rhythm we both feeling. My feelings are so damn confusing me. He pulls back leaving me hanging and wanting more.

"Save that for later, go rest." He orders me and I don't protest I follow the orders.

"Hay you back, yazi bengithi ngiyobheka wena." Judging from what she's wearing I believe her. She even has her handbag clutched under her arm. She sits down the couch that's opposite us. "Batheni odokotela?"

"They said I'm fine no harm done." I don't even know what to say cause we never hold a meaningful conversation with this woman.

"Makabongwe uJehova."

## NTOKOZO

I'm looking at her sleeping and my heart is betting very fast against my chest. Whenever I look at her I get these weird foreign feelings I can't describe. Behind that swollen face there a true goddess behind it. Ayanda is everything a man needs. She quite a very strong remarkable one. The fact that she was there for me when no one was there for me describe the type of woman she is. I caress on her tiny face.

"I promise to make myself a better man for you and for our kids." I kiss her partially opened lips.

It's now that I'm starting to realise that I'm truly in love with Aya. At first I thought it was just feelings that maybe at some point it will fade away but I was clearly lying to myself. What's left for me to do is to prove how much she's really worth. All the pain that I had of loosing my wife has faded away. I'm now the Ntokozo that I'm proud of. I just want to focus on my healing that dust myself off.

And there's a issues with my mother in-law. How do I get rid of that woman or the bay she's carrying? I don't want to loose Aya after everything I put her through because of my selfishness.

"Stressing is not good for your muscles." She's awake and I just love how her voice sounds when she has woken up.

"How can I stress when I'm looking at an angel that's right infront of my eyes."

"Mxm stop flirting with me it doesn't suit you." She says getting up and stretching herself. "What time is it?"

"8pm,"

"Yooh I slept that long. I must have been tired." She grabs her gown to ware it. "I'm going to make sandwiches

do you want some?" She should be resting not straining herself.

"Shouldn't you be resting?" I'm concerned about her.

"I've rested enough." She walks out of the room and I follow her behind. It literally takes me an hour to get to the kitchen. She helps me sit on top of the counter and I watch her as she makes her magic around the kitchen.

"Chilli source or sweet chilli sauce?" What do I know about sources. I'm so bad when it comes to that department. I'm that type of guy who is literally good in bed.

"Lets try sweetest the sweet." I respond. I never knew being around Ayanda could make me this carefree and don't worry about anything.

"I should chop that tounge off. You talk too much and it's not healthy." Ow wow, I laugh.

"I don't recall you being a doctor. So you now know that talking is not healthy." I continue to laugh and she comes flying my direction with a knife in he left hands.

"Say one more word and you will see."

"You pretty,". We stare at each other for a while without any words being exchanged. Our warm breathes exchanging making my blood to poke like needles. "Come here." She comes more forward still looking at each other without braking eye contact. I bend my head down smooching her tiny lips.

"Ay, ay, ay, noze nenze nocansi emakhishini." Is MaNtombela always going to ruin my every moment with Aya? Aya steps back and continues to fry the meet without giving her mother attention. "This is where we make food, respect this environment."

"Respect is earned." Ayanda mumbles without care as her more sighed feeling heart broken. I cannot be nursing other people's broken heart. I also have alot on my plate already. MaNtombela looks at Ayanda without saying a word and walks away.

"That was rude babe," no matter how bad your mother is but never show disrespect.

"I know, it's funny how she expects everyone to respect her but she can't respect anyone."

"When will you ever forgive her? She's your mother babe and she's pregnant." I try to convince her.

"Speaking of pregnancy...." My heart skips a beat. Ow God she knows! "Why is she not in her husband's house. To be honest I can't stand her presence it's just too much for me to handle." Now she's mad, I'd rather keep quite before she chops me into pieces.

MANTOMBELA

I'm standing by the passage listening to their conversation and I'm deeply hurt to know that my baby still hates me and she can't even pretend. I'm the one to be blamed after all. I did this all to myself without anyone's help. I need to talk to the Lord to help my daughter heal and forget about the past. I want her to start her own family with a



healed heart. I don't know what will happen the day the truth finally comes out. In her head she thinks that the baby belongs to Mhlongo. Ow God what have I gotten myself into.

I sit on the bed and let tears roll out. I don't want to stress but I can't help myself. I really messed up a wonderful relationship with my daughter. One minute she's warm and another minute she's cold, like I don't exist in front of her eyes. Will prayer restore the broken relationship? I don't think it will. That prayer failed to fix my marriage. You know when they say there's no use crying over spilt milk.... worstly I'm the one who spilt that milk in the first place. I kneel down trying to connect with the Lord himself;- I don't even know what to say maybe saying the most known prayer of them all will be a start.

"Our father in heaven

Holy be your name

Your kingdom come

Your will be done on earth as is it in heaven....." I just find this useless. What's the use of praying when the man I'm praying to doesn't answer my prayers.

After that prayer session I decided to read a Bible. When last did I opened to my Lord saviour this much? I find it funny that whenever we face difficulties that's when we remember that kunonkulunkuku.

AYANDA

I'm hurt and broken AGAIN by the one man I've ever truly loved. Yes our relationship was new but I didn't think Romeo will ever do me this bad. The fact that I was ready to hand myself to him because of the guilt and shame I did.

I'm tossing and turning thinking of a way forward, what do I really want with my life? Will I be ever successful like other women? I'm torn between two men and I don't know what to do. This is where my own mother comes in but guess what - the woman I call my mother never cared about my well-being. Ntokozo is sleeping peacefully after he overdosed his medication. This man is also giving me hopes of life and a second chance in love. Do I give him a chance? Should I fix things with Romeo?

"Ayanda," the man I thought is fast asleep is wide awake.

"Go back to sleep."

"I can't sleep when you stressing. Come back to sleep. Uzoze uhambe nezipoki." He pinches me lightly causing me to chuck a little. See what I mean, he is proving to be better man day by day and that's that just pulling me towards him. The closer I get to him....no, no, no, I don't want to think what I'm thinking. I assume my mind is playing tricks on me. I slid down laying on my back staring at the ceiling. "Sondela, let me cuddle you to sleep." I turn to lay on my left side giving him my back. He held on to my waist so comfortably pulling me towards him. The heat I'm feeling is making my heart beat. Flashes of Romeo and his girlfriend flashes through, my heart is being grinded into pieces and I don't think anyone can repair it. I'm hurt really hurt.

"Talk to me, don't let pain control your emotions." He says behind me.

"My life is just a mess." Should I tell him about Romeo? I want to talk to someone....I can't die with this pain in me.

"My life is also a mess but with you by my side I know I can concur the world. I can't wait to get back on my feet and spoil you like a queen that you are." He kisses my shoulder.

"You spoil me," I laugh. "Last time I checked you were very stingy." I tell him and he joins in.

"Hay mama, that was then and this is now. Everything changed for the better and best." I can see the improvement and I must say I'm really impressed. My wish is for him to never change.

"Ntokozo sleep cause you don't know what you saying."

"Okay, okay goodnight mfazi wami." He kisses my neck and I close my eyes imaging Romeo. I wish he is the one cuddling me, I wish he is the one beside me. I wish we could solve things and just move past this but unfortunately I can't.

#30

ROMEO

I really messed up big time. I didn't know that hurting someone would make me feel this way. Now I have ruined the chances of being with the woman who makes me happy, that woman that loves my kids beyond any doubt.

"Can I call Anuty A," Ramona has been a nag. All of a sudden she wants to call the woman I broke more.

I don't know why I gave those fucken people a day off cause they would have told me that Aya was driving this side. Her personal phone doesn't go through I'm hoping and praying that the banner phone is working. Luckily it's ringing but takes her time to pick up, I hope she does cause my daughter is waiting patiently with a wide smile on her face.

"Romeo," she answers in her soft voice making my heart to beat against my chest. I didn't think she would pick up.

"Aunty A," my daughter squeal in excitement and gets off my lap grabbing the phone.

"Hello sweetie," she sounds excited to be talking to Ramona. I'm looking at my daughter changing positions while talking to the phone. It's on loud speaker and I could hear every conversation. She's blushing and she looks so damn very much like her mother. Aya asks to speak to the rest of the family. I find it very loving that she is only mad at me and not my kids. An hour passes by only to find that she is helping Rebecca with her homework over the phone. My kids are very fond of this woman and I don't want any other woman close to my kids other than Aya.

"I'm done with homework she wants to talk to you." Rebecca hands me the phone smiling and walks out giving me privacy. The way she respects my space tears my heart. Rebecca can be very understanding at times and she's very young.

"Po....Aya," I clear my throat not to sure what to address her by.

"Hey babe," did she just call me babe. Maybe my ears are deceiving me, this.... "Halo are you still there?" I don't even know how to respond.

"I'm here." My heart is accelerating to the last heartbeat.

"I forgive you." The line goes dead. How does she forgive me? Does this mean that she is moving on? Does this mean she still wants to be with me? I don't want to push her to the limit, the fact that she forgave is the start right? My mood immediately lights up, I love that woman with everything in me. She makes me feel young and carefree.

"Daddy your friend is here." I frown looking at Rebecca, which friend is she talking about. The boys are very much occupied this weekend so we postponed our man's time to the following weekend. I follow Rebecca to the dining room and this haliot is here.

"What do you want?" I don't want to kick her out in front of my kids.

"That's not the way to greet the mother of your child." She says throwing an envelope towards my direction. I keep my cool cause I know she cannot be pregnant for me I've always played it safe. I read tear the envelope to read the note that's inside.

"2 weeks pregnant." I want to laugh so bad.

"Congratulations," I fold the letter giving back to her. "Now if you don't mind I need to spend time with my kids." I gently push her out of the house with shock written all over her face.

"You can't just kick me out like that!" She hisses and clearly she doesn't know who am I.

"What do you want me to do?" I calmly ask her.

"You have to pay for the damages, my mother knows that you are the father of the baby I'm carrying!"

"Okay Bettina I'm the father." I close the door right at her face leaving her to scream her lungs out.

"Do not ever open for that woman ever again." I warn the kids and they nod their heads in agreement. What was I even thinking sleeping with that thing. Is this the man I have become? Rose is really disappointed in me. I let her down and I let the woman I love down.

The fact the Aya is well and wasn't harmed I'm relieved. I don't want her taking taxi's, I want to buy her a car if she allows me to. And I will continue supporting her financially until she comes back home where she belongs. Look at me thinking positive.

AYANDA

So Romeo is using the kids card to get back to me. I'm all smiles thinking positive about us. I love Romeo no lies he made me feel special and made me feel like a woman. Those couple of months with him showed me what love is and not even once he had treated me badly. I've been missing those kids very badly and to talking to them just made my day. I'm cooking up a storm with a happy heart, I forgive Romeo for what happened. I don't blame him, he is a man after all he has needs. And I'm grateful that he is using protection. If he truly want us to fix things than I would be more that delighted cause honestly no man can ever treat me like the way Romeo did.

"I hope it's me that's making you smile like that." Ntokozo says kissing my cheek. My man's call made me happy dude but I won't tell him that.

"Just woke up happy." I lie, I should have told Romeo that I love him cause honestly I do. I'm hurt yes but I'm used to the pain.

"What are you cooking?"

"Roasted chicken, rice and some salads," I love how I know my way around the kitchen.

"Can't wait to eat." He walks away after spanking my butt. I find myself smiling and that reminds me I need to see the Matron as in yesterday before I go crazy because of these men.

Now that I'm carless I now take taxi's and it's exhausting. I wish Romeo can just buy me another car he is the one behind that accident anyway. I pass by Pep Store to purchase another phone. I can't be phoneless I need to get my life back on track. Speaking of getting my life back on track I need to check how much Romeo has in his card. I'm thinking of something.

Now that I have a brand new phone and managed to do a swim swap, it's like I did something huge. I pass by the ATM and he has around R70 000 in his card. Now if I start doing what I love will I succeeded into doing it? But before I do anything I need to see the Matron as in yesterday.

"So you mad coz he basically he cheated. You still young but you will understand. I forgave my husband after I found out he cheated and even has a child with that woman. Do you know what I did?"

"What did you do." I want to hear what she did.

"I forgave him, but forgiveness doesn't come cheap my baby." This woman is kidding right.

"So how do I make him sweat for forgiveness." She just laughs at me like I just said a joke. I know I said I forgive him but I want him to sweat for his forgiveness.

"Act like you don't care when you find out. Go to a concert, a club, or a theme park. Let him see you having fun and enjoying yourself without him. If he sees how happy you can be without him, he may feel sorry for doing what he did to lose you. Don't sulk when you are not around him." Her advise just made me think of ways of getting back at him.

"Wow," that's the best advise I've ever come across.

"Ayanda tell me something, what do you want in life?" That question got me by surprise.

"I want to be a chef, own a restaurant one day. But I know I won't succeed over night." I respond proudly and she just looks at me under her glasses.

"Hmmm I hear you. Now tell me something why is it so hard for you to forgive you sister's husband which happens to be yours but you are unable to forgive your mother?"

"She was not there when I needed her the most

she didn't care about me when I was at my lowest. The fact that she defended her son-in-law over me. She choose every other thing and I was always the last on her list. So I'm just saving her the trouble by being out of her hair." I still become bitter whenever I talk about my so cold mother.

"Always remember this blood is thicker than water." She sips her cup of coffee. "I'm not going to tell you what to do cause I can see that you are a clear confused soul. Follow you heart, that's all I can advise you on."

"I hear you mah." I think about my life and on what I want. In the love department I decided to take a brake and focus on myself. If Romeo and I were meant to be we will always find ways back to be in each other's arms. I don't want to find myself in a toxic relationship, the one that makes you feel unsupported, misunderstood, demeaned, or attacked. ...May even deal with toxic relationships among your family members. A relationship is toxic when your well-being is threatened in some way—emotionally, psychologically, and even physically. I don't want to come to that stage of it. And as for MaNtombela I don't know what I'm going to do with her maybe talking to her will do me good I don't know. But what I know is a good mother prioritizes her children above herself, and she is strong for them, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. Good mothers can empathize with their children. It brings to mind the picture of a mother counseling a grown daughter who may be having relationship problems

Toxic parent is an umbrella term for parents who display some or all of the following characteristics: Self-centered behaviours. Your parent may be emotionally unavailable, narcissistic, or perhaps uncaring when it comes to things that you need. MaNtombela was very toxic towards me but very loving towards Nkanyezi. I should be hating Nkanyezi right now since she was the most beloved but I love her regardless anything.

After the hospital visitation I decided to pass by the internet café. I needed a few posters for me deal and I'm glad to say I found the guy who knew exactly what I wanted. I printed out 50 copies and I will be handing each and everyone on the road. Today I'm not sleeping I will be putting everything together. Ow boy I can't wait for my knew journey.

## AT THE HOSPITAL

"Steven can you hear me?" The doctor flashes the lights in his eyes searching for his eye sight. He blinks multiple times responding to the doctor.

"Will he ever recover the shock?" The nurses have been taking very good care of him.

"He will be fine, I'm just relieved that he is responding to the new treatment and his body is healing slowly but surely." The doctor turns to look at the ward entrance and notices the two police men. She sighs taking off her gloves and walks towards their direction.

"Is there any progress? We've given you enough time." One of the cops wants to work on the case so bad that he suspects someone who wants to see behind bars so bad.

"Follow me," the doctor decides to do this their way. They look at the man laying in the hospital bed staring into thin space without blinking.

"Steven the police are here to take the statement. Will you be able to talk?" The doctor speaks a bit louder for him to hear since one of his ear was badly burnt and now has a hearing problem. Stevens body starts to shake vigorously making the cops look dumbfounded.

"Please leave you are upsetting my patient." The doctor warns and the cops leave without asking anymore questions.

"That was strange." One of the cops says as they walked out of the hospital.

## ROMEO

Is it possible for couples to go on to have a happy relationship after infidelity, provided are they're willing to put in the work. Will we ever survive and grow after an affair? We both cheated, atleast for her she wanted to confess her sins unlike me who was enjoying free pussy. At what I'm looking have to—otherwise the relationship will never be gratifying.

Whenever I think of this my heart skips a beat. Aya is a broken woman who needs a man to build her self esteem. The emotional and mental impact of cheating on the person in these types of affairs can be severe. People in affairs

may feel increased anxiety or depression. They may feel overtaken by guilt. Feeling helpless or trapped in the situation are other common feelings.

Ow God, I'm in panic. What if I put her through all of that? What if she took steps back in to healing?

My phone beeps tons of banking notifications. I frown looking at the messages.

"What in the name of Jesus Christ are you buying Aya?" Earlier today I noticed that she bought a new phone at pep store than later bough food as usual. Why the hell would she buy all of these unncesessary items. She spent almost close to R20 000 in one day.

I dial one of the guys who are keeping an eye on her.

"What the hell is my woman buying?" It feels so right to say my woman.

"I don't know man, but looks like plates, glasses and big pots."

I sigh scratching the back of my head trying to crack my skull.

Is she moving? I'm so curious into what she is up to. I want to call her but damn I'm afraid of her.

"Keep an eye on her." I say before disconnecting the call.

"Aya, Aya, Aya what are you up to woman?"

"Romeo!" What the hell did I do now. Why will my mother screaming her lungs so bad calling my name.

"Mother what is...." I stop on my tracks when I see unfamiliar faces in the house. "What's going on?" I'm clearly confused.

"So you made Bettina pregnant Romeo. What will I tell Aya huh?" I've never seen my mother so furious.

"I made Bettina pregnant?" I don't remember making her pregnant. I shake my head looking at her sitting down with a blanket on her shoulders.

"You don't even have manners for elders you standing while talking to us." I assume that's the mother. I wonder what game they are playing.

"Okay since Bettina here claims that she is pregnant with my baby how about if we go for a scan to verify if the baby she's carrying is truly mines or not." I see shock written on Bettina's face. I assume she didn't expect this one bit.

"That won't be necessary, the baby is yours." Why is this woman so eager to shove this fucken baby down my throat.

"We can go for the scan." He voice came out in a low. If she's agreeing to all of this so that means the baby is truly mines. I've always played safe with this woman.

Driving to the doctor's the car was filled with silence. I don't like this one bit. How did I find myself fucking this thing. Ay man Bettina is so ugly I can't even stand her but yet her pussy says something else. We register on the reception and patiently wait for the doctor.

"Mr Osman the doctor is ready to see you." The nurse informs us. We follow her to the doctor's room.

"Mr Osman," we shook hands. Doctor Pillay is a family doctor and he knows me too well. "Where is the madam? I hope she is doing well." He smiles. I always knew that this one has a crush on Aya. I chuck shaking my head.

"Leave my woman alone. She's fine." I smile thinking about her smile and those tiny lips.

"You love her don't you?"

"More than anything." He shakes his head understanding what I've just said.

"So what brings you here?"

"One night stands claims she's pregnant for me." I look at Bettina who was looking at me in disappointment and I don't care one bit.

"You can go pee," he hands her a peeing cup. Minutes later she comes back holding the cup full of her pee and indeed this bitch is pregnant. The scan was conducted and it's indeed two weeks. I still don't trust this bitch one bit. She is definitely up to something. After that consultation I drove straight to where we use to live. And that reminds me, I will be selling this house I can't let Aya leave where I used to bring this skank.

"How did you get pregnant cause we always use protection?" I ask her already ready to murder.

"I don't know," she lying and I know she is. I'm not a womanizer but this Bettina is turning me into one. A hot slap landed on her face and she held her cheek in disbelief.

"I'm going to ask you for the very last time. How did you get pregnant?" I choke her so bad that she almost rolled her eyes back.

"Okay, okay, I made tiny holes on the condom so that it will burst when we have sex. You were drunk that time that's why you didn't notice that the condom had..." I fly another hot slap on her face and she falls backwards. So bitch was trying to trap me with a baby. I'm not trapable I will teach her a lesson she will never forget! #31

AYANDA

It's in the wee hours of the morning and I'm already cooking the food I will be selling. I will be using the garage since it is not occupied. On my way back I made sure I handed posters to each and everyone on the road in town.

The idea of running my own catering business seems simple enough. You cook things in your kitchen and then bring them to the event you're catering. ... Even if your state permits you to use your home kitchen, you will likely still be subject to health inspections from either your state or your local health department.

Once you have a working business plan, you will need to register your business from home, before you can go on to sell your home-cooked foods to the public. ... Anyone who serves customers directly in food operations will need to register. According to the Food Standards Agency, food operations includes: Selling food. That's the information I found on Google but it left me stupidity confused as hell. I hear footsteps and MaNtombela appears sniffing her noise around. I wonder why shock is written all over her face.

"Why are up so early? Are you expecting some visitors?" She asked confused as she scans her eyes around the kitchen. It's a mess I tell you.



"Decided to do something new for a change." I chop the vegetables, I want to make a vegetable salad.

"And what is that?" mamgobhozi, she should work for Isolezwe.

"Catering."

"Are you starting up a catering business?" Haibo didn't I just tell her.

"Ow yes I am. I decided to do something that makes me happy." I'm slaving around enjoying what I do. I hardly slept thinking about the events for today and I'm not complaining.

"Ow my goodness," she squeals in excitement and squashes me into a tight hug. "I'm so proud of you." I see tears in her eyes. Woman it's way too early in the morning for you to be crying your balls out. "When did you have time to buy all of this? Where did you even get the money?" The concernity in her makes me want to laugh. For a change let me not be bitter and let me just see where this moment leads us to.

"Is catering a good business though? I mean will I even make profit?" I'm avoiding her thousand questions which I don't even know how to answer them.

First time holding a conversation with a woman I call my mother.

"Catering can be a lucrative business for restaurants my daughter. It helps you reach new customers and supplement dining room sales. ... It all comes down to finding the right balance of dishes that create loyal customers and drive profits, and you can start by looking at each individual component of your catering business." She smiles looking at me. I find this very awkward, but Matron was right I should learn to give MaNtombela a second chance since she is trying her best to meet me halfway.

"But I'm still clueless when it comes to these things." I say stirring the pot with chicken stew. The aroma in this house just makes me want to go crazy.

"You will be successful child, but you need to follow the footsteps of being successful you know. Carry out some market research, work out how much money you will need to start up your business but I see you got that figured out. Learn how to manage your costs, decide whether to operate as a sole trader or a limited company. Register your business with local authorities and most importantly create a business plan to secure funding." Now she has me thinking. I will have to dig and do more research on how to register your business.

"Looks like there's still a lot for me to work on."

It's before midday and I'm sitting outside patiently waiting for customers. I'm starting to lose hope.

"Don't lose hope they will come." MaNtombela assures me. Ntokozo is somewhere around the house doing only God knows what. I see a Quantum driving towards the house and parks outside the gate. A group of men came out and walked to where the table was. Everything has been neatly laid out on the table.

"Sanibona, we have been looking for this place for almost an hour. I think we need to be compensated for the trouble and petrol miss." One of the drivers makes a joke and the men crack in laughter.

"Hope you sell different food from the rest of them." My heart is on 120 speed making my knees to shake.

"Why don't you guys taste my food and tell me how it tastes."

All of them bought beef and phuthu with some salad and soft drinks. I know men love phuthu more than anything.

"If it taste nice we will put in a good word for you from the rest of the taxi drivers." They all walk out with their takeaways and I sigh in relief. For my first order I served 8 people. It's not bad for starters.

"You should include Usu, pap and braai meat, dumplings, samp and beans on certain days. You can make that your special. I know women from town hardly sell those." MaNtombela is right, look at her sharing business ideas with me. I decided to create my page on Facebook so that people would know about me and I left my number in order if they want to place orders. I need to also download WhatsApp for business reasons. Within an hour I'm over 1k of likes already. People sharing and commenting leaving positive comments. A post catches my attention making my heart skips a beat. Caption broke my heart into a millions pieces more.

"Baby daddy 💕". Wow so Romeo really moved on. This Bettina girl tagged him and looks like they are really happy for him. I scroll to the comment section to leave a comment.

"Congratulations, all the best. Much love 🥰👏."

I put my phone down balancing myself against the wall. Everything is fuzzy and I'm unable to walk. A call comes through and it's a number I don't recognise. I calm myself down taking breathing exercises and answer in the fourth ring.

"Hallo,"

"Hey sis, you posted on Facebook and I must say you food looks delicious. But the problem is your location is not added on your page. Can you send me your location I need 6 takeaways with rice and chicken and make sure you add every salad that you have."

"Worry not dear sister I will send to the location and definitely add the address on my page too."

"Great, I will come collect that within 30 minutes."

"Another order?" MaNtombela asks making her way to me. I don't even know whether to be happy or sad about all of this. So indeed he truly moved on. I guess it's time I did the same. "Ayanda," I zoned out thinking out Romeo moving on already.

"Sorry it's just that I'm overwhelmed that's all. I didn't think that my start up business will be kicking so soon." I'm surprised myself but my heart and mind is no longer here.

Half and hour later a golf parks near us and two girls jump out of it. Slay Queen's I tell you. Long nails, weaves, short dresses that shows your buttocks. 6inches tall of high heels, I would never wear like that and besides their bodies are to die for.

"Hey I'm looking for Ayanda the chef. I saw her post on Facebook and ordered 6 takeaways,"

"Hey it's me, your food is ready. Should I warm it up or..."

"No it's find babe's. How much is each plate?" She's already counting the money, I wonder what she does for a living. Looks like her lifestyle doesn't come cheap.

"R35 each." My palms sweat and I don't even know why. She gives me R300 and doesn't mind me she continues to scan her eyes around the table.

"Let me go get change."

"It's okay love keep it. If your food taste nice I will recommend my business people. You look to beautiful too disappooint by the way." She winks at me and they turn to walk away. I feeling like screaming in joy right now. Is it luck or is it God answering my prayers?

"I'm really proud of you Nana," I smile looking at the table feeling proud of what I did on my first day.

We decided to pack the stuff since there was little food that was left. We will be eating the left overs in the afternoon. That means no cooking in this house.

After clearing everything and washing the dishes, I decided to take a cold shower. I don't know why but I needed it. My mind trails back to Romeo and guess what I find myself crying out of pain. Does it suppose to hurt this bad by being hurt by the person who claims to love you? Does it make you feel belittle? I'm even starting to doubt myself as a woman. I step out of the shower already feeling cold. I look at myself in the mirror and my eyes are puffy. I sigh stepping out of the bathroom and I find Ntokozo sleeping.

"Ain't you hungry?" I haven't seen him eat all day.

"I just ate, but I think that was your food." He smiles looking at me. I drop the towel and moisturize my body. Portia M Products are truly the best. The scars are starting to fade away bit by bit, I'm really proud happy about the results.

"It's okay I'll dish up for myself." I can't even talk due to the pain I'm feeling. I'm avoiding eye contact with Ntokozo cause I know he will ask me questions which I'm not prepared and not ready to answer.

"Come here

Advertisement

" he slowly stretched his hand. "Don't ware that gown." He commands, it's already on my hands. I walk up to him and lay beside him. "Are you okay?" He turns to face me searching deep inside my soul.

"Everything was just overwhelming for me in one day. Can you believe we sold all of the food and we made R540 in one day."

"I'm proud of you." He kisses my forehead and pulls my chin using his middle finger. His warm breath hits my face. Our lips touch and I feel my body shivering along with the oxytocin and dopamine that make you feel affection and euphoria, kissing releases serotonin — another feel-good chemical. It also lowers cortisol levels so you feel more relaxed, making for a good time all around. He pauses and looks at me one more time before getting in-between my legs.

ROMEO

This Bettina bitch is really testing me. I'm still looking at Aya's comment with a broken heart. So whipping her wasn't enough? Maybe terminating that thing she's carrying will stop her from being a nag and a nuisance. I tried calling Aya several times but it's taking me straight to voicemail. Been trying the banner phone also and it's not going through.

"Fix this mess Romeo before you loose Aya for good." My mother hates me and I can see it right through her eyes and I don't blame her. I hurt her and she trusted me with her heart. What have I done? I rub my face in frustration thinking of the plan I'm about to do to Bettina. I'm no monster and I don't abuse woman but this one pushed me to the limit.

"On second thoughts get me those pills." I send the text message to a reliable source. If I don't do this today than chances of me and Aya getting back together are slim. I don't want her suspecting me having a hand in this but it's something I have to do before things get out of hand, what am I saying? Things are already spiralling out of control. I want to witness it all call me heartless that's my second name.

MANTOMBELA

What happened to day really caught me by surprise. Me and Ayanda actually spent the whole day without us fighting or scratching each other with hurtful words. Is it progress? Has the Lord finally answered my prayers? Ow Jehova I thankful for everything you have done for me. I will forever worship you. That warm hug that she gave, that warm smile, in such after so many years this is the first time seeing my daughter smile genuinely. I never knew she had such a charming smile. Tomorrow is another day and I want to be there every step of the way. I want to be a mother that I failed to be years back. I will support her in everything that she does.

The moans of her screams catch me by surprise. I can't listen to my daughter having sex with the father my of child who happens to be my son-in-law. A warm liquid gushing down my pubic causing me to shut my thighs tight but damn it's not helping. I try playing with myself but I'm failing. I'm even sloppy I can't play with my own virgina. I open the radio maybe I will be able to get some sleep and stop thinking of things that will never happen to me.

NTOKOZO

"Shit," I groan releasing my babies in her. Damn that was the best steamy session I've ever had in such a very long time. I'm panting and sweating on top of her.

"Did you use black balls for steaming cause damn the girl is on fire." Kiss her lips and she blushes looking on the side. Where's the talkative grumpy Ayanda? I'm still inside of her and I can't bring myself to pull out liyashisa nali ikhekhe bahlali.

"Your so heavy get off me," shame she can't even push me off her with her tiny hands. I chuck getting off her and I just want her close to me. "Let go I need to clean myself,"

"My tounge can do a better job woman." She gasps and her face immediately flushes red. I love this side of her, damn I love bold head and certainly looks good on her. My heart sinks when I look at the damage I've caused. I let go of her and she gets off the bed giggling like a child. "Nami ngicela unzongisula!"

"Dream on boy," but she has a towel on her hands but yet she's saying I must dream on. The pains shoot back throughout my entire body like an electrifying shock. I shut my eyes so tight grinding on my teeth. I don't think the pain will subside anytime soon and I can't get used to it anyway.

"So what's popping tomorrow?" Tomorrow I will be meeting with the board members. I don't even have an office, the meeting will be held here in my house luckily my study is big enough to accommodate 5 people.

"Tomorrow is the day of the pitch, I'm nervous yet again excited. Without your help I wouldn't have gathered all of that information." Aya helped me through alot into putting up this big proposal. I didn't know that her brains are as same as her beauty.

'wena nje just pitch what you've practiced and I'm sure they will be blown away." I like how she always thinks positive about me even after all the trauma I put her through.

"You should have just said I must think about this beautiful face of yours and I shall out do myself."

"Yazi wena, but not a serious note good luck. I'll be there with you okay." I nod my head and gave her a warm hug and damn Myeni is up again.

"How about if you prove to me that you will be with me every step of the way." My hands trails down to her already went nuna.

"No sleep," she breaths heavily as I flicker with her tiny piece of the clit that's left. Her body heats up and my body responds, my body is not yet strong but I can't seem to stop myself from wanting more of her. I get into of her and spread her legs wide open, I slid in my shaft in that slippery tiny hole and began to thrust her slowly with all the pain burning in my body.

It's true when Matron said I'm confused, I can now see that indeed I am a confused soul who needs guidance. She even went on and said I lack of oxygen in the blood (hypoxia), I don't even know what the heck is that.

Romeo smashed my heart into pieces and right now I really don't care what comes my way. My life has been giving me lemons ever since, so why not gladly accept them. "I deserve so much better than this." ... I assure myself but quickly remember that good things never last for me. You know what I'm proud of, I'm proud of my heart, it's been played, stabbed, cheated, burned and broken, but somehow still works. I should be braking down crying myself to sleep but somehow my heart knew that this would happen cause I'm not worth it. A million words will not bring me back, I know because I tried, neither would a million tears, I know because I cried and it's funny to think I've healed in just a couple of hours seeing the trending news. My heart says I should pure out what I feel and maybe that might make me forget. They say we must follow what we feel and right now I feel like venting.

"You broke my heart into a million pieces. As I gather the broken remains of yesterday, I discover that breathing itself has become painful. If one day you realize I haven't talked to you in a while, it's not that I don't care, it's because you pushed me away and left me there.

Thanks for giving me the best time of my life. I will only remember our good times together and will try to live happily. I pray for your happiness too." I click on send and sigh placing my phone on the pedestal. That chapter has been closed I'm now moving on. #32

ROMEO

Aya's message is tearing me apart. If I knew that's she was coming this side of town I would have cleared everything on my end. Is this the end of us? The pain of waking up every morning wishing I didn't. What I believe is we don't meet people by accident. They are meant to cross our paths for a reason. Aya was meant to be in my life for a reason. When I was not around her the nightmares will haunt me until I've gotten who am I. I would wish death upon myself but my kids always come first. I know she's a diamond and I didn't brake her. Life is too short to wake up with regrets, but I can't help myself not to feel hate and regret towards what I did. How can I brake a woman who is already broken? I need to fix this once and for all starting with that thing.

I did say I was going to deal with her. Her mother is working night shift and she the devil was fast asleep she didn't even here me come in. I had all the time in the world to sprinkle the abortion pills in the food that was already cooked. Pretty disgusting, the cooking oil is mixed with water and the soup is....I don't even wanting to think about

it. Thinking about it just makes me want to vomit. Later that evening she screamed for my name and that's when I knew the pills have started doing its deed on her. I can't have a woman like her bare me kids. A Jezebel like her, hell no!

"The abortion pills don't work and the pregnancy doesn't end. Some of the pregnancy tissue is left in your uterus and there are also blood clots in your uterus. It looks like you have been bleeding too much or too long." That is definitely music to my ears.

"I didn't do an abortion." She sobs holding her stomach. I'm disgusted right now. How did me Romeo become this stupid?

"Looks like you even overdosed the usage." I look at the doctor as he explains these terms as Bettina is crying her lungs out. Now that the baby is out of the way I should be thinking of ways of getting my woman back.

"After having an abortion, you'll probably have some period-type pains, stomach cramps and vaginal bleeding. This should start to gradually improve after a few days, but can last for 1 to 2 weeks. This is normal and is usually nothing to worry about. The bleeding is usually similar to normal period bleeding." He prescribes some medication for her and I'm so very much relieved. I can't have my mini me growing up in that stomach. Bettina can sleep with another man whilst pregnant and dating the father of the baby. Driving back home I felt like singing hallelujah, she is looking outside the window and silently crying and I don't care.

"Since you are a murder I do not want anything to do with you. You killed my babe and I will forever hate you."

"Please Romeo believe me when I say I didn't kill your baby our baby. God knows I didn't." I shoot her a deadly stare.

"Don't you ever out God in that mouth of yours. You do the devil deeds and you hide behind God!" I bang the steering wheel, I can't wait to get home.

"Please believe me, you can't just dump me like a used hot potato. Can't you get the signals that I'm in love with you Roms," she gotta be kidding me.

"Listen hear and listen very good, you are way too ugly to be my type, I love woman with standard and class unfortunately you do not fit to be in that category."

"But being inside of me singing all praise doesn't mean anything to you?" I shouldn't have slept with her in the first place.

"Ever wondered why I don't kiss you?" She looks at me and blinks a couple of times. "You are not even worthy to be kissed. A skank like you deserves to be fucked without care and that's exactly what I did. Get out of my car you murderer." Her lips tremble and she wipes her tears taking a deep breath.

"I hate you with everything in me."

"The feeling is mutual babe girl." She bangs the door. "Bitch!" I scream. I need fresh air far away from home. I drive around Richards Bay until I got tired and drove back home afterwards.

"Where the hell are you coming from? Romeo what has gotten into you these days. You've completely change for the worst." I'm not in the mood right now. With my mother screaming her lungs out ain't making anything's better. I know I've changed and I don't like it one bit.

"Aya caught me in bed with Bettina," I sit down on the couch. I didn't mean to tell her but right now I'm not in my right state of mind.

"Ow God," her hands are flying on top of her head. If it was something not this huge I would have said she is being dramatic but that's not the case right now.

"I feel bad already, no need to remind me." A hard stick lands on my head.

"You are stupid, are you truly my son? What has gotten into you!" She runs out of breath and pressed her chest.

"You want to kill me before my time?" She's now crying, I don't know whether she's faking or truly hurting.

"I'm sorry mah, I promise to fix my mistakes and I will do whatever it takes." Indeed I will kill a lion if I have to win Aya back.

"Maybe it's too late," she walks away leaving me in shock. It can't be too late right, that woman means so much to me.

I try her numbers again praying that she has unblocked me but my calls are still not going through. I login on Facebook to search for her but I can't find her anywhere. I decided to block Bettina after the stunt she pulled, she really messed things up for me and I'm also partly to be blamed for it.

AYANDA

I block every thing that has to do with Romeo, once the cash starts to roll in I will replace every sent I spent on his card. I will never be using it ever again. It came out of great help, it's now that I have to stand on my two feet.

The food is ready and the yard smells of different stews. Our neighbour asked me which spice am I using, I can't share my secret of the spices that I'm using. I just lied and said I mix every spice from the Spice store and she believed me. I want to be the only one who cooks food that can pull you from a distance and it looks like it's working.

MaNtombela will be in charge of the pots today while I assist Ntokozi in his pitch. I took out his suit that I've never seen him wear.

"This suit....my wife bought it for me on our anniversary," pain is written all over his face.

"More reason for you to wear it. Wear that part of your wife so that she can be part of the process you are trying to rebuild." He looks shocked and I don't blame him, he was a jerk for dealing with my sister's death the wrong way. I was also hurting and I needed comfort, I needed him to comfort me as my husband that he is.

"I don't know what I will be without you," he kisses me and I respond. It's funny how my body responds to this man's touch. The man I once hated with so much passion.



"Someone's man or someone's husband," he laughs at my statement. Today I shaved his head and beared giving that look. He looks cute and young.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" He smiles limping closer to me with a walking stick on his left hand.

"Is it wrong of me to look at my sister's husband," I fold my arms and arch my eye brows still looking at him.

"That husband happens to be your husband traditionally." He pulls me by my neck and introduces his tongue to mine slowly. He ran his tongue along my lips. We are taking it very slowly allowing the intensity to build in-between us. He pulls back and looks at me. I'm dizzy and my body dancing to his tune. "Let's go have breakfast before the meeting starts,"

"I thought you guys are still sleeping," MaNtombela serves us toasted bread with fried chips and cheese inside. Just the way I live it.

"We were still bonding," Ntokozo touches my thigh sliding his hand reaching for my nuna. Again my body betrays me, I parted my legs giving him access. He shifts my silky thong aside and plays with my clit.

"Ow God," I throw my head backwards and bite my tongue remembering that MaNtombela is here with us. I quickly pull his hand out in shock. What the hell is wrong with this man!

"Relax she's in the kitchen, I wouldn't have done that if she's around." He smirks and suck the middle finger that was inside of me. Now I'm wet, great just great. "You taste sweet,"

"That's grouse," I don't see myself slurp another's person's spermatozoa.

"The customers are already here

I think it will be a busy day today," MaNtombela hums in excitement. I should be the one excited not the other way around. How can she be this elevated since it's all my thinking. "I will eat my breakfast outside." I've never seen her this happy. Even on her wedding day she wasn't this enlivened.

"Let me go prepare myself they will be here any minute." He kissed my cheek and I'm left all alone. I decided to login on my Facebook and surprisingly I have tons of inboxes placing orders. If only I had a car, I would deliver the food and also charge for delivering. I clear the table and clean the kitchen. I need to be outside before that woman turns my business into a disastrous. I should be suffocated by her presence but it looks like I'm welcoming towards her.

"So many people," I'm stupefied of the amount of people that are here. Will the food be enough for all of them? I should consider doing a poster and stick it by the side of the road.

"See I told you," MaNtombela is joyful about all of this. I guess sitting at home and doing nothing made her useless. I still wonder what happened to her and Mhlongo.

"Let me get more takeaways,"

"Please do and warm up that beef stew." She shouts loud enough for everyone to hear. Now people will think I'm a maid, she's literally taking all the spotlight. I find myself smiling thinking of the current events but then again I remind myself that my happiness is always short lived.

Now the yard is clear, I decided to relax and sip on the wine that I bought weeks back. I need my body to relax and be calm. Everything is just happening so fast and I find it very weird. "Maybe this is where my happiness begins." I say to myself. Two big cars drive through the yard and I just knew that these are Ntokozo's investors. Atleast I look the part, I'm dressed pretty well.

"Nkosazane, I'm looking for Ntokozo." Okay no greetings what so ever. Jerks!

"Please follow me," I lead the way and these guys follow me behind. I make them comfortably wait in the study and surveys them with refreshments.

"Gents," Ntokozo limps towards them and they did a man's signal handshake.

"Shall we get down to business," these men are not here to play but to work. I look at Ntokozo who was sweating out of fear.

"You got this," I whsiper and walk past him for a fresh air, those men are intimidating and I wonder how will Ntokozo handle them. I'm thinking of ditching them.

NTOKOZO

"So why do you think we should invest in your business again?"

I'm jammed I didn't expect this one bit. I prepared for the pros and cons not interview questions.

"Sorry I'm late," Aya settles to a seat next to me and squeezes my hand.

"The question still stand Mr Myeni, why do you think we should invest in your business again?" Ayanda looks at me and I assume she's waiting for the response.

She clears her throat and dives in saving me from the embarrassment I almost caused myself. "I'm sorry to just overtake this,

not only that you will be also growing your portfolio but you are growing an asset that can generate more than capital for an investor." I don't even know what the heck Ayanda just said. We bother rehearsed yesterday and we were please of the results.

"How many employees does your company have?" I wish this could just end as in right now.

"15," I bite my tongue answering the easiest question ever.

"What services or products do you offer?" Wemalo bury me now!

"Different personalities, on purpose. Each of our brands has its own heritage and personality, but they will have one big thing in common - they all symbolize, embody or provide tremendous energy.

Castrol, a truly global lubricant brand." She probably smiles, when? How? This woman will kill me with surprises.

"Does your Garage station offer alcohol?" Seriously alcohol in a gas station. What does this fool take me for.

"Our full serve liquor store carries beer, wine and spirits to meet all of your needs. Stop by to pick up large quantities for social gatherings or a small bottle for an intimate setting, saw it cheaper elsewhere? No our Station is the cheapest." Woah this tie is making me suffocated. I can't breathe....more reasons for me to have this woman killed with pleasure later on.

"Can I use my card at your Gas Station?" Of course you stupid fool you can. As I was about to answer Ayanda dives in.

"No annual fee when using your credit card at our Gas Station and RO fraud liability."

"We will be in touch." Woah mother Mary thank heavens it's over. It's up to them if they take me or not. "Good luck once again. The competition is very tough outside." They stand up to take their leave.

"Please have a sit once more, I prepared something for you and I don't take no for an answer." She walks out leaving everyone stunned including me.

"I'm sorry about that." Why am I even apologizing? Ow it's because they are looking at me!

"Driven woman," he smiles that's a first. Ever since they got here they have been sour. "Keep her by your side you will go places."

"I agree with you. She knows what she wants and she does her job,"

Later that day were cuddling in bed eating popcorn and watching a movie. I don't know how she falls asleep at night with all this horror that she's watching. Why do women like scary movies?

"You nailed it," I'm proud of her.

"No we nailed it. I saw how sweating you were....you were never ready were you?"

"Truth be told I wasn't ready everything came to soon." I say, I wasn't ready honestly.

"That's why I did my little research on the side."

"You sneaky little thing," I tickle her and she laughs her lungs out. A knock comes through.

"Someone is here for Aya!" MaNtombela shouts as she walked away. There's only one person who looks for Aya, that Mapule girl.

"Can you attend to whoever that is I'll be in the loo," she's already out of sight. I smile getting off the bed taking baby steps. My feet are poking needles and everything hurts to the core. This walking stick is making me to look old. We have moved to our bedroom that's upstairs, I love how big it is. Going down the steps I see woman's legs and I assume it's her. The legs move towards the door as she bid farewell to MaNtombela. I can only see her back now that I've took the steps and I'm half way through. This woman looks like someone I know but I can't tell who. If only she could turn around. Maybe she's one of these fuck buddies.... I don't need that past life next to Ayanda it's been buried and dusted. The woman walks out of the door with her head bowed down. I would love to see her some day.

"That woman....I think I know here from somewhere even though I didn't see her face."

"You should see her some day, such a lovely child. She came to drop these." MaNtombela hands he Aya's punching gloves. I wonder how her tiny hands fit here.

"Hau she's gone already," Aya comes down the stairs eating chips. Her mouth is always chewing something. If it's not junk it's Amasi.

"She said she will fetch you tomorrow noon." Ayanda frowns looking at MaNtombela.

"Where is she taking me?"

"I didn't ask my daughter." I'm looking at them as they are communicating. I love how they now talk to each other. I like how they now respect each other. I wish this could stay like this for days, months and years.

"Than I guess I'll have to wait for tomorrow then." She throws herself on the couch next to me. She now has a new habit of sitting next to me. I don't know whether it's the chemistry between us or....

"Let's go to bed I'm tired," she helps me stand. I wonder why all of a sudden I'm part of her sleep routine!

#33

NTOKOZO

They say romance die hard. I decided to spoil my woman, breakfast in bed baba.

"Wee please don't burn my kitchen," the devil is awake.

"Uyisiphoxi mfazi kaNtokozo. Uyaphi Lana? Haven't you heard about breakfast in bed?" She looks at me for a while and laughs her lungs out like literally laugh until tears came out of her eyes. Enlightenment is not about feeling bliss. Enlightenment is about being bliss. Looking at Aya.... everything is just light, love, and endless laughter. Love is the condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own. Not until you are willing to surrender your desire for love, happiness fulfilment and peace. At this point I am able to experience enlightenment.

"You make me breakfast in bed? Ay cha lizoduma. Tell me something, can you make an egg? I bet not." This woman is literally squashing my intelligence in the kitchen.

"Why are you insulting my intelligence?" I'm trying not to look squashed as hell here.

"Ay suka move grandpa Ntokozo." I gasp in shock, so no I'm being called grandpa. I dip my fingers on the margarine and smear it on her face.

"WTF!" She's mad as hell.

"That's for calling me grandpa," I try running away but an egg smashes on my head and it dropped down on my back. "Ow no you didn't do that," I limp towards her and she runs away. "Come back here!" I scream my lungs out, the devil runs up the stairs. I will definitely catch her and she won't see it coming!

I'm relaxing my muscles in the pool, the pains are intense making my muscles to be stiff. Swimming makes me feel more lighter and easy to move my legs. I'm shoving the bicycle as how Aya taught me.

"Any progress," she dips her feet in water and sits by as she watched me.

"Pains are still there but better than before." Medication is really helpful. I can't wait to go back to my normal self. The pains are lingering....the doctor's say that hurting is part of healing and sometimes the healing process takes a longer than we'd want and expect it.

"Is the medication helping though?" It's like she read my mind.

"Not that much but there is a slight difference." She nods her head. "If you're here who is at your garage?"

"MaNtombela," I chuck getting out of the water.

"Don't over work her she is pregnant babe. Think of your little brother or sister she's carrying." She rolls her eyes at me.

"I get you, let me go to the pregnant lady again." She walks away barefoot and that gave me time to enjoy the view of her. I decided to follow her behind and damn one of old smash train is here. She looks at me and her eyes lit up beaming in joy.

"Ntokozo! Is this really you?" She comes my direction and I decided to keep my cool. I don't want to make Aya angry.

"Do I know you?" I act confused. I know who she is and where she lives. This woman almost made me brake up with my Nkanyezi back then.

"Ow come on, Slethu, Slethukukhanya."

"Err, I still don't recall the glimpse of you mam." I move next to Aya holding her waist. "I will be inside." I kiss her bold head and walk back to the house.

"Ntokozo wait, we should catch up sometime maybe you might remember me." I look at this girl annoyed. I see she hasn't changed. She still goes after men.

"Nah I'm good."

"Here's your food." I can't read Ayanda's expression. I don't know whether she's mad or what. The girl turn her hills and walk away but her eyes were still fixed on me. This is what I meant when I said I do not want any past of mine catching up with me.

## ROMEO

I'm in the bar drinking my sorrows away. My heart is heavy and very broken. I lost a gold while chasing stones, did I really loose Aya? It looks like I just did for what exactly for a stupid mistake I did. Breaking Aya's heart, I know I'm cast as a 'jerk'.

Do you really love someone if you cheat on them? Yes you can, no you don't. But I know for a fact that I love Aya more than my late wife. Rose was everything but now I realise that she was not part of my journey. I gulp down the last bit of the shot that was left, after that I drove straight home. Atleast I'm still able to see the road clear that means I'm not that drunk.

Arriving at home I throw myself on the bed shutting my eyes trying to fall asleep.

"Don't worry too much she knows her way back home." That's Roses voice, I know it very way. I flung my eyes open and the room is extremely dark and cold. The windows are wide open. I thought I closed them the time I came in my room. So I was dreaming again, I flicker on the light just to be sure if was I dreaming or not. And Indeed I was seriously dreaming. These dreams are starting to be a total bore now they are back and I hardly sleep. I even forgot what I was dreaming about. Maybe holding onto something that belongs to Aya will help me get the sleep I need. I decide to make one's way by sleeping with her night gown on me. It smells so damn good. I feel my eyes getting heavier and heavy until siesta took over.

## AT THE HOSPITAL

"Steven can you try responding to me, say something or even a ahhh will do." The doctor begs but Steven continues to stare into thin space.

"This is just completely a waste of time!" The doctor is starting to lose patience, she needs to contact his family but they are reaching a dead end.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to betray you." That's Steven voice catching the doctor's attention. "What did you just say?" She heard him right but she just wants him to repeat what he just said. Steven choke on his own tears.

"It's okay to cry, let the anger all out it will help you heal." He cries even more.

"I think something huge went down." She looks at him sadly. Who did he betray and for what reason? There are so many unanswered questions.

AYANDA

Finally I own a bank card! This feels like a dream. I feel like floating or walk on top of the water. Ayanda Ntombela, hehehe woah!

"What's making a beautiful woman smile like this on her own?" I didn't even notice that I walking around smiling. I'm sure people in town are looking at me like some sort of stupid mad woman.

"Ahh buti, I just woke up on the right side of the bed." I feel like jumping up and down. When was the last time I felt this way?

"I see, it's written all over your face." I smile even more looking at the envelope I have in my hand. "Would it be a bad thing of me if I take a pretty woman out for drinks?" Is he asking me out on a date? I'm sure a drink or two wouldn't mind right?

"Yea sure no problem."

We are in some club I don't even know the name of it. I didn't know that my home town has a club!

"So tell me more about yourself

"ahhh I didn't sign up for this. I'm just here to have fun and drink his money. He is the one who took me out after all.

"There's nothing to tell." I sip my drink and gaze my eyes around the club. It's Thursday and it's fully packed. Do people ever sleep?

"I'm sure you have a name," ow great I'm out with a stranger and I don't even know his name.

"Ayanda Ntombela, from eMlalazi. That's all to know about me cause there is nothing interesting." I tell him and he looks at me without blinking. "What?"

"You look beautiful MaNtombela," he reaches out for my hand and kisses the back of it. What was I thinking coming here? I'm bored as hell and this guy's is speaking in slow motion. Ever heard of a person being called uJamu. That's what I'm facing right now.

"Thank you." I try blushing but I'm failing dismally. "You didn't tell me your name."

"Dumisani Vilakazi," can someone shoot me right know! If I was pregnant I would have said ngiyamaliswa.

He is so damn quite but I can't stand his slow motion talk. It's like I'm talking to an automated robot!

"I think I should get going before my mama kills me." I look at my wrist watch. It's 7:30 pm and I'm sure Ntokozo is already stressed wherever he is.

"I would love to see you again." Ow hell no! I'm not up for this.

"Give me your number I'll call you." I say taking out my phone giving it to him.

"There, call me anytime."

If this was a date hawemah ngaze ngabhoreka. What was I thinking going out with a stranger? If Nkanyezi was alive she would have given me one hell of a slap. I basically risked my life for what? I don't even know.

"It's fine you can drop me off here, incase my mother is already outside the gate with the broom stick." Lies! Lies! Lies! I don't want him to see where I live. Imagine me Ayanda dating a tortoise, Never asoze!

It's so damn cold and I'm shivering, I can't wait to get home and get undercovers. I don't even think I will be taking a bath today.

"You will take care of this baby whether you like it or not!" That's MaNtombela's voice. Who is she fighting with so late at night?

"What baby?" I look at them confused and they both gets startled by my presence.

"Ntokozo is denying that Mbalienhle." MaNtombela throws the dishwashing cloth dramatically on the table and marches to her bedroom. I'm left confused.

"And then?" I look at Ntokozo waiting for an explanation.

"Your mother is shoving your daughter's friend down my throat. I don't even know your friend for crying out loud. I use to be a player back then but I always made sure I played safe." When he has those lines in his forehead that means he is stressed.

"What's stressing you?" I'm calm as hell. Mapule was raped....I don't want to think the worst of it.

"What if she's mine?" His voice is shrinking.



"Mapule was raped Ntokozo. Were you perhaps in part of any gang rape years back?" He thinks deep and shakes his head no.

"I know I use to smoke drugs for fun but I don't recall forcing myself on any woman."

"Okay then stop stressing if you have or had nothing to do about it." I tap on his shoulder and went to our bedroom. At least tomorrow is Friday, when I get time I will have to draft a new menu with different varieties of food especially more traditional.

I pass by MaNtombela's room and she was praying. I sigh walking past but something pulled me back. I kneeled next to her closing my eyes and talked to God himself....if there's one.

"Dear God.... I am a sinner who's probably gonna sin again." I chuck thinking of the nonsense I've just said. If Kendrick Lamar could hear me right now it will definitely be the end of me.

"Honest truth I don't know how to pray, I don't even know what to say. But first things first, I would like to thank you for opening my eyes and my mind businessly. I know I wouldn't have done it without you. I promise to pray better than this next time. Amen."

"What a prayer," MaNtombela laughs. "I'm sorry that I wasn't a mother to you. My daughter can't even pray and it's all my fault. I should have guided you like I did with Nkanyezi. But I'm glad to be part of your life again." She holds my hand and squeezes it softly. "When you pray open your heart, you mind and relax your soul. Take what's ever in your heart and share it with God himself. That way you will feel connected to him. You should pray more often."

"Can I ask you something."

"Anything my babe," that's the first her calling me pet names.

"What would you do when you were torn between two men?" I ask her and her eyes widen in shock. Maybe I shouldn't have asked her cause we hardly talk about anything!

"I would follow my heart. Be with a man that will make you happy, a man that will not take your love for granted. Another thing listen closely to potential and current partners. Don't loose yourself in a relationship." I nod my head understanding but I don't even understand what the heck she just said. I tried thinking that maybe being with someone new other than these two men will make me happy. I thought that maybe Dumisani will do the trick but I felt nada for him. You know when they say there are sparks and chemistry at first sight? I felt none of those, my feelings towards him were dead. I know I only met him couple of hours ago but man I was already fed-up with his presence.

"Okay I hear you." I'm stuck in-between and I don't know how to come out of this. Please Lord let me see light.

"You seem to be miles away," Ntokozo nibbles with my ear. These days I'm forever horny. Is that even normal? If I'm not horny I eat alot and that's making me to gain a little. My stomach....I don't know whether it's bloated or what. But it's a little unusual than my normal figger.

"Life," I say. It's not life that I'm thinking but I'm thinking about my confused self. Do people always get this confused? I never knew that one day my life will be this complicated and I'm the only one who can uncomplicate it but unfortunately I'm complicated myself.

"Don't even think about that. Sleep tomorrow is another day for you to showcase your talent." Haibo! This man can't be serious.

"What are we on now, SA's got talent." He laughs sneaking his hand under my night gown. "I think I should move into another room." I tease him.

"What! That will never happen sisiwe. " He snuggles himself close to me making my blood rush. I'm not in a good state of mind to require sex from this man. What's up with me and my blood these days!

ROMEO

"When will aunty A come back?" Why is Ramona torturing me this much? Doesn't she know that me and Aya are long separated!

"Soon baby, soon," I kiss her forehead tucking her hair behind her ear.

"I miss her," hope she doesn't cry on me cause this one cannot be trusted with her tears. I just wish she was quite like her twin brother Ronald.

"I know my baby, daddy misses her too." I sigh closing my eyes and a picture of her flashes right through my eyes. I love that soul no matter what we put each other through. I stare at her pic and smile to myself. So this is the woman Rose brought into my life.... Now it all makes sense. All those dreams, constant nightmares. Sighs I get off the bed heading to my room. If I don't overdose those sleeping tablets I won't be able to get some sleep. Gulping two down, I hope I will get some sleep.

It's 2:30 am and I'm wide awake. Why had God has forsaken me? Why am I being punished? Is it me or....?

"God dammit!" I push the sheets aside standing up and stare at the window looking at Bettina's house. I spot a figure walking around the yard naked. It's a bit dark and I'm unable to tell who it is. Is it that hot for people to walk around the yard naked at night? Maybe that is why I'm unable to sleep. A cold breeze hits my body making the back of my hair stand. Why is it suddenly so cold? If I'm not mistaken I switched the aircons off. I get on the bed and cover myself with the sheets but still it's not giving me any justice. I'm cold as hell!

"She's yours and yours alone," maybe I'm going mad. I swear I heard that voice, I look around my room but I don't see anything. The room is now hot again and I'm starting to sweat. What the hell is wrong with me? I cannot stand this torture. Maybe sleeping in Aya's room will tone down on the nightmares. Last time I slept wearing her night gown. It's funny how I consider her as part of our lives when that message made it clear that I'm no longer needed.

Atleast some of her clothes and important documents are still here. That counts for something right? The blankets still have her scent. I'm definitely sure that I will be able to sleep in this room if not than I don't know.

It's already Friday morning and I hardly slept. I didn't even sleep infact I didn't sleep at all. My life is just turned upside down and I don't even know how to resolve it. I have to get ready for work and also get the kids to school. Will I even be able to pull the day through looking like a zombie.

"We need to talk." That's a message with an unsaved number. I don't recall it one bit. There's only one way to find out, that's by giving that person a phonecall.

"I can't talk, I will send you the address." She disconnects the call leaving me dumbfounded. What's if its one of those pranks, I'm not going to put myself in danger because of people who don't know what they want! #34

ROMEO

I'm not in my right space of mind. I'm looking at everyone through my blurry vision. I'm tired, sleepy and drained.

"Mr Osman, are you sure you're okay?" Why is Pauline such a nuisance?

"We will postpone the meeting for tomorrow." One of the board member say. My head is massive heavy like I've been drinking. I look at everyone as they walked out of the boardroom.

"Damn I'm so tired."

"You should go home and rest," Pauline tells me. My shoulders are stiff and I just need a massive massage. I stretch my neck.

"Need a massage?" She offers and God damn it's just what I need.

"Please," I say softly. I neatly take off my shirt and I'm left with a vest.

"You so tense, try not to stress so much it's unhealthy." I close my eyes relaxing my mind. My whole body is reducing pain and muscle soreness. The tension on my body is toning down. I should consider atleast going once a month for a massage just to relax my body and muscles. I know Ramona would love this big time. That one is such a diva and I can't handle her. She just needs a woman's hand that will guide her. My mother is very old and she can't be running around after diva's.

"Ow yes, right there." I point out at my back just below my shoulder back.

She's good at what she does no lies.

"Done," she steps back. I was still enjoying though. My shoulders feel a bit lighter and there is a very huge difference. I stand up stretching myself,

"You should consider shaving your armpits," she laughs. "I shave my husband every month. I don't know why men don't like shaving." She smiles gathering the papers on the table. I smile thinking of Aya how much of a beautiful nuisance she was when she would shave my armpit, legs, chest. basically my whole body. She hated my androgenic hair. When it comes to axillary hair she would literally die. She hated my armpits but she loved smelling them. She was a weird rare breed.

"My girlfriend does the same." I bite my tongue after saying that. I miss Aya so bad and it hurts.

"Me and her can be friends." She laughs picking up a paper that was on the floor and her skirt rolls up. She pulls it down and clears her throat. "See you tomorrow sir." She's avoiding eye contact. My eyes are gazing at her and I can't seem to shift them away from her. I take few steps towards her and she steps back. "My husband will not like this." She looks terrified but man my mind wants what it wants. I grab her forcefully sucking her lips for dear life. She gasps in shock trying to wiggle herself from my grip but I'm holding onto her too tight.

"Don't fight this, I know you want me." I kiss her again pulling her skirt up and her body responds to my touch. That's more like it. I drop her panties and parted her legs playing with her clit. Great she's so damn wet. I make her lay on her back on top of the table opening her legs wide. I open my drawer reaping the glove apart and sliding it in my cock protecting myself. Her vagina is meaty, very meaty but too damn tight. Doesn't her husband fuck her everyday?

The warmth in her makes me think of Aya's cookie jar. That woman is so sweet. I'm moving in and slowly out Pauline. Her virginal walls are clinging onto my cock so damn perfectly like Aya's. I quicken the pace cursing and grinding on my teeth. Her phone rings and I shoot my loads relaxing myself. That was quick and meaningless. I get myself cleaned up and packed my stuff. Pauline is silently crying, "it's not like I raped you. You wanted this so bad as much as I did."

"You don't understand." Her phone rings again and she sighs picking it up. "Love I'm coming." She drops the call looking nervous as hell.

"You should wipe yourself, you don't want to enter your husband's car smelling prophylactic strawberries." I half smile.

I'm waiting patiently outside the school gate for my kids. A black car with tinted windows that has no number plates passes by and parks right in front of me. It reverses towards me and knocked me purposely.

"Hay!" I angrily get out the car and the car immediately drives off. "You moron!" I pick up a stone that was at the side of the road aiming for his window but I dismally fail. I place my hands on top of my head in disbelief. Not Aya's favourite car! I wonder who did that and for what reason.

Ramona and Ronald holding hands. I love how Roland is so overprotective of his sister, look at him carrying his sister's bag. For a minute I forget that I was madly pissed.

"Daddy," my princess runs towards my direction. The sight I would to see till infinity. My kids are everything, no matter how mad I am, looking at them just melts my heart in a way.

"Hey princess," I pick her up and she buries her head on my chest. "Hey champ." Ronald is a very much more like me calm and collective. Ramona definitely took after Nana their grandmother.

"What happened to Auntie A's car?" Ronald loves this car more than me his own father, it's not even my car.

"I knocked a cow," he looks at me like I've just lost my mind. This car belonged to Aya but she didn't know it was hers. Now I have to pay for the damages because of a moron who decided to knock someone's car!

Arriving at home took like for decades. The water was leaking, the brakes were not working. So I was very cautious and praying that I don't hurt my kids. I couldn't get Rebecca, I fetched my other car from home and quickly dashed to Rebecca's school and I find my daughter patiently waiting for me.

"Dad!" She calls out for me and I know just right then that I'm dead.

"I'm sorry,"

She folds her arms with her one foot tapping on the ground. How can Rose give birth to herself. I chuck getting out of the car squeezing her with a tight hug. "How about daddy buy's you your favourite ice-cream." I wiggle my eyebrows and she giggles. Kids!

Eating that ice-cream with so much happiness in her made me admire my baby girl. She went through a lot after the death of their mother.

"Can I have more?" I shouldn't have brought her here. I can't give her another ice-cream. Well that was Aya's rules. I smile thinking of the changes she made with my family.

"No babe girl." She looks at me with puppy eyes and I sigh. She can't blackmail me like this.

"But Auntie A is not around." She looks around our surroundings and I just laugh at her statement.

"Fine! Just this once." I say, she ran to the counter to buy another ice-cream and we drove back home. She's busy flickering with the radio and I don't even know what she's looking for.

"What are you looking for baby?"

"Music daddy." She should have said so instead of murdering my radio like this. The funniest song ever plays, she gasp holding her chest and her face lights up in excitement.

"Aya's song!" Her uniform is messed up and I know for sure my mother will have me for dinner. "Can I call her! Can I call her!" She's now kneeling. Who kneels in a car? Kids of today! Her smile just makes me weak. I pull out my other phone from my pocket and hand it to her.

What I love about my Rebecca is, I taught her how to use a phone. She scrolls through the list contacts and dials her immediately. She puts her on loud speaker and place her phone on her thighs mind you she still kneeling.

"Ayanda the chef halo?" Like really who answers their phone in that manner.

"Aunty Aya

it's me Ribs." Ribs what! Why the hell will Aya call my daughter Ribs.

The devil on the other line giggles and I find myself smiling.

"Hey babe, how are you?" Atleast I'm thankful that she still respects my kids.

"Your song is playing." Rebecca turns the volume up a bit for her to hear and Aya screams a little on the other line.

"Ow my God!" Who gets exited to such a very weird song.

Aya sings and Rebecca joins along. I'm looking at her and my heart bleeds. Ever since Aya came into her life she has been a lively child who is now always bubbly, happy and back to her old self. That baggage she use to carry is no longer there. The sickness of Nana really did a damage on her, I'm pretty sure she was in that phase of knowing that she's about to loose someone whom she took as a mother. She's singing her lungs out and damn my baby has a pretty ugly voice when it comes to singing. She turns the volume a bit higher.

ðŸŽŹ A nasty cough

can fix your lungs

The soccer match

Goes somewhere wrong

A yoga class

Always breaks your back

Or a selfie gives you a heart attack

It's easy to end up here

So easy to end up here

It's just as easy to feel well

With the help plan from Clientele

Du ru ru du du du du....ðŸŽŹ

Damn did they just sing an advert? Clientel advert! I'm left still lost. I cannot believe this one bit! Who gets exited over an advert? But to be honest I also enjoy this advert more than any other advert. Whenever it plays I find myself tapping my foot to the beat and humming here and there.

Arriving home we find mother making milk for these two. I don't get it why kids have to drink milk even at this age. I one asked her and she told me too much yada, yada of calcium, strong teeth, they will be sharp in school. I didn't even listen to most of the things, that department is for women not men.

"Son you back," she rushes towards my side with her arms wide open. "The kids told me what happened."

How do I tell her that I think someone wants me dead. Cause who ever did that did it deliberately. "I...."

"But thank heavens the cow didn't do much damage. I hope the cow is fine cause if not you do know that we have to do right by the owner." Crap I totally forgot about the cow story.

"The cow is fine, it's just my car." I sigh placing my car keys onto of the kitchen counter.

"Aya's car don't forget that." She taps on my arm and turns to walk away.

"I'm just going to lay down a bit I'm a bit tired." Indeed I am. I just need a rest for only two minutes could that be so hard to be granted!

I should consider seeing my doctor about these constant nightmares. No sane person could go for days without sleeping. I untie my knob tie and unbuttoned my shirt. I smell of strawberries, I need a shower other than anything else.

There's nothing relaxing like a hot shower, Aya's information. I use to be a man who takes his shower cold regardless the weather. But ever since Aya came along I've been a hot shower man. I feel my every ounce of muscle relax. My stiff shoulders loosened, atleast I'm getting somewhere. Now what I need is a quick sleep. I step out of the shower whilst drying myself. I put on my sweatpants and a vest and threw myself on my bed. I close my eyes for a minute and I can feel can feel sleepiness taking over.

"Romeo.... forget about me and take care of the kids please." Aya pleads looking at me with those hurtful eyes. "I love you and forever will without any doubt."

"I can't leave you behind!" I half shout and she takes her head no.

"You can't save us all at once, take Ramona with you she needs medical help, please my love." I pick Ramona who was laying helplessly on Aya's thighs. My daughter can't die and I can't loose the woman I love too.

I gasp waking up holding my chest. I look at the watch and it's 12:30 midnight. I cannot believe that I slept for that long. I sigh getting up of the bed having mixed emotions. Whatever dream I had please Lord let it not be the truth. My curtains are wide open, I guess my mother didn't want to disturb me since she didn't wake me up. I sigh closing them and again I see the same figure on Bettina's yard. Today I decided to take a close look. Why would Bettina walk outside her yard all naked? Ay people and witchcraft, people will amaze you I tell you. How did I dodge a bullet there? What was I even doing in the first place? I sigh closing the curtains and my phone beeps. Who could send me a message so late at night. \*\*\*You are putting them in danger\*\*\*. I read through my furrowed face

confused as hell. Who the hell is this? Who am I putting in danger? I throw my phone on the bed and drank my whiskey straight from the bottle. I'm not hungry I might as well get some sleep. I close my eyes and I love how sleep comes in easily.

"Romeo.... forget about me and take care of the kids please."

"I love you and forever will without any doubt."

"I can't leave you behind!"

"You can't save us all at once, take Ramona with you she needs medical help, please my love."

Fuck that same dream again! What the hell does it mean? I feel like crying, will ever God forgive me for a sin I non know about. If this is for braking Aya's heart than God I'm sorry.

Maybe taking more than the usual overdose will do me. I gulp three sleeping tablets and hopefully this time I might get some sleep. After 30 minutes I feel my eyes getting heavier than usual. I make myself comfortable on my bed and relax my body. I hope nothing disturbs my sleep this time!

AYANDA

Clientele advert is the best for me. I just recently loved it....I don't know whether it's related to the situation I have been through with Ntokozo or it's just and advert I like. The pictures on the advert says alot if you give yourself time analysing it. Apart from the insurance part....the pictures on that advert are the things that people go through on the daily basis. I didn't know I put Rebecca into it. My heart is breaking, my heart is hurting. Is it even normal to be heartbroken in this manner? Is it normal for me to be hurting in this manner? Why can't I solve my life within a blink of an eye? I miss them all, I'm hurt that I miss the kids more than anything. I miss Romeo even more. Who was I fooling when I said I no longer need him? Who was I fooling vele? Was I fooling myself or my emotions? Here I am crying missing my man. Did I even make the right decision of letting him go? My heart says another thing but



my mind says a total different story. That man accepted me with the scars that I have created by a man who is sleeping peacefully next to me. What am I with Ntokozo? I don't even know myself. Do I love Ntokozo? Yes, No, I don't know I'm just confused as hell. If I continue to confuse myself like this than I think I will die a confused soul. I don't see myself falling inlove with another man other than Romeo. I miss big ego, speaking of sex I need sex badly....

"Ntokozo Maan vuka!" I shake him up more like fighting with him. This man can't sleep while I'm struggling to sleep.

He slowly opens his eyes and yarns.

"What is it?" That sleepy voice just made my half clit throb in excitement. I can't hold my tears and I just sniff. "Hey are you okay? What's wrong? He is now wide awake sitting. I look at him in such hate.

"I'm horny," I find myself crying and the devil laughs his lungs out.

"Yoh maan baby, I thought maybe you sick. If you want my dick you should have said so. Haibo I didn't know that women wake up in the middle of the night and cry for dicks." He continues to laugh and I just look at him and he stops laughing.

"I don't see anything funny."

"I'm sorry I didn't mean to laugh. Come let me give you my dick." I smile widely taking off my oversized t-shirts. I don't want no foreplay I just want him inside of me.

"Don't kiss me just put it in." He is on top of me and I have my legs already wide open for him. He just looks at me with his eyes wide open.

"For how long have you been horny?" I don't need him asking me stupid questions!

"Shono mungafuni nepipi lakho!" I half shout and he just smiles looking at me. I don't need him looking at me with those lustful eyes of his. He inserts himself to my already slippery wet cookie.Â

"Just move faster," I instruct him. He chuckles and begins to move fast. I grab on the sheets calling his name out loud. If he continues giving me good sex like this....I'm sure he will be confusing me more on my already confused mind! #35

AYANDA

I've been having wired dreams lately, I don't know what for and why. If I don't dream of Ntokozo being a monster I dream about me being separated with Romeo for good. But yesterday this dream involved children and my heart beats abnormally whenever I think about it. Are the kids okay wherever they are? I put my pride and broken heart aside and gave him a call after unblocking him. I've tried him 3 times and he is not picking up. Let me just try Nana I hope she will pick up, it rings a couple of times and she picks up.

"My babe," I feel hurt when she picks up her phone this lively after I blocked Romeo in every social network.

"Nana how are you?" I sigh emotionally.

"What troubles you?" She knows me better than anyone.

"I've been having these wired dreams lately, I don't even know how to put it. It's like me and Romeo will be separated for good and another thing the dreams of my sister's husband is haunting me." I sniff, this is just too much for me. I thought I was healing but it looks like I'm taking 10 steps backwards.

"Ow child....if it was for me I wouldn't have allowed you to be in that house in the first place. Healing doesn't need you to be next to people that broke you but Romeo always has his own way of doing things."

"I don't know what to do. I'm totally confused, lost and broken." At this point it looks like I'm reaching my breaking point. Maybe death will solve all of my troubles.

"What I can say is follow your heart and do what's right for you. I cannot tell you what to do cause that will be me feeding you and you won't be able to make the right decisions for yourself." She advises me. I like how she is honest with me same as Matron.

"I want to move out of the house and rent a place once my business is up and running."

"You now run a business and I know nothing about it?" I can hear hurt in her voice.

"No Nana it's not like that. My life has been a mess lately and I don't even know what to do with myself also."

"I hear you child, so tell me more about this business of yours...."

After speaking with Nana my spirit was a bit better compared to the morning. I decided to clean the whole house and today is the day I add a few dishes on to my menu.

"Going somewhere?" Ntokozo asks stepping inside of the room. He stands behind me and holds my waist.

"Don't touch me cause you won't stand my hunger." I tell him and he just smiles looking at my reflection on the mirror.

"Mnyei will always be delighted to come at your service your highness." His hands moves a little bit further down and squeezes my butt.

"Don't even start." I'm already wet if I don't go now God knows I will be eating sex the whole day.

"Or what?" He moves further close to me and kisses my neck. He drops his walking stick and turns me around to face him. "Tell me to stop." He continues to bite my neck making me to breathe heavily. My hand trails to his already standing torso. Good thing he is not wearing anything underneath. I pull his jeans down freeing his machine. It's already pumping up and down dripping of his pre-cum. I play with his cock kneading it, he bites my lower lip enjoying my magic moment with my tiny hands.

"Damn you woman," he takes off his jeans while I take off my clothes and face the other way. He plays around my entrance with his finger....

"Just put it in." I swear my body has a way of betraying me in an unexpected way. He slides his machine inside of me and begins to move slowly in and out of me spanking my but on the other hand. This feels so wrong and yet so good in a way. I feel like crying.

"De....deeperrrr," ow yes I want him all in me. He spreads my butt cheeks and stand in a comfortable position and began to pound me like it's nobody's business. He knows it that I like it hard and a bit tough. He pulls out just when

I was about to reach my climax. He makes me stand to face him. Our lips touch and I'm clinging onto him so bad. He picks me up and presses my body against the wall. He places my one leg down and another hanging over his hand. He bends his knees a bit positioning himself. My bladder is full....

"Ow God," I dig my nails on his shoulders and he groans biting my neck. I swear by the time we are done I will have love bites all over my body. I remember this one time when we were in this kind of position with Romeo, he would say 'I got you, look at me and tell me you love me.' With Ntokozi no words exchanged just a room pleasure filled with moans and groans. He talks after when it's cuddle time.

If he keeps on going into deep I feel like my bladder is going to burst. I really need to use the loo. My legs are numb and shaky.

"Ntok... Ntokozi," I pant leaning my head against the wall. He begins to move faster making my boobs to bounce back and forth, he hits my cervix and immediately warm liquid gushes out my vagina and my bladder relaxes. Just right when I knew I have peed on myself.

"Babe," Ntokozi softly calls out for me not minding himself that he is wet because of me.

"Ow yes," I'm in paradise and I don't want this to end. He pushed further more making me to scream my lungs out. He relaxes his body and helps to stand giving me a perk on my forehead. He sits on the dressing table catching his breath with sweat dripping down his forehead.

"The pain is killing me," he complains and I bite my nails looking at him. It's all because of me and my always horny self. But another part of me does not care at all because of the pain he put me through.

I did all the necessary important things in town. Menu done, also bought a few new ingredients and added some soft drinks. New flyers were done and it has been confirmed I'm legally Ayanda The Chef!

"Ayanda!" I'm waiting for my Uber I have requested and someone is shouting for my name in this small town. Obviously there are many Ayanda's around.

"Ayanda," the voice seems to be getting closer. I turn to look back and I see this Dumisani Vilakazi guy. uJamu botela! I fake a wide smile and he genuinely smiles. He gives me a warm hug and damn he smells so heavenly good.

"I waited for your call but dololo." He lets go and looks at me. The way he is so cute....but I just can't stand his jamness.

"I thought I saved your number but I didn't I guess." I say avoiding eye contact.

"Hmmm," he folds his arms and still continues to look at me without shifting his gaze.

"Okay, okay, I still have your numbers saved on my phone." I sigh showing him his contact on my phone.

"Atleast you didn't delete it. Take me out to lunch....you owe me."

"God why did I come to town vele?" I groan stomping my feet like a 5 year old. This cannot be happening, out of all the days God why did you choose this?

"To be my blesser."

"Than be a man and load my groceries in your car." I fold my arms and look at him loading my plastics in my boot.

"Let's go madam." If only he could speak a little bit faster that would make him more cuter. "I get to choose where we eating." I just look outside the window thinking about my sad life. Once upon a time I use to be a happy soul who cared about nothing else but alcohol.

"And we are here!" I wonder what's making him so joyful this afternoon, probably he got some.

"Why are you happy?" I find myself asking. This is not the jamu Dumisani Vilakazi I know.

"Will tell you all about it."

We done eating and I'm glad that we ate in comfortable silence without him being a jam nuisance.

"So tell me what made you this happy?" I throw the last piece of the beggar that was left.

He heavily sighs leaning back and looks around. He shifts his chair next to me and whispered. "My mother accepted me for who I am." He says softly. I'm left confused, what is he talking about Kahle Kahle?

"Awume Dumisani, what are you talking about?"

"I've known you for like two minutes but it takes time for you to realise things gosh. Anyway my mother accepted me the way as I am." He shouldn't be smiling this proudly cause I don't understand him!

"Huh,"

"Eish chomza Udom yazi. Anyway I'm gay." He sips on his juice flapping his eyes. Now that he mentions it....all the signs were there but I was way too blind to even notice!

"Pho why did you ask me out?"

"I wanted to see if will there be any feelings awakening from me?" He shrug his shoulders, "I didn't mean to be forward but I was just drawn towards you.

"Okay, you look hot by the way." I confess and he just laughs at me.

"Ayke usuyangifunake." He says smiling. He keeps quite for a moment and his eyes blinks multiply with tears in the verge of coming out.

"Are you okay?"

"I remember how I was bullied in school by this group of guys just because I was different from them." I don't why people enjoy seeing other people's tears. I'm sad on his behalf but I'm wondering if is he fully okay though?

"Are you happy though?" I find myself asking.

"Since my mother has finally accepted me I'm beyond happy."

I'm happy that he is true to himself and I'm happy that he didn't go with the plan of confusing himself by asking me out. Now I've gained 2 friends. Speaking of my other friend I haven't seen her in ages. Tomorrow is Sunday, I'm thinking of attending church with them.

"I'm happy for you. Now no need to ask me out mfana stay true to yourself." I tell him and he just laughs at me.

We spent the whole afternoon together not realising that it's getting pretty late. The jamu Dumisani is gone and has been replaced by the bubbly noisy weird dude. I got to know more about him and he got to know more about me.

"So or you shagging umkhwenyana kamufi?" I couldn't help myself but to laugh. I never knew that Dumisani is this crazy. It's true when they say you will never know the book until you fully open it. I think I judged him way too quickly.

"Shut up." I laugh looking at my wrist watch, "ow crap I should get going before it rains terror in that house." I settle the bill and he drove me straight home. I find Ntokozo watching soccer as usual.

"Hey," I greet him and he responds. I don't have time nursing his ego mina. I have a lot of important things to worry about. Dumisani helped me with the groceries but he didn't enter the house. I unpack my groceries and went straight to bed. The sheets....they were white when I left this morning. Why are there blue sheets here? After a while Ntokozo comes in limping and sleeps a bit far away from me. That's a first, Ntokozo likes sleeping next to me. I try grabbing his dick but he quickly ducks and tells me his tired. Okay let me just let him be. I turn to sleep on the side and switched off the side lamp.

I can't sleep these nightmares are at it again. I decided to up wake and have a glass of cold water. I look at my phone with my heart pounding against my chest. Fuck this shit! I'm giving him a call if I die I die.

"Hello," it's 1 am and he is so wide awake.

"I can't sleep, I tried calling you this morning but you didn't pick up. Are the kids okay? I've been having dreams I don't understand

dreams that don't make any senses. I....

"Aya slow down," ow Jehova that voice. "You do realise that you speaking fast and you not making any sense."

"I'm sorry I'm just worried about the kids,"

"Ow so you are not worried about me?" I smile imaging his smile.

"I miss you every day and it hurts but I'm trying to convince myself otherwise." Of cause I miss him, I miss his sex game, his smell, smile, that tiny round nicely shaped ass. Is it possible to drool about someone over the phone?

"I miss you too," we fall into comfortable silence. "Everyone misses you."

"I miss everyone too," I sigh getting emotional.

"Stop feeding your fake husband my cake." My heart skips a beat, ow God he knows!

"I don't know what's wrong with me, I find myself wanting his dick cause it's the only one that's available. I'm always emotional, tired hungry." Gosh these tears.

"Are you sure you not pregnant?" How can he ask a sensitive topic like this.

"No, I doubt I can fall pregnant after what happened you know." We keep quite again.

"I'm sorry," he says and I'm confused.

"About?"

"Sending you back, for a minute I thought I was doing the right thing. I'm truly sorry just so you know you will forever be in my heart. I truly love you Aya."

"I love you too Romeo. I asked you if are the kids okay bro." He laughs.

"They are fine, don't drop the call I want to hear you snore."

"Haibo my airtime...." He drops the call on me first, mxm what was I thinking vele. Argh! For peace sake I will sleep downstairs, NoNtokozo akahambe eyofa lona nepipi lakhe. Just when I was about to sleep Romeo's call come through.

"Someone was at the gate, I'm probably seeing ghost's or something."

"I wouldn't be surprised," I yarn getting undercovers. I swear to my father's grave I'll never ever sleep with Ntokozo in this house ever again even if we get to share a bed.

"Let's sleep, and don't drop your phone."

I can't believe that Romeo did that, I'm glad I reached out to him. I guess I was being childish. I made a vow to my heart to never sleep with Ntokozo ever again and that's a promise I'm willing to achieve. It's 8:30 am and I've just woken up, no nightmares just a peaceful sleep. My battery is flat and I don't blame my phone after that long call we had. Romeo is weird in a sexy way yazi. What the hell was wrong with me vele abounding a man that loves me with my imperfections.

"Can I come in?" What does he want now. Looking for house to rent will do me good. But once my business gets in more money that's where I will definitely move.

"Yea sure," I'm suddenly annoyed by his presence and I don't know why.

"I'm sorry," he whispers, what is he sorry for? Ukuthi ungincishe ipipi lakhe?

"You were tired I understand." I peel the covers off my body. Damn my body is heavy.

"I know you mad at me and I don't blame you. The thing is I'm afraid of alot of things...." He pauses and looks at me. "I'm a mess and I don't know what to do with myself."

"Ow," that's all I managed to say cause honestly that's the only response I could give him.

"I'm sorry but I'll make it up to you." He looks guilty, I wonder what he did that made so down.

"It's okay," he nods his head and walks out leaving me deep on thoughts. I wonder what kind of mess you are talking about.

MaNtombela is singing her lungs out in the kitchen, I wonder what's her sudden mood of happiness.

"Ow my daughter you are here. How was your night?" I look at her in suspicion, Ntokozo is sour and MaNtombela is very much joyful.

"Good, Yin wanama Kangana are you going back to your husband's house?" That is the only logic explanation.

"Mhlongo and I are divorced." She's annoyed, that's a first to me. I'm in total shock!

"When? Why?"

"Don't interfere in adults affairs usaxakwe ukukupita." Did she just say that to me? Some things never changed. I knew that this sudden change of hers will burst anytime and this was expected cause I've already prepared my heart for it.

"Wow," that's all I managed to say. I need to spend my day with Dumisani or Mapule just to get out of this house.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean it in that way," I just ignored her and continued with my journey. I told myself I will never use Romeo's money. Right now I need it more than anything. I know these two people I consider as friends know places that I can rent from. I'm done with MaNtombela and Ntokozo, those people take my kindness for granted and I can no longer take it. #36

NTOKOZO

I pull out of this woman who has been demanding my sexual desires for weeks now. I can't satisfy Aya anymore because my dick is always flat tired. Aya got tired of me to a point that she moved into our old room. I now regret every ounce of what I did with this woman. She's smiling like a love sick puppy.

"Now you got what you wanted phuma." I point out at the door still naked. If Aya is not around she makes sure that she makes my life a living hell.

"Hay you are done?" She seems shocked. I sigh opening the door for her to get out. I can't even celebrate my success, the investors pulled through and I will forever thank Aya for that. She stood by me when I had no one, she opened doors for me that were closed. How will I ever repay this woman's generosity? Aya, Aya, Aya, my heart breaks for her. The day she finds out that I'm the man behind her mother's pregnancy.

"Yes I'm done MaNtombela. What will happen if Aya finds you in her bedroom?" I ask and she sighs getting off the bed. This back and forth is really draining me it's like I have no direction in life without Aya.

"Okay," she sneaks her head outside the door first and runs to her bedroom naked. This woman is really risking to lose her own daughter over a dick? At least Aya will forgive me and we will move on from this and live happily ever after. I quickly make the bed before Aya comes back and suspects anything.

"What's that foul smell?" God gracious! When did she come back? My eyes are all out I wasn't expecting her back so soon. "Your bedroom is always smelling this weird why?" She sniffs the air and her legs pull her towards the bed. I will be damned if I let her sniff the bed.

"I was masturbating," she stops on her tracks and I sigh in relief.

"Ey man Ntokozo!" She clicks her tongue and walks out of the room. Damn that was close. I need to sort out this MaNtombela woman and put her in her place once and for all. I can't stand to lose Aya again!

ROMEO

The clock is ticking I look at the text that was sent out to me minutes ago. Whoever this is has all the time in the world to play such a nonsense game. I click my tongue and toss my phone aside. I'm way too happy to be attending to such lunatics.

What's happening between me and Aya? The answer is we decided to let bygones be bygones and focus on us. Yes we made unhealthy decisions in the past but we pushed through them. I don't see myself raising my kids with any other woman beside Aya. That woman is light and comfortable herself. I step in the shower letting the warm water hit my body. I feel less tired, dreamless and free. So getting back with Aya made me this really happy? The woman behind my happiness. The fact that she took a decision to move out of that monster's house made me even more happy.

I find my family having breakfast downstairs.

"Morning my beautiful family!" I settle down to sit next to Ronald.

"Someone is happy, so tell us what is the main reason behind that happiness son." My mother and news, I don't know why old folks love news this much. I didn't tell her that we fixed things with Aya. I'm sure she will be more than merry.

"We fixed our endearment with the one and only woman who makes me this crazy."

"Son too much figures." She wanted information and I told her now she's complaining that I'm feeding her too much information, woman and drama! "I'm glad you did son." She tells me. My kids are just eating without even noticing me, traitors.

After Bettina's fake miscarriage here family demand us Osman's to cleanse her daughter so she could have kids in the future....as if I care what happens to her. After seeing her walking around naked, my suspicions have been confirmed she is a witch a diplomatic one for that matter. What kind of a woman who walks around the yard naked every day? Yesterday I decided to take a peek, I wanted to see closer, I wanted to see what she does. I wish I didn't go there cause I got the shocker of my life.

"Romeo is mine and mine alone. He will never look at any other women besides me. I want every bit of his money," she kept on singing those words over and over again. I laugh my lungs out when she bathed her cookie jar with that....I don't even know what's it called. So she is all doing this just to get my attention. I wish I didn't entertain her in the first place. She drops the calabash when she heard me laughing, I just couldn't contain myself any longer. What she was doing was beyond disgusting.



I didn't say anything further, I just walked back to my house leaving her in shame. Do women still bewitch men in this time. Back then I would have agreed, people practiced witchcraft every now and then and they were very well known for it. But now we are leaving in the 21 century, I still can't believe that she was bewitching me.

"I'm happy myself that she finally came back to her senses, her senses were gone for far too long now." I say, it's nothing but the truth. Aya is very disturbed and I don't know how to heal her.

"I hear you son, about Bettina...." I shoot my mother a death stare, she mustn't dare me this morning I'm in a very good mood. She knows better than to keep quiet. I do not want to hear that name in this house as long as I still leave in it.

"It's fun day at school daddy," Ramona reminds me. Gosh so the schools are tormenting us parents for real. Imagine me the whole Romeo running around the paly grounds of primary school! Rose, come to the rescue.

"When is it?" I ask and she just smiles widely making my heart to melt. What did I ever do to deserve these beautiful kids.

"Next week Friday," her reply has that passion of happiness. So this will give me the whole week to prepare myself. I'll have to talk to Aya about this. I can't be running around the yard.

"Are mother's allowed?" I dart my concentration on Rebecca. She nods her head with a little smile, a smile has that bit hurt and confusion. "Tell Auntie A," her eyes light up in excitement. If Aya doesn't come to the rescue than that means I'm all alone. But I know she will never turn down the kids offer that's how much she respects them and I admire her alot for that. "Good

we will give her a call later on." I walk back to my bedroom to have a little bit of rest. These days I'm always speaking with Aya on the phone till midnight and that's how I manage to fall asleep. The mere factor that she's back to me and my life makes me more happy. I throw myself on the bed deciding on a quick nap.

AYANDA

I've packed my every little bit clothing, item....it's time I put my past behind and focus on myself and my futher. After that hurtful outburst MaNtombela had literally showed me that I don't belong here. It's my sister's house after all, I didn't know that one day my life would go back to square one because of this woman. I wonder what did I ever do to her for her to hate me this much. I need a few things for the new house I've found with the help of Dumisani and Mapule. It's a three bedroom house and the rent cost R3,500 per month. My pocket won't be damaged that much because I will be using Romeo's money for rent. I half smile thinking of my stupidity when I said I swear never to use Romeo's money ever again.

"The couches are very nice, what do you think?" Dumisani points out one of the most elegant couches ever.

"I love them," I mean in joy, these Morden furniture will make you spend the last caber in your pocket. I'm looking at my newly furniture with so much pride, but I would have been more happier if I bought it with my hard earned money.

"They look so good," Mapule agrees, she looks around and I don't know what the hell she's searching for. She throws her weight, "and they also comfortable." She bumps up and downs feeling the cormfines.

"Aibo wena," I don't know what I will with Mapule. She is embarrassing me!

"What? Even for the bed that's what we do." Talk about black child!

I'm grateful for these guys what's left is for me to fetch my clothing and equipment in Ntokozo's house. If I don't put myself first these people will always take me for granted.

"Where must I put these?" Dumisani's hands on assisting as much he could. I live this vibrant side of him not the jam side.

"For now on the kitchen counter until I find space for it."

"Can we have food." Nangoke uMapule nokuthanda ukudla. Atleast we bought takeaways on our way back. I'm sure Dumisani' s car is complaining, the way we have been using it today....

"Okay guys let's eat we will finish this later,"

BETTINA

"So you are trying to tell me that all that nonsense you did in my yard was for sweet nothing?" Her mother was livid. The fact the neighbours now knows what abomination her child's does at night when people are asleep.

"When did you become this woman Betty? Didn't I raise you well? I don't even know what to say but I'm disappointed in you. You also do abortions." Her mother shakes her head in disbelief.

"I thought he was going to come back to me," what a pathetic response her mother thinks. Looking at her own daughter laying in that bed with blisters all over her body made her spirit down. Where did she ever go wrong with Bettina? She asks herself.

"He was never yours and you were never his. Now look at the outcome of your decisions. When you look at yourself in the mirror what do you see." Bettina keeps quite for a while. She saw herself yesterday and she doesn't recognise herself. Her curves are falling down slowly but surely. Her lips tremble as she thought of Romeo using her

like that and tossed her aside. How can one man be this heartless? "Crying won't help cause you are already deep and there's no way out. Just accepted your fate." Her mother leaves her room as she burst into tears.

#### AT THE HOSPITAL

"You got the package?"

"Yes, so when are they discharging you?" The man asks, Steven has been acting like a person who has lost his memory. Doctors believe that he might have a short term memory little did they know that it's all a setup to his escaping plan.

"Keep an eye on her until I tell you to strike." Steven advises the man who listened attentively. "It's time they know that the man of the town is back." Steven seethe through his greeted teeth in anger. Yes he betrayed a man who had his back no matter what. A fried who would move mountains for him but he backstabbed him in a very crucial way.

Steven is reading through the documents that the man left. His heart was on a heartbeat making it hard for him to breathe. So Romeo is now rolling with the big guys. Stone out of all people, he punches the bed and groans in pain forgetting the burnt blisters on his hands.

"Arghhh," he shut his eyes calming himself done. There is nothing that will make him happy by seeing all of these men down! The action of hurting or harming them in return for an injury that he suffered at their hands. He gazed his eyes on the information that's right infront of his eyes and sighed folding the papers. "You will all pay, starting with you Romeo." He hisses and leans back on his bed thinking of a painful strategy that will wipe Romeo on this earth for good.

Meanwhile the doctor was standing outside as she put two together. She put her phone back into her pocket and walked in like she didn't take any pictures.

"Steven you look better than most of the days." She says checking his temperature. So all this while he was pretending to be someone who has lost his memory. She shook her head as she thought about it deeper.

"Who are you?" Steven asks, he still thinks that the doctor is still clueless about him losing his mind and memory but the doctor now knows better.

"Steven, Steven," she smiles looking at this conniving Steven who was staring into thin space. "I will come back later on for your medication." She walks out taking out her phone and sent pictures to the number she always had on her phone.

ROMEO

WTF! Who could send me something this absurd, a burnt person sleeping in a hospital bed. I'm with the gents having time of our lives, my spirit is back to normal and I couldn't be anymore happier.

"Check this out," I hand Spikes my phone and he passes it around for everyone to take a gape.

"Who's this?" Zenzele asks with a slight frown on his face.

"This number has been bugging me for the past weeks for my attention." I reply coldly. Maybe it's Bettina seeking for my attention who knows. These species call woman will demolish you.

"And not once you even thought of telling us." Anathi looks at Romeo with a disappointment look on his face. "First of all you do know of the our line of work is dangerous. You have a family to look out for. Me being a day away from you makes you forget everything."

"I thought maybe...."

"Ay thula madala, bring your phone here " Spikes takes Romeo's phone and scrolls through the messages. "These are different people. The person who sent this picture is probably the person who works at the hospital or either has information about this person. And the other messages it's someone who comes as a threat, someone who means business." They all keep quite and look at each other wondering who might be a threat to them.

"Did Steven really dies in that fire?" Zenzele asks and their eyes widen in shock. A call comes through to Romeo's phone.

"Mum, what? Calm down....Ramona and Ronald....what! Okay I'm coming!" #37

ROMEO

Arriving home I find my mother swimming in her own pool of tears. My kids are nowhere to be seen, how did this happen that my kids go missing inside their father's yard. All of this doesn't make sense at all.

Times up, I read the text over and over again. I'm having heart palpitations it's beating more quickly in a fluttering way.

I'm experiencing excruciating pains, alternating with numbness. My heart is sore and very torn. How did I get here? Is it my stupidity that led me into.

"What happened?" I finally manage to ask. My mother is a crying mess. Rebecca on the other hand is in shock. Can somebody tell me what the fuck happened here!

"Two men came here they turned the whole place upside down." She's breathing heavily, crying. "They pointed me with guns and took the kids....ow God my babes."

"Did they say what they were looking for?" I look at Rebecca who was crying silently.

"I overheard them talking about the diamonds." Rebecca responds softly. Now I'm starting to believe that Steven is still alive. I should have killed him when I still had a chance.

"This bastard!" I sit down on the chair not knowing what to do next. Rose trusted me with our children. How can I be this careless?

"Is there anything that they have like a tracker or something?" Spikes asks.

"How can I be this stupid?" He covers his face with his hands as his lips trembled fearing to lose his children.

"Eish then we're doomed." They all keep quiet. "Call that number that sent you pictures." Spikes suggest and Romeo doubtfully dialed the numbers.

"What took you so long?" The person answers. He puts the phone on loud speaker for everyone to hear.

"Who is that man?"

"I believe it's your friend Steven even though he is hiding his identity from me." The doctor replies.

"Are you sure about this?" Romeo's heart thunders painfully realising that he might lose the twins.

"Positive, I even saw the man that was always your component in business.... Zobel, he had pictures of your family." She further explains. "Please take care of my friend's kids."

"Thank you." He disconnects the call and turns to look at the guys.

"The lady, who is she?" Spikes asks trying to put the pieces of the puzzles together.

"Rose's friend," he inhales sharply holding the bridge of his nose. Nana is laying on the couch sniffing non-stop. Rebecca is staring at the TV. How did my life get this messy? Is it because I was way too concentrated on Aya? A message came through on Romeo's phone. He swiped his phone and his hands trembled looking at the picture. The twins all tied up on a tiny dirty bed.

"No, no, no not my kids. Please God not my kids." His chest closes up as he struggled to breathe. The guys take turns looking at the picture. They clench their jaws in so much anger.

"Steven took this way too far." Spike tries calling the number while busy cursing but the number is unavailable. "Let me go fetch my equipment, I want to track this number maybe we might find something."

AYANDA

I love my new rental house now what's left is for me is to fetch what belongs to me from Ntokozo's house. I live just few houses away, I wanted to be far away as possible but unfortunately this was the only vacant place and I don't like to share. The Uber I requested dropped me off the gate. I walk inside the house and head straight to his bedroom. Me being shocked is an understatement I'm dismayed, disgusted. My own mother in bed with my sister's husband who happens to be my husband. Everything just comes back flooding, those sneaky conversations, the baby....so MaNtombela is pregnant with Ntokozo's child.

"Wow," they both freeze when they see me. Ntokozo jumps and pulls out from MaNtombela. I look at her in a very disappointed manner. I thought I knew her but clearly I was lying to myself. I don't know this woman who gave birth to me.

"Babe it's not what it looks like.... I can explain." He is wearing his pants and I'm still frozen on the same position. I hate myself for being this stupid and naive. I knew something was up and I didn't know it was this deep. I don't know whether to cry or what.

"I'm just here for what's mine." I walk right past him feeling revolted. Good thing I called Mapule and Dumisani to help me out and they would be here any minute from now. Friends that will be always there for you whenever you are indeed of them.

I pack each and every bit of my clothing, so for the past six months leaving with them in this room they were shagging on the very same bed I was sleeping on. Wow, I have no words to explain or express how I feel right now. A sharp pain shoots on my lower abdomen.

"Ahhh," I hold my stomach listening to the pain striking. After minutes it subsides and I stand up straight to continue with what I'm doing.

"Babe please listen to me," is he really still behind me annoying me. I don't want to be in the same room as him.

"Tell me something....for how long has this been going on?" I ask. He looks at me stepping forward and tries to get hold of my hand but I quickly yank it away. He can't touch me after being inside a woman old enough to be his mother! What does he take me for?

"It's started the day I denied sleeping with you. I'm sorry." I nod my head and I'm not surprised nor angry.

"Is the baby yours?" Is he answers me I will be just out of his site for good and he will never ever see me again. Maybe relocating will do me good.

"Yes," he voice came out as a whisper and again I'm not surprised by his response. It's like I knew that something fishy was going on or is it because I have already told my heart to prepare for the worst?

"Yoh, imikhuba yenu." I clap my hands once in disbelief and the pain stricken again but I ignore it. I feel constipated, when I get home I will drink Dulcolax it has been helping me very much pretty lately.

"Sisi," hehe the nerve of this woman I call a mother. I look at her with so much rage and hate.

"I'll be relieved when you in your coffin, I have been thinking about this for a while. As parent and child, our relationship should not be this way. But because of things that have happened, and things that you have done specifically, I hate you." She gasps in shock and blinks a couple of times but I don't care at all. It's time she knows where she stands in my heart, and the truth is there is no space for her in my heart.

"Ayanda, I'm sorry mntanami."

"Stop it with those fake crocodile tears. Ain't you tired of ruining my life and happiness? I knew that this day would come and I was already prepared for it.

I grew up knowing that there was something wrong between us. The tension in the air, the hesitation before you spoke, the glare in your eye. I spent my childhood seeing my friends have amazing, loving relationships with their mothers, then there was you and me. We never really spoke in depth, and we didn't do much together. You were the mother and I was the child. Soon, we became strangers who had nothing but hatred towards each other. You have made me stronger, you have made me independent, and you have been my motivation. I am done hating you, because I am done hating myself. I also want you to know that I promise that I will be a better parent than you were. I will never allow myself to let my child hate themselves because of how I treat them. I promise to be my child's best friend and put them over anything or anyone. I promise to be everything you weren't." I take a deep breath listening to the pains striking. I've said a mouthful and I think it's enough for one day.

"Ow Jehova what have I done." She places her hand on her head crying crocodile tears, she is indeed an actress. Lo mama. I'm so done with Ntokozo and MaNtombela. I'm sorry Nkanyezi but I cannot honour your request. A hooter honks outside and I believe the girls are here. I carry my luggage's out of that Foul-Smelling room. MaNtombela and Ntokozo are following me behind like they have been stricken by lightning.

"Babe can we talk

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" he begs with pleading eyes but my heart says no, I will not allow him to manipulate me.

"What do you want to talk about?" I give him my attention and he just stares at me. "You are wasting my precious time Buti, baby daddy kaMaNtombela." I laugh a bit bitterly, I'm not done with this woman I still want to vent what's in my heart that I have been holding on for far too long. "And wena fuck buddy kaNtokozo I want to know that I am not motherless, I just don't have you. I have amazing people in my life to share myself with, I just don't have you. I am growing and becoming a wonderful adult that a mother would be proud of, I just don't have you. I never really had you, and I never will, but I have a place deep within my heart that will always be yours."

"Please don't say that. Don't give up on me," she's kneeling down in front of me. What am I her Queen, probably I am it's just that I don't know it. Dumisani comes and stops on his tracks when he sees unfamiliar faces. I see his body tense when he keeps staring with Ntokozo.

"Wow," that's all that Dumisani says and walks out of the house with his eyes filled with tears. I walk out and Ntokozo follows me behind like he's been hit by a truck.

"Must we take everything from the garage also?" Mapule asks me and freezes when locking eyes with Ntokozo. "You," she points out at Ntokozo who was shamefully looking down. Her lips tremble and she begins to shake.

"I made a promise to myself long ago: if I ever find the man who had raped me as a teenager, I'd confront him about what he did." His voice is laced with so much pain.

"Chomie," I'm shocked yet again. How can one person have so many wrongs in his life? Is this really the sweet Ntokozo we all know? Now I'm starting to believe that he abused my sister and she died in silence.

"Aya, this is the man that took my pride and innocence in the most crucial way. I begged him to stop but he continued to hurt me without care! Facing the person who betrayed you, who preyed upon you, who haunts you: It's the stuff of vengeful daydreams, born of nightmares, do you have any idea of what I went through? After doing what you did you left me there just like that while I bleed profusely, months went by only to find out that I'm pregnant for the rapists who turned my whole life upside down!" She breathes heavily and bursts into tears. I drop the luggage's on the ground and gave her a warm hug. I'm not crying because I'm hurting I'm crying because Ntokozo is no human.

"So Mabalienhle is Ntokozo's child?" I brake the hug, I want to be assured by her response.

"Yes, my baby girl is a product of rape, and he is the father," she now has hiccups and her mascara is all over her face. Shame poor thing....

"I don't even know what to say," I'm truly hurt and it's hurting. "Ntokozo," I'm looking at him hoping and praying that all of this ain't true at all but who am I fooling cause this guy's is a walking monster.

"I'm sorry Ayanda," he sniffs, I shake my head not knowing what to do next. I have ran out of words for him. "Do you perhaps know Dumisani?" He shakes his head agreeing to the question I just asked him. So all of these people were abused by him including me. "Wow," so that also means that what Dumisani told me is also true, how sick is this man?

I load everything in the truck we hired. I will be driving Dumisani's car behind because for now I just want to be alone. I want to think clearly without any disturbance. So many revelations in one day! Ntokozo is no human being at all.

NTOKOZO

If you've been cheated on, you might be experiencing a whirlwind of emotions. You may feel devastated one moment and angry the next. A broken heart can lead to feelings of shame, doubt, confusion, and anxiety. Understanding and processing your emotions is a healthy way to heal from past hurt. What did I do? Getting cheated on is one of the most devastating and damaging things that can happen in a person's life. It can lead to emotional distress, an increase in risk-taking behaviour and actual physical pain. A partner's infidelity can even change our brain chemistry. After everything I did to her I still go to do this with her own mother! I have a child, a child that....what will I even tell Mabalienhle when growing up? That's she is a product of rape? Just when I thought my life is coming back together and crashes right before my eyes. I'm pacing up and down with my heart throbbing, Aya can't leave me....she can't!

No woman will ever tolerate me and the shit that I do.

"What happens now?" Is the devil seriously going to ask me that. Instead of running after her own daughter she stood still and watched her as she drove away!



"Don't ask me anything. I know Aya will forgive me." I convince myself and she laughs.

"I doubt she will this time. The look in her eyes said she is done."

"And you are not even bothered that she will hate you forever after this?" This woman has a heart of a devil. How does one does not care about their own child that they carried in their womb for 9 months.

"She will come around, Wena you should be worried about that child of yours." I swallow a bitter taste in my mouth when she mentions Mbalienhle. So I'm a father to a 5 year old. Should I be happy? Sad? I'm glad that I have her but I'm pained of the way I found her and how she was made. If only there's an erase button I would certainly wipe out the life I've lived, a past that I'm afraid to talk about. I made sinister things before which I'm not proud of.

"And nawe you should start looking for a house to stay in I can't have you degrading my life like this." I hiss making her to chuck bitterly.

"Uyahlanya, I'm due anytime from now and I will be needing you. So don't think chasing the mother of your child away will bring Aya back." She clicks her tounge and walks out. I can't stand her site really. I'm ashamed of myself.

#38

AYANDA

"Are you going to be okay though?" I ask Mapule who has been awfully quite. Dumisani left right after assisting me in with my equipment. The house looks sparkling clean and everything is placed neatly to it's rightful place.

"I wish I never met him, I wish I could cancel the moment of me seeing him after those awful 5 years."

"I know it hurts babe and I'm sorry. I sometimes wish I acted sooner. Come here," I give her a warm hug. My stomach cramps have stopped for now, maybe it was the instincts kicking in that I will see something I wish to unsee. Imagine seeing your mother being fucked by someone you've thought they have changed for the better but clearly he was lying to me and taking me for a fool that I am. I'm planning on seeing Romeo this upcoming weekend. I miss him so bad and I don't want us to have that gap of having a long distance relationship. The distance tends to make them less "personal" to us, but by maintaining frequent and open lines of communication and by fostering trust and positive emotions. I wouldn't put my relationship with Romeo's as a long distance one but it feels like it. We fall into an awkward silence staring at each other, next thing we find our bodies touching and lips dancing to the tune of the rhythm as our heads turned left and right. Her lips are so slippery reminding me so much of Romeo. I'm experiencing a flood of oxytocin, my senses came back and I stop. We are both broken and we shouldn't let our life to confuse us, me especially. I pull back panting heavily,

"I'm sorry I shouldn't have done that," Mapule apologies avoiding eye contact. I shouldn't have allowed it. "I think I need to get going." She says stepping back. I think it's the best idea considering what just happened.

"I'll see you tomorrow at the gym." She nods her head and walks out. Mapule is straight as a ruler. She is just afraid of men but she is definitely not a lesbian.

I decided to call my man and I'm so sceptical to tell him about what has just conspired.

"Poonky," okay what happened to my bubbly Romeo. He sniffs and he immediately gets my attention. I'm still standing on the same spot Mapule left me in. I can't seem to sit down, constipation is really making me go nuts.

"Babe what is it?" I panic but calm myself down. Probably he is pulling my legs, he just wants to see if will he ever get that attention if he ever cries. Men and acting like baby's!

"My baby's are gone, someone took them." I know Romeo can never joke about something like this.

"What? When? How? where?"

"At home, they were with Nana and...." He keeps quiet for a while. I think he is still trying to digest what he just told me.

"You know what say no more. I'm coming." I need to pack my bag as in now. Argh even if I leave them behind I have everything of mines at Romeo's.

"It's late babe, come tomorrow morning." He suggests but I'm not backing down on this one. I want to be next to him and besides it's only 5:30 pm. I'll just request. I didn't even ask him how's he coping, which children were taken? But we'll talk when I get there.

"I'll request my love don't...." Something just broke outside, is Mapule still around? I thought she has left. It's probably the dog though.

"Is there a matter?"

"No babe, I think it's the dogs from my neighbour. Listen let me take a quick shower and...." I scream my lungs out when I see man standing in front of me. "Please don't kill me, just take everything that I have a let me live please."

"Babe! Halo! Halo!" I can hear Romeo's voice in panic on the other side of the line. Ow God what did I ever do to deserve such in life.

"Somebody help me!!" I try running towards the door but the man grabbed me before I could even take any further steps. A stinging sensation stung on my neck making my vision blurry. I feel my phone slipping out of my hand and fell on the ground. Everything became fuzzy in split seconds and I feel my body giving in.

ROMEO

The line disconnects and I'm left with alot of unanswered questions. Where was Cedric when all of this happened. Just one task and he fails.... I can't loose my beloved people all in one day. I'm numb from the pain, dejected. How does one gets to face so much spectacle in their life. My heart is shredded in an unexplainable way.

"We will find your family man, trust in me." Spikes assures, what will make us find them since the bloody damn phone is untraceable. Spikes is good in what he does but if he also fails it's clear indication that we are dealing with an intellectual person here.

"I'm starting to lose hope," I say dropping a few tears. These men left their families behind to help me find my own missing pieces of the puzzles.

"It's not even a day but already you are crying your balls out. Don't be weak man Romeo be a man and fight for your family!" Anathi hisses. He feels useless seeing his buddy breaking down like this.

"I personally believe that each one of us have different ways to cope with challenges and obstacles in life. It may not be the best way or your way, but people survive the way they best can. But Romeo try staying strong and positive. We will find them and will bring them back home safe and sound." Zenzele gently squeeze his shoulder. I guess the gents are right, it's time I man up and look for my family. Mopping around won't bring them back without me looking for them. Even if it means killing the whole nation than so be it!

NTOKOZO

I've been trying to get hold of Aya but her phone is not going through. I'm hurt that I've hurt her beyond anything. I understand Mapule's situation because that was a long time ago and I was still blinded by drugs and alcohol. For Dumisani....the way I humiliated him, making him to walk around the school premises naked and kids were taking videos of him making fun of it. I felt like a real man not realising that I'm hurting alot of people in the process. Nkanyezi stayed even still and I don't know how she managed to make me a better man. Dumisani left school after almost being violated by my very same friends who watched and cheered for me when I was pumping Mapule without care. My past is catching up with me and I don't know what to do with myself. I hate what I did in the past and I will forever regret the decisions I made. I need to make right by Mapule and her family so that I can be able to have a bond with my daughter. I wonder how the child MaNtombela is carrying will look like, or who will she take after.

"Her phone is still not going through," says the devil brushing her stomach and flinches. "I think I'm having contractions,"

"Okay," I'm not in the mood to entertain her. What I want is my Aya and her alone. I sometimes wish that the baby that MaNtombela is carrying could just die so she could leave me in peace.

"You don't get it do you, I need to be in the hospital." She snaps.

"Okay, I will try and get a car for you to send to the hospital." I dial Nontokoza my twin sister but luckily she agrees.

Minutes later she was groaning and cursing underneath her breath. She's just faking it, I'm sure having a babe is not that bad. This woman and drama, now I will have to explain to my sister what's really happening.

"Out of all the women in the world you chose your mother-in-law." I knew my mother would judge me. I don't know why Nontokoze brought my mother along. She looks really disappointed in me. She mustn't dare judge me of the past mistakes I did, not that I'm proud of but what's behind is behind.

"Ma please now is not good time," I say settling on the bench. The doctor's are taking so bloody long. I just can't wait to hold my baby boy, I'm praying it's a boy.

"Where's Aya?" Instead of supporting me that I'm a man for nutting someone she's busy asking for Aya who packed up and left when things got rough.

"She left."

"Hmmm

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" that's her response, I don't even have the energy to fight with her. And there's this issue with Mapule, how do I even begin apologising to her? I think I have to tell my mother what abomination I did maybe she might help me. I clear my throat and suddenly it feels dry.

"I...I have a 5 year old daughter."

"WHAT!" They are shocked and I don't blame them. "How come we do not know any of this?" My mother spits fire, this is the reaction I didn't expect from her.

"I only found out recently," I don't know whether to continue to tell her the shame I once did.

"Go on I'm listening." She folds her arms and her looks says it all. I shift uncomfortably on the bench cause I know a fist could fly across my face.

"The thing is I....," I see the doctor coming towards our direction and I stand up in full speed forgetting the pains. "How's the baby, I mean my baby?" That's the only thing that matter to me right now. The doctor looks at me shocked but quickly suppresses the surprise look on her face.

"The baby is fine and healthy, it's a bouncing baby boy. Congratulations." Her fake smile plasters on her face, so I have a son and a daughter. So I'm not a waste of a man but a real Zulu man.

"And the woman....how is she?" I feel like rolling my eyes right this minute. Can't this woman I call mother celebrate with me!

"She's is still knocked out due to her high blood pressure."

"High blood pressure? But she will be fine right?" I don't know why my mother is showing so much interest against this woman.

"At this moment she is facing what is called a Postpartumsia a condition that can happen after childbirth. This rare condition will cause the woman to have high blood pressure and high levels of protein in her urine. This is a serious condition that can lead to brain damage, stroke, hellp syndrome and death if not treated." Haibo I have never heard of such.

"So what's going to happen next?" I wish I could slap my slippery mouth right now. Why the hell did I ask such!

"Medication to lower her high blood pressure that's the only thing at this current point. I beg to take my leave."  
Damn I'm looking at her shapely round butt. The back view is so amazing.

"Nontokozo take me home." My mother instructs.

"Ain't you going to see my baby?" I proudly smile. I'm a dad X2 talk about mathematics multiplication. She stops on her tracks and turns to look at me.

"You first baby....where is she?" My heart dribbles in fear. How do I answer her question.

"With her mo.... mother, yea she is with her mother." She shakes her clearly not buying my story. I decided to follow the doctor, I want to see my babe.

AYANDA

My body is disoriented and heavy. The fact that I'm struggling with this sleep paralysis is not making things any easier for me. Every morning I have to listen to it leaving my body. Having this after beaten up by Ntokozo.....how can I forget such an incidence but stupid me went back to him.

"Wakey wakey Fancy Face," the man laughs an evil laugh. Reality kicks in that I'm not home. Everything comes back and I just know right than that I have been abducted. Fancy Face.... There's only one person who calls me that and that is Romeo. If this person knows that simply means that it's someone close to use. I'm still laying on the floor still trying to fight this sleep paralysis. After a whole good 15 minutes my nerves get to work. I slowly stand up feeling a bit dizzy.

"Where am I?" I ask looking around. This place looks familiar, very much familiar. It clicks we are in Romeo's old house and we are in the basement. I thought Romeo once said no one knows about this house having a basement. I decided to keep my cool, whoever this is clearly means business.

"Far away my love....far away." He limps walking closer towards me. I wish I could see his face but he is wearing a balaclava and a cap on top with a huge black coat. But his voice....

"Why am I here?" My heart is beating abnormally and I'm very much afraid.

"Your stupid man owes me. I want what mines and you shall get what's his." He walks towards the door. "Bring them in!" He orders. Who must be brought in? Don't tell me that....

"Leave her alone!" That's:- Ow my goodness how cruel can this man be. Ronald is fighting for his sister. I run towards them and a man came out of nowhere giving me one hell of a slap making me dizzy. I swear I saw stars flying around.

"Aunty A," Ramona wiggles herself out of the man's hands until he dropped her like hot potatoes. I felt that and it broke my heart. I pull her up scooping her to my arms. She looks at me drained and tired and her body sinks into my hands letting go.

"Ramona babe please don't do this to me." The bloody scoundrel just walk out of the room locking us like some animals. There's literally nothing in this place beside a bed and blankets. Not even a toilet let alone water.

Performing a CPR on this tiny body terrifies me. I don't even know if I'm doing it right or wrong. My lower abdomen hurts so bad that it feels like it's going to burst. Ronald is silently crying and I don't even know what to do.

"It's okay babe come here. Aunty A is never leaving you ever again." I pull him into a tight hug. Minutes later Ramona gasps for air as she coughs. She needs water and I don't know where to get them. There's no pipe, no fucken nothing!

"Hey open this bloody door!" I scream banging the door but no one comes to the rescue. I guess I'll have to think of another plan. I look at Ronald who was looking at Ramona who was coughing so badly, her throat is dry....

"Babe, I need you to pee on my hands," I'm in the verge of crying cause I don't have another option. I myself is not well and I don't know what is wrong with me. I'm starting to sweat. "Come on babe you can do this. I promise it will heal your sister. She will be better." I sniff and Ronald pees on my hand as told. He is just a child and he will never understand why I'm doing this. "Open your sister's mouth," I instruct, I love how he is so calm throughout this ordeal we are facing. Maybe seeing me made him calm cause he trusts me and he is putting his trust in me. The more I think about this the more it makes me cry. I make Ramona drink her brother's urine, that was the only option to soften her dry throat. I pick her up through the pain I'm facing placing her in the bed making sure she's comfortable. "Ronald come sleep babe," his mouth is pure white indicating that they haven't eaten anything. He climbs on the bed and his stomach grumbles. I sigh taking of my shoe off, atleast it has a solid heal. I'll keep on banging the door until someone comes.

"Hey open this door," I bang the door with my shoe continuously until my arm got tired. I sink down on the floor loosing hope of being found. I just have to accept that this is my fate, maybe it's now time for me to bond with my child in heaven. I know he is patiently waiting for me. The sound of keys ruffling and the door cracks open, I stand up in slow motion dripping of sweat.

"What! Can't we have peace without you ranting and making noise?" The man that slapped me hours hour has no mercy. I can even tell by the way he is looking at me.

"My kids and I are hungry," tears blur my vision and the man just looks at me like I'm some sort of fool. "Please, even if it's dog food we will accept it. The kids are hungry." I kneel down touching his shoes but he kicks my face making me to fall backwards. I curl myself to a ball listening to all the pain striking. I feel tiny hands touching me and it's Ronald.

"I'm okay babe," I lie, I'm hurt, it's hurting, I'm in excruciating pain. I've never felt this kind of pain, even my mother not loving me was not this intense. Minutes later the door roughly opens and he throws a plastic full of food and another plastic full of snacks.

"Thank you," I muttered with my busted bleeding lip. Everything is just numb and nothing is making sense at all. I wake Ramona up to eat and my baby forces herself through her dehydrated body. One way or another we will find a way of leaving this house unnoticed. #39

NTOKOZO

I don't know what to choose, buy or take. I wish Aya was here to help me. Sighs, how did I take my own life this upside down? Why did I allow myself to be this selfish? Now look I lost a good woman for what exactly? I will fight with every tooth and nail to fight for what's mine.

These sizes are confusing me really....

"Excuse me Sisi, can you help me please." Pheww atleast she's willing to that's a relief.

"New born baby, boy or girl?"

"Boy," I proudly smile. He looks so much like me even the spot behind the ear.

"How much does he weighs?" Is she seriously asking me such? Now I'm confused.

"Huh," I'm totally lost. The woman just laughs like I'm sort of crazy.

"I'm sorry, weigh is to determine the weight of your baby when they are born."

"Oh okay, why do babies get weighed at birth?"

"Getting your baby weighed and measured is a useful way of checking that he's growing as expected. It can give you peace of mind and also help to identify whether there are any problems affecting his development. Your baby will be weighed at birth and again at around five days old and then 10 days old."

"Wow, I didn't know all that." I guess I will have to buy books about babies that will teach me more about handling new born babies. This is definitely a new adventure for me and I so wish to explore it with Ayanda.

"Trust me there's a whole lot more to learn about new born babies." She helps me with the stuff that I will be needing for my baby. How will I ever take care of a baby? Money hasn't start to roll in as yet but I need to get a nanny as in yesterday with the bit of money that I'm making.

"So she's still sleeping?" I ask the doctor who is assigned to MaNtombela. I don't get it why this woman will sleep for the whole day. I putting my hands in my pocket not knowing what to do.

"Unfortunately yes, she fell into a sleep coma just minutes ago."

"What the hell is that?" I've never heard of such disease. What was I thinking nutting inside and old fellow like this woman. These are the consequences I'm facing now. I intend to believe that God himself has turned his back on me.

"A coma is a prolonged state of unconsciousness. During a coma, a person is unresponsive to their environment. The person is alive and looks like they are sleeping. However, unlike in a deep sleep, the person cannot be awakened by any stimulation, including pain."

"That's too much info, isn't there a cure for this sleep what, what." If she gets discharged where will this woman live? I need to have my own family now not with this woman in the picture. I have to bring Aya back home the house is so cold without her.

"At this point we are fighting to keep her in a sustained unconsciousness. So medication such as propofol, pentobarbital, and thiopental. These drugs have a continuous effect on a patient, we will see which drug helps her more so we can prepare necessary for healing to begin."

"Okay," I don't even know what to say. MaNtombela is old enough to be my mother. I don't even know what her age is, but she looks like someone in late 1955, well that's if I'm wrong. I decided to spend time with my son for a while. I'm not fully happy, I'm happy that my son is finally here yes but part of me would be more happier if I had this baby with Aya.

I find my mother at home waiting patiently for me outside the door. I look at the yard and immediately I remember Aya, this house use be buzzing of people just few days ago. This yard would smell of freshly different types of stews every morning. A small smile crept on my face remembering how much of a sex rabbit she suddenly was.

"Mama," she just looks at me after greeting her. Why is she here if she doesn't respond to my greetings?

"Vula umnyango, we need to talk." Okay it sounds serious. Atleast the house is clean. I let them in and they sit on the couches.

"Let me get you something to drink," I attempt to walk but woman is spitting fire.

"Sit your arse down." Okay now I believe that is a serious "talk". What did I do this time around. The knock on the door saves me from this woman.

"Come in," I shout from the sitting room and wait for whoever is here. Maybe it's one of Aya's customers. Mbalienhle comes in running first and gives me a hug. This little girl is now used to me cause we spend most time together. I look at my mother's expression on her face and shock is written all over. Mapule steps forward wearing the shortest dress ever making me to swallow hard dry lumps. What the hell is she doing here? Isn't she the one who was hell bent into helping Aya to move out.

"Sanibona, I didn't know you have company. I'm actually looking for Ayanda, I went to her place and she's not there." She says, my mother is looking at her from head to toes with a long face.

"So you came to check up on Ayanda wearing such a short dress knowing fully that there's a man in this house?" Why can't my mother shut up just for once. Hasn't she humiliated me enough.

"Mah, I'm sure she thought Ayanda was in her house and...."

"Okabani umntwana?" Now she's taking it too far. I sweat immediately after being asked just a question.

"I think I should get going," Mapule attempts to leave but MaMyeni stops her. Now my heart is beating abnormally. Mapule stands like a statue.

"Can the two of you talk, and think before you answer....now who's child is this?"

Mapule's eyes glisten with tears and I look at her with begging eye's that she mustn't tell the truth. She shakes her head no clearly she's not agreeing to what I'm asking her.

"Mah, I think it's better if Mapule leaves." I stand up and pull Mbalienhle towards Mapule who had her face wet in tears.



"Sit down Ntokozo!" I sit down in full speed after that high pitch voice from my mother warned me. "Ntombazane sit down." She points out the couch next to me. Mapule slowly sits down already wet in tears. "Now talk!"

We look at each other in comfortable awkward silence, I don't want to say anything neither Mapule and I'm hoping that she doesn't say anything. If she decides to talk.... Lord let her say we were dating or she was a one night stand. I can't stand to be humiliated like this.

"Ntokozo, start talking before I brake that brainless head of yours." Aibo this woman was sent by the devil sturue.

"We were dating," I try to convince her and Maplule ruins everything. She gasps in shock and looks at me with tears dripping down her cheeks.

"I've never dated you, you are lying. For once in your life have balls and tell everyone how I fell pregnant!" She's screaming on top of her lungs and I'm shaking.

"Ye...yes we were dating, actually you were a one night stand." I look at her signalling for her to just agree to my fuck up story. She stands up looking furious and I just know I shouldn't have said that. I sometimes don't know how my big head works.

"You violated me and left me laying there in the bushes after taking my innocence. What kind of a man are you? I wish nothing but sorrow and misery in this life of yours. You will never know peace and happiness in this existing life of yours." She pulls her daughter's hand and walks out now I'm left with a woman spitting venom.

"I can explain," I go down on my knees just realising how my mother looks broken.

"Is it true?" I just look down not knowing how to respond. "Is it true that you are a rapist?" I nod my big head also disappointed in myself.

"I'm sorry ma," I am sorry just that I don't know how to show how sorry I am. She begins to cough continuously going out of breath.

"Look at what you have done. Congratulations you have finally succeeded in killing mama. Sometimes I wish you were never twins." The words of Nontokozo ring in my head like a buzzer. She can't turn her back on me when I need her the most. The sound of my mother falling brings be back to reality.

"Don't just sit there help me!" She shouts and my mind comes back. I can't loose my mother because of me.

Nontokozo is pacing up and down like a robot. Now great every family is here shooting daggers at me. I swear once I have money I will right them off as my family. Vele they were not there when I needed them the most.

"How is she?" My mother's Husband who happens to ubaba omncane asks the very same doctor who birthed my daughter. I don't understand tradition at all, why vele if someone passes on you have to marry their sibling or someone from their family? I don't seriously understand my culture to be honest.

"I'm sorry but we did all we could but unfortunately she was brought here already 15 minutes declared dead." No this cannot be happening, my mother cannot die. I laugh my lungs out and everyone turns to look at me like some sort of crazy.

"She's pulling our legs, Doc it's not April fool please so don't joke like that." I say continuing to laugh and immediately stop realising how serious she was. "Don't tell me you are serious,"

"Unfortunately she's no more, my deepest condolences." She walks away leaving me with so many unanswered questions.

"Congratulations for finally killing my wife." Her husband looks at me ready to murder.

"Uyinja Ntokozo

you will never know peace in your life." My aunt curses and I just realise that my mother is truly no more. Did I really kill my own mother because of my actions and plover decisions?

Later that day everything has been sore. It hasn't sunk in that I'm mother is no more and I'm the cause behind her death.

In just hours follow the death of my mother, I feel a heartbreak that cannot even imagine. I'm thinking of my very worst break-up, multiplying it by 100. This doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of what I will feel in the future. I am be angry, so angry that I find myself shaking. I drop a few tears not believing the tragic that has just conspired. I lift my head and everyone is looking at me with so much rage in their eyes.

"Mdlwengulu," one of my aunt say, vele they never liked me since I was in my mother's womb. The atmosphere is too thick just breaths rising up and down. Everyone is hurting and grieving, I myself on there other hand is loosing myself bit by bit. This is the moment that I need Ayanda the most, she would have known how to comfort me in time, she would have known what to do.

Grief is crazy-making with an element of surprise and the constant knowledge that no matter what you do that person is gone, never to return, never. Losing a mother is like being on a ship that has lost it's ballasts and is now at the mercy of the deepest ocean and all it holds within. I need to be alone and think things through. I want to try Aya.....maybe her phone is now available.

I can't sleep my dreams plagued me whether they were about your death or when they fooled me into thinking you were still alive. The waking up and again remembering you were dead was the hardest. I could never forget you. A part of me is still lost and I'm wondering if I will ever get it back. Maybe that piece is in heaven with you and someday you can put it back in me and I will be whole again.

AYANDA

It's already been a day been locked up here like a prisoner. My abdomen pain are getting worsen by the hour. I thought that maybe it was constipation but clearly I was lying to myself this is beyond just constipation. I fell like pushing, I don't know what I'm pushing. Ronald is wide awake next to me, his looking at me as I'm groaning and screaming my lungs out. I'm thankful that Ramona is asleep, I'm starting to think that maybe she's unconscious. It's been a day with her sleeping, she's burning and sweating. Yesterday she had a seizure luckily there is waster in this room. Atleast the kids are being feed and I'm thankful for that. Me on another hand I can't seem to stomach anything. I've been throwing up every second. Lights shine bright and I'm wondering where that light is coming from because we are locked up in a basement. I slowly saunter my legs towards the light and a window is painted in black. The paint is starting to ware off that's how I managed to see the light. The window is a bit high and I can't reach. I have no other option but to pick Ronald up through the pains I'm feeling.

"C....come here baby," I scratch the wall moaning painfully. I pick him up and make him stand on my shoulders. "Tell Aunty what you can see," I'm hoping he says he sees the outside. Part of me wants to believe that Romeo is outside and has finally found us.

"It's dark, I can't see anything."

"Look carefully baby, look closely so we could find a way home." I don't even know the new house. I feel Ronald standing on his toes and the pains strike again. I hold my lower abdomen and bend a little forgetting that Ronald is standing on my shoulders. He fell on the ground and hurt his knee.

"Ouch," he cries.

"I'm sorry my love, Ahhh." I lay on my back opening my legs wide. Whatever that's eating me please lord let it stop.

"I saw Kiki's house," I flung my eyes open, he can't be serious.

"Are you sure baby, Ow God it hurts." He shakes his head yes. "What else did you see baby?"

"A car,"

"Is still the car outside?"

"No, it went out. I saw 2 men getting in." That's all the information I needed.

"Great job buddy," I pull myself together giving myself strength to stand but it's hard. I feel like something is going to just drop out of my vagina. I look around searching for something that will brake the window but this room has absolutely nothing. Maybe there's a button to press and the window will open. I have no other option but to go back to square one and put Ronald on top on my shoulders again.

"Let's do this again my boy, this time around try opening the window okay." Ronald doesn't talk much he mostly communicates but using his head. He prefers his own quite space.

He is fiddling with the window using his tiny hands and I've just lost hope. Something brakes and my heart palpitates abnormally. I'm sure these men are on their way here. I try pulling Ronald down but boy kicks my ear mistakenly and my earring comes out flying. His tiny self finally manages to get outside the window and I sigh in relief. I keep on checking the door and praying that no one comes in.

"Ronald listen to me, I want you to run and look for help. Tell people to call the police! Run Ronald, run babe!" He doesn't respond but runs out of sight and I burst into tears. I'm sorry Romeo if I'm putting your son in more danger but that was the only option to be found. I notice my bearing making a beeping sound shining in red. That's weird, maybe something broke because Ronald mistakenly kick it. I pick it up and put it back on....these are the earrings my man bought me as a gift. If it's broken I know he will fix it. I love them way too much.

My body is getting tired and weak, my whole body joints are throbbing painfully.

"Awu, awu, awu ow my God," my vagina is stretching, "fire in the name of Jesus Christ!" Whatever is happening to me Lord please save me. The muscles of the uterus and by pressure on the cervix, I can't take it anymore.

The strong cramping in the abdomen, groin, and back, as well as an achy feeling I cannot explain. I'm also experiencing pain on the side of my thighs as well.

"Lord if I did anything please forgive me! Ahhhh, wuuhhh." From short and low to long and loud, moaning of pain. I take off my bra and threw it aside. I feel like walking naked, maybe I'm going mad.

"Ow God," I stand up a begin to walk up and down with my knees pressed together. I push myself to a corner and balance myself, I notice a gush trickle of water coming out of my vagina. Did I just pee on myself? Something in me tells me to go quickly lay down on the bed and open my legs wide open. I tighten my abdominal muscles and push down with as much force as possible. I grab the sponge push as much as I can. My uterus rising noticeably with each. An increase in bloody show. A tingling, stretching, burning stinging sensation in my vagina as something emerges. A slippery wet feeling as something emerges and drops on the sponge. #40

AYANDA

She lifts her head up with her heart bludgeoning against her chest. She wandering what the hell that came out of her vagina and it just made her so damn hungry. She's even afraid to lift her head up to look at.... minutes later a baby cry fills the room and she gasps in shock. She quickly sits up flinching in pain and looks at the thing that's crying in-between her legs. "Ow my God," she held her trembling mouth and looked at the replica of Ntokozo. She has been pregnant for 9 months and she didn't know, how is that even possible? She lifts her dress and checking her stomach...it looks flat compared to the last time, difference is now she has stretch marks and some darks areas. The baby continues to cry and she doesn't know what to do. "What do I do? What do I do?" She thinks for a while and her mind works over time.

"Make sure she stays warm. New-born babies don't have the ability to control their temperature well, so it's very important that they keep warm and dry." She says to herself panting not too sure what next step she should take.

"But first I need to cut the umbilical cord," I look around and there's nothing. The umbilical cord is still attached to the placenta. "If I die I die," she closes her mouth as she chews the umbilical cord. It has an iron taste, it's bitter but I have no choice. Finally I managed to separate the cord and I'm thankful that I did it. My mouth is full of blood and everything is just bitter. I pull the tiny blanket that I used for Ramona as a support pillow, I wrapped the baby with shaky hands not believing that I gave birth all alone and worstly I didn't know I was pregnant. I pull the umbilical cord out of me and I don't know what the next step is. I'm bleeding and I don't have anything to use as a pad. The baby is still crying and I don't know what to do. I look at my full breasts and I just knew right then that I need to breastfeed.

I'm looking at her as she's sucking for dear life, I don't even know if I'm doing it right or wrong? The question at hand here is how? When did I get pregnant? Didn't I do multiple pregnancy test and they all came out negative? If God decided to give me a child why would he give me Ntokozo's blood? Why didn't he give me Romeo's? I have so many questions and no answers to it. I'm starting to believe that God keeps pushing me to be with this demon Ntokozo who doesn't know what he wants. I'll never trust him ever again after what he did to Mapule. Since the child is his....must I let him know? Will he also rape my child? Ow God I throw my head backwards having mixed emotions.

"So I didn't know I was pregnant?" I ask myself in disbelief. I remember this one time when I watched that episode, how much I used to laugh at them not knowing I was already pregnant. So these things are true and I Ayanda didn't believe it existed until this happened to me.

The pains are unbearable but I'm trying to hold on and stay strong for the kids. Ow Ronald, my baby. Where is he? Is he safe? Ramona is having a seizure again and I don't know how to control her. What if she dies under my care in this basement? I pull her towards me placing her head on my lap. I don't have any energy in me, I'm hungry, tired and confused with alot of confusion. This is a moment when I need my mother the most but my mother is having the time of her life with her son-in-law. How will I cope with this baby? Will I even love it? I didn't even bond with it the time I didn't know I was pregnant. Everything just happened way too fast. Will Romeo send me back to that house cause I have the devil's child? If I could die this minute trust me I would appreciate it just be in a peaceful land. I know in heaven you don't hold any grudges, there is no hate at all.

As I was trying to put the pieces of my life together a step back takes on. I did say that happiness is short lived and it hurts because I do not know how to fully be happy. I don't know why happiness seems to be running away from me all the time. I should be rejoicing for holding a child that I've always wanted but I can't because I'm with child with a person I loathe. My life just took a U-turn when I just made a decision of forgetting my past and moving on. Now I have something that will always pull me back towards Ntokozo. I'm listening to the pains I'm feeling, my body is numb, hurt and in shock. I'm thankful that I didn't die. I'm praying that someone gets here before it's too late. If I die now I will die peacefully holding my strange baby in my hands.

## ON THE ROAD

It's dark late at night just the street lights making it bright. No car, no pedestrian just cats and dogs parading around barking. Ronald was bleeding from his abdomen, a sharp object shard of glass. A shard of glass that is stuck inside of him making him to bleed heavily. He doesn't know where his going. A 5 year old wandering on the streets at night afraid. His face had dried out of tears, the fact that he doesn't know where he is going makes things even

more worse. His vision is becoming blurry and his, his throat is dry and his tired walking barefoot. A car emerges in high speed with the bright light on, too bright that they saw a little boy painted in blood from a distance. The boy couldn't walk any longer, every muscle was stiff and his feet hurt. He stops and looks at the bright shining in front of him not noticing that it's a car approaching. He blinks multiple times due to the bright light. He puts his hands on his face and freezes as a wave of air hits his tiny self forcefully. Tires scratching, hearts pounding in fear.

"Jesus Christ," a man in the car jumps off in shock seeing his replica covered in blood. Through that blood painted all over his blooded clothes and face Romeo managed to notice his son, his only son. He jumps out of the car and scope his son up not minding the blood. Ronald faintly smiles finally seeing his only hope.

"P....pa....papa," he burst into tears and held on tight to his father.

"I'm here son," he rocked him back and forth.

"His bleeding

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"Spikes pulls Ronald like a piece of paper placing him on the bonnet. "Shit! It's in too deep. I can't take it out." Romeo places his hands on his head as tears drop out of his eyes luckily they came in two cars. Shortly Zenzele and Anathi parked next to them as both cars were standing in the middle of the road. Without questions asked Zenzele carried Ronald to his car.

"I'll come with," Sanele tells Zenzele. The boys didn't waste anymore time and drove fast to the hospital. Anathi was breathing heavily in anger, flashbacks of Mpilo years back when he thought he had lost him but the God's were with him. He still thanks him up until today for remembering him. Even though the mother came back years after claiming her son back. They went back and forth until Anathi got full custody of Mpilo.

"The tracker is still in one position and it's not moving. I don't have a good feeling about this." Spike tell the guys and suddenly the atmosphere comes sour.

"Let's go we don't anytime left." They all got in the car and drove straight to the location where the tracker was leading them.

"This basted!" Romeo hisses and jumps out of the car marching to the house. The house looks empty and he is just praying that atleast he finds what he is looking for. Somehow he had that feeling of Ramona being with Aya. They all went in the house and got the shock of his life. Pictures of Aya sleeping naked, eating at night, having fun with her friends.

"So all along this basted was raining Aya?" He chuckles in disbelief rather disappointed. A man he was once with friends has turned his back on him. He came back to life to haunt him. Instead of healing he was in a hospital bed plotting for revenge, unbelievable!

"Search the entire house upside down," Anathi instructs and the boys go different directions searching the entire place. But something catches Romeo's eye's....the basement door was not fully closed meaning someone was in here.

"Guys!" He calls out for them and they all come rushing.

"What?" Spikes asks with his all eyes out.

"I think they are in the basement," Romeo softly says.

"Than what are we waiting for!" Spike pushes Romeo aside and goes down the steps. "Shit! Romeo!" Spikes voices echo's.

"Romeo whatever you find down there be a man and don't brake down." Anathi squeezes his shoulder making Romeo to nod his head in fear. The anxiety of losing someone you love. Sometimes it's on our minds simply because we've lost someone before. When we feel depressed or anxious, our minds can become fixated on negative thoughts like this. Fear and anxiety often come from uncertainty. Romeo once lost the woman he loves, he can't lose a woman he just found. The woman that makes his heart skips a beat. Going down the stairs seemed forever. He stops on his tracks when he sees a bloody room, Romano sleeping on Ayanda's lap. Aya has a baby on her hands. She looks weak and warned out.

"Babe," she finally say through her busted lips. Her lips trembled looking at the man she dearly loves right infront of her eyes. "You came." Aya says in a soft tired pained voice.

"I told you I got you," she smiles faintly hearing that 'I got you'.

Anathi checks Ramon's pulse and shook his head sadly. "We need to get moving before we lose her." Anathi picks the lifeless Ramona and got out of sight.

"Spikes take the baby." Spikes doesn't project, he takes the baby that was covered in a blanket. So cute watching this little thing sucking her tiny fist. He go waits in the car with Anathi who was very much impatient.

"I didn't know I was pregnant," Aya softly says as Romeo picked her up in a bridal style. He smiles and kisses her dry busted lips.

"I know baby but you were in denial." Ayanda places her head on his chest and swore never to ever leave this man no matter what they go through in life. The love she has for him is unexplainable.

"Take them to the hospital I have something to sort out." Romeo tells them, Anathi looks at him and sighed knowing that once his mind is made up you talk him into it.

"Be safe," Anathi takes his gun and hands it to him. He gazed at the car as it drove out of sight. He took his legs towards the house and sat on a chair switching the light off.

Meanwhile Steven and his brother parks the car as they jumped out of the car in happy mode.

"Today is the day I bring my babies back," Steven whistles happily.

"Can't wait to be rich brother." They thought they had another plan up their sleeves for Romeo to bring the diamonds back.

"Did you switch off the lights when we went out?" Curiosity asks Steven.

"I don't remember, maybe I did?" The brother switches the lights on and finds a man seated on a chair with his head bent down. They both stop-dead, the brother pulls out for his gun from the back but Romeo was steps ahead of him. He shot his head without sparing seconds.

"Fuck you!" Steven scampers towards Romeo who was still seated comfortably on a chair. He shoots his leg and Steven stops as blood came gushing out of his leg.

"You know what's funny, you betraying me and later seek revenge. I felt betrayed and felt like you didn't care about my feelings or well-being....all you cared about was hurting me in the most cruellest way possible but today all of

that will stop cause you will no longer breathe the same air I breathe." Steven was quickly sitting down holding his wounded leg, even if he were to run for his life where would he even begin? Romeo pulls a 2 litre petrol that was next to him. He came prepared and this is the way he wants to see someone whom he trusted with his life begs for his mercy. He poured him with petrol with a dark heart.

"Romeo please I'm sorry my friend....I didn't mean to betray. Greed took over me." His now sobbing making Romeo more angry.

"Did you think of that when put my family in danger? Did you think of that when I had sleepless night wandering if they are safe or not!"

"I know and I'm sorry I wronged you my friend. Please, just give me a second chance and I will prove myself." He sniffs, the regrets are there but still had the greed in him.

"Too late," Romeo lit the matches and threw it at them and watched his friend being burnt alive. He had no remorse of what he is doing right this minute. There's nothing he loves than watching a person who wronged him begs for mercy. But Steven took it too far and he was emotionless.

Sirens wailing getting closer and closer. At this point he had no energy left in him. Flash back of his child laying helplessly on Aya's lap, Ronald being hurt beyond measures. Aya giving birth all alone, he thought of the pain they felt, he thought about Aya's pain. Looking at what he has done to his friend is worth it. He drops his gun and went down on his knees having panic attacks.

"Put your hands in the air!" The police officer shouts and Romeo puts his hands up. Without waste they cuff him and make him stand pushing him towards the van.

They walk past another neighbour who was writing their statement down.

"I heard gunshots and people screaming inside of the house that's where I called the cops...." The woman continues to add her statement. Romeo was just tired emotionally and physically. They pushed him behind the police van and he just knew that this is the end of the road for him. All the evidence is there! #41

AT THE HOSPITAL

The doctor's carefully looked at the abdominal organs making sure that nothing was cut. The window glass was successfully removed, they option for an abdomin incision, that is a cut made through your skin on the belly to expose the abdominal organs or to facilitate an operation or a procedure.

"Close him up, everything looks good." The doctor instruct, they close Ronald up stitching him. He removed his gloves and looked again if everything went according. He is not bleeding and responding very well to the incision.



"How's the boy," Spikes rubs his hands together fearing for an unbearing news. Worst part the father is held in custody.

"The surgery went well and I'm proud to say the boy is stable. He is such a fighter." The doctor smiles. The boys sigh in relief. "If you will excuse me."

Anathi's phone rings and he frowns looking at the caller ID.

"Day,"

"One of your man is here and it's not looking good." Day tells Anathi. He holds his breathe poking the bridge of his nose.

"How bad is it?" He asks praying that maybe Day is pulling one of his stunts.

"Deep shit." The call disconnects and they look at each other.

"Let's go check on Aya and Romano before going to the police station. Day asked for a transfer years back when things went South for arresting a wrong person. Day and the boys have been pretty close ever since.

After checking Romeo's family they drove straight to the police station where Romeo was held captive. They had to bribe the police officer who was on duty so they can be able to see their brother.

"How's my family?" That's the only thing that Romeo is concerned about.

"They all good, Ronald's surgery was a success. Ramona is just dehydrated but she will be fine. For Aya she's still in shock and confused. I think she needs to see a therapist....Nana said she tried killing the baby saying the baby belongs to a monster." Romeo bends his head stressed and lost. What does he do in this life time? His family needs him more than anything.

"Tell Aya I will love the monsters baby like my own, we will get past through this." He sniffs, he just wants to hold his kid, his beloved woman and hug his mother if it's the last time for him to get to be with his family.

"Don't stress man she will be fine plus your mother took the baby home after the doctor's did necessary check up on her." Anathi informs. "it's not looking good man but don't worry we got your back." He assures him but everything just falls into dead ears.

"Put your trust in us we are brother's." Spikes says and Romeo looks at him.

"What happened to Spikes?" They laugh cause they know that Spikes is a man that is always vomiting nonsense. A bubbly soul that laughs even in funerals.

"I grew up seconds ago." He huffs feeling proud of himself.

"Look man we will do everything in our power to look out for you."

"Time is up, nizongiqhatha phela,"

"We will get through this."

AYANDA

Part of me wants to believe that the child is Romeo's, part of me wants to believe that the child is not Ntokozo's. What's annoying is that baby is a full term and....

Is it normal to hate your child after giving birth to it? By the look of things when I calculate I got pregnant the same day when Ntokozo forcefully slept with me. I thought I have healed but clearly not, looking at this baby reminds me of how I had her. The day I had a miscarriage was the very same day Ntokozo forcefully slept with me. He violated me through pains I was feeling. Through that blood he went on and on all night. You know the pain of losing your child not knowing you were pregnant, you know the pain you feel when someone takes advantage of you. I thought I have healed but clearly I'm taking 10 steps back. How can God do me this bad? Why can't he just take me and save me from this misery?

"Aya, no need to shut me out. I'm here for you my daughter. Tell me what you are feeling."

"Hate is a strong word, and I don't honestly hate her but I hate her. Looking at this child just brings so much back that I thought I have buried." Nana will never understand the pain I'm feeling. She has never been what I went through.

"Those feelings include love and caring, but they also include resentment. Babies change everything, and there is no way to prepare in advance for what will come when the baby arrives."

"Nana you don't understand. Looking at her just makes my blood boil. How do I forget what her father did to me? How will I move on when I have scars that remain?" I raise my voice then later regret it. I'm hurting and no one seems to understand.

"But killing your own child won't make the pain go away. Do you want your child to grow up without a mother? Do you want your child to hate you the way you hate your own mother?" I shake my head no. Part of me loves her but part of me doesn't want to accept that I'm a mother to a child I got through rape!"

"What do I do Nana....please help me forget the pains I'm feeling. Help me forget about everything. Make me unsee what I've seen. Make my heart heal." My body shivers thinking of that substance being shoved in and out of me. And that time I was already pregnant.

"Then let me in. Let me walking this journey with you. Let me feel the pain with you. I'm sure even Romeo will be very much disappointed if you neglecting his child like this. You know what he said, he said I must tell you that :- 'Tell Aya I will love the monsters baby like my own, we will get past through this'. Do really want to throw away all of that just because of a man who is mentally unstable? Ronald, Ramona and Rebecca found a sister in Miracle. Ow yes that's what I've named her." My heart shatters thinking of what will I ever do without Nana. She's has been a blessing in disguise. For the past two days with me being hospitalized has been the worst days of my life. I haven't seen that baby in two days and I don't want to see her anytime soon. Nana found me pressing a pillow on her tiny face....the look on her face was very disturbing. She was stricken, that's why she offered to take the baby home.

"Thank you," I say wiping my tears. I will do whatever it takes for me to heal.

"No need to thank me child." She warmly smiles. I'm still relieved and thankful that she didn't tell the doctor's and the cops of what she found two days ago.

"MaNtombela," ow how I hate it when people call me like that because they remained of me of a woman that never gave shit about me.

"Hey doc," I force a smile, I don't want to sound rude.

"Good news the results came back and I'm proud to say that you are healthy as a horse and your virgina will heal on its own and there was no damage done. So we are discharging you Sisi." I sigh in relief that means I'm going home right?

"Go freshen up we need to go home." Nana hands me my bag.

"Before I go home can I go see the kids?" I ask, those kids mean a lot to me and I don't think I will ever survive without them.

After seeing the kids we drove straight home. Rebecca was staring at the sleeping baby. I'm sure this is what she has been doing for the past two days.

"A," she gasps when her eyes land on me. She runs towards me almost tripping and gave me one hell of a hug.

"Ouch," my body is still aching.

"I missed you," she squeezes me even harder.

"I missed you too baby," now she doesn't want to let go. She pulls me by my hand dragging me to where the baby is sleeping. She's so cute and innocent.

"Pick her up," she widely smiles. If only she knew of how much of a reminder this child is she wouldn't be doing this to me. I look at Nana waiting for her response.

"One step at a time child." She tells me. I sigh picking Miracle up, tears fill my eyes as I fail to control them. She starts crying and Nana rushes towards me and gets hold of the baby. "Go lie down." She tells me. "Rebecca show Aunty A her room."

I'm being lead to Romeo's room, everything here is just him. Pictures of me and us on the wall. I need to change into something comfortable. I open the closet and I'm met by my clothes neatly packed. I smile through the tears thinking of him. So he still had my belongings, he still hoped that one day I will back. I'm glad to be back. I've made a decision never to return back to Eshowe. Empangeni is where I will be building my home at. Eshowe holds too much sad memories for me.

"Ntokozo no please stop, you hurting me." He moves in and out of me roughly without care. "It hurts," he ignores my cries and continues to violate me through those stiches. My cries are falling into deaf ears. He is enjoying whatever he is doing to me, he is enjoying seeing the weakness in me.

"Hey

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hey, it's me wake up." Someone shakes me vigorously. I wake up panting and sweating...."it's me, it's okay." Nana pulls me into tight hug letting me sob onto her chest. It hurts, everything hurts.

"Shhh, it was only just a dream baby."

"It felt so real, everything he did to me felt so real. Why doesn't it go away." I still had me bold head on her chest.

"It's takes time dear child. You simply can't forget, and you shouldn't even try. It's important that memories are available to us because they mean we know how to protect ourselves. They also allow us to work through the emotions involved to a point where we can move on with life. The past cannot be changed, but neither need it define us."

"So what must I do to forget and move on?"

"You need to fully acknowledge the damage done to you by abuse so that your can see your life and relationships as they really are. You need to hand any shame and guilt back to the people who did this to you. You need to do the hard work of grieving for what might have been. You also need to safely and appropriately release the anger from your body so it doesn't destroy your health." Nana is the best mother you could ever ask for. She's asking me to see the light, the light that my own bloody mother failed to show me.

"I'm hungry," I haven't eaten since morning. After hearing the news of Romeo being arrested I completely lost my appetite. I want to see him, I miss him so bad that it hurts.

"Your food is in the Micro wave. Go eat so you can breastfeed the baby, your Baby. At some point you will have to learn to love your child through pain." I nod my head in agreement. She's right I cannot let my child I gave birth to suffer the way I suffered. I should do a better example, an example of a mother who loves their products of rape.

Your child can't come to believe their father was irredeemably and unavoidably evil, because if they do, they will also have to accept they are half evil. It's impossible to put a positive spin on a rape, but most rapists aren't evil from birth, they are raised wrong so that they don't respect other people's autonomy and boundaries. The question is what will say when she grows up? Do I tell her the truth about her father? Or do I let sleeping dogs lie?

"What are you thinking about?" We are still in the same position. There's something about her comforts and hugs. They are just warm in a way that it makes me want to stay there forever.

"What would you tell a child who was conceived by rape when they ask about their father?" Obviously when they grow up they will ask me about their father. There's no way that I will let Ntokozo near this child. I don't want her to go through what I went through.

"I would do this because once my child found out the truth about their origin, I suspect they would begin to doubt themselves - do I really love them? Do they make me constantly think of what happened? Do I secretly hold it against them? I would want to try to head that off as much as possible, and do everything in my power to reinforce to them that they are loved, that they have a place where they belong, that they have value, and that they are worth every bit of what their mother had gone though to get them." I love how she truthfully answers me. She doesn't sugar coat things.

After eating dinner we had a prayer session. That's the daily routine in this house. I'm listening to Nana pray....it somehow touched me in deep down. Deep down I know I need light....

"God, your light is the commencement and culmination of creation. From now until forever you are the light of life. You invite us to walk in your light and become lights to the world as we do so.

God, with you there is no darkness. Your character has no shadows, and you are pure and good. Yet in our broken world, we see so much darkness around us. Pain, sickness, and disease are in our community and in many of our homes.

Bring your light and restoring presence to the dark places in our lives. Bring your hope to hearts that feel defeated. Bring your love and compassion to those in pain in the name of Jesus Christ Amen!"

That was the touching prayer I've ever heard. Even MaNtombela used to pray but her prayers we not this touching. Was she faking it? I'm starting to believe that she was. She was just praying for the sake of praying.

"How do I begin to tell God what I want? How do I pour my heart out?"

"Tell God what you want or need and ask Him to provide that for you. Be specific about your request. Even though God knows what you want and need, He wants you to ask Him for it. God can answer vague prayers, but being specific creates a deeper bond between you and Him." See what I mean this woman truly knows how's make my heart melt.

## AT THE STATION

Romeo was sitting quietly in the floor thinking of what went down two days ago. He has been in this cell for two day's and he is starting to lose hope. He can be kept for up to 21 days in this cell while they still gather evidence. How does a cell look like? They usually contain a bed, toilet, and sink; some cells feature a desk and chair, all of which is commonly bolted to the ground to prevent the prisoner from using any of the objects as a weapon. The gates forcefully opens and the cop walks in whistling.

"Sboshwa your friends are here," his hands and legs are being cuffed and shackled for no reason. They mainly believe that he is danger amongst them and he is being held alone.

"Why is my client cuffed?" The lawyer asks the cop who was busy pushing Romeo.

"He is danger to the society." The officer proudly answers but looked stupid.

"You know I could report you for this? Inmates are subject to strip searches before and after the visit to check for contraband, however, inmates in general population are not brought to visiting rooms in handcuffs and shackles. I demand my client to be uncuffed!" The lawyer commands and the officer reluctantly uncuff him.

"It's not looking good, the only thing that you have to do is to plead NOT guilty."

"What happens if I plead guilty?" Romeo asks with all hope lost. He just wants to see Aya for the every last time so that he could just hold her in his arms and say his goodbye. He does know that with Aya his kids will be taken care of.

"If you plead guilty, this means that you admit committing the offence you have been charged with. The court will then decide what punishment (sentence) you will be given."

"And if I plead not guilty?"

"Pleading not guilty means that you say you didn't do the crime, or that you had a reasonable excuse for doing so. The court will then have a trial to decide whether you did. ... You may get a longer sentence after conviction at a trial than if you pleaded guilty." Lawyer explains the terms. Spikes was listening attentively like he was not there. His phone beeped and he excused himself.

The only thing that has been on his mind lately is his kids nothing else. The fact that they are recovering makes him at ease. And the thing with Aya almost killing there baby doesn't sit well with him. All the decision-making is on him. Whatever decision he takes now is the decision that will affect everyone. But he is doing what is best for him and his family. There's always a second chance in life.

"I will plead guilty," he stands up and turns to walk back to his cell leaving the guys demented and bewildered.

#42

NTOKOZO

My mother is my first friend and playmate. She's the one who rocked me as a baby, patched me up as a clumsy kid, and eased my heartaches as a teen. She helped me plan my wedding and coached me on the ins and outs of being a first-time husband. In a sense, my mother was a biggest part of my life.

Nothing can prepare you for what it's like to lose your mom. I've had many friends throughout the years who have lost their own mothers....I felt sad for them and wondered how it felt like. Today I'm feeling that pain and it's beyond any pain I've ever felt. The death of my mother is the first sorrow wept without her.

I haven't fully processed the pain of losing her and I doubt I ever fully will.

The most important thing I learned about grief is that it isn't linear, and it isn't logical. The pain of knowing that it's all my fault that we are burying her today, it's all my fault that we lost a loveable soul. I'm looking at everyone shedding tears, my mother was a loveable person who had a heart of gold.

Nontokoza can't even speak, I didn't even have the guts to say something to her.

"If roses grow in heaven,

Lord please pick a bunch for me,  
Place them in my Mother's arms  
and tell her they're from me.  
Tell her I love her and miss her,  
and when she turns to smile,  
place a kiss upon her cheek  
and hold her for awhile.  
Because remembering her is easy,  
I do it every day,  
but there's an ache within my heart  
that will never go away."

Nontokoza's speech touch my heart tearing it into pieces.

I watched the as they lowered the coffin and that's when I knew that part of me has been buried. Grief and love are conjoined, you don't get one without the other. All I can do is love her, and love the world, emulate her by living with daring and spirit and joy. I will never forgive myself for killing my own mother.

AYANDA

"Promise me one thing Poonky:- promise me that you will stay by my side no matter what. Promise me that you will love my kids like your own." He is squeezing my hand so gently. I've been trying so hard for the past week to be strong and to stay strong. Ramona and Ronald are back from the hospital and they are recovering well. On the other hand I've learnt to acknowledge Miracle, not that I have fully accepted her but I acknowledge her presence and I don't hate her as much as I use to.

"I promise," and that is the promise I'm willing to keep no matter what the circumstances are.

"Are you going to wait for me?" His voice is breaking and it's breaking my heart.

"Even if it take years I will wait for you my love."

"Do you know what is a promise Poonky?" I nod my head answering. He looks broken inside out.

"A statement given by me that I will do and honour as you plead." He smiles faintly but satisfied. "On my sister's grave I promise to wait for you no matter how long it takes." I assure him. I don't want him stressing over me while he is all locked up in here. I should be the one stressing over him cause I will not get to see him the way I want.

"Another request," his face suddenly looks serious. I'm just praying that whatever it is doesn't have to do with his shady dealings.

"Look after Riri. She is also my baby just because you had her with your ex husband doesn't mean that I won't love her. I love all my children equally and check my business from time to time. I put my trust in you." He gives me a perk on my lips leaving me numb. Romeo is talking as if this is the last time of me seeing him. I won't ever love another man besides him. "I love you remember that."

"I love you too." He nods his head standing up and walks back to his cell.

"It's okay don't stress," Spikes tells me. How can I not be stressed when I'm missing the man I love? He is always the first through in my head when I wake up in the morning, this is house much I miss him. Missing someone — and I mean really, really missing someone — is one of the worst feelings, plain and simple.

That person could be gone for one day or a few weeks and it can still feel like an eternity. And let me tell you, when you start to miss someone as soon as they leave, you've got it bad. Deep love like this means a lot of things; you have a more positive outlook on life, you are willing to try new things (as long as your man does, too), and you start thinking about the future, even if the idea growing old together used to freak you out. My heart told me that I will die where Romeo dies.

Decided pass by town for a few stuffs Nana asked me. Her hands are always occupied....not that she cleans or cooks but she is always with Miracle.

Arriving home I find an unfamiliar face, first thing I notice is that she looked at me with so much attitude. I have alot on my plate right now. I pass her without even acknowledging her sight. By the way her sight doesn't seem pleasant at all.

"Mama

" Ramona woke up from the dead and decided to call me mama. Ronald is still recovering from the operation and I'm just glad that there are no infections.

"Hey baby, where's your brother?"

"Sleeping," she walks away. I think I need to come up with a plan of making Ronald not forever sleeping but I'm still clueless is to what. But first I need to check on Miracle.

"Can I help you?" I ask the ugliest girl ever sitting my KITCHEN stools sipping MY orange juice.

"I guess we haven't been introduced. I'm Bettina, Romeo's ex baby mama." She devilishly smiles and my mind instantly trails back to the girl that once posted him. Ow yes it's her but I won't give her that satisfaction.

"Oh, okay baby mama. So what are you doing in MY house." I smile folding my arms. She keeps quite for a while....

"I came to tell Romeo that I'm pregnant." I wanted to laugh my lungs out so bad. My man told me everything- if I say everything I mean everything leaving nothing out. Yes I was mad at him for killing his own blood but he told me his reasons and I do believe him when he said he never had intercourse with her after that. I'm just glad that we



lined out everything even though some of the discoveries shocked me. But I stayed because I love him and no one is perfect.

"Okay, as you can see he is not here." I continue to smile suppressing my anger. Deep down I'm boiling in anger.

"I know," this girl is really testing me.

"Okay, so what's the main reason of you being in my house?" I look straight into her eyes. I don't have time fighting over useless things. I value my life more than anything and besides my body is way too weak to be entertaining such. She gets off the kitchen stool and comes towards me.

"Leave him while you still can and crawl back to wherever you come from." I Huff still smiling, clearly she doesn't know who am I is it?

"Leave my man for you....who are you? What are you? I can tell that you use to have a body to die for." I laugh I can see her chest rising up and down. "With those saggy hips of yours you will never hold my man, ow yes you are a daughter of a witch who walks naked at night calling my man's name. Nci, nci, nci look at how desperate you have become and I feel sorry for you. Entitling yourself to what's mine. Please leave my house right this minute." I hiss and her jaws drop.

"This is not over,"

"Bring it on!" I feel like screaming but I don't have the strength in me. I calm myself down remembering that they are kids in this house. Now I will have to keep a very close eye to this girl. Romeo is not for us but mine and mine alone.

Once the baby is three months old I will bring back my business. I know I will make alot of money this side there's no one who is in the same line of business as I am. Early tomorrow morning I will pass by Romeo's company for the announcement. He asked me not to put trust in anyone cause he doesn't trust anyone. Here I am ready the files and the finances don't add up. I'm just glad that I know Maths more than anything. Even in school Mathematics was my favourite. Due to my mother's toxicness my marks were average. I even forgot what was my purpose in life and found comfort in alcohol trying to forget her at all cost. Whenever I think of this my heart just sinks into a very painful hole.

"Can I come in?" Nana sneaks her head to my bedroom and I signal for her to come in. "You don't look good what is the matter child?" The concern in her makes me want to vent out everything even the imaginary one's.

I sigh placing the files aside. "It's my mother," I hold back the tears.

"Ow my, is she sick? Did something happen to her?"

"I assume she's fine....it's just that." I sigh letting the few tears drops. "I wish I had that strong bond with her you know. I wish she loved me beyond anything like she did with my sister. Why was it so hard for me to love me?"

She takes my hand and places it into of her's, "I don't have the answers to your questions but what I know is you can change what it was. You can have that bond with your child that you gave birth to. The love that you wished you shared with your mother you can now share it with your own family. Aya, God gave you Miracle for a reason. So many women out there wish to have a loving mother, and a home. My advice to you is never look at your past but focus on what is right infront of your eyes before you lose it." She caresses on my we cheeks and I smile thinking of how much of a loving mother she is. "How is my son doing. I'm nuts sad that he doesn't want to see me."

"He is fine. It's not that he doesn't want you to see him but he is afraid of you seeing him in that state and your health matters the most." I tell her and she sighs sadly blinking away. "I know it's hard for you but you need to trust him like I also do. It's hard but he said he knows what his doing."

"If you say so. Let me go check up on Miracle....that one keeps me on my toes." I laugh.

"Let me check up on her. It's time I open my heart towards her." She smiles widely.

Later that evening I got a call from Ntokozo and I was so sceptical about taking his call. I did a swim swap reason being most of my clients call me on that number. And since I'll be getting back into business....I can't wait to be a business woman.

I so wish I had or have nothing that links me to Ntokozo. But hearing the news of his mother passing was heart-rending. I loved that woman because she accepted me and loved me like my own. I wonder what happened to her.

"So what happened?" I ask, I may hate Ntokozo with everything in me but that woman loved me at all cost.

"I told her the truth about Mapule."

I hold my breath not believing my ears. So MaMyeni died because of Ntokozo's sins.

"Ow my God, I'm so sorry for your loss." That's all I could give him right now.

"I need you Ayanda. My life is could and lost without you. I know I have wronged you is so many ways but my life is shallow without you. The house is could and smells manly."

"Where's your baby mama?" I don't want to talk something out of context. I will not let him confuse me this time around.

"Don't say that Aya," his voice barely came out.

"I'm sorry I didn't mean it like that. Where is MaNtombela?" Maybe my first question sounded to sensitive.

He sighs and I hear some shuffling's on his side, "it's been two weeks with her being in some sort of coma, the baby is still fragile since it was born before time. I don't even know when was the right time for him to be born." He sounds broken but right now I don't feel anything for this man. He put me through hell.

"Ow, so how's your baby?" Why am I even entertaining him?

"He is growing but very tiny."

"He will survive." I'm so sceptical about me telling him that we have a child together. What if makes my life living hell? Will he accept her? But he needs to know he is the father after all. I just don't know how to brake the news to him. "Ntokozo,"

"Yes babe."

I close my eyes shutting them tight, Romeo's voice buzzing in my head "Miracle is my daughter...." Those words made me wonder even more, am I doing the right thing if I share this news with him. Will I be betraying Romeo? Indeed I will be. He asked me to wait for him and that's a promise I'm willing to take. I think it will be better if Romeo handles this. He will be the one telling Ntokozo about Miracle.

"It's noth....it's nothing. Yea it's nothing." Guilt takes over, I hate lying but I have no choice.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes I'm sure." My heart's beats abnormally against my chest.

"I will call you later, I love you Ayanda." He disconnects the call and I'm grateful that he did. Imaging me lying saying I love him to....I have to clear the air and let him know that I now belong to someone else and I'm very much happy with my man. As for MaNtombela I think karma is dealing with her. Do I wish for her to die? NO, I want her to see me prosper, getting married and having my own family!

#43

AYANDA

I'm looking at everyone asking questions amongst themselves. I'm sure they are wondering who am I and what am I doing in the bosses chair.

"Is everyone here?" I look at all 15 workers.

"Looks like it."

"And you are?" This guy is so forward.

"Mthunzi Masinga."

"And your roll in this company?" I look at him and he confidentiality looked at me.

"Finance advisor," I raise my eyebrows up. I need to have a word with this guy, I'm pretty sure that his confidence will die down once I have a serious conversation with him.

"Okay let's get straight to the point. My name is Ayanda Osman a wife to Mr Osman. I'm pretty sure that you are all aware of him being away on business. For the moment I will be in charge until he returns. What I need form you is just honesty, doing your work and minding your own business. I've been looking at the file for the past few weeks and I must say I am so highly disappointed in you. This business is loosing alot of money and I would like to know why?" The room becomes so silent making me nervous.

"The thing is Romeo intends to do things his own way." Mthunzi, I'm not liking this guy one bit.

"I see, since he is not around a few things will change here starting with your hours." I hear mumblings and hisses.

"We are in this mess because of your lack of ambition, we are hear because you are way too relaxed for my liking. If we are going to have a problem on how I'm going to operate you are more than welcome to leave." I point out at the door and they all keep quite. "Good now this is how this will go from now onwards...."

It felt really good to put these people in their places. When I came here you would swear that it was a club or something. Romeo needs to come back and deal with his workers once and for all. I need to fetch kids from day-care and Ramona from school. I notice that there is this car following me around and it's a woman. I find Ramona and Ronald patiently waiting for me. I'm only one minute late and I hope this girl won't bite my head off.

"You late!" What did I say. Her and Romeo never got along that we'll cause this little one always had him on his toes

"One minute late my love," she pouts cutely making me to laugh. This child is way too dramatic for a 5 year old.

"I'm hungry," ever since Ronald had that operation he is forever hungry. I'm just praying that there's no damage done.

"Okay babe we will pass by the Food and Eatery Store." I look at my rear mirror and this car is still following me around.

"Babe can you get my phone from my hand bag." I tell Ramona who was sitting in the front seat. She hands it to me and I quickly dial someone.

"I'm being followed," I'm trying so hard not to panic but the kids are the most priority right now.

"Number plate?" I check the mirror again and called out the number plates. "Social workers? I look get back to you. In the mean time don't panic just be cool." He drops the call. We drive straight to Rebecca's school and my girl is outside with her boy-friend as she says. Romeo will kill me one day but the fact that Rebecca tells me everything I'm good.

"Hallo," she's all in a happy and jolly mood I wonder what made her this happy.

"Are you okay." Girl blushes and now my chest is rising up and down. Don't tell me she had sex.

"He bought me chocolates," I sigh in relief. I can't imagine Rebecca having sex at this age.

"Your friend is sweet,"

She continues to blush and I just shake my head focusing on the road.

A call comes through and I put my phone on Bluetooth. "Hallo,"

"Drive straight home!" Just like that the call disconnects. How the hell do this guy manages to order me like that? Even Romeo doesn't bark like he does. So no more taking my kids out. I make a sharp U-turn and all thanks to Romeo for making me drive like a man. Surprisingly this car is still following me around.

"My food!" Ronald is almost minutes away from crying.

"I'm sorry babe mama will make you grilled chicken as soon as we arrive home, okay." I assure him that wide smile on his face comes with demands I know him.

"And pizza and burger and fried chips...." If I don't stop him he will continue adding and's on the list.

"Okay my love we have a deal."

Arriving home I find the police men packed and my mind immediately trails to Nana and Miracle. Are they okay? I jump off the car telling the kids to stay behind I don't want them witnessing anything. They have been through so much trauma lately.

"What's happening here?" I ask with my heart beating fast. I hope everyone is okay.

"Mam you will have to go down with us to the station." The police officer tells me.

"And why would I?" Am I a suspect in anything?

"Everything will be discussed in the station mam." I look at Spikes and he nods his head agreeing to what they are saying.

"Go with them, I want to sue the station at all cost." I trust him and I don't know why. Is it because Romeo told me to put my trust in them. I get in the van at the back of it with my mind asking itself alot of questions.

I'm being interrogated with things I do not know.

"Is it true that you abused your step children till they were hospitalized?" I shoot my eyes open in shock.

"Is this some kind of a sick joke?" I'm livid. "How can I hurt my own kids!"

"Point of correction you are a step mother to them and you are very much capable of hurting them. Who knows maybe you want all the money to come your way. Now tell us did or did you not abuse those kids?"

"Who contacted you and told you that the kids are being abused?" I ask and the devil just laughs at me.

"Nice try. Since you don't want to talk I will be keeping you for the night until you talk." He walks out and leaves me sobbing. Is Spikes part of this craziness circus? No I refuse to believe that. The look in those kids eyes....I watched them until the van disappeared out of sight. Ramona is the most fragile one and I wonder how she's doing. So whoever was following me already knew my routine? I'm just confused. Did Nana tell the police I'm abusing the kids? I doubt she would now would she?

I hear them talk outside the room and I listen attentively.

"She fetched the kids from school and there's nothing suspecting that the kids are being abused. They seemed happy." So this woman was following me around checking if I'm abusing the kids. I hold my chest feeling it closing up. I think I'm going to die because of this fake rumour. Who would lie so bad about me?

"Thank you, but still we have to gather more information about her. Until then we are keeping her for the night." Wow just wow.

Later that afternoon Spikes and some of the guys I haven't met arrived at the station and caused havoc.

"How do you explain this?" I'm looking at the police officer mumbling on his own. I wonder what he's looking at that spooked him this much.

"There might be a mistake. The person who called us said she is the step-mother and she is mentally disturbed." The officer defends himself. What the hell! I don't believe this.

"What does the documents say?"

"That she is the legal mother. But how?" Okay now I'm lost, what document are they talking about?

"Is it possible to sue this station cause clearly you do not know your work OFFICER?" Spikes smirks making the cop swallowing hard. "First things first I would like to know who informed you with this false information?"

"She said she is a neighbour that's all she said and she didn't want to disclose her name." Spikes nods his head.

"Now release the mother right this minute and consider yourself fired. Next time before you take someone for questioning you should get your facts straight."

I'm going home to my kids and that all that matters. I just need a long hot shower that will ease me down since I'm mad as hell. Who is after me?

"Your neighbours are noisy." I look outside the window and Bettina was peeping through the window.

"Unesidina Lona, yazi she was here earlier claiming that she is pregnant with Romeo's child." I click my tongue.

"I see," we drive through the yard, I need to make sure that the kids are okay.

"Ow child," Nana welcomes me with open arms. You can tell that she was worried sick.

"I'm good mama

I don't know who gave the police such information. I would never ab...."

"I know you would never. I trust you Aya with these kids. You are a very good mother to them." She looks at me warmly with relief taking over. This woman loves me more than her own son.

"Shout if you need anything."

"Spikes before you go....the document you gave to the police officer what did it say?" I just want to know if there's nothing incriminating against my name.

"I think it's the best you ask Romeo." He walks out leaving me more confused. What did Romeo do this time around. I turn to look at Nana and she just looks away. Now I believe that there's something going on and I'm not told.

"Nana," I'm waiting for an explanation. I will not let this die down.

"I can't tell you child, only Romeo can explain that." Now I'm left in the dark. What the hell did Romeo do?

ROMEO

"They can't arrest you let alone send you to court cause there isn't enough evidence. Someone keeps wiping away the information linking to you. Whoever it is, is sure good to what they are doing. For now just keep your cool and don't say anything to anyone." The lawyer is more stressed than Romeo. What if this person comes back for revenge or demands a huge some of money? Romeo is already slowly losing money since he hasn't been in business for a long time and they can't have that. Good thing the company is no longer under his name. Everything has been transferred to someone he trusts the most.

"Even Anathi is failing to know who is messing with the codes." Romeo rubs his face feeling defeated. If the guys can't get hold of the person who's behind this than that means he must prepare himself for whoever will come forward.

"We still digging and we will not let this die down."

I'm looking at my kids photos that Spikes managed to get hold of. Hearing the news that my woman was in a holding makes my body cringe in anger. All of this is happening because of me being inside here. They can take and mess with everything that's mine but definitely not my family. I'm glad that Aya is a strong tiny woman who have learned to be strong. I wonder who gave the police wrong information about my woman. Aya can't even hurt a fly.

I'm still struggling to find answers, who is behind me? I'm sure that person has a lot of information about me, my family.... This is definitely one fucked up situation I've ever come across but I will never back down.

The gate opens and I just know that someone is here to see me.

"Someone is here to see you." What did I say, I'm in no mood to see anyone. I'm so stressed that I'm locked up inside of here knowing that I'm failing to protect my family. I find Spikes seated playing with the car keys.

"Ndoda," I don't know why he likes calling me that. Yes I am a man but he doesn't have to sing it out.

"What brings you here?"

"Let just say manipulating the system do me good."

"What!" I look around just to make sure that no one catches our conversation. "Wait a minute....so it was you?" This person has been right under my nose. His stupid smile says it all, I can't believe this.

"What's the catch?" I ask, I know he can't do all of this for sweet nothing.

"I'm helping a brother out. Let's just say I enjoy confusing enemies. In no time brother....in no time." He winks at me living me dumbfounded. This peacock! He looked at us cracking our heads and he was right there looking at us like he doesn't know anything, wow!

NTOKOZO

I need to unwind and rethink. Aya, that was not my Aya. That Aya was way too cold and uninterested somehow I understand her feelings that she's hurt and needs to heal. But once she heals we will be once again a happy family. I'm walking around town trying to forget my reality of life when I bump into something.

"Watch where you walking next time!" I know I'm the one who's wrong but she doesn't need to scream her lungs at me.

"Mapule," I glad I ran into her. "Please don't leave...."

"What do you want?" Feisty I see.

"Look I just want to apologize for the way I did you in the past. I was still a boy back then who didn't know what he wanted in life. I was bad news and I admit I regret it dearly. My actions costs my mother's life. I told my mother how Mbalienhle was conceived and that was the end of her she died right in front of my eyes, just right after you left."

"I'm sorry about your mother but it doesn't justify what you did. You put me through pain and made me change my sexuality. Do I enjoy looking like this? No I don't but I'm trying to run away from species like you." I can see the hate and anger in her. I can imagine the damage I did to her.

"No amount of sorries will bury the past.

You see it's very hard for us to take clear and direct responsibility for specific things we have said or done — or not said or done --without a hint of blaming, obfuscation, excuse-making or bringing up the other person's crime sheet." I look at her waiting for a response. "I'm deeply sorry Mapule for putting you through that all these years. If I'm not asking for too much may I please have a bond with Mbalienhle.

"I don't know,"

"How about if you watch from a distance and we meet in a public place until you can be able to fully trust me. Do you think you can work with that?" I ask hoping she says yes.



"Can I think about it?" Her eyes are red from crying. I'm just glad that for once we are not raising our voices but handling the matter like matured people.

"That's a step I'm willing to take and I'm thankful for you to think about my offer." We exchange numbers and I'm thankful that I will be able to communicate with my daughter over the phone. I will never harm my own daughter but I understand Mapule's reasons. She must fully trust me before anything happens. But what I know is I want my home to be filled with love and warmth and only Aya can bring and give that.

MaNtombela is still the same old and there's no change. I'm thinking of informing her ex husband about this. What if she dies? I'm not ready to bury my mother-in-law or shall I say baby mama. Tough life and I put myself into it.

Good thing I still have her husband's numbers I'm just praying that he takes his wife back.

"Hello,"

"It's me Ntokozo. I just wanted to inform you that MaNtombela has given birth and she has been in comma for two weeks." I tell him and the man is silent. I don't have airtime laying around. If he doesn't talk I'm dropping this phone.

"Okay," really! Is that all that he is going to say?

"I was thinking that maybe you could come fetch her."

He chucks a little, I hate it when people do that it comes with a lot of attitude. "Seniqedile ukubhebhana?" Okay that's it! I won't tolerate this old man's behaviour.

"Are you going to fetch your wife or not? Or shall I send her to old age home?"

"Do whatever makes you happy mfana." This old man disconnects the call. Such disrespect in his old age. MaNtombela must wake up or how about if I switch off the machines once and for all ending all of this misery?

I need to claim my life back. I'm just happy that my garage is kicking in again. Just few more touches and it will be done. I can't wait for Aya to finally see it, I know my woman will be ecstatic about it. She helped me after all. That woman is truly a God sent. So Nkanyezi wasn't lying when she told me to look after Ayanda and I shall prosper. Why didn't I treat her like an egg before? I would have been far by now in life. Sometimes we make stupid decisions which I regret so much. I can't wait to buy an expensive ring for an engagement. It's time I make it official and propose for the whole world to see! #44

AYANDA

"So you say you are from the social worker services." These two ladies nod their heads. No one messes with my children! "So you were told that I'm abusing my own kids?" They nod again.

"We are just doing our job mam, on behalf of the law we are here to take the kids to the safe facility until the case is over, the case that has been labelled against you."

"You know what's funny, you are so quick into taking my children without doing the investigating. To you, you are just doing your job by taking what makes me happy but you are failing to find the main reason for the accusations they are labelling against me." I'm calm as hell, who is the main reason of flooding my tears like this. Today I was in a cell for hours and today the social workers are here to take my family. Ronald as a sweetheart he is, he came out of his room and threw himself at me.

"I want Miracle," I look at his innocent face holding back my tears. I can't let these women take what's mine!

"No hallo Mama," he smiles and covers his face under my armpit. He stands up and runs to the kitchen.

"Is that your son?"

"Yes, it is." I want to know who is the main reason behind my misery.

"He looks happy to me. If you were abusive he wouldn't be this comfortable around you." They both agree amongst each other. "We apologize for the faults accusations."

"Who contacted you?" I want to know and if it's someone I know Lord knows I won't back down. They will wish they never messed with my family.

"A woman called Bettina I assume." She looks at her diary to confirm. "Yes it's Bettina."

I laugh a bit, so the bitch is getting back at me using my kids. Today is the day she knows what I'm made of.

After the social workers left I marched straight to her mother's house. I find her in the kitchen dancing drinking wine. So this ugly Yibiri is making my life a living hell while she sways her downfall hips left, right and centre. I tap on her shoulder and she jumps out of fear holding her chest. She turns down the volume and looks at me up and down.

"What do you want?" Her smirk on her face makes me livid beyond anything. I don't get it why women enjoy another woman's downfall. A hot slap echoed while she held her cheek in shock. Bitch didn't expect that from me.

"This is just a friendly warning next time I won't be this lenient. Keep provoking the snake whilst in its hole. The day it finally comes out trust me, all hell will brake loose." I click my tounge and walked out of the house. I swear that girl will make me age before my time. People do really turn your heart around and make you something that you are not. I've never been a violent person but this one is just pushing me to the limit.

NTOKOZO

I try her phone for the last time and it doesn't go through. I hope she's safe wherever she is. But I trust my woman she's a strong beast that one. A door bell rings, I carry my legs to the door and found the surprise of my life. I didn't expect her here, she does know that Ayanda is not around, so what the hell is she doing here?

"Mapule.... I'm sorry come in." I move aside letting go her in. I look back checking if Mbalienhle is behind her but no.

"I'm sorry to come in unannounced." She takes a deep breath.

"Can we take a seat?" Hope she agrees but luckily she does.

"So how can I help you?"

"I thought about what we talked about yesterday and I would love for you to have a bond with your daughter but with terms and conditions. We meet in a public place and you don't go indoors with her without me." I'm hurt, to even think that she thinks I might hurt my own child but I don't blame her. Any mother would go to an extent of protecting their own child. This is a start and I don't want to ruin it.

"Anything with me I'll gladly accept at this point. I'm glad that you considered this and I appreciate it alot."

"Hope I won't regret this decision." She looks at me and stands up pulling her short dress down. Mapule has a really nice body, a body that you can showcase in public. I don't know why she hides behind those saggy clothes. I stand up to with my eyes still glued on her. I stand right in front of her face with no space in-between us. I see fear in her eyes and that brakes my heart. I pull her towards me giving her a tight hug.

"I'm sorry for putting you through hell. I hate myself every second of the day. I was young and naive back then but I'm a grown man now who is trying to build a life for his family. I want my kids to live a comfortable life, a life that I never got to live." I rub her back and let her cry on my chest. She's still hurting and I'm to blame. The fear in her eye's were vigilant that she still fears to be around me but I will do by all means to make her trust me again. I pull back wiping the tears dripping down her face. "I will make it in my power for you to trust me again. I mean it Mapule." She nods her head and sniffs.

"I have...." I don't know what demon possessed me, I found myself kissing the day lights of her. My blood is so hot, hot that I just want to be inside of her. No one is stopping anyone. My boner is pumping veins and I'm already imaging her pussy. She pushes me back forcefully, "Nto...." I shut her up with a kiss and I can feel her body betraying her. She holds my waist with me pushing her on the couch. I get on top of her spreading her legs apart....

MANTOMBELA

"Finally you're awake," I looks at the doctor who was looking at him so much worry in her face. I'm still lost and tired. My body feels like it has been hit by a truck. Everything in me is just completely dry. I'm agitated and confused to begin with.

"You are in a state of PTA or post-traumatic amnesia, which is described as 'a state of confusion that occurs immediately following a traumatic brain injury in which the injured person is disoriented and unable to remember events that occur after the injury.' Basically, for a while, during PTA, your brain doesn't work very well at recalling and storing information or your short term memory doesn't work properly. The length of time spent in PTA is an indication of the severity of the TBI."

She's inspecting my body and I'm lost as hell, she helps me to drink water. I didn't even notice I was thirsty.

"Where's my daughter?" Ayanda should know what happened to me. I know she is the one who brought me here.

"Daughter?" Why is this doctor sounding so confused. Ow mam you gave birth to an baby boy,"

"No, no, I meant my daughter Ayanda."

"Unfortunately no person with that name has ever come to check up on you. Let me call someone who brought you here." She walks away leaving me more confused. How did I get here? Ayanda must be really worried about me. Last night I had a terrible fight with her, ay naye she must try not to drink this much. Look now her ways are landing me in hospital.

NTOKOZO

Grief sometimes causes people to experience a spike in sexual libido. This is often caused as a way to cope with pain, or suppress it. ... However, most people who start having more sex during a grieving period tend to use sex as a way to suppress or escape from the loss they recently experienced. Being intimate with Mapule was not by choice but I'm trying to escape the pain I'm feeling.

I'm rubbing her clit using my thumb and I have her legs against my chest.

"Ow God," she pulls her hair biting her lower lip. I close my eyes imaging Aya on top of me.

"Shit!" I pump harder growling loud releasing. I collapse on top of her breathing heavily.

"I'm sorry but I couldn't hold myself." I say getting off her.

"You grieving."

"And the guilt at feeling something less than sadness can make us feel guilty. But it shouldn't. In fact, it's possible to feel conflicting emotions all at once — and yes, it is OK to feel happy while simultaneously grieving." She nods her head dressing up. You can see guilt and shame washing over her. I'm also ashamed of what I did, Mapule is Ayanda's friend for crying out loud!

"Ayanda

" she starts crying all over again.

"Hey, no one will tell Ayanda and no one will find out what we did." I assure her. My phone has been ringing non-stop and it's starting to annoy me. I look at my phone and I notice that it's a landline.

"Hallo," I'm still naked I'm trying to get my strength back.

"Am I speaking to Mr Myeni." Maybe it's one of the tenders Ayanda once applied for me.

"Speaking?" I can be professional if I like.

"Please come to Eshowe hospital. It's in regard about a woman called MaNtombela." Shit why did put myself as next of kin!

"Is she dead?" I would be more than happy is she is.

"Please come to the hospital." She drops the phone and I sigh annoyed. Why does my life have to revolve around this woman!

Driving to the hospital had me on the edge what if she is dead? The fact that I called her husband wangichitha. I can't inform Ayanda after what she saw between me and her mother. I jump out of my second hand vehicle, atleast I managed to buy myself a car that takes me to wherever I want and all thanks to Ayanda. A smile creeps on my face whenever I think of that tiny beautiful soul. I wonder is she still has he bald head.

"Good day," I greet the receptionist.

"Morning sir."

"I'm hear to see MaNtombela."

"Just one second," she types whatever she types on her computer and asks me to follow her behind.

"That office will be the doctor that contacted you."

"Thank you,"

I collect myself and knock at the door,

"Ntokozo, kanti it's you. Yazi I thought Mr Myeni is someone else. Have a seat." I sit down with my chest tightening.

"Why am I here?" I'm in no plan to bury that woman.

"MaNtombela woke up and it seems like she lost her memory and she doesn't remember giving birth to her child."

"What!" I'm beyond shocked, she decided to play dead and later wakes up only to loose her memory, it can't be!

"Yes she is suffering from post-traumatic amnesia...."

"What the hell is that?"

"Short memory loss, it seems like the only person she could remember is her daughter Ayanda." I lean back on the chair not knowing what to do next. MaNtombela is really here to torment my life, she's here to make my life a leaving hell.

"I don't even know what to say, I'm mystified."

"I know it's shocking and overwhelming we will try by our all means to bring her memory back through medication. And besides she's not yet fully healed." I hope she stays here forever, why not cripple her!

I need some time alone, atleast my boy is growing and his lungs are developing day by day. It's funny how MaNtombela still thinks that I'm married to Nkanyezi. That means that her mind went back to three years ago. I shake my head driving back home. The dining smells of sex, stupid me forget to open the windows for fresh air and stupid me didn't use protection with this Mapule girl. What if she is sick? How can I be this stupid. I throw myself on the couch closing my eyes regretting what I did earlier this morning. How do I begin to take it back? I hope Aya won't hate me for what I did and I hope this Mapule wont get pregnant.... speaking of her I need to remind her to get the morning after pill.

Don't forget to buy the morning after pill! I send her a text and she replies.

Already did

Huge relief washes over. I can't afford to have another child, these two beautiful souls at the moment are enough for me.

AYANDA

My heart is pumping with rage and hate, this girl has gone way too far. Hatred is distinct from short-lived feelings such as anger and disgust.... When someone feels hatred for another person, they often spend much of their time fixating on their anger, contempt, or dislike of the other person. Right now there is no amount hate that can describe the way I hate this Yibiri girl. First she gets pregnant for Romeo, she's now pregnant with his child again and I'm now abusing my own kids! She is now biting more she could chew. I'm pacing up and down with absolutely no plan to resolve this. I sent one of the guys the text and they told me they will handle it but they haven't get back to me. I'm starting to loose patience bit by bit, people are definitely taking my kindness for granted. They under value me....you know when they say even the nicest people have their limits!

I can't hate, I feel I can't either, because you learn to hate with discipline and practice. You don't hate spontaneously, it's a matter of severity and cold bloodedness. I'm not going to start hating at 21 years old. That is a difficult "career" needed to be "studied" from early childhood. I was not accepted in that "course" due to my excessive love and inability. But people change you to something you are not. This girl is playing with fire and she will get burnt the most crucial way ever and I just know how.

I'm looking at the numbers not too sure whether to call or not. If I make this call will I be a bad person? Clearly not....it's better than putting an innocent woman behind bars for sweet nothing. Lord forgive me for what I'm about to do but right now I have no choice.

"Halo," my heart is beating in an abnormal way. I think I'm having arrhythmia. "Halo."

I clear my throat calming my nerves down. "Ha....halo," I press my lips into a thin line.

"Who's this?"

"Can I be anonymous...." I can't provide my name for the whole world to see now can I? I don't want to be stamped as a bitter ex.

"I don't have all day, and I pray what you give me now is nothing but the truth cause of you lie we will haunt you down and you will spend the rest of your life in jail." I shoot my eyes open.

"It's the truth, I even have prove." I say.

"Go on I'm listening." She tells me, why am I suddenly having cold feet?

"The name of the woman is Bettina I don't know her last name. She lives in Empangeni Carsdale." I take a deep breath. "She is a witch. We see her at night doing witchcraft calling out men's names. Recently she did an abortion for sacrifice. I even have the medical records and pictures of her." The line goes silent for a while. Jesu why did I waste my time and energy on this?

"Sounds interesting tell me more about it...."

Later that night I was holding on tight onto my phone. I couldn't wait for morning to finally see the scope. Hopefully this girl will be out of my hair for good. I told her that I'm not the one to be messed with. Morning is a bit far and I can't wait any longer. Maybe if I check their site I might find something.

Scrolling down there's no new news feed maybe she didn't buy my story. But after all the evidence I presented ; - she can't do me that bad.

I've been tossing and turning the whole night. It's almost 6 am and I don't know how to feel about this. What if my name...."ow God, why did I do it? Why did I do it?" I kick the covers and start pacing up and down. "You know I didn't sleep at all last night." They say talking to yourself makes things better.

"We are accustomed to self-talk in the mind, yet we sometimes feel that this same self-talk — when expressed orally — is a sign of being odd or crazy. In fact, speaking out loud to oneself allows us to sort through our thoughts in a more conscious manner." I know I'm not crazy.

I do a quick shower just to pass time, I want to be the first one to get hold of today's paper.

"Going somewhere?" Nana asks with a slight frown on her face. This magogo is wasting my time.

"Just want something from the stores." I lie, atleast today is a public holiday kids are at home so I'm not sending anyone to school or day-care.

I grab the car keys leaving her stunned, I seriously need this now. I'll just drive straight to PICK N PAY. Luckily it's not full and it's still early in the morning.

"Cela neAirtime." I tell the cashier, I need to check how much money is left in Romeo's card.

Should I drive back? I'm even afraid to look at it. "This is now or ever...."

"FRONTLINE NEWS.

A woman called Bettina has been spotted around her yard doing witchcraft at the early hours of the morning. It has been confirmed that months back she did an abortion for a sacrifice to the DEADLY GOD that she worships. Our reporters have confirmed that...." I fold the paper and toss it aside in happiness. This is what you get for hurting harmless kids. The pictures of her roaming at night, the medical records.... everything is out there in the open for the world to see. I need Drostry for this one! #45

AYANDA

I admit, I'm a bad ass! I want her to feel what I felt when the cops took me to the station for only God knows what. I want her to feel how it feels like to be in that cell for hours. #CHECKMATE. I literally got the mosquito where I want it. In the moment when I truly understand my enemy, understand her well enough to defeat them. Give me honourable enemies rather than ambitious ones, and I'll sleep more easily by night.

What I've learnt is To know your Enemy, you must become your Enemy. Save your skin from the corrosive acids from the mouths of toxic people.

I feel like I warn a Lotto....!

Today I will be spending my time in the office, I can't work properly at home with the kids running around but I took Miracle with. Hope naye she won't turn her back on me.

Cracking my head looking at the balance sheets and everything is just a fall mountain. I'm in Romeo's office with papers scattered on the floor, I'm sitting on the floor with my legs apart. I need coffee, something that will wake me up. That wine did a number one on me. When I say number one I'm not talking about hangovers, I'm talking about horniness. That thing damaged me real big yesterday....to the point where I had to fully satisfy myself, imagine! The door cracks open and I'm just wondering who's here on a public Holiday since I gave everyone a day off. They have been working their butts off lately.

"Sister boss," the shock on his face was the first expression that alarmed me.

"Mthunzi," I continue to look at the papers trying to compose my structure.

"Erm I didn't know you would be here." Why is he sweating.

I half smile a bit, "was I suppose to inform you that I was coming?" I tilt my head observing his visage. I have him where I want.

"Sit down."

"Huh," why does he sound shocked.

"I didn't stutter did I?" I smile.

"N...no, erm, okay." He sits down intolerable.



"So what brings you here on a holiday?" I'm still faced down.

"Just came to check up on the business." This man is very much good in lying. I tilt my head....I'm looking at him as his eyes were running around Romeo's office.

"I see. Since you here you might as well tell me why is the balance sheet not adding up. You work in the finance department and I'm sure everything pass by you first before captured. Right?"

"Erm yes. Those are one of the reasons why I'm here. Everything is not adding up at all."

"Don't worry about it." I say packing. The cameras were disabled which I find it very much odd, but no one knows that they have been enabled back on. I just need a technician to merge the camera's on my phone. Something huge is going on around here and I'm yet to find out. As for Mthunzi, I will be keeping a very close eye on him. I want to observe him carefully to make sure he has no hidden agenda.

"Okay," I didn't know that he can be this nervous.

"You may be excused." He stand up and hurried out leaving me to chuckle a bit. I decided not to question him, I will deal with this my way I see it fit. I think I have done enough for the day and besides my body hasn't fully recovered as yet.

"Hallo Miracle Ratolaka Ntombela, no scratch that Miracle Ratolaka Osman. That's more like it." It's very funny how I have grown to love my daughter, I'm now very fond of her in just a short period of time. 2 weeks and we still growing. This morning I had to sneak out of the house with her because Nana would have chopped my head and handed it to the devil himself. My phone chimes and I look at the text making me to fit with laughter. This woman.... You can run but you can't hide. This text amuses me very much, can't Nana take a chill pill.

"Let's go home before your grandmother kills me." My heart saddens knowing that I will never have a normal relationship with my mother. She will never get to see my daughter....her grandmother. My baby is being raised by another woman who is not even related to her. I'm slowly forgetting my past and moving on from that toxic past. I wonder for how long her and Ntokozo have been shagging. You know what I want to forget about everything but not my friends. Mapule has been cold and distant lately. I don't know if it's me or her but whatever she's facing I know she will pull through I'm just giving her time. As for Dumisani;- I will be seeing him this month end and I can't wait. No one knows that I had a miracle baby and I prefer to keep it that way.

Nana is ignoring my presence and I know why.

"I'm sorry Nana, I promise never to take her again without you consent." Look at her sulking over Miracle. Kanti who gave birth to this baby?

"Next time I will give you a hot slap and besides Miracle is way too young to be walking on the streets. She can only be out of this house once she's 6 months and we are not debating that." Okay her word is final.

"I don't have a say in this?" I ask.

"No, not when it comes to kids." I surrender, this woman loves her grandkids more than anything.

"I give up."

"Thank you!" Wow, this woman....

I'm looking at Nana bathing Miracle and that got me wondering if my mother will ever do something like this for me?

I smile faintly in pain that's frictioning my heart. Nana has been there for me since day one and not even once has she ever complained about me or my actions of being a bad mother, but she puts me in line and direct for the right part.

"I would like to bath her someday." I smack my lips into a thin line shutting myself up. What kind of a mother am I? My baby is two weeks and some days and not even once have I ever bathe her!

"Don't drown her please," Nana says taking Miracle out of her bathtub. I don't get it why bath kids are being bathe in expensive bathtubs, something they will not use when the grow up. Nana is worse cause sometimes she just bathe her in the kitchen sink.

"That's my worst fear, what if I drop her by mistake? Ow my God....she would be dead right?"

I don't see anything funny in just what I said, "ow child," she continues to laugh her lungs out. "You just made my day. I didn't know bathing a baby could make you kill her. I told you to stop reading those books of yours - look now."

"This is not a laughing matter Nana."

NTOKOZO

Maybe my ancestors are punishing me for killing my mother deliberately. Why would Mantobela be discharged and come back to my house? I swear they enjoy seeing me suffer!

Why do some Christian families tend to suffer so much more than others? Does God make us suffer for our ancestors' sins? Maybe I'm reading too much into this....What if....

"Move out of the way you bimbo!" Great now I'm being disrespected so early in the morning. I stick out my middle finger out of the window. "Jerk!" I scream and the dude just drive past me.

I'm on my way to the hospital and I did not notice that I'm standing in the middle of the road thinking to myself. I cannot believe that my car just ran out of petrol just like that. I press on the hazards and step out of my car, I don't even know where I'm going, who to talk to. I'm literally few miles a way from town. It's a walkable distance but I can't leave my car behind.

A day like this reminds of the day I was lifted by a ghost. I went through trauma for months without telling anyone. That is the day I will forever respect in my life.

"Ow my God! Ntokozo!" I know that voice and she's the last person I want to see this moment. I turn around faking a smile, "oh hey," I wave my hand. I don't even remember her name. Why would I remember someone who I use to offload my troubles to. She parks the most expensive hatchback is none other than the BMW M135i xDrive. This four-wheel-drive guise, the 1-series produces 225kW of power and 450Nm of torque out of its 2.0-litre engine – which is enough to send it to 100km/h just 4.8 seconds. The extreme hatchback will cost you R808,188. Look at me analysing another woman's car. I feel so belittle right now. I'm looking at my sense of clothing comparing it to her's and damn I feel out of the box but I put my brave face on. Stepping out of her car alone says alot about her structure. She's like walking in water, ow damn my member is jerking up. I clear my throat calming him down but nigger keeps growning.

"Long time

" she opens her arms giving me a very tight hug. I inhale her scent and girly smells so damn nice. I squeeze her body imagining her calling my name and begging for mercy like the old day's.

"It's been long indeed," I say stepping back. I last saw her when she came by my house to buy Ayanda's food. I pretend to not know her cause Ayanda was in sight.

"Last time you ignored me, what changed today?" Does she really have to ask?

"My ex mother-in-law was around." I lie, I can't say Ayanda was there!

"Okay," she looks at me more like analysing me, "so what's wrong with your car?" You call these a car, like really?

"Ran out of petrol," I tell her and she nods her head.

"You can take my car and I'll wait for you here." She suggests and I just know right then what she means and I cannot allow that.

"Ow hell no. I appreciate the offer but how about you go and I'll wait. I can't leave you here all alone." She's convinced, she agrees and I sigh in relief.

"Thank you so much for your help..." I pause remembering I don't remember her name.

"Let me guess- you don't remember my name." She got that right. "Aphelele is the name." She gets into the car leaving me scratching the back of my head. Stupid me I didn't give her the money for fuel, she doesn't even know what fuel I use. Great and I don't have her 10's.

Standing in the middle of the road like I've just lost my mind waiting for a woman I don't even know whether she'll come back or not. I wouldn't be surprised if she doesn't- I'm a jerk who didn't even remember her name for crying out loud! Now everyone is looking at the stupid Ntokozo, the hospital has been calling non-stop. I'm only going there to only fetch my son not to fetch that old hag that lost her memory. Relief washes over when I see Aphelele parking her car on the side of the road. She kept her word and for that I applaud her . Now I have to pray for her having the right petrol.

"I thought you left," I smile like an idiot.

"Sorry I took long, it was packed." She takes out the petrol from he boot.

"How did you know?" I'm impressed.

"Volkswagen Golf was my first so I do know that it requires premium fuel." I wonder if Ayanda knows anything about cars. I should teach her the basics first.

"I'm tounge tied."

Parting ways with Aphelele after she helped made me realise that she is a good hearted woman just that she was sneaking around with the devil. Arriving at the hospital I find MaNtombela already dressed waiting for me and stupid her doesn't remember being pregnant. How will I take care of my baby boy alone, this is the moment I need Ayanda the most. But I'll try and look for a nanny that will help me with my baby boy. I think I will have to ask Aphelele to hook me up with a nanny I'm sure having her number will be useful. I will definitely give her a call when I get home.

I don't even know what to name him but I think Ntokozo Jnr will do for now until I come up with a meaningful name.

"Don't drive too fast my stomach hurts," Queen Cinderella is starting to annoy me. This is my car and I will drive it the way I see fit! I'll just keep quite and focus on the road. Ngaze ngasha ngimuncane!

"Miss me already," no manners. Didn't her parents teach her that this is not the way to answer the phone.

"Don't flatter yourself woman. I need your help and I think you are the right person to seek help from." I say.

"Don't tell me you are stuck in the middle of no where." Not so funny I thought.

"No, no. The thing is I need a nanny that will look after my baby boy. He is just days old and I'm desperate." I tell her and she keeps quite for a while.

"I think I might have somebody in mind. When do you need them?" Now she's talking.

"Today if possible. I just came back from the hospital with him." I don't want to tell her too much information about my life.

"I'll talk to my aunt and get back to you." That counts for something. I'll just have to wait for her confirmation.

My son has been crying his lungs out non-stop frustrating me. Apehele said she will be here with her niece and that was bloody two hours ago! I'm starting to think that maybe she ditched me and I'm not surprised. I'll just make tea for him and put it in a bottle. I hurriedly go to the kitchen leaving him in the lounge crying his lungs out. Damn my boy can cry. I'll just make it warm for him to be able to drink. 1 teaspoon of sugar will do. I have a taste and it's drinkable luke warm.

I rush my legs making myself comfortable on the couch. I pick him up, touched the baby's lips with a gentle yet firm touch of the bottle nipple. I rolled the rubber tit into his mouth. Gently press the nipple down onto the centre of his tongue.

"Wow," I admire the way he is sucking on the bottle. Boy is hungry, Opening his mouth. Rooting reflex, shame my baby turns his head to the side with his mouth open to find the food source, mistakenly his cheek is stroked, look at him sticking her tongue out.

A knock on the door disturbs me, "come in." I shout still admiring my baby.

"Ow my God," I tilt my head and I see Amanda with some girl I've never met before. Ay, ay, ay where did Apehele dig this girl from. Aibo she looks like she's just rose up from the dust bin.

Apehele snatches the baby from my hand and frowns looking at bottle.

"What kind of milk is that?"

"He was crying and I gave him rooibos tea." I answer, I also remember my mother giving me tea when I was young.

"What the hell Ntokozo! Are you crazy! He is way too young to be drinking tea! Does he have formula?" She asks and I just look at her dumbfounded. "Does he have milk?"

"Ow yes, I have crémora," she looks at me in disbelief.

"You know what I won't ask you any further questions. Get ready siyothenga ubisi lwengane. Where's the mother by the way?"

"Story for another day." I respond. How will I tell people that my mother-in-law is my baby mama? Abomination!

"Bettina, will you manage with the baby?" Aphelele asks the ugly girl.

"Yes," even her voice is pathetic.

"No funny business, if you ruin your life again I'm not bailing you out this time. This is the time to pick yourself up and stop running after married men. I trust you, I trust that you have changed."

"I promise aunty."

"Good, Ntokozo let's go I need to be in a meeting this afternoon." So I'm leaving my child with a blue bunch woman, overall, jailbird. I don't like this one bit!

AT THE STATION

#46

AYANDA

"Rebecca get you tiny butt down here right this minute!" I swear these kids are aiming for me to totally have a heart attack.

"Stop screaming A," okay I give up.

"Get yourself in the car it's already late. Romana, Ronald!" Ow God I didn't know having kids will be this hard.

"I can't find my shoes...."

"Ramona, your shoes are right next to your bed!" I calm myself down. Maybe I'm going mad, or is it because I miss Romeo so badly. "You know what go in the car I'll go look for your shoes." I'm much more calmer now. I shouldn't have had that outburst on kids no matter how bad my day is, no matter how my day is frustrating.

Look at the shoes- right here, just right next to the bed of her's. I shake my head smiling going to the car. I need to apologize to them. I give Ramona her shoes and she's not bubbly like before.

"I'm sorry guy's I didn't mean to shout." I hold back my tears. "I just miss your father." I say looking outside the window.

"But you always shouting." Rebecca tells me and she's right, for the past two months I've been shouting like a mad woman. With Romeo's trial coming up everything is just a mess.

"I'm sorry, I promise to take you out for ice-cream today." I say looking at them and they don't look convinced at all. Okay I'm failing dismally. I drive them to school, Rebecca doesn't even bother to bid goodbyes or wishing me a good day like she always does. No hug no nothing. I sigh emotionally knowing that I'm the course of this. I step out of the car and run behind her, "I'm sorry I promise I will never shout ever again. I'll promise to do better next time

baby." I pull her by hand walking her inside the school premises. She's looking down kicking the stones totally ignoring me. "what must I do to prove to you that I'm sorry? Name anything and I will do it."

"Anything?" I think I'm not liking the sound of this.

"Ye....yes baby anything." I respond with my heart thundering against my chest.

"I want to go visit daddy." She says in a low voice making me to choke on my tears trying to hold back. Now I'll have to cook up a lie.

"Okay baby, I'll talk to daddy okay." She nods her head smiling drawing circles on the school ground with her school shoes. The bell rings and all kids run towards the assembly area. "I'll see you at home home." I give her a hug and she hip hops towards other kids. Now the Rebecca I know is back. You know the traumatic and emotional impact on the rest of the family when a parent goes to prison. Not only is it difficult for the children, even though they do not know what's happening it can also be overwhelming for those of you left to care for the children. Making more sacrifices .... and I'm struggling with feelings of anger, hurt, and resentment. I may not want to keep the family connected yet I want to do what's best for the children. And by the look of things I'm falling dismally. I get into my car with alot of sad, painful emotions. I'm not in a good space to be around people so I'm not going to Romeo's work. Nana is at the doctor with Miracle, she's coming up with a flu and Nana insisted on taking her to the doctor herself. I drive back home and the first things I'll do when I get there is bake to keep my mind off things. I get home finding the gate slightly open, my eyes are red and puffy from crying all the way. Maybe Nana is back but her car is not parked where she usually does. Or maybe it's in the garage? But I'm the one who always puts her car in the garage. Maybe this time she decided to do things her way plus with Nana everything is possible.

I drag my feet to the house with heals on my left hand. The kitchen door is opened and for that makes me miss Romeo so much. He is the only person who leaves the kitchen door opened. I find myself crying all over again. Maybe smelling his scent will make me feel better. I walk up to his bedroom and throw myself on his king size bed and let it all out.

"I hate it when you cry." I scream jumping off the bed landing painfully on the ground. I shoot my eyes open, maybe it's my mind playing tricks on me. "Come to papa." He opens his arms wide.... I waste no time, I stand up with my lips trembling and burst into tears realising that I'm not dreaming. It's him, my man, my Mlungu, Mr Man.

"Mr Man." He picks me up and I wrap my legs around his waist. He still smells the same. I inhale his scent and bury my head to his neck.

"Someone missed me." I'm still lost for words. He walks towards the bed and places me gently on top. He gets on top of me and looks straight into my eyes. I'm looking at his eyes sparkling, the love is written all over his face. How did God bless me with such a man who loves me this much? His lips stretch into a smile, I place my hand on his cheek without braking eye contact.

"How did you get out?" I finally found the courage to ask.

"You should have asked that before you landed on the floor." He chucks.

"I missed you so bad." I squeeze him into a tight hug with him still on top of me.

"I missed you more woman." He perks on my lips getting off me and lays on the side.

"How did they take you out? We were waiting for your trail....did you escape or something?"

"I was released," he responds with his hands placed in-between my thighs.

"But why?"

"They couldn't find any incriminating act against my name. So they had no other choice but to release me. How is my girl. Four full month's without her felt like my blood will explode." I cover my face with my hands blushing. If only he knew how much I missed him. He removes my hands on my face with his breath hitting on my face. He pulls my chin up making me to look at him. "I love you," he smashes his lips on mine without giving me a chance to respond back. Not that I didn't want to but I wasn't given an opportunity. Those soft wet slippery lips, how I missed him. It feels like it's the first time seeing him, touching him. All of this feels like a dream, a dream I don't want to wake up from. The kiss is getting more and more intense. My blood is boiling from the touch of his warm soft hand. My breathing changes instantly....

Our clothes flying out of our bodies. I'm looking at the wide open door. What if the kids or Nana come back home and find us....

"No one is going to come in

Advertisement

so relax." He looks at me with those lustful eyes. "I want you so bad." We both naked with our warm bodies yearning for each other.

"I want you too." I say, there's nothing more that I want other than him being inside of me. I'm still underneath with my legs wide open and he is still on top of me. He strokes himself positioning preparing for the entrance.

NTOKOZO

My son is growing, for a 5 month old child he surely looks big but I'm not complaining. He eats a lot, cries a lot and sleeps a lot. As for his mother....that one was admitted again in hospital. She's seeing things that are not even there. I don't know whether it's witchcraft or what. Maybe someone is truly bewitching her- maybe she slept with someone's husband. It's been two months without hearing groans and moans of a crazy woman.

Last week I saw Mapule and she avoided eye contact. I'm not proud of what I did but I couldn't get enough of her after....you know, after I saw her ice-cream. It has that thing man something I cannot explain. . I have even lost count the number of occasions we had. It's freaky I know. The fact that she's getting comfortable around me says a lot. Most people don't recover from what happened to them. Worstly sleeping with a man that took your purity the most cruellest way. I admire her courage....would it be a bad thing if I become a man of polygamous. And besides they know each other very well so it will be very much easier for them to pick up the friendship where it left off. It's time I bring my wife back home.

Ugly Betty has been staring at Ayanda's pictures ever since she got here. I even regret sleeping with her but I was just taking out my frustrations on her and it worked. She's a easy target and she's always ready to dish out for free. If Mapule is not around I will definitely use this one. I think today is the day I finally get to ask her some questions.

"Sit down," I order her. She's been acting very clingy after I've slept with her and it's annoying. She sits opposite me with a bored look expression on her face. "I've been watching, for the past months you have been staring at my wife's pictures and I would like to know why?"

"Your wife?" She sounds shocked and I don't know why.

"Yes my wife, is there a problem?" I ask.

"Waoh wait, you trying to tell me that Aya a girlfriend to Romeo is your wife?"

"What?" I'm shocked. "What did you just say?" I want to confirm.

"This girl leaves next-door, she's my neighbour." I stand up not believing. "And she recently gave birth." She adds. Birth? What birth?

"What do you mean when you say she recently gave birth?" I ask.

"She has a baby, probably four or five months now." I feel myself getting dizzy. Last time she was here she was....she didn't look pregnant at all. "And looks like girly cheated because her baby is a total African not a coloured."

"Coloured?" I'm lost as hell.

"She's dating a white man and it looks like the baby does not belong to him." She further adds. No this can't be happening. So Aya has been cheating on me all along?

"Where is she now?" I ask with my chest tightened.

"At her house," wow she even has a house. I think I'm having a heart attack.

Sudden breathlessness it's like I'm having anasthma attack. My airways have narrowed and the more I can't breathe the more I produce more phlegm. I'm wheezing and coughing holding my burning chest. I feel breathless because it's difficult to move air in and out of my airways. I can't die now, I refuse to follow my mother. Everything just becomes fuzzy and dark making my eyes more heavier by the second.

I lazily open my eyes and scan my surroundings in panic. The bright lights are making me to squint my eyes repeatedly. I finally regain my consciousness,

"Ntokozo! Thank God you're awake." Aphelele rushes to my side. My head is heavy and banging painfully. "What happened?"

"I....I don't know." I'm still confused as hell. "I was with Betty when...." My memory comes back.

"When she what?" She ask.



"Ayanda, she told me that my wife has a child. I need to see her." My mind comes back instantly. I look at the drip connected to my hand, trying to unplug it out of my system.

"What the hell are you doing. You will hurt yourself!" But I'm not hearing any of that. I need to see Ayanda right this minute. She can't do me like this, not when we were just doing fine.

"Ayanda, I need to see her." I say giving up cause she was way too strong for me. I give in and lay back on the hospital bed with Apehelele standing by my side. Betty is standing from afar biting her nails.

"Bettina, what happened?" I zone out thinking about Ayanda but I can still hear their conversation.

"I just told him about her, I swear aunt I didn't know they were married. I thought she was married to Romeo."

"The same Romeo you've been running around so bad to try to get his attention. So you didn't learn any lesson when that woman put you to jail. You didn't learn when you aborted his baby. What is it that you want from that man huh? Didn't he make it clear that he loves Aya and he will choose her any day and he shall continue to choose her in this life time. What did that woman ever do to you?"

"I didn't think...." Bettina say's.

"That's the problem you don't think. Sometimes I really wonder if are we truly related. The only thing that you are good at is dishing out that stinky vagina of yours. And I wouldn't be surprised if you have slept with Ntokozo." Apehelele is breathing fire and I don't even have the energy to deal with all of this.

"I'm sorry aunty I didn't mean to." Bettina sniffs braking her fingers.

"Wow!" Apehelele grabs her hand bag and walks out of the house. "The baby is in the car come fetch him." She walks out of the hospital leaving Bettina swimming in her own pool of tears.

## MAPULE

"I am going to ask you this question for the very last time. Who made you like this? Who is responsible this time around?" Her mother asks calmly. She is a woman with no words. She's very down to earth and respected by the society.

"Khuluma Wena Maan!" Her father bangs the table. Her mother is way better than her father. Atleast she can be able to have a meaningful conversation with her mother. Even though they were not close when growing up. Mapule looks at her mother with begging eye's to save her from her monster father.

"Talk Sisi I don't have all day." She looks at her wrist watch.

"It's.... it's...." Mapule chokes on her own tears. Her father pulls out his belt from his waist.

"If you don't talk this is what I'm going to do to you." He says as he stroked her arm cutting her skin a bit. Mapule screamed in agony and held her arm looking at it not believing that her father just did that. GBV has never solved

anything! "I don't mind doing it again until you spit out who is the father of the bastard child you are carrying." Her father lifts up his hand with the belt tied around his hand.

"Ntok... Ntokozo!" Mapule screams curling herself into a ball.

"Doesn't he have a surname?" He asks looking furious.

"Ntokozo Myeni." She finally has the courage to utter his full name. She wanted so badly to have an abortion but her conscious didn't let her.

"Don't tell me it's that boy that you once said violated you." Her mother's voice is hurting. Yes they didn't support their daughter fully enough after that saga but she vowed to be her best friend in all odds. "Talk Mapule." She says calmly.

"Yes, it's him." She burst into tears. She's pregnant again from the man she thought she hated so bad. How can one fall for their victim? Is it even possible and normal? Mapule thought to herself.

"So he raped you again namanje?"

"Cha baba," her father sighs standing up. "Get dressed pack all your belongings and follow me." Mapule tilts her head sitting up straight looking at her father disappearing to the passage.

"I'm sorry Mama, I don't know how I feel for him."

Her mother shakes her head. "So you feel inlove with your rapist, get pregnant for him and betraying a woman you call a friend in the process?"

"I didn't mean to." She sobs softly.

"I don't know what to say. Part of me....I blame myself for not believing you the time you told me you were raped. I should have supported you and protected you. I should have stood by you but I didn't." Her mother holds her chest having memories of her daughter trying to commit suicide, the letter she wrote pouring her heart out. Mapule was a very respectful child who loved church more than anything. She changed after few weeks after learning about the baby she's carrying. She couldn't bare the pain of raising a child that she got the way she did. "In the mean time do what your father says I will talk to him on your behalf. But nawe Mapule why didn't you tell me sooner? I thought I was your best friend "

"I was afraid you will judge me." Mapule answers truthfully.

From taxi to taxi heading to eMlalazi where Ntokozo's house is, wasn't such a pleasant surprise. Mapule has been biting her nails this whole time not knowing what the future holds. Mbalienhle was left behind with her mother for a reason.

Upon arrival Mapule wishes she could just disappear into thin air or vanish from this planet of earth. They find the gate wide open and they could hear noises from the inside. Her father shakes her head looking at his daughter who had a disappointed face.

"Knock." He instructs. The door unlocks open and Bettina opens the door looking at Mapule with a slight frown on her face.

"Hey," she greets not too sure whether to let them in or not. Mapule's father pushed Bettina aside and walks in like a hurricane.

"Where is that bastard!" He screams. Ntokozo shoots his eyes wide open looking at Mapule who had read eye's.

"Mapule," Ntokozo stands up looking at them waiting for an explanation. "What's going on?"

A huge force punch lands on Ntokozo's face, he clenches his jaws in pain. This old man can give one hell of a mean punch!

"So this is the bastard that has been taking advantage of my daughter. First you rape her and now you have impregnated her again!" He roars shoving another punch on his face.

"Baba I'm sure we can talk like adults." Aphelele suggests trying to cut off the fight but Mapule's father isn't having any of that.

"Is this what you do to little vulnerable girls who can't fight for themselves? What kind of a man who rapes his own wife! Angithi windoda wena? Come fight me like a man." Mapule's father marches towards him looking like a beast.  
#47

#### NTOKOZO'S HOUSE

Bettina was pacing up and down in her room waiting for the results anxiously. "Okay, okay, I know I got this." She says assuring herself. She takes a deep breath and looks at the stick that's in front of her. "Maybe I didn't do it properly". She looks again to confirm and indeed the pregnancy test is negative. She sits down feeling disappointed. Why can't she get pregnant? Not that they have been shagging with Ntokozo....they were both caught up in a moment of weakness. A moment that almost lasted a whole day in bed, kitchen, toilet. Yes it only happened once but the amount of energy and sperms that man was dishing out to her was more than enough to make her pregnant. She has been having morning sickness and she does know-infact she is definitely sure that she is somehow pregnant. She caresses on her flat tummy smiling. "Can't wait for you to be born." She looks at herself in the bathroom mirror feeling proud. Tests like these do give you false information but she won't dwell on that. The most important main goal for her is to be pregnant for the man she loves.

Meanwhile Ntokozo was copped up in his room thinking deeply. At some point he wishes he never discharged himself two weeks ago from the hospital. Mapule's father wouldn't have found him in his house. Worstly Mapule now lives in the same house as him. He hasn't set his eyes on his first seed not because he doesn't want to but the grandfather is making his life a living hell. Sitting and hiding in this room won't make the matters go away. He decided to step out of the room and face the world. He finds Mapule watching TV eating popcorn. That's what she eats all day.

"Hey," he greets her.

"Unjani?" She asks.

"I don't know," he answers honestly shrugging his shoulders sitting down. "Still your father doesn't allow you to see our daughter?"

"And I don't think he will anytime soon." Mapule answers still glued on the TV.

"Can you just clarify something here which I'm confused of. You told Ayanda that you were renting, right? And you always left her here whenever you have an emergency. Why didn't you take her to your parents house?"

Mapule sighs placing the popcorn aside with her legs crossed placing the bowl with popcorn on top of the coffee table. Her baby bump is starting to show.

"I wasn't comfortable leaving her with them because they never loved her when she was young. I rented a room just to be away from them because they were toxic especially my father. They started showing care when I tried committing suicide but it was too late because my mind was made up for leaving their house. But I would visit from time to time even though it would be awkward as ever." She sighs.

"So you never had that close relationship with your parents after what I did?" He feels ashamed and yet again he has shamed the family.

"Yes, can we not talk about this."

"Okay," they sit in comfortable silence not knowing what to further say to each other.

"So what's the way forward?" Mapule asks.

"I don't know, we could give it a try. Taking it step by step." Mapule looks at Ntokozo with a shock expression on her face.

"Are you nuts? What do you take for?"

"My baby mama."

"Are you hearing yourself Wena mfana. Baby mama yani? Is it not enough that you made me betray my only best friend. Doesn't it matter to you?" Her noise flares.

"It does but Ayanda will forgive me and she is very much understanding. She will agree to be in the polygamous marriage." He keeps quite thinking about the possibilities that the baby might be his. Ntokozo's phone chimes and he looks at the screen noticing an unknown number.

"Yini!" He answers, he doesn't feel like talking to anyone.

"That's not the way to answer a phone."

Ntokozo looks at the screen to double check of his not dreaming.

"Sorry, who's this?"

"Meet me at your workplace and you will shall know. I'm giving you 30 minutes." The man drops the call making Ntokozo to chuck annoyed. Maybe it's one of those investors who are here to check on the progress.

"Are you going out?" Mapule asks Ntokozo who was already on his feet grabbing his car keys from the coffee table.

"Yes,"

"I've been craving for lemon cream biscuits."

"So you want me to bring you lemon cream?" He raises his eyebrows. When was the last time he ate those....he probably can't remember. "Do they still sell those?"

"Yes,"

"Okay." He walks out bumping into Bettina who was sneaking listening to their conversation. "What are you doing?" Ntokozo asks Bettina who was ease dropping on their conversation. She got startled by his voice that made her drop the bowl scattering on the floor.

"I asked you a question, Sista Bettina!"

"I....I was just standing." A loud a clap lands on Bettina's face echoing across the passage. She held her cheek in disbelief. Another backslap lands on her face. That stinging sensation making her cheeks burn, she's rubbing them but seems as if she's making it worse. "This better be the first and the last time you ease drop on my conversations with someone or else I will do something so terrible you won't believe it's me and trust me once I do it I won't regret it." He clicks his tounge and walks out leaving Bettina in shock.

## ON THE ROAD

After he had calmed down he passed by shops to get those Lemon Cream biscuits. Bettina is seriously getting out of hand. She's has been trying so bad to get Ntokozo's attention without success. He drives through the drive way parking his car in his reserved parking lot. Feels good to be back in business but he is not enjoying any of this without Aya at all. What's the use of spending money without the person who pushed him into being successful again. He sighs getting out of the car with a file in his hands.

"Bhoza Yami!" One of her petrol attendants greet.

"Wola lapho!" Ntokozo greets back. He went on his word by hiring the people who use to work for him. They basically treat each other as family. They were very much delighted to be back on track. He walks straight to his office after greeting every one. He opens the door and finds a white man with a baby in his hands sitting comfortably in his office.

"Who are you? Didn't you get any help?" Ntokozo asks with a slight frown on his face.

"Ow no, I'm actually the one who called you." Romeo says without even looking at him. His eyes were fixed on the grinning Miracle with saliva dripping on her lower lip. She bubble her mouth splashing her saliva on Romeo's face.

"Really Mira." Romeo say taking out his face cloth. He turns to look at Ntokozo who was looking back at them with a confused look. "Do you want to hold her."

"I have a lot of babies at home so no thanks." His says going around the table to have a sit. "So how can I help you sir?"

"I'll just get straight to the point. My name is Romeo, and this is my daughter Miracle Osman who happens to be your biological daughter."

"What!"

"Ayanda is the mother." Romeo adds.

"So it's not rumours...."

"Ayanda didn't know she was pregnant until the day she gave birth unknowingly." Romeo tells Ntokozo who was looking at the baby with an unexplainable blank look on his face.

"Wait, clarify something for me here. You are trying to tell me that my wife was pregnant with my child and she didn't know she was pregnant. Is that what you are trying to tell me?"

"Yes, indeed it's like that." Romeo says smiling to Miracle who was putting her hands in Romeo's mouth.

"Who are you?"

"Romeo Osman."

"I mean who are you to Ayanda, and how do you know her?" Ntokozo asks.

"I bumped into her at the hospital when she was hospitalized. She had no one and I was a friend she needed. One day she gave me a call, searched for her location and found her half dead." Ntokozo clears his throat the sound of that makes his stomach boil, his bile is half way through. He swallows hard thinking of the events. Those cries that he thought he has forgotten about. He calms down taking a deep breath. He will never forget that day. The day that he left someone's child to die. His forehead begins to sweat. His gaze shift from Romeo to the baby who had her head in Romeo's chest. She looks so much like Mbalienhle. He must admit he feels proud of himself, the fact that his sperms are so strong that he sees himself in his kids. He is definitely sure that his father is proud of him in heaven. May his soul rest in peace.

"So ....she's my daughter." As much as he would like to hold her....he is afraid.

"Yes. I just came here to tell you that and moving forward we won't deny you to have a relationship with your daughter. But you won't be communicating with Aya, you will be communicating with me."

Ntokozo scoffs not believing. "For your information Ayanda is my wife! She has to come back home where she belongs!" He barks.

"No, you are not married. Paying someone's dowry doesn't mean you are married to them unless if things have changed. Is there a certificate to prove that? If yes you can take me to court." Romeo tells him.

"You basted! I Will find Aya and bring her back home. She is mine and she belongs to me and nobody else!" He hisses standing up. "And that baby belongs to me! Give me my baby right this minute." He now looks like someone who is possessed. That made Romeo wonder what kind of a monster is Ntokozo truly is.

"You scaring her," Romeo tries to shush down the crying Miracle who was clinging on to him. "When your mind decides work perfectly contact me." Romeo says taking out his contact card placing it on the table. He scoops Miracles gently making her sleep on his shoulder and stood up. "I don't know how your mind works but this is not how a father behaves." He picks the baby's bag and walks out leaving Ntokozo swearing his lungs out. Romeo got into in car and drove off. This was the reaction he was definitely waiting for. From what Aya described him as....he shook his head and glanced at Miracle who was biting her toe not knowing what's the hell is going on.

ROMEO

"Don't let him get to you Poonky

I know men like him will come back claiming his child. But I promise you I will handle him like a man." Romeo tells Ayanda who was confused by Ntokozo's action. Not that she expected him to accept Mira just like that....but him having an outburst in front of his daughter like that says a lot about him.

"I'm just scared, what if he hurts her just to punish me?"

"I'll make sure he doesn't come close to any of you." He kisses her bald head. Having Aya sleeping on his chest just makes the world go round. He doesn't see himself being with another woman other than Aya. They both keep quite listening to one another's heartbeat.

"Today is the day I lost Rose, the day I buried her. It's funny how it doesn't pain me any longer, I can now talk about it without having to have memories of us. I can definitely say I have let go of her." He exhales out loud.

"You should go see her. I'm sure she feels neglected. Ever since I met you I never seen you visiting her grave or let alone taking the kids there. Why?" Aya asks drawing circles on his chest. Ever since he came back they have been having sex like rabbits. Thankfully they suggested to be on birth control until Mira is fully grown. Yes, they do planning on having kids in a later stage.

"Honestly I don't know. I guess I never thought about it." He answers truthfully.

"Than you should Mr Man." He chuckles.

"You won't stop calling me that." He spans her butt making her to giggle.

"Not anytime soon."

He flips her around making her to sleep on top of him.

"What did you say." He says biting his lower lip. The tiniest woman of them all. That's what attracted him- she's tiny and cute. Just his perfect size.

"I said I love you." She laughs.

He looks at her and smiles wondering where was she all this while when he was drowning himself in alcohol, having sleepless nights. He is definitely holding on and never letting go.

"Want to say something Rebecca?" Romeo asks his daughter who is awfully quiet. Romeo decided to bring the kids to their mothers grave and they brought her fresh flowers....

"No," she softly says. "I miss her." That's all she managed to say with a shaky voice. Aya puts her hand over her shoulders embracing her.

"She misses you too." Aya tells her.

"Promise me that you will never live me like mum did." Rebecca tells Aya with tears streaming down her face. Aya's heart brake into pieces- she was still young when she lost her mother and she knew exactly what was happening.

"I promise," they sign the deal with a pinkie promise.

"I will forever miss you, but now I have a new daughter in-law. She even cooks better than you." They laugh. "I promise you that your kids are in good hands. They now have a woman they call mother." Nana continues to add. It's a hot sunny day but the whether decided to change upon them. The clouds began to be getting darker by the minute.

"Looks like it's going to rain," Aya says.

It pours heavily and they all gasp in shock. They all run towards the car and luckily Miracle was in her car seat.

"That was strange," Nana says stepping into the car looking at the sleeping Miracle. "Imagine having two seasons in one day." Nana didn't even swallow her words the sun comes up again.

"Hay," Aya exclaims looking at the sun burning. "Wow, that was rather odd and very strange."

"Imagine if people saw us looking this soaking wet." They all laugh as Romeo drives off from the cemetery.

Aya decided to cook dinner after they have freshened up. It's not much just white samp mixed aromat, turmeric, and a half a cup of crémora. Beef stew with a touch of Boston Gravy Powder. Now that's how she likes her simple dish of creamy white samp.

"Smells nice in here," Romeo says peeping through the pots. He knows how much Aya hates that but he enjoys making her angry.

"Romeo Maan!" She half shouts. "Just go!" Romeo lifts his hands up in surrender and walks out of the kitchen laughing.

Later that afternoon they had dinner.

"Now that is what I call dinner." Romeo compliments after wiping his plate clean.

"Can I have more?"

"Of course baby." Aya dishes up for Rebecca who was seemingly gaining weight. Aya dishes out for her and she began eating. Ramona was being feed by Aya, seems like her hands are lazy. Aya decided to feed her first because she was falling asleep. She stood up picking the sleeping Ramona and heads straight to the kids bedroom.



"Goodnight." She kissed her forehead, switched off the lights and walked out of the room.

She sat down where she was sitting and ate her food but somehow it tasted funny. She managed to finish her food even though she was having a hard time swallowing. Romeo helped her to clear the table and washed the dishes.

"Is it me or the kitchen smells awful?" She sniffs around the kitchen.

"I smell nothing." Romeo also sniffs around to ensure, but there's nothing.

"Are you sure?"

"Babe come on, there's nothing smelling here." He assures her.

"I'm off to bed." She stands on her toes and perks on his lips. "Damn your mouth smells." She walks along the passage leaving Romeo smelling his own breath.

"Aya is acting strange." He shook his head smiling. "Yah neh," he decided to go check up on the kids and found them asleep.

These kids sleep alot these day and he wondered why. Romona yesterday pooped on herself.... He felt her temperature and baby girl is burning.

"Baby," he shakes her a little and she whines. Without wasting anymore time he picks her up and rushes to the dinning room to where his mother is. "Ramona is burning up I don't know why."

"Bring her here," he hands Ramona to his mother. "Go take Panado in the fridge and bring a teaspoon."

It's late at night and looks like Ramona's temperature seems to be going high every second.

"I'm taking her to the hospital." He says with a hard lump stuck in his throat. Nana is already by the door waiting for Romeo with the care keys.

"Let's go." He says approaching his mother who was anxiously waiting for him. Nana hops in the backseat, Romeo hands Ramona to Nana. Romeo gets into the drivers seat and rushed to the hospital. His heart beating abnormally all the way. He just hopes and prays that his baby is fine. They arrive at the hospital and parked his car in the parking lot.

"Let me carry her." Romeo offers as he took Ramona off her hands.

Nana stayed behind at the receptionist desk filling out some forms whilst Romeo waited for the doctor to attend to them.

"You may come in sir." The doctor tells him. He followed behind with Ramona held in a bridal style. "You can put her on top of the bed." The doctor instructs.

"What seems to be wrong with the little one." He asks while placing his left hand on Ramona's head and places his thumb on her eyebrow. He then held the ophthalmoscope about 6 inches from the eye and 15 degrees to the right of the sleeping Ramona. He is looking for the red reflex. Moved in closer, staying nasally until saw see the optic nerve. "All seems good. I'm trust going to run some tests on her but first let me do this." He placed his stethoscope checking her heart beat. "That's fine also, just her chest has a little whizzing sound but blood test will reveal all of that." He says already drawing blood off her arm.

After 3 hours of waiting the doctor comes back with the results.

"Nothing major, but baby girl here is coming up with a flue." They all sigh in relief. Atleast it's nothing hectic!

#48

AYANDA

"Ramona!" I swear this child will be the death of me. You wouldn't tell that she was the sick Ramona 2 weeks ago. She's screaming running around the house giving me one hell of a headache. I wish I could sleep but I can't, how will I sleep in this noise? Nana, Miracle and Ronald went out and the she devil here wanted to stay behind. Romeo took Rebecca to his work, atleast now he knows how's the money been missing. Mthunzi the man of the hour, I can definitely say that, that man have the skills to manipulate the system. How can you go about stealing for someone who took you from the gutters and made you the man you are today? I, sometimes don't understand my African people. Is it greed or they are never fully satisfied? I shake my head picking up the toys that Ramona keep throwing on the floor. I swear this child was sent to torment me!

"I'm hungry," she literally ate 30 minutes ago and yet again she's hungry. I feel like screaming....I feel tears filling my eyes and I don't even know why I'm crying. I'll just go make her food maybe she will stop pestering me.

ROMEO

"Why in the God's name will you steal from me knowing fully that I trusted you?"

"I'm sorry sir. I'm going to be open and lay everything on the table. My daughter was diagnosed with kidney failure a year ago. We've been on the waiting list for months without success. The treatment is very expensive and I can't afford it." He drops his head letting his tears drop.

"So stealing from me was the best option for you Mthunzi?" I ask him and he just sobs out loud. Luckily Rebecca has headsets on I wouldn't want her witnessing any of this.

"No it wasn't- I'm so.... sorry. I can do anything to pay back the money sir." Mthunzi rubs his palms together.

"Anything you say?" He shakes his head vigorously in agreement. I can see desperation in his eyes. I was about to suspend him but this desperation in him made me think about my kids.

"Get me her medical records." That's all I managed to say.

"Sir," he looks at me confused.

"Get me your child's medical report and I'll see what I can do."

He stands up and kneels in front of me. He comes forward and touches my shoes with his trembling lower lip.

"Thank you, thank you." He burst into tears failing to hold himself.

"I'm only doing this because of your daughter. A child in this has no sin she deserves to be happy. I wouldn't also like seeing any child in pain." A dry lump goes down my throat so painfully making me to choke. "It's okay stand up, but next time learn to communicate cause I will not tolerate this nonsense ever again. Go back to work." He stands up in full speed and wipes his tears off.

"Thank you sir." He walks out of my office more like shocked still not believing. I may be heartless but I will never be heartless to a defenceless kid. He did me bad but I understand why he did it. I would have also done the same. My phone beeps and it's Aya....I wonder what she wants now. This one is for ever demanding, complaining, crying and forever eating.

Bring me Doritos Sweet Chilli and a Dip

That's it she has commanded me, no asking, no pleading. I smile shaking my head. If I knew better I would say she's pregnant but she's taking shorts and she doesn't miss.

"Let's go home babe before she kills me." Rebecca looks at me and takes her headsets off.

"What!" She half shouts. I should burn these headsets because they making her go mad. What's the use of screaming when I'm right next to her. I guess the music is still buzzing in her ears even without them.

"I said let's go home before Aya kills us." The girl just giggles confusing me. What's funny about being murdered for a crime you didn't commit?

"She will lock you outside like yesterday." She laughs her lungs out making me to laugh. Yesterday was a disastrous day, just because I went out for jog in the morning, to her I was smelling a woman's feminine. It was a world war zone- so I was literally stuck outside my house for an hour!

I buy her what she requested and I hope I didn't cross the line because I went over board buying what she didn't ask me to. Arriving at home I find them sitting by the pool enjoying the afternoon sun. Miracle is growing fast.... look at her pulling all the grass out and stuffing it in her mouth. She's now crawling,-

"Baby," I hand Rebecca the plastic and my briefcase. I push my legs towards her and picked her up. "Hey Mira," I want to kiss her so bad but damn baby girl is so dirty. "You so heavy."

"Mama feeds her good." Aya responds standing up coming towards me. "Hey babe." She greets me and I looked at her shocked but quickly composed myself.

"Hey Fancy Face." She stands on her toes giving me a perk on my lips.

"Let me go bath her before Nana kills me." She takes the clinging Miracle from me and goes off leaving me dumbfounded. Okay that was just weird....what happened to Ayanda? She didn't even ask me for the items she requested.

Afternoon's are the best for me, watching my tiny woman going up and down the kitchen makes my heart melt. I'm sitting on top of the counter just admiring her beauty.

"Need some help?" I offer my services, "not in the onion department please." Last time I almost had my eyes out because of the onions.

"Hahaha, you must learn to forget Mr Man. You can wash the dishes." Again she knows that I hate washing the dishes. I prefer to dry them- washing them just takes alot of strength and energy.

"Argh, why did I even offer my services again?"

She laughs showing me her misaligned teeth. They are so tiny and yet perfect in a way. Just too sexy for her tiny lips.

The way she pronounces her words just turns me on. Those 'S's and T's'....the way they are being pronounced just makes me weak. I bet she was a thumb sucker.

"Because you like seeing my face."

"Dream on." She tells me. I decided to do the dishes as being told. Seeing her this happy makes me happy. Hope that crazy side of her doesn't come out today.

#### AT THE HOSPITAL

"She smashed her head on the mirror repeatedly until we lost her." So this woman really took her own life. Why does God keep punishing me in this manner. Was it not enough that he made be shoot my son inside this woman? Clearly these are fake doctors, they can't seem to know what they are doing. How can someone kill themselves in their presences?

"Where were youI when this happened?" I ask. I don't care that she's dead I'm just sad for my son that he will grow up without his biological mother. But worry not Ayanda will play a perfect role in this department. The fact that she also has my daughter makes my heart pump in joy. I don't shoot blanks, I'm a real makoya- the real deal. The man of the year!

"We were all on duty but your mother locked herself in the bathroom and by the look of things she knew exactly what she was doing. This was not her first time trying to commit suicide." Hehe, this doctor. That is not my mother but my baby mama! But I won't line that out, I'll just play along the 'mother card,'

"Why wasn't I informed earlier? As her son I had the right to know what was going with her. I placed her under your care because I trusted you with her life,- but what did you do, you let her see heaven before her time!"

"We apologize Mr Myeni. But your mother's behaviour was beyond our control. She was too much to handle...." Did I just hear her correctly?

"What did you just say? Taking care of someone who had gone nuts has suddenly become too much work for you to handle? You know what bury her yourself. I want her alive and mad the way I brought her in here." I say looking directly in her eyes. She has to know who she's dealing with. Where will I bury that old hatchet? In who's yard? She must definitely go to her husband's house. Them being divorced doesn't mean they are not traditionally married. The ancestors still recognise her, so why not ship her back? I can't place all of this burden on me.

"My sincere condolences to your family sir. I wish there was something different I could do but unfortunately I have none." She looks down playing the pen. I'm sitting opposite her in an open space looking at all the loonies going up and down. So MaNtombela was really losing it and she lost it until she lost her own life. So she died not remembering her past. This place looks clean though one can never tell that it's a psychiatric hospital. I guess my work is done here.

"Thanks," I don't have anything else to say at this point. I will have to inform her husband, but I bet he would accept her back.

"Apologies again sir."

"Keep your apologies to yourself"

#### Advertisement

it won't bring my mother back." I push the chair back and stood up putting my hands in my pocket. I turn my heels and walked out. I'm thankful that I won't be coming here anymore. MaNtombela has been a real pain in the butt.

I think it's time I send Bettina back to where she ever came from. I can't stand her sight and besides her looks are apt appealing at all. Her face....how does one man manages to look at that when they wake up? But stupid me went in her without a glove. I should go get tested before I infect anymore people. Infact before I infect Ayanda and Mapule. Look at me the man who is having two wife's under one roof. But the master bedroom belongs to Ayanda.

After the looney I drove to work just to go check on the workers. I like how everything is in progress. I am definitely proud of myself. I sigh walking to my office closing the door behind making sure I lock it. I look at the picture of me and my wife on the wall....I gently remove the picture opening the safe behind it. Everything is still there intact. I did good my having a stainless steel safe. I thank God that it didn't burn down. I take out the brown envelope and

placed it on top of the table. My THING needs a Polish, it's been long since I last used it. I open the brown envelope taking out my toy. I pull my handkerchief out of my pocket and began to polish my toy.

"Ayanda Ntombela, if I can't have you then no one will!"

AYANDA

I've been feeling very much uneasy today, like something bad is about to happen. My chest feel heavy, I'm having a hard time breathing.

"Still having chest pains?" Romeo asks me with so much concern in him. Will I be lying if I say I'm feeling okay, I will be better?

"I still do, it's like something heavy is sitting on top of me." I say rubbing my chest.

"Come sleep on top of me." He pulls me close to him me I let him be. At this point I will do anything to make these chest pains go away. But something in me isn't okay at all.

"Can I just go see the kids for the last time before I sleep?" My mind tells me if I give them a goodnight kiss all my troubles will fade away.

"Hay babe, were tucked them 2 hours ago."

"I know....but I just want to sleep peacefully after seeing them for the last time." I tell him.

"This last time sentence of yours is confusing me, but you can go see the kids." He lets go of me. I smile admiring the handsomeness of this white man.

"I will be back." I step out of the room and decided to see Miracle first.

"Hello my pumpkin, I'm so sorry that I was a bad mother to you. I'm sorry that I failed to be a better mother. I'm sorry for almost taking your life just because of your father's sins. I promise to love you till forever and ever." I kiss her forehead and stepped out of her nursery. The privileges these kids have. Growing up I never had all of this and all thanks to my mother. Ramona and Ronald always sleep together, well they now sleep together after that incident. I'm just grateful that they don't have flashbacks or traumatic events. I look at their sleeping styles and smile. Ramona has her leg on top of Ronald's face. It's time we put in the second bed in here, Ronald cannot sleep with this karate kid. Even I don't wish to share a bed with this little missy here. I sort her out putting her on her side of the bed, but I know once I walk out of this room her legs will be flying up high. I switch off the lights leaving the door half open. That's how Ramona prefers.

Rebecca my sweet heart, she's sleeping with her headsets on. If Romeo walked in her and found her like this she could be in serious trouble. I take the earphones off, switched off her iPad and placed her iPad along with her earphones on top of the dressing table. And then we fight over the headsets, earphone thingy. I still say it's the same thing but different words....if there's such.

"Aunty A loves you, I promise not to leave you. Even if I were to leave you, I would watch over you. I love you." I kiss her half open mouth, juices will be dripping out in no time. Now that I have seen all the kids my heart is at ease.

I find my man glued on his phone with a serious frown on his face.

"Why is your face like that?" I ask him getting on top of the bed.

"I'm looking at the medical report that Mthunzi sent me." Ow yes he told me about what happened and I must say I'm truly proud of his decision.

"What does it say?"

"That's the thing. I don't understand this hand writing." He hands me his phone and I go through the notes.

"It's nothing much just the name of the medication of the patient and the appointment dates." He nods his head and takes his phone from my hand pushing it under the pillow.

"Okay, I'll talk to him tomorrow. So now where were we before you went to see your kids?" He sneaks his hand under my night gown.

"Somewhere far." I giggle like a school child. He gets on top of me and stares deep into my soul.

"I love you Aya Meni," shame my poor thing can't pronounce my surname.

"I love you too." I smile widely appreciating the man that loves me with my scares. No man can stand to look at a pink burnt half clitoris virgina.

"Marry me," he says still on top of me. I laugh my lungs out till tears fell at the corner of my eyes.

"Are you serious?"

"Like a heart attack. I don't see myself living this life with another woman. I love you and that is only you that I want." He says with his eyes still on me. I scan his face for assurance but my man is damn serious. What a proposal!

"I'd love to be your wife,"

"Is that a yes?"

"Yes dummy. I will marry you." He sighs in relief and kisses the top of my nose. "Where's the ring?"

"Eish I don't have it," I look at him defeated. Proposal of the year!

"Wake up and run, run, run." I wake up in full speed gasping for air after hearing that voice I don't recognise. What a weird dream I just had, I'm sweaty and thirsty. I turn to look on my side and Romeo and he is fast asleep with his leg on top of my legs. Dude, did he even see how big he is to be on top of me. I push his leg aside. I need a glass of water that will calm me down. Hopefully I won't have that dream again. I switch the lights from the passage to make it bright, atleast there will be a little light in the kitchen. I can hear shuffling but I push that feeling off, maybe it's....last time I heard shuffling's I was kidnapped. I stop on my tracks when I see a shadow passing by the window. I tiny red light shines through the window and I can see it on my night gown. Three gun shots fired my direct, I feel

my body getting wet and weak instantly. I look down and stared at the bloody me, I try to scream but my voice failed me. I go down on my knees loosing balance.

"R... Romeo!" I managed to call out for his name. My mind trail to the kids, the betrayal after me promising them that I will never leave their side. A white fog takes over as I felt my body getting lighter and lighter. I give in as I feel on the ground- I can't hold on any longer.

#49

NTOKOZO

What was I thinking? I shouldn't have done what I did. What brewed my anger is her screaming his name like her life depends on it. Him opening her legs wide for other men to see my property! Is she dead? I watched her as she went down holding her chest. I shouldn't have done it, this is one of the most stupidest things I've ever done. Raping Mapule was even far more better than this. I killed my own wife!

I'm still seated outside this white man's house battling with my thoughts. Must I go hand myself in? Must I go inside? But that will be very much obvious that it was me that shot her. 30 minutes of me sitting inside my car....no help has come. What if she is truly dead? I'm not a murder right- I refuse to believe. Sirens from every direction....my heart is beating numbly against my chest. The best thing I could do right now is to get the hell out of here.

An hour drive from Empangeni to Eshowe with my emotions rattling. I feel like punching something so bad to release all of the tension in me. I park my car on the drive way lost in thoughts. I cat passes by making me to jump in fear. I rush towards the door and luckily it's not locked. It's past midnight and I'm wide awake without even a pinch of sleepiness. The house is quite meaning everyone is asleep. I enter my bedroom stripping naked. I just want a quick bath that will make my body relax. I'm standing inside the bathtub having flash backs of Ayanda. I sink down and lay back closing my eyes. Those three gunshots, blood, she didn't even cry....I flung my eyes open seeing her pained face. I get out of the water drying myself. I can't sleep in this room, what if she comes back to haunt me? I'm not ready to die....I still have kids to raise. I take my pillow and step out of my room. Maybe the couch will do.

I've been tossing and turning- my neck is stiff, my body is sore, my back is aching shooting sharp pains. I stand up grabbing my pillow and walked past my bedroom. I roughly open Bettina's door and find her with her legs wide open. Her finger is inside her virgina hole. My cock jerks up immediately,- maybe this will take away the guilt I'm



filling. I strip naked and get on top of the bed. I'm already hard and there's nothing else I want to do other than to release. I remove her hand and positioned myself. She's a bit wet meaning she was finger fucking herself in her sleep. I shove myself in and began to hump her with my eyes closed. She gets startled and opens her eyes finding me moving in and out of her.

"Nt.... Ntokozo," her breathing pattern changes. I know she long wanted this. I go in deep to feel that she flinches trying to push me off her. She places her hand on my non-existing abs. I pump her harder making her to scream my name. Her voice is not the same as Ayanda. I place my hand on her neck chocking her. She gasps trying to remove my hand. I move faster digging my nails on her neck. "Ouch," she tries to move my hands but I'm too strong for her. I flip her over making her to lay on her stomach. I lift you saggy arse up pressing her back making her boobs pressed against the pillow. I spread her butt cheeks and shoved all of me making her to tense.

"Don't annoy me, you wanted me now I'm here!"

"It hurts," she cries. I close my eyes imaging Ayanda on top of me.

"Ayanda," I roar rough humping her. She sniffs and right now I don't have a heart. I quicken the pace ready to release. I grab her roughly pulling her head back making her to scream painfully.

"Scream for me." I enjoy it when they scream helplessly. I quickly pull out of her smashing my sperms on top of her butt. I get dressed without even wiping myself. I'll do that in my bedroom. I grab my pillow and walk out of her room leaving her shaking on the bed as if she never wanted this. Hopefully sleep will come easily after I released every tension in me. I walk barefoot to my bathroom to wash dick.

It's morning and I slept peacefully, no flashbacks throughout the night. I wake up and make my bed finding Bettina in the kitchen limping. I pass her without even acknowledging her presence.

"So this is how you going to treat me?" I turn to look at her.

"Like what?" I ask.

"Like one of your sluts Ntokozo!" She half shouts.

"Ain't you one? The reason I came to you is because I'm simply thought you are one." I see the shock in her face and I couldn't careless.

"You are a dog Ntokozo!" Tears drop down her cheeks.

"That's my second name baby girl." I winks at her and decided to go check on Mapule. I've never seen her for day's and she's worrying me. I open her bedroom door-

"Sorry, I didn't know I will find you naked."

I scratch my head looking her sexy body.

"it's fine," she sits on top of the bed holding her back.

"What's wrong?" I close the door and walk up towards her.

"My back hurts."

"Okay let me rub you." I do rub her from time to time. The way she's so big you would swear that she's about to pop anytime soon. She lays on her side I rub the baby oil on her back massaging her. She moans making me to imagine myself being inside of her. It's been long since I've touched her. My hands trails down to her temple, I use my knee to spread the knees apart. I get hold of the clit and rubbed it gently. She moans out loud closing her eyes. I'm not good in this foreplay thingy. I stand up taking my clothes off. My cock sprung free already dripping semen, I get on top of the bed getting behind her. I lift her leg up, jerked Myeni up and slid it in. Damn a pregnant woman is so hot and damn tight. That slippery warmth, the walls of her virgina are making me nuts.

"Ow yes," I go in deeper clenching my jaws. If all pussies tastes like this I swear never to cheat ever again!

Meanwhile Bettina was standing outside listening to the moans and groans. Her bold boils in anger hearing Ntokozo enjoying himself this much. Him talking lingo language- he didn't do that to her but instead he treated her like some trash cheap prostitute.

Yesterday she was in an interrogation room asking lots of questions about Ayanda and her living arrangements. Most of the things she said were lies, she wants him to also see her as a woman that she is. After spitting all the information, his eyes were filled with so much rage, anger and hurt. Who wouldn't get angry when you are being told that your fiancé got married in court without anyone's consent. That's the lie that made Ntokozo loose his mind. She wonders what he did cause she knows for sure that he went there and caused havoc. It's time to pay her cards right but If this is how he is going to treat her. He will pay dearly for this. She limps back to the kitchen to prepare herself a snack. She can't even sit because her nuna is burning beyond control.

She sat down and thought for a while as to why Ntokozo is behaving this way. She takes her phone and Google's typing on the search bar what is a toxic person

She reads through;- you're constantly confused by the person's behaviour, you're left feeling emotionally exhausted after an encounter with them.

They constantly see themselves as a victim, they try to intimidate you just to get their way, they control you by guilt tripping.... "Yoh," Bettina holds her mouth in shock. "So Kahle, Kahle Ntokozo has a toxic disease. Ay bandla soke sibone." She continues to flip through the channels with her mind fully occupied.

Ntokozo and Mapule come giggling like high school kids. Bettina contains her anger and concentrates more on watching pictures on TV since the volume was down. You could never tell that this is Ntokozo who was mad minutes ago.

"I have to rush off somewhere, I will be back very late." He says kissing Mapule on her cheek. She blushes looking down meaning he was gentle with her. Wow Ntokozo is really a jerk

Bettina says to herself. She watched Ntokozo as he disappeared in sight.

"How was it?" Bettina asks Mapule was sitting down.

"How was what?" Clearly Mapule is confused as to what is Bettina is asking.

"Ntokozo being inside of you." Mapule rolls her eyes annoyed by this meaningless conversation. She decides to ignore her but Bettina kept on pushing her buttons. "You know last night he came back very late and slept in my room waking me up all night....let's say he couldn't get enough of me."

"Ow okay, good for you then." Mapule paid no mind to her. She decided to go make herself a sandwich leaving Bettina who was going crazy. Maybe going out for a walk will clear her head and most importantly she misses her daughter more than anything.

ROMEO

"So she lost my baby." I sink down on the floor feeling helpless and numb. How can Ntokozo be this cruel? How can he take something so special from me. No wonder Aya was this crazy, her hormones had no mercy. Hearing her screaming my name with her last breath broke my heart into pieces. Finding that blood on the floor, her tiny body laying there just helplessly.

"I'm sorry. But we managed to remove all of the three bullets. But my main worry is a gunshot wound to the chest may cause damage to your heart, lungs, oesophagus, ribs or major blood vessels. We will examine her body to check for a major injures. Double check if there's an entrance and exit wound from the bullet."

"How will you do that? I mean the double check of the entrance...." I don't even have the energy to hear any more of this. I want Ntokozo to feel the pain I've felt. I want to torment him and make sure he loses everything that has his name on it. He messed with a wrong woman.

"An x-ray, blood and urine test, an endoscopy and bronchoscopy will be looked into just to be sure that there is no damage done."

"Do what you have to do in order to save my fiancé."

"We will try our outmost best."

Going home to the kids having to explain the disappearance of Aya.... I can't even face Rebecca at this moment. She saw the blood on the floor-

"Daddy," Ramona runs towards me with her arm wide open. She's giggling not knowing what's happening in this house. I pick her up giving her a warm hug. She wiggles herself- I put her down and she continues to her direction. Ronald is watching cartoons. Miracle eye's land on me and she gasps in happiness looking at me. She crawls more like running on her knees towards me with saliva dripping on her chest. "Hey babe," I look at her innocent eye's. I feel tears burning me, looking at the duplicate Aya makes me shiver thinking of the outmost. Aya can't die, I can't lose her. I've just found a woman who respects and loves me for who I am. The woman appreciates every effort I do, corrects me if I'm wrong. What will my family be without her?

NTOKOZO

I thought maybe driving to Empangeni to go check on Ayanda it will heal me but something in me pulled me back. I made a U-turn in the middle of the road and drove back home. My mind is rumbling with a lot of thoughts....why did I shoot Ayanda? I park on the side of the road letting tears fall off. It's only now that I'm realising that I shot someone I love. But this is all Bettina's fault. She's the one who gave me false information. What I heard yesterday is a conversation of two people who are not married. Bettina turned me into this monster I don't recognise. I start my engine and drive straight home. I need to sort this shit once and for all.

"Bettina! Bettina!" I'm calling her like a mad person. I'm banging the bedroom door and Sqaosenkosi is screaming his lungs out. She opens the door with my son in her hands. I grab my son and rush to Mapule's room.

"Make sure he doesn't cry." I walk out banging the door.

"Wena waza la!" I give her one hell of a back slap and pushed her on top of the bed not forgetting to lock the door throwing the key out of the window.

"Ntokozo, what is it?" She asks with her voice filled with shock.

"You lied to me, you said Ayanda is married. Why?" I get on top of her sinking my nails deep on to her neck.

"I didn't lie."

"Continue to lie and I will kill you. You made me shoot her, you made me kill her with your fucken lies! What kind of a woman are you?" I drag her by hair tossing her on the floor.

"Ntokozo," she's trying to get off my grip.

"Don't call my name. You bad mouthed Ayanda because you wanted me all to yourself right? Now that you have me hope you will stand me." I kick her stomach multiple times with her screaming in agony.

"I'm sorry I lied." She tells me sobbing. No amount of pain she caused me will wipe the guilt and anger I'm feeling right now.

"What made you think you are my type? Woman like Ayanda and Mapule are my calibre. Look at yourself and look at them....what difference do you see? You are just a sperm dish that men use to empty their troubles." I roughly take of her clothes, she's just numb and crying from all the beatings she got from me. I take of my pants throwing them aside. I make her to sit flat on the floor with nothing....lowered my body and shoved my manhood inside her mouth. She continues to cry angering me.

"Continue to cry and you shall see the worst of me." She sniffs grabbing my dick and begins to suck me. "Harder," I instruct her.

I pull her by hair making her to stand. I push her making her to lay on the bed. I get on top of her and insert myself into the dry Bettina. She screams in agony as I push more further in.

"Ayanda was very strong for this she survived so shut up!" I hiss, she holds her mouth into a thin line still sobbing. Damn this pussy is way too good. How does one ugly Betty has a sweet pussy as this? Ow heavens this one I have to keep for the future.

"It hurts, I'm....I'm sorry." She continues to cry.

A loud cry stops me from drilling this spineless sack. I pull out of her roughly wearing my clothes. Mapule disturbed my session of releasing. I swear she doesn't want me to enjoy this free meal. I jump out of the window leaving Bettina curled into a ball crying her lungs out. Thank God this girl is using the bedroom downstairs. I grab the keys from the ground, walked around the house.

Sqalosenkosi is screaming, Mapule is screaming. It's just a circus in this house.

Mapule is holding her stomach bending down.

"What's wrong?" I ask out of panic.

"I don't know...." She continues to scream.

"That's it I'm taking you to the hospital." She's barely even 6 months she can't be giving birth right? I take the crying Sqalosenkosi and rushed into Bettina's room unlocking it. She's still crying, still curled into a ball....such a useless woman!

"Wipe those crocodile tears and take care of my son. I'm taking my baby mama to the hospital." I say placing the crying Jnr next to her.

"It's just normal contractions, but everything is fine with them." I sigh in relief after hearing the exiting news.

"So this was normal right?" I ask just to be sure.

"She's fine and there's nothing to worry about. The baby was just being overly board active. You have a very strong champ there." I look at Maple who smile blushing. I like how she knows her place around me. A smile on my face vanishes whenever I think of what I did.

"Do you need anything?" I ask her before driving off the hospital.

"Just want to go home and sleep." I nod my head in agreement and take the route home.

The house is very much quite I assume Sqalosenkosi is now sleeping.

"Will you be okay to sleep alone?"

"I will be fine." She assures me looking tired.

"Okay, let me know if you feel any pain." She nods her head and goes to her room. I'll have to check up on my baby before I go to bed. There he is in his cot sleeping peacefully. Looks like he bathe, he smells so fresh.

"Night buddy." I kiss his forehead then stepped out of the room. Bettina thought it's suitable if I moved his baby cot to her room so that she won't be going to the nursery every minute.

"A life for a life," I wake up panting after that scary dream. I swear people and witchcraft don't sleep. How do you explain the weirdest dream I've just had.

"A life for a life, what does that mean?" Maybe it's the guilt that's eating me up. I can't seem to be getting any sleep. The gunshots are occupying my mind. When sleeps takes over my ears become deaf. Maybe praying will wash away all my sins! #50

ROMEO

You know the pain of vising someone who doesn't even know that you are there....the pain I'm feeling now cannot be recognised with anything. For the past week I have been avoiding my kids at all cost, I don't even know how to answer them when they ask me questions.

"Daddy where is aunty A? When is she coming back? Who's blood was that? Is she hurt? Is she sick?" All of this is just too much for me. Loosing Rose didn't have this effect on me, yes I was torn apart but I wasn't this broken. With Aya sleeping here makes me feel worthless, disorganised, lost all hope.

Love is not what you say, but love is what you do. Most of us see the connection between social and physical pain as a figurative. We all agree that love hurts. The hurt of seeing your loved ones laying helplessly with you being helpless also not knowing how to take the pain they are feeling. I wish I knew how she felt, I wish she could wake up and tell me how she is feeling atleast. Loosing someone you love is the hardest thing in the world to deal with. It's a kind of pain that you feel over your body, it's suffering of the worst kind. To make things worse no one understands the pain I'm feeling at the moment. I'm acting strong infront of everyone's eyes but deep down in dying.

Today I decided to bring Rebecca along, reason being she understands what's going on. I can't hide it anymore.

"What's that?" She points out at the mask that's on Aya's tiny face. I chuck brushing her soft afro curly hair.

"That's an oxygen mask babe."

"What's it for?" I think bringing her here was a bad idea.

"So that she could breathe." I look at her and confusion on her face said it all.

"So she can't breathe?"

"Without it she can't breathe baby." She nods her head as if she's understanding but confusion is still written all over her face. I decided to keep my mouth shut because nothing I will say any further will make her understand.

"I wrote her a letter." She smiles widely. My eyes pile up with tears but quickly wipe them with the back of my hand without her noticing.

"You can read it to her, she can her." I tell her with my voice refusing to come out. She takes out a piece of paper out of her pocket unfolding it. She looks at me more like waiting for approval from me.

"You can read it baby." I give her the go ahead with a faint smile.

"Hello, it's me Rebecca your Riri." She giggles and covers her mouth shyly. My baby girl is growing slowly but surely. I'm afraid of her falling inlove.

"Are you feeling down right now? When I'm feeling down I like to talk to you. There are people out there that care about you, you can talk to of you want. You can call daddy or Nana. Don't worry about me I'm taking very good care of myself. I even wash my under-wares after bathing. I mop the floor and make my bed. I hope you get better mommy I miss you." She folds the letter and placing it back to her pocket.

"Wow," that's all I managed to say, after those hurtful words. "She's going to be fine babe." I assure her with lies. But I'm having hope that Aya wakes up and comes back to us. I'm not coping without her so my family is.

"Is this him?" Spike asks me looking at the camera. Looks like Ntokozo had all the time in the world, he knew what he was doing. After shooting Ayanda he stood there for more than 5 minutes without moving. He came here with a plan and that plan was to kill my happiness, my woman the mother of my kids. "So what's the plan?"

I want the best way to punish him ever, I want him to go mad "I want him to loose everything he owns including the cats." I seethe my teeth in so much anger.

"Consider it done." He closes his laptop and turns to look at me. "She will be fine, that woman is a survivor. She's been through worse. I have to get going, having a new born baby on top of the 8 that I have is a lot of work."

I laugh, the idea of having a lot of kids it's our dream. "Kids are a blessing."

He stands up, "I'll get back to you later this evening." He walks out of my study with his laptop in his hands. Miracle has been very clingy lately and I understand why. She misses her mother.

"Let's go have a bath." I tell her, she just smiles showing me her baby gums. The bottom gums are swollen which means she's teething. No wonder she's forever blowing bubbles, shame my poor thing.

"Bath time kids." I shout for them and they ignore me. "Guy's common." I switch off the television....

"I was still watching." Ramona and drama. I don't even have the energy today to argue with her.

"Hey buddy," I throw myself next to Ronald. He pays no mind to me and continues to keep his eyes glued on the television. I swear one day I will switch off everything. A door bell comes through....I'm not in the MOOD to be entertaining people!. I stand up from the couch pushing my legs towards the door and I find Rose's family standing outside my door. I frown looking at them because I don't recall giving them my new address.

"Come in." I move aside. They are still my family, well particularly not mine but my kids family. I take them to the lounge where Ronald is.

"Koko," my son loves his Koko more than anything. It's been long since they last saw each other.

"Mfana wami." This woman looks so much like Rose. She looks around my house and her smile disappears when her eyes land on the big portrait on the wall. Aya's smile is everything in me.

"Who's that?" Last time Rose's pictures were all over my house but not anymore. Those pictures are in the kids bedroom's.

"My fiancé,"

"Ow son there's no need for that. We brought you a wife that will cater for you and the kids."

"What?" I laugh my lungs out, this woman thinks this is a joke. So she came all the way to spit this nonsense?

"Okay, so who do you have in mind?" I fold my arms looking at them. We are all still standing,

"Can we take a seat first mkhwenyana."

"My bad, I'm sorry. Can we take a seat."

They seat opposite me...."so-" I wait for her to continue.

"Ow yes, as a family we thought it's best that we bring you a wife that will cater for you and your kids." She smiles.

"It's been long my son, and it's best if you move on. You also deserve some happiness."

"But I am happy, the woman I'm with takes very much good care of me." I respond.

"Where is she now because I don't see her anywhere?" She looks around, I can sense mockery in her voice.

"Hospital,"

"Okay, where is Rebecca and Ramona?"

Rebecca comes holding the naked Miracle. They both wet and I'm just wondering how does the bathroom look.

"She doesn't want to get dressed." She laughs. The naked Miracle is sucking her thumb.



"Bring her here." I take the baby from her. "Go take the big towel for me."

"Who's child is that?" Can't this woman mind her own business. I even forgot that they are in the sitting room.

"Mine."

"But she doesn't look like you. I'm sure the mother cheated." I ignore her taking the towel from Rebecca.

"So you don't greet us anymore? Where did your respect for elders go?" I know these women never liked nor loved my kids. Even when Rose was still alive she didn't want her kids home unless if her mother is around. These two aunties are very much cold hearted.

"Hallo." My baby looks down shyly.

"Mihlola, usibingelela nagesingisi." They mumble amongst each other. I pay no mind to them, I kept myself busy wiping her entire body. Her tiny bums and in-between her thighs. That's how my mama taught me. And I don't get it, where do men get such courage to violate such God's creation? Where do they get the audacity from? Everything of her is right in front of my eyes. I apply her body with lotion, applied Vaseline around her tiny butt and her inner thighs

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that's where she gets most of her rash.

Now that she's fully dressed I just need to feed her so that she could fall asleep.

"Where's her bottle? I'm sure Nana made it before she went to the prayer session."

"Your fiancé didn't even cook for you and the kids." She claps her hands dramatically putting them on her waist.

"Zimbini go cook for your husband." I look at this woman with so much shock. So they want to kill me? Even if Aya was to departure from this world I will never ever even try pursuing a relationship with this.

"No need, my mother will be back soon. When are you leaving?" I ask. I thought that maybe they are here for the kids but clearly they have an agenda.

"We sleeping you can't expect us to travel in taxi's so late."

I sigh annoyed, I'm not in the mood so I will just go sleep early atleast my kids have already eaten dinner. I walk towards my bedroom and stop on my tracks, "how did you find me? I mean how did you find my new home?" I ask out of curiosity. I don't trust anyone at the moment.

"We asked the neighbours were you used to live and they gave us the new address." I nod my head believing Rose's mother. Before I left I gave Mr Jones my news address, we get along pretty fine with that man. I believe he has the hearts for my mother.... I chuck thinking about the possibilities of my mother dating. I close my bedroom door, miracle is sleeping horizontally on the bed. "where and how the hell am I going to sleep?" My phone beeps, I swipe and frown looking at the message. R50 000 has been deducted from Ntokozo's account. I'm dealing with his personal account firstly then I'm messing with his business. I want him to feel my wrath, I want him to loose himself in the process. He provoked a snake in it's whole so let the games begin.

Keep the money for now

I press send and toss my phone aside. An ant occupying the whole queen size bed unbelievable! I lay on the side like a man that's in trouble with his wife, I'm even afraid to push her I might be opening a can of worms. A knock comes through.... I wonder who is it and what they want. Nana is still not yet back I wonder if indeed she went to the prayer session or - I don't even want to think what my mind is thinking.

"Come in," I sigh in annoyance seeing this face in front of my eyes. What the hell is she doing in my woman's bedroom? "You are not suppose to enter this room under any circumstance. How can I help you?"

"Erm, my mother asked me to come check up on you."

"As you can see I'm fine. Is there anything else?" I ask looking directly into her eyes. The fact that Zimbini hates my kids and my mother that makes me hate her even more towards the hate she hates my family with.

"Ow, okay. I guess I'll go to bed then." She turns to leave and I stop her.

"What is your plan in all this?" She turns around to face me.

"I don't understand."

"This, what your doing. What is your plan?"

"I don't have any plan." I chuck hearing her response.

"Zim, listen to me and listen very carefully. I have a woman that occupies my heart, the woman I love with the last heartbeat of my heart. That woman is non other than Aya. Whatever game you playing won't work with me. And I'm definitely sure that you are the one who came up with this nonsense and if it's indeed you I wouldn't be surprised. Now get out of my woman's bedroom and don't set foot here again." I click my tongue filled with so much anger. If I don't put them in line they will be a torn in my life and that I will not appreciate nor approve it.

How does my mother manages with this one, I hardly slept because of her kicking and always looking for her pacifier whenever it slips out of her mouth. It's so early in the morning and my eyes really sore. And the girl is wide awake opening my eyes, it's a game to her. Seriously I don't know how single mothers survive. I applaud them and they deserve the best. I flung my painful eyes open meeting her cute chubby face. Coming realisation that saliva is dripping all over my face.

"Miracle," I gasp in shock and sink on the bed. She just giggles and puts her hand in my nose- the torture I get for sleeping with a devil herself. Because she's awake now I have to wake up. I sigh getting off the bed picking her up. I pass by the bathroom to wash my face and brush my teeth with her placed on my hips. Honestly I still say....I don't know how single mother's do it.

I step out of my room heading to the kitchen. I can't get used to the fact that Aya is not around walking up and down this kitchen, that welcoming aroma is not there, the house is cold. I put Mira on her kitchen chair while I make her instant porridge, shit I for got to change her diapers! I leave everything as it is in the kitchen sprinting to the bedroom. I throw her on the bed making her to laugh showing her baby gums. This child is forever smiling like her mother. I pull out for a new diaper and baby wipes. I strap off the diaper throwing it on the floor, I pull out the baby wipes from the small bucket wiping her face first - that's how mother does it. Now here comes the challenging part, wiping her virgina. Getting her diaper is not a hustle but having to wipe the baby's every corner just makes my body cringe. But hey I natured for all of my kids Mira is not the first. After wiping the inside of her virgina I put a new dry diaper on.

"All done missy." I pick her up. "I'll clean this room later." I tell her but she just looks at me like I'm son sort of crazy.

"Come on Mira eat." Maybe I didn't mix it well. But you just add warm milk and stir until it's well mixed. She keeps on bubbling her mouth messing every bit of my face. "Say ahh," I sigh putting her bowl aside. This is a complete waste of time. Rebecca managed to feed her yesterday without any trouble. Why am I being tortured?

"Mkhwenyana," that voice truly irritates me to the core.

"Morning,"

"Have you eaten kodwa." Rose's mother was a sweet woman when Rose her daughter was still alive. I guess the death of her really hit her hard.

"I'll make myself breakfast."

"Nonsense, what kind of a mother in-law will I be?" She smiles warmly. Should I trust her with the food she's about to prepare? Rebecca comes down still in her sleepwear and freezes when she sees her grandmother. She slowly walks up to me and greets in a low tone.

"Mntanami unjani."

"I'm good," Rebecca is a child that doesn't like drama and she avoids it at all cost. What happened yesterday really hit her cause she doesn't like talking. How is my child suppose to greet? She doesn't understand her mother's language that we'll. So Aunty Sindi exaggerating really annoyed me. "Can I feed her?" Thank God she offers because I cannot stand any of this. She takes her baby sister out of her chair.

"If I didn't witness this I would say my grandchildren are being abused by this woman who sleeps out and doesn't bother to come back home."

I chuckle looking at this woman, she can't be serious. "My woman is not feeling well, you know what I don't have to explain myself to you." I leave the kitchen. Where the hell is Nana!

"Finally the queen decided to brace us with her presence." I say looking at Nana, yesterday when she left this house she wasn't wearing these clothes. "Where are you coming from?"

"Is that a way to greet your mother so early in the morning." She laughs, like literally laughs holding her stomach. It has been confirmed my mother has lost it! "Or you asking me this because Mira went ninja on you?" She walks past me still laughing. Okay that was very much weird. She comes back flying, "what are these people doing in my house?"

"They offered Zim to be my wife." I say leaving the sitting room. I don't even want to walk past the kitchen. The way it's so crowded it's annoying. Using another route in this house will do just to be away from them.

I can feel footsteps following me behind and I don't dare to look back, "Ro.... Romeo, I made you breakfast." She's still following me around. I stop on my tracks and turn to face her.

"Only one woman is allowed to make breakfast for me." I smile making her to swallow. My phone vibrates from my pocket, I lazily take it out still glued on the same spot. I sigh noticing it's the hospital and I just pray that they come with good news.

"Hello,"

"Good morning, am I speaking to Mr Romeo Osman." Zim is still standing with a tray in her hands annoying me. She's looking at me seductively, if only she knew she's not attractive at all.

"Yes," my heart pounds rapidly against my chest.

"You are required to be at the hospital it's urgent."

"W....why." I feel like crying. If I lost her why can't she just tell me.

"I'm afraid I can't share these news over the phone. Please try to be here before 10 am sir." She disconnects the call. I don't know one how to respond or how to feel. Is Aya really gone? Did she really leave me behind? #51

NTOKOZO

Mapule is seriously starting to annoy me with her nagging.

I've just lost a whole R50 000 without trace. I went to the bank early this morning for clarification from my money being withdrawn without my consent. I thought that maybe it's because there was a faulty somewhere but I was wrong. My money was taken out last night and they can't be traced. How ridiculous can that be? We trust banks with our monies and this happens. They are even failing to investigate because apparently there's no case! I've been with that stupid bank for as long as I can remember, being reimbursed was the appropriate step but they declined my request. Why? I also don't know why. I literally have nill in my personal account. Looking at Mapule spitting for....I wish she could just disappear from my face before I could do something I'd regret.

"You promised me never to touch another woman they way you did to me. You promised me that you would change and be a better man for Mbalienhle but I guess I was wrong. What was I thinking vele risking my daughter's life!" There we go again- pulling that card on me.

"Mapule please, stop being a nag. You are literally annoying me. What happened between me and Bettina is noun of your business. Know your lane and stop irritating me!" I bark back startling her and stepped out of the house. I need fresh air I can't deal with this. I drive out of the yard not knowing where I'm going. Part of me wants to go check up on Aya but my thoughts are distributed by a loud bang on the window making me to jump. Two hobos I don't even recognise, came out of nowhere pointing guns at me. I'm parked on the side of the road where there's no houses but long grass and tree's. What was I thinking parking in the middle of no where thinking about my troubles?

"Vula!" One of them commands me. My heart beats rapidly non-stop causing me to shiver in fear.

"Eh phuma ndoda," he bangs the window again making it to crack. Another is cocking his gun. I look at my car keys and my mind works fast. I start the engine but my car jams on me. I try again but nothing. No car is passing by, if I die today my kids will grow up without a father. Unexpectedly he shoots the window making me to duck screaming my lungs out.

"Okay, okay, I'll open." You know the pain of fear giving yourself in to the deadly people who have scars all over their faces. I unlock the door slowly stepping out with my hands on my head.

"Run," one says and I look at him confused.

"R....run?"

"Yey baleka masaka." He stomps his feet like a panstula pointing his gun at me. If he says run that means.....I think no further, I run for my life without looking back. My every important documents are in that car!

Maybe I'm paying for my sins who knows. I'm just grateful that they didn't shoot to kill. I'm still alive and kicking. I've been hijacked and for almost an hour I've been walking without luck. What did I do to deserve such punishment? A truck honks and the driver flashes his hazards.

"Jesus!" I approach the truck and the driver parked further away from my distance at the side of the road.

"Uyaphi?"

"eMlalazi," I breathe heavily. My feet are aching, sore. I'm hungry....what was I thinking driving this side of the place. I don't even know where I was. It shows I don't know my home town the way I thought I knew it. I climb the long giant trust steps. "Thank you." I muttered closing the door shamefully. The man just looks at me and smile. At least there are still some descent human-beings. I sigh leaning back closing my eyes relaxing my stiff muscles.

## NTOKOZO'S HOUSE

Mapule was loading every piece of her clothing. She couldn't take it anymore. What's the use of being with a man that will clearly never change for the better even for the sake of his own children. At first she thought she could probably hold on and change him to be the better man, father and possibly a husband. Who is she fooling- this man loves Ayanda more than his own life. If she leaves now where will she go? She doesn't even have a dime in her. But icebo liyozakha.

"where are you going?" Bettina asks with a squeaky voice. She's been forever crying lately.

"I don't know but I will see where life takes me. I can't stand Ntokozo....what if he, he....you know. I have a daughter, I hope you know what I'm trying to say." Bettina nods her head understanding.

"I get you," she keeps quite digesting the news of Mapule leaving. "So you leaving me?" Her voice came out shaky filled with sadness. Yes she used to bully Mapule because she thought she had a chance with Ntokozo but now she knows better. She has seen him for who he truly is. Part of her wants to pack up and leave.

"I thought you would be happy in my absence since you will be getting what you have always wanted." She turns to face her realising how sensitive she was. "I'm so sorry, I didn't mean that."

"It's okay- I guess deserve that. I know I've been a pain in the butt ever since I came here and for that I apologize deeply. If only I knew it would be this way I wouldn't have done what I did to you." Bettina drops her gaze looking at the floor. Her spirit is dead, she's tired emotionally....she doesn't know how women survive such.

"I'm sorry," she looks at the silently crying Bettina. "I kept quiet, don't keep your voice within you. Fight!" For the first time in months they get to share a hug filled with emotions. Why was she jealous of her anyway?...."take care of yourself," she tells her breaking the hug. Mapule picked up her bag in the floor and walked out of the door. Something hit her abdomen so hard making her to flinch in pain. She drops her bag on the floor and screams. Bettina rushes towards her with a worried expression.

"It hurts!" Mapule bends a bit more groaning painfully.

"What must I do?"

"Ca...call an ambulance." Mapule closes her eyes putting pressure on her lower abdomen with fail. She tries sitting in the bed but the pain was unbearable. "Ahhhh," she drops down on her knees letting out an excruciating pain. Bettina jumps in fear looking at Mapule who was bending over.

"Erm, I....I.... I'm going to call for help. Yah help it is." She runs out of the room with fear written all over her face. She gets hold of her cell phone out of her boobs, unlocked it and tried getting hold of Ntokozo but it took her straight to voicemail. She tries for the second time and still there was no response. She sighs stepping out of the house and runs to their neighbour.

"Manqoba! Manqoba!" She shouts for him. Manqoba come out running out of his house confused wondering who the hell is shouting their lungs out of his father's compound.

"Yes," he looks at the panicking Bettina. She pants trying to get catch her breath.

"Please help, Mapule....the baby, I don't know."

"Say no more," Manqoba runs inside the house and comes back with his father's car keys. "Let's go," he wears his jacket whilst running. They find Mapule trying to take baby steps screaming her lungs out. Manqoba ask no questions. Manqoba puts his hands around Mapule's waist leading her to the car.

Bettina was left in the house with the Squalosenkosi. Mapule needs her and besides she won't be comfortable with only Manqoba in the car, she thinks to herself. She quickly places the sleeping Squalosenkosi on her back securing him with a towel placing a big blanket over him. She rushes out of the room and grabbed the house keys. Disconnects every electronic appliances before stepping out of the house locking it.

She jumps in the care taking the backseat. She holds Mapule's hand assuring her that that she's here for her. She will be fine. They drive out of the house-

"It hurts," Mapule cries squeezing her hand.

"It will be okay." Bettina assures her but the pains were not making it any easier for her. How did she get here? If only she had her mother beside her. This is the moment that she misses Aya the most. The moment that she wished that her friend was here. Such betrayal for what? A complete monster who doesn't care about anyone's feeling but only himself. Ntokozo is a true definition of Lucifer himself. How do you live or sleep at night knowing that you caused someone pain?

"Manqoba, can you drive a bit faster?" Bettina suggest, Manqoba presses on the accelerator driving as fast as he could.

A horrific hour of waiting not knowing what's the cause of her pain. Bettina unstraps the baby from her back giving him a bottle.

"What's taking them so long?" Manqoba asks sitting down. He has been standing for far too long.

"I'm don't know, I'm just scared."

"Don't be. Let's hope they are okay." He looks at Sqalosenkosi lifting his one leg up with his hand sucking the bottle like his life depends on it. "Your son is sure enjoying that milk." He smiles admiring him.

"He is actually not mine. I'm just a stay in nanny." She smiles looking at the baby.

"Wow, I always thought he is your son."

"No, his mother passed away..." She slaps her lips into a thin line shutting herself up. She shouldn't have said that. If it was the old Bettina she would have proudly told him everything.

"Shame," they fall into an awkward silence. "So you are a nanny? Apart from that what do you do?"

She thought for a while and that's when she noticed that there is basically nothing about this of her life. While her mates where chasing dreams she was chasing men, men that only chewed her like some piece of gum and tossed her aside once the flavour is gone. Some how she felt her heart reaping apart. Her voice got stuck refusing to come out. This is the most embarrassing moment ever. She looked at Manqoba who was looking back at her waiting for a response. Shame washes over, how will she answer this question?

"Nothing

" that NOTHING response made Manqoba frown looking at her.

"Is there something that you would like to do with your life thought? Or you comfortable the way your life is?"

"I want to do something with my life." She responds shamefully.

"That's good to hear. If giving an opportunity to make it in life, where do you see yourself in two years time?"

She clears her throat and looks on the side hoping what she's about to say doesn't make her look more lesser than she already is.

"I see myself owning a day care or a pre-school. I love kids and I love teaching."

"That's....that's very rare. Most woman grab opportunities of being doctors, lawyers and business management." He looks at her without her noticing. She's not the prettiest girl in the world yes that he knows. But there is definitely something about this Bettina girl. "Do you have another name other than Bettina? Honestly I don't like it."

"Wandle is a name my father gave me."

"Beautiful name, from now onwards no Bettina for me." They both laugh.

"I also hate that name with passion." She adds.

"Mapule Ngidi?" They both get startled by the doctor's voice. Bettina stands up with the baby in her hands.

"Is she okay?"

"Unfortunately she suffered a miscarriage. Her BP was extremely high."

"Okay, is she okay though, emotionally?" She asks feeling very much heart broken on her behalf. The doctor sighs and continues to explain the BP situation not answering Bettina's question.

"High blood pressure during pregnancy poses various risks, including: Decreased blood flow to the placenta. If the placenta doesn't get enough blood, your baby might receive less oxygen and fewer nutrients. This can lead to slow growth (intrauterine growth restriction), low birth weight or premature birth. And unfortunately at this stage Mapule lost her baby."

"Ow my God" Bettina can't believe this.

"Tell me what is your relationship with her?"

"Erm, she's my si....sister."

"She would need counselling, she doesn't care about the loss of her baby. It's like she needed this to happen at all cost. I suggest therapy before it's too late."

"Thank you. Can we see her?" Bettina asks the doctor.

"Only for 15 minutes, she has taken medication and will be out anytime soon."

"Are you sure you are fine?" Bettina is the concerned one.

"More than good." They have been staring at Mapule for the past 10 minutes not knowing to what say to her. Manqoba stepped out leaving them to talk. "Good riddance to bad rubbish." Mapule says smiling. Bettina looks at the Mapule, she doesn't recognise the woman in front of her eyes.

"So what's next?"

"I don't know, maybe go back home if I'm still welcomed in that house." She pulls the sheets flinching covering her lower part of the body.

"When are they discharging you?" Mapule's sudden change breaks Bettina. Part of her still wants Mapule to be around that hell hole.

"Tomorrow, the doctor said they want to check on the bleeding." She shrugged her shoulders.

"Okay, guess I'll come check up on you tomorrow and bring you some clothes." She bids farewell and walked out of the hospital finding Manqoba waiting for her.

"You done?" He asks the sad Bettina.

"Yes,"

"Okay let's go then." He opens the door for her. The baby was still on her hands, she handed the baby to Manqoba while she got in first making herself comfortable. Manqoba then handed the sleeping Sqaalosenkosi to Bettina whose mood was on total zero.



"You don't look to well." Manqoba glances at her while he focused on the road.

"I'm just sad that she will be leaving and I will be left behind." A tear escapes her eye. Manqoba looked at her from the rear mirror and noticed that she is not okay at all. He parks at the side of the road.

"What's eating you if she's going? And don't you dare tell me that there's nothing."

Bettina sighs and looks outside the window. "It's just....I can't talk about it." She says.

"No wonder woman die in silence. You can trust me you know." He tells her.

"I will tell you once I'm ready to talk about it." She assures him but Manqoba doesn't buy her response.

"Really?"

"I promise, I just need to be ready to share what I'm going through and right now I'm not ready. I promise you."

"I'll keep that in mind." Manqoba starts and drives off in silence.

"Thank you," Bettina says stepping out of the car picking the baby up.

"Anytime, don't be a stranger now." He warmly smiles making Bettina to blush a bit closing the door.

"I'll see you around." She gets into the house while Manqoba drove to his home.

#### AT THE HOSPITAL

"I can't switch off the machines." I tell the doctor's who don't know their job. Not my woman, not the woman I love.

"Unfortunately her brain is dead which means she is also no more it's just the life support that's keeping her alive."

All of this doesn't make sense, they say she is brain dead yet her body is still warm. I can literally see that she is breathing - the decision I'm facing now is impossibly cruel. After they removed all three bullets from her chest and losing the baby she began to bleed internally. She has lost so much blood that her brain was starved of oxygen for several days.

"Are you asking me to think about ending my fiancé's life now?" I asked incredulously. I can't do that!

"Unfortunately yes,"

I was taken to the room where Aya lay. Nothing prepared me for what I saw. She lay on her back, her head to one side, and her bright brown eyes staring sightless ahead of her. She had a tracheotomy because she could not breathe for herself. A thin spindly arm, white as milk, lay outside the sheet. She was being fed intravenously through a line in the back of her hand; there was a catheter and another line from her stomach. A wave of anger and pity engulfed me.

I bent over her face and kissed her and smoothed her forehead. She felt surprisingly warm - and alive. What did brain dead mean exactly? What was dead about her when she was still warm and there was hope? I swallowed hard and whispered into her ear. I told her, as I always did when I saw her, that I loved her, that she wasn't alone and that I wasn't going to leave. I had read somewhere that hearing is the last sense to go, so I stroked her head that's starting to grow hair and told her the family news, the drama that I'm facing in that house but she stared into darkness I could not see.

Throughout the day I massaged her and stroked her head, singing and chatting to her until the light faded and the nurse told me to leave. Aya had shut her eyes as if in sleep. If she was sleeping, I mused, she must be awake when they are open and by implication aware of what was going on around her. I did not like the thought of her being alone, even if she did seem unaware of anyone's presence. But I had a strong sense that somewhere deep inside her, she knew that people were caring for her.

"I love you Poonky and always will." I looked at her and walked out with a heavy heart. #52

ROMEO

The next morning I walked numbly through beach of Richards Bay, recalling the times I had driven round searching for Aya, ridiculously I know but that woman captured my heart from the very first day I laid my eyes on her. A stranger that took care of my kids while I fell asleep on her mat. Stupid I know but hey I guess everyone has a love story to tell by meeting their beloved person.

If the weather was good, we'd sit on Cromer beach and I would catch glimpses of the woman I once knew: funny, laconic and gentle. The beach has always been her favourite, a place that will calm her whenever she's going through some stuff. Hearing the news that I might lose her and there's nothing else that they could donate this moment kills my spirit but I'm still holding on to the fact that my woman is a survivor. She escaped worse moments, deep down somewhere I know that she is fighting for herself, for us. I still have hope and I'm not giving up. I just need

a few things that will bring her back to reality. Maybe playing her favourite songs will be a start. I hope this will bring back the Aya I love not the woman I don't recognise on that hospital bed.

I bought a Bob Dylan tape and played her his favourite tracks, but her face remained unchanged. Sometimes her breathing was laboured, and on the second day, she began to shake uncontrollably. The nurse said she had a temperature, probably caused by an infection. She became still and her eyes seemed to lock on to my gaze as if registering me - then they slid away without any acknowledgement. The pain of visiting someone who just stares into thin space without blinking. The pain of having to check their chest if it's still rising up and down to put your heart at ease.

The next eight days were marked by the changing shifts of the nurses, Nana and I developed a routine. We brought sweet-smelling oils to massage her with, and held flannels soaked in lavender water over her temples. We told her things we knew would make her laugh. I kept expecting her to sit up and say, "Hello Mr Man, what am I doing here?" But she was silent, except when her throat filled up with fluid and she started choking.

Every day I felt under pressure to make a decision for Aya. A decision that will change our lives for the rest of our lives. Miracle will have to grow up without a mother....just the thought of that makes my stomach fill up.

"Get a second opinion on your fiancé but don't tell the doctor's I advised you." An elderly voice echoes in Aya's room. When I turn to look back there was no one but I swear I heard someone.

"Don't be pressured into making a decision by the doctors. Make sure you are as informed as possible and bear in mind the age and physical condition of your fiancé, and what sort of life she could expect." Again that voice.

"Who's there?" There's only me and Aya in this room.

"Are you okay sir?" One of the nurses startle me. I look at her for a moment thinking that maybe she is the one but her voice was too tiny.

"Yes, I'm okay." I say tiredly. I'm always here from morning to evening.

"I think you should go home and rest sir," The nurse tells me to go home to get some rest. I don't want to leave her but knew that I am no longer thinking clearly as I was so exhausted. I kissed Aya goodbye. Her skin smelled strange and she was hot.

Arriving at home I find these people still invading my privacy. I step out of my car and head straight to my room without greeting anyone. My mind is way too exhausted and I just need to be alone.

"Hay Mkhwenyana you back." Zimbini's aunty says excitedly. I just stare at her without response, I didn't want to sound rude but these people can push you to the limit.

"Can I help you?"

"Ow I just wanted to tell you that my daughter will be arriving this evening. Will you kindly please go pick her up from the rank." She smiles. I know what game she's playing and I won't tolerate it.

"Woman listen and listen very carefully. You see this plan of yours will not work with me. You know what, I want each and everyone of you to pack every shit of your belongings and leave my house right this minute." I hiss and her eyes pop out in shock. I'm sick and tired of these people. They have took my kindness for granted for far too long.

"Mkhwenyana,"

"I won't repeat myself." I leave her still standing. I just want to hold Miracle in my arms I know for sure that everything will vanish.

NTOKOZO

For the past two weeks my life has been hell. I keep loosing money without trace. Mapule loosing my baby was the last straw. With my son in hospital that's another thing. Why is God punishing me through my kids? Why can't he be a man and face me like a man!

"Excuse me sir, visiting hours are over." I can't even send my child to a private hospital. I thank Bettina for sacrificing herself to be here in the hospital with my son. I can't even buy the simplest things that are ineed when visiting someone. How will I pay Bettina this month end?

"Okay," I respond. "Thank you." I tell Bettina who has always been next to my son. She nods her head without looking at me. I will have to reach out to Mapule's family- I need to have a relationship with my daughter. I bury my hands deep in my pockets and walked out of the hospital with a heavy heart. How do I even begin to resolve my life when it's taking such a drastic decision on it's own? How do I fix my life? I slowly walk on the side of the road kicking stones wondering how is my money just missing out of my accounts. My business is slowly....a car parks meters away from me.

"Come in," I know that voice. It's Aphelele, she still looks ravishing hot as ever.

"Thank you." I sigh jumping in the front seat putting the safety belt on.

"Where's your car?"

"At home." I answer looking outside the window.

"Okay, what happened? I'm pretty sure that you just didn't decide to walk up in this blazing heat."

"My car broke down again." I lie, how do I tell a woman I was robbed and I was unable to fight back. That will show me and my weakness. Luckily she believes the word of my mouth. Women are very much easy to manipulate. She drives through the driveway and I step out of the car with her following me behind.

"Where's everyone?" She scans her surroundings.

"Bettina is in hospital...."

"What did you do to her? Please tell me she's okay."

"She's fine"

It's my son that is not well so Bettina is at the hospital on behalf of me as his mother. My life is turning upside down. Everything I touch just turns to dust." We get inside the house and seat on the couch next to each other. "Everything is falling apart." She shifts and sits next to me.

"We all have fall outs in life but it's up to you if you want to pick yourself up or pity yourself." She holds my cheek and looks into my eyes. Something in me draws me towards her. I find my lips touching hers....thick and warm. I place my hand on her thigh lifting her dress up.

MAPULE

"Mapule you are not the first one to lose a child my baby. Cry, break down if you have to. Brake my plates....just take the anger away." Her mother says in a concerned voice causing Mapule to chuck bitterly.

"As if you care." She says scrolling down her phone looking at the pictures.

"I do care...." Her mother sighs sadly looking at her child whose sudden behaviour has changed for the worst. "You don't even spend time with your daughter."

"My daughter, that cursed child! Don't tell me about that....that thing, that demon you call a child!"

"Mapule!"

"What? Heh! What? Isn't she cursed like her useless father? I went through hell and pain because of that child! Now let me be and enjoy myself without being remembered that I have a burden of a rapist child." She clicks her tongue leaving her mother in shock.

"Mama," Mbalienhle smiles warmly seeing her mother after a very long time. She opens her tiny arms widely waiting for a hug like it was. Mapule looked at Mbalienhle with so much hate. Whenever she looks at her she sees Ntokozo.

"Yin! Angisonyoko mina. Futsek." She pushed her aside and Mbalienhle fell on the floor and cried.

"Ow nkosi yam." Her mother rushes to where Mbalienhle is. "Askies baby, mama didn't mean to push you." She picks her up rubbing her back. Whatever happened to Mapule in that house changed her for the worst.

"I don't want her in my house ever again." Her father barks. This is not her daughter at all.

"Your usual?" The man asks standing on his spot like every other day.

"Yes please." She takes out R200 that she stole from her father's purse. She pays the man and the man gives her a little packet.

"Nice doing business with you." The man says and stands still on his spot. He watched Mapule as she walked away with hands in her pocket. He shook his head and wondered why would such a beautiful lady resort to such.

NTOKOZO

"Come on, I know you wanted this as much as I did." He continues to lay on his back facing the ceiling.

"You practically forced me. I didn't agree to this, I wasn't up for it!" She snaps.

"Don't be dramatic, I did you good. I'm sure that boyfriend of yours doesn't know anything." Aphelele gasps in shock. Ow no he didn't compare himself with her boyfriend. "You know what, you are very much useless!" She hisses getting off the bed butt naked. "You didn't make me cum, that's how useless your dick was to me. Awukwazi ukufenda uyafathuza!" She clicks her tongue wearing her clothes with his semen dripping out of her vagina. He laughs getting off the bed walking towards her.

"So you say I didn't make you cum huh!" His sudden mood of change startles Apehelele. He grabs her hair throwing her on the bed tearing her clothes roughly. "I will show you, infact I will teach you a lesson never to insult my manhood. This is what I do to loose women like you. You should ask Bettina...." He roughly parted her legs apart overpowering her.

"Shut the f\*\*k up you are annoying!" He barks wiping his cock using his towel.

"You are such an animal." She wears her shoes and walks out limping banging the door.

"Mxm as if she didn't like it rough." He says to himself smiling. But still all of these pussies cannot be compared to Ayanda's no matter hard he tries not to compare. Ayanda's pussy had that grip that just clings on to him making his whole body to vibrate.

He stops breathing for a moment remembering that he actually shot her, she's no more and he is all the cause of it. Their daughter is going to grow up without a mother but he will definitely fight tooth and nail to get what's his even if it means he has to kill!

A notification beeped on his phone and he frowns looking at the message. This is just the beginning

He wondered who could possibly send him this message. Maybe this person sent it to the wrong number and besides he doesn't have beef with anyone. He tossed his phone aside and walks barefoot to the kitchen to make himself something to eat. He is even running out of groceries!

ROMEO

"I can't bring myself to do it. I can't end the life of the woman I love. What will I tell my kids? That I killed their mother?"

"I know it's a hard decision to make but set her free, let her be free and happy. Right now she's in pain and we don't even know the amount of pain she's feeling." The doctor says making Romeo to sigh sadly.

"After turning off life support, a person who's brain-dead will die within minutes, because they won't be able to breathe on their own. If a person is in a permanent vegetative state but not brain-dead, their life support likely consists of fluids and nutrition." She continues to add.

"Why is all of this happening to me? Why am I being punished for a sin I didn't commit?" Romeo sniffs unable to hold the pain.

"I apologize but I'm afraid I will have to ask you to step out of the room." Nana, Dumisani and Romeo look at each other. Romeo burst into tears realising that he is about to loose yet another woman he love dearly. Romeo wants to be there through it all. He wants to be by her side till she takes her last breath.

"What now? Will she live for a few minutes after turning them off?" He asks.

"Depending upon how long the patient lives after that, they may begin to turn blue before they've actually passed away."

"Will there be a sign thought?"

"Near the very end of life, the patient's body may go through convulsions. Some of these may seem violent and include arching of the back and tremors in the arms and legs. This is the brain sending out signals to the body that it's running out of oxygen, and the body should move out of whatever position it's in that's stopping the oxygen." The doctors start the process of turning off the alarms on the machines and remove the Aya's breathing tube. Removing the tube causes a gargling sound and triggered some reflexes that may make it look like they're coming out of the coma. They are not!

"This is very painful to watch." He staggers back letting his tears fall out. He can't go down that road again. Why is his happiness always short lived! Is this a curse? Is Rose making his life a living hell? That's it she doesn't want him moving on which is something that definitely doesn't make sense at all.

"The patient has passed away," the doctor confirms that there is no heartbeat. The family was told to take all of the time they need to say goodbye.

Watching her take her last breath was not what I thought it would be like. Okay, I'll admit, I suppose I had never really "thought" about it and it hurts.

"If I had words to make a day for you, I'd sing you a morning golden and true. I would make this day last for all time. Then fill the night deep in moonshine." I sing a line from her favourite movie. The room is sour and no one is saying a thing.

"Just one more!" I hoped.

But no. No more came. That was it. No more breath!

I had missed it somehow. I wanted a slow motion replay.

Breath had just been there. Where the heck did it go?! Inflation and then no deflation. Inhale but no exhale.

"It's okay son," Nana tells him but that 'okay' is not OKAY!

There was peace. But there were tears. When the rock cracked open, I broke open. My heart burst with all the love a heart could hold; it let things in and it let things out. It would never be the same.

I go down my knees trying to hide the pain I'm feeling but everything is too much. My chest is closing up making it hard for me to breathe.

I miss her so soon. I missed her smile and her voice and her human life in the exact moment that it was gone — in a way I didn't know was possible to miss someone or something. It was a guttural missing that couldn't be filled by anything else.



"Can somebody help me!" I can hear voices fading away. Everything becomes dark, I can't hold on any longer I let the darkness take over me.

#53

AT THE HOSPITAL

"Has the mortuary confirmed anything yet?" The doctor ask the nurse's.

"Nothing yet, no response what so ever." The nurse replies.

"Are you sure you did the process correctly?"

"Yes doc," The doctor goes through the Ayanda's file reading through the notes.

"The coroner requires that the person's body be left exactly as it was at the time of death. The Coroner's Office arranges for the deceased person to be taken to the Mortuary Services Centre. You can request that no autopsy be conducted since we know what's the cause of her death. This request should be directed straight to the Coroner's Office. I don't know why they haven't replied." She sighs closing the file.

"In the mean time you can check up on other patients. I can't wait for this day to be over, it was way too traumatic for me. I've been up and down since we lost that patient yesterday." The doctor adds.

"Eish, it's very sad to loose someone you love dearly." The nurse says thinking about the day she lost her mother.

Another nurse comes in running into the doctor's office. "Doctor Msomi! Dr Msomi!" She looks dazed and shocked. "The mortuary people are but....but" she swallows her dry saliva.

"What MaKhambule?" The doctor asks.

"I think you should come see this for yourself." She states with her eyes all out. She has been with this hospital for more than 10 year's. Never in her life has she ever seen something like this! Maybe the world is coming to an end.

BETTINA

"We tried all we could mawakhe. In stead of him getting better he keeps on getting worse. I think you should seek assistance in a traditional way."

"But, the doctor said it's flue." Bettina tells the nurse.

"Nawake njengomawakhe, looking at your child are these symptoms of flu? Look at him and tell me if this is flu. Yinto yabaphansi Lena. Stop wasting time and seek help before you loose your child. Even the doctor's cannot diagnose the problem behind this hence why they keep lying saying it's flu." The nurse advise her. How will she seek assistance when this child has an arrogant father like Ntokozo? Bettina sighs emotionally. She has grown to love Squalosenkosi as her own. And another thing she hasn't been sleeping well lately, Ayanda's situation has been bugging her. Did Ntokozo really kill her? If yes then he is the most cruellest animal she has ever come across. "Think about it, you can prevent this. Don't let science fool you." The nurse walks out leaving Bettina thinking hard. Will she be overstepping if she decides to consult without Ntokozo's consent? But she will be doing all this for him right-well not for him but Squalosenkosi. She pulls out for her phone out of her breasts and sends multiple call-backs to Mangoba. Without waste he calls her immediately.

"Nkosazane," he says over the line. "Ngabe uright?"

"Can you please come fetch me." She says suddenly feeling emotional.

"Have you bee discharged?"

"Yes," she lies.

"Okay I'm coming." He ends the call. Bettina got hold of her bag making sure that everything was there. They didn't come with much just those clothes that they were wearing when they arrived in hospital. They have been wearing hospital gowns ever Squalosenkosi has been admitted.

After a whole hour of her waiting a message comes through Bettina's phone. I'm outside she reads the message and her hands suddenly trembles in fear. This decision she's about to make or take scares her to death.

MAPULE

I take one pull, pulling it to deep trying too escape reality. I never knew that one day I will resort to drugs just to escape the anger and pain I'm feeling, a history of trauma.

It looks like the constant search for pleasure. But the pleasure derived from opioids like heroin or stimulants like cocaine declines with repeated use.

"How can I stop hurting?" I always ask myself this question all the time but I find no answers.

I smoke whatever comes my way. Certain prescription drugs can create changes in the brain, causing powerful cravings and a compulsion to use that makes sobriety seem like an impossible goal. I sometimes hallucinate and see things that are not even there.

I lay on my back letting this thing do its magic, I'm waiting for it to "kick." I'm sitting in the bushes because I don't want anyone to see me let alone know what I'm in hidden places.

I just want all the pain to go away.

I don't know what made me hate my child all of a sudden....but I hate her. Or, is it because she looks like her crazy father too much? But the fact is I hate her and there's nothing I can do about it.

I dust myself getting up from the ground. I'm now alive and I feel like I'm the one that matters. I'm walking freely like I have no troubles at all. I'm more lighter and happier. It's time I go home, I left that house since yesterday and never even bothered to check up on them. I now realise how much I've hurt my daughter...ow my poor baby.

I finally arrive home and it's almost midday. I see Mbalienhle playing around the yard with stones in her hands. I smile highly like I'm floating in water. I open my arms wide waiting for her to jump to the embrace. She stops playing and looks at me....she stands up and runs into the house.

"Hau," I say in shock. Why would she run away from her mother. I step inside my father's compound still high as hell. "Sanibona." I find them sited on the couch watching gospel. Mbalienhle is sitting on my father's lap. No one pays attention to me but since because I'm high and happy I'll just walk right past them.

"Go back where you coming from." My father hisses without even glaring a glimpse of me.

"Excuse me?" Why would he chase me out of his house?

"I said get out!" He roars making me to jump, damn my fix vanished immediately out of my system. I look at Mbalienhle jump off my father's lap and cling onto my mother.

"Baba," I've never seen my father looking this murderous before. Maybe it's time I tell them what I went through. No one knows other than myself but I decided to keep quiet. I kneel down in front of him already swimming in my own pool of tears.

"Mapule, what has gotten into you ngampela?" She says in her tiny voice with her eyes glistening in tears. "Do you really hate me that much mntanami?" She asks and I gasp in shock holding my chest.

"Cha mah," I rub my hands together out of shame.

"Then what is it? Why can't you open up to me? Am I not your mother? Am I not suppose to be your friend?"

"You are," I sob loudly.

"Masuqedile ukubikisa phuma lakwami." He means it and I can't have that.

"Ma nawe baba. I would like to apologize for my behaviour. The truth is Ntokozo....he said he would change and be a better man for his kids. He lied and mislead me saying that he will work on his ways and be a better man for us, all along he was lying! Bettina is dying in silence in that house. What he did to me in the bushes he is doing it again to another woman. I heard her cries but I couldn't do anything. I can see that she is dying slowly inside. I wish I helped her in a way. I hate myself for not fighting Ntokozo. I hate myself for not helping when she needed me. Everything, every pain I thought I buried came back. I'm in that dark hole again and I don't know how to get out." I look down and I see my father's eyes getting dark to a point that I shivered in fear. He stands up grabbing his car keys and walks out of his house.

Mapule's father was driving his old van in anger spirit. He should have known that he was sending his child into the lion's den. Not even once has he ever contacted and asked her how she was doing. Not even once has he ever catered for her well-being. He should have seen the changes but he was way too arrogant to pay attention. He was more focused on being a strict father than an understanding one. So basically at this point he killed his own grandchild. He parks outside Ntokozo's house with so much rage and anger in him. Ntokozo walks out of the house with his hands in his pockets. Mapule's father starts the engine and at this point all he can see is red. He moved the car swinging the steering wheel right towards his direction. He did it before and he failed to protect his daughter. Right now he is trying to protect another woman's child. Ntokozo turns around and his eyes widen in shock looking at the car coming towards him in full speed.

BETTINA

She double checked for the coast and walked out of the ward without looking at the nurses who were doing their rounds. She held the sick baby so close to her chest praying that she doesn't drop him since she is running for her life.

She walks past the security with her head down....

"Sisi, can I have your discharge form." The security guy says standing by the gate.

"Discharge form?" Bettina asks clearly confused. Why would the security ask for the discharge form?

Meanwhile Manqoba was in the car. He sighs stepping out and walks up to them.

"Mfana kaMadonsela." They shake hands.

"Long time,"

"I'm back we should catch up. I'm just here to fetch my queen." Manqoba says looking at the Bettina who looked back at him confused.

"Ahhhh skwiza, if I knew I wouldn't have stopped you. You may pass." He says stepping aside.

"Thank you," Bettina thanks the security guard and walks up straight to the car without looking back leaving the guys catching up. She sat at the backseat and wondered why will Manqoba introduce her as his queen....maybe he was just trying to soften up the guard. Even man she ran after only agreed meeting her only at night- was she that ugly? Her inner self ask. Unexpectedly a tear drop falls off. The door opens and Manqoba gets in. Bettina quickly wipe the tears off her face and composed herself.

"So where to from here miss?" He smiles showing his perfect smile.

"Can you do me a favour."

"Anything for you nkosazane." He replies.

"Can you take me to a sangoma." Manqoba raises his eyebrows and waits for an explanation.

"Why,"

"Please, I really need to see a sangoma. I'm not doing this for me but I'm doing it for Sgalosenkosi."

He sigh shutting his eyes. "I don't believe in sangoma's.... Not that I have anything against them. But I just prefer holy water. Don't get me wrong nkosazane....they do their job perfect but I'm just afraid of Zulu medicine." Bettina furrows her eyebrows looking at him in disbelief. What kind of a Zulu man doesn't like imbiza-

"Okay send me to the one you trust then."

After a 45 minute drive they have finally arrived at the place. Bettina wasn't expecting such a magnificent house with such a beautiful garden. Not that they live in unhealthy house's. But she was expecting huts with grass, people wearing amabhayi - red and white in colour, walking around the full yard of people who came to consult.

"Wow," she exclaims in shock. "Are you sure she lives here?"

"Hau nkosazane

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you don't trust me?" Manqoba chuckles turning off the engine. "Masambe nkosazane." That Nkosazane makes Bettina blush. They both step out of the car and walk towards the house.

Manqoba knocks on the door and a young beautiful woman opens. Bettina wondered how does a beautiful woman like this do this for a living.

"I have been waiting for you." She tells us letting us in.

Wait did she just say she was waiting for us? Maybe Manqoba called her.

"I'm sure Manqoba called you."

"Ow no he didn't, please come this way." They walk into some room that looks like a consultation room. "Please leave your shoes by the door." They do as they were told and they sat on the mat. "Hand me the baby." Bettina looks at Manqoba waiting for approval. Manqoba nods his head and takes the baby from Bettina's hand. She lit a white candle and burnt Izinyamazane. Squalosenkosi sneezed and started to shake vigorously. Bettina gasp is shock not knowing what to do.

"Relax he will be fine." Manqoba assures her squeezing her shoulder making her to relax a bit.

"Okay," she exhales out loud relaxing. Somehow she trusts this stranger.

The lady began to pray:-

As we help our child recover from illness, we pray that you bless us with strength and courage to be better parents and caregivers. We pray for your mercy, dear God. Heal this child so that he may continue to be a source of light to us and to others. We place our sick under your care and humbly ask that you restore your servant to health again. Above all, grant us the grace to acknowledge your will and know that whatever you do, you do for the love of us. Amen."

She hands the baby back to Bettina. "Where is the mother?" She asks.

Bettina clears her throat. "She's passed on."

"Where's the daughter?" Bettina looks at her confused.

"What daughter?"

"Usisi kaSqualosenkosi....Ayanda." Bettina gasp in shock and turns to look at Manqoba who was looking back at her.

"She's.... she's not around." The lady nods her head in understanding. She reads the water that's in the calabash and sighs.

"Squalosenkosi needs his sister. Once he reaches the hands of that woman all will be well."

"His father...."

"Worry not about his father. The Ntombela incestors are dealing with him. There's nothing much I could do. Now that you know what to do, do the right thing this time. This will change your life around for the better."

Bettina's eyes filled with tears not knowing what to say. Yes she was sceptical coming here but hearing all this makes her have hope about life. It makes her see her future for the better.

ROMEO

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. Often, the pain of loss can feel overwhelming. You may experience all kinds of difficult and unexpected emotions, from shock or anger to disbelief, guilt, and profound sadness. The pain of grief can also disrupt your physical health, making it difficult to sleep, eat, or even think straight. These are normal reactions to loss—and the more significant the loss, the more intense your grief will be

I look at the grinning Miracle who doesn't even know what the hell is going on. So my kids will grow up without a mother AGAIN!

I don't know how to feel, I'm hurt, angry that she left me. We promised each other happiness.

"God why me?" I've been crying throughout the night, I feel weak like my world is coming to an end. Like I have no life left in me. Coping with the loss of someone you love is one of life's biggest challenges. And people don't get that. They expect you to be strong and fine. Do they even know the love I have for Aya? Do they even know what I'm feeling? No they don't but they expect me to be damn fine!

I slowly get off the bed scooping Miracle up. I like how she has her mother's eyes, seeing Miracle is making my healing to be taking 10 steps back.

"Dada," I pause holding my breath. Did she just say Dada? "Dada," she repeats. Miracle and talking are like oil and water. At some point we thought that maybe she doesn't talk until we sent her to the family doctor but everything was confirmed that my baby is as healthy as a horse. Hearing these words makes me spit joy. She's always grinning unless if she's crying that's where you get to hear her voice. I'm looking at her smiling in hurt. If only my Angel was here.

"Yes baby, I'm your Dada," I say kissing her cheeks. As usual, it has become our morning routine with me brushing my teeth with her on my hip cause I don't trust this little one.

I can hear my phone ringing non-stop. I've been avoiding calls for the whole night, I just hate being pitted. It stops ringing and I sigh looking at Mira who was looking at her reflection in the mirror. My phone annoys me again, this is the fifth time....I guess it might be something important. I wash the toothpaste out of my mouth quickly and walked out of the bedroom. I pick it up and frown looking at the long number on the screen. I swipe to the left and place it on my ear.

"Halo,"

"Halo good day, am I speaking to Romeo Osman?" I remove the phone my ear and look at the numbers again but I don't recall ever seeing it.

"Yes," I answered with a bored tone. I'm trying to mourn in peace!

"Can you please come to the hospital."

Aya's should be at the Mortuary by now, I say to my inner self. Will I be able to bury the love of my life?

"Why is there a matter? I signed all the necessary documents that I was suppose to sign." Again it hits me, Aya is really gone.

"It's more than that, please come to the hospital." The line goes dead and I'm left dumbfounded.

#54

ROMEO

I'm standing by the receptionist with my thoughts battling on its own. Why am I here? Is it not enough that she was taken away from me!

"The doctor is now ready to see you sir," the receptionist tells me after placing the landline down on the table. I hope there is a good explanation for this! I'm mourning and I would like to mourn in peace. I walk along the passage taking giant steps. I don't care if people are looking at me like crazy. I finally reach her office.... I don't even knock I just barge in furiously.

"Mr Osman, please take a seat." She tells me....part of me regrets when I didn't seek for a second opinion but where would I have turned to. Maybe if I was a traditional man I would have consulted like Africans do.

"Please get to the point,- why am I here?" I don't even want to take the seat that she's offering me. A lot is happening and I'm trying by all means to deal with it.

"I think the news I'm about to tell you will require you to sit down." She smiles warmly. She can't be smiling like a retarched when I just lost something that I value in and with my life with so much pride.

I finally sit holding my breath. I look at her intensely....

"Okay, now that I'm sitting....what is it?" I ask and she opens a file with Aya's name on top. My heart races abnormally making me to sit so uncomfortably.



"So- I don't know how to put this." She takes a deep breath and pushes the file towards me. I look at her confused....

"What must I do with this?" I ask clearly lost.

"Read," she flickers with a pen that's in her hands leaning back. I look at the notes and don't see a God damn thing! Why do doctors have such a bad handwriting.

"How am I suppose to see this horrible handwritten?" I push the file back to her and attempt to stand.

"Ayanda is awake." She says, i pause my breathing and looked at her with seriousness on my face.

"Out of all the things..."You know what I cannot stand this bullshit! I stand up pushing the chair roughly. Two nurses came in to the doctor's office. I just right past them without acknowledging their presence.

"Sorry to interrupt. We didn't know you have company, but your patient seems to be doing much more fine." One says with her hands on her waist.

"Your patient made history Doc, I'm still shocked. I didn't know people wake up from the dead." I'm right by the door almost out of it, I stand still and turn to look at them. The doctor looks back at me and sighs.

"Please take Mr Osman's to his wife's ward." She packs whatever paper that was on top of the table.

"Please follow me," one of the nurses tell me and I waste no time I follow her behind with the doctor following us behind. If this is true then....

After an hour of a crying session I finally decided to calm myself down. Down she is laying on the hospital bed with her eyes closed.

"So people do wake up from the dead. Please tell me that you are joking, that...ow God. How does one wake up from a coma?" I'm too emotional, my throat hurts from all the crying. This, I did not expect one bit.

"People who do wake up from a coma usually come round gradually." She explains.

"Does she remember me though, like anything at all? Does she still have sleep paralysis?" I ask with a hoarse voice full of pain and hurt mixed with emotions of excitement.

"She may be very agitated and confused to begin with. Some people will make a full recovery and be completely unaffected by the coma. Others will have disabilities caused by the damage to their brain."

"So what's in it for Aya at this point?"

"The faster that a person emerges from a coma, the higher their chances of making a full recovery will be. For example, patients who reach a minimally conscious state within three months have a high likelihood of regaining full consciousness."

"Wow," I put my righ hand on my mouth covering it.

I'm left with only her in the room with a lot of confused emotions. I've never cried like this in my entire life.

"I love you beyond the horizon; beyond the sea. outside the understanding, limits, or reach of; past: beyond comprehension; beyond endurance; beyond help. superior to; surpassing; above: wise beyond all others. more than; in excess of; over and above: to stay beyond one's welcome." This is what she once said to me after she googled all that shit. I shake my head laughing. A smile mixed with tears. Aya has that crazy side no one knows or has ever experienced. Imagine someone declaring their love to you using internet.

"I laugh harder with you, I feel more myself when I'm around you. The funny part is I trust you with me. When something goes wrong or right. Hear a gossip somewhere, you are the first person I think about, the first person I would like to share that side of me." I gently hold her tiny hand and look straight into her eyes half opened. This woman is my peace and happiness. How would I have coped without her though. "I love you." She faintly smiles closing her eyes fully. I pat on her head and kissed her forehead. She has to get better to remove all of this hair off her head. I love her head more bald. It just has that sexy thing. It basically compliments her looks. I never knew that one day I will love my woman bald. Rose was more a weave person- she did her hair every now and again. And then Aya came along, and this woman changed my perspective thought in women.

"Our kids are waiting for you, even Miracle can now talk." I chuck thinking about her. Miracle will soon be taking baby steps and I really need Aya to be wide awake and healthy when that day comes. I don't want her to miss out on anything at all.

After the visitation I drove straight to work just to keep my mind busy and hopefully I will find those people gone. I still can't believe that Aya, not just any Aya but my woman is awake. I don't know if God thought of me or probably heard my cries. What I faced was the horrible experience I don't wish even upon my worst enemy. I park my car in my parking space and step out. I feel dizzy all of a sudden, Aya's come back really did a number one on me. I need to dig deep about this issue people of dying and resurfacing. I lean against my Range Rover and held my chest letting a few tears drop. I wipe the tears using the back of my hands and sighed closing my car making sure I lock it. I step inside the work premises and everything is just fuzzy, I seriously don't know how to feel at this point. Was God testing me? I pass a few people by the receptionist and head straight to my office, I didn't even bother to greet because I don't have the energy and time.

Upon arrival I find Mthunzi waiting for me.

"I just want to thank you. Even though I stole from you but you helped me still. I really do appreciate it- I just wish God could protect you and your family. May he bless you for me." I'm still confused.

"What are you on about? What happened? I haven't even entered my office and I'm already holding meetings OUTSIDE my own office. He looks at me a bit astonished, did I say something wrong perhaps?"

"For what you did to my daughter, I don't know what what I would have done." Ow now I get it.

"No hustle," I say opening the door and he follows me inside. Since I'm in a good mood I will let him be. I put my bag on top of the table and make myself comfortable on my chair. This whole office smells Aya's fragrance- I'm pretty sure she hid something somewhere. How do I explain a smell that is always in here, never wares off. I inhale sharply closing my eyes.

I remember the last day she forced me into doing the deed in my office. Whenever I recall those memories my dick just twitch.

"Sir," God dammit! I totally forgot Mthunzi is here with me.

"I'm sorry," I say clearing my throat. "It's okay I was doing something out of the goodness of my heart. Make sure she never skip medication." He nods his head thanking me one more time before walking out of my office.

I couldn't focus in the office the office. I just kept on thinking about the impossible. How did Aya wake up? Apparently she never died

after switching off the machines she was still very much alive. All that gagging and gasping for air was her trying to breathe on her own. Her lungs were adjusting, the airways were opening up. Even though she still doesn't talk but she acknowledges your presences. She smiles faintly and for that I'm grateful.

None the less I'm happy, Nana cried her lungs out and said she will follow shortly with the kids. They have been asking her for far too long now.

I want to get her some roses and I just know the perfect shop for that. The last time I bought flowers from this man advised my in a whole lot of shit I don't remember till today. I park my car at the side of the road closing the window. I step out making sure to lock it and head to the flowers shop.

"Good day," I greet the old man who is bending down cutting some flowers and neatly shaping them. He stops cutting and attends to me. He poses for a bit looking at my face widening in a smile.

"Let me guess, you finally tapped the cookie jar." He says taking off his plastic gloves. This man....what the hell is he talking about? I look at him confused and the old man just chucks coming towards my direction. "Last time you were here to buy roses I advised you to buy the white and yellow one's. Judging from the facial expression on your face right now I will definitely advise you to buy Red Roses for her. Last time I gave you Daffodils which symbols New Beginnings and I can see the glow in you son. This time around Red roses will be a perfect second option.... They carry a meaning of passion, true love, romance and desire. It conveys a message of commitment. And I can tell you are ready for commitment." He pulls out the red roses one buy one neatly packing them.

"Ow trust me, we are getting married." I smile widely and proudly.

"I hope to get an invitation."

"You will be the first." I smile. He hands me the bunch of roses neatly rapped and smells so heavenly. I will have to pass by the house to get one of her vases, hope she won't kill me. "Thank you sir." I take out R200 notes and hand it to the old man without even counting them. I hear him gasp in shock, I won't take the money back. Before he could say anything I walk out of his shop. I know for sure that he won't follow me behind.

Money is not a problem old man, there's more to where that came from. I put the flowers in the front seat, strap myself with the safety belt on and drove straight home.

I park my car outside the gate. Nana and the kids are still here already dressed. I thought they were long gone. What are they still doing here?

"Family," I scan around the house and my house is full of people I do not recognise. You got to be kidding me. So after telling this family to go they decided to bring in more of their family members. Looking at them having a feast in Aya's dining room table. These people have gone too far seriously. Here they are laughing and chatting like there's no tomorrow. Eating the food that I've bought with my money. Not even one of them ever asked how Aya is doing....

"Mkhwenyana, this is my daughter Mahle."

"Okay, so what must I do with her?"

"I was hoping you would show her around. She's not familiar with this place." Rose's sister is really getting on my last nerve. I've been very patient with them through out their unwelcomed stay. Even if they made my kids uncomfortable, still I made them stay and right now I've had enough of them!

"I don't time for nonsense, take whatever garbage you came with in this house and leave peacefully before I call the cops on you all. I've been quite for far too long and you kept on pushing my buttons to the last minute." I hear gasp and shocks. I'm still standing in the kitchen.

"Mkhwenyana,"

"I'll go to my room and when I come back I want all of you gone!" I hiss and angrily. I turn to look at my mother and kids. "Go wait for me in the car." I say I don't know how these stupid people's mind work. I go straight to my bedroom leaving them talking amongst themselves. I open the safe, punched in the code and took my gun out. Good it's loaded. Maybe scaring them will see the seriousness in me. Imagine being uncomfortable in your own space and house.

"Maybe this language.... they will understand better." I say cocking my gun. Hope my kids are in the car cause I don't want them witnessing this, they don't even know I own a gun.

I still find them going up and down, Osman's house looks like a circus. I fire two shots in the air and they scream making me more annoyed.

"I told you to leave my house but you are taking me for a fool!"

"Awu kodwa Jesu."

"Shut the fuck up! Before I count to three I want each and everyone of you out of my sight!" They look at me in shock with their hands covering their ears. Seven unwelcomed guest in this house and I literally can't breathe.

"Okay, we will go." Zimbini tells me.

"When I come back from the hospital I want you all gone." I lower my gun putting the safety on and shoved it on my back. I huff and left them still standing like statues.

We arrive at the hospital and it's pretty quiet. Private hospitals are not that busy like public ones. I park underground in the parking lot, I glance at the flowers on my left and Ramona is hugging them so tightly like she's a human-being. fuck! I forgot the vase for the flowers. My mother hasn't asked me anything as yet and I'm sure she will not ask me any just for peace sake.

"Alright people, let's go." We all hop out of the car.

"Look what we have here." Says a voice behind us and we all turn our heads. My worst enemy!"

"Jack." I look straight into his eyes and I wonder what is he doing this side of town.

"Romeo," we share a gaze of an intense stare until he cleared his throat.

"See you around," he walks out of sight leaving me to swallow heavy lumps.

Jack is someone who I was always in a competition with. Smuggling diamonds has never been easy but having my business on my side keeps everything I do clean. Jack has always tried to make my business the impossible but I still pulled through. I need to keep a close eye on him. I have to make a mental check to inform my guys about him. He can't parade this freely in my home town.

"Fancy Face," my eyes burn with tears. Today she's sitting, she is not laying as usual. She looks much more better compared to last night. She still looks beautiful even after losing weight. Ramona steps forward placing the roses next to her. She faintly smiles blinking rapidly.

"Ow child," my mother has become an emotional wreck but I don't blame her. Aya's situation made everyone's mood sour. I see her looking at Miracle with so much desire to hold her in her arms but she can't. I take Mira from my mother's hand and make Mira to kiss her mother's cheek. Saliva dripping out of her mouth messing her mother's cheeks. I hand Mira back to Nana....

"Bubu," I sit next to holding her tiny hands. I can literally see green veins since her skin is so much pale and white. One would think that she went for skin lightening. "I miss you....we all miss you. When are you coming back home?"

She slightly squeezes my hand, my poor thing doesn't even have the energy to do so. I sigh squeezing her back, -

"Make sure you come back home woman, that home is so cold without you." I kiss her forehead and caresses on her wet cheek. Miracle really did a number one there.

Spending time with my woman eases my soul, it makes my mind function. I really don't know what I would have done after losing her seriously. She's all that matters to me and I don't recall falling for a woman this hard. She is all I need in my life, a perfect puzzle that fits in my life traumendously.

NTOKOZO

I can feel shooting pain, burning sometimes even itching in the limb that is no longer there. Amputation is a devastating and life-changing experience. The loss of both my legs will prevent me from being able to walk without some form of assistance and I don't even know how will I be able to do that. I've just realised that the basic pursuits of daily living will become much more difficult, or perhaps even impossible.

It will be mentally challenging for a person like me to adapt to the loss of sensation of missing my limbs, or alternatively, it could be just as psychologically demanding for a person to suffer from chronic aches and pains.

\*Sighs\*

The pain of knowing that I'm limbless, I don't have legs any longer, for two weeks I'm struggling with the terms of me being limbless. The annoyance of being advised that at least you are still alive makes me sick. No one knows the pain of waking up the following morning only to realise that both of your legs were beyond damaged and you have none. Who ever ran me over really had a strategy of tarnishing my image and I applaud them for what they did!

"Mr Myeni," I roll my eyes looking on the side and stare at the light blue curtains. The mighty Ntokozo is sleeping in a public hospital because he can't pay his bills. My family was informed but no one came to check up on me. Are they that heartless? What did I do to deserve such treatment from them? I wonder how Siqalosenkosi is doing.... Does he have diapers, baby formula? My life is all over the place and definitely a mess. I also don't know how my business doing. Is it still there or has it collapsed.

"Yes,"

"Time for your medication," as if they will help me. I stretch my hand without looking her and she hands me the pills. Pills that could last the whole year. I won't be drinking any of this, I'll just put them in the hospital cabinet. She stands besides me waiting for me to drink them. I throw them in my mouth and drink water pretending to be swallowing.

"I will be back to check up on your stitches," she leaves. I'm left thinking how my life has turned out in just a short period space of time. Another thing Ayanda's face has been haunting me for the worst. What the hell was I thinking? I should have loved her right but what did I do I abused her emotionally and physically. The taste in my mouth becomes bitter and that's when I realise that I forgot to take the pills out. I have no other option but to swallow them.

I fully lean back with me still processing the news of being limbless. So this means I will be using government's wheelchair? I wonder how is my business doing.... Life has showed me another side I didn't expect. Ayanda would have known what to do with me.

BETTINA

"Are you sure you will be fine?" Manqoba asks Bettina who has Squalosenkosi strapped on her back. He has been sick ever since and it's taking a toll on Bettina. They have been living on Manqoba's expenses. Without him she doesn't know how she would have survived.

"Yes I should be fine." She sighs thoughtfully of the journey she is about to start.

"Promise to call me if you need anything." He tells her. Part of him has grown to warm up to Bettina.

"I promise Manqoba." She smiles warmly. How can she forget a man that had her back in tough times. She hasn't set her eyes on her aunty Aphelele for a while now. Even Ntokozo just vanished without saying a word. Manqoba steps forward and hugs Bettina tightly forgetting that there's Squalosenkosi on her back. He starts to cry and Bettina shush him.

"I'm sorry," he steps back and unexpectedly gives Bettina a perk on her lips. She freezes for a moment and perks back. "Call me when you arrive." He looks at her with begging eye's and turn his heels to leave. Bettina steps inside the taxi to Empangeni with a huge lump filled with sadness. Part of her wants to do this and another part of her is afraid. She doesn't know what to expect at this point. What if she will be rejected before she even started? But she was advised to stay positive, and the holy water she's been bathing with for some time now will come in handy. She finally unstraps the baby off her back after having the whole 15 minutes of thinking. She takes out the bottle filled with milk and feed him. The baby is always sleeping, hot, and will have seizures every now and again. Sometimes he would run out of breath....all of this is just too much.

The taxi is finally full and everything is coming to reality for her.

"Ayize ngamasoso imali." The driver tells the passengers, she reaches for Squalosenkosi's bag and digs in searching for the money. She's sure that this is the zip that Manqoba shoved the money in without even counting it. He doesn't even complain for providing for them, for a man who works as a cleaner in some company. She knows he doesn't earn much but he always pulls through whenever she is indeed. Which man takes care of a baby they didn't seed without complaint? Men nowhere days are selfish and heartless but not Manqoba. She finally gets hold of the money and begins to count. She gasps in shock and re-counts again. This is not what they agreed on. Why would he sacrifice on giving her this much. "R1775.50," she says to herself. No this is way too much. She just wanted R500 only!

"Sisi, kuyakhokwa." The driver calmly tells her.

"Ow sorry," she takes out R120 and hands it to the driver. Heck she doesn't even know how much it cost from Eshowe to Empangeni. He hands her back R65.

"R55 itaxi Sisi." He tells her.

"Thanks I didn't know." He pays no mind to her and continues to count his money.

"R10 umbila, R10 umbila." A woman shouts, she has a bucket on her head. When last did she have mealie meal. She opens the window...."sorry! Cela umbila." The woman stops and takes the bucket off her head.

The distance wasn't that long. Before I knew it we are at the Empangeni. I wonder if my home still looks the same. Will my mother even welcome me? Suddenly my stomach is knots, seeing myself approach the Surb area makes me even more nervous. I should be rejoicing that I'm going home but my intestines are moving painfully. Right now I feel like I'm doing the worst decision ever.

"Stop Street," I nervously tell the driver.

My mother will definitely thinks that this is my baby and she will never understand. I knock on the door multiple times until she opened.

"Fununani la?" Her question takes me off by surprise. That is the reaction I didn't expect. She's not pleased at all to see me.

"I came back home." I softly say.

"Who's husband did you sleep with this time around?" She asks and my heart just brakes into pieces. This is what I'm known for? It shows that my own mother did not miss me at all.

"No one," I answer honestly.

"I don't want any trouble Bettina. Take your child and go to wherever you came from." She closes the door on my face and I gasp in shock. I turn to look back.... luckily no one saw. I knock again and this time around she doesn't answer.

"Mama, please open." I say in a shaky voice. I look at the helpless baby sleeping in my hands and tears just drop out. It pains me that I'm in this position. Now I know how people felt like when I was the one who was this mean.

I'm standing by the gate not knowing where to go next. I don't even know what to do at this point. I take out my cracked phone out of my breasts and dial Manqoba, he will know what I need to do. It rings a couple of times and an unfamiliar voice picks up.

"Manqoba's phone hello, hello. Weeh." She disconnects the call. With me just leaving he couldn't wait to be with another woman, who was I fooling? No man will ever want to be with a woman like me. Especially with my ugliness, Manqoba didn't ask me out but atleast he pretended to care about me. I always felt safe around him and he made me feel beautiful even though I knew deep inside that no amount of expensive cosmetics will take the ugliness on my face.



I scroll down my contact list with a dry throat. I pause looking at Mapule's number. But still it's on voicemail. I sigh placing the phone back to my breasts and lead the way. I'm just going to go wherever the road leads me.

I'm standing outside Romeo's gate battling with my thoughts. If I leave the baby here I know he will be safe rather being with me who is homeless and I don't even have a roof for tonight. It's true when they say, when days are dark friends are few. My mother should have atleast let me spend the night here than chase me out of her house in the early hours of the morning.

I ring the intercom twice and the gate slides open. I'm sure they saw me because the gate has an outside camera and an inside one.

This house is beautiful in and out. To even think of me following Romeo behind like a lost puppy. I chuck bitterly thinking of my stupid mistakes I made. The sitting room door is opened slightly. Without knocking I let myself in, the braveness in me leads the way. Maybe it's because I don't care about my life anymore. The moment I set my eyes on her everything just became fuzzy. She's in a wheelchair and chances of her being in a wheelchair are mine. If I have not said what said she wouldn't be here. She looks at me without any expression on her face. She's not angry and sad and that makes me even more nervous. I sit down without being told with the baby still in my hands. He has been on my hands the whole day I'm sure his body is even aching. I place him on the couch and help him sleep peacefully.

I take a deep breath calming my nerves down.

"Where do I even begin?" I say looking down playing with my finger tips. "This is Sgalosenkosi Myeni and he is not my biological my son." I sigh and tilt my head only to find her looking right straight at me with her tiny face. I find myself smiling and quickly compose myself.

"I'm not here to cause any drama or havoc to your family. The thing is....I'm a nanny to this little boy who is suffering from his father's sins. I don't even know where that so cold father is. He just disappeared last month without trace and his phone has been off since. The main reason for me being here is this little boy. He has been sick for a month without getting better. Instead of him getting better he keeps on getting worse."

"You haven't told me the main reason for you to be here." Still her expression is unreadable.

"I went for consultation weeks back and I was advised that the baby will heal when he reaches his sisters hands." She raises her eyebrows.... "And that sister is you." My voice came out as a low.

"Excuse me," she's breathing slowly

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you can tell that she's still weak. I wonder what Ntokozo did to her.

"Sgalosenkosi is MaNtombela's son." Tell her. She moves my eyes from me and than she looks at Sgalosenkosi for the longest time ever. He begins to shake vigorously.

"This is what I go through everyday," I make him lay on his back and I begin to pat on his back. For me it calms him down but in honest truth it doesn't.

"Bring him here,"

I pick him up gently with him still in seizure. I place him on her lap and she begins to rub his head calling upon Ntombela's ancestors. I step back and let her continue to talk to her brother. He stops shaking-

"Where is his mother?" She asks, I don't know whether to answer or not. She's not even looking at me.

"She passed away months back." I say and she nods her head slightly.

"The first room on your left." She says and I'm lost.

"Pardon?"

"Take him and make him comfortable in the first room on your left."

"Okay," I pick him up and do as I'm told.

I kiss his forehead after making him comfortable in the baby's bed that I found in here. I leave the door open incase if he cries so that she could hear him, I find her still seated watching TV.

"Usalekahle," I pick up my bag not knowing where I'm going. It's already dark and I don't know whom to contact. All my relatives are miles away. If only we didn't move I would have known whom to contact.

"What happened to MaNtombela?" She asks as I place my bag on my shoulder. I'm preparing to leave....

"Apparently she lost her memory and the last memory she had was you. She didn't even remember giving birth. She committed suicide in hospital. That's all I know." I just lay out what I know.

"Chomza," a male shouts entering the house with his big bag. She smiles faintly but you can tell that she's excited to see him. I've seen this man before but I cannot recall where and when. He walks past me to hug her so tight making her to flinch in pain.

"Ouch,"

"Sorry, I came as soon as husband Mlungu called me. You were finally discharged. I'm so happy for you, omg don't believe this." He sits on a couch that's next to her.

"How was your trip?"

"Boring as usual."

I clear my throat and they turn to look in my direction.

"I'm sorry to disturb, but I'm on my way out." I say and turn to leave.

"You can stay, I could use some company."

"Erm.... I don't want to intrude your private space." I smile awkwardly.

"No you not." I sigh not to sure of what she's saying.

"I don't want your husband finding me here. You know hell will brake loose."

"His mine to deal with."

I have no other choice but to drop my bag on the floor and sit where I was sitting.

"You can use the room where your son is." She tells me and that shocks me a little.

"He is not...." She cuts me short before I could even proceed.

"He is." I don't eject any longer I just do as I'm told. Honest truth, this house is beautiful inside out. This room is bigger than the one I have at home. I wish I had my own house like this. A tear escapes my eye, maybe it's not too late to correct my wrongs. I'll start by apologizing to her and tell her the truth of what led to the shooting.

An hour being with them you can tell that they are really close loving friends. I find my inner self asking myself a question. 'why don't I have any friends?' and I know the answer to the question. 'jealousy and greed made me have no friends!'

"Can I use the bathroom?" I suddenly feel and become emotional and I don't know why.

"Your room has a bathroom." I stand up in full speed and flew to the bathroom closing the door behind me. I sink down on the floor and burst into tears. Come to think of it I don't know how it feels to have a friend.

"Halo, are you okay in there?" The guys, whom I got to learn that his name is Dumisani asks.

"I just need sometime alone!" I snap.

"Okay," I hear footsteps disappearing until I hear non. I start crying all over again because of pain I'm feeling. The pain of Ntokozo, messing with my own life-.

"What happened?" Ayanda asks after I cried 30 minutes in the toilet. How does she do it?

"How do you do it?" I ask and wait for a response. "How do you forgive someone who brought pain into your life?"

"By moving on and forgetting that they ever existed." She eats her green salad that has a salad dressing in it.

I think it's time I tell her that I'm behind the shooting.

"Will you ever forgive someone who landed you in hospital?" She inhales sharply and puts the fork down.

"Depends,"

"I'm sorry," I fail to hold back the tears.

"For?"

"The.... Ntokozo." I place my hands on my head. "I was jealous of you and began to feed Ntokozo with wrong information."

"Are you trying to tell me that Ntokozo shot me after everything I've done for him?"

"And it's all my fault. I kept on rubbing salty information on his face." I add. She keeps quite for a while hurting. She's still calm and that scares me the hell out of me. What if they gang up on me or call the cops?

"Why? What's that I have that made you be jealous of a woman you don't even know?"

"You beautiful and I'm not. No man ever approaches me, I'm the one who usually run after them. In my whole life no one has ever noticed me. Do you know how much that hurts!" I wipe the mucus. "To make things worse.... Ntokozo violated me to a point I didn't care anymore. I was just waiting for death to rescue me."

"Ubhuhlala naye endlini?" Dumisani asks.

"I was a stay in nanny and a sex slave throughout the day. If I refused he would get physical with me."

"I don't know what to say. Wow,"

"He was so obsessed with you to a point that your name never left his mouth. He would compare me with you all the time. Silly of me I thought maybe I stood a chance at first little did I know that he is the devil himself."

"Some people never change no matter how hard you try to save them from themselves." She says. She pushes the plate aside and gulps down the water while her friend drank wine. This kitchen screams expensive, and the high stools are making me even more uncomfortable.

"What have you learnt?"

"What do you mean?" I ask out of confusion.

"Look at your past and your current life and tell me what did you learn. What did life teach you?"

"Lessons learned from hardships often that reveal limitations, patterns, beliefs, and skills. This shift, which increases self-awareness, is powerful. I have the chance to make new choices based on what matters; how I act, think, and feel; and what I can and can't do."

She nods her bald head slightly. "I should be hating you but somehow....I'd rather not say it."

"Thank you." I muttered.

"What steps are you taking for your life?"

"For now I don't know. I don't even have a room to stay. But I'm a big girl it's time I face reality." I sigh deeply realising that I'm alone.

"Never look down upon yourself like that." She wouldn't be saying this if she knew how much I hate myself.

"Trust me you would also look down upon yourself if you were me, I don't even know how it feels to be in a relationship." I sadly look down.

"Our relationships are the most important things in the world. They're the most crucial factor for happiness and, in combination with your calling, tend to be our reasons to live. For most, family is at the top of the list in terms of values and priorities. What I'm trying to say is there is a man out there for you."

I doubt any man will love me and I have come in terms to accept it. #56

AYANDA

"How is the trip?"

"Trip is fine my love, just felt bad that I had to leave you behind." I chuck listening to him whining.

"I'm not fully fitted to be traveling long distance babe and you know that."

"Yes love and I know." He sighs exhaustedly. I can relate kids are a lot of work.

"And the kids, how are they coping?"

"They are fine. They are somewhere around the house destroying it."

"And you okay about that? Unbelievable!" He laughs softly making me to miss him even more.

"They broke what we buy. Why not spoil them? Dada has money after all."

This man can't be serious!

"Romeo! You are spoiling these kids way too much and I don't like it." I reprimand him. Does he even know how hard it is to raise a spoiled brat? What will I do with so many spoiled brats?

"They still kids babe, they don't understand anything."

"Ow they do dear Mr Man, these little creatures know everything and pretend not to know nun." I add.

"Ow my dear Aya," he continues to and I'm wondering what did I say that tickles him this much. What am I now a comedian? "Did Dumi arrive?" This thing with Romeo for cutting our names short is not ayoba.

"Yes he did...." I pause for a minute battling with my thoughts. Must I discipline him? And if I do what will happen? He will definitely come flying down. They went to Johannesburg to visit his father's family side. I thought maybe he didn't have one cause he never spoke about them. Turns out they do visit from time to time even though their bond is not that tight. I don't even know which part of Johannesburg they went to.

"What's wrong?"

"Erm, nothing. Was just thankful that I'm alive." I lie. Something brakes on the background and I hear Romeo curse.

"Miracle! Shit babe I'll call you back." He disconnects the call.

"Serves you right for spoiling them." I say to myself while laughing. He deserves this. "Babe they too you to understand, we Jesus. These are true devils if he doesn't know."

"How's hubby doing?" Dumisani asks me as I approach them. We decided to spend our evening watching movies cause we were now tired because sad full stories. I walk past the first room and I notice that it's wide open. The lights are dim but I notice a figure sitting on top of the bed. When you are sitting in the sitting room area you are able to see every everything besides the rooms. It's an open space and I live it that way.

I pause looking at this boy sitting in the baby cot with his all eyes out. I don't know whether to take him out or call Bettina. Maybe I should call Bettina because he knows her.

"Bettina, your baby is up." I say, without wasting anytime she jumps off the couch throwing the towel aside and runs towards my direction.

"Ow my God." I see tears dripping down her cheeks. "Boy, boy kaMama." She burst into tears and rushes towards him. Dumisani being a news reporter he is now here standing behind me asking me what's going on.

"Choma, what's going on?" As if I know.

"Hau Dumisani, how will I know if she hasn't said anything."

"Where's your wheelchair?" He asks and I just feel like murdering him right now.

"Don't be Romeo who forces me to use a wheelchair even if I'm able to use two legs!" I snap, they treat me as if I'm the only who is sick. I live their care but damn they are over doing it!

"Mxm, sengathi ungaquleka." He says, and I feel like laughing. So my friend wishes such for me? We both look at Bettina who held Sqaalosenkosi in her arms so tightly with her eyes closed.

"Let's give them space," I tell my nosey friend and she nods in agreement.

40 minutes later Bettina comes out of the room with the bathe Sqaalosenkosi. He is very much wife awake. I didn't see him properly the time he was asleep but right now I'm looking at the younger version of me. Yes the boy does have Ntokozo's features but damn I see myself in him. Funny enough, even after I heard about the shoot out I stayed calmed. It's like I was prepared for this someway. She sits opposite us and puts him on the floor and he begins to pull everything that's from of his face.

"When was the last time I ever saw him this active? Let alone sit. He should be crawling by now but sickness to over. You know ever since Sqaalosenkosi got sick he has always sleeping. A minute with him having is eyes half opened was biggest you could ever find."

"So you are trying to tell me that he was always out?" I want to confirm.

"Always, sometimes I would get scared if I don't see him breathing....it was just seizure after seizure. You Ayanda I went through hell in that house. Somethings are better left unsaid."

"I agree.... Something things are just not easy to talk about at all but hey it is what it is and we learn from it." I shrug my shoulders. "So how did you manage to feed him." I change the topic because it was just getting too intense for me.

"Asleep as he is I would feed him. I had no option, but seeing him here now awake and well spooks me up a bit. Not that I didn't believe that woman but I was a bit skeptical coming here because of what happened." She looks down.

"I'm glad you did. He is my brother after all but all in all you are his mother. I won't take that away from you."

"Do you think I will even let you?" She brushes his big head smiling. She is really fond of my brother and I will not take that away from here. I can only provide him with a sister's lover but not what Bettina can offer him.

NTOKOZO

"Somebody help me!!!! Help!!!," I scream out of panicking, this is what I hate about public hospitals. They do not have an emergency buzzer, we are all stuffed in one long hollway room which is very Michelle meaningless with every person with their sick disease. I feel suffocated and confused. Why is everyone just looking at me like I just lost some mubbles?

"Hep!!!!" I scream once more in the hopes of being rescued. Why am I being tortured in this manner. Why did MaNtombela have to do this to me. Look at her coming towards me. "Hamba sathan!" I try getting off the bed forgetting that I'm limbless. Did I not fall flat on my arse!

"Jesus! Jesus!" The devil is just standing there looking at me with no emotions. The excruciating pains I'm feeling now are beyond every pain I've ever felt. Loosing my own mother didn't feel this way. She points out at me and disappears immediately. Now everyone is surrounding me like I've just lost my God damn mind!

"Help him up." I hear one of the nurses instruct. Ow this is now that they come? The two security guards pick me up helping me to sit on the bed.

"Don't leave me....you hospital is being haunted." They look at me like I've gone nuts. "Please call my wife for me, I need her."

No one says nothing but they burst into laughter and go their separate ways without even saying a word.

"God," I stay leaning back as how they left me. "How will I survive this?"

—

It's in the middle of the night and I have my eyes wide open. Sleeps seems to be drifting away from me. I look at everyone asleep, it's cold and my stiches are aching painfully. I need the sun.... Who am I fooling? It's in the middle of the night! My teeth clashing against each other

my insterstines are tied knots making it hard for me to breathe. Whatever I'm feeling now is totally witchcraft. The back of my hair stands making me to cringe in fear. I pull the sheets up but still nothing works for me. A cold breeze passes by and I hear footsteps by my bed. I scan around my bed there is no one,

"Halo, halo who's there?" I hear my voice being repeated along. My bed moves a bit and I jump on the bed holding my chest. "Halo!" I try screaming but my voice came out as a low.

There she is the devil herself standing beside my bed. I gather all my strength to face this demon!

"You are not real you are dead!"

"Why am I here if I'm dead?" She steps forward and sits on a chair that's beside my bed.

"What do you want from me?"

"My son Ntokozo, I want my son." Her face suddenly becomes red like she's breathing fire. She's choking me, I try fighting her off and my hands just pass right through her body. I'm gagging for air, I wish I could kick and scream but my voice is

"Aibo! Wozani nizobona!" Says a voice. I see there shadows looking down on me.

"Is he trying to commit suicide?" One asks.

"I don't know, useyahlanya lomuntu."

Finally she lets go of me and I can finally breathe. I sit up straight coughing rubbing my painful neck.

"She was here, she tried to kill me!" I tell them.

"Who was trying to kill you sir?"

"Her!" I point out and the devil is long gone. "She was right here I swear." They look at me like I've just lost my mind. One of them I next me with something that made me drowsy making me to see double.

ROMEO

I thought taking my mother to her brother's house will make her relax but no she's here up and down slaving around.

"Nana, will you sit down!" I tell her. You know one would swear that she's a maid. Her and Aya are cut from the same cloth!

"I'm almost done son, just help the kids to bed." I've done that a long time ago.

"I'm sure they dreaming by now." She nods and walks away leaving me to smile. This woman doesn't want to grow old so she could relax.

"Any new woman in your life?" My uncle asks, this one and alcohol are like twins.

"Ow yes my dear uncle. I have an amazing woman in my life." Whenever I think of my Aya my mind just runs wild.

"So you have finally moved on?" That's my cousin Irina, we don't see eye to eye most of the time because she has a dark heart.

"Did you really expect me to mourn Rose forever?" I ask.



"I don't know, but I think it's just too soon for you to be in a relationship." She tells me and I just chuck.

"We are already engaged."

"You are indeed my sister's daughter. When are we getting to meet our beloved daughter-in-law." A smile creeps on my face.

"Don't tell me you support this nonsense father!"

"The nonsense of Romeo being engaged is non of your business. He needs someone to take care of him and the kids. I don't understand why you are being bitter about this."

"Rose was my friend and I feel like he is forgetting her memory." She says.

"Rose and I were not meant to be and I have accepted that. Being with Aya makes me forget about everything. She healed me when I was at my lowest." I say totally being mad at Irina. I don't understand why she says such bad stuff about Aya when she doesn't even know here!

"Wow, two minutes relationship and she's already wiping away all the memories that you had of the person loved and still love. I don't believe this." She storms out of the room leaving me and my uncle confused.

"What the hell is wrong with her?" I ask my uncle who looking at back at me.

"I don't know, I'm so sorry about that."

"Don't need to feel bad about her actions. She's old enough and she knows what she is doing." I will pay no mind to her bit I do not want her any where near my Aya. She had proved to me that once she gets to meet her she will use the emotional blackmail and Aya is not well enough to handle any drama in her life at this point.

"I'm sorry about earlier," here she is again with her backering. I'm just siting by the fire place alone lost in thoughts because I want to be left alone.

"What you said really broke my heart. I'm trying to move and be happy. How will I move on when I know that their are people who don't wish well upon me. That woman found me at my lowest and made me the man I am today." I say.

"And I'm sorry for spoiling your mood."

"Can I be left alone," she looks at me before stepping out. I'm not buying her apology one bit. Irina can be a nuisance in meddling her noise in people's affairs.

I wonder how her man managers her cause I'm honestly not going get along with her. My mood just went from. 100 and straight to 0. Tomorrow I'm going to fly back home and I will love the kids behind. I know I my one person that will make me all smiles.

## SOMEWHERE IN EMPANGENI

"Did you locate the truck?"

"Yes, the driver is here."

"Good not take those diamonds and swipe them with the ones that I gave you. Once you done make sure that you meet me at the mountain next to the hospital." The line goes dead. This man is stupid to even believe that he will betray one man that has taken care of his family for so many years. He stops the truck on the side of the road and inspects. He sees the diamonds and something in him tells him to take them without being noticed. He whistles trying not to draw attention. He inspects underneath the truck. He pulls the wooden plug that is filled with diamonds inside. Of course they did advise him that the plug will be different from the others thats why it was easy for him to locate what he wants.

"All clean you may go." Without noticing the driver of the truck drives out of the companies premises for delivery. Naw that is out of the way he sure knows what is the next step.

A group of black cars with heavily tinted windows block the truck from out of nowhere. They came out of there cars and point on the truck driver.

"Get out of the truck!" One of the man tell him. He can't see their faces. The truck driver lays down on the road with his heart pounding in fear.

"Search everything and destroy if possible." He instructs. 15 minutes of searching they find nothing.

"Jay, we have nothing in here. Its all a trap!"

"No, search again!" The shout amongst each other. They continue to search and destroying everything but they found nothing.

"This can't be happening." He kick the tires and instructs everyone to back to their cars and they drove off in a hurry. The truck driver slowly got up from the ground got into the truck making a U-turn and drove straight to work. He took out his phone and made a phone call.

## ROMEO

I knew that having Jack back in the making will cause havoc in my life. I was well prepared for his come back and trust me I was fully prepared. I know Aya is safe wherever she is even if they try their won't get any close. What's left for me is to fly back home and be hands one.

"Are you sure you want to fly this late. It's 22:00 at night for God sakes!" Nana screams and I'm not having any of that. My gut is telling me to go home and that's exactly where I am going.

AYANDA

A amount of gunshots exchanging outside got me totally on the edge. Romeo is not here and I'm thankful that I'm kids are now here. Gas is being thrown at us and everyone is coughing uncontrollably. I'm trying the password to the secret room and it's not going through. Bettina is shot on the arm while covering Siqualosenkosi who is wide awake wondering what the hell is going on. We have our mouths and noise covered in wet cloths.

"Try again mngani. Ow Jesu I see a shadow." Dumisani paniks in fear. Bettina is groaning in pain holding on tight to Squalosenkosi. I punch the code again it does no go through.

"There's a man coming towards us." He whispers shivering in fear. Aya punches the code again and luckily this time around it goes through after 5 attempts of fail. The man shoots towards our direction.

"Go down," I tell them, everything is white. Smoke is everywhere and the baby is choking failing to breathe. The door beeps and it finally Skoda open. Bettina is kneeling down with the baby underneath her. My eyes are burning and I'm loosing my breath. I use my feet to kick her issue and she rolls down the steps with the baby still tackled in her hands. Dumisani goes in without being told. I try standing up loosing balance due to the amount of gas I have been inhaling. I remove the useless towel off my face finding my way in. Suddenly I'm being pulled back roughly and the door automatically closes.

"No, no, no!" I cry trying to wiggle myself out of this man's hands. He points a gun to my head and cocks it.

"Where are the diamonds?" He ask making me to shiver.

"I don't know." He gives me one hell of a slap at the back of my head.

"I'm going to ask you for the very last time. Where are the diamonds."

My airways are closing on me slowly, if I don't fight now I know I will die. I turn around forcefully and kicked his balls. I want the gun, we wrestle over the gun until I was underneath him. Five gun shot flying around and all I can see is blood between us. We both look at each other loosing breath and balance.

#57

AYANDA

Breathing small amounts of gas vapors can lead to nose and throat irritation, headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, confusion and breathing difficulties. Symptoms from swallowing small amounts of gas include mouth, throat and stomach irritation, nausea, vomiting, dizziness and headaches.

My emotions are ranking up high to a point that I don't know myself. I feel numb, lost and confused. I once did say that my happiness is always short lived. Everytime I try to be happy pain and sorrow comes to me. Never in my life have I ever experienced happiness fully without facing hardship.

A dead weight on top of me. I take all the strength that I have and toss him aside. I stand up after catching my breath through that gas. My chest is burning uncontrollably, my saliva taste like bile. It has that bitter taste I can't stomach.

Through that white smoke I make my way to the door and luckily the code pulls through without a hustle. My eyes are beyond painful, I never knew that gas could do this to a person. I'm bloody and I don't know if I also have been shot somewhere. The door slid open and I make my way in.

"Ow my God!" Dumisani makes his way to me. "You have been shot." He panics. I don't even have the energy in me.

"I saw a bathroom down the passage." Bettina tells Dumisani who was panicking. Bettina has a cloth wrapped around her arm.

"Okay," I respond lightly. Dumisani helps me take off the bloody cloths. At this point I don't care about anything at all.

"Thank God you are not shot!" He exclaims after inspecting my body. Warm water hitting my shoulders making me to calm down. I killed someone and I don't know how to feel right now. Should I be sad, mad, disappointed in myself?

"Ow God," I let tears drip down my face. So now I'm a murderer! I step out of the shower after having a therapeutic session with the water.

I'm laying on the bed breathing slowly, I'm not even mad at Romeo, he didn't know that this would happen. He tried by all means to protect me but the guy was too much of a coward. He couldn't face him while he was around. Why wait for him to be out of town then act. He knew that he will be facing a defenceless woman who can't even use a gun. How did I manage to pull the trigger I also don't know!

"Fancy Face," that's him! I flung my swollen eyes open, I wish I could jump into his arms right now but everything in me is just tired.

"Hey baby."

He rushes next to me scooping me up making me to sit on his lap.

"I'm sorry I wasn't there."

"It's not your fault that he waited for me to be all alone then strike." I tell him, the guilt is written all over his face and I don't want him suffering.

"Are you hurt?" I shook my head no.

"We fought over the gun and some how I found myself shooting him." His eyes widen in shock.

"Don't ever touch a gun with these hands!" He squeezes me into a tight hug. I don't want to let go, I feel safe in his arms. I wish this could just last forever.

"I love you." My mouth blurts out. He tightens the hug.

"Forever," he says making me to blush.

"The bastard escaped!"

"We will find him, tell Shange to send me those fake diamonds." Romeo tells one of the guys that arrived shortly after the shoot out.

"On it." He turns to leave and stops on his track. "Manje Koti you shot him, like BHA, BHA, BHA....I give it to you, you...."

"Spikes go do what I asked you to do and shut the hell up." Spikes raises his hands to surrender and mumbles to himself.

"Whatever I say will be used against you in the court of law, in sickness and in health." He walks out leaving Romeo to chuck and with Aya giggling.

ROMEO

"Any luck?"

"For now no, it's like the dude disappeared into thin air. But don't worry tomorrow dawn he will be singing a different tune."

"Let him hide but it won't be long."

I will forever be grateful to have brothers like these. These men will die where I die.

"Sekeni." That is our signature goodbye as men. We don't say goodbye like women do. Speaking of women I need to be with my woman. The gas has died down, how the hell did that bastard know my movements, because from where I'm standing I was two steps ahead of him. I'm sick and tired of people betraying and walking all over my head. Maybe I've gone too soft that's why people take advantage of me.

"Babe," I find Ayanda asleep in the safe room. She does not want to leave this room and I let her be. The trauma alone of shooting someone dead is taking the healing step backwards. She sits up straight rubbing her swollen eyes. "Don't you want me to take you to the hospital?" I ask and she shakes her head no. I sigh getting on top of the bed sitting next to her. Maybe I should just tell the doctor who's here to check her also.

"I'm hungry." Her voice is husk which is very much unusual and I don't like it one bit. What if this has really affected her?

"What would you like to eat?"

"Anything soft." I know what she wants and I'll make that for her. I head to the kitchen.

I'll make her a green salad and I know just the way she likes it. I don't get it why she likes to chew leaves. I top it with a salad dressing adding diced tomatoes in it. I pass by a room where Bettina is and I'm just wondering what the hell is she doing her. Part of me wants to ask her but no I will wait for Aya to tell me.

"Here you go." I hand her a bowl of salad and she gladly accepts it.

"Where's the baby?"

"The room, the doctor is still busy with him."

"Is he okay?"

"I don't know. Would you like me to go check up on him?"

"Take me with you."

"Eat first I'll take you to them." I watch her as she slowly chews. Now that she is done I will take her to that room.

I get off the bed and pull the wheelchair and help her to sit on it. I wheel her to where the baby and Bettina were.

"Ayanda," Bettina calls out for her. I decided to leave the room and get some fresh air. I don't want to be near Bettina woman. That is one of worst mistakes I've ever come across!

A phone call comes through my phone. I wonder who the hell is calling me so late. I look at the screen and sigh in annoyance looking at the name on the screen. Why the hell will Irina call me this late.

"What?"

"Cuz, I will in Bay tomorrow. Can I pass by your house and sleep over just for tomorrow?"

"Yea sure." I disconnect the call. If she ever touches my Aya, I swear on my father's grave I will forget that she's my family. I've been quite for too long with people walking all over my head doing as they please.

AYANDA

Why did I even come to this room. Now the doctor is fussing over me. I'm fine just a little shaken to what happened earlier. I don't know for how long I will try or shall I rather say pretend to be strong.

"All good for now

but I will prefer you come see me some time around next week for a check up."

"Are we in danger?" I ask. My main concern is my little brother. I may not like his mother but a baby has no sin.

"No it's just assurance. It depends on which gas or chemical is inhaled and how deeply and for how long it was inhaled. Symptoms may include irritation of the eyes or nose, cough, blood in the sputum, and shortness of breath." All the symptoms we had earlier on.

"Ow okay, what if....what if the baby inhaled it deeply. Will that affect him? And if yes what's next?"

"Oxygen is the mainstay of treatment for people who are exposed to gases. If lung damage is severe, a person may need mechanical ventilation. Some people with respiratory failure need a mechanical ventilator (a machine that helps air get..."

I nod my head understanding. I notice that Bettina has a bandage around her arm.

"How's your arm?"

"Numb, doctor gave me something for the pains."

"That's better. I'm sorry about earlier."

"No need to apologize. I would have also done the same to protect my family. No need to feel guilty at all, I truly admire your charisma Ayanda. You are one strong remarkable woman." She tells me.

"Guess life taught me to be this tough." I brush Sqalo's head who was peacefully sleeping.

"I've been thinking, I want Romeo to hire you so you can be able to take care of yourself and the baby." He eyes widen in shock.

"No, you've done enough already. You accepting me in your home after what happened means alot. I can't take your whole arm, that will be me being greedy."

"This job will help you to get back on your feet. You have a baby that you need to take care of." She looks on the floor curling her toes.

"I'm afraid of you know....your husband.""

"No need of you to be terrified of him, he doesn't bite." I tell Bettina who was stuck inside of this room afraid of Romeo. I like how she knows her place without me telling her to.

"Okay I hear you. Thank you for keeping me for the night I really do appreciate it, but tomorrow I will have to go hustle."



"What about Sgalosenkosi? You can't leave him behind. In case you have forgotten you are his mother and I'm just his sister." I tell her and she smiles.

"I don't want to invade your privacy, I don't want to make you feel uncomfortable in your home." She tells me.

"Nonsense, it's time to prove everyone around you that you are worth it. We make mistakes yes but we learn from them. Wena stop pitying yourself, rise and shine and be the woman you've always wanted."

"Thank you,"

"My eyes are tired. Let me go sleep."

Romeo doesn't understand why I have Bettina in my house.

"Romeo it's late and I want to sleep. I told you the reason why I have Bettina in the same house as you. She needs a roof over her head. She can't be living in the streets with a baby. Have a heart please, I know we are all not perfect but that does not mean we should hold that against them. Nawe you have your mistakes but you will not find me holding them against you. You gave Mthunzi a second chance why not give her? Ow and she needs a job." I cover myself with a blanket. Preparing myself for sleep.

"You can't expect me to trust her after everything!"

"Forgiveness is often defined as an individual, voluntary internal process of letting go of feelings and thoughts of resentment, bitterness, anger, and the need for vengeance and retribution toward someone who we believe has wronged us, including ourselves." I advise him.

"Hope I won't regret this tomorrow. That woman cannot be trusted." He seethe his teeth and I feel like laughing at him. I know exactly what to do that will make him agree to everything. I remove the blanket and sit up straight looking at him looking all mad.

"That was intense and hella mad." He is breathing heavily with sweat dripping on his face. This is exactly what I wanted, a weak as I am I know how to satisfy my man.

"So you will look up that offer?" I ask sitting on top of his stomach. He growls dramatically and looks on the side.

"Fine, you win." He is not even looking at me and I don't blame him. He will have to learn to forget and forgive. Life is too short to be holding on to grudges.

"Thank you."

"But you seduced me." He says pulling me to sleep on top of him.

"And it worked like magic."

"How about we go for round two?" He flips me over getting on top of me. This is going to be a long night. Why did I seduce him again?

MAPULE

Therapy is definitely a waste of money. Why not drown your sorrows away by drinking whatever you want to drink. By smoking what you want to smoke.

"Sisi, you are taking a overdose." One of the nayope boys tell her but everything just fall into deaf ears. She keeps sniffing, sniffing this substance so deep making her head light and dizzy. Now this is how high she wants to feel.

"Do you feel that?" She ask the man and the man just looks at her shaking his head. Whatever happened to this young lady really damaged her. Such a beautiful girl resorting to drugs trying to escape the pain.

"No more for you." He snatches the little cocaine that's left out of her hands and puts it deep in his pocket. "When you done being high, make sure you go home you your baby girl."

Mapule clicks her tounge with saliva dripping out of her mouth. The urge of her to vomit gags up her throat making her to spill every food that she was eating this morning. The shortness of breath causing her whiz holding her throat. The man stands up and pushed himself in the corner looking terrified.

"Sistera,"

Mapule falls on her back and begins to shake vigorously with white form coming out of her mouth. "Ow shit." He stands up and runs out of the little shack that they use whenever they want to smoke.

Running along the way to inform her parents was not his option but he had no other option to inform them.

"Kuphi!" Her mother puts her hands on her head with her head spinning. Everything is just fuzzy.

"By the stream." He answers. Everyone knows what goes down the stream. That little shack there is not good for the young youth at all but no one is doing nothing about it.

"Baba! Baba!" She screams running back into the house to inform her husband.

"If she wants to die, let her die. I've done all I could as a father but what does your daughter do? She spits right back to my face." The old man continues to read the news paper without care. He is sitting comfortably on his bed with his reading glasses on.

"Please baba, help my child. Your child is dying." The pain of knowing that a child you carried for nine months might lose their life any minute and you have no control over it. He sighs putting his paper aside and gets off the bed.

"This shall be the last time you inform me about such nonsense. If she doesn't want to grow then let her do as she pleases."

A whole hour waiting without being informed feels like a total torture. This is not how she envisioned her life's child as a mother. Hearing all this breaks her heart, she failed as a mother and the thought of failing as a grandmother scares her to death. Now that the doctor is here explaining everything, everything feels like a dream itself.

"What do you mean my daughter is taking drugs?" This seems so unreal.

"Not only she is taking drugs but she is overdosing. An overdose can lead to serious medical complications, including death."

"Ow nksoi yami. Are the drugs curable? Is there any medication that could help her?"

"We will administer her with Narcan (naloxone), a life-saving injectable medication that reverses the effects of overdose medication. They "wake up" and begin breathing again almost immediately. Don't worry she will be fine. But I will suggest rehab cause if you don't she will sink in deep and she will die."

Looking at her sleeping this peacefully, her mother doesn't understand why will her daughter decide to kill herself.

"Uphile ngabe Yami. Mbalienhle still needs her mother." Her mother says looking at her. All of this hurts too much and doesn't settle well with her at all.

"I don't know what has really gotten into Mapule, one minute she's happy the next minute she's suffering."

"Do what the doctor asked you to do. Mina I've washed my hands off your daughter, I've had enough of her behaviour!"

"Kodwa baba...."

"I don't want to talk about this anymore Mkami." So much of being a father! #58

NTOKOZO

Two weeks have passed and I've been told I've gone mad. You know the pain of being held in a loony with people smashing their heads against the wall. Running around naked, talking to themselves. I've been told I'm on of them.

Can someone with a mental illness live a normal life? With a dedication to ongoing treatment, often beginning with intensive residential care, most individuals can live normal or almost-normal lives.. I know that I'm not mad!

You've crawled into bed ready for a good night's sleep. You begin to nod off, but haven't completely fallen asleep yet. That's when you sense something in the room near your bed. Despite your fright, you can't cry out, run, or scream. You're frozen with fear. She's always standing there looking at me ready to murder but no one seems to understand what I feel, what I see.

"Time for your medication."

This is what I hate the most about this place. The medication, endless therapy and activities.

"I'm not mad, how many times must I tell you this?" I spit venom out of anger. "No one understands how I feel! No one understands what I'm going through!" I snap and turn to look at her and she's still standing. I'm always in my bed because I can't move as I please.

"They all sing that verse buti. Let me help you up."

These tablets always leave a bitter taste in my mouth. In cases like these I always find myself missing the woman that brought light into my life. Aya was a true definition of a woman but what did I do? I killed her for my own selfish reasons.

"Halo lover boy," not this circus of a joke again.

"Kahle hlanyo." I click my tongue to turn to look on the other side. That's what I'm good at, tossing and turning all day until someone decides I see the light and sun.

"Yabona wena, the day you taste my lollipop you won't call me hlanyo." He comes to my side and licks his lips looking at me. What did I do to deserve this? If it's not that old dead woman it's him!

AYANDA

I've had it with this girl! Always complaining and ranting nonsense. How can she compare me with the dead? How dare she! Rose this, Rose that. I'm so fucken tired of her!

"You know Rose...." It's way too early in the morning and she's her to ruin it the best way she knows how.

"Don't you have something valuable to do with your life other than sticking your noise into your cousin's business? Don't you have a life maybe? Keep on comparing me to the dead and you will know me very well. Nxa bloody skeleton, you should gain weight instead of minding other people's business!" I push her aside with so much rage.

"Did you just call me a skeleton?"

"Yes! And what are you going to do about it?" I ask coming towards her. She tries slapping me and I get hold of her skinny hand yanking it off painfully. If I don't deal with her today she will never know me.

My hand fly's across her face making her to gasp in shock. She holds her left cheek in disbelief. I push her on top of the couch getting on top of her. Punches followed by punches, everything wrong that has gone wrong in my life is coming back like a hurricane.

"What happened?" Romeo asks.

"She started all this! I'm sick and tired of your cousin comparing to the dead. Yes Rose was your wife and no one is disputing that. But she's gone, buried and never coming back."

"So hitting her to this extent was the only option?" Did Romeo really ask me that. The devil is really testing me here.

"If given a chance I will do it again." I say looking right at Irina. A little smile that was on her face dissolves a bit.

"Did you hear her?"

"You did a good job babe, I'm proud of you. Whoever compares you to Rose beat the shit out of them." He kisses my cheek and walks out leaving me smiling.

"This is far from over!" She tells me.

"You see the energy that you have use it on gaining some weight, you look like someone who just woke up from the dead."

BETTINA

Being a cleaner is better than having no direction in life. For two weeks I have learnt a lot from Aya. She welcomed me in her home and I will forever be grateful. No woman would have done what she has been doing. She helped me find myself, she helped me realise my worth as a woman. I didn't know that there's this part of me that loves helping people out.

I try by all means not to step on Romeo's toes. I make sure he doesn't see this unpleasant face of mine.

"Bettina, the boss is requesting for you."

"As in Sir Romeo?" Why would Romeo request for her. She didn't do anything wrong now did she? Maybe he wants to brief her on something regarding work.

"Yes Lala." MaMavis tells her. Her heart drums against her chest in fear. Maybe she is getting fired today. She sighs placing the cleaning materials aside. She was just tidying up Mtunzi's office.

"Sir, you requested for me." She sits down on the chair opposite Romeo. Romeo stops typing on his laptop and tilts his head to look at her.

"Bettina, how are you?"

"I'm fine sir and you?"

"I'm good," he pushes his laptop aside giving me his full attention. "I need you to do a favour for me. Tomorrow is Aya's birthday and I need you to make arrangements. Will you be able to pull this in the last minute?"

"As in tomorrow? Couple of hours away?"

"Yes," he takes out his bank card and hands it to me. "But sir."

"You can take the rest of the day off. I'm counting on you. You may take your leave." I stand up from the chair frozen. "Pin 4099."

Now I'm here in town with a blank mind not knowing where to even begin. I know her favourite colour is Beige.

"Halo Sisi, I'm looking for a place.... I don't even know what to say. A company that deal with decorations for birthdays." I sigh feeling emotional. Romeo is putting me on a tight spot and it's just making me emotional. The woman just smiles warmly.

"I understand what you mean, just down the road on your right hand corner, there is a place called Lulu's. They will be able to assist you on your request."

"Ow my God thank you."

How stupid can I be? I've been bouncing up and down sweating myself for just something that is right under my nose. I've been passing that store more than five times.

All these prices in this shop are just ridiculous. Nothing is under R10,000!

"Does the birthday girl has a dress?" One of the assistance ask and I look at her confused.

"I don't think so, this was meant to be a surprise." I turn to look at her. She looks so pretty, I wish the ground could swallow me right now.

"And you are clueless?"

"More than that." I say biting my inner cheek.

"Ask someone who would know her best. Chooses the theme, colour palette, and decorations. Make the decision. Surprise parties are polarizing and also exhausting. Do you have the location set already?"

"Ow God, this is harder than I thought."

"And you only have like 5 hours to sort all of this out. How many guest?" I shrug my shoulders not even knowing how many will be there.

"Not more than 10

Advertisement

I guess." Someone suddenly comes to mind and I just hope they are still around.

He takes time answering his buy eventually does.

"Mfazi," I've gotten used to him calling me that way.

"Mfazi, usuhambile? I need your help as in now."

"I'm in a taxi but it's not yet full. You know I'm going back home today." He can't be serious.

"I need you mfazi, Romeo is planning a surprise birthday party for Aya and I'm on a tight spot here...."

"Say what! Where the hell are you? I'm coming send me the address." Just like that he disconnects the call. Atleast I won't be stressed alone in this.

About half an hour he finally arrives looking all good. If only he was a man.

"Such a waste of sperm." I click my tongue.

"Says febelina who can't plan a birthday party." He rolls his eyes making me to laugh. "what's the budget?"

"Unlimited."

"Then let's get ourselves useful."

10 pm and thankfully everything is sorted. Not even once Romeo called complaining about money. I don't even want to say how much we've spent in total just for today.

"Who pulls a surprise birthday party in one day?"

"Us, we should consider doing catering."

"What! Hell no. Planning is draining." They both enter the house finding Aya watching television with two white girls making noise.

"Choma!" Dumisani screams announcing his arrival. Irina rolls her eyes and whispers to her guest only God knows what.

"Hau, why are you back?" Aya asks looking all drained and I just know that her and Irina where at it again.

"Just missed my friend."

"I'll take these to the bedroom." Shopping bags that contains her presents. Hope she doesn't snoop around, I better make sure that I hide them very well.

ROMEO

Irina is biting more than she could chew. Her disrespecting Aya.... I don't even want to think about it. I arrive at home and I find her passed out on the couch with Bettina next to her. I thought having Bettina around will cause havoc but it is peaceful as ever. I'm just glad that she respects my space and not even once has she tried to make a move on me.



I walk past them heading to my bedroom finding the worst disgusting surprise ever.

"What are you doing here?"

"Hey," she blinks multiple times seductively.

"What are you doing in my woman's bedroom?" I ask again.

"I just came to greet you." She stands up and comes towards me. Even if she wears the shortest thing ever I will never look at her the way I look at Aya. No woman will ever erase that love I have for her.

"In my fiancé's bedroom?"

"Come on, don't be a bore." She aces her hands on my chest. I roughly grab her hair making her to scream.

"Listen here and listen good, you see this....will never end well. Who ever told you to do this tell them they have just dugged their own grave. Now leave this room including this house and never look back." I push her towards the door. She trips and falls on her stomach.

"Take every shit that belongs to you and get the hell out of my house. I have tolerated your shit for far too long." I say yanking off the cover off her thin self.

"Cuz,"

"I hate you Irina get that through your thick skull. I hate you for making my Aya cry. This morning was the last straw. Now get up and pack every shit that belongs to you."

"Can't you see she is not good enough for you!" She screams getting off the bed. I don't hit women but Irina just made me do the unthinkable. "Did you just hit me?" She asks in disbelief.

"And I can do it over and over again. Now leave my house and take that trashy friend of yours."

Good thing her bags are already packed it will be easier for me to throw them outside.

"Make sure you never return and you are not invited to my wedding." I slam the door on her face.

"Romeo open this door." She can bang the door for all I care. She has definitely crossed the line!

NTOKOZO

Every now and again I feel like someone is watching me in my sleep. Someone is here with me in this room. I fully open my eyes only to find Hlanyo looking at me with that unexplainable look.

"What do you want?" My sleep immediately vanishes away and fear takes over.

"To get what's mine. You see I've been very patient with you for the past weeks. I want what's due to me." He laughs as he walks towards the bed. I sit up straight in the dark with all of my eyes out.

"Hlanyo...."

"Yini lover boy, having cold feet." I feel his hands on my head, they trail down to my face. I yank his hands off and try to get off the bed and remembered that I'm limbless. "Don't play hard to get."

"Is it money that you want?"

"I want you." He takes off his hospital gown roughly.

"What do you mean?" I'm confused as hell.

"I want me and you to be an item."

"WHAT! Uhlanya ngampela Wena!"

"Ngihlanyiswa uwena." The bed dips and I know right then that Hlanyo is getting on top of the bed.

I'm pressed on the bed, a heavy weight is on top of me.

I try fighting him off but he is way too strong for me. I try screaming I feel his saliva filling my mouth. He is shoving his tongue down my throat. A giant man on top of me and my mind has come to realisation of what he is about to do. He gets off the bed and I sigh in relief. What would I be if something happened?

I never knew that I would find myself in a situation like this. Being reaped out by another man, watching him stripping the last dignity that you have. My whole soul is gone. I'm laying on my stomach crying my balls out. Every inch of my body hurts, I can't move, how can Hlanyo be this cruel.

"See you around sweet pumpkin." Hlanyo walks out of Ntokozi's room satisfied. It's been long since he played dirty. He would do anything inside of these walls to have his mother and daughter being taken care of. He throws the bloodied hospital gown in the bin and grabs the new one. He walks to his room while whistling. He pulls out for his phone underneath a loose tile and sends a text.

Mission done he waits for a response.

Continue doing until I tell you to stop he smiles reading the response. Him being here is a story for another day.

## MAPULE

If you have an addiction and want to get sober, treatment may be your best option. Beating an addiction to drugs or alcohol requires not only eliminating the physical dependence but also addressing the behavioural issues.

It hasn't been an easy journey I'm proud to say I'm drug free. Thankfully I wasn't an addict as yet. Two weeks without drugs....I feel proud of myself. Attending this program for women makes me see my worth, I almost lost my daughter in the process.

"How do you feel?"

I'm on a 30 day program and I can already see the results.

"I feel lighter like a huge massive stone has been lifted off my shoulders." I say.

"I'm happy to hear that. Many people go to rehab because they realize the detrimental toll their problem has taken on loved ones. Many parents, for example, develop significant stress and financial issues when their child is addicted to drugs, on top of the emotional pain."

"I've caused my parents a lot of pain and strain in their marriage. I wasn't myself and I was going through a lot. I didn't know whom to talk to and where to even begin. The things I thought I have buried aroused within the blink of an eye."

"A trigger in psychology is a stimulus such as a smell, sound, or sight that triggers feelings of trauma. Past traumatic events may be interpreted by the brain as current. This causes the body to experience symptoms similar to the original trauma (such as the fight-or-flight response). Some refer to this as "traumatic coupling," where a trigger is connected to a traumatic experience, causing you to relive symptoms."

"I guess hearing what he did to Bettina triggered all those feelings." I say wiping a tear off my face.

"I need you to do an exercise for me, I want you to write every feeling that you feel whenever you alone. Write everything that you think about and what you wish. I need that tomorrow so we can take another step to healing."

It can be hard to untangle the range of complicated emotions I feel. It can be helpful to explore my feelings, and identify each one. From here I can start to work through my feelings and begin to heal. I sometimes feel embarrassed, humiliated and like I don't want anyone to know what I went through. Sometimes feel isolated and alone, like I'm the only person who's ever been through this or like I'm different from everyone else. It wasn't my fault, my own efforts kept me alive. I didn't choose to be raped. I will feel in control of my life again. It's okay to feel angry. I can channel my anger into my life: my career, exercise, helping others

I put my paper and pen aside and sigh thinking of my life. What do I want to do when I live this place? My heart is still with Bettina, when I live this place.... The first thing I want to do is to go see her. Apologize and move on from the chains. I need to reach out to Ayanda, she tried reaching and I backed away. I was facing a lot of scandals at that moment. I can feel my life taking a new turn. I can feel that I have a new life ahead of me. Life that I've longed wanted. I move away from my bed and stand beside the window looking outside the rehab premises. This is indeed the new beginning for me. #59

AYANDA

Looking at this man kneeling down with one knee in front of his colleagues and family. I don't even know when his uncle came down.

Those four simple words--"Will you marry me?"--can set off a cascade of complex emotions, many of which are about taking a huge step into adulthood.

He asked. (Yay!) And I said yes! Now everything's puppies and unicorns.

I've been shaking my head a countless time agreeing to be the woman who wants to spend the rest of my life with him.

"We all fantasize about that big moment, but it's impossible to anticipate what you're going to feel. Oh child I officially legally welcome you to the Osman's." Nana makes her way to me with her eyes filled with tears. Everything is just overwhelming.

"There's the thrill--he finally did it! But then there are unexpected emotions, too." I say breaking the hug.

"You're making the profound transition from single to married, daughter to wife. So while you're celebrating the start of an amazing new life with the guy you love, give yourself permission to spend some time reflecting on the one you're leaving behind." What will I do with this woman?

I'm all about being the center of attention, every moment after the proposal will be like the best birthday party I've ever had multiplied by a million. Turns out it is my birthday but I've been stuck up in my own world.

"Chomami," Dumisani squeals in excitement.

"Friend." I turn to look at Bettina who looked all nervous.

"Happy birthday," she hands me a little paper bag. I pull her into a hug and she tensed a bit but later relaxed her muscles.

"Thank you." My eyes are burning from crying.

"Thank you." She's forever thankful.

This is where me and Romeo first met, the day he slept on my mat and I played with the kids. That day I still remember it as if it was yesterday. He looked way too good for a woman who had scars but he accepted me with all those scars. Whenever he looks at me I feel the love and the warmth in his heart. Learning that he secretly made me a mother to all these three beautiful humans was overwhelming. I'm their mother and he has always wished for that.

"Poonky," here he is disturbing my peace. "This is were I first met you." He stands behind me and wraps his arms around my tiny waist.

"And you were such a horrible father."

"But you were there playing your role." He chucks holding me tighter. "I love you."

"I love you too."

I look at my ring not believing, last time was just words and I took it as a joke. Mr Man was indeed planning to make me his wife.

"How's my little one doing?" He brushes my flat tummy. After hearing the news of loosing yet another baby broke my heart into a million pieces. Maybe I'm not bind to have more children.

"How I wish." I sigh sadly.

"Trust me when I say nine months down the line you will be having a baby. Come let's go to the other's."

It's a simple intimate setting. A romantic set that I cannot even explain. Light-up marquee letters written Will You Marry Me? Just imagine how romantic they look on the beach at sunset.

These whimsical outdoor proposal decorations create a fun romantic atmosphere. Rose petals on the sand is classic. I don't want to go into details, I'm taken and blown away by all of this. Bettina and Dumisani really out did themselves.

BETTINA

I excused myself, I just want to be alone and unwind a bit. The thought of me being all alone not in a relationship scares me. I only have Siqalosenkosi, such a cute lovely soul. Looking at the waves under the sunset calms me a bit.

Being in nature, a place you feel safe, can lower your blood pressure and stress hormone levels. Likewise, spending time at the beach can lessen anxiety and nervous system arousal, which is what makes you feel stressed and anxious. Too much internet can make one go crazy.

Staring at the ocean actually changes our brain waves' frequency and puts us into a mild meditative state. Listening to the waves activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which makes us more relaxed. In addition, the negative ions in the sea breeze have a mood-boosting effect

"She promised to call me back but she never did." That voice, I'm sitting and I don't want to turn my head. "Nkosazane." Ow my god it's really him. He comes around to stand in front of me. We both stare at each other for quite sometime not saying any word.

"Manqoba," my voice came out as a whisper. I'm...scared? Scared and very, very self conscious. But exhilarating. Like I'm standing on the edge of a cliff and feeling the wind through my hair as I lean over it. Or perhaps the feeling when you're in an aquarium with floor-to-ceiling glass walls and as you look up you see a magnificent whale floating by you. You're almost frightened in your awe, you're delighted to see it, and in a hushed way you're staring up at it, begging for it to look your way.

Did I just compare my crush to a whale? Lol. Got a bit carried away there, I see.

"I love the way you look at me," he says and I just blush like a fool that I am.

"Come greet your man." He opens his arms wide. I slowly stand up nervously from the.... I throw myself in his strong masculine arms. He smells manly Nivea.

"What are you doing here?" Finally, I find my voice.

"You left me just like that and never looked back, why?" We brake off the hug.

"I called you and your girlfriend answered your phone, so I didn't want to sound....I don't know." I shrug my shoulders exhaling out loud. I've told my heart that I will be never seeing this man ever again!

"You mean Nothando, that's my younger sister. I don't have a girlfriend for your information. I was still waiting for you hoping you might come back."

"So what are you doing this side of town?" I ignore his statement.

"We came to the beach with my family and by God's grace I bumped into you."

"I thought I was never going to see you again."

"I had hope and funny enough I trusted my gut feeling. And here I am with the woman of my dreams." He says making me to smile but my smile quickly vanishes. "Did I say something wrong?"

"And then they leave after tasting my forbidden fruit, and it's like I'm dropped into the pits of despair. I feel tired, dizzy, ugly, unworthy. I feel stupid and childish, too, for having my emotions tied so completely to a person who I haven't talked to in some time."

"Even if I get to taste I'm never dropping you. I always told you, you look beautiful in my eyes. I don't care what you think or what other people think. All that matters is you."

"What if you see some attractive one day and...."

"Don't even think about it nkosazane. Let me make you happy."

"I'm sacred," I've never been asked out before, I always do the running after men. Once they smash they pass like I don't exist.

"Of what? Scared of me? You haven't even given me a chance and yet you already having doubts about me, us. I want you Wandle." He sounds desperate and sincere.

"Buti," I've heard that voice before. Why am I always seeing pretty people? I'm sure even my own mother resented me when she first laid her eyes on me.

"Nothando, can you just for once stop following me around." He hisses. The girl just looks at him and smiles.

"Your phone buti," he sighs taking out his phone giving it to her.

"Nothando, this is Wandle and Wandle this is my baby annoying sister."

"Ha Buti you mean she's your girlfriend?"

"Nothando, go play with other kids." She smiles and turns to walk away pressing on Manqoba's phone.

"I should consider myself phone."

Parting ways with Manqoba left me lonely and happy at the same time. I decided to give love a try, hope I'm not going to get heartbroken. He promised to call me and he hasn't called. I'm staring at my phone battling with my

thoughts. Maybe he saw that I was not worth it. Who was I fooling? Manqoba is very handsome to be with a woman like me. I glare at the watch and it's only 8:30, I should sleep because I'm hurting my own self.

My phone chimes waking me up from a horrible sleep. I swipe the screen without even looking at it.

"Hmmm,"

"Is that the way to greet your man?" I roughly yank the sheets off getting out of the bed. I trip my own self but luckily I managed to contain my balance. "What's all that noise?" He asks.

"Erm nothing, I was just waking up." I switch on the lights and lean against the wall crossing my legs.

"Ukahle?" That ukhahle just makes my nipples harden.

"I'm okay, I've been waiting for your call." I say pressing my lips into a thin line.

"And let me guess you thought I was never going to call."

"Yes," I'm embarrassed. Maybe I should just loosen up and go with the flow. I can't keep punishing him like this. He will end up getting tired of me and giving up.

"You should wipe away that negativity that you have in that big head of yours."

"Ouch I'm offended."

"You don't listen, how many times do I have to sing the same song? Why are you mixing me with the wrong crowd? Wandle, if you're going to break my heart with these insecurities then I don't know what to say anymore."

"I'm sorry."

"I'll call you in the morning, by then maybe there will be a little bit of positivity." The line goes dead. What the hell did I just do? I didn't mean to upset him.

I push my legs towards the bed feeling disappointed in myself. I'm sure Manqoba is boiling wherever he is.

ROMEO



Make him to sign on each paper

I press send snuggling myself next to the woman who owns my heart. She is fast asleep and sweating

maybe it's because she has covered herself with a heavy blanket. I need to cover her with something.... A sheet will do and besides it's hot.

My phone chimes underneath the pillow and I'm wondering who might this be so late at night.

"Spikes,"

"Ubhohile."

I end the call smiling from ear to ear. Jack stepped on my toes it's unfortunate that his life ended too soon.

"Baby!" She is burning up.

"Hmmm,"

"Poonky wake up!" The way she's so hot scares me to death. "You know what I'm taking you to the hospital."

If this is not the devil then I don't know what it is. Atleast she's tiny, I'll just throw her at the backseat and drive like a maniac.

The streets are very much quite and empty, no time following the protocols of the road. I need to be in hospital as in yesterday!

I couldn't let them attend her without me next to her. The drip inserted on her left arm, she's grunting in pain and I don't even know where the hell this sudden pain is coming from.

"I will need you to lay straight and tell me where the pain is." She curls herself into a ball holding her stomach. I wish I could take away the pain she's feeling. If she's hurting I'm also hurting.

"Ayanda, where is the pain coming from?" The doctor asks again.

"Abdomen," her voice is faint indicating that the pain she is feeling is very much unbearable.

"I need you to lay on your back for me." She takes time until she manages to lay on her back through those pains. The doctor examines her abdomen putting pressure on it. "Can you go pee for me in this container." She nods her head and struggles getting off the bed. Finally she manages to force herself to the toilet. I follow her behind, "you can wait for her sir, no need to accompany her to the toilet." I sigh stepping back, hope she won't fall and hurt herself cause if she does Lord knows what I will do to this woman!

I'm running out of patience.... minutes later she comes back with the container filled with her urine. The doctor takes it from her hands, she then dips a thin white stick in it and disposes the urine to the toilet.

"I feel like vomiting." Aya tells me.

"Need water?"

"Yea," luckily I always carry a bottle of water in my hand.

"Please lay on your back for me." The doctor tells her. Seems like the pains have died down. She lifts Aya's pyjama vest up.

"I will put a special lubricating jelly on your abdomen. The gel prevents air pockets from forming between the skin and the ultrasound transducer, which looks like a microphone. The transducer sends high frequency sound waves through your body."

She tells her as she pours the gel on her stomach.

"What is the sound of that?" She asks, I look at Aya who looks at me confused. "Congratulations, you guys are one month pregnant." I already new but I wanted affirmation.

"But I was on my periods last week."

"Despite all of the claims out there, it isn't possible to have a period while you're pregnant. Rather, you might experience "spotting" during early pregnancy, which is usually light pink or dark brown in colour."

"So I'm pregnant again?"

"With a faint heart beat." She smiles and wipes off the gel from her stomach.

"What does that mean?" I ask already in panic mode. Aya can't lose this third child. She has been through a lot, can't God give a fucken damn break!

"Last time you were admitted you were shot and had a miscarriage. It's too sudden for you to be pregnant again. Your body hasn't fully healed. I don't want to scare you but...."

"But what?" I ask.

"She might loose the baby."

"No," I sink down on the chair that was next to her bed. This can't be happening, we cannot pass through that route again. It took me forever to make sure that she lets go of the baby we lost.

"Pregnancy can be a great time of joy, but it can also be filled with worry and even sadness — especially if you've previously experienced a miscarriage."

"What's the use because I will also lose this one too."

"Never say such and have negativity. I will advise you to take at least 400 mcg of folic acid every day, beginning at least one to two months before conception, if possible. Exercise regularly. Eat healthy, well-balanced meals. Manage stress. Keep your weight within normal limits. Don't smoke and stay away from secondhand smoke. Don't drink alcohol or have more than one to two cups of a caffeinated beverage like coffee a day. Avoid illicit drugs.

Make sure you are up to date on immunizations. But don't worry I will recommend you to a good gynaecologist. We will concur this by Jesus name."

I left Aya behind due to her BP being on and off. After hearing those news she was never the same again. Hope she pulls through. I sigh sadly closing my eyes trying to catch some sleep. Hopefully tomorrow we will wake up in the different sound of different news.

AYANDA

"Coping with grief after a stillbirth is very personal but eventually it shall pass, don't stress yourself this much. You are upsetting yourself more."

"I remember just saying over and over again, I want her back. I would have given anything to go back to the hospital for them to replace the foetus back to my womb. My mind said she was still alive and they took her out. It sunk after a while that I had a miscarriage. Now hearing these news...." I can't cope.

"I know it hurts but trust our team. We are here for you. We know that for parents the intense grief after losing a baby can cause overwhelming, possibly frightening, emotional and physical reactions. You may feel life will never be normal again. Knowing more about how others experienced the grieving process may help."

"It's hard, I'm scared." I tell the doctor.

"It's okay." She stands up gives me a warm hug. Guess I will see where life takes me this time.

NTOKOZO

"And you are all good to go."

The shame I'm feeling, the pains I'm going through. Was this the same way Aya felt when I....I.... Why was I the monster Ntokozo? Look where life has got me. Hlanyo did all what he wanted to do all-night. I'm being stitches up and it's the most shameful things ever.

"Thank," I humbly say not even wanting to look at the woman in front of my eyes.

"Don't worry you will be fine. Would you like to open a case?"

I shake my head no, what's the use because this guy is not known here, I described him a countless time but no one seems to know.

What hurts me the most is that he literally forced me to sign every dotted line. I practically Gave my own hard earned work just like that. I signed my life, my company, my shares everything! For what? I don't know.

I feel helpless and depressed.

They say pain is your greatest asset. You see, happiness doesn't change you. Pain, adversity, and loss do.

Each and every one of us is sailing uncharted seas every day. Few of us have any idea where we want to sail and most are stuck in a lull in the middle of the sea hoping for a miracle. Unfortunately for me I don't even know which direction I'm sailing to. I find myself waking up with little energy and no excitement, then the chances are high that I am losing track of my life. Those who know what they want in life embrace every new day with exciting plans and the desire to execute them. As for me I have failed recognition!

"Time for your medication," I'm laying on my stomach rumbling deep with my own thoughts. A thought is just words in your brain that cause you to do something, right? Right now I feel like I could just die. There's nothing that I wish upon myself but death.

"Can I have a pen and paper," I'm still laying on my stomach. I can't even move a muscle due to the pain I'm feeling. It's late in the afternoon and my heart is drumming against my chest. What if he comes back to finish me off. Now that he has what he wants he should leave me alone!

"Okay just one second."

"Okay," I whisper feeling down. Events of the woman I've hurt, the hearts that I've broke.... "There you go." She hands me a 72 book and a blue pen. I will just write something from the heart.

\*DEAR AYANDA

I am writing this letter to try to explain myself. I'm not sure if I can ever make up for what I did to you but believe me, it haunts me everyday. I am not perfect nor do I pretend to be, but what I do know is, if I had the chance to do everything over again, I would have hugged you instead of hurting you.

See, when I saw you I saw a light so bright that I couldn't ignore. You, in all your brilliance made me want to be as close to you as possible. I wanted to know you. I wanted to be with you. I wanted all of these things and I had no clue how to get them and I didn't think I deserved them. I lashed out at you because I thought you would never see me the way I see you. I hurt you because I was hurting. I wanted to show you love but I don't know how to give that. Love was given to me but I failed loving you. Sometimes I feel evil knowing that I did what I did to you. I hate that the tables have turned and now I know how you felt.

I know you are an angel in heaven looking after other angels. I would like to meet the baby we lost, but I hope someday we will meet again. Please watch over my kids and protect them from any harm since I have become limbless.

Love Ntokozo\*

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I fold the paper neatly and write the address on it. I still remember it clearly. I memorized it the day Bettina told me. I wonder how are my kids doing.... Are they taken care of? I need to ask Nontokozi my twin sister to be my eyes for the kids since I can't do anything. I know I can count on her and they will get the love from her.

AYANDA

There is nothing that I hate being up and down with a huge stomach. Nine months and we are still counting. Looks like I will be pregnant for ten months. MY This baby does not want to come out, after hearing the news of the possibilities of me miscarrying really broke me into pieces. I was mess for almost two months until the doctors discovered that I will be carrying my baby a full term. But unfortunately, I will not be able to have kids in the future, that is the sad part and I have come to terms into accepting it. And besides the kids I have are more than adequate.

I guess God works in mysterious ways that none cannot understand. I will forever be gratifying for this man that is in my life. Romeo has been nothing but the sweetest man one could ever find. I love him more than words can even delineate itself. What will I be looking for when I have everything right under my nose? I feel appreciated, loved and he makes me feel like I am the only woman in the world. I wonder what would have become my life if I did not meet this soul. Would I have been still stuck with Ntokozo, My Sister's Husband?....

"Pass the ball!" Rebecca screams at the cheating miracle who had the ball held tightly onto her chest. Instead of kicking it she is running around with it. And that saliva.... I do not know what do with it. It is forever dripping, and it scares me. But the doctors assured us that she is healthful. Guess when time passes by it will all vanish away.

My beautiful daughter is now a year old. Miracle is a lot of work I cannot cope with her, that one does not even know I am her mother. I am not even recognised as one. Romeo is filled in that big head of hers. Why did my child take Ntokozo's head? I, till today do not have the answer for that. Speaking of Ntokozo, that one sent a letter couple of months ago thinking that maybe I have passed on. I was wrestles for some time wanting answers to the question that I had in my mind.

Finally, Romeo gave in and sent me to where he was, and he had a hand of Ntokozo being there. That I know but I did not ask. Seeing him in that manner brought a lot of emotions and sadness. I should be abhorring him, but pity is what I felt. When his eyes landed on me... I saw a man almost losing his life. So, he really thought I was dead. He did not believe that I am alive, pregnant and I am somebody's fiancé. I cannot believe it myself either. I sat there next to him and talked like we have never talked before.

"Why did you shoot me?" that was the first question I asked him, and his response took me by surprise...

"I could not bear watching another man loving you unconditionally while I failed. That man treats you like an egg that is going to break anytime soon and that pushed me to the edge a bit. I was jealous of being a failure. I could not just let you go when I knew that my heart still wants you. There is nothing that I hate than coming last in the game."

Devoting time with Ntokozo made me notice that there is definitely something wrong with him, but I cannot tell what it is. Maybe one day he will find himself and be happy again. Unfortunately, I cannot help him find himself AGAIN, that is not my take. Maybe if he were still under my care, I would have handled things in a different manner. The least that I did was to look for a stay-at-home caretaker that will be with him 24/7. I remember fighting with Romeo about this and he was not pleased at all. He asked why I keep helping people that never took interest in me? Why do I keep helping people that continue to hurt me? It is something that is in me. I may hate you today but tomorrow I will be singing another different story and tune. The reason why I did that is because he needs a stable warm home, so that his kids can be able to visit him whenever he wants. I will not deny him Miracle. Even Siquosenkosi do go there from time to time but Bettina makes sure that she spends the night in her boyfriend's place.

Everything happens for a reason. But what I learnt is never stay in an abusive relationship or marriage. Women lost their lives because of that; I was supposed to leave Ntokozo the very first minute he laid his hands on me. I almost lost myself, I almost did not even recognise or cherish myself either.

"What are you thinking about?" Romeo asks wrapping his hands around my midriff. We are at the background watching the kids playing soccer and getting dirty.

"Life," I answer truthfully. "I'm just thankful of the family that God gave me."

"We are grateful for having you as a wife, mother and a sister to Rebecca."

"Please don't remind me of that one. She thinks I'm practically her age." I chuck thinking about her. I am not a make-up person, but Rebecca has turned me into a make-up addict. She forces me to go shopping with her, I am the only one who is allowed to attend school meetings and plays. She practically does not notice Romeo at all.

"She found a mother in you. Who wouldn't be this happy to have such woman as a mother? She is definitely showcasing to the domain and trust me she will do this until she gets married." We laugh that off. I do not know what will happen to me if God decides to take all this away from me.

"And I'm happy to have kids that are very much adorable."

"Let's go have you fed; I don't want you starting my little one Mrs Osman." We decided to get married next year since the year is almost over already. I am in no rush at all. Once my baby is six months old then we will tie the knot.

"When is the baby coming, I have been waiting for ever?" Rebecca whines brushing my elephant huge tummy. She likes sleeping next to me with her hand on my stomach until she falls asleep, then her dad will have to pick her up and tuck her in. That has become their daily routine, but daddy is not complaining. One would swear that I am carrying twins.

"Next month," I reply, and she snorts dramatically.

"That is what you said the last time when I asked you. You know what she must stay in here forever!" she points my stomach.

"You don't mean that." I smile patting on her curly hair.

"I do, miracle is forever following Ramona and we don't get to spend time together anymore. Ronald is always with daddy; I also want a child that will run after me that is why I'm waiting for her to be born." Okay now I get it. She wants to be followed around. I could not contain myself, I laughed out loud to a point that I ended up watering myself. "You have just made my night." I say getting off the bed. Romeo is going to kill me; too bad I am unable to hold it in.

"Ewu,"

"You are the cause of this." I need to shower before Mr Man chases me out of the room.

I am standing in the shower and my back hurts like hell. Maybe I laughed too hard. Everything inside if me is burning to a point I cannot hold it any longer.

I look down at the water and noticed some blood mixed with water. Okay this is not meant to happen at all. I step out of the shower and I leave the water running. I am still naked, and blood is flowing down my legs.



“Go call your father,” I try to sit, and I like my lower part of the body is being electrocuted by the most excruciating pain I have ever felt. Rebecca runs out of the room without asking me any questions. Minutes later she comes back with her dad who looked terrified.

“Babe,” Romeo stops on his tracks and looks at me with his chest rising.

“Daddy, look at the blood.” Rebecca points out my bloody legs.

“Fuck,” that was the last I heard of Romeo saying.

Hearing the news that the baby has been delivered and well is the most exiting news ever. I gave birth through c-section and unfortunately my womb was taken out. It hurts no lies but its for the best. A baby boy, I could not be happier. I wanted the baby’s gender to be a surprise.

“He is perfect just like his mother.” I have never seen Romeo this happy. Feels like this is his first child. What I admire about him is that he loves his kids equally.

“Thank you for giving me such a Precious gift. What do we name him?”

“Raphael Osman.”

“Raphael Gift Osman.” He moves his eyes from the baby and looks at me with those eyes that just makes me want to scream to the whole world of how much I am loved.

“You are loved.”

“You are beyond loved.”

A feeling of fear creeps over, something is going to happen, and I do not know what it is. Maybe it is me thinking of the unthinkable that is not there. I want to go home I hate hospitals!

BETTINA

He pulls out after giving me the magnificent pump and grunts in pleasure cathectic all his cum inside of me. He lays next to me catching his breath.

“That was fun,” at first, I felt like I am being treated like a prostitute. That, “that was fun” did not still well with me at all. Guess I had too many insecurities.

“You always do your best,” I compliment him. He has that tendency of leaving me sky high and wanting for more.

“Your mother in-law will soon be back from church and the food is not ready.”

“Shit!” I sprint out of the bed wearing my clothes not minding his cum dripping out of me. I have no other option but to wipe myself, what if it his cum drips down my thighs and down to my legs. We have a two room bedroom at the backyard making me even more comfortable.

I never knew that me Bettina would be so happily, madly charmed and in love with a man like Manqoba. This man took me from down when I was still zero and made me appreciate and love myself today. I am stirring the chicken stew with a wide smile plastered on my face. This family, not even once they have judged me for my looks. I know I am not the prettiest of them all, but they love me regardless. This chicken stew smells so great, and I should applaud Ayanda for forcing me to learn how to cook. I was the sucker in this department but now, I am the best of the best.

“Do not even dare think about that good for nothing boyfriend of yours in my kitchen!”

“Hau mah,” I just love her sense of humour. The woman that makes me be me around her and not even once she has made me feel like an outsider even if a few family members try giving me a hard time, she is always there to back me up. “Umuntiu uzodla amanyala inkosi impela,” she clicks her tongue and turns to leave the kitchen making me to spurt in laughter. This woman will surely be the death of me.

At least I am done with cooking, so what is left of me to do is to fetch my son. How I have missed that big head of his.

“Your phone has been ringing non-stop.” Manqoba says entering the kitchen with my phone in his hands. I wipe my hands with a dry cloth and quickly attend to it. I swipe to answer, and the person just screams in my ear.

“It’s a baby boy!” that is Dumisani. When the hell did, he arrive that side?

“You lie,”

“He is so cute. You should come down.” We talk for some time and I must say I am genuinely happy for Ayanda. She is one hell of a strong woman.

“Can you fetch Siqalosenkosi for me.” I am still not comfortable being around Ntokozo, even though he has apologised a million times, but I still get that vibe I do not understand whenever I see him. I try so hard to push the past away from me, but I just cannot help but to just think about it.

“Siqalo babe, ay you are making him age if you keep on calling him by his full name.” He turns to leave the kitchen, leaving me astonished. Trust Manqoba with his drama!

“What did I do to deserve a man like him?” I smile tidying up the kitchen. Now I need to go bath and wait for my son. I will be seeing Ayanda this up imminent weekend. I am on leave and me just wants to spend time with my man. Manqoba has corned me to a point of hiding my every belonging. If it were for him, I would be leaving with him under one roof waking up next to him or surrounded by his big strong arms.

Now that my son is here my day is fully fulfilled. No number or amount of words would make me feel the way I do right now. Him and Manqoba have shared quite a magnificent bond throughout the months.

Looking back seeing all those years of suffering from rejection from people you thought they were your friends, your family, and the worst part is my mother being that part of the rejection. But today she wants to be the best mother of the year. \*sighs\* what can I say in life we fall and once you fall you must get back up, dust, hold yourself by hand and move on without looking back.

MAPULE

The service church was good, and I feel uplifted on a whole new level. When was the last time I have ever been to a church service? It is a bit quite without Mbalienhle around. Her aunt Nontokoza came by yesterday and took her for visitation. My daughter is happy where she is, and I can feel it. Not even once she complains about being mistreated. She is simply happy being the eldest sister to Miracle and Sigalosenkosi. I see the Pastors son approaching and my heart decides to skip a beat betraying me. This man is way too handsome, the ways he dresses, the way he smells. Lord knows how to make people look like a sinner. I have just undressed the pastor's son with my eyes!

"That was great testimony Mapule," the Pastors son tells me. Today I decided to share my story and the path I took into changing my life for the better. What I like about him is that he does not hold on to the ball of preaching "I am the Pastors son". He lives his life the way he sees it fit and we have become close in the past few months. Would I be safe to say romantically or am I jumping into conclusions?

"Indeed, it was." I reply waiting for my parents who are stuck inside church doing only god knows what. While I am standing outside by the van looking at white walls of the church being tossed by the burning sun. He looks at me in a way I cannot explain. But the way he is looking at me with is making me blush in a way.

"I am proud of you." He pulls his hands out for a handshake and I just look at him disappointedly. I am expecting more than that! Part of me wants to jump on to his face and give him one hell of a mean punch waking him up from his slowness. I fake a smile and allow him to shake my hand the way he wants. Those soft warm pink hands....

"I am proud of my myself too." And to be honest I am. I recovered from drugs and I will forever be thankful of my parents' for not giving up on me.

"Would it be a bad thing if I ask you out on a date?" Ow hell no! Did he? What the...hell, heck yes.

"Not at all." Now my smile is real and wide. I cannot believe he just asked me out on a date. I have been waiting for those words for months!

“Will text you the time and I will pick you up.” He kisses the back of my hand and turns to leave. Ow Jehovah my prayers have been answered. I collect myself and I am failing to keep myself calm. Ow my god, what will I wear? Are my braids still, okay? I do not want to embarrass him or myself. He is the Pastors son!

My father is definatly driving in a slow motion on purpose. Does he not know that I have a date? Can't he see or feel that?

“Ngizodlula ehlanzeni ngiyobheka inkomo zami.” What the hell! Who uses a car to go look for their cows. Old age is slowly catching up with my father. I sigh feeling defeated and look outside the window. I never knew that my own father could jeopardise my unknown plans unknowingly. He parks on the side of the road and hops out of his tired van. I am sitting by the window with my mother on the middle.

“What were you talking about with that boy?” I turn to look on my right side and this woman is looking at me with all smiles.

“You mean the pastors son?” She did not address him well, so I am going to do that for her.

“As long if enepipi namasende he is still a boy.” I gasp in shock holding my chest. Did my mother just say that?

“Mah! Just minutes ago, you were I church.”

“So? God understands that there are some names that you just can't....”

“I do not even want to hear it.” I speak.

“Must I dig the information out of your entrails?”

“He just asked me out on a date.” The connexion between me and my parents have gone remarkable. More communication and respect. That is what my father has always wanted. A healthy family, guess I had too much anger that was hovering inside of me and clearly, I was lying to myself when I said I have healed, moved on and have forgot about everything.

“How do you feel about it?”

“I don’t know,” I shrug my shoulders. I keep on looking at my phone hoping for something. “I mean he has not even sent me a text.”

“Maybe he forgot. Give him time.” This woman is not helping at all. My father comes back smelling of sweat mixed with the heat. I do not know why he does not hire a herd boy to look after his cows, he is too old to be running around chasing aboDurban and Ntabeni. Yes, my father’s cows have names and they are treated like humans!

I do not know whether to scream, cry or laugh. A text just came through confirming the time and place. I am pacing up and down not knowing what to wear. My mother on the other hand is not helping at all.

“Just wear what you feel comfortable in.” she tells me. I stop pacing and turn to look at the woman I call my mother sitting on top of my bed. It is almost 18:00 pm and the date is around 19:00 pm. I literally do not time on my side.

“I cannot just wear anything mah. Have you ever seen what that man wears, his clothes? They all look expensive, and you want me to go with a R50,00 dress on a date?”

“Kahle ngoba loyamfana ugqoka imali yethu yomunikelo.”

“Mah! Just leave my bedroom because you are not helping.”

“Okay MaMfundisi.” She walks out of my room. What the hell is wrong with my mother?

Finally, I found something in my wardrobe that will suit the date. I am wearing a simple short yellow summer dress with block heels. I let my braids loose and I feel beautiful in my own way. If this is not the look, he likes then I am afraid I cannot change it. I am just a simple girl who does not like to wear dramatically. He should be thankful that I am not wearing any pants. I’m sitting on the couch waiting for him with my parents stealing a few glances at me.

“Khumula ayikho lento.” I swear this woman is here to destroy me.

"He is coming." I assure myself. He is 15 minutes late. I sigh emotionally. Maybe he did not mean it, how do you explain this? A hooter honks outside the gate and a small smile creeps on my face.

"Tell him to come inside. He is disrespecting me." My heart pounds a bit but I send the text regardless. After a short while a knock gently bangs on the door. I go to open, and I find him leaning against the wall with his eyes closed like he did not knock couple of seconds ago. He opens his eyes and looks at me from head to toes. I feel belittle right now; I knew it that he was NOT going to be impressed about my simple look. What was I thinking?

"You look beautiful," he licks his lips making me to blush. When was the last time a man made me draw circles with my toes on the ground?

"You don't look bad yourself." We stare at each other, but I fail to keep the eye contact. "Come in, my father wants to see you." He nods his head and takes a deep respire.

"Sanibona," he is rubbing his palms against each other in respect. He should see himself how cute he looks right now.

"Ngizohlala odabeni." My father says not even greeting back, rude as much. "Ngimudinga ebuyile ngo 11, nextime time mufuna indodakazi yam you should ask permission from me or her mother, Siyezwana?"

"Yebo baba."

"Seningahamba." He continues to watch Discovery Channel. Such embarrassment!

We walk out of the house with him holding my waist sending sensations making my knees weak. He opens the door for me and helps me to sit comfortably and closes the door. He walks around the car and hops on the driver's seat.

"Ready?" he asks roaring the engine.

"Ready,"

"Let's go enjoy our date smurf." Ow hell no he did not!

NTOKOZO

“she gave birth to a baby boy.” I clench my jaws with anger brewing inside of me. If only I did not shoot her, if only I loved her right that would have been my baby that she gave birth to!

“Keep me posted.” I disconnect the call tossing my phone aside. She should be the one taking care of me!

“Smamisa!”

“Buti,” I shake my head thinking of how my life has turned out AGAIN. How the hell did that man decide to take everything from me just like that? The fact that he sent Halanyo to torment me in that mental institution. The fact that he turned me into a sissy by another man makes my stomach turns. I get it, what I did in the past is not a pleasant sin, but I was married to her for God’s sake! They even hired a helper for me. The garage is very much still alive, but I am no longer the owner of it. From being the owner to being a manager. I know get paid by someone not the other way around. A lot of things have changed, I no longer get an erection! And for some reason my guts tell me that, that white boy is accountable for it.

“Try one more time.” I instruct after gulping a glass of whisky. The girl sighs looking afraid, I do not care I just want to get an erection, fuck a pussy maybe I might release all this tension I have inside of me. She begins to unzip my pants; I lay on my back closing my eyes imagining her on top of me like Aya use to. I am in my bedroom trying to find ways to get back at him. Her warm mouth swallows my flat cock. Finally, I get an erection, I groan due to the pleasure I am feeling. “Get on top.” I tell her, she nods her head taking off her clothes. She gets on top of me and positions herself.

“It’s flat.” She whispers.

“Impossible!” I look down and fuck this shit. “DO IT AGAIN!” I startle her, “Don’t you dare cry on me. I know you want this dick.” I spit venom. Her shaking self goes down again giving me a blow job. I am hard again and there is nothing that I want other than to fuck something. She positions herself again and my member dies down again. Anger develops inside of me. I roughly push her off me. “You are useless like that loose pussy of yours.” I get off the bed zipping my pants up. These plastic legs are very much uncomfortable. They make me walk like a robot. I should consider looking for comfortable ones. She is still seated on the floor crying her balls out.



I drag her by her hair making her to scream and kick. If only she gave me what I wanted I would not be doing this. I pull out for my leather belt from my drawer. I untie it wrapping it around my hand. The belt meets her yellow bare skin.

“One simple thing and you fail!” The sound of the belt tearing her skin apart makes me more eager to tear her skin more. Looking at her I see Hlanyo with his sweat dripping on top of me from behind. His semen dripping out of me from my own very behind. My arm is tired, I stop whipping her and look for an object. She is laying on the tiles helplessly, the amount of blood does not stop me from doing what I want to do. I get hold of my toothbrush breaking it in the middle. I spread her legs apart, and I start stabbing her vestal countless times. Her screams are fading bit by bit. Pieces of meat began to fall out while I keep stabbing and destroying it. Why not? It is useless anyway. I can see the virginal bone if there is one through that heavy blood gushing out. She is no longer moving, no sound of life. I drop the toothbrush on the ground realising what I have done. I limp to the bathroom to wash my bloody hands. I am shaking and afraid

I need to leave this place. I cannot go to jail. I instantly send Nontokoza a message informing her of me starting afresh. I pack every clothing and important documents.

I am leaving and I shall be back. This is far from being over. The pain I have endured in that loony hospital cannot be constructed to the pain I am about to cause to all and sundry!

MY SISTERS HUSBAND

#60

AYANDA

There is nothing that I hate being up and down with a huge stomach. Nine months and we are still counting. Looks like I will be pregnant for ten months. MY This baby does not want to come out, after hearing the news of the possibilities of me miscarrying really broke me into pieces. I was mess for almost two months until the doctors discovered that I will be carrying my baby a full term. But unfortunately, I will not be able to have kids in the future, that is the sad part and I have come to terms into accepting it. And besides the kids I have are more than adequate.

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"I could not bear watching another man loving you unconditionally while I failed. That man treats you like an egg that is going to break anytime soon and that pushed me to the edge a bit. I was jealous of being a failure. I could not just let you go when I knew that my heart still wants you. There is nothing that I hate than coming last in the game."

Devoting time with Ntokozo made me notice that there is definatly something wrong with him, but I cannot tell what it is. Maybe one day he will find himself and be happy again. Unfortunately, I cannot help him find himself

AGAIN, that is not my take. Maybe if he were still under my care, I would have handled things in a different manner. The least that I did was to look for a stay-at-home caretaker that will be with him 24/7. I remember fighting with Romeo about this and he was not pleased at all. He asked why I keep helping people that never took interest in me? Why do I keep helping people that continue to hurt me? It is something that is in me. I may hate you today but tomorrow I will be singing another different story and tune. The reason why I did that is because he needs a stable warm home, so that his kids can be able to visit him whenever he wants. I will not deny him Miracle. Even Siqalosenkosi do go there from time to time but Bettina makes sure that she spends the night in her boyfriend's place.

Everything happens for a reason. But what I learnt is never stay in an abusive relationship or marriage. Woman lost their lives because of that; I was supposed to leave Ntokozo the very first minute he laid his hands on me. I almost lost myself, I almost did not even recognise or cherish myself either.

"What are you thinking about?" Romeo asks wrapping his hands around my midriff. We are at the background watching the kids playing soccer and getting dirty.

"Life," I answer truthfully. "I'm just thankful of the family that God gave me."

"We are grateful for having you as a wife, mother and a sister to Rebecca."

"Please don't remind me of that one. She thinks I'm practically her age." I chuck thinking about her. I am not a make-up person, but Rebecca has turned me into a make-up addict. She forces me to go shopping with her, I am the only one who is allowed to attend school meetings and plays. She practically does not notice Romeo at all.

"She found a mother in you. Who wouldn't be this happy to have such woman as a mother? She is definitely showcasing to the domain and trust me she will do this until she gets married." We laugh that off. I do not know what will happen to me if God decides to take all this away from me.

"And I'm happy to have kids that are very much adorable."

"Let's go have you fed; I don't want you starting my little one Mrs Osman." We decided to get married next year since the year is almost over already. I am in no rush at all. Once my baby is six months old then we will tie the knot.

"When is the baby coming, I have been waiting for ever?" Rebecca whines brushing my elephant huge tummy. She likes sleeping next to me with her hand on my stomach until she falls asleep, then her dad will have to pick her up and tuck her in. That has become their daily routine, but daddy is not complaining. One would swear that I am carrying twins.

"Next month," I reply, and she snorts dramatically.

"That is what you said the last time when I asked you. You know what she must stay in here forever!" she points my stomach.

"You don't mean that." I smile patting on her curly hair.

"I do, miracle is forever following Ramona and we don't get to spend time together anymore. Ronald is always with daddy; I also want a child that will run after me that is why I'm waiting for her to be born." Okay now I get it. She wants to be followed around. I could not contain myself, I laughed out loud to a point that I ended up watering myself. "You have just made my night." I say getting off the bed. Romeo is going to kill me; too bad I am unable to hold it in.

"Ewu,"

"You are the cause of this." I need to shower before Mr Man chases me out of the room.

I am standing in the shower and my back hurts like hell. Maybe I laughed too hard. Everything inside if me is burning to a point I cannot hold it any longer.

I look down at the water and noticed some blood mixed with water. Okay this is not meant to happen at all. I step out of the shower and I leave the water running. I am still naked, and blood is flowing down my legs.

"Go call your father," I try to sit, and I like my lower part of the body is being electrocuted by the most excruciating pain I have ever felt. Rebecca runs out of the room without asking me any questions. Minutes later she comes back with her dad who looked terrified.

"Babe," Romeo stops on his tracks and looks at me with his chest rising.

"Daddy, look at the blood." Rebecca points out my bloody legs.

“Fuck,” that was the last I heard of Romeo saying.

Hearing the news that the baby has been delivered and well is the most exiting news ever. I gave birth through c-section and unfortunately my womb was taken out. It hurts no lies but its for the best. A baby boy, I could not be happier. I wanted the baby’s gender to be a surprise.

“He is perfect just like his mother.” I have never seen Romeo this happy. Feels like this is his first child. What I admire about him is that he loves his kids equally.

“Thank you for giving me such a Precious gift. What do we name him?”

“Raphael Osman.”

“Raphael Gift Osman.” He moves his eyes from the baby and looks at me with those eyes that just makes me want to scream to the whole world of how much I am loved.

“You are loved.”

“You are beyond loved.”

A feeling of fear creeps over, something is going to happen, and I do not know what it is. Maybe it is me thinking of the unthinkable that is not there. I want to go home I hate hospitals!

BETTINA

He pulls out after giving me the magnificent pump and grunts in pleasure cathectic all his cum inside of me. He lays next to me catching his breath.

“That was fun,” at first, I felt like I am being treated like a prostitute. That, “that was fun” did not still well with me at all. Guess I had too many insecurities.

“You always do your best,” I compliment him. He has that tendency of leaving me sky high and wanting for more.

“Your mother in-law will soon be back from church and the food is not ready.”

“Shit!” I sprint out of the bed wearing my clothes not minding his cum dripping out of me. I have no other option but to wipe myself, what if it his cum drips down my thighs and down to my legs. We have a two room bedroom at the backyard making me even more comfortable.

I never knew that me Bettina would be so happily, madly charmed and in love with a man like Manqoba. This man took me from down when I was still zero and made me appreciate and love myself today. I am stirring the chicken stew with a wide smile plastered on my face. This family, not even once they have judged me for my looks. I know I am not the prettiest of them all, but they love me regardless. This chicken stew smells so great, and I should applaud Ayanda for forcing me to learn how to cook. I was the sucker in this department but now, I am the best of the best.

“Do not even dare think about that good for nothing boyfriend of yours in my kitchen!”

“Hau mah,” I just love her sense of humour. The woman that makes me be me around her and not even once she has made me feel like an outsider even if a few family members try giving me a hard time, she is always there to back me up. “Umuntiu uzodla amanyala inkosi impela,” she clicks her tongue and turns to leave the kitchen making me to spurt in laughter. This woman will surely be the death of me.

At least I am done with cooking, so what is left of me to do is to fetch my son. How I have missed that big head of his.

“Your phone has been ringing non-stop.” Manqoba says entering the kitchen with my phone in his hands. I wipe my hands with a dry cloth and quickly attend to it. I swipe to answer, and the person just screams in my ear.

“It’s a baby boy!,” that is Dumisani. When the hell did, he arrive that side?

“You lie,”

“He is so cute. You should come down.” We talk for some time and I must say I am genuinely happy for Ayanda. She is one hell of a strong woman.

“Can you fetch Siqalosenkosi for me.” I am still not comfortable being around Ntokozo, even though he has apologised a million times, but I still get that vibe I do not understand whenever I see him. I try so hard to push the past away from me, but I just cannot help but to just think about it.

“Siqalo babe, ay you are making him age if you keep on calling him by his full name.” He turns to leave the kitchen, leaving me astonished. Trust Manqoba with his drama!

“What did I do to deserve a man like him?” I smile tidying up the kitchen. Now I need to go bath and wait for my son. I will be seeing Ayanda this up imminent weekend. I am on leave and me just wants to spend time with my man. Manqoba has corned me to a point of hiding my every belonging. If it were for him, I would be leaving with him under one roof waking up next to him or surrounded by his big strong arms.

Now that my son is here my day is fully fulfilled. No number or amount of words would make me feel the way I do right now. Him and Manqoba have shared quite a magnificent bond throughout the months.

Looking back seeing all those years of suffering from rejection from people you thought they were your friends, your family, and the worst part is my mother being that part of the rejection. But today she wants to be the best mother of the year. \*sighs\* what can I say in life we fall and once you fall you must get back up, dust, hold yourself by hand and move on without looking back.

MAPULE

The service church was good, and I feel uplifted on a whole new level. When was the last time I have ever been to a church service? It is a bit quite without Mbalienhle around. Her aunt Nontokozi came by yesterday and took her

for visitation. My daughter is happy where she is, and I can feel it. Not even once she complains about being mistreated. She is simply happy being the eldest sister to Miracle and Siqalosenkosi. I see the Pastors son approaching and my heart decides to skip a beat betraying me. This man is way too handsome, the ways he dresses, the way he smells. Lord knows how to make people look like a sinner. I have just undressed the pastor's son with my eyes!

"That was great testimony Mapule," the Pastors son tells me. Today I decided to share my story and the path I took into changing my life for the better. What I like about him is that he does not hold on to the ball of preaching "I am the Pastors son". He lives his life the way he sees it fit and we have become close in the past few months. Would I be safe to say romantically or am I jumping into conclusions?

"Indeed, it was." I reply waiting for my parents who are stuck inside church doing only god knows what. While I am standing outside by the van looking at white walls of the church being tossed by the burning sun. He looks at me in a way I cannot explain. But the way he is looking at me with is making me blush in a way.

"I am proud of you." He pulls his hands out for a handshake and I just look at him disappointedly. I am expecting more than that! Part of me wants to jump on to his face and give him one hell of a mean punch waking him up from his slowness. I fake a smile and allow him to shake my hand the way he wants. Those soft warm pink hands....

"I am proud of my myself too." And to be honest I am. I recovered from drugs and I will forever be thankful of my parents' for not giving up on me.

"Would it be a bad thing if I ask you out on a date?" Ow hell no! Did he? What the...hell, heck yes.

"Not at all." Now my smile is real and wide. I cannot believe he just asked me out on a date. I have been waiting for those words for months!

"Will text you the time and I will pick you up." He kisses the back of my hand and turns to leave. Ow Jehovah my prayers have been answered. I collect myself and I am failing to keep myself calm. Ow my god, what will I wear? Are my braids still, okay? I do not want to embarrass him or myself. He is the Pastors son!

My father is definatly driving in a slow motion on purpose. Does he not know that I have a date? Can't he see or feel that?



“Ngizodlula ehlanzeni ngiyobheka inkomo zami.” What the hell! Who uses a car to go look for their cows. Old age is slowly catching up with my father. I sigh feeling defeated and look outside the window. I never knew that my own father could jeopardise my unknown plans unknowingly. He parks on the side of the road and hops out of his tired van. I am sitting by the window with my mother on the middle.

“What were you talking about with that boy?” I turn to look on my right side and this woman is looking at me with all smiles.

“You mean the pastors son?” She did not address him well, so I am going to do that for her.

“As long if enepipi namasende he is still a boy.” I gasp in shock holding my chest. Did my mother just say that?

“Mah! Just minutes ago, you were I church.”

“So? God understands that there are some names that you just can’t....”

“I do not even want to hear it.” I speak.

“Must I dig the information out of your entrails?”

“He just asked me out on a date.” The connexion between me and my parents have gone remarkable. More communication and respect. That is what my father has always wanted. A healthy family, guess I had too much anger that was hovering inside of me and clearly, I was lying to myself when I said I have healed, moved on and have forgot about everything.

“How do you feel about it?”

“I don’t know,” I shrug my shoulders. I keep on looking at my phone hoping for something. “I mean he has not even sent me a text.”

“Maybe he forgot. Give him time.” This woman is not helping at all. My father comes back smelling of sweat mixed with the heat. I do not know why he does not hire a herd boy to look after his cows, he is too old to be running around chasing aboDurban and Ntabeni. Yes, my father’s cows have names and they are treated like humans!

I do not know whether to scream, cry or laugh. A text just came through confirming the time and place. I am pacing up and down not knowing what to wear. My mother on the other hand is not helping at all.

“Just wear what you feel comfortable in.” she tells me. I stop pacing and turn to look at the woman I call my mother sitting on top of my bed. It is almost 18:00 pm and the date is around 19:00 pm. I literally do not time on my side.

“I cannot just wear anything mah. Have you ever seen what that man wears, his clothes? They all look expensive, and you want me to go with a R50,00 dress on a date?”

“Kahle ngoba loyamfana ugqoka imali yethu yomunikelo.”

“Mah! Just leave my bedroom because you are not helping.”

“Okay MaMfundisi.” She walks out of my room. What the hell is wrong with my mother?

Finally, I found something in my wardrobe that will suit the date. I am wearing a simple short yellow summer dress with block heels. I let my braids loose and I feel beautiful in my own way. If this is not the look, he likes then I am afraid I cannot change it. I am just a simple girl who does not like to wear dramatically. He should be thankful that I am not wearing any pants. I'm sitting on the couch waiting for him with my parents stealing a few glances at me.

“Khumula ayikho lento.” I swear this woman is here to destroy me.

“He is coming.” I assure myself. He is 15 minutes late. I sigh emotionally. Maybe he did not mean it, how do you explain this? A hooter honks outside the gate and a small smile creeps on my face.

“Tell him to come inside. He is disrespecting me.” My heart pounds a bit but I send the text regardless. After a short while a knock gently bangs on the door. I go to open, and I find him leaning against the wall with his eyes closed like he did not knock couple of seconds ago. He opens his eyes and looks at me from head to toes. I feel belittle right now; I knew it that he was NOT going to be impressed about my simple look. What was I thinking?

“You look beautiful,” he licks his lips making me to blush. When was the last time a man made me draw circles with my toes on the ground?

“You don’t look bad yourself.” We stare at each other, but I fail to keep the eye contact. “Come in, my father wants to see you.” He nods his head and takes a deep respire.

“Sanibona,” he is rubbing his palms against each other in respect. He should see himself how cute he looks right now.

“Ngizohlala odabeni.” My father says not even greeting back, rude as much. “Ngimudinga ebuyile ngo 11, nextime time mufuna indodakazi yam you should ask permission from me or her mother, Siyezwana?”

“Yebo baba.”

“Seningahamba.” He continues to watch Discovery Channel. Such embarrassment!

We walk out of the house with him holding my waist sending sensations making my knees weak. He opens the door for me and helps me to sit comfortably and closes the door. He walks around the car and hops on the driver’s seat.

“Ready?” he asks roaring the engine.

“Ready,”

“Let’s go enjoy our date smurf.” Ow hell no he did not!

NTOKOZO

“she gave birth to a baby boy.” I clench my jaws with anger brewing inside of me. If only I did not shoot her, if only I loved her right that would have been my baby that she gave birth to!

“Keep me posted.” I disconnect the call tossing my phone aside. She should be the one taking care of me!

“Smamisa!”

“Buti,” I shake my head thinking of how my life has turned out AGAIN. How the hell did that man decide to take everything from me just like that? The fact that he sent Halanyo to torment me in that mental institution. The fact that he turned me into a sissy by another man makes my stomach turns. I get it, what I did in the past is not a pleasant sin, but I was married to her for God’s sake! They even hired a helper for me. The garage is very much still alive, but I am no longer the owner of it. From being the owner to being a manager. I know get paid by someone not the other way around. A lot of things have changed, I no longer get an erection! And for some reason my guts tell me that, that white boy is accountable for it.

“Try one more time.” I instruct after gulping a glass of whisky. The girl sighs looking afraid, I do not care I just want to get an erection, fuck a pussy maybe I might release all this tension I have inside of me. She begins to unzip my pants; I lay on my back closing my eyes imagining her on top of me like Aya use to. I am in my bedroom trying to find ways to get back at him. Her warm mouth swallows my flat cock. Finally, I get an erection, I groan due to the pleasure I am feeling. “Get on top.” I tell her, she nods her head taking off her clothes. She gets on top of me and positions herself.

“It’s flat.” She whispers.

“Impossible!” I look down and fuck this shit. “DO IT AGAIN!” I startle her, “Don’t you dare cry on me. I know you want this dick.” I spit venom. Her shaking self goes down again giving me a blow job. I am hard again and there is nothing that I want other than to fuck something. She positions herself again and my member dies down again. Anger develops inside of me. I roughly push her off me. “You are useless like that loose pussy of yours.” I get off the bed zipping my pants up. These plastic legs are very much uncomfortable. They make me walk like a robot. I should consider looking for comfortable ones. She is still seated on the floor crying her balls out.

I drag her by her hair making her to scream and kick. If only she gave me what I wanted I would not be doing this. I pull out for my leather belt from my drawer. I untie it wrapping it around my hand. The belt meets her yellow bare skin.

“One simple thing and you fail!” The sound of the belt tearing her skin apart makes me more eager to tear her skin more. Looking at her I see Hlanyo with his sweat dripping on top of me from behind. His semen dripping out of me from my own very behind. My arm is tired, I stop whipping her and look for an object. She is laying on the tiles helplessly, the amount of blood does not stop me from doing what I want to do. I get hold of my toothbrush

breaking it in the middle. I spread her legs apart, and I start stabbing her vestal countless times. Her screams are fading bit by bit. Pieces of meat began to fall out while I keep stabbing and destroying it. Why not? It is useless anyway. I can see the virginal bone if there is one through that heavy blood gushing out. She is no longer moving, no sound of life. I drop the toothbrush on the ground realising what I have done. I limp to the bathroom to wash my bloody hands. I am shaking and afraid, I need to leave this place. I cannot go to jail. I instantly send Nontokoza a message informing her of me starting afresh. I pack every clothing and important documents.

I am leaving and I shall be back. This is far from being over. The pain I have endured in that loony hospital cannot be constructed to the pain I am about to cause to all and sundry!

THE END