

FAMILY
LOVE
BETRAYAL
FORGIVENESS

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MY SISTERS
Keeper
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Nolwazi Mbuli

MY SISTERS KEEPER

My sister and I have a love hate relationship, well I love her but she hates me. Dont ask me why, cause i also don't have the answer. We grew up together in the deepest parts of rural KZN.

Coming from where we came from, it wasnt easy even dreaming beyond the lush green mountains and running rivers that surrounded us. But for me, the books our mother brought with her everytime she came down from her job in Joburg gave me a sense of adventure. I wanted to see all the places described in those books, and I knew the only way I could get out of there was through school.

I gave my all to my studies, I was pushed to the next class twice, which led to me finishing school at sixteen, my sister on the other hand was content with where she was. I passed matric with five distinctions and got a scholarship to study at Wits.

The whole village celebrated when I left to start my first year.

Twenty years later I wish I hadn't left my safe village. I wish I had been like every other girl in my village who didn't care much about the outside world, I wish I had been content with the obvious outcome for most girls in this village, marry a local man who'll leave you to take care of the home while he went to Joburg to get a job, come back home once or twice a year, get you pregnant and live you to raise the children alone. Why couldn't I be content with that?

My name is Nomonde Mashile, a BCom graduate and a convicted felon. This is my story.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

ONE

I've walked down these corridors for what feels like a zillion times now. I don't know why I still do it when I already know the outcome that's waiting for me at the end of this line, I know I'll still be stuck in here, I know I'll spend months or years before I can even try again. This is my fifth attempt at trying to get parole, and this will probably be my fifth rejection.

I've sat in front of the parole board and told them why I think I deserve parole, why I think I deserve to go out to the world as a free woman and raise my daughter. The last time I held her in my arms she was barely a year old, and today she is blossoming into a young woman, and it pains me to see her pictures and know I had nothing to do with the woman that she is becoming. My mother has done an amazing job raising her, but the guilt of leaving

her with such a responsibility still pains me.

I sat on the cold benches waiting for my turn to go in and "perform" like a circus monkey, telling people why I deserve my freedom. Truth is I'm tired of it, but I need to clear my name, and I sure as hell cant do that in here. As long as I am in here I will always be the girl who tried to kill her husband, and no matter how many times I scream I'm innocent no one will ever believe me until there is concrete evidence. And for as long as I am in here, that will always be just a theory.

Shelley walks out of the office with a smile on her face, maybe things went good in there, hopefully the board is in a good mood today. But then again Shelley always has a smile on her face no matter how she feels. It's one thing I've learned about her while I was in here, she keeps her smile on through anything and everything, and that pisses a lot of people off cause even when they try to hurt her they

never know if it's working or not.

She winks and walks past me going back to our cell. I've shared the same cell with her since she got here five years ago. To this day no one knows why she is in here. There are plenty of theories going around though. Some think she is here because she killed her abusive boyfriend, others say she put a knife on the neck of someone trying to rape her, and our justice system being the mess that it is she's the one who ended up in here, truth is though no one knows, not even the officers, the best they could tell us was that she was transferred from Cape Town. I've stopped trying to get the truth out of her.

"Its time." An officer says poking her head out from the door. I get up and follow her into the office. She shows me where to sit and I do as instructed. I sit down and look at the eight people looking at me with judgement filled eyes. One thing I've learned over the years is to look at their eyes and I would know if

there was hope or i should just give up. I look at each of them and it's the same look as all the other years. At this point I'm not sure if it's because they really dont believe i deserve a second chance or it's because of how high profile my case was.

"Miss Mashile, tell us why you think you deserve parole?" One voice seeped into my zoned out mind. I shook my head a bit trying to get all my attention back to this moment before me. I took a deep breath and tried to find the right words to say, I didn't want to repeat the same words I have said before cause that would just be useless.

"Well, truth is, I could give you a thousand reasons why I believe I deserve parole but it wont matter, you'll still deny my request anyway." I said looking down at my clasped hands. I looked up and found them all staring at me.

"Can you read minds Miss Mashile? We didn't know

we had an extraordinary being in front of us." One of the men said with his husky voice. I'm not sure if he was pissed or irritated but whatever it was, I knew it wasn't good. I turned my eyes to look at him, trying to show him that I wasn't really scared of him and I was standing by my statement.

"No sir, I can't read minds but I've been in this room so many times before I have learnt to read people's facial expressions and know whether there is any hope and right now I don't see any. I have maintained my innocence for the fifteen years I have been in here, I didn't try to kill my husband, but I know my word alone will never be enough, I'll always be the girl that tried to kill her husband, and right now, all I want to do is go home so I can see my daughter attending her matric dance. That's my only wish really. And that's the only reason I have for wanting to get out of here."

Silence engulfs the room and I'm pretty sure I just

fucked up my chances of getting out. I look at the panel and for the first time in a long time I cant tell what they are thinking. Some of them are busy scribbling things on their notebooks and the guy with the husky voice is looking straight at me. After five minutes of silence I figure I'm screwed anyway, so theres nothing I can do now that would make my chances better so I just get up and walk out.

I close the door behind me and allow the tears to stream down my face. I stand there for about a minute just dealing with my emotions. The guard walks over to me and gives me a hug. I know that seems a little crazy to some people but fifteen years in here and you are bound to build relationships. She let's go after a while and wipes my tears.

"That bad huh?" She asks after a while. I take a step back to my reality with her walking by my side.

"I'm never going to leave this place. I just need to

accept that."

"Dont lose hope Monde. Maybe this time will be different."

"That's what I thought the five other times I walked down this corridor. It's never going to happen. I just need to accept that and move on."

She walked me back to my cell in silence. I sat there just looking up at the cold ceiling trying to find some motivation but I found none. I've seen people with worse crimes than mine get out of here leaving me behind. I tried to think what I could have possibly done to deserve this much pain and my answer always leads to one place, the Mashile mansion in Houghton. I want to say I curse the day I set foot in that place but then that would mean having to deny the greatest gift that came from it, my babygirl.

I got to Joburg at sixteen, with a big suitcase full of dreams and a small backpack full of hope. I guess I should have left room for disappointment. My first year at varsity was filled with school and assignments, I never gave myself time to just be a teen and do what most of my peers were doing. I had an entire village looking at me to make sure I did not fail, I had all the maidens looking up to me to show them that there is more outside the green hills and rivers we used to play at, I needed to show them what focusing on your dreams meant, while keeping my virtue and purity.

First year for me went by in a breeze, I studied hard and my results showed. Second year I decided to let my hair down a bit and enjoy my youth. On my eighteenth birthday, my roommate Melody convinced me to go out and celebrate being an adult, officially and I agreed. We went club hopping just the two of us. We first had dinner at some snazzy five star restaurant in Sandton, her treat. From there we went to a club downtown but it wasnt that

happening according to her, for me it was just loud but I was enjoying myself.

We left that club just before eleven and went to another one, but the same thing happened, it wasn't "poppin", we eventually ended up back in Sandton. That club was happening, it was crowded and getting in was a mission and a half. We made it in and sat at the bar for about two minutes before one of the bouncers came to tell us that there were seats in VIP, we followed him and joined the party that was happening there. It was really nice, it was the first time my birthday was so much fun. And the people we were with were kind enough to make sure we got back to res safe and sound.

The next morning I had an early class. Even though I was hungover my education was important. I got to class and I was surprised when our guest lecturer, Paul was one of the guys we were with last night. He recognized me too and after class we spoke a bit.

We ended up being friends, even though most people didn't understand our friendship. He left after three months but our friendship continued. I'd visit him at his place and he'd pick me up and we'd go out.

I knew I was developing feelings for him when I saw him at the mall with a woman. She was beautiful, and well dressed. I got jealous and for the first time ever I looked at my jeans and pumps and I didn't like myself. Somehow my overthinking mind convinced itself that he didn't see me as "girlfriend material" because I dressed like a kid.

I decided to get a job to supplement the little allowance I got from my mother and my sponsor so I can change up my wardrobe. I got a job as a waiter in a restaurant and the tips were good. In three months I had saved up enough to get myself some basic pieces that I could wear everyday without feeling like a fraud. I looked at myself in the mirror and fell in love with my look.

Paul called me one night and asked me to be his date for a family dinner he was attending. I agreed. I found a beautiful black dress that wasn't too tight but it looked good on me. He picked me up and we drove to Houghton. I don't think I had ever seen a house that big in my entire life. It was beautiful, from the moment we drove in from the gate, it felt like an out of body experience.

He introduced me to his family as his girlfriend. Some of them thought we were cute but others raised their eyebrows, especially when they found out I was only eighteen. I mean what would a 25 years old man be doing with an eighteen years old girl, but he didn't care. I didn't either. Even though we hadn't spoken about us being a couple, to me, it meant he had feelings for me too. By the end of the evening we were all lovey dovey. We said our goodbyes and he drove me back to res. He parked outside the gate and we sat in the car talking.

"Since when am I your girlfriend?" He chuckled and revealed his dimples.

"Well, I apologise if that took you by surprise. Now that we are alone, I can ask you properly. Will you be my girlfriend?" I felt the butterflies in my stomach doing gymnastics all over. I dont know how long I'd waited for him to see me as more than just a friend. At one point I had thought he saw me as his little sister. But I was wrong.

"Dont you have a girlfriend? That lady you I saw you with a few weeks back at the mall. Isn't she your girlfriend?" He smiled, it was like he could hear the ping of jealousy in my voice by just talking about that girl.

"That's not my girlfriend. She is an old friend."

A part of me didnt want to believe him, but the loved

up part of me just wanted to stay in this bubble forever. That night we officially became a couple. I had told him about my purity and that I wasn't planning on losing my virginity before I was married, after all as a leader of intombi I had to lead by example. He respected that and he never tried to force me to sleep with him or do anything I wasn't comfortable with. Our relationship was perfect, to me at least.

When I was doing my third year my sister had finally made it to Joburg to study to. She went to the University of Johannesburg, and the entire time she was there, seeing her was a mission. I'd have to beg and plead for her to even see me, sometimes I would guilt trip her by telling her mum would not be happy with us being so distant. It worked because she had way too much respect for our mother and like me, she didn't want to disappoint her.

"It's time for dinner." Shelley said poking her head

into our cell, bringing me out of my head. I got up and went to the dining hall. We sat dished up and sat down in our little corner. If theres one thing I have been able to do since I got here, is to stay away from the little gangs that operated in here. They have tried to recruit me but I've always fought hard to stay in the shadows and not step on anyone's toes. Fifteen years later I can say I succeeded. I wonder if I'll be able to do that for the next five years, when my sentence ends.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWO

It's been a week since I sat before the parole board, and I still haven't got a response. I was right though, this was just a farfetched dream that will never come true.

By the time the alarm rang at 6am I was already up lost in my thoughts. I got up and grabbed my wash cloth and soap and followed the line to the bathrooms. By the time I got there, the line was long. I crossed my fingers and hoped that by the time I got to the front the water would at least still be warm.

My turn came and I got in with nine other women. I took the shower at the far end of the room hoping for a bit of privacy. Lucky for me the water was still hot. I stood under the shower and let the water

cascade over me and tried not to think too much about my parole, or non parole. I closed my eyes and took my mind back to the happy moments in my life. The moments I wouldn't trade for anything in the world. Or maybe I would, over the years I've tried to convince myself that all the things that have happened were fate, that I didnt get here by mistake, that all that happened was meant to happen. But truth is that is just a lie that I use to make myself better about all this.

When I turned nineteen Paul took me to Cape Town to celebrate. Melody being the only friend I had was excited when I told her. But she reminded me that a man doesnt take a girl on a vacation just for the fun of it, somewhere along the line he would want something in return. As much as a part of me believed her, I chose to give Paul the benefit of the doubt, afterall we had been together for almost a year and he still hadn't tried to pressure me into sex or anything like that. Inspite of all the things he did for me he was always respectful of my decisions.

We flew to Cape Town on a Thursday, even though I would miss my Friday classes I wasn't worried, it's just one day, plus I had already asked some of my classmates to borrow me their notes when I got back and they had agreed. We got to Cape Town and drove to a five star hotel, we checked in, then we were led to the most beautiful suite, it had an amazing view of the sea and the beach, it was like a view straight out of a magazine. We had a quiet evening, ordered in and watched the sea from the balcony. If I could ever go back to one day in my life, it would be that day. That day was more than just perfect, I was lost in the beauty that was before me that I didn't want it to ever end, I mean what could be better than watching the sunset while curled up in the arms of the love of your life?

Woke me up early the next morning and we got to watch the sunrise. I swear God was in a good mood when he created nature, there is absolutely nothing like it. As soon as the sun was up Paul ordered

breakfast. We finished eating and went out shopping. I'm pretty sure I bought out all the shops in Cape Town, but Paul didn't mind, he told me to get whatever I wanted. We had lunch at a restaurant by the beach, it was my first time having proper seafood, and I was hooked since then.

The next day I woke up to a room full of balloons and more gifts. I had thought the trip itself was my gift but I was wrong. My birthday was magical. In the evening we dressed up and went to dinner, when we came back from dinner the room was decorated in candles and fairy lights, there were rose petals from the door all the way to the balcony. He asked me to marry him and I swear the world stood still. That moment alone was like nothing I could have ever imagined. Who would have thought my first love would end up being the man I spend the rest of my life with. I said yes and threw myself at him. He slipped the diamond ring on my finger and it fit like a glove. It was beautiful.

Somehow I'd been so lost in my own imagination that I didn't notice that I was now alone in the shower. I looked around and I almost had a heart attack, Mazola and her crew were standing behind me, watching me. I wonder how long they had been standing there. I reached out for the towel but Jess pulled it away. I stood there naked, with my heart beating faster than normal.

See if this was any other person or any other crew I wouldn't be so scared right now. Mazola and her crew are like the elite gang that no one messes with, everyone knows you don't step on any of their crew members' toes and live to tell the tale. They run this prison and everyone knows it, but more than anything they have no problem reminding us about that. And today looks like I will be the sacrificial lamb.

I tried to keep my emotions in check and not show them that I was afraid but I was failing with every

second that passes. I said a little prayer like my mum always taught me to do when I was weary and afraid. I took one step forward hoping to get out of their way before anything bad happens, instead I was met with a thunderous slap that sent me back inside the shower, I slipped and fell flat on my butt in the cold shower. I felt tears trickle down my face. If theres one thing I've learnt about Mazola and her crew, the more you resist the harder they go.

I thought that staying on the floor nursing my painful cheek and nursing my broken ego would be my saving grace but again I was wrong. One of the girls dragged me by the leg and pulled me out of the shower. They started keeping and punching me all over my body. I could literally feel my ribs breaking. I was in so much pain I had become numb. There was blood gushing from my mouth and nose. My body had bruises all over. I didnt even bother asking why they were doing this cause I know how they operate, they do this for the fun of it.

After they were satisfied with their work they walked out after spitting on me. I was in so much pain I couldn't even get up. I tried to crawl on the cold tiles and call for help but I couldn't. It was like my voice was gone. I decided to take a moment to get my strength back but I could feel myself getting weaker and weaker. I heard someone call my name, but it was like the person was so faraway, and the louder they called the further away they got from me, until I couldn't hear them anymore and everything went dark.



I woke up to the sound of machines beeping all around me. I opened my eyes and it was a bit dim. There was just the light from the hallway shining into the room.

"Finally you're up." A voice spoke somewhere in the room, startling me. I looked around trying to figure

out where the voice was coming from but I couldn't see anything. The person switched on the light next to me, completely blinding me for a few seconds. I opened my eyes again and this time he was standing right in front of me. It was Lesego, Paul's older brother.

I tried to sit up but my body was so bruised moving even once was a mission full of pain.

"They did you good huh? I didnt think they would be so thorough about this." I don't know why I wasnt surprised he had a hand in this. Lesego has vowed from the moment the gun that shot Paul was found in my luggage, that he would do whatever it takes to make sure I pay for my "crime". No matter how many times I tried to tell him I was innocent he would hear none of it. I cant blame him though. He was the oldest of six kids, and since their dad died when he was just 21 he had taken up the role of being protector to his brothers and sisters.

"You should have told them to slit my throat, it would have taken a burden off of your shoulders." I said trying hard to mask the pain I was feeling without success.

"Probably. But then that would mean not being able to watch you suffer inside these cold walls." He walked around to the other side of the bed and took a sit on the chair.

"What do you want Lesego? Why are you here?"

"I just came to see my handiwork. It's crazy how cheap a life is in here. Put the right amount on someone's head and in just twenty four hours the results are in. Amazing isnt it. I wish our government would be this fast when it comes to service delivery."

"Well you've seen it, now you can leave."

He got up from the chair and came closer to me. He

placed his hands on the pillow framing my head between his strong muscular arms. I'm pretty sure if he wanted to crush my head he would do it without a hassle.

"Now listen to me and listen very well, I heard about your application for parole, I just thought I should let you know, it will be a cold day in hell before you walk out of those gates a free woman. In fact you should thank your lucky stars that you are still inside here because the moment you walk out of here, there will be a big ass target on your back, and when you least expect it someone might put a bullet or even a knife through your pretty little heart. So be glad you are still in here."

I felt the pillow getting wet from the tears that were streaming down my face and onto the pillow. I knew chances of me getting out were slim but I never thought that someone on the outside was working tirelessly to keep me in here. I could feel my heart

break into a million pieces. Lesego didnt make threats, he made promises, and being a businessman he was ruthless, so when he made a promise he kept it, because he said a man's word is his honour.

I watched him walk out of the room and with him walked out all my chances of ever getting out. I closed my eyes and tried to imagine what would have happened if I had never agreed to go out with Melody that night. If I had done what I'd always done on my birthday, bake a cake and celebrate with my family. If only I hadn't allowed her to convince me to go out. If only.....

If only is not going to save me right now. If only is not going to get me out of this mess. I need to find another way to get out of here. I need to think.

I was disturbed by someone walking into the room and for a moment I thought Lesego was back. I

looked up and it was the prison doctor.

"You're up, thank God." She said as she checked my vitals and blood pressure.

"What's the prognosis doctor. Am I going to die." She chuckles a bit.

"No, you are not going to die, although whoever did this to you did a number in you, you will not die."

"Okay, my body hurts all over, how much damage did they do?"

"Well, you have three broken ribs, one rib missed your lung by just a few inches, you might have a concussion and of course you have bruises. Other than that, you will be fine."

"Thank you."

"Anytime, stay out of trouble." She reached into her coat to find a pen, which wasn't there, before moving to the pocket of her denims. I saw the outline of a phone in her pocket and thought I should take a chance.

"Can I ask you for a favour?" She nodded her head.

"Can I use your phone, u just need to call my mum." I could see the reluctance on her face. "Please I wont be long."

"You know I can't do that, its against the rules."

"I know, but I won't tell anyone. I just need to speak to my mum." She let out a sigh and took out the phone from her pocket.

"Two minutes, I'll wait by the door." She unlocked the phone and handed it to me before walking out. I dialed my mums number and crossed fingers she picks up. It rang for a while then went to voicemail. I dialed again and fortunately she picked up.

"Hello!"

"Mama, its Nomonde. Unjani (how are you?)" I could hear the lump on her throat. She's always been too emotional for her own good.

"Oh mntanami (my child), how are you holding up?"

"I'm okay, I miss you mama."

"I miss you too my baby. I wish you were home."

"Me too. Hows Bontle?"

"She's good, she's getting ready for her trial exams, but you know she has your brain so I'm not worried." She says chuckling a bit.

"That's good, can I talk to her?"

"Eish nana, she's at a study session, I'll tell her you called."

"Its okay mama, tell her I love her."

"We love you too baby. I pray for you every day Nomonde, I dont know how but I know God will bring you home soon, I know it and I believe it."

"Ngyabonga ma, i have to go Okay, this isn't my

phone. I will try and call you some other time."

"Dont take too long Monde man, I dont like this habit of yours of taking forever to call, it worries me."

"I'm sorry mama, I didnt mean to worry you. I'll call soon okay. I promise."

"Good, I love you baby!"

"I love you too mama." I hung up just as the doctor was coming back. I handed her the phone. "Thank you." She smiled and walked out again.

Speaking to my mum was all I needed to get my bearings back in order. I need to get out of here, Lesego can go screw himself. I want my life back and I will do whatever it takes to get it.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THREE

I've spent almost two weeks in here, two weeks that I needed to figure out a way forward for myself. Now that I know Lesego has been working hard to keep me in here, i thought I'd know what to do but to be quite honest I don't know where to go from here. The Mashile's are more powerful than most people care to admit. When they need something done all they have to do is snap their fingers and it gets done, so if I am going to get out of here I need a water tight plan.

I am getting discharged today and it's back to the cold cell. The doctor signed my discharge papers and a guard escorted me back to my cell. I got in and found Shelley laying on her bed. As soon as she saw me she gave me the biggest hug, squishing my already sensitive bones.

"Ouch, ouch, ouch. Shelley." She quickly let me go.

"Sorry, I missed you."

"I missed you too." I put my medication under my mattress and got into bed.

"So what happened to you? I heard they found you close to death in the showers." She asked coming to sit next to me.

"Mazola happened."

"Why?"

"Someone paid her to do it."

"That bitch! I'll deal with her." She said getting up and pacing the floor. Shelley is protective of me. In spite of her ever smiling persona, when pushed, she packs a mean punch and people around here know not to mess with her.

I know I should stop her from going after Mazola, but over the years I've also learnt that when she sets her mind on something she won't stop till she gets what she wants. I decide to lay down a bit. She told

me she was going out to get some sun. She left and I was left alone with my thoughts.

After Paul proposed, it took just three weeks for his family to go to mine to pay lobola. My mum wasn't too sure about this, especially since I was now doing my final year. As far as she was concerned, I should finish my studies first before even thinking about marriage. I should have listened to her, instead I convinced her that Paul and I loved each other and we wanted to have a life together. Eventually she gave in and the negotiations went ahead.

On the day of the negotiations Paul and his family proved their worth when a truck with fifteen cows was delivered. My uncles had thought that wanting ten cows as lobola was steep enough but Paul had other ideas. On top of the fifteen cows he left my mother with fifty thousand rands. Lucky for us we lived in the rural areas so there was plenty of room for the cows to flourish. That day wasn't just special

to me but to all the girls I led as a maiden leader.

We did all the traditional aspects of a wedding that needed to be done within a month. We had a small intimate wedding with just close friends and family. For me, life was perfect. I had my sister as my maid of honour. As much as we didn't have a normal sister bond, I wanted to show her how important she was to me.

I graduated a few months after my wedding and being a Mashile by then meant I had the opportunity to pick and choose where I wanted to work. I chose to work in the family business as that would give me enough experience and also give me ample time to do my honors degree.

I found out I was pregnant almost a year after getting married, I was scared, I mean I was only a few months away from turning 21 and now I had to add a baby to the mix. Everyone was happy though

and they were very helpful. After a while I realised being a mother wouldn't be so bad. After all I had the right support system.

When Bontle was born everyone celebrated. My mother was happy to have her first grandchild. The Mashile's were just as excited. Life was good. I felt like God had sprinkled a little extra blessings into my life, and I felt like I was floating on a cloud of happiness.

The pain medication I took knocked me out flat. When I woke up I felt something or someone running their hands over my stomach moving up to my boobs. At first I thought maybe it was a dream until I opened my eyes and came face to face with two of the guards. I was about to scream when one of them covered my mouth and pinned me down on the bed.

The one who had his hand inside my tshirt got up and checked down the hallway to make sure no one

was there. Soon as he was sure no one was there he came back, unbuckling his belt and opening the zip of his pants. The other one got on top of my stomach and sat on me, holding my hands on top of my head with one hand while the other hand covered my mouth.

I couldn't see what the other one was doing behind him, but I felt him pull down my pants and my underwear. He then pulled my legs apart leaving me exposed. Tears streamed down the side of my face. I closed my eyes and just prayed for this to be over. I'm pretty sure most of the prisoners in here have gone through this, and in the fifteen years I've been here, I've been raped so many times I've become numb to it. Although you try and fight but the end result is always the same, the guards always win. It didnt make it any less painful though.

I felt the one guard shove his fingers deep into me. It was painful but I couldn't even scream or shout. The

guard on top of me got down and stood next to the bed, by my head with my hands still secure in his. And his hand was still on my mouth. The other one got on top of the bed and got on top of me. I felt him push himself inside of me. When he was done he got up and pulled up his pants, then he came to release the one holding me down.

The other moved down and also had his turn. Soon as they were done one of them threw my pants onto the bed. The one who was holding me down kissed me on my forehead before they walked out after fist bumping each other. I got up and put my pants back on and walked to the showers.

I stood under the showers and scrubbed myself clean. Even though that was a pointless exercise because I still could smell their sweat and cologne. I went back to my cell and found Shelley ready to go shower since most of the prisoners were back inside.

"Where have you been?"

"Taking a shower."

"What's wrong? You dont look okay."

"Its nothing. Just the usual, guards forcing themselves on us."

"I dont know how long we have to put up with this. Why do the guards do this?"

"They do it cause they know they can get away with it. No matter how many times we report it our pleas fall on deaf ears."

"One day. Just one good day those men will get what's coming to them."

"Maybe. But until then we have no choice but to put up with this mess. I really wish I wasnt here." She came over and gave me a hug.

"I'll go take a shower then we'll go eat." She left and went to take a shower.

I waited for Shelley to come back and we walked

together to the dining hall. We dished up and sat down to eat. I saw Mazola on the other side of the room and soon as our eyes met she winked at me with a smirk on her face.

When we were done we went back to our cells and prepared to sleep. I got into bed and waited for the lights to go out. We heard footsteps coming down the hallway and Shelley and I looked at each other. We waited to see where the footsteps would end up and they stopped right by our cell. We looked up and it was the warden and two guards, the same guards that had their way with me earlier.

"Nomonde, come with me." She said looking straight at me.

"Why? What did I do?"

"You didnt do anything, just come with me." I looked at Shelley and she gave me a nod. If anything happens to me she will know who I left with and they will be held responsible for what happens to me.

I got up and put on my shoes and went to her. The guards handcuffed me before opening the cell and letting me out. We walked to the wardens office in silence. She opened the door and I walked in. I was surprised to find a woman standing by the window looking out. The warden closed the door leaving me with this mystery woman. She turned and faced me, my heart started beating fast but I tried to keep my composure.

"Nomonde!"

"Mrs Mashile!" We looked at each other and she was still as intimidating as she was more than fifteen years ago. She still had impeccable taste. She wore a knee length red pencil skirt with a black blouse and high heeled red bottoms. Looking at her now you wouldn't believe that tiny body carried six kids.

I walked to the chair and took a seat and looked at her.

"I don't remember saying you should sit down."

"Well this isn't your house so you really cant tell me what to do and what not to do." She smiled a bit, but I could tell her smile is that of annoyance.

"You've grown some balls I see. Pretty brave for someone who still has five more years in here."

"The five years is gonna pass anyway so....." She chuckles.

"Right! I heard you applied for parole again." Of course, that's why she's here.

"And let me guess, you are here to tell me that you will do whatever it takes to make sure I stay in here until I die? Dont worry about it, you son already told me that."

"Actually it's the opposite, I'm here to tell you that you are getting out. I spoke to the parole board and they are letting you out. Without conditions. Your release letter is being signed as we speak."

"What's the catch?" She takes a deep breath and I know her "no conditions" parole has conditions. No one just decides to help without expecting anything in return, and the Mashile's, well, they know how to

play this "favour for a favour" game, and they are very good at it.

"Its not a catch Nomonde, but as soon as you get out there will be a bus ticket waiting for you to take you back to KZN. You stay in your little village and never set foot in Joburg or anywhere where my family might be. I don't want to run into you anywhere, and I don't want my family running into you. Anywhere, ever, especially Paul." I chuckle.

"So basically that's the whole country."

"Glad we have an agreement." She grabbed her Chanel bag from the desk and walked towards the door. I get up and watch her sashay across the room.

"Do you ever worry about your granddaughter? What she eats? What she wears? Anything?" She turns and looks at me.

"You really think you can use a child to guilt trip me? A child whose DNA proved she wasn't a Mashile? That child? Come on Nomonde, jail didnt teach you a single thing, did it."

"One day when the truth comes out, I hope to God you'll be able to swallow that bitter pride that you carry around. Bontle is your granddaughter and no amount of fake DNA's are going to change that. Thank you for getting me out, I'll make sure to stay out of your way." I walk past her and walk out of the open door. I find the guards waiting for me outside. They escort me back to my cell. It seems my Mums prayers have been answered, in an unexpected way but still, they've been answered. I guess I'm going home.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FOUR

I couldn't sleep, ever since I was told that I would be going home after what feels like a lifetime in here, I just couldn't close my eyes. I was afraid it would be nothing more than just a dream. But it wasn't, I am really going home.

The warden called me to her office and told me that my letter was ready and my release had been processed, I should go and pack my stuff cause in the morning I am leaving. I got to my cell and found Shelley laying on the bed reading a book.

"How did it go?" She asked as soon as I sat down on my bed. "What did that old hag want?"

"I'm going home." She closed the book so fast and sat up.

"What do you mean you are going home?"

"I am going home. My release has been processed and I am leaving in the morning." She rushed over to me and gave me the biggest hug. I held on to her for dear life, and just took everything in. Everything I'd gone through, being here for so long, the beatings you get for not wanting to join a gang, the many times I've been raped my body has become numb to it, I'm finally going home. It feels so surreal.

We sat there for a while until the bell rung for us to go have supper. We got up and went to the cafeteria. After supper we went to take our shower and then go back to our cells, even though I should have been packing, I just couldn't bring myself to do it. I figured I don't want to do all that and then be disappointed in the morning. I will believe all this when I step out of

that big gate and smell the fresh air of freedom. I dozed off I think around midnight.

I woke up that day like normal, prepared for work and gave Bontle a bath. That day she seemed better, she wasn't crying as much as the other days. For once in a while u wouldn't worry much when I left her to go to work. Her nanny came in about thirty minutes before I had to leave. She seemed to be in a good mood too.

Lesego and Lesedi showed up before I left, I could see from their gloomy faces that something wasn't right, but never in my wildest thoughts did I think they were there about Paul, afterall Paul was supposed to be in Cape Town.

When Lesego uttered the words "Paul has been shot" I felt my world spinning. I felt like I was getting dizzy and no matter how much I tried to stop the spinning it just kept going. They told me they were

there to take me to the hospital to see him because Doctors weren't sure he would make it. I knew I should be crying, I was sad and hurt but my tears refused to comply. Instead of crying like any normal person it felt like I was instead breaking inside like a flask.

We got to the hospital and Paul we were told Paul was still in Surgery. The rest of the Mashile family was now gathered in the private waiting room. I sat down next to his mother, but when I looked around the room, it was cold, not the normal cold from the weather but the cold that emanates from some sort of hatred that people have for you. I wasn't sure what was going on and at that moment I didn't care, I just wanted to see my husband.

We sat there for another couple of hours before the doctor came out and told us that he was in Intensive Care, they had managed to remove the five bullets that were shot into him. I couldn't believe it, five

bullets pumped into one body, and he lived. I sat down and said a prayer thanking God for saving him, even though he was still unconscious but I was just glad he was alive.

I asked the doctor if I could see him and he told me he would come get me soon as he was fully settled in. I'd never heard that before but what do I know, I was just a twenty one year old who almost became a widow. I sat down and the rest of the Mashile's, Paul's siblings, Lesedi, Malcolm, Princess and Palesa decided to leave. I was left with Mrs Mashile and Lesego. She got up and started pacing. If I didnt know better I'd think she had something on her mind.

I looked over at Lesego and the daggers he was shooting my way made the hair on my neck stand up. Something was really going on and no one was telling me anything. I got up and went to get myself coffee at the nurses station. They were kind enough to give me a cup. When I was going back to the

waiting room I ran into Lesego in the hallway.

"I know you did this." He said blocking my way.

"What are the talking about?"

"I know you had my brother shot so you could hide the truth of that bastard child."

I wasn't sure if I heard right but the words kept ringing in my head. How can my child be a bastard. I stood there trying to find the right words to even respond to this man but j found none. I was shocked by Paul's shooting and now I'm being blamed for it? What the fuck us happening right now?

"I don't know what gives you the right to call my daughter that but I'm going to pretend tou didnt say that, I understand you are upset about Paul being shot but pointing the finger at me wont work. Now please excuse me." I tried to walk past him but he wouldn't let me.

"Paul took a DNA test, and last night the results came back and they proved that Bontle is not his child, that's why he came back early, and instead, you being the sly snake that you are, toh decided to have him killed before he could even get to his house. As soon as the cops get the person who pulled the trigger, your ass is toast." He turned and walked away leaving me stunned.

I'm not sure what hurt the most, the fact that Paul took a DNA test without even telling me or the fact that he might die and I will be blamed for it. I called my mother and asked her to come and bring Amanda, my sister with her.

I got back into the waiting room and Mrs Mashile couldn't even look at me. I felt like I was alone and the one person that was supposed to be on my side had chosen to betray me, and now he was laying in a hospital bed fighting for his life. At that moment I was angry at him. I was angry at him for betraying

my trust, I dont even know what would have made him believe Bontle wasnt his, and for him to go as far as getting a DNA test done, that was low.

Two days after Paul was shot cops came to the house with a search warrant in hand. They tore my house down from top to bottom, looking for only God knows what. After about an hour of them rummaging through my belongings, the Detective came down with a gun. He said the gun was found among my stuff, in my closet. They even told me they had a written statement from a witness who saw the whole shooting and the gun was just a confirmation. I knew then that I was screwed.

I was woken up by the alarm clock ringing. I got up and the sun was already streaming through the tiny windows. My heart started beating, today was the day I get my freedom. I got up and sat on the bed looking out at the little of the sky I could see. Soon I would be able to see the sky from every direction

without anyone interrupting me or telling me it's time to go back inside.

When the Prison alarm sounded for everyone to wake up, I was already packed and ready to go. I waited for the bars to be opened so I can go take a shower. Shelley woke up and we went to the showers together. We took our bath and then we went back to the cell. I wasn't sure what to wear so I just put on the old Jean's and tshirt I had first came in here with, they didnt fit as snug as they did before, the only other option I had was a two piece suit k had worn during my sentencing. That was no option because it would just remind me of a day I'd rather forget.

I sat there waiting for the warden or a guard to come get me. Two female guards showed up and I got up ready to go. They laughed at me, but it wasn't the mocking laugh, these two had become friends, and having a few people to look out for me helped a lot,

especially when I was feeling down.

"You are ready to go Monde?"

"Yes please, can we leave before the powers that be change their minds." They laughed and took out a Mr Price plastic bag that they had hidden behind them.

"Baby, no one is changing their mind, but we cant have you going out there with old ass clothes." I took the plastic and inside there was a long maxi dress and a pair of sandals. I gave them both a hug and changed into the dress. Good thing my hair is short and manageable so I didnt have to worry about that.

Soon as I was done I gave Shelley the biggest hug. As much as I was happy to be going home, I felt bad for leaving her behind. I was escorted to the warden's office and I got my letter, the guards escorted me out and watched me as I made my way out that big gate. I had about two hundred rands in my pocket and I knew a bus ticket would cost more than that, but at least I was out.

I heard the gate close behind me and knowing I was on the other side of freedom was amazing. I looked left and right trying to figure out where I can get a taxi. I decided to go right. I walked for a while before I heard a car stop next to me. I stopped and waited for whoever it was to say or do something. The back window slid down.

"Get in Nomonde." I looked inside the car and it was Mrs Mashile. I was tired and the sun was shining so I figured I might as well. I opened the backdoor and got in. "How does freedom smell?" She asked.

"I don't know. How should it smell?"

"I wouldn't know. I've never tried to kill someone before and got locked up."

"Neither did I, but we are here."

The driver started the car and we drove away. We got to Park station and he stopped the car. Mrs Mashile took out an envelope from her bag and

handed it to me. I opened it and there was a bus ticket and about ten thousand rands inside. I took out the ticket and handed the money back to her.

"You don't want the money?"

"No. Thank you for getting me out, thank you for the ticket, and the only reason I am taking it is because I cant afford one, but the money you can keep. I'm not that desperate." She chuckled.

"From the looks of it you cant afford anything, at all."

"Maybe, but one thing I've always been able to do is take care of myself."

"Fine, whatever. Now you remember our deal right?"

"I'm pretty sure you wont let me forget."

"Glad we understand each other. Have a safe trip."

I got out of the car and wandered around a bit looking for a bus to take me home. I got in and lucky for me the bus wasn't full yet so I got a seat by the

window. I placed my little plastic bag on the overhead baggage holder and sat down. A woman came in selling fruits and fish. I bought the fish and a pack of bananas so I can eat along the way. The bus got full and the Marshall came in to check if all was ready for us to go. He got out and the driver started the bus and drove out of Johannesburg.

I watched the city go by through the window and remembered the first time I got here. I had vowed then to make this city my home, and for a while I did, and one day, one sweet day I would be back. Yep, I'll be back. I'll be back to get back all that was taken from me.

Unedited ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIVE

Twenty four hours later I made it to my home. My safe haven, for now. The bus took forever to get to Durban, and by the time it got here in the evening the taxis going home to Ntunjambili were already finished. So I had no choice but to wait for morning so I can get one. It took a lot for me to convince the security at the bus station to let me stay there until the morning. I didnt care much for my stuff to be stolen cause I didnt have much to begin with. I put the little money I had in my bra, put on my Jersey and sat down on the concrete and waited for morning.

I couldn't sleep, no matter how hard I tried. I know I should be used to the cold but I've never had to sleep on the floor in jail, the blankets weren't the warmest but they were something. Plus the bars

kept us somewhat safe.

The sun eventually came up. I wasn't even sure what time it was cause I didn't even have something as simple as a watch. I walked around the bus station looking for a filling station so I can clean myself up before going home but I found none. I walked to the taxi rank and found a taxi to Ntunjambili with just a couple of people inside. I paid, got in and sat down, saying a silent prayer that my body odour wouldn't give in just yet.

I was finally able to get some sleep in the taxi while waiting for it to fill up. I woke up when I heard someone banging the door. I looked around and it was finally full. The driver got in and began the more than two hours drive back home.

We got to Ntunjambili and by the time the taxi got to my stop there were two of us inside. I got down and the sun was blazing hot, I could feel it burning my

head. I took my Jersey and put it on my head so it covers my head and shoulders so they dont get burnt. I started my ten minutes walk to my mother's house.

I stood by the gate and looked at my home. I could see some of the neighbours getting out of their houses to see who I was. Thank God for my Jersey cause i don't think they could tell it was me. I opened the gate and walked up to the door. It was closed. I knocked for a while but there was no response. I knocked for a while until a neighbour shouted that MaGumede wasnt home.

I thanked her and sat down on the stoop. I was tired and hungry, but I wasn't about to go knocking on the neighbors doors, these people are nosy as hell and I dont have the energy to explain myself to them. I saw a kid walking by with a bucket of ice blocks on his head and some scones in another bucket. He stopped and I went over to him. I took my last ten

rand and bought an ice block and a couple of scones. I guess this will have to hold me till my mother gets back from wherever.

I went back to sit on the stoop. I saw a couple of women walking by and I thought they were just passing by but they opened the gate and walked towards me. Oh God, why cant they just leave me alone.

"Sawubona sisi (hello)" they said soon as they got close enough.

"Yebo sanibonani." I said not lifting my head to look at them. Lucky for me my Jersey was still covering me just fine.

"Hhay sisi besithi sihlole nje ukuthi uright na. (We just wanted to see if you're okay.)"

"Ngiright, ngyabonga (I'm fine thank you.)"

"Kepha wena sisi sizothi uwbani (what's your name?)"

"Angsimuntu (I'm nobody). Niyazi ukuthi uMaGumede uyephi? (do you know where MaGumede is?)"

"Useskoleni uthengisa khona. Uzobuya kungekudala (she's at the school where she sells, she'll be back soon.)" I nodded my head hoping they would just leave but they stood there like some naughty children wanting to ask something they didnt know how to ask.

"Sisi, ngabe uyindodakazi kaMaGumede? Are you MaGumede's daughter?"

"Cha, bangthume kuye, angmazi yena (no, I dont know her. They sent me to her.)"

"Oh, Hhay, kulungile ke sisi, uMaGumede uzobuya kungekudala. (Oh, it's okay, MaGumede will be back soon.) Anyways, bye bye."

"Bye!" I watched them walk away whispering between themselves. Some people are brave.

They were right though, a few minutes after they left I saw my mother walking towards the house. She had a huge cardboard box filled with something on her head and a bucket hanging on her hand. This is not how life was supposed to be. By now she should have been living in a huge house somewhere in Durban or even Joburg, but here she was, walking around in the blazing sun trying to provide for my child.

I wiped the tears that had fallen down my cheeks and watched her walk up to the house. I could see her looking at me trying to figure out who I am. I pulled the Jersey away from my head and walk to her. Soon as she saw who i was she stopped dead in her tracks. The bucket in her hand ended up on the ground. I got to her just in time before her cardboard box fell on the ground too. I took it and placed in on the ground.

"Maka Nomonde." I said with tears streaming down

my face. I wiped the tears that were running down her wrinkly face and her hands came up to hold mine.

"Nomonde mntanami, nguwe lo? (Nomonde my child, is this you?)" She said between sobs. I nodded my head with my hands firmly in the warmth of my mothers hands.

"Ngimi mama, ngbuyile (it's me, I'm back.)"

I heard her take one deep breath before falling onto her knees praying. I got down on my knees and hugged her.

"Nkulunkulu wami ngyabonga, ngyabonga Somandla, ngyabonga ukunglethela ingane yami siyaphila. Oh Messiah olungileyo ngyabonga, Jehova Ngiswele imilomo eyinkulungwane engingakubonga ngayo. Ngyabonga Somandla, uwzwile umthandazo wami futhi wangphendula. Ngyabonga baba. (God I thank you, thank you God, thank you for bringing back my child alive. Merciful God I thank you, Jehovah I'm short of a thousand mouths to sing praises to you.

Thank you God, you heard my prayers and you answered me. Thank you father.)"

We stayed like that for a while as we both cried on each others shoulders. I could feel her tears falling down my arm and making my dress wet but I didnt care, I was just happy to be in my mother's arms again. She pulled away from me and looked at me before hugging me again. She pulled away again and held me at arms length.

"Nomonde!"

"Mama!"

"Nguwe lo Nomonde? (Is this you?)"

"Ngimi mama. (Its me.)"

We got up after what seemed like forever with the neighbors watching us like we were performing a show. I picked up the cardboard box and the bucket and followed my mother to the door. She picked up

my little belongings on the stoop and opened the door. We went in and sat down on the couch. She held my hand and kept looking at me like I was just a figment of her imagination.

"I cant believe you are finally home. I've waited for this day for a very long time."

"Me too mama. I'm so happy to see you. Where's Bontle?"

"She stayed at school, you know that girl has your brain, she's helping the grade eleven class with their maths." I can't believe my daughter is going to finish high school at the same age that I did. Talk about history repeating itself, I just pray that's where it ends.

"I cant wait to see her."

"She'll be so happy to see you. You must be hungry, let me go make you something to eat."

"Its okay mama, I can make something."

"No, you just got back, just rest and I'll take care of

you."

"Only for today!" She chuckled.

"Okay, only for today. That means I have to cook seven colors today." She said as she went away to the kitchen.

This house has changed a bit since I was last here. It was painted now and from the looks of it, there were even fitted cabinets in the kitchen, and even a small flat screen TV. I turned the TV on, even though the screen wasn't that clear but I could see people moving around and talking. So that's something.

My mother came back with a sandwich on a plate and a glass of juice. The bread was buttered with peanut butter and jam. My favourite. I took a bite and it tasted like home.

"That was always your favourite, and I see nothing's changed." I laughed and swallowed. "So tell me,

when did you get out?"

"Yesterday. Paul's mother pulled some strings and got me out."

"Why would she do that? What does she want?"

"She said all she wants is for me to stay as far away from her family as possible."

"Mxm, that family has a special place in hell I tell you."

"Haw mama, that's not very Christian of you."

"God will have to be patient but I'll never forgive those people for what they did to you. First they sent you to jail for something you didnt do and then they treated Bontle like she had leprosy, she was just a child but they were so heartless."

"What happened?"

"Hhay Monde, it doesnt matter." She said playing with her hands and trying to avoid eye contact.

"Ma, ngtshele (tell me)"

"Eish Nomonde man."

"Ma nyakcela, (please), I need to know what happened." She slowly breathed out.

"Well, after you were sentenced they called me to come and get you because they wont be raising a child that wasnt theirs. I asked them to give me a few days so I can get the money cause I wasn't working anymore, a few days after that they came and dropped Bontle at the gate. They left her there like some unwanted child and they left. She had no clothes no diapers, nothing. If I wasnt home I dont know what would have happened to her." I wiped the tears on my face as we heard the gate opening.

I looked out the window and saw my baby coming in. She looked so pretty in her school uniform. I can't believe I have a child in Matric and I didnt even get to raise her.

She walked into the house and greeted without even looking up. She went straight to the kitchen and came back with a glass of water. She stood by the

kitchen door and froze when she saw me.

"Mama!" She said her eyes tearing up.

"Hi baby!" She dropped the glass on the floor and threw herself at me. She buried her head on my lap and just cried. I wasn't sure how she would react to me being back but I sure as hell wasn't expecting this. I saw my mother wipe her tears and for the first time in a long time I could allow myself to be vulnerable. I could cry without being judged. I was home. This is home.

Unedited ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIX

Being home still feels like a dream honestly. I can actually wake up at whatever time I feel like, well it's more like I get out of bed at whatever time I feel like because my body is used to waking up at six am, so even when I try not to soon as the clock hits six my eyes are wide open.

I've been home for almost a month now and I can fully say I'm gaining weight. My mother has been feeding me at every chance she gets. I swear by the time she is done with me I wont be able to get up from this couch.

I stay home alone when Bontle goes to school and mum goes to sell her wares at school. I dont think I'm ready to face the world and have to explain to

people, especially my former teachers why I never became all that I had wanted to become. A lot of them had a hand in me even being able to go further my studies. And now having to face them with nothing to show for all their hardwork and help is just too much for me.

I wake up every morning and help mum make her famous vetkoeks and pies and help her get everything ready. Soon as she leaves with Bontle I get down to cleaning the house, doing laundry and cleaning the yard. Luckily for me a water tap was installed in the yard so I dont have to go down to the river.

As much as it's nice to be home and just relax I think its time I started my life over again. And the first thing I need to do is get a job. I dont know who is going to hire someone with a criminal record but I wont know unless I try right. I've sent out some CV's to accounting firms but I know there is a lot that I

need to do before I can fully even be able to where I need to be. I also saw some ads in the newspaper for waiters and waitresses but with those i need to be in Durban to even have a chance at getting one. Everytime I call the restaurants I get told to show up the next morning which is impossible cause I am more than two hours away from them.

I turned on the TV cause I had nothing better to do since the house is clean, clothes washed and food is ready. I'm not even sure how I can still cook after so many years without cooking, or maybe it's my tastebuds that are fucked up from eating all that tasteless prison food. I decided to make myself a glass of juice and sat down on the couch.

I flipped through the two channels that were somewhat clear cause watching the others would require me to squint my eyes. I've been here for almost a month and I've already figured out what I need to do around here, and that includes getting a

DSTV decoder. I flip to SABC 1 and find a repeat of real goboza. Mhmm, I guess I'll be catching up on celebrity gossip. I mindlessly watch story after story with zero interest until I hear the presenter mention an Amanda Mashile.

"Real life socialite and rich housewife of, well basically South Africa Amanda Mashile had set tongues wagging after she was gifted the latest Mercedes G63 Brabus by her husband, businessman Paul Mashile."

The story itself wasn't that interesting until they mentioned Paul, as if that wasn't surprising enough they showed the picture of his wife, no matter how unclear the signal might be but that picture was clear as daylight. Paul's wife is my sister.

I sat up on the couch and stared at the TV long after the show had ended. Shocked wouldn't even be enough to describe what I was feeling at this very

moment. Nothing is making sense to me right now. How did my sister end up with my husband, well ex husband but still, how did she end up marrying him?

I dont know how long I sat there with my mind going haywire trying to figure out all this. I didnt even hear my mum walk in and sit down.

"Yho hhay I'm getting old, good thing today is Friday, tomorrow I can rest." She said putting her feet up on the coffee table. "Hawu Nomonde, what's wrong mntanami?"

"Mama, where is Amanda?"

"Argh that one, you never know with her. She shows up when she wants and disappears the same way. I've already told you this, why are you asking?"

"I know you told me. But you also forgot to mention that she is married to my ex husband." I saw her close her eyes and take a deep breath. "Mama why didnt you tell me?"

"I'm sorry mntanami, you were already in jail when it happened and trying to appeal your case I didnt want you worrying about anything."

"Why would she do that? After everything that that family put me through, why would my own sister turn around and play happy families with them?"

"I wish I knew Monde. I begged her not to do it, but you know your sister is as stubborn as they come. She even came here cause they wanted to pay lobola but I refused so she went to your uncle. You know I'd never allow anything to come between the two of you, despite the fact that you two were never that close to begin with. I still should have told you though, I'm sorry baby."

I didnt think after all that I've been through my own sister would do that to me. But I guess this explains why she never came to see me, she wasnt even there to support me during my case. I thought she was just being her usual distant self but now I know it was more than that. While I was fighting for my life

she was taking over my life, living my life.



NARRATED

At the Mashile mansio in Houghton, the family has gathered for dinner. Lesego, Paul, his wife Amanda and the Matriarch of the family, Mrs Portia Mashile are gathered around the dining table eating in silence. As soon as they are done and the maids take away the plates Mrs Mashile gets up and heads to the lounge.

"I think I'll head to bed. I'm tired." Amanda says. She leaves the brothers there and heads up to her room.

"What's wrong with your mother?" Paul asks his brother.

"I dont know, probably has something to do with

your gold digging ex."

"Please don't start."

"Why? You are the one who brought that girl into our lives and then you almost died." Paul clicks his tongue and gets up. He leaves his brother there and goes upstairs to his bedroom.

Lesego decides to join his mother in the lounge. He pours himself a glass of scotch and refills his mother's almost empty glass of wine.

"What's wrong mama. You don't look like yourself."

"It's nothing son, I'll be fine."

"I know you'll be fine, but I still need to know what's happening with you."

"Have you heard anything about Nomonde?"

"According to my guy she is still cooped up at her mother's house, doesn't even go out."

"Mhmm."

"Mama what's going on?"

"Do you think theres more to this attempted murder of Paul than meets the eye?"

"Where is this coming from? It's been fifteen years, the person responsible did their time, so why the sudden doubt."

"When I went to see Nomonde she asked me when last did I see Bontle, and then she said one day the truth will come out."

"The truth did come out mama, and we all know it."

"I know but what if..... what if we sent the wrong person to jail? What if she is innocent?"

"Mama, three DNA tests were done, all of them came back negative, two people who had never met witnessed the shooting, and to top it all of the gun used was found in her possession. How much more proof do you need?" She took a sip of her wine and looked at her son.

"Maybe you are right, maybe I'm just overreacting."

"You are. Stop overthinking this whole thing."

"You are right. What's done is done. Nomonde is out of our lives and that's all that matters."

"Exactly." He says giving his mum a hug, oblivious to the lurking figure hiding behind the wall.

Upstairs, Amanda just finished taking a shower when her phone beeps. She checks the message and calls the person back.

"Mandy."

"Sihle, what's with the please call me this late. Don't you have airtime?"

"I do but I needed you to call me. Anyways I have news."

"What?"

"Your sister is out of jail. In actual fact she has been out for almost a month now." Amanda sits down on the edge of the bathtub.

"That's impossible. Lesego would never allow her to

just walk out just like that."

"That's the thing babe, she did. And what's even worse, your mother in law got her out."

"This isnt good."

"Tell me about it. What if she comes back and wants her life back?" Sihle asks her friend.

"That's not going to happen. Plus if she had those plans she would ha e atleast showed up here by now."

"Maybe. Anyways I have to go,keep your eyes open babe, you never know what could happen."

"Nothing is going to happen. If she knows what's good for her she will stay as far away from us as possible. I wont let her take Paul away from me, No! I will fight tooth and nail to keep what's mine."

"Good. Cause you said it yourself, Paul still holds a burning candle for her, and only God knows what would happen if he saw her."

"There is absolutely no need for you to remind me damn. I've been living under her shadow ever since

she went to jail. In spite of all the evidence against her Paul still wants to believe she might be innocent."

"Well there's nothing she can do now."

"Yes, I won, fair and square. Plus it's not like I took Paul from her. They were already divorced when we hooked up."

"Right." She said before hanging up the phone.

Her phone beeped again and a message popped up.

'Hey sis, congratulations, mum tells me you are married and happy. I can't wait to meet my nieces and nephew. I hope they are good.'

It's a message from her sister Nomonde. She's not sure if she should ignore the message or reply to it. She decides against it and puts the phone away trying to calm her nerves.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVEN

Weekends in this house are a constant reminder of my childhood. When we were growing up my mum would wake us up early and make us clean the whole house together. She would play some old RnB music, when we were done we would do the laundry, while one was washing somebody else was rinsing and somebody was hanging the clothes on the washing line. I always wanted to do the hanging cause washing was never my cup of tea. Amanda would be rinsing cause we both knew my mum wanted clean clothes, and she was always the one doing the actual washing.

When we were done we would go to the kitchen and start cooking and baking. My mum would sit down at the table with my grandmother and they would watch us cooking and baking. Amanda loved baking

so that became her forte and I would cook. All my mother did was give us instructions on what to do. Even when she went to work in Joburg we still carried on like that with grandma monitoring everything.

Those days were some of my most memorable childhood memories, it was mostly on those days when Amanda and I would actually get along. Soon as we were done with all that she'd disappear and go be with her friends. If you had to ask me what it was that divided my sister and I, i wouldn't tell you because i also dont know. To this day i wish someone or something would let me know where everything went wrong.

I got up and put on my mum's gown and went out to the kitchen. I found Bontle busy making soft porridge.

"Hey baby." I said sitting down on the kitchen table.

"Hi mama, how did you sleep?"

"Like a baby." She closed the pot and turned around to look at me.

"You know theres no need to lie. You had one of your nightmares again." I could see the concern in her eyes. It's crazy how her eyes, just like mine can never hide the emotions behind them.

"I dont want you worrying about that. I will get over them eventually."

"I think you need to go to therapy."

"I'll be fine nana." As much as I know therapy is a good idea but I dont think we can afford it. Plus i dont think I'm ready to tell a total stranger my deep dark secrets.

"I know you will be, but it will help."

"Tell you what, I'll think about it." I saw her lips form into a smile. I hope to God she never loses that beautiful smile.

I left her to her cooking and went to check on my

mum. I found her sitting on the bed with her bible in her hands and her eyes closed. I figured she must be praying so I tiptoed into the room, quietly pulled the dressing table chair and sat down next to the bed. I closed my eyes and bowed my head with my elbows on the bed. I felt my mums one hand rubbing my back. I heard her say Amen and I opened my eyes.

"Goodmorning."

"Morning baby. You had your nightmares again."

"Bontle told you?"

"Of course. She says you need therapy." I chuckled.

"She's too grown for her own good. She doesnt need to be worrying about me when she has matric to worry about."

"I can multitask you know." She said walking into the room with a tray and three bowls of soft porridge.

She put the tray on mum's lap and got in next to her on the bed. I picked up one bowl from the tray and

we had our breakfast, joking and laughing about anything and everything.

When we were done my mum told me to go take a bath because we were going to town. We finished bathing and getting dressed and we left. We got a taxi and took the two hour journey to Durban. We did a bit of clothes shopping. We even went shopping for some material to make Bontle's matric dance dress. She picked some shiny blingy material, and knowing mum and her sewing prowess, I knew she'd turn that material into a bomb ass dress.

We went into clicks and bought some toiletries. Over the years I had learned to survive with the bare minimum. My mum found me at the makeup counter and she somehow convinced me to get some make up. I took the necessities and we paid and walked out.

Mum convinced us to pop into KFC for some lunch. I

seriously need to ask her where she gets the money for all this. We had our lunch and then headed to PicknPay to get some groceries. By the time we left the trolley was almost spilling over. We bought anything and everything, Bontle was in heaven cause mum let her get as much chocolate and snacks as she wanted.

We got to the taxi rank and found the taxi empty. Thank God for that because we were able to load everything in the front seat. My mum even agreed to pay for the two seats that were filled with groceries. When we got back to Ntunjambili the driver dropped everyone else off first before driving home and dropping us off. Mum gave him twenty rands for his trouble, even though he didn't want to take it Mum shoved it in his pocket and all he could do was laugh.

We took all the plastic bags into the house as the neighbours watched. We unpacked everything and packed it away in the fridge and the cupboards. We

had the KFC again for dinner. Bontle left for a sleepover study session at her friends house. Mum and I watched TV together.

"Ma!"

"Yes!"

"Where do you get all the money to buy all these things you bought today?" She smiled.

"Oh is that why you've been quiet?"

"Mum I dont want you spending money you dont have."

"Rekax Sthandwa sam, we will be fine. When my bosses left for Australia they left me with some money which I saved. Then a few years ago I got into an accident and Road Accident Fund paid so we are okay."

"Wait when did you get into an accident, and why dont I know about it?"

"About five years ago. I didnt want you worrying about me, and Bontle took very good care of me.

And besides, you were in jail, there was nothing you could do."

I opened my mouth to say something but no words came out of my mouth. I've missed out on not only the good times but I've missed the bad times too. I wasn't here to take care of my mum or my daughter. I felt the lump of guilt building up in my throat. I couldn't understand why life had hit me so hard.

I don't know when I fell asleep on the couch but I woke up when I felt my mum shaking me and calling out my name. I opened my eyes and saw concern written all over her face. I felt tears streaming down my face just looking at her. She engulfed my face between her hands, wiping my tears with her thumbs.

"Baby don't cry, it was just a bad dream. You are home now, don't cry." I held on to her arms.

"I'm sorry mama, I know I failed you, *ngyacolisa ma*

wami (I'm sorry ma.)" I saw the tears glistening in her eyes.

"You could never fail me even if you tried Nomonde, you didnt fail me."

"I did mama, nghlulekile ma, I did everything right but I still failed. I finished high school, I went to varsity, I focused on my studies, I didnt mess around with boys and the only time I fell for one and all hell broke loose. Ngyacolisa ma, I should have never left my home, I should have just stayed here." I said between sobs.

"Nomonde....."

"This is not how things were meant to be, I'm the one who is supposed to be taking care of you. I should have been here to raise my child, I should have been here to take care of you, I should have....."

"Should have, could have, I get it Nomonde, but theres no going back now. We cant change the past, the only thing we can do is look forward. You have your whole life waiting for you. And you are going to live it." She says wiping my tears.

"How ma when I dont even have a job. No company is going to hire someone with a criminal record."

"I know that, but I spoke to MaDlamini's daughter, Bonsile, she works in one of those taverns in town, she said she'll let me know when there's an opening and then you can go and work there."

"Ngyabonga Mnguni."

"Nomonde I know you, i know the daughter i raised. Yes i might have failed your sister somehow but I know you. I know you didnt do this, i know you are innocent and I know you want to prove that to everyone but you've already lost fifteen years of your life. Even if you prove you are innocent it wont bring back the years those people took from you. And as for Amanda, the thunder that's going to strike her is still doing exercises." I smiled. "That's what I want to see, a smile on your face. Tomorrow I will cook a feast just to celebrate your return. It will be our own little Thanksgiving thing."

"Thank you ma, I dont know what I would have done without you." I said giving her a hug.

Being in jail, being raped and beaten, I had learnt to numb the pain, but the pain and guilt of knowing I failed this woman will forever be something I could never get rid off.

As promised I woke up the next morning and she was already busy in the kitchen. The aroma coming from there was just amazing. I got up and went to the kitchen. I gave her a hug before getting a jug of warm water and went out to brush my teeth and wash my face. Bontle came back and we joined mum in the kitchen to help her cook. We had a seven color lunch and it was amazing. My mum was a beast in the kitchen, but then again she was a beast at everything.

We were sitting in the lounge after cleaning the kitchen and washing the dishes after lunch when there was a knock on the door. Mum said come in and a nice looking woman. She came in and greeted

before sitting down next to me.

"Bonsile, unjani Ntombi (how are you?)"

"I'm good ma, how are you?"

"Getting by. Arent you supposed to be at work?"

"No I'm off today. I came to talk to you about that opening we spoke about." She said looking at me. "I spoke to my boss and he agreed to let Nomonde come work with us."

I wasnt sure if I should jump for joy or control myself but I felt my heart doing some somersaults.

"Are you for real?" I asked her while my mother was busy praying.

"Yes, you can stay with me at my flat until you get your own room."

"Thank you, I don't know what else to say." She smiled. She seems nice.

"I will pick you up tomorrow morning so we can go."

"Sis Bonsile, can I dish up for you?"

"No it's okay babygirl. I'm going home."

"Thank you so much Bonsile, God will bless you."

"Ngyabonga ma. I have to go now, mum is expecting me."

"Please greet her for me."

"Will do. Nisalen kahle (stay well). Monde I'll see you tomorrow morning, eight o'clock sharp." She said and left.

"See, the God I pray never fails me." My mum said picking up her glass of juice.

I went to bed that night excited but nervous at the same time. Tomorrow I will be starting my life all over again, from the bottom, but like they say, once you hit rock bottom you have no other way to go but up.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHT

I couldn't sleep last night. After Bonsile came over and said she would take me with her to her new job I was worried. For starters I've never worked in a tavern before, and being in the city means I am highly likely to run into the Mashile's, I just pray that this tarven is far away from the places they frequent.

I got up early in the morning and took a bath. My mum and Bontle helped me pack the little that I had. Even though Bontle had to leave early for her morning classes I was just happy she got to see me before I had to leave. Bonsile will be here in twenty minutes, if she is punctual. I sat on the couch with my bags already waiting by the door. My mum came in after getting her wares ready so she can go sell, I pray that all the doors that were shut on my face be opened up again so i can give this woman all that

she deserves. I don't know what I did for God to bless me with such an incredible woman as my mother but I pray to God I keep doing it.

She comes over to me and sits down next to me. She takes out a bank card from her skirt pocket and hands it to me.

"What's this?"

"This is your bank card. You gave it to me before you went to jail." I want to laugh. It's been fifteen years and I'm pretty sure that card has not only expired I'm sure the bank has closed the account by now.

"Ma, I'm sure that card has expired by now."

"It did expire a couple of times but I renewed it. I couldn't transfer the money in there into my account so I deposited money into the account every chance I got. A hundred rand here and a two hundred there, I'm sure by now it should be enough to help you start your life over." I felt tears sting my eyes and threaten to make their way out. How did I get so lucky.

"Ma..... I dont know what to say."

"No need to say anything Monde, I knew one day you'd walk out of that hell hole and this was just a way for me to make sure that you will be able to start afresh." I threw myself at her and gave her a hug as tears ran down my face. Everytime I think I'm stuck in the bottom with no way out a light always shines through. Maybe God hasn't deserted me after all. Or maybe the prayers of his favourite girl keeps me going.

Bonsile showed up with ten minutes to spare. I said my goodbyes to my mum and we left. We got to Durban and headed straight to Bonsile's flat. It wasnt too big, just a two bedroom flat with a small kitchen and lounge and a bathroom. Honestly though in my opinion it was huge even though she didnt see it that way. She showed me to one of the bedrooms.

"My roommate went home cause she's pregnant and about to pop any day now, so you will use this room

for now."

"Thank you."

"Rest a bit. We'll go to work around two. You can make something to eat from the fridge, it's not much but its something."

"I will, thanks."

I walked into the room and put my bag down on the chair. I sat on the bed and said a little prayer just as mum instructed. Lucky for me the bed had all the necessities so I didnt have to worry about that. I got on the bed and tried to sleep but my body just wouldn't obliged. I decided after a while to go to the kitchen and make something to eat. I found chicken feet in the freezer so I decided to make that and some pap.

I finished cooking and dished up, I sat on the couch and turned on the TV, thank God this one is not like the one at home, the people are clear and visible,

and there are plenty of channels to choose from. I heard a door opening before Bonsile walked into the lounge.

"Something smells good." She said walking to the kitchen and opening the pots.

"I couldn't sleep so I decided to make something."

"Chicken feet, my favorite." She dished up and came to sit down.

We finished eating and showered. She told me to wear black jeans and a black top and sneakers. I did as she said and grabbed a jacket, just in case it gets cold later. We left the building and took a taxi to Durban Central. We got to the club and I chuckled as we walked in. My mum called this a tavern meanwhile it's a whole club.

We walked in and went straight to the office. I could see some of the girls working here had on heels and

short dresses. I hope to God I dont have to wear those cause I know a whole night in heels and mini dresses with men groping me would just not work for me. We got to the office and Bonsile knocked. A male voice came from the other side saying come in. We went in.

"Sanbonani." She said soon as we got in. There were two men in the office. One of them was sitting on the chair and the other was standing. I wasnt sure which one was the boss but I could tell the one standing was a bit fidgety. The one sitting down looked up when we got in. He looked at Bonsile then at me before looking back at her with a look that said speak without uttering a word. "Uhm this is the lady I told you about. The one who will take Nqobile's position at the bar." The guy sitting down turns to look at the one standing and I could have sworn I saw fear rip through his body.

"Yeah bozza Nqobile quit on Friday so I need

someone to fill in for her. And since Friday we have the event I figured we needed to get someone as quick as possible." He said and the tremble in his voice was unmissable.

"Can she mix drinks?" The guy sitting down asks, and by now I have already gathered that he is the big boss.

"We will teach her. By the end of this week she'll be a professional cause getting a new bartender right now would take time, and time we dont have."

"Okay. But if she fails you will follow her out the door." The big boss said going back to the laptop in front of him. The, I assume manager looked at me and I saw daggers coming my way. I knew then I couldn't fuck this up.

We left the office and Bonsile led me to the staff room where some of the other girls were sitting.

"Why didnt you all warn me the boss was here?"

Bonsile asks the girl. Some of them giggle like naughty school girls.

"Well surprise babe." One of them answers.

"Mxm. Anyways this is Nomonde, she'll be replacing Nqobile. Nomonde that is Tisetso, we call her Titi, that's Wendy and Zanele." Bonsile says pointing out each girl.

"I already have someone who is coming to take Nqobile's place, Thulani agreed to it." Tisetso said looking at me like I was a mound of dirt mixed with poo.

"Well too late, the big boss approved it so..."

Bonsile showed me my locker and I put my things in there and followed her out while the girls mumbled behind us. If there is one thing jail taught me, if girls dont like you, especially those you will be in close proximity with, you need to make sure you know your story and look over your shoulder all the time.

We got to the bar and Bonsile showed me all that needed to be done. How to mix all the drinks. The club even had an inhouse cocktail that was apparently a best seller, all I had to do today was master that one and I'll be good for the day. People started coming in around five in the evening, by seven the place was halfway full. It's a Monday but people are already thinking about alcohol, judgemental I know, I just dont understand why people are so obsessed with alcohol. Anyways its their lives and their money so who am I to judge.

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The week went by pretty quickly, but I am happy to say I have mastered atleast ninety percent of the drinks. The inhouse cocktail had become my specialty. The girls weren't as welcoming but Bonsile told me to focus on my job and forget them, which works for me. The tips are rolling in too. Turns out people like to spend when they dont know you, they

try to impress maybe even hoping that will get something in return. I blame my tiny body for all this because being petite, people assume I'm a small kid. I'm pretty sure they would faint if they found out I was quarter to thirty six years old.

Friday came and the place was buzzing, the event was happening tonight and apparently the who's who of Durban and Mzansi would assemble here. If you asked me what the event was for I would tell you. I just knew it would be big. The waitresses wore shorts with black pantyhose underneath, heels and tiny cropped tops. I don't know if I could last the whole night with those heels.

Bonsile and I wore our normal black Jean's, with some black corset tops that revealed too much of my boobs, well they weren't fully out there but still. A few minutes before the doors opened the manager, Thulani called us for a meeting. The big boss was here too. I guess this event really is important.

"Okay ladies and gentlemen, you all know how important tonight is, we cannot afford to have any mishaps. There will be bouncers at every corner so if something seems off alert them." He said looking at each of the waiters and waitresses. "Bonsile and Nomonde, service at the bar needs to be quick and precise. So with Nomonde being new, I will also help out at the bar when it's too busy. Are we clear?" We all mumbled and nodded. "Glad we understand each other. Now go back to work." We clapped our hands and went back to our posts.

The good thing about having Bonsile as my teacher is that I live with her, so the lessons don't end in here but even at home she would make sure I practice making drinks. Soon as the doors opened the line outside was already so long. It's a pity some of those people will have to enjoy the event from outside .

Working in the bar was a breeze, I didn't have to deal

with pervert minded customers, and those who came to the bar really tipped well. We were halfway through the night when I looked up from mixing a drink from a customer and came face to face with my sister. I froze for a second but I remembered this was my workplace. I handed the drink to the customer then turned back to my dear sister.

"What can I get you ma'am." I saw a smile creep up on her face.

"You know I've been sitting over there thinking this person looks familiar, and lo and behold it's my big sister. Iwele lam. (My twin.)"

"You can either order something or move aside, there are customers behind you."

"What? You dont want to catch up with your dear sister?"

"I am at work right now Amanda, if you want to catch up make an appointment. Please move aside." I took an order from a customer standing next to her. I asked Bonsile to swap sides with me so she can

serve Amanda if she does decide to order.

After ignoring her for a while she eventually decided to leave and go back to her table. We continued serving and working, and I was honestly beginning to enjoy this job. The fast pace and having to remember every little detail about a drink was just exhilarating. The event went on until the wee hours of the morning. I don't know when Amanda left but sometime during the night she disappeared.

By four in the morning the bouncers had to literally drag some drunk patrons out the door. Soon as the last one was out everyone found a seat to throw themselves on. The place was dirty and there were glasses all over the floor. Thulani and the big boss came in from the office all smiles. I guess the event was a success.

"Okay people gather around." Thulani shouts while clapping his hands to get everyone's attention. We

all gathered on one couch by the wall. "Well done to all of you. Today was a raving success. We literally made our seventy percent of our monthly target in one day." There were whistles and hands clapping all around.

"Like Thulani said, well done. You all did a great job. And Nomonde, Congratulations on not cracking under pressure." The others clapped for me and of course there were those who were hoping I would fail, and lucky for me, my mother serves a living God. "Today is Saturday and we all know we will be busy again. So we will work today and tomorrow and take the day off on Monday. The club will be closed so you all can rest." We clapped again. "Don't worry about the clean up, just be here tomorrow by three so we can open the club, get your stuff, your transport is waiting outside." The big boss said, crazily enough I still didn't know his name, everyone calls him big boss since never had the urge to even ask anyone.

We grabbed our stuff and got into the taxi. We were dropped off one by one. By the time we got home we weren't straight to bed. It felt so good to just sleep. I thought I'd be up by my usual six am but I didnt. I slept through the morning. We woke up around midday and took our baths. As much as that sleep was refreshing my body was still mildly tired. I was done bathing and sitting in the lounge waiting for Bonsile to finish dressing up when there was a knock on the door. I got up and opened the door. I swear trials and tribulations always come when things seem to be looking up.

"Nomonde!" I wasnt sure if I should answer him or shut the door in his face, but I also knew the latter option wouldn't work because he had his foot halfway into the house. Also how the hell did he even find me, because I know for a fact Amanda did not tell him.

"Paul!"

MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINE

He stood there like he had just come face to face with a ghost. How did he even know I was here? I swear these people are determined to make my life a living hell, as if the past fifteen years haven't been traumatic enough.

"With all the money in the world you couldn't afford to buy a car that would tell you that you are going astray?" He walked past me and stood in the middle of the tiny living room. He looked around disgust written all over his face. I guess his rich ass is wondering how a living room can be smaller than his ensuite bathroom. He turned to look at me after scanning the surroundings and clearly being unimpressed.

"I need you to stay away from my wife." I chuckled. I

should have known Amanda would pull a stunt like this.

"So what did my dear twin sister say I did to her?"

"You know exactly what you did."

"And yet again I ask, what did I do to her?" He walked closer to me and stood inches away from my face. Even though he has always been a bit taller than me he never could intimidate me.

"My wife came back to the hotel last night with alcohol all over her and she says you are the one who threw it on her so I will tell you this one time and one time only, stay the fuck away from her." I sighed and looked him square in the eye. Its crazy how his eyes havent changed one bit, their make that is, but now they were cold and deadly. The love and light he once held for me now was no longer visible, not even a tiny trace of it.

"Tell me something Paul, when did you become stupid?" I saw his jaw clench and his fists curl into a ball next to him. But I stood my ground, cause one thing I knew about him, he has never been one to put

his hands on a woman, but then again the Paul I knew didnt seem to exist anymore.

"Nomonde, I'm warning you."

"You still havent answered my question. When did you become stupid, was it a gradual thing or you just woke up one day and stupid was a part of your personality?" I did say fifteen years is a long time for a person to stay the same. His curled fists opened up and one made it's way around my neck. He pinned me on the wall while I gasped for breath. I held on to his arm trying to remove it from my neck but he was stronger than me.

"I wont repeat myself Nomonde. Stay away from my wife. Are we clear?" He hissed under his breath. I could feel my lungs getting deflated because they weren't getting enough oxygen. He eased his hold a bit until he fully let go of me. I crumbled down on the floor as Bonsile tiptoed towards the kitchen and came back with a pan. She wacked Paul on the head with it, he stumbled a bit and held on to the back of his head, clearly in pain but still standing.

He turned around and charged towards her but She ran around the lounge making sure there was some form of furniture between them.

"I've already called the cops, they will be here soon. So if I were you I would leave before the Mashile name gets plastered on all the front page news because one of them finds pleasure in putting his hands on a woman." She shouted while standing behind the couch with the pan still in her hand. I was still crouched on the floor trying to get my breath back.

Paul touched the back of his head and then looked at his fingers. He clicked his tongue when he saw the blood. He wiped his bloody hand on the couch before opening the door and walking out. Bonsile immediately ran to the door and locked it then came to me to make sure I was okay. She helped me up and I sat on the couch.

"Are you Okay?" She asked as she went to the kitchen to get me a glass of water. She came back and sat down next to me as I drank the cold water.

"I'm fine. We need to get to work before we get fired."

"You need to put a polo neck on." I got up from the couch and looked at myself in the mirror that was hanging on the wall. She was right. I need to put on something that will cover my neck and my bruises since my neck was now turning blue and purple. If I was light skinned I'd probably be red by now.

I went to my room and looked through my clothes trying to find something that can cover my neck. Lucky for me I found a polo neck. I changed my tshirt and put on the polo neck. I walked out and found Bonsile waiting for me. We left, took a taxi and went to work. I spent the night trying to put the incident with Paul to the back of my mind. I never thought I'd see the day Paul ever put his hands on me, but here we are.

I continued working. My mind had even forgotten, or at least tried to, the incident earlier. Even the bruises on my neck were becoming less painful. I saw Amanda walk in with a bunch of women. You couldn't miss the smell of money with each step they took. They were wearing luxury from head to toe, even their weaves screamed top quality. I saw Amanda looking at me and winking, I guess Paul told her what happened.

They took a seat in the VIP section. The waiters literally raced to be the one to serve them. I decided to ignore them and focus on my work. As I had expected, it wasn't long before my sister made her way to me, I counted down from ten to one trying to calm myself so I wouldn't find myself doing something I'll regret. I need this job.

"Sis wami. What's with the polo neck, it's almost thirty degrees outside." She said with a smirk on her

face.

"What drink would you like?" I asked with the most professional smile on my face.

"Oh sis, why so professional. Anyways we would like for you to come to our table and take our order there." She turned and swayed her hips back to her table. I decided to ignore her and serve the people before me.

Waiters kept coming to me to tell me that the table was waiting for me and I kept telling them I was busy. They were beginning to be pissed at me because they were losing tips all because of me. As if i said i wanted to serve those women. I saw a waiter talk to them before he went up the stairs to the office. I knew what that meant, I'm probably going to lose my job tonight, all because of my sister.

The waiter came down with the big boss and led him to the VIP table. He spoke to the ladies for a while before marching over to the bar.

"Nomonde, please follow me." He turned and walked back upstairs to the office. I put down the glass I was holding and followed him. I looked over at my sister and she and her friends were looking at me smiles all over their faces. I never thought having money also came with an evil heart, but here we are. Or maybe the evil heart has always been there. The money just made it more visible.

I got to the office and the big boss was sitting on his chair. I closed the door and the music from downstairs literally dissapeared. I guess this room is sound proof. I stood before him and waited for him to say something first.

"Please explain yourself." He said not even looking at me.

"I dont know what to explain sir." He looked up and sat back on the chair resting his head on it.

"Why won't you serve those women? Do you know the kind of tips you are missing out on?" I chuckled,

he clearly doesnt know my sister.

"With all due respect sir I know my sister, chances of her even giving me a tip are zero to nil. She might even find something stupid to complain about and then I would have to pay their bill for giving them mediocre service, so no thanks I would much rather not."

"Who is your sister?"

"Amanda."

"Amanda Mashile?"

"Yep, that's the one."

"Okay that explains the surname. But how do you have the same last name when she is Mrs Mashile and you are Miss, she's your sister in law?"

"No she's not, it's a long story."

"Mhmmmm. So I take it theres bad blood between you?" He asked, his curiosity clearly visible.

"You can say that."

"Okay, go back to your post, I'll be down in a few

minutes." I turned and walked out breathing a sigh of relief. Thank God my job is still safe, for now that is.

I went back to the bar and continued on with my job. The big boss came down after a while and came over to the bar. He got a bottle of wine and opened it. He told Bonsile to put it on his tab. He poured a glass for me, another for Bonsile and one for himself. We did a toast then downed the red liquid like it was juice. I haven't tasted alcohol in such a long time I was surprised I kept it down.

I saw my sister come over to the bar fuming. She and her friends have been here for almost an hour and the only thing they ordered was a bottle of wine.

"Radebe, what's happening with my complaint?" She asked looking at the big boss. He smiled and looked at her while he balanced himself on the counter with his hands.

"Nothing is happening with your complaint Mrs Mashile." She chuckled and crossed her arms across her chest.

"Do you know who I am Mr Radebe? If you dont I would suggest you take my complaint seriously or else you might wake up one day and this club will be history."

"Threatening me wont help your case Mrs Mashile, I'm not going to fire one of my best bartenders just because you have a problem with her. If this place is too much for you, you can use the same door you used to get in and get the fuck out." To say Amanda was shocked would be an understatement. Her face said it all. Not only was she shocked she was embarrassed too. I guess that whole 'do you know who I am line' always gets her what she wants, not today though.

"You dont know who you just messed with Radebe, my husband will hear about this and this little rat infested hellhole you call a club will be down on its knees by the time he is done with you." I looked at the big boss and he had a smirk on his face.

"Tell your husband to give it his best shot. Now pay for that bottle and get the fuck out." She closed her mouth that was wide open and headed back to her friends.

She got her purse and threw a few notes on the table before she marched out with her little entourage following behind her. I'm not sure if the waiters were impressed or pissed at having lost out on what might have been a huge tip. Oh well, I didn't care really cause at this very moment I was on cloud nine. It was kinda nice to see someone put Amanda in her place.

As soon as they had left the big boss went back to the office.

"Remind me again what just happened?" Bonsile said getting closer to me. I smiled and just looked at her. She took two shot glasses and poured some tequila on them, she handed one to me and we gulped them

down. I was so happy the bitter liquid felt like soda on my throat.

"I've never seen my sister that embarrassed before."

"I think Lungelo has a crush on you." I frowned and looked at her. I dont know any Lungelo.

"Who is Lungelo?"

"The big boss. You are telling me you've been here a week and you still dont know your boss's name?"

How could I have possibly know his name when everyone calls him big boss. But I guess today is a good a night as any to finally put a name to the one person who could make my sister breath through the wound. Lungelo Radebe is my new hero and he doesnt even know it. Superman who?

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TEN

Ever been on a cloud that seems so far up in the sky you dont think you'll ever come down? Well that has been me the entire week. Seeing Amanda being put in her place just somehow ignited a feeling of pure joy from deep within my soul.

This weekend I will be off so I decided to go home and see my mum and daughter. The pay is great but the tips are even better. I decided to start at the mall and get Bontle some shoes for her Matric dance. And I knew just the perfect pair. I took a taxi and headed to Gateway, I got to Steve Madden and searched around for the shoes that Bontle has on her phone. I asked the assistant to help me and she showed me. I almost jumped for joy when I saw that they were on sale. I told you this week has been perfect.

I bought the shoes, paid and headed out. I went to PicknPay and bought a few groceries and things we might need at home. I finished my shopping and took a taxi home. By the time I got there my mum was already back from selling so I didn't have to wait outside in the hot sun. I got in and hugged my mum. She was sitting in the lounge with her feet up on the coffee table. I decided to boil some water so I can give her a foot massage. Mental not, I need to get her one of those home foot massages so she can relax like the queen she is. I came back with a bowl of hot water and a cloth, I put some Epsom salt in there to help her relax.

"So how is going?" She asked while I massaged her feet.

"Good, so good in fact that my boss told Amanda where to get off when she came to the club."

"What! What did that spawn of satan do this time?" I laughed.

"Ma, she is your child and you are not satan."

"Hhay you never know, if Mariah could get pregnant with Jesus via the holy spirit, maybe that also happened with me, except this time the devil was the one doing the work."

"Ma you cant say that."

"Argh, I know, I just cant help feeling like I failed Amanda, somewhere somehow I must have done something wrong."

"Amanda is a grown woman, whatever she does, she is fully aware of it. You cant blame yourself for it."

"I know, so what did she do?"

"She tried to embarrass me in front of her friends, my boss put her back in her place pretty quickly. She left the club fuming."

"Serves her right. You know she's never even brought her kids here? I swear this girl has no idea the kind of karma she is digging up for herself."

"Argh forget her, she will remember home when the time comes. So I bought Bontle some shoes for her matric dance."

I took the plastic bag from the couch and showed it to her. I swear her smile went all the way up to her ears. She took the shoes out and looked at them.

"They are so beautiful, she'll be so happy."

"I hope so. She has a picture of them on her phone."

"She'll fit them when she gets back, her dress is almost done, just a few amendments here and there and she'll be good to go."

"Good, at least that's one less thing she has to worry about. Then she can fully focus on her exams."

Speak of the devil and he shall appear. Bo the walked through the door clearly tired with her school Jersey over her head to shield her from the sun. She threw herself on the couch face down.

"Hectic day?"

"You have no idea. I swear these exams will be the

death....." she stopped talking when she got up and saw the shoes on mums lap. The joy in her face was evident. "Gogo?"

"Hhay hhay, these are mine hawu." Mum said hiding the shoes behind her. Bontle rushed to her and gave her a hug while tickling her. "Bontle ngzokshaya man ngyeke (I'll beat you leave me alone.)" She said between giggles. Bontle managed to get the box of shoes and ran back to sit down on the couch. She opened the box and her screams filled the room.

"Oh my God these are perfect, how did you know?" She asked looking at me.

"I have my ways." She threw herself at me and gave me the biggest hug.

"Thank you mummy." She sat back down and wiped her tears. She couldn't stop looking at the shoes. I was happy she was happy. These are the moments I've always prayed to see and experience.

Bontle went to get her dress and put it on together with her shoes, and I shed a tear just looking at her. She was so beautiful, my baby is all grown and she is turning into an incredibly amazing human being. How did I get so lucky though.

After admiring herself for a good thirty minutes she went to do her homework while my mum went to take a nap. I decided to start on supper. I was busy chopping vegetables when my phone rang. I looked at the number and I didnt know it. I picked up.

"Hello!" I heard some shuffling of something on the other side but the person wouldn't speak. "Hello!" I shouted.

"Oh hey, sorry about that." He said.

"Who is this?"

"Its Lungelo, why arent you at work?"

"Because I'm off this weekend. You said that." I could feel my heart beating fast, what if I lose my job?

Oh God.

"Oh!"

"Is everything okay?"

"Yeah everything is fine. I must have forgotten.
Sorry."

"Its okay. Maybe you need to rest." I heard him
chuckle.

"Funny, my mum told me the same thing."

"Then you should listen."

"Maybe I will. Enjoy your weekend."

"I will, thanks." He hung up.

I'm not sure what that was even about.



AMANDA

Fifteen years I had peace and harmony in my life. For the first time ever I didn't have to worry about my sister overshadowing everything I did. And now that she is out of prison I feel like she is back to torment me. As far as I know she was supposed to stay home and never set foot anywhere where the Mashile's might be, but now she is working at my favourite club in Durban. I literally fly there most weekends just for the vibe. And how she has ruined that. And that Lungelo who thinks he is God has no idea who he is messing with.

Paul flew back to Joburg soon as he confronted Nomonde about the little white lie I told him, I couldn't even tell him about Lungelo and his shenanigans. And by the time I flew back to Joburg he had already left the country on business. And his phone is not going through. I hope to God he is not with that slut he's been seeing lately.

I dont know when my life went wrong. I had everything perfectly planned out after my sister went to jail and Paul got out of his coma. Seduce Paul, get pregnant and then get him to marry me. It took a while for me to get pregnant, but when I did I lost the baby before lobola negotiations happened. I had to lie to Paul that I was still pregnant until after everything was done. Lucky for me he wanted the lobola and wedding to happen within a month. Perfect for me.

We got married and a few days later I faked a fall down the steps of his mother's house in Houghton, which "resulted" in my "miscarriage". After that he treated me like a fragile egg, playing right into his hands. A few months later I fell pregnant with my daughter Princess. Paul being untrusting since my sister lied to him about Bontle being his child he decided to have a DNA test done. When the results came back positive he was so happy, if i had demanded the moon at that point he would have brought right down to earth. But i settled for a house

in Sandton.

His mother didnt understand why we wanted to move out but for me, I didn't need too many eyes watching over me. Everything had to go according to plan. A couple of years later I fell pregnant again, this time my little Prince was born. The excitement in the family was beautiful. The first of the next generation of Mashile man was born. Although the sisters-in-law had sons they weren't really Mashile's, but my son was the heir to everything. Life was perfect. Until it wasn't.

One night I woke up to go check on the kids, Paul wasnt in bed so I decided to go check on him in the study. He was there sleeping on the couch. I didnt want to wake him so I decided to put a throw over him. I was about to do that when I noticed that his laptop was on. When I tried to switch it off the video started to play. It would have been an easier pill to swallow if he had been watching porn, but no, he

was busy watching old videos of himself and my sister, and then it dawned on me, no matter how hard I try, he will never love me the way he loved her. In spite of her being in jail for trying to kill him he still pined over her.

I left him there and tried to gather myself. I went to sleep angry, angry at him and angry at her. Why did she have to be so perfect in everyone's eyes? Even my own mother refused to handle my lobola negotiations because she was loyal to her. Now my husband was still holding out a torch for her. When will she lose? How long do I have to live in her shadow?

The door opened and my son and daughter walked in dragging their suitcases, why are they even back, they should be in school.

"What are you guys doing here? Shouldn't you be at school?"

"Relax mum, we will stay out of your way, we thought you would be on a girls trip somewhere." Princess answered while her brother went up the stairs with his headphones on.

"That's beside the point Princess."

"Its a long weekend mum, we cant be at school alone. If you feel we'll be an inconvenience to you I'll ask the driver to take us to grandma's." She said trying to walk out the door.

"No, baby this is your home, you know I love having you here." She rolled her eyes and dragged her luggage upstairs.

Who am I kidding, I was never meant to be a mother. For some people motherhood comes naturally but to me it's a struggle, if the kids arent noisy they are fighting, and if it's not that then they are just naturally irritating. And now that Nomonde has ruined my favourite club I cant even fly down to Durban so I will have to tolerate my kids for a whole weekend. Plus I dont have the energy to be judged

by my "perfect" mother-in-law. God give me strength.
Argh.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

ELEVEN

Spending the weekend with my family was all I needed. I got back to work the following week ready for just about anything. I got to work and found Bonsile already there. I greeted and went to change, I locked my stuff in the locker and went back to the front. I joined Bonsile at the bar and helped her dry the glasses.

"So how was your weekend?" She asked.

"Perfect. After the drama with Amanda I needed to be with my family."

"Good, I'm happy for you. Although Lungelo seemed to be moody since you weren't here."

"Why would he be moody, I've been here for less than a month." I wasn't sure if this sudden mood she is talking about was good or bad. I just hope I won't

lose my job because of it.

"You really are blind aren't you? The man has a crush on you. I mean he has started spending more time in the club than before. He used to come here twice a month at most and now he is here almost everyday, and the only thing that has changed, you joined the team." I laughed.

"Come on, your mind is on a fast train to nowhere Sweetie."

"If you say so. And speaking of which....." she said looking at the entrance. I turned to see what had caught her attention and it was Lungelo.

He walked in with a guy who looked almost like him. They walked past us and greeted before going up to the office. I did notice the guy smiling at Bonsile though. I looked at her and she had a smile plastered on her face as she watched them go up the stairs. I waved my hand in front of her and she blinked before looking back at me.

"Speaking of crushes, who is he?" She blushed and continued working.

"That is his brother. Muzi Radebe."

"You have a crush on him, dont you?"

"Well not a crush per say, we are in a relationship, although no one knows about it." She said with a hint of sadness in her voice.

"Why not? If you too live each other then what's the problem?"

"Well, his wife died a year and a half ago. We started seeing each other six months after so he thinks it's too soon for people to know about us because of that."

"So you have to stay hidden like some sort of a mistress?" She shrugged her shoulders but I could see she was hurt.

The bar phone rang and I picked it up.

"Monde can I please have a six pack of Heineken in the office please. And some food from the kitchen."

He said before hanging up. I looked at the phone before putting it back in its place. How did he even know I would answer the phone? And what food does he want.

I took the alcohol and put it in the ice bucket then filled it with ice. I took it upstairs to the office. I knocked and heard him say come in. I walked in and he was seated with his brother and Thulani discussing something. I placed the bucket on the table.

"Thank you. Welcome back by the way." He said and opened a bottle of beer.

"Thank you. You didnt tell me what food you want."

"Surprise me." He said with a smile. I must admit he has a beautiful smile. With a single dimple on his right cheek.

"As long as it's got chilli." His brother said. I smiled and walked out. I went back to the bar.

"If you want this guy to take your relationship seriously you need to make him realize that you are not the type of person to be hidden. If he really loves you he shouldn't be afraid of what other people say." I told Bonsile.

I walked to the kitchen and ordered a dozen peri peri wings, wors and some steak with chips, pap and chakalaka on the side. I went back to the bar and started working. Since Bonsile had started the early shift she would knock off earlier than me so I had to prepare myself to man the bar alone after she's gone. Hopefully Thulani will be in hand to help.

Soon as the food was ready I took it upstairs. I handed them the food and went back downstairs. People were starting to flock in. Lucky for me it was midweek so I'm pretty sure it won't be busy, but then again this is Durban.

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By the time my shift finished I felt like my feet had needles pricking them everytime I took a step. We cleaned cause we didnt want to come in too early tomorrow. I went to the locker rooms to get my stuff while everyone was already on their way out. Thulani and Lungelo came down the stairs after cashing up. I walked out and almost had a heart attack when I couldn't find the staff transport. They left me. How the hell am I supposed to get home now? I dont even have the number for a cab.

I stood there trying to figure out what to do. I saw Lungelo and Thulani walk out, i went back to them while they locked up.

"Hi, I need your help." They turned to look at me.

"I thought you'd left?" Lungelo said looking behind me.

"Yeah the transport left me. Can you call me a cab."

"No need for that. I'll take you home."

"Thank you but a cab will do."

"Dont waste your energy Monde, he wont take no for an answer. I'll see you guys tomorrow." Thulani said and walked to his car. He drove off as Lungelo led me to his car. He opened the door for me and I got in. I told him where we stay and he drove there.

"So how was home?"

"It was great. I miss them already."

"Besides Amanda, how many other siblings do you have?"

"None. It's just her. I have a daughter though."

"Really? You look to young to have a child."

"Ha ha ha very funny." He laughs.

"What's funny."

"I'm old shem."

"Well your mother must have the strongest Gene's. You dont look a day over twenty five." I chuckled. No one has ever said that to me. Welk I do look young but I doubt I look like an under twenty five.

He got to my place and dropped me off. I thanked him and got out of the car. He waited until I was inside the building before he drove off. I got to the flat and took a shower. I went straight to bed after. I need as much sleep as I can get.



AMANDA

The family is hosting a dinner tonight to welcome back my dear sister in law Bonolo, she has been away studying in the states. She doesnt like me very much. The little time I've been in her presence hasn't been nice. She thinks she breathes out flavoured

oxygen.

Paul drove the kids back to school yesterday and he came back late in the evening. With the kids gone I can have my peace back. This house was way too noisy for my liking. I got ready to drive to that house. I know Paul wont even come to pick me up, I'm sure he is there already.

I drove to Houghton and sure enough his car was already parked outside. I'm sure the guest of honor was here already judging by the laughter coming from the house. I walked in and the mood was jolly and happy. I grabbed a glass of mimosa from the waiter passing by. Yes, there is a waiter at a family dinner. This woman is super extra. I saw her walk down the stairs and she walked straight to me.

"Amanda, you are late." My dear mother in law said.

"My apologies ma, I got caught up at work." She

faked a smile.

"No worries. The guest of honor is not here yet." She said and walked away. I went upstairs to the guest bedroom and threw myself on the bed. I sat there for a while before Paul walked in.

"What are you doing in here? The party is downstairs. Come on, Bonolo is almost here." He said and walked out. I sighed and got up. I went downstairs and the music was already off. I forgot this was a surprise party. Lesego came in and announced that Bonolo was outside so we had to hide. I went to the kitchen while everyone was busy trying to find a hiding spot.

I heard them shout surprise while I gulped down my second glass of mimosa. I went out to join the party and people were busy hugging Bonolo. She saw me from the corner of her eye while hugging Paul. Her smile turned to a frown soon as she saw me. She picked up her smile soon as Paul let go of her and

she kept on hugging people.

We sat down for the dinner and she went on and on about her time at Harvard, as if she was the first one to make it to Harvard. Mxm, bloody show off. I got up after dessert and went to the bathroom. I peed then powdered my nose. When I walked out I found Bonolo standing against the wall with her arms crossed across her chest. I'm not ready for whatever drama she brings.

"Welcome home. It wasnt the same without you. Congratulations on your degree too."

"Its a Master's degree honey. I'm surprised you are still here, I thought Paul would have dumped your ass by now."

"Ever heard the term till death do us apart?"

"Where you're concerned, I doubt that term holds true. Someday Paul will see right through you and then he will dump you out with the trash cause that's

where you belong." I chuckled and walked closer to her.

"Sweetie, you've been singing that same song for years now and yet I'm still here. This little torch you are still holding for my sister will burn out eventually, just you wait." She walked closer to me and stood inches away from my face.

"That torch I hold for your sister will always burn bright. I've never believed she tried to kill my brother and I still don't believe it now. Nomonde is ten times the woman you will ever be. You can wear expensive clothes and perfume but that perfume will never be enough to stop the stinking smell that comes from your evil heart. You are nothing more than an opportunistic and gold digging trash. And one day, everyone will see right through you." She said before walking back downstairs.

I hate her. This family has never fully warmed up to me but they've always been civil. Bonolo on the other hand has always been a cold hearted bitch, her

return is only going to make my life more uncomfortable. I need to get rid of her, quick.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWELVE

If anyone had to ask me why I slept for less than three hours I probably wouldn't have an answer. Last night, well this morning I knocked off super late or super early depending on how you look at it. We knocked off at three thirty in the morning and I ended up falling asleep a few minutes past four. Its six thirty now and I'm already up. I've been trying to close my eyes and will my body to sleep but I have been failing.

I gave up trying and decided to go clean the house and make breakfast. I first went to the bathroom and washed my face then brushed my teeth. I got to the kitchen and cleaned up before moving to the lounge. By the time I was done I was too tired to make a proper breakfast so I just made soft porridge. I dished up and went to sit in the lounge watching

cartoons. I bought free minutes on Vodacom and called my mum. We chatted for a while and then I spoke to Bontle. She was in a jovial mood cause some boy had asked her to be his date to the Matric dance. After speaking to her I said a little prayer thanking God for these two people in my life. He alone knows their faith and prayers kept me through the toughest days of my life.

Bonsile walked in from her room and went straight to the kitchen to dish up. I didnt even know she was home. I thought she'd be with her boyfriend. She came in and sat down on the other couch.

"I thought you'd be with your man." She looked at me and chuckled.

"Well I took your advice. I told him I'm tired of being hidden. Then I gave him an ultimatum, either we let people know we are together or we end things."

"So what did he decide?"

"He tried to make me see "reason" on why it was important to keep our relationship private."

"There is a huge difference between being private and being kept a secret."

"And that's exactly what I told him. No one knows we are together so how is that a 'private' relationship? Mxm, that man thinks he's the only one walking this earth. There are plenty fishes in the sea."

"True, but give him time, maybe he'll come around."

"Yeah well I wont be waiting around for him to come to his senses."

We finished eating and she went to take a shower. Since she was taking the early shift again tonight she had to leave before me. I could feel my eyes getting tired. I set an alarm for two hours later and took a nap on the couch. Hopefully I can get enough rest to keep me up tonight.

I woke up even before the alarm rang. I went to take

a shower. I didnt even see Bonsile leaving. I finished bathing and wore my uniform. I was putting on my sneakers when I heard a knock on the door. I hope it's not Bonsile's boyfriend. I left the bedroom and went to open the door. I was surprised to find Lungelo standing in the doorway.

"Hey, what are you doing here?"

"I came to pick you up." He said walking into the house. He looked around and I'm pretty sure he has never been in a flat this small.

"You do know there are taxis right." I said and he turned and looked at me. He was smiling, and his dimple was visible.

"Well I was in the neighborhood. So I thought I'd give you a lift." I could bet my entire months salary that he is lying, but I decided not to drag his little lie further than it needs to be.

"Okay then. I'll go get my bag." I left him there and went to my room. I combed my short hair and went back to the lounge with my sling bag strapped

across my chest. I found him sitting on the couch watching the cartoons. "I'm ready." He got up and switched off the TV.

We walked out and he took the keys from me and locked. He led me down the stairs instead of us taking the elevator. We live on the fifth floor and he expects me to take the stairs. Atleast we are going down and not up.

"So tell me who is Nomonde Mashile." He asked as we went down the stairs.

"Well, what is it that you want to know?" I've never had to tell a stranger who I am before. Not even when I was working have I ever been asked to say who I am. But what's scary now is having to tell someone that I spent the last fifteen years of my life behind bars.

"Everything. You seem like a smart beautiful woman, why are you working in a club?"

"I need the money."

"Come on. That cant be all."

"It is actually." I was getting a bit restless.

"Okay, I'll let it go, for now."

We walked to the gate and he tagged us out. He opened the car door for me before getting in. He drove until we got to work. Thank God for the dark windows in this place, I wont have to deal with the gossiping if people had to see me getting out of his car.

I opened the door and got out. I was trying to rush in before him but he somehow caught up to me with his long strides. We walked in side by side. I tried not to look at the staff who were looking at us sideways. We parted ways when I went to the locker room to put my things and he walked up the stairs to the office. I came back and found Bonsile with a huge grin on her face. I tried to ignore her but it was just

impossible.

"Say what you want to say Bonsile and get rid of that smile on your face."

"Do you have any idea how good you look together though."

"Stop daydreaming."

"I'm not. You look so cute together."

"Stop talking about me and this none existent crush you've been seeing. Has your man called?"

"Speak of the devil." She said looking at the door. I looked and saw Muzi walking in. He walked up to the bar.

"We need to talk." He said as he sat down on the chair.

"I'll give you some privacy." I tried to walk away.

"No, stay. I'm sure whatever he has to say he can say in front of you." He walked around the counter and

came into the bar. He looked at Bonsile and grabbed her by her waist bringing her close to him. He kissed her with all eyes on them. He pulled out after a while.

"Is that public enough for you?" He asked and I saw a huge smile form on her face. She kissed him again. He pulled out and jumped over the counter and walked up the stairs to his office.

"So, you are officially Muzi Radebe's girlfriend."

"I guess so." She said with a huge ass grin on her face. I'm a sucker for love and this one seems to be a potentially great love story.



BONOLO

I've never liked Amanda and I've never been able to pretend to like her. The rest of my family might tolerate her but I could never pretend. And that was just when she was just Nomonde's sister, mybhatred

for her became worse when she married my brother. I might have been in High school at the time but I was old enough to know that something didnt make sense with Nomonde's arrest and subsequent sentencing. And what Amanda marrying Paul fueled my suspicions even more. Somehow I always felt like she had something to do with it. But being a kid at the time no one was willing to listen to me.

After she was sentenced I vowed to study law so I can get her out. She was more of a big sister to me than my own sisters were. Yes we had a normal relationship as sisters but everyone felt the need to look at me as a child and thus treat me like one. Even my own brothers have a hard time seeing me as an adult even now. Everyone calls me Princess, yes it's my name but I still prefer Bonolo cause it sounds grown.

Nomonde was the kind of person I could tell all my secrets to. Even when i had my first crush she was

the first person i told. I was heartbroken when she was arrested, it felt like I'd lost a huge part of my heart. I left home and went to study in the States mostly because I needed to be far from my family, I was angry at them for not believing her, i was angry at them for not fighting for her. I guess a part of me is still angry. But i chose to fuel my anger on to something positive. Now that Nomonde is out of prison i will prove her innocence, and then help her sue the shit out of the police department and the Mashile family. Yes I will make sure they feel the pain for every single day she spent in that hellhole.

I went to the police station earlier armed with a court order from a dear friend, that allowed me to have access to all of Nomonde's case files, including the DNA tests that were conducted on Bontle, which made everyone believe she wasnt a Mashile. And that's something else my family will have to pay for, allowing a Mashile child to suffer while they lived lavish.

I got all the case files and loaded them up in my car. I drove to my new offices. I thought about leaving the files there but I decided against it. I decided to take them to secret location, Lord knows how many people are hoping for the truth to stay buried, and if they find out I have these files they will do anything to destroy them.

Once I was sure the files were safe I drove home. My mother was hosting another family dinner. This woman sure has time on her hands. I need to get her a boyfriend. Cause these family dinners are nothing more than a sham.

I drove in and found everyone already seated. I sat down too and dished up. We ate with conversations happening few and far in between every scoop of food. The staff brought out desert so I asked them to bring champagne too. Of course my family was surprised about that. Everyone got a glass. I stood up and faced them.

"Family, thank you for lending me your ear. I have news. As of this morning I have been granted a court order giving me permission to reopen Nomonde's case." I heard them gasping, but my eyes were focused on Amanda. I'm not sure if it was fear or panic I saw in her eyes, but i know it wasnt good, for her that is.

"Are you out of your mind Princess?" My mum asked as she out down the glass of champagne.

"No mum, I'm not. Nomonde was tried and persecuted for something I personally believe she didnt do. So I am going to help her prove her innocence. And once that is done, I will help her draw up a civil suit against the force and this family."

I've never seen my family this she'll shocked before. The Mashile name alone tends to send fear down people's spines, but I'm a Mashile, so even though people fear my family, I dont.

"You've been gone for so long that you've forgotten what family is. You want to side with someone who tried to kill your brother? Really Bonolo." My brother Lesego said. I could see he was angry, the clenched jaws and lines forming on his forehead and the side of his face were proof of that.

"You seem to forget Bontle is family too. But you had no problem turning your back on her and sending her mother to prison."

"BONOLO!" Lesego shouted and hit the table. He stood up with his fists clenched and balanced on the table. He looked at me straight in the face with his eyes full of rage.

"You can shout till Jesus comes back brother, but you know I'm just as stubborn as you. I will prove Nomonde's innocence and there is absolutely nothing you can do about it."

I walked out leaving them there unable to even speak. If I ever had doubts about this before, they are gone now. I will prove Nomonde's innocence,

even if it's the last thing I do.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Please excuse any grammatical errors, I'm tired and sleepy.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTEEN

"Bonolo, what the fuck is wrong with you?" My dear mother shouted as she barged into my office. It's crazy to think I just finished my Master's less than two months ago and I came home to a job and a corner office. The joys of being a struggle hero's daughter, a lot of things come easy.

"Goodmorning mother, how are you this morning?"

"Dont bullshit me Bonolo, what was that crap you said last night?"

"It's not crap, I plan on pursuing this to the very end. I need to find the truth."

"Everyone knows the truth Bonolo." She muttered between clenched teeth.

"The truth according to you and whoever framed Nomonde, and my guess is that daughter in law of yours is behind it."

"What are you talking about?" She asked, her curiosity obviously piqued.

"I'm talking about that good for nothing Amanda, I have a feeling she is behind this whole thing, and I will prove it, even if it's the last thing i do."

"If you really believe that then why would you make an announcement in front of the whole family, with the person you suspect right there? What if she does something to harm you?"

"Then you'll know where to look. I'm not stupid ma, if my gut is right, Amanda right now is probably trying to cover her tracks. And if she is then it's highly likely that she missed something the last time."

"And you're banking on that to catch her?" She asked as she pulled the visitors chair back and sat down.

"Yep."

"Fine, I'll let you do what you need to do. But I'm assigning a guard to you. If you are right then you might be in danger."

"Thank you but I dont need one."

"I wasn't really asking." She got up and grabbed her bag. "And you better forget about that suing business." She said and walked out.

Suing is exactly what I will convince Monde to do once I've proven her innocence. Nothing can bring back the years she spent behind bars and away from her babygirl. I took out two pictures from my drawer. One was of me as a teenager, I think I was about seventeen or eighteen and the other was a picture of Bontle I stole from Instagram. Putting these pics side by side was like looking at the same person. Bontle looks exactly like me, so this business of her not being a Mashile will never sit right with me until this part is explained.

My boss knocked on the door and told me to get ready to go to court. I grabbed my notes and files and walked with her to her car. We got in and the driver drove to court. I had this uneasy feeling through out the court proceedings that someone

was watching me. I kept looking over my shoulder but I couldn't see anything or anyone unfamiliar, just strangers in a courtroom.

When we drove back to the office I noticed a navy blue Tazz following me. I didnt think much of it, we went to the mall to get some lunch and the Tazz parked in the same parking lot, just a few spaces away. Again I thought my brain was just on high alert for whatever reason so I chose to ignore the feeling. I knew something was up with the Tazz when we drove out and the same car was following us. We got to the office and only then did the car drive past the building.

Soon as I got to my office and texted mum and told her that I'd need the guard before I knock off work today. Maybe I am a bit paranoid right now but I'd rather be safe than sorry. And whoever that is, if they think they can intimidate me then they clearly dont know me.



AMANDA

I've been pacing up and down this little flat for the past hour now. I still don't know why Thabang is not back yet. How long does it take to steal evidence from a police station. Evidence that's probably gathered enough dust for us to have a desert right here in Joburg.

I heard a key turn in the door and I let out a sigh of relief. I watched the door waiting for him to walk in. When he finally did, he had nothing. This has to be a joke right? But for his sake I hope it's not, my life is on the line.

"Thabang, please tell me this is a joke. Your hands are empty." He dragged his feet and threw himself on the couch. The way he threw himself on that

raggedy old ass thing I'm sure a spring probably popped out.

"The evidence is gone!" I felt my temperature rising with every word he spoke. I swear if anyone would test me now they would think I have Corona.

"Gone where?" I whispered, the words barely leaving my mouth.

"According to Bra Moss, a woman came to the station last night with a court order and demanded the evidence. You know no one would disrespect a court order so they gave her everything."

I felt my feet turn to jelly. I held onto anything I could find until I got to the couch. I sat down and tried to calm my mind and heart down. I'm screwed. If Bonolo has all the evidence then I'm screwed. Yes we covered our tracks, but that girl is like a dog with a bone. She wont stop till she finds what she is looking for, and right now that's my head on a platter.

"If the woman who has the evidence is the same woman you say is after you then we have only one option, we have to send her to meet her maker." I turned to look at him. Why am I the only one with brains in all this.

"Do you know who she is? Did you even think about that before you opened that mouth of yours and uttered those words? If it is Bonolo and then something happens to her, the Mashile's will bring this country to a standstill until whoever is responsible is found, and then they will kill us."

"Oh come on, they kept your sister alive in jail for fifteen years."

"And for any normal person she would have been out in less than five years. No one touches Bonolo until I have a solid plan to get that evidence away from her." I grabbed my bag and walked out.

I requested an uber and it took me to the mall. I took my car that I left there and drove to Sandton. I got out of my car and walked to his offices. His PA

wasnt in his desk so I just got into his office. And lo and behold I found his PA, on his knees sucking his dick off.

"If you're going to do that in the office the least you can do is lock the door." The PA quickly got up and ran out. Malcolm pulled his pants up and fastened his belt.

"What do you want Amanda?" He said walking around his desk and taking a seat.

"We have a problem."

"If it's about my brother then I dont want to know."

"Its not about your brother, it's about your little sister Princess and her little announcement last night."

"What are you afraid off? Bonolo will get bored soon enough, plus you covered your tracks so theres nothing there. Right?" He questioned looking up at me.

"You mean OUR tracks? Anyways It depends on how you look at it. She has the evidence."

"What do you mean?"

"She might have obtained a court order and now the evidence is in her possession."

"You cant be serious right now."

"I'm dead serious. You better get that little girl on a leash before all hell breaks loose."

"Dont threaten me Amanda. You and I are both screwed if she even finds an ounce of evidence."

"I think you are more screwed than I am. Think about it, what will the country think when they find out that young charismatic presidential hopeful, Malcolm Mashile, the answer to the youths prayers is actually a dick loving playboy who caters to the needs of the most powerful men in our society. Who do you think is going to vote for your party then? And if they find out how far back this little hobby of yours goes, nc nc nc. Get that little girl on a leash Malcolm, dead serious. I'm not going to lose my life because of a little spoilt brat."

I turned and walked out and found his PA pretending to type something on her laptop. It's such a pity seeing girls like her go through this BS, thinking they can get Malcolm away from his wife meanwhile he doesn't even like her. This is just a cover up for his sexuality.

Fifteen years ago when the country was really homophobic, blackmailing him was easy, but now our society has evolved, not entirely but still, it's evolved. For his sake though, I hope he gets that little girl in check, otherwise pictures of him sucking different dicks will be splashed across all the major Sunday tabloids. Come to think of it, if I leaked the pictures now, the family would be too busy putting out fires to even think about Bonolo's little tantrum, and that will be enough for me to get her out the way, permanently. Yeah, this could work.



NOMONDE

Ever since Muzi publicly claimed Bonsile it's like their relationship started all over again. Now they are like teenagers in love. It's beautiful to see her happy without having to hide it. She even spends more nights with him than in this place.

I got home late as usual and went straight to bed last night. People in Durban dont sleep honestly. Its midweek and the club was just as busy as any weekend, and the fact that its month end already isnt helping much.

I woke up in the morning and cleaned the house and did the laundry. I took a bath and just waited for the time so I can go to work. I looked at the message from the bank notifying me about my salary being paid and i still cant believe i made this much money in my first month working. It's still surreal.

I heard a knock on the door and I went to open. I found Lungelo standing there with a chicken licken plastic bag.

"Hi, what are you doing here?"

"I was in the neighborhood so I thought I'd bring some lunch." He said lifting the plastic up.

"Right!" I moved aside and let him walk in. I got two plates from the kitchen and two glasses. I found him going through the channels on TV.

"Why dont you have Supersport?"

"We dont really watch sports."

"Well, I do." He said putting the remote away. I opened the plastic bag and dished up for us. I handed him his plate. "So I'll miss the game?"

"Apparently so. Did you come here to watch soccer?"

"Maybe."

"You should have stayed in your house then."

"You're right. Let's go." He got up with his plate and

drink.

"Where are we going?"

"To my house. We will watch the game there." What? Is he high on something? "Come on, the game starts in fifteen minutes and my house is twenty minutes away." He said while standing by the door. There has to be something wrong with him.

I got up and took my plate of food and followed him. I locked the door and we got into his car and drove to his house. Something might be wrong with me too, why am I even going to this mans house? Where does my brain go where he is concerned?

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FOURTEEN

Mornings are Gods way of saying heres one more chance, to live, to start over and blah blah blah. I dont remember the last part but that's what my mum always told us growing up. She always said Yesterday is gone, enjoy today and prepare for tomorrow. And I've lived with that my whole life. Even when I was in jail it was my daily reminder. With all the hell that happened in there, these words became my anchor and calm in the middle of the storm.

I woke up and stretched my arms. I don't know when I fell asleep but the last thing i remember is celebrating Chief's win with Lungelo in his house. I looked around and there is no way in hell this was my bedroom. It was a beautiful room with nude coloured paint with splashes of colour here and

there. I looked at the clock on the side of the table and the numbers 7:30 were boldly visible. I sat up so fast remembering I didnt go to work last night. Holy fuck.

I quickly got up and opened the first door i saw and it was a closet, i presume this must be a guest bedroom since the closet didnt have much stuff in it, just towels and a bathrobe. I grabbed the bathrobe and opened the second door where I found the bathroom. This room is huge. I quickly jumped in the shower and got out in less than ten minutes. I opened the cabinet and found some women's toiletries. I decided to use them. The owner will just have to forgive me.

I went back to the bedroom and put on my Jean's and tshirt. My sneakers were sitting pretty by the door. I made the bed before putting them on and walking out. I walked down the stairs and smelt something coming from somewhere. I decided to

follow the scent and it led me to the kitchen. Lungelo was busy on the stove cooking something with his headphones on. He was topless with just shorts and slippers on. I wonder how many times he works out in a week, I'm pretty sure its everyday, theres no way in hell he got all that definition and muscles from playing around in the gym once a week.

The lion head tattoo on his back seemed to follow his movements every time he used his muscles. I sat down on the highchair and rested my chin on my curled up hands and watched him move around. He turned after a while and almost dropped the pan when he saw me there.

"Hey, you're up." He said almost sounding disappointed while pulling the headphones away from his ears.

"Hi, how long have I been sleeping?"

"Long enough to miss work." He put a plate in front of me and dished up the scrambled eggs.

"I'm sorry."

"Dont be, you looked tired and I didnt want to wake you. I called Thulani and told him that you weren't feeling okay." He poured a cup of coffee and placed it in front of me with some toast and sausages, mushrooms, tomatoes and cheese. I havent had a breakfast like this in forever. Although I am grateful to him for calling Thulani I still couldn't help over thinking about the money I just lost. The tips alone would have gone a long way.

I picked up the fork and started eating. I could hear him talking but I had no idea what he was saying. My brain was still trying to process the fact that I just lost a shitload of money that could have gone a long way in helping Bontle when she gets to varsity next year.

"Anyways I was thinking of getting a couple of strippers to give you a lap dance."

"That would be nice."

"And then we can have a threesome with one of them."

"Cool."

"You're not listening to me are you?"

"Right."

"Nomonde!" He half shouted bringing me back to the present.

"What?"

"Did you hear anything I just said?" I tried to filter my mind to figure out what he said but all I could come up with was strippers and threesomes. Why would I even be thinking about that? But I know I'm not letting these words leave my head.

"I'm sorry, I just have a lot on my mind."

"Like what?"

"I missed work."

"I know that. It's just one day Nomonde, it's not a train smash."

"No, but I did just miss out on some good tips."

"It's just money. You can make it back tonight."

"That's easy for you to say."

"Okay tell you what, since you missed work because of me, how about I pay you for the night."

"Thank you but no thanks. I'm just overreacting. Thank you for breakfast. I need to go home and get ready for my shift."

"Ok, I'll drive you." He gets up and heads upstairs.

I take the plates and put them in the sink, I open the tap and the hot water cascades over the oily stains and drags them down to the pits of the sewage. I finish cleaning up and go around the downstairs part of the house. Yesterday I didn't get time to do a mini tour. With every nook and cranny I walk into I can't help but admire the beauty of this place. It's a beautiful house, charming but modern, art fills the walls in just the right spaces to make it interesting. There is what looks like a whole gallery of black and white pictures on one wall. It looks like a family tree with two pictures of some old people at the top and

followed by rows and rows of different people's photos in frames. I'm guessing they are the Radebe family.

I walk around till I get to what looks like a study or an office. Well the thousands of books in oakwood cupboards pretty much confirm that. I get in and go through some of the books. He has an amazing collection of masterpieces, from the Pilgrims Progress by John Bunyan from the sixteen hundreds all the way down to new and amazing writers like Simphiwe Molaba, Yvonne Maphosa and Busisekile Khumalo. You cant really tell what his proper taste is but I'm sure I could be locked in here for months and I wouldn't miss the outside world. Well maybe I would miss my mum and Bontle.

I grabbed Fallen Candle by Busisekile, people with proper connections, the book isnt even out yet but here he is with it resting pretty in his study. He needs to share the secret. I take the book and head to the

couch. I move the papers that are occupying the couch to one side and sit down. I read the first page and close it again. If I start now chances are I won't be able to put it down and then I'll miss work again. This one needs my full attention.

I put the book on the armrest of the couch and pick up the papers laying on the couch. I go through them and realize these are the clubs books. Now me being me, two things can capture my attention and make me get lost in them, amazing literature and numbers. I go through each page one by one. I put them together in piles on the floor. Something doesn't make sense.

"Hey, I'm ready we can....." he stops dead in his tracks when he sees me on the floor. I don't even know when I grabbed a pencil but I have it in my hand and I've circled and underlined so many numbers. "You're busy."

"I'm sorry, numbers are my favorite thing in the

world." He chuckles and comes to sit on the couch behind me.

"No problem, so what did you find, I cant seem to make sense of anything there."

"Arent you supposed to be a businessman?" He slips down from the couch and sits next to me.

"Even Bill Gates has an accountant. So what's happening there."

"Well, this is just an assessment, maybe you will need a professional to look at these, but I think someone is stealing from you." I see his jaw clench and release.

"I thought as much."

"So you knew that already?"

"I had my suspicions, but you just confirmed it." He takes out his phone and calls someone. "Yeah bafo, I need your auditor guy to do an audit of the club..... Yeah, before the Joburg one opens, I need to know what's going on..... Sharp." He hangs up. Atleast he's getting a proper assessment and not

taking my word for it.

He gets up from the floor then helps me up. We pick up the papers and put them back on the couch. I pick up the book and try to muster up enough courage ask him for it.

"No!" He says before I can even say anything. I guess the book being in my hands was a dead giveaway.

"I haven't said anything yet."

"If you want to read it, you'll have to do it here."

"I have work."

"You have off days. Besides, it took some major begging and pleading for me to even get that so we cant have people getting hold of it before it actually comes out." He takes the book from my hands and puts it back in the shelf.

"What happened to chivalry?" He throws his head back laughing.

"Consider this chivalry." He puts his elbow out for me to hook my arm in. I do it and we walk out

together. "Dont sulk, this is just another way to have you back in this house again, besides it was kind of nice to have some laughter in here." I smile and look away.

We get into his car and he drives me back to my place. He drops me off and drives off. I get into the apartment and find Bonsile in the kitchen cooking. I look at the two plates she has set up and I know Muzi is probably here.

"Oh thank you, how did you know I was hungry?" She laughs and grabs the plate away.

"Girl dont even, pretty sure you got fed where you came from, topped with some Vitamin D." She winks at me.

"I'm going to get ready for work."

"We have atleast five hours before we have to be at work. Spill. Where were you?"

"Don't you have company?"

"I'll let it go....." we are disturbed by a man's voice coming in from the passage.

"Babe what's..... shoot." He pops out to the kitchen with his underwear on and nothing else.

"Oops." He turns as quickly as he came and goes back to the bedroom. Bonsile and I look at each other and try to muff our laughs with our hands.

"I think I need to lock myself in my room till he goes before things get awkward."

"You are a star." She picks up the plates and walks to her room. I grab my bag and head to my room too. I text Bontle just to check up on them and she assures me everything is fine. I promise to send them money the next day before she has to go and study. I must admit, this taking life a day at a time was a good idea. And maybe it won't be so bad afterall.



NARRATED

In Joburg, Bonolo is in her office working when her brother Malcolm comes barging into the office. Instead of saying anything he starts pacing up and down huffing and puffing.

"If you wont say why you are here please leave." She says looking back at the files in front of her.

"Princess, please let go of this investigation of yours." He says stopping to look at his little sister.

"Which one?" She asks not taking her eyes of the files.

"The one on Nomonde. I'm begging you please let it go."

"Why? My gut tells me that she was framed, all I have to do now is find out how and by who. And you being here right now makes me believe you know something." She looks at him while she plays with her pen.

"I dont know anything, I'm just worried about you, what if this thing leads you to some dangerous people, what then? I dont want to lose my sister."

"You can relax brother, mum already got me security so you have nothing to worry about."

"I guess, but promise me if things get complicated you will let it go."

"I'll try." He smiles at her and walks out.

Malcolm walks to the parking lot and gets into his car. He picks up the envelope laying on the passenger seat next to him. He opens it and looks at the compromising photos in them. The little note written "tick tock" at the top reminding him of all he could potentially lose if these ever got out. If the public found out that he was having sex with the President of the country, chances of his party being elected into the highest office in the land would go up in flames.

One thing his father has always wanted, and what was his dying wish was to see a Mashile walking the corridors of The Union Building as President of South Africa, of all his siblings he knew that was just his father's way of trying to push him to pursue his political interests, and it worked. For years he had built up a following, mostly from the youth who were ready for change, and this was the year he felt The South African Youth Party stood a chance against the ruling party, but these would throw all his hardwork down the drain.

He took the photos and got a lighter from his pocket and lit it, he took the flame to the photos and watched them go up in smoke. He opened the door and threw the burning papers onto the ground and watched them turn to ash. Soon as he was sure the photos were gone and the wind had sent the ash scattering everywhere he closed the car door.

"Damn you Amand, Damn you!" He said hitting the

steering wheel with the palm of his hand. What was he supposed to do now? If this was anyone else they would be six feet under by now, but this is his little sister, he cant kill her. Or could he?

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTEEN

Lungelo was clearly serious about getting an auditor to go through the clubs books. By the time we got to work the next day there was commotion happening. People weren't sure what was happening and why, all they said when we asked is that some nerdy guy showed up with a briefcase and asked for the clubs books and he's been locked in the office for hours now.

We decided to focus in work and let the guy do his job. It was the weekend anyway and it would be kak packed today, plus there's some artists coming so we will have to drink a bunch of energy drinks just to get through the night.

As expected the crowds starting streaming in

around ten. The thing about clubs that I've noticed, the fun doesn't begin until after ten towards midnight, so we know once the clock hits 9:30 we know the people are coming. And for us it means the tips are coming in too.

I haven't seen Lungelo since I got here and the auditor has been in the office for almost twelve hours now. He did order some food and one of the waiters brought it up to him. I saw Lungelo come in behind a crowd of rowdy and probably already drunk girls, he was looking at them like they were crazy. For someone who owns a club shouldn't he be happy that they are here to spend money.

He went past us and went to the office. The auditor left the club just before midnight. I wonder what he found. Hopefully it's not too bad, cause when I looked at the books yesterday it seemed like the theft had been going on for a while.

When the last patron's left around four in the morning we started cleaning up. Bonsile and I together with the other bartender made sure the glasses were clean and everything was in its rightful place before we left. Even though we didn't have to do the cleaning now, it helped make sure we can come in a little later the following day.

We went to get our bags and got ready to leave when we found Lungelo and Muzi sitting around the bar with the others standing before them. It looked like a meeting of some sorts. We decided to join the crowd and find out what's happening.

"Is everybody here?" Muzi asked looking around. We turned and looked around too and from the looks of it everyone was here, except Thulani of course since he was helping with the pre opening of the Joburg club.

"Since everyone is here, I'm sure you are all wondering what the guy who was locked in the

office was doing the whole day, well he is an auditor and he is here to audit the club. There's been a revelation that happened recently, I found out that someone was stealing from the club. I've suspected this for a while now but a reliable source made me realize it was true." He said the last words looking at me. If I was any lighter my cheeks would be tomato red by now, but I thank God and my mother for my chocolate skin.

One of the waiters raised his hand up to speak. Lungelo nodded his head allowing him to speak.

"Boza, manje kuzowenzakalani uma umthola lomuntu obhathulayo (what will happen when you find the person who is stealing?)"

"We'll cross that bridge when we get to it.

For now I need you to go home and rest. We have a long day tomorrow." He said and the crowd started dispersing. I was about to follow suit when I felt his hand on my arm. He waited until everyone was a bit further away before he spoke to me. "Don't leave, I'll

be out just now." He said then walked up to the office.

I got out and found Bonsile waiting outside too. The staff was also waiting for the staff transport to show up.

"I wonder who is brave enough to steal from Lungelo?" One of the waitresses said to no one in particular.

"Whoever it is better make sure their funeral policy is up to date." Another one answered.

"Oh come on, stop exaggerating, Lungelo is nice, the worst that could happen is the person going to jail." Another replied as they made their way to the taxi that was already parked. Bonsile and I looked at each other and laughed.

"Umjolo is nice neh." She asked with a huge ass smirk on her face.

"Good thing I am not dating."

"Keep telling yourself that, but one day I'll be a flower girl at your wedding." I burst out laughing, and just then Lungelo and Muzi walked out and locked the doors. We got into their cars and drove out.

"I didn't you serious about getting an auditor." I said breaking the silence after a while of driving in silence.

"Well I need concrete proof before I do anything else."

"So what will you do when you find the person?"

"I dont know yet. Let's get the truth first then we'll see."

"The others seem to think you will kill the person." He laughed as he parked the car in front of my building.

"I'm not a killer Nomonde. Anyways forget about that. I have a request."

"What?"

"I need you to work with the auditor and figure out what's happening."

"Nope!"

"Why?"

"The last time I opened any accounting book was over fifteen years ago. I'm pretty sure accounting has evolved since then"

"Well you were able to figure out that someone was stealing so what will stop you now." What would stop me really? I mean accounting has always been my favorite thing in the world. "I'll pay you double."

"And my tips?" He chuckles.

"Okay, double plus double your average weekly tips." I put out my hand for him to shake and he takes it.

"Deal." He laughs.

"Great. I'll pick you up in the morning."

"Its morning already." He looks out the window and sure enough there are streaks of the sun announcing its entry.

"Okay I'll pick you up around lunchtime. You'll be working at my house."

"And work?"

"Don't worry yourself about that."

"Okay then. Let me get some sleep." I said my goodbyes and got out of the car.

I got to the flat and took a shower before getting into bed. I sent Bontle a text telling her to enjoy her day and give mummy a big hug for me. I know by now she's about to wake up and prepare for church. My mother used to refuse to compromise on that when we were kids. Church was non-negotiable and I am glad she isn't compromising much with Bontle. Being in jail also taught to believe in a higher power and a higher being otherwise I wouldn't have survived.

I woke up five hours later and took a bath. I had a banana and sent Lungelo a text that I was ready. It wasn't even midday yet but I was ready. I'm not sure if the excitement was being with him again or just the thought of doing something I loved.

He showed up less than thirty minutes after I texted him and he drove us to his house. We found the auditor with papers sprawled out on the dining table. He introduced me to him and we got down to work.

We worked for hours and hours and somehow I got lost in the numbers. Although they didn't make much sense but we were able to narrow everything down and get a clue as to what happened. It turns the stealing has been going on for a while now, about two years to be exact. All we had to figure out now was how the money was stolen and where it went.

I was busy looking at some invoices when they were taken from me. I looked up and Lungelo was

standing in front of me clearing the table.

"I was still using that."

"I know. But it's late, you need to rest. And you need to eat." He took the documents and placed them in a drawer and closed it. I was tempted to take them out again but my grumbling stomach reminded me that I actually haven't eaten the whole day so I let that thought go. I followed him to the kitchen and sat on the highchair while he dished up. He placed the food in front of me.

"Thank you." It looked delicious, it was simple rice, stew and some steamed veggies on the side. A man who can actually cook proper food is a while different breed of top tier men, in my opinion anyway. He sat down next to me with his own plate and we ate.

"So, tell me, when did you know you loved numbers?"

"Ever since I was a kid. There was always something fascinating with seeing numbers and trying to make them make sense. I was way too smart for my own good."

"So why didnt you become a Mathematician, that looks like fun?"

"Maybe. But I loved accounting more. Besides it seemed like the easier option, I could get a job sooner thus being able to help my mother and make life easier for her."

"So were you able to do it? Make life easier for her?"

"Almost. I brought a piece of land with my first three months salary, I was going to build her a huge mansion but that didnt pan out. Life got in the way."

"Knowing what you know now, and if you had to go back in time and change anything, what would you change?"

"I want to say everything but that everything would also mean my daughter wouldn't exist. So I dont think I'd change anything. Maybe be a bit more cautious on who I allow around me and not trusting

anyone, but other than that....." I shrug. "Every mistake is a lesson learnt right?"

"Right." He took the plates and placed them in the sink. "Come on, let's go watch a movie."

I followed him to the lounge and sat on the couch while he grabbed a throw from the other couch. I took the remote and switched on the TV. We watched some romantic movie that was playing on Netflix. It was fun and cute. I don't know why he even put it on cause halfway through he was already yawning. Men and trying to please women, it's funny to watch.

Soon as the movie finished I needed to pee. I got up and went to the bathroom. I came back and he had already put on another movie. I bumped my little toe on the corner of the coffee table and I'm quite certain my soul just left my body. I flinched in pain and sat down. He lifted my foot up and put it on his lap and tried to massage the pain away.

"Is it getting better."

"It is, but not fast enough." He laughed and lifted my foot up to his mouth and kissed my little toe. I could feel myself blushing, I just hope to God he cant see it.

"And now?"

"Well that is actually working." He started kissing my toe faster making me laugh. "Okay I think I'm fine now." I said trying to calm my laughing.

He looked at me with a smile on his face and his dimple making an appearance. I'm not sure what this man is doing to my insides but I think I like it.

Although logic and common sense are telling me to take it slow but my heart and vagina also have their own ideas. And right now it looks like logic and common sense are slowly fading away.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTEEN

I woke up cuddled in Lungelo's arms. And by the looks of it we were still on the couch with our clothes on. Thank God. I tried to get up but his arm tightened around me. I looked up at him and he had his eyes closed. I need to pee and I couldn't wake him up. He looked like a peaceful decadent slab of dark chocolate. I wonder how he is so dark but Muzi is light?

He stirred a bit and a frown formed on his face. I wonder if he is having a dream or a nightmare.

"Its rude to stare." He said still with his eyes shut.

"And it's very rude to stop a girl from peeing so early in the morning." He laughed and his cute dimple revealed itself.

"You could have just said that."

"Well I thought you were sleeping and I didnt want to wake you."

"So you'd rather mess up your bladder." He said as he loosened his grip on me. I got up and rushed to the bathroom to pee.

I finished and washed my face before walking back to the lounge. The lounge was empty so I just assumed he must have went up to take a shower. I decided to also go up and take a bath in one of the guest rooms.

I finished with the shower and went back downstairs. I took out the documents from the drawer and had them sprawled out on the table. I made myself a cup of coffee and got down to work. A few minutes later Lungelo came down in sweats and a tshirt.

"I am going out to get breakfast. I would ask you to

come with but it looks like those papers won." I smiled as he kissed me on the forehead before walking out.

I kept working while waiting for the auditor to show up. He finally showed up after about twenty minutes. We got down to work while waiting for Lungelo to come back with breakfast.

"I think I just figured this out." I said looking at the invoices and receipts before.

"What did you find?"

"Well, it looks like whoever was stealing didnt necessarily take money, but they ordered more stock than was needed but the extra stock never made it to the club because the sales dont match up with the ordered stock."

"So whenever an order was placed, the club paid for the extra stock but the person responsible took the extra stock for themselves."

"Yep, and from the looks of it, they only did that with the expensive bottles."

"I see that. And some of those extra bottles were put down as damaged."

Just then Lungelo came in with breakfast and placed it on the kitchen counter before coming over to us. He sat down and we explained everything to him.

"So who do you think did this?" I asked seeing as he was silent with his eyes glued to the documents.

"Only one person is responsible for making orders."

"So what are you going to do?"

"Mhmmmmm. I dont know. But thank you for this. Hlophe, thank you for your time."

"I would love to take the credit for this but the lady did most of the work." He said getting up and gathering his things. He took out his card and placed it on the table in front of me. "If you are available, I might have a position for you at the firm." I smiled

and looked at the card.

He shook hands with Lungelo and then walked out. I got up and dished up the cold breakfast and put it in the microwave. Lungelo came back and we sat down to have our food. I could see the wheels turning in his head. Maybe that waiter was right, maybe whoever did this just messed with the wrong person.

"Penny for your thoughts." He looked up from playing with his food and I could see his jaws were clenched.

"Its nothing. I need to go somewhere."

"Okay, I'll go get dressed."

"No need, stay here. I'll be right back." He got up and grabbed his keys from the counter then walked out leaving me alone. I pray whoever is responsible for this runs as fast as they can.



LUNGELO

Two things have the ability to piss me off, liars and thieves. Especially the ones who lie to me and steal from me. After I left the house I went straight to Muzi's place. I found him waiting for me at the gate. I picked him up and we drove to Joburg. Since the one person I suspect of stealing from me is. To think i trusted him enough to let him be in charge of the club in Joburg, only for him to betray me.

"So I spoke to Khanya, he has people watching Thulani to make sure he doesnt disappear."

"Thank you, but you didn't have to involve him." He chuckled.

"He is your big brother, he also wants to help you."

"Yeah and then he will remind me of his 'help' everytime I see him."

"You know him. So what are you going to do to that bastard."

"We have a long drive to Joburg bafo, I'm sure a plan will come up somewhere along the way."

"So I left the warmth of my womans thighs for a plan less plan? Nice."

"Can you please not talk about Bonsile like that to me. She's still my employee you know."

"Whatever."

We got to a garage and bought some snacks and drinks before getting back on the road. By the time we go to Joburg a plan had still not formulated itself. I needed to make Thulani pay without killing him, he needs to know and tell everyone else what happens when they steal from me. People think I'm too nice, I guess even nice people have a breaking point.

We drove straight to the club premises and lucky for us there were still some of the construction guys

there. We got in and I must admit, the place looks rather amazing. We walked up to the office and Thulani was sitting on the chair with his feet up on the desk. He quickly got up when he saw us come in.

"Bozza, I didnt know you were coming." He said coming around to shake our hands.

"It was a last minute trip. Let's go for a ride."

"To where?"

"A supplier I need you to meet."

"Okay." He grabbed his phone from the desk and followed us. We got into the car and drove to a warehouse in downtown Joburg.

We got out of the car and walked in. Muzi hit Thulani on the back of the head with the back of his gun sending him tumbling on the floor. We dragged him to a chair and sat him on it.

"Why do you guys like to have fun without me?" That would be our big brother Khanya Radebe, ruthless lawyer extraordinaire. "So what do we have here?" He asked wrapping his arms around us and drawing us close to him.

"What are you doing here?"

"I came to have some fun too. So how do we do this? I was thinking we should start by cutting off his tongue." I told you he was ruthless.

"And how is he supposed to tell us why he stole from us and who he was working with?"

"Oh yeah there's that. Okay we start from the bottom then." He grabbed a baseball bat from the corner and gave Thulani one big whack on his knees, waking him up real quick.

He groaned and looked around before he saw us standing there.

"Bozza, what's happening?" He asked while trying to ease the pain on the back of his head with his one

hand while the other massaged his knees.

"You stole from me. I want to know why?"

"Hha bozza, angazi ukhuluma ngan (I dont know what you're talking about." Khanya whacked him again and he screamed.

"Yeah you have to tell us something, otherwise he will keep doing that. And if you keep saying you dont know you will make him angry and who knows, you might find yourself without a tongue." Muzi told Thulani who was groaning in pain.

"Bozza I'm telling the truth, I dont know anything."

"Okay, this is taking forever, I have dinner plans with my wife so here's what's going to happen." Khanya says before he goes to the lone closet standing against the wall and he comes back with a rope that he ties around the screaming and pleading Thulani's legs and hands. "We will leave you here to think about what you have done. In the morning we'll come check on you and if your head is still not screwed on straight then I'll personally gut you."

He ties a gag around his mouth and we leave him there. This is why I don't like telling anything. Khanya likes to go into big brother mode whenever anyone of us is in trouble. He thinks he is Superman even in his old age. Although he won't admit it, he is getting softer.

We drove to his house to greet his wife and our niece and nephews. My phone rang while I was playing with the kids. I saw Nomonde's number flash across my screen and I smiled, before I remembered I left her alone in my house.

"I'm sorry." I said when I picked up the phone.

"Why?"

"For leaving you alone with no explanation."

"And then forgetting I exist?"

"I could never forget you even if I tried."

"Charming, but I'm still here, alone, in your house."

"Pretend its your house and run around naked." She laughed. I love her laugh. Although sometimes when she smiles or laughs you can tell she is holding something back, but when she does laugh, like fully laugh without holding anything back, it's a beautiful sound.

"And what makes you think I'm not naked right now and laying in your bed?"

"Prove it." She chuckled.

"I didnt say I was naked, I jus asked what makes you think I'm not."

"Come on." I pleaded.

"Come now Mr Radebe, you need to atleast take a girl out on five dates before you can ask for nudes."

"Okay, so where would you like to go? For dinner? Lunch?"

"I have to sleep, now, your bed is very comfortable by the way." She said before hanging up. I smiled and looked at my phone as if she would jump out of it.

"Weeeeh udlisiwe wena (you've been bewitched.)"
Khanya said coming around to sit on the couch with
the kids jumping around.

"So what if I am?"

"So when am I meeting this girl?"

"Not anytime soon, knowing you she will go running
the other direction when she sees you." He laughed.

We got up and said our goodbyes before heading to
a hotel. Sleeping here would be easier but we need
to wake up very early in the morning and it wouldn't
be right to wake everyone up that early. We got to
the hotel and booked our rooms then headed to the
bar. We ordered our drinks and sat down.

"So what do you think Khanya will do to Thulani?"
Muzi asked before sipping his drink. I was about to
answer him when a beautiful woman joined us at our
table. She didnt look like the normal slay queens
considering her dress code.

"Gentlemen, I'm sorry to disturb you. My name is Bonolo Mashile." Muzi and I looked at each other before looking back at her.

"What can we do for you?" I asked, my curiosity piqued.

"A friend of mine told me that you guys run Durban."

"You make it seem like we are drug dealers."

"I'm sorry that's not what I meant. I know you have connections, you know people, I need you to help me find someone."

"Hire a PI Miss Mashile." I said and raised my hand to call a waiter over and order another drink.

"I would but this is more complicated than that, I need to find someone and if I hired a PI it would take forever." I'm pretty sure that's a lie but I'll let her be.

"So who do you need to find?"

"Nomonde Mashile or maybe she is using Vilakazi cause that's her maiden name."

"So who is she to you?"

"She is my brother's ex. She was in jail for the past fifteen years for his attempted murder but I am trying to prove her innocence."

I'm not sure which part was more shocking, the fact that Nomonde was in jail for attempted murder or that she was an ex wife to a Mashile, THE Mashile's. I mean she did say it was a long story when I asked her about sharing the Mashile surname with her sister. I knew Amanda was a Mashile by marriage I didn't think Nomonde was a Mashile by marriage too. But then again what did I expect. This is a fucked up mess. Why wouldn't she tell me anything though. I'm not a judgmental person, or am I?

"So gentlemen, will you help me or not?" Muzi and I looked at each other and nodded

"We will help you Miss Mashile." A smile formed on her face. She shook our hands and went back to her table. I knew I should have done a background check on her.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTEEN

Comfortable beds should be a necessity. Heck, government needs to make sure everyone has a comfortable bed to sleep in every night. This bed feels like a cloud. Comfortable and just right. Last night after speaking to Lungelo I fell asleep without even trying. I don't know when last I had a proper good sleep. But this bed though, well I'm not sure if it's the bed or the environment I'm in. Either way I am glad to have actually slept this time.

I opened my eyes and the sun was already shining through the window bringing its warmth and glow inside the house. The Joy's of having private property, you dont even have to close the curtains at night. I felt something heavy on my waist. I looked down and it was an arm. The scared little cat in me thought it was someone who had broken in until I

turned slowly and found Lungelo snoring next to me. I took a deep breath when I saw it was him. I wonder when he came back.

I slowly moved his arm and got up. I went to the bathroom and peed before taking a shower. I wrapped a towel around me and went to the guest bedroom. I lotioned my body and put on some fresh clothes. I headed downstairs to make breakfast. I finished cooking and put everything on a tray to take upstairs.

I turned around and found Lungelo sitting on the highchair with his elbows resting on the counter watching me, giving me a freight. I smiled and put the tray in front of him.

"Why are you up so early?" He asked as he threw a sausage in his mouth.

"Its almost twelve o'clock."

"Exactly, its still early." I dished up for myself and sat down across from him.

"So where were you?"

"Joburg, I had some things to take care of."

"Mhmm. So you left a stranger in your house and went to another province? What if you came back to an empty house." He smiles as he chews and his dimple makes an appearance.

"I know where you live. Besides I trust you."

I smile trying to figure out what he is hiding. See in the few weeks that I've known him, he is readable, when he wants to be, and right now he is hiding something. It seems like he has a lot going on in his head. I wanted to ask what's going on but I also didn't want to impose. We might be spending more time together but that doesn't mean I have to stick my nose in his business.

We finished breakfast and I took the plates and

washed them while he went upstairs to, I guess take a shower. I finished up and went up to the guest bedroom to pack my stuff. Even though it's been fun being in this little bubble it's time I went back to reality. I took my nag and went back downstairs.

I put the bag on the floor and sat down on the couch. I put the TV on and played some music. He walked down the stairs looking like he was stepping into a music video. He walked to me and sat down. He lifted his one leg and rested it on the couch and faced me.

"Can we talk?" I turned to look at him with my heart beating faster than a horses hooves at the Durban July. I looked at him straight in the eye.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothings wrong. I found out something when I was in Joburg. In fact I met someone who asked me to help them find a, close friend, I guess."

"Okay, so what has that got to do with me?" "The friend they are looking for, is you?" I know for a fact I have no friends in Joburg. The only friend I used to have severed ties with me when I went to jail, my sister knows where I live so there is no way in hell anyone would be looking for me.

"I dont have friends in Joburg, so maybe whoever that was made a mistake."

"I dont think so. They seemed certain that you were the one they are looking for."

I racked my brain trying to figure out who would even take the time out of their busy life to look for me. I know its not the Mashile's. Those ones probably have people following me and watching my every move, so it cant be them. So who could possibly be looking for me and why?

"Okay, so who is it that is supposedly looking for me cause I cant figure it out."

"She said her name is Bonolo Mashile, apparently you were married to her brother." My heart went from sprinting to slow motion in less than a second. When I went to jail Bonolo was fourteen years old. Of all the Mashile's she was the only one who had faith in me when I said I was innocent. Back then it felt good to have someone from that family believe in me, but I knew eventually everyone would poison her against me and she wouldn't look at me the same way again. So why is she looking for me now? I cleared my throat and tried to bring my mind back to the present.

"Why.... Why is she looking for me?" I asked. A part of me, the scared part of me feared that maybe she told him about me going to jail. If theres one thing I've always feared when it came to people finding out about my past is the judgement that comes with it. No matter how many times you can sing the innocent song, truth is people never see beyond what is in front of them. People only believe what they see, and if I tell someone I was in jail for fifteen

years and why, their minds will immediately go to me being a criminal, everyone will believe that, it's not always that an innocent person spends that long in jail. Just when I thought my life was coming correct something had to derail it somehow.

"She said she wants to help you prove your innocence." I felt the my lungs deflate. He knows, so how long till the judgement and distrust begin? Even though I was planning to tell him, someday, eventually, this is not how I had hoped he would find out.

"Can you take me home. I need to get ready for my shift tonight." I got up and picked up my bag from the floor. I turned to look at him and he was still in the same spot. It didnt look like he had any plans to get up. "Please." I whispered.

He sighed and got up. He walked toward me. With every step he took I could feel my tears sting my eyes. I bit my bottom lip trying to stop myself from

letting them fall. He put his hands on my upper arms and brought me close to him before engulfing me in a hug. Wrong move on his part cause now his shirt will be stained with my tears.

I pulled out after a while, even though his hands were still holding on to me. He pulled me back to the couch and I sat down. He went to the kitchen and came back with a glass of water. I drank and took a deep breath trying to figure out how I'm going to tell him all this without sounding like some crazy woman.

"I know this is hard for you but we need to talk about this." I kept my eyes glued to the water in front of me. As much as I know I am innocent, seeing judgment or maybe pity in people's eyes is not something I am ready for.

"I dont want to talk about this. Not now."

"Okay, when you're good and ready then. But what do I tell Bonolo?"

"Nothing. Tell her you haven't found me."

"Okay."

He got up and grabbed his car keys and i thought we were leaving. I took my bag and prepared to leave. He took my bag and threw it on the couch.

"And now?"

"We're going to get lunch."

"I have to get to work."

"No you dont. You have the entire week off to work on that audit, and a week is not up yet. So what do you feel like, seafood or pure junk?" He said that so calmly like he didnt just find out I'm a convicted criminal. Where is the judgement? Where is the pity?

"Uhm, I think junk will do."

"Perfect, let's go." He held out his hand and we walked to his car.

The only other people who've never judged me or looked at me some type of way for my past are my mother and daughter. Bonsile, although she knows since we grew up in the same village, she's never brought it up so I wouldn't know how she feels about it. But I guess now I can add one more person on the list of people with little or no judgment to give.

LUNGELLO

Nomonde and I really went too hard on the junk food. We went out to buy as much junk as we can possibly find. We had our lunch before she passed out on the couch. I picked her up and took her upstairs. I came back and cleaned up in the lounge and put the leftovers in the fridge.

I decided to do some work while she slept. I'm glad I didnt push things earlier and force her to tell me things she wasn't ready for. After Muzi and I drove back down after speaking to Bonolo. We ended up

not sleeping in the hotel. I got to the office and called to let him know we arrived safe.

"You're alive, nice of you to let me know." He said soon as he picked up the phone. I'm pretty sure next to the word dramatic in the dictionary there is a picture of Khanya.

"We are fine Bhuti, stop exaggerating."

"Stop exaggerating? Are you for real? You left with no goodbyes this morning, no updates to let us know you're safe. What the fuck is wrong with you two?"

"Okay you can stop worrying now, we are home and we are safe."

"Mxm, you know if anything happens to you your mother will come down on me like a ton of bricks."

"I'm literally ten minutes to forty years old, I am not a child."

"Try telling MaMtolo that. So what's up."

"Nothing much, I need a favour."

"What?"

"There is a girl there, her name is Bonolo, she's working on a case, I need you to help her."

"What kind of case?"

"Wrongful imprisonment case. She'll fill you in on everything."

"Fine, I'll talk to her but I'm not promising anything. What did you say her name was again?"

"Bonolo Mashile she apparently works for....."

"Mashile, hhay, I dont mix with those people."

"Hawu Bafo, ngyacela. This is very important to me. If you love me and you want to see me get married and have kids in the near future you will do this for me." I hear him whistling and I can bet my last money he is dancing. This idiot. And that time he is supposed to be the big brother.

"Awu oBhungane bajabulile madoda, sebaze bakutholele intombi (the Bhungane's must be happy, they even got you a girlfriend.)" He said in between laughter. And I know I will never hear the end of this.

"So will you help me?"

"Sure, just to see you bring an actual woman to Mamtolo, I would fight a shark to see that happen. Send me this girls details." He said then hung up.

I immediately texted him Bonolo's number and where she worked. I know Nomonde might not be ready to deal with this but that doesnt mean we cant work behind the scenes to help her out. I hope she doesn't get offended by it. I decided to also take a nap since doing work wasn't working. I went up to the bedroom and got in behind her and put my arm over her waist and pulled her close to me.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTEEN

Over the years I've learnt the importance of boundaries, knowing what to say and when to say it saved me from a lot of situations while I was in prison, situations that could have got me into a lot of trouble. But knowing how to stay in the shadows and being able to read situations helped me a lot.

Lungelo has been patient with me, although I know he wants to know the truth he hasn't been pushy about it. I know eventually I will have to tell him something, I'm just not sure if I'm ready for it. Or if I'll ever be. Yes we are somewhat close, and he has been a gentleman throughout but he hasn't said anything about his intentions or whatever he hopes to get from all this. I just don't want to jump into conclusions and end up looking like a fool.

Another thing I learnt in prison was the ability to shove feelings and emotions to the back of my mind and pretend like they don't exist but I've also realized that doing that served me well in prison, but I am out now, and I cant continue living in fear and pretending all is well when it isnt. I've been contemplating seeing someone I can talk to about all these buried emotions cause if I am not careful they might just rise in moments when they shouldn't.

My week off that Lungelo gave me ends in three days. So I go back to work on Monday. My mother told me she has a funeral to attend eMlazi but she feared leaving Bontle alone since people might break in if they know she is alone. I thought about going home but I figured Bontle coming here was also a great idea. We could spend the weekend together. And this is Durban, there is plenty to do. We could go to the movies or the beach, or whatever she wants to do.

My mother and Bontle are arriving in Durban in a few minutes. I've been waiting for them at the rank. I can't help the excitement I feel soon as I see them getting off the taxi. I rush to them and give them hugs. After exchanging all the necessary pleasantries Bontle and I walked mum around until we found a taxi going to eMlazi. We waited until the taxi was full and it drove off before we walked over to get a taxi to the flat. We made a decision to pass by a McDonald's and get some dinner since we couldn't decide who should cook.

We bought the food and got into a taxi and went to the flat. When we got in Bonsile was already on her way out. She greeted Bontle and said her goodbyes. We put the burgers and chips on plates and sat down in the lounge. Bontle had already put on a music channel. We finished eating and she showed me the latest dances that were all the rage right now. I didn't even know she could dance like that. Even though I tried, I realised an old person like me had no business dancing to Amapiano when mbhaqanga

and soul were available.

We sat up for most of the night catching up. By the time we went to bed it was almost morning. We woke up around six, I blame my mother for making this one such an early bird. I went to the kitchen to make breakfast while Bontle made the bed then took a shower. When she was done I took my bath and got dressed. To day we were going to start at the mall and watch a movie then go to the beach for a mini picnic.

We got to the mall and walked around window shopping. I bought my baby some things. Lungelo's extra pay was coming in handy. We were going past an iStore when I noticed Bontle looking at the laptops. I decided to drag her in even though she didn't want to. We looked around and I must admit, these things are expensive. But I also know that my baby will need one for school next year. I'll just have to find a cheaper alternative.

"These laptops are freaken expensive, you could buy a car with the price of one." She whispered to me, making sure the sales assistant doesn't hear her.

"I think you are just buying the name with these. Let's go so these people can stop following us." We linked our hands and walked out.

We went to pick'n'pay and bought some things we'll need for the beach picnic. I paid and we walked out to get a cab to take us to the beach. I saw Lungelo before he could even see me. A part of me thought about hiding from him but Muzi saw me before I could do that. I saw him show Lungelo where I was, and the fact that we were going towards each other's direction didn't help matters.

"Nomonde, what are you doing here?" Lungelo asked giving me a hug.

"Just getting some stuff, Bontle and I are going to the beach for a picnic."

"Bontle?" He asked confused.

"That would be me." My forward daughter said holding out her hand towards Lungelo. Lungelo smiled revealing his dimple and took her hand.

"Nice to meet you Bontle, I've heard so much about you." I dont remember telling him about my daughter. Or did I?

"And I've heard nothing about you. So who are you?" She asked studying him from top to bottom. I could tell Lungelo and Muzi were somehow impressed with her boldness, but I wasn't.

"That's no way to talk to an adult Bontle."

"I'm sorry. I just want to know." Lungelo chuckled.

"Its okay. I'm just a friend of your mum's."

"Friend as in friend friend or friend as in you could be my future stepdaddy?" Myzi was laughing while I was imploring God to open the ground and let it swallow me whole.

"BONTLE!"

"Okay, sorry hawu, I was just asking."

"I'm sorry we need to get going." We left them there and I dragged Bontle by the arm and I didnt let go till we were outside the mall. I was so embarrassed. I could feel my cheeks burning from the embarrassment.

We took a cab and it dropped us off at the beach. I took out the throw I had gotten from the flat and laid it out on the ground then sat down and laid the food out. Jontle took off her clothes and she was left with her swimsuit. I was watching the waves when I felt her kneel down next to me and hug me.

"Ngyacolisa ma, i didnt mean to embarrass you in front of your friends." I sighed and kissed her arm.

"Its okay baby, but please dont ask people questions like that. It's not nice."

"I'm sorry. But I wouldn't mind having him as my stepfather." She said letting go of me and going to sit on the other side.

"Bontle!"

"I'm just saying mama, he's cute. And he looks like he has a crush on you."

"Can we talk about you and leave me alone?" She laughed.

"I'll let it go, for now."

"Thank you."

We had fun at the beach. Bontle swam, well more like pretended to cause all she did was dip her feet in the water then run back when a wave came. We took lots of pictures. Her phone takes really nice pictures. I need to get myself a phone with a camera too so I can save all these memories.

Since we couldn't watch a movie in the morning we decided to watch it when we came back from the beach. By the time we went back to the flat it was almost ten on the evening. We didnt need to cook since we are at the beach so when we got home we

just took showers then went straight to bed. I saw a message on my phone just before I slept. I opened it and it was from Lungelo.

'Hope you had fun at the beach. I like Bontle, she seems like a smart kid, but then again, she has your genes. Goodnight.'

I smiled like a retard after reading the message. I looked at my sleeping baby and kissed her sleeping ass on the cheek. She is one smart cutie, too bold for her own good but still smart. I said a little prayer thanking God for giving me a child from his favourites list. He really did come through for me on that.



MALCOLM

The thing about secrets and lies is that they never stay buried, no matter how many times you feel the grave with soil and even put concrete on top, the truth will always find a way to seep out and reveal itself.

The dumbest thing I've ever done in my life was hide who I was from my family. My family might not be the most perfect, well on the inside, cause on the outside we are a picture of pure perfection, but know they would not hate me just because I am attracted to men. Being bisexual is not a crime, so why couldn't I tell them that?

I kept asking myself that question over and over again and the answer always came to one thing and one thing only, my political career. I chose to live a lie just to fit into the political spaces. But to my surprise I found a whole lot more people within this

space who were just like me, who hid who they are for the sake of their careers and to be seen as normal to the outside world. And in them I found friends and lovers.

If this was all about me i would let Amanda die with those pictures whatever she felt she wanted to do. But the problem is too many people would suffer if the truth ever comes out. This is a scandal that would ripple through the parliamentary corridors like boiling water, burning anything and everything in its wake. I'm not prepared to lose my career cause that would mean taking other people down with me.

I sat in my office awaiting feedback from my guys that I sent out to watch my sister. No, I dont want to have her killed, I just need to get my hands on those files then everything will be Okay. My phone rang as I took the last sip of my brandy.

"Cruise, what's going on?"

"Brazzo, your sister is at a restaurant in Rosebank."

"Food is an essential need Cruise, why are you surprised?"

"I'm not. Its who she's with that's surprising." I sat up on the chair now curious to hear these news.

"Who is she with?" I aske pouring another glass of brandy.

"She's with Khanya....." I held my breath going to God Cruise wont say Khanya Radebe. "Khanya Radebe." He said and I felt the air leave my lungs.

I've never been so scared in my life. Khanya is ruthless, not just in the courtroom but outside too. Just a couple of days ago rumors started spreading that he had cut off some guys balls and shoved them down their throat because they stole from his brother. Even though there was no evidence to prove that it was him but anyone with half a brain knows not to mess with the Radebe family. Khanya is just as ruthless as his late father who was a taxi boss. That man was feared by many, even in high places.

When he died people thought they could do whatever they wanted but no one was prepared for the second coming of Radebe through his oldest son. Khanya is everything his father was and more.

Radebe senior had no qualms fixing his problems even with people seeing, and that's what made people fear him, Khanya on the other hand uses the law to his own advantage. He knows which lines to cross and which ones to bend to achieve what he wants. But most importantly him and Lesego hate each others guts, so ultimately he hates all things or people with the name Mashile, so why would he be meeting with my sister?

I hung up the phone and rushed out to my car. I drove to Rosebank to see for myself. I got to the restaurant and asked for a table a bit far where they wouldn't be able to see me. I was able to see them talking, their conversation was intense one moment and the next they were laughing. What could they

possibly be talking about?

I decided to muster up enough courage to go say hi. Soon as Khanya saw me he smiled, not a happy to see you smile, more like a condescending, the cat that got the milk smile. Something big was going on.

"Malcolm Mashile, my future president." He said getting up holding out his hand for me to shake. I took it.

"Its too soon for that Radebe. Bonolo, what are you doing here? With him?" Khanya laughed and looked at my sister as he sat back down. I hope for his sake he is not cheating on his wife with my sister.

"Brother, Khanya and I are working on a case."

"Oh, which case is that? Dont you have people to help you at the law firm?"

"I do, but this is a personal one. Khanya is helping me with Nomonde's case."

Have you ever seen droplets of rain rushing down the windshield of a car during a heavy downpour? That's what my forehead felt like at that very moment. I could feel the sweat dripping down from my head.

"Malcolm, you are sweating, are you okay?" Khanya asked looking at me but the smirk on his face clear as daylight. Bonolo got up with a serviette and wiped the sweat from my face.

"I'm fine. I just didnt take my pills for my high blood pressure. Goodnight." I left them there and stumbled to my car, I dont even know how I found my car in the parking lot. Bonolo wasn't playing when she decided to do this. Khanya has never been one to give up, if he wants the truth he never stops till he finds it.

I need to get my hands on those files or else I might have to bury my own sister. There is no other way.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETEEN

Teenagers who wake up early are a different breed I swear. I woke up at half past six to find Bontle staring at me like she was seeing me for the first time. It was both creepy and cute in my opinion.

"Its kind of weird waking up next to you." She said looking down at me.

"Tell me about it. But since you woke up early why am I not getting breakfast in bed?" She laughed and laid back down on the bed.

"Hha ma, I'm the guest here, if anyone should be getting breakfast in bed it's me."

"Who is the adult between you and me?" I asked looking at her. She mumbled something before getting up.

"I can't wait to be an adult too then I can demand breakfast in bed from you." I laughed as she walked out to the kitchen. Knowing her, she will make porridge just because I asked for breakfast in bed.

My phone rings from under my pillow. I pick it up and see Lungelo's name flash on the screen. This phone is so loud even Bontle can hear it all the way from the kitchen, that's why she is busy screaming for me to pick it up. I press the green button and put the phone on loudspeaker since my speaker has mood swings. Sometimes when I speak to anyone they can't hear me even if I can hear them, so when I'm at home it's easier to just put the phone on loudspeaker.

"Hello."

"I hope I'm not disturbing your sleep?" His deep husky voice bellowed from the other side.

"No, I was up already."

"Good. I was calling to see if i can take you and Bontle out for breakfast."

"Yes, yes you can." Bontle said walking into the bedroom. I swear this child needs prayer. Lungelo laughed and for some strange reason all I could think about was his one dimple.

"I'm sorry about that, my daughter can be a bit forward for her own good."

"Hhay ma, the man asked a question and all I did was answer. Yes we would like breakfast please." She said speaking into the speaker.

"Ok then, I'll be there in thirty minutes. Be ready." He said and I could tell he finds all this amusing.

Soon as he hung up I threw a pillow at Bontle who was laughing her lungs out and jumping around.

"I still want my breakfast wena phaphelina."

"Shem you will eat your soft porridge alone mine I'm going to order bacon and eggs." She said sashaying out to the bathroom.

I smiled looking at her thanking the heavens that in spite of all she's been through she can still laugh and just be a teenager. Annoying and headstrong at times but still happy. And that's all I could ever ask for.

Lungelo showed up thirty minutes later as promised. We got into the car and Bontle wouldn't stop talking, even when I asked her to keep it down. It was kind of nice to see Lungelo being so accommodating and answering her questions. We got to the mall and Lungelo led us to Mugg 'n' Bean. We sat down and a waiter placed the menus in front of us.

We had our breakfast and I must admit Lungelo is good with Bontle, but then again she asks a thousand questions per minute. I even found out Lungelo has a degree in Bio Chemical Engineering and he only did it cause his father wanted him to have a proper career but he had his heart set on

being a business man, which he was able to achieve after getting his degree.

After breakfast we drive to eMlazi to fetch my mother since she was going back home. When we got there we waited for her in the car and I could tell soon as she walked up to us that she has so many questions. I introduced her to Lungelo and made it clear he was just my boss. But the scoff she made after that was clear enough to say she didnt believe anything I said.

She got in the car nonetheless but I could see on the rearview mirror she had her eyes set on Lungelo the entire time. He even noticed too and I could tell he was getting uncomfortable. Bontle on the other hand was busy giggling under her breath.

We went back to the flat to get Bontle's things then Lungelo drove us to the taxi rank so they can get a taxi home before it gets late. Lucky for us when we

got there the taxi was almost full. I stayed with them for a while, waiting for the taxi to get full. When the last person got in I said my goodbyes.

"I like Lungelo, I think he'll make you happy." Bontle said before getting in the taxi and closing the door. I watched as the taxi drove out of the taxi rank. I went back to Lungelo who was parked across the road. I got in and he drove me back to the flat. I invited him in for a cup of tea and he obliged.

He sat in the lounge while I made some tea. I brought him a piping hot cup of tea and sat across from him. I watched him as he sipped the hot tea while trying to master up enough courage to say what I needed to say.

"I'm ready." He put the tea down and looked at me.

"Ready for what?"

"To tell you my story. Every single piece of it."

"Okay."

I told him everything from beginning to end. And by the time I was done, he was sitting next to me holding my hand while tears freely flowed from my eyes. Until that moment I didn't realise how much I had bottled up. I figured if there was ever any hope of us even having a relationship then I would have to tell him everything, even the things my family knew nothing about.

I told him about the beatings, being locked up in solitary confinement just because a gang leader thought I looked at her funny or the warden got told I was misbehaving, I told him about the rape that would happen every other week and the many abortions that resulted from it. I couldn't even look at him because I felt ashamed. Even though I knew none of what happened was my fault I still couldn't help feeling the shame.

He held me in his arms as I cried. My tears weren't just tears of pain, they were also tears for the children I never got to bring into the world because they were not conceived right, it was tears for their little souls that never got to even breath an ounce of the outside air, it was tears for all the time I tried to be strong while a guard was huffing on top of me slowly ripping my apart every shed of my womanhood and innocence, or what was left of it.

Maybe this wont fully heal me or make the nightmares go away, but maybe it's a start. Maybe this will be a step closer to me finding some closure and living my life without feeling like I have failed in life. Maybe, just maybe this is the beginning of the rest of my life.



NARRATED

In Johannesburg, Khanya is at home with his wife and kids when he gets a call that his offices have been broken into and someone rummaged through his files in the office. The security guards got alerted when they heard the alarm ringing from his office. Whoever it was that broke in tried to open the safe without realizing that the safe alarm would go off if anyone put in the wrong password three times in a row.

Khanya left his wife and drove to his office building. He found the guards as well as the cops already there trying to figure out how the person got in and out without anyone noticing.

He walked around over the files and documents that were strewn all over the floor trying to find a clue as to what could have happened. After running his eyes around the office he turned to the cops and gave

them his statement. He answered whatever questions they had. He knew this was a waste of his time but he needed to comply with the law even though he was pretty sure nothing would come of their investigation.

Soon as they were satisfied with whatever they could get from him, they left. He punched in the security override on the safe before resetting the password. The safe opened and he took out the files on the Mashile case he was working on. He knew then that the break in was as a result of his involvement in the case.

Khanya has never been the type to back down from anything. If there was one thing his father instilled in him, it was to never fear, especially when he knew he could win. He tried to figure out who would want this case dead and buried but no one came to mind. No one knew he was working on this case except his brother Lungelo and Bonolo. And then he

remembered Bonolo told Malcolm about the case, he even had a hard time convincing her to keep anything that involves the case to herself. She had tried to reason with him, that she had to tell his family about the case so that if anything happened to her then they would know where to start looking.

As valid as her reasons were, it also opened her up to being a target because if more people know it would be harder to figure out who would they to make the case go away, so she had to watch what she said and to whom she said it. Stubborn as she is she agreed to keep her mouth shut, but not before she had told Malcolm.

Khanya put the files back in the safe before he drove to the South African Youth Party offices. He saw a lone car parked out in front of the building. He drove in and parked next to it. He got out and walked into the offices. Although it was late the front door was unlocked. He pulled out his gun from the holster and

corked it before taking slow strides and checking every office until he made it to the one he was looking for.

He heard voices coming from the office. Although he couldn't hear what they were saying he could tell the voices were loud and angry. He heard footsteps coming from the office and walking towards the door so he hid behind the PA's desk and waited for whoever was walking out to disappear. Soon as they were out of sight he heard something breaking in the office. He walked towards the slightly opened door and saw Malcolm pacing up and down, frustration emanating from every part of his body.

He stood there just watching him with a smirk on his face. He heard him mumble Bonolo's name and then cussing. Until that moment all he had was a hunch, but now, now he was sure that Malcolm was involved in the case. He wasn't sure how, but his guy told him that, and his gut has never failed him.

He turned and walked away unseen. He knew then that this little side hobby he had taken on had just become his main priority. But first things first, he needed to make sure Bonolo was protected. Even though she had the guard her mother provided, he would still feel better if one of his own people were watching her and keeping her safe.

He got into his car and drove away feeling like the cat that got the milk. For years he has waited for an opportunity to make the Mashile's pay for their involvement in his father's death, and now he just found it.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWENTY

I sat in the waiting room of the doctor's office, my appointment was in thirty minutes but I'm early. I'm nervous. Although I need to do this I'm still nervous. This is a stranger that I'll be telling my business to.

I keep tapping my foot and biting my nails. The receptionist is busy talking to someone on the phone, laughing out loud. I wish I was that carefree again. And just living life with no fears or anxiety. But i guess this is step one to getting all that back.

After a somewhat nerve wracking twenty minutes the doctor walks out with another patient. She walks her to the door before heading back to the receptionist and checking her appointment book. She closes it and turns to look at me before walking

over.

"You must be Mrs Mashile?" She says holding out her hand. I shake it and make a mental note, I need to change that name.

"Yes, that's me."

"You're early. I just need to finish up some things in the office I will be with you in ten minutes."

"Okay." I smile and she walks back into her office.

Ten minutes felt like a lifetime. At last she walked out and invited me into her office. I walked in and her office was quite spacious and homely. I guess that's why she is so popular, the moment you walk into the office it's just a calm and relaxing space. I sat down on the couch and waited for her to sit across me like they do in the movies, instead she sat on the carpet with her notebook on the coffee table. She smiled when she saw the confused look on my face.

"Don't be alarmed. This is just more comfortable for me." I nodded my head and tried to make sense of all this. "Anyways, my name is Dr Khanyile. It's so nice to meet you. So tell me about you."

I opened my mouth trying to say something but words wouldn't leave my mouth. In my head I knew what I needed to say but it was like the plug between my brain and my mouth was disconnected.

"Take your time." She said, clearly she was used to this. But what I couldn't figure out was why it was so hard for me to tell her about me. Was it maybe because I also didn't know who I was. On the surface, I could tell her my name and age and where I come from, I could tell her the most basic of things about me but I know that's not what she wants to know.

"I don't know what to say." She smiled. Her smile had a calming effect to it.

"Relax Nomonde. This is our first session, I don't need you to unpack everything all at once. Healing is a marathon not a sprint. Right now I just want you to tell me about you. Not your deepest darkest secrets. I want to know Nomonde, what makes her happy and what makes her sad. That's it. We'll get to the rest later. Okay?" I nodded and let out the nervous breath I was holding in.

An hour later I felt like a huge piece of this load I carry on my back was lifted today. It might not be all of it but still. I felt relaxed. It was nice being able to talk to someone who didn't judge or make me feel like I should be ashamed of my past.

I walked out and found Lungelo leaning on his car in the parking lot of this building. I was about to ask how he knew I was here then I remembered he recommended this doctor. I walked over to him and he hugged me. It's strange how, whatever this is that's happening between us feels like a relationship.

He opened the car door for me and I got in. He got in on the other side and turned to look at me.

"How was your session?"

"It was okay. One step forward right?" He smiled.

"Right! Are you hungry?"

"I am, but I'm already late for my shift so I'll eat at work."

"About that, Hlophe is waiting for your call."

"You know I can't work for him, I have a criminal record."

"He doesn't care. He is expecting you."

"I don't know."

"Well I do. I told him you will start on the 1st of next month."

"You can't be serious."

"I am. You are smart Nomonde, and you deserve to live the life you've always dreamed of, starting with

that job."

"I need this job Lungelo. I have to get a laptop for Bontle before she goes to varsity."

"And you will, I promise."

I figured arguing with him would be a waste of time so I just let it go. He drove me to the flat after going through a Nando's drive through. We ate before he had to go to work.

I woke up in the morning and decided since I dont have a job anymore I might as well go home cause I have two weeks before my new job starts. Its weird even saying that, a few months ago I didnt even think I'd be able to get a job let alone get two within a few months. I texted Lungelo and told him I was going home. He texted back and said he will drive me home.

I cleaned the flat and cooked some lunch for Bonsile

since she was working last night and I'm sure she is hungry. After cleaning and packing a few clothes I sat on the couch waiting for Lungelo to show up since he said I should not leave without him. If it weren't for that I'd be halfway home by now.

I heard a key turn on the door before Bonsile walked in. She didn't look like someone who had spent the night working. She came in and threw herself on the couch with her head on my lap.

"You're in a good mood."

"Of course. I am moving out."

"What?"

"Muzi asked me to move in with him and I agreed."

"That's great. What about the kids?"

"The kids are nice. I met them a few weeks ago, but they stay with their grandmother."

"Okay, so he really is serious about you."

"It looks like it. And it's all thanks to you. If hadn't given him an ultimatum I'd still be his secret whatever."

"I'm happy to have helped. Does that mean I get to be the maid of honor at your wedding?" She laughs and gets up.

"Baby you can be whatever you want to be. By the way, you are looking at the new official manager of the club." She said before disappearing to her room. Things seem to be looking up on all sides, and it feels rather great.



BONOLO

This case is driving me nuts. But I am happy cause I am getting close to finding the truth. Khanya and I found out that the gun that was used in Paul's shooting was actually a police issued firearm and it

doesn't match the one that was found in Nomonde's possession, and yet the ballistics report from the case says the gun in Nomonde's possession was the one used to shoot Paul. Confusing I know, but it's one step closer to the truth.

I finished working and packed up my things. It's a good thing I don't keep the original case files in the office. After Khanya's office was broken into I realized maybe he was right about keeping this whole thing quiet. Clearly someone is trying to cover their tracks.

I got to the parking lot and found my driver already waiting for me. I got in and waited for him. He opened the door before I heard a gunshot go off. I screamed and laid down on the backseat as gunshots went off. I couldn't even see what was happening outside. All I could feel was glass breaking.

Someone tried to open the back door. I screamed so loud hoping someone would hear me.

"Ma'am open the door, Khanya sent us." I got up slowly and looked at this man. I looked behind him and there were two other guys holding guns, but they weren't facing this side. I slowly opened the door and grabbed my bag. "Dont be scared. We were sent to protect you." I looked over at my driver/guard and he was slumped over on the front seat, bleeding. I felt tears stream down my face as I was pulled to another car and driven off. I'm not sure if the cops were even called.

I thought this would be easy but clearly I was wrong. Now I'm being shot at. What kind of mess did I get myself into. We drove for a while before we pulled up to this building. It looked like an apartment building, but it wasnt my apartment building. All I wanted to do at this point was get into bed and pretend this night never happened.

The guy opened the door for me and I was led into the building. We got into the and one of the guys pressed the PH on the lift. We got up to the penthouse and the two guys stayed outside the door while the other one came in with me and showed me around. I sat down on the couch as he walked again.

I sat still in that same position trying to make sense of what happened. The door opened and Khanya walked in.

"Hey, are you okay?"

"Someone tried to shoot me tonight."

"I know." He said as he sat down next to me. "Its a good thing my guys were there."

"Who were those people and why did they want me dead?"

"Well I think it might have something to do with the case. I have my suspicions of who it is but I'll let you

know once I have enough concrete evidence." I couldn't even question him on anything cause I was still in shock.

I took put my phone and tried to dial my mother's number but then I decided against it. How am I going to explain to my mother that someone pit out a hit on me. If I had any other major cases i would maybe say this is a result of those cases but I dont, so Khanya might be right. This must be because of Nomonde's case.

I wasnt sure at that moment if I was filled with anger, adrenaline or shock, but I knew then that I couldn't let this go. Whoever was behind this hadn't scared me away, instead they have just given me an extra push to do this. I will prove Nomonde's innocence, come hell or high waters.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWENTY ONE

I made it home late in the evening. Lungelo decided to drive me home since he's the one who held me up. We got home and parked in front of the gate. I saw my mum standing by the door looking at the car clearly monitoring what was happening. And she wasn't even pretending to be doing anything else.

"Your mum is hectic." Lungelo said looking out the window at her. Good thing the windows are tinted.

"Tell me about it. I should go before she comes here." I opened the door and got out. Lungelo got out and opened the boot for me to get my bag. There was a pink laptop bag in there as well. I took out my bag and tried not to think too much about this pink laptop bag. What if he has a girlfriend, or even worse a wife?

I was about to close the boot when he took out the pink laptop bag and gave it to me.

"What's that?"

"A laptop for Bontle. You said you needed to buy her one."

"Yeah, I need to buy her one."

"Well now you don't have to. She can use that one."
He said closing the boot.

"You bought my daughter a laptop? Why?"

"No, I did not buy it, the only thing I bought was the bag, the laptop is old, I haven't used it in a while. I figured she could put it to good use. Anyways I'll call you." He kissed me on my forehead and drove off before I could even say anything.

He left me there standing like I just missed the school bus. I looked at his car as he drive away. I

went in and my mother was standing by the door with her arms crossed across her chest.

"Uyajola?" I wanted to laugh but I decided to keep it in.

"Cha ma, I'm not dating. Lungelo is a friend." She shook her head and walked into the house. I followed her and sat down on the couch while she went to the kitchen.

I opened the laptop bag and took out the laptop. He lied. This is not an old laptop, its brand new. It still has the bubble wrap around it, even the charger looks like it's never been used. I cant accept this. It's too big a gift. I was about to put it back in the bag and put it away before Bontle sees it, and speak of the devil and she will appear. She screamed soon as she saw the laptop on the table. Her screams were so loud mum even came in from the kitchen.

"What the heck is going on?" She asked with flour all over her hands and apron.

"Ma bought me a laptop." Bontle screamed as she sat down on the carpet with the laptop on the coffee table.

"Actually I didnt buy it. Its Lungelo's old one, he figured you could use it." I said trying not to look at my mum's judgemental face.

"A friend huh." She said before walking back to the kitchen. Bontle got up from the floor and sat next to me on the couch.

"Mum this is not an old laptop." She whispered.

"I know. And that's why we cant accept it." I saw her face fall. "Look I know you want a laptop and I promise I'll buy one for you but I cant accept this one."

"Why?"

"Because its brand new, and I cant pay him back for it. This is an expensive laptop."

"Has it ever occurred to you that maybe all he is trying to do is make things easier for you."

"Huh?"

"Not every man is going to be like my dad. Besides it would be rude to return a gift. Tell stepdaddy I said thanks." She said picking up the laptop and rushing to her room. I texted Lungelo and he called back.

"You lied."

"You wouldn't have accepted it if I'd told you the truth."

"Well I wasn't planning on it but Bontle seems to have other ideas." He laughs.

"Smart girl that one."

"More like stressful. Let me help my mum with supper. I'll call you later." I hung up and went to the kitchen to help my mum.

I dont know why I came in here, I should have just

gone to the bedroom or stayed in the lounge and watched TV cause the stares I'm getting from this woman are just weirdly crazy.

"Mum please stop looking at me like that."

"Like what? A liar?" Mothers and their drama.

"Ma I'm not lying, Lungelo and I are just friends."

"Just make sure you go to the clinic uyo preventer."
Yho Jesu. I decided to just leave her there and go sit with Bontle cause now I feel like a teenager who just got caught with a boy.

I got into Bontle's room and she already had the laptop running. I sat on the bed and watched her as she was busy doing her homework. I dont even know why I thought she'd be on social media.

"Let me guess, gogo was interrogating you about stepdaddy?"

"Can you please stop calling him that." She laughed and turned to look at me.

"He seems like a nice guy though."

"He is."

"Look I know you have a lot to deal with trying to make up for the last fifteen years but the truth is you cant live in the past. Nothing you do or say can turn back the hands of time. Just live in the moment and enjoy it. You deserve it."

"You do know I am supposed to be the parent here not you." She laughed and went back to her laptop.

"Besides, when did you get to be this smart?"

"Well, when you come from a long line of smart ass women, you're bound to be smart." I got closer to her and hugged her from behind. I kissed the top of her head and sat back down and decided to be quiet and let her concentrate on her work.



LUNGELO

After dropping Nomonde at her home I decided to go by the club to check how things are going. Turns out Bonsile is steering the ship in the right direction. Even the waitresses who thought they run this place when Thulani was here seem to be on the straight and narrow now. I think I did the right thing by putting her in charge.

I decided to go back to the house to watch some soccer seeing as the club was in the right hands. I pulled up to the house and noticed a car was parked outside. I wasn't even worried much cause I knew whoever it was must be family since no one knows my access code except my family. And they know I would give them hell if they ever gave that to a stranger.

I parked next to the car and peeked in to see who it might belong to but the rental car brochure on the

backseat gave me my answer. I walked into the house and found a woman sitting on my couch drinking wine. She didn't even seem to notice that there was someone behind her. I walked closer and I guess my footsteps scared the shit out of her cause she jumped and even dropped the glass of wine all over my white couches. Great.

She turned around and I noticed she looks familiar. And then I remembered, she is Bonolo Mashile.

"What are you doing in my house?"

"Hi, geez you scared the shit out of me."

"I know I said I'd help you find your friend but what are you doing in my house?"

"Uhm, Khanya sent me here. He said I'll be safer this side."

"Safer from what?"

"Uhm I think maybe he can explain it better."

I took out my phone and walked up the stairs while dialing Khanya's number. He wouldn't pick up. This idiot probably knows why I'm calling and is avoiding me. I called him for the third time and this time he decided to pick up.

"You do know leaving a thousand missed calls on my phone won't make the phone answer itself. One would have been enough." He said sounding like he was eating, probably somewhere KwaMaiMai eating skobho.

"There is a woman in my house and she says you sent her here. Kindly explain." I was pissed, but knowing Khanya he would probably act like I'm overreacting.

"Oh yeah, she made it there alive good."

"Good? Khanya are you hearing yourself. What is she doing in my house?"

"Well she got shot at last night. A few days ago my office was broken into and then she got shot at, my guess is it has something to do with the case we are

working on."

"I'm still trying to figure out why you wouldn't send her to a safe house. I'm pretty sure you have plenty of those."

"Dude awuna Ntombi ezokwata, so relax."

"Trust you to think of that. That girl is a Mashile, in a house yakwaRadebe. Do you see where I'm going with this?"

"Look I know this isn't convenient right now especially considering our history with those bastards but, I found a lead, and I think one of her brothers is involved in this case and he could possibly be behind the shooting." I've never felt my hear beat that much ever since I was born.

"Bra, those are serious allegations. Does she know?"

"Not yet. But if I find the evidence to prove this, I promise you that little perfect picture that family has painted of themselves will come tumbling down like a house of cards." I could feel the smug smile on his face. There is absolutely nothing more that would make him happy than seeing the Mashile's fall.

"Out of curiosity, which brother do you think is involved in this whole thing. Please don't tell me its Lesego."

"Nope, it's not him. Try again."

"Paul?"

"Dude, please, you know that ones washaywa ngephenti ebusweni (he's been bewitched.)"

"Ok then who, not Malcolm." He laughed and I could swear everyone was probably staring at him with his loud laugh.

"The one and only Mr Future President. All I have to figure out now is how he is involved in all this. But one thing I'm certain of, he is behind the break in at my office."

"Wow. Okay then do your thing." I hung up.

I was about to text Muzi and tell him about this when I got a text from Khanya telling me to keep my mouth shut. How the fuck am I supposed to keep quiet about something like this? I threw my phone on

the bed after ordering food for myself and my uninvited guest. How am I going to explain having a woman in my house to Nomonde?

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWENTY TWO

Coming home was maybe a bad idea. The looks I keep getting from my mum are just funny and uncomfortable some times. Bontle is starting her exams soon and it seems the laptop came right in time. I need to get her a router though cause right now she has to hotspot the laptop using her phone data just to access the internet and sometimes the network sucks.

After my mum left in the morning I decided to spring clean the house. I started in the kitchen and took out all the dishes and plates from the cupboard and just scrubbed everything down. After that I went to the bedrooms. I started in Bontles room then went to my mums. I decided to rearrange her wardrobe and just pack everything nicely and neat.

I took the clothes out and threw them on the bed. I found a box hidden on the bottom of the wardrobe on the far end, it was like it was hidden. Being the nosy person that I am I took it out and sat down on the floor and opened it. I felt tears sting the back of my eyes when I came face to face with my degree. I took it out and looked at it and I felt an avalanche of emotions going through every part of my body.

I left home for this piece of paper. This was my motivation for a better life for me and my family. This little piece of paper was the one thing I wanted more than anything in the world. And I got it. I should be proud. I should be happy. Heck I should beat my chest and celebrate cause i got what I've always wanted. But I'll never get to use it ever again. Right now it's just another piece of paper tucked away in a box. My criminal record now holds more weight than this degree.

I wiped my tears and put the degree aside and went through the contents of the box. At the bottom I found a letter from the bank. I opened it and again it was something else that served as a reminder that I had failed. The letter was a notice from the bank letting me know that they will be repossessing the land I bought.

The only thing that the Mashile name guaranteed was to open doors that usually would have been shut in my face. At twenty one years old I was able to secure a bond with the bank with no qualms whatsoever. I bought a little piece of land to build my mother a house. The foundation was laid a few months later. The plan was incredible. Strangely enough I had drawn it myself and just had an architect friend I was in school with refine it and make it more presentable. It would have been a perfect five bedroom home with an open plan kitchen, lounge and dining area. It was meant to be a surprise for her birthday the following year. Unfortunately for me by the time her birthday came I

was languishing behind bars.

Seeing this letter felt like a stab through my heart. I was so close to giving my mother everything she's ever wanted but I failed. Life neh. I found some old pictures of my graduation and some of Bontle's baby pictures. She looked so cute and chubby.

I put everything back in the box and put it back where I found it then continued with my cleaning. I finished and decided to take a walk to the school to get my mum. It was almost time for her to come back anyway. I found her talking to the other women who also sell here. I wasn't ready for the many questions that would come. I greeted and started packing mums stuff. And just like I had thought the questions came. I tried to keep the answers short and sweet but people in this place love gossip. Mum had to remind them to mind their own business real quick. I was reminded of why I like being indoors. I took mums stuff and carried them home.

Since she was busy gossiping about BabMfundisi and his shenanigans with the church ladies I decided to leave her. I got home and made some lunch for her so she can eat when she gets back. I knew Bontle would be back late. Mum came back a few minutes after me and I dished up for her. We sat down and I could feel her eyes boring into mine with every bite. And then she would make some weird sounds, honestly it was getting uncomfortable.

"Ma please just say whatever it is that is bothering you instead of these stares."

"I dont have anything bothering me."

"Really? So what's with the weird stares?"

"I dont know what you're talking about." I swear this woman should have been in the CIA. Somehow she is able to make me feel guilty without even saying anything at all. She finished eating and went to take a nap.

I cleaned up and prepared for supper. Bontle came in with a couple of her friends and greeted. The girls stayed in the lounge while she went to the bedroom. She came back with the laptop and they sat down to do their schoolwork. My phone beeped, I picked it up from the table and it was a message from Lungelo saying he misses me.

It's crazy how I havent known him for long but somehow he has already wormed his way into my life. His kindness and patience alone make him an amazing human being, yet somehow my walls are still up. Sometimes I fear that I might never fully let them down. But I can only hope therapy does it's intended job. Although I know I'll never fully get back to the person I was before, but maybe this might be the rebirth of a new, improved Nomonde.



NARRATED

Everything seems to be unraveling all around Malcolm. Amanda has her foot on his neck and she refuses to let go, his friends in parliament and the political circles have made it clear that should the truth come out they will distance themselves from him like a man with leprosy. They have vowed to make his life a living hell and set his political aspirations on fire and watch them burn together with him in it. But through all of that, the threat of losing all he has worked hard for, nothing teared him apart than hearing his mother weeping at the possibility of his sister being kidnapped.

Him and Lesego were called by security at her office, they told them about the shooting that happened. Even though when they got there, there were a number of bodies sprawled out on the ground, even his sisters guard laid dead with his front body resting on the front seat. There were blood spatters

on the backseat. He recognized the bodies on the ground as those of the men he had sent out to scare his sister. That's all he wanted, to scare her, so she could let go of this case. All he wanted was for her to just forget about this and focus on her career. But now she was gone. Possibly dead.

Going home and having to tell their mother will forever be the hardest thing he has ever done. Watching his mother weep and wail in pain was a sight he had never thought he'd ever see. The last time his mother had cried with that much pain was when his father died. Even though he was young at the time, her pain then will forever be engrained in his memory. It was a pain he had hoped to eventually forget, but it seemed to fade to the back of his head and only showed up in tiny little moments. But this moment now had brought that memory back like a flood, and now it seemed like it had come back tenfold. And he didnt know how to help his mother.

What he couldn't understand though was who could possibly have his sister when the people he had sent were laying dead in a police morgue. He wrecked his head trying to find answers, but even his own trusted 'friends' couldn't help him. It was like Bonolo had disappeared into thin air. Her cards had not been used in over twenty four hours which was unusual for his shopaholic sister. Everyone knew she found pleasure in swiping her card every chance she got.

He finally got a lead from one of his friends who told him that his sister was driven out of the parking lot in a black SUV with KZN license plates. That same SUV was also seen going into an apartment building in Lonehill. That alone wasn't enough to tell him where his sister was, until he got the list of all the tenants and apartment owners of that building, and one name stood out, Khanya Radebe.

He immediately got out of his mother's study since he had spent the night at home. He walked out to the

lounge and found it crawling with police and private investigators, his mother was curled up on the couch with a blanket over her. Her red eyes and the dark circles under them told him she had probably cried herself to sleep and woke up to the same nightmare.

He got into his car and drove all the way to Sandton to find Khanya. He went to his offices but he wasn't there. His PA wouldn't tell him where he was. He figured it was midday so maybe he was still in court. He thought he'd wait for him in his office but his PA again wouldn't let him go through. After what seemed like a long time of waiting, Khanya's PA felt pity for him so she told him where he was.

He drove to the place and as soon as he got there he felt his nerves failing him. This was no place to confront him, this was his playground. Khanya being the son of a taxi boss meant he was known in the taxi industry, after all his father was a respected taxi boss. If he had to go in there guns blazing it would

be like walking into a minefield with bombs that could go off at anytime. He knew no sane person would confront the son of a taxi boss inside KwaMaiMai, that would be a stupid thing to do.

He was about to drive out and wait for another opportunity to confront Khanya when two cars together with a police van and quantum pulled up next to him. He knew something bad was about to happen when he saw Lesego get off the one car. The cops and other guys Lesego was with followed behind him.

He decided to follow them too and find out what was going on. He ran till he caught up with his brother. He saw Khanya sitting with some guys around a table playing molabalaba. He knew this was a bad idea when he saw the number of people who had suddenly surrounded Khanya and the man he was with. It was clear to see that if uncontrolled, this could be a very deadly situation.

"Where is my sister?" Lesego hissed as soon as they got close enough to Khanya. Khanya ignored them and carried on talking to his friends. Lesego was raging with anger. In his circles, when he spoke people listened, but not here. Here, he was just a nuisance making noise.

"Khanya Radebe?" One of the officers asked.

"That would be me officer." He answered without taking his eyes off the game.

"We are looking for someone and we've been led to believe you might have her."

"Okay. Who are you looking for?"

"My sister, you dumbfuck." Lesego shouted. The laughter that erupted from the people around made Lesego even angrier. No one was taking him seriously.

"I dont have your sister Lesego. But I'm flattered you would think of me at this painful moment in your

family. How is your mum, she must be shattered?" He asked as he made another move on his game.

Lesego lunged at him wanting to grab him, he was stopped by the guns that suddenly went up and pointed straight at him. He took a step back with his hands curled into fists. Khanya stood up and came to stand in front of Lesego.

"You give me way too much credit Lesego. I don't know where your sister is. And even if I did, this is no way to ask for help." He turned to the officers who had somehow become zombies. "Officers, unless you are here to charge me with something, I'd like to go back to my game with my friends without any disturbance."

"You really think you run this town don't you?" Lesego muttered under his breath.

"And here I was thinking this was your town Lesego Mashile." Khanya said and turned around to sit back down.

Malcolm held his brothers arm and dragged him back to his car. They drove off feeling defeated. Malcolm couldn't stop the guilt that he felt. Not only had he failed to protect his little sister, he had restarted a war that should have died the day Radebe senior died. But it looks like the sins of the father do fall on the son.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWENTY THREE

First days at anything are daunting and sometimes stressful. But not today, not for me. I'm more excited than stressed. Although I know it might take a while for me to get the hang of everything but the fact that I'm here now, ready to do a job that I love, that I studied for. It feels like a dream.

I came back from home two days ago. If mum wasn't looking at me some type of way cause of Lungelo then she would be praying and fasting for me. Ever since I told her about this new job she's been consistent with her prayers and fasts, not that she was ever inconsistent. I've heard people say that their mother's or grandmother's prayers still carry them long after they have left the earth, but I see it now, my mum's prayers are carrying me every single day of my life and I don't know if I'll ever have enough

Thank you's for God. But I doubt it.

I've been sitting in Lungelo's car for about ten minutes now, outside Hlophe's office building. He seems to have done well for himself. And from the looks of it, he'll be a great mentor during my transition back to my career path.

Work starts at nine, and right now it's still eight thirty. But I think I should be there at least ten minutes before. That's why I had to drag Lungelo to get up early. He slept at my place last night. Since Bonsile moved out the flat is now mine. Although she volunteered to pay for her half of the rent for the next three months I'm glad to have a space of my own. And now Bontle can visit anytime she wants. I look down at my suit and remove some invisible stains or whatever dirt I think is there.

"You look perfect." I turned up to look at him and he had a huge smile on his face, a contagious smile, I

smiled too.

"I should be scared right?"

"No. Your excitement is actually refreshing. And I know for a fact you will do great."

"I hope so."

"Don't stress. If Hlophe gives you any trouble, call me and I'll deal with him." I laughed a little. I wish I had someone like him in my corner when I was in prison, could have dealt quite nicely with the bullies in there.

I said my goodbyes and got out of the car. I took one last deep breath and walked towards the building. As soon as I walked through the huge sliding doors I felt an overwhelming sense of..... I wasn't sure what it was but I liked it, it felt good. I walked towards the huge desk written reception behind it in huge bold letters.

"Hi, I'm here to see Mr Hlophe." The lady behind the desk looked up at me and smiled. Her smile was

warm and welcoming.

"Hi, you must be Nomonde, he's expecting you. Take the lift to the top floor." She pointed me towards the lift. I wasn't nervous before, but now my entire insides were in a knot. With every step I took it felt real.

I got into the lift and the doors closed. I said a silent little prayer as I went up. The doors pinged signaling the end of my little journey. I got out and walked into a peaceful, serene calm hallway. It almost didn't feel like an office space but a hotel. It was a beautifully decorated place with art all over the walls. Classy, and modern. There were three doors and the names on the doors made me realize this was the executive floor.

I walked towards Hlophe's office and knocked. I heard a faint come in command from the inside. I turned the door knob and walked in. His office was huge. The mahogany cupboards filled with books

and the matching desk gave a sense of power. From the looks of this man and his office, he looks like he is a powerful individual, but how does Lungelo call him, no command him at the click of a finger and he comes running?

"Nomonde. I'm glad you're here." He said getting up from his chair. He shook my hand and his power was unmissable.

"I'm glad to be here."

"I was expecting you to be here two weeks ago, but Radebe convinced me to wait. And now I'm glad the wait is over."

"Thank you. For this opportunity too."

"You're smart. I'm pretty sure you will make a great addition to the team. Come let's go meet the others."

He led me out of his office and into the lift. We went down a couple of floors. When the lift doors opened it felt like we were walking into a jungle. This wasn't

a normal Accounting and Auditing Firm. This looked like one of those new age gaming offices where people played pool and had ball pits inside the office. There was a bunch of cubicles on the far end of the room, a bunch of fluffy carpets in the centre of the room where people sat, judging by the couple of people sitting on the floor. There was also some standing desks. What did I walk into?

"Dont be too shocked, this is an unconventional thing I know, but I like my employees to be free around here. They work when they are comfortable and personally I like my employees being productive at any cost."

"This is a far cry from the other office." He chuckled.

"We all work in different ways."

He showed me to my cubicle and introduced me to my supervising manager. I got down to work as soon as I sat down. It felt real good to have to be doing what I love.

Knock off time came way too soon. Well, technically speaking I was allowed to go home an hour early cause I finished my first assignment in time. I figured since Lungelo would only be here to pick me up in an hour I might as well just pop over at his place and tell him all about my first day.

I called a cab and it took me straight to Lungelo's place. I punched in the access code and made my way in. I could hear music blasting from the driveway. I guess he is home. I walked to the door and knocked a few times without an answer. I turned the door knob and lucky for me it wasn't locked.

I walked in and the music was way too loud from the inside. I found the remote on the couch and lowered the volume.

"Stop being a bore Lungelo, turn the music up." I heard a female voice speaking from the kitchen. I turned and she came in from the kitchen looking rather naked for my liking. She had on shorts and a vest. She stopped dead in her tracks when she saw me. Not that I was indifferent to her sight. She looked familiar, like a younger version of Mrs Mashile. "Nomonde?" My name was the first thing she uttered when she came back to the here and now.

Her voice told me who she was. I could never forget that voice. I dont know how many times I had to comfort her when her family was being g too overprotective. When all she wanted was to go party and they wouldn't let her. Rich girl problems right? She walked slowly towards me till she was standing right I front of me. She put out her hand and touched my face.

"Its really you." She said with a tear rolling down her

face. All I wanted to do was run, but this girl had engulfed me in a hug. She held me so tight as if she was afraid that this would be just a dream. I wasn't sure if I should hug her back because as much as my heart knew she was a sweet spoiled little girl, she was still a Mashile. The same blood with the family that almost destroyed me. I know she might be innocent of her family's deeds but my head and logic had other ideas. She let go of me and looked at my face.

I looked back at her for a few seconds then turned and walked out the door. I know who she is, but I don't know what she is doing in Lungelo's house. I heard her call out my name behind me as I walked to the gate. The gate opened and Lungelo's car was parked outside the gate ready to roll in.

I walked out of the gate with the intention to go back to my place but Lungelo came out of the car and tried to stop me.

"I can explain." He said while my arm tightly.

"No need. You dont owe me an explanation Lungelo. What you do in your house and who you do it with is none of my business. I have to go." I tried to pull away from but he pulled me back and opened the car door. I got in and he came around to his side. He closed the gate and drove out without a word.

We got to my flat and he opened the door for me to get out. I walked towards the flat with him behind me. I opened the door and threw my bag on the couch and sat down.

"I get that you're upset, with good reason, but I promise you there is nothing going on with her." He said sitting down besides me.

"Like I said it doesn't....."

"Matter? Maybe not to you. But to me it does.

Nomonde, I love you, I know this is a bit of a surprise and to be quite honest this is not how I wanted to tell

you this. But I do love you, and I promise you there is a good reason why Bonolo was in my house."

I dont know which part of his confession was surprising. The fact that he loves me or that Bonolo Mashile was in his house and theres a good reason for it.

"So what's the reason? Why is she in your house?" Even though my heart was doing somersaults over his confession but I needed to know the truth before I get myself wag too deep with this man, not that I'm not half way deep already.

"Bonolo and my brother are investigating your case. She wants to prove your innocence."

"Why? She's a Mashile, or has she forgotten that?" He chuckled.

"Probably. But she seems to be so deep in this that she was almost killed two weeks ago. Her car was

shot at. If my brother's goons weren't watching over her she'd be dead by now."

"Why would anyone want to kill her, and what makes you so sure it was because of my case?"

"My brother's office was broken into a day or two before the shooting. Coincidence, maybe, but he thinks it's connected. He said he needed to make sure she was in a place where the Mashile's wouldn't find her and they wouldn't dream of searching for her at a Radebe residence. That's why she is there. It's just to keep her safe."

"Who wants her dead? Her family can protect her so why are you hiding her from them?"

"Because we think the threat is within the family." I laughed. The Mashile's are a tightknit family, there is no way in hell one of them would hurt Bonolo. They treat her like a little fragile China doll, they protect her with everything they have so what could have possibly changed since I went away?

A few months ago I might have been okay with

forgetting about my past and focusing on my future, but now, now I need answers. I need to know what the huge Mashile mansion is hiding behind those huge walls. If one of them would go as far as killing one of their own just to keep their skeletons hidden, maybe, just maybe, it's time those skeletons spoke for themselves. Maybe it's time the Mashile's were exposed for who they are. Evil and manipulative. Maybe it's time the truth came to life.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TEASER

Going into a war of any kind at anytime is a risk all on it's own. But going after the Mashile's might just be a bigger war than Khanya expected. He knows he might win this battle but in order to win the war he needed to make sure he has the right back up.

He had already reached out to the one other person he knew off who also had a gripe with the Mashile's, and tonight he was meeting with him in Durban. He needed to be a bit further away from the city of Johannesburg since Lesego and his cronies were watching his every move.

He flew in to Durban and went straight to Muzi's house where the meeting would take place. He found his brothers already there waiting for him.

They too were anxious to see if this person shows up.

"Do you think he'll come?" Lungelo asked as he poured himself a drink.

"He has to come. We need him to win this. Bringing down Malcom will be easy, but if we are going to go for the big fish then we need him."

Just then the door bell rang. Muzi went to open and to his surprise it wasn't the person they were expecting. He stood aside and let them in.

"Gentlemen. You called, we answered." He said looking at the three brothers.

"Where's Philani?" Khanya asked looking at this man and his colleague.

"I'm here on his behalf. My name is Lindani Ndlovu and this is my associate Sizwe Ziqubu. As his lawyer I need to make sure whatever this is that you called

him for is worth his time and energy. So get on with it gentlemen. Tell me why I'm here." The brothers looked at each other and figured they have nothing to lose by telling this man what they need.

"We need Philani to help us bring down the Mashile's." Sizwe and Lindani looked at each other.

"What's in it for him?"

"If he can help us with this, I'll help him get his hands on the person responsible for his son's death."

See you tomorrow ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWENTY FOUR

I didn't think I would enjoy working again this much. But everything seems to be coming along just right. I love my job even though most of my colleagues are graduates straight out of varsity but it's perfect cause they teach me new things everyday.

It's the last day of the week and some of my colleagues roped me into going to a club with them. I agreed and we went out and had the time of our lives. It was fun, although they drink like fish and dance the whole night long. When I left them at around midnight they were ready to move to another club but I had to put my foot down and go back home and sleep.

I called an uber and headed home. I wish Lungelo

was here though but he is busy with his brothers working my case. And for the first time in a long time I'm actually anxious to find out the truth. Even though I wanted to help, Lungelo assured me they got everything under control so I let them be. I havent seen Bonolo since that day i accidentally walked in on her at Lungelo's house. I'm really not even sure I want to see her. I know i shouldn't be punishing her for her family's sins but i just dont want anything to do with that family except knowing the truth and who set me up and why.

I woke up on Saturday and spring cleaned the house and did my laundry. Since I'm not working today and Lungelo is busy I decided to do some work. Good thing I brought work home yesterday. I sat down on the couch and got to work when I heard a knock on the door. I figured it must be Lungelo. I got up and opened and to my surprise Bonolo was standing there.

"Hi!" She said nervously.

"Hi."

"Can we talk?" I opened the burglar door and stood aside to let her in. "Look I know you dont want anything to do with me or my family but I just thought I'd come check up on you." She sat down on the couch. I sat down across from her not sure how I should actually act right now. "Uhm..... hows Bontle?"

"She's fine. Grown." She smiled and strangely enough her smile reminded me of Bontle's. Come to think of it Bontle looks like Bonolo when she was younger.

"I bet."

"Thank you, for helping with my case. Lungelo told me it was all your idea." She shrugged her shoulders and played with her hands.

"I just want to prove your innocence."

"Why?" Okay that might have come out rather harshly.

"Because I believe you Nomonde. I know you'd never

try to hurt my family like that, and the fact that everyone believed you were guilty didnt sit right with me."

"Thanks, for believing me."

"I should get going. I just wanted to make sure you're ok, but I also dont want to overwhelm you with my presence." She said as she got up. I got up and walked her to the door.

I hugged her and let her go. I know I should have been a bit kinder or welcoming, but I cant help the walls that automatically go up whenever I come into contact with a Mashile. I've learnt to keep those people at a safe distance, the only good thing they ever did for me was my babygirl. Other than that, they can all go burn. I texted Lungelo and told him that Bonolo was here, I also asked him to make sure she stays as far away from me as possible. No, I dont hate her, I just prefer not to be anywhere close to her family.



KHANYA

Digging up dirt on the Mashile's seemed like a mission and a half at first but once I got to piecing certain pieces together I realised that family isn't as squeaky clean as they would like to pretend they are. Bonolo told me she suspected Nomonde's sister had something to do with setting up her sister and sending her straight to jail. And now I have all the pieces of the puzzle, and unfortunately this little puzzle goes further up than we thought.

I figured it would take a lot to expose these people. If we expose Amanda's hand in this, the family might disown her like they did Nomonde and they will come out of this as victims and that will throw this little exposé out the window. And if we expose Malcolm and his hand in this they will find a way to twist it and make it seem like Amanda was the

mastermind behind it all, afterall she had more to gain than Malcolm. All he got to do was hide his sexuality and the fact that he sleeps with some of the high profile man in parliament. And in this day and age people will pity him having to hide out of fear of being victimized, I mean fifteen years ago being gay wasnt as 'normal' as it is today. So that might go left.

I realized proving Nomonde's innocence was a piece of cake, but I need more. I need to make sure these people dont only have to deal with a little scandal on a Sunday that will blow over by Monday but I need them to feel the cracks and watch as their little perfect home crumble to the ground. Especially Lesego.

I've been sitting in my office for hours now trying to figure out how to do this to make sure these people feel the maximum impact of all the tears people have cried because of them and the pain that they

have inflicted along the way. I heard a knock on the door before Zakes walked in with a bounce in his step, I know that walk, he found something. I turned to look at him and his smile was big enough to light up a city during loadshedding. I got excited just looking at him.

"You got something." He took off his hat and sat down on the chair and crossed his leg over his knee.

"Bozza, I found gold. And we can use this to get whatever we want."

"Okay what did you get?" He threw the file he had in his hands in front of me. I opened it and I couldn't believe my eyes. This wasn't gold it was a river of diamonds.

"Zakes where did you get this?"

"It turns out when people are drunk, they talk."

"This is perfect."

"Yep, and to top it all off, I've contacted the man and asked him to meet up with you in Durban, so you

have to fly down as soon as possible."

"You told him about this?"

"Nope. I'll leave that honor to you. I'm not sure if he'll come but I left enough juicy pieces to leave him wanting more. And your flight has been booked."

If I was a girl I probably would have kissed this man. I got up and took my briefcase and packed up my things. I drove straight to the airport and got into my flight. I texted my brothers to meet me at Muzi's place. Hopefully this man shows up or else the Mashile's will get away with one more thing in their long list of atrocities they have committed.

I got to Durban and drove straight to Muzi's place. I found him and Lungelo already drinking. I explained everything to them and they were just as shocked as I was when I heard this. We sat and waited to see if this man will show up. I'm not a praying man but this time, this time I prayed. I need this man to win this war. Malcolm and Amanda are just drops in the

ocean when it comes to the mess in this family, exposing them will not do much damage so I need this man on my side.

"Do you think he'll come?" Lungelo asked as he poured himself another drink.

"He has to come. We need him to win this. Bringing down Malcom will be easy, but if we are going to go for the big fish then we need him."

The doorbell rang and Muzi went to open. I was a bit nervous to be quite honest. Muzi came back with two man who looked like they didnt want to be here, but somehow they were here. I recognized them as Biyela's friends. They walked towards us and stood looking at each of us.

"Gentlemen. You called, we answered." One of them said looking at us.

"Where's Philani?" I asked looking at this man and

his colleague.

"I'm here on his behalf. My name is Lindani Ndlovu and this is my associate Sizwe Ziqubu. As his lawyer I need to make sure whatever this is that you called him for is worth his time and energy. So get on with it gentlemen. Tell me why I'm here." My brothers and I looked at each other and figured we have nothing to lose by telling this man what we need.

"We need Philani to help us bring down the Mashile's." Sizwe and Lindani looked at each other.

"What's in it for him?"

"If he can help us with this, I'll help him get his hands on the person responsible for his son's death." They looked at each other again and they seemed to be having a conversation that we weren't allowed to be a part of. The other one turned to look at us again. He was more scarier. At that moment I came to the conclusion that I might be scary to some people but these men, these men are deadly.

"Elaborate." The other one said and I could tell by his

dark eyes that he was probably the deadly one, a man of very few words.

"The Mashile's might be responsible for our father's death, and we just found out that they are responsible for a girl going to prison for a crime she didnt commit."

"I missed the part where this has anything to do with Philani." The Sizwe guy said. I could tell he was getting a little irritated.

"Well, a couple of years ago Philani's wife was hit by a drunk driver. His son died in that accident."

"We already know that, and the person responsible ended up right where they deserved to be, in hell. My question still stands what has this little beef of yours got to do with Philani?"

"The person you killed wasn't the one who was driving the car that night. The driver of the car that killed Philani's son was a Mashile."

Sizwe pulled out a knife from his pocket so fast in a blink of an eye he had the blade on my neck while he pinned me on the wall. Lungelo and Muzi got up to try and help me but I stopped them.

"Give me a name." I could feel the sharp blade parting my skin.

"That I can only give to Philani himself." He pushed the knife a bit further into my skin and I could feel a bit of blood trickling down my neck. While I was busy trying not to die the other one took out his phone and sent a text.

"Let him go Siz." Sizwe moved the knife from my neck and when I touched my neck, my hand came back with blood. Lungelo handed me a paper towel and I held it against my neck. A few inches deeper and I would be dead.

Someone knocked on the door and Lindani went to open leaving us with this man who seemed hungry for blood. I heard once that he skinned a man alive.

Lindani came back with two other guys. I noticed one of them was Philani. The other one must be Nate Samuels. They came over and stood next to their friend and looked at us. How did they get here so fast? Or maybe they've been here the whole time.

"He's here. Speak." Sizwe said with the knife still pointed in my direction. I repeated my little "presentation" again.

"The name Radebe!" Lindani said.

"Not unless you agree to help us."

"You do know we could just go after the Mashile's one by one till we get to the person we need?" Nate said.

"You could." Lungelo said. "But we all know you aren't the type to go after innocent people. You don't hurt people just for the fun of it." They stared at each other.

"Fine. We will help you." Philani finally spoke. I could finally tick 'get an army' of my checklist.

"Thank you. I promise you won't regret this."

"The name." They said almost in unison.

"Okay. The person who hit your wife wasn't the one you killed, the man you killed was paid to say he was driving that car. The actual driver was Lebogang Mashile."

"Lesego's wife?" Lindani asked.

"Yep. Apparently she has a drinking problem and that day she was drunk out of her mind."

"Does Lesego know?" Philani asked. I noticed he had a vein popping on the side of his neck.

"He knows. He orchestrated the whole thing. His wife was taken home immediately after the accident, before the police and even paramedics got there. Which made it easier for Lesego to hide the truth. One of his security guys took the wife's place. Paramedics and cops were paid off to make it seem like the security was the one driving since his bruises weren't consistent with the accident." Philani

nodded his head and walked out. He was angry. His friends followed suit.

"We'll be in touch." Lindani said before walking out.

"Are we sure they will help us with this?" Muzi asked. To be quite honest I wasn't certain at that moment but I would like to give them the benefit of the doubt.

"The Mashile's have absolutely no idea what's coming their way do they?" Lungelo said with a smug look on his face. And for some strange reason I got excited too. While they will be waiting for us to strike they won't notice the armageddon that is about to be unleashed on them. There really is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWENTY FIVE

Bonolo is finally out of Durban. Her little hiatus came to an end and she had to go back home, which works for me cause now I can visit Lungelo without having to run into her.

As much as Lungelo told me he loved me I still havent mastered up enough courage to say it back. Do i care about him? Yes. Am i in love with him? Maybe, i dont know. I care about the man but i dont want to find myself in a position where i am more infatuated with him than i am in love. I want the love to come in its own time. And therapy is helping me get there.

I've moved my sessions to twice a week. But sometimes I feel like that's the same as overdosing

on medication with the Hope's of it working faster than normal. At first I thought it might work but I've also realized I have way too much baggage to let go off and two sessions help me cope throughout the week.

I finished my second session for the week and headed to the mall to get groceries. I decided to cook Lungelo some dinner just to say that I you for his support. I got a few items from pick n pay then headed out to the parking lot. I called Lungelo and told him I was here and he said he'd come pick me up so now I have to wait for him.

I stood by the mall entrance daydreaming when I felt like someone was watching me. I looked around and found my sister staring at me.

"Creepy much." I said and went back to my phone.

"Creepy is thinking you can dig up information that

died a long time ago." She said coming around to stand in front of me.

"Are you really that afraid of me finding the truth or is this your conscience showing itself." She chuckled.

"Dont fallater yourself sis wam. You arent important enough to give me sleepless nights."

"And yet here you are."

"Stop dragging Bonolo into your mess. You know how the family feels about being betrayed. If you're not careful she might end up in the crossfire of this mess."

"She's a grown woman who knows exactly what she's doing." Lungelo parked in front of me and got out of the car. He hugged me then helped me with the groceries and out them in his bit.

"That was quick." She whispered to me while looking at Lungelo

"How long did it take you to get under my ex again?" She kept quiet. "Yeah, I thought as much." I left her

there and got into the car.

"You good?" Lungelo asked soon as i got into the car.

"Yeah, I'm great. She is a non factor in my life so I refuse to let her ruin my day or my life."

"Perfect. And soon she'll get what's coming to her. Very very soon." He said with a smile plastered on his face. And for some reason I think theres more to this smile than meets the eye. I wonder what he is hiding.



NARRATED

It's been a week since Khanya met with Philani and his friends, and its been a week of waiting and wondering if they will really get back to him or they were just bluffing,but then again Philani and his crew

never bluff.

Khanya went about his week and tried to keep everything at the back of his mind. He also had to make sure Bonolo doesn't find out about his plan. But he also knew he had to make sure she doesn't get caught in the crossfire of this war that's about to erupt. After all she is the reason he is even a step closer to finding out the truth about his father's death.

He finished up his closing statements in court and decided to call it a day. This was one of the biggest cases he's worked on this year, representing an MP who was charged with corruption, it seemed the universe had been working in his favour from the get go. The MP had come in handy when it came to getting information about Malcolm and his friends in parliament.

He decided to go to a restaurant first since there

was no one in the house and he was in no mood to cook. He placed his order and sat down as they prepared it. His phone beeped and he took it out of his pocket. He looked at it and smiled when he saw the message and who it was from. All it said was 'we're in' and he knew, he didnt need to worry anymore. Things were coming together just right.

A waiter brought his food over and he made sure to give him a huge tip. He got up and on his way out he bumped into someone since he's eyes were still locked on his phone and the recent message. He looked up and instead of getting mad at whoever had bumped into him he was amused.

"Watch where you're going Radebe." He chuckled and kept going. After taking a few steps he turned around.

"Lesego!" Lesego turned around. "Maybe you should also watch where you're going, or better yet, watch where you come from and you'll know where you're

going." He said before heading to his car leaving Lesego confused.

Lesego went into the restaurant and sat down while waiting for his wife to show up. They had decided to meet for lunch. The lunch dates had become sort of a ritual they undertake atleast once a week to keep up appearances. Their marriage was on rocky grounds but somehow Lesego was either too naive to see it or he was desperate to hold on to his perfect little life.

His wife showed up and sat down across from him. Their relationship was in ICU and ready to give up. They never held hands anymore or even kissed. Everything had gone south two years ago after the accident that claimed the life of Lisakhanya Biyela. Lebo has never been the same since then. Her drinking had never been a problem to her, although everyone around her always saw that her drinking had gone overboard, but she didn't think it was, until

she took the life of a child while kak drunk.

"How long are we going to do this Lesego, this pretense that's going on?"

"As long as it takes." He said perusing through the menu. Lebo just sighed and opened her own menu. They made their order and ate in silence. As soon as they were done they called for the waiter to bring the bill. Lesego paid the bill while Lebo had her eyes glued to the door. Lesego followed the direction of his wife's eyes and shook his head when he saw who it was.

They got up and he held her by the hand and dragged her to the table where Philani and his friends were sitting. Although he didnt know any of them well enough he had run into them at gala dinners or business events. They had the type of relationship most men have, they dont need to meet up and catch up to know each other. They meet when they meet and keep it moving.

"Gentlemen." Lesego said with a fake smile on his face. The guys looked at him and said nothing, not a smile, no greeting just silence. He noticed though that while some of his friends were looking at him Philani had his eyes stuck on his wife. He looked at her and she was fidgety.

"Lesego Mashile. I havent seen you around in a while." Nate finally said, breaking the awkward silence.

"Business has been keeping me busy."

"I bet."

Lesego said his goodbyes and dragged wife out of the restaurant. They got into their cars and drove out. Lesego headed to his office not aware that he is being tailed. He got to his office and found a box on his desk with balloons floating around. He checked the box and looked around to make sure it wasnt anything deadly. He opened it. He found a note on the top of the box with a message, 'I know what you

did. Its payback time.' He put the note aside and opened the tiny little box that was inside. He found another note that jus said 'icala aliboli.' He wasnt sure what to make of the messages, but history told him it wasnt good.

Meanwhile at the restaurant Philani and his friends are formulating a plan to make Lesego pay.

"I say we kill him." Razor says as he takes a sip of his drink.

"That will be too easy." Philani says. "He cant die. He needs to see everything he holds true and dear to his ice cold heart fall through his fingers. He needs to lose everything, even his underwear. I need him to beg for death. Killing him will be a small price to pay." The guys took their drinks and made a toast.

"Makunyiwe!"

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWENTY SIX

Some people say death comes like a thief in the night, it comes unannounced and disappears the same way. That was the kind of energy that was surrounding the Mashile's, and like death it didn't make an announcement.

Every day and every hour was like a countdown to what was coming. Lesego did what he always did, control everyone and get them to do whatever it is he wanted. Paul was like an empty tin being blown by the wind to whatever direction it desired. Malcolm had guilt eating him up inside, day in and day out, but he had rested in the knowledge that Bonolo had given up her investigation, which meant his little secrets were safe, for now. Unbeknownst to him, his woes were far from over.

Amanda lived her life like she had no worries in the world. She had won, again, little did she know there was more coming her way than she could imagine. Lebo was Lebo, strolling through life with a glass of wine in her hand anytime of day or night, some people would have quit alcohol after what befell her, well to her credit she did quit, for about three months but it seemed the need for alcohol was bigger than she had imagined, so the cravings had won.

While Mrs Mashile had celebrated the return of her daughter unharmed and in good spirits she was unaware of the kind of floodgates her daughter had opened. She was in her kitchen making lunch for herself since she was home alone when the gate intercom buzzed. She opened the gate and whoever it was drove in. She waited till the person knocked on the door before she opened.

"Khoza, this is a surprise. What are you doing here?" She asked as she let her guest in. She led him to the patio where she was sitting enjoying the beginning of spring, and with it the heat. She sat down on the lounge with her drink next to her.

"We have a problem MmeMashile." Khoza muttered as he took a seat.

"What's the problem?"

"I don't know who your son pissed off but they are coming for him."

"Which son?" She asked concern now taking over.

"I don't know yet, but I wouldn't put it past Lesego, you know how arrogant he is." She sighed and took a sip of her drink.

"Who did he piss off?"

"Rumours have been circulating at the office that it might be the Biyela's."

"As in Busani Biyela's family? Didn't he retire to travel a few years back, what could he possibly do?"

"That's the thing. He retired yes, but his son is still in

charge of the family businesses, and I mean all of them, legal and illegal." She chuckled.

"Come on, Busani might have been ruthless in his heydays but I doubt his son's bite is stronger than his bark." Khoza shook his head and tried to suppress the laugh rising up from frustration.

"That's where you're wrong. Some people think he might be worse than his father. Him, together with his friends are as ruthless as they come. And if he finds out that we helped cover up the accident that killed his son, I promise you we will be in deep shit."

"See that's why we pay you Khoza, to make sure nothing ever comes to light. I know Lebo made a mistake but she was drunk, she'd just found out her husband was a lying, cheating piece of scum. No one deserves to be punished for that."

"Maybe, but she did kill someone's child in the process."

"I know that, but we cant go back and change the past. How is the investigation going?"

"Nothing much has come up. And I doubt we will get

anything. It's been a long time."

"Maybe that's why Bonolo let it go too. She couldn't find anything."

"Possibly. I have to go. Mrs Mashile, I know you might not think much about anybody else but your family but I promise you, be very careful of the Biyela's. Whatever Lesego might have done, he better find a way to rectify it before Biyela finds out about his son." He said before he got up and left.

Mrs Mashile sent a message to her children and summoned them home for dinner. She called the maids and told them to start making dinner since her children would be coming over. She laid back on the lounge to enjoy the last few sun rays before the sun went down.

The Mashile's sat around the dining table waiting for

their mother to join them. They had been sitting there for almost an hour with no sight of her. They knew better than to call her so they just sat there like statues, not even speaking to each other.

"How is your investigation going Bonolo?" Lebo asked trying to break the awkward silence.

"Its not going. I've given it up."

"Already? That was quick. Maybe next time you should stick to writing contracts and leave the heavy lifting to the big dogs." Amanda said, pissing Bonolo off.

Bonolo was about to say something when they heard the clicking of heels coming down the stairs. They looked up and their mother descended the stairs like the Queen of Wakanda. She sashayed to the table and took a seat. She looked around at her children one by one.

"Ma, what's going on? Why are we here?" Lesego questioned before gulping down the glass of whiskey in front of him. His mother turned to look at him with fire burning in her eyes.

"I'm glad you asked Sego, one of you pissed someone off and now they are apparently coming after us." She said much to the amusement of everyone at the table.

"Ma come on, no one is coming after us. I would have found out by now." Lesego said then stood up to pour himself another drink.

"Khoza was here earlier. It seems there are rumours going on at the Hawks offices about this."

"But we have people at the hawks, they would have told us by now." Paul chimed in.

"Paul is right ma, we are good." Lesego muttered before taking his seat again.

"Then explain to me why I got a call from someone at the police department saying the same thing? Tell me why we are the last people to find out about a threat to our family. Tell me why you are dropping

the ball Lesego?"

"Ma please stop worrying. I'll sort things out. I promise."



KHANYA

Remember in high school when you got invited to the house party hosted by the coolest kid in school? You felt like you were part of the clique, like you'd just made it to the cool kids club, even if it was for just one night. Well that's how I'm feeling right now. It feels like I've just been made part of the clique and it feels so good.

I got a call from Philani a couple of days back saying we had to meet up to discuss a way forward. I called Lungelo and Muzi and asked them to come up to Joburg for the meeting. Apparently all of Philani's

crew has landed in Joburg and they are ready for war. And knowing Philani, or what I've heard of him, his crew is more of a family than just friends. And when one of them calls, they show up. Always.

Philani texted me the address of where we were meeting. I had expected to meet them in some dodgy place or maybe even at his house but instead he sent me the address to a house somewhere in Hyde Park. I called him when we were at the gate. They opened for us and we drove in. I wonder whose house is this cause I know he doesnt live here.

Nate opened the door for us and we walked in. This looked like someone's house judging by the pictures on the wall. The house was beautifully decorated. We went past the lounge and somewhere in the hallway he pulled a bookcase aside and revealed a door. He scanned his fingerprint and the door opened. My brothers and I looked at each other like, what kind of crime movie are we in right now.

We walked down a few stairs and he scanned his fingerprint again before another door opened and we walked in to find everyone inside. This looked like some secret spy stuff. There was a bunch of computers all around the room.

"Gentlemen." Philani said. "I hope you didnt get lost."

"No, it was actually easy to find the place."

"Good. Let me introduce you to everyone. You know Lindani, Sizwe and Nate. That's Razor, he's the Jack of all trades, those are my brothers, Banele, Sihle and Junior. And that is Sbu, he is the"

"I swear to God if you call me the nerd..." everyone laughed.

"I was actually going to say the brains but I guess you just introduced yourself." The Sbu guy clicked his tongue and went back to his computers.

"Nice to meet you all. These are my brothers Lungelo and Muzi."

"Perfect. Let's get down to business. Sbu, what have you got?" Philani asked as we were handed chairs to sit down. Lucky for us it was easier to see what was happening on the screens even when you're on the other side of the room.

"Well, I managed to hack into the Amanda girls phone. She has all the pictures of y'all's president on a folder on her iCloud and another on her computer. I sent her a dummy email that looked like it was from her kids school, she opened it and voila, no more pics."

"Just by sending an email?" Muzi asked. Sbu turned around to look at him and the guys were hiding laughs.

"Word of advice, don't ask him anything, just kid and agree to whatever he says." Banele told us. Sbu explained everything that he did and how he made sure to wipe any trace of Malcolm and his lovers.

"So what now?" Lungelo asked.

"Now we wait. Amanda's arrest should be on the

headlines by the morning. Her friend at the police station sang like a bird when we found him. He has been put in witness protection." Nate said.

"So Malcolm gets away Scot free."

"Not entirely, his little indiscretions should make for good gossip on a Sunday, and while Lesego is busy fighting all that, we strike." Lindani told us.

"Works for me." Lungelo muttered

"So what are you going to do to Lesego and his wife?" I asked, curiosity getting the better of me.

I looked at Philani and he looked like he was deep in his thoughts. His friends were also looking at him waiting for an answer. He took a sip of his whiskey then looked at the glass as if it held all the answers. The room had become silent, with just the humming of the computers.

"Lesego and his wife will know what hell looks like. If he thinks what's about to happen now will be hard,

then I will show him what hard looks like. I'll show him what it's like when you are helpless and feeling like the walls are closing in on you. He will know what it's like to lose it all. But the time we are done with him, he will beg for just one bullet to be shot right through his head."

The way he was looking at that glass when he said those words you would think all that was written at the bottom of that glass. But it wasn't. I've heard rumors about this crew and their antics, they are like folklore or myths, but sitting here now and listening to this man I know it's not. Everything I've heard was real, and the fact that I'm about to witness it first hand feels like some dream. But nothing will ever matter to me than seeing Lesego and his family pay for all the shit they've done. I guess it's true what they say, every dog has its day.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWENTY SEVEN

People who make phone calls before sunrise should be arrested and prosecuted. They honestly deserve to be in jail. My phone rang from the side table. I picked it up and looked at the caller ID and it was my early bird daughter. I thought about going back to sleep but I couldn't help thinking maybe something is wrong.

"What's wrong?" I asked as I covered my head with the duvet.

"Nothings wrong mama, I have news." She said sounding a bit giddy, like she was muffling a laugh.

"At this time of the day nana, I'm tired."

"I know mama, but this couldn't wait, its juicy." I sighed and just accepted that my sleep was gone and I would not be getting it back.

"Okay, you got me, what is it?"

"Amanda was arrested last night. Her arrest is all over social media. There are videos and pictures. And the funny part, in some of the videos she is screaming at the police asking them if they know who she is, its hilarious."

"Okay that was a mouthful. First of, who is Amanda and why would she be arrested?" I swear I could feel her rolling her eyes on the other end.

"Really ma, how many Amanda's do you know? I'm talking about your sister." I got up so fast from the bed I almost fell on the floor.

"Bontle dont lie!" She laughed, this was amusing to her.

"I'm not. I promise you she is going to jail. Apparently she had a hand in Paul's shooting and then she framed you for it. Everything is out there. She is fucked."

"Baby I'll call you back."

I hung up and quickly rushed to the lounge to get my laptop. I quickly turned on the mobile wifi router and fired up the laptop, one of the benefits of my new job. I tapped my foot impatiently as the laptop seemed to be taking longer than usual. Finally it opened and I went to my Facebook profile, I scrolled down the timeline but I couldn't find anything. I decided to go on twitter and my heart almost stopped when I saw Amanda trending at number one. The sun wasn't even out yet but people were already having a field day about this on social media.

I saw a tweet from a newspaper stating that Amanda had been arrested as a conspirator in an attempted murder case. They said the state has mounting evidence against her plus a witness. They did it. They really did it. I didnt have much hope when Lungelo said they'll prove my innocence but he was right, now all that's left is for the courts to make a decision.

I took my phone and called Lungelo. I know he is in Joburg with his brother but I needed to hear his voice. He picked up and his raspy, sleepy voice made some nerves in my body tingle.

"Hey, why are you up so early?" He asked.

"I.... Thank you." I wanted to say so much to him but I could only utter just two words. Important as they may be, but it felt like my body had gone into shock. I had prayed and hoped for so long that someone would believe in my innocence beyond my mother and my daughter, and now here is this man who didnt just believe me but went far and beyond just to make sure everyone else believes it too. Is he real or am I just imagining him?

"Now everyone will know the real truth. It might not bring back all those years you lost but it's a start right?" I wiped the tear that had decided to creep down my face. I know its not over yet, but it's close enough.

"Yeah, it's a start."

We spoke for a while before I hung up. I kept scrolling down twitter and reading the tweets and comments. Amanda wasn't just being dragged for filth but she was being annihilated. If the justice system would be left to social media she'd probably be sitting in an electric chair at this very moment.

I sat up for a while just getting lost in all the drama that was happening, what hurt though was seeing her screaming and crying, and even throwing in the occasional "you dont know who I am, I will sue you line". I'm pretty sure everyone knows who she is, and they know her family, but right now she was all alone while being dragged and paraded in front of the press. No Mashile was in sight to offer support or anything, I should know cause I went through the same thing, except with me, social media wasn't a thing back then so I was afforded a bit of that decency.

I got ready for work, but halfway through that process I decided to go home to see my mum, I wouldn't want her to hear about this from other people. I texted Bontle and told her not to tell her anything. I called my job and told them I wasn't feeling too good so I would stay home. I got dressed and took a taxi and went home.

By the time i got home my mum was in the house alone. She seemed pissed, I wonder what lie Bontle spun her for her to be this angry.

"Mama kaNomonde." I said as I walked into the house. She looked at me and turned back to the tv with her arms crossed across her chest. I gave her a peek on the cheek before sitting down.

"Do you know how much money I'm losing sitting here waiting g for you."

"I know mama, I'm sorry, but I did tell you, you dont have to work anymore."

"I like working Nomonde."

"I know. But I have news. Amanda has been arrested."

She looked at me with a blank expression on her face. I didn't know what was going on in her mind but my mother has never been silent for anything. When she gets good news she ululates and dances, and when it's sad news she cries or says a prayer. But not today, today she did neither of those things, I couldn't tell you if that was a good or bad thing.

"Am I a horrible person?" She asked after a long moment of silence. I looked at her trying to figure out where that question came from but I couldn't find anything. "Am I a horrible person for not feeling anything. I mean, my child is in jail, and might be there for possibly a long time and I, as her mother, I don't feel anything. I'm not sad or concerned. I just don't care."

If there's one thing my mother never does, it's to not care. She cares, about anything and everything. She cares about kids who have no one to provide for them that's why she has a bunch of kids at school that she gives free lunches to. She hides it by saying it's just leftover stock that shouldn't go to waste, she cares about the earth and the effects of global warming. She cares. Her not caring or feeling anything at all in my opinion, is never good.

"Maybe we should get her a lawyer." I muttered under my breath, half hoping she wouldn't hear me, but she did.

"She has her husband to take care of that Nomonde. I gave up on Amanda a long time ago. She made her bed, let her lay in it." She got up and picked up her wares and left.

I constantly went back onto social media throughout the day, not sure what to think, I guess a part of me was hoping that the story would change, but it

seemed to get worse the more I read. It was like taking a needle and poking it into my skin expecting a different outcome every time. But with every poke, blood comes out.

I waited for Bontle and my mum to come back home before I went back to my flat. The next morning I woke up unsure of what I should do. It was a Saturday and Lungelo was still in Joburg, I guess I should have just stayed at home. A crazy thought crossed my mind and I decided to follow through with it before I change my mind.

I booked a flight to Joburg with some of my savings. I packed an overnight bag and made my way to the airport. Three hours later I was landing in Joburg. Lungelo came to pick me up and immediately drove me to the police station where Amanda was being held. We drove in to an army of reporters on every side. We made it through and parked as close to the entrance as we could. We got in and I asked an

officer if I could see her, telling him i was her sister worked like a charm.

The officer led me to a room and told me to wait there. He left and came back after about five minutes with her. I looked at her and it was like looking into a deep dark hole. The sister I'd met a few days ago seemed to have dissapeared and in her place was this broken, forlorn soul. She had cuffs on her wrists and ankles.

"Why are you here Nomonde, to gloat?" She asked since I didn't know what to say to her. And the truth is I dont know why I'm here. I dont know why I just used my savings to get here, I dont know why I'm standing dead in the middle of this police station, I dont know why I'm here. Or maybe I do know, I'm just trying not to seem petty. I know I'm here to see for myself if all that I've read was true, I'm here to see what it's like to be the visitor and not the visited.

"I'm here to see for myself how the mighty Amanda plans on getting out of this mess. You've always been a slippery person, you fuck up and always get away with it. But this time it seems your luck has run out." She chuckled, took a seat and looked up at me.

"Enjoy it while it lasts sis, I wont be spending another night in this hellhole."

"That's funny, I said the same thing and then ended up spending fifteen years inside. Hopefully things go better for you. I'll keep you in my prayers."

"I dont need your prayers sis, I am Amanda Mashile, there's no way i will spend anymore time in here. Keep your prayers to yourself."

"Where's your lawyer? Shouldn't they be here strategizing a way to get you out?" She swallowed and unknowingly answered my unasked question.

"You dont have a lawyer do you? I hate to break it to you sis, you're on your own. Paul and his family arent coming to rescue you."

"I'm not you Nomonde. You experiences with them are yours, leave me out of that mess."

She turned to the officer standing by the door and he escorted her out. Her confidence is cute, but I know the Mashile's, the fact that there is no lawyer is a sign all on it's own. She is alone, and yet she still holds on to whatever little hope she still has. Crazy.

I walked out and got into the car, but not before some reporter spotted me. They came running soon as they saw me, lucky for me I was fast getting into the car. We tried to drive out carefully without driving over these reporters who were now clicking away with their blinding flashes and banging on the car.

We managed to get out and Lungelo drove me straight to a hotel. He ordered food and we sat down to eat.

"So hows your sister?"

"Arrogant as always. She thinks the Mashile's are

working on getting her out."

"She said that?"

"Not in so many words. She actually believes she wont sleep there tonight." He chuckles like he knows something I dont. "What's funny?"

"Your sister is not getting out Nomonde, not today, not ever. She wont even get bail."

"Okay how do you know this?"

"Since my brother has been working your case, he found the truth. But because he also has a vendetta with the Mashile's he needed a way to get to them and hitting them where it hurts the most. Amanda is just the first step in a carefully thought out plan to bring that family to its knees." He threw an olive in his mouth like he didnt just drop the biggest bomb on me.

"So your brother did all this?"

"Not necessarily. Just some other dangerous people who also have a problem with that family. And unfortunately for them, these people dont play."

I sat back on the couch and looked at the TV where the news was on. Amanda's story was the leading headline on almost all the news, if Amanda really did set me up, then maybe she does deserve all that's coming her way. And maybe the Mashile's deserve the same kind of hell they put me through over the years. I hope these people Lungelo and his brothers have teamed up with not only destroy that family but I pray they they teach them that isn't the be all end all of life.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWENTY EIGHT

When it rains it pours, that's what the learned people of the world say when things go from bad to worse. And for the Mashile's it wasn't just pouring, there was thunder and lightning to boot.

After a few days in jail with no visitors or any hope of getting out, Amanda had begun to lose hope. Paul hadn't come to see her and it seemed like the Mashile's had no plans to help her. Her one last attempt at getting out was Malcolm. But he had been avoiding her calls. She reached out to a friend of hers whom she convinced to bring her her laptop and phone from home. The friend did just that.

It felt like Amanda's world had come crashing down around her when she realized all the leverage she

held against Malcolm was gone. All the videos of him having affairs with different men were no longer where she kept them. In fact nothing was there. Not her pictures, not her children's pictures or even anything that was important to her.

She called Malcolm one last time and he promised he would come see her. True to his word he had showed up late in the night with the help of a contact inside the police station. He waited in a room and Amanda was brought in. She looked like a former shadow of herself. Her long weave was gone, now replaced with unkempt dry hair. Her skin had become a tad bit drier than usual.

"You need to get me out of here." She said soon as she saw Malcolm.

"You know I dont have the means or the power to do that."

"Then get me a lawyer. Dont forget I can still make your life difficult even from in here." Malcolm

laughed and sat on top of the table.

"No you cant. I know whatever pictures or videos you had on me are gone. You have no hold on me now." She swallowed at the realization that her last card was useless.

"Maybe, but imagine what the world will say when I tell them that you helped me to cover up your own brothers shooting. That you actually helped me get close enough to him that we fell in love."

"Come on Amanda, you didnt fall in love with Paul, you fell in love with the convenience of being with him, the doors it opened for you, the opportunities and the money. And now the train ride has come to an end. And if you think anyone will believe you then go right ahead and you'll have more than attempted murder charges to deal with." He whistled as he walked out leaving her there alone with no one in her corner.

She was dragged back into her cell. She stayed up in the cold cell with her legs raised up to her chest and

tears rolling down her face. It was all over. The life she had created for herself had gone down the drain in just a few days. And she knew she couldn't even count on her own family for help because she had burned that bridge a long time ago.

On Sunday the country woke up to a scandal that would shake not only the country to its core but it would bring the country's leadership into question. The pictures that Amanda and Malcolm had thought were gone forever were now splashed all over the Sunday tabloids. Videos of Malcolm having sex with other men were trending on social media.

Lesego woke up to find his wife in the kitchen with the newspaper on the counter. He looked over her shoulder to see what she was looking at. He quickly grabbed the newspaper and looked at it.

"Tell me how you plan on sorting that out." Lebo said as she poured herself some tea. She looked at her

husband who was fuming. He took out his phone from his pyjama pocket and called his mother.

"Have you read the news." He questioned soon as his mother picked up the phone.

"No, what's happening?"

"You need to call Malcolm and ask him to come to the house. I'll be there in a few minutes."

He threw the newspaper in the trash and went to his room to get dressed. He came down a few minutes later and rushed out. He got into his car and drove to his mother's house where the rest of the family had assembled. Malcolm sat on the couch with his head down. His wife was on the other side of the room throwing daggers at him.

"Explain!" Lesego said standing in front of his brother. Silence engulfed the room and everyone turned to look at Malcolm who couldn't even bring his head up to face his family. He felt ashamed. Not

for his choices but for the embarrassment this would cause his family. For the past few days he had been trying to master up enough courage to let his family know about this, but unfortunately for him, someone had beat him to it, and he didnt even know who it was.

Mrs Mashile dragged Lesego away from Malcolm.

"We need to figure out who did this?" His mother said.

"Why would anyone even feel the need to do this."

"Maybe Khoza was right. What if the Biyela's are after us?" She asked while pacing up and down.

"Why though. That's the part I don't understand. Why would they want to come after us?"

"That's the million dollar question."

Lesego tried to get as much information as he could from his contacts but nobody seemd to have the answers he needed. He left his mother's house and

went looking for Khanya. He had found out from one of his contacts that he was at a restaurant in town. He drove there and sure enough Khanya was there. But he wasn't alone. He was there with his wife Zola, Philani and his wife Landokuhle. They were sitting together laughing and chatting like old friends.

He walked up to them and the mood immediately changed. Khanya looked at him with a smirk on his face, he looked like the cat that got the milk. He greeted. He looked at both man and he wasn't sure who it was between them that could have done this to him and his family.

"Radebe, can we talk."

"That's my cue, let me go to the ladies room." Lando said getting up.

"I think I'll join you." Zola said. The ladies left and went to the bathroom oblivious to the tension they just left behind. Lesego grabbed a chair and sat down.

"Please tell me you had nothing to do with this or so help me God you will regret it for the rest of your miserable life." He grumbled under his breath looking at Khanya.

"Actually....."

"Stay out of this Biyela, it doesnt involve you." He told Philani. Philani just sat back on his chair and crossed his arms.

"Actually he has everything to do with this." Khanya corrected him. "Sure I could have made your life a living hell after finding out about your brothers little secrets, but in my opinion, that wouldn't have been enough for you to feel the kind of pain you've inflicted on others over the years, I needed someone to make sure even the next generation of the Mashile's feel this pain. And that is where Biyela comes in."

Lesego turned to look at Philani who had a smile on his face. So his mother was right. The Biyela's were coming after him. And clearly they weren't holding

back.

"Why?" Lesego asked Philani.

"Simple. For my son." Philani answered with hatred and anger burning in his eyes.

"Your son? What do I have to do with that?" He asked hoping that this was just a nightmare. Philani came forward and rested his balled up fists on the table.

"You can play ignorant all you want Lesego but I know the truth. See it would have been easier to forgive if this was just another accident, but the lengths you went to, to hide the truth is what brought us here today. Your wife killed my son and you helped cover it up. And for that I will never forgive you."

The ladies came back and sat down. The tension around the table seemed to get thicker and thicker. And the ladies could feel it.

"Thank you for your time gentlemen." Lesego said standing up to leave.

"Lesego, I'm having a dinner party at our house tonight, it would mean the world to me if you and Lebo would come." Lando said.

"Baby I'm sure Lesego is busy with all the family drama going on." Philani uttered without looking at his wife. But his eyes were glued to Lesego.

"Which is exactly why they need this dinner. To get their mind of things and just enjoy the company of friends." Lando argued.

"It would be an honor for us to come Mrs Biyela." Lesego uttered. "Goodbye." He turned around and walked out.

He got to his car and called his long trusted friend and confidant Kaizer.

"I need you in Joburg by tonight. I have someone I need you to take out." He hung up and drove away. His pride, although bruised and battered was still intact. He refused to let anyone come for his family. And his go to response has always been to defend by attacking, and the first shots had been fired his

way. Now it was time for him to fight back.



NOMONDE

"Its rude to stare Nomonde." I smiled and just looked at this person laying next to me. He seemed like a figment of my own imagination but he was real and he was right here next to me, ready to love me.

"Well if you weren't so handsome I wouldn't have to stare." I answered and he smiled revealing his dimple that has seemed to become my weakness. He wasnt just kind and caring but he was honest and never afraid to say what he feels. He was patient with me and my healing yet still holding my hand at every turn.

He turned to look at me and his red, just woke up from his sleep eyes tingled every part of my body. I pulled myself closer to him and kissed him. I'm not sure if it was shock or fear but he didnt kiss me back. I held on for a few seconds hoping he would reciprocate but he didnt. My bruised ego was ready to pull back when he turned me over and pinned me on the bed and kissed the living daylights out of me.

His kiss ignited fires in me I thought had long turned to ashes. His touch on every part of my body left little fires burning, but it was his touch between my legs that sent my brain and body into a tizz. I found myself wriggling under him and wanting more than just a kiss. Instead he got up.

"What's wrong?" I asked nervously.

"Nothing's wrong. You said you need to go see your sister before you leave. Go bath. Dont finish the hot water." I got up and made my way to the bathroom and got under a cold shower. Even when she is not

here Amanda still manages to spoil my fun. Maybe not today though, but one of these good days I'll get my happy ending.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

TWENTY NINE

I've never seen my sister like this. Even at her 'lowest' she was never this sad and forlorn. Seeing her was like looking at a horror movie main character. In the past couple of days alone she'd lost weight, I could even see the bones around her neck popping out. Her hair was dry and messy, for the first time since this whole thing started I was glad mum wasn't here to see her daughter like this.

"Say what you came to say Nomonde and leave." I opened my mouth to say something, anything, but I couldn't. I didn't know what to say. I had practiced all I wanted to say to her on my way here, but now that I was standing in front of her I couldn't utter a single word. "Cat got your tongue?" She said and pulled up a chair. She sat down and looked at me.

"I'm sorry Amanda."

"Excuse me?"

"I'm sorry. I dont know what I ever did to you, I dont know why you'd hate me so much." She chuckled and played with the cuffs on her wrists.

"Dont flatter yourself sis wam. Not everything revolves around you."

"Amanda, you set me up to take the fall for a crime I didnt commit, I spent years in jail going through things you wouldn't even dream about. If this was your way of punishing me then I'll give you a ten over ten, you passed with distinction. You didnt just punish me you broke me and shattered my soul, and to this day I still dont know why you would hate me that much. You're my twin sister, we might not be identical but we are still sisters at the end of the day, you're supposed to be my God given best friend, instead you chose to be my enemy." I wiped the tears that had somehow freed themselves from my eyes and ran down my cheeks. "I forgive you. I hope

you find peace in your heart and actually learn to see beyond your hatred for me, cause look where you are now, your children are now going to grow up without a mother, although they are lucky they got a few more years with you than Bontle did with me."

I got up and made my way to the door. I stopped and turned to look at her. Even though her back was turned I noticed her lifting her hand and wiping away a tear. The sister in me wanted to hold her in my arms and tell her everything would be okay, but I couldn't. Cause I knew nothing would be okay, for her anyways. I've walked this path and I know the hurt and pain that's waiting on the other side, I just hope she is stronger than me and can handle whatever comes her way. I hope my mother still prays for her just as much as she prayed for me cause she will need those prayers.

I opened the door and walked out of there with my head held high. For the first time in a long long time I

can walk in a police station and not feel judged or feel like a criminal. I got out and went to Lungelo who was waiting for me by the side of his car. He opened the car door for me and I got in. He got in on the other side and looked at me.

"Your eyes are red. What happened?" I took a deep breath and laughed. I didn't know what else to do except laugh. I've spent years shedding tears that laughing seemed like the appropriate response at this time. It felt good to just breathe, to know that my life was back to being on track. This might not be the end goal but it sure as hell was the first step to whatever freedom and happiness looks like. And I was ready for it.

"Let's go have lunch before my flight." Lungelo smiled and started the car. We drove to Melrose Arch. As we walked into the restaurant hand in hand we bumped into Lesego and his mother. She stopped and looked at me like she wanted to say

something but she couldn't say it. I pulled Lungelo into the restaurant and left them standing there like they were struck by lightning.

We had our lunch while talking and laughing. Bontle called me while I was eating and soon as I told her I was with Lungelo I apparently stopped being important to her cause all she wanted to do was speak to him. They spoke for a while and as loud and carefree as Bontle is, I didnt want Lungelo to feel like he has an obligation towards her just because he says he loves me, but the mother in me knows I could never be with a man who couldn't love my child like his own. It would be pointless really.

But it seems I had nothing to worry about because Bontle and Lungelo got along very well. He seemed to enjoy talking to her too, he didn't seem forced or pressured to interact with her and I was grateful for that.

After speaking to her he got up to go to the loo. I was busy playing candy crush on his phone when I sensed someone sitting across from me. At first I thought it was him but when I looked up it was Mrs Mashile. She was looking at me wearing guilt and shame on her face like makeup.

"That seat is taken." I said after a long while of awkwardly staring at each other.

"I know. Can we talk?" She asked clasping her handbag tightly.

"You're already sitting down so you might as well say what you want to say." A huge part of me wasn't afraid of her anymore, but a tiny part still felt like she could make my life miserable if she wanted to, but I would hope somewhere in that cold heart of hers she still had a conscience, and knowing what she knows now there is no reason for her to be hostile towards me, but you can never confirm a person.

"I do believe we owe you an apology." She uttered

the words like they were a bitter plant she was forced to endure.

"For what?" As much as I knew why she was 'apologizing' I still felt like I should ask anyway.

"For everything we did to you. Amanda confessed to everything. From faking Bontle's DNA tests to shooting Paul. She admitted to everything."

"I'm still failing to see how that has anything to do with me."

"Look I know we are probably the last people you want to talk to, but I'm truly sorry Nomonde, you didnt deserve half the shit we put you through, neither did Bontle."

"You know I wish sorry was truly a magic word. The way people fuck up and then come back with sorry as if it erases everything."

"I know it wont bring back the years you've spent in jail but....."

"But nothing. Sorry is not going to do a damn thing Mrs Mashile, it wont bring back the years I spent in

jail, it won't erase the trauma I went through because of you and your sons, it wont give Bontle back the years she spent without her mother. Your sorries mean absolutely nothing to me. I spent fifteen years behind bars for a crime I didnt commit. And your son made sure a five year sentence became the longest time of my life and you think a simple sorry will erase all of that?" I saw Lungelo walking over to us on the corner of my eye.

"Babe, you ready to go?" I stood up and took our things and walked out.

When we got to the parking lot Lesego was in his car and watching us. For the first time in a very long time my heartbeat did not escalate at just the mere sight of him. Whatever hold this family had had on me seems to have dissapeared and honestly it felt so good to have the upper hand for a change.



PHILANI

Lando loves throwing dinner parties, or just parties in general. I don't like people in my space but all these dinner parties usually consists of our closest friends and family so I'm cool with that. Lesego has also come to these dinners a few times before, it was always nice whenever we met up, actually making friends outside the cartel was great.

A few years ago my friends and I decided to quit the cartel and all it comes with, well to the outside world we quit but we knew better. You never quit the cartel, once you're in, it's a lifetime commitment. We just figured out a way to run it from the shadows.

For the longest time I was enjoying being a normal businessman, I enjoyed going to work and coming home to a house full of chaos and noise. As crazy as this may sound that noise was the fuel that kept me going, it drove me to want to be a better husband

and father every single day of my life.

Everything was going well, my wife was happy and my kids were happier. It seemed like having a present mum and dad gave my kids more joy than I could imagine. Until one cold night that will forever be etched in my memory, and nothing will ever wipe that away.

Two years ago Lando went to my dad's place to pick up the kids. I was supposed to do it but I got held up at work. She offered to go get the kids. I didn't think much of it until I got a call while in the middle of a meeting with some overseas clients that Lando's car was in an accident. I got up and drove like a maniac to the scene of the accident.

Lando's car was laying on its side with another SUV not too far from it. The police and paramedics were already pulling them out one by one. The driver of the other SUV had already been rushed to hospital,

not that I cared at that moment, all i wanted was to make sure my family was okay. Liyema was the first to be pulled out, he was bruised but he was okay, he wasnt even crying, I wasnt sure at the time if it was shock or it was just him thinking he is a big boy, at four years old he thought he was a teenager, I guess that's how all last borns behave.

Lakhiwe was pulled out next, she had a few more cuts and bruises than her brother, her hello kitty sweater was bloody and cut. I thought to myself at the time I have to get her another one of those cause they were her favourite. Anothe was next, she was screaming and fighting, my little fighter, she was freaked out I could tell. She only calmed down when she saw me. It took some convincing for her to go into the ambulance. But she did, and I stood there waiting for Theo and Lisakhanya. Theo eventually got out. He had a cut across his jaw, I knew it would leave a scar, but I didn't care, he was okay,that's all that mattered to me.

Lando was eventually pulled out. She had a broken leg, cuts and bruises on her arm and another cut on her head. I've never been a praying person but that night I prayed. I didn't know where the words came from but they came. All I asked God was for him to spare my wife and kids, if this was punishment for all the things I've done I'll gladly bear my cross, as long as my kids and wife are safe. Lando's wounds were so severe she had to be airlifted to hospital. I told them which hospital to take her to, then I called Nate and he told me he was there already, Buli, Faith and Taki were already there too with the kids.

As soon as Lando was out the firefighter's started to push the car so it would stand back up. I didn't see Lisakhanya being pulled out so I went closer to the car. It was empty. A part of me had hoped that Lisakhanya wasn't in the car because he had stayed behind at my dad's, but when I asked the firefighters they told me a kid was airlifted to hospital before I showed up.

I didnt need anything else I just got into my car and drove to the hospital. I quickly rushed in and found my friends in the waiting room. It was dead silent except for some sniffing. I couldn't tell where it came from and quite frankly I didn't care, i just wanted to see my family. Sizwe walked over to me when he saw me, his eyes were red.

"What's going on? How are the kids?" They all turned to look at me and all of them had tears in their eyes. If there is one thing you will never see is some tough ass thugs in suits shedding tears, but that day I saw it. None of them could tell me what was going on so I decided to go find Nate, maybe he knows what's going on.

I bumped into him and another doctor in the hallway. I rushed to him and asked him about my kids. He was red, the one thing about white people's skin, sometimes it shows their emotions before they can tell you. Nate was red and his eyes were blood shot

red like he was crying. I asked about my family and he gave me updates on everyone and how they were doing. In the back of my mind I was thanking God for answering my prayers, until Nate said seven words that will haunt me until the day I die.

"I'm sorry bro, Lisakhanya didn't make it." I felt like the earth was moving at a fast speed at that moment, I could feel the axis tilting, but it wasn't the earth's axis, it was mine. It felt like my world had just lost balance. I dropped down to my knees and wailed. I didn't care who saw me or heard me, I was hurt. My son was gone, this wasn't the deal I made with God. He was supposed to punish me not my kid.

Telling Lando was the hardest thing I'd ever done. After seeing Lisakhanya's dead body in the morgue, the realist in me knew he couldn't have survived a glass that was shoved into his head by the impact. He was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. The doctor's managed to pull out the glass from his

head but it was so far into his brain that chances of him surviving were slim to none, even if he did make it he would have been a vegetable for the rest of his life. The father in me felt like the latter would have been better. I would have taken care of him. As long as he was alive, but God clearly thought different.

I was angry. So angry I went after the driver of the other car. When we saw him he didn't look like he was in an accident. He literally walked out of the hospital on his own two feet while my son left in a body bag. That made me even angrier. My friends and I went looking for him. We found him and made sure he too got in a body bag. And now I find out we got the wrong person.

Lesego might not be a friend but he is an acquaintance, business wise we run in the same circles, his wife is even friends with Lando, she was there when we were mourning, she comforted my wife as a friend, I was truly grateful for her presence

and her countless prayer sessions. But now to find out all that was a lie, their caring, their comfort and prayers were all a lie.

I've been angry since Khanya told me the truth. But I was more angry at myself for not digging deeper then, i could have ended this a long time ago, but i guess everything has its time. And Lesego's time has come, together with his wife and whoever played a role in covering up my son's murder, they will pay.

And this time, I'll make sure I get the right person.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTY

Preparations are underway for a dinner party at the Biyela home in Fourways. Landokuhle is busy making sure the catering team she hired is on top of things. Since she had invited too many people she decided to get some help instead of doing everything herself, but she still has to make sure everything is up to her standards.

Once she is sure everything is in order she rushes up to her room to get ready. She decided on a formal theme for tonight. She does her makeup as quickly as possible. Sue takes out a long, off the shoulder black dress with a high slit and a sweetheart neckline. She adds some diamante stud earrings and a simple bracelet with a matching pendant necklace. She finishes off her look with a pair of red strappy heels.

"You know I hit the jackpot when I married you."
Philani says wrapping his arms around Lando's waist and kisses her.

"You can say that again." She chuckles and turns around to look at her husband. She notices when he smiles, the smile doesn't make it to his eyes, and these past few days that has been a constant occurrence.

She's noticed that he seems distant at times and sometimes his mind wanders off. Although she's been waiting for him to tell her what's wrong, she also knows if it's too serious it's unlikely he will tell her.

"What's going on? You haven't been yourself lately."
He lets her go and walks to the bed where he takes a seat. He rests his elbows on his thighs and buries his head on his hands, unable to face his wife, but knowing he has to tell her the truth. The days of

laughing and smiling with her child's killer needs to end.

"I have to tell you something." She walks closer to him and stands between his legs. He looks up, holds her waist and sits her on his lap.

"Tell me."

"It's about Lisakhanya." Hearing her son's name makes her fidget on his lap but he holds her tighter. He knows how hard she's had to work to get past the accident and actually breathe, and Lebo had a lot to do with that. Lando holds her in high regard. As much as her friends were there and supportive, she knew they were also in pain. They had loved Lisakhanya and treated him like their own. They too had lost a son, maybe their pain wouldn't amount to Lando's but they were still hurting, so having someone who was outside of their circle be a shoulder to cry on for her was something she needed, but now he has to burst that bubble. And for a while he has been debating whether to tell her or

not, but seeing as things might just get out of hand soon, he figured she deserves to know.

"What about him?"

"Remember I told you we got the person responsible?" She nods her head. "Well, we made a mistake. Somehow in the midst of everything that was going on, we didnt do a thorough investigation into the accident....."

"Baby please just get to the point. Our guests will be here soon."

"Right. The person who was driving the car that hit you wasnt just some random driver."

"I know he was a Mashile driver, that's why they came to apologize, or have you forgotten?"

"It wasn't a driver Lando, it was Lebo. Lebo was driving the car that night. The driver was just a cover up." She gets up from his lap and looks at him.

"Since when do you not like Lebo?"

"What?"

"You cant make up a story like that Philani, Lebo wouldn't kill my child then turn around and comfort me. No ways."

"Well she did. Lesego helped her cover up everything. He paid off paramedics, doctors, cops, everyone really."

"Philani, ngyakcela, don't do this. Not tonight."

"This is why I didn't want you to invite Lesego. He knows the truth."

She sits down next to her husband and her mind goes back to everything that's happened the past couple of years. How the Mashile's, inspite of them not really being close to the Biyela's had showed up for her in her time of need. They had been here everyday to help and offer prayers. That's how she had gotten close to Lebo.

At that moment it felt like her heart had been ripped apart all over again. Just when she thought she'd

mourned her son and was slowly learning to live without him, this happens. It felt like she was starting the grieving process all over again. They heard a knock on the door and Buli spoke from the other side of the door.

"Guys we are here, come down." She said before they heard her clicking heels fade away.

"I'll go tell them to go home." Philani says getting up and walking towards the door.

"No don't. Unless you're going to eat all that food then dinner goes ahead." Lando utters before getting up from the bed. She goes to the mirror and wipes the tears that were now falling. She fixed herself and walked towards her husband. "Your suit is in the closet, take a quick shower and come down. Our guests are waiting." She kissed him on the cheek and walked out.

Just as she was walking down the stairs she noticed that Lebo and Lesego were here already. Lebo was

having a fire conversation with the ladies, judging from the laughter that came from the little corner they were holed up in. She looked over at the guys and they were all sitting in the lounge, drinks in hand and saying nothing. She saw the daggers that were being thrown Lesego's way and it confirmed what Philani had said. A few minutes ago she didn't want to believe that Philani was telling the truth. But seeing his friends confirmed everything to her.

She got to the bottom of the stairs and grabbed a drink from the table and walked towards the guys.

"Gentlemen, so glad you could make it." She said with the biggest smile she could give. Nate got up first and gave her a hug. She greeted all the others and she noticed they were trying to get her away from Lesego. But she had other ideas. She hugged him last, much to the annoyance of the others. She left them there and went to her friends.

She hugged her friends and sipped her drink, the

whole time looking at Lebo and trying so hard not to let her feelings show, even though she wanted to poke her eyes out and watch her bleed on the ground she knew better, she knew her husband had a plan and he would take care of everything.

Philani came down and they all sat down at the table. Lando made sure to sit next to Lebo. They had a light conversation as they ate the starter, everyone couldn't stop talking about how amazing it was. The main dish was served, since everyone loved meat, steak was the best choice.

While the knives and forks were the only sound being made as everyone ate, no one had anticipated the screams that came from Lebo as Lando stuck a steak knife into her hand. Blood was gushing from her wound but Lando shoved the knife deeper into her hand till it reached the surface of the table.

Lesego quickly got up and pulled out his gun and

aimed it at Lando. The guys pulled out their guns and pointed them at Lesego.

"Let go of her Lando." Lesego uttered while his wife cried in pain trying to pull her hand away with no luck.

"You lied to me." Lando whispered under her breath, starring at Lebo. "You killed my son." Her friends gasped. "You killed my son and then you comforted me, how cruel can you be."

"I'm sorry." Lebo muttered.

"How does sorry fix this? You killed my son then turned around and wormed your way into my life. Why? What did I ever do to you? Why would you want to hurt me like that?"

"Please, I'm sorry."

"Baby let her go." Philani said holding her hand and getting her away from her.

"Get them out of my house." Lando said. She let go of the knife and rushed upstairs with her friends following behind her.

Lesego helped his wife and walked her out of the house with the guys behind them, making sure they leave. They drove off.



NOMONDE

Love lives here, well maybe not love just yet but happiness definitely lives here. Since the truth is now out in the open it feels like a whole load has been lifted off my shoulders.

Lungelo jumped back on the couch after his phone call and got under the blanket. He decided to fly back with me and instead of taking me to my place we came to his place. As weird as our relationship is right now, it's one thing I'm grateful for, it's nice to have someone to talk to without feeling like I am burdening them. With my mum I can talk to her

about anything and everything but sometimes I feel like I am piling up a whole lot of things on her that she doesn't need to deal with.

"Wanna hear some gossip?" He asks as he grabs a handful of popcorn.

"Sure."

"That was my brother on the phone. Apparently he just watched Lesego get a taste of what's coming his way."

"What do you mean?"

"Let's just say Lesego and his family are about to feel pain like never before, and tonight was just the beginning."

"You do know you aren't telling me anything." He laughs.

"Uthand'indaba (you like news.)" This man. He started this gossip, unprovoked but now he won't tell me anything. Mxm.

We sit and watch the movie just talking and laughing about anything and everything. Being around him is quite refreshing. Even though I haven't known him that long I can confidently say I enjoy his company. And maybe a full blown relationship wouldn't be so bad after all.

My phone rings and my mum's name flashes across the screen. I pick up.

"MamakaNomonde." I can feel her smile on the phone.

"Monde, when are you coming home?"

"What's wrong?"

"I got a call from that demon you call an ex, apparently he wants to talk about Bontle." Eh! The audacity of this man.

"I hope you told him to go burn in hell."

"Mxm, I told him if he ever sets foot in my house I'll burn him with boiling water." I laughed cause as

sweet as my mum can be she is a fighter, and she can actually do this.

"Good. I dont want him anywhere near my child."

"Yes. Anyways I just wanted to let you know so when you find out he is dead or in hospital it will be because he trespassed into my home. Bye bye, let me sleep." She hangs up. I look at Lungelo and he is looking at me, curiosity all over his face.

"So apparently Paul wants to talk to my mother about Bontle." He clicks his tongue and looks back at the TV.

"That man needs to grow some balls. Besides, he needs to stay away from Bontle, she cant be caught in whatever mess is coming for his godforsaken family."

He keeps talking about something that's coming to the Mashile's. This is the second time he's mentioned it tonight. I wonder what they have

planned for them. I could ask him but clearly he's not ready to tell me so I'll just wait. But whatever it is that they have planned, I pray it brings those people back to earth.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTY ONE

I am anxious and excited all at the same time. Khanya has finally applied for my criminal record to be expunged. Now that the case has officially been opened and Amanda confessed, it means I can get my life back. And to be honest it still feels like a dream. I didnt think that things would work out so quickly for me. I mean its barely been a year since I came put of prison and things are looking up. I guess its true what mama always says 'when the time is right, the Lord will make a way.' And boy has he come through, he didnt just make a way he made an entire highway.

Today I am going home. I havent spent time with my family for a while so I decided this week will be family time. Plus I just got paid for this month and my account hasn't seen this much money in a long

while. So I decided I will treat my mum and daughter to a bit of a shopping spree.

I packed up my things soon as the clock hit three o'clock. It's time to go home. I'm super excited. I said goodbye to my colleagues and made my way out to the parking lot. As usual Lungelo was already waiting next to his car. I walk over to him and he hugs me. He smells divine.

"Shouldn't you be at work?" I ask as I pull out of the hug.

"The Joy's of being a businessman, I can be wherever, whenever. You ready to go?"

"Yep. I cant wait to see Bontle and my mum." He takes my laptop bag and puts it in the boot before opening the door for me to get in. He gets in and we drive off. In my head I thought we were going home but it seems he had other ideas. We drove into a mall and he parked.

"What are we doing here?"

"You can't go home empty handed babe." He gets off the car and I follow suit. Every day I learn something new about him, and recently i learnt he is stubborn. I figured it's useless even arguing with him so I get out of the car and follow him. We get to pick n pay and he starts filling up the trolley.

"That's a bit too much dont you think?" I ask as he throws two 5kg chicken portions into the trolley. In my head I'm already calculating how much all this will cost, but I figure I will leave somethings at the till. Yes I got paid but I still need to stick to the budget. He keeps adding anything and everything he can find. It's quite weird and funny at the same time cause he keeps adding things that arent necessarily basic essentials. Instead he adds snacks and sweets, cheese, polony and cereals. Well those are essentials but still.

We get to the tills and I start taking out the basics cause I'm not about to spend on unnecessary things just because, not yet anyway. Soon as my life is back on track I'll be able to spoil my mum and daughter with anything and everything they want. As soon as I am sure I've taken everything I can pay for he takes the rest of the things and gives them to the cashier to scan. And my protests fall on deaf ears cause even the cashier has stopped listening to me, her focus is now on Lungelo. She is crushing hard. I decide to step aside and let them be. Everything gets up to five thousand and he pays.

We walk out to the parking and he packs everything in the boot. We go back to the mall and head to Mr Price. I'm pretty sure Mr Price doesn't have his style of clothing but let's see. He goes past the men's section and heads to the shoe section, women's shoes even. I'm in a mild state of shock really cause right now I am just an observer. He takes a pair of boots and looks at their sizes till he gets the size he wants.

"Ok so when did you start wearing women's boots?"

He laughs.

"These aren't mine babe, they are Bontle's."

"Wait what?" I'm not sure how I feel about this.

"Yeah, she said she likes them so I'm getting them for her." We go to the pay points to pay and along the way he picks some more things. He pays and we leave. We get into the car and off we go.

We get home and it's already dark. We unload everything into the house and mums side eyes aren't missed at all. Lungelo says his goodbyes and I walk him out.

"You do know you don't have to buy my daughter things for her to like you." I say soon as we get to his car.

"Oh I know that. I know she likes me. Besides, I don't do things for her to like me, that would be weird."

Anyways, let me know when you come to Durban so I can drive you back." I was about to say he didnt need to but I've also learned he gets offended everytime I say no to him doing something for me.

I stand on my tippy toes and give him a kiss before he drives off. I got back into the house and these two are looking at me funny.

"Please dont look at me like that." They high five each other and laugh. Mxm, and here I was thinking only one of them was a teenager. After teasing me we go to the kitchen and finish up cooking. We eat and I give Bontle her parcel. She screams for joy then calls Lungelo to thank him. I didnt even know she had his number.

"Where did you get Lungelo's number?"

"He gave it to me, he said if I ever need anything I should call him." She says going through her phone.

"So you asked him for the boots?"

"No, I actually posted those on my status. I didnt know he'd get them." Mhm. He seems to be full of surprises.

We woke up the next day and off we went to town. We shopped and had lunch before I called Lungelo and told him we were done. He came and picked us up. We drove home and to my surprise when we got there, there was a couple of cars parked outside the gate. There was no question of who they belonged to cause the Mash 10 and Mash 7 license plates gave it away. I got out of the car and opened the gate for Lungelo to drive in.

He drove in and the queen of Sheba got out and walked towards me as I closed the gate. If you didnt know better you'd think she was headed to the Durban July. Her little puppy was behind her looking like he was hit by lightning. My mum came down from the car and came towards us with Lungelo and

Bontle behind her.

"Nilahlekile (are you lost)?" My mum asked soon as she reached the gate.

"I know we are probably the last people you want to see but we come in peace." Mrs Mashile said taking off her huge sunglasses.

"Keep your peace mfazi, we dont need it. Get into that fancy car of yours and go back to where you came from." I could see mum was upset. But I was honestly curious about what it is they wanted to say.

"Ma, I think we should hear them out. I'm curious to hear this." I said and she didnt look pleased at all. But she nodded her head so I opened the gate and let them in.

We went to the house and they followed behind us. My mum sat down in her favourite chair looking at them.

"Bontle, go to your room baby." She grabbed her

phone and went to her room. "Speak." I said looking back at these people who've somehow doubled in number.

"Can we talk to the family without any outsiders." Mrs Mashile said looking at Lungelo.

"Kukwami la! Anizongtshela loko. Khulumani, nithe nifuna ukukhuluma. (This is my house, you won't tell me that. Speak, you said you wanted to talk." My mum said. Mrs Mashile cleared her throat and opened her handbag. She took out a stack of notes and put it on the coffee table.

"Yin lena?" Mum asked.

"A peace offering. We know what we did to your family, especially your daughter and granddaughter is shameful, but we just want to make things right." Mum laughed and clapped her hands. I looked over at Lungelo and he had his eyes on Paul. I'm not sure if Paul having his head down was because of Lungelo's stare or just his own guilt.

"Yoh, nine nicabanga ukuthi umhlaba ngowenu. (You

think this world is yours.) You think money solves everything. After all the shit you put my daughter through you think you can just come here, throw money at us and we will forget? Niyedelela nina." She gets up and heads to the kitchen. And before we know it the kettle is boiling.

"I think you should leave."

"Not until we speak about my daughter." Paul says finally looking up.

"You have a daughter in this house?" Lungelo's voice bellows and fills the whole room.

"Stay out of this Radebe. It doesnt involve you." Paul answered.

"Nomonde told you to leave but you are still here. Leave?"

They chuckle and sit back on the couch. I guess they have no intention of leaving. Mum comes back from the kitchen with a jug filled with boiling water.

"Didn't Nomonde tell you to leave? You have five seconds to get off my couch and get out."

"Ma, please." Paul says getting down on his knees.

"I will boil you. I'm warning you." She counts down from five and they realize she isn't playing. They get up and walk out. Mum follows them with the jug still in hand.

Lungelo gets up and holds her back and leads her back into the house. Bontle comes rushing out and follows them. We get up and head out.

"Why?" Bontle asks and they turn around. "Why are you here?" Paul walks over to her but she takes a step back and he stops. "I want to know why you are here? You think everything will be forgotten just because you have money to throw around."

"Of course not nana, we know we messed up....."

"Messed up? You left me in the street like some unwanted child being dropped off at the orphanage.

You left and never looked back, you didnt care if I had food to eat or clothes to wear and you show up here like nothing happened. Why? What gives you that right?"

"Sweetie, you are still a child, you wont understand." Mrs Mashile answers. Bontle just chuckles and walks closer to her. I know as her mother I should stop this and protect her but I also feel like she has been waiting a long time to say all this and get it out of her chest so I just let her be.

"You really do think the world revolves around you, don't you? I might be a child but I know what a fucked up family you are and I will never be a part of it. So when you walk out that gate, make sure you never come back here. Ever!" She spits on the ground and turns and walks back into the house.

I follow her and find her in her room with her headphones on. I get on the bed and bring her in for a hug. As strong as my baby is she still has a heart and I can tell she is hurting. I know it wasnt easy for

her growing up without any of her parents around. I'm pretty sure it must have hurt even more knowing who her family is, how lavish they lived while she had to struggle. Yes she might never have gone to bed hungry or never had shoes but still, I'm sure it still hurt not having the luxuries that her cousins had.

I held her in my arms while she cried. I knew there was nothing I could say to her to make her feel better so I just let her be. She fell asleep after a while. I laid her down on the bed and put a blanket over her and walked to the lounge. Lungelo got up as soon as he saw me.

"How is she? Is she okay?" I sat down on the couch and he did the same.

"She'll be fine."

"I should have burned those idiots." Mum said while sipping on her tea.

"Dont worry yourself too much ma, their time is

already here. That family will know what karma is soon. I should get going." He got up and shook mums hand. I walked him out to his car.

"What did you mean by what you said about the Mashile's. And this isnt the first time you've alluded to something terrible happening to them. And dont tell me it's nothing to worry about."

"Well, Khanya and some friends are on a mission to make them pay for a whole lot of things. And part of those things is the death of my father. We think they had a hand in it."

"Well they deserve whatever is coming."

"Yeah. Let me know how Bontle is. Better yet I'll come pick you up tomorrow then I'll see for myself." I nodded my head and gave him a hug.

It's crazy how overprotective he is of her. He drove off and I went back into the house. I sat down and poured myself a cup of tea.

"He seems like a good man." Mum says while staring at the TV.

"He is."

"I like him. Maybe I'll give him a chance after all." I smiled and sipped my tea. I guess now that he has won over the queen of my heart we can proceed with her blessings. My phone beeped and when I looked at it, it was a message from an unknown number.

'I'm coming for my child.'

I didn't need a sangoma to tell me who the message was from. I just didn't know how he got my number. But if he thinks he'll just waltz in here with his family's money and play daddy to my child he has another thing coming.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTY TWO

I couldn't sleep last night. Although Paul and his godforsaken family seem to be so determined to get Bontle back, I'm glad she has made her own decision to say she doesn't want them in her life. As much as she knows the truth of what happened with them, I don't want to be labeled as the bitter baby mama trying to keep a child from her father.

Bontle might be almost seventeen, technically speaking still a child, but she has a good head on her shoulders and I know eventually she will make the right decision for herself. And if she decides she wants her family then I will support her, I won't like it but I'll support her.

I decided to wake up early and make her breakfast in

bed just to cheer her up. I put on my gown and went out to the kitchen. Since its Sunday I know my mum will be up soon so it will be fun to beat her to the punch. But it seems I got beaten to the punch too. When I got to the kitchen I found Bontle laughing and making breakfast. She was on a video call with someone seeing as she had her phone balancing on the milk container. I decided to not disturb her phonecall and just stand by the doorway, out of her sight.

"Where's your mum? Is she still asleep?" The voice on the other side said. It sounded familiar and after a while of trying to place who it belongs to it finally dawned on me. She was speaking to Lungelo.

"She's still asleep. I'm sure she'll be up soon. Hopefully I'll be done with these pancakes by then."

"Good. And dont tell her I gave you the recipe. That's a family recipe." She laughs and for some strange reason that brings tears to my eyes. Just last night she had her world turned upside down by her so

called family and today she is as cheerful as she can be.

"Well I guess now I'm family too since I have the recipe."

"Definitely. Call me if you need anything okay."

"Will do. Thank you for talking to me."

"Anytime. I'll see you later when I come to get your mum."

"No problem. I should get ready for church soon."

"Okay. Bye."

"Bye." She cuts the call.

I decide to go check on mum since it's way past her time to wake up. I knock on her bedroom door and open. I find her sitting on the bed, its already made and she has her bible in her hands. I walk over to her and sit down next to her.

"Are you okay."

"I was just praying. I can't believe those monsters thought they would come here and throw money at us like we are desperate for it. We are not poor."

"Well technically speaking we are."

"No we are not. We have a roof over our heads, we've never gone to bed hungry and we have clothes on our backs. We might not have all the luxuries that they have but we are far from being poor." I sighed.

"You're right. Plus it seems the big guy listens to you cause things are looking up now. My innocence has been proven, my daughter is a smart and clever girl thanks to you, and I have a good job. Tell the big guy I say thanks." She laughs.

"You can tell him yourself too you know."

"I know, but it will be more special coming from you. Anyways Bontle is making breakfast. Let's go and eat."

We got up and made our way to the kitchen. Bontle had finished making breakfast so we sat down

together and ate. We finished up and got ready for church. Our mood had improved from last night's shenanigans and I was glad.

We went back home and we found Lungelo already parked outside. Mum invited him in and we had Sunday lunch together. When we were done Lungelo and I drove back to Durban. Somewhere along the way I fell asleep. I was woken up by the soft sounds of Jaziel brothers singing ndinike indawo.

"Ndithi ndithi ndithi ndicela ukungena

Ntombi wentombi yabantu

Zininzi izinto ndiyaqonda

Zininzi izinto

Zininzi izinto ndiyavuma

Zininzi izinto

Oh ndinike indawo entlizweni

Ndinike indawo ndoyigcina

Bamoshile abantu ndiyaqonda

Badlalile abantu ndiyaqonda

Ndinike indawo ndoyigcina

Zekuthi xakuthethwa ngabantu

Besithi hayi kunzima

Wena uzuthi hayi ndiyathandwa

Uzuthi ndithandiwe

Oh ndinike indawo entlizweni (entlizweni)

Ndinike indawo ndoyigcina

Bamoshile abantu ndiyaqonda

Badlalile abantu ndiyaqonda

Ndinike indawo ndoyigcina

Oh ndinike indawo entlizweni

Ndinike indawo ndoyigcina

Bamoshile abantu ndiyaqonda

Badlalile abantu ndiyaqonda

Ndinike indawo ndoyigcina

Ho iye iye iye iye iye iye

o iye iye iye iye iye iye

Ho ndiyavuma iye iye iye iye iye iye

Hayi andisoze ndiphinde iye iye iye

Ndidlale ngawe

Oh ndinike indawo entlizweni

Ndinike indawo ndoyidcina

Bamoshile abantu ndiyaqonda

Badlalile abantu ndiyaqonda

Ndinike indawo ndoyigcina

Ndinike indawo

Ndinike indawo

Bamoshile abantu ndiyaqonda

Badlalile abantu ndiyaqonda

Ndinike indawo ndoyigcina"

I couldn't help feeling like he played this song on purpose. The lyrics felt like they were speaking to my soul. We got to Durban and went past my place to get some clothes to wear tomorrow at work. We got to his place and loadshedding had hit. Stupid eskom. Good thing my clothes are ironed so I can relax. We lit some candles to bring light to the house. Lungelo ordered some food on uber eats while i took a shower. Lucky for me the water was still hot. I finished up and he came and took a shower too before the water gets cold.

I went down to the lounge and found his laptop open on the coffee table playing music. I sat down on the carpet and tried to find a movie we can watch cause music all night long might not be it. I found a romantic comedy and waited for him to come down.

He stood up at the top of the stairs and called out my name. I looked up and he threw down his wallet and told me to take some money for the food and open the gate for the delivery guy. I did as instructed and even gave the guy a fat tip. I got plates and some wine and waited for him. He came down after a while in his pjs. I don't know any man who can make pyjamas look good enough for an editorial spread on GQ except for him.

"Take a picture, it lasts longer." He said as he sat down next to me, making me blush. I can't believe he caught me drooling over him. Oh well, he is my man so I have that right. Right? That kind of sounds amazing, my man. I swear I just woke up butterflies in my tummy.

I dished up for us and poured the wine and we ate.

"Question, what would you do if someone betrayed you?" I asked as I threw a chip in my mouth.

"Depends on how big the betrayal is."

"So on a scale of zero to ten how would you rate giving Bontle your pancake recipe before I got it." He burst out laughing and as much as I tried to keep a serious face, I ended up laughing too.

"Wow, jealous much." He said after a while. "I'll give you the recipe."

"Pinky swear." I put out my finger for him to make this official otherwise it dont count. He laughed and intertwined his pinky with mine. Even though his pinky was almost double mine.

He pulled me towards him and kissed me. It started out slow and slowly got a bit heated. I let go of his hand and wrapped my arms around his neck. The kiss got deeper and I could feel my body wanting more. I got up and sat on his lap. I felt his hands moving down to my butt and grabbed my flesh sending sensations throughout my body I didn't think still existed.

I felt his hand move up on the inside of my thighs and

I could feel my clit doing the tango and foxtrot all in one go. He rubbed it over my underwear and it took a whole lot of self control for me to not just combust. I wasn't about to embarrass myself and be part of the two minute noodles gang. Do women even get to be two minute noodles? Well I don't know but I'm not about to be one.

He pulled out of the kiss and held my face in his hands looking at me.

"Are you sure you want to do this? We don't have to do this if you're not ready." I moved my hand down his chest.

"I'm ready." He smiled and brought me back in for a kiss. His hands left my face and made their way back to my butt. He got up from the floor with me in his arms. I don't even know where he got the strength to do that.

He walked up the stairs carrying me like I was a piece of paper. We got to his bedroom and he laid

me down on the bed. He pulled up my nightdress leaving me naked under him. He pulled down my underwear. He kissed the inside of my thigh and I answer the sensations I felt should be illegal. He slowly moved up till his tongue was playing music with my clit. I grabbed the sheets as I felt my body finally giving in and letting go.

While I was busy trying to calm my body he was sucking up all the juices from my orgasm. He got up and stood so majestically over me while he took off his pyjamas. He took off his pants and his dick came popping out like it had been held in captivity for so long. He got on the bed, between my legs and my excitement went up to a hundred.

He reached out to the side table drawer and pulled out a condom. He put it on and within seconds he was inside of me. My body expanded to accommodate him. He started moving, slowly at first but he seemed to be slowly getting his pace up.

He lifted my legs up and placed them around his neck completely opening me up to him and his strokes.

He flipped me over and continued with his strokes making me all sorts of delirious. I could feel my body building up to release and I guess he felt it too cause he flipped me back again so I could face him. He entered me and moved inside me, he upped his pace as my body finally gave in and released. He continued his beautiful torment till he came. Then he collapsed on top of me trying to catch his breath.

He got up and went to the bathroom. He came back with a warm towel and wiped us both clean before we cuddled on the bed. I guess this must be my answer to the song ndinike indawo. As if this moment, this man has a place not just in my heart but in my body too. I just pray love is kinder to me this time around.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTY THREE

"Now I'm walking on sunshine, whoa

I'm walking on sunshine, whoa

I'm walking on sunshine, whoa

And don't it feel good

Hey, all right now

And don't it feel good

Hey, yeah"

I dont even know who sings this song but its been on repeat since I woke up. I woke up early and got ready for work. And now I am making breakfast while floating around in the kitchen. I'm happy. My heart and soul is full and it feels amazing. To have all things align and just flow is quite amazing.

I felt Lungelo wrap his arms around my waist. And here I was planning on surprising him with breakfast in bed.

"You know its rude to leave your man alone in bed right?" He says as he plants kisses all over my neck.

"Well unlike my man, I have to get to work. Sit down so I can dish up for you, I'm done with breakfast." He gives me one last kiss before he takes a seat on the high chair around the kitchen.

I dish up and give him his food then I dished up for myself. We heard a knock on the door and Lungelo went to open. He came back with his brother, Khanya, I think.

"Makoti waka Radebe." He says as he sits down next to Lungelo. I mize that and just focus on the greeting.

"Hello." He grabs Lungelo's plate and starts eating.

"That's my food." Lungelo mutters while looking at

his brother devour his sausage. I just smile and get up to dish up a new plate for him. I give it to him and he thanks me.

"Hhay Makoti, uyalishaya ibhodo, ngyakuvuma. (You can cook, no doubt about it.)"

"Thank you."

"We need to talk about your case. I have filed the wrongful arrest suit."

"That's good. How long before the court case." Lungelo asked.

"Hopefully soon. I also included the Mashiles as respondents too since they had a hand in this."

"Is that wise. What if they pull strings to have the case thrown out?" I mean it's possible. Those people would do anything and everything to keep their name clean.

"Well those one's have too many problems right now. Lesego booked a private jet to take his wife and kids to some unknown destination to keep them safe from Philani, unfortunately for him someone tipped

the cops off about him smuggling drugs out of the country and sure enough the cops found about 20kgs of clean cocaine on the jet so wifey is now in jail and he is being investigated too."

"Did he think he'd run away from Philani?"

"Bafo you know if you strip away his name Lesego is just a dumb idiot."

"I need to get to work. Thank you for the update."

"Of course. Soon you'll be rolling in dough."

I left them there and went upstairs to finish getting ready. I put on my shoes and touched up my makeup. I grabbed my bag and just as I was about to get put of the bedroom Lungelo walked in.

"You're leaving already?"

"Yeah. If I dont leave now I'll be late."

"Okay let me change then I'll drive you." He quickly rushed to the bathroom to brush his teeth. He came

out and put on some sweatpants and a tshirt then we walked out. We got downstairs and his brother was already gone. We got into his car and he drove me to work.

If you could ask me what I've done for the first half of this day, I wouldn't tell you. I swear love really does make the world go round. I got a call from reception just as I was about to order lunch. I was told someone was downstairs waiting for me and since they didnt have an appointment, they couldn't let them up without my say so. I decided to go down and see who it was, since I know for a fact its not Lungelo.

I got down to reception and I was surprised to see Paul pacing up and down looking at his watch. Clearly frustrated. Looking at him now, yes he still looks good, his suit looks good on him, a few weeks

ago I could have said he is aging well, but right now, it seems he has grown a few more grey hairs on his head. The green really isn't always greener on the other side.

I walked up to him and like I had expected, he came towards me breathing fire. He was clearly carrying a whole lot of baggage on his shoulders. I decided to put on my best smile, I wasn't about to let this man ruin my day.

"Mr Mashile, to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"You know exactly why I'm here Nomonde, I want my child."

"Isn't that something you should be telling Amanda. I don't have your child Paul."

"Nomonde!"

"This is my workplace Paul, you will not be loud in here." I walked past him and walked down to the

coffee shop down the road.

I got in and ordered a sandwich with a cup of coffee. I sat down while they got my food ready. I looked up and the devil was before me. It took me counting down from ten just to stop me from swearing at this man in front of so many people.

"Do you know how annoying you are?"

"You cant avoid me forever Nomonde. Bontle belongs with her family." I chuckled a bit and rested my elbows on the table staring at this man, the nerve, the audacity the liver to even allow those words to leave his mouth.

"You are brave,I'll give you that. But I have a question, which family are you talking about exactly? Because as far as I am concerned Bontle is with her family."

"You know what I'm talking about Nomonde. Bontle is my child."

"Your child huh? Do you know what your child's favourite subject at school is? Do you know what your child wants to study after high school? Okay let me make it simple. Do you know her favourite colour? No? See you are not Bontle's father. You've never been. You lost that right the day your family left her at my mother's gate. The only children you have are your kids with Amanda. Bontle is mine and my mother's and quite recently, Lungelo's." I saw him swallow and clench his jaws. Maybe the last part was a bit petty but, his reaction makes it worth it.

"I swear to God Nomonde, if you give that son of a bitch much child....."

"That 'son of a bitch' has known Bontle for less than a year and he's already ten times the father you'll ever be to her. Call him all the names you want but you will never be him. If I were you I would worry more about your brother and the walls of Jericho that are closing in on you and your family." I took my sandwich and coffee and left him there. This man clearly thinks I'm still that naive rural girl he married.

I've grown and it will be a cold day in hell before I let him walk over me again.

I went back to work and put the whole encounter with the devil to the back of my mind. I'm happy, my baby is happy, Paul will not ruin that for me. Not now, not ever.

NARRATED

No matter how big and scary a shark may be, there will always be a bigger and scarier one that will always eat it. And Lesego has had to learn that the hard way. Sure he might be scarier to some, but clearly somebody else is scarier than him.

It's been almost four days since his wife was locked up for the drugs found in the jet, and no matter where he goes, and who he asks for help, she is still behind bars. Her bail application was denied cause

she is a flight risk. And now she is awaiting trial in a maximum security prison. He knows the source of his calamity, and today was the day he decided to confront it head on.

He drove to Biyela Holdings and made his way up to the executive floor leaving the receptionist scrambling to call the bosses and let them know a visitor was on his way. He went straight to Philani's office. He barged in hoping to surprise him and catch him off guard, instead he found him and Lando standing by his desk watching the door.

"It took you longer to get up here even with a lift? You're getting old Mashile." Philani said looking at his watch.

"You need to put an end to this Biyela. I know those drugs in the jet were your doing."

"You give me too much credit bro."

"Actually it was me." Lando chimed in surprising him.

"You really thought after what you and that hoe you call a wife did, you will just sail off into the sunset. You really have no idea who you messed with."

"Do you have any idea the trauma you put my kids through with the cops? If you want to punish me fine, but leave my kids out of it." Lando and Philani laughed and looked at each other.

"And here I was thinking kids were fair game, i mean your wife did kill mine." Philani said.

"Name your price?"

"Excuse me?" They said in unison, then looked at each other and high fived.

"Name your price. Tell me what you want to make this right and I'll do it."

"You know what I want?" Lando asked walking closer to him. "What I want, is your head on a platter, next to Lebo's head on another platter. That, and that alone will bring me peace. Until then, watch your back." She whispered the last bit and walked out of the office.

"Usekhulmile umamBiyela. (Mrs Biyela has spoken.) Your head on a platter and all will be forgiven. Until then, get out of my office." Philani said and went back to his seat to continue his work.

He went out of the office and made his way to the car. He drove to his house where he found Kaizer already waiting for him. He poured himself a glass of whiskey and gulped it down. He roughly loosened his tie and unbuttoned his shirt.

"Boss, usharp?"

"That man will drive me nuts."

"If you're talking about Biyela, well I can confirm that he had nothing to do with the drugs."

"I know that Kaizer, his wife just told me she did it. Imagine some stupid, bored rich wife thinks she can take on me. Me, Lesego Mashile. Me? This girl doesn't know me."

"What's the way forward then boss?"

"I want you to put together a team, I need you to wipe out that entire family, starting with Philani and his stupid wife, and make sure even the cats and rats are not spared."

"Sure bozza."

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTY FOUR

I should start teaching yoga cause it seems I've mastered the ability to not let negativity get to me. My encounter with Paul made me realise how much I've grown the last few months. I'm pretty sure therapy had something to do with it, but my determination also had something to do with it. And I'm happy to be quite honest.

Bontle is starting her exams in two weeks. And her school decided to give the matric class the two weeks off just to rest and relax so they can start their exams with a fresh mindset. I'm not worried really, Bontle is a smart girl, I know she will ace her matric and come out with distinctions too. I invited her over to stay with me for the time being. Mum refused to come stay with me cause she thinks I stay with Lungelo, well technically speaking I do

spend most of my time at his place. So she decided to go visit her sister in Soweto. I dont mind that cause it means she will rest a bit too.

It's crazy to me really, amazing too, my mum can actually take time off and she wont have to worry about what to eat for the next few days or weeks. God really came through for your girl. And Bonsile's sister will be staying at the house while Bontle and Mum are not there.

I came back from work and packed my things that were at Lungelo's since I cant have Bontle staying here. Yes, Lungelo loves her like his own but, slow and steady wins the race. I decided to cook him supper before I go back to my place. Bontle will be here tomorrow afternoon and thank God it's a weekend so I will be able to pick her up from the taxi rank.

I finished cooking and wrote a note for Lungelo

since his phone has been off for the better part of the day. I'm not worried though cause he did say he will be held up for most of the day. I grabbed my bags from the couch and made sure the stove is turned off before walking out. I opened the door and found Lungelo parking his car outside. I waited for him to get out of the car, my uber will be here any moment now.

He got out of the car and walked closer to me with a frown on his face looking at my bags.

"You're leaving?" I might be imagining things but I could have sworn i heard a ping of hurt in his voice.

"Yeah, I told you Bontle is coming over so I have to get the flat ready."

"What's wrong with this house?" I knew he would say this and I was trying hard to avoid it.

"Baby you know I cant stay here with Bontle."

"Why not? The house is big enough for the three of us, she'll have her own room, theres the pool, she'll

be able to study in peace, theres wifi for her to do any projects or research and theres security here so you will know she is safe."

"I know that but....."

"But nothing. You know I'm right." We heard the uber hooting at the gate. "Wait here." I knew I was gonna lose this argument. Damn this supper I had to cook, I would have left before he got here. He quickly ran to the gate. I went back into the house and waited for him.

He came back after a while and sat next to me on the couch.

"I take it you've decided to stay." He said with a smug look on his face. I couldn't help but smile.

"Its not like you gave me a choice." He laughed and like the hundred other times he does laugh, it somehow makes me happy to see him happy.

"Good. And I'm sure Bontle will be happy too." He got up and rushed upstairs. I decided to dish up in the

meantime.

He came down a few minutes later, showered and changed. We sat on the couch and watched a movie while we ate. We washed the dishes together when we were done before going to sleep.

We woke up the next morning and I got the guestroom ready for Bontle. I got some work done before we had to go pick Bontle up. Is it weird that I love my job so much I don't even mind doing it on the weekend?

Lungelo got up and took a shower then we went to the rank to pick babygirl up. We got there a few minutes before her taxi arrived. I was glad we didn't have to wait that long. Soon as she saw us she came running. She hugged us and we got into the car. We drove to McDonald's and Bontle ordered everything she wanted. And for the first time in a long while she was excited. It's crazy how just being

able to order anything off a menu and not look at the price is a luxury to some, and it was to us too, but here we are and my daughter can actually do that without worrying about the price. I've vowed to make it up to her for the past fifteen years when I couldn't offer her that, and I'll spend the rest of my life making sure her life is as soft as I can make it.

We went back to the house and Bontle had her eyes popped out, like she'd never seen a house this big. And yet she was born in one of the biggest houses in Joburg. My sister really did a number on us. She didnt just put me in a prison cell for all those years but she also stripped my daughter off her legacy and identity. But strangely enough I'm glad it all happened before she was old enough to remember that life. Right now she knows she has their blood running through her veins, but her identity is firmly rooted in all my mother's teachings, values and ethics that she instilled in her. Her strength in the midst of all this, it's something I will always admire for the rest of my life.

She ran into the house and went into every room. She came back down after a while and she couldn't stop raving about the house. We dished up the junk food that these two decided on.

"I changed my surname to Gumedede." Bontle blurted out in the middle of lunch shocking us both.

"Why?"

"Well, I decided that I don't want to get to school and have to explain why I have the Mashile surname without the benefits. It's like wanting champagne on a beer budget." I heard Lungelo chuckle next to me. I have no idea what she even means by that.

"If you're sure then I guess it's your call."

"I am. I actually went through with it last year. I wanted to make sure my matric certificate has my new surname."

"Wait. Last year? How come I'm only finding out about this now?" She smiles. A sneaky mischievous

smile.

"I actually was planning to show you when my certificate came." She took out her ID from her pocket and gave it to me. And sure enough, her name had changed. She was now officially BontlebaModimo Simamkele Gumede. I smiled a little, trying to cool my happiness. I think it's also time I did the same.



NARRATED

Someone said never make decisions when you are angry and don't make promises when you are happy. I guess no one told Lesego that, because he seems to make decisions that aren't so good for him or the people around him. He allows his ego and pride to go before any and every decision he seems to make right now. And no matter what anyone says, he

refuses to listen.

Just hours before him and his men were gathered in a warehouse with him giving instructions and telling them the plan of attack. He was so sure he would come out victorious in this war, but now he was here, with bullets in his body, laying on the ground fighting for his life. His men were sprawled out next to him, some dead, some also fighting for their lives, and police moving between them checking for any life.

Lesego and his men showed up to the Biyela home with the intent to obliterate any and every living thing they could find. They got to the house and made sure the security system was cut off before they made their way in. They got into the house and searched every room but it was empty. They waited, hoping that the Biyela's would return. But unfortunately for them the Biyela's never came home, instead a whole police force net them outside.

The police told them to hand themselves over and drop their guns but they wouldn't. Instead of letting things go they started shooting the cops. The police weren't willing to go down without a fight so they fired back. Unfortunately for Lesego, his little army was no match for an entire force.

The Paramedics took the injured and loaded them into ambulances and took them to hospital while the rest were taken to the morgue. Lesego was the last one to be put on a stretcher and wheeled to the ambulance. Just before he was loaded in an officer came over to him and asked the paramedics to give them space.

"So tell me something, I've been very curious about this. Are you naturally stupid or you've mastered the trick along the way? Did you really think you'd walk into Biyela's house and just do as you please and there wont be consequences?" Lesego tried to speak but the pipe that was shoved down into his throat

prevented him from doing anything. "A word of warning my guy, it's one thing to attack Biyela, it's another to walk into his home, where his wife and kids live with guns blazing, you're a dead man Mr Mashile. Make sure all your affairs are in order my guy."

He called the Paramedics back and they loaded up Lesego before the ambulance drove off. Soon as the ambulance drove off the officer took out his phone and made a call.

"Dladla?"

"Ntshangase, it's done."

"Is he alive?"

"Barely. But he'll live."

"Good. He cant die just yet. And Kaizer."

"He's alive too. Has a bullet in his thigh though."

"Perfect. As long as Lesego thinks he is still working

for him then we are good."

"Yeah. Anyways let me clean up here. We'll talk later." He hung up and went back to his crime scene.

Meanwhile in Midrand, Philani and his friends are having a braai at Nate's house. He dropped the call he was on and went back to his friends. They sat on the patio watching their wives and kids splash around in the pool.

"So he really came through?" Lindani asked while sipping on his drink.

"Please, you know the man is as stupid as they come." Nate replied.

"Good thing we got through to Kaizer." Philani said. His friends laughed.

"Dude, you blackmailed the man. He had no choice."

"Well it worked didnt it. Otherwise I would be dead by now."

"True. So what's next?" Nate asked.

"Now we go after the old geyser that's their mother."

"Good. What about the girl?" Sizwe asked.

"Which girl?"

"Khanya's girl, what's her name Bonolo. We promised she wouldn't be caught in the crossfire."

"She already has a job offer from a law firm in London. Hopefully she takes the offer and gets out of the way."

"And if she doesn't?"

"Then we'll have to find a way to convince her to go."

"I forgot how exhilarating this life was." They laughed.

"Dude dont get too excited. Soon as we are done with this, we crawl back into the shadows." They all mumbled in agreement before lifting g up their glasses and making a toast.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTY FIVE

They say a mother is someone who will love you unconditionally till her last breath. No matter how many times you swear and insult her or turn your back on her, her love never wavers. And every day she prays for you whether you are in her life or not.

Amanda sat in her cell, with more time on her hands her mind took her back to the moments she wishes she could go back and redo. And the most important one of those was to make amends with her mother.

Like they say, the higher you climb, the harder you fall, and right now, Amanda was at the bottom, and as much as she wanted to believe that once you hit rock bottom the only way to go was up, but how do you go up when there are bars keeping you in? How do you rise when you have shackles on your feet? As

much as her mind and spirit were willing to rise, her circumstances told a different story.

For the past few weeks she had shut the world out. She had refused any visitors, she had refused to see anybody that would remind her of the life she was living less than three months ago. How things have changed. She laid in her cell looking up at the ceiling and no matter how many times she tried to quiet her mind, it wouldn't give her rest. Her mind reminded her of her jealousy and greed that had led her here. And she had no one to blame but herself.

She woke up in the morning with the rest of the prisoners and took her shower before heading out to breakfast. For the first few weeks in here she couldn't eat the atrocious food that was served in here, but hunger made her rethink her decision. The food didnt taste like sushi and the tea wasnt champagne but she knew she had to eat if she wanted to get out of here alive.

She finished eating and headed back to her cell while the others made their way out to the yard to catch some sun. An officer came and told her she had a visitor.

"I've already said I don't want to see anyone."
Amanda answered the officer without even looking at her.

"Not even your mother?" Amanda sat up and looked at the officer.

"My mum is here? Are you sure?"

"Come see for yourself."

Amanda got up and followed the officer to the visitors area. She could feel her knees turning into jelly due to nerves. In all that she has done to her family, in all the pain she has caused her mother, she is here, willing to see her. Amanda wasn't sure how to feel or what to expect from her.

She walked into the visitors area and saw her mother sitting on a bench with her head bowed on the table and a bible in front of her. She walked up to her and sat on the bench opposite her mother. Her mother looked up and Amanda was taken aback by the tears in her mother's eyes. Her mother wiped the tears and forced a smile on her face. They sat there in silence, with Amanda's head hung in shame and her mother's eyes boring into her.

"You know I never thought I'd be back here again."
Her mother says after a long while of silence. "How are you doing?"

"I'm fine."

"How did we end up here Amanda? Where did I go wrong? I dont understand. I've prayed about this and asked God to show me my mistakes and show me what I could have done different but nothing. I'm lost and confused."

"You didnt do anything wrong mama."

"I must have done something wrong, I've never even met your children. I know I begged you not to marry Paul and you defied me and went ahead and did it anyway. You denied your niece a chance at living a life that she deserved, and had your sister in this hellhole for so many years. Why Amanda? What did I do to hurt you so bad Kodwa mntanami."

Amanda wiped her tears and looked up at her mother. Truth be told she also couldn't tell you what her mother ever did to her. She had a good life, sure they didnt have the best that life had to offer, but their mother had made sure they never went without the basics. They had clothes, food to eat and a roof over their heads. All Amanda could think about was greed and jealousy. Her sister had always been the smart one, the kind one, everybody loved her. Their teachers sang her praises at every turn, the mothers in their little village had put her on a pedestal telling their daughters to look up to her and telling their sons to bring home to their mothers a girl like her. While Amanda was the total opposite of all that. She

was the rebel, some people even called her the evil twin. No matter how many times she tried to shake off that name it seemed to follow her everywhere until she embraced it and made it her own.

Amanda got up from the bench and looked at the woman who had birthed her, her tears streaming down her face and her heart broken, tough as she was, seeing her mother cry because of her was enough to make her question her whole being and all the choices she had made. Although she always knew her mother didn't agree with any of the choices she made, Amanda figured staying away from her all these years would make the guilt less obvious, but right now, it was staring at her straight in the face.

"Ma please don't come back here again." She said and turned to walk away.

"Amanda!" She stopped but she couldn't turn to look at her mother. Her mother got up and went to where she was standing. She opened her hands and put the

bible in her hands.

"When you have time, read this, find strength in it and pray. I might not know what I ever did to you but I pray one day you will find it in your heart to forgive me." She took the bible and walked away, back to her cell.

Amanda sat in her cell for a long time clutching the bible in her hands. Unsure of what to make of her mother's 'gift'. That night she got down on her knees and prayed. No words came out of her mouth, just tears streaming down her face. She wasn't even sure God would listen to her but she still felt the need to talk to him anyway. Who knows, maybe he too, just like her mother, still had a soft spot for her, no matter how small it might be.



NOMONDE

My case starts in a couple of months. Turns out having and knowing people in high places makes life easier. Lungelo and Khanya's friends have been pulling strings left right and centre. And quite frankly, I'm enjoying this. Watching the Mashile's crumble from every corner is, well as a daughter of a praying woman I probably shouldn't be saying this but, it's quite satisfying to watch them suffer.

Lesego has been in hospital for a while now. Apparently he was short on his back, his spinal cord to be precise and now he cant walk. Is it weird that the day I found out I couldn't even pretend to feel sorry for him? As far as I am concerned he is getting every single ounce of karma that he deserves.

I texted Bontle and told her to start cooking dinner cause I would be a bit late. I finished up at work and requested an uber. I drove straight home. I got there

and found a white range rover evoque parked in the middle of the driveway. I know it's not Lungelo's so maybe it's one of his brothers.

I got into the house and there was noise coming from the lounge. I said a little prayer hoping Bontle didnt have any uninvited guests in here. I walked in and on the couch sat one heck of a woman. She looked like she just stepped out of a magazine. Her makeup was impeccable and her power suit just screamed boss bitch. If I had met her in a different life I probably would have been able to admire her, but right now, she was just another girl in my mans house. And who was she talking to earlier cause I could have sworn I heard some noise. Or maybe she was on her phone.

"Hi, I don't think we've met." I said walking closer to her.

"You just got in, where were we supposed to meet?" She asked then flipped her 30 inch weave away from

her face. I wonder who she is.

"Can I help you with anything."

"You can start by making sure the maid in the kitchen gets me my food. I've been waiting. I cant believe Lungelo would hire such incompetent people." She grabbed her phone from the table and started doing something on it. As for the maid thing, I didnt even know we had a maid in this house.

I turned and walked to the kitchen. I found Bontle sitting on the highchair snacking on some chips.

"What's going on? What's with Miss Universe that side?" Bontle just rolled her eyes and I could tell she was annoyed. "What happened?"

"I don't know who that woman is but I hate her. She got here about an hour ago and she acts like she owns the place. She keeps ordering me around." I could tell Bontle was fed up.

I decided to text Lungelo and tell him about his

guest. He said he was already on his way back home. I helped Bontle finish up cooking then we set the table. Miss thang refused to join us saying she will wait for Lungelo, as if thina we were waiting for Jesus Christ. Mxm.

After almost an hour and a half Lungelo decided to show up. And soon as he opened the door miss thang ran over to him and threw herself at him. Bontle and I just looked at each other and rolled our eyes. Lungelo pushed her off of him and took a step back.

"Nqobile, what are you doing here?"

"Sthandwa sam." Athi sthandwa sam? I'm about to go back to jail stru Bob.

"Sthandwa sakho? Uright Nqobile? Yini uyagula? (Your love? Are you Okay? Are you sick.)" Lungelo asked seemingly just as shocked as we were.

"Hawu, Bhungane, ngbuyile (I'm back.) I'm ready for

us to start over again. Like you've always wanted." Lungelo chuckled and rubbed his chin.

"So uvuke le lawvuke khona wabona kuncono uze la uzongnyela (you woke up from wherever you woke up from and decided to come here and talk shit.)" She turned to look at us and I could feel she was either embarrassed or shocked at his reaction.

"Can we talk about this without the maids?"

"Maids? You mean those two?" He asked pointing at us. She nodded her head. (That's my wife and that's our daughter, so which maids are you talking about?" He asked. As dark skinned as she was I could see her face turning red from either shock or embarrassment. I'm not sure which.

"You have a daughter?"

"Yes, and you will not disrespect her or her mother in their own home. Now if you'll excuse us, as you can see we are about to have dinner. So you can use that door and get the fuck out."

I've never seen anyone so embarrassed in my entire life. She grabbed her bag from the couch and her phone and walked out banging the door. Lungelo came and sat down. We held hands and said grace before digging in. When we were done Bontle cleared the table and washed the dishes.

"So, Nqobile, who is she?" I ask soon as Bontle was out of earshot.

"Someone I'd rather forget even exists."

"That's cute and all but it still doesn't tell me who she is and why she is here." He took a deep breath and looked at me.

"Nqobile is my ex wife."

Okay, talk about having the wind sucked out of you.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTY SIX

Women and gossip are two things that will never be separated, not now, not ever. And it seems isthandwa sami takes the cup in that department. After Nqobile left we had our dinner. I told Nomonde who Nqobile is and I thought she wouldn't think much of it. Until she came to bed with a bowl full of popcorn. Talk about being dramatic.

She got into bed with the bowl on her lap and looked at me waiting for me to open my mouth and say something. But I know she's dying to know more about Nqobile, and if she wants to know she'll have to open her mouth and ask. I decided to ignore her even though I felt her stare boring holes into me. But I'm a man, I don't give up that easily, and I could tell she was getting frustrated.

"You do know eventually you're going to tell me right?" She finally decided to open her mouth and speak. I tried hard to hide the smile on my face.

"Tell you what?"

"About 'Hawu, Bhungane, ngbuyile (I'm back.) I'm ready for us to start over again. Like you've always wanted'." She says mimicking Nqobile's voice making me laugh.

"She doesnt speak like that."

"Of course she does. If I didn't know better I'd think she is a bimbo."

"Yeah I can see it."

"What?"

"The green eyed monster on your back. Uneskhwele muntu wami. (You are jealous.)" She rolls her eyes and crosses her arms across her chest, sulking. Strangely enough, she's probably more beautiful like that. But then again even with tears falling down her face she's still the most beautiful woman I've ever

come across in my life.

"Mxm."

"Okay I'll tell you. Stop sulking." She smiles like an innocent little girl.

"I'm listening."

"Well, Nqobile and I got married straight after varsity. We met there, fell head over heels in love. I thought we'd be together forever but, I found out she was cheating on me with her boss, I guess he could give her all I couldn't. My business wasn't doing so well and I wasn't willing to ask my family for help so she bounced. No amount of begging or pleading would make her stay. I promised myself I'd never fall in love ever again, cause women would just break my heart. Then you showed up. I saw you the first time Bonsile brought you to the club and I could have sworn you were sent straight from heaven."

"That's sweet, but you're deviating from the story."
She said trying not to blush.

"Theres nothing to it really, it took me a while but I made peace with Nqobile leaving me, Ma made me realise everything happens for a reason, and maybe she was right."

"So what happens if Nqobile decides to fight for you tooth and nail? Just so you know, physically I can moer her but I'm not the type to fight for a man." She says making me laugh, not that I ever expected her to turn into a straatmate.

"Trust me you will never ever have to fight any woman because of me. I promise you."

"Okay." She put the bowl away and laid on my chest, where she belongs.



BONTLE

My grandmother always told me that if you trust in God and his timing you'll never have anything to

worry about, because when God says it's time, all things will align and it will be like the bad things never happened. And I can say she was right. A year ago if you had told me I'd be living in the same house as my mother, that I'd be able to call her at anytime of the day and she would pick up I would have laughed at you.

All my life I've known why my mother was in jail. And I'm glad gogo never hid that from me, but she also made sure to remind me how much my mother loved me, and how she would give anything in the world to be home with me. Even when I felt like I should be angry at her, like I should judge her, I knew better. Sure I had moments where I felt like if she had been there our lives would have been different. But now she's been vindicated, and gogo's prayers have been answered.

I woke up in the morning to an empty house, nothing unusual there, this house is so big I cant even hear

my mum or bab'Lungelo when they leave. Who would have thought, in my big old age I'd be calling someone Baba, life neh. I went down to the kitchen to make myself breakfast then went out to sit by the pool.

Today is a Wednesday which means sis'Pearl is coming over to clean and do the laundry. Although I know it's her job and she gets paid for it I usually feel guilty letting her do all the work by herself so I will help her. I finish eating and start washing the dishes. She walks in and finds me in the kitchen.

"You know I get paid to do that right?" She says walking into the kitchen.

"I know that, but gogo would flip if she saw me sitting idly while there are dishes to be washed." She laughs and puts on her uniform.

"Well, I like ugogo already. Finish up there and go do some studying and let me work."

I finished up with the dishes and went to take a shower before getting a bit of studying in, but then I got distracted and decided to go soak in the pool. I was busy sipping on some champagne (well juice, but I can pretend right. For now anyways.), when I heard footsteps coming towards the pool. I looked up and saw Bab'Lungelo walking towards me. He sat down on the pool lounge.

"Hey, I brought you lunch."

"Thank you, but you know i could have cooked or made a sandwich right?"

"I know that, but a break wouldn't hurt anybody."

"Speaking of breaks, I think coming here was a bad idea." He looks at me and I can see concern on his face.

"Why? What happened?"

"I cant seem to study. This house is distracting. There's so much to do and so little time." He laughed and got up.

"Well you'll have to try harder cause if you fail, I'm not getting you a new phone." Je said walking away. Wait did he say? He said he's getting me a new phone? I heard that right?

I quickly got up and followed him. I caught up with him in the house as he was about to walk out and back to his car.

"What do you mean you're getting me a new phone."

"I didnt say I was, I said if you fail I won't get it."

"Which means you are getting me the phone, unless I fail?"

"Something like that."

"Do I get to pick whatever phone I want?"

"Depends, right now the budget is 5k for a pass, for every distinction you get I'll add 2k to the phone budget."

"So if I get five distinctions then that's 15k which means I could get an iPhone?" He nods his head and if I ever needed motivation, I just got it. Not that I

was going to fail anyway. But a new phone is a great incentive.

I turned around and ran to my room leaving him laughing. For his sake he better not be lying to me. But then again he's not the lying type. I wish he was my real dad. Life would have been so much easier and better.



NOMONDE

This moment right now feels like dejavu. Last night I came home to find this same car in the driveway and today its back again. I look at Lungelo and he clenches his jaws in frustration. As much as I want to be angry right now, I am going to let him deal with this girl.

We walk into the house and it's dead quiet. I can feel the tension all the way from the door. We walk to the lounge and sure enough Miss Universe is sitting there like she's waiting for a photographer to take her pictures. And as crazy as that seems, she has her eyes set on the woman sitting across from her. From the looks of it, it seems like they are shooting deadly daggers at each other with just their eyes.

"MaMtolo. I didnt know you were coming over."
Lungelo said looking at the other woman. I wasn't sure who she was till he called her MaMtolo, he always talks about his mother and I'm guessing that's her.

"Good thing I came cause the devil is back. Hhay ubhidlangile usatane (the devil is busy.)" And I guess usatane is Miss Universe. I want to laugh but that would just make things awkward. I look at the corner of my eye and Bontle is standing by the wall giggling while watching all this.

"Nqobile, why are you here?"

"Mbuze baba, mbuze (ask her.)"

"We need to talk, Lungelo." She says getting up and walking towards him. He takes a step back just as she is about to get too close. "Please. Its important."

"You can say whatever you need to say right here."

"I..... I need your help."

"Hhay bo weSathane, khuluma (speak)" MaMtolo shouts from her seat.

Nqobile looks at Lungelo with eyes pleading for mercy or just a chance to hear her out but Lungelo refuses to budge. I almost feel sorry for her.

"I had a baby, our baby." She says when she realises there wont be any privacy.

"What are you talking about?"

"When I left, I was pregnant."

"So what has that got to do with me?"

"It was your baby. Our baby."

"I'm sorry to budge in like this but what do you mean 'was'?" I ask.

"That's none of your business." She says looking at me, pissed as hell.

"Hhaybo sathane, answer the question. What do you mean was?"

"Our son died a year ago. And things havent been the same since." I look at Lungelo and he is clenching his jaws and I can tell he is getting angrier by the second. I hold on tighter to his hand hoping to calm him down. It works.

MaMtolo gets up from the couch and walks over to where we are standing and looks at Nqobile dead in the eye before slapping the shit out of her. She stumbles back a few feet and holds on to her burning cheek.

"So wenanja wena (you dog), you fell pregnant with my grandchild, and in what? Almost fifteen years tou decide to come back and tell us about him, when he is dead? I knew you were the devil's daughter. Uyinja

uyezwa."

Lungelo lets go of my hand and walks upstairs. I knew there was a reason I didnt like this girl. In the few minutes she's been here she told Lungelo he has a son and that he is dead. I'm pretty sure finding a word to describe her cruelty in the dictionary would take me an entire lifetime.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTY SEVEN

Who knew my life would be this eventful. After Lungelo left us there and went to the bedroom MaMtolo told Nqobile to leave, of course she was reluctant but this tsunami of a woman literally dragged her out with her bare hands. Remind me to never get on her bad side.

She came back from throwing her out and found me and Bontle still stuck on the same spot she left us in.

"Yes mantombazane." She said with her hands on her hips looking at us.

"I'll go finish up cooking." Bontle said then ran off to the kitchen leaving me with her. I opened my mouth to say something to her but I didnt know what to say.

"I'll go check on Lungelo." I quickly turned and ran up the stairs. I could hear her chuckling a bit.

I got to the bedroom and found Lungelo sitting on the bed with his head in his hands, facing the floor. He looked defeated. I guess I would be too if I found out I had a son and now he is dead. I sat down next to him and put my arm across his back.

"I'm sorry."

"Why are you apologizing?" He asked.

"Well, I was going to ask you if you're okay but it just seemed like a stupid question." He lifted his head up and looked at me with a fake smile on his face.

"She really has changed. Or maybe this has always been her, I just ignored these parts of her cause I loved her."

"You need to talk to her and get to the bottom of this. If this child really is yours then you need to do right by him."

"He's dead Nomonde."

"Yeah but we're Africans Lungelo, we have rituals and ceremonies we do even for the dead. Maybe he isn't at peace wherever he is because he's probably buried away from his blood. You need to bring him home."

"I can't. Right now I'm so angry at Nqobile spending any more time with her, I might just end up strangling the life out of her."

"You don't have to do it yourself. You have family, brothers who would be more than happy to do this for you. But you do have to talk to her and get to the bottom of this." He sighed and laid his head on my lap.

I kissed the side of his head and we sat there in silence for a while. I felt my thigh getting wet and I knew he was crying. Even though he was trying hard to hide it, I was glad he wasn't keeping it all in. I decided to just be there. I know I can't solve this for him and heal his heart, so maybe just being here is

enough.

I got a text from Bontle telling me dinner was ready. I told Lungelo and he quickly went to the bathroom to wash his face. I decided to change quickly out of my work clothes then we headed down to have dinner. We sat down around the table. MaMtolo held out her hands for us to say grace, she prayed then we dug in. Bontle really knows how to cook, but then again what did I expect, she was raised by uMaGumede herself.

"So, Lungelo, arent you going to introduce me to your guests." MaMtolo said. I looked at Lungelo and he had a smile on his face. It was quite sweet, even though his smile didnt make it to his eyes but it was something.

"Well this is not how I was planning to do this but you came unannounced."

"I didnt realize I had to make an appointment to see my son. Besides, you dont have a wife so I'm still the

lady of this house." She sipped her wine and I could feel her eyes on me.

"Baby, do you agree?" Lungelo asked putting me dead in the middle of the spot. I looked at his mother and she was hiding a smile but I could tell she was enjoying my discomfort.

"Yes, I agree."

"I dont. Ma, this is my girlfriend Nomonde and this is our daughter BontlebaModimo." He said our daughter. Not my daughter, OUR, it took a whole lot of self control for me to not let the tears fall. Tears of joy that is.

"I'm glad to hear that. Cause I was ready to kill you." She said.

"Why?" Lungelo asked and to be honest i was curious too.

"When I came in and saw her cooking, I thought she was your girlfriend."

"Ma, she's a child."

"I know. That's why I was ready to kill you. But I'm

glad I had nothing to worry about. I'm happy to meet you both."

"Thank you."

Dinner went pretty good, if I say so myself. MaMtolo seems like a sweet and kind human being. She loves to laugh and she doesn't seem like the judgemental, usual mother in law. I pray she never changes.



LUNGELO

I'm glad my mum met Nomonde. Although I didn't plan on them meeting this way but it is what it is. I'm just glad mum likes her, although she didn't say it out loud, it's clear to see. But then again what's there not to like about Nomonde.

I woke up this morning and decided to go talk to Nqobile. I need to sort this out before it takes over my life, and right now my life is pretty good and I'm not willing to let it go, especially not for Nqobile.

I drove around to some hotels trying to see if she is booked in any one of them but no luck. I don't even have her phone number so I can't call her. After a while of driving up and down the city I decided to head to the club. I seriously need to get some proper offices that will be the base for all these things that I do, I can't be running around all the time.

I got to the club and as if my ancestors were in a good mood, there she was, sipping on some champagne so early in the morning. I walked up to her and I seem to have caught her by surprise cause she almost choked on her drink.

"We need to talk."

"I know. That's why I've been here the whole morning, I was hoping to run into you."

"Follow me." I turned and walked to the office with her behind me. Lucky for me no one was in the office. I walked in and waited for her to get in too before closing the door. I leaned on the desk with my arms crossed and watched her as she looked around the office, God alone knows what she was looking for.

"Nice place. You did great, the club seems like a success."

"It is. Now please explain to me why you are here Nqobile."

"You know why, I told you about....."

"About my son. Who happens to be dead. Why now? Why not when you found out you were pregnant? Why not when he was born? Why not when he was alive? Why now?"

"Lungelo I know I'm no saint, and I know I hurt you."

"You're not answering my questions."

"Right. By the time I found out I was pregnant I was already with Clive. I wasn't sure if the baby was his or yours but seeing the excitement on his face when I told him, I just figured maybe....."

"Maybe he'd make a better father than me cause he had more money."

"Lungelo stop playing the victim, your family had money, you were just too stubborn to ask for help."

"Because I wanted to build my own legacy from the ground up? Was that reason enough for you to pawn my son off to another man who had money?"

"Of course not, I just wanted to make sure he was okay."

"Fine. Let's say I believe your story. Now explain to me why it took my son dying for you to come here and tell me about him."

"A few months after he died I started having these dreams, in most of them he would be sitting somewhere watching me. And everytime I try to talk

to him he wouldn't reply. Instead he would walk away from me like he hated me. The dreams kept coming back time and time again till I went to a sangoma who told me that Ncedo wont rest in peace until he is given his surname."

"So that's when you found out he was mine and not the other guy's?"

"No. I found out he was yours after he was born. I did a DNA test without Clive knowing and it confirmed my suspicions. I couldn't tell Clive cause he was so excited. He was happy to be a father I just couldnt take that from him."

"So what do you want from me?"

"Well, he needs to be buried with his real family."

I guess Nomonde was right. This has more to do with tradition than anything else. All I have to do now is let the rest of the family know so we can figure this whole thing out.

"Fine. I'll do what needs to be done."

"Just like that? No fighting, no anger?"

"I'm more hurt than angry. For sixteen years I had a son, and the only time I get to know or do anything for him is after he is dead. All thanks to you. But, I have a life I need to get back to so the sooner we go this the sooner you can be out of my life, for good. I'll let my brothers know and we'll take it from there. If you need anything regarding this, you can call my mother, she'll pass on the message to me. You dont come to my house, you dont come to my place of work, unless you are here to party and get drunk." I wrote my mothers number on a piece of paper and handed it to her.

"Your girlfriend is that insecure."

"You should thank her cause she is the only reason I'm even talking to you. You can leave."

She turned and walked out. Nomonde was right, I dont need to spend time with her when I have an entire family to help me out. I did some work before

heading home. I was planning on ordering lunch for Bontle and mum but the house was empty. I called my mum but she didnt pick up. I called Bontle and lucky for me, teenagers are always on their phones.

"Hey."

"Where are you guys?"

"At the mall, shopping."

"I should have known." She laughs. "Please give the phone to MaMtolo."

"Okay." I hear shuffling on the other side before my mothers voice comes through.

"Lungelo."

"Why didnt you tell me you were going out. I could have taken you to the mall."

"Oh dont worry about it, we used uber."

"Okay. But let me know when you're done so I can pick you up."

"You can come now, we are done, we're just getting

lunch."

"Okay. I'll be there just now."

I hung up and drove to the mall. I should have just let them take the uber. When I got to the restaurant they had an entire trolley packed to the brim with different plastic bags. I'm pretty sure they went to every shop in this mall. We loaded everything in the boot of my car before driving home.

When we got home we unloaded everything before Bontle ran off to her room to try on the thousands of stuff they bought. I poured myself a glass of juice and went to the lounge where mum was sitting with her feet up on the coffee table.

"You do know you're getting old, you cant be on your feet all day."

"Tsek." She said making me laugh.

"You guys had fun?"

"Of course. Bontle is a bowl full of energy. But she's a great kid. I like her." Music to my ears.

"Me too."

"So your brother tells me the Mashile's have an avalanche of problems coming their way."

"Yep. And to think it all started with trying to prove Nomonde's innocence."

"He told me about that too. I'm glad those toes of satan are finally paying for all the things they have done. I hope that woman and her spawns of satan rot in hell."

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTY EIGHT

'When all is said and done, we'll always have each other.'

Those words reverberated in Mrs Mashile's mind as she sat in her dining room, around her table surrounded by her children. It pained her to see the sombre mood that now seemed to be the order of the day in this family. The power she thought she had and could wield at any time and any day to bring people down to their knees begging and pleading for mercy was now crumbling all around her, and she didnt know how to get it back.

Her friends were now walking further and further away from her, some were scared that whoever was at war with the Mashile's would not only come after

the Mashile's but they would annihilate anything and everyone that stood in their way, and many of them had too many skeletons hiding in their closets, so they couldn't afford to put themselves in the firing line, they had too much to lose and the Mashile's were not worth it.

Malcolm was now a shadow of his former self. His wife had filed for divorce and taken the children with her, his career was in shambles, he couldn't bring himself to even make it out the house even to just get a box of pizza at the mall. And the only reason he was here today was because his mother had insisted on it.

Next to him, his big brother, the one who had become a pillar of strength to everyone in this family was now confined to a wheelchair. Knowing him and his pride, he still couldn't accept his fate. All he could think about was revenge. Every single day he swore he would get back at his enemies or he would die

trying, and a wheelchair wasn't going to stop him.

Mrs Mashile looked at her children and wondered what she could do to fix this. If money couldn't fix it then she had to find another way. But which way would, when she was slowly exhausting her options day in and day out.

"Mum, at some point you're going to have to speak. Why are we here?" Bonolo asked, breaking the silence and tension that filled the room.

"We need to figure out how to keep this family together, in spite of all the mess that's happening around us."

"Mum, there's only one way to fix this, give Nomonde what she wants." Lesedi said, clearly irritated and not wanting to be here. As much as this was her family, she feared that in spite of her brother and mother being the ones responsible for whatever is happening right now, their enemies would also come after her and her children, and like any mother, her

biggest dream has always been to keep her children safe, and happy.

"Do you think 20 million grows on a tree Lesedi? Where do you think that money will come from?" Lesego bellowed from his seat, sending Lesedi to an immediate moment of silence.

"Please it's not like we don't have that money. Plus Nomonde deserves every penny for all the hell this family put her through." Bonolo answered, clearly braver than Lesedi, because she refused to cower in spite of Lesego's fire filled eyes staring at her.

"I think you're the last person to talk Bonolo, it's your fault we're in this mess. If you had stayed in your lane and stopped trying to be a superhero, none of this mess would be happening." Paul spoke for the first time since the night began.

"Right. And you still wouldn't know about your first born daughter whom you neglected her entire life, and now you're busy trying to get full custody of her like that will rectify the pain you caused her. If I were you I would focus on fixing my life."

"Bonolo I will fuck you up."

"Of course you will now that the whore you shared a bed with is no longer here to keep feeding you whatever it was that she fed you that made you a weak pathetic deadbeat bastard."

"SHUT UP!" Mrs Mashile says banging the table and scaring everyone around her. "All of you, get out, I need to be alone."

"Mum!"

"GO LESEGO. I need to think." Her kids get up from their seats and shuffle out. "Bonolo. Sit down." Bonolo comes back and sits down next to her mother. Mrs Mashile pours herself a glass of wine and takes a sip. "You need to get Nomonde to back off."

"What?"

"You heard me. We have enough to deal with as a family, this lawsuit is just a waste of time."

"Mum you do know the kind of torture and pain that

Nomonde went through because of Lesego constantly making sure her sentence was extended."

"And you think 20 million will make all that go away?"

"Maybe not, but it will offer a small comfort for her pain. She will be able to send her daughter, your granddaughter to university and she will be able to give her family the life she always wanted to give them."

"You do know there is a family trust for all the children in this family to go to varsity right. Bontle can be added to it too." Bonolo chuckles and pours herself a glass of wine.

"Ma, why do you always think money solves everything? This will not be fixed by money."

"Exactly, which is why this lawsuit is unnecessary."

"Yoh mama, you dont get it. Nomonde went through hell in prison. According to her file she was raped countless times, fell pregnant and had to have multiple abortions. She probably chose that route

because she couldn't keep piling on kids on her mother when she was already forced to quit her domestic worker job so she could take care of Bontle back home. This family put her through hell. No amount of money will erase the pain and hurt she went through. And to make matters worse, Paul thinks fighting for custody of a grown child will make him what! Father of the year? Bontle is grown, and it will take a miracle for her to forgive him, or even us. If you really want to show how sorry you're you will get your son to back off and give Nomonde what she wants. It won't solve her problems but it will make her life a tad bit easier. It won't make her forgive you or even like you, but it's a start."

"Bonolo you're confusing me. In one breath you're saying money won't solve anything and on the other you're saying we should give her money? Exactly what are you saying?"

"What I am saying is, you throwing money at her and her family and expecting them to dance to your tune is not only an arrogant move but it's quite frankly, stupid. But giving her money through the lawsuit is

like an admission of guilt. And she gets the money with no expectations of a kumbaya moment. If she chooses to forgive after that it should be because she wants to. Not because you blackmailed her into it."

"Fine. I'll think about it. Now we need to figure out how to get Philani Biyela off our backs."

"Now that, is not something I can help you with. Everyone I've spoken with who knows him says he is not the backing off type."

"Who did you speak to?"

"His wife's best friend is friends with my boss."

"Mhmm."

"Whatever it is you're thinking about I hope it involves groveling to Biyela for the sake of peace." She gulps down her wine and leaves.

Mrs Mashile picks up her phone and makes a call.

"Yes, it's me. I need you to get all the info you can find on Philani and his crew, their wives, girlfriends,

even kids. Find out everything. I need to know everything from the moment they came out of their mothers' wombs. Get on it." She hangs up and sips her wine. She wasn't sure how this plan would pan out just yet, but she knew she might have just found a way to get to Biyela. His family. And this time, she would make sure she does it right.



NOMONDE

It's been a crazy two weeks. And now it has to come to an end. Bontle has to go back home so she can start her exams. These two weeks has been an amazing bonding session. I can't wait for her exams to be over so she can come back and visit again, and this time stay longer. Even though I got served with papers a few days ago, Paul is suing me for full custody of Bontle. His audacity to think he can just waltz in and play super hero daddy. Mxm. That man

needs prayers and maybe a dip in the ocean.

Today is her last weekend, it's a Saturday and she has to go back tomorrow. It's crazy how when she came here she had one sports bag full of clothes but now she had two suitcases full of stuff. Lungelo spoils her way too much. Oh and now that MaMtolo is here and she seems taken by her, she too has got on the bandwagon of spoiling her. As crazy as this may be, I'm glad she likes my daughter. It would really be awkward if she didnt.

My mum is here. And by here, I mean Durban not Lungelo's house cause she made it pretty clear she will not stay in a boyfriend's house under any circumstances. Although she is coming over for Bontle's "farewell/goodluck" party. MaMtolo's idea.

Lungelo offered to take her shopping for school supplies so she doesn't see the surprise. Good thing, but then now I have to spend the morning with

MaMtolo. Yes I know she's a good person but she is still my boyfriend's mother.

I was busy putting the finishing touches on the food when she came in and sat on the highchair staring at me, making me nervous.

"Is everything okay?"

"Everything is just fine. The balloons have been set up, the decor is done."

"Thank you. And thank you for this. I'm sure Bontle will be happy."

"She's a great kid. You did a great job with her."

"I would love to take the credit for that but it's all my mum."

"Well she must be superwoman then."

"You have no idea."

My phone beeped, it was a message from Lungelo, he had sent me the information on my mums uber. Since he couldnt pick her up with Bontle in the car he had to make another plan. It seemed she was a few minutes away so I decided to go wait for her at the gate. As expected she was there in just a few minutes.

"Hi ma." I gave her a hug.

"Mxm, dont talk to me wena, you made me sleep alone in your flat." She said pretending to sulk. I just smile and hugged her anyway then we walked up to the house.

"But you refused to sleep here. Plus I had to set up for Bontle's party early in the morning."

"I know. Where's my baby anyway?"

"In town getting some school supplies. She should be back soon. Everything is ready. And Lungelo's mum is here." She stopped walking and looked at me.

"Tell me she's not a monster cause I will put her in her place quick quick." I laughed. Mama bear coming out to play.

"No actually she's quite sweet. I think you'll like her."

We walked to the house and MaMtolo was already waiting with the biggest smile on her face. I introduced them and they got along like a house on fire. They sat together in the lounge while I changed. You could hear their laughter all the way from upstairs. One less thing for me to worry about.

Lungelo sent me a text saying they were on their way back. I quickly got downstairs and told these new besties and we waited looking at the door. Its a pity Bontle doesnt have any friends around here. Her party will be full of old people. Oh well, her celebration party will be closer to home so she will have her friends there. For now she'll just have to be content with us old folk.

We heard the car pull up outside and got into positions. Soon as the door opened we screamed 'surprise'. Bontle almost turned back. She smiled and I saw a few tears glistening in her eyes. She gave us hugs and we sat down to have lunch.

The gogo's made sure to give her some words of wisdom. She had fun, even with us old people. Later that night we decided to spend the night with my mum at my place. I helped Bontle pack her things then Lungelo drove us to the flat. We decided to make popcorn and watch a movie since we were all full from the lunch. Mum went to sleep early, leaving us alone.

"Thank you." Bontle said before laying her head on my lap.

"For what?"

"Everything. I didnt think you'd be back before I went to varsity but now you're here. It still feels like a dream."

"Well it's not. And I'm never going anywhere ever again. And no one is going to take you from me. Not while I still have breath in me." She lifted up her head and looked at me.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Nothing? Just know that I will do whatever it takes to protect you and make sure you have all that you need." I could see she wasn't convinced but she nodded her head and laid back on my lap.

Inspite of their money and all the lawyers he can find, Paul will have to walk over my cold dead body before he can get his hands on my child. Until she herself decides she wants him in her life, I will do whatever it takes to keep her safe and as faraway from them as possible. Full custody yoknuka.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

THIRTY NINE

I dont know why I'm so nervous when the person actually writing these exams is relaxed and chilled. Last night when we came to drop Bontle and my mum off I decided to spend the night, I'm pretty sure Lungelo sulked all the way back to Durban since I decided to stay when we got here.

I woke up this morning and made breakfast for Bontle, then helped my mum with her wares. If it were up to me she would quit working and just relax, and allow me to take care of her, but MaGumede is as stubborn as they come. She refuses to budge. But I know eventually I'll wear her off.

Bontle woke up and took a bath, got into her uniform and we sat down to have breakfast. We said a prayer

and then dug in. Good thing I called my boss and asked for the day off. After breakfast we sat in the lounge and said a prayer for Bontle before these two had to go to school. Lungelo texted me and told me he'd come pick me up since I wasn't going to work. I decided since I'll be here for a while I might as well do some work. I did Bontle and mums dirty laundry and cleaned the house, even though there wasn't much to do in the house since the person who was house sitting kept the house clean.

Bontle came back just before midday. Her first paper was done and dusted. I thought she'd be feeling out but she was cool and calm. I guess everything went well.

"So, how was the paper."

"It was fine mummy, stop worrying. I will face these exams." Her confidence made me a tad bit better but I'm a mother, I won't stop worrying.

Lungelo showed up with a whole bouquet of Rose's

for Bontle. She was happy to see him and he was just as happy. He asked her about her first paper and how it went. I love how she is so carefree and just open with him. She might not have had a father in her life for sixteen years but life and God seem to be making up for all that.

Lungelo and I drove back to Durban in the evening after mum came back home. We got to Durban and went straight to the club. This is the first time I've been back since I started my new job. Lungelo said he had some work to collect and he ordered takeaways too so we had to collect those.

We went in and he went straight up to the office while I headed to the bar to talk to Bonsile and collect the takeaways.

"Hey girl."

"Do I call you boss now?" She said pretending to think while I laughed.

"You're an idiot. I am not your boss." We laughed.
She came around and gave me a hug.

"Kumnandi kwa Love lives here, you're even glowing ntombi."

"Mxm, stop exaggerating. So how's it going there by your new home?"

"So far so good. Muzi is treating me like the queen I am."

"As he should."

"I even met his mother last night. Yho lomama unedrama, but in a fun kind of way."

"Yeah, her personality fills an entire room."

"You've met her too?"

"Yep, she even met Bontle. I thought she'd have a problem but she's quite sweet."

"Right. I thought she'd hate me but she was cool."

She went to the kitchen and came back with our takeaways. Lungelo came down and after promising

to meet up with Bonsile for lunch so we can catch up we left. We drove home and I was surprised to find that MaMtolo wasn't there.

"Where's MaMtolo?" I asked soon as we got into the house.

"She's staying at Muzi's for a couple of days then she is going to Joburg to see Khanya and the kids then she'll go to Limpopo to see my sister and her family then she'll go back to Cape Town and be with my other sister before she heads home."

"Talk about a country tour."

"She likes surprising us, I don't know what she thinks she'll find. But she won't stop trying."

He went upstairs to freshen up while I dished up the food. He came back and we snuggled in front of the TV.

"So I've been thinking, you should move in here."

"I am here baby."

"No I mean officially. You can give up your flat and

come stay with me." I looked at him and he had a nervous smile on his face. "Think about it, you can save on rent and bill's and all that."

"I'll think about it." His smile widened and it moved from being a nervous one to a genuinely happy one. I laid back on his chest.

I wasn't sure if I should even consider moving in. But then again I am always here, so it kinda makes sense, but we havent been dating that long, what if things dont work out? I couldnt stop thinking about this suggestion. I spent the better part of the night with all these questions in my head. I dont even know when I fell asleep.

I woke up the next morning to find Lungelo staring at me. He had a smile on his face and I didnt understand why. Its morning for heavens sake.

"Its rude to stare Mr Radebe."

"Its not staring Sthandwa sam its admiring." He said

kissing my forehead.

"Wena na. Why are you up so early?"

"I wanted to give you another reason why this moving in suggestion is a good idea."

"Okay. I'm listening."

He leaned over and kissed me, slowly, but I could feel the kiss deepening. I felt his hand move up on my thighs lifting up my night dress. He moved from my lips and nibbled on my neck moving down to my chest. He moved my dress aside and kissed my boobs for a while before putting my nipple in his mouth sending a whole lot of emotions and tingles all over my body.

He let go of my boob and helped me lift up my nightdress. He leaned closer again and kissed my lips before making his way down my body till he got to the Holy of holies. If this was a negotiation for me to give the earth to aliens and he was negotiating on

behalf of the aliens, I'm sorry to say but the aliens would officially be in possession of earth right now cause, no, ubhuti knows what he's doing. I orgasmed so many times from just his tongue and fingers alone.

He came back up after a while. He kissed me and I could taste myself on his lips. He pulled out of the kiss and reached into the side table drawer and took out a condom. He put it on then entered me in one swift movement. He slowly moved in and out of me. His slow strokes were crazily satisfying but still my body wanted more.

I locked my feet around his waist pulling him deeper into me. He got the hint cause he started moving a bit faster and hitting places I didn't think were reachable. He went faster and faster till my body gave in and sent a thousand sensations running through my body. He kept going till his own release happened. He pulled out and took the condom off.

He went to the bathroom and came back with a damp towel. He wiped me clean then got into bed. He laid on his side with his head resting on his arm watching me try to catch my breath.

"You don't play fair Mr Radebe. How is a girl supposed to say ok when you're that convincing." He laughed and leaned down to kiss my bare shoulder.

"All I did was lay down my arguments. Now the ball is in your court."



NARRATED

In Joburg, Mrs Mashile has been working tirelessly to get Philani and his friends to back off of her family. She had people collecting evidence to use against the guys. But so far she had found nothing. All her digging wasn't producing the results she

wanted so she urged her people to keep digging.

After a meeting with one of her people she made her way to a restaurant in town. She got in and sat down, placed her order and waited. She was surprised when she saw Busani Biyela walking into the same restaurant.

He was led to a table where he sat down. The waiter brought him his drink. Mrs Mashile got up from her table and went to where Busani was seated. She sat down across from him. She took the glass in his hand and gulped it down, much to his annoyance.

"Portia Mashile, I would say it's nice to see you but you and i both know that would be a lie."

"Oh come now old friend. You and I have history, I'm sure that counts for something, right?"

"What do you want Portia?"

"I need you to talk to your son, tell him to back off."

Busani chuckled.

"Let me guess, none of your digging has produced anything? My advice, dug harder, who knows, you might make it to hell."

"Busani, you and I have history, we used to be close. There was a time I knew I could count on you, for anything. What happened to that man?" Busani leaned close to her with his arms on the table.

"That man lost his grandson, all because of your daughter in law, and then you and your son made sure to cover it up. See if that accident was a mistake it would have been so easy for everyone to get past it. It would have been easy for us to forgive. All the mess that's happening right now is all because of the choices you and your son made by choosing to go to extremes just to cover your own butt? Philani is my son, I raised him, if anything or anyone comes after his family or the people he loves, believe you me, not even God himself can stop him. So if I were you, I'd prepare myself. Lebo is in jail, Lesego is in a wheelchair, Malcolm hasn't shown his face in public for weeks, I wonder what's next."

A waiter came over and brought Busani's takeaway order. He took and got up. He looked at Mrs Mashile.

"Have a nice day Portia." He left her there and walked out. Mrs Mashile got up and went back to her seat. The waiter brought her food. She took one bite of her steak before her phone rang. She picked it up.

"Mrs Mashile."

"Ma'am, its Detective Ngele, I'm calling from your house in Houghton, I think you should come home."

"Why? What's wrong?"

"Ma'am, I think it's best you come home." Mrs Mashile hung up and quickly rushed out. She drove home like a maniac.

Soon as she got to her street, her heart started beating faster. She was met by a tone of smoke coming from her house. She parked outside the gate where people were gathered, well this is Houghton,

her neighbors were probably watching through their windows, but these people on the street, she couldn't figure out where they came from.

She quickly rushed into her home. Lucky for her Detective Ngele had seen her first and was walking towards her.

"Mrs Mashile?"

"Yes. What's happening? Why is there so much smoke?"

"Well, your cars burst into flames. The fire department is investigating what happened but they suspect arson."

"Arson? So someone deliberately did this?"

"It looks like it. Luckily the fire was contained so it didn't affect the rest of the house. But the garage is toast. Do you know anyone who would do this?" Mrs Mashile deliberated with herself, wondering if she should say who she thinks is responsible.

Her phone rang before she could even answer the Detective.

"What?" She answered without even looking at the caller's name.

"That's a rude way to speak to someone who literally has your life in their hand." Mrs Mashile looked at her phone but the number was blocked. She moved away from the Detective.

"Who is this?"

"This is your worst nightmare. And sadly for you, it's just beginning. Next time make sure you lock your gates. You're making this so easy and I hate easy. Fight damnit. This wont be as much fun unless you fight. Make this worth my while." He hungs up leaving her confused.

She put her phone back in her bag and looked at her house that still had smoke coming out of it. Her cars were burnt beyond recognition. It was at that moment that she made her decision, if Philani Biyela wants a fight, a fight he will get.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FORTY

There is no better time than now. That's what they say right? To urge you to take that first step towards your dream, to urge you to believe in your own capabilities and what you can do if you put your mind to it. Well, I decided to take that into consideration when I decided to apply for an opportunity to help the auditors at our firm audit one of the biggest companies in Africa, and possibly the world.

Mr Hlophe told us about an opportunity for us to help the auditors who will be flying to Joburg to join Biyela Holdings for a couple of weeks. Although Biyela Holdings has its own inhouse accountants and auditors, the CEO apparently also wants an independent contractor to check on the books atleast once a year to make sure all is well. Makes

me wonder what the accounting department feels about someone else watching over their every move.

I packed my bags ready to hit the road. Biyela Holdings booked us flight tickets to Joburg. There are four auditors and four accountants who will be serving as assistants throughout. And that includes me. Its amazing isn't it. I cant wait to experience a whole different vibe.

"You do know I can drive you right?" Lungelo said as he woke up. He's been sulking since I told him about my trip.

"I know you can that's why you're driving me to the airport."

"You do know how long two weeks is?"

"Yep, fourteen days."

"That is so long Sthandwa sam. I will be bored out of my mind."

"You have Muzi to keep you company. Besides, when

I get to Joburg I'll get a chance to meet up with Khanya about the custody suit." He laughs.

"A custody suit for a sixteen year old. How dumb can Paul be."

"Yeah well, he thinks his money will automatically buy Bontle's love and make him daddy of the year."

"Mxm, he doesnt deserve her and he sure as hell never deserved you." He says wrapping his arms around me while I finish off my make up.

"You need to take a shower so we can go, I dont want to be late.

"Fine." He groaned and kissed me on the head before heading to the bathroom.

He came back after taking his shower and put on chinos and a golf tshirt. He drove me to the airport. He helped me carry my bags in and we looked around for my colleagues. I called one of them who told me they were in the business lounge so we headed there. We found three of them sitting around

waiting for the others. Lungelo offered to sit and wait with me but after a while he decided to leave.

When everyone had showed up we boarded our flight. We got to Joburg and found a Mercedes Benz viano waiting. We got in and headed straight to the hotel. We freshened up and had breakfast at the hotel restaurant before we headed to Biyela Holdings.

We got to the building and it was huge. This building was probably double the size of our building in Durban. We got in and we were led to a huge boardroom. We sat around the table and took out our laptops and set up. A man and a woman came in soon as we were done setting up.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Biyela Holdings. My name is Philani Biyela, and this is my wife Landokuhle Biyela, the Chief Operations Officer. Please feel free to do what you need to do to make

yourselves comfortable. The staff is ready and available to help you with whatever you need." The man said.

"Before my husband works you to the bone, we have a refreshment station just outside the boardroom, there are cold drinks and hot drinks and there is a cafeteria on the first floor." Lando said. She seems nice and sweet.

"Thank you for having us. We hope to give you the answers you need." Zonke said. She is a Junior partner at the firm and right now she is our supervisor on this trip. She went on to introduce us all to the couple. They smiled and greeted us one by one. Well they smiled until they got to me. I'm not sure if I was just reading too much into it but I could have sworn their smiles disappeared when they heard my name.

After they left we got down to work and I tried to put the whole awkward moment to the back of my mind.

We were so engrossed in work we almost missed lunch. By the time we got our heads away from the computer it was almost three o'clock. We decided to go down to the cafeteria to get some sandwiches. By the time we knocked off we were dead tired. Biyela Holdings is huge. And the fact that it holds so many different companies under its roof means we literally have to audit all those companies in two weeks. As heavy as the work is, its exciting and I'm loving every minute of it.

I got to my hotel room and headed straight for the shower. The warm water massaged my tired muscles just right. I got out and almost had a heart attack when I went back to the bedroom, I found Lando sitting on one of the two chairs in the room. It was a bit scary seeing her just sitting there but what's scarier was the fact that she didnt even look up when I came in.

"Hi!" I muttered after a while.

"Hi. Sorry if I scared you." She said after putting her phone in her bag and looking up at me.

"Its fine. Is everything okay?"

"It will be. As soon as you tell me which one of those god forsaken people sent you to spy on us." Huh?

"I'm sorry what?"

"I'm no spy but I'm pretty sure the first rule at spy school is never give people your real name."

"Im sorry I still have no idea what you're talking about."

"Mashile! That's your name right?"

"Yes."

"So who sent you? Lesego? Malcolm? Your mother?"
It took a while for everything to register in my head. This was about the Mashile's that's why she was naming them. She thinks I'm their spy.

"This name is such a curse." I mutter under my breath and sit down on the chair across from her.

"What was that?"

"Unfortunately for me the Mashile name is not my birth name. I was married into that family and being young and naive, I changed my name to Mashile. And now I need to get rid of it. Clearly."

"Okay. So who were you married to?"

"Paul."

"Wait, are you the one Khanya was helping with the wrongful imprisonment case?"

"That would be me."

"Oh wow. I'm sorry. That name just gives me the hibby jibbies. And when I heard your supervisor introduce you I jumped to conclusions. I'm sorry."

"Its okay. I don't like the name either. I've just been procrastinating on changing it. And if I ever needed a kick, I just got it." She laughed. When she's relaxed she's actually quite warm and sweet.

"I'm really sorry about that." She got up and picked her bag up. "I should get going, I think I've embarrassed myself enough."

"No worries. Thank you though for doing this today. It would have been quite an awkward two weeks." I walked her to the door and watched her leave.

I went back in the room and lotioned then ordered room service. Who knew today would be an eventful day. Its gonna be one epic two weeks.



NARRATED

After leaving Nomonde's hotel room, Lando headed straight to a restaurant where she was meeting her husband for dinner. She got to the restaurant and was led to her table. Philani wasn't here yet so she just ordered a cocktail and waited for him.

She enjoyed her drink unaware that she was being

watched. Her guards were sitting at another table watching her. She was glued to her phone she didn't even notice someone walking up to her table. Her guards were quick to stop the intruder from reaching her table. She looked up and saw her guards standing between her and her intruder, Mrs Mashile. She nodded to her guards to let her go. Mrs Mashile took a seat next to her.

"Mrs Biyela."

"Mrs Mashile. To what do I owe this disturbance?"

"Woman to woman, you need to put your husband on a leash." Lando leaned back on her chair and crossed her arms on her chest.

"And why would I do that?"

"I've been patient, I understood him going after Lesego and Lebo, but those two are paying for their sins. My son is in a wheelchair and my daughter in law is in jail. You got your revenge. Now it's time to back off." Lando laughed and leaned back closer to her.

"You're cute when you try to be scary. But see, the rules of revenge, you don't get to decide when the revenge metted against you is enough. If you know you fucked up, you either fight back or take whatever is thrown your way. You don't get to say it's enough and it all ends."

"And this is me fighting back. My family means the world to me. And you've already destroyed three of my children's lives, I'm not going to sit back and watch you destroy my family. So tell your husband, he can either put a bullet through my head or he can prepare for the fight of his life."

"I'm glad to hear you say that Portia. I love a good fight." Philani said standing behind Mrs Mashile.

Mrs Mashile got up and started at Philani, fire burning in her eyes.

"Consider this your warning." Lando and Philani looked at each other and smiled.

"I'm glad you're fighting. My father always told me that things that come easy usually never last. So if I

had to put a bullet in your head it would be a waste of time and energy on my part. When I am done with you, I need that feeling of satisfaction to last a lifetime."

"You're forgetting one thing. I've been on this earth longer than you've been. I've seen things you can only dream off, so trust me I don't scare easily. Believe you me, you will wish you had put that bullet in my head."

"Okay. I love a fair fight. Bring it on. Sleep with one eye open from now on. If you think all that's happened until now was bad, imagine what's coming. Now if you will excuse us. My wife and I are hungry and we need food." Mrs Mashile took a couple of steps to leave. "Oh, Portia, tell Paul I said hi. And tell him to take his car for a service. You never know when the brakes might give in."

Mrs Mashile walked away. She took out her phone and called her son, but he wouldn't pick up. She panicked and drove to his house. She sighed when

she walked into the house and found him sitting on the couch watching TV. He stood up when he saw his mother rush in. Mrs Mashile engulfed him in a hug, thanking the heavens that her son was safe. But for how long?

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FORTY ONE

When things are good you would think they will never change and when they are bad you would think the bad times will never end. But I have learnt to enjoy the good times and hold on through the bad times till they pass.

Being in Joburg has been a major learning experience. I've learnt so much from the auditors and the other accountants. I've relearnt so many things I had totally forgotten. And one thing I am grateful for is that everyone is willing to help whenever I get stuck. Although there's been a couple of people who dont like the idea of me even being here but i am grateful for the kind and helpful ones.

We are halfway through the audit. Lungelo is

probably counting down the seconds till I go back home. He calls me any chance he gets. If it were up to him he would be here with me, I've even had to stop him a few times from coming here cause I know if he comes I'll be distracted. I need to focus right now so I can take a step up the ladder in my career. Yes I have a career. It still amazes me all the time. A year ago I would have neve even dreamed of this.

We finished working for the day. Since its Friday we ended our work early. We are supposed to work tomorrow but because we've been so far ahead with our work Zonkhe decided to give us the weekend off. As great as that is I will be bored all alone here, now I regret stopping Lungelo from coming. I have a meeting with Khanya later. He said he had an update on the lawsuit. I just pray I dont have to go to court and have to recount every horrible moment I've gone through in jail.

We left work and headed straight to the hotel. A few of the others were planning on going out to the club just to let their hair down. If I didn't have this meeting with Khanya I would have probably joined them, but this is important.

I got to the hotel and took a shower. I changed to a flower print A-line dress. I put on some strappy heels and did a natural look on my face. The fact that I have mastered make up in just a few months, I need a huge pat on the shoulder. I requested an uber and headed to the restaurant where I would be meeting with Khanya. I found a text on my phone soon as I got to the restaurant. Khanya was running late.

I got in and was led to a table that Khanya had pre booked. I ordered a glass of red wine while waiting for him. I was enjoying this solo date until a descendant of satan straight from the pits of hell decided to invade my space.

"You look good."

"I know. What do you want Paul?" He called the waiter over and ordered a glass of Jameson whiskey. I guess his taste hasn't changed much.

"How's Bontle?"

"You're her father, maybe you should call her and ask her. Oh wait, you don't even have her number and yet you think you can get custody of her. Tragic."

"Look, I know I fucked up and I also know I have a lifetime to make up for, but she is still my child and you can't stop me from being in her life."

"You're right. I can't stop you, but she can. She wants nothing to do with you Paul, your money can buy you the world but it will never buy you Bontle's love or acceptance. At some point, you are gonna have to accept that and live with it."

"Maybe if you stopped feeding her with all the lies of what actually happened she might give me a chance." I laughed out loud. I even saw a few eyes looking at me as I laughed.

"You really underestimate her dont you? Bontle is sixteen going on seventeen. Your name is on her birth certificate, she knows how to use a computer, do you really think all she knows about you she got from me or my mother? Really Paul. Your family is all over the internet, everyone knows who you are. The only thing she got from my mother was how you and your family made sure to have me locked up for a crime I didn't commit. If she chooses to hate you for that then that's on you."

I saw him clench his jaws a bit from frustration. I wasn't sure if it was because he realised that he can't just waltz into Bontle's life and expect to be father of the year or it was because he hates losing. But I didn't care cause Khanya walked in with Lungelo behind him. I had the goofiest smile on my face just seeing him. Love can really turn you into an idiot.

I got up when they got to us and gave Lungelo a hug and a kiss. Paul sat back on the chair with his arms

crossed looking at us, disgust written all over his face.

"You didnt tell me you were coming."

"Then it wouldn't have been a surprise baby."

"Yes, you can also thank me for picking you up front the airport." Khanya chimed in bringing us back to the present.

"True. Thank you Mthimkhulu for bringing my man."
He smiled.

We sat down and the brothers turned to look at Paul who didnt seem to be in a hurry to leave.

"Hhaybo ndoda, ufuna size sikucoshe yini. (Do you want us to chase you away?)" Khanya asked him. Paul turned to look at me and all I could do was shrug my shoulders. He got up and took his glass and moved to another table.

"So, what's with him?" Lungelo asked as Khanya called a waiter over to place their drinks order.

"Mxm, he thinks mum and I are the ones feeding Bontle with lies, that's why she wont accept him into her life." Lungelo frowned, judging by the lines formed on his forehead. Khanya just giggled.

"Does he think Bontle is stupid enough to believe anything without fact checking?"

"Apparently being a teenager equates to being stupid."

"Ok can we please stop talking about that dunderhead. I know Jesus makes miracles but I'm pretty sure he's also given up on him."

We placed our orders and had our dinner.

"So, the state came back to me with an offer for the wrongful imprisonment suit. They are willing to give you 50 million." I choked on my wine when he said that number.

"I'm sorry what were you asking for to begin with? That's a whole lot of money."

"I actually sued for 250 million rands."

"Oh wow, ambitious much."

"I'm an ambitious guy. But the suit is nothing compared to all you went through because of a bunch of corrupt officers who chose corruption over justice."

"Okay, so what do you think about the counter offer?"

"I dont work for peanuts Makoti. Fifty million is childs play compared to the years you spent behind bars, add the pain and suffering on top of that, you might never have to work again."

"Add the rapes on top of that." Lungelo said, the shock on his face when he said that, it was like the words just slipped out of his mouth. I wasnt sure how to react to be quite honest.

"Rapes?" Khanya asked, clearly shocked too since he didnt know that.

"Uhm... yeah." I answered.

"How many times?"

"I dont know. Countless times."

"I guess the suit just went up."

We finished our dinner. Lungelo and I headed back to the hotel.

"I'm sorry." He said as we laid on the bed.

"For what?"

"I shouldn't have told Khanya about the rapes."

"Its okay. I think at some point I have to see myself as more than just a victim. I'm a survivor and I need to embrace that. It's a part of me, I cant just pretend it never happened."

"I know. But still, it wasnt my place to speak on your behalf. And I feel really bad."

"Dont feel bad. We all need a push in the right direction sometimes. Thank you though, for being so supportive. God knows I wouldn't have been here without you."

"Nomonde, you deserve to be happy, you deserve all

the good things in the world. And I promise you, I will do all I can to make sure you're happy. You and Bontle. Even MaGumede even though she still looks at me weird." I laughed so hard at that. If only he knew mum actually likes him. But I'll just let him stew a bit.



BONTLE

Exams have been going great, although theres been a couple of papers that threw me off a bit I had to calm myself down and remember all my revisions and all my lessons. We are halfway through the exams and I am hopeful that I already have a couple of distinctions in the bag.

I finished my last paper for the week and just as I was preparing to go home and relax I was called into

the principal's office. I wasn't worried much cause I know I haven't done anything wrong although nerves were there too.

I got to the office and he told me I had a delivery. He reached into his drawer and took out a big brown envelope and handed it to me. I was scared a bit cause I didn't know what was in there. I thought the principal would make me open the envelope right there but he said I can take it home. So I did just that.

I went to say goodbye to gogo since school was technically not over, it was only the matric class that was going home. I promised to come back and help her carry her wares home.

I got home and opened the envelope. Inside it was a letter from a company I didnt even know offering me a scholarship, not a bursary but a full scholarship. The scholarship would pay for my tuition and accommodation as well as a monthly allowance.

There was also another letter stating that I had to go to Joburg to sign the contract. Strange, cause I don't remember even applying for this scholarship.

I turned on my laptop and googled the company. There was nothing much about it on the internet. I decided to search the company name on the CIPC website and it wasn't there. Yeah, ain't no way I'm going there.

I called my mum and we spoke a bit before I started cleaning the house. My phone beeped. It was a notification from the bank. Someone deposited money into my savings account. I've had this account for almost two years now and gogo always deposits a few hundred rands into it every other month but I know this is not her. There's way too many zeros here.

I looked at the reference and it said P Mashile. No guessing who that is. If I had his number I probably

ly would have called him and told him to shove his money where the sun dont shine. But since I dont have his number I cant even ask him where he got my account number from. I know mum didn't give it to him.

I called my friend Thando and I told her about this money and she told me to spend the money. Even though at first I wasn't too sure about it she told me to consider it back pay on child support. Oh well, if Paul has money to throw around then who am I to deny him that. But if he thinks this money will buy my love or accept him back into my life then he clearly doesnt know me. But I need to tell gogo and mum first before I even spend a cent of that bribery money.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FORTY TWO

All good things have to come to an end. My two weeks in Joburg is finally up. It feels weird but in a good way. I've learnt so much in so little time. And now it's time to go back home.

We packed up our things soon as everything had been done and the report had been printed and emailed to the powers that be. We waited in the boardroom for the Biyela's to address us before we leave. They came in looking like the power couple that they are. My mother always said never envy people's lives cause you dont know what they are going through behind closed doors but I can't help loving this couple. They seem so in sync with each other and they look perfect together.

"Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for your time. This is the end of the road. We truly appreciate it. So, right now you will head to the hotel, refresh and change, there will be transport waiting for you to take you to dinner. We can't let you go without little bit of a party."

There were cheers and whistles around the room where they said that. We all went back to the hotel and as instructed I took a shower and changed to a pair of Jean's with a mesh shirt and heels. Lungelo left two days ago and I miss him already. I wish he was here but tomorrow is just a few hours away.

I went downstairs to the lobby soon as I was done. I found some of my colleagues already waiting. A viano parked outside in the parking lot. We got up and went to it. We got in and waited for the others. Soon as everyone was in we drove to a restaurant in Sandton. It looked expensive as fuck.

We got in and sat down at the long table that was prepared for us. A few minutes later our hosts joined us and we ordered food and drinks galore. It was so much fun just bonding with everyone. We even lost track of time. By the time we looked up it was almost three in the morning.

We drove back to the hotel and literally had a little time to sleep and pack. I'm pretty sure I had less than two hours of sleep. Morning came and we headed out. We checked out of the hotel and the viano took us to the airport.

We got to Durban and Lungelo was already waiting at the airport. And lucky for us we didnt have to report to work today so we went home. I got home and the first thing I did was throw myself on the bed and head to dreamland. Philani and Lando know how to throw a party. I dont know how many shots I took last night. Every single one of us boarded the plane with shades on to hide the red eyes and hangover.

I woke up feeling super relaxed, well almost. I did have a bit of a minor headache, but it was nothing an aspirin wouldn't cure. I got up and went to the bathroom to pee. I came back and threw myself on the bed again. I picked up my phone and found a missed call from Bontle. I called her back immediately.

"Hi mummy."

"Hi nana. I found a missed call from you, what's up?"

"Nothing much. I have news." I could tell by her voice that she was nervous.

"What?"

"Well, a few days ago I got a letter, it was for a scholarship, one I didnt even apply for and then a few minutes later someone sent twenty thousand into my account."

"Okay, the scholarship is nice, but how did you get it if you didnt apply for it? And who would send you

that much money?"

"The scholarship thing, I searched for the company it came from and the company doesn't exist, as for the money, it had a reference, P Mashile." That son of a bitch. He thinks he can manipulate my daughter with money. Who the fuck does he think he is.

"Okay, you did good by telling me. Have you spent the money?"

"Nope."

"Good. Get a bank statement from the banking app and email it to me together with the scholarship letter. Okay."

"Okay ma."

"You did good Okay. And if you need money I'll send it to you. This sudden money Paul sent you is his way of trying to manipulate you."

"I figured as much. You can't buy love."

"Exactly. Greet gogo for me okay. I'll come see you soon. I love you."

"I love you too. Bye."

I hung up and called Khanya.

"Makoti." He said soon as he answered the phone. I dont think I'll ever get used to that.

"Hey, uhm so Bontle got a scholarship from a none existing company and then Paul sent her twenty thousand."

"That son of a bitch."

"That's what I said."

"Tell you what, I will find a way to get the bank to reverse that money and then figure out what's happening with the scholarship."

"Perfect, thank you. I'll send you everything soon as Bontle sends it to me."

"Good. And I take it neither one of you gave him Bontle's bank details?"

"Definitely not."

"Right. I will let you know how it goes okay."

"Okay. Thank you so much."

I hung up and went downstairs. The house was empty. I'm sure Lungelo is at work. I decided to start making dinner. I checked my emails and came across one from my boss. I opened it and it had an attachment to it. I opened the attachment and it was a contract. A work contract for a permanent position at work. I decided to call Mr Hlophe.

"Nomonde. How are you?"

"I'm good. I just got an email from you saying you are giving me a permanent position. Is it real?"

"Yes, it's real. Zonkhe told me how impressive you were in Joburg so we decided to make your position a permanent one. Welcome onboard Miss Mashile."

I felt my heartbeat rise to double its beat. I am officially a chartered accountant. Crazy. As impressive as this is, I need to change my last name back to Gumede. I refuse for my contract to bear that God forsaken name. Tomorrow morning, my first stop will be to home affairs. It's time for

Nomonde Gumede to make her presence known and felt.



LUNGELO

CJ's ceremony is coming along just fine. Well CJ is my son. Nqobile not only gave my son another man's last name she also gave him his name too. Yeah neh, when women want to hurt you they make sure.

I figured since Monde was sleeping I would go and check on some of my businesses. I went past a flower shop and got about a dozen Rose's. And just as I was walking out I bumped into Nqobile.

"She's a lucky girl."

"No, I'm the lucky one. What do you want Nqobile?"

"Well, now that I've ran into you, maybe we could talk about the ceremony."

"Is my mum dead?"

"What?"

"I told you if you need anything regarding this ceremony you will talk to my mother or Muzi."

"Really, Lungelo. This is your son not Muzi's or your mother's. Cant you show a bit of interest!"

"You know what would have been interesting? Actually getting to know my son, but you denied me of that opportunity. My mum and Muzi are waiting to solve whatever issues you might have."

I left her there and got into my car. I drove home and found Monde playing some music. She was dancing around the lounge. I decided to join her and goof around. We danced around for a while before we threw ourselves on the couch.

"You're in a good mood."

"Well I just got some good news. Hlophe is giving me a permanent position at the firm."

"Really?"

"Yeah." She said with a huge smile plastered on her face. I pulled her up and picked her up the spun her around while she giggled. I put her back down and kissed her.

"I'm so proud of you."

"Thank you. I wouldn't have been able to do this without your help."

"Actually I didnt do anything. This is all you. You did this baby. You rebuilt your life and now it's paying off. I cant wait to see how far you will go." I wiped the tear falling from her eyes and gave her a hug.

I've never been a corporate fan. I dont like being confined and following a protocol or standard that's been laid out. Sometimes I look at Nomonde when she gets ready for work and the smile on her face tells me she enjoys it. I wonder how far she would be

if Amanda hadn't happened and the Mashile's had had a bit of Faith in her and believed her? Looking at her now and seeing her rebuild herself from the inside out and reaching for all the dreams she was denied before makes me so proud to be a part of this journey. And I pray to God this time nothing stands in her way, but even if something does come up, this time she will have a whole team rallying behind her and ready to fight with her at every turn. I cant wait to see what Nomonde will get up to in this lane. But I'm pretty sure it will be amazing.

My phone beeped indicating a message. I looked at my phone and it was a message from Khanya. Malcolm Mashile had committed suicide. One down, how many more to go? Who cares, we have good news to celebrate.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FORTY THREE

Some of the things on this earth that are a certainty, night will always come no matter how bright the sun shines, the sun will always rise no matter how dark the night is and death will always come, whichever way it can.

Death had visited the Mashile's, it had no intention to show up but Malcolm made certain to open the gates wide open for it to come in. After weeks of shame and not being able to face his family for helping Amanda cover up her sins, not being able to face his party members. He wallowed in his own self pity for so long he had missed the support that many people were sending his way, after being the trending topic on social media for almost a week and being on the news every second day, he had allowed the negativity to drown out the positives.

When everyone had had time to think and digest his choices, many came out in support, many believed in his dreams and ideas that would have steered the country to new directions and his choices on who he chooses to sleep with weren't so much an issue to some. But the people caught up in this scandal with him were not happy that their little secrets had been made public. Some blamed Malcolm, and they vowed to make him pay for it. His wife was seething with anger, divorce lawyers had been called in and ad they say, 'hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.'

With all that was being thrown his way, it became too much for Malcolm, so on one fateful night, his wife had taken the children out for supper, he went into his home office, he checked all his funeral policies and life policies to make sure all was in order, lucky for him, or maybe lucky for his wife and kids he had chosen life covers that were unconventional to say the least, they covered him for all the ways that he could die, including suicide. His will was up to date. When he felt everything was the

way it was meant to be, he took a bunch of pills and downed them one after the other till there was none left.

Malcolm laid back on his chair waiting for the pills to take effect, but they seemed to be taking too long. He went around the house looking for more pills. He found them and proceeded to take them all. He felt himself getting dizzy and before long he was frothing on the mouth. With no one else in the house, help was too far. Eventually his body gave in, his organs shut down one after the other until his soul left his body.

He laid there lifeless for the whole night with the door locked. His wife wasn't surprised by the locked door as that had been his ritual the past few weeks, even his kids missed their father because even as close as he was, he was still far away from them.

Paul had showed up a couple of days later hoping to

Speak to his brother. Since Lesego was incapacitated at the moment he needed someone to help him with his custody case, and his brother seemed like the best option. He drove to his brother's house, Malcolm's wife let him in. He got into the house and asked where Malcolm was, he got worried when Malcolm's wife told him she hadn't seen him in two days since he had locked himself up in the study.

Paul knocked on the door over and over again but he got no reply. He decided to break down the door. He called the security guys outside who came in and helped him. They were all shocked when they got in and found him laying there, dead. His pupils were white as snow, the foam that had come out of his mouth had dried up. After letting his family know about the tragedy that had befallen them, Paul was shocked to see the story trending on social media.

The next few days were somber and tedious for

Malcolm's wife, as much as she had loved her husband, what he had done, had quickly turned her love into hate. The saying, there's a thin line between love and hate rang true for her. Even though some say love doesn't just disappear, for her, it had gone out the window like a mist in the morning sun.

Mourning wasn't in her plans, although, as the dutiful wife she had to play her part. She sat on the mattress and pretended to be sad everytime a new group of people came in to pay their respects.

Philani and his crew had also found out about the death on social media, and for them, it was a celebration. Khanya has joined them at Phoenix lounge as they toasted to one less problem to worry about. They had made the decision to also pay their last respects. They set a date and drove to the Mashile home.

They were not surprised to find media outside. They

walked into the yard and the Mashile's already had their guard up. They knew there was nothing they could do with the media watching their every move. Philani and his friends found Malcolm's wife and mother in the lounge on a mattress with a few more relatives. They sat down on the chairs that were set aside for mourners. The daggers that Mrs Mashile senior was shooting their way was unmissable.

"Biyela. What are you doing here?" Mrs Mashile asked soon as the friends sat down.

"We came to pay our last respects. Malcolm was our future president. He had so much hope for this country we couldn't help but be inspired too." Philani said, much to the amusement of his friends who tried their best to hide their pretense.

"I'm sorry, can I use the bathroom?" Sizwe asked. One of the ladies sitting on the mattress gave him directions. Lucky for him the bathroom was downstairs right next to the home office.

Sizwe left his friends still pretending to care and made his way to the bathroom. He did his business, washed his hands and walked out. As he was walking past the home office, he saw through the door that was ajar that Lesego was in there. He silently pushed the door open and walked in. He looked around the room, with Lesego still oblivious to the guest behind him.

"So this is where he took his life? You know I knew your brother was a coward but honestly I didn't think he'd do this." Lesego quickly turned around and looked at Sizwe.

"What the fuck are you doing here? Came to gloat?"

"Gloat? What do you mean? We didn't do this."

"Of course you did, if it weren't for you and your friends we wouldn't be here." Sizwe knelt down until he was level with him.

"You know who did this? You! Your wife! Your dearly beloved mother! And thanks to you all the people who helped you cover this up will pay dearly."

Lisakhanya was very important to us and Lebo took his life, and then you helped her cover it up. Your brother's gone. You're in a wheelchair, there's four more to go. You and your mother will watch your lives crumble day by day. And when we are done with the rest of your little family we are coming for you. And you know what my favourite thing to do to people, I skin them alive and watch them squirm. I look forward to seeing your skin parting with the flesh. It will be beautiful."

He got up and left Lesego sitting there, his heart rate faster than normal. There were rumours he'd heard once that Sizwe was the most ruthless of the group, and now he knew the rumours were true. And now he was coming for him. He could feel his skin crawl just thinking about Sizwe's threath and even though most of his acquaintances had started distancing themselves from him he had to find just one person willing to help him. The question was who?



NOMONDE

I finally found time and went to home affairs to change my last name back to Gumede, although it was a long process my documents are in and being processed. Hopefully I will have my new ID with my proper name on it.

I asked Mr Hlophe to give me time to change my name so that my new contract will have my proper name on it and he was more than happy to indulge me. He promised to draw up a new contract with my new name. I'm super excited about that. But more than anything I'm happy that I'll be able to show my mother my contract with the Gumede name on it. She'll be so happy. Now we can fully be the Gumede Girls. I'm so giddy about this even thinking about it just brings a smile to my face.

Work is coming along just fine. I found out after we got back from Joburg that the whole trip was also an assessment of the juniors and interns, Zonkhe was impressed with all of us that the interns got their contracts too. We celebrated together. Lord knows I owed them a lot for their help so when we celebrated we went to Lungelo's club. After a bit of negotiation with him he agreed to let me pay full price for the drinks and food. After all this is a business not a soup kitchen. But I should have known he was too stubborn for his own good cause when I wanted to pay the bill, he had already taken care of it.

I got home after work and found him in the kitchen cooking. I stood by the door watching him move around the kitchen. After he asked me to move in with him I decided to speak to my mother about it. Her response was quite surprising to me. I had expected her to put her foot down and tell me hell no but instead she went the opposite direction. She told me that I need to live my life. She said I spent too

much time locked up with no freedom or choices, and now I can do whatever makes me happy. And being with Lungelo makes me happy. And yes it might be too soon but if it's meant to work between us it will whether we live together or not. Bontle on the other hand was super excited, mostly because if she comes to visit she will come to a house with a pool and a whole library right under her roof.

He turned around and smiled when he saw me standing there. I know I say this a lot but that dimple is a whole aphrodisiac.

"Hey baby. How long have you been standing there?"

"Long enough." I walked over to him and gave him a hug and a kiss. He lifted me up and placed me on the counter standing between my legs. "Aren't you supposed to be cooking?"

"I'm done. Now I want to eat." He said nibbling on my ears.

He moved down my neck and unbuttoned my shirt. His hands fondled my boobs making me moan. He came up again and kissed me on the lips while lifting up my skirt and pulling down my underwear. I felt him rub his fingers on my little haven sending shivers all over my body before entering me in one swift movement. I felt my body give in before he could even move. He waited till my orgasm had died down before he began his slow dangerous strokes. Before long I felt my body building up again. I locked my legs behind him as my body began its climax. He went harder till my body gave in. He kept going till his own climax happened.

He pulled out and threw the condom in the bin.

"Come on, let's go take a shower so we can eat."

We walked up the stairs hand in hand. Maybe mum was right, I have fifteen years to make up for, I am allowed to make mistakes and learn from them, and if this is a mistake, if loving this man is a mistake then its definitely a mistake I'm willing to make. I

love him.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FORTY FOUR

Do matric students still do pens down parties or that trend died with the old folks? I dont know. All I do know is that Bontle is officially done with her exams which means she is officially done with school. And now we await her results. While most people will be an anxious and nervous I will be as cool as a cucumber cause I know and trust my baby.

I decided to go home for the weekend since Bontle finished writing on Wednesday I figured we could celebrate on the weekend when I'm off work. And I get to celebrate my new ID. Yes i am officially back to being Nomonde Sarah Gumede. I still dont know why my mum felt the need to name me Sarah but ke it's my grandmother's name so I have no choice but to bear the name. The only positive about it is that it's my second name.

I went past a bakery after work and bought a small cake and some snacks before Lungelo picked me up and drove me home. Is it weird that I have got used to being driven around? I dont know when last I used a taxi to go home. Weird or not, I am enjoying this and for as long as its here, I will savor every moment of it.

We got home and since Lungelo was in a hurry to get back to the club he couldnt stay for the celebration. He did come in and greet my mom and Bontle though. And when we walked him out with Bontle he gave her an envelope with something inside before driving off. We got back into the house and I was curious to see what was inside the envelope but Bontle wouldn't open it just yet. As curious as I was I had to respect her wish.

We had an awesome mini celebration. Mum enjoyed the cake so much she even had an extra slice. And

here I was thinking she has no sweet tooth. Bontle finally decided to open her envelope. She screamed after opening it but she still wouldn't tell us what it was. We kept looking at her hoping she'd say something but she didnt. Instead she closed the envelope and put it back in her pocket. My mum and I looked at each other before looking back at her, and she could clearly see us looking at her.

"Are you going to tell us what's in that envelope?" My mum finally asked.

"No. It's my gift."

"Hhaybo Bontle, we want to know." I said.

"Fine." She sighed and took the envelope out of her pocket. She opened it and all I saw was a bunch of orange something being pulled out. Only when she laid it out on the coffee table did I see what it was. It was two hundred rand notes.

"How much is that?" I asked as I tried to count the

notes in my head.

"I dont know." She answered. My mum couldnt stop looking at it.

"Count it." She picked it up and counted it and it was five thousand rands. Why would Lungelo even give her that much money.

"Letha ugogo akbekele yona. (Give it to me so I can save it for you.)" Mum said making us laugh. We all know chances of her getting it back are slim to zero if she does give it to her.

"Hha gogo, I am going to put it in my savings. It will come in handy next year." Okay. Smart girl. She takes out a couple of notes from the bunch and hands one to my mum and another to me. "But yourselves something nice." She says before walking to her room while fanning herself with the money.

"I wish you had met Radebe before meeting that devil." Mum says sounding upset, I think.

"You and me both. But ke we cant change the past.

That's what you always say right."

"I know. But still. I think he'd make a great father. Seeing the constant smile on your face and how he keeps making Bontle happy, I could die now and I'd die happy cause i know you two would be just fine."

"You were coming along just fine until the death part. You are not going to die on me anytime soon. I still have to build you that house in the burbs." She laughs making me happy.

"Just make sure the house has a pool."

"Done." I high five her. She gets up and goes to her room to sleep.

I decide to call Lungelo. He picks up but there is so much noise I don't think he can eve hear me cause he keeps asking me to repeat stuff. I cut the call cause it's clearly hopeless. He calls back after a couple of minutes and this time its silent. He's either outside the club or in his office.

"Hey, sorry about that. The club is packed. What's

up."

"Nothing much. I just want to say thank you."

"For what?"

"For Bontle's gift. She loved it. And she even gave me and mum two hundred rands each." He laughs.

"She's balling already. I can't help but stan." How the heck does he know so much young people lingo?

"Why so much money though?"

"Well, I figured since The bank reversed the 20k from Paul I should kind off replace it. I'm pretty sure she already had plans for it."

"True. I hate that Paul keeps using her to fight his stupid battles. I wish he could stop."

"You know he wont. They just buried their brother and he still feels the need to keep fighting."

"Yeah well, he's fighting a losing battle."

"I know. Let me get back to work. I love you."

"I love you too." The words leave my mouth before I can stop them. I can tell by the silence on the other

end that he is just as shocked as i am. I know i should be panicking or sweating right now but I'm not. It feels rather good. I hadn't said that to him until now.

"Wait, what did you say?" He asks no making me nervous. I giggle like a little girl.

"I said, I love you too."

"I thought I was dreaming. Okay. You just made my entire night, no make that my entire year."

"Ok, go back to work."

"Ok. I love you." He's really going to milk this for all it's worth.

"I love you too." He laughs again and hangs up.

I went to bed with a heart full of gratitude. I might not have all the luxuries that life has to offer but I am grateful for the life I have. And I don't think I'll ever get tired of saying that.

We woke up the next morning and took a taxi to town so Bontle can deposit the money in her account. We then went to the mall to get lunch and some groceries. I told Lungelo we were in town and he offered to take us home. Of course i couldnt say no to that offer. We got home and found a car parked outside the gate. It had a KZN registration so maybe that rules out the Mashile's. I wonder who it is.

We got into the house and the person in the car didnt even move an inch. Lungelo decided to stay for a while just to see who this person was but they didnt seem to be interested in letting themselves known. Thw crazy part about it was that they weren't trying to hide cause we could clearly see them sitting in the car watching the house. I was getting nervous to be honest.

Lungelo went out to confront them and as soon as they saw him walking towards the car they quickly

started the car and drove off. He came back and my mum was pacing up and down the lounge praying.

"I dont think you guys should stay here tonight."
Lungelo said soon as my mum said Amen.

"What? Why?"

"What if those people come back? What if they are watching to make sure that they come back soon as I leave. I can't leave you here."

"Yoh." Mum said as she sat down.

"I get that this is an inconvenience ma but I can't leave you here alone with some person watching your house. I'll feel better knowing you are somewhere safe."

"Ma, Lungelo is right. Whoever that was probably knows it's just you, me and Bontle in the house, what are we going to do if they decide to attack us." I said sitting next to her.

"Where will we go Nomonde, my sister is in Soweto."
I forgot I let the flat go. But we could find a hotel.

"We'll find a hotel."

"With what money?" Lungelo cleared his throat trying to get our attention.

"You could just stay at my place. Its big enough and there's plenty of security. And I know you aren't really comfortable being there so I will stay with my brother until we figure out what's happening."

"I cant let you move out of your house Radebe."

"I dont mind. I'd rather you were safe."

After more persuasion my mum finally agreed. We packed our bags and got into the car and off we went to Durban. I cant believe we are running away from our own home because of some unknown person watching our house.

As much as this may seem like some random thing I can't help feeling like Paul has something to do with it. After I told Khanya about Paul's little stunt with the scholarship and the money he made sure to have

the money reversed and the scholarship being looked into. He even got a PI to find all they can on this bogus company. A part of me however hopes I am wrong. The Paul I knew wouldn't do something like this, but then again I havent known him for a long while and people change.

The only positive about this is that Bontle is done with her exams so we wont have to bring her back here and worry the whole day not knowing if she is safe or not. We got to Durban and Lungelo drove around a bit, I guessed it was maybe to throw off the person if, God forbid, they are tailing us.

After a while we drove to his house. We got in and Bontle headed straight to the room she was using before. I led my mum to the other guest bedroom before going to our room. I found Lungelo packing a small bag.

"And now?"

"I did say I will be staying with my brother. I don't want to make your mum uncomfortable."

"That's sweet, but isn't it supposed to be the other way around." He chuckles and brings me in for a hug.

"Well, if I plan on marrying you one day I have to be in your mother's good books and making her uncomfortable will not do that." He kissed me on the forehead before going into the closet to get more clothes. How did we move from just 'I love you' yesterday to marriage today. "I spoke to Muzi and dont be scared when you wake up in the morning and find people in the yard. He is sending guards to watch over you guys." He said from the closet bringing me back to earth.

He finished packing and I walked him to his car. I watched him drive out then I went back into the house. I dont know what the fuck is happening right now but if Paul is behind this, I will kill him with my own bare hands. This time I will go to jail for something real.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FORTY FIVE

I hate living like this. It reminds me of prison. Constantly having people watching over you and being next to you at every turn is just crazy. I probably should be used to it but this just gives me a bit of PTSD. Damn whoever was driving that car that day. And Damn whoever sent them.

It's been a week since that person showed. And it's been a week since mum, Bontle and I have been together at Lungelo's place. As much as it's fun being with them I can tell mum is getting a bit restless. She's so used to being up and down doing something for herself that being stuck in one place is draining.

Lungelo picked me up from work and we've been

sitting outside the gate in his car for almost an hour now. I feel like a teenager being dropped off by my boyfriend. I don't know why he won't go in. It's his house after all. But at the same time I like the respect he gives my mum.

"Still no clue on what's happening with that car?"

"Well the car was a rental. The person who rented it gave the rental place a fake license and ID. But Khanya is following up on it. We should have a clue soon."

"Okay. I just hope it's very soon cause I'm tired of these guards, they remind me of prison." He took my hand in his and kissed it.

"It will be over soon. I promise."

"I know." He looked at his watch and I remembered he has to drive to Richard's Bay for his son's ceremony.

Yesterday they drove to Joburg armed with a court

order allowing them to exhume CJ's body and bring him home. I can tell he's a bit down about it. But then again who wouldn't. Tomorrow they are officially burying him with his people. As much as I wish I could be there for him I don't think it would be a good idea since it's just a small thing with his immediate family.

"What time are you driving to Richard's Bay?"

"In a couple of hours. Muzi has to finish up some work and then we'll drive together."

"I'm sorry I can't be there with you."

"It's okay. Besides, you will be safer here until we find the person following you around."

"Yeah. I think you need to go and take a nap before the drive. I don't want you driving tired." He chuckles and brings me in for a hug.

"Yes ma'am." He lets go and looks at me with a smile on his face. "I love you."

"I love you too."

I kissed him and got out of the car and went into the yard. He drove off soon as he was sure I was safely inside. I got to the house and found mum and Bontle in the lounge watching Skeem Saam. I joined them.

"You need to start packing." Mum says with her eyes still glued to the tv. I look at her and I look at Bontle and they are both looking at the TV.

"Who's packing and where are they going?"

"You need to pack. We've already packed we are just waiting for a car to come pick us up."

"Again, why are we packing and where are we going?"

"We are going to Richard's Bay. MaMtolo called earlier and said she is sending a car to come pick us up and take us there." Okay I know mum and MaMtolo speak from time to time but I didnt think they were so close that they would invite each other to intimate family gatherings.

"You do know there's a family thing going on right?"

"I know, and I tried explaining that to her but she says since we'll be family soon we might as well get to know each other and this will be the perfect time for that."

"So you and" Bontle cuts me off.

"Mum, don't waste your time and energy. These two wont listen to anyone. They've made a decision and we just gave to do what they say." She says.

"I'm pretty sure Lungelo doesnt know about this."

"And he wont know cause you wont tell him. MaMtolo made that pretty clear. So go pack."

I got up and went upstairs. I got in the shower and took my bath. I got out and sat on the bed trying to figure out if I should call Lungelo and warn him. I looked around for my phone so I can call him but I couldnt find it. I'm pretty sure I brought it up with me. Or maybe I imagined that.

I took out a small overnight bag and packed a few

things. I wore a midi skirt with a tshirt. Even though it was hot I had to debate with my head on whether I should put on a headscarf or not. But I'm not really married to him so I dont have to play the Makoti part right?

I decided against the headscarf. I took my bag and went downstairs. I found these two with their bags patiently waiting by the door. I placed mine too and sat down.

"I cant find my phone." Bontle took it out from her pocket and waved it around. "Give it to me." I said with my hand held out. She looked at her grandmother and she shook her head letting her know not to give me the phone. Bontle smiled and put the phone back in her pocket. "My phone please."

"You'll get your phone when we get to Richard's Bay. We dont want you calling Lungelo and telling him we are coming. His mother made it pretty clear he cannot know we are coming."

Yeah this is a mess. I'm still trying to figure out if it's a good mess or a bad one. I decided not to argue with these two. My mums phone rang. She picked it up and after a couple of seconds she hung up and got up from the couch.

"Switch of the TV, the car is here." We got up and I made sure all the lights were off except for the outside lights and a few lights in the hallways and the kitchen. The car was waiting outside. We got in and drove out.

We drove to Muzi's place and picked up Bonsile. I didnt know she was coming too but the driver seems to have specific instructions.

"What is going on?" Bonsile whispered next to me.

"I wish I knew. Who called you?"

"MaMtolo. She was very specific and threatening too. Made it pretty clear I shouldn't even think about telling Muzi or else they will cut the lobola in half." I laughed so hard. I knew that woman is nuts but this is beyond that.

"Atleast she called you. Mine I was ambushed."

"We are not going to be expected to play the dutiful Makoti's right? Cause I dont think I can."

"I'm sure we wont be. But you never know with that woman. She is unpredictable."

We drove to Richard's Bay. As soon as we saw the welcome to Richard's Bay sign I could have sworn my heart did a somersault. I wasnt more nervous about meeting the rest of Lungelo's family. As much as I've met a couple of them and they are super nice, I still can't help the nerves, cause you never know how the others will react.



LUNGELO

One thing I've never been a fan of is funerals. I dont

like them, never have and never will. The thing about funerals is that they are so final, sad and gloomy. I go to funerals because I have to not necessarily because I want to. But one thing I've never anticipated or ever thought I'd be doing was to bury my own child.

A part of me feels guilty more than sad. I didnt know him and the only thing I can do for him is bring him to rest with the rest of his family. A family he didn't even know, but they've all gathered together to make sure he finally rests in peace with his real ancestors.

After I dropped off Nomonde I went home to take a nap like she ordered but I ended up working. Muzi showed up after a while and we drove to Richard's Bay together. We got home and the rest of the family was there. As much as this would be a small intimate affair but the family showed up in numbers. Even Nqobile and her family were here.

I got off the car and went straight to my little two bedroom house in the yard. I got in and went straight to the shower. When I got out my siblings were sitting on the bed. All four of them.

"What are you guys doing here?"

"We came to bury our nephew." My sister Bongiwe answered.

"No I mean here, in my room. Why are you here?"

"We came to see you. We missed you." Thandeka answers. I look at Khanya and Muzi and all they can do is shrug.

"Now that we are here, uphi uMakoti?" Bongiwe asks sipping on some wine disguised as tea.

"What are you talking about?"

"We are talking about the brave girl who fell in love with you. Where is she?"

"Can you please leave me alone. I need to get dressed."

"We'll wait in the lounge." They got up and followed each other out. These ones are just nosy.

I picked up my phone and tried calling Nomonde but her phone went straight to voicemail. She must be asleep. I'll call her in the morning. I got dressed and went to join my siblings in the lounge. We sat around on the couches and they were looking at me expecting me to gossip with them.

"Hhaybo bhuti, speak. Tell us about this girl."

"No!"

"Muzi and Khanya, you two know her, tell us about her."

"You know what we should do wena Bongiwe, go to Durban cause clearly these ones won't tell us anything."

"Clearly. But the upside to this is that there is no chance of Nqobile making a comeback. Right Bhuti."

"What do you take me for. Once all this is done,

Nqobile is as good as dead to me."

"Amen." They say in unison.

We sat there talking and laughing about anything and everything. We heard a car pull up outside. We didnt even bother going to check who it was. Soon after that there was a knock on the door. I told the person to come in and it was my nephew Mxolisi. He told us gogo was calling us because she had guests she wanted us to meet.

We all got up and followed him to the main house. My heart almost stopped when I saw Nomonde sitting on the couch next to her mum and Bonsile, with Bontle sitting next to my mum. What the heck is happening.

"Children, so glad you came. I need you to meet MY guests, I invited them to join us." Muzi and I looked at each other while Khanya was laughing his ass off

and trying so hard to hide it. I dont think I've ever met a more devious woman. My mother has a whole lot of explaining to do.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FORTY SIX

"What's going on?" I asked confusion written all over my face.

"Nothings going on Lungelo, I just wanted you guys to come greet MY guests." My mum said with a smug look on her face. "Anyways for those of you that dont know, these are my guests. Bonsile and Nomonde are my future daughters in law, that's MaGumede, Nomonde's mother and this next to me is BontlebaModimo, my grandbaby."

Khanya and my sisters were having a field day with this. And just then my uncles and some of our extended family members we weren't expecting showed up. You would think they had just got off a train the way they just barged in here. There was noise and chaos while I was busy trying to figure out

what's going on.

"What is your mother up to?" Muzi asked as he came and stood next to me.

"Beats me. You know she's unpredictable."

"Tell me about it."

My mum was busy introducing Nomonde and Bonsile to everyone. As weird as this may be it was quite nice seeing how welcoming my family was, and I have my mother to thank for that. I know if she didnt like either of them the rest of the family would follow suit. But right now, as devious as her plan was or is, I'm happy that Nomonde and Bonsile dont have to feel some type of way about being here.

With all the chaos and noise that was happening I was able to pull Nomonde aside. I held her by the hand and led her to my house.

"Why didnt you tell me you were coming?" She

laughed and threw herself on the couch.

"I didnt know either. I got home and mum and Bontle told me to pack cause we are leaving. And they took my phone too so I couldnt tell you." I joined her on the couch and turned on the TV.

"I'm glad you came though."

"Me too. I like your family."

"They like you too. Makes my life easier."

"Right. So how are you feeling?"

"I'm okay. It's weird seeing his coffin in the house. To think this is his first time being here and he has to be here in a coffin. I'll never forgive Nqobile for this."

"Its going to be Okay. Atleast now he will rest in peace with his real family."

"Yeah." I brought her in for a hug. "I can't believe you are here. KoRadebe. My ancestors must be dancing." She laughed.

"How? They dont even know me. I'm sure they are wondering who that woman is?"

"Well they wont wonder anymore. Soon as I make you my wife they will know you."

The door burst open and Bongwiwe and Thandeka walked in giggling and laughing.

"Manje, akusa knockwa laykhaya (you dont knock anymore?)"

"Hhay yima kancane Bhuti (hold up). MaMtolo wants uMakoti wakhe. We are here for her not you."

Bongwiwe said.

"Ah ah. We are still busy."

"Yeah I'm not telling MaMtolo that. Wona Makoti."

Thandeka held out her hand to Nomonde. Nomonde looked at me and took Thandeka's hand and got up from the couch.

"Kanjalo vele, uyangshiya? (Just like that, you're leaving me.)" She smiled and gave me a kiss on the cheek.

"I will see you later."

They walked out giggling. My mother seems to forget that Nomonde is mine not ours. I need to remind her. I got up and followed them to the house. I got there and everyone was gathered in the lounge while the others were in the kitchen cooking. I decided to go to my mums room where CJ was. Good thing we will be changing his name tomorrow.

His casket stood there like it was a prop, but it was real. It actually reminded me of when we buried my dad. I got closer and touched the coffin before sitting down on the bed looking at it.

"I'm sorry son. I wish I had known you before this moment. I dont know what kind of father I would have been to you but I know I would have tried my best. I would have tried to give you a good life and I know you would have been loved dearly by everyone. Your aunts and uncles would have loved you to bits. I'm sorry you never got to experience that.

Ngyacolisa Bhungane, Mthimkhulu, Makhulukhulu, Zikode, Mashwabada inkomo nempondo zayo, Izinzipho zimnyama ngokuqhwayana, Mangelengele,

Mahlub' amhlophe. Sale uphumula Bhungane (rest now). Uyathandwa Zikode (I love you.)"

I wiped the line tear that had made it's way down my face. I looked at the candle that was lit and the flame seemed to burn brighter. I smiled at myself and walked out. I closed the door behind me and looked up to find Nqobile standing there.

"What are you doing here?"

"I wanted to spend some time with him. You would have made a great father to him."

"Right. And that only dawned on you when he was laying in a casket? Give me a break." I left her there and headed to the lounge ge where everyone was.

I sat down with my family, and as sombre as this moment is supposed to be I cant help feeling like it's not as bad as it should be. I might not know CJ as a person but I know enough about him to know that even in death, his blood knows where it belongs.

Nqobile might have taken the opportunity for me to be a father to him away but at the end of the day he still ended up where he belongs, with his blood.

Even though we went to sleep late last night, we were able to wake up early to begin the reburial process. My mother wouldn't let Nomonde sleep in my house with me, I understood though but I still missed her. I got up early in the morning and went to the main house. I was surprised to find people already moving up and down whether in the kitchen or in the yard. I thought I was the first one to wake up.

My uncles were in the lounge already waiting for me, when did these people wake up? Soon as I walked in we went to the bedroom where CJ was. Nqobile and her family spent the night in this room. We got in and my uncle lit the incense and we all knelt down.

"Radebe, Bhungane, Mthimkhulu, syakwamukela

ekhaya (we welcome you home.) Noma sofika nje ngendlela engayinhle (even though you came in a sad way), oBhungane bayakwamukela (we welcome you.) Sesiyakuthatha kemzukulu syokhlanganisa nokhokho bakho (we are taking you to join your ancestors.) Usungaphumula manje (you can rest now.) AMahlub'amhlophe akulindile (they are waiting for you.) Phumula Bhungane, phumula Mthimkhulu. Sosekhaya manje, siyokubeka nokhokho bakho nawe ulale nabo ngokuthula (rest, you are home now, we will place you with your forefathers so you can rest in peace with them.) Sizokunika igama elisha ke mzukulu (we will give you a new name.) Igama lakho kuzoba uBuyelekhaya Radebe (your name will be Buyelekhaya Radebe.) Yilona gama abazokwazi ngalo nokhokho bakho (that's the name your ancestors will know you by.) Radebe, Bhungane, Mthimkhulu."

We got up after my uncle had done what needed to be done. Someone started a song and Muzi, Khanya and I held the coffin together with our cousins and

we slowly walked out of the house with my uncle leading the way. We got to the cemetery and did the burial. It felt weird seeing his name on the little cross that was put up.

We went back home and the yard was busy. As usual people showed up uninvited. But then again that's what ubuntu is right? They see something happening and they also want to help out. I just hope theres enough food to feed everyone. We sat under the tree by the kraal. Khanya's wife, Kgomotso came over to us with a tray of food. Seeing her now playing the dutiful Makoti you wouldn't believe that she is a hotshot businesswoman in Joburg. I'm sure if her clients and employees would see her now they wouldn't believe it. She bowed down a little as she handed Khanya his food. The smile on his face was priceless. He thanked her and she blushed as she walked away. They are the reason I still believe in love. We all looked at him as he put a spoonful in his mouth.

"Stop looking at me like that. Thathani abafazi nani nizodla kucala (get yourselves wives so you can eat first.)" We laughed as we waited to be served too. He was right though. Maybe it was time I got married. And the perfect woman walked into my life one Monday morning and I refuse to let her go.



NOMONDE

Lungelo's family is a bunch of crazy individuals. But then again their mother is MaMtolo so what should one expect. But I wouldn't trade them for anything in the entire world. I'm pretty sure by now I have a two pack from laughing so much.

I thought his sisters would be indifferent to me or not like me at all but I was wrong. They've been incredibly amazing. They are so warm and

welcoming. At times I think it's too good to be true for one family to be so full of kindhearted people. There has to be the odd one out who has the heart of satan. Or maybe I should just stop trying to hold people to the evil standard of the Mashile's.

As much as everyone has been calling Bonsile and I boMakoti, I know for a fact I cant be phitizeling here cause I am not actually uMakoti. Kgomotso came back after going out to serve Khanya food.

"Your turn." Bongiwe said looking at me.

"My turn to what?" The women looked at each other then looked at me.

"To serve your man Makoti. He has to eat too." Kgomotso answered.

"Theres just one problem with that. I am not a proper Makoti so Nope."

"Baby you are just serving food, you are not cooking. I have two trays here, you and Bonbon can go together if you're scared." Thandeka took out two

trays and dished up the food and handed the trays to us.

We figured since there was absolutely no way we are getting out of this we might as well do what needs to be done. We took the trays and followed each other out. We stood by the door.

"You go first." I whispered to her.

"No. You go first."

"No. Muzi is older than Lungelo so he has to eat first so you have to go first." She groaned and walked out.

I followed her with my head bowed until we got to them. I looked up to see where Lungelo was and I was met by his dimpled smile. I felt myself melting. I got closer to him and handed him his food. I felt his fingers touch mine as he took the tray sending shivers down my spine. I know my period is close cause I just got horny all from just a simple touch. Oh God I need prayer. Bonsile and i turned and

walked back to the house leaving the guys whistling and laughing behind us.

I realized I was holding my breath when I let it out soon as we got into the house. The women in the kitchen clapped their hands and ululated. Bunch of idiots. We dished up and ate too. I saw Nqobile walking down the passage with her family in tow and their bags packed and ready to go. I wonder if they ate. They went to the lounge and sat down waiting for the elders so they can say their goodbyes.

The uncles came in and went to the lounge. I decided to go outside to watch the kids. I sat on the stoop and watched Lungelo playing soccer with his nephews. They were laughing and having so much fun.

"He would have made a great father." I looked up and saw Thandeka. She sat down next to me.

"He will, one day." She looked at me with a huge ass grin on her face. "Hold your horses, not yet."

"Well a girl can only hope." We sat there in silence just watching the mini soccer match. "I like you Nomonde."

"I like you too."

"No, I mean I like you, especially for my brother. He seems happy lately. And it's all thanks to you. And he did tell me he was ready to tell Nqobile to go fuck herself until you spoke some sense to him. So thank you."

"Well I try to be sensible sometimes." She laughed. I looked up and Lungelo and the kids were gone. I looked around but I couldn't see where they went.

"Come on, let's go and change so we can take a walk."

She held my hand and helped me up. We got back into the house and went to the room we had slept in last night. I changed to a long red maxi dress and

sandals. We walked out and we found the family in the yard. They had formed a circle facing the main house door. Thandeka quickly left me and joined the others. I wasn't sure what to do so I just stood there stuck. I tried to step away and join the crowd but someone pushed me back to the centre of the circle.

What the fuck is happening right now?

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FORTY SEVEN

I wasn't sure what was happening. I stood just outside the door on the stoop with everyone watching me like I was some criminal. I looked around the crowd hoping to find a familiar face, well actually I was hoping to see Lungelo but he wasn't there.

My heart started beating fast cause I didn't know what I did or didn't do, and all these eyes starring at me was just hella awkward for me. I don't like attention and this was a bit much for me.

Bongiwe and Thandeka popped up from Hod knows where and they hooked their arms around mine. A bit of normalcy was what I needed. We started walking towards the gate.

"What was that about?"

"What?" Thandeka asked pretending not to know what I'm talking about.

"You know exactly what I'm talking about."

"Argh, dont worry about that."

We got out the gate and walked up a gravel road to God only knows where. I looked behind me and I noticed the kids were following us. They were busy giggling and laughing. I figured maybe I am overthinking this whole thing so I just decided to enjoy the walk.

We walked for about twenty minutes until we got to the beach. I didnt even know they lived this close to the beach. We walked to the beach and I noticed Lungelo was standing close to the water with his back to us. Bongwiwe gently pushed me towards him. I walked towards him. I heard someone whistle. I

turned to look where the whistling was coming from but I couldn't see anyone.

I turned back and Lungelo was now facing my direction. I walked towards him. He had a stick in his hand. I got closer to him and just before I could get to him he drew a line on the sand, with him on the other side and me on the other. I stopped cause I didn't understand what was going on.

"What's going on?" I asked him. He smiled and his dimple showed, making me smile too.

"Nomonde, MaGumede omncane, ntombi yo Qwabe, ngiyakuthanda Mnguni kaYeyeye. I haven't known you for long, but I've known you long enough to know that I never want to be without you in my life. Ngako ke, ngalomugca lo, (therefore with this line.) Ngfuna uthathe isincumo, (I want you to make a decision), inkomo kwaRadebe zikhona (we have cattle), ngingathanda ukuzthumela kini (I would love to send them to your home), ngvumele nglethe injabulo

empilweni yakho (allow me to make you happy),
weca lomugca lo (if you go past this line), ngfuna
wazi ukuthi bonke ubuhlungu ondlule kibo, kuyosala
emuva, ngoba ngyohlala njalo ngikukhombisa
uthando olufanele ismomondiya esifana nawe. (I
want you to know that all the pain you went through
will be left behind, because I will show you everyday
the love that a beautiful woman like yoh deserves.)
Weca lomugca, kusho ukuthi uyavuma futhi
uyangethemba ukuthi inhliziyo yakho iyohlala
ezandleni ezifudumele, (if you go past this line then
you agree and you trust that your heart will be in
warm hands.) Ngvumele Mnguni,

Qwabe, Mnguni kaYeyeye, Osidlabehlezi
bakaKhondlo kaPhakathwayo, Abathi bedla,
babeyenga umuntu ngendaba Abathi “dluya
kubeyethwe”, Kanti bahlinza imbuzi, Bathi
umlobokazi ubeyethe kuyikhuni, Sidika lolodaba,
Phakathwayo

Wena kaMalandela, Ngokulandel' izinkomo
zamadoda, Amazala-nkosi lana Mpangazitha!
Ngvumele ngthumele abakhongi kini, (allow me to

send representatives to your home.)"

I stood there like a statue just trying to take in this moment. I've known Lungelo for what? Less than a year, less than six months to be exact, and in those six months he's been consistent in both word and actions. If he says he will do something he does it, and if he says something he means it. In the time I've known him I've learnt to not only trust and believe in myself because he trusts and believes in me, but he has also shown me what happiness should be. What love should be, he loves my daughter like his own flesh and blood and he protects us. What more could a girl ask for.

With tears streaming down my face I took one step forward. I put one foot in front of the other and crossed the line before me. And with that one step I took a step towards my future, my little piece of haven awaits. The smile on Lungelo's face went up to his ears, I hugged him. It felt right being in his

arms. I belong here and I never want to be anywhere else.

I heard whistles and ululating coming from behind us. I looked back and everyone was running towards us, with Bontle leading the pack. When they got to us Bontle threw herself at Lungelo before hugging me.

"Sadla thina oBhungane madoda." I heard Khanya's voice from the sounds of Congratulations and well wishes. After a bit of celebration we went back home. As soon as we got in the elders ululated and danced. I felt weirdly nervous at first but after a while I loosened up.

Lungelo's family gets along like a house on fire. From the looks of it, Lungelo and his siblings don't just see their cousins as cousins but more like brothers and sisters. I never had that growing up, yes I had cousins but my uncle didn't like his kids being close to us. I guess because we didn't have a father

and our mother wasn't educated as he was and she didn't have a "respectable" career like he did. His kids looked down on us the same way he did. And I guess things got even worse after I went to jail, but somehow he had no problem accepting Amanda's lobola. Family huh.

Later in the evening, when most of the family had gone back to their homes I sat outside on the verandah just taking everything all in. This weekend was meant to be a final goodbye to a son who only found his roots after death, but now it had become a beginning of something else. I hope Buyelekhaya doesn't strike me with lightning for stealing his thunder.

Someone sat down on the bench next to me. I looked up and it was my mother. She had a smile on her face.

"You knew didn't you?" She shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, maybe I did. Are you sure about this?" I took a

deep breath and looked at the beaded bracelet on my arm that Lungelo gave me.

"Honestly, I know I haven't known him for too long but this feels right. I should be nervous but I think I'm not. Is that weird?"

"No it's not. Lungelo is a good guy. If he makes you happy then go for it. He's protective of you and Bontle and he loves her and treats her like she is his, he stepped up for her and for you unprovoked, most men act more than they speak but he does both. So my baby, allow him to love you, you deserve it." She gave me a kiss on my cheek before walking back into the house.

I took a deep breath and said a little prayer of gratitude before going back into the house to join the chaos. Well now it will be my chaos too. I sat down next to Lungelo and he held my hand and kissed it. I looked around the room and the warmth and joy that filled this room was a chaotic reminder that no matter how dark the night might be, the sun

will always shine, always.



NARRATED

Sometimes walking away is the only option one has, but how do you walk away from family? Bonolo has been debating this for the past few weeks. A few weeks ago she got a letter from one of the most prestigious law firms in London offering her a job.

Any other day she would have jumped at the opportunity. After all McClelland and Associates was a law firm filled with some of the best lawyers in Europe. Many aspiring lawyers in Law school had the firm in their vision boards, and so did she, but many knew even if statistics would say nine out of ten things on their vision boards were bound to come through, they knew the one thing that wouldn't come

through would be an opportunity to work with McClelland and Associates.

But for Bonolo, that dream had come true. She didn't know how or why they would offer her a job when she didn't even apply for the job. It just landed on her pretty little lap. But whether or not she would take it was still up for debate. But she had to make a decision soon because time was running out. If she doesn't respond to this offer she might just lose the opportunity of a lifetime.

But it seemed she was caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one side she wanted to be selfish and take this opportunity, go overseas and make a name for herself or stay here and help her family fight this losing battle that they were up against.

She left her mother's house with the intention to go back to her place but she found herself pulling up to the mall to do some shopping. After browsing

through the mall and buying one or two items she decided to go and have a mini brunch at Mugg and Bean. She got in and was offered a table for one.

She made her order and sat down with her iPad in front of her. While she was busy working someone threw an envelope on the iPad. She looked up and saw Philani Biyela standing in front of her. She wasn't sure if she should be charmed or scared, after all Philani was the type that commanded respect without saying a single word. And he wielded power and sex appeal like Thor wielded his hammer.

"What's this?"

"A one way plane ticket to London, first class. There's also your Visa and passport in there as well as a key to an apartment in Central London that's already been paid for." Philani said as he pulled a chair from another table and sat down.

"Okay, firstly, how did you get my passport and what

makes you think I want to go to London?"

"How did o get your passport? I have my ways. What makes me think you want to go to London? To be honest, I dont care whether you go or not, but Khanya made me promise to spare you from my plans for your family."

"And what plans are those?"

"Nothing for you to worry about. All you need to be thinking about right now is the outfit you'll wear for your first day at work. But if you decide you dont want to leave then be prepared to suffer the same fate as your dear brother and mother. See if it was up to me I would wipe out anything and everything related to your family, but a promise is a promise. And I owe you. If you hadn't reopened Nomonde's case I would still be clueless about my son."

"I dont understand one thing, Lebo is behind bars, not for killing your son but still, Lesego is in a wheelchair, they've already paid for their sins. Dont you think it's time for you to walk away now?"

Philani chuckled and came closer to Bonolo, he put his crossed arms on the table and looked at her straight in the eyes.

"Two years ago I would have considered walking away, but your brother and sister in law made a mockery of my pain by pretending to give a fuck, so now not you or them will decide how I avenge my son. Get on that plane and save yourself while you still can." He pushed back the chair and stood up. "Have a nice day Bonolo. Your flight leaves in three days. Make sure you're on it." He walked away leaving her with fear vibrating through every part of her body.

Philani to her seemed like an urban myth. When people spoke about him and his squad you would think they were speaking about some people straight out of a Hollywood movie, but he was real, and now she could say she's been in his presence, and as intimidating as it was, it was also a turn on.

Three days might seem like a little time to make a decision, but Bonolo couldn't help thinking how things would be easier if she had a man like Philani making the decisions for her, she knows all he would have to say was 'jump' and she would ask how hi. But he was married, so there goes that idea.

She paid for her food and headed out after requesting for her food to be made into a takeaway. She sent a text to Khanya asking him if they could meet, maybe he would shed some light on Philani and his crew since he seems to be so close to them they have no problem doing favours for him.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FORTY EIGHT

Whichever Angel is holding the remote on my life better not change the channel cause I like it here. I love this chapter or phase of my life. It doesn't feel forced or rushed. It just feels right. Like it's meant to be.

After my surprise proposal we had a mini celebration with the Radebe family. Although it was meant to be an engagement celebration I couldn't help feeling like it also became a celebration for Buyelekhaya. We spent the better part of the night with everyone imagining how he would have been like. Everyone had their own version of how they imagined him. It was quite funny to see and to listen to their stories, but the common factor in all their stories was that he would have been loved, he would have been crazy too since this family is crazy, but most importantly

he would have been an amazing man being raised by an amazing man.

After sleeping for about two hours we got up in the morning and helped out with serving breakfast to the relatives who hadn't left yesterday. When we were done we got ready to go back to Durban. Even though Bonsile, Bontle, Mum and I came here together we ended up leaving with different cars. Bontle left with the teenagers in a taxi Mum got a lift with MaMtolo's sister who lives in Durban. It's crazy how close everyone has gotten. It's truly a blessing.

Lungelo and I drove to Durban with Muzi and Bonsile. By the time we got there Bontle and the others hadn't arrived. I thought they would be here by now cause they left before us. Muzi dropped Lungelo and I at the house. We got in and I got ready to cook dinner. Lungelo wanted to take a nap so I let him be.

About thirty after we arrived Bontle and her new

besties finally arrived. They were loud and so annoying so I told them to go out to the pool. As soon as they exited there was peace. Well for me anyways. I added some more meat to accommodate everyone since teenagers eat like food is going out of fashion.

Mum called and told me she was on her way. Which made me wonder where she had been the whole time cause she and MaMtolo's sister left before us and the kids. I made some snacks for the kids and took them out to the pool. Bontle has always been a friendly person but seeing her get along so well with literally everyone is heartwarming. And the best part about it, now she'll have 'family' when she gets to Joburg, and she'll have friends too since some of her new friends also go to school in Joburg.

I went upstairs and found Lungelo already up and sitting on the bed with his phone in his hand. I got on the bed and laid on his chest.

"The kids are here."

"Yep. You can tell by the noise. Those rascals woke me up." He said pretending to be annoyed.

"They are having fun."

"I can tell. So which ring do you want?" He asked showing me his phone. He was on some jewellery stores website looking at engagement rings.

"Weren't you supposed to do that before you proposed." He chuckled.

"Well better late than never. So pick one."

"Why?"

"We are engaged, you should wear an engagement ring."

"Nope. I dont need an engagement ring to know that."

"If you say so. But think about it."

"I will, but it's not necessary. Have you found out anything about the car?"

"Yeah, the car was a rental, and the person who

rented it gave the rental place fake details. The only thing real about it was his photo so all we have now is a face. Khanya has sent the picture to some people to help find the person. So hopefully we will get him soon."

"I hope so."

"Dont worry. It will be over soon."

I sighed and fell asleep on his chest. It's crazy how relaxing things can be once you realize you dont need to fight every battle by yourself.



KHANYA

I hate driving long distances. But ke we are Africans and we have a zillion homes. We have no choice but to drive from one home to the next. And driving from

Richard's Bay to Joburg can be a drag. We got to Joburg just before eight in the evening. Even though we left early we ended up getting here late because my dear wife likes to stop anywhere and everywhere, either to eat or take pictures. Even the kids were getting restless, but luckily for us we got home safe and sound.

I got home and checked my emails. There was nothing urgent there except an email from the Department of Justice. I guess they are feeling the heat since we upped the lawsuit. Well I'll just let them stew a bit. I switched on my burner phone and a pile of messages came in one after the other. I opened them and all of them were from the same person, Bruno. I called him back and he picked up in no time.

"Brazzo, ubuyile? (You're back?)"

"Yeah, zkhiphani (what's going on?)"

"Sure. I found him."

"Where is he?"

"A warehouse downtown."

"Send me the address, I'll be there soon."

"Sure."

He hung up. I got up and picked up my phone and went to the kitchen where Kgomotso was. I wrapped my arms around her waist and she stopped cutting the fruits she was bust with.

"Where to?"

"I have something to sort out."

"Its late Khanya."

"I know Sthandwa sam, I'll be back before you even notice I'm gone."

"Whatever." She picked up the fruits and headed to the lounge.

I knew she'd be pissed but I need to see this guy

before I sleep. I have too many questions for him. I'll just have to make it up to Kgomotso later. I went out, got into my car and drove to the location Bruno sent me. I got there and went into the warehouse. Sure enough the guy was sitting on a chair with his hands tied behind his back. Even from far you could tell he has been dealt with a bit.

I walked closer to him. I pulled a chair and sat in front of him. He looked up when he heard the chair screeching on the floor. I didn't think he could see me through his roughed up face and his blue eyes but seeing as he was focused on me, I guess he could see me.

"Bakuphethe kahle laykhaya (are they treating you well?)" I asked looking at him.

"What do you want from me?" He asked through his torn lip and swollen mouth.

"You were in Ntunjambili a few days ago. Why?"

"I dont even know where that is bra yami. Ngyafunga (I swear)."

"There are a few things in the world that are capable of making my blood boil, being lied to is one of them. I'll ask you again, why were you in Ntunjambili?"

"Bra yami mina an....." I punched him in the face before he could even finish his sentence. I guess he is truly loyal to his bosses if he still refuses to talk even after being roughed up so much.

Bruno came in from the other room.

"Brazzo, I didnt hear you come in."

"So even if he had escaped you wouldn't have heard him?"

"Of course not, there are guards outside. Anyways, we wont be needing this guy."

"Has he told you who sent him?"

"No, but I found a guy who works for the Mashile's as a gardener. He overheard the conversation between Paul and this dumbfuck. Apparently Paul

ordered this guy to watch the kid for a while then once he's figured out a pattern then he can take her."

"So he was planning on kidnapping her?"

"Yep. So what are we going to do?"

"Send this one to meet his maker, get the gardener to a safe house. He will make a great witness in the custody suit."

"So vele he is fighting for full custody of a grown child, not a baby, a whole teenager that's about to start varsity?"

"I told you that man has a screw loose in his heard."

"So will you tell Biyela about this?"

"No, this one I'll handle myself. Just make sure this one doesnt trace back to me."

"Sure thing."

I got up and left him to finish the job. Paul might be the weakest link in that family because he keeps doing shit that makes him look pathetic and stupid.

A part of me wanted to go to his house and confront him about this tonight. But I had to practice some self control and wait for the right time. First things first, I need to make sure the gardener is safe before I make my move. I need to ensure nothing jeopardizes this case.

My phone rang just as I was pulling up the gate to my house. I looked at the caller ID and it was Bonolo. I'm surprised she's still here.

"Hello."

"Khanya, hi. We need to talk."

"About what?"

"The Biyela's. I think they are planning something drastic for my family."

"Okay so what do you need me to do?"

"I need to know if you know anything about that."

"No. But what are you concerned about this. I thought you didnt like your family."

"Maybe not, but they are still family and running is not an option. My family needs me right now."

"So you think you're going to go against Biyela and win?"

"Well, I'm hoping to appeal to his human side."

"Bonolo, this is a dangerous game you're playing. But you're a grown woman do what works for you. But I'll tell you this, nobody goes against Biyela and wins. If you think being here works for you then I wish you all the best of luck, you will need it."

I hung up. This girl is being unnecessarily dense. She thinks Biyela will just let his son's death go just because she asked him? I hope her funeral cover is up to date.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FORTY NINE

I made a decision a long time ago to not go back to the life I used to live. It took a lot out of me to actually get past that and go clean and legit. And now I feel like I am being dragged back into the life that I worked so hard to leave behind.

Khanya told me who was behind the car being at MaGumede's house. That alone sent my heart racing. See I'm very over protective of the people I love. Some would say too overprotective. As much as everyone thinks my brother is the dangerous one, no one knows what I am capable of. Which works for me because when people underestimate you it's easier to hit them when they least expect it.

I got on a plane earlier today and flew to Joburg. I

headed straight to Hyde Park. I hit the buzzer and the gate opened. I drove in and found everyone's cars parked outside. I got into the house and the guys were into the lounge having drinks. I poured myself a glass and sat down.

"I'm pretty sure you didnt come all the way from Durban to look at us. What's going on?" Philani asked.

"I need to take someone out."

"Let me guess, Paul Mashile?" Lindani said.

"The one and only. I need him taken out ASAP."

"We'll get one of our guys on it. I dont understand why you wont do it yourself. It's not like you aren't capable of doing it." Nate said.

"I know. But I dont want anything leading back to me. And I dont want Nomonde knowing this part of my life."

"Understandable. So how would you like it done?" Sizwe asked.

"As long as he suffers I'm good."

"Perfect." Sizwe said excitedly. This one loves inflicting pain.

"This little secret of yours, how long are you going to keep it from your loved ones? You cant hide it forever." Lindani said.

"My family knows all they need to know. My involvement in the cartel has to stay in the shadows."

"You being in the shadows actually works well for the cartel. No one ever expects you to pop up and do what you do. Mayne you're right. You do need to stay in the shadows." Philani said.

We took a few more drinks before we all went our separate ways. I drove to Melrose Arch to meet up with a jeweller. I found him at the restaurant waiting for me. I asked for a private table away from prying eyes. We went there and sat down.

"Mr Radebe, I was surprised to hear from you."

"I need my ring Wayne."

"Yes sir." He picked up his briefcase and placed it on the table. He took out a few small boxes and laid them out on the table. "So I have a couple of rings here for you to choose from. I know you said you wanted one with a huge ass diamond so these are the ones I got." He went on to describe each ring in detail, and I must admit I was impressed by all of them. But one caught my eye, I picked it up and looked at it. Its glow against the light made it more special. "That sir is a 750 White Gold Diamond, with 1.218 carats."

"Perfect. I'll take it."

"Are you sure? It's rather expensive."

"How much is it."

"R142 893.00." He said making it seem like it was a billion rands. I picked up another one and looked at it. "That is a 585 White Gold Diamond and Swarovski Crystal, 1.99 carats. And that is R308 036, 00."

"Good. I'll take both."

"I'm sorry?"

"I said I'll take both. Give me your banking details so I can transfer the money."

He wrote his details down on a piece of napkin and handed it over to me. I logged onto my banking app and transferred the money while he packaged the rings. I got the confirmation SMS that the money has gone through.

"You will courier the receipt and the certificates for the rings."

"Of course." He handed the rings over to me and packed up his own bags and left. I took the rings and put them in my pockets. I was getting ready to leave when I saw Paul in the corner of my eye having a meeting. A part of me wanted to confront him about what he did but I had to control myself. I decided to not pay any attention to him. But the devil works

hard cause he sent his evil son over to test me.

"Its a bit early for you to be picking out rings don't you think?" He said pulling up a chair and sitting next to me.

"What do you want Paul?"

"Nothing much. I'm just surprised to see you meeting with Wayne. I take it you're ready to play step daddy with my daughter."

I pulled out my gun and cocked it under the table and quickly placed it on his dick. I pulled the chair he was sitting on closer to me.

"Now listen to me and listen good. I dont play step daddy, I am a daddy. Bontle might have your blood running through her veins but she'll never be yours. She is mine now, and I will do whatever it takes to protect her, even if it means protecting her from you. Now if you ever send anyone to watch her and make her uncomfortable in her own home, I promise you,

no amount of power on this earth or beyond will stop me from coming after you, and when I do, God have mercy on your soul."

"You dont scare me Radebe."

"You should be scared. Very very scared."

I put my gun back in it's place and walked out. I went to the airport and got on my flight and headed back home. First stop, picking up my fiancée from work. I need to get her her own car. Although I enjoy dropping her off and picking her up again but I'm sure she would like to be independent.

I waited a few minutes for her to come out. I heard the car door open and someone getting in. I thought it was her but it wasn't. It was Hlophe.

"Knocking never killed nobody."

"My apologies. But I've been looking at your books like you asked me to. So far all is well but the hotel has a bit more problems."

"Theft problems?"

"Among others. Besides the theft I think someone is using the hotel to launder money."

"Mhmmm. Okay. Get me concrete proof and I'll deal with it."

"Okay. Sorry for the ambush. I just saw you and thought I should update you."

"No problem. Thank you for the heads up."

"Cool. I'll be in touch." He got out of the car.

I waited for a few minutes before I saw Nomonde walking out of the building. She headed straight for my car. I got out and gave her a hug then opened the door for her. I got in and started the car.

"So takeaways or we cooking?"

"Cooking. Mum sent me a text and said Bontle cooked."

"What did she cook?"

"Dumpling, tripe and spinach."

"Okay then. I have good news by the way. Khanya figured out that Paul was the one following Bontle around."

"I thought as much. I cant wait for all this ti be over."

"I know." I took her hand and kissed it.

We got to the house, Bontle and MaGumede were in the lounge watching TV. It's crazy how she doesn't scare me as much as she used to. Or maybe it's cause she's no longer giving me those side eyes she used to give me.

"You're back. Perfect. We need to eat before the food gets cold." Bontle said as she got up and hurried to the kitchen. Nomonde decided to help her. I took a deep breath and decided to join MaGumede on the couch.

"Ma, I have something to talk to you about."

"I'm listening."

"Well, my brother found out that Paul was the one who had Bontle followed."

"That son of a bitch." Okay, I never thought I'd hear those words come out of this womans mouth. My mother, most definitely, but MaGumede, I wasnt expecting that.

"Yeah, but you have nothing to worry about. He wont be bothering you anymore."

"Why? Did you kill him?" I laughed.

"I wish I could. But no I did not kill him. Khanya took out a restraining order against him."

"Oh okay. As long as he stays away from my baby."

"Let's hope he respects the law enough to stay away."

"Food is ready." Nomonde shouted. I helped MaGumede off the couch and we joined the others at the table.

"I think it's time I go back to my house." MaGumede uttered. I'm pretty sure she's been waiting a long time to say that.

We had our dinner then I headed back to Muzi's place. I got into the house and found Bonsile in the lounge sipping on some wine.

"Hey. Where's my brother?"

"In the shower. Are you hungry?"

"No thanks I'm good. I just ate. I'll go talk to Muzi."

I went up the stairs and lucky for me my brother was out of the shower. I sat on the ottoman and took out the rings. I gave him the White Gold one. He looked at it and smiled. He likes it.

"Is that close to what you wanted?"

"Its perfect. Thanks for doing this man, I didnt want Bonsile being suspicious."

"No problem bra. So when are you asking her?"

"Soon. But I was thinking of bringing the kids down for the holidays so they can spend some time with her."

"That's good. But I think the kids like her. I saw them when we were at home."

"I saw it too but I still need to do this."

"Cool. You owe me 200 thousand."

"You must be drunk. I saw Wayne's website. I know the price."

"Uhm theres something called Shipping fees and travel insurance."

"Mxm. You should have just couriered it via paxi. It's only sixty bucks. Let me see yours." I took out mine and showed it to him. "Nice."

"Right! All I need to do now is plan the perfect proposal."

"Didnt you already propose."

"That was my proposal. This one is for her. You know women like all those frilly things with flowers and candles."

"Tell me about it. You should go first. I dont want you copying me."

"Mxm. You just need ideas. I'm going to sleep."

I left him and went to the guest bedroom. My phone beeped. I looked at it and it was Sizwe. 'The fish has been caught. I'm about to gut it.' His text read. For once I actually felt sorry for Paul. Sizwe's level of causing pain is something horror writers need to do some research on. Oh well, I need to get my suit ready for the funeral. And knowing Sizwe, there wont be an open casket.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTY

My mum decided to go back home. Although I will miss coming home to her but I know she misses her own house and waling up in her own bed.

I was in the bedroom helping her pack when Bontle walked in. She threw herself on the bed.

"Are you finished packing?" I asked as I folded mum's clothes.

"Sort off. I have a request."

"What is it?" Mum asked.

"So I got a call from Zethu, she invited me to come to Joburg. Since schools are closed for me and her she thinks we should spend some time together."

"Who is Zethu?" Mum questioned. I remember the name, I'm sure it's one of the Radebe kids.

"She's Bab'Khanya's daughter. And Mam'Kgomotso said I can come. Can I go?"

Mum and I looked at each other. I wasn't sure if I saw a smile on mum's face or what. I looked at her to answer Bontle's request, but she was also looking at me.

"Mum, say something." I said seeing as she wasn't saying anything.

"What do you want me to say?"

"Can she go or not?"

"She can go I don't mind."

"Gogo, are you sure. If you want me to stay with you I don't mind I'll stay."

"Hhaybo Bontle. At some point you need to hang out with people your own age. Hanging around me all the time will age you." Bontle screamed and hugged my mum before hugging me. She skipped out the room. Mum had a smile on her face.

"When did you become so easy going?"

"I'm not. I just think she needs to spend time with her agemates. She's been stuck with me for way too long."

"True." I sat down next to her and laid my head on her shoulder. "Are you sure you will be Okay by yourself?"

"I will be just fine. Besides I'll have plenty to do. My garden needs attention and now I can give it my undivided attention."

"I'll come up every weekend."

"No you wont. Who'll be spending time with your man? I'm not a child Monde, I can take care of myself. Let's finish packing so I can go to my house. I'm sure it misses me too."

We finished packing and took the bags downstairs. I requested an uber so I can take mum to the taxi rank. My phone beeped and I thought it was the uber but it was just a notification from an online newspaper

that I followed. There were a few headlines. But the one that caught my attention was about Paul. Apparently his almost lifeless body was found this morning outside his mothers house. He was rushed to the hospital in a critical condition. Oh well, I guess there might just be another funeral kwaMashile.

The uber arrived. I opened the gate to let him in. He parked outside and Bontle helped me get the bags out. Lungelo pulled up next the uber. He got out and went to the driver. He took out some notes from his wallet and gave them to the driver. The driver got in his car and drove out. Lungelo came to us and took the bags and put them in his boot. Bontle went back into the house to get mum.

"Sawubona Radebe." I could tell he was a bit upset or maybe hurt that I called the uber instead of calling him.

"I'm not talking to you." He put the rest of the bags in the boot and closed it. I wrapped my arms around

his waist with my head on his back.

"I thought you were busy. Sorry Sthandwa sam."

"When have I ever been busy for you?"

"Never!"

"Exactly. Dont ever make assumptions for me Nomonde. If I can't do something I'll tell you."

"Ngyacolisa phela Radebe. Uyangcolela (am I forgiven?)" I felt him smile and rush out behind him. I moved to his front with my arms still around his waist.

"How can I stay mad at this face though. You're way too beautiful for your own good. I love you MaGumede omncane." I laughed and kissed him.

I heard my mum clear her throat behind Lungelo. Nice. Lungelo opened the door for her and she got in. Bontle and I got in on the other side. We drove home together.

We dropped mum off and then drove back to Durban. We got to the house and got Bontle's bags and drove her to the airport. We saw her off then headed back to the house. Good thing I took the day off from work.

"So when are you moving back home?" I asked soon as we got into the house.

"Right now. Muzi will bring my bags later." He kissed me and carried me up the stairs to the bedroom. We made love all over the room before passing out on the floor.

I got up and went to the bathroom to take a shower so I can cook since it was late already. I finished my shower and wore a mini flowy dress then headed down to the kitchen. My phone beeped. I picked it up and it was a message from an unknown number.

'I hope for your sake you had nothing to do with

Paul's attack or else the fifteen years you spent in jail will look like a vacation.'

I didnt know who the message was from but I couldnt help feeling like it was from Lesego. I dont know anyone else who would even threaten me except him. That man thinks he is untouchable. I decided to reply to his message.

'Its a pity he is still alive. I have a few black outfits that would be perfect for the funeral. Let me know when to get them out.' I pressed send and continued with my cooking. Lesego doesnt scare me so he can go burn in hell.



NARRATED

At SunMed hospital in Joburg, Lesego and his mother together with his siblings were sitting and standing next to Paul's bed. He had bandages all over his body and a breathing tube down his throat. There was silence in the room as no one knew what to say really.

Mrs Mashile couldn't stop looking at her son. A part of her was scared. She's already buried one son, is she really going to bury another one? She wasn't sure. But at this point everything was finally sinking in. Although she had no proof she was suspecting that Philani had something to do with this.

The doctor came in with a nurse. He checked Paul's wounds.

"How is he doctor?" Lesego asked.

"It's hard to tell. His wounds are severe. His head is swollen, we have to wait for the swelling to go down so we can check if there is any brain damage." The doctor answered.

"And if there is, what then?" Mrs Mashile.

"Well, until we know for sure if there is damage and its severity, only then can I give a proper diagnosis."

"Thank you doctor." He walked out leaving the family more confused and worried than before.

After visiting hours were over the Mashile's left the hospital. They left a guard outside Paul's door to make sure nothing happens to him. As soon as they left Philani and Sizwe walked up to the guard. They gave him a roll of money. He moved aside and let them in.

Philani and Sizwe walked into the room. They looked at Paul laying there almost dead.

"You really did a number on him."

"I tried. He's a fighter though. I thought he would be dead by now."

Philani took out his phone and took a few photos then sent them to Lungelo.

"Are you sure this wont trace back to Lungelo?"

"Definitely not. I'm sure by now the Mashile's are suspecting us."

"Good. But I think it's time we escalated this whole thing. Lesego and his mother need to be our next priority."

"So no more going up the family tree?"

"No. This is taking too long for my liking. We need to deal with those two direct."

"Works for me. So what's the plan?"

"Start by stripping them off the one thing that makes them think they are untouchable."

"I'll get Sbu on it."

In Durban. Lungelo is in his office when he receives some images from Philani. He opened the images and smiled when he saw Paul laying there with tubes

all over him.

He opened his safe and took out a phone that was in there. He switched it on and found a message from the cartel. There was a request for a chemical weapon. The great thing about it was that he would get to choose which one he uses, and he immediately made the decision to make the VX weapon.

As much as Lungelo hated his chosen career at first it has worked in his favour. Thanks to his ability to experiment with it, Bio Chemical Engineering put him in places he didn't think he'd ever be in. But now that he was in there he would use that to the best of his abilities. For years he had built up a reputation for being the shadow assassin. That's what everyone called him even though they didn't know it was him. Only Philani and his friends knew.

Lungelo switched off his secret phone and put it

back in the safe. He went up to his bedroom and for into bed with Nomonde close to him, looking forward to a brand new day.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTY ONE

One thing I've learnt about God over the past few months, when he shows up, he shows off. I know I say this a lot but after being in the hell that I was in, every single day when I get to breath fresh air, go wherever I want, whenever i want and do whatever i want, I consider that a blessing.

Waking up day after day in the arms of a man who loves me inspite of my many scars, a man who seems to want to shield me from any kind of pain and hurt that may come my way. Even though it took a while, being able to give myself fully to him will always be one of my greatest strength. He makes it so easy to love him.

I've been watching him sleep for almost half an hour

now. Its the weekend and since I'm not going to work I might as well indulge myself on this sight before me. I got closer to him and lightly kissed him on his forehead. I moved back and then closer again to kiss him on the nose and cheeks. I felt him smile under my lips and I knew he was up.

"You should wake me up like that everyday." I giggled and sat back looking at him.

"I will do my best." He reached for his watch on the side table and looked at it before looking back at me.

"Why are you up so early? It's the weekend."

"You know I always wake up early."

"Yeah, when you go to work."

"Well, I'm up now. Want some breakfast?"

"Later. Come here." He pulled me to him and I laid on his chest. "Go back to sleep."

I tried to close my eyes and sleep but that was a

hopeless exercise. He fell back to sleep like he wasn't up just a few minutes ago. Oh well. I guess I'm on my own. I quietly got out of the bed and went to take a shower. When I was done I put on a swimsuit and heading down to the pool.

I grabbed a glass and a bottle of juice from the fridge and headed out. I dipped my feet in the pool since I can't really swim. I browsed through my social media and found a message on Facebook. I opened it and it was from Amanda. I thought about deleting it and not even reading it but my conscience wouldn't let me.

I opened the message and all it said was she needed to see me. I'm not even sure why cause technically speaking we are supposed to be enemies. I kept reading her message over and over again hoping to get some sort of a clue but I found none. I got off Facebook after a while and just focused on soaking in the morning sun.

After a while I decided to go back to the house and get started on breakfast. I wanted to make a full english breakfast but there was no bread for the toast. I remembered there was a small spaza shop down the road. I just hope they have bread.

I rushed up to the bedroom and found Lungelo in the shower. I poked my head in and told him that I was going out to buy bread but he told me to wait for him. While I was waiting for him I got dressed in a simple dress and some flops. I took some money from my wallet.

He got out and got dressed. We took a walk down to the spaza. We bought the bread and some snacks. As we were walking back to the house I noticed there was a car parked outside the house, just a few houses up. When we were walking out there was a red audi on that same spot and now there is a black VW. I might be reading too much into this but it

seemed a bit suspicious to me.

We got back to the house and got started on breakfast. We sat down and ate but my mind couldn't stop going back to the cars outside. I told Lungelo and he went out to check it out. He came back and said the car had left. Maybe I was reading too much into this.

We watched a movie together and he seemed to gag at every scene, cause this was a romantic movie. After the first movie he said he would be right back. He rushed up the stairs and came back a few minutes later. He sat down and I laid down on his chest. He handed me a tiny little velvet box. I opened it and almost had a mini heart attack. It was a ring with a glowing stone. It was beautiful.

"I thought I said I didn't want a ring." I said as I turned and looked at him.

"How are people supposed to know that you are someone's fiancée?"

"The important people already know."

"Everyone needs to know. Come to think of it...." he grabbed his phone from the coffee table. "Let me put it on." He held out his hand and I gave him the box.

"Aren't you supposed to go on one knee when you put it on."

"Oh yeah." He got off the couch and got on one knee on the carpet. "What do they say in the movies again?" I laughed as he pretended to think. "Okay, I got it. Nomonde Gumede, I know there should be Rose's and candles around here but I just can't wait, Nomonde Gumede, will you make me the happiest man in the universe, will you marry me?" I smiled and nodded my head. He slipped the ring in and it felt like it was made especially for me. It fit perfectly on my finger, like it was meant to be there.

He got back on the couch and took his phone. He took my hand and took pictures of the ring from

every angle. I laid back on his chest and watched him as he uploaded one picture onto his Instagram page. Good thing my nails are done.

"Perfect. Now everyone will know you are mine."

"My face is not even there."

"It doesn't matter, they will know I am officially off the market." I need to open an Instagram account too.

I guess I'm officially engaged. My phone started beeping nonstop. For a moment I thought it was ringing but no, it was just a barrage of messages from my daughter. There were about a thousand emojis and question marks. I thought about answering her but I decided to let her stew a bit. I laid back on Lungelo's chest and turned up the volume on the movie.



NARRATED

At OR Tambo International Airport, a man walks off a private jet with so much security if anyone didn't know they would think he was a foreign president. He got off the jet and got onto an SUV with bullet proof windows and a convoy behind him.

He drove to Houghton. He commanded attention throughout his trip. He got to Houghton and drove into the huge mansion. His host was already waiting for him. He got out the car and went over to her. They hugged and she led him into the house. She handed him a glass of the best whiskey. They sat down.

"Portia, it's been a while since I heard from you. I was surprised by your call."

"I know. But I am desperate. I need your help."

"You know I have a soft spot for you. Anything I can do to help I'll do it."

"I'm glad to hear that Vladimir."

"I heard about Malcolm. I'm sorry I couldn't come to pay my respects."

"It's okay. As hurt as I was I'll never be able to understand why he felt the need to take the easy way out. Yes he fucked up but we could have found a way through this."

"Well there's nothing we can do now but move forward. My condolences."

"Thank you. But there is something we can do. I want revenge on the people who started this whole thing. I need them to pay for my son's death."

"You know I'm always ready for war. So what do you need? Do you know the person responsible?"

"Unfortunately or should I say fortunately for me, I do. It's Biyela and his crew."

Vladimir took a sip of his drink and looked at Potia.

"I know of one Biyela, I hope he's not the one you're talking about."

"The one and only. Busani Biyela's spawn of satan."

"You know it wont be easy going up against that man."

"I know. But my son is dead, my other son is now confined to a wheelchair, his wife is in jail, and now my other son is fighting for his life in hospital."

"And you think all of that was done by Biyela?"

"Without a doubt. He's turned everyone we know against us. The people we called friends refuse to help us. Its just a mess."

Vladimir sighs and gets up from the couch. He walks to the window and looks out to the garden.

"I hear you Portia." Portia gets up and stands next to him.

"Dont tell me you're also afraid of the man."

"Not really." He turns to look at her. "The thing about Biyela and his little crew, they have a secret weapon."

"Everyone has a secret weapon Vladimir."

"Not like this one. There's someone who is part of their crew, they call him the Shadow Assassin. No one has ever laid eyes on him. It would be easy to pretend like he is nothing more than a myth but the things he has done say otherwise."

"Vladimir, you telling me between the five of them and their little lapdogs, you can't figure out which one is the assassin."

"Its not a matter of not being able to find out. Even people within the cartel have absolutely no idea who he is. I've put spies into that cartel and none of them ever came back with anything concrete. No one knows who this man is."

"Okay, but I'm sure Philani knows."

"So what do you suggest, that we torture the man until he tells us who this person is?"

"If that's what it takes." Vladimir chuckles and turns back to looking out the window.

"Portia, I understand you're hurting but you need to

be careful how you go about this. You know Biyela is not one to be messed with. If you're going to go up against him then you need to make sure you have all your ducks in a row, cause if one of them is crooked, even slightly, Biyela will wipe you and your family out and there will be nothing left, not even a dog to carry your name."

"If I don't do this, my family will cease to exist."

"I'll do the best I can to help you. But you know Biyela probably already knows I am here?"

Meanwhile at Biyela Holdings, Philani is in his office working when his PA knocks and walks into the office.

"Sir, you have a guest. She doesn't have an appointment though."

"Let her in." The PA walked out and came back a few seconds later with Bonolo behind her. Philani looks up and sees her standing there.

"Thank you. You can go." He says to his PA. She

walks out and close the door behind her. Bonolo sashays towards his desk and takes a seat on the chair. She pulls up her leg and crosses it on the other, making her short dress roll up revealing her thighs.

"I thought you'd be in London by now."

"Well I'm not. I'm here."

"Why is that?"

"Philani, I known my family is not the nicest but this little feud has to end at some point." Philani laughed and took a sip of his water.

"So mummy and big brother sent you to fan the flames?"

"Not really. I just want us to make sure that we can find common ground and move forward. Our families are in the same circles and we have to co exist."

"Lalela ke sisi....."

Philani was interrupted by Sizwe walking into the office.

"Manje, kwenzakalani la? (So what's happening here?)" Sizwe asked soon as he saw Bonolo.

"Nothing. She was just leaving." Philani answered looking at Bonolo. She looked at him for a while then realized he wasn't budging. She got up and went out.

"Manje?" Sizwe asked as he sat down.

"Her Mashile blood is coming out to play. She thinks she can walk in here, but her eyelashes and the world will be sunshine and rainbows."

"Forget her. Guess who's in town?"

"President Obama?"

"That would be nice but no, Vladimir, and he left the airport and drove to Houghton."

"Let me guess, the Mashile mansion?"

"The one and only." Philani smiled and nodded his head.

"Okay. Now this might just be a worthy fight after all."

And this might be a chance to finally take out Vladimir for good."

"That's what I thought too. Two birds one stone."

"Right? Sbu needs to get to work. I'm thinking we start by auctioning off that mansion." Sizwe laughs.

"You do know the red tape that comes with that?"

"You're right. Let's in guns blazing."

"Now that's my kind of party." Sizwe said. He got up and left Philani in his office.

Philani picked up a framed photo of his son from his desk and looked at it.

"Its almost time son. I'm sending your killers straight to hell."

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTY TWO

Road trips with the love of your life slap. Hard. I dont care what anyone says but the open road, soft music playing and the man you love next to you will always be top tier in my opinion.

I told Lungelo about Amanda's message so he decided to drive me to Joburg so I can hear her out. Of course it took some convincing from him cause I honestly dont know what Amanda could possibly want to say to me. But we are headed there now.

We left Durban last night and since I asked for a couple of days of work I wont have to stress much about being late to work or being fired for my absence. And I can still do some work even in Joburg. We got to Joburg and Lungelo drove to

Lonehill. We entered what looked like an apartment building. We got in and he led me up to one of the flats. He opened the door and it was empty.

"Whose place is this?" I asked as I looked around. The place was huge and open. The balcony looked out to a little pond on the other side and a kids playground. It looked peaceful and serene. I could actually live here.

"Mine." He said as he joined me in the balcony. I turned to look at him.

"Since when do you have a place in Joburg?"

"The sale closed about two weeks ago."

"Why though? Are you planning on moving here?"

"Not really but it will be a great place for us to stay when we come this side. It will save us money, and Bontle can stay here if she decides to come to school this side." Why do I suspect that the last statement was the main reason for this purchase?

"Okay but what if Bontle want's to stay at res?"

"That's fine but if she needs some air or time away from the stress of school she can come here and rest."

"Why do I get the feeling that is the main reason you bought this place." He smiles and looks put at the view.

"Shoot me for wanting our daughter to be safe." Ever seen a snowflake melt in the sun? That's what I felt like right now. I'm pretty sure my cheeks are red from all the blushing. "Let's go see the rest of it."

He held my hand and gave me a tour of the place. You would think an apartment wouldn't be too big but this one was huge. It has three bedrooms each with it's own bathroom and huge closets. One bedroom had a bed, a duvet cover and two pillows and some sheets.

"Moving in already?"

"Yes. We are spending the night here. We need to

christine every room here and give it our blessings." I laughed and jumped on the bed.

"Let's get started." I say and he laughs.

"As much as I would love to, we have to go to the prison, visiting hours are starting soon." Nice way to bring me back to reality.

We left and headed to the prison where Amanda was kept. We got there and Lungelo decided to stay in the car and wait for me. I went in and checked in. I went to sit down and wait for her to be brought out. I waited for a while before I saw her being led out. If prison taught me anything it's that you will come in as one thing and leave as something else. My sister didnt look like herself. She was a shadow of her former self. I'm pretty sure she never thought she'd ever be in this situation.

She sat down and I got to take a closer look at her. I'm pretty sure if I met her outside of prison looking like this I would not recognize her, heck I might just

walk past her in the street. She had dark under eyes, a bruised lip, a cut on the side of her lip and a broken arm judging by the sling on it.

"You look....."

"Worse for wear? I know." She says cutting me off. She smiles but the smile doesnt reflect in her eyes.

"How are you?"

"Taking it day by day."

"Are they treating you okay?" Who am I kidding. This is not a hotel.

"Like royalty." She says trying to be sarcastic. "On a more serious not though, I need your help." I never thought I'd see the day.

"With what?" She pulls out an envelope from under the table and pushes it towards me. "What's this?"

"I have signed over my parental rights to you."

"You can't be serious."

"I know I should have spoken to you first but I didnt

want you to say no. Nomonde I know I've never been the best sister to you. And I know I don't deserve any kind of kindness from you but all I'm asking for is for you to keep an eye on my kids."

"They have a family Amanda, one with enough reach and money to buy the world. I'm sure they will be fine."

"Not if Philani Biyela has anything to say on that."

"What?"

"It's complicated okay. But Lebo, Lesego's wife is in here too, about a week ago she was sentenced to twenty years for drug possession, Malcolm is dead, Lesego is in a wheelchair, Lesedi is apparently making plans to leave the country with her kids and husband, Bonolo, well she's Bonolo and Paul is in a hospital bed fighting for his life. I don't want my kids to end up alone."

"Amanda...."

"I know it's a bit much. I'll probably never win the mother of the year contest but this is the least I can do for my kids. I know you have a good heart and

inspite of all I did to you I know you won't take it out on them. I'm begging you Nomonde, do this one thing for me and I'll never ask you for anything again. I promise." She shoved the envelope to me and quickly left me there with my mouth wide open.

I didnt even raise my own child, how does she expect me to raise her kids? And to make matters worse, I just got engaged. Lungelo has already stepped up for Bontle in ways I never thought possible, so how do I expect him to now play daddy to my sister's children? This won't work, Amanda clearly didnt think this through, or maybe she did, and now I'll be the bad one if I say no to this.

I took the envelope and got up to leave. I bumped into someone. I looked up and it was Shelley.

"Nomonde?" She asked looking at me from head to toe.

"Shelley." We screamed, grabbing everyone's attention before I launched myself into her arms for

a hug. We pulled apart, looked at each other and hugged again.

"Girl, what the heck are you doing here?" Shelley asked as we took a seat again.

"I came to see someone."

"Wow, you look incredible, life on the outside suits you."

"Thank you. So when are you joining me on the outside?"

"Soon, I hope. But those hundreds you keep sending make life a bit easier on this side."

"I'm glad I can help. I miss you."

"I miss you too, but I prefer you out there and not in here. So who did you come to see?"

"My sister. It turns out I spent all that time in here for a crime she committed."

"So you were finally able to prove your innocence?"

"Yep. And I got a job as an accountant too and met a guy." I saw her blink away some tears. Tough as

nails Shelley showing emotions? This is a first.

"I'm so happy for you Monde, you deserve this."

"Yeah, it still feels like a dream."

"So what's your sisters name, I want to shake her up a bit for doing what she did to you." I laughed cause I know she's not joking.

"Its okay. Actually now that I've seen you I would like you to do me a favor. Please watch out for her."

"Babe I dont even know who she is?"

"Amanda, Amanda Mashile."

"That snob?" She shouted drawing attention again.

"Yes, that one. Please watch out for her."

"You do know she's gotten into a few fights since she got here? I guess you didnt give her the 411 on things around here."

"Even if I had, she's too stubborn for her own good."

"Tell me about it. I'll watch out for her. Only because I love you. If it weren't for that I'd let her burn."

"Thank you Shelz. It means a lot to me."

"When I grow up I want to have your heart." She said as she got up. I got up too and we hugged. "Take care of yourself Monde, I dont ever want to see you in here again."

"I will, but I want to see you outside soon." She laughs.

"Ah we'll see." She walked back to her cell.

I walked out and went to the car. Lungelo was sleeping. He woke up soon as he heard the door open.

"You should lock the doors, what if someone steals you while you're sleeping?" He laughed and pulled the seat up.

"You're right. A gorgeous man like me is in high demand." He said making me laugh. "So how did it go in there?"

"Shocking." I handed him the envelope. "My sister just signed over her parental rights to me."

"Wow." He says as he looks through the documents.

"Tell me about it. How the heck does she expect me to do this? The Mashile's would never allow it."

"True, but that doesn't mean you can't be there for them. And this could be an opportunity for the kids to know their mother's side of the family."

"True, but those kids are used to luxury and private schools, how am I going to afford that? With Bontle going to varsity, if she doesn't get a scholarship I'll have to pay for her fees myself and that's a lot."

"Okay breathe." He takes my hands and holds them.

"For now, you can hold on to this. We will ask Khanya to look into it and see if it holds any weight. If it does then we'll take it from there and figure out a way forward. Okay?" I nodded and took a deep breath.

We drove out of the prison with me trying to figure out how I will do this. I can't expect my mother to do this, she's already done enough. I'll have to make a plan, but I know the Mashile's won't just give the kids up without a fight. But I guess like Lungelo said, we'll

just have to figure out everything one day at a time.



LUNGELO

Nomonde and I left the prison and drove to Khanya's place. I thought he would be home but he wasn't. Kgomotso was there though so I decided to leave the girls alone and go find my brother.

I decided to make a detour and head to the hospital where Paul was. Good thing Nate owns it. I went straight to his office. U knocked and walked in. I found him with his wife on his lap.

"Dr Samuels, I'm sorry to interrupt. I can come back later."

"No please, stay, I was leaving anyway." His wife said as she got off his lap. She kissed him and then

walked towards the door. She stopped next to me and looked up at me. "I know you." She said matter of factly.

"Yes you do. We met at that infamous dinner where someone's hand got pinned to the table with a steak knife." She laughs.

"That's where I know you from. It's nice to see you again."

"You too."

"Why are you flirting with my wife?" Nate asks soon as she walks out.

"Haha very funny. She's pretty though. Way to pretty for someone like you."

"And yet she's still mine." He says and I know it's his ego talking.

"A mystery that still needs to be solved." I sit down.

"So I hear Vladimir is in town."

"Yep, courtesy of the Mashile's." I chuckle and take a wing from his food. "Do they know they just invited

death to their doorstep."

"Obviously not. Vladimir is way too reckless, and he thinks he is untouchable. Maybe we need to remind him about the shadow assassin."

"Ucalile (you've started.) I need to see Paul."

"Just like that?"

"Yep. Just like that. Which room is he in?"

"I'll take you to him." We get up and he hands me a coat and a stethoscope then leads me to Paul's room.

We go past the guards without them being suspicious. We get into the room and he is sitting up on his bed. Sizwe really did some damage on him. The fact that he is still alive is a miracle all on it's own. Soon as he sees me with Nate he reaches for the panic button. I quickly run and get to the button before him. He looks at me, and I'm not sure if its fear or panic I see in his eyes. I smile just to ease the tension.

"Phunyuka bemphethe madoda, usaphila?"

"What do you want Lungelo?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to see the damage. So how are you feeling?"

"Leave me the fuck alone."

"I will. Soon as you stay the fuck away from Bontle. You are going to drop the custody suit cause that's just a waste of time and energy for everyone. If I ever find out you have your goons following Bontle or Nomonde then this will seem like a vacation compared to what I'll do to you. Get better soon." I said gentle slapping him a couple of times.

I walked out with Nate behind me. As soon as we were out of sight of the guards I handed him the coat and stethoscope.

"You know I wish people knew how dangerous you are then they wouldn't mess with you."

"I like being underestimated. Thanks for the help, I'll

see you around." We shook hands and I left.

Even though I wanted Sizwe to finish what he started, the Jesus in me kicked in and i figured if Philani has his way, this will seem like a vacation anyways so i might as well let nature take its course.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTY THREE

Someone needs to pray for Khanya, it seems he is getting old. I told him I was coming to pick him up and the idiot left before I got to his office. And now I have to drive back to the house. Mxm. What a waste of petrol.

I got back to his house and found his car parked in the driveway. I got in the house and found him in the lounge laughing and joking with Nomonde.

"Really? You couldnt wait for me?"

"You were slow mosi. I told you you drive like an old lady."

"Mxm." I just shook my head and tried to sit down next to Monde, instead my idiot brother decided to push me out the way and sit next to Nomonde. All she could do was laugh. "Manje."

"Go sit that side. I sat here first." Its true what they say, women mature faster than men but I can safely say there is zero hope for my brother. I decided to let him 'win.' I sat on the other couch looking at him sitting there.

Kgomotso came down and looked at us then just shook her head and sat down.

"Manje, what's going on?"

"Ask your husband." I crossed my arms on my chest and stared at him. He looked at me then looked at his wife who was also staring at him.

"Dont look at me like that, this is my house, I will sit wherever I want next to whoever I want."

"Mxm, you need prayer wena." I answered.

"The kids are on their way back so I was thinking we can go out for dinner." Kgomotso said.

"Works for me. Lungelo is paying anyways." Khanya said with his eyes glued on his phone. This man thinks I'm made of money.

"You're the lawyer with money, dinner is on you. Besides, I'm a guest laykhaya."

"I'll ask MaMtolo if you are really a guest here."
Kgomotso muttered.

"Hawu I was joking, dont ask her that. She'll kill me."
We laughed.

As much as we've always known that my brothers house is also my house my mother made sure to remind us that we should respect that home as much as we would like to have our own houses respected. And Kgomotso has made sure to never make us feel like unwelcome visitors, but if my mother had to hear me call myself a guest in my brothers house she would be mad. It's a Radebe home yes, but we always need to respect it and its main ownership.

Zethu and Bontle came in laughing and giggling. They greeted and hugged us. And their first stop was Nomonde's ring, before they broke out in loud

screams. I had to close my ears for a moment and their screams were enough to get Khanya off the couch.

"This is beautiful, you have great taste." Bontle said looking at me.

"I try."

"Yeah shem, you tried. Its perfect though." Zethu said. This one thinks I'm old fashioned and way too strict. But in my defense, you can never be too strict when it comes to girls, especially in South Africa.

"Now that we are here, can we all go to dinner." Kgomotso said.

"Ok, we'll go change." The girls quickly rushed upstairs.

Soon as Bontle stood up I rushed to sit next to Nomonde.

"Dont ever let my brother sit next to you." I whispered to her.

"Why?"

"Because he is an idiot. He might turn you into one."

She laughed. My brother threw a cushion at me.

"I heard that."

The Bontle and Zethu came down after about thirty minutes with Zweli and and Akhizwe, Khanya's twin boys. The girls and I together with Monde got into my car and the boys went with Khanya and Kgomotso. We got to the restaurant and were led to a huge table. I guess Kgomotso made the booking before hand cause the table had a reserved sign on it.

We sat down and made our orders. We had our dinner with laughter and jokes all around. It felt good. It was even nice to see Nomonde loosen up around Khanya, I know she respects him as my brother but I also want her to be free around my family.

Halfway through dinner I noticed she became quiet. Her eyes kept going to someone who was sitting on a table across the room. It was a guy. And I could he had also noticed her cause he kept stealing glances at her. I wonder what's going on.

By the time we went home I could tell she was completely back in her shell. I'm not sure who that guy was and why he has that much of an effect on her but I need to know. We dropped the girls at Khanya's and then drove to Lonehill. We got to the apartment and Nomonde went straight to the shower. I knew this was serious when she took almost an hour in the shower.

I decided to make the bed while she showered. I even thought of joining her in the shower but I figured she just needed to be alone for whatever reason. She came out after a while with a towel wrapped around her. She sat on the bed and lotioned then put on her pyjamas.

"So are you going to tell me what's going on?" She kept her eyes glued on her phone like she didn't hear me. I took the phone from her and only then did she lift her head and look at me. "I'm talking to you."

"Oh sorry, what did you say?"

"What's going on Nomonde, you've been quiet since we left the restaurant. What's going on?" She sighed and looked at her hands.

"It's nothing. I'll be fine."

"I know you'll be fine, but I still want to know what's going on. Who was that guy at the restaurant?" She brings her head up to look at me almost shocked.

"Yeah, I noticed that. Who is he?" She takes a deep breath and looks away.

"He is one of the officers from the prison."

That's all I needed to know. I felt my blood boiling just thinking about all that she went through in that place. And now she is out and coming face to face

with the same people who made her life a living hell.

"I thought I was over everything you know, I thought I'd dealt with it at therapy but seeing him just brought everything back." I brought her in for a hug cause I could tell she was emotional. "I'm sorry I ruined dinner."

"You didnt. Everything will be fine okay."

I held her till she fell asleep. As soon as I was sure she was fully asleep I laid her down. I got up and went to the kitchen and called Khanya.

"Dude, I'm busy what do you want?" He said soon as he answered.

"Do you have the list of the officers from the prison."

"The ones who raped Nomonde?"

"Yeah."

"Yeah I have it."

"I need you to send it to me."

"Why?"

"Just send it to me bra."

"Fine. I'll send it in the morning."

"No, now."

"Lungelo."

"Ngyakcela. (Please.) Its important." I heard him sigh on the other side.

"Fine." He cut the call.

A few minutes later he sent me a pictures of all the guards. There were about seven of them that were still working there. The rest had either moved on, died or retired. I went to my luggage and took out my burner phone from its secret compartment. I switched it on and sent the pictures from my phone via bluetooth. I sent the photos to Sbu using my burner phone, then I called him. He picked up after the first ring.

"I got them." He said soon as he picked up.

"Why are you not sleeping?"

"Do you really want me to answer that?"

"Maybe not. I need you to find me as much info on those names as you can. I need to know everything there is to know about them, from the moment they were born to now."

"What did they do to you?"

"I'll let you know soon. For now I need that information."

"Okay. I'll get on it."

"Sbu?"

"Yeah."

"You need a girlfriend. You cant be working at this time of the night."

"Hahaha very funny. Good night." I laughed and hung up.

I switched the phone off and put it back in its secret place. I took a shower then got into bed. I wrapped my arms around my sleeping beauty. They say love will make you crazy but if making the world a better place for the woman I love makes me crazy then I guess Weskoppies is waiting g for me.



BONTLE

I've been in Joburg for almost two weeks now. I must admit it's been one of the best times of my life. I've spent my entire life in our little bubble with gogo, it was just me and her against the world. Yes I have friends but I've always been cautious about not letting people get too close. But now here I am even visiting people in an entirely different province. How times change.

Zethu is a whole ball of energy. I thought she'd be snobbish when first met her but she's the exact opposite. I dont know how MaMtolo did it but she has done an incredible job with her kids, her influence trickled down to her grandkids. Of course there are those who have their own issues but like Zethu says, 'as long as the important people in your life are good then nothing else matters'.

"Hhay wena, you're still sleeping. Get up we have to go." She said soon as she got into the room. She went out jogging about an hour ago. She did ask me to come but I've never really seen the need to run without knowing why or what I'm running from.

"Relax. I already took a shower. I'm just waiting for you." She threw herself on the bed. "So did you see him today?" She rolled her eyes and I knew her escapades were not successful today.

"Mxm, that one has a girlfriend. Today he was jogging with her."

"Oh, askies."

"Ah whatever, guys like him are players anyway."

"So the crush is officially dead?"

"Dead and buried. No more jogging for me. Let me hit the shower so we can go." She got up and headed to the shower.

I chuckled a little cause I know her little crush is not dead and buried. She's been crushing on BJ for a while now, and if she greets him and he doesn't respond she claims the crush is dead and buried, then she sees him again and the crush begins.

She finished showering, and we got dressed. We headed downstairs and found mamKgomotso working on the dining table. We greeted and rushed out. Zethu requested an uber and we went to the mall. We met up with some of her friends. We went to the cinema and watched a movie then made our way to Spur for some lunch.

When we were done eating we got ready to go home. Till we saw BJ going to Steers alone. We said goodbye to her friends and headed to Steers. We got a table and sat down, watching him and pretending like we aren't even there. Good thing her dad is a lawyer cause we might just get arrested for stalking.

We sat there for almost an hour sipping on some milkshakes. Even though we were already full. He left and again we followed him but we lost him somewhere at the mall. Oh well, I guess we'll begin again some other day.

"Can we go home now?"

"Mxm, wena, you'll be a bridesmaid at our wedding busy acting like you don't care. That's your future brother in law and all you are doing is adding to our love story." I laughed.

"Right. Okay ke now that future brother in law has disappeared can we go home."

"Fine." Let me call the uber.

We sat on a bench at the mall entrance while she requested. A car pulled up just a few spots from us. I didnt think much of it till I saw the license plate. I just hope whoever it is doesnt know me and if they do I hope they didnt see me.

The door opened and the first thing I saw were crutches hitting the ground. I saw someone move fromt the drivers side and come to the passenger side to help whoever it was that was using crutches. Soon as the person was out I noticed it was my dearest sperm donor father. I focused on my phone saying a silent prayer that he wouldn't see me. But I was too late. He had already seen me.

All I heard were the crutches hitting the ground and getting closer to me. He stood l'm front of us.

"Hi." He said. I didnt even look up at him. Zethu

looked at him then looked at me.

"Hi, can we help you?" Zethu asked.

"I'd like to talk to my daughter please." He said.

"Bontle?" Zethu said. I looked up at her then looked at this man. I figured at some point I'll have to talk to him whether I want to or not, so that time might as well be now. Zethu stood up and stood behind me allowing Paul to take a seat.

"How are you?"

"I'm fine. I'm sure that is not what you want to talk about. What do you want?"

"You returned the money I sent you."

"Yes I did, why?"

"That money was for you, and I know the scholarship I got for you you also didnt accept." I chuckled cause I already know all that he is saying and yet here he is repeating it.

"I know all of that, what's your point?"

"I'm just trying to make it up to you."

"Make up for what? Fifteen years of absence? You think fifteen years later you can just throw money at me and expect me to come running? You dont know me Paul, you cannot buy me."

"I'm not trying to buy you, I know that's probably what your mother wants you to believe but....."

"Dont bring my mother into this. Just keep her name out of your mouth."

"I know this is difficult....."

"There's nothing difficult about this. How long have you known my mum was innocent? Have you taken the time to actually apologize to her, like really apologize and mean it, not throw money at her and expect her to forgive and forget? You've never done that but now you expect to play daddy fo the year just because I have your blood running through my veins? I'm sorry but It doesnt work like that."

I got up and got into the uber that was waiting.

"Are you okay?" Zethu asked.

"I'll live."

As much as I am trying my best to distance myself from the Mashile's I also need to come to terms with the fact that should I decide to come study in Joburg then I'll run into them a lot. That spot at UCT is beginning to take top spot on my options, knocking Wits out the way.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTY FOUR

If there's one thing Sbu doesn't play around with, it's his job. I sent him the names of the officers last night and by morning he had already texted me saying he has the information I need.

I left Nomonde a note saying I'm going to get breakfast. Although Kgomotso and Khanya are coming over later with the kids to see the apartment, I can't wait until they show up with food since Kgomotso said she'd take care of that. I don't know how she does but when we talk about a multitasking queen, it's her.

I got to the club and lucky for me the chef was already here prepping for the lunch crowd. This club has been opened for just a few months but it seems

it now has its regulars. I asked the chef to make me a breakfast to go and he was more than happy to indulge me.

I went to the office and checked on the books while waiting for Sbu to show up. So far all seems to be well. But of course if Thulani taught me anything, it's to look beyond the surface. The books might look good but it doesn't mean they are. I'll just wait for a couple more months then do an audit.

Sbu showed up after a while. He came in with his trusted laptop and sat down.

"Do you think it's safe to walk around with that laptop when all the crazy things we do are in there?"

"Relax. Even if anyone got a hold of this laptop they won't be able to get to anything. There are five passwords that are punched in in sequence and the sequence changes everyday, and if I don't punch in the sequence at a specific time, the laptop will self-destruct and destroy any and everything in it, and if

any some miracle they do get in, they will need my DNA strand to access any and every information." I shouldn't have asked.

"Ok ke steve jobs, what did you find?"

"Don't insult me. Steve Jobs cant do a tenth of what I do."

"Ok. My bad. So what did you find?"

"Well, the prison warden who was in charge when Nomonde first got to prison is now working for the department of justice, getting to him will be as easy as ABC, the rest of the officers and the current warden I also have their addresses, I've already sent out some guys to each of them, by the end of today they will all be under our watch, say the word and they will be meeting their maker before sunrise tomorrow."

Do I want them dead? No. Death might just be an easy punishment for something that Nomonde has to live with for the rest of her life, and I'm sure she is not the only one they have done this to. So if I do this,

I need to make sure they not only suffer but they remember why they are suffering.

"No, I don't want them dead. Watch them. Give me a few days and I'll know what to do to them."

"Okay, so I'll send you their information then."

"Thanks."

"Why am I scared on their behalf?" There was a knock on the door and the chef poked his head in. I told him to come in and he did with my breakfast in hand.

"So I made you some omelettes, sausages, mushrooms and some tomatoes."

"Thank you Calvin." He nodded his head and walked out. "Sbu, thank you, I need to go."

We got up and walked out together. We got into our cars and went our separate ways. I went past a garage and bought some juice, coffee, milk and sugar. I remembered that we don't have cups in the

house so I got some paper cups too. I got to the apartment and the balcony door was opened and Monde was standing outside. I left the breakfast on the counter and walked to the balcony. I wrapped my arms around her waist with my chin on her shoulder.

"You know its rude to leave a girl all alone in this big place." I chuckled a bit.

"Well, I had to get her breakfast." She turned around and looked up at me.

"I might just forgive you, so what did you get?"

"Omelettes, mushrooms, sausages and I got some juice too and coffee."

"Mhmm. Okay, I'll forgive you. Let's go eat."

We went inside and I was about to make coffee then I remembered we dont have a kettle.

"Baby, you need to furnish this house. We dont have a kettle." She laughed while taking out the food.

"That, Bhungane is what happens when you want to christine an empty house."

"Speaking of that, we need to get started before the others get here."

We climbed up on the counter and ate from there since we have no chairs either.

"This omelette smells funny." Nomonde said with a frown on her face. I smelled my omelette but it was fine. What is she talking about?

"Mine seems fine."

"Argh, I'll just have the mushrooms." She ate the mushrooms, sausage and tomatoes and left the omelette. When she was done eating I took her omelette and tasted it and it was fine. I wonder what's going on with her smell.

We finished eating and took a shower then waited for the gang to show up. Khanya and Kgomotso showed up before midday.

"How the fuck do you invite us to a house with no furniture." Khanya asked soon as they walked in.

"I didnt invite you, you invited yourself. Mrs Radebe, how are you?"

"I'm good Mr Radebe. I like the place."

"Me too. And the future Mrs Radebe likes it too."

"Where is she?"

"In the bedroom."

"Cool, let me go see her." She went to the bedroom.

I poured some juice for Khanya and handed it to him. He looked at the paper cup and looked at me funny.

"Really?"

"Just drink." He takes a sip and almost spits the juice out.

"No alcohol either? Yini kantian?"

"Dude we just moved in."

"Mxm, let me tell Zethu to bring the camp chairs

cause sesise Midrand."

"Drama king." He took out his phone and made a call. Kgomotso and Nomonde came out after a while.

"We are going to pick up the food. Later." Kgomotso said.

"Baby please bring alcohol too. This house is like a church." Nomonde kissed me and they left.

The kids finally showed up with the camp chairs. It's a good thing Zethu drives otherwise my brother would be sulking by now. We took the camp chairs and sat out on the balcony while the kids ran around the empty house.

Kgomotso and Nomonde came back with the food and we ate. It felt like a mini house warming. They even bought plates and cups and glasses. And a kettle. Since it was getting late and Nomonde and I are supposed to drive back to Durban so she can be

at work tomorrow I decided to book us a flight for tomorrow. We'll have to leave very early, and I'll have to come back again for my car.

Khanya, Kgomotso and the kids stayed until late. I figured since they are here this could be an opportunity for me to do some work. I told them I was going out to get some ice while Khanya was in the bathroom cause he would have wanted to come with me.

I drove to a garage that was close by. I found Razor and Sbu waiting for me. I got off my car and got into theirs and we drove to Fourways. We drove to the former prison commissioners house. Lucky for us he didn't have much security, just a couple of guards at the gate. Sbu walked up to them and pretended to ask for directions while we jumped the fence. Good thing it wasnt an electric fence otherwise we would be fried.

We got to the house and snuck in through the back door. There was laughter coming from the lounge, I guess his family is here. We manoeuvred ourselves until we got to his home office unseen. As soon as we were in I texted Sbu. He then texted the commissioner and told him about an important work email he had to check. We waited for a while, and for a moment I thought he wouldn't come. We heard footsteps coming from the hallway.

He opened the door and turned the lights on. He walked towards his desk. We quietly closed the door and turned the lights off. As soon as the lights were off he turned around to find guns pointed to his face.

"You can take whatever you want, just dont hurt me." I grabbed his phone from his hand and threw it on the floor.

"Sit down." He reversed slowly till he found the seat. Lucky for him the outside lights was bringing in a bit of light. He sat down and looked up at us.

"What do you want?"

"Explain to me why you never took the rape reports seriously when you worked at the Joburg Women's Prison?" I asked.

"This is what this is about? I havent worked at the prison for years."

"That's not what the man asked." Razor said before slapping the shit out of him then shining a torch on his face.

"You know what, let me make things easy for you. Fifteen years ago a woman came to that prison, less than five weeks after she showed up she was beaten and raped. She reported the incident to you and you did nothing. Why?"

"Do you know how many women have been to that prison? I cant know all of them."

"Nomonde Mashile. That's the woman." I saw his face change and I got my answer. He knows her.

I took the mask from my pocket and put it on. I

tapped Razor on the shoulder and he put his on. We turned the lights on. I took out my make up brush holder and laid it out on the desk. It had a lot of syringes. I took one out with a pinkish liquid.

"What are you going to do with that?" He asked, panic written all over his face. Razor helped me gag him and tie him to the chair. I took the syringe and stuck it to his penis. He was busy trying to scream with the gag in his mouth but it was impossible. I stuck another needle on his neck and he immediately fell asleep.

We took the gag out and untied him. I took my syringes and put them back in their carrier bag then we jumped out the window. We should have done that from the word go. We jumped the fence and got in the car. Sbu drove off.

"So you are telling me we came here to stick a syringe in him and just go. Really bra?" Sbu said

sounding annoyed. Tjis one loves violence. Him and Sizwe will kill anything and everything for just about anything.

"Not everyone kills Razor, you know that."

"So what did you inject him with?" Sbu asked.

"A little creation I made. It's going to make his penis and balls rot until they fall off."

"What the fuck bra."

"What? Since he watches people getting raped let's see how he lives without a penis. Let's see how long that trophy wife of his sticks around."

"So we are doing this to all those guards?"

"Yep. Since their penises drive them nuts, let's take the penises away and maybe they will be human again instead of monsters." Razor laughed.

"Maybe you should patent that and sell it."

"Maybe I will."

They dropped me back at the garage and left. I got in

and bought a couple packets of ice then drove back to the apartment. I found that Khanya and the kids, together with Kgomotso were gone.

"You're alive." Nomonde said.

"I'm sorry. My car died. The others left?"

"Yeah, let's go and sleep, I'm tired."

"Its barely ten o'clock babe."

"I know. But I'm tired."

"Maybe you need a vacation."

"I definitely do. You need to furnish this house so we can bless it properly." Music to my ears. I made sure all the windows and doors were closed and locked before joining her in the bedroom. By the time I got there she was already snoring. Something is not right with her. I need to get her to a doctor ASAP.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTY FIVE

I hate being sick. The past week alone I've been throwing up and having dizzy spells. Today it got a bit too hectic so my boss sent me home. I know I should go to a doctor to figure out what's going on but the dizziness and nausea comes and goes so maybe it's not that serious.

I requested an uber and went home. I got home and found Lungelo's car in the driveway. It thought he'd be out and about checking on his businesses but nope, he's home. All I want is to get into bed and just sleep, but now I'll have to explain to Lungelo why I'm home early.

I got into the house and called out for him but I got no response. I got myself a bottle of cold water in

the fridge then put some ice in a glass and went upstairs. I put the glass and bottle on the side table and took my clothes off. I put my pyjamas on and went to the bathroom. I was hoping Lungelo would be there but he wasn't. Oh well, works for me, now I can just sleep in peace. I peed and got into bed. I took my phone and called my mum.

"Monde."

"MaGumede. How are you?"

"I'm good. When is my baby coming home, I miss her."

"I miss her too, but she seems to be having fun in Joburg."

"I know. She calls me ever night. It's crazy how grown she is, but it's nice for her to enjoy life."

"True. So I have news. I got a message from Amanda saying she wants to see me."

"Oh, why? Are you going to see her?"

"I already went to see her. She signed over her

parental rights to me." She was silent for a while and I knew she was confused.

"What does that mean?"

"It means she gave me her kids. She wants me to raise them."

"Wow. Okay. So when are you going to get them?"

"I dont know ma, I don't think Paul will just hand them over like that. I mean he is busy fighting for custody of Bontle, I doubt he'll just hand over his kids to me."

"That's true. It would be nice to meet them though."

"I know. I cant believe Amanda really didnt see a need for her children to know her side of the family."

"She was clearly ashamed of us, or me to be precise." I could hear a ping of hurt in her voice. And if there ever was one thing I dont think I'll ever forgive Amanda for, its hurting our mother.

"Ma, dont say that, you're a great mother, there is nothing to be ashamed of."

"Yeah, but I'm not educated like y'all, so maybe she

didn't want her kids knowing about their stupid grandmother."

"Ma don't ever say that. Okay? Please just don't. Amanda had her own issues and they have nothing to do with you. Her actions say nothing about you and everything about her. You're an amazing mother, Bontle is the biggest proof of that." She sighed and I know no matter how many times I say it, convincing her that she is the best mother will be an uphill battle when her other child is determined to prove otherwise. "Look, I will see if I can't appeal to Paul's human side and see if he can't allow the kids to visit, even for just a few hours."

"That would be nice. Thank you. Are you on lunch?"

"No, I'm home. I've been feeling dizzy and nauseous lately so I just need some rest."

"Mhmmm." That mhm is loaded with so many questions and statements.

"What?"

"Nothing. Congratulations."

"For what?"

"For my new grandbaby of course. Take care of yourself." She hung up before I could even reply. Shem, if she thinks there is a bun in this oven she can think again. I turned over on the bed and before long I was fast asleep.

I woke up to something heavy on my waist. I looked behind me and Lungelo was back and sleeping behind me. I quietly turned to look at him. He pulled me to him and we were so close I could feel his breath on my face. He opened his one eye and frowned looking at me.

"You're up." He said then opened his other eye.

"Yep. When did you get back?"

"About an hour ago, why are you home early?"

"I wasn't feeling too good. My mother seems to think I'm pregnant." A smile formed on his face.

"You know old people and always assuming. I take it

your never told her."

"I couldn't. If I'd told her I got my tubes tied I'd have to tell her why, and that would mean...."

"Telling her everything that happened in prison."

"Yeah. And I don't think I'm ready for that conversation yet."

"Understandable. But you will have to tell her eventually."

"I know."

As much as Lungelo seems okay with me not being able to have kids I know it's something he wants. He might not say it out loud but I know it's there. The need to have a human being who looks like you and has your mannerisms and parts of your personality. It's every man's wish. Right? I think at some point Lungelo and I will have to weigh our options because I don't want him to live his life with what ifs and maybes. I know he will make a great father and I would never be able to forgive myself if I were to

deny him that chance.

"I'm going to order some food from the club. What do you want?"

"Wings, lamb chops, mustard sauce, a green salad and shrimp pasta." I looked at him and he had a frown on his face looking at me like I damn near lost my mind. "What?"

"You're never that specific whenever I ask you what you want to eat. If I didnt know better I'd say your mum was right." He grabbed his phone and made a phonecall. He's right though. Usually I take forever to decide what I want to eat but right now I know so maybe he should be happy.

He finished his call and came back to me.

"So tomorrow I am taking you to the doctor."

"I'm not even going to argue with you cause I'll lose." He laughed and came closer to me. He kissed me on the forehead.

"I'm glad you know that." He kissed me all over my face making me giggle. He got to my lips and gave me a few pecks before intensifying the kiss.

I felt his hand go under my butt as he positioned me under him. I wrapped my arms around his neck and opened my legs wide open. He pulled back and pulled up my top. He came back down again and kissed me before moving down to my neck and then my boobs. I groaned in pain when he squeezed my one boob and he quickly let go.

"What's wrong?" He asked looking genuinely worried.

"Nothing, keep going."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Radebe." I took his hand and shoved it inside my pyjama bottoms making him feel my wet ass pussy, as Cardi B would say. "You need to finish what you started." I said looking straight in his eyes. He bit his lip with a little smirk on his face. He came

down and kissed me again while his hand rubbed my clit making me feel all types of tingles and sensations.

I gasped when I felt his finger going inside me. He pulled back for a while and I was ready to fight him when he pulled down my pyjama pants and underwear. His hand made it's way back to its spot but this time it was accompanied by his mouth. His fingers went inside me while his tongue paid attention to my clitoris.

After a moment of my senses being stimulated to hell and back I felt my body finally give in and crumble under his touch. I calmed down after a couple of minutes. He came up and I dont know when he took off his shorts but I felt him enter me in one swift movement. His strokes were slow and delicate but somehow they reached parts of me I didn't think could be reached.

I wrapped my legs around his back and pulled him deeper into me. The strokes got a bit faster and faster till I felt my walls crumble again for the second time. He kept going till I felt him groan and spill his seed inside me. I was so caught up in everything I forgot we didnt use a condom. Any other time I would be freaking out but I know chances of me falling pregnant are zero to nil.

His phone beeped and he pulled out and took it.

"Our food is here." He got up and went to the bathroom. He came back with a warm towel and wiped me cause I was laying there like a nando's grilled chicken. He put his shorts on, kissed me on the forehead and walked out to get our food.

I got up and went to the bathroom. I quickly got in the shower and splashed myself with the water. I was out in less than five minutes. I wrapped a towel around me and went back to the bedroom. I took the sheets off the bed and replaced them with clean

ones. By the time Lungelo came back I was sitting on the bed waiting for him.

He came in with all the food in a tray and placed it on the bed.

"Just so you know if you get any food or sauces on the duvet shem you will wash it." He laughed and got on the bed.

"I'll buy you a hundred more of these." Show off.

We ate our food and for some strange reason I ate almost everything. When we were done he took the tray and the leftovers down to the kitchen. He came back and we cuddled on the bed until we fell asleep.

By the time Lungelo woke up in the morning I was already curled up on the floor in the bathroom with my head inside the toilet depositing whatever my stomach couldnt handle. I knew eating that much food would come back to haunt me.

Lungelo walked into the bathroom while I was busy gagging even though there was clearly nothing left in my stomach.

"Ok, this is serious. I'm taking you to the doctor right now." He helped me up and got me into the shower. He bathe me, as warm as the water was the heat was just making me dizzy. He helped me out and carried me to the bedroom. I sat on the bed while he chose something for me to wear.

He came back with a white dress. He dried me with the towel and helped me lotion. I'm pretty sure if anyone had to walk in right now they would think I was terminally ill and cant do anything for myself. He helped me dress and put on my shoes. He was about to carry me to the car but I had to put up a fight. I walked down with him right next to me ready to catch me if I fall.

We drove to the hospital and by the time we got

there they were already expecting us. I dont even know when he got time to call them. The doctor led us to his office and we sat down.

"Good morning. I am Doctor Mseleku, what seems to be the problem?" He asked with his file opened in front of him.

"I think I might have food poisoning."

"Why do you think that?"

"Well she can't keep anything down, she has dizzy spells and she seems tired most of the time."

"Okay. When last did you have your period?"

"Uhm, maybe a couple of weeks back."

"Okay, I will conduct a pregnancy test just to rule that out."

"Theres no need for that. I had my tubes tied a few years back."

"Oh. Okay, I will do the test anyway just to be sure."

She handed me a small container to pee on. I went

to the bathroom and peed on it then came back. She did the test and after a few minutes she had the results.

"Well, according to the test you're pregnant." She said looking at me. Lungelo looked at me like I had grown a huge horn in the middle of my forehead like a unicorn.

"That's impossible. My tubes are tied. I cant get pregnant."

"Tell you what, let's do an ultrasound just to be sure."

I got on the bed and pulled my dress up. She squirted the gel on my tummy then started moving it around while I looked at the screen. I saw some fuzzy movements that I didnt quite understand.

"Well, that's your baby." I looked at whatever it was she was pointing at but it still didnt make sense to me.

"I dont understand, she had her tubes tied so how is this possible?" Lungelo questioned, clearly just as

astonished as I was.

"To be honest with you i dont think anyone knows really, the tubes being tied is meant to be a permanent procedure which means technically speaking she shouldn't be pregnant."

"But I am according to you. How?"

"Let's put it down to an act of God." She pressed something on the sonogram machine and the sound of a heartbeat filled the room.

If I didnt believe it before, hearing that heartbeat just made time stand still. I wasnt sure if I should be happy or worried. Christmas is about six weeks away so miracle season isn't open yet. I turned to look at Lungelo and he had his eyes glued to the screen. His look didnt give anything away so I wasnt sure if he was happy or what, but I was certain shock was one of the feelings he was going through right now.

The doctor wiped the gel of my stomach and helped me off the bed. She handed us the sonogram pictures. We walked out of there in silence. I couldn't even bring myself to ask Lungelo if he was okay. We got to the parking lot and sat in the car just looking out at the parking lot.

"This is real right?" Lungelo muttered under his breath, I wasn't sure if it was a question to me or he was trying to convince himself. He turned around and looked at me. "We're going to have a baby?"

"Apparently so." I don't think I've ever seen his smile that big. His dimple was even deeper than usual.

"I'm going to be a father?"

"Yeah." His eyes got a bit glossy. He brought me in for a hug.

He was happy, but I was nervous. We've been together for less than a year and in that time we've moved in together, he's met my family, I've met his,

we got engaged and now there is a baby in the mix, a baby I didn't think I could ever carry. Honestly it was easier twenty four hours ago when I thought I had food poisoning, it was easier when it was just me and him, yes I saw a future with him but isnt it too soon to bring a baby in this? So many questions were in my head. But no matter how many questions I have, none of them will make this baby disappear.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTY SIX

I'm having a baby. I'm having a baby. Those words have been ringing in my head for the past week. I don't know if this is me trying to convince myself or it's me trying to make sure this isn't a dream.

When Nomonde told me she had her tubes tied I didn't really care much. I had told myself that if God had wanted me to have kids he would have given me kids a long time ago. I mean at my big old age it's not like I wasn't having sex, I was and yes sometimes without protection, which is why I understood when Nomonde insisted on using condoms, even though she couldn't get pregnant.

I figured it was safer that way until we both tested just to be on the safe side. We eventually got around

to it and we found out we were both clean. Except of course because of those fucken prison guards Nomonde had a few STDs in the past but lucky for us, she got her treatment so we were good. We continued using condoms but of course there were those moments when we got caught up in the moment and condoms were the last thing on our minds. I guess this is the price we pay for it.

I've been doing a bit of research on what to expect during this time but to be honest I don't think I will know all that I need to know in just seven months. But I can try right? This is probably the best news I could have this year. Christmas is less than five weeks away and I think my gift came early. Santa must be in a good mood.

I was in the office at the club going through a baby book I bought at the mall. My lesson for the day, cravings. According to this book women have the weirdest cravings, even though not all pregnancies

are the same but the weird cravings seems to be a common denominator.

Muzi walked in like he owns the place. This one needs to be banned.

"I'm going to ban you from my club. You're distracting my manager." He sat down and put his feet up on the desk.

"You just ruined my day."

"What did I do?"

"Why are you here. Its lunchtime and I should be having my lunch right now."

"Okay so what's stopping you?"

"You are." It took a while for me to figure out what he was trying to say. This idiot's 'lunch' means having sex in my office.

"Eeuw, what the fuck bro. This is work."

"I know, and since you overwork my fiancee I have to get it in whenever I can."

"You're five to being a sex addict wena." He laughs and takes the phone. He calls the kitchen and orders his lunch, real lunch this time. He puts the phone down and grabs the baby book.

"And now. What's with the baby book? Dont tell me Monde is pregnant?" I had to debate with myself for a second if I should tell him or not. I havent told anyone especially in my family about this. Monde wants us to wait until she is over three months, which is the first trimester. Yes I learn new things everyday.

"I will tell you if you promise not to tell anyone. Not even your mother cause I know you and your big mouth, especially when it comes to MaMtolo."

"Dude, you make me sound like a mama's boy. Of course I won't tell anyone."

"Okay. We are going to have a baby." I see a huge smile form on his face before he got up and punched the air.

"Yes." The smile disappeared as if he just

remembered something. "Wait, didnt you say she had her tubes tied?"

"She did. I dont know how it happened but it did." He started dancing around the room before he came and gave me a hug. He pulled back and looked at me pretending to be emotional.

"I'm so proud of you. For a moment there I thought you were shooting blanks."

"Uh newsflash, Buyelekhaya?"

"Yeah but we didnt know about him until recently so." He shrugged his shoulders and sat down. To be honest though if Nqobile hadn't showed up with the news of Buyelekhaya, even though he was already dead I was actually beginning to doubt that I could father a child. But here we are.

Muzi's lunch came and we ate. When we were done he got up and went back to work. The way he spends so much time around here I wonder when he gets to see his patients. But then again he also lectures at UKZN and sometimes he will let his

students handle any minor operations, under his supervision of course. And he says he trusts them so.

I left around four to go and get Nomonde from work. I guess the car I just bought her as a Christmas gift will now have to come with a driver. I got to her workplace and called her to tell her I was outside. She said she'd be down in a few minutes. I sat in the car waiting for her. She came down after a while with a large box in one hand and her bag in the other. I quickly got out of the car and ran to her. I took the box from her.

"You are not supposed to be carrying that. You're not allowed to lift heavy things."

"Its not that heavy."

"Nomonde!"

"Okay ke Bhungane, ngyacolisa (I'm sorry.)" And then she tries to soften me up. Women. Hhayi.

We got to the car and I put the box in the boot then opened the door for her to get in. I went around to my side and started the car.

"So what do you want to eat? Wings, Ribs..."

"Ulusu (tripe.)" She did not just say that. Where am I going to get ulusu at this time of the day and when will it be ready? I'm sure by the time it's ready she'll be craving something else.

"Uhm, okay." I tried to figure out where I could get it cause the books I read said women can get a bit emotional, basically bothering on crazy so now I have to find this tripe before she goes crazy on me. And then I remembered sometimes pick n pay will have it.

We drove to the mall and went to pick n pay. We got there and lucky for me I found it. Although it looked more like leftovers than the usual tripe.

"Can I have the tripe." She said before I could even

complain about it looking some type of way. The smile on her face said she didnt care so I just shrugged my shoulders and let her be.

I took the order and placed it in the trolley. We went around picking up some snacks and fruits. I thought she'd be going crazy on the junk but it looks like I'm still safe for now, I won't have to drive out in the middle of the night to feed her cravings.

We got home and I cooked pap while she took a shower. I warmed up the tripe and served it to her in front of the TV. Instead of a movie today we are apparently watching the news. I was about to complain when I saw a story about some sickness going around. According to the news reporter a few men had been admitted to different hospitals around the country due to their private parts rotting. Even though the government couldnt figure out where the disease came from all they knew is that the first four victims either worked for the women's prison or

used to, and now there was a task force put together to find the source of all this.

I looked down at Nomonde and she had finished her food and was fast asleep on my lap. I took out my phone and called Sbu.

"You just caused a pandemic you know that." He said then laughed.

"I need a favour. I need you to find other people, rapists especially and abusers. Give them the mixture."

"Why? This is working pretty well."

"Remember we told the former warden about Nomonde, I don't want this leading back to her and I don't want it leading to the prison as the source of all this."

"Okay. Makes sense. I'll get the boys on it."

"Cool. You should have the mixture by morning."

We hung up and I carried Nomonde up to the bedroom. I tucked her into bed and left. I got into my car and drove to the lab. It was only a few minutes away so I should be back before she wakes up. I took a left turn and got to a shopping complex that had a few shops. There was a restaurant at the centre of the complex. Lucky for me it was still open so no one would question me being there at that time of the night.

I got in and walked past a few patrons that were having drinks. I'm pretty sure they are the last ones for the night seeing as it was almost time to close. The manager saw me and came to me.

"Bozza, u right?"

"Yeah, I need to use the lab."

"Sure bozza." He led me down the passage to the toilets. We got to the toilets and I put my fingerprint on the side of the air dryer. The wall opened up and I got in. The manager went back soon as he was sure no one had seen me disappear into the wall.

The wall closed and the secret lift took me down to the basement. I took my jacket off and got to work. I mixed about two litres of this mixture and put it in a container. By twelve I was done. I went back up. By this time the restaurant would be closed so I didn't have to worry about people being in the toilet.

I got out and found the manager and his assistant waiting for me. They got up soon as they saw me walking out. I handed the assistant the mixture.

"I need this to be in Joburg by morning. Sbu is expecting it."

"Sure thing bozza. I'm on it." He took the mixture, grabbed his jacket from under the counter and left.

"I feel sorry for whoever that is meant for." The manager said. I just chuckled and we walked out. I got into my car and drove back home.

I got home and quickly got into the shower. Lucky

for me Nomonde was still out like a light. I finished my shower and got into bed. She stirred when I got in and got closer to me so we could spoon. She had her ass right in my crotch. If she wasn't sleeping I'm pretty sure we would be busy right now.

I closed my eyes and tried to sleep.

"Stop poking me." Her sleepy voice is quite cute and sexy.

"I'm not. Sleep." I whispered to her.

"How am I supposed to do that when you're poking me." She reached her hand behind her trying to move whatever was 'poking' her instead she found my crotch.

"See. That's not me poking you." She giggled and turned around. Good thing the side lamp was on so I could see the twinkle in her eye.

"So where were you. I woke up and you were gone?" She asked looking straight at me with her hand still holding on to my dick and moving her fingers around

it, stroking it, making me moan a bit.

"I went to the club. I had something to sort out."

"Ok." She brought the bed cover up to cover her face, while I was baffled by that I felt something warm on my dick. I lifted the cover up and she had my whole dick in her mouth. Okay, I think I'm going to enjoy this pregnancy.

Her mouth was doing things to me I didnt think she was capable of. At some point she had my whole dick in her mouth I'm pretty sure I could feel her tonsils. I felt myself about to explode and she stopped. She came up and slid herself down on my dick. It took a prayer and divine intervention for me not to become a two minutes noodles man.

Her little nightgown was sitting pretty up on her waist. I figured she wanted to be in control so I just let her be. Well more like let her drive me nuts in the middle of the night. She was moving up and down, left to right and sideways, doing circular movements

and every other shape. I groaned like a dying cow when she started moving faster. I came with her still doing her thing. She kept going till she came.

When her breathing was stable she slumped down on top of me with my dick still inside her.

"You should do that more often. I like it." She giggled and rolled over to the bed. I got up and went to the bathroom. I took a towel and splashed it with warm water. I cleaned myself up and went back to the bedroom. I found Monde already snoring. This baby is lazy as fuck. I cleaned her up and took the towel back to the bathroom.

I came back and got back into bed. I held her closer to me. This pregnancy will either be the best thing thats ever happened to me or it will be the death of me. Either way I am ready for this journey.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTY SEVEN

As much as great things have been happening to me since I got out of prison, I've always looked at each of them as Gods restoration. My mum always said that God is a God of restoration, he will always restore what the enemy has stolen. I just didnt think he'd be working this much.

It took a while for the baby news to sink in, but to be quite honest, Lungelo being excited about this helped a lot. He seemed so happy about this and a part of me couldnt help but be excited too. One thing I know and will never doubt is how great of a father he will be. That much I can bet my last cent on.

I've been waking up to breakfast in bed since we found out I was pregnant. As sweet as that is I'm

beginning to feel like an invalid. Lungelo seriously needs to slow down. I haven't even told mum yet. I wonder how she's going to react.

I woke up to go take a shower before my new found chef comes in. I got into the shower and the soon as the water hit me I felt last night's dinner coming up. I quickly got out and bent over the toilet and emptied the contents of my stomach. Soon as everything was out I brushed my teeth and got back into the shower. I really hope this morning sickness will disappear soon.

I finished my shower and put on my robe. I went back to the bedroom and as expected my breakfast was on the already made bed. This man is seriously going to turn me into a lazy fool if I keep letting him do this. I sat on the bed and had my food. Lungelo came back just as I started eating.

"Hey, I thought you'd still be in the shower." He gave me a kiss and sat down next to me.

"When did you get to do all this?" He smiled revealing his cute dimple. I wonder if our baby will have a dimple too. I hope it's a boy. Girls are cute but they are usually daddy's girls, especially if their father will be Lungelo Radebe. If it's a girl I know she'll be spoilt rotten, but if it's a boy maybe he'll be a mama's boy.

"Earth to Nomonde." I don't know when I drifted off but I came back to earth when he snapped his fingers in front of me. I looked at him with a smile on my face. "Where did you drift off to?"

"I was actually thinking about our son, and wondering if he'll have your dimple. I hope he does." I'm pretty sure God was in a very good mood when he made this man. Everytime he smiles he seems to light up the room and for some strange reason I feel myself not being afraid of the journey ahead. It's like his smile just lights up the way and I know everything will be okay.

"You mean our daughter. She's going to be perfect and she's going to look like her mummy and her big sister. I hope she has your eyes."

Emotions are probably the downside of pregnancy. As much as I want a boy, hearing him speak about his 'daughter' like that made me teary. I remember when I was pregnant with Bontle, Paul was just as happy, even though he had wanted a boy he adjusted soon as we found out it would be a girl. He was happy, he bought every pink toy and baby clothes he could find. He had so many plans for her, he wanted to spoil her and love her. He said he'd make sure she never ever questioned his love for her, and that any man who comes into her life will have to match his love or exceed it. It's a pity none of those plans came to fruition.

My hand made its way to my invisible bump. Even though Bontle never got to have the father daughter relationship she deserved I know this baby will have that and more. My heart and soul was at peace knowing that even if anything were to happen to me or Lungelo she or he would still have a family that would move heaven and earth for them. They are

already doing it with Bontle so I have no doubt this baby will experience the best love God has to offer.

"I'm sorry I didnt mean to make you cry." He wiped my tears and I could see he was a bit scared. All I could do was throw myself at him and hug him while straddling him.

"I'm just happy. That's all."

"Okay. In that case, you can cry as much as you want." I giggled into his shoulder before pulling out to look at him.

"I would love that but I need to get to work."

"I think you should take maternity leave now." He said with his hands fondling my butt. As tempting as this is, I need to get to work.

"I'm barely three months pregnant Sthandwa sam, I cant take maternity leave now." He pulled me to him and buried his face between my boobs. I could feel his erection under me. That alone just made me wet. I swear this baby will be the death of me. I needed to

get tk work but the throbbing sensation between my thighs was also calling for attention.

I heard him mumble something but I couldnt figure out what it was cause his face was still between my boobs. And I could feel his tongue playing around with my boobs, which was also making the throbbing worse. I figured if I dont do this now I'll spend the rest of the day thinking about this so I might as well help myself.

I reached down into his pants and pulled out his dick and shoved it inside me in less than ten seconds. That has to be a record of some sorts. He pulled his face back and looked at me with a smirk on his face.

"This pregnancy is making you bold. I like it." I wanted to laugh but the sensation going on inside me also needed my full attention.

I moved up and down on him while he was busy

fondling and sucking on my boobs. As sensitive as they were they were enjoying this attention. I felt him wrap his arms around my waist before he began giving me some deep ass strokes that I clearly needed.

After we were done I went back to the bathroom and took another shower. I got dressed and he dropped me off at work. I got in and started working.

Sometime before lunch all I wanted to eat were wings. Not chicken licken or any other wings but wings from the club. I decided to call Bonsile and placed my order. She told me my order would be ready in half an hour. I took an uber to the club and by the time I got there my wings were ready.

I decided to sit down and have them right there and then while they were still hot. Bonsile came to join me.

"So, since when do you like the chilli wings? Last time I checked you dont like anything chilli." She said

looking at me weird.

"A girl is allowed to change her mind right." She laughed and sipped on her drink. "Hows everything going?"

"Good. The club is doing well, Muzi asked me to marry him." She showed me her ring and we both started screaming, drawing some unnecessary attention.

"Oh my God, congratulations."

"Thank you. I still cant believe it."

"Well you should. The man is crazy about you."

"I know. So we are both going to be Mrs Radebe. Who would have thought."

"Life neh, has a way of surprising you."

"Yeah. And thanks to you for keeping Lungelo busy, he doesnt come around very often now. It's like he trusts me to run the club."

"Of he does. Otherwise he wouldn't have pit you in charge. Wasnt he here last night?"

"No. I last saw him some time before lunch. And before that, I dont even remember."

I had my lunch then took an uber back to the office. Of course soon as I got there it came right back up. But I still couldnt figure out what Bonsile meant when she said she last saw him before lunch. Last night when I woke up to get some water he wasnt home, and when he came back he said he was at the club, but now it turns out he lied. So where was he? What is he hiding from me?



NARRATED

At club Phoenix, Vladimir and his guys are sitting in the VIP lounge. Philani and Nate are in the office watching him. They notice Sbu walking up the stairs towards the office. He quickly walked into the office

looking like he had a lot on his mind.

"And now, what's with you?" Nate asked. Sbu grabbed a piece of paper from the desk. He grabbed a marker and wrote on the piece of paper. He turned it towards Nate and Philani. They read what was written on it then looked at each other.

They quickly took off their watches, cufflinks, belts and shoes. They placed everything in a box behind the desk. They took their phones and placed them on the desk drawer. When they were sure they had taken everything off they got out of the office and walked out of the club using the back entrance. They found a car waiting for them there, they got in and drove out in silence.

They got to Hyde park and headed straight for the basement. They undressed and put on sweats and sneakers.

"Are you sure about this Sbu?" Nate asked soon as they were done getting dressed.

"Dead sure. Vladimir and his cronies bugged our phones."

"So why didn't we leave just the phones? If I lose that watch Lando is going to kill me."

"You wont lose it. Besides, you never know with that man, if he was able to bug our phones I wouldn't be surprised if that watch is bugged as well."

"And the office?"

"Its bugged too. When I was updating the security software I noticed that there was some unauthorized signals going out from there. Now I need to check all your houses, offices, cars, literally anything that could be bugged."

"What the fuck does he want? Vladimir seems to be losing his touch. When did he start pulling stunts like these?" Philani asked.

"Well, my guess is he is looking for Shadow. He knows what Shadow is capable of. And if he attacks

us....."

"Shadow will come after him and he won't know when or how he might retaliate." Nate said.

"Exactly. So he probably thinks this will lead him to Shadow."

"So what's the plan?" Sbu asked looking at Philani. "I can disable the bugs. And I'm sure by tomorrow your houses will be swiped clean."

"No, don't. Now that we know about this we can make him think he's still in control. We need to make sure the others also know and we need to make sure we keep things as clean as possible. And if we need to communicate we use the burner phones."

"Okay, I will install signal blockers so we can talk. You can switch them on and off."

"Perfect. We need to make sure when we strike we leave nothing behind."

"So what happens to Portia?"

"I'm pretty sure they are working together. We hit Vladimir we hit her. It's time we put an end to this

shit and go back to our lives."

"Works for me. But we need to go back to the club."

They grabbed their clothes and got back into the car and drove to the club. They used the back entrance and went straight to the office. They put their clothes and accessories back on and continued drinking.

Meanwhile at the VIP section, Vladimir is watching the office. Even though he can't see what's happening inside he rests easy knowing his bugs are in place. One of his guys walks into the club and goes over to him, he whispers something in his ear. Vladimir takes off his sunglasses and throws them on the table. He calls the waitress over. The young woman walks over to him.

"Is everything okay sir?"

"Where's your boss?"

"In his office. Why?"

"I need you to go up there and make sure him and his friend are there. My guys have not been able to get some Intel for the past hour. And I didnt see Biyela or Samuel's leave."

"And what am I supposed to say I'm doing in there? They didnt ask for anything. Dont you think it will be suspicious for me to show up there unannounced?"

"If you want your mother and little sister to wake up in one piece tomorrow then you'll figure something out." The girl, trembling with fear at the mention of her mother and sister quietly went away trying to come up with a plan. Lucky for her Nate placed an order for some fries and wings. She figured that would be her way in.

As soon as the order was done she made sure she was the one to take it up to them. She got to the office and with a smile on her face placed the order on the desk then walked out. She served some other tables before making her way to the VIP section.

"They are in there?" She whispered to Vladimir while clearing the bottles from the table.

"Then why are they quiet?"

"They are working. All of them are on their laptops with airpods on."

"Ok. Good job. See, saving your mother and sister isnt that hard."

The waitress turned to walk away and Vladimir spanked her on the ass. A small tear fell down her face. She wiped it away and continued working.

Vladimir ordered a bottle of champagne, unbeknownst to him, Philani, Nate and Sbu were watching the whole interaction with the waitress from the confines of the office. They looked at each other and nodded knowing that they have found their snitch.

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTY EIGHT

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I dont think I'll ever be able to understand the weird cravings women get when they are pregnant. I mean who in their right mind eats bread, acthar, avocado, mayonnaise, tomato sauce, ulusu, spinach, cheese and a dash of peri peri sauce. I feel like throwing up just looking at it.

I swear my daughter is driving her mother crazy. I've been sitting here looking at my soft porridge, two spoons later I can't even take more of it because of this mess that Nomonde is eating. She takes a bit of her weird sandwich and I swear she just had a foodgasm.

I figured since I wont finish my porridge I might as

well throw it away. I took the bowl and emptied the porridge into the bin. I washed the bowl and put it away. Usually Nomonde likes to make small conversation even when she is eating but she has been ignoring me. At first I thought maybe it was simply because she was just hungry but then I remembered even last night she was a bit cold.

I decided to leave her since she was in no mood to talk. I kissed her on the top of her head and went to the office to get some work done early then maybe by the time I'm done she'll be better. I got my burner phone from the safe and switched it on. There was a message from the Philani's burner phone. Vladimir was watching everyone, all their houses had been bugged so they had to keep a low profile.

I took out my other laptop from the safe and went through Vladimir's file. The man was a trigger happy idiot who thinks he can control everyone. He honestly thinks he can take on the cartel and win.

Many before him have tried and failed. And he honestly thinks he'll be the one to take us down. If Bushiri hadn't left the country I would have personally paid for him to be prayed for. I'm not sure if that would work but it would be worth a try right.

Since he likes to party so much it would be easy to take him out. All I would need is a bottle of water or any of his mixers. He's Russian so I'm pretty sure he drinks vodka mostly. Vodka is clear so it would be easy to give him the poison. Plus it's clear and has no odor. It will be perfect. All I need to do now is find out where he might be and strike.

I texted Sbu and asked him to check out Vladimir's favourite places. The Phoenix lounge is probably one of those since he is watching the crew, but it wouldn't make sense for me to be there. I need him at my club. That way I can get easy access to him without being questioned.

Sbu texted me back and told me about the places Vladimir likes to go to. And lucky for me my club was one of them. Well there are only three clubs really, there's a gentleman's club he likes then the Phoenix lounge for obvious reasons and then my club. I texted Sbu and told him to make sure that if he shows up tonight they shouldn't let him in. If I'm lucky he might just do a detour and head to my club. I booked the first flight I could get to Joburg. I got my Russo-Baltique Vodka from the cabinet and put it on the desk. I need to go to the restaurant to get the poison before I head to the airport.

When I was done talking to Sbu I switched my phone off and put it back in the safe. I put the laptop back too and then headed out to the lounge. Nomonde wasn't there so I went upstairs. I found her sitting on the vanity lotioning herself.

"Hey, listen I know we're supposed to spend the day together but I have to go to Joburg for some work

stuff." I said going into the shower. I took a quick one and got out. I walked back into the bedroom and Nomonde was still in the same place I left her at. I pulled up an ottoman and sat next to her. "Babe, is everything okay? Why are you so quiet?" She closed her lotion and turned to look at me.

"When did we start lying to each other?"

"What?"

"Where were you the night you said you went to the club?" Her eyes were looking straight at me.

"I was at the club. I told you that."

"Are you sure?" A part of me thought about keeping with the lie but my mother taught me one thing, when a woman asks you something and then asks you if you're sure about your answer then chances are she already knows the truth. So lying would be a waste of time.

"Okay, I wasn't at the club. And it's not what you're thinking."

"You read minds now?" I know I should be shaking in

my boots right now and putting out this fire that I started but I kind of find this whole thing sexy.

"Sthandwa sam I know how this looks and I would like to explain everything to you but I can only do that when I come back from Joburg. I swear to you when i come back i will tell you everything." She turned back and continued what she was doing. I know I should stay here and fix this but I have a flight to catch. I kissed her on the cheek and went into the closet to get dressed.

I got out and grabbed my wallet from the dresser together with my phone and my backpack. Nomonde was sitting on the bed with a magazine in her hands.

"Baby." Silence. This is going to be harder than I thought. I kissed her on the cheek and walked out. Atleast she still let's me kiss her.

I went to the study and got the bottle of vodka. I cant

believe I'm about to give this bottle up for someone like Vladimir. But then again I can rest easy cause I dont drink Vodka and I sure as hell didnt buy this one. Although my brothers have been trying to take it from me. But now it will be the death of a man.

I got into my car and drove to the lab. I went straight to the bathroom. Unfortunately for me there were people occupying the bathroom so I had to pretend to pee too. As soon as they were done and walked out, I made sure the bathroom was empty. I scanned my fingerprint on the air dryer and the wall quickly opened for me to get in.

I got in and made my way down to the basement. I took the bottle out of the backpack and put it on the table. I found my bottle of poison, I thought about putting the poison in the bottle but what if he has company and decides to share the vodka, I dont want people dying unnecessarily. Change of plans. I grabbed a shot glass from the cupboard, I got some

gloves and put them on. I dipped my fingers in the poison then smeared the poison on the edges of the shot glass. Now all I need to do is make sure he uses this glass.

I put the glass in a zip lock bag and put it in my bag together with the bottle of vodka. I took off the gloves and made sure to wash hands then I called the restaurant manager. He texted me after about five minutes and said the coast was clear. I got out of the lab and found him standing by the door.

"You seem to be on a roll these days, who pissed you off?" He said as he walked me out of the bathroom.

"Just some loose ends I should have taken care of a long time ago. How's business?"

"Good. Since they built that office building across the road we've been getting more customers."

"Great. At least now we can clean the money without

anyone being suspicious."

"Yep. Things are looking up."

"Okay, I'll see you later."

I got into my car and drove to the airport. My flight landed just before sunset. I got a rental car and drove to Phoenix lounge. And just my luck, Vladimir was there. He's really not being discreet about this spy business. I figured it would be weird for him to see me with the guys so I just took a seat on the table next to him. I ordered some wings and water. I was looking around pretending to scout the place. It was almost five o'clock so it wasn't that busy. He noticed that I was looking around and smiled.

"It's still early, the girls aren't here yet." He said with a smirk on his face. If only he knew I was here for him.

"Oh I'm not here for those. My club has the best girls."

"Oh, a competitor checking out the competition. I

dont know if I should be impressed or what."

"Well a great businessman should know what his competitor is up to at all times."

"True. So what's the name of your club?"

"Club Vegas." He sat forward when he heard that and I could see he was happy about something.

"You own that place. That's one of my favorite places, and you're right, it has the best girls."

"Really, and yet you're here." He laughs and takes a sip of his drink.

"I just came to have a late lunch. I'm definitely going there later." I smiled.

"Okay then. I look forward to seeing you there. Let me get going before they notice I'm here." He laughed and lifted up his drink.

I grabbed my bag and walked out of the club. This idiot is making things easy for me. I got to my club and went straight to the office. I sat there watching the security monitors. I saw on the security monitors

as soon as Vladimir pulled up. You cant really miss him with his entourage.

I quickly rushed down to the bar with my backpack. I put it under the counter and took out the bottle. I put it on the display by the bar and waited for him.

Vladimir walked in and he saw me. He walked over to me with a huge grin on his face. He seriously thinks we are friends now.

"My friend, see I told you I would come." I smiled.

"I can see that. Welcome. How about I give you a bottle for your loyalty." He smiled and looked around. And his eyes stopped at the bottle behind me.

"I want that one." He said pointing to the bottle. I turned to look at it then looked back at him.

"Any bottle but that one."

"Come on my friend. You said any bottle, and that one is a rare piece of art if may say."

"I know that and that's why you cant have it. Choose

another bottle."

"I want that one. I'll pay for it."

"Its not for sale."

"My friend. I need that bottle." This will be easier than I anticipated.

"Okay tell you what, how about I give you a shot. That's the best I can do." He sighed.

"Fine, a shot will do."

"Perfect." I reached under the counter and took out the shot glass from my bag. I got the bottle out of the display and I could see him salivating.

I poured the shot and handed it to him. He looked at the shot before pushing it back to me.

"I think you should take the first shot."

"My ancestors would turn their back on me. My dad always told me that a guest should be the one to take the first sip of any drink. It shows respect to his hosts." I took another shot glass and poured myself

a shot. "So how about we take the shots at the same time." He smiled and took the glass. We toasted and gulped down the shots.

"This is some premium stuff." He said clearly impressed. I decided to give him another shot. He gulped it down like he was drinking some elixir of life.

"My guy. This is officially the best club in Joburg."

"Thank you. I'll get a waiter to bring drinks to you. First bottle is on me. So take a pick." He looked around and chose a bottle of absolute vodka. A waiter prepared his order and took it to him. I took the shot glass and put it back in the zip lock bag and back into my backpack.

I looked at the time and it was late. But I can't stay here. I need to fix things at home. I booked a late night flight. After making sure Vladimir was comfortable I took my bottle and drove to the airport. Hopefully Vladimir goes out in the next two days because as slow as that poison is, once it starts

working it wont take long before he goes to meet his ancestors.

I got to Durban and drove home. Along the way I parked my car and took the shot glass out of my backpack. I got a small rock and smashed the glass then emptied the pieces. I took a lighter out of my pocket and burned the bag. I got back in my car and drove home.

By the time I got home Nomonde was fast asleep. I took a shower then got into bed. I held her close to me and kissed her neck. I can't afford to lose this woman, and if I have to tell her everything about myself and life then so be it. I just pray to God she doesn't hate me afterwards.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

FIFTY NINE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I'm nervous. I don't know how Nomonde will take all this. I know she'll probably be mad but my biggest fear is her losing the baby. I read somewhere that the first trimester is a sensitive time for a pregnant woman and during that period there is a higher chance for a miscarriage, especially if she is stressed out. And I know telling her that I'm part of a cartel might just stress her out a bit.

I woke up early and went to my study. I should be sleeping right now but my nerves won't let me. I figured I would keep myself busy with some work while my baby sleeps. I took out my phone from the safe and switched it on. I found a voicemail from Philani. I called him back. The call went straight to

voicemail. I took my daily phone and called him on his usual number. He picked up after the first ring.

"Come home." I hung up and waited for him to call me back on the burner phone. Since their phones have been bugged we cant really talk about important things on our usual lines. My burner phone rang a few minutes after that. I picked it up.

"Good morning."

"Its not a good morning. I should be between my wife's warm thighs but here I am talking to you. So no, it's not a good morning." Trust him to complain about sex. I just chuckled and pretended not to have heard anything he said.

"How are you this morning Ntshangase?" I hear him groan in frustration.

"I will shoot you. What do you want." All I can do is laugh. His appetite for sex is way above average and lucky for him his wife can handle him.

"I need advice. So I'm planning on telling Nomonde everything, problem is, she's pregnant." I hear him whistle.

"Congratulations. So you don't shoot blanks afterall."

"Man fuck off." He laughs.

"Hey, we were beginning to worry about you. Atleast our prayers have been answered."

"Do you even know how to say the Lords prayer? Anyways help me out, what do I do?" He sighs.

"How far along is she?"

"About ten weeks."

"Then dont do it. If you're going to tell her you'll have to tell her about everything. And in her condition it might be a bit much. Wait until she gives birth then you can tell her."

"Maybe you're right. But now I need to tell her something that's believable."

"Figure it out man. But make sure it wont leave her with more questions."

"Right. Listen, your sister in law, the one with an events company. Can she help me plan my wedding?"

"I'm sure she can, at the right price."

"Money is not a problem."

"I'll send you her number."

"Cool. Thanks man."

We said our goodbyes and hung up. I guess my decision is made. I want Nomonde to know the truth, but not just yet. I got up and went to the kitchen to start on breakfast. But then I remembered I dont know what she wants. These days she eats a whole lot of things I dont know. So I guess I'll wait for her to wake up first.

I went to the gym to get a workout in before the day begins. About ten minutes into it I feel someone watching me. I put down the weight and turn around to look and just my luck, it's my baby.

"Hey, I didn't know you were up." I take a seat on the press bench. She said nothing, instead she sashayed over to me with the tiny silk nightdress. I found myself looking at her thighs instead of her. The nightdress was short enough to be tantalizing yet long enough to be decent.

I swallowed the lump of saliva as she got closer to me. As tiny as she is, I could see her body was changing. Her hips were becoming wider and her boobs were beginning to fill up the cups of the nightdress. Just looking at her made me hard. She got to me and straddled me. The pregnancy gods must really love me, as much as this pregnancy is making her all sorts of horny I cant help feeling like I'm the one who just won.

She crossed her arms behind my neck, bringing my face direct to her delicious boobies.

"You said you'd tell me everything when you came back. You're back now so spill." Who needs lie

detector test when women are alive and well. With just the right moves a woman can suck all your deep dark secrets. That's how humanity got kicked out of the garden of Eden anyway.

"Well, you were right, I didn't go to the club." Her grinding on my already hard dick wasn't really helping my chain of thought.

"Go on!"

"I heard Gugu Mdlalose was in town, so I went looking for her." She stopped grinding and looked at me.

"Gugu Mdlalose the events manager?"

"Yep, that one. I couldn't find her though but I got her number and if I can, I want to convince her to plan our wedding."

"You do know there are plenty of wedding planners in Durban."

"True. But you my sweet baby, deserve only the best. And Gugu is that." I saw a bit of smirk on her face

and I guess I could rest easy now, if she believes me then its minus one trouble.

She unclasped her one hand from behind me, and moved it down my chest until it got to the edge of my shorts.

"For your sake, you better get Gugu to do this, you cant get my hopes up then dash them."

"God himself would strike me dead if I ever dashed any of the promises I make to you." I felt her hand go inside my pants and bring out my dick. I lifted her up with her butt so she could get me inside her. Her warm haven welcomed me so effortlessly I'm pretty sure God had me in mind when he made her.

"I dont like secrets Lungelo and I dont like being lied to." To be honest I'm not sure what I should be concentrating on. On the one hand I need to listen to what she's saying but what she's doing to me right now cannot be ignored.

"I know, baby, and I'm sorry. I promise you I will not keep secrets from you."

She puts her hands on my shoulders to balance herself before she starts going ham on my dick. This baby is turning her into a freak and I'm here for it.

Her moans fill the room and before long I feel her walls contract around my dick. I stand up with me still inside her and pin her on the wall. I move in and out of her as slow as I can go and I can tell she is getting frustrated with my snail pace. But I'm in charge now so I will do things my way.

"Bhungane. Please."

"Please what?"

"You're killing me."

"Tell me what you want."

"I want you to up the pace a bit." I start going faster

and I guess I hit the mark cause she holds her head back and with her eyes closed, moans getting louder I ran into her as fast and as hard as I can until we both release. Wait. Is sex even healthy right now, what if I somehow poke the baby and she gets a miscarriage. Oh my god.

I quickly pull out of her and look at her as she tries to get her breathing in check. She doesnt seem to be in pain. I make a mental note to ask her doctor about this. I carry her to the shower and we both get in. She is oblivious to the thoughts going on in my head. I really need to speak to someone about this.



NARRATED

In Joburg, Vladimir has just finished his late lunch. He drives to Houghton for his meeting with Portia

Mashile.

He drives into the estate followed by his entourage. The driver parks the car and gets out to open the door for him. He walks to the house and the cramps he's been feeling for a while now come back. They aren't as strong as before. To him they feel like just a pinch but they are irritating.

He walks into the house and finds Portia in the lounge. He takes a seat across from her. He pours a glass of wine and takes a sip.

"Feel free why won't you." Portia says with her head buried in a magazine.

"Thank you. So my guys seem to be close to finding out who the Shadow Assassin is." That seems to get Portia's attention, she looks up at him.

"Close isn't good enough for me, I want that person's head on a silver platter."

"And you will get it, soon. And once that is done we

can go full force on the cartel and this time we will win."

Portia smiles, Vladimir lifts his glass up for a toast but then a sharp pain hits him on his abdomen so he groans and puts the glass down.

"What's wrong?"

"I dont know. I think I ate something that didnt agree with me and now my stomach is acting up."

"I'll call a doctor. In the meantime lay down." He lays down on the couch while Portia makes the call.

After a few minutes he closes his eyes trying to implore his body and all his cells to fight whatever was going on in his stomach. His body seemed to listen as his heart slowed down. It felt like laying there was draining his energy, but he couldnt do anything about it since his muscles were relaxing. Eventually his heart stopped.

Meanwhile Portia was busy on the phone with the doctor trying to explain to him what was wrong with Vladimir, but she didnt know either. She called out to Vladimir but she got no answer. As soon as the doctor said he was on his way she hung up and tried to check on her friend.

She screamed when she felt his body slowly getting cold. Her guards and Vladimir's guards quickly rushed into the room. One of Vladimir's guards, his second in commad checked on him and when he found no pulse he turned to Portia with a gun in her face.

"What did you do to him?" He asked in his thick Russian accent. Her guards pulled out their guns too and pointed them to the man, but Vladimir's guards were armed too so they pulled out their own guns. If anyone who didnt know better would walk in here they would swear this was a scene from a movie.

"I didnt do anything to him. He said he was feeling

some cramps, I told him to lie down while I called the doctor. He did, next thing I know he is cold." One of Vladimir's men whispered something to the second in command.

The doctor walked in and almost turned back when he saw the sight before him.

"Come over." Portia said. He slowly came over and with a racing heart tried to check on the patient.

"He's dead." He announced much to the annoyance of everyone.

"We know that. What happened to him?" Portia shouted clearly upset.

"I cant know that until an autopsy is done."

"Then do it." The Russian man said.

"Here?" The doctor asked.

"Yes, here. He died here right?"

"You do realise we have to call the cops, file a police report before we can do anything to his body. I

cannot do an autopsy either, it is not my area of expertise."

"Everyone put your guns down. We need to figure out what happened to him. And if you're planning on burying him back home then we need to do things the right way." They all put their guns down. The doctor made a call to the police. And before long the Mashile home was buzzing with police and journalists were parked outside waiting for a scoop.

The coroner took the body away with the guards refusing to leave its sight, the police filed their report and opened a case. As soon as everyone had gone Portia sat alone in her lounge, in the darkness trying to figure out what happened. She wasn't sure what to do with everything that's happening to her family. She felt defeated and broken.

Her phone beeped. She picked it up and checked the message.

'Dont go looking for things in the dark with no torch, the shadows can bring relief from the sun, but it can also hide some deadly poisonous snakes. Be very careful before you make your next move.'

She threw the phone against the wall and screamed. This is not how this was supposed to go. For once in her life she felt helpless. No matter how many times she tries Biyela and his bloody idiot friends seem to be a step ahead. Will she ever win?

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTY

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

At the coroner's lab in Joburg, Vladimir's men are standing outside the lab, watching through the glass as the coroner performs the autopsy.

Its barely been twenty four hours since Vladimir died and his men need answers to take back to his father in Russia. They know when they get back to Russia they need concrete proof of his death and a reason why he died.

The coroner tries to calm his nerves, he's never done an autopsy with people watching, but these men have taken over his lab. Vladimir's body laid on the table as he prepared his tools. As soon as he had on his protective gear he got down to work.

He opened him up, as soon as his insides were visible the coroner took a step back with his mouth covered. The guards noticed and quickly rushed in. The smell from Vladimir's insides fill the room making the men's steps falter. His second in command covers his mouth and nose and gets closer to the body. He looks inside and to his surprise, it's like an empty shell. Where there should be organs, there's nothing but what looks like coals.

"What happened to him?" The second in command asks the coroner.

"I dont know, it looks like he either ate or drank something that fried his insides." The coroner picks up what should be a heart, and the fact that it easily disseminates from the body with no scalpel or razor scares him a bit. He's never seen anything like this in his entire career.

The coroner continues with his examination, but

even when he is done he still has no proper answers. How could he when he's never seen this before. He concludes that this must have been a poisonous substance that made this man like this, but he couldn't figure out which poison was used. He takes a part of the live and sends it to the lab for a toxicology test. He makes sure to write in his notes that the lab should test for any and every poison they can think off, even the ones that are supposed to be untraceable.

As soon as his assistant leaves he turns to Vladimir's men.

"The lab will conduct a test to see which poison was used."

"So he was poisoned?" The second in command asks with his jaw clenched and veins bulging. In his head he is already preparing for revenge. Whoever did this needs to pay.

"Yes, he was poisoned. The poison mixed with the acid in his stomach and literally burned his organs

one by one. The liver is worse than that of a man who smoked ten packets of cigarettes everyday for ten years, his kidneys have shrunk and now they look like raisins, his heart is like a rotten apple."

"So that's where the smell was coming from?"

"Yes. In all my life as a coroner I've never seen a case like this."

"But a few minutes before he died he was fine, he was walking and talking like normal, how is that possible? Shouldn't he have been in pain?"

"He should have been. Maybe he put on a brave face so as not to seem weak in front of you or his men."

The second in command nods and walks closer to the body. In spite of the smell he puts his hand on Vladimir's cold forehead.

"I will find who did this boss, and they will pay. They will pay dearly for this. I promise you I will avenge you. Even if its the last thing I ever do." He kissed him on the forehead then turned back to the coroner.

"Close him up, we are taking him home. Make sure we have the documents to get him out of the country." The coroner knew not to argue so he just nodded his head and got on with his work.

Vladimir's men made arrangements to take Vladimir's body home. By morning the plane was ready and waiting at the airport. The coroner had made sure to get all the documents ready for his departure. The police, after being bribed of course had also released the body. The flight to Russia took off at exactly six pm.

Meanwhile in Soweto, Tshegofatsho, a waitress at the Phonenix lounge was walking to the taxi stop to get a taxi to work. She looked like she hadn't slept in days. She was worried about her mother and little sister. It's been almost two weeks since they were taken from home.

She came back from school one day about ten days

ago and found her house empty. She called out for her little sister and mother but she got no response. Instead she found a man in her house. She screamed but the man covered her mouth and pointed a gun at her. With tears running down her face she kept quiet. The man released her and threw her on the couch.

"Who are you and what do you want from me?" She asked, her voice breaking.

"The man took out a small plastic bag with listening bugs and placed it on the table.

"I need these planted at the office of your workplace." The man said in his thick Russian accent.

"I cant do that, I'll be fired. I need this job."

"I think you need your mother and sister more." He took out his phone and showed her a picture of her mother and sister with their mouths covered and their hands tied behind them. She could tell from the picture they were scared.

"Please let them go. Please. My mother has diabetes, she'll need her medication." She pleaded.

"That's why we have her medication. We will continue giving it to her as long as you do what we need you to do."

Tshego thought about telling this man to go jump off the nearest bridge but she couldn't. Her sister and mother were in danger and she needed to get them back. She prepared for work while the man waited for her. They drove her to the lounge and waited. She planted the bugs in the office everytime she got the opportunity.

By the end of the night the bugs were planted and transmitting. She had hoped they would release her family, but they wouldn't. They had told her as an insurance policy they would keep them, lest she goes and opens her mouth and tells Philani or anyone else. And thus her torture began.

Day after day she had to put on a smile on her face even though deep down inside she was worried about her family. Wondering if they have eaten and if they are Okay. But what hurt the most was that she couldn't even tell anyone. Meanwhile the people she'd been sent to spy on were living their lives like normal.

She stood at the stop waiting for the taxi to show up. She looked up and a black Mercedes SUV was parked in front of her. It had tinted windows, she couldn't even see who was inside. The window rolled down and her heart almost stopped when she saw who it was. She wasn't ready to face her sins and pay for them, not until her family was back home and safe.

She took a couple of steps back hoping to make a run for it.

"Don't make me run after you Tshogo, the sun is hot

and you know I will find you sooner than you think. So get in the car." He was right. She couldn't run far even if she did run. Razor knows Soweto like the back of his hand, he knows everyone and everything. And if she ran, chances are by nightfall she would be tied up and being tortured somewhere.

She said a little prayer before getting into the car. She buckled herself in and Razor started the car.

"Unjan Tshego? (How are you?)" He asked while focused on the road.

"I'm fine."

"How's your mum and sister? Are they okay?" Tears formed in her eyes at the mention of her two favourite people. She wasn't sure if she should tell Razor everything or keep her mouth shut for their sake.

"They are fine." She said while swallowing the lump in her throat.

"So they are not tied up somewhere?" She quickly

turned to look at him. Even though Razor could feel her eyes on her he chose to ignore it and focus on the road.

"How..... how..... how do you know that?"

"You should know better than that Tshego, I know everything. What I dont understand is why you felt the need to keep all that from us, havent we taken care of you? We pay you well, or am I wrong?" The tears she'd been keeping in check finally escaped from her eyes and ran down her face.

"I'm sorry, Razor, I had no choice. I really had no choice."

"Of course you had a choice Tshego, you always had a choice, and you chose to betray us. I've known you my entire life, you grew up right in front of me, I got you the job at the lounge, it took some pleading for me to get you that job cause you were just seventeen, you get paid a very good salary, you get benefits other clubs dont offer. I mean show me a waitress with medical aid paid for by the club. Your

sister goes to one of the best schools around courtesy of Biyela Holdings and yet you still betrayed us."

"Please, I'm sorry, you have to believe me. I'm really sorry, I just wanted to keep my mum and sister safe. I just wanted to protect them."

Razor turned up the music, shutting Tsheho's cries out. They kept driving till they got to Centurion. They got to a warehouse and Razor parked the car. He got out and waited for Tshego to follow him. They got inside the warehouse and found Philani and the others standing around.

Tshego was scared, she wasn't sure how this would go, but somehow she knew it would not go good for her. She was in deep shit. Sbu brought her a chair. With tears in her eyes, fear in her soul and her muscles trembling she sat down.

"Tshego, why did you plant the bugs in the office?" Nate asked.

"I'm sorry."

"That's not what I asked."

"I had no choice. He was going to kill my mother and sister. I had no choice."

"You always have a choice Tshego. We could have helped you. We could have protected you, but you chose to betray us." Nate continued. The others were just standing and watching.

"I'm sorry."

"Okay, let's end this." Sizwe said taking out his gun and walking towards Tshego.

"Stop. Just get her out of here." Philani said. He called for one of his guys who was in the other room. The guy came in with Tshego's mother and sister. Tshego quickly ran to them and hugged them with tears streaming down her face. Philani gave the guy a nod and he walked the three of them out and drove them home.

"When did you become so nice?" Sizwe asked

looking at Philani.

"You cant fault the girl for wanting to keep her family safe. Besides, we didnt lose anything. Vladimir is dead." He said taking out his phone. He called Lungelo. Lungelo picked up after a couple of rings. "And the shadow strikes again." Lungelo chuckles.

"At your service sir."

"So Vladimir is dead."

"I heard. I also heard his people have taken his body home?"

"Yeah they did. Now we are free to strike."

"Before you do that, I have a suggestion. Why not let the Russians take care of this one. They will want to avenge his death and if we point them in Portias direction....."

"They will destroy her."

"Exactly. You know how ruthless they can be."

"It could just work. Plus if they believe Portia killed him then there wont be a war between them and us."

"Precisely. We stand on the sidelines and let them do the work for us. Because if they smell us anywhere near this it will start a war."

"Remind me to never get on your bad side. Goodbye." They hang up.

The guys go home as soon as everything is sorted. Crazy as the past few months have been, they can now enjoy the Christmas season in peace.

*****See you on Friday*****

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTY ONE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I envy women with easy pregnancies. Some women are lucky to not have any morning sickness, fatigue or any of the horniness I've experienced. I am officially three months pregnant. Crazy as it may sound, right now it feels real.

Christmas is two weeks away, work is officially closed for the year now all I have to do is go Christmas shopping before the malls get too crowded, not that they aren't halfway there already. I've already booked Lungelo for the day since he's been a bit busy. It's the festive season and clubs are getting busier.

I woke up very early and got my daily dose of

morning glory before getting into the shower. I was dressed and ready in fifteen minutes. I just wanted to get this done before I got tired. I woke Lungelo up who was busy grumbling.

"Baby wake up, we have to go." He grunted and took the pillow to cover his face. "Baby come on." I pulled the duvet cover from him and came face to face with mini Bhungane, well not that he is mini but you know what I mean. Men and their morning erections, little Bhungane was looking right up at me just begging for me to take him into the warmth of my mouth. I swear I could see some glossy puppy eyes just staring back at me saying 'take me please'.

I kept swallowing and trying to calm myself down I didnt even notice Lungelo staring at me from under the pillow with a smirk on his face.

"He's all yours baby, you can take him." He said bringing me out of my dirty dreams.

"Get up, we need to go before it gets busy." I tried to

look straight at his eyes and not be distracted by his dick.

"But I am up baby." He says pointing to his dick.

My mind is telling me No, but my body is telling me yes.

"Baby ungazncishi sthandwa sam, thata ukudla kwakho. (Dont deny yourself my love, take it.)" He runs his hand on the top of his dick and I'm pretty sure whatever taps that get turned on when we're horny are on full blast right now. I'm sure if I wasn't wearing any underwear my juices would be dripping down my legs by now.

Oh fuck it, malls aren't going anywhere. I lift my dress up and get on top of him. I shift my I underwear to the side and put him inside me. That alone brings so much relief to me, I feel like someone getting a drop of water after being in the desert for weeks with nothing to eat or drink. I close my eyes and just savor the moment. I move up and

down while he lays there with his arms behind his head and just lets me lead. I find that sexy though. As much as I know he is a man and they are leaders it feels good to just initiate and lead our sex life sometimes.

I feel my orgasm come and I keep going with my walls crumbling inside me. I carry on till I feel him cum and spill his seeds all over my insides. Before I can even do anything else he lifts me off the bed and carries me to the shower. He goes in with me still in my dress getting me wet. I guess I'll have to change now.

When we are done showering we get dressed and head out to the mall. Lucky for us we aren't too late, the mall is still not too busy. We head to checkers and he gets the trolley, he gets the wipes and sanitizes the trolley before we go in. I get overwhelmed just seeing all the decorations and everything that's there. This is my first Christmas

with my family in fifteen years so I really just want it to be perfect.

First things first, choice assorted. And lucky for me they are right by the door. I take three boxes and load them in the trolley. We go around the shop filling the trolley up with all that I need. I'm super excited to be honest. When the trolley is full Lungelo goes and brings another one. We fill that one up too. When everything on my list has been ticked off we go and pay. And as usual this man refuses for me to pay, until I convince him to pay for one trolley and I'll pay for the other one. He reluctantly agrees.

When we are done we leave and head to game. I need a Christmas tree and lights. And I need to get my mum and Bontle some presents. I settle on getting my mum a new smart phone and I get Bontle some new headphones. We pay and head out. We load everything up in Lungelo's bakkie. Even though he doesn't drive it often this one will come in handy

when he has to drive me home with all these things.

We get home and unload everything, pack it in boxes and leave it in the garage to make things easier when I leave in a couple of days. The meats and anything that needs a fridge go straight into the deep freezer. When we are done we get into the house and throw ourselves on the couch.

My phone rings and I notice it's a Joburg landline number. I answer.

"Hello!"

"I found your missed call, what do you want?" That's the first thing he says. This man really is full of himself. I wonder how I never saw it before. Or maybe it's because I was blinded by love.

"How are you?"

"I'm going to hang up if you don't get to the point." I sigh cause clearly formalities don't work with him.

"Fine, did Amanda tell you that she signed over her

parental rights to me?" He chuckles. This is going to be hard.

"Yep, and my lawyer is dealing with that as we speak, so those rights should be out of your hand soon."

"My mother would like to see the kids." He laughs.

"Why? So you can poison them the same way you poisoned Bontle. That's not going to happen." As much as I have about twenty different replies to that statement I figure choosing my battles is very important, and this is not a battle I need to fight right now.

"Please okay, even if it's just for a couple of days, mum has never met the kids before, all she wants is to see her grandkids."

"I don't care if your mother has met them or not. The only person she can blame for that is Amanda not me. My kids are not coming there and that's it." He hangs up.

Oh well I tried. No one can fault me on that. Lungelo,

who has been busy on his phone throughout this entire exchange looks at me.

"That bad huh?"

"I tried. I really tried."

"I know baby. I know." He brings me in for a hug. My day just went from a hundred to a ten. I just hope mum wont be devastated. I'm pretty sure she has been praying for this.

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Two days later Lungelo loaded up the groceries and stuff and drove me home. A part of me was hoping to decorate the house for Christmas but we both wont be there anyway so it didnt make sense.

Bontle was supposed to join us since she landed yesterday but she decided that she missed her gogo way too much so she headed straight home.

"So when are you buying things to take home?" I asked Lungelo.

"Things like what?"

"Groceries, gifts for the kids."

"Groceries, Bongiwé, Thandeka and Kgomotso take care of that, and next year you and Bonsile will join them. As for gifts, the little kids are easier, the teenagers get hift cards. I don't have the energy to be going up and down a mall looking for a hundred things." I heard the last part but I was still stuck on the next year part. I cant believe I'm about to marry this man. Nomonde Radebe? It has a nice ring to it, but I just changed my surname back to the original, should I really change it again?

We get home and unload everything. I keep wondering of all the meats will fit in the fridge though. It's not small but it's not the biggest either. But maybe we can use mums older one too if she hasn't given it away. Getting her the new one was a

struggle cause she was so attached to her old one. When we were done Lungelo said his goodbyes and left.

Mum, Bontle and I sat in the lounge looking at the boxes in front of us.

"Are you sure you left something for the other shoppers." Mum asks as she takes out a box of choice assorted and opens it.

"I got carried away, I was just too excited."

"Okay, we need to pack these away. That deep freezer is going to come in handy now gogo." What deep freezer?

"What deep freezer?"

"I exchanged the old fridge with MaKhumalo down the road. Her daughter was moving to Richard's Bay for work so she needed the fridge more than the freezer."

"Okay, and here I was wondering if the meat will fit in the fridge."

"Well problem solved. Let me go unpack everything."
Bontle took the boxes to the kitchen.

"So I called Paul, he refuses with the kids." I said.
Mum just sighed and ate her cookies.

"Well it was worth a try."

"Yeah."

"So how far along are you." She asked with her eyes
still on her cookies.

"What are you talking about?" I asked knowing very
well what she was on about.

"I'm talking about the baby in your stomach. How
long?" I dont even know why I'm afraid to tell her this,
I mean I'm a grown adult for heavens sake.

"Three months."

"Mhmmm." That's all she said. And here I was
expecting a lecture. But the smile on her face gave
me a little hope that maybe she is happy. I guess
now I can relax and enjoy my holidays.



NARRATED

In Russia, Vladimir has just been laid to rest. His brothers and father come together to hold a meeting.

"When are we going to Johannesburg?" His younger brother Dimitri asks since no one seemed to know what to say. His family was shocked when his man came back with him in a casket. What their independent coroner told them was the cause of death confirmed what the first coroner said.

His father, Ludis was angry at his men since none of them could give him answers on what happened. All they got was that he died at Portia Mashile's house. They dont know when or how he consumed the poison. Ludis shot all six men who had left with

Vladimir to send a message to his other men to do their jobs.

"Get the plane ready." Ludis told his sons. "Portia has some explaining to do." His other son Boris got up and left to prepare for the trip. Dimitri and his other brother Eriks got up and went to help Boris with the preparations. Ludis decided to call his old friend.

"My friend. How are you?" He asked soon as his friend picked up.

"Ludis, long time friend. Condolences on your son. I'm sorry I couldnt be there to pay my respects."

"Thank you my friend. I am coming to South Africa, I need answers for my son's death." Ludis said while lighting his cigar.

"Of course. Let me know what you will need and I will make sure I available to help."

"I knew I could count on you old friend."

"Anytime. Tell me, I heard Vladimir died at Portia's

house?"

"He did. Portia is supposed to be a friend, especially since her husband was a part of our crew, but now I found out my son died in her house. What kind of bullshit is that Busani?"

"I wish I had the answer for you my friend. My grandson died at the hands of that womans daughter in law and she helped cover it up." Ludis stood up, shocked at the revelation.

"What are you saying to me Busani?"

"Its true my friend. That woman has no concept of loyalty. We've taken care of her and her children since her husband's death, but then she turns around and stabs us in the back. It's time she learned a lesson."

"Definitely. She needs to meet her maker."

"I'll be here waiting for you my friend. My boys and I are ready."

"I will see you soon my friend. Very very soon." Ludis hung up, picked up a glass of vodka, took a sip and

threw the glass across the room. "I will avenge you my son. I swear I will."

Meanwhile in Durban, Busani hung up the phone and looked at his son and his friends.

"Its done. Ludis is going to take care of Portia once and for all."

"Perfect. And we keep our hands clean." Philani.

"Definitely. I have just one question though." He turned to look at Lungelo. "How sure are we that this poison will not be traced back to you?"

"I've never used it before. With my previous work I've used identical poisons. Their is distinct and unique and I'm the only one with them." Lungelo answered.

"Theres just one problem." Sizwe said. "We sent a message to Portia taking responsibility of Vladimir's death."

"That can easily be disputed. Did you use the cartel numbers?" Busani asked.

"No, I got a sim card from one of the Indian shops

and used that one." Lungelo answered.

"Perfect. We can easily say Portia used that number to frame shadow. Plus Ludis doesn't know Shadow, he knows about him but not who he is. So if Portia shows him that message we'll tell him she's trying to frame Shadow." Philani said.

"Do you think he'll buy it?" Nate asked.

"He's angry, he'll buy it. Also the men who were here with Vladimir are dead. It will be Portia's word against ours. And you know Ludis is loyal."

"I guess I'll get the guys ready with the guns and whatever will be needed." Razor said.

"Get ready boys, our troubles will be over soon. Portia will wish she could take back the hands of time." Busani lifted up his whiskey glass and they all made a toast.

They have slayed many dragons before, and this one, although was a worthy opponent, it was time to put it to rest.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTY TWO

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I love being home. Being with my mum and my daughter means so much to me. Maybe it's because there was a time I thought I'd never get to be with them ever again, but here I am, seeing my daughter and my mum baking Christmas scones. It reminds me so much of when I was growing up. It reminded me of the time I spent with mum, my grandmother and my sister. I really wish she was here right now with her own kids.

I cant go back and change the past, as much as my sister hurt me and literally destroyed my life, it would still mean a lot to me to have her here. For our kids to grow up loving each other and being close like most cousins are. Or in our case, siblings, since our

kids share a father. I know Amanda signed her parental rights over to me but I haven't really taken into consideration the magnitude of what that means.

Amanda gave me the responsibility to raise her children, something she never did or even tried to do for my child. But holding on to that anger and hurt would be like drinking poison and expecting Amanda to die. And punishing her kids would make me no different to her. I tried getting the kids to come home for Christmas but Paul made it pretty clear that that's not going to happen. I think I'm more angry at him for denying my mother the chance to know her grandkids more than anything else.

Paul has a chance to make himself look good, especially in Bontle's eyes, but he is too blind to see it. I know at some point Bontle will want to know her father and his family and maybe Paul showing a bit of compassion could have done that. But I guess

you can take a horse to the river but you can't force it to drink.

Christmas is two days away. That means I've been here for ten days, ten days of no sex, ten days of having to help myself cause the person who should be doing that is kilometers away. I've been up for almost an hour now just staring up at the roof. I want to help renovate the house but I figured soon as my settlement with the department of justice comes through I will buy my mother a house close to us. That way she can be close enough for me to see her anytime I want. Maybe that's a bit selfish but I will need my mother, especially when the baby comes.

I called Lungelo cause I miss him. I didn't realise how clingy I was till i got here. And now i have to call him atleast three times a day like a balanced meal with some snacks in between. He picked up.

"Let me guess, you're horny and you need me to help

you." He said.

"Yes I am, but that's not why I called. I miss you."

"I miss you too sthandwa sam, I wish I was there with you. Hows my babygirl?" I rubbed my invisible bump with a smile on my face, he's adamant the baby is a girl, so much so I think I'm also secretly hoping it is a girl.

"She is fine. She's not making me vomit as much now so thats good."

"I'm glad to hear that. What about my first born?"

"She's fine. She and mum are delivering some scones to the neighbours."

"Your mother is mother Theresa around there. I hope people aren't taking her kindness for granted." I chuckled and closed my eyes, thinking how lucky I am finding a man whose not just protective of me but my family too. How did I get so lucky?

"I doubt it. She's way too stubborn to be taken advantage of." I heard him laugh.

"I hope so. So have you spoken to Paul lately?"

"A few days ago, he made it pretty clear that the kids would not be coming here. Not now, not ever."

"Mhmmm. And here I was thinking he would have changed his mind by now. Oh well, he'll have to answer to his kids one day."

"True. So hows the family?"

"They are fine. But I'll only be going home tomorrow."

"Tomorrow is Christmas eve Lungelo, roads are busy and there are too many accidents, go today." He laughs.

"Yes ma'am." He thinks I'm joking. Mxm. "By the way, a driver will be there tomorrow to drop off your Christmas gifts."

"You could have just given them to me when I came here."

"They would have been opened a long time ago. Theres a reason they are called Christmas presents." I laugh cause I know he is right. I would have opened them the moment I got here. But I'm not about to tell him that.

"You have little faith in me Mr Radebe."

"I know you, remember. Anyways I've spoken to my uncles, a letter should be delivered to your mum soon."

"Okay, I'll let her know."

"Cool, baby I have to go Okay, I'll call you later."

"Okay. I love you."

"I love you too."

We hang up and I decide to get up and stop being lazy. Mum and Bontle should be back soon. I go to the bathroom and take a bath. I finish up and put on a short summer dress. I go to the kitchen and make myself breakfast, I put the scones in the microwave and warm them up, make myself some hot chocolate and sit in front of the TV. I must admit, this huge ass TV looks so much better in here than it did in the shop. As much as I plan on moving mum out of here it doesn't mean I can't make her life a tad bit easier while she's still here. Being able to buy her

the little things like appliances and blankets mean the world to me. In my head I'm already preparing for her new house.

She and Bontle come in and from the looks of it they are tired as hell. Thank God I didn't go with them. Mum plops herself onto the lazy boy couch and puts her legs up. Bontle goes straight to the kitchen and comes back with a glass of cold water and hands it to ma then throws herself on the other couch.

"Remind me again why we need to do this every year gogo, in the blazing sun even. I feel like I'm going to pass out." Bontle asks laying there with her eyes closed.

"Drink some water before you faint." I say.

"Its called Ubuntu Bontle." I can see Bontle roll her eyes even though they are closed. She knows this since mum drummed it into us as kids and I'm sure she did the same with Bontle, but right now its the exhaustion that's speaking.

"So, mama, Lungelo says his uncles will be sending a letter soon. My question though, aren't they supposed to send it kwaMashile?" The way Bontle got up so fast from the couch you would think I was asking her the question.

"No. No. No. No. Those people aren't going to benefit after what they did to you. No ways no how." She says and I can see she's serious too.

"Relax Bontle, that's not going to happen."

"How though ma, culturally we need to do things right, even if that means going to that hellhole."

"There won't be a need to go there. After your arrest and divorce, Paul, his brother and mother came here demanding their lobola back, I told them I would give them back their lobola if they do a ceremony to let their ancestors know about your divorce so they don't come back tomorrow and claim you as their wife."

"So they did do it?"

"Well they wanted their money so they had to."

"Okay. Perfect."

It's crazy the things my mother has done to protect me. Even when I wasn't there to defend myself she still had my back. I owe this woman my entire existence.

We heard a car pull up outside and when I peeked through the window I noticed a black SUV with Gauteng registration numbers. I know it's not Lungelo cause he could have told me he was coming. But then I remembered he said there will be a delivery. But it's supposed to come tomorrow, maybe it came early. I got up and walked towards the car.

When I was close to the gate I saw Paul get out from the backseat, followed by two kids, a boy and a girl. I didn't need to be told who they were because the girl looks just like Amanda. The driver opened the boot

and took out their luggage. I wonder what changed his mind. I opened the gate and walked over to him.

"Hi. What are you doing here?"

"You said you wanted the kids, well here they are."

"Hello, I'm Nomonde, your" I didnt know if I should say I am their aunt or stepmother. How does this shit work honestly? "Uhm you can go in, your grandmother is inside." The girl seemed over protective of her brother. I'm sure she must be thirteen or fourteen years old. She kept holding her brothers hand and she wouldn't let it go. They followed each other up to the house with the driver behind them carrying their luggage.

"What made you change your mind?" I asked soon as the kids were out of earshot. "A few days ago you were adamant that this wouldn't happen so what changed?" He chuckles and puts his hands in his pockets.

"You're seriously going to pretend like you don't know?"

"Know what?"

"This little friendship of yours that you have with the Biyela's and Khanya Radebe, it will end in tears, that I promise you." He got into the car as the driver got in too then they drove off.

I stood there confused for a hot minute, sure Khanya is my lawyer but what do the Biyela's have to do with this? What did they do?

I went back to the house and found the kids sitting on the couch together. My mother had tears in her eyes but I could tell they were tears of joy. Bontle came in from the kitchen with muffins and juice for the kids.

"Hi, I know you don't know us but we are your family. Your mother is my twin sister, that is your

grandmother, MaGumede, you can call her gogo and that's your sister or cousin, whichever one you prefer, Bontle. It's nice to have you home."

"I'm Princess and this is Prince."

They both smiled but they looked uncomfortable. Who can blame though, God only knows what Amanda told them about her family. But it doesn't matter now cause they are here. And the tears in my mums eyes were proof of that. I guess Christmas really does come with unexpected miracles.



NARRATED

It's been over a week since Ludis landed in Joburg together with his sons. They've been holed up at the Kruger National Park just so they don't draw too much attention to themselves. Ever since they got

here they've been strategizing on when to attack.

Ludis decided to drive to Joburg, leaving his men behind just to scout out the place and see if all they've been strategizing will work, one thing they weren't willing to do was have civilians getting caught in the crossfire.

He got to Houghton and drove around the Mashile mansion trying to see its weak spots. Although they've strategized and got their plan in order, he also knew people like Portia Mashile stay updating their security so he needed to be sure that things were still as they planned.

After about thirty minutes he decided to drive to Sandton for some lunch before coming back again. He got to San Deck and got a table. He sat down and placed his order. He wasn't sure if luck was on his side or it had deserted him when he noticed Portia on a table across from him having a meeting. Even

though he crossed his fingers and hoped that Portia wouldn't see him, she did. She got up from her table and walked over to her. He couldn't help but notice that she still looked as good as he remembered. There was even a time when he'd had a crush on her.

"Ludis, may I?" He nodded his head. She pulled out the chair and sat down. "It's been so long. How are you holding up?"

"My son died, I don't know who did it and no one is willing to tell me anything, the only thing I do know is that he died at your house, I hope that answers your question." He took his drink and sipped it, looking straight at her.

"Understandable. My condolences on your son. He was a good man."

"What happened to him Portia, he died in your house. I landed two hours ago and I need answers. Who killed my son?" Portia felt her temperature rise a bit. A part of her knew Ludis would want answers, especially from her, the other part of her was hoping

she'd have enough time to prepare herself for this.

"I also need answers Ludis, Vladimir died in my house, under my roof, the police are already investigating."

"Why was he here? He left home saying he was going on vacation to Zanzibar yet somehow he ended up here. So why was he here?"

"He came to help me with my Biyela problem. Philani Biyela and his crew and have been after me for a while, and my guess is they found out he was helping me so they decided to take him out."

"Who else knew besides you that Vladimir was here to help you?"

"Just me, his guys and my guys."

"So what was the plan exactly, how was he going to help you?" His order came and he started eating.

"Well, the plan was to take out Biyela and his friends, but Vladimir said the only flaw to that plan was The Shadow Assassin. If we take Biyela out then chances are Shadow would come after us. And you

know how dangerous he is. So Vladimir decided that we should snuff out shadow before we even do anything."

"Keep going!"

"Vladimir planted bugs all over Biyela's club, his house, his friends houses and even his office. He figured since Biyela was the only one who knew Shadow personally the maybe he would talk to him, whether at the office or at the club, and if he called him then we would be able to trace his number and find him, take him out then take on Biyela." Ludis laughed and threw a piece of steak in his mouth.

He finished chewing and looked at Portia.

"So let me guess, you seriously thought you could take on Shadow and win? I know my son was impulsive most times but I would have thought you'd have more sense. You know Shadow, you know what he's capable of and you thought you could get him by planting bugs? When did you lose your touch Portia? When did you become dumb?"

"Look, all I wanted was for that son of a bitch to get off my back."

"You covered up his son's death, you and your son. Did you really think you could get him off your back just like that with no consequences? Which planet are you living in?"

For the first time in a long long time Portia didn't know how to answer a question. In retrospect, she knew she had fucked up. She had vowed to protect her family through anything and everything, but this time she had taken things too far, and instead of protecting them she had brought trouble to their doorstep. But maybe there was some saving grace.

"I think Shadow got to Vladimir. I think he killed him." She said making Ludis pause and stop eating his food.

"What do you mean?"

"Vladimir was poisoned, Shadows MO is poison, and a couple of hours after Vladimir's death I got a text from him saying I shouldn't go searching for things in the dark."

"Are you sure about that?"

"Dead sure." She took out her phone and showed him the message. "That's the message and his number." Ludis took the phone and wrote down the number on a serviette.

He finished his food, paid his bill and walked out. Instead of driving back to Houghton he took a detour and went straight to Dainfern. He called Busani and told him he was at the gate. Busani called the security and told them to let him in.

He drove in and parked the car and quickly rushed into the house. He found Busani in the lounge with his wife. His wife quickly excused herself and rushed upstairs. Busani got up and looked at Ludis with his hands in his pockets.

"My friend. To what do the I owe the pleasure."

"Did your son have my son killed?" Ludis asked with his jaw clenched.

"I dont understand. Why would my son want to kill your son?"

"According to Portia, Vlad was here to help her bring your son down, but he needed to find shadow first before he implements his plan, he planted bugs all around his house, his office and his friends houses. Portia thinks your son found those bugs and decided to strike back."

"Ludis, you and I have been a part of this cartel for years now, we might be on different parts of the world but we are roots of the same tree. Our sons are like branches of that same tree. Right?" Ludis nodded his head. "So explain to me why your son would want to destroy mine? Since when do we turn on each other like that?"

"Look, I didnt even know about this until Portia told me." Busani took out his phone and made a call.

"Sbusiso, come to my house now." He dropped the call. "Would you like a drink?" He asked as he pour the drinks. He handed Ludis a glass then sat back on the chair. Ludis sat down on the other chair and they waited for Sbu.

Sbusiso showed up after about twenty minutes with his laptop in tow. He came into the house and found the two men sitting in silence sipping on their drinks.

"Ntshangase, sengkhona."

"Apparently there are bugs in Philani's house, explain to me how that is?" Busani said.

"That's impossible baba, I update the security system every six weeks, I would have known if there was something."

"Have you updated it yet?"

"Not yet. I have to update it first of January."

"Do it now."

"Excuse me?"

"I said do it now?"

Sbusiso knew better than to question Busani so he switched on his laptop and got work. After a while he called the security guards and told them to find the bugs in the different houses. Once they found the bugs they took pictures and sent them to Sbu. He called the security at the lounge as well as Biyela Holdings, and sure enough by the time he was done, every bug had been found.

"You were right, there were bugs." He said. Busani turned to look at Ludis.

"The bugs, as you can see were discovered today, so how would Philani have known about them if Sbusiso, the one who deals with these things just found them now."

"What about the message that Portia received from Shadow?" Ludis asked.

"What message?"

"Apparently Shadow sent Portia a message after Vladimir died." He took out the serviette and showed it to Busani. Busani gave the number to Sbusiso. Sbusiso clicked through his laptop doing only God knows what.

"This is not Shadows number. In actual fact it doesnt even exist anymore. It was used to send this message and then destroyed. Shadow has one number that Philani and the others know. That number is the one he's using even today. Also, Vladimir was poisoned yes, but the poison used on him wasn't the one Shadow uses. Shadow has a distinct poison he uses thats only known by him. Everytime he has used it, everyone knows its him. The one used on Vladimir is not it." Sbusiso blabs on.

"How do you know which poison was used on him."

Ludis asks.

"No offense sir, but the son of a Russian mafia leader dies in South Africa, people are bound to talk and want to know what happened. I was curious so I did some research."

"So what's your thoughts on this?" Ludis asks Busani.

"My friend, I think you've been played. Clearly Portia called Vladimir to come here under the pretense that he was here to help her, she killed him and then tried to pin it on Shadow knowing full well that you wouldn't just let it slide. And since Philani knows Shadow then you would go after him and....."

"And the I'd do the work for her!"

"Bingo."

"That bitch will curse the day my son landed in this place." Ludis muttered as the glass shattered into a million pieces right in his hand.

Ludis got up and walked out with his bloody hand, leaving the shattered glass all over the floor. Busani

walked over to the window and watched as Ludis drove away. As soon as he was gone he poured himself another glass of whiskey and poured one for Sbu and handed it to him. They clicked their glasses and smiled.

"Mission accomplished." Busani said.

"And our hands remain clean. Well somewhat."

"I cant wait for the new year. Things are already looking up." They clicked their glasses again.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTY THREE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Oh the joy of Christmas. It's like the sun, the birds and every form of nature is celebrating this day too. The sun isn't too hot today and the birds are chirping. This is bliss.

We woke up this morning and started cooking Christmas lunch. Even Princess woke up to help. The kids seem to be adjusting to being here. Prince asks too many questions and Princess, even though is overprotective other brother is slowly warming up to us. The last time I saw my mother this happy was the day I came back from prison, and now she has more reason to celebrate this Christmas. I know in the back of her mind she wishes Amanda was here too but maybe having her children here is somewhat

a consolation.

Bontle and Princess were chatting up a storm while helping me cook. Mum was in her room, and if I had to guess I'd say she was praying, Prince was in the lounge watching cartoons. He kept coming into the kitchen to get some cookies then go back to his cartoons. He came in again for his twentieth cookie since he woke up.

"If you keep eating those cookies like that you wont have an appetite later." He just giggled and went back to his cartoons.

"Dont worry about it, he eats like he has a never ending hole in his stomach, so trust me he'll eat." Princess said.

"You seem overprotective of him, why?" I asked much to Bontle's shock judging by the look she gave me.

"Mum, you shouldn't be asking her that?" In a way I

understood why she wouldn't want me to ask her that but I want to know. Princess just chuckled and peeled her potatoes.

"Its okay sis." Look at that, she called her sis. I swear I could have jumped for joy at that moment, but I had to control myself. "We are all we have so I have to look out for him."

"What do you mean? You have your parents."

"On paper yes, but in reality we dont. When we were little we had a nanny who was literally like our mother, she died and we were shipped off to boarding school. The only time we saw them was during school holidays, even then we were lucky if we spent time with them, so we learned to be with each other."

"I'm sorry." I probably should give some comforting words but I didnt know what to say.

"What about your aunts and uncles, your grandmother?" Bontle asked.

"They are Okay, uncle Malcolm was the only one who ever cared. The rest of them didnt seem to care.

Even though we would spend time at grandma's place it was still lonely."

"I'm sorry you had to go through that."

"It's okay. I'm just waiting until I finish high school, go to varsity and forget that any of them even exist."

The pain in her voice broke my heart. No child should ever feel like that, especially about family.

On one hand I felt like maybe I shouldn't have asked her that, but at the same time I felt like maybe she needed to talk about it.

"I'm sorry for prying."

"It's okay, no one's ever asked me that before."

I decided to stop asking too many sombre questions, it's Christmas after all and we should be happy. We finished cooking and set up the food on the table. We dished up and ate before opening up our presents. Lucky for us the gifts that Lungelo delivered yesterday included gifts for Princess and

Prince. He seriously needs to tell me how he knew they would be here.

After opening the gifts Bontle and Princess cleaned up. We could hear their laughter from the kitchen. My Christmas was complete. I called Lungelo to wish him a merry Christmas and he didnt pick up. I called him again but he still wouldnt pick up, instead his phone would ring and then go to voicemail. I figured it would be better to send him a message instead. I sent the message then we all sat down and watched a Christmas movie.



NARRATED

In Houghton, Portia and her family, well some of her family are sittted in the lounge drinks in hand, waiting for the food to be done.

"This feels weird. Our Christmas lunches have never been this quiet. Where's everyone." Lesego asked as he wheeled himself into the lounge.

"No one wanted to be home for Christmas. No matter how much I begged." Portia said and sipped her red wine. "Bonolo went on a girls trip with her friends. Lesedi went to her in-laws. Malcolm is dead, his wife took the kids and never turned back, Lebo is in jail, Paul decided to ship my grandbabies off to the Bundus."

"Ma, I had no choice." Paul defended himself.

"You always have a choice Paul, always." She said staring at him with cold angry eyes. "And you, where are your kids?" She asked Lesego.

"They wanted to see their grandparents and I figured since their mother is not here it would be better for them not to be here."

"So all that food is for the three of us? Why did you let me waste time and money hiring caterers? I should have just got takeaways." She got up from

the couch and refilled her drink, oblivious to the storm that was about to rain hard on her.

Outside the property, Ludis, his son's and his men were setting up to attack. Busani, Philani and the crew joined them. A security guard noticed the black cars parked outside. He knew something wasn't right when one of the men got out and walked towards the gate. He stood still with his gun in hand waiting for this person to say why they were there.

"Can I help you?" The guard asked.

"I'm looking for someone, please come closer." The man said.

"Just tell me who you're looking for, and let's see if I can't help you." The guard answered.

"Bra I know you're working and I'm not trying to waste your time but I really need your help." The guard sighed and walked closer to the gate.

The man took out a syringe from his pocket and waited for the guard to get close enough to him. As soon as the guard was close, the man dragged him by his tie and pulled him to the gate. He reached out his hand and pulled out the remote from the guards pocket then threw it to Razor who was standing behind him before injecting the guard with a tranquilizer.

As soon as the man fell to the ground Razor opened the gate and the others put their masks on and drove in. Others walked in on foot to make sure they dont run into other guards, and if they do so they can be able to neutralize them quickly.

They parked the car at the front of the house and Ludis walked in, gun in hand followed by his sons, Busani, Philani and the crew. Lindani and Nate hurried to the kitchen and got the caterers out while Portia and her son's stood there, shocked by the sudden influx of uninvited guests.

"What's going on?" Portia asked as men went up and down her house searching every room.

"You'll find out soon enough." Ludis answered.

The guys got all the workers that were in the house and bundled them up in the garage. They tied them up and put duct tape on their mouths. As soon as everyone had been neutralized they went back into the house.

"Now, one of you is going to tell me how my son died in your house?" Ludis said then sat down on the couch looking at the three of them.

"I dont know how your son died Ludis, I've told you that." Portia answered.

"Right, you did say you think Shadow killed him, but theres just one flow with your explanation. The bugs you claimed Vladimir had planted at Philani's place, they weren't found until a couple of days ago, the

poison used on Vladimir was not Shadows MO, and then you said he sent you a message, guess what, the number that was used, it actually was registered in your son's name two days before Vladimir was killed. So you still going to maintain your story?" He asked looking at Portia.

Portia sat there shock written all over her face. She didn't know what to do or say, the only thing she knew at that point was that death was near. Ludis placed a paper in front of her, it had all the information on the number that sent her the message, and to her shock and dismay, the number was registered in Paul's name. She knew then that there was no coming out of this one.

"You know my mother would not have killed Vladimir, he was here to help her, why would he help her and then she turn around and kill her." Ludis pointed the gun and shot Lesego on the knee. Fortunately for him he was paralyzed from the waist down, so he

couldn't feel the bullet, but he might bleed to death.

"Unfortunately my son is sti dead, and evidence all points to your mother. Si maybe you should focus on that knee." He turned back to Portia, "Now, since you refuse to give me the answers I need, I'll kill you."

"Ludis please, fine, I'll pay you, whatever amount you want." Portia pleaded.

"Oh okay, how much do you think my sons life was worth?" He asked. Portia didn't know what to say so she just kept her mouth shut. "Just as I thought. Boys, let's get down to work."

The guys went around the house closing all the windows and locking the doors. Razor and Sizwe went to the kitchen and turned the gas stove on. They duct taped Lesego, Portia and Paul and tied them to the chairs they were sitting on. They tried to fight but it was no use. They were outnumbered.

When they were done tying them up, Razor lit a candle and left it on the dining room table. Philani and Nate went out to the garage where the staff was. They made the staff stand in a line and pulled the duct tape from their lips. Nate took out his phone and took a picture of them.

"Ladies and gentlemen, heres how this is going to play out. We are going to untie you, how many of you have your personal belongings in there?" The caterers nodded their heads. Philani sent one of the guys to go and get their things and come and give it to them. "Now that you all have your things, we will release you, you walk out that gate and never look back, we were not here, and if any of you open your mouths about today, we will hunt you down one by one and we will kill you. Understood." They nodded their heads with tears streaming down their eyes.

They untied them and they all scoured out like rats. When they were sure they were gone they got into

their cars and drove out. The stove that was left on released all the gas into the house, and then it met the flame from the candle and it exploded making the house go up in a blaze of fire with its occupants inside it.

The guys drove away with smoke filling up the sky behind them. They were done, the Mashile brothers together with their mother would make the headlines tomorrow, and this time, it would be their obituary that would make the front page news. Merry Christmas!

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTY FOUR

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I've seen death, sometimes brutal and sometimes self inflicted, but this, this is something I've never thought I could ever experience.

The news of the Mashile burning down to ashes was one thing, it's a house, they can rebuild it better yet buy another one. But the fact that three of them were inside it when it went up sent shockwaves all over the country. Most people were more shocked that a house with that much security didn't have a fire alarm or something that would stop the fire.

For me, I was more shocked at the fact that now I have to tell the kids that their father is dead, and he died in the most painful way. Burning alive is no joke.

How do I tell them that? How do I even begin to explain that?

My mom and I sat up the whole night shocked, neither of knew what to say or what to do. On the one hand I was thanking God that Paul had brought the kids here for Christmas, on the other hand I was questioning him on why he had to take him so soon. He still had his children to raise and he still had to make peace with Bontle. What if she feels bad for not giving him a chance? What if she feels bad for not listening to him when she had the chance?

Around five in the morning I went to the kitchen and boiled water to make tea. I sat in the kitchen and went into WhatsApp. Lungelo was online, shouldn't he be sleeping? I was about to log out when he called me.

"Hello!"

"You should be sleeping Sthandwa sam, why are you up so early?"

"I couldn't sleep. Paul is dead."

"I heard. Are the kids Okay?"

"I haven't told them yet. I don't know how. How do I even begin to tell them something like this?"

"It will be fine Sthandwa sam."

"I don't know Lungelo, their mother is in jail and now their father is dead. How can God be so cruel?" I wiped the tears that were now falling down my face. This was the first time since the news broke that I was crying. I don't know if I was crying for the man I used to love and the father of my child or I was crying for the three kids in sleeping in the bedroom.

"God works in mysterious ways MaGumede, isn't that what you always tell me?"

"Yeah well maybe for once he needs to stop operating in the shadows."

"True. Get some sleep okay, don't forget you're

carrying precious cargo."

"I know. By the way, I called you earlier, why didnt you pick up my calls?"

"Oh yeah, I saw them. I left my phone in my room."

"Oh!"

"Dont say it like that, I'm telling the truth."

"I didnt say you were lying though. Look I need to get some sleep. We'll talk later." I hung up before he could say anything. I dont know why I was having doubts about this, it's not like I have a reason to not trust him. I'm just being paranoid right?

I brewed the tea for mum and poured myself a glass of juice. I brought the tea to the lounge and poured some for mum.

"We have to tell the kids." Mum said as she sipped her tea.

"I know. But how? How do we even begin to do that?"

"I don't know."

The kids woke up a few hours later, Bontle went to make breakfast and Prince went out to play. For a while I thought Princess would come out too but she didnt. When I asked Bontle she said she left Princess in the bedroom busy on her phone. I decided to go check on her. I got to the bedroom and knocked then walked in. She was sitting on the bed with her phone in her hand, she didnt even look up when I came in. I sat on the bed and that's when she looked up and wiped her tears. I didn't need to know why she was crying because she was on Twitter. I figured she already knows.

"I'm sorry." I brought her in for a hug and she just cried. I just held her and let her cry. A part of me felt bad that she found out this way. Social media can be messy sometimes. Neither her or her brother deserved this. I might not like Paul much but he didnt deserve to die, especially like that.



LUNGELO

The Mashile's are gone, well most of them. I knew Ludis was a cruel son of a bitch but to burn people alive like that is just plain evil. He could have just shot them and kept it moving. But no, he had to make sure they suffer.

I was laying in my room at home waiting for a phonecall. I just hope Philani was able to do what I asked him to do. As much as I hated those people, and since Khanya already had proof that they had a hand in our father's death, I should have been the first one to celebrate, but it just feels rather odd for me cause I would have gone a different route than burning them alive. Oh well, I guess it's over now.

I heard a knock on the door and MaMtolo walked in

and sat on the couch.

"You miss your girlfriend, is that why you are so moody?" She asked.

"Yes I miss her but no, I'm not moody I'm just expecting a work call."

"Okay, so, you uncles are ready to go for the negotiations. They said they will make it the first week of January, before people go back to work."

"Okay, works for me. I'll let Nomonde know."

"Perfect. I can't wait for you to actually have a wife, a proper one this time." I laughed cause I knew what she was trying to say.

"Well, thank you mother. But I have to tell you something."

"What? Don't tell me you're cheating on her because my sjambok is still there and you're not too old for a good hiding."

"A hiding? For a man old enough to be a grandfather?"

"As long as that man is my son then yes, a hiding he

will get." I laughed mostly because I know she's not joking. She's actually done it before when she found out Khanya was cheating on Kgomotso. It was quite funny to watch him try and dodge mums sjambok, but he did get a few strokes. Hopefully that set him straight.

"Okay, I'm not cheating on her, she's pregnant." Her mouth opened wide I'm sure a couple of flies made their way in.

"You lie?"

"I'm not." She started ululating and dancing around, which drew the attention of my sisters who came running.

"What's going on?" Bongiwe asked as they watched my mother dancing around and her ululating had turned into Sfiso Ncwane's My God is too much.

"Ask her. Dont look at me."

"Ma, what's happening? What are we celebrating?" Thandeka asked. Msizi and Khanya came in too

followed by Bonsile and Kgomotso.

"I'm going to be a grandmother. See my God, he answers my prayers."

"Who is pregnant?" Msizi asked. They all looked at each other before their eyes landed on me.

"You son of a bitch." Khanya said halting my mother's singing.

"Who is a bitch wena?" My sisters took a step back when they saw the fire in mums eyes.

"Eish, sorry ma, slip of the tongue."

"Unganglingi Sathane (dont try me satan.) You will not ruin my happiness today."

"Sorry hawu ma."

"Buy me a car and I'll consider forgiving you."

"Eh!"

"You know what give me your card." She held put her hand to him. My sisters were busy giggling. He pulled out his wallet and gave her the card. "Good,

I'm going shopping, my grandbaby will need so many things. Bye!" She walked and we all burst out laughing.

"See, you and your loud mouth, I hope she leaves you broke." Kgomotso said. "Congratulations Bhungane." She said turning to me.

"Why didn't you tell us wena?" Msizi asked.

"Nomonde wanted to wait until we were past the first trimester." All I heard were ncoohs and I dont know why.

"You're so cute, you'll make the best dad ever." Thandeka said then hugged me.

"We need to start planning the baby shower." Kgomotso said and everyone agreed. As much as I would like to tell them to wait a bit I know it will be a waste of time. These people will take any excuse to have a party.

We sat together while they planned this baby shower.

I just need to warn Nomonde before they overwhelm her. We'll need the energy to deal with these ones.

They left after a while and left me by myself. I took a shower. When I walked out of the shower my phone rang. It was Philani.

"Ntshangase."

"Mthimkhulu. Unjani (how are you?)"

"A bit anxious. How did it go?"

"It went great, we managed to get him out before the explosion. He has a few cuts and bruises here and there but he'll live."

"Thank you. Does he know what he needs to say if people ask him how he survived?"

"He does. He's been briefed. If he knows what's good for him he'll stick to the story."

"Perfect. He didnt see your man?"

"No. As far as he knows he was saved by a good

samaritan."

"Good, thanks man, I owe you."

"I have one question. A few weeks ago you were ready for him to kick the bucket, and today you want to save him. Why?"

"Honestly, I didnt do it for him, I did it for Bontle. A few weeks ago I was angry with him stalking her like that."

"And now you've changed your mind?" I laughed.

"A man is allowed to change his mind right?"

"True. He should thank his lucky stars for you."

"As long as he keeps away from my family he'll be fine."

"I'll take your word for it. Let me go man, sharp."

"Sure thing, thanks again."

We hung up and I heaved a sigh of relief. I just hope Paul sticks to the story of a good samaritan helping him. I guess I just clocked my one good deed for the

year. I just hope it counts for something in the heavens above.

I will see you guys on Monday, I'm in the Bundus, I'll probably run out of data and my powerbank
I forgot my charger
hhay MaZwane has me by the balls.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTY FIVE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

It's been a sad couple of days. The kids have been quiet and I've caught Princess crying a few times. I cant blame her though. Loosing a father must be heartbreaking. Not that I would know since our father left when we were barely four years old. I've been trying to get a hold of the

I got to the kitchen to get some water and found Bontle sipping on some hot chocolate and eating muffins. I decided to make myself the same thing too. I sat down next to her.

"Why aren't you sleeping? Everyone else is asleep."
She shrugged her shoulders.

"I cant sleep. Princess keeps having nightmares, waking me up. She's heartbroken."

"I can imagine. So how are you feeling?"

"About what?"

"Paul dying. You're allowed to be hurt too you know."

"I dont know if I'm hurt or not. Shocked maybe, but hurt, no. I know he is my father and I should be crying but I dont know the man, it's hard for me to even feel for him, I dont hate him, I used to be angry at him but I let that go a while back, so I really have no feelings for him."

"I guess I understand." She finished her hot chocolate and muffins and washed the cup and saucer and sat back down.

"Results are coming out in a few days. I've been checking out new phones online." I chuckle a bit cause I know that's her changing the subject.

"So which one do you like?" She shows me the phone on her phone. It's an iphone 8plus. Its

beautiful.

"Do you think Bab'Lungelo will buy me that one?" She asks and I can tell she's a bit nervous too.

"He made you a promise and he keeps his promises. So you're confident about your results."

"Of course. I've been preparing for this since grade ten. There's no way I will fail." A huge grin made its way to my face. Her confidence is refreshing.

"I'm glad to hear that. And I can't wait for you to go to varsity. So where have you decided to go?"

"Well my plan has always been to go to Wits to study medicine, but when I was in Joburg I ran into Paul, I guess I realised then that I'd always run into him or his family so I decided to go to UCT. But now that he's dead I can go to Wits in peace."

"Oh okay. I'm happy to hear that. Now go to bed, it's late."

"Yeah, yeah. Goodnight." She kissed me on the cheek and went to sleep.

I finished my hot chocolate, then washed the cup and put it away. I put the muffin back in the cake tin and went to bed.

I got up in the morning to someone banging on the door. My mum was fast asleep next to me. I got up and went to open the door. I almost had a heart attack seeing Paul standing there. I didnt even notice the kids coming in from the bedroom. Princess and Prince rushed over and hugged their dead while I stood there mute.

"I thought you were dead!" Princess said with her arms around her dead, crying.

"I know. I'm sorry about that." I finally snapped out of it and invited him in. He sat down on the couch with both his kids on either side of him.

Mum came in too and sat on the opposite couch looking at him with Bontle next to her.

"What happened?" I asked after the shock wore off.

"Uhm..... there was an explosion, mum was cooking and she left the gas stove on, the candles from the dinner table ignited the flame and everything just went up in flames." He answered. He had a bandage on his arm and a few scratches on his face.

"So how did you get out?" Bontle asked.

"I dont know. I just woke up in a hospital bed. The last thing I remember is the fire igniting. I dont know when I passed out or who got me out."

"Wow. What about your mum and brother?" Mum asked.

"Unfortunately they couldnt get them out."

While he sat there narrating his story I felt a rush of relief, not just because he was alive but because his children atleast had one parent around. I have no problem with being in the kids lives and I know I would have had to raise them if Paul was dead but the fact that he is here is just a load off of my

shoulders. As kind and helpful as Lungelo has been with Bontle it would not be fair for me to pile another responsibility on him because even though my mother would have insisted the kids stay with her, they still would have been my responsibility.

I heard a knock on the door as we were talking. I opened and Lungelo stood there looking rather handsome. I'd even forgotten that I have a doctor's appointment today.

"Hey, come in." He gave me a hug and kissed me then walked in and greeted everyone. He seemed surprised to see Paul too.

"I'll go make breakfast for everyone." I said walking to the kitchen. Bontle followed me and helped me. I heard mum excuse herself before she headed to the bedroom. We finished dishing up and Bontle took food to my mum in the bedroom. I called the kids to come and eat in the kitchen then I went to give Lungelo and Paul their food.

The tension in the lounge was so thick I'm sure it had hips and a butt like Faith Nketsi. I handed them their food and went back to the kitchen to get my cup of tea. I came back and sat down and to be quite honest I didn't know what to do or say. I just sipped my tea.

"Did you call Dr Mseleku?" Lungelo asked looking at me.

"No, I even forgot we had a doctor's appointment."

"Are you sick?" Paul asked, earning himself a deadly stare from Lungelo.

"Not really. Just a routine check up." I answered.

"Oh okay. Thank you for breakfast, I'll come back in a couple of days to get the kids for the funeral."

"Sure. I'll let my mum know."

"Okay. Let me go."

"I'll walk you out." I got up and followed him out. I

called the kids to say their goodbyes.

His car was parked outside the gate and there was a driver waiting for him inside. He hugged the kids and told them he would see them in a couple of days. The kids said their goodbyes and rushed back into the house leaving me with him. I turned to walk away after saying my goodbyes. He called my name and I turned to look at him.

"I'm sorry. For everything."

"Its okay."

"No it's not. I shouldn't have put you through half the things my family and I pit you through. I'm sorry."

"Thank you."

"I should get going, I have a funeral to plan. By the way, Congratulations on the baby."

"What?"

"Your nose gave it away." He said chuckling. I held

my nose trying to figure out what's wrong with it.

"What's wrong with my nose?"

"You had the same nose when you were pregnant with Bontle." He said getting into the car and driving off.

I stood there touching my nose trying to figure out what was happening there but I found nothing. I went back to the house and my mum was now in the lounge.

"Is something wrong with my nose?" Lungelo and mum looked at me like I was crazy.

"Nothing is wrong with your nose. Why?" Mum asked.

"Just asking. Let me go bath so we can go."

I went to the bathroom and took a bath. When I was done I lotioned and wore Jean's and a white tshirt. I put on some sneakers then got my bag and went out.

Lungelo said his goodbyes and we left.

"Are you sure nothing is wrong with my nose."

"Babe, you're fine. Your nose is fine." He held my hand and kissed it. "Besides, you're pregnant, your body is bound to go through some changes. And your nose is cute. Stop obsessing over it."

"Okay." Not that I believed him.

When I was pregnant with Bontle my nose was so huge I didn't think it would go back to its normal size. I just hope mother nature is kinder this time around.

We got to the hospital and headed straight to the doctor's office. We were twenty minutes early for our appointment so we decided to go and wait in the waiting room. We found the Radebe clan also waiting. I didnt even know they were coming.

"Hi!" I greeted looking at them. They were so loud I'm pretty sure the whole hospital heard them. I went to sit next to MaMtolo.

"Makoti. How are you? Hows the baby treating you?" She asked soon as I sat down.

"So far so good. The nausea is slowly wearing off but the weird cravings are really taking over." She laughed and rubbed my little bump.

"Dont worry about it. Take everything as it comes. As soon as the baby is here it will be all worth it."

The came in and told us the doctor was ready for us. We went in with the pack behind us. The doctor did her tests with everyone watching and posing questions. Sometimes I think my life is way too good to be true.

After the sonogram everyone requested a copy for themselves. I dont know why but the doctor gave them each copies. We walked out of the office

walking behind them as they kept looking at the sonogram pictures. I held Lumgelo's hand as we walked and rested my head on his shoulder.

"This is real right?"

"What?"

"This. Everything. I sometimes feel like this is a dream. That I will wake up one day and be surrounded by steel bars and small walls." He stopped and looked at me, holding my face in his hands.

"This isn't a dream baby. It's all real, and you deserve it all. Now let's go home, I missed you."

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTY SIX

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Lungelo and I drove back to his house while the rest of the family drove back to Richard's Bay. I cant believe they drove all the way here just to see the baby.

We get to the house and I look through the fridge and cabinets and theres no food. There's literally a box of stale chicken licken wings in the fridge, a box of cereal in the cupboard and some old milk. We didn't even buy groceries what are we going to eat? And what has he been eating all along? The thought of not having anything to eat makes me emotional, I find myself shedding a few tears. Lungelo comes in with the takeaways and finds me staring at the fridge crying.

"Babe?" He puts the takeaways on the counter and walks over to me. "Babe what's wrong? Why are you crying?"

"There's no food." I say sniffing. He holds me and I find myself crying even harder on his chest.

"But babe, we bought takeaways. We'll eat."

"There's no mayonnaise or chilli sauce. How am I going to eat without mayonnaise?"

"Okay, tell you what. I'll quickly rush to the mall and get you your mayonnaise and chilli sauce." He leads me to the lounge and makes me sit on the couch, he wipes my tears and makes me lay down then puts a throw over me. "I'll be right back okay. Dont move." I nod my head and wipe my tears as he grabs his keys and runs out.

I watch him as he rushes out and in the corner of my eye I notice the Spur takeaway sitting on the kitchen counter. I get up and head to the kitchen, I get a

plate from the cabinet and dish up the wings and ribs, chips and onion rings. I can feel my mouth watering already.

I head back to the lounge and turn the TV on, the Kardashians are on, I love them but seeing their perfect bodies will just make me insecure about my own so I change the channel and play some music on channel O. I bop my head side to side as I eat the meat. I feel like I'm in heaven. I decide to call my mum and let her know I'll be late.

"Hey nana."

"Hey ma, I'll be a bit late."

"Okay. Where are you?"

"At Lungelo's place. He didnt buy mayonnaise and chilli sauce."

"Huh?"

"I got here and there was no mayonnaise." She laughs. Am I a joke to her? "Ma, it's not funny!" She

wont stop laughing.

"Okay, where's Lungelo?" She asks after her fit of laughter has wore off.

"He went to buy the mayonnaise." She laughs again.

"Ay, ok. Shem. I feel sorry for him."

"Whose side are you on?"

"Baby, I'll see you when you get back." She says before hanging up. Mxm.

I finish eating and take the plate to the kitchen. When I come back Lungelo walks through the door with a plastic bag from Spar.

"Hey, you're back."

"Yeah." He empties the contents of the plastic bag and places them on the counter. "I got your mayo, infact I got three just to make sure. And I got the chilli sauce." He says feeling proud of himself. I grab a small bowl and a spoon from the kitchen. He opens it for me and I take a couple of scoops and put them in the bowl and add some chilli sauce. He

just shakes his head and goes to warm up his food.

I sit in the lounge waiting for him, he comes in with his ribs and sits next to me. I take one rib and dip it in my delicious mixture. He just shakes his head and laughs.

"So, new years eve we'll be together right?" He asks.

"I guess. That's if my mother doesn't force us to go to church."

"Nope, I booked you first. By the way, my family is coming on the fourth. Are you ready?"

"I think so."

"Good. I can't wait to make you my wife, officially." He pops a chip in his mouth and sits back. "You're spending the night right?"

"I can't. Bontle's results are coming out tomorrow. I need to be there."

"Oh yeah, I forgot about that. Okay I'll pick you up on the 31st and then we can have our new years together."

"Fine by me. But, I've already told my mum I'd be late."

"What time is late."

"I dont know, nine, ten. It's almost two pm now so we have about eight hours to spare." He puts the rib back on the plate and turns to look at me with a huge grin on his face.

"So what do you think we should do with those eight hours?" His hand goes under my tshirt.

"I dont know. You tell me."

He pulls me to him with my legs and they go over his.

"You're going to make up for leaving me alone for almost three weeks." He says kissing me on the neck making me moan. My bowl of mayo still in hand. I move it to the other hand and place it on the coffee table. He holds my face and kisses me, and like a bolt of lightning he pulls out quickly.

"And now?" I ask surprised.

"Baby, your little mayo chilli sauce combo is not

nice." I blow some air into my hand completely embarrassed. "Let's go brush those teeth." He picks me up from the couch and carries me up the stairs. This is embarrassing, I'm not even sure if I'm in the mood anymore.

We get to the bathroom and I brush my teeth with him standing next to me brushing his. I finish brushing my teeth and head to the bedroom. I decide to open the balcony door and get some air. He comes behind me and wraps his arms around my neck and kisses the top of my head.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing." He turns me around to look at him.

"Babe, what did I do?" Really. He just told me my mouth stinks.

"You said I stink." He frowns as if he's surprised to hear me say that. Does he have short term memory?

"Okay, baby. Please don't cry, I'm sorry." I didn't even

realize I was crying. "Baby I'm sorry, you dont stink. I didnt mean it like that." He brings me in for a hug and I cry even more.

I stop crying after a while and wipe the tears. He envelopes my face in his hands and starts kissing me all over my face making me giggle.

"I love you, MaGumede. I'm sorry, I didnt mean to make you cry."

"Its fine. You should blame your baby for making me eat those weird things." He laughs and goes down on his knees. He lifts my tshirt and starts kissing my small bump.

"You little princess, need to rest a bit. Mummy cant be eating those weird combos. You need to cut her some slack." He kisses my tummy again and then gets up to kiss me. "I've spoken to her, no more weird combos." We'll see about that.

He lifts me up and I wrap my legs around his waist while we kiss. My hands are around his neck as he lays me down on the bed. He lifts my tshirt up over my head leaving me with just my bra. He plants kisses going down my neck and chest till he gets to my tummy.

"You should close your eyes now. Mummy and daddy need to get busy." He whispers making me laugh.

He takes my pants off followed by my underwear. He parts my legs leaving me open, making me shy. I dont know why. I try to cover myself up with my hand but he moves it and buries his head inside my coochie. I clutch the covers as every type of sensation travels through my body. His tongue on my clit and his finger inside me will always be a top tier combo. I feel my walls crumbling and my muscles contracting and some liquid spraying all over his face.

He comes up again and kisses me with his white face dripping with my liquids. I cover my mouth with my hand.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that." He smiles and moves my hand from my mouth and kisses me again.

"I'm glad you did that." He kisses me again and enters me in one swift thrust. He moves in and out of me and before long I feel my body giving in again. I feel him groan and spill his warm juices inside me.

He pulls out and lays next to me as we try to catch our breath. He gets off the bed and goes to the bathroom, he comes back with a warm towel and cleans me up and then himself. When he goes back to the bathroom his phone buzzes.

"Babe, your phone is buzzing."

"Who is it?" He asks from the bathroom.

"I dont know. It's a message, I think."

"Please check it for me." I reach down to the floor where his pants are laying and get the phone from his pocket. I open the message and all it says is 'N and P have been shot.' "What does it say?"

"It says N and P have been shot."

"What?" He asks coming in from the bathroom. I hand him the phone and he reads the message. His expression quickly changes and I can see panic in his eyes.

"What's happening?" I ask now getting worried. He quickly rushes to the closet so decide to get dressed too. "Lungelo?" He comes back in black from head to toe.

"Babe, I have to go somewhere." What the heck. He grabs a backpack from the closet and walks out of the bedroom. I follow him asking questions and getting no answers. He goes straight to the study

and pulls out a book revealing what looks like an alarm keypad. He punches in a code and the wall opens to reveal an arsenal of all types of guns. What the fuck is happening right now? I've only ever seen this in movies. It cant possibly be real.

"Lungelo answer me, what's going on? What's with the guns?" He picks a few guns and what looks like bullets and shoves them in his backpack. He closes the secret wall and then makes a phonecall. I'm clearly invisible cause right now he is paying attention to everything except for me.

"Hey, I need your help. Please get one of your guys to drive Nomonde home." He cant be serious. "Yeah she's at the house I have to rush to Joburg for an emergency." So he's going to Joburg. "Sharp." He hangs up then comes over to me.

"Babe, I know how this looks and I promise I'll explain everything when I get back, Muzi is going to

send someone to drive you home." I feel tears sting my eyes. I'm not even sure why I'm crying right now.

"Why do you have that many guns in the house?"

"I will explain everything when I get back. I promise. Right now I really need to go." He kisses me on my forehead before rushing out. No matter how many times I scream his name, he doesn't come back. He leaves me standing there like a statue.

I don't know how long I stood there waiting for someone to wake me up from this nightmare but no one comes. I hear a knock on the door before some guy walks in looking rather shady. If I didn't know that someone was coming to pick me up I would think I'm being robbed.

"Hi, I was asked to take you home." I fake a smile and nod. I walk up the stairs and make sure every window and door upstairs is closed and locked. I go back downstairs and do the same. I put my sneakers on and walk out with this guy whose name I don't

even know. I have so many questions right now but I know he is the last person to give me the answers I need.

I lock the door and he opens the back of the car. I get in and strap myself in. My phone beeps from my bag and I take it out. It's a message from Lungelo.

'I love you. I promise I'll explain everything when I get back. Please dont be mad.'

I don't even have the energy to answer him so I just throw the phone back in my bag and watch the trees and nature passing by. For his sake, I hope his explanation is worth it because I am not ready to go back to jail for whatever criminal activities he is up to.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTY SEVEN



I've never driven like this before. Or maybe I have, I don't remember. It took me about four hours to get from Durban to Joburg. A trip that would take a normal person almost seven hours took me four. I'm pretty sure I'll be getting speeding tickets in the mail soon if any of our roads have cameras.

By the time I got to Joburg the sun had set and darkness had crept in. I drove straight to Hyde Park. When I got there, loadshedding had hit and the streets were dark, works for me, at least no one will question me being here with these guys. I called Lindani and told him I was at the gate and he came out with Sizwe. They had to physically push the gate just so I could get in. They closed the gate shut

again when I was in.

I parked the car and got out. These two walked towards me when they had closed the gate.

"Hey, man, that was fast." Sizwe said soon as they got to me. We hugged and walked into the house.

"What's with the darkness? Y'all ate the electricity money again?" I asked.

"You know Eskom. Razor and Sbu are busy trying to get the generator up and running." As soon as we walked in the generator kicked in and there was light. I was about to ask what's happening with Philani and Nate when I saw them sitting on the couch.

Nate had a sling on his arm and Philani had a bandage across his shoulder.

"What the heck happened to you?" I sat down on the couch looking at them. Nate groaned as he tried to sit up properly. I didn't understand why they were so calm. These two got shot and they are sitting here

so calm.

"We got shot." Philani says like it's a joke.

"I see that. So why are you not doing anything about it? What if someone is after you, after the cartel? Don't you think we need to be planning something? Anything?"

"Theres no need bro, I mean what can you plan against someone like Bonolo." Philani answers. He cant possibly mean thee Bonolo Mashile.

"Bonolo as in Bonolo Mashile?"

"The one and only!" Nate says lifting up his whiskey glass. Sizwe and Lindani are standing by the door laughing their asses out. And they have been joined by Razor and Sbu.

"How did Bonolo Mashile shoot you? Does she even know how to use a gun?" I ask.

"She clearly does, they have bullet holes in their bodies." Lindani says chuckling.

"But his house has more holes on the walls, Lando is going to kill him." Sizwe says laughing. So I left my angry fiancée and drove here for a joke?

"So why did I get a message about this shooting if y'all are laughing and joking about it?" I ask half way between pissed and angry.

"I'm sorry about that." Lindani says. "When I got the call from Nate I panicked cause I thought we were under attack, only to find they were playing Fortnite with Bonolo."

"And the worse part, they were hit by stray bullets." Sizwe adds before bursting out laughing. I cant help but join them too. I know Nomonde is mad at me but I'm glad I witnessed this, if anyone would meet me on the street and tell me this story I wouldnt believe it.

"How did Bonolo get into your house? You live in a fortress." I asked after the fits of laughter had died down.

"Well, I got a call from the guards about a car that keeps driving up and down by the house everyday. They couldnt give me answers so I told these idiots so we drove from home and came here. They went out to buy food since Lando and the kids are home for Christmas. Bonolo shows up, didnt think much of it, we open for her, she says she knows we had something to do with her family's accident. We deny it, next thing we know she has a gun pointed at us, with a silencer to boot. She wants a confession, she doesnt get it, shots go off in every direction. She panics when she sees us bleeding, drops the gun and runs." Wow, this sounds like some scene from a bad American movie.

"So what are you going to do about it? What if she comes back to finish what she started?"

"She's not coming back. We'll just let her bury her mother and brother then teach her about respect." Philani says. Sometimes I think his good heart will be the death of him one day.

"Fine. If she comes back to kill you, dont call me. I'm hungry, what's eatable in this house?" I ask getting up and heading to the kitchen. I find a bunch of takeaways on the counter, I take the first one I come across. Lucky for me its meat and pap. It's cold so I warm it up.

I head back to the lounge with my food in a plate. Lindani looks at me like I just stole his favourite toy.

"Dude, that's my food." He says soon as I sit down.

"Well thank you, it tastes delicious. And that's what you get for bringing me here under false pretenses. Do you know I left my fiancée to rush here? Now I have some explaining to do. For your sake, I hope she doesnt leave me."

"Eh, ngingenaphi mina (what's that got to do with me?)" He asks as the others laugh.

"You're the one who got me here for nothing."

"Mxm, you're a bully Lungelo Radebe. KwaMaiMai is closed now, where will I get my food." He seriously

wants to cry? For pap and meat? If I didnt know better I'd say Taki doesnt feed him but I know for a fact she does.

I finish eating and go find a room to sleep in. I find one and throw myself on the bed. I take out my phone hoping to find atleast a message or a missed call from Nomonde but theres nothing. She must really be pissed at me, not that I blame her. I decide to call her. Her phone rings and goes straight to voicemail. I try again and I get the same reply. I try again and figure if she wont answer me maybe she'll listen to a voicemail. The white woman tells me to leave a voicemail after the beep so I do.

"Hi babe, I know you're mad at me, with very very good reason, and I promise I will explain everything when I get back, I think it's time I tell you the truth about me. But just know that I love you with every fiber of my being and i dont want to lose you, i hope i don't lose you. Anyways i love you and I'll be home

soon. Kiss my babies for me. And tell them i love them too."



NOMONDE

I've listened to his voicemail about ten times already. Even though I'm angry at him, hearing his voice makes me realize I miss him.

I woke up early this morning and headed straight for the supermarket to get the newspaper. There's already a crowd waiting there, probably for the same reason I'm there. At six AM on the dot the doors open. Everyone rushes in and get the newspaper. I get in and lucky for me I find a few copys still available. I take a couple of them, pay and head out.

I slowly walk home. I see Bontle and Princess walking towards me. I hide the newspapers behind me.

"Hey, where are you two going?"

"To get the newspaper. Did you get it?" Bontle asks, I can feel the panic in her voice. So much for confidence.

"No, its finished. By the time I got there the newspaper was finished." I see her face fall, but I can tell she's trying to find Plan B.

"Okay, I'll ask some of my friends. I'm sure one of them has it."

"No, let's go home. I'll ask Lungelo to bring the paper."

"No, that's going to take too long." She says, now she's really panicking.

"Didn't she say she wasn't worried about the results? Why is she panicking?" Princess whispers to me. I want to laugh honestly.

"I don't know either."

"Okay, Princess let's go. I'm sure I'll find someone with a newspaper." She says reaching out to Princess. I laugh at her and she looks at me like I'm crazy. I take the newspaper out and she screams.

"Let's go home. I'm sure gogo is just as anxious as you."

We walk home and sure enough, mum is already up and pacing up and down the lounge. We get in, I hand the newspaper over to Bontle, she lays it down on the coffee table then starts going through the names. Mum and I stand together holding hands, I can hear mum mumbling what sounds like a prayer.

"Oh my God!" I hear Bontle say. I open my eyes hoping its not bad news.

"What's wrong? Your name is there right?"

"Yeah. I passed." I feel my insides slowly shift back to their places. Mum just let's out a loud Amen. I let out the breath I didn't even realize i was holding in

and take a seat. I bring her in for a hug and I can tell she's getting emotional.

"Dont cry baby, you've worked way too hard for this. We need to celebrate." She smiles and wipes away her tears. She goes to mum and hugs her too. She holds her a little longer and a part of me understands where her thoughts are. All the sacrifices my mother made raising her, this moment is proof they were all worth it. I wipe my own tears and just exhale. I'm grateful that inspite of everything, me being in jail and her father not being there she never lost sight of her path. She walked it no matter how difficult and today it had paid off. A new chapter awaits.

"I have to go get my results." She says and wipes her tears.

"Hurry up, I need to see how many distinctions you got." Mum says making her laugh. She goes to the bedroom and comes back with her eyes less puffy.

She grabs her sister and they leave.

"I cant believe it's over."

"Tell me about it. I didn't realize I was actually nervous, you'd think I was the one writing." Mum says chuckling. Her phone rings and she puts it on loudspeaker. I dont know why cause her speaker works just fine. Old people.

"Hello!"

"Hey, where's Bontle, I'm trying to call her she's not picking up." I know that voice, its mummy's new best friend MaMtolo.

"She went to the school to get her results."

"Arent they supposed to be in the newspaper?"

"They are. She's getting the statement of results."

"Okay. Did she pass?"

"Yes, she got a Bachelor." MaMtolo starts ululating and my mum laughs out loud. I love seeing her

happy.

"Amen. I need to get her a gift." MaMtolo says before hanging up.

As soon as she hangs up Bontle and Princess come running in. Judging by the sweat on their faces and dust on their legs they probably ran all the way from the school. She places the big brown envelope on the coffee table.

"Open it." She says looking at me with a huge grin on her face. I take the envelope and open it. Looking at the results, my jaw drops. I knew she was smart hut this is beyond even my wildest expectations. Seven distinctions. Yep, my baby is smart like that.



NARRATED

At Lesego Mashile's house in Bryanston, Paul and his sister Lesedi are in the lounge with the rest of the Mashile uncles and Aunts. Bonolo walks in like shes being chased by something. She quickly closes the door and leans against it trying to calm down her breathing, drawing the attention of everyone in the room.

She realizes the attention shes getting so she quickly runs upstairs to the bedroom. Paul and Lesedi follow her and find her pacing up and down.

"What's wrong with you? Why didnt you come home last night?" Paul asks looking at his sister.

"They are going to kill me. They are going to kill me." She keeps repeating while pacing the floor.

"Who is going to kill you?" Lesedi asks, clearly worried about her sister. Bonolo stops and looks at them.

"Philani Biyela, he's dead. I shot him together with his friend Nate." Lesedi slumps down on the bed.

"Why would you do that?" Paul shouts.

"I just wanted to scare him. I wanted him to confess to killing mum and Lesego."

"Okay so now what? If he is dead what are you going to do? Because trust me, his friends are coming for us." Paul says.

"Since when do you carry a gun Bonolo?" Lesedi asks.

"I don't. I just got Lesedi's gun from the safe."

"And how long have you been planning this? Because I remember telling you to let this go." Paul says.

"I didn't mean to kill him. I really didnt." She says as she throws herself on the couch, her guilt eating away at her.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTY EIGHT

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

It's been a couple of days since I spoke to Lungelo. Although he keeps calling I have been avoiding his calls. I keep listening to his voicemail though. I miss him, but the fear of finding out whatever he is involved in makes me nervous.

It's new Year's eve and I'm not sure if he is coming to get me like he promised, but I have an outfit just in case. Bontle and her friends are all over the neighborhood celebrating their distinctions. It turns out their school had a hundred percent pass rate. Impressive. Paul picked up Princess and Prince earlier. Its quiet without them, but he has promised that they will come visit during school holidays. That alone earned him some brownie points in my mums

books.

I was in my room busy googling if my previous abortions will affect this pregnancy. I might be mad at Lungelo but I dont want anything to happen to this baby, and I need to make sure my body can carry this child. My fears escalate when I read that my cervix might just be thin because of the multiple abortions. And if that happens I might lose my child. I get lost in reading all the worse case scenarios I dont even hear Bontle calling me. Only when she taps me on the shoulder do i pay attention to her.

"Are you okay?" She asks looking concerned.

"I'm okay. Just tired. What's wrong?"

"Bab'Lungelo is here." Oh, he came.

"Okay, I'm coming." She leaves. I get up and fix myself then head to the lounge. I find him sitting going through something on his phone with a glass of juice in front of him.

"Hi!" He looks up when he hears my voice and puts the phone away.

"Hi. I'm sorry." This isn't the time for this. I take a seat next to him. "I came to get you."

"Okay." Bontle comes in with a plate of muffins and places them on the coffee table. She takes the statement of results and places it next to the muffins. Lungelo picks it up and looks at it. A smile forms on his face.

"You owe me a phone." Bontle says matter of factly. Lungelo has a huge grin on his face.

"Impressive. Well done." He gets up to hug her then sits back down.

"Thank you." Bontle says. She takes out her phone and shows him the phone she wants. "That's the one I want." He looks at the phone then looks at her.

"Are you sure?"

"Yep, it's the iPhone 8 plus."

"Okay." He reaches behind him and comes back with a box in a spar plastic bag. "I guess I'll have to take this one back." He takes the box out of the plastic bag and it's an iphone 11 pro. She starts screaming and all I can do is close my ears.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you." She keeps saying and wiping her tears. My babygirl is happy. And that makes me happy.

"I thought you said you wanted the iPhone 8 plus?"

"Nah, this one will do. It's even better. Thank you."
She hugs him again.

I decide to take a bath while Bontle and Lungelo are busy setting up her new phone. When I'm done I lotion and put on a black A -line dress with some block heels since I'm not even sure where we're going. I brush my weave and wear a bit of make up then head out. My mom is not back from her friends so I'll just call her. We say our goodbyes to Bontle and leave. We drive for about an hour then he parks the car on the side of the road and looks at me.

"Hi!" I look at him confused.

"Why did you stop?"

"We need to talk."

"We can talk at the house. That's where we're going right?"

"Yeah, but I want us to talk before we get home. I'm sorry about what happened that day."

"Leaving me in your house or having enough guns for an army in your house?"

"Our house. Look Nomonde I'm old." Really? He's barely forty years old. "I have a past. A not so clean past. And sometimes that past trickles into my present."

"Okay mahatma Gandhi get to the point." He laughs. I missed his laugh.

"What I'm trying to say is I am part of a cartel." He says staring at me. He looks anxious, almost afraid.

"Like a gang?"

"Sort of, just a lot more sophisticated and has more reach."

"What does that mean?"

"I've worked with the Biyela's since I was in varsity."

"Biyela's as in Philani Biyela?"

"Yes, but I started working with his father and when Philani took over the cartel I worked with him too. I cant tell you everything that we do but....."

"Because it's illegal?"

"Mostly." He goes on to tell me about his other life as the Shadow Assassin. In my opinion that's just a fancy word for inkabi. Who knew I'd get out of prison and marry a criminal. But for some strange reason nothing in me is screaming for me to run.

For all I know he might be the world's most dangerous criminal but I've nu and wanted. I've never felt like he's dangerous. But then again I've heard criminals have the biggest hearts.

"So one day I'm going to be woken up by a phonecall or a knock on the door telling me you're dead or in jail?"

"That's not going to happen. If I die it won't be because of my job." So it's a job now?

"How do you know that? Didn't you say someone was trying to reveal your identity?"

"And they failed."

"Lungelo, I love you, as scared as I am sometimes I choose to love you every single day. I don't want to lose you." He comes closer to me, holds my chin with his hands and kiss me.

"Baby I'm not going anywhere. I've actually started scaling back on the cartel. I'm getting old and I have you now, you and Bontle and and this precious cargo," he runs my tummy. "Are very important to me and I'll do whatever it takes to protect you. You won't lose me, we have the rest of our lives to just breathe and be together. All I'm asking for is for you to give me a chance to prove that to you." I don't know why I'm not panicking or worried about this. Something

must be wrong with me. Or maybe I've allowed love to blind me to any of his mistakes.

"Just so you know, if you get killed or go to jail, I'll find a new man within a week and he'll raise your children." He bursts out laughing. He thinks I'm joking.

"I love you so much." He kisses me and I can feel him smile between the kisses. "I thought you'd leave me." He says as he pulls back.

"Die or get arrested and you'll see." He laughs again. "We need to go to the doctor." His face changes from laughing to worry.

"Is the baby okay?"

"For now. I need to ask the doctor if the abortions I had in prison will affect the pregnancy in any way."

"Okay." He takes his phone and sends a text.

An hour later we drive into the hospital and find Doctor Mseleku expecting us. We head straight to

his office.

"So, is everything okay with the baby?" He asks soon as we sit down.

"Yeah, so I was googling something and I just needed to find out from you about it." He probably thinks I'm just a nervous first time mum who will run to the doctor for the smallest thing. I tell him about the abortions and what I found on the internet. The worried look on his face tells me I am on the right path. He tells me to lay on the bed and lift my legs up. Good thing I'm wearing a dress.

He covers me with something like a sheet and inserts his finger inside my vagina. It's a little uncomfortable to be honest and I can see Lungelo is just as uncomfortable.

"Okay, so usually I dont advice patients to google stuff when it comes to their health but I will give it to you this time. It seems the abortions did affect your cervix, its thin and with the pregnancy progressing

the cervix will expand and possibly give in, leading to a miscarriage." He says looking at us. Thank the heavens or whoever planted that idea in my head.

"Okay, so what can we do to make sure she carries the baby to term?"

"Well, I'll have to stitch the cervix closed."

"And when can that happen." Lungelo is asking all the questions cause I am in shock. I was actually hoping the doctor would say I have nothing to worry about. And now I have to have an operation.

"We can prep her for surgery right now. The procedure doesnt take too long, a couple of hours at most."

Within fifteen minutes of walking through those hospital doors I'm being prepped for surgery. As scared as I am I know it needs to be done. Lungelo is worried. We went from talking about his criminal ways on the side of the road to being prepped for surgery. My life should be on a tv show.

Two hours later I'm being dragged out of theater and into a ward. I find Lungelo already there pacing up and down. I'm just glad I wasn't put to sleep, the doctor just numbed me from my waist down.

"Hey, are you okay?" He asks soon as the nurse has done setting me up in the ward.

"I'm okay." He leans in and kisses me. Doctor Mseleku comes in pleased with herself.

"How did it go?" Lungelo asks with my hand squeezed into his.

"It went well. But I'm going to keep her here for a few hours just to make sure everything is okay." I smile and she walks out. I make space on the bed and pull Lungelo down. He takes his shoes off and gets on the bed with me.

"Babe!"

"Mhmmm!"

"It's New Year's Eve. If you want to go to the club you can go, I'll be here when you get back." He chuckles and looks at me.

"Where's the fun in that. If we have to spend New Year's Eve in this bed then so be it." He pulls out his phone and sends some texts. It's almost ten in the evening and I'm getting sleepy. My eyes are barely staying open. "Baby, don't sleep." He says trying to open my eyes. I laugh and move his hand from my face.

"But baby, I'm sleepy."

"I know, but it's New Year's Eve like you said. We need to see the new year come in." As sleepy as I am I feel bad that we ended up here instead of living it up wherever he was planning to take me.

"Okay how am I supposed to stay awake?"

"Let's talk. Ask me anything."

"Anything?"

"Anything at all."

"Ok. So this little alter ego of yours, when exactly does he come out." He chuckles.

"When it's necessary."

"When is it ever necessary to kill someone Lungelo."

"I'm not Jesus and I don't pretend to be one but trust me, sometimes it's necessary for death to happen."

"Even if that death comes by your hand?" He shrugs his shoulders. "How many people have you killed." He laughs.

"Baby maybe you should sleep, I'll wake you up five minutes before midnight." Pshh, too late. He woke me up now he must entertain me

"Okay, then tell me how you deal with it afterwards."

"I have a therapist, plus I don't think about it. As far as I'm concerned once it's done, it's done. Dwelling on things like that will drive me nuts." We hear a knock on the door, a part of me thinks it's the nurse or doctor but instead two women, one black and one white walk in with chef jackets on and pulling a

trolley behind them. Lungelo gets off the bed and attends to them.

"Ladies. That was fast."

"We were already on our way to your house to set up." The white one says. She pulls out a small foldable table and two chairs and places it at the bottom of the bed. Lungelo directs her to bring the table closer to me since I won't be able to sit up.

"Baby, this is Jamie and that's Nthabi, they were supposed to set up dinner at home but since we are here, plans change." I smile at them.

"Nice to meet you." They finish setting up and give instructions to Lungelo. What comes first and what goes where. When they are done they say their goodbyes and leave their trolley behind.

"You always have a plan up your sleeve dont you?" He smiles and kisses me.

"Always." He pours the non alcoholic champagne in

glasses. He hands me a glass and sits next to me.

"I'm sorry I ruined your plans." I say sitting up on my side.

"You didnt, this was the plan all along." We laugh and toast. I guess this is my first new years eve out of prison. Well it will be memorable though so that's something. Happy New Year.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SIXTY NINE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I woke up in a hospital bed on new years day with a man on my arm. I still don't understand how the hospital let him stay.

I watched him sleep. He looks cute when he's sleeping, you wouldnt even tell hes a criminal. Oh well, I guess he's my criminal now. I got up and went to the bathroom to have a shower. I came back and got dressed and waited for the doctor. Lungelo was already up and busy on his phone.

"What if the doctor doesn't discharge you?" He asked seeing me get dressed.

"She has to. I need to go see Amanda."

"In Joburg?"

"Yes. I'm sure she was lonely, especially on Christmas." He put his phone away and looked at me.

"How many times did she come to see you when you were in prison?"

"It doesnt matter, I need to find out if I can't get her a transfer to Durban, that way she'll be close by and mum can also go see her."

"Why? Dont you have enough on your plate? Your career is just starting again, we have a baby on the way, a wedding to plan, Bontle needs her mum and Amanda's kids also need you. Why cant you let Amanda be the adult that she is and focus on you."

"She's my sister Lungelo, I can't just turn my back on her."

"She didnt have a problem doing it to you. Heck, shes the one who put you there." Are we really doing this right now? It's not like I'm going to Mars.

"That doesnt mean I have to do the same to her. I'm not like her Lungelo, I cant just turn my back on her."

He sighs and brings me to stand between his legs with his hands on my waist.

"I know you're not like her, but Nomonde sometimes you need to think about you first. You just had an operation. You cant just get on a flight and go to Joburg." The door opened and a nurse walked in together with the doctor.

"I see my patient is ready to go." She said with a smile on her face.

"I am. So what's the verdict."

"Well, I'll need you to get on the bed to make sure everything is okay and then I might discharge you."

"Okay." I got on the bed and the doctor did all her tests.

"Alright. Looks like everything is good. I'll get your discharge papers ready."

"So doctor, is she allowed to fly with the operation still so new." Of course he had to ask.

"I would not recommend it."

"Thank you doctor. We'll wait for the discharge papers." She smiled and left with the nurse in tow.

"Really Lungelo. You didnt have to do that."

"What? Care about your wellbeing and that of our child?"

"Of course I care about our child, but I also need to speak to my sister. She's all alone."

"Your sister is fine. You're not."

"Fine then we'll drive."

"Who is we?"

"Lungelo?"

"I'm not driving to Joburg and you aren't either. We'll go to Joburg when we drop off Bontle, then you can see your sister. Until then you arent going anywhere."

"Okay so what will have changed then? The operation will still be there."

"Get ready to go, I'll get the discharge papers." He said and walked out. I'm not sure if this is a fight or I'm just overreacting. I guess I'll see Amanda some other time.

A few minutes later Lungelo walks in with the discharge papers signed and my medication. He helps me put my shoes on then I remember the food trolley.

"Are we taking the trolley with us?"

"No, they are already on their way to pick it up." He's not even paying attention to me. Maybe we are fighting. I grab my bag and we leave. He opens the car door for me and I get in. He gets on the other side and drives off.

"Are we fighting?" He looks at me with a frown on his face.

"Why would you say that?"

"Because you're not talking to me, and you seem

irritated." He chuckles and puts his hand on my thigh.

"We are adults MaGumede, we dont fight we talk."

"So you're not mad at me?"

"I couldnt be mad at you even if I wanted. My heart wouldn't let me." He pulls into a Nandos drive thru.

"What do you want to eat?" I give him my order and he places it. Maybe he is right, we are two grown adults and I've had enough fights in prison to last me a lifetime.

We get home and I head inside to change. I need something comfortable. I finish changing and head back downstairs while Lungelo takes a shower. I dish up our food and lucky for me my mayonnaise and chilli sauce is available. I do my little mixture and spread it all over the chicken, well my share. I go back upstairs to call him and he's still in the shower. I knock and go into the bathroom.

"Hey, food is ready. Come down."

"I'll be down in a second." He says over the sound of the running water.

I go back downstairs. I put the food on a tray and cover it. Even though I'm hungry I decide to wait for him to come down. When he does come down he has his phone in his hand, he is topless and wearing black sweatpants. If the doctor hadn't told me to stay away from sex for the next few weeks I'm sure I'd be all over him by now. My loss. He hands me the phone.

"Who is it?" He signals with his head that I should talk to whoever mystery person is on the line.

"Hello."

"Nomonde. Hi."

"Amanda?"

"Yes. How are you?"

"I'm good. I'm sorry I couldn't come see you on Christmas." I leave him in the kitchen and head to the lounge. She chuckles.

"You do know you dont have to do this. You dont have to be nice to me after everything I did to you." Nothing like jail to humble a person.

"You're still my sister. Princess and Prince came home for Christmas."

"They did?" Her voice breaks and I can tell she is getting emotional. "How are they?"

"They are good. They miss you." She chuckles.

"I doubt that. I was never a good mother to them, I'm sure they dont even notice I'm not there."

"Well they do miss you. And mum too."

"Please tell them I love them. And I'm sorry for not being there."

"I'm sure they understand. Are you Okay though?"

"I'm okay. Your friend Shelley has been taking care of me. Apparently you asked her to."

"I know how horrible it can be, we all need someone to be in our corner."

"Thank you."

"That's what sisters are for. I've been thinking. What if we applied for you to be transferred to Durban, that way mum can come visit you too."

"No dont. I dont deserve your kindness and I know for a fact I dont deserve mums kindness or forgiveness either."

"Mum misses you." She sighs.

"I'll think about it."

"That's all I ask."

We say our goodbyes and then hang up. I go back to the kitchen and this man is halfway done with his food. While I waited for him to finish bathing before i ate he can't wait five minutes for me to finish my phonecall. Mxm. Men are something else. I hand him back his phone.

"I think science needs to do an experiment on your heart to figure out how you still show kindness to the one person who made your life a living hell." He

says with a mouth full of meat.

"Thank you for that."

"You're welcome. See you didnt need to go to Joburg to see her."

"Yeah. She seems better than the last time I saw her."

"That's good. Had Bontle decided where she's going to varsity?"

"I dont know. She was talking about going to Wits when we thought Paul was dead. But now I'm not sure."

"I hope she goes to Wits. It will be good for her."

"Yeah. So when are you taking me home?"

"Tomorrow."

We spent the whole day watching movies and cuddling on the couch. It's weird how just doing nothing together draws us closer to each other. As

scared as I get sometimes, that I'll wake up and all this will be a dream, its these quiet moments that make me realize this is real. I just hope that his other life as Shadow doesnt sip into our lives and disrupt it.

The next day we did a bit of shopping, mostly baby stuff. We dont know the sex of the baby but brothers bought a whole lot of pink stuff. He finds the pink tutus and princess dresses. I just pray to God to grant him his wish, I'm pretty sure he'll be heartbroken. But I don't doubt he will be happy even if it's a boy.

When we finish shopping we go home and drop everything before he drives me home.

"Babe, I cant come in, I have to drive home. Its getting late."

"I know. I'll miss you."

"I'll miss you too. But I'll be back in a couple of days with my uncles then you'll officially be mine." I dont

know if I'm more nervous or excited about that.

I say my goodbyes and head to the house. I find my mom sitting in the lounge with three men. One of them I recognize as my uncle. I guess he is here for the lobola. The other two men I don't recognize. I greet and head to the bedroom, mum follows me and I can tell she has something on her mind.

"Mama, what's going on?"

"I want to introduce you to our guests." Okay. "But I need you to promise me something." I look at her expecting her to keep going but she's also looking at me to say something.

"Ma what's going on? Is everything okay?"

"Everything is fine. But I need you to promise me that you'll keep an open mind." Eh.

"Okay MaGumede, I'll keep an open mind."

"Ngyabonga. Asambe. (Thank you, let's go.)" She holds my hand and leads me to the lounge. I take a

seat on the couch next to her.

"Uhm Monde, I'm sure you remembered my brother, malume Madoda." I nod my head and smile at him.

"Good. He is with our cousin, Nqabayezwe and that is Mhlaba khumalo, your father." I look at the man thats supposed to be my father then look at my mom. This has to be a joke. I look at him and look at my mother again. I know shes silently begging me with her eyes not to go sideways.

I look at this man and I must admit, looking at him he does look like Amanda. I'm not sure why he is here though. I've lived my entire life without him so why is he here now.

"Ngyabonga ukulwazi baba, Kodwa ngingombuzo, (I'm happy to meet you, but I have a question.)" He looks at me and smiles. I dont know why cause theres nothing amusing happening. "Why are you here?" I feel my mother pinch my arm.

"He's here to help us with the lobola negotiations."

My uncle answers. I guess my father has a spokesperson now.

"With all due respect malume, I was asking bab'Khumalo. I still dont understand why he is here. He's never been here so why show up now?" Judging from the look on his face and everyone else's, I wont be getting an answer anytime soon. So I get up and leave them to enjoy their scones and tea.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTY

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I've been holed up in my bedroom since I got home. My uncle and his two friends are staying till the negotiations are over, which means Bontle, mum and I have to share a room.

I have mastered enough courage to go into the lounge and eat since it was way past dinner time. My stomach is grumbling and to be honest I'm not sure if it's me that's hungry or the little human growing inside of me. Either way I need to eat. I heard a knock on the door as I prepared to drag myself out to the kitchen. Bontle came in with food on a tray. Yay, my sweet angel. She placed the tray on my lap.

"Thank you baby."

"Oh I didnt do it for you. I did for my brother." Wow. That hurt.

"Ouch." She gets on the bed and sits with her legs crossed watching me eat.

"Why are you mad at him?"

"Who?"

"Your father. Maybe him being here is his way of asking for forgiveness."

"Have you forgiven Paul?" She chuckles. I know she's about to give me a court room worthy argument.

"You and I both know that's not the same. Your father left, he left you with your mother and sister, he might be a deadbeat but he was way better than Paul. Paul me on the road and left me there, anything could have happened to me. Him and his family together with your sister made sure you spend half your life in a cold jail cell. You've forgiven Amanda inspite of the hell she dragged you through so why cant you forgive your father too? Or atleast hear him out."

I dont know what's worse, her being that smart and using her smarts on me or the realization that maybe I did overreact about this whole thing. I don't hate my dad and I dont think I'm even angry at him. I just resent him more than anything. He had his life wherever he was, didnt give even a second thought to the children he left behind. For all I know he had a whole new family and life without us. Judging from his clothes and the fact that he seems well groomed and clean, I'm pretty sure he wasnt struggling either.

"Fine, Bontle, I'll hear him out. No need to judge." She laughs and gets off the bed.

"I wasnt judging. I'm just saying if I can give Paul an ounce of attention you can too." Mxm, today's kids.

She takes the extra sponge and lays it on the floor and covers it with the sheets and blankets. I wonder which room my dearest father is going to use. I hope it's not my mum's, that would be hella awkward.

I woke up feeling like I hadn't had dinner. Well technically speaking I did have dinner for one cause that's what Bontle said. I carefully got off the bed making sure not to step on Bontle and not waking my mum. I walked out the bedroom towards the kitchen and noticed the front door was opened. Mum and Bontle are asleep, I slowly tiptoed out to see what was happening and found daddy dearest sitting on the stoop reading a newspaper. It's not even seven yet and he has already taken a bath and got dressed.

"Hi!" He looked up from his newspaper and smiled.

"You're up early."

"I could say the same about you. Are you going somewhere?" He chuckled and got up from the stoop, he rolled the newspaper and tucked it under his armpit.

"No, I've always been an early bird. I cant sleep past five am."

"Oh ok. I'm making breakfast, what would you like?" I walked back into the house with him following behind me.

"Anything is fine, as long as there's no pork."

"Why? Religion?" He sighed and sat on the chair with his newspaper on the small kitchen table.

"No, doctors orders. I have high blood pressure so I need to scale down on some foods and stress."

"Lobola negotiations can be stressful too."

"I know. I'm not here for the lobola money, just so you know."

"I didnt say that."

"I know, but I also know you're sceptical about me being here. I just wanted to do one thing right for you. I know I failed to be a father to you and Amanda." He remembered our names. That's nice.

"So where were you?"

"I was in Mpumalanga, I have a farm there."

"That's nice. So what does your family feel about you

being here?"

"To be honest, my wife is not happy but it is what it is." He said that with his eyes stuck on the newspaper. I could tell he was uneasy about this conversation but it had to be had.

"Why did you leave us? You left and never looked back. Why?" He took a deep breath and took off the reading glasses and left them hanging around his chest by the string holding them up.

"I wish I had a good enough reason but I don't. I left here to go work at a coal mine in Mpumalanga, the plan was to make enough money then come back, marry your mother and pay damages for you, for a while I held on to that plan and it looked like it would work. I found a woman in Mpumalanga, I'm a man and I have needs, and that's where this whole thing was supposed to end but I found myself in too deep, she fell pregnant and I ended up marrying her."

"And completely forgot about the children you left behind."

"I know. I don't think there will ever be enough sorry's in the world for me to say, I failed you and Amanda and that is something I will never forgive myself for."

I should be emotional right now, I should be crying or something but I just didn't feel anything. He was opening up and telling me about his remorse and apologies but I felt nothing. I guess a part of me will always wonder if our lives would have turned out different if he had been there. Maybe Amanda wouldn't have been so hateful of me, maybe the Mashile's wouldn't have gone so far with their torture if I had a father to fight for me. I guess I'll never know.

"A few months ago my daughter, Yenziwe was busy talking about this case about this man who was almost killed years ago, she said the person who was convicted for the attempted murder had been released and it turned out she was innocent all along and her sister had planned the whole thing. Now the

sister was the one behind bars. When she showed me the picture of the girl I knew it was Amanda. Looking at her was like looking at a female version of me. That's when I realized how much of a mess my leaving caused. I'm sorry Nomonde. I wish I could turn back time and do things differently. I wish I could have been here to protect you and Amanda. I'm truly sorry."

I turned around and faced the sink, for the first time since this conversation began I shed a tear. My mind kept going back to everything I had gone through. I wish I could tell him the past is the past and we've moved on, but how do I do that when my sister is enduring the same hell I went through. I got out of jail and my sister got in. Its like we swapped lives. And with her court appearance and sentencing likely to happen anytime soon, God alone knows how long she'll be in that place. And unfortunately for me I cant save her from facing her own crimes. The same way I cant force my father to face his own mistakes, he left us but we had a good life. It wasnt luxurious

but we never went to bed hungry and we never had to walk barefoot because my mother made sure to play her role and his as perfectly as she could. But no matter how well she played his role, she could never fully fill the void of a father.

I felt a hand on my shoulder and I quickly wiped my tears.

"I'm sorry. I'm not going to ask for your forgiveness because I dont deserve it. I'm just asking to be a part of this important part of your life. And if after that you never want to see my face again I will leave." Iw wiped my tears again and nodded my head. He brought me in for a hug and for the first time in a long long time I got to feel my fathers hug.



AMANDA

I hate it here. I know I sound like some entitled spoiled brat but it's the truth, I hate it here. I wouldn't wish this on my worst enemy. But I also know I deserve to be here and I have to put my big girl panties on and face the music.

After taking my morning shower I went to eat breakfast. As kak as this food is I have gotten used to it. Even though for the first few weeks I couldnt stomach it, it also didnt help that some of the prisoners would take my food. I guess being the new one around here I became an easy target.

I was beaten for no reason, people would pick fights with me for no reason, and if I didn't fight back I'd be attacked for not fighting g back. Until one cold morning I got into the shower and as expected one of the biggest bullies in this place, Mazola showed up with her little crew, I knew what was coming, I just hoped they wouldn't break any bones this time. I closed my eyes and prepared myself for the

onslaught of blows and kicks but they seemed to be taking too long to come. I slowly opened my eyes wanting to see what the hold up was for, I found another prisoner, Shelley standing between Mazola and I. They were in a stare down contest of some sort with no one speaking. Not even the little minions behind Mazola were speaking.

"Shelley, move."

"No, she's off limits." Shelley answered without flinching. And when did I become off limits.

"Since when?" Mazola asked, clearly pissed.

"Since I said so." Shelley answered. I had so many questions too but I decided to keep my mouth shut.

"That's not a good enough reason for me." Mazola reiterated.

"She is Monde's sister, and you and I both know Monde was off limits, until that day you and your lapdogs beat her and landed her in the infirmary."

"You dont have proof of that."

"I don't need proof. But know you're still going to pay for that. It could be today, tomorrow or even a year from now, but it will happen. Now, if you even touch a hair on Amanda's head, I'm coming after you." Mazola clicked her tongue and walked out with her minions on her heel.

"Thank you." I whispered.

"Don't thank me, thank Nomonde. After everything you put her through I don't know why she feels the need to protect you. Hurry up so we can get your stuff, you're moving into my cell."

I quickly got out of the shower and got dressed. She helped me get my stuff from the crowded cell I was in and led me to what I've come to learn is the elite side of the prison, where the prisoners make the rules, of course the only disadvantage of being this side are the Male guards who think they have monopoly on our bodies. Even though none have made a move on me, I've heard some women crying

in the middle of the night.

While I was eating a guard came and told me my lawyer was here. I got up and followed him to the visitors area, it wasn't visiting hours yet but I guess lawyers don't count as visitors. I sat down.

"Hi. How are you doing?" He asked.

"I'm good. Surviving."

"That's good. So I got a date for your court appearance. It will be five weeks from today."

"Okay, what's going to happen?"

"The prosecution will present all the evidence they have and then the judge will set a date for the sentencing."

"And what's your defence?" To be honest I don't have much faith in him. He is just a legal aid lawyer who probably has five hundred other pro bono cases on his desk so I wasn't hopeful.

"Defence will be difficult because of your confession. The only thing we can do is ask the judge to be lenient with the sentencing."

I figured since there was really no defence strategy prepping me for the court appearance was a waste of time. I cant believe my jealousy of my sister led me here. If only I could turn back the hands of time. The one person whose life I turned into a leaving hell is now the person looking out for me, she's the one who worries about me, calls me to check on me, something I never did for her. None of my so called friends have bothered to even come say hello, yeah neh. Life really has humbled me. But I still dont understand Nomonde's kindness. Why couldnt I see the goodness in her before this? Or maybe I've lowkey known about her goodness that's why I thought I could get away with mistreating her and hurting her. Why did I have to hate her for being herself?

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTY ONE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Lobola day has arrived. With just one friend that I have I didnt think it would be this busy. I expected a small intimate crowd but no, my mum invited her friends and their daughters are busy in the kitchen cooking under the watchful eye of Bonsile.

The Radebe's have been outside for almost an hour now and they are still not letting them in. If it were up to me they would have been in and everything would be done by now, but it's not up to me so I'll just have to be stuck in here.

I've been alone in my room for exactly five minutes since this day began. Everyone keeps walking in and out of here like it's a train station. I'm just tired and I

want to sleep. Bontle walks in with a bowl of delicious smelling soft porridge. I raise my hands out to her and she laughs and hands me the bowl.

"Thank you baby. How is it going in there?"

"Good. They will let them in soon."

"Good. I want my man." She chuckles while busy with her phone.

"Soon. Very very soon." She answers.

"Can I ask you something. How do you feel about me getting married?" She switches her phone off and looks at me.

"Why do you ask?"

"I'm just asking."

"I think you deserve to be happy, and bab'Lungelo makes you happy. That's all I could ever ask for." I blink away a couple of tears.

"Do you think I'm too nice?"

"Way too nice." She answers without hesitation

making me laugh. "But I wouldn't change you for anything in the world."

We sit and chat about anything and everything then she leaves to go check on the progress in the lounge. And as always soon as she leaves one of her friends comes in to keep me company. She tells me the Radebe's have been let in. Now my nerves flare up. I want this but I can't help being scared. I just want this over and done with. I get called to identify the guests. Soon as I'm done I head back to the bedroom.

Two hours later they are done. I get called in and told the good news. Lungelo and Mbuso join the delegation and they are served with food and drinks. As soon as they are done eating we walk them out and Lungelo promises to come get me the next day. I'm just happy that this day is over and done with. Now all we have to do is the traditional side of things and we can then go to home affairs and just sign. I

hope.

I got back in the house and helped clean up in the kitchen and the lounge. My uncle and his guests left and people started trickling out one by one until it was just me, Bonsile, my mum and Bontle left. We sat in the lounge and drank some tea with scones.

"Mum, I have a question, your little boyfriend, did he tell you where he's been all this time?" I asked. I know my dad said where he was and all that but I'm still not sure if that is even true or what. And yesterday I let my hormones get the best of me.

"I dont know and quite frankly i dont care. Ngayehla leyoncola a long time ago. (I let him go)."

"So how come you've never moved on? It's been what, more than thirty years. Dont you think you deserve love too." Bontle asked.

"I have love."

"Kids dont count." Bonsile said.

"I never said anything about kids either." Hold up. What the heck is that supposed to mean?

"Mum, what does that mean?"

"It means I am an adult woman, and I have needs. You seriously think I've spent this whole time holding a torch for a man, child, how stupid do you think I am." She answered and sipped her tea like she didn't just drop an entire nuclear bomb on us.

In all my life I've never seen mum with a man, just the few men around the community that she would greet and kept it moving. But now the plot thickens, your girl might just have a stepfather lurking somewhere in the world. Question is who is he?

"Yeah I think I'm too young to be hearing any of this so I'm out." Bontle said as she got up and took her cup to the kitchen before heading to her room.

"So mum, who is this man that's been scratching your itch." This feels wrong to even say.

"Maybe one of these days you'll meet him." Wow. I wonder if he is the only one and he's been patient all this time or there's been break ups and make ups.

We stayed up for the better part of the night with us grilling mum about her mysterious man but she was mum as a mute.

I woke up the next day and packed my bags. Work opens in a week and I need to prepare myself. Bontle walked in just as I was closing up the suitcase. She sat on the bed.

"Have you decided where you're going to varsity?"

"Well, Zethu bullied me into going to Wits." I laughed.

"Cause she's also there?"

"Yep. But it didn't take much to convince me. I've always wanted to go to Wits anyway. Plus, now I can be close to Prince and Princess. It will be nice to spend time with them."

"Okay. Arent they going back to boarding school?"

"No, apparently Paul got them a school close to home so they will be in Joburg full time now."

"Wow, seems Paul has done a one eighty."

"Looks like it. And he has even offered to pay for my schooling."

"No backdoor tendencies this time?" She laughs.

"No. But that would mean giving up my bursary. But at the same time I feel like it could go to someone deserving."

"That's true. So you are taking Paul's offer?"

"I think so. Atleast he can say he did one thing right when it comes to me."

"Well, whatever you decide I'll support you. Help me carry these out."

We walked out and found Lungelo in the lounge. This one has a tendency to just show up unannounced.

"Hey." He got up and gave me a hug and a kiss.

"Get a room." Bontle said behind us making Lungelo laugh.

We said our goodbyes, Bonsile and I packed our bags in the car. We left and drove to Durban. We went past Muzi's house to drop Bonsile then Lungelo drove to the airport.

"Are we picking someone up?" I asked as he pulled up to the airport parking.

"No. We are flying out."

"To where?" He smiled revealing his dimple. I hope my baby has that same dimple.

"Its a surprise baby." He got out the car and unloaded our luggage. I didnt even realize he had his luggage in the boot too. He opened the door for me and I got out.

We boarded our flight and four hours later we landed at George airport. There was a car waiting for us.

"Exactly where are we going Bhungane." He chuckled and held on to my hand. He kissed my hand and looked at me.

"You'll find out soon."

"I hate surprises Lungelo." He threw his head back laughing.

"I know. But you'll love this one."

We drove until we saw a board saying we are in Knysna. We pulled up to the SOUL Rainbows End. It's a beautiful place. We checked in and we were led to our room. I immediately opened the balcony doors and walked out to the beautiful deck overlooking the ocean. This was perfect.

I felt him wrap his arms around my waist, holding on to my little bump.

"Surprise." He whispered in my ear. He was right. This was a surprise I loved. I turned around and stood on tip toes and kissed him.

"This is beautiful baby, ngyabonga."

"You deserve the world and the universe Sthandwa sam."

"I love you babakhe." His smile shone brighter than the blazing sun.

"I love you too mamakhe."



NARRATED

In Joburg, the Mashile's have been laid to rest. Family and friends have gone back to their daily lives leaving Paul and his siblings to mourn alone.

Lesedi has taken her children and gone back to her home, Paul drove the kids to their new school to get their stationary in preparation for the new school year. Bonolo is stuck alone in Lesego's house. She's

busy in the kitchen cooking when she hears footsteps in the house. She thinks it's her brother. The footsteps get closer till they stop. She turns around and jumps when she sees who her uninvited guests are.

Her heart starts racing and her mind goes into overdrive. She knows things might not end well for her today. She looks around the kitchen to see what she can use to defend herself. The cutlery drawer is too far, the knife set is on the counter close to them. She has no way out.

"Bonolo Mashile. Seskhona. (We are here.) Finish what you started." Philani says walking closer to her. "Do you need me to borrow your gun?" He takes his gun out and places it on the counter then pushes it to her. "Shoot me. This time make sure you aim for the heart. And don't miss."

"I'm sorry." She manages to say in spite of the heart

beating in her throat.

"If I was dead would you be sorry?"

"Please. Forgive me." She gets down on her knees with tears running down her face.

"I gave you an option many would take without blinking, but not you. You had to stay here and then shoot me, when I went out of my way to make sure you stay out of harm's way. And this is the thanks I get?"

"Please. I'll leave the country. I'll go to London. I'll take your offer and get out of your way. I promise. Please forgive me."

"That offer expired a long time ago." Nate says finally walking closer too.

"What do you think we should do to her?" Philani asks.

"The only thing we can do. Send her to meet mummy dearest and her brother." Bonolo cries louder.

"Please I'm begging you, please don't kill me. I swear

on God I'll stay out of your way. I'll never bother you again. Please."

Just then Paul walks in. Lucky for him the kids are not there to see their aunt huddled on the floor with her urine warming her up. Nate turns around and points a gun at him. He lifts his hands up.

"What's going on?"

"Nothing that involves you."

"Please dont hurt her. I know what she did and I apologise on her behalf."

"Really. Since we have bullet wounds on our bodies to remind us of her little gun toting escapades what are you willing to do to make sure we forget this little incident?"

"She'll sign over her boutiques." Paul answers

"Arent those your mums boutiques?" Nate asks.

"They are. Now they are hers. And she'll give them to

you." Philani thinks about it for a second.

"No. I want the vineyard in Stellenbosch."

"Done." Paul's says.

Nate and Philani put their guns away and get closer to Paul.

"Its been a pleasure doing business with you. Our lawyer will be in touch." They shake hands and walk out.

Paul walks closer to his sister and lifts her up from the floor.

"This is why I told you to stay away from that man. Now we just lost mums most priced possession."

"I'm sorry."

Outside, Nate and Philani get into their car.

"So what are we going to do with a vineyard Philani?"

Nate asks.

"I dont know. But the girls love wine so maybe it will be their pet project." Nate laughs.

"I'm sure they will be happy. A lifetime of free wine."

"Exactly." They laugh, start the car and drive out leaving Paul to nurse his sister.

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We said our goodbyes, Bonsile and I packed our bags in the car. We left and drove to Durban. We went past Muzi's house to drop Bonsile then Lungelo drove to the airport.

"Are we picking someone up?" I asked as he pulled up to the airport parking.

"No. We are flying out."

"To where?" He smiled revealing his dimple. I hope my baby has that same dimple.

"Its a surprise baby." He got out the car and unloaded our luggage. I didnt even realize he had his luggage in the boot too. He opened the door for me and I got out.

We boarded our flight and four hours later we landed at George airport. There was a car waiting for us.

"Exactly where are we going Bhungane." He chuckled and held on to my hand. He kissed my hand and looked at me.

"You'll find out soon."

"I hate surprises Lungelo." He threw his head back laughing.

"I know. But you'll love this one."

We drove until we saw a board saying we are in Knysna. We pulled up to the SOUL Rainbows End. It's a beautiful place. We checked in and we were led to our room. I immediately opened the balcony doors and walked out to the beautiful deck overlooking the ocean. This was perfect.

I felt him wrap his arms around my waist, holding on to my little bump.

"Surprise." He whispered in my ear. He was right. This was a surprise I loved. I turned around and stood on tip toes and kissed him.

"This is beautiful baby, ngyabonga."

"You deserve the world and the universe Sthandwa sam."

"I love you babakhe." His smile shone brighter than the blazing sun.

"I love you too mamakhe."



NARRATED

In Joburg, the Mashile's have been laid to rest. Family and friends have gone back to their daily lives leaving Paul and his siblings to mourn alone.

Lesedi has taken her children and gone back to her home, Paul drove the kids to their new school to get their stationary in preparation for the new school year. Bonolo is stuck alone in Lesego's house. She's

busy in the kitchen cooking when she hears footsteps in the house. She thinks it's her brother. The footsteps get closer till they stop. She turns around and jumps when she sees who her uninvited guests are.

Her heart starts racing and her mind goes into overdrive. She knows things might not end well for her today. She looks around the kitchen to see what she can use to defend herself. The cutlery drawer is too far, the knife set is on the counter close to them. She has no way out.

"Bonolo Mashile. Seskhona. (We are here.) Finish what you started." Philani says walking closer to her. "Do you need me to borrow your gun?" He takes his gun out and places it on the counter then pushes it to her. "Shoot me. This time make sure you aim for the heart. And don't miss."

"I'm sorry." She manages to say in spite of the heart

beating in her throat.

"If I was dead would you be sorry?"

"Please. Forgive me." She gets down on her knees with tears running down her face.

"I gave you an option many would take without blinking, but not you. You had to stay here and then shoot me, when I went out of my way to make sure you stay out of harm's way. And this is the thanks I get?"

"Please. I'll leave the country. I'll go to London. I'll take your offer and get out of your way. I promise. Please forgive me."

"That offer expired a long time ago." Nate says finally walking closer too.

"What do you think we should do to her?" Philani asks.

"The only thing we can do. Send her to meet mummy dearest and her brother." Bonolo cries louder.

"Please I'm begging you, please don't kill me. I swear

on God I'll stay out of your way. I'll never bother you again. Please."

Just then Paul walks in. Lucky for him the kids are not there to see their aunt huddled on the floor with her urine warming her up. Nate turns around and points a gun at him. He lifts his hands up.

"What's going on?"

"Nothing that involves you."

"Please dont hurt her. I know what she did and I apologise on her behalf."

"Really. Since we have bullet wounds on our bodies to remind us of her little gun toting escapades what are you willing to do to make sure we forget this little incident?"

"She'll sign over her boutiques." Paul answers

"Arent those your mums boutiques?" Nate asks.

"They are. Now they are hers. And she'll give them to

you." Philani thinks about it for a second.

"No. I want the vineyard in Stellenbosch."

"Done." Paul's says.

Nate and Philani put their guns away and get closer to Paul.

"Its been a pleasure doing business with you. Our lawyer will be in touch." They shake hands and walk out.

Paul walks closer to his sister and lifts her up from the floor.

"This is why I told you to stay away from that man. Now we just lost mums most priced possession."

"I'm sorry."

Outside, Nate and Philani get into their car.

"So what are we going to do with a vineyard Philani?"

Nate asks.

"I dont know. But the girls love wine so maybe it will be their pet project." Nate laughs.

"I'm sure they will be happy. A lifetime of free wine."

"Exactly." They laugh, start the car and drive out leaving Paul to nurse his sister.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTY TWO

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

AMANDA

To think I spent a better part of my life avoiding quiet spaces and now I'm forced to deal with the demons in my head by fire by force.

I hate it when the voices in my head are loud. And that's why I prefer clubbing and partying. It just makes things easier. And if I'm not partying or clubbing my wine keeps me company. But now all that is gone. Now if I'm not in the yard soaking in the sun I am in my cell looking at the ceiling. I hate it here. But I'm paying for my sins so I have no choice but to suck it up.

I decided to leave the others outside and go to my cell and take a nap. Not that I need it. I met one of the officers on my way in.

"Amanda, glad I found you. You have a visitor."

"Its not visiting hours yet."

"Try telling that to your guest." She said and turned around. I followed her to the visitors area. And sure enough there was just one person there. My heart started racing. I never thought I'd see the day he ever comes here. The last time I saw him I was in a holding cell. I took a few deep breaths to calm me down and walked over to him.

"Paul." He looked up and his eyes went all over my body, almost like he was surveying me.

"You've lost weight." Right. I sat down and looked at him.

"Well it means my diet is going well." He frowned and cleared his throat.

"Right. That's not why I'm here."

"How are you? I heard about your mum and brother. I'm sorry."

"Thanks. How are they treating you in here?" I chuckled.

"Well it's not five star service but it will do."

"Atleast you dont have to endure it for long."

"And how do you figure that?" He looks around to make sure the guards arent close enough to hear us. He puts his arms on the table and leans closer to me.

"On the day of your appearance in court the prosecution will not have any evidence to present so you will walk free."

"What's that supposed to mean? In case you didnt know, I confessed."

"I know. And that will be taken care off." I wasnt sure if I was hearing right. He cant possibly be thinking of stealing evidence. He cant be.

"Why? Why would you want to do that? I'm paying for my crimes and I'm okay with that." I whispered to

him.

"That's good and merry but your kids need you. I cant raise them all ny myself."

"I'm sure Nomonde wont mind helping. I did sign my parental rights over to her."

"That's nice and all but the kids need their mother. Of course if I do this there will be conditions that you'll have to adhere to."

"I'm not sure Paul, I dont want this coming back to bite me in the butt."

"It wont. I'll let you know when everything has been sorted." He got up, took his car keys and walked out like he hasn't just said he'll commit a crime to get me out of prison.

As much as I want to think this is a great thing I cant help feeling like whatever conditions he has for me to follow will be worse than prison itself. On the upside though, I will get a chance to redeem myself in my children's lives. So maybe it will be easier to

serve my punishment under whatever conditions Paul has than to be stuck in here without even seeing my kids.



NOMONDE

The downside of being cooped up in a little haven like this is that it never lasts. One way or another you have to give it up and return to your daily life. I must admit though, this place has been a tranquil piece of haven. I've been able to relax and just enjoy myself.

Today is the day I let go and go home. I'm happy to but I know I'll miss this place. Lungelo went out for a jog by the ocean. Not my cup of tea, I applaud people who jog to stay healthy but for me I dont see a reason to just start running if theres nothing chasing me.

I finish packing and get into the tub for one last bubble bath. I sit and relax for almost an hour, I can feel myself dozing off when Lungelo comes back. He makes his way to the bathroom and gets in. I turn my groggy head to his direction and he looks appetizing with sweat dripping all over his face and his vest soaked in sweat. It's such a pity I've been banned from sex.

"You're back."

"Yep. And we need to hurry up, before we miss our flight."

"Get in the shower then, it will take me a while to get out of here." He chuckles and takes off his clothes and hurries into the shower. I got out of the tub and drained the water and cleaned the tub. I know we're in a hotel but I don't want the cleaners thinking I'm some nasty woman.

I get back to the bedroom and get dressed. Good thing I took out our clothes before closing up the luggage. As soon as Lungelo is done he comes in and gets dressed too. We head out to reception and check out. We drive to a small cafe and have breakfast before driving to George to catch our flight. We find a table and make our order. This place is beautiful.

"When are you getting your driver's license?" Lungelo asks. Last time I had a driver's license was more than fifteen years ago. Can i even renew a license that old?

"I dont know. I havent thought about it."

"Well you should. You cant go around in uber's or taxis. Plus if I'm not there i need to know that you can get yourself from point A to point B without worrying."

"I'll think about it."

The waiter brings our food over and in the corner of my eye I see someone I never thought I'd have to see again. And just as luck would have it, she sees us too and starts walking over.

"Your girlfriend is coming over." He looks up and looks around. I see him mentally roll his eyes as she gets close to us.

"The happy couple. How are you?"

"Fine thanks. Can we help you?" Lungelo asked.

"Oh come on baby daddy, there is no need to be rude." I decided to focus on my food and ignore this devil.

"Seriously, what do you want Nqobile?"

"I hear congratulations are in order. Congratulations future Mrs Radebe. Planning the wedding must be tough, with the baby and all."

"Nqobile, you and I are not friends, we will never be friends. You can keep your well wishes and all, we dont need it. Now if you'll excuse us. We want to finish our food." I replied. I was beginning to get

agitated with her so close to me.

"Its okay. I know how hormones can be. I have experience in that department. Have a nice breakfast boBhungane." She said, then cat walked back to her table.

I refuse to let this woman ruin our perfect vacation. I kept repeating that in my head and after a while I was back to my happy mood.

"I'm sorry about that." Lungelo said with his hand on mine. All I could do was smile. We had our breakfast in peace and got that girl out of our minds. Although I still couldnt figure out how she knew I was pregnant, I know she didn't see my bump cause it was covered by my free flowing shirt dress. I wonder how she found out.

We finished our breakfast and paid.

"I need to use the bathroom, I'll find you in the car." Lungelo said and got up. He handed me the car keys

and went to the bathroom. I got up and headed out the door. We weren't parked close to the cafe so I had to walk a bit. I heard footsteps behind me and I was hoping i wouldn't get robbed, but the little squeaky voice calling out my name laid all those worries to rest. I walked a bit faster just to make sure she doesnt catch up with me. But I was full, the sun was hot and my wedges were making me take shorter steps than normal. I felt her touch my shoulder and rush to stand in front of me.

"I'm pretty sure you heard me calling out your name."

"I did. I just didnt want to talk to you."

"Too bad. I mean you are going to be my son's stepmother, it's only right that we have some sort of relationship." If ever there is a low that someone can stoop too I'm pretty sure Nqobile has surpassed that.

"Using your dead son for your own selfish reasons? Classic." I tried to move past her but she kept blocking my way.

"Just because CJ is dead doesnt mean we arent

family. I mean, you owe me a huge thank you. If I hadn't left Lungelo, you wouldn't be with him right now. And pregnant too. Aren't you maybe moving at rocket speed. I mean you two have been together for less than eight months and you're already pregnant and engaged. No sisi I need the number of your sangoma, he is super powerful shem." She said looking at my tummy. She tried to reach out her hand to touch me but I hit her hand and she chuckled.

"Dont touch me."

"A bit touchy aren't we? Anywho, I hope you don't mind, I'll be in Durban in the next couple of days and Lungelo and I need to talk about the cleansing that needs to happen. I hope you'll be okay with it." She muttered. I just glared at her silently praying for a bolt of lightning to strike her right there and then.

"Lungelo is a grown man, he doesn't need me to tell him what to do. But I do remember him telling you that if you have anything to say regarding his son then you should talk to his mother. I'm sure she'll be ready for your call." I replied with a smile on my face.

"Yeah, the problem with that is I didnt make CJ with his mother."

"Of course not. You made him with Lungelo then went and pawned him off to another man. Mummy of the year." Her face changed from the happy go lucky bitchy face to, I dont know, regret maybe. I knew I hit a nerve.

"You know what, I'll just call Lungelo and talk to him."

"Talk to me about what?"

"Your baby mama will tell you all about it." I muttered and got in the car. I watched them on the rearview mirror but I couldnt tell what was going on.

After a while Nqobile walked off and Lungelo got in the car. I dont know why I was suddenly angry at him but we drove to George in silence with me looking out the window.

"Are you angry at me?" He asked as we went to board our flight.

"Nope." He sighed and kept going. Honestly I dont

know why I was angry too. We got to Durban and my little tantrum had faded away, I guess. I let him hold my hand which is something I've been avoiding since we left Knysna.

"Has Bontle decided where she wants to go?" He asked as we drove out of the airport.

"Zethu apparently bullied her into going to Wits. So she's decided to go there."

"That's good. Atleast she wont be completely alone in a new place."

"Yeah."

"And the apartment is always available for them to stay at if they want."

"I'm sure they will be happy there. And then they'll host parties and bring boys over." He quickly turns to look at me with a frown on his face.

"No they wont." I just smile and look out the window. He clearly doesn't know today's kids.

We get to the house and there is a woman sitting by the door with a huge suitcase next to her. She has headsets on and she is facing down so I can't see who it is. Not that I would know. But one thing that I do know is the huge bump she is wheeling around. You can tell she is heavily pregnant.

"Who is that?" I ask looking at the girl. She raises her head up as if she can tell we are talking about her. I look back at the man next to me and he looks like he has seen a ghost.

"Stay in the car." He says and quickly gets out. The girl stands up soon as she sees him and she looks like she is ready to pop. I'm not staying in the car. I get out and walk up to them, the girl has a smile on her face and she is busy rubbing her tummy. Her face changes as soon as she lays her eyes on me.

"What's going on? Who is this?" The girl turns to look at Lungelo and he seems, I don't know, scared. I'm not sure.

"Hi, my name is Lily."

"Nice to meet you. What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to talk to him." She says pointing to Lungelo. "About this." She points to her bulging tummy. Yeah, good things never last.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTY THREE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I watched Nomonde as she walked into the house leaving me alone with this woman. As much as I know I need to be with her I also need to fix this. I cant have Lily ruin the life I have with Nomonde. I just cant.

"Why are you here?" She points to her bump and I swear this girl is out to ruin my life. "I'm not a doctor so I cant help you with that. I can direct you to a hospital though." She chuckles.

"You're funny. This.." she points to her tummy again. "Is yours. And since I have nowhere else to go I figured baby daddy will have to help too. I mean I've been doing this alone for eight and a half months so it's only right." She answers with a smirk on her face.

"Why did it take you this long to tell me that it's my child? Or maybe you were going down the list of all the men you've slept with and ticking them off one by one? And now you're here." Her face changed and she sat back down.

"You can insult me all you want but it won't change the facts. I need a place to stay."

"Go home mosi. I'm pretty sure you have a family somewhere." She chuckles and looks up at me.

"Really? Go home, eNkandla, to have my baby there while baby daddy lives large in the city? That's a very tempting idea but no. I'm not going there."

"Okay, so where are you going to stay?"

"You tell me. Unless you want me to have the baby on the street." I sighed.

She might be right, and she might be playing me also. And the only way to solve this would be a DNA test, but I know doing a DNA test before birth would pose a danger to the baby and if it is mine, I can't have that.

"Come in. I'll figure something out." I walked past her.

"Arent you going to help me with the bags?"

"This isn't a hotel Lily. So dont try me." I walked into the house and left her outside to find her way.

I found Nomonde in the kitchen sitting on the counter with a bottle of mayonnaise and a spoon, eating the mayonnaise from the bottle. I walked up to her and stood between her legs.

"Hey." If looks could kill I'm sure I'd be on the floor right now, dead. "I'm sorry, I'll fix this okay?"

"Did you cheat on me?"

"No. I would never do that. All this happened before you and I met."

"Was she your girlfriend?"

"No. Just someone i used to hook up with."

"Did you pay her for the hook ups?"

"Eish."

"Did you?"

"Sometimes. Look i know how this looks but i promise you I'll fix it."

"If you say so."

"Nomonde, I promise you I'll get to the bottom of this." Lily comes in dragging her suitcase behind her.

"So which room am I using?" I look at Nomonde and she is looking straight at me. I really need to sort this out. "Never mind. I'll find it myself." She drags her suitcase up the stairs.

"How long will she be staying here?"

"A day or two. I need to find her a place to stay."

"How far along is she?"

"She says eight and a half months. I'm not sure."

"Right. So what's the probability of the child being yours?" I sighed and stood back with my back resting on the kitchen island.

"Honestly, I'm not sure. Until I have DNA tests done I

can't say."

"Okay then. I'm going to take a shower. I'm tired and I need sleep."

"Okay, I'll be up in a second. I'll order food." I helped her down the counter and she walked out of the kitchen. I stood there wiping the sweat from my forehead. U know Nomonde is nice and sweet but I feel bad that I even have to put her through this. I hate the fact that she's si calm about this. Honestly I'd feel so much better if she screamed and shouted, or something. Because right now I feel like she is holding things in and I dont want her to keep things bottled up.

I order the food and decide to go upstairs to check on Lily. I go to the guest bedroom and its empty. I go to the other bedroom and it's also empty. The other room I'm turning into a nursery so its empty, she cant be in there. The only other rooms available are the main bedroom and Bontle's room. I head to Bontle's room and she is sitting on the bed with her

legs up and she's busy on her phone smiling.

"This is not a guest room." She looks up and looks around the room.

"Its empty. Plus it's pretty, I like it." She answers with a grin on her face. Lucky for me she hasn't unpacked her luggage.

"This is my daughter's room, you are not allowed in here. Now get your things and I'll show you where to sleep."

"Since when do you have a daughter?"

"None of your business. Get off the bed and let's go. I dont have all day."

"My legs are swollen, and I'm tired. I'll move to the other bedroom later." I'm seriously being tested right now. I walk closer to her and she looks up and I see fear in her eyes. Perfect.

"I wont tell you again. This is my daughter's room and it's off limits. You are not allowed in here. So get your stuff and let's go." I guess she sees the

seriousness in my face because she gets down mumbling whatever.

I drag her luggage out and lead her to the guest bedroom.

"This is the room you'll be using. Any other room up here is off limits to you." She looks around the room, running her finger on the chest of drawers checking for dust. She really thinks this is the Protea Hotel. I need to get her out of here in like yesterday.

"So which room will be the nursery. I have a few ideas for it."

"There wont be a nursery Lily, I dont even know if that child is mine to begin with. And the only reason why you're still here is because my mother would kill me if I threw a pregnant woman out on the streets. So this will be my one car of goodness for the rest of the year." She chuckles and crosses her arms on top of her stomach.

"Whatever you say. But you weren't complaining when we had sex. And these are the consequences."

"Except I used a condom."

"Condoms break Lungelo, umdala, you should know that."

"Oh I do know that. And I dont remember the condom breaking with you." She shrugs her shoulders and gets on the bed.

"Well, I guess we'll have to wait till the baby is born then you'll see this little guy, indlalifa yakho, is yours. And we'll see who'll be smiling then." She says while rubbing her tummy.

My phone beeps and I see it's the food delivery. I leave Lily there daydreaming and head downstairs. I get the food and dish up for Nomonde. I take the food upstairs and meet Lily on her way down. This is going to be a problem.

"Is that for me?" She asks with a huge grin on her face.

"No!" I go past her and head to my bedroom. I find

Nomonde sitting on the bed speaking to someone on the phone, and she's smiling. I place the tray on the side table and wait for her to finish her conversation. After about two minutes she hangs up and looks at me. The smile hasn't left her face.

"I found a solution to our little problem." She was angry a few minutes ago and now she's all smiles, I hope her solution doesn't involve killing someone.

"Ok. What is it?"

"I called MaMtolo. She's on her way."

"On her way where, to do what?"

"On her way here silly. Thank you for the food." Yeah I'm screwed.



NOMONDE

The weird thing about me is I'm nice, when I need to be. Also the thing about still waters running deep is true. I have a high tolerance for bullshit but when I reach my pinnacle I become something I'm not. That's why I've spent most of my life trying not to get to that point. I couldn't do much about what I went through in prison but I'm out now. I have control again.

Seeing Lily standing there with her baby bump on show and her being smug about it could have sent me down a path I never want to go down. I don't want anyone, whether her or Lungelo changing me to become someone I'm not. I found comfort in my tub of mayonnaise and that helped me think. I'm not willing to share a house with that girl. But I know I wouldn't feel good with her alone in the street. That would just be cruel. So I found my secret weapon. MaMtolo.

After taking a bath I decided to call her. And her

being her, I'm pretty sure by the time I ended the call she was already in her car driving out of Richard's Bay. I could see the scared look on Lungelo's face, it's funny how he is scary and sometimes intimidating, but his mother still scares the shit out of him.

I finished my food and headed downstairs, Lungelo was in the study probably trying to figure out a way to get himself out of this. I got to the kitchen and it looked like a tsunami hit the place. And miss Lily sitting on the kitchen island with almost every food decked out in front of her. Atleast she didnt touch my mayonnaise.

"When you're done please clean up my kitchen. I hate a dirty kitchen." I said as I walked past her and washed my dishes in the sink.

"Can't you do it? You're already washing dishes anyway so you might as well clean up." I turned to look at her.

"Sweetie, this is not a hotel, I'm sure you've noticed that."

"Fine but you do have a maid right?"

"We do. And she is at home spending time with her family. Even if she was here, it's not her job to clean up after you."

"No, but if she works for Lungelo then she will automatically also work for me and our baby. I'm sure Lungelo wouldn't want the mother of his son slaving away over the stove or washing dishes." She said rubbing her tummy. I swear that tummy feels like an accessory to her. I walked over to her and stood next to her.

"That's cute and all. But this is my kitchen. Ask Lungelo he will tell you that too. In my kitchen, anyone who walks in here and does anything cleans up after themselves. And that includes you. So when you're done here, I want to find my kitchen spotless. Are we clear?"

"Mxm."

"I'll take that as a yes." I walked out leaving her there mumbling only God knows what.

I decide to join hubby in the study. I opened the door slowly and he was sitting on his chair looking out the window. I walked in and went over to him. I turned the chair around and sat on his lap. He wrapped his arms around my waist and pulled me closer to him.

"Penny for your thoughts."

"I'm scared. I dont want to lose you. And you being calm about this whole thing makes me scared." I sighed.

"Look, you and I have been together for six months, I know sometimes it feels like things are moving at rocket speed. But I can't be angry about your past. I have one too and you've never judged me for it or made me feel bad about it. You've been supportive, so it's only fair that u support you too."

"Thank you. But did you have to call my mother though. She's going to kill me." I laughed.

"Yoh, I had to deal with two baby mamas in one day. I had to bring out the big guns."

"Thank you. All though my mother will drag me to hell and back but maybe she'll have a better solution for all this."

"Exactly. If that baby is yours then we'll take care of it."

"What did I do to deserve you though?"

"You did everything right." I said between kisses.

Just when we were getting hot and heavy we heard voices coming from the lounge. We looked at each other and quickly got up. We got to the lounge and found MaMtolo already walking around. Bongiwe was on the couch pissed as hell. How did they get here so fast?

"What's going on?" Lungelo asked. Bongiwe quickly got up from the couch and crossed her arms across her chest.

"Your mother has to pay for my speeding tickets."

"What?"

"I got four speeding tickets since we left Richards Bay. Four. Because your mother here thought my car was a plane and it needed to fly."

"Hhay suka wena, if you'd let me flirt with those officers they would have even given us a convoy here. Makoti, why is the kitchen a mess? I thought you hated a messy kitchen." That bitch didnt listen.

"I do. Lily was busy eating."

"Uphi yena loyo, (where is she?), Bongwiwe, mlande (go get her.)" Yeah, the new sheriff is in town and I'm here for it.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTY FOUR

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Bongiwe and Lily walked down the stairs, Bongiwe was amused and Lily was pissed as hell. I'm sure if she could she'd slap the shit out of Bongiwe.

They got down and joined us in the lounge. Bongiwe sat down next to her mother and Lily stood there with her arms crossed.

"Why did you wake me up from my nap?" She asked looking at Bongiwe.

"Ntombazane, awuzokhuluma nami ngimdala ume ngeynyawo. Hlala phansi (girl, you wont speak to me as an elder standing on your feet. Sit down.)"

MaMtolo answered her in a calm manner, way too calm if you ask me. Lily wasnt having none of that. She kept standing and tapping her foot on the

hardwood floors.

"I'm not in the mood for whatever game this is. I'm tired and I need to rest, so say what you need to say magogo." Some people like to play with fire.

MaMtolo got up and went over to her. She stood in front of her looking at her straight in the eyes.

"Angazi ukuthi ukhulelephi, wakhuliswa ubani Kodwala, kukwaRadebe, imthetho yalaykhaya iyahlonishwa, umthetho walaykhaya uthi akunangane ezokhuluma nami ime ngenyawo. Uma lokho kukuhlula, thatha imthwalo yakho uphume uphele la. Siyezwana? (I'm not sure where you grew up and who raised you but this is a Radebe home, the rules in this house are respected, and the rules say no child will talk to me while standing on their feet. If that is too much for you then take your bags and get the hell out. Are we clear?)

I'm not sure what Lily said cause all we heard was her mumbling before sitting down. MaMtolo also sat

down and looked at her.

"Now that we are all adults, where is your family?"

"They are in Nkandla."

"Why didnt they bring you here to report the pregnancy?" Lily frowned.

"Because its none of their business. This is my child."

"Does your family even know you're pregnant?" Bongiwe asked.

"Like I said. It's none of their business." She answered with her teeth clenched.

"I'll take that as a no then. Now moving on. We need your family's address. We need to have a conversation with them about this." MaMtolo told her.

"No! My family has nothing to do with this. I've already told you that." She answered half shouting.

"Ntombazana, dont shout at me. Firstly we dotn know if that baby is really a Radebe, secondly, you failed to come to us when you found out ypu were

pregnant and you show up now ready to pop, so excuse us for having doubts. We need to have your family involved in this if we are to move forward." MaMtolo said clearly not waiting for Lily to agree or disagree. Whether she likes it or not it has to happen.

"Fine. I'll let them know." She answered. "Can I go back to sleep now?"

"Of course. As soon as you clean the kitchen."

"Excuse me?"

"Unless you brought a maid with you, you can call that person to come clean for you. And if you didnt then please go to the kitchen and clean your mess." MaMtolo told her. As much as I am happy she's here to help I also cant feel like maybe I am weak. I mean who needs to run to their mother in law to solve her issues in her own house.

Lily gets up front the couch and drags herself to the kitchen. You can tell by the banging of plates and

pots that she was angry.

"I'm hungry. What are we eating?" MaMtolo asked

"I'll order more food. It's too late to cook now."

Lungelo answered.

"Perfect. I'm going to take a shower and a nap. I'm tired, Bongiwe will bring my clothes. I'll be staying here till we figure out that girls intentions."

"Hhay ma, I cant drive to Richard's Bay and then come back here again. Ask Thandeka to bring your stuff."

"You ask her. Mina I just want my clothes." She says and walks up the stairs. I was hoping she would take Lily with her but I guess it's better that she'll be here, I wont have to deal with Lily.

Bongiwe decides to leave even though she's busy grumbling. Chances are very high that MaMtolo will get her clothes tomorrow. I walk her out and she gets into the car.

"So we'll see you when you get back?" I ask through

the open window.

"Get back where. I'll see y'all tomorrow. I dont have the time or energy to drive back here. Wena bond with your mother in law." She says and drives off. It's going to be a long night.

I get back to the lounge and Lungelo is not there. I got into the kitchen and its spotless, just like I like it. I go to the study and I hear Lily's voice before I even make it to the door.

"If I lose my child because of your mother I'll never forgive you." She says.

"Hhay suka, I dont see how my mother being here should bother you. She will be the baby's grandmother afterall." He says sounding bored. I hear Lily click her tongue before footsteps come towards the door. I tiptoe back to the lounge. She comes by and sees me and she comes over to me.

"Are you that weak?" She asks looking at me with a raging fire in her eyes.

"Excuse me."

"Excuse you excuse you woknuka. You had to bring an old woman to fight your battles." I didnt even know I was in a battle.

"Which battle am I supposed to be fighting?"

"It doesnt matter what you try to do and who you bring. You can even wake Nelson Mandela from the dead and nothing would change the fact that I am giving Lungelo and heir, indlalifa. All this..." she spins her finger in the air, "will be my son's. So you can try to sabotage me any which way you want but I'm still going to come out on top." She says and turns around to walk away. I watch her as she wobbles up the stairs. I say a little prayer in my head asking God to not let that child be Lungelo's. I dont have the energy to deal with that woman for the rest of my life. Jesus seriously needs to intervene.

I woke up the next morning and found a note from

Lungelo. He was driving MaMtolo to Richard's Bay to get her clothes since Bongiwe boycotted her mothers request. I got up and took a quick shower. Work starts in a couple of days and I need to prepare myself for it. And part of that is getting new clothes. I need to go shopping. I finish my shower and lotion then wear an oversized tshirt dress. These are my faves lately, plus they are airy and give me the fresh air that I need. Except this one is too short. It shows the large scar on my thigh that I got from prison. It's crazy how when I dress up I'm always cautious to make sure it doesnt show but when Lungelo and I are getting hot and heavy it completely slips my mind.

I take the tshirt dress off and put on some leggings with one of Lungelo's shirts. I put on sneakers and get my bag. I'm going to have breakfast at Mugg n Bean. I need one of their muffins. I grab my bag and some shades and head out. I get down the stairs and find Lily in the kitchen sitting on the counter eating a banana.

"Good morning." I say and walk to the fridge to get a bottle of water.

"You're going somewhere?" She asks.

"Yes. I'm going out for breakfast."

"Wait aren't you making breakfast?"

"No."

"Okay then, I'll go get dressed and be down in a second." She says struggling to get down from the chair.

"Why?"

"What do you mean why? We are going out for breakfast. Plus I need to buy baby clothes, and I noticed the other room has a crib in it so I think it will be perfect for the nursery." So not only are we now friends she's already planning the nursery. I'll leave Lungelo to deal with that. I ain't got time for this.

"I'm sure Lungelo will be happy to take you shopping but I'm in a hurry, I already have someone waiting for me. You can make whatever you want, as long you

clean up ofcourse." I say as I head out the door. I text Bonsile and tell her to meet up for breakfast. She says she's coming. I request an uber and wait for it outside the gate. I seriously need to get my license. There are two perfectly working cars parked in the garage and I'm busy using uber's.

I get to the mall and head straight to Mugg n Bean. I get my table and order some tea and a muffin. Bonsile joins me as I'm halfway done with my muffin.

"Eh, you've already finished eating?" She asks and sits down.

"No, this is a starter." She laughs.

"A breakfast starter?"

"Yes. Hawu." We laugh. I call the waiter over and we place our breakfast order.

"So wena, what's happening with the new guest in your house?"

"I dont want to think about that one. She's already planning on changing one of the rooms into a

nursery for her son. The gag is, Lungelo is busy changing that room for our baby. So I decided to let her be, Lungelo will deal with her shem, I don't have the energy."

"Why was she quiet all this time?"

"That's the question we all have. I mean it's not like Lungelo would have denied the child or told her to have an abortion. But now she shows up at eight months, obviously we will have questions."

"Ay, shem and you'll have to deal with her for the next whatever years."

"Dont remind me. Let's just eat and go shopping. I dont want to think about her."

We ate our food and then went shopping. My day was amazing, but I also know there is a devil waiting for me at home. But for these few hours i will just forget about her.



NARRATED

Back at Lungelo and Nomonde's house. Lily is in the kitchen making breakfast. Her phone rings and she looks at the caller ID, she leaves the phone to ring till it goes to voicemail. The person calls again and she still doesn't answer. After the fifth time she answers.

"Why are you calling me?" She asks sounding irritated.

"Lose the attitude. How are things going?"

"Fine."

"Has he said anything?"

"The usual. He doesn't believe the baby is his and he'll probably do a DNA test after."

"That's fine. How's the girlfriend?"

"Ugh, she's whatever. But she did call her mother in law to come sort me out and now I have a

bodyguard." She answers rolling her eyes.

"Mxm, dont worry too much about that one. I need you to play your part. Make sure Lungelo bonds with the baby."

"You do realise I'm going to give birth anytime from now."

"I know. Which is why you have to be as needy as possible. Find a way to spend time with him and just bring him close to you."

"What are you getting out of this?"

"Nothing for you to worry about. Play your part and I'll play mine. If we are lucky Nomonde will be out of there in the next few months."

"Fine. But they want to meet my family."

"That can be easily arranged. Give me a couple of days and I'll come up with something." Lily hears a car pull up outside.

"I have to go, someone is here." She hangs up and continues with her food. The door opens and Khanya walks in.

"Who are you?" He asks soon as he sees Lily. Lily looks up and puts on her best smile.

"I'm Lily."

"That's nice. Why are you here? Where is Nomonde?" She chuckles.

"One question at a time please. I'm here because of this." She points to her tummy. "Nomonde went out." Khanya frowns looking at her tummy.

"Right. I'll come back when Nomonde is back."

"You can have breakfast with me I dont mind."

"No thanks." He says and walks out. He remembers something and walks back into the house. "What did you say your last name was again?"

"I didn't."

"Okay, what's your last name?"

"Badenhorst. Lily Badenhorst."

"Nice to meet you Lily Badenhorst." He says and walks out again. He gets into his car and takes his

phone and calls someone. "Are you busy? Cool. I need you to get me as much information as you can on a Lily Badenhorst. Sharp." He hangs up and drives out.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTY FIVE ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

"Yewena sdididi." Trust my brother to not even greet. That time I'm with my mother in the car and he feels like throwing insults as a hello.

"Khanya Radebe, ufunani? (what do you want?)"

"Why is there a pregnant woman in your house? And where is your fiancée?" I sigh and try to focus on the road. I can feel my mother's stare boring into my skin. Damn bluetooth.

"My fiancée is at the mall shopping and as for that pregnant woman, you should have asked her yourself what she was doing there."

"Its too early in the day for you to be drunk. Get that woman out of your house."

"I will. I just need to get some information first. She says she's pregnant with my child."

"Amen." He hangs up.

I've tried throughout this whole trip to steer clear of any conversation that will lead me to talking about Lily. I'm just not in the mood for her. I can't believe things got complicated this fast. I know Nomonde might seem like she is okay but deep down I know she's just putting on a front. I have to fix this before it's too late. And Sbu still hasn't come back about any information on her. I need to know where she's been the past few months and why it's taken her this long to even show up here. I might be a sucker for kids but I'm not about to let someone play me.

"Pull up at the garage I need to pee." My mum says. I'm not sure if she is angry at me or what cause she keeps staring at me and not saying anything. We drove to Richard's Bay in silence and now we are driving back and she's still holding back which is unusual for her.

"But mum we stopped less than an hour ago.

Besides we are almost in Durban, cant you hold it?"
Bad move on my part. She throws fire daggers at me with her eyes.

"Do you want me to pee in the car?" She snaps. Okay. She's pissed. I pull up to the garage and she gets out of the car. I figure since I have some time alone I might as well call Sbu and hear what he has for me.

"Radebe!"

"Do you have something for me?"

"Up until seven months ago, yes. From then till now I have no clue. It's like she just dissappeared into thin air. She closed her bank account before she disappeared. From then there is nothing. No trace. Until she showed up at your place."

"And theres nothing in between then and now?"

"Nothing. But if you could get me her phone number, I might be able to trace its location the past few months then we'll know where she's been and who she has been in contact with."

"I have her old number. I'll send you the new one when I get to Durban."

"Where are you?"

"On my way to Durban from Richard's Bay, I'm driving my mum and she keeps staring at me like I'm the one who crucified Jesus on the cross." He laughs.

"I never thought I'd see the day the big bad wolf that you are would be scared of someone, especially an old lady."

"Firstly if she ever hears you calling her old, she'll kill you. Secondly she raised me, I know what she's capable off." He laughs harder making me laugh too.

"Listen I have to go, she's coming back. I'll send you the number soon as I get it."

"Sure thing. Later."

"Sharp."

I hang up as my mother gets back into the car. I drive and we get to Durban. I help mum with her bags and she walks into the house first. By the time I

walk in I notice she is in the kitchen looking around. Probably making sure its clean. I leave her there and head upstairs to put her bags in the bedroom. I put her bags in the bedroom and walk back out. As I walk past the nursery I see Lily in there holding the big teddy bear that I got for my baby.

"What are you doing in here?"

"Oh hey, you're back. This room will be perfect." She says excitedly.

"Perfect for what?"

"Perfect for the baby silly. I think we need to change the pink accents though cause we are having a boy and not a girl." She says looking around the room.

"Okay, let's get somethings straight. This is my daughters room. You will not be using it and I will not be changing anything. And I never want to find you in here again. Are we clear?" She places the teddy bear on the cot and walks towards me. She grabs my arm and puts my hand on her tummy. The baby is moving. It's beautiful.

"You feel that? That's our baby boy, your son. Indlalifa yakho. He deserves this, he deserves to have the best of everything. He deserves a warm home." I love babies and yes I would love to have a son one day but the idea that only a boy can be indlalifa is absurd to me. I know girls who've worked harder than their brothers and carried their family names to new heights. So I will not be emotionally blackmailed by patriarchy. I drag my hand away and put my hands in my pockets.

"Until a DNA test proves that this child is mine I'd like for you to stay out of my daughter's room. Dont forget you're a guest here and I'd like for you to stay in your lane. Cross one more line and I'll throw you out, I dont care if you're pregnant or not. Know your place."

"Fine. But you'll regret this when you realise this is your son." She says and walks out. I get the key and lock the door after walking out. I find her standing in the hallway.

"Why are you mean to me?" She asks as I walk past her. I stop and look at her. "I'm pregnant with your child. The least you can do is be nice to me."

"Stay in your lane and I'll be nice to you. Cross the line and you'll see what mean looks like." I walk away and then remember I still need her number. "Why is your phone off?"

"What?"

"Your phone, it's off. I tried calling earlier I wanted to bring you food, but I couldn't get hold of you." Her face lights up and I can tell she thinks there is light at the end of this tunnel. If only she knew.

"Oh, sorry, I have a new number. I'll send you a please call me." She sends the please call me. I'm surprised she still knows my number. I receive the message.

"Thanks. I'll save it." She smiles. I leave her there and head back downstairs. My mother is already cooking.

"You're cooking?"

"Yes. My daughter will be hungry when she comes back from her shopping. She can't be slaving over the pots with my grandbaby." I smile. She looks at me and frowns. I walk over to her and wrap my arms around her shoulders and kiss her on the cheek.

"I know you're mad at me but it's cute that you still love me."

"I didnt say that."

"You didnt have to. You're making food for my baby, so I'm happy."

"Well you can stop. Its not for you anyway." I kiss her cheek again.

"Either way, I know you still love me."

"Mxm. Leave me alone." I let go of her and head to the study.

I send Sbu Lily's number and then get some work done. The door opens and Khanya walks in followed by Nomonde. I look at Nomonde and she just shrugs

her shoulders and sits down. Khanya looks like he could punch me. He keeps pacing up and down making me dizzy.

"You're ruining my carpet." He stops and looks at me, ready to bite my head off.

"Why is that woman in your house?" I sigh.

"Can we not talk about this right now. I'm not in the mood. And until DNA tests come back proving that baby is mine I dont want to talk about it." He takes a seat.

"Do you have someone looking into her?"

"Yes. Can you stop?"

"Mxm. You're stupid. Anyways I also have someone looking into her. You're way too relaxed about this whole thing."

"I'm not. I just said I have someone looking into this. I'm pretty sure you didnt come all the way from Joburg to talk about Lily?"

"Right." He turns to look at Nomonde, his face suddenly changes and now he has a huge grin on his

face. I swear the way his face just changed from angry to happy, it's like magic.

"Makoti, I actually came here for you until I got distracted by my idiot brother." He reaches into his pocket and takes out an envelope and hands it to her. "This is for you." She takes it and opens it. And judging by the smile on her face, it's good news.

"This is a huge cheque."

"It is. The department of Justice decided to settle your unlawful arrest case before the start of their new year. And the hawks have taken over Amanda's case. You should expect them to question you anytime before her court appearance."

"I thought the case was open and shut. Plus Amanda confessed so why do I need to be questioned?" She asks.

"It's just a formality. Plus they are trying to make sure the evidence and her confession are secured safely, you know how dockets go missing. And the state can't afford to lose this case so they are doing

anything and everything in their power to make sure it goes well."

"Do you think Amanda is up to something?"

Nomonde asked.

"I don't think so, but my friend at the NPA said they are keeping their eyes open for anything."

"That's perfect, so where do I cash this cheque?" She asks with a huge grin on her face making me smile. I love seeing her happy. That's why I need to have this Lily thing sorted out fast.

"No need for that. That cheque is just for show. The money will be transferred into your account in the next couple of days."

"Thank you. I wouldn't have done this without you."

"I'd love to take the credit for this but you and I both know it wouldnt have happened without Bonolo. You should give her a call."

"Yeah, I will. Can you send me her number?"

"Sure." He sent her the number and she got up and left.

"So what's your share?"

"Share of what?"

"Lawyers fees. How much are you getting?"

"That is none of your business. But just know I also got a fat cheque from the department. I made sure they pay the lawyers fees." He answered with a smug look on his face.

"Smart. Now leave."

"Go where. I'm not going anywhere. Mum cooked so I'm definitely staying. Plus I need to get to know your baby mama a little better." He said as he got up and left. Brothers, cant live with them, cant live without them.



NOMONDE

I left Khanya and Lungelo in the study and went upstairs to our bedroom. I couldn't stop staring at the cheque. It's over. I can fully go on with my life knowing that my innocence has been proven and I got compensated for the time I spent behind bars. Although I'll never get those years back, this is a little comforting. Now I can buy my mother a house close to us.

I threw myself on the bed and called Bonolo. She picked up after a couple of rings.

"Hello."

"Hi, its Nomonde." Silence. I looked at the phone and the call was still connected. "Hello."

"Hi, sorry, I'm just surprised to hear from you."

"I know I wasn't really welcoming the last time you and I saw each other. I just wanted to say thank you for what you did for me."

"What do you mean?"

"Proving my innocence. You didn't have to but you

did and I'll always be grateful for that."

"You're welcome." She didnt sound very happy. I wonder why? But it's not my place to pry though so I'll just let her be.

"Okay, that's all I wanted to say. And condolences on your family passing. No one deserves that."

"Thanks. I'm glad you're finally free."

"Me too. Bye."

"Bye!" I hung up.

I remembered my shopping bags that were still in Khanya's car. I sighed at the realization that I have to go down the stairs and get the bags. I went down leaving the cheque on top of the bed. I found Khanya and MaMtolo in the lounge. I wonder where Lily is. But then again why do I care. As long as she stays out of my way.

"I thought you were taking a nap?" MaMtolo asked.

"I was about to. Bhungane, can I get my bags out of the car."

"Oh yeah. I'll bring them up to you."

"Okay, thanks." Chivalry is not dead afterall. I went back upstairs as he went out to get the bags.

Walking barefoot can be soothing for tired feet and sometimes it's good to walk up to people without them noticing. I walked into our bedroom and I was surprised to find Lily in there. I walked slowly behind her and noticed she had the cheque in her hand. Her other hand was covering her mouth. I'm sure just like me she's never seen that many numbers in one place. Oh wait, I've seen those numbers, just that they weren't mine.

I grabbed the cheque away from her and she got startled.

"What the heck, dont ever sneak up on a pregnant woman like that. Do you want me to give birth before

my time." I crossed my arms and looked at her.

"What are you doing in my room?"

"Oh, I wanted to see your shopping."

"Why?"

"Hawu, I thought you might want to try things on and I'd tell you if it looks good or not."

"When did we become friends?"

"I was just trying to be nice."

"Well dont. And stop going through my stuff."

"I didn't. The cheque was just sitting there. Is it real? Like that's all your money?"

"Yes, it's real. Now please leave, I need to take a nap."

"So when are you going to cash it?"

"That's none of your business. Please leave."

"Geez, you're rude." I walked closer to her.

"Keep poking your nose where it doesnt belong and I'll show you rude. Trust me I learnt a few tricks in

prison and I will use them. Now get out." She rolled her eyes and walked out. I need to get this cheque in the safe before it magically disappears. I got on the bed and opened the drawer on the side table and put the cheque in there. When I wake up I have to get it in the safe. I didnt even last five minutes laying on the bed before it was lights out. This baby is making me lazy and tired.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTY SIX

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Work was amazing today. Even though this pregnancy is getting heavier with each day I actually was floating on air today. It felt like everything was coming together just right. All I wanted was to go home and continue this euphoria I was feeling by getting under my husband's body and feel him all inside me.

I got an uber and drove straight home. I dont need to buy anything today cause I did groceries yesterday. I got home and walked to the door. Sometimes I let the uber drop me off at the gate then walk for about three to five minutes into the house, depending on my pace, and I consider that my exercise for the day.

I get into the house and it's dead quiet. I wonder where MaMtolo is. Usually she's the first person to greet me when I walk through the door. But not today, it should make me sad but all I'm thinking about is more time with Lungelo. Lily is also not in the kitchen finishing my groceries, I just hope wherever MaMtolo is Lily is with her.

I take my shoes off and walk up the stairs barefoot. That's another form of exercise I have to do everyday. As I walk closer to the bedroom I hear some romantic music playing, I smile to myself wondering how he knew this was all I was craving. I slowly open the door and walk in. There's rose petals all over the floor, small tea light candles light up the room. The huge curtains are close allowing the tealight candles to set the ambience. On top of the bed there's a tray with strawberries on a small bowl and whipped cream on another. There are two glasses of champagne and a bottle in a champagne cooler with ice. It's beautiful.

I get closer and notice the champagne is alcohol free, perfect for me and Bhungane Junior. The strawberries have been half eaten and the champagne bottle is empty. I know a bottle that big couldn't have filled up those two glasses. The music dies down as the song comes to an end. And in its place sounds of someone groaning and moaning fills the empty space. I'm confused as hell right now.

I throw my bag on the couch and shoes on the floor. I walk towards the bathroom and the sounds get muffled by the new song that just came on. I get closer to the bathroom and place my ear on the door trying to listen. I hear the voices again. And this time I know who they belong to.

"Yes baby.... right there.... yes..... you're hitting the spot.....yes..." Lily's voice is as clear as daylight. I wonder who she's with and why she thought having sex in my bathroom was okay.

I open the door and I swear the sight before me feels like God has deserted me. Lily has her hands on the tub with her ass up in the air. He has his hands on his waist pumping into her hard and fast. He groans louder with each thrust and there's sweat, or is it steam, running down his spine. I have tears running down my face as my heart gets shredded with each stroke he gives her.

"Lungelo." My voice comes out in a whisper but its loud enough for them to hear me. He let's go of her and quickly turns around.

"Baby, it's not what it looks like." He says. I must be blind then. Lily is standing there with her huge tummy covering her vagina and her boobs covered by her hands. I take a few steps back and then sprint out the room with Lungelo chasing me. I dont know how far he thinks he'll get while naked.

I get out the bedroom and keep running towards the stairs. The tears have filled my eyes so much I cant

see clearly in front of me. The more I wipe them the more they fall. I'm not sure what happened, I just felt myself floating on air before hitting the floor and rolling down the stairs. I come to a stop and the pain then hits. My whole entire body is aching. I have cramps on my stomach and its painful. I feel a liquid running down my legs. I hope I didnt pee on myself. I look down and there is blood running down my legs. Oh no, my baby. I try to drag myself up so I can get a phone and call the ambulance but I cant move. Lungelo has his hands pinned on my arms holding me down. Can't he see the blood. I cant lose my baby.

"Baby..... Nomonde.... Baby please....." he keeps shouting. He let's go of my one hand and starts gently slapping me. "Baby wake up, please. Wake up." I can hear panic in his voice. I open my eyes and see his glossy eyes looking down at me. "Hey!" He says trying to fake a smile. I look around and I'm in my bed. I live the throw away from me expecting to see blood on my legs but theres none. I touch my

stomach and I feel my bump is still there. I breath a sigh of relief. And as if my baby could feel my panic she starts to move. I feel a tear moving running down my face. My baby is Okay. I was just dreaming.

"Baby what's wrong?" Lungelo asks bringing me back to the present. I look at him seething mad. Be betrayed me.

"You cheated on me?" He frowns and any sane person can tell he is confused as fuck. But I dont care. I know what i saw in my dream and I'm not about to let him get away with it.

"What are you talking about? I havent cheated on you."

"You did. I saw you." I cross my arms across my chest staring straight at him.

"Where?" He asks half shouting.

"In my dream." I see his face relax and form a smile. He thinks this is funny.

"Baby it was only just a dream."

"Ever heard the saying dreams come true? Exactly."

"Baby....."

"I want Lily out of the house. Tonight." He frowns again, I guess he can see that I'm serious.

"Ok. I'll get her out but it cant be tonight."

"Fine. Then I'll move out." I say getting off the bed.

"What? No! You cant move out."

"I can and I will. Get that girl out of my house. Tonight. If not, tomorrow I'm moving out." I turn and go to the bathroom and lock the door.

I sit on the toilet seat and pee. Until that girl is out I am not leaving this room. He keeps knocking but I wont open.

"Baby, please come out, let's talk about this."

"I'm done talking. Do what I asked."

"I will, dinner is ready. Come and eat."

"No. I'll eat when Lily is gone."

"Hhayike MaGumede, usuyabheda ke manje (you are crazy right now.) You cant starve my baby because of Lily." He is right.

And I'm hungry. But my pride refuses to budge.

"Are you saying I'm crazy?"

"No. But you need to eat. Please come out."

"NO!" I shout. I get off the toilet and wash my face.

"If you don't come out of there I'm going to go to the kitchen, get your food and shove it down your throat if I have to." He says calmly but I can tell he is getting angry.

"No you won't. I don't want your cheating hands anywhere near me." I open the door and get back in bed.

"Nomonde, I did not cheat on you."

"You did. I saw it in my dream. God wouldnt show me that if it wasnt true."

"Yoh hhayike. Now I'm going to be punished for something I dont know."

"That's what every cheater says." I pull the throw up and cover myself with it including my head. I hear footsteps as he walks out.



LUNGELO

It's true what they say, women and men really are from different planets with different waves and vibes and whatever else comes with it. Right now my wife is angry at me because she dreamt of me cheating. How the fuck am I going to be punished for something that happened in a dream? A bloody dream. Jesus help me.

I left Nomonde and went back downstairs. I even forgot to tell Lily that dinner was ready. Argh, she'll come down when she's hungry. I dragged myself down to the dining room. Mum has set the table and

made everything pretty. This was supposed to be a dinner to make Nomonde feel better about Lily being here but she refuses to come down.

"Where's my daughter?" Mum asks when she sees me. I take my seat and look at her and Khanya staring at me.

"She refuses to come down because she's angry at me."

"Why? What did you do?" Khanya asks.

"I apparently cheated on her in a dream and now she refuses to eat. She wants Lily out of the house, tonight."

"Finally. Someone with some sense." Khanya says and claps his hands. Mum is just giggling.

"Good for her."

"Really mum. Where am I supposed to get a place for Lily at such short notice?"

"Simple. I can take her with me to Richard's Bay. She should have gone there from the get go. She might

be pregnant with your child but this is Nomonde's home, and she needs her peace. She cant be sharing a home with your side chick." Mum says.

"Okay, one, Lily is not my side chick, two, why didnt you say that from the get go. We could have shipped her to Richard's Bay and saved me from being punished for a crime I know nothing about." Khanya is busy laughing. I dont know what's funny.

"I didnt say anything because it's not my place. This is your home, before I could make decisions for you but you have a wife now, she's the lady of this house and her word goes. It trumps even mine. You've never seen me make decisions at Khanya's house or Muzi's house. So this wasnt my decision. But now that madam has spoken, Lily has to go."

"Where am I going?" Lily asks as she walks into the room.

"You are coming with me to Richard's Bay." Mum answers her.

"No I'm not. My doctor is here and I might give birth at anytime. I need to be here."

"She wasn't really asking. She was telling you. There are doctors in Richards Bay. When you finish eating go upstairs and pack your bags. I'll drive you to Richard's Bay." Khanya tells her. I'm not sure what she saw in his eyes but whatever it was, it was enough to make her cower and not argue. She looks at me hoping to find an ally but she finds none. I have bigger fish to fry. Starting with making peace with my wife.

We finished eating and I dished up for Nomonde. Khanya helped mum and Lily pack their bags in the car. Lily dragged herself from upstairs.

"Lungelo....."

"Nope."

"I haven't even said anything." She said almost close to tears.

"You don't have to. I'm not changing my mind."

"It wasn't her was it? She's the one who is so insecure she feels threatened by me being here."

"She has a name, her name is Nomonde and she's my wife, this is her home, her house. Kuhlala esakhe iscathulo (she makes the rules.) So you can beg and cry it wont help."

"You know the Lungelo I knew would never allow a woman to pull him by the nose." She said and I just smiled. I watched her walk out the door. Khanya came back in.

"Your girlfriend looks unhappy." He says hiding a laugh.

"She'll live."

"Let's hope so. Anyways I got some info from my guy, your girl was in the Eastern Cape, she left seven and half months ago. And then a month ago she came back to Durban."

"Really? What was she doing in the Eastern Cape?"

"Beats me. But my guy is going to keep searching to see who she's been in contact with."

"That's great. Thanks."

"You're welcome." I walked him out and said goodbye to mum and watched them drive off.

I went back to the house and dished up for Nomonde and took the food up to her. I got into the bedroom when she was just coming out of the shower with her gown on. I'm not sure why she's still throwing daggers at me with her eyes, Lily is gone mosi.

"I got you food." She sat down on the bed and I handed her the food.

"Thanks."

"Baby."

"Mhmm."

"I'm sorry I cheated on you in your dream. I promise you that is one dream that will never come true. Besides the fact that I know you would leave me if I ever did, my mum would also beat the crap out of me with her sjambok." That gets her attention. She

looks up at me with a smile.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Well, Khanya cheated on Kgomotso a few years ago and when mum found out she drove from Richard's Bay all the way to Joburg. Went straight to Khanya's office, found him in a meeting with his partners. She asked them to leave and they did. As soon as they walked out she locked the door and started whooping him with a sjambok. He managed to escape though, he ran out of there like he was being chased by a black mamba. He's never cheated since then." She was now laughing. A sound that brings joy to my heart.

"I knew there was a reason I loved her so much. I need to be like her when I grow up."

"No you dont. That woman is crazy."

"And I love crazy."

"Seriously though babe, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have even let Lily stay here."

"Its fine now. But this better be the last time I have to deal with your exes. Even Nqobile gives me the creeps."

"You and me both. And I promise from now on, it's me and you till the wheels fall off. I love you MaGumede wami." She smiles and gets closer to me.

"I love you too Bhungane."

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTY SEVEN

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

It's been a week since Lily went to Richard's Bay. A week of peace and quiet. Last night she had contractions and mum rushed her to the hospital but it turned out to be false contractions, the doctor called them Braxton hicks, apparently they are practice contractions preparing her for the big finale. The way she was screaming when mum called me I wonder what the real contractions will be like. I just pray Nomonde has easier ones, if theres even such a thing.

I just dropped Nomonde off at work before heading to the traffic department to make an appointment for her to take the learners test. She needs her license in like yesterday. Her car is gathering dust in

the garage. I set the appointment and it was two weeks away. Perfect, now we can start studying for the test.

My phone rang as I was driving into the house. I looked at the caller ID and it was Sbu. I picked up.

"Sbusiso."

"Where are you?"

"I'm good how are you?"

"Mxm, you sound like my ex girlfriend." He answers with his mouth full. He must be eating something.

"Now I understand why she is your ex. Have you found anything on Lily?"

"This is why I was asking where you are."

"I'm at my house."

"No you not. I'm in your kitchen and you're not here."
What the fuck.

"How did you get in my house?"

"That's beside the point. Hurry up. I have news." He hangs up. I get out of my car and go into the house and sure enough he is in the kitchen with a huge ass sandwich in front of him.

"Why did you break into my house?"

"I didnt break in, I got in."

"How?"

"I have my ways. Sit down. I have some juicy news for you. I even flew down here to see the look on your face when i tell you." Okay. This seems serious. I hope he's not fucking with me. I take a seat and look at him.

"Speak!" He takes a drink of the whiskey in front of him. Who in their right mind drinks whiskey with a sandwich. When he is done he burps. Mannerless bastard.

"Right. So your potential baby mama was in the Eastern Cape. She told Sandile Shezi that the baby was his."

"Sandile Shezi?"

"Yeah, the KZN MEC, he gave her money to have an abortion. She faked her medical records and gave them to him as proof that she had the abortion. Soon after that she got out of town and stayed away until a month ago when she came back to Durban."

"Why did she come back?"

"For you. Her phone records show that she's been communicating with your ex wife."

"Nqobile?"

"The one and only. And according to Nqobile's call records, she has been in contact with Paul Mashile."

"Hold up. So you telling me Paul has a hand in this?"

"I can bet my life on it. The week before Lily came back to Durban Paul and Nqobile were in the Eastern Cape. Same guesthouse and all. There's CCTV footage from the guesthouse showing them there together."

"I can't believe this. I saved that motherfucker only for him to try and screw me over. What is their end

game in all this? I have nothing that either of them would want."

"Actually I beg to differ. Nqobile is divorced and now she wants to get back with you. Paul on the other hand feels guilty about doing what he did and I guess he feels like Nomonde and Bontle would have forgiven him if it wasn't for you standing in the way. He's looking to bring everyone together including Amanda. If you and Nomonde break up it gives both of them a chance to get back with you. Nqobile gets you and Paul gets his original family."

"Amanda is in jail?" He can't possibly be thinking about breaking her out. But then again this is Paul, he seems to have a mind of his own.

"My sources tell me he is planning on stealing the evidence and the docket so when she appears in court the prosecution will have nothing."

"Automatically letting her go."

"Exactly."

"Do you think the child Lily is carrying is mine?"

"I doubt it. They say that a mother always knows the father of her child and my guess is Sandile is the father. I mean Lily went to him and didn't bother coming to you which means she also knows the baby is not yours."

I sigh and pop my knuckles. I need to think about what I'm going to do with this new information. I knew Lily was up to something but I didn't think she'd be this vile. I mean passing off one man's child to another like some toy, did she even think about the child's life, his heritage and legacy? What if his ancestors are the aggressive type that will make the child sick because he's not using his biological surname? Sometimes we do things and not even think about the future and the consequences. But one thing that's going to happen, Lily and her buddies will pay for this.

I spend the day with Sbu and do some work while trying to figure out how to make these people pay.

One thing I know for sure though, Nqobile and Paul being the masterminds behind all this will pay dearly. Lily might have just been a pawn in their sick game so maybe I might consider going easy on her. I drop Sbu at the airport and go to pick up Nomonde from work. I park the car and see her walking out with some of her colleagues. It's quite beautiful to see her so happy and living her dream. And I get to be a part of it. I might not pray much but I'm pretty sure the day I met her God was either in a good mood or he just made her for me. I'll take both reasons. Either way i get to sleep and wake up with the most incredible woman, strong on the outside and a little soft on the inside. In spite of all she's been through she still finds a way to be happy and smile. Every day I ask myself how she does it. Most people would have broken down with all the things she's been through, but I guess it's true what they say, we can go through the same circumstances but how we react to them will not be the same.

"Penny for your thoughts." I look up and she's

already in the passenger seat. I smile and bring her face in for a kiss. It lingers for a while and I can feel her breathing changing. But this train is not going anywhere, doctors orders.

"I love you." She smiles and frown all at the same time making the cutest face.

"Where is that coming from?"

"Nowhere. I just cant believe you're mine."

"Are you dying?" I laugh.

"Of course not. I'm just happy. So what do you want to eat for dinner?"

"I dont know. Surprise me." Not the answer I was looking for but a huge mountain to climb.

"So you'll eat whatever I give you?" She nods her head. I know she's lying.

I start the car and drive out. I keep wrecking my brain trying to figure out what to get her then I remember I have a club that also sells food. I text the chef and tell him what I want. He replies and says my order

will be ready in an hour.

"Stop texting and driving." She says sternly. I guess she'll pass her learners, she already knows the rules of the road.

We get home and I run a bath for the Mrs. We seriously need to set a date for the wedding before the baby comes. I light some candles and play some soft music. I need her to relax and just enjoy being spoilt. I get back to the bedroom and find her sitting on the bed with a laptop on her lap. I know she's looking at houses for her mum. Her dream is finally coming true.

"What do you think of this one?" She asks. I take a seat next to her and look at the house. It's not too big and not too small either, I think it would be perfect for MaGumede senior.

"I think it's perfect. I'm sure ma will love it."

"Atleast it doesnt have any stairs, you know my

mother would complain about her knees and bones until Jesus comes back." I chuckle.

"Exactly. And it's close enough for us to have a babysitter on call." That brings a smile to her face.

"Go take a bath. Your water is ready." She closes the laptop and kisses me then heads to the bathroom.

My phone rings and Sbu's name pops up.

"You miss me already?" He laughs.

"Dont flatter yourself. I found a Doctor in Richards Bay who will help us carry out our plan. Lily wont know what hit her."

"Perfect. What about Paul?"

"He cant know who you are so I'll take care of him."

"How?"

"Dont worry about it. Focus on the ladies."

"Okay. Thanks man."

"Anytime." He hangs up and I let out a sigh. One problem down, two more to go.



NARRATED

In Richards Bay, MaMtolo and her helper have gone to sleep. Lily is in the guestroom pacing up and down. She keeps looking at her phone. She has a picture of Nomonde's cheque. She keeps looking at it and imagining having all that money. What Paul and Nqobile promised her seems like peanuts right now. She could be set for life, if only she could get her hands on that cheque.

She calls her best friend Bianca. She picks up after a couple of rings.

"Lily, it's late. What's going on?"

"I'm going to send you a picture Okay. Look at it and tell me what you think." She sends the picture on WhatsApp while Bianca is on the line. Bianca

receives the picture and looks at it. She immediately gets out of bed and turns the lights on in her room with the phone still in her hand. She puts the phone back on her ear.

"Lily, what is this?" She asks shocked.

"Our ticket out of poverty. All I have to do is get my hands on it and we will never work a day in our lives."

"I can see that. But who is this Nomonde chick?"

"Lungelo's fiancée. Apparently the government paid her for having her imprisoned for years for a crime she didn't commit."

"Okay, so how are you going to get your hands on it? You said you're in Richards Bay now and you're no longer in Lungelo's house?"

"That's the problem. I can't get to the cheque but you can."

"And how am I supposed to do that?"

"Befriend Nomonde. She doesn't have that many friends, and if you can get close to her she'll invite

you to the house. You'll get access to the safe, the same way we did to Sandile." Bianca smiles when she remembers the scam they pulled on Sandile.

"Does he know you're back in town?"

"I doubt it. You know he would kill me if he ever found out. I have to protect my child. Sandile might want kids but you know his wife is as evil as they come. If she finds out about the baby I'll be dead for sure." Bianca sighs and sits back down on the bed.

"How sure are you that she hasn't cashed the cheque?"

"Not really sure right now. But even if she has theres some expensive stuff in that house, clothes, jewellery including a huge diamond ring that's probably worth a lot. And they have two safes in the house, one in his office and another in the bedroom, and chances are..."

"Theres money in there."

"Yep. And if you can seduce Lungelo and get some incriminating photos, we can use that to get even more out of him. He loves Nomonde and he won't

want anything to hurt her."

"Got you. I'll book a flight to Durban in the morning. I'll ask Thabiso to dig up some info on Nomonde. We are about to hit the big time."

"Yep. We are back in the game. And soon as I pop this baby out we will have more fish to fry."

"Oh yes. I can't wait." They hang up.

Lily goes to sleep with a smile on her face. Plan A might have been thwarted but Plan B is always ready to go.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTY EIGHT

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

The buzzing of my phone on the side table is so loud in the quiet room. Its almost 3AM and I need my rest but this person is reluctant. And if I dont answer the phone it might just end up waking Nomonde up. I pick it up and the brightness of it hits my eyes and makes me close them for a while. I answer the phone and put it in my ear.

"Its 3AM, this better be good." I dont even know who it is but they better not wake me up for shit.

"Money doesnt sleep Radebe." The raspy voice answers. I dont know who it is. And the light is too bright for me to check the caller ID.

"Who is this?"

"You really are asleep." He chuckles and then it clicks. Its Sbu, and the raspy voice was an imitation. This idiot. He forgets I'm older tha him. What happened to respecting ama grootman?

"Sbusiso. Ufunani? Do you ever sleep?"

"Only when its necessary. I have news."

"And it couldnt wait till morning?"

"It could. But I was too excited." I got off the bed carefully and opened the balcony door and walked out.

"Speak. I'm up."

"You'll have a guest soon in your house."

"What guest?"

"Lily is sending some girl to come befriend Nomonde and then steal from you."

"What?"

"According to their conversation, Lily saw Nomonde's cheque and then decided that Paul and Nqobile are paying her peanuts so she wants the

jackpot."

"And how is she planning on getting to the jackpot?"
Lily is seriously getting on my last nerve.

"They are planning on stealing the cheque, that's if Nomonde hasn't cashed it yet."

"Stupid idiot. That cheque was just for show. Does she really think in this day and age of technology people still use cheques?"

"That's not all. They said if the cheque has already been cashed then the girl will have to find a way to your safe and steal jewellery and money and any other valuables. To top it off they are planning on the girl seducing you and getting some incriminating pictures to blackmail you with."

"Its time I put an end to this. Lily has gone too far."

"That's true. My fear though is that she'll find out who you are and you know that information could be valuable to the right hands."

"Yeah. Thanks man, now go to sleep." He chuckles.

"Wait, how did you find this out?" He laughs.

"I'm Sbu the nerd, I have my ways. Besides there's nothing much happening on the work front so this has kept me a bit busy. Oh and one more thing. Lily and this friend of hers have been doing this scamming for a while now. I'm busy looking into this friend now. I should have more info by morning."

"Okay. Thanks man. I owe you one."

"Yes you do. And I'm coming to collect." He whispers trying to sound intimidating.

I hang up and go back into the bedroom. I get into bed and pull my wife close to me. She stirs and nestles her head on my shoulder.

"You're cold." She mutters under her breath.

"I know baby. Go to sleep." I kiss the top of her head and hold her close to me. She falls back asleep. I need to put an end to this thing with Lily. I refuse to let her ruin my life.

I wake up the next morning and get breakfast ready

for my girl while she gets ready for work. She eats and I drive her to work. I then drive to Richard's Bay. But the time I get there my mum is already prepping for lunch. I find her in the kitchen.

"Hi mummy." I kiss her on the cheek and get an apple from the fridge.

"Hi baby. What are you doing here?"

"Oh, I'm here to take Lily to the doctor." She stops cutting her vegetables and looks at me.

"Her appointment is only tomorrow. Didn't I tell you?"

"It must have slipped my mind. I can still take her today since I'm here already."

"Okay. Hows Nomonde and my grandbaby?"

"They are good. But I'm being starved."

"Dont you have food in your house?"

"Not the forbidden fruit. My hands are getting tired...."

"Voetsek." She throws some green peppers at me and I run out laughing.

I go to the backyard and find Lily sitting there basking in the sun. It must be nice. Plotting and planning must be exhausting.

"Lily." She looks up and smiles.

"Hey, what are you doing here?"

"I came to take you to the doctor."

"My appointment is tomorrow."

"I know. Mum just told me. But I'm here now and I'm sure the doctor can squeeze us in." She gets up from the lounge, difficult as it might be and stands in front of me.

"Its quite nice of you to want to be involved." I fake a smile.

"Well its my baby right? So its only right I get involved. I wouldn't want to miss out on moments with my child." She throws herself at me and tries to hug me but her big belly is in the way.

"Thank you. This means a lot to me."

"It's nothing. Go get ready so we can go." She walks into the house almost floating on air. She's happy, it won't last though.

I take out my phone and call Sbu.

"Brother man, we are here."

"Good. We are on our way. Is the room ready?"

"Everything is ready. Even though it was short notice we got everything and Nate is here."

"Perfect. I'll see you guys in a few minutes. Sharp." I go back into the house and the aroma of mum's delicious food is just tantalizing. I would love to stay for lunch but we have work to do.

Lily comes down ready to go.

"Mummy, we are leaving. I'll call you if the doctor says anything serious."

"Okay. Lunch will be ready by the time you get back."

"Sure thing." I give her a kiss on the cheek and lead

the way. I open the door for Lily and the smile on her face is unmissable. She really thinks this is a fairytale.

I open the car door for her and off we go to the doctor. Instead of taking the turn to the hospital I drive straight past the robots. She turns to look at me.

"You just missed the turn to the hospital."

"Dont worry about it. This is my hood, I know all the shortcuts." She nods her head and keeps her eyes back on the road.

I keep driving for about ten more minutes and we get to a suburb.

"What are we doing here?" She asks now sounding worried.

"Relax. I want to show you something." I keep driving until we get to a huge modern style home. The gate slides open and I drive in. I park the car and help her

out. We walk into the house and its beautiful. From the outside you would think when the doors open your typical, mum, dad, son and daughter family would come running out. But theres no family here.

"Nice house." She says looking around. I lock the door behind me and watch her admire the house. Sbu walks in from the kitchen eating an apple. Lily looks at him then turns to look at me.

"What's going on?"

"I would tell you but we can only talk about this when everyone is here." Two other guys come in from the passage with Nqobile and some other woman, I take it that's Lily's friend. The guys throw them on the couch.

"I think you should join your buddies." I say walking up to a shocked Lily. She turns to look at me close to tears.

"I dont know them. What's going on Lungelo?"

"I don't want to go drag you to the couch so do us both a favor and walk." I can tell she is shaking as she walks to the couch. She sits down next to her buddies. Nate comes out from the guest toilet and joins us.

"Why do you like starting the fun when I'm not there?"

"That's because you're getting old and spending too much time in the bathroom."

"Ha ha very funny. Let's get to work." I pull the coffee table and sit close to the three musketeers.

"What's your name?" The girl looks at me fear written all over her face.

"Bianca." Her brittle voice answered in a whisper.

"Okay then Bianca. Why are you in Durban?"

"Work."

"Does your work include trying to steal from me?"

Lily's eyes pop out like she just saw a ghost.

"Lungelo, I dont know what's going on here but I need to leave." Nqobile pleaded.

"I'll get to you in a minute Nqobile, wait your turn." I turned back to Bianca. "I still dont have an answer. Were you planning on stealing from me?"

"No!" She whispers with tears running down her face. "It was Lily's idea. She's the one who called me and told me about her plan. I'm sorry." Talk about throwing your friend under the bus. No thought put into it, she just sang like a canary. People who make my job easy. I turned to Nqobile.

"Ex wifey. How are you?"

"Why am I here Lungelo?"

"A question for a question. I know you paid Lily to come to my house and try to pawn that child in her stomach off to me."

"I dont know what you're talking about. I dont know these girls."

"Dont make this harder than it already is. I have the proof. I know you've been working with Paul Mashile, I know you brought Lily back from the Eastern Cape to try and break me and Nomonde up. I know everything Nqobile. And I'm going to make sure you pay dearly for this. But first, Lily. It's time to pay the piper."

The two guys come behind the couch and inject both Bianca and Nqobile with a sedative. Sbu injects Lily and in two minutes they are out."

"The room is ready, let's do this." I get up. The two guys bring the stretcher and carry Lily to the other room. It's a makeshift hospital room. Nate gets to work and starts on the C-section. He gets the baby out and shem, he's ugly. Well all newborns are ugly, according to Nate. He closes her up and then cleans the baby up. Once the baby is dressed he places him on the table and we stand there looking at him.

"Are you sure he isn't yours?"

"Did you see a birthmark on him? No! Exactly. Besides that the kid looks exactly like Sandile. Even though he is small and ugly, he is a mini Sandile." Nate chuckles.

"So how is Sandile planning on doing this. His wife wont accept the child."

"His sister has agreed to take the baby and raise him as her own. Atleast he will be close to family."

"That's true." We take the baby out to the lounge. Bianca and Nqobile have been taken to the other rooms.

"So baby daddy is on his way with his sister." Sbu says coming into the lounge from the kitchen.

"Perfect. By the time Lily wakes up the baby should be long gone."

Twenty minutes later Sandile pulls up outside with his sister. Sbu opens for them and they walk into the

lounge. The moment they lay their eyes on the baby his sister tears up.

"Is that him?" I take the baby and him to her. "Ncooh. He is so handsome." She gushed staring at him.

"He is." Sandile reiterated. He turned to look at me. "Thank you."

"You're welcome. I have a friend already working on the paperwork. He should have a birth certificate but the end of the week. What will you name him?" They look at each other and smile.

"Siyabonga Okuhle Shezi."

"Perfect. I'll send you all the paperwork once its done."

"Where is Lily? I'd like to see the look on her face when she realizes I have my son." Sandile asks.

"I don't think your wife will be happy about that. Focus on Siyabonga and forget about Lily." He nods his head.

I walked them out and watched them as they drove

off. Lily will wake up to an empty belly, but her son will be well taken care off. One down. Two more to go.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

SEVENTY NINE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

These girls are taking too long to wake up. I need them up so we can finish what we started. I still need to go to Joburg to deal with Paul. Of he thinks he can mess with me and I will let it slide then he doesnt know me. The only problem though, I cant do much to him since he is Bontle's father but I can still put the fear of God in him.

I left the guys in the lounge and went to check on Lily in the makeshift hospital room. She was still out. I was about to walk back out when Nate walked in to check on her too.

"Do you think she'll wake up?"

"She will. It's not like we did anything to her other than take the baby out."

"I guess. I can't believe she really let greed lead her here. Who the fuck uses a child like that. I would die if Nomonde would do that. Nqobile already pawned my child off to another man so I don't understand how some women's minds work." I shake my head and lean on the small table watching him check her cut and stitches.

"And you forgave Nqobile for that. Now Lily shows up and tries to pull the same stunt on you. No thought whatsoever for the poor child and his future."

"I should have gone Shadow Assassin on her and wiped her ass off the face of the earth."

"Come on. You're better than that. We've done what needs to be done. And now she'll spend the rest of her life paying for this. Now we just need to take care of the other two."

We walked out and headed to the other room.

Bianca and Nqobile were still out. I don't have time to wait for them. I need them to wake up so I can get to

work and then head to Joburg. My phone rang.

"Baby."

"Bhungane. Where are you?"

"I'm in Richards Bay, listen I dont think I'll make it there back in time to pick you up."

"Dont worry about it, I'll get an uber."

"No, I'll send a driver or ask Muzi to pick you up. You're carrying precious cargo, I need to know you're safe." She chuckles and I know there's an eyeroll too.

"If you're overprotective now, imagine when she's here. My poor baby wont even have a boyfriend."

"What boyfriend? That word will be foreign to her. I'll break any boy who even thinks of coming close to her." She laughs making me laugh.

"Okay then Mr Radebe. I'll wait for the driver. So what are you doing in Richards Bay?"

"Dont even think about it." I know what she's thinking and that dream of hers is still at the back of her

mind. I can't explain everything to her now but I don't need her overthinking and stressing herself.

"What am I thinking about?"

"That dream of yours. Baby I'm here on business. Nate and Sbu are here and we have some business to sort out."

"Okay." I don't know why that Okay makes my heart rate go up. But if I keep explaining things to her she'll probably start thinking there really is something wrong.

"I love you. And I'll see you soon okay."

"Okay. I'm getting takeaways tonight. So if you want a home cooked meal you'll cook it yourself." I smile and shake my head.

"Don't worry about me. As long as you and Junior are happy then I'm good. Bye."

"I love you too."

I hung up just as Nqobile was waking up. I watched her as she tried to get her bearings. As impatient as I

was when they were out, now that she's waking up I need to make sure she never even thinks about trying to hurt Nomonde or worming her way back into my life. If it was just me it wouldn't matter as much, but Nomonde has been through enough, and I'm going to spend the rest of my life making her life as easy as possible. And if that means dealing with the likes of Nqobile and Paul so she doesn't have to then so be it.

Nqobile looks around the room and sees me standing there watching her. She pulls herself up so she's sitting straight up on the bed.

"Lungelo?" Her voice is hoarse and pleading. Unfortunately for her, I'm past the mercy stage.

"You need water?" She nods her head. I go to the kitchen and come back with a bottle of cold water. As soon as I open the door I don't see her. I know she didn't get out because the door was locked. I take a step in and I feel something whack me over the head. While I'm paying attention to my throbbing

head I hear footsteps running out. I thought she was smarter than this.

I hear her scream. The screams get closer until she's thrown on the bed by Nate.

"Did you lose a package?" He asks looking at me try to ease the pain on my head.

"Argh, I knew she wouldnt get away."

"Okay then. I'll be in the lounge." He walks out leaving me with her.

"You're not going to get away with this!" She mutters with tears streaming down her face. "My family and friends will be looking for me."

"I know. And that's what I'm counting on. See your phone is on, it's been on. Sbu is busy with your twitter account as we speak. He is telling the people that you've been kidnapped and the people want a hundred thousand rand reward." Her eyes pop out.

"What games are you trying to play Lungelo?"

"I'm glad you asked. So while your friends and family

are busy trying to put together the money for your reward you will be crying for help. As soon as they pay that money it will magically appear in your bank account. And then in a week there will be photos of you partying in a club, photoshopped of course but people wont know that. And then the police who are already searching for you will have you prosecuted for faking a kidnapping and extortion. I know people say our police system is fucked up but, if you accuse a prominent person of being involved in your 'kidnapping' then we are good to go. You'll be in jail by the end of the month."

"Lungelo, please, I'll give you anything. Please don't do this." I take my phone and log on to twitter. I dont have that many followers which works for me because I can spy on the kids in peace. I go to the trends and sure enough, #saveNqobile is trending. I show it to her.

"See, you're trending at number one. People are worried about you." I show her the tweets 'she's' been tweeting. "See heres the kicker. You just

accused the minister of Police of being involved in your kidnapping. Now all we have to do is wait and he will be on your tail. And knowing him and his foreign friends he will do whatever it takes to prove his innocence. Even putting you in jail."

"Why him? Why not someone else?"

"Good question. However if I had to tell you that then I'd have to kill you and I'm too busy for that. Sbu will take care of you. In the meantime, I have bigger fish to fry. You should have stayed away Nqobile. You should have stayed away."

I walk out and head to the lounge. I get my car keys.

"Gentlemen, I have to go."

"What do we do with them?" Sbu asks.

"Stick to the original plan where Nqobile is concerned. As for Bianca, put the fear of God in her and then let her go. I need to check on Lily before I go."

I get to the room she's in and she's already stirring. Nate is watching her.

"How is she?"

"She's waking up. When are we leaving?"

"We?"

"Yes we. You are not leaving me here. Besides I have a wife to get back to." Lily clearance her throat and we turn to look at her.

"Where am I?"

"Heaven." She looks around the room before trying to pop herself up but I guess the pain in her abdomen is a bit much. She touches her stomach and the panic in her face is unmissable.

"Where's my baby? Lungelo what happened to my baby?" She's panicking. Her voice is hoarse and she has tears forming in her eyes.

"Since you said the baby was mine I did you the honor and got him out of your hands."

"Where is he? Lungelo I need my son."

"I gave him up for adoption." Her eyes pop out I'm sure if she could add some more pressure they would be on the floor.

"Lungelo, please, give me my son." Her voice is breaking and I can see she's in pain. But unfortunately for her, I'm not moved. Not one bit.

"Your son is in safe hands. I gave him to a family that will love him the way he deserves to be loved. So now you are free to go about your business and scam people. See I did you a favor."

"Lungelo. I'm begging you. Just hand me my child and I'll be out of your life. He wasn't yours to begin with."

"I know. And one day you're going to have to explain to your baby daddy why his son is out there somewhere in the world."

"He's going to make you pay for this. He won't just let you take his son from him." I guess she just remembered who he is. If only she knew.

"I'll be waiting for him. I have to go though. And a warning. Stay away from me and my wife. If I even

see you anywhere close to us, I'll put a bullet in your head."

Nate and I walk out leaving her screaming insults and threats at us. Its almost midnight and I need to be in Joburg by morning. Nate and I drive out and head to Joburg. He drove here with his own car I wonder how it's going to get back to Joburg.

We get to Joburg by the break of dawn and head straight to Morningside since Nate refuses to go home. I thought he said he had a wife to go home to.

"Are you sure you don't want me to drop you off?" He yawns and stretches. He's been sleeping for the better part of the trip.

"No. I need to see what you're going to do to him. Are you going to kill him?"

"I cant kill him. Bontle is slowly coming around to having a relationship with him and I don't want to take that from her. Atleast for now."

"Okay. So what are you going to do?"

"I'm not sure yet. But we need to get over that wall."
He leans forward and looks at the huge wall fence with electric fencing at the top.

"Ok superman how do you suggest we get over that wall?"

"I'm still thinking." To be honest I didnt think this through. Of course this is a mini fortress but we need to get to the other side. Nate gets out of the car and stretches a bit. I see him walk towards the gate. I call out to him but he pretends he can't hear me. He walks to the gate and a security guard walks towards him. They speak for a while then he takes his hand out of his pockets and shakes the mans hand. He walks back to the car and gets in.

"What was that about?"

"Start the car. We are driving in." Of course. He just bribed the guy. I figure it's one less problem for me so I start the car and drive in. We park in front of the house. I hope he doesnt have an alarm system in

there. Nate picks the lock and we get in. No alarm. Thank God. We tip toe up the stairs. The kids are in their rooms sleeping soundly. Perfect. We get into the main bedroom and Paul is fast asleep. He has a woman sleeping in his arms. Cute.

I hand Nate the syringes with the sedative and he walks around the bed to the girl. I take my gun out and point it at Paul. Nate sticks the syringe in the girls arm and she screams waking Paul up. He wakes up and finds the gun starring at him. The girl wakes up and rubs her arm before passing out. I turn the side lamp on and the shock on Paul's face seeing me standing there is priceless, and to think I almost missed it by letting Sbu take care of him.

"What the fuck is going on?" He asks.

"I know what you did. You and Nqobile."

"I dont know what you're talking about." He answered with a wobbly voice.

"I dont need you to confirm anything because I already know the truth. I came to warn you. Your first crime was abandoning your child, I let that go for her sake, and then you went and stalked her, scaring the shit out of her, and now you and my ex teamed up to try and hurt Nomonde."

"I've already said I dont know what you're talking about. I dont know your ex wife."

"I should have let them burn you with your evil mother and brother. Now I realize you never deserved my mercy."

"Excuse me!"

"You heard me. Consider this the final warning. If you come after me or Nomonde, I'll rain hell on you, and I will not even take into consideration the fact that you're Bontle's father. When you're dead I will be the one to comfort her and be her dad, like I've been. You've been warned."

Nate takes the other syringe and sticks it in his arm. He passes out in just under a minute. We leave and

head to Nate's place. I park outside the house. I have to drive back to Durban so I'm definitely not staying.

"You have to drive in." Nate says.

"I cant. I have to drive back to Durban."

"You havent slept in twenty four hours. You're coming in with me and taking a nap. You'll drive back to Durban later. I'm not going to be the one to tell Nomonde that you had an accident." Well I am a bit tired.

"Fine."

I drive in and he shows me to the guest bedroom. My phone rings just as I'm about to sleep. It's my mum. I'm sure she's worried about Lily.

"Hi mummy."

"Really Lungelo, no calls no nothing, where are you? For your sake I hope to God you're not cheating on Nomonde."

"Of course not. Lily went into labor so we are at the hospital."

"Which hospital. I'll come now."

"No need ma, the baby is not mine."

"You've seen him?"

"Yeah. And he looks nothing like me."

"Are you sure? What about DNA tests?"

"No need for those. Lily did say the baby is not mine
So I'll send a friend over there to pick up her stuff.
Please pack it up for me."

"Of course. How are you feeling?"

"Relieved. Atleast I dont have to deal with her for the
rest of my life."

"I guess. But you have a baby on the way so that's a
blessing you should be focusing on. And we need to
set a wedding date before the baby is born."

"Yeah. And thanks for taking care of her. I owe you
one."

"Yes you do. Go home. Monde needs you."

"I will, I love you."

"I love you too. Bye."

I hung up and sent Nomonde a goodmorning text. I have a lot of explaining to do, but the upside, one less problem to worry about. Now I can focus on my wife.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTY

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

It's been five months since Lily got out of our lives. Well Lungelo made sure of that. Things are slowly becoming the way they are supposed to. Bontle is officially a first year medical student at the university of the Witwatersrand. Yep, I'm the proud mother of a future doctor. It still feels like a dream.

Amanda's case was supposed to be done a few months ago but it keeps being postponed. I know how frustrating that it but in my experience when the prosecution keeps asking for an extension it means they want to make sure they have a watertight case. And for her sake, I hope they show her a bit of mercy.

I am officially eight months pregnant. The doctor

finally confirmed that we are having a girl. To say Lungelo is on top of the world would be an understatement. He is on top of the universe. He has painted the the nursery pink. It's like a unicorn snuck in there and had an explosion.

Lungelo and I got married. Well the traditional aspects have been observed and as far as the Radebe ancestors are concerned I am now one of them. I'm Officially Nomonde Radebe. Our wedding was beautiful. It felt like a dream come true. Even though I wanted something small and intimate, Lungelo went the opposite route. He said he wanted the world to know that I was now his, officially. I thought my first experience with marriage would have turned me against the institution but finding someone like Lungelo who makes life worth living was the best thing that ever happened to me post jail.

My mum now lives a few houses down the road. Yep,

I bought her a house right here in Umhlanga, I was thinking of Ballito but everyone talked me out of that. Having her close has been a dream. She comes over everyday to help me out since I was put on bedrest a month ago. The doctor even does house calls everyday because I was diagnosed with preeclampsia. It seems to get hectic with every passing day. For the past couple of days my blood pressure gone up tremendously, I vomit a lot, I have throbbing headaches and breathing has been hard. Lungelo sometimes stays up the whole night watching me just to make sure I'm alive.

This morning I woke up to darkness, I cant see. Lungelo thought I was joking when I said it was dark. He said the curtains were wide open. I tried to get up to go pee but I couldn't see anything. I kept bumping into stuff. I guess thats when Lungelo realised I was serious. I was blind. He was freaking out calling the doctor. As scared as I was I tried to keep myself calm. Lungelo was already freaking out enough for the both of us.

He came into the room almost running.

"The ambulance is on it's way."

"I need to pee." I whispered. This has been a constant battle. Peeing is now a luxury to me. I'm lucky if I can pee once a day. I always go to the toilet and say a prayer asking God to make me pee but nothing. He picked me up and placed me on the toilet seat. I sat there for a while and nothing happened. I felt tears running down my face. And I felt him put his hands on my knees. He was kneeling in front of me.

"Baby dont cry. It will be Okay."

"What if I die?"

"You won't."

"You dont know that Lungelo. The doctor did say this was a severe case of preeclampsia. One of the worst he has seen. So it's possible I might end up dead."

"I don't care what the doctor said. You will be just fine. We are going to raise our baby together. I'm not going to lose you Nomonde, I cant lose you." I could feel his voice break. As tough as he was, he was just as scared as I was. I felt around till I found his face. I held his face in between my hands as if I could see him.

"I need you to do me a favor, if push comes to shove I need you to promise me something."

"What?"

"Promise me."

"Nomonde, tell me what you want and I'll decide if i promise or not." Stubborn idiot. I took a deep breath.

"If push comes to shove, promise me you'll save our baby. If one of us has to live make sure it's her."

"No."

"Lungelo."

"No Nomonde." I could feel my palms getting wet. He was crying. "I'm not choosing someone I dont

even know over you." What does that mean? This is his child.

"Lungelo, this is your child, your little princess, you tell her that every day. You have to save her." I know he is shaking his head, judging by my arms being moved side to side.

"I can have a thousand other babies but I can never have another you. So no sthandwa sam, I will save you if I have to. I'd rather you be alive to resent me than to have you dead." The sound of the siren was too close. I'm sure it was now outside the gate. "I'm going to open for the ambulance."

I hear his footsteps walking away. I'm trying so hard to stay calm right now but it feels like with every minute my body is giving up on me. I hold on to the basin and stand up. I feel weak, but if I'm going to die then I have to leave my baby behind. I know Lungelo is being stubborn right now but he will have to be strong, our daughter will need him. And Bontle will need him too.

I hear footsteps coming towards me. Now it's more than one person.

"Mrs Radebe, how are you feeling?" I dont know that voice so I assume it must be a paramedic.

"I dont know. I'm not sure which part of my body hurts the most."

"Okay, we'll get you on the stretcher, your doctor updated us on your condition."

"Sure." I feel him touch my arm holding me up, I hear the sound of wheels coming towards me. "Okay we are going to Hey you on the stretcher now." Does he really have to tell me that every five seconds? Cant he just do his job.

I feel strong arms worm their way behind my knees and on my back. He lifts me up and puts me on the stretcher. Lungelo is so impatient. I get strapped in and a drip is stuck on my arm. It's good that I can't see that cause I hate needles. I feel whatever

strength I had leave me bit by bit.

I dont know when we made it to the hospital. All I know is that I woke up to the sounds of beeping machines and the strong smell of disinfectant fills my nostrils. I can hear voices in the room, whispering voices. I look around the room and it's dark. Then I remember my sight has deserted me. I'm not even sure who is in the room.

"Hey, you are up. You scared us." I feel the frown from on my face. I should know this voice, I mean they wouldnt let anyone other than family in here right. I guess she senses my confusion. "Its me, Kgomotso. I'm here with Khanya." That's a relief. I try to smile but I'm sure she can't even see that with the ventilator stuck to my face. I lift my hand up and try to get it off me. Someone holds my hand and stops me.

"Relax. The doctor will be here soon. Lungelo went to get MaGumede, and Bontle is flying down." The

deep voice let's me it's Khanya. I try to shake my head but it's so heavy. These meds must be dealing with me quite good. I use my other hand and remove the oxygen mask from my face. Breathing is hard but I need to get this off my chest.

"My baby."

"She's still in your tummy. The doctor tried to induce labour but that didnt work so she is preparing for a C-section." Kgomotso answers. I know how dangerous preeclampsia is, and mine is severe, worse than the normal kind. And chances of me getting out of that operating room alive are slim.

"I need a favour." Someone holds my hand and rubs it.

"Anything." Khanya says.

"I know how serious this is. And I know that Lungelo wont do this, but I need you as my lawyer to do one thing for me."

"Of course."

"Save my baby." I hear them gasping, it's a pity I can't see their faces. "If one of us has to come out of this alive please make sure my daughter lives. Please."

"I dont know Nomonde, this is a bit much dont you think?"

"I know it's a lot. But I need you to do this for me. If a choice has to be made, choose my child. As my lawyer please make sure my wishes are met."

Theres silence in the room. I cant see anything but I'm sure he is frowning.

"I'll try my best." I let out a sigh of relief. I put the oxygen mask back on and breath. I feel myself drift away again.



LUNGELO

I've never been so scared in my life. I've come face fo face with some of the most dangerous people in

the world and I stood my ground and feared nothing. But seeing Nomonde like this feels worse than all I've seen and experienced.

When the doctor diagnosed her with preeclampsia four months ago I didn't think it would get this worse. I knew there were dangers and there might be complications but this is beyond me. Her sight has been failing her for a while now, she'd have moments where she couldn't see anything close to her, even watching TV became a bit of a struggle cause she wouldn't be able to see it. She tried to act tough but I could tell she was just as freaked out as I was.

When she said she couldn't see anything I thought it would be just another episode and she would be able to see again. But this time things were more serious. And now I'm sitting in this waiting room as she is being prepped for surgery. MaGumede is here, she's been praying since she got here. I hope God

listens and saves them both. I dont pray like normal people do, I just hope God can atleast listen to MaGumede.

Bonsile and Kgomotso went to Richard's Bay to pick up my mum. I havent told her what's happening right now. She knows Nomonde is not well but telling her about this over the phone would be dangerous. She'd probably drive here, no fly here, and I cant have her getting into an accident. Not today. Khanya went out to buy food for MaGumede. Muzi is doing some guest lecturing at University of Pretoria, but he said he'll be here as soon as possible. I know he is not a Gynaecologist or whatever they call maternity doctors but it would mean a lot to me to have him here, to be my eyes and ears in that operating room.

I look up and my crew walks in one after the other. They were supposed to be here for a baby shower instead we are now gathered in a hospital waiting area.

"Hey man, we came as soon as we heard." Philani says. He turns to MaGumede. "Sawubona ma!" He shakes her hand and sits down.

"I'm going to talk to the doctor." Nate says and walks out.

"How is she holding up?" Lindani asks.

"I dont know man. It seems to get worse by the minute. This morning she couldnt see anything. She even said if push comes to shove, I should make sure I save the baby. What kind of bullshit is that?"

"Hey relax. I'm sure the doctors will do all they can to save them both." Philani answers.

The doctor walks in with Nate now in scrubs. He works fast.

"If you'd like to see her before we take her to the operating room, nows the time." The doctor says. I get up and head to her room with MaGumede behind me. As soon as we see her MaGumede starts

praying. I listen to her pray for about five minutes before she says Amen. She kisses her on the forehead then walks out leaving me alone with her.

"Hey, I know this is scary but you have to fight Okay. Fight for you and fight for our baby. I need you to come back to me Nomonde. You can't show me what love and happiness feel like and then expect me to live the rest of my life without you. I need you MaGumede omncane. I need you mkami, this life without you wont be the same so please fight and come back to me. We can have other kids. But I can never have another you. Please come back to me." The doctor walks back in with Nate. I wipe my tears and kiss her before she is wheeled out.

"She'll be Okay, you know." Nate says.

" I need you to do me a favor Nate, do this for me and I'll never ask you for anything ever again. Bring her back to me. Alive. I need my wife back."

"The doctor was told to save the baby, apparently

her lawyer spoke to her."

"Khanya?"

"I think so."

"Listen to me Nate, I'm begging you, from the bottom of my heart. Save my wife."

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTY ONE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I've prayed a few times in my life before. To be honest I've never understood the concept of one man having power over billions of people. I never understood why everyone had to get down on their knees and beg him even for the simplest of things. The worse part for me, has always been how people call him our father then expects his children to be at his mercy all the time. Isn't a father supposed to move heaven and earth for his children?

But then again people say he listens, he hears us and he answers. In his own time of course. Like a great puppet master, he pulls the strings and we all dance to whatever tune he feels like playing. And right now he is playing with my wife and child's lives.

Unfortunately for me He gives and takes life. So I'm at his mercy. With all the resources at my disposal, none of them can help me bring them back from this safe and sound.

I've been sitting in this chapel for almost an hour now. I've been trying to pray and ask the great puppet master to be merciful but words fail me. My mum and MaGumede have been praying since they got together. They keep telling me God listens, and he hears their prayers, and he will not let Monde and my baby die. At this point I just want Monde back. Dont get me wrong, I love my baby, she's going to be the first child I have experienced loving from conception. At my big age of thirty nine years, I've only experienced this once, and now it all feels like a nightmare. But as much as I love her, I'd rather have Nomonde alive and well, I know her wishes but if it means she has to hate me and resent me then so be it. Atleast she'll be alive to hate me.

I've been watching people walk in and out of here, they get in, kneel down and say what they need to say, get up and walk out again. It's so easy for them to say what they need to say to God but not me, I think my pride is getting the better of me. If I want them to live, the least I can do is swallow my pride and ask the one who holds life in his hands. I got up from the bench and went to the front of the chapel. I knelt down on the cushion at the altar.

"God, you and I don't speak much. I don't ask for much. I try to stay out of your way, well except for when I'm getting people out of the way, but those people deserve it, and I'm pretty sure they are crowding hell not heaven so maybe..... anyways I'm derailing. I came here to ask you for one thing and one thing only. Save my wife. And if you can, save my child too. I can't tell you that I'll be a saint tomorrow if you do this for me but I'm asking anyway. I'm asking for you to please save them. If not for me then for MaGumede and Bontle. I know Monde is trying to save our daughter but she has

another daughter here who needs her. So please, if not for me then listen to MaGumede and Bontle, they need her, they've already lost so much time without her, dont take her from them. Not now. Please save them."

"Amen." I looked behind me and Khanya was standing there. I got up and sat back on the bench. He took a seat behind me. "I've been looking for you all over the place."

"Why?"

"I wanted to make sure you're okay."

"Why do you care? You told the doctor to kill my wife."

"What?"

"You heard me. Why would you tell the doctor to save the baby and let Nomonde die."

"That's not what happened. All I did was tell the doctor Nomonde's wishes."

"Would you feel the same if that was Kgomotso

fighting for her life?" Silence. "I didnt think so. But you're okay with letting my wife die. It's good to know you have my back." I got up.

"I get that you're upset, but Nomonde's wishes also count in this. She's the one who is fighting for her life, she deserves to have a say in all this." I turn around and look at him.

"What about Bontle? Does she get a say? She just got her mother back after so long and you're going to sit there and support this? Really? What about me? Dont I deserve to have love? You have Kgomotso and you're happy. Muzi has Bonsile and he's happy. What about me?" He gets up and takes a deep breath and looks at me.

"Look, I know this is hard. I know how happy you've been with Monde. I'd give anything to have her get out of that operating room with your daughter in her arms. I dont pray, you know that, but for the first time in my life I've prayed, for her, for you, and for my niece to be healthy. I love you and I want to see you

happy, but Monde has her wishes, and they need to be respected. I know how you're feeling....."

"Really? You've watched the woman you love deteriorating before your eyes, watching her fight her own body just to try and save her child? You know that?" He keeps quiet and I walk out.

Maybe I'm just angry, but I don't need anyone telling me about Nomonde's wishes and what she wants. Maybe I'm being selfish. I walk to the waiting area and the doctor is there. She turns around soon as I walk in. She has a smile on her face. I don't want to get my hopes up but I pray it's good news.

"Mr Radebe. I've been waiting for you."

"Okay, what's going on?"

"Well we were able to get the baby out. She's been transferred to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit."

"What about my wife?" Her smile disappears. My heart starts racing.

"She's unfortunately still in the operating room. Getting her blood pressure down has been a bit of a struggle. Dr Samuels is busy with her."

"Shouldnt you be in there helping him?"

"If you want to see your daughter you can go to the NICU." She says then walks out again. Why do I get the feeling that whatever is happening in that operating room is not good. Everyone in here was looking at me like they felt the same way. What if she doesn't come out of there? I dont know how I'm going to be able to live without her in my life. I know I should be grateful that if, God forbid, she doesn't make it out of there, atleast I have a little reminder of our love, our daughter, but will I be able to love her the same without her mother there to raise her?

"Maybe you should go and see her." MaMtolo says bringing me back to reality. I've been standing in the same position the doctor left me in.

"Maybe later."

"Now!" She says sternly. I turn around and walk out

of the waiting room headed to the NICU. I stood by the window watching the baby, I wasn't sure which one it was so I just started at one after the other.

"You can go in. You'll need protective gear but you can still see your baby." A nurse spoke behind me. I faked a smile and followed her to the entrance. She gave me the protective gear and I put it on. "So which one is yours?"

"I'm not sure."

"What's your surname?"

"Radebe."

"Okay. Let's find baby Radebe." She walked down with me behind her like some lost puppy. "Ah, here she is. I'll leave you with her. Call me if you need anything." She stands in front of an incubator with a tiny human being inside. She has something covering her eyes and a tube down her tiny mouth. Her hands are so small, her body looks like it could fit in both my hands. I know sometimes babies are born tiny but should she even be this tiny. Her chest

moves up and down showing that she's breathing. I guess Nomonde got her wish. Our baby is here, alive, fighting for her life, but still here. I guess God listened to all the prayers, now I wonder if He listened to my prayers.



NARRATED

While Lungelo is in the NICU, Nate walks out of the operating room following Nomonde as she is wheeled out. He stops and watches as she is led away. He wipes the sweat from his forehead and walks out to get some fresh air. Philani sees him and follows him out. He finds him in the middle of the parking lot bending over, with his hands on his knees.

Philani takes a few steps forward and stops. He is

not sure what is happening. Nate is a great doctor, anytime any of them or their families were ever in need of medical help, he'd be there to help. It didn't matter where that person was, if he could do something he would be there. And everytime he showed up he would do everything in his power to help. But right now, Philani wasn't sure the outcome was what everyone was hoping for.

He took a step closer to Nate and placed his hands on his back. Nate got up and wiped the tears from his eyes.

"It's going to be Okay. You did the best you could. No one can fault you on that." Nate shakes his head and looks at his friend.

"It's not that, she is okay. For now. She's in ICU."

"That's great. So why are you here? What happened?"

"Her heart stopped, twice. I've lost patients before and I was Okay, it's always a matter of I did the best I could. As painful as it is, it's just another day on the

job."

"And this time?"

"This time I was afraid of having to tell Lungelo that his wife is dead. I know everyone is more concerned about honoring Nomonde's wishes, even the doctor stopped trying to help her when her heart stopped the first time. She was more focused on getting the baby out. I literally had to fight tooth and nail to bring her back. And when I got her pulse back we then had to stabilise her heart rate. When the baby was out her heart stopped again. I spent about ten minutes alternating between a defibrillator and doing CPR till we got a pulse. The doctor called her time of death, but I just couldn't stop. I've never cried in the operating room until today. If miracles really do happen, then I can fully say I experienced one today." Philani brings his friend in and hugs him. The two men shed tears in the middle of the hospital parking lot with only the moon and stars as witnesses.

After a while they pull apart, wipe their tears and

walk back into the hospital. They meet Dr Mseleku at reception.

"Dr Samuels. I take it you've done the paperwork for Mrs Radebe?" She says.

"What paperwork?"

"For Mrs Radebe's death."

"Dr Mseleku, Mrs Radebe is in ICU as we speak." She opens her mouth in shock.

"What? But her heart stopped. You tried to resuscitate her and failed."

"No. I didnt fail. I'm not that big on God and His shenanigans but this time around I'll give him credit. He pulled through."

"So she's okay?"

"She's critical right now. So the next 48 hours we'll have to watch her."

"Understood. I'm sorry I doubted you."

"Dont be. You were just honoring the patients wishes. No one can fault you on that. I'm going to let the

family know. Would you like to come with?"

"Sure."

They all walk to the waiting area. As soon as they get in everyone stands up. Nate looks around, looking for Lungelo.

"He is with the baby." Lindani answers Nates silent question.

"Oh, okay. Uhm, I'm sure Dr Mseleku has updated you on the baby. Well Nomonde is out of theater, she's now in ICU."

"So she'll be Okay?" MaGumede asks.

"Right now we have to wait and see. The next 48 hours will be critical. We have to watch her close. Her heart stopped a couple of times before so we need to monitor that."

"Oh thank you God. Can we see her?" MaGumede asks.

"I'll take you to her but it will have to be one person at a time. I also need to find Lungelo and update

him."

"In the meantime MaGumede will go see her."

MaMtolo says.

Nate walks out with MaGumede. Bontle follows behind them and goes to the NICU. She finds Lungelo walking out.

"Hey, is everything okay?" Lungelo asks her. She stands by the window looking at the babies.

"So which one is my sister?" He points her out and Bontle smiles.

"I've always wanted a sister. I know now theres Princess but a sister from your father's side is not the same as one from your mothers. It's just different." Lungelo smiled.

"I guess. So how are you feeling?"

"I'll be okay. They will be Okay. Mums a fighter, and clearly my sister is a fighter too."

"Well she has a fighter for a big sister, so we can't expect any less from her." Bontle laughs as Nate

joins them.

"Hey man, I've been looking for you."

"What's wrong? Is everything okay?"

"Everything is fine. Nomonde is in ICU. You can go see her....." Lungelo ran off before Nate could even finish his sentence, making him laugh. Nate turned to Bontle.

"Hey big sister, are you okay?"

"I'm good."

"You can go see her too if you want."

"I will. Thank you, for saving her life."

"Just doing my job."

"I think I want to be an obstetrician. It's crazy the hoops and volcanos women go through just to bring a life into the world. And somehow they come out on the other side like superman emerging from a crash."

"I think you'll make a great obstetrician. Come on, let's go see your mum."

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTY TWO

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

It's been 168 hours, 10 080 minutes, 604 800 seconds since Nomonde was wheeled into ICU. But who is counting. It feels like with each passing minute I'm losing her. I know she's here, alive and breathing, but i cant help feeling like we are just holding on to dreams and hope. But then again they say hope has never killed anyone.

The baby is doing well. Although she was born underweight she's improving every day. Doctors have had to watch her heart and liver growth. For a while her heart had complications because of the preeclampsia, but doctors have been quite great, making sure she fights. And boy is she a fighter. I just hope she didnt suck all the fighting spirit from

her mother.

I stood by the glass window watching her. She was now out of the incubator, she has been transferred to a crib. Although she still has the tubes on her body and the oxygen one inside her mouth, she's gained some weight and she's looking normal again.

"She needs a name." Someone says behind me. I turn and find Nate standing there. I turn back to the window and he joins me.

"Nomonde will kill me if I give her an ugly name. So I'll wait for her to wake up."

"Fair enough. But a baby can have more than one name. We can't be calling her baby Radebe." I chuckle. Maybe her name should be Baby Radebe.

"I dont know man. I was thinking of naming her Iminathi."

"Nice. It's a beautiful name. I'm sure Nomonde will love it." Its a beautiful name. And it fits her birth. The

Lord was with us, that's the only way to explain her and her mother making it out of that operating room still breathing.

"I hope so. She can give her another name if she wants."

"Yeah. By the way. I'm bringing in a neurosurgeon to check on Nomonde."

"Why? What's wrong?"

"Nothing. I just need to make sure everything is okay. Remember her heart stopped twice. The longest being for ten minutes. And that's ten minutes with little oxygen to her brain."

"Didn't she have a ventilator on?"

"She did. But this is just to make sure we are on the safe side."

"Let me guess, the neurosurgeon is Ngcebo?" He laughs. That's my answer.

"You know he is one of the best. He'll be here in an hour."

"I know. Thanks man. I owe you my life."

"Its cool man. You know I got your back."

"Let me go check on Nomonde."

We parted ways and I went to Nomonde's ward. She was still in ICU but in a private ward. The beeping sounds welcomed me in as soon as I opened the door. She laid in the same position she was in when I left her an hour ago. I really wish she'd just wake up. I pulled the chair up and sat down. My elbows were resting on the bed. I took her hand into mine and they were so warm. Almost like she would tell me my hands are cold. I kissed her hand and just stared at her.

"You have to get up now MaGumede, put banies need their mummy. I named our daughter Iminathi. I hope you like it. And if you dont you'll just have to live with it. Or better yet, give her your own name too. Until then, my name wins." I chuckled alone like a retard. And my smile turned to tears running down my face. "I cant do this without you Nomonde. You

have to come back to me. I need you. I really really need you." I kept planting kisses on her hand. I laid my head down on the bed with her hand still in mine, until I fell asleep.

When I woke up a nurse was busy checking something on the monitors. I lifted my head up and she smiled at me.

"I'm sorry I didn't mean to wake you." She said as she wrote something on Monde's file. They have mastered the art of working in silence. I've fallen asleep in here and woke up to find her sheets had been changed, her drip filled and I thought I was a light sleeper.

"It's okay. Listen I need to go home and take a proper shower. Will you call me if anything changes, no matter how small?"

"Of course. I will let you know. And I'll keep an eye on her." I kissed Monde's hand and walked out.

I remembered soon as I got out of the hospital that I didn't bring my car. When I came here I was in an ambulance with Nomonde. I would request an Uber but I left my wallet at home. I text Muzi and ask him to come pick me up. Ten minutes later he is here. I get in the car and he drives off.

"How's Nomonde?"

"Still the same. I just need to take a proper shower then come back."

"You need a nap too, and some proper food. I told mum you were coming so I'm sure she already has something cooking."

"Thanks. My back hurts like hell."

"Sleeping on a couch for a week will do that to you."

We get home and the entire Radebe clan is here judging by the many cars in the driveway.

"Who is here?"

"Everyone." Muzi answers and gets out of the car. I follow him in and the moment we open the door there is so much noise you would think we are in a stadium. They keep quiet when they see us. I take a seat on the couch and everyone looks at me like they are expecting some bad news.

"She's fine." Relief washes over all of them.

"And the baby?" MaGumede asks.

"She's okay. She's getting bigger."

"Thank God. You still haven't named her yet?"

MaMtolo asks.

"I named her Iminathi. I'm not sure if Monde will like it."

"She will. It's a beautiful name." My uncle says.

"Okay, I am going to take a shower. I need to go back to the hospital."

"Can I come with you?" Bontle asks. She's been to the hospital everyday since this whole thing hapoened. More than anything I can see she's

worried about her mum.

"Sure. Let me just bath then we'll go."

"In the meantime I'll make you something to eat."
Mum says.

I get up and go upstairs. My bedroom is clean. The last time I was here I thought I was about to lose my wife and kid. And now I'm back here I cant help but see Nomonde in every book and cranny of this room. I lay down on the bed facing the ceiling and the clean scent of the linen reminds me of her. She refuses to sleep in the same linen for more than a week. She says you have to change the linen while it still smells the fabric softener. I close my eyes and picture her walking around naked, looking at herself in the floor length mirror with her baby bump on display. Every week she would stand there and take a picture of her growing tummy. It's a pity she didnt get to take a picture on the last day of her pregnancy.

I open my eyes and get off the bed. I take my shower

and it feels so refreshing. I stay under the water for a good fifteen minutes just soaking it all in and letting emotions I didnt even know I was holding in go. The water hides my tears and washes them away, and with it goes the fear and panic I've been feeling. She'll be okay. I know she will be. I refuse to believe anything else.

I get off the shower and wrap a towel around my waist and go back to the bedroom. As soon as I open the closet the smell of her perfume hits my nostrils sending a thousand memories into my mind. I close my eyes and take it all in. At this point, every little reminder I get of her presence in this house and in my life gets to be pushed to the forefront of my mind to carry me through this.

I get some pants and a tshirt. I lotion and get dressed. As I'm putting on my sneakers my phone rings. Its Nate. I immediately go into panic mode. What if it's bad news. My heart is racing. I look at the

phone and just when it's about to go to voicemail I pick it up.

"Hey."

"Hey. Listen are you on your way back?" I cant read anything from his voice. I'm not sure if him calling me is a good thing or a bad thing.

"Not yet. I was about to eat."

"Take a lunchbox and come back."

"What's going on Nate?"

"I'll tell you when you get here." He hangs up. Now I'm really scared. I spray some perfume and grab a cap. I walk back downstairs and Bontle is ready to leave.

"You're leaving already?" Mum asks walking in from the kitchen.

"I have to. Nate just called. He wants me back at the hospital."

"Is everything okay?"

"I dont know."

"Let me dish up for you, you'll eat at the hospital."
She goes back to the kitchen and comes back with a
Tupperware full of food.

"Is this for me or the whole hospital?"

"Mxm. You need to eat. Anyways let me grab my bag.
I'm coming with you." She says already walking up
the stairs.

"Me too." MaGumede says and follows her friend.

I say my goodbyes and go start the car. There are
about two cars parked in my way, getting out of here
will be a struggle. I maneuver the car as slowly as
possible till I get a way out. I dont have time to go
back inside and ask people to move their cars. O
wait for about five minutes before the three ladies
join me.

We drive to the hospital and make our way in. We

find Nate at Reception with Ngcebo.

"Nate, hi."

"Hey man, you're here. Sanbonani." He greets the ladies and my mum and MaGumede seem shocked to hear him speak Zulu. I'm sure if they heard him having a full blown conversation in Zulu they would faint.

"So what's going on man? Your call sounded urgent."

"Yeah. This is Dr Ngcebo Dlamini. He is the neurosurgeon I told you about. He has an update on Nomonde's cat scans." I shake his hand and wait for him to speak.

"Its nice to meet you. I took a look at the scans and so far everything seems good. The ventilator being on while Nate revived her sent some oxygen to her brain. It wasnt much but it was enough to make sure she doesnt have any lasting damage." Ngcebo says. I know he is the best at this, but I will fully believe that when Nomonde wakes up.

"So when she wakes up there won't be any complications?"

"We will have to wait and see about that. For now though everything seems to be on the right track."

"Okay. Thank you."

"You're welcome."

"Let me go check on Nomonde."

"I'll walk with you. Ngcebo, I'll speak to you later man. And thanks for coming so soon." Nate says.

"Anytime."

We walk to Monde's ward speaking about nothing in particular. I open the door and walk in. I stop dead in my tracks when I see her. The ventilator is out of her mouth. She's breathing on her own.

"When did you remove the ventilator?"

"About an hour ago. Just before I called you."

"Are you sure she doesnt need it?"

"How about you ask her yourself." He walks towards the bed and shakes Nomonde a bit. Her eyes fly open. She looks at Nate confused before she looks around the room. She smiles when she sees us. The ladies quickly rush to her.

"Oh mntanami. God has answered my prayers." MaGumede says before breaking out in prayer. Bontle and my mum close their eyes. Nate pat's me on the shoulder and whispers 'surprise' before quietly walking out. I cant keep my eyes off of her. She looks at me and gives me a faint smile. I take a few steps close until I'm right next to her. She lifts her one hand up and I hold it. I pull the chair close and take a seat. MaGumede says Amen and wipes her tears. I dont have the strength to wipe my own tears so I let them be.

"You look like shit." Nomonde says making us laugh. Her voice us a bit raspy and dry.

"Its those masks you keep putting on my face. I told

you they'll make me ugly." She gives me another faint smile.

"My baby, where is she?"

"She's in the NICU. I'll take you to her when you're strong enough."

"Speaking of her, I'm going to see my sister." Bontle says and makes an exit. The two besties follow her.

"I cant believe you came back to me. And you can see."

"I cant believe it either. The doctor did say one of us might make it out of theatre alive, so how did we both make it out?"

"That is a story for another day Sthandwa sam. For now I'm just happy you're here."

"Our baby. What did you name her? I hope you didnt give her an ugly name." I chuckle.

"I named her Iminathi. I figured the only way you both made it out of theater alive was because God was with us." She smiles.

"Its beautiful. Iminathi Radebe. I like it. Does that

mean you'll come to church with me now." I laugh.

"I'm not promising anything but I'll think about it. I do need to thank the big guy for giving you back to me." She shifts a bit then pats the bed next to her. I get on the bed and hold her close to me. I know she's been here the whole time but being able to hold her and have her child me back feels like a dream. She's back. Back in my arms and back in my life. I'm not sure what I did for God to grant me this second chance at love, but I sure hope I keep doing it.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTY THREE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I've been in hospital for almost three weeks now. I hate it here and I really need to be in my bed. I should have been discharged a week ago but the men I married pulled some strings just to make sure I stay here until he is satisfied that I'm fine. I wonder who died and made him God.

I walk back from the nursery after feeding my baby. Yes, she has been moved to the nursery. She's breathing on her own now, although doctors still want to monitor her respiratory functions, so far she's been acing all her tests. My phone has now become her own gallery, I have a zillion pictures of her doing even something as mundane as sleeping. I cant help it though. She's so cute and looks just like

her daddy. I wish I could say she has my nose at least but no, she is a spitting image of her father. All the hell I went through and not a single thing to identify her as mine except the birth certificate. The betrayal.

I get to my room and find Bontle laying on the bed. This one also refuses to go back to school until I come home. She's being having virtual classes, at least she's not missing out on anything. I take my gown off and get on the bed next to her.

"Hey, when did you get here?"

About five minutes ago. I wanted to see you before I leave."

"Leave? Weren't you adamant you are not going anywhere until I'm home?"

"I was, but baba convinced me to go, and he promised to take care of you and Imi."

"So you trust him more than you trust me?"

"Yes. Just the other day you told doctors not to save

your life so...." I sigh and close my eyes.

"I'm sorry about that."

"Its fine. I know where you were coming from but it would have been nice for me to be considered before making your decision." I can hear the hurt in her voice. I know I was being selfish. But in my defense, I just wanted both my kids to be alive and Okay even if that meant me losing my life. But in my decision I completely failed to protect the one who was already here and making sure she still has her mother even through all this.

"I know. I'm sorry. I thought I was doing what was best for you and Imi, I figured you're grown. I know you're not an adult yet but you are a smart young woman, and I knew you'd be okay."

"When did you become a prophet? Bushiri left you with his powers?" The disrespect!

"Okay I know you're upset, with good reason but that doesn't give you a right to talk to me like that. I'm still your mother." I'm trying so hard to stay calm

right now.

"Yeah and you forgot that didnt you."

"Bontle! I've said I'm sorry. And I'm here aren't I?"

"No thanks to you. I'm going to see my sister. I'll see you when I get back from school." She jumps of the bed and walks out.

Maybe I deserve that. I mean I didnt raise her and now I was willing to sacrifice myself for my other child to live. Talk about being caught between a rock and a hard place. I grab the bottle of water from the side table and take a sip. I can feel the tears filling up my eyes. I wipe them when I hear the door opening. I look up and Lungelo looks at me confused and concerned all at the same time. He walks over to me and wraps me in a hug. I sob silently on his chest and he just let's me be. When I've sobbed enough I pull back and wipe my tears.

"I take it you spoke to Bontle?"

"Spoke. More like she shouted at me and called me selfish."

"She said that?"

"Not in so many words. But I don't blame her, maybe I was selfish."

"You were. But it doesn't matter now, you are here and that's all that counts."

"Aren't you supposed to be comforting me instead of calling me selfish as well?" Isn't that every man's job. When a woman tells you she's fat you tell her she's not, and when she says she's selfish you say she's not. Did he not get the memo.

"I'm not going to comfort you with a lie. You were selfish. You didn't think about me or Bontle. Not even your mother crossed your mind. I know why you were willing to sacrifice yourself but do you think Iminathi would have been happy knowing her mother died to save her? You didn't think about any of that. I love you, you know that. But I'm not going to lie to you even when you're wrong. I'm grateful Imi is here

and getting healthier by the day, but I still would have chosen your life any day. We could have had more kids, theres surrogates and adoptions. We would have been fine. Hurt, yes, but still fine."

Talk about a mouthful of hurt. I guess no one will ever understand my point of view and why I took the decision I took. But through some miracle I'm here, and so is my baby. That's all I need to focus on. I take the Nandos paperbag and dig in. I can feel his eyes boring into me. But I don't have the energy to fight with him right now. So I'll just focus on my food.

"So you arent talking to me now?" He asks as I bite into a juicy piece of meat. I ignore him and keep eating. "Fine. I'll go check on my baby." He gets up and leaves. The moment he walks out the door the meat loses its taste. It's like he took it with him.

Mxm.

I switch on the TV and see Amanda's court

appearance happening live. This must be a big deal for it to be shown. I turn the volume up and the prosecutor is speaking.

'Your honour as we've stated previously we are asking for the maximum sentence to be given. Not only did the suspect attempt to kill Mr Mashile she also helped frame her own sister, Miss Nomonde Mashile for the crime. Her sister spent fifteen years behind bars for a crime she didnt commit. According to prison records, not only was her sister assaulted, both physically and sexually, she was forced to have a countless number of abortions because of the assaults she suffered. The Mashile's also had a hand in making sure she not only spent more time in prison but her assaults were also orchestrated by the late Mr Lesego Mashile. Not only did the prison warden and guards have a hand in these assaults we have also found out that she is not the only one who suffered some of these assaults but of course hers was a bit more severe as it was orchestrated on the outside. Mrs Amanda Mashile needs to pay for her

crimes my lord. And on top of the charges on the table we would like to add more to the charge of defeating the ends of justice. It has come to our attention that the evidence in this case was stolen a few days ago. Fortunately for us we got an anonymous tip off before the evidence was stolen so all they took were copies of the docket. As you can see the docket is right in front of you with all the evidence including her confession. So this is just a formality. The prosecution rests.'

I sit there shocked out of my mind. How did Amanda even get someone to steal the evidence? And here I was thinking she had grown and learnt to take accountability for her own actions. Now she's going to get a longer sentence for trying to break the law while inside prison. I guess this is why her case was constantly being postponed. I switch the TV off and choose to focus on my own life from now on. If Amanda wants to throw her life away then I wont stop her. It's her life afterall.

I get off the bed and walk to the nursery. Bontle might be angry at me but I can't have her going back to Joburg before we even talk about this. She's my baby afterall. I get to tha nursery and she has Imi in her arms. Lungelo is busy taking pictures of them. Although the drip is still stuck in her tiny body, she's getting stronger.

I stand by the glass and watch them joking and laughing. I cant believe I was willing to not be a part of this.

"You should be in there too." Someone says behind me. I turn around and find Nate standing there. I smile and turn back to the sight before me.

"You know you can go home now. I'm fine." He walks around and comes to stand next to me.

"I know. But I can only rest when my patients are home."

"Do you think I was selfish for wanting to save my child? I mean I already had one, maybe I was being selfish on her. She just got to know what it's like to

have a mother and I almost took that away from her."

"There's nothing selfish about a mother choosing her child. And if you keep thinking about it you'll drive yourself crazy. You're here, alive and well. That alone is a miracle. So just be grateful and be happy. Your kids still get to have a mum."

"And I owe all that to you."

"No. You owe it all to God. I'm not a believer but I can tell you now, you wouldn't be standing here if God didn't want you to. I was just a vessel he used."

"For a none believer you sure do sound like one." He chuckles.

"Well I try. Let me go check on my wife. I'm sure by now she's bored at the hotel."

"So she goes wherever you go?"

"Not all the time. She comes only if I'll stay longer than two days. Lucky for her, her schedule is flexible so while I work she gets a mini holiday."

"Lucky her. Thanks again, for everything."

"Anytime. You're part of the family now, so when you call, we'll show up. No matter the time or place." He pats my shoulder and leaves.

I decide to join these three. I walk into the nursery. I play with Imi a bit until she falls asleep in Bontle's arms.

"She looks nothing like me." I say out loud and these two laugh.

"It goes to show whose gene's are stronger." Lungelo says.

"Your genes must be really weak cause I look nothing like you either." Bontle adds. She's right. She looks nothing like me. Except her nose and ears. At least I got something there. But this one refused to even acknowledge me.

"I'm going to see Nate before he leaves." Lungelo announces and leaves. I know what he is trying to do and I'm grateful for it. Bontle puts Imi down and we

walk out.

"I'm sorry I shouted at you." She says as we walk back to my room.

"Its okay. I deserved it. I know my decision was selfish, but truth be told, I wouldnt change it. I'd give my life for my children, you and Imi are the most important people in my life and if I had to choose between your life and mine, I would give mine up in the blink of an eye. It's not about choosing one child over the other, its choosing life, for both of you. I know it won't make sense now, but one day when you have kids you'll understand. I just pray you never get to be in the position I was in."

"It doesnt matter now. What's important is that you're here and so is Imi. That's all that matters now." She says and gives me a hug. "I have to get going. My plane leaves in about three hours and I still need to pack."

"Okay. I'll miss you."

"I'll miss you too. I'll call every single day."

"To talk to me or to Imi?" She laughs. "Both. But

maybe mostly her, we'll see."

"Whatever. Just take care of yourself, and focus on school."

"That goes without saying." We hug again and she leaves. I watch her as she walks away. My baby is so grown.

I get back into my room and get on the bed. I hear a knock on the door before my husband pokes his head in.

"Is it safe to come in or you're still mad at me?" I roll my eyes and he walks in laughing. He joins me on the bed and we cuddle. "I'm not going to apologize for what I said." He whispers in my ear.

"I know. And I wasn't expecting you to."

"Good. Let's take a nap while Imi is napping too."

"Who is taking Bontle to the airport?"

"Philni and Lindani. They are also going back to Joburg."

"They've also been here for the past three weeks?"

"No, they just came to check up on us."

"I like your friends. They seem nice."

"I know. They are more than friends. They've become family. Maybe one of these days we'll go with them on a trip and you'll get to know them better." He says sounding so far away. His voice speaking in my ear and his chest moving up and down are all that I needed to fall asleep.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTY FOUR

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Finally I'm home. Back in my bed and back in my space. The great part about my discharge is that Imi also got discharged too so we came home together, her pink haven fits her perfectly. Although I still think Lungelo went a bit overboard but she'll grow into it and we can always change the paint later on.

We came home to find the nursery full of gifts. All types of gifts. I didnt even know I had that many friends to send me baby gifts. I figured theres too many of them, I'll see them tomorrow. I went to our bedroom after putting Imi down and took a shower. I put on pyjamas and went downstairs. My mom and MaMtolo are still here. I find them drinking tea in the kitchen.

"Makoti, shouldn't you be resting?" MaMtolo asks looking concerned.

"I think I've done enough resting to last me a lifetime ma." She chuckles. My mum is looking at me weird. A part of me knows she's going to say something about my decision to save Imi and letting me die if they had to. But I'm tired of hearing that. It's done, it's over. I just wish we could move on from it.

"What's for dinner?" It's not even four o'clock yet. I just need something to break the ice.

"We haven't started cooking yet. What do you feel like having?" Mamtolo asks.

"Anything is fine. I just miss having a home cooked meal."

"But we always cooked for you. Didn't Lungelo bring you food at the hospital?"

"He did. But then he'd eat most of it and then get me takeaways."

"Lesdididi somfana (this stupid boy.)" She says and gets down from her seat. "Today he will know me. We Lungelo." She shouts as she heads to the study where Lungelo is leaving me with these bulging deadly eyes before me.

"I'm sorry." I take a seat next to her.

"For what?"

"For everything. I didnt mean to be selfish."

"Okay."

"Just like that?" She sighs and puts down the cup of tea.

"For fifteen years I was lucky if I saw you once a year. And in just over a year, I was getting used to being able to see you anytime I wanted. I could talk to you anytime of the day or night, as a mother I know why you made that decision, but as YOUR mother, it hurt."

"I know. And I'm sorry." I can see her eyes getting glossy from the tears filling them up.

"I'm glad God answered my prayers and brought you both out of this alive and well. I don't know how I would have been able to survive without you when I just got you back. But I'm glad I will never know." I give her a hug and feel her tears fall on my shoulder. She pulls away after a while and wipes her tears.

"So what do you want to have for dinner?" She asks, her smile back on her face.

"Oxtail and dumplings with chakalaka and beetroot with mayonnaise." She laughs so loud I'm sure even Imi heard her.

"This is not a restaurant sisi, yoh."

"Your bestie will help you. That's why you're both here mosi." I take an apple from the fridge and head back to the nursery. I'm sure I can open some of these gifts.

I struggle to sit on the fluffy rug because of my stitches. But after a bit of manoeuvring I make it. I

take a pink gift bag with a flamingo on it and read the card. It's from my colleague's. I smile like a retard. Most of the people I work with are younger than me, but we've become friends, and I learn a lot from them. Especially when it comes to new things they learned while I was stuck in prison. Speaking of which, I need to register again and finish up my honors. And maybe even get a masters too. I open the gift and it's a baby pink stuffed animal. It has an instructions leaflet. I read through it and it allows me to record my voice so my baby can hear it anytime. I hold it close to me and cuddle it.

The door closes and I look up to find Lungelo looking like he has seen a ghost.

"What's wrong?" I ask him.

"Why would you sell me out to my mother like that? She almost beat me up for starving you." My worry disappears and I laugh. It's quite cute how him and his brothers still somewhat 'fear' their mum. Its adorable.

"Well technically speaking you did starve me. I'll forgive you if you help me open these." I point to the gifts with my hand. He smiles and seats down across from me.

We open a couple of presents while laughing then miss sleepy head decides to make her presence known. And of course the moment Lungelo picks her up she completely forgets that she was crying and starts making baby sounds. Their bond is quite beautiful already. I can tell she already has him wrapped around her little finger.

"I think I'll need a son so I can be close to someone since this one clearly has chosen her favourite parent." I joke and laugh a bit but this man doesn't find me amusing. I look at him and he has a frown on his face. "What?"

"We are not having more kids. Imi is just fine."

"Of course we are. Don't you want to have a son to carry your name?"

"I have sons. Khanya and Muzi have sons so we good. Besides, who said girls cant carry their fathers names?"

"Well according to tradition they get married and take their husbands names."

"Maybe, but my Imi will not get married. In fact she will be the one to carry my name. Forever and ever. Right baby?" His smile has returned and he is busy playing with Imi. "And besides, after what you went through, I'd rather die before watching you go through that again."

Maybe he has a point. But there are more ways to make babies, and one of these days I'll convince him about it. Imi needs a playmate.



3 MONTHS LATER

Imi is officially four months. She's now a cute fat little girl with the cutest baby rolls on her arms and legs. I have about a couple of weeks before I return to work. Although I have been working from home for atleast two days in a week for a couple of hours. Its helping me get back to the work vibe. Lungelo has decided that we are going away on a couples trip with his friends. They are nice people so I'm game.

Imi will be spending time with her grandmothers. Since they couldnt decide who will take her they made the decision to both come to our house that way they can both take care of her. They've been fussing over her since they got here. I hope they won't spoil her too much. I finished packing our stuff and took a shower. Lungelo went to check on work before we leave. I finished with my shower and got dressed. My stitches have healed, although the scar is still visible I've been rubbing it with tissue oil, I'm not sure if it will help but I'm hopeful.

By the time Lungelo comes back the bags are already by the door, I'm ready to go. I deserve a holiday. I just hope we aren't going out of the country. I still need to be able to get on a plane and come home if anything happens to my baby. Lungelo walked in and almost laughed when he saw the bags by the door.

"And now? Anxious much?" He says coming to the lounge.

"We have to be at the airport in an hour and a half. We are already late." He picks up Imi from MaMtolo and plays with her totally ignoring me. He really wants to piss me off even before we leave Durban. He kisses her a few times making her laugh. I try to focus on her laugh to calm myself down. After what feels like forever he hands her to me and I kiss her then hand her back to her gogo.

"Now we can go before you bite my head off." He says looking at me. I notice how amused these two are. But I'm not about to give him the satisfaction.

He takes the bags and loads them up in the car while I kiss my baby goodbye. I know I was anxious to leave but now it feels so wrong leaving her behind. Lungelo even has to pull me out of the house. I can see her little eyes getting teary. My poor baby.

"And somehow you were mad at me for being late now you cant even leave her alone. Women?" He mutters as he starts the car. I take a deep breath and close my eyes as we drive out. I dont want to see the house fade away, otherwise I might just end up staying.

"Do you think she'll be Okay?" He chuckles.

"She'll be fine. Besides, the gogo's will call us if anything happens. We will keep our phones on."

"I guess. I'm not sure how I'm going to survive going back to work. We'll need to find her a nanny soon." He frowns.

"What nanny?"

"You know what a nanny is Lungelo, we can't leave her in the house alone."

"I know that. But I don't want some strange woman in my house."

"We could always get a manny."

"A what?"

"A Male nanny. They exist you know."

"Not happening. In this day and age, I'm not leaving my baby with a strange man." Okay he has a point there. "I will watch her."

"And work?"

"You know my job is flexible. I only go to the club or the office when there is a need. And her granny is just down the road, I'm sure she'll be happy to watch her for those few hours when I need to be at work."

"Fine. I guess that could work."

We pull up to the tarmac, yes the tarmac, not the parking lot where most people park before heading

to check in. There are two women, who look like flight attendants already waiting for us. They are beautiful.

"Mr and Mrs Radebe, we've been expecting you. You can board, we'll take the luggage. We will take off shortly." They say with the most professional smiles on their faces.

"Thank you ladies. Baby lets go." He holds my hand and we head to a plane. It's written Biyela Holdings in bold letters on the side.

He helps me up the stairs and judging by the noise, we are in a private jet. We get in and find Nate, Philani and Lando, well they are the only three people I know here. As soon as I walk in one of the ladies hands me a glass of champagne and drags me to the where the women are gathered. I greet and take a seat.

"Don't mind that one, she's obsessed with wine." Lando says as she takes a seat next to me.

"Its champagne darling. Champagne!" The champagne lady announces with a twang, the others just laugh.

"My bad, she's obsessed with champagne. You remember me right?"

"Of course."

"Good. The champagne lady, that's Bulelwa Samuels, Nates gangster wife. That's Faith Dlamini-Ngcobo, Mbuso's wife, Takisani Ndlovu, Lindani's wife, we call her Taki for short, Qhawekazi Biyela-Ziqubu, Philani's only sister and Sizwe's wife. You'll meet Gcina in Cape Town."

"Its nice to meet all of you." They smile and raise their glasses.

"Dont worry about the men, you'll get to know them later." Taki says. I like them. They seem like they are chilled out sweet people. I hope I don't embarrass myself or Lungelo.



NARRATED

At the Hawks offices, Detective Maharaj is in his office staring at the wall in front of him with pictures of Philani, Nate, Lindani, Sizwe, Razor and Sbu, with another picture that has no face on it. His partner, Detective Theron walks in with two cups of coffee and hands his partner one.

"You'll drive yourself crazy staring at that wall." Theron says and takes a seat next to his friend. "Its been what? Almost a year, and we still have no lead on what really happened to Vladimir."

"My gut tells me these guys are involved." He answers not taking his eyes off the wall.

"Maybe. But we can't prove it."

"If we can find out who the Shadow Assassin is, we'll have solved this case."

"Its been almost twenty years my friend. No one can

tell us who that person is. We can't even say whether it's a man or woman cause he or she is that good."

"I know man, I know. I just need one clue. Just one and we could nail these guys. If we can tie them to Vladimir's death, then we can solve the Mashile attack."

"You still believe that wasn't an accident?"

"Not a chance man. That was no accident. If it was the Mashile staff members, or some of them at least would have died too. But every single one of them got out, even the catering team came out. Even though they lost everything in that fire some anonymous donor gives them half a million rands, with no explanation. Trust me that was a deliberate attack, and it involves Vladimir somehow."

"Speculations wont get us anywhere, we need proper evidence. If we can just get a lead, no matter how small."

An officer knocks on the door before popping his head in.

"Detectives, there's a woman here to see you." He announces.

"Who is she?"

"I don't know. But she insists on talking to you."

"Let her in." He nods his head and walks out. He comes back a few seconds later with a woman behind him. When she is inside the office he walks out, closing the door behind him.

"Ma'am, what can we do for you?" Maharaj asks. The lady takes a seat and holds her bag close to her chest. She looks at the wall then looks back at them.

"I have something you need. Information."

"We could do with some information. What is it?" Theron asks. She gets up and goes to the wall. She points to the faceless picture.

"I can tell you who that is." They look at each other, feeling hopeful but apprehensive at the same time. They are certain no one knows the Shadow Assassin, they've been searching for him for almost twenty

years and no one can even tell them his gender, let alone his name.

"Okay, who is it?" Theron asks, he knows his friend will take whatever this woman says, but not him. He needs to be sure this girl knows what she's talking about.

"His name is Lungelo Radebe. He owns a couple of clubs in Durban, and another one right here in Jozi." They look at each other, hope written all over Maharaj's face while his friend has his doubts.

"A club owner. Not some gangster or drug lord, but a club owner. Are you serious?" Theron asks on the verge of laughter. The lady walks back to the door.

"Believe me or dont. I dont care. I've told you what you need to know. It's up to you whether you follow up on it or not." She says before walking out leaving the two men confused.

"What do you think?" Theron asks.

"It's worth looking into." Maharaj replies already on his computer typing away.

"Come on man, a whole club owner, not a drug lord or mafia or something criminal but a club owner. This girl could be playing us."

"Maybe. But we wont know until we investigate. What do we have to lose?" Maharaj asks.

"Fine. But if we dont find anything, you're buying me lunch for a whole year." Theron says and gets to his desk.

Maharaj feels like this could be clue he's been looking for. Twenty years he has been trying to get the Shadow Assassin, if this girl is right, this could be his ticket to the top.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTY FIVE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Sea, sun, sand, fresh breeze and lots and lots of cocktails, virgin cocktails but cocktails nonetheless. We've been in Camps Bay for almost four days now but I already need new luggage from all the shopping we've been doing. These girls can shop. I guess it helps that they have black, no limit cards. Well their husbands do. I have millions in my bank account but I still draw up a budget every month end. I need to know how much I'm spending and where. Old habits die hard I guess.

We rented a house in Camps Bay for the trip. It was beautiful and private. It had a huge pool and a private beach. I've watched the sunrise twice now and I can safely say, it looks so much better here.

Okay maybe that's an exaggeration, but its beautiful.

Lungelo and the guys are out by the pool drinking and braaiing while we make the pap and salads. We decided to have a braai before going back home in a couple of days. I miss my baby. Although I call home every two hours I still miss her. Even a video call doesn't do much for me. I want to hold her chubby cheeks and kiss them all day long. I'm pretty sure I wont be able to cope when I go back to work.

"Earth to Nomonde." Buli says snapping her fingers in my face. "He is right outside, there is no need to daydream about him." She says and we all erupt in laughter.

"I was actually thinking about my baby. I miss her." I hear ncoohs and I blush.

"Two more days and she'll be back in your arms." Lando says.

"I guess. How will I cope when I go back to work?"

When I had Bontle I didnt need to work as much, but now its different."

There is absolutely nothing different. You have millions in your bank account, you have a husband who is monied, you can always be a stay at home mum." Taki says. She has all that and she's still teaching.

"True. But you all have that too and you still have jobs."

"I dont." Kazi says lifting her glass in the air. We laugh and raise our glasses too.

"So you went to school to sit at home with that degree?" Taki asks. I'm also wondering the same thing.

"Of course I'm using it. I studied Business management and I help Sizwe with his businesses." She answers, clearly not convincing cause we are all looking at her with raised eyebrows.

"And how many times a year do you do that?" Faith

asks.

"Once a month, like a period." She answers and sips her champagne. We all laugh. We continue cooking while chatting about anything and everything. From the outside you would think they are snobs but once you get to know them they are actually sweet and kind. I think I'm going to enjoy getting to know them better.

We were almost done with cooking when some guy barged into the house with a file in his hand. He looked like he had some pressing matters to discuss.

"Sbusiso, you do know they are on vacation right?" Lando asks. The guy smiles and scratches his head.

"Eish sisters, I know but this is urgent. But I'll be out of your hair in no time." He answers.

"You need a girlfriend. Are you sure you've exhausted all avenues to find one? I can help you, you know. I know a whole lot of people." I've concluded that Buli

has absolutely zero filter. But Sbusiso doesn't seem to mind cause he is laughing.

"I'll let you know when I'm ready to meet someone." He says. Buli rolls her eyes and walks away.

"They are out by the pool." Taki tells him. He nods his head and walks out.

"Theres trouble." Kazi says.

"What kind of trouble.?" I ask. I'm just getting to know these people and since Lungelo works with them I might as well familiarize myself with the in's and out's of this group. I cant be the weakest link. If there is even such a thing.

"Sbu never interrupts a holiday unless its important. I wonder what they did?" She asks absentmindedly. Her eyes are still locked in the direction Sbusiso went.

Lando leaves us and tiptoes to the door that opens up to the pool. She's listening in on their

conversation, but judging by the frown on her face I don't think she can hear clearly. She gives up after about two minutes and comes back to the kitchen.

"What's happening?" Faith asks the question we all want to know. Buli come back with a fresh bottle of champagne and sits on the counter.

"I'm not sure yet. All I know is that whatever trouble they are in, it involves the hawks." Lando answers.

"That bad huh?" Buli says with the glass in her mouth.

I know they are involved in some shady criminal activities, and I know the hawks being involved means something bad is really going on. What if we are about to lose it all? My heart starts racing at that thought. Lungelo and I are married in community of property, so whatever affects him will also affect me. I need to figure out a way to make sure if anything happens to him we will be just fine. But I'm sure he already has put measures in place for that, right? I need to stop thinking about this before it drives me crazy.

As promised Sbusiso leaves ten minutes after his arrival. He even takes a takeaway with him. We have our lunch and the mood is jolly and happy. Either these guys are good actors or whatever news Sbusiso brought doesnt bother them. Either way, Lungelo and I need to have a proper talk about our future. I know he has always said he will take care of us, all I need to know are the specifics because I will drive myself mad even thi king about this.



LUNGELO

I thought Sbu's unannounced visit earlier would ruin my mood but it didnt. I actually enjoyed myself. I was able to not even think about it the whole day. After dinner the girls went to rest. They said they were tired from cooking the whole day. A bit of an

exaggeration if you ask me. But, we love them so we just let them be.

"So what's the plan?" Sizwe asks soon as we are alone, he is looking straight at me.

"There is no plan. Detective Maharaj has been trying to find the Shadow Assassin for years now, I'm pretty sure he is watching our every move right now, if we do anything out of pocket we will be playing right into his hands." I tell them.

"So how do we explain knowing you? This man is looking for a link between us and the Shadow Assassin, if he finds out we've been hanging out together, that will be a problem." Lindani says.

"Actually that one is easy." Mbuso chimes in. We all turn to look at him waiting for an explanation. "Look at it this way, you all started hanging out with Lungelo in public after Khanya 'introduced' you to them. If anyone asks, your brother brought you all together and you became friends."

He is right. Plus there is nothing tying me to the crew except those moments. Khanya can attest to that. My offshore bank accounts are not registered in my name so any payments I got from the cartel will not lead back to me. My house was mortgaged, I just finished paying it off a couple of years back. Basically there is nothing in my past or present life that would suggest I'm a criminal. All I have to do, if or when they question me is to feign ignorance. But Lily will pay for this. I dont even know why she felt the need to tell the hawks I'm the Shadow Assassin. How did she even know that?

"He is right. Every question has an answer. But we do need to find the girl who gave them you name. We need to deal with them." Lindani says.

"Not yet. The police will know its us. Let's just let things slow down a bit." I say.

"Lungelo is right. This is no time to panic, yet. We need to let Maharaj lay his cards on the table first then we'll know what we're dealing with." Philani

says.

Nate and Sizwe get up and pour more drinks for us. I guess it's a good thing I've been training my new protege, if, God forbid I do get arrested, he will have to perform one job with me inside to take the heat off me. And if they will be watching me he'll have to take over full time. I have a lot more to lose now. I cant be as carefree as I was before. Now I need to think about my wife and kids, and their future.

Monetary wise, they will be protected and secure, but I do need to be there to watch Imi grow up and Bontle graduate from med school. Until then I'll do what Philani suggested, let Maharaj play his hand and see if he wins or he loses. The problem though, failure is not part of my vocabulary, so hell will freeze over before I let this Maharaj idiot win.



NARRATED

At the Hawk's offices, Detective Maharaj is in his office working well into the night. He has been trying to find this Lungelo character but nothing. He hasn't been to any of his clubs in over a week. He needs to bring him in for questioning. Although he hasn't found anything tying him to the cartel, he knows that where there is smoke, there is fire, so he can't just let go of this without digging as deep as he can.

Someone knocks on his door and he let's them in. It's the same girl who told them about Lungelo. He welcomes her in and she sits down.

"How come there are still no news about Lungelo being arrested." She asks with her legs crossed. She's anxious to see the man pay for all he has done. Since she cant make him pay herself, she figured the hawks would do all the work for her.

"That's cause we havent made any arrests yet. We havent found any evidence suggesting that he could

be the Shadow Assassin."

"I heard him with my own ears admitting that he is the Shadow Assassin. How much more evidence do you need?" She snaps.

"Look lady, I don't even know your name yet or even how you got to hear him say that. But I'll keep digging, I need to question him though and I cant find him." He assures her.

"He is in Camps Bay."

"How do you know that?"

"His wife has been posting about their little vacation on Instagram. And guess who else is there? Philani and his crew. If that doesn't make this clear as daylight the I don't know." She says and gets up. She takes her bag and walks out.

Maharaj decides to go into his Instagram, he doesnt even use it but his daughter insisted on opening it for him. He goes through Philani's wife posts and sure enough, Lungelo Radebe is with them. Could

this be the clue he has been waiting for? The one that broke the camel's back.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTY SIX

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

We landed back in Durban an hour ago. And when we drove back to the house there was a Hawks branded Golf GTI parked outside the house. No guesses who that might be. I opened the gate and while it was sliding open these two gentlemen got out of the car and walked towards our car. One of them was Indian and the other one was a typical Afrikaans man. The Indian was in a black suit with a striped tie, and the other guy had on Jean's, a white shirt tucked in which exposed his belly, it's a good thing I've never seen the hawks run after criminals, this one wouldnt make it to ten meters before running out of breath. He completed his look with a purple tie and a brown leather jacket. The Indian guy knocked on the window while his friend went to the other side. I could see the fear in Nomonde's eyes so

I held on to her hand to reassure her. I slid down the window and this idiot decided to lean on the door with his whole face inside the car. Whatever happened to respecting people's space.

"Mr Radebe." He says with his Indian accent. It's not so thick like most Indians, but if he spoke to you on the phone without knowing what he looks like you would know he is Indian.

"Can I help you?"

"We'd like to have a word with you. Alone." He emphasizes looking at my wife. If he thinks I'm getting out of this car he must have smoked some strong ass weed.

"Whatever you want to say to me you can say in front of my wife. And if you really want to speak to me you'll follow me inside and we'll have a conversation like grown adults." I start the car but he doesn't move from the window.

"I think this is a conversation we can have right here. You can get out of the car and we'll talk like grown

adults as you say." I turn the car off and turn my body to face him. His friend is now standing next to him with a toothpick in his mouth.

"For starters, I don't know you. You've been parked outside my house for hours now, scaring the shit out of my mothers and my daughter, now you come here, you dont even bother to introduce yourselves and you think I'm just going to get out of this car and talk to you? Are you nuts?" They chuckle and look at each other.

"You are seriously going to pretend like you cant see the car and where it belongs?" The other guy says.

"I dont care where your car belongs, for all I know you could have stolen that car and used it to come here and maybe kill me." They laugh. Like really laugh. They really think this is a joke. I'm going to show them who is in charge here. Hawks or not, this is my house, kukhala esami iscathulo (I call the shots!). Okay truthfully kukhala intonto likaNomonde (Nomonde calls the shots.) But at this very moment

these ones dont need to know that.

"Your imagination is wild Radebe." The Indian guy says.

"Right. Why would we even want to kill you?" The other one asks.

"I dont know. Just like I still dont know why you're parked outside my house in the middle of the day."

"Like we said, we only want to talk." The Indian guy again. He must be the boss of these two.

"Okay. Am I under arrest?"

"No!" He says.

"Good. Then if a conversation is all you want to have you'll follow me into the house and we'll talk. If you cant do that, then please get off my property." I start the car and drive in.

I leave the gate open and wait for them to make their move. Their Golf drives in a few minutes after.

"What's happening Lungelo?" Nomonde asks, I can see she is freaked out. Police aren't her favourite people in the world so I understand her worry. I take her hand and kiss it.

"Don't worry Sthandwa sam, I'll fix this, whatever this is. Okay. Go inside and get the gogo's out to the pool. I don't want them seeing these men in the house." She nods her head and gets out.

I get out and these two are already leaning on their car with arms and legs crossed. I open the boot and take out the luggage. I drag the first suitcase and place it by the door. I come back for the other two before coming back to get the small bags. I walk for a while and realize these two aren't following me.

"Are you coming?" I ask. They look at each other and I could have sworn I saw fear in their eyes.

"Your mothers told us to not go in there so no, we'll have this conversation right here." I want to laugh so bad. I'm not sure what those two did or said to scare the living daylights out of people who deal with

criminals everyday. Even though they called me to tell me about these men, they didnt go into detail about what happened. But judging from their fear, it must be huge.

"Well that's your choice. But I dont hold conversations outside my house unless I'm with my brothers and uncles during a ceremony. You'll find me inside." I get the bags in and lo and behold the gogo's are still here. Nomonde is on the couch with Imi in her arms.

"I tried. They refused." She says answering the unasked question I had. These two walk into the house and freeze when they see the gogo's. This is funnier than I imagined.

"Did I not tell you two never to set foot in this house again with your little conspiracy theories?" My mom asks. Now I'm really curious to know what happened, and I'll surely get it out of them, but for now I need to deal with these two.

"Dont worry ma, I'll sort this out. Follow me." I lead them to the study and I can see they are no longer as confident as they were outside. I take a seat and show them chairs to sit. "Now gentlemen, let's talk. What seems to be bothering you?" They keep looking around the room, probably trying to find a huge poster of me with a gun maybe shooting someone. I dont know.

"Mr Radebe, are you familiar with someone by the street name Shadow Assassin?" The Indian guy aks with his notebook in hand. You're looking at him, I want to say, but first things first.

"No offense but i dont even know who you are so how would i know a Shadow Assassin? Who is he or she? A marvel character perhaps?" They look at each other and I can see the Indian guy clench his teeth. Even though he is now looking straight at me, I can see him trying to calm himself down.

"Apologies for that. I am Detective Maharaj and this is my partner Detective Theron." They take out their

badges and place them on the desk. I take them and look at them, I look at their faces and back at their badges. Okay their faces match, although Theron was a bit younger and cuter when these photos were taken. Maybe he should get on a Herbalife diet and get back to being this cute. I mean I've seen people with a bit more weight on their bodies more beautiful and handsome than this. This one is just lazy, he's the reason people think fat people are lazy and unhealthy. I put the badges back on the desk.

"Now that we all know each other. Can you answer the question?" Maharaj says, he's clearly annoyed now.

"No, I don't know anyone named Shadow Assassin."

"You've never heard anyone in your club talking about this man?" Theron asks. I'm not sure if it's because I'm not a fan of white people in general but this one really annoys me.

"Have you ever been in a club? You can't even hear yourself think let alone hear people's conversations.

So no, I've never heard anything."

"Have you ever heard of a man named Vladimir?"

"Again, no. Should I know him?" Maharaj takes out his phone and scrolls down a bit before showing me a video of the club in Joburg, on the night I gave Vladimir that deadly shot of vodka. "What am I looking at exactly?" I ask pretending not to see anything.

"That's Vladimir. You served him a drink and a couple of days later he passed away from some unknown poison."

"Okay. I'm still missing the part where this has anything to do with me."

"The Shadow Assassin uses poison as his MO, he never shoots or fights, poison is his poison, no pun intended. Now we've had some information that you are the Shadow Assassin. Vladimir died after being poisoned, you served him a drink before he died. Can you blame us for having questions?" Maharaj narrates.

"No. I don't blame you. Now if you notice on that video I served a few other people too. Are they also dead?" He keeps quiet and looks at his partner. "I mean, the video also shows the man was there for the better part of the night, being served drinks made by the bartenders, so does that mean my bartenders are also suspects? Another thing, you said he died a couple of days later, was he under lock and key after leaving my club? He didnt drink or eat anything anywhere?" They keep quiet.

"Gentlemen, if you're going to accuse me of something, the least you can do is bring proper evidence. And also I'd like to know who was it that told you I was the Assassin Shadow, what did you say his name was again?"

"The Shadow Assassin."

"Yes that one, so who told you that fairytale?"

"We cant reveal our sources." I smile and stand up. I extend my for a handshake and they stand up.

"I don't know who sent you on this wild goose chase,

but I do pray you find what you're looking for gentlemen." They shake my hand and walk towards the door. Maharaj stops and turns around.

"Tell me something, how do you know Philani Biyela?"

"We're friends. Why?"

"I know you're friends. I just want to know how long you've known him."

"Almost a year now. We met last year when he was helping my brother with a case."

"And your brother is thee Khanya Radebe?"

"Yep. That's the one."

"We'll talk soon Mr Radebe." He walks out.

I know I probably wasn't as convincing as I could have been, but like we discussed. We need to know their game plan first before we strike. For now, I'll just deny whatever stories they come with. One thing I know though, Maharaj will not give up that easily. But there are upsides to all this, my lab at the

restaurant, no one knows I own it. It's in the managers name, and the lab itself was an unpermitted addition so it wont show up on municipal plans. Basically as far as society is concerned, it's none existent. All I need to do now is get rid of the guns in the bookcase and replace them with my expensive alcohol collection.

The door opens and Nomonde walks in carrying my princess. She smiles as soon as she sees me and extends her hands to me. Nomonde hands her over then sits on top of the desk looking at me.

"What was that about?" She asks with a frown on her face.

"Nothing for you to worry about."

"Are you going to jail?"

"Of course not baby. I havent done anything wrong so I'm not going anywhere. I promise you." I hold her hand and kiss her.

"Okay. Tomorrow we are going to mums for dinner."

"Oh, what's wrong with dinner in this house?" I love my mother in law but what difference will it make if we eat there and not here? The food will taste the same.

"She wants to introduce her man."

"Oh. What if you don't like him?"

"I'm too old for that. I just hope he doesn't have a wife hidden somewhere with kids."

"You think he might want to take advantage of her?"

"I doubt it. Mum would have noticed that a long time ago. I just hope he is genuine and really loves her. She deserves some happiness too."

"I guess."

"Okay, let me go start on dinner. The gogo's already went to mums so its just us. You'll watch Imi while I cook?"

"Of course." She gets down from the desk and kisses us before walking out.

I get off the chair and walk around to sit on the couch and play with my babygirl. Something catches my eye under the desk. Its tiny but I can see a red light coming from it. I know I didnt put anything there so what gives. I put Imi down on the carpet and go to the desk. I kneel and look at the little red light. Maharaj thinks he is slick. How do you plant a bug under the very same place you were sitting in? Idiot. But I'll play along. If he wants games, I'll give him games.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTY SEVEN

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

It's been a week since Maharaj planted that bug inside Lungelo's home office. He is beginning to wonder if this wasn't a waste of time from the get go. Maybe he should have listened to Theron. After all there is no evidence pointing at Lungelo as the Shadow Assassin. His finances are up to date, he has no offshore accounts under his name, so maybe that girl did lie to them.

He wants to badly believe that Lungelo is innocent, but his pride and his bruised ego just wouldn't allow him to. His gut feeling is telling him Lungelo might be involved in this. He doesn't know how but he knows, things just aren't making sense to him. He has been listening to the tapes from his office, and

all he got was Lungelo playing with his daughter, or working on his computer, or even having sex with his wife. That's been the only constant thing he has heard, Lungelo and Nomonde groaning and screaming in the office, he's beginning to think maybe Lungelo found the bug and is doing this on purpose.

He drove to the hotel where they have been staying while conducting their stakeout. He gets to the hotel and goes straight to his room. He takes a quick shower. He needs to go back to the stakeout before he misses some important stuff. When his shower is done he gets dressed. Even though he is tired he is not willing to rest just yet. He will rest when the big fish has been caught. That's what he keeps telling himself.

He was about to walk out when he heard a knock on the door. He opened and came face to face with Khanya Radebe. He's heard about him, his reputation

is well known. And recently after taking the department of justice to the cleaners with that wrongful arrest lawsuit, he has amassed a whole new level of fear.

"Mr Radebe, to what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?" He asks. Khanya pushes him out the way and walks in. He takes out a small plastic bag from his briefcase and holds it up in the air.

"I do believe this is yours Mr Maharaj." Maharaj looks at the bug inside the bag and clenches his teeth.

"I dont know what that is?" Khanya throws the bug on the bed.

"Mr Maharaj, I'm not going to play games with you. That thing was found in my brothers house, and not only that it was traced back to the Hawks. Now, I'm pretty sure, since you've been listening in for a while now, you know there hasn't been another Hawks officer who has come into that house. You planted that bug. And you invaded my brothers privacy. Consider this a warning, unless you have enough

proof to substantiate your allegations against my brother, stay the fuck away from him or his family. I hope I've made myself clear. I'd hate to contact Mr Molefe and tell him how his officers are harassing innocent people. Have a good day sir." Khanya pushes past him again and walks out leaving Maharaj fuming.

He takes the bug and looks at it, it is the one he planted. He throws the tiny thing across the room. Another knock comes in. He opens the door angrily and finds his partner standing there.

"I take it you've spoken to Khanya Radebe?" Theron asks as he walks into the room.

"How did they find the bug?"

"Beats me. Khanya showed up to the house around noon, I heard he has a case here. I guess he decided to go see his brother and then boom, he found the bug."

"He didnt find the bug, Lungelo did. The man has been taunting us, those sex scenes in the study, no people, no matter how much they are in love would have sex that many times in one place."

"You really believe that?"

"I do. This man is more conniving than we thought."

"Since we cant catch him on the shadow thing, how about we go after him for the kidnapping and human trafficking?" Theron suggested. Lily had told them about what happened to her, and her baby going missing.

"That's going to be difficult. Its just one person's word."

"Yeah but it wouldnt hurt to look into it. Look at it this way, if he is in jail and Shadow strikes then we'll know he is innocent. But if he is in jail and nothing happens then....."

"We'll know there is some truth to the Shadow rumour."

"Exactly. It wont be as easy to find the evidence against him, you saw how squeaky clean he is. Except for a few speeding tickets, from the looks of it the man is clean."

"You're right. Let's look into the kidnapping thing and see where that leads us."

Maharaj was feeling hopeful again. His gut is telling him there is more to Lungelo than meets the eye. All he needs to do now is prove it.



NOMONDE

This little charade game Lungelo is playing with the hawks is getting boring to be quite honest. I know that if they had concrete proof he would be in jail by now. But I cant help being afraid. What if all they are doing is bidding their time until they have gathered

all they need to put him away. Right now I'm not sure what's more scary, him going to jail or me having to do this on my own. I know mum will always be there to help me, if God forbid anything happens to him. And the Radebe's will also be there but still, it's scary.

I got off work and decided to pass by the mall. Lungelo got me a driver since he said he cant pick me up. I got to Pick n Pay and got the trolley, my phone rang as I was walking in.

"Mr Radebe."

"Mrs Radebe. Where are you?"

"I'm at the mall, doing some shopping."

"Okay. Dont stay out too late. I miss you."

"You should have picked me up. Where are you anyways?"

"At home. We miss you."

"I'll be home soon."

"Okay, I love you."

"I love you too."

"Love. Such a beautiful thing." I heard someone speak behind me. I looked back and it was Maharaj.

"Can I help you?" He came around and stood in front of the trolley.

"Do you know the kind of trouble your husband is in?" He asks looking straight at me. I dont like police, I dont have a great history with them and I'm not about to pretend like I'm not annoyed at this ones presence.

"I guess this is the part where you tell me all the trouble he is in, then you tell me that I should help you help him, blah blah blah. Did I miss something?"

"It might sound like a joke now but you dont know the kind of things that man has done. I'm pretty sure there are plenty of people in the world who would like to know his identity. And God alone knows what they will do when they find out who he is."

"So you are planning on putting my husbands name out there as some ghost Assassin just because you've actually failed to prove your little theories about him, so your figure whoever wants to know the ghost Assassin will do the job for you? Is that your plan? Go ahead, Detective, put my husbands life in danger because of your own shortcomings and failures, but if anything happens to him, if anything at all happens to him, you will regret it." He chuckles.

"Is that supposed to be a threat?"

"I dont do threats Detective. If your theory is true, find the evidence and let the law take its course, but if you put my husbands life on the line for your own incompetence, trust me, you wont know what hit you when I'm done with you." I pushed the trolley almost hitting him and went to the other aisle.

When I was sure he wasnt following me I switched off the voice recording and saved it. I did my shopping and went back to the car. The driver loaded my groceries in the boot then drove me home.

When I got home it was a bit quiet. Too quiet. I went to the study and as I got closer I heard voices. It was Lungelo and Khanya and they were arguing.

"Lungelo you still havent answered my question, is there any truth to Maharaj's allegations?"

"And I've said this ten times now. No, there is no truth to it. I dont know why Maharaj is even harassing me."

"So explain to me how you got to be so friendly with Philani and his crew to such a point you went on a vacation with them?"

"You introduced me to them remember." Lungelo yells. I decide to go in.

"What's going on?"

"Ask your husband. He is the one who seems to be hiding something."

"I'm not hiding anything. Maharaj is grasping at straws. He wont find anything."

"Dont be too sure about that." I take out my phone and play the recording for them.

"That son of a bitch."

"This is more serious than we thought. Send me the recording. It's time I paid Molefe a visit." Khanya says. I send him the recording and he leaves.

"What made you think to record all that?" Lungelo asks.

"I don't know. I had the phone in my hand and I just recorded the conversation. Lungelo I'm scared. What if Maharaj does leak your name and people believe you are the Shadow Assassin?" He comes around the desk and holds my waist.

"Nothing will happen to me. Maharaj will not win. And if he does put my name out there, I have put majors in place to make sure no one comes after me."

"What majors?"

"Trust me, we will be fine. Besides that, Busani is also working on something to get the man off my back."

"You trust him?"

"Busani? I trust him with my life. So worry not Sthandwa sam, Maharaj will not be a problem for long. You and I will get our lives back, and we can plan our wedding, and we'll have the time of our lives. Maharaj and his little minions will not be a problem."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTY EIGHT

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Maharaj is beginning to get on my nerves. He won't let his little investigation go, even though he still hasn't found anything connecting me to Shadow. It's cute that he even felt the need to follow up with whatever Lily told him. But now he has been investigating a kidnapping case. Apparently I kidnapped her and took her child. Well technically speaking I did but he doesn't know that.

I've tried to dot as much of my I's and crossed my t's. Hopefully it will be enough to get Maharaj off my back. I'm meeting the guys at some secret location where Busani directed me to. He sent a driver to pick me up. That meant dodging these idiots that have been watching me twenty four hours. I drove my car

and parked it opposite the taxi rank. I locked it and walked towards the restaurant. Of course Maharaj's people were on my tail. Lucky for me there was some commotion happening in the rank, there were people fighting and a crowd had gathered around. I got in the middle of the crowd and some guy held my hand. When I looked at him he gave me a jacket and a cowboy hat. I quickly took off the jacket I was wearing and handed it to him. He was almost the same height as me. He put the jacket on just as Maharaj's men got close. He walked out of the crowd and I noticed a couple of people following him. I guess they thought it was me. Now I know Busani had something to do with this little distraction here. I must give it to him, even in his old age he still got it.

Just as the other guy disappeared among the taxis another one tapped me on the shoulder and signaled for me to follow him. With my new jacket and cowboy hat on I followed him. He led me to a taxi and I got in. He was driving the taxi. I sat at the back and watched the taxi fill up. When it was full he

drove out. Just as we were driving out I saw Maharaj's men still on the other guys tail. Idiots.

The taxi drove out without raising suspicion. Why would a taxi full of people even be suspected of transporting a criminal? The taxi goes on its normal route. Its going to KwaMashu. The driver drops people off along the way. When he is done with his drop offs he drives to KwaMashu M section. He drives past a truck shop, crosses the road and there are homes on either side of the road. There is a river flowing just a few meters behind some of the houses. He stops in front of a red brick house. From the outside it looks like a normal family home. But knowing Busani, it's anything but that.

I get off and walk towards the gate. The taxi drives off. I pull the gate and get in then pull it back to its place. The grass here is green, and there are flowers on the perimeter of the wall fence. It really looks like a normal home. I walk to the door and knock. The

door opens and the man himself is standing on the other side.

"Ntshangase." I greet and hold my hand out for a handshake. He takes it. He doesn't seem too pleased. I can't blame him. One thing the cartel can't afford is having law enforcement looking, even if it's just one of us. This whole organization is like a four-legged table. If one leg breaks it's easy for the table to come tumbling down, so we have to make sure all the legs are always stable and working right.

"Bhungane. Come in." He turns and walks away, I follow him. The house looks like a four-roomed house. The lounge is not too big but it's not small either. It's big enough for this house. He takes a seat on the couch.

"So, what's been happening?" He asks and grabs a bottle of whiskey from the floor. He points with his head to the kitchen. I get up and go get myself a glass and come sit back down. He pours the

whiskey then hands it to me. He knows what's happening, but Busani can get on daddy mode sometimes. I don't know how many times he's scolded me for doing something wrong even if it had nothing to do with the cartel, and right now it feels like one of those moments.

"I'm listening?" He says and takes a sip of his drink.

"It's nothing. I'll sort it out." He chuckles.

"You're becoming sloppy Lungelo. Why is that?" He stares at me and it feels like I'm staring at my father. That man was scary but kind and loving. I guess that's one of the reasons I got so close to Busani. He reminded me of my dad.

"Sloppy, in what way?"

"The police are looking into you."

"That can happen to anyone." I answer defensively.

"Not to you. Do you know why you've lasted so long in the cartel? Because you're thorough in what you do. You never leave even a scrap of evidence. You've

been to countless places in the world carrying out work, different disguises, different aliases, and not once have you ever drawn any attention to you. Not once have the cops ever even had a sniff of your presence in whatever you did. That's why you are the Shadow Assassin. You never announce yourself and your actions. You do you and disappear. Twenty years, twenty years and we've never had to worry about you. You find love and all of a sudden you become sloppy and go announcing your business like its the lotto draw. Is love making you weak? Is it distracting you? Cause if that's the case we can get it out of the way."

The last statement just sent chills down my spine. I know Busani and I know what he is capable of. And I know he will do anything and everything to protect the cartel. Even if that means killing his own. He did kill his sister for betraying him. But one thing I won't let him do is try and threaten my family.

"What do you mean 'get it out the way'?"

"You know what that means. Do you need help getting your head back in the game?"

"Not if that means getting rid of my family."

"You'll have to make a choice at some point. Either you get your head back in the game or we get rid of whatever it is that's distracting you."

"Please dont threaten my family. I have way too much respect for you to sit here and listen to you threaten my family. I've given my entire life to the cartel. I've put my own happiness and life on the back burner for this cartel, you off all people know that. So dont threaten the one thing I've done for myself that makes me happy. Do not." I can feel the muscles in my jaws clenching. I'll die a slow painful death before I let anything happen to Nomonde or my children. I'd rather than die.

He gulps down his drink and and stands up.

"You have forty eight hours to get this fixed or I'll do

what needs to be done." He announces before walking towards the door.

"Didn't you say just a few days ago that you'd fix this?" I know he said that. He promised me and now he has suddenly changed his tune. What the fuck is happening with him. Maybe he is the one that's distracted. He stops and turns around.

"You boys think I'll always be there to fix your problems. Do you know how many of the original founders of this cartel are still alive? Five." He answers his own question. "You, Philani, Nate, Lindani, Sizwe, Razor and Sbu, you have to run this cartel. The North, the East and the West already have people running things that side. The whole lot of you are supposed to be overseeing things all over the world. But if you're so distracted how will you grow this cartel? I'm done fixing things for all of you. It's time you stepped up and played your part. If none of you can do that I'll make sure to get whatever distractions standing in your way out. You have 48 hours." He opens the door and walks out.

I take my burner phone out of my pocket and call Philani.

"Ndoda."

"What the fuck is wrong with your father?"

"What are you talking about?"

"He just threatened me. Apparently I have 48 hours to get Maharaj off my back or he will get whatever is distracting me out the way."

"And what exactly is it that's supposed to be distracting you?"

"He says love is making me sloppy."

"Oh please. He needs to chill. We all make mistakes and we fix them. I'm sure he was just trying to scare you. Dont worry about it."

"Philani, I've worked with your father for over twenty years, I know when he is being serious, and right now he is deadly serious. If I dont get Maharaj off my back, I'm screwed."

"Come on. He wouldn't kill Nomonde."

"You do remember your aunt is dead because of him right."

"Oh shit."

"Yeah, and he included you guys in his little speech. He says if we dont step up he will get the distractions out the way."

"And our families are supposed to be our distraction?"

"Yep. Listen I have to go. We'll talk later." We hang up.

I sit on the couch trying to process everything that just happened. I really want to believe Busani is bluffing, but I know that man doesnt bluff. I need to fix this. I dial Sbu's number.

"Bro, where are you? I've been trying to call you." He says soon as he picks up the phone.

"What's wrong?"

"Maharaj just pulled up to the Melomed Hospital with a warrant in tow."

"You did plant Lily's patient files right? We cant afford for them not to be there."

"Eish, bra. Maharaj beat me to it. I'm in the car right now and the files are in my lap." I feel the air leave my lungs. When Maharaj asked me about the night Lily gave birth I told him I checked her into the Melomed hospital. Now it he doesnt find her file, I'm screwed. This is really bad. The phone falls down to the floor and I just sit there, I see my future slowly disappear.



Maharaj and Theron walk into the Melomed hospital, warrant in hand and about fifteen officers behind them. They are confident about what they are looking for. Lily insisted that she never went to the hospital. She even showed them the house where she was kept and her baby taken from her womb

while she slept, unfortunately for her, the house had occupants. A family that has lived there for three years. Maharaj asked to look around the house and they let him. He was hoping to see something that would give him a clue but he found nothing. So getting that patient file, or not getting it would be a jackpot. It would be what he needs to convince his boss that Lungelo wasn't as squeaky clean as he pretends to be. He was given until the end of business today to present any evidence, if not this investigation will be called off.

He went to the room where all the patient files are kept and filed. He went through the the B files and found Badenhorst. There was just one file with that last name, Lily Badenhorst's. His hope died for a second. But he needed to be thorough. He took the file and walked out to the reception where he found a nurse and a doctor going through some patient files.

"Good day. I need help." He says catching their attention.

"What do you need officer?" The doctor asks.

"I have this file, its of a patient, everything seems to check out, but there is one problem. The patient insists she was never here on the said day." The doctor and nurse look at each other confused.

"Officer, if the file says she was here then she was." The nurse says.

"I know. But humor me for a second." He takes out his phone and shows them Lily's picture. "Do you know her?" They squint their eyes trying to figure out if they do know her.

"Oh yeah I know her." The nurse answers.

"Really, so she was here?" Maharaj's Hope's seem to be dissipating in his arms and he cant hold them.

"She was I checked her in. She was in labour, some guy brought her in." Maharaj shows them Lungelo's photo.

"I remember her too, she was my patient. The guy wasn't happy about the child knot being his." The doctor adds.

"Him?"

"Yep, that's him. The girl said he was her baby daddy. But when he saw the baby and that it wasn't his, he left, angry." The nurse answers.

"So what happend to the baby?"

"Poor thing, he died at birth. The mother was so distraught she couldn't even function. When she woke up from being sedated she discharged herself."

"And left the baby?"

"Yeah, I guess she wasnt ready to face the truth. All she wanted was her baby, a live baby. She refused to even hold him."

"So what happend to the baby?"

"The hospital had her cremated."

"You're sure this is the same girl?"

"As sure as sure can be." The doctor answers while the nurse nods her head.

"Okay. Thank you ladies." Just then Theron walks up from the security room. "What did you find?"

"Nothing. The cameras weren't working on the day. They were down for routine maintenance."

"So we got nothing?" Theron shakes his head making Maharaj's frustrations sky rocket. This is another dead end. And he knows he cant ho back to his boss with nothing to show, in his head he already knows it's over. Twenty years of hard work down the drain in just a few weeks. Now he knows Theron was right. He shouldn't have listened to Lily.

Meanwhile in the parking lot, an old Tazz is parked out there with two occupants inside. They watch as the police get into their cars and drive away. Fifteen minutes after the police have left the nurse and doctor go to the Tazz.

"Did everything go well?" The passenger asks.

"Yep. He bought it, the file was the last nail in the coffin." The nurse says.

"Good." The driver says. The passenger reaches into the glove box and takes out two envelopes with large stacks of money and hands them to the two.

"Now, you do know what will happen if this ever gets out right?" She asks looking at them through the rearview mirror.

"We know." They both say in unison. They hide their envelopes nicely under their uniforms and go back to the hospital.

"That's one load off." The driver says.

"Yep. Now I can breath again. Thank you Lando for helping me pull this off."

"We are family. We never face anything alone." She answers smiling at a relived Nomonde. "Now lets go get rid of this old jalopy." She says and tries to start

the car. It takes a couple of minutes but it starts.

"Where did you get this car anyway? I'm pretty sure it's not road worthy." Nomonde asks.

"Let's just say the only place it belongs to now is a scrapyard. We need to set it on fire." Lando tells her.

They drive to an open veld, away from any civilization and they torch the car. Buli pulls up just as the car is almost burned. They get into the car with Buli and leave the car burning. It's done. Now they can all breathe. The table is steady again.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

EIGHTY NINE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Lando and Buli dropped me off at home. We had decided not to tell the guys about what we did. I know men like Lungelo have way too much pride and they wont ask for help. So we will let them be and just watch them try to figure this out all on their own. One thing I'm grateful for is that I can rest easy now knowing he wont be going to jail.

When he told me about what they did to Lily, for a moment I felt bad for her. I'm sure it must have been hell waking up to find your baby gone. I dont know how I would have felt if that was me. I probably would have died. I was busy trying to convince him to give her her baby back, the punishment was too severe, yes she tried to do what she did and even

steal from us but that is nothing compared to her losing her child. That's a pain no woman should ever have to face.

I guess my opinion changed when Lungelo told me he suspects Lily to be the one who set Maharaj on him. Her pain, I understood, but trying to get him arrested I dont. All she had to do was apologize for her part in all this and maybe she would have been led to her child. I guess now we'll never know if her apology would have led her to her baby.

A few days ago Lungelo was stressing out about this thing, even spending time with Imi became a chore. If he wasnt on the phone with Philani and the others he was talking to Khanya trying to get him to have this investigation stopped. I called Lando and told her about my fears. We ended up in a conference call with Buli. We decided to do something about this once and for all.

Lando got in touch with Gcina, she is Razor's girlfriend and she is a nurse. When I asked Lungelo about Lily he told me he told the cops she was at some hospital the last time he saw her. The problem with that little lie was that Maharaj would definitely look into it. And if there was no patient file or any proof that she was there, hell would break loose.

Gcina connected us to some nurse she went to school with. A couple of days ago we contacted her and told her what we needed, a patient file. Nothing more. The security cameras were just a stroke of luck, on the day Lily left the Radebe residence with Lungelo, the hospital was doing a routine upgrade on its security cameras, so those were off on that day. Talk about stars aligning.

China's contact filled in the file and got a doctor to sign it too. Today Buli found out Maharaj had a court order to find Lily's patient file, he did and he found it. Of course it's fake but he doesn't know that. Right

now I'm just waiting for Buli to confirm with her contact that the investigation has been dropped.

I walk into the house and mum is in the kitchen with Imi on her back. The advantage of her being close by, shes always ready to babysit. I walk to the kitchen and give her a perk on the cheek before kissing my baby. Shes five minutes to sleeping, that's the magic of a mothers back.

"Hi ma."

"Hi baby. I'm glad you're home. Your husband is in a mood."

"Really? What happened?"

"Beats me. Go check on him. I'll put Imi down for her nap."

"Ok, thank you ma." I leave her and go to the study. Lungelo is on the phone speaking to someone. I push the door and find him pacing up and down.

"Hey." He quickly turns to look at me.

"I'll call you back." He hangs up with his eyes glaring at me like I did something wrong. "Where have you been?"

"Work. Where else would I be?" I walk into the room until I'm close enough to him. The look on his face, I've never seen it before. It's like a mixture of fear, anger and nerves. This thing is really taking its toll on him.

"I went to the office earlier to pick you up for lunch. I couldn't get through to your phone so I went to the receptionist. She told me you took the day off. Which is rather weird cause I dropped you off this morning."

"Something came up that I had to take care of. Don't worry about it." I lift myself up and sit on his desk with my legs swinging back and forth.

"What came up?" He asks crossing his arms on his chest.

"Something. What's happening with Maharaj? Have you found a solution yet?" I know he is upset right now and me ignoring his questions might make him angry, but I didn't send him to piss anyone off so his anger will be his own to deal with.

"Where were you Nomonde? I was worried."

"I was fine don't worry about it. Mums making amagwinya, you want some?" I jump off the desk and look at him.

"I'd like to know where you were. You know the police are on our backs, what if Maharaj carried out his threats and put my name out there as the Shadow Assassin? Do you know the kinds of enemies that would be on our backs? Then you go and disappear without telling anyone where you are. Do you know how careless that is?" I roll my eyes and turn to walk away.

"When your mood has adjusted come find me."

I walk to the door and just before I open it he shuts it closed. I turn around to look at him and he is unrecognizable. There is a kind of fire that's burning in his eyes. I don't know if it's lust or anger. I hope it's not the latter.

"Nomonde Radebe, this is not the time for you to be rolling your eyes at me. Do not test me." He said with his teeth clenched. I'm not sure why I find this sexy. Or maybe it's because I know his anger is misplaced right now. He is worried about Maharaj and I'm worried about him. I stand with my back on the door and my hands clasped behind me.

"What would happen if I did test you? Do you think I'd pass the test or fail?" He frowns. I'm sure he is more confused than anything. I'm pretty sure he was expecting me to be scared and shaking in my boots. But I know one thing about him, no matter how angry he can get, deep down he is a cute cuddly bear.

"Nomonde?" I lift my face up and kiss his lips. Thanks to the heels I'm wearing I am almost his

height. His lips are opened, more in shock than anything. I hold his face in my hands and pull him down so I don't have to wait on tippy toes. "Am I failing or passing?" I whisper between his opened lips. I take his bottom lip and gently bite into it. His breathing has changed, I can hear him trying to suppress his moan.

I let go of his lip and go across his jawline kissing him and sucking. He tenses up with every kiss.

"Nomonde!" He whimpers as I put my hand on his erect dick through his pants. I let go of his face and look at him straight in the eyes. Whatever anger was there five minutes ago has been replaced with lust. I unzip his pants and slowly push them down. Thank God for squats. I squat down and leave his pants on his ankles. When I look up his ding dong is staring right back at me.

I kiss the head before I swirl my tongue around it. He flinches when I run my tongue down his dick till I get

to the balls. I cup them in my hands and massage them a bit. I go back and kiss the tip of his dick before putting it all in my mouth till I feel it in my throat. I feel his hand on the back of my head. I move his dick in and out of my mouth until I feel him so close to the edge. He pulls out and lifts me up. I wrap my legs around his waist.

"Just so you know, I'm still mad at you." He says while carrying me to the desk. He places me on top of the desk and pulls up my dress. He pulls down my underwear. "I still need to know where you were." He says with his hand running over the moistness in my between my thighs.

He slips into me then stops. I want him to move so bad but he seems to be on some strange punishment mode.

"Tell me where you were." I try to hold my breath and savor the little movement he keeps giving me but I want more. "Speak Nomonde."

"Lunch with the girls." I answer him while gyrating on him but he keeps stopping me.

"Which girls cause I know Bonsile was working?"

"Seriously Lungelo, do we have to do this now?"

Seriously my heat levels are quickly going from a hundred to zero.

He pulls out, helps me off the desk then turns me around and enters me from behind. The pounding that came after that, it was like he was intentionally trying to nail me to the desk. He was taking out all his frustrations on me and quite honestly, I should keep the truth from him for a while if this is how he distresses.

●●●●●●●●

NARRATED

It would be easy for anyone sitting across this man to assume he was having problems. The beer bottles on his desk were evident to something more sinister happening in his life. This case has been on his mind for twenty years now. From the day his brother was killed by some unknown person. His death was heartwrenching, he was first poisoned before being dipped in acid. His family was lucky to find parts of him still with some flesh, that was the only way he could be identified.

Maharaj vowed from that day to use whatever resources were at his disposal to find the person responsible for his brother's death. Many others had suffered the same fate after that, which earned the killer the name Shadow Assassin. Every person he killed had been involved in some shady business. The kind that would send people running helter skelter if they were ever caught.

The Shadow Assassin had taken more than just his

brother from him. From the moment he buried his brother he gave the case a hundred and ten percent of his time, completely neglecting his wife and two children. To most people, his wife having an affair after years of being ignored and neglected had led to their separation. But Maharaj knew better, he had neglected his wife. But even with the truth staring at him in the face he could never own up to it.

And now he was here, suspended from work, alone with no one to turn to. Theron had gone home to be with his family, at least his wife was still there.

Maharaj sat at the bar oblivious to a man sitting a few feet from him. The bar was busy, music was loud, but none of what was happening around him could penetrate his mind and bring him back to the land of the living.

The man across from him stood up and went to the bar, he got a beer from the bartender and walked back to his seat. He opened the beer and sprinkled

something inside before going to Maharaj's table. He sat down across from him.

"You seem to have a lot on your mind." The man said. Maharaj couldn't see his face, it was too dark for that. The man handed him the beer. Maharaj took the beer since his own bottle was running low. He took a huge sip before putting it back on the table.

"Thanks. I'm Maharaj, Rajesh Maharaj." He extended his hand for a handshake and the man took it.

"I know who you are. And I heard you were looking for me." The man answered. Maharaj squinted his eyes but he still couldn't see him.

"How can I look for you when I don't even know who you are." The man chuckled.

"Those closest to me call me Shadow. The Shadow Assassin." Maharaj's eyes popped out at the mention of that name. "You were looking for me, now I'm here." Maharaj attempted to stand up but he couldn't. He fell face down on the table and it was lights out.

The man took out his phone and made a call.

"Yes." The woman answered.

"Its done."

"Are you sure?"

"Yep. I'm with him now. Anyone looking will think he is just drunk."

"Perfect. Now get out of there. Are you certain the poison is untraceable?"

"Definitely. His post mortem will point to alcohol poisoning."

"Good. Your payment will be delivered in a couple of days." He hung up and walked out of the bar.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETY

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I've never panicked about anything as much as I am panicking now. Maharaj was found dead in a bar. According to news reports he died of alcohol poisoning after being suspended from work. Any other day that would be good news to me but right now I cant help feeling like the cops will come after me. He was investigating me anyway. But I guess I can rest easy knowing that he died of his own accord, the cops were watching each of us so there is no way they can try and pin this on us.

I've been in the lounge playing with Imi, now I understand what they meant when they said enjoy them cause you will blink once and they will be teenagers. At five months old this one has even

started crawling. I dont know where she is rushing to but I just want her to stay this little forever. I want my babygirl to be my babygirl for life.

The perks of working from home a lot I get to watch this one grow right in front of my eyes. Nomonde walks in from work looking exhausted and throws herself on the couch.

"Long day?"

"You have no idea." She gets down on the rug and kisses Imi then gives me a kiss too.

"I still dont understand why you are working. You know you could quit today right?" I dont know anyone who has the kind of money that she has in her bank account still working. But then again we all wake up every day and go to work.

"I'm not quitting my job Bhungane. I've told you that before."

"I know. I'm just saying."

"Have you heard what happened with Maharaj?"

"Alcohol poisoning. But I can't help feeling like there is more to this than meets the eye. Someone like Maharaj wouldn't just die nje just like that."

"People die all the time Radebe. Maybe it was his time." Ever since we found out about Maharaj, Nomonde hasn't been bothered. If I didnt know any better I'd say she had a hand in this. One moment she was freaking out about Maharaj the next she is not even flinching when she finds out the man is dead. But I know better, Nomonde is a saint.

"I'm going to cook. Do you want something specific?" Her head shoots up like I just spoke a foreign language.

"Since when do you cook?" I laugh. This one doesnt see me.

"MaMtolo taught me how to cook. She didnt play games. Besides. Who do you think was cooking for me before you got here?"

"I dont know. I thought you ate takeaways. And I know you did because when I first came to this house there were no groceries in the house."

"Okay maybe I didnt cook everyday, but I did cook. So what do you want?"

"Surprise me. Imi and I are going to take a bath."

"Ok." I got up and went to the kitchen and started cooking. I know those two will take forever to finish bathing.

My phone rang just as I was setting the table. I picked it up and it was Busani.

"Ntshangase."

"I'm sending you an address now, be there in the next thirty minutes. Bring your wife." He hangs up after dropping that bomb. I wonder what he wants. I'm still angry at him for saying my wife is a distraction. I switched off the stove and went upstairs. Nomonde and Imi were on the bed playing in their pyjamas.

"Hey, we have to go." She looked up at me and smiled. I know what's she's thinking.

"You burned the food didn't you?" She asks trying to hide a laugh.

"No the food is fine. Busani wants to see us." Her face changes.

"Why? What did you do?"

"What makes you think I did anything?"

"Why else would he call you?"

"I don't know. But we have to go." I pick out a dress for her in the closet and a jacket with sneakers. I hand it to her and she starts getting dressed while I take a quick shower.

"I'll call my mom and ask her if we can leave Imi with her." She shouts from the bedroom.

I get off the shower and get dressed. When we are done we pack Imi's things and drop her off at her

grandma's. We drive to the location Busani sent. When we get there we find a few cars parked outside the house. When we walk in its silent. Philani and Lando are here, Lindani and Taki, Sizwe and Kazi, Faith and Mbuso, the only people missing are Nate and Buli. Everyone is sitting around a few rectangular tables pushed together to form one huge table. At the end of the table there are five empty chairs. There are also four open spaces which I assume are mine and Monde's as well as Nate and Buli. We greet and take our seats. I'm sitting next to Philani. Sbu and Razor are sitting together.

"Why are we here?" I whisper to him. He shrugs his shoulders.

"Beats me. Dad just ordered us to be at the airport and then we flew here. As to what's going on, I dont know." Nate and Buli walk in a few minutes after us and take their seats. Silence engulfs the room when we hear footsteps coming from the passage. Its more than just one person. Busani pops out first. Behind him is Chakrii, he is a world famous Thai

businessman who has won many awards for his fight against human trafficking, even his own son is in jail because of it after he refused to help him.

Next comes Dominic Vasquez, he is the Colombian President's right hand man. A lot of people think he is the president's lackey, but he is more powerful than the president himself. In fact if you look closely you'd see that the president is nothing more than a puppet and Dominic calls the shots.

Then there is Chimezie Etiko, Uche's dad. He is an oil magnate, with a reach that goes far beyond West Africa. Then there is Ludis, Vladimir's dad. He is a well known Mafia king. He also happens to be cousins with the Russian President. These are the founders of the Imperium Mortem Cartel. Well five of them. The other three are dead. Killed for betraying the cartel.

The five men stand in front of their chairs and look

at us one by one. It's like having death staring at you from the other side of the room. Busani clears his throat.

"I'm sure you're all wondering why we called you here, and why we invited your wives to this meeting." I cross my arms across my chest and look at them. For his sake, I hope this is not him doing what he said he'd do by getting rid of the 'distractions' in our lives. Cause if this is it he'll have to get through me to get to my wife.

"You're getting sloppy." Chakrii says. "In all the years this cartel has been in existence we've never had the police look at any of us the way they've been looking at all of you. You've invited the world into your lives and therefore invited a lot of unnecessary scrutiny into it."

"That comes to an end today." Dominic chirps in.
"You've failed to hold up your duties and

responsibilities the way they should be. We should be retired by now, we should be out there somewhere enjoying our old age, but we've constantly had to come to rescue time and time again. That ends, today."

"This cartel was created because each of us had a common goal, to better our lives no matter what it takes, and to make sure our children have things easier than we did. You have so many powerful people at your disposal yet you allow yourselves to be played by the most useless of people. You were coming along just right. You've dealt with some people very well. But you've also dropped the ball one too many times." Chimezie adds.

"Now as of today," Ludis adds in. "As of today, we are relieving you of all your duties, maybe one day when you've learnt what this cartel means and what it stands for then you will be reinstated." I chuckled a bit and looked around me. Philani and the others

were just in shock. Since when does the cartel hire and fire at ease. Who is even going to run the cartel? I lift my hand up and they look at me.

"I've heard all you said, and I can agree, we've been a big sloppy. But aren't you just being a bit extreme? We all make mistakes."

"Not mistakes that will have the world looking at us. You have the cops looking into every single one of your businesses looking for dirt and anything to use against you. If you all go down guess what, the cartel is as good as dead." Busani says.

"Fine. Let's say you're right. Who is going to run the cartel?" Philani asks, I can tell he is annoyed. I am too cause they could have just sent us an email and we'd be over and done with this. But this whole show is just a bit extreme.

"I'm glad you asked." Dominic. "Do you know how

that patient file made it to the hospital?" We all shake our heads. "Do you know how Maharaj died?" Nope. "Do you know why that girl who opened her mouth and outed Shadow is being digested by the crocodiles stomachs down in the Tugela river?" Lily is dead? When did this even happen. "Do you know why the girl that accused you of rape ended up with a rope around her neck inside the jail cell?" I cant believe we've been slacking this bad. The fact that they've had to come behind us and clean our mess means we've really dropped the ball.

We've never left any loose ends before. We always make sure we leave a clean trail behind. That's why no one knew anything about the cartel this whole time. And now we are here, with cops and sometimes the media searching for something to pin on us. Maybe we do deserve this little punishment. But it won't last though. That much I know.

"Ladies please stand." Busani says. Why would he want the distractions to distract us right now.

"Gentlemen, as of today, Landokuhle, Bulelwa, Faith, Nomonde, Takisani and Qhawekazi will be running the cartel." He drops his bomb. It can't be.

"Is this supposed to be a joke? Didn't you call them distractions just a few days ago." I ask.

"I did. But you were so blind and focused on whatever you were focused on you didnt even see that they have been cleaning up your messes. You think some fairy godmother showed up and sprinkled fairy dust on the trails you've left behind?

No, there was no fairy godmother, it was them.

Thanks to them Maharaj found that patient file, and thanks to them that girl disappeared into thin air before the hawks could get to her and question her about Shadow. Thanks to them, you're safe. Don't worry, they know they wont be running the cartel forever, all you need to do is getting your bearings in order and who knows, you might be back to the top. For now, the ladies are taking over. Ladies. I trust

you'll do well in your new positions?" He says with a smile looking at them.

"We wont disappoint." Lando says.

"I know you wont. Now, to welcome you all to the top." Busani, Chakrii, Chimezie, Dominic and Ludis all hook their arms with our wives and lead them out. Busani has Nomonde and Lando in his arms. We get up follow them. When we get outside there are six Audi R8's in black sitting in the driveway. Busani and his buddy's take keys out of their pockets and hand them to the girls. "Welcome to the cartel ladies." The girls take the keys and get into the cars. Even Nomonde gets in the driver's seat and they drive off following each other out.

Busani turns to us.

"Gentlemen, I do believe you will be of great help to the ladies should they require any assistance." He says before they all walk off and get into their cars.

"What the fuck just happened?" Lindani asks.
Honestly I still have no idea, but I know I just got a
hard on watching Nomonde drive off like that. I didnt
even know she can drive now. Talk about another
huge surprise.

"I dont know what just happened, I just know I'm
going to be fucking a cartel boss tonight though.
Goodnight gentlemen." I get into my car and drive
home.

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MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETY ONE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I drove home a bit more anxious than usual. I wasn't sure how Lungelo would take tonight's surprise announcement. Busani and them were supposed to warn us first but they did their own thing. Talk about a huge surprise.

I drove into the house and his car was in the driveway, he beat me to it. I was hoping to get here before him. But I guess I was too slow. I got out of the car and walked to the house. I was nervous. I walked in and the house was quiet. I went to the kitchen and got some water. I need something stronger but I'm breastfeeding so water will have to do.

I drink my water then walk upstairs. The light in the bedroom is still on so Lungelo must be up. I walk in and he is on the bed, topless with his laptop on his lap.

"Hey." He looks up and smiles. Ok. Maybe this wont be so bad after all.

"Hello liar." I chuckle and get on the bed. I give him a kiss and sit back.

"Surprised?"

"More shocked than surprised. When did you get your license?"

"A few weeks ago. I wanted to surprise you but Busani beat me to it."

"So I can get your car from the dealership now?"

"Depends. Which car are we talking about?"

"The car I'm getting you."

"Yes you can."

"Okay then. So miss cartel boss, how long has this double life been going on?"

"A few months now. Although Lando and Buli have been at it for years now. Are you mad?" He sighs and puts the laptop away.

"I'm not mad, I'm worried."

"Why? We've been doing this for a while now."

"Yes, but no one knew that. I'm not doubting your capabilities but I can't help but worry." I get on top of him and straddle him.

"You have nothing to worry about. We got this?"

"If you say so. Just promise me one thing."

"What?"

"Be careful Nomonde. Please be careful." To answer him I locked my lips with his.

His hands cupped and squeezed my butt. The kiss got intense as I grinded on his erect manhood. He flipped me over and laid me on the bed. He got up, kneeling on the bed and helped me up too. He pulled

up my dress then laid me back down on the bed. He came back down and kissed me again while his one hand moved down to my thighs rubbing on them. He let go of my lips and planted kisses all over my neck and down to my boobs. He went down till he got to my warm haven.

He kissed me over my underwear before pulling it down until it was off of me. He lifted my leg up and started kissing me from my toes coming up till his face found solace in the warmth of my folds. I held on to the sheets as my moans took over. I felt his fingers go inside me while his tongue swirled all over my clit till I came all over his face. He sucked my juices up before coming back up to kiss me.

His pants were off within seconds while I tasted myself on his lips. He pushed himself in me and then stopped. This little habit of his is getting annoying. I open my eyes and look up at him. He is looking at me with a smirk on his face. I'm busy trying to move

under him.

"You know I've never had sex with a cartel leader before." He says. At this moment that's all he is thinking about? Lord have mercy.

"And what do you think a cartel leader would do if you don't do what you're supposed to do?"

"Put a bullet in my head."

"Exactly. Now get on with it before I get my gun." He laughs.

"You're bossy, I like it." He comes down and kisses me while his strokes start slow. He picks up his pace and pounds into me till I scream. He flips me over and I lay on my stomach. He puts a pillow under me then goes in from the back. He goes in strong and hard till I cum. He keeps going and a few seconds later he reaches his own peak.

He slumps down on my back kissing me. I can feel sleep taking over. He pulls out and goes to the

bathroom and comes back with a warm towel. He cleans me up while I lay there like a patient in a hospital. He goes back to the bathroom and comes back. He gets on the bed and we cuddle.

"I love you."

"I love you too."

I woke up to a note from Lungelo saying he went to Joburg for some business. I took a shower and got ready for work. I still need to pass by my mums to check on Imi. My phone rang while I was getting dressed.

"Lando."

"Hey babe. How are you?"

"I'm good. You?"

"I'm good. So how did last night go? You were worried about Lungelo."

"It went better than I expected. Lungelo didn't seem

angry or upset."

"Philani too. Do you think it's just an act?"

"I'm not sure hey. But let's just hope for the best. Besides, it's not like we'll be doing this forever. It's just a temporary thing. Right?"

"Right." She starts laughing. "Oh my God."

"What?"

"I've done this in the background for years now but now that I'm in the spotlight I'm all of a sudden anxious."

"Now I know why the guys wanted to stay in the shadows. Anyways let's hope its not an act and they are really on board."

"Yep. Listen I'll talk to you later."

"Yeah. I need to check on the shipment from Colombia later today."

"Okay. Let me know as soon as the drivers leave the depot."

"Will do. Bye babe." We hang up.

I finish getting dressed and head to my mums. I park and go through the front door but its locked. Instead of knocking I decide to use the back door. I walk by the side and head there. When I get close i hear someone speaking on the phone. I peek and see Bab'Zwane on the phone. I dont know why but this man gives me the creeps. Well maybe that's a bit dramatic but something is off about him. I know he has been with my mother for years now according to her but something is not right with him. I've felt this way since I first met him. But until I have enough to calm my fears down I'll keep an eye on him. I decide to not disturb his phonecall. Plus he cant see me anyway.

"Listen to me. Watch the warehouse. As soon as the shipment comes in, we strike. That's a whole lot of product and if, no when we get it, we'll be set for life." I knew there was something shady about him. "Yes, the address is still the same. 28 Watford Road, Umbilo Industrial. Yes. That's the one. Be there as

soon as possible. If my source is right the product will be leaving the warehouse by tonight. Sharp." He walks back into the house.

I take a few steps back making sure not to make a sound. I go back to the front door and knock there. And look at that, he opens the door for me. I greet and go in. Mum and Imi are in the kitchen and mum is feeding her soft porridge. She's not even supposed to be eating that.

"Mummy. What are you feeding her?"

"Soft porridge. She loves it." She says with a smile on her face. I would argue with her right now but she will remind me that she raised three kids so she knows what she's doing.

"Okay then." Bab'Zwane comes in from the lounge.

"So, Nomonde, where is your husband?"

"He is in Joburg. Business." He smiles.

"I hear you. I should go. I'll see you later." He gives

mum a kiss on the cheek and walks out. He comes back again. "The car in the driveway, that's you?"

"Yes, Christmas present from hubby." He smiles.

"Lucky you. That's a beast of a car."

"Thank you." He walks out again.

"You didn't tell me you have a car."

"It was supposed to be a surprise. Anyways where did you say Bab'Zwane works again?"

"He has a couple of taxis. You know that."

"Right. I have to go to work. I'll see you two later okay. I love you." I kiss them both and leave.

I get into my car and take out my phone.

"Boss lady."

"Themba, can I trust you?"

"Of course you can. My loyalty is to the cartel, always."

"Good. The product that's coming from Colombia. I need you, and you specifically no one else. I need you to get it and drive it to the warehouse on South Coast Road."

"Wasn't the product supposed to go to the warehouse at Watford Road?"

"It should but I think we have a mele. I need you to get a fake product and deliver it to the original warehouse. Get some guys to wait there. And they should be armed."

"Of course. I'll be there."

"So when is the product going to Joburg?"

"Tonight. While the others are busy at the warehouse you will drive the product to Joburg."

"Okay. I'll let you know when everything is done."

"Perfect and make sure the product gets to where it needs to go or else heads will roll."

"No worries. I got this."

I hang up and send Sbu a text asking him to look into this man. He might fool my mother but he wont fool me.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETY TWO

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Busani and his cronies are starting to annoy me. Who summons a person at 2 AM and expects them to be in Joburg early in the morning? Mxm. I landed in Joburg and found Philani already waiting for me at the airport.

"Hey man, thanks for picking me up." We hugged and got into the car.

"No worries man."

"So, why did your father call us?"

"Beats me. That one thinks we are kids, summoning us at will. Shouldnt he be calling bo Lando and Nomonde?"

"Argh man, let's see what he has to say. How do you

feel about this whole thing anyway?"

"I don't know. It's sexy seeing Lando be in charge like that but I can't help feeling like this is a bad idea."

We got to Dainfern and Busani welcomed us into his house. We sat in the lounge.

"Gentlemen, I'm glad you came. Now let's discuss a way forward."

"Shouldn't you be discussing this with the new bosses." Philani asks, Busani chuckles.

"Do you have a problem with the decision we made?"

"No." Philani answers.

"I have a question. I understand your decision and why you took it. But you do realise that you just put them in the spotlight? You know how things work in the cartel and any other one for that matter, they don't see women. As far as they are concerned women are weak. And right now with them on the forefront you are inviting a whole lot of enemies who will see them as weak and easy to get rid off." The

others nod their head in agreement.

"So you have doubts about your wives capabilities?"
This man will not twist my words.

"No. I dont doubt their capabilities. The fact that they've been running things behind the scenes for months now without us even knowing about it shows just how capable they are. But they were better off doing what they do in the background, getting things done without anyone being none the wiser. But if you feel this is best then so be it."

"I'm sensing a bit of jealousy."

"Sense whatever you want. But if anything happens to my wife, even if she comes home with a scratch on her I'll hold you personally responsible." I get up and leave them there. I dont even know why he called us but I dont care. The cartel has new bosses so they must take care of things.

I stand by Philani's car waiting for him. He shows up

two minutes later and we drive out.

"So what was that about?"

"I've been thinking about this. I have no problem with the girls running things. I feel like them being in the spotlight will open us up to a lot of enemies trying their luck."

"I know what you mean. But ke we will just have to wait and see how things pan out."

"I guess. So how are things with Lando?" He takes a deep breath and shakes his head a bit.

"I don't know. It turns out she's been doing this for years now and I didn't know a thing. I'm just thinking how much more has she been hiding from me?"

"Come on. It cant be that bad."

"Dont get me wrong I know what Lando cam do. She is a fighter, she works hard and plays harder, but....."

"But you can't help wondering if you can trust her now, and what else she's been hiding?"

"Am I overthinking this?"

"I don't know man. We'll just have to wait this out. You know your father is stubborn, now with his cronies on his side theres nothing much we can do."

We pulled up to club Phoenix and got ourselves a table. We ordered some meat and drinks. The sight of Nyambose walking in there like some peacock sent chills down my spine. He is a known drug dealer. He used to be part of the cartel when it started, things went awry when he tried so hard to get the cartel to deal in drugs. Unfortunately the powers that be wouldnt have any of that. He became an enemy and went his own way. He got to the table and pulled the chair and sat down.

"Biyela." He says looking at Philani. Oh he doesn't know me.

"I hear your wife now wears the pants." He says with a smile on his face. Philani sips his drink and pretends not to hear him. Nyambose chuckles and runs his beard. "And you act like a woman too now.

Shame. It must be hard being given orders by a woman. Mele niyochatha man, (you should detox.) You can't be a proper man while taking orders from iyfebe. (Sluts)

I dont know what came over me. I dont even remember how I got off the chair. Before either one of us could blink I had him pinned on the floor with my knee. His two men were now standing there with guns pointed at us. Unfortunately for him, even the bouncers in this place are armed and always available. His two men now have guns to their heads too.

Philani pulls the chair close to him. He looks down at him.

"Now, how does it feel being pinned down like a woman?"

"Mengvuka la Uzonya mfan wami. (When I get up from here you'll be sorry.)" He says while trying to breath.

"Uyahlupha kodwa Nyambose. (You can be a nuisance sometimes.) You just can't stay in your little lane and focus on your business. Now you're here, exactly what are you hoping to achieve? Do you think you'll just waltz in and destroy us?" I ease up on his neck and he coughs a bit. "See right now you're on the floor, with a knee on your neck. It would be so easy for him to crush your windpipe and kill you in seconds. But like you said, my wife wears the pants now. And you will know just what she's capable of soon. Keep poking your head in where it doesn't belong and hell will rain on you. So I will leave it to my wife to deal with you. Oh and don't ever call my wife isfebe, ever again." Philani taps my shoulder and I get up. He tries to get up after me and Philani pours the drink on him before we walk out leaving him swearing revenge.

We get into the car and burst out laughing.

"Manje? When did you become so quick?" I chuckle.

"Its the iyfebe line he used. It pissed me off."

"Well, you seem to get tougher in your old age so I'm glad." We sit in the car for a while. Nyambose walks out speaking to someone on the phone. He seems pissed. Whatever it must be must be huge.



NOMONDE

The shipment is on it's way to Joburg. Lando has been alerted and is waiting to receive it. Themba is the one driving the shipment, of course we've made sure to have two drivers going before the shipment to make certain there arent any roadblocks along the way. All three cars have to keep a ten minutes interval between them.

Once I was sure the shipment was safely out and on it's way I went to work. I knock off around four and head to my mums. Since Lungelo is still in Joburg I'll

need the company. Plus Sbu sent me all the info I needed on my potential step daddy. Hopefully by the end of the night he will be out of our lives. For good.

We have guys waiting for Bab'Zwane's men at the old warehouse. I decide to let them take care of things but I still need to figure out who is the snitch that gave Bab'Zwane the address for the warehouse.

I get to mums house and Bab'Zwane's car is in the driveway. I park next to it. I get out and let the air out of two of his tyres. Hopefully he wont have to go anywhere tonight. I walk to the house and find him sitting in the lounge with the TV remote in hand and his phone next to him. He keeps tapping his hand on the arm rest, looking at the time then at his phone. I walk up to him and he fakes a smile.

"Sawubona baba."

"Nomonde, Sawubona. How was work?" As if you

care.

"Work was good. Where is mum?"

"Shes in the bedroom putting Imi down for her nap." Oh. I wanted to see her now I'll have to wait till she wakes up. But then again this give me time with this little traitor.

"How is the business?"

"The usual. The taxi business is not for the faint hearted."

"I bet. But you've made a success of it. I mean four taxis and still growing."

"Yep. We do what we have to do."

"So how do you know Nyambose?" He freezes while starring at the TV before slowly turning to look at me. He cleared his throat and furrowed his brows like he didnt know what I was talking about.

"Who is Nyambose?" He is really going to play dumb? Two can play this game.

"He is a taxi owner too, his taxis go from Durban to Joburg daily. I thought you knew him." He laughs

and hits his thigh like he just remembered something.

"Oh, you mean that Nyambose? No I know him. I call Mthethwa though so the Nyambose threw me off a bit."

I like it when people lie to you when you already know the truth. I smiled and pretended like I believed him. His phone beeped and he smiled.

"Good news?" He looked up with the smile still on his face.

"The best. I have to get going. Please tell your mum I'll see her when I get back."

"Will do." He grabs his phone and car keys and walks out. I decide to join mum and Imi in the bedroom. As soon as I walk in Miss Radebe forgets that she should be sleeping. I pick her up and kiss her while she giggles.

"This one still needs to sleep." Mum says.

"I think she's completely forgotten about that. How was your day?"

"Good. Missy here keeps me on my toes. And Bontle called. She's coming home soon."

"She told me. And her birthday is coming up. I was thinking of throwing her a party."

"She'd like that." While we were talking Bab'Zwane's voice was loud as he called out for my mum. He eventually got to the bedroom.

"What's wrong?" Mum asks.

"My tyres are flat. I can't go. Monde can I borrow your car, I'll bring it back in one piece, I promise." Should I? Nah. I don't want my car being seen in shady places.

"I wish I could. I have to go do some groceries for the house. Lungelo will be back soon and I need to cook. I can get you an uber though."

"Can you?"

"Of course." I get my phone that has turned into Imi's

toy and text one of the guys to come pick him up. "Its three minutes away." I give him the license plate my guy sent me and he walks out. Now I have to go get groceries before mum starts asking questions.

"Mum, I have to go to the shops before they close. I'll pick Imi when I come back cause she's sleeping already."

"No problem. Bring me KFC when you come back." I roll my eyes and get my keys. Mum and her love for KFC is almost the same as her love for us.

I go out and drive out. I get to the mall and park. There is a car already waiting for me. I get in and we drive to the warehouse. Our men have been given strict orders not to show themselves. Bab'Khumalo and his men are already there. We drive in and the guys go in first to neutralize the situation. Once that is done I go in. Bab'Zwane quickly gets up from the floor where he is laying with a gun to his head.

"Nomonde, thank God. What's going on?" The man pushes him back onto the floor.

"I should be asking you that. What are you doing here?"

"I dont know. The uber brought me here."

"And you couldn't tell him where you were going? How dumb do you think I am." I signal for the guys to bring him up and hand him a chair fo sit. The bags with the 'merchandise' is brought before him.

"I take it this is why you are here?" I take it out and lay it on the floor. He is still feigning concern and innocence.

"I don't even know what that is."

"Its icing sugar." His face changes from concern and innocence fo anger.

"What?"

"Its icing sugar. You risked your life for icing sugar. Must be sad." I see him clench and unclench his jaw. He is fuming.

"That's impossible."

"It is. Now this explains your money. I know the taxi business can be lucrative but sometimes you need to be smart about it. I know you and Nyambose have been working together for years. You came here for the merchandise which you've been doing for the past few years now. At first you didn't take much. Just enough to get you by. Then you got greedy and took everything. Unfortunately for us the dealer was renting one of our warehouses, and you robbed it. Now the owner of the shipment is blaming us for it. Now we have to clean up your mess." He chuckles.

"Nice story." I guess the pleading him is gone. "I don't see what it has to do with me though."

"Don't worry about it. Let's just say by the end of tonight, your family will be singing Amagugu." I see him swallow.

"You wouldn't want to hurt your mother like that."

"She'll be fine. She'll get over you. I'll be there to comfort her. So she'll be okay. Don't worry." I turn to

the guys. "Set the place on fire. Make it believable."

I walk out and I'm driven back to the mall. Lucky for me the shops are still open. I get a few groceries and head back home. By the end of the night I'll be playing the dutiful potential step daughter that's hurt by her potential step daddy's death. Life neh. It can change in the blink of an eye.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETY THREE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Guilt eats me up seeing my mother so hurt. Bab'Zwane might have been full of secrets and all but she loved him. And right now she is in pain and it's all my fault. I keep wiping tears from her eyes. The fact that I put them there hurts. Even though I was following orders it still doesn't make it any less hurtful.

For once in my life I'm glad my mum and Bab'Zwane were not married. As we speak right now we are sitting in the lounge with his family. I'm not even sure why we are here cause this isn't his even his house. Lungelo, Muzi and MaMtolo are here too. Bontle has been serving these rude people. My poor baby is also hurt for my mother's sake.

"We need to know what happened to him." His brother says. "There is no way he can just die nje."

"Did the police not tell you what happened?" Muzi asks.

"What was he doing at that warehouse anyway?" His daughter who's been eyeing the house since she got here asks.

"Unfortunately that's something only he can answer. And he is not here to answer for himself so we cant give you those answers." Lungelo answers her.

"Fine. We know he wasn't married to her so we would like to have all his stuff." His daughter says. His son nods next to her.

"We've packed his clothes so you can have those." They look at each other, the daughter shakes her head.

"What do you take us for? What about his house?" I swear this girl is here to test me. For her sake I hope

she is not talking about this house. Cause if she is, shit will hit the fan.

"Which house are you talking about exactly?" I ask. This is the only thing I've said since they got here.

"This house!" The son says pointing his finger to the floor. I laugh. Mum, as hurt as she is, is looking at her like she just popped all over the floor.

"Which house are you talking about?" My mom asks. I can see the fire burning in her eyes and for their sake, I hope who ever speaks next will have to count their words carefully.

"You heard us, this house." His brother reiterates. Mum chuckles.

"This house? You must be drunk. This is my house. My daughter bought me this house. Your brother had a house eMlazi. If you want to lay claim on anything it's that house. If there is nothing better you can talk about ngcela ningphumele. (Please leave.)"

"We are not leaving here until we get what we need."

"I think you've heard what mama said, you can leave now." Lungelo says so calmly. They get up.

"We better not see you at the funeral." The brother says. Lungelo and Muzi stand up and face them.

"We will be there. And there is nothing you can do about it." Muzi says. They follow each other out and leave with Lungelo and Muzi on their tail. I get up and go to the backyard when my phone rings. I pick it up.

"Hello."

"Hi, Nomonde Mashile?" That name brings back so many bad memories.

"Can I help you?"

"I need confirmation that you are Nomonde Mashile." The woman says.

"Fine. I am Nomonde. What can I do for you." I'm getting impatient right now.

"Ok. I am calling from the Women's prison in Johannesburg. Its about your sister Amanda."

"Is she okay?"

"She tried to commit suicide a couple of days ago. We are letting you know so you can come see her. Shes been admitted to the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital."

"Is she okay?"

"She will be. Shs lost a lot of blood but a guard was able to get to her in time. She's had a blood transfusion so she'll be Okay."

"Thank you for letting me know." She hangs up.

I sink down on the small chair. Who have I become? I havent seen my sister in months and now she just tried to off herself. My mother is mourning her lovers death that I caused. I haven't checked on Princess and Prince in so long. Is this really the person I want to be? I hear footsteps behind me and I quickly wipe the tears away.

"Baby. What's wrong?" He comes and crouches in front of me with his hands on my knees. "Baby tell me what's wrong?" I can hear the concern in his voice. I shake my head with the tears flowing freely from my eyes. He helps me stand and then engulfs me in a hug.

"It's going to be Okay baby?" He says rubbing my back. Instead of feeling better I cry harder. No matter how many times I try to justify what I did, I took someone's life. It was easy when all I had to do is make threats here and there but taking a life, that's just something else. I thought it would be easy, or maybe it would have been if it was someone I didn't know. But I knew him, mum loved him and I took that from her.

"Baby please, tell me what's going on. You're worrying me now."

"Its nothing. I just feel bad for my mum."

"I understand that but I know that's not why you're

crying like this. You didnt even like the man."

"That doesn't matter. Mum still loved him. And right now shes the only thing that matters right now." He helps me sit down on the chair then pulls up another one and sits down.

"I guess you're right. I'm sorry I wasn't here when you found out about this." I shake my head.

"Am I a bad person?"

"Of course not. Why would you think that?"

"Amanda tried to commit suicide. I haven't checked on her in months. I haven't checked on Prince and Princess. I've become someone I don't know."

"That doesnt make you a bad person. You had a difficult pregnancy, you almost died and you've been adjusting to being anew mother. Putting yourself first is also important." He doesn't understand. His reasoning would be easier to stomach if I had truly taken time off just to rest and recharge. But I didnt. I was too focused on trying to be a gangster I completely forgot about the people in my life that matter.

"I need to go check on Imi." I leave him sitting there and go upstairs. Imi is still asleep. I sit on the floor watching her sleep on the bed. How much of her life am I going to miss out on while trying to be some bad bitch? I need to put a stop to this before I completely lose myself.

I'm not sure if the Zwane's have given up their little claim to my mothers house but they've been quiet ever since they left. We took the almost five hour drive to Manguzi the day before the funeral. I wasn't really sure about this being a good idea. But my mother has been with this man for a long time and she deserves to pay her last respects. Khanya, Philani, Nate and Lando came down to support us. I guess with the drama we might come into where we are going we will need all the support we can get.

When we got closer to his house I felt my heart racing. We asked mum directions since she's

apparently been here. The house was huge. Well the yard because there were about ten houses in the yard. Rondavels mostly, with one huge house in the middle. A kraal was at the top end of the yard. There was a tent mounted close to the main house. I guess that was the sign that there was a death in the family. The yard was filled with people moving up and down preparing for the funeral.

As soon as the cars pulled up outside the yard people stopped and stared at us. There were some taxis parked outside the yard too. When mum got off the car one of the older men standing by the taxis came to us.

"MaGumede. Ngaze ngajabula ukukbona (I'm happy to see you.)" He says shaking mums hand.

"Nami ngajabula ukukbona Shandu, noma isimo singasihle nje. (I'm happy to see you too even under these circumstances.)"

"Come in. I'll show you where to seat." We all look at

each other wondering if this man is a family member of what.

We follow him into the yard and straight to the tent. As soon as we sit down Zwane's brother comes marching to us with his son behind him.

"Nifunani la? Asishongo ukuthi asindingi? (What are you doing here? Didn't we tell you we don't need you?)" His brother asks breathing fire and drawing unnecessary attention to us. Bab'Shandu gets up and stands between us.

"Mangethe, this is not the time for this." He says calmly. I look around me and I can see Lungelo and the others are ready for war. I wish they would have listened to me and let us stay home.

"Shandu ka Ndaba, this is a family matter. Ungazingeni (dont involve yourself.) Angibadingi labantu emzini kamfowethu. (I don't want these

people in my brothers house.)"

"Ngeshwa ke Mangethe angeke kwenzeke loko. Bazongcwaba uZwane, futhi bazokwenza look. (Unfortunately that wont happen. They came to bury Zwane and they will.)"

"Mbatha!" He shouts. The only thing I'm grateful for is that these people inside the tent don't act like people in citys who will immediately take their phones out as soon as there is commotion anywhere.

"Uzongbiza ukhathale Mangethe, (you'll call me till you get tired.) But the fact still remains. They are not going anywhere. The sooner you get that into your head the better. If you cant do that you know what I can do."

The bickering keeps attracting a crowd. Even the taxi drivers who were parked outside are now in the tent standing by Mbatha. Zwane's brother huffs and walks away with his tail between his legs. I wonder what Mbatha has on him.

The funeral went on without a hitch. Or maybe its the 'guards' Mbatha left us with. People spoke highly of him. Which made me feel even worse than I already did. We drove back to Durban after the funeral. Even though we were offered food we refused it and decided to drive home.

Somewhere along the way we stopped at a garage. People were hungry and needed to eat. Luckily for us there was a wimpy right next to the garage. I excused myself after placing my order and went to the bathroom. I didnt even see Lando following me.

"Are you okay? You haven't been yourself since we got here." She asks. I look around the toilet and make sure we are alone before I can answer her.

"I'm not okay. I killed a man. Not with my bare hands but still, I made the order."

"No you didnt. Busani did."

"Because I told him about Zwane's involvement in the missing shipment."

"Still Nomonde, all you did was follow orders. Nyambose and his friends have been taken care off and McGregor has his merchandise back."

"So it will be over soon and we can go back to living our normal lives?"

"I hope so. This thing might seem like fun and all but it's not. The guys are better off running this thing."

"Tell me about it. I know I can multitask but this thing can turn one into the complete polar opposite of themselves."

"When is Busani and company planning on getting this whole thing cleared up anyway?"

"Soon. He said they were tying up some lose ends and then things will be back to normal."

"I'm crossing fingers its soon. I tried so hard to not let prison change me and I can't let this change who I am. I want to go back to my life."

"You and me both. Let's go back before they come

looking for us."

I do what I came to the bathroom to do before we walk back to the others. I hope Busani holds true to his word and brings this little charade to an end. I want my life back.

Insert sponsored by Anonymous. Thank you babe



MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETY FOUR

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Since Iminathi's birth I've noticed I've grown a love hate relationship with hospitals. The coldness and the smell of disinfectant make me nauseous. I've been sitting here for almost an hour waiting for visiting hours to start. The doctors and nurses are busy doing their rounds.

"You can go in now." The guard says when the doctor is done with his rounds. I give him my bag and he searches to make sure I didn't bring any counterfeit stuff with me. I go in and she is looking out the window. She seems so so different. Growing up she was this super confident girl, she knew who she was and what she wanted. Even though we weren't close as most sisters were but she was the

brave and sociable one. Everyone loved her. And then she grew up and just when we were getting close I was arrested and sent to jail. I guess now that I know everything, her getting close to me was just her own way of worming her way into my life and taking it over.

I got out of prison and the sister I knew had become so cold and calculating. She'd channeled her brave energy into things that wouldn't benefit her in any way. But then life can change in a blink of an eye. Right now the woman sleeping in that bed is a far cry from the brave and confident girl I used to know. She's so broken. I thought by now she'd be used to prison but I guess I was wrong.

"Hi." She quickly turns and looks at me. She smiles but the smile ends right on her lips, it doesn't extend to her eyes.

"Hi. What are you doing here?" She pushes herself up until she is sitting upright. Her wrists have bandages

on them. I guess she can't hide them cause the hospital gown doesn't extend to her arms. Although she does hide them under the hospital blanket.

"The prison called me and told me you were here."

"They shouldn't have. I'm sorry they disturbed you."
She's trying hard not to look at me in the eyes.

I pull up the chair and sit down.

"So how long will you keep doing this?" Her head shoots up and she looks at me.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you doing all these things. I get that prison is hard, heck I was there for fifteen years. I should know. You've been there for less than two years and you're already looking for an easy way out." Her forehead creases and her lips are parted like she wants to defend herself but then she shuts them again. "Amanda, you have two kids who still need their mother. They might be young but it doesn't mean they are stupid. What do you think this will do

to them. Knowing that you chose death over them?"

"They deserve better."

"Of course they do. But you're still their mother. Nothing will ever change that. I can be in their lives as much as I can but I'm not their mother, I'll never be." She wipes the lone tear falling from her eye.

"I'm sorry."

"Saying the words sorry without any action to back it up is as useless as washing a car when it's raining. You've said sorry so many times and yet you keep doing these little things that make one wonder how honest and genuine your sorry's are."

"Nomonde I'm truly sorry....."

"Stop okay, just stop. Your need to put your big girl panties on and face this head on. If I can do it then you can too. I know I havent come to see you in a while but I'm not going to come back here if you ever pull a stunt like this. If this pity party is what you want to be in for the next ten years then so be it. But I wont be here to cheer you on." She wipes her tears. At this point I'm not sure if those are real or she's

just acting. But if she is acting then maybe she deserves an oscar.

"How is mum?"

"She's okay."

"She still wakes up at four in the morning to get her vetkoeks ready? She must be tired by now."

"No. She hasn't done that in a while. I bought her a house in Umhlanga. Right now she's just enjoying herself."

"You bought her a house?" I nod my head.

"eMhlanga?"

"Well I prefer her being close to me. And since she wouldnt move in with us it was only right I have her close."

"She must be happy."

"She is. Except her boyfriend just died."

"Bab'Zwane?"

"You knew him? How?"

"I bumped into him one morning leaving the house. It was too early and I was coming from a party when I was in high school. Of course I couldn't tell mum about it cause that would have earned me a few strokes for sneaking out. I'm surprised they've been together this whole time. She must have really loved him." The guilt I thought was slowly dying away made a return. What if I've just taken away her soulmate?

"I guess so. I'm going to see the kids, would you like me to tell them anything?"

"I..... uhm..... I....." she sighs and rubs her face with her bandaged arm. "Tell them I love them. And I'm sorry." I got up. "And Nomonde, I know it won't be easy to believe this but I'm truly sorry, for everything I did to you. I'll try my best, and I'll do better. I promise. If not for you then for my kids."

"I'm glad to hear that. But like I said....."

"I know, actions speak louder than words."

"Take care of yourself. I'll try and come see you as soon as I can."

"Thank you." I couldn't even give her a hug cause the guard was watching us.

I walked out. I got into my car and drove to Sandton mall. I need to get the kids some gifts. Plus they will only be out of school in a few hours. I got their gifts and then headed to Tashas for some late breakfast. If Bontle was here it would have been nice to bond but she is back in Durban so I have no choice but to enjoy by my lonesome self. I made my order and waited with a glass of orange juice.

"Nomonde?" Someone's voice sounded next to me. I looked up and it was Paul.

"Hi." He pulls out the chair and sits down.

"I didn't know you were in town."

"I actually came to see Amanda, and hopefully the kids too. If you don't mind." He smiles. And for a moment I am reminded of the man I fell in love with. The kind, fearless man who made butterflies cause

havoc in my stomach. And now all I see is just a man I'd rather play as far away from as I could. But we have a child together, and he has children with my sister. So I guess we will always be family.

"I don't mind. The kids would love to see you. I know they missed you guys."

"Okay then, I'll come over after school since my flight is late in the evening."

"That's perfect. So where is your boyfriend. Is he around?"

"You mean my husband. No he is not around."

"Right. Congratulations."

"Thank you. So how is your family?"

"They are good. It's weird without mum and Lesego but we move."

"True."

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure."

"Lungelo, do you know what he does for a living?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean his livelihood. Do you know everything there is to know about him?"

"I'm not sure what you're trying to say, but I know all there is to know about my husband."

"Even his friends?" I lean on the table with my arms crossed on it.

"What exactly are you trying to say?"

"Nothing much. I'm just curious."

"Well dont be. I know all there is to know about Lungelo and I know all his friends."

"All of them?"

"Yes all of them. What are you trying to say?" He chuckles and rubs his hands together. A part of me knows what he might be on about, but at the same time I wonder what he knows that would make him 'curious'.

"Forget I said anything. If you want, you can go pick the kids up from school."

"I'd like that. Thank you."

"Perfect, I'll call the school and let them know you're coming. My appointment is here. I'll see you around Nomonde." I nod my head as he gets up and walks away. He shakes the man's hand and walks with him to a table. This man looks familiar. If he is who I think he is, I hope for Paul's sake, this meeting is above board.

I busy myself with some work while waiting for the clock to hit two thirty. But my eyes keep wandering to the man Paul is with. Something about him is off. Busani and Dominic walk in and I can't help noticing that the man with Paul has his eyes set on them. His eyes don't leave them until they are sitting down. He keeps looking at them. Any other day I'd walk over to Busani and ask him about this man but I know better.

When the clock hits two o'clock I get a text from

Paul saying all is set with the school. I pay my bill and head out. Before I walk out the door I turn to look at the man again and he still has his eyes on Busani. I dont know why the look he was giving him sent shivers down my spine. I got out and dialed Lando's number.

"Hey you."

"Hey listen, I'm probably jumping the gun a bit but I just left Tasha's in Sandton Square."

"Wena sathane, why not tell me you're in Joburg?"

"Focus wena. I just left Busani and Dominic in there. There is a guy looking at Busani strangely. Ever since he got here he has had his eyes glued on him."

"Really. Okay uhm. I'll get some security to them."

"Make it quick."

"Sharp." We hung up and I drove to the kids school. I just hope that I'm wrong about that man.



NARRATED

At Tashas. Busani and Dominic have been sitting at their table with their drinks. Even though the waiter has been coming back time and time again to take their food orders with no luck. They've been sipping on the bottle of Hennessy they got sealed.

"Busani, I'm hungry." Dominic says making Busani laugh.

"Theres food at home."

"So why are we here?"

"We are here to find out Odoms accomplice."

"And you think the man he is with is his accomplice?"

"Yep. You can see the way they are looking at us. They haven't left their table. And they keep ogling

us." Dominic laughs.

"So this is battle of what? The stares." They both laugh. Busani's phone beeps signaling a message. He opens it.

"Lando is sending some security. Apparently Nomonde called her and told her about some strange man watching us. Where was she? I didn't see her."

"I did. She was here. She left a while ago."

"The other guy with Odom is her ex husband?"
Dominic frowns.

"Really? What did she see in his ugly ass." They laugh as the security guys Lando sent walk through the door. They nod their heads and sit a few tables away from Dom and Busani.

Busani stands up and walks towards Odom and Paul. He pulls out a chair and sits down.

"Gentlemen. How are you?" He says looking at Paul

"Unless you have my merchandise you shouldn't be here." Odom says. Busani turns to look at him.

"I do actually. I'll send you the time and place to pick it up."

"Good. You're already a few days away from your deadline. You know what will happen if I don't get my merchandise in time. And if I see your son anywhere near this there will be hell to pay." Odom tells Busani. Busani smiles and looks at the man straight in the eye.

"It's crazy how you think my son is the one you should fear. Him and his friends, sure they are rather dangerous, but what you forgot is that a lion is not a born hunter. The lioness has to teach the little Cubs to hunt. But when they do learn they too become deadly. But that doesn't mean the lion then loses its ability to hunt just because it has passed on some knowledge to its Cubs."

"Stop speaking in riddles. Say what you have to say and then go get my merchandise."

"My son is the least of your worries Odom. The moment you threatened my grandchildren's lives was the moment you signed your death certificate." Odom chuckles.

"Dont forget I still have your son Biyela. I have the upper hand right now. Not you."

"Keep telling yourself that. When the time comes, remember my words, never ever poke a snake in its hole. You wont like it when it strikes. Enjoy your meal." He gets up and walks out with Dom and the security behind him.

"What the fuck was that?" Paul asks shaking in his boots. "Maybe this was a bad idea."

"Get yourself together. If you want to know if your ex's new husband is the Shadow Assassin then we need to carry this through. Busani should have him on call, and soon he will show himself."

"I hope you're right. That mans words sounded

threatening."

"Busani is an old dog. All bark and no bite. Relax. We got this."

better late than never

MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETY FIVE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

"Maybe this was a bad idea."

"What was a bad idea?" Bonolo asks her brother. It's been almost half an hour of him repeating the same words over and over again while pacing up and down the lounge.

"This was seriously a bad idea." He keeps saying. Bonolo takes the glass of wine she was sipping on and throws at him. "What the fuck is wrong with you?" He shouts at her.

"If you're not going to tell me what's going on then just sit down and stop pacing, you're making me dizzy." He wipes his face and takes a seat.

"So what's going on?"

"I was with Odom earlier at Tasha's, Busani and some guy showed up."

"Okay, so what's the big deal, Busani doesn't bite."

"That man is dangerous Bonolo. I didn't realize it until he was sitting in front of me. From afar he looks like any normal old person, but up close, he's just....."

"He is what?"

"There is something dangerous about him. When he came to our table he seemed calm and chilled but when Odom mentioned his son it was like he became a demon right in front of us. His eyes were breathing fire. And when he said we shouldn't have poked a snake in its hole I knew we are in deep shit." Bonolo sits down next to her brother. Fear gripping her.

"What are we going to do?"

"Nothing. I told Odom we are out." She turns to look at him.

"You can't be serious. How are we supposed to find

out what happened to mum and Lesego? This was our only chance to avenge them."

"I'm done avenging anyone Bonolo. Lesego and mum were grown adults who knew exactly what they were doing. Whatever happened to them was a result of their own actions. I have three children I need to raise. I've already missed out on Bontle's life, I'm not going to do the same to Prince and Princess." Bonolo stands up and looks at her brother with her arms crossed on her chest.

"Do you think mum and Lesego would have given up if it was you lying in a grave? Really Paul."

"I guess we'll never know."

"Paul!"

"Bonolo, weren't you the one working overtime to make sure we all paid for our sins, especially to Nomonde. So why do you care now? Mum and Lesego have paid for their sins, we all have, now it's time to let things go."

"I wanted them to pay yes, by going to jail not dying."

"Yeah well, they are dead now. We cant turn back the hands of time. Mina I'm done. If you want to continue doing this, go ahead. Mine I'm done."

"So you're okay with a dangerous man like Lungelo being a part of your daughters life?"

"You're a lawyer, what happened to innocent until proven guilty?"

"Mxm." She throws herself on the couch just as Prince and Princess come running in followed by Nomonde. They hug their dad and greet their aunt.

"Look what Aunt Monde got us." Prince says emptying the bags in his hands to show reveal several video games.

"Nice. So when do we get to play?" His father asks.

"I'll go set up." He grabs his games and runs upstairs.

"So what did you get?" Bonolo asks Princess.

She takes out her new pink headphones and a shiny

pink microphone.

"Okay. I guess Beyonce has competition now." She smiles and rushes upstairs. "Thank you. They seem happy." Paul says.

"I'm glad. I hope you don't mind, I got them takeaways."

"Of course not. Saves me the trouble of cooking tonight. Thank you." Paul answers.

"Anytime. I also wanted to ask if they can come visit when schools close? Mum misses them."

"Sur...."

"No." Bonolo says and stands up. "We are taking the kids on vacation, you know, they've been through a lot. We just want them to have a bit of fun." Paul looks at his sister questions filling his mind. No matter how old he might be he knows they did not speak about any vacation. But he cant say that in front of Nomonde. His sister will have to give him answers later.

"Dad, it's ready. Come." Prince shouts from the top

of the stairs.

"Ok. I'll be right back." Paul rushes up the stairs to play with his son.

"I take it the vacation story was a now thing."
Nomonde says soon as Paul is out of earshot.

"Excuse me!"

"You just made the whole vacation story up. Why? Dont you want the kids to spend time with their grandmother?"

"I have no idea what you are on about. We've been planning the trip for a while now." Nomonde chuckles.

"Right. Anyways, I'm not sure if I've said this before, but thank you for all you did to prove my innocence. I owe you a lot. You didnt have to do it."

"The biggest mistake I've ever made." She mumbles to herself.

"Excuse me?"

"Nothing. I was just doing the right thing."

"Right. I should get going. I'll go say goodbye to the kids."

"Tell me something, your new husband, How close is he to Bontle?"

"They are pretty close. Why?"

"Are you okay with a man like that being so close to your child?"

"A man like what?"

"A man like him. Dangerous." Nomonde chuckles.

"Lungelo? Dangerous? Those are two words you can never put in the same sentence."

"You can protect him all you want, but it's a matter of time before the world knows exactly what he is capable of."

"If you say so. I'll go say goodbye to the kids." She leaves Bonolo standing there and goes upstairs. She says goodbye to the kids and leave.



NOMONDE

I'm not sure what game Bonolo is playing at. But now i know Paul being at the restaurant with that guy was probably no coincidence. The way he was looking at Busani and Dom means there is more to it than just someone being intrigued by another person. But I have to hope that Busani will take care of this whole thing so I can go back to my life. My phone rings just as I'm pulling up to the car rental place.

"Hello!"

"Nomonde, its Busani."

"Oh hey. I take it the guards got to you in time?"

"They did. Although it wasn't necessary for them to be there, but thank you. I wanted to let you know my guys know where BJ is. They will be going there tonight."

"That's good. So tomorrow we will be back to normal?"

"Hopefully. So tell me what do we do with Paul? I know Lungelo saved him the last time because he is your daughters father, but it doesnt seem like he is ready to let go."

"I know. I think his sister is also in on this."

"Clearly he doesnt give up. I didnt recognize him for a moment. So what do we do with him?" I close my eyes and sigh.

Paul seems stubborn. And with Bonolo in the mix these whole revenge tactics my daughter might end up without a paternal family. Our maternal family is already small as it is. As much as the Radebe's are now a part of her life she also needs her blood family. And now that I know what Bonolo and Paul are up to I'm torn between letting Busani do what he needs to do to protect his family but I also cant help feeling like I need to give Paul one more chance.

"Can I call you back?"

"Sure. But know time is ticking. If I don't have an answer from you on what to do with Paul by tonight, I'll do things my way. And it won't be pretty."

"I know. I'll call you back." I hang up and drive out again. I know I'll have to book another ticket home but I need to do this. I drive to Paul's house and park outside. I send him a text telling him I'm outside. I wait for a while before the gate opens and he walks out. He opens the car door and gets in.

"You know you could have just driven in like usual." I could have.

"I know. I need to warn you." He frowns and I can almost see the worry in his eyes.

"Warn me about what?"

"You need to let things go. If not for your own peace of mind then do it for the kids. They still need their father."

"What are you on about?"

"Whatever it is that you're planning with the man you were with earlier. Let it go Paul, it wont end well." He turns his whole body to look at me.

"Be specific Nomonde, what are you talking about?" I'm not going to spell it out for him. For all I know he could be recording this conversation, which is why I needed it to happen in the car because in here I have a signal blocker so he wont be able to do anything about it. Even if he were to open his mouth and say what I just told him it would be his word against mine.

"Tell Bonolo to let it go too. You're messing with dangerous people who will not think twice about wiping you out. They saved you once before dont think they'll do it again."

"Nomonde....."

"You know exactly what I'm talking about Paul, I wont spell it out for you. But if you go down this path, you might find yourself in the same position your mother and brother are in right now."

"And how do you know all of that? So it's true that your husband is the Shadow Assassin?"

"Consider this your last warning. You've been saved twice before. This is your third and last opportunity. Give me your word that you'll let this go and you might get to see Bontle graduate varsity." He stares deep into my eyes, God alone knows what he is looking for.

"Fine. I'll let things go." He says after a while. "I'll speak to my sister too."

"Good. This might seem like a game but you're playing with masters of the game, and I'd hate for Bontle to lose her father again." He sighs and shakes his head.

"Thanks for the warning." He opens the door and gets out. I start the car and drive back to the airport. I call Busani.

"I take it you've made a decision."

"I have. Paul wont be a problem."

"Are you sure?"

"I've spoken to him, he promised he will let things go. And he also knows this is the last chance he will get. If he decides after this to pursue this then it's all on him."

"And his sister?"

"He said he will talk to her. I hope she listens."

"I'll take your word for it. I'll update you once we get BJ."

"Thank you. I'll wait for your call." Whoever said running a cartel was child's play needs to be skinned alive.

I got to Durban just after ten PM. I promised Lungelo I'd be back before eight. I'm sure he is fuming right now. I drove home hoping that maybe he'd be at the club, but it seems I dont slaughter for the underground gang enough cause his car is parked outside.

I take a deep breath before turning the door knob and walking in. The TV is on judging by the flickering lights in the lounge. The lights are off and he is laying on the couch with a bottle of beer on the coffee table.

"Hi." Silence. Okay, I told you he was mad. He is not sleeping, cause he is busy doing something on his phone. I walk to him and sit on the couch next to him. "I know you're mad....."

"Look at you reading minds now." He says without taking his eyes off the phone.

"Lungelo?"

"Dont you have a cartel to run?" I can feel his eyes on me. But because I'm sitting between him and the TV I cant see his face. I turn the side lamp on and sure enough he is staring at me.

"I'm sorry okay. I know I said I'd be back before eight and I'm late. I'm sorry."

"Did you know Iminathi's top teeth came out?"

"I thought she was teething on the bottom?"

"She was. And now she is teething on the top. Her teeth are almost completely out. Bontle's semester results came out a few days ago. She passed, three distinctions. Your mother hasn't left the house in two days, she's still upset about Zwane. Bonsile is pregnant, she's been asking about you. I get that running a cartel is a fulltime job, but you're missing out on important milestones in your children's lives, you haven't called to check on your mother in a few days, your best friend has hormones messing her up daily and you haven't even called to check on her either. We haven't had sex in almost two weeks. You need to get your priorities in check Nomonde."

He gets up, takes the baby monitor from the coffee table. He kisses me on the top of my head before he goes to bed. Busani better hold his end of the deal. I don't need this much pressure on me. I need a break.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETY SIX

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I have some grovelling to do. Last night, well more like in the early hours of the morning, I got a call from Busani saying the mission was a huge success. BJ is back home and Odom has been taken care off. I should be happy and celebrating but I cant. The man snoring next to me is mad at me. Not that I blame him. I've clearly dropped the ball. But last nights call is worthy of a celebration.

I carefully roll out of bed and go to the bathroom. I wash my face and brush my teeth. I go to Imi's room to check on her and she is fast asleep. She'll be up in no time so I have to use the few minutes I have profitably.

I go down to the kitchen and start preparing breakfast. I know Lungelo will be up soon. I do all that I need to do and put everything on a tray. I should have worn some lingerie to make this apology a little smoother. When I get to the bedroom Lungelo is not there, I hear the shower running. Perfect. I have a few minutes to put on some lingerie. I make the bed first and put the tray in the middle of the bed.

I go through my underwear drawer and find a little black number I've been saving for our anniversary. I guess it will have to work sooner than I had wanted. I put the lacy number on and put a black silky gown on top. I know I don't need it but it's okay to leave some things to the imagination. Plus I need him to eat his food first before he can have his early morning dessert.

The shower stops and I quickly run to the bed. I try and position myself till I find a perfect spot. My one

leg sprawled out on the bed and the other lifted. My hand is resting on the lifted knee. The silky gown opens up enough to show my inner thigh and the lace covering up my sacred holy place.

He walks out of the bathroom with a towel around his waist. Droplets of water covering his upper body. He hasn't gone to gym in a while. His six pack is slowly disappearing, but I'm not complaining, dont they say a man with a potbelly is a sign of wealth? Well I'll take it. He stops when he sees the little set up on the bed.

"What's going on?" He asks walking closer to the bed with his hands on his waist.

"I made you breakfast." He sits at the bottom of the bed with the breakfast between us. He takes a piece of bacon and throws it in his mouth. A smile creeps up on my face when I notice his eyes making their way up my thigh.

"I can see that. What's the occasion?" He leans back

and rests on his elbow, giving him a birds eye view of everything nice and sweet.

"I actually wanted to apologize. I know I havent been the best wife or mother, and I'm sorry. I promise I am going to try harder."

"Its fine."

"Dont say that. It's not fine. I realise running a cartel is no childs play. So I quit." He laughs.

"You? Quit? That's a first." He is still smiling so maybe the ice is melting.

"Yep. I quit. I'm keeping the car though. I deserve it after the grey hairs I've grown because of that cartel." He shakes his head laughing.

"Try telling Busani that and see how he reacts."

"He already knows."

"Really?"

"Yep. It's time for me to focus on what matters. My family." He smiles and leans over the tray and gives

me a kiss.

"Your food is getting cold." I say after pulling out of the kiss.

"That's why I'll have the warm food." He runs his hand up my thigh and grasps my butt cheek. He uses the one hand to pull the tray away. He takes it and puts it on the side table before pulling me down till I'm laying on my back. He opens the gown revealing the lacy black magic number.

He bites his lip taking in every inch of my body. Two kids later and my body is still close to the way it was before. Just a few stretch mark's here and there and a bit of baby fat but other than that, I'm good. Even the c-section scar is not as bothersome as it used to be.

He turns me over so quick if I didn't know better I'd say I imagined the whole thing. I'm laying on my

stomach and he is planting kisses all over my back. He unhooks the bra then pulls down the little lacy gstring. I feel his lips on the top of my butt. His one hand goes under my body and straight to my cookie jar. He runs his hand in between my other lips.

He pushes my one leg to the side and before I know it he is inside me. And then he stops. I keep my eyes closed waiting for him to move, instead he crosses his arms on my back with his chin resting on his crossed arms. Is he seriously going to stop, right here, right now? Jesus I'm being tested right now.

"Lungelo?"

"Mhmmm." He is so relaxed it's not even funny. He keeps making these slow strokes and just when I get into it he slows down and then stops before starting again.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing." Of course you're not doing anything.

"Okay, get off me. You're heavy." I can feel myself getting pissed right now. But I'm trying so hard to remain calm.

"No. I like being here." His phone rings and he extends his hand and gets the phone from the side table. He is really not planning on finishing what he started. Now I know why they say man are trash. Mxm.

"Hello.....yeah..... okay. I'll come by later. Sharp." He throws the phone on the bed

I wiggle myself under him but he wont dudge. Instead he raises my hands over my head and pumps into me like his life depends on it. I try to muff my screams by burying my head on the pillow. I cant afford to wake Imi right now. The fact that she hasn't made a sound means she's still sleeping.

He let's go of my arms and gets up. He kneels on the

bed and raises my butt up till its floating in the air. Maybe this was a bad idea cause I still have to go to work and the way he is digging himself into me I'm pretty sure by the time he is done I'll be throbbing, but the orgasm I feel coming is worth it. My body finally gives in and convulses around him. He keeps going till I feel his load fill me up.

I slump back down on the bed and he falls next to me. Imi and her perfect timing. Her cooing comes through on the baby monitor. Lungelo gets up and walks to the closet, I guess to get something to wear. I take my gown and put it on then head to Imi's room. She is laying on her stomach grabbing her stuffed toys. When she hears my footsteps she looks up. I'm hoping to see her usual smile but it's not there. I pick her up and she looks at me like she's trying to figure out who I am. Have I been absent that long?

"Hi baby." She keeps touching my face and letting go. I guess after a while she realises who I am and she

gets comfortable. I decide at that moment that work will have to wait. I take her back to the bedroom.

"I need a doctors note." I tell Lungelo who is busy putting on his shoes.

"Why?"

"I need a couple of days off."

"I'll see what I can do."

"Thanks." I get my phone and send a text to my boss telling him I'm not feeling too good. Today I'm spending the day with my kids. I've missed out on a lot and I need to make up for it.

"So what's the plan?" Lungelo asks watching me play with Imi.

"I'm going to my moms to spend the day with her. Maybe later I'll go and see Bonsile later."

"So you're really done with the cartel."

"Yep. It was easier when y'all were doing everything

and all we did was be the fairy godmothers sprinkling fairy dust everywhere. Or maybe I'm just not built for this."

My mother always said the first step to fixing your mistakes is admitting you made a mistake. I dont think the cartel thing was a mistake, me failing to prioritize what was important to me, now that was a mistake.

Lungelo left and my day began. Imi and I took a bubble bath. Baby bubble baths smell like magic. When we were done we walked to mums house. I find Bontle in the kitchen making breakfast. Of course I'm invisible to her when she sees Imi. I leave them in the kitchen and go up to the bedroom. Mum is still in bed. I get under the covers with her.

"Hi."

"Dont you have a bed?" I chuckle and give her a kiss

on the cheek.

"I like yours better. How are you?"

"I'll live. So where have you been? You've been scarce lately."

"I know. I'm sorry. I missed you."

"What were you busy with?"

"Work. I've been thinking. The house in Ntunjambili, what are we going to do with it?" She sighs. She's been procrastinating making a decision about it.

"I spoke to my sister about the house, she says we should sell it."

"What do you think?"

"I don't know. That's our family home. My sister has her own house in Soweto so she doesn't need the house but she wants the money from the sale."

"I have an idea. How about we build rooms, rent them out and then that can be your income. You and aunt Bertha can share it equally."

"Okay. That sounds like an idea. I'll talk to my sister."

"Perfect."

"Seriously though, why are you here? Shouldn't you be working?"

"I should be, but I'm here, bonding with my favourite girls. I am going to book us massages. Maybe I can invite Bonsile over."

"That would be nice. Her hormones are wrecking havoc on her."

"You know too?"

"Of course I know. Let me take a bath then you can get those massage people ready."

"Okay."

She gets off the bed and heads to the bathroom. I send Bonsile a text inviting her over. I call the spa and book an appointment with their mobile division. I go back downstairs and find Bontle and Imi having a conversation. God alone knows what they are talking about. The only thing I can hear is Bontle's side of the conversation. All Imi does is bubble some

sounds and then she laughs.

I stand by the wall watching them bond. I say a silent prayer and hope to God their relationship remains like this. I pray Imi sees her big sister as her role model and best friend and not her enemy. I pray what happened with Amanda and I remains with this generation and doesn't make it to the next. I hope and pray history never repeats itself.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETY SEVEN

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Things are back to normal. Well for me anyways. I'm fully back at work and doing what I love and enjoy. Lungelo and the guys are back in their positions. This time more determined to make everything work, of course Busani and the others had to threaten them so now they have no choice but to ship up or ship out. But I do believe Busani was right though, we can be a bit of a distraction, but I think all they need to do is prioritize and delegate where necessary.

I got off work and went to the parking lot. Now that I can drive myself it feels kind of weird not having Lungelo waiting for me after work. Things need to go back to how they used to be. I take my phone out

and make a call.

"Baby."

"Hey, where are you?"

"I'm at the club. Why?"

"You were supposed to pick me up twenty minutes ago." He chuckles.

"What?"

"Have you forgotten that you always pick me up after work?" He laughs.

"Wow, okay. I'm coming." I hang up and with a smile plastered on my face I wait for him.

Fifteen minutes later he pulls up right next to me. I get out of my car and get my things. I get into his car and give him a kiss.

"So what gives? What's wrong with your car?"

"Nothing is wrong with my car. I just missed you

picking me up." He shakes his head and starts the car.

"Okay then. Let's go home then. We'll get your car tomorrow."

We drive past the club cause he has some documents he needs to get so I have to tag along. I decide to stay with Bonsile at the bar while Lungelo gets what he needs. Her pregnancy is coming along just right. She's already showing. Although she's wearing a baggy top I know she's pregnant so I can tell she is showing.

"Hey you."

"Hey. Shouldn't you be on maternity leave already?" She laughs as I take a seat on the bar stool.

"You sound like Muzi. If it were up to him I would be laying in bed 24/7. He even wants to put the wedding plans on hold."

"Isn't he a doctor? He should know these things." She

hands me a glass of wine.

"You know they say a doctor cant heal themselves. I think he is more worried because of your situation."

"Ncoooh, he's just scared."

"I know. But so far so good."

"I'm happy for you. You deserve this."

"Thank you. But I've been thinking. Now that I'm going to have a baby I cant be working these long hours, so I wanted to go back to school and get my degree."

"Really? That's great. I'm sure Muzi is happy about that."

"He doesnt know yet."

"That's a great decision."

"Yeah, so hows it going with you?" I sigh and take a sip of my wine.

"Nothing much. Imi is growing, Bontle is doing well at school and mum is slowly healing from Zwane's

death. So I'm good."

"Good. When last did you speak to MaMtolo?"

"A couple of days ago. She wants me to bring Imi to Richard's Bay for atleast a month."

"And, will you do it?"

"I dont know hey, a whole month is too long. But I know she hasn't spent that much time with her so I understand. I'll think about it though."

"Please do. Then maybe she will stop fussing over me. I swear she is worse than Muzi." I laugh. I'm glad the attention is no longer on me.

Lungelo comes back down with what he came to pick up. A waiter brings him takeaways. Good. No cooking tonight. We say our goodbyes and head home. When we get there the lights are on. I know Bontle has the key but I am still cautious. Lungelo goes in first and sure enough Bontle is there busy on her laptop.

"Hey baby." She looks up.

"Hey, you're back."

"What are you doing here?"

"I needed to finish an assignment." Mhm. I'm not sure I believe that.

"Okay. Mina I have some work to finish up." Lungelo says and leaves. I take a seat on the couch next to Bontle.

"Let me guess, Imi was too loud?" She laughs.

"No. She's an angel. Actually I was hoping to talk to you about something before you fetched Imi."

"Okay, what's happening? Is it school?" She smiles.

"Somewhat."

"Okay, talk to me."

"Well, so my roommate has a friend who is a first year law student. She brought her to our room the other day with a couple of her classmates and they were talking about a case. Your case." I swallow. I

dont know why my heart just started racing. I've been proven innocent so I have nothing to worry about.

"Okay, what about my case?" I'm trying so hard to keep it together but I hope to God she's not being bullied because of my past.

"They were discussing the details around it and all. But what caught my attention was the lawsuit bab'Khanya brought against the DoJ."

"I'm still not understanding baby, what happened?"

"She mentioned everything that you went through in prison. The rapes and the abortions." I feel tears sting my eyes and my heart sink. I tried so hard to keep this part of everything away from her. I take a deep breath trying to calm myself down.

"Uhm.... I..." she takes my hand.

"There is no need to explain ma. I'm sorry you went through all that. I'm sorry that I was too young to do anything to help..."

"Bontle...."

"I'm sorry I didnt pay attention to your pain. I was so caught up in being happy that you're home that I forgot that you were in prison and that alone comes with a lot of trauma. I know I convinced you to go to counseling but I should have paid a bit more attention." As hard as I tried to keep the tears in check they still find their way out. I bring her in for a hug. She's way too young to know or even try and carry this burden. Its mine and mine alone. I pull back and wipe my tears.

"Bontle!" I take a deep breath. "Thank you but baby this is my cross to bear. That's why I didnt tell you or ma about what happened in prison because thats a part of my life I'd rather forget. Please dont think too much about this and just forget about it if possible."

"I cant forget about it. Hearing all that just made me realize how strong and brave you are. You went through so much yet you still find a way to put a smile on your face. I'm proud of you."

I know I tried to keep her and mum from finding out about my experience in prison, but I guess I should have known better. It was bound to come out anyway. With the lawsuit and all, things were bound to come out.

Bontle left and went back to mums, and of course apparently I'm only getting my other daughter tomorrow. It would have been nice to have her here to distract me from the crazy thoughts in my head. I dished up for Lungelo and waited for him to come and eat. But he didn't so I just covered his food and put it in the microwave.

I went upstairs and got in the shower. I thought I'd forgotten and healed from everything but I guess I haven't. I got out the shower and tried to get some sleep. I tried to read but that didnt help. All I wanted to do was get some sleep and just forget about this whole thing.

Lungelo came to bed and found me with a book in my hand. If he had to ask me what I was reading I wouldn't know.

"Hey, are you okay?" I nodded my head and watched him take off his clothes before going to the bathroom. He came back and got into bed. "Okay, tell me what's going on." He grabbed the book from my hands and put it away.

"Bontle knows."

"Knows what?"

"Everything that happened in prison, she knows. The rapes and the abortions, she knows everything."

"Oh."

"Yeah, I guess it was naive on my part to think everything would stay hidden." He sighs and brings me in for a hug.

"What are you going to do?"

"I dont know. I'm not sure if I should tell mum before she finds out from other people."

"You should. And then, this is just an idea, you can do a cleansing. You never did it when you got out of prison right?"

"No."

"Maybe we can do it now. And then we can name the babies who never got a chance to live."

"So now supposed to come up with atleast ten names?" He chuckles.

"Dont worry, I will help you."

"You know sometimes I wonder how my womb was able to carry Imi after all the trauma I put it through."

"Miracles happen all the time. You know what they say about mothers and their prayers. They are powerful beings those ones."

"They truly are. Speaking of mothers, MaMtolo wants Imi to come visit her for a month." He laughs.

"What do you think? Should she go?"

"I dont know. But then again a month can give us an opportunity to make a brother or sister for her."

"Don't even think about it. We are done having babies. There is no way in hell I'm going through the trauma we went through. Imi and Bontle are enough."

"So you don't want a son?"

"Nope. We have plenty of sons kwaRadebe."

"Mhm." He gently pushes me off him and looks at me.

"What's the mhm for? Are you pregnant?"

"Not yet."

"Dont say yet, we are done with babies. You still have your birth control on right?"

"Yes." He lays back on the bed and I lay on his chest.

"Good."

My poor baby. Maybe he is right though. Maybe I do need to give the babies names and let them go in

peace. To me they might have been just blood clots and the product of a trauma I can never let go off but to my ancestors and God, they were children. I'm pretty sure they know why I did what I did and I hope they forgave me too. But Lungelo is right, I do need to let my mother know about this and then let this go once and for all. Therapy might have helped me deal with it but in order for me to just put it all to rest, once and for all.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETY EIGHT

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I wouldnt say I've faced many deadly and scary situations in my life but I've seen my fair share. But nothing is scarier to me at this point than having to face my mother and tell her everything that happened in prison.

I know her prayers were meant to keep me safe, but they didnt keep me safe from the lustful eyes of the guards. It didnt keep me safe from the countless attacks I went through and now I have to tell her that. I have to tell her that my womb is more of a graveyard than a life giving miracle. I've spent most of my life trying to make her proud of me, and make her see me as her sweet girl, but this might change everything.

"It will be Okay baby." My sweet husband. Maybe God did answer some prayers. I mean how else would I explain having someone like Lungelo in my life. For some people it takes forever to get their lives back and for them to find their feet again. But I did it. So maybe my mother's prayers went in vain.

I've been sitting on the balcony for a while now just watching my other miracle play. Lungelo is standing by the door watching me watch her. He takes a step and comes out. He lifts her up and sits on the chair next to mine with her on his lap. He holds my hand in his.

"What if she blames me?"

"You and I both know that is not going to happen. Your mother is not like that." He is right, my mother is nothing like that. I mean she literally turned her back on her family when her brother tried to molest Amanda. Sometimes I think that's why Amanda

turned out the way she did. Even though we were very little when it happened, I used to think a four years old's mine would block things like that. But maybe I was wrong. Even though she has never spoken about it but I cant help wondering.

She chose to leave everything and everyone behind to protect us. If I hadn't over heard her talking about it with my grandmother when I was fourteen I would have stayed clueless too. Even the grandmother I thought was my grandmother turned out to have been a woman she was friends with. She was older than my mum so we called her gogo, and thanks to her we got to experience what it's like to have a grandmother, and that's why I'll always consider her my gogo.

"If you want I can be there with you." Lungelo said bringing me back to the present.

"No. It's okay. I need to do this alone." I stood up and gave him a kiss. I kissed Imi too.

"Tell me if you need me."

"I will. Thank you."

I decided to walk to my mums house just to get a bit of fresh air and strength. When I got to her house she was in her vegetable garden. It's good to see her out and about.

"MaGumede." She looks up and smiles.

"Hi baby. Where is Iminathi?" I laugh.

"You do remember I'm your child right." She laughs and comes over to me. We sit down on the patio chairs.

"I know you're my baby but now theres a new sheriff in town." Babys and their effect.

"She is home with her dad. I wanted to talk to you about something."

"Okay, what's wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong. But I need to tell you about my experience in prison."

"I don't want to know."

"I know you've said that before but its important. I want to do a cleansing."

"Oh. Okay. When?"

"Soon. But I need to tell you everything first." She sighs.

"Okay. Tell me."

I take a deep breath and start from the beginning. From the moment I stepped foot in that prison. I tell her how scared I was when I was raped for the first time. I had been in prison for about a week. On the day we first got to prison, I heard one of the guards saying there is new meat. At the time I didn't think much of it. I guess at the point I was naive in thinking I'd be out of there soon as the truth comes out. But I never did.

For the first few days I couldnt sleep. Being in a holding cell and being in a prison cell was different.

Hopeful as I was I still couldn't help the fear that kept creeping up on me. On the day of the rape I had one of my insomnia episodes so sleep was just not there. I lay on the bed in the dark, the silence was loud. I lay there imagining myself out of there. That was the only thing that kept me going.

The cell doors opened and a guard walked in. I closed my eyes and pretended to be sleeping.

"Mashile, wake up." I kept quiet hoping he would go away but he didn't. Instead he pulled the measly blanket off of me.

"What's going on?"

"Get up. Let's go." I got off the bed and followed him out. The lights were off and it was dark. The only light was the light from his flashlight. I followed behind him as he opened and closed doors. I didn't even know where I was going.

We got to this room and the light could be seen from

the passage. I figured that's where we were going. He pushed me in and there were three other guards in there. I heard the door lock and somehow I knew I was screwed, no pun intended.

"What am I doing here?" I asked with a shaky voice. I was scared out of my mind but I had to be strong so they know not to mess with me. At least that's what I thought.

The three guards we had walked in on were sitting around a round table playing cards.

"Mashego, why didn't you bring that other one with the big hips."

"Stop complaining Moloji and enjoy." He said. Moloji got up from the chair he was sitting on and walked around me like a lion circling its prey. The look in his eyes is something I'll never be able to forget.

"Take off your clothes." He commanded. I stood there trying to play tough but with every minute that

passed I was getting weaker and weaker. "I'm not going to tell you again." He growled. I took off the tshirt I was wearing and as soon as they soon my breasts inside my bra they whistled. Tears stung my eyes as I held on to my pants not wanting to pull them down.

Moloi pushed me down on the table and the other guard pulled down my pants. All four of them took turns on me till they were satisfied. That night I lost a part of myself I dont think I'll ever get back. I was taken back to my cell and thrown on the bed like some useless thing. That night I cried and asked God to get me out of there. I guess he was preoccupied because that night marked countless nights and days where I was violated. Eventually I became numb to it.

My mums tears make me want to stop but I need to get everything out. I need her to know so I can fully heal. Yes therapy has been helping but to fully heal I

need to let everything go.

I narrate to her how scared I was the first time I had an abortion. I lay on that bed tears streaming down my face as my baby was plucked out of my womb like a piece of food being plucked out of the cavities of the teeth. I tell her how numb I was when I had the last abortion. I didn't even feel any pain as the doctor did his job. With every word I say I can feel my soul getting lighter. By the time I'm done she is a crying mess. I stand up and sit next to her and hug her.

"Nomonde." She says between sobs.

"Ma!"

"I'm so sorry mntanami (my child), I'm so sorry I failed you. I am so sorry." I hold her tighter while wiping my own tears.

"Ma, what's going on?" Bontle asks coming from the house. I can see the worry in her eyes.

"I was just telling ma about prison." Her mouth

forms an 'O' and she comes closer. My mum keeps crying.

We sit there in silence for a while after she stops crying. Her eyes are red and she keeps sniffing. Bontle is now crying too. Although she's trying to keep it together.

"Yoh!" Mum says after being quiet for a while.

"Ngyacolisa mntanami, (I'm sorry my child.)"

"Its okay ma, It wasnt your fault."

"I keep thinking I left home to protect you and your sister only for you to face the same problem." Even though I know what she is talking about I dont think this is the time to question her about it.

"So when do you want to do this cleansing?"

"Soon, I hope."

"We can do it this weekend. We will have to name

the children. And buy clothes for them." Bontle stands up and goes in the house.

"I dont know where to start with the whole cleansing thing." I tell her.

"You don't have to start anywhere. I'm here to help you. We will do this together." I nod my head. She takes sandeep breath and takes my hand in hers.

"Monde, I'm truly sorry. I wish I could make this better."

"Theres nothing to make better ma, I just need to do this cleansing and put this whole thing behind me once and for all."

"Yeah. I'm glad you told me. I know it wasnt easy but I'm happy you told me."

"Me too. I'm happy to finally let it out."

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

The day of the cleansing came. It still feels like a some weird dream but it needs to be done. I had to

get my medical records from the hospital they used to take us to for me to know how many abortions I had. Thirteen. That's how many procedures I had. Thirteen human beings I denied the chance to live. Who knows, maybe one of them could have been a president. But I guess now we will never know.

I dont know how mum got the traditional healer so quick but I'm glad he is here. He did all the necessary procedures to make sure this was done right. He asked me to give the children names and I did, each of them got a unisex name since I didnt know what sex they were. The clothes i bought were put in a box that mum said I can leave at her place. Lunch was served. Even though it was a family affair with just the close family Bontle still cooked.

I was sitting in the garden when she brought me a plate of food. I took the plate and she sat down next to me.

"How are you feeling?" She asked. Bontle thinks

she's an adult, but in some way I'm glad she is a bit more mature for her age. Something I should Thank my mother for.

"I feel lighter, it's like something I hadn't paid much attention to before had made its presence known and now it was gone."

"I know this is not a moment worth celebrating but I'm glad you're okay. Now you can fully be who you are. I know the trauma wont just disappear but this is a great step." I smiled and hugged her.

"When did you get so smart?" She laughs.

"I'll ask gogo." She gets up and walks back into the house. I sigh and eat my food. The past almost couple of years have been nothing short of a rollercoaster, but now I know I can count on my family. Before, I used to tell my therapist everything but now I can speak freely about my experience without censoring myself. This is my life story afterall.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

NINETY NINE

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

"How are you feeling?"

"Like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulder."
He wraps his arms around me and we stand there watching the sun set.

"I'm glad to hear that. Slowly but surely letting go of the past and starting all over again."

"Yeah. Now I'm glad I did this."

"So does that mean we can have a white wedding now?" I chuckle and turn around to face him.

"You do know we are already married right?"

"Yeah but we didnt have a white wedding."

"Why is it so important to you?"

"Just because."

"You're not going to let this go are you?" He shakes his head. "Fine. We'll get a wedding planner....."

"I'll call Gugu, she's ready and waiting."

I let go of him and go back to the house. He clearly seems to have made his mind up about this. He even has the wedding planner on call. I sit on the bed and he joins me. It's been a couple of days since we did the cleansing. And like I said, I feel a bit lighter. I guess now I can fully start my life over on a clean slate.

"So I've been thinking, since we are starting over, I need a favour."

"What?"

"I know you have people inside the prison where Amanda is."

"Yeah." He has a frown on his face and I know it will take some convincing for him to do what I need him to do.

"Dont say no." He laughs and lays down on the bed.

"Khuluma MaGumede. (Speak.)"

"I need you to make sure that Amanda is not to be touched, by anyone." He sits up and looks at me.

"Are you serious?" I nod my head. "I'll never be able to understand you." He says shaking his head and I know it's a yes.

My sister might not be a saint, but I wouldnt want her to go through half the things I went through. She might have put me there with her actions and choices but she's still my sister. Crazy I know, but like mum always said, do unto others as you would like done unto you.

I left Lungelo in the bedroom and went to check on the kids. I first went to Iminathi's room and she wasnt there. I went to Bontle's room and they were on the bed sleeping together. I tiptoed in and they were both snoring. I know this means Imi will be up

the rest of the night but I didn't have the heart to wake them up so I just let them be. I took my phone out and took a few pictures then I walked out and silently closed the door.

I went down to the kitchen and mummy was in the kitchen cooking. Today she is here, which is great cause we are always going to her house.

"Mummy!"

"Mhmmm."

"Can I help?"

"Yes, where is Bontle, she's the one who was supposed to be helping me." I laugh and start chopping the vegetables.

"That one is fast asleep." She shakes her head and checks on the pots.

"I need to talk to you about something."

"Okay."

"So I've been thinking, that house is way too big for me to be there alone."

"I thought you liked it?"

"Let me finish hawu. I do love the house. But it gets lonely. During the day I have Imi to take care off but at night I'm alone." I feel a ping of guilt hit me. "So I've been thinking, MaCele's daughter got a scholarship to study in town. She leaves home early in the morning before sunrise. So I was thinking maybe she can come and stay with me, then she can go home during the weekend."

"Do you know her?"

"Yes, she's a good girl, she's doing grade nine now and she's very smart. Bontle used to help her with her studies."

"Its your house mummy, whatever decision you make, I'm going go support you."

"Thank you. By the way, Zwane's daughter sent a letter through their lawyer, she still thinks the house is her fathers."

"It must be a bogus lawyer cause a real one would have told her the truth. But ke that's fine, I'll find a lawyer just to make sure we dont get caught slacking."

"Thank you."

We finish cooking and set the table. Everyone comes down and we have dinner together. After dinner I help Bontle clean up while she tells me about varsity. She seems focused on her studies which makes me happy. Once we are done cleaning up I decide to get some rest cause I have to go to work tomorrow.

I change into my PJ's and get into bed. Lungelo is in his study, mum is in her room and Bontle is catching up on some TV. Imi is fast asleep but I know she will wake up soon. I decide to read a book to help me fall asleep.

A few minutes after getting into bed Lungelo walks

in looking rather worried. He looks around a bit before going to the closet. He opens the safe and takes out what looks like a gun.

"What's going on?" He puts the gun on his back and walks to me.

"I have to go somewhere. I just got a message that Philani was hijacked in Durban somewhere. When I try his phone it goes straight to voicemail."

"Oh, do the others know?"

"They do. They are on their way here. But I figured I'd go and see if any of my contacts can tell me who has him."

"Cant you wait until the others get here?"

"We dont have time babe, we need to get a headstart. By the time the others get here we should have a lead or a clue on what happened." Clearly he has made up his min and theres no changing it.

"Fine, but please be careful. We have a wedding to

prepare for." His smile reaches all the way to his eyes. He kisses me.

"I'm definitely coming back." He kisses me on the forehead before heading out. I dont know why I get an uneasy feeling about this. I get off the bed and get down on my knees.

"Dear God, I'm not sure what is going on and why I have this feeling right now, but I'm asking you Lord, please protect my husband, send your Angel's to watch over him Lord, I know he has his own faults but Lord, you gave him to me so I'm asking you to protect him and bring him back home safe and sound. Amen."

I get up from the floor and get back on the bed. I pray whatever he is going to do, he comes back home in one piece.



LUNGELO

I'm pretty certain whoever decided to hijack Philani is up to something more sinister. If it was about a car I'm sure he would have been found by now, but it's been a few hours and he is still missing. His car tracker says he was last in Durban central. But his body tracker traced him to KwaMashu.

I decided to drive to KwaMashu just to scan the place and see what's going on. Sbu sent me the coordinates of where he might be and I drove there. It was a quiet street. Too quiet for a street in KwaMashu. I drove down slowly and I could tell by the beeping red light on my phone I was getting close. I could see the house he is supposed to be in but I know I cant go in alone. I'll have to wait for the others to come so we can go in together.

I decided to park my car a few houses down just so I can keep an eye on the house. I turn the ignition off and wait. I call Nate wanting to know where they are and he says they are almost here. They will be landing in a few minutes.

Five minutes into my wait I get anxious, I can feel that I'm being watched. Just when I decide to leave and wait somewhere else a bunch of people come out of the shadows and a couple of them are standing in front of the car. There's a couple more behind me and they all have their guns pointed at me. My car beeps indicating not one but two flat tyres. I'm pretty sure the tyres have been slashed cause if it was air I would have got the warning sooner.

I look around me and I know I'm surrounded. If I fight here I'll probably end up dead. A guy comes and knocks on my window. Shit.

"Puma ndoda. (Come out.)" The guy says with his

gun on my window. Now I know this supposed hijacking was just a distraction. I open the car door and get out. As soon as I step out I feel a sting on my neck and then everything goes blank.

.....

My head hurts. I don't know what is going on cause I also feel a pinch on my arm. Whatever it is keeps pinching me and calling out my name. Eventually I open my eyes slowly and I realise my hands are tied on my back. I'm sitting on a chair in a dark room. The only light available is from a candle that's sitting in the corner.

"Lungelo." A voice behind me calls my name. When whatever it is I was given has worn off my mind clears up. "Lungelo." The person calls me again. And now I can recognize the voice. Its Philani.

"Hey."

"What are you doing here?" He asks. I cant see him but from the looks of it he is also tied up behind me.

"I'm on vacation. What do you think? What happened cause I got a text from Nate saying you got hijacked."

"I dont know man. Everything happened so fast. Next thing I know I'm here. You?"

"I followed your tracker to KwaMashu, now I'm here. What do you think is happening?"

"I don't know man. But whoever did this is brave."

The door opens and someone walks in. I cant see the person but their footsteps are getting closer. They stop in front of me. The person kneels just so they can be face to face with me. I still cant see who it is cause the candle is behind them and the light isnt that good.

"Lungelo Radebe, or should I say the famous Shadow Assassin. How are you?" He asks. I know he

doesn't want an answer to that he is just messing with me so I keep quiet. "It's okay you don't have to answer that. I can see. Anyways, you've been one elusive motherfucker, but every dog has its day. And yours has come. It's time to pay the piper Radebe, and I'm going to enjoy every bit of it." The other guy he came in with comes closer to us with the candle. As soon as he lights the candle my face I can also see the person in front of me.

"You lousy son of a bitch." He laughs.

"It's crazy being on the other side isn't it?"

"I should have killed you when I had the chance." He laughs again.

"Yeah, you should have. But now you're here, helpless, and unlike you, I'll make sure one of us walks out that door and it sure as hell will not be you." He gets up and walks out with his lackey behind him.

"Do you have your second tracker on?" Lungelo asks.

"Yeah. What happened to yours?"

"Probably pulled out. There is some pain where it was."

"I guess that explains it being in KwaMashu."

"Probably. But if you have the second tracker we should be fine right?"

"Right." We can only hope that somebody gets here in time. Cause if they dont, only heaven knows what will happen.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

ONE HUNDRED (PART ONE)

I'm anxious. It's been a while since Lungelo left. I'm not sure where he is or what's going on cause even his phone is off. I've been trying to call him but nothing. I've even tried to call Philani but even that has been a dead end.

It's been hours and still no word from him. I know Nate and the others are here already but there's also been no communication from any of them. And if I call them no one answers. I even called Lando and she's just as clueless as I am. Now I wish we hadn't given up on the cartel, maybe then we would be getting updates at every second. Heck we'd be the one in the forefront of this whole thing, but it's better this way. There's a lot more at stake on my side anyway.

I got off the bed at the crack of dawn and sat outside the balcony watching the sun rise. It's beautiful no doubt but it's hard to pay attention to it when I'm worried about Lungelo. I hear Iminathi making some cooing sounds through the baby monitor, I guess that's the distraction I need. I get up from the chair and go to her room. She's not there, obviously. I go to Bontle's room and they are both here. Although big sis is still sleeping she has her arm protectively over little sis. Blessings right?

I quietly free her from Bontle's arm and take her downstairs to make her her bottle. As soon as I'm done feeding her she does what she does best, crawl to every corner of this house. She's getting so big so fast. I try and call again and still no reply. I decide to put my phone on private and call Sbu. He picks up immediately.

"Hello!" He answers. He sounds a bit tired, which

worries me even more.

“Sbusiso, don’t hang up.” He sighs.

“Madam, what’s with the private number?”

“Well none of you is answering my calls so, a girl has to make a plan. Have you heard anything yet?”

“Not yet. Philani’s tracker was taken off early yesterday, Lungelo’s was removed in the evening.”

“So you can’t find them?” My heart sinks. I was hoping he’d tell me they found them and they are at least in hospital, but nothing.

“Not yet. But we are trying to access Lungelo’s other tracker. Hopefully they are both in the same place. But don’t worry, we will find them.”

“For your sake I hope you’re right.” He chuckles.

“You know me. I always keep my promises. I’ll bring him back in one piece.”

“Okay, please keep me updated, and answer my calls.”

“Definitely. Let me get back to work.”

Calling Sbu should have eased my mind a bit, instead it just made me a lot more anxious. I didn't even know Lungelo had a tracker, but I guess it's coming in handy now. I decided to make breakfast for mum and Bontle just to keep myself busy. I wanted to do a full English breakfast but I ended up settling for soft porridge. Imi went back to sleep and I put her back in her crib.

I'm not even sure what to do with myself, going to work will be a waste of time, but I still need to show my face. I took a bath and got ready for work. By the time I was done Bontle and mum were already downstairs.

"Hey nana, you don't look okay, what's wrong?" Mum asked soon as she saw me.

"Argh, I didn't sleep very well but I'll be fine."

"Uphi umkhwenyana? (Where is my son in law?)"

“He left early, he has some things to do at the club.”

“Okay. Have some food before you leave.”

“No, I’m okay. I fed Imi earlier before she went back to sleep but she’ll be up soon.”

“Nomonde, I know how to take care of my grand baby, go to work, we will be fine.” I sighed and said my goodbyes.

As soon as I walked out of the house there was an entire army in my yard. I stopped and looked around and I could see they probably had been briefed about being here but I wasn’t. And now I have to let mum know too so she doesn’t have a heart attack when she walks out of here. I took a step back and one of the men walked closer to me.

“Ma’am, good morning.”

“Hi!”

“My name is David, these are my men, I’m sure you’ve been briefed about us?” He said matter of

factly. But I don't know nothing about them.

"Of course." I answered with a forced smile on my face.

"Good. A couple of my guys will drive you to work and I'm sure you've been told that your mum and daughter cannot leave the house." Okay, this is a problem honestly.

"Yeah, thank you." I took a step back inside the house.

Mum and Bontle were still in the kitchen.

"Mum, you're back?" Bontle says surprised.

"Yeah I have to tell you guys something. There are people outside, I don't want you to get alarmed, they are just security guys."

"Okay so what are they here to secure?" Mum asks. I have no answers to be quite honest. I don't know what's going on but I know it's serious if I'm going to wake up to a bunch of men in my yard.

“Unfortunately I don’t have any answers right now but I will, soon. I have to go to work, but you guys can’t go anywhere. You’ll have to stay here for a while.” I see the frown on mums forehead, if I stay here a minute longer I’ll have a whole lot of explaining to do and I have no answers to give. “I’ll see you guys later.” I grabbed my bag and quickly walk out before a barrage of questions starts.

I get outside and there’s already two guys standing next to my car. One of them holds out his hand for me to hand him the keys and I figure arguing will just waste my time. I’m already late for work. I hand him the keys and he opens the back door for me. I get in and we drive to work. While driving I can’t help feeling like we are being followed. The guy who is driving seems to have noticed too because he takes a route that doesn’t go to work and a blue golf follows us. He takes another turn and the same blue golf shows up behind us. I’m getting nervous with every passing second.

We drive into a parking lot and park, he tells me to get into another car that's already parked there. I get out of my car and into this other car. This is bigger than just some hijacking, and I hope to God these people are going to keep me safe. When the new driver drives out of the parking lot we see the golf parked on the street, a guy is standing next to it looking around, frustrated. He keeps banging on the car. We drive off leaving them there. Yeah neh.

NARRATED

In a house in KwaMashu, Lungelo and Philani are still in the same position they were in for the past two days. They are tired and hungry, whoever put them here hasn't come back to check on them. Although there are people roaming around outside, they've been instructed to not set foot inside this room, just to let these two suffer.

After they seem satisfied with their 'punishment', the

man walks in again. Today's it's sunny so there is plenty of light making it's way into the room. He strolls in, ice cream in hand and walks over to Lungelo, he drags a chair from the other side of the room and sits down in front of him. He licks his ice cream, his eyes avoiding the fire that's emanating from Lungelo's eyes. If looks could kill the man would be dead by now.

“Are you hungry?” He asks Lungelo. He has a smirk on his face. Lungelo looks at him and says nothing. “It's funny isn't it, when the hunter becomes the hunted. I mean y'all have done so much to inflict fear in people, and now you are here, alone, your friends are not here, no one is coming to save you Radebe. You are going to watch your friend die right in front of you, and then I'll bring your little girl and put a bullet in her tiny little head, right in front of you, and then you will go and meet your maker, and you know what I'm going to get? I'm going to get my family back, I'm going to get Nomonde back, and together we will rebuild our family, cause that's what we

intended to do from the get go, but life got in the way.” Philani chuckles, which makes Paul angry.

He stands up and goes to where Philani is.

“Is something funny Biyela?” Philani looks up at him, a smile on his face.

“Everything that just came out of your mouth is funny. Do you seriously think Nomonde will forgive you when she finds out you killed her husband.”

“She’ll get over it, eventually. And besides, who is going to tell her? You two will be dead so....” he shrugs his shoulders and goes back around to Lungelo. “So wena, you have nothing to say?” He asks completely ignoring the fire burning in Lungelo’s eyes for the second time now.

Commotion breaks out outside, there’s an exchange of gunfire for a few seconds before it all goes quiet. Paul gets his gun and walks out, only to find two of his men with their brains blown off laying on the

lawn. A crowd is now gathering outside the house. There is no sign of the shooter, Paul knows it's bad, his other guys came running from the back of the house and now they are observing the damage before them.

When reality kicks in they quickly run back into the house, untie Philani and Lungelo, they then drag them through the back door. They pull out of the house driving away just as the police sirens sound from a distance. Unbeknownst to them, they are being followed.

LUNGELO

Whatever it is that son of a bitch gave us is dealing with my head good, and the fact that I haven't had food in a couple of days is not helping. I woke up in a dark room, laying on the cold floors, with Philani laying a few steps away from me. The room wasn't pitch black though cause I could still see my legs

and feet. Last time I remember we were in that other house with bullets flying outside, and the next thing we wake up here, I wonder what happened to make them get us out of there.

I tried to sit up properly, even though my hands were tied behind my back. I tried and eventually got to sit up.

“Philani!” I whispered. He wouldn’t wake up. I dragged myself closer to him and tried to wake him up with my foot. I kicked him a bit till I felt some movement. He groaned and stirred making me relax a bit.

“Hey man! Where are we?” He asked soon as he got his bearings.

“I don’t know man. How are you feeling?”

“So so. What happened?”

“I don’t know man, my guess is the guys are the ones who fired the guns.”

“I hope so. I need to go back to my wife, two days is a long time without her.”

“We’ll go home soon.”

The door opened and Paul walked in with another guy. He seemed too happy for my liking. I got nervous looking at him, I wasn’t afraid, just nervous. It felt like he was up to something.

“Gentlemen, the hour of reckoning has come. Now you will feel what it’s like to lose what you love.” He pulled out a gun and pointed it at Philani, I’ve never been the praying type, but at that moment I prayed, I prayed for him not to pull the trigger, I prayed for God to intervene, but nothing. He shot one bullet and it penetrated Philanis chest almost in slow motion. I watched as blood poured out of him and filled the floor. I felt numb. At that moment I was filled more with regret than anger. I should have killed this man when I had the chance, then i wouldn’t be here, watching my friend die right in front of my eyes.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

ONE HUNDRED (PART TWO)

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

I've been sitting here watching my friend bleed to death. I can't even check his pulse because my hands are tied behind my back. I'm numb, I did this, Paul might have pulled the trigger but I did this. I should have killed him when I had a chance, I should have done what needed to be done, but I didn't, and now I'm here watching my friend bleed to death. I'm not worried about Imi, even though Paul says he will kill her too I know by now Nate and the others have already organised security for her and her mother.

I drag myself close enough to him, with my hands behind my back I try to check for his pulse. I have to do it with my back to him and it's hard. I feel his arm and it's warm. My heart starts racing, he is still alive.

Now I need to get him out of here and get him to a hospital ASAP.

The door opens and someone walks in. I can't see them properly because it's dark but they have a candle with them and it gives me a chance to see them when they get close. It's one of Paul's guys. He has the candle in one hand and a plate on the other. He seems almost scared to be there. But he comes in anyway. He sets the plate down next to me together with the candle. He looks over at Philani and I can see pity in his eyes.

"Here's some good, eat."

"How?" I ask and shrug trying to show him my tied up hands. He sighs and reaches into his pocket, takes out a pocket knife and comes behind me. He cuts the cable ties. I rub my wrists trying to ease the irritation of the cable ties. He takes another cable tie and ties around my wrists from the front. "Thanks." He smiles and takes one more look at Philani before

he walks out.

This food is like prison food, but I'm starving so I have no choice but to eat. It's rice and boiled chicken. I'm pretty sure it doesn't even have salt. Mxm. I turn around and check on Philani, he is still warm which means he is still alive, I check his pulse and it's faint but it's there. I place my hands over the candle fire and burn the cable tie. It takes a while but it's plastic, eventually it falls off.

Now that I'm free I get the chance to check on Philani properly. He has lost a lot of blood and if he loses anymore he might just end up dead. I take of my T-shirt and put it on the wound to stop the bleeding. I get up from the floor, with the spoon in my hand and go to the door. It's locked. I hear footsteps coming towards the room. I quickly blow the candle off and rush back to the door. I stand behind it with the spoon, I'm not sure what damage it will do but I have hope.

The key turns and the door opens wide. The person walks in and goes forward, they push the door to close. I quickly pull the key out of the key hole, close the door and lock it. He turns and tries to get his gun but I get to him first and we get into a scuffle. I overpower him and take the gun. He tries to shout but I shove the gun in his mouth. I can't see who it is but I'm sure it's the guy that was here earlier.

“Now listen to me, I will pull the trigger, no questions asked, but for now you will help me and my friend get out of here. Are we clear?” He has a hard time answering so I pull the gun out a bit.

“That's not going to happen. There's a whole army outside. You won't get through.”

That's fine. I have my own army. Give me your phone.” He takes the phone out of his pocket and hands it to me. It's an iPhone. Perfect. He puts in the password and I dial Sbu's number.

“I have insurance so if that’s what you’re selling hang up now.” Trust Sbusiso to say something like that.

“Sbusiso.”

“Lungelo?”

“Yes, it’s me. Trace this number and hurry up, Philani has been shot, he needs a hospital as in like yesterday.”

“What? Okay, okay.....” he keeps saying okay okay and I can hear the keyboard clicking like crazy.

“You do know it’s likely by the time they get here you will be dead.” The man says. He is beginning to irritate me. I hit him with the back of the gun and he falls on the floor and passes out.

“Sbusiso, where are the others?”

“Hum... they went to the last place you were in, apparently someone shot at the house and two bodies were found so they went to check if it was you or not.” Wait, if they are not the ones who shot at the place then who did? I have no time to be asking

too many questions right now, I need Sbu to find us and we can get out of here.

“Okay, how’s it going.” He bangs something and yells ‘yesss’.

“I got you. I’m sending the guys your location now. Hold on okay, and tell Philani to hold on too, we are coming.”

I let out a sigh of relief, although we are still here I know and have faith in my friends, they will come through for us, they always do. I check on Philani and he is still out of it. I just pray the guys get here in time. Someone tries opening the door, I tiptoe there and try to quietly pull the key out. The person on the other side starts screaming for someone to bring the key. My guess is he is calling the guy who is on the floor now passed out. He keeps shouting and his footsteps fade away, then I remember I have this mans phone. If they should call him the phone will ring in here. I quickly put it on silent.

The person comes back still shouting for the key and then the phone starts vibrating in my hand. I look at it ring until it stops. He calls again and I still don't answer. I hear more voices outside the door.

"Let's just break down the door." One of them says.

"Are you stupid, then what happens when the boss comes and finds the door broken down? You do remember there are people in there?" The other asks.

"It was just a suggestion." The first guy says.

"A stupid suggestion." Another adds. I hear them leave and breathe out. I take the phone and call again.

"Sbusiso, where are you?"

"We are almost there. Just five minutes away. Nate and Lindani should be there by now."

"Okay, hurry up. Philani doesn't have much time."

"Hang on man, we are coming."

“Be careful, there are armed men outside.”

“Don’t worry, we are bringing the Calvary.”

I keep the phone on and listen to them as they drive here. I can hear them speaking and coordinating on what to do and how to do it. I get hopeful with each passing second. I take a seat next to Philani and check his pulse again, it’s getting fainter and fainter and he needs help as soon as possible. I hold my T-shirt over his wound and hold on tight to stop the bleeding. I pray the guys make it here in time. I cut the call and make another one, one I should have done sooner.

.....

NOMONDE

Whoever came up with that whole ‘no news is good news’ bullshit needs a bullet in the head. I don’t

know how that even makes sense. Because sitting here not knowing what's going on is driving me nuts. It doesn't help that Lando and the other ladies flew in a few hours ago, and now they are filling up my house. I haven't told mum or Bontle what's going on but I'm sure by now they have noticed how tense things are and that something is truly going on.

Bulk comes in from the kitchen with a bottle of wine in hand and throws herself on the couch. Mum, Bontle and Imi are asleep so that's one less thing for me to worry about.

"None of them have called?" Buli asks.

"No! This is driving me nuts." Kazi answers taking the bottle of wine from Buli and gulping it down. My phone rings from the coffee table and everyone goes on alert. I look at the number and I don't know it. I cut the call.

"Who was it?" Lando asks.

“I don’t know, probably some insurance sales people.” I answer. I can’t afford to have the line held up by unnecessary things. The person calls again.

“Answer it, it could be important.” Taki says. She’s heavily pregnant, I don’t know why they let her come here when she might just pop at any time. I take the phone and answer it.

“Hello!”

“MaGumede!” My heart starts racing. He is okay. I feel tears sting the back of my eyes.

“Lungelo?”

“It’s me baby. Listen, I wanted to tell you something. I don’t know how this will play out but I want you to know that I love you, with everything in me, I love you Nomonde. Please never forget that.”

“I won’t. Where are you? Did you find Philani?”

“I don’t know. I can’t tell.” He is ignoring the question about Philani and now I’m wondering if everything is okay.

“What phone are you using?”

“It’s an iPhone. Why?” Take a picture, then go to the camera roll and find the specs of the picture it should have your location on it.”

“How do you know that?”

“I’m younger than you.” He chuckles. I hear the click of the camera.

“Okay, it says here we are in KwaMashu. Oh, this thing is clever.”

“Okay, call Sbu and tell him where you are.”

“He’s already on his way here. I’ll be home soon okay. I love you.”

“I love you too.” He hangs up and I breathe out all the air I’ve been holding in.

“So, what did he say?” Lando asks.

“He’s in KwaMashu and Sbu and the others are on their way there now.”

“Did they find Philani?” She asks again. I can’t blame

her, I would be anxious too if it was Lungelo, heck i was anxious just minutes ago.

“He didn’t say anything about him but I’m sure they are together.” I see disappointment wash over her. We all rally around her and hug her. I say a silent prayer asking God to protect them and keep them safe.

NARRATED

The house is dark, one thing is for sure though, it’s not load shedding, the houses next to it have electricity. Sizwe and Razor scan the place trying to figure out how many people they will need to get through to get inside and rescue their friends. They are on top of the roof of the house across the street, their sniper rifles helping them see.

“There’s five of them roaming outside the yard, two in the lounge, and another three in a room at the

back of the house.” Razor says.

“The ones at the back, do you think it’s Philani and Lungelo?” Nate asks through the communication device.

“I think so. Two of them are laying down on the floor, that other one is sitting and watching over the one laying down.” Razor answers.

“Are there any guards at the back of the house?” Lindani asks.

“Two.” Sizwe says.

“Okay, so let’s take the five in front out quick. We’ll go in as soon as they are down, you stay there and shoot anything and everything that moves, as long as it’s not us or the guys.”

“Done! Is everyone in position?” Sizwe asks and gets affirmative answers from everyone.

“Okay then gentlemen, let’s go to war.” Nate announces. Sizwe and Razor begin their shooting spree and within seconds the five men patrolling

outside the house are down. Nate and Lindani lead the others into the house and a gunfight ensues. Bullets go flying in every direction.

Meanwhile in the back room Lungelo is trying hard to keep his friend alive, but it's slowly proving to be a futile exercise as with every passing second he seems to be losing his life. Lungelo can hear the gunfight going on and he slowly gets hopeful, he even says a small prayer asking God to spare his friends life.

The gunfire gets closer and closer to the room they are in. Before they know it the door is kicked open and a torch light makes its way in, searching. The person finds their target and bullets start flying. Lungelo lays down to shield a wounded Philani. A bullet hits him on the back and two more penetrate his skin before it all comes to a halt. He hears shouting and his name being called out as he slowly loses his own consciousness and blood oozes out of him.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

ONE HUNDRED (PART THREE)

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

It's easy to have people to celebrate with when life is going great, but having people who stick by you when things are bad, now that's a blessing.

It's been a hectic night, Lungelo and Philani have been airlifted to hospital, Paul is nowhere to be found. Lindani and his friends turned the house upside down and found nothing. The police also didn't find anything, except fingerprints all over the place, most of whom belong to the men who were found sprawled out all over the house.

Sbusiso called Nomonde and told her which hospital the guys had been admitted to. The girls drove there, not sure what to expect and anxious about their own

safety. They get to the hospital and find Sbu and Razor in the waiting area anxiously pacing around. Even though it's been just an hour since they got here they are still hoping for some news, good news.

"Sbusiso, where is Lungelo?" Nomonde asks as soon as they get to them.

"The doctors are working on them." He answers.

"What exactly happened?" Lando asks.

"We are not sure yet. But from the looks of it Lungelo was shot just before we came in."

"So you shot him by mistake?" Nomonde asks.

"No. It wasn't us. Probably one of the people who was keeping them in that house." Razor answers.

Nomonde sinks to the chair next to her, fear gripping her entire body.

She wasn't sure what she feared most, losing Lungelo or finding out who was behind this. Although she had her suspicions she still wasn't

sure about it. She couldn't understand why Paul would be in Durban and not meet up with Bontle, he's been insisting on seeing her, even offering to come to the house, and each time she said no he would have a fit. Although the pieces have been there, only now are they starting to come together.

Lindani, Sizwe and Detective Dladla walk in followed by two more officers.

"Ladies." Dladla says and nods his head. The girls force smiles.

"What's going on?" Razor asks.

"We are just here for statements my guy." Dladla answers.

The guys turn to look at Lindani, he nods giving them the go ahead. They turn back to Dladla and his officers.

"Okay then, please tell me what happened? What led to this moment?" Dladla asks. The guys narrate the

story from the moment Philani was 'hijacked'. "Okay, so do you have any idea who might be behind this?" The guys shake their heads. They do have an idea, but they have their own way of dealing with it so they will keep this one to themselves.

Minutes turn to hours and still no news from the doctors. The girls are bundled up on the chairs, one resting on the other. The guys are busy on their phones trying to find the mastermind behind the attack. Nate walks in in scrubs, he looks like he hasn't slept in days. The guys see him and quickly get up together with the girls.

"What's going on? Where are they? How are they?" Lando asks.

"They are still in the operating room."

"How is it looking? Any hope?" Nomonde asks. Nate closes his eyes and takes a deep breath before opening them again.

"Honestly, it's not looking good, the bullet missed Philani's heart by an inch, he lost a lot of blood so the doctors had to do a blood transfusion before they could even attempt to take the bullet out." He answers looking at Lando. She takes a deep breath and sits down.

"What about Lungelo?" Razor asks the question Nomonde has been dreading to ask.

"He was shot twice on the back, one bullet missed his spine and got lodged in his ribcage, the other bullet went through his back through to the front and punctured a lung along the way."

"I need to call his family." Nomonde said and walked out.

She got outside the hospital and took in a large dose of air to try and calm herself down. She got her phone out of her pocket and debated with herself on who to call between MaMtolo and Khanya. She started pacing up and down the trying to make a

decision. MaMtolo might be easy to talk to but she is still his mother, how will she explain to her what happened. How will she explain this part of his life because she knows nothing about it. She decided to call Khanya instead.

"MaGumede, it's nice to hear from you, unjani? (How are you?)" She blinked back the tears and tried to stay strong. Like it or not she had to tell him what's happening.

"Uhm.... I..... I'm not okay. Lungelo is in hospital."

"Is he okay? What happened?"

"He was short sometime today. He is in hospital right now."

"What? How? You know what, send me the hospital name I'll see if I can get a flight tonight."

"Okay, can I ask one favour."

"Sure. Anything."

"Please tell MaMtolo, I dont think I have the heart to be the one to tell her this." She answered tears

streaming down her face.

"Dont worry about it, I'll let the family know. We'll be there soon. I'll call Bonsile to come and be there with you."

"Okay, thank you."

She hung up and wiped her tears. She took another deep breath and walked back into the hospital. In the corridor she found Sbu on his phone talking to someone. He cut the call when he saw her.

"Hey, are you okay?" He asked concern painted all over his face.

"Please tell me the truth, who do you think is behind this?"

"I dont know."

"Come on Sbusiso, you wouldn't have come all the way here if it wasn't serious. You know something." He looked around to make sure no one else was close enough to hear him.

"Look, I'm not supposed to tell you this but your ex, Paul is behind this. He masterminded the whole thing."

"Why would he do that?" He shrugs his shoulders.

"I dont know. He escaped after he shot Lungelo, but we have people looking for him. He hasn't been to his house and he is not around Durban. But he will show up eventually."

"I guess."

"I know he is your daughters father and you want her to have a relationship with her dad but I can tell you now, whatever mercy had been shown to him before is the reason we are here now, if he had been taken care off from the get go we wouldnt be here, so just know that this time around, no mercy will be shown to him. None at all." Nomonde sighs and shakes her head.

"I know. I would try and defend him but theres nothing to defend. Lungelo saved his life more times than he can count and this is the thanks he gets."

Whatever happens to him now is all on him."

"I'm glad to hear that." Sbu says and leaves.

Nomonde takes out her phone and calls Paul's number. Lucky for her he answers.

"Nomonde, this is a nice surprise." He answers. It takes every ounce of strength in Nomonde to not go off at him. She has a plan and she needs to execute it well. If the guys are going to find Paul, she needs to make sure it has little effect on Bontle.

"Hey, listen I spoke to Bontle and she said you can come by later today."

"Oh, that's great. So have you heard anything from Lungelo, I know you said he was missing." Nomonde pulled the phone away from her ear and looked at it as if she could see him on the other side, she didn't tell Paul anything about Lungelo missing. She put the phone back on her ear and tried to be as calm and collected as she could be. She can't afford to have him suspecting anything.

"Uhm.... he was hijacked. He is in the hospital right now."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Will he be Okay?" If she didn't know the truth she would believe his concern laced voice. But she knows better.

"Its not looking good. The doctors arent that optimistic. They say he might not make it to tonight."

"Thays bad. I'm really sorry to hear that. I'll come by around noon if that's Okay with you."

"Its fine. I'm sure Bontle will be happy to see you."

"I hope so. We'll talk later." She hangs up and goes to join the others.

The clock seems to be on a go slow today. It's a couple of hours before midday and the last report they got was hours ago. They are all anxious to hear if the guys will make it. But only time will tell.



NOMONDE

This little plan of mine. I'm not sure how it's going to work, or even if it will work, but it needs to be done. I need Paul to tell me why he did what he did. A part of me wants to give him the benefit of the doubt, but my husband is laying on a hospital bed fighting for his life, whatever happens to him now will be beyond my control.

It's been hours since Nate gave us an update. Mum has been calling non stop. She is worried. When we left the house to come here I couldnt tell her what was going on. And since it seems like Lungelo and Philani will be in there for a while, I can just go home and update my mother about what happened.

I tell Sbu where I'm going and head home. I'm a bit

nervous. More than anything, Khanya is still not here and neither is anyone from the Radebe family. I hope to God they dont blame me for this. You know how families get when someone dies or gets hurt. The wife always gets blamed.

I get home and find the security guys still there. As expected. I ask the one whi introduced himself to me as the captain. I ask him to get some of his men to escort my mum and the kids to her house. I need to make sure they are far away from the firing line. I get inside the house and mum and the girls are in the lounge.

"Finally, where have you been?" Mum asks as soon as she sees me. I sit down on the couch and look at her.

"I'm sorry. They found Lungelo."

"How is he? Where is he? Is he okay? What happened?"

"He is at the hospital. He was hijacked. I'm not sure what really happened, the cops aren't telling us anything. I'm just here to shower and then head back to the hospital."

"Will he be okay though?" Bontle asks. I can see tears filling her eyes, even though she's trying to hide it, but her eyes are glossy. I wish Paul could see the damage he is doing, if this is meant to hurt me then he clearly didn't think things through.

"I don't know nana, I'll get an update when I go back to the hospital. I just need you guys to go to mums and stay there for a few hours." They look at each other before looking back at me. This is going to be harder than I imagined.

"Why? What's wrong with this house?" Mum asks.

"Nothinb. Its just that Lungelo's family is coming and they will be staying here. I just need to make sure they have plenty of space."

"Okay." That's all mum says. This is too easy. I'm pretty sure she is holding back on saying something

else, but I don't have the energy to dig it out of her now so I'll just have to take her words at face value.

They get their things and the security drives them down the road to mum's house. Once they are gone I take my phone and call Dladla.

"Mrs Radebe."

"Mgabadelo, I need your help."

"Anything. Just tell me what you need."

"I called Paul, he might be here in a few minutes. I'm going to call you when he walks through the door, you'll record the conversation and then have him arrested."

"I can do that. But you do know the guys will want to handle this themselves right?"

"I know. But if I can get him to confess and you arrest him, it will ease the blow with Bontle. As much as I want him to pay for this, Bontle will ask questions too, and I'll need to have answers for her."

After that he can go burn in hell."

"I guess that makes sense. As soon as he tells you he is outside, call me."

"I will. Thank you."

I hang up the call and take a quick shower. I put on some sweats and sneakers. I need to go back to the hospital. My phone rings just as I'm making myself tea, its Paul.

"Hi!"

"I'm outside."

"Okay. Let me open for you." I open the gate and he drives in. I call Dladla while Paul parks the car. I take my work phone and put it on record, just in case. I'll need the security.

Paul walks through the door and it takes everything in me to not punch his face in.

"Monde, it's nice to see you again." I fake a smile and sip my tea.

"Would you like a cup?"

"No. But I'd like some water."

"Right. Have a seat. I'll be right back." I go to the kitchen and pour the glass of wine. I take the small bottle of pentothal I found in Lungelo's safe and pour a few drops in the water. Good thing it doesn't have an odor.

I head back to the lounge with the glass of water and hand it to him.

"Thank you. Shouldn't you be at the hospital?" He asks and takes a huge gulp of the water.

"I'm going there soon. I just came to take a shower and change."

"Okay. So where is Bontle?"

"At mums, but she's on her way here."

"Okay."

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure. Anything."

"Why did you do it? Why would you want to kill Lungelo or Philani for that matter?" This is risky, the serum might not have started working yet, but I need to head back to the hospital, I don't have time to waste.

"I dont know what you mean." He answers feigning innocence. Well it doesn't matter, I know the truth anyway, but I need a confession.

"You know what I'm talking about Paul, I know you kidnapped Philani as some ploy to get to Lungelo, and now both of them are fighting for their lives."

"And if I'm lucky they will be dead by tonight." He says and his eyes bulge out in shock at his 'confession'. I guess the serum is working.

"So you did shoot them?"

"Of course, and I'd do it again in a heartbeat if I had

to. They took away my mother and my brother, they ripped my family apart."

"You don't have any proof of that. Even if you did, why not go to the police and report them?" He chuckles.

"You and I both know that would never work. Those idiots always get away with everything."

"So now what? They die, and then what? You feel better about yourself? Did you stop to think what damage this will do to Bontle, she loves Lungelo."

"She will be fine. Do you know how annoying it is to always hear Bab'Lungelo this, Bab'Lungelo that all the damn time. When I try to talk to my daughter somehow that son of a bitch finds a way to sneak himself in. He is like the perfect father and I'm the stepfather trying to get love from my own child. My OWN CHILD!" He sneers. I think I added too much of the truth serum.

"What about me? My happiness! Dont you think I deserve to be with my husband?"

"Of course you do. But I'm here. I know I fucked up before but we can still be a family again. You, me, Bontle, Prince and Princess, we can be a family." I wonder what he was planning to do with Imi in his little sinister plan.

"What about Imi?"

"I was going to kill her. She is a Radebe, I cant have a spawn of satan in our house." Wow. Okay I've heard enough.

I get up and take my phone.

"Hello."

"Yes, we are outside." I open the gate and sit back down on the couch with Paul confessing his sins like he is in a confessional. Dladla walks in with officers behind him.

"Paul Mashile, you are under arrest for the attempted murder of Philani Biyela and Lungelo Radebe." Dladla says cuffing Paul.

"What the fuck are you talking about?" Paul asks. Dladla plays the recording of our conversation. Paul turns to look at me.

"You bitch. You set me up." I shrug my shoulders.

"If I were you I'd worry more about being in a confined space. The people you shot, their friends are coming for you, and now they know where they can find you. You should have stayed away Paul, you should have stayed away." I say as an officer leads him away fighting and screaming.

"He'll be lucky if he makes it to the end of the week." Dladla says. I hate that I know what he means. Paul's days are numbered.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

ONE HUNDRED (PART FOUR)

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Paul's arrest is trending on social media, and I'm pretty sure by now Bontle has seen it. But I don't have the time to explain everything to her now, although I'll have to. And it would have been better for her to hear about this from me at least. But with all the drama and commotion happening now, I need to be at the hospital with my man. I just hope she can understand.

After Paul was arrested I drove back to the hospital. As soon as I parked the car I rushed inside to the waiting room to find it filled with the Radebe's. I was nervous a bit seeing everyone there, I hope they don't blame me for this. I wanted to take a step back and try get some strength but I was a bit late because

MaMtolo saw me first and she quickly rushed to me and hugged me. I stood there like a robot, this is not what I expected but Thank God for her sweet heart. She pulled away and held my face in her hands.

"Sthandwa sam, how are you feeling?" I try to fake a smile but it doesnt really work out the way I wanted it to. Instead I feel tears welling up in my eyes.

"I'm trying. When did you get here?"

"A few minutes ago. How are my baby girls."

"They are Okay, just shocked about everything."

"I can imagine. Come, have a seat." I let her lead me down to a chair. I looked around and I swear the whole Radebe clan is here. And now there are other people i dont know. I'm guessing they are Philani's family.

"Can we pray?" MaMtolo announces bringing the room to total silence. We stand up and hold hands creating a circle all around. "Heavenly father,

merciful God, we come to you with pleading hearts and bring forth your children, Lord please have mercy on their lives, protect them Lord and bring them out of this mess that they are in Lord, please Lord, send your Angel's to protect and watch over them father till they come back home, safe and sound. Amen."

There are Amen's resounding all around the room. Everyone sits down where there is space, and those without space stand. My phone rings, its Bontle. I get up and go outside the waiting room, I take a seat on one of the benches.

"Hi nana, is everything okay?"

"Is it true?" She asks with her voice breaking. I just want to hug her and tell her everything will be okay, I just want to assure her that things will be okay, but how will it ever be. Her own father almost killed her stepfather, and now, even though it might not be obvious but she will feel like she has to choose

between Paul and Lungelo. And whatever choice she makes, it might just feel like betrayal to the other.

"Its true baby, I'm sorry." I hear her snuffle trying to hold back tears.

"How could he do something like that? Did he even stop to think about you or Imi atleast." I can hear the heartbreak all the way from here.

"I'm sorry baby, I didn't want to believe it either until he confessed everything to me."

"I'll never forgive him for this."

"Dont say that."

"I mean it ma, it wasnt enough that him and his family took you away from me for all those years and now this. When will they ever rest?"

"Let's leave the past where it is. Right now we need to pray that Lungelo comes out of this alive. That's all we can do. The law will take care of Paul."

"I guess. Can I come to the hospital later?"

"Sure, but I dont think you'll be able to see him, he is still in surgery."

"That's okay, I'll wait with you."

"Okay. How is ma?"

"Worried. She's been locked in her room praying."

"Let's hope God listens to her." She chuckles.

"You know she has Gods private number, I'm sure He has heard her." I chuckle and hang up.

I sit down and take a deep breath. I know this looks really bad, but I cant help feeling hopeful, maybe it's the thought of our wedding that keeps me sane. I know I wasnt too keen about it but hearing Lungelo's excitement about it makes me happy. And right now it's the only thing that's holding me together. I want our wedding, I need him to wake up and see me walk down the aisle.

"Are you Okay?" Someone says in front of me. I open my eyes and find Khanya staring down at me.

"I'm okay. I'm just worried about Lungelo." He sits down next to me.

"He'll be fine. He is a Bhungane, we are fighters."

"I hope so."

"So my contact just told me your ex has been arrested for the shooting."

"I heard."

"Do you know what happened?"

"He claims it was revenge for his mum and brother, he also claims he wanted us to be a family, me, him and Bontle. He even wanted to kill Iminathi." I chuckle just thinking about it. Who even thinks about killing a child?

"Did he have a chance?" He asks. I turn to look at him a frown plastered on my face.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Its just a question. If he had succeeded in killing my brother would he have had a chance with you?" I

shake my head trying so hard to keep it together.

"You must really think so low of me if you think I'd even give him the time of day knowing he killed my husband and my child. I know you love your brother Mthimkhulu, and you want to protect him but dont ever question my love for him. And dont ever think I wouldnt lay my life on the line for him. Ever."

I get up and head back into the waiting room. How dare he even ask me that. I feel a bout of anger bubbling up inside me. I know I brought Paul into our lives but to question my love for Lungelo is just an insult. I saw him walk back into the waiting room and take a seat next to Kgomotso.

Hours went by with no word from Nate or any doctor for that matter. I felt like my head was going to explode with all the crazy scenarios going on in my head. I wanted to cry and scream but I had to hold it all together.

Nate walked in after what seemed like a lifetime. We all stood up when we saw him walk in.

"Is everything okay?" Lindani asked.

"Everything is fine. Lungelo is out of surgery but he is in ICU. Philani is still being given a blood transfusion. Because the bullet was so close to his heart we had to call in a specialist to make sure they can take the bullet out without it affecting his heart."

"He's had the bullet for more than forty eight hours, are you sure this won't affect his recovery?" The other guy I dont know asks. I'm sure he is probably his brother.

"Ngcebo is busy with his scans right now and trying to make sure the surgery goes well. So far his vitals are strong so we are hopeful."

As happy as I am that Lungelo is Okay, it feels really rude for me to show it.

"Can we see Lungelo?" MaMtolo asked, taking the burden of guilt off me.

"Sure. But I can only let two of you in at a time." Nate says. I don't need to be told twice. I follow him out to the ward, I don't care who is coming with me. We get to the ward and i sanitize before walking in. It feels rather weird seeing him like this, tubes stuck deep in his throat, drips on his hands and machines beeping all over the place. I take a deep breath and walk up to the bed. I pull the chair close to the bed and take his hand into mine.

I feel tears stream down my face, guilt and anger brewing inside me. Guilt for letting Paul back into my life and Bontle's, guilt for persuading Lungelo not to kill him when he had the chance, guilt for even thinking Paul could think far beyond the here and now. In all that he did he forgot the most important people in his life, his own children. And I was angry for being so forgiving when it comes to the Mashile's.

"I like the mermaid dress, I think it will be perfect for our wedding. And I was thinking a black tuxedo

would look perfect on you. You do look yummy in a suit, you know." No reply. I sigh and hold his hand tighter. "You have to wake up Bhungane, we need you, your babies need you, everyone needs you back, alive. You have to fight babe, fight for me okay. Fight for our love and our future. I need you to fight the same way you fought for me to live even when I'd given up. I need you to apply that same energy now. I need....." I sit back on the chair when I feel him squeeze my hand.

I feel tempted to scream and ask for help but I also know that many times when you see someone show some sign of life doctors will say its just involuntary muscle movement. I need to be sure if this is real or not.

"Radebe, I know you can hear me, squeeze my hand if you can hear me." He squeezes my hand and I swear my heart stopped. Tears streamed down my face and I sobbed with his hand holding me tightly.

"Okay, okay, let's try something else. Open your eyes for me, open your eyes Baba, show me your beautiful eyes." I sit there holding my breath praying silently. I see his eyeballs move under his eyelids. He is trying so hard to open his eyes, and I know he is getting frustrated with not being able to open them judging by the heart monitor going haywire.

I let go of his hand and press the buzzer to call for help. A few seconds later no one has come through. I quickly go to the door and open it. I see Nate and another doctor rushing towards the ward with a nurse in tow.

"Is everything okay?" The doctor asks as soon as they get in.

"He squeezed my hand, and I asked him to open his eyes but he couldn't, but I could see his eyes moving under his eyelids." Nate and the doctor look at each other. They probably think I'm nuts. "Look at his heart monitor, it went up." They check the sheet of

paper rolling out of the heart monitor. Nate walks closer to the bed.

"Hey man, listen, if you dont wake up I call dibs on your house in Joburg. I'm sure Monde wont mind selling it to me." The heart monitor beeps out of control again and Nate laughs. "Okay then, wake up. I know you can." I don't know what kind of manipulation or understanding they have but I'm glad it seems to be working. I see him move his eyes around. I clutch my imaginary pearl's praying he wakes up.

After what seemed like forever of Nate taunting him he finally opened his eyes and looked around. His eyes landed on me and I saw them glisten, I wasnt sure if it was excitement or tears, I was just happy he was Okay. And here I was thinking it would take a long time for him to heal. Nate and the other doctor help him by pulling the ventilator tube out of his mouth. He turns to look at me again and tries to

smile. With tears streaming down my face I hold his hand again.

"Hi." He looks at me smiling.

"MaGumede. You look beautiful." Trust him to pass a compliment at a time like this. MaMtolo and Khanya walk in and of course prayers fill the room. I get off the chair allowing MaMtolo to sit down and talk to Lungelo. Nate walks out and I follow him.

"Hey." I call out. He turns to look at me.

"Hey, is everything okay?"

"Yeah, how is Philani?"

"I trust Ngcebo, he is good at what he does. With the bullet so close to Philani's heart, I know he will do all he can to make sure the surgery goes smooth."

"I'm glad to hear that. With Lungelo, I know you said the bullet was lodged in his ribcage and another punctured his lung, how will that affect him long term?"

"Well, the bullet in the ribcage we haven't removed, just the fragments of the second one."

"So what happens with the other bullet?"

"In due time we will remove it. For now we just need to make sure he is strong enough to undergo the surgery."

"Okay, thank you."

"You're welcome, let me go check on Philani." I watch him walk away.

Before I can go back to the ward I see Lando going down the passage. I follow her until she walks into the small chapel. I go in and find her on her knees at the altar. I kneel next to her and close my eyes. I say my own prayer. We say Amen. I open my eyes to find her staring at me with a smile on her face.

"How is Lungelo?" She asks getting up and sitting on the bench. I sit next to her and we look forward to the altar and the small statue of Jesus hanging on

the wall.

"He'll live."

"I'm glad to hear that. I just hope Philani lives too."

"He will. He has to."

"You know I haven't done this in a while. Praying. I haven't done it in a while. Ever since my son died I thought God was punishing me for the life we live. For a while I even asked him why he couldn't take Philani, he is the one who lives life on the edge and then my son paid for it. At least that's what I thought. But I was wrong. He is no saint but one thing he will always hold above anything else in his life is his family. And his family goes far beyond just me and the kids, his friends count too. And I know he would move heaven and earth for them, and they will always do the same for him. Lindani told me they found Lungelo bleeding on top of him, almost like he was trying to shield him from something." Okay I didn't know that.

"Right now I'd give my leg and foot just to hear him

Speak to me again. I don't know what I will do if anything happens to him." She says now with tears running down her face. I bring her in for a hug. The chapel door opens and a doctor walks in. He walks to the altar and kneels down to pray. Lando pulls out of the hug and wipes her tears. The doctor finishes praying and gets up. He stops when he sees Lando.

"Lando. Hey." Lando quickly stands up.

"Ngcebo, shouldn't you be in surgery? What happened to Philani? Is he okay?" He chuckles and puts his hands in his coat pocket.

"One question at a time. Surgery is done."

"So quick?" I'm shocked, I know they say he is good but I'm pretty sure he did not finish the surgery that fast.

"Actually by the time I got here the doctor had already opened him up, all I had to do was remove the bullet. They are now closing him up."

"Will he be okay?" Lando asks her hands squeezing

the lights out of my fingers.

"He should be fine. He is one lucky guy. Right now though we will have to wait and see what happens. I'll check his vitals and monitor his progress as soon as he is he is in ICU. But from the looks of it, all is well." Lando throws herself at him and hugs him.

"Thank you." She says as soon as she pulls away from him. He nods his head and walks out.

"I told you he'd be fine." I say to her. She looks at the statue of Jesus and smiles.

"Maybe the big guy didnt abandon me afterall." We walk out of there. We part ways somewhere along the passage and I head back into Lungelo's room. I find him with his eyes closed and I get a mini panic attack thinking of the worst. But the heart monitor tells me he is just fine. Maybe Bontle was right, maybe mum does have God's private number.

MY SISTERS KEEPER

ONE HUNDRED (PART FIVE)

Unedited ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

When I got out of prison I wanted just a few things, nothing major, just to feel the breeze on my face, the beach sand between my toes, to see the sun rise and set and to see my mom and daughter up close and personal. That's all I wanted. Nothing could have prepared me for the drama that became my life. But u wouldnt trade it for anything in the entire world.

It's been more than two years since I walked out of prison with nothing more than a Mr Price plastic bag filled with broken dreams and years of pain. With all the plans I had, I never would have dreamed that a mere bartending job would lead me to finding the love of my life, being given an opportunity to prove my innocence and live a life I've probably only read in

novels.

I've been up since four thirty just to watch the sun rise. Although I do this every day, today it's different. Today the sun rises with an ending to a year long process of bringing Paul to justice for what he did. His trial has been one for the books. With Bonolo as his lawyer he stood trial for all his crimes, and today, he gets his sentencing. He tried, Lord knows he tried to deny everything that happened, but eventually he had to accept defeat.

To be honest, I didn't think he would make it to the end of the week of his arrest, I thought by then he would have been sipping tea with his ancestors, but the gang has been silent on his punishment. But one thing I do know, they have plenty of plans for him, when those plans will be carried out though, now that's a mystery. And I'm pretty sure Paul himself knows that the shoe can drop at anytime, anyday.

I feel Lungelo's arms wrap around my neck and his lips on the top of my head.

"I know you love the sunrise but the bed is cold without you." I chuckle and take a sip of my tea.

"But I'm right here. Besides, you should have slept a little longer, I was coming back."

"Well it's too late. How are you feeling?"

"I dont know. A bit anxious. I'm worried about Bontle."

"She seems to be taking this well."

"I guess. I cant help worrying about her still."

"You need to stop stressing yourself. You know it's not good for you or the baby." He lowers his hands and wraps them around my ever expanding mid section. It took him a while to warm up to me being pregnant again, especially after all that happened when I was pregnant with Imi.

"Relax, I am not stressing." I feel his lips on my neck kissing me. I arch my neck a bit letting him do what

he needs to do. I turn around to face him and his lips move to mine. Any other day I would let this go on but we have a sentencing to attend.

"We need to get ready for court Baba." He pulls out of the kiss and throws his head back sighing.

"And we have a doctor's appointment." And theres that too. This pregnancy is a miracle all on its own, but thanks to Iminathi's dramatic arrival now I need to see the doctor twice a week until I give birth just so they know we are on the right track. This pregnancy is a high risk one, although there hasn't been any major issues but the doctor's want to be cautious. And yes I say doctors because this man has four doctors that are just a phone call away.

We go to the bathroom and take a shower together. When we are done he helps me by wiping and lotioning me. He has taken over doing all that, anyone who sees him wouldnt think a year ago he was laying in a hospital bed fighting for his life and then had to undergo a few physiotherapy sessions.

And then had to have surgery to finally remove the bullet from his ribcage six months ago. But here he is taking care of me instead of things being the other way around. I wonder how I got so lucky.

We get dressed and get ready to attend Paul's appearance in court. While Lungelo was getting dressed I walked out and went to check on Imi. I got into her room and she is already playing with her toys on the floor. At eighteen months old she's figured a way to wake up and get off the cot and down to the floor. All that's left now is for her to learn to open the door and we will find her in the kitchen making breakfast.

"Hi nana, hi munchkin." She looks up with her pacifier and a smile on her cute little face. The older she gets the more she looks like Lungelo. When he is carrying her no one even has to ask if she is his. It's like looking at a miniature Lungelo. I pick her up and head downstairs. I place her in her seat and

strap her in then start on breakfast.

When Lungelo comes down he joins us and we have breakfast together. I clean up and wait for mum to arrive and take care of Imi. Prince and Princess have moved down to Durban. Now that Paul is behind bars and I have Amanda's parental rights it was easy to get the kids. Of course Bonolo had something to say about it but the kids still chose to come down here. They live with my mother together with Macele's daughter, Mbali. By now their school transport has arrived and taken them to school.

I decide to go upstairs and freshen up a bit before mum arrives. My phone rings from the top of the chest of drawers.

"Mrs Biyela."

"Mrs Radebe. How are you?"

"I'm good. Are you here already?"

"Yep. Landed about an hour ago. I still dont

understand why the trial had to happen in Durban."

"You know why. The crime happened here so.
Anyways how's Philani?"

"He is Okay. Too okay if you ask me. I feel like the guys have something planned for Paul."

"I know right. A year later and he is still breathing?
There is a lot that they ar planning. And from the looks of it, it wont be pretty."

"Yeah. Anyways I will see you in court."

"Sure thing. See you later."

We hang up and Iminathi's screams can be heard from here. I'm pretty sure mum is here thats why. I get my bag and head downstairs. I find mum and greet her and say my goodbyes. When I walk out Lungelo is already standing by the car on his phone. The moment he sees me he cuts the call.

"Hey. Who was that?" I ask as soon as I reach him. He gives me a hug.

"No one important. It's just work." He opens the door and I get in the car. I wonder what's going on. He gets in too and off we go. When we get to the courthouse the whole gang is here. Not that I expected anything less. It's almost time so we walk in yo court and take out seats.

The courtroom is packed. The media is here, the Mashile's are here, who knew there was still more of them left. His uncles, aunts and cousins also came down. The stank eye I'm getting from Bonolo would have scared the living shit out of me but not today. Today I make peace with the fact that Paul will never again be a part of my life. And from what Bontle said when I called her last night, he wont be a part of her life either.

The police drag Paul in and sit him down in his little box. The cameras go crazy with the media taking picture after picture of him. He bows his head and pulls the hood of his sweater closer to his face,

covering it. Shame, I wish I could feel sorry for him, but I dont.

We all stand as the judge walks in. As soon as she is seated we also take our seats.

"May the defendant rise?" The judge says and Paul stands up. "I'm not going to waste your time. As the court concluded two weeks ago, the defendant was found guilty of two counts of kidnapping and two counts of attempted murder. Today all we are here for is sentencing. Before I give out the sentence, Mr Mashile, I hope that with the time you will spend in prison will be plenty for you to think about what you did. Not only did you try to take away two fathers and husbands from their families, but your reasons which you presented to the court as what led you to doing what you did, have zero merit. No evidence whatsoever was found to support your accusations. Even after the court granted the police a window to investigate your claims, nothing was found. So,

because of that, the court found you guilty. The prosecution asked for the maximum sentence to be passed, and I am granting them that. Mr Paul Mashile, the court sentences you to twenty five years behind bars without the possibility of a parole."

Gasps and screams fill the court. The media starts clicking away taking pictures of everyone and their reactions. One journalist starts taking pictures of Bonolo who is sitting there, still with her eyes boring into me. The journalist follows her gaze and then starts taking pictures of me staring back at her. I'm sure this will be front page news tomorrow.

The judge leaves and Paul is led out. We get up and walk out of the courtroom with cameras still flashing. I feel the need to pee so I excuse myself from the others and go find a bathroom. I get in and it's pretty empty, except for one person who is washing her hands. When I get into the stall and close it she walks out. Perfect. I can fart in peace. I sit down and

pee, letting out a couple of farts in the process. It's not my fault, it's this baby making me constipated.

I finish and flush then walk out to wash my hands. I find Bonolo standing by the sink, arms crossed and ready for a fight. Well she came to the wrong person because a fight is not what I'm here for. I wash my hands and attempt to walk away but she stops in front of me.

"Are you happy now?" She asks, arms still crossed.

"Of course I'm happy. My husband loves me, my babies are happy and healthy, what more can I ask for." She chuckles and shakes her head.

"You know the biggest mistake I ever made was proving your innocence. I should have let you rot."

"Exactly what is it that you want from me Bonolo. I already said thank you for proving my innocence, what do you want now? Money? How much?" She laughs and throws her head back.

"Wow, so this is who you are now? Throwing money around like its nothing. Really Nomonde? What happened to that timid big dreamer who married my brother? What happened to the go getter that you were? Now you hang out with the likes of Philani Biyela and you all of a sudden think you are all that. Really? Those people will spit you out like yesterday's garbage as soon as they are done with you. Why cant you see that?" I take a step close to her but thanks to this baby bump, I cant reach where I need to reach.

"You asked me what happened to the girl I used to be? Well, you know what happened to that girl. Your family killed her. She went to prison and she suffered while you all carried on with life like nothing happened. She was beaten, raped and tortured per your brothers instructions. That girl had to face life with nothing but the hope's of one day seeing her daughter, that your other brother left on the street like some garbage. That girl, she grew up, and the

person you see in front of you now, she is a woman. Ready to fight. For everything and everyone that means something to me. As for the likes of Philani as you put it, I've found more support and protection from them than I ever had before. So my advice, take that smart brain of yours and focus on things that really matter, your future and leave other people's business alone. Right? Good." I walk past her towards the door.

"Did you stop to think about Bontle before sending her father to prison." I stop and turn around. She slowly turns too and looks at me. "Did you think about Prince and Princess, their mother is already in prison and now their other parent is on his way there too. Do you and your friends ever think about anyone but yourselves? How selfish can you be?"

"Selfish, you say. So your family was selfless when you all protected Lebo after she killed Philani's son? Was your family being selfless when you all forgot that Bontle exists?" Silence. I sigh. "Bonolo, I will always be grateful to you for proving my innocence, I

cant thank you enough for that. But I'm not going to spend the rest of my life bowing down to you because of that. And as for the kids, Paul should have thought about them before he went on a revenge attack. And I'm pretty sure you knew about his plans too, heck, I wouldn't be surprised if you hatched this whole entire plan. But it doesn't matter now, the kids will be fine, they will be taken care off. Maybe it's time you took care of yourself too." I turned and walked out.

I closed the door behind me and took a deep breath. As I'm walking towards the others I notice that I'll have to go past the Mashile family. As if my encounter with Bonolo wasnt enough now I have to do this. I held my breath, held my head up high and walked past there like I was Miss Universe herself. I got to the others and we walk out of the courtroom together.

When we got to the car my stomach starts to

grumble. And then I remember I haven't had food in a few hours.

"Babe, I'm hungry." He looked at me and smiled.

"Let's go get you fed then we will go to the doctor. Where do you want to eat?"

"Can we get some McDonald's? We can get takeaways then go to the doctor."

"Okay then." He starts the car and off we go. We go through a McDonald's drive through and get a few burgers, some nuggets and ice cream. I notice the side eye Lungelo gives me looking at my food.

"Don't look at me like that." He laughs.

"I didn't say anything."

"This is all your fault so please." He shakes his head and tries to hide his laugh. Men. Mxm.

We get to the hospital and head straight to the Doctor's office. All three doctors are here, yep, a

whole team for lil old me. Trust Lungelo to go overboard with everything. There is a Perinatologist, an Obgyn and a medical doctor.

"Ladies. How are you?" I greet as soon as we get in.

"We are good. But shouldn't we be asking you that?" One doctor asks. They ask questions, take blood samples to be tested and then we do the sonogram.

"Would you like to know the sex?" The obgyn asks.

"Yes. Please." I answer. Lungelo is sitting there pretending like he doesnt care, but i know he wants a son. All men want sons to carry their family name. Right?

"Well, it's a boy." A wide smile fills my face. Yep, I'm done having kids. I'm pretty sure my womb has been through enough.

The doctors check my vitamins and prescriptions and all that and then we head out. So far all is well so I'm happy. We get into the car and drive out. I

notice we aren't driving towards home, instead we are going to the airport.

"Where are we going?" I ask cause I'm confused and tired.

"To the airport."

"I can see that Radebe, where exactly are we going?"

"You'll see."

"I hate surprises." He turns to me with a smirk on his face.

"I know. But you'll love this one." He says so sure of himself. I would dig for more details but we are here already and I know he won't tell me.

We get to the airport and he checks us in. Our flight is waiting. We get in and off we go to God knows where. It turns out we are going to Cape Town. I don't have clothes, all I have with me is my medication. I guess we'll be indoors the whole time.

We land and we find a car already waiting for us. We are driven to a private wine estate in Stellenbosch.

When we get there we find dinner ready for us. And the weird thing about it, we are the only ones in the restaurant.

"They dont have customers?" I whisper to him. I wouldn't want the people to hear me gossiping about them. He looks around and then sips his wine.

"Argh, maybe we are the ones who are late. What do you want to eat?" A waiter is already standing by. We place our orders and I must say, the food is divine.

"So babe, i have a question. Since you decided to drag me here without packing any clothes, what am I going to wear?" I ask him when we get to our room. It's quite huge. More like a penthouse than just a room. We are standing in the lounge looking around at the amazing decor. He smiles and looks at me from top to bottom. Idiot.

"You dont need clothes. Let's go shower." He lifts me up and we head to the bedroom. Oh look at that, there is a suitcase on the bed.

We shower and when we are done I open the suitcase and it's my clothes. How did they get here before we did. And I know I did not pack anything.

"Lungelo, how did my clothes get here?" He comes out of the shower with a towel around him.

"I had them brought here. Now you have clothes to wear." He says and disappears back into the bathroom.

I get my phone from my bag and call my mum.

"Hey baby."

"Ma, how did my clothes get to Cape Town." She laughs. I must be a comedian and I didnt even know it. Everytime I ask a question I get laughed at.

"They flew there. How else were they supposed to get there?"

"Whatever. Anyways, how is my baby? I didnt even get to say goodbye to her."

"She is fine. Besides you didn't go there to die. You'll be back and she'll still be here. Go enjoy some time with your husband." She cuts the call. I sit on the bed looking at the phone, why would she hang up on me?

Lungelo joins me on the bed and within minutes I'm off to dream land. When I wake up in the morning he is not in bed. Oh well, maybe he went for a jog. I get up and go to the bathroom, brush my teeth then take a shower. When I'm done I go back to the bedroom and to my surprise, Lando is sitting on the bed busy on her phone.

"Hey, what are you doing here?" She looks up and smiles.

"You're up. Perfect." She gets off the bed and rushes to the door. "Girls. She's up." And before I can contemplate what is going on the girls walk in with a bunch of other people I dont know.

"What's going on?"

"You're getting married today." Bonsile says leading me to a chair. I'm pretty sure we called off the planning of the wedding a few months back so what are they on about?

"What do you mean?" The girls I don't know start working on my hair and face.

"Relax and just enjoy today. Let's consider today a celebration. We need it after the year we've had." Lando says.

"Hear. Hear." The girls say lifting their champagne glasses up. I guess this is really happening.

I dont know who chose this dress but whoever it is, did a damn good job. Not only is it amazing just looking at it, it even looks better on me. It flatters me and even accentuates the bump to not make it seem like this is a shotgun wedding. I cant believe Lungelo pulled this off even with all the drama surrounding us this year.

I walk out to the garden where the wedding is apparently taking place. Its overlooking the vineyards. Such a beautiful sight. My friends walk out first in their dark purple dresses. I didnt plan this wedding but it seems to incorporate all my favourite things. Bonsile walks out last as she is my maid of honour. Princess and Imi are flower girls. Oh my heart is going to burst out of my chest. Even Bontle is my honorary maid of honor.

"Are you ready?" Mum asks. I look at her and smile at her. My mum, my hero and strength. Where would I be without her. "Dont cry. You're already married anyway." I dab my little tears away.

"Of course I am. Let's get me married. Again." I give her my hand and we walk down the aisle. So many people are here. When all this is over, I need answers. Like how did he even get everyone here.

We get to the end of the aisle and mum hands me

over to my husband. We hold hands facing each other.

"Ladies and gentlemen. We are gathered here today to join these two love birds in holy matrimony." The pastor begins. "I'm not even going to ask who is against this union because you'll be too late. This is just a formality." Everyone laughs. "Right. Now, do you Nomonde Gumede take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband, to love and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer for poorer till death do you part?"

"I do."

"Do you, Lungelo Radebe take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife, to love and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer till death do you part?"

"I do." Lungelo answers and the crowd ululated.

"And now for your vows. Lungelo, I will let you go

first." The pastor says.

"Uhm... Nomonde, MaGumede omncane, I love you, I know I tell you that everyday and I promise I will remind you of my love ever day of our lives. You came into my life at a time when I thought I'd made peace with being alone till I die. But you showed up and made me rethink that, and now I cant see my life without you. I could promise you the world, but I'd rather spend the rest of my life showing it to you. I love you and I cant wait for the rest of our lives together." Yeah I'll need a touch up of my make up after this because I'm sure by now I have streak Mark's of tears on my face. And I'm not the only one.

"That was beautiful. Nomonde, your turn." The pastor says. I take a deep breath. I didn't prepare for this so I'll have to speak from my heart.

"Lungelo, Radebe, Bhungane,
Mthimkhulu, Makhulukhulu, Zikode,
Mashwabada inkomo nempondo zayo,

Izinzipho zimnyama ngokuqhwayana,

Mangelengele, Mahlub' amhlophe, you've been nothing but a ray of sunshine in my life. You loved me at a time when I thought I wasn't worthy to be loved let alone deserving. With the walls I built up around my heart I thought I was safe and my walls were impenetrable, but I guess your love has one massive bulldozer. I promise to love you, honor and respect you for as long as we both shall live. I promise to hold your hand through this life thing and never let go. You are my best friend, my confidant and I look forward to being your wife for the next hundred years. I love you."

"Well, what more can I say after that. Can we have the rings?" Prince comes forward with the rings and hands them to the pastor. He prays for them then hands them to us. We do the formalities and when we are done, we are pronounced husband and wife. We kiss and the crowd cheers. I know I wasn't that excited about a white wedding but I think this, as they say on TV, was our perfect wedding. What more

can a girl asks for.

NARRATED

With the festivities still on going, friends and family dancing away inside the reception, Sbu and Razor slip out and drive down to the harbour. When they get there they find a couple of their men there.

"Majita, hows it going? How is our guy?" Razor asks.

"He is good. Still passed out from the long drive."

The one guy says.

"Did you make sure not to leave any trace behind?"

Sbu asks.

"Yes. As far as the law is concerned Paul Mashile did a run for it and now he is a wanted fugitive."

"Perfect."

"Is he ready for transportation?" Razors questions walking around the box sitting on the ground.

"Yes. And the colombians are expecting him. He will be there until you guys decide what to do with him. Of course we need to make sure the cops are not looking your way."

"Good. Now we need to get back to the wedding. Make sure he is out of SA waters before sunrise."

"Got it."

They drive back to the wedding reception. They give the guys an update before the party continues.

THE END