

## More Than Enough by L.A.V

### Insert 1

My head is pounding. My entire body feels heavy, like something is on top of me. Every part of my body hurts, I can't even open my eyes. I'm trying to catch a breath but I feel suffocated. I slowly open my eyes, wondering across the room, it's dark with small streams of light coming through the blinds. What's that smell? It's a confusing scent between a dumping site and a soccer club locker room. Who are these people laying on my bed. Shit!

I lift my head, it's heavy and painful, I notice about five people on my bed.

"Get up. Get off me!" I manage to get those words of my mouth, pushing him away. My head hurts every time I try to speak.

“Yhow, what’s with the noise birthday girl?” a guy next to me moans as he rolls over and covers his ears.

Oh shit! What did I do? Did we? It can’t be.

“Everybody get the fuck out now” I say pulling and waking them up on the floor as I make my way to the window.

The sunlight blinds them, moaning and complaining as they make sense of their surroundings. They need to leave, I don’t even know how they got here in the first place.

There are wine and beer bottles everywhere, cigarettes are scattered like litter on the floor and the smell gets worse.

I push them one by one to the door, I don’t know any of these people. I must’ve been really drunk, to bring strangers in my home.

“Mxm, spoilt brat” a girl says with an annoyed expression as she walks past me while fixing

her braids. This other guy walks up to me with his right hand in the air and a huge smile on his face. Is he expecting a high five, seriously?

“Girl you throw a mean party, last night was banging, hope to see you soon, mchwaa”.

Eww, that breath!

I watch them as they make their way out of the house all the way to the gate. I have to call the cleaning company to clear this up, I don't know where to begin, everything is a mess.

I can't believe this, how did it end up here, at my home? This was supposed to be a chilled night, like all of my other birthdays. All I remember was sitting at Chichi's Jazz Bar looking out to a view of the dark ocean lit up by the ships making their way to the harbor. I had ordered a bottle of white wine as I waited for Thando to show up. An hour later after a few glasses, I got a text from him:

\*Sorry babes, something came up. Promise to make it up to you though xoxo\*

I was so disappointed, in fact I was pissed. How could he do this to me, on my birthday. We might not officially be a couple, but we've been "together" for almost 3 years now.

So there I was in one of the hottest spots in Edernville, alone, tipsy and hungry on my birthday. When the waiter took my order, the place was beginning to fill up. Poetry night is always popular at Chichi's, tables were occupied and people started standing randomly around the place. A group of three guys and a girl came over to ask if they could share the table with me, I said yes. I felt like I had no choice, I was starting to look like a weirdo, downing a bottle of wine by myself. My social anxiety faded away with every sip of wine I took. They were a cool bunch, apparently they go to the same University as me but different campus.

I later found myself laughing and the drinks kept flowing, it began to feel like a real birthday, something foreign to me. They ran out of money so I told them I'd take care of it. I felt like I owed them for making my birthday one of the best nights. I remember thinking to myself, so this is what it feels like to have friends, people who care for you. The last memory I have was when everyone was singing happy birthday for me while I stood on the bar.

I hope no one posted on social media. I still don't know how I got to my house.

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I hear the gates opening and I run downstairs. It must be the cleaning company. I peep through the window and my body suddenly feels cold and my knees begin to shake with fear. I could hear my heartbeat pacing through my chest. He said he was coming home tomorrow. Why is he here? Where's that damn cleaning company?

He's going to kill me.

The kitchen is a mess, wine bottles are everywhere, pizza and burger takeaway boxes are thrown in all angles of the floor. Where do I even start? I'm pacing up and down trying to clear up what I can. It's too late. How am I going to explain this to him?

The door opens and I feel a rush of fear running through my body, my mouth is dry and all I'm thinking is, I need to cover my arm, he can't see this. I quickly grab the large dish towel and cover my sleeve tattoo. I don't see this ending well.

"Buhle!" he shouts. I can hear the anger in his voice as he continues to utter words I can't hear properly. I make my way to the lounge and stand close to the staircase with my arms folded holding the dish cloth tightly to cover my arm.

“Morning Dad” I say as I lean against the wall. I can’t even look at him.

“So this is what you do in my house when I’m gone, throw parties and invite strangers in my house, eh?. I go away for one night and you’ve turned my house into a freak house. Do you know how embarrassing it is to get calls from neighbors, who also happen to be my business associates, telling me that there is a disruptive noise coming from my house? “ He’s full of rage.

“Mr Kruger is one of my biggest clients, how do you think he’ll take me seriously after this. How will he trust me with his business if I can’t even control my 20 year old daughter. Dammit Buhle why are you doing this to me? Look at me when I’m talking to you.” He says, i’m not surprised that annoying Kruger called him, he always snitches on me.

He doesn’t even know my age, my father doesn’t know how old I am.

I slowly lift my head until my eyes meet with his. They're red. There it is, that vein, the one he has when he's angry, pumping across his forehead. I haven't seen him this angry since....

"Say something Buhle, don't just stand there looking like a wet kitten. You weren't so shy when you spent R8000 last night with your 'buddies'" he says as he takes off his navy blue blazer and places it on the couch.

Shit! How does he know how much I spent?

"I'm sorry." That's all I can say, I just need him to calm down and neglect me like he always does.

"Sorry for what Buhle? For being a spoilt brat who enjoys causing trouble and making my life worse than it already is? Sorry for sabotaging my career with your carelessness? You know we wouldn't have all of this if it wasn't for my job, you know that right? I do everything for you,



I pay for that useless art degree of yours even after I told you a BCom degree has more substance, I buy you all these expensive clothes, I bought you that mini cooper, I fund every activity and your overseas trips. I do everything for you and this is how you pay me back?"

There we go again, with the same old blame game and money talk, that's all he cares about. He has become this cold and insensitive person, this is not the father that raised me. I do not know this man.

"Your mother would be very disappointed in you right now" he says

I try to hold back my tears but my anger consumes my body, my temperature begins to rise, I feel a huge lump stuck in my throat, my stomach suddenly feels uneasy and my hands are sweaty. I can't hold back anymore, He knows what buttons to push, he's hurting me, intentionally..

“Do not talk about my mother, you have no right to speak about mama like that. You never even mourned her, you couldn’t wait to get rid of her. You took all her pictures and hid them away the day after her funeral, you moved out of your room and I’ve never seen you visit her grave. So don’t you dare stand there and talk about my mother like you loved her” I say as tears run down my cheeks.

He takes a step closer. “What?”

“You heard me, you never loved mama and you don’t love me. Throwing your money at me is not love. That’s all you do dad, you throw your money and think that’s all. You’ve never been to one of my exhibitions, you’re hardly home and even if you are, you’re always locked in your study. What about my birthdays dad? Ever since mama passed, I’ve always spent it alone, 10 years, by myself. Do you know how being alone on your birthday feels? When you have no one

singing or wishing you happy birthday.

Yesterday was my 22nd birthday and you don't even know that. You can't stand a minute with me, you're always rushing off and leaving me alone in this big and cold house. And yeah! That "no substance" of a degree is all the hope I have. Sometimes I wish you could switch places with mama, she'd do a better job" I say ,as I wipe my tears with the dish cloth.

His eyes widen when he spots my sleeve tattoo.

"Oh yes I have my entire arm covered with the only picture I have of mama, since you tried so hard to erase her memory from me" I say furiously as I run up the stairs and bang the door behind me. Throwing myself on the bed and covering myself with a pillow. Silence has never been this loud as thoughts of my miserable life haunt me.

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After cleaning the mess in my room, I took a long nap and a cold shower, which always helps me clear my mind. The room is lit up by scented candles I bought in India last summer. They have a very soothing scent that manages to relax my mind while I sketch.

Vrrr Vrrr

That's my cellphone. I stand up and follow the vibrating sound, it's coming from under the bed. I see a small light and reach for it. So many missed calls and text messages, all from Thando.

\* babes I've been trying to call you, answer please, I know you're mad, sorry\*

\*hey, you didn't tell me you're having a party tonight, I thought it was going to be just us two, like usual. Anyways, who are these people you're hanging out with, they seem dodgy\*

\*okay, I'm starting to worry now. I'm coming

over\*

Wait, how did he know about the party? Who told him?

I continue to scroll through my social media notifications, I has over ten thousand likes. What is this? Oh my gosh, who posted these?

There are pictures of me drinking out of a wine bottle and kissing a guy. A video? You have got to be kidding me. I scroll down to the video tag and press play, I am dancing on the table and yelling “ bartender, give these people what they want and put it on my tab. Drink up folks, im paying.” How did they even know my handle? Why did they tag me in all this madness. My father is going to kill me, his business associates will not appreciate this. I need to delete these.

My phone lights up, it’s Thando.

“Hey Thando” I say

“What’s wrong with you, I’ve been worried sick, why aren’t you taking my calls? Who were those people you were drinking with? And your new “boyfriend” whats going on here Buhle?” he sounds like my boyfriend, someone has forgotten our relationship policy.

“What? Are you jealous that I found a real boyfriend?” I say rolling my eyes

“Everything is all over social media, since when do you post your personal life, I thought you used it to showcase your art” I can hear the concern in his voice, he’s overreacting.

“You didn’t show up Thando, I was sitting alone on my birthday, Alone Thando. If you hadn’t ditched me in the first place this wouldn’t have happened. It’s all your fault. I’m tired I need to sleep” I say, raising my tone.

“Yeah, do what you do best, push me away, blame me for everything. Go ahead, take no

responsibility of your actions and point fingers at those who try to help you. That's all you do. FYI I had to take my mother to the hospital, her sister had a heart attack, that's why I couldn't come" I could hear the sadness in his voice. Since when did he become sensitive.

"Well, I'm sorry to hear that. Last night was a mess, everything happened so fast, I can't remember most of the things that happened. Is she fine?" I try to calm myself down

"She's fine, I left my mom at the hospital, she wouldn't leave her side. I worry about you Buhle, you never talk, you always bottle things in and your anger continues to build up. I'm here for you, you know that right? I'm more than your fuck buddy you know, 3 years is a long time." I hear him smile

How does he do this, pretend like he cares, like he'd really stick around if he knew everything about me. Why do people pretend like they want

to help you then leave you when they feel like it? He'll never understand me, no one can. My life is too complicated for him. He doesn't know how it feels to be alone in a world filled with people. To continue walk around with people who want a piece of your life because of how perfect it seems from the outside. The cars, the clothes, the trips, my father's success. It's not a fairy tale. He should just stick to our initial agreement, that's all I need from him, his body, to relieve all the stress and tension.

"Goodnight Thando" I drop the call and continue with my sketches. I have a lot in my mind, a fuck buddy shouldn't be one of them.

Vrrr Vrrr

Thando :\*Let's make it official\*

Is he serious? He can't be. I thought we both agreed on the terms of this relationship. Ugh

Okay, here's the story.



Thando and I went to the same high school but he was a few grades ahead of me. When I was doing grade 10 he was doing grade 12. I never really had friends in school, just a couple of classmates and the craft club I was part of. He, on the other hand was very popular, especially with the girls. I really didn't know what they saw in him, he was always so arrogant and stuck up. He walked around like he owned the place, maybe it was because his mother was the principal of the school. Every girl wanted a piece of him, most of them got the piece but they never lasted. Our first encounter was that years Valentines ball, the craft club was responsible for decorating the school hall for the ball. As the head of the entertainment club, he was in charge of the planning of the event. He always appointed himself as the DJ for all the school events, I understand they liked his sound but it was annoying to listen to the same deep house. So in one of our rehearsal

meetings I suggested we play a different kind of music other than the deep house they usually went for. I suggested we play soul and jazz to set the mood. They all looked at Thando and waited for his response and he just laughed and told me that was “grown folks” music, how stupid and ignorant. I let that idea go and went with whatever he said was “cool”.

The day of the ball his sound system had a problem so I offered mine on conditions that they play soul music in between meals, he agreed. That night I left early, he called me and brought my sound system to my house. He wouldn't tell me where he got my number from, he kept saying “I'm smooth like that” but I bet he got it from the craft club member book. He left for University but we started chatting on Mxit and sharing music. When I was in Grade 12 I told him he was going to be my date for my Matric farewell. He was the only guy I knew and

spoke to. He called me a bully for demanding and not asking but I knew he liked the idea. The after party was full of varsity boys and all the girls were all over them, that was the first time I drank alcohol, I didn't feel good, so I asked him to take me home. My father was away that weekend so I was alone. He carried me to my bedroom because I couldn't walk in my heels. We started kissing then one thing led to another. That was the night I lost my virginity.

I made it clear to him that we were not a couple and therefore we wouldn't act like one. I told him all the rules and he agreed:

- \*No telling anyone about our "situationship"
- \*No sleeping over or cuddling.
- \*No posting pictures together on social media.
- \*No pet name calling.
- \*No public affection display

\*One is allowed to have their own girlfriend or boyfriend.

\*Always use a condom

\*No sex with lights on.

He couldn't be more happier about these rules. I mean what guy like him wouldn't be. It was a strictly no strings attached situation. And I was happy with that. If he wanted me he called and if I wanted him, I do the same. No commitment. No worries.

He had a few girlfriends but they never lasted, some a couple of weeks, a month, the longest was three months. I've never been a relationship kind of person, it's emotionally demanding. And yes, Thando is the only guy I've been with. It's easier with him, he knows the routine. I don't have to explain myself all the time. He understands, or at least I thought he did.

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I always try to maintain a healthy body and mind set, my anxiety forces me to. So in the mornings I go for my hourly morning jogs or opt for yoga sessions. It always helps with my creativity and relaxes my mind. It's a beautiful October morning and I decided to go for my regular morning jog around the neighborhood. Our neighborhood is one of the oldest and also wealthiest estates in Edernville, the city of golden opportunities and broken promises. I make a break by the park. The sun is peeking through the trees, its glow kisses the lake running across the park making the water appear gold. The flowers surrounding the lake give it more life, it's a beautiful scene. This would look good over my headboard, I take a picture with my phone and continue with my jog. When I turn the corner of my street, I see a truck

parked in front of my home. I pick up speed and run closer. There are men moving bags out of my house. Are we being repossessed? As I walk towards the gate I see two men carrying some of my paintings.

“Hey, where are you taking those?” I say as I reach out for my paintings.

“Young lady we’re just doing our job” he walks pass me and loads the truck.

“My dad will settle this, he will pay whatever debt that’s due, put my paintings down dammit” I’m really mad at him for handling my work with no respect.

“Girl, don’t make this any hard, Mr Sidwell paid us to pack these things, now move” he pushes me aside.

What does he mean my father paid them to take these things. Are we moving? I run to the house and start looking for my father. To my

surprise the entire lounge and dining room is still furnished. I see men coming down stairs carrying more of my things. I turn around and see my father walk down the passage.

“Dad what’s going on? Are we moving? Why didn’t you tell me?” I’m curious and he’s not even paying me any attention.

“I’m not going anywhere, you are.” He says, packing his briefcase.

A flash of shock overwhelms me, I suddenly feel cold from the inside. What does he mean by this? Is he kicking me out? Where am I going to stay? This is my home, he’s the only family I have.

“What do you mean dad? Where am I going”? I’m shaking.

“You’re leaving. You’re going to stay with your grandmother in Khumba, get ready, you leave in an hour” he says as he walks out leaving me on

my knees with my mouth wide open in disbelief.

My entire body shuts down, I'm struggling to find my breath, the movers are walking pass me like they feel sorry for me. I can't believe what I heard. I know he was mad at me but this, this is insane. Neglecting me for 10 years was not enough, now he's getting rid of me. To Khumba of all places. I haven't lived anywhere but the city. I don't know anything but the life of Edernville. Moving me to Khumba is like dumping me on a different planet.

I've just finished writing my final year exams, I need to get a job. I am not going to Khumba, I won't survive a day in a village. Do they even have electricity or running water. What will I do there? I haven't seen my grandmother in years, she must be old and blind. This is the biggest punishment, he can cut me off financially, that's it, I haven't even used some of my allowance anyways. I'll sell my paintings and move



downtown, not Khumba. I don't even know where it is. He really hates me does he, he's getting rid of me.

When I get to my room my things have already been packed, the only thing left is my bed, the white naked walls, cream carpet and a couple of my suitcases. I walk to the shower and let the cold water run over me. I can't seem to ignore the sharp pain in my heart, it continues to stab every time I think about how things would be if mama was still alive. How my father went from being a hands on-caring dad to a insensitive blesser. How he couldn't leave my side to how he cannot wait to get rid of me. Why has mama's death created this distance between us? What is it about mama's death that makes him hate me so much. I know I've wronged him many times with my rebelliousness but his hatred towards me is deeper than that.

“Mama, you promised to look after us, we’re drifting apart and you’re doing nothing about that. Dad doesn’t love me, you left with all his love and hope and I’m just a constant reminder of all that pain” I’m on the floor, shouting with my back against the tiles and the water is running all over my body as I tremble in heartache. My tears have camouflaged in the water running on my face. My throat is suffocated by a distracting lump, I can’t stop myself from crying. This all seems familiar. This was me exactly the night mama was a victim in a hit and run and died on the scene.

After a few minutes I manage to get up and get dressed. I put on my black skinny jeans, a black vest and black sunglasses. As I stand in my empty room I can feel the resemblance in my soul. Cold, empty, abandoned and bruised. I look around and try to think of all the memories I have of this place. My “girl time” with mama

painting our nails and braiding our hair, the time she let me experiment my art of painting on the wall, I can still see the pink paint next to the window. The time dad used to read me bedtime stories everynight, Cinderella was my favourite, I'd make him read it to me more than once until I fall asleep. I think of the time I locked myself in for three months after mama's funeral, I couldn't move on with life without her. I thought of many ways of making the pain go away but it didn't. I tried causing physical pain on myself to make it go away but it didn't. The scars in my thighs are a constant reminder of those dark times. I also think about the time I'd cry at the thought of losing my mothers image in my head and decided to make a permanent reminder of her on my arm. And also my first sexual experience and the beginning of many other sexual experiences with a boy that knows nothing about me. If the walls in this room could speak, I'd never let anyone it in.

The car hooter from downstairs disturbs my thoughts. I wipe my tears and lower my sunglasses from my head to cover my swollen eyes. I drag my luggage and there's an all black Range Rover with a man dressed in a black suite and white shirt walking towards me as I leave the house.

“Good morning Ms Khephu, I'll be driving you to Khumba, let me help you with those” he says with a smile as he grabs my luggage.

Mxm! I walk pass him and get in the back seat, I put my earphones on and turn up the volume. This is going to be a long day.

As we drives off, I look behind with the hopes of seeing my dad running after the car and stopping it to apologise and admitting he is making a mistake. That he loves his Hlehle and doesn't want to live without her. When we turn to exit our estate, a thought came to me, that Hlehle died with mama, it's all just wishful

thinking. I lean against the window close my eyes. I'm tired, emotionally.

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The next insert will be uploaded on Thursday.

More Than Enough by L.A.V

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Insert 3

Thami and I have been spending a lot of time together, we do chores together, well he does and I just watch and he helps me learn how to cook, which I find difficult. I've never cooked anything in my life. My father and I have always ordered food from our favourite restaurants, we've never really shared dinner nights. When the food arrived we both went to our rooms,

that is once a week when he is not away for business. Most nights I'd invite Thando over but he never slept over but sometimes I enjoyed the peace that came with being alone, or maybe I was so used to it that I didn't know how to be with someone.

Being in Khumba was uncomfortable at first, everyone in my face and demanding attention, I wasn't used to it. It was suffocating, but now I've begun to appreciate having them around. It's been a two weeks and I'm already learning more about myself through them. Makhulu makes me want to make a difference and have a purpose. Asakhe's innocence makes me appreciate life and find time to be social, which is a struggle, there's just something about being in a room with strangers, wanting to know me, it gives me anxiety. Like why me? I'm not special. I'm bruised and broken. Thami made me realise how I enjoy laughing and the importance of

finding what makes me happy. Aunt'Kholeka, well, I'll probably learn something once I get to know her better. Right now, nothing. That woman is cold as ice. She doesn't talk much and when she does she's angry and defensive, I don't understand her.

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After gathering all of the clothes I want to give away, I asked Thami to help me take them to the church, I know he'll jump at the opportunity. He told me to meet him at his workplace during lunchtime so he can accompany me to the church. He went through the things I was going to give away and took some scarfs and hoodies for himself. He even made funny remarks about my choice of color, I always wear black. He went as far as calling me "the undertakers wife". I have been waiting outside the Khumba Lodge

for ten minutes and Thami hasn't showed up. He said I should be here during lunch time but I'm still waiting on him. He better have a good explanation for this. I'm starting to look like an idiot, everyone is staring at me every time they enter the lodge. It's a beautiful place, it's big. The mountains behind it must be the tourist attraction.

"Molo sisi, can I help you with those?" a voice from behind says. I turn to see who it is.

"Hi. No, i'm good. I'm waiting for my cousin" I'm nervous, I don't know why. He's smiling.

"So they haven't told you?" he says.

"Told me what?" I ask

"You never refuse help from amaHlubi, it's considered rude and disrespectful to the Kingdom" he says folding his arms, He's masculine and fit. How does he keep in good shape, I don't think they have gyms here. I find



myself staring at him with my mouth open. I'm embarrassing myself.

"What happens when I really don't need help?" I ask

"Someone always needs help, they just need to open themselves up and accept it. and I don't think those nails can handle the load you're carrying" he says looking at my hands

"That's obnoxious if you ask me. But my cousin will be here soon. He promised to take me to the church to donate some clothes I no longer need." I say and his smile widens. It's a distraction.

"That's nice of you. We need as many donations as possible, when I started the programme half of the people in this village didn't have clothes, I'm happy you're helping out" he says

"I'm glad I could help, and your programme is a good idea. What we might see as little and

insignificant is a useful resource to others, I'm sure they appreciate your efforts. This village has a lot of potential. A lot of skillful people, they just need guidance and resources" I really don't know what to say, I'm swallowing words. He raises his eyebrows looking impressed.

"Listen, why don't you come to our council meeting tonight, we will share ideas on how to grow this initiative." He says. What? No, I don't do socials.

My heart is beating faster and harder at the thought of me with his council, I'll probably say something wrong and upset them. I mean I didn't make a good first impression too.

Who am I kidding, they wouldn't give me a chance to speak with the kind of look I represent, with tattoos. What do I know about charity work, mama was the one who did all that work

“Don’t worry it’s nothing serious, just sharing ideas, it’ll be nice to have a female perspective.” He says, he can see the panic on my face.

“I don’t think I can, I’d have to ask my grandmother first.” I’m trying to make excuses here, He doesn’t understand the pressure I feel when in a group of people who have certain expectations of me. It’s not easy, this is why I never associated with a lot of people.

“How about I come explain it to her myself” he suggests.

“I’ll think about it.” I say, he doesn’t like this response but that’s all I can offer. I know I won’t show up, I’ll bail last minute. Why does he make me nervous

“Okay then, I’ll pick you up at 6pm” he says with a smile and nods before he walks into the lodge. Wait what? Oh shit!

He slowly walks with both his hands in his

pocket. He is tall, his body structure is mesmerizing. I can't stop looking at his behind, it's firm and plump. His long, bracket like legs give him a cowboy like walk, even with his blue work suit he looks sexy.

"Mzala, do not even think about it, he's a no go zone" Thami comes out of nowhere, snapping me out of paradise the moment he opened his mouth.

"No, it's nothing like that, I'm just looking. Where do you come from, I've been waiting looking like a fool next to this gate." I'm actually mad, if he was here on time, I wouldn't have received this invite.

"It doesn't seem like you were bored and alone here, Prince charming kept you company" he's smiling and annoying.

"Stop that, let's go, I'm tired already." I dismiss him immediately and we walk towards the

church. How do I tell him about the royal council meeting, how will I tell Makhulu. Wait, when he said he was picking me up at 6pm, how does he know where I live. That's strange, I never told him anything about me, not even my name. I have the entire afternoon to tell Makhulu about this meeting, I don't want to go to. I'll be the only female amongst grown traditional men, who will judge me before I open my mouth. My insecurities are clouding my mind, I'm shaking and it's that annoying feeling of worthlessness. I've just set up myself for failure.

"Why you so quiet, day dreaming about the Prince?" he bumps his shoulder on mine.

"He invited me to a Royal council meeting tonight at the church" I'm biting my teeth.

"And you agreed? You are just another dumb yellowbone Mzala" he says with his hands on his waist.

“Don’t make me feel worse than I already am, he said rejecting help and invitations is an insult to his tribe, I didn’t know what to do. He makes me so nervous, I don’t remember saying yes” I’m worried and he’s not helping.

“He’s right, you don’t say no to the Prince, especially one that is next in line to become King, you are on your own, those council men will eat you alive, they do not like outsiders and you’re a female. Wow. I don’t want to be you, shame.” He almost feels sorry for me.

“No, you’re suppose to help me, please. How do I greet them, what do I say, what do I wear, do I bring a gift. Thami you have to help me or I could hide when he fetches me later” I’m trembling with panic.

“He’s picking you up ? Mzala this is beyond my area of expertise. How did you get there? The Prince doesn’t go around picking people from their houses, he doesn’t just invite strangers to

council meetings? What did you speak about, tell me word to word. Starting from his greeting all the way to his body language, I need more than what you're giving me." he isn't making this any easier.

I don't know what to say or do. Maybe I should just tell him my granny got sick. I'm starting to feel sick, my stomach is in knots and I'm feeling light headed, slightly losing my balance. I need to breath, my chest is closing in on me. I can't breathe. I hold on to Thami as I slowly reach for the ground. I'm sitting on the grass and I can see the confusion in his eyes.

"Mzala, my lunch break will be over soon, get up." He says.

Is he serious right now, I'm having an anxiety attack and all he cares about is his stupid job. The last time I had one was when I hosted my first exhibition. All I remember was being dizzy and waking up in my bed the following morning,

I don't remember how I got there.

I'm trying to catch my breathe but it's difficult. Images of the council member faces, laughing at me, pointing and me, keep flashing in my head. I can hear their loud voices. My head is pounding and I begin to slowly lose control of myself. It's dark. I'm out.

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Oh, not this again. How did I get here. It's already dark outside. What time is it? the council meeting. I can't believe this. I get up and make my way down the passage. There's no one in the lounge, I look at the clock on the wall, it's past 7pm. I have definitely missed the meeting, he probably thinks I'm the most rude person he's ever met, his ancestors will haunt me forever. I hear people talking in the dining room. He's here. How did this happen, what does he want here. What about the meeting. Everyone is looking at me.



“Come sit Hlehle, you must be tired” Makhulu says pulling a chair next to hers.

“How are you feeling?” he asks. I still don’t know what he is doing here? How does he know where I live.

“What are you doing here?” I ask him

“Buhle, no! I’m sorry Bhungane, she’s still tired” Makhulu gives me a threatening look. She looks upset.

“No it’s fine, she’s probably confused and doesn’t remember” he says with a smile. he’s always so calm and happy. And what does he mean I don’t remember what happened.

“What happened? Didn’t you have a meeting to attend?” I ask.

“You fainted in the middle of the road and your cousin went to ask for help at the lodge so I drove both of you home, your grandmother is the best nurse we have in this village. I had to

postpone the meeting, I had to see you were fine before I left and your grandmother insisted I stay for supper. And I'll never say no to lamb stew. It's my favourite." He says smiling looking at my grandmother. Her smile can blind you from a distance, she is smiling from ear to ear. The Prince just complemented her stew, she'll brag about it forever.

"Mzala you scared me, I thought you were dying, yhoow. What happened?" Thami looks concerned, he's being dramatic with the dying part.

"I think I had a heat shock, today was very hot." Im lying, my anxiety keeps escalating and im losing control, it's not something I share with the world.

"Have some food so you can take some medication. You scared all of us. We're grateful for your help Bhungane" she nods to his direction. Honeslty, he should leave now, he's

the one that got me in this situation in the first place, with his “can’t take a no ancestors”

“I feel responsible for this, I’m sorry Buhle. I shouldn’t have let you stand in that heat for so long” he says, like he read my mind.

Everyone seems shocked by his apology. Like they’ve never seen a Prince apologise. And the way he says my name, it’s charming. I’m smiling, I can’t help it.

“Apology accepted” I say, he seems at ease, he smiles back, now we’re both smiling at each other. He’s smile captures me for a while, forgetting there are people around.

Thami is giving me the “don’t you dare” look. His eyes are fixed to mine, he is scary. I’m normal again. Everyone is looking at us, this is getting awkward. I look down on my plate and start eating.

“Thank you for the meal, it’s the best lamb stew

I've had, I could pay for it" he says and they all laugh. He pushes his chair and stands up. They all quickly stand with him. I'm confused, what's going on. Thami signals with his head that I should stand as well and I do just that.

"Aaah Bhungane, Mthimkhulu" they all chant at the same time. They should really teach me these things so I can stop acting like a clueless city girl, it's embarrassing. He nods and smiles at me and leaves. What just happened? why does my stomach dance when he smiles

Everyone sighs in relief as we hear the car engine fading away. He's gone.

"Did he invite you to a royal council meeting?"

Makhulu

"Yes, it scared me. I'm not used to this lifestyle, I feel like an outcast, when he told me what they do there, I couldn't see myself being seated with those men, not after I'd insulted them

before. And Thami wasn't even helping, he just poured salt into the wound, I panicked and I lost control" I say

Everyone is looking at me like I did something wrong, the same way Thami looked at me when he told me he is a "no go zone". He still needs to explain that to me. I slowly pick up my spoon and continue eating, they're still looking. It's like they want to tell me something but they're afraid to say it. Can they at least let me eat in peace. I'm hungry and tired, I don't need any more judgment, I've embarrassed myself enough for having anxiety attacks in the middle of a gravel road for the whole village to see. In Edernville I would have been all over social media with captions "can't hold her liquor" 'drugs are not for everyone'.

He was right about the lamb stew, it is delicious. I take my medication and head back to my room. Thami, aunty and Asakhe have gone to

their outside flats. I'm putting on my pyjamas when Makhulu walks in with a straight face. What's wrong with her, I've never seen her this serious. She seats on the edge of my bed and takes a deep breathe before talking.

"Hlehle, that boy invited you to a private royal council meeting, he offered to pick you up, yes Thami told me. He brought you home and insisted on waiting for you to wake up, he postponed an important meeting and apologized to you" she looks concerned. She telling me something I know. What's the big deal?

"Yes he did Makhulu."

"He is the Prince of Khumba, next in line to become King, he has been training for the past years. " she's still serious. I don't understand what the hype is about.

"Thami told me" I say. "Did I do or say

something wrong Makhulu”

“No my child, I just want you to know what you are dealing with, this is not just a boy, yes he is a year or two older than you, and might seem young and charming, he is of royal blood, he is not just a boy that likes you, it’s not that simple. I don’t want you to get hurt. His life is more complicated than it looks, just be careful” he kisses my forehead and leaves.

Did she say he likes me? how does she know that? Is it true, does he like me? a part of me wants to jump for joy but I cannot stop repeating the words Makhulu and Thami have been saying. What is it about this royal family that makes them so scary and detached to the rest of the village. Maybe he doesn’t go for city girls with tattoos and no home training. I have never had a real boyfriend, I do not know how it feels like to be in love, is it even possible for me to love another? Do I want to love another? Im

too complicated, knowing my history I'm better off by myself. I will ruin it before it even begins, I already have, he missed his meeting because of me, I am a burden and a complication myself, I don't need to bring someone into this mess I cannot seem to figure out myself. Maybe in a life where things were simpler, I would. But my life is far from it. He would never accept me with all my imperfections and insecurities. I'm a ticking time bomb, my anger issues have put me in situations where I almost injured myself and those around me. I'm better off alone. It's simpler and better that way.

Deep down inside, I'm grateful for my panic attack I couldn't imagine sitting with those serious traditional men, discussing things I know nothing about. I should just avoid the Prince so he wouldn't ask me things I can't say no to, just to please his ancestors. They don't even know me. they're bullies if you ask me.



The medication is kicking in, I can feel myself slowly lose myself in these thoughts. It's been a long day.

.....

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The next insert will be uploaded on Thursday.

More Than Enough by L.A.V

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Insert 2

It's freezing. There's cold air coming from somewhere, I lift my head and remove my sunglasses, The sun is setting and the car is still moving.

"Switch off that air conditioner dammit, I'm trying to sleep" I say after realizing the air con button is on.

“Sorry Ms I was trying to stay awake, I’ll switch it off” he turns it off immediately.

Nx!

I look out of the window and try to make sense of the location, I don’t know where I am. Heck, I don’t even know where I’m going. Mama told me we visited Khumba a lot when I was still a baby. She used to tell me how beautiful it was and how big and green the mountains were.

When she and my father got married in Edernville, they didn’t have a traditional white wedding, they decided to have a traditional Xhosa wedding in Khumba, my fathers home. Their wedding was beautiful, every picture was full of life and love. Mama wore umbaco. She was draped with colorful beads from head to her ankles, her face was painted with white dots that ran down her forehead to her nose and around her cheeks, she wore a bright red lipstick, which complemented her light

complexion, she looked like a Xhosa princess. My favorite picture of her was one my father took when she was leaning against a tree in Khumba, wearing a black dress with a heavily beaded necklace and smiling at a gift my father had bought her. She had the most beautiful smile ever. I loved seeing her smile. To come to think of it, I don't remember seeing her angry.

Mama always had positive vibes and saw the good in people, she got along with almost everyone. Even when she quit her job as a financial adviser and volunteered at the Sunshine orphanage, she still kept in touch with her former colleagues. Her confidence and intelligence made me feel like the luckiest daughter. Being an only child to her parents she appreciated being surrounded by people. Her mother passed away a couple of hours after giving birth to her and she never knew her father. She would host events for her former

clients to raise funds for the orphanage. Everyone adored her, especially Makhulu from Khumba. My father on the other hand is very stubborn and not trusting of others out of his close circle. He is very career driven and takes pride in providing for his family. He doesn't show much emotions, he's always been empty these past years. When mama quit her job he was more than pleased to have her home full time even though she did a lot of charity work, she fulfilled her wifely and motherly duties,effortlessly.

I begin to see small dots of lights from a distance, they're scattered. I look closely and they begin to appear bigger and clearer. It's houses on mountains. There is at least five houses close together and another group of houses in a further distance. At least there's electricity. We continue to drive past a few houses. Almost every yard has that one big

house with a veranda and a water tank, two small flats and what seems like a rondavel. I don't know if I could call it that if it's not entirely round. It somehow looks like an octagon. There must be a lot of big families in this Khumba. I can't seem to find a reasonable explanation for these many houses in one home.

On the far end of the small groups of houses there is a larger number of houses in one place. I can't see properly but it doesn't look like someones home. Its too big. Like a lodge. Judging by its lights, it looks expensive. I'd love to see it during daytime. The road has become bumpy and rough, the driver is driving cautiously as we go up a steep hill towards a home with its own group of houses. Well, this is a bit fancy. It's a face brick house with white pillars in front, there's flowers growing along the front wall all the way around the house. There are two small flats on the left side of the

house and a small rondavel on the other side of the house. With a big tree next to it. The yard neatly surrounded by a face brick boundary wall with tall spiky gates. We drive towards the house and stop outside the gate. I look at the driver. Is this my fathers home?

“We’re here Ms” he says and presses the hooter.

I see someone walk towards the gate. It’s a tall young man wearing pyjamas, playing with keys, he opens the gate and we drive in. I begin to feel light headed and nauseas. I’m not ready to live with strangers. I’m trying to calm my nerves as more people walk out of the house towards the car. I don’t know these people. Then an elderly woman walks out wearing a pink robe with her hands behind her back limping towards the car, that’s Makhulu, my dad’s mother. I haven’t seen her since mama’s funeral, that’s ten years ago.

The driver opens my door and I gather my

nerves and slowly step out. All eyes are on me, they're giving me a weird look like there is something wrong with my face. I've been on the road for almost 8 hours. I'm tired, not ugly. I move aside slowly and close the door.

"mama why is she wearing shades at night" a small voice coming from a young girl.

"I don't know my dear, maybe it's an Edernville thing. City girls think life is a red carpet" the woman carrying her replies and they all start laughing. They all look alike, the woman, young girl and the guy that opened the gate. Great, I'm already a case of ridicule. I slowly shift my sunglasses over my head.

"Hi" I greet. Makhulu pushes them out of her way, looking at me in the eyes, smiling, she wraps her arms around me and holds me tight for a couple of seconds.

"Yho, don't suffocate her Makhulu" the young

man says.

She let's go of me, holds both of my cheeks and kisses me on the lips.

Uhm. Oohkay. That's a bit too much. She's always been this excited to see me.

"You are a photocopy of your mother, you are beautiful just like her when she first came here." She says as she grabs me towards the house but we are interrupted by the driver clearing his throat behind us.

"Excuse me Ms Khephu, the rest of your things will arrive in the morning, the truck had a tyre problem" he says. I sigh and turn my back against him with no response. They better not break my things or sell my designer clothes.

Everyone is looking at us, probably judging me by how the driver addresses me, but no one is saying anything. They're a bit weird if you ask me, and we continue to walk towards the house



as the car drives off.

“You must be tired Hlehle, I’ll show you to your room so you can rest, you’ll meet everyone in the morning, it’s already late” Makhulu says as she escorts me down the long passage with pictures on the wall. My father is the only one that calls me Hlehle, well used to.

She directs me in a bedroom on the far end of the passage. It’s nothing like my room in Edernville but it’s better than what I expected in a village. Honestly, I thought I was going to sleep in a doorless mud hut with no furniture or window. Here there’s a double bed and white headboard and matching pedestals. Oh no, my clothes will not fit into that thing. That cannot be for my clothes, its too small. At least there’s enough space on the wall for my paintings. Its cozy and doable. It’s fine. I look at her and she’s smiling with watery eyes like she’s fighting back tears, I feel awkward. Why is she crying?

“It’s good to have you home Hlehle” She says and slowly shuts the door.

Awkwardly standing in this cold room, my mind is overwhelmed with the realization that I’m in a foreign place that is now home with strangers that are family. This is a whole new world for me. How will I fit in, what will I do with myself. What do people my age do in Khumba. I still don’t understand why my father brought me here. My entire body is exhausted. I quickly change into my pyjamas and look at my phone. I have missed calls from Thando, I forgot about him. How will I explain this to him. That my dad shipped me to a village in the early hours of the day. He won’t understand. I was going to end our relationship anyways, he was getting too attached, clingy and very demanding emotionally. But this is not how I imagined things to end. I’ll call him in the morning and end our agreement. Right now I need to sleep.

.....

It's a sunny morning in Khumba and I've been laying in bed for a couple of hours now. I haven't had much sleep, I guess my mind hasn't adjusted to it's new environment. I've been hearing voices go up and down the passage and around the house, seems like everyone is a morning person here. Makhulu woke up in the early hours of the morning before the sun rose, she has been cleaning and singing church songs. Everyone but me seems to be up already. What will I do when I wake up, do I go fetch water from the river? Surely they have taps here. At least they have electricity, I don't have to make small fire to warm up water. I sit up and look through the window. It really is beautiful as mama described it, the mountains are big, green and moist. The trees are rich which leaves and flowers are in full bloom. Cattle is escorted by boys down to the river, which flows

all the way across the village. I reach out to open the window and a cool breeze pushes the lace curtain on my face. I find myself smiling, I like this view. I have never seen anything so beautiful and natural.

Let me go greet everyone before they start calling me a snob, you know how village people are towards city girls who sleep 'till noon. I neatly make my bed and grab my cosmetic bag and head for the door. I need to find the bathroom. I slowly tiptoe down the passage until I spot a picture of my mother holding a baby, that must be me. She is wearing a pink night gown sitting on a sofa holding me wrapped in a pink fleece. She is looking at me with smile on her face.

“Makhulu says that was your first time visiting Khumba, apparently you were two months old” a man’s voice startles me. I look up immediately, it’s the young man that opened the

gate.

“My name is Thamsanqa, but everyone calls me Thami, it’s nice to finally meet you, Makhulu talks about you all the time” he says with a smile.

He seems very excited.

“Oh I’m Buhle, are we related? “ I probably sound stupid right now. He wants to laugh but he stops himself

“ Ofcause we are, your father and my mother are siblings, we are cousins. So, Hi Mzala (cousin)” he smiles widely and opens his arms expecting a hug.

He has a lot of energy, It’s too early for all this. I don’t do hugs. So I awkwardly stare at him until he gives up and folds his arms.

“Where’s the bathroom?” I ask and he starts laughing hard. Is asking for a bathroom considered funny in the village? Im confused.

Im still waiting for a response.

“there’s no bathroom in the house, the toilet is outside next to my flat and if you want to wash,you use a vaskomu, there’s one in the store room next to the kitchen, it’s a plastic basin, it looks like a bowl but it’s bigger. By the time the King and the municipality installed a sewage system the big house was already built without one, but we’re used to this life, we’re just happy we have running water” He says with pride as he puts his hands on both sides of his waist.

“ookay, so, if I want to brush my teeth?” I’m still shocked at the part where they have Kings run villages, I thought that ended in the 1800s or something.

“Use a plastic cup in the kitchen cupboard and brush them after you wash, i just stand outside my flat and go about my business. You’ll get used to it” He pats my shoulder and walks away.

I don't think I'll get used to this wild life.

I walk to the storeroom and grab the small yellow bathing basin. This is going to be interesting. I head for the kitchen to find this "plastic cup". How do I know which one is for brushing teeth? Is it labeled? How do they differentiate them from the real drinking cups? I really thought they'd be more advance than this, judging by the structure of the house and the furniture. I thought they were past these impractical times.

There's tile flooring all over even the rooms, the décor is a combination of shades of brown and burnt orange. The lounge suite is a beige suede four piece with a glass coffee table and faux sunflowers on top of it. There are orange scatter cushions on the one seater sofa and dark brown fleece blankets on the three seater sofas. There's a big tv unit to fit the 40inch plasma and its full of different sets of crockery

and photos. At least they have satellite TV, that's impressive. But I still can't get over the bathroom situation.

An hour after I finish bathing, I put on my black maxi dress, wearing my curly Malaysian 16inch wig. I find the wig life very simple, you want it, you put it on. It's simple. I rarely go out with my natural hair, it has a mind of its own. One day its cooperative and most days it just freezes, literally. Mama always helped me with it when she was around, she knew how to handle my afro, I don't have the patients for it.

I walk outside to get rid of my bathing water, now the whole village knows I've just bathed, great! Everyone is seated under the big tree with a pile of clothes in front of them.

"You're awake, finally,we thought you escaped and went back to Edernville" she says. Makhulu and her dry jokes, not my cup of tea.



“No Makhulu, she spent an entire hour looking for the bathroom then another hour figuring how to bath in a vaskomu” says Thami as he leans back with laughter and they all join in, even the little girl.

They’re really enjoying themselves. I slowly walk towards them, the closer I get the louder they laugh. it’s annoying actually, they should stop.

“Hi” I greet them with a straight face. They seem to notice my seriousness, they stop laughing and their eyes are glued to me, even the little girl is looking at me.

“Good morning my child” Makhulu greets back. “This is your aunt Kholeka, Thami and Asakhe’s mother, she is your fathers sister. I don’t think you remember her, you were very young when you visited with your mother.” She says

I nod.

You can tell she was beautiful when she was

younger, she definitely has my fathers eyes, she has a scar above her left eye, it looks old though. She looks younger than my father but she's probably in her 40's. She has short dreadlocks that are hanging over her shoulders. She looks tired, her face doesn't give much away but you can tell she has a lot of life stories. Asakhe is lying on her stomach on the grass playing with her doll. She looks cute with her small afro. Her smile is beautiful

"Who wrote that thing on your arm?" she says curiously pointing at my tattoo.

"Ugcogcile?" the shock in my aunts face is indescribable. She says this as she claps once and makes a clicking sound with her mouth.

Okay, that was dramatic. I try to cover the tattoo with my arm by folding them. I forgot about it, I shouldn't have worn this revealing dress. I can't look any of them in the eyes. I wish they could understand the story behind this tattoo. I felt

like I didn't have a choice but to get it. With one picture of my mother, I felt like I was forgetting how she looked like. Every time I woke up it seemed like her face was fading away in my thoughts. I couldn't live a day without seeing mama's smile. That's how I decided that I will have a permanent reminder of her on me.

"Is that Noncumo?" Makhulu asks , Noncumo is mama's wife name.

"Yes it is, I had it made a few months after her funeral. Dad took down all her pictures and hid them away." I say

"I see, well there are many pictures of her here you can look at them all the time. You know your mothers death was not easy on your father, he was in denial for a long time, still is actually. It came as a shock to all of us. Be patient with him" she says, I can't believe she's taking his side in this, I lost my mother and my father is punishing me for her death. That's not fair on

me. Him projecting all his anger on me will not bring mama back. I'm really angry. I don't want to talk about this again.

"Where are the pictures, I'd like to see them" I say, changing the subject.

"They're in the house but first you will go with Thami to the church and give the Pastor these clothes for the orphanage. You can also give away some of your clothes that don't fit you anymore, I see you have lost some weight" she says as she continues to pack the clothes in large plastic bags.

I wear a size 30. I'm not skinny. And why is she acting like I was once fat, the biggest I've been was 34 when I was still in high school and everyone made fun of me. Also, is this why they brought me here, to do charity work and walk around in this heat?

"Why am I here? " I ask

“We have enough time to talk about that my child. Now I need you to do this for me” Makhulu responds.

I decide to calm my anger and nod with whatever this old woman needs me to do. Maybe I might be sent back sooner than expected.

“how far is this church place?” I ask while taking a glance of the surrounding areas. I don’t see a church in sight.

“It’s on the other side of Khumba, its not that far, you’ll see” Thami replies, he sounds excited

What’s so exciting about walking up hills with heavy plastic bags? I quickly grab the lightest plastic bag and walk towards the gate. He laughs at me as he follows with two heavier bags. Did he really think I was going to carry the heaviest bag, not with these nails. We walk towards the gate swinging our packages. There

are a few houses close by but ours is the only one on that hill. We carefully walk down the steep hill until we reach a long gravel road.

“So, Thami, what do you do here? Work? School?” I might as well get to know him, I don’t know how long I’d be staying here, no one has said anything about the duration of my stay.

“Well Mzala, after I passed matric, I didn’t have enough money to go to university so I ended up volunteering at the lodge as a cleaner then later got a job as a waiter in their restaurant. It pays well and the tourist tips are good, so I forgot about university, all I needed is here.” He replied. He smiles a lot, its annoying. How can one be happy with a basic waiters’ salary and a village life. that’s torture. He has this positive energy that you can’t ignore.

“Why didn’t your mom ask for assistance from my dad?” I ask.

“My mother is very stubborn and has too much pride, she’d never ask anyone for anything, especially from malume, I don’t think they get along well.” he says.

They should’ve been twins, they’re the same person basically. Maybe they inherited that from their father, Makhulu is the opposite of that, she’s very sincere, gentle and gives as much as she receives. She speaks openly about anything. She is a real matriarch of this family.

“So tell me about Edernville, the fastest city in the country, how are the shops there, the clubs and the men, do you have one? With that face and body they must be throwing themselves at you” he says looking at me with the corner of his eye. Life really is roses and rainbows to him.

“I don’t do clubs and no I don’t have a man” I say, he seems disappointed

“Then what do you do with yourself? Where do

you hang out with your friends?” he’s really interrogating me.

“I don’t have friends, I go to school and work, that’s it.” I say

“You cannot be serious right now, that boring stuff? With your kind of money, I would be a socialite and be trending all over social media. I would have everyone bowing before me everytime they see me, I would be their god, they would worship me.” he says as he demonstrate a wave similar to that of the Queen. I can’t help but laugh, he really thinks life is a fairy tale. He continues to fantasize about his perfect extravagant life in Edernville, acting out gestures. He looks foolish and I find myself laughing. So hard that my stomach begins to hurt.

Without even noticing we have passed two hills and are already approaching the church. It is those old churches built of stone. There is the



bell next to the gate with a board written “Methodist Church Of Southern Africa” in red and white text. There is a few people walking around the church yard. I guess everyday is Christ day here. the last time I was in church was on mama’s funeral.

“Let’s go find the pastor, we can’t stay long” he says pulling me by the arm. We go behind the church and we immediately stop when we see three men talking to the pastor. Thami quickly fixes his posture and broaden his shoulders. I’m confused.

“Aaah Bhungane, Mthimkhulu” he says as he reaches out his hand to one of the gentlemen. I’m standing here completely clueless, what is going on, why are these men looking at me like I’ve killed their cattle. Thami hits me with elbow, I assume I should to the same.

“Hi” I say, Thami widens his eyes at me while clearing his throat.

“uhm, Mbungani...uhm..Mkhulumthi” I didn’t hear Thami properly but judging by their facial expressions, I just cursed at them. The younger one reaches out his hand to meet mine, we shake and he laughs. He has beautiful teeth.

“Molo sisi” he replies. Thami has covered his face with his hands. He’s embarrassed. This is the most confusing experience of my life. The men walk away and go inside the church.

“What the fuck just happened, who are those people?” I ask Thami

“Firstly, you don’t use that language in the Lords house, secondly, those are not just people, they are the royal council members, and lastly but definitely not least, you just insulted the Prince of Khumba, in fact, you insulted the entire tribe of amaHlubi. Mzala, you are going to need a cleansing ceremony after this, slaughter a goat and make an apology or bad luck will follow you all your life” he says as he snatches the plastic

bag from my hand and walks to the pastor leaving me traumatized, alone.

Is he serious though, bad luck. I didn't know those people were from the royal family, they weren't wearing name tags or crowns. He has to be joking. And what kind of Prince wears regular bootleg jeans and a hoodie, he's also too young, maybe 25 or 26.

Thami finally appears without the plastic bags. "Let's go before you embarrass me even more"

We walk towards the gate when a young man walks by us looking at us awkwardly, almost wanting to smile. People in this place give the weirdest stares and they don't see anything wrong with it.

"Mzala, I forgot something inside, wait for me under that tree, I'll be back now" he says as he rushes off back to the church.

This is just ridiculous. I try to call him but he is

already gone. Can this day get any worse.

“Molo sisi” I am startled by a deep manly voice behind me. Oh shit! It’s the young-bootleg-wearing-Prince guy.

“Im so sorry about earlier. I don’t know, I’ll send a goat or two for any damages caused. I’m new here, I don’t know how things work here and my cousin didn’t...” I need to clear my name and remove this bad luck Thami spoke of.

“woaw! Relax, its forgotten” he says, trying to hold back his laugh

“I don’t think the old folks will forget that easily, they were ready to give me a death sentence. And the tattoos didn’t help either” I say.

“Don’t worry about it. My uncles are never impressed by anything. I actually found it funny.” he looks calm, too calm for someone I’ve insulted.

“So no bad luck for me? Apologise to your

ancestors or god for me please. If a goat isn't enough, I could send a cow or two" I say and he laughs really hard. His eyes are completely shut as he laughs, that's how small they are. His nostrils move with every chuckle he makes.

Okay, he can stop now. I'm embarrassed. He finally stops and catches his breath.

"You're funny" he says. Oh well that's a first.

Thami comes rushing from the gate and I immediately dismiss myself from the Prince, walking towards Thami. We continue walking, he's out of breath, like he has been running.

"That short distance and you're already tired, you need to exercise more" I say

"Trust me, it was more than just running" he says with a smile on his face. What's up with him?

I don't even want to know, I have my own royal bad luck to deal with right now. I look behind us

and he is still standing there looking at us. Well, that's not creepy, at all.

We've been walking a few kilometers now, Thami has been singing and smiling to himself like a love struck teenage girl. I need answers.

"Are you going to continue annoying me with the happy singing or are you going to tell me about this girl?" I ask he pauses and laughs really hard. He's annoying right now.

"What did you forget in church, or should I rephrase to who did you forget?" I ask again, standing. We're not moving until he tells me. I'm really curious. he doesn't look like the courting type.

"Okay, if you insist. But you have to promise not to tell anyone" he says.

Who am I going to tell anyways. "okay, what is it?" I say.

"You must first promise me " he sticks out his

pinky finger. Are we in creche

I roll my eyes and go with it. the things we do to get the gossip. “promise, now speak” I say.

“Well, i've been seeing someone, we've been together for a few months now” he's blushing.

“I knew there was a girl involved” I say. His face is hard to read right now, it looks sort of worried.

“It's not a girl” he says with a straight face.

Okay, i'm confused. Is he seeing someone or not? Oh wait! Oh my gosh.

“is it the guy we saw when we were leaving church?” I ask

“yes, he is such a good guy, he makes me happy and I really like him” he's face lights up immediately. Now all of this makes sense.

What were they doing in church?

“Did you have sex in church?” I ask with my eyes wide open. He better say no.

“Yes and No” he says.

Well what is it? Its either you do or you don't, there's no in between.

“We didn't engage but his mouth engaged in my tool, if you know what I mean” he winks at me.

“A blowjob, are you kidding me?” I begin to laugh. Village people are not as boring as I thought. Bootleg wearing princes and blowjobs in church storerooms. And I thought the big mountains were the only fascination this village has to offer. I was wrong.

“You are the only one I've told, let's keep it that way. People like me aren't entirely welcomed in this village, especially with the kind of leadership we have.” He's serious again.

“Sealed” i respond and we continue chatting until we reach home.

The truck is parked outside and some men are



offloading my stuff into the house. I completely forgot about the rest of my belongings. Today was eventful.

“We apologise for the delay Ms Khephu, we had a problem with the tyre and we didn’t have spare whe...” I cut him off before he could even finish.

“It’s fine, as long as all my paintings are still in one piece. Put everything in my room.” I walk away and let them finish their work, i'm tired and i'm hungry.

As we walk in the house we are welcomed by a hypnotizing aroma of Indian spices. It’s smells beautiful like stew or curry. I walk straight to the kitchen and Makhulu is busy cooking.

“You’re back, just in time for lunch. I notice you didn’t eat your porridge. You must be hungry. Go wash you hands and help Thami set up the table. How many men are outside, they must be

hungry too” she’s not even looking at me. And why are we feeding grown men? They’ve been paid. They can buy their own lunch. But I am not about to argue with her, she can feed the entire village if she wants to, I’m just hungry.

“I think there’s 4 of them.” I reply and I walk away. After washing our hands and watching Thami set the table, we call in the movers to join us for lunch. Makhulu has cooked beef stew and dumpling. It smells delicious. I’m salivating. We all sit around gathered on the table with the food placed in the middle of the table. Makhulu leads a short prayer and everyone digs in. The room is silent and they’re just enjoying the food until Thami breaks the silence

“Heee Makhulu, Buhle called the Prince Mkhulimthi” and he bursts into laughter.

Makhulu is shocked and almost dropped her dumpling.

“I apologized and told him to apologize for me to his ancestors. I offered him cows but he just laughed” I try to defend myself while giving Thami the look. How could he do this. Every one starts laughing, even the movers are enjoying this. They need to calm down before they choke. Their mouths are filled with dumpling, they must really like it.

“As long as you apologized mntanam, he’s a nice young man. I’ve worked with him with his health programmes. He really is going to be a great King one day, that’s if he’s father will ever step down” she says.

I forgot Makhulu is a retired nurse. She’s been working at the community clinic all her life, she is those nurses that know all their patients by name. My father said that when people were sick they would come to her house because the clinic was too far.

A few moments later and everyone is done

eating.

“This was delicious Makhulu” I say smiling

“Good now thank me properly by washing the dishes.” She says as she gathers all the plates and puts them in front of me. I’ve never washed dishes in my life. I’m sitting silently, looking at the pile of dishes and everyone is just looking at me.

“I’ll help you” Thami comes to my rescue, he must have seen the panic on my face. We both get up, go to the kitchen and wash the dishes. He’s washing and I’m just standing there awkwardly. We’re not speaking but he keeps looking at me and smiling. I know this smile, he’s thinking about him. Before we know it, he’s done. He makes it look so easy. He should teach me this domestic life.

I just remembered I need to unpack my things, so I excuse myself from them. I stand at the

door looking at all my things and I feel discouraged. I throw myself on the bed and his face shows up. He is laughing with his eyes closed, his wide nose and white teeth. His hand on his chest as he tries to catch his breath. I've never seen a man with beautiful hands. I've never seen a beautiful black man. woah, where does that come from. Let me start packing. Maybe I'll give some things away to the church, there's a lot of things that won't fit my slim tight closet here. Maybe I'll see him again. oh my gosh, why can't I get rid of his face. I carefully choose all of my favourite clothes and separate them from the ones I will be giving away. Someone walks in.

"Do you need help?" It's aunt'Kholeka. That's a bit random.

"No thank you, I'm already done, I was just sorting out the ones I'll be giving away to the church" I say.

She's awkward and cold. I can't read her, she walks closer and goes through the pile I'm giving away.

"So many things? Where do you get the time to wear all of this?" she asks.

Why is she in my room again?! This small talk is annoying, its like she's fishing for something.

"We wore clothes everyday at school" I reply.

"Must be nice being rich" she replies and she leaves. Why do I feel like she is judging me. I roll my eyes and continue with my packing.

Another person walks in,it's Asakhe.

"Sisi can I have this, she's pointing at my Cartier necklace.

I can't, it's expensive.

"Here take this one" I hand her a small bracelet Thando bought me, she likes it. She continues to play with my wigs and modelling around the

room wearing my shoes. They're too big for her. She has small feet for an eight year old. She's not even minding me, to her I don't exist.

Her innocence reminds me of when I was younger. When mama was alive, when I had a family, when my father was not afraid to look me in the eye, when life was simpler. I need that again, I'm tired of walking around with my head held down, I'm tired of being afraid to be happy, I'm tired of running away from my emotions, of not feeling worthy. I want to laugh more than I cry. Like Thami. He's always smiling and happy. With the little he has, he still finds joy in life and still has some to share. I enjoyed my time with him today. Thinking about his foolishness makes me smile.

.....

I took a long nap after packing, that walk to the church exhausted me. Asakhe fell asleep next to me, still wearing my clothes. I'm hungry. I

walk down the passage and everyone is watching t.v, they are glued to the screen, it's a local drama. I tiptoe to the kitchen

"Your food is inside the microwave" it's Makhulu's voice.

"Thank you" I reply. I'm really hungry, but there's no way I'm eating anything heavy after 8pm. I open the refrigerator and find a banana and yoghurt. It'll do for tonight. I grab that and go back to my room. I remember I have a phone, I can't believe I neglected it all day. I have text messages from Thando:

\*I know I said I was okay with our rules but that was 3 years ago, things have changed between us, let's stop this childish act and just make it official babes, I can't stop thinking about you. Day and night you're on my mind. I want you to be mine. No more games. I love you Buhlebethu Khephu. I'm madly in love with you and I know you are too\*



This is the last thing I need right now. How does he love me, he knows nothing about me and for him to say that I love him, is insane, I don't. Him and I would never work out. We are from two different worlds, we have nothing in common. I chose him as my fuck buddy because he was the only person I spoke to and he broke my virginity. I don't have any emotional attachment to him. Did I lead him on? I made it clear, I always stuck to the rules. And he's the one who started buying me gifts until I felt terrible for not buying something. I didn't do it because I love him, I just felt bad for him. It's pity gifts. Good thing I'm not in Edernville to deal with his drama.

I select his contact, select option, BLOCK CONTACT

I feel a weight lifted off my shoulders. I look through the window to get some fresh air, I see the view of the village, it's peaceful. I haven't

done yoga in weeks now. I need to get my mind right. I take out my yoga mat and put on my yoga outfit. My mind is relaxed. I forgot about the problems I have with my father, I'm not even freaked out about the village life anymore and my new family is kind of cool, especially my cousin, he's like an older brother I never had. Plus the Prince is cute. Not that I've been thinking about him or anything, but he's okay.

As I close the window I notice a person jumping over the boundary wall. It's Aunt'Kholeka, she's running towards a white Polo car parked at the bottom of the hill, it must be her man. Why is she jumping over fences though, clearly she's old enough to walk out of the gate. That's strange.

.....

#like #comment #share

The next insert will be posted on Tuesday.

More Than Enough by L.A.V

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## Insert 4

People in Khumba wake up very early, by 5am I can already hear people laughing and having conversations from a distance. The majority of the village doesn't work, especially women, some get part time jobs at the lodge when there are big events or celebrations hosted by the royal family. Women in Khumba are mostly famous for their hand work, they make everything from beaded jewellery, traditional garments, to grass mats and baskets of different kinds. They make these and sell them in town or on the high way. The woman that stays at the house down our hill makes beaded

necklaces, earrings and bracelets. I bought a beautiful three piece set from her, she charged me R50 for all three, I was shocked. I paid R100 for each instead. She was very grateful. It's the first colourful piece I own. I told her she should charge more for her pieces, she told me they wouldn't sell because no one would afford to buy them here and because there's many of them making these crafts, someone will find a better seller. It's such a shame, to watch them gather around the tree next to the river and creating these beautiful pieces only to sell them for peanuts. R50 for a three piece that probably took her a week to finish is unfair and sad. I wish there was something I could do to help them.

On my way back home from my morning jog from the river I was thinking of how successful their work would be if they'd sell in Edernville, they would make their monthly profits in one

day. I wish I had more resources and influence to help these woman. I just need to think harder and more strategically on how I could take them there and help them sell in the markets that side. Their pieces are unique, authentic, they tell a story and have a significant message unlike those knock offs sold by the Chinese downtown.

.....

I get home and run to the outside tap for some water. The yard is always empty in the mornings and afternoons during the week. Thami is usually at work, Makhulu is visiting patients, Asakhe is at school and aunt'Kholeka is always missing, she doesn't have a job but she is the most unavailable out of everyone. I've been seeing her frequently jumping over the boundary wall and leaving with the white polo, they're close if you ask me.

I'm alone and I need to clean the kitchen and my room. Makhulu said this weekend we will

paint the inside walls for the holidays. She bought new carpets and trinkets for the lounge and dining room. She takes Christmas holidays seriously, everyone in the village has been preparing for the December holidays. Houses are being painted, new fences and gates are installed, stoops are painted and polished. Every house windows are spotless and shiny.

I hear a knock on the door as I am busy cleaning my room, I'm still wearing my gym clothes. It's a man with a box in his hands.

"Good morning, I have a delivery for Buhle Khephu" he says with a smile. I wasn't expecting anything.

"Where does this come from?" I ask

"The prince sent me" he says and hands me the box and walks away. It's not heavy. I try to shake it to make sense of what might be inside. I'm clueless. I put it down on the lounge floor

and open it. There's a note on top of the pile of things inside it. I open the note and begin to read it:

Good morning Buhle

After what happened to you yesterday I couldn't stop blaming myself for the pain and discomfort I put you in. My intentions of inviting you to the meeting were purely innocent and harmless, I wanted the council to experience views of an outsider, sometimes they get ignorant and become inconsiderate of how important my program is to the people. Your views would've at least given them something to think about. I was happy to see you were fine before I left last night, I doubt I would've slept at all not knowing you weren't well. I can't shake this feeling of guilt in me. With this note I would like to invite you to lunch at one of my favourite places in Khumba, it's nothing fancy but it's beautiful. There will be no traditional Xhosa

men joining us, don't worry, it will be just us two. I just want to make sure you're all right. I hope you like your gifts. I will pick you up at 12pm.

See you soon

Zanemvula.

He's asking me out on a lunch date? I throw myself on the sofa and push my feet to the air making them dance with joy. I mean, I can't say no, his ancestors will hunt me and torture me all my life, so lunch it is then. What will I wear and where is he taking me in Khumba, it better not be a tarven or a tshisanyama, I cannot stand crowded places. Okay wait? Why am I so weird. The tickles in my tummy expand all over my body. What is going on with me. I don't do this. I don't get excited. But I can't shake this feeling off. I continue to look at the things in the box, there's a cap, an umbrella and sunscreen, it's labeled "to prevent heat stroke", he believed the lie about me fainting because of the heat.



There's also a heart monitor, a self help book, a jar filled with biscuits and there's a note with a number labeled "your personal driver". This is now confusing. The other gifts I understand, why do I need a personal driver. I hardly leave the village and besides I have Thami to accompany me wherever I go. I will save it and tell him/her I won't be needing their services.

I put everything back one by one and suddenly I'm startled by someone running in the front door. I stand up and walk towards the door. Oh my gosh.

"What happened to you? " I ask as I get closer "aunt'Kholeka who did this to you?" her face is covered with blood, I can't tell where the blood is coming from, she is not crying. As I get closer to her she pushes me away. I'm trying to help her, there's too much blood, it's dripping all over the floor. I run to the storeroom to fetch the vaskom, fill it up with water and a towel.

“Come seat on the floor, take this and wipe your face, we need to see where the blood is coming from, hold it like this” I say as I try to help her wipe her face, it looks painful, she doesn’t want me to touch her. I run to the lounge to get my cellphone

“Im going to call the police” I say. She immediately gets up and snatches the phone off my hands before I even dial the number. Why won’t she let me call the police?

“Don’t call the police, please, you’ll make things worse.” She’s struggling to speak, she’s in pain. Her face is starting to appear as she continues to wipe it off. She’s bleeding from the nose. Her left eyes is almost shut and there is a dark blue mark around it. Her lower lip is also bruised. Whoever hit her must’ve been very angry. This doesn’t look good.

“Can we atleast go to the clinic, I’m sure you will get proper medical help there.” I suggest

“Shut up! Im not going anywhere. You want the whole village to see me like this? You want them to laugh at me and find more words to call me by.” She’s angry.

“Im sorry but this doesn’t look good aunty” I don’t know what to do. I’m worried about the bleeding, it hasn’t stopped.

“Bring me the medical box in Ma’s room, it’s in her wardrobe. Also bring me a bucket filled with water and bleach and a mop.” She’s giving me orders. How is she so not crying with all these bruises. I run outside to get the things she asked for and run back in the house. She has wiped her face and has placed cotton wool on her nose, the bleeding has stopped. She cleans the blood off the floor all the way down the passage, I’m standing leaning against the wall. I feel useless and confused, I want to ask her something but I’m scared it would make her angry. She finishes her cleaning and get rids of

all the water and cleans the bucket and soaks the towel in bleach.

“Don’t tell anyone about this, especially Ma, do you understand me?” she’s looking me in the eyes. Its scary.

“But aunty you’re hurt and the person who did this to you needs to be punished. What he did to you is not right, he could’ve killed you”

“You no nothing about what happened don’t involve yourself in things you no nothing about, don’t tell anyone, or else I’ll deal with you personally.” Is she threatening me, clearly she doesn’t know me.

“You do not threaten me in my fathers home, you do not tell me what to say and what not to say. You continue living the way you do, next time you will not make it out alive. I read about these abusive relationships, it never ends well” I say. She walks closer and pointing at me

“Heeey! Don’t you dare raise your voice at me. I will give you a hot clap. Bloody spoilt brat with no respect nor morals. This is not Edernville, I will teach you life with one clap and you will learn” she tightens her grip on my arm, I pull myself away and walk to my room, shut the door and lock it. Her eyes had no life or mercy. She looked empty and evil. She scared me and I will not leave this room until she leaves the house. I’m shaking as I seat on my bed playing back what I’ve seen from the moment she ran through the door to when she threatened to hit me. She is violent.

.....

It’s hours since she left the house and I’m deciding on what to wear for my lunch date with Prince Zanemvula. Seriously,Im having troubles with this name, I think I’ll just call him Zane. His name sounds like it belongs to his great grandfather. No wonder this place is moist and

green, he brings the rain. It's matured and unusual for guys his age. I decided on wearing a boob tube black maxi dress that hugs every inch of my body with my copper studded strapped sandals, good thing I painted my toe nails, I will accessorize with my new colorful bead set. My 20inch Peruvian hair will do today. I didn't put on too much make up, this heat will melt it. There's atleast forty five minutes before he picks me up, let me make myself a light snack before I leave. I don't want to show up with an empty stomach. And I don't even know where we're going, and that makes me even more anxious. I make myself a fruit salad and hear Makhulu singing as she walks in.

"Why are you dressed up? You look exactly like your mother, she loved wearing beaded jewellery. You are beautiful" she's smiling

"Thank you Makhulu, I'm going to meet Thami at the lodge for lunch, I want to spoil him." I lied,

i can't tell her I'm going to lunch with the boy he warned me about.

"That's nice of you. Who's things are these?" she asks as she points to the gift box on the floor.

"Those are some of my things, I didn't finish unpacking" I quickly run and grab it before she could, she's looking at me like she suspects something. I need to stop him from fetching me here, he needs to wait for me down the road. Let me call the drivers' number and ask for his number. Its ringing.

"Zanemvula" he answers. What. He's my personal driver?

"Hello, it's Buhle" I respond

"I know, Good day. I take it you received my box. I'll pick you up in 10 minutes" he says

"Oh! Yeah about that, please wait for me down the road" I say

“Okay. See you soon” he says and ends the call.

Whew! Now I need to leave before makhulu asks any more questions. I make my way down the passage and say my goodbyes to her and make my way out of the gate. I walk slowly, frequently looking behind me. I’m being paranoid, it’s the guilt that comes with lying to your elders. I make my way down the road and I spot a blue Ford Ranger. I can’t see clearly from the distance but that should be him. Vrrr Vrrr.

Its a text:

\*The blue ranger is me\*

I walk towards it and pass by a group of girls sitting under tree, they’re playing cards with coins. I guess Vegas has come to Khumba. I get in the front seat, we greet each other and drive off. He’s been smiling from the moment I opened the door and got in. Our conversation is flowing as we drive away from the village and approach a deserted forest with big trees and



gigantic mountain views. Is this the part I find out he's a serial killer. I try to keep calm but the panic in my eyes is evident.

"Don't worry, I won't kill you and dump your body here." He's laughing while looking at me

"Where are we going?" I'm more scared than curious. No one knows I'm here with him. What have I gotten myself into.

"It's a surprise, we're almost there." He assures me with his smile. He is calm and I am terrified. We reach the top of a mountain that has the view of the entire village. I can see the entire village, the mountains that surround it, the river that runs across the village and the waterfall at the bottom. It's green and colorful images of the houses make it a beautiful sight. I can hear the water from the waterfall, it is a few kilometers from where we're parked. It's beautiful.

“Welcome to my heaven” he says as he exits and goes to the back seat. I’m still in awe of the beautiful sight. The colors work perfectly together. I need a picture of this. I love it. He walks around and opens my door. “Come, this is our lunch venue” he says

He’s carrying a picnic bag, a cooler box, picnic blanket and two cushions. We’re having a picnic, impressive for a village boy. I walk out and take in all the fresh air produced by the trees around and the river below us. It’s unbelievable that places like this exist right under my nose. He is setting up the picnic in front of the car. He places the crockery and cutlery perfectly on each side. Where did he learn picnic etiquette. He lays out the food from the cooler box, there’s fruits, sandwiches, juice, water, biltong, dried fruits, yogurt, ice cream and small sweets. He went all out. I doubt I’ll finish all of this today. He stretches his hand towards me offering a

seat. I hold him as I kneel and sit across him. He's hand is warm and gentle. He has beautiful fingers too.

"This looks beautiful" I say looking around at all the food in front of us.

"You look beautiful" he says looking at me smiling. I'm blushing. I can't stop smiling.

"Thank you, you're not too bad yourself" he's wearing a grey t-shirt with navy blue jeans. He laughs and bites his lower lip. His smile does something to my stomach, it tickles and makes my face heat up And with the little make up I have on, I probably look red as a tomato. Being with him feels good. He makes me feel things I've never felt. I just want to scream and jump around the place.

And no, I won't embarrass myself further.

"I didn't know what to get, so Thandi put everything edible she could find in the house"

he says scratching his head. Who's Thandi?

"Everything looks delicious, I like it. Thank you" I see a relief on his face.

"Help yourself to anything you want" he says, I go for the dried fruits and yogurt. He takes out a meaty sandwich from a separate bag.

"I must confess, I don't like any of the things Thandi packed, I'm a meat kind of guy." He says. So he expects me to eat all of this by myself, he's crazy.

"Take a bite of everything so I know it's not poisoned" I say and he laughs. I'm not a pig, I'm not eating all this by myself.

"I'll have the fruits later, I'm just very hungry right now. You can taste my sandwich" he says, taking a big bite of his sandwich and handing over the rest to me. His jaw stretched and firm, chewing into it. He's fine, I can't stop looking.

"This is a beautiful place, I like it. How did you

find it?" I distract myself from his looks

"When I was a young boy I used to help with the cattle, I sent them to the river in the morning and had to fetch them at sunset. I would pack lunch and seat here all day watching the cattle from this view and take them back home by sunset. It's where I find my peace." He's smiling and looking around with pride.

"What do people around here do for fun, doesn't look like there's much to do?" I ask

"Well, I'm not a social person, I just do my work and that's it, I don't know what others do but everyone seems good here, we're used to it" he says

"And here I was thinking you're friends with the whole village. You are the prince after all" I ask

"I don't have friends here, I haven't had friends since high school. I went to an all boys school and although I was popular, I only had two close

friends. I don't have spare time, I work 24/7, I've been training for the throne for years now and that takes up most of my time, I don't have time to waste" he says.

"I see, if you had time to "waste" what would you waste it on?" I ask. He thinks for a while and smiles.

"I'd travel " he says with a smile

"I enjoy travelling, seeing how other people from different countries live, exploring their cultures and food." I say.

"Seeing happiness in a different language, in different festivities. Unfortunately, I don't have enough time on my hands for that. the village is my priority." He says.

"I think you should make time for that, one should never compromise their needs to satisfy others" I say. he gives me a deep and long stare.

"It's not that easy, I have responsibilities and

duties to fulfill, I can't just up and leave" he says  
"Our happiness is our biggest responsibility. It should come first, always" I say. He seems uncomfortable with this, he's fiddling with his sandwich. Maybe I crossed a line.

"I hear you come from the city of Edernville, what brings you to Khumba" just like that he changes the subject

"I'm visiting my grandmother and my cousins" I have forgotten how I got here. I forgot about my father and everything I had going on in Edernville.

"It's a different world compared to the city but it's beautiful, the people are nicer, happier and wiser. It took me a while to adjust but eventually I found what works for me. The city is loud and fast, everyone walking around claiming to know what they want but actually have no idea. And even if they get what they think they want, they

seem to want more. It's a toxic place and can ruin lives, it has." I say in deep thoughts and for a second there I forgot who I was talking with. He's looking at me with a blank stare. I can't read him.

"People are never fully satisfied when they don't know what they want. they walk around dictating lives of those around them to fit their own flaws. They break them and move on to the next one" he says. This seems personal and deep.

"The broken ones walk around with bruised souls, fighting to be heard. With every cry they lose a piece of their true self they forget that, their magic, their healing power is within the cracks of their broken souls." I say. He's closer, I can feel him breathing closely to my face. Our eyes still locked in to each other.

"Their cries are never heard by ordinary people they are heard by those who are bruised with



the same scars. Those with similar cries and identical scars. They open themselves to each other and let their flaws communicate with every move they make and every word they say. Eventually they recognize, they are one”

His nose rubs against mine, my heart is pounding with every breathe that leaves my body. Our eyes meet and so does our lips. His lips are warm and soft, slowly he pulls me closer to him and rubs his hand up and down my back. My hands are around his neck. He carefully rests me on the blanket. He is a good kisser, so gentle and considerate. His body is on top of me as he rubs my face with his hands. I can feel my temperature rising, his breathing has escalated. My hands are all over his body. He is firm and well built. He works his lips to my cheek, to my ear and down my neck. My body feels electrified, like a million watts of electricity have been released. My hands are rubbing on

his head down to his back all the way to his thighs. Kissing has never felt this good. This has escalated and neither of us saw it coming. We clicked and we can't control our emotions, it's like we were both waiting for something like this to happen. Something foreign yet familiar to what the heart has been yearning for. Thinking about it too much gives me an uneasy feeling. I might be making the biggest mistake of my life, it's scary but irresistible.

His phone rings. Are you fucking kidding me. At first he ignores it but by the fifth ring he removes his hand from my butt and reaches for his back pocket. He hasn't stopped kissing me. he lifts it up and puts it against my face. Talk about bad timing.

We stop kissing and he slowly places me on the picnic blanket.

"Sorry I have to take this" he excuses himself and stands.

I can see his erection through his jeans, he walks away with one hand holding the phone and another in his pocket. He is shirtless, horny and sexy. I want him. The call wasn't long.

"I'm so sorry, we have to leave, there's a crisis at the lodge." He says as he reaches for my arm, helping me get up. He quickly gathers everything and puts it in the backseat. He opens the front door for me and goes around the front to his side. He's still shirtless, horny and sexy. He gets in and we drive off. He keeps looking at me and smiling. I smile back but deep down inside, I am screaming. I want more.

"I don't usually do these things you know, invite people to lunches and do things with them" he says, he looks a bit shy.

"What do you usually do?" I ask.

"I don't do anything and you make me want to do more things like this, with you" he says.

“well, what’s stopping you? You can do what you want, when you want” I say. his face is serious again. I must’ve crossed the line again.

“You make freedom look so beautiful and peaceful, like it’s a world of endless possibilities” he says.

“But it is, you are free to do whatever you want” I say

“Your kind of freedom makes me feel a certain way, I don’t want to be forward but I feel different around you, I do things I wouldn’t normally do, I think about things that wouldn’t cross my mind on a regular day. It’s refreshing, you’re a breath of fresh air” he says, smiling. I’m blushing and words fail me.

“I’ve had a wonderful day with you Buhle, though it was cut short. I enjoyed your company” he continues.

“I enjoyed you too” oh gosh, that didn’t come

out right. He laughs out loud.

“I mean I enjoyed your company too” I smile shyly and look away.

“Don’t worry, I know exactly what you meant” we both laugh.

“I think you should put on your t-shirt, we’re getting close.” I suggest looking at his fine chocolate body.

“Is it distracting?” he’s teasing me

“Yes it is, now please put on your t-shirt” I grab it and hand it over to him.

“Hold the steering wheel” he says as he puts on his t-shirt. “are you happy now?”

“That’ll do for now” I say as I cross my legs. He’s observing every move I make. He’s more focused on me than the road. We enter the village and drive to the lodge. It’s not that late, let me check on Thami, we’ll walk home

together. He parks in front of the entrance and we both make our way inside the lodge. He winks at me and walks the opposite direction. He's such a charmer. I walk to the kitchen where Thami is usually working.

"Mzala, what are you doing here and why is your face so pink?" so many questions at once. And am I really pink from all the blushing.

"can't I visit my only cousin at his workplace, and yes, my skin is not used to the Khumba heat. Let me buy you late lunch" I say

"We're leaving early today, there's something wrong with the wiring, the stoves and ovens are off."he responds

"Oh well, another day then, let's get going" I say. he says his goodbyes to his colleges and we walk out of the lodge together.

We're walking home and he's telling me stories about how one of his colleagues was caught

stealing meat but blamed another. This guy can talk for days even years. I cannot stop thinking about prince charming. His touch, his scent, his soft warm lips and his warm embrace. I can't stop smiling, it's insane. What has gotten into me? what is this guy doing to me? why am I suddenly obsessed with his everything? It's like he put a spell on me. I like it. and those arms lifting me and holding me tight, aah. Im blushing again.

"Buhle, what is going on with you, your face went from pink to red in seconds, are you okay?" he's standing in front of me holding my shoulders. He really is dramatic.

"I'm fine I told you the heat here is too much on my skin" I dismiss him and we walk towards the house.

There's a police van parked outside the gate and Makhulu is shouting. We run as fast as we can. There are two police officers, a male and a

female. The female one is holding makhulu and the male has aunt'Kholeka in cuffs and pushing her at the back of the van.

"Whats going on here? Where are you taking my mother? What has she done? Answer me dammit" Thami is yelling at the male policeman.

"My daughter is not a murderer, she would never hurt a fly" Makhulu is screaming and crying.

Oh shit! She didn't. This can't be what I'm thinking. Did she go back or did she do it before she came home. No No No. I'm starting to shake at the realization that I was part of it all, helped her clean up. It makes sense why shes didn't want me to call the police. Aunt'Kholeka killed her boyfriend. It could have been self defense judging by all her bruises.

The police van drives off. We're all traumatized, Asakhe is crying for her mom, Thami is



comforting Makhulu. I'm just standing with so many question.

.....

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The next insert will be posted on Tuesday.

More Than Enough by L.A.V

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Insert 5

We've been waiting at the police station for hours now. Our closest neighbour offered to take us immediately after the police van had left. I'm holding Asakhe and Makhulu is seated next to Thami. He is shaking and has been crying since the van left. I have been replaying the morning incident in my head so many times, I want to tell Thami but judging by his current state, he wouldn't handle it well. Telling

Makhulu is not even an option. I have so many questions for aunt'Kholeka. Did they get into a fight and ended up killing him? Did he beat her then went back for revenge?

A constable walks out of the dark passage and stands in front of us.

"Where's Buhle?" he asks. Everyone is looking at me.

"So I take it it's you, follow me" he says

"Where are you taking me, you can't just tell me to follow you without any explanation, I didn't do anything." I refuse and fold my arms

"She wants to talk to you, stop wasting my time Nx!" he raises his voice.

I follow him in the dark and cold passage. There are people singing and yelling from a distance. This is a creepy place. The walls are dirty and the windows are high. He leads me into a small room where aunty is seated with two other

people. She gets up as soon as she sees me and stands close to the steel bar gates.

“You have one minutes” the constable says and stands by the door.

“Buhle, I didn’t do it. I need for you to listen carefully. My boyfriend owed some people money, lots of it, so they came over in the early mornings to collect but it wasn’t enough, they beat him and me too. They tied me up and continued to beat him.” She takes a deep breath and continues

“I managed to take my phone from my back pocket and recorded an audio. I shoved the phone under the bed so they wouldn’t see it. they hit him until he stopped crying, then they came to me.” her eyes are red, she’s crying. They took off my clothes and” she paused and wipes off her tears.

“The police will protect you aunty you have to

tell them what happened, how did you escape?"  
I'm shaking, this can't be real life.

"You don't understand Buhle, they wont. Not without evidence. After they... well, they were standing in the passage discussing something, I couldn't hear them properly but their backs were facing me so I went out of the bedroom window and ran without looking back. They must be looking for me. I'm not safe anywhere Buhle."

"Times up, let's go little girl" the constable says, pulling me by my arm

"Go find it Buhle, you're my last hope" she shouts as the door shuts

"Let me go, I am not one of your prisoners" I say as I pull myself from him.

"With that attitude, you might be. Now get out."  
He pushes me out of the passage.

"Mzala, what's going on? Where mama? Is she

fine?" Thami stands

"She's fine, they say she'll meet the judge on Monday." I don't know what to say, this is too much for me to handle, I can't go there by myself. What if those killers come back and find me there? I cant.

"She's going to spend the entire weekend here, for a crime she didn't commit?" Thami is pacing up and down with his hands on his head. He's giving me a headache. Makhulu is sitting on the chair with her hands buried in her hands. She's praying. Asakhe has fallen asleep on the chair next to her

"I think we should go, there's nothing more we can do" I say and we leave the police station.

"Mzala do you know this boyfriend? I never heard aunty talk about a boyfriend" I whisper to his ear

"Yes, they've been dating on and off" he

whispers back. We don't want Makhulu to hear us.

"Does he stay here in Khumba? I've never seen her with anyone" I say. I'm fishing for information. I can't believe I'm considering this.

"Yes, I'll show you, we'll pass there just now, he lives close to the main road, a few kilometers from the royal palace" he always picked her up at night and brought her back in the early hours of the morning. They had a strange relationship" he says

As we pass by his house, Thami points at it. It's a small flat standing by itself next to the village main road. It is peach in color and there is not gate or fence around it. Looks creepy, it doesn't look like someone lives there, it doesn't have that home feel to it. A few minutes later we arrive home and we all head to our rooms, no one is speaking. I'm trying to think of how I will go to that house to get the only evidence that

will prove my aunt is innocent and help arrest the killers. I can't go during the day, people will see me and start asking questions.. I'll go in the early mornings when I know people are really asleep. I'm freaked out by the thought of me walking alone in Khumba, to a house where someone was killed. I need to prepare myself. I need comfortable clothes, so I pull my black leggings, black hoodie and Nikes. I will use the flashlight in my phone. As hours pass by my heart beats even faster. My phone rings and I'm immediately shook. Damn it. It's Zane.

"Hello" my voice is trembling

"Hey, are you okay, your voice sounds weird."  
Why must he be like this though. Now is not a good time

"I just finished yoga, I'm a little bit out of breathe" I hate myself for being such a good liar.

"Isn't it suppose to make you relax? It's not

working if its making you tired.” He clearly doesn’t know yoga and the energy it requires. Village boy. My mind is focused on my G.I Jane mission.

“Mmmh okay” this call needs to end

“Are you sure you’re fine Buhle, you don’t seem fine at all.” He really can read my mind

“I’m tired that’s all, it’s been a long day. I need to rest” another lie.

“Okay let me leave you to your sleep then. I’m sorry our date was not what we wanted, I hope to make it up to you, soon.” He’s charming again.

“I’ll be waiting. Goodnight for now” I say

“Goodnight Buhle” he drops the call.

.....

It’s after midnight and I climb out of my bedroom window and run towards the boundary



wall and jump over it. I crawl down the hill and start walking when I get to the gravel roads. It is a cold and quiet morning, there's fog all over the place, I can only see what's at least five feet from where I'm walking. I pick up the pace and keep checking behind me every five seconds. This woman owes me her entire life.

I walk towards the main road and my stomach is suddenly filled with knots. His house is down the main road, so I still have to walk a little more. I hear dogs barking and I stand still next to a tree. I can't hear anything besides the dogs. I continue walking until I walk up to the house, it's dark and the front door is locked. I walk around it and find the back window slightly opened. This might be where aunty escaped. I jump inside and reach for my phone. I make my way around the room. It's quite empty, there's only a bed and a wardrobe, no pictures, no decoration, it's bare and cold. The scent of

cigarette ash has me covering my nose. I slowly move towards the bed and look under it. It's dark so I stretch out my hand and pat around while I lie on my stomach. I push myself around the bed searching from all angles. There it is.

I grab it quickly and switch it on. I browse through the gallery files and select audios. This must be it. It's dated yesterday at 2:15am. It's long. I press play

“Khaba le nja. I want my money marn. Huh, who do you think I am? A fool. Today I will show you who the fool is. You've been going around the village spending my money on these hoes, now you can't pay me back. To day you will learn a lesson that you will share with your ancestors. Finish him” oh my goodness, I can't listen to this. He's crying for help and so is aunty, I can hear her yelling and cursing at them. I think there's three of them but only one is doing all the talking. The other two are beating and

kicking.

“This is the hoe that you’ve been spending my money on, she doesn’t even look decent, so you wasted my money for nothing. I will show you what you do with hoes like these, you don’t spend money on cheap women, bring her here, don’t just stand there like fools. Take off her clothes. I will show you what to do with hoes”

Nooo. I hear aunty screaming and crying. The man is breathing heavily and cursing it at her. He then tells the other men to help themselves. They killed her boyfriend, they beat her and they raped her. I cannot stop crying, this is a lot for one person to handle. Listening to the audio made me realise why she was angry and empty when she got home. These people have taken everything from her and they have taken a part of her that could never be replaced.

I wipe off my tears and put the phone in my pocket and jump out of the window. I hear the

grass moving behind me.

“What are you doing here” there’s a voice behind me and part of me wants to run but my shock got the best of me. I freeze.

“Turn around, who are you? And what are you doing here” I slowly turn around to face him. It’s dark I can’t see properly. He’s tall and buff. This is what I feared the most, my body is filled with shivers of fear.

“Buhle?” I lift my head and look properly.

“You scared me Zane, what are you doing here” I’m partly relived but how will I explain this situation.

“I saw you walk down the road and jump into this house, what do you want here? “

I begin to shake again, he saw everything. How will I lie myself out of this one. I’m blank, just staring at him. I slowly pull out aunty’s phone from my hoody pocket. “I came for this, it’s the

only evidence I available to release my aunt from jail. She has been wrongfully accused for the murder of her boyfriend who stays here.” I’m holding the cellphone up.

“Wait, what? The woman they arrested yesterday is your aunt? So you decided to play detective and risk your life by coming here, alone, in the dark? You are either stupid or suicidal” I don’t understand why he’s mad, he doesn’t know the whole story

“If saving my aunt’s life is seen as stupidity, then so be it. Now I need to go back home before everyone wakes up” I say walking away. How can he call me stupid for bringing justice for my aunt? Nx!

“Wait Buhle, I’ll drive you home” he follows behind me “wait here, I’ll go get the car” he rushes off and disappears in the thick fog.

The wind has become colder. I see lights

coming from his direction. He puts on the hazard lights and I walk towards the car and we drive off. We're both quiet and I'm looking out of the window. I can feel his eyes weighing on me. It seems unreal that the last time I was with him we almost had sex.

"I shouldn't have called you stupid, I was insensitive and wrong. I crossed the line. I understand you were helping your aunt but what you did put your life in danger and that freaked me out." He's back to his calm self again.

Why does he care so much? This is not about me or him, it's about my aunt who experienced a traumatic incident that will forever affect her.

"I had no other choice, I was her last hope. If I didn't do it, she was either going to die or rot in jail for murder." I respond.

"I understand but I wish you have told me earlier, I could've helped you" he says. Is he kidding me,

we don't know each other that well to be telling each others family secrets, it was my responsibility, not his.

"well, I had to do it alone. Now please let's drop it" I really don't want to talk about this. And why was he up so late.

"Why were you still up? And how did you see me?" I'm curious

"You kept me up. I sensed that something wasn't right and I couldn't sleep knowing you weren't okay. I tried calling you again but you weren't taking my calls. So I decided to go out for some fresh air, That's when I saw someone, well you, walk down the road and into that house." He's looking at me as he parks at the bottom of our hill, I can see home, it's still dark. He cares. And that makes me blush.

"So I kept you up, did our unfinished business really bother you?" I'm teasing. He's smiling and

biting his lip.

“You’re a naughty girl and I find myself liking that.” he says leaning over.

He grabs my face closer and starts kissing me. I give in and pull his head closer. His hands are all over my thighs, rubbing up and down. The sensational tingles in my spine make me arch my back and pushing myself towards him. He lifts me over the hand break and puts me on his lap, my feet are hanging on the sides of the seat. I can feel his erection develop from under me. The kissing is passionate and my pressure is rising, I can feel the excitement in my stomach. He’s gentle and moves his hands carefully on my back, his soft lips move at a rhythm mine understand. He keeps stopping and pulling my face and looks me in the eyes like he wants to say something but smiles and continues to kiss me. Normally I would have taken off all my clothes but all I want is to be held close and



tightly the way this man does. I feel safe, wanted and respected. Like I really matter, something foreign to me.

I slowly pull myself from him and I kiss his head. He doesn't want to let go, he's holding me tight and grabs my face and kisses me. Can I live like this forever?

"Why does this feel right? like I belong" he asks.

"Tell me when you have the answer, I'd like to know too" I respond. My head is rested on his chest and he plants small kisses on my forehead, his arms are tight around my body but the timing is all wrong.

"I need to go, so do you" I whisper as he continues to kiss me

"What if I don't want to go, what if I want to stay here with you" he whispers back as he kisses my neck.

"You could stay but the sun will come out soon

and the village Prince will be seen kissing a girl in his car” I say

“What if the Prince doesn’t care what people see or not” he’s charmingly stubborn.

“Well the Prince can come back anytime” I say kissing him and moving back to the passenger seat. He stares at me and leans for another kiss. I can’t resist his soft lips.

“mmh, they’ll catch us if we continue like this” these kisses are long and passionate. I grab both phones. ” I have to leave before everyone wakes up, I still have to go to the police station later” I say, fixing myself.

“I can take you if you want, I am your personal driver after all” he’s smiling

“Oh yeah tell me why I need a personal driver again? I didn’t get that part” I ask looking at him

“Well, you can’t be walking long distances with your kind of medical condition.” He says with a

serious face.

“It doesn’t happen all the time, only when I’m invited to council meetings with stubborn royal men” I say and he laughs

“I’ll take you anyways just to be safe.” He grabs my hand and kisses it looking in my eyes. He’s eyes are seductive and sexy. Every time he looks at me I want to be all over him. And I can’t have that right now, Makhulu will wake up in two hours time.

“Okay, good morning. I’m leaving for real this time” I pull my hand and reach for a kiss.

He holds my face, smiling at me. He’s eyes say it all. He wants me and I want him, the timing keeps messing up.

I crawl up the hill with my knees and hands on the wet grass. And make my way over the wall and enter my room through the window and I watch him drive off.

I change to my pyjamas and sleep with a smile on my face. I can still smell him. What started off as a terrifying day ended as a beautiful dream, full of laughs and intimacy shared with a man I find myself liking for reasons I don't know. I haven't even had a real conversation with him, I don't know his last name or what he actually does as a Prince, does he have a real job? What does he like? Does he like soccer or cricket? What's his favourite meal and drink? I don't know anything about him besides his first name but yet I find myself comfortable, free and vulnerable around him. His presence makes me feel new, I feel like I've been given a second chance in life, like all my past mistakes have been forgiven and forgotten. I like myself with him, I'm free, from my insecurities and doubts, he makes me happy and kind. He makes me want to be a better version of myself yet he does so effortlessly, he's calm and considerate and each word he says he owns and is

accompanied with love and kindness. It feels good but it also feels unreal. This can't be my life.

.....

I'm woken up by Makhulu's morning prayer. I'm still sleepy and tired but the sun streaming through my window is blinding. I get up and go through my phone. I can't remember the last time I went online and checked on social media. I have so many notifications. I check my e-mails, my inbox is full, there's so many unread messages from school, the gallery, Thando and some of my favourite stores. I scroll down to find important ones, there's no way I'm reading all of these. I click on the ones from school, it's end of the year messages, notices. They're out already, it's my final exam results. I click on the link that leads me to our student website, I enter my details and log in.

YESSSSS! I'm screaming and running around

the room, jumping up and down. Makhulu walks in.

“What’s wrong?” she asks, her eyes are wide open

“I passed Makhulu, I’m graduating. I passed all my modules and practicals with distinctions.”

I run to hug her, she crying and speaking in tongues. I’m close to tears as she hugs me tighter. This is my happy moment, I want to call my father and share the good news. I haven’t spoken or seen him since he told me I’m moving to Khumba. I miss him, I want to apologize for all the hurtful things I’ve said. I want to tell him I love him and that I was angry at him for not spending time with me, not that I hate him, I don’t, I can never hate my father. I love him, he’s the only person that reminds me of mama.

It just hit me, I haven’t thought of mama in

weeks since I got here, am I forgetting my own mother, my mind has been focused on other things and a certain prince that I have deserted my own mother. I'm crying and Makhulu pulls me closer and we seat on the bed.

"What's wrong my dear?" she asks

"I wish mama was here for this, I wish I could share these news with her, jumping across the room with her, and see me happy." I can't stop crying.

"I feel like she's missed out on a lot of things, I still need her, I still need my mother, I need her to help me choose a graduation outfit, to see me walk across the graduation stage and yell my name when I get my degree, I need her now more than ever, she left too soon." A lump in my throat is holding back my voice, I can't speak anymore, my face is buried in her chest and she's rubbing my back.

“I know my child, I’m sorry. I’m really sorry you feel like this. I know you miss her everyday and you need her everyday but what you should know is that she is with you everyday, she walks with you, day and night, she’s with you in everything you do. Her spirit follows you around, she protects you from harm and encourages you to greatness.” She says. I wipe my tears and hug her back.

“You have us now, you don’t have to feel alone and abandoned, I will go dress shopping with you” she smiles and wipes my eyes. I smile back and hug her tighter.

“Now let’s go celebrate with the rest of your family” we walk towards the kitchen where Thami and Asakhe are having breakfast.

“Hlehle passed, she’s going to graduate” Makhulu announces

“Ahhhhh Mzala issa graduate. Halala” he’s



dancing around the kitchen and Asakhe is confused.

“I finished school Asakhe, I’m going to find a job now” I try to explain to her

“Where will you work? What job will you do” she asks. I don’t have the answer because I’m clueless myself.

“I don’t have it yet but I will look for it” I say, she’s smiling at me.

My good news have made us smile again and distract us away from aunty’s situation, which reminds me, I have to go to the station now. I need to find an excuse as to why Zane is accompanying me. I also have to find a way to give the captain the phone without Makhulu and Thami’s knowledge. This is tougher than I thought and I thought the hard work was fetching the phone.

“uhm, Makhulu, we need to go to the station

again, the captain wanted to see us, to discuss the details of the case.” I say, crossing my fingers behind my back

“Okay, I’ll ask Tshawe to take us again, he won’t mind” she replies

“Well, Zane...uhm The prince was called by the captain to also be present when the details of the case are released , so he said we can all go together” I say, still crossing my fingers. She pauses and stares at me for a couple of seconds and nods. She continues with what she was doing.

“We leave in an hour, he’ll pick us up” I say and rushed to my room avoiding any kind of response. Whew! I take a deep break, make my bed and start getting ready.

I put aunty’s phone in a clear plastic bag and put it in my make up bag. After I bathed I put on my black jeans, a black sleeved lace bodysuit,

gold hoop earrings and my Mui Mui sunglasses. My 12inch bob will do today. I decided not to wear make-up, only a red lipstick, it's really hot in Khumba by 10am you can fry eggs on stones.

Vrrr Vrrr. It's a text message

\*Morning again gorgeous, I'm outside waiting for you.\* it's him. I'm smiling.

I need to control my blushing. Makhulu notices everything.

\*Okay, we're coming\*

I leave my room to find everyone waiting in the lounge. They're all looking at me.

"We're going to a police station not a photoshoot, besides don't you have any colorful clothes?, or is it an Edernville thing to dress like you just buried your husband everyday?" he enjoys making fun of my clothes. He always says they're over the top, too glamorous for Khumba.

“These are the only casual clothes I have and yes, black is my favourite color. The car is outside” we all leave and Zane is waiting outside the car talking on the phone. We’re all standing waiting for him and he comes to greet everyone. His eyes have been fixed on me the moment he dropped the call. He opens the front seat door for Makhulu and we get in the back. I’m seating in the seat behind his.

“Im sorry that you have to go through all of this Makhulu, I’m sure they will find whoever is responsible for this and free your daughter” he says

“I hope so too, my daughter doesn’t belong in a jail cell, she is not a murderer” she responds.

“How’s the project going? I see a lot of people donating” she changes the topic

“It’s growing but not at the pace I want it to, there’s still a lot of people who are homeless and go to bed without food, I wish I could reach

them all but it's difficult, the council doesn't take these things seriously" he responds.

"I understand, as long as you're helping some, the rest will follow. Keep doing the good work" she smiles

"Thank you Makhulu" he nods and looks at the rearview mirror and winks at me.

Is he crazy, what if Makhulu or Thami sees him. I blush and look out of the window. Everytime I lift my head, he's looking at me in the mirror. Thami catches me smiling foolishly, I quickly looked out of the window again. He's playing Jazz, it's soothing. My kind of music

Vrrr Vrrr, I check my phone:

\*You look sexy in that lace\*-him. Why is he doing this now, I can't stop blushing

\*Driving and texting is against the law\*-me

\*I am the law, remember. Look at me\*-him I try

not to look but I find my eyes locked to his in the mirror, he pouts and winks.

\*Stop that before Makhulu catches you and focus on the road before you kill us all\* -me

\*Dying with you would be a great send off\* -him.

I give up. I let out a loud laugh and everyone looks at me. I'm embarrassed. I try to stop myself and look outside the window, trying to stop the blushing but it's hard, he's a charmer and I'm falling for his tricks.

We finally reach the police station and the captain is already waiting for us at the front desk.

"Aaah Bhungane, Mthimkhulu, Ndlebentle zombini, Rhadebe" he greets Zane by clan praises

"Morning Captain, I'm here for the case of Kholeka Khephu, can I speak to you in private please" he says.

What's he doing, he better not tell them a thing of what I told him this morning. He didn't tell me about his plan, he said he was just accompanying me, why does he want to speak to the captain in private. My heart is racing and I'm looking at him but he is paying full attention on the captain. They walk down the passage and enter into an office. I'm panicking and my hands are shaking. It's been almost thirty minutes now and they still haven't come out. I really do not like surprises.

"Stop fiddling, you're making me nervous"

Thami taps my hands. I can't seem to stop the shaking. I stand up and walk towards the door and look outside, I need a distraction. A few minutes later I hear a door opening, I walk back inside. It's Zane with the captain and aunty'Kholeka. She is not in cuffs and the captain is not holding her. How did he get her released, I have the phone. An explosion of

emotions are running through me, I'm happy and confused at the same time.

"You need to sign some things first before you leave" the captain says to aunt'Kholeka. She nods and moves towards the desk. I'm looking at Zane and his face is not telling me anything.

"Can I talk to you outside Buhle" he says and he leads the way to the door. I follow.

"What's going on Zane?" I ask

"I spoke to them and told them someone came forward with evidence that proves your aunts' innocence, I told them that person wants to remain anonymous and the evidence will be delivered before the end of the day" he explains

"But why are they releasing her before they get the evidence, it doesn't make sense" I ask

"Well, they don't have any evidence proving that your aunty could be a suspect, there are no witnesses, and they didn't even have a warrant



for her arrest. They don't even know that she was there when he died. I told them to release her or the royal council will deal with their incompetency" he responds

Why did he do this? Why is he going to the ends to help me and my family, I don't understand. He doesn't owe us anything, instead we owe him now. He could've just let me deal with it the way I planned but he went with his own plan without telling me.

"Why are you doing this? Why are you helping us?" I aks, he seems shocked by my question

"I did it because I care and I wanted to help." He says

"I had a plan, why didn't you respect that?" I'm upset

"If you came here with that recording it would've been another suspicious act that would only open another case against you for trespassing

and invading a crime scene with unauthorized entry. That wouldn't help your aunt, it would make it worse. One of our guards told me the police is friends with that loan shark. Not involving our names in the evidence brought is safer and scares him because he won't know who brought it. Accept my help" he puts his hands on my shoulder. I feel a relief over me, he's right. I don't have the power and influence to gain respect from these people, they would have taken advantage of me and twisted my whole story instead of going out to search for the real killers.

"You should've at least told me about it before we came here, I don't like surprises." I say. He pulls me closer and wrapped his arms around me.

"As if you'd ever let me help you, you're too proud and independent Buhle" he kisses my head and releases me. He's right, I thought my

plan was perfect and that I didn't need him. I smile back at him.

"So what about the phone? how will they get it" I ask

"Give it to me, I'll send one of my delivery guys to drop it at the Captains office during lunch time, he's always at the tavern, he won't see him" he assures me and lifts my hand to his lips. We walk back to inside.

The family is happy again and she's done signing. Thami is looking at me then Zane then me again. Did he see something he shouldn't have? But they were all inside. Maybe he's just being his nosey self. We all make our way to the car and drive home. The ride is shorter and is lighter, everyone is talking and laughing.

"This is a beautiful day, my daughter is free and my granddaughter is going to graduate, we need to celebrate and thank the Lord" Makhulu says

rejoicing and smiling widely.

I almost forgot about my good news. It's a good day indeed. Zane is looking at me smiling in the mirror. Makhulu catches him but he can't see her , I try to signal with my eyes but he's just smiling. He's such an idiot. A good looking idiot.

A part of me feels like he doesn't care if people know about whatever is going on between us, he just carries on like nothing is wrong, I'm the one feeling guilty. Like the time we got back from the picnic, he parked in front of the main entrance where people were standing and watching us get out of the car. I'm more careful, I'm not used to being public and exposed like he is. He is a Prince and I'm just a regular girl. My life has always been private, his was always for the world to see. I'm not used to that, I like private and intimate. I don't even know what to call this situation we have, it's moving so fast

and a part of me is scared but the other part has lost total control and is just moving with the flow. It's like a roller coaster ride.

"Thank you so much for today Bhungane, I'm grateful for your efforts" Makhulu says as she exits.

"It's my pleasure Makhulu" Zane replies. He walks out and opens my door. Makhulu walks into the house with everyone else.

He pushes me against the car and kisses me. What if someone sees us, No No No. Makhulu will kill me but his lips are so irresistible. He needs to stop this. I push him and move aside.

"No, someone will see us. Makhulu will kill me" I say catching my breath.

"You look so sexy, plus this is part of your congratulations for your graduation." he says rubbing his hands down my waist. My body is addicted to his touch, my stomach is exploding

with fireworks. I push his hands to his chest.

“Thank you but the timing is all wrong, I need to go, I’ve been standing here far too long, they’ll get suspicious” I say

“Why are you so scared of people seeing us, it’s not like they’ve never seen people kissing” he says reaching for another kiss. I kiss him back and run to the house. He’s standing there watching me, I get in the house and he’s still standing outside, he’s such a creep. A sexy creep.

I walk in the house and Thami immediately pulls me down the passage all the way to my room and closes the door.

“What’s going on between you two and don’t you dare lie to me, I saw how he was looking at you when he saw you, how you both happened to be texting at the same time, how he held you outside the station, and the smudged lipstick is

giving it away. Come out with it” he folds his arms. I look at the mirror and my lipstick is all over my mouth and neck. I can’t lie here, I’ve been caught.

“Well, I can’t explain it either, we’ve been talking, that’s all.”

“Talking? Don’t lie, he kissed you and hugged you at the stations and I’m guessing again now, with all that mess on your mouth” he says pointing at my face

“Ok we kissed, and we text occasionally” I sit on the bed.

“Buhle there’s something you aren’t telling me here, are guys dating?”

“No! we are not dating, we just enjoy each other’s company that’s all”

“What company? How long has this been going on? Where and when are you meeting?” I feel like a child, he’s interrogating me and I’m feeling

guilty. I can't tell him everything, he'll overreact and make a big deal out of nothing.

"Only for a week now, we chat over the phone, that's all. And I'm not a child, I know what I'm doing, I can handle it. And stop judging me please." I say. he needs to relax, I'm not judging him for having spontaneous sex with his man or getting blowjobs in church storerooms. I can see he wants to say more but he bites his tongue

"Just don't forget what I told you, watch yourself, his family is not the nicest, especially his mother." He says and leaves.

Why does he keep telling me this line and not explaining it. I'm only having fun with the guy, I'm not planning on meeting his parents, marrying him and have babies. It's just kissing between two adults. I lay on my bed and take off my wig.



Aunt'Kholeka walks in the room, she wearing clean clothes and the swelling around her bruises has cleared a little. She lays next to me. We're both staring at the ceiling.

"You saved my life, you did something so selfless and yet dangerous, I hate myself for putting you in that situation. I put your life at risk and yet you still came through for me. I owe you my life" she says

"I'm sure you would've done the same thing too" I say.

"Honestly, I wouldn't have." She says.

Are you fucking kidding me? I jump up, facing her.

"And it has nothing to do with you. Your father has always been the favorite here, the smartest and I've always been the troublemaker who was seen as useless and careless. I was never smart like him so I didn't pass well to get into

university like he did. I got rebellious and that's how I had Thami and later had Asakhe. He was always perfect and even brought a perfect wife that mama loved and adored as her own, I hated her. I thought she came to replace me. Whenever they tried to offer help, my ego wouldn't accept even though they were genuine but your mother always helped even if I didn't ask. She's like you" she says.

This sheds a light on a lot of things. I can't believe she held on to that grudge and hatred for this long. I also understand why she doesn't like me, I remind her of mama and she thinks I'm here to replace her. She felt neglected, like I did. she distanced herself from everyone, like me. she has bottled up a lot of emotions, so much that she doesn't know where the hurt is coming from. This all sounds familiar.

"I would've been selfish for not helping. I wanted to help. I needed to help for the family's

sake. We were all shaken by your arrest. What I did was nothing compared to what you had experienced, you need to see someone about it” I say. she turns and faces me.

“You heard the audio?” she asks

“Yes, I heard everything, they will find them and arrest them but you will have to live with this forever. Your experience was traumatic just listening to it, I can only imagine how it is to you.” I say. I see tears rolling down her eyes.

“He borrowed the money to pay for his daughters tuition, she’ll be starting her first year and all he wanted was for her to have a better life than his. After his wife heard about our affair he chased him out of the house and took all his bank cards, he was broke and depressed. It’s been a year since we’ve been together, he kept going back to his wife, hoping things with them would change but they were worse. She was controlling him and blamed him for their

financial struggle. This started when he refused to marry off her daughter to a wealthy family from another village. His wife blamed him for depriving them that kind of fortune. He promised to send his daughter to University after she passed matric. He loved his daughter and wanted to give her more. Makhulu hated our relationship because everyone in the village was talking about it, saying I broke their marriage. That marriage was broken when we first met. That's why I had to sneak out and sneak back in again." She says as she wipes off her tears.

I'm shocked by this. I don't know what to say, I'm blank.

"I need to sleep, Thanks again. And I'd like to keep this between us." She get's up and stands by the door. I nod and she leaves.

I can't tell anyone about this, there's too much at stake and I will not mention Zane's

involvement in this. I'm very tired, I need a nap, this day has been a very long day and it's only after lunch. I'm yawning just thinking about it. I roll over and pull the fleece over me. My phone rings,

"Hello" me

"Your lipstick got me in big trouble with Thandi, she can't remove the stain from my shirt" he's laughing. And who's this Thandi he keeps talking about

"You're the one that pulled me to your chest, I didn't ask for it" me

"She says it must be expensive because the stain won't come off, I told her that could be true." Zane

"It was R400. You need to buy another shirt it won't come off" we both laugh.

"I'm keeping it as a souvenir, so you're graduating?" Zane

“Yes, my Bachelor of Arts in fine arts but the graduation will be next year.”

“You’re an artist?” he sounds shocked

“Yes, I paint and sketch, you sound surprised” me

“I am, I thought maybe you’ve done law or accounting, you’re always serious, that’s why”

Zane

“No I’m not, you’re the one walking around like you own the place” me

“I do own the place, so, I have to look the part”

Zane

“All of Khumba belongs to your family?” me.

“Not all of it but most parts, especially this side down to the river and our picnic spot. Thandi is still mad that we didn’t finish the food after all the effort she put in” Zane

“Well, you should’ve told her that I was you meal” me. he’s laughing

“ A delicious one, an irresistible and addictive meal you are. I really lose myself around you, I forget a lot of things and live in the moment. It’s exciting” Zane.

Im blushing and my toes are curled up together with bliss.

“I feel the same way too” me, I can hear him blush.

“You make me feel things, free and certain. You make me feel like a man, a man with a purpose and I’m sure of myself. You bring me confidence, in myself and the things I want to pursue, your drive and independence motivate me. you are unapologetically you and are not easily shaken by thoughts of those around you. You’re wild and caring all at once, and that makes me want more of you. I want more of you Buhle.

“I want more of you too” me.

We both sit silently for a while, I can hear him breathing. Slowly I begin to doze off. I'm asleep.

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More Than Enough by L.A.V

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Insert 6

It's been a month since I've moved to Khumba and I already feel like I belong. My family has become closer and makes me happier even though I haven't spoken to my dad. The lifestyle is easy and slower than that of Edernville but it's beautiful. I've been spending most of my time painting and sketching. I find inspiration for my art when taking long walks and morning runs with Zane. Every morning we jog together and sometimes do yoga next to the river, he



enjoys it but is terrible at it, he can't seem to concentrate. We've been spending a lot of time together, I see him almost everyday and we always text each other. He's funny and I enjoy laughing at his corny jokes. He told me about his life and his duties as a Prince. He works full time at the lodge as a manager for the lodge and the restaurant. He also has community based projects he runs with the royal council. They mainly focus on providing basic necessities for the poorest in Khumba. They cook for them, donate clothes and build small huts for the families. He's always smiling with pride when talking about his project even though he feels like it's not enough. He wants to grow the initiative and reach those who refuse to accept help from the royal family. He says some of the villagers are not fond of their family. I kind of understand why they wouldn't be. The King and his family take majority of the money from the municipality and use it for their

luxurious needs. The king and queen both have 3 cars each, expensive cars. Their house is big enough to fill half of Khumba and there's only six people living there. They wear designer clothes and nothing from the local designers. They go as far as taking a portion of the money made by the local woman who sell their crafts in the lodge, it's pathetic. I don't know how Zane is born in such a family, he is a total opposite of what they are. He uses his royal share to fund his projects and maintains a low lifestyle living with the money he gets from working at the lodge. He told me that all the food that is used in the restaurants is locally produced at the Khumba farms and local butcheries. He would rather feed the mouths of those around him than far. He constantly feels the need to make it up to the villagers by providing them with as many opportunities as he can. They adore him, everytime we pass people they greet him and say nice things to him. They always have

testimonies to share about the goodness that comes with his project.

Word have been spreading around the village about our relationship. People have spotted us jogging and taking walks around the village. Some remarks are good and some are not so good. I tried to keep things under wraps but he can't keep his hands off me and that didn't make things easy. He's constantly holding my hand when walking or hugging my waist, at first I was uncomfortable with it and how people were looking at us but his gentle touch became my new obsession. He is gentle and his warm hands seem to have magic powers of making me feel wanted and cared for. I crave his touch even in my deepest sleep. Not a day goes by without thinking about him and he's naughty humor. We haven't had sex but we engage in deep intimate moments. Most of our dates involve a lot of passionate kissing, deep

conversations and cuddling. His hugs are warm, I feel safe in his arms. It's all happening so fast and I can't help but enjoy every moment I spend with him. He's funny, smart, passionate about helping others, he's considerate and gentle with me. I walk around with smiles and singing happy songs. If anyone would've told me I'd be this happy in Khumba, I wouldn't have believed them but here I am, in Khumba, at my happiest.

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We're laying on a blanket under a tree close to the river, this is our favourite place. It's far from the village and no one is usually down here except for the farmers when looking for their cows, but that's always around sunset. He is on his back and I'm on my stomach with one arm on his chest. We've been here for hours now, talking and kissing. He's been whispering sweet things in my ear making me blush and laugh, he is probably the cheesiest man ever.

“You know I miss you” he says. But we’ve been together all day, everyday.

“I don’t understand, we’re always together” I lift my head and look at him.

“I miss your warm body on mine” he says as rubs his hands on my face and around my lips.

“I wouldn’t have it any other way” I respond.  
He’s smiling

“I’m asking for more. I want to know you better. I’m inviting you to my place” he lifts me and placing my body on top of his.

“Uhm, is this the village polite way of asking me to sleep over at your place? It sure is confusing. You could just say I want to have sex with you. Besides, your family will not be entirely pleased to know you’re fucking a random girl in their palace.” I say. He’s cringing.

“Well, firstly, you are not a random girl, you are my girl. Secondly, the ancestors have already

approved of you, if not we wouldn't be here right now, and lastly, my parents will be away for the weekend, besides I have an outside room, no one in the main house will see you, if you don't want to be seen. And please, I told you to stop cursing." he says. He's been saying I need to stop using the f word.

I'm partly relieved by some of these news but also confused by the part where he says the ancestors have already approved of me.

"Did you do some ritual or ancestral calling to know they have approved this thing we have? How do you know?" I ask he's laughing at my confusion

"Well, my ancestors have a way of communicating certain things to me, they bless and warn me about all the decisions I make that might affect the future of our Kingdom. All my past relationships never lasted because my ancestors never approved of those girls and

they made sure I knew. They would put me in circumstances that test the girls intentions with me and they all failed. We've been together for almost a month now and you're still here. Trust me one week is enough for them to chase a girl away." He says.

"What kind of circumstances?" This is scary and I don't think i'm ready to be tested by this man's ancestors.

"This one time I took a girl to a restaurant in town and the room was suddenly filled with bees. She ran out of the door and I never saw her again until she wrote about the incident of Facebook threatening to sue my family for trying bewitch her. A month later she came with her family to report her pregnancy, demanding we pay for damages. We didn't even have sex, the restaurant was our first date. Fortunately, the baby looked exactly like his father, not me. She even refused to make paternity tests." He

says

“Your ancestors are dramatic, bees? Really? Couldn’t they send butterflies. She was obviously there for the wrong reasons, your ancestors did good though. But please tell them to use butterflies when testing me” he’s laughing and kissing my forehead.

“I will tell them, you’ll probably pass every test they throw your way, you’re tough and genuine.” He’s smiling at me

“But you haven’t responded to my request, I want you all to myself for the whole weekend.” He’s running his hands through my wig.

I want to say yes but I have a lot to consider. A weekend is too long, what will I say to Makhulu, she won’t agree to this. What about his staff, they’ll see me and tell the King and Queen, I don’t want him to get to anymore trouble because of me. Also, I’ve never slept with a man



in my life, like shared a bed and slept a whole full night. I have to take off my wig and all my make up. He will see my nappy hair and freckles under my eyes. This is a big deal and I'm caught between reality and romance. And he's looking at me with his fine eyes and gorgeous smile, how can I say no to that.

"A weekend is too long, Makhulu will be suspicious, so how about you pick me up later tonight and I spend the rest of the night with you and you bring me back in the morning before Makhulu and any other person in the village sees us." I suggest. He's smile is slowly fading.

"Why are you trying to hide what we have, I want to be with you and I want everyone to know that. I don't care if they approve or not. I choose you Buhle, I choose you over anything else. I want to be with you" he's serious and his eyes are locked to mine.

“It’s just that I don’t want people in my business like that, I’m not used to having this much attention and people knowing this much about my life, I want you too, I just don’t want to disrespect my grandmother.” I say.

“I understand that part, I also don’t want to be in her bad books. Don’t worry yourself about what the villagers say, they always have an opinion, good or bad. You can never win with them. Lets just focus on us for now, so I’ll pick you up after 9pm and bring you back before sunrise, is that fine?” he asks and I nod. He pulls me closer

“Now come here and give your man a kiss” we kiss and stay a little longer. Eating the snacks he brought and listening to music in his cellphone. Ingoma by Thandiswa is his favourite, he has it on repeat while we watch the sunset.

“We should get back now, I still have to prepare for my “outing” later tonight. Besides, your

parents might want to see you before they leave.” I say

“You don’t have to prepare much, all I want is you, that’s all. You’re beautiful” he says.

Only if he knew what’s underneath all this.

We both get up, it’s starting to get dark. He gathers all the things and puts them in the car. We drive off and head back to the village. I can’t believe I’ve spent an entire day with this man, he took a day off from work and instructed that we both switch our phones off during our date. It was perfect, just the two of us, no distractions.

We get to the village and he drives me to my house and parks in front of the gate.

“See you later” he leans forward and kisses me. I leave and go inside the house.

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Everyone is gathered in the lounge watching TV

“Where do you come from and why has your phone been off all day?” it’s Thami, can he chill for a second and not mother me, I thought that was Makhulu’s job. Now everyone is looking at me for a response.

“I was helping Zane with his project, it took longer than I’d anticipated” lying to save my relationship is not a bad habit. I greet everyone else and walk towards the kitchen.

“Hlehle you will help me with dishing out supper, I’m tired. I’ve been on my feet all day” Makhulu.

“Don’t worry about it, I’ll do it, just sit there, I’ll serve everyone too.” I reply and there’s silence in the lounge.

“Don’t you want some tea, I can make you a cup while you soak your feet in some warm water, I’ll massage them with one of my oils” I say. Everyone is still quiet so I walk to the lounge to see if everyone is still there. They are, and

they're looking at me weird. Then Makhulu finally says something.

"Thank you my child, I'd appreciate that" she says. And they all continue watching TV, except for Thami, who is looking at me with suspicious eyes. I feel like I need to tell him about my plans so he can cover up for me just in case Makhulu suspects something. He walks towards me with a naughty smile and pushes me back to the kitchen

"Spill it" he says

"Shhh, not so loud, I don't want Makhulu to hear us" He's really going to ruin this for me

"Listen, Zane and I had a date today near the river and that's where I've been all day." I'm blushing just thinking about the wonderful time I've had

"This thing is getting serious Mzala, I really thought it was a fling like all of his other

relationships but nope, it's still going, stronger."

He says, smiling

"So he invited me over to his place tonight, I'm scared and excited all at once"

He's screaming and jumping around the kitchen. This boy is foolish.

"Mzala, you know what this means, he wants the box, are you ready to give your box to the future King of Khumba? The great Zanemvula of amaHlubi? Are you ready to let him murder your insides with that royal sword, Mzala?" He says folding his arms in a sassy manner. I can't stop laughing.

"I've wanted to give him the box the first day I saw him. I'm surprised he waited this long to invite me over, he's kind of old school. Our intimate moments have been hard to resist though" I respond shyly.

"Heeeee, Buhle!" he yells and claps his hands.

Why is he so dramatic and loud .I try to hold him to bring him back to reality.

“shhh, shut up, Thami.” I say

“You’ve been keeping things from me. I want the details. What intimate moments? when? How? Where?” he says. Well I can’t tell him everything,

“It was in his car a few weeks back, it was brief kissing and that’s that” I end it there.

“You are a freaky nasty girl, I didn’t know you were messy like that, in his car. Wow! you move fast” he says laughing and pointing at me. He needs to stop now, someone might hear our conversation.

“Okay, back to the issue at hand, he’s fetching me after 9pm and coming back before sunrise. I need for you to cover up for me. Think of something quick.” I say.

“I got you girl, go spoil your box and worry about

nothing.” He assures me with a smile and walks back to the lounge. He is such a character. I love him though. I trust that he has my back. It’s past 7 and we’ve just finished dinner. I’m washing the dishes. I enjoy doing dishes, its therapeutic. I finish up and go to my room. I need to start preparing for my night with the Prince. I bath and shave. I moisturize my afro and tie it in four sections. My body is covered in tissue oil and smells of cocoe butter. I grab my Gucci travel bag, it’s medium size. I put in my black satin pajama set and my silk head wrap. I also pack changing clothes for the morning. I think I’m good to go. Thami walks in

“I told Makhulu we’ll watch movies in my room” he says. That’s great, I won’t have to jump out of the window.

“Wait so what about this?” I say pointing at my travel bag.

“Are you moving in or staying overnight? That’s



a big bag girl. And Gucci? You're really trying to impress the royal gods. Well, just throw that over the window, we'll take it from the outside." He says and walks out.

And this is not a big bag, I just packed everything I could need, I'd rather be safe than sorry. I toss my bag out of the window and follow him to the lounge. It's only a few minutes to 9pm and Makhulu is getting ready for bed.

"Goodnight Makhulu" we both say and walk to Thami's flat. I quickly run behind the house to take my bag and run back to Thami's flat. It's my first time in his flat, it's so feminine. It's cream with touches of rose gold. There are pictures of naked men behind his door. He's really gay. I sit on the small sofa next to the window and look out.

"He's coming relax, there's no way he's missing out on all of that" Thami

“I’m not worried about that, it’s my first time being with a man an entire night, sharing the same bed. What if I snore or fart in my sleep? That’s a turnoff.” I say

“When a guy likes you the way this man does, he will not be turned off by silly things like that. That man likes you and he wants to take things to another level, I can tell. The way he looks at you when you walk in a room, the way he touches you, like no one is watching and the way he’s always calling and checking if you’re okay. He wants more than what you’re giving him, I hope you’re ready for that” he says. What more could he possibly want? We spend most of our times together, I can’t think of anything better. Vrrr Vrrr

\*your prince is here, are you ready?” it’s him. I’m blushing

“I have to go, he’s here. See you tomorrow” I say

“I want all the juicy details tomorrow over a glass of wine” he responds and we both laugh as I leave and jump over the wall and run towards the car.

We drive in the Royal palace gates through the guards. It’s extravagant and beautiful, it looks like a game reserve. He drives to the other side of the yard and parks in the garage next to other luxurious cars. He grabs my bag with one hand and hold my hand with the other.

“Are you sure you’re staying for one night only, this bag says you’re moving in” he laughs and kisses my hand. What is it with people and this bag. We walk on towards his flat and someone appears behind us. I thought it would be just us this side.

“Ey bro, can I borrow your laptop, mine just crashed.” It’s a young boy, probably 16 years of age. They look alike.

“Don’t you greet people anymore?” Zane

“Oh I’m sorry, Hey, I’m Zinzisumzi but you can call me Zinzi, I’m this one’s brother.” He says with his hand out to greet me.

“Hi, nice to meet you, I’m Buhle and I’m this one’s friend” I greet back. They both look at each other and smile. Maybe it’s a royal brother thing.

“Friends? I don’t think so. This one has been talking about you non-stop, he literally wouldn’t shut up only Thandi tolerates his stories. Nice to meet you though. The laptop bro, I’m cold out here.” He says.

We all walk towards his flat. It’s bigger than Thami’s flat, it has living area and a small patio looking on the mountains of Khumba. The décor is mostly earthy colors, it’s masculine and neat. He hands his brother the laptop and he leaves.

“My friend, you say. Do friends do this? “ he grabs me and lifts me wrapping my legs around his waist. Our eyes meet and we kiss as he walks to the bedroom. It’s warm and cozy. There are candles everywhere, on the floor, on the pedestals and on the chest of drawers. It’s romantic and the music in the background is beautiful, I don’t know who the artist is but it sounds Nigerian. He places me on the bed and lays on top of me. Looking straight into my eyes he’s singing along to the artist, he’s enjoying himself and keeps stealing kisses. I’m blushing and charmed.

There’s a knock on the door. Are you fucking kidding me?

He gets up and walks to the living area and opens the door.

“Should I bring you dinner now or are you going to eat inside with me and the boys?” it’s a woman asking.

“I don’t know, give me a few minutes I’ll get back to you” he says and closes the door. He walks back to the room.

“uhm, let’s go and have dinner in the main house then we’ll come back and finish off what we’ve started” he says.

“I thought you said your parents were out of town, who are we having dinner with? I don’t think I’m ready to meet your family, I didn’t bring anything appropriate to wear for them.” I’m actually freaked out by the thought of me sharing a dinner table with them. He can see the panic in my face. He comes to sit next to me on the bed.

“Ofcouse they’re gone, it will be me, you, Thandi and my two brothers, well, you’ve just met one of them. please come, I want you to meet them. please.” He’s begging me and kneeling in front of me. “ I promise to leave anytime you want to” he’s really begging me, laying his head on my

thighs.

“Just dinner, after that we leave immediately” I say. he’s excited smiling from ear to ear and kissing my hands.

“Great let’s go, Thandi is waiting for us” he pulls my hand and we walk out of the flat and straight to the main house.

The inside is even more beautiful. The inside is covered in stone and the dark wooden floors give it an earthy feel. There are pictures on the walls but they should add more with color. It looks a little bit bland with all the greys and browns. He’s still holding my hand as we enter the dining room with a long dining table, it almost fills the room. There is a big chandelier hanging over it. the lighting is bright almost blinding me. I remove my hoodie over my head as we make a long walk down the room to sit next to everyone, all eyes are fixed on us. A part of me wants to go back to the flat but Zane is

holding me tightly.

“Molweni, this is Buhle, she’ll be joining us for dinner” he says to everyone. The brothers are seated next to each other and a woman is seated next to them. This must be the famous Thandi.

“So you’re the reason why we couldn’t have dinner at our normal time because brother here insisted we eat with you.” The other brother says. Smiling at me sarcastically. Oh so Zane planned all of this, sneaky.

“That’s not how you greet guests, stand up and do it properly.” Zane’s voice is strong and his face is serious as he looks to his brother who immediately gets up and walks around the table to my direction. He’s well dressed, very stylish and modern. He looks like those men in the front row in fashion week. Trendy.

“Pardon my manners Miss, it’s a pleasure to



have you tonight, I'm Zazini but you can call me Zazi" he reaches to greet my hand. That was a full 180 degrees angle turn. I've never seen anyones mood change that quick. I want to laugh at him but I hold it in.

"Nice to meet you, Zazi" I greet him back and we all seat.

"Hello Buhle, I'm Thandi, the house help. Nice to finally meet you" she smiling from across the table then looks at Zane and smiles even more.

"She's more than our house help, she's like a mother to us all, she's been with us since Zazi was born, she practically raised us." Zane says smiling back at her.

"Hi, I'm still Zinzi, now can we all eat please, I'm starving" it's the young one, he's funny. They bow their hands and say a short prayer.

There's food in big serving trays at the center of the table. There's samp, dumpling, curry and all

sorts of veggies. It looks beautiful and smells great. Everyone starts serving and eating. I can't eat all this heavy food at this time. I serve veggies and some curry. Everyone is quiet and just eating, Zinzi is stuffing his mouth with the curry dripping out of his mouth.

"Zinzi don't be stupid, you will choke, eat properly we have a guest" she says giving him a serious look. His mouth could explode anytime now.

They seem like a close family, they're laughing at their own jokes and teasing each other.

Everyone seems free and open around Thandi, they talk about all sorts of things with her and she responds openly and honestly, she really is like their mother. They show respect and love towards her like she is their biological mother, she has this warm and welcoming presence that makes me feel appreciated. I can definitely see why Zane adores and values her so much.

“So, Buhle what brings you to Khumba?” she asks as she sips on her juice. The interrogation begins. I finish chewing and take a deep breath.

“After my exams my father saw it best that I visit my family this side.” That’s the only way they would understand my situation, getting into the details will confuse them.

“I’m glad you came, Zanemvula has been at his happiest this past month, he’s been singing and dancing like a young boy. I guess there’s something you’re doing that we can’t. He’s changed, a lot. At first it was annoying but I saw how he kept looking at his phone and how he smiles when you call. It made sense, he needs this kind of energy.” she says and smiles to Zane who looks some what embarrassed.

“Okay, that’s enough for tonight Thandi,” he says. and Thandi laughs.

“ I’m sorry for embarrassing you, what did you

study Buhle?” she asks.

“I did Bachelor of Arts, specializing in fine arts.” I respond. She smiles and I finally get Zazi’s attention, he looks interested.

“So you can draw?” Zinzi asks

“Yes, I can sketch. Some of my pieces are showcased in different art galleries in Edernville, like this one” I say as I show him some of my work on my cell phone. He looks impressed as he continues to scroll through the other pictures.

His eyes are wide open, he’s shocked and he looks at me then quickly hands me back the phone. What did he see? I reach for my phone and look at it, it’s a topless picture I sent Zane a few days ago. I’m so embarrassed I can’t look at anyone, especially him.

“So where will you work with that degree? How will you make money? A lot of artists are

starving out there” Zazi asks and everyone is looking at me for an answer.

“Well, art is a personal calling for each artist, it is their responsibility to find their niche in the industry and find innovative ways to use every platform to showcase their craft. I’m into storytelling through my paintings. All the art I’ve done tells a story and I have made dialogues that represent a message to society, some writers ask me to sketch images for their stories, I’ve even received offers to do comic books and cartoons. It’s just the society’s expectations of what a successful artist should look like. Artists are the most diverse people in any career. They just need to be given a chance and not just seen as “lazy people with no ambition”.” I respond. He looks at me and smile, like I’ve lit his light bulb.

“Oooh I see, Thank you” He says and goes back to his phone.

“She’s graduating next year, she’s not just a pretty face you know” Zane says smiling at me and rubbing my back. I smile shyly, I can’t remove that image in that boys’ mind, why did he continue scrolling? He hasn’t looked at me after he gave me the phone. I’m uncomfortable

“Congratulations sisi, your family must be very proud of you” she says.

“Thanks, they are. “ I smile back. Thandi gets up and clears the table. The boys are busy with their phones. I kick Zane under the table and signal for us to leave but Thandi walks back in with dessert before he could respond.

“Some dessert, it’s cheesecake, Zanemvula’s favorite.” She says as she puts it on the table.

There’s no way I’m eating cheesecake, I’m full and I want to leave. I look at Zane and his eyes are fixed on the cheesecake. He’s such a boy.

“uhm, I think we’ll have our dessert at the back,

Thanks Thandi, for everything” he leans forward to hug her. Yes, we’re leaving. He pulls back his chair and helps me get up.

“It was lovely meeting you all. Thanks for the delicious meal Thandi” I say

“It was lovely meeting you too, dear. I’m glad you enjoyed the food. Zanemvula gave me strict instructions about tonight, I had to do it.” she’s sweet and her smile is genuine. She’s a beautiful woman, probably in her 40s, her afro is neatly tied in a bun and her face is bare and beautiful.

“Goodnight guys” I say to the boys and only Zazi responds.

“Goodnight”. Zinzi’s face is still fixed on his phone. I don’t want to look at him, I cant. I’m too embarrassed. Zane looks furious at Zinzi but I pull his hand before he speaks and we both walk out holding hands. This was good minus

the part where Zane's 16 year old brother saw my 34b boobs. I've traumatized the young boy with my boobs that were meant for his brothers' eyes only. He likes my breasts.

We're back in the flat, I'm full and tired. I honestly don't feel like doing anything but sleep. Zane is in the en suite bathroom taking a shower while I change into my pajamas, take off my wig, my make-up and wrap my afro in a silk head wrap. His wall is empty, they need some life. I work my eyes around the room, it's cozy and the candle smell nice too, like a floral scent, almost like potpourri. He steps out of the shower with a towel wrapped around his waist. He looks at me as I lay on the bed. He's smiling and walks towards me with his eyes fixed on me. He keeps looking at me from the head down and from my legs all the way to my head. He lays next to me.

"You're beautiful in a doek, your face looks cute



and innocent without make-up” he says rubbing his nose against mine. I want to kiss him but he moves back and walks to his closet. His back is facing me as he removes the towel and lets it drop on the floor. Oh my Gosh. My eyes will not move from his butt, firm and sexy chocolate butt. He turns around and his erection catches my attention. Why is he doing this to me? making me wait this long. Is this a game he’s playing? Well, two can play the game. I slowly turn over lying on my back and pull my satin pajama vest over my breasts. He smiles and walks closer and I cover them up. He’s standing, looking at me at the bottom edge of the bed. He pulls me by my legs and kneels on the floor as my butt hangs on the edge of the bed. I open my legs and look down at him. he slowly inserts kisses in between my thighs, he works his way with his tongue drawing over my scars. A feeling of sadness overwhelms me, I pull back. He pauses. “It’s okay Buhle” he says. my legs

begin to shake as I let him. with all my insecurities, he still makes me comfortable enough to let him in spaces no one has entered. And he still wants me. Flaws and all. He kisses and bites my inner thighs as he pulls my pajama shorts down my legs. I never wear panties to bed. He pulls my legs over his shoulders and buries his head between my thighs. Tingling sensations are sent up my spine as he kisses my 'box'. I've never felt something like this before, my entire body is rejoicing with excitement with every kiss and lick he makes. I can't seem to control my upper body, I keep arching my back and moving my waist. This feels good. I run my hands over his head pushing it closer towards me. my moaning escalates as his tongue does its magic. Aaaaah, right there. I have lost all control. He inserts two fingers in me while his tongue is playing with my clit. I begin to grind to catch his finger rhythm but he gets up and lifts me and places

me of the floor. He's eyes are red and mine are half closed.

"You're so tasty and warm" he whispers as he puts my legs over his shoulders.

He's still kneeling and leans forward for a kiss bringing my knees close to my chest. He reaches for a foil packet on floor. He slowly inserts his hard erection in me. He moans loudly and continues kissing me as he pushes himself towards me. His face is hard and he's eyes are completely shut as he continues to move in and out of me. He moves his hands to my breasts and rubs on them and playing with my nipples. He is moving faster and deeper. My moans are louder with every depth I feel in me. He leans forward to kiss me and moves even faster and harder, banging me against the carpet. His eyes are locked to mine he makes a loud growling sound as he pulls me by my shoulders. We both cry out and hold on to

each other tighter. He's sweat is dripping over me. I felt my body exploding and releasing warm juices of pleasure. He slowly moves to rest next to me with his eyes close, he's smiling. This was a real passionate session. He's trying to catch his breath but leans over to kiss my breasts. We lay on our backs for a while.

"I've never stopped thinking about our moment in the car." he says.

"I replay it all the time in my head." I respond, rolling over and kissing him. He hugs me tighter and kisses me back. His warm arms are wrapped around my body as he carries me to the bed. We both lay naked on the covers, I'm trying to cover my thighs with my hands but he removes them and kisses my thighs.

A part of me wants to hide away and not have him see my scars but I also feel relieved by his reaction. My face warms up and I feel a flood of emotions coming through. I can't believe im

crying. I look up to try hold back my tears.

“Every part of you is beautiful, even the parts you don’t want me to see” he says, rolling over to rest on his stomach. He knows exactly what to say and when to say it. My tears roll down at the side of my cheeks as I think of the day I was cutting my inner thighs. The day I felt like I had nothing more to live for. The day I didn’t feel worthy to be alive.

“I never knew this much happiness existed or if I was even worthy of it. The amount of pain I was in after my mothers passing, took over my life.” I say.

“Pain has a way of making us feel like happiness is a foreign feeling. It makes us become dependent on it and it drives us away from thoughts of possible joy. We become dependent to it and feel like we need it and only it to survive, so we find more ways to hurt ourselves. That doesn’t mean we don’t love

ourselves. “ he says wiping off tears on my face. He pulls me closer and hugs be tighter, I feel safe and cared for.

“How do you do this? How do you care for someone like me? “ I ask. He looks confused.

“I care for you the best way I know how, I care for you in a way that I would like to be cared for, that’s all I know. It’s easier with you, you are real, everything about you is genuine, what you see is what you get. I don’t have to be a certain way or act differently with you, I’m comfortable being the Zane that I know not the one my parents or Khumba wants me to be. And that alone is motivation enough for me to care for you” he says.

“I feel like I’m not giving you as much as you are giving me, I feel like I am not enough for you” I say. He sits up and pulls me up with him. His hands are on my face and he is staring me in the eyes.

“Listen to me, you are more than enough, all I need is you and only you. What you do to my life, you do it effortlessly, without command or doubt. You being yourself is all I will ever need, all I’ll ever want. Without saying a word, you make me feel whole and secure and that is why I find myself falling deeper in love with you every day.” He says, tears are running down his cheeks.

My heart has sank and I’m feeling light headed. He just said he loves me. Me, Buhle Bethu Khephu. He knows all of my insecurities and flaws and yet he loves me. He sees all of my imperfections and yet he openly admits to be falling in love with me. He says that I am more than enough for him. Is this a dream or nightmare? A man who I cannot go a day without thinking about, a man who has brought happiness and peace into my life, a man who has accepted my entire being, a man who cares

for me more than I care for myself has admitted his love for me and a part of me feels unworthy.

“Say something Buhle, please” he says. I am staring at him, speechless and overwhelmed with emotions.

My body is trembling as I try to make sense of what he just said. I want to respond but I can't, I don't know what to say. I don't love him, I don't know how to love. I don't know what he expects from me. I don't know love.

I slowly move away from him and stand next to the bed. He looks freaked out. He comes closer and I move back. There's a cold feeling in my head, like an electrifying cramp. I feel the room moving. There's two Zane's standing in front of me, buzzing and blurry, my knees are weak and with every breathe I take my eyes begin to shut slowly. My head hits the ground and it's dark.

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More Than Enough by L.A.V

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Insert 7

“Daddy, which dress should I wear tonight?”

“This one, red looks beautiful on you Hlehle” he says pointing at the red dress.

I walk back to my room to prepare for the party later. The house is full of people, the florists, the caterers and the band is setting up the entertainment area. My father has been planning this party for the whole year now and mama has no idea. I asked him why he’s throwing a party for mama when her birthday has passed and he said he doesn’t need a birthday to celebrate his love for mama. So here we are, preparing for a surprise party for the

love my daddy has for mama. He sent her to run a few errands and booked her to a spa for a whole day, he usually sends a driver to take her places but mama insisted she goes alone today, she said she wanted sometime alone, whatever that meant.

It is hours later and she hadn't called to check up on us and the yard is beginning to fill with guests. Their friends, colleagues and neighbors. The whole place is covered in flowers of different kinds, there is a variety of foods and drinks and the bands is playing jazz hits. The evening is beautiful.

"Okay, she's leaving the spa now, so I'm guessing she'll be here in twenty minutes time, everybody move to the dining room please" I can see the excitement in dad's eyes as he gives instructions after hanging on the phone. We all make our way to the dining room, where the party would be.

It's been more than twenty minutes and she hasn't arrived. I try to call her but she doesn't answer. I'm more anxious than my dad, who keeps checking his watch. He walks towards the front door and I follow him.

"I tried calling her, she wouldn't answer, maybe she's held up in traffic" I say.

"But the spa is not inside the city, it's close to our home, she should've been here by now" he's starting to panic. He's phone rings. It's mama. He smiles.

"Baby, where are you?" he answers. His face went from happy to confused in one second. He hasn't said anything but I could hear someone speaking on the other side of the phone.

"Where is she?" he says. He's voice is trembling with fear and anger. "I'm coming" he drops the call and grabs his car keys.

"Daddy what's going on? Where are you going?"

Where's mama?" I'm confused. He ignores me and runs out of the door and drives off. I'm left standing, confused in the middle of the entry way. The guests are becoming restless in the dining room, it's been an hour and there is no sign of my dad or mama. Guests have started eating and drinking, they keep asking me and I can't answer because I'm as clueless as they are.

I hear a car pull up our drive way and I run to the door. It must be them. I walk out to the drive way and I see dad's car parked outside the garage. His white shirt is covered with blood. His face is blank and he's holding his blazer in one arm. I walk slowly and closer towards him. Is he hurt. He sees me walk towards him and he looks tired as he slowly sit on the paved floor and lean against the car.

"Daddy what happened? Where's mama?" he's still quiet, burying his face in his hands.

“Dad” I poke his head shouting at him,  
demanding answers

“Why are you covered with blood, who’s blood is this? Who hurt you daddy? Daddy, daddy” I’m beginning to cry kneeling next to him to find his face. He lifts his head and looks at me. His eyes are red and he is shaking as the vein in his forehead appears.

“Mommy got into an accident Hlehle, a car hit her and it drove off and left her lying in the middle of the road.” he says

“Well, let’s take her to the hospital daddy, they will make her fine again. Let’s go daddy.” I try to pull him up but he begins to cry out, loudly and uncontrollably. I pull him even more. We need to move now. I lift my head and see guests walk out of the house to stand close to us. They must have heard his cry.

“She’s gone Hlehle, by the time I got there, it

was already too late”

“Where to?” I’m confused.

“She’s gone to heaven. She’s dead Hlehle” he says and covers his face, crying.

I feel a heavy weight on my shoulders, my temperature rising as I try to make sense of what my father just said. Emotions all come through at once and I begin to scream, crying out for her.

“Mama! Mama! I want my mommy!”

.....

“Hlehle, wake up. Hlehle” someone is shaking me. I try to open my eyes but I am blinded by the brightness of the light. The room is white and cold. I can’t see clearly, my eyes are watery and my head hurts. I try to get up but someone pushes me back down again.

“You need to rest, you’ll hurt yourself.” He says.

The voice sounds familiar. I close my eyes again for a while and open them again. He's here, my father is here. I look around the room, I'm confused. What's going on, where am I? how did I get here? What happened? I try to get up again but my head is pounding hard and painfully.

"Relax Ms Khephu, you had a seizure and you hit your head hard. You've been unconscious for a day now. We're running more tests. Have you experienced this before?" the doctor says.

"Yes, it started off as panic attacks but it felt different this time, my whole body felt cold and it was dark" I say.

"It makes sense, your symptoms show that you suffer from anxiety disorder, I'll refer you to a clinical psychologist. I'll be back to check on you, okay." She says, and leaves. This is serious and I've let it go on for too long.

“How did you get here?” I ask my father. He looks sad. He sits closely and holds my hand

“I got a call from your grandmother, she told me you were admitted in hospital after having a panic attack and collapsed. When I got here, she and the family were already here. I was worried, I couldn’t wait longer, so I drove as soon as I spoke to her, she gave me directions of the hospital. I drove all night worried with the fear of losing you.” He says and holds my hands, kissing them.

“I had a dream about that night, the night mama passed” I say.

“I figured, you were screaming out for her right now, I tried waking you up but you kept crying” he says.

“Ten years later and it still feels new, it feels recent. I saw everything exactly like it did that day.” I say



“That day haunts me every night but what haunts me more is how I neglected you after that day. I hate myself as a man, as a father and as a husband, for treating you the way I did. Your mother’s death came as a surprise to me, I wasn’t expecting it, neither did you. I was angry at her for not warning me or saying goodbye, I was mad at her for not giving me time to show her how much I loved her, for leaving me with you, alone. Leaving me to raise you alone.” he says.

“We could’ve picked up the pieces together, but you shut me out, you wanted nothing to do with me” I say

“You remind me of your mother, you look exactly like her when we met, your confidence and smile reminds me of her and I couldn’t stand to see that every day. I saw her in you every day, you reminded me of the day we first met, the day we got married and I couldn’t

shake the images of what your brother or sister could've looked like. Everything about you reminded me of her, as you grew older you looked like her even more. I couldn't handle it. So I chose to ignore you and I regret it" he says looking down.

"What do you mean?, I thought the doctor said she can't have anymore children after her miscarriage" I say.

"Yes, that's what the doctor said, but one of the reasons why your mother insisted on going alone that day was because she went to visit a gynecologist. She was 8 weeks pregnant. I didn't know, I was told by the doctors days after the accident" He's crying.

I'm shocked. He didn't only lose his wife but he lost his child too, a child he wanted more than anything. They've tried different procedures and they kept failing. Now the only time they succeeded and finally got what they wanted, it

gets taken away from them. A mother, a wife and a child, all at once.

“You never told me this” I say

“I didn’t know how to tell you, you were young and I didn’t want you to carry such a heavy burden. You didn’t take your mothers passing well and adding your sibling’s passing felt like a punishment, I couldn’t do that to you, so I carried it for both of us.” he says rubbing my hands

“I’m sorry for everything I’ve said to you, daddy, I’m sorry for saying you didn’t love mama, you did and she knew that too well. She wore your love in her smile every day, I’m sorry for causing so much trouble just to get your attention, for being unfair to you. I’m sorry daddy, I’m sorry for your losses, I’m so sorry” I reach out to hug him and I squeeze him closer and we both cry.

“I should be apologizing to you, I’m the one that

excluded you in my life, you practically raised yourself in the last ten years, I left you to deal with things alone because I felt like I wasn't strong enough to do a good job at parenting like your mother. She loved you so much and I didn't think I had it in me to love you and care for you the way she did. I felt like I didn't have any love left, she left with all of mine. I was constantly scared that someday I would come home and you'd be gone. I saw the blooded sheets and towels in the laundry room, I was scared, I couldn't think properly and I didn't know what to do with you at that stage. I saw myself as a failure, I failed you and I failed your mother. Your last birthday I decided to move you to Khumba to your grandmother, I knew she would give you the love and attention you needed." He says.

"I hated you for bringing me here, I didn't know your motives but I've come to like it." I say

smiling. He looks surprised.

“You like Khumba? Ms Gucci, Ms Prada, you like Khumba? What exactly do you like here?” he smiles. I blush and my mind immediately goes to his place. Oh shit, where’s Zane?

“Who brought me here dad?” I ask. He notices the sudden panic on my face.

“I don’t know, when I got here, you were already admitted and the family was in the waiting room. What’s wrong?” he responds

He must be losing his mind. I need to call him. I grab my phone from the pedestal and dial his number, he’s not answering. I dial again, he’s still not answering.

As I was about to dial again, someone runs through the door pushing it wide open and yelling. It’s him, he’s sweating and out of breath. He’s still standing at the door and slowly walks in pulling his hand away from the guard.

“You called?” he says. He’s still trying to catch his breath. He looks tired.

“Yes, hi, why are you running?” I ask

“They wouldn’t let me in even after I told them you were calling” he says and walks closer. His eyes are fixed on me, he is ignoring my father but my father is looking at him. He looks at Zane then at me, waiting for an explanation.

“This is my dad, dad this is Zane” I say. My father looks confused, he’s giving me a look as though waiting for me to tell him who he is.

“Good day sir, nice to meet you” Zane says, reaches for a hand shake.

“They wouldn’t let anyone in when I brought you here, you were out for a whole day, you hit your head really hard” he says. My father looks at him, he wants to ask but he doesn’t.

“I can’t remember much, it was all blurry and dark” I say scratching my head, there’s a

bandage over it.

“Don’t do that, you’ll hurt yourself, how are you feeling?, they wouldn’t tell me much. ” Zane says walking to my other side.

My father keeps moving his face to the direction of whoever is speaking. He clears his throat.

“Excuse me, how do you know my daughter? How did you bring her here?” he asks. Zane suddenly looks nervous.

“uhm, we...uhm, she was... uhm. I....” he’s struggling to find his words. I’ve never seen him this nervous and speechless, a whole prince. He’s fiddling with his fingers. And my dad is lifting his eyebrows waiting for an explanation. I need to rescue him before he gets a panic attack too.

“He’s my boyfriend dad. I was at his place when the incident happened.” I say.

He was going to find out sooner and if we're building this daddy-daughter relationship, honestly is the way to go about it.

His eyes are wide open. he looks at me then at Zane, then at me again.

"You have a boyfriend? And you visit his place at night?" he says.

"Dad, I'm 22 not 12, remember" I say rolling my eyes. He was about to say something but Makhulu and the family walks in. Makhulu is smiling at the sight of me holding my father's hand but is somehow shocked to see Zane standing next to me.

"Oooh Hlehle, you scared us. These panic attacks you keep having are scary. Twice in one month. No, you need to see a psychologist." She says.

"This is the second one? Why didn't anyone call me?" my father looks concerned.



“The first was brief, I was able to stabilize her pressure and Bhungane brought her home immediately. This time she hit her head hard, that’s why we all came to the hospital. Again, if it wasn’t for Bhungane, I really don’t know. And we are yet to talk about how you were not at home that time.” She gives me her strict look. I am in trouble.

“Yhoow Mzala, the timing of your attacks is all wrong shame.” Thami. I know exactly what he’s thinking.

“But she’s fine and that’s all that matters.” Zane comes to my rescue. I smile at him. my father keeps looking at both of us. Zane has his eyes fixed on me. His eyes look drained, like he has been crying, like he hasn’t slept. I feel responsible, I brought this to him. He poured his heart to me and I couldn’t respond. He confessed his love for me and I panicked. I collapsed. I blacked out for a whole day. I can’t

begin to imagine the amount of torture he was in all this time. I wish I could clear this room and talk to him, alone. I need to know he's fine.

"Are you somehow related to the Ngele-Ngele family?" my father to Zane

"Yes sir, I am the first son of Zenzele Ngele-Ngele" he answers and my father's eyes immediately widened. He looks at all of us and back to me.

"You are the prince of amaHlubi?" he asks.

"Yes sir, I am." Zane responds.

My father looks more worried than my granny and Thami were when they first found out about my relationship with Zane. He looks at my grandmother and they exchange looks. They both leave the room. I'm worried, what's happening? What is it with my family and my relationship with Zane? Thami exhales and walks toward my bed and sits where my father

was. Aunt'Kholeka stands beside the bed with Asakhe and Zane leans against the wall looking out of the window. I wish I could have a moment alone with him.

"What's going on?" I whisper to Thami. I don't want Zane to hear this conversation even though I can see he senses the awkwardness.

"I'm not quite sure, Mzala. " he whispers back. Im distracted, I keep looking at Zane's direction and he is in deep thought. I want to know what he's thinking.

"I think we should leave you guys to talk, remember this boy brought you here in the early hours of the morning, yesterday. he's been waiting in the foyer for 24 hours, fighting the doctors to give him update, he's been crying and blaming himself for this. He's hurt Buhle, talk to him. whatever happened before you collapsed, he blames himself for it and only you can fix it." Aunt'Kholeka says rubbing my hand.

When did she turn into Oprah. They all make their way out of the room and we're left together. He hasn't noticed the room is empty. I try to get up but he sees me move and hurries to stop me.

"Buhle, you can't move, you will hurt your head. Stay in bed" he pushes me back. He pulls the pillows behind me and fixes my blanket. I slowly try to move to make space for him to seat. I pat the bed inviting him to sit next to me on the bed. He looks worried more than anything.

"You won't hurt me, come" I say. He carefully slides next to me and wraps his arm around my shoulder and I rest my head on his chest, placing my hand across his waist. He gently places a kiss on my head. He smells good, I missed resting on his warm body. I missed his touch, it feels like I've been unconscious for days.

"You scared me my love, when you hit the floor

and started trembling, I thought I'd lost you." he says.

"I'm sorry" I say

"Don't apologise, it's not your fault, I shouldn't have put you in a corner like that, I shouldn't have put you in a situation that could jeopardize your life, I'm the one who should be apologizing." He says. I can't help but feel bad for making him feel like this is his fault. It's my fault, I'm the one with the problem here, I'm the one with issues of expressing my feelings to people, who is unable to love because I'd forgotten how love is.

"I had a dream about the day mama passed, it was exactly the way it happened that night, it felt real, and recent. I woke up crying and my father witnessed that, we had a conversation about that night and how things were after it. I apologized and he also apologized. It feels like this is the conversation I needed to have with

him a long time ago, it felt good hearing his side of the story and also me letting him know how he made me feel. I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulder, like I've been forgiven, like I've gotten the answers I needed." I say fiddling with his jersey.

"Look at me, all of this is not your fault, it was never your fault. You lived a life you best knew how, you were forced to figure things out on your own at a young age. Yes you made stupid decisions along the way but you didn't know any better. You did it all by yourself and from where I'm standing, you did good. And I need for you to stop being hard on yourself, you deserve nice things, you deserve care and love from me and your family. We love you and I need for you to feel worthy of our love." He says as he holds me by my chin, he's eyes are sincere and full of love. He kisses my lips and wipes off my tears. He's being

honest, everything he just said is true and I need to work with forgiving myself and begin to appreciate those around me, starting with appreciating myself.

When mama died I felt like I didn't deserve to be happy and thought it was probably why mama was taken from me and my father neglecting me was a validation of that. I distanced myself from anything that could potentially be seen as love or care. I figured that if I keep my distance from it, I wouldn't give it space for it or someone to love me, to only be taken away from me at some point. I excluded myself from any commitment, friends, relationship, pets. I didn't want to be part of it and that made me build a wall against life itself. Now ten years later I find myself being cared for and loved by a man that knows all of my flaws but chooses to be with me anyways. He gives me more than I feel I give him, yet he wants to be with me. and

honestly, I want to be with him too, I cannot see myself spend a day without this man.

Everything I have done or thought of includes him. He has become a part of my life and that happened in a short space of time without even noticing. I fell in love with him effortlessly and unknowingly. Yes, I am in love with him, and I want to show him that in everything I do and in every word I say. I want him to know that.

“I love you Zane, and I want to continue loving you. I want to be with you every day and involve you in everything that happens in my life. your love has brought me this far, emotionally and spiritually and I want more of that. I want to fall deeper in love with you, all of you.” I say unable to stop tears from rolling down my eyes.

“Zane you loved me when I didn’t feel worthy, and you loved all of me, even the places that I hated, you loved. And I can’t promise you the world, I’m new to this, I don’t know what to do



or how to love but I will love you, the best way I know how , I need for you to be patient and I want you to promise to never leave me. “ I say looking in his eyes. His face lit up and hugs me tightly, almost squeezing the life out of me. Ouch. My head.

“I’m sorry my love, there’s one thing you should never concern yourself about, and that’s me leaving you. I could never spend a night without knowing you are okay. You are enough for me, you are more than I could ever need. I love you just the way you are. We’re in this together.”

He looks serious and leans forward and kisses me on the lips. We engage passionately and I wrap my arms around his body as he pushes himself closer to me. His arm is cautiously rested around my neck creating a safe rest for my head, his other arm rubs against my hips and my butt. My mind immediately goes to the moment we shared in his place before the

incident. The scent of the potpourri candle, the soft ballads of the music and the warmth of his body all over me. Take me back please. I reach to unbuckle his belt and I hear the door open. We're both startled and jump to see who it is. My family walks in, everyone's eyes are wide open and my Thami claps his hands in a dramatic manner. Zane quickly jumps off me and stands next to the bed fixing his belt. My father looks furious and my grandmother has a confusing look of shock and disappointment. Aunt'Kholeka is holding in her laugh so bad but her shoulders are giving it all away. Can I die now, please.

The doctor follows behind them feeling the tension of awkwardness in the room.

"Oohkay, let's see how you're doing? How's your head?" she walks pass everyone and stands over me.

"It still hurts a little, but I think I'm fine." I

respond.

“Of course it would hurt, you’re here making out while you should be resting” My father says looking at Zane. He looks embarrassed, so do I.

“No shouting sir, we need to clear the room for her to rest a little more. We’ll keep you one more night just to observe your condition, the test came out fine, I think you need to see a therapist or talk to someone about things you feel. No amount of medication can help with what you’re troubled with in your mind” She says as she inserts an injection in my drip. I can feel the medication pinch through.

“Well you heard the doctor, out.” He says looking at Zane. He doesn’t have to be this rude though, seriously.

“Dad no, I’m fine.” I say. I’m starting to feel dizzy. Whatever she put in here is working, fast.

“He’s the one riding you with your injured head.

He needs to leave.” He says.

Aunt’Kholeka and Thami bursts into laughter, so loud that my head starts aching. I look at Zane and his head is facing down, I grab his hand and nod. My eyes are weighing hard on me and I can’t keep them open. He kisses it back and I’m out.

.....

I’m being released today and I’m waiting on the nurses to come remove the drip so I can change to my clothes. I’ve had breakfast and my morning medication, the doctor also gave me a few psychologist recommendations who do sessions in the comfort of your home. She also instructed that I reduce the amount of alcohol I consume. I only drink wine occasionally and last I check, red wine is good for your health. The nurse arrives and helps me get ready. She hands me my Gucci travel bag and I put on my clothes, it’s good to see that my

over packing came to good use.

The family walks in with the doctor. They're all smiling and excited that I'm coming home.

"You're good to go, everything is sorted. Use those contacts I gave you and remember what I told you, take it easy okay. Get as much rest as possible" The doctor says as she clears my chart.

"Thanks for everything doctor. So where do I settle the bill?" my father asks.

"Don't worry, it's already been paid for sir." She says and waves goodbye and leaves. My fathers looks mortified, his face is a combination of anger and that of someone who feels disrespected. I know Zane must've paid for it. I haven't seen him this morning. Maybe he left, his parents are probably back from their weekend trip.

"Is this everything?" Makhulu asks carrying my

travel bag. I nod and we all make our way out of the room and head for the foyer. It's a busy morning at the hospital, the foyer is full. At the corner of my eye I spot Zane passed out on the sofa. I stop and walk towards him. I thought he was gone. I poke him with my finger. And he jumps up and smiles when he see me.

"I'm leaving, we can go now. How long have you been here?" I ask

"I must've fallen asleep after I left your room last night." he responds, stretching his arms and putting on his jacket. He slept here all night?

"Did you go home at all?" I ask

"No, I couldn't leave you here my love" he says stroking my chin. "Come let's go", he says reaching out his hand for mine. We both walk towards the door.

I cannot believe he's been here the entire weekend, waiting for me to get better. Khumba

is not far from here, if my family could go rest and come back, he could've as well, but he chose to stay anyways. He cares, he really does and that makes me warm on the inside.

When we leave the hospital my family is standing next to my fathers car and Zane is parked next to my father. Everyone is looking at me. What should I do now? go with Zane or my family. I want to go with my man but the way my father is looking at me, I can't risk putting Zane's life in danger. He whispers in my ear.

"Go with your family baby, I'll call you when I get to Khumba" he kisses my cheek and walks to his car. He waves to my family and only Makhulu, Thami and Aunt'Kholeka wave back, my father gives him a blank stare. I don't like how he's treating my man. I walk towards them, get in the car and we all drive off. There's silence in the car.

"So how long has this thing been going on?" he

asks. It's not a thing. It's a relationship.

"Over a month now." I respond

"Over a month?" I hear Makhulu scream with shock at the back, I try to turn but my head hurts.

"How do you meet? When and where? Have you met his family?" Makhulu asks. I can hear Thami's yho yho. What's with the questions now?

"We jog together sometimes, we talk on the phone, and I only met his brothers and their maid." These questions are starting to irritate me. Why the sudden interest in the details of my relationship. They're starting to annoy me.

"I thinks it's moving too fast, whatever it is that's happening, l'ts moving too fast." My father responds. He needs to take a step back before he can start dictating my life. If it's wasn't for his negligence causing my



insecurities, I'd have probably married Zane by now.

"We're still getting to know each other, nothing more. We enjoy each others company, that's all. And I'd appreciate it if everyone leaves us alone." I'm angry and my head starts hurting. I flinch and rest it. my father notices and drops my chair backwards.

"Rest Hlehle, you are not completely well" he says. Vrrr Vrrr, it's a text message. I reach for my phone

\*are you still fine?\* Zane, I can't tell him about my interrogation session, he'd panic and want to take me from my father.

\*I'm fine, just missing you\* me

\*Rest my love, I'll see you soon, I love you\* Zane

\*See you soon and I love you too\* me.

I'm smiling, insert my earphones and play the

playlist he made for me. It's a mix of Jazz instrumentals. It's all I listen to lately. I close my eyes and sleep with a smile on my face. I can feel the weight of my father's eyes. He will need to get used to the new me, the happier and the in love me. That's who I've become and I'm not going to apologize for it. They need to get used to the fact that Zane makes me happy.

I find myself at home, in bed, tucked in with my clothes on. I don't know when we got here or how I got to bed, it's already dark outside. I check my phone, it's past 8pm. I was really out. I get up slowly to change to my pajamas and my bandage is loose. My clothes smell like medicine. I need a bath. I walk out of the room to fetch the vaskomu. It's dark, seems like everyone had an early night. I'm hungry too. I walk to the fridge, there's fruit and yogurt, I grab that and my warm water and head back to my room.

I carefully take off my bandage and untie my afro letting flow all over my face. It's a mess. I bath and change into fresh pajamas. I hear a knock. It's coming from my window. It's dark and I'm scared. I slowly walk towards the window and listen carefully for the next knock.

"Buhle, it's me" that can't be. What is he doing here at this time and why didn't he call me first. I'm confused. I open the window and he jumps in. he's eyes are red and he is pacing up and down the room with his fists clenched like he wants to punch someone. I want to get closer but I'm scared. I've never seen him like this. I've never seen him this angry.

"What's going on?" I try to whisper. I don't want to wake Makhulu, she'll lose her mind if he saw Zane here. And I wouldn't have any explanation for this. He's still angry, punching one hand with another. I step back. He's scaring me.

"Zane calm done, talk to me? what happened?"

I'm trying to calm him down. He finally catches his breath and stands against the wall. He's calmer now.

"I hate it when people try to control what I do and who I do it with, I know I'll soon be the King of Khumba but I hate it when people see me as a Prince who has no other life besides my duties" he's biting his teeth. I'm still confused but at least his talking

"Tell me what happened my love" I say standing in front of him. He looks me in the eye. They're still red and heavy. He's really hurt more than he is angry.

"All my life I've been told about being the next King of Khumba, I've never had to live normally like other children, I never had to experience childlike things because of that. I was forced to not continue with varsity after passing matric because I had to start training for my role, I never had time to hang out with friends

because I was told they do not represent my status well. I was only a child, what status could I possibly have by then. They don't know me and honestly, I don't think they care, all they care about is that stupid throne. I don't even want to be King. It has totally alienated me from my own life, from the things I love and truly matter to me. It took away my true identity. I hate it. " he's angry again, his face is hard and he is rubbing his hands against each other. He needs to lower his voice. I think I know what this is about but I need him to tell me, he needs to let it out. I pull him closer and we sit on the bed.

"Tell me what happened" I brush his hand. he's face drops when he hears my voice.

"It's my mother, she was told that I've been in hospital with you all weekend. She's angry at me, she called me all weekend and I didn't answer. She says Kings don't sleep in hospital

foyers waiting on..." He pauses and then continues" she always does that, make me feel like I'm some robot who has to do everything by the book, like every move I make has to be done the way a King would, that's not me. I've done that all my life and I'm tired of it, it's depressing. I'm done. I'm done with the throne. My dad can keep it forever. I don't want it." he says furiously.

I take it the argument didn't end where he told me but I will not ask further, he might explode. He had an argument with his mother and he came here, to me. I'm officially a girlfriend. I want to comfort him with words but in his condition, I'd be wasting my time. I pull him closer and we both lay down. I rest his head on my chest and put my leg over him, he hugs me tighter as he exhales and let's out a cry. He really needs to keep it down though. I pull him closer to cover his mouth. He's crying uncontrollably and all I can do is rock him and

place kisses on his head. I wish I could do more. What kind of mother does that to their own son, deprive him of the one thing he wants, life. He can still be King and have his own personal life other than that of the throne. I've always wondered why he didn't talk about friends and why he seemed like a loner, walking around with old Hlubi men. It's such a shame, that a man with such a great personality has been restricted from exploring life and experiencing things, all because of a throne.

"You need to fight for yourself, stand up for yourself, not only for you but for Khumba, people here like and adore you as you are, you don't have to change or do anything differently, you have won them with your kindness and your humbleness. They know who you really are and they know you are nothing like your family, they love you like that. They need you to fight for yourself. They need to see they can trust you to

stand for the truth, your truth.” I say, rubbing his back.

His crying has stopped and he looks in my eyes. He pulls himself up and close to my face. he looks at me and smiles. I know this smile.”I like your hair like this” he says. He just whet from the incredible hulk to Mr sexy eyes in a split second. He rubs my face and moves my hair from it, pushing it backwards, I lean forward for a kiss. His lips are warm as usual. I pull him closer and place his hands over my breasts. I knows how to turn him on in seconds. I push myself closer to him and climb over him.

“Buhle, no! someone might walk in. Your grandmother would kill me” he says.

I kiss him to keep him quiet and place his hands all over my butt. I lower his tracksuit pants, his erection is hard as I fill my hand with it to insert it in me. He has lost total control.



I hear a door open and I panic, I jump off the bed and he lifts his tracksuit pants. We're both pacing around the room, I hear footsteps getting closer. I push him inside my wardrobe and lock it. Someone immediately walks in, it's my father. My eyes are red and my temperature is high, my face is pink and full of guilt.

"Hey, what's wrong? Are you okay?" he looks worried the moment he sees my face.

"It's the medication, I think I'm reacting badly to it but the doctor said it's normal." I need a trophy for lying. I can't move away from this wardrobe door, I can't.

"Okay, I saw your light was on I came to check up on you." He says. Searching around the room with his eyes. Why is he so nosy.

"I'm fine, I was taking a bath and also had something light to eat so I could take my meds" I say with my back against the wardrobe. He

looks confused but he doesn't say anything.

"I really want us to work things out Hlehle, I've realized that I missed out on a lot of things, ten years is a very long time. Your granny also told me about your results. I'm proud of you baby girl. Mama is also proud of you." He says. I wish I could go hug him but my situations doesn't allow me. I can't move. I can hear him take deep breaths inside the wardrobe, he's probably suffocating.

"Thanks daddy, I appreciate it. We will work things out, we could start by going to the psychologist together for some of my sessions." I suggests. He's smiling

"I'd like that, so what are your plans now? will you move back to Edernville with me tomorrow?" he asks. I hear a banging noise coming from the wardrobe. Is he trying to get himself killed? I lean harder against it and fold my arms.

“uhm I’ll decide after graduation daddy, I kinda like it here.” I say. he raises on eyebrow

“Does this have to do with a particular Prince? Im sorry about earlier, I shouldn’t have made a big deal of it, it’s just that I realized how old you’ve grown and that I missed out on all of it. he just needs to protect you, especially from his family, they’re not the nicest people.” He says. There’s that banging noise again. I need to get him out here, what if he’s dying. I fake a yawn and stretch out my arms.

“I’m tired, this medication is also weighing me out, we’ll talk tomorrow before you leave daddy. Goodnight”, I escort him out of the room before he responds. I shut the door and hear him respond. “Goodnight, Hlehle.” I hear him walk down the passage and out of the front door, I peak through the window and he enters his hut outside. He’s gone.

I run for the wardrobe and I open it, he rushes

out trying to catch some air. "Are you trying to kill me?"

He's still horny and topless. He looks sexy with all that sweat dripping over him. I give him the look, I want him.

"No, not happening, I need to get out of here." he says.

I drop my pajama pants and walk towards him, he moves back and I take off my top, I'm standing in front of him, naked and horny. He lifts me and we're all over each other.

Ten minutes later he dresses and jumps out of my window, I watch him run and jump over the wall. His car drives off leaving dust all over. I clear the room and get into bed. I'm all smiles and my stomach is filled with butterflies. What a good way to end a dreadful weekend. I could live like this, everyday. But I need a job, I need to start looking.

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More Than Enough by L.A.V

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Insert 8

My father left in the early hours of the morning, we've agreed that he'd come this side at least one weekend a month to visit and to also take part in my therapy sessions. He seemed happy when he left, he was smiling and he seemed lighter, like he has something taken off his shoulders. He offered to have my car delivered this week but I told him not to bother, the roads here will ruin my car and besides, I have my own personal driver. He didn't like that part at all. He says that Zane needs to know his place, I think he is still angry at him for paying my hospital bill. I get why he would be mad but Zane was just

trying to help, that's what he always does, helps out, it brings him joy to know that he has helped someone. He gives to others more than he receives, his generosity never tires and he does it willingly. I wish he could receive all that he gives. I wish I could give him that. That's what I will do, that's where I will start, I have been battling in my mind as to how I will show him that I love him, I think I know. I want him to feel special and cared for. I want to be that person that gives him what he needs exactly when he needs it. I want to love him the way he loves me and those around him, he deserves it.

After my morning jog, I decide to complete some of my paintings, the one I took of the park in Edernville, our picnic spot and the waterfall view we occasionally visit. I've been keeping myself busy with the craft and photography of the people in Khumba. I created a website where I share all my pictures and painting, each

with a short essay of the post. At first it was just about storing the memories until I saw the number of web visits increase weekly. It caught me by surprise. It's audience is growing bigger and people are asking about the place, it's insane. I need to do more research on this on how to turn it into a career. I think I've found my job.

.....

"Hello Buhle, it's Thandi, I stole your number from Zanemvula" she's whispering.

"Good day, Thandi, why are you whispering?" I ask. She's quiet for a few seconds but I can hear her breathing.

"Okay, I can talk now, how are you? I was worried when Zanemvula carried you out on Friday." she's talking normally, she saw me?

"I'm fine thanks, my head has also healed. I'm

better.” I have a feeling this is not a social call, can she get to the point, the anxiety is killing me.

“Well that’s good to hear my girl, I called to let you know about Zanemvula’s birthday later this week, he never does anything but I always try to make it special for him even though he insists on nothing big. I was wondering if you would like to be part of the planning, he’d really appreciate that” she says.

I didn’t know it was his birthday and I know his humble self wouldn’t mention it. This is my chance to spoil him, I know he doesn’t like expensive and flashy things, it’s going to be hard, but I’m in.

“That would be nice, I didn’t know. What did you have in mind?” I respond.

“Honestly, I have no idea. I always make him cheesecake but i’m sure he’s tired of it by now. I was hoping you’d have something in mind.” she



can't drop the ball on me like that, she's been with him half his life, he knows him better.

"Well, let me think about it then I'll get back to you before the end of the day, but what I know for sure, he wouldn't want anything big and extravagant." I say, she laughs

"Definitely, he'd walk out and leave us to enjoy "our" party" we both laugh at the thought of that. I need to think of something, fast.

"I'll be waiting for your call, bye" she says and hangs up. Now I have this responsibility of planning a surprise birthday for my man. A man that doesn't necessarily do well with receiving. A humble man that doesn't like extravagant things, I don't know how I will do this but I have to. I love him and I have to show him. Let me call him.

"Hello my love" he sounds excited. I can feel him smiling.

“Hello baby” I greet him back, Something about his voice that makes my stomach dance.

“How’s my baby doing? Did your prince heal you last night?” he’s naughty, reminding me of our risqué quickie. I keep having flashes of images of him pounding me against the wall with his hand over my mouth. I can be loud..

“For last night? healed. But I woke up with some other pain in my head” I’m teasing. He laughs out loud. I really can’t get enough of his touch.

“You’re pushing it but I’m sure I can work something out for you my love” he says. I know he would jump at the opportunity to be naked with me over anything.

“What are you doing today?” I ask, he’s silent a bit then he responds

“Checking the new stock that arrived this weekend at the restaurant, no one seems to do anything when I’m not around, it’s still piled up

at the door, for the customers to see, imagine.” He takes his job seriously. He doesn’t like being absent at work. He took his first leave ever the last time we had an all day date by the river.

“Why? Do you want me to take you somewhere, I can take a day off” he says.

“Or you could borrow me your car, I need to get a few things in town and I’d hate to disturb you from work, you’ve been away too long because of me” I say, crossing my fingers.

“You can drive?” he sounds surprised.

“Ofcourse, I have a car,, but it’s not convenient for the roads of Khumba, they would break my baby apart” I say,

“I thought I was your baby?” he seems serious, then he laughs. He’s teasing, okay.

“You are, my one and only. Now back to the issue at hand” he’s trying to avoid the subject of giving me his car. I’m a good driver, he needs

to trust that. If I can drive in the city I can certainly drive in Khumba.

“Okay...” he says, I didn’t even let him finish, I am jumping for joy.

“Yes, but Zazi will take you, you can’t drive alone after your episode this weekend. I need to know someone reliable is with you. He’ll drive you wherever you want.” he says. And I suddenly feel disappointed. I really wanted to do this on my own, I can’t have a lot of people know what I’m planning, especially his brother. Ugh.

“I just want you to be safe Buhle, I’ll let you drive some other time” he says, he has no idea how he just made all of this difficult. I guess I’ll have to work with what I have.

“I understand, its fine” my energy just went from a hundred to one in a few minutes. He senses my disappointment.

“I’ll take the day off and take you myself if you want.” he suggests. He’s not helping, he’s making things worse.

“No it’s fine, you work, Zazi can take me.” I say.

“Okay, I’ll tell him to pick you up in two hours time. I love you” he sounds relived.

“That’s fine, I love you “ I say, with a sigh of relief, at least he’s not taking me, I’m sure I can get Zazi to shut up for a few days. He might also be of great help in helping me choose a gift for his brother. Let me get ready. Two hours is not enough for someone who hasn’t even bathed.

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I made up a story about getting prescribed medication from the chemist to my grandmother who didn’t buy the story the moment she saw Zane’s car parked outside the gate. The drive to town is longer than usual

because brother here has been quiet all the way. He's dressed pretty well for his age. Zane said he's 18. He looks and carries himself in a mature manner. Even the way he speaks, he takes himself seriously for his age. He looks like Zane but he's not tall as Zane and Zinzi.

"So.. where do you attend school?" the silence is annoying plus I need to fish some information about his brother. So I might as well start somewhere.

"Richmond Boys College, it's a private school close to Edernville" he responds. I need more.

"What grade are you doing?" I ask, he looks at me like I should already know, he's cheeky .

"I finished writing my grade 12 exams last month." He responds. Oh wow,

"Any plans for next year?" I ask, he exhales as though I'm annoying him. I need answers, I want to know more about their family.

“I haven’t decided yet, maybe I’ll take a gap year and travel Europe.” He says raising one eyebrow, he doesn’t seem to care.

“Don’t you want to study further?” I ask, if he wasn’t scared of his brother he would’ve told me to shut the fuck up, his face is covered with annoyance.

“Well, things aren’t that easy with us, we have to do things by the book, and tertiary education isn’t part of it, serving for the Kingdom is.” this is probably why Zane never went to university. This is why he hates the rule book.

“But Zane could be King so at least you can go and study whatever you want to study. What would you study if you were to go?” I’m curious

“At first I wanted to be a fashion designer but now I’m battling between that and fine arts.” My eyes are wide open, I need to hear more of this. He can see the enthusiasm on my face, he

continues.

“ I want to do fine art so I can sketch and create my own patterns and prints and make fabric to sell all over the world to different designers. I heard what you said at dinner that night, it made sense, so I would love to do fine arts but I also want to do fashion design I enjoy making clothes” He says. I’m smiling. I’m impressed and shocked at the same time. He’s talking, finally.

“But you can still do them both, you have a great eye for style and you already say you make clothes, so I would advise you to study for the skill you need to improve or learn more of, fine arts. You can even use those material as your signature prints, the thing that sets you apart from other designers. Like Fendi and all other big brands.” I say and he’s face immediately lights up when I mentioned Fendi.

“That brand is my inspiration, the patterns, the



textures, the design layout, everything about Fendi is perfect, one day I will sit front row at their show.” He’s smiling. This kid knows fashion more than me, he’s so specific and you can see the passion in his eyes as he speaks. He loves it. It’s a pity he can’t pursue it though. This is unfair. I suddenly feel sad. I look over the window. I’m getting emotional just thinking about the things Zane said to me last night.

“Where to first?” he asks. Oh we’re here, it’s a small town, not even half of Edernville but it’s busy because all surrounding villages use it. There’s only one mall, it has two floors. Most shops there don’t even have names, they’re Chinese cell phone shops, Indian curtain and material shops and also those Nigerian hair shops. It’s not that fancy . I need to tell him why I’m here, he will know soon enough.

“I’m planning a birthday lunch for your brother” I say, he stretches his mouth making and

impression of a sad face and raises his eyebrows. He looks surprised more than he is impressed.

“It’s not going to be anything big, I want to book the restaurant and invite some of his friends and colleagues, but instead of them buying him gifts, I want them to buy food parcels to donate to his project. Oh and cheesecakes, lots of it. But first let’s go to the gift shop” I say and he drives off. He looks impressed. He’s smiling.

“He’ll like that, he doesn’t like celebrating birthdays, he says it’s a waste of money. Years back my mother bought him a sport car for his 18th birthday, he took it back and used the money to host a fun day fair for the village kids. There were jumping castles, balloons and kids with sticky fingers from candy all over the yard. My mom was furious.” He’s laughing and I join in. That’s the man I know and love. I blush. He looks at me and continues driving in the parking

lot. We head inside the busy mall.

An hour later and we're done.

"I think we have everything we need, I just need to let people know without him suspecting anything" I say as we pack the plastics in the boot.

"I'll help you with gathering some of his old school friends, I'll find them on social media." He says. Yes, one less thing to worry about. I'll handle the colleagues, well Thami will. Now how will I anonymously book the restaurant? He's the manager after all. Now I'm sweating just by thinking about it.

"What kind of gift are you giving him, I'm curious." he asks.

"You'll see when I hand it to him, I hope he'll like it" I say crossing my fingers.

"You can give that guy a stick, he'll treasure it all his life, as long as it's from you. You've changed

him. He's happier and more expressive now. He always kept to himself and mostly spoke to Thandi, now he chats with us as well, he's laughing and always on the phone. You've brought him what he's been needing. " he says and we drive off. I could blush but he's looking at me but my face says it all, it's turning pink. He's laughing and I end up laughing too. My phone rings. I'm still laughing

"Hello you" I say

"Someone sounds happy, is he treating you right?" he asks.

"Yes, we're almost done now, we'll grab something to eat then come back. You miss me already?" I ask. I can't deny that I miss him more. I haven't seen him all day today.

"I always miss you when you're not around, maybe I need to tie you to my hip and have you follow me all the time, that way I can easily tap

it whenever I want.” We both laugh, he’s crazy, I have a life too, which I need to figure out before he turns me into a village housewife.

“We’ll be back before you know it, see you soon” I say and he drops the phone.

We grab quick lunch at a café and we’re off to the village again. He’s been asking me about the life in Edernville, he seemed interested, it’s a pity I couldn’t tell him much because I never really had a life there. To think of it, I’m more social and active here than I was in Edernville. I’m living more and experiencing more life in a village than I did in the city, it’s hard to believe but that’s my life and I wouldn’t have it any other way.

In no time we’re in the village, I suggested we first drop everything at my home then come meet Zane at the lodge. Makhulu was confused when I entered with big bags of plastic, she was expecting small packs of medication. I didn’t

bother explaining. I just offloaded everything and put them in my room and immediately left.

He's waiting for us outside when Zazi pulls over. He hugs and kisses me, then Zazi throws him the keys and heads to the Lodge. I missed his touch, my eyes are glued to his, he's smiling and keeps stroking my wig. He's never gentle with them. He has knocked it off a few times. He likes my afro better, he never said it but I can see how his face lights up when I'm not wearing wigs and my afro is all over my face. Only if he knew the struggle that comes with maintaining it.

"Can you wear your hair out on Friday, please" I pull myself away from him, he sees I'm uncomfortable.

"No baby, you look beautiful in your wigs, I just like your natural hair more, especially when it hangs over your face. Please don't take this the wrong way" he tries to explain. Does he think

hair just decides to be happy and cooperate?  
My hair has a mind of its own, it never does  
what I want it to. I can't promise anything.

"I have very stubborn hair, I'll have to talk to it  
overnight first, so I can't promise anything." I  
say and he pulls me closer by my waist with a  
smile.

"Or I could talk to it myself later" he can't be  
serious, I want to laugh.

"It doesn't listen to strangers" I say

"Ouch, that hurt. I am a stranger now. eh" he  
says tickling me and pulling me closer. I scream  
out uncontrollably. I'm laughing really hard, my  
eyes are completely shut as he continues to  
tickle me.

"Stop, stop, ok, you're not a stranger then, you  
can talk to it too." I say and he stops. When I  
open my eyes the entire lodge staff is standing  
at the entry way looking at us, I'm embarrassed.

Some are smiling, some look disappointed. I want to bury myself under the ground now. Why are they so nosy. Zazi walks out and shouts.

“Get a room guys, we’re too young to see such things” he says as he walks out of the yard.

The staff is still standing there, I can see Thami, he winks at me and orders everyone to go back to work. He’s such a control freak. Which reminds me I have to ask him a favor.

“I need to see Thami quickly” I say to him as he answers his phone while he signals an okay sign. I walk to the restaurant and leave him on the phone.

“My lovely darling cousin, you know I love you right?” I need him in a good mood for this. He’s suspicious

“What do you want?” he gets to the point.

“I need you to book the restaurant for Friday without Zane knowing, I’ll also need to invite the



staff to a lunch event, they must bring food parcels or any kind of donation. And I need it to be a surprise for Zane. So he can't know or suspect anything."

"Might as well ask me to drag down the sun with my bare hands. That's a lot Mzala, that man is hands on in everything, he'll notice. Unless he takes the day off that day, and only you have the power to make him do that." He suggests. That's true. So then, I'll have to make him take a day off, without suspecting anything. It's going to be hard but I have to do it.

"I'll do it, I'll put you in charge of the staff and their donations. Thanks cuzzy" I say and kiss his cheek and run outside.

He's standing next to the car, in deep thought, he looks worried about something.

"Are you okay my love?" I ask waving across his face to get his attention. He snaps out of his

thought and hugs me tightly. Something is not right and I'm beginning to worry .

"Talk to me baby" I say looking in his eyes.

"Nothing I do is ever enough," he exhales and his face drops. I felt that, it hit me in the heart. I know exactly how he's feeling right now.

"Let me help you, tell me, we'll find the solution together, I'll help you carry this burden" I say holding his face to look at me.

"The lodge is not doing well financially, the financial advisor just called, he says we need to reduce the number of staff. I can't fire these people, this is their life, it's their only hope. I can't take that away from them. I'm failing the people that count on me to save them." he's becoming emotional.

"Listen, I'm sure we can find other ways of improving the business in this place, we need to go back to the drawing board and find ways of

bringing more people in the lodge that way you wont have to fire anyone. I know how much this means to you. We'll fix it together. I will help you. You're no longer alone. I'm here now, you can count on me." I say and he looks relieved, like I've given him some hope. He smiles and kisses me

"What would I be without you?" he hugs me tighter. I need to help him, I have to. What can I do to invite more people this side? It's a beautiful place but no one knows about it in the outside world. My light bulb just lit. Yes, it makes sense.

I'm smiling from ear to ear. I hug him tighter. I think he's birthday presents just increased. I'm excited. I need to start working on it and doing as much research as possible. He's still confused. I need to go now, I have two days to get everything together. There's a lot of work that needs to be done, I still need to call Thandi,

she'll help with the catering and the staff will do the décor, I also need to check on Zazi about the friends. Perfect, everything seems to be falling into place. I'm more than excited.

"Baby I forgot Makhulu wanted some help at home, I need to go" I lie, I need to start implementing the plans.

"Okay, let's go I'll take you" he looks rather suspicious about the excitement in my face. I can't hide it. We get into the car and drive. He's holding my hand and I keep kissing it every chance I get. We stay in the car and chat for a while about my day with Zazi, and I finally leave. He drives off and I got straight to my room.

I take out my Macbook and start working. This will definitely keep me up all night. I'm glad his other gift is ready or else I'd be in trouble right now. I can't believe I didn't think of this initially, it's perfect. I have so many emails to send and so many calls to make. Getting funding for

these kind of things is hard, i'm definitely pulling some strings and using my fathers' contacts and influence to get this right. I need to focus, I need to get this right, there's no greater gift than this, he deserves it. Ideas are flowing as I go, everything is falling into place,i'm excited.

I've been working on this project all day and I realize it's dark outside. I take a break and head to the dining room to have dinner with everyone. My mind is in my room right now, I can't stop thinking about it. Everyone notices my distracted behavior but no one comments on it. I clear the table and wash the dishes. That's my chore and everyone already knows, it gives me time to clear my mind and think properly. I'm done before I know it. I excuse myself and continue with my work. A few hours later, I realize that I must have lost track of time and my cell phone battery has died. It's dark and I passed out with the laptop screen watching me.

I insert it in the charger and I have several messages from Zane

\*Hey, you left your doek at my place, I just found it. Want to come fetch it?\*

\*Why are you quiet? Are you okay baby? I miss you\*

\*Your phone is off, should I be worried\*

\*Baby no, I can't sleep not knowing you're fine, call me\*

I have to call him.

"Buhle are you fine, I was about to drive over there, what happened?" he's not giving me a chance to speak.

"Relax, I'm fine baby, my phone died and I didn't see it. I've been busy with Makhulu. I'm fine my love" I say. He's more calm now, I can hear him take small deep breathes. He really was panicking, it was only a couple of hours.

“I was worried, I thought something happened to you.” He says. he’s overreacting right now but I will not say that, it would crush him. He doesn’t like it when i say he cares too much and that he worries too much. He says he would hate for something bad to happen to me. He’s scared that I’ll leave him. I appreciate that he cares, I really do but sometimes it becomes too much. Maybe this is what people do when they’re in love, they suffocate you with all their love. I’ll get used to it, I guess.

“I’m fine baby, I’m just tired, today’s been a full day of activities.” I say, I need to finish off what I’ve started or else it won’t be ready on time. I also need to brief Thandi on the lunch details.

“Okay my love, rest. I love you” he says, I can feel his smile on the other side of the phone.

“I love you too” I say we hang up and I get back to work. There’s no sleep for the wicked. I need to atleast finish half of it today and make the

other arrangements tomorrow. Looking at the time, it's after midnight and I realize I have only one day to finish off the proposal. I think I bit off more than I could chew. I'm way in over my head here. but his words "nothing I do is ever enough" keep ringing in my ears and I immediately continue working, I can't let him down, I made a promise and I intend on keeping it, even if it means staying up all night. He deserves this.

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More Than Enough by L.A.V

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Insert 9

My eyes are baggy from lack of sleep, my head hurts and my anxiety is at its highest, planning a



birthday lunch for my man has been hectic. I finished the business proposal, made calls and received good feedback from some of my dad's contacts in the private sector. All I need is for him to see it, be on board so we could register the business and take it from there. Surprise lunch guests are aware of how the day will go, he had only two high school friends, they're coming, thanks to Zazi. Thami organized the staff and booked the restaurant under a false name. He suspected something at first when he called the number and it wasn't available but Thami had to come up with lies, it worked. Everything is in place and ready. I had to beg him to let me take him to breakfast in town in the morning so that everyone can settle in and make the final touches.

We've been in town since 7am it's almost 12pm and he's getting irritated and there's not much one can do in this town. I've been stealing time

by going in every shop in town, he's annoyed. We can only go back to the village after 1pm. We're at the Indian material shop, I told him I need to find nice material for my graduation dress, he hasn't said a thing since we arrived, he's been standing next to the door. I feel bad. He doesn't want to rush me, he wants me to enjoy my time. Only if he knew, I'm hating every moment of this strolling around buying things I won't use. Now I'm stuck with a 5m red and gold material, Hello Kitty cellphone pouch and an Aloe plant. This is ridiculous. What will I do with all these things?

"Can we go now baby?" he says, leaning against the car. He looks annoyed and tired. I feel bad for him. We have to wait another 30 minutes then we can leave. I need to think of something fast.

"Okay, we need to go to one more place then home, I promise." He moans with annoyance

and rests his head on my breasts. I hug him and kiss his head. Only if he knew. I've run out of ideas, I don't know what to do and I'm done buying useless things I have no intentions on using. We drive to the bookshop and he waits for me in the car, I need to call these people.

"Are you done, he's annoyed and I'm running out of lies" I say

"If you leave now make sure he drives slow, we're still setting up the décor" Thami

"What? you had the whole morning to do that". These people are not serious.

"Well, it's not as easy as it sounds, keep him busy, use your power, woman" he says and he drops the phone. I can't believe they're this slow. And I might actually take his advice and take this man out of his misery. I walk out of the store with a journal to find Zane sleeping, he's that bored. I feel for him. I must commend his

patients though, this man has been running up and down this dusty town with me with no explanation. He's a good man and I'm going to reward him.

"Baby, wake up. We can go home now" I say shaking him. He looks pleased at the news of going home.

"Finally" he says and we're off. We're listening to one of his jazz playlists. And he only listens to South African and African music, I tried getting him to listen to American soul, he didn't like it. We leave town and he's driving fast, I need him to slow down. I stretch my hand over his side and caress his thighs, he looks at me and smiles. I remove my seatbelt and continue rub in his zip area. I can feel his erection form, I unbuckle his belt and lower his zip. He looks confused and excited at the same time.

"Babe, im driving" he says. I ignore him and lean over to kiss him slowly on his neck while pulling

it out. I go down and drown it in my mouth, he moans. I can feel him move slightly from his seat, I can feel the speed of the car slowing. That's more like it. I continue moving in and out, gently and slowly. He groans louder. He's brushing my afro with one hand as he drives with the other. Yes, I wore my afro out today as he requested, I asked aunt'Kholeka to help me with it, she's doing a good job with Asakhe's. She used a lot of oils, she says I need to moisturize it more, so I can style it easily. I try to push him all inside my mouth, he moans louder and exhales and his warm juicy pleasures fill my mouth. I swallow and move back to my seat. He keeps tilting his head over and the car is driving at 20km/h. I check the time, its 1:30 pm. Now we can go home. He's still away with his mind as he tries to fix his pants. His eyes are half open as though he just woke up. He's smiling.

“Happy birthday” I say. He looks sexy when he’s like this, eyes half open, biting his lower lip and smiling. I just want to have him, here right now but we can’t be late for his birthday lunch . He keeps kissing my hand and stealing looks at me. If he’s this happy with only a blowjob, I can imagine how happy he’ll be with the surprise lunch. I sneak a text to Thami stating our location. We’re a few minutes away from the Lodge.

“That was the best birthday present ever, Thank you my love” he finally speaks. He seems at peace and less irritant than he was a few minutes ago when we left town, I guess that’s what one should do, let him drive you all day while you shop and run errands and just give him blowjobs and quickies in between, sounds fair. He’s happy even singing along to the instrumentals. I guess I swallowed all the tension. We drive towards the lodge entrance

and the yard is empty, I asked them to park their cars at the back. The conference room windows are covered.

“Oh I forgot someone booked the lodge for the whole day, I need to go and meet them and see if they’re well taken care of.” He really loves his job. We walk out and go towards the conference room. He’s walking normally but I can tell by the look in his eyes there’s something he’s not sure about. The entry hall is empty, there’s no one in the corridors and the kitchen is also empty. he’s holding my hand tight as we walk in the conference room.

“SURPRISE!” everyone shouts. The look on his face is priceless, his eyeballs are close to popping out, his eyebrows are raised and his jaw dropped. He looks around the room, it’s full with people he loves, his brothers, Thandi, his high school friends, his staff. He keeps looking at me then at everyone else. He’s smiling and

laughing as people are wishing him happy birthday. He still hasn't let go of my hand as we make our way around the room to greet people.

"Did you know about this?" he asks me. I'm just smiling and raising my shoulders.

"She planned it, this is all her doing" Thandi walks behind us. She's smiling and they hug.

"Happy birthday Zanemvula" she's beautiful, she's wearing an Ankara dress and a matching doek.

"I can't believe you did all of this without me knowing, should I be worried, that you can do such things behind my back" he's smiling and kissing my forehead

"You have nothing to worry about, besides, Thandi is the one that told me about your birthday, and helped with the plans. So I should be the one worried for keeping such things from me" I say. He hugs me tighter and spots his



high school friends and walks towards them. He looks so happy, he can't stop smiling.

"You did great, this is him, everything he stands for, everything he believes in. All of it is in this room" Thandi. I'm blushing.

She's right, Zane doesn't care about a crowded room full of people flashing money, he wants his small group of people who he loves and cares for. The donation corner is full of clothes, food even books and school clothes. People really went all out, now that I know he'll love more than anything.

"I had to do something that represented who he is and he's not a difficult man to read." I say smiling back at her

"I've never seen him this happy, not just today but the entire month, he's laughing louder, he's even more dedicated to his projects and is more expressive with his will to give to those

around him, you've brought out the great man he truly is." She says

"He has done the same to me too, I'm a completely different person than I was when I got here a month ago and I know he's a great influence of that change, I appreciate him more than anything" I say and look at his direction to find him looking at us, he's smiling and winks at me.

Someone plays the music and the dancing begins.

"Should we serve now or after the presents?" Thandi asks.

"I think after the presents, people get rowdy when they eat, serve the snacks and drink for now" I say and walk towards the people.

People are watching every move I make, most of them haven't seen me this close and interact with anyone. I've been the talk of the village

solely because of my relationship with Zane, some say I'm in it for the money others say I've used a love potion.

The day is beautiful and hot as usual, I'm wearing an off the shoulder crop top and wide leg pants, it's a black two piece. I've accessorized with my colorful beaded jewelery set. I own five sets now and I still pay her more than what she charges. My tattoo is showing and I'm getting all sorts of judgmental looks, funny how Zane never commented on it, everyone else seems to have an opinion about it. I pour myself a glass of wine at the bar. I haven't had alcohol in weeks, Thami and I occasionally binge drink over rural gossip at his flat.

I feel him hug me from behind and squeeze me tight. His hands reach for my glass and he places it on the bar. He pulls me to the open space. What's he doing? Everyone is looking,

I'm confused. He is all smiles.

"Dance with me" he says as he pulls me closer to his chest and places his one hand on my back. He's moving slowly from side to side. I'm not a dancer, I cannot dance to save my life, he's putting me on the spot right now. He's leading me as the melodies of an acapella group play in the background, he's enjoying this and I think I am too, he pushes me out and makes me spin and pulls me closer again. I feel like Cinderella at the ball. It's magical, I can rest in his chest forever, he smells good, like a man, a man I love.

The song stops and he lifts my face to kiss me on the lips. The room applauds, for a moment there I forgot about the people. I'm embarrassed and hide my face in his chest, his laughing.

"Okay, time for presents, enough you lovebirds" it's Zinzi, perfect timing. He walks towards the

donation area and clears his throat.

“Well since we were all given strict orders by Buhle that we shouldn’t buy you presents but instead bring donations for your charity project,so here you go bro” he says pointing at the pile in the corner of the room. Zane is smiling. Everyone is clapping.

“But because I’m boss like that,I decided to donate R10 000 to help with the feeding scheme of the project” he continues. Oh my Gosh. Zane walks towards him and gives him a strong hug and lifts him. He’s emotional. He’s eyes are filled with gratitude. This is beautiful. My stomach is filled with joy.

“Now who can top that?” Zinzi says with arrogance. Everyone’s laughing. He’s such a kid, he seems to have forgotten about his traumatic experience. I’m glad he’s over it, I wouldn’t be able to handle the awkwardness.

“I don’t think I can top that but I have something too” I say as I move towards them and I slowly uncover the painting of the Khumba view from our picnic spot. His eyes widen with disbelief, his jaw drops as I hand it over to him. He’s surprised, amazed. I don’t think he believes what he’s seeing. He looks at me then back to the painting.

“You made this?” he asks. I nod and he hugs me tight and lifts me. I think he likes it, he’s still in awe.

“We also want to see” one of his friends shouts from the back. He shows it to the crowd. Everyone is amazed. They’re smiling. I blush. He kisses me passionately holding me by my face, he needs to slow down, people are watching.

“Okay, okay, she topped that. Now let’s eat.

“ Zinzi breaks the kiss with those words and everyone heads to their seats. Zane is still looking at the painting. He really loves it.

“Come I want you to meet my friends” he grabs me by the hand and we move to another table. They’re watching us as we get closer.

“This is Thabiso, we played rugby together since primary school” he says. I greet him. He really looks like a typical rugby playing guy, he even has that rugged caveman haircut most rugby players have and he’s big.

“This is Kagiso, I met him in highschool, he was my deputy when I was headboy” I greet him. he’s the opposite of Thabiso, you can tell he didn’t play sport, he looks nerdish, he even has the glasses to go with it.

“Guys this is Buhle, the love of my life” he says looking at me, I can’t help but blush and smile.

“Nice to meet you guys.” I say.

“We really had to come see for ourselves this lady, buddy here, has been talking about, you are in every conversation we have in our group

chat.” Thabiso. I don’t know if I should be flattered or not, but a smile won’t hurt. They continue laughing at their own jokes, I’m just standing here like a trophy. This is uncomfortable. My phone rings, it’s an office number, I have to take it. I excuse myself from them and walk outside. It’s good news, in fact, it’s great news. I’m more than happy right now and I can’t wait to share these news with Zane. I drop the call and smile foolishly by myself.

“Nothando, Nothando my child” a strange voice behind me. I turn around and find an old man holding a spade looking at me smiling. He’s scary. He must mistake me for someone else. He’s walking towards me, his overalls are covered with soil.

“Nothando is that you?” he continues.

“No tata, I’m not Nothando. You’re mistaken” I say as I slowly move backwards and run back to the lodge. I bump into Zane in the entry way. I



scream. Geez. I'm shaking, he scared me.

"Heey what's wrong, you look like you've just seen a ghost" he holds me and rubs my shoulders. He keeps looking outside. But he's gone, the old man has disappeared.

"No I'm fine, I just got some good news, more birthday present, but I'll give you after we eat, let's go sit down" I can't have him worry about something I know nothing about. But that old man was creepy. He looked sick too. We walk in the room and find our seat. I've lost my appetite. I keep poking my food, it looks nice but I'm not hungry.

"You're not hungry?" Thand says. She notices everything around her.

"Not really, we had a full breakfast in town." I say but Zane has already finished his second plate, he's a vacuum cleaner.

"Or maybe you're full from my nutritious babies"

he whispers in my ear and winks. I laugh out loud and so does he. They're looking at us again, I'm embarrassed.

"I can still feel them swimming in me" I whisper back. He laughs and smiles with pride. He looks impressed with himself. Men and their babies. Dessert is served and it's almost 5pm, people are starting to leave one by one. It has been a great day. Zane refused to do a long speech, he just thanked everyone for being part of helping with the project. It was short and beautiful. We find ourselves seated alone at our table while others are drinking up at the bar. Thami has been laughing hard with Zazi, I didn't know they knew each other that well, they seem close and they click perfectly. They've been sipping on champagne and singing along to their favourite songs. I'm surprised they like the same music, they seem like completely different people.

I just remembered the last gift I have, well,

second last gift. I give him a binded report titled "Khumba Kulture Festival" he looks surprised and confused, he goes through the first pages and keeps looking at me, he continues reading as I sip on my wine, he's been drinking juice, he doesn't drink alcohol, he says it makes him sick. I take the last sip of the glass and signal for a refill. He continues browsing the report, he wants to say something but he's speechless. He looks at me and pulls my chair closer, he's eyes are watery, he leans his face against mine rubbing his nose on mine and kissing me slowly, I feel his tears run down his cheeks and mine. He's quiet for a while.

"Buhle, is this what I think it is?" he asks. He's still leaning on me. He hasn't read the entire report but the first pages have a clear explanation of the project.

"yes my love, that is a business proposal for an arts and craft festival to be hosted in Khumba,

showcasing local talents and skills for the whole nation to enjoy, my website will be used to promote the festival and make it reach everyone who is anyone around the country and beyond, this way a lot of people will be visiting Khumba, that means more accommodation will be needed, the villagers will sell their crafts at the festival all the way from food, veggies and meat to beads, mats as well as inviting local artists to perform. It's exactly what you think and more. I've spoken to some investors and they've have agreed to support the initiative to help put Khumba on the map and showcase its' talent. I've also sent the proposal to the Department of Arts and Culture, I'm still waiting on their response but the private sector contacts I have are enough to get the ball rolling. We just need to register it and show the nation what Khumba has to offer. Happy birthday my love." I say and he buries his head on my lap and cries hysterically. Good thing the music is

loud. Nobody wants to see their future King in tears like this, even though they're tears of joy. He's making me emotional now. I wipe my tears and drink more of my wine. He finally lifts his head. His eyes are red and watery.

"You are more than enough" he says and kisses me. I love him, I really do and this much happiness in him makes me even more happier. I did it, I loved my man the way he loves, I cared for him the way he cares, he got what was due to him and he appreciates it. My heart is his and his is mine. There is no denying that.

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We're laying, on our backs, sweaty and breathless on the floor in his bachelor flat in the royal palace of amaHlubi. The room is lit with candles and rose petals are all over the floor. Thandi is very cheesy. She did this and told me to do whatever it takes to sleepover and not have panic attacks. And that's exactly what I did.

After the party, Zane dropped me at my house, I bathed and got ready for my "outing". Zazi picked me up with his car, and snuck me in the back without being seen by anyone. Zane was still in the shower when I let myself in, I wore a black see through lace lingerie that only covered my nipple with black studs, everything else was showing. He got a fright when he saw me standing leaning against the door but he wasted no time, he was all over me like a drug he's been craving for. We had so many breaks in between but we kept going. An hour or so later, we're defeated, well at least he is. With all the wine I drank, I can go all night. Grapes give me an unstoppable groove.

He rolls over and kisses me and smiles.

"Can it be my birthday every day?" he says as he continues kissing me "I could get used to this treatment, regular days all I get are quickies" he says. I'm laughing, is he complaining that I don't

give him enough sex? Talk about ungrateful

“Are you complaining?” I ask.

“Nope, I’m just saying birthday sex is longer. And the other treats that come with it, I’m not used to that on regular days” he says, smiling and shrugging. He’s complaining.

“The treat you got was to buy time, it wasn’t planned as part of the gifts, it doesn’t count” I’m laughing at his disappointed face.

“Don’t ruin it for me please, let me believe what I want to believe, it is my birthday after all.” He says, climbing on top of me and tickling me. I scream and laugh out loud, he doesn’t stop. I can’t stop laughing, my stomach hurts.

“Okay, it was a first of many gifts.” I say trying to make him stop. He stops and lifts me placing me on the bed. He rests next to me, we’re facing each other. This moment is perfect, his smile is perfect. This is what I want to go bed to,

a beautiful black man with a beautiful smile and perfect teeth. It's heaven and he's my heaven. A beautiful dream I'm living. I want this forever.

"What you did today, no one has ever done for me, Thandi made my birthdays as special as she could, I banned my parents from throwing me parties the day they decided they'll have me walk in with an elephant." He says. I try not to laugh but I fail. I can't imagine this tall buff man on an elephant. He threatens to tickle me, so I stop laughing.

"I'm glad you find this funny. but honestly baby, I don't know what I'd do without you, and what you did today, all of it, confirms that I am nothing without you, I can't imagine being without you, your energy is needed by my soul, it craves it and I'm truly, genuinely grateful for everything you did for me today. No words are enough to thank you. Enkosi s'thandwa sam." He leans forward and kisses the tip of my nose.



My stomach is filled with all sorts of happy movements. I'm happy with how today turned out. Everything was even more than I've planned. Everyone really went all out with the donations, it made him so happy, and the cash donation from Zinzi, he still can't believe he that his "too cool for school" 16 year old brother donated to his project.

"I'm happy you enjoyed your day and all your gifts" I say. Honestly the wine is slowly weighing me off. I'm sleepy.

But today's events keep flashing on my mind. It's been a wonderful day. I smile as each memory flashes on my mind. The food, the people, the music, the dance, his smile, his tears. It was perfect. I see the old man again. I wonder who's this Nothando he mistook me for, he seemed pretty sure I was her, I must really look like her though. His face lit up when he saw me, he was excited and that's what freaked

me out. I must really have a good resemblance to Nothando, the name even sounds familiar. It's mama's name. she was Nothando before she got married and became Noncumo. When you marry into a Xhosa family they give you a new name as a wife and you use it with your new surname. And everyone says I look exactly like my mother when she was my age, even my granny, my mother's mom had my features.

Wait, could he be? No ways. It can't be. He can't be my grandfather. He can't be the man that neglected my grandmother after getting her pregnant. it's impossible. He's been hiding here all along. I want to see him again, I need answers.

I'm sober and I sit up on the bed, Zane is still up, he's been watching in my sleep, weirdo. He notices my mood and gets up

"What's wrong my love?" he asks. I'm sweating and breathing heavily.

“Take deep breaths baby, don’t think about it, deep breaths, in....out....in....out, that’s it, good. Relax baby, you’re fine” he’s holding me by my shoulders. He’s becoming good at helping control my anxiety. And I can’t have another panic attack, especially on his birthday night. I can’t be that selfish.

“I think I saw my grandfather today, my mother’s dad. I think I saw him at the lodge” I say as I continue to take deep breaths.

“Where? When baby? What did he say?” he’s curious and confused

“When I went out for the call, he called me by my mothers’ name, her original name, and I look exactly like my mother when she was younger. I need to see that old man, I want some answers.” I say. I’m calm now.

“Okay, we’ll go look for him in the morning, you need to calm down and keep your pressure low

baby. Right now let's sleep. If he works at the lodge, we'll find him in the morning." he says grabbing me and placing me on his chest. My happy place, all my troubles and worries disappear when I rest like this. It's home.

"I love you Zane"

"I love you Buhle"

My mind has been at ease the entire night, rested on my mans chest and falling asleep in his arms has brought the most peaceful sleep I've ever had in a while. So peaceful that we didn't hear the 4am alarm we set for Zane to take me home. I look at the time, shit!

Makhulu is going to kill me.

.....

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More Than Enough by L.A.V

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Insert 10

We overslept, we both didn't hear the 4am alarm, the sun is already out and we're panicking. I didn't bring clothes, when I came here I wore the lace bodysuit lingerie and a coat. I'm worried and we're speeding through the village dusty roads. I keep making small prayers that my grandmother hasn't checked me in my room. Zane gave me his sweat pants and a hoodie. They're big and unflattering but I'll take that over that skimpy outfit I had on. I have my wig in my hand, my afro is all over my face, it's softer now, must be aunt'Kholeka's oil, I look like a mess. We're getting closer and my stomach is in knots, how am I going to explain this to Makhulu, how is she going to look at me after this, her innocent grandchild not sleeping at home, it's a disgrace, I'm dead.

“She’s going to kill me Zane” I’m panicking. He’s panicking too but he’s trying to hide it.

“She’s probably still asleep, it’s not even 8am” he says.

“That woman wakes up at 5am everyday for her morning prayer, of cause she’s up. 8am is lunchtime for her.” he clearly doesn’t know my grandmother, that woman is militant and very time conscious, everything she does is by her timetable, every hour and minute has its own duty, from the moment she gets up.

“Atleast the front door is still closed, maybe she hasn’t gone to your room” he’s blabbing and it’s not helping.

“Don’t leave until I say so, just in case she kicks me out of her house” I say and walk out. He wants to laugh but he knows this is not the time nor the place for that. I run up the hill and jump over the boundary wall and enter the room by

the window. I pull it back to close it.

“Where do you come from?” it’s her, she’s sitting at the small sofa behind the door, her face is full of rage. Oh shit!

“uhm Makhulu” I’m shocked, I’m sweating and I’m out of breath.

“Speak!” she yells. She’s scary

“I was with Zane”

“So early? Where did you sleep?” she asks. I’m quiet.

“Speak! Buhle” she’s really angry, I have never seen her in such a mood.

“I slept over at Zane’s place” I can’t look at her. My face drops, I’m facing the floor.

“At the royal palace? so you’re telling me that while we’re asleep you sneak out and sleep at other people’s houses? How long has this been going on? Have you even slept here, or you’ve

made a new home eMaHlubini?”

I can't answer this. I'm really scared. She gets up and gets closer. I take a step back, she pushes me aside and looks out of the window.

“Tell him to come in” she says. No ways, she's not bringing Zane into this. I can't, I wont. I don't respond.

“So you're protecting him?, Buhle what's gotten into you?” she asks.

“Makhulu, it's not his fault.” I say.

“You're defending him?, it's fine stay here, I'll go fetch him myself” she says.

“No wait, I'll call him” I don't see this ending well. I text him. A few seconds later, Zane walks in. He's still wearing his pajamas, he's embarrassed.

“Sit, both of you” she says as we sit on the bed. I keep looking at him, he's fiddling with his



pajama strings, avoiding eye contact with Makhulu.

“What is this, this thing you’re doing? What is it?” we’re both quiet. I don’t understand this question, we’re just two people in love, that’s all and I can’t answer like that, she’d be offended and feel disrespected.

“It’s all my fault, I’m sorry” he says. Is he crazy.

“No Makhulu, I’m to blame, he had nothing to do with this” I say, he looks at me and he’s annoyed by my response. Makhulu looks defeated.

“Zanemvula, what will your parents say about this? Bringing a girl over to the royal palace, having sex with a girl you’re not married to, you’re going to be King and this is how you carry yourself. Driving around at night and early mornings just for sex?” she says.

She’s being unfair now, she can’t put all the

blame on him, and It's not just sex, we're enjoy spending time together and our living conditions are making it hard for us to do that. Zane's face is full of sadness.

"Makhulu, it's not just sex, and it's not his fault, I want to spend time with him, yesterday was his birthday and I wanted to be with him, that's all" I say in his defence. He's looking at me.

"I love Buhle, ever since she came to this village, my life has changed, she makes me happy. Yesterday she threw a surprise birthday lunch for me, she organized my old friends and colleagues, she gave me something no one has ever given me, love, true love. I need you to understand that this is not just about sex. I love your granddaughter and I want to be with her." he says, he's holding my hand, Makhulu's eyes are wide open with shock by Zane's gesture. I'm embarrassed, I want to pull away but he's holding me tight.

“Are you using protection?” Boom! She drops the bomb. We’re not going to have sex education with my grandmother. I’m not answering this.

“Yes, we are” he answers. I’m surprised he answered. He looks at me and shrugs.

“Do your parents know about this thing of yours?” she asks. I’d also like to know, I’ve never asked him.

“Yes they do, I didn’t tell them, they overheard a conversation from our staff.” He says, he looks worried. I want to hear more

“Have they spoken to you about it? what do they think about it?” she’s digging deep and he doesn’t like it. I have a feeling I’m not going to like this.

“They asked me about it and I confirmed it, I told them how I felt about Buhle and my intentions with her. You need to understand

that my parents have always tried to control how I live all my life, I've never had a say about what happens in my life and the one time I get to make my own choice, they have a problem with it." he says.

Hold on! Did I hear this correctly? Did he say his parents don't approve of our relationship? Why hasn't he told me any of this? They don't even know me, they've never met me, how do they have their minds made up already? I pull my hand from his.

"Why do they have a problem with it?" I ask. I don't like where this is going but I need to know. He sees my reaction and is scared.

"Buhle, calm down. Let me explain" he's worried and this means there's more to this than he's telling me.

"I'm waiting" I fold my arms. He better start speaking now.

“Well in royal families, the sons have to continue living according to the traditions of their ancestors and things need to be done in that manner, so when one rails off those ways, the royal family sees it as disrespect. “ he says. why is he beating around the bush? I’m angry and he can see it. What is he keeping from me, I can sense that there’s something he’s not telling me and he’s not going anywhere until he says it.

“Get to the point Zane, say it, your parents don’t want a tattooed city girl with no morals and scars in between her thighs, they think I’m corrupting you and denting your good guy image, they don’t think I’m worthy of your love, they think I do not deserve you, say it Zane, speak the truth, your parents think I’m not worthy of their prince” I’m angry and the volume of my voice is rising.

“Buhle no” Makhulu warns.

“What Makhulu, that’s what this is all about, they don’t want a damaged girl close to their precious son” my voice is shaking and I’m getting emotional. I don’t want to cry, I wont.

“Buhle, it’s not about that, I don’t care what they think of you, I love you and that’s all that matters, please don’t say such things, I love you and I want you.” His sadness is written all over his face.

“There’s nothing you can do about that Zane, what your parents want, your parents get. We’re just wasting our time here” I’m crying and his face is drained.

“Don’t say that, that’s not true, what we have is more than what my parents think. You know we’re more than that. Don’t say such things, please baby” he reaches out for my hand and I pull it away and stand next to the wardrobe.

Who am I fooling here, all this time, he’s known

all along that his parents won't approve of our relationship. I've been a laughing case in this village, walking around thinking things will be smooth and easy, they're not and everyone around me knew all this time. How could I have been so stupid, to think that I could be seen as worthy to be with someone so respectful, so generous and innocent. I don't deserve this, they're right, I could never be seen or respected in the way he is. This man is going to be King and I never thought about the future, this won't last long, not with his duties. I'm nothing like him, I will ruin his reputation. He doesn't need that. He doesn't need me.

"Buhle please don't do this, we've come this far on our own, we can get further on our own." He says

"Who are we kidding here Zane, this wasn't going to work long term, it's just a phase, did you really think I'd be Queen when you're King,

we come for different worlds, it's impossible" I says. he stands and walks closer to me.

"Buhle please, I'm begging you, don't do this to us, don't let people's perception of us break us like this, we're stronger than that." He holds my hands and pulls me closer to him. I'm crying, I don't want to lose him but I don't know where this, us, is going and that scares me. The uncertainty of our relationship makes me insecure and weak. I don't have fight in me for this and he sees that, he sees that I'm scared.

"I don't want to lose you and I don't want you to have to choose between your family and me, it shouldn't be like that, love shouldn't make us choose" I say as I hug him back.

"You won't lose me, baby, we'll be fine, I'll never leave you, I promise." He says. he holds my face and kisses me on the lips.

"Heeey, not in my house." It's Makhulu, she's



been sitting here all this time and I forgot. We both sit on the bed and face her.

“I knew this would happen, I knew this day would come, from the time I saw you carrying her after her first panic attack, it’s not going to be easy, it’s not going to be fun, your family is strict Zane, I know. This is why I was scared of this union from the beginning. But it’s clear it’s too late to turn back now. We can undo a lot of things but we can’t undo love.” She says. So this is what she’s been warning me about all along, this is why she and Thami have been on my case about seeing Zane. It makes sense.

“It’s going to be fine, I’ll make sure of it.” he says. I want to believe him but his parents power over him, scares me the most.

“I love you Buhle, I can’t lose you, I won’t lose you. I will do everything to make this right.” he says. His words calms me down, he loves me and I need to trust that he will fight for us. Love

is difficult, love is not for the fainthearted, love is work and love is resilience. And I love this man with all of me.

“I love you too, we’re in this together” I hug him tighter. He kisses my forehead and excuses himself and leaves.

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I’m having breakfast with aunt’Kholeka under the tree, she’s updating me about her boyfriend’s case. Only two of those man have been arrested, the other, who seemed to be the ring leader, hasn’t been found. She’s more open now, she tells me things. Her boyfriend’s daughter contacted her, she told her that she has been accepted at university but doesn’t have enough money for registration and for studying the following year. She’s worried about her because her father made sure her daughter had everything she needed. It’s really sad that her mother still thinks that her daughter going

to school is a waste of time and money. She would rather have her marry an older man just so they can get the fortunes of the royalty, what kind of a mother does that. Sell off her daughter for money, rather than investing on her education so she could take care of them and not have to depend on any man. I should try help her find a bursary, aunt'Kholeka says she's smart, it can't be hard to find her one.

"What course is she studying?" I ask.

"Teaching, she says she wants to teach here in Khumba Primary when she's done" she says.

"Well, that's great, I think I can help her get a bursary and most of those bursaries place the student at a school in the district of their choice immediately after they graduate." I say, her face lights up, she's smiling.

"That would be great Buhle, she'd appreciate that a lot much, I'll call her to come meet you so

you can talk to her about it, I really feel like I need to continue where her father left off, he really wanted more for his daughter and I can't shake off the feeling that I need to honor that by helping her. Thank you Buhle" she's smiling.

"What about you? What do you want?" I ask. That came out of nowhere and I think she noticed that. She's quiet for a while.

"I don't know Buhle, life hasn't been an easy journey for me, i don't know what I want from it anymore" she says, the sadness in her eyes is deep.

"You can't lose hope like that aunty, you have to find what makes you happy and do it, life hasn't been easy to a lot of people but everyone moves on, it's not a curse, it's a journey and we need to keep moving" I say.

"It's easy for you to say, you're young and educated, there's a lot of opportunities for you

out there, can't say much about this old lady here" she says

"Okay, let's start here, what did you want to be when you were younger?" I ask, we're doing this and we're going to do it now. Let's go.

"At first I wanted to be a radio presenter, then a model, and when I heard someone went to the moon, I wanted to be them too" she says

"Geez, you were very ambitious" I say and we both laugh. I could never imagine her as a radio presenter, she's too stubborn and self centered, plus she curses a lot.

"But what is that one thing you enjoy doing the most?" she's looking at me weird, like I should just stop with the questions.

"You know I'm lazy, the only thing that occupies my time is Asakhe and her stubborn afro" she says. uh hah. Now we're going somewhere

"Yes, the oils you use on Asakhe's hair, the ones

you gave me to use, you made it right?" I ask "yes" she's giving me the "and then" look. She doesn't realise her own talent.

"Do you know how many women out there are struggling to maintain their natural hair? Do you know the difference your oils have done to my hair in just a few days?" I say. She still doesn't see where im going with this, sh'es confused.

"Yeah, but there are a lot of hair products that they can use out there" she says.

"Those products are not natural hair friendly, they accommodate those with relaxed and straightened hair, aunty your oils are made from natural oils they're organic and do not damage the scalp, it's what everyone wants. I say make more of them and sell them" I say. she's laughing, she thinks im joking.

"Woah! Hold on, sell them where? In Khumba? Don't play with me" she's laughing

“Not only here, across the country, people can order them from you and you can courier them to your clients, you will work from home. That’s what people do these days” I say, she looks interested.

“Okay, sounds interesting, but you need to show me all of this in detail first, then I’ll decide” she says. I’m excited

“Great, I’ll draft something and give it to you, you’re going to be rich aunty, no more Redds for you, you’ll soon be sipping on French champagne” I say, she’s laughing.

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves here, besides, I like my Redds, I’m a Redds woman for life” we both laugh out loud. She’s right, every time Thami and I try new wines, she always has her 750ml Redds lined up, it’s all she drinks, she’s not interested in anything else.

“What are you two laughing at?” Makhulu

appears behind us. aunty gives me a warning look as I was about to talk.

“It’s an inside joke Makhulu” I say.

“Eshee” she looks annoyed.

Vrrr Vrrr it’s a text

\*I found the old man, he’s here at the lodge, will you be able to come?\* Zane

Oh my gosh. I totally forgot about that. I need to meet him. I haven’t even told Makhulu about him.

\*can you bring him here, I want Makhulu to be present as well\* I text back

\*okay, give me a few minutes.\*Zane

“Makhulu, yesterday at Zane’s birthday lunch I saw a man, he kept calling me Nothando. I put two and two together and I figured he might be mama’s father.” I say. Makhulu looks shocked.

“What did he say exactly Buhle” aunt’Kholeka



“He said, Nothando, my child is that you? He kept repeating it, I got scared and ran away, he didn’t look well, he looked sick.” I say.

“And he could’ve noticed the resemblance because you look exactly like your mother when she was your age, and she looked like her mother, she was light skinned and beautiful like you, I saw the pictures.” She says.

“I asked Zane to bring him here, I want to ask him things, I’ve never really met anyone from my mother’s side” I say. They’re both still in shock and speechless.

“Are they coming now?” Aunt’kholeka.

“Yes, they’re on their way now, I wanted you to be present when he gets here” I say

“Okay, we’ll first have to confirm if he really is who you think he is, then we’ll take it from there” Makhulu says and walks back to the house, she’s probably going to prepare a feast

for this 'blast from the past' session we're about to have. I'm nervous, I'm about to meet the man that conceived and abandoned my mother, the man that refused to be a father to his child, my mother. What kind of a man does that? My emotions are getting the worst of me.

"Buhle you need to pull yourself together before they get here and when they do, take it one question at a time, don't overreact, you'll have another anxiety episode." Aunt'kholeka warns me as she wipes off my tears and hands me a glass of water.

They're here, I see Zane's car park outside the gate. They walk in, Zane is helping the old man walk even though he has a stick in one hand. We stand to greet, he's looking at me smiling, he's creepy. We make our way to the house. Zane keeps rubbing my shoulder, he can sense that I'm tense. We all sit at the lounge.

The old man hasn't taken his eyes off me.

Makhulu comes to join us, I can smell the food from the kitchen, she's cooking. Every time someone comes to our home, a meal is cooked for them. She lays out drinks on a tray and greets them.

"Molo tata" she greets him with a handshake. He's smiling. He needs to stop smiling and start explaining.

"We hear my granddaughter here looks like your daughter, tell us about her please" Makhulu. The old man takes a sip of his drink and takes a deep breath

"Nothando is my daughter, my only daughter" he says, taking deep breathes in between. I did say he looked sick. He continues "her mother and I were teenagers when we met, we were so in love but because I didn't have money, I couldn't marry her" he breathes." So when I found out she was pregnant I knew had to go find work to support my family" he sips and

breathes. “the train to the mines left in the early mornings and I didn’t have a chance to tell her I was going to come back and marry her, I left immediately without any explanation, there were no phones in our village, I couldn’t call and the letters I wrote, she never responded” he breathes. “by the time I’d made enough money to come back and fetch her, I was told she died after giving birth. I went to the hospital to find out where the baby was they told me she was placed in an orphanage but couldn’t tell me where because I couldn’t prove I was the father but one nurse was kind enough to share the baby’s name to help find her. I searched all over until I lost hope and went back to the mine” he takes a deep breath.

This is not what I expected, I wanted to be angry at him for leaving my mother fatherless all her life but I can’t, what he just said changed everything.

“But if you never saw the baby how did you know how she’d look like when she was older?” I ask. He reaches for his inside pocket in his jacket and takes out a photo, it’s blurry and looks old.

“Look at this” he hands it to me. It’s mama, this woman looks like me and mama. She’s beautiful and the man next to her, wait! It’s him.

“Is this her? “ I ask. Is this my grandmother?

“That’s her, that’s Nothando’s mom, she looks like you, exactly.” I pass the photo and everyone is amazed by the resemblance.

“I’m Nothando’s daughter” I say, he smiles.

“Where is Nothando, I would love to meet her and apologise, she must hate me with all her heart, I want to explain things to her, I want to meet my daughter” he says. there’s silence in the room. We’re all looking at each other and no one is saying anything. I want to speak but my

emotions are holding me back.

“Well, tata, Nothando has unfortunately left us, she passed away 10 years ago” Makhulu breaks the news. His face falls in his hands and he weeps.

“It’s all my fault, God is punishing me for all the bad decisions and mistakes I made, I was never good enough for her mother, I couldn’t afford to buy her nothing, I was a useless man” he says as he cries. He’s blaming himself and I can’t help but feel bad.

“No tata, it’s not your fault, you did all you could do, it was out of your control” I try to comfort him, he wipes his tears and sips on the drink again.

“So you’re my granddaughter? When I saw you yesterday I was so happy, I have never seen you before that day in Khumba, how long have you been here?” he says.

“Over a month now, I lived in Edernville with my father, your daughters husband.” I say.

“ooh I see, what happened to her? how did she die?” he asks, it’s quiet again

“She got hit by a car” I say, he looks worried.

“How did you come to Khumba”

“aaah it’s a long story my child and with my breathing, it could take us all day” he says. he looks tired.

“I can help you tell it, I was there from the beginning” Zane says, I’m confused, he knows this man, he knows my grandfather. He nods as approval

“On my way back from school, I found Oom’Ray, your grandfather, in town after he and other men had been dropped off by a truck. They were seating next to the road, they were lost, hungry and looked very sick. I approached them and they told me they were the few mine

workers than had a lung disease and were fired for not being as productive as the others, so they were dropped at the nearest town. I took them to the hospital where they were admitted and treated, two died in the following weeks and six were left. I decided to take them back with me to the royal palace, I begged my father to give them jobs, they worked on the grounds until I became manager at the lodge and hired them to do maintenance and landscaping, they did a good job and I've kept them since then.

" Zane says. I'm shocked by this, my eyes are wide open and I'm speechless

"True, Rhadebe saved our lives and he was still a young school boy then" he says with a smile and pats Zane on his shoulder. I really don't know what to say.

"What a small world we live in" aunt'Kholeka breaks the silence. She right, all this time, I fell in love with a man that saved my grandfather's



life, this warms my heart. Life truly is a beautiful journey, the way paths cross and how people meet, it's amazing. I look at Zane, I want to hug him so much but I can't.

"Well, this turned out to be a great afternoon, my grand daughter finally get to meet the other side of his family" Makhulu says with a smile. "let's all gather in the dinning table, I will serve lunch now, I'm sure everyone is hungry, we can use this time to get to know eachother" she's all smiles and everyone gets up. Zane walks slowly and holds my hand, I quickly kiss it, without getting caught.

"You're a good man Zane, and you deserve good things" I whisper

"I deserve you, you're my good thing" he whispers back and plants a kiss on my forehead. The whole room is looking at us. Makhulu looks defeated.

“Can you not do that when I’m around please” she says.

“Sorry” we both say and seat on the table. It smells lovely, there are different salads and grilled chicken. Makhulu says a prayer and we all dig in.

“So Rhadebe, she’s the reason you’ve been smiling and giggling on your own, looking like a crazy person?” My grandfather says, he’s smiling and sideyeing Zane.

“Yes, she is, she’s the one driving me crazy, you all teased me a lot this month” they both laugh.

“You chose well, if she’s anything like her grandmother, she’s a rear treasure that needs to be kept and nurtured. Treat her right and protect her” he says. Zane is smiling, he looks relieved.

“Do you have any other family?” I ask.

“No, it’s just me and my mine brothers, they’re

my family now, well and you ofcause” he says, smiling at me

“Where do you live?” aunt’kholeka

“I stay alone in my house close to the lodge, my brothers and I built houses for ourselves on the land Rhadebe gave us.” He says smiling at Zane. That’s my man, land distributor. I rub his thigh under the table, he’s blushing.

“So, let me introduce everyone to you, this is my granny, my fathers mother. That lady there is my aunt, my father’s sister, she has two children, Thami and Asakhe.” I say.

“It’s good to meet you all, I’m very happy right now. Is your Thami the one that works at the lodge with us?” he asks. Ofcause he knows Thami, he demands attentions wherever he goes.

“Yup that’s him” I say. he’s laughing and we all start laughing.

“I’m Raymond Jaca and I am your grandfather” he says, he looks proud and that makes me happy. I walk around the table and hug him. My family is growing and now I have a piece of my mother on earth. Life is indeed an amazing journey.

.....

I’m updating Thami about today’s events over wine, from being caught entering my room through the window to our khumbulekhaya moment.

“Mzala, you’re telling me that Makhulu now knows that you’re sexually active and that Oom’Ray is your grandfather” he’s laughing so hard. This is our second bottle.

“Thami, she even asked if we’re using condoms, I died” I say and we burst into laughter.

“No Mzala your day was a movie, a blockbuster” he says as he refills his glass. My phone rings.

It's him. I'm smiling

"Hello my love" I say.

"Why are you so happy at this time? Wait, are drinking?" he says

"Just a little my love, what you miss me?" he's laughing

"That doesn't sound like just a little and yes I miss you, a lot" he says.

"I miss you too baby but after today, I won't be coming there anytime soon, Makhulu will kill us both" I say

"I guess it's back to quickies then" he says. I'm blushing.

"And we could do more picnics" me, he's smiling

"Yes baby, more of that. But I called to talk about the festival, but clearly you can't talk business when you're like this, so let's have a

meeting at the lodge tomorrow and go through everything, we need to start this early next year, so we only have a few weeks to get it together” he says

“You so sexy when you’re serious and making orders” I say, i’m horny and drunk

“ookay, clearly this is not the right time for this business talk.” he says.

“It’s the right time for you to be all over me” I say. I really want him. Thami is side eyeing me.

“Don’t torture me like this please, we’ll talk tomorrow” he says

“Or we could sweat it out tonight and talk about it tomorrow” I say, I can hear him breathing.

“Buhle, stop, see you tomorrow. I love you” he says and hangs up before I could respond. I got him.

“Mzala, you are dangerous, yhoow” good thing

you're using condoms, otherwise, we'd have little princes running all over the yard." He says as he lays down. I'm also tired and drunk, and I have to walk back to the house. I hope Makhulu is asleep, she doesn't know that I drink, she doesn't know that any of us drink. Thami walks me to the front door and runs back to his flat. I open the door and hold on to the wall, I need to balance before I fall.

I lock and make my way silently down the passage into my room. I immediately throw myself on the bed. I go through my phone and view pictures of him I took when he's not watching. He's always smiling, there's that one I took when he got out of the shower, he's naked and beautiful. My body is warm.

I take off my clothes and select camera, video option. I move the phone up and down my naked body and I touch myself with my other hand, focusing on my breasts and my thighs. I

select his contact and press send. Vrrr Vrrr

\*I'm going to get you for this, you naughty girl,  
thanks for the motivation though\*Zane

\*I want you to get me\*me

The wine is getting the best of me. My eyes are  
heavy, I pull my blankets over me and sleep.

.....

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More Than Enough by L.A.V

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Insert 11

December holidays in Khumba are a full time  
Caribbean carnival, the village gets smaller as  
more people arrive to visit, there are  
celebrations in each home, fancy cars driven by  
visiting grandchildren are strolling around,



everyone is happier, people walk around in groups singing, there are imigidi (initiates homecoming) and amabhaso (kitchen parties) invitations arriving, it's insane. Zazi is one of the boys that went to the mountains for initiation, his homecoming ceremony is in a few weeks, Zane has been very busy with the planning and making sure everything goes well, he has let me handle the business side of things for the Khumba Kulture Festival. We decided to go into it as partners, he's exact word were "you're more informed about this than I am". I handle the marketing and public relations side and he handles the operations and finance side. He also lets me do most of the talking in meetings, he says I know how to handle them, he's too soft for business. We have had several meetings with the department of arts and culture trying to get them to get on board but they're too slow, so we've decided to go with the sponsors from my father's contact lists. We

have decided to host the festival on a monthly basis, on every first weekend of the month, we will launch the festival in February. The word has spread around the village and everyone is excited, people have been working harder to prepare their products for the festival, even Aunt'kholeka will be selling her oil hair product there, yes she agreed. I created a facebook page for her product and people have been placing orders regularly, she's busy and has even hired two ladies to help her.

The royal council gave us problems in the beginning, demanding that all proceeds go to them and that all vendors pay a fee for selling at the lodge, greedy bastards. They don't even appreciate the number of guests they will host at the lodge. I didn't like that and I didn't accept it so for those reasons we then decided to find a location they have no control over and that has lead to the construction of the first ever

arts and crafts gallery in Khumba. The funding we received from the department was enough for the project. Everyone in Khumba is excited by the opportunities this festival is bringing, especially the woman, they can finally get the income they deserve and not have to solely depend on their husbands. My website has reached hundreds of thousand visits and the news of the festival are well received, the booking at the lodge have doubled, it is almost fully booked and we haven't even launched the festival. Zane is very happy about the progress and working together is not that bad, even though sometimes we lack concentration, he can't keep his hands to himself.

Office quickies have become our ritual. He wanted me to have an office at the lodge, I rejected that offer, we can never work in the same space and besides the lodge is a bit too plain for me, so I added an office in the gallery

building plan, that's where I'll be working but in the meantime I work at the lodge and he's not fond of the fact that I'll be leaving once the construction is done. He's also not fond of the fact that I use my own money to market the project, he said I should've asked him for it but he soon realized that I'm not that kind of woman. I'm independent and I had to use my trust fund money eventually and this initiative is a great investment.

I told my father about it, he's proud, although he was a bit sad at the realization that I'll be staying longer in Khumba. He tried to lend a hand to help but I honestly wanted to prove to him that I'm capable of doing this on my own, I am the daughter of the most successful business strategists in the country, I inherited his business savvy mind from him and I'm doing pretty well.

Tamkhulu and his friends have been regular

visitors, I think one of the man likes Makhulu, he's always complimenting her and her food, she likes the attention. It's hard to watch my grandmother blush. It's a disturbing image, maybe that's how she feels when Zane is all over me.

.....

"You've been working all morning, let's get lunch" he says.

"I can't, I'm trying to get as much media attention as possible, I want the whole world to know about this, these people are depending on us, I can't let them down" I say.

I have emailed so many media houses to at least write a paragraph article, still not answer.

"An hour lunch break won't hurt my love, come on" he says and pulls me off my chair

"Aaaah Zane, let me send this quickly then we can go" I protest, he's not pleased.

“5...4...3...2...1... done, let’s go” he lifts me from my chair and carries me out of the office to the car. I’m screaming and laughing as we walk pass some of the staff who seem to be bothered by our disruptive behavior. He couldn’t let me send one last email.

“Zane, put me down” I say. He’s ignoring me, we get into the car and we’re gone.

“The staff saw all of that, we can’t act like that in front of them, they’ll lose respect for us, especially you, their boss” I say. He doesn’t seem bothered

“They must concern themselves with their jobs and let us do ours” he’s so unbothered. We’re driving to town and just like any other day in Khumba, it’s hot.

“I’m feeling hot, I wore this cardigan in the morning, the heat in this place will be the death of me” I say as I take off my cardigan and throw

it at the back seat. His mood immediately changes to serious.

“Don’t throw clothes like that, you fold it and place it properly.” He’s such a perfectionist. I roll my eyes

“Maybe I should bring my car and toss whatever I want” I say. he doesn’t seem pleased.

“You’re going to bring a mini cooper to Khumba, the villagers will eat you alive” he says. I know what he’s doing.

“I don’t care what people think of me anymore, I will even drive it top down and wear my Gucci sunglasses with my 22inch weave hitting the wind” I say, he wants to laugh.

“You wouldn’t do that, yeah when you first got here, you would, but now, never. The village has brought out the villager in you, you rarely wear your wigs, you wear colorful clothes, now you always do your nails shorter and you only put on

lipstick or lip gloss now.” he says with a silly smile. I punch his shoulder and he laughs.

He’s right, I’m becoming more comfortable with my own hair, honestly, Aunt’kholeka’s hair product helps so much, it’s so easy to style it now, it’s soft and moist. I hardly put on makeup because it melts before the sunsets. And the clothes, I blame Zazi, I’ve been his muse the past month, he creates these pieces and gives them to me and I won’t say no to free clothes, he refused to let me pay him. I guess pride is a Rhadebe thing, they’re all the same, even the little one but they’re also a hardworking bunch, everything they do they fully commit and produce sufficient results.

“What are you smiling about?” he asks.

“I'm just thinking about how I hated this place when I got here, I hated my father for bringing me here but now I find myself at my happiest in a place I once hated” I say. he reaches for my



hand and kisses it.

“It’s amazing what love can do to people, ever since you got here, I feel free, no fear and lots of hope and peace within myself, something I’ve been wanting all my life” he says as he parks in front of our favorite café. We walk in and all eyes are on us, I’ll never get used to this attention that comes with dating a prince. We find a table and place our orders. I order a chicken salad and ice tea, Zane orders steak and chips and coke. He hates salads, he calls it “goat food”. He eats a lot of meat but is still in good shape, wish my body was like his. I eat one slice of pizza and it goes straight to my thighs and appears as cellulite.

The restaurant is busy but the atmosphere is relaxed. People keep staring now and again, especially when Zane is being affectionate, which is almost all the time.

“Don’t do that” he says, noticing me pull my

hand from his.

“I don’t like how they’re looking at us, they should just mind their own business” I say.

“They shouldn’t bother you baby, I understand you’re not used to it but please, don’t let it get to you. They’ll get tired and eventually leave.

Besides, I never got this much attention until you came around” he says rubbing my hand. I blush

“That’s more like it, I like seeing you smile, you have a beautiful smile, I hope our kids look like you” he says. Kids? woah slow down boy.

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves here, baby steps remember” I say,

“Can’t a man dream?” he says laughing. That’s where it should stay, in his dreams, in his head. I’m nowhere ready to be anyone’s mother, I still need some mothering myself, responsibility of another human being is the last thing I need.

“Dreaming is good, keep it there” I say and kiss him, passionately he pulls me closer and holds me by my face and we’re interrupted by the waiter interrupts us bringing our food. He says a short prayer and we eat.

“I don’t understand how you eat that goat food” he says looking a bit disgusted.

“I don’t understand how you eat steak and chips for lunch, it’s so heavy” I say, giving him the same look

“I’m worried about our married life, I will starve as a husband” he says.

Marriage, what has gotten into him today. First the baby now marriage. And I can’t cook, what does he think he’ll eat. Atleast salads you just throws things in one bowl.

“Marriage? What’s with these talk now? Are you trying to tell me something?” I ask.

“We will get married eventually, so I just want to

know if you'll feed me?" he says, confidently.

Don't Xhosa men propose, like go down on one knee and ask for marriage, this one just told me we're going to get married, it's not a question, it's more like a statement, a fact.

"You'll have to propose first, then we get married, you don't just tell people you will marry them and I can't cook, no one's ever taught me." I say, he's eyes are wide open, almost choking on chips.

"You can't cook? This is a first, I've never heard of a woman that can't cook. Oh well at least Thandi taught me, so what I cook, you will eat. Meat every day." He says, winking at me. I will not be fed meat every day, is he trying to make me fat. I won't fall for it.

"We'll see about that" I say. my phone rings, it's the Premier.

"I have to take this" I say and walk out of the

café. It's noisy in there. From the corner of my eye I spot a girl talking to Zane. One of the investors is congratulating me on the project and wants to be part of the launch, she also wants to invite me to a woman empowerment seminar. Things are really looking good, this is the chance for me to socialize with the local businesses and spread the word about the project. I'm all smiles as I end the call. Zane is still talking to that girl, he looks serious, her back is facing me, she can't see me coming. I walk up to the table and sit. What's happening here, their faces are serious, like I interrupted something. I look at Zane then at her. She gives me a cheeky look and walks away.

"What was that about?" I ask. Zane looks annoyed and some what angry.

"It's some girl from the village, she came to say hi" he says. Doesn't look like that to me.

"She was here too long to just be greeting,

what's going on? Who is she?" he better start speaking before I cause a scene.

"We had a thing, but it ended way before you came, she's just bitter" he says. So his exes are now showing up and disrespecting me? I will not have that. My mood has changed, he cant allow his floozies to disrespect our space and expect me to be okay about it.

"She better stay away before I put her where she belongs" I say and sip on my ice tea.

"Oh it's nothing, she's just a bitter ex, it wasn't even a relationship" he says.

"I don't care, and I don't want to know the nature of your thing with her, she must know her place that's all" I say. This village girl better not test me, I will pass it with flying colors.

"You're so sexy when you're mad" he says playing with my chin. This is not the time, he's the one letting his floozy at our table

“stop” I move his hand and he continues

“I know what we can do with that anger though” he says biting his lower lip. He’s so sexy but I’m not falling for it, I’m still mad. His eyes are locked on mine and are very seductive. He keeps licking his lower lip as he seductively brushes my hand. I want him, now. We get the bill and walk to the car.

Thirty minutes later we’re out of breath at the backseat parked in the middle of the forest, naked and satisfied.

.....

Zane had to go check on Zazi and I’ve been at the office all day. I enjoy this kind of work, it doesn’t even feel like work, it’s fun. Watching this project come together is beautiful. I don’t feel the pressure to rush home because I’ll be alone, it’s Thursday and Makhulu has gone to church, Thami is always missing when Makhulu

is away, maybe he's with his boyfriend and aunt'Kholeka has no time to chill with me, her business is keeping her on her toes. So I've decided to use this time to continue working until Zane is back to take me home. I also have to go to the local tailor who's making my umbaco for Zazi's mgidi, I've been seeing a lot of people wear it when attending village rituals and ceremonies, it's beautiful, so I decided to get one as well. I chose to a red one because everyone here usually wears the white one and I wanted something different plus red looks good on me. This is going to be my second fitting, Zane is also having his traditional attire made by the same woman, he's just not interested in the fitting process, his will be white.

The village has been very busy this week, a lot of ceremonies and celebrations have been happening, everyone is in their celebratory moods, young men are walking around singing



and drinking, girls are always gathered practicing songs for imigidi, women and men are preparing for upcoming events, it's busy and it's noisy. I'm sitting in the office I can hear the young men singing, I have lost concentration and decided to watch them through the window, the sunset has turned the sky orange and the mountains are becoming darker. Boys are fetching the cows and girls are carrying buckets filled with water for the night and the early morning tea.

"Help Help, someone Help" there's a cry but I can't see or hear where it is coming from.

"Someone please help, help" it continues and I walk towards the gate. I see the young boy crying for help, people are walking towards him, he is out of breath and crying.

"Please help, they've beat them, they've beat them really hard" he says, he's still crying. People are confused and want to know more,

everyone is talking at the same time and not making sense.

“Where are they?” I ask,

“Behind the school, come quickly, they’re bleeding” he says. Only a few run after him, people are still loud and making no sense, some are shouting with anger, some have stayed behind looking rather uninterested, it’s like they know what is going on and don’t want to be part of it. The school yard is full of people, cursing and shouting, it’s a confusing scene because some are crying and the others are angry. I make my way through the crowd, there are three young men laying naked on the grass, their hands tied behind their backs and their bodies are covered with blood. Their faces are buried in the ground, they are surrounded by angry men who are taking turns at kicking and hitting them. This is just wrong. Why isn’t anyone calling the police? What did these men

do? Is this how mob justice looks like, I was closer and one of the victims lifts his head, his face is covered with blood and soil.

“Mzala” he says.

Oh shit!

“Stop, No no, do not touch them, don’t you dare get any closer” I say running to the semi circle formed by the angry men, I try with all my power to push them back, it’s not working they’re stronger than me, they’re pushing me aside. I grab a timber with nails in it and swing it towards them, they look surprised by my determination.

“Get back and let these people go now” I say, I’m crying as I watch Thami struggle to breath.

“Sisi, move, we will teach these moffies a lesson, we don’t accept their demonic acts here” one of the men shouts, getting closer to me. I swing the timber and hit his face, he

bleeds immediately, I haven't stopped swinging it, some have moved back and others are joining the fight.

"These people have done nothing to you, you will not hurt them, you will not lay a hand on them" I say.

I have never been this scared in my life

"Thami get up, get up" I shout to them, they're powerless.

"Oh you're one of them, this is not a place for moffies." The other one says.

The two other victims have gotten up, Thami is still laying on the grass, naked and blooded. What kind of human being does this to another human, what kind of hatred must one possess to inflict so much pain, physically and emotionally to another person, solely because of who they fell in love with.

Thami's body is laying still on the grass, he's

not moving now, he's friends have untied themselves and are helping him up, he's not moving. Oh my gosh. My eyes are wide open.

"What did you do, he's not moving. You killed him, you killed my cousin, Thami! Thami get up" I'm screaming at the top of my lungs and the crowd is suddenly silent. I run to him and try to get him up, he's heavy and unconscious.

"Look at what you've done, you killed him" I scream and grab the timber and hit every living thing in front of me. My eyes are teary and my sight is blurry. I hear people screaming as they scatter away, one of the men trips and falls. I stand over him and hit him, hard, continuously, he's crying and covering his head with his arms

"Ohh it's not nice now, you treat people like trash and you don't like it when it's done to you? I will kill you, I will kill you just like you did my cousin" I cannot stop, my anger has taken over and feel every blood splatter on my face as I

continue to hit him. He will pay for this, he will feel every pain he inflicted to these men and I will make sure he never heals. My heartbeat is racing and my arms are painful from all the pounding.

He's still crying begging for forgiveness.

"You want forgiveness? For killing my cousin? An innocent man? You want me to forgive you for their pain?" I say.

There is blood all over the grass, he is bleeding and some of it is on my t-shirt and shoes. I walk around the field and collect rocks and bricks. This man messed with the wrong woman, you hurt someone I love, I hurt you too. I throw the rocks and bricks at him. he's crying becomes softer and slower.

"Buhle stop, Buhle No" I hear a voice behind me, it's coming from afar and it's getting louder.

I continue to throw the rocks at him

“You do not hit people because of who they love, you do not kill people for loving someone and today you will learn and tell all your other friends, I will teach you a lesson you will never forget, Nx!” I say, picking up more rocks. My voice is trembling and my anger has escalated. I cannot catch my breath and I cannot stop crying as I watch Thami laying there, helplessly and unconscious.

“Buhle stop, don’t do this baby” it’s Zane, he’s holding me from behind as he removes the rocks from my hands. I’m shaking, terribly and crying hysterically. He hugs me tighter as I fall on my knees. He looks scared as he navigates the bloody scene with his eyes. He’s eyes are wide open. I can’t believe he saw this side of me.

“They killed him, they killed Thami” I’m screaming, there is blood in my hands, on my clothes and my shoes.

“He’s breathing, he’s still breathing” one of his friends shout. I get up and run towards them. they carry him and we all run towards the lodge.

“Zane go get the car and meet us back here, hurry now!” I say. He runs off. I’m trying to wake him up but he’s silent.

“You’re going to be okay cuzzie, we’re taking you to the hospital, everything will be fine” I say wiping off the blood on his face with my t-shirt. I haven’t stopped crying and my anger has turned to fear, I don’t want to lose him. Zane gets back, he brought towels to cover their naked bodies and we drive off. This is the longest and quietest drive I’ve had with Zane, his eyes are fixed on the road and he’s driving fast. Thirty minutes later we’re in the hospital.

They have admitted all three of them and took Thami straight to the operating room. I’m shaking as we wait in the foyer. The noise around me has been muted, all I can hear are



the voices of those violent homophobic men. I keep playing back the fight over and over. I can't sit still, I'm rocking uncontrollably on the chair and Zane looks more scared than I am, he hasn't said a word. Tonight he saw a side of me I never wanted him to see, he saw how I am unable to control my anger, how violent I am and how merciless I can become. He saw a side of me I am not proud of.

The last time I had an incident close to this one was in high school when a group of girls continuously called me banana face because of my freckles. I didn't mind it at first because they would say it behind my back and only hear them from afar, until one day during free period, they were playing truth or dare and one was dared to point who banana face was. She did and the whole class laughed. I was more angry than embarrassed. I ran straight to her and banged her head against the table and dragged her

across the floor until I saw blood come out of her nose, the whole class fled and the teacher next door pulled the girl out of my hands. I was suspended for a month and was forced to take counseling. But my father worked out a deal and I got back to school earlier. I never saw that girl again.

“I called your grandmother, she’s coming” he says. He’s speaking softly. I scared him.

“You should also change your clothes, I’ll ask the nurses to give you something to change to” he says. Why does he care so much, he saw the most violent side of me and he still cares. I look at him and our eyes meet. He looks sad, like he feels sorry for me. I’ve really messed things between us, I can never make him unsee what I did today.

“I’m sorry, I’m really sorry Zane, when I saw him laying there, not moving, I couldn’t control my anger towards those men, I went numb, I’m

sorry you had to see that” he hugs me tight.

“No Buhle,I will not let you do this to yourself, do not apologise, I will not let you tear yourself down like this” he say.

“Buhle what’s going on? What happened?” it’s Makhulu and she’s rushing towards me along with aunt’Kholeka and Asakhe. Their faces turn red when they see my clothes covered in blood, Makhulu begins to cry with her hands on her head and aunt’Kholeka covers Asakhe’s eyes.

“What happened Buhle?” aunt’Kholeka. Her face is hard to read and her eyes are locked to mine, if she could, she would extract the truth from me with her eyes only

“It’s Thami, he and his friends were beaten by some village men” I say fighting back the tears.

“Why did they do that and why are you covered with blood? Even your face has splashes of blood, Buhle speak now, what exactly

happened?" she's angry and she wants more. I don't have the energy to relive the incident, I look down.

"Buhle tell me what happened" she yells and the whole foyer is shook.

"Sisi calm down, she's still trying to process it" Zane says.

"Well she must tell me what happened to my son and who did this to him" aunt'Kholeka looks scary right now. Her voice is louder and her eyes are intense.

"They beat him because he's gay, they beat his friends too." I say looking down at my blood stained sneakers.

Makhulu walks closer. "He's what?" she asks. I can't repeat it, I'm tired, I'm tired of this night.

"He's gay, your grandson Thamsanqa is gay" aunt'Kholeka yells at Makhulu

“Those men beat your grandson and his friends, they beat them because they’re gay” Zane speaks. Makhulu looks defeated and seats down with his mouth opened. She doesn’t know Thami is gay. I still don’t know how she missed the signs. Thami has never had a girlfriend yet makes seductive comments about men, he’s always at home helping with cooking and cleaning, they both like the same shows and he’s always flamboyant and sassy.

“Why can’t people let others live the life they want to live, why are people so bothered about how others live their life? whoever did this is going to pay, no one touches my baby and walks, they messed with the wrong child” she says and she clenches his fists, she looks scary.

“You will not do that Kholeka, you will not resort to violence, it won’t solve anything” Makhulu.

“If it wasn’t for violence we wouldn’t be here in the first place, they already call me the crazy

bitch, so I will show them no one messes with the crazy bitch's son, because he's gay. Never!" she yells.

"And the blood? How did this happen?" Makhulu points at me.

"She was helping Thami and his friends" Zane speaks before I do. I look at him and he puts his arms around my shoulder. He's covering for me but it's useless, everyone saw what happened. it's a matter of time till someone tells the truth.

"I beat one of the men, I beat him with a timber full of nails, I beat him with stones and bricks, I wanted him to feel the pain he caused Thami, I wanted to kill him like he intended to kill Thami"

I say

"Good, Good Buhle" aunt'Kholeka. Makhulu gives her a warning look.

"You mean to tell me that the blood on you is not Thami's but the man you beat? How do you

beat a man Buhle?" Makhulu

"The same way they beat Thami, you did good Buhle, I would've done the same" aunt'kholeka.

"Shut up Kholeka" Makhulu.

A young man runs through the entrance, he looks familiar, it's Thami's boyfriend. He walks towards us with eyes wide open. I need to change these clothes.

"Where is he? Please tell me he's fine. I came as soon as I heard about the attack" he's shaking and crying

"He's in the operating room, we're still waiting" I say

"How bad is it?" he asks, working his eyes all over my body

"He's breathing" I say. he's worried but he can clearly see I'm in no state of explaining the attack word for word.

“And who are you?” Makhulu.

“I’m Xola” he says.

“Surname? And how do you know Thami?”  
Makhulu. He looks scared. He’s quiet for a while and then answers.

“I’m Xola Jacobs, I’m friends with Thami” he says.

“I know all Thami’s friends, they come over, I’ve never seen you before, speak the truth, how do you know Thami”

“it’s the boyfriend mama, he is Thami’s boyfriend. Stop with the million questions”  
Aunt’Kholeka.

Makhulu’s jaw drops, a lot is happening in one night and there’s awkward silence. Everyone is sitting in deep thoughts trying to make sense of it all.

“Come let’s get you out of these clothes” Zane



says reaching for my hand and we walk.

Zane speaks to some nurse and she offers me scrubs. I put my clothes in a plastic bag and throw them in the dustbin. When we walk down the long corridor facing the entrance, the paramedics rush in with a man covered with blood, they run past us. I walk closer and recognize the clothes he is wearing, it's the man I beat. I feel a cold rush of pressure on my spine as the images of me hitting him appear. He looks bad. So much blood, he's not moving. I immediately panic and feel my body slowly giving up on me, my knees are shaking and my breathing is heavier.

Zane holds me as I slowly lose my balance, he carries me to the foyer and calls for a nurse. I might have killed him, everyone saw what happened, I'm going to jail. My mind is playing out all scenarios and jail is the only conclusion I've come to, I have ruined everything.

.....

It's been hours since we've been here and we still haven't heard anything from anyone about Thami. Aunt'Kholeka has been fighting with the nurses trying to get some information but there hasn't been success. My pressure has been reduced and my breathing has stabilized, everyone is still waiting in the foyer, Zane has been feeding us with coffee and muffins from the canteen, I was forced to eat something so I could take my medication. The foyer has become quiet and less busy at these hours, it's almost midnight. I overheard some nurses talking about the man I beat, they said his arm had to be removed because it was hit so bad that all his nerves were damaged, it wouldn't function. A part of me feels bad but my anger towards him and what he did to my cousin, doesn't allow me to. Xola has been waiting here with us, he fell asleep on the sofas, so did

Asakhe, who has been quiet throughout this evening. It must be a traumatic experience for her, visiting hospital twice in one month.

Makhulu has been praying and talking to herself.

A doctor walks towards us and is accompanied by two nurses.

“Are you the family of Thamsanqa Khephu?” he asks. We all stand, and nod.

“He’s not looking good, he broke some ribs, his arm and hit his head a lot.” He says.

“But he’s alive, he’s going to live?” I ask.

“We’ve managed to reduce the bleeding in his head, good thing you brought him early, an hour later would’ve been too late, he will be staying here for a while, we need to monitor his recovery closely, whoever did this to him deserves to be locked up for good” he says.

“The bleeding in his head? How bad is it” Makhulu asks, she’s crying.

“When he got here it was bad but he’s fine, we’ll monitor him closely, we’ve also run some tests and there are no signs of brain damage, he will be fine mama, you can all go rest, he’s in good hands.”

“And the others? How are they?” I ask.

“They’re fine, better. Also a few broken bones but they’re good.” He says, and walks away.

I guess we have no other choice but to go home. We all walk to the car and leave.

.....

It’s been a week now since Thami’s attack. His recovering slowly, but at least he can talk. We’ve been visiting him every day so has his boyfriend, he seems like a caring person. At first I was very skeptical about their relationship and his intentions, but his actions this week have proved me wrong, Thami’s room is full of ‘get well soon’ balloons, flowers and fruit

baskets. Every time he's visiting, nurses warn him for making him laugh too hard, they say it's not good for his broken rib recovery, I say it's cute.

He works in town as an associate lawyer, they are the same age with Thami but their personalities are complete opposites. He's more reserved and cautious. He's more of a doer than a talker but he is very funny, he has a great sense of humor. He calls me 'kill bill' every time they talk about how I handled Thami's attacker, who is very much alive, armless and jailed. He didn't press any charges because Thami's friends beat him to it. No one from the other village homophobes came forward to his defense so no one can speak about how I hit him. It's his word against ours and Xola has been of great help throughout. Thami is still shocked at how much damage I caused but is very happy I did. His words were "Mzala, you

slayed, literally”.

Makhulu is coming to terms with understanding the dynamics of Thami's relationship. She was upset that we kept it a secret from her and that she had to find out the way she did. She's been feeding Thami like a pig in that hospital by the time he leaves, he'll look like one.

Between my hospital visits I've been busy burying myself with work, which is all in my hands because Zane has been busy with Zazi's homecoming which is this week. I haven't fetched my dress and I haven't bought him a present. My work has taken over my life even Zane is starting to complain saying I do not give him enough time. Which I find silly because I see him every day, he fetches me from home in the morning to the office then to the hospital during lunchtime then back to the office and takes me home when the sun sets. I practically do everything with him, which is why he was

offended when I told him I was thinking of getting a new car, he enjoys that I'm dependent on him. He says if I have a car I'll easily forget about him, so foolish.

Only if he knew how obsessed I am with him, I can't go a day without seeing, talking or touching him. I call him and text him all the time just to check up on him when he's at the construction site or visiting Zazi on the mountains. I'm constantly looking at his picture which I saved as my screensaver on both my cell phone and my laptop. I cannot imagine a day without him and I still can't believe the amount of love I have for him. To think that months ago I was having casual sex with a guy I felt nothing for, that I lived alone and thought that was how I would live for the rest of my life, the times I would carve my thighs with sharp razor blades. I've come a long way and it is all because of love, a love I have for a man that

loves me unconditionally.

.....

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Insert 12

Summer mornings in Khumba are the noisiest but today is even worse. The entire village is engaging in conversation meters apart from each other. Makhulu is talking to Tshawe's wife, our neighbour, who lives at least 500m from our home, they're shouting at the top of their lungs, it's not even 6am. There are banging drums, singing, ululating, and chaos around the village, everyone is in high spirits. Makhulu and other elderly woman walk down to the royal palace,



she said they will gather there for ingqongqo, which is the beating of the drums, done by elderly woman, to notify the village that there is an initiate coming back home from the mountains. Men have gone the opposite direction to fetch the initiate from the mountain. Girls and young women have gathered at the gate waiting in song to welcome home Zazi, the initiate. This is the day the entire village has been preparing for, the homecoming of Prince Zazini Ngele-Ngele.

My outfit is ready, my hair is braided, painful but beautiful, my beaded jewellery is laid out and my nerves are at their highest. When Zane invited me to the ceremony, weeks ago, I was more excited than nervous but that was before I learned that his parents want nothing to do with me or my relationship with him. We've spoken about this many times and he assured me that they will not come between us. Just the thought

of him having to choose between me and his family gives me an unsettling feeling. I know how it feels to be without a family, to grow alone and have to figure things out yourself, to have to Google things other kids ask their parents about, it's hard, it's damaging and I wouldn't want him to live like that, it would hurt me more than anything.

"Hlehle, what time do we have to leave? I want to go visit Thami now before we go to the royal palace." Aunt'kholeka. Everyone calls me Hlehle now.

"I don't know how these things go. I thought you would know, I don't want to step on anyone's toes there by arriving early or too late." I say.

How can she possibly ask me that question, I've never attended umgidi, I don't know when it starts and I'm not about to insult amaHlubi and their ancestors by showing up at the wrong time.

“Oh well, I thought your man told you when we should arrive. These things usually start after lunchtime so we’ll go around 12, I’ll be back by then. Sho” she says and disappears into the passage.

She’s such a happy soul lately, everything seems airy and peaceful around her. Her hair product is selling successfully, she’s laughing more, she’s joking around and even plays with Asakhe, they chase each other around the yard. It’s refreshing to see her unburdened and free.

She insisted on coming with me to the ceremony, Thabiso and his fiancé are also coming, Kagiso couldn’t make it. Thabiso has been a regular in Khumba since the birthday lunch, he’s very fond of the new Zane, he says he feels like Zane has been freed. He comes over once in a while for lunch at the lodge which sometimes stretches out to dinner, that’s how much time they spend together. Thabiso works

as a sport presenter for a sport show, that's how he met his fiancé, whom I haven't met but have heard so much about, so much that I feel like I've known her for years. Her fiancé is a reporting journalist for the news in the same network. They have been together for 5 years now, he says he knew he would marry her the day he laid eyes on her. Their wedding is early next year and we've been invited, I've never been to a wedding and for many reasons, I'm very excited about this one.

.....

These braids are painful and heavy, I should've stuck to my wig, no worries, no pain.

Aunt'Kholeka suggested I do these, she said I need to protect my hair and that they would look good on me. She spent the whole day yesterday doing my hair, I'm never doing this again, ever. I try to tie them up but I'm failing, I tie half of the top part and create a side bang

with a bun and leave the rest to fall back, it's quite cute and better than the full bun I attempted. My make-up is done and I borrowed Makhulu's calamine to create white dots down my forehead, nose and a few on my chin. My umbaco is a three piece, it has a skirt that is fitted to my body shape with a mermaid tail, a backless apron looking top that I tied on my chest and around my waist, with a full covered front that flows all the way to my knees, with a beaded image of a Xhosa hut in front and lastly a shawl to cover my arms and my back. I wore a black gladiator sandal and the tailor was kind enough to make a small sling bag with the left over material. My neck is draped with an all black bead work that covers all the way to my shoulders, my wrists are armed with matching bracelets. I look myself in the mirror, I see my mother. Her eyes, her smile, I can hear her laugh and I can smell her perfume scent that she left behind everywhere she went. I see her today, in

me. I look like a Xhosa woman, I feel like a Xhosa woman.

Vrrr Vrrr. It's a text

\*S'thandwa sam, I'm losing my mind here, 24 hours and I haven't seen you, when are you guys coming?" Zane.

\*I miss you too baby, we're coming soon just finished getting ready" me

\*Hurry, I really miss you, Thabiso is on his way, they'll fetch you, so you can all arrive together and sit together\* Zane

\*That's awesome, see you soon, I'll be the lady in red\*me

\*Red? This I have to see\* Zane

I walk out of the room and make my way to the lounge, aunt'Kholeka's eyes widen and her jaw drops. She must really like what she sees.

"Buhlebethu Khephu or should I say, Noncumo

Khephu, my darling, you look beautiful, you look exactly like your mother on her wedding day, we have to take a picture and send to your father. Wow.” She really looks amazed as she pulls out her phone.

“Thanks aunty, you look beautiful too” I say. she’s also wearing umbaco, hers is white with black stripes, mine is red with black strips. Hers is a full dress with long sleeves and her fitted bottom shows off her curves. She also has the white dots.

“Uchokozile?” she asks. I’m confused, what is she talking about?

“The white dots on your face, it’s called ukuchokoza.” She says pointing at my face.

“I didn’t know, I saw a picture of mama and wanted to do it” I say. I’m learning something every day here and there’s a whole lot more to learn about.

“Oh and listen, when you introduce yourself, you don’t just say hi, I’m Buhle, you have to tell them your clan name and praise your ancestors” she says.

“What? I don’t know how to do that” I say. all I know is that I am MaDlomo, that’s all.

“unguMaDlomo, uSophitsho, uYemu Yemu, uNgqolomsila, uVelebaMbenstele, uMamtande, that’s all you say. I’ll teach you the rest some other time. Memorize that and you’re good.” She says, sipping on her Redds cider.

“That’s a lot, I’m going to need more practice, maybe I’ll just pretend like I can’t speak Xhosa, I’ll rather be called a snob than embarrass myself and shame my ancestors like that” I say.

“Suit yourself, the quicker you learn the better.” She finishes it off and we walk out of the door when hear the car hooter.

A black SUV is parked outside our gate, fancy



car. We make our way out of the gate and Thabiso is whistling while his fiancé is ululating, aunty and I are blushing.

“Yho, my friend chose well here. You look beautiful Buhle” he says greeting us.

“Thank you” I say.

“Come meet my fiancé” he says pulling me to the passenger’s side.

“Baby this is Buhle and that’s her aunt, Buhle this is Sinazo, my fiancé.

“Wow, you’re prettier than they described, I’ve heard so much about you, I feel like I know you. Nice to finally meet you” she says as she reaches out for a hug.

“Thank you, it’s nice to finally put a face to the romantic stories Thabiso has been telling us” I say. She looks beautiful, her smile is the first thing that caught my attention, it’s wide and genuine. She’s a beautiful dark skinned young

lady with a long 24'inch weave. She's wearing a tribal print dress and a matching doek.

We all get in the car and drive to the royal palace. The car is full of conversation and laughter, this is going to be a beautiful day. Thabiso and Sinazo seem like a cool couple, they are that couple that listens to hip hop and know every verse to their favorite song, the car karaoke type. Their presence gives that new love ,happy vibes feeling, plus she's funny.

In no time we reach the royal palace, it's packed and we had to park far and walk quite a distance to the gates. I texted Zane when we were leaving home. We are escorted to a tent where other young woman are seated, Thabiso went a different direction. There are different tents and guests are grouped by gender and age. Women are all seated in one tent, next to ours. Men are seated on the other side, next to the tent of young men. There's a special tent for

the royal family and I only see two people seated there, must be the King and his Queen.

We greet and we sit, and drinks are offered.

“I’ll have wine please” Sinazo. I like her.

“Me too, Rose please, no ice” I say. She winks at me. Grapes buddies.

“Redds, lots of ice” aunt’Kholeka. Sinazo and I look at each other and laugh. That’s all she drinks, she’s not a spontaneous drinker.

“I hear you stay here full time now, how are you adjusting to the village life” Sinazo.

“At first it was a nightmare but now I like it, it’s totally different from Edernville and I think that’s why I like it, its peaceful” I say.

“I’m so used to the fast pace Edernville, I could never survive. But I’m sure a certain Prince has a lot of positive influence” she has a naughty smile. I can’t help but blush, she’s right.

“I guess you can say so, he makes me happy” I say unable to hide my smile.

“You’re blushing and turning pink” Aunt’Kholeka is laughing and Sinazo joins her. I really can’t help but turn pink when I hear his name. Love does that to you.

“Thabiso told me about the surprise birthday lunch, I’m glad you invited them, he missed him a lot, even though he wouldn’t openly admit it but when he got a call for the invitation, he was at his happiest. And he never stopped talking about you guys” she says.

“It was all short notice and I wanted his closest people, I heard he doesn’t like birthdays, so I had to keep it simple and intimate” I say like

“He told me all about it and the gifts you gave him, the painting and the festival concept, that was priceless, no money in the world could buy that” she says.

“I brought his passion and the village needs together, and there it was, Khumba Kulture Festival, it’s a great initiative to help develop the village and a great opportunity for the villagers to expose their craft to the world. Plus I get to do what I love everyday with the man I love” I say, smiling.

“It’s great, they told me you were smart. Also, I would love to cover the launch if that’s fine with you” she says

“Oh my gosh, yes, I’d love that a lot, your network is one of the popular networks in the country, that would be great, thank you so much” I say reaching out for a hug.

The lady is back with our drinks, a carry pack for aunt’Kholeka with a bowl of ice tube, my rose bottle and dry red bottle for Sinazo. Let the celebrations begin.

A few minutes later, a big bowl full of meat

arrives, it's beef, almost shredded and falling off the bone, it's tender and tasty, we're served homemade steam bread. No one wastes time, we dig in. it's delicious. I have never enjoyed meat they way I am right now, even aunt'Kholeka is surprised. I cant help it, it looks and tastes delicious.

I feel a warm embrace from behind me and kisses on my neck, he smells like fire.

"You look beautiful my love" he whispers in my ear as he continues to kiss my neck.

"People, stop" I'm embarrassed, everyone is watching and he doesn't seem to care.

"I'm giving them a show" he says and sits next to me

"Hey my love, you look tired" I say. He's eyes proves he hasn't slept

"We didn't sleep, we had to stay up all night and I still have to go and change but I had to come

and see the beauty that is my love” he says leaning forward for more kisses.

“I missed you, 24 hours without you is dreadful. Still don’t know how I survived twenty two years.” I say rubbing my hand against his face.

“I missed you too baby, after all this we should take a weekend trip, just us two” he says, he looks excited.

“Trip to where?” I ask

“Anywhere you want, we’ll go, as long as I’ll be stuck with you” he says and I nod. He leans over and kisses my lips.

“Excuse us, we’re still here, Hello” it’s Sinazo

“If you’re going to be around them, you should get used to this. They’re always touchy touchy, I think they forget I’m their elder. One time when Buhle was admitted in hospital we walked in on them making out, Zanemvula’s pants were hanging. Mama almost died. It was funny.”

Aunt'kholeka. They all laugh but I'm not, she didn't have to share that.

"Why were you in hospital?" Sinazo

"Anxiety" I say. She looks shocked, that anxiety can hospitalize someone. Well mine does.

"Showing someone you love them isn't a crime" he says. He's looking at me with his sexy "I want you now eyes". And I can't say I don't feel the same way. I want him too.

"You've turned Zanemvula into a soft love struck puppy" Thabiso, he's sitting next to Sinazo.

"You know exactly how I feel buddy, don't you dare put it all on me, you're the one getting married in a few months time" Zane

"Oh yeah, congratulations, where is it? Zane didn't tell me the details, he just said we're invited to wedding" I say.



“It’s going to be in the Cape, in one of the old vineyards there, it’s a beautiful location. It’s not going to be something big, just close friends and family.” Sinazo says, sounds exciting.

I guess this will be our weekend away trip, in the Cape. We can get there earlier so we could enjoy some alone time and only go to them the day before the wedding.

“I’m excited, I’ve never been to a wedding” I say.

“Ever?” she looks shocked. I nod.

“Well, I’m glad mine is your first” she says flashing that smile of hers.

“I need to go and change my love, I’ll come see you once I’m done” Zane

“Say hi for me to Zazi, wherever he is” I say

“He’s at one of the backrooms, you’ll see him when it’s the women’s turn to give advice.” He says, kissing my cheek and disappearing into

the crowd.

There are people all over the yard, singing dancing and ululating every time someone enters the gate. It's big and beautiful. I've never seen anything like this before. There are different people wearing different outfits and different styles of umbaco, everyone is happy.

I've spent an entire day laughing, drinking wine, not as much as I usually do and eating meat, lot's of it and all kinds of starch, December in Khumba is a calories trap. If one is on a special diet, Khumba in December is the last place they want to visit, everything is irresistible. People are becoming drunk; singing is out of tune and dances went from traditional to qgom but the happiness is filling the yard. The young ladies have joined the young men in their tent and the singing is louder. We cannot even see or hear the actual ceremony but judging from the mood in the yard, everything is

done.

A group of young ladies walk towards us, they look tipsy. There's four of them, they're all wearing matching outfits.

"Molweni" they all greet at once. The one on the left looks familiar. It's the one from the café, it's Zane's ex.

"Hi" Sinazo replies. These girls better not piss me off not when I've had my wine.

"We just wanted to come greet our future queen" she says and they all laugh.

"Oh well thank you" Sinazo replies innocently. They better leave before I knock them over

"Yho! She doesn't look happy. Fake queen, we just wanted to pass on a message. You're wasting your time, there already is a chosen queen, it's just a matter of time before she gets introduced to the village. So enjoy it while it lasts." They laugh out loud.

I'm doing the best I can to contain my anger but their laughter is not making it easy. And this "queen" nonsense they're talking about is quite childish. But the disrespect I will not tolerate. I stand and hold the ex by her arm, I pull her closer to me squeezing it with all the anger in me. She looks scared, her friends have taken a step back.

"Buhle, don't" aunt'Kholeka warns.

"Don't you ever come near me and Zane, ever again. Or you will know what this fucking fake queen is capable of" I say. She tries to free herself from my hand, she fails.

"Now you and your friends are going to walk out straight through the gate and don't look back. The party is over for you" I say and push her so hard, she almost fell but her friends held her up. She's close to tears as they make their way to the gate.

Sinazo's eyeballs are close to falling out.

"They're just fooling around, I'm sure they weren't serious" she says.

"They're not, they know exactly what they're doing and it's as serious as they made it to be" I say, sipping on my wine. This had better be a sick joke by a clingy ex. I'm hoping with all I am that it is just a joke.

The whole yard is silent as the royal family stands in the middle of the crowd. It's the King, the Queen, Zinzi and Zane. He looks handsome, wearing something that looks like a skirt, with blue and white beads across his shoulders, a white shawl looking like his skirt over the other shoulder, he's topless. He has a blue beaded piece on his head and is carrying a beaded stick in his hand. I find myself smiling just by looking at him. His father begins his thank you speech which goes on forever. He looks old and tired, his face doesn't look like someone with good

health, Zane did mention that he was sick but didn't get into much details. Her mother on the other hand looks young and beautiful, she's wearing a ball gown dress made with African prints, it looks expensive and ridiculous, honestly. She looks younger than the King, maybe in her early forties. While the King could be well in his late sixties. As the Queen I thought she would wear the most extravagant mbaco piece. Zane looks bored and distracted as his father continues with his long speech.

A young lady and an old man join them on the platform. The young lady is facing down and the old man is smiling with pride. Zane's face is searching the crowd, he's panicking.

I spot Thandi walk towards me, she's rushing. What's happening here? She grabs me by the arm and pulls me out of the tent, I pull myself off her.

I look at Zane, he sees us and he's shaking, his

face is trembling. Thandi is pulling me and we're headed for the gate. I keep looking behind me, aunt'Kholeka and Sinazo look confused. Why is she trying to get rid of me?

"You can't see this, I won't allow it." she keeps saying as she pulls me.

"Where are you taking me Thandi, let go of me" I say looking back at Zane, he's still looking at us, he looks more scared than nervous. What does she not want me to see?.

"Stop, what's going on here" I pull myself from her and walk back to the tent.

"He's going to fix it, don't mind it, he doesn't want this." Thandi is yelling as I walk away from her. The crowd is silent listening to the King.

"The search is over, we have found our new queen, fit for the future King" his father shouts to the crowd and there's awkward silence.

Everyone is looking around and mumbling

amongst themselves. I went blank and my heart sank the moment the King held both their hands in the air and the crowd eventually applauded.

She tried to warn me, everyone tried to warn me. His ex, my grandmother, Thami, I was too stubborn and naïve. How could I have been so stupid, I shouldn't have let this go this far for too long. He said he loved me, he said he will never leave me, he said he will fight for me and this is the time to prove it but he stood there and did nothing. My eyes are wide open and tears are falling down my face. I have never felt this stupid in my life. A sharp pain in my heart rips me from the inside everytime it pumps, harder and harder.

I look around and aunt'Kholeka gets closer and tries to hold me. My knees feel weak and every muscle in my body is numb. Everyone in the tent is looking at me, with pity.

I've made a fool of myself in the name of love.



I've put myself in a space where I couldn't think properly and protect myself from this, all because of love. I'm trying to grasp for air but my chest is closing in on me as I look at him holding her hand. My anger escalates as every image of him crosses my head, all the moments we've spent together, all the intimate moments we've shared. I opened myself up to him, I let him in my most sacred rooms and he just gave up, without a fight.

"Buhle,Buhle" I feel someone shaking me, this feels like a dream. I didn't realise I zoned out and have been staring into space.

"Buhle, sit down" it's Aunt'Kholeka, trying to get me to sit down. I pull myself from her and run. As fast as I can, I run out of the tent, out of the yard and I don't look back.

When I reached the river I catch my breath and let out a loud scream. My entire body hurts, my legs, my arms, my head, all of me hurts. I kneel

on the grass and bury my head on the ground.  
How can I be so stupid?

All the signs were there but I chose to ignore them. His family was never going to accept me and making him choose between me and his family would've been the most selfish thing to do. I'm just mad he let this get too far, so far that I fell in love with him.

I don't love, I'm not a lover but I loved him, the best way I know how, wasn't it enough? Wasn't I enough for him to fight for me, for us.

"Fuck Buhle, You fucked up really hard this time" I find myself saying the things on my mind.

"Did you honestly think this would end well? Nothing you touch ends well" I can't help but hate myself for being so naïve and ignorant.

I wish there was a way to end this pain, permanently.

.....

I've been in bed for days since umgidi. I've locked my room and covered myself with my blankets. Makhulu and the others have been talking and praying at the door, like any of that will help. I just want to be left alone, to drown myself in the salty fluids of my stupidity. I have been back playing every event I've had with him, every encounter and I wish I'd never went on that picnic date with him. Maybe things would've been different. I'd have moved back to Edernville, lived the life I knew too well and would've found a real job by now.

I haven't done any work with the Festival preparations, I haven't check my emails, I haven't accepted calls and I even missed the seminar I was invited to by the premier. Nothing seems worth it now, I don't have the energy in me to move forward, everything seemed like it was all a lie. My life these past two months

have been a lie, every feeling, every word, and every commitment was a big fucking lie and I fell for it. I fell for it like the fucking idiot that I am.

Thandi and his brothers have been calling me, bloody liars. I haven't responded or taken their calls. They were in on it, they were probably laughing at how stupid I looked. Thabiso and Sinazo have been trying to contact me as well, asking about their wedding, talk about insensitive bastards. They'll probably invite him and his new bitch ass queen. Nx!

I walk up to the dresser to get more tissues, my entire face is red and my eyes are swollen, almost shut from all the crying. My braids are all over my face, it's irritating. I spot scissors in my drawer and begin to cut them off. A tear drops as I watch it fall from my head to the floor. I hate everything he liked, I hate how he made me feel like I could be this person and

he'd like me then still leaves me. He said he liked it and I kept it, for him but he still left. My head is bald and my body is covered with hair. I seat on the bed and slowly draw over my thighs with the scissors. My anger takes over as the images of him kissing my scars appear in my mind. It was all a lie.

“Buhle stop, you're hurting yourself” it's Aunt'Kholeka she pushed the door and runs towards me and grabs the scissors from my blood stained hands.

My thighs are pumping blood dripping down my legs. Her face is masked with disbelief as she grabs a towel and places it on my thighs, Makhulu walks in and begins to cry hysterically with her hands over her head.

Aunt'kholeka is running around trying to stop the bleeding, Everything happening around me feels distant, like in a dream, it doesn't feel real. She tries to snap me back to reality by wiping

my tears.

“I hate him so much, I hate him, I hate him” I’m sobbing. Aunt’kholeka tries to comfort me but my scars are painful I push her back.

“I know Hlehle, I hate him too, we all do. You didn’t have to hurt yourself” she says, cleaning off the blood in my thighs.

“I hate myself more for falling for his lies. I’m so stupid” I say

“No you’re not, love makes us do stupid things, you’re not the stupid one, he is.” She says. My thighs hurt every time she wipes them off.

Makhulu walks in with her first aid kit, her eyes haunted with worry and fear.

“Come let me see how deep these cuts are” she says, avoiding eye contact with me as she kneels in front of me.

“Hlehle, I think you should go to Edernville for a while until graduation” she says. She’s shipping

me away just like my father did. Every time people around me feel like they don't want me they just drop me, just like that. No one wants to try help me, no one even offers to help, they just send me off, to deal with myself. It always go back to it, being alone, by myself.

"I'll stay there for good. There's nothing for me here, all I did was bring trouble" I say as she finishes wrapping bandages around my thighs. I roll over the bed and cover myself.

"Listen Buhle, that's not what she meant."  
Aunt'Kholeka tries to explain.

"GET THE FUCK OUT NOW" I scream. The door shuts and there's silence.

If they want me gone, they'll have it. I will leave them to live their peaceful village life and I'll go back to my city life.

\*Dad, send a car to come fetch me in the morning, I'm coming home\* me

\*What's going on? Why do you want to come back?\* dad

\*I want to leave in the early hours, send the car now, please dad\*me

\*Okay, as long as you explain everything when you get here\*dad.

I stare at my phone for a while, looking at my screensaver. His smile, his eyes, how is this the same man that stood there and did nothing to fight for us, all in the name of culture and tradition. I toss my on the wall and it breaks into pieces. Makhulu left painkillers on my pedestal, I drink them and doze off. I need to get out of this place.

.....

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More Than Enough by L.A.V

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Insert 13

I've packed everything I need and the car is parked outside. Makhulu is crying begging me to stay.

"Hlehle, please my child, I thought you were going to leave next week" she says.

"I'd have long forgotten about Khumba by then" I hug her.

"Thami is coming back home today, he'll be devastated to know you left before he got back" aunt'Kholeka.

"I'll get a new phone and call him. Kiss Asakhe for me" I say as I walk towards the car. The morning is cold and foggy as usual. Every step I take, there's a sharp pain coming from my

thighs.

“Don’t forget your food for the road and drink your medication” Makhulu says as she hands me a big Tuppaware with food and a two litre drink.

I get in the car and put in my ear phones and play music on my iPod, cover my eyes with sunglasses and we drive off.

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The drive seemed shorter than when I first went to Khumba. We arrive in Edernville sooner than I expected, maybe it’s because I was asleep most of the time. My father is waiting at the front door when we pull up. He walks towards the car and hugs me. The driver takes my luggage inside and we walk to the house. I try to hide the pain I feel when I walk but it’s hard.

“What’s wrong Hlehle?” he asks as we get in the lounge and watches me slowly sit on the sofa

with my legs stretched out.

“It’s a long story dad” I really am in no mood to relive it all.

“Well, you can tell me over dinner” he says. The house smells nice, there’s something unusual about the place, it’s different.

“You cooked?” I ask.

“You know I can’t even boil an egg, someone cooked and we’ll just eat” he says. He helps me get up and walk to the dining room. It’s cozy, there are candles and the food looks home cooked, must be a new restaurant he’s trying out.

“Take off your hoody, so we can pray” he says. I’m shocked. He prays? Since when? I slowly remove it and the horror on his face when he sees my bald head is priceless. His eyeballs are close to falling off.

“Hlehle, why did you cut your hair and it’s not

even shaved properly” he says

“I did, I cut it off” I say and tears start rolling out of my eyes. He looks worried and walks up to me.

“Tell me what happened” he says

“It hurts daddy, love hurts so much. It holds you up so high only to drop you and laugh when you hit rock bottom” I can’t stop crying

“I know my girl, it hurts but hurting yourself does a huge injustice to the love you have for yourself” he says, rubbing my arms looking at me in my eyes.

“What self love, I’ve never had any reasons to love myself” I say

“And it’s all my fault baby, it’s all my fault. All these years you had to do it all by yourself, you had to figure things out and be your own adult. You never had time to enjoy being a child and worry about nothing. I neglected you, I never

showed you love, I didn't care for you. There's no way you could've learned to love yourself if no one has ever loved you." He says hugging me tighter. Ouch. His elbows touch my injured thighs as he kneels in front of me.

"What? Did I hurt you?" he asks.

"My thighs" I say avoiding eye contact.

"No Hlehle, you didn't, I'm taking you to the doctor first thing tomorrow." He looks worried and sad.

"It's not that deep dad" I say,

"I don't care, I'm still taking you" he says as he makes his way back to his seat.

The food is delicious and soulful. It was definitely cooked with love

"Which restaurant did you order this from, it tastes delicious" I ask. He's quiet for a while.

"Uhm it's new, I don't think you know it" he says

and continues eating. He's acting strange. We both finish, I never finish my food. And to think I also finished the entire skafin Makhulu packed for me and still had the appetite for this feast my father ordered. I refuse to be a pumpkin because of a boy who can't stand up for himself. The last thing this heartbreak is getting from me is thick thighs and stomach rolls.

"I'm tired, I'm going to sleep now." I say.

"Of cause, tomorrow morning I'm taking you to the doctor" he says. He's not letting this go is he. I nod and walk up the stairs.

Things look different, our décor was always white and plain. Now there are paintings on the wall and on my right I spot some of my old pictures as a kid even mama's pictures are displayed. The house feels warm, cozy like a real home. There's even a Christmas tree next to the fire place, we never had a tree in the past ten years. My father is a changed man. It takes

me a while but I eventually get to my room. Maybe I do need to see a doctor.

I walk into my room and it's warm with new linen and bedding, the paint on the wall has been changed from cream to rust orange, there are pictures of mama and us when I was younger, they're all in black and white. I walk closely to see them properly. It's their wedding pictures, some from the trips we took as a family, some are just mom sitting randomly. My heart is filled with warmth. I'm emotional. I walk to my bed and take off my clothes to wear my pajamas. I didn't know I missed my bed until I laid on it. It's soft and comfortable. It's big and there's space for me to stretch out my legs to avoid hurting myself. I pull my laptop and play music. It's soothing sounds of jazz instrumentals that makes me miss him. This man has rejected my love and I still miss him. What kind of crazy person am I? To miss a man

that chose his throne to be King. A throne he said he didn't want. I guess lies catch up on someone. I find myself laughing at all the things he promised me and the love he kept declaring for me. What's even funny is how I believed him. I'm laughing out loud with tears flowing from my eyes. I'm just a mental case. I should probably see that psychologist the doctor recommended. I don't see myself getting over this one alive. I need help. And they say the first step to recovery is admitting you need help. I do.

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Traffic during December in Edernville is a breeze, everyone has gone home to the villages and townships, no one who lives here is really from Edernville. I'm wearing my curly wig and all black tracksuit and my Mui Mui sunglasses, to cover my swollen eyes. The hair is blowing on my face as I rest my head and look out of the window. we're driving past the ocean and it



smells clean and salty. I haven't seen it in two months.

"Can we stop here please" I ask. He looks confuse

"Here?" he asks, I nod and he parks next to the road. I step out of the car and take my shoes off. I make my way down the rocks and land on the sand, walking towards the sea. The water looks so calm and clear as it comes and go.

I stand there for a moment, staring into the ocean and listening to the waves. It's calming. The water washes on my feet, it's warm. I feel my fathers arm around my shoulder hugging me tightly.

"I never really liked him you know, he looked arrogant and clingy" he says. I want to roll my eyes but I find myself laughing.

"Very clingy" I say.

"But I also saw how he cared for you, that boy

slept in that hospital foyer an entire weekend” he says.

“I know but he’s not here now, I am and I’d like to focus on me for a while” I say. I need silence and I don’t want him to be mentioned in my place of calmness.

We walk back to the car and drive off and enter a small complex with a security gate, it’s like a fancy office park. The guard smiles at him and lets him in, it shows he’s been here before, he didn’t ask him a thing. We park on the second block and walk in. The air conditioner is very cold and I’m trembling the moment we enter. My father signals the receptionist and we walk right pass the other people in the waiting room, he must have set an appointment. We make our way down the hall way and enter a room labeled “Dr K. Motsepe”. The room is cold as the entry way, it’s mostly grey and white. A young, very young lady walks towards us. She’s smiling

from ear to ear, she looks very young, definitely in her 20's, maybe 26 or something. She's so confident and elegant. She's clean with her natural relaxed hair tied in a bun and her grey fitted dress under her white lab coat with her tag.

"Goodmorning" she says, still smiling. She looks very happy to see us.

"Good morning doc" my father greets her back with the same energy.

"This is my daughter, Buhle" he says.

"Good morning Buhle, I'm Dr Katlego, everyone calls me Dr Kat" she says with the brightest smile. She really likes her job.

"How can I help you" she asks.

"I need you to check my bruises" I say. I'm avoiding eye contact

"Okay, let's take a look. I think Mr Sidwell you

should give us a minute” she says. and just like that my father is gone. I’m left with the happy Dr Kat. She asks me to take off all my clothes.

She slowly unwraps the bandages and examines the scars, carefully.

“These look deep but whoever cleaned them did a good job, I’m going to have to stitch them up, quickly” She says pushing herself around the office with her chair, collecting things from different shelves. She has a lot of energy. Her office is filled with motivational quotes and bible quotes.

“I also need to take blood tests to check any infections, just to be safe.” she says as she slowly stitches me up. It’s painful but not as bad as I expected it to be and she’s done before I know it.

“Ta’da” she says, still smiling. And walks off to her desk.

“I don’t want to give you anything strong until I get all the tests back, I need to know exactly what we’re dealing with here.” she says.

“Could it be serious?” I ask.

“I just want to see if there aren’t any bacteria’s stuck in there, they can eat you from the inside but by the way your wounds were cleaned I doubt it, but I want to be sure” she says.

“Okay, my granny did, she’s a nurse, well, was a nurse” I say.

“Bless her, well take these, you drink it after meals. It’s soothing tea, it’s made of natural herbs, it will help you sleep through the pain and it’s good to boost your energy, you seem tired” she says, handing me the box of tea.

“I’m very tired” I say. She can probably see my eyes are swollen from crying. I’m just a mess.

“You should try meditation” she says. I nod

“Thanks again, the appointment was probably short notice” I say

“Not at all, you can drop by anytime you want.” she says. What does she mean? So my father didn’t set an appointment. A lot doesn’t make sense here but I’m too tired for any of it. I walk down the hallway and my father is chatting with the receptionist. It’s like he knows everyone here. We walk out and drive off.

It’s almost midday and I’m hungry.

“Can we get lunch, I’m hungry” I say and he looks pleased by that

“I’ve never heard you say you’re hungry, you never liked food” he responds. He’s right but right now I’m hungry. I haven’t had decent food in my last days in Khumba, I locked myself in the room for days without real food, just fruits which were in the bag I use when working at the lodge. I want something spicy and meaty.

“Let’s go to that Indian place mama liked downtown” I say and he’s smiling.

“They moved, they’re in the South now” he says and drives into the freeway. So he’s been visiting that restaurant even after mama passed. She loved that place. She would crave a lamb briyana and make my dad bring her some on his way back from work.

The aroma of the spices hit me the moment we park outside. It’s bigger now and fancier. The place is full as we walk in and sit at a table at the back. The menu is still the same, nothing has changed. I order a spicy lamb curry and garlic rolls, he orders lamb briyani.

“That’s what I get everytime I come here” he says.

“You miss her?” I ask.

“A lot, more than I should. I used to watch our wedding video every night since you moved to

Khumba” he says.

“I understand, you seem better than when I left you, you don’t look as stressed out and hostile like you were a couple of months back” I say. He’s in good shape, he speaks openly and even prays before eating.

“Well, I’ve found ways to heal and still honor your mother” he says with a smile

“I’m proud of you, next time you should try this curry, it’s delicious” I say licking my fingers, it’s really good. The meat is tender and the curry is spicy, just how I like it. I didn’t realise my appetite was this big.

“I’m proud of you my girl, you managed a lot all by yourself and still came out right, I don’t think there’s anything I could ever do to make it up to you” he says.

“You can get me a new phone” I say and he laughs



“What happened to your old phone?” he asks

“I broke it, and don’t ask” I say before he asks further questions

“Okay, we’ll get it when we leave here, we also need to go fix that mess on your head” he says and we both laugh. I didn’t cut it properly, some parts still have hair.

“Oh and the house? What’s with the colors, where does the inspiration come from?” I ask. And he’s smiling, almost blushing.

“I like color, can’t I be a little bit spontaneous?” he jokes.

“I don’t know dad, can you?” I say, he’s smiling like a young boy.

A young lady walks towards our table, smiling with excitement.

“Oh my gosh, I hope I’m not mistaking you for someone, are you Buhlebethu from the Khumba

Kulture Festival?” she says

“Yes, that’s me” I say, she’s still smiling even with the annoyed look I’m giving her. She doesn’t understand how much I hate hearing that place’s name.

“Oh wow, your concept is so inspiring. My friends and I have been saving up for the launch of the festival. A lot of my classmates are too. We’ve been low-key stalking you and your blog for weeks. It’s a great initiative, something new and fresh.” She’s really excited. I cannot help but feel proud of myself for coming up with this project. It’s big, bigger than I thought.

“Thank you, can’t wait to see you and your friends at the launch” I say and she walks off. I guess I’m left with no choice but to finish what I’ve started. I need to find a way of doing it without seeing him, it seems impossible. He’s in everything I’ve planned, it was his birthday present after all. My petty self wants to move

the festival in a different village, away from him and his royal clowns. It was my idea after all.

“Hlehle, this festival is bigger than I thought.” he says. I’m still amazed at the amount of support we’ve received.

“I know right, still can’t believe it. Just don’t know how I’m going to do it, now that Zane and I have broken up” I say.

“I don’t know exactly what happened between you two but this project has to happen. You were so excited when you told me about it and it has reached a lot of people, pulling out now is a wrong business move. You won’t be able to gain people’s trust ever.” That’s the business strategist in him talking, and his right.

“I know but I’m not ready to go back to Khumba” I say

“Well you have the rest of the December holiday to get yourself together, then January you can

go back and do your work” he says.

I guess that’s what I’ll do. I should also see that psychologist, I’ve been avoiding this for weeks now, I should get to the bottom of these anxiety attacks and violent acts. The thought of me opening up to a stranger gives me anxiety all on it’s own. I should probably visit media companies I emailed before they close for Christmas holidays, which is two weeks from now. This will be the first Christmas I’ll be spending with my father in ten years. I always stay alone in my room and watch movies, drowning myself in wine. Some years I’d forget it’s Christmas day until Thando sends me messages. The first Christmas after mama’s passing were the hardest, I cried most of the times. Then I developed the mentality of not caring. Not caring about the holidays or any other celebratory days. Just thinking about the nights where my 13 year old self cried herself to

sleep on birthdays, Christmas and mama's birthday, warms my face and reduces me to tears.

"Whats wrong Hlehle?" he says,he looks worried

"I have a lot on my mind, I think I should really see that psychologist, it's too much. I don't know how I made it this far, I honestly don't and it's all weighing heavily on me now." I say, unable to control the tears.

"Okay, I'll find one and you can go, we'll both go" he says. I can see the guilt in his eyes. I nod.

He calls the waiter and we leave.

.....

I took a long nap after today's events, Dr Kat's tea works. My new phone has been charging all day, I already did a sim swap but haven't checked any messages. Honestly, I don't want to, I can already see whose texts have filled my inbox and I don't want to read them.

I make my way to the shower. I think short hair looks good on me, I like it more than my natural hair actually. The barber did a good job, he even did that line on the side, it's fierce and makes me feel capable. I think I should get earrings though, I kind of look plain. It's something new, I like it. New hair, new journey. It can't be a coincident, it feels right. I find myself smiling at myself in the mirror.

After my shower I make my way down stairs and it smells nice, like someone has been cooking. The Christmas tree changes colors and candles are lit around the room, it looks like a romantic setting. There's music playing and my father is singing along, sitting in the sofa with his laptop.

"You're awake, whatever the Dr gave you is strong, you slept throughout the day" he says.

"Would you believe me if I tell you it's herbal tea? I liked it, that was the best nap I've had in a long

time and that smell?" I say making my way to the kitchen. My home has never smelt this good in years. The kitchen island is full of casseroles and salad bowls. It's definitely not restaurant food, it looks delicious

"It's our dinner, didn't want to start without you. Grab the plates" he says.

"Something's different about you, it's like you're a different person" I say. He looks shocked that I've noticed it

"I'm speaking to my daughter and we're working things out. By the way, I've managed to secure an appointment with a psychologist. Is tomorrow too soon?" I really wasn't expecting him to get on it that quickly.

"Already? Oh well, I guess I can go. " I say.

We make our way to the dining table, he says a prayer and we eat.

"Oh, I almost forgot to tell you. I met mama's

father in Khumba” I say.

He almost choked on his food, he looks surprised.

“How? When? Why didn’t you tell me? wait, how did you know who he was” he says, he still doesn’t look like he believes me.

“I met him at the lodge, he kept calling me by mama’s birth name, Nothando. He thought I was her, I ran away because he looked creepy. But I couldn’t stop thinking about him. I told Makhulu about it, I invited him over and we all spoke” I say. He looks freaked out

“Hlehle, this doesn’t sound real, well, did he explain why he left Noncumo’s mother after he found out he was pregnant?”

“He told me everything, he knew she was pregnant, he wanted to marry her but he didn’t have money for lobola, so he went to the mines and when he got back he heard she passed



away and that mama was sent to an orphanage home. They didn't tell him details about it, one nurse gave him mamas name. And that's all he had."

My father looks shocked and sad like I was when I heard the story, he drinks his water and takes a deep breath.

"So he never abandoned them, he went to work to get money to support his family. So I hated him for nothing. Your mother always told me there was an explanation to everything and she always said one day she will learn the truth and until then , she will not be angry at something she doesn't know" he says, sweating and looking defeated.

"I have to meet him, I have to see this man Hlehle, I feel like I owe him an apology" he says.

"He's in Khumba, you can see him whenever you want" I say

“Who does he live with there? Is he fine?” he looks concerned

“He lives alone but he has friends there, they’re like brothers, they all come from the mines, they work at the lodge. He has lung disease, that’s why he lost his job at the mine” I say

“Lung disease? Is he taking medication? Is he okay?”

“I think he is, he constantly has to take breaths in between his conversations but he’s funny, he’s always making jokes and teasing Zan....” I stop myself. I can’t bring myself to say this guy’s name. I spent an entire two months with him and now I can’t even say his name. I need to at least be able to say his name. I look stupid.

“I have to take him to Katlego this side, just to make sure he’s good.” He say. He cares.

“I have his number, you can call him” I say. He looks pleased.

“There’s something I wanted to tell you and I wanted to tell you earlier at the restaurant but you cried” he looks serious and I’m just staring at him

“I don’t know how to say this and I want you to know that this will not change this new journey we’re trying out, and this will not change how I feel about you or your mother” he says. Can he just speak already.

“I’ve met someone, someone I like, romantically.”

What! The shock on my face is making him uncomfortable, he is look at his plate.

“When?” I ask

“I met her a year ago but it officially started a month ago” he says.

A year! My eyes are all out.

“Where’s she from? Where did you meet her” I

ask

“She catered at one of our business networking events and she’s been catering for all my clients. She’s from here in Edernville but she lives in the township, Baloza Location.” He’s still calm

I cannot believe what I’m hearing. My father is dating. He has a girlfriend. How did he even approach her, my father does not have a friendly face. He cannot carry a decent conversation without sounding like an arrogant business man. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not mad at him for dating, I’m impressed but for some reason I forgot that he must’ve been lonely for all these years. He needs a second chance in love, he deserves it.

“So she’s the one whose been cooking all this delicious food?” I say and he’s smiling

“Yes, he cooks for me everyday and packs lunch as well” his eyes light up, he seems happy.

“I’d like to meet her” I say. He looks surprised but he also can’t hide the excitement on his face.

“I didn’t want to bombard you with everything all at once but if you want to meet them I can arrange something” he says.

Who’s ‘them’ now? I’m confused and he can see it.

“She has a daughter, you’ve met her, Katlego, Dr Kat” he says.

No ways! Dr perfect smile and elegant sense is going to be my half sister? Well a lot of things makes sense now, he’s been there before, he knows her personally.

“Oh I see” I say. I’m really lost for words.

“Are you sure you’re comfortable about this, we can wait longer” he seems concerned.

“I’m fine, I’m just trying to process it all, I’d like

to meet them, it's just them two right?" I say. he laughs

"Yes, just them two" he says.

He really seems happy. I never thought after all these years that I'd sit in a dinner table with my father, laughing and talking so openly about anything and everything under the sun. He's so comfortable and seems at ease. He looks peaceful. I can't believe this is the man I hated for years, a man I lived with for ten years and never seen him or spoken to him without yelling. Life is really an unpredictable journey, you never know what it will bring or take and all you can do is to take it as it comes, no permanent decisions because everything about it is temporary. This makes me think about my situation with Zane, it hurts just seeing his face on my mind but I can't stop myself from loving him.

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Insert 14

We never used our garden since the night my father planned a surprise dinner for mama, the night she passed away, the night everything changed.

Today it is set for my therapy session, all kinds of fruits and breads are placed on the table, juices and water, courtesy of my dad's girlfriend, I don't think I'll get used to saying that. She dropped them when I was still in the shower. I haven't met her yet, they're coming over later this week.

I'm so lazy to dress up and put on make-up lately and this haircut makes everything easy. I just wear tracksuits and walk around bald headed. Besides, she's coming to my home not the other way around.

She walks in wearing a white shirt and jeans with pumps, her dreadlocks are tied up in a messy bun and in her hand is a diary and cellphone. She looks casual yet clean and presentable.

"Good morning, I'm Dr Boniswa Dube, you can call me Bonnie" she says as she greets us and takes her seat across us.

"Good morning, I'm Sidwell and this is my daughter Buhle, I'm glad you could squeeze us in at such short notice, thank you" my father replies.

"Nice to meet you both. Dr Kat and I help each other all the time, I had to come through" she



says.

You have got to be kidding me. This Dr Kat is taking over our lives, atleast they're just work associates and not friends, I'd hate to have my business scattered all over Edernville.

"Help yourself to whatever you want, there's all kinds of fruit. Whoever got all this will be offended if we don't eat it" I say, handing her the fruit tray. She smiles and helps herself. My father has been helping himself since the food arrived, he eats anything that woman makes.

"I usually let people give a brief description of themselves, let's start with you Sidwell" she says. She didn't come to play. My father takes a deep breathe and speaks.

"I am Sidwell Khephu, I own a business consultant company, i am a business strategist and have won several national and international business awards. I stay in Edernville with my

daughter Buhlebethu.” He says.

“What do you enjoy doing in your spare time? like hobbies?” she asks.

“Spare time does not exist in my line of work, I have a very demanding career and that has become my hobby” he says.

“Okay, Buhle, your turn” she says.

“I am Buhlebethu Khephu, I am an artist, I’ll be graduating next year. I enjoy creating stories through my paintings. I enjoy listening to music and writing poetry. I live in Edernville but have been away for 2 months visiting my family in Khumba” I say.

“I know Khumba, I was planning on visiting next year when the Khumba Kulture Festival launches” she says.

“You know about the festival as well? I’m the co-founder of the festival. My boyfr... uhm. It’s a great project, I’m glad you’re coming” I say. She

smiles politely with a concerned look on her face.

“Okay, now I’m going to need you to introduce each other to me, Buhle you introduce your father and he’ll introduce you” she says.

“Oh, okay, this is my father he is a business strat....” I couldn’t finish, she cuts me off.

“Uhm sorry, I didn’t explain properly, please tell me something he hasn’t already told me, continue” she says. I’m quiet for a while and all I can hear is my heartbeat

“He.... I hated him for almost half my life, I hated how he made me feel about myself. He made me feel weak, unworthy and undeserving. He didn’t want to be my father, he brought me into the world and deserted me when I needed him the most”

“It wasn’t intentional Buhle, I didn’t do that to hurt you, I just couldn’t stand seeing her

everyday without feeling her presence. I couldn't see her in you and still know she's gone and never coming back"

"But I didn't know that, you never told me that. I was 12 dad, 12 years old, how do you think I felt when I first got my periods and freaked out, I had to Google for solutions, the bras, I developed boobs early and other children made fun of me because my breasts were hanging out and bouncing around when I played sports, I didn't know which bra size to buy. I was alone, you left me to deal with everything by myself" my heart beats faster and my voice is louder, I'm upset and his face is blank

"She left us, she left me with you, alone. How do you think I felt when I saw my wife lying in the middle of the road covered in foil, when the doctors told me she was pregnant, when I had to tell you that she died, how do you think I felt when I saw sheets with blood stains in the

laundry room or condom packs in the dustbin. I didn't know what to do, she did everything and left me to figure it out, by myself" he says, he's crying

"So you saw it best to let me figure it out myself? You punished me for mama, you saw her in me so you brought all that anger for her towards me?" I ask

"I didn't do it intentionally, I didn't know what to do, I ended up not doing nothing" he says

"Your nothing ruined my life, your nothing made me this violent person, your nothing made me this insecure and unworthy person. I know nothing about anything, all I know is how to survive. A guy told me he loved me and I panicked, he showed me his love and I felt undeserving, your nothing hurt me." I throw my glass on the floor and they both jump. My breathing is heavy and my whole body is shaking.

“I don’t know what else to say Hlehle, I’m sorry” he says.

“Okay, Buhle take deep breathes. Put your hands on your waist, breath in your nose and out with you mouth. Steady. Allow your anxiety to feel your calmness. It’s going to pass. Good. In....out” she says. Standing in front of me

I do as she says my hands are shaking and my head is pounding, painfully. She’s taking me through this breathing exercise and it’s working. My breathing is normal and my anxiety is gone.

“This went fast too soon. I’m going to ask each one of you questions individually and when the other one answers, the other will be quiet and listen” she says. Making her way back to her seat. My father has moved to another seat, a distance from me.

“Buhle, what does your father make you feel about yourself?” she asks.

“He makes me feel like I’m not enough, like me being myself is not enough. As a result I don’t do well with relationships, friendships or just any companionship in general, I always fear that people might see past my insecurities and use it against me” I say, looking down at the broken glasses

“Okay, Mr Sidwell, what does Buhle make you feel about yourself?” she asks

“She makes me feel guilty and angry. I feel angry not at her but at her resemblance to her mother. I look at her and want to scream at her for leaving me without warning. I also feel guilty for all her tears, I feel guilty for every blood she has lost through hurting herself” he says.

“How does she hurt herself” she asks

“I don’t know but she hurts herself and bleeds” he says.

“Buhle, why do you cut?” she asks.

“Physical pain helps me shift the focus away from emotional pain, I see where it comes from and I see why its hurting, unlike emotional pain, it just hurts, and I don’t know why or where its coming from. But cutting gives me a break from hurting emotionally” I say.

“Why do you think you’re hurting emotionally?” she ask

“I don’t know, I guess I have a lot on my mind and I don’t have anyone to talk to about it, so I guess all these emotions become overwhelming” I say.

“You can talk to me, you can also talk to your father, what comes to mind right now?” she says.

“How do you in love someone, like get rid of it, the love.” I ask. She smiles like she’s amused by this question

“From my experience, you can’t force yourself



to in love anything, no time or distance can make you in love anything. Only your heart will decide that and that also depends on the depth of your love." I say,

"That doesn't help because he doesn't want me, he made it clear. He chose another over me" I say

"How certain are you that he chose another? Did he tell you?"

"He showed me, he did nothing and stood there like a fool. He promised to never leave me, even when I ran out he still stood there"

"It sounds to me like you left him, but I don't know the entire story, all I'm going to say is this; sometimes the people we depended on for love depended on us for strength to love. So when they are at their weakest they need us to show strength and fight for them. I hope I make sense" she says. I kind of get her but my pride

is sitting on her high chair with a glass of wine. I nod anyways

“Mr Sidwell, is there anything you want to say or ask?” she says

“She keeps having anxiety attacks, what’s the cause” he asks

“There are many triggers of anxiety and when it hits it’s like a flood that overwhelms the victim, some hit them bad until they collapse. She’d have to recall all her past events to figure it out” she says looking at me. I think she wants me to speak

“Uhm, the first was at my art gallery exhibition, the other was in Khumba, when I was invited to a royal council meeting, then another was when my boyfriend told me he loves me” I say

“What would you say each of these events made you feel, that could have made you anxious” she asks

“I don’t really know, but I guess it’s the fear of not being good enough. My first exhibition, the royal council meeting, a man telling me he love me. It goes back to feeling unworthy.

Sometimes I feel like my life and my abilities are not mine, like I can’t be the person being invited to these places with these people.. It’s like someone will walk into a room and point at me shouting “she doesn’t belong here”, screaming out my flaws for everyone to hear. It’s scary living a life that you feel like it’s too good to be yours, like I don’t deserve love, I don’t deserve my talent and no one needs to hear what I have to say. It’s the fear of not being worthy. And the emotions that cloud me turn into anxiety.” I say as tears fall down my cheeks and my father wraps his arms around me.

“You are enough Hlehle, you deserve every good thing you have, you deserve happiness, you deserve love and all the success you can have.

You are a smart girl and lots of people would love to hear you speak. I want to hear you speak” he says, hugging me tighter

“I wish it was that easy dad, I wish I believed in myself that easily” I say, my face is red and warm. He wipes off my tears. Holding my face to his

“Hlehle, you are Noncumo’s daughter. A woman of great integrity and wisdom. She walked confidently with a smile even when she said silly things. She knew who she was without a proper upbringing, she defined her own sense of happiness and shared it with everyone. She never compromised herself for anything and anyone. She birthed you, you are a product of everything she was, it is in you. All you have to do is find pieces of her within you” he says and continues to hug me tighter, he keeps apologizing.

“I will give you exercises to help you with that.

This was a very productive first session. But it's definitely not the last, you're going to see me again. I will email you both your homework" she says.

"Thank you" I say

She smiles as we make our way to the front door. She leaves and we watch her drive off.

That was emotionally tiring. I look at the time and I cannot believe it went on for that long. It's almost noon and I'm tired. We both walk in the lounge and throw ourselves on the sofa.

"That was a lot, I'm glad we did it. "he says

"Me too" I say

"But honestly, all she did was to ask questions, we just conducted that therapy session ourselves, she was there as a mediator. So I paid her to come watch us talk." He says and we both laugh

“True, but she asked questions we couldn’t ask ourselves. She’s worth all the money you’re paying her and she’s good. Thanks to Dr Kat for her or we could’ve gotten those old ones with poor eyesight and no listening skills” I say and we laugh hard until my stomach hurts.

“I think I’m going to nap a bit, I’m tired. it’s been a long morning. We can go out for lunch again?” I say and he’s smile fades.

“uhm, I can’t. I have to be somewhere during the day” he says. He should just rephrase that and say he needs to be with someone. The excitement is written all over his face, he can’t even hide it. It’s funny to watch.

“Okay, I guess I’ll go shopping and go to the spa. I need some retail therapy after this therapy session.” I say.

“Okay. Let me go check some e-mails then, I’ll probably leave while you’re asleep. See you at

dinner time.” he walks to his study and I walk upstairs to my room.

My body feels defeated and all I want to do is sleep.

.....

I haven't driven my baby in months, she still looks cute though. The mall is very busy, people are doing their last minute shopping for Christmas. I have been going in and out of shops, nothing is catching my eye. I haven't bought any clothes in a long time and now that I'm wearing color, shopping has become harder. I usually buy everything in black and it's always been easy, with color I have to find matching shoes and accessories, it's hard. So I've decided to spoil myself with new earrings, the bigger the better. I'm making my way to the gadget store on the other side of the mall, I'm watching my reflection on the shops windows, I can't deny the glow on my face, my lips are

plump and my face is golden, it's definitely the Khumba sun. I'm wearing a floral strap dress, I didn't wear a wig, I'm rocking my new look, confidently, I really like it, it suites me. I have on subtle make up and a nude lipstick. Anyone who knew me two months ago wouldn't recognize me, I look different but beautiful, more than I've ever been.

I'm thinking of getting my father and my new family members Christmas gifts, I've been walking around the stores trying to see what I could buy for each of them. I know little about them, including my own father. I was thinking of getting him a digital photo frame where he can store new pictures of us, after our reconciliation and they're not that expensive. Done. Now for his girlfriend and miss perfect, her daughter. I make my way to the book store to find a bestselling motivational book, she seemed into that kind of stuff. Done. His girlfriend likes



cooking,so I'm headed to a homeware store, even though she probably has everything she needs, she has a catering company after all. But I heard a cook can never have enough knives, so a knife set will do. Done.

I've been walking around on an empty stomach and I'm starting to feel dizzy, I need to eat, now.

I make my way down to the restaurant side and decide on seating at a café close to the parking area. I order a chicken burger and sweet potato fries, I'm really hungry. As I wait for my order I go through my messages, there are so many unread messages and I'm immediately exhausted just by looking at them.

\*Buhle please call, he's losing his mind. He needs to speak to you, please let him explain\*  
Thandi

\*He hasn't spoke to anyone since you left, he's not coping. Please Buhle, he will explain

everything\* Thandi

\*Sisi please call or atleast take his calls, he is not doing well here. He has locked himself in his room all week\*Zazi

\*Mzala, I heard what happened, I'm so sorry but I hate you for leaving without me seeing you. Also, brothers has locked himself in his room. they say he's depressed. The entire village is against this new queen and they have started riots against the King and Queen\* Thami

\*Mzala, call me, I need to talk to you, it's urgent. Seriously\*Thami

There's more but I can't read them all at once, I'm overwhelmed and emotional. Just the thought of him isolated and depressed makes me want to cry. I hate that I care so much about him even after he chose that girl over me. I'm not ready to speak to him or anyone in Khumba, I still need time to process things and prepare

myself mentally.

My order arrives and I waste no time. I dig in. My sixth sense has me paranoid and I look behind me. Oh shit!

“Buhle?” he says, looking somehow confused.

“mmmh” I can’t speak my mouth is full, almost exploding. I’m chewing very fast to at least greet him.

“I thought this was you but I was confused with the new hairstyle and the clothes, you look different” he says, taking the seat across me.

“Hi Thando” I finally speak. He still looks confused and amazed.

“You look totally different, I wouldn’t have recognized you from a distance. Wow”

“Well, you know what they say about change, it’s inevitable” I say, faking a smile. I haven’t seen him in months but he still looks and

sounds exactly the same.

“How have you been? I heard you went to Khumba” he says.

“I’m okay, yeah, that’s where I’ve been the past two months. how are you?” I ask

“I’m good, even though you dumped me and never said goodbye” he says. Is he really going to be that guy. I can’t.

“It was short notice and I didn’t dump you, we never dated” I say. He rolls his eyes.

“Here I was, thinking you’ve changed” he says.

“It’s the truth, but I’d like to apologise for being rude to you in the course of our “situationship”. You didn’t deserve any of it. I’m sorry” I say and he looks shocked.

“I spoke too soon, you have changed. Who is this person and what did she do to my babes?” he says smiling. He’s so silly

“It’s still me, just a healthier version of me. Do you forgive me?” I ask

“With that beautiful face, I can’t say no. How’s the village life? I also heard about your project, the festival thing, smart” he looks proud

“The village life is chilled, peaceful, I enjoyed it. I partnered up with my..uhm..a friend on the project, I’m excited about it.” I say

“It’s what you’ve always wanted, all of it. The village life, the art and helping of others, it’s you. The city life was never for you, you were always lost, trying to figure out where you fit. But I can see now you’ve found your peace there, it’s all over your face. You look beautiful. I’m happy for you babes.” He holds my hand and rubs it against his.

“I can’t believe you noticed all of that with the little time we spent talking and did nothing but sweat all over each other.” I say.

“You were there for the sweats but I had other intentions, I liked you and I was falling in love with you more but you kept pushing me away. I eventually accepted that it was not meant to be. I found someone, she’s not you but she’s good, so thank you” he says, kissing my hand with a smile.

Honestly I’m happy he found someone, so he could finally settle down and get off my back.

“I’m happy to hear that, I hope for nothing but the best for you, you deserve it” I say

“You deserve it too. But make sure you tell whoever you end up with, I got there first, I opened the door for him” he says arrogantly. I can’t help but laugh at him

We continue with our conversation and ended up having lunch together, even though it’s late lunch because the sun will set soon.

He told me about the gigs he’s been booking

as a Dj and his collaborations with other artists in producing music. He also told me about his new girl, apparently they met in a club, she's a promo girl part time and a student full time. He seems happy but he definitely hasn't changed his arrogant and stuck up mindset. Before we know it, the sun sets and we leave separately. I even missed my spa appointment, it was worth it though, I haven't had a good laugh in a long time.

.....

I'm very nervous about this dinner. I know I was the one who wanted to meet them but now that the day has come, I'm nervous. This week went by really fast.

Our therapy sessions are more calm than our first one, the homeworks have been helping as well. One of them was to write letters to each other about the things we appreciate about each other and the other was to write one to

mama and tell her all about what has happened since she's been gone. I feel lighter and much more at ease with myself and my surroundings. My father and I have been spending a lot of time together, he's been helping me with the festival and showing me ways on how to get funding from private and public sector. I've shared with him some of my paintings, he likes them, even offered to buy some. I just hung them in his study.

I've been changing dresses for the past hour, I really don't know what to wear and I don't want to embarrass my father by dressing inappropriately. What do people wear when they meet their fathers girlfriend? It's a tough one.

"You look good in anything Hlehle, just get dressed already, they'll be here any minute now" I hear my father's voice on the other side of the door. I've been mumbling to myself

"red or blue?" I ask.



“red, it looks good on you” he said. And that’s exactly what he said ten years ago. Red really looks good on me. So red it is.

I put on a red fitted dress with long sleeves, my new gold hoop earrings and a bright red lip. I look like Christmas.

I make my way down the stairs and everything is already set up, the house feels warm.

“You look beautiful my baby” he says hugging me.

“You look even better, wow dad” he’s wearing a midnight blue velvet suit and white shirt. He really pulled all the stops for this evening.

The doorbell rings and my stomach is in knots. I hear laughs coming from the entry way. They all walk towards me, smiling.

“Hlehle this is Gloria Motsepe, she’s the woman I’ve been telling you about” he says.

“Nice to meet you Ms Motsepe” I say reaching for a hand shake. She looks beautiful, her smile is wide and she doesn’t look old at all. She’s wearing a black dress and silver heels. Her head is wrapped with a black doek with a crystal flower broach. I can see where Dr Kat got her elegance. She’s smiling

“Please call me Mam’Gloria, nice to finally meet you Buhle” she returns the shake.

“And you’ve met Katlego.” He says pointing at her. She’s smiling and walks closer and hugs me tight.

“Hi Buhle, you have no idea how much I’ve wanted to meet you personally. When you came to my office I knew I had to play cool until Ntate’Sidwell gives me the go ahead.” She says with so much excitement.

She’s wearing a blue jumpsuit with flat pumps. She’s simple and beautiful

“He only told me about you guys after our appointment” I say.

We all make our way to the dining room and seat. I’m sitting next to Katlego and my father and Mam’Gloria are seated across us. My father keeps stealing looks at her, I don’t blame him, she looks beautiful.

“Who cooked, I know it wasn’t Sidwell”  
Mam’Gloria

“I ordered from a restaurant. I wanted to give you a break, you’ve been cooking for us all week” he replies with a smile and they lock eyes. This is weird to watch.

“So Buhle, you’re an artist” Katlego breaks the awkwardness.

“Yes I am. I studied BA in fine arts” I respond

“Nice, have you found a job yet?” she asks

“Yes, I created one for myself, in this industry

you have to go independent to see your work give you the money you deserve. I've started a culture festival in Khumba, it will showcase local artists and craft work. We're also building an art gallery in Khumba to showcase artist's work" I say. I'm really on love with this project. I cannot speak about it and not find myself smiling.

"I see you have a passion for this. It's a great project, I'm definitely coming to see it" she says with a smile.

"Enough about work you two, let's eat before the food gets cold." Mam'Gloria

We dish out, say a prayer and we eat. The table is full of different kinds of food but there's something missing, wine. There's only juice and water. I haven't had wine since that day with Sinazo and I can't believe I've survived the worst past weeks without thinking about it.

“I hear you have a catering company Mam’Gloria” I say. I need to get to know these people.

“Yes my dear, I started it years ago and it has been doing pretty well. I quit my job as a teacher the moment it took off. I enjoy cooking.” She says with a smile and then there’s awkward silence again. This is going to be a long night.

“Okay, we’re all old and matured I think we should get rid of this elephant in the room so we can all enjoy this dinner properly, so someone say something please” Katlego says.

What’s she talking about, I look and my dad and he’s looking down and Mam’Gloria is looking at him to say something. I’m confused.

“We’re getting married, I asked Gloria to marry me and she said yes” my father finally speaks.

What?

“Uhm, why didn’t you tell me earlier? When did you ask her?” I ask

“I asked her a few days ago, after our first therapy session. I was afraid of your reaction” he says,

“You tell me things, regardless of what my reaction will be, you tell me these things and not make me look like a fool in front of people” I’m really angry. He should’ve told me and let me process this before they arrived now I look like an angry ungrateful stepchild. Nx!

“I’m sorry my baby, I should’ve” he says. There’s silence in the room

“Congratulations, I’m happy for you, I really am.” I say as I make my way to their side and hug them both from behind. They’re smiling. I hear Katlego exhale.

“Finally, now we can celebrate properly. Bring the champagne.” She says, grabbing the bottle

from the ice bucket beside her. I didn't see that. Finally some alcohol.

"Here" I pass her my glass and she gives me a concerned look, she puts it beside hers and pours for the newly engaged.

"You drink alcohol?" she asks. What kind of a stupid question is this? Ofcourse I drink alcohol. She looks concerned. All I need her to do is to fill up my glass and keep it moving.

"Yes, I do. Occasionally though. Don't you?" I say

"I do too, you can't drink alcohol...uhm you cant drink alcohol with the tea." she says and hands me water.

Is she serious right now? She can't be. I want champagne too. And her tea has done nothing but given me a big appetite and awful sleeping patterns.

I don't answer her but she sees the annoyance

on my face.

We make a toast and the conversation starts flowing. Mam'Gloria is a divorcee. She divorced Katlego's father many years ago and moved to the township with Katlego, where she started her catering business with small church events then weddings. She says that her divorce left her with nothing and she had to start from the bottom to build what she has now. Fortunately Katlego got a scholarship for her medical degree. She is a Christian woman, now I get where my father saw this praying thing. She really played a huge role in changing my father. And Katlego who insist I call her Kat, is very fond of my father.

We clear the table and move to the kitchen while the love birds sit at the lounge. We wash the dishes and are finished in no time. She talks a lot, about anything and everything, she speaks



nothing but positivity.

“By the way, your tea is not working for me, by the time I’m done with it I’d have gained a lot of weight and wasted all my time sleeping” I say.

“It’s not the tea, it’s you” she says with a straight face.

I’m confused

“What do you mean?” I ask

“I thought you knew, you’re pregnant Buhle”

“No I’m not, we always use a cond...” I replay the last time I had sex, it was a quickie in his car, in the middle of the forest. Oh shit!

“But I’ve been drinking alcohol. I don’t understand. No, I can’t be.” I say. I slowly slide down the cupboard and sit on the floor with my head buried in my hands.

I don’t want this, I didn’t plan this. I’m not ready to be a mother. I can’t. I won’t.

.....

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Insert 15

I don't understand the need to have a cold office, especially as a doctor. You already have sick patients, it doesn't make sense to have the coldest temperature on. I need to talk to Kat about this. I'm seating here, trembling.

How long do pregnancy tests take anyways? I need to see this for myself even though she told me I am just wasting my time. She wants to do an ultrasound to check if it's fine, you know, with all the drinking I've been doing. How

could I have been so stupid and ignorant to have sex without protection, love really blinds a person. I always carry my own packet. Now I'm stuck with this thing.

"Okay, done. Here" she walks towards me with 3 sticks.

They all say positive. I'm as shocked as I was when she told me last night. What am I going to do with this.

"And the baby is fine, you're lucky. But I'm going to need you to stay away from alcohol. No coffee, no energy drinks, no smoking and take it easy, no late nights.

"Can we keep this between us please, until I decide what I want to do with it" I say. She gives me a blank stare

"Why? Aren't you in good terms with the father?" she asks

"Not really, it's complicated and I didn't plan this.

I don't know how to take care of anyone but myself. I can't bring a baby in this messy life" I say. she walks closer and hugs me

"You have a family you know, us and in Khumba. We can help you out with anything. You're not alone anymore" she says hugging me tighter

"He's a prince, and he will be marrying someone else soon." I say she pulls back and widens her eyes

"Woaah, that's a lot. Buhle you're carrying a royal baby? You sure know how to choose" she's smiling. I'm glad she finds this fascinating.

"Let's just keep it between us until I figure something out" I say.

"Hurry now, this one will start showing soon" she says pointing at my stomach.

I look down at it and it looks normal to me, to think that something is growing in there, another human being is developing inside of me.

What will it look like? Will it draw like me or be a humanitarian like its father? Maybe it'll like clothes like its' uncle or be business minded like its grandfather. I made a human being and soon the whole world will see me as a different person.

.....

It's Christmas morning and we're all going to church, me, dad, Mam'Gloria and Kat. They've been visiting us almost every day, whether for lunch or dinner. It's been great. It's been a week since I've learned about my pregnancy and for some reason I feel like the whole world knows about it. I've been avoiding eye contact with dad and have been wearing my black clothes. Kat told me I'm just being paranoid, that I will only start showing in two months time. My breasts are already looking big and my face is chubby. I'm constantly eating and having weird cravings, like tripe and bran muffins. I drove all the way to

the township just for it. Kat has been monitoring me closely, making sure I take my vitamins and following the “take it easy” instructions.

We’re watching the Sunday school children’s play of the birth of Jesus. Honestly, it has been going on forever, for a moment I forgot I was still in church. The only people enjoying this is their parents. They’re saying every line word for word smiling at their children, you can see the pride written all over their faces. They look foolish. We’re all seating in one bench next to an old lady and a toddler. She’s been looking at me awkwardly the entire session. I tried to distract myself with my cell phone but Mam’Gloria gave me strict warning look. I’m bored. Kat has been serious and concentrating all this time. she’s such a perfect daughter.

This toddler opens up a pack of chips, they smell like feet. Oh my gosh

I don't feel well, the smell has invaded my stomach and I feel sick. I slowly walk out and run as soon as I leave the room. Throwing up all over the grass. I'm trying to grasp as much air as possible to get rid of the smell.

I feel a hand on my back, it's Kat. She must've followed me out.

"And so it begins." She says handing me a bottle of water.

"You mean this will happen everyday?" I'm freaked out and she's just smiling and looking perfect. She nods.

"You're going to have to say something soon, they will suspect something. The first trimester is usually the worst when it comes to morning sickness." She says

"No it's too soon, I don't think I'm ready for this Kat, it's a lot just thinking about it. I'm going to be a single mother. I don't want all of this." I'm

crying. I hate that I cry over everything lately.

This is the most careless thing I've ever done. Falling pregnant for a man that is getting married to another woman. His family would never accept this baby.

"What would you do if you were in my shoes?" I ask her

"Honestly, I wouldn't be in your shoes, I'm celibate. I'm saving myself for marriage." She says.

I almost choke on the water, looking at her. You have got to be kidding me.

"You mean to tell me you've never had sex in your life?" I'm shocked by this.

"Yes. The only man I'll have sex with will be my husband" she says.

"Do you have a boyfriend? Like how will you marry someone you've never been intimate



with?" I'm really curious

"I do have a boyfriend, we're not sexually intimate but spiritually intimate. We've been together for 3 years now." she says confidently with a smile and walks back inside the church, leaving me seated on the stoep.

She's an angel and I'm the step daughter with all the burden and flaws. My life is already a freak mess and I just made it worse by bringing another human in this mess.

Vrrr Vrrr

It's a text from Thami.

\*I told you to call me a long time ago, why are you avoiding my calls and texts. You can't hide forever. It's not his fault. Call me or at least take my calls\* Thami

Why is he nagging me so much, I'm not in the mood to be discussing any Khumba drama. Kat said stress is not good for the baby. And

already the baby is a stress on it's own. Maybe I should just get rid of it and end this before it blows up in my face.

.....

The table has been set and there are all sorts of food and salads. All the bright colors and smells have me salivating. Mam'Gloria really knows her stuff, I'm hungry just by looking at it. We all say a prayer and eat. I've dished up everything on the table and I'm eating without noticing the eyes fixed on me.

"You must've been very hungry?" Mam'Gloria says. I nod, looking embarrassed. My mouth is full of food.

Kat is smiling and laughing to herself. She really finds this funny.

"She never liked food growing up, we had to chase her around the house to get her to eat" my dad.

“I don’t blame her for stuffing her face like that, Mme’s cooking is bomb” Kat comes to the rescue, she winks at me and continues eating.

“Uhm, we’ve started looking at houses” my father speaks. Kat and I look shocked, we look at them and each other again.

“What? Did you think we were going to live like this forever?” Mam’Gloria says.

“And don’t worry, we wont sell your homes, I’ll have this one under Buhle’s name and Gloria will do the same with Katlego with the one in the township. We’ll buy a new one for us.” he says.

We’re still quiet. I don’t know what to say.

“So you’re going to live together?” Kat

“Of cause, what kind of a question is this? We’re moving after the wedding. Which will be after Buhle’s graduation” Mam’Gloria says.

“Okay, so I’ll stay here alone?” I ask.

“Aren’t you going back to Khumba?” dad, he really wants to live with his soon to be wife, alone. to do God knows what.

“I’m not sure” I say.

“Whatever problem you have you sort it out with your own selves. We’re buying a house and that’s final.” Mam’Gloria says.

Kat and I burst into laughter. We’re not against it we’re just admiring their attempts to live together alone, it’s just cute and funny.

“We’re fine with it. We support your decision” Kat says. We look at each other and smile. I guess we really are a distraction. They just want to fully express their love for each other, and who are we to stand in the way of that.

The room is full of love and laughter.

Mam’Gloria telling us about she met my dad and how he attended every event she catered

even though he wasn't invited. They're comfortable around me now, they kiss and hold hands in front of me. I'm happy to see my father this happy again, after years of self torture and guilt, he found courage to love again. Just watching him laugh till he cries makes me emotional. Pregnancy really messes one up.

"What's wrong Buhle?" dad. He looks worried. I wipe my tears. I probably look ridiculous right now

"Uhm...I'm just happy to see you happy, that's all" I say and he walks towards me and hugs me.

"I'm happy I have my daughter again" he says hugging me tighter. I feel another hug and the body weight on me gets heavier. It's Mam'Gloria and Kat, they've joined the hugging session. My heart is warm and I can't stop crying. Bloody hormones.

"Okay now, let's open presents, I'll go first" Kat

says. She leads us to the lounge where the presents are placed. She gives each one of us our presents and sits next to me.

Dad opens his, it's a briefcase with his initials. He likes it. Mam'Gloria opens hers, it's a chef apron with her name, she's smiling. I open mine, it's a spa voucher, labelled maternity leave. She's more excited about this pregnancy than me.

"Okay, my turn" I say handing everyone their presents. Kat quickly opens hers, she's smiling, and hugging me tight, almost suffocating me.

"Thank you, Thank you" she says.

Dad opens his, he looks confused.

"It's a digital photo frame, we need to make new memories and no one has photo albums these days. You store pictures and they show in slide show mode" I explain to him and his face lights up. He hugs me and smiles.

Mam'Gloria opens hers, she's laughing.

"It's like you knew I needed a new set, the one I'm using is getting old. Thanks Buhle" she smiles from across the room.

"Well, I didn't get you guys anything, I got Gloria only." My dad says, reaching for his pocket. He pulls out a small box and hands it to her.

She opens it and immediately cries with her hand over her eyes. Kat goes to comfort her. What did she get?

She pulls out a ring and places it in her finger. It's beautiful. It's a simple band with a small diamond on top. My father moves towards her and they kiss, for a while. I'm looking at Kat we both want to run. This is awkward.

"Uhm, I'm going to go check on dessert." I say. I'm ignored

"Me too" Kat. We both run to the kitchen and start laughing.

“How awkward was that?” she says.

“I don’t think they noticed we left” I say

“Today has been nothing short of special. The entire day has been a blessing. I’ve always wanted a “normal” Christmas and a family. After my parents’ divorce our family kind of isolated themselves and it was always me and Mme. Today I felt like I belonged, like my prayers as a young girl have been answered.” She says. Her eyes are watery.

“I enjoy having you around as well. And seeing my father that happy really touches me” I say.

“We’re officially family now, sis. Gosh, I’ve always wanted to say that” she says hugging me

“Me too sis” I hug her tighter. I’m emotional again. Geez

This is what Christmas should feel like, love, laughter and lots of food. I’ve craved for this



atmosphere all my life and to now have people who I consider family to share it with makes it even more great. My family is expanding and I've never been happier.

We grab dessert and move back to the lounge. They're sitting on the floor and my dad has his arm around Mam'Gloria. They look so happy and in love.

"You made my favorite, milk tart." My father says. Kissing her on the cheek. She's blushing.

Just by looking at it my stomach feels sick, I try to eat it and the texture has me gagging.

Mam'Gloria looks worried.

"Buhle?" she says.

I try to stomach it and swallow but I can feel it didn't settle well in my stomach as a pressure builds and my mouth becomes watery.

I stand and run to the nearest bathroom. I immediately throw up and struggle to get some

air, I feel dizzy and my knees are weak. I kneel in front of the toilet seat and my body begins to shake.

“Take deep breathes Buhle” it’s Kat. I’m trying but my whole body is shaking and I feel nauseas. My head is spinning.

“I can’t go on like this Kat, it’s too much” I say. I feel weak

“Don’t worry it will pass, just keep breathing” she’s patting a damp cloth around my neck and forehead.

“I don’t want it, I don’t want this baby.” I say, crying

“No, you don’t mean that. You’re emotional, you need to rest” she says

“I wouldn’t be like this if it wasn’t for it. I don’t want it” I snap and she looks shocked and scared.

“I’m sorry. I can’t continue like this.” I say.

“It will pass. Drink some water and I’ll make you the tea so you can rest” she says, helping me up and we walk out of the bathroom.

My dad and Mam’Gloria looked worried and confused.

“What’s going on, what wrong Buhle?” my dad.

“She reacted to the milk tart, I think she ate too much earlier, she’s going to lie down” Kat says, she’s covering for me. She really is my sister.

We walk up to my room and she tucks me in, putting more blankets on top of me.

“You need to keep warm, I’ll be back soon with your tea” she says and leaves.

Vrrr Vrrr

“Thami”

“I’ve been calling for weeks, you don’t just abandon me and move on with your life, I have

feelings too and I miss you.” He’s so loud.

“What do you want” I’m really not in the mood

“What’s wrong with you, you don’t sound good, are you okay?”

“I’m good, just sleepy”

“On Christmas, Edernville really is a boring place. We’re having a party later with Xola and some of my colleagues. you’re missing out”

“Have fun”

“Mzala you don’t sound fine at all, anyways I called to tell you that your witchy mother in law threatened to kill you if Zane chose you over that girl. Apparently Zane rejected the marriage with the Nduna Princess and told them he wanted you. So his evil mother threatened to have you killed. And she’s the one behind our attack, she heard about our weekly meetings as the rainbow club in the village so she sent some of his men, she’s really evil”

I cannot believe what I'm hearing and I don't even have energy to react. My whole body has shut down. All I can do is cry, my pillow is immediately soaking wet.

"How is he?" I ask, my voice is shaking

"He's not doing well, Zazi told me that he has locked himself in his backroom ever since he heard you left Khumba. Mama said he came to the house the day you left and she told him you left early that morning."

I'm crying uncontrollably and louder. I cover myself to avoid being heard by anyone.

"Mzala don't, just come back. He needs you" he says and I hang up the call.

I dial his number. It rings once

"Buhle, Buhle is that you my love" his voice sounds tired

"Zane, I'm pregnant, I miss you and I love you" I

can't stop crying

"I'm coming, I'm coming now baby" he hangs up.

Kat walks in and my face is red with tears falling down my cheeks.

"Buhle what's wrong? Are you feeling pains?" she says, sitting next to me

"I told him, he's coming" I say.

"That sounds promising, he wants to fix things." She says

"I miss him so much" I can't stop crying

"I'm sure you do, your hormones are getting you real hard sis, here have some tea, you need to rest. This tension is not good for the baby" she hands me the tea, wiping my face with the damp cloth.

She's such a big sister, even though she's only four years older than me. She's so matured and peaceful. She knows what to say and what to

do. She always approaches things with a positive perspective.

I finish my tea and lie down, she's rubbing my bald head with her nails, I like it. Within seconds I'm gone.

.....

I slept throughout the day and half the night, Kat passed out next to me. I need to pee, now. I tiptoe to the bathroom and almost peed myself. I sit on the toilet seat for a while staring into blank space.

My phone lights up the room and I run towards it.

Vrrr Vrrr

"Zane?"

"Hey my love, I just got here, I booked in at Edernville Game reserve."

"It's close to where I stay, it's literally our

backyard. I want to see you.”

“Send me your location, I’m coming”

“Okay” I hang up.

It’s after midnight and I want to see my man.

I wear my black leggings and black hoodie. I slowly tiptoe out of my room and make my way out of the sliding door and run to the small gate by the pool house and jump over it. I see his car parked across the road. I run towards it.

“Baby, I’m so sorry” he’s hugging me tight, he’s eyes are tired and he is crying.

“I missed you Zane” I hug him tighter.

I missed his touch more than anything. His voice and his smile. he’s looking at my new hairstyle and keeps touching my face like feeling if it is real.

“Thami told me everything, I shouldn’t have left without fighting for you, for us” I say.



“I’m sorry I dragged you into this life, I hate myself for putting you in such danger” he says, holding my hand. He looks sad and tired.

“You look tired baby, nine hour drive is no child’s play, you need to rest” I say.

“I needed to see my babies” he’s smiling and rubs my tummy.

“Your baby is not treating me well, I eat everything and throw it all up again” I say.

“When did you find out? How did you know? And you’ve been drinking wine almost everyday?” he looks concerned

“I found out a week ago, I went to get stitched at the doctor, she took blood tests, to check for bacterial infections but she found a baby instead. She did an ultrasound, it’s fine” I say.

“Please don’t say it, he or she is human too you know and what were the stitches for?” he says.

I look down, I can't answer this.

"No Buhle, ooh baby I'm sorry. It's all my fault."  
He hugs me. His eyes are full of sadness and guilt.

"I'm fine now baby." I say, trying to make him feel better.

"I've caused you too much pain, I've pushed you away, so much that you hurt yourself. I'm sorry my love" he says.

"I'm fine, they're healed and I'm doing therapy, I'm learning about my anxiety, I know what causes it and I'm working on that. I'm fine baby"  
I really need for him to stop blaming himself.

He kisses my hands and smiles.

"I like your hair or lack of it, rather. You look beautiful" he leans over and kisses my cheek.

"I missed you baby" I kiss his lips and we're all over each other, he climbs on to my seat and

lowers it, flat. My whole body is suddenly excited by this moment, like it's been waiting for it. I'm grinding and he pushes his knee between my thighs. I reach for his belt. He pulls back

"Woaow, babe. I don't think this is the right time or place" he says, moving back to his seat. Is he kidding me, this is the perfect time for it. I was ready, I wanted him and my whole body was waiting for him. He can see the disappointment on my face.

"You need to rest, we'll have breakfast together at the Reserve, I'll come fetch you." He says planting a kiss on my forehead.

"Okay, I'll see you tomorrow, well, in a few hours" I say.

"And please don't jump over the gate, just walk in, you can't be jumping like that in your condition" he says. I roll my eyes. This baby is not even here and is already taking over my life.

“I’ll try.” I kiss him and run back to the house. I make it without getting caught. I take off my clothes and get into bed.

“Running around at night and jumping over gates is not acceptable, you’re putting this baby at risk sis”

I thought she was asleep, she saw everything. I’m shocked and I switch on the side lamp.

“I thought you were asleep.” I say

“I’m a light sleeper, one move and I’m up. Don’t do that again.” she says. She’s serious.

“I won’t. I was scared the gate would make a squeaky noise and wake everyone” I say in my defence.

“Couldn’t you wait ‘till the morning?” she says

“No” i say, dropping my face. She shakes her head in disbelief

“Let’s sleep, you need to rest” she says and rolls

over, her back facing me.

I pull the covers over my head.

Vrrr Vrrr

\*I can't wait to father our child. I love you Buhle\*  
Zane

Only if he knew how scared I am of this new journey. But I know I have a lot of people by my side. I'm not alone.

.....

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Insert 16

I slept like a baby. When I woke up Kat had

already left and I found Mam'Gloria in the kitchen making breakfast.

The kitchen smells so good. "You're up, come I made breakfast. Kat has already left for work" she says.

"Good morning ma, isn't it a holiday?" I ask.

"Kat never rests, she will tell you sickness doesn't have holidays. She loves her job" she says handing me a cup of coffee.

"I'll have tea, don't worry I'll make one myself" I say. She looks at me for a while then continues with her cooking.

"Where's dad?" I ask

"He's still sleeping" she says. That's a first, my father never sleeps past 9am

"Oh, is he fine? He never sleeps this late" I say.

"He's probably tired" she says unable to hide her smile. And then? I'm missing something.

I finish making my tea and grab a rusk. She bakes every morning.

“Buhle I’m so happy you and your father worked things out and I also want you to know that I love your father. He has shown me nothing but kindness and respect. I will look after him, even when you not around. I want you to know, I’m not trying to take your mothers place, she’ll always be part of his life, he loved her.” she says with a sincere face.

“I know, I’m also glad we were able to reconcile and be family again. You make him very happy. I respect you and appreciate you. You’re good for him” I say with a smile.

She walks my side and smiles.

“Will you be my bridesmaid?” she says. Wait, what? is she planning a big wedding?

“Uhm, will Kat be fine with this?” I ask.

“Yes, she’s also a bridesmaid. We won’t do a big

wedding. Just our close friends” she says.

I don't want to disappoint her by saying no but I also don't want to be a pregnant bridesmaid.

“Ok, I'll do it” I say and she looks excited.

She's singing and telling me about all her plans. It will be a black and white theme. All ladies will wear white and all men will wear black. She says she'd love to have it at a beach resort with only close friends as guests. She said she won't be catering that day, she wants to enjoy it with no stress of work. She said the last time she got married they went to court and that was it. I can see why she's excited about this wedding.

“We have an appointment with the designer after new year, so you better be ready” she says.

So I think this means I have until that appointment to come clean with my pregnancy. This is why I didn't want to be a bridesmaid.

“Cool” I say, sipping on my tea.



She hands me a plate of full traditional breakfast. Eggs, bacon, tomatoes, sweet potato and toast. She also made pancakes. It's a lot and I want it all but I can't finish it, I still have to meet Zane for our breakfast date, which I still need to get dressed for.

"My favorite people in the world" my father walks in with a smile across his face. He hugs Mam'Gloria and kisses my forehead. He's in a good mood.

"Someone seems happy" Mam'Gloria

"You know I'm happy" he says kissing her.

This is awkward and I need to go before Zane gets here. I excuse myself.

"You're not hungry? You hardly touched your food" she says. Honestly I would've eaten it all but I'm saving space for breakfast with my baby daddy.

"I'll grab something in town, I need to be

somewhere” I say. They both look suspicious.

“Where? This early” My father asks

“uhm... I need to check out some things in town, like toiletries” I say rushing upstairs before they asked questions.

I put on my a loose black dress and my new tussel earrings. My pregnancy glow has become my new make-up, all I do is put on a nude matte lipstick and mascara and I’m good to go.

Vrrr Vrrr

\*I’m here my love. I’ve parked at our spot.\* Zane

\*Okay, coming\*me.

I make my way downstairs and the love birds are cuddled up on the sofa in their sleepwear, feeding each other fruits. This is so uncomfortable to watch, my father is a completely different person around Mam’Gloria.

“I’m leaving, see you” I say, walking as fast as I can to the door.

“Why are you leaving that side? the garage door is over there” he says. Oh shit!

“Uhm.. I’m going with an old friend from school” I say

“You’re lying. You don’t have friends. Where are you going?” my father is serious.

“I’m going to meet Zane” I say, he looks surprised.

“Where?” he asks.

“He’s outside” I say, I’m scared and embarrassed. I can’t make eye contact.

“When did he get here?” he asks

“Early this morning” I say. This conversation is getting deeper and I just want to leave.

“Are sure you want to see him? I don’t want you getting hurting. You’re already doing well with

your anxiety” he looks concerned

“I’m fine dad, we’re just going to talk” I say.

“I want to see that boy. When you come back, bring him in” I freeze, he’s going to make a big deal out of this, he can never know about Zane’s mother sending people to have me killed. He’ll ban me from Khumba forever.

“Okay. See you later.” I say and rush to the door.

I take a deep breath as soon as I leave the house. That was hectic, my father’s eyes looked intimidating and he saw pass my lies. I walk down the road and get into the car.

“It was worth it, you look beautiful” he says smiling.

“What?” I’m confused

“All the time you had me waiting here, while you make yourself pretty. Not that you need it.” he starts and we move

“Actually I was caught in a lie, my dad wants to see you later” I say. He looks at me widening his eyes.

“I’m not going in there, he’s going to kill me” he says.

“He’s not going to kill you but if you refuse to come, he just might.” I say and I’m not about to show up alone without him, I’d be in deep trouble.

“Does he know about the pregnancy?” he asks

“Nope, only Katlego knows” I say, he looks confused

“Who’s Katlego?” he asks

“My sister, she’s my fathers’ step daughter.” I say, he still looks confused.

“Your father has a girlfriend?”

“A fiancé, they’re getting married”

“A lot has happened and you need to fill me in

on everything.”

“How’s the little one doing?” he says reaching out for my stomach.

“ I don’t think it likes me, every morning it makes me sick” I say

“Not it, he or she, we’ll call “it” Ozayo until we meet him/her” he smiles and kisses my hand.

“Well, Ozayo doesn’t like me, gives me weird cravings and makes me throw up. And I pee all the time” I say, he’s smiling. I can’t believe he thinks this is worth smiling for but I missed this smile, I could look at it all day every day.

We reach the lodge and make our way to his chalet. There’s a private breakfast set up at the patio, facing the moist fields where the animals roam around freely. The room is open and the wind is blowing in from all windows, it’s beautiful. I make my way to the patio and enjoy the view of the wild life, the breeze blows my

dress in different directions.

“You look beautiful my love, I could watch you forever.” He says hugging me from behind. I turn around to meet his face, he’s smiling and looking into my eyes.

“I want to make things right Buhle, with you. I need for you to trust that I will never leave you and that I will do everything it takes to protect you and our baby. You’re all I need and this baby seals the deal.” He’s emotional and holding me tight.

“I thought you didn’t want me, I felt like I wasn’t enough for you when I left.” I play back that day and I’m reduced to tears. My heart aches just by seeing him standing next to her with their hands held in the air.

“I will always want you, you’re more than enough baby. I will never let that happen to you again, even if I have to leave Khumba and find

our own place to stay and raise our child, that's what we'll do, I'll do that for us. I love you Buhle, never doubt that" he kisses my bald head as I rest it on his chest with my hands wrapped around his waist.

"I love you Zane" I look up to him and we kiss, he lifts me and I wrap my legs around his waist, spinning me around the room. I'm laughing.

My stomach feels uneasy and I suddenly feel sick. Not this again. I push him away and run to the bathroom. He follows me and stands looking clueless at the door.

"Buhle, what should I do?" he's pacing by the door

"Bring me water and a towel" I hear him run off.

He's back with many bottles of water and bunch of towels, dramatic. I clean myself up and rinse my mouth.

"See, I told you this child doesn't like me" I say,



trying to find my balance holding on to his arm.

“Does this happen all the time?” I reply with a nod. He looks sorry for me. He should be, he’s the reason why I’m in this mess.

“Where were we?” I pull him closer and kiss him, passionately. His warm lips meet mine and his hands are all over my body. Gosh I missed this. He carries me and we make our way to the bedroom, he lays me, gently, on the bed.

He pulls my dress over my hips all the way to my head. I’m naked with nothing but my panties on. He plants kisses all over my body and down my waist, I arch my back, this feels good. His head is buried in between my thighs. Yees, I exhale as his movements sends tingling sensations down my spine. He removes my panties and kisses me under. My toes feel the excitement and my hands are grabbing on the sheets. I want him inside, now. I sit up and grab him by the shoulders. I pull off his t-shirt while

he takes off his jeans. His erection has me smiling. I jump on him as he stands next to the bed, wrapping my hands around him, I insert him inside me and he has me against the wall pushing me hard with his hand holding my thighs. He makes groaning noises everytime he moves faster. I dig my nails in his back, as I pull him closer and tighter. Aaaaah baby. My whole body is enjoying the pleasure of his movement, I'm overwhelmed with emotions. My eyes are watery and I don't want him to stop, he grinds harder and hugs me tighter. Before I know it we're on the bed and he's on top of me. He looks into my eyes and kisses me while thrusting harder and faster. I come first, he follows with a loud groan and rests his head on my breasts. He's out of breath and I'm in tears. "Buhle?" he looks at my face and wipes my eyes. "It's these bloody hormones. When it's good it's good" I say and he laughs out loud.

“You almost dug holes on my back, that was hectic.” He says, kisses me.

“I’m hungry” I say. I haven’t eaten much this morning and I haven’t taken my medication too.

He hands me a white gown and we make our way to the patio, where the breakfast is set up. He’s so thoughtful and romantic. Thandi really taught him well. He told me that she taught him everything about how to treat a woman, she also taught him how to cook.

“This is beautiful baby.” I reach out for the pork sausages and eggs. There’s also waffles with cream and fruit salad with granola and yogurt. I’m eating like I’ve just been released from jail. Zane is holding in his laugh, he’s smiling and winking at me. Everything tastes good. I want it all.

“These past weeks have made me realize how much I don’t want to spend a day without you.”

He looks serious. I nod, I'm enjoying these pancakes. I could join in on the conversation but my mouth is occupied.

"I never want to go to bed without knowing you're okay and I want to wake up next to your freckle face every day, for the rest of my life" he continues to speak, looking at me in the eye. he's still serious, he's so sexy. I nod and continue with my food.

"Buhle, I want to spend the rest of my life watching you eat. I want to marry you and make you my wife, my forever." He says.

I almost choke on my sausage, I chew slowly with my eyes fixed on his.

"Mmmh?" I'm still trying to process this, did he just propose. Did he ask me to marry him.

"I want to make you my wife" he says.

This is all happening too fast, too soon. First the baby, now marriage? I'm still trying to

process this motherhood stage. It scares me, now I have to worry about marriage. No, what about his mother, he wants me dead and marrying his son will piss her off.

“Buhle” he snaps me out of my thoughts

“I can’t...” I say and he looks shocked

“I want to, I want to marry you, I want to spend the rest of my life with you. It’s scary. I’m still trying to process this baby thing, now marriage? It’s all happening at once and it’s overwhelming. Can we take it step by step please. Let’s first figure out how we’re going to tell our families about this baby. I’m really scared” I say

“Buhle, I want to be with you. I will not have my child raised in different homes, I want to be there from the beginning. I want to be a father to this child and I can’t do that if we’re living apart. I understand your concern but telling our families and whatever reaction they will have, it

will not change what I want and that's you and that baby, under the same roof as me" he's serious

"Your mother wants to kill me, what are you going to do about that?" I say.

"She will have to get through me first, I won't let anyone hurt you or my child. No one, even my own mother." he says, I see anger in his face and he's breathing heavily.

This is really a messed up situation I got myself into. I bury my head in my hands, it's exhausting just thinking about it. I'm crying again.

"Buhle, everyone in the village supports us, they saw how things happened and they heard about my mother's threats. There are protests in the village. People are protesting against my father and my mother. They want him to step down, especially after the attack of Thami and his friends. Zazi was mortified when he heard that

my mother was behind the attack, he even came out about his sexuality.” He says.

“Zazi is gay?” I ask.

“Bisexual, he spoke out when he confronted mama about the attack. He said that could’ve been him because he attends those meeting regularly. He survived only because he was in initiation school. My love, I will do whatever it takes to bring peace back in Khumba, I will fight for the people, they’ve suffered too much for too long.” He says, he looks determined and angry.

“I’m coming with you” I say, holding his hand, he’s shaking with anger. I go over his side and hug him. He’s hurt by this, the last time I saw him this mad was when he showed up in my bedroom at night after having an argument with his mother. That woman really is evil as they warned me but to threaten to kill your sons girlfriend is a psychotic.

“We’ll do this together my love” I say holding his face, he’s calm now.

“Are you saying yes to my proposal?” I almost forgot he even proposed.

“Yes, I will marry you. Let’s just have this baby first. I’m not walking down the aisle with swollen ankles and a hippo belly” I say, he’s laughing and kissing my stomach.

“I can’t wait to meet Ozayo”. He’s so excited.

“Oh I almost forgot, the manager offered us a couple’s full body massage, we should head to the spa now” he says with a smile.

What did I do to deserve such a considerate man, it’s like he knew my body needed some TLC.

“Let me ask Kat if it’s fine to do it?” I say dialing her number. He looks confused.

“She’s a doctor babe” I explain. She answers.



“Hey sis, is it okay to get a full body massage?”  
me

“Hey, yes, just tell them you’re pregnant so they know which muscles to avoid. Mmmh you’re spoiling yourself without me” Kat

“It was unplanned, a surprise. We’ll get ours when you finally leave that office” me

“Is it the Prince? I take it everything is going well. See you tonight.”Kat

“See you”me. I smile and walk up towards Zane who’s standing by the door. He stretches his hand towards me and we’re together.

“So your sister is a doctor” he says

“Yes, she’s the one I went to for the stitches and she discovered my pregnancy” I say and he looks impressed.

We enter the spa, it’s beautiful and there’s only one bed. I look at him and he leads me to the

bed. I thought he said couple's massage.

"Aren't you getting a massage?" I ask.

"No ways. I'm not letting a stranger touch my body." He says. I can't help but laugh at him, he's such a rural boy at heart. You can take the boy out of the village but you can never take the village out of the boy. You'd think private school would change him.

He is sitting on the sofa grabbing his laptop with juice on the other hand.

A young lady walks in and greets us, she helps me get comfortable and prepares the oils.

"She's pregnant, so please take it easy" he says and the lady nods.

I can already see the kind of dad he will be. He will spoil this child and he will shield it so much that it wouldn't even bump or trip. He seems like that overprotective father.

He's making conversation but honestly, my mind zoned out the moment this lady's hands pressed on my body, it feels so good. My body deserves this. He's still talking but I can't hear a word he's saying. Moments later I fall into deep sleep.

.....

I open my eyes slowly to find him looking at me, he smiles. He's just a weird lover. Watching me sleep is a thing he does a lot. I look around to familiarize myself with the location. It's almost dark, the sun has already set. My father is going to kill me, how could he let me sleep this long. This pregnancy will be the death of me.

"Babe, what's the time? we need to go now. I've been gone all day. My father's going to kill me" I say, changing into my dress.

"I couldn't wake you up, you slept so peacefully" he's also changing into his clothes. I can't

believe this. So he let me sleep through the whole day, just to watch me sleep. He better explain that to my father.

“Let’s hope my father will be peaceful when we walk in at this time” I say, he looks terrified.

“Or maybe I’ll drop you and meet him tomorrow when he’s calm” he says.

“No you’re not. We’re going there together, you’re not leaving me alone” I say, as we both rush to the door and drive off.

I look at the time, it’s close to 7pm. Our drive is short and we’re at the gate in no time. I see his car and Kat’s in the drive way. He opens my door and we walk inside the house. I can hear people talking in the lounge. He’s holding my hand tight. All eyes are on us as we enter the room.

“Where do you come from? You’ve been gone all day.” My father speaks. He looks angry.

“It’s all my fault sir, we lost track of time. I’m sorry” Zane speaks

“Of cause it’s your fault. You’ve pained my daughter for weeks and now you show up and disrespect my curfew” his voice is louder.

Mam’Gloria holds his hand trying to calm him down. Zane look terrified.

“Sorry dad, we lost track of time and we had a lot of things to talk about” I say, my head is faced down.

“Sit down” he says. we both find a seat, he’s still holding my hand, tight.

“No, Buhle sit, you’re coming with me. follow me” he says,standing up and leading. Zane gets up trying to remove my hand but I hold it tight. Where is he taking him? What does he want to do?

“What are you doing Buhle, let him go” my father speaks. I shake my head and hold him

tight. He wants to hurt him, I won't allow that.

"It's fine Buhle" Zane speaks, slowly removing my hand from his. He walks behind my father who's face is full of disbelief, they disappear into the passage.

I can't sit still, this makes me nervous. My father is very angry and I don't want him to hurt Zane.

"They're just going to talk" Mam'Gloria. I look at her and not answer

"You need to understand where he's coming from as a father. He saw you hurt because of that boy, now he can't just let it go like nothing ever happened. He's doing what any other father would do for their daughter." She continues to speak.

"Aah sis, you are on another level of falling in love. A whole day" Kat say, smiling

"After the massage I fell asleep and he let me

sleep throughout the day, I just woke up a few minutes ago.” I say.

We’re immediately terrified when we hear shouting from the passage. As I stand, about to walk to them, my father appears followed by Zane.

“Buhle, is it true? You’re pregnant” he say. My whole body shakes and my face falls facing the floor. Why did Zane tell him.

“Speak Buhle, are you pregnant?” he’s shouting and angry

“Yes” I say. Kat walks towards me and stands next to me holding my hand.

“Oh so you also knew about this, this is why you’ve been acting strange and feeling sick. How long did you think you’d keep this a secret?” he’s yelling.

“Sidwell” Mam’Gloria tries to calms him down.

“I was going to tell you, when the time was right” I say.

“When is that? When you start showing? When you give birth? When Buhle?” he’s yelling again. I cover my ears and sit down. I can’t handle his yelling voice.

“Buhle, are you okay?” Zane kneels in front of me. He lifts my face and sees the fear in my teary eyes. This is what I was scared of, his reaction. I wasn’t ready to deal with it.

“I’ll get her some water” Kat says, moving to the kitchen.

“Okay, I think we should all calm down and talk properly like adults” Mam’Gloria says.

“I’m sorry dad. We didn’t plan this” I say, he’s calm but I can still see anger and disappointment on his face.

“You’re too young to be a mother Buhle, both of you are too young to be parents.”he says, he



looks concerned.

“With all due respect sir, I will do whatever it takes to take care of Buhle and the baby” Zane.

“What’s your plan exactly. Do you even have one?” he says

“I’m going to marry your daughter and I will be present as a husband and a father” he looks confident and is looking at my father in the eye. he’s quiet for a while and sits down. He’s speechless.

“I love Buhle, I will do whatever it takes to protect her, all I need is your blessing. I’m asking for your permission to marry your daughter and father your grandchild.” He says rubbing his hands on mine. Mam’Gloria and Kat look at each other.

My father hasn’t taken his eyes from us, he keeps looking at us and shaking his head.

“What about your family?” he finally speaks.

“My family has no right over my life and who I choose to live it with. I chose Buhle over the throne. I’m no longer their prince, but if it comes down to it, I will fight for us. I will shield her with all my life, she’s worth it” Zane responds with tension in his eyes.

“Let’s continue this conversation privately” he says, standing. They both walk towards the study room. I drink up my water and rest my head on the sofa. I lay across it and curl up.

“Are you okay Buhle?” Mam’Gloria

“This is just emotionally draining” I say.

“You should eat something, I’ll make soup for you quickly” she says and disappears to the kitchen.

Kat sits next to me and puts my head on her lap. She’s brushing my head with her nails. She knows I like this.

“Everything will be better tomorrow, it will soon

be over” he says with her calm voice. She’s such a good support system.

Mam’Gloria walk up with soup. That was quick. It smells delicious. I sit up and eat.

“I make it in batches and put it in the freezer, so your father can just warm it up” she says. I’m impressed.

My father and Zane appear from the passage. At least there’s no shouting this time and they look calm.

“I think we can have dinner now” my father says. Zane sits next to me, he’s hiding a smile. Everyone else makes their way to the dining room

“Your head is buried in this bowl” he’s giggling softly. I am really hungry.

“You’re teasing your baby mama?” I say. He laughs and kisses my cheek quickly while side eyeing everyone, they didn’t see that.

“What did you speak about?” I ask, whispering  
“I can’t tell you, it’s men stuff” he says. I frown.  
But I want to know.

“You’re so cute when you make that sad face.”  
he says kissing my hand.

Ugh. He’s really not going to tell me what they  
were talking about. But I can tell by the ease in  
his eyes, it’s positive.

“Come join us” Mam’Gloria says and we walk  
towards them.

“I don’t think we introduced ourselves. I’m  
Mam’Gloria, Buhle’s step mother and this is  
Katlego, my daughter.” She says

“I’m Zanemvula, nice to meet you” he says, he  
looks shy.

“I think it’s safe to say congratulations, or is it  
too soon?” Kat really knows how to break the  
awkwardness with more awkward statements, I

don't think she realizes it. My father looks at her and shakes his head, proceeding with his eating.

I want to laugh at this but I'm scared, I don't want to upset my dad. I still don't know what they decided in the study. And I think I deserve to know, I'm part of this as well.

"We still don't know what Zane and dad decided on in the study" I say my father looks at me.

"We'll be going to Khumba to report the pregnancy. We need to do things accordingly." He says.

Oh okay.

"And the wedding?" I ask

"That can wait. Let's start with this first" he says.

I don't see this ending well. Reporting the prince's pregnancy out of wedlock will have everyone in the village talking. I'm more nervous

about his family, especially his mother, her motives of having me killed will be doubled. It really scares me, a part of me wants to run off to a different city where we will raise this baby and get married, live happily with no traditions dictating how we should live, I guess love alone is not enough. One would think it's enough to reconcile and bring everyone together, it's a lot more complicated. I want to enjoy this journey to motherhood with my man, I really do not want anymore drama.

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Insert 17

We continue eating, Mam'Gloria and Kat are grilling Zane with all sorts of questions, from his role as a Prince to when we met. They're enjoying the stories, my father looks rather annoyed by all the attention Zane is getting. I think he's jealous. Zane answers all the questions honestly, he still looks nervous.

"Anyone for dessert? I made cheesecake"

Mam'Gloria

Zane looks at me and smile.

"Zane likes cheesecake, I'll have a little. Thanks"

I say and she walks back to the kitchen.

Zane's phone rings and he excuses himself. He walks towards the hallway, I can see him pacing up and down the room. His face is hard to read but his body looks tense. He's using his hands as he speaks, it's a hectic phone call. He's done talking but he's still standing in the hall way. I

walk to him.

“What’s wrong? Who was that?” I ask

“It’s Thandi, the people in the village are protesting in front of the gate. They’re burning tyres and throwing stones inside the yard.” he looks worried and angry.

“Thandi’s room is close to the gate, I don’t want her to get hurt. I told her to sleep in my room. this is really bad Buhle, those people are violent and angry” he says, looking concerned.

“You need to go back, you know you’re the only person they listen to and they will not stop until your father steps down.” I say.

This is hard. He really will not find peace until the villagers get what they want and that’s him as their King. He keeps rubbing his hands on his head, he looks stressed.

“I have to leave early in the morning, these protests really get dangerous at times, people



die and I can't have that." He says.

"I'll come with you" I say, and he doesn't like the idea

"You're not going to a violent place with my child, I won't put you and my child at risk like that" he says with a serious look in his face.

"I'll stay at home, I don't think I can stay another day without you" I frown and he pulls me closer

"Your father won't agree to that and I'm already in his bad books by getting his angel daughter pregnant" he has that naughty smile

"Well, it takes two to tango. Besides I need to get back to work. The festival has a huge following. So many people are telling me they've been saving up to attend. I need to finalise everything and push the marketing side." I say. he kisses my forehead.

"You tell that to your father, you're on your own" he says and we walk back to the dining room.

Everyone has finished their dessert. Zane digs in the moment he sits.

“This is delicious Mam’Gloria.” He says with a smile, he’s such a boy around cheesecake. She smiles back

I take a small bite and I already feel my stomach rejecting it. I push it away and drink water to get rid of the taste. I can’t, I’m gagging.

“Bathroom!” Kat instructs. Zane stands and pulls my chair, following me to the bathroom.

I thought they called them morning sickness because they happened in the morning. It’s 8pm and I’m throwing up like a drunk college student. I really do not like this part of pregnancy, and I still have eight more months to go. It’s unfair.

I wash my face and rinse my mouth.

“I don’t like feeling like this” I say.

“If I could, I would take the sickness and you

keep Ozayo” he really is a sweet man with a sincere heart. I bury my head in his chest and he hugs me tighter.

“I need to go baby, I have an early drive tomorrow” he says planting kisses on my head.

“I’ll tell my father about our trip, you’ll have to come fetch me” I say.

“What if he doesn’t allow you to go?” he says

“I’ll go anyway” I say. he smiles and lifts my face to his.

“Your stubbornness will have me killed” he says, kissing me.

I hold his face and kiss him back. If being horny all the time is a pregnancy thing, then I should stay pregnant. My body is always ready for sex. One touch from Zane and I’m moist.

I pull him closer and place my hands in his butt.

“woah! Not here, Never” he pushes me back.

Aaaah I want him. I continue kissing him but he refuses to engage

“Buhle, no not in your fathers bathroom” he says.

I roll my eyes and he leads the way me out the door. I spank his butt and wink at him as we walk down the passage. He looks awkward and embarrassed, like someone saw us.

“Thank you so much for the dinner Ma, it was delicious. I need to go back to the lodge” he says.

“It was nice meeting you Zanemvula” Mam’Gloria. He shakes everyone’s hand.

“We’ll talk more about that issue later. Keep in touch” my father says while shaking Zane’s hand.

What’s that all about. He’ll have to tell me, and keep in touch? So they’ve exchanged numbers or something. He says his goodbyes and we

both walk to his car, he's hand is rubbing on my butt.

"It's getting bigger and I like it" he says.  
Seriously?

"Are you saying I'm fat?" I stop and look at him

"No baby, not fat but thick..uhm.. you're growing. That's what I meant, you're expanding. Not that you are big, just..." he's digging himself into a whole. He should just stop.

He can't call me fat when I'm carrying his child, that's disrespectful.

"You're beautiful baby, pregnancy suits you" he says, pulling me over to stand by his door. It's so dark I can't even see where I'm walking.

He pushes me against the car and lifts my dress, rubbing his hand over my thighs. I pull closer and we kiss. He drops my underwear and turns me around. A second later I feel his erection enter me from behind. Aaaah, I exhale

feeling the excitement all over my body. He thrusts harder and faster. I feel a rush of pleasure as he cups my breasts. His breathing is loud in my ears as he pushes me hard against the car. I've been craving this sexual adrenaline. And just like that, he releases his juices and rests his heavy body on me, my knees are weak and shaking. I can't believe I had sex outside, in front of my father's house.

He pulls up his pants, wipes me with his t-shirt. I pull up my panties. And lean against him. Wow, exactly what I needed.

"There's no way I'm staying behind, tomorrow" I say.

"There's no way I'm leaving you behind" he says, "We'll leave at 4am. I love you MakaOza" he's so charming. I'm blushing

"I love you too Oza's dad" I kiss him and watch him drive off. I run back to the house

Dad is sitting alone in the lounge with his laptop. I walk up to him and sit at the sofa next to him  
“Are you okay? With the pregnancy? Is the baby healthy?” he asks. He genuinely looks concerned.

“Yes, Kat has been monitoring me” I say.

“You girls are sneaky” he says, almost wanting to smile. Okay this is my chance.

“Zane is going back to Khumba in the morning and I was thinking of going back as well. To get started with work again.” I say, he’s mood changes.

“Whatever love potion you guys have on each other is strong. You follow each other around like ants and are always touchy touchy. It’s every parents’ worst nightmare because you realise they no longer need you.” He says.

“We leave at 4am” I say.

“I can’t even say no because you’ll go anyways. I will come down next week. I need to meet your grandfather and inform the family about the wedding plans for me and Gloria. Also to report your pregnancy” he says.

“Thanks dad, I should start packing already. And rest. Goodnight” I wish I could hug him but my situation doesn’t allow for such, I need to shower now. I walk upstairs to my room.

Kat is laying on my bed reading the book I bought her, she looks focused and serious. We have so many rooms in this house but she always sleep with me, in my bed. I’ve never asked her why she does that. Not that I’m complaining, I enjoy our late night chats, it’s just something I’d like for her to explain but I don’t want to sound rude.

I pull out my suitcase and start packing.

“Where are you going?” she asks.



“Khumba, I’m leaving early in the morning with Zane. I need to get back to work” I say. she sits up and smiles.

“He’s a nice guy. I like him for you. He’s calm and matured. I can’t believe we’re the same age and he’s that responsible. The way he spoke about his projects back home, I admire his passion, he would make a great King” she says. smiling

“He the opposite of me. I yell, he’s calm. I want to fight, he wants to reason” I say.

“It’s a great balance. And I can tell he’s deeply in love with you. He watches your every move and smiles with admiration.” She say, it’s true.

“I’m in love with him too” I blush.

“Agh, I’m going to miss you wild one” she says looking sad.

“I’m going to miss you too, perfect one, don’t you want to visit with dad next week? I could

introduce you to my family that side” I say. It would be great.

“I’ll check my charts and let you know sis, I’d love to see how the village life is, I’ve never been” she say, she’s such a workaholic.

“I’d love to host you. Please help me pack. I need to shower” I say,

Vrrr Vrrr. It’s a text.

\*I can still smell you on my t-shirt\*Zane. He’s so nasty

\*Wash that. You’re a low key freak.\* me.

\*You made me a freak. I was normal before you came into my life.\*Zane

\*So I corrupted you?\*me

\*I’m not complaining. I like that you brought out this person\*Zane

\*I’m glad I could help. BTW dad said I could go with you. So 4am it is\* me

\*Great. See you soon. I'm actually sleepy. You wore me out\*Zane

\*I'm exhausted too. I asked Kat to help with the packing\*me

\*Lucky you. Let's rest baby. Kiss Oza for me. I love you\* Zane

\*Will do. I love you\* me

I didn't realize I've been smiling like an idiot all this time and Kat is looking at me.

"Sis, you are smitten" she says, closing the suitcase. That was quick.

I can't answer her, I'm just smiling and blushing, I walk to the bathroom and take a quick shower.

She's back to reading her book, she must really like it, she can't seem to put it down. I put on my pajamas and get into bed.

"Goodnight sis" I say.

"Goodnight Buhle" she responds and goes back

to her book.

Today has been very emotionally draining but at least I have one less thing to worry about, hiding this pregnancy from my family. Kat has shown me what a true sister does. Stick up for each other and be the best support system they need. I fixed things with my man, my baby daddy, my future husband. My mind is at ease.

I pull the covers over my head and sleep.

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We've been driving for hours now, the sun has risen and the wind is thinner. Kat woke me up minutes after my alarm went off, I didn't hear it. I had to take a quick shower and say my goodbyes. Mam'Gloria made us breakfast and lunch to take with on the road. I slept the moment we left Edernville and we've been making emergency stops for my throwing up and peeing. It's been a long but fun trip. He's so

excited about this baby, he's even suggesting baby names, where the baby will study, he even speaks about building a house for us to live in once the baby arrives.

"I'd have to build a big one to fit all our other children" he says.

"What other children?" I ask.

"Oza's siblings, there's no way I'm having one child. I want more" he says.

"How many exactly?" I'm curious

"Four, I want four children" he says. he's joking right?!

"There's no way I'm going through all this sickness three more times, it's not going to happen." I say and he looks shocked by what I said.

"You don't say no to the future King of Khumba, have you forgotten about the great curse that

will follow you all your life?" he says. The way this curse thing is thrown loosely, I'm starting to believe it's a lie.

"I'm carrying one of their own, they better be careful" I say smiling.

He reaches his hand to my side and tickles me. I laugh hard and scream trying to make him stop but he's still at it.

"You don't threaten amaHlubi" he keeps saying. My stomach suddenly feels uneasy with all the movement. I'm trying to make him stop, he doesn't. I throw up all over the dashboard.

"Baby, I'm sorry" he parks the car on the side of the road and runs to my side, helping me out of the car for some air. His face is full of guilt.

My dress is full of vomit and it smells horrible. I take out my suitcase and change to something else while he's cleaning the front seat. I rinse my mouth and seat at the backseat.

“Are you fine baby? I’m sorry for that” he says

“It’s fine baby, I guess Oza doesn’t like being tickled like I do” I say. he’s smiling.

“So you like it?” he says still smiling.

“Yes, it kind of turns me on” I say, blushing.

“Everything about you turns me on” he says with a naughty smile.

He’s such a beautiful man, I can’t get enough of his smile, his sexy eyes, he’s beautiful teeth and moist lips. I can’t believe a man this beautiful exists and loves me.

My thoughts are disturbed by the grumbling of my stomach.

“Someone’s hungry” he says, walking to the other side bringing the food Mam’Gloria packed for us. he enters on the other side and we both sit at the back seat. He pulls my feet to rest over his lap while my back leans against the

door behind me. I feel relaxed and ready to destroy whatever Mam'Gloria has for us.

“Woaw, there’s a lot of food. She went all out. Sausages, eggs, bacon, green salad, beans and pancakes. Oh there’s fruit too. And this is only for breakfast” he says as he takes out the Tupperware containers from the cooler bag.

It smells delicious and my mouth is watery, waiting to dig in. He prepares a plate for me, dishing out everything. He’s trying to get me fat.

“Thanks my love” I say as he hands me the plate. I waste no time. my mouth is full immediately and Zane’s looking at me holding back his laugh.

“Mmh?” I want to ask him what’s funny but my mouth is full.

“Chew then you can speak” he says, still wanting to laugh.

“What’s so funny about me eating?” I ask.



“A few weeks ago you were eating all that rabbit and goat food. Now you want nothing but fat.”

He says laughing

“I’m not eating fat, these are proteins, your baby likes protein” I say, frowning and continuing with my breakfast.

If it wasn’t for his sexy self, we wouldn’t be in this situation.

“I’m sorry my love, I didn’t mean to make you feel bad.” He says rubbing my feet. Aaah it feels good.

“Do that and don’t stop” I say, he looks confused but still continues rubbing my feet.

“Are you going to eat that?” I ask, he hasn’t eaten half of his food and I’m done with mine.

“Nope, you can have it” he says passing it over to me. he’s looking into my eyes as though wondering who this person is.

He yawns, he looks tired, resting his head on my thighs.

“I can drive while you nap. You seem tired” I say, he lifts his head.

“I can’t let you drive, you’re sick” he says. I roll my eyes

“I’m only a few weeks pregnant not sick. You need to rest.” I say and I’m not taking no for an answer. I can see he doesn’t like the idea but he eventually gives in. We exit the backseat and I get into the driver’s seat. We’re off.

“Easy, don’t drive too fast Buhle” he says looking worried

“I’m not driving fast, besides the road is clear” he really needs to relax and take his nap. I put on some music and ignore his stares. Since when is 140km/h considered speeding.

He keeps staring at me with caution but I can see his eyes slowly close. He should stop

fighting sleep and let me drive. I've been driving since I was 19, Thando taught me with his first car, I didn't even go to driving school. He taught me everything I know about cars, that's what he ever spoke about when he wasn't talking about other people or his music gigs.

I've been driving for hours now and Zane is fast asleep, he looks so peaceful, I wish my baby looks exactly like him. I should make a pee stop in the next town, my bladder is about to explode. I see houses, it's seems like a busy town. There are cars all over the road playing loud music and everyone seems happy and joyous.

December vibes are definitely a thing in these places. I spot a garage and make a stop. Zane is woken by the silence of the engine. He tries to make sense of where we are by looking around.

"Where are we and why did you stop?" he asks rubbing his eyes.

“I don’t know this town but I need to pee, immediately” I say removing my seatbelt.

“I’ll come with you, this place is very chaotic. I need energy drinks anyway.” He says getting out and making his way to my side. He opens the door and we head for the garage. He’s holding my hand tight.

People are very drunk and noisy here, shouting and dancing. It’s a chaotic scene. I make my way to the bathrooms and Zane goes inside the shop for his energy drink.

I feel free and relaxed after I peed. I can’t believe I paid R5 for this smelly toilet because that guy didn’t have change. I make my way to the shop. It’s full, no wonder Zane is taking long.

“Buhle? What are you doing here?” I hear a voice. I turn around, it’s Thando.

“Hey, I should be asking you the same question?” I say, he’s eyes are red, I think he’s

tipsy.

“I had a gig earlier, you still haven’t told me why you’re here” he says

“I’m going to Khumba, just made a bathroom stop, this place is wild” I say.

“Not as wild as our sex though, I miss that” he says, pulling me closer by my hand. Oh wow, something’s never change. I thought he had a girlfriend to make him forget about me.

“Thando, no.” I pull my hand from him.

“Why are you always like this Buhle? I know you want me, you always pretend like you don’t care. I can see it, you care. Come here” he says, pulling me harder by my face, he smells like cheap alcohol, sies

“Thando, stop. Stop it” I say distancing myself from him but his stronger.

“Get your hands off my fiancé” Zane pushes

him hard, he loses his balance and falls on his back. I think he's more than tipsy. He's wasted.

"Fiancé? Buhle you're getting married?" he says, looking shocked. He's struggling to get up.

Zane looks angry.

"Let's go" he says and pulls me towards the car, he opens my door and rushes over to his side and gets in, we drive off. He's silent and driving fast.

"And then?" he says. I think this is his way of wanting an explanation

"He's an old friend" I say.

"Didn't look like you were just friends" he says, still angry

"We did have sex" I say. he looks at me, confused.

"You have sex with your friends?" he says. ugh, I don't think he's going to understand this

“We never dated, we were just having sex. That’s all” I say, he looks even more confused

“You have sex but you never dated? What’s that called?” he looks annoyed, he must think I’m lying to him

“No strings attached. He’s the only person I’ve ever had sex with before you, I don’t go around sleeping with guys, if that’s what you’re thinking.” I’m starting to get mad, he’s judging me. I don’t like it. I fold my arms and look over the window.

“I don’t like him, he better stay away from you and you should do the same” he says. Is he being serious right now.

“I didn’t know he was going to be there, I didn’t call him, he came to me, he pulled me, not the other way around. I’m not that kind of girl. Just because I didn’t have proper parenting like you did, doesn’t make me an easy, loose girl” I can

feel the rage boiling inside of me. I do not like being judged. He's really pissing me off.

"I didn't mean to upset you Buhle, I just didn't like seeing another man holding my woman like that. I'm sorry." He says. I didn't know him to be the jealous type. He seems calm and always chilled about everything. But in this case it is understandable. Besides if that didn't bother him, I'd be worried.

"I'm sorry for yelling." I say, he reaches for my hand and kisses it.

"I wouldn't want to share you, you're all mine" he says and I blush.

He drinks his energy drink while I eat what was meant for lunch. It's pasta and prawns. I really don't know when she made all this food, but I'm happy she did, I'm enjoying it. I keep sharing with Zane, feeding him as he drives. We're a few kilometers away from Khumba and I'm full.



Zane is singing along to the music, I'm sleepy.  
Few minutes later I'm asleep.

.....

I am woken up by the wind coming in, I look around and we're home. Zane is opening the gate. It's dark, Thami and aunt'Kholeka both standing next to their flats, they look confused, I didn't say I was coming. He drives in and they get closer. Zane greets them and he opens my door. Thami jumps for joy and hugs be tight, he's looking at me smiling.

"Mzala, you must never leave me like that again, never" he says, he looks at my new hairstyle and shakes his head. It's the first time he's seeing it. aunt'Kholeka also hugs me and takes my bag from my hand, she's smiling.

"It suites you." She says.

"And you look like you've gained weight, maybe it's this new hairstyle, you have this glow. I can't

explain it, you look beautiful Mzala” he says, working his eyes all over me. I roll my eyes at him. Zane is taking my bags in the house.

“I’ll see you tomorrow. Remember to rest and stay indoors.” He says, kissing my forehead.

“I will” I respond. And he drives off.

“What’s with the instructions?” Thami. I can’t answer that. I just walk off and smile.

We all go to the house, Makhulu is watching TV, she’s all smiles when we all walk in, she gets up and hugs me tight.

“Oooh Hlehle, I missed you. We all did” she says.

“I missed you too” I say. we all sit on the lounge.

“The way you left, I thought we’d never see you again” Makhulu.

“I knew she’d come back, Zanemvula’s potion is strong. I knew it” Thami says and everyone’s laughing.

“How’s your father?” Makhulu.

“He’s fine, We had a couple of therapy sessions together, we’ve made some progress. He’s coming next week, he’ll tell you everything” I say and she smiles at the news.

“Oooh that’s great, I haven’t seen him since that time you were in the hospital.” She says.

“Are you back for good?” aunt’kholeka.

“Yes, my life is this side now.” I say smiling.

“This means you’ve sorted things out with Zanemvula?” Thami

“Yes, but there’s a whole lot more to be done. It’s just the beginning but I’m staying” I say, they all seem happy. Honestly I could do with the bed. I’m tired.

“Well, you’ve missed out on a lot. But the biggest and most important news is that mama’s product is doing so well that salons are

ordering in bulks. She's rich now" Thami.

"That's wonderful aunty. I knew your product had potential. Well, you're going to have to find a working space in town now, you can't work in your flat anymore. Bulk orders means more productivity and that's more employees. I'm very happy and proud" I walk up to hug her, I'm so emotional. My mind takes me back to the time she walked in the house bleeding, the time she was arrested. She's come a long way.

"awww Buhle, don't cry, these are happy times." Aunt'Kholeka. Only if she knew

"Tears of joy" I say, wiping them off and going back to my sit. I'm really tired. I need to sleep on a bed.

"You look tired, you should rest. We'll catch up later after. I'll bring your favorite, grapes, and we'll talk all about it" Thami says, winking. He'll be on his own on that, no wine for me.

“Uhm...yeah, sure thing. ” On a regular day, I’d be gossiping with Thami over a bottle of wine. Right now, all my body needs is sleep. I get into my room and it looks spotless. The furniture is rearranged. I take off my clothes and get into bed.

I dial Zane.

“My love” he answers.

“Hey, how’s everything that side?” I ask

“It’s better than I’d expected. I told the people to come again tomorrow. I’ve organized a meeting so everyone can express how they feel and hopefully find solutions.” He says.

“That’s better. I hope the meeting brings peace. I’m already in bed. I’m tired” I say

“Me too, I just took a shower. The boys and Thandi have been asking about you, they’re happy you are back. I haven’t told them about the pregnancy” he says

“I also haven’t said anything here too, I’m scared.” Me

“Don’t be. I want to solve this protest saga before I tell anyone. And I have to do that before your father comes to report for damages” he says

“Whatever reaction you get, just know you have me and Oza to run to.” I say

“I know and appreciate that. Get some rest, you are yawning” he says. I’m really tired.

“We love you daddy” I say.

“I love you mommy” he says.

I’ve never felt so appreciated and loved by anyone. He makes me so happy. And I get to keep him forever, how lucky am I ? Gosh

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Insert 18

“Buhle, Buhle” Makhulu is shaking me, trying to wake me up. It’s so early for this.

“Mmh?” I really don’t feel like getting up. I feel like I’m coming down with flu with my body aching.

“You slept so hard you even missed dinner yesterday, we didn’t want to wake you ‘cause we figured you might be tired. You’ve been sleeping the entire morning, it’s almost noon. Are you okay?” she looks concerned.

“I’m fine, I think I’m coming down with something, maybe flu” I say, lifting myself up to sit up straight.

The sun is already out, doing what it does best in Khumba.

“I’ll get you antibiotics, come have porridge first” she says.

This is really going to be hard, I can’t have antibiotics and the texture of the porridge will make me sick. Kat suggested I stay away from foods with slimy texture. I want solid food or maybe fruits.

“Okay, I’m coming Makhulu” I say getting my gown and following her. It really is daytime already, I must’ve been really tired.

“Here take these once you’ve eaten your porridge.” She hands me the antibiotics. I have to throw these away when she’s not looking. She puts the porridge in front of me and just by looking at it, makes me want to throw up.

“I think I’ll have a fruit salad Makhulu, it’s a little bit too late for porridge.” She looks offended



but right now I don't care about that.

I make my way to the fridge and take out the fruits Mam'Gloria packed for us yesterday, it's still fresh. There's watermelon slices, peaches, mango, pears and apples. It looks delicious. Asakhe walks in running to me, she hugs me tight

"Hello sisi, when did you get back? Why did you cut your hair? Why are wearing pajamas during the day?" she asks a lot of questions, all at once. And she expects you to answer them

"I got back last night, I cut my hair because I want to be free and I overslept, that's why I'm still wearing pajamas" I say.

"Why do you want to be free? Did your hair not make you free? I liked it" she says. I look at her for a moment and think, how is this aunt'Kholeka daughter, she's so spontaneous and curious about everything.

“It was troubling, so I want to grow it back again, so it can be beautiful like yours” I say lifting her and hugging her tight.

“My mom has money now, she sells hair oils. She bought me a bicycle on Christmas, do you want to see it?” she says. Oh my goodness, Asakhe, can I just eat my breakfast in peace.

“I do, I’ll come see it after I finish eating, okay” she looks disappointed a bit, but smiles anyway and disappears.

Finally, some peace and quiet.

This tastes delicious, the juices from the fruits are thirst quenching. I tilt my head backwards drinking all the juices from the bowl.

“Yho Mzala, you might as well eat the bowl itself.” Thami walks in, he’s laughing.

“Ugh stop.” I say , he’s so annoying.

“You must’ve been really tired, if Makhulu didn’t

wake you, you'd still be asleep. She said you have fever" he says, sitting next to me, placing his backhand on my forehead.

"Just a little, I think it's the relocation. Moving back to windy Edernville after being exposed to the Khumba heat. How are you though?" I ask

"I'm okay, my body still hurts now and again but I'm fine" he says, he's downplaying this.

"I'm talking, psychologically. It must've been a traumatic experience. Are you okay?" I ask.

"Honestly, I still have nightmares about that day, it could've ended badly. It was easier when I was still in hospital but coming back to the village brought it all back. Xola has been there for me through it all. Mzala I love that man." he's smiling, close to tears.

"I love him too, and I know he loves you too. If you ever need to talk I'm here." I say.

"You're glowing marn, Mzala. I can't stop

looking at you.” He says. Oh boy!

“It’s this new hair. How’s the protests going?” I ask, I want all the village gossip and I know he has it all.

“There’s a meeting starting at 2pm today, everyone is going there to state what they need from the Kingdom, and that’s Zane as King.

They don’t want the new queen, apparently the King made a deal with the new queens father and he’s giving him the land close to town, and the villagers are against it, that’s where their cattle graze and others grow crops.” He says,

“There’s a lot, I wish I could go and listen to the meeting. What did the King and the Queen say about Zazi revealing his sexuality?” I ask. He seems surprised by my question.

“How did you know?” he asks.

“Zane told me, did you know?” I ask

“Yes, he’s the chairperson of our rainbow club.

He joined the group years ago, he's the youngest in our group but he's the most reliable and protective member. They kicked him out of the royal palace for a couple of days but Zane spoke sense to them. Things are not good there by your mans' home" he say, he's really dishing them today.

"How did you know that the Queen sent people to kill me?" I ask

"I first heard one of my colleagues speak about it, her brother was one of the hired hit man, he refused the job when he found out you were the target, then I asked Zazi, he confirmed it. I think he saw her mother pay off one of the men. Apparently she was asking around about a witch she could consult" He says, he looks sorry for me.

This is the most hurtful and confusing thing I've heard. Why would someone want to kill a girl her son loves, someone she's never met and

know nothing about. I know they warned me about her evil tactics but this is extreme, I don't know how Zane will overcome it, especially with the pregnancy and the marriage proposal.

"I need to bath, this is too much." I say moving to my bedroom.

Vrrr Vrrr

"Hey my love" Zane

"Hi" me

"Are you okay?" Zane

"I don't know, would you be okay if your boyfriends mother wanted you dead?" me.

He's quiet for a while, I can hear him breath

"I won't let her or anyone hurt you. I promise baby" Zane

"I just wish I understood why she hates me so much, she doesn't know me" me

“Don’t think about it too much, please busy, that kind of stress is not good for the pregnancy. I need for you to rest as much as possible.” he says.

“I’m trying, it’s not that easy but I’m trying” me

“I could book you to a spa with Thandi, she wanted to see you” him

“But I went yesterday, since you’re offering, I do need a manicure and pedicure though” I say smiling.

“As long as you’re relaxed and stress free, Thandi will make the booking, she’s been begging me to let her see you. You can use my car, I’ll be in the meeting all day.” He says.

“That’s sounds great, I’ll get ready. Call me when you’re coming” me

“That’ll be in an hour. See you” Zane

“See you soon” me he hangs up.

Good thing I don't have hair anymore, one less thing to worry about, I'll just wear any maxi dress.

I finish getting ready and head to the living area. Makhulu is looking at me weirdly.

"You've gained some weight Hlehle, you look beautiful" she says. Am I really that fat already. I'm annoyed by these weight comments.

"No my child don't be offended, I'm not saying you're fat I'm just saying you're glowing, your skin is clear, you're growing into a woman" she further explains

I'm not going to answer that. She might suspect something because she seems to notice everything, I can't risk her knowing now.

"Makhulu, I'm going to town, I'll be back" I say. she looks confused

"With who?" she asks



“Thandi, we’re just going to lunch.” I say, she’s smiling.

“Okay, send my love to her ” she says and continues with her sewing.

I see Zane’s car parked outside the gate. I say my goodbyes and leave. Zane is standing outside the car looking at me, smiling. I smile back.

“Hey my love” he says, hugging me.

“Hey baby” I hug him tighter.

“You look beautiful” he says, I’m blushing.

“Have you forgotten about me?”” Thandi says peeping her head through the window.

We laugh and get in the car.

“Hello Thandi” I say, smiling.

“Hey my dear, you look beautiful with your new hair” she says turning her head towards me at the back seat.

“Thank you, you look beautiful too” I say, she’s wearing a peach dress with a matching floral doek.

“I won’t lie, I’ve missed you, I wanted to come yesterday when you and Zanemvula arrived but he said you were tired and needed to rest.” She says

“I was, and I don’t think I realized how tired I was until Makhulu had to wake me up an hour ago. I slept through the morning” I say. Zane looks at me in the rear view mirror

“You’re such a sleepy head lately, I wonder why” he says, smiling and winking. He’s such a fool, what if Thandi sees him.

“Well, I have you to blame for that” I reply. We both laugh. Thandi looks confused. This secret will soon reveal itself if we continue like this.

“It’s good to see this one laugh, I thought I’d never see his beautiful teeth again” Thandi says.

“I’m glad I can make him laugh” I say.

We arrive at the lodge. He opens my door and leads me to the driver’s seat.

“Do not drive above 100km/h and remember what the doctor said.” He leans over and kisses me. He is so overprotective of this child.

“What’s with the strict rules, I know how to take care of myself. I’ll be fine” I say getting in the car.

“You’re no longer alone, remember.” He says smiling. I roll my eyes and drive off.

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The town is packed and busy. It is noisy and dusty, people are holding conversations on the road making it hard for drivers to pass by, causing unnecessary traffic. It’s annoying.

“Oh my goodness, you’d swear I’m in down town Edernville right now, what are these

people doing?" I say pressing the hoot, hard

"This is Khumba in December for you, especially the days towards New Year, people go crazy."

She says, calmly. I can't believe she's not annoyed by this.

"Move out of the way dammit, move" I'm shouting out of the window. At this point, my anger went from zero to hundred in a split second.

"Calm down Buhle, just go with the traffic flow" she says. How can she be so calm in this annoying situation and the heat is making it ten times worse. My face is heating up, sweat is dripping down my forehead. I see a gap and I decide to overtake, Thandi looks terrified.

There's no oncoming traffic yet, just people standing on the road, I drive fast and people start jumping to the pavement, where they belong.

“uuh Buhle, I think you should lower the speed a bit” she says, with fear in her eyes.

“I’m almost there, these people do not respect the road and I’ll give them the same amount of disrespect” I say, making my way to the end of the traffic. We’re out.

“Take a left here, the spa is on the other avenue” she says, softly. I can hear her take deep breathes as we make our way to the spa. I think I see where Zane took his paranoia from, he’s always worried about the worst thing happening.

We arrive in a small townhouse turned business and we settle in.

The lady gives us foot massage while the other is busy with our hands. It’s relaxing, especially after this nightmare on the road.

“He really thought you wouldn’t come back, like you were really gone” she says.

“I was shattered Thandi, my whole world fell apart, I couldn’t believe that the man I loved would betray me like that” I say, she looks sad.

“I understand. The day before umgidi I heard the Queen speaking on the phone, she said something about “I want her out of our lives for good” and I knew immediately who she was talking about but I didn’t have much to go by, she kept me busy in the kitchen, I didn’t have the chance to speak to Zane. She threatened him when he came to change for the thank you speech” she says, close to tears

“Why does she hate me so much? Why does she want me out of their lives? She doesn’t know me” I say.

“She knows you, she sees you through Zane. Yes, she hasn’t met you in person but who you are can be seen through Zane. All Zane’s life, she controlled him, made him do whatever she wanted, she made him forget about himself and

worship her and the throne. She and the King have had issues since the day they first got together, she doesn't receive anything from him, no money, nothing. She manipulates Zane into getting her things. Money, cars, clothes and all that. When you came, you brought out Zane, the young boy with dreams and aspirations, you made him feel like he could live and that he deserved to live his own life and that was a threat to her, that meant she had no power over him and that she wouldn't be able to control him because you gave him his voice back, his power. And that takes away her ticket to the luxurious life our Kingdom" she says.

My heart feels heavy with all these news. I'm speechless, just staring at her.

"Why did she marry him if they didn't get along?" it doesn't make sense.

"Family and tribe politics" she looks uncomfortable by this question.

“So Buhle, believe it or not, you have set him free as the Queens’ prisoner and gave him a voice, just by being yourself. The village loves you, of cause some may not understand your ways but you are adored in this village.” She continues

“What you’re telling me is a lot to take in at once.” I say, grabbing the glass of water next to me.

“Zane loves you and is willing to do everything in him to have you. He even rejected the throne for you. He told the royal council to exclude him in the running.” She says.

“Thandi, when Zane met me I was nowhere near being perfect, I was flawed and damaged, I still am. I didn’t know why I was here, I hated it here and hated my father for bringing me here. I was full of anger and hatred for myself and my father. But Zane loved me and cared for me, I felt so unworthy but he made me realize that I



need it more than anyone. He made me feel deserving” I say, tears roll down my eyes.

“It was fate, it brought you together and you both healed each other by being yourselves. Without realizing it, his flaws were your remedy and so were yours to him. It was meant to happen. The Universe orchestrated everything, the ancestors aligned your paths and God blessed your souls, Buhle it is rare, that all spiritual powers come together and produce such love, effortlessly” she says, with tears in her eyes

My face is red and tears are voluntarily dripping down my cheeks. I feel so special with what she said, I feel so loved and that validates a lot of things, like my purpose is served.

“He loves me Thandi, me, what most people see as broken, he loved me anyways, and he loves our child even more” I say. Her face is full of shock and I just realized that I slipped. Oh Shit!

“You’re pregnant?” she asks. She’s still shocked

“Yes” I say looking down.

“Buhle, look at me, this is not one of those prank things right?” she says, turning to face me.

How could I joke about something like that

“It’s not, I’m really pregnant” I say looking at her. She excuses herself from the ladies and stands coming to my seat. Her arms are open widely.

“Come here” she says. I get up and walk to her, we hug, a long tight and emotional hug.

“How long were you planning on keeping this from me” she says.

“I don’t know, Zane has this week to tell everyone, my father will report the pregnancy next week.” I say, she’s smiling at me wiping off my tears.

“No wonder you were so furious earlier, it’s the

hormones. They will make you yell at an ant” she says, laughing.

“It’s only been like seven weeks and already I’m feeling like it’s too much. The sickness, the fatigue, the cravings, the rage, all at once. And I have another 8 months to go” I say, she’s laughing

“When and how did you find out?” she asks, as we both get back to our seats

“My step sister is a doctor, I went to get stitched but she insisted on taking blood tests for any bacterial infections, for some reason she checked pregnancy as well. She told me later that I was pregnant, she thought I knew” I say.

“Oh, no wonder Zane gave me strict rules about today, he said I should take care of you and see that you’re not stressed or anxious. He kept repeating, I thought he was being annoying and

controlling” she says, smiling

“He’s been doing that to me, he doesn’t let me do anything. I’m even surprised he let me drive today, maybe it’s because I’m with you” I say.

“These are good news, he just needs to propose already” she says and I blush.

“He did” I say.

“That’s my boy. This makes me very happy Buhle” she says, holding my hands and kissing them

“He proposed the day after I told him about the pregnancy” I say. Her excitement is making me spill everything out.

“I’m happy things are going the way they are. It might be difficult but your love for each other has proven to be stronger than any circumstance.” She says. I wish her reaction would be everyone’s when the news are out.

“Done.” The ladies say. I forgot we were even in a spa and that people were doing our nails. They’re looking at us, smiling. We nod and make our way to the exit. Zane has paid already.

“Lunch it is then, little Bhungane must be hungry” Thandi says as we make our way to the car

“Zane calls it Ozayo” I say and she laughs.

We drive off to an African soul food restaurant. I’ve been thinking about tripe and dumpling all week. It’s more like a kasi chill place. There’s deep house playing in the background, there’s a stretch tent that looks like a VIP session with white lounge chairs and an exclusive bar. Other people are sitting in their cars on the parking lot. It’s only chaotic on the outside, the inside is pretty decent. We walk in and Thandi calls one of the waiters before we even seat, she says something to him and he escorts us to the tent. We find a seat and a lady waitress walks

towards us.

“Good day, can I take your orders” she says with the brightest smile

“for starters I’ll have chicken livers and garlic bread, lots of garlic. Then I’ll have tripe with dumpling and...oxtail. Oh.. do you have ginger beer? I’d love that. Ice lots of ice, on the side though. And a glass of water. For now please bring me roster bread, with butter, That’s all thanks” I say, she’s looking at me funny, both of them.

“I’ll just have today's special. That’s it, and mango juice. Thank you” Thandi says and the lady disappears.

“I wonder if they have sheep liver, maybe I should have that with my roster bread” I say, looking at the direction of the waitress but she’s disappeared.

“You really are carrying Zanemvula’s baby.

Everything you ordered is his favorite food. He used to text me on his way from school during vacation, asking me to make him tripe. I eventually taught him how to make it so he could stop harassing me about tripe all the time” she says. She did good, I don’t have to go through that admin of preparing tripe. If he wants it, he’ll make it.

“I drove all the way to the townships in Edernville just to get tripe, and guess what I ate it with? Bran muffins” I say and she laughs harder.

“That’s pregnancy for you. It will make you crave the craziest things” she says

“Do you have children of your own?” I ask. She’s silent, her mood immediately changed. I probably shouldn’t have asked her this. I feel bad for throwing this at her. There’s awkward silence.

“I did, I fell pregnant at a young age by an older man that I was forced to marry. I was 16 years old and 4 months pregnant when I decided to run. I ran away from home and went to this woman who took care of situations like mine. She didn’t know what she was doing and I almost died. When I went to the hospital they told me I could never carry my own children” she says. The sadness in her eyes gives me goose bumps, I hate myself for asking this question.

“I’m so sorry Thandi, I shouldn’t have asked that. I’m really sorry” I say.

“Don’t be sorry, it happened and it passed. I managed to break away from a situation many of my then peers couldn’t, ukuthwala in my village was a tradition most parents pride themselves with” she says

“What’s that? Ukuthwala?” I ask



“It’s when young girls, mostly teenagers are married off to older men. The two families speak and agree on the marriage without the girls knowledge, men then abduct her and take her to her new home, where she’ll be a wife. It’s different with every village.” She says.

This is the most absurd and disgusting tradition I’ve ever heard of. I can’t believe parents agree to send their children off.

“In my case, my mother and aunts sent me to the river for water, that was how I got taken away. Others were not organized like mine was.”

“That should be illegal Thandi” I’m really shocked by this.

“By law it is but you know how village people live, it might not be practiced in Khumba but young girls are still raised and groomed to be wives. They’re not offered the freedom to

choose the lives they want to live, it's very common here in Khumba that after girls turn 18, they are sent to marry and families get the wealth" she says.

My mind is baffled by what Thandi is telling me. I am saddened by the lifestyle these girls are living. That their goals are considered invalid because they are their families wealth token. This cannot be happening, not today, not in the twenty first century. I need to find out more about this. This is exactly what aunt'Kholeka's boyfriend's daughter had to deal with. If I hadn't helped her get that scholarship, she'd be forced to stay in the village and take care of a man old enough to be his father. Sies! I am going to intervene and I am going to end this kind of slavery and filthy trade.

"Well, it ends now, this year. No young girl will be married off to older men. I will make it stop, not on my watch. Not while I'm alive and living

in this village” I say, this has me heated with anger. Thandi looks at me and smiles.

“You see why Zanemvula fell in love with you. You are such a selfless and fierce young lady” she say smiling.

Our food arrives and we immediately dig in. Thandi is talking by herself, this food is delicious, I can’t waste time talking.

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We’re making our way back to the village. I’m so full right now, my stomach is about to blow up. Thandi has been telling me childhood stories of Zane. He was a softy, she says every time he came back from boarding school, the other children would make fun of the way he spoke English, he was more fluent than them, he says he hated that he was different than the other boys. One time she says he came home crying because the other boys made fun of him for not

knowing the rules of their game. He then introduced them to rugby.

It's almost 5pm and the lodge is chaotic, there are people outside the gates, others are singing.

"I thought the meeting would be over by now" I say

"These meeting can take the entire night" she says. She's used to it. I'm anxious, these people don't look too happy. I drive closer and they stand in front of the car. Singing loudly, looking at the car.

**BOOM BOOM**

I hear a banging noise from behind me and glass scatters all over. They're throwing stones at us.

"Buhle get down, now" Thandi is screaming at the top of her lungs.

I cover my head with my hands as more

windows break, my heart is pacing and I am scared for my life and my child's life. Why are they attacking us, we did nothing to them. I hear their screams getting closer and closer and my I'm suffocating in this position I'm in. The rubber smell of the mats makes me feel sick.

"Buhle, Buhle" I hear Thandi screaming

"yeah, I can't breath Thandi. I'm scared" I say.

I'm crying

"Press the hooter, just lift your hand and press it hard" she says

I lift my hand and press on it with all my energy. Seconds later I'm throwing up, my breathing is heavier and I'm not receiving any oxygen. My heart beats faster and I'm shaking with fear. My dress is full of vomit. I can't stop crying. This can't be the end of my life, not today, not with my child. History cannot repeat itself. There's more shouting getting closer, I cover my ears

with my hands.

I feel a breeze of air coming from behind me, someone is pulling me hard from behind.

“No no no, let go of me. Thandi they’re taking me. Thandi help me” I scream out loud the harder they pull me out of the car.

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Insert 19

I’m kicking and screaming for help, I can’t hear anyone singing or yelling, all I can hear is my voice, shouting for help. I’m on my back, laying

on the grass, with my eyes closed and my hands covering my head.

“Buhle, it’s me, baby, open your eyes” it’s Zane.

He holds me tight with his arms around me as I’m trying to catch my breath my whole body is trembling I can’t even open my eyes. There’s silence around and all I can hear is my cry.

“It’s okay my love, you’re safe now” Zane says brushing and kissing my head. I hear some men voices mumbling.

“Buhle, we’re safe now, come my dear, let’s get you inside” Thandi’s calm voice appears.

I slowly lift my head up and open my eyes, there’s a crowd standing around us, all looking at me. Their faces are filled with guilt and shame. Zane lifts and carries me to the lodge, in one of the outside rooms.

“Lay down baby, Thandi will bring you clothes to change” he says, resting my head on the pillow.

I'm still shaking. He covers me with a fleece blanket and lays next to me wrapping his arms around me

"I'm sorry baby. I'm sorry that I'm putting you in all this danger." He says, he's voice is low and sad

"Why? Why is everyone in this village trying to kill me? what have I done to these people?" I say, crying more, with anger

"They saw the car and thought you were the council members, they didn't show up for the meeting. So they were attacking them not you." He says.

"I was scared for my life and my child's life" I say

"I'm sorry my love." He says, continuously until Thandi and the boys walk in.

"Buhle, are you okay? Is she okay?" Zazi walks closer



“Yes, she’s fine” Zane replies.

“This is getting out of hand bro, it needs to be fixed immediately or someone will lose a life” Zinzi says, standing next to Zazi. They look sorry for me.

“Here, take a bath and change” Thandi says handing me clothes. I don’t understand why she’s not as traumatized as I am. We were ambushed and stones were thrown at us, we almost died.

“I’m sorry Buhle. I’m really sorry” Zinzi says. I nod, all I want to do is go home to my bed.

“Okay, let’s give her some space to change” Thandi says and they all make their way to the door.

“Come baby, you need to bath and change” he says, holding me up and taking off my dress.

There’s blood on the sheet, small spots of blood. We both look at each other, then back to

the sheet.

It's coming from my arm, there are small cuts.

Must've been from the window glasses that were falling over me. I'm numb and my mind is playing back all the thoughts I had when I was trapped in that car. I cannot believe I almost got stoned to death. How I thought I was going to die with my unborn child. It's a scary thought and I can't seem to shake it off.

Zane lifts me to the bathroom and puts me in the bath filled with warm water. He takes the bathing sponge and bathes me. He's gentle and moves slowly, cautiously around the cuts.

They're not deep, just small multiple cuts. He's not saying a word, he keeps looking at me. I feel tired but safe. He makes me feels safe.

"Come let's get you dressed" he lifts me and wraps me with a towel. He carries me back to the room, helps me get dressed and lays me on

his chest. I wrap my arms around him and hold him tight.

“I’ll never let anyone hurt you, I will protect you with all my life Buhle. No one will dare hurt my wife and my child” I can feel anger form as his heart beats faster. I don’t want to talk about this, it makes me sad and him angry.

“I told Thandi about the pregnancy and the proposal” I say. My voice is tired and hoarse, from all the crying

“What did she say?” he lifts his head to face me.

“She hugged me” I say. I look up to his face. he’s smiling

“Did she cry?” he asks.

“We both cried” I say and he laughs.

“Thandi is very passionate, I knew she’d cry” he says.

“She even told me stories about your childhood,

it was funny” I say, smiling at him.

“She better not tell you all my secrets” he says, smiling jokingly.

“She told me everything” I say and we both laugh.

There’s a knock at the door. Makhulu walks in with aunt’Kholeka and Thami.

“Buhle my child, are you okay?” Makhulu’s face is full of fear and concern.

I immediately jump off Zane’s chest and sit up on the bed, he does the same.

“Yes, I’m fine Makhulu, just cuts on my arm” I say. she walks closely, looking at my arm.

“This village is full of violent men who want to hurt people, something needs to be done before someone actually dies.” Thami says with his hands on his waist, directing his words to Zane.

He replies with a nod.

Thandi walks in carrying a tray with a cup of something hot.

“Here have this, it will calm the nerves and reduce the nausea. It’s all natural herbs don’t worry.” She says handing me tea.

“I have some painkillers as well, here take this for the headache” Makhulu says handing me two tablets.

“No!” Thandi jumps in and snatches them off Makhulu’s hands.

She looks confused. Everyone is, beside me and Zane.

“I’m pregnant and Zane asked me to marry him” I say and the energy in the room changes immediately.

Thami is laughing out loud, clapping his hands. Shouting “ay Mzala”

Aunt’Kholeka looks shocked with her hand over

her mouth. “yho yho” that’s all she said.

“I knew it, I just didn’t want to believe it because you told me you were using protection.” She says.

Zane and I look at each other.

“It wasn’t planned but it’s definitely appreciated”  
Zane comes to our rescue.

Makhulu’s face lights up, she opens her arms and hugs me tight. She’s rubbing my back in a circular motion. She holds me tight for a while. I wasn’t expecting this reaction.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” she finally speaks

“They kept this secret between them, she wasn’t going to tell me, she slipped up and the truth revealed itself” Thandi says.

“I was going to say something after the meeting today. I knew I had only this week to speak, because Mr Sidwell is coming to report the

pregnancy next week.” Zane speaks

“Sidwell knows too?” Aunt’Kholeka is shocked

“Yes, Zane told him when we were in Edernville” I say and Thami laughs

“And what did he say? He must’ve given Zanemvula a hot clap” he says and everyone laughs. even Zane is laughing.

The boys enter and are confused by all the humor.

“Share the joke” Zazi.

“You’re going to be an uncle, that’s the joke” Thami responds and everyone laughs again.

“Are you pregnant?” Zazi. I nod and he walks towards me and hugs me really tight.

“You did well bro” Zinzi is shaking Zane’s hand.

“I can’t breathe” I say to Zazi who is still holding me tight. Zane pulls him off and they laugh.

“I’m happy, very happy” he says.

“Guess what? They’re also getting married”  
Thami says and they both jump for joy.

“And guess who’s making your wedding dress?  
aaah the honored uncle” Zazi says, with a huge  
smile on his face.

Oh gosh, he will not take no for an answer.

The room is immediately filled with positive  
energy and love. I’m so happy I have these  
people in my life. I really wouldn’t be this person  
I am today without them and to be walking into  
this journey of marriage and motherhood with  
them is a blessing.

A man slowly walks into the room with his hat  
in his hand. He keeps folding it with every step  
he takes. Zane gets up and walks towards him,  
he punches him and he falls on the ground.

I’ve never seen him hit someone before, he’s  
really angry.



“Zane, stop!” I say, moving towards him and everyone jumps in to push me back to the bed. Are they going to let him beat this guy like this.

“You almost killed my wife and my child” he’s shouting and the man keeps apologizing with his hands covering his head.

“Stop Zane!” I say. He gets up and looks at me, his eyes are full of guilt.

“We are very sorry. We mistook you for the royal council, they have a similar car” he says, his head is facing down.

Zane is pacing up and down.

“Where are the other men?” I ask. He points at the door.

They walk in, there’s nine of them. It’s like they’ve been standing at the door all this time.

“Violence is the biggest threat in this village. Children, women and the rainbow club do not

feel safe in this village because of you. And that will change today, now. You will be on the other side now, you will prevent the violence in this village. You will guard it day and night. I don't care how you do it and if I hear about any more attacks, you will be held responsible, you will go to jail. From now on, you will be the village security and you will work 24/7." I say.

Their eyes are wide open, wondering around each other, so is everyone's in the room.

"Yes, you will do that voluntarily for the next six months and if there is progress in the safety of this village, Zanemvula will hire you, permanently as the patrol marshalls of the village. And if you do not do your job well, I will press charges of assault and attempted murder. We're talking a lot of prison time here, fifteen to twenty years. Understood?. Good. Now start planning. Your job begins tonight" I say.

They nod and walk out.

The whole room is silent. I make my way to the bed and sit. They're still quiet.

"Buhle for King, Zane, bro, take a back seat. This lady is leadership" Zinzi says clapping his hands. Stupid boy. Everyone laughs.

At least he broke the awkward silence.

"That is actually a good task and responsibility you put on them, I like it and I know for sure they will do it. Village men are scared of prison and their wives will give them hell for hurting you. " Thandi says

"This is one of the reasons I'm marrying her" Zane says hugging me and kissing my head.

"Oh stop it. The people are still waiting in the meeting. They want to know the way forward, they want to know when the King is stepping down" Zazi says.

"I have to get back, I can't give them a date, the council is not here and that's what makes them

angry.” He responds.

“I’m going to lie down a bit, I’m tired” I say.

“Zazi will drive you home, I’ll wrap things up here and come check on you later” he says. I hug Thandi and Zinzi gives me a fist punch. He’s such a cool kid.

Makhulu, Aunt’Kholeka and Zazi walk to the car.

“Make sure you get enough rest. Don’t think too much about what happened. I think I’ll take you to the doctor tomorrow, just to be safe” He says

“I’m fine, I just need to sleep. That herb tea Thandi gave me is making me sleepy. No need for the doctor, I’m fine.” I say, he hugs me tight for a while. I wish I could lay down with him like this.

We walk out of the room and he leads me to the car, opens the door and kisses me goodbye.

“Be safe” I say and we drive off. The drive home

is quiet. In no time we're home.

"Thanks Zazi, he needs you. He might act tough and all, he needs your support." I say. Zazi nods with a smile.

"I got him" he says.

All I want is my bed. I walk in and head straight to my room. Pull the covers over my head and sleep.

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It's dark already, pregnancy sleep is peaceful, long and tiring. No matter how long you've slept, you wake up tired and wanting more sleep. With today's traumatic accident, I needed it. I'm more calm now and I'm glad those men came forward. I really hope they take what I said seriously because I wasn't playing, I will press charges if they don't change and protect the village.

I'm still laying in bed, hungry but lazy to get up

and get food. The last meal I had was during my lunch date with Thandi. That is the only beautiful thing about today, the lunch and the spa. I was shocked to learn that a small town like that one has a spa.

I'm going through the pictures we took today, my face really has changed.

I hear the door opening slowly. I lift my head to see who it is.

"Hey makaOza" he says, walking in with a smile.

"Hey, Oza's dad" I'm smiling, I love it when he calls me like that.

He looks relieved and peaceful. He's the total opposite of what he was when I last saw him earlier today.

"Did Makhulu see you walk in?" I ask. He knows better than to just walk to my room, Makhulu would kill him, baby daddy/fiance or not, she says it's disrespectful.

“She let me in actually. I wanted us to talk in the car outside, she said a pregnant woman can’t walk outside at night.” he says walking closer to my bed.

“Why is that? What’s going to happen?” I ask. I’m curious.

“It has something to do with the baby contracting evil spirits” he says.

I laugh out so bad my stomach begins to hurt. Evil spirits? The people in this village believe too much of these voodoo stories. It’s insane

“Ugh, there’s no such. These village myths are made up” I say. He looks serious and quite annoyed by my opinion.

“They’re not made up, witchcraft is real. People die and go psycho over that stuff. You do not want to be on the witches wrong books” he says, with a straight face.

I can’t believe he believes in these things. I don’t

want to annoy him more, let me change the subject.

“How did the meeting go?” I say, he smiles Great.

“It went well actually, the council members arrived eventually and the voting began. My father is ordered to step down as King and I have to step up after him. I told them, I can only take my throne after I’ve paid lobola and the damages for your pregnancy. They agreed.” he says, with a huge smile on his face.

“No everyone knows I’m pregnant?” I ask

“Not everyone, only the royal council, I only spoke to them about it because they’re also my uncles and close family friends who have to be part of the negotiations anyways” he responds. He’s calm and for some reason, I’m not.

“So when is that? The negotiations?” I ask suddenly nervous, this is real. I’m going to be a



wife, a Kings' wife and I'm carrying a prince or princess.

"Next week, I called your father, he'll arrive on Monday and the negotiations will begin on Thursday. We'll do both of them in one day." He says, he can sense my energy.

"Oh, you spoke to him. okay." I say, it's all happening so fast.

"Yes, and after the negotiations we'll start with building our house and the wedding preparations." He says leaning over to kiss me.

He really is excited about all of this and I should be too but I'm just overwhelmed by all these news. My entire life is about to change, I'm going to be a Queen, a wife and a mother, I'm only 22.

How did I get here, how did my life become what it is right now. It's all moving at a fast pace and I cannot help the nerves and the

anxiety.

“Buhle, I can tell you’re anxious. I understand. You didn’t sign up for this kind of life and I’m sorry for bringing all of this to you. I love you and I do not see myself spending any other day without you. I am a rural boy at heart, I know my traditions and how hush and unfair they can be to women. Thandi raised me, I know how to take care of myself, I cook, clean and take care for myself. You don’t have to feel like you’re being over worked as my wife. I want you as the Buhle I fell in love with, that’s all I’ll ever ask from you. As for being Queen, today you proved you’ll be the best Queen Khumba and amaHlubi ever had.” he says, smiling

“I hear you, I feel like I’m too young for all of this, like we’re not even 30 and already have all these responsibilities. The village, our baby, the marriage, our families. We haven’t travelled and experienced things together, as a couple,

outside of Khumba. I'm worried that we'll eventually get bored and lose what brought us together" I say.

His face is serious again.

"Buhle, you will never be boring to me. You surprise me everyday, like you did today with those men, I was shocked and I loved that. We will go wherever you want us to go. We are not tied to our duties. You will still have your job in the art gallery and the festival. You will still be you Buhle, all I want is to spend the rest of my life with you, at home, at the throne, at work, everywhere." He says, holding my hands tight.

"I want to be with you forever too my love.

Speaking of the festivals, when I was in Edernville I visited some media companies and told them about it, they're in. I got three to cover it, two on print and the other on digital media. We also have many social media influencers coming, so we're good. We just need to host a

press conference a few weeks before the launch, here in Khumba” I say, he wants to laugh

“Did you just change the subject and talk about work? Now, how can I get bored with that. I love you” he leans and kisses me.

I’m smiling as he kisses me, this guy can never be serious when talking about work. He’s agrees with everything I suggest about this festival. The last time we worked together I suggested we have camels at the festival just to see if he was paying attention, he agreed and continued kissing my neck until I pushed him back and laughed at him, he was still confused and didn’t know what I was laughing at.

“How do the lobola negotiates happen?” I ask.

He stops kissing me and gives me a ‘are you kidding me’ look.

“Women are not included in those kind of

things” he says, he’s really not going to tell me. I don’t get what’s the big deal.

“How much are you willing to pay for me and your child?” I ask with a smile.

“You’re not allowed to know the details of the lobola and the damages, I’ll pay whatever money they want me to pay” he says with a serious face.

I hate it when he acts all rural and traditional, he should at least tell me my worth.

“Yeah whatever” I say and roll my eyes.

“I would tickle you until you apologise but Ozayo would make a mess and I don’t want trouble with your grandma” he says with a naughty smile.

The door opens, speak of the devil.

“It’s late now, Zanemvula, visiting hours are over.” She peaks through the door with a

straight face and pulls it back again.

Zane's face is full of fright, he gets up immediately and walks towards the door. He looks scared. I want to laugh

"Hey, not so quick. A proper goodbye for your wife to be" I say pushing him against the door and pulling his face towards mine. We engage in passionate kissing, he keeps hesitating but eventually gives in. His hands are all over my body, rubbing on me gently and sexually. My body heats up and I push myself towards him. His lips are warm and I can feel his erection slowly form. I run my hands over it, he's breathing heavier as he grabs my butt tight. I want him now. I spread my legs apart and he puts his hand under my dress up and pulls my thong aside. He inserts his fingers inside me, my body enjoys the excitement and I want to scream. He moves in and out slowly as the moisture allows. I move with his rhythm, he

moves his kisses down my neck and bites on my ear. I grab on his back with my nails as he goes in, dipping with his finger. I exhale out loud and he tries to silence me with a kiss. My adrenaline rushes to my spine and my knees are weak. My body gives in as I feel pleasure fluids wet my thighs.

He removes his hand and licks his fingers with a naughty smile. He's such a freak., my eyes are exhausted and so are my legs.

"That was for you my love" he says, kissing me. I'm still feeling a bit out of sync resting my head on his chest.

"Thank you baby, I'll return the favour" I say.

"You know where to find me. Now let me leave before your grandma chases me away with a sjambok" he says.

He's erection is still visible.

"And that?" I ask, pointing at it.

He takes off his jacket and carries it with his hands, covering it. He looks ridiculous and I can't stop myself from laughing.

"This will do, let's go" he says and we walk out of the room.

Everyone is seated on the dining room table, they all stare at us. I feel like they can see right through me, I look down.

"Goodnight, thank you for letting me see Buhle" he says to Makhulu.

"Goodnight Bhungane." She replies.

I walk him to the door and watch him walk to the car, it's Zazi's. He keeps looking back and making heart signs with his hands. He's such a cutie. Are all village boys like this one, witty, caring, funny, overprotective and loving. I'm the luckiest girl in the whole of Khumba. He's perfect and he's going to be my forever.

I find myself blushing as I watch him drive off. I



can feel my face burning from all the smiling and blushing.

As I close the door I spot a man walking towards the gate, he's limping and waving. I can't see properly, it's dark.

"Buhle, wait for me my child" he says.

I look closely, it's my grandfather. What's he doing here so late? In his condition, he shouldn't walk long distances, especially at night, alone.

"Why are you walking by yourself at night?" I ask as he tries to catch his breath.

"I wasn't walking alone, some young men walked me, they say they're the new securities of the village" he says.

Oh wow, so they did abide by my instructions. It's good to hear they're being serious about this, I'm impressed. They better continue with this for the rest of their term, this village really needs to be protected from these violent men.

“Come let’s get in, it’s so late, you could’ve called, Zane would’ve picked you up” I say, he’s smiling as I help him inside the house.

“Oh I thought you were no longer coming” Makhulu looks surprised when we walk in. We both find our seats and join everyone in the dining room table.

“I missed my granddaughter, I was busy with the contractors at the art gallery, Zanemvula put me in charge to supervise everything, it’s coming along. We’ll be done after new year” he says.

“That’s great, I have to go and see it soon. I need to start with the interior design and finding artists who want to showcase their work.” I’m suddenly excited.

Art is my first love, it has been my escape for years and every time I think about my plans for the art gallery I get chills all over my body.

“Zanemvula made sure that everything is done according to the plan he gave us, he said you designed it” he says

“I did, I don’t want it to be just an art gallery, I want it to be a space for creatives of different arts to freely express themselves.

Music,dance,writings,paintings,design, just everyone. it’s going to be great for Khumba, it will definitely attract more tourists.” I say, everyone is looking at me, I can’t believe the huge smile on my face. I wipe it off and laugh.

“You’re doing great things for the village Buhle, the gallery, the festival and now the village security. You are a born leader, just like your mother.” Makhulu says, with admiration in her eyes.

“You hired those men that brought me here?”  
Tamkhulu

“I haven’t hired them, yet. They’re still on

probation. We'll see in six months time" I say.

"You are fierce and determined just like your grandmother, she was so independent, sometimes I would be mad at her because she never gave me enough chance to take care of her and my lack of finances didn't help. One time I promised to take her to the bioskop, so I bought her a new dress to wear that night, she beat me to it, she had bought her own dress but decided to wear mine just to cheer me up" he says.

We're all listening attentively with smiles on our faces. My grandmother sounds exactly like mama and somehow, like me as well. Mama always had her own things, even when she was a housewife, she didn't depend on my father for things, she made it work and that annoyed my father a lot. I guess that's where I take my independency from, I find power in securing myself financially. Even when my father put

money in my account, I still made my own through my art and winning poetry competitions. It makes life simpler, to have your own and not be dependent.

Makhulu dishes up and the room is filled with spicy aromas. There's pork chops and salads, my mouth is watery. We say a short prayer and eat.

I'm already on my second chop, they're so tender and well seasoned. Oh my gosh.

No one is paying attention, everyone seems to be enjoying their meal, Asakhe has been struggling with the same bone for a while now. It's that delicious.

"So, oom'Ray I have some news to tell you, that's why I invited you for dinner. And as the elder of this family, you need to know before you here it from the village" Makhulu

My grandfather lifts his head with curiosity and

stares at Makhulu waiting for her to speak.

“We’re going to need you to be part of the negotiations, the Ngele-Ngele’s are coming next week Thursday, for pregnancy damages and lobola negotiations, for your granddaughter.” She says.

The room is quiet, everyone is looking at him. he’s quiet for a while then he looks at me, his wrinkled face is hard to read.

“You’re pregnant by Zanemvula’s child? That boy is disrespectful. Doesn’t he know how things are done? You don’t get girls pregnant before marriage. He’s going to pay, plenty money” he says, with a straight face.

He’s not joking. I want to say something but I’m afraid it will make things worse for Zane. They need to go easy on his, he still has to start a family with me, we can’t do that in debt.

“Sidwell is coming on Monday, I’m sure he’d

love to meet you” Makhulu says.

“He called me, we spoke on the phone days ago, he told me he was coming, he didn’t say why. He’s a nice young man, my daughter chose well” he says. Makhulu looks pleased by these news.

I’m glad my father ended up calling him, I really need for my family to be united and present in this journey. I want my child to grow up surrounded by people who love and care for her. I want her to be a child and do childlike things, play sports, run around wearing my shoes, play a musical instrument, paint, all those things. Wait, I just thought of my child as a she, do I want a girl? I’ve never thought of it before, but the thought of having a mini me running around, makes me happy.

“You can ask ooDlamini and the others to accompany you” Makhulu says.

The way her face lights up when she speaks about Dlamini, one of my grandfathers' mine friends, she's like a young girl again and Tamkhulu has noticed. She talks about him all the time and he visits more than my grandfather does. I want to think there's something going on between them but my mind switches off immediately when thinking of them in that way.

"Yes, they'll be present." He says with a smile of pride.

"They will know we mean business, we will not be intimidated by their royal status, they will pay for their boys disrespect" he continues.

I can't help but cringe when he says he's going to make him pay. They will milk my man to bankruptcy and we'll be forced to live in that royal house forever, my biggest fear about this marriage. I told Zane long ago, that if we were to marry, there was no way I would live in his



parents mansion, it's not my style plus, it's ridiculously big. He didn't seem to have a problem with it and even agreed with me about it being ridiculously big.

"Oom'Ray don't milk them too much please, we still have the wedding to think about, and it has to be the best event of this village and those around us." Thami speaks.

He is being his usual self, thinking of big and lavish events. He probably wants us to be floating on hot air balloons and every guests given a cow as a thank you gift, which Zane and I will never agree to. If he were to plan this wedding with Zazi, we would be broke and our wedding would be a carnival.

"Can I be your flower girl sisi? I will also wear a white dress and throw flowers where you will walk" Asakhe pleads, and I nod.

I can't believe she knows this much about her

role and now I've accepted flower girl requests and the lobola hasn't even been paid up.

"Do you really think that's what Zanemvula and Buhle want, if it weren't for the customs of amaHlubi and the Xhosa traditions, these two would go marry in a foreign country, alone" Aunt'kholeka says, finishing her drink. It's in a cup and last time I checked she doesn't drink tea or coffee. It's something stronger. Her eyes says it all, they look dreamy. I'm trying so hard not to laugh at her.

"No, No they will marry here in the village, with a Xhosa traditional wedding., no fancy away wedding. We will do things properly" he says. he clearly didn't get the joke, he is serious and we're all laughing at him, he's confused.

"She was joking oom'Ray" Makhulu says, he joins in the laughter.

"He's a good boy, he will take care of you and

you should do the same for him. Cook for him, clean after him, give him more babies, boys. That's all men want from their wives, don't embarrass us" he says, the laughter escalates.

And I know what they're laughing at, me. If a good wife is defined by what my grandfather just mentioned, I'll be the worst wife ever. I can't cook, I clean but I'm not going to lift things and rearrange the house every week, at least I enjoy washing dishes, that counts as cleaning and the babies topic is a no, I'm not trying to start a soccer team. This one or maybe one more would be fine. Not more than that, I have a life too. I can't be pregnant all my life.

"Goodnight everyone" Aunt'kholeka says her goodbyes, followed by Asakhe and Thami., who's still laughing.

"Oom'Ray, you'll sleep in the spare room there, it's already too late for you to walk back."

Makhulu says.

He nods.

“I’ll have my herbal tea and head to bed too” I say, making my way to the kitchen.

I make my tea and grab biscuits and walk to my room.

Vrrr Vrrr

“Hey wild one” its Kat.

“Hey sis” me

“How’s the village life? how’s the future husband and the baby?” Kat

“Geez, what about me? These people are taking over my life already” me. she laughs

“I’m sorry, how are you?” Kat

“I’m good, almost got stoned to death though, but I’m fine. Don’t tell dad and Mam’Gloria.” Me. I can hear her shock

“What? What happened, is the baby fine? Did

you consult a doctor? Are you hurt?" Kat.

Ugh I shouldn't have told her.

"I'm fine, the baby is fine. Everyone is fine. They hit the car, they thought we were someone else" me.

"No Buhle, I'm coming down with your father, I'll close down the surgery for the whole of next week and transfer all my patients to my other friend." Kat. She sounds worried but I'm kind of happy she's coming.

"I'll be happy to have you this side, I need someone to calm my nerves during the negotiations" me.

"Well, I'm your girl. How did everyone receive the news?" Kat

"well I guess, besides my grandfather who says Zane is disrespectful and that he will make him pay, he's going to milk him dry. We will live under trees for the rest of our married life." me.

Kat is laughing really hard.

“He’s a prince, I’m sure he has more than enough money to pay” Kat

“I doubt, his mother spends it recklessly.” me

“Ugh, he’s a mature guy, he definitely has savings. Trust him. I also heard your father talk to his business friend, he’s also coming” Kat. She can’t be serious

“Did you hear his name? All my fathers friends are wealthy snobs who negotiate deals in international trade level, they will ruin things here. No, he can’t bring them here” me.

I don’t like what I’m hearing and I don’t want this to be about them, it’s about me and my husband and our child.

“I’m sure it won’t be that bad, relax. I’ll be there with you anyways.” Kat

“Now that I’m excited about” me.

“Good, now let’s get that little one to rest.  
Goodnight sis” Kat

“She’s always resting this one, Goodnight  
sis”me

“Mmmh, she? You want a girl?” Kat.

“I think so” me, I’m smiling. She’s laughing.

“She’s going to be the pretty like her mom” Kat

“A mini me” I say, we laugh and hang off the call.

Having a sister and a great family is something  
I never dreamed of having, this is all surreal.

Someone calls just to check up on me, she  
worries over me, she wants to help me and  
support me. I have a grandfather, a

grandmother, cousins, an aunt, a step mother  
that loves me like her own and a father that  
protects and loves me the way a father should.

I have a man that loves me enough to want to  
spend the rest of his life with me and I have a  
baby, that wants me to be her mother. This is

my life now, full of love that comes in different forms, I'm not alone anymore. Gone are those days where I wondered around like a lifeless soul, I have a purpose. I no longer feel like I'm not good enough to be surrounded by nice things, I feel worthy. As a young woman about to become a mother, a wife, a Queen and an entrepreneur, I have never felt so deserving, I am filled with strength to do it all, with everything I have. I'm grateful.

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More Than Enough by LAV

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Insert 20

"Hlehle my child, what you're about to go through is no childs play, marriage and



parenthood will change you and the person you're with" Makhulu says.

She came to my room in the morning whilst I was busy with my paintings. She seems serious and has pity in her eyes as she continues to advice me about my journey. We're seated on my bed facing each other.

"Especially in your case, with the kind of family you're marrying to. There are traditions and customs that you need to adopt, to be fully welcomed by the family and the ancestors. You are not marrying Zanemvula, you're marrying the entire Ngele-Ngele family. I need for you to listen to me very carefully" she continues.

She's scaring me, I know she means well and she's probably doing what all parents do when their daughters are getting married but I can't help fear the seriousness on her face. Is marrying into a royal family this bad? Zane assured me that we will do things our way, he

assured me that I wouldn't have to change who I am and what I believe in but looking at my grandmother right now, it seems like there's a lot of things Zane didn't mention about his family. And that scares me.

"Do not, and I repeat, do not eat anything anyone cooks for you unless Thandi made it. Zanemvula's mother, Nonjezu, doesn't like that his son, chose you over her, she is dangerous and evil." She says.

My heart starts pacing harder and my eyes are filled with fear. How will I marry into a family that doesn't like me, so much that they'd want to kill me. I know Zane's mother is cruel but to poison her sons wife? Is she that desperate of the royal money?

"We won't be staying with them Makhulu, we'll build a house for us" I say. My voice is low and shaking.

“That’s better but during family gatherings and rituals, also, if she gives you any jewelery, like necklace, earrings, or any gift, don’t wear it. Don’t even bring it to your room or your personal space.” She says.

This is bigger than I thought, it’s more scarier and intense than I thought. Why would she want to buy me gifts if she doesn’t like me? This is becoming more confusing. I suddenly feel my head pounding with all these instructions from my grandmother.

“Why would she want to buy me things if she doesn’t like me?” I ask.

“She is very manipulative, she has a way of making you think she likes you and once she’s gain your trust, she strikes.” She says.

“How can this be the mother that birthed Zane? She is nothing like him” I say.

Makhulu’s face suddenly drops, she fiddles with

her apron for a while and takes a deep breath.

“Zanemvula and the other boys were raised by Thandi. She arrived in the village when Zanemvula was the only child, he was still a young boy then. She brought them up like her own, she was gentle with them and they respected her more than their mother. They will never be like Nonjezu.” Makhulu

What kind of woman births children only to watch another woman raise them? Doesn't she have that motherly connection with them? Or were they just her ticket to the royal money? It really annoys me the more I think of it. No child of mine will be raised under such evil and negligent circumstances. I will raise my own children with my husband and I will not allow anyone to come between me and my little family.

If I'm going to be a mother, wife and the Khumba Queen, I might as well start acting and

sounding like one. I was raised by a queen, not by her marital status but by trait. My mother was the true definition of what a queen should be and I will embrace every part of her in me as I walk in this journey.

“The council and the people decided to remove King Zenzele from his throne and nominated Zane to step up. He agreed” I say, she doesn’t look surprised

“Of course, that’s what the people wanted, it happened sooner than we expected though. King Zenzele and the Queen Nonjezu haven’t been fulfilling their royal duties, Zane has been more consistent with all of that, that’s why they chose him. He is for the people, he is easily accessible unlike his father and mother. The people like that about him” she says.

“He really is passionate about helping the people in Khumba and developing the village” I say

“Yes, and you know what this means too? You will be his Queen, the people’s Queen. You’re going to share him with the people, the village will demand him and they will demand you too. Many like you already” she says with a smile.

I mean I understand his duties as a King will be more than the ones he had as a prince, but to share him? I don’t understand. He’ll work during the day and come back home when he’s done, It’s that simple. No one will come to my house after working hours demanding to see my husband. I’m going to set strict rules concerning his consultation times. I know he can be too soft at times.

“So this means you’re going to have to change the way you dress, no more boob tube, stomach out things, you will change the way you speak, no more cursing. You will have to carry yourself in a more respectable manner and know that your man and family come first. There are

things you did as a single woman that you wouldn't do as a married woman, a Queen of the people" she says.

She sees my facial expressions change as she gives me these instructions.

"I think you're exaggerating, I'm sure in the twenty first century people can do whatever their husbands are comfortable with in their marriage." I say

"Like I told you before, you're not marrying Zanemvula, you're marrying his family and his ancestors. So you need to clean that filthy mouth of yours and fill it with polite words fit for a Queen" she says.

She laughs pinching my cheeks, really hard.

"It's not funny Makhulu, this means I have to be a new person, it's hard. Marriage is hard. Zane and I should've just eloped and left the culture and the ancestors behind." I say throwing

myself on the bed with my hands over my eyes.

“You said you love him, now prove it” she says and walks out of the room leaving me in my deepest thoughts wondering how my life would’ve been if I never went on that picnic with him.

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I spent the rest of the morning thinking about all these complications and traditions that are attached to this marriage I’m going into. I won’t lie and say I’m prepared, I don’t think anyone can ever be prepared for what I’m about to walk to but when I think about the man that I’m doing this with, I immediately find courage to want to conquer, for love’s sake. He gave me his word that we will do things our way, he promised me we will create our own traditions and there is no way I will allow myself to be bullied by people I have no commitment to. Only Zane will have the right to say what is needed in our marriage and



his suggestions will have to be reviewed and evaluated by the both of us before we finally decide on something. It will be a partnership not a dictatorship and everyone will have to accept that, especially the elders.

I decided to take a walk to the art gallery construction site, I didn't tell Zane, I know he'd freak out and make it seem like I walked all the way to Edernville. It really isn't that far, close to 5km, besides, with all this junk I've been eating, I need the exercise. Khumba heat is out in full force today. Good thing I borrowed Makhulu's umbrella and also brought water.

I can already see the building, it's bigger than I thought. Wow. It's almost done, the roof is done and the widows are installed. I'm excited just by seeing it from the distance. I walk a short distance and make my way to the entry side.

Zazi's car is parked outside and I know Zane's driving it. This is going to upset him, me walking

this distance without telling me, he will be pissed. As I get closer to the gate, I take small steps as I approach the group of contractors standing in a circle.

“Buhle my child.” It’s my grandfather. He’s yelling from a distance, now everyone is looking at me. Zane’s face is full of shock and disbelief. I really can’t do much but fake a smile.

“Surprise” I say lifting my shoulders widening my fake smile.

He doesn’t buy into it, he looks upset.

“Who brought you here?” he walks closer.

He is wearing a blue work suit full of dust and mud. His hands are ashy, so is his face. He’s that hands on employer, the one that works on everything with his employees.

“Uhm, I was just stretching my legs” I say, he doesn’t look pleased.

“You walked, all the way from your house? After what happened yesterday?” he’s shouting.

“It’s only 5 km Zane and I wanted to come see the progress my grandfather was telling me about” I say, my head facing down.

Ugh, he needs to chill a bit, I’m already here, there’s no need to be worked up, I made it safely.

“What about the baby, didn’t Katlego tell you to take it easy? I told you I was handling things here” he says.

This baby will be the death of my freedom, now I can’t walk to see my new work space because of it, besides, exercise is good for the baby and explaining that to him right now, will be a waste of my time.

“I just wanted to see my new office, Zane, I need to take measurements so I can start with the interior design” I say.

I hear him exhale, holding my hands. They're so rough and ashy

"You are the most stubborn person I know, you could've called me to come get you, I don't want you walking alone in your condition." He says.

I can hear his voice is calmer, he tries to pull me closer, I decline. He's too dirty and sweaty.

"You're not putting all that dirt on me" I say pushing him back.

He pulls me even harder rubbing his hands on my red dress, he's having fun with this, I'm not.

"Are you done now, I want to see my office" I say with a straight face, he laughs at me and plants a kiss on my cheek.

"Here, wear this on your head and don't let go of my hand" he says, as we make our way into the building. The outside is done, it needs a little bit of touch ups and painting.

The inside is spacious, just how I wanted it to be, I can spot at the corner of my eye, my office. There are rooms at the back, dancing studios and a small library. It's perfect, I can already see it done and decorated, filled with art and people walking up and down this big hallway. I can't help but smile.

"You like it?" Zane asks

"No, I fucken love it. It's perfect." I'm excited

"Language please" he says with a serious face.

"Oops, my bad. My office, I want glass around it, I want to see the entire gallery from my desk. I want the whole place covered in wooden floors, dark brown. See those pillars, I want them to have random pictures of people here in Khumba, like a collage or something. It's all coming together. I love it" my face aches from all the smiling, I'm very excited and Zane is pleased to see that.

“I’ll tell the guys everything. I’m glad you like it, the men were so nervous when they saw you, they’ll be happy to know you like their work” he says.

I’m not even paying attention to him, I’m taking pictures of the place to help make things easier when furniture shopping.

“Did you hear what I said?” he says.

“Yes my love” I reply as I finish taking the pictures. Honestly, I wasn’t listening to him, I’m still in awe of this beautiful space here.

My grandfather walks in with two of the contractors.

“See, I told you we’re almost done, these guys are good” my grandfather says, walking towards us with these two men.

“I like it, they’re very good and fast. We might need them for our other project” I say, winking at Zane. If they’re this quick and skilled, I’m

going to need them for our new home, I want to move into my new home before my baby is born.

“I told them already, we just need the house plan and they’ll start as soon as they complete this one, which, as you can see, is already done” Zane replies. At least we’re on the same page about that.

“I’d like that office to be surrounded by glass windows, I need to see the entire gallery and wooden floors, that’s all. Everything else is perfect. You did a good job.” I say to the men, they seem to understand. They nod with smiles.

“Okay, I think my work here is done for the day. I’ll take some of you guys to get the paints tomorrow but our boss lady here will choose the colors. Finish up on the roof and you can have the rest of the afternoon off” Zane instruct the men. They walk out smiling.

“It’s good to hear you are pleased with the place,

this one here gave the contractors a hard time just to have things happen the way you wanted them. At some point they were more scared of you than him.” Tamkhulu says, laughing with Zane.

I still haven’t forgotten how he threatened to milk my soon to be husband for making me pregnant.

“I really wanted to have things exactly the way you planned them, this will be your working space, even though I preferred you working at the lodge with me.” he says with a frown on his face.

He will not let this go, will he, and there’s no way I’m working in the same office space with him. He never concentrates when I’m around and he’s hands are always wondering on my thighs and breasts.

“But we both know why that won’t work out” I



say.

“You will have to slow down on work Buhle, to take care of your husband and your children. You can’t work full time and still have a family, that’s not how things are done.” Tamkhulu says.

I roll my eyes and look at Zane who is having the laugh of his life. It’s really not that funny, it’s stupid. I don’t understand why it’s always the wife that has to drop everything to take care of her family. She didn’t propose to herself, she didn’t trip and land on sperm pool. Why can’t men drop everything to take care of their wives and children, since they pride themselves in being sole providers. They want marriage and children as much as their wives, if not more. I will not be bullied by these stupid sexist rules. I will work fulltime and wife my husband while mothering my child.

“Buhle is a strong woman, she can do it all. She doesn’t have to stop working” Zane says. he

can see how annoyed I am by my grandfathers remarks.

“You young boys are afraid of your wives, in our days, a wife stayed at home with the children while the men work, it’s simple” he says.

“Well, now is our time, we do things our way” I say, annoyed.

I walk towards the door, leaving them standing in the middle of the gallery.

I got what I came for, there’s no need for me listen to what other people tell me how I should be a wife and a mother.

“Buhle wait, I’ll take you home” Zane is running behind me as I make my way to the gate.

He pulls me by my hands and looks into my eyes

“Remember what I told you, this is our marriage, our family and we’ll do things our way” he says.

I want to believe him but from what Makhulu told me earlier this morning, I'm scared.

"It doesn't seem that way to other people though, they have these expectations of me and that scares me because I am not that person, I'm not the person they want me to be" I say.

He pulls me closer and hugs me

"I will never ask you to be someone you're not and I am your husband, you should believe me when I say that. Don't worry yourself about what others want, they're not part of our team, here, it's me, you and Ozayo" he says rubbing my stomach.

"Ozayo wants her mother to work full time, she needs her mother to make all the money for her future" I say.

He slowly pulls back and gives me a puzzled look.

"She? Ozayo is a girl?" he asks.

“I don’t know, I sometimes find myself referring to it as she. I don’t know. Don’t you want a girl?” I ask.

We’ve never spoken about the baby’s gender, I don’t know if he wants a boy or girl.

“I don’t know, I haven’t thought of it like that. Any child is fine with me, as long as they look like you. Come let’s go” he says. Oh well, no pressure, that’s good.

We walk to the car and drive off.

“You need to shower and change to decent clothing” I say looking at his dirty and sweaty work suit, he looks so comfortable.

He looks at me like I’m a crazy person for suggesting this.

“A man is suppose to be dirty and sweaty, not walk around smelling like roses like Zazini. That boy doesn’t know hard labour, all he does is drink champagne and make clothes, that’s all.”

He says

“Zazi is a real man, he dresses well, he takes care of his skin and all that. Unlike someone who walks around covered in mud and dust” I say.

I can feel him smiling, I’m looking straight on the road ahead

“Are you saying I’m not a real man Buhlebethu, the man that planted that baby in you, the one that proposed to you?” he says

“I’m just saying he could learn a thing or two from Zazi, a true gentlemen” I say, folding my arms, trying so hard not to crack and smile.

“mmh, I think my wife to be doesn’t love her husband’s dress sense” he says.

“Not that I don’t like it, I think you should put in more effort. Especially now that you’ll be King. You need to look the part when going to meetings. No more casual t-shirt and bootleg

jeans. It doesn't have to be always formal, just smart casual. Skinny jeans, dark ones or chinos and a shirt." I suggest.

He smiles, grabs my hand and kisses it.

"We'll go shopping and you'll choose the clothes for your husband" he says as he continues to kiss my hand.

Without even realizing, we're at the lodge. He said he was taking me home.

"This is not my home?" I say

"I'll change and we'll have lunch together, Oza must be hungry. Besides, I miss you, we haven't spent much time together since you've been back" he says, parking in front of the entrance.

We walk into the lodge holding hands, making our way to his office. The staff is now used to our affectionate nature, they no longer give us those long awkward stares.

He leads me to the two seater sofa, where he places a pillow on my back and the other under my feet. He's such a gentleman.

"I'll shower and change quickly, what do you want for lunch, I'll tell the chef to make it while I get ready" he says.

"I'd love pizza with lots of cheese, wings and fries, sweet potato fries" I say.

He stares at me for a while, and smiles.

"Is that all?" he asks.

He better not make fun of my eating habits.

"No, I'd also like a pan fried Zane with extra sauce. Tell him I like my man well done" I say, he bursts out in laughter walking towards me.

"You know I love you, all of you." He says kissing me, he's a charmer and I love him.

"Go now and give my order to the chef, I'm actually hungry" I say pushing him away.

He laughs and makes his way out of the room carrying a sport bag. Must be his clothes.

The air conditioner is cooling the room and stabilizing my temperature, my back is well secured and my feet are rested. That 5km was not joke, I can feel it now, I slowly close my eyes and fall asleep. I hate how I immediately fall asleep when I find a comfortable position.

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Someone is poking me, slowly and gently.

I open my eyes, it's a young man, he's one of the staff.

"Sorry to wake you, Bhungane said I should bring you fruit salad" he says, placing the bowl on Zane's desk. He looks nervous and intimidated.

"Thank you, what's your name?" I ask

He looks surprised



“I’m Luzuko” he says.

“Well, thank you Luzuko” I say and he nods.

He walks out of the office smiling. I wonder why people here think I’m this scary beast that no one talks to. Every time I walk pass a group of people, there’s silence and others look away like I don’t exist. I really don’t know. I’m human too, just like them.

I pick up the bowl of fresh fruit and eat. It’s my favorite pregnancy snack, it’s fresh, juicy and all sorts of sweet. I’m glad my baby daddy knows what I crave during my pregnancy.

The door swings open.

It’s Thami.

“Mzala, you have the whole kitchen swamped because of your orders, your baby daddy instructed the chefs to work on it, as we speak, they are sweating trying to impress you, must be nice” he says walking in like he owns the

place

“Hi Thami, how are you? Oh I’m fine too, thanks for asking” I say.

He doesn’t even greet, straight into the gossip. He rolls his eyes and sits next to me.

“Mzala that man will walk on fire for you, I’m telling you” he says

“Honestly, I’d do the same for him” I say. He laughs

“Of cause you would, you’re carrying royal blood” he says, laughing louder. He’s so stupid.

“Aren’t you suppose to be at work?” I ask

“When your soon to be brother in law is your boss, things change. I get longer tea breaks and less shifts” he says.

“Are you crazy? I hope you’re not abusing your co workers” I say. He’s capable of doing that.

“I’m not here for that, Xola and I are going away

for the New Year weekend, I need you to help me convince Makhulu to let me go with him. She listens to you, especially now that you're bringing royal cattle at home" he's begging

If this is his way of begging, he's not doing a good job at all. Teasing me while at it, is not the way to go about it. I continue eating my salad and paying no attention to him He kneels in front me.

"Please Mzala, this is going to be our first time, you know... I want it to be special. Please Buhle, I'll do anything you want me to do for your entire pregnancy, I promise" he says, begging really hard.

I can't believe they still haven't had sex, it's shocking, considering how intimate they are. He did say, he's not the kind of guy to just throw himself at any guy passing by and Xola has proven to be a great and reliable guy. They've been together for five months now and they still

haven't had sex, while I've been with Zane for 2 months and I'm already pregnant and engaged.

"Fine, where are you going?" I ask.

He jumps to hug me.

"Thank you, thank you. We're going to some game reserve close to Edernville, I've never been this nervous and excited about anything in my life. Xola really is the one Mzala. He makes me genuinely happy and my attack really showed me how much he cared for me" He says, with the biggest smile on his face.

"I'm glad you're happy cuz, you deserve it. He really is a good guy. Don't be nervous, just enjoy him and all that he offers." I say, he gives me a naughty smile.

"And you of all people would know this, hence..." he says pointing at my stomach

We both laugh. Zane walks in and there's awkward silence. He greets Thami who quickly

worms his way out of the office.

“And then?” he asks looking at me

“It’s a family joke, you’re not family yet.” I say.

“I guess my uncles should hurry up the process so I can laugh at family jokes” he says sitting next to me and grabbing some of my fruit

I don’t like sharing food. I give him a warning look.

“Oh come on, it’s one bite” he says.

“I was going to eat that” I say.

“Here, have it” he places the chewed apple on his lips and pushes it in my mouth.

“There, no more complaints. Now let’s go have proper lunch”he says, taking my hand and we make our way to the restaurant.

It’s empty, that’s odd because it’s always full here, especially now that it’s the holidays.

“Why is it empty? I thought the lodge was fully booked for the holidays?” I ask

He smiles and leads me to our table.

“It’s ours for the next two hours” he says.

He pulls my chair and I seat. He booked the restaurant for us, to have lunch. Why though, we could have had lunch in his office if he wanted privacy.

“Ookay” I say, still not sure of his actions.

The waitress shows up with all the food I’ve ordered and Zane’s plate. She’s smiling from ear to ear as she places the food on the table.

“This looks delicious, send my regards to the chef” I say salivating on the sight of the delicious food in front of me.

She nods and disappears in the kitchen.

We say a short prayer and we eat. Praying is something we do regularly now, he’s always

prayed before he eats and has taught me that as well.

Everything tastes delicious, I move my shoulders from side to side, it's my happy dance. Zane is laughing as he eats his burger.

"So when do you want to get married? Before or after you give birth?" he asks.

This guys' timing is all wrong. How can you ask such questions in the middle of a busy meal, my mouth is so full.

"I'll let you chew your food, take your time" he says.

I finally finish and take a sip from my water.

"I don't want to walk down the isle looking like a hippo and I don't want to birth my child out of marriage." I say.

He looks confused.

"What do you want?" he asks

“Let’s get married right away after the negotiations, start building the house and move in before the baby arrives. That means you’ll be sworn in as King as a married man” I say.

He looks surprised almost impressed.

“Wow, I really thought you’d want to wait longer, I’m not complaining, that’s what I would like” he says smiling.

“We’ll get married after the Festival launch, followed by my graduation then dad and Mam’Gloria’s wedding. Oh my gosh, it’s a lot” I say.

I didn’t realize that there are so many events to come next year, and I will be already showing. I’ll have to take it one event at a time. I’m exhausted just by thinking about it. I need to also focus more on the Festival and do last minute touch ups, I should just hire an events planner to do all the hard labour, I won’t be able



to do that for the festival and still plan a traditional Xhosa wedding, which I know nothing about. Graduation is also around the corner and dad's wedding.

Ugh, no.

"And there's Sinazo and Thabiso's wedding too, remember" he says.

I totally forgot about them, oh no. we're swamped. I immediately feel defeated, drowning my head in my arms

"Yhow, it's only two weekends away from now and there's so much work to do for the festival launch. And I have nothing to wear to their wedding." I say.

"You could always hire someone to help you with that, and Zazi can make you something. I don't want you to worry" he says, he's brushing my hand softly.

I look up to him, he's smiling as our eyes meet.

He just solved my problems in an instant. I guess Zazi will do my graduation outfit as well.

“Now, I have something for you here.” he says, reaching to his pocket and pulling out a small box. He opens it and I see a ring. A Ruby stone with small cut diamonds around it. It’s beautiful and I love it. my eyes, tear up and my face heats up. He pulls the ring out and places it on my left hand ring finger.

“Will you be my wife?” he says, with a smile.

I can’t even utter a word, I’m in tears and all I can do is nod, continuously. He stands to come to my side, pulls me up and kisses me.

I love this man, I want to marry him, I want to be his Queen, I want to have his children. This one was sent for me and I cannot believe the love I have for him exists in me, he has made me love myself and helped me realize that I’m worthy of the love he gives me. I wouldn’t have chosen

anyone, it had to be him. Whatever trials the Xhosa tradition and amaHlubi may throw at us, I will fight for him, I will fight with him.

I cannot stop looking at the ring, it's unique, beautiful and it looks expensive.

“Zazi insisted we design a new one instead of buying one from the shops, he helped me with the design. The Ruby stone represents strength, courage, beauty, love and confidence, that's you. It is the queen of all stones. The small diamonds around represents us, your support system. We'll always protect you, shield you.” He says, he looks emotional as he explains the design of the ring.

“I love it baby, thank you so much my love. I love you” I say, hugging him tighter.

I've been so focused on this pregnancy, I forgot that I should be wearing a ring like any other engaged woman.

“I love you Buhlebethu” he says.

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More Than Enough by LAV

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Insert 21

On a regular day I'd be jogging down to the river to clear my mind or take long walks around the village to keep my mind distracted but today is no regular day, it's the day I take a step further to being a wife. My father and Kat arrived earlier in the week and he brought his business associate with him just like Kat said. He's staying at the lodge.

I've spent a lot of this past week admiring my ring forgetting the anxiety that this day would bring, now here I am, in my room, fiddling with my umbaco skirt and wishing Zane's family

would arrive sooner to speed up these negotiations. According to the Ngele-Ngele culture, Zane and his father cannot be part of the negotiations, only the chosen uncles should be present.

He called me earlier in the morning to check on me, I tried to pretend like everything was fine but he knows me too well, he could sense the anxiety right through the phone. He even gave Thandi the phone to talk me through it, it worked only for the duration of the call.

“Sis, you need to control your breathing and your thoughts, everything will go well. This much stress is not good for the baby and your health” Kat says.

I really wish it was as easy as she makes it to be. I’m trying so hard not to think about the worst case scenarios but knowing Zane’s family, I can’t help it.

“I should drink the herbal tea, just to calm my nerves a bit” I say, my voice is shaking and Kat can see I’m having difficulty with breathing.

“Okay, go and make it, take small steps and focus on the tea you’re making” she says.

I’m just glad she’s hear, as a doctor and my sister. I don’t think I would have been okay by myself. She helped me with getting dressed and showed me how to tie the doek. I bought a mustard two piece set of umbaco from one of the local designers. It’s an A-line skirt that flows all the way to the ankles and a top with long bell sleeves. Makhulu gave me her dark brown beaded doek for my head.

I make my way to the kitchen and the men are already seated in the lounge. My father and his friend are seated next to each other while Tamkhulu and Dlamini are seated on the sofa next to them, they’re having conversations over a bottle of whiskey, and that has my stomach in

knots. If Zane's family doesn't arrive any minute now, these negotiations will be a mess, a drunken mess. Dlamini is already talking loudly and carelessly.

"Oh, Buhleza. Your in-laws don't know how to keep track of time eh, they'll be fined even more for that" Dlamini says and everyone laughs.

I'm trying so hard not to yell out my frustration at them, they look like young men waiting for a soccer match to start, I am beyond annoyed.

I walk past them and straight to the kitchen, Makhulu and Thami are running up and down preparing food.

"Oh my child, you don't look good, come here" she says opening her arms to me.

I bury my face on her chest and begin to cry, she hugs me tighter. I cannot fully explain why I am crying but it feels good to let go of all this tension inside of me.

“It’s okay my child, let it out. Things will go perfectly” she says, wiping my tears.

“Why haven’t they arrived? They’re an hour late”  
I say

“These things happen, men and their egos, they don’t want to be seen as following instructions set by other men, they don’t want to seem weak. They’re just being their stupid selves.” She says.

“So they’re staying away on purpose just to prove a point? They’re fucking insane and senseless. I’m going to call Zane” I say, fuming.

Makhulu looks calm.

“Hlehle, I warned you about this cursing of yours, stop that. You can never control the arrogance of a Xhosa man, ask any woman whose married one, they will tell you, to let them be, eventually they’ll learn it was all a waste of energy and time.” she says calmly with a smile.

I don’t understand why I have to put up with



such reckless behaviour especially from people who are not directly affected by this. They're probably trying to sabotage our marriage and I can already smell Zane's mother in this. Nx!

I proceed to make my tea and a car hooter startles us all in the kitchen. Thami walks towards the window and smiles.

"It's them, they're here. Relax Mzala, things will only get better from here" he says continuing with the cooking. If I was any good, I'd help them.

I take my tea and walk towards the passage, my father and the men are seated like nothing's going on. Didn't they hear the car hoot

"They're here already, someone should open the gates dad" I say.

They ignore me and continue with their chats and the whiskey is half way finished. This is not going to end well.

“Dad” I say, he looks at me, smiles and takes a sip of his drink.

What kind of twisted game is this, pretending like I don't exist and how they're going on like they can't hear the people shouting at the gate. This is going to be disastrous.

“Buhle, you need to rest my child. It's going to be a long day. Your in laws made us wait an hour and a half now they think we'll jump the moment they arrive, clearly they don't know ooDlomo are not to be messed with, they will learn” my father says with an unfamiliar look on his face. He looks serious but his smile is confusing.

“But dad...” I didn't even finish.

“Room now!” he yells so hard that Makhulu walks out of the kitchen.

My entire body shakes as I rush back to the bedroom. Kat must've heard the yelling, she's

looking at me, seeing all fear on my face.

I have never been yelled at like that by my father in a long time, he's anger vein almost popped at the top of his forehead. What is it about these negotiations that makes them seem so untouchable and angry. They're all trying to prove a point to each other and no one wants to be seen as weak, it's pathetic. This is not about them, they're ruining things for us and yet they'll will find fault and call us disrespectful if we elope and marry in at exotic island without their help.

"These things take time sis, they will argue about entrance fee, the fee for permission to talk, the fee for being late, all of that and they haven't even started with the core of the matter" Kat says.

I don't know how she knows about these things, I not even surprised, Kat seems to know a lot of things, she reads a lot, it might be that.

“Can they do all that will them inside? What if they turn around and never agree to come back here? What about my marriage with Zane, they’re being very selfish right now” I say.

I’m emotional again, damn hormones. I’m more angry than sad, I hate how these stubborn men are trying to ruin my union with my husband and the father of my child.

“Aww sis, don’t cry, have your tea and lie down a bit” Kat says.

She’s really trying but there’s nothing any of us can do. I continue drinking my tea.

Vrrr Vrrr.

It’s Zane. I don’t want to talk to him. It rings again until Kat grabs it and answers it.

“Buhle’s phone hello” Kat.

She moves it from her ear and puts it on loud speaker.

“Where’s Buhle? Is she fine?” Zane

“She’s hear, she’s fine just nervous”Kat.

I really don’t feel like talking to him, how could he let them be late for hour and 30 min?

“Why is she quiet? Buhle?” Zane

“What?” me. Kat shakes her head trying to calm me down.

“What’s wrong baby? You sound upset” Zane, how can he be so cool while our elders are trying to ruin things for us.

“They’re late, your uncles are late and now my father won’t open for them, they’ve been standing outside for the past 15minutes. nothing is okay” me

“Relax baby, these things usually start off like this. It will be fine” Zane.

“Well they should start with it already. This is not about them” me

“I understand your frustration my love, it’s out of our hands at this point. When they leave there you’ll be Mrs Ngele-Ngele, they know what they’re doing. You’ll be mine by the end of today” Zane, I can feel him smiling on the otherside,

I find myself blushing when he called me Mrs Ngele-Ngele. I grab the phone from Kat and turn off the loud speaker.

“I like the sound of that, Mrs Ngele-Ngele” I say to him,

“That’s you my love, my wife, my Queen and the mother of my children” Zane

This man really wants more children, he never says, the mother of my child, he says children. We need to have a talk about this, not now though.

Thami walks storming in the room and we both look at him. he’s smiling

“They’re letting them in, it’s happening Mzala” he says.

“They’re inside, I have to go.” I say.

“Okay, I love you” Zane

“I love you too hubby” I say and we hang off the phone.

“Tell me what happened?” I ask Thami

“Makhulu spoke to Dlamini and he went to the gate with oom’Ray, they stood there for a while, doing nothing, just standing in silence. The royal men kept pulling out money but they still wouldn’t open. Then a while later they opened for them.” he says.

Tamkhulu is very dramatic, unnecessarily.

“What are they doing now? Are they talking about the money?” I ask.

I really wished someone would have told me how these things go but everyone said it’s not

my business to know, which is very ironic given that I'm the business they'll be discussing.

"No, it's too early for that, they're quiet now, no one is speaking, the royal men have been offering expensive whiskey bottles and cash, our side is not buying in, they're giving them a hard time" Thami continues

"At least they're inside now, one less thing to worry about. They'll eventually get tired of this as well and move on" Kat says, she's really trying to keep me calm.

Thami pulls out a small bottle from his pockets, it's vodka. Oh my gosh, I need something that strong as well, Ozayo really is messing up my jam, I could be downing a bottle of wine with no worries of what my father and his team decide to do or not do.

"Ooh I wish I could drink that, I need something that strong" I say with a frown of envy as Thami



takes a shot. He offers some to Kat and she declines.

“Please take, on my behalf. I will be living vicariously through you today” I say and she gives me an annoyed look but she takes the shot.

“Only this one, no more, I don’t like vodka. I’m a champagne girl” she says making an ugly face after drinking the shot,

Thami and I laugh at her.

“You’ll get used to it, with your kind of job I would drown myself in it everyday after work” he says.

He is in awe of Kat’s profession, he says it’s too big of a responsibility for someone her age.

He’s been asking her about weird diseases he only heard of from medical shows. Kat entertains it.

“I can’t just get drunk on random days, what if

I'm on call and a patient of mine needs me. I've never been drunk before, I know how to hold my liquor." Kat says.

She really strikes me as that person that drinks one glass throughout an event. She's classy like that.

"Thami and I finish two bottles of wine, we get drunk almost every weekend and it's never planned. We start off with one glass then before we know it, we're calling his boyfriend to get us more wine" I say.

I miss those days, where we'd spend an entire afternoon in his flat, talking about our men and how much we love them to talking about our goals and how we'd like to live the rest of our lives. I really had the best laughs with Thami and our wine.

"Then Zanemvula would call and you'd try your best to convince him you're not drunk, making

an even bigger fool of yourself” Thami says, we all start laughing.

“Wait, doesn’t he know you drink? “ Kat.

“He knows, even though he says he doesn’t have a problem with that, him not drinking makes me feel guilty sometimes, well at least until I sip on the second glass” I say.

We’re laughing and sharing our drunk stories, it’s all the distraction I needed from these negotiations.

Aunt’Kholeka walks in the door.

“Buhle, they need you in the lounge, all you have to answer is ‘yes I know them’ that’s all” she says.

I’m confused but I walk with her to the lounge, all of them are staring at me. There are only 4 men from Zane’s family, the two I recognize from the day I first met Zane at the church. They still have that disgusted look on their

faces. The other two men, I've never seen before. They look at me from head to toe, they probably expected me to show up with inappropriate clothing, I've disappointed them.

"Ntombi, do you know these people? They say they're here for you" Tamkhulu says.

"Yes Tamkhulu, I know them" I say and he nods. I walk back to the room.

.....

The negotiations have been going on for two hours now, yelling and laughs are the only noise coming from the lounge. My side of the family has been mocking and shaming Zane's family for not raising their son well, blaming him for what they called 'reckless behavior' for getting me pregnant before we marry.

Which I find stupid because we both didn't intend on having a baby this soon.

The Ngele-Ngele's have also been throwing their fair share of curses at me, calling me 'loose and lacking principles', nothing anyone can say to insult me anymore, I've heard it all in this village. All because of the man I fell in love with.

Zane has been texting and asking about what is going on, non-stop, he's starting to feel the anxiety I've been feeling throughout the day. I've been telling him word for word how the arguments were going, well only those I could hear. He has been trying to keep me company with long chats and this has also given us a chance to talk about these upcoming events we have to attend to. We've decided that I will go back to work after the negotiations, hire a personal assistant and an event planner to help me out. I have to finish all preparations in the next two weeks before we go to Thabiso and Sinazo's wedding in the Cape because the

festival launch will be two weekends after it. Then we'd have to start planning for our traditional wedding which we haven't set a date for but will follow immediately after the festival.

I've also come to terms with the fact that I will be moving in with Zane's family until our house is finished, Zane said the men would be done by June or July, depending on the weather. Even though we'll be living in Zane's bachelor pad, at the back, I'm still a little bit worried about being in the same yard as his mother but he said once we're married I can't stay at my grandmother's house.

Zane will be sworn into his new role as King of Khumba, immediately after the wedding, he said he wants to do it the following weekend, which will also mean I have to assume duties of being Queen as well. He assures me I don't need to do much work but I can't seat back and do nothing while women of this village remain

unemployed and children are married off to older men instead of going to school. I feel like there is a lot of work to do and clearly the current Queen has missed her true calling.

Graduation will be a month after my wedding, then followed by dad and Mam'Gloria's wedding, by then my belly will be showing and I'll be tired of all the celebrations. At least this means I'll spend less time with my new family, travelling to these events will also give me a break from the roles of being a 'good wife' and be the wife my husband needs me to be and hopefully after all this madness, I will have to move into my new home and prepare for the birth of my firstborn.

.....

"They're done, you're getting married sis"

I'm woken by Kat's voice screaming in my ear, she's jumping and dancing around the room,

I've never seen her this joyous and expressive.

"Where are they now?" I ask, sitting up straight. She stops and seats next to me.

Her eyes look weird and she's smiling a lot.

"How many more shots of vodka did you drink?" I ask

"I can't remember, maybe Thami kept track. My mind is telling me funny stories, do you want to hear them?" she says with the biggest smile.

She is really out of it, I can't believe I left Thami with her for a few hours and he turned her into a vodka drinking storyteller.

"I don't think now is the time sis. Where's Thami?"

"He went to the kitchen, they're dishing out for the men, we should go help them too sis" she says.

I don't think she should be seen by Makhulu or



dad like this, especially my dad.

“I think you should lie down a little sis, I’ll go see if they need help” I say.

She gets up and walks to the door

“I’m not drunk sis, come let’s go” she walks out of the room, I rush behind her immediately.

I walk towards the lounge and my father smiles at me but is confused by Kat’s enthusiastic energy.

“Aaah Makoti, I want to taste your food, we need to know our son will be well taken care of” one of Zane’s uncles says.

Everyone seems to be in good spirits, they’re laughing and sharing jokes. They just opened another bottle of whiskey and everyone is getting along like they didn’t curse at each other a few hours ago.

I nod and smile then walk straight to the kitchen.

Now I need to look busy, like I actually laid a hand in making all this food, it looks delicious. Thami and Makhulu know the kitchen business. There are different kinds of meat, salads, hot and cold, samp and dumpling. They went all out.

“Can we all pretend like I at least made a salad, the uncles think I can cook and I’d like to keep it that way, they seem impressed by wives that cook” I whisper

They all laugh at me. I mean if its that important, I will take cooking lessons online or hire those private chefs that teach you at home, I could do that. I would do anything for things to go smoothly with this wedding.

“Buhle, you can’t even fry an egg, how will you take care of your husband?” Aunt’Kholeka asks holding in a laugh.

“She’ll probably hire a private chef to cook for them every night and pretend like she made the

food, she can't even make a salad" Thami responds before I even explain myself.

They're having fun with this and I'm annoyed.

"Don't worry sis, your man loves you without cooking skills, he will eat your love all his life" she says and they all burst into laughter.

It's not funny, and I don't appreciate being mocked.

"Well isn't it funny how the only one who can't cook is the one getting married in this room?" I say. there's silence.

Thought as much, if their cooking skills are good enough to get a man why haven't they found men to marry and become 'good wives'.  
Nx!

"We were joking Buhle, no need to get all worked up" Thami says.

"Dry jokes you have" I say.

“Agh, don’t let your hormones turn you into the Grinch, chill out, we’ll tell them you made all this food, with love” Kats says and she continues to laugh.

I can tell the others want to laugh as well but my wicked stares are preventing them.

“Here my child, put these on the dining table and ask them to gather there” Makhulu hands me two salad bowls.

I walk towards the dining room and I can hear them laughing as I leave the kitchen.

They are the most annoying people right now. I should just ignore them and feed my in-laws, who seem very happy to see me walk in with the bowls.

I do as Makhulu instructed and walk back to the kitchen for more food. We all help each other out with placing the food on the dining table, Makhulu says a prayer and they eat. They are

enjoying the food, nodding and smiling at me as they continue to indulge in the buffet in front of them.

“Our money did not go to waste here, clearly Zanemvula will gain some weight marrying you” one of the uncles say, smiling with his cigarette teeth showing. He looks like a fun uncle, he’s the only one speaking to me, others just smile and nod.

I smile and nod back at him, walking back to the kitchen where us women will be eating, Makhulu has made a small buffet for us to dish for ourselves. I haven’t had a decent meal all day, just snacks and that herbal tea. I’m hungry and all this food is screaming ‘eat me now’.

Vrrr Vrrr

“Mrs Ngele-Ngele” Zane .i’m blushing I take my plate and walk to the bedroom.

“Hello husband” me

“Soon you will officially be mine, I’m the happiest and the luckiest man in the world right now” Zane

“I can’t wait to be officially yours my love and build a life with you and our child” me

“And make many more of them right?!” Zane

Ugh.

“Let’s focus on this one now. I’m glad they settled their differences and sealed the deal, how much did they make you pay?” me

“I told you, you’re not suppose to know these things. I paid what I paid and that’s it” Zane

“I should atleast know what I’m worth” me

“You’re priceless, no money can buy you my love. Now when am I seeing my wife to be?”

Zane

“You’re so smooth, Makhulu said we can’t engage in any sexual activities until the

wedding” me.

“There’s no such thing, we’ve paid full lobola and pregnancy damages, technically we’re married, we can have all the sex we want and I want some now” Zane

I laugh at him and he sounds annoyed. We haven’t had sex in three days and he’s already anxious, I wonder how he coped when we had our little break up.

“There is that thing called ‘self-pleasure’” me

“I’m not paying lobola for my wife and still help myself, that sounds ridiculous. I’ll come by later when my uncles leave, I’m dying here” Zane

So now that we’re getting married, he’s entitled to sex at any time he wants? Is that what he means by that? This better apply to him aswell, not that he’ll complain.

“Come before sunset so we can meet in your car” I say

“That’s my girl, eish Zazi’s car is a big inconvenience, it’s small but we’ll work something out. I can’t wait for the day we finally get to live together, this quickie business is not working for me” Zane

I laugh because he’s been complaining about how we have sex in the most awkward and uncomfortable spaces. He’s right though, I also can’t wait to have regular sex without having to hide or rush things. Our living arrangement is not making it easy for us. I somehow like the adventure and all the trouble we go through just for a 10 minute quickie. Sometimes I miss that intimacy we shared when we first had sex, it was passionate, slow and gentle. I liked that.

“We have the rest of our lives to have all sorts of fun with it, don’t worry” me

“True, see you soon Mrs Ngele-Ngele”Zane

“See you soon Mr Ngele-Ngele” me



We hang up and I continue finishing my food. My stomach is filled with so much joy and excitement, I'm going to marry the love of my life. I need to freshen up for my mini date. I leave and walk back to the kitchen.

Everyone has finished eating, they're still drinking their whiskey and the laughs are louder.

"Eeer Makoti, when is the baby coming? We want to see the little prince" the uncle with the vibe says.

"It's still early to say, maybe sometime in spring" I say.

So I assume they want a boy, this is tough, what happens if it's not a boy? Do they deny it and send it back?

"Okay, as long as you keep them coming, ooRhabele need more sons to carry on the legacy of amaHlubi" he continues

This is getting awkward and uncomfortable because I do not understand his obsession with sons. What if my child doesn't want to become King and carry on the legacy? This assumption that everyone wants to report for royal duty needs to stop, my child will be whatever she wants to be not what the council wants her to be.

I fake a smile and nod.

“We have to introduce ourselves, I am Mnikezeli, Zanemvula's uncle, I am his father's cousin. This one is Zwelitsha, my brother as you can see he doesn't do much talking, I do. And over there are, Jongikhaya and Melumzi, who are also part of amaHlubi royal council, they have been part of this family for years, they are family.” He says.

“You kids are rushing for grown people things, when I was your age I was enjoying my youth, now you want marriage and parenting, yho!” one

says, Jongikhaya, I think. He has a lazy eye and it keeps twitching the louder he gets. He has a similar vibe to Mnikezeli, they seem like the loud fun uncles who voluntarily tell their long and boring stories about their youthful years, bragging about how all the girls fought over them and all the men were jealous of them. Their faces are all the proof you need to confirm their stories. Zwelitsha, on the other hand is the silent drinker, he keeps nodding and smiling in slow motion, I don't think it's the whiskey, he probably had something else too, he's eyes look sleepy, while the other one, Melumzi, is busy fitting his tobacco in his smoking pipe, he's not even paying attention to any of them.

I don't know feel like engaging in any conversation, in fact, I need them to leave so I can freshen up for my man and the sooner they leave the quicker my man will get here.

“Have you decided on the wedding date Buhle?” my father asks.

“We haven’t decided on the exact date but we’re doing it immediately after the Festival launch” I say and he looks shocked.

“So soon? I thought you’d want to wait for the baby to arrive first” he says.

“We thought it’s best the baby arrives in a proper home, with both Zane and me” I say, he’s facial expression is worrying me, he doesn’t seem pleased by these news.

“What about graduation? Won’t it clash?” he asks.

“No, we’ll get married before graduation. We’re only doing the Xhosa traditional wedding” I say. He nods but I can see he’s worried.

He’s worried that his little Hlehle is grown and is about to become someone else’s wife and mother. He feels like he’s losing me again after

we've just reconciled and bonded. He doesn't want to lose me and honestly, I don't want to lose him, I need him now more than ever. I can't deny the guilt I'm feeling, like im abandoning him. It's growth, it makes us feel guilty when our lives take a different direction that doesn't accommodate our loved ones.

I find myself in tears, I immediately wipe them off and rush to the kitchen before my dad sees me.

"It's done Buhle, you must be relieved"  
Aunt'Kholeka says, sipping on her cup.

I am relieved, I've been caught up in getting married that I forgot I'll be moving away from my family. That soon I'll be in a place where no one calls me Buhle or Hlehle and thinking about it makes me very sad. I'm losing a part of me, a me I've known all my life and I'm starting a new journey with a new family.

“Awww don’t be sad Mzala, we’ll visit you every day in your new home” Thami tries to console me.

He’s also tipsy, everyone is having the best time except for me. I’m here sulking in depressing thoughts. I should just bath and wait for my man, only he can cheer me up now, he has what I need.

I go to the kettle and boil water. I also need to emphasize the importance of an en suite bathroom in our house plan, this vaskom business is too much admin, I’ve had it.

“Are you making tea for your in laws?” Makhulu asks jokingly.

“No ways, I’m going to bath, it’s been a long day. Besides, I think the uncles are already sorted with drinks” I say.

She smiles

“I heard you said the wedding with be in two

months time, it's close, you need to start with dressmaking and buying gifts" she says.

I'm confused by the second part

"Why am I buying gifts, aren't people suppose to be buying me gifts instead?"

"For your in laws, you have to buy them gifts, you have to buy cutlery, crockery and other utensils to use in your new home. You can't use theirs, you have to use your own. You have to buy a new bed, your makoti clothing, your khisti, blankets and everything you'll need for your new home" she says.

I'm suddenly overwhelmed by everything she just told me, so basically in the Xhosa tradition, you leave everything you had or used as a bachelorette and buy new things to use as a wife. Wow, it's a lot and it's expensive.

"What's a khisti?" I ask

"It's a storage case that we have to buy for you

to store all your new belonging in your house. Every Xhosa bride has one, mine still has all the gifts I got from my wedding and my kitchen party.” She says.

“And the makoti clothing? What kind of clothing is it? and where do I buy it?” I ask. She probably thinks I’m being stupid, I really don’t know anything about weddings, especially Xhosa traditional weddings, there’s a lot of things done.

“It’s best I show you, we’ll go to town tomorrow before shops close for the end of year weekend.” She says, she realized that there’s a lot I don’t know about what I’m about to do and explaining it seems like a hassle. I understand. I nod and go about with my vaskom business.

“Buhle, ooRhadebe are leaving” Tamkhulu’s voice fills the house from the lounge. We all walk towards the lounge for the send off. Kat is trying her level best not to appear drunk, it’s not working, she’s overdoing it, even trying to speak



Xhosa with her SeSotho accent, it's hilarious to watch.

"Thank you MaDlomo for such a beautiful lunch, we can't wait to officially have you as our own." Uncle Jongikhaya speaks, his eye is still twitching.

"I wish I can take all the credit but Makhulu and Thami were the head chefs." I say,

"Aaah thank you so much for your hospitality, amaHlubi appreciate your kindness" he says to Makhulu.

She nods and they move towards the door accompanied by my father and his troops, stubborn troops who almost ruined my plans.

I take my vaskom and head for my room.

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Zane is on his way and I have to come up with a quick lie to everyone to go see him. This is hard,

even after he paid lobola I still have to lie to go see my husband, ridiculous.

My father and his friend are still enjoying their whiskey, Tamkhulu and Dlamini have left. All the females are cleaning up in the kitchen.

“uuhm, I need to meet Zane to brief him about the festival press conference” I say.

Makhulu doesn't buy this lie one bit.

“You don't have to lie to see your husband, we're not kids here, don't fool us please” she says looking away.

I'm actually lost for words right now, I don't know what to say, just standing in the middle of the kitchen with my jaw hanging.

“Uhm okay, so it's okay if I go with him a few minutes?” I ask, I'm still confused, did she give me permission to go or did she call me out for lying

“Buhle go see your husband, be back before sunset” she says with her back turned on me, she’s busy with washing the dishes.

I’m smiling like an idiot now. I look through the kitchen window, he’s here.

I walk to the lounge.

“Where are you going?” my father asks with a straight face.

Are you kidding me?!

“Uhm, I need to see Zane about work things, I’ll be back now” I say, he nods and continues with his drinking.

Whew! I rush to the car and we drive off.

“Imagine having to lie about where I’m going with my husband, we should get married soon, I say the weekend after the festival, I can’t take any of this anymore” I say.

He smiles widely

“I am a hundred percent for that, let’s do this” he says, kissing the back of my hand.

We’re parked at our favorite spot close to the river and after what was meant to be a quickie but stretched out a bit longer, we lay naked at the back of a Golf GTi, my body is rested on his as he moves his fingers up and down my spine. I could live like this forever.

We’re now talking about how we want our wedding to be like and incorporating our own twist to the traditional Xhosa ceremony. I still want to say my vows to him and I want him to do the same, so we decided to have that included as well as the signing of the certificate. I want everything to be done in one day. So we’ll have the vows and the signing as the first session then Zane’s family will take over the second session.

“You’re everything to me Buhle, thank you for your fierce and unconditional love, it saved me”

he says, planting kisses on my forehead.

“Thank you for your healing and generous love, it saved me too” I say with a tear dropping from my eye to his cheek.

He pulls my head and rests it on his chest, he knows where my home is and he knows when I need it the most. I feel safe here, it really is home.

.....

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Insert 22 (Part B)

After the shopping with Makhulu I decided to drop her home and some of our purchases,

fetch my laptop and head to the lodge, I need to start looking for my P.A and an events planner. With the limited time frame, I need to find them today and the first place I'll look is online recruiters. The staff told me Zane is at the gallery site and hasn't had lunch, he is such a workaholic. He enjoys hard labor more than seating in his office and doing admin, that's why he has me handling all of that side of the business, he only handles the finances, he's really good at it.

I've been going through potential candidates for my P.A online and only a few are willing to relocate, others don't have much experience.

Oh wait, this one is willing to relocate and has more experience.

She has a great resume, she has worked with events before, she's willing to relocate and is currently unemployed, I think I've found my P.A, let me send her an email, or maybe let me call

her.

“Hello, am I speaking to Yolanda Mbona?” me

“Hello, yes this is her. How can I help you” her.

She sounds so polite and well spoken.

“I’m Buhlebethu Khepu, the co-founder of Khumba Kulture Festival, I saw your resume online, while I was searching candidates for a P.A post I have, I would like to invite you for an interview if you’re interested. I will send you the details of the job description” I say.

“Oh my goodness, thank you so much, I’d be delighted to meet with you, it’s in Khumba right? when is the interview?” she sounds very happy.

“Yes it’s in Khumba, I need it to be as soon as possible, I’m very swamped and I need someone who will start immediately. I know it’s the holidays and all but immediately after new years” I say.

“I’m free, I don’t have any plans, I really need a job, I can start right now if needed.” She says.

She’s really excited and eager but I can’t help feeling guilty for taking her away from her family during the holidays even though I could use with some help right now.

“Uhm, is tomorrow too soon for the interview? If it’s too soon please say so, I know this is all short notice” I say

“No it’s perfect madam, don’t worry, just give me the time and place, I’ll be there. I’ve waited too long for this kind of opportunity” she says.

Oh my gosh, am I lucky or what? To find someone who’s this willing and ready to work.

“Okay then, 9am at the Khumba Lodge, I’ll email you directions. Thank you so much for considering this and I also apologise for the inconvenience” I say

“No madam, I should be thanking you for this



opportunity, finding a job is really hard out here, so getting calls from jobs I didn't even apply for is a huge blessing. I'm truly grateful. Thank you so much. I'll see you tomorrow" she sounds so happy and grateful.

I'm touched by her willingness and appreciation, I think I've just found her, I might as well hire her. I mean, she's everything I need, her resume fits exactly what I'm looking for.

"Thank you, see you tomorrow. Bye" I hang up the phone.

Now I should send her the job description and the directions. I also need to draft some questions for the interview, which is kind of useless because she's already what I need but I have to be professional here.

There's a knock on the door.

"Come in" I say.

The young man from yesterday walks in,

Luzuko.

“Afternoon mem” he greets

“Afternoon, please call me Buhle” I say, he nods awkwardly.

“We’ve noticed you’ve been in here for a while, would you like something to eat or drink?” he says,

“I had the biggest lunch hey, thank you for checking up on me though” I respond

“No fruit salad or any snack, the kitchen staff is concerned” he says.

I guess I should just let them bring me what they have because he doesn’t look like he’s leaving here without an order.

“Oh well, if you insist, I’ll have a fruit salad” I say. He smiles and nods.

“Okay mem..uhm, Buhle” he says and leaves.

Perks of being the bosses lover, staff wants to

randomly spoil you with food and snacks, I could get used to this but calling me mem, I won't tolerate. I'm younger than most of these people. Surely they can see that.

I continue with drafting the questions when Zane works in, sweaty and dusty as usual.

"This office suites you" he says, with a naughty smile.

I know exactly what he's thinking and it's not going to happen.

"My office is almost done, that's where I'll be working at, don't get any funny ideas" I respond.

"You're going to leave me here alone?" he says

"You're hardly in here, you enjoy being dusty and sweaty more than making calls and responding to emails." I say.

"You know me too well. Hi my love" he says reaching for a kiss.

“Hello my love” I kiss him back

Nothing is sexier than a black man in construction work suit with sweat and dust. And his smile just melts my heart, I chose well, I don't have to worry about this baby's features. All is well in that department.

“Don't look at me like that, I might insert another Ozayo in there” he says.

“I can't help it, when my man is this fine, I really can't help looking.” I say, he laughs, almost blushing.

“Well, you have the rest of your life to do that. What are you busy with here?” he says

“Good news, I've found my P.A, I've invited her for an interview tomorrow, here, hope you don't mind” I say.

“So quick? How did you find her? Sure you can use the office, it's yours too you know” he says.

“I found her resume online, she fits the criteria perfectly and she was so excited when I told her about the job interview. And she’s willing to start immediately” I say, I’m really excited about having someone to help me with everything, pregnancy brain is starting to kick in, I need a second brain.

“I’m glad you found someone, this means you’ll take it easy right?” he says,

Ugh, Zane needs to relax a bit, I’m pregnant not sick.

“I can’t dump everything on her and you know how obsessed I am with this project, there’s no way I’m leaving everything up to someone else, my vision, my responsibility, but she’ll be great help, especially when we’re away” I say.

“Speaking of which, Thabiso called, he emailed the details of the wedding, they’ve book the entire estate so we just need to confirm arrival

time so they can secure accommodation for us”  
he says

Oh wow, this is bigger than I thought and fancy,  
I’m really excited.

“Okay, we’ll get there on Friday, during the day,  
so just set 16:00pm with them. I need for Zazi  
to make me that dress already, the lady I usually  
go to for traditional clothes won’t cut it, this is  
going to be fancy and I need to look the part.  
What are you wearing?”

He looks blank, he lifts his shoulders carelessly.  
Don’t tell me this guy doesn’t own a suit.

“You do have a suit right?” I ask

“It probably doesn’t fit, I wore it once, matric  
ball”

Jesus take the wheel!

“You’re joking right? How are you so relaxed like  
this? What are you planning on wearing

Zanemvula?” I’m actually angry right now.

“I haven’t thought about it, I’ll go get something”  
he says, he really isn’t bothered

“What are you going to get? Do you know your kind of fit, what shirt to wear, the tie, shoes, do you even know where to start looking? I can’t believe you’re this relaxed” I say, how can someone be this relaxed about something so important.

“I don’t know if it’s the hormones or what, but this shouting is unnecessary. I’ll get the suit, you’ve already offered to help with the shopping” he says, he’s serious

“Don’t push me with that hormone thing please, you have to take these things seriously, you can’t rock up on peoples events dressed like that”

He looks hurt, I’ve hurt him.

“I’m a village man, I grew up here, this is all I

know. We don't wear suits and smell like potpourri, you won't find that in a village man. I'm not going to change, that's who I am, do you have a problem with that?" he says.

I take a deep breathe. This went too far too quick.

"I don't, I need for you to have options to choose from for special occasions, every man should at least have one special suit, even village men. They deserve that, to look fancy at times too. I love you just the way you are my love and I don't want you to change one bit. I love the village man in you, it's who I fell in love with, I wouldn't trade you even if Bill Gates paid me to" I say with a smile, he appreciates it. His eyes are locked to mine as he takes in every word I just said.

He walks towards me and pushes my chair against the wall, he lifts me and places me on the desk, spreading my legs apart.



“I love you so much Buhlebethu. We’ll go buy the suit” he whispers on my ear as he kisses me down my neck.

“or Zazi can make you one, a unique suit for the King” I say as he continues with his seductive kisses and gestures.

He replies “mmmh” and continues kissing me.

He’s rubbing his hand against my breasts and pulling me closer with the other one. He is rougher than usual, grabbing my butt tighter, biting and sucking my neck, his energy is nothing I’ve seen before, I’ve never met this Zane. His hand lifts my dress and rubs against my pelvis, he feels my moisture and he roughly pulls my panty down. He kisses me on the lips with his eyes fixed to mine, they are red and dreamy. He looks sexy, I want him as much as he wants me. I pull down his pants and his erection appears. He pulls my dress over my thighs and bends me over the desk. My face

lays on the vanished wood as he enters from behind. I feel the excitement spreading all over my body, he thrusts harder and deeper. He's hand is on my butt, pinching, it could be painful but the pleasure overpowers the pain. I don't know what got to him and I'm not complaining but I've never seen him like this, powerful and in control. He lays his body over mine, inserting his erection deeper as he hugs me on my shoulders. I feel all of him inside me, moving in circles in all the right places, my knees are giving in to the pleasure, he's sucking on my neck and back, harder with every thrust. He whispers he loves me in my ear continuously. I feel my body about to explode, I let out a loud scream, exhaling as I lose control of my body, explosions of satisfaction run through my body. He groans loudly behind my ear, and let's go of all his weight over me as I feel his warm pleasure juices explode inside me. He's very heavy but I don't have strength to speak or

stand. We both saty still for a moment, satisfied and out of breathe.

What just happen, who was this person and what did he do to my man. It's like something took over, we always have great sex but he's always gentle and considerate, now he was rough, loud and dominant.

He lifts me and lays me on the sofa, he lays next to me. A part of me wants to ask him but I can't find a proper way of asking him without sounding like I'm offending him, you know men and their egos. My butt hurts a bit from the spanking and my neck is on fire from all the sucking, I still haven't recovered from the great pleasure I got, I hope none of the staff heard our screams, I couldn't hold it in, it was too much to handle.

"Did you eat" he says, catching his breath

"I had a heavy lunch with Makhulu, Luzuko,

offered to bring me fruit salad” I say. He lifts his head and stares at me

“Luzuko?” he says,

“Yes, the short one, they said I’ve been working too hard and they were worried” I say.

“Mmmh, that’s generous of him. Well did they bring it?”he asks, he seems surprised with Luzuko’s efforts

“No, they probably saw you come in and wanted to respect our space. Have you eaten?” I say.

“Let me call them, I haven’t eaten and I’m really hungry” he says, grabbing his phone

“Especially after all this tension you released, you need to regain all your energy” I say, he kisses my forehead and smiles.

“Please bring Buhle’s fruit salad and my regular lunch and juice please” he’s speaking on the phone.

“No, apple juice, and water please, Thanks Lu” he continues and drops the call.

“Let me get dressed before Lu gets here. Can I keep this?” he says holding up my red lace underwear.

“Now I’m going to walk around with no panty?” I ask, he’s enjoying that

“You should do that more often, makes my job easier, no lace restrictions” he says with a naughty smile.

“You’re a nasty man Zane and I find myself loving that” I say, watching him put on his cloths.

He’s all mine, to have for the rest of my life.

Luzuko walks in and hands Zane our food, he’s avoiding eye contact with both of us, that’s weird. Did they hear our noise, surely we weren’t that loud, Zane’s office is on the other side of the Lodge, there’s a huge hallway between the

kitchen and the office. But his face is really making me uncomfortable, like they heard us.

He hands Zane the food and leaves.

“I think they heard us” I say. He looks confused

“I doubt, we’re on the other side, it’s impossible. Lu is always shy” he says, handing me my salad.

He seats next to me and eats his sandwich.

“He definitely heard us, he wasn’t this shy earlier, He even smiled. I swear they heard us. we were loud Zane” I say.

He’s not even bothered.

“Or maybe he has a crush on you, Lu doesn’t smile, he walks around with his head down and does his job, that’s all.” He says and carries on with his sandwich.

Agh there’s no such thing, this guy knows something and he was embarrassed to even look at us, I can’t believe Zane is not bothered

by this.

I proceed to eat my fruit salad with my feet rested on his lap, he keeps rubbing my ankles, he knows how much I enjoy that.

“ We bought everything for the wedding, what’s left is our wedding outfits, Zazi has to start on them immediately after the ones we’re wearing at Sinazo’s wedding. I want us to wear matching umbaco pieces. I’ll have him make a modern version of my mother’s wedding dress.”  
I say.

I think he likes this idea, he’s smiling and chewing on his food.

“Great, so who bought all those things, sounds like a lot of money spent” he says

“I did, Makhulu wanted to help but I couldn’t let her pay for my wedding, she said I can’t buy my own khisti, she has to, so that’s all she’s getting me. it wasn’t that much, we got everything,

makoti attires, the gifts and other things for like R8000” I say.

He’s eyes widen when he hears that amount

“That’s a lot of money, hope it didn’t dent your bank balance.” He says, looking worried.

“It’s nothing actually, I’ll survive. Finish up, I need to get home to sort everything out. Abdul will deliver everything if he hasn’t arrived already” I say.

The money topic is a very sensitive one between us, he doesn’t want me spending my own, he really doesn’t know the state of my bank account but in this case there’s nothing he can do about it, he can’t buy me gifts to give to his family. He’s planning and paying for everything in the wedding, I feel bad for not being able to help, I also don’t know where his bank balance is standing. I worry sometimes but he seems unbothered about it.



“Done, one more kiss then we can go. I miss these lips when I’m alone here.” he says, moving towards me and kissing me.

“mmmh, okay, enough, let’s go, it’s getting late. I have curfew remember” I say pushing him back, if I give in, we might find ourselves naked again.

He takes my hand, carries my work bag and leads us to the car.

The staff is peeping through the conference room, I swear they heard us. It explains this behavior I’m seeing. Zane is not even paying attention to them, he’s whistling whatever song and going about his business.

He opens my door and we drive off to my house. Abdul just delivered the goods, I forgot we bought so many things, it’s insane.

“That’s a lot of stuff, please ask Kat and the others to help you, you can’t sort all of that alone, rest, remember. I need my wife and my

baby to be healthy and beautiful” he says.

“Right now all I need is my bed, today was exhausting” I say.

He looks impressed by my response.

“How I wish I could cuddle with my hand on those breasts, they keep getting bigger by day” he says with a naughty smile looking at my chest.

“You never just cuddle, it always leads to something greater. We’ll talk on the phone, don’t forget to fetch me early tomorrow morning, the interview is at 9am” I say.

“Okay my love, I’ll pick you up at 8am. I love you” he says

“That’s fine, I love you too” I kiss him and go inside the house.

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Insert 23

Kat and Aunt'kholeka helped with sorting out all the things we bought today, we've stored everything in the storeroom and all my makoti clothing is packed in my wardrobe. Makhulu made me soup, which turned into a mess, I threw it all out. I think Ozayo likes meat, every time I eat purred food, she rejects it but if I eat meat, she wants more of it. She is her father's child, I'm going to be in trouble with this one.

I took a short nap after my throw up session and woke up to finish off preparations for the interview tomorrow. Which I'm very anxious and excited about, I really wish she agrees to work for me, I'm in desperate need for assistance

right now. I hope that the fact that she will have to work in a village doesn't put her off. It's really hard to find someone who is willing to relocate to Khumba.

"Don't worry, she'll take the job. With what you've told me, she needs the job" Kat say, painting her toe nails.

"I hope so too, I really need someone to start as soon as possible or else I will lose my mind with all these events happening in such a short space of time" I say.

"And you really need to take it easy, anxiety is not good for the baby, especially now that you're off your medication. Maybe you should talk to your therapist. You've been doing great though, keep at it sis" she says, looking proud.

"I'm trying sis, it's not easy but I've been at peace lately." I say.

Thami interrupts our conversation.

“Mzala, I owe you, thank you, thank you” he says, hugging me tight.

“You sure do.” I say.

“Let me go finish packing, I’ll see you in the morning.” he says.

He’s so excited. I take it he spoke with Makhulu and she’s agreed for him to go.

“Don’t forget to bring us gifts” I say as he rushes off to the passage, not even replying.

He’s mind is already on vacation with his man.

Kat reads her book while I doze off. She still sleeps with me and I still haven’t asked her why, I think that would be rude but out of pure curiosity, I’d love to know.

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It’s 8:15am and my nerves are on an all time high, one would swear I’m the interviewee. I’ve been going over my questions, doubting and

editing them, I really want her for this job and I don't want to jeopardize that by asking questions like 'how was your relationship with your former colleagues'

She'll be working with me here and that's all that matters, well that's if she'll accept the job offer.

I've asked the lodge staff to make this place as fancy and presentable as possible, I don't want her to be discouraged by the surrounding of her potential work space. Khumba is a beautiful village but no one really wants to work full time in a place surrounded with mountains, dusty roads and bad cell phone service. People prefer the fast paced, glamorous city life than villages, so it is very important for the staff to present the lodge in a sophisticated manner as possible.

Zane thinks I'm over thinking it and telling me I should relax, he doesn't know how desperate I

am to get a P.A as soon as possible. He picked me up on the time we agreed on and he dropped me off at the lodge, rushing to the gallery to meet with electricians. The outside is done and they're busy with the inside, at least one of our projects is running smoothly.

There's a knock on the door, I look at the time, it's 8:45am, it must be her.

And she's punctual, I like her.

Okay, relax. Breathe in, breathe out.

"Come in" I say.

The door swings open and Luzuko peeps his head through the half opened door.

"She's here" he say.

"Let her in please" I say.

I can hear the clicks of her heel getting louder. I take another deep breath and the door swings wide open.

She's wearing a navy blue slim tight dress and a white blazer. Her braids are tied back, face is fresh with no make-up. Her smile is welcoming as she walks closer to my desk, reaching out for a handshake.

"Good morning Ms Khephu" she says, gracefully and confidently.

"Morning Yolanda, take a seat" I say.

She sits and crosses her leg, her shoulders broadly stand carrying her head high.

She didn't come to play.

"Nice to finally meet you and again, I'm sorry for any inconveniences I've caused, this really was short notice" I say.

"Not at all, I'm just happy I got this interview."  
She says, sincerely.

Okay, let's start.

"Okay, can you give a brief review of your



resume, highlighting traits that will make you a suitable candidate for this vacancy” I say.

She smiles, takes a breath and answers. I have never seen someone who speaks with a smile on their face. Her voice is calm and her eyes are locked to mine. She didn't come to play. She's from a small village, Qenqe, which is an hour away from here. She obtained her Degree in Public Relations followed by her honors, majoring Media & Communication. She got an internship in an events company, which ended within 10 months instead of the promised 12 because the company was declared bankrupt. She then moved on and found a part time job at a local radio station. She has done research on this project, she has all the facts and she is confidently claiming this vacancy. I'm impressed. I don't think there's anything I need to know, this is her.

I don't think any of the following questions

matter, she is the real deal.

“Okay, Yolanda. When can you start?” I ask.

Her face lights up.

“Now, today, I’ve been waiting for a whole year for this moment” She says, with excitement.

Oh wow. This is exactly what I wanted.

“We have to first discuss the nature of your job. You’ll be working with me, all the time. I will hire an events planner for the launch but you will report to me. When the art gallery is done, which might be next week, we’ll work from there. You will manage my diary, you will help with correspondence, calls, emails, post and other forms of communication about the festival.” I say.

She’s nodding and smiling as I talk.

“It helps that you did PR, that’s my part of the project, my partner focuses on the finance and

other operations related parts, you'll meet him soon. Let's talk accommodation, I don't think you'll be able to commute everyday, do you have relatives here in Khumba?"

She stares blankly and shakes her head.

"I'll find a place to rent" she says.

"Uhm, okay, I'll speak to my partner about that too, otherwise, I'm impressed. Welcome to the team" I say

She's smiles widely and I can see her face tremble with emotions, her eyes are watery.

Oh gosh, now she's going to make me cry.

"I'm sorry, I've been applying for an entire year, no responses, no interviews. I was starting to lose hope. Your call came at the right time.

Thank you so much, Ms Khephu. I won't let you down" she says, wiping tears on her cheeks.

If only she knew that I'm as happy as she is. I

can finally breath with her on my team.

“Can I have the copies of your documents, I’ll draw up a contract and you’ll sign it when you start. I’m thinking, the second week of January. I won’t be around on the first weekend.” I say.

“No problem, I’m really grateful madam, thank you so much.” she says.

Do I really look old, why do people keep calling me madam, first Luzuko, the staff, now her. oh gosh.

“Please call me Buhle and don’t thank me yet, there’s a lot of work that needs to be done in a short space of time. I’ve done most of the admin work and PR stuff, there’s a press conference coming up on the week you start” I say.

I go through her documents, she’s actually older than me, she’s 25. She passed really well, so many distinctions. I’m impressed by everything,

I chose well.

“I’m ready to work.” She says with a smile.

“The salary and other employee benefits will be included there, you must also bring in your tax details.” I say.

Her eyes widen a bit, she looks surprised by the tax part. Of course she’ll be taxed, what is she expecting.

“If you don’t mind me asking, how much will I get paid” she says,

“Your starting salary will be R15 000 per month” I say,

Her eyeballs are popping out, her mouth is wide open. she’s really shocked.

“R15 000 madam?” she says

Is it too small?

“It’s only your starting salary, it will increase as time goes by, especially if the festival

succeeds.” I say.

“I’m not complaining Ms Khephu, it’s just that I’ve never earned that much money before. I’m used to stipends not more than R5000. I’m very grateful, Thank you so much.” she says, in tears again.

I really had a mini heart attack there, thinking she wants more. Honestly, I would’ve given her more. I’m that desperate.

“Buhle... call me Buhle please. I think we’re done here. I’m looking forward to working with you.” I say.

This was short and successful as I wished for. I knew she was the one.

She smiles widely, she does that a lot.

“I’m excited, I can’t wait to start.” She replies.

There’s a knock at the door.

“Come in” I say.

Luzuko walks in. What now?

“Madam, do you need anything? Breakfast.” He says.

I’m so sick of this mem, madam business. I’m annoyed, I’m almost their age, if not younger.

Ugh man.

“uhm, sorry Buhle. The prince said I should come check if you’ve eaten” he must’ve noticed my reaction.

I almost roll my eyes. So Zane is the one sending his staff to feed me. it’s ridiculous.

“Oh well, I’ll have granola with strawberry yogurt, pancakes with syrup and cream, pineapple juice. Yolanda what would you like?” I say

They both look at me like I’m crazy. It’s not me, it’s this child.

“Scones and tea will be fine for me” Yolanda says politely. Luzuko nods and leaves.

I can't help but feel insecure about her order. Now I'm out here looking like a pig, ordering all sorts of food.

Zane should stop babying me. the sooner we move to our new work space, the better.

"So since we'll be working together, it's best we get to know each other better" I say.

We will be stuck together for the longest time, its best we get comfortable with eachother now.

"I'm from Qenqe, I stay with my Grandmother and two younger sisters." She says,

"Nice, I also stay with my grandmother. My aunt, and my two cousins also stay with us." I say.

"Do you have siblings, if you don't mind me asking?" she asks.

"No, I don't have biological siblings, I'm an only child but my father is remarrying, now I have a step sister." I say,



She looks shy and uncomfortable but her smile is always present.

I get where it's all coming from though and I should stop pushing her and let it flow for itself.

Luzuko walks in with a tray of our breakfast.

"Thank you" I say and he leaves.

"There are so many upcoming events in a short space of time, next weekend we're going to a wedding in the Cape, then the launch, then my wedding, then the King's inauguration, then my graduation, my father's wedding. I'm just glad you'll be around to share the work load." I say.

"Woaw, that's a lot of events, and congratulations on the wedding and graduation. I'm glad I'm the one helping." She says.

She's really a nice girl. Genuine and smart too, she seems focused and driven. She's the type that knows what she wants and goes after it. She's exactly what I need around here.

There's a half knock and the door swings open.

It's Zane, he's cleaner than previous days.

He greets and shakes Yolanda's hand, she greets back with her smile.

"I see Lu has obeyed my instructions" he say, walking to my side of the desk.

This one wants me to gain as much fat as possible

"Did you leave him with a choice?" I say.

He smiles

"Uhm, Yolanda, this is my partner in the project. Zanemvula Ngele-Ngele" I say.

She smiles enthusiastically with excitement.

She's acting like everyone who meets Zane, the Mighty Prince of Khumba, they adore him.

"Nice to meet you sir" she says, still smiling.

She needs to tone it down. He's not a celebrity

or something.

“Zane, this is Yolanda Mbona, she’s my P.A” I say.

“Pleasure to meet you sisi. Finally I have someone to help her, she’s been slaving alone and she doesn’t need all this pressure.”he say.

He’s being dramatic and making me seem like I’m some fragile object that needs to be handled with care.

“Please don’t start. Yolanda will start the week after Sinazo’s wedding. What day are we coming back again?” I ask,

“Monday, afternoon, so she can start on Tuesday. We have to enjoy that break because after it, is an uphill race. No resting” he says winking at me.

He needs to control himself, it’s no longer me and him now in this office. We have to act professional.

Yolanda looks puzzled

“Well, Tuesday it is then, oh and accommodation, are there any empty chalets? She stays in Qenqe, she can’t commute everyday” I say.

He’s silent for a while. He reaches his phone, texting.

“Okay, there are no chalets available but there is an unoccupied staff cottage at the back of the lodge, it’s nothing much, one bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and living area. She can use it” he say.

Oh great. It’s done. She’s officially ours.

“Thank you so much sir.” She say.

“I’m trying to make things easier for my partner here, she needs you” he says.

He’s right, I need her more than she needs me.

“Let me go get my breakfast, it was nice meeting you sisi, welcome to the Kulture team”

he says.

He leans forward and kisses my bald head and leaves.

This guy has no shame. I need to teach him how to be professional.

Yolanda looks shocked by Zane's gesture.

"He's not just my business partner, he's my fiancé too" I say.

Her reaction resembles that of a child watching magicians in a circus. She's amazed, almost doesn't believe how it's possible.

"You're marrying the prince of Khumba? The soon to be King of Khumba?" she says.

Her eyes all out, staring me as though waiting for me to say, it's all a joke.

"Yes, he'll be my husband in two months time" I say sipping on my juice.

Her reaction is something I'm used to. It's the

same reaction I get when I walk with Zane. People here are so possessive of him, they feel like they own him and can also dictate his ways. My relationship with him changed that and some villagers were not fond of that, especially the young woman.

“You’re lucky, many girls would kill to have a husband like him” she says, her smile narrows.

I think she’s one of Zane’s many fans who’d rather have him stay single with the hopes that one day he’ll choose them. Shame, he’s taken and never returning.

“I’m lucky but he’s luckier for having me as his wife to be” I say.

She smiles and continues with her tea.

“Thank you for this opportunity and the breakfast.” She says finishing off her tea.

“Thank you for accepting my offer. Looking forward to working with you.” I say.

She gets up and shakes my hand.

“Let me walk you out.” I say and we walk towards the hallway.

Zane is carrying a tray full of food.

I can smell the bacon as he gets closer, I grab it from his plate.

“And then? Didn’t you have breakfast?” he says

“It’s for Oza” I say biting on the bacon strip.

He laughs and shakes his head

“Goodbye sisi, enjoy the last days of unemployment, see you next year.” He says.

“Thank you, enjoy yours too” she says with her wide smile again.

“See you next year. I’ll email you everything I’ve done, just to speed you up on things. Have a lovely weekend” I say as we reach the door.

“I’ll read up on it. Thanks again. Bye” she says

and walks towards the gate.

My heart is jumping for joy. I got exactly what I wanted and she seems like nice person.

I'm singing and dancing as I walk back to the office, Zane is smiling as I enter with my performance.

"I've never heard you sing or seen you dance" he say.

"It's my happy song, she's perfect baby. She's the one and I'm happy." I say.

"Not as happy as I am though, I was really starting to worry about the workload and all the upcoming events. Now I can have you all to myself." He says pulling me towards him and I seat on his lap.

Is there anything he thinks about besides sex when he's around me.

"Oh about that, you need to keep your hands to



yourself. We have to act professional around her, so no more kissing and grabbing boobs. Okay?!" I say.

He doesn't like this. He frowns and rests his head on my breasts.

"Are we clear on that?" I ask again.

He's mumbling, I can't hear him.

"Zane, promise me" I say.

"Mmkay" he says rubbing his hands on my stomach.

I don't think he fully commits to this request, his response is just to shut me up.

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## Insert 24

Wrapped in the arms of the man I'll be spending the rest of my life with, warm and safe in my new home, his chest. The excitement of the last day of the year is chaotic, children are running around with burning steel wools, yes the one we use to scrape our pots with. They burn tyres and create a big barn fire in the clear bushes, singing and dancing around the fire. Adults are gathered on their front stoops watching from a distance, laughing and drinking ginger beer and hops. It's a chaotic celebration, a joyous night.

Zane booked a room at the lodge for us, to spend this night together. Earlier we had dinner at the restaurant with my grandmother, Aunt'Kholeka, Asakhe, Thandi and the boys. Kat left with dad to be with Mam'Gloria. The dinner was filled with laughter, love and a bond that cannot be broken. Thandi shared Zane's

childhood stories while Makhulu told mine, some I'd never heard before.

Now as we lay skin on skin, talking about our house plan and location, listening to the sweet ballads of Sipho Gumede in the background, I'm starting to imagine how the rest of my life will be like. If this will be us everynight for the rest of our lives, I want it.

"Why are you looking at me like that? Like I'm a snack or something?" he says.

The light from the candles shines on his skin, making it appear bronze.

"You're a beautiful man, I wish our children have clear skin like yours, little sun kissed goddess" I say, he's trying so hard not to blush.

"No one has ever told me that, that I'm beautiful. Are men suppose to be called that, beautiful?" he say

"You're not just any man, you're my man and I'm

calling you beautiful” I say.

He smiles widely, flashing his teeth.

“I like it when you claim me, calling me yours. Makes me feel like I belong” he says running his finger on my face, down my cheeks and around my mouth.

“You belong to me and I, to you. And that will be us for the rest of our lives. No one and nothing has power over that” I say, leaning forward for my lips to meet his. Warm and soft, we kiss. Long and passionate kisses. His hands rubbing on my back down my spine, all the way to my butt. He squeezes it tight. I can feel his erection develop from between my thighs, I split them open, inserting him inside me.

He breathes loudly as I move on top of him. I move his hands from my butt and place them over his head, holding on to them as I grind slowly. The noise outside is getting louder as

the night comes to an end. I begin to move faster, still holding his hands above his head, he's trying to move them but he has lost control. The countdown begins. He begins moving in circles inside me, he's enjoying it but cannot move freely. I want him to feel what he made me feel the day he bend me over the desk. I want to torture him.

"Buhle please" he's begging, whispering and almost exhausted.

His eyes are barely opened. He's such a puppy. I move deeper and slower, up and down. I'm in control and he's not loving it.

5....4...3....2....1..... the crowd outside is screaming.

"aaah" he exhales, loudly, moving his lower body closer to me.

"Happy New Year my love" I say as I collapse on his chest.

He is sweaty and hugging me tightly. I plant small kisses on his sweaty body, his heart beats faster. He keeps looking at me and smiling, almost laughing. If he had the energy, he would speak. I slide slowly and rest next to him.

He moves his hands around my waist, pulling me closer with the biggest smile.

“Are you trying to kill me?” he finally speaks. Oh so he knows how I felt that day.

“I was just returning the favor” I say, he pulls his eyebrows together.

Now he’s going to pretend like nothing happened.

“Your office” I say.

He raises them up and smiles.

“You told me you loved me as I am, that you’d never change me. That moment you made me feel whole, like all I’ve been fighting for these

past years, didn't go to waste. I'm sorry if I hurt you but I couldn't control the love and appreciation I felt from you, it was immeasurable" he says rubbing on my face

Of course it hurt but it was also passionate and pleasing. It was not our regular love making, it was far more intimate and meaningful, I felt the message he was telling me, it makes sense now.

"I'm not complaining, you just caught me off guard. I understand, and I hope you do too. You're mine" I say.

He really like the sound of that. He's squinting eyes and his wide smile validate that.

I turn my back on him and he hugs me close to him from behind, whispering sweet things in my ear while he rubs his hands on my stomach. The fireworks and the moon light up the room while our feet engage in intimate dancing.

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I'm having a cup of tea and scones with Thandi at the lodge, as she shares with me possible baby names.

"Likhanyise ihlabathi lamaHlubi," she says with excitement in her eyes.

"Uhm, all of that or just the Likhanyise part? I don't want my child to keep repeating grade R for not being able to spell her name properly. That's a whole sentence Thandi." I say, raising my concern, she's laughing.

"Of course not the entire thing. When you name a child you don't just give any name, it has to have a meaning, the name carries the child's purpose, their destiny. Their name becomes a crown they wear and as the first of its generation, the name needs to be a representation of its destiny for the Kingdom of amaHlubi." She says and I get it, nodding to her



statement

“No wonder Zane kept insisting that we name the baby in one of his great gran’s names, it’s inspirational and all but I am not naming my child Sigcawu, sorry, not happening.” I say and Thandi laughs hard, almost choking on her tea.

“Or Manzezulu, that’s his great great grandfathers name. I know those names come with a lot of dignity but they’re not for these times. Your child will have a hard time making friends.” She says and we laugh.

It feels so good being in Thandi’s presence, I sometimes wish that she was Zane’s biological mother instead of that fire breathing monster of a Queen. Thandi is kind, she’s loving and everything that comes out of her mouth doesn’t intend on hurting anyone. I’m agreeing to marrying Zane, knowing well that his biological mother hates me enough to have me killed. Every time I think about it, I always struggle to

sleep, thinking about the danger I am putting myself in, all for love. what if love isn't enough, to protect me from her? All these thoughts suddenly shift my mood and I feel the weight on my heart.

"What's wrong Buhle?" Thandi asks, noticing the sudden sadness covering my face.

"Should I be worried about Zane's mom? And please be honest with me." I say and her body language changes. She takes a deep sigh before responding.

"She likes things happening her way and she will do whatever it takes to get it. All of these things she does out of hurt and anger, it's deeper than what you see." She says

"What do you mean?" I ask, she shakes her head.

"It's complicated but everything she does is not to hurt you or Zane but she's just angry about

things that have happened in her past, she needs help. It's not easy" I cannot believe she's siding with that witch

"She tried to kill me Thandi, she sent a group of men to attack Thami and his friends, what do you mean she's not trying to hurt us? We all have scars from our pasts but we don't go around trying to get people killed." I'm angry and I find myself shouting.

"Buhle, relax. I'm not trying to defend her but it's not as simple as you think." She says.

"I think it's very simple and I get the message loud and clear Thandi, I will never be safe in Zane's house and by what you're saying, I'll have no one to run to either." I say and get up, walking away from our table. Why do I keep putting myself in these situations, thinking everyone has my back. I can't believe she sides with that monster after everything that she has done to me and my family. My anger has

reduced me to tears as I walk out of the lodge.

“Buhle wait!” I hear Zane’s voice screaming behind me.

“What’s going on? the staff said they saw you storming out of the restaurant crying. where’s Thandi?” he finally catches up on me, he stands in front of me, eyes wandering around my teary eyes.

“Zane, I’m calling off the wedding.” I say, unable to hold back the tears.

“Buhle, no baby. Tell me what’s wrong and I’ll fix it. you cant do this to us.” he says, begging.

“You can’t fix it Zane, who were we fooling, thinking your mother will be okay with this union. She hates me and will do anything to get rid of me, it’s beyond your power. Thandi made it clear to me that things will never change and I just have to accept them as they are.” I say

“I told you I’d protect you from her, she won’t do

anything. I'll make sure of it." he assures me.

"I just want to go home Zane, please move." I say, walking past him.

"So you're going to give up just like that, after everything we've been through. I love you Buhlebethu and I want to spend the rest of my life with you and my child. I want you and if it means neglecting my family who's against us then that's what I'll do." He's shouting, close to tears as I walk away from him. people walking on the street stop to look at us.

"You know how I feel about that, I know how it is to grow up without a family. Can't you see that we're forcing things here Zane? It's not going to work." I say, tears racing down my cheeks.

"You are my family now, you are what I want Buhle. these people can keep their throne, I don't want it if I can't have you." He says,

pointing at the crowd that has gathered around us.

“Let’s all go inside” Thandi appears from nowhere

“No Thandi, I want these people to know that I will not be King of amaHlubi if can’t have Buhle as my Queen. I don’t care about the throne and what my family thinks, especially my mother.” He says and the crowd mumbles in disbelief.

“Okay, you’re frustrated I understand, let’s finish this inside please.” Thandi says and I’m just standing, crying. I walk closer to Thandi and Zane follows behind us.

We make our way to the office, Zane is still fuming.

“I know both of you are upset but you can’t hang your personal business for the whole village to see.” Thandi says.

“Zane is the one who started yelling out of

control” I say

“You’re calling off the wedding Buhle, what did you want me to do, laugh and do nothing while watching the love of my life give up on us.” he says, still shouting.

“You’re calling off the wedding? Buhle, you can’t do that. work things out, please.” Thandi says, walking closer to me.

“How Thandi, i’m scared. this whole things is scary for me and I don’t know if I want to go through with it. I love Zane with all my heart but...”

“I’m here for you Buhle, always have and always will be. I will never let anyone hurt you and my child. How many times do you want me to say that, I love you and I don’t see myself surviving without you. Please don’t do this to us.” He says, kneeling in front of me, holding both of my hands.

“She hates me Zane, she wants me dead. Who knows what else she’ll do to get rid of me. I’m scared Zane.” I say, looking down on him, he stands and our eyes meet.

“I know, I am too but what scares me more is not living the rest of my life with you. I don’t even want to imagine what that would be.” He says rubbing his hands on my shoulders

“I’m going to need you to speed up the building of our home, I don’t want to live with that woman long enough for her to do something horrible to us. I don’t want you to have to choose between me and your family.” I say, wiping off my tears

“Let me leave you two” Thandi says

“No, wait. I’m sorry about earlier, I overreacted. I didn’t mean to yell at you, I’m really sorry. You’ve be nothing but kind to me and very accepting of me. I want to say I’m very grateful



for that.” I say and she smiles

“I’m sorry if I said anything upsetting. It wasn’t my intention. I will always be on your side, I am that shoulder to cry on. Now please, talk this out.” she says and walks out of the office.

“I’ll get the contractors to start immediately after they finish at the gallery. I meant what I said Buhle, I will do everything in me to make sure that you and this child are safe. I promise you baby.” He says, looking into my eyes as he plants this promise in my heart.

“I love you Zane, I really want this to work beyond my fear.” I say and he pulls me into his arms

“I want it to work too, just know that I will always have your back.” he says, hugging me tight.

“I’m sorry for saying the wedding is off. I was upset and scared.” I say

“You scared me there” he says, looking at me with a smile. “You looked so serious, I was convinced I’ll never see these watermelons.” He says cupping my breasts

“Is that all you think about?” I ask,

“Of course I didn’t want to lose you and your intelligence, your creativity and beauty but don’t get me wrong, these are to die for.” he says, kissing on my cleavage while rubbing my butt.

“Don’t start something you can’t finish now.” I warn him

“Have I ever not finished anything I started?” he says, walking to the door, he locks it and walks back to me with a naughty smile on his face. I know that look, he has some dirty things on his mind. I feel my stomach send the excitement down in between my legs and creates a warm moist feeling as he kisses me. slowly pulling up my dress, he spreads my legs as he tucks

himself in between my thighs and I feel his erection develop slowly. He keeps pausing in between kisses and looking at me, smiling and continues.

“I love you so much” he says repeatedly as he plants kisses down my neck, whispering in my ear every chance he gets and his action continue to prove this. my body receives the pleasures of his love as he lays me desk, showing me his love, naked, heated on top of me and whispering ‘I love you’ as he passionately grinds me onto the wood. I feel it, filling me up inside all the way to my heart, his love has me screaming his name as I clench my nails on his back.

I love this man and I want to spend the rest of my life with him, not even his own mother can get between us. if it comes to it, I will make it known that Zane is mine and no ones should ever dare come between us or they will see a

side to me I buried years ago.

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Insert 25

It's the night before we leave for Sinazo's wedding. My dress is done and Zane's suit is almost done. Zazi has been complaining to me about Zane who keeps changing the design in every fitting. He says he doesn't like the fit, apparently it's too tight for him. Then he complained about the color, he says he's a man and is not comfortable in pink. The suit is grey and has small pink pinstripes over it. that's the pink he's complaining about. From a distance,

you see a grey suit, only when you're a few feet away will you see the stripes. You'd think because he went to a modern boarding school, he'd let go of these "men don't wear pink" stereotypes. Ugh.

Everything on the work side of things is in order. The gallery is done and I've ordered all the furniture, it will arrive on the following Tuesday. I'm very excited about moving in my new work space. My mind is at ease and I'm ready to enjoy this wedding and this time away with my man.

Honestly we need the break, a lot has happened in such a short space of time and all I want is some time alone in a foreign place where love is celebrated. We'll drive 2 hours to a nearby city where we'll take a flight to the Cape. Everything is ready and packed. I'm ready

Makhulu and I have been seated on the lounge and she's been grilling me about Mam'Gloria.

My father told them about her and about the wedding. Everyone is pleased about the news, that my father has finally moved on.

“I like that she’s a Christian, I saw Sidwell praying for the first time ever.” Makhulu says.

She loves her faith and everyone who lives by it. Mam’Gloria is the perfect daughter in-law according to Makhulu.

“We went to her church on Christmas, she really is a nice person. So is her daughter.” I say.

“She raised Katlego into a wise, faithful woman of God, something that’s rare to find in the youth these days.

“Yeah well, some of us have flaws.” I say.

She doesn’t like my response. Her face is serious and is looking at me over her glasses, like a librarian.

“For real though Makhulu, we can’t all be the

perfect daughter, it doesn't mean we don't try, sometimes we're judged before we even try, so we just don't bother" I say.

She removes her glasses

"Buhle, you cannot live for people, they will always have an opinion, whether you're doing something or not. Do what you want, how you want and always take up the responsibility. You're doing fine my child." She says, with a smile of pride.

I move towards her and hug her, tight. I needed that.

I'm constantly doubting my decisions and how my life has turned out. I'm happy here, with my family and the one I'm building with my soul mate and that's all that should matter.

.....

I haven't spoken or seen Sinazo and Thabiso since umgidi, I've ignored their calls for weeks

after that. Zane and Thabiso have been in contact, they speak almost everyday. Tonight will be the first time I'm seeing them after that day. We're all having dinner at the main house of the estate, with all their friends and family.

Zane and I arrived during the day, I was so tired, I slept the moment we checked in and my head hit the pillow. I got a small glimpse of the venue, only the side we're staying at, it's a big estate, must've been expensive to rent out this place for the entire weekend. The place is surrounded by large green mountains, the grapes plantation is on the other side, we saw it when we drove in. there are French inspired cottages scattered around the main house.

It's beautiful, the air is thick and warm. The sun sets over the mountains as we prepare for our dinner date. Good thing I went shopping while in Edernville. I know I have gained a little bit of weight, okay, maybe a lot but this dress will fit,



it has to. My cleavage is squashed and my butt and hips are hugged tightly by this floral below the knee length dress. Looking at myself in the full view mirror is discouraging, I can't believe I've gained so much without noticing.

I see Zane walk out of the bathroom, struggling with his tie, he's eyes and mouth open wide the moment he sees me.

Am I really that fat, really now.

"Don't look at me like that, I already feel like a pig" I say as he walks closer to me, his eyes are still fixed on me.

"You look beautiful my love, breathtakingly beautiful. Perfect" he says, hugging me from behind, kissing my neck.

"You'll ruin my make-up baby, plus, we're already late for dinner" I say pulling away from his irresistible kisses.

He pulls me closer again

“We could always skip dinner and meet them at their wedding in the morning” he can’t be serious about this.

And there’s no way that’s happening. Imagine being invited to a wedding and people paying for your accommodation only for you to lock yourself up in the room for sex. Not happening. Tempting but not happening.

“No ways, we’re going to dinner, and we’re going now.” I say fixing his tie, he keeps kissing my face while I’m busy with it.

He can’t be serious for a minute, he’s always fooling around.

“Done, let’s go.” I say, putting on my Jimmy Choo strap heels.

He opens his arm out for me to hold on to him and we make our way down the beautiful landscape. Greens and roses, with different stones on the paving.

One of the staff females walks towards us, her eyes are fixed on Zane, she's smiling, he's not even noticing, he's just walking like nothing is happening.

She trips, almost falls as she walks closer.  
Praise the Lord!

She can clearly see he's with someone.

"Uhm, excuse me, can you take a picture of me and my fiancé please" I say handing her my phone, she looks annoyed.

I pull Zane closer and we both smile for the picture.

I reach out for a kiss and he kisses me back, flashing my ring to her direction. She must know.

"Thank you, have a lovely night" I say, pulling Zane as we walk towards the main house.

He is clueless, noticed nothing. Anyone can hit

on Zane and he'd still not notice, he's too naïve. Thinking people are just being generous and kind. Pshhht!

Everyone is already seated and starters are being served, we're late.

There isn't that many people, they did say they want close friends and family in their wedding. there's about 20 something people here, young and old.

All eyes are on us as we walk in hand in hand. Sinazo gets up and walks towards us with her wide and beautiful smile, Thabiso is walking behind her.

"Oh my gosh, thank you for coming" she hugs me tightly, almost suffocating me.

"We had to come, couldn't miss it for anything" I say

She really is excited to see us, so is Thabiso.

“Good evening Buhle” he says, hugging me and moves to greet Zane

“Buhle, I’m so happy things worked out between you two. The condition you were in the last time I saw you was scary and painful to witness” she says holding my hand.

She must’ve been really worried and even worse when I didn’t take her calls for weeks.

“I know right, I’m sorry I didn’t get back to you, a lot has happened in the short space of time. I’m really happy we get to get out of Khumba for a while” I say.

She smiles even widely as she looks on my left hand.

“Congratulations, Thabiso told me about the engagement. You two are meant for each other” she say, looking at it closely. She looks impressed.

“Thank you, let’s find our seat” I say, these

shoes are not for standing.

We all find our seat and its close to their work friends.

They introduce us to them and the conversation flows.

They're all media personalities and journalists. Some of their family members are here, like cousins and close aunts. Sinazo's parents are still on their way and Thabiso's are here with us.

There's laughter and great conversation around the long dinner table. Zane and I are seated two chairs away from Sinazo and Thabiso. Everyone is sharing stories about the couple, they're funny and cute. Apparently Thabiso had to create a false storyline about a sport star being on drugs, just to work around Sinazo. She found out that it's all a lie the moment she investigated, she's that good but she decided to extend the false storyline to see how far

Thabiso would go with it. Fast forward a year later, when they were both called in by their station manager, confronting them about their fake news, they bonded over drinks later that night and never looked back.

The stories are funny and my stomach hurts from laughing.

The main course is served and the waiter offers me wine, Zane declines before I do, he's so careful. It's not like I was going to drink it, I'm not stupid.

He treats me like a child sometimes, it's annoying.

I ordered the tuna steak and veggies. It smells divine and I'm already half way through it.

"So you're going to be a Queen? Must be nice" one of Sinazo's work friends says, she smiles sarcastically.

My mouth is full and I can't immediately

respond before chewing. I help myself with water.

She's still looking at me for a response

"Yes, I'll be married to a King, thus making me Queen." I say when I finally chewed and swallowed all my food.

Only if she knew the short comings of marrying into the royal family, especially when the mother Queen wants you killed.

"You seem so young, how are you going to handle all the work? How will you have them respect you" she continues with the questions.

She's looking at me like I'm a stupid little girl with no vision.

I thought I came to celebrate Sinazo and Thabiso's union, not an interview session.

Do all journalists do this when having conversations in social places, ask deep and



long questions?

“I am young, probably the youngest Queen in the history of amaHlubi. I’ll take it as it comes and respect is earned, if I respect them, they will return it” I say, she smiles but it quickly fades away

“What about your own goals, surely you wanted a life of your own, your own job. Doesn’t that restrict you from living your own life? Or maybe you wanted to marry rich and chill for the rest of your life” she continues.

At this point I want to throw all this water on her. Why is she so interested in what I do or do not do. There are a lot of celebrity personalities here, she should be interviewing them.

She’s reaching deep and I’m annoyed.

Zane notices my discomfort.

“Nothing will change, I am living the life I’ve always wanted. I do have my own job so no, I’m

not restricted and one of my long term goals will be fulfilled next week, so my life is goals.” I say, sipping on my water.

She looks surprised and curious at the same time.

“What goal is that, if you don’t mind me asking?” she say, leaning forward facing me in the eyes, she’s holding in a laugh.

This woman better not come for me, not with these hormones.

I turn my whole body to the left, where she is seated, to face her. I feel Zane hold my thigh, trying to caution me.

“If you were a good journalist you’d know, but since you’re slacking let me help you. I am the co-founder of the Khumba Kulture Festival, we’re launching it next weekend. I’m also opening the first gallery and art institution in the village” I say and shift back to my original

position.

Her face is hard as a rock and her eyes are all out. She nods when I'm done talking and continues with her meal.

Zane is smiling with pride and kisses me on my cheek.

"You really are the Queen of Khumba" he whispers in my ear.

I kiss him back and continue with my meal.

We've just finished dessert and Sinazo and Thabiso both stand with champagne glasses in their hands.

The waiter walks towards the table, handing everyone a glass of champagne.

Zane declines both glasses and requests juice instead. He doesn't even want to taste it, even for making celebration toasts. The waiter brings our juice and I can see Sinazo giving me a weird

look. She knows I love my liquor.

“Can I have your attention please. Thank you.”  
She says and the room is suddenly silent.

We’re all looking at them.

“I just want to thank all of you guys for coming through to be with us as we enter in this new journey. Zane and Buhle who come all the way from Khumba, thank you guys. My parents are still on their way, my father’s sickness doesn’t make travelling easy for him. My sister, thank you so much for enduring my bridezilla attitude, you’re the best maid of honor ever and all my friends and colleagues, Thank you. Okay, your turn baby, before I cry” she says, sipping on her champagne, fighting back tears.

Thabiso clears his throat and takes a sip on his glass.

“You forgot the people that gave birth to your future hubby” he says and there’s laughter.

“Thank you to my parents who loved Sinazo and accepted her for who she is. Sometimes I get jealous by how much love they show her, I’m their son, not her.” he says, jokingly and we all laugh.

Mine quickly fades away and a sudden sadness and envy over shadows me. I wish this were the case for me as well. To be well received by my husband’s parents and loved the way she is. They all look happy and comfortable around each other. it’s beautiful to watch.

I feel Zane’s hand around my shoulder, he pulls me closer to him and kisses the side of my head. I think he noticed my foul mood.

“Things will be good for us my love, I promise” he whispers in my ear.

I really wish it was as simple and easy as he’s saying it. I know he’s trying to make me feel better and wants me to focus on being positive

for the sake of my health and this baby but honestly, Zane's parents accepting me will be the toughest thing ever.

"Everybody lift up your glasses and let's all toast to love, happiness and infinity sex"

Thabiso says, shouting with his glass on the air.

We're all laughing and clicking our glasses.

Lady journalist has been uncomfortable with me next to her since our conversation.

We all shout "CHEERS"

The music plays loudly in the background and everyone starts dancing, I think the alcohol is motivating them. Only a few of us are left on the table, the older people have left. It really is late and Zane looks like he's enjoying his time talking to his friends, I don't want to rush him.

I'm seated on the table watching people dance and get drunk. It's a hilarious scene to watch.

I keep scrolling through my phone and

eventually feel my eyes slowly close. I'm really sleepy. Maybe I should nap for a second just to reduce the sleepiness.

And just like that, I'm out.

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Insert 26

I feel a cool breeze of air coming through from somewhere, I open my eyes and look around.

Where am I? Where's Zane?

I lift my head and rub my eyes to clear my vision.

I'm in the cottage and I can see Zane standing on the patio looking at the mountains while on

his phone.

How did I get here, and how did I sleep right through the night. All I remember was going through my phone then it was dark. I reach out for my phone to check the time, it's after 6:00am.

Zane walks back inside wearing nothing but his pyjama bottoms. He's shirtless and yummy.

"Oza hypnotized you all night long, leaving me lonely for the rest of the night." he says as he lays next to me.

"I don't remember much, all I remember was being on my phone, next thing I fell asleep, thinking I'd nap for a while, while you enjoyed you night." I say.

he's face is serious and concerned.

"So you decided not to call me and tell me you were exhausted and needed to sleep?" he says, looking annoyed.



Ugh.

“You were having fun baby, didn’t want to ruin it for you” I say.

“If you want to rest you should tell me, no fun is worth my baby and my wife's life. Kat said you should rest. You passed out on the chair with you head rested on plates. I had to carry you all the way to the room, get you out of your dress and tuck you in.”he says, still serious

I want to roll my eyes but I stop myself, he’s serious and that could offend him. I didn’t even notice I’m wearing his pyjama top. He must’ve struggled ey. I’m not the feather weight she met three months ago.

“I will baby.” I say with a smile. He seems at ease and relaxed now.

“I ordered breakfast for us to have here.” he says.

He’s such a thoughtful man, I’m a lucky girl.

I nod and roll over while he heads for the shower. He drops his pajama pants on the floor.

He's teasing me and I'm falling for it.

"I think you're going to need help reaching your back." I say walking towards him.

He pulls the over sized pyjama shirt over my head and carries me to the shower.

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The matrimonial service venue is beautiful, the mountains looking down at it with the beautiful lilies surrounding it. There are swans and flamingos around, it's fancy. They went all out. The sun is out and the band is playing jazz music from the far left. Guests are seating and settling down.

Zane and I walk hand in hand, making our way to our seat.

My dress flows perfectly with the wind, good

thing I chose a long one. Zazi did a wonderful job. Zane looks like he belongs on the cover of businessman's' magazine. He seems uncomfortable with the stares we've been getting, he keeps looking down everytime people look at us with smiles. We look good.

"Walk slowly, Louboutins are not for walking on grass" I say, holding on tighter to his arm.

"These people are giving us weird stares, let's quickly find our seat" he says with an irritable face.

I hope he now understands how uncomfortable I get when we walk together in Khumba and people give us weird and long stares.

We find our seat and the music gets louder. And the crowd settles.

Two young girls walk down the isle scattering flowers on the pale pink carpet. They're dressed in fairy dresses, even wearing the wings. They

look so cute.

I smile widely looking at them as they pass us.

“They look so cute” I say to him, he’s looking at me like I’m an idiot right now.

He nods and continues with her drink.

Thabiso and two of his brothers walk in. He is wearing a white blazer with black collar and his brothers wearing all black suites with white bow-ties. They look handsome.

Zane hugs Thabiso as they walk pass us. Their brotherly bond is beautiful to witness.

A while later two ladies, Sinazo’s sister who looks like her, even smiles like her and her best friend. They’re both wearing black lace dresses. They’re beautiful and elegant.

“Black is worn in wedding now? Things have changed” Zane says the moment he saw them.

I’m yet to understand some of his logic and

ways of thinking when it comes to certain things. Clearly Khumba has influenced him.

“You’re lucky they’re not nudists and having a nude wedding” I reply and he gives me a strange look but also disgusted.

“Nude? Like naked? How?” he says. I want to laugh at his facial expression.

“People who enjoy walking around with no clothes and choose to wear nothing and invite their guests to also wear nothing on their wedding day” I say and he’s immediately disgusted.

“That’s stupid and disgusting. I could never be friends with such crazy people” he says.

I’m laughing really hard at his reaction. He could throw up just by the thought of being in a room full of naked people.

The wedding song plays and we’re all ordered to stand. The bride is here with her father by her

side.

She's covered by a long dazzled veil. Her dress is off the shoulder with long lace sleeves. It's a ball gown with a black belt and studded with small diamonds around it. Her make up is simple yet elegant, she looks beautiful and her smile lights up.

She's almost in tears as she makes her way down the isle with her father. He looks older and tired, she did say he wasn't well.

This so beautiful to watch, I can't help but cry and hold Zane's hand. I'm emotional and tears are just rolling down my cheeks. She looks beautiful and this moment is precious.

Thabiso is smiling as they walk closer to them, hugging Sinazo's dad and walking with her to the alter.

The pastor opens with a prayer and lets them continue with their vows.

Thabiso takes a deep breath and speaks.

“Sinazo January, when I first laid my eyes on you, my heart stopped for a moment and I thought to myself ‘is she real?’ your smile captured me first then your laugh. I followed you around and did whatever it took to be around you, I was obsessed. I got to know you and realized your beauty was just the cherry on top. You are an amazing person inside, your passionate love and respect for yourself and others lured me in, I found myself falling deeper in love with you. I love you and will continue loving you ‘till my heart stops, permanently.” He says, holding back tears.

Sinazo is crying, tears rolling uncontrollably.

I’m a mess, my tears are black from my mascara and Zane is trying his best to keep my face clean by wiping my tears. Weddings are beautiful and very emotional.

“Ohh my love, my happiness, my anchor, my leader, a man of resilience and integrity. You have opened my heart to love in ways I never knew were possible. You’ve reached the deepest parts of my heart and I will forever be grateful for that. I will build our home, make it warm and fill it with love. I love you Thabiso and I cannot wait to spend the rest of my life with you, laughing with you, singing and dancing with you. I promise to care for you, I promise to wait on you to catch up so we could both watch Greys’ Anatomy, together and I promise to go wherever your love takes me” she says and the crowd is full of ‘awwwws’.

We all laughed when she promised to wait on him to catch up on Greys’ Anatomy. They’re such a fun couple, their love is effortless and fun to watch and to be around. They bring out the best from each other.

They seal their union with a kiss and everyone



is cheering and ululating.

We all make our way to the drinks and snacks area and everyone is taking photos.

I spot Sinazo waving towards us, she's calling us, I was really enjoying these finger snacks.

We make our way to their photo scene. They're standing like a choir and waiting for us to join them.

As we get closer, Sinazo's father is giving me a very strange look, like he knew me and didn't expect me, it's weird.

We join them and take the pictures, he's still looking at me, he's making me uncomfortable.

"What's wrong baby?" Zane notices my mood

"Nothing, I need to sit down, these shoes are killing me" I say, lying because there's no way I can explain what is happening, I don't know either.

He excuses us and we walk towards the reception venue and find a seat outside.

I cannot shake the weird stares Sinazo's father was giving me, it was uncomfortable. Does he know me? Even if he does, why did he not greet me? He looked shocked to see me, it's scary.

"Are you sure you're okay Buhle" Zane snaps me out of my thoughts.

Didn't even notice I've been staring into space.

"Yeah my love, my feet hurt from all that standing" I say, he lifts them and places them on his lap, rubbing on my ankles.

Aaaah, this feels nice. He's really good at this.

The crowd makes its way towards us, singing and cheering. I think its time to get into the reception venue.

"Come let's get in, you can walk barefoot" he suggests.

He really thinks I'm ruining this look by walking barefoot. I can walk on heels till my feet bleed, as long as I look good on them, I don't care.

"No ways" I say putting on my shoes.

He's shaking his head as we enter the beautiful reception hall. It's mostly black and white with silver and a lot of mirrors. It's classy, just like the bride.

We find our seat, close to their friends and the intrusive journalist is seated in the same table as us, again. She better keep to herself today, I'm not in the mood.

Sinazo's parents and her family is seated on the table next to ours, I'm trying so hard to avoid eye contact with her creepy father.

"Are you sure you don't want a white wedding?"

That's a bit random, especially coming from him.

“I never thought I’d ever get married so I never thought of a wedding and how it should be, don’t worry about it. We could get married at the court and I’d still be pleased, as long as I get to be your wife” I say, he smiles and kisses my cheek.

The annoyingly nosy journalist is giving us weird stares, this lady needs to mind her own business and let us live.

The speeches are long, especially from the old folks. Their friends keep it short and funny, it’s refreshing.

The music is loud and everyone is dancing.

“Oooh I want you to meet my parents” Sinazo appears from nowhere with Thabiso on her side. they look tipsy, with wide smiles and Garfield eyes.

I’m nervous about this but she’s not taking no for an answer. We all walk to their table.

His fathers eyes are wide open and he looks like his soul is leaving his body. Like he's seeing a ghost or something.

"Mom, dad, this is Buhle and Zano from Khumba, the ones I've been telling you about" she says.

Her mom has the same wide smile as her daughter.

"Nice to finally meet you, Sinazo has been talking about you non-stop." she says.

I wonder what she told them

"Nice to meet you too mama, hope she told you nice things about us" I say, she giggles

"She told me about the work you're doing to develop Khumba" she says

Hope she didn't tell them about my in-laws dilemma, I don't like people knowing my business.

Her father still looks pained to see me. I shift my eyes back to Sinazo's mother.

"She's a great asset in Khumba, we're thankful she left Edernville for us" Zane says, breaking the awkward silence.

"Oh you're from Edernville, so are we. Where there?" she says with enthusiasm

"Limeridge Estate, next to Edernville Game Reserve" I say, she smiles even widely.

"Mmmmh that's the richest neighborhood in Edernville. My husband worked in that area years back." She says, her husband is now shaking and looking around.

"Are you okay dad?" Sinazo notices his trembling.

He is scaring me as well. I want to leave, I'm not comfortable here.

"Get him some water" Sinazo's mother instructs.

His eyes are still glued to me and Zane pulls me back to our table. That was the scariest thing ever.

“Why was he looking at you like that?” he asks, he looks terrified as well.

“I don’t know, that’s how he’s been looking at me the moment he saw me it got worse when we spoke about Edernville” I say, looking back to their table, they’re stabilizing him.

Sinazo looks worried and confused. A lot of people are standing close to that table, this is a dramatic scene.

“Oh so when I asked you earlier you lied and told me you’re fine” he’s annoyed.

I really don’t want to argue with him and he also needs to stop treating me like a baby.

“I didn’t know how to explain it Zane” I say. He’s even more pissed.

“So you lie to me? How am I going to protect you if you keep lying to me” he says.

Is he seriously doing this right now?

“It was a once off thing geez” I say, annoyed.

“No it’s not, you always hide things from me, you don’t tell me how you feel most of the time, I don’t like that, if we’re going to do this marriage thing, you need to talk to me, tell me everything” he’s face is serious and cold.

I can’t believe we’re having this conversation here, at a wedding. I also don’t find it important to share every single detail of my life with him, he’s overreacting.

“You also need to stop treating me like a baby, like I can’t take care of myself, like I will break the moment I hit something. I’m not a child.” I say,

“I care for you, can’t you see that. I worry over you. And now you’re carrying my child, I have to



worry, I am your husband and the father of your baby, if I don't, who will?" he says with a straight face.

We have attracted stares in our table with our facial expressions, everyone is quiet as they observe our quarrel.

I'm annoyed and do not want to further this argument, I turn to the other side, my back facing at him and sipping on my water.

Does he expect me to share everything that happens. That's invasive and now that I'm telling him to stop treating me like a child he uses this baby as an excuse, it's annoying.

I can't even go to town by myself, I can't take walks and enjoy some time alone, I need some time alone too.

We have to iron out this invasive and controlling nature before we say 'I do'.

"I need some air" I say and make my way to the

door.

The room is becoming more crowded, people are shouting, Sinazo's dad health scare is also giving me a headache. I need to breath and clear my head. It's too much.

The moment I breathe fresh air, I throw up. My head feels heavy and my knees are shaking. Not this again.

I want to cry out loud and scream but my breathing is making it hard. I kneel on the grass trying to catch my breath.

I try to practice what my therapist taught me, it's hard. I keep throwing up and I can't stop my emotions. I try to look around, no one's outside and I left my phone on the table.

I need to get up and find Zane. I try to stand but I'm not strong enough, this can't be happening here, right now, where no one sees me.

The more I think about it, the more worried I get

and the anxiety takes over.

I feel weak and defeated.

This is not good.

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I'm trying to take deep breathes, in and out, it's working. I continue like this for a few more minutes. I can feel my body taking control again, my breathing is normal again.

"Buhle! " I hear him shouting from behind me

He holds me closer to him. he looks worried

“Baby, breathe. Someone get us water” he’s shouting and one of the estate staff brings it to him.

There’s a small crowd standing around us, including miss nosey journalist.

“Can we have some space please” Zane instructs them and they move back inside.

He’s rubbing my face as I lay it on his arms.

“I’m sorry my love, I didn’t mean to push you this far.” He says with sadness on his face.

“No baby, it’s not your fault. I was just overwhelmed with everything and I think Ozayo doesn’t like crowded places” I say he hugs me tighter.

Now we’re both seated on the grass, he’s convincing me to go rest but I can’t just leave Sinazo’s wedding celebration, besides, I’m fine now.

We're fine. We get up and walk back inside.

Everyone is still dancing and drinking, it's a real party now.

Thabiso walks towards us, he looks worried.

"Are you okay? My colleague tells me you're sick" he says walking closer

News travel fast.

"Yes, it was just a bit crowded for a second and the little one here doesn't like that" I say rubbing on my stomach.

He looks shocked. His mouth wide open, looking at Zane, who's smiling.

"Are you serious? You're pregnant?" he says with his eyes wide open.

I was planning on telling them at our wedding.

"Yes, I'm going to be a father" Zane responds and they hug.

He moves and hugs me as well. He looks very happy

“You sneaky bugger, you overtook me” he says to Zane and they both laugh

“You’re too slow, I had to mark my spot before someone else” he responds.

“I’m far from having them though, lead the way” he says, and we all laugh.

Sinazo walks towards us, she also looks worried like Thabiso was a few minutes ago.

“Someone said you weren’t well” she says, confused by the smiles on our faces.

“She’s pregnant” Thabiso says.

Her reaction is exactly like Thabiso’s. Her’s is added with a few tears.

“Oh Buhle, you’re going to be an amazing mother” she hugs me.

“Explains why you’ve been sober throughout

your stay, this estate has the best wines and you still didn't drink, I really didn't see this coming. Congratulations" she says and hugs me one more time.

"We should catch up on them babes" she says to Thabiso who downs the glass of champagne, avoiding eye contact with her.

He's avoiding this talk and pretending he doesn't hear it. Sinazo keeps pressing through. Doesn't he want children? I'm confused and this is becoming awkward to watch.

They walk back to their table and I notice Sinazo's father has left.

The night went on and we all danced and had a great time, their friends definitely know how to bring the party to life. After that drama caused by her father and my mini anxiety episode, it's all forgotten and we're all dancing the night away.

I've never had this much fun on the dance floor, learning dance moves and singing along to new music, its all new for me. Zane seems to know all the songs and the dance moves, I'm shocked.

For a second there when the music slowed down, we forgot we were in a room full of people, we danced so intimately and kissed like it was our wedding. He kept rubbing on my butt and pulling me closer, just like in the fairytale bedtime stories my father read me as a young girl, magical.

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It's past midnight and we're all seated on the table having the laughs of our lives. The older people have gone back to their cottages and only us younger ones are still enjoying the fun. We've somehow separated ourselves from the males, we're all in one table while they're standing by the bar. Sinazo's friends are very feisty and naughty, they're giving her tips on



how to satisfy her man in the bedroom.

“Naz, you can never be tired, don’t you dare. Always stay ready and warm. Men love a warm vagina” one of them says, she’s been the biggest advocate of this sex education.

“I think I’ve been doing quite well. We also have busy schedules, we can’t be all over each other all the time” Sinazo says in her defense.

Friend doesn’t look pleased with Sinazo’s answer

“How many times do you have sex in one day?” she asks. And we’re all waiting for the response looking at her.

“Once, sometimes we skip days, we’re busy Lydia, we don’t have the energy.” She says.

Lydia, the advocate looks mortified by the response almost falling off the chair.

I want to laugh so bad.

“You skip days, Naz, men wake up with a boner every morning, you can’t let that go to waste, No my friend. If you’re lazy just blow him goodmorning and goodnight.” She says, sipping on her champagne glass.

Sinazo’s face is beyond hilarious, I don’t think she believes what Lydia just said.

I burst into laughter and attract attention on me.

“And you, miss Queen Khumba, how are you planning on keeping your better half satisfied?” she says looking at me, now all eyes are on me.

I didn’t call for this, they were fine educating Sinazo. Besides, Zane and are pretty covered in that department.

“Well, all I’m going to say is that my man never goes hungry, he’s always fully satisfied” I say with a sassy smile.

They all look surprised and interested.

“I don’t share my bedroom details but surprising your man with a blow on the drive from work or town, guarantees you the ‘wife of the year’ award” I say they all shout with excitement.

Even Lydia the freak is surprised, I thought she knew these things.

“That’s dangerous Buhle,I’m not doing that” Sinazo says with a concerned face.

“Queen that is an extreme sport, you are dangerous. I thought I’d heard it all. While driving?” Lydia is still shocked.

“If you’re that scared for your lives, do it at home with him standing, with luke warm water in your mouth. Thank me later” I say.

They give me the same reaction as before. These girls are slacking in bed, how can they not know about these things.

I heard some girls talk about it in Uni few years

back, I tried it for the first time with Zane, he was uncontrollable. I tried to hold his hands down but he wanted to be inside me and I couldn't stop him.

"I'm definitely trying that one, tonight." Lydia says and we all burst into laughter.

We're making so much noise that the guys are starting to notice, they're interested in our topic and we can't help but laugh at their facial expressions.

"I've also heard doing it in water is great, like in a bathtub or pool" another friend says.

Lydia nods immediately. She seems very informed about this sex thing.

"Try it in a Jacuzzi sis, you won't regret it." she says.

I've never tried this before maybe Zane can join me in the bathtub sometime. It would be nice to have him like that. I should probably try it when

we bath in the morning, set a romantic mood and massage him before we take the bath.

I can't get rid of the naughty smile.

"Someone is in the mood" Lydia says as she spot me smiling by myself

She's so nosey. I try to hide it but I cant.

"I'd have to try it, I've never" I say.

"Well, you can try it tonight, your King is coming to fetch you" she says looking over my head.

I turn around and Zane is walking towards us. He's confused with the stares and I'm embarrassed for him. He keeps looking down on his feet as he walks closer.

"Girl you chose well, that one is for keeps definitely. And he's King, does it get better than that. Clearly I've been hanging around the wrong spots" one of the ladies say and everyone laughs.

Now Zane is really awkward, I can't help laugh as well.

"You need to rest" Zane says softly, when he reaches the table. Everyone is quiet and serious, like they weren't fooling around a few seconds ago.

I don't argue, I grab my shoes and he hands me his jacket, placing it over my shoulders

"Goodnight ladies. See you at breakfast" I say they all smile and wave.

"We'll understand if you don't make it" Lydia says with a naughty smile and winks.

They all laugh as we make our way to the exit. He's confused and shaking his head.

"You're having a great time" he says, holding me closer to him. I sense some envy here.

"Oh, so that's why you fetched me to come rest, because I was having too much fun?" I say.

“It’s just that in Khumba you don’t have friends to hang out with, it was refreshing to see you interact with Sinazo’s friends.”

He’s right, I don’t have friends, I spend most of my time with him or my family. I’m used to it, I’ve never had friends before. Even when my classmates would invite me to functions, I never went if it wasn’t exhibitions or poetry performances. I always kept to myself.

“But I was also envious about the laughs they enjoyed with you, I wanted a piece of it too”he says as we get closer to our cottage.

I roll my eyes but he can’t see, it’s too dark. I knew it was more than just wanting me to rest.

The closer we get to our cottage, the louder the conversation between two people, a man and a woman gets. I’m assuming it’s from a couple, an older couple.

“That doesn’t make sense Mthunzi” the woman

says.

Zane is pulling me to move but I want to hear.

“It’s her, I saw her. I know I was drunk but I saw her, it’s her” the man replies with anger.

I wonder what they’re talking about, maybe the man cheated or something. This is juicy.

“This alcohol has made you crazy, that woman died, it was all over the news.” It’s the woman again.

This is serious and I can see Zane’s face freeze. This sounds interesting. We both stand closer and listen.

“Her face haunts me everynight for the past ten years, I know it was her. Sinazo even said she’s from Edernville, it’s her, she’s the woman I drove over that night” he says.

This better not be what I think it is. I look at Zane and his face is cold and blank. I’m shaking



and confused. I try to move but my entire body has froze, I can't move.

"She's almost Sinazo's age Mthunzi, stop this. You're imagining things. There's no way that girl looks exactly the same, ten years later. You almost ruined your daughters wedding with all this foolishness. You must just stop drinking alcohol. We wouldn't been in this if it weren't for it in the first place." The woman says.

My throat closes in on me, my head is feels light and I'm losing my balance.

I cannot believe what I've just heard, Sinazo's father is the man that drove over mama and left her to die. He killed my mother and went on to live his life like nothing happened. When we suffered the past ten years, he lived a life with his family. He killed my mother and lived happily. Sinazo's mother knew about it all along.

No wonder he acted strangely before, he saw

me and immediately saw mama. This means he saw her before he drove off. He hit her with his car, went to see her and drove off. He killed mama.

Zane holds me tight in his arms as I try to make sense of it all. Emotions are running through my mind and I can't contain them anymore.

I let out a loud scream and fall on my knees. My whole body is filled with anger.

This is the last thing I expected in this wedding. My mind immediately goes to the day dad told me mama was gone and is never coming back.

I stand and run towards the cottage from where the voices came from. I want to see him, I want to see the man that killed my mother and moved on like nothing happened. He must know that I am the daughter of that woman, that I suffered ten years of my life, alone because of him.

“Buhle no” Zane is walking behind me.

I bang on the door really hard

“Open the door you murderer” I’m screaming out loud and other guests have now come out of their cottages.

Sinazo’s mother opens the door, she looks shocked. I walk past her and head straight to Sinazo’s dad. He’s standing on the lounge. I run fast towards him. I’m going to squash him while his family is watching, they will witness the death of their father.

“You killed my mother and you left her to die like a dog.” I’m screaming and hitting him with fists, he’s blocking his face with his arms. I grab a water vase on the coffee table and throw it at him, he blocks it with his hand.

Zane pulls me from behind, I’m kicking and screaming as he pulls me outside.

“You are going to pay, you fucking murderer.”

This man doesn't know the amount of anger I have in me, the potential I have to hurt him like he hurt mama and me.

I grab a glass from the kitchen counter and throw at him, it hits his arm as he was blocking it. he's bleeding and that makes me happy. I want to make him feel the pain.

"Let me go Zanemvula" I struggle to release myself from him as he pulls me away from the crowded area.

Sinazo and Thabiso appear from where we're headed. They're confused.

"What's with all the noise? Buhle are you okay?"  
Sinazo say

"Get this bitch out of my face before I do what her father did to my mother. Get her out of my face now" I'm screaming uncontrollably at them.

She gets to live a normal life with her family as a whole while I lived alone half my life.

What kind of a person kills someone and move on like nothing happened.

“We’re leaving now. You’re not spending another night here” Zane says as we enter our cottage.

I throw myself on the floor screaming and crying. I don’t know what to do with myself . All these emotions are overwhelming, my heart pains in a way I’ve never experienced before. I can feel a sharp pain in my stomach as I try to control my breathing.

Zane is running around gathering our clothes and bags. He makes a quick phone call and walks towards me.

“Baby, I know it hurts, the cab will be here right now” he seats on the floor holding me close to his chest.

“He killed mama, he killed her and let her die. He’s still walking around living after taking

mama's life. It's not fair Zane. He gets to see his daughter wed" the lump in my throat makes it difficult for me to speak. My face feels heated and I can't stop the tears.

"I'm sorry baby, I'm really sorry my love. We'll leave now now" he keeps saying, hugging me tight. He knows where I feel most safe at, his chest and that's where he's holding me.

"I want him dead, I want revenge Zane. I want to kill him like he did to mama. Him and his wife deserve a place in hell" the anger inside me has taken over, I pull myself away from Zane, he looks scared more than he is worried.

"You're not doing that Buhle, we're leaving and we'll speak to the police about it." he says, his eyes are red and tired. this is not the time to play good guy, those people don't deserve that.

"The police will do nothing, they didn't even investigate when dad reported the hit and run.

Now ten years later you're telling me they'll listen" I wipe my face and stand up and walk to the bathroom.

Zane stands with me and observes my every move.

"Buhle, don't. Don't hurt yourself my love" he's standing at the door and begging from the other side.

I can hear him cry as he begs me. I just need to reduce this anger, I need to allow myself to explode or else I'll hurt someone. I look in the mirror and my eyes are full of sadness and anger. I hit the mirror with a fist, I continue to punch it again and again and again as I scream and cry louder.

"Buhle no. no. stop" Zane is trying to open the door. He keeps banging it with something. I hear him running outside and running back in with some other guys.

My hand is bleeding the mirror glasses are scattered all over the floor. I'm barefoot and there's blood on the floor, coming from my hand.

Zane and the guys managed to open the door and he's crying and angry.

"Stop doing this Buhle. This needs to stop." he walks closer, lifts me and carries me to the bedroom. There's a crowd of Thabiso's friends and brothers standing around us. I hate how they're looking at me, like they pity me. I hate pity stares.

"Get out" I scream and they all scatter outside.

Zane is cleaning the cuts on my hand with the first aid kit and wrapping it carefully with the bandage.

"You're hurt me when you do that, when you intentionally hurt yourself, it pains me Buhle" he's still crying.



“I said I was going to protect you, I just realized I can’t protect you from yourself. I’ve tried, it’s hard” he continues.

“I can’t control my anger, I can’t” I wish I could make him understand, I can’t. Everytime I’m angry I want to let it out and I when I do that to someone, they get badly injured.

There’s a car hoot outside and Zane gets up.

“Come, we’re leaving” he says, grabbing our luggage and we leave the cottage

I can hear shouting and people talking as we make our way towards the cab.

“Buhle, let’s talk about this, please. Don’t leave now. I’m so sorry for what my father has done, I understand your anger and frustration.” Sinazo says running behind us.

She says she can understand what I’m feeling. How is that possible, what part does she understand?

“Do you understand the trauma and the mental suffering your father put me through? Growing up without a mother. Do you understand how broken I am as a person who had to figure things out on her own, while your mother was hiding the killer of my mother? What part do you understand Sinazo?”

“I’m sorry Buhle, I didn’t mean to upset you. I’m as shocked as you are. I didn’t know. Please let’s all talk about it” she says begging.

What’s there to talk about. We heard everything we needed to hear from him, it all adds up and it all makes sense.

“I do not talk with murderers, especially one that is responsible for my mothers death. Say your goodbyes, this might be the last night you spend with him in civilization” I say and we get into the car. It drives off.

Now she wants me to have a conversation with

a killer, mama's killer. She has the nerve to ask for me to talk.

The car exits the estate and I don't even know where we're going.

"Breathe baby, slowly, in and out" he says, holding me. He can feel my body trembling.

I can't believe how this went from one of my best nights to the worst, how this day started so beautifully and ended so tragic.

After few minute drive the car stops at a hotel, we're inside the city. I look at the clock, it's past 2am.

"We'll stay here for the rest of the day until we figure out what you want to do" he says.

When did he plan all this and how did he get a reservation at such short notice. I could ask but I really don't have the energy to speak. My head hurts and I want to forget about today.

A young lady meets us at the gate, she helps us with the luggage. Her eyes keep meeting mine, she feels sorry for me, I can tell.

My face is full of sadness.

We check in and walk to our suite. It's big and spacious, like a proper apartment. We get in and Zane heads for the bathroom and runs water in the bathtub.

I seat on the bed and stare out of the window, the small lights of the city buildings and the full view of the harbor, lighting up the ocean with its ships and boats.

My mind randomly plays back the conversation between Sinazo's parents. His fathers words keep ringing in my head. All I see is my father kneeling down with his shirt covered in blood, telling me mama is gone and never coming back.

"Baby, let's take a bath come" Zane says,

unzipping my dress and letting it fall on the carpet.

He takes off his suit and we both enter the bathtub. The water is warm covered with foam.

I'm seated in front of him, between his legs. My back is rested on his chest. He keeps rubbing water on my breasts and arms with a sponge, he's gentle. He has a way of making me feel safe here.

"You're going to be fine" he says, softly in my ear.

"I wish I could believe you." I say.

"You don't have to believe me right now. I believe in myself for the both of us, you will be fine" he says, wrapping his arms around me from behind.

He always knows what to say, he's calm and very certain. What will I ever be without this man, how will I ever cope without him.

.....  
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Insert 28

I slept throughout the morning, Zane let me sleep until noon. After our bathtime he made me warm milk and cinnamon to help me sleep, it worked. For a second when I woke up I thought we're in a vacation, forgetting how we got here and the reason we ended up here. I still can't believe that after ten years I'd still feel the pain I felt when mama died. For some reason I thought whoever killed mama would've gotten what they deserved and died, I never thought I'd meet him, attend his daughters wedding and

spend a weekend with his family. It still feels like a nightmare I should wake up from.

I have to call my father before going to the police, I have to tell him.

“Hlehle, how’s the Cape?” he’s in a good mood. I don’t think I can handle this, my voice is shaking.

“It’s good...uhm, I need to tell you something”

“What’s going on? Are you fine? Where’s Zanemvula” his tone immediately changes.

I take a deep breathe

“I’m fine, it’s about mama” I say and he’s quiet. I can still here him breath.

“I overheard Sinazo’s parents talk about that night” I say

He’s silence is confusing me but I continue anyways.

“He was there when it happened. Sinazo’s dad is the man that hit mama” I say, tears roll down

my cheeks.

I wish he could say something. I should've asked for Mam'Gloria or Kat first, just to confirm he's not alone.

"Where are you now?" he asks, in a low and calm voice. This reaction is confusing me.

"We're in the city, Zane booked us here for the day, we left them early in the morning."

He's quiet for a while. This is not the reaction I expected, he's too calm for someone who's just received news about the man that killed his wife and child.

"Where's Zanemvula? You can't be alone at a time like this. I hope you didn't do something to yourself or that....or hurt anyone else" he says.

He's really worried about that man's life? If it weren't for Zane I would've hurt him really bad. I don't care what anyone says or do, I will revenge myself for my mothers sake.



“Buhle, I’m serious. Don’t do anything stupid, you’ll regret later. You’re a mother and a wife now, worry about that. I’ll take care of this.” He says.

“He killed mama, there’s no way he’s getting away with this. I won’t let him” I say.

He can sense the anger in my voice and hangs up the call.

I can’t believe he’s taking this murderers side on this and why does he want to speak to Zane.

I get up to find Zane. I’ve been alone in the room for a while now, I haven’t seen him all morning. I make my way to the living area, he’s standing on the balcony, on his phone. It looks like a serious phone call, maybe it’s my father.

What are they talking about. He hangs the phone the moment I walk closer to him.

“What did he say?” he better tell me the truth.

“He asked me about what happened at the Estate. We have to leave the Cape, today. He said he’ll take care of the case” he says walking towards me.

Now they’re deciding things behind my back, they’re making decisions about my life without my consent.

“Since you didn’t discuss that with me, I’m not leaving. I’m going to report that man to the police” I say. We can’t just let him get away with this

“You can’t report an accident that happened in Edernville ten years ago, here. There’s nothing you can do about it here. I know you’re angry but there’s nothing you can do Buhle” he say.

He has a point but I’m not admitting that, I still hate it when they gang up on me and make such decions behind my back, like they did with the lobola negotiations.

“I understand you’re upset but you need to let go of the anger, it will tear you apart, and I don’t want that to happen to you. Come here” he says opening his arms and hugs me tight.

I wish it was that easy to let go of the anger I have for that man and what he did to my mother. For Sinazo’s mother to continue live with such a huge secret.

“Let’s go eat lunch, well, breakfast in your case” he says with his gorgeous smile.

“It’s that milk and cinnamon, where did you learn that?” I’m really curious.

“Thandi, she makes it for us everytime we have trouble sleeping. I told you that woman taught me everything I know” he says as we walk down to the restaurant.

It’s a buffet set up lunch with every food one could imagine, I’m really hungry. I walk through the different stations like a kid in a candy

factory, everything looks delicious and I want it all.

Managing to endure the judgemental stares from people, I serve up three different plates. One with fruit salad, the other with burger and fries as well as a plate of donuts and small cakes. I think Zane is trying to make me feel good here, he also has a mountain of food in front of him.

His phone has been vibrating non-stop and he's ignoring it. He looks at it and places it on the table again.

"Who is it?" I ask.

His eyes wonder around avoiding the question.

"Zane?" I say.

Why is he suddenly ignoring calls when I'm around

"It's Thabiso, he wants to come here. He wants

to speak to you” he says.

Why would he want to talk to me.

“Call him and let me speak to him” I say.

He doesn’t like the idea but dials anyways.

It rings once

“Zane, I need to speak to Buhle” he says without greeting

“Speak” I say.

He sounds shocked but he continues

“Oh Buhle, I’m really sorry about how things went earlier this morning, we didn’t know.

Sinazo is not doing well right now, I hope you’re not blaming her, this was suppose to be her special weekend, this secret ruined it. I know you’re hurt and I’m really sorry.....”

He’s talking too much but not making sense.

“Get to the point please” I say

I can see Zane biting his teeth and looking awkward.

“Uhm, he’s turning himself in. They’re leaving now for Edernville.” he says

I didn’t expect this.

“What is he saying?” Zane asks, he sees my face is stunned.

“Okay” I say and drop the call.

“What Buhle?” Zane

“He’s turning himself in, he’s leaving for Edernville today.” I say, I still can’t believe it

He’s as shocked as I am about these news.

I’ve suddenly lost my appetite, even though I’ve finished half of my food.

Zane grabs his phone and sends a text.

“Your father should know about this” he says.

They’re bestfriends now, texting and calling

behind my back.

I know I wanted revenge and to see him go to jail but now I suddenly feel sorry for Sinazo and what she's going through. I can't imagine how it must feel to find out your father killed your friends' mother and your mother knew about. All of this happening on her wedding night, she must be losing her mind.

I regret shouting and calling her a bitch when I saw her, I was angry and I wasn't thinking straight.

"Are you okay? You're awfully quiet" Zane says, snapping me out of my thoughts.

"I'm just thinking about what Sinazo is going through at this moment" I say.

It really must be a tough time for her. My anger has clouded my thoughts and compromised my humanity.

"I think we should make a stop in Edernville

before going back to Khumba, I need to see my father.”I say.

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Insert 29

“Hlehle, we leave in an hour, hurry” my father is shouting from down stairs.

I need to hurry up and get dressed, Zane never wakes me up when I’m asleep, he always lets me sleep through, he doesn’t care what appointment I have with who.

He’s probably downstairs with dad, I’ve been hearing laughs and voices all morning.



We arrived in Edernville late yesterday, we flew from the Cape and dad picked us up from the airport. We spent the entire night discussing how we felt and how we wanted to handle this case, just me and him. Zane was kept company by Mam'Gloria and Kat, who was very excited to see me. Dad let him sleep in my room, apparently, after paying lobola, that signifies as being married, traditionally. That meant Kat had to sleep in the spare bedroom, which she was not fond of, she left the light on all night.

Now we're meeting up with the investigative officer in Edernville police station to work on the case, we're meeting my fathers lawyer there as well. It took a lot from my father to help me understand his decision and when I did, it was easy for me to support him.

I make my way down stairs and my father is with Zane on the patio, laughing. Their bond grows bigger and deeper everyday.

“I thought you forgot about the appointment or maybe you changed your mind” My father says.

“Zane didn’t wake me when he got up, I overslept” I say

“He knows to never wake a sleeping woman, especially one that’s carrying your child” My father says and they both nod and smile to each other.

Oh wow, he’s on his side now.

“Let’s go dad” I say

“You haven’t eaten Buhle” Zane says.

Well I wouldn’t be late if he’d woken me up for breakfast earlier.

“I’ll grab something in town, we’re going to be late” I say and he gives me a judgemental look.

I grab two banana’s from the fruit basket in the center of the table.

“There, I’ll have these for now” I say and he’s

not looking happy about this. If it was just me and him, he'd go crazy shouting and calling me irresponsible.

If we don't leave now, we'll miss our appointment. My father gets up trying not to laugh at our conversation

"You married well Zanemvula, stubborn and feisty. Don't forget that red number at eleven" he says and we make our way to the garage.

Zane nods and smiles. What I'm more interested in is this red number they're talking about. When did they develop a secret language for themselves only, I could ask but I know my father won't tell me.

The police station is close to where we stay. Inside, we meet my father's lawyer and we're instructed to wait for the officer. I thought we were late, I guess African time applies to police as well, no wonder they never catch these

criminals. People would make an emergency call at 8am and police arrive at 10am after the criminals have fled and crossed the boarder. Places like these give me the creeps, the last time I was in a police station was when aunt'Kholeka was arrested and ordered me to go fetch the evidence. I still don't know where that kind of bravery came from.

"Aah sorry to keep you waiting sir, so many cases" the officer walks towards us greeting my father and his lawyer.

He's a typical policeman, short, the mustache, bald head, potbelly almost tearing those buttons off his stripped shirt. He blinks a lot too, like an eyelash is stuck in his eye.

"Buthelezi, I'm glad you could meet us at such short notice." My father greets back.

We all head to his office.

"What can I help you with today sir?" he says.

“Well you remember the case I opened when my wife was hit by a car, we’ve found the driver and he turned himself in late last night” my father speaks

The officer looks shocked and confused at the same time

“okay, that’s good news for you, now I’m still confused as to why you’re here wanting my help” he says.

“We want to drop the charges and let him go. He’s not well with health and my daughter and I have decided to let him have his last years with his family, on a few conditions though” my father says.

The officer looks curious, ordering my father to speak.

The lawyer, gives the officer the conditions my father and I worked on and a money bag.

His eyes widen when he looks inside the bag.

“That’s just to say thank you for your time” my father says.

We’re bribing an officer to change the nature of Sinazo’s fathers case. When my father told me about this, I was scared.

Buthelezi is browsing through the notes given by the lawyer.

“...attend rehabilitation for alcohol addiction and produce attending slips and progress report on a weekly basis, volunteer at Sunshine orphanage as a driver during weekends, charges to be dropped and case closed as long as he remains sober...eeh Sidwell, why are you doing this for this man, he killed your wife. This is childsplay” he says

“Keeping him inside here is not going to bring my wife and my child back. He needs help, serious help, he’s an alcohol addict and his family needs him. We’ve healed and seek no

revenge. This is what she'd have wanted" he says and the officer nods

My father made me realise that holding on to anger about things from the past holds you back from enjoying joys brought by the future and the present. I was very angry at Sinazo's dad and her mother, I wanted to make them feel what they did to us all these years, that was the anger talking. Without realizing I was becoming him, the killer, my anger drove me to the other side, the side that hurt me and put me there in the first place. To hurt somehow who hurt you does not make you any better than them, it is satisfying at first but it never changes anything, you become them. It was a toxic cycle I didn't realise I've been riding on for years. All the anger from mama's passing, my father's negligence and my inability to control my anxiety, followed me and surfaced everytime I got mad, emotions united and formed a concus

against me, hence the violent harm, to myself and those around me.

I'm in peace with this case and how it is handled. Sinazo's father will sober up and be the man his family needs him to be while we move on with our lives knowing we've done what mama would've wanted.

The deal is done and we're out it no time.

I feel lighter and releaved by this and so is my father.

"We're going to be fine" he says hugging me making our way to the car.

I believe him and this is what Zane told me when we were in Capelon. He was right and I have to thank him, properly.

We're in our favourrite café having breakfast.

"We've found a house, she loves it" he says

"Nice, when are you planning on moving in?" I



ask.

“After our wedding.” he says with a smile. He’s so in love he can’t even hide it.

“How’s the planning going?” I ask

“I hired a wedding planner to do all that, all we have to do is agree on something, that’s all. Gloria’s schedule is fully booked, there was no way she could’ve planned the wedding by herself.” He says.

Lucky woman

“I need to speak to her about the dresses, I’ll be showing them and I don’t want to look like a pumpkin at your wedding” I say and he laughs.

He keeps checking his watch and his phone as we talk about wedding plans, babies and graduation. It’s like he’s expecting a call or text. He’s not himself.

“We can go now” he says looking at the time

again, I look at mine it's 11:30am. It's too early if he's rushing off to Mam'Gloria, she has a big event today, she'll be back by sunset. I don't know why he's restless.

We drive down the highway listening to jazz instrumentals.

Oh we have guests, he didn't tell me this.

"You didn't tell me about visitors" I say looking at him, he's smiling and not saying anything.

Zane meets us on the drive way, he's also smiling. What's going on with these two and who's this visitor

"I was going to give it to you on your wedding day" my father says handing me a car key.

I'm so shocked, he bought me a car, a Jeep. It's red and sexy. I love it and it's perfect for Khumba. The registration is personalized 'HLEHLE'

“Aaah Dad, thank you so much, I love it” I say hugging him, emotions fill my body with warmth and gratitude.

So this is what they were up to all this time ‘red number’ and my father being restless at breakfast. I wonder how he broke the news to Zane, who prides himself in driving me wherever I need to go.

“I’m glad you like it, I was mostly worried about the color.” He says.

“You are so sneaky, you even got Zane into your mission.” I say.

“He had no choice, I thought I’d let you guys use it to go back to Khumba, it wasn’t planned. I only thought about it last night and told Zanemvula in the morning, I needed the hand. I was scared he’d say something to you, he’s too honest” he says and shakes his head.

He says that like it’s a bad thing.

“I like that about him” I say I walk towards him and hug him. he’s always shy around my father. He acts so awkward when I hug him or try to touch him when my father’s around.

“Now you’ll be driving me around until mine comes back from repairs” he whispers in my ear.

“We first have to take it to our picnic spot for ‘initiation’.” I whisper back, he laughs and pushes me away.

I’m also glad we won’t be using Zazi’s car anymore, he was starting to get annoyed with us borrowing it all the time plus its small for our on the road quickies.

“Thank you so much dad, it’s perfect for Khumba.” I turn to him.

“What do I do with the cooper?” he asks

Awww my baby, I’ve totally forgotten about it.

“You can sell it dad, I doubt I’ll need it” I say, he nods and goes inside the house.

“Let’s take it for a spin” Zane suggests, entering the passenger side.

He puts on his cap and sunglasses then leans over the window with his elbow hanging. He looks like a typical Edenville guy, a much handsome version though. I jump in the driver’s seat and we drive off. We’re driving through the city with the windows all dropped, air blowing on my face while we sing along to our favourite afro-soul music. He keeps stealing glimpses of me every second and smiles then looks out of the window again, no one is saying anything but his eyes tell me how much I’m loved everytime he looks at me.

“I can’t believe I get to do this for the rest of my life” he says holding my hand and kissing it

“I’m glad I get to do this with you for the rest of

my life” I say smiling, he makes me blush.

“So how did it go at the police station?” he asks as he turns down the volume.

“We’re dropping the charges and letting him go on conditions that he goes to rehab for his alcoholism, he must also volunteer at Sunshine Orphanage home and clean his act up” I say, his reaction is the same as mine when my father suggested this last night. His face is blank, waiting for a further explanation.

“I know, that’s how I felt too, but dad spoke some sense into me, there’s no use in having him arrested at that age and at his health condition, the justice mama believed in was helping those in need, including the ones that wrong you.” I say, he’s face slowly softens but he still doesn’t believe it.

“As long as you’re both comfortable with it, I’m just glad you’re fine” he says

Without even realizing we're parked in front of the beach, the water is reflecting the blue sky with wide white clouds. People are relaxing on the sand under their big beach umbrellas while the children run after the ice-cream bicycle. The weather allows for this beautiful and relaxed day.

"I haven't seen the ocean in a long time" Zane says.

This doesn't come as a surprise to me, he's always working. He doesn't give himself time off to unwind and partake in adventurous experiences.

"We're here now, so let's go say hi" we take off our shoes and walk towards the beach. The sand is warm and soft, covering our feet as we make our way closer to the water. His hand holds mine tighter as we get closer, I wonder if he can swim. Maybe that's why he doesn't visit the ocean as often but I'm certain all village

boys know how to swim, especially those in Khumba. I see them swim at the river almost everyday, Khumba heat will make you do the craziest things. They have this branch hanging over the river, that they jump from. They all climb the tree and jump from the branch screaming for joy.

“It’s beautiful, better than I remember” he says, his eyes are fixed at the waves coming and going, splashing on our feet.

“When was the last time you came?”

“High school, when we came to play rugby with Edernville boys, it was my first time too” he says, still looking at the water

“Now you can come anytime you want, you have a home here now” I say and wrap my arms around his waist. He hugs me back, tighter. We stand like this for a while just watching the waves dance to their own rhythm.



Vrrr Vrrr

It's Sinazo

"Buhle, they released my dad, they say you dropped the charges" she says, her voice sounds stressed and confused

"Your father needs help, and jail is not it" I say.

"They told us the conditions of the case that the magistrate gave him, we've been trying to get him to stop alcohol for a long time but we've failed, I hope this gets to make him realise how bad it is" she says,

I'm glad Buthelezi stuck to our confidentiality request of Sinazo's dad release conditions.

"If he doesn't abide by the rules, he'll be jailed and I'm sure he doesn't want that, he'll be fine Sinazo, don't worry"

Her breathing is slower and more calm

"You have no idea how sorry I am for what he

did to your mother, I'm really sorry" she says

"You are not your fathers faults, I'm sorry it ruined your wedding" I say

"I'm married, that's all I needed" she says

"How about you and Thabiso come over for dinner? Things didn't end well with us in the Cape"

"We'd love that so much Buhle, I'd hate to lose friends like you and Zane" she says her voice trembles.

"If our men can reunite after years, there's no way we can split again, so dinner at my home, 7pm." I say and I can sense a smile

"See you at 7"

I just invited people over for dinner like I'm going to cook for them. Oh shit, Mam'Gloria has an event she's catering for 'till late. I'm fucked, big time. Or I could just order from a restaurant

and pretend I cooked, I have a few hours to do all that.

“What’s with the long face?”

“I just invited people for dinner forgetting Mam’Gloria is working late today, now I’m forced to feed them take aways” I really didn’t think this through.

He’s calm as usual

“I’ll cook don’t worry” he says.

I’m the world’s worst wife, his ancestors are fuming with rage. Their son, soon to be King of Khumba, offered to cook for his wife and guests. They are beyond upset.

“Oh baby,I can’t let you cook, that’s unfair, I invited them”

“I’m going to cook, I’m not asking for your permission, now let’s go and see what Mam’Gloria has in her pantry” he says, pulling

me walking to the car.

He seems very pleased with himself about this cooking quest, I should be embarrassed but I can't suppress the feeling of joy within me, I don't have to order restaurant food and pretend like I made it. He just saved me from an unnecessary sin.

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Insert 30

He's moving around the kitchen like he belongs here, he knows what to do with everything, I'm just standing here awkwardly watching him chop. I offered to help, he gave me vegetables

to wash and that was it. I don't think he trusts me. Heck I don't even trust myself.

"What are you making?" if my grandmother would walk in here, she'd be mortified, she'd run back to Khumba and perform an apology ritual for amaHlubi.

"I'm making mutton stew, veggies and couscous" he says, throwing the tray of chopped veggies in the oven. I'm surprised he knows how to make couscous, Thandi did well here, I'm impressed.

"That apron looks good on you, My sexy chef" he's wearing one of Mam'Gloria's aprons, he looks like a professional chef.

He models with it around the kitchen trying to impress me, I can't stop laughing at his goofy poses. I have to get this on camera, I grab my phone and record.

"They call me the King of Pots, the master of

chops, Mr hot sauce” he says holding a wooden spoon as his microphone.

My stomach hurts from all the laughing, dad appears from behind him, he doesn't see him, he's still fooling around.

“Now come here and get some of this sauce, I know you like it” he says, dad walks closer and their eyes meet.

His face immediately freezes and jumps back to the stove, his eyeballs could pop out and fall, my dad is still looking at him, scaring him with his piercing eyes. I put down the phone and pretend to be helping, I'm trying so hard not to laugh, Zane is stirring an empty pot just to avoid eye contact with my dad, while dad is standing awkwardly trying to figure out what we're doing.

“Thabiso and Sinazo are coming over for dinner, we decided to cook, Mam'Gloria will be very tired by the time she gets home” I say, trying to

break the awkwardness, Zane is still at it with the empty pot. It's hilarious.

"By we you mean Zanemvula right? You can't even make a sandwich" he says, grabs an apple and heads back to the passage.

My own father just dissed me in front of my future husband, and future husband is holding in laughter, like I can't see his shoulders shaking.

"Okay, fun's over Mr hot sauce" I'm annoyed, I'm not even going to help with any of this, not like I was useful anyways.

I seat on the kitchen high chairs and go through social media. I'm not talking to him, he can cook everything by himself. I'm done here.

"Ooh I'm sorry my love, I'm sure you make the best sandwiches ever" he says, still with a smug on his face. Mxm!

He walks closer to me and keeps pulling my cheeks like I'm a toddler

“You’re so cute when you’re mad, come here” he reaches for a kiss and I move back. He’s not charming his way in here.

“Ooh maybe I should do this” he says, tickling me.

I immediately scream out with laughter. He’s such an idiot, the last time he did this, I threw up all over his car and made a mess.

“Stop Zane “ I’m trying to catch my breath, he hugs me tight and kisses my head

“I love you” he says and heads back to his cooking station.

I should use this time to check on my emails and catch up on some work, I quickly run upstairs to get my laptop and go through my work. Everything for the upcoming press conference is set, I just need to work on some of the questions with Zane.

“Baby, let’s go through the questions for the



press conference, I'll ask, you answer, ok?" I say  
"Sho" he shouts from the pantry.

"Wait, where are the spices?...oh never mind, go ahead my love" he interrupts me before I even begin.

"Okay, I'll take the first one, asking about the purpose of the festival, you'll take the second one, what role does the royal Kingdom of amaHlubi play in the festival?" I say, he looks at me confused

"Why are they asking that? They're not involved, it's our thing not theirs" he answers and moves on,

Oh boy!

"But you can't say it like that baby, rather say, amaHlubi have offered their moral support in promoting the festival within the village, as a project conducted by their own to benefit its people" I say, he's smiles.

“You just added more English to make it seem nice” he says

This is going to be difficult.

“You need to get into your headboy mentality for this one Zane, those people will twist and turn your words and spread false news.” He needs to take this seriously.

“They must also ask relevant questions, they’ll get relevant answers” he says.

I’m trying really hard not to lose it here, he’s being difficult.

“Okay Zane, next question, as the future King, what are your long term plans for the festival?”, go” I ask.

He stands and looks at me holding the wooden spoon as his mic. He’s not taking this seriously.

“Our long term goal for the festival is to develop the village as a location, to enrich local

products from farmer to be sourced nationally, this way we enable for more job creation for the people of Khumba and neighbouring villages. We ensure that women's work and craft dominates as much as men does, to reduce gender inequality. The youth will now have something to aspire to within its reach, rural development by dismissing socio economic issues. Khumba Kulture festival is the key to alleviating generational poverty" he says.

What just happened? Who was that? Head boy? I'm speechless, I don't have words. I'm stunned and unable to move or show expression. This is exactly what I need on that day, he's been playing me all this time, pretending like he knows nothing.

"That's perfect my love" im so proud. He's such an intelligent man.

"You seem surprised" he says looking concerned.

“You scared me with that careless answer before, I know you’re a smart man baby, one day you’ll get that degree” I say, he looks at me with a frown, like I’ve just said something crazy. It’s never too late.

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Dinner is served and everyone loves it, Mam’Gloria can’t stop praising the mutton stew, she even went for seconds. Zane is blushing like a season tomato from all the compliments. All the serious talk about the case and everything that went down that weekend has been long squashed, everyone is laughing and enjoying themselves. Kat is sharing the scene she walked in on when she got home, when Zane was cooking while I was busy on my laptop. She and Sinazo are debating about the roles in relationships, which has created a heated conversation on the table.

“The women cooks not the other way around”  
dad says,

“It’s the twenty first century, no one does that  
anymore, if you can cook, cook,if you can’t, stay  
away from the pots” Sinazo says, she’s a big  
feminist.

“If I knew how to cook, I would. I don’t cook  
because I don’t want to, I just can’t. That  
doesn’t make me less of a woman. If cooking  
was a womans thing only, then it would’ve been  
attached from birth to all women and I wouldn’t  
have to learn the skill” I say and Mam’Gloria  
shakes her head.

“Buhle, if you want to learn to cook, you  
do,there’s no excuse, you kids don’t understand  
the pleasure of seeing the smile on your mans  
face when serving him food you cooked  
yourself, specially for him” she says,smiling at  
dad, who’s as smitten as a kitten.

“But that joy is also there when she does other things as well, like moral support, when she helps out with work and surprises you with birthday lunches and business proposals that will save and create jobs for many, it shouldn't be tied to domestic work only, women are more complex these days.” Zane says and everyone is quiet for a while.

I sneak a smile. that's my hubby

“Yes, my future husband has no issues with my lack of cooking skills” I say, my dad shakes his head

“Zane is high on Buhle's love potion, you should've seen him earlier today in Gloria's apron, dancing for Buhle like a fool, a fool in love. No man thinks like this boy here” he says. Only he can make fun of Zane and still have him laugh, he's such a traditionalist.

“I do, Sinazo can cook but because of our tight

working schedules, I don't put pressure on her to cook all the time, if she can, she does, she's not obliged to. I surprise her with dinner and hire a private chef sometimes." He says.

"I love the idea of providing and taking care of my man, him being dependant on me for certain things, like food, ironing, choice of clothing, those sort of things, even the Bible said we should submit to our husbands." Kat says. Ofcourse that's what Kat wants, she's been saving herself up for marriage. I'm yet to meet his boyfriend, he's bringing him to the launch and my wedding. She doesn't share much about him, just that he's also a doctor. They have dates but she never sleeps over, she always comes back home.

I can see Sinazo rolling her eyes from across the table

"I believe in the mutual sharing of responsibilities in any partnership, roles create

expectations that ruin marriages and people forget what brought them together, love should be the only form of submission in marriages” Sinazo says, sipping on her wine.

This conversation is getting heated as everyone expresses their views. Everyone has their own opinion. They’re all laughing at the video of Zane modelling in the kitchen and his reaction when dad walked in, it’s all on camera, rotating across the table. Everyone is relaxed and happy. My family keeps growing, now I’ve gained two more friends, Sinazo and Thabiso who are like family now, it’s surreal.

The dinner ended after dessert when Sinazo and Thabiso left. Zane and I decided to sleep early to rest for our road trip back to Khumba tomorrow.

We’re laying in bed with my head rested on his chest, his hands rubbing on my stomach as we’re discussing baby names. He’s suggesting



names that belonged to his great grandparents, like Zingangalala and Nontweninzi. Not happening. Those people died with their names, we will not be recycling ancestors name, no thank you.

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Insert 31

Today is the day we host the press conference for the festival.

“See, I told you it would be quick and easy” I say, he’s been very worried about this press conference, he did well, better than I expected.

“You know these things, I was just nervous. I still think their questions were irrelevant, especially about our relationship” he replies.

“You scared that journalist ey, he wanted to run for his life when you told him, it’s none of his business and that they should focus on the festival. Next time say it with a smile.” I say

We’re seated in the conference room at the Lodge and everyone is out having lunch. It has been a very long day, from preparations to the actual press conference, which lasted for a whole hour. I’m glad they accepted our invitation, the country will know more about the festival, attracting more visitors. The lodge is fully booked that weekend and the b&b’s in town. People are even offering to pay Khumba residents to let them stay at their homes for the weekend, it’s bigger than I’d anticipated but it’s exactly what the village needs.

Yolanda has been very helpful, this whole week

she has been hands on and leading in the preparations and making sure everything we will need is available. She is a lifesaver. She has adapted pretty well in the Khumba lifestyle, she is a village girl aftreall, it wasn't a big transition for her. She also recommended the events planner we hired for the launch, apparently they went to school together, she has her own events planning company.

The art gallery is also done and the interior has been organized. Furniture and paintings have been placed, everything is looking good and ready for the launch. All vendors have finished their work and crafts, everyone in the village is excited about the festival.

“We should go have lunch aswell, you must be hungry, I didn't see you eat anything all morning” he say, reaching out his hand for me.

There's no way I could stomach anything with all the nerves I had this morning. I had two

spoons of yogurt and it all came back.

“Ozayo didn’t like the yogurt I ate in the morning” I say as we make our way to where everyone else is gathered.

“This child likes meat, just like me” he says with a proud smile.

We enter the restaurant, where everyone is seated in small groups, laughing and having deep conversations. I thought these journalists would have left by now, clearly Khumba food is irresistible. Their plates are full and some are heading for seconds.

“Go find a seat baby, I’ll bring you your food” he says. I spot Zazi and he waves for me. I also need to know how far is he with our wedding outfits, the wedding is close by and I know nothing about the event and what Zane has planned, I’m completely in the dark.

“You have turned my brother into a B.E.E, the

suits, the press conferences, he even talks like one” Zazi says

“Oh please he’s always been like that, he just didn’t live it. Now to more serious stuff, my wedding dress” I change the subject

“It’s almost done, I need you to fit it again, I think you’re growing a little, or maybe it’s my eyes.” He says, looking at my stomach.

Is he calling me fat?

“No I’m not, you’re imagining things. Kat says I’ll start showing two months from now and that’s after the wedding.” I say, he’s making me feel uncomfortable and insecure. I pull my blouse over my stomach and fold my arms.

“If you say so, also, do you want a cape or not, because you can’t show your tattoo that day, i urge you not, the villagers and traditionalists will be livid.” He says.

I might as well wear a white sheet and wrap it

all over my body like Egyptian mummy. First the fit was too tight, then it was too sexy, now I have to cover my arms, it's ridiculous.

"Do whatever you want, clearly this is their wedding not mine because I don't even know what they've planned for the day, I'm on the dark about my own wedding. What kind of food will they serve, will there be a wedding cake? What about entertainment, I know nothing" I say, I'm really annoyed about this whole tradition thing, it's a way people use to bully others into doing things for them.

"Geez, I know you're angry, don't take it out on me, I'm just the designer. But trust me, Zane has everything under control, plus, Thandi is helping him, he's in good hands." He says.

Maybe I should fish information from Thandi, since everyone else is on mute.

Thami walks towards us with the widest smile,

he's been like this ever since he got back from his New Years vacation. He still, to this day, talks about how amazing his trip was, at first I enjoyed the stories but now it's annoying. Everything reminds him of his trip. 'oh these spoons look the ones we ate with at the resort' or 'oh wow, that's exactly what we ate at the resort' its annoying now.

"Guys guess what? I got a job, I got a job in Edernville Game Reserve" he's screaming with excitement. I'm shocked, when did he apply? Is he moving? For how long? I'm confused.

"Uhm, congratulations" I say he's disappointed with my reaction.

"With a little bit more excitement please" he says

I could be very excited if I knew when all of this happened, he needs to explain this.

"I'm just shocked, you never said anything about

moving out of Khumba or applying in Edernville”  
I say.

“Well, I applied late last year when Xola got news about being promoted to a branch in Edernville, I was just trying my luck. So we’re moving in together and staying in Edernville, starting next month.” He say, with the biggest smile.

They’re getting serious and I’m very happy for them, it’s just too sudden but who am I to judge. I move forward to hug him.

“You’re so lucky Thami,when will I find someone to runaway from this dusty Khumba and chase the sunset with?” Zazi say with an envious smile.

“Now I have to break the news to the family. Makhulu and I were just getting along, she won’t take it well. Mama is too busy with her business to notice anything” Thami says, biting



on his finger nails.

“Yeah ey, she’ll get used to it. She’s been hanging out with Dlamini a lot, he’ll keep him company” I say and we all laugh.

“Speaking of which, look who’s keeping your future husband company” Thami says with a sassy look towards the buffet table, Yolanda is helping Zane dish up.

“Oh please, that’s my P.A, Yolanda. She works with me, she’s just helping relax” I say.

He’s reading too much into this, she’s holding the plates while Zane dishes up for us. Thami is dramatic

“She’s laughing too loud, unnecessarily. Look at that” he continues.

Yolanda is always smiling and laughing, it’s who she is. She’s just a happy soul, Thami needs to relax, besides, Zane won’t even notice her tactics, even though there aren’t any.

“You’re dramatic” I say and Zane walks closer to us with two full plates. I’m so embarrassed, everyone is looking at him and I just want to hide under the table.

“There you go my love” he says, placing the pile of meat in front of me.

The looks on Thami and Zazi’s faces are priceless. Thami can’t contain his laughter, I’m a joke now but I’m really hungry and it looks delicious.

“Thanks my love” I say to Zane who is confused by Thami and Zazi’s reaction. I know he means well and is feeding his wife and child but this is too much.

I begin to eat and we all engage in conversation. It’s been a while since we’ve all been together, laughing and enjoying each other’s company. Thami is telling us about his trip again, I want to cry, we’ve all heard this story over a hundred

time this week, it's too much. Without realizing, I'm halfway through the plate and Zazi is shaking his head. He better not judge me, it's his neice that wants all this meat, I don't even like meat that much, I like salads and veggies, goat food as Zane calls it. With a stuffed mouth, laughing at Thami's stories, Yolanda walks towards us, with her wide smile.

"Would you like something to drink sir? Beer or wine" she says, looking at Zane

Thami is giving me that look again.

"No, I don't drink alcohol, thanks" Zane responds, she looks a little bit disappoint, her smile fades.

"Can you get me juice, ask Luzuko for my pineapple juice" I say she nods and walks to the kitchen.

Zazi and Thami are exchanging looks, they need to stop this. I need this girl, they can't mess

things up for me with their dramatic views.

I give them both a warning look and they shy away, Zane has no idea what's going on, he's busy with his meat.

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Insert 32

We're moving into our new office space today and it looks great, exactly how I had invisioned it. The paintings are all up on the wall, the library is half full with books, donated by one of my fathers' investor friends, I'm very proud of the outcome.

Yolanda has been here since the morning, tidying up everything before I settle in. Her desk is close, just outside my office but because of the glass walls, I can see her and the entire gallery. The furniture complements the colourful art on the walls, it's every creatives dream, I'm in heaven.

It's been hours since we've settled in and we're busy, the final preparations has us on our heels. The events planner made the biggest mistake of booking the wrong musical artist, now the one we initially wanted is booked that day, it's a mess.

"Yolanda, call all talent agencies in the province, we need a musical item, atleast one celebrity that day" I say, I'm really taking my chances here, the event is a few days away. I could ask Thando to help me with this, since he's in the industry and has the connections but he'll probably read this the wrong way.

“Everyone is booked Buhle” Yolanda walks in looking discouraged.

Are you kidding me. I lay my head on the desk and my hands on it. I’m screwed.

I signal an okay sign and I hear her heels click further away. I just need to think this one hard, we’ve promised the village a famous musician and I can’t let them down.

“Uhm Buhle, it’s lunch time, I’ll be back after an hour” she says. I nod and she walks out.

I went on social media to stalk some of these musicians to see who’s available, I’m desperate right now. My eyes and my head hurts, I haven’t had a meal and my stomach is feeling nauseous, it’s probably the stress too. I should just text Thando and put myself out of this misery. Now I’ve just realized that I blocked and deleted his number. Ugh.

There’s a knock on the glass door, it’s my

husband to be. He can see the stress written all over my face, he looks concerned.

“I figured you’re slaving, I brought you lunch” he says, walking closer with a big Tupperware in his hand. I’m such a lucky woman.

“Thanks my love, I’m really stressed, this useless events person didn’t book the artist, now we don’t have a celebrity like we promised. I need everything to be perfect” I could cry right now, I feel like I’m failing at this.

He’s calm as usual, massaging my shoulders as he stands behind me. Aaah, I needed this.

“You’re doing a great job my love, what kind of artist do you need?” he says.

“Something soulful and jazzy, not these loud gqom and rap kids. It has to flow with the theme of the festival” I say. He stops and grabs a sit across my desk.

“I could ask my uncle to come through as a

favour” he say.

What uncle is that, I said a celebrity, not some maskanda on the rise artist, is he taking this for a joke?

“A celebrity, that’s what people want. Not your uncle, sorry my love” I say.

“He’s a celebrity, a legend, Ringo, he’s the uncle I’m talking about” he say.

Why didn’t he say that in the first place, he’s perfect for this kind of event. Everyone knows and loves his music. He never mentioned that he has a famous uncle.

“You never said Ringo is family?” I ask, he smiles in the most modest manner.

“He’s a Hlubi, we’re related by clan. He’s very close with my family. He’ll honoured to be part of this event, I know he will.” He says.

I didn’t know that, people really take this clan



thing seriously here, well i'm glad, now my problem has been solved, all thanks to the bloodline of amaHlubi. Camagu, I guess.

“You just saved my day from misery, how will I ever thank you” I say, he’s smiling like a kid offered candy.

“I have so many suggestions” he responds.

I walk up to him and turn his chair to face me, he’s smiling with his eyes fixed to mine. I kneel in front of him and undo his belt, pulling his zip down. I rub my hands over his briefs, his erection develops immediately. He pulls my face towards his and kisses me, slowly and passionately. I lower his jeans and working my hands on his erection, filling my hand as I rub up and down. He’s ready now. I pull myself from his hypnotic kiss and bend forward, filling my mouth with it. His head tilts back, resting on the chair with his hands on his head. I move with in and out, deeper and he exhales loudly,

his hands rub on my back. He continues to moan and gripping tighter on the chair.

“Aaah baby” he whispers after every groan.

I tease him with my tongue and he holds my head, pushing it closer to him, filling my mouth deeper and deeper. He lets out a loud groan and my mouth is suddenly filled with warm fluids. He lets go of my head and rests back. I swallow and wipe off excess spots.

That’s how you thank your husband for saving your career. He’s defeated as I lift my head to face him, for a minute I forgot there are no walls in this office. He’s rubbing his hand on my face, still speechless and out of it. A thank you would be nice.

I slowly get up and at the corner of my eye I spot a shadow. Oh shit.

“Yolanda, what are you doing? You said you’ll be back in an hour” I’m shocked, I didn’t hear her

come in at all, how long has she been standing there.

Zane jumps off the chair and fixes his pants, his back facing us. Did she see all of this? When did she get back and why was she just standing there.

“I’m so sorry, I forgot my wallet” she grabs her purse and speeds out of the gallery.

How will I look at her after this, after seeing me blow my fiance, who happens to be her boss too. This will ruin our working relationship, she might feel uncomfortable and quit. What will I do without her.

“Zane what if she quits? I can’t lose her” I’m panicking.

“I don’t think she saw anything, you were already standing when you saw her” he says.

This is not the time to be calm, I could lose a P.A and I don’t want that, maybe I should go

talk to her, I don't know how much she saw while standing there.

"I'm going to call her" I say, grabbing my phone.

Zane pulls it from me, is he kidding me, I need to fix this before it's too late.

"Give her time to calm down, let her speak to you about it, we don't know what she saw, let her come to you" He says calmly walking closer to me.

He's even smiling, this one is not serious. He pulls me closer and leans for a kiss.

"Zane no, we can't keep doing this here. We need to keep our sex life at home" I say, pushing him away, he looks annoyed.

"Not even in the car? You know our living arrangements are not friendly to our sex life" he says.

I roll my eyes and sit, opening the lunchbox he

brought me. It's stew and samp, it smells delicious.

"Mmmh, who made this?" I say, digging in with the spoon.

"Thandi did" he says, seating across me, grabbing his spoon and we both eat together.

"Oh I forgot, I have a doctors appointment tomorrow, for the baby" I say, he's smiling widely.

"What time? Never mind, I'll clear up my day" he says.

"It'll probably be for a few minutes, no need to clear up your day, it's at 10am" I say, he's really excited about this, like we're already delivering the baby.

"Will they tell us if it's a girl or boy?" he asks.

"I think it's too early to tell, they'll just check if the baby is healthy that's all." I say

“This one is very healthy, he’s been eating almost anything, he’s good.” He says, and I suddenly feel insulted. So I’m a pig now, I eat almost anything, that’s what it has come to. He can finish this lunch by himself. I push it away and toss the spoon next to it. I’m done.

“Aah baby, I didn’t mean it like that” he says, as he realizes my reaction to his stupid comment.

“Mxm” I say, folding my arms and looking out of the window.

“Ooh I’m sorry my love, you look beautiful. You carry Ozayo perfectly and you’ve been taking good care of him.” he says, reaching for my arms, pulling them closer and holding my hand.

I haven’t started showing and I’m already shamed for what I eat, like I have control over it. He walks around the desk and stands in front of me.

“Come here with your cute face” he says, and I

can't stop myself from blushing. He's too handsome to resist. I find myself falling into his arms, he hugs me tight and close to his chest, home, I could stay here forever.

"Okay, thanks for lunch, you need to leave before Yolanda finds us in eachothers embrace again" I say pushing him

"I'm just happy you embraced this guy down here" he says looking down his jeans. I laugh at him.

"That was a thank you, I'm glad you appreciated it" I say, he kisses my cheek and we walk hand in hand towards the door.

"I can't wait to marry you and live with you, so we could embrace eachother freely everyday" he says while charming his way for a kiss.

I'm not falling for it and I fear the things he says about us staying together, I should immediately start birth control after Oza's birth or else I'll be

pregnant all the time.

We say our goodbyes and he leaves. I need to get back to work, atleast I have one less thing to worry about, Ringo will be performing at the festival launch.

Yolanda walks in, she's still wearing that wide smile of hers, does she not remember what happened, maybe Zane was right, she didn't see anything. How do I approach her withn this. Im nervous.

"I'm back, any progress on the artist, seems like everyone is booked." She says, standing by my office. I should just go with her vibe, it's confusing but its better than addressing the neon elephant in the room.

"Uhm yeah, Zane will ask Ringo." I say, trying to figure out her mood, she's the bubbly Yolanda, nothing awkward. Maybe she didn't see anything, I'm reading too much into it.



“Wow, at such short notice? Mr Ngele-Ngele is good at his job” she says with a smile.

“He’s family so he called in a favour” I say and she’s suddenly impressed by that.

It’s been a long day and the sun will set soon. We close the gallery and head for my car. I will drop her off the lodge and pick up Thami and Zane. I’ll drop Zane at his place and drive home with Thami. That’s my new routine.

She’s been complementing my car since she the first time she saw it. She talks so much about a lot of things but never about herself, she hardly speaks about her family and friends, I doubt she even has friends.

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Insert 33

Thami and I get home just in time for dinner, aunt'Kholeka is in a great mood. She is singing and voluntarily cooking in the kitchen. Thami and I look at each other and then at her, she smiles and continues with her duties. Asakhe is in the lounge with Makhulu, everyone seems to be in a good mood tonight, it will soon be spoilt because Thami is telling everyone about his move to Edernville.

We're all gathered around the dining table serving up dinner.

"I have something I need to share with you all"  
Thami says. and all eyes are on him

"Me too" aunt'Kholeka says. That explains her

mood. This could go very good or horribly bad.

“Okay, I’ll go first, I got a job” Thami says and everyone begins to celebrate, even Asakhe is clapping.

“That’s wonderful my child, when do you start? Wait, where is it?” Makhulu says with excitement on her face.

Thami looks at me for a brief second then answers

“Edernville Game Reserve, I start next month” he says and it’s completely silent. Makhulu’s eyes are glued to Thami, she looks betrayed. Even aunt’Kholeka didn’t see this one coming.

“So you’re moving to Edernville?” Aunt’kholeka speaks, she’s still shocked almost sad.

Thami nods and drops his head.

“Where are you going to stay there, it’s a dangerous world out there.” Makhulu finally

speaks, concerned.

Thami is older than me and more responsible, they have nothing to worry about.

“Well, uhm.. Xola is also moving that side, so we’ll find a place together” he says, shyly.

The expressions on their faces, alone, would end a war. They look angry and ready to attack, aunt’Kholeka looks slightly sad.

“I found a loft in town to work from, I also made an offer for a house closer. It’s best if Asakhe and I found our own place, there are also good schools that side” Aunt’Kholeka drops the bomb.

Makhulu is reduced to tears.

“So you’re all leaving? Well I should accept Dlamini’s proposal and invite him to move in with me, since everyone wants to be grown and wonder off to the world.” She says, fuming and walking to her room. She shuts the door really

hard, leaving us all shocked and in disbelief.

We silently seat, staring at each other.

“Wait a minute, did she say Dlamini proposed?”

Thami whispers, we all try to hold in our laughs but fail. We cover our mouths with our hands.

That’s exactly what she said and now she’s using our departure to cover up for it, she can’t do that. When was she going to tell us if neither of Thami and aunt’Kholeka shared their news.

“Congratulations aunty, your business is doing really good” I say, we’re still whispering. We don’t want to upset Makhulu even more.

“And when did you apply to Edernville, Buhle knew, I could see it all on her face” she says looking at Thami

“Right after Xola knew about his promotion, I was going to move with him even if I didn’t get the job, we planned everything” Thami says, aunt’Kholeka looks shocked and claps once,

she does that when she's in disbelief. I find it funny.

"So you were just ready to be a house husband of Edernville, stay home and cook while your man works" I say, he's really serious about this relationship and I won't be surprised if one of them proposes, they're in love and it's moving faster than we'd expected. Okay, I know it's ironic coming from someone who fell pregnant and got engaged in three months, I'm happy for them. They can live happily in Edernville without being judged by the narrow minded people of Khumba.

"As long as you're happy and employed, I'm good." Aunt'Kholeka says, she looks almost proud but she's trying to act tough.

"We will stay in town now mama?" Asakhe asks with her small innocent voice.

"Yes, just us two. You will go to a town school,

play with all sorts of toys and games, you will have your own room with your own bed, no more sharing with me” Aunt’kholeka responds.

She’s getting emotional as she speaks to Asakhe about their new life and it’s benefits.

She has come a long way, I get it. She has done great with her business, it’s growing quickly, she even has a full time accountant to help with the financial side of things.

“I think Makhulu is overwhelmed with the timing of our growth, it’s all happening at once and she feels like she’s losing us.” I say, they both nod.

We all make our way to the her room. She’s kneeling in front of her bed with her face rested on her hands, she’s praying and in tears. We silently walk in and join her. We all begin to pray, together. I’ve never prayed like this before, to fully express myself and be vulnerable enough to ask for things and to acknowledge the Lords presence in my life, it feels good and I feel

lighter, like a heavy burden has been lifted off my shoulders. Now I understand why people rely on it for strength and comfort, it is a place I felt heard and validated. We all chant 'Amen' when Makhulu finishes.

"I'm very happy for you my children, you make me so proud" she says, looking at us. We all join and hug her. My head is rested on her back, Thami and aunt'kholeka are on her sides, this is where we'll always know we're safe, in her arms, in her prayers.

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Insert 34



The one thing I admire about the village people, especially the people in Khumba, is the support they show for others and their work. Whenever there's an event or a celebration in a home, villagers go out of their way to assist. Women gather groceries and plan the menu, men slaughter and prepare the meat while young men gather wood for the cooking fire. The whole village joins together to prepare for one person's event, without command or plea, they willingly volunteer.

This has been the same with the Khumba Kulture Festival launch, the entire village has pulled all stops and all resources in assisting with the preparations. People have been visiting the gallery to ask how they could help, at first I kept declining until Zane explained to me that it's their way of thanking me for the festival. He says people here don't have much in terms of materialistic fortune and offering their labour is

their way of showing gratitude. It has been a hectic week, emotionally, with all the nerves but everything was going according to plan, the village men helping with moving tools and setting up tents, the women helping with the food. They laughed at me when I told them I'd hire a catering company, one of the women said "we are the best catering company money can buy, not those expensive people who leave you penniless and hungry" and just like that, they took over that department. There was no way I was going to argue with Khumba women.

It's an hour before the event starts and I'm running around the gallery, seeing if everything is in place. I have been up since 3am, hardly slept. I'm still in sweats and sneakers, haven't dressed for the main event and I'm sweating like a pig. I last saw Zane when he got here in the morning, honestly, I've been avoiding him, he's making this harder than it is by telling me

to let the planner do everything. After she booked the wrong artist, there's no way I am sitting back watching my event turn into a mess. People are already here, dressed for the occasion and enjoying the vibe.

"Everything is perfect, go and change" Zane startles me. He looks handsome in his Nigerian inspired suit Zazi made for him, well fitted.

I'm randomly standing the middle of the crowd, making sure I haven't missed anything. It feels like something's missing, maybe it's the nerves.

"You think?" I say looking unsure.

"You did a good job baby, now change before you miss the actual event" he says, pulling me.

We make our way to the lodge. My dress is laid on the bed with all my jewellery. Zazi did an awesome job, he used some of Zane's material to detail mine, I love it.

I take a quick shower and glam myself up.

Make up, wig, lashes and nails are out to play, I am the founder after all, I've got to look the part.

"Done" I say. Walking towards him. He's leaning against the door with his hands in his pocket gazing at me with his dreamy seductive eyes. I'm not falling for it.

"Can I just..." he hugs me, placing his hands on my butt, squeezing tight and pulling me towards him. His erection hits my stomach. When and how did this happen.

"Zane we can't, people are waiting for us" I'm trying so hard to resist his seduction, he's touching me in all the right places. I want him, now.

There's a knock at the door.

"Buhle, we start in 5 minutes" it's Yolanda.

"Coming" I shout. I hear her footsteps fade away.

“You have two minutes” I say, he smiles and lifts me, spreading my legs apart and banging me against the wall. Gosh he’s good, aaaah!

The yard is packed with people from different ethnic groups. I knew the festival was well known but to see people here is overwhelming, in a good way. We navigate our way through the stares, heading for the tent. My family and friends are seated on one side and Zane’s family on the other, it’s my first time seeing Zane’s parents. Their eyes are locked to us, Zane is pulling me to their direction. What is he doing? I don’t want to meet them, not here, not in front of the press. The panic is quite visible, Thandi stands from a distance and looks at us, guarding cautiously.

“Ahhh Bhungani” Zane says, greeting his father and they shake hands. His eyes are still on me, so is his mother.

“Ahhh Bhungani, Mthimkhulu, Ndlebentle

Zombini” I say greeting him, my voice is shaking, I bow my head and he nods.

“Molo Nkosazana” I greet Zane’s mother. She stands and opens her arms for a hug. I didn’t expect this. I’m still shocked, unable to move. She pulls me closer and smiles.

“Molo Buhlebethu” she says and goes back to her seat.

What was that? I didn’t expect that kind of a reaction from someone who paid people to kill me, even Zane is amazed.

“We’ll see you later, once everything is in order” Zane says and they both nod.

There’s no way I’m putting myself through this again, he can come and see his parents, not me.

It’s an hour into the event and I’m already loving it, people are enjoying themselves and the guests are spending on the Khumba craft, the vendors are very happy. I haven’t had time to

seat down with my family, I keep seeing them from a distance. I've been busy with the media and engaging with the guests, who've come from different places. I met this couple, they came all the way from Swaziland just to support this initiative, they're also creatives and we've exchanged contact details for future purposes.

"Oh hello Miss Khephu or should I say Mrs Ngele-Ngele" as young male journalist greets me with a smile carrying a recorder.

"Just call me Buhle" I respond. These journalists are hungry for a scoop on my relationship with Zane, they keep bringing it up.

"Right, please tell me more about your husbands involvement in the project, you seem more hands on" he says.

"Prince Zanemvula is also the co-founder of the festival, he handles the finance and operations side of the business, I could invite you to his

office whenever he pulls out the journals,if you desperately want to see him work” I say, he smiles back sarcastically.

“I see, how much did your father contribute in this project, he is the countries most influential business strategists” he says. He’s trying so hard to get under my skin, I won’t let him, I won’t give him that power. Not on my special day.

“His only contribution was helping conceive an intelligent and independent woman that came up with this idea.” I say. I will not crack, not in front of these people.i’m not giving him what he wants.

“Charming, for someone who grew up in the wealthiest suburbs of Edernville, why Khumba? Surely you could’ve chosen other places for your charity work” he asks.

That’s it, I’ve had it. I will not entertain this



anymore.

“My background and my fathers wealth has nothing to do with this festival. Khumba is my father’s birth home, he was raised under these mountains. If you would focus on the actual craft instead of chasing after gossip, you’d actually see the talent of the people of Khumba. I feel sorry for your newspaper, they don’t know how much of a useless asset you are, maybe I should give them a heads up” I say and walk away.

He’s fiddling with his recorder.

People are waving and greeting me from all sides, demaning pictures and questions.

They’re really fascinated about the project, I’m loving what I’m seeing.

I feel light headed and dizzy, I haven’t eaten. I browse through the tent, I can’t see any tables with food. I make my way out of the tent, I feel

nauseous and empty. Why is it hard to find food around here. I spot two guests with food coming from behind the tent. I walk towards their direction. If Zane would know about this, he'd never speak to me.

"Buhle" someone's calling my name from behind me.

It's Thando, what is he doing here?

"What do you want Thando?" I say. I don't have the energy or the time for all of this, I could pass out any minute now if I don't get food.

"I'm not here to cause trouble, I came to support the festival. You did an excellent job" he says.

He's also dressed for the occasion, with a Ghanain dashiki.

"Thank you" I say, he smiles almost wanting to laugh.

“Who knew you’d find comfort in Khumba” he says, and we laugh

“I know right, even I can’t believe it myself but here I am” I say. My knees are weak and I’m slightly losing my vision. I need to seat down for a moment, I need food, lot’s of food. Zane is going to kill me.

“Buhle, are you ok?” Thando holds me in his arms and I rest my head on his chest. I hold on to him and point at the food stalls. He helps me move closer and I find a seat.

“I need food and water” I say, slightly out of energy.

He walks to the stalls and buys something from each stall. There’s meat, salads, samp and tripe, dumpling and stew, he almost bought everything. I sip on the water and begin to eat. He’s looking at me confused and somehow amazed by the amount of food I’m consuming.

“Are you sure you’re okay? Should I call a doctor?” he asks.

I’m regaining my energy and the shaking has stopped.

“I haven’t eaten all day, the nerves had me really bad that I forgot to eat at all” I say. Half of the food is already gone. Ozayo destroys everything with meat.

“Well, you seem better now. So you’re getting married? I thought you weren’t the commitment type or maybe it was me” he says.

I don’t want to have this conversation with him, not now, not here.

“It’s complicated and no it’s not you, I’m the issue” I say, he doesn’t look convinced.

“That line is getting old” he says, smiling. Atleast we can joke about it.

As much as I never had that connection with

him, he's the only person that kept me company half my life. He might not know everything about me but he was there, he made me laugh and despite the conditions of our relationship, he made me feel wanted.

"Mzala, they're calling you. I've been looking all over for you" Thami walks closer to us, giving Thando an inquisitive look. It's like he's sending him a message.

"This is Thami my cousin, Thami this is Thando my friend from Edernville" I say, Thando smiles and waves.

"I thought you said you didn't have friends in Edernville. Hi bhuti" he says.

"We were more than friends" Thando replies before I could even open my mouth.

Thami's reaction is my cue to leave, now.

"Thanks for the food, enjoy Khumba" I say, pulling Thami, walking away from Thando.

“Mzala is that your ex? You invite exes to your events, Zanemvula will not like that” he says.

“Relax, he’s not my ex, we were just bedroom buddies” I say.

His eyes widen and his jaw drops. He is so dramatic.

“Yho! I thought I knew you.” He says.

“Don’t mention this, Zane doesn’t like him and him buying me that food will piss him even more.” I stop him, he nods and we move towards the entrance

“I won’t, I don’t know how Yolanda missed you, she was coming from this direction when I asked her where you were. she’s strange, there’s just something about her, she moves like a mouse. I don’t trust her” he says,

Ugh, not this again. this Yolanda slamming must stop already.

“Well, I work with her not you, so please, leave that girl alone, she’s good at her job and that’s all that matters” I say. I need him to stop thing he has against Yolanda, she might sense his energy and cause trouble for me, I don’t need that.

The launch was a success, uncle Ringo, yes I call him that now, performed and the crowd loved him. I still can’t believe he’s family. Yes I’m part of the family too. Most guests from afar have left but many remained for the after party, which we didn’t stay for, Zane’s strict orders. He drove me home and insisted on seeing me change into my pajamas, like I was going to sneak out during the night. He’s become this over protective and controlling person eversince my pregnancy.

I had a brief talk with my family; dad, mam’Gloria,Kat and I finally got to meet her boyfriend, definetly not what I expected. He’s

good looking and decent, he just doesn't strike me as the celibate type, with his gold chains, tight suit and his carvella shoes. I'm the last person to judge anyone based on their appearance, I know, but he is too kasi for celibacy. I still wonder what they talk about as a couple besides medicine. They seemed to enjoy the festival though, I caught a glimpse of them dancing. It was a great day and a stressful one too, part of me is glad its over, now on to the next events.

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Insert 35



The headlines and press releases on the festival have been positive and nothing short of exceptional. The pictures, the bloggers reviews, the posts on social media platforms, everything is big just like it turned out to be. We've been getting a lot of requests from artists and other creatives to be part of the next months' festival, it's overwhelming but it's exactly what Zane needed, to invite as many people to the lodge as possible to save the jobs of his employees. This festival did more than that, they hired more people instead and Zane has been discussing building more rooms and chalets to accommodate more people.

Now that the launch is out of the way, the wedding is next and I regret moving it close right after the launch. I'm exhausted and nervous about the wedding, even though Zane has planned everything with his family, all we need to do is show up. The launch was

Saturday and today is Thursday, I have one day left to myself before I move into marriage life. Our house is still on the ground but in progress, I told them to move as fast as possible. There's no way I'm spending a whole year at the Royal palace, performing wifely duties to grown men who have their own wives.

I haven't been feeling well today, the new pills the gynecologist gave me are weighing me down, I'm constantly tired and more sleepier. Kat begged me to take her to town during lunch time, I've been postponing all week.

"Sis, you need to move or else your baby will be overweight and lazy" Kat walks in

She doesn't know how tired I am and now I have to dress up for town, in this heat. I can't. I pull the duvet cover over my head, ignoring her.

"Leave me alone" I say.

"Come, this is your last day of freedom as a

single woman, soon you'll have to report to your husband about everything." She says, poking my back.

She knows a hundred percent I'm not the type to be controlled and bullied around.

"One hour and we come back, just one" I say. She's screaming with excitement. I hear her leave walking down the passage. I wish I had her energy.

Like any other summer day in Khumba, the sun is scorching hot. Kat drives so slow and cautiously, I'm annoyed. We left the house an hour ago and we're still not close to town, it usually takes me 30 minutes.

"Step on it Kat, there's no traffic here" I say, she sees how annoyed I am but she ignores me. Her phone has been buzzing throughout the trip.

We get to town and she drives past the mall, does she even know where she's going? I

shouldn't have come with her, everything about this day is annoying and my hormones are bringing the worst out of me. I decide to keep to myself and let her do all this wondering. She parks outside a guest house.

"What are we doing here Katlego? Didn't you say you wanted to come to the mall? I'm tired and my body feels horrible, do what you came here to do and let's leave" I'm fuming and she looks scared.

"Please come, I need your help with this" she says.

What could that possibly be? She's really pissing me off. We make our way in this guest house, it has a beautiful garden and multiple fountains, it's quiet. A white lady meets us at reception and greets us with a wide smile. I won't even entertain this, Kat will attend to her, I don't even know why we're here. She leads us to the back garden.

“SURPRISE” everyone shouts. What’s going on? Sinazo is here with Lydia, when did they get here? Thandi, Thami and Aunt’Kholeka are also here. I’m shocked, I didn’t see this one coming. There’s a table in the middle of the garden, on the corner of my eye I spot a floral backdrop written ‘Congratulations Queen of Khumba’. It’s a bachelorette party, they did all of this for me. Poor Kat, she had to deal with my irritable attitude and rudeness just to pull off the surprise. I’m not even dressed for it.

“Oh sis, I’m sorry” I say hugging her. I feel bad.

“I was so scared, I couldn’t even think properly” she says. This is why i don’t like surprises, I never see them coming. Everyone walks towards us.

“When did you all plan this? Sinazo how did you get here?” I’m really surprised, no wonder she’s been acting strange in our texts.

“We got here last night, we had to stay in this guest house and avoid Khumba.” She says, they are so sneaky,

“She almost bit my head off, you ladies have no idea” Kat says and everyone laughs.

“We’ll blame it on the hormones” Thandi says. I can’t believe she was also in on this

“Okay, let’s all seat down” Thami leads us to the elegantly set table with red roses and gold trinkets, I love it.

“Who’s idea was this?” I ask, they all smile looking at each other.

“It was Kat’s idea but your future husband insisted on paying for everything.” Thami replies. Oh my goodness, no wonder he was pushing me to take the entire day off and stay home, he knew about this all along. I’m not surprised he insisted on paying, that’s his fashion.

“He’s so sneaky” I say, still surprised as to how

they all pull this off without me knowing or suspecting anything.

“He’s so romantic, he paid for all of this, how many men do that? zero.” Lydia says. ofcause that her highlight of all of this, money. That’s all she talks about, well and sex.

“You marrying a gentleman Hlehle, all thanks to Thandi” aunt’Kholeka speaks. Thandi smiles.

“And he’s marrying every mens’ dream woman, smart, beautiful, independent and fearless. He’s very lucky” Thandi says.

We all continue talking about Zane and my relationship from how we met and everyother story in between. Everyone is sharing their story of us, I’m laughing so hard. I really didn’t know they thought of us the way they’re describing us. Thandi is sharing about the times she’d catch Zane sneaking me in at midnight only to drive me back home before sunrise.

“I saw her leave everynight, jumping over the boundry wall, from my bedroom window, Zane would be waiting for her down by the road.” Aunt’khokela shares, they all laugh. I really thought no one saw us.

“What about the time she overslept and got home at sunrise, she jumped in her bedroom window to find Makhulu waiting on her inside,she called Zane and gave them a sex education lesson.” Thami says, oh my gosh, I almost forgot about that time.

“Well clearly their minds were elsewhere, hence the pregnancy” Sinazo says pointing at my stomach.

“They have an unbreakable bond, they have redefined love and stuck to their own terms, especially with Zane’s family and its traditions, Buhle stands for her love and Zane does the



same.” Thandi says, with watery eyes, she’s making me emotional now.

“They are soulmates, their energies feed off each other and they produce this unshakable love, it’s beautiful to witness” Sinazo says, with a fondness in her smile.

“Oh you’re making me cry,” I say, wiping my tears with a napkin.

“Okay, enough with the cries, these are happy times. I organized some games.” Lydia brings a box of props and objects. She pulls up different role play objects, she’s that girl, very kinky. I can see Thandi’s face explode with confusion and disbelief as Lydia pulls them out one by one. There are dildos, vibrators, spankers, anal beads, handcuffs and many other things I do not recognize.

“We will each guess what these are for and how they’re used, anyone who gets it right, takes a

shot of vodka, if you get it wrong, you take two shots. Baby mama, you will wear these” she says, handing me lace lingerie, there’s no way I’m wearing this thing, for them. For my husband, yes, them, definitely no.

“What are these things?” Thandi asks, her facial expression is killing everyone with laughter.

“You have to guess, we’ll start with you. Here, have this one” Lydia she hands Thandi the beads, she’s playing with them, putting them around her neck.

Lydia, Sinazo and I burst into laughter, the others are confused, especially Thandi.

“What’s funny?, is it a necklace?” Thandi innocently asks.

“Honey, those belong inside you, down there” Lydia responds and Thandi is immediately disgusted, removing them and throwing them back to the box.

“Here, two shots for your lack of knowledge, bead lady” Lydia hands her the two shots, she downs them fast and shakes her head.

And that was the first of many, this game has people confessing their bedroom fantasies and what works for them. Everyone is almost drunk, Thandi stopped playing a long time ago when she mistook one of the objects as a feather duster. She’s clueless and I don’t blame her, these things are next level kinky. I can’t believe some people, Lydia being one of them, use them for pleasure. Some look painful and torturous.

The day went by so quick, everyone is drunk, besides me, Thandi is a little bit tipsy but she drank coffee and water, everyone else is highly intoxicated. This has been such a fun filled day. Lots of love, laughter and vodka shots. My sober mind can’t stop thinking about the wedding day. The uncertainty immediately gives me stomach cramps.

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Insert 36

I would be nervous but that voice message I got from Zane in the morning soothed all my anxiety.

“My love, I know you’re probably panicking and worried about how things will be, I’m here to tell you, take a breath and take it easy. I’ve told you many times to trust me and I’ve worked so hard to make sure that that trust is not broken and today I’m saying it again, trust me, everything will be fine. Today is the day I’ve been dreaming about since I first met you in church, when you

called me 'mkhulumthi', I still find it hilarious. I thought to myself, why do I like her, why do I find myself smiling when her face pops up in my head, I had so many questions about you since that day but they were answered when I took you to the picnic, you are my soulmate. My mind couldn't figure it out at first but my soul knew it belonged with yours from the beginning. This is our first day to forever and I can't wait for our souls to officially become one. I love you Buhlebethu"

I keep playing it over and over, as I seat in front of the dressing table, putting on my make up. I've been seated here for the past hour, playing back everyday of my life since I met Zane, in awe of how things changed, how I've changed. It all happened so fast but felt natural and not forced, like it was meant to be.

"Do you need help?" Kat walks in, letting in all the noise from the living area. People are

singing and talking loudly with excitement. She looks beautiful in her African print dress.

“I’m done, just need to get dressed. You look beautiful sis” I say. My dress is laying elegantly on the bed.

“You should dress, everyone is done. Makhulu said we should leave at 10am” she says. I nod and she helps me get dressed. It’s exactly what I asked for, he added his own touch and made it look like it belonged on Africa Fashion Week runway. It would definitely be a showstopper. It has thin straps and fits tightly creating a mermaid like tale at the bottom with the three stripes of a traditional mbaco. The straps are black and make patterns that create a curvy shape. He also made me a cape to cover up and a matching doek. Kat helps with the white dots on my face, I show her mama’s wedding photo and she does it exactly like that, if anyone could do it, is her. her steady surgeon hands

helped. We make our way out of the room to meet everyone in the lounge, they're screaming and ululating.

I took aunt'Kholeka's advise of wearing comfortable shoes, we're walking all the way to Zane's home. The distance is not that long, especially with the large crowd following us and the singing, I'm even dancing along.

My favourite one goes like "ubhuti unezandundu usisi yigolide, ubhuti unezandundu usisi yigolide" I find it very amusing, it loosely translates to "the groom has high cheekbones and the bride is gold" basically teasing the groom and praising the beauty of the bride. They've been singing it the longest and louder as we get closer to Zane's entourage, also singing their own songs, coming our direction. This is how Makhulu explained to me, we would sing our way to them and they would meet us half way to fetch me, their bride, there would be

song and dance battles when the groups meet.

We meet Zane's entourage and their song goes like "zenimphathe kakuhle ubhuti wethu, azangalambi, azangadlakazeli" which loosely translates to "you must take care of our brother, he must not starve, he mustn't look filthy and unpresentable". How typical. They're sending a message in song on how I should treat their son, I hope they taught him how to treat me. Surely they should've taught him how to take care of himself at this age.

He looks handsome in his traditional wear, he's topless and draped with blue and white beads across his upper body. He's wearing a skirtlike thing on the bottom, it's also made from the material of umbaco with a matching shawl over his shoulder, he's wearing black leather gladiators on his feet carrying a white and blue beaded stick on his right hand. He looks like a true Hlubi man, beautiful and confident. I can't



stop smiling and blushing.

We join them and make our way inside the royal palace, there's a huge tent in the middle of the yard, we walk inside and it looks like Xhosa heaven. Everything is in place and perfectly placed. It's all Xhosa tradition inspired, with the black and white draping and table décor, it looks like my dress, effortlessly elegant. We stand on the podium in front, all eyes are on us and the first ceremony begins, we're going to say our vows and sign the certificate.

My eyes are locked to Zane, I have blocked all eyes in the room, just me and my man. My cheeks hurt from the smiling and the blushing, we're here, doing it. I'm getting married.

"If anyone would've dared me to bet on how my life would be now, I would've lost everything. Where I am today and who I am is no where close to where I was a few months ago, and all this changed because of you. Your love, it

healed places no medication could. It validated things no psychic could confirm. With your love I was comfortable enough to face my own demons, ones that ate me up inside and left me crying silently while the world continued like nothing happened. Zane you know my journey, you know my flaws but you love me anyways, you loved all of me, even the places I couldn't love. I stand here today, in front of our families to thank you and also to say, I will continue thanking you for the rest of my life. I will show gratitude in every word and every action" I say, my voice is shaking, and tears are rolling uncontrollably down my cheeks. Zane's eyes are red, he takes a deep breath.

"I've never met someone with a contagious spirit of courage and fearlessness. Your love is fearless and strong. Your love is funny and sexy. Your love has made me the man I am today. I walk around with confidence, knowing that I am

loved by your kind of love. It has made me stand up for myself and what I believe in, it has made me to shy away from cowardice. To have you beside me, as my Queen, makes me a better person and an even better King” he says, wiping off his tears.

The crowd rejoices and ululates, I see Kat crying and so are some of the villagers. Her mother doesn't look pleased, I'm confused, I thought she's over her nonsense with us. I quickly look away. The traditional leader blesses the rings and orders us to kiss. Zane has been waiting for this part, he's giving me his naughty smile and biting his lower lip. I'm so shy, he pulls me closer by the waist and we kiss. He's really enjoying himself with this kiss, forgetting there are people watching. He moves his hands up holding my face and tilting it to the side, he continues to kiss me, deeper and passionately. I can hear the crowds screaming

and the men whistling. I pull away from him and I immediately spot Thami covering his eyes with embarrassment. I'm looking down, shying away from the audience. I can't believe he put on such a show, in front of so many people, his parents, royal council and other royal families.

The second phase of the ceremony began after we had lunch. It was very long and boring, I still don't understand the significance behind everything that was done, a few women, including Thandi, took me to a backroom and dressed me in my new makoti attire, which is very heavy and hot. They wrapped two towels, one across my breasts, one hanging from the shoulder, a scarf around my waist, like that wasn't enough, they topped it with a small check blanket over my shoulders, hanging like a cape. All these different textures make my skin itch and the Khumba heat is cooking me alive from the inside out. If anyone wants to marry a

Xhosa man, do it during winter, this is torture. They escorted me to seat on a hand grass mat, it's so thin, my butt hurts. Zane owes me a full body massage for putting me through all of this. I was given my new name, Zanozuko. They proceeded to give me advice on how to carry myself with my new name, living up to its' distinct meaning, to bring honour, peace, dignity and purpose.

They also served me an under seasoned leg of lamb with a glass of amasi, it had heart burn written all over it. I couldn't stomach the different textures and taste, it all came back for everyone to see. Ozayo was not liking that combination at all. I was embarrassed but Thandi was there to help clean up the mess. Atleast someone understood my situation, others gave me weird judgmental looks. The women took turns in giving me marital advise and I can proudly admit, I won't be using any.

Thandi and Makhulu said something so profound, both in different ways said that I should learn to listen and understand everything Zane says before I respond and my response should lead to a solution and not worsen the circumstance. Everyone else spoke about my domestic duties as a wife, typical and old, for a second during their speeches I almost slept. They wouldn't even notice my head was faced down the whole time, as instructed.

I haven't seen Zane since our lunch time, I miss him. I'm making tea for all the older women, apparently they want to see how generous of a wife I am. In their view, a wives' generosity is measured by how good your tea taste and your love is gauged by the warmth of your house. According to their theories, I'm not a good wife for their King because I hate tea and I don't like a stuffy house, air conditioner must be on at all times, I like a cool breeze.

I serve them one by one, there's over 20 women in that tent. I'm sweating like a pig under this winter collection, my back hurts, from the heavy trays and my hormones have elevated my intolerance, I'm beyond annoyed. On my way back to the kitchen, I take a few minutes break, leaning against the back wall and processing my emotions, I want to cry. All I wanted was to marry the man I love, not slave like Cinderella while everyone enjoys themselves. Even Zane has forgotten about me, I haven't seen him for hours now.

My sixth sense alerts me, someone is looking at me, I turn my head and my darling husband is standing next to me. I hug him tightly, I want to leave, I want to run away from here and lay my head on his chest.

"Where have you been? Your family is abusing me" I say, he's laughing.

"I'm sorry baby, I heard you threw up after

eating the meat and sour milk, I felt so bad and wanted to come see if you were fine but I wasn't allowed" he says. Who told him about the mess I made and what kind of tradition deprives the husband from seeing his wife on their wedding day. I just want it all to end

"I want to be with you, alone, naked in your arms" I confess looking into his eyes, he smiles and plants a kiss on my forehead.

"Let's wait 'till the crowd clears away then we'll escape to our room" he says. By the looks of things, the crowd is ready to sleep over. They've been demanding more alcohol and meat, singing louder and crazier. I was amused when they sang 'ilanga liyatshona' which is 'the sun is setting', that's the song they sing when demanding alcohol from the family. It's their way of telling the family that sunset is party time, they even sang it at Zazi's homecoming. I find it amusing and quite creative how they



send messages indirectly, with songs.

“You look beautiful Zanozuko, like a true Hlubi Queen” he says, admiring my new look, I’m still getting used to this name. They called me a couple of times in the kitchen and I didn’t respond, it will take some time. I like it though, I’m now Zane’s Zano, no longer Zane’s Buhle. King Zanemvula and his Queen Zanozuko, it’s perfect.

“You chose well” I say. “ I need to get back before they call me lazy” I say kissing him and rushing back to the kitchen.

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And hours later, when the noise has calmed and yard is finally empty, we’re naked, alone in eachothers arms, just like I wanted. I really thought I would pass out the moment I got to our room, instead I wanted him to help release all the tension, sweats and all.

“Goodnight Zanozuko” he says, kissing me on the lips

“Goodnight my husband” I respond, wrapping my arms around him.

The only part I enjoyed about today was the first phase ceremony, our vows and making it official, everything else was slavery, nothing to do with love. Briefly spoke to my family before they left, it was an emotional moment, leaving me in my new home with my new family. Thami said he’ll come visit before he leaves for Edernville with Xola and Dlamini is moving in with Makhulu, she wasn’t joking. Haven’t directly spoken and had a decent conversation with Zane’s parents, not that it’s something I’m looking forward to, I just don’t know how I’ll live in the same yard as someone who hates me so much she paid people to have me killed.

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Insert 37

Vrrr Vrrr

It's my phone, who could it be at this time. It's a text from Thandi.

\*Get ready, we have to prepare for breakfast\* Is she serious? What breakfast? It's 4am, who's eating anything at this time.

\*It's 4am Thandi\* I reply. This is ridiculous.

\*Porridge needs to be ready at 5am, the King wakes up at 5:30, Zane wakes up at 6:00 and by that time we should be done making the whole breakfast feast. Quickly\* she replies.

I want to cry, this is utter rubbish and domestic slavery. I get up and head for the shower, Zane is fast asleep not even distracted by my movements. A few minutes later I'm done and fully dressed in my makoti attire, all the towels, scarf and blanket, the full package.

Zane lifts his head as I walk towards the door.

"Goodmorning Zanozuko" he says in his deep morning hoarse voice.

"Mxm" I say furiously and shut the door behind me. This all his fault, I could be single and satisfied in the suburbs drowning myself in wine and exploring fine art.

Thandi is doing most of the work, I'm just gathering ingredients and washing cutlery. There are three other kitchen staff busy with whatever, I can tell by their facial expressions that they are judging me, for not being a 'good wife'.

“We’re almost done, here, go set the dining table” Thandi gives me a set of plates and cutlery.

Atleast I know how this is done. I hear footsteps getting closer and walking slower.

Its Zane’s dad. “Molo Zanozuko” he greets as he walks closer, I’m nervous.

“Molo tata” I greet back, he smiles and it quickly fades away. He doesn’t look well at all, his eyes say it all.

“Did you sleep well?” he asks, pulling out his chair. Why is he nice? I thought he hated me, why does he care if I slept well or not.

“I slept well tata, and you?” I guess we’re having a conversation then.

One of the staff walks in with a plastic full of medication and water. That’s a lot of medication and I never really asked Zane about his father’s illness. All I know is that he needs to

retire from his throne and it's busy schedule.

"When you're this old and sick, sleep is not something you enjoy, you just don't know if tonight is your last night" he says, sorting out his pills.

Woaow! That was deep, I feel awkward, I don't know how to respond to that, he caught me off guard.

"Uhm, well you're still alive, that's something to enjoy" I respond and he laughs, so much that he begins to cough, uncontrollably.

I walk closely and hand him the water, helping him to drink it, his hands are shaking.

"Breathe, slowly and drink. I'm sorry tata" I say, I can't help but feel guilty for this. He finally calms down, Thandi walks through the door with a tray of food.

"I can see why Zanemvula chose you over the throne, you are funny MaDlomo" he says, trying

to catch his breath. I don't know whether I should smile, say thank you. I stand there looking at him.

Thandi pulls me and we get back to the kitchen.

"Why is he being nice? I thought he hated me" I whisper to Thandi.

She shrugs and walks away before I could ask anything else, she's avoiding me, there's something she knows about this. I continue clearing up the kitchen and Zane walks in. He's smiling, leaning against the door.

"Are you really angry at me?" He still has a smile on his face. I ignore him and continue with the dishes, I feel him walk closer and hugging me from behind.

"You're disturbing me, please move" I say, pushing him away.

"I'm sorry for making you my wife" he says. He's patronizing me and it's pissing me off even

more.

“Zane your breakfast is ready in the dining room” I say and move away from him, he pulls me closer and hugs me tighter. He smells so good, his embrace is warm and his stare is seductive. He knows how to win me over, rest me in his arms and look at me like I’m the only one that matter. He leans for a kiss and I fall for it immediately.

“Not in my house, never” Zane’s mom is shouting. Oh shit!

I pull away from Zane’s arms and stand a few feet away from him. We didn’t hear her come in, I’m embarrassed and Zane is being his cool self. Almost like he doesn’t care.

“Sorry Nkosazana” I say, avoiding eye contact.

“Mama, can I speak to you, privately.” Zane says, he looks angry, leaving the kitchen, his mother follows him. I can hear them arguing but I can’t



really make out what they're saying. Zane is dominant in the argument. I wonder what they're talking about.

They both walk in and his mom walks straight into the dining area, she's furious. Zane follows and walks past me.

"Zane ?" I say, he pauses for a moment and looks at me, he's still upset. I wish he could tell me.

"See I don't want you to feel like a guest here, it's your home now and people need to understand and respect that" he says, I nod and he walks to the dining room.

I think confronting his mother about that will only worsen things for me, she'll make me hate this place even more. She's giving me confusing attitude, one day she's nice the next she's angry, I can't really tell which of her personalities I'll be meeting when.

I dozed off after the breakfast preparations, Zane went to work and I'm here fulfilling housewife duties. I'm in our backroom going through our gifts, there's so many of them. There's a knock on the door. Thami walks in, he told me he'd visit so I asked him to fetch my laptop and some files at the gallery so I could work from home.

"Mzala or should I say Nkosazana Zanozuko" he walks in with his hyper energy. I'm definitely going to miss him.

"I'll always be your Mzala" I say.

"I brought your things, eish I know you've been telling me to stop this Yolanda thing, but Mzala.." ugh not this again.

"No Thami, it's enough" I interrupt him before he continues

"She was sitting in your office, looking at the pictures of you and Zane from Sinazo's

wedding” he says. So people can’t look at my pictures, he’s crazy.

“She works for me, she uses my office, so what? and those pictures are beautiful, I don’t blame her” I reply, he rolls his eyes

“You should’ve seen how she looked at them, she was blushing and we both know she’s straight.” he says. So now she was blushing because of Zane? I will no longer entertain this madness.

“When are you leaving?” I ask, changing the subject. He looks annoyed but gives in.

“Tomorrow morning, Dlamini has already moved in, you should’ve seen Makhulu’s face, she’s always smiling and singing with joy. I’m just happy she has someone to keep her company now that we’re all leaving” he says.

And that also gives us space to live our new lives peacefully without her checking up on us

every other second.

“I’m going to miss you cuz, how often will you visit? Edernville swallows a lot of village people, they forget about home, don’t be those people” I say, he laughs.

“Mzala you’ll see me when my glow up is in full force, with a car and branded clothes. I’ve lived in Khumba for 25 years, there’s no way I’m coming back looking the same, I need to inspire my people.” He’s full of himself, I’m laughing hard at his facial expressions. I can already tell, he’ll comeback for Christmas.

He’s those cousins that visit the city and come back only on Christmas to flaunt their lifestyle and start speaking city languages even demanding expensive liquor from local shebeens. Thami is not far from that sort of behavior.

“I’ll probably see you on my graduation and

dad's wedding. I know Xola will take good care of you, call me anytime you need anything" I say, we hug and continue gossiping about how villagers thought the wedding was a waste of money and was not traditionally done.

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I've been busy with work that I totally lost track of time, the sun is slowly disappearing behind the mountains and I have to get back to the kitchen to help with dinner. Ugh.

"Thandi, can I help with dinner?" I say, she's busy in the kitchen.

"Don't worry about it, I'm almost done" she says, I need to at least look busy to keep up with this 'good wife' image. I help clearing up the table

"Buhle...uhm...Zanozuko, don't. Zanemvula said we shouldn't overwork you and I agree, with your pregnancy and health, you should take it easy." she says.

“But Thandi you know people around here are” I really don’t want to be known as the lazy wife who can’t fulfill her wifely domestic duties. I already have a bad reputation in some of the people calling me too western and too fancy.

“You shouldn’t worry yourself about what people think, people that matter know the real you, now if you really want to work, make tea for both of us, there are some rusks there as well” she says. I do as I’m told. We continue having conversations about the wedding, she enjoyed the first session more. She says it was a true reflection of our love and who we are.

I’m having my first dinner with my new family and everyone is quiet, all I can hear is the cutlery hitting the plates. Zane is seated next to me, Zazi and Zinzi are seated opposite us with Thandi next to them. Their parents are seated on the far right of the long dining table, I don’t understand why they have a 16 seater table for

a small family like this.

“This is nice Thandi, unlike the one Zazi once made, it tasted like rubber” Zinzi says and Zazi is immediately annoyed.

“Well I’m not a chef, I’m a designer” he says in his defense.

“Oh have you decided on a course you want to do? Last time we spoke you were still confused” I ask, remembering our conversation late last year. There’s awkward silence, even his parents are waiting for an answer. Since when do they care about their children's’ studies

“Well I sort of have but I didn’t apply” he responds, shyly. He passed really well, with five distinctions, surely he can be considered as a walk in, it’s not too late.

“You can also apply for second semester, your results are exceptional, I can help you with that. your work is amazing, the fashion industry

needs people like you” I say and Zane’s mom hits the plate loudly, shocking all of us. Did I say something wrong? Zazi is immediately uncomfortable, he nods and continues with his food.

Zane looks pissed, his eyes are locked to his mother, I think I started a forbidden topic; education. We all continue with dinner in silence. It feels like back home in Edernville when my father and I weren’t in good terms, I don’t want to be around this energy, it’s a saddening and has me missing home, where we laugh and talk about all sorts of things with Makhulu. They’re taking me back, I don’t want to go back to that toxic place, I’ve come too far.

“Excuse me” I excuse myself and leave with my plate. Zane notices my watery eyes and follows after me.

“What’s wrong Buhle?” he asks. How do they live like this? With a full family and not get along.



I can't do this, I won't. This energy brings back so many bad memories of all the times I've spent alone, it's too much.

"I can't do this Zane, I can't live with your family." I say, he's confused.

"What do you mean? What's wrong?" he says. Is he serious with that question

"This is not normal, I know this, I lived like this for ten years and I don't want to go back to it, I don't want this Zane. When I agreed to marrying you, I didn't mean this." I'm upset and tears fall down my cheeks. I knew they didn't get along but this is too much of a trigger to handle.

I walk outside, leaving him standing in the kitchen, making my way back to our room. I throw myself on the bed and cover my face.

This was suppose to be a happy time, marrying the only man I ever loved, living with him full time like I wished. We should be all over

each other, not this. We should be enjoying our honeymoon phase with no worries. As much as I love him, I cannot live the next six months with this kind of energy. There's one thing I fear the most as someone who suffers from depression and anxiety and that's slipping back to the darkest stage of the illness. I try everyday to watch what I do and dictate my life trying to avoid the things that put me in that place, its hard because I'm constantly worried that one wrong decision could take me back and what is even more depressing is constantly carrying that fear of slipping back to that dark place.

Without realizing I've fallen asleep and it's dark. Zane is not in bed, I look across the room and he's not here. I pull my phone to check on the time, it's after midnight. Where could he be at this time? I dial his number and the door swings open. It's him, he looks drained, like he's been running or fighting, sweat fall from his face to

his t-shirt.

“I’m sorry, did I wake you” he says. I shake my head.

“Buhle things are not good with my family, especially my mother. I’m sorry I brought you into this, I know you didn’t sign up for it and I shouldn’t expect you to be tolerant and understanding of it. I’m really sorry” he says, close to tears kneeling in front of me.

“Why can’t you talk things out? I know it won’t be easy or solve things over night but it’s worth a try” I say, he shakes his head.

“My father is controlled by my mother, she manipulates him. I’ve spoken to my father so many times and we reach common ground but always seems to forget our conversations and it becomes hard to keep explaining myself all the time. I really wish our house was close to being done, I want us out of here.” he says.

“But Zane you can’t abandon your family.” I say and he gives me the ‘watch me’ look.

“I’m serious, you can’t walk out and never look back, resolve things and make it work. You have to try for the sake of our child. I don’t want her to grow up not knowing his fathers’ family, I know how it feels and I don’t want that for her” I say, he drops his head on my lap, burying it between my thighs, he takes a deep breathe.

“It would be easy if I knew the root of the problem” he says. Well that’s where they should start, asking their parents what the problem is and take it from there.

“Well ask them that. Let’s sleep now” I say.

“And why are you so sweaty?” I ask, he lifts his head

“Jogging” he says and kisses me before heading for the shower.

I can’t be the cause of this disruption in this

family, clearly it started before I met Zane, they should get to the bottom of it and work it out, I can't live like this. I won't.

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Insert 38

It has been a month since I married my soulmate and became Mrs Zanozuko Ngele-Ngele, I'm a totally new person and I have the name to go with it. My new family's issues still haven't been resolved, instead they have worsened. They had the meeting but nothing positive came out of it, there was shouting and

cursing. This has caused a divide in the family, Zane and I eat dinner alone in our room or go out for dinner in town, sometimes we're joined by Thandi and the boys.

This separation started after Zane's mother lashed out during a family dinner and accused me of trying to steal her position as Queen, she called me a city chancer who is after the royalty money and didn't care for Zane. That's when the boys, jumped in and told her about the impact I have of Zane since the day we've met. I could handle her insults because I knew they came from a bitter and ignorant person who cannot be taken seriously but she pained me when she accused my grandmother of using black magic to get Zane's attention and make him fall in love with me, that I couldn't handle. I walked out with rage and told Zane I never want to be in the same room as her. I meant it, if I see her and she continues to talk lies about my

grandmother I will not be able to control myself. From that night onwards, I've been avoiding her and the King, whose only words were 'Nonjezu is your mother, you should respect her' , like he was controlled by remote. I saw what Zane spoke about, she's manipulating him and using his sickness to her advantage. She's as dangerous and vicious as Makhulu described her.

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I am now back to work, Zane used my office for a week but went back to the lodge. When I asked him why the sudden change of mind, he said it's not his style, which I found odd because his office also has art and crafts all around it. The preparations of Zane's inauguration are underway. I still don't know what is expected of me but I'm more nervous than excited because I too will be sworn in as the new Queen of Khumba, which is nerve

wrecking. I've been asked by the Royal council to draw up my plans and objectives as the new Queen, which I found to be very easy because Khumba is very patriarchal and my main objective is to alleviate that, by offering more opportunities for women and the young girls. This means, the tradition of ukuthwala (young girls abducted and forced to be wives to older village men) will have to end.

"I brought you lunch" Zane walks through the door. I've been busy with the royal council report all day, neglecting my own work, good thing I have Yolanda to help me.

"Thanks my love, I've been busy with this report all day, I need it to be perfect so they can take me seriously" I say.

Aaah he brought my favorite, prawn curry and noodles. It's smells delicious.

"They'll accept anything, mama did nothing



throughout her reign, all she did was help install the sewage system” he say, looking annoyed.

I’d rather not talk about her, my body just cringes.

“How’s the house going, Oza is growing here” I say, he’s been visiting the sight almost everyday.

“It’s coming along, they had to redo the main bedroom, but they’ll be done before Oza arrives” he say.

They better be, there’s no way my child is living in that negative space.

“Okay, don’t forget our meeting at 3pm today please, I need to brief you on new proposals.” I say, he’s immediately annoyed.

“You can always email me these things” he says. What has gotten into him, he’s always making excuses when we have staff meetings, it’s new. He was never like this before I went on my short leave.

“We have to discuss the finances as well, everyone needs to be present, why don’t you want to be at the meeting?” I ask, he shifts his eyes away from mine and shakes his head. He’s coming whether he likes it or not.

Yolanda walks in and interrupts the conversation.

“More faxes for you Buhle, afternoon Sir” she says, Zane nods, still looking away, he’s acting really strange and disrespectful.

“Thanks Yolanda, the meeting will start at three, you can go on your lunch break” I say. Poor thing, she’s been working non stop all day, I didn’t see her snack on something.

“Okay, I’ll have lunch at the lodge” she says, walking out.

“What’s wrong with you Zane? What happened when I was away?” I ask. I finally got his attention.

“Nothing happened, I just don’t feel her energy that’s all” he says. He’s starting to sound like Thami, since when does he care about energy

“Well we work with her, your energy will adjust” I say, annoyed and continue eating my lunch.

The meeting was quick and awkward, it felt like I had two meetings, one with Yolanda and Zane and the other with just Zane. He didn’t respond or give attention to her, it was like she wasn’t there, I was so embarrassed. After his financial report he excused himself and left, I was left to finish off with Yolanda.

I just got home and Zane is seated on the bed with his head facing down, he has a large brown envelope in his hand. He doesn’t look well, he looks angry.

“Are you fine baby?” I ask, moving towards him.

He slowly lifts his head and his eyes are red, full of rage. What’s going on here

“Zane, talk to me? What’s going on?” I ask, I’m starting to worry and I sit closer next to him, he gets up and walks away.

“You tell me Buhle, what’s going on?” he says throwing the envelope on the bed.

I’m really confused. I open it and pull whats inside.

Oh shit! Oh shit! Where did these come from? Who took them and how? Why would someone do this.

My body feels a rush wave of embarrassment and shock.

“Talk Buhle!” he shouts and startles me. It’s really not what it seems like.

“It was at the launch, he was there, I was trying to find food stalls, I hadn’t eaten all day, I was feeling nauseous and dizzy, I almost fainted and he helped me. There’s nothing more baby” I say, he’s still angry.

But what sick person took these and sent them to Zane. What are they trying to achieve.

“Why didn’t you tell me about it?” he asks.

“It meant nothing, it wasn’t important and from how you were the last time you met him, I didn’t want to start unnecessary conflict, but who took these? Where did you get these picture?” I ask.

“So now you invite your exes or what do you call it? Fuck buddies to our events and have them buy you lunch?” he says. Didn’t he ear what I juts said

“I didn’t invite him Zane, and he only bought lunch because I wasn’t feeling too good. This picture is when he caught me when I felt dizzy, this one is when he carried me to the table and this one is me eating lunch, by my self, it’s not a date. Whoever took these was trying to get to

you, to us. Where did you get these?" I say, I'm getting pissed of being accused of something I didn't do. Zane should know me by now, I'd never cheat on him, never.

"I found them here, on the bed" he says, he looks defeated and tired.

"So someone broke into our room and left these here, doesn't that worry you? I'm your wife, I'm loyal to you, it hurts me that you think I'd do such a thing, all you should be worried about is the person who's trying to get between us" I say. He walks closely and seats next to me.

"I think mama has stoop on the devils level with this, it has her name all over it. She never approved of us and she's doing everything she can to break us up, I'm tired of her lies" he says, storming out of the room before I could stop him.

He can't confront her with no evidence of how

she took the pictures, it's useless. I run after him, he's already out of my eye sight.

"You will never come between us, you will not control and manipulate us like you do with dad, I love Buhle and you need to accept that. You even pretended to like her at the launch because of your evil traits. I still don't know how you're my mother, so evil and heartless" Zane is shouting, I can hear him from the kitchen. Thandi looks confused.

"What's going on?" she asks. I hand her the envelope. Her reaction is exactly like mine when I saw the, shocked.

"Where did these come from?" she asks. I shrug and move towards the lounge.

"Can't you see this girl is using you, she's using you for your money and you're just giving it to her on a silver platter, you are such an idiot" she says giving me ugly looks.

Oh so she did this and is not even going to deny it

“Zane this is pointless, let’s go” I say, pulling him from the conversation.

“Go with your gold digging granddaughter’s witch, she and her family have won you over with their witchcraft, I don’t even know you anymore” she says.

I can tolerate the insults but to drag my grandmother in the name of witchcraft is a death application.

“Leave my grandmother out of this Nonjezu” I’m angry, she laughs out loud.

“She doesn’t even respect your mother, calling me by name. The whole village knows about it, she’s a witch, that’s how your father became rich, she used her black magic and your mother was the sacrifice” she says carelessly as she sips on her tea.



Unable to contain my anger I rush towards her with all the rage, jumping on top of her, hitting her and letting all my anger and frustrations out on her.

How could she say something like that about my family and think I will let it go with the wind, to accuse of my family of such evil practices and still bring my mother into it. How dare she disrespect my father like this.

She's screaming as I continuously punch her face and pull her hair, Zane and Thandi are pulling me from behind. My grip is so tight on her hair that I drag her on the floor as I am pulled back.

“You will not disrespect my mother like that, you will not speak about my family like that, you evil bitter bitch.” I'm screaming and crying.

Zane manages to free her from my hands and pulls me away, holding me close to him.

“Buhle, you’ll hurt yourself and the baby, she’s not worth it” Zane says, holding me closer to his chest. The whole staff is watching with their eyes wide open.

“Nonjezu, stop this. These children have nothing to do with it, it’s you, it’s all you. Don’t let it out on them” Thandi says. She’s angry, I’ve never seen her with this much anger, she’s usually the calm one.

“One more word and you’re fired, I took you in when you ran away from your marriage, I gave you this job and this is the thanks I get” Nonjezu replies, wiping off the blood from her nose.

“I would never thank you for anything, never. Don’t project your anger and resentment on these kids. You’re jealous of their love, it’s what you always wanted but instead your father sold you to King Zenzele, you’re angry at the wrong people Nonjezu, these kids are not your father. I know the story.” Thandi says, we all look

confused and shocked, even Zane is confused. So Nonjezu's father traded her to Zane's father when she was younger, now this explains her anger and vile behavior towards life and my relationship with Zane.

"You don't know me Thandiwe, you know nothing about my life" she says.

"Ooh I know, I know that when they brought you here you were only 19 years old, the King was close to 40, I also know about how you took contraceptives to avoid getting pregnant, how you wanted to abort Zane by poisoning yourself. I know more than you think. I also know you hated me only because I ran away from my marriage, you couldn't. You envy Zane and Buhle's love because it's what you wanted. They are not to blame for how your life turned out, you are not to blame for it. Stop carrying that burden, it's killing you and your children" Thandi is emotional, so is Nonjezu, she's crying

uncontrollably on the floor.

Thandi walks closer to comfort her but she gets up and walks down the passage.

I didn't expect that, neither did Zane. His hands are both over his head, his eyes are watery and I can see he's hurt. The truth finally came out and Thandi knew all along.

I walk towards the kitchen and leave Zane talking to Thandi. I need water. The staff is still shocked by the incident, one of the ladies walks to me and whispers in my ear.

"It's not the Queen, some young lady gave it to me to put it in your room, she said she works with you. She's the one that gave me the envelope" she says.

I can't believe what I'm hearing, why would Yolanda do this? What is she trying to achieve, I'm confused.

"Are you sure she said she works with me?" I

ask, she nods and walks away.

I need to get to the bottom of this. Why is she trying to break us up. Maybe she's working with someone. I took her in and gave her this job without flinching, now she's going to betray and humiliate me like this. Thami was right about her strange ways.

Zane walks out with Thandi, they look emotionally drained, I can't dump this Yolanda bomb on him right now, I need to find evidence first.

"I'm sorry Buhle" Thandi hugs me tight.

"It will be fine, things will be better from here". I say and she shakes her head.

"We're leaving, we're staying at the lodge until the baby is born. My child will not be brought into this cruel home" Zane says.

Wait, what? We can't run everytime there's a family crisis, these things need to be dealt with

for future purposes. Judging by his look, I can't argue with him. I nod and we walk to the room.

I packed one suitcase, he said he'll fetch other things tomorrow. He hasn't said much, he only answers briefly and spends most of his time staring into space. We checked in at one of the guest rooms inside the lodge, the one we usually book. He has been silent ever since we got here and I've been awkwardly staring at him.

"At some point you're going to need to deal with it" I say, he gives me a warning look. I should stop but I know where this will lead, his anger will change the sweet and kind man I fell in love with.

"Baby I know it must be..." he interrupts me before I finish

"You know what Buhle? My own mother tried to kill me, she didn't want me, everyday of my life she saw me as a curse, that thing that reminded

her of the horror of her marriage” he says fuming.

“I know what bottled anger does, I know what unresolved family issues do, I know how it feels to be neglected by someone who’s suppose to parent you and I can assure you, it will change you and it’s up to you to let it change you into a better person” I say.

Tears roll down his cheeks as he looks at me. I’ve never seen him this broken. I pull him closer and lay his head on my chest, wrapping my arms around him. He cries loudly, his whole body is shaking.

“You tell me this all the time, you will be fine baby. I know you will” I say, comforting him.

I hold him closer and we both fall asleep.

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Insert 39

I have been watching Yolanda and observing every move she makes, nothing is out of the ordinary, infact, she's perfect, everything she does is precise and very calculative. She works exactly on schedule, I need to know more about this girl.

"Yolanda, we'll have lunch together" I say and she nods slowly, almost confused.

"I'll order something at the lodge and have someone bring it in here" I say. She continues with her work. I can't believe I've worked with this girl and know nothing about her, I've never seen friends or any of her family visiting. She



hasn't even gone back home since she started working, she's always alone. There's more to this than this 'perfect faced' she's putting on.

Luzuko walks in with takeaway boxes and I call on Yolanda.

"chicken or beef?" I ask.

"Beef please" she responds.

"We really don't get the time to know each other, like chat, we always talk about work, I find that odd" I say, she gives me a blank stare.

"What would you like to know?" she asks.

"Well, friends, do you have any?" I ask.

"Varsity friends, they're not around, some are in the Cape some in Edernville" she says.

"Boyfriend?" I ask, she smiles, almost turning pink.

"Not yet, it's still new though, just a little bit complicated" she says. Oh so if she has

someone, why is she trying to break me up with mine.

“How complicated? I’m sure you can be together if you both make it work” I say, she’s still blushing

“We could, there’s just a lot of issues, his family, his lifestyle, I don’t want to rush him, I’m giving him space to realise what he’s missing out on” she says.

This seems serious, I wonder why she never spoke of this mystery man before.

“Where does he stay? Why don’t you invite him to Zane’s inauguration, I’m sure he’d love it here.” I say and her mood changes, she’s annoyed.

“I said it’s complicated, he’s just held down a bit but he’ll eventually see we’re meant to be together” she says, with a straight face, almost convincing.

There's more to this than she's telling me and I will get to the bottom of this suspicious relationship of hers, even if it means sending one of our safety marshals to follow her. I also need to know where she got those pictures and who send them.

"So you don't have friends here in Khumba? Or someone who's visited you? Don't you get lonely?" I say, fishing for more information.

"No one, I'm shy, it's hard to make friends and I'm always misunderstood" she says.

I defended her for far too long, she's lying and tricking me, she's not misunderstood, she's plain weird.

We finish off our lunch and head back to work. I've been going through her resume and realized that I never called her references, maybe they might know something that will help. I walk to the door and close it.

The first one is from the radio station.

“MsasiFM hello” a lady answers

“Oh hello, I need to ask about a former employee of yours, Yolanda Mbona , she worked there for a brief period” I ask. The lady is silent for a while

“I don’t recall a Yolanda, when did she work here?” she asks.

“Late last year, she worked for the PR team” I say.

“I think you called the wrong station, I’m the head of PR and we haven’t hired anyone in the last two years, sorry” she says and hangs up.

I’m confused, I thought I wanted answers but now I’m digging myself into a bigger whole. She said she worked there after she left the events company. Who is this girl and why did she lie.

I dial the second number.

“Fancy events hello” the lady answers

“oh good day mem, I’m calling to ask about your former employee, Yolanda” I say.

“oh Yolanda, ey, where are you calling from?” she asks.

“I’m her new employer, Buhle Ngele-Ngele from Khumba Kulture Festival” I say

“Did you say employer? So she’s been cleared to work again?” she says, I’m confused what does she mean by this

“I’m not understanding mem” I say.

“For her to be able to work again she must have been cleared by the clinic she was admitted in for her mental illness, that’s why the company let her go. She was a danger to us and herself and her obsessive relationship with our boss. But it’s good to hear she’s fine and working again, she is hardworking” she says.

My mouth is wide open and my eyes too, I don't have anything to say, I'm gobsmailed. This is the last thing I expected. How did I not do this before I hired her, I put myself at risk and my family too. It all makes sense now, the pictures, the way her face lights up when Zane is around, how she's always willing to help even when not asked. I messed up.

I go through her documents, they're all certified from three years back, she post her C.V three years back and I stumbled across it, she fit the requirements I needed and my desperation didn't even bother to check for such things. I poked the bee hive and put my family in danger, all because I wanted a P.A. how am I going to fix this?

So this man she's talking about, being held up and her complicated relationship is Zane, my husband, she's in love with my husband and wants to break us up. Zane needs to know

about this, she needs to go.

.....

I am having dinner with my husband in our room, he's still in a foul mood but he's better than the other night. I don't want to add on his shoulders, the Yolanda saga, but I need him to know and be alert.

"Yolanda is in love with you" I say and he almost chokes on his food. He avoids eye contact. Wait, did he know?

"You knew? Zane do you know that girl lied about working at the radio station, she lied about the events company being bankrupts, she was released from work because of her mental illness, she's dangerous" I say, now this is the reaction I expected, he stops and stands with his hands on his waist

"Who told you all of that?" he asks as he begins to panic

“I called the references today, after one of the staff told me she was the one that delivered those pictures and I know she took them too, Thami mentioned she was in that area when I was with Thando” I say. what’s he not telling me

“So you hired her without calling her references?” he says.

“I know, that was very ignorant of me but I was desperate” I say.

“She made a move on me, she tried to...uhm..”  
he can’t continue

“She did what Zane?” I say, curious. He’s been keeping this from me all along.

“She wanted to give me a blow job” he says  
looking down, clothed with shame. He ought to be.

This is bigger than I thought, how could he keep such a thing from me, no wonder he’s been acting funny around her. What kind of mental



illness is this? Making her believe that my husband loves her and have the courage to approach him for oral sex.

She needs to leave Khumba and never look back.

“She’s leaving and she’s leaving now” I say, rushing through the door, making my way to her cottage.

Zane is following behind me.

The lights are still on, good, she’s up. I bang on the door continuously until she opens. She looks shocked and confused.

“Pack your shit and get out of my village.” I say, pushing her in and pointing at her bags.

“What’s going on Buhle?” She’s playing innocent. It’s not working, I know her tricks, I’m not falling for it.

“I’m giving you 30 minutes to pack everything

and never look back” I say.

She stands still, folding her arms. She thinks I’m joking? I’m going to show her.

I rush to her closet and pull out her clothes out, throwing them on the floor, shelf by shelf. She walks closer and tries to stop be but I push her away, opening the other side.

Oh my Gosh!

My whole body is overwhelmed with fear. She has different pictures of Zane collage with hers. She has my face stretched out with a red marker.

This girl is beyond crazy.

“ After all I’ve done for you, you betray me like this. I called your former worker, they told me everything. And the station said they don’t know a Yolanda. You lied” I say. She laughs and walks closer to me

“He loves me, he’s just waiting for the right time to break the news to you. We connected the first time we met, let him go, I will be his Queen, not a city girl with no home training. He deserves better” she says. I can’t believe what I hearing.

I can see Zane rushing towards the door with two of the safety marshals, Yolanda runs and shuts the door and locks it.

It’s me and her.

I take a few steps back as she walks closer. I can hear Zane banging the door and shouting my name.

“You ruined things for me, because of you I couldn’t be with my man” she says.

“Then why is your man shouting my name and not yours?” I say, she’s getting angry the louder Zane shouts my name. She covers her ears with her hands.

“Shut up” she yells, she’s really showing her signs of mental instability and I’m scared.

“Open the door Yolanda, we’ll take you to a place so you can be safe and be treated” I say.

She looks at me with anger and walks faster towards me. She pulls me by the shoulders and hits my head with hers. I immediately bleed from the noise, screaming for help as she drags me on the floor, kicking and hitting me on my back.

“Zane help, help me” I scream, covering my face with my hands. She’s yelling and cursing as she continues to attack me. My back hurts and she’s not giving me a chance to stand and defend myself. I feel each kick on my back leaving a sharp pain and all I’m thinking about is my baby.

“You city girls always steal our man” she shouts, walking to the closet. I try to gain strength to

get up , my back hurts and my face is burning. I crawl to the door but she drags me by my feet, she has a knife in her hand, I turn to lie on my back and push her with my feet, she stumbles back and the knife falls from her hand, we both rush for it and I push it under the bed. I drag her by her braids, hitting her head against the pedestal. She's quiet, just bleeding. I push her away and crawl to the door again, leaving her lying on the floor.

Zane rushes in with two men, lifting me and carrying me out of the cottage.

"Get the keys from my room, I'm taking her to the hospital" he's shouting and rushing to the car.

The staff is standing randomly outside and a small crowd is formed. The pains on my back are getting worse and the blood from my nose drips faster. She's awfully quiet, no more screaming and cursing. What did I do?

“What happened to her?” I ask Zane as he puts me at the back of my car. He looks disgusted by my question

“I don’t care about her, I care about you and my child”he says, and we drive off.

On our way we pass a police van and an ambulance going the opposite direction, I hope theyrealise she needs special care and not arrest her.

“You should call them and tell them about her illness” I manage to speak, my back hurts everytime I talk, like someone is poking my back with a sharp hot knife.

“Buhle please, save your energy and stop talking about that girl, I don’t care what they do with her, she deserves it for hurting you” he says with anger.

We get to the hospital and I’m immediately admitted. The nurse cleans up my face and

sends me in for an ultrasound, my entire back is in pain and I can't stop crying, blaming myself for what happened. I brought her in and let her stay for free, gave her a job, treated her like a close friend.

"Everything is fine with the baby, her back will cause her trouble though, especially in her later stages when she's fully developed." The doctor says, looking at Zane, he looks terrified.

"If you work, you have to take it easy, and an early maternity leave will be needed" the doctor says, and we're both relieved that the baby is fine.

"She can be on maternity leave until the baby arrives, it's fine" Zane says. That's not happening. I look at him and he seems serious.

"You will seat it out for the next six months, I'm not risking it and that's final" he says with a strict voice. He's serious and I don't feel like

arguing but what I will not do is lounge at a lodge for six months.

“The nurse will bring you medicine to help with the pains. You were lucky” he says and walks away.

Vrrr Vrrr

“Hello Makhulu”

“What’s happening? I see police and ambulances at the lodge?”

“I was attacked by Yolanda but I’m fine now, I’m at the hospital”

She screams, so loud I had to remove the phone from my ear.

“Oh my child, why must these things happen to you? All these fights and attacks Why was she attacking you, she’s your worker” she says

“She’s not well mentally, she had an episode. I’m fine Makhulu and the baby is also fine” I say,



she's still crying and she drops the phone.

Zane is pacing up and down the room, he's on the phone, trying to explain the incident to someone, I'm guessing the police.

The door opens and it's Thandi with the boys. Their faces are full of concern, especially Thandi.

"Oh Buhle, are you fine?" she says, hugging me and hurting me, I flinch and Zane pulls her back.

"Only my back, I'm fine and the baby is also fine" I say, she's close to tears

"We came as soon as we heard, when we got to the lodge they were taking her out by the ambulance, she's out" Zinzi says.

What does he mean out? Like dead? I feel my anxiety build up, my heart beating faster by the second.

"No she's not dead, they said she's unconscious

that's all, I say she deserves it for putting you through this" Zinzi says.

"Buhle, relax. Please let her rest and not bombard her with questions, she's still hurting" Zane warns them and they sit quietly by the chairs close to my bed.

I just want to go home, I've visited too much of this place, I don't like it.

Zane gets the bill and we leave. The car ride back home is silent. All I want is to rest and forget about this horrific day and its night.

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## Insert 40

The Yolanda incident resulted in Zane watching me and guarding me like a bank safe. When he's at work, he calls me all the time or has someone check on me in the room. He begged me to work from home and only work for a few hours instead of the entire day. At first the back pains held me back but now that I'm recovering I can sit up straight and work from the desk but I always have a pillow to support it.

Today is the day of the inauguration. I haven't fully recovered and the tension within the family is increasing my stress levels about what could happen today. I have been in our room the entire morning, thinking about what I'm about to get myself into. It's scary but if loving this man comes with being responsible for the entire village, then that's what I'll do. With all what we've been through, I feel like I'm walking into

something I've been destined for, my purpose. And with him by my side, it's something I want to do for the rest of my life. Makhulu insisted on getting me a new outfit for this day, refusing I wear anything amaHlubi offer me. She really believes they'd do anything to get rid of me. And after seeing how much they hate me and my relationship with Zane, I'm not risking it.

According to amaHlubi traditions, the current Queen is suppose to help me get ready for the event but because of our relationship, I know I'll be doing everything by myself. I'd rather that than have that bitter woman touch me.

Thandi walks in with a tray full of breakfast.

"You must be hungry" she says with her wide smile.

"You read my mind, Thanks Thandi" I reply and immediately dig in.

"Queen Zanozuko Ngele-Ngele, its perfect. I'm

so proud of you” she says sitting next to me.

“Thinking about it makes it unreal. Like how did I get here? how did I become this person? Its fascinating how quickly life can change. Me, Buhlebethu Khephu, now soon to be Queen of Khumba.” I say

“These things were always written in our stars, we’re meant to be them. We’re worthy of them. We just need to realise that we’re not ordinary and walk in our destined paths. See how quickly you changed the village, the developments, the impact you’ve had in the people of this place. You’ve done it effortlessly without changing anything about you. That’s how you know you’re destined for things.” She says, holding me.

“And it feels so good Thandi, I feel complete here.” I say, giving her a hug.

“oooh let me go and check ladies by the fire. Good luck” she says and leaves.

A moment later as I get dressed, someone walks in, without knocking. My body immediately goes to shock. My doek falls on the floor and my heart stops for a moment.

“Nonjezu” I say. she walks closer, eyes locked to me, straight face.

“You finally got what you want” she says

“Marrying your son, yes. That’s all I’ve ever wanted” I say

“I’m not them, I’m not stupid. I see right through your scamming and manipulation. You’ve always wanted the throne, the money, the status, the power.” She says

“You’re sick! Get out” I say. she laughs and walks closer. I take a step back.

“Oh the truth hurts ey? So what did you do? Did you poison his drink? or cast a spell in the mirror? Or hypnotize him? tell me your secret” she says

“I loved him for who he is. I appreciated him for everything he did for me. I listened to him telling me about his aspirations, I allowed him to speak his mind and be who he is. I opened my heart and welcomed him as he is. Something you, his mother couldn't do. Your own son, he loves you, he respects you, he adores you and all he ever ask of you is to allow him to be who you birthed him to be. To make him feel valued about his purpose. And you just couldn't, how cruel could you be” I say, tears rolling down my cheeks. She stands there, blank.

“Well life is cruel. There's no time for games and fairy tales. He knows the rules and that's to be King, the right way. Do things by the book, live by the rules. He knew all that until you came with your ridiculousness and ruined my son, took him out of his way and turned him against me and his tribe” she says, angry

“The tribe never cared about Zanemvula, you

never cared about him, all you cared about was what he brought to you. Just because things didn't turn out for you doesn't give you the right to make Zane's life a living hell"

"Don't talk to me like you know me" she walks closer, eyes turning red and watery.

" I do, a young hopeful girl whose dreams were taken away by tradition. You had the chance to change that for your own children but you didn't, your anger stood in front your childrens' freedom. The boys love you Nonjezu, despite everything that has happened in their lives with or without you, they still want you in everything that happens in their lives. You can still change that, just open your heart to them. I know how hard living without a mother is, it's damaging. Reconciling with them won't only help them, it will heal you as well." I say

"What's the point, they hate me. They want nothing to do with me, they can't even look me



in the eye. Thandi is their mother and I've made peace with that. Besides, I have nothing to offer them" she says, in tears as she takes a sit on the bed. head lowered with shame and heartache

"It's never too late. Love doesn't expire, pride just drives it away" I say.

She laughs and looks at me with sadness

"Love? What is that?" she says

"A remedy for all heartaches, for lost souls, for restoring peace. Love is also forgiving ourselves for the times we neglected our existence and allowed anger to rule. Love is believing we are worthy of a second chance and gain strength to give ourselves that. Love heals, I know it does." I say. There's silence in the room, just sobbing. For a moment there, the Nonjezu that I knew disappeared and someone else took control of the conversation.

“Don’t tie your doek too tight, inauguration is the longest event of all time. Tight doek headache is worse than a red wine hangover.” She says and walks out, leaving me standing, wet eyes and confusion. What just happened. Who was that and what did she do to my fire breathing mother in law.

And as I was told, I tie my doek loosely and make my way to the door as the singing at my door gets louder. Young girls are gathered outside my door in song to escort me to the main tent. I take a deep breathe and follow behind them.

Now that I have been sworn in as the new Queen of Khumba, my duties have officially begun and the pressure is weighing heavily. The event went exceptionally well and the village received us with warm arms. Zane’s father was more pleased to step down while his mother just stared blankly at us throughout the event

but eventually walked up to us and congratulated Zane. She hasn't said anything to me after our emotionally weird conversation but I'm glad she's at least talking to Zane, he needs it more than me, in fact I don't expect her to apologise.

"You look beautiful Zano and I'm happy with you by my side" he whispers in my ear. They just served the food and alcohol. The crowd is getting rowdy.

"Thanks my love, I can't wait to have you all to myself later." I whisper back he smiles and rub my thigh under the table.

"Patience my King" I say as I slowly remove his hand.

"Or we could leave them here and go start our own party in our room. Look at them, they don't even care if we're here or not. Let's go." He says. Last I checked, you can't say no to royalty. Just

like that, we make our way to our room.

Sweat, skin, warm, breathless, love, my home.

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Aunt'Kholeka is coming over for lunch, I haven't seen her since she moved to her new house in town, which I only saw in pictures, it's beautiful with a big yard for Asakhe to run around. She has employed more ladies to help at her warehouse, she's succeeding and I'm proud.

She walks through the restaurant entrance like she owns the place, I love her new look. She's a completely different person, wearing tight jeans with a light blue shirt and nude court heels. She looks like money, smiling from ear to ear as the staff greets her. They are as shocked as I am.

"If I saw you in town I would walk past you without greeting, you look different" I say as she takes her seat across me, removing her

sunglasses.

“I am different, I have my product delivered nationally, I need to look the part” she says smiling widely.

“I am so proud of you aunty, you are doing it for the women in Khumba” I say, she looks impressed.

“If it wasn’t for you, I wouldn’t be here Buhle. You believed in me when no one did” she says, holding my hand closer to hers. I can see her get emotional.

“No, no tears, we are here to celebrate not cry, let’s catch up, how’s the urban life?” I say, she wipes off her tears and starts laughing.

“Steak and veggies with Redds, a cold one please” she says to the waiter.

No, she hasn’t changed, I take it all back.

“Chicken wrap and pineapple juice for me, have

Lu make the juice please” I say and the waiter is off.

“So, Queen of Khumba, tell me how’s marriage life?” she says.

“It’s good but it has its downs, well his family and the recent Yolanda drama, but we’re coping. I married the man I love aunty, that’s all that matters” I say, blushing.

“When mama told me about that crazy girl, I was ready to find her and sort her out” she says, looking angry. And I know she means it by sorting her out. If I were to go to war, she’d be on the front line of my battle squad.

“She needed the help and I hope the institution we put her in will help her” I say, she rolls her eyes.

“You’re too nice, that girl needs jail, finish and klaar” she says.

“No, she needs help and she’ll get the best help

there” I say.

“But Buhle, too much is happening around you, so much negative energy and accidents, I think you should perform a ritual, maybe the ancestors are trying to get your attention” she says, looking into my wide open eyes.

She’s joking right?!

“A ritual? That’s a bit extreme aunty, I’m sure they have bigger things to worry about than me” I say.

“Don’t be stubborn, atleast go to a sangoma and let them tell you what this is about, all these events mean something” she says.

I will not entertain this talk, there’s no way I’m consulting peaceful spirits, they can stay where they are, it’s not my kind of vibe.

“How’s the new house” I say, changing the subject, she looks defeated but goes with the conversation.

“Asakhe likes it, she likes the bathroom more, she fills the bathtub with water and stays there for hours. It’s always a struggle to get her ready for school” she says, with a smile.

That’s the first thing I will do when I finally move in my new home, enjoy a bubble bath in a bathtub.

“I feel her, the vaskom life is torture” I say and we both laugh.

“Oh and my late boyfriend’s daughter has been visiting, she got the scholarship, she’s in school again” she says.

“Oh that’s great news, I’m glad I could help” I say.

“You should help other village girls too, everything you’ve touched in Khumba has turned to gold” she says.

It’s actually one of the programmes I’ve started, to provide post matric education information



and guidance to children, particularly girls in Khumba.

“It’s part of my projects objectives, I’m going to try my best” I say.

“Well,I have something for you, it’s a thank you gift from me and Asakhe. It’s nothing compared to what you have done for me, from helping me with the case to motivating me to start my business.” She says pulling out a box . It’s heavy and I open it.

“Oh my gosh aunt’Kholeka, this is huge. I hope it didn’t dent your wallet, this is expensive” I’m out of words and just admiring my new camera.

“I know how you like these things, I saved up and knew it would be a great gift, take it as an early grad/thank you present” she says.

I still cannot believe she bought me this expensive camera, I can’t stop looking at it. I stand and walk to her, hugging her tight.

“Thank you so much aunty, I love it and I love you even more” I say.

“Oh wow, you have grown, I can see the little one already is popping” she say, looking at my small belly. I’ve been covering it up by wearing big flowy clothes, I’m not ready for people to know yet, only family and close friends know about the pregnancy, not even the staff knows.

“She’s growing” I say, she looks shocked

“It’s a girl?” she asks

“I don’t know, I just refer to it as her” I say she laughs and our lunch is served.

We continue gossiping and laughing about Makhulu and Dlamini’s relationship, Thami enjoying his life in Edernville and refusing to comeback on weekends. She says he said that he’ll come back on December when he has a car, he can’t even drive. This kind of energy is exactly what I needed after last months

Yolanda drama.

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Insert 41

I feel warm kisses on my cheek, I try to open my eye, it's him, my husband is home.

"Hello my love" I say, I must've dozed off while working, the laptop is on the bed beside me.

"You're such a workaholic, you even sleep with this thing" he says, placing it on the dresser and resting next to me.

"I have two jobs now, the festival and the royal project. I also had a big lunch with Aunt'Kholeka,

I was too full, I dozed off” I say, he works his fingers around my lips as I speak.

“You are the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen” he says looking straight into my eyes.

That was random

“Uhm, okay, thanks, I guess” I say, awkwardly staring at him. I think he is seducing me with his piercing eyes.

He kisses me, pulling me closer to him, his breathing is heavy like he’s been wanting this all day. In a split second he is inside me, pounding and pushing me against the mattress, I didn’t expect this to escalate this quick and steamy. Moments later we’re lying on our back, breathless and sweating.

“My mother wants to see you tonight” he says and rushes off to the shower leaving me puzzled.

Ooh so this was his way of softening me up and

dropping the bomb. Why does she want to see me, I think she's said enough. Whatever she needs to do she needs to do it with her kids.

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I don't know why I agreed to this. I know we had our moment before the inauguration but I don't trust her. With all the things she said about my family and how she's been treating me, you never know what she's up to.

"I called you for dinner to apologise" she finally speaks.

"For what? Calling my grandmother a witch? For accusing my father of killing his wife? For paying men to have me killed? What exactly are you apologizing for" I say, my voice went up without even realizing I'm getting angry.

Zane tries to calm me by rubbing on my thigh under the table

"I'm sorry for the pain I've caused you from the

day you set foot in this village, I'm sorry for the troubles I've cause between you and Zanemvula. I'm sorry" she says, looking down.

I'm not falling for this act.

"Did Zane beg you to apologise to me? Did he threaten to take away your royal allowance?" I say, she doesn't answer and keeps her head down.

"Buhle listen to what she has to say" Zane speaks, he's already under her spell.

I don't forgive and forget easily.

"Something you said that day made me realise a few things. I'm sure you all heard Thandi, everything she said was true. All my anger and resentment I have projected it to you, to my children and the staff. Instead of dealing with it I chose to spread the hate because the truth was too hard for me to deal with. I understand it if you don't forgive me, I don't expect you to, I

just wanted to let you know, you're a good woman for my son and for Khumba" she says, looking sad and close to tears.

I want to forgive her but the pain she has caused me and Zane refuses. I can't, I need to see her change. I sit quietly while everyone is looking at me waiting for a response.

"What you did to me and your family is not something to be forgiven and forgotten overnight, you broke your children, you broke them and you enjoyed it. They don't know their real mothers love, only what Thandi could offer, which was the best they could ever have. You need to deal with your issues and work on yourself, everything else will follow but I will never forget" I say. she nods with teary eyes.

"I'm very grateful for Thandi and how he raised the boys, I wouldn't have done half the job she did. They turned out to be grown and responsible young men." She says, smiling at

Zane, who is smiling back.

“I think we can all build something from here, taking baby steps” Zane says.

He really wants this to work and I want him to have that relationship with her mother, one I never got to entirely experience. I will support him, I will try to make it work with his mother for his sake.

“If it would be fine with you, I’d like you to move in again, here at the palace” she says.

I nod and everyone smiles. I’m not living here forever though, the moment our house is done, I’m out. Besides, that lodge bed is messing with my back and there’s no bathtub, I miss my bubble baths.

We all continue in small talk, she’s asking about the baby and the work. It’s awkward for me but I can see the boys are happy with this union. I’m just happy to see them this happy. They’re



sharing all sorts of stories like she has just got back from prison, their excitement, especially Zane's, warms my heart. He is genuinely happy with everything, he deserves it. Zane's dad has been quiet throughout the dinner, I even forgot he is amongst us until he starts coughing. He's been observing and smiling as the whole family engages in conversation.

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It's our first day back in the royal palace and we've been enjoying a bubble bath together, planning our holiday after the baby arrives. We deserve it.

"I think an African tour would be nice" he suggests

"I need white sand and clear blue water, Maldives" I say, he seems to like this idea

"And the baby?" he asks.

"What about the baby? She has Thandi,

Makhulu and your mother is also pulling through, I need you all to myself and not worry about her, it will only be a week” I say. There’s no ways I’m travelling with a new born.

“I’m not leaving my child at a tender age, we’ll wait for her to turn one then take her” he says. Is he joking? That time I’d be long off my travel spirit.

“Well you can go with her, I’m not waiting that long” I say, he laughs when he notices how annoyed I am by his suggestion

“That’s also fine, I might even take her to that cartoon country overseas” he says,

I can’t hold back laughter, I know what he’s trying to say.

“Is that Disney land ?” I say, he nods.

“Yes that one” he says.

I can already tell this child will take my husband

away from me.

.....

Zazi has finished my graduation dress and I'm fitting it one more time to see if it fits properly, especially with the belly development.

"Good thing you chose a flowy design, the little one is growing" he says, observing my fast growing belly.

I'm only 5 months into my pregnancy and already popping hard, time really has flown. I've been so busy with the royal project and trying to win the council over that I forgot about many things. Zane has been surprising me with monthly wedding anniversaries dinners and gifts, I feel really bad for forgetting but my head has been so focused on my work, I forgot about it. He's also been following up on the house, I haven't been there in months, I trust he has everything under control, he likes that sort of

work.

“We can’t afford any errors, graduation is in a couple of days” I say, fitting the dress. I look at myself in the full sized mirror, I love it. The colorful print, the off the shoulder and the bell sleeves, it’s perfect.

“Zazi you need to apply for design school, the world needs to know about you, people online keep asking about my outfits, you are pure talent” I say, he smiles like he already knew what I’m telling him.

“Everything Zazi touches, it turns to gold.” He says, playing with the tape measure around his neck. He’s so full of himself.

“And the belly is hardly showing” I say. He did a great job. Zinzi walks in with a packet of chips in his hands, he’s such a messy eater.

The rooms suddenly smells like old wet shoes, it’s disgusting.

“How do you eat that?” I’m trying so hard not to throw up, I keep gagging and covering my nose.

“Not on Zah Design, get out with that rubbish food Zinzi” Zazi pushes him out of the room

“I just wanted to see the dress, I want to surprise my girlfriend with something nice, it’s her birthday next month” Zinzi is shouting as he is being kicked out.

We both look at each other. He has a girlfriend? Mr cool-no time for chicks has a girlfriend? Zazi hits his packet of chips and it falls on the ground then pulls him back inside.

“What girlfriend?” Zazi asks. I’m also curious, Zinzi has been playing girls and denying them, now he has a girlfriend? Who’s the lucky girl

“My girlfriend you fool” he says

“Since when do you have ‘girlfriend’ who’s this lucky girl” I say, he seems shy

“Don’t laugh okay” he says and Zazi and I nod.

Why would we laugh at him

“She’s a bit older than me, she’s in Uni, almost Zazi’s age but she doesn’t want people knowing about us” he says.

I didn’t expect that, she’s older than him, I promised not to laugh and I’m trying really hard not to break that promise

“So you’re a blesser now to Uni students? Where did you meet Ms anonymous?” Zazi say, laughing.

“Mxm” he says, annoyed and walking towards the door.

“Woaw, wait Zinzi, don’t mind this one, he’s single and jealous, you don’t have to say her name, I just want to hear how you met her” I say, he slowly walks back in.

“I met her in December, she was home for the

holidays. I asked to see her by the school, then I asked her to be my girlfriend she said yes, I want to give her a beautiful birthday present” he says.

He’s really serious about this mystery girl, I wonder who she is.

“So why does she want to stay private?” Zazi asks

“It’s her family issues and I respect that, now help me with this birthday thing” he says.

“Well what does she like? Take her out for dinner, buy her earrings, flowers or perfume, all girls like that stuff” I say. He doesn’t seem impressed by my answer

“She’s not like most girls, she’s simple and doesn’t like extravagant things, that’s why I thought of a dress, a unique one like her” he says. I think he’s in love, he’s smiling just by talking about this girl, I can’t believe what I’m

seeing.

“Give me her measurements and I’ll help you bro” Zazi says with confidence.

Zinzi seems pleased by his brothers response and willingness to help. I wonder who this young girl is, I’m curious.

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INSERT 42

\*sis today is your day, you worked hard for it. I’m sorry I couldn’t make it but I’ll see you later for lunch. Congratulations, Love Kat\*

I woke up to this text this morning, it calmed my



nerves and made me smile. It's a few hours before my graduation and I've never been this relaxed before an event, I'm usually nervous and fighting anxiety, not today. I've overslept, as usual Zane let me sleep without waking me, I can hear him on the phone in the bathroom, he's shouting and demanding things, must be work.

"Did I wake you?" he says, walking towards my bed, with his half naked lean body. I still don't know how he keeps in good shape, I know he jogs but I've never seen him workout.

"I rolled over to hug you and you weren't there, I panicked" I say, he laughs.

"Well I'm here now" he says, opening his arms towards me, hugging me then kissing my belly. He enjoys that, sometimes I wake up to him talking to it or singing to it.

"Is everyone awake downstairs? We need to get

ready and get going” I say, putting on my gown, which hardly fits, and head for the bathroom.

“I’ll join you in a sec, just need to make one more call” he says. He seems stressed about something.

A quick shower and glam time. Done.

We make our way down stairs to the kitchen to join dad and Mam’Gloria for breakfast before we leave. Mam’Gloria cannot stop smiling as I walk towards them, I think she like what she’s seeing.

“You look beautiful Buhle, that dress looks amazing on you, pregnancy loves you” she says, making me twirl.

She mustn’t give Zane ideas with that pregnancy glow complement, he wants me to stay glowing.

“Thanks Ma, you look beautiful too, even dad got out his finest suit” I say, he’s charmed by

my complement.

“Well, my daughter is graduating cum laude, I have to look the part” he says.

I’m blushing. We all seat and enjoy breakfast. Mam’Gloria is updating me on the wedding preparations and showing me the venue, which is also their new house. It’s beautiful and big, very big. The garden and the landscape is breathtaking, the inside is all white with marble floors and high windows, it’s a dream.

“So when are you moving in?” I ask.

“The night of the wedding, when everyone leaves, we’ll be left in our new home” Dad says, holding Mam’Gloria’s hand. They’re smiling at each other like highschool kids who just found love. It’s beautiful and uncomfortable.

“We’ll be late, let’s go” I say and we all make our way to the door.

When we reach my campus, Mam’Gloria leads

us with a prayer in the parking lot. I feel complete in this moment, my mothers face keeps flashing on my mind, she's smiling and laughing, she might not be here physically but I can feel her in my heart. Tears fall, slowly when we all say 'amen'. Zane helps me wipe them off cautiously not to ruin my make up and I feel movement in my stomach, it feels weird. I stand still, Zane can see my reaction, it moves again, I look at him and pull his hand to my stomach, it moves again. He's smiling and laughing loudly, causing a scene, the last time he was this excited was when he found out about the pregnancy.

"He's moving, my baby is moving" he keeps screaming with excitement. Mam'Gloria and dad are looking at him weirdly.

He hasn't removed his hand from my belly as we make our way to the entrance, he's inviting so much stares, I think she's done moving for

the day, that was a lot. It is the weirdest and most satisfying feeling in the world and the moment in which it happened made it even more magical for me.

“I have to use the other entrance, see you on stage” I say, they all hug me.

“Congratulations Hlehle” my dad says and the disappear in the crowd. I spot some of my classmates, who almost didn’t recognize me when I was greeting them

“Buhle, no ways. You’re a completely different person, even more beautiful” one says, I think her name is Sandy. I was never that close with any of them, but I remember their faces.

“You’re married? That ring, oh my gosh” the other says, eyes and mouth wide open, lifting my left hand closer to her face.

“I’m a married woman now” I say as humble as I can,

“She’s married to the new King of Khumba, she’s now a Queen and also heads the Festival there, she’s winning in life, while we’re out here being interns” Sandy says, the girls are shocked with these news, I can’t believe she knows all that, she’s been following my website I can tell.

“You should all come to the next festival, as my guests” I say, they’re excited.

“I’m sure the King has brothers, I might not come back from the village” Sandy says with a naughty smile

“Well, they’re both young, one is a little bit of a diva and the other just found new love, and he’s sixteen” I say and they’re immediately disappointed.

We make our way to the hall and seat in our reserved seating order, I spotted my family when I walked in. I never knew graduations to be this long and exhausting, the speeches,

reading out every graduate from our faculty, I keep finding myself sleep in between speeches.

It's our turn now, we walk towards the stage, I'm the first to go. I'm glad I wore these comfortable heels, this standing is tiring.

"Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts Cum Laude, Buhlebethu Khephu" they announce and I make my way to the stage, my family cheers from a distance, Mam'Glorias ululating and Zane's whistling has the hall screaming. In my head I'm thinking 'don't fall, keep smiling'. It is a short yet beautiful moment, I'm still smiling even after I've left the stage. We gather outside for family pictures.

We all make our way back to the house, Kat and his man are already here, waiting on us.

Mam'Gloria cooked, she woke up early and made all of this food, she's a super woman, she can do anything.

“Congrats sis” Kat says, hugging me, tight. She’s actually blocking my air way.

“Thanks sis” I say, grasping for air as soon as she lets go.

“Congratulations Buhle” her boyfriend says, he’s the handshake type. He’s still kitted with the multiple gold chains and tucked in t-shirt with a Gucci sling bag.

“Tyson and I got you this” Kat hands me a gift bag, its heavy.

It’s a paint set. How thoughtful.

“Oh thanks you guys, I haven’t painted in a long time, my other jobs have taken over my life” I say, we all make our way to the dining table.

“The food is delicious as always Mme” Tyson says, he’s enjoying it, he seems like a humble guy despite he’s flashy choice of clothing.

“So it’s my stew that you don’t like because



you've never complemented it" Kat says, she's offended.

Tyson's doesn't know how to respond to that, he's staring blankly at Kat. It's hilarious

"Nothing compares to my stews, I have secret receipies I don't share with people, especially you Katlego" Mam'Gloria saves Tyson who seems more releaved by this response.

"Maybe you should open a soul food restaurant in your new area" Tyson suggests.

I don't think that's a bad idea, my dad doesn't seem pleased with that idea.

"I'm trying to get her to retire and travel the world with me, you're busy proposing new ideas" he says, annoyed.

Ugh, there we go again

"But that would be easier with a restaurant, she'll ba able to travel but she shouldn't stop

the catering, it's also good money" I say.

"Let's drop this talk, you're putting too many ideas in her head" he says and just like that its done.

"How's marriage life? I hardly hear from you these past months" Kat says.

"She's been drowning herself in work, sometimes I even find her sleeping with the laptop, I feel neglected in my own marriage." Zane says jokingly.

Where is this all coming from? Since when does he feel neglected, he's doing this in front of my family.

"Are you complaining that I'm not a good wife?" I say, everyones looking at us, quietly.

"I'm just saying you should tone down the workload" he says.

My father bursts out in laughter.

“I told you this ‘my wife is independent she must work’ thing will backfire, I told you Zanemvula and that friend of yours, look at you now, asking to tone it down” he says and continues laughing harder, he’s so annoying. I’m not toning down anything, he’s overreacting.

Someone rings the doorbell, breaking the silence. Kat goes to the door and she screams loudly, laughing.

She walks in with Thami and Xola. What a surprise

“Mzala!!!” he yells as he enters the awkwardly tense dining room

I walk up to him and hug, he looks good, he even gained some weight a little, Edernville likes him.

“Congrats Buhle” Xola says, handing me a gift bag.

“Thanks Xola, and thanks for the gift, I love it” I

say admiring this stylish laptop bag.

“Help yourselves on some food” Mam’Gloria says.

They immediately serve everything in the platters.

I walk to the kitchen for some water, Zane follows me.

“Are you okay?” he asks. Can’t I get water now?

“I’m thirsty, are you going to report that to my family too” I snap, he’s shocked.

“Buhle, I meant what I said and I’m not changing it, you work too hard, you need to hire people to help out and that’s final” he says, with a strict look that I cannot argue with.

“Fine, next time come to me before embarrassing me in front of my family” I say.

“There won’t be no next time, you’re hiring staff to help at the gallery, that’s it” he says and

walks back to the table, leaving me standing, barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen.

“Haibo Mzala, whats with the long face?” Thami walks towards me.

“ugh, marriage drama, I don’t want to bore you. Lets talk about you and Edernville life” I say

“ooooh Mzala, I love it here. the air is cool, the beach is warm, the people are minding their own business, my job is paying well, my man loves me, the sex is great, ooh Mzala. Life is good” he says and we both laugh.

“Im so happy for you cuzzie. This is all you’ve ever wanted. Enjoy every part of it” I say

“I heard things are looking good at the village for you too. Makhulu and Dlamini are inseperable” he says and laughs

“Listen, they literally follow eachother around like kids. She couldn’t come because Dlamini had a check up with his doctor and she just

couldn't leave her man without moral support. I think moving out was the best thing we did for her, she hardly calls" I say and the conversation continues as I put him up to date with village gossip. Just like how we used to in his outside flat minus the wine. I miss drinking. Oza needs to arrive so I can have my grapes.

.....

The drive back home is mostly quiet, I thought we spoke about our issues and solved them, I don't understand why he's tense. We left in the early hours of the morning and we're almost there.

"What's wrong Zane? " I ask. He looks at me confused

"With what? I'm fine" he says, in the least convincing tone.

"You've been quiet throughout the trip and you have that tense look on your face" I say. he

looks guilty

“I just don’t like it when you don’t listen to my instructions, that I have to use a certain tone in order for you to obey. I’m your husband, I take pride in providing and protecting you, please let me” he says, almost begging.

“It’s hard for me because I’ve never had anyone take care of me, I’ve always depended on myself, it’s new to me and I find it hard to just let go” I say.

“I understand and I mean it when I say, I will never let you down, I will do everything to make sure you’re happy, that I can assure you. Just give me the chance to do that” he says, reaching for my hand.

I wish it was as easy as he says it, to just let go of all control and let someone else do it for me, it’s not easy especially when you’ve watched someone who was responsible for that role, live

a life without considering your livelihood.

“To completely let go, I don’t know but to bring you in and allow you access in my thoughts and actions, I can, we’ll start there” I say, he seems pleased with that, kissing my hand as we enter Khumba.

We drive pass the lodge and pass the royal palace, I’m confused. Where is he taking me.

“Where are we going Zane?” I ask, he’s smiling and not answering.

“Zane? You’re experimenting to soon to our agreement” I say. I know I said I’d let him in, but this is taking full control, I don’t like surprises. My anxiety doesn’t accommodate such spontaneity.

He parks outside our new home. What are we doing here?

“And now?” I ask, he gets out, walking all the way to my door, opens and we walk towards the



entrance, he's holding my hand tightly and keeps smiling at me.

I knew those men were fast but this much progress at such a small time frame, is remarkable. The outside looks done, I love it. I still don't know why we're here. He pulls out a key from his pocket and opens the door, he swings it open and let's me in first.

I cannot believe what I'm seeing, I keep looking at him then at the house, it's done, completely done. Everything is how I wanted it. It's perfect.

"When? How?" I'm out of words and he's taking a video with his cellphone.

I cannot believe he surprised me with a fully furnished complete house, I really thought it would be done in a month or so.

"When did you finish here? Who did the interior? I love it my love" I say, close to tears.

"It's my graduation present to you, your dream

home, just how you wanted it” he says, smiling.

I walk to the lounge, everything is here, the walls have some of my work and other artists from the festival, even the furniture complements the art perfectly, with warm earthy tones and pop of mustard. I walk down the long passage.

“Come I want to show you something” he says, pulling me pass all the other rooms, to the last one in the passage.

It’s looks like a master bedroom, it’s big and beautiful. Even the bedding is how I imagined it. He opens a door inside the bedroom and let’s me in

Oh my gosh. It’s a creative studio with boards, paints, brushes, empty photo frames. I can’t believe he did all of this.

“I love it Zane, I love you” I say jumping to hug him, unable to control my tears. What did I do to deserve a man like this one. This is the best

present I've ever received, a fully furnished house with all the things I needed.

"I hired an interior designer and Zazi was responsible to tell him what works and what doesn't, I figured he knows your style more than I do" he says.

I hug him tighter, I cannot believe this. I throw myself on the bed and he rests next to me, we're both looking to the ceiling. I can't believe my home is done.

"When can we move in?" I ask, facing him

"We've already moved in, this will be our first night in our new home" he says.

I roll over and sit on top of him, looking at him into his eyes. He grabs me by my butt and our lips meet. He is having me, I am giving him all of this tonight, like he never had it. He deserves it.

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Insert 43

It's our first morning in our new home and it feels like we've lived here for a long time. We've been in bed all morning, it's almost noon and we're still in eachothers arms, wrapped in his warm hugs and frequently gifted with kisses on my neck.

Earlier in the morning I was woken by the smell of bacon and eggs, he served me breakfast in bed. I ate everything, even his, it was that good. I can't help but feel blessed to have a cooking husband who actually enjoys cooking for me

and allows me to invade his plate as well.

“I want to stay like this, forever, in your arms.” I say, looking out the window view of Khumba’s gigantic mountains, the dewy weather filters the glass with raindrops and steam from the warmth of the room.

“They’re yours now, you can do whatever you want with them and as long as you want to” he says, biting my ear from behind, his erection poking my butt.

Spooning is the only comfortable cuddling position for us right now and he likes it.

Cuddling sessions are always interrupted by steamy sex and passionate kisses and he always blames my big butt.

“Don’t you sometimes think of how our lives would’ve been like if we never met? If I never came to Khumba?” I ask, it’s a random thought that invaded my mind

“Those wouldn’t be our lives, our paths were destined to cross one way or the other. There is no life of mine that you wouldn’t be part of, whether you’d be my maid or a cashier in a supermarket, our paths would’ve crossed either way” he says rubbing on my tummy, he rubs it hoping for the baby to move again, she hasn’t. Yes, the ultrasound confirmed it, we’re having a baby girl.

I always forget how deep he can be. I find that very sexy, it’s always when I least expect it, which is what I fell in love with on our first date.

“I believe that because as much as I had future plans, I wasn’t as serious in pursuing them, it always felt forced, unlike now, it all flows and I’m not even trying. Everything falls into place and all I did was fall in love with you” I say.

He hugs me tighter, pulling me closer to him.

“I keep falling deeper in love with you Zanozuko

and I don't see myself stopping anytime soon” he says, kissing me on my neck, slowly and breathing heavily in my ear. He slides his hand between my thighs feeling the warmth and moisture, slowly he enters from behind filling my body with excitement I cannot contain. He pushes and pulls, smoothly, moving in and out. Filling his hand with my ever growing boobs. The pleasures of his movement have me speechless. His moaning behind my ear and his rhythm is taking me to another level.

“Aaahhh.....”

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It's a month later and we're all still recovering from dad and Mam'Gloria's wedding, they said it was going to be small and intimate, they failed to mention that the entertainment would be extravagant. They had a live band and various local artists perform, Zane and I danced till my feet were swollen and started looking like

mangos. The ceremony was emotional and filled with the genuine love they share, their guests were mostly dad's business associates and only a few friends of Mam'Gloria from church, who left before the after party. I think the biggest highlight is when Tyson asked Mam'Gloria permission to marry Kat, I still can't get over Kat's dramatic cry, you'd swear she'd won the jackpot.

Zane's mother has been a regular visitor in our new home, she loves it. We once invited her over for dinner, just her and we lost track of time until it was too late, she slept over. It's unbelievable that she is the woman I attacked for calling my grandmother a witch and accusing my father of killing mama, she's an active part of our lives now and that makes Zane very happy, making me even happier.

I hired two people to help out at the gallery, like Zane asked and I must say, it's a bliss. Even



though I go to work everyday, it's not as strenuous as it used to be and I also have enough time to implement my royal duties, which has been successful. I organized some NPOs to help students in the village with tertiary applications and financial aids and the tradition of ukuthwala has been officially withdrawn and girls who've been married off are also applying for tertiary, some are back in high school. This was the hardest duty, I got a lot of backlash from older traditionalists but the King and the royal council ruled in my favour. One of my new employees suggested we do a womans' only Khumba Kulture Festival in women's month and only have the females showcase and sell their art. This will benefit all women in Khumba and surrounding villages.

We're hosting our first dinner for both our families in our new home. Everyone is coming, except for Thami, he's 'occupied'. I even told

Zinzi he can invite his girlfriend, she's home for winter holidays. He was very excited. Zane and Thandi did all the cooking and I unapologetically hung my feet on the coffee table watching ratchet reality shows. It's how we live in this house, Zane cooks while I entertain him with jokes and celebrity gossip, sometimes I order food from the restaurant and surprise him with dinner.

"Zanozuko, where's the egg beater?" Thandi has been consistently using my new name.

"In the drawers next to the pantry" Zane answers, I honestly didn't even know we had an egg beater. The only cabinets I open is the snack and crockery ones.

I smile and continue watching TV, watching them from a distance as they effortlessly transform raw ingredients to food that fills the whole house with aromas, leaving me salivating.

“They’re here” Zane shouts from the kitchen. I stand, rushing to the front door, I’m so excited, I haven’t seen my family in a month, at dad’s wedding.

“Molweni” I scream, hugging them one by one, as they enter the hallway. They look impressed, especially Mam’Gloria.

“Ooh sis, how are you?” I say hugging Kat the longest while Tyson stands, awkwardly next to us.

“I’m good sis, God has been good” she says, with the widest smile. I’ve never seen her this happy. We all walk to the kitchen.

“You’re slaving again while Buhle sits back doing nothing, I’m telling you, she keeps renewing this love potion” my dad teases Zane, everyone is finding it funny, I’m not. It’s old and boring.

“She can keep renewing it, I’m the happiest

man” Zane replies. That’s my boo.

“I won’t argue with that, you chose well here Bhungane” my father says.

The room is noisy with laughter and regular family debates, it’s always about gender roles in relationships. Makhulu arrives with Dlamini, Tamkhulu, Aunt’kholeka and Asakhe.

“Yhu, Buhle, this house is beautiful and big, so many rooms?” Aunt’Kholeka asks the moment she sits down with a mug filled with Redds. She’s in her element

“Well, it’s Zane’s strategic way of letting me know we’re having more children, he wants four, four children aunt’Kholeka. I can’t” I say, I’m already feeling like a fool with this pregnancy, to go through it all again, three more time, I won’t survive. Between the mood swings the cravings, swollen feet, backpains and the neaseuasness, it’s a lot and emotionally

draining.

“And knowing you kids, that’s possible.” she says and sips on her cup. What does she mean by that? I’m not a baby making machine, I won’t pop them trying to reach a target.

“Yeah, Buhle and Zane are always at it, she might be pregnant with a second one right now, who knows” Kat says and they both start laughing, I think it’s the alcohol that’s making them say silly things. I walk up to the other seating area, where the older people are seated. Zane’s parents just arrived with Zazi, Zinzi will join us later with his ‘ms anonymous’, it’s the most part I’m excited about this evening.

“The little one is growing” Mam’Gloria comments as I walk in.

“One more month to go. I want it to be over, back pains are killing me” I say, she looks concerned

“Have you seen a doctor about it? You should stay off your feet as well, get as much rest” she says. I never told them about the Yolanda incident, I’m still surprised why Makhulu never told them.

“Well, I did the doctor told me I’d experience backpains after the attack” I say and she looks confused, looking to my dad, who stares at me demanding an explanation

“Uhm, a former employee of mine attacked me months ago, before graduation. She kicked my back and that’s why it hurts this much” I say and my father jumps off his seat, looking at my grandmother

“This happened and no one cared to tell me?” he says. This is the reaction I was trying to avoid by not telling him. I mean it’s over now, no need to get worked out now.

“I’m fine dad, let it go, It’s all in the past” I say,

he's still annoyed.

"Let it go? Buhle this is serious, did you lay charges against her? I have to call someone to deal with this case" he says

"She's in a mental institution, she's not well, jail is not the solution" I say. He doesn't seem to care about Yolanda's mental illness, he's still fuming.

"Sid, they handled it, it's fine, she's fine. But you need to rest more Buhle" Mam'Gloria says.

So that's what she calls him 'Sid', okay. He goes back to her seat.

We all gather in the dining room for dinner, I saw dad and Zane having a heated conversation, well dad being the only heated one, Zane just stood there with his head facing down, I'm certain it was about the Yolanda incident.

The food looks and smells delicious, I can't

believe Thandi and Zane cooked so much food, just them two.

“Save a seat for Zinzi and his mystery lady, he’s on his way” Zazi says. His mother looks confused, like I was when he first spoke of her.

“What mystery lady? Zinzi has a girlfriend and he’s bringing him to dinner?” she says, even his mother knew he’s never serious with girls

“Well, you can ask him that mama, we are as clueless as you” Zazi says with a silly smile.

This is going to be an interesting night for Zinzi.

Just as we begin to eat, Zazi walks in from the entry way with his... oh my goodness. This is her mystery girl, I cannot believe my eyes.

“Nandipha?” Aunt’Kholeka says, almost chocking from her food, Nandipha looks as shocked.

“Sis’Kholeka?, Buhle?” Nandipha almost



wanting to run.

What a small world we live in, aunt'kholeka's late boyfriend's daughter is Zinzi's girlfriend, the girl I helped get the teaching scholarship, yes that one. How did she not know I'm married to Zinzi's brother, surely Zinzi told her about his royal status.

"Wooaw, wait, how do you know each other?" Zinzi asks, looking confused.

"She's my father's ex girlfriend the one I told you about, how do you know them? Why are we in King Zanemvula's house?" she asks Zinzi, who looks down with guilt.

"Zinzisumzi!" she says, looking irritated.

"He's my brother" he says.

The room is suddenly tense, everyone is looking at them not saying anything but facial expressions are speaking the loudest. Zinzi didn't tell her he's a prince and that Zane is his

older brother. Looking defeated and betrayed, she runs to the door, Zinzi follows her. We're all left looking at each other.

We can all hear their conversation, Nandipha is shouting, she sounds upset

"You lied to me Zinzi, I opened up to you and you lied" she says, crying

"I didn't know how to tell you Nands, I'm sorry"  
Zinzi is begging

"So you thought I would milk your royal fortunes, that's why you kept it from me, I'm not that girl Zinzi and I thought you knew" she says, her voice is shaking.

"I know you're not, that's why I was scared to tell you, I was scared you wouldn't give me a chance because I'm a prince, I wanted you to know me as Zinzi and not the prince. I didn't want you to reject me because of my status" he explains himself further.

There's a long pause of silence.

"You should've told me Zinzi, this is embarrassing. Aunt'Kholeka is like family to me, Buhle helped me with the scholarship, do you know how stupid I feel right now?" she says, she's calmer now.

"I'm sorry Nands, I really am, I wish I could redo it all. I'm really sorry" Zinzi says, then they're quiet again.

This feels like a scene one would watch in a soapie, it's captivating and everyone is listening attentively, even Zane's dad, only he's smiling, he's the only one smiling. I wonder what's to smile about in this awkward situation, he's weird.

We hear their footsteps walk closer and we all resume eating like we weren't eavesdropping. They're even holding hands.

"Okay, we'll just pretend like that didn't happen

and I'm going to introduce her, fam this is Nandipha and Nands, this is my family" Zinzi says, we all nod and smile.

She waves shyly and they both take their seat.

"Please tell us how you meet because im' confused, and how didn't you not know who Zinzi was?" aunt'kholeka breaks the silence, I think that Redds is in control

They both look at eachother, and Nandipha takes a deep breath

"We met in town during December, he offered me a lift back to the village, it was late and there no more bakkies at the rank, then we spoke, he wanted to see me again so we chose the school field, that's where we've been meeting. I don't know most people in the village, I knew there were 3 princes, I knew King Zanemvula because of his projects and the others I never met. Plus, Zinzi goes to boarding

school, he's hardly home." she says. I still can't believe the mystery girl is someone we know.

"How's school?" I ask, she seems pleased about the change of topic.

"It's been good, I passed all my semester modules and thank you so much for helping with the bursary." She says, I nod and smile

"So help me understand, what exactly do you two talk about? I mean you were born in different times" Zazi says, Zinzi is immediately annoyed.

"Don't answer this fool" he says.

"Well, about a lot of things, school, our passions, our goals, we both like soccer and he's funny" Nandipha responds anyways, with a smile. Zazi is lost for words, she shut Zazi up, she is skilled. Zinzi looks proud, almost smiling.

"Where are you from? Your family?" Zane's mothers asks.

Her mood changes immediately, Zinzi immediately defends her.

“Let’s stop with the interrogation, we’re here for food” he says swiftly dismissing his mother’s question.

I know her family issues are very sensitive and the divide in the family keeps getting worse, especially now that she’s in school, her mother still wants her to marry that old King. It also makes sense to me why she’d want to keep their relationship private, her mother would be furious to know she’s dating when according to her should stay ‘pure’ for this old King and I’m sure she’d want to keep it even a secrete now that she knows Zinzi is a prince, her mother will push her into marrying him and milking every cent they have. I feel for her, all she did was fall for a boy but like always, it’s never just about the love, falling in love is more complex.

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Insert 44

After dessert we've all grouped ourselves by age, Aunt'Kholeka never seats with older people, she says they bore her. The older people are all seated at the lounge by the front and we're gathered at the patio, looking out to the mountains, with a fire keeping us warm and lighting our space. All the alcohol drinkers are drunk, except Kat. Tyson, Aunt'Koleka and Zazi are the life of the party, dancing and sharing hilarious stories. Tyson is the funniest with his childhood stories of sharing a house with fifteen people, at first I never understood him but now I'm seeing why she and Kat are meant

for each other. He's passionate, fun and very religious.

He grew up in the township, with no parents, raised by his grandmother. He had to hustle to help feed his family, that's how he was involved with people in criminal activities of card scamming. He was arrested for 5 years and later found out his grandmother was sick and couldn't afford proper healthcare, that's when he went to school to study medicine, became a born again Christian and met Kat. He later opened his surgery in the township and volunteers at the local old age home. It's a story that brought us to tears, sad and joyful tears, how sad it is and the humour he has while telling it.

Nandipha seems anxious, she keeps checking the time and looking at Zinzi, who's been holding her hand all night. New love, they actually look good together. This night has been



beautiful, filled with love and lots of laughter, not forgetting the little drama Zinzi's entrance made. Both families are present and getting along, that's one thing I'm grateful for. Now my baby will have a full family, she will come at a time where everyone is joyful, that's all that matters to me, for her to grow up around family that loves and cares for her.

"What are you smiling about?" Zane catches me in my thoughts.

"I never thought I'd be in this kind of space, so much love and laughter. I'm happy Zane, genuinely happy" I say, he pulls me to his chest hugging me tighter.

"That makes me even happier, that's all I need in this world" he says lifting my face to his, with his lips on mine.

A loud scream from the lounge interrupts us, we all run towards it. It gets louder and there's

shouting as well. What's going on? It's Zane's mother, she's screaming and crying with his hands over her head, she can't speak.

"Mama what's wrong?" Zane looks terrified.

"Get the car, let's take him to the hospital" my father is shouting, and we all enter the lounge, Zane's dad is on the floor, with foam coming out of his mouth, he doesn't look good. I feel a sudden panic and my heart starts racing, I can't think properly, I'm just staring.

Kat and Tyson rush to him, and start demanding things, they keep looking at each other, like they know what's going on but don't know how to say it.

"What his medical status ma?" Kat asks and the only person who know is unable to speak, she's still crying. She keeps pointing the head. At this point I want to shake the answer out of her.

"Speak mama" Zane shouts with frustration.

“He has cancer, they found it in his brain” she manages to speak.

“For how long?” Zane asks. She’s continues to cry without responding.

What? All this time and she never spoke of it, she never sent him to doctors and specialists for treatment. Everyone is as shocked as I am, Zane is close to tears. I can see Kat and Tyson are slowing down on their efforts, they both stop and look at eachother then at us.

“He’s gone, I’m sorry” Kat says, trying to hold back tears.

Noooo, this can’t be, he was fine a few hours ago, smiling and laughing.

“No Kat, we’re taking him to the hospital, they need to double check.” Zane says, walking up to them, lifting him, he’s crying. I try to pull him back, he pushes me away, carrying his father, I can tell he’s struggling but his deternimanation

is not failing him. Everyone is disoriented and crying uncontrollably.

Zane is defeated before he gets to the door, placing him down and kneeling over him. Zazi and Zinzi walk to him, they all start crying. My whole body is shaking, I find a seat. This day has turned into a nightmare, we're all in disbelief and traumatized. I see Kat on the phone, she speaking in medicine, I don't understand. My dad is seated next to mam'Gloria and Makhulu is praying standing over Zane and the boys, where his father's body is lying. It's a sad thing to watch and I can't hold back the tears, I can hear their loud cries, bold and broken. Aunt'Kholeka is comforting Zane's mothers.

Zazi walks towards us with rage in his eyes  
"You did this, you knew he was terminally ill but you never took him to specialists, you killed my father, you evil woman" Zazi is shouting and

pulling his mother from aunt'Kholeka, who is blocking him from her.

"Zazi, don't do this" Aunt'Kholeka says pushing him away but he keeps coming back

"She's a dangerous vile woman, she knew all this time my father had cancer and never told us, you got what you wanted, stop pretending, you will be rich now. All the money will go to you" Zazi is shouting and crying. I cannot take the screams from his mother, they do not sound like someone who killed her husband but I can't shake off the fact that she knew all along and never told anyone.

"Zazi stop it" I say, walking towards him.

"You will not do this to your mother, I know you're hurting but don't take it out on her" I say, he's even more angry.

"She tried to kill you, you're taking her side? She's evil and cares about nothing but herself

and money. Well she will have it and it will be dripped in dad's blood" he says, angrily walking to the hallway, out of the door and drives off.

He's angry and I hope he doesn't do anything stupid. I walk up to where Zane is, he's still kneeling in front of his father, crying. I cannot see my man this broken, he's shattered and there's nothing I can do about it. I kneel next to him and notice a blue light outside, it must be the police and the ambulance is behind them.

They walk slowly in the door, examining the body and they confirm his death. Zane is shaking as they load his father's body on the zipper and pull it over. It's official, he's really gone, King Zenzele of amaHlubi has departed. The police are talking to Makhulu and my father.

Zane gets up and rushes out of the door, I follow behind him, he's running, very fast and I can't keep up

“Zane....where are you going?” I’m screaming his name as he disappears in the darkness. I feel defeated and useless. I don’t know where he’s running to, I’m worried about him. I’m going to go find him, I walk back to the house looking for my car keys, Thandi is behind me as I fiddle in the drawer. Where are these damn keys?

“You’re not going anywhere, Zane will come back. Give him time” Thandi says. She seems so calm, she’s not going to tell me what to do with my husband, I’m going to go find him.

“Where are my bloody keys?” I’m screaming with frustration.

“Hlehle, you need to rest, this stress is too much for the baby” Makhulu walks in, why are they trying to dictate how I live

“How will I rest not knowing where Zane is or if he’s safe?” They should all just leave me alone. I’ll take Zinzi’s car then because someone

clearly took my keys. I walk back to the lounge and the ambulance has left, with the police.

“Where’s Zinzi?” I ask, I can’t see him and Nandipha.

“They’re gone” aunt’kholeka says. I want to scream out loud with frustration but I’m exhausted and defeated. I slide down the wall with my back against it, tears are rolling down my cheeks, I want my husband, I need him, I need to know he’s okay.

“He’ll come back Zano, he just needs space to process everything” Thandi says comforting me. I can’t help feel useless as a wife.

“Come, lie down, I’ll make some tea for your nerves” Makhulu says, helping me up and walking me to my room, it’s big and cold. The pictures of us on the dresser are making me even more emotional, I cover myself up with the covers trying to erase his cries in my head. I can



still hear his loud cries and begging, my heart aches and I can't control my thoughts, I'm overwhelmed with emotions, my body is shaking and the room temperature is not helping.

Mam'gloria brings in more blankets and plugs in the heater. She is followed by Kat and Makhulu with the tea.

"Here, this will warm you up from the inside" Makhulu hands me the tea. I sit up straight, trying to not to spill the tea as I am trembling. They're looking at me with pity, Kat sits next to me.

"Tyson and I will use the spare bedroom, we'll be around when you need us" she says and I nod. Atleast I won't be alone when everyone leaves.

They all leave the room and I already feel warm, I cuddle his pillow and try to fight back tears.

This day went from a blessing to a burden, a heavy thorny burden. It's weighing heavily on me, I can only imagine what Zane and the boys are going through right now and there's nothing I can do.

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Insert 45

I feel a warm hug from behind, he smells like soap, I didn't hear him when he got back .

Pregnancy sleep is heavy. I try to lift my head to face him but he holds me still, rubbing on my stomach. I look at the time, it's past midnight.

“Let’s sleep my love” he whispers in my ear.

“It’s going to be fine my love, it will be” I respond, the emotions are overwhelming, my face heats up. I’m just glad he’s back in one piece.

My stomach feels weird again, she’s moving. She’s kicking aggressively this time, moving around my rib area, it’s a bit painful but we’re both enjoying this moment. Zane sits up, rolling me on my back, his hand are still on my stomach, feeling every movement, he’s smiling.

“She’s putting on a show” I say. He looks so happy, he’s laughing. The pain moves lower.

“I think we have a dancer here” he says, moving his hands following the baby’s movement all the way down my waist. They’re becoming slower and are fading away.

A sharp pain from my lower parts of the stomach hits. I flinch and turn on my side.

Again, the pain hits. My back feels cramped with multiple pains, I try to seat up, it hits again. Ouch, Zane sits up with me, looking confused as I am.

“I need to pee” I say, standing and walking towards the bathroom. The pain cripples me, I kneel and yell. Zane runs towards me pulling me up but struggles.

“What’s going on baby? Talk to me” he says.

“Call Katlego, I don’t know but something’s wrong with the baby” He runs out of the room, screaming for Kat.

“What do you feel Buhle?” She rushes in, and kneels in front of me with Tyson standing next to her.

“My stomach hurts, my back hurts, everything hurts Katlego. I can’t lose my baby, I can’t” I’m screaming through the pain. It’s not time yet, I have a whole month to go, it’s too early.

They try to get me up and I spot blood where I was seated.

“What’s going Kat? Why is she bleeding?” Zane screams with anger and confusion. Kat and Tyson exchange looks and Tyson grabs his phone

“Hello, can I have Dr Hlapho please” he says as he walks out of the room.

I’m on the bed, tossing and turning to these sharp pains in my body. Confused and scared Zane is pacing around the room demanding answers from Kat who keeps wiping my sweaty face with a cool damp towel.

“Breathe Buhle, slowly.” she keeps saying. My mind is running all different scenarios and my anxiety finds a home. My body begins to tremble in fear. I feel dizzy, like I’m going to throw up, my head feels light. I feel sleepy, my head weighs heavily as I battle to keep my eyes

open.

“Buhle, stay awake. Open your eyes sis. Stay with me” Kat says, patting my face with the towel.

The sharp pain hits again, waking me up, Tyson walks through the door and there’s suddenly warmth in between my thighs. I’m wet, I look at Zane, his eyes are all out

“She can’t give birth now, it’s too early Kat” he says.

“Okay, it’s happening and it’s happening now. get me towels, water, warm and cold and the hand sanitiser” she says and Zane immediately runs off.

Kat removes my pajama bottoms, places new linen under me and spreads my legs and observes.

Time goes and the pain becomes unbearable, Zane continues feeding me water while Kat

frequently slides a finger up my vagina.

“Just pull it out Kat, do it” I scream

“It doesn’t work like that sis, relax, she’s coming” she says in a calm voice.

“Tell her to get out so the pain could stop, I can’t take it” I say

“You’ll be fine baby, just breathe” Zane says

“Breathe? Would you be able to breathe if someone was ripping their way out of your womb, biting and tearing apart everything that stands on their way, would you?” I say, angrily as he sits there staring blanky. I thought so.

“Oh my goodness!” Kat’s face is covered in disbelief after observing again. she looks at Tyson and he peeps, making Zane curious, he peeps too. Their faces alone bring me to tears. I feel a stretch inside me, movement and more pain.

“What’s going on Kat?” I ask, she’s silent.

“Call the ambulance” she says to Zane and he immediately runs out of the room

“Call Hlapho again” Kat says and Tyson dials. It rings, she answers.

“She’s feet first, I don’t know what to do” she says.

My whole body shakes, I panic. My head begins to feel light again, the nausea returns.

“No sis, stay awake. C’mon. she’s here. You need to help me push but only when I say so” she says, calmly, taking instructions from the woman on the phone, Hlapho.

“I don’t want my baby to die please, I need her. I need her Kat, alive. Please” I’m begging, breathless, in pain.

“I got you sis, let’s go. Push” she says and follows a series of screams, pain, pushing,



cursing, begging for my child's life, praying, doubting, fearing. Zane's hand holds me tight while Kat and Tyson continue with the delivery and Dr Hlapho's voice over the speaker continues instructing.

My body can't take the pressure, it's tired, with a long push and Kat's pull, I feel empty and seconds later, silence. I try to keep my eyes open to see my baby girl but I fail.

A loud baby cry follows and everyone's joyful voices from a distance as I feel my mind slowly shut.

It's dark. It's quiet.

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After what feels like a lifetime of worry and pain, I'm seated at the hospital nursing chair, looking out the window facing the surrounding mountains thinking about the near death experience I've survived. I've been through many

life threatening situations, mostly inflicted by myself to end my own misery but this, this gave me a whole new awakening to life. At times we tend to take for granted the daily things we do and not register that in a split second, one thing can happen and change our lives forever, good or bad. The thing about change is that it is inevitable and when it happens it requires you to deal with it head on, it jumps on your face demanding attention and you're left with no choice but to embrace it and control how life goes on or seat back and let that change control your life. Today i am a mother, a wife, a Queen, i have people depending on me for things, i no longer live for myself, as beautiful and desirable as it looks on paper, it is scary because now, for the first time in my life i have something to lose and that scares me but the blessing of it all is that i feel worthy of it all.

"Morning mama" Zane walks in with a tray full

of food and a bottle of my favourite wine.

"Morning daddy" i say with a wide smile.

"I sneaked this in just for you" he says handing me the bottle, i pour some in a cup and take my first sip.

"Aaah, is it because I haven't had wine in a while or did they improve their technique because this tastes a 100 times better than it did the last time i had it." i say, he laughs

"I wouldn't know. How are you feeling?" he asks, gently planting a kiss on my cheek.

"I'm good, but i'll be way better when this wine kicks in. I feel well rested." i say, he smiles.

"You look peaceful, i like that. I don't want you to worry much about the baby, the doctors say she's doing okay and you'll go home soon. Baby you gave me the best gift anyone has ever given me, i will forever be grateful for it. I love you so much." he says holding back his tears.

"I wouldn't have done it without you baby, thank you. I love you too." i say, kissing his hand.

"I feel complete now, all i've ever wanted i have, you were my missing puzzle." he says

"For the first time i feel enough, more than enough." i say, as i hug him, laying my head on his chest.

Rested on your chest, listening to the thrilling groove of your heartbeat.

Resisting the urge to dance but my stomach volunteers with exciting movements that leave me beaming.

Eyes light up staring into yours,locked out of the world,ours is all i'll ever need.

Leaning down towards my cup and gently sipping on my love,just how you like it,sweet and deliberate.I pull up your cup and sip on

it,creamy and unconditional,just how I like.

Your love is my favourite beverage.\_L.A.V

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Insert 46

\*ONE YEAR LATER\*

I've been rushing around for last minute preparations of my daughters imbeleko, I tried to talk Zane into doing it when she can atleast understand it, he refused. Saying that's not how things are done emaHlubini. She's a year old for crying out loud. The most beautiful one year old

ive ever seen, I'm obsessed with her. Thandi has been helping out a lot, as usual, especially with the flu I'm coming down with, I think I got it from the weather in our trip from two months, we finally went to that Maldives trip and took Bangcwalise, our daughter with. Makhulu named her, it means 'Bless them' and she has done exactly that. It was the most painful and complicated thing I've ever experienced. I had to stay a month at the hospital after giving birth, I wasn't doing too well, even though my little princess came out perfect and healthy, her mommy was really struggling. Zane lost his father but got her princess a few hours later. When I went home Thandi had to move in with us and I couldn't have been more grateful for her helping. Since Ngcwali arrived, she has brought a lot of light and joy to our families, our house is constantly full of visitors, people from the village, even Thami and Xola came to see her. She's such a daddy's girl, which I enjoyed

when I was recovering from her delivery but now I feel like she doesn't like me. She only wants me for feeding, everything else is done by her dad, just how he likes it. Zane is very overprotective of her and spoils her a lot.

I'm improving in the kitchen department, I still can't cook but I have hacks, especially for rituals. I hire a chef and ask that she dresses casually, I buy already peeled and chopped veggies so the women in the village don't have to come the day before, less pressure on me. I buy seasoned and marinated meat, and hand it to them in the morning, they always ask for the marinate recipe, I tell them it's an Edernville secret. I know I should feel bad for deceiving these women but I'd rather this than have them call me a useless wife.

The yard is already full and we only have a few minutes to start. I haven't seen Zane since this morning when they brought wood. I'm seated in

the bedroom trying to feed Bancgwalise before the ceremony begins, I have turned into a cow, even starting to look like one. That's all she sees me for, most times she's with his father and uncles, playing until she cries and they bring her to me to feed, only to take her back the moment she's calm. She is the spitting image of me, the complexion, the pouty lips and the forehead, that almost ruined my vagina.

"My two favourite girls" Zane walks in with the widest smile, even Ngcwali recognises his voice, lifting her head and smiling at him.

"Dtadta" Ngcwali says, it's the first word she spoke, followed by Zazi, then mama. That's how much my daughter loves me.

He takes her from me, giving me time to get dressed. Zane's eyes are glued on me. If he wants to have sex now, it's not happening. Not with this flu and my fatigue.



“You look sexy mommy, those keep growing” he says with a naughty smile at my large breasts.

“I know that stare” I say

“I can’t help myself around you, you’re too sexy, a snack I’m always craving I’m the luckiest man” he says walking towards me kissing me on my lips. He’s tempting me, I want to give in but my fever won’t allow me.

“No daddy, not today. This flu is the worst, my whole body hurts, I just want to sleep” I say, he looks concerned.

“I’ll take you to the doctor tomorrow, it’s definitely the Maldives weather” he says, kissing me on the forehead.

“That was two months ago, are you sure?” I ask,

“I think so, you started reacting to it about a month ago, explains the long naps” he says. I’ve been very tired and constantly feeling under the weather, maybe I caught a bug.

“I’m done, let’s go” I say, and we all make our way to the people.

The ceremony continues, she was so peaceful throughout, I was worried she might become restless and demand daddy, she was playful and laughing at the men. She’s a people’s person just like her dad, who has been applauded for his work in developing Khumba. All our projects have grown and a lot of people have benefited and I’m very proud. The gallery and the festival have attracted international creatives, we’ve decided to stretch it out through the whole weekend instead of one day, it is that much successful.

We’re now serving lunch and it’s the most busiest part of any village celebration, somehow the number of guests triples at this time, good thing we slaughtered five cows or else they’d call us stingy.

“Yummy mommy” it’s aunt’kholeka, I haven’t

seen her in months.

“Hey aunty, long time no see” I say, hugging her.

“You’re glowing, motherhood definitely suits you” she says

“Thank you aunty, I try” I say.

“How’s the baby? Sorry I couldn’t come for her birthday, I had distribution problems in the Cape” she says. Okay, miss CEO of the leading organic cosmetics.

“I still can’t believe you took over skin care as well, you are cashing in aunty” I say, her skin care range sold out within a week of its launch.

“I’m trying Hlehle, I have to leave a legacy for my daughter who is growing every second, the other day she said to me’ mommy, we should move to the Cape now since you’re always that side and not here. clearly you like it there’ that’s her way of saying I’ve been away for too long” we both laugh, she’s grown to be opinionated

and headstrong just like her mother.

“You really are enjoying that side, everytime I go to the warehouse, they say you’re in the Cape, I’m starting to think it’s more than business” I say and she’s blushing, guilty.

“Who is he and when did you meet?” I say, excited, she can’t hide the smiles

“He’s Calvin and we met at a conference” she says, her eyes light up.

“When are we meeting this Calvin? I’d love to see the man who’s responsible for this smile” I say, she’s laughing.

“Zanozuko, they need you at the kraal” one of the ladies interrupts. I nod. Ugh, as we were getting into juicy details.

“I’ll be back now now” I says.

“I’m leaving, I have to go back to the Cape tomorrow morning, I came to fetch Asakhe, but

I'll be back nextweek. She's meeting Cal for the first time. Thami has met him already and all he keeps talking about is his money, you know how childish he is" she says. That's Thami for you, always going for the obvious. She's in love and I'm happy.

"Well, we'll see you all next week" I say, hugging her and making our way outside. Mmmh, she even bought a new car, this woman is unstoppable. I make my way to the kraal and stand next to Thandi.

"What now? Aren't we done?" I ask, she nods. Zane is holding Ngcwali who's smiling at me and jumping for joy, all she sees is her meal. I need to make her stop breastfeeding, she's old enough but somehow I feel sad breaking that bond, that's our most intimate moments, most times we're interrupted by Zane.

The men are chanting clan praises and introducing her to the ancestors. I wish they

could speed up, I feel dizzy and this cow poo smell isn't helping.

"Are you okay Zano?" Thandi notices my disorientation. I'm slightly losing balance, I hold on to her shoulder. I don't know what's going on with my body, everything feels weak and drifting away. She holds me with both her arms.

"Zanozuko?" Thandi's voice sounds far but she's standing in front of me, I can feel other hands on me but my vision is blurry, I'm out.

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## Insert 47

I wake up and I see trees moving fast, Thandi is holding Ngcwali and Zinzi is on the passengers seat. What's going on

"Where are we going?" I ask. They all look at me.

"You fainted, we're going to the doctor, maybe you caught a bug in Maldives" Zane speaks, he's driving. I didn't know this was serious, I really thought it's just a cold, now he's suspecting a bug. I wish Kat was here to assess this situation, she's probably in her honeymoon with her husband. They married in the beginning of the year with the smallest wedding guests, there were no more than 30 people. I was even surprised she invited Thabiso and Sinazo, who looked beautiful in her pregnancy glow, she was early on then. They are part of my girlfriend squad, with Lydia ofcourse, she's the wild one in

the group. We're even planning an all girl's weekend away for my birthday.

"Here, it's your grandmother" Thandi hands me my phone

"Makhulu" I say

"They tell me you fainted, I hope you're fine" she says

"I'm fine, I'm sure its flu from the holiday" I say.

"I'll come check on you later today when you come back, I'm with Oom'Ray, he's also worried." she says

"Okay Makhulu, tell him I'll see you all later" I say and we hang up.

I can tell she's worried, she's always at my new house, with Dlamini and my grandfather. They enjoy spending time with their great-granddaughter. Makhulu and Dlamini's relationship is stronger even though they are



not legally married. She's happy and always takes him with her. Sometimes she fights with Zane's mom over the baby, they both want to have her over, we had to schedule times for them, so Zane's mom has her on Mondays during the day, then Makhulu has her on Wednesday during the day. Those are the days I work at the gallery and the festival, other days I focus on the royal projects then Fridays I don't work, strict orders from my husband.

We're at the doctors office and I immediately go in with Zane holding my hand. I guess all doctors like their offices cold because this is how Kats office is.

"Mr Ngele-Ngele I got your call, sit down. Good day Mrs Ngele-Ngele" the doctor greets us with a smile.

"Good day, we went to an island two month ago, and only now I'm coming down with a fever' I say, she's taking notes and smiles at me.

“Sit there and please take off your top for me”  
I do as I’m told.

She examines me and calls in her assistant to  
take some urine and blood samples for tests.

Zane’s phone rings, he hands it to me.

“Buhle, what’s going on? Are you okay?” it’s my  
dad

“Yes dad, I’m waiting on the results. I’m sure its  
not tht serious” I say

“You fainted, ofcause its serious” he says

“I’ll be fine, where’s mam’Gloria?” I ask

“She’s here, worried. We’re going to come there  
next week. Kat and Tyson will be back from  
Thailand as well” he says, I can hear  
mama’Gloria mumbling in the background.

I could say they shouldn’t but I know my family,  
they’ll still come. And that makes me happy,  
that people care for me so much that they’re

willing to drop everything and drive 9 hours to see if I'm fine even after ive told them I'm fine. I smile and agree.

We're wating for a few minutes now. She comes back with the widest smile, I hope it's goodnews, I don't see why she'd smile bearing bad news

"Well, you're not sick, no bugs, no fever." She says and a sigh of relief from both of us, I feel lighter.

"You're just pregnant" she says, with an even wider smile.

Nooooo. I can't accept that, no ways. How am I pregnant? Bangcwalise can't even talk properly, she's a year old, I don't need this stress. I just experienced a very straineuous delivery, now I have to go through it again. I can't. Zane can see the panic and anxiety on my face

"How far along is she doctor" Zane asks

“I’m not sure, we’ll have to do an ultra sound, follow me” she says leading us to the door.

My whole body is numb, she must think I’m an ungrateful person for not being excited over these news. We enter the room and I’m ordered to take everything off.

It’s so cold, I keep looking at Zane, I can’t read his face, he’s calm. I bet you his heart and jumping for joy. This is all he ever wanted.

“There it is” the doctor say, we’ re all looking into the screen. She looks confused and looks closely, moving the thing around, I don’t like her facial expressions. She takes out her phone and calls in someone else.

“What’s wrong doctor, what do you see? ” I need to know and her silence is killing me.

Another doctor walks in and greets. This is not a friendly visit, there’s not time for that, she must tell us what she’s seeing in my there.

“Take a look at this, is it what I think it is?”  
smiley doctor says to the new one. I’m getting  
tired and impatient here.

“What’s going on? Is there something wrong  
with the baby?” I ask, the tone of my voice  
frightens the new one.

“It’s not a baby, it’s babies, three of them” she  
says.

My eyes wide open looking at Zane. This is a  
mistake, they need to look again, I’m not having  
three children at once, that’s impossible. Zane  
is as shocked as I am. They print out a grey  
picture with three dots. I want to cry and Zane is  
looking at the picture even more confused.

“I’ll be outside if you need me” she says and  
leaves.

She dropped these news and just left

“What did you do to me? This is all your fault,  
with you seductive eyes and wondering hands,

I'm scared" I say, crying, it's an overwhelming feeling.

He walks up to me, sits next to me, looking into my eyes.

"Shhh baby, you have me and you know I made a promise, you'll be fine, trust me" he says, he has said this so many times and I overcame everything we've been through, he's always been with me.

"I don't feel strong enough, emotionally and physically" I say,

"You are stronger than you think. You are enough my love, more than enough" he says, those words fill me up sweeping my insecurities and self doubt away.

He means it and I believe him.

Everything I've been through was to prepare me for this moment, the lonely nights where I felt the like my existence was a waste of Earth

space. The isolated life I've had in a world full of people. The times I felt like I deserved nothing great from the world. All my insecurities have brought me to this very moment, a moment where I can rely on myself for strength, where I actually believe in myself more than anyone. I've survived a lot of traumatic experiences as lessons and training for me to be able to conquer this journey with three terrorists growing inside of me. I have my family, my friends and my faith as my backup, something I never had for years and still made managed through it. Things are better now, I am better now. I am stronger, I am enough, more than enough.

"I guess you can call me Maka'Bayeza" I say. We break out in laughter.

"You're more than enough Maka'Bayeza", holding me tight in his arms.

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Insert 48

Cold winter mornings in Khumba have become my favourite time of the year. Smoke of the morning fire from each house appears and the village busyness begins, well in it's own pace. The young boys accompany the cows to the river and young girls squatted around the fire preparing the morning tea and breakfast. The cold wind blows softly yet piercing hard on the faces of the little ones, pulling up their necks trying to catch the glimpse of the morning sun, slowly appearing over the mountains draped in thin blankets of snow, dripping down and filling up the waterfall below it. I can hear it flowing



down the river, flowing across the village.

I've been standing over the balcony staring at the hot vapour coming out of the tea, trying to get my mind ready for another day as the Queen of amaHlubi, the co-owner of Khumba Kulture Festival, a wife and mother of the sweetest baby girl. At first the pressure was overwhelming but now I have found a way that works for me, it might not be the usual way the royal council and the village is used to but I am on top of my game. I have a group of women I work with in performing my duties as the Queen, they have been very helpful with ending many traditions that undermine a lot of women, young and old in the village. The Khumba Kulture Festival has been running successfully since its' launch last year, my team has grown to 5 members assisting us grow this business bigger than it already is. My marriage with Zane has grown stronger, I still can't cook or do any

of the wifely duties expected of me but it's been close to two years of being married and I love him even more. My daughter who continues to grow and look exactly like me, is a very happy baby who loves daddy.

Speaking of which, she pulls me by my robe from behind.

"Mama" she says in her small squeaky voice as she opens her arms for me to carry her.

"Good morning my angel." I pull her above my slowly showing triplet carrying belly.

"Look mama, moo" she says pointing at the cows wandering by the river.

"Yes my darling, moo" I say and I walk back inside, carrying her.

I've been standing outside for so long my cheeks have almost turned pink from the cold and my fingers are numb. I make my way to the kitchen and our help is making breakfast while

Zane has his morning coffee.

“My favourite girls.” He says wearing a wide smile on his face, as I walk in.

“Good morning everyone.” I walk up to him, kiss him and hand over Ngcwali, who’s very happy to be in her dad’s arms.

“I made mealie porridge, eggs, bacon and pork sausages, MaDlomo.” MaJola, our help says. I asked Makhulu to find me someone to help around the house, she’s been very nice and helpful for the past months. Even though I get a lot of criticism from some women in the village, calling me a useless wife that can’t take care of her family, I couldn’t care less. As long as my house is cleaned, food is made and I have someone I can trust to watch my daughter while I work.

“Oh thank you so much Ma. Listen today, I have a late meeting so I won’t make it for dinner. “ i

say.

“What did I say about late meeting baby, you can’t work yourself to exhaustion. You have to think about the pregnancy.” Zane says with his strict concerned look.

I resist the urge to roll my eyes

“It’s a very important meeting baby, it’s a potential investor and this is the only time he can come to Khumba to meet us. I was hoping you’d be present for this meeting.” I say

“I’ll see if I have the time, you still haven’t heard from the minister of arts and culture?” he asks

“No, you know how government is, they can be very slow when it comes to handing out money but always quick to spend it on their own things. If it weren’t for my dad’s contacts, the festival wouldn’t be where it’s at right now. So we have to impress this investor.” I say as I make Ngcwali’s milk bottle.

“I’m so proud of you but honestly, please take it easy. The doctor said...” I cut him off before he could finish because I already know what he’s going to say, he’s been preaching this ‘the dr said’ ever since we found out I’m carrying triplets.

“I know, rest and take it easy. That’s what I’m doing my love but life has to move on, I have a businss to run and a kingdom to serve.” I say and hand him the warm bottle of milk. “Now let me go take a quick shower and get ready.” I kiss him on the lips and run down the passage to my room.

As I’m getting ready my phone rings, it’s Kat.

“Hey sis” I say

“Hey, why are you so scarce? Haven’t heard from you in weeks. How are the babies doing? still cant believe there are three humans growing inside of that tight figure of yours.

Where's baby Ngcwali? I miss those chubby cheeks of hers" She doesn't even give me a chance to respond.

"Wooaw, one question at a time please." I say, she laughs

"How are you?" she asks

"I'm good just swamped with work. How are you doing?" I reply

"I'm good, just missing you. It's been a while sis. I hope you're not overworking yourself there, take it easy." She says, she sounds like Zane.

"I know sis. How's everyone's doing that side? how's marriage treating you? I saw your honeymoon pictures online, Bali looked gorgeous." I say, I can feel her smiling through the phone.

"Marriage is beautiful and I'm blessed to be experiencing it with Tyson, he's so loving. Maybe we should all plan a couple's island trip

soon.” She says, excitedly.

“The last time I went on an island, I came back pregnant with triplets. Let’s rather find somewhere else.” I say and she laughs.

“Cool, as long as you’re agreeing. I’ll search for travel packages and let you know. It’s good hearing from you, you sound happy sis.” She says

“I am at my happiest sis, I sometimes want to pinch myself because I don’t believe that this is my life. so much love, so much joy, its amazing.” I say.

“And you deserve all of it, you’re worthy Buhle, more than worthy.” She says

“Thanks sis. Now let me get ready I have an important meeting to get ready for. Love you bye.” I say

“Best of luck. Love you, wild one.” she says and hangs up.

I'm going through my wardrobe trying to find something to wear. I never thought I'd be wearing skirts and dresses full time in my life. As a wife and the Queen of amaHlubi the village cannot see me in pants. I have to wear skirts and dresses and my head has to be covered. I knew marriage came with a lot of sacrifices but changing my wardrobe completely is something I didn't bargain for. The only time I get to wear pants is inside my home or when we're away from Khumba, which is very rare. Thanks to Zazi who's been making me comfortable yet stylish garments that are also appropriate enough to wear in front of the critical crowds of Khumba. Everything I do or say is judged, it's like they own me. Makhulu did tell me things were going to change but this, this is too much and I bury myself with work that I don't spend so much time around them to give the something to talk about. If its not my lack of domestic skills, it's my work ethic, it's the fact



that I don't speak a lot of Xhosa, it's the clothes I wear or a most recent one when I was spotted by some village girls as I was doing yoga by the river, wearing tight pants that showed off my butt. They made such a big deal about it that the royal council called a meeting to discuss my dressing. sick, I know. But love brought me here and that's the only thing keeping me sane, spending everyday with the man I love deeply.

I put on my beige safari looking A-line dress with long sleeves. It's flowly and helps hiding my small pregnancy bump. Only close family knows, according to the rules of the royal council, I can only share the news of the pregnancy after the 6th month. I wrap my head with a similar beige doek detailed with white pearls. I put on my black leather jacket with a pair of black ankle boots with studded heels. Gold studded earring and a simple bronze make-up with a nude pinkish lip.

I'm ready for work. Koti style.

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Insert 49

This day has been going faster than we anticipated. We've been preparing for our investor meeting all morning we missed our lunch break.

"Okay, I think we should take a break and come back with fresh minds." My assistant, Lindi says and she's right, we've been twitching and turning this presentation all morning, nerves have really gotten the worst of us.

“I agree, let's all take an hour and come back to it.” I say and we all clear the boardroom. They all head for the door and I seat in my office.

“That includes you too Zanozuko, you deserve it. Everything is going to work out perfectly.” Lindi peeps her head through my office door.

“Yeah, I’ll go visit my grandma, she always has something good in her kitchen.” I say and she leaves. I grab my phone and dial her number.

“Hello mntanam” she says with so much joy, my heart begins to feel lighter.

“Hello Makhulu, how are you?” I ask

“I’m good, how are you?” she responds

“I’m good too, are you home? I want to come by for lunch.” I say and she answers immediately.

“Yes, I made your favourite, tripe and dumplings.” She says and immediately my mouth is filled with saliva.

“I’m coming right now.” I say and head for the car.

A young man is standing at the gate as I drive out of the art gallery.

“Hey, can I help you?” I ask

“I’m looking for a job, don’t you need someone to help you around the yard or with heavy packages?” he asks, sincerely as he joins his hands, begging. His old school jersey is torn on the right side of his shoulder, his pants are hanging way above his ankles and his hands are as ashy as his lips.

“I’m sorry, we’re not hiring yet. Maybe try at the lodge.” I say

“They’re fully staffed there too. Please ma’m I’ll work extra hard even on weekends, I just need job to help out at home. My mother is not well and can't work, I have to help take care of my other siblings, please ma’m.” he’s begging close

to tears.

“Okay, but come back tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do. I’m not promising much in terms of money but we’ll figure something out.” I say and he jumps for joy, thanking me. I nod and drive off.

Makhulu is busy in the kitchen while Tat’Dlomo listens to the lunchtime story on the radio, it’s their favourite thing to do. Gathering at the verander as they listening attentively at the story while having whatever lunch Makhulu has prepared.

“Oh mntanam, you look so beautiful.” she says huggin me. She’s wearing a denim apron with pink cut outs. She’s always wearing an apron, even when she’s not cooking. So does every other woman in Khumba, it’s more like a fashion statement than a convenience when cooking.

“Good day, it smells so nice in here. I’m so

hungry.” I say and she pulls me to the dining room where the older men are seated.

“Good afternoon Buhle” Tamkhulu greets me and Tat’Dlomo nods.

“I knew Makhulu made a delicious meal, plus I missed you all.” I say. and they smile with adoration.

“It’s lovely to see you mzukulwana. Where’s Bangcwalise and Bhungane?” Tamkhulu asks.

“Ngcwali is at home with the nanny and Zane is probably at the Royal Palace.” I say confidently and my grandfather’s face changes immediately.

“So who’s going to cook lunch for him and the child? Buhle mntanam you must take care of your husband and family. It is your duty as a wife and a mother. You must set a good example for the young girls and young women in this village, they need to see you submit to

your man and your Kingdom. You can't be here while someone else takes care of your child and your husband, you are their nurturer." He says and I take a deep breathe calming myself down before I say something I'd regret.

"I do Tamkhulu, its just that today is a very busy day for both of us, so sacrifices have to be made. Let's eat before the tripe dries up." I say, quickly dismissing this topic.

We say a prayer and we enjoy our lunch. They've been asking me about the pregnancy. That's the only thing my grandfather can congratulate and brag about me, bearing triplets for amaHlubi. He doesn't care about my fast growing business, my charity projects or my art. We spend the rest of my lunch break laughing at the lunchtime story playing on radio. This is what I needed in the midst of all the stress about this investors meeting, a good laugh, delicious grandma's food and the

warmness they bring to my heart by giving me their love, even though Tatmhulu's is conditioned to me fulfilling my wifely duties. By the time I'm going back to the office, my mind is at ease and I'm ready to impress the investors with this new presentation idea I just thought of and get that money flowing our way.

The meeting went well perfectly and the investors were impressed, my idea worked.

"Gentlemen, please help yourselves out on some drinks and snacks." Lindi leads them to the open area at the gallery where we've set up a variety of traditional foods from some of the food vendors of the festival.

"Oh they're definitely sold, did you see their smiles when that mini film you created started playing?" the intern says whispering in excitement.

"That mini film was a great idea Zanozuko." our



creative leader says.

“It was so last minute, I didn’t think we could pull it through. No matter how much we tried to convince them about the fun in the festival, it wouldn’t compare to them just seeing it for themselves. Good thing I kept the tapings from the videographer. All I did was edit in my voice, narrating the experience.” I say

“Well, we’re done for the night, one thing off our shoulders.” The intern says, looking at her watch.

I quickly look at mine, it’s past 7pm. Oh gosh, I needed to be at home by 5pm to release MaJola. I need to leave, immediately.

“Geez, it’s late. I need to leave. See you all tomorrow.” I say, rushing towards Sihle and the investors.

“Mr Rodney and you Mr Kravitz, it was lovely meeting you and I hope to hear from you soon.

The ladies will take care of you, everything you need they'll offer. I have to go, Kingdom duties are calling." I say, shaking their hands.

"We'll have a meeting with our partners and let you know shortly but it's all good. Khumba is worth investing in." Mr Rodney responds with an almost invisible smile hiding under his thick grey mustache. I say my goodbyes and rush to the door. Panicking as I dial Zane's number.

"Hey babe, I'm on my way home now. I lost track of time, the meeting..." he cuts me off before I finish

"Ngcwali and I are at the Royal Palace, we're having dinner here." he says and drops the call.

He's angry, I know it, I heard it in his voice. Zane has never dropped a call on me, I messed up. What's even more worrying about all of this is him being at the Royal Palace with his family and me as a his wife, coming back home at

night. I can already foresee how the rest of the night is going to go. Everyone against Buhle, good thing I've learned to control my anger. They'll say what they want, I'll keep my head down and obey like the daughter-in-law they need me to be.

I park my car next to Zazi's GTi, I grab the scarf from the backseat and wrap it around my waist. I'm always prepared for these random visits. Wrapping this scarf around my waist also comes with the tradition of being a wife, I can't enter my inlaws territory without it, it shows respect to the elders.

People are gathered around the dinner table. Thandi is seated next to the Queen mother, who's holding Ngcwali. Zazi and Zinzi are seated across them, Zane is seated at the top end of the table. His face is less angry than I expected, he looks rather disappointed as I walk into the room. all eyes on me and the only

person happy to see me is my daughter who is clapping her hands and waving her arms for me to pick her up.

“Good evening.” I say and they all greet back.

“I love that dress you’re wearing, whoever made it is a desing genius.” Zazi says, with his sassy smile.

“Ofcause he is. You are a design genius Zazini.” I say and he smiles widely. I walk up to where I normally seat, next to Zane, he’s not even making eye contact.

“Is this from your new collection? I need it, you never let me wear your designs.” His mom says

“You prefer Italian designs mom. If you want to wear Zazini, you just ask.”

“I will. How was the meeting Zano?” Queen Mother asks.

“It was good actually, they loved our

presentation, which was a short film of different clips I combined from the festival. They were really impressed, I also think that..” Zane furiously gets up and pushes his chair then walks towards the kitchen with his empty plate.

Everyone is looking at me to do something.

“Go talk to him, he’s upset.” Thandi says. I slowly get up and walk to the kitchen. He’s standing over the sink washing his plate.

“I’m sorry baby, I lost track of time. once I got the idea of the pitch, I zoned out completely and time went by so fast.” I say, rubbing both my hands on his back.

“You zoned out so much that you couldn’t call to let me know you’ll be running late? MaJola had to walk all the way from the house to drop Ngcwali here so she could go home. She didn’t have airtime to call and ask what was going on or where we were. I called you many times but

you never picked up. You need to get your priorities in check Zano. This is getting out of hand.” he says, looking at me with disappointment.

“I know I fucked up babe...”

“Don’t use those words with me, I told you to stop cursing. What you did was wrong and very embarrassing for me.” he says

“Embarrassing? Everyone knows I work and they knew that before we got married. If I didn’t do my job, many others will be jobless in this village. I have to make it work for the business to grow and continue employing more people, like the young boy I hired today.”

“What young boy? What did I tell you about hiring people without me knowing and doing a background check on them? remember what happened with Yolanda? We have a child now Zano, you cant act careless and make

spontaneous decisions like that.” he says, he’s angry

“He’s a harmless boy, he’s from around the village. He was desperate okay, I wasn’t going to let him go when I could help. And I asked you to stop reminding me about the Yolanda incident. now please, for peace sake, can we go home so we can have a proper conversation about this. I don’t want to talk about this here.” I say and before he responds, we’re both startled by a banging noise followed by shouting coming from the front door. we both rush to the dining room and everyone is as confused and startled as we are.

Two guards walk in with a woman and a young girl, with her face held down and her hair hanging.

“What’s going on here?” Queen Mother asks and the woman begins to shout again. Zinzi’s face suggests that he knows this woman but is

also confused by this outburst.

“Heeey! You will pay for what you did to my daughter. These boys think they can just go around playing with our girls and corrupting them. you will pay for this mess you have done.” She continues to shout, the girls’ face is still facing down. Her shoulders are moving, like someone who’s crying.

“What are you talking about and who are you?”  
Queen Mother asks

“I’m the mother of this child one of your son’s have impregnated. Speak up, who is it?” the mother speaks and we’re all shocked by this. We all look around eachother as the mother shakes the young girl to lift her face.

Zinzi walks closer and the girl eventually lifts her head.

Oh gosh, it’s Nandipha, Zinzi’s girlfriend.  
Aunt’Kholeka’s ex’s daughter. Her face is



covered in snot and tears. Her eyes are red and swollen from crying. She's more terrified than sad.

We all look at Zinzi.

"Which one is it?" the mother screams, startling her.

She lifts her hand and points and Zinzi.

Zinzi is both shocked and confused. He wants to walk closer to her but Zazi, pulls him back.

"I've been preparing my daughter for her marriage while when you had your own agenda. Listen here, I don't care what any of you say, you will marry my daughter whether you like it or not. No daughter of mine will have a child out of wedlock, what will people think of me. You will first pay for damages of taking my daughters virginity, then impregnating her and then we'll talk about lobola." She says with one hand, tight around her daughter's neck and the

other on her waist.

“Zinzi what did you do?” Thandi speaks softly but her voice is accompanied by disappointment.

Zinzi is as shocked as everyone, his eyes haven't left his girlfriend from the moment he saw her.

This is the last thing this family needs, news spreading around the village that their youngest son, has impregnated a girl who was set to marry someone else.

This is bad.

“Speak Zinzi!” His mother screams at him.

We're all looking at him, waiting for an explanation.

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Insert 50

“I did it, I made her pregnant and I want to marry her.” Zinzi says, with tears forming at the corner of his eyes. Nandipha’s shoulders drops as she sighs with relief, her eyes haven’t moved from Zinzi’s face.

“Are you crazy Zinzisumzi? What do you think life is? A fairytale? You have school to worry about, not marriage and children. You’re not marrying that girl and that’s final.” Queen mother says furiously.

“Didn’t you hear what I said? He will marry her, I’m not proposing. I’m telling you he will. My entire life I’ve had plans for my daughter marrying into a respected home, becoming a good wife and a great mother. And now this

spoilt brat of a prince thinks he can ruin that for my child, never. Are you trying to make me a laughing stock in this village for failing to raise my daughter well? Never, they're getting married and that's final." Nandipha's mom says.

"What were you thinking Zinzi?" Zane says, roughly grabbing Zinzi by his hoodie.

"Zane, stop it." Thandi walks over to our side, trying to stop Zane.

Zinzi, is standing, starring into his girlfriends' face, with pity. They both seem to be communicating something between them that we don't know. Their faces are sad, terrified and very certain about whatever is going on.

"I can just see myself, the mother of the prince's wife. Huh, my daughter marrying into the Ngele-Ngele family and carrying one of their own, everyone will bow down to me. With all the damages this boy has done, they'll be lots to

pay.” Nandi’s mom says, her eyes wandering around the room with a spiteful smile.

“You’re not getting a cent from us. Take that little liar you call a daughter and get the hell out of my house. Guards, get them!” Zane’s mom instructs the guards and they waste no time.

They pull both Nandipha and her mom out of the room. Zinzi jumps out to his girlfriends’ rescue and pushes one of the guards to the ground.

“Do not touch her!” he says, pushing her behind me, away from the guards.

“Zinzisumzi, what is wrong with you? Can’t you see this girl and her mother are trying to scam you into giving them all your fortunes? Don’t be stupid.” His mom says, moving towards them.

“Ma, wait. I think we should hear what they have to say first.” I suggest and she gives me a strict warning look.

“There’s nothing to say, we all know Zinzi is a virgin and he promised to stay one until he went to initiation school, next year. That girl is lying and she should get out of my house.” Queen mother says

“Then I’m leaving with her.” Zinzi says, pulling Nandi with him as they run out of the house.

“Zinzi! If you leave with that girl, never set foot in this house again!” His mother screams as they bang the door.

“You’re not helping Nonjezu. Zinzi wait!” Thandi says, following after them with Zane and Zazi.

“Love huh? ” Zazi says, sipping on his hot coffee as we all stand outside the door, watching Zinzi’s car drive off into the darkness of the foggy village of Khumba.

“What is wrong with this boy?” Zane asks

“Love, you of all people should know.” Zazi says, rolling his eyes and walking back in, I follow

behind him.

“Get Ncgwali and let’s go.” Zane says with a harsh tone. Why is he acting like this? is he still mad at me for coming home late? I look at him, puzzled by his behavior.

“I’ll wait for you in the car” he says and walks off. I go into the house, grab Ncgwali from Thandi and say my goodbyes then head for the car.

“Shouldn’t we call him, i’m worried about Zinzi.” I suggest as we drive out of the royal palace, he doesn’t reply.

I take my phone out and dial Zinzi’s number. It rings but he doesn’t answer. I try Nandi’s phone, it also rings but she doesn’t answer.

“They’re both not answering, I hope they’re okay. I’m worried about the state Nandipha was at, she was not okay.” I say, he’s still quiet and driving very fast. Khumba roads are all gravel,

swaying sideways and bumping on potholes.

“What is wrong with you Zane? Are you still mad at me for working late? I said I was sorry.” I say, he’s still ignoring me.

“You’re acting quite childish right now because i....”

“Childish? We had an agreement about your work schedule, you work certain days and certain times. Weekends were suppose to be our hangout time as a family, instead you have conferences and networking events to attend. Do you know how embarrassing it is to show up as a King at a Royalty event without my Queen? I’m constantly making excuses for you.” He says, shouting and hitting the steering wheel, Ngcwali starts crying. I don’t know my husband to be this person.

The guilt begins to feast inside me like a game of pac man. Rocking the baby and feeding her



her bottle as the silent drive home feels like a never ending punishment. I wish I could make him understand that seating at home and feeling helpless and useless is not where i'm comfortable at. Being with the Royal Council who can't seem to agree with anything I suggest makes me feel like I do not belong. Hanging out with the other tribe Queens and hearing them talk down on me for not being able to do half of the things they do at their homes is depressing. There's no place I feel like i'm needed and where I feel like I belong like my workplace. From the moment I walk in through those doors, the art on the walls welcomes me with a smile, it's like I can hear their voices speak a language I understand fluently. The youth that spend their time after school, creating art of their own, dancing in the studio and others reading in the library, give me hope and an affirmation that what we're doing there will not go unappreciated, it is needed, I am

needed. That's the only place where I feel like I can let go of the guard and be who I am with no fear. I don't even feel like that in my own home.

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Insert 51

A text from Zinzi woke me up at 4am and I haven't gone back to sleep since then. I've been tossing and wrecking my brain about why he wants to me, just me. The sun is slowly appearing through the blinds and Zane wakes up. We didn't talk last night, we got home and went straight to bed.

"Morning baby. I'm sorry for shouting at you last

night, I shouldn't have acted like that." he says getting closer to me and pulling me towards him.

"I'm sorry for working late. I'll really try to manage my schedule better to spend time with you and Ngcwali. But baby, I don't enjoy those Royalty events though, those Queens make me feel like shit for not being able to make a milk tart or make the perfect curry." I say, burying my face in his chest, he laughs.

"You give the best kisses and that's all that matter to me my love." He says, pulling me to his face and kisses me.

"We could save time and water by showering together." He whispers in between kisses.

"I'll be working from home today but I'll take the offer. Quickly before Ngcwali wakes up." I say and we tiptoe to the bathroom.

"Oh they're slowly starting to show." He says,

rubbing on my belly, kissing my neck while standing behind me.

“Sssh stop talking, Ngcwali will wake up any minute now.” I turn around, kneeling in front of him. The water hits on my slow growing afro, down my back as I hold onto his thighs. I fill my mouth with it, it slowly develops in my mouth and I feel his hands on my head. Pulling and pushing onto him. I get and he pulls me, spreading my legs around his waist. His eyes half closed as he kisses me on the neck, banging me against the steamy wet walls. Groaning and moaning in his ear, holding on tighter on his back as he rushes, my legs begin to tremble and my body begins to fill with the pleasures and excitement. Moments later he sighs loudly as he pulls me closer and tighter to him.

“I love you” he says, kissing and biting on my neck.

“I love you too my love.” I reply and we continue our shower talking about Zazi and Nandipha’s situation from last night. I haven’t told him that he texted that he wanted to see me, I can’t until I know exactly what is happening with those two.

We’re all having breakfast at the kitchen and MaJola is cleaning in the lounge.

“Did I tell you Luzuko got a job in Edernville, he’s leaving next month, so I need to find a manager soon.” He says

“Good for him but a loss for you, people who are loyal and hardworking as him are a rare find.” I say

“I know, I’ll have to part time there until I find someone because there’s no one there that I can trust with all of that work, especially with all the tourists coming for the festival.” He says

“Yeah, you’d have to find someone qualified and

experienced.” I say and his phone rings.

“My guy, is fatherhood that bad that you have to hide from me?” Zane says when answering and I know it’s Thabiso.

“oh Ngcwali is doing great, she’s gorgeous like her mother and calm like her father. How’s everything? How’s Sinazo?”

“That’s great man, we miss you guys. Yeah she’s good too, she’s here.” Zane says and puts the phone on speaker. “Say hi” he says

Hey, Thabiso. How are you’re doing? Long time huh?” I say, he replies and I hear a crying baby and Sinazo’s voice.

“oh it’s a full house” Zane says

“He doesn’t stop crying, how do you do it Buhle? I haven’t slept properly in weeks.” Sinazo says

“I just hand Ngcwali over to Zane and run away, you should try it too.” I say and they all laugh.

“We have to meet up, I want to see that noise making cutie.” I say as their baby continues to cry.

“That’s actually why I called, did you get the email about our highschool reunion?” Thabiso asks Zane, he looks confused.

“No, when is it?” he asks

“Next weekend, they’re doing it in Edernville. So maybe we could all meet up and make it a weekend thing.” Thabiso says

“I can’t wait to see you guys, it’s been forever.” Sinazo shouts at the back.

“It sounds great, we’re definetly coming.” Zane says and I know this is what we need right now, a break from everything happening. We need our alone time, just to enjoy ourselves. Ngcwali will have to stay behind, she’s not messing up my groove. I miss having sex and not worrying about her walking in on us or crying for

attention. I want to relax with my man and have fun with our friends.

“I’ll speak to Thandi and see if she can watch Ngcwali while we’re away or Makhulu.” I say, he looks at me weirdly.

“She’s not going? I want her to meet Thabiso’s son.” He says, is he kidding me.

“She’ll meet him some other time, I want you all to myself and missy over here is a big distraction. She’s staying.” I say

“See mommy wants to leave you behind” he says to her and she nods.

“Nod all you want boo boo, you’ll be nodding like that when we leave you with Thandi.” I say to her and she smiles. She loves Thandi so much, she’s always saying her name and wanting to go to her.

“Bad mommy” Zane says,



“That’s exactly what I want to be, diaper bags and milk bottles do not go with that persona.” I say walking closer to him. “The bathroom scene, every hour of the entire weekend. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and midnight snack. Do you still want Ngcwali?” I whisper in his ear, he gives me a naughty smile.

“You’ll stay with Thandi, okay boo boo.” He says to her and I laugh as I finish of my breakfast. I knew he’d never say no to that. Never.

He leaves for work and Ngcwali takes her nap while I check on my emails. I sent MaJola to town so I could be alone, I don’t know want her around when Zinzi and Nandi get here, I don’t know what to expect. This whole thing is making me anxious. The door bell rings I open for them. they walk in, hand in hand, terrified.

“Are you alone?” Zinzi asks

“Yes, what is happening? Where did you go last

night?" I ask, as we make our way to the lounge

"We can't stay long. We need to tell you something but you need to promise not to tell anyone until we figure something out." he says and my heart beats faster

"You're scaring me Zinzi, what's going on?" I say and they both look at each other.

"Nandi is not pregnant." Zinzi says and I feel a hole open in my stomach

"What do you mean? Last night you said you were and Zinzi is the father." I say

"Nandi's mom went through with the arranged marriage for Nandi to marry that man. The lobola negotiations were underway and lying about being pregnant was the only way she could stop the marriage from happening." He says.

I can't believe what I'm hearing.

“But he can’t marry you, we banned child marriages and ukuthwala in this village. He’ll get arrested.” I say

“I’m 19, so technically I’m not a child and he leaves in another village where ukuthwala is still a custom that is practiced.” She says

“Then we’ll have to involve the police and....” I say and Zinzi cuts me off

“The police do not involve themselves with cultural practices, they’ll tell us to resolve it with the royal council, which in that village is supportive of this custom. Listen, we came to tell you because we need your help.” Zinzi says, with a serious face. His hand has been tightly holding Nandi’s.

“This is beyond me, I don’t think I can help.” I say, defeated by this overwhelming information.

“I want to marry her and leave Khumba for good.” he says and I stand with hands on my

waist.

This is a lot to take in. Zinzi's phone rings and he excuses himself.

"Sisi, listen. I don't want to ruin things for Zinzi. This is all my mess and he doesn't have to deal with it. he deserves to live his life without all this drama. I need to leave before this drags any longer and he ends up getting hurt. I know those people, they're violent and always get what they want. please, I should be the one leaving, not him. I just need you to help me so I can get away with all my troubles, he doesn't deserve any of it. I'll go far away and never come back. I'll continue with my studies there and start a new life but please help me. he's very stubborn and wont let me go but it would break my heart to be the reason why he abandons his life and his family." She's begging me, crying and holding both my hands.

I feel the desperation as she trembles, begging

me. I know how it feels to feel like a burden to someone, how you feel like you're the reason things aren't going well in their lives. I also know tears of sacrifice, that's what she's doing, sacrificing her love for what she believes is his happiness and peace.

I think I have a plan and Zinzi cannot know anything about it.

He'll probably never speak to me again.

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Insert 52

I used my lunch break to visit Zazi to see if he

can help me with something to wear at Zane's high school reunion. After yesterday's meeting with Zinzi and Nandi, I haven't been able to wrap my head around everything that happened. I tried to pretend like everything was okay the rest of the day but I couldn't stop thinking about Nandi's plea and my plan. I wish things wouldn't have gotten to where they are but I have to do what's right, for Nandi and all the other young girls in that village. It's a dangerous plan but there's no other way to go about it, a lot of people will be hurt, especially Zinzi but hopefully one day he'll understand that we did this to protect him and his relationship with Nandi. Hiding something of this magnitude from Zinzi and everyone else is probably the hardest part of it all. For everyone's safety, its best if I handle this by myself.

"Are you even listening to anything I was saying?" Zazi snaps me out of my deep

thoughts.

“Ugh, I’m sorry. What was that?” I respond

“Are you okay? You’ve been distracted since you got here.” He says, turning away from the sewing machine and facing me.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Have you heard from Zinzi today?”

“ I ask

“No, I haven’t seen him since he left with Nandipha the other night. A friend of mine said he saw his car drive out of the village yesterday. Have you heard anything?” He asks

“No, I’m just worried about him that’s all. So, the reunion, I need to look good, what do you have for me.” I say, his mood brightens up.

“Well, I was thinking colorful geometrics print suit with wide leg pants and the blazer could have like a peplum flair to hide those three munchkins trying so hard to show.” He says with a wide smile on his face. I love the

idea, especially the pants part, I haven't worn any in months.

He continues explaining the design to me and showing me different materials and patterns online, I like them all.

Zane walks in with a Tupperware in his hand.

"I went to the gallery and they said you're here, I brought you lunch." He says handing me the Tupperware. It has lamb chops and a greek salad.

"Thanks my love. Zazi is helping me with something to wear for the reunion, do you have an outfit yet?" I ask knowing damn well he doesn't and if he thinks he'll just rock up in anything, he's only fooling himself.

"I was thinking of wearing the suit I wore at Thabiso's wedding, I only wore it once." He says

"And he doesn't have to see you wear it again. Besides, that design is so last season. I'll make



you something that coordinates with Buhle...uhm...Zano's outfit. You're the King of amaHlubi, you need to look like it." he says and Zane, holds back his laugh. Thank God for Zazi because this whole outfit conversation would've turned into a fight between me and him.

"Whatever you do, I shouldn't look like a one of those trendy guys on magazines, I need something simple that I could wear again."

Zane says

"What's up with you and recycling clothes?" He says, annoyed and turns his back on us to continue working on his sewing machine. He's been very busy in the past year with different orders from his online store. It's a small collection with limited edition pieces. He's been using me as his brand ambassador to showcase his work. it's slowly growing and getting some recognition.

"Is Thandi in the main house? I need to talk to

her about babysitting Ngcwali while we're gone." I say to Zane.

"Oh yeah, let's go find her and leave Mr "don't recycle clothes" finish his work." he says, teasing him and sticking his tongue at Zazi, who's paying him no attention.

We head to the main house and Thandi is in the kitchen cooking. I grab a seat and start eating the lunch Zane packed for me.

"Good day Thandi, we need to ask you a favour." Zane says, standing close to me.

"What kind of favour?" she asks

"We're invited to my high school reunion so we need someone to watch over Ngcwali while we're gone that weekend." He says and she smiles

"I can stay with that sweet little girl anytime. I've never met a calm baby like that one, let's hope these ones will be just like their sister." She

says

“I won’t lie, this pregnancy is way better than Ngcwali’s. I don’t know if its because I know what to expect but even with morning sickness, it’s not as terrible as it was with Ngcwali. So I hope that’s a sign that they’ll behave or maybe they’re giving me an easy pregnancy so they misbehave guilt-free when they arrive.” I say and they laugh.

“You will never know until they arrive and all you can pray for are healthy strong babies.” Thandi says

“The only thing I’m praying for is atleast one boy from the pack, that’s all.” He says and I roll my eyes

“That’s all he talks about, having boys.” I say.

“I’m with Zane a little bit too, I would love for you to have a boy in that pack.” Thandi says

As we’re enjoying this baby gender talk,

shouting and cursing startles us and we all run outside where all the noise is coming from. It's Zinzi, he's chasing after his mother with a note in his hand.

Oh gosh. I feel my heart racing with fear.

"Look at what you've done, she's gone mama, she left me because of you. Aren't you tired of ruining our lives? First it was Zane now me. When will you stop with your viciousness? Aren't you tired of all the scheming and manipulation? You're pure evil and I will never forgive you for this, ever. I wish you could die a slow painful death." He says, crying with anger. His face hardens and veins begin to show on his forehead.

"Zinzi, what is going on?" Thandi asks

"She's gone Thandi, the love of my life has left me because of this vindictive woman who doesn't want to see me happy." He says,

defeated. Thandi walks closer to hug him but he takes a step back.

“Buhle, did she say anything to you after we left yesterday? Did she tell you where she was going? I thought we had everything planned out. For the first time I felt I was doing the right thing, what I wanted.” He says and everyone looks at me. Zane’s confused

“What plans? When did you meet with them?” Zane asks. My mouth feels dry as I struggle to find my voice.

“Yesterday they both came to the house to see me. Zazi said he wanted to go through with marrying Nandipha and move away from Khumba for good.” I say and Zane looks angry.

“All this happened and you didn’t tell me?” He says

“I told her to not tell anyone.”

“Shut up!” he shouts at Zinzi.

“Don’t make this about you bro, out of people you should know how it feels to have to choose between family and love. Everyone being against of your relationship, you know that.” Zinzi rshouts back and Zane furiously walks towards him.

“Zanemvula! Stop it.” Thandi cautions him before he could throw a punch at his youngest brother.

“No one ever cared for me in this family. Everything was always about the precious Zanemvula, the bearer of promises and fortunes of amaHlubi. It has always been about him and this fucken throne. I will never forgive you for not standing up for me and Nandipha, never.” Zinzi walks to his car and drives off furiously leaving dust behind.

Thandi is crying, Zazi is conforing her mother while Zane is staring at me waiting for some kind of explanation.

“Since when do you hide things from me?” he says

“Zane this is not the time.” Queen mother warns.

“Stay out of this, mama.” He snaps back

“I was caught in the middle okay. It’s a lot more complicated than you think.” I say

“Then uncomplicated it then?” he says.

“You’re not blaming all of this on me. I’m going back to work.” I say and walk away.

As if this isn’t hard enough for me as it is, he just has to make it even more difficult by asking me all these questions.

I need to solve this before it goes out of my control, I need to implement the plan immediately. Seeing Zinzi hurt that much is probably the hardest thing, I hope he doesn’t do anything stupid.

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Insert 53

“Hello, is this the Royal House of Sokwe?” I ask

“Yes, how can I help you?” the lady on the other side of the phone says

“I’m Zanozuko Ngele-Ngele, I would like to speak to Isolethu Sokwe.” I say

“Ahhhh Kumkanikazi wamaHlubi. Please hold.” She says and music plays.

“Ahhhh Zanozuko” a lively voice finally appears

“Ahhhh Iso lakwaSokwe” I respond.

“How are you doing? long time.” she says



“I’ve been good just busy with the duties, building a nation is not as easy as our ancestors made it to be.” I say

“Camagu. It’s really not that easy, I can imagine it being harder for you with your full time job. You should just focus on one, you really don’t need your job with all the royal allowance.” She says and I roll my eyes, if its not my lack of domestic skills it’s my job at the gallery and the festival.

“I called to ask if we could meet, I have a project I would like to merge on with the Sokwe tribe.” I say

“I never thought I’d see the day I work with Zanozuko on anything, you’re always busy with business. What kind of project is this?” she asks. Ugh, she’s so annoying.

“It’s for the empowerment of young girls. I think it’s important that we groom these young girls

into grown respectable women.” I say and she seems pleased and excited about this topic

“Oh yes definitely, we need them to be good wives and great mothers for their children. I couldn’t have thought of a more perfect merge, they need to realise their purpose as women and that’s being respectable wives and dignified mothers.” She says and my heart drops.

This is going to be harder than I thought.

“Well, I was also thinking about offering them classes on career choices, providing them with opportunities where they can figure out furthering their education and also possibly eliminating the high rate of child marriages in these villages.” I say

“There you go again, always disrespecting traditions and beliefs of our ancestors. We don’t need any more of your kind in our villages, tattooed and modernizing our cultural practices,

which have worked quite well in the past years. I heard what you did with banning marriages and ukuthwala in your Kingdom and that is not going to happen in Sokwe. No wonder Khumba is slowly turning into an immoral city with all the festivities and turning on the tradition.” She says, furiously.

“You’re kidnapping young girls, forcing them into marriage. You’re robbing them of a bright future where they get to be what they want and not what the culture think is right for them. You are no better than the criminals who kidnap and trade young girls for money. The only people who benefit from this disgusting tradition is the men. Let us help these girls show them a life other than the abusive one they’re used to, let us show them that they can be whatever they dream of.” I say and she laughs

“You think you’re better than all of us. Driving around, buidling fancy homes and galleries and

bringing in all these white people. You're doing nothing but embarrassing your husband. The other Kings don't respect him because he doesn't seem to be able to control his wife and put you into order. He has become a laughing stock, walking in these royal events by himself while you chase behind money and business deals. Stop all this nonsense you're talking about and make time for your husband before someone else does a better job than you." She says and drops the call.

Dammit! I'm so angry I could punch all her teeth out. She always manages to get me this angry, even though she says the most dumbest things ever, she gets to me. Ugh!

I'm back to square one again, trapped into a corner with no solid plan. I'm running out of time.

.....

I hate sneaking around, hiding things from my family, especially Zane, who is still angry at me with the whole Zinzi and Nandipha thing. I'm always looking over my shoulder to see if anyone is following me, its scary and my anxiety is not doing well with it.

"What are you doing here?" a voice startles me

"Oh Makhulu." I take a deep long breathes trying to hide the fear in my eyes.

"You didn't tell me you were visiting." She says, walking closer to me.

"Oh yeah, I'm going to Edernville this weekend and Thami asked me to bring him a couple of things." I say, struggling to put my words together.

"What's in Edernville?" she asks

"Zane's high school reunion. I have to go back to the office soon. I have a lot of work to finish off before I leave this weekend." I say, rushing

off. I know she can drag this conversation longer than it should be. I need to get back to work.

“are you sure you don’t want tea, I baked some scones.” She says as I get into the car.

“Some other time Makhulu.” I say

“Send my love to everyone in Edernville, tell them to visit soon.” She says as I drive away.

My heart is still beating fast, I drink some water to calm myself.

The rest of the afternoon goes by so quickly as I was very busy meeting PR deadlines and finalizing a lot of work so I could enjoy this weekend without having to worry about being behind at anything. I’m home, preparing dinner before Zane gets here. My kind of preparing is taking food out of the take-away packages and transferring them into decent serving dishes. I’ve set up the table, lit candles and playing his

favourite jazz instrumentals. Once Ngcwali is fed and worn out, I'll give her daddy his favourite trick to soften him up. I don't want us to go to Edernville with this tense vibe between us.

He walks through the door and smiles as soon as he sees the dining room scene, Ngcwali runs to him.

"Tata, look." She says, pointing at the candle lit dinner.

"I see boo boo, who did this?" he asks

"Mama" she replies, pointing at me.

"What's the occasion?" he asks

"I love you, that's the occasion. Have a seat the food will get cold." I say, leading him to his seat and placing Ngcwali in the seat next to his.

"Where did you buy this food?" he asks, holding in laughter.

“Hey, I worked really hard trying to find the perfect dish to serve this food, I don’t need any criticism. Thank you.” I say and he bursts out laughing.

We say a prayer and begin to eat. He’s enjoying it, Ngcwali too, especially the chicken wing. She’s been struggling with it for the past hour.

“I kept Zinzi and Nandi’s thing from you to protect you baby, it’s not as simple as you think and I wish you can understand that.” I say. He sips his juice.

“Protect me from what baby? I don’t like it when you keep things from me.” he says

“Like I said, it’s complicated and its not my place to say but I just need you to trust me.” I say

“I really don’t understand this whole secrecy. What is going on Buhle?” he asks, confused.

“You should go easy on Zinzi, he’s really not



okay. I need you to stop being hard on him and think of how supportive he was when your mother didn't want me to be with you. He was always by your side, he needs you now more than ever." I say

"I guess you're right. I should call him." he says.

"Not now, you'll meet with him tomorrow when we go for our last fitting. Right now, I have one more surprise for you. Let me go put Ngcwali to bed and I'll meet you in our bedroom. I want you with nothing on." I say and he smiles widely. I pick up Ngcwali, who has fallen asleep with a chicken bone in her mouth and take her to her room, which is opposite ours. she's sleeping so peacefully. I race down to the kitchen to get the jar filled with luke warm water and head to our room.

He's sitting on our bed with nothing on, biting his lower lip as I slowly off my robe and expose my naked body. He smiles and stands up to

walk to me, I meet him halfway and kiss him, passionately as I work my hands on his body. He's very ticklish, he's trying so hard not to laugh. I feel his erection ride up my thigh, that's my cue. I kneel in front of him and take a sip of the luke warm water and fill my mouth with his fast forming erection. He moans loudly and holds my head. I work the water in my mouth and swirl my tongue around his hard erection and then I swallow the water with him in my mouth. "Ohhh baby" he moans and take another sip then repeat the process. The more I play with him in my mouth the harder he pulls on my hair and the louder he moans. Pulling me closer and harder towards him, I feel him in my throat, he groans so loud and I feel his warm juices fill my mouth. He slowly lets go of my hair. "Wow baby" he says, smiling down at me with his eyes half closed. He regains his strength and lifts me up.

“It’s your turn.” He says, carrying me to the bed.

.....

“Can you stand still please” Zazi says to Zane who is moving around while Zazi is trying to pin the suit together.

“It’s too tight, losen the bottom part Zazini.” He says and Zazi doesn’t entertain him.

“Turnaround, I want to see it from the back. I think you’ve gained some weight. Zano’s take-aways are doing wonders.” He says, laughing.

“Isn’t that what your uncles want? To see their son gaining some weight, im just doing what is expected of me.” I say, looking at my outfit in the full view mirror, I love it and can’t wait to style it.

“Am I done now?” Zane asks, he looks so bored.

“I would if you didn’t move around.” Zazi says

“You look beautiful baby.” Zane says biting his

lip. I know that look.

“Thanks my love.” I’m blushing, unable to hide my smile.

I can't wait to take it off of you and....”

“Wooaw! I don’t want to hear any of the things you want to do to her so please keep them to yourself.” Zazi snaps at him before he could finish what he was about to say. “There, done. Now go.” He says and Zane walks to me starts kissing me.

“Oh im not staying for this.” Zazi, walks out.

“I can’t wait to have you all to myself this weekend. Just like when we first met.” He says and continues to kiss me.

“I miss the old times though, when I used to sneak out of the window for a midnight quickie in your car.” I say and we both laugh. I never thought I’d miss those times but with Ngcwali, my job and royal duties, I miss that carefree life

we had. That's what I want to relive this weekend, we deserve it.

"Zane! Someone call the ambulance! Help!" Zazi is shouting outside and we rush to him.

Oh my goodness!

"What happened to him?" I ask, moving closer to them.

Zinzi, is laying helplessly on the ground, bruised and bleeding.

"I don't know, they threw him out of a moving van." He says

Oh shit!

"Let's take him to the hospital. the ambulance will take forever to get here." Zane suggests.

"Zinzi? Can you hear me?" I get closer to him, he has an overwhelming smell of cheap whiskey.

"Hold him that side Zazi" Zane says and they lift him into the back seat.

“I want my baby, I want my love back that’s all.”  
He keeps saying as we drive to the hospital.

“Do you know those people Zinzi?” I ask even though deep down, I know they were sent by the man Nandi was suppose to marry.

“That bastard thinks he can take my love from me and get away with it,” he says

“So you went to them? Why would you do that Zinzi? You could get killed.” I’m so mad right now because not only did he start a war with those people, he alerted the that Nandipha is gone. Not even her mom knew about this.

Damn!

“You’ve started a war against those people and with Nandi’s family. Her uncles will think you’re hiding her from them.” I shout he’s crying.

“I just want my love back, I want my Bands.” He says, his face swollen and bruised from beatings.

We get to the hospital and he's admitted immediately. Queen mother arrives with Thandi and four guards. They'll be watching on Zinzi.

Everything is happening so fast and I can't seem to come up with a plan. I'm running out of time and more people are getting hurt.

"Let's go home and you need to rest. Don't let this stress you baby, Zinzi will be fine. The guards won't leave his site." Zane says. We leave behind everyone and we head home. The ride home is silent and short. I get home and get into bed. I feel so defeated and I can't even share this with anyone.

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## Insert 54

Today we're going to Edernville but we'll first visit the hospital to see how Zinzi is doing before we leave.

"His injuries aren't that bad, so we gave him some painkillers." The nurse says

"Okay nurse, thank you." Zane says

"His mind is a little bit all over the place with all the medication so you can't stay long, he needs to rest." She says and walks away.

"Hey buddy." Zane says and he tilts his head towards us.

"She was here, my love. I saw her. I want her back, I want my love back." he says, crying.

"It's okay buddy, you should rest. You're tired." Zane says and he slowly goes back to sleep.

"This boy sees this girl in her dreams too, he's



really in love.” Zane says. “Please make sure you do not let anyone other than Thandi and my mom in here, are we clear?” Zane says and the guards nod.

We make our way to the car and we drive out of Khumba. This whole thing has been stressing me out. I don’t know what I’m going to do.

“I went to your office earlier today they said you went out, where were you?” Zane asks

“Uhm, I went to see Makhulu to let her know we’re leaving for the weekend just incase she wanted to see Ngcwali.” I say

“I wanted to tell you about the strange call I got from Sokwe, yey! That man is disrespectful. He said I should put you in order and not try to hinder with their traditions.” He says

“I called his wife to ask if she’d be interested in merging on a project with us, she didn’t even want to meet to discuss it.” I say

“Sokwe is all over the place telling us to put our wives in order when he can’t even put his own wife and son into order.” He says, he’s really heated up by this

“What do you mean? According to him, Isolethu is the perfect wife who does all her wifely duties with ease and his son is the bravest of all in all Kingdoms.” I say

“They’ve been having an affair right under his nose. Sokwe’s eldest son is from his first marriage and he’s also the same age as Isolethu. And everyone is suspecting that the twins are not Sokwe’s they’re his sons’. So he can never tell me about putting my wife in order when hers is sleeping with his son.” Zane says and my jaw drops to my chest.

This man just saved the day and he doesn’t even know it. Isolethu will not know what hit her, she’ll meet Buhle the Edernville devil and if I have her eating from the palm of my hand, I’ve

captured his man too. He does everything she says, you'd swear she has some kind of spell on him.

"You know I love you right?" I say, he looks confused. I kiss him on the cheek and feel the weight on my shoulder lighten. I can enjoy this weekend peacefully.

.....

Heavy rains are very common in Edernville during this time of the year. Cold wind, the grey skies and empty streets lit by tall commercial buildings surrounding them. Driving through the usually busy down town, past the first art gallery I showcased my art in and the nostalgia fills my stomach.

"See that yellow bulding with the rustic metal structures hanging over it, at the corner? That's where I first shared my art with the public." I say, Zane looks and smiles.

We continue driving out of the city into the southern suburbs of Edernville. The area is filled with lots of upmarket apartment buildings, residence estates and small shopping complexes. According to the GPS lady, we're 5 kilometers away from Sinazo and Thabiso's home, they insisted we stay with them for the entire weekend. I was more than pleased, I missed Sinazo so much, I can't wait to unwind and enjoy myself without having to worry about Ngcwali, the village or work, just me and my man. We enter their complex, the houses are all identical with a light stone-ish grey brick with wide dark brown doors, there's about 8 houses in here. There's a park, and outdoor gym and a pool at the far end of the houses. Tall palm trees are planted along their main street, and each house has its small garden next to their double garage. We pull up at house number 7. "This is a beautiful complex and it's huge for

just 8 houses.” Zane says looking around as we step out of the car, heading for the door.

“These are big houses as well.” I say. we ring the bell and they both appear at the door, I forgot how beautiful Sinazo’s smile is.

“Ahhh Bhungane, ahhh Zanozuko.” Thabiso says, bowing his head and Sinazo imitates his husband, they’re so goofy.

“Hi you.” I say and hug Sinazo tightly for a few seconds. “oh I missed you” I say before letting go. She’s still smiling widely. “I missed you too.” She says. I greet Thabiso and enter into their beautiful home. Décor, is everything Sinazo is, minimalistic and perfect, light grey walls with a few black and white family pictures. The white glossy floors that run through to the entire living space, a four set sofa in different shades of grey with touches of black and mashmallow pink. Their living area is open to the dining room, with a wide window looking out to the beautiful

backyard of their complex, the vibrant downtown of Edernville. They lead us into the seating area where a fire is dancing inside the sexy marble fireplace in the corner of the room, next to it lays peacefully a black pitbull, in its' comfortable cushion.

"You must be tired, the drive from Khumba is tiring." Thabiso says

"Tired and hungry." I say, I really am.

"That's what I want to hear. Can I get you anything to drink while I prepare the table?" Sinazo asks.

"I'll have tea please" Zane says "Me too." I say

"What? Queen of Khumba can't have a glass of wine? I'm sure Zane can make an exception." She says

Oh gosh, I forgot I haven't told her. I've been too busy, caught up with work that I didn't tell her and judging by Thabiso's face, Zane didn't tell

him either.

Zane and I look at each other, oh we're bad friends.

"Oh please don't tell me you're pregnant again." Sinazo says, walking closer to me. I smile and nod.

"What? when did this happen? How do I not know about this?" She says with her eyes wide open and ready to fall off.

"It's been close to 4 months now. everything happened so fast, we haven't spoke in a while and it was all just overwhelming." I say and she hugs me.

"Oh my gosh, is that it?" she says after feeling my stomach

"Them." Zane jumps in

They look confused

"You're carrying twins?" Thabiso asks

“Triplets.” Zane says and Sinazo loses her mind.

“You’re telling me there are three babies growing inside of you right now? How do you forget to tell me something this big? No, you’re going to have to tell me everything, from the moment the doctor told you you’re carrying three babies. I want all the details.” She says hugging and rejoicing.

“Yeah, I knew you were good bro, I didn’t know you were that good. Three at once, yeah, I give it to you chap.” Thabiso says to Zane and they hug.

“These are great news, congratulations guys.” Sinazo says and disappears into the kitchen.

Zane and Thabiso continue talking about their old high school days trying to remember people’s names and their stories, they seem very excited about tomorrow’s reunion event, im just happy im out of that village.



My phone vibrates, it's a text.

\*Your grandmother suspects something\*

My mood drops immediately and a cloud of worry hangs over me. This is the last thing I need, I knew hiding Nandipha in Thami's flat was high risk but it was the only place no one would suspect. Besides, Makhulu never goes into that flat because it's locked and I took all the keys. I've really tried keeping this on the low without anyone suspecting anything. I drop of enough food for her to last the whole night until the following lunch time the following day, that's the only time I can visit, when Makhulu and Tat'Dlamini are not around. I also empty out the bucket she uses to urinate in. we were suppose to keep it like this until I can convince the Sokwe Queen to end ukuthwala and child marriages in their village, where Nandi's potential husband is from. That's the only way we could solve this, now everything is moving

slow and out of hand but nomatter what happens, no one can know where Nandi is, especially her family.

“Dinner is served.” Sinazo says, welcoming us into the beautifully set dining room. the table has different kinds of food that fill the room with spicy aromas. She disappears for a while and comes back with her beautiful babygirl.

“Aahh Nazo, she’s perfect.” I say, walking closer to them. she has her fathers eyes and her mothers smile. “Hello boo boo, hello.” I say, holding her and rocking her as she smiles wider, just like her mom.

“What’s her name again?” I ask

“Awongwa.” She says. it’s a beautiful name. I give baby Awo back to her mom and we all enjoy dinner, well, them more than me. At the back of my mind, this Nandipha situating keeps making an appearance, disrupting and worrying

me.

Before I realise it we're done with dinner and Sinazo and I are cuddled in our warm thick fleece blankets in front of the fire while the guys are in some room upstairs. Sinazo says it's Thabiso's entertainment room, I can already guess what their talking about, sport, sport and more sport.

"You seem distracted, is everything okay Buhle?" Sinazo asks.

"Im just tired, between work, my duties as Queen, being a wife and a mother. It can be overwhelming at times." I say and she smiles and stares directly into my eyes

"Talk to me Buhle." she says, reaching out her hand to mine.

"I feel like im not making Zane happy, you know. I'm always at work, hardly make time for her and the baby. I cant even cook to make up for

all of that, its like im not enough. So I choose o stay away from them, I work more, drown my schedule with meetings and conferences so that I don't have to face him and Ngcwali as this disappointment of a wife and mother." I say and tears begin to tumble down my cheeks

"Buhle, you know what that man feels for you is greater than all these petty things you're worried about. Zane knew who you were before he married and he fell in love with that Buhle, not Zano the wife or the Queen of amaHlubi. That man loves you unconditionally." She says, holding my hand tight.

"I don't like the feeling I get when I'm around them, useless and irrelevant. Im there but I feel like I'm not bringing anything to them, unlike when I'm at work. I know I'm needed there, I know that the moment I walk in, there's something waiting for me to do and it makes me feel valueable. At home, I walk in and I feel

small, the walls swallow me and I watch Zane make dinner while feeding Ngcwali. They look complete without me, if anything, I feel like an inconvenience. Sometimes I stay in the car for close to an hour before walking in. I know he says he doesn't have a problem with how I am but the village talks, the other Kings and tribe leaders talk and I can't help but feel like I'm not making him proud." I say and begin to cry, unconsolably, covering my mouth.

"Buhle, no. You can't do that to yourself. You are an amazing mother and wife, Zane appreciates everything you do for him." she says, hugging me.

"I know but I feel like I should do more." I say, wiping away my tears.

"Have you had this conversation with him and hear what he has to say?" she asks

"You know how Zane is, he'll blame himself and

assure me there's nothing wrong with us even though there clearly is." I say.

"Please don't take this the wrong way but maybe you should try talking to your therapist and see if she can help you make sense of what you're feeling." she suggests and I cant help but laugh it off.

"No, it's not that big of a deal. I'll just have to find a way reduce my work and focus more on them. Enough about me, girl, this house is beautiful, from the décor to the entire complex." I say and she smiles looking around the room.

"Thank you girl, when we were looking for a place, I just wasn't imopressed with any of the houses at the northern areas. This estate was still under construction yet every house was already purchased. When I saw it on the website I knew this is where I wanted my children to grow up in. Thabiso had spoken about me wanting this already sold out complex

to a former rugby player who happened to be one of the resident owners. He got back to Thabiso and told them he can sell it to us and his wife had decided she wanted to live in a farm out of the city, I've never been happier in my life. Everyday when I wake up, I feel God's love in every room." she says and I can't stop admiring her happiness. The beautiful home, the loving husband, the perfect career and adorable baby, she's living her dream and she feels fulfilled. Every part of her life excites her, I envy that, I probably sound ungrateful right now but something about my life doesn't make me excited about living it and these three babies growing inside of me is something my mind hasn't wrapped itself around. The puzzle pieces aren't matching up and everytime I think about it, I feel anxiety creeping up.

"Let me give you a house tour" Sinazo says and we walk around their beautiful home.

It's bed time and Zane and I have been placed in a room downstairs on the far end of the long passage. I just took a shower and Zane is already in bed, talking to Ngcwali, Thandi and her mom.

"Here's mommy" he says, handing me the phone.

"Hello boo boo, are you being a good girl for Makhulu?. I say with my baby voice, Zane makes fun of it all the time, he's laughing right now.

"Mama" Ngcwali screams, laughing on the other side of the phone.

"Yes its mama, be good for Makhulu and Thandi okay, mama loves you so so much.

" I say

"Love you mama." She says with her squeaky little voice and my heart immediately feels warm. The call ended. She probably pressed



that button herself.

“She said, love you mama. Awwww” I say, climbing on the bed snuggling next to Zane.

“I also love mama.” He says, kissing me my forehead.

“And I love daddy too, or should I say, dzaddy.” I say, sitting up and pulling down my robe, exposing my watermelon pregnancy boobs.

He likes what he’s seeing and tries to move closer to them, I push him back and climb over him. I lean towards him and begin to kiss him, slowly and sensually. His hands, rubbing on my thighs up to my butt, squeezing and tightening his grip firmly on my butt. I feel his erection, slowly develop in between my thighs, I pull it out and rub it on my moist vagina lips as I stretch out my legs. He moans and I continue to play with him, eventually I slip him inside me, receiving him in my warm paradise. Slowly and

gently, I move my waist as I hold on to his chest, he moans again, louder. I cover his mouth. This man forgot we're not alone in our home. Gradually moving faster, he seats up, wrapping my legs around his waist. I feel my body, overwhelmed with all the pleasures, moving faster and closer towards him, wanting more of him. I hug him tighter and he does the same. Heated up, moving at our own rhythm, trying not to be our loud selves, we clench on to each other until I feel an explosion of satisfaction consume my body, he follows with a loud groan. We stay in this position for a while before getting into bed and spooning. He's telling me funny stories from his high school days and I find myself slowly dozing off at the soothing sound of his deep voice behind my ear, my perfect lalaby.

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Insert 55

It's the evening of the reunion and we're getting ready. I'm helping Sinazo with her make-up in her bedroom while our husbands chill downstairs, they've been done an hour ago.

"How do you like your eyeshadow?" I ask, looking at her from the mirror

"Let's try a dramatic look, this is my first social outing since I gave birth to Awo, so I need to look smoking hot, Thabiso won't know what hit him." she says, smiling widely.

"Okay then, let's go for the metallic shades and smoke it out with a deep midnight blue." I say and get started.

“They’re so excited for this reunion, Thabiso has been talking about it since the day he got that invitation.” She says, moving her lips steadily, trying not to interrupt my application.

“It warms my heart to see Zane this happy, he works so hard for his village, he needed this break.” I say.

“I’m just happy they went to an all boys school, imagine if we’d have to run into some of their high school exes.” She says and we laugh while finishing her make-up.

An hour later we’re done. Sinazo is wearing a figure hugging silver dress with thin straps. She accessorized with small diamond earrings as her curly wig flows over her shoulders. She’s definitely red carpet ready, so is Thabiso with a tight fit classic black suit with a crisp white shirt and a black thin tie. I’m wearing the colorful geometrics printed suit Zazi made for me, the blazer has a peplum flair that hides my belly

quite sophisticatedly and the wide pants flow perfectly showing only my toes and the platform of my heel. Zane is wearing a tight fitting emerald green suit with a black shirt and no tie. The babysitter is seated next to the fire place with baby Awo in her hands, she's deep in his sleep.

"Now I see why you had to take an extra two hours to get ready, you ladies look beautiful." she says, almost whispering.

"Thank you sisi." Sinazo replies and we're headed for the door. Zane has been stealing glimpses of me and biting his bottom lip. We're taking Thabiso's Audi Q7, Zane opens my door and gets in on the other side, still looking at me like something he wants to unwrap and divulge in without sharing.

"Everybody ready to have a good time?" Thabiso shouts as he starts the engine.

“Yeah!” we all shout back. He puts on some old school kwaito and we begin to sing along. Hands in the air, singing every lyric, word for word, kwaito hand signals and a lot of laughter is exactly the pre-party we need to keep us warm on yet another rainy day in Edernville.

“Zane do you remember when we had to force you to enter the talent show to rap this song because you were the only one who knew all the lyrics?” Thabiso says, his voice competing with the loud Prokid rap in the background.

“You knew I hated rapping in public but I had to take one for the team, if it wasn’t for me, you wouldn’t have won that competition.” Zane replies, Thabiso laughs.

“Ugh please, you know the only reason the crowd went wild was because Creggs Girls were invited to the show, those girls praised everything you did. Zane would cough and they’d go crazy oover him.” he says and he

awkwardly smiles

“Nah, you just don’t want to admit that I nailed that rap performance.” He says and they laugh it off.

So he really was popular with the ladies huh.

\*i can’t keep my eyes off of you\* a text from Zane. I smile and look over to his side, he’s smiling.

“You like what you see?” I say, leaning over to his ear. The music is really loud and Thabiso and Sinazo are really into this karaoke mood.

“So much that I can’t wait to see what’s under it” he whispers back. I kiss him on the cheek.

“Patience is virtue my love.” I say and he kisses me on the lips, sucking on my bottom lip. Oh gosh this guy will ruin my make-up, besides we’re not alone here.

“We’re here!” Sinazo yells and lowers the

volume. I pull myself away from naughty Zane and he's smiling like a kid with a sweet treat in its mouth.

"Wait, I didn't know they're combining this reunion with Creggs Girls' High" Thabiso says

"Where do you see that?" Sinazo asks

"Look at the banner by the door." he says and it's there "with Creggs Girls Class of 2009"

Thabiso finds a good parking spot, close to the entrance. We walk towards it and we're met by a redcarpet with a photographer. He signals where we should stand and takes a group picture of all of us.

"Oh your lipstick is smudged girl" Sinazo says, oh shit! I quickly pull it out of my clutch and apply it, naughty Zane is smiling like a fool.

We all make our way to a small table with two older white ladies, they seem very happy to see Zane and Thabiso. They're incharge of the



seating arrangements.

“Oh look at the boys, all grown up, I see you on the papers ‘youngest King of amaShlubi’, I knew you were destined for greatness. And Thabiso my husband and son love your sports show, i tell them everyday that I taught you how to read and write.” The one says and proceeds to hug them. they give us our table number and we enter the already full hall, trying to find our table. The hall is lit by fairylights and candles, the décor is simple black and white with tall mirror vases as center pieces, I feel like I’m reliving my matric dance night. The music, the DIY décor, the pretend excited faces, the only thing better is the fashion, people went all out.

“There’s our table.” Thabiso says, leading us to it, there are three couples already seated in it.

“Terminator! Terminator!” people start chanting as we get closer to our table. I’m confused. I look at Zane, he looks embarrassed but

flattered.

“Oh come’on guys!” he says and hand shakes start flying, across my face, trying to reach Zane. I’m being pushed aside as the crowds move towards him and Thabiso, I slowly escape and finally find a seat at our table. I exhale and pour myself water from the ones displayed on the table.

“Hi, I’m Sihle.” A lady across the table greets me with a smile. her braids are neatly tied up in a bun, she has fair skin and minimum make-up.

“Hi, I’m Buhle. Nice to meet you.” I greet back

“Did you go to Creggs? Everyone looks different, its hard to tell who’s who now.” She says, still smiling.

“No, I’m here with my husband.” I say

“Lovely, I came with my fiance too. Love, meet Buhle.” she says to the man seated next to him. He’s been busy on his phone the moment I got

here, one wouldn't know they're together, he seems very far away from the event.

"Hi sisi." He says and quickly drops his head to his phone.

"Hi" I reply and continue drinking my water. Zane and Thabiso are still chatting with the other guys, I don't know where Sinazo went. Can they start already because the awkwardness at this table is making me nauseous.

"Babe, do you still remember Kagiso?" Zane walks up to the table with Kagiso and some white guy with a full beard and has his hair tied into a short ponytail.

"Long time no see. How are you?" I say, greeting him with a hug.

"I know right, last time I saw you was at Zane's surprise birthday lunch. I got a job in the UK and have been hiding there since. This is Nate, my

boyfriend. Babe, this is Buhle, Zane's wife." He says and the white man rejects my handshake and goes in for a hug.

"Nice to finally meet you and that piece you're wearing, oh darling, you truly are a Queen. You look gorgeous." He says with his perfectly posh British accent, observing my outfit from head to toe.

"Well, while you were away, this lady here kept me company. This is-"

"Sihle Majola" Zane says before I could finish, his eyes locked on her.

"Zanemvula 'terminator' Ngele-Ngele" she says, even her fiancé is looking at them.

There's silence around the table. Kagiso and Thabiso are looking at each other, trying to hold back their laughter. Whats so funny about this moment?

"Let's all settle down, they're starting." Thabiso

says and everyone takes their seat.

Sinazo walks back to the table with a tray full of tequila shots.

“Everyone take a shot, Zane you’re taking two for you and your wife. No excuses” she says, ordering everyone to take a shot.

“Zane doesn’t drink alcohol and you know this.” I say

“He’s taking them anyway.” She says, this girl is bullying my husband.

“It’s okay.” He whispers to my ear. Oh boy. They all down the shots and the speeches start, boredom.

“Sihle, do you remember, at the grade 8 social when we sneaked in a bottle of vodka in your toiletry bags and poured in the punch and everyone got drunk?” Kagiso says and everyone starts laughing.

“We all agreed not to snitch but Mr goodie good, Zane couldn't resist. us.” Sihle says

“I didn't snitch, Mrs Brown asked who's toiletry bag that was and I said yours, I didn't even know the story behind the vodka punch. besides, who leaves evidence at a crime scene?” he says

“Drunk criminals” Sihle says and laughter erupts again.

“Wait, how did you know Sihle's toiletry bag?” Kagiso asks. I'm also curious.

“I bought it it for her on Valentines, it came with other cosmetics.” He says.

Oh so this is makes sense now, this is the girl Zane had a relationship with throughout highschool. She's the girl who took his virginity. He's told me about her but never mentioned her name.

“Oh so when was this, before or after your

special night at the BnB?" I ask and everyone starts laughing and going crazy, attracting all the attention.

"No, that night was in grade 12, he bought the toiletry bag in grade 8." Sihle replies and grumpy fiancé doesn't look pleased. He's too uptight if you ask me, hardly says a word. I mean he cant be jealous of Sihle and Zane, it happened a long time ago and all we're doing is having fun about it, he needs to lighten up.

"You got into so much trouble for that bro. Sneaking out of hostel, fetching Sihle, who also sneaked out, booked into a BnB for a few hours and got caught climbing back over the fence." Kagiso says and we all laugh oh gosh.

"No one has a good story about their first night." Zane says

"I still have nightmares about mine. it was dark, in the closet. Literally and figuratively." Kagosi

says and the laughter breaks out again.

“Oh baby, we all start in the closet.” Nate, the bearded British boyfriend says and kisses him on the cheek.

We’re not even concentrating on the speeches, we’re having a party of our own at our table. Everyone is happy, laughing besides grumpy fiancé, I wonder what his deal is.

“Where do you stay Sihle?” I ask

“I worked on the Cape but home is in Edernville, but I’ll be moving with my fiancé to Lagoon Bay.” She says.

“Oh lovely, did you get a new job or ? Lagoon Bay is an hour from Khumba right?” I ask, she’s easy to talk to, I cant believe I’m bonding with the woman that deflowered my husband, well they deflowered eachother.

“Yeah it is, I left my job to be closer to my love, so I’m still trying to figure out a work situation



this side.” she says.

“Okay, I hope you find something soon. Congratulations on your engagement.” I say and she smiles widely.

“Why are you so nice to her?” Sinazo whispers in my ear, she’s getting tipsy.

“She’s a nice girl and her fiancé is really making things awkward for her by being on his phone that long. Besides, I’m a nice person.” I say and she laughs

“Nice? You? The last time you handled Zane’s ex you almost shoved that poor girl to the ground.” She says

“oh please, she deserved it.” I say and she laughs.

They’re calling on the headboy and deputy ,Zane and Kagiso to the stage, the crowds are cheering.

They make their speeches and the food is served. This is exactly what Zane needed and I'm happy he's happy and enjoying himself. Reuniting with his old friends and watching how he interacts with them is beautiful. After the meals, drinks started flowing. Everyone in the table is now drinking except for me and Zane. Thabiso and Sinazo have let loose and definitely enjoying their time, dancing and singing along to songs with Kagiso and his boyfriend, who also seems to love the drunk karaoke vibe. Between the heat and the malva pudding and custard I just had, my head begins to feel light and a nauseating feeling overwhelms me.

"I need to go to the bathroom." I say to Zane

"Want me to come with you?" he asks. I shake my head and hurry to the bathrooms. I enter the first cubicle and let it all out. I'm on my knees with my head facing down the toilet, I feel a little bit dizzy so seat on the close toilet seat for

a while. I hate this part of pregnancy. I finally get my senses back and able to walk back to the table, everyone is on the dance floor. Zane is having a conversation with Sihle and her fiancé, he's finally talking, it took all those shots to get him off his phone.

"Are you okay baby?" Zane asks

"Yes, just the usual. It's getting heated in here." I say, flapping a napkin on my face.

"Are you sure you don't want to leave?" Zane asks

"I'm fine baby, besides, Sinazo and Thabiso seem to be having the best time." I say, pointing at them on the dance floor. Sinazo is twerking on her man, her shoes are off and they're getting into it.

"Look at Kagiso and Nate, they're both off beat." He says and I can't stop laughing, Nate is white, it's understandable, he was born with two left

feet. Kagiso has no excuse to be that embarrassingly off beat, he's just tumbling on the dance floor.

Zane is looking at me while I laugh these fools on the dance floor, he's so creepy.

"What?" I ask

"You look beautiful, when you're happy." He says and I blush. "I haven't see you laugh this hard in a while, I know work can be hectic but you need to keep that smile on." he says

"As long as you're by my side, I'll always be happy." I say, kissing him.

The night continues with more off beat dancing from Kagiso and Nate, more twerking from Sinazo and we also got to see Mr grumpy on the floor with his fiancé, Sihle. Zane and I have been the grandmas of this party, left alone at the table, kissing and admiring eachother. He kept whispering in my ear all the things he was

planning on doing to me once we get back to Sinazo and Thabiso's night, that cut the night short. I insisted on driving us back home because everyone was drunk and Zane had two shots of tequila, I was the only sober one. immediately when we got home, Zane and I took a long sexy hot bath together. He massaged my back and neck areas and all the other places down under than needed his special touch. The night ended perfectly with me wrapped up in his warm arms, receiving spontaneous forehead kisses.

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## Insert 56

We left Sinazo and Thabiso's place after we all had breakfast and now we're on our way to my dad and Mam'Gloria's house where we'll spend the night. This weekend has been exactly what me and Zane needed, stress free time where we can enjoy eachothers time with our friends and not worry about work, children, the in-laws and royalty duties.

"Don't you miss the old times where we use to sneak around for quickies and having all the time to ourselves, that was a fun time in our lives." I to Zane who's concentrating on the road.

"What's fun about sneaking around? Atleast now we live together and we have a beautiful child with three other ones coming. It doesn't get better than that." He says

“I know my love but don’t you miss staying up all night, not having to worry about anyone else but ourselves. When we’d have picnics by the river, take walks or jog together and watch the sunrise. I miss that, just me and you.” I say smiling at the memory of those times.

“That was a good time but we’ve grown now, we have a family. That part of our lives has passed.” He says, smiling back.

“It passed too quickly.” I mumble in my teeth.

“What babe?” he asks

“Nothing my love.” I say as I turn up the radio volume and put on my sunglasses.

He doesn’t get it. it all went by so quickly that when everything happened at once, I didn’t have time to adjust. It’s overwhelming, motherhood, being a wife and Queen, it’s all suffocating me and my husband doesn’t get it, no one does. Everyday I feel like I’m drowning in

responsibility and I'm expected to show up ready and deliver. Sometimes I just want to switch it all off and reset to a time where I don't have to be needed in spaces I don't feel like myself, spaces that want a me that I cannot be.

We drive in my dad's and Mam'Gloria's house and two cars are parked outside, I recognize Kat's but the other, I don't know. The weather is very cold and windy today, atleast it's not raining like the past two days. Im wearing a two piece black sweater and pants with a black studded leather jacket. Zane is also wearing all black, jeans and a hoodie.

"Watch your step baby" he says, helping me through the slippery tiles as we make our way to the door. Before we ring the door bell, Kat opens and screams with joy, opening her arms to welcome us.

"Siiiiis!" she screams, hugging me tight.



“Hi sis.” I say

“You look beautiful, marriage and motherhood really suit you.” She says, smiling widely.

“I try.” I say and she goes on to greet Zane.

“Hello Hlehle” my dad walks towards me with his arms wide open, his smile is something I didn’t realise I missed until this moment, I find myself tearing up as I greet him with a hug.

“Hi daddy.” I say, crying in his arms, holding on tightly. “ I miss you.” I say

“I miss you too my baby.” He replies, wiping away my tears.

“Ohh mzala, this pregnancy is messing up with your emotions.” Thami walks to us, he has false eyelashes on and a highlighter on his cheekbones. He looks gorgeous

“Mzala! Is that make up you have on?” I say hugging him.

“I’ve been exploring with it, do you like it? well I don’t care, I love it and Xola loves it on me.” he says, batting his eyelashes at me, I can’t help but laugh.

“I love it, you look amazing Mzala.” I say, he smiles and pulls me towards the dining room where Xola, Tyson and Mam’Gloria are seated.

“Welcome home.” Mam’Gloria says, wearing a beige knit dress and an apron over it. This woman doesn’t age at all, she keeps looking younger everytime I see her.

“It’s good to be home Mme.” I say, hugging her.

“How are you?” she asks with her soothing voice, her eyes looking directly into mine. for some reason I feel like she sees what everyone can’t, it’s like she sees my heart.

“I’m fine Mme.” I say, she pulls me back for a hug. I feel emotional again, I try to pull myself together.

Oh these hormones” I say, as I greet Xola and Tyson.

“With three babies growing inside of you, you can cry, scream and curse, we’ll understand.” Thami says, pulling a chair across from me, next to Xola.

“How’s the pregnancy going so far?” Kat asks

“It’s better than Ngcwali’s. I just feel tired and the appetite is also on another level. By the time I deliver, I’ll be as big a hippo.” I say and they laugh.

“How’s baby Ngcwali doing? Oh I miss those cheeks.” Kat asks

“She’s the sweetest, I’m glad she took after Zane’s calmness. She’s learning how to speak. The other morning she walked up to me and pointed at my stomach and said ‘molo baba’ then greeted me.” I say

“She’s very smart and beautiful, just like her

mom.” Zane says, kissing my cheek.

“Oooh-kay. Let’s eat.” Thami says.

“Let’s say a prayer.” Mam’Gloria says “Father we thank you for this day, we thank you for family, we thank you for love and for bringing us all in one roof. You are God and we praise and rejoice with you everyday. Amen.” She says and we all follow “Amen.”

“Do you go to church?” my dad asks, looking at Zane.

“We haven’t made time yet, it’s been quite a hectic year. Sundays is the only free time we have to ourselves, that’s if Zano doesn’t have any weekend conferences or networking events to attend to.” He says.

Oh gosh, I can’t believe he’s putting this all on me. I want to roll my eyes at him so bad but I stop myself and focus on my eating.

“You have to make time for church, you have to

make time for family. Work cannot consume most of your time. I understand you both have demanding schedules but quality time is very important.” My father says. I’m so not liking this marriage master class.

“Can you pass me the potatoes please.” I say to Xola, Mam’Gloria is reading my annoyed facial expression.

“We’re trying, Zano even promised on going back to working part-time again, right baby?” Zane says, looking at me.

I want to scream at both of them, my heart is beating ten times faster with anger and I’m trying really hard not to lose it.

“Sure” I say without flinching, looking at my plate as I continue eating. “This is a nice stew Mme.” I say and she smiles at the complement.

“We haven’t seen you in months, everytime we want to visit, you’re always busy or away for

work. You know, especially with the babies coming, you should try and slow down..”

“I get it, I’m a horrible wife and mother. I’m trying okay! Now can we stop making me feel like shit for trying.” I snap, shouting. I feel my heart beating out of my chest and my body trembles in anger.

Everyone looks terrified, especially Zane

“You’re not a horrible mother baby, he’s just..”  
Zane

“I said stop talking about it dammit.” I shout, banging my fists on the table, startling everyone.

“Calm down Hlehle.” My dad says.

“You don’t get it, I have to take this everyday, everywhere I go, I have to take it that I’m a bad mother and wife, everyday.” I say and walk away from the table, tears in my eyes, breathing is uncontrollable as my anger shoots for the roof. I run upstairs to my room. I’m trying to control

my breathing, taking deep heavy breathes while calming my anger. I can't stop crying, the more I calm myself, the more guilt and sadness consume me. I cannot bring myself to calm down or get out of this sadness and guilt, so I lay down and allow my heart to sink in it. Suddenly the room is dark and cold, slowly closing in on me, I feel the walls suffocating me. The closer they get, the louder the laughs. I see their shadows, pointing at me and scribbling on their notebooks, smearing at me with disapproval. I feel their pity for me, piercing through my skin to my heart, a sharp pain of disappointment and a familiar feeling of worthlessness. I feel stuck in a space I don't belong in and all the doors are locked. I'm trapped.

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A vibrating movement wakes me up.

\*Your grandmother was looking through the

window this morning, I swear she knows something.\*

\*I'll be back tomorrow, I'll find you another spot. She can't open, I took all the keys. Stay low\*

I need to speak to Isolethu and sort this out before this whole plan goes to dust. Let me call her.

"What do you want from me?" she answers

"I need to speak to you, can we meet tomorrow morning at the gallery." I say

"I told you I don't want to be part of your stupid project, or do you want my husband to call you directly, since yours can't put you in your place?" she says

"That'll be better actually, I'd love to know what he thinks about your stepmom duties, surely that's something he'll be proud of." I say, her breathing pauses



“What are you talking about?” she asks

“You know exactly what I’m talking about. Now meet me at the gallery at lunchtime or you can kiss your royal status goodbye.” I say and drop the call.

I look at the time, it’s past 7pm. I can hear everyone downstairs talking, I hate how I stormed off and allowed my anger get the worst of me, I feel like crap. There’s a knock on the door.

“Come in” I say and Mam’Gloria walks in with two steaming hot cups.

“Hot chocolate to keep you and the little ones warm.” She says, smiling as she walks closer, handing me the cup.

“Thanks Mme.” I say. “Zane must be very angry at me huh?” I say

“No, he’s just worried about you.” She says. “I know I will never replace what you had with your

mother and I don't want to overstep my boundaries but you must know that I'm always available if you want to talk, about anything." She says

"Thanks Mme, I don't know what got into me. I'm just tired I guess." I say. she takes a deep breathe and I feel and 'oh here we go' in my head.

"I saw that the moment you walked in, there's some heaviness in your eyes. It's not the work kind of heaviness, its deeper than that. Is everything okay between you and Zane?" she asks

"Yeah we're fine Mme, like I said, work is hectic and the pregnancy is also doing it's part. I just need to relax more and spend time with my family." I say, sipping on my hot chocolate.

"Take some time for yourself as well, if we don't take care of ourselves, we cannot take care of

those who need us.” she says. This conversation needs to end because I don’t want to discuss this, I need to apologise to Zane.

“I don’t think I can face everyone right now, I just need to speak to Zane.” I say

“It’s fine, I’ll get him. Remember what I said, i’m a phone call away.” She says as she leaves the room.

A few minutes later, Zane walks in.

“Are you okay babe?” he asks. I nod.

“Come seat here” I say, welcoming him into bed.

He slides in next to me and I reach for his hand.

“I’m really sorry about earlier, I didn’t mean to yell at you like that. It was very wrong of me and I feel really bad for disrespecting you like that. I let my anger get the worst of me and I’m really sorry my love.” I say rubbing on his hands.

“But where does the anger come from my love?

You really scared me, I didn't know where all that came from." he says

"I don't know, I guess I'm just tired and with all what my father kept talking about continuously, I felt he was taking away from the fun we came for in this weekend. I didn't want to lash out like that and I'm really sorry my love." I say, kissing on his hand. "Do you forgive me?" I ask, he's quiet and seems like there's more he wants to say.

"Will you forgive me if I do this?" I say, kissing on his cheek and down to his neck.

"Buhle, wait.." he says and I silence him with a kiss on the mouth. I move over to his side and sit on his lap with my legs hanging on his sides. I pull his hands and place them on my butt.

"I love you so much" I whisper in his ear as I grind on top of him, feeling his erection forming, slowly. He carries me and lays me on the bed

and spreading my legs wide for him. He pulls down my sweat pants while I pull the sweater over my head. His eyes locked on mine as he undresses himself, exposing his hard erection. He buries his head in between my thighs and kisses in between them until he reaches my vagina. I arch my back as he feasts on it without mercy, I want to scream but I remember where I am, so I exhale and tighten my grip on the sheets. He turns me over on my stomach kisses on my back, I feel the adrenaline rush through my back, hearing him breathing behind my ear. He enters from behind with his hand cupping my breasts, I moan as he kisses me on the neck, slowly grinding and thrusting towards me. I move my waist to his rhythm. My body heats up with the pleasures of his love, moving faster and harder, he pulls me up on my knees, spreading my legs apart as I lay my head on the bed. He groans hard the more he pulls and pushes at my butt, I grind my waist to catch up

on him and my legs begin to shake, my emotions are all over, tears roll down my face, it feel good, his love consuming my spine and transferring all over my body. "Ahh yes, yes, yes yeeees!" I scream. Zane quickly spanks me, to lower my voice. He lays me flat on my stomach again, covering my mouth, the louder I scream, he thrusts hard, pinning me deeper and deeper. He exhales and I feel an explosion inside of me. Trying to catch my breath I lay aside him, trying to gain back my sanity. That was incredible, my afro is messed up. He's defeated, trying to catch his breathe, he leans towards me.

"You're trying to get us kicked out with all that screaming?" he says, grasping for air.

"You're to blame for that." I say and he laughs. I get up and kneel in front of him, stroking on his penis.

"Round two" I say, kissing on it. He tilts his head backwards.

“Your pregnancy sex drive is going to kill me.”  
he says.

“Agh, don’t be a wimp.” I say, filling my mouth  
with it as he moans with his hands on my head.

We spend the rest of the night, having sex,  
taking breaks and having more sex. If it’s not on  
the bed, it’s on the floor, on the dresser and our  
last spot, in the shower before we got ready to  
sleep, for real this time. When everyone had  
gone to bed, I ran downstairs to get some  
snacks as we’ve worked ourselves a good  
appetite.

I’ll face everyone in the morning before we leave  
for Khumba, right now it’s me, my man and our  
orgasms.

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Insert 55

It's the evening of the reunion and we're getting ready. I'm helping Sinazo with her make-up in her bedroom while our husbands chill downstairs, they've been done an hour ago.

"How do you like your eyeshadow?" I ask, looking at her from the mirror

"Let's try a dramatic look, this is my first social outing since I gave birth to Awo, so I need to look smoking hot, Thabiso won't know what hit him." she says, smiling widely.

"Okay then, let's go for the metallic shades and smoke it out with a deep midnight blue." I say and get started.

"They're so excited for this reunion, Thabiso has



been talking about it since the day he got that invitation.” She says, moving her lips steadily, trying not to interrupt my application.

“It warms my heart to see Zane this happy, he works so hard for his village, he needed this break.” I say.

“I’m just happy they went to an all boys school, imagine if we’d have to run into some of their high school exes.” She says and we laugh while finishing her make-up.

An hour later we’re done. Sinazo is wearing a figure hugging silver dress with thin straps. She accessorized with small diamond earrings as her curly wig flows over her shoulders. She’s definitely red carpet ready, so is Thabiso with a tight fit classic black suit with a crisp white shirt and a black thin tie. I’m wearing the colorful geometrics printed suit Zazi made for me, the blazer has a peplum flair that hides my belly quite sophisticatedly and the wide pants flow

perfectly showing only my toes and the platform of my heel. Zane is wearing a tight fitting emerald green suit with a black shirt and no tie. The babysitter is seated next to the fire place with baby Awo in her hands, she's deep in his sleep.

"Now I see why you had to take an extra two hours to get ready, you ladies look beautiful." she says, almost whispering.

"Thank you sisi." Sinazo replies and we're headed for the door. Zane has been stealing glimpses of me and biting his bottom lip. We're taking Thabiso's Audi Q7, Zane opens my door and gets in on the other side, still looking at me like something he wants to unwrap and divulge in without sharing.

"Everybody ready to have a good time?" Thabiso shouts as he starts the engine.

"Yeah!" we all shout back. He puts on some old

school kwaito and we begin to sing along. Hands in the air, singing every lyric, word for word, kwaito hand signals and a lot of laughter is exactly the pre-party we need to keep us warm on yet another rainy day in Edernville.

“Zane do you remember when we had to force you to enter the talent show to rap this song because you were the only one who knew all the lyrics?” Thabiso says, his voice competing with the loud Prokid rap in the background.

“You knew I hated rapping in public but I had to take one for the team, if it wasn’t for me, you wouldn’t have won that competition.” Zane replies, Thabiso laughs.

“Ugh please, you know the only reason the crowd went wild was because Creggs Girls were invited to the show, those girls praised everything you did. Zane would cough and they’d go crazy oover him.” he says and he awkwardly smiles

“Nah, you just don’t want to admit that I nailed that rap performance.” He says and they laugh it off.

So he really was popular with the ladies huh.

\*i can’t keep my eyes off of you\* a text from Zane. I smile and look over to his side, he’s smiling.

“You like what you see?” I say, leaning over to his ear. The music is really loud and Thabiso and Sinazo are really into this karaoke mood.

“So much that I can’t wait to see what’s under it” he whispers back. I kiss him on the cheek.

“Patience is virtue my love.” I say and he kisses me on the lips, sucking on my bottom lip. Oh gosh this guy will ruin my make-up, besides we’re not alone here.

“We’re here!” Sinazo yells and lowers the volume. I pull myself away from naughty Zane and he’s smiling like a kid with a sweet treat in

its mouth.

“Wait, I didn’t know they’re combining this reunion with Creggs Girls’ High” Thabiso says

“Where do you see that?” Sinazo asks

“Look at the banner by the door.” he says and it’s there “with Creggs Girls Class of 2009”

Thabiso finds a good parking spot, close to the entrance. We walk towards it and we’re met by a redcarpet with a photographer. He signals where we should stand and takes a group picture of all of us.

“Oh your lipstick is smudged girl” Sinazo says, oh shit! I quickly pull it out of my clutch and apply it, naughty Zane is smiling like a fool.

We all make our way to a small table with two older white ladies, they seem very happy to see Zane and Thabiso. They’re incharge of the seating arrangements.

“Oh look at the boys, all grown up, I see you on the papers ‘youngest King of amaShlubi’, I knew you were destined for greatness. And Thabiso my husband and son love your sports show, i tell them everyday that I taught you how to read and write.” The one says and proceeds to hug them. they give us our table number and we enter the already full hall, trying to find our table. The hall is lit by fairylights and candles, the décor is simple black and white with tall mirror vases as center pieces, I feel like I’m reliving my matric dance night. The music, the DIY décor, the pretend excited faces, the only thing better is the fashion, people went all out.

“There’s our table.” Thabiso says, leading us to it, there are three couples already seated in it.

“Terminator! Terminator!” people start chanting as we get closer to our table. I’m confused. I look at Zane, he looks embarrassed but flattered.

“Oh come’on guys!” he says and hand shakes start flying, across my face, trying to reach Zane. I’m being pushed aside as the crowds move towards him and Thabiso, I slowly escape and finally find a seat at our table. I exhale and pour myself water from the ones displayed on the table.

“Hi, I’m Sihle.” A lady across the table greets me with a smile. her braids are neatly tied up in a bun, she has fair skin and minimum make-up.

“Hi, I’m Buhle. Nice to meet you.” I greet back

“Did you go to Creggs? Everyone looks different, its hard to tell who’s who now.” She says, still smiling.

“No, I’m here with my husband.” I say

“Lovely, I came with my fiance too. Love, meet Buhle.” she says to the man seated next to him. He’s been busy on his phone the moment I got here, one wouldn’t know they’re together, he

seems very far away from the event.

“Hi sisi.” He says and quickly drops his head to his phone.

“Hi” I reply and continue drinking my water. Zane and Thabiso are still chatting with the other guys, I don’t know where Sinazo went. Can they start already because the awkwardness at this table is making me nauseous.

“Babe, do you still remember Kagiso?” Zane walks up to the table with Kagiso and some white guy with a full beard and has his hair tied into a short ponytail.

“Long time no see. How are you?” I say, greeting him with a hug.

“I know right, last time I saw you was at Zane’s surprise birthday lunch. I got a job in the UK and have been hiding there since. This is Nate, my boyfriend. Babe, this is Buhle, Zane’s wife.” He



says and the white man rejects my handshake and goes in for a hug.

“Nice to finally meet you and that piece you’re wearing, oh darling, you truly are a Queen. You look gorgeous.” He says with his perfectly posh British accent, observing my outfit from head to toe.

“Well, while you were away, this lady here kept me company. This is-“

“Sihle Majola” Zane says before I could finish, his eyes locked on her.

“Zanemvula ‘terminator’ Ngele-Ngele” she says, even her fiancé is looking at them.

There’s silence around the table. Kagiso and Thabiso are looking at each other, trying to hold back their laughter. Whats so funny about this moment?

“Let’s all settle down, they’re starting.” Thabiso says and everyone takes their seat.

Sinazo walks back to the table with a tray full of tequila shots.

“Everyone take a shot, Zane you’re taking two for you and your wife. No excuses” she says, ordering everyone to take a shot.

“Zane doesn’t drink alcohol and you know this.” I say

“He’s taking them anyway.” She says, this girl is bullying my husband.

“It’s okay.” He whispers to my ear. Oh boy. They all down the shots and the speeches start, boredom.

“Sihle, do you remember, at the grade 8 social when we sneaked in a bottle of vodka in your toiletry bags and poured in the punch and everyone got drunk?” Kagiso says and everyone starts laughing.

“We all agreed not to snitch but Mr goodie good, Zane couldn't resist. us.” Sihle says

“I didn’t snitch, Mrs Brown asked who’s toiletry bag that was and I said yours, I didn’t even know the story behind the vodka punch. besides, who leaves evidence at a crime scene?” he says

“Drunk criminals” Sihle says and laughter erupts again.

“Wait, how did you know Sihle’s toiletry bag?” Kagiso asks. I’m also curious.

“I bought it it for her on Valentines, it came with other cosmetics.” He says.

Oh so this makes sense now, this is the girl Zane had a relationship with throughout highschool. She’s the girl who took his virginity. He’s told me about her but never mentioned her name.

“Oh so when was this, before or after your special night at the BnB?” I ask and everyone starts laughing and going crazy, attracting all

the attention.

“No, that night was in grade 12, he bought the toiletry bag in grade 8.” Sihle replies and grumpy fiancé doesn’t look pleased. He’s too uptight if you ask me, hardly says a word. I mean he cant be jealous of Sihle and Zane, it happened a long time ago and all we’re doing is having fun about it, he needs to lighten up.

“You got into so much trouble for that bro. Sneaking out of hostel, fetching Sihle, who also sneaked out, booked into a BnB for a few hours and got caught climbing back over the fence.” Kagiso says and we all laugh oh gosh.

“No one has a good story about their first night.” Zane says

“I still have nightmares about mine. it was dark, in the closet. Literally and figuratively.” Kagosi says and the laughter breaks out again.

“Oh baby, we all start in the closet.” Nate, the

bearded British boyfriend says and kisses him on the cheek.

We're not even concentrating on the speeches, we're having a party of our own at our table. Everyone is happy, laughing besides grumpy fiancé, I wonder what his deal is.

"Where do you stay Sihle?" I ask

"I worked on the Cape but home is in Edernville, but I'll be moving with my fiancé to Lagoon Bay." She says.

"Oh lovely, did you get a new job or ? Lagoon Bay is an hour from Khumba right?" I ask, she's easy to talk to, I cant believe I'm bonding with the woman that deflowered my husband, well they deflowered eachother.

"Yeah it is, I left my job to be closer to my love, so I'm still trying to figure out a work situation this side." she says.

"Okay, I hope you find something soon.

Congratulations on your engagement.” I say and she smiles widely.

“Why are you so nice to her?” Sinazo whispers in my ear, she’s getting tipsy.

“She’s a nice girl and her fiancé is really making things awkward for her by being on his phone that long. Besides, I’m a nice person.” I say and she laughs

“Nice? You? The last time you handled Zane’s ex you almost shoved that poor girl to the ground.” She says

“oh please, she deserved it.” I say and she laughs.

They’re calling on the headboy and deputy ,Zane and Kagiso to the stage, the crowds are cheering.

They make their speeches and the food is served. This is exactly what Zane needed and I’m happy he’s happy and enjoying himself.

Reuniting with his old friends and watching how he interacts with them is beautiful. After the meals, drinks started flowing. Everyone in the table is now drinking except for me and Zane. Thabiso and Sinazo have let loose and definitely enjoying their time, dancing and singing along to songs with Kagiso and his boyfriend, who also seems to love the drunk karaoke vibe. Between the heat and the malva pudding and custard I just had, my head begins to feel light and a nauseating feeling overwhelms me.

“I need to go to the bathroom.” I say to Zane

“Want me to come with you?” he asks. I shake my head and hurry to the bathrooms. I enter the first cubicle and let it all out. I’m on my knees with my head facing down the toilet, I feel a little bit dizzy so seat on the close toilet seat for a while. I hate this part of pregnancy. I finally get my senses back and able to walk back to the table, everyone is on the dance floor. Zane

is having a conversation with Sihle and her fiancé, he's finally talking, it took all those shots to get him off his phone.

"Are you okay baby?" Zane asks

"Yes, just the usual. It's getting heated in here." I say, flapping a napkin on my face.

"Are you sure you don't want to leave?" Zane asks

"I'm fine baby, besides, Sinazo and Thabiso seem to be having the best time." I say, pointing at them on the dance floor. Sinazo is twerking on her man, her shoes are off and they're getting into it.

"Look at Kagiso and Nate, they're both off beat." He says and I can't stop laughing, Nate is white, it's understandable, he was born with two left feet. Kagiso has no excuse to be that embarrassingly off beat, he's just tumbling on the dance floor.



Zane is looking at me while I laugh these fools on the dance floor, he's so creepy.

"What?" I ask

"You look beautiful, when you're happy." He says and I blush. "I haven't see you laugh this hard in a while, I know work can be hectic but you need to keep that smile on." he says

"As long as you're by my side, I'll always be happy." I say, kissing him.

The night continues with more off beat dancing from Kagiso and Nate, more twerking from Sinazo and we also got to see Mr grumpy on the floor with his fiancé, Sihle. Zane and I have been the grandmas of this party, left alone at the table, kissing and admiring eachother. He kept whispering in my ear all the things he was planning on doing to me once we get back to Sinazo and Thabiso's night, that cut the night short. I insisted on driving us back home

because everyone was drunk and Zane had two shots of tequila, I was the only sober one. immediately when we got home, Zane and I took a long sexy hot bath together. He massaged my back and neck areas and all the other places down under than needed his special touch. The night ended perfectly with me wrapped up in his warm arms, receiving spontaneous forehead kisses.

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Insert 56

We left Sinazo and Thabiso's place after we all

had breakfast and now we're on our way to my dad and Mam'Gloria's house where we'll spend the night. This weekend has been exactly what me and Zane needed, stress free time where we can enjoy eachothers time with our friends and not worry about work, children, the in-laws and royalty duties.

"Don't you miss the old times where we use to sneak around for quickies and having all the time to ourselves, that was a fun time in our lives." I to Zane who's concentrating on the road.

"What's fun about sneaking around? Atleast now we live together and we have a beautiful child with three other ones coming. It doesn't get better than that." He says

"I know my love but don't you miss staying up all night, not having to worry about anyone else but ourselves. When we'd have picnics by the river, take walks or jog together and watch the

sunrise. I miss that, just me and you.” I say smiling at the memory of those times.

“That was a good time but we’ve grown now, we have a family. That part of our lives has passed.” He says, smiling back.

“It passed too quickly.” I mumble in my teeth.

“What babe?” he asks

“Nothing my love.” I say as I turn up the radio volume and put on my sunglasses.

He doesn’t get it. it all went by so quickly that when everything happened at once, I didn’t have time to adjust. It’s overwhelming, motherhood, being a wife and Queen, it’s all suffocating me and my husband doesn’t get it, no one does.

Everyday I feel like I’m drowning in responsibility and I’m expected to show up ready and deliver. Sometimes I just want to switch it all off and reset to a time where I don’t have to be needed in spaces I don’t feel like

myself, spaces that want a me that I cannot be.

We drive in my dad's and Mam'Gloria's house and two cars are parked outside, I recognize Kat's but the other, I don't know. The weather is very cold and windy today, at least it's not raining like the past two days. Im wearing a two piece black sweater and pants with a black studded leather jacket. Zane is also wearing all black, jeans and a hoodie.

"Watch your step baby" he says, helping me through the slippery tiles as we make our way to the door. Before we ring the door bell, Kat opens and screams with joy, opening her arms to welcome us.

"Siiiiis!" she screams, hugging me tight.

"Hi sis." I say

"You look beautiful, marriage and motherhood really suit you." She says, smiling widely.

"I try." I say and she goes on to greet Zane.

“Hello Hlehle” my dad walks towards me with his arms wide open, his smile is something I didn’t realise I missed until this moment, I find myself tearing up as I greet him with a hug.

“Hi daddy.” I say, crying in his arms, holding on tightly. “ I miss you.” I say

“I miss you too my baby.” He replies, wiping away my tears.

“Ohh mzala, this pregnancy is messing up with your emotions.” Thami walks to us, he has false eyelashes on and a highlighter on his cheekbones. He looks gorgeous

“Mzala! Is that make up you have on?” I say hugging him.

“I’ve been exploring with it, do you like it? well I don’t care, I love it and Xola loves it on me.” he says, batting his eyelashes at me, I can’t help but laugh.

“I love it, you look amazing Mzala.” I say, he

smiles and pulls me towards the dining room where Xola, Tyson and Mam'Gloria are seated.

"Welcome home." Mam'Gloria says, wearing a beige knit dress and an apron over it. This woman doesn't age at all, she keeps looking younger everytime I see her.

"It's good to be home Mme." I say, hugging her.

"How are you?" she asks with her soothing voice, her eyes looking directly into mine. for some reason I feel like she sees what everyone can't, it's like she sees my heart.

"I'm fine Mme." I say, she pulls me back for a hug. I feel emotional again, I try to pull myself together.

Oh these hormones" I say, as I greet Xola and Tyson.

"With three babies growing inside of you, you can cry, scream and curse, we'll understand." Thami says, pulling a chair across from me,

next to Xola.

“How’s the pregnancy going so far?” Kat asks

“It’s better than Ngcwali’s. I just feel tired and the appetite is also on another level. By the time I deliver, I’ll be as big a hippo.” I say and they laugh.

“How’s baby Ngcwali doing? Oh I miss those cheeks.” Kat asks

“She’s the sweetest, I’m glad she took after Zane’s calmness. She’s learning how to speak. The other morning she walked up to me and pointed at my stomach and said ‘molo baba’ then greeted me.” I say

“She’s very smart and beautiful, just like her mom.” Zane says, kissing my cheek.

“Oooh-kay. Let’s eat.” Thami says.

“Let’s say a prayer.” Mam’Gloria says “Father we thank you for this day, we thank you for



family, we thank you for love and for bringing us all in one roof. You are God and we praise and rejoice with you everyday. Amen.” She says and we all follow “Amen.”

“Do you go to church?” my dad asks, looking at Zane.

“We haven’t made time yet, it’s been quite a hectic year. Sundays is the only free time we have to ourselves, that’s if Zano doesn’t have any weekend conferences or networking events to attend to.” He says.

Oh gosh, I can’t believe he’s putting this all on me. I want to roll my eyes at him so bad but I stop myself and focus on my eating.

“You have to make time for church, you have to make time for family. Work cannot consume most of your time. I understand you both have demanding schedules but quality time is very important.” My father says. I’m so not liking this

marriage master class.

“Can you pass me the potatoes please.” I say to Xola, Mam’Gloria is reading my annoyed facial expression.

“We’re trying, Zano even promised on going back to working part-time again, right baby?” Zane says, looking at me.

I want to scream at both of them, my heart is beating ten times faster with anger and I’m trying really hard not to lose it.

“Sure” I say without flinching, looking at my plate as I continue eating. “This is a nice stew Mme.” I say and she smiles at the complement.

“We haven’t seen you in months, everytime we want to visit, you’re always busy or away for work. You know, especially with the babies coming, you should try and slow down..”

“I get it, I’m a horrible wife and mother. I’m trying okay! Now can we stop making me feel

like shit for trying.” I snap, shouting. I feel my heart beating out of my chest and my body trembles in anger.

Everyone looks terrified, especially Zane

“You’re not a horrible mother baby, he’s just..”

Zane

“I said stop talking about it dammit.” I shout, banging my fists on the table, startling everyone.

“Calm down Hlehle.” My dad says.

“You don’t get it, I have to take this everyday, everywhere I go, I have to take it that I’m a bad mother and wife, everyday.” I say and walk away from the table, tears in my eyes, breathing is uncontrollable as my anger shoots for the roof. I run upstairs to my room. I’m trying to control my breathing, taking deep heavy breathes while calming my anger. I can’t stop crying, the more I calm myself, the more guilt and sadness consume me. I cannot bring myself to calm

down or get out of this sadness and guilt, so I lay down and allow my heart to sink in it. Suddenly the room is dark and cold, slowly closing in on me, I feel the walls suffocating me. The closer they get, the louder the laughs. I see their shadows, pointing at me and scribbling on their notebooks, smearing at me with disapproval. I feel their pity for me, piercing through my skin to my heart, a sharp pain of disappointment and a familiar feeling of worthlessness. I feel stuck in a space I don't belong in and all the doors are locked. I'm trapped.

.....

A vibrating movement wakes me up.

\*Your grandmother was looking through the window this morning, I swear she knows something.\*

\*I'll be back tomorrow, I'll find you another spot.

She can't open, I took all the keys. Stay low\*

I need to speak to Isolethu and sort this out before this whole plan goes to dust. Let me call her.

"What do you want from me?" she answers

"I need to speak to you, can we meet tomorrow morning at the gallery." I say

"I told you I don't want to be part of your stupid project, or do you want my husband to call you directly, since yours can't put you in your place?" she says

"That'll be better actually, I'd love to know what he thinks about your stepmom duties, surely that's something he'll be proud of." I say, her breathing pauses

"What are you talking about?" she asks

"You know exactly what I'm talking about. Now meet me at the gallery at lunchtime or you can

kiss your royal status goodbye.” I say and drop the call.

I look at the time, it’s past 7pm. I can hear everyone downstairs talking, I hate how I stormed off and allowed my anger get the worst of me, I feel like crap. There’s a knock on the door.

“Come in” I say and Mam’Gloria walks in with two steaming hot cups.

“Hot chocolate to keep you and the little ones warm.” She says, smiling as she walks closer, handing me the cup.

“Thanks Mme.” I say. “Zane must be very angry at me huh?” I say

“No, he’s just worried about you.” She says. “I know I will never replace what you had with your mother and I don’t want to overstep my boundries but you must know that I’m always available if you want to talk, about anything.”

She says

“Thanks Mme, I don’t know what got into me. I’m just tired I guess.” I say. she takes a deep breathe and I feel and ‘oh here we go’ in my head.

“I saw that the moment you walked in, there’s some heaviness in your eyes. It’s not the work kind of heaviness, its deeper than that. Is everything okay between you and Zane?” she asks

“Yeah we’re fine Mme, like I said, work is hectic and the pregnancy is also doing it’s part. I just need to relax more and spend time with my family.” I say, sipping on my hot chocolate.

“Take some time for yourself as well, if we don’t take care of ourselves, we cannot take care of those who need us.” she says. This conversation needs to end because I don’t want to discuss this, I need to apologise to Zane.

“I don’t think I can face everyone right now, I just need to speak to Zane.” I say

“It’s fine, I’ll get him. Remember what I said, i’m a phone call away.” She says as she leaves the room.

A few minutes later, Zane walks in.

“Are you okay babe?” he asks. I nod.

“Come seat here” I say, welcoming him into bed.

He slides in next to me and I reach for his hand.

“I’m really sorry about earlier, I didn’t mean to yell at you like that. It was very wrong of me and I feel really bad for disrespecting you like that. I let my anger get the worst of me and I’m really sorry my love.” I say rubbing on his hands.

“But where does the anger come from my love? You really scared me, I didn’t know where all that came from.” he says

“I don’t know, I guess I’m just tired and with all



what my father kept talking about continuously, I felt he was taking away from the fun we came for in this weekend. I didn't want to lash out like that and I'm really sorry my love." I say, kissing on his hand. "Do you forgive me?" I ask, he's quiet and seems like there's more he wants to say.

"Will you forgive me if I do this?" I say, kissing on his cheek and down to his neck.

"Buhle, wait.." he says and I silence him with a kiss on the mouth. I move over to his side and sit on his lap with my legs hanging on his sides. I pull his hands and place them on my butt.

"I love you so much" I whisper in his ear as I grind on top of him, feeling his erection forming, slowly. He carries me and lays me on the bed and spreading my legs wide for him. He pulls down my sweat pants while I pull the sweater over my head. His eyes locked on mine as he undresses himself, exposing his hard erection.

He buries his head in between my thighs and kisses in between them until he reaches my vagina. I arch my back as he feasts on it without mercy, I want to scream but I remember where I am, so I exhale and tighten my grip on the sheets. He turns me over on my stomach kisses on my back, I feel the adrenaline rush through my back, hearing him breathing behind my ear. He enters from behind with his hand cupping my breasts, I moan as he kisses me on the neck, slowly grinding and thrusting towards me. I move my waist to his rhythm. My body heats up with the pleasures of his love, moving faster and harder, he pulls me up on my knees, spreading my legs apart as I lay my head on the bed. He groans hard the more he pulls and pushes at my butt, I grind my waist to catch up on him and my legs begin to shake, my emotions are all over, tears roll down my face, it feel good, his love consuming my spine and transferring all over my body. "Ahh yes, yes, yes

yeeees!” I scream. Zane quickly spanks me, to lower my voice. He lays me flat on my stomach again, covering my mouth, the louder I scream, he thrusts hard, pinning me deeper and deeper. He exhales and I feel an explosion inside of me. Trying to catch my breath I lay aside him, trying to gain back my sanity. That was incredible, my afro is messed up. He’s defeated, trying to catch his breathe, he leans towards me.

“You’re trying to get us kicked out with all that screaming?” he says, grasping for air.

“You’re to blame for that.” I say and he laughs. I get up and kneel in front of him, stroking on his penis.

“Round two” I say, kissing on it. He tilts his head backwards.

“Your pregnancy sex drive is going to kill me.” he says.

“Agh, don’t be a wimp.” I say, filling my mouth

with it as he moans with his hands on my head.

We spend the rest of the night, having sex, taking breaks and having more sex. If it's not on the bed, it's on the floor, on the dresser and our last spot, in the shower before we got ready to sleep, for real this time. When everyone had gone to bed, I ran downstairs to get some snacks as we've worked ourselves a good appetite.

I'll face everyone in the morning before we leave for Khumba, right now it's me, my man and our orgasms.

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Insert 57

We left Edernville in the early hours of the morning, Mam'Gloria and dad saw us out when we left. As usual, Mam'Gloria packed us food for the road. They did express their concerns for me about my blowout yesterday but I assured them there's nothing to worry about. It really is the hormones and how tired I am with people constantly judging my wife and parenting skills.

We're racing with the sun to see who reaches Khumba first and at the speed that Zane is driving at, we might just win the race. The road is clear and with a few cars, mostly driving opposite us, the cold wind sways the trees side to side, the mountains topped with snow, dripping down to the lakes below them. It's a beautiful view, so peaceful that I'm able to clear my mind and not think about anything but focus on admiring the beauty of nature. The sun

slowly appears above the mountains as we enter the village of Khumba. It lights up the community of houses on the upper hill close to the waterfall. Hurrying on the road are school kids marching in groups with hot vapour coming from their mouths, followed by older scholars. Cows gathered at the kraal waiting to serve their master with fresh milk, roosters competing with their alarming sirens alerting Khumba about the rising sun, a new day for amaHlubi to conquer.

“Please drop me at the office, I need to sort some things out. We have two investor meetings this week.” I say and he’s quiet, like he’s been the entire trip.

“So we’re not going to talk about what happened at the dinner table last night?” He asks.

“I thought we spoke about it last night Zane, is there anything you’d like to add that you didn’t

say?" I ask, after all that sex from last night, he still wants to talk.

"We never got to talk about why you lashed out on everyone like that." He says

"I told you I was tired and it came out wrong, what more do you want from me Zanemvula?" I ask, he shakes his head and continues driving.

"This is only going to cause more arguments between us, can we just drop it." I say

"It wouldn't cause any arguments if you told me what exactly is happening but if you don't want to talk, fine. Just be home before dinner." He says parking in front of the gallery.

I'm so angry I could scream but I control myself, I grab my laptop bag and get out of the car. He drives off angrily, leaving dust behind. He's so unnecessarily dramatic.

"Morning ladies." I say entering the office, they greet back and I go straight into my office.

With all the preparations for the important meetings and networking events, the morning sways through like a plastic in the middle of a tornado storm. It's lunchtime and the ladies have all gone to town. I keep checking my phone, fighting the edge to call Iso to check if she's really coming but that will give away my desperation.

A couple of minutes later, she walks in with a seriously annoyed look on her face.

"What do you think you're doing?" she says, without greeting.

"Drop ukuthwala as a tradition in your tribe and I'll let you be." I say, she bursts out in laughter.

"You think this is Edernville huh? Where everyone does what they want, turns their back on the traditions that birthed them. The tribe of Sokwe will not do such, I don't know what information you think you have but ukuthwala is



a way for young girls to be groomed into women, dignified women, not that you'd know anything of that." she says, standing by the door, leaning against the glass.

"I guess your husband will have to know about your affair with his son." I say, she stands up straight, fuming with anger.

"You don't know what you're talking about. That rumor has been going around the village for years. I've accepted my husbands' son like my own, he and I have built a close relationship and my husband is very fond of that, so if you think you're going to use that old rumor to threaten me, you're dumber than I thought." she says, still uncomfortable but pushing through a smile.

"Iso, i'm from Edernville, we deal with facts and we don't bluff. Drop ukuthwala as a tradition in your tribe and set those young girls free to do what they want to do with their future. I'm giving you one night or King Sokwe will know what a

deceiving whore he married.” I say, she begins to breath heavily, her chest moving up and down as her eyes fill with rage.

“Listen, you uncultured cold hearted bi..”

“Shhh Iso, calm down. It’s just a rumor right? Why are you so worked up then. You know what you have to do, now get out of my office and save your fake ass marriage.” I say, chasing her away with my hand.

“You don’t scare me one bit.” She says, storming off.

“Clench on to your diamonds Iso, you have one last night with that fortune.” I scream as she exits the main door.

Dammit! I was hoping she’d fold with this threat immediately but now I have to do it the hard way. what she doesn’t realise is that I care for those young girl’s future more than her dignity and whatever she calls that marriage of hers. If

she doesn't contact me by tomorrow with an agreement to my plea, I will send her husband everything Zane told me.

I look at my watch, I still have time to see Nandi, without a car, I need to hurry before Makhulu comes back from visiting her patients. Damn, I was so mad at Zane I forgot to ask him to bring my car. I'm walking fast, up the hill towards the main road, im out of breath but I continue walking. There's some unusual chaos ahead, I try to walk faster to see where its all coming from.

Oh shit!

It's Nandi's family, they're heading for my grandmother's house, yelling furiously with weapons in their hands, this is not good. what are they doing here? How do they know? I need to get her out of here before they find her.

"We know she's hiding here, open the gates you

old witch.” One of the men shouts, pointing a sharp spear at my grandmother, who’s standing on the other side of the gate. She keeps looking at them and then at Thami’s flat, she looks terrified. I enter at our neighbours house, jump over the side of our boundary wall, behind the flats. I peep through Thami’s window, I cant see her, she must be hiding.

“Nandi, it’s me. Come to the window.” I say, she’s quiet.

“Nandipha, they wont hurt you, you’ll jump out of the window and we’ll go to the gallery. Quickly.” I say, still nothing.

I hear the shouting and cursing getting louder. I run to the front, they’ve opened the gates, running towards the flat. My phone is ringing, it’s Zane. I can’t answer it.

“Makhulu.” I shout, walking towards her.

“Buhle, what are you doing here?” she shouts

back

“She’s in there I saw her, she’s in that flat.” one of the men says, rushing for Thami’s flat.

“Get out of my grandmas house. There’s no one here.” I scream, standing in front of the spear carrying men. Makhulu pulls me out of the way and lets them break down the door.

My heart beats fast, I feel my whole body, trembling in fear as the men, enter the flat, one by one. I fiddle with my phone, trying to call the police.

“I swear she was here, I saw one night jumping over the fence and I saw her again when she peeped through the window, she was here.” one of the men says.

“I told you there’s no one here, now get out of my grandmothers yard before I call the police. And trust me when I say the royal council will know that you’re terrorizing old women in this

village.” I say, with their heads held down, showing guilt.

“We’re sorry Nkosazana Zanozuko.” One of the men says

“Sorry for what? These people drove my sister away from her marriage. They have turned her against her family, there’s nothing to be sorry about here. I will not rest until we find her.”

Nandi’s brother says and they all follow him out of the gate.

I run to the flat. “Nandi?” I whisper, there’s silence. Where did she go?

Makhulu looks at me, waiting for an explanation. I struggle to find the words to speak, I stand, shamefully looking at her disappointed face. She walks back into the house and I follow behind her.

“I can explain Makhulu.” I say, running after her as she walks past the lounge and dining room,

down the passage. She enters into my old room and I follow behind her.

“Explain this.” she says, pointing at my old bed. Her hair hangs on her face, eyes red and teary. Her body trembling in fear, as she hugs herself tight with her knees closely held to her chest.

“Nandi” I say.

How did she get here.

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Insert 58

“I knew there was something wrong in that flat, I

kept hearing noises in the early mornings. I tried to open but I couldn't find the keys, Dlomo told me I was imagining things but I knew that there was something wrong. Yesterday I overheard some young men talking about organizing their friends to look for Nandipha and with the news of her sudden disappearance and you randomly visiting, I knew something was up. I opened the back window and I found her there, starving and scared. I had to get her inside." Makhulu says.

"Why did you visit Zinzi at the hospital when I told you to never leave the flat until I figured something out?" I say, im angry at her for disobeying my rules. It's all her fault that that man saw her.

"I heard Makhulu and Tat'Dlomo talk about him being in hospital and I had to go see him, I knew my brothers were responsible of the attack. I went very early in the morning, it was already dark, even the guards placed in his ward were



fast asleep. I didn't stay too long, I had to see if he was okay. I'm sorry for causing trouble." She says, still crying.

"Now the whole village knows you're around. They're going to think Zinzi has something to do with it, ugh Iso is just taking forever with this." I say, defeated sitting next to Nandi.

"What were you even thinking, hiding this girl from her family? Now you've put your life and hers in danger. Who else knows about this stupid plan?" Makhulu asks

"Just us two." I say, facing down

"So you thought it is okay to kidnap and hide a future bride of the Sokwe tribe, Khumba's biggest rivalry. Do you know this could start a tribe war between the kingdoms? What stupid plan did you have to solve all of this?" Makhulu asks, she's getting angry.

"She's just a child, she can't be that old man's

bride. she wants to study and become a teacher, she wont be allowed to do all that as a bride. so I approached Iso to join Khumba laws with banning ukuthwala as a tradition in their tribe.” I say

“Do you really think Isolethu will listen to that? if anything, she’ll take it straight to her husband and create tension with your husband. Buhle things are done differently here, you cant ask someone to drop ancients traditions at the snap of your fingers. You need to take this girl back to her family and let her sort out those things with her family. Hiding her here will only cause trouble for everyone.” Makhulu says

“No, please don’t take me back home. I’d rather leave Khumba for good, that’s the only way I can solve this, just runaway and never come back.” She’s begging Makhulu, crying.

“Just give me one day to sort this out, Iso will do this, she doesn’t have a choice.”I say to them

“Why are you so sure? What did you do Buhle?”  
Makhulu asks, concerned

“I have her whole life in my hands, I pull the strings. Nandi needs to stay here until I figure this out, tomorrow I’ll have everything sorted out and you’ll be free.” I say and Makhulu shakes her head.

“Buhle you’re playing with fire mntanam. Be careful.” She says and walks out of the room.

“How is he?” Nandi asks

“He’s out of the hospital but he’s not taking the fact that you ‘left’ lightly. He’s going to be fine though, everything is going to be fine.” I say hugging her.

“It’s all my fault.” She says, crying.

“No it’s not, all you want is a chance to be who you want to be, that’s all and you deserve that.”  
I say, consoling her.

So better know what she wants because I'm not taking this as a joke, I don't care what tribe wars start, these young girls will get the freedom they deserve and if I have to physically fight someone, then it shall be.

.....

"I brought you lunch today but you weren't at the office and you didn't take my calls." Zane says as we drive home, he just picked me up from the office. Ngcwali is at the backseat, singing along to the song playing on the radio.

"I had a meeting." I say, he side eyes me with a "mmh" and continues to drive in silence.

We get home and I head for my room, I need a steaming hot shower.

"I forgot our dinner order at the lodge, I'll quickly fetch it." he says, rushing to the door.

Ngcwali is playing in my room while I take a quick shower, the doorbell rings as I put on my

robe. It can't be Zane, he just left and he wouldn't ring the bell he has the keys. Ngcwali follows behind as I run to check who it is. I open the door, oh gosh. Its Zinzi, he's so drunk, he can't even keep his balance.

"Sisi." He says, his eyes red and barely opening.

"Zinzi, you need to pull yourself together, this isn't right. How did you get here?" I ask, pulling him inside. Ngcwali's so excited to see him.

"Zizi" she says, pointing at him.

"Seat down Zinzi, you're drunk. I can't believe you drove here. Zane will not like this, he's going to be very mad at you." I say, pulling him to the lounge.

"Ugh, Zane wont like this, Zane wont like that. I don't care about Zane. Why does everything revolve around him?" he says, as I push him to the couch, he lays across it.

"Rest, I'll make coffee for you." I say but he pulls

me back.

“I miss her, everyday, I see her face. I can still smell her perfume in the jacket I once borrowed her. I want her back Buhle.” he’s crying, holding my hand tight.

“It’s going to be okay, trust me, she’ll come back to you but you need to get your act together, she’s going to need you to be strong for her okay.” I say, he nods, wiping off his tears. “Now, wait while I make you your coffee, you can sleep in one of the guest rooms tonight.” I say and head for the kitchen to make him coffee. Zane walks into the door with takeaway packs.

“Is Zinzi drunk again?” he asks, walking past him.

“Yeah, he’s not taking this Nandi thing too well.” I say, preparing the coffee.

“He’s being irresponsible with all that drinking. He cannot sulk forever, he needs to stop being

a burden and start taking care of himself.” He says, furiously.

“A burden? Zane he’s going through a difficult time, he needs all the support he can get. The last thing he should be labelled as is a burden.” I say. He’s being so insensitive right now.

“No matter how hard we help him, he needs to put in the same effort for himself and take responsibility for his actions. He can't be drunk every night, driving at this state. You need to stop babying him.” he says, preparing dinner.

“I can’t believe you right now.” I’m so angry, I walk to Zinzi with the cup of hot coffee in my hand. He’s fast asleep, snoring even. There’s no way he’s waking up for this coffee. I should get him a blanket, it looks like he has claimed his spot.

Dinner is silent, the only conversation taking place is between our cutlery and the plates.

“I don’t like arguing with you” he says

“And apparently I do.” I say, scrolling through my phone.

“I just don’t like that you’re not home more often.” He says

“Zane you know my work schedule, you know I try to make time for you but why must you always make it seem like I’m doing it on purpose? I deal with a lot of that outside home, why do I have to deal with it in my home as well?” I say, and my emotions fill up in my eyes.

“I’m sorry baby. I didn’t mean to make you sad. I love you and I know how much you love Khumba Kulture. These past weeks you’ve been very distant and busy, I couldn’t even get you for lunch dates.” He holds my hand from across the table and the guilt kicks in.

“I promise everything will be okay after tomorrow. We can have as many lunch dates as



you want. I'll go back to working at home on some days." I say, he smiles.

"I'd love that baby. I just need to find a manager real quick so you can have all of me with no distractions." He says

"Have you put out an advert yet?" I ask and he shakes his head.

"Wait, why not get Sihle to fill in. she said she's looking for a job close to where her fiancé is moving. She's qualified plus you know her well. Contact her and ask if she's willing to take the offer." I say. why didn't I think of this earlier.

"I don't think she'll take a village job offer, Sihle is more of a city girl, Khumba is a big downgrade for her. I'll put up the advert in town tomorrow, hopefully we'll find someone qualified." He says and I wont even bother fighting, it was worth a mention.

We finish our dinner and head for bed.

My phone vibrates.

\*Stay the hell away from my wife\* It's a text from Sokwe himself.

I guess she wants to do this the hard way.

\*I thought you were smarter than this Iso. But I guess you want your dirty laundry aired out for the whole world to see. If you think the cheating rumors are nothing, wait 'til I tell your husband that his precious twins are actually his grandchildren. You have before lunchtime.\* I press send.

"I thought we agreed, no cellphone in the bedroom." Zane says, walking out of the bathroom.

"I know baby, I'm putting it down." I say, switching it off.

I lay in his warm arms, peacefully.

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Insert 59

“Morning gorgeous.” Zane says, waking up.

“Morning my love.” I say, I’ve been up since 3am, my mind is digesting a lot of things at once and decided to keep me up.

“Did you sleep well? You were tossing and turning all night. Is it the babies?” he asks, wrapping his arms around my stomach.

“I am feeling a little bit nauseaus.” I say.

“Do you want me to make you porridge?” he offers.

“I’d love that my love.” I say and he immediately

gets up.

A part of me wants to believe that Isolethu will easily scare and go with my offer but the other part of me is worried that she might not and turn everything around on me to start some tribal war with amaHlubi like Makhulu said. The last thing I need is Zane finding out about everything that's been happening this past week, this has to go my way, I don't have a plan B, its this way or no way at all. Running everything on my mind and I feel my heart beat at a faster pace, my throat slowly drying up. I need to calm myself down before it escalates into a panic attack.

Zane walks in with a tray holding two hot steaming bowls of porridge, Ngcwali walking behind him with her milk bottle. She never sleeps past 6am, she's an early riser, just like her father.

"Mama." She says, climbing on our bed.

“Morning boo boo” I say, hugging her.

We spend the next hour, in bed, eating our porridge, watching Ngcwali do her crazy dance moves. I look at them, happy in their bond, laughing insync and each doing something that immediately pleases the other. They look complete. They both look like they belong. Me, on the other hand, can't seem to place myself in their bond. I'm happy seeing them with so much joy but I can't seem to find myself in their bond.

“Are you okay baby?” Zane says,

“Yeah, let me shower before I'm late for work.” I say, struggling my way out of bed.

“Want me to join you?” he asks says, smiling and pulling my robe.

“I'm already late.” I say and rush to the bathroom.

I get into the shower and let the water run over my back as I kneel with my head buried in my

hands. Tears dripping down the drain with the steaming hot water and a sudden pain hardens in my heart. Confused and angry, a lump in my throat explodes, releasing a raspy cry. I cover my mouth with my hands and the pain persists, a series of heartaches accompanied by anger. Overwhelmed with emotions I seat in this defeated position for a while until the pain is no more. Slowly my chest clears and reality hits, my afro is wet. Shit. I get up and dry it with a towel. I'm going to regret this but I don't have any other solution, I take out the dryer and begin to dry my hair out. Combing it with a big comb, my arms are painful. Oh gosh I'm so late. I tie my hair up in four sections and put over it my wig and my doek. I quickly get dressed and rush out of my room. MaJola is cleaning in the kitchen while Ngcwali watches her cartoons.

"Molo Zanozuko, I'm just finishing off your lunch." MaJola says, making what looks like a

chicken and mayo sandwich.

“No thanks, I’m already late. I’ll order something at the lodge.” I say, Zane appears from behind me, still in his pajamas.

“I’ll pick you up at 1:30” he says, I’m confused.

“Why are you picking me up?” I ask, still confused.

“Your appointment with the doctor is at 2:30pm, please don’t tell me you forgot.” He says

Oh shit.

“No, I haven’t forgotten, 1:30 pm it is then. See you.” I say rushing out the door.

I totally forgot about my check up today, ugh. Why must it be today though? I’d reschedule and sort out this Nandi saga first, but I’m tired of making excuses and lying to Zane, he’ll suspect something.

I arrive at work and have a brief staff meeting.

Vrr Vrr

“Aaah Iso lakwaSokwe.” I answer the call

“I’ll do it, I’ll ban ukuthwala in Sokwe. Now stay the hell out of my way.” she says

“Woaw, slow down. I need that in writing, email it to me with signitures of all the members of the Sokwe royal council, then I’ll let you hoe in peace.” I say.

“AmaHlubi made the biggest mistake bringing in a snake like you in their Kingdom.” She says, breathing heavily through the phone

“I’m sure your husband will think the same of you once he learns about you and his son. Send that e-mail immidiately.” I say

“You’re destroying your husbands reputation by killing the only dignity he has, his Kingdom. The ancestors of amaHlubi will teach you an unforgettable lesson, no one makes a mockery of traditions that were created to restore dignity



in their tribes and gets away with it. Your mind has been consumed by the white mans tale, making you believe that you are superior than tradition. You are who you are because of your ancestors and the very same traditions you're trying to erase."

"What has these traditions done for you? For the young girls future it has robbed? Freeing young girls to lead lives they want and not the ones traditions wants for them will create a whole new generation of females that can stand against a lot of struggles in the village. Girls will go to school and study to pursue careers of their dreams, they'll be able to take care of their families without depending on men and sacrificing their livelihood. Iso you were young once, you had the dreams of a life that kept you up at night. A life where you did what you wanted and not what was expected of you but tradition convinced you otherwise, it buried

those dream, it made you lose the courage to want to be who you wanted to be. Tradition stripped you down off all your sense of self and injected its patriarchy, you felt dependent on it. You didn't know who you were without it, it wrapped itself around you so much that you didn't recognize who you were before it. That scared you. You're scared, I understand but for the sake of the little girl inside of you, crying to come out and live, I ask that you be brave for her. If you can set her free, you can set every other girl in our villages. Please Iso." I say, my voice cracking. She's quiet but I can hear her breathing. She immediately drops the call.

I said too much. I messed up. I rest my head on my desk trying not to panick.

"Ms B, the department of arts and culture finally approved the funding we asked for." Our communications officer, says with a huge smile on her face.

Two years later they decide to approve it, honestly if it weren't for my father's connection and my trust fund money, Kumba Kulture would be non-existence. I'm happy but it's long overdue.

"Thanks Pat, now we'll wait for another year for them to actually deposit the money. " I say, she laughs and walks back to her working space. I go through my emails, replying to our social media platforms. The website has gained so much following, we're over 10 000 subscription. I'm looking at the pictures I took when I first got here, the paintings I did. it's been a while since I created art, I never went a day without taking pictures or sketching something. I feel lonely without it, it's like missing an old friend you fell off with for no valid reason, you want to call them and chat like old times but it's not the same anymore and neither of you know why. Not creating art feels lonely.

“It’s time to go.” Zane says, startling me with his hard knock on the glass door. “Sorry to scare you baby, I thought you heard me chat with the ladies, you’re busy hey?” he says, reaching for a kiss on my cheek.

“I’m checking out emails and the website. Is it 1:30 already?” I ask, looking at the watch, its 12

“Early lunch for you Mrs Ngele-Ngele.” He says, smiling revealing his gorgeuous smile.

“What did I ever do to deserve such a beautiful and caring man?” I say, as we make our way to the door.

“I’m off to lunch.” I say to the ladies

“She might not come back.” Zane says immediately after me.

They’re laughing.

“You can have her for the rest of the day, there’s no work for her here.” Pat says. Oh he’s loving

this. We're driving to town.

"What happened to Zinzi? I didn't see him this morning." I ask

"He left while I was making porridge. That boy needs to sort out his life and forget about that girl. " he says

"Remember he was on your side, defending you against your mother for being with me, he's going through something he helped you through. You can't turn your back on him now." I say, his eyes soften like a wind blew on his face.

"You're right, I should talk to him." he says.

" Last night you said things will be better after today, what did you mean by that?" he asks, looking over at me.

"Uhm..no, just that everything gets better on the following day. We shouldn't lose hope." I say, avoiding eye contact.

"You were really optimistic, like you knew

something.” He says.

“I knew once you settled, the anger you had would blow off.” I say and an awkward silence in the car follows.

Vrr Vrr

Its an email from Sokwe tribe.

\*Isizwe sakwa Sokwe.....ukuba isiko lokuthwala kweentombi ezineminyaka engaphantsi kweshumi elinesibhozo, nokuzekiswa kwawo, liyapheliswa.....amalungu ekomiti abhaliweyo ngezantsi avumelana nesizwe samaHlubi ekuphuhliseni ikamva lamantombazane.....esisigqibo salomthetho sikhutshwe nguKumkanikazi Isolethu Sokwe....\*

I quickly browsed through the email in my head, reading only the important parts. I feel a wave of relief sway over me, followed by a deep sigh.

I text her.

“Thank You.”

She texts back.

“No, thank you.”

My mood immediately shifts and Zane is even happier, seeing me excited about our lunch date and check up. We have lunch at our favourite restaurant, we order a platter of meat and salads. We're finally at the doctors office, we're waiting for her in the examination room.

“Is it the lunch or is your stomach bigger than it was this morning?” he asks

“It tends to grow bigger as the day progresses but I'm sure that meat platter plays a part too.” I say, he laughs.

“Good day Mr and Mrs Ngele-Ngele.” The Dr walks in with her smile and her silky Indian hair flowing over her shoulders.

“Hello Dr Moodley.” We both say

“I see growth, healthy growth. How are they treating you?” she says, sliding on her chair, closer to my bed.

“They’re great, I haven’t felt anything out of the ordinary.” I say, she nods and begins her examination.

“When would you say is the right time for her to take maternity leave?” Zane asks, oh he’d love for her to say today.

“I always suggest towards the eighth month but with her carrying three, she can take it earlier. The last months can be very treneuous on the body.” She says. “Lets see what they’re up to.” She says, dimming the lights and spreading the cold gel on my belly with the scanning device. Drum sounds in an imperfect synchrony put smiles on all our faces.

“There they are.” She says. They’re definetly bigger than I thought, all squashed together like



a fur ball. Zane is so focused, he's squinting his eyes to make sense of what he's looking at.

"Oh someones putting on a show." She says, focusing on the one closest to the front, feet dangling. I'm laughing at the tickling feeling in my stomach.

"What is it doing?" I ask

"Dancing, this one loves being center of attention." She says and I laugh.

"We're going to be in trouble with this one." I say, Zane is still confused, eyes glued onto the movements in the small black and white screen.

"Are those feet?" Zane finally speaks

"Yes, this one is kicking everyone else out of the way." she says

"Can we see the gender?" he asks

"We should by now but the way they're seated, its going to be hard. Oh wait, this one wants to

show us.” she says, steadily adjusting her control. Zane looks closely.

“Can you see it?” she asks, smiling.

“See what?” I ask, all I see is small feet and big heads.

“Our dancer is a boy.” She says and Zane looks closely, excited. His smile widens across his face.

“And the others?” he asks.

“Let me try and see but bro here just wants a solo today and the others aren’t even bothering to fight him.” she says. Zane kisses my hand, continuously, smiling.

“Thank you MaDlomo.’ He says and the joy in his eyes, reduces me to tears.

We spend another half an hour searching for the gender of the other ones, nothing. They’re all curled up at the back while dancing baby boy

enjoys the spotlight. Zane has been smiling throughout the session. We get a print out and we leave.

“Baby, please ask Thandi if we can all have dinner at the royal palace tonight and invite everyone.” I say and he loves the idea. He immediately calls Thandi and she’s excited to host us.

“I’ll finish up the accounts at the lodge and get home as soon as possible.” he says

“You can drop me at Makhulu’s place, I’ll wait for you there. Then you’ll pick us all up for the dinner.” He agrees and we drive into Khumba. He’s in such a good mood, singing and spontaneously kissing on me. I love seeing him this happy.

Makhulu is not at home, Nandi is by herself, locked up in my old bedroom.

“She went to see your grandfather, apparently

he's coming down with flu. She brought him soup and some medication." She says, snuggled in bed wearing a grey hoody and her hair hanging over her face. Her eyes look tired, small and her skin is pale for a brown skin girl.

Atleast we have some alone time to speak.

"Iso agreed to my offer and has banned ukuthwala in the Sokwe tribe. You're free now." I say and she begins to tear up.

"Oh sisi, this means a lot to me." she hugs me tight, crying in gratitude.

"It's okay." I say huggin her back. "But for your own safety from your brothers I suggest you stay here until varisty opens again then you can go to school. The villagers wont take this ruling well and I don't want to put your life at risk." I say,

"Can I atleast call Zinzi and tell him I'm okay. He must be worried sick." She asks

“Let me call him to come here now.” I say, dialing his number.

“Sisi” he answers in a low defeated voice.

“Where are you, I need you to come to Makhulu’s house. It’s urgent. Don’t tell anyone.” I say, he’s hesitant.

“Are you okay?” he asks

“Quickly. Make sure no one follows you.” I say and drop the call.

A few minutes later, there’s a knock on the door. I open for him.

“What’s going on?” he asks, looking around.

“You can’t tell anyone.” I say, pulling him down the passage.

“What are you doing?” he asks.

I open the door and pull him inside, Nandi stands in the middle of the room with tears in her eyes. He rushes to her and embraces her

warmly in his arms. Both crying and not letting go of each other.

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Insert 60

“You can’t tell anyone where she is.” I say.

“Where have you been? How did you get here?” he asks, not removing his eyes on her.

“She’s here now, that’s all that matters. But Zinzi, you cannot tell anyone where she is.” I say

“Does Zane know about this?” he asks

“No and I’d like to keep it that way until the dust clears.” I say, he looks confused but doesn’t

question. He hugs Nandi again.

“I missed you, I thought I lost you. Everyday when the sun set without me hearing your voice or seeing your eyes smile before your mouth does, I couldn’t handle it. I love you Nandi.” He says

“So Nandi is going to stay here until she has to go back to varsity.” I say

“Can I keep visiting?” he asks

“You’ll have to ask Makhulu about all that, its her house not mine.” I say and the front door opens. We both push Nandi into the wardbrobe as the footsteps get closer.

“What are you doing here?” Makhulu walks through the door.

We both take a sigh of relief and let Nandi out.

“Iso agreed to my deal. Nandi is free but for her own safety I think its best she stays here until

she can go back to school. I'm sure by the time she gets back for Spring vacation, the anger would've settled." I say.

"How did you get Iso to agree? She's the most stubborn and selfish person I know." Makhulu asks and everyone looks at me.

"I spoke to her, woman to woman." I say.

"I really hope you didn't do anything stupid." Makhulu says and I roll my eyes

"I came here to invite you to dinner at the royal palace." I say

"What's the occasion?" she asks

"You'll find out at dinner." I say

"Can I stay with Nands for a while?" Zinzi asks and Makhulu immediately switches to strict mode.

"You will not have sex in my house." She shouts and I can't help but laugh. It feels like yesterday



when Makhulu gave me and Zane the sex talk.

“No, we’re not doing that. I just want to spend some time with her, please I promise I won’t cause trouble.” He begs Makhulu while Nandi holds her boyfriend’s hand tight.

“That’s what Zane said two years back, now we have Bangcwalise.” She says, oh boy. FYI Ngcwali was conceived in Zane’s old bakkie in the middle of the forest, not romantic but memorable.

“We’re both virgins and planning on keeping it that way. Please don’t compare us to these two, all they do is...” I quickly give him a warning look before he could finish off his sentence. He must not dare forget the favour I did for him.

“Don’t stay up too late.” Makhulu says

“And park your car at the back, Zane will be here to fetch Makhulu and I” I say and he quickly runs outside, drives his car to the back of the

house and runs back into the house again.

A couple of minutes later, Zane picks Makhulu, Dlomo and I for our dinner at the royal palace. Makhulu borrowed me one of her scarfs to wear around my waist.

Thandi out did herself once again, this food is delicious. Eveyone is admiring the scan printout with the dancing baby boy in front, Zazi says it has Thami's personality and I agree. The conversation around the table is all about the babies, the uncles are even suggesting the weird names again, Zane is lauging at my disapproving facial expressions. While everyone is still debating baby names, Thandi and I are washing dishes in the kitchen.

"This is such a beautiful night you've set up, so much joy." Thandi says

"You cooked Thandi, its all you." I say

"I cook everyday, no big deal but you brought

the family these joyful news. Zane's mom hasn't stopped looking at the scans. Zane himself, speaks like the babies are already walking and ready to play rugby. You're carrying joyful news Buhle, you're the reason for this." She says and I tear up, she hugs me.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm not giving anything to the family, I feel like such a let down." I say.

"No baby, everyone here is happy you're part of the family. You've done amazing things for us here, bringing the family together is one of them. Your love for Zane did that." she says, wiping off my tears. I do as told and I feel somewhat better.

"Are you two crying?" Zane walks in on us

"Happy tears." Thandi says and leaves us in the kitchen.

"We love those. Baby I came to show you, I just got a call from Sihle, she saw the ad in town

and was asking about the manager job at the lodge.” He says

“Ask her to send you her documents and hire her. You won’t find anyone more qualified than her, she did say she worked in hospitality all her life.” I suggest

“Maybe I should.” He says

“So we can both clear one day of the week just for us. No work, no tribe stuff, no Ngcwali. Just me and you, like the old times.” I say and his face lightens up with excitement.

“I love that, having all of this to myself. Mhhh” he says, kissing on my neck. I try not to laugh out loud but I’m ticklish.

“And your birthday is coming soon, we need to plan something for that too.” He says, continues kissing me on my neck, on my face.

“We could do a trip to a beach house in the Cape or go visit the green forest of

Tsitsikamma.” I say, he’s serious with these kisses, someone could walk in. “Zane, we’re in your mom’s kitchen.” I say, feeling his erection harden.

“Bathroom in a sec.” He says, spanks me and walks down the passage to the nearest bathroom. I follow after him avoiding getting caught but everyone is still on the baby names topic.

Dress up on my waist, Zane in between my thighs, my back against the door, my arms wrapped around his neck. His hard erection fills me up on the inside, sending a rush of electric fireworks up my spine. With his hand over my mouth, i dig my hands on his back the harder and faster he thrusts. 10 minutes later, out of breath, satisfied and finding our balance after the explosions of pleasure erupted in all our joint.

“Thank you for my son.” He says, kissing my

sweaty forehead.

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Insert 61

“This is what I meant when I said I missed you, laying with you in bed, counting the little freckles under your eyes while you sleep, warming up your cold tiny feet and holding you tight in my arms, I missed you.” He says in his raspy morning voice, looking into my eyes as he lays across me.

“Usually Ngcwali is up at this time, demanding attention with her moves and I’d be at work begging rich people to give us more money for

the festival. It's quite busy at the moment, everything just went by so fast, I blinked and I was Queen, wife, mother and businessowner." I say

"You're a strong woman Zanozuko, you can do it all and you're good at it. I've never seen anyone work so hard and make it seem so easy." He says and my heart feels a sudden heaviness to it, that word- strong- it weighs heavily, its always used to commend women for the sacrifices we make for our families but never used to celebrate those who make sacrifices for themselves, for their own happiness. He's looking at me, smiling with so much pride and joy, I make him proud and joyful, that's all i ever wanted.

"Don't let the villagers hear you, they're probably calling me all sorts of names just by being in bed at 12 midday, shipping my baby to her grandmother and not attending to any royal

duties.” I say, trying to laugh but the heaviness in my heart still lingers.

“Those people wouldn’t even be happy if you went door to door to make them breakfast every morning, they’d still call you names. Us, people who care for you and know you, we appreciate everything you do for us. And I, in this moment, am very very appreciative of this moment.” He says, pulling my face to his, softly kissing on my lips, gently rubbing his hands on my face, down my neck, drawing an invisible track to my blossoming pregnancy boobs. Our feet engaging in a slow intimate dancing, he pulls himself closer to me, I feel his erection on the tip of my belly, hardening as the closer and tighter he pulls me. I feel my heart sending the love message to the rest of my body, creating a rainforest in between my thighs and excitement beats in my vagina. Breathing heavily the deeper we kiss, my hand, holding his full hard



erection, rubbing on it, he exhales and carries me on top of him. My thighs hanging on both sides of his legs, I gently allow him inside my heated rainforest, soaking wet, he slips in sending sensational affirmations up my spine, he moans and I lean to him for more kisses. Moving at a slow pace, grinding my waist in circles as he squeezes my butt tighter with every move I make.

His phone vibrates, we ignore it.

The room is getting heated as my pace fastens, his grip around my waist tightens and my head tilted back, he watches my gigantic boobs, bouncing up and down. I moan, and I'm thankful we're alone and gave MaJola the day off. Explosive pleasures consume my whole body, I lay on his chest as he moves under me, to catch up from where I left off. Moaning and groaning in my ear.

My phone rings, we ignore it.

My hands holding on the headboard, tightly as I bump and sway on top of him, he's smacking and grabbing my butt harder the more I move on him, I feel my legs trembling as the pressure builds up, my moaning is out of my control at this point, so is Zane's loud groaning.

Both our phones ring, non stop. We both ignore them.

My boobs, hanging and bouncing over Zane's face, I feel my body release another series of explosive pleasures all over my body, I moan, loudly as he pulls my waist closer and tighter to him, he follows with a loud groan and releases his warm juicy pleasures inside of me. I lay my head on his sweaty chest, feeling his fast beating heart pacing through my face. Out of breath but fully satisfied, I reach for my phone.

He quickly takes it away from me.

"No cellphones, remember?" he says, throwing

it on the floor, he begins to kiss me.

His phones rings again.

“Zane, your phone.” I say, he ignore me

“It’s probably work, they can fix whatever problem they have.” he says, in between his soft warm kisses.

“Something doesn’t feel right, our phones haven’t stopped ringing in the past 20 minutes.” I say, pulling away from his seduction.

“See who it is and get that juicy butt back here.” he says as I get off the bed to check my phone. Missed calls from Thandi, Queen mother and Zazi.

There’s a text from Zazi “Get here now, the Sokwe tribe is attacking everyone.”

Oh shit!

“Zane, the Sokwe tribe is attacking everyone at the palace. Let’s go.” I say and he immediately

jumps

“You’re not going there, you’re pregnant . Stay here, I’ll go check it out.” He says.

“I cant stay here, I have to be present, I know why they’re mad. They think I had to do with Isolethu’s decision of banning ukuthwala.” I say, he pauses for a while while tieng his shoes.

“Do you have anything to do with it?” he asks

“No” I say, avoiding eye contact. “ But I have to be there, I can convince them to see things our way like I did with our people.” I say

“You don’t negotiate with angry tribe members. You’re not going. Stay here.” he says and leaves before I could get a word in.

Mxm. I’m furious, trying to call Zazi but his line is busy, so is Thandi’s. I finally get ahold of Zinzi.

“What’s going on down there?” I ask, there are riot noises at the back, screaming and shouting.

“These people are angry, beating everyone and everything in front of them. where’s Zane, he needs to come sort this out now. It’s really bad.” He says, shouting.

“Where’s Ngcwali? Where’s Thandi and your mom, I cant get through to them.” I ask, anxiously

“Thandi is inside the house with Ngcwali, they’re safe. Mom is trying to gather the guards to help out. I’m outside with Zazi, he’s calling the police. They’re getting closer to the gate, these people are really angry....” he says and pauses but I can hear his breathing and the riot noises.

“Zinzi?” I say,

“Nandi? Nandipha! Let go of her, get your hands off of her.” he screams and the line cuts.

Oh gosh! What is she doing there, she was suppose to stay with Makhulu. WTF

I need to go, this is my mess.

I grab the closest clothes I could find-my grey hoodie and sweat pants set, a doek and wear my sneakers. I run to the garage and drive out with my Jeep.

The village is chaotic, people running towards the royal palace direction, each carrying a weapon to fight back. I use a different gate, away from the crowd. I run to the kitchen door, walk in and the staff is all here, scared and confused.

“Aaah Zanozu....”

“Where’s Zane? Where’s Bangcwalise?” I cut them off before they could finish their greeting formalities, this is not the time. They’re all looking at me, funny, one hasn’t taken her eyes off my sweat pants.

Oh shit, I forgot, I need to find a skirt immediateky before any member of the royal council sees me.

I quickly run to Thandi's room, she's immediately startled by my entrance. Ngcwali is asleep.

"What are you doing here? You can't be in spaces like these? How could Zane let you come here?" she says, speaking in her soft voice.

"He doesn't know I'm here, Nandi is in trouble, can you borrow me a skirt or dress please" I ask,

"Didn't Nandi leave? what kind of trouble? Where is she?" she asks, while searching through her wardrobe, she finds a wrap skirt and I wrap it around my waist, over the sweat pants.

"She's here, outside. The people causing this riot are from the tribe she was suppose to marry to, they're mad that Iso ruled against ukuthwala and suspect that I had something to do with it." I say, wrapping a scarf around my

waist and tightening the doek on my head. She still looks confused

“Why would they suspect you had something to do with it? what did you do?” she asks

“I’ll explain later.” I say, hurrying out of the door, down the passage. I can hear her scream my name and threatening to call Zane. At this point I don’t care if he sees me, I’m worried about Nandi, I was suppose to keep her safe, I promised Aunt’Kholeka I’ll take over that promise she made to Nandi’s father before his brutal passing.

The guards are already out and fighting back, chasing the Sokwe tribe members away from the gate. There’s dust all over the place, spears, axes and metal poles flying in the air, rage fills the air as I inhale some of it in dust form, coughing as I make my way past the guards, I see Zinzi fighting back, with crying Nandi behind him.



“Nandipha!” I scream, I try to hurry towards their direction but a hand pulls my back.

It’s Zane.

“I told you to stay at home. Are you trying to get killed?” he ask, furiously as he pulls me away from the crowd.

“Go help Zinzi, they’re trying to take Nandipha.” I scream, he ignores me. I pull myself from him and run with all my power, not looking back, to the crowd. Pushing the guards out of my way, I pull of Nandi and run towards the kraal. Zazi follows behind us, so does the Sokwe tribe men who were already inside the yard.

“Stop crying and run.” I say to Nandi, who keep looking behind her.

“Zinzisumzi!” she screams while pulling away from me. Why is she stopping?

She runs back. I see Zinzi on the floor with two men over him. I grab an old plumbing pipe and

run towards them, hitting one with it while Nandi throws stones at the other.

“Zinzi get up.” I shout. Zazi comes running with a bucket of hot steaming water.

“Move!” he screams and we step away from the men, he throws the water onto the Sokwe tribe men. They cry angrily and we all run back to the house, all the way to Thandi’s room.

“What is wrong with you Buhle? Are you trying to kill my kids?” he’s raising his voice, face covered in rage.

“I was trying to help Nandi, I asked you to but you wouldn’t listen. Those people came here with a mission.” I say. He’s still angry, walking towards me.

“So you thought, with your 6 month pregnancy that you’ll fight back those men? Putting my children in danger? Are you stupid?” he shouts, he’s really angry.

“You don’t know anything about what is going on out there? you don’t know what they were going to do to Nandi when they got her. And don’t you ever call me stupid again Zanemvula.” I scream back at him. Thandi tries to calm us down.

“You’ll wake the baby, keep your voices down. Besides, everyone is safe now, the police have also arrived.” She says.

“I don’t care about what those people want, I care about you and my children. You put your life in danger for what? You’re the most stubborn and selfish person I know.” He says, still shouting.

My heart sinks into my body and every part of my flesh begins to ache.

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Insert 62

“Selfish Zanemvula? I’m selfish? After everything, I have done to please your fucken tribe and this council? I have to reduce my ambitions to remain this humble Queen wife, I’ve changed my entire life for you and your family and you’re going to call me selfish for saving Nandi who I got into this mess? You are calling me selfish for trying to save your brother who was in trouble with the Sokwe tribe? Out of the things I’ve done to make you and this family happy, you call me selfish.” I say, tears rolling down my cheeks as I feel the sharp pain of betrayal in my heart. My body begins to tremble, the more his words ring in my mind, I feel my pressure rising as my breathing escalates.

“Every day, I’m crying, beating myself up for not being able to juggle everything, just to make you proud. Everyday to put myself in uncomfortable spaces for this tribe and these people, being mocked for sounding different and not looking like a typical Hlubi Queen. Every day I walk past people who laugh behind my back and I have to stay strong and keep it moving because I want to make you proud and yet you still call me selfish.” I feel the lump in my throat closing out air from my lungs, I’m crying and I feel angrier, I want to scream but my mouth is dry. My fists are tightly closed, my nails piercing through my skin.

“Calm down Zano.” Thandi says

I pull rip the wrap skirt she gave me and throw it at Zane. I walk over to the bed and get Ngcwali

“Leave Ngcwali alone,” Zane says

“What? you think I’m incapable of taking care of

my child? I'm selfish and useless as well? Out of my way please." I say, he stands and tries to pull Ngcwali off my hands, she wakes up.

"Guys please, calm down. Sort this out without the baby. Let's give them some room." Zazi says, taking Ngcwali off my hands. They all leave the room.

"I shouldn't have called you selfish, I was angry at you for putting your life in danger." He says

"You can't take back that betrayal Zane, I thought we were in this together. I already feel like shit for not meeting everyone's "Queen" standards and yet you throw such words at me, knowing damn well how much I try. It's hard for and of all people you know it's hard." I say, still crying.

"I know but why did you come here when I told you to stay behind? Why would you put me in a place of worry? You know how I feel about you

and the kids, I wouldn't forgive myself if anything were to happen to you." He says

"I heard Zinzi screaming Nandi's name and I knew you wouldn't know what was going on, so I had to come and help them," I say, he looks confused.

"What do you mean?" he asks. I freeze. I can't tell him, at least not now, he'll hate me forever.

"It's just that I know the Sokwe men were angry about Iso's ruling and think I had something to do with it. when I heard Zinzi screaming for Nandi I knew those men would do something to hurt her for running away. Zane I promised aunt'Kholeka that I'd take care of Nandi, I couldn't just stay at home and do nothing. I know I shouldn't have acted the way I should and I'm sorry for that." I say, he pulls me closer and hugs me.

"Don't get into any fights please, stay safe all

the time. I can't lose you and the children. I still need you, Ngcwali too." He says, hugging me tighter. "I'm sorry baby, I hurt you and I'm really sorry. I appreciate you so much. I love you." He says.

"I love you too." I say.

Thandi walks in the room.

"The royal council is here, they want a meeting with both of you, immediately," Thandi says.

Ugh, I'm not even dressed appropriately for them. Zane and Thandi see the panic on my face.

"I'll ask Nonjezu to find you some of her old traditional attires, follow me." she says and I do as she says.

The meeting has started, we're all seated at the dining table in the royal house, Zane and I seated on the far end of the table, with the members on both sides of the table, four on



each side. They don't look happy at all, their faces tense, not flinching at the mild jokes Zane is making to lighten the mood, I know what they're thinking, they're blaming me, they always do.

"Who gave you the go-ahead to involve ooSokwe in your project without consulting with us first? You don't get to make such big decisions without consulting the royal council?" The council Chairperson says

"How could you let this happen Zanemvula?" The other member asks.

"Do you know what this has created? Are you ready for a tribe war?" Another says.

"I understand your frustrations but this is not our fault, no one was forced into any ruling, it was an invitation to join the initiative, Sokwe needs to stop pointing fingers and deal with his tribe issues." Zane says

They're not happy with Zane's response, looking at each other in disbelief.

"MaHlubi, as the King said, Isolethu and the council of Sokwe all made that decision by themselves, no one forced them to make the ruling. I never brought up the issue with you because my title allows me to take control and full responsibility for projects in my programme. The initiative will be good for the future of the young girls in the villages, giving them a chance to be whatever they want to be and not have culture decide for them." I say, they're still not convinced, shaking their heads in disbelief.

I'm actually pissed because this is quite simple and needs no explanation.

"Would you rather have your daughters married off to old men, abducted and thrown into a home where they're forced to have sex with old men? is that the kind of future you want for young girls in this village, bride slaves? Is that

what you think is okay? Because if it is, then we have an even bigger problem because I will not rule a nation with people like you. A new royal council will have to be elected and we'll let the village decide." I say, they groan in anger, Zane tries to hide his subtle smile but fails.

"I think Queen Zanozuko has spoken, everything is clear. We're leading the village into a future where traditions encourage our youth into becoming better versions of their parents and ancestors, we're leading a tribe that wants their children to thrive successfully while making it's village proud all over the world." He says, the groaning is silent, each in deep thoughts.

"As for the issue with Sokwe, I'll sort it out, I got through Isolethu the first time, I can do it again. So what else do we need to discuss? The date for electing the new royal council?" I ask they're uncomfortable.

"Uhm, Zanozuko, we hear you and we

understand the vision, we're willing to work with you and King Zanozuko in building a better future for amaHlubi and the village of Khumba." The chairperson says, and they all willingly nod with him. Thought as much, I knew they'd never give up all this royal fortune for a 'supposed' tribe war that won't even happen.

"I think it is important we meet up with the Sokwe royal council to find common ground before their people take this too far. Maybe next Friday? The sooner the better." One of the members says. Finally someone says something smart.

"I think that's a good idea, I second that." I say, Zane looks at me weirdly.

"Next Friday is your birthday." He says

Oh gosh, I forgot.

"Why didn't you say that? Have you started with the preparations? When are handing out

invitations, you need to notify other Kingdoms in time, everyone's diaries are full. How many Kingdoms did you invite?" The chairperson asks. My mind is immediately overwhelmed by the questions.

"I wasn't planning a party, I thought Zane and I could go away for the weekend." I say, they look disgusted, like the day I first met them at the church and said their clan names wrong. Going away with my husband for my birthday is an insult?

"No such will be done, the entire tribe and village celebrate the birthday of the Queen with all the neighbouring kingdoms. It's one of the biggest events of the year, it has to be done." The chairperson says, with certainty. He's not asking if they can throw me a big party, he's telling me its happening and there's nothing I can do about it.

"And you're pregnant, you can't be wandering

around at your state.” The other member says.

“But isn’t it a little bit too late to organize all of that?” I ask

“Call Nonjezu, she’ll sort everything out.” he says and my eyes pop out. If Zane’s mom is planning this party I might as well die right now, Nonjezu doesn’t hold back with party planning. Nothing is too small or insignificant, she will make sure that everyone who steps in this party knows who’s party it is and why they were invited. I’m worried.

She walks through the door and stands next to Zane.

“We have a crisis, Zanozuko’s birthday is next week Friday and they haven’t planned anything.” The council member says. She looks disappointed.

“Why didn’t they say anything? I can pull through some strings and make it happen. I’ll

call in the village wives to help out, it's short notice but I'm sure we can pull together something decent." she says. Her kind of decent is elephants meeting us at the gate while walking on a real Zebra skin carpet that leads to a 1000 packed venue, traditional dancers all over the place and fireworks going off after every speech. I'm worried and for some reason, Zane finds my reaction funny. I don't do well with crowds and being celebrated.

"Or we could just have an intimate dinner with the family and close friends, you don't have to go to all that trouble," I say and their faces are sending all kinds of curses.

"And get badmouthed for being stingy and not including the village in family celebrations, never. I got this." Nonjezu says and they all continue with planning my birthday party that I have no say in, no one bothered to ask what food or drinks I would like to have. Seating at

the end of the table, being shut out of my birthday celebration planning, I don't know how I feel about this but fighting it will only make things worse.

"You must be hungry," Zane says

"Hungry? Can you not see what is happening here" I whisper in his ear, pointing at the meeting held about my party.

"It's out of your control at this point baby, the day you became Queen is the day you signed to give away any rights to your own birthday celebrations. Let's go see what Thandi cooked in the kitchen." He says, standing and opening his hand to help me up. We go to the kitchen and Ngcwali is eating what seems like pumpkin and creating a mess in front of her.

"What's with the long faces?" She asks

"Mama and the council are planning Zanozuko's party, she's worried." Zane says



“Oh, Nonjezu will invite everyone she gifted in the past year, it’s going to be big.” she says and they laugh. I wish I found this amusing as they do.

“Relax baby, you can invite everyone you want, choose your own section with them, you’ll hardly have conversations with anyone that night, just the ones you know in your own circle. Mama will do all the mingling, she’s good at it.” he says and I feel a little bit better.

“I’m hungry, what do you have Thandi?” I ask, they look relieved by my change of attitude.

“I’m making dumpling and chicken stew. Have a seat I’ll dish up for you.” She does just that and we all have lunch while Nonjezu and the council members continue with the planning.

I need to send invitations to my family and friends in Edernville because that’s the only thing I can do in this planning, everything else is

handled for me.

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Insert 63

I had a day of back to back meetings in town with potential vendors and artists who want to be part of the festival. It's past 4pm and I'm on my way to Zane and I's favorite restaurant, to fetch a dinner order I placed. Lasagna and I'll grab some salad ingredients at the supermarket, that's the only thing I'm comfortable making, it really doesn't require much thought, you just throw in everything in a bowl, no worries. Maybe if I really had the time to learn how to cook I

would but I don't, ugh who am I kidding, I'm not really interested in it. I don't understand the pressure placed on women to learn how to cook because if it was a destined gendered trait, all females would be born with it as a built-in trait in their womanhood but we weren't so everyone needs to chill. I'm carelessly wandering around the supermarket like I know what I'm looking for, I don't do grocery shopping that much but I'm trying to keep my cool but I'm certain I will not find cherry tomatoes in the toiletries aisle, so I continue walking like I know what I'm doing. Between getting lost at the grocery store and getting weird stares from people who are only noticing my belly, my mind is telling me to drop everything and buy a salad at the restaurant at the lodge.

"Hi Buhle." A calm voice behind me startles me

"Hi, Sihle." I say, waving at her as she walks closer. Like everyone else at this supermarket,

her eyes are glued to my belly.

“Wow, when did this happen? I don’t remember seeing you like this at the reunion.” She says she looks surprised

“My outfit hid it very well. How are you?” I ask

“Just a little bored but I’m happy to be this side with my fiancé, how are you?” she says, flashing her perfect teeth, flipping her 20inch deep wave weave off her flawless pale face. Her eyes attracting all the lights in the store, she makes casual look sexy in her grey sweater with washed off jeans.

“I’m good, just busy with work. Yeah, Khumba can be very slow compared to the fast-paced life of Edernville, how’s the job at the lodge so far?” I ask, she smiles.

“It’s been great, the staff and I get along so well. Zane told me you recommended me, thank you.

“I honestly needed him to offload a bit and

focus on his other projects, I'm sure your fiancé is happy to have you this side," I say, she smiles widely.

"He's very happy, we even have enough time to plan for the wedding now, oh speak of the devil." Her phones ringing, she's smiling from ear to ear as she answers it.

I can't believe our conversation is flowing, talking like she isn't my husbands' high school sweetheart.

"Oh got to go, apparently I've been gone for too long and I'm already being missed. See you around." She says

"Oh listen, I'm having a birthday celebration this Friday, I'd like to invite you and your fiancé, it'll be at the amaHlubi royal palace," I say, she smiles

"Thank you Buhle, we're definitely coming. Is there a theme? I mean you are the Queen of

amaHlubi, I don't want to show up as basic Betty." She says, almost laughing.

"Honestly I have no idea, but knowing my mother-in-law, take out your best set of clothing, even I'm intimidated by my own party," I say and we laugh.

"Great then, extravagant it is," she says

"See you Friday then," I say and we part ways. I see what Zane liked in her, she seems fun, very kind, and genuine.

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I'm keeping my lasagna is in the oven to keep it warm, ready to be served, my salad is assembled, MaJola has already left and Ngcwali is watching her cartoons at the tv room. Zane should be home in a couple of minutes now. Let me quickly call Iso to check up on her.

"Hello, Iso" I say

“Hey” she replies

“How are you doing?” I ask

“What do you want?” she quickly brushes me off, sounding cold and irritated.

“I just wanted to ask you to talk to your council about the ruling, some Sokwe residents came to the palace and attacked everything and everyone in front of them, I thought you said this rule was also approved by the....”

“I got you what you wanted Zano, I don’t understand what more you want me to do. I’ve sacrificed a lot with that ruling, I don’t have anything else to give, so please, deal with it.” she snaps at me. This is weird, why is she acting like this.

“Iso these people are initiating a tribal war, both tribes cannot afford that right now, especially with upcoming events of the festival where we’ll be hosting investors. So please, if there’s

something that you know,let me know.” I say and she takes a deep breath and releases a heavy sigh.

“You know how stubborn Sokwe men are, they will not rest until blood is shed. I heard them planning.....I have to go.” she is startled and immediately cuts the call.

What just happened. I need to know what those men are planning and I why was she acting weird throughout the phone call. Zane needs to double up the guards at the palace and our home, I’m not taking any risks, surely this is serious that I thought.

Zane’s van pulls up on the drive way, lighting the whole TV room, that’s Ngcwali’s cue to run to the door and scream ‘tata vula’. He walks through the door as I place our dinner on the dining table, he looks impressed and confused but mostly confused at what he walked in to me wearing an apron, with food on my hands.



“Hi baby.” He says, reaching for a kiss while his eyes wander around the table.

“Hello my love, how was work?” I say, he’s smiling so wide, all his teeth are exposed.

“My day was good baby, how was your day?” he asks as I help him take off his jacket.

“It was good my love, ended early, so I decided to prepare dinner for us. Well, within the context of my definition of preparing dinner.” I say and he laughs.

“I appreciate it baby, thank you.” He says. We say a short prayer and we eat.

He continues to tell me he saw three big trucks at the royal palace offloading some things for the party. Honestly, I’ve given up on what the party will be and who will be there. I’ve invited my family in Edernville and that’s all I’m looking forward to, seeing them, especially Thami.

“I ran into Sihle at the supermarket, I invited her

and her fiancé to the party,” I say, he gives me a weird stare. “What?” I ask

“You like her.” he says

“She’s cool plus she said she doesn’t have much to do around here so I figured she could come. Is there a problem?” I ask. He shakes his head

“Not at all baby, she’s your guest after all. Now, where’s dessert?” he says, smiling and winking.

“You’re looking at it but I need to bath Ngcwali and put her to bed. Give me a few minutes and I’ll be your caramel pudding.” I say, planting a kiss on his cheek.

“Can’t wait to taste that.” he says, spanking my butt as I walk to Ngcwali’s room. He stays behind to clear the table.

While Ngcwali splashes the water my phone rings, it’s Makhulu.

“Molo Makhulu.” I greet in high spirits.

“Molo mntanam.” She says, calmly.

“Are you okay?” I ask, she takes a deep sigh before answering.

“Your grandfather has been admitted in hospital, his coughing kept getting worse, today he collapsed while watering his garden, thank God for the young boys that saw him.” she says.

My heart drops to my stomach. I know his lungs had issues but I thought he was okay, his medication made him better after my father took him to the specialist in Edernville.

“We’ll have to refer him to the hospital in Edernville, they have more equipment and doctors who specialize in his illness. I’ll make some calls and see if we can do that tomorrow.” I say.

“That’ll be great mntanam, oh thank you Jesus, he’ll get the help he deserves.” Makhulu says,

praising with joy. "He was really looking forward to the party you know." She says

"Ohh, I've been so busy that I haven't made time to see him. I'll go to hospital first thing tomorrow." I say, feeling the sadness creeping up on me.

"Don't be mad at yourself mntanam, he's going to be alright. He just needs some advanced doctors to take care of him. Goodnight. Send my greetings to Bhungane and the little Ngcwali." She says and we end the call.

My mood has really dropped, I have to call Kat and ask if she can pull some strings for Tamkhulu.

I wrap Ngcwali in her towel, dry her, moisturize her and give her her milk bottle. She's already sleepy, eyes slowly shutting as her favourite animal sounds play in the background. After minutes of watching her resist sleep, she finally

gives in and doses off.

Zane is in bed, on his phone. He notices my mood and seats up.

“Are you okay baby?”he asks

“Tamkhulu is in hospital. Zane I haven’t seen him in a while, the only connection I have of my mother. I’ve been so caught up with work that I’ve totally neglected the ones I love, you, Ngcwali, Tamkhulu, I haven’t spoken to my father in days. Everyday goes by without speaking to them and not realizing we’re living on borrowed times.” Tears roll down my cheeks, he walks up to me and hugs me.

“It’s okay baby, we all get busy. He’s going to be fine, plus, you’ll see all your family at the party on Friday. Don’t cry baby.” He says, holding me tight to his chest.

“I need to call Kat, I want to transfer Tamkhulu to a specialist in Edernville.” I say.

“That’s a good idea, call her baby.” He says and seats next to me.

I call Kat and luckily she knows a specialist in a hospital close to Dad’s and Mam’Gloria’s new home. She even offered to administer the whole process, ugh I’m so happy to have people to rely on on days like these. I have been blessed with something I have been praying for for years and now that I finally have it, im too caught up in the spree of the blessings without taking a minute to show gratitude. I need some time to myself and my family, I think its time I took my maternity leave, the girls at work will cope without me and if they need me, I can work from home. I need to spend the next four months of my pregnancy at home, surrounded by my loves.

“Kat will sort everything out.” I say.

“Come here.” he pulls me in and spoons me from behind. His voice behind my ear, warm

feet tangled together with mine. “He’s going to be fine baby.” He says.

“I want to take my maternity leave, tomorrow.” I say and I feel his heart pause for a minute then he hugs me tighter.

“I don’t want you to feel pressured into doing things to please other, I’d love for you to rest but I don’t want you to feel like marrying me restricts you from doing things you love.” he says and I turn to face him.

“I know my love and I appreciate that but I need to slow down with work and be present with my family. I missed my fathers’ birthday, I haven’t spoken to them in a while, I’m always home late, I feel out of touch with my family and that doesn’t sit well with me, especially with Tamkhulu being sick. I just need to spend time home.” I say, he kissed my forehead.

“I’ll support you baby.” He says

“Thanks my love, I love you.” I say kissing him.

“Come.” He lays my head on his chest and rubs my butt with his other hand.

“I was suppose to be your caramel pudding.” I say, he giggles a little.

“I can still have a sweet breakfast.” He says, grabbing my butt tight. I laugh. “I love you Zano.” He says.

I listen to his heartbeat slowly settle to a calmer beat, pouncing in my ear, hypnotizing me into deep sleep.

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Insert 64



“Please make sure he’s comfortable, warm and hydrated. Also, I think it’s best you take two nurses with him instead of one, just to be safe. And more blankets please, these are too thin, its cold.” I say tucking the thin brown fleece on both sides of Tamkhulu as we stand outside the hospital.

“Hlehle they know what they’re doing mntanam, he’ll be fine,” Makhulu says, hugging me from behind.

“They could’ve at least used a helicopter, this long-distance drive is not something Tamkhulu’s health can handle. Maybe I should call Kat and see what they can do.” I say, tears falling down my cheeks.

“No Hlehle, it’s going to be fine. These young men and this lady will take good care of me, I’ll be back soon don’t worry. You’ve done so much

for me already.” Tamkhulu says, struggling to finish a sentence without taking deep breathes.

I squeeze his hand tight, unable to hold back my tears. “Please call me immediately when you get there, dad and Mam’Gloria will visit you before they come this side for the party. I love you Tamkhulu and I’m sorry I neglected you these past months, I got caught up on work and royal duties.” I say, he shakes his head.

“My child, you’ve made these past two years the best years of my life, giving me the peace I’ve always prayed for all my life, having a piece of my daughter, a daughter I never got to see and hold in my hands. You are the blessing that completed me, I am at peace mntanam, I can never be mad at you, you’re young, life has a lot to offer and your happiness is what should sum it up. Do more of those things that bring you joy and you’ll never regret a day in your life.” he says, smiling at me as his eyes slowly shut the

wider he smiles.

“I’ll come to visit you immediately after the party.” I say hugging him.

“We have to go.” the nurse says and I pull back.

“See you soon.” I say as they push his bed into the back of the ambulance.

“Happy birthday mzukulwane” he says as he slides something wrapped in a soft pink cloth in my hand.

I slowly unwrap it, it’s a necklace with an oval locket, I open it and my body shivers with emotions. It has pictures of him and my grandmother on both sides of the opened locket. My eyes tear up again and my body begins to tremble. Makhulu holds me tight as the ambulance drives away.

“He’s going to be alright baby girl, he’ll get all the help he needs and he’ll be back before you know, nagging you about cooking for Zane and

giving him more babies.” She says and I find myself laughing. He really can be annoying with the lectures he gives me about being a good wife and Queen.

I just dropped Makhulu at her house and I’m making my way to the gallery. The boy who begged me for a job, Nkosi, has been very helpful in the few weeks he’s been with us, I didn’t know we needed help until he started working. From cleaning around the yard, helping out with maintenance and helping the young ones at the dance studio with some dance moves.

“Nkosi, here, have some tea and scones just to warm you up.” I say, handing him the tray.

“Enkosi sisi” he says and wastes no time. Holding both scones in each hand, biting on them one after the other, he must’ve been really hungry.

“You must always tell the ladies inside when you’re hungry, okay?” I say and he nods with his mouth full.

I doubt he even had anything to eat today or the night before. To think that he has to give up his own childhood and goals and find work so he can provide for his family is heartbreaking. He’s too young to be carrying this much responsibility on his shoulders. While his peers are at school, kicking the ball around the village, he’s worried about his family’s next meal. I have to speak to Zane about this, surely he can assist his family with one of his projects.

At the office, the ladies are on their tea break, the perfect time to break the news.

“Morning ladies,” I say, and they all smile back

“Morning boss lady” they all reply in song.

“Great, I have all of you here. I have some news to share.” I say and they all seat up to face me.

“More funding?” one shares her guess

“I wish” I says “I’m going to take my maternity leave as of today. And I'm leaving Linda in charge of everything.” I say and they’re all surprised

“Is everything okay with the babies?” Linda asks

“Yeah, they’re good. I just need to take it easy, carrying three babies isn’t easy, my feet are starting to look like watermelons. I need to hide before I blow up.” I say and they laugh. “I need you to take care of Nkosi, make sure he eats the moment he enters that gate, I’ll speak to Luzuko at the lodge to prepare him lunch and something to pack for home every day.” I say and they nod.

“Things aren’t looking good at him home. I wish we can do more” Linda says, with worry in her eyes.

“I’ll speak to Zane and see if he can help them

through one of his projects.” I say and she seems relieved.

“So, are you ready for the party? It’s definitely going to be the party of the century.” One of the ladies say with so much enthusiasm.

“Yeah, I heard the royal family from eSwatini is also coming. Aaah they are very good at gifting.” The other says.

“I’m so nervous, I don’t know 80% of the people that’ll be there on that day, this is why ya’ll need to be there. The more familiar faces, the better.” I say

“I already have my outfit ready, all I need is royalty worthy shoes and im good to go. Who knows, maybe I’ll meet my future Prince there.” Linda says waving her right hand like a beauty peagent winner.

A car hooter interrupts the laughter in the room. we all walk towards the door.

“Mzalaaaaaaaaa molweni bethuna!” Its Thami, upper body hanging out of the front seat window like a politician greeting his followers in a manifesto.

“Cuzzy!” I say, moving as fast as I can (I can move faster but I have three humans battling for room inside me) to the gate.

“Waow, you’re big big Mzala” he says as he walks towards me looking at my belly. He’s wearing a shiny blouse revealing his chest, black tight leather skinny pants and black sneakers, very dramatic and it looks uncomfortable but he looks great and happy.

“Oh stop it, come here” I say, giving him the warmest and longest hug. Ugh I missed him so much. I’m beginning to tear up. Xola walks slowly behind him.

“Oh stop, you’re going to make me cry” he says, wiping away my tears. “You’re still working?”



amaHlubi are really going easy on you.” He says

“For making me wear dresses and doeks everyday? They better let me do whatever the fuck I want.” I says and we both laugh

“Hi Buhle.” Xola moves closer for a hug

“Hi Xola, I didn't expect you guys till later this evening. I'm so happy to see you.” I say, still crying.

“Oh stop with the tears already, we have a lot of catching up to do. First, show me around, I can't believe you made this happen Mzala.” He says, admiring the Gallery.

We all walk inside, I introduce them to the ladies and show him around the office. Xola excused himself, he said something about meeting someone in town, honestly, we weren't listening to him, I was all caught up in Thami's Edernville gossip.

“Mzala, they're like bees in honey, all over my

man. Mine, Thamsanqa, they don't know well enough. I was not having it one bit, chairs were flying, wigs all over the place. No one gets to look at my man without my permission, no one." he says and I haven't stopped laughing ever since he started sharing about Edernville.

"We can continue this conversation at home, I have wine and a pantry full of grocery, you can cook and get to see your darling niece, Ngcwali." I suggest and he gives me a side-eye.

"Is this your way of asking me to cook for you?" he says

"Oh cuz, I missed your dumpling and butter chicken so much." I say, begging him.

"As long as you let me drive. I've been taking lessons and working on getting my license. I need to practice." He says and I nod.

A few minutes later I'm holding on for dear life as Thami speeds through the gravel road from

the gallery to our house. I can't even complain much because I really miss his cooking and with the whole Edernville family coming down, I need him to prepare the grandest dinner for all of us tonight. So he can speed and bump on rocks and potholes all he wants, as long as he gets to cook, my babies will have to forgive me for this discomfort. The Dr did say movement is good for the babies, right?!

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More Than Enough by LAV

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Insert 65

One of the things I used to dream about was

love and laughter that fills a room so much that every doubt and insecurity one has, fades away. My dreams were filled with voices echoing sounds and words that warmed my heart and tickled my stomach, the air would be filled with kindness and aromas that left my heart at a blissful state. I hated these kinds of dreams because they reminded me of how horrible my reality was, it resembled nothing my soul yearned for.

Seated next to my husband, who's rubbing on my fast growing pregnancy belly, my beautiful daughter, struggling with the oxtail bone in her hand. My father and his wife, laughing and loving loudly, my cousin with his boyfriend hand in hand, coloring the room with their bright smiles, my grandmother, aunt, and her daughter, confirming my worthiness to all that my heart desires and soul yearns for.

"So you're telling us that you got there and

within a month you were promoted to head chef?" Zane to Thami

"eh Bhuti, when I got there, they were serving basic dishes with nothing unique at all. I shared my signature creamy samp with them and they couldn't stop asking for more. So if they were really serious about their Lodge attracting more visitors, they had no choice but to get me deep in those pots. They don't call me the 'Botwe Kween' for nothing." He says and we all die in laughter.

"And you sure don't disappoint baby," Xola says kissing his boyfriend's cheek.

I never saw melanin turn red but Thami is close to it, blushing like a cherry tomato, smile stretching widely across his face.

"Bhungane, what did you do to convince Buhle uhm.... Zano, to have this big birthday celebration?" My dad asks

“I didn’t, the council and my mother didn’t give her any choice. I mentioned that it's her birthday on Friday, the next thing I see are big trucks loading off heavy equipment at the Royal Palace.” He says, they’re all laughing

“Trust Nonjenzu to pull up a party so big at a short notice, this is definitely going to be bigger than your wedding. I saw the tents, the guest list, it's going to be massive.” Thami says

“I heard the royal family from Eswatini is coming and Olodo’s from Nigeria landed in Edernville this morning, all I can tell you is that those families don’t play when it comes to gifting, from uncut diamonds to hectares of land. Nonjezu knows the game and how its played.” My dad says

“Mzala please spare a chip of that diamond, one can never know when they might need it.” he says winking at Xola.

“Oh is there something you want to tell us?” Aunt’Kholeka says, trying so hard not to hide the excitement on her face.

We all look at them waiting for an answer

“No, nothing, just that I might need it, I don’t know,” Thami says with a naughty smile on his face, Xola on the other side is pretending to not hear a word of what is said on the table.

What is it with them? surely Thami would’ve told me if there was indeed something.

“Now stop looking at us and you madam mogul, who’s this creamy man in your WhatsApp statuses?” Thami says and all our eyes turn to Aunt’Kholeka, who looks like she’s about to run and hide under the table.

“Oh come’ on, is this spill the beans dinner? I thought we are here for Buhle’s birthday party, let's focus on that.” She says, blushing as she downs her sweaty mug, probably filled with her

favorite beverage.

Zane's phone rings, he excuses himself and Ngcwali runs after him.

"You look so happy Buhle, your skin is glowing, you seem at peace," Kat says with her wide smile

"The pregnancy glow isn't a myth after all." I say

"I'm glad that you've decided to take time off of work, you need to rest and enjoy the last weeks of carrying these precious ones." She says

"I was also happy to hear she's taking this maternity leave, Buhle works so hard, she really needs to take it easy sometimes." Makhulu comes in with her 2cent

I would roll my eyes but I stop myself and smile with my mouth closed.

"She has money to make, she can't stay down too long. Pop them out and get back on it



Buhleza” Aunt’Kholeka says, with a much higher volume. Whatever she’s drinking is definitely working its magic.

“No one is saying she shouldn’t make money, it's just that she needs to pace herself, I mean, in her condition and all the responsibilities she has, she can’t be moving at this pace,” Makhuku says

“Yeah, she also has helped here at home with the Ngcwali and at work, the ladies seem like they’re doing quite a good job. So she can now relax and just stay home and rest.” Kat says to Mkahulu and they continue going back and forth, giving suggestions on how I should live my life and handle all of the things I have in my life.

My head begins to pound a little every time the words “relax” “responsibility” “motherhood” “wife” “queen” fly across the table. Thami is clearing up the table, Xola and Tyson are having

their own conversation.

“I need the bathroom,” I say, leaving the table and dragging my feet down the passage. I can hear Zane’s voice getting louder the closer I get to our bedroom, he’s shouting on the phone and Ngcwali is fast asleep on the little sofa next to the window. I walk in and he immediately drops the call.

“What’s wrong?” I ask, still fuming, eyes wide open, he checks his phone over and over again before he replies.

“It’s work, they messed up orders for the party” he finally speaks.

“oh baby, I’m sure they’ll work something out with what they have,” I say as I walk to the bathroom. “Please take Ngcwali to her bed, my love.” I shout from the bathroom and he replies “okay” and disappears.

I need to remove all this makeup and get into

some comfortable nightwear. I light some candles and apply my night face cream.

There's a subtle knock on the door.

"come in," I say

"You have a beautiful home Buhle." Mam'Gloria says as she walks in with her eyes wandering around the room.

Thank you Ma, Zane did a good job." I say

"And you made the house a home, filling it with all the love and laughter. It's so warm and comfortable." She says, in her soft monotone voice.

"Sometimes I don't even see myself in it, it just feels foreign," I say, my mind immediately regrets saying this. Nx! This woman has a way of making me say what my heart feels regardless of how cautious my mind is.

"You've created a home for others but you left

yourself at the gate, it happens, when we put others before ourselves. It's good that you've noticed that. What would you say home is for you?" She asks and my mind immediately slams on the table, no no no, we're not doing this.

"I don't know, somewhere I can be all I am without reducing certain parts for certain people, space where I feel safe and needed in, where my mind is stimulated and my heart is grateful, where I am only responsible for me and my happiness. I don't know where that is and I don't know if I could ever find it." my heart vomits

"If we can identify what home is for us, then we can find our way to it." She says.

"How? When I feel like my hands are tied behind my back and my ankles are strapped together with chains. My life is no longer mine, I have people who wake up and look to me for support,

a way forward, I have people giving me instructions on how I should live mine, I longer represent myself. Nothing about me is about me anymore Ma, so please tell me, how do I find my way to myself again, how?" tears rushing down my face, heart pacing through my chest, I feel my body begin to tremble as my eyes stare deeply into Mam'Gloria's teary eyes.

"You can start by knowing that you're not alone, we are here for you. Everything you need, we are here to help you. We will support you in every decision you make, we will always be by your side, cheering and assisting where you need." She says, holding my trembling hands in her warm reassuring hands.

"I'm tired Ma, im tired of coming last, I'm tired of watching people having the best of me and I get the angry, sad, sick, toxic me," I say, with my head rested on her chest with her arms around my, holding me tightly.

“I think it’s time we turn that around my love. I think its time we put you first and let everyone else figure themselves out,” she says and I immediately lift my head to face her.

“You do know that I’m a Queen, a wife, a mother, and an entrepreneur,” I say and she nods

“I know, as I said before, you are not alone. In all those titles of responsibilities you just mentioned, I know there is someone you can count on to keep things operating so you could give yourself the attention you need.” She says

“Now I have to find a substitute wife for Zane” I say and we both laugh, snot and all.

“Zane is in too deep in your love poison, whoever you get to step in will have big shoes to fill.” She says

“He better stay deep in it, I’m not going anywhere. I’m here to stay.” I say

“I love the love you two share and this is why I

say you should give the best of it to yourself as well. I know Zane will agree with me. Speak to him Buhle, don't shut him out." she says

"I'll try" I say

"Let me go make you hot chocolate so these little bunnies to stay warm." She says rubbing my belly and walks out.

I don't know how I'm going to break this to Zane and the rest of the family but it needs to happen, for my own sanity. It scares me how my mind quickly knows exactly what needs to be done and how because I always end up being the bad person, the selfish one and only after the situation has been solved will only people realize that my intentions were not to hurt anyone. What scares me the most is that regardless of their reaction to these news, I'm going forward with it. Whether it flows or crashes, I'm choosing me. Going into it blind but knowing this is the best decision for me and

that's all I need right now, the comfort and peace that comes with being my highest priority.

"I thought you'd be fast asleep by now, even the hot chocolate Mam'Gloria made for you has turned into a cold chocolate milkshake." Zane walks into the room.

"Oh I forgot about that, let me go get it," I say getting up from the dressing table but Zane stops me

"Everyone went to their rooms and ooMakhulu and your parents have left already. We all assumed you were asleep, that's how long you've been here," he says walking to the bathroom.

"Oh, time went by so quickly," I say, applying my night cream on my face.

"Ahhh my back hurts, you pay someone to sort out storage but they do half the job and expect you to do the rest, might as well take 50% of



their wages and pay myself.” He says walking back to the room

“Come, show me where it hurts baby” I say as he seats on the bed, half-naked with nothing but his pajama bottoms. He can't hide the naughty smile on his face. Does his back really hurt or is he trying to get touched?

“You’re too excited for someone who’s complaining about back pains,” I say and he smiles wide as I instruct him to lay on his stomach. I reach out for my oils and drizzle them on his back. With my legs dangling on his sides, as I seat on his bums, rubbing the oils up and down his back. My hands pressing in the areas he complained about, he moans.

“Right there baby, mmmh.” He says

I continue massaging him, pressing harder yet moving gently with my thumb on his lower back. He keeps moaning and breathing heavily. I get

off him, undo my nightgown and when he lifts his head he finds me naked, standing behind him.

“Turn around,” I say as I walk closer to him. He does as he’s told and his hard erection shows through his pajama bottoms.

“You never disappoint huh” I say, kneeling in front of him.

“I mean, c’mon.” He says with eyes making rounds all over my body.

Smoothly, I move my hands up his thighs, and rub on his erection, he tilts his head backward. I lower his pants to the ground, kissing the tip of his penis with my hands massaging his firm thighs. I begin to wrap my tongue around him while letting me enter my warm and moist mouth. He grabs onto my afro with both his hands. The more I bury him inside my mouth, the tighter he grabs onto my hair. Twirling my

tongue around him, he pushes my head closer to him, and moans loudly, as my mouth floods with warm creamy pleasures. His body rested on the bed, eyes half-closed, I lay next to him. He smiles at me. I smile back.

“I want to leave Khumba.” I say and his eyes widen, straight face with a little bit of confusion.

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More Than Enough by LAV

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Insert 66

Anything that requires fake smiling and small chat I try to avoid it with all my life but today, right here, there's no running. I can't bring my 'resting bitch' face, I cant book my own table

and enjoy a glass of bubbly by myself, I can't have one friend celebrate with me, I can't have any of my moments to myself, it doesn't work like that anymore. I have people lined up for a piece of me, people traveling from regions away to devour in some of my energy, excited and curious to taste some of my own magic.

Entitled to it, they take and expect me to be okay with it because that is the point of my whole existence, to live for them, to give all of me to them, to give up anything and everything that I built for myself, with myself, by myself with them, and still show gratitude for their generous feasting of my soul.

“See I told you this would be too tight.” Zazi, pulling and pinching the zip at the back of my dress.

“Can you not move, I have to get this cat-eye proper,” Thami says angrily as he steadily points on my eyelid with a black eyeliner.

“Hayi Hayi, she can't wear that, this is a conservative event, she can't have her shoulders out, cover her.” A bold Xhosa woman comes rushing into my bedroom and throws her green wool scarf over my shoulder.

Who is this woman and how did she get into my house.

“Eew, get that away from her. Besides, it's her birthday and her husband, you know the King of Khumba, said she could wear whatever she chooses and Zee Coutoure is it exactly.” Zazi says, throwing the scarf on the floor.

“Can you not move her please, it takes the stillness of the water in a glass to master the perfect cat-eye” Thami says almost poking me.

Ouch

“Oh what a beautiful home you have Zanozuko, where can I put these gifts from emaCirheni?” another random woman walks into my bedroom.

“Give them to me, I put all the gifts in the baby’s room. I’ll also write down their names and what they’ve gifted you with. Oh Lord, who still gifts people with dinner set, this old brown one nogaal. Tsi!” the bold Xhosa woman says while grabbing the box and both leaving the room.

Who are these people in my house

“Okay done.” Thami says, taking a few steps back to catch a better view of this dramatic face beat he just gave me. He’s smiling, that’s a good sign.

The door swings open and two other women walk in, one with two live chickens and the other with a grass broom and grass mat. They don’t look as pleased with my make up as Thami is.

“Gifts for the Queen.” One says with a slight disgust on her face.

“Down the passage, fourth door on your left. Thank you” Thami says and shuts the door at

them

“Yho, if stares could kill, Buhle would’ve been long dead by now. Bones and dust, honey.”

Thami says and Zazi joins him in laughter.

“Do they really expect her to walk around in that Koti uniform? When I, Zazini, am the brother-in-law? Clearly they don’t know me.” He says pulling last touches on my dress.

“Are you okay? You haven’t said a word since we got here in the morning. Have you eaten?”

Thami says

“I just need a minute by myself.” I say and they both look at each other.

“Uhm, okay. Should I call Kat? Or Zane?” Thami asks

I shake my head. “No, I just need a few minutes to breathe, it’s a bit too crowded.” I say and they make their way out of the room.

I look at this fully glammed up unrecognizable woman in the mirror, beautiful, skin so flawless, cheeks so full and lips so luscious but her eyes, her eyes tell a different story.

“It’s time to go, the car is outside. Wow, you look beautiful sis.” Kat comes rushing through the door, letting in all the loud singing from outside.

“Where’s Zane?” I ask, as she hurridly helps me up the bed.

“I don’t know, maybe he’s already at the palace. We’ll call him before we enter the gates.” She says pulling out my long train behind me. I look at the time, its just after 5pm, Zane said we’d enter the palace together at 6pm, he didn’t mention anything about having any plans or places to go to before that. I know he’s still mad at me for what I told him last night but he wouldn’t let me walk into the royal palace to meet all those royal delegates by myself, my



husband would never do that, not my Zane.

Between the loud singing, the large number of strangers walking in and out of rooms in my home, the cars hooting and back pain, I don't know what's worse but my anxiety is slowly creeping in.

"Please hold my hand." I say to Kat, as I quickly grab hers and hold it tight.

"Are you okay?" she whispers in my ear.

I nod and we make our way out of the room. Smiling and two-stepping to the celebratory songs sang by the strangers in my home. One is holding my special coffee mug that Zane bought for me for Mothers' Day, I spot another one wearing my 'kiss the chef' apron I wear when preparing take outs for my husband, and many are shaking their heads in disapproval of how I look.

Where's Zane? He's supposed to be here with

me.

“See you at the palace,” Kat says

“No, ride with me Kat.” I say. Why would she leave me

People are singing, smiling, dancing around the car.

“I have to go fetch Mme your dad and Tyson at your grandmother's house, we'll meet you there. You look gorgeous. Mwah” Kat says and closes the door.

I have no choice but to smile, nod, and wave.

My heart is beating out of my chest, my armpits are sweating, tears are slowly making their way to my eyes. I feel scared and lonely.

“Thandi, where's Zane?”

“Isn't he with you? I haven't seen him all day. Where are you, the guests are waiting.” She responds

I drop the call and dial Zinzi

“Hi sisi, Zinzi is outside.” Nandipha answers

“Is Zane there?” I ask

“No. What time does the party start?”

“6pm” I say and drop the call.

“We can go.” I say to the driver and he drives off.

I do not like this feeling of waving goodbye to strangers who have fully made my home theirs.

I do not know who let them in or what they are doing there because the main party is at the Royal Palace, not my home.

\*Please lock my room and Ncgwali’s room as well\* I text Thami

All this anxiety building up inside of me is slowly turning into disappointment. I know he’s mad at me for wanting to leave Khumba and my title as a Queen, I know he’s mad at me for not wanting to be around his family and anything

Khumba related. I keep losing myself while trying to please people who believe are doing me a favor, who insist my life revolves around them and their rules, to forget everything I am and want to become. I feel like I've emptied out everything in me for everyone else and have left myself starving.

Loud singing, drums, fire stunts, dancers meet us at the gates of the Royal Palace. This is bigger than I thought, Nonjezu did not hold back, I'm surprised she managed to pull this off in a few days.

I dial Zane's phone one more time and it goes straight to voicemail.

The car slowly drives through the crowd at the gate, passing the many guests seated at the different tents, waving and ululating. My cheeks hurt from all the smiling. My eyes are navigating through the crowd to see if I can find my, oh there he is.

He walks towards the car as it stops by what I assume is the main tent. My family is here, dressed to the nines, my friends are also looking the part, heck I even thought Kat and Tyson are part of some rich Royal Family, especially Tyson in his Nigerian inspired print suite.

“You look beautiful my love.” Zane says as he helps me out of the car

“Where have you been?” I ask, cheeks burning, teeth flashing as I wave to the crowd trying not to show the frustration I’m feeling.

“The generator wasn’t working and the fridge was off all night, I had to go check it out, and you know the guy who was supposed to fix it is on holiday and my battery also died and none of the staff....” He says, fixing my dress avoiding eye contact

“Is this your way of punishing me for what I said

last night?" I say, still smiling and waving at the crowd, as we make our way to our tent.

"Ahhhh Zanemvula" the crowd chants repeatedly.

"What kind of a person do you think I am Buhle?"

"The kind that disappears on his wife on the day she needs him the most." I say as we enter the tent, greeting, hugging and praising all the people Nonjezu is introducing me to.

"Ohh Lisa, Jambase, it's lovely to see you and your beautiful family. Thank you for coming." I say, smiling at the Nongubo's who traveled all the way from eMamfeneni.

"You're carrying so well Zanozuko, Nkosi'Zanemvula and the Khumba people must be proud of the blessings you're carrying." Nkosi'Jambase says, holding both of my hands tightly while admiring my big triplet carrying

belly. “NomaLisa has some catching up to do, we have to expand isizwe samaMfene.” He continues to say to his wife who’s head has been faced down since we got here, I can’t see her face but I can tell she’s smiling by the way her cheeks rise close to her eyes.

“Molo NomaLisa” I extend my hand to her and she nods shyly without reaching for my hand.

Weird.

After walking up and down the tent, greeting all our royal guests, my feet hurting and the alarming headache from the tight doek style Zazi did, we finally get to our table with all my close friends and family. I can finally drop the happy Hlubi Queen act.

“You look beautiful mntanam.” Makhulu says with a huge smile on her face, seated next to Dlamini.

“Thanks Makhulu.” I say with a straight face as I

pour myself some water.

“Are you okay?” she asks

“I’m tired.” I say and she rubs my shoulders.

“Nyamezela sisi” she says and I can feel the tension form in my jaw, clenching them tight trying not to say something foul.

“How do you like everything? I really pulled what I could given the short notice.” Zane’s mom pops up behind me with a huge smile on her face, she looks very proud of herself.

“It’s beautiful, I don’t know anyone who can pull this off at such short notice, it’s beautiful. Thank You.” I say and she smiles.

“Wait till you see the surprise I have for you. Oh, let me go check on the catering.” She says and disappears into the crowd.

“I’m scared on your behalf, if Nonjezu says she has a surprise for you, trust me you’ll be



surprised,” Thami says and the whole table laughs

“Just pray its not an elephant or giraffe for a pet.” Zazi says

“Or a sexy sportscar like she did with Zane on his 18th birthday.” Thandi says

“Which he sold and used the money to throw a big fun day for all the children in Khumba and bought groceries for them, Mom was furious. Even more furious at Thandi who helped him plan the whole thing.” Zazi says and we all laugh.

Nandi and Zinzi walk in and all eyes from the Sokwe family are on them, I can see the anger in those mens’ eyes. Isolakhe has been avoiding eye contact with me, even when we went to greet them, she looked the other way. King Sokwe didn’t even greet Zane, his brothers’ did.

“Errrr love birds” Zazi shouts as they greet everyone around the table and find their seats.

“Where have you two been hiding?”

Aunt’Kholeka asks as her voice increases with the volume of alcohol she consumes.

“Around” Zinzi says politely and opens a chair for his lady who looks like a dream in her orange umbaco and colorful beads. She looks uneasy from all the stares but trying to keep a brave face.

“You look beautiful Nandi” I say and she smiles

“Thanks sisi, you too. Happy Birthday.”

The festivities begin; long meaningless speeches from royal leaders that I’ve never seen before, loud traditional singing, praises and dancing from different tribes, handing of gifts from guests, food, alcohol, fun, music, laughter.

“I’m going to the bathroom,” I say, Zane helps

me up on my seat and I gracefully make my way out of the crowded room hiding the discomfort of my full bladder.

Finally, some quiet time, I know it's not forever but I need some peace to myself just for a little, not that I don't appreciate the one thing I've always dreamt about, being celebrated by loved ones, but this whole celebration is overwhelming. My head and heart are not in the right place, I keep running my conversation with Zane over my head, his disappointment on his face when I told him I no longer want to be Queen of amaHlubi in Khumba, that I want to leave Khumba and that I'm leaving with Kat and Tyson tomorrow. He didn't say much but stare at me and ask what could he do to convince me otherwise, I told him nothing because there isn't, it's not his fault, it's not my fault either but I just don't want living like this anymore, there are too many bodies on my shoulders expecting

something from me. while I sink in my skin every day, failing them, and most sadly, failing myself at being who I need to be for myself.

“Zanozuko” Isolethu’s voice shakes me out of my thoughts.

“Iso” I reply, looking at her reflection in the mirror as she stands behind me at the door. She locks it and walks closer. I turn around.

I don’t like the look on her face.

“I told you things would be messy, what are they doing here? I thought we both agreed on them leaving Khumba for good? How do you think my husband and the tribe feels about all of this, knowing damn well that you had something to do with it.” She says, her eyes intensely locked to mine with fear and frustration showing.

“They’ve signed the ruling already, there’s no turning back, there’s nothing they can do Iso. They’re teens for Christ’s sake, what life do you

think they'll have running away all their lives because of old men who lack self-control. They should move on from this, Zinzi and Nandi are not going anywhere." I say. She shakes her head in disbelief.

"You don't get it huh? What these men are capable of, the lengths they'd go to prove a point, to have the last laugh. They might not get what they initially wanted but blood will be spilled and hearts will be broken." She says, my heart begins to beat faster.

"Listen, if they hurt them, I will personally hunt them down and kill them myself, so you go on and tell your husband that I do not fear him and his minions. Nandi and Zinzi are not going anywhere." I say, as my anger builds up

"You really don't know how things work around here, don't say I didn't warn you. Happy Birthday." She says and walks out.

I try to catch up behind her but she disappears into the crowd. Still processing all that she said to me, my mind is immediately distracted by the couple arguing on the far right of my sight. The man looks very upset and the lady is trying to calm him down but no success. He eventually storms off, leaving her sobbing with her hands covering her face.

I could play Dr Phil right now but I have my own mess to deal with, so I walk back into the main tent. Everyone is turned up, joyous drunk laughs and dancing have consumed the atmosphere.

Thami and Zazi are already dominating on the dancefloor, Makhulu and her friends have created a small corner for themselves to show off their moves, the men are in their corner watching and cheering.

“How are you missing most of your party, girl?” Zazi comes to me, dancing and reaching out for both my hands. “Dance.!” He says, pulling me to

the dancefloor, I try to resist but before I knew it, I'm in the middle of a dance circle with a crowd clapping and cheering to a triplet carrying Queen of amaHlubi. I am very awkward with dancing, I hate being put on the spot but this is one of those sacrificial moments where my anxiety has to man up and let me serve the people. I'm looking around the room to see if Zane can come in and save me from this awkwardness I'm stuck with but I can't find him, I swear he was here a few seconds ago when I walked in.

"Let's show them how we do it in Edernville, Hlehle." My dad says followed by Mam'Gloria, Tyson, and Kat, moving swiftly to the beat, dancing around me. We all get in formation and to the "bus" and the whole room joins in. My worries and fears suddenly disappeared, I feel the warmth in my heart, the love, genuine unconditional love, I feel it here, with these

people, my Edernville family.

After that joyful dancing moment, where I completely forgot about my titles and responsibilities in Khumba, I'm all passed out at our table, full of all beef stew and dumplings that I kept going seconds and thirds for. The party has gone out of the tent as more people, mostly people who were walking past and saw a tent and thought 'free food and free booze, let's go join them'. That's one of the things I love about this place, no one waits for an invitation to attend an event, from the moment they see a tent or a group of people gathered in the joyful moment, they walk in and are welcomed with open arms, Edernville could learn a thing or two.

"Ladies and gentlemen, can I have your attention please?" My mother in law takes to the podium and my stomach is immediately in knots and my palms begin to sweat.



“Firstly I would like to thank you for gracing us with your presence in such notice, celebrating with us the birthday of our Queen, Zanozuko. She has done amazing work for amaHlubi and the village of Khumba, the festival has fed so many families and brought so much development for the tribe, I mean, we have people from all over the world coming to visit the village and buy locally produced products because of her, as a tribe and village, we say thank you.” She says and the crowd cheers and ululates.

“So, this is for you.” She says and in walks five men carrying a huge structure covered with a cloth.

I hope this is not what I think it is. my heart is in my throat.

“Reveal.” She says and the men uncover the structure.

Oh my gosh, Nonjezu. Thami and Zazi are on the floor with laughter.

“I present to you, the Queen of Khumba.” She says, revealing a concrete incomplete statue of me.

“I know it’s not done, yet, I mean it was all short notice, but it will be done by next week and will be situated at the art gallery.” She says with so much pride and joy in her eyes, I’m perplexed, I don’t know how to feel about this, I know she’s capable of gifting the most extravagant things but this, this I did not think about.

Mam’Gloria helps me out of my seat and I slowly begin to walk closely to this structure.

It looks nothing like me. also, this is very overwhelming and somewhat, embarrassing. I mean, its not my style, at all. As I stand on the podium, I see Zane walk in from the back door, didn’t even notice he was gone for so long, he

seems very absent today. He really is punishing me for my decision to leave Khumba but to take it out on me on my birthday, not cool at all.

“Uhm, thank you, wow, this is uhm, how do I put it, huge.” I’m trying to find the right words for this and I’m struggling. My eyes keep bumping to Zazi and Thami, laughing their faces off.

“This is beautiful and I cant wait to see it when it is complete, thank you so much

Mam’Nonjezu.” I say, my voice trembling as I think of what I need to say next because it seems like the crowd is expecting more than a thanking speech.

Zane makes way through the crowd to where I am standing.

“I’d also like to thank many of you for coming at such short notice, I can imagine it was easy dropping your lives to come to celebrate with us, I appreciate that. To the people of Khumba and amaHlubi, for working tirelessly to put all of this

beautiful event together, especially my mother-in-law, thank you to all. My family who have come all the way from Edernville to be with me, thank you. And my dear husband, thank you.” I say, looking at me as he stands beside me.

“We have an announcement to make,” I say and he’s eyes slowly widen. “As you can all see that I there are little human beings growing inside of me and to prepare for their arrival, we have decided that I will be moving back to Edernville until the babies are born. I will be leaving with my Edervnille family in the morning. Thank you.” I say, moving away from the podium, Zane is stunned, the whole tent is mumbling underneath their breathes, the royal council is giving Zane the dirtiest looks and the atmosphere has changed. As I walk back to my table, judgemental stares are following me, the embarrassment from the amaHlubi royal council, and the awkwardness from my family.

“I’ve never in my life heard of a Queen giving birth to royal blood outside of their Kingdom”

“Maybe the children aren’t even royal, you know what they say about Edernville girls”

“This will only drift the Kingdom apart, these things aren’t done like this, ancestors will not recognize those children.”

“I heard they are getting a divorce, what was Zanemvula thinking, marrying a city girl with no morals.”

Those are a few comments I could hear from the many ones mumbled by the crowd around me.

“Really Buhle?” Zane whispers in my ear

“We spoke about it, didn’t we?” I say

“You spoke about it Buhle, I didn’t, this is all you. I didn’t have a say in all of this.” he says, furiously.

“Guess now you know how I feel most of the time in this family.” I say

“So you’re punishing me now, is this what it is? By leaving me and your daughter while you go and vacation in Edernville?” he says

“Vacation Zane? how will I vacation with the stress of the three children that I have to bring in this world, children I didn’t even plan for? Children who will have to depend on me for the rest of their lives. Seeing my therapist and working on my mental health so that by the time I get to be a mother of four, my head is at least at the right state. Seeing my grandfather and hoping that his health somewhat gets better. How am I vacationing when I am going to Khumba to heal. I am not okay, can't you see that everyday I'm breaking down, drifting further and further away from myself, I'm tired Zane, I'm tired of this life that I didn't choose. All I wanted was you and your love, not this.” I say,

tears rolling down my eyes.

“This is all of me Buhle if you do not want this then...I don't know.” He says looking away.

Everyone on our table is noticing the tension but trying to not stare. My teary eyes make contact with my dad's concerned eyes. I can feel my emotions building up, as my face warms up and turn red, my heart beats faster the more I try to suppress them, a lump in my throat expands as I try to trace back my thoughts on how we got here, a place where we do not see eye to eye, where we can't even hold a conversation without snapping at each other or complaining about what the other doesn't give the other, where I look at him and wonder if what brought us together is still in his heart.

I wish I could crawl under the table and let it all out.

A few hours later when many guests have left

and others drunk and passed out on the tables, I ask to excuse myself and walk to the main house.

“I’m sorry baby, it won't happen again. I promise I will do better.” I hear a female voice begging.

“I will not repeat myself again, do you understand?” a man responds with passion in his voice. As I walk closer I notice its Sihle and her fiancé.

“Oh Buhle, Hi...ugh you were so tied up with everything that I couldn't even come say happy birthday. You look so beautiful and the dress, wow. Oh my gosh, how extravagant is that gift from your mother-in-law? Iconic.” She says, her voice slightly trembling and somewhat shocked to see me.

“Thanks, last time I saw you was when I arrived. Thanks for coming.” I say to both of them, her fiance doesn’t look interested, well he never is



but now he is far away from this conversation, if anything, he wishes I could disappear.

And that's exactly what I'll do.

"Well, enjoy the rest of your night," I say

"Thank you, we're going home too, it's late. Baby over here is not a crowd person, you know how men are with these type of things. Thanks again for the invite." She says smiling and holding on to her uninterested fiancé who hardly looked at me this entire time.

"Goodnight," I say and walk away.

I finally get to Zane's old bachelor flat, lay on the bed, and consume my mind with peace and quiet. The moment I had my feet up and rested, I could feel them tell me 'girl, that dancing was unnecessary though, especially in your condition'.

Before I know it, I'm out. Fast asleep, it's been a long day.

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More Than Enough by LAV

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Insert 67

A chorus of rooster hymns wakes me up as the Spring sun shines brightly through the cream lace curtains. I feel the weight of two fleece blankets on top of me, I slowly look around me, I'm still in Zane's bachelor flat.

The door slowly opens and he walks in with a tray of food and tea.

"You won't believe that some people slept in a tent." He says

"I actually believe it, people were very wasted last night," I say, he places the full breakfast

next to me.

“Good morning,” he says and plants a kiss on my forehead.

“Morning, this looks delicious. Thank you.” I say helping myself to the food.

There’s an awkward silence in the room.

“So....you’re leaving.” He says

“Yeah” I respond

Silence.

“For how long?” he asks

“Uhm.... I’m not sure but it’ll be after the babies are born.” I say

“Oh, so roughly, will it be a month, a year of when they start high school after they are born?” he says

“Oh come’ on Zane”

“I need to know what I’m getting myself into

here since you're the one holding the ropes."

"What ropes Zane? All I'm saying is that I need some time to myself without any distractions, that's all." I say

"Distractions hey, kind of hurts when you put it that way since you're also leaving me and Ngcwali behind."

"Zane you are not making any of this easy for me"

"Because it isn't easy Buhle, you're saying that you want a break from us, that's not easy." He raises his voice.

"Now imagine how I feel, the one who had to make that decision and deal with everyone else's opinions on how I choose to heal. How I have to brave up through the hurt and pretend like I cannot hear all the things people are saying about me, to me, and calling me. This is hard for me to Zane, being labeled as the

useless wife and mother who abandons her family to go 'chill' in Edernville. The pain of being cornered by my emotions and still having to make decisions that will leave many hurt, regardless of what I choose. But this move is for my own benefit and I don't care whether I'm called selfish or cruel, I will do everything it takes for me not go back to where I was with my mental health." I can't hold back the tears, my face heats up and I can feel my breakfast bulking up in my stomach.

My mouth is filled with saliva and head feels light. I quickly run to the bathroom.

"Towel please," I say, kneeled in front of the toilet seat with my breakfast staring right back at me.

"Here's some water," he says, handing me a glass.

"I don't want to fight with you Zane, I'm tired.

Everything is tiring.” I say, still unable to hold back my tears.

Zane joins me on the floor.

“Yesterday, I didn’t feel you, physically and emotionally. I was constantly searching for you around the room and I couldn’t find you. My heart was yearning for you; your love, your care. I needed you and I couldn’t get you. That hurt me to a point of making that spontaneous announcement. That was petty, I shouldn’t have.” I say and he immediately looks uneasy.

“I hate being in this kind of space with you, where we don’t see eye to eye, it hurts me and I don’t want to leave with this feeling about you in my heart,” I say, he wipes my tears off.

“I’ve never had anyone show me love like you do Buhle, a love so strong and real that it defies tradition. I wrapped myself in it so much that I forgot to check up on the person giving me this

rare gift, I'm sorry. I'm sorry for turning a blind eye, for not creating a space for you to be vulnerable with me because I was so caught up with basking in your aura forgetting that it too needs nurturing. I love you Buhle and I want you to be well." He says, staring passionately into my eyes.

"I love you too Zane and I really want to be a healthy version of myself, for us and our family. I know this is not going to be easy but I know we can make it work baby. We have gotten through far more worse things than this, I love you too much to give up on us right now." I say, he holds me tightly.

"And I will endure anything to see you well and healthy my love, we're in this together." He says.

We lay on the bed in each other's arms while we work on a plan of how we're going to make this work. We've agreed that he will start his weekend visits two weeks after I've started

therapy and settled down. To talk to each other every day, via text, call, or video call. To be honest and transparent about every decision we choose to take from now onwards. To choose love and kindness lead us in our journey and to put Ngcwali in the center of everything. And to not give up on us.

There's a soft knock on the door.

"Mama" Ngcwali's voice squeaks from the other side of the door. Zane excitedly jumps to the door and opens for her, she runs straight to me and hugs me too tightly, I begin to tear up.

"Hey, baby. Where have you been?" I ask

"Khulu, I was eating your birthday cake mommy, it's delicious." She says licking off the icing from her hands.

"Let me have a taste." I say licking her pinky finger, she's immediately tickled and laughs.

"mmh delicious." I say.



We spend most of our day chatting in between naps and laughing at Ngcwali's impersonations of my dancing last night. She even pushes her stomach out to have a fake belly. So cute.

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A few hours later, everyone is packed up, the engine is running and goodbye hugs are being shared amongst us.

"I want you to take care of Nandi, promise me you'll always be by her side, always," I say to Zinzi and he nods. "And please, no baby-making." I say

"Ugh Buhle come on, you know we don't do those things." He says shyly.

"I might see you when I come for Edernville Fashion week, don't be a stranger, call." Zazi walks closer and hugs me tight.

"I'll see you then, look after my husband for me please," I say

“Oh he’s too grown to be looked after, I’m the young fragile lamb that will need looking after, who will I play dress-up with?” he says with his puppy eyes staring sadly at mine

“When I come back I’ll have my figure back, so we’re definitely playing dress up,” I say and he smiles.

Zane’s scent consumes me from behind as his arms wrap around my belly. His head rested on my shoulder and lips on my neck. He plants a series of kisses on my neck.

“Oh get a room,” Zinzi says before he and Zazi walk away.

“I have something for you, follow me,” he whispers

“Babe, we’re leaving already,” I say as he pulls me back into the house.

“It won't take long I promise.” He says with a naughty look in his eyes.

I know this look.

I feel a sexual excitement forming inside of me. We enter the closest bathroom from the kitchen, he pushes me against the door as he locks it, kisses my neck while placing his hands in between my thighs. Warm, wet, and waiting to be pursued, I feel my womanhood tapdancing with excitement. He gently turns me around, my face against the door, he pulls aside my underwear while biting on my earlobes. I exhale and he whispers “ I want you to think about this moment every night in Edernville, me inside of you and my voice in your ear.” He says as he inserts his rock hard erection inside of me, parting my legs further away from each other. I arch my back and move to his thrusting rhythm. “Every time you think of me, I want you to hear my heavy breathing and the sound of my penis dancing in your warm vagina.” He says and moans louder while pinning me on the door,

harder. I feel my legs begin to shake as he places his other hand on my clit, rubbing on it in circular motions. It cries, joyfully at the tenderness of its favorite handler, my temperature rises as I lose myself in his pleasure. He holds me closer to him and fucks me harder and harder, his breathing becomes heavier and louder in my ear. Everything inside of me explodes with splashes of my juicy pleasures running down my trembling legs. I can't find my balance. He holds me up and on his last grind, he moans loudly and we both collapse on the bathroom floor.

“Promise to never give up on us” He says with his eyes half-opened

“Promise,” I reply and plant a kiss on his lips. He holds my face closer with both of his hands.

“I love you so much.” he says in between the kissing.

“I love you too Zane.” I respond and we both get up and join the others’ outside.

“Oh there you are, where have you been?”

Thandi asks

“Trust me you do not want to know,” Zazi says with his eyes scrolling my tilted wig.

“Where is Ngcwali?” I ask

“She’s asleep, it’s best you leave without her seeing you, she’ll be very upset,” Thandi says and my heart sinks.

I nod as tears blur my vision.

“We have to go.” My dad says, saying their last goodbyes before getting into the car with Mam’Gloria.

“Don’t worry about anything left in Khumba, I’ll sort it out. I want you to focus on yourself, your healing.” Zane says as he hugs me tightly.

“I’ll do my best, I promise to do good for all of

us.” I say unable to hold back my tears

“No baby, do best for you. What’s best for you is best for us. Focus on yourself.” He assures me and plants the last kiss on my forehead.

“I love you Zane.” I say as I walk to the car.

“I love you too.” He says and we drive out of the yard, waving at everyone behind.

I curl up on the backseat and silently let the cry out as we chase the sunset to Edernville. I’m sad about leaving them behind but man, if I had it my way, I’d pack my husband’s dick with me, that man blew my back like his life depended on it. I’m going to miss waking up to that more than anything.

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More Than Enough by LAV

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Insert 68

Sometimes the things we envision in our lives do not manifest the way we'd initially wished the would. It's all sweet and desirable when you see this fairytale playout in your head over and over, leaving you with a stomach filled with butterflies and cheeks burning from the bliss of this joy, love and newfound hope for your soul to experience. A wife to the most loving man in the world, a mother, a Queen, an entrepreneur, a big loving family that I've always dreamt of; and yet here I am, suffocated by all of it. Buried so deep that I can't hear my own voice in each movement. The fairytale lives on while I slowly fade away in the background because I wanted this to work out so bad that I compromised a

lot of myself. I put the dream first and myself last, now the dream is fast becoming about everyone else in it but me.

Woken by the delicious aromas of Mam'Gloria's cooking, I quickly make my way to the kitchen, where I am met by a fully catered breakfast.

"Just on time for breakfast, have a seat," Mam'Gloria says as she continues to dish up.

"I couldn't resist the aromas, this is a lot of food for just us three," I say, eyeing the full kitchen counter.

"Katlego and Tyson slept over last night they'll be joining us as well. Here, help yourself, those three musketeers must be starving." She says and I do as I'm ordered.

Oh my gosh, I've missed her soulful cooking. Biting into anything I can reach on this buffet, I do my this-food-is-delicious-dance.

"Only my wife's food can make you dance like



that.” My dad walks in with the widest smile ever. “Waking up and the first people I see are my favorite girls is a blessing, how more blessed can one be.” He continues to say, kissing Mam’Gloria on the cheek and reaching for my forehead to plant another one.

“Morning dad.” I manage to say with a mouth full of pork sausages and toasted bread.

“Steady now, we don’t want you to choke.” He says and they both laugh.

I roll my eyes and continue eating.

“You didn’t really tell me the whole plan of moving back to Edernville, so..” before he could finish Mam’Gloria nudges him with her shoulder.

“She’s home and we will support her in everything she decides on,” Mam’Gloria says.

“I’ll take it a day at a time but first I need to get back to therapy and lay low till these babies decide to pop. Honestly, I’m so tired, I need

them out as in yesterday.” I say looking at my big and heavy belly.

“You look like you can pop at any time, rest as much as possible. if possible, you can ask your therapist to come to you for sessions.”

Mam’Gloria says and I nod.

“Put more emphasis on ‘rest’ we know how much of a workaholic she is.” My dad says

“I wonder where she got that from.” Mam’Gloria hits back and I can't help but laugh.

“Good morning fam.” Kat greets us with her bright perfect teeth followed by Tyson.

“Mmmh that’s a lot of grease on your plate, Sis.”

Is she really judging a heavy triplet carrying a pregnant woman about what she has on her plate? What kind of audacity does this lady have?

“Just in case you haven’t noticed, I have three

human beings growing inside of me and greens is not their kind of foods, so no judgment please,” I say

“I’m just warning, you don’t want your blood pressure to go up close to your delivery days.” Dr. Kat surfaces and I have no time to argue so I roll my eyes and stuff my mouth with more cheese grillers.

“Okay, sorry, no judgment. I have the entire day off, can we spend some sister time together, spa, nails, shopping, lunch at this new French restaurant in Nortklip, my treat.” She says, almost begging and there’s no way im saying no to that. I haven’t done my nails in years besides the messy nail polish Ngcwali puts on me in our playdates.

“Did we not just talk about you resting?” Dad

“Kat’s a Dr and if this is what a Dr recommends for me, then that is what I will do. I’ll be ready in

an hour.” I say leaving the table.

I need to call my man.

While I wait for the bath to fill up, I dial his number and it rings once, he answers.

“My love,” He says and my heart smiles warming up every part of my body.

“Hey baby, how are you?” I say

“Just missing you, I cant wait to see you. How about you? Hows Edernville?”

“It’s warmer than Khumba, that’s all I missed about this place. I’m good, Kat is taking me out today.” I say and there’s silence on his side.

“It’s a spa day, I won’t be working and she’ll be driving. Nothing to worry about.” I say

“Okay babe, have you booked sessions with your therapist? When do you start?” he asks

“I’m going to do that today and find out what slots she has and ask her to do the sessions

here at home to accommodate my situation,” I say

“Please don’t call my babies situation, how are they doing?” he says and I laugh

“You know what I mean, I’m out here looking like a gigantic human balloon, my back hurts, I eat everything in front of me and I’m just tired, I can’t wait for them to pop out. I’m never doing this again.” I say and he laughs.

“You’re lucky AmaHlubi helped you complete my four children goal in two go’s. How are my other twins doing? getting any bigger?” He asks and I know he’s referring to my boobs

“They’re about to explode, they’re ridiculously big,” I say and I can feel his breathing through his teeth, this is good news to him.

“Where’s Ngcwali, can I say hi” I ask

“I’m at the Lodge, you can call Thandi to speak to her, she cried for you this morning, I had to

bribe her with a chocolate bar and control of the TV remote.” He says

We continue our conversation going back and forth with work updates, erotic talks, and sulky sighs of how much we miss each other.

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“I think I'm going to get red nails, long coffin shape with dramatic art,” I say and Kat looks me funny.

“Girl I've had to hold back my ratchet dramatic nails as a form of respect for the people of Khumba and amaHlubi council, this is my time to shine,” I say placing my hands in front of the friendly nail tech.

“Do you feel like sometimes you let go of too much of who you are for your marriage and everything that came with it?”

Trust Kat to turn an innocent social into a soul searching conversation.

“I know I did, sometimes I’m caught between regretting it and being grateful. It’s a battle I’m struggling with. No matter how hard I try to do as I’m told by the council and women of the village, following the rules and traditions, walk-in line, dress like them, speak like them, I always stick out like a sore thumb.” I say and take a deep sigh

“How much of this does Zane know of.”

“I mean at first I was focused on making it work, to make him proud, to stick through it all and not nag about it all the time but I the more I tried the more I kept falling into the cracks and had to tell him. Ofacuse he thinks I can be whoever I wan to be and do whatever I want but that’s not how things work there.” I say

“So how are you planning on fixing it because you can't hide in Edernville forever and this is your life, your forever, you cant live behind the shadows of a culture that doesn’t acknowledge

your individuality.” She says and all I could do was sigh and look away because I honestly do not know how the rest of my life will be but how insignificant I've felt these past months is not how I want to live the rest of my life.

Something has to change or a lot of people will be hurt.

And that can't be.

After getting our nails done and full-body massages, we're strolling through mall walking in and out of boutiques.

I'm already annoyed. Nothing I fit looks flattering on me, my ankles are heavy and painful as hell and this belly is weighing me down.

“Sis, my body is done for the day.” I say, almost out of breathe.

“Oh, I just need to pick up my order from this other store, you can wait for me here at this



Café,” She says and I look at the design of those chairs, my back will break.

Across the Café is a furniture store, I see a comfy looking bed with the fluffiest fleece blanket.

“No you wouldn’t,” Kat says as she sees me almost salivating at such comfort.

“I’m pregnant, no one says no to a pregnant woman. Don’t be long.” I say and my eyes are fixed on that bed. I enter the store, walk straight to the bed and comfortably settle while adjusting the pillows on my neck.

I let out a sigh of relief and every shame on my body.

“Excuse me, Miss, can I help you with something?” A polite voice from the dreaded sales lady

“Yes please, a glass of water and a moment of silence until my sister gets back from wherever

she is.” The lady stares at me for a while and nods then walks away. She quickly comes back with the water and leaves me in peace.

Eyes completely shut, I can feel my feet breathing with embarrassment, my back thanking me and my babies dancing joyfully at their courageous mother.

Moments later a foreign accent interrupts my peace, I slowly open my eyes.

Dark brown long hair, hazel eyes, pale white skin, offwhite wrinkled ill-fitting shirt, and light blue jeans. Why is this white man interrupting my peace?

I try to get up and sit up but I struggle.

“Please, stay comfortable, you don’t have to move. Are you Buhle from the Khumba festival?” He says with his Italian accent.

“Yes, that’s me.” I respond, still puzzled. What I thought was just eye shutting might have been

a deep nap.

“Oh thank god, imagine waking up a pregnant woman in her sleep for nothing. My name is Frankie Mossel, I noticed you from a blog I read about the Festival and I couldn’t miss the opportunity of introducing myself.” he continues to say.

“Oh nice to meet you Frankie,” I say reaching out for a handshake. I try to get up and this time I succeed.

“I just moved to Edernville, opened a restaurant, and with all the work, I haven’t had time to drive down and experience this festival myself. It is so rich with culture and authenticity. You’re doing a good job, yah.” He says.

“I’d love to take credit for all the work but the village as a whole makes the project a success. Once you make time, we’ll be delighted to host you.” I say

“And the gallery, I want to visit it too.” He says enthusiastically

“It has some great art pieces from the village artists and some of my work as well,” I say, he seems surprised.

“You’re an artist too, what can’t you do?” he says

“Stand for more than 2 minutes,” I say and we both laugh

“Yeah, you’re carrying a baby. Not a big problem. I would like to work with you, most tourists that visit my restaurant are always looking for adventure and I think Khumba is just what they need. Maybe we can talk on it with business, yah?” he says and the entrepreneur in me is intrigued.

“Okay, that would be good for the festival. Listen, why do you set up a proposal and have me look at it and we’ll meet on how to execute

this idea of yours.." I say and he excitedly pulls out his phone.

"Put your number," he says. I do that and I saved his on mine as well.

"Good then, will here from you soon. Thank you and sorry for disturbing your sleep." He says as he gets up.

"Hey, I got a potential business deal, I'm glad you woke me up," I say, standing up as I see Kat, walk in the store.

He laughs and walks away.

"And who is Mr. Broken English, also why are you exchanging numbers with him? Should I call Zane?" Kat walks up to me

"Oh please, it's a potential business deal and yes you can call Zane and tell him I'm bringing Euros to Khumba. Did you get whatever you needed, I'm hungry and tired." I say putting on my shoes.

“Girl, you really got comfortable in this bed? Shoes off and your hair all messed up.” She says almost wanting to laugh. “I bought us takeaways, you can eat on our way home. Let’s go.” She says, and we make our way out of the mall.

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Insert 69

This is my third week in Edernville and things are becoming clearer than they were when I first got here, I know what I need, how I want the rest of my life to be. Therapy has been helping a lot with me having these honest

conversations with myself, helping me figure out what steps I need to take and the more clear the direction became the more scared I became.

Zane and I have been communicating every day, or should I say every hour because he just couldn't stop calling. When I wake up, bath, eating breakfast, he even asks me to not drop the call and just continue about whatever it is I was doing just so he could feel like he is with me. We've decided that he can visit next week, so he'll be part of my doctor's appointment regarding the birth date and all those other arrangements, I also want him to meet with Frankie. Oh shit, I almost forgot, I have a meeting with him and his people in an hour. He will be here anytime, he was kind enough to understand my situation and agreed to hold the meeting here and honestly , that's how my family was going to allow me to that meeting

because I am in strict no traveling rule.

Mam'Gloria offered to cater to us and all I've been doing was chill in bed all morning scrolling through Instagram.

With this whole weight I'm carrying, it will take me forever to get ready, so I'm going into this meeting, make up free and white shirt and jeggings, my bob fringe wig will do good.

Done. At least I look like someone they can trust with their Euros.

"I thought you forgot about your meeting, I was about to go get you," Mam'Gloria says as she runs around the kitchen doing the final preps of the food.

"I almost forgot actually, that's why I had to quickly put something together to wear and no makeup." I say grabbing some chicken wings from the platters on display.

"You look beautiful my baby, but please don't



finish your guest's food." She says

"My home, my rules, they can eat whatever's left," I say and we both laugh

"Oh yeah, your dad is going out so you can have the place to yourself and the guests, we don't want to interrupt that why I'm serving everything now so you can just plate up and eat.

"Mmhhh, day date. Must be nice." I say and she can't even hide how smitten she is.

"You know the joys of marrying the man of your dreams." She says

The doorbell rings, and make my way to it.

It's Frankie and two other white men whose faces look like they've never seen a pregnant woman before.

"Good day, nice to see you again, Frankie." I say reaching for a handshake but he goes in for a hug.

“Italians don’t shake hands.” He says

“Please come in.” I say and they all walk in.

“This is Marco, my brother also a business partner.” Marco also comes in for a hug, they definitely look alike but Marco has shorter hair, almost wavy short and doesn’t seem as nice and welcoming as his brother.

“Nice to meet you, I’m Buhle.” I say, he doesn’t even smile.

“And this is Pieter, business partner, her helps with tourism.” He says and we shake hands

“Nice to meet you Miss Buhle.” He says with his almost posh Afrikaner accent.

“Please follow me, we’ll have the meeting out at the patio, Edernville weather is too beautiful to hide away from,” I say leading them to the patio as their eyes curiously gaze around my home.

“Beautiful home you have.” Marco says, still not

smile or any show of enthusiasm.

“We’re leaving Buhle.” Mam’Gloria shouts from the living area.

“Okay, bye. Enjoy.” I respond “Sorry, that was my stepmother and she was also kind enough to cater for our meeting.” I say as we settle at the table.

“Oh thank you mama, nothing more delicious than a meal prepared by an African mother, let's get started so we can enjoy it.” Frankie says with the widest smile

“Cool, so I looked over your proposal and I like it, I loved it but I have a suggestion that could collectively make it work like a well-oiled machine and that’s starting tour packages. I know Mr Pieter has already have established ones within Edernville that he collaborates with you and your brother. How about we create one for Khumba festival.” I say and they nod waiting

to hear more.

“I’ve spoken to my business partner who’s currently in Khumba and we have decided that Frankie brings in the tourists, Mr. Pieter provides shuttle services to Khumba and we provide the tourists with the most authentic Khumba experience they’ll never forget. Just like that, we have the Khumba Kulture Tour. Instead of that individual contribution of our different services and tourists paying different people and the whole admin of doing everything themselves, we create a travel tour in one, more convenient for them and smooth sailing partnership for us as well.” I say and they all smile looking impressed.

“Now let's talk numbers, what are we looking at.” Marco says I knew that smile wouldn’t last for long.

“Well, my partner, who deal with that part of Kumba Kulture will be in town next week, we

can discuss all of that then. This also gives all of us a chance to go to our drawing boards for operation costs and stuff.” I say and they all agree.

“Okay, let’s talk productivity.” Marco says and continues to present how the day to day operations of the business will work out and how we should register it as an individual business with all of us as partners, separate from our existing businesses. As the presentation and discussions get deeper, the more clear the vision becomes, the more excited everyone is. Without realizing it, we have a whole business plan draft and built a good solid partnership relationship.

“Enough talking, its time for mamas food.” Frankie says and we all laugh.

“Let’s all go to the dining room.” I say and we all make our way there.

Breaking bread with the white men who are excited about the business venture we're about to get into, I find myself in a space of calm, no anxiety of worrying about saying the wrong thing, presenting myself in a way that embarrasses my husband or his Kingdom and after a long time, I find myself laughing so hard that my stomach begins to hurt. There's something about the way Frankie tells his stories that make throws me on the floor with laughter, I don't know if it's the broken English or the way he's so animated and carefree. After sharing countless stories of failed recipes he's tried and almost burning his mother's kitchen and blaming it on his brother, we find ourselves, both seated at the dining table, sharing our passion for our craft, the arts for me and food for him. Marco and Pieter left an hour ago.

"I find it hard to believe that a talented artist like you cannot cook, cooking, and painting are the

same things. You have a vision, you know what you need and how much of it you need to produce the vision and you just let your heart and creative mind take control.” He says

“Well that’s the hard part, my creative mind goes blank when pots are involved, suddenly everything looks like I’m in chemistry class, which I hated with everything in me. So its best I stick to painting, at least I won’t be burning down any kitchens.” I say, side-eyeing him and laughing out loud.

“See, you make fun of me? But today I own restaurants all over the world.” He says

“I’m amazed you had the courage to go near the stove after almost burning your mom’s kitchen,” I say and we both laugh.

Mam’Gloria and dad walk in with my eyes tearing up from laughter.

“Good evening.” My father says, almost looking

confused.

“Hi dad, this is Frankie, the one who approached me with the Khumba Tour deal. Frankie this is my dad, and my stepmom.” I say, and he greets them both.

Without even noticing the time, is past 6pm already. Oh my gosh.

“Well, thank you for your delicious meal Mama Gloria.” Frankie says

“I didn’t notice the time, let me walk you out.” I say and we make our way out.

“I have a good feeling about this deal, it will open up so many does for the people in your village and attract more tourists in our country. Thank you for hosting us.” He says

“I can't wait for us to seal it down, my partner will love it, I just know it.” I say, unable to contain the excitement in me.



Yeeees!” he screams and hugs me tightly. “And more money for us.” He says getting in his car. “Let me not keep you standing too long, I know your struggle.” He says, laughing and drives.

This is one crazy Italian man. Smart and funny, business with him is definitely something I’m looking forward to, unlike his bulldog brother.

“Frankie is quite a character huh?” my father says, with a weird look on his face.

“He’s Italian, when have Italians been....uhm...ordinary. He’s very passionate and quite smart. Our meeting was successful. I can't wait for Zane to meet him, speaking of which, he hasn’t called me all day. Let me check up on him.” I say making my way to my room.

I dial his number, it rings and goes straight to voicemail.

Strange.

“Hey, Thandi. Ninjani?”

“Hi Zano, siyaphila sisi, kunjani kuwe?” She answers enthusiastically

“I’m good, I’m looking for my husband. He’s not taking my calls.” I say

“I last saw him when he dropped Ngcwali in the morning, haven’t seen him since. Maybe he’s still at the lodge. He’s been really keeping busy with work since you’ve been gone.” She says

“Okay, let me try calling him again. If you see him tell him I called. Kiss Ngcwali for me.” we say our goodbyes and I drop the call.

I dial his number again, no answer.

Oh yeah, let me try Sihle.

“Hi Sihle, its Buhle.” I say

“Oh Buhle, hi, how are you?” she answers, sounding a bit confused.

“I’m good, just looking for my husband.”

“Why would he be with me? I don’t understand?”

she says, her voice sounds like she has flu, blocked nostrils.

“Because you work with him. I’ve been trying to call him and he’s not taking my calls, thought you guys might be working late.”

“Oh yeah, no. I’m home already. I left him at the office.” She says

“Okay, thanks. Bye.” I drop the call.

As I was about to dial Zinzi, my phone rings, its Zane.

“Hi my love,” he says

“I’ve been calling the whole of Khumba trying to find you, why aren’t you taking my calls?” I say, slightly furious

“I know, I forgot it at the office while driving back home. so I had to drive back to fetch it. Is everything okay, are the babies okay?” he says

“I’m fine, I was just worried about you. You

didn't call me at all today." I say, my voice sounding calmer.

"I'm sorry baby, work was a bit hectic. I'm really sorry. He says

"I forgive you, besides, I wanted to tell you about my meeting with Frankie and his business partner, listen, baby, this is going to be huge for Khumba, we need to make sure that we impress these people with the authenticity Khumba has to offer. I will send you minutes from our meeting and you can draw up the financial plan of it all from our side. I can't wait for you to meet Frankie next week. Oh yeah, what day are you coming on again?" I say

"Woaw, there's a lot you're saying now baby."  
He says

"Okay, I'm just excited about this deal my love and yes, we agreed you'll visit on the third week of me being here which is next week," I say

“Okay, I’ll come done on Thursday then stay for the whole weekend. Is Ngcwali coming?” he asks.

“Yes please, I miss my baby so much. I’ll set up our meeting with Frankie on Friday. Oh even great, we could meet at his restaurant.” I say

“Okay babe, I have to go. I just pulled up at home. I’ll get back to you later.” He says.

“Cool babe. Bye.” I say dropping the call and texting Frankie setting a meeting appointment with Zane at his restaurant. He agrees. Great!

After I come out of the shower, I pull out my paints and boards and start working, I haven’t worked on a piece in while, it feels like reuniting with a lover at the airport. Without any knowledge of what outcome I’m expecting, my hands sway up and down, dipping in and out of different colors, forming shapes and shades I haven’t seen before. The motion yet stillness

state of my mind shows me an open field with a river flowing at a distance, a smiling woman watching the sunset while sipping on her wine. The wrinkles around her wide smile show gratitude of the courage of choosing herself above all things.

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More Than Enough by LAV

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Insert 70

I missed walking, so I was very happy to hear my doctor say I need to get back to exercising more, especially now I'm closer to my due date. So waking up every morning with my camera to walk to the park and take pictures of the

sunrise is how I've been starting my days. It feels like the old days, well, when I was way lighter and would run while blasting Queen and the next thing, I'd find myself two suburbs away from Edernville. It helped a lot with escaping the situation at home and my anxiety but now, it feels like chasing hope, a hope that comes with a fulfilling joy of being stubborn and deliberate about who I am, what I want and where I'm headed.

"Good morning Ma." I say, walking into Mam'Gloria making herself a cup of coffee.

"Morning my baby, you look happy." She says, smiling at me.

"I am Ma, I know I'm carrying three babies but I've never felt this light in my life. No worries about anything going wrong, just hope Ma, hope for a happy ending." I say, unable to contain my smile.

“Oh my baby, I'm so glad to hear that. So does this mean you're ready to go back to Khumba.” She says and the heaviness of this secret weighs in my heart. My smile slowly fades away.

“Buhle, you know you can talk to me about anything.” She says

“I know Ma, I just need to figure this one out by myself,” I say, releasing a deep sigh

“I'm just tired of putting everyone else above my own needs Ma, these past few weeks, all I had to think about is my health, my business and my art. It sounds selfish but it feels good Ma.” I say

“We have to do what makes us happy, even if it means being selfish.” She says, “As your family, we'll always be here for you, supporting you in everything.” She says.

“Thanks Ma, let me get ready for my therapy session. I love you Ma and I'm grateful for you, always.” I say, hugging her tightly and tears run



down my cheeks.

“I love you my baby and I pray that you find the peace you deserve.” She says, also tearing up.

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“So have you told your husband any of this?” my therapist asks as she sits across me, in our lounge with her poise posture and well-kept dreadlocks

“I haven’t, I hope I’ll be able to tell him when he visits later this week. Another part of me wants to tell him after I’ve given birth.” I say

“What do you think he’ll say?” she asks

“Uh, demolish the whole plan. But the thing is, I don’t care what he says or how he reacts, it’s my plan so it’s either he’s for it or not.” I say.

“Your children? What about them?” she says

“I don’t know, this whole thing was never my plan, the responsibility. All I did was fall in love

and the next thing I have so many people looking at me for survival, that was never my plan.” I say, feeling the frustration in me, rise up. “Now I have the entire village expecting me to lead, me, lead? Bow to everything and never question anything. To surrender my whole life to people who don’t care for my health but their status. That’s bullshit and I refuse to be a slave the rest of my life. That’s not the love I signed up for. I want him, just him. Everything else can go.” I say, crying and trying my hardest to not punch the glass table in front of me.

“But he comes with all of that, the love you chose comes with all that responsibility.” She says

“Then the whole love can go fuck itself, I don’t want it,” I say, tightening my fists so hard that my nails dip into my palms and they start bleeding. “I’m done being the last priority,” I say, unable to control my tears.

“Okay Buhle, breathe, in your nose and out of your mouth. yes, slowly, focus on the breathing.” She says, walking up to me.

“I’m done with it, I’m done!” screaming in tears with my head buried in my hands.

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It’s been two day days after my therapy and the scratches on my hands are slightly healing. I’m now walking around with bandages on my hands. Mam’Gloria has been keeping a close eye on me, I know they’re worried and I hate myself for allowing my anger bring out the worst of me but she doesn’t have to follow me to the bathroom every time. Like, every time. Atleast today I get to get out of the house and get some fresh air, its Lydia’s birthday and she's having a brunch party at some resort an hour outside of Edernville. Sinazo, Kat and some of Lydia’s friends are going together with a minibus they hired. I’m excited to see the girls

again, more excited to leave Mam'Gloria in peace, to relax without having to worry about me hurting myself.

In true Lydia style, it's an exotic festival theme party, g-strings, fishnets, stripper hills and feathers. Well, she clearly wasn't considerate of me when she thought of her theme because there is no way in hell am I wearing any of that. So I picked up a pink flowy dress and glittered pink angel wings, that's all she's getting from me.

I take pictures on my full view mirror and send them to Zane. He doesn't respond.

I dial his number, he cuts it off. I dial again. It goes straight to voicemail.

Something about this makes me mad. I dial Thandy's number

"Hello, Zanozuko." She says with her civilized tone.

“Hi, is Zane with you?”

“No, what's wrong?” she hears my frustration

“I'm trying to get hold of him, his phone is off,” I say, furious

“Maybe he's busy at work,” she says

“Okay, thanks bye.” I drop the call and dial the reception at the lodge

“Khumba Lodge, Good day.” A well trained female voice answers

“Hi, its Zanozuko, I'm looking for my husband, is he at his office?”

“Oh Nkosazana Zano, he just left, he was in a hurry so I think he might be late for a meeting or something.” He says

“Is Sihle there?” I ask

“No, she didn't report for work today.” He says

“Okay, thanks bye.” I drop the call and dial

Zane's number again. It's off.

I hear a loud noise of music accompanied by a car hooter.

I peep through my window and a Quantum full of half-naked women draped in feathers are at my gate, screaming my name. This is going to be wild.

I grab my bag and make my way downstairs.

"Do you have everything you need baby?"

Mam'Gloria

"Yes, Ma. Come see what your daughter is wearing." I say, pulling her outside.

Kat standing next to the Quantum, wearing a red two-piece lingerie dazzled with silver and red crystals, feathers on her knees, arms, and her head. Her make up so dramatic, her own mom can't even recognize her.

"Katlego, why are your bums out? you're a

married woman for Christ's sake." She says with her jaw almost touching the floor.

"My husband approved of this outfit, so anything goes. Bye Mme, we're going to be late." She says and we all get inside and the road trip begins or should I say chaos.

We slowly approach the mountains wealthy with pine trees and as we get closer an infinity view of the blue ocean appears, my heart finds itself jumping for joy. I seat up and glue my eyes on the window, there are huge hills overlooking the ocean and loud sounds of the waves crashing on the hills. Different multi-colored houses on the top of the hills with the ocean view in their backyards. The taxi slows down as we enter the gravel road up the mountain.

"What is this place?" I ask the girls who have been taking shots and dancing all the way.

“eXhantini, it’s a small town with the best views in the province.” Zuki, one of Lydia’s friends says with her deep husky voice.

“It’s so beautiful,” I say unable to hide the wide smile on my face. I take out my phone and start recording the view as we move.

“It’s beautiful without a doubt but the town is way underdeveloped, they have one supermarket, one hardware store, one Dr, no bank branches just two ATMs and thrift stores. The only place comes to visit here is the Resort we’re going to and that’s about it.” She says and takes another sip of her beer.

We enter the Resort, surrounded by beautiful mountains, and are met by the staff at the entrance. Complimentary drinks are received by the ladies and a non-alcoholic cocktail for me.

“Lydia made sure they accommodated you.” Shirley, another friend of Lydia says smiling



with her green tipsy eyes and her curly her  
dangling on her face.

“That’s so sweet of her, where is she by the  
way?”

“What’s up Mamacita's!” And just like that, our  
heads turn to the right where they’re met by a  
Victoria Secret looking model with the most  
extravagant rainbow-colored wings and thinnest  
thong bikini bottom and sheer bra covering just  
the nipples.

It’s Lydia, I’d have been very disappointed if she  
came out looking any less extravagant. It is her  
birthday after all. I wish we could trade bodies  
because damn she looks hot.

We all start cheering and singing around her as  
she wiggles her butt and wings.

“Oooh, I missed you so much.” She says  
hugging me tightly. “These ones need to hurry  
up and bounce out of your body so we can all

go on a wine tour” she says rubbing on my belly.

“At this point, I'm ready to pull them out.” I say

“Oh not now sis, we have alcohol to drink and asses to shake. Party time,” she says and we all laugh as we make our way to the entertainment area set for the brunch. It looks like we're in a Caribbean Island, the music, the décor, the food, the handsome black waiters and bartenders, the view of the ocean, and tall pine trees. It's party heaven.

“If anyone is looking for me, I'll be over there.

Dzaaamn!” she says and walks towards the half naked-ab showing-melanin popping waiters.

“Help yourselves to anything ladies, food, drinks, and don't worry Buhle, they have alcohol free cocktails for you. Our bartender is very flexible.”

Lydia says

“How flexible?” Zuki asks, biting her lower lip.

“Oh sis, you're going to have to find that out for

yourself,” Sinazo says and we all laugh

“Oops, looks like I need a refill. Later.” She says and walks towards the bar

“Oh my goodness, is she really going to hit on him?” Kat asks

“She’s the kind of woman that goes after what she wants and gets it, always,” Lydia says and the laughs continue

We plate for ourselves and gather around the table, Sinazo sits next to me.

“For someone who’s carrying three babies, you look beautiful, the only pregnant thing about you is your belly, everything else looks normal.” She says and my eyes can't look past her glittery eyeshadow

“Oh girl, have you seen my ankles, they look like mangos,” I say she chuckles

“How have you been? I didn’t want to crowd

with you visits when I heard you're in Edernville." She says

"Ugh come'on we're practically besties now, I'd love for you to crowd me. I've been coping, therapy has been helping a lot too." I say

"That's great, everything will be better and always know that I'm always here for you." She says flashing her assuring smile.

"Thank you, I appreciate that."

"Game time!" Lydia shouts

Oh gosh, I already know what kind of games these are.

"We're playing, never have I ever, dirty edition."

She screams

See, told you.

"Here are the cards, you just flip on Have or Have Not according to the scenarios I'll be reading." She says handing them around the

table.

“Okay, Never have I ever had sex in a public space” She reads and everyone screams

“Wait, what constitutes public space?” Zuki asks

“Anywhere outside a room or house.” Lydia answers

And everyone, besides Kat flips I Have.

“You dirty freaks!” Lydia shouts

“Hey sometimes you just wanna get the urge off and home be too damn far!” Shirly says and we all die of laughter.

“Queen, I want to hear about your experience, com’one share,” Lydia says, ugh she’s always on my case.

“Heeey, why me? Anyway, all I'm going to say is when you’re dating a Prince in a village and staying in your grandmothers' house is not the

easiest and practical so ofcause I'm going to find alternative places to get my groove on." I say and everyone screams

"What kind of alternative places?" Zuki asks

"You guys, nooo!" I say, blushing as I think of all the times Zane and I used to sneak around the village trying to find safe spaces for our intimate moments.

"Just one" Zuki says

"Okay, Bangcwalise, my firstborn, was conceived in the middle of the Khumba forests," I say covering my eyes and they start cheering loud.

"Yaaaas Queen!" Sinazo screams.

Oh gosh!

"Okay, next question.

"Never have I ever tasted my own vagina," Lydia says

And we all flip to Never while Zuki is stalling.  
We all look at her with our eyes wide open.

“Wait let me explain...” she says and we all  
laugh.

“Does it count when I kiss my girlfriend after  
she ate me out?” She asks

“Do you taste the vagina?” Shirley asks

“Yes, and it tastes like heaven.” Zuki replies and  
the cheering begins

After many sex games, drinking games, long  
drunk speeches, and gifting, the sun is slowly  
beginning to set and we’re getting ready to go.  
Lydia is staying over with her boyfriend who just  
arrived. Oh my gosh she’s so drunk.

“I love you guys so much,” Lydia says, tears  
running down her cheeks while holding onto her  
man.

“Bye ladies, travel safely.” He says and carries

her back inside.

You'd think all the pre-drinking and game drinking will tire the ladies out, nope, they're still going strong, in fact, stronger than ever.

My phone rings, its an unfamiliar number.

"Hello" I answer

"Tell your husband to stay the fuck away from my fiance or he'll regret the day he ever hired her." and the call drops before I could utter a word.

My mind is still trying to digest these words but my stomach is already at the bottom of my stomach causing a heavy and painful discomfort.

I dial Zane's number and it rings with no answer. I try ten more times and on the eleventh time when my anxiety has turned into anger has me trembling and sweating.



“Zane!” I shout

“Oh sorry Buhle, its me Sihle, he left his phone at the office. He’s been out on meetings all day. I’m also wrapping up at the office now.”

“Why are you lying? Where is my husband you fucking bitch?” I scream and all the ladies move towards my seat asking the driver to turn down the music.

“What’s wrong Buhle?” Kat asks as she kneels next to me

“I’m not lying Buhle.” She says and her voice begins to tremble

I drop the call and dial Zinzi.

“Queen of..”

“Where’s Zanemvula?” I ask

“Uhm, I don’t know, is everything okay?” he asks

“Stand by the back gate entrance and see if there’s any car parked at the lodge,” I say and a

lump in my throat slowly forms

“Buhle is everything okay, you’re worrying me.”

He says

“Go to the fucken gate Zinzi”

“Woaw! Okay, I'm going.” He says and I hear the wind blowing faster.

“Do you see a car? Any car?” I ask

“No, there’s no car. Buhle what’s going on? Are you safe? Is it the babies?” he says and drops the call.

Tears run down my cheeks and a lump in my throat explodes and I scream at the pain at the bottom of my stomach.

“Buhle! Buhle! What is wrong, come, speak to me?” Kat says trying to get my attention.

My ears mute every sound and my vision slowly blurs out the louder I scream.

My stomach creates these multiple knots of

pain that ache as they scatter around it. My body sends a cold thunder through my spine and I tremble with coldness. Icey tears leave my sorrowful eyes, nothing in me feels alive as the girls drag me on the Quantum passage.

“Buhle! what’s going on Kat?” I hear Sinazo’s cry.

“She’s cold, give me the anything, to cover her up. Driver turn up the heater. How far are we from Edernviller hospital?” Kat begins to panic as I slowly gain my vision

“It hurts sis, make it stop.” I say, crying so hard my voice breaks

“What hurts Buhle? Tell me?” Kat asks, wiping away my tears and covering me with jackets and scarves.

“My heart, my heart hurts sis.” I say, holding onto her hand tightly and the knots grow stronger with pain.

I scream holding her tighter as the pain goes

through my back.

“Hey Zinzi, we’re on our way to the hospital. What did she say to her? Where is Zano?” Kat’s voice

“Fuck him, Fuck Zano and his bitch,” I scream so hard I feel something explode in my stomach.

“OHHH” I cry loudly and Kat drops the call and looks at me.

“Buhle breathe, look at me. Sis, stay awake. Come’ on open your eyes.” Kat’s voice slowly fades with the image of her teary face.

My cold trembling body slowly goes to slumber.

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More Than Enough by LAV

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## Insert 71

At the tip of a green hill overlooking the vast and still sea, a woman holding a baby on one hand a book on the other, with her afro dancing with the wind. I slowly walk towards her while enjoying the beautiful view.

“It’s beautiful isn’t it?” She says as I step closer

“It is, I love it. What is this place?” I reply while trying to figure out the her familiar sounding voice.

“Your home, your forever. This is all yours Hlehle” she says and my heart is immediately filled with joy.

“Mama” I hug her tightly from her knees while kneeling in front of her, unable to hold my tears.

“Oh my baby, I know.” She says rubbing her hands through my hair.

“It’s not easy baby, its not. It’s never meant to be. You’re just need to take care of yourself baby. This is home for you, you need to rest. This is your resting place.” She says

I finally look up and she smiles down at me, its like looking into a mirror. I look at the baby she’s holding, it looks like Ngcwali, a boy version of her. It smiles and I cant help but smile almost wanting to giggle. I wipe away my tears and reach out my hands it does the same too. Mama hands it over to me, its skin dark, smooth and warm. I hug it tightly and lay my head on Mama’s legs as we enjoy the view in our silence.

There’s something about this silence and the crashing waves brings a sense of comfort in me, like I belong, like a place I can call home. My soul feels unrushed and my head space is floating on clouds of love, peace and fulfillment.

“This is all I’ve ever needed.” I say

“It’s all yours, waiting for you to claim it.” She says in her calm soothing voice, the voice that assures me that everything will be okay.

“I want it, with you and this baby. I want it all Mama.” I say

“You can have it, we’ll always be here with you. Always.

“Am I even worthy of that...” I say almost chuckling as my unworthiness surface.

“You’re worthy, you’ve always been and you’ll always be. And Buhle...” she says, I look up to her and the sun shines brightly almost blinding me from seeing her face.

“You’re enough, more than enough.” She says and sun blinds me so hard that everything turns white.

I rub on my eyes and look around, I’m in hospital. I try to lift my head but my headache suggests otherwise. I move my hands around to

feel myself, I bump them into my legs. I look down my nose, there's a breathing mask. I can't see past it. I try to speak but instead I moan, so I begin to moan louder. My voice breaks and I as I begin to shout a pain at the bottom parts of my stomach silences me.

A nurse shows up.

"Hello, Buhle. Look up." She says with a wide smile and a Dr walks behind her.

"What happened? Where's Kat? Call Kat?" I say, crying as the Dr flashes his little torch on my eyes. He removes the masks.

"Mrs Ngele-Ngele, you had a panic attack and your body was beginning to lose control so we had to perform an emergency C-section for the safety of the ba..."

"Where are my babies, are they okay? Call Dr Kat please, My mom, call Mam'Gloria. I want my dad, where's my family?" I cry, feeling the sharp



pain below my stomach.

“Please calm down Mam’, they’re here, they’re not allowed in ICU but we can get Katlego for you.” He says calmly.

“My babies? Where are my babies?”

“As I was saying, we had to perform an emergency C-section and because your anxiety was affecting your heart, its unfortunate that...”

“No, no you will not tell me that, you will take me to go see my babies, I want my babies. I want them. You will not tell me unfortunately, its not unfortunate that I carried them this long, its not unfortunate that i've grown to love them with everything in me, that me and them became one, that I felt them grow in me every month, nothing about it has been unfortunate. So you, with your scrubs, do not get to tell me, their mother, that it is unfortunate. No you do not!” I scream, enduring the physical pain in

body and my heart.

“We tried everything we could Mrs Nge..”

“You didn’t try hard enough if you’re telling me its unfortunate, you failed, you failed three lives, there’s no trying trying in that. Trying doesn’t produce unfortunates.” I say, crying loudly and Kat rushes in with an exhausted face.

“We managed to save two but the other one, we couldn’t. I’m sorry Mrs Ngele-Ngele” He says, holding back tears and walks out of the room.

“No! Kat, it’s not true, please tell me Dr Unfortunate is playing a fucked up joke on me, please tell me that all my babies that I’ve been carrying in me for months are all alive.” I say, crying reaching out for her hand.

“I’m so sorry sis, I’m really sorry. One didn’t make it” She begins to cry holding my hand tight as my heart begins to ache.

.....

They've moved me to a different ward, I haven't seen the babies, I don't think I can. It's been two days since finding out about losing my son all I can do is cry. The family, Mam'Gloria, dad and Kat visits just to watch me cry and sleep. The only form of communication was when I shook my head when Kat said Zane asked to see me.

Today I silently watch the blue sky through the window and my mind vividly takes me to the dream I had about my mother and the boy. My heart feels comfort, a sense of peace, the longer and deeper I stare, the more clearer their smiles become. I find myself attempting to smile.

My phone bleeps, it's a text.

"Hey Buhle, I know I'm the last person you want to hear from right now but I promise you its not

it seems like. I am not having an affair with Zane, I promise you. The thing is, my fiancé has been very abusive, at first it started as just words, then he became controlling, then when we moved this side, it got worse, he started beating for coming home late and working late with Zane. Zane began to notice bruises and after trying so hard to hide it, I ended up telling him bcz he was threatening to go to the police and I didn't want that. So when I didn't report for work without telling him, he called and as I was trying to lie to tell him about being late. My fiancé heard me whispering and hit, so Zane heard me crying and came. They got into a fight and the police eventually arrived but he had ran away. So when you were calling non-stop I thought maybe something wrong was wrong with you because he left his phone in the car and he was talking to the police, so I answered after seeing the many missed calls. I promise you he was just trying to help me and I hate that

I brought him into this, I know I asked him not to tell anyone when he first found out, I'm so sorry Buhle, I can never forgive myself for the pain I have caused you. I'm really sorry. As soon as Zane dropped me at the hospital, he got a call from one of his brothers that you're in hospital and he drove to Edernville immediately. Please, believe. There's nothing happening between me and him. I'd never do that to you and him."

The text is followed by a series of pictures of her bruised face, arm and rib area.

My heart begins to sink, I cannot exactly place my emotions right now. It's all beginning to make sense now. How that man always looked at her, oh gosh, the tension at my party. And it was them that I saw argue from a distance, which is why Zane had been absent most of the time during my birthday. He was trying to

protect her, he was saving her life. For that bastard to call me and say all of that shit while he knew exactly that he's the moron in this whole thing. I don't know how I feel but I want my husband, I want to hug my husband.

I text Zane to come.

He comes, rushing into the room with his eyes red and swollen.

"I'm so sorry baby, it's all my fault. I'm so sorry my love." He says, crying as he knees down close to the door, almost to came closer.

"I'm sorry too." I say, crying reaching out my hand for his.

He shakes his head "Come my love" I say, slowly trying to sit up.

"Don't move." He says walking closer and sits at the chair next to me and sobs harder while holding my hand tight.

“I’m sorry baby, I’m really sorry. Its all my fault.”

He continues to say

“No it’s not. It’s not your fault my love, don’t carry that. You’re a good person baby, you saved Sihle’s life. It’s not your fault baby.” I say.

We spend a while longer, in each others arms, crying and praying. His eyes are written a pain i’ve never seen in him before, he’s hurting. He cant even pretend that everything will be okay, all he sees is this moment, this painful moment we’re and my heart is already resting in my mothers lap while holding the baby and looking over the majestic view.

This is going to pass and we will be okay.

“Can I see the babies” I say and he quickly gets off the bed and shouts for the nurse.

They help me onto a wheelchair and Zane pushes me as we follow the nurse.

“Have you seen them?” I ask him

“No, I couldn’t.” he says

We finally reach a room full of tiny babies in cubes.

“You can come in.” The nurse says and Zane pushes me in, we pass baby through baby and finally reach two tiny big eyed looking babies wrapped in blue blankets.

These are your babies, they’re doing really good. Breathing on their own, waving, looking around with their big eyes. I must say, this one’s more calm and oh that one, you’re going to be in trouble. I’m sure by the time you leave you’ll be leaving with them.” She says smiling.

Zane and I begin to cry as we look at them with their eyes wondering around. These are definitely my eyes, curious eyes.

“They’re perfect.” Zane says.

“Lwandle and Langa.” I say, smiling as the enter my mouth



“Huh?” He asks, confused

“Langa is the one still and Lwandle is the busy eyes and hands. Your sons names are Lwandle and Langa.” I say and he hugs me from behind me.

“I love you Maka Lwandle and Langa.” He whispers in tears in my ear and we spend the next hours looking at our beautiful sons.

A sense of peace and fulfillment overwhelms me and I find myself in tears. I feel complete, enough, overflowing.

More than enough.

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## Insert 72

There's something magical about owning every part of you. The uncertainty, the truth, the fun, the sad bits and everything in between. Its like fully having control of it all and knowing that no one or anything has power over you. Walking head held high and knowing that this is all you, the storms and the calm, the dark and the light, all of it is you, and finding comfort in accepting all of that brings a different kind of love for ones self that cannot be found anywhere else but from within. So here I am, scarred with pain and grief yet smiling and the blessings weighing on my arms as they look up at me smiling as a way to reward me with assurance that all will be fine. Not only am I assured that things will be fine, I feel it in me that they can only be okay because that is the promise I have made for myself and my family. That regardless of all the restrictions in our lives, I choose myself and

them being part of who I am, I choose us.

It's been a month since I've had Langa and Lwandle and a week since we've been back to Khumba in our home and things are not the same. I never expected them to be but I never thought things in my family could be like this, the loss we have suffered came as a shock to everyone; the families, council, community.

There is a cloud of sadness that has been lingering over us as soon as we got back with one baby missing. It's a heavy burden to everyone but my husband, the King of AmaHlubi, my husband, the father of my children is not the same, a part of him left with his son who never got to see life. He carries on with his daily schedule and trying to catch up on work and the new project we're working on with Frankie but his soul is not with us presently.

"Come let me relieve you Zano, you need some rest." Thandi says, she moved in with us the day

we got back from Edernville and refuses to leave my side.

I appreciate her carrying about me but I'm fine, I honestly am okay, I don't know how that sounds but no one seems to believe it. For them it seems like an act, that I wake up everyday, prepare for my husband, make sure he has everything he needs, check up on him mentally while taking care of all my children without missing my own relaxation time with a book and a cup of tea at my bedroom balcony. That I help Thandi cook every meal and chit chat on the phone with my friends, laughing at their crazy dating lives. I'm okay, whatever that sounds to everyone else but im at peace, I cannot explain it so I decided to just be.

"Thanks Thandi, they're asleep anyway. I better prepare for my Skype meeting with Frankie and then go check on Makhulu and Tamkhulu later on." I say, she gives me a deep look, the one

that looks like she wants to say something but is holding back.

“Yes, Thandi, say it.” I say

“I think you should rest Zano, you’re still mourning. I want you to take it easy.” She says with her eyes filled with concern

“I will mourn for the rest of my life Thandi, this loss will forever be with me till the day I lay to rest. Life goes on and I cant stop it, I cant stop it for something that has happened and cant be undone. He’s gone and all I can do is live knowing this, incorporating it in my daily life because it will forever be that, a death. I know you mean well Thandi but I have to do this my way and living is how I will do it. Someone who I’m most worried about is Zane, he’s far from being okay.” I say

“Does he speak to you about it?” She asks

“No and we cant force him to, all we can do is

be by his side nomatter what, constantly assuring him that it is not his fault.” I say and she nods.

I make my way to the kids bedroom and lay them in their cot and head over to my bedroom to get ready for my meeting.

My phone rings.

It's Iso

“Isolethu” I greet

“I don't have much time but I just wanted to give you a heads up, the men in the tribe are planning on kidnapping Nandi, I don't know when but it seems soon. They are not happy at all that she is walking freely and her mother accepted the lobola while you were away so she is also putting pressure on the marriage. And I heard about your loss, I'm sorry. Bye.” She says and drops the call leaving me out of breath.

Fuck these traditional perverts!

Zane has a lot he's dealing with right now, this is the last thing he needs to be dealing with, I need to meet the Royal Council immediately.

This needs to end now even if we have to go to a tribe war, it has to end!

.....

“Now that we're all on the same page we can start operating next year Jan. I have included the Lodge manager, Sihle as our project manager, she'll be the one you liaise with accommodation, me and my Kulture team will be in communication with all the day to day operations of the festival and my partner will be dealing with the finances. Everything else sounds perfect, I can't wait to start next year.” I say forcing a smile at the three white man on my screen.

“Perfecto! See, this is going to be great. We will see you all on December for the tour.” Frankie

says

“Yes, I want to taste that African beer everyone has been talking about in the blogs.” Marco

“Careful Marco, that thing is not for the weak hearted.” Pieter says and we all laugh

“Thank you gentlemen, we’ll keep in touch. Bye” I say and shut my laptop, leaning my head on the chair head rest trying to figure out this whole Nandi situation.

Ughhh!

I prepare lunch for Zane and drop it off at the Lodge, he was very happy to see. We sat and chatted for a while until he had a call to attend to and that gave me time to escape to go see Makhulu.

“How’s everything at home mntanam?” She asks, handing me warm bowl of butternut soup, it smells delicious.



“We’re taking everything day by day Makhulu.” I say

“I know saying this wont help much but kuzolunga mntanam, don’t lose hope.” She says and I nod.

“Yeah, where’s Nandi?” I ask

“Probably with her boyfriend, those kids are always following eachother around, like ants. Why?” she says and I try not to laugh

“I needed to talk to her, like where do they usually hang around Makhulu? Within the village or outside the village? Has she gone back home while I’ve been gone?” I ask and Makhulu looks at me with her suspicious look.

“Why so many questions? Is she in some kind of trouble? Is it the Sokwe men?” She asks, looking straight into my eyes. I try to look away and find a way out of this but I cant.

“Yes, Iso called me telling me that they’re

planning on kidnapping her because her mother had already accepted lobola from them. So yes, she's in danger. I don't know when they're going to do it but I just want her to be safe Makhulu." I say and she sits up straight with her eyes wide open.

"Buhle, what is the council planning on doing about this? This is not good." She says

"I haven't told Zane and I don't want to, he is not in the right head space to be dealing with this, he is still mourning and this is the last thing he needs. I was going to call a council meeting myself and work on a way of resolving this and maybe get the police involved as well." I say and she shakes her head

"You are as stubborn as your father. You can't go against a whole tribe, a dangerous and unruly, one like Sokwe. They will hurt you Buhle, please, speak to Zane and here what he says to say." She says, I knew she'd say this but just to

keep the ball rolling and reduce her pressure levels I nod and continue talking about Tamkhulu's progress.

"He's better now, I know you couldn't visit him while you were in Edernville because of how fragile his lungs were that they didn't allow any kind of contact but now that he's back home, breathing on his own and talking, everything is well. He's just resting now, you can see him when he wakes up some other day."

"I know and I'm glad that all is well with him." I say

In the middle of our tea date and updating me on the village gossip, in walks the love birds, hand in hand.

"Oh look who's back." Zinzi says as he hugs me

"Hello, not too rough now." I say, "Oh sorry, I'm so happy to see you." He says

"Hi sisi." Nandi says hugging me as well.

“Hi baby.” I say, looking at her unable to hide my fear for her.

“What’s wrong?” She asks

“Uhm, you have to move out of Makhulu’s and come stay with us for a while.” I say and her face is immediately covered in fear.

“Why?” Zinzi

“It’s them, I knew it. Remember when we went to town babe and I told you that car had been following us since we left the village and you thought I was being paranoid, it was them. They’re coming for me.” She says, holding back tears.

“We don’t have time to waste, you’re coming home with me today. Go pack your things, we have security in our place.” I say

“I’m coming with you, I have to protect her.”  
Zinzi says

Oh gosh. I try not to roll my eyes.

“Okay, fine. Pack her things and lets all go.” I say and they both disappear in the passage

“Buhle, don’t forget to tell Zane.” she says and I nod.

“Done.” They appear with the bags and we all go to the car and drive off.

“Listen, Zane is dealing with a lot of things right now and doesn’t need to brought into this, I will handle it with the council. So please, don’t tell him anything. If he asks why you’re moving in with us you’ll just say you want to spend more time with the twins and helping around in the house. Do you understand?” I say and they both look at eachother

“Do you understand?” I ask again and they nod.

“Yeah, we wont say anything.” They both say

“I will put an end to this for good. Those man wont know what hit them.” I say as my mind

orchestrates a solid plan.

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Insert 73

“The Sokwe tribe is threatening to kidnap Nandipha and they will spill anyone’s blood who will stand on their way. We need to stop them.” I say and they all look confused

“Where is the King? We cannot hold a Royal Council meeting without him?” Chairperson, Hlombe says

“As you all know, the King is not mentally handling the loss of his son well and he is quite busy at the lodge with new business

developments, so we have to continue without him.” I say, reluctantly they murmur among themselves

“Am I not the Queen of Khumba? Do I not have authority to summon the council to attend to an issue that is threatening the people of amaHlubi?” I ask and they nod “We do not have time to waste and therefore need to come up with a solution by the time we get from this table.” I say and they listen attentively as I explain my plan to them and their involvement in it.

“How many times must we go humble ourselves to the stubborn Sokwe council for a girl who isn’t a Hlubi?” One of the council members says with anger

“Those men do not listen to anyone, when they want something they go after it. I say we give them the girl before any blood of our people is shed.” Another one says and they all nod in

agreement

“That girl is Zinzisumzi’s girlfriend and knowing how much they’re close and how Zinzi deeply feels about her, he will go with her whether you like it or not. So either way, blood of amaHlubi will shed. Unless you do things my way and get the police involved.” I say

“Do you really think Sokwe men care about the law?” Chairperson says

“Nandi is 18 years now, she has rights of an adult. She can file a case of harassment and issue sokwe men a court interdict. I will speak to the Director of Social Services that I worked with on the project to criminalize ukuthwala in all villages in this Municipal District. And if their egos drive them crazy, they will be driven straight to the jail cell.” I say

“I here you, we will do as we’re told. Shouldn’t we update King Zanemvula on this meeting?”



Chairperson asks

“No, I will handle this on his behalf, my husband is dealing with a lot right now, this is the last thing he needs on his plate. This mission stays between us.” I say, they nod with hesitation and walk out.

My phone rings.

“Hello”

“Mrs Ngele-Ngele, how are you?”

“I’m good Cathy, how are you?”

“Great. I have good news for you.”

“Just what I need.”

“The plot is on sale and the buyer is happy with your offer. So you can start with the building plans.”

“Oh thank you so much Cathy, this is the best news i've heard in a while. I'll contact my bank and we can have the contractors to work

immediately.”

“That’s amazing, speak to you soon.”

I drop the call. Aaaaaah I can’t hide the smile

“It’s good to see you smile again.” Thandi walks in the dining room

“It feels good, wish I could transfer this energy to Zane.” I say

“Is he still not okay?” she asks as she takes a seat next to me

“He isn’t, he hardly speaks, he doesn’t finish his food, he always wants to be in the room by himself. Thandi I’m scared, what if I never see the man I married again.” I say, unable to hold back tears

“Hey sisi, just give him time and be present by his side all the time. He will crack and open up at some point.” She says, holding both my hands.

“What’s going on?” Nonjezu walks in

“Zanozuko is worried about Zane.” Thandi says

“He hasn’t dealt with loss since his father died, its not going to be easy but he will eventually see the light. We will support you guys on anything.” She says hugs me from behind.

“Thank you so much Nonjezu.” I say

Oh look at the time, Zane will be home soon. I need to leave.

“I need to go, he’ll be home soon.” I say

“Oh let me fetch Ngcwali and we’ll be on our way.” Thandi says

Eish!

“Uhm, Thandi, you can have the night off. Uhm, I want to try talk to Zane tonight.” I say and she looks confused, as she should.

“How are you going to handle all three children by yourself? Don’t be silly, I’ll be in my room, its

not even close to yours.” She says

“No, it’s fine. I’ll manage. You can come back after two days. Please, I need to do this.” I say, she looks suspicious but doesn’t want to argue so she hands Ngcwali over to me and I walk to my car.

“Why isn’t Thandi coming with us Mama?” She asks

“She’s going to stay with Queen Makhulu and we are going to play games with daddy, sis’Nandi and Uncle Zinzi” I say

“Is daddy still sad?” she asks and I look at her face on the rear view mirror

“Daddy is going to be okay nana, he’s just stressed with work.” I say

“Is work making him sick?” she asks

“A lot of other things baby, just a lot of stuff.” I say, unable to hold back the tears.

We haven't told Ngcwali about the loss of her brother, we don't know how to explain it to her yet. The plan was to tell her when she's a bit older and when she asks why I'm wearing all black, I tell her it's a Queen trend. She's more occupied by playing with his twin brothers, pulling their legs and always trying to figure who is who between them. Langa seems to like her, well, Langa likes everyone and Lwandle, well lets just say, he takes his time with warming up to anyone.

Nandi and Zinzi have cooked dinner, our two nannies, (yes I hired two more nannies for each baby, I'm not Superwoman) have bathed and fed the twins.

"I smell stew" I say

"That's exactly what we're having, beef stew and dumplings, figured you'll be too tired to cook." Nandi says and that's her nicely putting- if I didn't cook, we would have eaten pre-

packaged food.

“That’s sweet of you.” I say

“How did it go with the council?” Zinzi asks and they both look at me waiting for answers

“They’re in on my plan but you’ll have to stay low until Nandi can apply for restraining order against them.” I say, her eyes widen

“Sisi, I’m sorry but that will only make them angrier. And they wont obey by the law, those men are ruthless.” She says, with fear in her eyes.

“That’s not all, don’t worry. The council is going there tomorrow and I’ve already contacted some people who will help put a stop to this in the entire Municipal District.” I say, she exhales.

“Don’t worry baby, they wont hurt you.” Zinzi says hugging her

Zane walks in, Ngcwali runs to him. He hugs

him tightly.

“Hello my baby.” He says

He looks confused by Zinzi and Nandi’s presence.

“Hello everyone, I didn’t know we were having guests.” He says, planting a kiss on my forehead.

“Yeah, Zinzi and Nandi wanted to come spend time with the twins.” I say

“Okay, where’s Thandi?” He asks

“She’s at the Palace, thought I’d give her some time off while these two will be here.” I say

“So they’re staying over? Both of them?” He asks

“Yes, of course in separate bedrooms. No funny business. Nandi made us dinner.” I say quickly changing the subject

“Smells nice, let me change, I’ll be back.” He

says and disappears in the passage.

“Remember, this is between us We’ll go to the police station tomorrow.” I whisper and they nod and plate up.

Dinner is served and conversation is a little bit awkward because Zane is in his own zone.

“I’m just ready to graduate and start making my own money, I cant keep depending on Sis’Kholeka’s allowance, it’s a lot and I’m grateful but I need to make my own money and get my own place to stay.” She says

“Our place” Zinzi says

“Ohh why are you inserting yourself in her plans like that? what if she wants to stay by herself?” I ask and Nandi laughs

“And he’s still starting varsity, now I must share my place with a student, imagine.” Nandi says and we both laugh.



“You’re only two years older than me so when you graduate I’ll be doing my last year ‘cause your teaching degree is four years and my African studies degree is three.” He says, almost annoyed.

“Still, you’ll be a student. I need my independence” she says, teasing him more

“Help me out bro, they’re ganging up on me.” Zinzi says to Zane whose mind is elsewhere

“Uhm, yeah?” He snaps out of his thoughts.

“You’re not even listening bro, forget it.” He says shaking his head

“Wish I could, erase it all.” He says staring into blank space and there’s silence around the table, Nandi and Zinzi look confused.

“Nandi please tuck in Ngcwali in bed and Zinzi clear the dishes and put them in the dishwasher.” I say and they all do as they’re told.

“Baby, let’s go take a bath.” I say to him holding his hands

He looks into my eyes and the sadness and regret exposes itself.

“Come my love.” I hold him and walk to our room and into our bathroom.

While I prepare the bath for us, he sits on the bed, still and sad.

I help him take off his clothes and walk towards the warm bubble bath with soothing oils.

I sit across each other, staring into each other silently.

“Does it end, the pain? Does it end?” He asks, tears forming in his eyes

“Everytime I take off my clothes and look at the scar below my stomach, I feel my heart pinching in pain.” I say

“Everytime I look at you, I feel guilty, I feel sad, I

feel the pain ive caused. The office, Sihle, the village, everything around here makes me hate myself and what I've done to you." He says, crying with his hands over his face.

"Before I woke up at the hospital, I had a dream of Mama and holding him, he looked more like Ngcwali but a darker and chubby version of her. He smiled when I held him. I stayed with them, overlooking this beautiful view. I felt at peace, there with them, I felt complete and I want you to experience that as well." I say, his eyes red, amazed at what he's hearing

"How? When all I feel is guilt?" He asks

"Our new home." I say, picking up my phone and showing him a picture of the exact location in my dream.

It's in the small town, eXhantini, where Lydia hosted her birthday brunch.

He doesn't say anything but stares at me.

“I bought it for us and hired contractors to start working once the deal has been finalized. It’s literally in the middle of Edernville and Khumba, our families can visit us anytime and we can do the same. And with the new deal with Frankie and the team, everything is handled with business. Sihle is more than capable to run the lodge and restaurant by herself and just report to you regularly. I can work on supervision level on the Festival work. This is what we need baby; me, you and our children to spend all the time with ourselves. We deserve it baby.” I say

He doesn’t look convinced but he doesn’t look like he’s against it either. He continues to stare at the picture for a while.

“Let’s go to bed baby.” He says and just like that, the idea is tucked under the carpet.

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Insert 74

“How are you? Zane told me you’re back at work?” I ask

“I’m fine, just worried about him. You know he doesn’t say anything to me or any of the staff. He greets and says bye. How are you holding up?” Sihle asks

“Taking it a day at a time. The case, did you follow up on it?” I ask

“The family got too involved and I had to drop the charges but the restraining order still stands. He’s also suspended from his job this side so he can’t come this side. Thanks for convincing the Royal Council to ban him from Khumba.”

She says

“No problem, listen. I need a favor from you, can you clear up Zane’s schedule for tomorrow.” I say and she agrees.

“Thanks, take care.” I say

“You too.” She says and we drop the call.

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On our way back from the police station and the court, the Captain assured us that they will take this seriously, I know they got a call from the Commissioner otherwise they wouldn’t care for shit. It’s nice having friends in high positions at times, you rub my back and I rub yours.

“When does your final exams start?” I ask Nandi

“In three weeks time.” she says

“I’m going to need you to head back to varsity by nextweek, I don’t want you to be stressed by everything happening here, I’ll handle it.” I say

“Will this be my life though? Running away, always?” She asks teary eyed

“No, you’re not running. You’re a student and you need to prepare for your exams.” I say

“Trust me, you’ll enjoy December with no fear of anyone or anything, I promise.” I say, she nods as she wipes off her tears.

“What about me?” Zinzi asks

“What about YOU?” I ask, trying to hide the laughter

“When can I go back to campus?” He asks

“Zinzi what does your timetable say? Are you going to follow Nandi around all the time?” I ask

“Well, she is my soulmate.” He says

“Oh my goodness, you’re worse than your brother.” I say, laughing.

“Why are people driving so recklessly on the roads, I mean the roads are bad as it is.” I say

as the bakkie in front of us sways all over the road.

I press the hooter for it to move aside.

“Are you kidding me, is this man crazy.”

“Oh no, Buhle reverse it’s the Sokwe brothers. This is a trap.” Nandi says with panic

There’s another one behind me. Oh shit.

I sway on the side and speed reverse on the car that was behind us. They turn around and start chasing after us as we drive backwards.

“Buhle let me drive” Zinzi shouts.

There’s no time to switch now, if I stop, they will catch up on us.

I turn quickly and speed towards the Ndlovu village. The two cars are still chasing after us, my heart is beating faster and my c-section wound is hurting from all the bumping on the gravel road.



“Dial the Captain and tell him they’re chasing us to the Ndlovu village.” I say handing Nandi my phone, her hands are shaking.

“Zinzi call one of the guards and tell them we need armed men to meet us kwaNdlovu, my orders.” I say and he does as he’s told.

Nothing in me is calm, I’m scared. The roads are really bad, as much as my Jeep is made for these bumps, those cars behind are getting closer and closer and we are not even close to the village.

“The Captain says there are no vans at the station right now but will send one when it arrives.” Nandi says

“Fuck!” I scream

“Six armed guards are on their way, they’ll use the alternative route, so we’ll find them kwaNdlovu.” Zinzi says

Small houses begin to appear from a distance

the faster I drive.

A banging sound hits my side view mirror and breaks it.

“Heads down.” Zinzi shouts

“What was that?” I scream, trying to keep my head down while trying to see the road ahead

“They’re shooting.” Zinzi replies. Nandi starts crying.

We’re getting closer to the village but I still cannot see any of our men.

“Zinzi where are they? You said they’ll be here by now.” I scream

Zinzi lifts his head to look clearer.

“There by that tree Buhle. Turn left, lets not go into the village. The Ndlovu’s cannot be involved in this.” He says and I take a sharp left turn into the forest and stop.

We cover our ears as the gun shots get louder

and closer.

Nandi's screams and cries become louder the longer the shots are fired.

"It's going to be okay Nandi, it's going to be okay baby." Zinzi says, hugging her tightly in his arms, almost shielding her with his whole body while I'm stuck in the front seat with a sharp pain in my stomach and I just know I've ruptured my stitches.

After what seemed like a lifetime, gunshots stopped and everything went silent.

"Nkosazana Zano? Zinzi?" Someone's shouting. We sit still in our silence, holding our breathes.

"Zinzi, it's me Zumba." He shouts again and we get up and step out of the car.

"The Sokwe brothers ran away and left these fools behind." He says pointing at the blooded bodies laying on the ground.

“Are they?” I ask

“Leave, we’ll sort it out. Go now.” He says

“The police are on their way.” I say

“We’ll be done by then.” He says

Nandi and Zinzi run back to the car.

“King Zanamvula or the council is to never know about today, any of it. Understood?” I say starring right into his eyes.

“It never happened.” He says and I go back to the car.

The drive back home is silent, sad and scared.

After I’ve freshened up, cleaned up my stitches and I took pain meds that took me into a deep sleep.

“Baby, are you okay?” I’m woken up by Zane’s voice

“I ruptured my stitches.” I say trying to get up.

“No, stay in bed. You need to stay in bed, it’s only been a month since you...” He stops

“Since I gave birth to our beautiful and healthy sons” I say, holding his hand

“They are a Blessing to be grateful for, they are a beautiful part of our life.” I say

“Promise me you’ll rest.” He says

“But first, can I take you somewhere tomorrow?” I say, he looks puzzled

“Rest? I’m asking you to rest and you want to travel. Besides, I have that important meeting with Frankie.” He says, looking uninterested.

“Sihle will handle work, you’ll drive and I’ll rest on the passengers seat. Please baby.” I say, making my cute face.

“Okay and after that you’re not leaving this bed until you’re fully healed.” He says and I nod

“Can I cuddle?” I ask and he rests next to me

and places his head on my boobs.

With my hand I rub on his head.

“I’m so sorry baby.” He says, sobbing “I’m so so sorry.” He continues to say as I hug him tightly. He cries loudly the more he apologizes and all I can do is hold him closer to me.

“Let it out my love, let it out.” I say and he cries until his tears are no more.

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More Than Enough by LAV

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Insert 75

On our way back from what will soon be our

new home, we're playing our favourite jazz instrumentals, singing along, and reminiscing on the old days of our trips to town and how much we enjoyed those rides because they were the only time we got to spend with each other without having our families in our business.

"I have to set a meeting with the Council, they won't like what I have to tell them but it's my decision and they have to live by it." He says

"I'm more scared of Makhulu, she's going to be on my neck with the 'what will the people say' lecture." I say and we laugh.

I smile widely as I see his beautiful smile, the smile that had me falling for him, not caring what the consequences and the culture had to say about me, just me wanting him all for myself. Muting everything Thami and Makhulu said and just wanting to see him and that smile. Spending hours in bed tossing and turning,

seeing it, unable to sleep because of the rush butterflies it brought in my stomach. Jumping out of my window in the middle of the night just to see him and his smile, well and other things but that smile, always assured me that it will be worth it and that's exactly what I feel right now.

"I love you Zanemvula and I do not regret anything about being with you." I say

"Buhle, what have I ever done to deserve a love like the one you give me?" He says "I love you so much my love and I promise to always love you 'till my last breath." He says, reaching for my hand and kissing it. "It's all for us from now on, no one else but us." He says.

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In the midst of the heated discussion about Zane stepping down as King and me as Queen of amaHlubi and our move to eXhantini between the family and the Royal Council, my



phone bleeps,it's a text.

“Meet me outside now.”

It's from Iso

I excuse myself and head out.

I look around to see if I can find her, until I spot a white double cap on the far right of the Palace gate. I walk towards it.

“Iso, what's wrong.” I say when I see her face with bruises and swollen eyes from crying.

She is not alone, she's with his husbands' son, her twins and what seems to be luggage, a lot of it.

“What's going on Iso?” I say

“I'm leaving, for good. We're leaving and I wanted to see you before I leave. I wanted to thank you, for everything you have done, risking your life for every young girl in the villages and for making me realize that what I perceived as

normal growing up was actually abuse and I shouldn't tolerate it. When the police showed up yesterday, things got really hectic. Sokwe's brothers were arrested and issued some document banning him from visiting Khumba or getting any close to Nandi and Zinzi. He knew I had said something to do with it, he got violent and that's when....he helped me pack and leave with the children. Obviously they're all angry but I know they won't do anything about it because the law is now involved."

My mind is taking its' time trying to process everything.

"Where are you going? Do you have any plan? Iso this is big, i'm glad you're choosing to leave but are you safe? I mean.." I say with my eyes side-eyeing the King's son.

I don't trust him.

"He's the one who helped me get out, he's the

one who's been convincing me to leave for the longest but I guess I was too stupid to realize what was in front of me for years. But I'm safe, I know I am." she says, reaching her hand to his.

"We have to leave." He says

"Take care of them." I say and he nods

"Call me, once everything is settled at all." I say and she nods. I get out of the car and watch it rush on the gravel road leaving behind all the dust of their trauma and journeying towards healing and new memories.

"This young girl came here and changed everything that was built by our ancestors, she changed how things are done in our tribe and the village. She came with her city agenda and now is trying to rule your head and turning you against us, your people." I woke in and Chairperson, Hlombe is on his feet, fuming.

"Buhle, is your Queen and you will not speak of

her like that. She has done nothing but bring light into the village. How many home now have more income because of the festival? Girl children are going to school and getting accepted to colleges and scholarships. It's not about us, and that's what it has always been about, the Royal Council and family, she came and shifted focus to the village at large and now people are benefiting from everything that comes to the village." Zane responds with passion matching Hlombe's

"But Nkosi'Yam, who will take up after you? We cannot have a Kingdom without a King." One of the Council members says

Everyone looks at Zazi.

"Oh no darlings, wrong brother." He says, rolling his eyes

"I will. I will finish university and I will take up after my brother." Zinzi speaks and everyone

looks at him.

“The Royal Council will collectively rule under the Queen Mother, Nonjezu, until Zinzisumzi is ready and able to take the Throne.” Zane says.

The Council mumbles among themselves.

“And anyone who has an issue with that must state so, and they will be excused from Council duties with immediate effect.” He continues to say and the room is silent.

“My intentions were never to divide the family or the tribe, I fell in love and it so happened to be with the King of amaHlubi. I did what I could with what the scrambles of life taught me. I do not come from a family with rules and traditions, so all I know is what I taught myself and that is to survive. Zano came into my life and taught me that there is more to life than just that. He taught me to live, to love, to be joyful and most importantly, finding joy within myself and not

only in pleasing those around me. And that is why we have come to decide on the move, to do what pleases us and not what is expected of us. With the recent events of our life, it has really taught us to choose ourselves because life happens and we're the ones who are left to pick up the pieces. EXhantini is not that far from Khumba, the family is welcomed to visit anytime, I know Zane will never turn his back on his family and tribe, he values that so much, he will always be yours." I say

"Oh and speaking about life happening and us choosing ourselves, I want to let everyone know that I entered a fashion competition and got a year scholarship to one of my dream fashion schools." He says and we all rejoice with applauds

"Yeah, so I'm leaving for New York in January." He drops the bomb and everyone is silent

"Yeeey!" he cheers for himself

“New York Zazi?” Nonjezu asks with her eyes wide open

“Overseas?” Thandi asks

“When were you going to tell us that we have one full month to spend with you before you go overseas?” Zinzi

“Congratulations” I say

“Thanks skwiza. Things have been quite hectic at home, everyone going through something, there was just never the right time.” He says

“You need to tell me more about this scholarship thing, is it a real school? where are you going to stay? What will you eat? I hear a lot about these scams of people being sold to be domestic workers.” Thandi says

I saw that coming.

“Okay, I will let you guys in on everything now can we get back to the King’s betrayal.” He says

and I chuckle.

Zane gives him a sharp side-eye

“I’m happy that you have both found what you need and are happy with it, we will support you in everything. I just want to know, what will happen to your house?” Nonjezu asks

“We’ll use it to accommodate more festival tourists, especially with Frankie and the team on board, we will need more of it. But we’re only leaving once our new home is done, You’re not getting rid of us that easily.” I say and I see everyone smiling, including the Council chairperson

“I think we have resolved everything we needed to, we can adjourn the meeting.” Zane says and they all walk out.

“I spoke to Iso, everything is sorted. Nandi is free, for real and for good this time.” I whisper to Zinzi and he smiles with joy.



“Thank you so much.” he says, hugging me tightly. “I’ll call Nandi and let her know.” He says and runs to his room.

“What’s he happy about?” Zane asks

“Nandi, what else could it be?” I say jokingly, and he laughs

“He’s so obsessed with that girl.” He says

“Oh you’re one to talk, leaving a whole Kingdom behind for Buhle.” Zazi says

“And you, Mr New York Fashion, you’re really leaving?” Zane asks

“Are you kidding me? I’ve been dreaming about this day for all my life. I will gladly fly out of this village with a broom if I have to.” He says and we all laugh

“You deserve it, I’m so happy for you.” I say

“Thanks for always encouraging me to continue with my online store even when two people

were buying and them being your friends.” He says “All I need is allowance to shop for my New York wardrobe. Mama, when can we go to Edernville, I need new clothes.” He says and Nonjezu being the big spender that she is looks more than happy to help.

“Anytime you want, we can go tomorrow.” She says

“No, he must first show us this school and all the details of this place he’s going to overseas.” Thandi says and that’s true Thandi-sm, facts over fashion.

“He can tell us that over dinner, I’ll make pasta quickly.” I say and everyone looks at me

“Did you say you’ll make, as in cook something.” Zazi asks

“Oh come’on, Frankie taught me a quick pasta dish that I can make in less than 45 minutes, its very easy, throw in the pasta in boiling salted

water and in a separate pan fry chicken pieces, garlic, onion, herbs, mushroom and cream with salt and pepper. Simple.” I say and they still don’t look convinced.

“I’ll hang around in the kitchen and supervise.” Thandi says and follows me as we make our way to the kitchen.

I’m busy with the food preparations and Thandi’s eyes have been following me as I move from cabinet to cabinet.

“Is it selfish of me to be sad that the boys are leaving? I mean, they’re the only reason I woke up, taking care of them and now they’re leaving me. I knew this day would come but it seems like yesterday when they refused to sleep in their own rooms and cried for me when they went back to boarding school. Now one is married with children, one is in college and the other is going overseas. I just, its all moving too fast and I just don’t feel good.” She says

“Change, it’s inevitable, we grow, life happens, things shift and people move on. it’s sad, I know but look at the growth that has happened in this household. The relationship the boys have with their mother, with each other, how they are blooming in their own personal prospects.” I say

“I know, I’m very happy for them but its going to be weird now, me and Nonjezu in the house.” She says

“You’re going to be lonely. I might have an idea, how would you feel managing the accommodation at our house for the tourists. It’s not any different from what you already do for the Palace and I know our guests will love you.” I say

“Oh Zano, I haven’t worked anywhere else but here. I don’t know if I can do it for those international people.” She says

“Thandi you can host anyone with your eyes closed, all you have to do is be yourself and make sure they’re comfortable and make sure the staff is doing their job and that’s it. You’re perfect for it.” I say and she smiles

“Okay, I’ll do it. Oooh no, that’s not oil, its apple cider vinegar. Here’s oil” She says handing me Olive oil unable to hold in her laugh

“Good thing I came huh.” She says and I nod.

We’re all gathered at the dining table and enjoying the dish I prepared, they’re all convinced that Thandi helped me because there is no way I could have done it by myself.

Sharing jokes around and laughing at the top of our lungs is how we spend the rest of our family dinner date. It dawns to me that when we accept ourselves and go for what we deserves that those who love us and want the best for us will always be by our side, which teaches me that no matter what, I should always choose my

own joy, my own peace and my own sanity. That no matter how many times we chase after this happy ending we've always dreamt for ourselves while in a place of hurt, we shouldn't sacrifice our true selves for an imaginary happiness while neglecting what we truly deserve. Yes, it's all glitter and sunflowers from a distance but when we get to it and it doesn't reflect what we truly deserve and doesn't resonate with our happiness, we should always find courage to step aside and choose what makes us happy, regardless of what the world says about it because at the end of the day, the world is not there when we cannot find fulfillment in our hearts, it's us and our conscious.

“Go after the things that set your soul on fire about but never at the expense of your peace and happiness.”\_L..A.V

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## THE FINALE

It feels weird being back here again, after a whole year of not being a Queen but enjoying motherhood and marriage life in one of my favourite places in the world. Waking up to Ngcwali screaming at the top of her lungs and her brothers following behind her like baby penguins as they all invade our bedroom, we then have a dance off in front of the huge mirror until the little ones get cranky and want their milk then I go from dance mom to cow mom or

as my husband calls me, the dairy factory. While I pump myself dry to feed Langa and Lwandle, my husband would be busy making breakfast for us and our home staff would arrive, that includes two nannies for the children and our household help. After the chaotic morning, Ngcwali gets in the car with me and I drop her off at her crèche while I head over to our new office and Zane goes to the construction site where he's currently building a cultural center with a restaurant serving local food. We've both agreed to work four days a week and break at work at 4pm, with all of our businesses booming, new and old projects, we have been very busy with work but have also found a great balance in our strict quality time schedule. The people in eXhantini have been very welcoming and kind to us, even though we do not have any nearby neighbors on our site, we know everyone by name and clan name, that's how small and receptive the village and



town is. Sihle and Frankie's team have been operating on a daily basis on the new project and my Kulture team has been great support which is what brings us to Khumba today, the launch of Khumba Kulture Tours.

"What do you think? I wanted something authentic yet artistic, I didn't want to lose the Khumba heritage but also wanted a more creative twist to it? Do you think it's too much? I mean, I can ask them to remove the..."

"It's perfect, you did a perfect job Sihle." I say and she lets out a deep sigh of relief.

"Psheew! Great, now come i want you to see these art pieces that were done by the children from art gallery workshops, so cute. I decided to put them at the entrance. Oh I have to check on catering as well." She says with no breath in between, she reminds me on our launch of Khumba Kulture Festival.

“Okay, relax. Breathe in and out. Everything is going to be fine. Now, how have YOU been?” I ask her and she smiles with her cheeks almost turning pinkish.

“I’ve been great, work is good, life is good I’m just happy.” She says

“I know that smile? who is he?” I say and she blushes more and quickly changes the conversation.

“You’ve been doing good too, the kids are so grown, I see you uploads all the time. I also here you guys are doing another business that side as well. How is that going?” She says hiding her smile.

I’m gonna get her, she wont even know it!

“Things have been good, very good. That move was everything we needed and I’m just grateful that we still get to do the things we both like and still have our family. The cultural center and

restaurant are coming okay, still at construction but we're hoping to include it as one of the official stops for tourists in the Khumba Kulture Tours but enough with business, I need village gossip." I say and we head to her office talking and laughing.

Zane walks in with her mother and Zinzi. I jump out of my seat to greet them, I've genuinely missed them, especially Nonjezu and her extravagant looks.

"Wait, did you gain weight? Or are you..."

"Oh no, I am not pregnant and that baby chapter is closed." I say as I hug her

"I am ready to be a grandma again, its been a while." She says with her cheeky smile, her doek tied tightly matching her traditional ensemble.

"Oh that's up to Zinzi and Zazi now, Zane and I are done." I say

"Oh I am not ready to be a father to anyone, so

please don't look at me either. Zazini might be next, his Insta stories have been..." I quickly give him a warning look and he's immediately silent.

He knows damn well that Zazi is not yet open to discussing his new love life with the family, he blocked everyone in the family besides myself and Zinzi, even Zane didn't make the cool club, he's blocked too. We also don't know much, besides the pics he posts, all I see is him and his white man eating joy with the Queens cutlery. I get him, his family can be very controlling at times and it really does take away from the special love one shares with their lover, so until he is ready to share, we shall remain mute.

"What Insta stories?" Zane asks

"Uhm...just him and uhh just him posting cute baby videos, you know those funny videos, very funny baby videos..hahahaha, so funny...uhm so how are the twins?" Zinzi says trying to get

himself out of this sticky conversation.

“They’re good, well Langa is good but Lwandle, yhoow, so restless and always looking for something to break or “fix” in his mind. All Lwandle does is smile and point at the ocean view.” I say

“I cant believe you didn’t bring them with, I miss them so much.” Nonjezu says

“Oh, I needed a break, I just wanted to enjoy the launch with no worry of chasing around after them. Besides, Christmas is almost here, you’ll be with them until they exhaust you.” I say and she laughs

“I cant wait to come visit and for the whole family to be present, it’s going to be a Christmas to remember.” She says and loud singing and ululating begins.

“Oh, I think they’re starting, let’s go.” Zane says and we all head out.

The are two mini buses full of tourists who are staying over for the weekend, this is amazing. The celebrations begin and the tourists are amazed. Walking from stall to stall, busying crafts and clothing, tasting food and locally brewed beers to dancing and singing along, the tent is filled with joy and learning, and all I see is the euro signs floating over their heads, heck I really am my dad's child. I mean, that why we do business, for money but this one is different because a lot of people get to benefit, especially the people of Khumba who have worked so hard to host this event.

Frankie takes to the podium and prepares for his speech.

“Uhm, hello everybody, can I have your attention please. Thank you so much for the support and your warm welcome, the Khumba people are very kind and we love you all mwaaah!” he says the crowd claps and ululates. “Thank you to the

King and the Queen, can I still call you that? or is it not like that? anyway, my business partners, Mr and Mrs Gelele and the Kulture team” everyone starts laughing and applauds at the same time.

There was no way he was getting that surname right when he cant even speak English properly, besides he calls us by our names anyway.

“And to the most hardworking woman I have ever met, Miss Sihle, thank you for always making sure everything is in order and easy. You know, she is so kind to me and works with so much respect and for that I thank you.” Frankie ends off his speech and Sihle hasn’t wiped off her smile, mmmh, wait it he? And she? Uh, she needs to give me the tea. I know chemistry when I see it. If only Thami was still working here, he would’ve dished it all up for but he’s busy travelling and having the best time with his man. Ugh, this Christmas must

come already, I miss him so much and aunt'Kholeka and dad and Mam'Gloria, Kat ugh, I miss them all.

"This wouldn't be possible if it weren't for you." Zane whispers in my ear as he hugs me from behind, planting soft kisses on my neck.

I still get shy when he does this in public, especially in Khumba and the people watching.

"We should thank Frankie for having the guts of waking a heavily pregnant woman in her nap." I say and he laughs.

"He sure is one brave Italian." He says "Did I tell you how gorgeous you look in this dress, the way it tightly hugs you in your curves and especially this part." He says rubbing on my hips.

"Oh my gosh Zanemvula, the people." I say, pushing them away but still flattered by his gentle touch.



“I’m not their King anymore, I’m just a guy in love with his wife, his sexy wife.” He says planting more kisses on my neck, I try so hard not to giggle and blush, damn this has me heated up right now, I can feel my nipples begin to harden.

“Oh you two don’t want to grow up, you’re still doing this touchy touchy thing of yours. Infront of the people nogaal.” Thandi shows up from nowhere, followed by Makhulu, Tamkhulu and Dlamini.

“Look at Zane, all up in her neck like that, are you a scarf? Is it winter?” Makhulu says and I cant help but laugh out loud.

“Leave my scarf alone, I love it.” I say in his defence, still unable to hold back my laugh.

“You look...uhm...thick, gorgeous, just thick and you are glowing, Xhantini is really treating you well.” Thandi says

“I just had two babies at the same time, ofcause I’m thick and the air in eXhantini has magical powers.” I say

“Or maybe you have another one coming through, I trust Bhungane on that.” Tamkhulu says they all laugh

Oh gosh, someone cant gain weight in peace.

“I am not pregnant. I’m done with babies, yho! the ones we have are more than enough.” I say

“I see Lwandle is going to give you grey hair, that video of him putting Vaseline all over calm Langa, always brings me to laughter, your grandfather loves it so much, he says it reminds him of himself as a young naughty kid.”

Makhulu says

“Yhu and my poor Langa just sat there in obedience with the cutest smile while he shines bright with thick layers of Vaseline. I couldn’t even shout, I just laughed.” I say and the

conversation is about the twins non-stop.

“You will experience them first hand when you come visit for Christmas.” I say

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The sun shines on the the calm sea creating sparkling reflection of the beautiful sky. The wind is thin with humid air from the mountains behind us and the cool breeze from the ocean in front of us. My ears are filled with his charming giggle as he chases after mama from a distance. I stand by the dining patio and watch them in their joy, in their peace. My mom’s hair dancing to the wind the same direction with her red flowy dress. And with her back facing my I can feel the joy in this moment, I can feel their presence in my heart and that’s all I needed, an affirmation that this move was not a mistake, that peace really does come when we choose our own sanity of pleasing others, that indeed there is a light at the end of

the tunnel and the tunnel, no matter how long and dark it may be, it leads to our desired peace and as much as it can be suffocating, there are lessons of ourselves and who we need to become when we reach our place of peace. The tunnel might be dark but in it we find light within us that guides us to our everlasting light. So, hold on, in during the dark and the uncertainty find courage in knowing that a better version of yourself will meet you at the end of the tunnel, don't let the darkness dim your inner light.

“You know that’s only romantic in movies, in real life it’s weird.” I say to Zane as I am met with his smile the moment I wake up from my slumber.

“The smile you had in your sleep, I couldn’t stop starrng. I hope you dreaming about me.” He says planting a kiss on my forehead.

“You’re always in my heart baby, you’re always in every thought I have. Your love is the most important thing in my life, it brought out a version of myself I have given up on, it gave me hope, your love for me was so strong that it challenged traditions and stereotypes. I held on it until I can find a love like yours for myself, within myself. Your love inspired me to love myself, to choose myself and to never give up on who I am becoming. And I will forever be thankful for it.” I say and he’s silent.

Tears flooding my eyes and eventually overflowing down my cheeks.

He wipes them off.

“I know you always feel like there’s nothing much you offer and that you are never enough for me but trust me when I say you are everything I needed and more. There was something about the way you carried yourself, no care in the world what people thought of you,

just being and honestly without anyones approval. Your aura was filled with life, and that is something I needed. To be bold and courageous in my intentions and doing what makes be happy. Your love gave me freedom, it broke down chains of fear and awakened the kid in me with dreams of his own and not that of others. I love you for making a man out of me, a man with love, a man with intentions and freeing me from my own insecurities.” He says with tears in his eyes, staring directly in mine. He pulls me towards him slowly.

“I love you so much Zanozuko, I appreciate you so much. And I thank you for loving me.” He says with his lips close to mine.

“I love you too Zane, and I love what we’ve built together. And thank you for us.” I say and my lips meet with his warm lips, together dancing in gratitude of not giving up on our love. His hands sliding under my silk bottom shorts and

rubbing on my butt. I put my leg over his and begin to feel his erection for in between my thighs. I push myself closer to him as my blood rushes all over my body with excitement of the glory that awaits it. All over each other, his erections hardens and the moisture in between my thighs is ready to receive it all.

“Mama! Merry Christmas, come see what Father Christmas got us. Mama! Open.”

Ngcwali screams on the other side of the door and I immediately want to scream ‘GO AWAY’ but she continues to bang the door and two small voices speaking in gibberish appear as well.

I genuinely want to cry, I feel a lump in my throat form.

“You know they wont go away until we open the door.” Zane says with his almost red eyes.

I throw a little tantrum and bouncing up and

down the bed with annoyance before getting up to attend to the cute mood spoilers while Zane quickly runs to the bathroom to pee.

“Merry Christmas my baby.” I say, faking a smile to my excited four year old.

I have no choice but to swallow the lump in my throat and mother my babies.

“Come lets go make hot chocolate and see what Father Christmas has for us.” I say and she immediately runs off to the kitchen leaving me and the little ones behind.

“Mama” Langa says with his arms up in the air, ready for me to lift him up. I do just that and Zane appears behind me and carries Lwandle, and we all make our way to the kitchen where we are met by delicious aromas of a full buffet of breakfast.

“Merry Christmas.” Mam’Gloria and Thandi both greet us with their sincere smiles.



“Merry Christmas Ma, Merry Christmas Thandi.”  
I say, hugging them both.

“How did you sleep?” Mam’Gloria asks

“Peaceful.” I say smiling

“I woke up to her smiling.” Zane says as he  
makes coffee.

“That’s good to hear.” Thandi says “The birth of  
Jesus should bring peace to us.” she continues  
to say.

“Mama!” Lwandle says and points outside.

“You must eat first baby, then we’ll go play  
outside.” I say. It’s not him to be the one to  
suggest to go outside first, it’s always Lwandle  
who is banging on the sliding door to be out, I  
guess the beautiful weather has an impact and  
the excitement in the house has him wanting to  
play outside.

“Come let me feed him while you eat Hlehle.”

Mam'Gloria says and I immediately hand him over to her. He doesn't seem happy about that and his eyes have been glued to the view outside.

I'm walking around the kitchen counter dishing up for myself.

"Morning family!" Thamie and his husband, walk in the kitchen with their matching onesies. Yes, I said husband. They're married, they eloped and got married in Paris and didn't tell anyone. They both showed up lastnight with rings in their fingers and did a "tada" on us. We couldn't even be mad because the joy on his face was priceless, he looks genuinely happy and that's all that mattered.

"Merry Christmas newly weds." I say and he smiles so wide, flashing his ring on the air.

"Oh I still believe what you two did, a whole secret wedding." I say

“It wasn’t a secret, we just wanted what we wanted and that was to get married in Paris. Unfortunelty, our budget could only accommodate us, we are not rich and our dreams had to made possible, so we did us.” He says with no regret just smiles and peace.

“I don’t care what you say but I am definitely throwing you two a reception lunch or whatever we will call it, just to celebrate your union.” I say

“Oh can it be on that garden with that gorgeous ocean view? And have doves, I want to fly doves at the end oh and a live disco band with vogue dancers.” He says with no breath in between.

“Okay, you can have all of that but that would be next year. I have a lot on my plate right now.” I say and he smiles heading to the food station and dishes up.

“We have to start preparing for Christmas lunch Gloria.” Thandi says to Mam’Gloria

“Oh that won’t be necessary, I hired a catering company to do that for us, they’ll deliver at 1:30pm. I wanted everyone to relax and enjoy eachothers company without worrying about food and décor and all that comes with it. It’s been a while since we’ve all been together, lets just catch up and relax.” I say and Thandi shakes her head.

“We wouldn’t have minded at all but thank you for being thoughtful. I guess, let’s catch up then.” Mam’Gloria says

“Mzala, I just need you to tell me how you convinced the council and you know who(with his head pointing at Zane) to move away from Khumba and drop the royal titles like that. That has never happened in any tribe Kingdom” He says

“Zane did all the convincing, I just sat there and looked cute. He just made them understand that this move doesn’t take away that we are

still family and that the village will always remains home for us.” I say smiling at Zane.

“When Mama called and told me, I almost fell off my seat. One because you were leaving Khumba and two because you were moving to an even boring village, with a population of 5 and literally 1 store, cant even call it a store because you only get basics, they don’t have prawns.” He says with the most dramatic hand gestures and we all laugh.

“Oh come’on its peaceful and that’s all we needed. Speaking of your mother, she is so in love with his white boo, her statuses are of them two in restaurants and boat cruises.It looks serious” I say

“Their holidays give me so much travel envy. Her business is doing good and life is just so great for her.” he says

“I’m so happy for Kholeka, she deserves all

those great things she is getting.” Thandi says with a smile on her face.

“What time are they arriving?” Mam’Gloria asks

“They left Edernville already so they’ll be here around 11” Thami says

“Morning all.” Sinazo and Thabiso walk in hand in hand

“Merry Christmas!” Everyone in the kitchen greets them with a welcoming smile.

They also arrived last night, right after Thami.

“It smells so good in here.” Sinazo says, salivating over the breakfast display.

“Zane that view is priceless.” Thabiso says, looking through the sliding door and Langa runs to stand next to him.

He really wants to play outside today, so weird.

“All thanks to my wife for convincing us to move here.” Zane responds smiling at me.

“Morning fam.” Tyson walks in and we all greet him back.

“Where’s Katlego?” Mam’Gloria asks

“She’s still sleeping and there was no way I was waking her up.” He says with fear in his eyes.

“She really is quite moody with this pregnancy.” Mam’Gloria says

“Moody Mme?, she bites my head off for placing water 2cm away from where she prefers it. She’s a fire breathing dragon.” Tyson says and we all laugh

“Good luck bro, wait till her craving wake you up in the middle of a deep sleep and you have to drive around looking for bran muffins” Zane says and the laughter continues

“Oh and the on and off mood swings that come out of nowhere, one wrong word and she has already concluded that you hate her.” Thabiso say and Sinazo quickly side-eyes him.

“Let me dish up for her and I’ll warm it up when she wakes up.” Mam’Gloria says

“More bacon please Mme.” Tyson says, almost begging “She loves bacon, a lot.” He says and we all laugh and continue catching up and laughing at old moments.

I walk to my room to shower and prepare for Christmas lunch and my phone rings before I head for the shower.

It’s a video call from Frankie.

“Merry Christma...” before I could finish my greetings, two faces appear on the screen.

Frankie and Sihle in matching Christmas glam attires with a view of night time and Christmass decorations.

“Surprise! Merry Christmas!” They both say and I really am shocked, not only seeing them together but seeing how beautiful and happy they look together.



“Merry Christmas! You look so beautiful. wait where are you? It’s day time in SA.” I say

“We’re in Toronto, Canada. Holiday with the family.” Frankie says and I cant stop but smile

“We just wanted to wish you all a Merry Christmas.” Sihle says with her eyes twinkling with joy.

Zane walks in and I twist the phone to his face, he’s as surprised as I was.

“Hey, what’s going on over there?” He says

“Fun and love.” Frankie screams and kisses Sihle on the cheek.

“Congratulations and Merry Christmas to you too.” He responds while hugging me from behind.

“See you next year when we make even bigger money.”Frankie says

“Have a good day you guys.” Sihle says

“Thank you and enjoy the holidays. Bye.” I say and end the call.

“Oh wow, who would’ve thought.” I say

“Oh I saw the way they were staring at each other at the launch, I knew something was happening.” Zane replies still huggin me tight and kissing on my neck

“I mean, I did suspect it but wow, this is great for her. im so happy for her.” I say and he agrees in between kissing me and feeling up on my body.

“Wanna finish off what we started earlier.” He whispers in my ear.

“Let me take my meds and you can have me anyway you want baby.” I say and he goes to the bathroom and runs water in the shower.

“Done.” I say and find him standing in front of the shower, naked with his dark skin and sexy retired rugby body inviting me to its glory.

I take off my pjs and walk to meet him with nothing on but my love and adoration for him.

And just like he promised, he gives me exactly what my body needed in the morning.

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“Amen!” We all say after Makhulu said a prayer as we all gather in the Christmas table outside, on the dining patio with the majestic views of the ocean and pine tree mountains.

“There’s some vegan stuff for you Calvin, when aunt’Kholeka told me that you’re vegan, I had to cater for all.” I say to him as he smiles at glowing aunt’Kholeka seated across from me.

“Thank you so much Buhle, that means a lot to me.” He says with his deep voice and the sun shining bright on his bald head.

“So, any wedding bells soon?” Thamie asks and eyes are all on them

“Ha.a, none, we’re good like this.” she says and Calvin smiles in approval. “Unlike some people, we’d actually invite people to our wedding or atleast tell them we’re getting married.” She says and the table giggles

“Oh come’on can we get over this already, besides, Buhle is throwing us a reception what-what where all of you will be invited and Asakhe will be our flower girl.” He says

“Oh no, thanks but no I’ll pass. Ngcwali will do that.” Asakhe and her teen sassiness responds without moving her eyes from her fast texting on her phone. She’s been glued to it since they arrived.

She really has grown and how can I put this, very sassy and teenage-ish.

“Yes, I’ll wear a pink princess dress with wings and flowers with glitters.” Ngcwali replies with excitement.

“Yes girl, leave miss cruella over there.” Thami says and Asakhe rolls her eyes, still glued to her phone.

“Put the phone down and eat Asakhe.”

Aunt’Kholeka says with a strict looks and she immediately does as she is told.

“You’re really enjoying that steak sis.” I say, spotting Kat filling her mouth with a chunk of steak. She cant even speak, that’s how full her mouth is, so she nods and I cant help but laugh because I know exactly what she’s feeling.

“She’s like you when you were pregnant with Ngcwali, you ate everything meaty.” Zazi says and the table laughs.

“Oh Mr New York, you’ve got jokes huh?” I say giving him a look, he knows I know his secret.

“Okay, I know you’ll threaten me to death with this so I’ll just say it. I have someone in my life, I met them in New York, they’re also from SA.

You have three questions to ask it and we're never speaking of it until I'm ready to." He says "Is it a boy or girl?" Nonjezu quickly asks the first question

"Mom, you're wasting questions, ofcause it's a man. uhhh now we have two questions left." Zazi says, annoyed.

"How was I suppose to know, he's bi, anything is possible." Nonjezu defends herself

"Okay, lets be careful with the last two questions, think hard guys." Thami says

"How did you meet?" Thandi asks and everyone seems pleased with that question

"We met on the plane on our way to NY, all recipients of the scholarship flew on the same day. There were 4 of us. We got to know eachother more during orientation week and got placed in the same location. We started out as friends and the more we spent time together

the more we got to fall for each other and like they say, the rest is history.” He says with a smile on his face.

We all look at him with so much joy.

“Okay, can I ask the last question.” Nonjezu

“Oh mom, you’ve asked one already, a very useless one at that. Give us a chance, I also want to ask.” Zinzi says

“Oh come’on, I’m his mom for Christ sake, I should ask as many questions as I can.”

Nonjezu

“Zinzi is right though, you’ve asked already, let him ask now.” Kat intervenes

“No I want to ask again. I promise it wont be a waste.” Nonjezu says

“No mama.” Zinzi

And they all go back and forth about who is going to ask the next question, whispering

questions across the table to find the suitable one, its quite a hilarious scene to watch. It looks like we're on a family game show and have one chance of winning the grand prize and no one wants to blow it.

"What do you like about him?" Zane silents the table with his question that no one approved of and we all face Zazi to hear his answer.

"He's genuine and very kind. He creates a safe space for me to be whoever I want to be. Not once have I felt like holding back with him. I know if I say or do something wrong that he will always correct me in a way that doesn't take away from who I am but the lesson will be passed on. Plus he's funny, I've never met anyone funnier than him. Sorry Thami but he takes the cup. And my favourite thing about him is how he looks at me, a reassuring look that brings a sense of security." He says and Kat is in tears



“I want to meet him.” Kat says, sniffing on her napkin

“When the time is right.” Zazi says

“The time be better tight by my reception what-what that Buhle is throwing for us, you cant be the only single one. The more queers, the better.” Thami says and we all laugh

“That was a good one bro.” Zinzi says

“A very good one.” Makhulu says. “Oh stop it you two, can’t you two keep you hands off of eachother for one second.” She continues to say as Zinzi kisses Nandi’s hand.

“Reminds me of Buhle and Zano running around behind our backs trying to find more time to be together.” Thandi says and they all laugh

“And the sneaking out at night to go to the palace. I’m at home sleeping thinking my sweet angel is spending time with her cousin in the backroom kanti she’s in the Kingdom of

AmaHlubi. Yeey Buhle you are bold, inside a whole Kingdom.” Makhulu says and the laughter continues

“You know she jumped over the gate at night in Edernville when Zane arrived after finding out about the pregnancy.” Kat says and my father looks mortified.

“Yeah and you two tried to hide the pregnancy from us, don’t forget that.” Mam’Gloria adds and Kat goes silent immediately.

“And look at them now, after all that, they’re still here, joining these two families and building beautiful friendships. True love really conquers all. They’ve been through so much, so much pain but here they are, smiling and loving stronger than before.” Sinazo says, with tears in her eyes. She raises her champagne glass

“To love.” She says and we all toast with joy.

“Dessert time.” I say as I get up and Sinazo

follows me to the kitchen.

We unpack the take-away packages and put the dessert on the dishes.

“Mama” Langa pulls me by my dress and points outside

“Yes, baby go play outside.” I say trying to get him to go but he insists and pulls me harder, so I give in and follow his lead.

We walk past the dining table on the patio where everyone is gathered and we move towards the end of the garden where the ocean view is more clearer.

“Mama, ubhabha.” He says pointing towards the edge of the cliff and my body is immediately consumed with goosebumps. I feel a wave of sadness and affirmation that turn into tears. I lift him and hold him close to my chest.

“Yes baby, your brother is here with us, always. He’ll always be here, this is all our home.”

unable to hold back my tears, I feel Zane's hand on my shoulder and Lwandle's reckless shouting a whole lot of gibberish that seems to make sense to his brother, Langa, who laughs hysterically.

"Are you okay baby?" He asks

"I'm grateful, I'm at peace, I'm happy baby, I'm so happy." I say, wiping off my tears

"I'm happy too my love and I cant wait to experience the rest of our forever with you." He says. as he hugs me tight.

A loud beat of music blasts from behind us and our eyes are met by scenes of dancing.

"Oh my gosh, that champagne went to their minds." I say

"Let's go, I have something for you." He says

"Wooza!" Aunt'Kholeka screams as she dances around her man who is unable to catch

on to the beat.

Everyone in high spirits, dancing with so much joy in their faces, no care in the world but pure bliss.

Zana slowly pulls me aside and straight to our bedroom.

He locks the door and my tipsy self is already excited.

“Stand there.” He says and runs to his side of the bed and pulls out something, hiding it behind his back.

Oh I thought we came here for something else, you know, bloodrushing things.

He kneels in front of me and opens the small box and my eyes are blinded by the diamond rock that appears.

“This is to the rest of our lives, this is me committing to make you my highest priority, to

celebrating our love, to praising your humanity and continuing being the provider for us all.

This is me committing to forever, to remind you that not only am I insanely in love with you but I commit to show you that love everyday of my life for the rest of it. I love you Buhlebethu and I will forever love you.” He says and I kneel to meet him on the ground.

“Baby, I didn’t expect this? I don’t know what to say, shocking I know, but I really don’t know.” I say as he helps me put on this ring.

“Come here.” he says kissing me and holding my face with his both hands. He carries me up against the wall and lifts my dress up to my waist. With my legs wrapped tightly around his waist, he presses his kisses on my neck, down to my nipples. They harden with excitement and I feel the warmth and liquids ready to welcome his hard erection. He carries me to the bed and places me on it, Removes his clothes and with

his melanin erection starring me. I pull my dress over my head and he pulls down my thong. He kneels in front of me and begins to kiss me in between my thighs, biting at my scars and licking my vagina lips. Blood rushing through my body has me gripping the duvet covers, his gentle circle motions on clit have me exhaling in gratitude. I pull him by his face to move towards my face, I kiss him as he plants himself in the warmth and moist garden of pleasure, his fullness fills me up I dig my nails on his back. Thrusting slowly but hard, I feel him in my guts, bringing all sorts of emotions in me, do I laugh or cry or begin to worship. Planting me deeper and deeper in the bed, I hold on tighter to him and he lifts my legs, placing them over his shoulders. Ohhhhhh. His hands holding me tight by my shoulders, I feel him, hard and rough in my stomach, butterflies, fireworks, fun fair and volcano explosions have me screaming from the bottom of my lungs. "Ahhh baby." I say, as

tears stream down my cheeks. "I love you Zano, I love you so hard." He whispers as he groans on my face. Eyes half-closed, locked on to each other, I hold him by his face, moaning and grinding to his rhythm. I feel my legs beginning to shake, the harder he grinds on me. I let out a cry of joy and waterfalls in between my thighs, splash all over us and he groans loudly with his sweat running down his face and dripping on my breasts. Rested on my chest, trying to catch his breath in our full nakedness and fully satisfied beings, he whispers. "I've been thinking about this moment all day."

Back with the family, the mood is lit as Asakhe would say. Dancing, drinks flowing, couples loving and joy consumed the room. With every laughter and smile I'm met with I feel a sense of identity, a sense of belonging, in joy. That this is where I was meant to be, in joyful moments



with myself and the joy of sharing it with those close to me. It's always been about it, finding what brings me joy and fighting for it no matter what.

“We will heal from the pain and our bones will rejoice to the beat of gratitude for not giving up on ourselves.”\_L.A.V

THE END

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