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Chapter 1

I could still remember it clearly, his smell, his touch, his rough hands but the most important thing I needed to remember which was his face was blurry. It happened years ago but It was still clear as a white cat on a burnt grass. I was coming from a party my friend hosted it wasn't really my scene but my friend begged me to be there and I went not knowing it would be the worst decision I ever made in my life.

My boss brought me back to life banging on my desk oh I was daydreaming again at work I immediately collected myself and asked her if she needed any help, she handed me a pile of documents that needed to be stapled. This is not the life I wanted for myself I was always ambitious, I had dreams I wanted to be one of the most successful young businesswomen in our country but I guess God had other plans because here I was running around Mrs Robinston stapling her documents I mean how useless can one possibly be in life. I was a receptionist and that didn't come with any perks except coming tired from all the typing, answering calls and running around from 9AM to 5PM. I always looked forward to my chilled evenings in front of my laptop watching series.

I had a new series that I had downloaded at work "how to get away to get with murder" I mean I worked hard the least they could do is let me use their wi-fi although Mrs Robinston would kill me and bury me on their office garden then plant flowers on top of it. When I got home I defrosted chicken I was running out of groceries I needed to be careful or else by the time my payday arrives I would be dead of hunger I was planning on cooking it with some salads I was trying to avoid starch I heard it helps when you are trying to lose weight although I wasn't so sure but trying never hurt anyone. I prepared my meal as music was blasting on the background. The knife I was using to cut some cucumbers cut my finger and already my finger was leaking blood I watched it drop on the floor as soon as it did something triggered my memory.

I begged the guy to stop hurting me I was still a virgin I knew nothing about sex I was never interested but I knew that you had to be wet first before the guy can penetrate you, he forced himself on me I cried but it was meaningless my cries were replaced by sobs silent sobs as he pounded me violently.

I quickly went to the bathroom to try and stop the bleeding after I was done I took the mop and wiped the floor then carried on with my meal. This salad and boiled meat didn't do it for me but I really wanted to lose weight so I had to brace it, I washed the meal with some green tea. I continued with some series.

I was running late as usual this thing of me being late was becoming a habit now I had to rush to the train station just when i was getting nearer there was a commotion and this old lady told me that trains were delayed oh great just great now I had to go back to the very same rank I passed earlier when I came here I thanked the lady and rushed out of the train station. I looked around and this big car stopped in front of me I might not be that good with cars but I knew that it was called a Fortuner. The driver asked me where I was going I told him, I lived at Braamfontein I rented a room there which had a bathroom so every day I took a train to work, I worked in the CBD. I thanked my lucky stars and got in the car. He dropped me off by my workplace and sped off I didn't even get to thank him and he didn't introduce himself either well I rushed to my workplace.

“You are so much in trouble” that was my annoying colleague Palesa, she told me that the boss lady wanted to see me.

“shit!”

“You are swearing” I rolled my eyes at no one in particular because she couldn't see me.

Oh she was still here some annoying person she was, I quickly rushed to the boss lady's office I found her furious, she was a bit exaggerating I was only thirty minutes late okay maybe an hour but what could have possibly gone wrong in an hour what mattered was that I was here breathing I mean that mattered right.

“You are late!” she roared.

“uhm I can explain maam” I was shaking.

To be honest I really had no explanation at all I couldn't possibly tell her that I was watching a series and I overslept.

“This is your first written warning, if you weren't such a hard worker I would have fired you long time ago”

“I am so sorry it’s the last time I do this I promise”

“That’s what you said the last time”

“I just i....” I stuttered.

“Take this and consider as your first written warning and close the door on your way out”

I guess that was my cue to leave, I needed to get hold of my habits if I wanted to keep this job I was lucky enough to get it without any qualification.

Chapter Two

Your child needs food and money for school.

That was a text from my aunt who lived with my son back in KZN, that was the text I always got on my payday even before I got the one notifying me about my salary. I made a mental note to transfer a R1000 which was never enough to her, it’s like I had to take care of her too I really needed a better paying job. After reading that text I went back to sleep there was no way I was going to transfer some money at 1AM I still needed my beauty sleep it was a good thing I wasn’t working the following day.

I was coming back from the ATM when I noticed this car following me well not really following me but it was like it was watching my every move. If I was rich I would think someone was sent to spy on me or something but I really had nothing to offer so that was out of question.

I told my friends that I was leaving since I didn’t feel so good they were occupied so they had no problem I took my coat by the door, since it was really late I rushed hoping no one would attack me I could see home from where I was when this car I didn’t see coming stopped right in front of me.

I quickly erased the thought and told myself to breathe in and out surely that incident would never happen again and I mean God can’t really hate me that much in such a way that he would continuously send people to attack me. When I got to my place I called my aunt to ask her if she got the money, she picked up almost immediately

“You know that money is not enough, food is really expensive nowadays surely you know that”

I don't know where she thinks I worked, I needed to survive too I couldn't send her all the money I had.

"I'm sorry anti but it's all I can afford right now"

"awu cha kodwa ke yona ingane idinga okuningi kunalokhu osinikeza kona iyadla phela lengane"

"I will send more when I can promise"

Family!

On my way to work the following the day I saw the very same car following me but quickly brushed the thought away and rushed to the train station. Luckily this time around I arrived right on time at work and Mrs Robinson was there already you would swear she had no husband or family to take care of she was always the first one to arrive and the last one to leave it was annoying really because she was always watching us like a hawk nothing ever gets past her or so she thought.

During lunchtime Palesa came to me and said that we should go get lunch the girl was trying so hard to be my friend and I was not interested I didn't trust anyone the last thing I needed was a friend and I was fine on my own but I went with her anyway. She was telling me about how her husband is always working and hardly give her his attention and the kids are always asking about him blah blah I wasn't interested really in rich kid's problem.

"can you atleast pretend to be interested geez you are so mean"

"excuse me" I widened my eyes.

"you care about only yourself"

"that's not true" I defended myself although I knew it was true.

"oh is it? How is it that no one is friends with you at the office"?

I raised my eyebrow she really thought I cared.

"No, but I know you will tell me why?"

"You are selfish" well not having friends doesn't make one selfish in my vocabulary.

"I think we should go back to work."

“OOOkay” she dragged herself behind me, maybe I was a bitter person.

Chapter 3

Okay this car following me was becoming a habit now and I was also scared I mean who would take time out of their busy day just to follow me around. This one afternoon I was coming back from work it was a public holiday which meant half day for us I noticed this white BMW just outside my place it wasn't the same car that used to follow me so I had no worries I just passed it. I heard someone calling for my name I turned, it was the guy the very same guy that gave me a lift the other day.

“what”?

“I'm sorry I caught you on such a dreadful day”

“how can I help you?”

“I need some I..”

“I'm sorry but I'm rushing somewhere” he asked sincerely.

“can I take you home?” “I huffed, I could use some comfortable leather seat rather than those from the train that can make your butt swell in a minute but I didn't trust this guy.

“I promise I don't bite”

“Fine” I said as I was going to the passenger seat.

“so, is this a coincidence?”

“what?”

“you, here offering to give me a lift”

“oh, I actually came to finalize a deal”

I raised an eyebrow enquiring him to go on but he kept quiet and drove me to this coffee shop I know it because Mrs Robinson always asks me to get her coffee there it's not my kind of place very expensive.

“I didn't know we were going to a coffee shop”

He smiled a bit but quickly collected himself, it's like he wanted to be this tough guy who doesn't take nonsense.

“I thought you would love some coffee”

I looked at him with my eyebrows raised.

“did you see the sun out? Its scorching hot and besides I don't even like coffee”

He looked hurt by my words, was that harsh? Well I don't like coffee

“so now can you take me to my place?”

“you really don't have to be so cold not everyone is out there to hurt you”

“what?” people really thought they have me all figured out.

“I can see right through you it's like you have built this wall around and you don't want anyone to break it”

“so, two seconds around and already you think you have me all figured out wow congrats Mr”

“my name is Sandile”

He said as he stopped in front of my house I was about to get off and it clicked I never showed him where I live I looked at him sternly.

“Sandile how do you know where I live?”

“I like the way you say my name but you showed me where you live”

Mxm it seems like I won't be getting any answers from this Sandile guy I made sure to bang the door when I got off.

My feet up on my coffee table, coffee on one hand and some snacks catching up on some series is what I always look forward to after a crazy afternoon at work. Being a receptionist is not my idea of fun and contentment but what choice did I have.

I decided to check on my son he was growing up fast, I needed to go home soon I had avoided them for a long time it was time I went back home. I avoided home because it brought memories I had buried at the back of my head.

As days went by this Sandile guy made sure to be up in my face whenever, he never takes no for an answer. He took me to this secluded place once for shooting lessons I mean who does that but I have to admit I enjoyed it ever since he has been acting like I am his girlfriend he doesn't get it just because he has taken me out once or twice well maybe five times it doesn't mean we are now dating or friends even because he has never asked me to date him I don't even know what gave him the idea, I can never say no to free food though.

This one morning I found Mrs Robinston all stressed out at work as soon as I made my way in she commanded me to email everyone and notify them about the meeting at 10AM, we all knew that whenever she calls a staff meeting there is a problem brewing she never calls for a raise. I emailed everyone and made sure to tell them also when they get to work in case they check their emails too late.

We were all scattered in the boardroom everyone asking those next to them what was happening, I was silently praying that I don't get fired if there was one person Mrs Robinston would fire first it would be me I mean I had never been on her best books ever. As soon as she got in we all sat down and kept quiet.

“as you all know that the place hasn't been doing good for the past two years management has decided to close it down, someone else has already bought the place and will do whatever they want with it which means that we have no business you will all get your rightful packages. Should anyone have any questions please do come to my office. This will be our last month unless we get a miracle”

We all gasped we did not expect this at all I mean yes, we knew about the low profits but we didn't think it was that bad. In a month's time, I will be jobless life can really be unpredictable one minute you have it all well not really have it but surviving and the next you have nothing. Yes, I did not have the best job in the world but I was content.

As much as I didn't want to I found myself calling Sandile I mean he is the only person whoever showed interest in me and so I regarded him as my friend because well I'm a loner.

“why, what happened?” he asked me after I told him that I was jobless I then explained the whole thing to him he listened attentively.

“I am sure the buyer will turn the place around but he could at least think of our jobs”

“but your manager sold the place” how did he know that.

“Sandile how do you know she sold the place?”

“because I am the buyer!”

Chapter 4

It's been a month since Sandile bought the place he offered me a job but my pride wouldn't let me take it. I had decided to go home for few days just to clear my head I was worried about the next chapter of my life I really didn't know what it had in store for me but I could tell that I was on a road to struggle and poverty. Also, I had a son to think of in whatever I do I wanted my son to have everything I ever wanted as a child with me having no job meant he will not go to a private school as I had wanted to. His father, that is a story for another day.

I am squashed in a taxi backseat with three huge ladies who have been eating since the taxi took off if I had other choice I would have taken a bus but I decided on a last minute that I was going home. Sandile will find an empty house when he comes to my place he really has helped me over the past two months after I lost my job I even agreed to be his girlfriend for the benefits not that I loved him, I hope he finds someone who loves him as he deserves to be loved he is such a kind person just not for me. I found myself smiling think about him, could that be love. Not! I enjoyed his company that's all.

I got to my home town Mandeni around about 5am I called my drunkard of a cousin to come and fetch me I knew he was still coming from a party now or accompanying his “one night stand”. He picked up almost immediately and told me he would be there in few minutes.

My aunt had just woken up sweeping the yard that's what she does every morning before she can do anything at all. She stopped what she was doing and looked at me as I made my way to the house.

“ngiyathemba awuxoshiwe njalo” she just had to.

“morning, I am really tired can we talk after I wake up”

She just looked at me then shook her head not that I blamed her I was known to be the troublesome one in the family, I dragged my suitcase to the house and took it to my room. My son was still sleeping I was going to see him when I wake up.

My name is Minenhle Zuma I was born and bred in a small town called Mandeni in KwaZulu Natal, I am the only child from my mother's womb she died while giving birth to me. My father is somewhere in our location he drinks day in and day out he is just useless, he always asks for R10 when he sees me. My aunt took me in she had no choice really. At the age of 16 I was raped but I never told anyone about that is how I conceived my son, I did not tell anyone because I was ashamed I thought maybe there is something wrong with me that made provoked the guy. It must have been something I was wearing since I liked short things and I was half drunk since I was coming from a party. Till this day I don't remember the face of the guy who raped me my mind must have blocked it to protect me. At first, I didn't love my child he was a constant reminder of what happened but as time went on I grew fond of him he loved me tirelessly, he showed me love I never got I connected to him in a way I can never connect to anyone. I made a vow to live for him.

At the age of 18 I passed my grade 12 at that time my son was 2 years old, my results were not that good so I was luckily accepted at MUT to do Diploma in HR which I dropped out on second year since I had no financial means of carrying on so I had to that is how I ended up in Joburg earning peanuts.

I woke up to find my son playing with my eyes trying to open them, I smiled and woke up. "look at you all grown" I said tickling him he laughed while trying to hide his face he was still shy even at 6 years old. I decided to wake up anyway it was round about 3pm. Lihle was following me around, it's like he was scared that I was going to disappear well I last saw him 2 years ago I don't blame him. My aunt gave me my food and told me to do the dishes after I was done even at 21 years I was still ordered around like I was some child.

"you will cook supper for the whole family"

I agreed well it's not like she was asking me, well my aunt is strict and rude at times we don't really get along but we love each other if you get what I mean. She raised me I will forever be grateful for that.

Chapter 5

This place is always crowded I woke up very early just so I can do everything I want peacefully but here I am stuck in this queue it doesn't help that it is two days before Christmas I always do Christmas shopping late. A tap on my shoulder. *Okay it's probably someone who wants to pass by.* Another tap. *Can't a person just talk like normal people instead of poking my arm.* I turn with the meanest face and stunned to find the most handsome dark soul on earth, I didn't know we had those in Africa. Jokes, but Mandeni is the last place you would expect to find a handsome guy like that.

"Sawubona"

Okay he speaks Zulu. Well of course he speaks Zulu he is in Mandeni after all.

"This line is moving really slow"

I was staring, I flush embarrassed.

"yeah it is"

"Monde"

He says with his hand out for a handshake.

"Minenhle"

"beautiful name for a beautiful lady"

Next customer please! That is my cue I am out of here. I rush to the till hoping he won't follow me.

"can I atleast get your number"

This handsome fool followed me and these plastics are heavy. Did he really have to see me in this all sweating and panting with six plastics three in one hand and the other 3 on one hand with 20th century jeans. I put the plastics down then turn to look at him.

"let me help you with those plastics"

"no, I'm fine really"

He looks at my hands still carrying two plastics and smirks.

"I insist"

Well I could do with some little help around here.

He takes the rest of the plastics and follow me to the...no wait this is not the way to the rank it goes to the parking lot.

“I offered to help with the plastics”

“sorry uhm Monde but I don’t have a car”

“I know”

“where are we going then because this is definitely not the route to the rank”

“well I am taking you home”

He says that as he puts the plastics in the boot.

“please give me directions to your house”

He says as he starts the car, this is some machine he is driving I’m sure everyone at the place I live at will be looking at me I will surely be the talk of the day. Not that I mind.

“so, tell me about yourself”

I hate this question. The way I get so blank when someone asks me this question I forget my name even.

“there is nothing to tell really, my life is not that interesting”

“I did not ask you to tell me an interesting story, I just asked you to tell me about yourself”

Commanding much. Well where do I start.

“from the start”

He said that as if he read my mind

“it was a rainy morning as my aunt puts it when my mother experienced some intense pains they knew I was on my way (I smile thinking about it) but unfortunately my mother died immediately after I was born after that things took a wrong turn till this day”

“oh, I’m sorry about your mother but that is a really summarised version” he said raising an eyebrow with a smile I guess to make me comfortable.

“well I grew up knowing my aunt as my mother but as I grew older I learnt that she wasn’t I found a diary. At 16 I was raped I gave birth to my gorgeous son whom I love so much (his facial expression changed after I mentioned the rape part) a lot has been happening in my life I recently lost my job so yeah that is me”

I have never opened to anyone about myself like that I don’t know what I felt at that moment but It felt like a relief, like a massive load has been lifted off my shoulder. He held my gaze for a moment

“Minenhle that is not the way you should describe yourself but thank you”

“for?”

“for opening up to me”

“oh”

Honestly, I didn’t know what to say I was really an awkward person especially around a guy Sandile once said this. Why am I thinking about Sandile now?

....

Christmas at Mandeni is a big deal for kids as they go around wearing new clothes enjoying themselves however this year was different. I was invited by Monde for family lunch at his house, normally I wouldn’t have agreed to come but this was Monde we are talking about. How can I say no to him? I woke up early so that I can cook lunch before I leave as much as my aunt wouldn’t say but I knew she appreciated me being here. Lihle woke up soon after me he was one early bird I guess the Christmas excitosis was getting to him. He kept his clothes beneath his pillow after fitting them he couldn’t let them out of his sight. It didn’t help me that I had lost my job, it pained me just thinking about it. Most people are eager for a new year but I was dreading it I really wasn’t looking forward to it. I decided to buy Lihle’s uniform with his Christmas clothes and saved money for the fees I was going to worry about other things later. Chronicles of being a single mother come to think about it I should write a book about that I’m sure it would be interesting even. For now, let me enjoy Christmas seriously I don’t understand why people fuss about Christmas really to me it just any day except it’s a day whereby people waste money and food.

Monde arrived later he looked rather dashing while I looked average I was wearing a dress that is just below the knees and with heels that my cousin lent me I don't own any pair of heels I think its high time I shop for new thing if I'm going to be invited to Christmas lunches occasionally.

We arrived at this gigantic homestead which had several houses it was like there are many homes in one home I'm not sure that makes sense. There was a security guy at their gate I didn't understand exactly how rich the guy was I mean who in their right mind build such a big homestead having not been married. I'm saying this because I didn't see any ring in his finger so I'm assuming he is not married.

"exactly how rich are you" I asked as we exited the car.

"I'm not rich" he said smirking

"if you say so"

"welcome to my home, I hope you won't be intimidated by my family" I raised my eyebrow

"your family?" he laughed

"yes, my family Minenhle why do you think I brought you here" Oh no!

Why didn't I think of this before I really thought it was going to be the two of us maybe not the two of us but I didn't think he was going to bring the whole family here. A very vibrant lady came out of the house.

"Hi!"

She was smiling widely; her smile was contagious I couldn't help but smile too.

"oh my God you are so beautiful"

Most people always say that when they see me but I didn't believe them I didn't feel beautiful.

"Okay sis calm down"

He took me in and led me to the biggest house of them all.

"you are late"

One of the men in the table who really looked like Monde said that. There was two of them and the energetic lady who greeted us earlier she got in and kissed the guy who spoke I guessed she was the wife or the girlfriend. You could tell that she wanted so much to fit in the family.

“shut up Musa”

He said frowning and the other guy who was quiet got up and greeted me in a very formal manner. Finally, someone with some good manners in this house.

“I am Masande the big brother”

“Minenhle”

“siyakwamukela emagcekeni ka baba”

Such formality.

“Ngiyabonga”

“okay enough with formality” that must be the sarcastic brother

“I am Musa”

“nice meeting you Musa”

He stared at me and then said quietly

“you are even more beautiful in person”

Errr Should I be flattered by that. I chose not to answer.

“Lunch is ready” they have a maid? Well of course they have a maid.

Monde took my hand and we went out. We followed to the other house all this up and down was tiring really, I was panting already. Its high time I took that eating healthy issue seriously I had some really big thighs I was fat.

Lunch was already laid out okay so there are people who eat this much food where I come from having meat on your meal is considered as a blessing really. We all sat down I wondered where the parents were since I was meeting the “family”.

“sooo Minenhle tell us where did you meet our brother” the energetic lady.

I smiled recalling the day it was really weird I wanted to laugh but I contained myself I didn't want them thinking I am some sort of a lunatic.

"I met him at the supermarket"

"she caught my eye at the queue I knew I had to talk to her but the way she looked at me when I tapped her shoulder was enough to make me run for the hills but I didn't" I laughed

"how did I look at you?"

"you looked at me like I was dirty it's like you were saying *get your dirty little finger off me*" I laughed again.

"no, I did not"

He laughed and shook his head.

"okay lovebirds back to us" okay energetic one keep your tits on

The brothers were really cool they made me feel like I was part of the family which made me wish I had a family some siblings at least, as much as they picked on each other you could tell that they would kill for each other their love for each other knows no boundaries.

"Minenhle it was really nice meeting you" Masande said. I felt like I passed some kind of an unknown test. I smiled assumingly and they all smiled back at me. Weird.

Monde and I were not dating but the way they all treated me it was like we were dating already and him too maybe it's because of my disclosure. TBH I loved him I really did and I have known him for two days only.

After lunch, he took me home.

"my siblings really love you"

"love?"

"I know but they do"

"they are cool people" he took my hand and held it

"thank you"

"for?"

“coming to my family it really means a lot to me”

I smiled.

“Pleasure”

“I know we’ve known each other for like two days but what I feel for you is really strong”

I know I feel it too. I raised my eyebrow.

“Minnhle I love you and I will spend the rest of my life proving to you how much you mean to me”

Now I was really shocked I really didn’t expect him to say it like that how blunt can he possibly be.

“I know it’s a shock Minnie but yeah it is what it is” he blinked.

He then focused on the road, I didn’t know what to say whether to tell him that I love him too or wait.

“I’m scared” we were now close to my home so he stopped.

“I’m scared to fall in love” I said feeling the need to explain further.

“why?”

I don’t know. I couldn’t help but think he felt sorry for me or that he wanted to be a hero and save me from myself.

“okay no pressure but just think about it okay”

“Thank you”

“okay I’m going to kiss you now just don’t freak out okay”

Just do it already. When was the last time I was kissed I wonder if I can still kiss

He held my head and brought it closer our foreheads were touching then brushed my hair a bit while looking at straight into my eyes, my breathing was quickening I closed my eyes when I felt his finger brushing my lower lip. My lips parted and then he kissed me slowly I responded to the kiss almost immediately.

He was smiling looking down at me.

“that was terrific”

I looked at him.

“I have to go”

“I am seeing you tomorrow right”

“you are?”

“okay can I see you tomorrow” he asked smiling

“okay” I said quietly

He got out of the car too when I got out and hugged me I could see my aunt and the neighbours peeping out of their windows already, he was parked far from my house but when a car like that comes by everyone becomes curious it’s not every day a jaguar passes by. I wasn’t looking forward to the stares I was going to get on my way home.

“usuqomile ntombi?” that was my aunt, only she can be blunt like that and she said that as soon as I got in she couldn’t wait for me breathe at least.

“no aunt it’s not like that” I said trying to busy myself around the house

“if you will be bringing men and cars like in my yard you need to tell me about it”

“aunt it wasn’t in your yard” my eyes were literally in the sky with the eye roll I was doing

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Time sure flies when you are having fun, Monde was amazing he was everything I ever dreamed of, everything I ever wanted in a man. This is a time where I needed a friend to just let off the steam you know I was literally dying to tell people about how I felt.

Chapter 6

It was January and my kid was back in school I must say it was a tough time for me, for some people January is a difficult month because they have been spending recklessly over festive but that wasn’t the case with me I had to go back to Joburg and look for a job. I

was so desperate I could even take the job Sandile offered. Monde was totally against the idea he was on some “I want you to stay at home and I could take care of you” like hello its barely been month since we’ve been together and already he is dictating me around. I can’t depend on a guy for the rest of my life I mean what happens when he gets tired. Well he suggested I go back to university and finish off my diploma but I couldn’t not with a child to take care of.

“you know Minenhle you will never get this opportunity in life” that was my aunt who was looking at me closely as I was packing my clothes.

“and who will take care of Lihle financially and myself if I go back to school”

“I thought you said uthe uzokunakekela and your child” I frowned

“that is just too much”

“you know you won’t be anything if you don’t have a qualification and you need to take help when it’s given to you” she said that as she got up to let me do my thing

“you are just too stubborn I don’t know who you take after” she mumbled going out.

Well.

Monde convinced me to let him take care of me atleast which meant him giving a “secure accommodation” not the dusty Tembisa I wanted to live in and let him help me find a job. I really didn’t know how rich Monde was because I later found out that he was also in property at Joburg and we all know how good investing in that is.

I made sure to call my family as soon as I settled in, I was living in this cute apart... no it was far from cute stunning is the word I was looking for.

“ngihambe kahle anti”

Of course, she had something to whine about and gossip about also I would frown and laugh at the same time, my aunty was that one person who knew every dirty secret about everyone around and she was kind enough to share. I was still laughing when Monde got in we had travelled together since I didn’t know the place I would be staying. My life was really turning out I didn’t know whether for good or bad. He raised his eyebrow and I told my aunt I would call her later then dropped the call.

“family doing good”

“yes they are, you don’t look so good”

I got up from the couch and went to him, he didn’t say anything just looked at me in the eye while I kissed him my hands found its way to his abs while he deepened the kiss.

“talk to me”

I said in between the kissing, he groaned and touched my booty which was fat on its own about that healthy eating new year resolution, he grabbed while nibbling on my ear okay now this was sending tingling sensations down my spine.

“ahhh baby” he went down to my neck while taking my top off his other hand touched my already erect nipple talking about responding fast to the touch. He went back to my lips while putting me down on the couch.

“baby let me in” we had been abstaining. I know.

He went down on my belly sucking on it while his hand found its way to my punani and I was wet really wet. I moaned when his thumb rubbed on my clit, he then took off my jeans roughly, my lace new underwear included it better not tear off. I was now really exposed to him he opened, he opened my thighs really wide now my pussy was just sitting there looking at him while he looked at it.

“baby let me welcome you properly”

He ate my pussy like his life depended on it, I was screaming like a bitch I have had oral sex before but not like this, his finger was rubbing on my outer anus while doing me with his tongue which brought both pleasure and pain at the same time. I could feel my orgasm building up and before I knew it he was inside me banging me I screamed well I can’t remember the last time I had sex so it was really tight.

“I’m sorry baby I couldn’t.... aahhh”

Pleasure was really kicking in and oh baby it was so good it got me speaking in tongues.

I really wasn’t used to living on this side of Joburg I didn’t even know who lived next door, these walls were really high. Monde was going to be in town till I get “settled” which meant

him finding me a job I could really get used to this treatment I mean just being taken care of.

Monde had just finished taking a bath when I got in.

“what are we doing today?” he smiled and turned to me.

“I am showing you around” I laughed

“Monde I know Joburg okay I lived here for more than two years”

“well you lived on shady side of Joburg, I don’t know how you survived two years in Braam” he smirked.

“oh, wow I feel insulted you know, come give me some love”

“did you brush your teeth” I loved the playful Monde

“Monde!”

He gave me a kiss I quickly went to bath too.

I wore a floral dress with some sandals and left my braids loose it was scorching hot outside that’s Joburg weather for you when it gets hot it gets really hot. Monde was wearing light brown chinos with a white shirt tucked and white stan smith.

“we gonna go to the movies and then do some shopping afterwards” he said as we were driving out.

“but babe you treat me so good” I was getting emotional this was all so new to me my heart refused to believe it. He held my hand.

“I love you”

We went to this huge mall I was told that it opens 24/7.

“now this my love is Mall of Africa”

“it’s really huge”

“yeah it is, you can even shop at night here”

We watched some action movie I know I'm supposed to be all about Rom Coms but I loved me some action then we did shopping. We started factorie I checked some jeans and this jean I loved costed about R500 now that's ridiculous a lousy jean and some costed over that.

"take whatever you want love and don't worry about the price let me worry about that okay" he could see that I was doubting. We he didn't have to tell me twice, after we were done we went to Makro to get some kitchen appliances.

It was Monday morning Monde had to go to Durban he told me that he had some business to care of well I was going to miss him but I could do with some breather the guy had been suffocating me I was just used to being on my own, not having someone breathing on my neck every now and then. I was making him breakfast while he checked if he had everything he needed. After I was done I called him to come and have breakfast with me.

"I could get used to this"

He said that when he saw the setting.

"I will take that as a compliment"

He dished out whatever he wanted, thanks to the grocery we did the previous day. Monde took this "taking care of my woman" too far I didn't have to do anything with my money well not that I had any money. I looked at him chewing and thought of how much I've fallen in love with this person in such a short span of time and I could see that he loved me too. He was so focusing on his food he didn't even see me staring at him. He was dark in complexion like really dark and tall, he liked leaving his head bald like your typical Zulu man but lately he changed and did some stunning men cut of which I influenced of course. One of his brother was light skinned which I was told he looked like their mother and him and Musa took after their father but they all looked alike. Monde told me that the bubbly one wanted to see me so we could do some shopping together she lived in Rosebank, we were gonna go with the other wife too so what is this now some *wives/girlfriend club outing*.

"earth to Minenhle hellow!" he said waving his hand, I smiled.

"you know I was thinking"

"mind sharing" he said with his eyebrow raised

“I was thinking about how much I’m going to miss you I mean ever since I moved here we’ve been practically living together”

” I know I mean it’s hard not to miss me” I smiled I was getting emotional.

“are you getting emotional”

“what, me oh no” he laughed then came to give me a hug.

“I am really going to miss this” he said kissing me.

He was probably on a highway going to Durban so I was now alone, I focused on googling the places that were hiring I was using his laptop that he left with me. I emailed my CV to few places of which I was just doing it I had no hope that they were going to get back to me with the experience that they needed from the applicants.

I had just woken up when I got a call from the bubbly one she asked me if we can hit the stores today I was in no mood for them but what could I have possibly done I was bored to death watching the t.v the entire day is not my idea of fun. She said she was going to come and pick me up since I’m the only one who doesn’t have a car. weird enough she knew where I lived although I don’t remember telling her. After the call, I made the bed then went to take the shower.

I was still chilling having breakfast when she buzzed at the gate, okay that was really fast. I opened then waited for her at the door, she had the widest smile when she got out of the car she was driving the latest AUDI talk about living nice. We hugged.

“I really can’t get over your beauty if I had your beauty I swear I wouldn’t even bother wearing makeup” I had untied my braids so I had my natural hair on, I still can’t take compliments so I just smiled.

“welcome to my home, come on in”

She followed me in.

“I still can’t get over this house its always like I’m seeing it for the first time it is gorgeous”
oh

“you’ve been here” she looked at me and smiled.

“of course, I’ve been here, Monde used to live here” I raised my eyebrow as she went about making breakfast she even knew where to find what talk about comfortability.

“I see you already feel at home so I’m gonna go get something to wear”

“alright love” she said taking a spoonful of salad from the fridge.

I went upstairs shaking my head, I checked my phone and was surprised to see that Monde had deposited some money in my account I called him.

“you deposited some money into my account” I said matter of factly

“yes, I did”

“what is it for?”

“I don’t know whatever you want to do with it” oh

“okay babe thank you”

Monde needed to let me fend for my own money, he had deposited some money after the money he left which I hadn’t used because I had everything I wanted. I made a mental note to deposit some to my family.

I opted for some high waisted jeans I got at top shop which fitted perfectly since I had big thighs, fat ass and some tiny wait it was really hard to find something that fits perfectly. Jeans with a lace black bodysuit, flowered kimono with some high heeled nude heels. Thanks to the shopping I had been doing with Monde I literally had a new wardrobe. The weather was chilled outside so I let my hair loose.

“minenhle uwe lo?” she said as soon as I stepped in “my love you are stunning”

I smiled “I had to I mean I’m going with you and look at you”

She had a simple denim shirt, jeans and heels but she looked beautiful in her slender dark self, she was tall you would swear she is model. She insisted we take some pictures before we leave.

Chapter 7

It's been two months and I still haven't found any job it would be better if I got those "we regret" messages but there was nothing. It was frustrating I even considered taking Monde's offer of going back to school because staying at home all day every day is not how I envisioned my life at all.

My phone beeped while Monde and I were cuddling I checked the message

Thank you for the money my daughter it was a lot, did you get a job?

Okay, my aunt hardly ever calls me her daughter when thanking me for money because I used to send them "peanuts" as she called it, this meant that Monde had sent them money without me knowing and made it seem like I'm the one who sent the money.

"Monde" I said to him softly trying to contain the anger that was brewing inside me.

"I love it when you call my name like that"

"did you deposit some money to my aunt?"

He scratched his head and looked away and I knew there and then that he was guilty he always does that when he has done something.

"where did you even get her account number"

"on your phone"

"Monde you didn't even approach me about the matter, you always take decisions for me and I don't appreciate it. Stop treating me like a charity case!"

"wow I thought you would be grateful"

"grateful! Monde grateful that you are just throwing your money on my face and suffocating me while at it"

"I'm suffocating you" he said quietly

"yes, geez let me breathe and what you did was really unnecessary"

I took my phone and went to the bathroom banging the door on my way out, Monde was really annoying at times it was already frustrating me enough that I couldn't take care of myself.

When I got out of the bathroom I found him in his clothes ready to leave.

“where are you going?”

“I am letting you breathe” he took his wallet and car keys then left, mxm he can go hang himself for all I care.

I busied myself around the house tidying up and cooking, I loved cooking when stressed out it calmed my nerves in a way. While tidying up I got a call from the bubbly one(Simphiwe).

“babe, can we go out for lunch tomorrow” doesn’t this one have any friends

“errr I’m not sure hey”

“please I need someone to talk to and you are the only person I trust” okay I was flattered

“okay, what time” it’s not like I was busy or anything but at the same time I didn’t want her thinking I have nothing to do

“is midday OK with you”

“yeah, I think so ill text you”

“thank you” she sighed

“are you OK?”

“I think Musa is cheating on me” oh dear I was just asking for formality I didn’t expect her to tell me something that drastic.

“are you sure?”

“my instincts are never wrong, listen we will talk tomorrow a patient just go in” we said our goodbyes and she dropped the call. Simphiwe felt like it was her duty to welcome us all and be friendly to us since she was the first one to join the Mbatha family and be introduced. I didn’t see myself as part of the family yet but hey the girl was trying so I had to meet her halfway.

It was now evening and Monde was not back yet I was starting to feel bad for lashing out like that earlier I mean the last thing I needed was to push him away when he had been nothing but good to me, I was about to call him when I got a call from Sandile we spoke

every now and then so he knew I was back in Joburg and jobhunting. He was over the fact that I just disappeared I feel he never liked me though he wasn't even hurt by the fact that I left.

"I've got good news for you" I could do with some good news

"what sup?"

"I got a job offer for you since you don't want to work for me"

"oh, you do?"

"can you sound a bit excited please" I laughed

"I am, I am elated, where?"

"at this publishing company, you will be working as their editor"

"editing? You know I'm not qualified for that"

"just go to the interview then you will see"

"when" I asked panicking

"next week Monday, that will give you time to prepare"

"thank you Sandile this really means a lot to me although I doubt I will get the job"

"have some positivity please woman" I missed him and I loved that he was totally over me, thank heavens for that.

It was now 8pm and the person who is supposed to be my boyfriend was still not back from wherever he was at. I didn't want to dish without him so I called him but it rang unanswered I tried again and no I still couldn't reach him. I decided to dish out for myself.

I waited for him watching t.v while a thrower was wrapped around me it was cold.

I woke up to find his bedside empty now I was really worried I was tempted to call the bubbly one but I didn't want her knowing about my relationship problems she might trust me but I didn't trust her. I called him again this time he answered with a "ngingena egatin" and dropped the call. God intervene.

He got in wearing the clothes he was in yesterday but you could tell that he drank the night away, okay we quarrelled but it wasn't that big such that you can drown yourself on alcohol. Did this mean every time we have an argument he is gonna go and drink, I wanted to apologise earlier but now I wasn't so sure. He got in and went to take a bath I decided to go back to sleep I wasn't about to waste my sleep on him.

I was drifting to sleep when he came back and he mumbled that he was hungry and that annoyed me to the core I got out of the bed kicking the blankets furiously and went to warm his food. The time was 3:00 AM, I tapped my foot in impatience while microwave took forever. He got in wearing his pyjamas, I gave him his food on a tray and he asked for a juice the nerve of this guy, he was really testing my patience.

“Here”

He took it and gulped on one go I was about to turn the corner when he said

“aren't you going to stay with me?”

I looked at him annoyed

“oh, I forgot I am suffocating you” I sighed oh dramatic much.

I sat on one of the high chairs and looked at him

“look, Monde I am sorry I shouldn't have said that it wasn't uncalled for”

“but?”

“it just feels like this is a one-way relationship like you make all the decisions even decisions that involve me, if you want this to work you need to meet me halfway I am not your child I am your girlfriend, talk to me include me in decision making and most of all love me. Treat me like an adult that I am” he took my hands and kissed my knuckles while looking at me straight in my eyes.

“I am sorry too, I thought I was looking out for you”

“yes, you were but you went about it in a wrong way”

“I know babey I know, I am sorry okay” I smiled, see that wasn't so hard (my inner voice scolded me)

“come here, come to daddy”

I got up almost immediately I had missed him the few hours he wasn't talking to me, I stood in front of him and he put his hands behind me pulling me closer.

“so, we are fine?” he asked sincerely

“yes, I don't like when we fight”

“I don't like it either”

“but promise me one thing” I pointed out to him

“I'm listening”

“don't go out drinking every time we fight, don't walk out on me”

“but I must assure you I wasn't in a club or anything like that, I went to Musa's place”

“talking about that you Simphiwe called me”

“the bubbly one” he smirked, I laughed.

“I want to stop calling her that anyway she asked me out for lunch tomorrow”

“today” oh yeah “so are you going?”

“yeah, she said she has something important to talk to me about, I didn't know I was that special to her”

“she likes you” I gave him a yeah right look “seriously people like you Min and you don't see it I don't know why”

“uuuh no”

“have you seen how people look at you emall especially males its annoying”

“lol jealous much babey” I said kissing him “let's go to bed”

When I woke up the sun was up already and Monde was already up working in his study, I went to wash my face, brush my teeth the norm then went to prepare breakfast for Monde. It bothered me that I acted like his wife already he wouldn't see the need to marry me when he has it delivered on a silver platter. I wondered when he was going back to Durban

because that is where he worked formally, he owned properties this side so he didn't need to be here always because his brother took care of that and he was only called for important matter but ever since I came to live this side he's been around frequently at least that's what bubbly one told me.

I was standing in front of the mirror thinking of joining gym but I was just so lazy, Monde was obviously against the idea according to him I had the meat in all the right places but no I wasn't feeling it. I was wearing a high waisted denim skirt with an off the shoulder top and sandals I mean we were going out for lunch not a wedding I didn't need to dress all out. I was still putting my makeup on when Monde got in

“you know you don't need all of that. I love you just the way you are”

“and I appreciate you baby but a girl gotta do what a girl gotta do” I said smiling. He just shook his head and sat on the bed.

“so how do I look” I said standing up

“isn't that skirt a bit too tight” I smirked

“uuuh no not really”

“oh I'm joking my love you look good”

I took my handbag and called Simphiwe telling her I was done

“I am taking you where are you meeting” said Monde getting up from the bed and taking his keys.

“Mandela Square”

I found her already sitting down sipping cocktail Monde dropped me off and left.

“Guurl” she said getting up to give me a hug she was all about giving me love.

“so, dear what's happening” I said after we had both placed our orders.

She took a long sigh I could tell this was stressing her out. Just then the big brother's wife got they all called her Manxumalo I didn't know her name.

“asisatshelwa when its girl's day out” OK this is awkward.

“there is always a room for one, join us” I said to the trying to kill the awkwardness.

“no, I don’t want to intrude I will see you around” well I tried. She then left

“oh, she is so dramatic, I don’t know how Masande got involved with her” I laughed

“you are so mean, that is your sister”

“she is just a bully she thinks just because she is married she owns everyone” okay I choose not to involve myself in family politics.

“so how long have you been with Musa?” I said trying to change the topic.

“eight years” what? My pupils were all out literally

“wow” that’s all I could say. You know there is waiting and then there is insanity, how can you be with someone for eight years and not get married. When you have met the one you just know but then again, we don’t have the same intellectual capacity.

“I know and I can see that he is changing”

“changing how?”

“He is not the same Musa that I fell in love with it’s like the spark is not there anymore and he is hardly ever home nowadays even yesterday he did not come back home” wait, I thought they were together with Monde at her place but I decided to let that slide maybe it was just my paranoia playing tricks on my mind.

“so, you think he is cheating maybe you are just reading too much into things hey”

“he suddenly has a password on his phone, he takes his calls outside and this one time I found lipstick stain on his collar”

“wow and did you ask him about it”

“he just denied everything and pinned this whole thing about how I don’t trust him blah blah blah” No! when men do that they are guilty of what you are accusing them of.

“maybe you are reading too much into this I mean you haven’t caught him red-handed right?” I honestly didn’t know what to say.

“my friend I really don’t know what to do?” what does one say in such situation, I was saved by the waiter which brought me much time to think.

“I think you need to talk to him openly as they say communication is key hey”

We talked some more before paying the bill.

“I really don’t know what I would if Monde could cheat on me” I said as we were headed outside, she looked at me like she wanted to speak but then decided against it. Monde was already waiting outside.

Chapter 8

I would feel much better if I was better qualified for this job and I knew much about the company I mean it was recently opened so there wasn’t much to find except that everyone wanted to be part of it apparently it was owned by some tycoon of sort. Monde had left for Durban which meant I would be alone for the whole week I really didn’t mean it when I said he was suffocating me a week without him would be hell.

Good luck with your interview, I believe in you.

Their offices were situated on the top floor so I had to use the lift there is no way I was going to use the stairs I still wanted to lead a very long life. I was welcomed by a very kind receptionist she told me that the manager was waiting for me.

“am I late?” she smiled

“no dear you are right on time”

I followed her to the manager’s office, the nerves were getting better of me there is nothing scarier like an interview, my palms were sweating. She then turned to me “Goodluck” and walked away.

I knocked once and I was told to come in, I was surprised to find him alone to interviews ive been on I have never been interviewed by one person its usually three or more people. Now this was really disturbing.

“come on have a seat” I smiled and sat down.

“I am Mr Johnson’s” Oh Nigerian

“I am Minenhle Zuma” he nodded and started paging on some file.

“so you have the job already, I noticed here that you don’t have any experience so we will give you training first” oh wow

“I got the job really? I had the impression that I was coming for an interview”

“no, the job is yours already I just needed you here to sign some documents for me and your training will start tomorrow”

“okay, thank you so much” I was stunned really.

“you know what they say you should strike while the iron is still hot”

“yeah very true”

He gave me some documents to sign which included a contract so he gave me space while I went through honestly, I was just being professional I desperately needed a job so I was going to sign it anyway.

Monde couldn’t believe it when I told him that I got the job just like that he was on some “this guy will want something in return, he can’t give you a job just like that” well I wasn’t surprised because he was against the idea of Sandile finding me a job in the first place because he thought I was his ex. Imagine. I was looking forward to working with the Johnson’s company and the unique environment was all exciting for me. Their salary was good compared to what I used to live on.

It’s days like these where I wished I had a parent to share the good news with, no matter how good my aunt can be she will never fill the void my mother left its always going to be there. I didn’t even remember what she looked like I wondered what my life would have turned out to be if I had a mother who fussed over me, who took care of me and fought for me surely my life would have turned out to be different altogether I would be a different person.

Chapter 9

Surely working in a publishing company would not be that hard, I mean all you have to do is publish stories well that’s what I thought before this whole thing I didn’t think of the late

hours in, the research one has to do the hard work and hours you put in. it was all draining but what was most exciting was seeing the boss's face after you had pulled out a good job this one time he even said "with the little experience you had I didn't think you can come up with this" I could see the boss didn't have much faith on me and I was glad to prove him wrong.

Monde and I were growing and getting to know each other better, I loved him dearly but I liked it when he was at Durban come to think of it I have never been to his house in Durban. I found him watching soccer when I got back from work, I loved my man but he was lazy when it came to domestic work there were snacks wrappers and bowls all over it was annoying especially when you come from work tired and expected to cook. "hey love" he shouted when he saw me getting in not shifting his eyes away from the t.v I knew I wasn't getting any attention from him until he finished watching his game so I went to change into more comfortable clothes and tidied the place up. I was so tired so I settled on amasi I always make sure that I go all out when cooking but this time around amasi will do.

"how was work my love" he asked while shifting his legs from the coffee table and putting his beer down as I gave him his food.

"good but tiring" I said getting comfortable next to him.

"that boss of yours is overworking you" I smiled.

"I could just quit and be a house wife" he smiled even wider

"usuyakhuluma ke manje" I laughed as he took my feet and gave them a massage

"I think my body needs a massage too babe" he grinned

"a masseuse at your service beautiful" I loved it when he was in a good mood.

I was woken up by Monde's phone ringing one thing about me is that I'm a light sleeper I wake up whenever I hear some movements so he untangled himself carefully from me and answered the phone, you could by whatever he was being told that it was pissing him off. He got up from bed and went outside to answer the phone I wanted to eavesdrop but then again, I chose to trust him it's not like he had given me any reasons not to I guess I fell

asleep on that quest. I was woken up by him again telling me that he was leaving as he had an emergency to attend to in Durban.

“what sort of emergency?” I said rubbing my eyes and getting out of bed too. He came to stand right in front of me and held my hands. Okay we are holding hands in the middle of the night now that how deeply in love we are right.

“my nephew is sick and my brother needs me there” now I was fully awake not even yawning this got my attention.

“what? What happened? Do you want me to come with you?” he let go of my hands and started pacing up and down.

“no babe you have work, don’t worry yourself” his phone rang again and he switched it off and started packing of which I had to help him on. He left immediately after that promising to call as soon as he was aware of what was happening. I couldn’t sleep so I prayed instead yes I didn’t know him personally I didn’t even know his brother had a son but that didn’t mean I couldn’t pray for him.

It was a bright sunny morning with birds chirping on the trees across the street which suddenly lightened up my mood, I didn’t want to worry about Monde since his phone had been off the whole morning. When I arrived at work everyone was jolly well it was understandable since everyone was getting paid, which meant them spending the night at the bar drowning their sorrows it was slowly becoming their tradition of which I was welcomed to join. It was amazing how much of a close knit we all were you would swear we have been working together for ages although I loved keeping to myself most of the time.

Mr Johnson’s called me to his office while I was busy editing some work in my office we knew that whenever the boss called you had to leave whatever you were doing and rush to him which is what I did exactly.

“close the door” I did. He looked at me and smiled

“so Minenhle, you do realise that i did you a favour right” I nodded wondering where this was going.

“as an adult, I am sure you know that you have to return the favour”

“yes, I know which is why I always go an extra mile and make sure my work is always smooth at all times” he smiled.

“I’m glad you understand” I looked at him expecting to explain further and he dismissed me. OK that was unexpected. Weird.

should you have asked me what just happened between me and the boss I wouldn’t tell you because I didn’t know myself. Our boss was a straight talker he didn’t beat around the bush but what he did there really amazed me to the core. I decided not to read too much into it instead I texted the bubbly one so much had been going on in my life I felt like I neglected her. She called me almost immediately talk about someone who always had time on her hands must be nice huh. I smiled and answered to be honest I missed her overly talkative self.

“are you OK?” she asked.

“I’m alright babe I miss you that’s all nothing deep”

“aah babes really, you should come by to my place after work I will cook” she sounded excited, we spoke some more before I dropped the call. I needed someone to talk to I don’t know but I felt like I could trust her.

I was struggling to get any work done it was just one of those lazy days, it’s a good thing I wasn’t working the following day. 16H00 was seen by me I was the first one to leave which took everyone by surprise I told them that a night out will have to miss me I would join them next time.

I went straight to Rosebank after work, I wasn’t looking forward to spending another hour alone in my place, I still couldn’t reach Monde and I was getting worried the only thing I got from him was a lousy message telling me that he got home safe. Simphiwe was already waiting for me when I arrived.

“Hi, get in Musa went to the shops” err I thought their nephew was sick. I followed her in and I could tell from the aroma that whatever she had cooked was good. I could do with some tasty food.

“how are you?” she asked after I had settled down.

“not bad, how are you? I’ve missed you” she turned to me and smiled.

“listen I’ve missed you too don’t be so scarce one would swear you live on the other side of the planet” she said taking some greens from the fridge she was finishing off a salad I found her making.

Musa got in from the shops, you could tell by the way he looked at his girlfriend that he had nothing but love for her, his eyes sparkled when she spoke but I noticed that he had this sad smile when he approached me like he was feeling sorry for me.

“you fixed things?” I asked quietly as soon as he was out of the room.

“yes, we are fine, I love him” she said that more to herself than to me

“that man loves you that’s all I can”

“he just can be a lot sometimes”

“show me one couple that hasn’t had any hiccups” she sighed.

“I know I’m just lucky he loves me” I smiled at her

“no he is the lucky one” I helped with dishing out. I saw this as an opportunity to spy on Monde if he wasn’t prepared to tell me the truth I was going to find out myself.

“sooo” she turned to me and laughed

“out with-it babes”

“I thought Monde’s nephew was sick, he rushed off last night to Durban saying that he is in a critical condition I’m surprised to see Musa here” she looked at me confused.

“nephew?” ok I shouldn’t have asked now I feel like a fool.

“yes, his brother’s son?”

“which brother?” she asked confused

“their older brother Masande” she raised her eyebrows.

“his son lives in the states I didn’t know they were back”

“oh” that’s all I could say I felt more like a fool now that I had asked her and I could tell that she knew something that I didn’t know about. I remembered the look she gave me when I said I don’t know what I would do should he cheat on me. We all sat around the dinner table and ate but my mind was no longer there I kept smiling here and there. Musa offered to take me home after supper.

It’s been a week since Monde lied to me (yes, I was counting) I didn’t ask him anything when he was still in Durban. He was coming back today and I was planning on working till late hours, a woman’s gut can never be wrong they say but I refused to believe that I could be cheated on, there must be an explanation for this it can’t be he loved me too much. He called later telling me that he was in the CBD asking me if I wanted anything like hell I did.

I was still buried in my work when the receptionist Thandi buzzed me in telling me that there was someone there to see me, I knew then that it was Monde he brought me to work every now and then but never got in so it was understandable that Thandi didn’t know him. He was soon knocking on my door of which I pretended to be busy when he came in.

“Babe” I looked at him briefly and greeted him.

“wow no hug no nothing for your boyfriend you haven’t seen for a week” he smirked.

It annoyed me that I loved this man so much but I refused to let that blind me.

“I am taking you home, I can’t have you working at this hour” just the Mr Johnson’s got in “I need that article I emailed you earlier, are you done editing it?” he asked without acknowledging my visitor.

“yes, I will send it to you just now” I replied, he looked at me for a while then greeted Monde.

“he wants to get inside your pants” Monde said that as soon as Mr Johnson’s was out, I laughed.

“no, he doesn’t” he raised his eyebrow and kept quiet. I forwarded the article to the boss then we left. He bought takeaways on the way there was no way I was cooking at that time.

“are you sure you okay” he asked when I gave him his food.

“let me see....oh besides being lied to I am doing pretty well” I turned taking the tray to where I was. We spent that night in bed apart no holding each other well it was hot anyway so I wasn’t bothered.

I was woken up by someone shaking me roughly in the middle of the night only to find that it was this stupid boyfriend I have.

“what?” he was already up

“let’s talk”

“in the middle of the night, really?” I was annoyed.

“Minenhle you called me a liar” really dude you woke me up for that

“can’t we talk about that in the morning?”

“NO” why is he getting angry I’m the one who was lied to here not him.

I got up and went to wash my face on the en-suite bathroom clearly, I needed to be fully awake for this.

“okay talk”

“Minenhle I don’t appreciate you insulting me calling me a liar” wow.

“I didn’t call you a liar I said I was lied to clear your ears needs some cleaning” he rubbed his hands in frustration.

“babe what did I do?”

“you still asking Monde? You said your nephew was sick and I know your brother’s kids are not even in the country” his eyes popped open and he kept quiet.

“You wanted to talk Monde khuluma ke let’s talk isn’t this what you woke me up for?” I was now annoyed. He scratched his head he was clearly calming down well I wasn’t.

“I have a son” what? Oh no!

“what?” he got up from bed and came to stand right in front me, looking everywhere but my eyes.

“I have a son” he said searching my eyes if searching for what we have or had I don’t know. I kept quiet I was really hurt not because he lied but because he thought I wouldn’t accept his son, what did he take me for.

“please say something” he begged.

“I have nothing to say” he took my hand trying to stop me from leaving I turned.

“you know what hurts me the most Monde” he looked at me broken

“I thought we didn’t keep things from each other, I told you about my son from the word go but you couldn’t trust me enough to tell me about yours. Do you really think that little of me Monde” I was pouring my heart here.

“please babe..”

“don’t babe me Monde don’t I can’t even look at you right now you disgust me” I took my phone as I was leaving our bedroom he said

“I have a wife” I turned to him slowly

“I am married Minenhle” he said quietly.

He was married. I am dreaming I must be dreaming.

Chapter 10

I should have seen yeah, I should have I mean the late-night calls, the fact that he went to Durban almost every week and I couldn’t reach him unless he called. I should have seen it but I didn’t. I felt like such a fool. I felt numb, bleak is the right word any normal person would be throwing fit right now, shouting but here I was still waiting for him to say that he is lying it’s just some sort of a sick joke.

“you are married?” I asked

“I wanted to tell you but I didn’t know how to it hurts me too Minenhle because I love you” he was crying. Why is he crying, does this guy honestly think I’m a fool? Nothing annoys me like a guy who does you wrong and then cry expecting you to be touched and forgive him.

“Monde I need you to take your things and leave” he just stood there.

“actually, this is your house anyway I will leave” I could feel tears **prickling** from my eyes threatening to escape but I didn’t want to cry in front of him. I kept telling myself not to cry a thousand times. I took my suitcase on top of the wardrobe and put it on the bed then took all my clothes out he was still stuck there. It annoyed me that I had so many clothes that couldn’t fit on my suitcase. He after coming to his senses took the clothes I was packing out of my suitcases which was really getting on the last of my nerves.

“Monde I really don’t have your energy right now”

“don’t leave I will leave please” he said touching my arm I snatched it away.

“don’t touch me don’t fucking touch me Monde” I said with tears streaming down my face. I sat down on the bed and let it all out. Did loving someone really hurt this much just when I have opened my heart for once in my life and he does it like this. It was like he tore my heart out and stabbed it with a steak knife right in front of me. To say I was heartbroken would be the least this was more than I could handle. He tried to hug me believe me I wanted to let him hug me but I couldn’t let him. He got the message and told me that he was going to sleep at his brother’s house he could go back to his wife for all I care.

This whole time his family had been taking me for a fool from the day I was introduced to them till now, Simphiwe didn’t even think of telling me well who am I kidding I wasn’t family she had to be loyal to her in laws. I didn’t want to talk to anyone, I heard my phone ringing somewhere in the house but I was tired. I had texted my boss telling him I was sick although I knew he wouldn’t approve but I couldn’t care less he will have to deal.

Simphiwe wasn’t so bubbly when she came to my house, she looked good as always but that’s not the reason why I’m writing this book. She found me still in my room under the covers with clothes all over the floor.

“this is so unlike you” she said as soon as she saw the mess but I couldn’t care less what she thought. She started tidying up my room then went to the kitchen to make me some food that I wasn’t going to eat she was just wasting her time. Okay makoti slow down. She sat next to me and told me to actually she bullied me to go take a bath.

“I know I am not your favourite person right now but babes you don’t want Monde to find you like this and see the effect he has on you” well she was right. I got up and went to take a bath. After I was done I wore jeans with a grey t-shirt and slippers then joined her in the sitting room. We were both lost in our own thoughts when I said “why?” she looked at me confused.

“why didn’t you tell me that Monde is married” she shrugged

“it wasn’t my place Minenhle I wanted to but I couldn’t this is something that he needed to tell you” she said looking at me.

“you know relationships are made up of two people not more than that and I respect that” she added. I understood where she was coming from but still you don’t keep something as big as this one from people you claim to love.

“I thought you liked me, friends don’t keep stuff from each other” she sighed.

“this really put me in an awkward position but for what it’s worth I am really sorry Minnie” I understood where she was coming from I guess part of me wanted someone to put a blame on and it wasn’t fair after all she had been nothing but kind to me.

“to be honest with you I think I was just looking for someone to throw my stones at” I looked down.

“it’s okay I think I would have reacted the same way if I was in your position” she said.

“I can’t believe he played me like that this whole time I thought he loves me” I sighed.

“Men can be so trashy I know” she said taking a spoonful of ice cream, we were having ice cream while catching up on reality shows.

“I know right I was such a fool how could I not see it, I mean the signs were there I guess I chose to ignore them”

“how could you know you were in love babes but I’ve seen the way he looks at you I think he is into you” she said

“looks can be deceiving hey”

We were still talking when Monde got in, he was still in the same clothes he wore the previous day but you could see that he bathed. Simphiwe excused herself as soon as he got in telling me that she is going to call. Monde was still standing there minutes later not knowing what to do with himself. Well he can stand there for an entire day while I do my things.

“shouldn’t you be with your wife?” I asked when he settled himself on the couch.

“Minenhle please don’t” one thing I’ve learnt about Monde over the past months we have been together is that he honestly doesn’t like to argue. He is one person who apologises once well we’ve never quarrelled to a point whereby we don’t talk to each other for an entire day and can’t stand each other.

I dished for him too after I was done with cooking since I couldn’t eat alone and he pays for most of the things if not all at my apartment anyway. He was still in the same position when I gave him his food staring on a blank t.v.

“are you sleeping here?” I asked after I was done with tidying up.

“where else would I sleep at Minenhle?” he snapped.

“you have a wife I thought you would be with her because there is no way I am sharing a bed with you” wow I was so calm I was impressed with myself if he thought just because he got food from me then he was forgiven well he had another thing coming.

“are you going to bring that up every time we are together?” he asked.

“you are being ridiculous right now Monde, you can’t throw that card on my face right now. How would you feel if I was the one who hid his husband from you huh? You have a family Monde why are we wasting each other’s time? This is doomed!” I did not see this one working out, I was not a home wrecker. His face was buried in his hands this whole time not saying anything I had to ask as much as I knew the answer to what I was asking.

“do you love her?” he quickly looked at me for a second then looked away.

“answer me damnit!” I snapped.

“I love her but I love you too babe” he answered.

“what kind of a fuckery is this?” he must think I’m mad or I am losing myself.

“I want to marry you Minenhle, I want to make you my second wife. You are like a precious stone that is rare.....”

“shut up Monde! Just shut up okay” I stormed out of the room.

How did I get up here, how did I find myself in this sticky situation? this is not how I imagined my first real relationship at all. God can’t be punishing me like this I know I don’t pray often and I hardly ever go to church but this this is just too much for any human being. I needed my mother, I needed a friend I needed everyone who would care to hear my cries right now. In all this confusion one thing I knew for sure is that I loved Monde but I wasn’t prepared to be in a polygamous marriage actually I wasn’t going to be in a polygamous marriage I knew that for sure. As much as I loved him I had to let him go, I wondered if his son hadn’t gotten sick I was ever going to find out about his wife. Men are good liars I can give them that much.

Monde moved out of the apartment as much as he was against this breakup thing but he had no choice I was tired of loving him and him being next to me I was losing my mind. It’s a good thing I was going home soon I needed the sanity I hated that this breakup affected me so much. Experts say love is not supposed to hurt the moment it starts hurting is if you are in love with the wrong person I guessed that was true because Monde was never mine from the word go we were never meant for each other. He would call every now and then but I never picked up his calls. It’s been a week and it gets harder with every passing minute.

I signed up for a gym it was time I did things I had been putting on hold this whole time, losing weight had been my priority that I abandoned along the way. I decided to start with the gym after coming back home because I was leaving in a weeks’ time.

This one day I was at work when I got a call from Simphiwe she was screaming I really couldn’t make out what she was saying but I could tell that something good happened.

“I said yes, I said yes oh my God I am so happy” she ranted on the phone.

“yes, to what babes khuluma I can’t hear you” I asked laughing

“uMusa ungelile ukuthi ngimshade and I said yes” she said sounding elated.

“about time oh woow I am so happy for you” I was happy for her she deserved it, she was a good person you know and she has been waiting.

“you know I waited for this I have been waiting” yeah right.

“you deserve it babes you do so this whole time you thought he was cheating on you kanti he’s been planning this” it was sweet really or maybe he was cheating you never know with these men and I really don’t trust men anymore.

“listen babes I am coming to your place after work to plan a party to tell everyone”

“alright see you later”

If there was one person who deserved what was happening in her life was Simphiwe, she deserved it all she had persevered I would never date someone that long who doesn’t know what he wants. This made me wonder about my love life and my future in general what it had in store for me it’s funny how life can just change just like that I mean one minute I was happy I had a man I thought I would spend the rest of my life with and now here I was miserable and lonely. It is unpredictable but if God really planned my life to be this hectic then he was not the good guy everyone raved about.

I found Simphiwe already parked outside when I got home thinking about it I needed to get a license this thing of taking taxis was not fun at all not that I could afford a car but for future references.

“babes” I said running to hug her she was so glowing even wow I guess being two minutes of being engaged does that to you. I prepared a quick meal while we chatted, she was busy telling me about how he proposed.

“so, you know we spent this past weekend in Magaliesburg well I thought it was for bonding and all you know just spend some quality time together” she said beaming with joy.

“kanti a guy had other plans on his sleeves you know Minenhle he gave it to me so good, I can still feel it in my knees”

“don’t talk about that I am on starvation okay” I chimned in laughing.

“im sorry babes”

“so how did he pop the question?” I asked getting more interested.

“he did it the old school way a waiter brought a ring in a plate a plate was covered in those silver things they use to cover up plates” she said laughing. Well not so romantic but wow.

“I am really happy for you” I got up to give her a hug again.

“so, about the party” I said dishing out the Italian pasta I had made. We both filled our glasses with winery as she told me about this intimate party she was having. She was planning on having it on weekend before everyone went home for Easters if it didn’t stand in the way of me going home then I didn’t mind at all.

“it’s really over between you and Monde?” she asked while wiping a plate I had just washed.

“it is hey” this saddened me as a result I didn’t like talking about it.

“I should hook you up with my friend” I gave her a stare.

“too soon?” she shrugged

“yeah too soon”

If I said my week was fun I would be lying it was far from that it was sad to be exact, if it was not Monde calling every now and then it was the boss sending me up and down as if I was his personal assistant he was what you call “a boss from hell” I tell you.

It was a Friday evening and Simphiwe and I were going shopping thanks to Mall of Africa for opening 24/7, I remembered the first time I ever set my foot on that mall it was with the man at that time I thought was the one for me, a man I loved wholeheartedly. Why does love hurt so much? I shook my head trying to think of something else yeah choosing an outfit that’s what I was doing before I got interrupted by these thoughts I couldn’t help but wonder though if the wife is going to be Monde’s date at the party I mean intimate party meant close friends and family right so she was going to be there. The awkwardness I wasn’t looking forward to.

The theme of the party was all white Miss Party would hear none of it when I suggested she choose another colour instead of white but hey what miss party wants miss party gets. I must admit though it looked exquisite now that I was here they had the most stunning mansion which had a pool outside. You could see people outside taking pictures some admiring the place that's one thing about their place you can never get enough of it no matter how many times you've been there.

I felt him before I could see him, I could feel the hair on the back of my neck standing still that's the effect he still had on me. I could feel his eyes gawking at me but I didn't turn I didn't trust myself in case I do something stupid like running over to him to give him a hug. He stood there for quite some time not saying anything I was in a balcony; the party was about to start so I wanted to collect myself before the party. I had spent the night over at their house. He cleared his throat making me aware of his presence I turned slowly oh boy was he hot I looked at him for a while drinking him all in. when I finally looked at him in his eyes I found him also staring like he was in deep thoughts.

“Hi” I said awkwardly.

“Hi” he replied searching my eyes. He looked tired I'm glad that I wasn't the only one having trouble sleeping. He took one step coming closer to me, closing the gap that was between us the tension that was in that balcony was so thick you could cut it with a knife.

“don't” I said when he was about to kiss me.

“I am sorry” he said taking a step back.

“I know, please excuse me” I said going back to my room well the room I slept in and he followed me I wanted to get ready I already had my makeup on.

“ngifuna ukugqoka Monde” he chuckled.

“well I've seen every part of your body even you would need a mirror to see” he smirked.

“mxm whatever”

I took out the dress I was going to wear, it was a figure hugging just below the knee dress I was going to wear it with heels, hey it wasn't my party so surely, I wasn't expected to look

like I just stepped out of fashion magazine. Me and lace underwear are best friends nothing makes a girl feel sexy like a lace sexy underwear just in general. He groaned as I put it on slowly intentionally.

“and then?” I said turning to him and giving him a full view of my body.

“how am I expected to focus when you look this sexy” I suppressed a smile hey I was flattered okay.

“aren’t you supposed to be somewhere entertaining your wife” I asked shifting the attention on me.

“wow you are such a mood spoiler you know I will meet you downstairs” I laughed as he left. I missed him though. I quickly got ready I don’t want to get there when the event had started. Luckily, I was right on time. Monde was standing on a table with his brothers I quickly looked away I didn’t want to be caught staring again. Simphiwe quickly came to me and ushered me to their table, she looked stunning in her lady suit.

Everyone had gathered around when Musa clicked his glass with a spoon grabbing our attention Simphiwe was by his side. Monde came and stood right next to me he just couldn’t keep away.

“you look stunning” he whispered to me.

“not bad yourself, now keep your hands to yourself” I said taking his hands off my waist.

“is my hand affecting you?” I turned to look at him and he was smirking.

“don’t flatter yourself Monde and you are disturbing me I am trying to listen” he kept quiet but did not take his hand off me.

I never thought Musa was a hopeless romantic, his speech really touched me it’s true when they say when you find someone you love you should hold onto them for dear life because true love only comes once in life. I didn’t know they had been through so much in their marriage from miscarriages to break ups they had survived a lot I wondered if there was still a possibility of this with Monde this true love thing but who was I fooling here he said it himself that he was in love with his wife and didn’t see himself divorcing her and I wasn’t prepared to be the second best. I was such an emotional person why was I crying now I

needed to truly get my act together. Monde hugged me now I was going to ruin his crispy white shirt with my makeup.

“I’m fine” he looked all concerned. Yes, you should be concerned this is all your doing.

“no, you’re not” he gave me a tissue to wipe my face.

“I need a bathroom” he followed he was seriously trying to get on my nerves today.

I fixed my face with him looking at me he was probably wondering why I was crying and to be honest with you I didn’t know either emotions just got better of me.

“I hate seeing you like this Mini” he said empathetically.

“I hate seeing myself like this too” I shrugged.

“I am sorry if there was any other way of taking all this pain you are feeling right now I would, I would bear it all for you” yes blame yourself prick.

“well you can’t Monde”

“I will never stop loving you Mini” he said sincerely.

“Love alone is never enough I can’t have you and that’s that you should just leave me alone and stop making this hard for both of us” I snapped.

“that’s because you are not willing to compromise Minenhle I gave you an option but nooo you just had to be selfish about it” what?

“oh, so I’m being selfish now for not wanting to share you with anyone for loving that is selfish in your vocab oh wow you just never cease to amaze me” the nerve.

“I grew up in a polygamous homestead and I don’t see anything wrong with polygamy. Ungumzulu you should understand this better that I fuckin love you and I want to wife you”

“whoa hold your horses Mr you know what actually I want to go and enjoy the party OK please don’t be up in my business annoying me” I snapped and left. Who does this guy think he is and the nerve of calling me selfish wow this was interesting so he expects me to accept the fact that he has a wife and dance to his guitar whatever he says goes because I love him. Monde is one selfish person, he has too much ego he thinks the world revolves

around him really. I didn't even know he grew up in a polygamous marriage but that doesn't mean he should shove it down my throat.

I didn't even get to enjoy the rest of the party but I tried to mingle with Simphiwe's friends and family she had such a beautiful family, they were all really welcoming and loving. I had to spend yet another night at their place because Simphiwe's fiancée had planned lunch at sandton for everyone before they departure.

We slept late everyone was out of it, I can sure pull a party maybe I should be called the mother of all parties lol alcohol was provided for everyone. I was drunk but I remember Simphiwe saying something about me being her maid of honour now that made me sober within a minute. All her friends and family were there but she chose me I felt special really, I knew the girl had a thing for me but I really didn't know she loved me so much and yes, I cried again my emotions were really getting better of me. I had just woken up but it still felt surreal because I never really had friends this flattered me.

Chapter 11

A trip home is always tiring as hell being in a bus for eight hours is no child's play I was tired but I found them home already waiting I noticed that ever since I got a better paying job my aunt loved me more and it must be because she was also getting lot of money from Monde too for Lihle my son although she thought the money was from me. Being illiterate is hard. Monde really loved Lihle like his own I remembered when we were still together whenever he went shopping he would buy clothes for him too come to think of it maybe he was buying clothes for all his kids I just never noticed thinking about this just made it less special.

I found Lihle outside playing with my cousins's kids he dropped everything as soon as he saw me and ran to me this I had missed. Aunt came out too and smiled when she saw Lihle and myself.

"you are just in time for breakfast" she said smiling and opening her arms for a hug. The warmth.

"and I am starving" funny I had eaten on my way.

"come on get in"

It had always been the three of us, my aunt was unfortunate enough in having kids so I think that is why she had always taken me as her own, Nokwakha who was also my aunt's niece visited every now and then with the kids since my aunt complained about being lonely a lot I had tried to take Lihle so he can stay with me but she plainly refused of which I understood because that would mean her being alone.

One thing about Mandeni is that it's like an armpit of the country there is just nothing exciting about it. It is a small town; most people would go to Empangeni or Richards Bay for shopping but since we never really had enough at home I never noticed this. I cherished the days I spent with my son they were just priceless I always felt like my holidays were short lived. The week I spent at home was really amazing I was planning on extending my aunt's house. I believe as a person one needs to fix home first before impressing the streets, I wanted people to see me as that child who made sure that her aunt lived a comfortable life not as a child who went to Joburg and never came back.

"you are lying" I said failing to hide my shocked expression as Sandile was telling me that he was out of the closet. We were having lunch at Tashas as we had somehow found ourselves at Gateway. Sandile was originally from Durban Kwa Mashu so he had asked me to visit him before going back to Joburg like I said we had become close.

"I am telling you well I always knew but I just never acted on it" no ways!

"so the time you were pursuing me?" I questioned struggling to register this on my mind.

He laughed

"I never really wanted to be in a relationship with you I guess I went about it the wrong way, why do you think I never pursued you into getting intimate with me" I thought he was a gentleman.

"I should be offended by this" I said smiling

"I wanted friendship with you but you just got it all so wrong" he said

"no Sandile you made me think you were in love with me and besides I didn't know you were gay"

There was something he was saying but my attention had shifted I saw him and his family he was holding a baby that I suspected was one or two years with two boys who were a bit older than Lihle. We were inside Tashas and they settled on the chairs outside which gave me a better view of them. The wife was beautiful like beautiful you know if she wasn't it would have made me feel better but no she just had to be petite figure yellow person who you wouldn't believe had three kids. You could tell that she was the working type the independent yet spoiled type you know. She was the type that made the world stand at her feet and worship her this made my stomach turn.

Sandile snapped his fingers in front of my eyes bringing me back to him.

“did you even hear what I was saying Minz” he said irritated.

“uhm I am sorry”

“you look sour what did you see?”

“come sit next to me” I said patting a space next to where I was sitting

“now you are being weird”

“come on I want to show you something” he shifted his chair and came sat next to me.

I showed him where Monde and his family stayed I hated that I couldn't find anything wrong or bad to say about them. They were just perfect but that didn't make me love the wife. Isn't it funny how men cheat on us and we forgive them then hate the other woman.

“so that is my ex with his family” he gasped.

“he has a family?” he asked still in shock

“yep I only found out few weeks back”

“shut the front door” he said with his eyes popped out “so this whole time you were the side chick” I slapped his shoulder.

“don't say it like that it sounds so wrong” I said frowning.

“amadoda izinja yezwa” I looked at him “not me though”

“so, he says that he wants me to be his second wife” he gasped

“this guy just keeps on getting worse every day I hope you showed him where hell is” I looked away. “Oh no you love him don’t you”

“I do and I hate it. I should be hating him after what he’s put me through you know”

“Love is like that Minz don’t hate yourself for it, it happens to the best of us but I’m not surprised why he wants to make you his second wife I mean look at skinny maBonz she can’t be giving it all to him” I laughed I couldn’t believe what he just said.

“dont be like that please”

“but don’t let them ruin our day we are here to have fun and I am taking you shopping after this” I smiled at him.

“you would have made a better boyfriend you know” he gave me a stare

“mxm”

We spent the day shopping I could see he was trying to cheer me up of which he succeeded and besides I could never say no to a being spoilt he was paying after all and yeah he had money loads of it. Imagine if I had fallen for him I would’ve ended up with a miserable gay guy, love life was really not on my side.

Chapter 12

It was just after six pm everyone had deserted the office I was the only one left in the building or so I thought. When I felt these footsteps in the corridor I didn’t get worried because I knew that the security system was very high. I was surprised to see Mr Johnson’s in the door looking at me.

“Sir” I acknowledged him surprised to see him there because he had gone for a conference in Durban.

“I need to get my file and rush back to work” he said still standing in the same place making no movements to leave.

“Okay” I was desperate for him move to his office something about him made me uneasy but he did the opposite and got in. he came and stood behind me. I was rehearsing on my head as to how can I tell my boss to move and not sound rude and disrespectful at the same time.

“you are such an asset in this company I would hate to lose you” I nodded trying to register where this was going.

“it’s a pity that I have to let you go because of your lack of experience” I thought my work was satisfactory what was this man bluffing about.

“but I know ways that can make me convince the management otherwise” if only he could stop speaking in riddles.

“am I getting fired” I asked. Is this how one gets fired in this corporate, interesting.

“it depends” okay this was getting irritating, I stood up and went a bit further from him.

“so, what are you saying exactly Mr Johnsons?” I enquired trying to hide my irritation.

He came closer to me closing the gap that was between us, he moved his arm and it rested above my head I was now under the scrutiny of his venomous eyes to say I was terrified would be putting it lightly. I tried to control my breathing which was becoming uneven this can’t be happening again. His hand touched my bare arm and I flinched.

“we can do this my way or the high way”

“do what sir”

“oh, please stop acting like an idiot, can’t you see what I want here” he snapped I was taken back by his tone.

“I don’t understand” he collected himself and then took my arm brushing it lightly I snatched it away.

“I would like to leave” I said my voice firm making it clear that I wasn’t enjoying this.

“don’t play hard to get Minenhle”

“Please Mr Johnson’s I am tired I want to go home”

“quit the formality and call me David” his voice was now audible. He chuckled as he saw the panic on my face.

“it’s just me and you today, even you scream no one will hear so let’s just get this over and done with”

My phone was far and I couldn't get to it fast enough. I couldn't believe that was about to happen again.

"please Sir I just want to go home" I didn't want to fight him I didn't have energy at all, this is not how imagined my evening turning out to be. He forcefully tried kissing me and he was very strong I tried pushing him away it was just like I wasn't doing anything at all. He held my hands-on top of my head I couldn't do anything with them by now I was really crying trying to beg him to leave me alone but they fell on deaf ears. My top was ripped exposing myself he was about to touch them when I heard a familiar voice shouting by the corridor. I screamed even louder and he slapped me trying to shush me and even closed my mouth. I don't know where I got the nerve but I kicked him on his balls, took my handbag and ran out from the office.

Monde was running after me telling me to stop but I couldn't I kept running, running until I couldn't feel my legs I was running out of breath. I was losing myself.

"Minenhle you don't have a top on!" he shouted. I tripped and fell on the ground it's a good thing it was at night otherwise people would have looked at me thinking I am losing my mind. Tears wouldn't stop coming out. He picked me up and embraced me this closure felt familiar but it wasn't comfortable I didn't want any guys hands touching me.

"leave me alone Monde, leave me alone okay!" I shouted.

"what did that bastard do to you" I kept quiet as whole scene replayed on my mind. I should have seen it coming the little comments he made here and there making sure to remind of the little experience I have. I should have seen it.

"please take me home" I said sniffing.

I was biting my nails and sniffing all the way home Monde decided to keep quiet because I still wouldn't talk. I thanked heavens that he got there on time and I didn't even care what he wanted at that time.

When we got home he fixed me food but I couldn't eat so he took me to bed instead and made sure that I was warm under covers, no matter how warm I was under those covers it wouldn't change the fact that I was cold inside, my heart was dripping ice I was nearly raped the pain that ached inside me was just too much to bear.

“he nearly raped me” I said.

He was at the door preparing to leave when I said that and he turned quickly like he couldn't believe what I just said.

“what?” you could see the pain in his eyes like he couldn't believe it I don't know what he would have done should he have raped me. He came and sat next to me you could see that he was angry but he was trying to control himself.

“why didn't you tell me?” he asked. I shrugged I wasn't in the mood to talk to him but I felt like I owed him that much since he helped me. He touched my hand and I flinched.

“I'm sorry” he looked hurt.

He left after a while I insisted because he didn't want to but I needed to be alone I couldn't stand his eyes piercing through my skin feeling sorry for me. My eyes slowly closed after a while taking me to sleep but as I tried to sleep I kept getting flashbacks, the flashback of that night I conceived Lihle. He was rough he kicked and slapped me, he forced himself on me groaning as he planted all his seeds on me. I could see it clearly but I couldn't see the face, the colour of his shoes was still clear they were brown. It came as a flashback but the pain was clear as a stream water.

The days that followed were hard I didn't talk to anyone they all came and left, my house was locked and my phone was off. I spent my days crying I hardly ate I couldn't even look at myself in the mirror I looked horrible. I had lost weight I had bags under my eyes, my hair wasn't tidy. I had a habit of cutting myself it felt good because at least I had a pain to focus on that was physical instead of this emotional one I had that just wouldn't go away.

It was a Sunday evening I had just finished bathing when I heard a knock on my door I thought people had given up on me but clearly, I was wrong because they just wouldn't go away. I opened to find Sandile standing there, he looked at me with a frown on his face.

“get in” I tried to sound cheerful but instead I managed an utter.

“oh Minz” he said hugging me

“you look like you are about to cry” I joked.

“Minenhle look at you, you lost weight” I rolled my eyes.

“don’t roll your eyes at me I don’t like you like this I really don’t”

He said going to the kitchen and I knew that he was going to make me food.

“I’m not hungry I just ate”

“then you will eat again” he said giving me that this is not up for negotiation look.

He cooked while I watched him I didn’t even know why he bothered.

“tell me what happened?” he said as he gave me my plate.

I sighed.

“you know you can talk to me about anything right” He said sincerely.

“I don’t know what happened Sandile I guess I made him believe that I wanted to sleep with him.....” I told him the whole thing how it all unfolded.

“the nerve of that bastard he even says that you seduced him”

“what?” this was news to me.

“yeah, I went to your workplace the other day looking for you and I was told you were fired word has it that you seduced the boss and when he rejected you, you lost it and said you were going to lay charges of rape against him” I couldn’t believe my ears.

“what does this man want from me?” how am I going to face the world after this.

“I didn’t believe them of course which is why I came here I wanted the truth” wow. I didn’t want to cry not over this.

“listen Minenhle I want you to know that it’s not your fault it never was your fault don’t blame yourself over this okay, he is a jerk no actually he is a pervert that’s what he is. When I am done with him he will regret the day he ever laid his eyes on you”

“you don’t have to fight my battles”

“yes, I don’t have to but I want to it’s about time someone teach him a lesson about taking advantage of defenceless women” I just looked at him I really had no words. Speechless is the right word. Sandile tried to make me feel better but I was still in my zone but I appreciated him being there and I made sure he knows.

After he had left I took my p.c and I googled *committing suicide* and it did not give me what I want it just told me about people who were depressed and I wasn't depressed I just wanted to kill myself. I typed again *making suicide look like an accident* and still google didn't give me answers I wanted so I tried one last time and typed *safest way of killing yourself* yes, I wanted to kill myself but I didn't want to feel pain I wanted something quick and clean.

I couldn't believe I had been on internet for such a long time I got up closed the curtains then switched on the lights before going back to google again. I was now reading the stories people had posted on google they were quite interesting, some were speaking about the journey to recovery as much as it didn't give me what I wanted but it surely opened my eyes.

What do you do when it hurt so much that you don't feel like God is on your side, I have questioned God. There were days where I would go down on one knee and pray but no words would come out of my mouth and I would just cry pouring my heart out. There were days where I would beg God to take me I mean that is selfless than committing suicide right. What do you do when you feel like not waking up ever again, the first thought that comes to mind is committing suicide but you end up feeling guilty. One thing about suicide is that it may stop the pain you are feeling but it gets transferred to your loved ones, they are left asking themselves questions. People who commits suicide are cowards and I didn't want to be remembered as a coward. That girl who killed herself.

It was a beautiful Saturday morning I decided to wake up and do some spring cleaning at my place yes, I didn't have a job but I certainly had hope. Well it wasn't really a spring cleaning because I wasn't moving any cupboards and stuff but I was cleaning.

I was moping the floor when I heard Monde saying, "you sound happy" I smiled within I felt rejuvenated in a way, it had been a month since the saga and things were not going well for me but I had hope. Hope is a strong thing if you ask me it can carry you anywhere you want to be.

"Hi" I looked at him and he looked good in his denim shorts, a vest and some flip flops I had noticed that he loved white shirts. Monde is one of those dark guys with small eyes kinda of guys the ones that would have no trouble getting any girl he wants not to mention

that he was insanely rich and had a body for days. It was still flattery that he wanted me well and his wife.

“Hi, yourself” he smiled. I didn’t notice I was staring until he cleared his throat.

“like what you see” I looked away embarrassed to be caught staring.

“how can I help you?” he smiled

“You know Minenhle you can hide it all you want but I can see that you love me and to me you are still my girlfriend I don’t know about this breakup you’ve been talking about” mind you it had been three months since we broke up.

He took the mop and insisted on helping me.

“do you even know how to mop the floor Monde” I asked laughing, he looked at me for a while.

“it’s good to see you smiling baby by the way I was once a bachelor you know so I am very domesticated”

“oh, so you say”

He finished mopping and did everything while I watched but you could see that he was enjoying it. Monde really came through for me he had been there for me other guy would have ran for the hills.

“you know you have to deal with what happened to you” I raised my eyebrows trying to make sense of what he was saying. He put his bowl down and looked at me

“you didn’t deal with your rape Minenhle you just buried it somewhere at the back of your mind and now that it nearly happened again it is all coming back again” why was this talk making me emotional and I never saw it like this.

“I know Monde but me dealing with it means opening old wounds and I don’t want to go back there” he sighed.

“believe it or not you have. Remember how you locked yourself in this room after the saga shutting everyone, starving yourself it’s been a month and you are far from getting better” I hate it when someone is analysing me.

“so me dealing with it does that mean me going for a counselling” he looked at me for a while and nodded.

I have watched movies and I have seen people going for counselling. You get an old looking white lady with spectacles on who listens to you talk every day and then you pay them. How does that help? I didn't see it working and I've always seen people who go for counselling as people who had bigger problems like depression and mine wasn't big I was going to be fine after some time.

Monde and I spoke for hours with him trying to convince me to go for counselling I ended up agreeing to it just for the sake of it because he wasn't letting it go. I wasn't going for counselling period.

Time flies I couldn't believe that it was months after the saga happened, I heard that Mr Johnsons publishing house was on its way to bankruptcy. I later learnt that he liked preying on young inexperienced girls like me I was lucky for me it never got that far. Most of them were afraid to speak out as they didn't have proof and they were scared since he threatened them. This is what he did to these girls, he would employ them especially those who came from disadvantaged backgrounds, take advantage of them then make them quit after that he would take care of them financially so that he can have some hold over them. Men are sick and twisted out here. I got all this information from Sandile and I don't know how he got hold of it. I know I had questioned God before but I was thankful to him that he didn't get to rape me and that he didn't have some hold over me. As much as I wanted to him to pay for his sins I knew how justice of this country works. My rape case I reported years ago I don't know what happened to it their famous line is “sisaphenya”.

Chapter 13

I loved bacon but lately it had been giving me some weird vibes I was convinced that the one I bought was off so I threw it on the bin and bought another one but it was the same story I threw up. I paid no mind to that because I had to meet with Simphiwe to discuss a way forward about her wedding it was in September she wanted a spring wedding.

I met her outside Olives she was already having winery lol this girl, I joined her and soon we were both on our 3rd glass.

“babes if I knew that a month and weeks ago we would be here laughing our asses off I wouldn’t have worried that much” she said smiling “you had us all worried” she sighed.

“I know hey I am getting better, Monde said I should do counselling and I am not that keen on it”

“I hear it helps though, my cousin did counselling after her divorce and it did wonders on her. If you want to move on you should do it”

“yeah neh”

“one thing I have heard about rape is that it’s like a prison, it’s shattering, leaving you feeling scared, alone with flashbacks and unpleasant memories” she said and this was true.

“I keep having flashbacks you know every now and then, I didn’t know it was normal” I had told her about how Lihle was conceived.

“deal with it babes and free your mind”

As time went on we discussed the lengthy details of her wedding she was so excited about it, the theme was baby pink and white.

“I need to hire a wedding planner” yes please.

“are we doing the wedding here or?”

“no, I love Durban so I think Zimbali is the best place” I will have to remember to google it.

After that meeting, I went home and on my way home I decided to get a pregnancy test I know I had been celibate for four or five months but I felt like i was pregnant. I went to clicks bought it with some cosmetics.

When I got home I did all the necessities and it came back negative well I guess I got worried for nothing.

It was the day I was going for counselling my people had managed to convince me to go, Sandile even offered to drive me there. He was sent from above really.

“sooo” I eyed him and laughed.

“Just out with it” I was getting ready at my place.

“you and Monde” he said

“what about us?” I asked innocently.

“out with it already, what’s happening between you two”

“nothing” I said laughing.

“come on” he rolled his eyes.

“no I am serious he is just that ex that is always there”

“don’t patronise me wena Minz ngiyabona nje ukuthi kukhona okushaya amanzi and you are glowing lately it must be his D game” I glared at him “it’s too good neh”

“I don’t know what you are talking about” well I was also not convincing and Simphiwe said the same the same thing about me and Monde. They were both convinced that we were back together.

I was surprised to find a young black handsome gentleman waiting for me when I arrived, the setting was just calming well as expected I was told to sit on a couch opposite him so he could analyse me I rolled my eyes internally at this.

First day

We spoke about me mostly where I come from, my dreams and goals (long term and short term). My background where I grew and how it was like growing up. honestly, I didn’t understand how that linked with what I was there for. I was sure this guy didn’t know what he was doing I mean judging by his age well his appearance also I mean what experience did he have. As I left I was convinced that this wasn’t going to help at all.

Second day

Growing up without a mother, how has it affected me and not having a father figure in my life. I answered as honestly as I could but I didn’t understand why he was asking this about me to me it seemed like this person was just **prying** into my life, wanting to know every detail of my life. He even asked me how it’s like living in KZN compared to Gauteng. I mean was that necessary. At least I wasn’t the one paying for these sessions otherwise if I was the one paying I would have used the door and never turn back ever again.

Third day

Reframe what happened. This is what we were talking about on this day.

Firstly, he asked me about that day as to what was happening.

“it was a Friday and I had been invited to my friend’s party, we were all hyped about the party especially me because I was one of those kids that were never allowed out of the house so I was looking forward to it” I told him the whole story leading to the night I was raped.

“there is stigma attached to being raped, you may be ashamed. It might make you feel dirty and weak. Also, fear what others will say of being judged. Because you have acknowledged it that is good it’s a great step. When you stay silent you deny yourself help I know you have denied yourself help for a while and reinforced victimhood” he said. Okay I didn’t see it that way, we were going somewhere. We spoke about a lot 2 hours went by fast.

Fourth Day

Reach out to someone you trust and challenge your sense of helplessness and isolation.

Its normal to be in denial that gives you a sense that it didn’t happen but you can’t heal avoiding the truth and hiding it only adds to the feeling of shame, it doesn’t make it better it only makes it worse. Your best someone to talk to is someone you trust someone who will be there for you and not judge you. Someone supportive, empathetic and calm.

Challenging your sense of hopelessness, trauma leaves you feeling you powerless and vulnerable. What is most important is reminding yourself that you have strength and coping skills. Your coping skills can you help you, you can either help an orphanage or do whatever that will leave you feeling better. He even said

“You may also want to consider joining a support group for other rape or sexual abuse survivors. Support groups can help you feel less isolated and alone. They also provide invaluable information on how to cope with symptoms and work towards recovery” okay thank you for the information but I won’t be joining any support group.

Fifth day

We were talking about assigning responsibility to where it belongs, the rapist. Intellectually you may understand that it's not your fault but you may still struggle with feelings of guilt and shame. The I should have's and I shouldn't have's. I should have worn something longer, I shouldn't have taken that route or I should have just stayed at home and not gone to the party. He told me that I shouldn't be ashamed as I did not bring the assault to myself.

"if you are feeling ashamed because you did not stop the assault from happening, well you need to know that when you are in a shock your body reacts differently both your body and brain are in shock. You can't think properly. How did you feel when it happened?"

"I felt frozen like my feet were glued to the ground and I couldn't move" I said recalling what happened.

"you shouldn't judge yourself this is a normal reaction, if you could have stopped the assault you would have"

"you were in a party, right?" I nodded

"I assume you might have been slightly drunk or dressed in a certain way" I looked at him suspiciously wondering where he was going with this.

"you shouldn't be blamed because of your dress code, one person who deserves to be blamed or someone responsible rather as a perpetrator"

It was a weekend and we were all invited at Simphiwe's place to talk about the wedding awu cha naye ubesesibiza kakhulu bandla, if she was going to continue with this pace she was going to be a bridezilla.

"guys I want to discuss the dresses with you" she said when we were all outside drawing sketches outside and checking out the venues. I had forgotten to check out Zimbali during the week some maid of honour I am.

"I want a figure hugging dress" said one of the bridesmaids Mbali

"How are you going to dance in a figure hugging dress" she snapped.

“Okay Simphiwe why did you call the bridesmaids if you don’t want their opinions these dresses will be worn by them I feel like you should just hear what they have to say” I didn’t realise she was such a bully but she agreed and looked at the sketches they had for their dresses and as stubborn as she was we convinced her otherwise.

Monde arrived later with his brother that meant the end of our meeting and I couldn’t be happier we had been brainstorming I didn’t understand what the wedding planner was going to do if we were doing all the work. I was dog tired I needed a hot bubble bath and my beauty sleep.

“I am taking you home” Monde announced after we had supper he just had to shout Simphiwe eyed me I smiled and shrugged because I knew what she was thinking. I got up and said my goodbyes to everyone. He held my hand when we were going out.

“I think you are pregnant” he said out of the blue.

“what?”

“I had my suspicions before but after today I was convinced”

“huh”

“you ate a lot”

“maybe I was just hungry”

“no not like that and you love your green salad but I noticed that you skipped it also”

“okay well I have had my suspicions but a test came back negative so I am sorry to burst your happy bubble”

“I am sure you are, you have even gained weight. We will get two clear blues tests”

“why are you getting excited” he smiled

“because I know I am right”

We got in and stayed in the couch you know since we were both no sleepy, he suggested we rent a movie I wasn’t big on movies so I let him choose.

“you know I will never stop loving you” he has said this a million times but the way he said it this time around was amazing and it was surprising that I hadn’t stopped too.

“you know I still love you too Monde and thank you, you know for being there for me all the time even when we were not together you came through for me. I will never forget that and I have never ever had someone do something like that for me” I was getting emotion why not now tears please.

“I have realised this now I love you Monde okay” let’s just push the issue of him being married under the carpet.

I was woken up by Monde putting me in bed we had fallen asleep on the couch I was on top of him wow the poor guy must have some dislocated ribs somewhere it’s not easy having to carry my big body all night literally.

“I can’t sleep now” I said after a while.

“Me too” he said turning to face me.

“what are you thinking about?”

“about the baby”

“what baby now” he can’t honestly be thinking about his kids while he is on bed with me well I know it’s inevitable but no its just wrong.

“our baby, come on baby” he said bringing me closer to him.

“so, you are certain that you scored” I asked

“yes baby I mean my D game is too strong” I laughed as I snuggled closer to him.

“oh yeah, well it could be that the baby is not yours hey” he shifted uncomfortable

“don’t tell me you moved on after me”

“the starvation was too much I couldn’t have stayed and waited for you” he immediately stirred and sat down.

“you could have called me for that” he was serious.

“aw baby no I am joking” I laughed.

“really? You didn’t see anyone after me?” he said as he cupped my face.

“some of us are faithful” he looked straight into my eyes

“you waited?” he asked as if he couldn’t believe it. I nodded.

“I fucking love you okay”

“no need to swear I get it” I said laughing.

“no, I am serious, I hope you know how much I love you”

He said as he kissed me, his cold lips felt so good colliding with mine his kisses were soft yet they held so much on them like he was letting me know that he owns me and I am not allowed to have anyone but him.

Sixth day

Prepare for flashbacks and unsettling memories. Its normal for our bodies to be on a fight or flight mode whenever we go through something stressful and when the threat has passed our body calms down. But something as traumatic as rape get stuck on your mind. Flashbacks are normal for rape survivors for some people it takes years to get over it especially if there are things that triggers it.

When flashbacks you need to tell yourself that it’s not real assure yourself that it’s not reality, what is most important is that the traumatic experience is over.

In all honesty, me and my counsellor spoke about a lot of things with regards to rape I got to know that what I was going through was normal what I needed to do was accept that it happened and not be ashamed of it. I had a task of telling my aunt that I was raped. I was almost certain that it wasn’t going to be easy.

When I got home I found Monde cooking, okay I could get used to this. The first thing he said when I got was “I bought two pregnancy test kits baby” Lord I wasn’t hearing any end of this. I took and went to pee.

“are you going to watch me pee?”

“yeah”

I peed then we waited, I gave him both the tests without looking at them. He looked at them and shook his head.

“this is weird”

“the other one says four months” what?

“and the other one came back negative” he added. This was even more confusing.

“weird indeed”

“we need to go see the doctor”

I was thinking about it and it hit me, something could be wrong with me and how could I be four months on another one and negative on the other. That is just insanity.

“Monde, what if there is something really wrong with me?”

“baby calm down okay, we will know for sure when we go see the doctor”

“hey, don’t cry” he said holding both my hands and putting me on his chest.

“there are things you have no control over Monde” I wasn’t strong enough to deal with any pain.

Chapter 14

Life was good, I was done with my counselling sessions I was glowing it turned out there was nothing wrong with me and now I was happily pregnant. I was spoilt, I had everything any woman could ever need on their pregnancy. Mr Johnson’s got fired and I got my job back and I insisted on taking a six months course to familiarise myself with everything against Mondes wishes. If it was up to him I would be home all day everyday eating and getting even fatter.

Today was the big day Simphiwe was finally getting married and we were all happy, at least I would get some time to enjoy my pregnancy. Simphiwe wanted a perfect wedding and we all gave her a perfect wedding, it wasn’t easy but with God we managed.

I was pushing my big belly making sure that everything was fine while people slowly filled the venue. Everything was all pretty baby pink and white was gorgeous, Amanda the wedding planner told me to go and get ready too as she had everything under control.

I found Simphiwe doing her makeup, she was on her phone and as I thought she was texting Musa. I took the phone from her and sat next to her.

“heey I was still texting” she said frowning.

“you are going to see him just now chill, are you ready?”

“I was born ready you know” she smiled.

“nerves” she shook her head.

“oh good then, you know after this there is no turning back”

“yes, I love him so much”

I hugged her

“I can’t believe you are getting hitched, now I will be the only one who is not married oh I’m going to cry”

“your time is coming babes don’t rush it okay”

My date was Sandile because uhm Monde had his wife as his date I won’t lie or even pretend like I wasn’t sad but I guess that’s what you get for dating a married man and he had made it clear to me several times that he wasn’t divorcing his wife. This is the time I wished the earth would just open and swallow me I mean people always talk I will be painted as the bad guy here that mistress who is pregnant trying to tame the guy with a baby and also trying to break the happy couple. Oh dear.

Sandile was already seated since I had to make sure that the bride was all happy and ready. I was wearing a baby pink cocktail dress which had touch of white lace and high heeled wedges my feet were forever swollen so it was only safe I wore a wedge. I had styled my natural afro and I looked cute gaining weight everyday didn’t help.

As soon as I was seated my eyes roamed around and I saw them they were at the front Monde was removing something on her eye and you could see the love from the distance I didn’t know why I was doing this to myself but the heart wants what it wants. Besides Monde was treating me good it didn’t even feel like I was his second best I guess that make it better and explains why I was still holding on. Their second born was the page boy, I have to give it to him Monde made beautiful babies. Sandile held my hand and brushed it.

Just then the bride walked and we all stood up as the piano started playing, oh what a stunning bride. Musa looked at her like we all don't exist at all you could see the love he had for her.

The wedding was beautiful, we danced, we took pictures and ate. Monde and his wife were forgotten for a moment. I must say I enjoyed myself and everyone else. My favourite part of the wedding were the speeches they spoke so fondly of each other which made me believe that there was hope for me and Monde too. Sandile was the best date ever if he wasn't making nasty comments about everyone's dress code he was making jokes about everything happening. I didn't know weddings were so much fun.

We were about to leave when I felt the urgent need to go pee, luckily toilets weren't so far from where I was so I rushed there. I had just finished what I was doing and washing my hands when she also came out of the loo. I tried my best not to look at her with an evil eye to me she was living my life I'm the one who was supposed to be living in a mansion raising Monde's kids, I'm the one who should have been on his side today not her and I am the one he should have wifed from the first place not her so yes I hated her and I envied her life.

"finally, we meet" okay continue with your business Minenhle she is not talking oh wait there is only two of us here so she is talking to me.

"it must be nice fucking someone's husband huh, you even got pregnant for him?" hoosaaa keep calm Minenhle. I kept quiet still. She got closer no she is not about to hit me now is she.

"listen young lady I know you cannot abort the baby now but after you give birth you are going to give me this baby and I will raise him as mine and we will pretend like you never came into our lives" I laughed.

"oh, it is now?"

"don't let these good looks fool you I can make your life a living hell bitchikazi" oh she is Xhosa.

"do you feel intimidated by me honey"

She fake smiled.

“why would I be intimidated by a fatty like you”

“but honey he loves these big thighs and that’s all that matters”

She laughed a bit.

“clearly you don’t know me, wake up honey smell the coffee he doesn’t love the only reason why he wants to marry is because you are having his baby”

“keep telling yourself that and watch your man slip from your slippery hands” with that said I left.

My heart was beating fast, what did just happen. This is not how I imagined the ending of this day.

“you sure took your time” said Sandile when I got in the car.

“I think I just got attacked”

“who? Where?” he said panicking.

“well not literally at least but it happened”

“okay what happened?” he said starting the car.

“Monde’s wife found me in the loo”

“no ways!”

“yes ways. And guess what she said. Uthi nje I should give my baby up and let her raise the baby as hers so I can break up with Monde.”

“woah wait what? Is this bitch crazy? Who in their right minds would do that?”

“a crazy girl like her. I felt so attacked kodwa nami angimuyekanga bandla”

“you sure did not, I wish I was there”

“she is Xhosa now I don’t know what Monde loves so much about her I mean she is beautiful and all but no”

“well you did take her man”

“hawu ngiyazi” I said rolling my eyes.

“you know what they say about Xhosa women”

“what?”

“bazifaka zitshone” he said imitating how Xhosa’s speak.

He ended up spending the night over at my place because we were both dog tired, Monde didn’t call or text. Mxm.

Simpfiwe and Musa had left for their honeymoon soon after their wedding so for all of us it was back to our boring lives. Sandile made sure we have the best time of our lives in Durban before we left. Durban had such a great vibe I wouldn’t mind settling down there well except for the humidity otherwise it was perfect.

We were booked at Hilton Hotel since we were gonna be there for a week or so, Monde called me after hours as he “didn’t want to upset his wife”, this one sunny morning we were having breakfast at vigour and verve when Sandile asked me.

“but my friend do you think he is worth it though?” I knew exactly who he was talking about.

“I love him Sandile I know it might seem like I am out of my mind but he is one man who has ever shown me love and loved me for who I am”

“yes I get that but this sharing thing, are you up for it?” I sighed.

“not really but if that’s what it takes for me to have him as my own then I am more than willing to share” he looked at me like he was feeling sorry for me.

“oh friend” he took my hand and brushed “don’t lose your morals and what you believe in because of him I hope your love for each other will keep you up because right now what I see is not happiness at all. You are miserable my friend” I looked at him and kept quiet because what he was saying was true.

“this is supposed to be the happiest time of your life carrying the child for the man you love but no, he even missed your first appointment with the doctor. Money alone is not enough he needs to be there every step of the way.”

“I don’t know what to do Sandile”

“communication is the best tool in any relationship, you let him get away with too much Minz. You need to let him know that just because you have accepted his relationship it doesn’t mean he has to flaunt it on your face, you need that stability and the comfort too”

“it’s so hard” I said getting emotional. Okay I shouldn’t be getting emotional right now not in front of all these people. I blinked the tears away.

After breakfast, we went to take a walk by the ocean before packing we were leaving later that day. It was so calming most people take walks during late hours of the day or early in the morning but not us. Here is one thing about Sandile looking at him from far you can’t really tell that he is gay so most people were looking at us adoringly thinking that we were a couple. One old white lady even said, “oh you going to have such a beautiful baby”, it didn’t help that he was holding my hand. Should you have asked me a year ago if me and Sandile would be friends I would have told you proudly that we would never. But fate.

Chapter 16

It was a chilly Monday morning when Monde barged in my place looking furious and I wondered what could have been wrong and I was sure that the problem wasn’t me but I couldn’t have been more wrong. Mind you I hadn’t seen this person for a week.

“what is wrong with you?” I looked at him blankly.

“why did you attack my wife emshadweni Minenhle?”

“what?”

“don’t give me that she says you slapped her” oh wow this was news to me.

“and you ran up here to do what exactly?”

“just answer the damn question Minenhle”

“or what?” the way he looked at me scared me a bit.

“I did not attack her”

“what was so hard in that”

“mxm”

I said walking away and he grabbed my arm.

“we are not done here”

“I am done, this is what is going to happen in this relationship when we get married you coming at me like that everytime she lies”

“when we get married” he said smiling

“I am not saying we will get married wena and besides I am getting late”

“I am taking you to work”

The fight we had earlier was forgotten when we got to work, he had been busy brushing my belly all the way from home.

“I want to wife you”

“oh, please you can’t even handle your wife what is it going to be like when you add another one on the equation” he chuckled.

“I should be offended by that”

“but I am serious babe” he added.

I just laughed then gave him a soft peck as I got off at work.

Nothing was interesting maybe it was about time I took that early maternity leave offer because I wasn’t productive at all. Thandi our receptionist got in with my lunch she was extra nice I guess she was still trying to apologise for the way they all treated me after that saga.

I called my aunt while waiting for Monde to come and pick me up I was going to buy a car after I had finished building the house for my aunt because I really needed it. When Monde was in KZN I used taxis imagine a lady of my calibre using taxis lol. Aunt picked up almost immediately she worshipped me these days since I was building that house she had been going on about for years. When I was younger she would say *I am saving all this money for you my child so that you can go to school, get a job and build me the most beautiful house*. Sadly, I didn’t finish school but did that stop me from getting her that house NO.

“Minenhle ngane yami yazi I can see the neighbours envy me phela none of their children has ever done such for them” I laughed because I knew what was following was the hot

gossip of the neighbours my aunt knew everyone's business. After she had assured me that everything was going according to plan I dropped the call. I was still postponing the rape issue I had planned to tell her when I go home.

Monde finally arrived and after some time, I decided not to fight with him and just let him be. When we got home he told me to take a bath and wear the dress and shoes he had bought for me. Okay this was confusing, Monde hardly ever buys me clothes he gives me money rather. So, I took a bath, he was all smiles nje I knew we were going out but does he really have to be so excited about it. It was a gorgeous red little number that didn't hung loosely on my shoulder down to my thighs it made me feel sexy.

“so, what's happening Mr”

“I am taking you out”

“I can see that but why are you so excited about it”

He just smiled and ushered me out and the time now was around 10 ish I wondered which restaurant would accommodate us at this hour but seemingly he had everything under control. We drove outside Joburg towards the outskirts and took another turn I wasn't familiar with.

We arrived at this restaurant which had a view to die for it overlooked the lake and had lintels that made the whole thing spectacular. We ordered and ate over a chilled conversation with him assuring me how much he loves me and all that I didn't want to bring up what we spoke about earlier with Sandile and spoil the moment. the time was now 00:00 and the waiter brought a slice of cake from with one lit candle on it.

“why aren't you having one” I asked after the waiter had left.

“it's yours baby. Happy Birthday” He then sang for me softly.

Oh what? Of course, its 12 October my birthday how could I have missed it.

“you sneaky how did you know my birthday, oh God thank you baby. I love you”

“I love you my love this is just the beginning”

“this so sweet you are so sneaky how did you even plan this?”

“well that is my secret ungaze untshe ama ideas wami”

After dinner, we went home and I have to say he gave it to me on all angles, well with pregnancy I was forever horny. Birthday or no birthday I must go to work. Monde ran me a hot bubble bath and I got breakfast in bed. I should get more birthdays in a year but a gift would have been nice instead of ukuqwasha ubusuku bonke not that I was complaining it was a sweet gesture.

I was surprised to find the reception empty the security told me to go to the conference room and as I got in everyone screamed SURPRISE! These are very awkward you never know how to respond to them. They had balloons and a big ass cake everyone had a gift bag on their hand. You never know how much people love you until it's your birthday I really didn't expect the love I was getting this year. I had always spent my birthdays alone in my room feeling sorry for myself but today was different.

After we all enjoyed the cake, then exchanging gifts I was given a day off oh dear this treatment I could get used to it. When I got home, Monde wasn't in so I guessed he was running his errands. Sandile called he was taking me out as expected so I mean I could never turn down an offer to free food and some good company. I changed what I was wearing into a long dress that was really comfortable it wasn't my style but pregnancy was really not working on my favour.

I found him already seated outside the Roccomammas he knew how much I loved their hot wings and freaky shakes but I was really eating unhealthy with this rate by the time I give birth I would be huge. This child was forever hungry so don't blame me blame the child.

“Happy Birthday to you, Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you” he sang all the way as I approached him, he even had balloons. Trust him to cause a scene. I sat down quickly then looked around trying to see if anyone was looking my way.

“wow you sure can cause a scene”

“Heey Birthday girl” he shouted and I ended up laughing with him.

“you are so annoying”

“I love you” he pouted.

“Okay fine I love you too, did you order for me?”

“yes babe yes, we would drink the night away if you were not so pregnant” I laughed.

“not that I drink but it would have been nice I guess”

“it’s about time we wash this rustiness yasemafama from you”

“you like offending me don’t you”

I was joking actually because I drink winery like its water but I am not an alcoholic I just drink wine a lot. Our food arrived and we indulged while we spoke about what Monde did for me and of course he criticised it I was almost convinced that he didn’t like him.

“why don’t you like him Sandile, tell me” I pointed at him with a finger.

“there is something shady about it yes I can see he loves you but I can’t shake the uneasiness I feel around him”

“but as long as you are happy my friend”

“Thank you”

We gossiped as we ordered another meal it helps having a foodie as a friend. We were still talking and laughing called telling me to come home as he had another surprise for me. I could hear the excitement on his voice as he spoke I got excited too.

“okay we need to go home Monde has a surprise for me”

“really?”

“yeah let’s go I am so excited”

“does that include some smooching because I am not coming” I rolled my eyes as we got up to leave.

“what do you think he got for me” he thought for a moment.

“you know how extra your man can be maybe he bought you a house”

“okay let’s calm down for a moment he wouldn’t go that far”

“I am just saying” he shrugged.

I was surprised to find Simphiwe, Musa and the big brother with his wife there, for a moment I thought Monde's wife would pop somewhere and be like "Hey!". They all sang when I got in oh dear I had enough singing for a day but I smiled as I greeted everyone. "you are glowing babes, honeymoon stage?"

"yes honey, I will tell you all about it. Happy birthday"

They all had gift bags with them, the big brother's wife didn't like me as much she just tolerated me since her husband was fond of me. I noticed that their big brother was more like a father to them they treated him with respect. He was the discipline of the house I guess he took over the role when their parents passed on, I was just glad I didn't have to deal with a mother in law. The big brother had that "I demand respect" aura going about him, he didn't even have to say it out loud. So when I got to him I didn't know whether I should hug him or give him a handshake, he saved me from that internal conflict by shaking my hand.

"let's pop champagne on your behalf Miss Party" that must be Musa, he has a bit mouth this one. I laughed as they all enjoyed their champagne on my behalf while I was having mango juice. I missed my winery. After all the eating and catching up on each other's life I feel like that's what house parties are for especially for ladies if not gossiping they are always updating each other on what has been happening. Monde clicked his glass and we all gathered around, that was just dramatic I mean there was only a six of us in this party. But what kind of a party is that with six people only.

"your attention please" he said motioning to us and we listened.

"I'd like to wish my lover a happy birthday, I love you baby a lot you know I am not a man of many words but I really love you" this would have been much nicer if I didn't know that he has a wife, I caught Sandile rolling his eyes while sipping on his champagne.

"so my love here is my little appreciation for loving me with my flaws and for carrying my blessing" woah wait are those car keys.

"I love you" I said kissing him "you bought yourself a car?"

"no, it's yours baby, come outside"

Yes, he did, he bought me a car. I remember telling him that I love big cars and he didn't even reply to that. Everyone rushed outside when they heard me screaming but you could tell that they all knew about this car. it was a bmw 1series. If this doesn't prove how much this man loves me I don't know what does. I kept kissing him all over his face while checking out the car, saying I was ecstatic would be putting it lightly I was over the moon. I was loved and taken care of.

“you didn't have to”

“of course, I did I will not have no wife of mine riding a taxi to work” I laughed it was about time I got a new classy job I mean I couldn't be driving a bmw 1series while still earning peanuts it's just wrong.

“I cannot wait for these people to leave so I can thank you properly” I whispered to him while biting his earlobe softly.

“yourl can go the party is over” they all laughed as they went about with their drinking business. This day was proving to be a lot better that I thought it would be and I had my man to thank for that. When they talk about love they talk about something like this I am very sure of that.

My body was aching when I woke up the following day, Monde was still in deep sleep next to me. we were both tired, I don't even know how we got into bed but I remember that we started making out at our kitchen, to the couch then to our bedroom. Now as I woke up it started sinking in that I had a car not just any car but a freaken bmw people better put some respect on my name. it was a good think I was already halfway through building my aunt a big house now imagine parking a BMW on that four roomed house we lived in. I would be the talk of the town, not only would I be embarrassing myself but I would be embarrassing my aunt too.

I got off the bed and went to make breakfast for both myself and Monde I was famished this child of mine really loved food. However, I noticed that this child hasn't kicked yet I didn't know if I should be worried or what I mean at six months I should be feeling the baby move it's something I needed to ask my gynae about on our next checkup. I was making an omelette when I felt Monde behind me kissing my neck, he was only in his boxers and I could feel his morning erection.

“how is my baby doing?” he asked as he kissed my neck.

“the baby is doing fine” I said as my breath hitched.

“and my love?” his hands were brushing on my nipples softly, half pinching them as they hardened. I moaned and brought my ass closer to him.

Chapter 17

After I finished taking a shower I chose on what to wear which was a real struggle since I was getting bigger everyday it felt like I needed to get some new clothes every day, I ended up wearing leggings and a baggy top with comfortable sandals. I wanted to go for some grocery shopping Monde was somewhere in the house catching up with his work. I got a call from my aunt just the person I was about to call.

“aunt” I answered excitedly I wanted to share the good news with her.

“uyaphila sisi?” she sounded down.

“what’s going on aunt, is Lihle okay? Are you okay?” I asked panicking.

“yes, we are fine my child don’t worry”

“but you don’t sound fine” she sighed.

“I got a letter from abakwa Mbatha”

“Mbatha?” I was confused.

“yes, they are asking for your hand in marriage” now I was even more confused.

“you mean Monde’s uncles sent a letter?” can someone just send a letter without talking to you first.

“yebo nganeyami”

“aunt can I call you back later, I need to talk to Monde”

Monde!!

He rushed to me and when he saw my facial expression he knew better than to say anything stupid because I was ready to slap his face. I tried collecting myself.

“Monde did you send your uncles ekhaya?” I asked calmly.

“uhm something like that”

“what do you mean something like that Monde?”

“well I did, why are you making it sound like I committed a crime?” as he said this he was scratching his head.

“it is a crime Monde how can you send a letter ekhaya, we are not even engaged?”

“we can do that whenever baby, it’s not a problem for me”

“No! Monde I don’t even know if I want to marry you” he raised his eyebrows.

“no, don’t look at me like that if the situations were reversed I wouldn’t even think twice about getting married to you because I love you but this situation is hard. I’m not ready to be in a polygamous marriage” I added

“but baby we can make it work, we have managed to make it work so far. We can babe please I love you”

“I need to think”

He was at the door when I drove out of the yard I didn’t even get to enjoy my first ride on this car because of his proposal well that wasn’t exactly a proposal.

I found myself at Pick’nPay well that’s what I wanted to do before this whole thing, so I did my grocery and that put my mind at ease for a moment. I found myself at earth child after grocery shopping going through some baby’s clothes, they were just so cute I couldn’t help myself. By the time I was done my basket was almost full I had chosen neutral colours since I didn’t know the gender of the baby yet, I made a mental note to pass by cotton kids and buy some for Lihle as well my aunt was always complaining that I buy Lihle a lot of clothes she was convinced that I was a shopaholic and I was convinced that I was a mother who loved her child and wanted him to have everything he couldn’t have as a child. I was at the shoe section when this guy greeted me so I nodded and continued with what I was doing. I noticed that he was staring when I turned.

“can I pass and stop staring its rude”

I wanted him to make a way for the trolley I was pushing.

“I am sorry but can you help me choose an outfit for my niece” he was smiling, I noticed that he was very handsome light skinned with some pink lips but he was not my type I might be yellow too but I preferred my dark guys. Okay why am I even noticing his complexion my inner conscience snapped at me.

“you know your niece and her style so I don’t think I might be of help so now can I pass”

I said as I pushed the trolley but this stupid handsome guy was still following me, what more does he want.

“are you always this rude”

“I wasn’t being rude I was just being myself”

“so, this is yourself?”

I rolled my eyes, he laughed. Wow so he found my annoyance funny.

“okay if may ask politely what more do you want I told you I can’t help you with your niece” he bit his lower lip if this was his way of charming girls he really had a long way to go.

He made a way I passed I decided to go and pay before I meet another weirdo who thinks he can make a pass at me. I was loading the stuff on the boot when he decided to interrupt my peace again now he was starting to get on my nerves. He loaded things on the boot as he looked at me. When he was done he smiled and said “Done!” I raised my eyebrow.

“well I decided to be a gentleman once today so the least you can do is be nice to me just this once”

“are you always this uhm annoying?” he pretended to be hurt and touched his chest in an exaggerated manner pretending to be hurt.

“okay that was rude but thank you for helping me load my stuff” I added feeling guilty.

“can I atleast get your number”

He is really making a pass at me wow why is he like this, I don't understand men who flirt with pregnant women doesn't that give you a clue that she might be taken. It doesn't make sense really. I shook my head and got in my car then drove away. My mind kept going back to this guy, why was I giving him

When I got home, Monde got out and came to meet me halfway, he unloaded the groceries in silence while I went to cook, I couldn't stand him. I was very energetic for a pregnant person or it was my anger fuelling me up because I'm not normally this energetic.

I was almost done with cooking when he got in deciding to break the silence, we don't always fight but when we do we always say things we should have just kept to ourselves or atleast I do.

"I didn't like the way you spoke to me earlier" Zulu men and their egos.

"I am sorry,I was just angry"

"I still don't get why you are angry" I thought we were both apologising to each other here why is it all suddenly my fault.

"Minenhle do you want to raise this child out of wedlock I mean you said it yourself that you want it to be perfect this time. I want Lihle to live with us and be a perfect family" well except we can never be a perfect family. He already has a perfect family.

"I know and that was before I knew that you were married"

"are you going to throw that card at my face all the time we are fighting" he really is in a bad mood.

"why don't you get it Minenhle that I love you. I love Ziyanda (oh that's her name) too but in a unique way I love you both in two different ways and I cannot imagine my life without any of you" uuuh.

"I know you love me too Minenhle otherwise you wouldn't have stayed" he added. You see this love is betraying me. why did I fall for a married guy for someone who already has his person. I wanted him to experience marriage with me, was that too much to ask for?

"I do" I said quietly. I hate this love, it's making me weak.

"then let me send my uncles let's make this official vaat n sit is not my thing"

“you’ve been doing it very good” I said smiling, he laughed.

“so, should I send my uncles” he said blinking and closing the gap that was between us.

I nodded.

“I want to hear you say it”

“you can send your uncles”

He kissed me. I couldn’t believe I was agreeing to this, I wondered what would my aunt say when I tell her that I am getting myself into a polygamous marriage because of love. She was going to say I was stupidly in love but I wanted to make this work I wasn’t going to be best friends with the first wife but I was willing to try and be a civil person in this whole situation. I wonder what comes in being the second wife, did that mean everything we want to do it must go through the first wife first? I have read or heard somewhere that whatever the first wife says goes and she is the heart of it all. The decision maker but surely that wasn’t going to happen I mean we are modernised it’s not like I am getting married to someone who lives in the rurals and still believe in all the customs that comes with it including being submissive. Apparently the first wife in a polygamous marriage is the one who suffers the most.

Chapter 18

It’s been a week since I accepted Monde’s proposal with no engagement ring, a week since I committed myself into a polygamous marriage, a week since I allowed him to be Lihle’s father. I didn’t know what I was getting myself into but I was ready. I was going home soon for lobola preparations but before that Monde insisted that we go to this chesanyama with Simphiwe and Musa. I didn’t understand why we were suddenly going to a chesanyama even but when he told me that it’s a special chesanyama to him where him and the guys used to go to before they had money in Soweto when they were still hustling. It was in Soweto eZola deep ekasi. Yes, I lived in Joburg for many years but I have never been to Soweto which was quite something.

“I still don’t understand why you guys like this place so much I mean it’s too ghetto” Simphiwe complained about it for the hundredth time. She is a snob this one, well I couldn’t

really blame her she grew up in the suburbs. She was spoiled rotten by her parents since they were all rich so she led a very comfortable life since she was born.

“are you still OK babe?”

“yes, love I am, I actually love the vibe here. its chilled” he smiled and went to order our meat while Musa was getting alcohol.

“girl I hear you are getting married soon?”

“yes, I finally let him do the things that makes the marriage to be done” she squirmed in happiness.

“oh, I can’t wait for the actual wedding and to be your maid of honour” okay I hadn’t thought that far but since I didn’t have that much friends it left me no choice but let her be.

“I am not even engaged yet and here we are discussing marriage” I was laughing we can be forward though as women but he is the one that planted the idea on my head. Monde came back with the meat it was so juicy I couldn’t wait to indulge.

This thing of me being pregnant was getting in the way of enjoying my life I mean my people were here having the time of their lives and I was drinking juice I mean. Out of the blue Monde expressed his true feelings for me telling everyone how much he loved me and how he couldn’t imagine his life without me and about how I was the only one for him. he was drunk. He was obviously drunk. He surprised me and everyone that was around when he went down on his knee took a box out of his pocket. Oh no I wasn’t getting engaged in a chesanyama but who cared where I got engaged if I was engaged to him.

“ngicela ungishade ntombi” trust him to be blunt like that. What happened to “will you marry me?” like the civilised man that he is. Tears can’t choose this very sweet moment to fall bloody hormones. He repeated the question again with his eyes pleading with me.

“yes, yes just put the ring on already” everyone cheered oh I didn’t notice everyone had gathered around to witness this. We had an audience, but getting engaged in a chesanyama SMH.

My aunt was pacing up and down making sure that everything is perfect for the inlaws I have been trying to tell her about the situation I was getting myself into but she was too excited to even lend me her ear so I guess she will hear about it during the negotiations or after. My uncles (distant relatives) were here already also waiting. They all knew at home that I was getting married to a rich guy so they were all trying I think they just wanted to be invited to the wedding. My aunts which were cousins to my mother so I wasn't sure as to what to call them were already telling me about how much they children are suffering asking me to make sure they atleast get an educated rich man like me if I end up not finding a job for them.

“phela we also you never got to finish eMangosuthu but look at you now” I didn't want anything to spoil the day so I let that comment slide. Other than those nasty little comments from my aunts everyone was enjoying themselves some were even drinking from the cups.

“they are here” my aunt said getting inside, I was told to go and stay with my cousins in the room as we were going to be called when they need us. Elders peeped through the window I heard one of them exclaiming how rich the brothers both look.

“you must be excited hey” Nokwakha the cousin said while I was busy texting Monde. I smiled at her I really was.

“I wonder if I will ever get a man who will love me enough to marry me” she is talkative.

“you will trust me” but then again not everyone is destined to get married I didn't understand why they all wanted to get married to much. Not all that glitters is gold. It must be the societal expectation. Nokwakha was one of those girls who really had a good body that appealed to men, she had curves and big boobs I think that's what made her fall pregnant at an early age. She had three kids from different fathers who weren't supportive. She depended on the social grant she and her sisters I guess that is why their mother wanted them to get a rich man who was going to take care of them financially. She had given on up on them.

I can't wait for you to be Mrs Mbatha a text from Monde, I smiled.

I am Mrs Mbatha already you put a ring on it remember I texted back. Funny how he was wasn't a fan of WhatsApp before I introduced him to it and now he texted me almost every

minute whenever he gets time. If he is not asking for my pictures he is busy telling me how much he misses me. I loved this man.

You look beautiful in your long dress and a doek, pregnant and all. He must have seen when I was outside earlier

You sneaky person. Where are you?

In the car outside, I am not allowed in.

Just then aunt got in telling us that all went well, she was all smiles I thought we would be called in at some point. I was then told to go serve my in-laws of which Nokwakha helped I think she liked me but I wouldn't know growing up we've never been close since they were older than me.

When I got in my eyes landed on my husband yes, we were husband and wife now I don't care what anyone else says. He winked and I melted but I really had it in for this guy really bad.

Everyone was having an enjoyable time ekitchen we were listening to the tales Nokwakha's mother was telling us about, her escapades were hilarious though I could tell she enjoyed her life in her youth days. Monde texted me when they were leaving so I went to him.

His arms were already opened wide as I approached him, he was all smiles I snugged on him as he hugged me my belly was so big it was almost pushing him off.

"I can't wait for this child to pop out already".

"leave my baby alone. It's done babe we are going to be husband and a wife very soon. I am the happiest man alive"

He said spinning me around, I could feel them eyes gawking at me from the window which made me giggle.

"I will see you tomorrow" I nodded.

Later on everyone went back to their holes but Nokwakha and her mother were spending the night over. We were all having supper Aunt had cooked I noticed Nokwakha's mother staring at Lihle which was making my child uncomfortable. I snugged her on the shoulder since I was sitting next to her she turned to me.

“your boyfriend really looks like your child”

I laughed at how ridiculous that sounded.

“no seriously he does you would swear he is his father”

“I noticed yazi” my aunt chirped in.

“I guess when people spend too much time together they end up looking alike”

They were just being ridiculous Lihle didn't look like Monde.

Chapter 19

“aunt are you sleeping already?” I asked as I got in her bedroom. She was already inside the blankets.

“no I am just thinking”

I sat on her bed.

“yazi Minenhle ungi-phoxile mntanami bengithi asinazo iyimfihlo layikhaya” I looked at her apologetically I really had no valid reason for not telling her this.

“I am sorry Aunt you were too excited earlier I didn't want to spoil your mood” even my explanation sounded ridiculous.

“you had more than 8 years to explain Minenhle, I have been raising this kid don't you think I deserved some truth on your side”

Okay we are not on the same page here, what is she talking about.

“why didn't you tell me that you were raped” I gasped, how did she know.

“who told you aunty?”

“it doesn't matter, I am just hurt right now”

Why is she making this about herself, as we were having this conversation she was still buried inside the blankets.

“you know why I am hurt Minenhle?”

I shook my head as if she can see me.

“Minenhle I am hurt because you went through this all alone, this whole time I had been on your case about pregnant at 16 kanti it wasn't even your doing. I would have been there for you my child, we would have gone through it together. I love you I am practically your mother” she was crying Oh No.

“I am fine now Aunty stop crying, I dealt with it already I even went through counselling” I was assuring her, I didn't like seeing her like this she never cried.

“oh my child”

She said hugging me and she sobbed. This was breaking my heart this was not how I imagined this night.

“aunt please you are breaking my heart now”

She wiped her tears and smiled.

“you are so strong I admire your strength” she said hugging me tighter.

“I cannot believe I cried”

“aunty even the tough one's cry” I said laughing. It's good to have her back.

“I have something to tell you”

It was best I told her now.

“I am getting myself into a polygamous marriage”

She looked at me as if she expected something bigger.

“that's all?”

I nodded.

“Minenhle uyintombi yomzulu this is culture, you are just lucky to have found a man like him who will take care of you and who loves you unconditionally. He speaks so fondly of you. Polygamy is normal in our culture it has been practices for many years and they turn out just fine.”

“I though you would freak out?” I admitted to her.

“why would I. as long as you are not forced into this marriage then I am 100% behind it”

I got worried for nothing. I got in bed and slept with her I couldn't remember the last time we shared a bed no I do actually it was before I got pregnant. I slept peacefully. The baby kicked.

Everyone was in high spirits when we woke up I wasn't, I wasn't looking forward to meeting this Ziyanda person I loved her man not her. I didn't understand why I had to meet her soon after the lobola negotiations. They lived at Mathonsi and I lived at Oyengweni which meant that the place I lived in was very far from theirs.

I was eating porridge outside when I heard my phone vibrating, I asked Nokwakha to pass it to me and as expected it was Monde calling telling me that he would fetch me.

“this guy loves you too much it's like he cannot live a minute without you” I smiled at her.

“how do you know that?”

“I saw you two yesterday it is like when you enter the room he can't see anything else except you” Nokwakha is sweet.

“really?” I don't know why I still needed an assurance from other people that this man loved because I knew for sure he showed me every day maybe it was the fact that he loved his wife also as much.

“I love him too” I added.

Nokwakha and I spent the rest of that morning catching up, her telling me about her life I always thought I had it hard in life but hers was much worse. I felt obliged to help her in a way she was my cousin after all.

I had just finished when Monde came and of cause they were all fussing over him offering him food and all and he didn't say no he loved to eat. We ended up leaving after midday and that meant I would have to spend the night over at his home, this wasn't comfortable with me what if that person burns me with the house. It's possible.

We finally left when he was done Lihle wanted to come over and I didn't want him to come yet because I didn't know how he would be welcomed by the kids, I know eventually they would have to know him and all that but not like this.

“so, who is at your home” I asked as we passed some kids who were playing by the road.

“just my family, Musa's family and Masande's so basically its family”

“I wish my parents were still alive you know to witness everything that has happened in our lives” where is my inspirational mind when I need it.

“they may not be with you physically but they are definitely watching over you with pride in their eyes. You all turned out so good” he smiled and held my hand as we drove in silence.

This was not just his family, it's like they invited the whole of Mandeni to come and witness the girl who took someone's husband. When we got in the gate bubbly one was already there waiting for us with a smile I loved her she was kind. She held my hand in assurance there were men drinking umqombothi by the kraal and neighbours cooking outside.

“are you guys celebrating something” I asked this husband of mine who was holding my hand.

“yes, your arrival” he said smiling.

“stop lying”

“we are hardly home so whenever we come back we always do something for our neighbours which means everyone around this area, so I wanted you to be part of this” he explained.

I smiled at him it was a very kind gesture what they were doing, I was proud of them. Never forget the streets that raised you, as they say it takes a village.

“Heey” she said coming to give me a hug as soon as we entered and Monde smiled. what is this, some kind of a soap opera why is she suddenly so nice. I looked around waiting for the camera guys to come out from wherever they were hiding from but no they did not so I gave her an awkward hug I wasn't about to pretend like we were best friends.

“be nice” Monde whispered to me, what does he mean I am nice I hugged her back didn't I?

“are you hungry, come have a seat we have a feast here” this is awkward.

I sat down she gave me the baby she was carrying which I assumed was theirs, step mother duties. She played with my cheeks smiling oh maarn such a cute baby she was heavy though I wonder what they were feeding her. I was playing with her until the food finally arrived and my stomach grumbled in response. If the food was poisoned I will attend to that later for now I am starved. I was 7 months pregnant and huge so I was relieved when they told me to sit down as they had everything under control I guess my role was to play with the kids.

Masande’s kids were also back and hell did they speak English, this thing of speaking English with kids who had an American accent was not my favourite part of the day. They kept asking me about my baby. Masande had four kids (two girls and two boys) who were playing outside with Monde’s kids.

“Uncle said you were coming with our brother, where is he. We wanna play with him” one of the boys peeped in through the door, that must have been Lwandle I heard he was talkative.

“I will bring him next time I come okay?”

“is he going to live with us?”

“please can he live with us?”

I wasn’t ready with the questions they all bombarded me with but I loved staying with them they were such adorable kids, they had manners.

Chapter 20

Monde was spending the night with me, I was never going to get used to the idea of sharing him.

“the kids love you”

He said as he was giving me a massage, I couldn’t wait for this baby to come out already.

“all of them?”

He smiled.

“yes, Hubo even wanted to sleep with you” she cried when she I gave her back to her mother.

“she is such a sweet child. So, it’s Musa only who doesn’t have children in this family”

“he has a son, he lives in the Eastern Cape though” Oh

“I have never heard Simphiwe talking about him”

“well, she doesn’t know”

What? Who doesn’t have secrets in this family. My eyes were so heavy I had a very long day I fell asleep on Monde’s arms.

I could hear someone knocking on the door I ignored it until Monde and went to attend whoever was at the door.

“hey sleepy heads” she said getting in. wow.

“I brought you breakfast” it doesn’t get any worse than this. It’s 6:30 AM. She put the breakfast down as I pretended to be fast asleep. When she was going out her and Monde kissed, I will never get used to this. NEVER.

But I really didn’t understand this woman she was hot and cold like an unreliable weather.

“she is trying please meet her halfway” I guess if I wasn’t trying too then I would be the bad guy here.

“when am I leaving?” I wanted to go home.

“you know you are part of this family now right? Which means you will have to come and live with us eventually”

“I know I’m just not ready” he sighed.

“you are so spoilt” he said shaking his head.

“you finally admit that you spoil me too much”

He laughed.

“simphiwe do you have ear buds” I asked her after we were done with the dishes, I insisted they were all treating me like a child I didn’t like it when people were fussing over me.

“I do, they are in my handbag I’ll go fetch them for you”

“no, it’s fine I will go, in your room, right?”

I went to her on my way I met with Ziyanda she smiled at me and it was genuine wait did that mean she really likes me. but what changed? I returned the smile as I passed her I am such an awkward person.

I could hear voices speaking inside Simphiwe’s room I was about to turn when I heard my name being mentioned now that had my full attention, I know eavesdropping is wrong and all but I couldn’t help myself this had my undivided attention.

“How could you marry her Monde are you crazy?” Masande.

“I have fallen in love with her I can’t help it”

What are they talking about, he wasn’t supposed to pay lobola?

“I was fine with this whole this I mean she is a lovely lady but after I heard no Monde you can be so stupid sometimes” Masande

Heard what?

“but bro as he said he had fallen in love with her”

“Musa, you were also part of this, what happened to you two. This is not how you were raised”

“you need to tell her the truth” Masande added.

What were these people hiding from me again?

“I can’t it will break her”

This must be big.

“but Monde eventually she will need to know the truth you can’t hide the truth from her forever” Musa

“okay Imagine I tell her what would I say? Hey Minenhle, I am the guy who raped you”

What? No, my ears were definitely failing me this is not true.

“mhlampe uzokuxolela”

It is true. At that moment, everything froze I couldn't move I didn't hear what they said afterwards. I was bleak.

A door opened and they all stood there with their eyes popped out.

“You heard?” Musa

My throat was dry I couldn't say anything I just stood there, Musa and Masande saw it best that they leave.

“Minenhle”

“Monde”

My baby.

The End.

