

AGAINST MY WILL

NOMZAMO

SACRIFICE, TEARS & LOVE



**eBooks
Teach**

BY AYANDA.N

Ss:02

INSERT 14

MPENDULO

“Baby please talk to me. You've been mad at me since you came back from work yesterday you didn't even touch my food after I've spent my whole day cooking for you” Khutso says on my heels.

She has been following me everywhere since I woke up. I slept on the couch last night I couldn't stand her. She's out here pretending to be a loving girlfriend knowing very well that she's cheating on me with a wealthy man I just don't understand why she didn't end things with me and I wonder how long has she been cheating on me. Thinking about it earns it a reckless chuckle tumbling out of my mouth. She could be HIV+ or worse I'm just glad that we are not intimate. Clearly she was going to infect me with whatever disease she contracted from her sugar daddy.

She grips my arm with both of her hands. “Baby please. Stop ignoring me. Tell me what I did so that I can fix it. You even refused to sleep in the bed with me.”

“Khutso please. Leave me alone I don't have time for this” I state picking up my briefcase.

She chuckles freeing my hand. “Now I get it” putting her hands on her waist. “You've found a girlfriend at your workplace now it all makes sense but I will find her and I will teach the both of you a lesson! You will not leave me for some skank that you met at work! I will not allow you. I supported you your whole life and you think you can do this to me? Haha I think TF not!” She shouts at me.

I shake my head. She's just being dramatic and not all of us are cheaters like her. Even if I were to start cheating on her It wouldn't be with someone from work but it was going

to be with Nomzamo. I fell in love with her when I spotted her on her spot that particular morning as I was going job hunting. I was not even planning on going there but my heart lead me and I had no choice but to follow it. And to tell you the truth I don't regret it. I have hope that our paths will cross again one day and if it wasn't for the ring on her finger I would've asked for her numbers. But I respect married women.

“Aren't you supposed to be preparing for work?”

“Work can wait I'm still talking to you. Who is the bitch?”

“I'll see you later” I say already stepping out of the house.

“Mpendulo! Don't you dare walk out on me when I'm talking to you!” She shouts running after me. “I will find that bitch and I will deal with her. The two of you will not find happiness!”

“Watch out Mpendulo!” One of the men I take the bus with me warns me.

A brick land on my back as I'm about to turn around to see what he's warning me about. Fuck! Khutso is out of her damn mind I'm telling you.

“Are you crazy?” I yell.

“This is only the beginning Mpendulo. The beginning!” She attempts to pick up another brick but one of the onlookers stops her. “Fuck you Mpendulo! Fuck you!”

I click my tongue and walk up to her. The fear in her eyes is visible she's never seen me like this before. I hate the fact that she pretends to be this perfect girl whereas she's just some random hoe who sleeps with old men for money and I won't tolerate her disrespectful demeanor.

I squeeze her cheeks with my hand and look at her straight in the eyes. "Don't you ever do shit like that again because I will cripple you. Don't you ever fucking disrespect me in front of people I've been far too patient with you. Stop pushing my buttons because you won't stand it when they start playing just don't." I let go of her cheeks and let go of her.

Everyone has a limit to tolerating disrespect and this is one of them for me. I've had it with her tantrums ai. My mood is already ruined and once my day gets ruined I become moody and do not talk to anyone because I say a lot of shit that I regret later once I start opening my mouth. Jidenna better not start with me today I'm really not in the mood.

Getting to work I find Jidenna waiting for me by the gate with a big smile plastered on her face.

"Good morning Mr. Khuzwayo" she greets sounding happy.

"Hi." I walk past her.

"You're in a foul mood this morning. Bad night?" She's on my heels.

"Morning rather."

“Want to talk about it? I'm a good listener you kn—”

“Please don't.” I stop her from talking any further.

“But I—”

“I'm not going to repeat myself try staying out of my face just for today I'm not in the mood” I tell her unlocking my office.

“Take the lunch at least it's mince & rice.”

“I'll pass” I tell her stepping inside my office. I shut the door in her face.

I step around my table after opening the binds and sit down opening my laptop. Tea can miss me for now maybe I'll drink it later. Khutso nxa. I need to end things with her it's too much.

“Mpendulo please open up we need to talk. I don't like seeing you like this.” Jidenna says outside my door. TF is she still doing here? I thought she left.

I don't respond to her she'll eventually leave that's for sure. And I need to start setting boundaries with her. I don't want to give her the impression that I'm interested in pursuing a romantic relationship with her our relationship should be strictly about work nothing else.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

Willow came here knocking a couple of minutes ago but I didn't attend to him and luckily for me the kids have already left for school. I don't even know what he was doing here so early in the morning gosh after last night I don't really know how I feel about us being friends and his lingered hug really put me off. But I hope that was the first & last time he hugs me I bet you his girlfriend wouldn't appreciate him hugging girls for more than a minute or two. A quick one is enough Lihle used to hug girls like that or maybe he did that because of my presence but still he respected me.

I log into Facebook and browse through and nothing interests me the perks of not having too many friends I have 110 friends 55 are family members and extended members 25 are my ex-school mates 13 are Lihle's friends of which I need to unfriend & block by the way. And 17 are just people I don't know. I also read Facebook stories but none of the writers posted anything and some take a long time to post but because the story is intriguing we stick around so that we know what will happen at the end. And I'll see Lwazi later it's still early now.

“Nomzamo! Open this fucking door right now ak'si kakho la!” Nonjabulo yells from outside and it's only now that she's coming back from wherever.

I stand from the couch and attend to the door. I chuckle when I see my leather jacket in her hand I open the door for her to come in. She smells terrible she smells of alcohol mixed with cigarettes and throw in a dash of sex too. I abrade my nose.

“Here's your jacket.” She hurls it at me and stomps off.

“As'thembe uyogeza. No woman should smell like that so early in the morning!” I yell after her.

“Voetsek njandini!” She yells back and I laugh.

“Ok'salayo take a bath or else you are not going out of that door. Ebile I don't mind scrubbing you!”

“Hlukani nami Nomzamo. Ngigxeke. Leave me alone!”

“Ok'salayo you are not going anywhere without taking a bath I will lock the both of us in here and throw the keys out of the window if it needs to!”

She comes to the lounge fuming her hands on her waist. I fold mine and look at her. She's slightly shorter than me.

“What the hell is wrong with you Nomzamo?”

“The fact that usaba amanzi that's what's wrong with me. And I will not allow you to continue being a laughing stock in the community and be a sperm dish for all these men who want to release their dirty semen inside you in exchange for beer and money to gamble. You need to take charge of your life Nonjabulo and I'm here to make sure that you go back to whom you used to be before Tumelo divorced your arse. You need to reclaim your life back and you won't do that nawudodi. Think of your kids.”

“Shut up Nomzamo! Thula! You don't fucking know anything or how I feel! I loved Tumelo & I still do. You don't understand.”

“Where do you refusing to bath have anything to do with Tumelo? Just because you are a divorcee that doesn't mean that you must be seen as one. Nonjabulo you have kids think about them for once and stop ruining your life any further. And futhi ke I heard that Abigail was in a process of becoming your provider in funding your gambling lifestyle. So wena you were ready to sell her for sex? You wanted to ruin her childhood life and her real-life before it all began?”

I see tears clouding her eyes. But I don't care right now she needs to make sure that she fixes her life.

“Your tears don't move me anyhow. Go and bath right now I don't want to repeat myself Nonjabulo I really don't” I hiss.

She nods turning around with tears streaming down her cheeks. I shake my head and I head to my room. Nonjabulo has lost so much weight but at least I have small clothes that I was going to donate to some charity and the clothes are still in good condition. I'll

only take out the ones she's going to wear for now then I will make a day and sort them out. I go to her room to put the clothes that she's going to wear on top of the bed.

The smell that hits my nostril immediately after I open the door makes me dizzy. I cover my nose stepping inside. The bed is unmade there are used condoms on top of the head dresser you can see that some of them have been here for months if not weeks. Clothes are all over the place dirty panties in here too used pads. Jesus I've never seen something like this before. Hiybo yinkinga le. How does she sleep when she's around though and to think that the kids used to sleep in this room makes me cringe. I step out of the room without closing the door I want her to see that I was here. Angizodlaliwa wu Nonjabulo mina I refuse. She will clean her bedroom today ebile. I will force her.

Looking at the time on the wall stepping inside the lounge it's just after 09:45. There's still time for her to clean her room then she will go and play her cards in peace without anyone bothering her.

“Urhm Nomzamo.” She calls and I turn to look at her I find her playing with her fingers. She's covered her body with a very filthy towel that used to be white but because filthiness took place it is now dark white not even cream. “I'll clean it. My room I mean.”

“Good. Take these clothes you are going to wear them. And once you are done cleaning your room you will come back here and I'll freehand your hair but you need it to wash it first. Yeah?” She nods taking the clothes from me and walks away.

This is the first step. She'll claim her life back in no time I believe she will. My phone rings and it's Lwazi.

“Hey Lwazi.”

“Hey chomi. I was confirming if you are still coming or what” he sounds sad.

“I'm still coming choma. I'll be the around 11:00 -12:00 I'm still busy with something.”

“Okay I was just making sure. See you then.” He disconnects the call.

“Was that Willow?” Nonjabulo asks sitting next to me.

“No. It was Lwazi.”

“Lwazi the gay?” I nod. “You can't befriend him Nomzamo. He's cursed and he's HIV+.”

I chuckle. “First things first do you know your status?”

“This is not about me Nomzamo.”

“I know. But do you know your status? Do you know how he contracted it?” She shakes her head.

“I. Well rumors. Tha—”

“That's the problem with you. You believe in rumors instead of finding out the truth you rather entertain rumors. What if he got it whilst he was still in her mother's womb? What if he was raped? Has any of that occurred in that mind of yours? Has it?” She shakes her head. “Do yourself a favor and go and get tested it's free advice.”

“I'm sorry.”

“You don't have to apologize Nonjabulo.”

“You can go and see him. I'll just clean my room.”

“And don't leave before I come back the kids must find someone when they come back from school.”

“I will.”

“Cool. Let me go and take a proper bath” I say standing.

“I've rinsed the bathtub” she tells me with a smile on her face.

Nonjabulo is very beautiful Jessica Nkosi's level of beauty. Seeing her this clean makes me smile I'm sure aunt Norah was going to be happy seeing her daughter this clean.

★»★«

ENHLE

My pussy is on fire Mpilo really fucked me he was not even gentle and no foreplay took place. I cried myself to sleep and now I have a serious headache from all the crying that I did. How did we get here? Like how? This is not the life I've planned on living I didn't sign up for this shit. I signed up for a happy marriage and a perfect lifestyle not this abuse that Mpilo is subjecting us to all of a sudden. And looking at the root cause of it it's Mazana. Her getting married to Mpilo brought us nothing but pain & mystery she somehow woke the monster in Mpilo that we didn't know existed. We were so happy before she came into the picture and now everything is a mess. Everything is spiraling out of control it's a disaster. I will have to set up a meeting with Nonkolosi & Lenah and discuss a way forward. Mazana needs to leave I don't know how but she needs to leave and just maybe things will go back to normal. To how it used to be before they took a route that I'm not familiar with.

Stepping out of the bathtub is a mission but I need my body to heal so I'm using some ointments to soothe the pains and the burning heat from my pussy. I throw in my robe and step out of the bathroom I gasp when I see Mpilo sitting in my bed with a banquet of blue roses in his hands he knows that I love them. And if this is his way of asking for forgiveness then I'm not going to fall for it. What he did is unjustifiable.

“I've brought you your favorite flowers.”

“I don't want them. You can keep them.”

“I'm not asking you I'm telling you that I've brought you flowers.”

“And I said I don't want them. Keep them for yourself. What you did is unforgivable Mpilo.”

“And you think I'm here to ask for forgiveness? Then you're wrong sweetheart. I brought these flowers because they will be your friend in the next coming three days.”

“Askies?”

“Yes I'm going to lock all four of you in your rooms for 3 days and I'm confiscating your phones” he proudly says.

I chuckle. “What has gotten into you? What nonsense is this Mpilo?” I'm angry.

“Since when do you question me MaDlamini?” The change of tone in his voice is not missed.

“I'm sorry but I'm not following you. Why are we going to become prisoners in our bedrooms?”

He stands and I swallow at nothing. "You're still questioning me?" He walks up to me. I quickly shake my head. "I'd hate to see you covered in fresh bruises while the old ones are still healing" he says brushing my cheek. "Don't ever question me have I made myself clear?" I quickly nod. "Your phone now."

I free from him and go to where my phone is charging my hands are shaking. I remove it from the charger and hand it to him.

"Excellent" he says making his way towards the door. "On second thoughts I'm not going to lock you in your rooms I don't want to find one of you dead when I come back from my trip" he yanks the door open and walks out banging the door after him.

I jump up and tighten my rope. Sitting down on top of the bed my whole body trembles and tears stream down my cheeks. I miss my mother I truly miss her. I wonder how are the other ladies holding up especially Nonkolosi she's too sensitive.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

I text Lwazi when I get to the spot that he told me to wait for him at. Looking around only a few people are walking in the streets and there's a tavern nearby I'm sure this is where Nonjabulo drinks her future away. Oh speaking of Nonjabulo she told me to take my time she'll attend to the kids and help them with homework. She even cleaned up her room was I not impressed? It was like seeing your child's school grades or them becoming leaders of some sort. She even said she will cook dinner babazani bo.

“Nomzamo.” I turn to look at the person and I find Lwazi with a nervous smile on his face. I smile & hug him.

“Choma” I say pulling out from the hug. “How are you?” My smile never leaving my face.

“You look beautiful up close” he compliments taking me all in.

“Stop playing with me” I link my arm with his. “I'm hungry where can we get food?” I ask as we start walking in the direction he came from.

“Food? They don't sell green salads around here.”

I laugh. “Green salads? Who said I eat those? Chile I eat real food not rabbit food.”

“Hmmm. Do you eat cow head?”

“No but I do eat cow heel. Inqina elibabayo with pap.”

“Choma I know just a place that sells the best.”

“Asiye then.”

“So Willow. My crush. What's the story between the two of you?”

“Willow is your crush?”

“Always has been but too bad he doesn't even look my way. Lordit he detests gay people with all of his heart. He & his friends used to bully me every chance they got at school I never had friends or an awesome childhood. I was forever alone called all sorts of names plus my family is not well off so you can imagine how awkward things were when I was supposed to wear casual at school. And Christmas and New Year were the worst because I was always locked inside the house. After all I had nothing to wear. I'm sorry it's just that after the weekend I—”

“It's okay you don't have to apologize. Talking helps and I'm only here to lend my big ears” I say wiggling my brows and he laughs.

“Stop it Nomzamo. I don't remember when was the last time I genuinely laughed with someone. Most of the time the only people that make me laugh are Youtube videos.”

“I laugh every chance I get even though there's no reason to laugh but I laugh still. Have you watched amantombazana the girls vs abafana the boys?”

“I always scroll past them they look boring to me.”

“I recommend you to try them. You won't regret it and there are some lessons to be learned in all of them. And please subscribe to Sassenathi studios.”

“For real?”

“Qondile.” I laugh.

“I'll binge-watch them when I get home. We have a community Wifi so I never have to worry about buying data.”

We finally get to the caravan where they sell African food. I give Lwazi the money to buy while I sit down. Phew it's good to be out of the house.

“Oh my God. Here comes my main crush the man I'm in love with in my dreams. Don't look back he's coming here” Lwazi says fanning his face and sitting down.

“Who is that?” Whispering.

“Ghost. I don't know his real name though.”

“Oh I see” I say nodding.

“Ladies” this ghost person says as he passes by.

“Hi” Lazwi responds sultry. “Aren't you a lady?” He asks.

“I am why?”

“Why didn't you agree when ghost was greeting us?”

“I didn't think that he was greeting. He just said ladies and passed. Pardon me for being ignorant.”

He laughs. “You & I are going to be best of friends. Anyways did you see how hot he is?”

“I didn't realize. The only man I find hot is the stranger that I once helped one morning and he's been living rent-free in my mind ever since. God. He's all that I need in a man.”

“Love at first glance kind of love?” I nod and he laughs.

“I know exactly what you mean. I once had a person like that but he passed away in a terrible car accident.”

“I'm sorry.”

“No worries choma. I've moved on and I'm healed.” I nod. “So we are going to eat at my home yeah?”

“Yeah no problem.”

I look at this ghost person then at Lwazi and chuckle. They actually make a cute couple and it looks like ghost is playing for Lwazi's team but I'm not sure it's just innocent speculation on my side...

Lwazi stands to go and fetch the food and he misses a step but ghost catches him before he can even fall. I giggle and take a picture. This ought to be interesting.

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INSERT 15

NOMZAMO

My day with Lwazi is going really great and I like the fact that we have a lot of things in common for instance; we both don't drink we know how to bake & cook we love the same genre of music and we both don't have friends. So we are automatically best friends. I even got to meet his mother who by the way looks really sick I didn't ask him what sickness his mother I just sent my healing to her. Anyways we are in Lwazi's room lying on the carpet with our backs glancing at the roof we've just finished eating for the second time. Lwazi's room is simple there's only a bed here a wardrobe that seems like it has seen all the wars that were happening in the past and two laundry baskets.

“I still can't believe that ghost actually halted me from falling. I mean he held me with his ripped arms Nomzamo I felt so safe. My God it all feels surreal” he says fanning his face. “I don't think I will sleep tonight because if I do I'll probably dream about him and when he said ‘next time be careful’ I wanted to kiss him right there & there.”

I laugh. "Geez. You're acting as if like he asked for your numbers or something but I did see you blushing. So was it deliberately or you were too nervous to pass him?"

"I was too nervous to pass him I lost a step I just didn't know how to walk. Hear me sounding like a teenager right now but I can't help it things like these barely happen."

"Maybe this the beginning of many great things to come between the two of you and that will not happen whilst indoors. I think we need to go out more and experience life. I come from a very shitty marriage well it wasn't really shitty but yeah that. Anyways I'm also someone who loves being indoors and at some point I thought that it was normal but then I realized that there's no harm in going out once in a while and it had to take me my marriage not to work to see all that. Kahle - kahle bengizincisha (I was depriving myself of) I nice time." Kwayisholo u Fatima.

"Yeah we should go out more and live a little. So this rubbish of yours where is he?"

"I don't know and I don't care. I just want him to sign the divorce papers that he'll be served with I'm so done with him."

"Do you think that he will give you the divorce that easily?"

I sigh. "I don't know. But I'm sure Amara will force him to sign the papers so that they will get married and live happily ever after with their soccer team."

“Still. Just be careful Nomzamo. You've been with this man for more than 5 years and your souls are tied together you guys shared more than just love and its worst with you because he is your first and he's been around until he met you and decided to settle and he's never done cleansing and tried breaking all the souls that he got from his previous lovers. Some people have dirty souls Nomzamo. Sex is more than just sleeping with your partner sex destroys lives especially if you've been sleeping around. You don't know who your previous partner has been with and if those people have demons or what.”

“Yeah. Wait I didn't tell you that how do you know that he's been around? And what are these soul ties that you keep talking about and how does one break it? In fact how can it destroy one's life?”

“I just know anyway I—”

My phone rings as he's about to tell me more I flip it over and aunt Norah's name pops up on the screen.

“It's my aunt let me hear what she wants.” He nods. “Aunt Norah” I say immediately answering her call.

“Nomzamo. Where are you?”

“I'm at Lwazi's home. Is everything okay?”

“No everything is not okay. It's 15:55 you're not at home and the kids are still in their uniform and they are hungry. Wh—”

Sitting upright. "What? But how? I mean Nonjabulo promi... Urhm I'm coming now. I should've known see you in 10 minutes."

"Okay" she disconnects the call.

I sigh standing up. I should've known no one changes in just a day mxm. Nonjabulo really disappointed me just when I think we were on the right track she off ramps and what's more annoying is that; she's the one who said I must leave she promised that she'll look after the kids. Trusting too easily is a load of bullshit truly speaking. Well at least she bathed.

"I've got to go aunt Norah says the kids are still in their uniform and they're hungry so I need to attend them."

"Let me accompany you then. I told you that Nonjabulo shouldn't be trusted."

"Yeah. I thought that she was really willing to change but it seems like I was wrong" I say as we step out of his bedroom that he shares with three of his siblings. "Wait I think I've forgotten something in your room I'll be back" I tell him already making my way back to his bedroom.

I remove the pouch of my phone take out the last R200 that I had in me and put it under the pillowcase I hope he won't feel offended by this gesture that I'm doing for him. I step out of the room. I bid my farewell to his mother who's watching Dumisa channel old people and their love for this channel always defeat me.

“Took you long” Lwazi says immediately I step outside.

“I was still bidding my farewell to your mother let's go.”

People love staring my Lord. And you can see when someone is gossiping about you like these three girls who are wearing gowns and standing a couple of houses away from Lwazi looking at us straight in the eyes as we are walking. Futhi ke they don't have future these ones no need to ask.

“Those are very well-known gossipers around here everyone is used to them hence they no longer pay attention to them and their outdated gossip.”

“I see. Are they working?”

“No school dropouts. All they know it's grooving every weekend and gossip.”

“Oh I see. The groovists I'm sure Nonjabulo drinks with them.”

“Haike I don't know about that. But they are in the same WhatsApp group after all so everything is possible” he says shrugging.

I laugh. “Yeah I guess.” We pass them and I continue laughing.

“Nomzamo!” Lwazi punches me lightly and chuckles.

“What?”

“You should've seen their looks when you walked past them laughing.”

“They'll be fine. Anyways I'll call you later.”

“I'll be waiting.” We hug. “Let me go and cook” he says breaking the hug.

“Dish up for me too” I joke and he lets out a nervous chuckle.

“I will.”

Getting home I find aunt Norah sitting under the tree shade on the grass they stand when they see me. I passed Nonjabulo playing cards and I'm so disappointed with what she's wearing. Hhayi shame uyawupetula umoya straight. Uyanyova shame. I bet she placed a bet with the clothes yuhh I'm so done with her. Clearly she doesn't want to be helped.

“Aunt Norah. Babies.” I open the butler since the door wasn't locked.

“Sawubona sis Nomzamo.” The kids greet in unison.

"I'm sorry for keeping you outside I had something to take care of. Go and take off your uniform then you'll come back and eat" I say and they step inside the house running.
"Tea?" I ask aunt Norah.

"Sis Nomzamo your room is locked" Abigail tells me.

"Argh baby sorry" I give her the keys and she runs back to the room.

"Oh no tea for me. I'm not staying I have to go and cook for Zac before he knocks off."

"There's no need. There's last night leftovers pap & grilled chicken with tomato gravy you can pre-heat when you get home."

"Ey you've helped me plus I was not in the mood to stand on the stove."

I laugh. "I know. So that tea?"

"Please. Do you have muffins?" I nod. "So you bake daily?"

"No I bake enough."

"I see why don't you start a business? No one is selling scones around here plus you can bake cakes and trust me when I say the money will come in."

“That was part of the plan but I first need to settle and then try selling maybe for 5 people and I'll take it from there.”

“I can even help you wherever I can” she offers and I nod.

It won't hurt to try but I first need to build a strong customer base and maybe I might try selling scones and muffins at Abigail's school. Just need to draft it out. My phone beeps from my pocket I take it out and it's a message from Lwazi I view it.

“Choma.” It reads and it's accompanied by tears of emojis. I smile and put it back in my pocket.

“So how was your first day of being with Lwazi and what kind of a person is he?”

“Well...”

★»★«

ENHLE

Mpilo left a few hours ago he didn't tell us where he was going but he said he'll be gone for three days this journey is very important for him to take and he must do it because he's securing our future so he said. And yes he took all our phones. The coldness in his eyes made me tremble in fear they were so cold.

“So this is our life now?” Nonkolosi asks absent-mindedly.

We are sitting in the lounge all four of us. Mazana & Lenah are lost in their thoughts.

“Seems like it

Sponsored

absent-mindedly.

We are sitting in the lounge all four of us. Mazana & Lenah are lost in their thoughts.

“Seems like it” I respond.

She chuckles. “How the hell did we get to this point? Like how?”

“I don't know but it has to do with Mazana. Ever since she arrived things have not been the same things changed drastically and she resurrected whatever animal lives inside Mpilo. She's ruining our lives!” I raise my voice I want her to hear me talking.

“The very first time I didn't click with her I knew that there was something off about her. I knew but none of you took me seriously when I said there's something offish about her. Look now she made Mpilo turn against us and it's quite sad because whatever voodoo shit she did to Mpilo is working on her too.” Nonkolosi.

“Don't blame me I did nothing. This is all Enhle's fault. That stunt she pulled at spur is what got us into this situation in the first place if only she behaved like a respectful wife of a billionaire none of this would've happened. We're in this mess because of her and she better make sure that she gets us out of it.” Mazana.

I laugh sarcastically. “You're saying that all that is happening here is my fault?”

“You heard me loud & clear Enhle. It's your fault yours & yours alone.”

“Don—”

“Enough!” Lenah cuts me mid-sentence. “Stop this blaming each other game of yours. One way or the other it was guaranteed that one day we will see the other side of Mpilo that we didn't even know existed we were warned or have you forgotten that?” She asks moving her eyes in all 3 of us.

Yes we warned that one of these bad days we will see the other side of Mpilo that we never knew existed and it's not a good one. I didn't expect it to show this soon and now the words of that old woman that I pushed about the kingdom crumbling down replays in my mind. Who or what is exactly Mpilo? I have a lot of questions running in my mind right now but no answers. Futhi ke what triggered this other side of him? It can't be the spur saga.

“I still say Mazana is to be blamed for this. She's the root cause of it all I hate her. I don't know about you but I want her out of this house. Mpilo must see to it that he finds her a place to stay where he can abuse and rape her freely and leave us out of it” Nonkolosi says.

“Stop acting dumb Nonkolosi. You know very well that she'll never go anywhere Mpilo said it from the beginning that all of his wives will stay in one house no one will have her own house. It seems like you ladies have forgotten all that we were told and agreed to when we got married to Mpilo. Or maybe the money and the rich lifestyle made you forget all that?” Lenah sounds very disappointed right now. “After all we were once humble women until we got introduced to the life of money and we went in too deep. We got lost in the world of money and forgot everything else. So nje this blaming game won't work. Let's just pray and have hope that when he comes back from his trip he'll be a better man and will give us back our freedom.”

“The only sensible wife around here” Mazana says standing. “Excuse me I need to lie down.”

“I wish you never wake up” Nonkolosi says. Lenah & I gasp.

“Nangabe sewungu Nkulunkulu phela njalo. Ngisho yena uSomandla qobo lwakhe” Mazana responds to her walking away.

“You do know that the tongue is a very powerful tool right?”

The questions make Mazana stop walking she slowly turns to look at Nonkolosi her head tilted.

“I know and will it be wrong of me to wish that your womb be damaged and you never get to have kids again?” She asks Nonkolosi.

“That would be evil of you to wish such an unfortunate thing for Nonkolosi Mazana” I tell her.

She chuckles. “And her wishing me death is not evil right Enhle?”

“It is but I—”

“Stop defending her Enhle. She wished me death allow me to curse her womb to never carry any children. May she die a barren I curse her womb” she clicks her tongue and walks away leaving me & Lenah in shock.

“You bloody witch!” Nonkolosi yells. “I hate you! I really do!”

“Did she just curse her womb?” Lenah asks as if she didn't hear Mazana correctly.

“Yes and Nonkolosi wished her bad first guess she was retaliating this is bad real bad Michael Jackson” I say clapping hands.

“Wow. What a witchcraft” she says unbelievably.

I don't want to imagine what Mpilo will do if it happens that Mazana passes on or Nonkolosi can't bear kids for him. Iyoh it will be a real disaster. A terrible one plus we will also be included since we know that they really can't stand each other. He'll punish us too for not telling him anything this is a mess and these two better make sure that they fix their issues before this reaches Mpilo's ears. I don't want to suffer at his mercy once again my body won't survive his wrath and my soul is emotionally sapped.

“Let's pray. I know we never pray but let's make an exception just for today” Lenah says.

I laugh. “Pray? You mean we should talk to someone who doesn't exist? Hhayi wena musa ukudlala kabi. We don't do that here. Anyway let me go and prepare us something to eat I'm hungry” I say already walking towards the kitchen.

★»★«

MPENDULO

I'm preparing myself to retire to bed when the kitchen door opens and the smell of alcohol is the first thing to hit my nostrils I shake my head. Khutso comes to the lounge with a bottle of Russian bear in her hand and she's still wearing the dress she was wearing in the morning I don't know when she left because when I got home I didn't find her and the house was how I left it in the morning. Or maybe she never came here after the stunt she pulled in the morning. So I tidied up here & there and cooked supper even though I was tired.

"Yah njandini" she says almost falling but she steadies herself. "What did your girlfriend bring for you today for lunch? Do you think I don't know that she cooked for you mince & spaghetti yesterday? And by the way she's such a great cook. Better than the chefs at work."

Argh I forgot to throw away the food the minute I got back but I forgot because I was on a phone call it wasn't deliberate.

I switch off the TV ignoring her completely. I won't do this with her since she's drunk because the next thing we will get physical with each other and I don't want that. So ignoring her is best in this case.

"Answer me Mpendulo! What did that hoe bring for you to lunch on today huh? Is it pap & chicken? Steak?" She gulps down the vodka.

"I'm not doing this with you Khutso. Go and take a bath then go to sleep we will talk in the morning when you're sober."

"I want to talk now Mpendulo!"

“Do you also talk to that man who dropped you off here yesterday morning the way you're talking to me right now? Do you?” I really didn't want to raise it but she's pushing me and acting like a saint.

“Wh-what are you talking about?” She acts confused.

“I'm talking about the big car that dropped you off here yesterday morning I saw you disembarking from it Khutso. It's funny how you are the one cheating but you keep on accusing me of cheating. Unlike you I know how to control my zipper.”

“I you must've mistaken me for someone else it wasn't me. Why are you making me a bad guy here Mpendulo? You are the one cheating on me! Don't you dare act smart on me don't you fucking dare!” And just then her phone rings on top of the couch where she left it and “Sugar D 3” name pops on the screen.

I laugh. “Your phone is ringing answer it ” I say and she takes a quick glance at it. “Sugar daddy 3 is calling answer him” I point at the phone with my head.

“That's not my phone. I don't know who stored those numbers there” she denies. Cute. She even denies her own cellphone with her pink pouch.

I shrug. “Guess it's mine then” I pick it up.

“What the hell are you do—”

“Finally.” The deep voice deeper than mine halts her from talking any further. “I’ve been calling you all day sugar baby I even thought that something bad happened to you or that stupid man of yours with no balls confiscated your phone?” He sounds aggravated.

I chuckle. “Come and fetch her together with her clothes man with balls” I disconnect the call and look at Khutso who’s sitting on the floor sobbing. I feel so is respected right now I chuckle again not believing this.

She crawls to me. “Baby please I’m sorry forgive me” she cries hugging my knees.

“Get up and go pack all your shit and leave my house! Go to that man of yours with balls. I don’t ever want to see you again ever. It’s quite obvious that you told this man of yours about how useless I am and how you are the one supporting me. Hhe I actually can’t believe this. Now this explains all the money you’ve had you were getting it from him and the others since he’s number 3. Fuck! I’m such a fool! Excuse me I need some air” I say walking out of the house.

Fuck this shit! At least the truth is finally out but it still hurts like hell it hurts being cheated on shit!

★»★«

NOMZAMO

“Usekhulelwe nalo omunye” (the other one is pregnant) says the first voice.

“Okubi wukuthi lo ngeke afike ezinyangeni ezintathu phela manje usayothatha amandla amasha lomlisa lengane iyoba yisihlabelo” (the bad thing is that this one won't reach three months the man has gone to renew his powers and the baby will be the sacrifice) says another.

“Kuzomosheka kakhulu. Sekuyisikhathi sokuthi angene emagcekeni akwa Khuzwayo” (things will get ruined worse. Now it's time for her to step inside the Khuzwayo's yard) says the first voice.

“Asikafiki isikhathi sakhe sokuthi angangena kulawo magceke. Siyeza esakhe isikhathi masesifikile kowonakala okunengi” (her time hasn't come yet for her to step into that yard. Her time is coming and when it has finally come a lot of things will get ruined) says a new voice.

“Kodwa usabadla abantwana abanganacala” (but he still sacrifices with the innocent babies) the first voice.

“Nalabafazi abalaleli isijeziso sabo lesi mabachubeka ngalendlela ebahamba ngayo basazojeziseka kakhulu. Nomzamo uzowazi uma isikhathi sifikile uzophumelela sisi kulo mjaho. Wuwena ozonqoba emaphethelweni kodwa ngeke kube lula” (those wives

don't listen this is their punishment and if they continue behaving the way they do then they will get severely punished. Nomzamo you will know when the time has come you will win this race. You will be one who will conquer in the end but it won't be easy) says the new voice.

I flutter my eyes open and jolt upright heart beating out of my chest and my pillow drenched in sweat. Dammit! Not the dreams again thought they left for good and who the hell are the Khuzwayo's? I mean there are too many Khuzwayo's in our country. I pick up my phone from the bedside table and glance at the time and it reads 02:57. Shyt! I wipe my face and lie back down and look up the ceiling.

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CHAPTER 16

MPENDULO

It's been a week since Khutso moved out of the house but she said she'll be back that was not the last I see of her. Her sugar daddy 3 didn't fetch her and he blocked her calls but she had back up. So the next available sugar daddy came to fetch her after crying to him claiming that I've hit her the man didn't even come inside the house he just texted her that he's outside. She picked up her bags and looked at me with pleading eyes before marching to the door. Now I'm a free man! I can do whatever fucking shit I want and not worrying about Khutso or stressing about her whereabouts furthermore no one will disrespect me and remind me every fucking chance they get that they're supporting me and shit. I'm sure the news has already reached the wives' ears and they are so happy in that mansion knowing that Khutso has finally ended things with a loser like me who couldn't even afford to take her out.

Anyways today I'm going to Pretoria. Samke invited me to the house of one of his friends I'll be going with him. Samke's friends are all fuckboys and I have no doubt that there'll be more ladies than men. Who knows? Maybe I might score myself some pussy tonight it's been a long since I last had some action I'm sure my dick thinks that I've passed on or something. I'm wearing my simple black jeans black shirt that I've unbuttoned on the top half military boots and I throw in a black Cardigan that falls past my knees and a gold chain to complete my look arh how can I forget my watch. I got a haircut and trimmed my small beard earlier today after knocking off at work. Haike not to blow my own horn but mans look good.

My phone rings from on top of the couch I pick it up and Samke's name pops up on the screen.

“Mathafakha.”

“I'm outside you piece of shit. Get your ass here” he disconnects the call.

I laugh shaking my head and picking up my man sling bag and I walk out of the house locking the door behind me. Sample+Q is chatting up some chick I shake my head and step inside the car. They exchange numbers.

“She has some fine ass. Why didn't you tell me about her?” He asks roaring the engine to life.

“Dude TF you mean? I don't even know her let alone ever saw her. It was my first time seeing her.”

“Oh okay. Anyways the girlfriend allowed you to come with me? You know how much she loathes me she thinks that I'm a bad influence on you. I mean I can never influence an old man to do the shit that I do not unless he doesn't have a backbone.”

I chuckle. “I ended things with her.”

“What?” He sounds shocked. “Tell me that you're joking man.”

“I wish I was but I'm not.”

“Who would've thought that the Love of my life pair will break up? This is worth celebrating and tonight you better make sure that you get some pussy. A fine peach ass and thunder thighs. Don't go for the all-black-everything girls those ones are not the best. Well for me they aren't the best I prefer my huns yellow.”

“Different strokes for different folks. I for one don't go for looks body and color. I go for love and how you carry yourself as a woman beauty will fade at some point and the body will get wrinkled but dignity & respect will always be there. A happy & warm home is what I desire.”

He laughs. “Jokes mfana. People no longer do love ntwana yami it's just a give-give situation no feelings involved.”

“Speak for yourself. There are people who have genuine love out there and if we look deeper in the wilderness we will find our soul mates.”

“Ai stay in your dreamland Mpendulo. In fact dream some more and by the time you wake up you'll realize the reality of life not this fairy tale of yours about true love existing.”

“Fuck! You are a hopeless romantic razo yereses” I whistle and he laughs.

“As long as I get to hit the pussy all is well” he says shrugging.

“Do you even use a condom?”

“Condom? No I hit it raw” he states proudly.

“Mjita? For real?”

“100% qondile.”

“Aren't you scared of contracting diseases?”

“There's always ARVs to take. I mean I'm already taking them so what's the point of having sex with a condom whereas you can hit it raw and feel the skin.”

I want to answer him but I don't know what to say. Izogula le one and by the time he realizes that It'll be too late. Too fucking late. This one clearly doesn't care about his health imagine all the innocent women he infected with HIV? Wait it is said that if he takes his treatment and sleeps with one partner the partner won't get sick right? Or the partner must take prep to prevent themselves from contracting HIV. Now if he sleeps with multiple women without using a condom how many of those women has he infected? And again how many women that also have HIV has he slept with? Weeeh waze wanguSomandla ngempilo yakhe. He doesn't care at all this one he lives in the moment. Wait until he's bedridden and whispering “geu” he'll wish that he lived a careful life and not chase after girls. But what do I know? In fact let me leave his problems and focus on mine.

“Ai if you say so mjita. Put in some music and can we pass by Mjeke's and grab 12 for the road.”

“Now you're talking my language. You look handsome by the way Razo.”

“I know man and you don't look bad yourself.”

He snorts. “You mean I look good with this BMW overall? I think you need glasses because wow you sure as hell seeing things that aren't there. Anyways this is not my final outfit. My clothes are at Tshego's house.”

“Oh okay then.”

He puts in Big Zulu x Imali eningi as we cruise. I hope I won't regret going to this party I seriously need to loosen up a bit and see if I still have my groove on.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

I've told my mother that my dreams are back they keep occurring at night they are very vivid it has come to a point where I'm seeing a cave situated in the deep scary forest with trees howling animal noises and leaves rattling like crazy you can clearly tell that there's an evil person dwelling there and also people wearing black cloaks covering their faces making their way inside the cave. It's so scary and seeing a lot of blood is what wakes me up mostly at night even with the lights on I still dream I don't know what the universe is trying to tell me but whatever it is I'm not interested. Anyways my mother said I must always pray before I sleep I tried and it's not working. The women in my dreams keep saying it is not yet my time but the others say I must free them from the devil's house I'm so flabbergast. Shayt it's frustrating. I can't even go and consult because I don't believe in ancestors but now my life is a mess I don't even know what to take or do. My mother is a devoted Christian while my father is an African man he's the one who does all the traditional stuff and consulting on our

behalf. I love the fact that they respect each other's preferences. Dad always says; "we worship God and acknowledge ancestors." I'm yet to acknowledge them...

Oh and my mom told me that he saw Lihle driving a big car and people are talking Lihle is going to rebuild his house he even quit his job. Well congratulations to him on his new endeavors. I guess I was the one making his life stagnant now he is flourishing. Ai it's true when they say the people that we are dating play a role in our lives it's either they elevate us or they don't at all.

Willow has been coming to knock here all week and I'll ignore him. I wasn't in the mood to see him plus the dreams were unsettling my soul I didn't even visit Lwazi this week. I told him that I went back home to fix some things I'll let him know when I'm back. He's been texting me daily and I felt bad for lying to him but understand where I'm coming from. The week was rough and an outing would've done but it's late now. Guess I'll just go buy myself some Kota or springbok combo then come back and binge on movies. It's payday today and everyone is in the clubbing mood because there's already loud music coming from the second street away from mine the streets are also lively. Nonjabulo is back to her old self and she hasn't been home for two days and I guess she won't be home this coming weekend.

Bajabulile aunt Norah's last daughter has asked for the kids for the weekend since she's throwing a massive party for her eldest son. Trust me when I say I wanted to refuse them from attending the party but when I saw the excitement in their eyes when Norah told them I decided otherwise. What pisses me off is that when the kids were still living in poor conditions and underfed they didn't try lending a helping hand towards their sister by taking the kids until their mother got back to her senses. And maybe Nonjabulo is doing all those things and is seeing them as a coping mechanism especially the gambling simply because when she's looking at those kids she sees their father in them and the embarrassment hurt & rejection he put her through plus aunt Norah has her issues too and she's in a happy relationship yena she doesn't have time to stress herself about Nonjabulo's failed marriage and state of mind. Maybe if aunt Norah together with Bajabulile & Moloko sat down with Nonjabulo and supported her through her trying times maybe and I mean just maybe Nonjabulo wouldn't have turned out the way she is. I low-key blame them truth be told but then again the kids just want to have fun. I wonder if she was going to invite them if I wasn't around. Abigail steps inside the house breathing heavily.

"Sis'Nomzamo. Aunt Bajabulile is coming I saw her car approaching" she says sounding really excited.

"Okay go and get your bags ready and tell the others to finish eating."

She nods her head and disappears to my bedroom.

The sound of a car pulling up outside the gate makes me roll my eyes inwardly. And a knock follows shortly. Before I can even summon her in she's already inside the house looking around. I don't know if it's me or maybe it was a long time since I last saw her but she has lost a lot of weight. Or maybe she's banting or dieting. She's wearing a leather jumpsuit with block heels and hoop earrings her curly weave screams expensive but her husband has money after all.

"Wow this is not how I was expecting to find the house I was expecting to find it filthy as it was before. I mean it seems like women with failed marriages love living in filthy places and not take care of their kids. Well it's unfortunate that you don't have any kids of your own Nomzamo." She scrunches her nose and looks at me from head to toe. "And you lo—"

"Kids! Get your bags your aunt is here to fetch you!" I yell cutting her mid-sentence.

"Yo—"

"I'm not in the mood Bajabulile. And why do you look older than your age? Hawu you have eye bags too? I'm sure it's marriage stress that shit ain't no child's play" I state not jokingly.

She's going through hell but she's scared of being a returned soldier like me and her sister. Yena ke she'd rather stay in that unhealthy marriage for what? Women need to know their worth and not settle for bullshit well it's all talk because the pumping organ that sends us straight to gowishing has a mind of its own.

"We are ready to go sis'Nomzamo" Abigail announces standing beside me. The others have already stepped out of the house.

"Have fun then."

"We will sis Nomzamo" she says running out of the house.

"So you decided to play mother to Nonjabulo's kids while she gambles her life away?"

"Yes I have. Is there a problem with that?" I arch my brow and cross my arms before me.

"Yes there is. How can you mother another grown woman's children while you don't have any?"

"Because it's the right thing to do. There's a term that says; it takes a village to raise a child but I don't think you are familiar with that term yeah?"

"Mxm whatever!" She turns on her heels and steps out of the kitchen banging the door behind her. I laugh going to lock the door. The sun has officially set and I don't want any disturbance and just then my phone rings on top of the kitchen counter. I attend to it and it's Lwazi.

"Choma you won't believe what I'm about to tell you. I mean I don't believe it myself but babe I'm at ghost's house warming" he half screams.

"What? But how did you end up there?" I ask him going to switch on the kettle.

"Well my cousin Tebatso was invited and since she isn't familiar with my neighborhood she gave me an address of a specific house and street and since I'm familiar with the street I accompanied her

and she begged me to stay. My God I can't believe this. But he didn't see me because I stepped out of that house as if I'm being chased by a dog.”

I laugh. “Shame you poor thing. You are deep in love with him and you can't even hide it why don't you just get drunk and declare your love for him?”

He sneers. “Ewww choma. You know I'd never do that even when I'm drunk and choma akusi ma hunk yi wrestling.”

He sure as hell making me laugh as if I'm watching a comedy or someone is tickling me.

“Stop it choma.”

“I wish you were here choma so that we will drool over them together and laugh at these ridiculous girls with funny make-up.”

“Well you'll do just fine. And as for me I'll go to Lettie's and buy springb—”

“Wait you're back?” He cuts me mid-sentence.

“Yeah I got back a couple of hours ago I was yet to call and inform you.”

“Okay. I'll come and fetch you get ready. I'm so excited.”

“But I—” the phone goes silent. Great he disconnected the call. There goes my movie binging night.

What do people wear in house warming anyway? Lord this is an ambush seriously. Hectic.

★»★«

ENHLE

Mpilo came back from his trip yesterday and he didn't update us about it as he normally does like every other trip he comes from. But Mazana hasn't been feeling well ever since Mpilo came back from his trip she's been complaining about stomach cramps and how painful her pussy is she can't even sit upright. If I didn't know any better I'd say that she's losing a baby but Mpilo didn't announce her pregnancy and still if that was the case is too early for her to lose her child unlike us who lost ours within three months of pregnancy. Much as I don't like her right now seeing her wriggling on the bed pains me and the rest of the ladies. The worst of it all is that there's nothing we can do to help her plus he confiscated our cellphones.

“This is not right I need to go and talk to Mpilo regarding Mazana's health. What if she dies? And you can see that she's in pain” I say standing from her bed.

“Go already and stop wasting time” Lenah dismisses me.

I nod walking out of Mazana's bedroom I know Mpilo is in his office. I take deep breathes before raising my hand to knock on the door.

“Inside!” He shouts right after I cleared my throat I don't even know how he even heard me because I wasn't loud when clearing my throat.

“Sawubona Baba” I greet slightly bowing immediately I step inside.

“Just get straight to the point MaDlamini. I'm busy” he says not looking up at me.

“Baba Mazana is real sick. She's complaining about terrible cramps” I state.

“And so?”

“Can you please get her urgent medical help?”

“No. She'll be fine. I can't just drop everything for Mazana and what are you doing in her room?” He asks lifting his head to look at me. God there's something about him but I can't put my finger on what it is exactly there's some change.

“Well we heard her screaming and we went to find out what's wrong and we found her wriggling on the floor.”

“So you invaded her privacy?!” He bangs the table making me jump. “She didn't call you for help? You and those two women decided to stick your nose where it doesn't belong?” He asks standing up from his chair and stepping around his table.

The darkness in his eyes is evident that he's furious and there's no use telling what he'll do but whatever it is is very evil. He approaches me and I turn around heading for the door but he pulls me by my braids before I can put my hand on the doorknob.

“Baby please let go of me. I'm sorry for bothering you” I plead with him. He twists my braids roughly and I yelp tears blurring my vision.

“You disturbed my peace. You came to me I didn't come to you” he whispers in my ear and my blood runs cold instantly. “Now tell me why exactly did you invade MaGumede's personal space?”

“I heard her crying and I—” he bangs my head on the door and I scream in pain. He bangs it again.

“Enhle! Is everything okay in there?” Lenah asks on the other side of the door sounding worried.

“I'm fine” I say and Mpilo bangs my head hard this time around and I see black stars. He pulls me back and I fall on my bum.

He yanks the door open and grabs Lenah's hand forcing her inside his office. He slaps her and Lenah screams. I close my eyes as I feel a headache coming dammit. Mpilo? What the hell happened to you? Where is this abrupt abuse comes from all of a sudden? I question him in my psyche. Lenah is sniffing besides me...

INSERT 17

NOMZAMO

Lwazi has come to fetch me with his cousin's car I wonder where does this cousin of his work driving such a big and expensive car. There are only two people I know that drive

this kind of car and they are both celebrities or maybe there are also people in this country who drives G-wagons but as for me it's my first time seeing one being driven by a none celebrity. Inspiration vibes I tell you being a recluse has damaged me a little at least now I'll live my life to the fullest make mistakes and learn from them. I lock the door and look at myself one last time I hope the dress is not too short for some people because to me it's not it's just above my knees when you place your whole hand right above the knees even though it goes up when I walk it was the only thing that didn't need me to wear anything else. I peep at my purse and everything is here.

Stepping out of the yard I spot Willow with his girlfriend playing lovey-dovey cute. Lihle never played with me like this in public we always played like kids indoors and did all the crazy things that couples do together mxm. Thinking about it gives me a somber expression ai. Willow's eyes turn to the G-wagon the minute I step inside it closing the door. I can't even read his expression but I don't care. Lwazi whistles and I giggle.

“Nice ride choma” I compliment. “I didn't even know that you know how to drive. And who's beast is this?” The seats are purple.

“Thanks choma and you look beautiful. I'm so jealous of you” he pouts roaring the engine to life. “It's my rich cousin's car.”

“Thank you and you don't look bad yourself.” He's wearing boyfriend jeans a white shirt probably tucked in his front and all leather red Chuck Taylors.

He has also styled his dreadlocks and he changed a nose ring too reminding me of my tongue ring that I ditched and I think I want it back. Oh his makeup is subtle but it still accentuated his beauty. Lwazi is very handsome and he looks like a female hence I said “his beauty” and not “his handsomeness.”

“Hhayi uyowathatha amadoda wabantu choma (you will snatch peoples men friend) with all these flames that you are showing us knees will go wobbly.”

I laugh. “No a man is the last thing that I need right now and I thought we are going there to laugh at people not for men.”

“Well for me I'm only there to drool over ghost in peace without him seeing me. I think we should pass by Madison's bottle store and buy ourselves cold drinks.”

“Why don't we just buy them at one of the shops?”

“Because I also want to buy some cocktail heard that it doesn't have a bitter taste but it sure does gets you drunk.”

“Oh you want to get drunk?”

“Yeah so that I can have the courage to approach ghost and declare my love for him.”

I shake my head. “And what happens when you become sober the following day?”

“Shit. I didn't think about the after-effects of it all. But It'll be a once-off thing and besides I'll never get to see him again so why not risk it once?”

I laugh. "Yeah yeah whatever. Maybe I'll kiss someone tonight who knows? Let's do some crazy shit just for tonight but no leaving with men. Deal?" I lift my pinky finger.

He links his with mine. "Deal."

We pull up at Madison's bottle store. All eyes are on us as we step out of the car Lord the stares are making me uncomfortable especially from these men even though some of them are looking at us with envy if only they knew that this is not Lwazi's car they wouldn't have even bothered looking our way. It is only now that I notice Lwazi's clothes. The jean has chains on the sides they look very new in fact all the clothes look new.

"My cousin is the one who brought me these clothes" he says as we step inside the bottle store.

"Oh is it?"

"Yeah and she only brought them because she wanted my help. My family doesn't help us with anything without expecting something in return we have to work for what we need help with even if it's a bowl of maize meal. Anyways my mom saw that they are using us and she put a stop to it all some of them no longer talk to us" he says shrugging. His voice is laced with sadness.

"You don't need them choma. Family ain't shit. One of these good days they'll need you don't worry. You have me your mother and your siblings. We are going to make it together but for tonight let's just focus on enjoying our night everything else we will attend tomorrow."

“Yeah you're right. And you know what? I'm going to use her card to buy the alcohol.” A mischievous smile plasters on his face. “And the good thing is that her phone is in the car she won't know what hit her yena she'll hate me shame and insults me but I don't care her family used me many times. It's payback time.” We high-five laughing.

As we are looking for cocktails to drink I feel a tap on a shoulder before he can even tap me I smelled his Cologne first I turn to look only to find some guy narrowing his eyes at me glaring at me as if he knows me from somewhere. He looks tipsy...

“Can I help you?” I ask him sizing him up & down. He looks disheveled.

“No. I'm just confirming if you are not Nomzamo but you are. You resemble your father so much even though I saw him once and my brother can't stop babbling about you every day & night since he saw you. You live rent-free in his mind he even wrote your name in bold letters in his pillows” he burps.

“Your brother?” I bite my lower lip.

“Yes. Igwele ngawe lenja. He even drools at night sies.” I laugh. “But we are not there so—”

“Asivaye Samke!” A voice calls out to him.

“Tsek. As I was saying my bro—” Lwazi pulls me by my hand and he rushes with me to another aisle leaving Samke standing there.

“What is it?” I ask the heavy breathing Lwazi.

“Ghost. He was coming towards us probably to fetch the guy you were busy talking to.”

I laugh. “Geez Lwazi. I doubt he even saw you.”

“Yes he didn't but I did. See why I need to get drunk?”

I continue laughing. Lwazi is really something else hey. All this behaviour because of a man? My God drama drama drama. And that Samke guy how did he know my name? I wonder who is his friend or maybe it's Willow? No I don't think so it can't be Willow because Willow obviously has a girlfriend. Anyways this Samke guy is handsome. I'm sure girls throw themselves at him and he looks like a fuckboy for real and so is ghost.

We end up buying 2x 4 liters of strawberry daiquiri and pineapple punch. Ai sizobona phambili. Lwazi also buys a Hennessy VSOP and Cruz Vodka I widen my eyes at him.

“Now why are you buying whiskey & vodka?” I arch my brow.

“Gifts for ghost. We can't arrive there empty-handed hey. After all they are going to give us free food plus we didn't spend our money. Plus vele I don't have it.”

I chuckle shaking my head. “You really want to clean her neh?”

“Yeap and I'll also withdraw some money to buy my mother medication and buy groceries too. Lord will forgive me but Christmas doesn't come every day and we are also going to buy some meat & wors just in case they don't dish up for us at the house warming.”

I laugh clapping my hands. “Choma?”

“It is what it is” he says chuckling.

What a wild & naughty best friend I have. I'll never trade him for anything I swear.

★»★«

ENHLE

It had to take Mazana to bleed to death before Mpilo responded to the situation and rushed her to the hospital. The ice really helped in swelling the bumps on my forehead Lenah is still in shock that Mpilo laid his hand on her she's been touching her cheek

ever since the incident happened unbelieving. I don't blame her though because I was once in her situation and vele it's unbelievable. We are sitting in the kitchen waiting for Mpilo to come back and tell us how good or bad is Mazana's situation she has lost so much blood. Her duvet cover is stained with blood and Mpilo strictly told us to not touch it. How are we even going to touch it because he locked her room and took the keys with him? Mpilo is acting really strange something is just off with him and I can't even pinpoint what is it or maybe businesses are not going well or not securing any deals hence he's channeling all the anger and frustrations on us. Even if that's the case but it's not fair that we have to pay for his failed deals and shit.

“I pray that she lives. I take back the curse I cast on her I didn't mean it I was angry and I spoke without thinking. Lord I'm such a bad person but then again Lord she brought this upon herself. She ruined our lives.” Nonkolosi is praying. Wow that's new. I roll my eyes.

Pacing up & down won't help me either way and we have no phones to call and ask for an update even if we had them we wouldn't have called him and angered him more. Yoh we are living a beast I swear.

“Firstly he raped me” Lenah says shaking her head. “My husband raped me and not only did he rape me but also laid a hand on me. The very same man who loathes who laid on women did what they do and he showed no remorse for it afterwards. He was just expressionless no regret showed in his eyes none. That man is not my husband I'm sure he's possessed by an acrimonious demon. He needs deliverance we need to bring in a pastor or something.”

I laugh. “What a joke. Where will you even get a pastor knowing very well that Mpilo hates those people? You want an innocent man to die without bidding his family goodbye? Mpilo is like a wild beast left to wander around the forest and attacking

anything or anyone obstructing its path just don't elicit him any further he won't like it" I tell her.

"I understand but we can't let the demon swallow him whole because he'll end up killing us and I'm not planning on dying anytime soon."

"I agree with you" Nonkolosi chirps in. "We need to help our husband. We can't live in fear in our house we really can't. I need my old husband back not this monster that he has turned to all of a Sunday. I don't know about you ladies but we need to go on fasting and pray for our husband's state of mind and ask God to spare Mazana's life because should anything happen to her I'll have no one to blame but myself. I'll live the rest of my life with regrets." She shrugs.

"And you think God will help you? He won't sweetie. You can't need God in bad times and not in good times you have to remember him when things are good too. Don't waste your whiff and words to that selective man living up there" I tell her rolling my eyes.

Mpilo's car pulling up outside makes us alert and I sit down playing with my fingers. Heart beating out of my chest there's no telling what he'll do and we won't ask him anything. We'll wait for him to tell us. The rattling of keys outside causes me to close my eyes in fear. The door opens and Mpilo steps in smiling. Weird.

"My beautiful wives. How is your evening so far?" He whistles and dances to no music dammit. He's happy.

The ladies and I look at each other then at him as he kisses Nonkolosi's cheek

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mine and lastly Lenah's.

“Mazana is recovering very well she'll be home in a day or two. Anyways I've brought for you my wives a concoction that will help you numb the pains. Drink it before you sleep you'll wake up feeling fresh tomorrow morning ” he says putting the colorless bottle on top of the table. “Oh and I'll give you back your phones as for unfreezing your accounts it'll depend on your behavior. Let me go and freshen up.” He whistles disappearing in the passage that leads to the stairs.

“What just happened?” I ask in a whisper. The ladies are still glancing in the direction where he disappeared too.

I don't know what changed his mind but whatever it is I'm grateful. Our husband is back. I disembark from the chair to fetch glasses for the 3 of us finally he saw his mi— no wait he didn't apologize. Maybe he will when he's done freshening up.

“Let's drink up” I say twisting the bottle cap. I first pour for myself then Lenah and lastly Nonkolosi.

★ «★»

MPENDULO

The housewarming is going better than I expected I also saw my high schoolmates. Everyone seems like they made it big in life it's only me who hasn't made it as yet but I believe my time is coming and when the time comes hhe the heavens will rejoice. Samke and ghost have been gone for an hour to buy more meat as people keep on coming d there are fine ladies here including the one sitting on my lap right now playing with my beard. She's very beautiful yellow and thick I didn't even get her name not that I need it though because she'll be forgotten by tomorrow morning. I chuckle when I see Samke marching towards us he's walking like a duck engathy he'll quack. I shake my head laughing shit.

“Voetsek baby girl I need to talk to my brother” he says pulling the girl off my lap.

“Mjita? Dintshang?” The girl walks away clicking her tongue pissed off. “You just cost me some pussy” I hiss.

“Fuck her this is important. I saw Nomzamo at Madison's bottle store about an hour ago.”

“Dude you don't even know Nomzamo.”

“Tsek saarn. You told me that she resembles her father and I'm telling you that the girl I saw resembles the man that once came over to your dad's house. Man she gave me a boner with that sh—” I punch him on the shoulder halting him from talking any further.

How dare he get a boner by staring at my woman? That's if he's telling the truth about seeing her phela Samke has a tendency of lying for fun but right now he sounds serious.

“Who was she with?” I ask taking a sip of my beer.

“She was with that lady-boy your stepmother mistreated at spur. I think they are friends and ghost knows where that lady-boy stays and It'll be easier for us to get Nomzamo's numbers through him since the lady-boy has a crush on ghost” he laughs. “Who would've thought that there's a boy who's actually crushing on ghost the ladies man? It sounds real funny if you ask me. Anyways when are we get—”

I sit upright tuning off Samke when I see Nomzamo the woman who's always in my mind 24/7 making her way inside the house with the lady-boy friend of hers. And a grimace plasters on my face when one of the gents spansks her ass.

“Mjita? Go and get her plus I've put in a good word for you while we were at the bottle store.”

I turn to look at him. “What did you say mjita?”

He laughs standing up. “Nothing but good things mjita wami. Let me go and call her for you since you're slow and trust me when I say there are already vultures eyeing her. Did you see that dress?”

“Fuck!” I stand from my seat and walk towards the house.

I pass some guys and I hear them talking about Nomzamo I mean she's the only one who just arrived and wearing a scotch dress with block heels. They better not test me Nomzamo is mine I saw her first except the fact that that her husband of hers beat me to it. I wonder where is her husband futhi hhayi fok he's not here this is my time. I ignore the girls who try talking to me I have a mission at hand.

Stepping inside the house I head straight to the lounge where ghost's VIP guests are sitting. I see Nomzamo sitting uncomfortable sandwiched by two men who are chatting her up and she's not focusing on them but at lady-boy and ghost's fuck buddy you can see that they are in a very heated argument and their hands' gestures are saying it all. One of the men puts his hand on her thigh and she tries removing it but mans not budging. I clear my throat hands buried deep in my pockets and Nomzamo lifts her head quickly she abruptly stands when she sees me. You can see relief in her eyes. I pull her towards me and take the biggest risk by kissing her and luckily for me she responds. Her lips are so soft and inviting I hope by the time I pull out from the kiss there'll be no lipstick left on my lips.

I pull out from the kiss. "Let's get out of here."

"Ek'se mjita" one of the men says tapping my shoulder.

I turn to look at him then at his hand on my shoulder and I scowl. He quickly removes his hand and sits back down. I walk out with Nomzamo with one of my hands around her neck ignoring all the stares sent our way.

"Thank you" she says when we get to where I was sitting. I'm sure Samke is scouting for more girls.

“You are welcome Nomzamo.”

She looks at me. “How do you know my name?”

“Let's just say I did my research” I take a quick look at her finger and there's no ring on her finger. I wonder what happened.

“We didn't work out” she says catching me off guard. I didn't even realize that I was staring for long.

I chuckle. “Sorry my bad. He's such a fool for letting a dime like you go.”

She smiles looking down but I put my two fingers under her chin and lift her face. She's shy and she has a beautiful smile.

“You look by the way.”

“Thank you urhm?”

“Mpendulo. The name is Mpendulo.”

“Thank you once again Mpendulo. And how is job hunting going?”

“I'm working now no longer job hunting.”

She squirms and throws her hand around my neck. Khutso wasn't this happy when I told her the news not even a mere congratulations.

“Oh my God. I'm so happy for you Mpendulo. Those are good news.”

“Yeah I wanted to share them with you first but you went in your spot anymore.”

“Yeah I had things to do. But I'm happy for you.”

“Choma we need to leave. Hey bae” guess I'm bae.

“Hi” I respond.

“What's going on choma?” Nomzamo asks standing.

“I kissed him by mistake just one quick kiss and I left him standing there shocked. And Phatho is angry well her card exceeded her daily limit and now she's insulting me. Women and drama. Asambe.”

I laugh and Nomzamo joins me. This one is crazy I tell you and I wonder who did he kiss.

“Oh oh choma he's coming here and he looks angry. Run” Nomzamo warns him.

I look to see who she's telling him to run away from and I laugh when I see ghost marching here wiping his mouth.

“I'll be next door” he says taking off giggling.

Ghost finally reaches us he looks at me then at Nomzamo. He smirks and whispers something in Nomzamo's ears.

“You lucky bastard” he says walking away.

I look at Nomzamo and her mouth is wide open from shock obviously I wonder what did he whisper to her. I blow some air in her mouth and she blinks shaking her head she turns to look at me.

“He said he'll rip his ass apart when he crosses paths with him and he'll bleed for the whole week” she tells me it's as if like she knew that I was eager to know what he whispered to her. “I don't know if whether he means sexually or what.”

I chuckle. “Ghost is harmless” I assure her.

“With such a name? I don't think so. I need to find Lwazi and warn him” she says walking away but I pull her back with her hand.

“Relax. He won't harm him in any way he just wants to scare him” I say lapping her nose and she giggles covering her face.

“Arh you finally met my brother. He's the one I was telling you about earlier on. Now that he saw you I doubt he'll drool and wet his pillowcase” Samke says laughing.

“TF Samke? I don't drool man.”

“Shut up you drool. I have a video of you drooling I'll expose you phela. Anyways we are taking the party to the club the neighbors are complaining about the noise and all these people who pee anywhere. This is why I hate living in suburbs you never really have fun and don't worry about your friend Nomzamo. He's in my car hiding from ghost. If you ask me; I'd say ghost enjoyed the unexpected kiss.”

Nomzamo & I laugh when he tells us this. He's not even laughing.

“Oh okay. Is ghost coming too?” Nomzamo asks him.

He howls. “Hell yeah he is. It's going to be a movie we are going to watch an epic movie I can't wait. Mpendulo pick up our shit and let's get out of here” he orders already walking away.

“Friends we have ai.”

“Tell me about it” Nomzamo says helping me with the camping chairs while I pick up the cooler box.

I foresee a great night ahead. I must make sure that I win Nomzamo tonight and I get her numbers. That husband is no longer in the picture after all.

“Choma I'm such a risk-taker bathong. Thanks God we are going to the club he'll not be there” Lwazi says the second we inside the car.

Nomzamo attempts to open her mouth to say something but I shut her up with a kiss and she bites my lower lip.

“Fuck munku. The hell you think you doing? Why are you biting me?” She smiles.

“Bite that fuckboy!” Lazwi shouts and everyone laughs.

“Hhe let's wait until we watch a 3D movie at the club tonight kuzonyiwa” I comment.

Nomzamo laughs pouring herself whatever they were drinking in a plastic cup. All three of us are sitting at the back and Samke's fuck buddy for the night is sitting in the front sit busy with her phone. I hope Samke won't dish her for the next available big ass at the club and as for me I'll stick with my Nomzamo. The love of my life I declare njalo...

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INSERT 18

NOMZAMO

This was not how I planned out my night it wasn't. Yes I did say that I'll kiss a guy tonight I just didn't think that it would be Mpendulo. The man who has been occupying my mind ever since I never thought that I'd ever cross paths with him but the universe had other plans. I was taken aback when I saw him standing before us; by us I mean me and those bizarre-looking men old enough to be my uncles who smelled like brewery and sweat. And my eyes lit up with excitement shortly afterwards as I abruptly stood and threw myself in his body inhaling his cologne. Lord and when he kissed me unexpectedly I had to play along with his game to convince these men that I'm his woman. I felt my core wetting when he shoved his tongue inside of my mouth it was so electrifying and I almost moaned in his mouth. Gosh I felt so loose afterwards kissing a guy that I knew like that much as I enjoyed his kiss and wanted more than it I had to chastise myself and pulled myself towards myself because wow I was going to lose myself in him. But then Lwazi & I made a deal and the deal was to do all the shit we wanted except leaving with boys. Did I tell you that he's very handsome up-close? Or maybe it's the daiquiri making me see things that aren't there.

I felt safe in his presence and I was snuggling him all the way coming here to the club. Lwazi was going on & on about ghost and he was praying that he wasn't going to follow us here at the club but rather leave with his cousin who insulted him. Shame if only he knew that ghost is going to join us he would've told Samke to drive us straight home but he didn't. Instead he wants to kiss another man just to forget about ghost. Drama.

The table is filled with alcohol and we are sitting on the ground floor. The VIP area is occupied by affluent men with women wearing next to nothing entertaining them. Oh and there's Samke's lady friend the girl with an attitude behaving as if she's the only beautiful girl in the club with her size 38 body. Her personality doesn't match her behavior I mean after all. We are all here to have fun and build friendships but she told us straight up that she doesn't befriend basics and people who don't put on quality make-up. And trust Lwazi to laugh at her face he laughed at her and I saw tears blurring her vision Samke was not around to comfort her. Anyways I stare at Lwazi who's

dancing on the mini stage with other people. He is free-spirited and as for me I'm guarding the alcohol simply because I can't dance. I don't want to step on people's toes people have anger issues out there. Some might even moer you for stepping on them by mistake even though you've apologized.

“Hey sexy” a deep voice greets me and whoever the man is settles his hand on my shoulder and starts massaging it.

I shrug him off irritated. He chuckles I crane my neck to look at him and there behind me stood Senzo looking down on me with a mischievous smile plastered on his face. I roll my eyes and focus on the dance floor again and he settles his hand on my shoulder again this time putting pressure.

I snarl. “Leave me alone Senzo!”

“I won't. Until you agree to come with me until you agree to spend the night with me. I don't want to drag you out of here” he growls.

Lord why are the gents not coming back now? It's been almost 45 minutes since they went to buy some meat.

“I'm not going anywhere with you Senzo. Leave me alone.”

“No. I'll not leave you alone.”

I sigh shaking my head. Senzo is annoying me and funny enough I'm not afraid of him. Hmm if only I was not this afraid towards Lihle too the minute he lifted his hand on me. Sometimes I think that I'm the one who gave him the permission to abuse me because I didn't stand up for myself in the first place maybe if I did stand up for myself maybe he wouldn't have abused me continuously. I close my eyes and breath in & out. Dammit I need to clear Lihle's name out of my mind I can't keep on doing the comparison it's not on. I need to heal & move on from him. But how would I because he's refusing to sign the divorce papers that he was served with? Mxm he does really want to make my life a living hell. I pray that he doesn't find me.

Someone groaning behind me makes me turn my head to see who it is and it's Senzo. One of the guys that I saw at the house warming is twisting his hand with a scowl plastered on his face and someone throwing their arm around my neck forces me to look at him. I find him smiling then licking his lips fuck. This man is driving me crazy he's making me feel so foreign yet I love the foreign feeling. It makes me want to explore more with him. No it's the daiquiri talking but I didn't consume much I only drank 3 glasses just 3. I swallow pressing my thighs together and looking ahead. Lwazi is already locking lips with some guy. I shake my head smiling. He doesn't waste time.

“Sorry for taking too long we were discussing something outside and don't worry no men will bother you while I'm here okay? It's just unfortunate that that man saw the gap since you're sitting alone and tried shooting his bullet at you. He's lucky that he was found by Simunye and not me” he tells me lifting my chin with his 4th finger making me face me. “Listen munku. I'm not a gangster nor a murder but should I find one of these losers gaping at you or touching you anyhow I'll wear their blood as a perfume while I make you watch. Clear?” He bores his eyes into mine he looks so serious. I swallow and nod at his threat my gaze locked with his.

He smiles leaning his face on my mine and I close my eyes waiting for him to kiss me but he breathes in my ear instead. My chest heaves up & down.

“Fuck!” I curse and my cheeks flush. What a moemish.

“Not here” he whispers caressing my thigh.

Lwazi plops himself in between us. “Get a room you two!” He says grabbing one bottle of Caribbean twist at least it has a sweet taste too. “Gosh. I'm tired.”

“Of course you are. I mean you've been dancing ever since we got here.”

“I needed to dance a little I'm fine now. Let's get this party started!” He shouts shaking his cider and I chuckle.

The others join us shortly with the meat & pap and we start digging plus I was hungry. Samke's lady friend was eating an apple and drinking water. Ai it can never be me shame. I eat like I'm eating alone and no one better judge me because I'm not trying to impress anyone. I'm the hungry one and hunger needs to be satisfied especially when there's enough food.

“So choma. What would you do if ghost was to come here?” I ask Lwazi facing him and Mpendulo sneers.

“I'd do nothing because I know that he'll never come here. Places like this are not his scene” he states proudly.

“Hmm so you know the places he prefers?” I probe.

He snarls. “I don't but this is definitely not his kind of a scene I tell you. Did you see his house? I'd be very disappointed if I were to see him here. So I'm not worried about him coming here” and Mpendulo & Samke laugh.

“Are you sure that this club is not his kind of a scene?” Samke asks him giggling.

“100% correct.”

I chuckle when Samke nudges me and points towards the crowd. There standing in the middle of the floor is ghost with more of his friends and women. He looks around and he spots us a devilish smile plastered on his face. He brushes his beard as he takes a slow stride to the table he looks like some celebrity with fans after him looking for autographs.

“Choma don't look up” I whisper in his ear.

“Why?” He asks lifting his head to meet my gaze.

“Ladies & gentlemen” ghost's voice ring in our ears and Lwazi shoot his eyes open in fear when he hears his voice.

He doesn't move his gaze from me clearly he's asking me for help with his eyes. I shrug and he closes his eyes in defeat.

“Move” ghost taps my shoulder.

I shift my gaze from Lwazi and look at him. “The magic word” I scowl at him.

He sighs. “Can you please move for me?”

I smile and look at Lwazi he's still closing his eyes. I nudge him and he shakes his head.

“Come and sit on my lap munku. I want to see something” Mpendulo tells me and one of the girls sneers.

I stand up not even looking at her. I watch ghost sitting down chuckling shaking his head.

“So gents. What are we drinking?” He asks taking a piece of meat from the tray.

The ladies giggles pointing at Lwazi I'm sure they think that he's sleeping. One of them whips out her phone.

“What do you think you're doing baby girl?” I ask her.

“How is it any of your problem? This is my phone and I can do whatever the fuck I want!”

“Exactly. But not trying to take a picture of my friend.”

“You call this thing that was embarrassed all over social media a friend? Cute.” She rolls her eyes.

“Did you ju—”

Lwazi stands from the couch picking up his bottle and he marches towards the girl and he breaks the bottle on top of her head and the lady screams plus she's blood. Ghost stands up and grabs Lwazi from behind and leads him out. And I'm sitting here with my mouth wide open watching the blood trickling from her forehead.

“Damn they dealt with her real good. Next time she'll know when to open her mouth and when not to. She eventually met her match uyaphapa lo” Samke says laughing clearly finding all of this whole scenario funny.

“I think ghost is going to rip Lwazi's arse apart” Mpendulo whispers in my ear and my eyes shoot open with fear.

I slowly turn to look at him and he pulls my face down to his smirking. He licks my lips before kissing me fully I follow suit and block everyone around us. He puts his hand in between my thighs and I allow him in by parting them apart. Damn. What the hell am I doing? Why is this guy doing me like this? I ask myself these questions yet I can't bring myself to get up from his lap break the kiss but I drown in his kiss instead and moan in his mouth. If my parents were to see me now hhe! Bebazo khuza um'hlolo. I shudder when I feel him resting his finger on top of my panties thanks God I put on a panty liner.

“You're wet munku” he whispers in my mouth.

Lord I've never felt so much desire for sex before. But right at this moment all I want is to ride him bite his neck explore his body and for him to fuck me from all angles. My nipples harden at these thoughts. They all feel so wrong yet so right. I break the kiss and abruptly stand from him almost losing balance. He catches me and makes me sit on top of him.

“The desire is too strong. Too strong that I can't resist it. I want to rip your apart throw you on top of the bed bury myself in you and fill you with my come.” He brushes my arm with his nose and his breathing is erratic.

“Fuck! Get a room. Y'all can't be having sex out in the open” I hear Samke say.
“Qaluyibona le. Yi film yi erotic for real.”

Taking a look around everyone that we are sitting with is looking at us shocked. I shake my head then bury my face in Mpendulo's neck inhaling his scent.

“Dude this is some erotic shit on another level. These two have zoned us out first time seeing something this especially from people who barely know each other. Mpex here's my key I live three houses away from the club. My house is no the left it's the only double story house in this street.” One of the guys says hurling his keys at Mpendulo.

“Let's go” Mpendulo tells me and I stand from his lap.

Stepping out of the club I scan my eyes around looking for Lwazi or ghost but I don't see them simply because there are a lot of people dancing the street is dark. I'm sure the neighbours are tired of complaining. And as for me I wouldn't survive in this neighborhood too much noise. Seems like the deal of not "leaving with men" is off.

★»★«

MPENDULO

I don't know what's going on with me but all I know that this is not me. And I can't blame alcohol because I've consumed alcohol before and attended clubs but this that's currently happening right now is beyond my control. I don't even know where this sudden strong desire for sex spurted from. Nomzamo is really doing things to me things that not all the girls I've been with did. Her skin alone hardens my dick rock solid. The kiss alone sent me to heaven and back I was actually fucking her with my mind and that alone made my dick pre-cum.

The second we step inside the house I pull her to me and crash my lips on hers she moans in my lips when my hands move down further to her butt pulling up her dress. Her hand slide inside my jeans then my boxer and when her soft hand touches my dick and start massaging it I growl in her mouth. She retrieves her hand from my dick and pulls my jeans together with my boxer and they pool around my feet. She breaks the

kiss and licks my nose before going down on me pushing me to the fridge. The softness of her hand in my dick as she wraps her hand around it and the warmth of her mouth leaning closer at the slit of my dick and coating up my pre-cum in her lips makes me shudder.

“Fuck munku.” Cursing.

She takes me inside her mouth slowly as she can until her mouth almost covered my dick I can feel it settling on her throat. She gags and starts bobbing her head sucking me like a lollipop her other hand finds my balls she squeezes them lightly grabbing them in vice and I growl like an animal. I put my hands at the back of her head and fuck her mouth myself as she continues playing with my balls. This is a whole new experiment for me I had girls sucked me Khutso too but this is not even close to what they did. It feels like they didn't do anything.

“Fuck munku! Fuck!” My toes curl in my boots as I feel my orgasm building up and I release every drop of my cum in her mouth. “Fuck!”

She releases my dick from her mouth and saliva drips down but she licks it off and I yank her up attacking her with a kiss. I pick her up and she wraps her legs around my waist I don't break the kiss but I lead her to the lounge even though my pants are making it hard for me to go fast but I don't mind. Getting to the lounge I lie her on the couch my body falls on top of her.

I lean on the carpet and remove her panties with my teeth leaving them on her knees. I lift her legs and I'm welcomed by her glistening pussy baby shaved. Shit. I kiss her pussy before inserting one of my fingers inside her.

“Hmm” she moans.

I lap on her hole and up to her clitoris which's beginning to swell. I linger my tongue on her clitoris sucking her. She wiggles her legs no she's fucks my tongue pushing my head deeper and I slide my second finger inside her hole.

“Oh yes baby right there. Ahhhh!” I fuck her with my fingers faster twisting them inside her and I move my thumb in between her folds. She cries out when I slightly bite her clitoris. “I'm cu—”

Her legs start trembling cutting her mid-sentence. She whimpers as she releases her juices in my mouth. I stand on my feet stroking my dick and I get on top of her positioning myself and I slide inside her. Her dress is on her breasts she lifts her hand as I pull it over her head leaving her with only her bra that I unclip on the front and her boobs sprung free and her hard pointy nipples face me. I put both my hands in them she winces. Guess they are hurting. I take one of them in my mouth and massage the other one as I start moving inside her. She moans raking her hands all over my back and digging her nails in it. I move a little faster in her and her hands rest on my ass she's practically rubbing them.

“Yes baby right there” she whispers as I hit it in all fours.

Her pussy is so warm so inviting it feels like a home that I'm yet to occupy filled with love and shit. Fuck. It's perfect. My sanctuary.

She's riding me right now. My hands are on her boobs as she rides me up & down left & right in a circular motion. I groan losing all sense of my morality as she bobs on my dick.

I spank her ass and she giggles shaking it. Shit. This woman is really something else something that I've been missing all my life. And I'm not letting her go never.

My dicks swells inside of her and I know that I'm ready to release. She looks at me straight in the eyes her eyes filled with love and satisfaction just like me. She smiles closing her eyes and throwing her head back.

“Soon” she says her pussy squeezing my dick. She squirms releasing her juices coating my dick and I shoot my load in her as she collapses on top of me.

We are both breathing heavily and we are drenched in sweat.

“I love you” whispering. I kiss her forehead I pray she doesn't regret this night and a part of me wishes that she can fall pregnant so that I'll be tied with her forever.

Call me selfish or inconsiderate I don't care. I just want to be her forever and me hers till we depart on this earth. I don't regret this night in fact I'll remember it every year and remind her about it when we get old. Because from now going forward it's engraved in my mind.

INSERT 19

NOMZAMO

The weekend was over in a blink of an eye. I tried not to think about what happened Friday night to Saturday in the early hours of the morning I really tried but I couldn't. The night kept replaying in my mind like my favorite movie even when I try to sleep all I see are those events and they make me horny all over again. Fuck that was the best sex I've ever had ever since losing my virginity to some stupid bet back in college. And to tell you the truth I wouldn't mind doing it again & again with Mpendulo. Unfortunately I didn't get a morning glory I left early in the morning leaving Mpendulo

passed out in one of the bedrooms that his friend showed us to use after he found us on the couch passed out. We didn't even exchange numbers of which is a good thing because I'm not ready for any attachment. Plus there's a big possibility that he has a girlfriend. Fuck what a one-night stand. I never saw myself doing one but life is really unpredictable.

Anyways I did buy two emergency pills at the nearby chemist and gulped them the minute I got home. I don't want to risk falling pregnant for a stranger but it was really strange because there was a deep connection between the two of us I mean we were so clingy with each other and didn't want to let go it didn't even feel like I was with a stranger. Hmmm I also can't believe that I had skoen sex with some random stranger? Shit. What if he's sick or something? I'll need to go and get tested. Jesus. My blood rushes as I think about the possibility of getting sick and I'll not even blame Mpendulo for my careless doings because we were both so deep in the moment none of us thought about using a condom. Life of fun is really shitty I tell you but then again fun is all that we want.

My coffee has turned cold because of being buried in thoughts. The kids have already gone to school and they came back very late yesterday Bajabulile brought them late and they were tired. So I just took them to bed after changing them into their pajamas. I need to fix their room and buy them new beds and a wardrobe. I need my own space so that I can satisfy all my sexual fantasies with Mpendulo without any disturbance. Hhe I didn't even know that I can blow job a man like that and take him all in my mouth. Alcohol will make you do things you never imagined doing dammit.

Oh yes Lwazi. He texted me yesterday and told me that he's fine and he said he'll fill me in about what happened when ghost took him out of the club. I can't wait to hear all about it at least ghost didn't make him bleed for a week as he said he would. You know I asked Mpendulo if ghost is bisexual and he said he doesn't know because ghost date only women. And him being obsessed with a guy like that shocked him. Oh well. Life & its people.

A knock comes through on the door as I switch on the kettle. Nonjabulo is still not back yet ey this woman and she's still in her Friday's clothes and underwear too sies. Ke gore she doesn't care about anything. I yank the door open and I find Willow standing on the doorstep looking very pissed I don't know what or who pissed him off but he better not take out whatever pissed him off on me there's a kettle switched on just in case he tries something funny.

“Hey” he greets and I nod. “Can I come in?”

“No. Aunt Norah is around you can go sit on the benches near the tree I'll be with you shortly. Would you like some tea or juice?”

“Juice will do” he peruses me and walks over to the benches dissatisfied.

What's wrong with this man? Arh. I can't bring him inside the house because it's not mine nor my home the first time it was a mistake I shouldn't have allowed him in to begin with but it happened. So yeah. The kettle switches off and I pour the water into my cup and prepare juice for Willow. There are no scones today so homemade kota will do. My mom taught me a lot of things about food and stuff I know my way around the kitchen. Heck! I'm even better than some chefs as I blow my own horn. I put everything in the tray and step out of the house.

“Well I've prepared kota for us I didn't bake this weekend” I say sitting next to him.

“Because you spent the whole weekend at your sugar daddy's house?”

“Dude what? Why would you even think? Oh I see now yo—” I laugh. “So just because I rode in a big car and disappeared all weekend you automatically assumed that I left with my sugar daddy?”

“Yes. What else was I supposed to think? You were even not looking as you look now you were totally a different person. I mean you looked beautiful. Breathtaking. I couldn't help it but feel a little jealous.” He confesses.

“Huh?”

“Yeah I was jealous. I wanted to stop the car the minute the engine roared to life but I couldn't because I was with my girlfriend.”

“And why would you even decide to stop it?”

“Because.” He takes a bite of his kota. “Because I love you.”

I spit out my tea. “Wh-what?”

“Because I love you.”

I laugh. “You almost got me there. I almost believed you.”

“I’m serious no jokes.”

I look at him for a couple of seconds I don’t need his bullshit right now. Willow got some liver with fats on the sides.

“Well I don’t know what to say.” This is so awkward.

Who drops such a bomb knowing very well that they are in a serious relationship with someone? I’m talking about people who’ve met each other’s families here on all occasions. And the truth is I don’t feel anything for Willow at all. He doesn’t make my heart beat like it wants to come out of my chest and drop to the floor.

“You don’t have to say anything. Just know that I love you and it won’t settle well in my heart if I see you talking or walking with another guy it’ll piss me off honestly.”

“Willow. Listen. I can be with whoever I want whenever I want whichever time I want and you won’t do anything about that. I don’t love you Willow let alone think about you in my spare time. So please don’t tell me what won’t settle well in your heart because I don’t care. Dude you have a girlfriend who is very much in love with you. Don’t ruin our friendship that’s not even 3 months old don’t.”

“I’m still saying; if I see you walking or talking with a guy it won’t settle well in my heart. If you are seeing someone make sure that you see them far away from our hood because I won’t be held accountable for my actions.” His voice is laced with menace.

I laugh. “Willow I will not be told by you what to do and what not to do. You don’t own me nor my heart. In fact leave. This” I point to him then at me. “Little friendship of ours is over. I can’t be friends with you anymore leave Willow and don’t ever come back here.” I stand from the bench annoyed. How dare he?

He stands too. "I'm not going anywhere. You are stuck with me Nomzamo. You can do whatever fucking shit you want but I don't want to see any man in your presence."

"You tell that to your girlfriend too?"

"No I'm telling only you. You shouldn't have allowed me to talk to you in the first place."

"So me allowing you to talk to me gave you the right to try and control me?" I ask tilting my head.

"Yes it did and there's no stopping me." He looks at me straight in the eyes and I shake my head.

An involuntary chuckle escapes my lips when I think about Mpendulo's words mans will wear people's blood as perfume. I wonder how will Willow's smell like once he's worn it I doubt that I'll be around him for long because I'll be disgusted.

"Okay you can take your leave Willow. Thank you for stopping by. You can take the kota with you is okay" I tell him picking up the tray. "And remember don't come back here I don't think you'll smell good as a perfume."

He looks at me confused. I saunter to the house lock the gate and close the door. Peeping out of the window I see him walking towards the gate as he keeps on looking behind mxm as if I'll go out after him. I think it's time I looked for a spot for my business because sitting here all day will not work for me. The knock at the door startles me I wonder who is knocking because I didn't see anyone coming in through the gate.

"Who is it?" I ask picking up the pan that's on top of the stove.

"Mam'Dladla."

Huh? How did she get inside the yard because my eyes were still lockd at the gate? What if she's a-
? I shake my head holding in laughter. I drag my feet to attend to the door I open it half and there on the doorstep is a woman I don't know wearing white cloths maybe she's aunt Norah's friend. Her eyes are gray she has very unique eyes or maybe they are contact lenses.

“Sawubona Ma” I greet her and she just glares at me.

“You'll never be fully happy unless you heed the orders given to you. This journey is not for the faint-hearted you stepping into that house will change everything and everyone's life. Just be strong no matter what and never be shaken take whatever is thrown your way when you get there. It's not going to be easy you'll still shed tears and ask yourself questions and find no answers. The day for you to step in the gates of that yard will come and it'll be against your will. I'll watch you and protect you from the distance as there'll be nothing for me to do to help you. Yo—” her breath hitches cutting her mid-sentence. “Wa-water” she whispers. It's like she's being choked by something.

I turn on my heels grabbing the nearest cup and fill the cup with water. Going back to the woman she's not there but she left a folded cloth on the door. What the fuck just happened? Confusion dawns on my face and I'm left standing looking out at the trees before me.

★»★«

MPENDULO

I don't remember when was the last time I enjoyed my day like I am today. Everything is going smoothly. The weekend was great fuck I don't regret it. And for the fact that I got it down with a woman whom I yearned to see ever since I saw her it's what completed it to be a 100. Yes she left me in bed after the mind-blowing sex we had probably thinking that she'll never see me again but she was wrong because I have her numbers. I buzzed myself with her phone when she was passed out and I'm planning on calling her in a few days surprising her. Now I have a reason to visit Mpilo at any fucking time I want and I think it's time he brought me a house that I'll go to when I'm off.

And now it's effortless for me to masturbate I just close my eyes after touching my dick and every sex that I had with Nomzamo that night plays in my mind. Her riding me while biting his lower lip and looking at me straight in the eyes me taking it from behind as she calls my names and moans when I

hit her G-spot. How she gives me all of her pussy without holding back. Fuck my dick hardens at those thoughts. I need to wank it out...

I unzip my jeans and take out my cock then close my eyes as I start massaging it. Nomzamo strides towards me wearing nothing she smiles as she gets on top of me and starts straddling me hands wrapped around my neck. She looks at me straight in the eyes and smiles then she throws her head back lifting her body allowing me to slide my cock inside her. She starts riding me burying her head on my neck and she starts sucking me.

“Fuck!” I curse increasing my pace my breathing becoming erratic as I squeeze my dick hard and pre-cum comes out and I release all of my semen shortly afterwards. Fuck!

I wipe myself using one of the paper towels on top of the table. Yuuh a quick one it was. I stand from my chair and walk towards the door I need to wash my hands. The minute I open the door Jidenna comes out of Mbuso's office. Her eyes meet mine and she smiles I return her smile with a slight nod and head to the restrooms.

“Mpendulo wait” she calls out after me.

I stop turning to look at her as she approaches me. She eventually gets to me she fixes herself. I raise a brow waiting for her to say something but she just looks at me still smiling.

“Are you going to talk or should I proceed with my walk to the restrooms?”

She opens her mouth trying to say something but nothing comes out of it. She's clearly wasting both our time. I shake my head and proceed with my journey.

Stepping out of the toilet after washing my hands my phone rings. I whip it out from my pocket and it's Mpilo. I wonder why is he calling me.

“Mpilo.”

“Boy I'm still your father.”

“What can I do for you?”

“There's a family gathering this weekend and I expect you to be here I don't want any excuses. Clear?”

“Family gathering?”

“You heard me very well the first time. Everyone will be here Mazana's family too. And I think it's time you introduced Khutso to the family then we will discuss her lobola. It's time you did right by that girl you've been chowing her free all these years.”

“I ended things with her. She was cheating on me with a man your age who drives a big car.”

He chuckles. “She finally realized her worth. Boy next time you should date girls within your caliber and leave these slay Queens. Date a girl who doesn't care about the latest fashion updates or expensive hair. Khutso is not for young boys like you who still earn a salary. He is for real men who pay salaries.

“I'll be there. And I hope your friend will take care of Khutso.”

“They're doing a remarkable job. The team is winning” he says laughing. “See you weekend son.” He hangs up still laughing.

I click my tongue so much to my annoyance. So Mpilo is the one who organized these men for Khutso? He actually introduced them to her and since she loves money and good life she fell for it? I hope she knows what she has gotten herself into and these men are married for Christ's sakes but she doesn't care or does she?

Stepping inside my office I find Jidenna sitting on the chair opposite mine. This woman is starting to annoy me.

“Jidenna” I call her name sitting down.

"Mpendulo. I've brought you lunch and seeing that today you're in a good mood I hope you won't tell me where to get off" she says sounding nervous.

"Thank you for the lunch but unfortunately I've carried my own lunch today."

"Oh." Disappointment is laced in her voice. "But you can take it home with you and eat it for supper."

"No I'll pass. But you can put it in the fridge I'll eat it tomorrow."

"At least. So how was your weekend?"

"Great. It was one of the best weekends I enjoyed in a long time. A weekend that changed my life for the better and filled my heart with excitement and love."

"It sounds interesting. The filled your heart with excitement and love does it have to do with a woman?"

"Yes and not just any woman but the woman I dreamed of every single night and thought about daily." Her expression changes the second I say that. I dismiss it.

"A woman? You met a woman?"

"Yes I did. A wonderful experience it was. And how was yours?"

"Fine." And all of a sudden she has a stinking attitude. "Excuse me I need to go back to my office" she clicks her tongue standing up. "I'll put this in the fridge too" she makes her way towards the door clearly pissed.

I chuckle as she bangs the door after her. Women and superfluous drama. Why is she pissed though? I mean I never gave her the impression that I want her mxm. Assumptions assumptions.

★»★«

ENHLE

Mpilo will be doing a family gathering this coming weekend starting from Friday until Sunday. He said we should invite all our family members to attend it well not that we are surprised though because every time one of us loses the baby he makes one and invites everyone for a cleansing. And by everyone I mean every fucking one even though you are not related to any of us (his wives). It's a rare ritual but he insists on it being done. Yes Mazana lost the baby and what hurts the most is that she didn't know that she was pregnant. I bet Mpilo didn't know it too because if he did he wouldn't have beaten her up or forced himself on her. He was hurt to know that Mazana lost the baby because of his abuse and for that he gave Mazana a card and said we should go and pamper ourselves. Lord was I not happy that I'm finally going to go out? I was freaking excited!

Anyways whatever concoction he gave us worked. All the bruises and pains we had are gone everything is back to normal. Our husband is back to his usual self and we can never be happier. This time around I promise not to go to these basic public restaurants. Oh Mpilo gave us our phones and the second he gave me mine I went straight to Mia's website to check for new dresses and shoes and boy I already know which dresses I want. The others went to their own websites we don't buy in the same place most of the time even our dresses designs are not the same.

Marshall drops us off at the salon where we are meeting with Khutso. We've heard that Mpendulo dumped her because he saw her disembarking from a big car furthermore that clever old man called her in the presence of Mpendulo and she denied her own phone ringing. That was a good laugh I don't want to lie. I'm glad that Mpendulo ended things with her because now she'll be treated like the queen that she is and she will not lack anything. Maybe she'll have her own driver as well. Khutso is waiting for us by the door busy with her phone she looks totally different from her usual self. She's just breathtaking even the clothes are screaming expensive. I can never be proud of her. Nonkolosi hurries at her and she throws herself at her they giggle as they hug.

"You look so gosh I don't even know what to say. But spectacular is the word for now. So much transformation Mpendulo was really a cock blocker in your life. He was hindering you from living your real life not that ghetto life he subjected you to" Nonkolosi says breaking the hug and we all laugh.

“Babe. I'm just mad at the fact that it took me so long to live this life I'm so mad at myself. Some people are really stagnant in our lives hhayi fok. Anyways did I mention it to you ladies that I now live in an apartment in hillcrest?”

“No way!” All four of us say in unison.

“I'm telling you ladies. I'm living the life I deserve yeses maarn” she says fanning her face. “Anyways let's get inside. And Mazana I heard about your misfortune I'm sorry.”

“Thank you” she gives her a faint smile.

“Well let's get inside they are ready for us.”

We all step inside and there's a long queue damn. I hope we're not going to sit down with the rest of these people. Khutso walks up to the receptionist. It's my first time coming to this salon and trust me when I say it has the most expensive decor everything here is high-class. It screams “only rich people allowed.” Hmmm I think I'll like it here and it's worse because white people will be the ones doing our hair. No foul smell on side I like.

All those people that they were busy with stands from their chairs allowing us to sit and they didn't even put up a fight or anything and to think that I was ready for them. They just had to disappoint me wow.

INSERT 20

{SHORT}

MPENDULO

“Boy” I answer Samke's call as I walk to the bus station. I've just knocked off from work.

Jidenna didn't talk to me for the rest of the day and I was grateful for that. Hopefully she'll keep her distance from me.

"Yes man hoe-hoe."

I laugh. "Man what? Dude don't start with me."

"Yeah whatever. Yazi ntwana I never thought that I'll see the day where you will be clingy over a girl like you were on Friday I swear in that little mind of yours you thought that she was already your girl and you were planning a huge wedding."

Smiling. "Because she is mine she's my girl."

"Does she know that?"

"Not yet but she will soon enough."

"I see. Enhlek I want us to talk about ghost."

"What about him?" I snicker because I know what he wants to talk about.

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

I laugh. "Man I don't know what the fuck you're thinking but what I do know is that; I don't want to think it."

"Well I've been thinking about it all weekend it doesn't give me peace. Man I can't even bring myself to stomach the fact that ghost penetrated his beret tail in that lady-boy from behind. Man shit is disgusting yuck."

"Man it's his life and he's living it the way he sees fits. Who are we to judge him? If he likes boys & girls then let him be."

"Hhe Mpendulo. That's not the case man. The only issue I have is that this man is my friend and I'm worried that maybe he wanted to get it down with me too for so long but he never got the chance

since we are always in a group. Whoa wait maybe he used to watch me the time I did sleepovers at his old house. Man I'm freaked. What if he was jerking off while watching me?"

I laugh. "Dude relax. He never tried any advances towards you or did he? If he didn't then that should tell you that you are not his kind of beverage. You don't have sauce like Lwazi phecelezi awukho muhle or attractive to him."

"Yeses you're nonsense of a human being rha! Anyway what time must I fetch you Friday?"

"Dude is Monday for crying out loud. Call me Thursday again and I'll tell you the exact time."

"I will. Anyways how are things going between you and munku since you claim that she's your girl?"

I smile spinning around with my chair facing the window. "I'm yet to call her and ask her out on a proper date."

"This sounds serious. So you don't want to be a one-night stand since she left you in bed out of it?"

"No that woman is mine mjita. God created her specifically for me. I love her."

"Wehh so you ate it all without a wrap even?"

I chuckle. "It was even before that man. The moment I saw her that one morning where she was selling scones I knew that she was for me. The type of a woman I've always wanted a future and build a legacy with."

"Hhayi if you say so then. Thursday it is then." He hangs up.

Anyway I tried searching for Nomzamo on all social media platforms but I didn't find her. It was going to be better if I at least knew her name because even with typing her number nothing pops up.

I get home and the first thing I do is to throw my bag on the floor and plop to the couch closing my eyes I had a long day. And to think that I still have to cook ai.

“Son.” The voice is soothing and so is this calming place that I'm in.

I look around for the soft voice but I see no one. This place is so calming and so are these colorful trees that are making sounds as if they're singing a soul-soothing song. I sit under the shade in one of the big trees taking it all in.

“Son.” The voice comes again and light not so bright shines through then a young lady appears she's beautiful.

“Who are you?”

“I'm your mother.”

“What? Mother? You look too young to be my mother.”

“That's because I passed on while giving birth to you I was 19 years old at the time I gave birth to you. I had to sacrifice my life to save yours.”

“What do you mean?”

“She'll be taken away from you and I want you to run as far as your legs will carry you. Far from getting hurt and watching the woman you love with your all being snatched from you. You'll get badly hurt that evil man will cause you great grief and end up killing you for taking what's his. Forget about her save yourself.”

And just like that she changed a topic confusing me more with a new one. I hate people who speak in riddles just like she's doing.

“What are you on about? Can you please elaborate further because you're losing me right now.”

She shakes her head. “I wish I could but I can't because I'll perish for life and I don't want that at all.” Tears veil her eyes. “That man is very evil Mpendulo. He doesn't care whether you're family or not. He doesn't mind shedding blood just to get what he wants when coerced. Run son run and never look back. Your life matters she's nothing to you nothing at all. Forget about her. You de—”

“He is not going to forget about her. Akalona igwala.” (He is not a coward) another female voice comes from out of nowhere.

“I don't want to lose my son because of some savior bitch that's said to—”

“Shut the hell up! He will not die he is a warrior. Nothing that's worth it comes easy. Stop interfering what's going to happen will determine whether they are meant to be or it was just infatuation between the two of them.”

“Son forget about her! She's far too more important than you and you're nothing. You'll lose all your legacy you'll be left with nothing! I don't want you to suffer you've suffered enough already!”

“I will not!” I roar and the leaves start rattling.

“He'll start from scratch. Wake up!” The second voice commands me.

†*†*†*

I jolt upright my heart beating out of my chest. I shake my head clearing my space fuck. What the hell just happened? Dammit passing out unexpectedly makes one have nightmares before midnight. I rise from the couch rubbing my face with my hands and head to the kitchen to look for something to eat. The dream felt so flipping real. Stepping inside the kitchen I open the fridge and skim for something to eat. Shit I'll have to do grocery when I'm off the fridge is empty. Bread & butter with tea will do for now. No let me cook mincemeat while I go and take a quick bath while it simmers.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

I'm done cooking and now I'm dishing up. The kids just finished their writing their homework and they are done bathing. So all they need to do now is to eat watch some cartoons then go to bed. Today was very weird for me firstly it was Willow with his weird behavior that shocked me then that old woman who came here announced and said some things that made my blood cold for a couple of seconds. I'm still trying to wrap my head around it and what she meant by her words. What makes me shudder is being taken against my will. Who will take me against my will and why would they do that? God my life is taking a different route my life is taking a different route I myself don't even know how to control it.

"Auntie I'm hungry" Nevada Nonjabulo second child says as he steps inside the kitchen jolting me out of my thoughts.

"I'm dishing up I'll call you once I'm done. Okay?" He nods hurrying back to the lounge.

I finish dishing up and I take the food to them. Abigail stands and hurries to the kitchen to fill up a bowl with water to wash their hands and a cloth to wipe their hands. I go back to the kitchen to fetch my food and a knock comes through at the door.

"Nomzamo is me Nonjabulo open up." Oh and she remembers that she has a home.

I drag my feet to the door and turn the key opening for her. She steps inside and an unpleasant smell coming from her hits my nostrils. I peruse her and she looks like she hasn't been sleeping for weeks and she's still in her clothes that she left wearing Thursday they are so dirty they even have beer & food stains. She passes me without even greeting me nor her kids. I don't even bother with her she told me to stay out of her business and I'm doing just that. I lock the door pick up my food and go to the lounge to join the kids. I say a short prayer and start eating.

My phone rings from the couch and its numbers that I don't recognize. Only 5 people have my numbers so whoever this is must've dialed a random number or maybe it's some kids playing with their elder's phones. I glance at it until it stops ringing. It rings again well guess it's not a random number. I pick it up and put it in my ear without saying anything.

"Munku."

Huh? I remove the phone from my ear and look at the numbers one more time. How the hell did he get my numbers? Who gave them to him? I put it in my ear again making sure if I heard him correctly or what.

“Munku are you there?” He asks and I squeal in excitement. It's really him.

“Hi. Yes I'm here.” I put a hand over my chest I'm excited to hear his voice.

“I'm sorry for scaring you and I'm sorry for calling you without your permission so late and don't ask how I got your numbers because if I tell you you'll hate me. But a man did what needed to be done to get his woman's number.”

“I can never hate you. But where did you get them?”

Did he just say his woman's number? Alpha male much? Hmm.

“Nevermind. I miss you. I was planning on calling you this coming Friday but as I was scrolling through my contacts your name popped up. So I decided to take the risk and call you.”

I smile. “And I'm glad that you did. You must've been thinking about me all weekend.”

“Good to know that you are not mad at me but then again you can never be mad at someone who gave you orgasm and yes I've been thinking about you all weekend and a couple of seconds ago. And I bet you've been thinking about my dick?”

I laugh out loud and the kids look at me I throw my hand over my mouth still laughing but not loud enough for them to hear. This man is unbelievable. Why would he even assume that I was thinking about his dick and not him as a whole?

“See how effortless it is to make you laugh? Imagine if I make you laugh like this for the rest of your life with me?”

I continue laughing my heart is doing flapjacks.

“Yeah I see.”

“Anyway what are you doing this weekend?”

“Nothing. Have anything in mind?”

“Actually yes I'll be there this coming weekend and I'd be happy to see you and probably spend the weekend with you.”

“Oh is it?”

“Yes if that's okay with you of course and I promise to not get in between your panties. I'll just kiss you.”

I giggle. “Alright then I'll hear from you.”

“Perfect. Ube nobusuku obufana nami.” (Have a night that looks like me)

“Wehhh nightmares after nightmares. I'll have to sleep with the lights on tonight aw ngeke phela.”

He laughs. “You're such a mood killer munku. Have a blessed and peaceful night.”

“You too and try not wetting the bed.” I tease.

He laughs. “This woman. I'll catch you your day will come.”

I roll my eyes. “Yeah whatever. Goodnight.”

“Yes goodnight. You can hang up now.”

“No you hang up you're the one who called me njena.”

He sneers. “No you hang up first. You know the saying mus; ladies first.”

I giggle. "Okay let's count to three then we both hang up yeah?"

"Agreed. Let's begin."

"1... 2... 3..." none of us hang up as we finish counting we burst out with laughter instead as if we've planned it.

"Okay I'll hang up. Goodnight." I hang up not waiting for him to respond because I know that once he responds we'll both find it difficult to hang up.

At least my weird day has been replaced by a goodnight and my heart is still doing flapjacks and butterflies somersault in my tummy. All it took was one phone call to make it better. The kids bid their good night kissing my cheek as usual. Their bedtime is 20:30 they start by brushing their teeth pray then get into blankets and sleep.

And Lord I still have dishes to wash and tonight I'm kind of excited to wash them I hate them yes but tonight I'll enjoy washing them. Abigail washes them in the afternoon when they come back from school.

"Nomzamo did you cook enough food? I'm hungry" Nonjabulo says standing near one of the couches not looking at me but at the TV. She looks clean and she smells nice too.

I shake my head. "Yes I've cooked enough. You can go and dish up for yourself."

"Thank you. Don't worry about the dishes I'll do them."

Wow that's a first. Well I'm not complaining though at least I'll get to have a night off. After here is straight to bed and sweet dreams after sweet dreams. Damn I think I'm in love...

INSERT 21

ENHLE

The week moved by real fast. Today is Thursday and some of our family members will be coming especially my family and Nonkolosi's family. I'm so excited about my family's arrival Lord how I missed them. Lenah's family will come tomorrow I'm not sure about Mazana's family or maybe they'll come with the other Khuzwayo family since they stay around the same area. Khutso will come too as Nonkolosi's friend after all no longer as Mpendulo's girlfriend like she used to before. Anyways I can't wait to see Mpendulo's reaction when he sees the new flaming Khutso. I bet you he'll regret dumping her. In fact he'll beg her to take him back.

“Seems like we've written down everything that we will need. You can go through the list one more time and if we've missed something you can add” Lenah says handing me the list of things we need to buy. Food mostly.

“I can't wait for the weekend to begin.” Nonkolosi sing-song dancing. “I honestly can't wait to see my family I've missed them so much and talking to them once a week is not enough.”

“I'm used to talking to them once a week but I also can't wait to see them” Lenah says.

“Yeah but I'm not looking forward to seeing the rural wives of the Khuzwayo's with their too traditional husbands” Nonkolosi says shuddering.

“And as for me I'm happy that they are coming because that means they'll be the ones putting in all the work while we laze around plus they know how to cook with the outside fire unlike us” I tell them.

“Not when Mpilo is around. We will be forced to help too worse be put in the front line of it all” Lenah says.

“No Mpilo would never do that to us he knows that we're clueless when it comes to cooking outside let alone start the fire. He'll never throw us in the lion's lair intentionally” I tell them.

“If you say so” Lenah says.

“So are we going to bake or what?” Mazana asks.

“I'm clueless when it comes to baking so I don't know” I tell her.

“I also can't bake and so is Nonkolosi. But if you know how to bake then you can pick yourself and we will buy the ingredients and if not we will have to go to the locals and order there.” Leah says.

“But the villagers will come with them. Why must we bother ourselves with wanting to bake scones and what not? If it was up to me we wouldn't do anything but then Mpilo will force us to. That man is a big bully but we love him like that.” Nonkolosi.

“Yeah it is what is it. We can go now.” I tell them.

We all step out of the house. We're going to the mall to buy all the things on the list I pray that we find everything because I don't want to do too many trips. Marshall is already waiting for us and Khutso said she'll meet us there. Oh yes she resigned from where she was working. I mean she doesn't need the money after all.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

At least my week was fruitful this week and I'm happy to say that I don't regret leaving the house at 05:00 in the morning to sell scones biscuits and all that. It all started on Tuesday where I overheard two women talking about the scarcity of scones in this neighborhood and how tiring it is to walk a long distance just to buy them as I was coming back from the shop to buy bread. So I humbled myself and sold myself to them told them that I'm new around the area and I know how to bake and I can bake for them just a small portion of variety then they'll taste and give me feedback. To cut the long story short I baked for them the minute I got home and texted them when I was done since we've exchanged numbers. They loved them couldn't stop complimenting them and told me to go for it they'll spread the word.

Wednesday I woke up with a plan I prayed about it put it into action and it all went well. Today was the second day and now people are coming to the house to buy. I did tell aunt Norah that it'll be for time being until I find my own place she agreed. And when I told Nonjabulo yoh she said I should buy electricity well she wanted me to give her the money so that she will buy the electricity but I didn't give it to her knowing very well that she'll take the money and do what she does best. So I bought it myself instead and

showed her the receipt now she's not talking to me and she's not sleeping here either. Argh whatever.

Oh and boy another reason why I'm happy it's because of Mpendulo the man of my dreams. The one that God made for me. I never thought I'd love a man this much let alone the man I gave my cookie too the second I met him and granted him the permission of taking me raw without second-guessing. Mans calls me 3x a day and we've exchanged pictures on WhatsApp. We chat until 03:00 am we talk about a lot of things and I'm always the one who leaves him hanging because I always fall asleep in the middle of our chats. I'm a gone girl no one can catch me now. Not even Caster Semenya or Usain Bolt can catch me. Well Willow has been keeping his distance and I'm happy with that.

My phone rings on top of the table as I'm putting another pan of muffins in the oven. I pick it up and Lwazi's name pops up on the screen.

“Choma I'm at the shop. Where to from here?”

“Look on your right you'll see me waiting for you by the gate” I tell him stepping out of the house.

“I can—” he waves when he sees me. I chuckle disconnecting the call.

I wait for him to reach me. He finally gets to me I open the gate for him and we hug. He looks happy and whoa he has his nails done. Guess this has to do with ghost.

“Look at you glowing and stuff.”

“Chile I have to glow after the week I've had.”

“So you were at ghost's place almost the whole week?”

“Let's get inside the house first make some tea and serve me some of your best scones. This news needs tea” he says fanning his face and I laugh.

We step inside the house and he closes his eyes taking in the smell of lemon muffins he opens them then he sits down. Oh I managed to fix the door of the cupboards yes I know how to fix minor things too and I can change a tire without anyone's help paint and I can do tiling too. My dad taught me all that and I'm grateful for that.

“So what happened?” I switch on the kettle.

“Well after him dragging me outside he leads us to his car. I refused to get in but he took a knife from wherever he was hiding it and threatened me with it.”

I open my eyes obviously in shock about this revelation. Why didn't Lwazi scream or something? Ghost is really not a good guy he's bad news. But then Lwazi is telling me this with a smile. Guess it was a humorous threat I shudder thinking about it. I would've screamed my lungs out or passed out.

“I almost peed myself but I still refused to step inside his car and when he puts the knife on my neck hhe I knew shit was real.”

My hand flies over my mouth deterring the tiny scream from escaping my mouth. I don't like this ghost person he sounds like a person who doesn't take no for an answer. It's obvious that he's used to getting what he wants whether by force or willingly given. And Lwazi better not tell me that he'll see him again because I'll be very disappointed in him.

The kettle switches off. I take out two mugs from the cupboard and put them on top of the counter.

“So I stepped inside still shaking he joined me and he started questioning me about the kiss I told him that it was an honest mistake. Yoh he sent strings of insults my way. I apologized crying he said he forgives me but I must not pull a stunt like that ever again. Then he asked me to accompany him to his house to fetch money to add more booze.”

Putting six muffins in a saucer. “And you fell for that old trick? Really choma?”

“Yeah I fell for it. It was stupid of me I know I agreed to go with him without thinking twice but that guy was like a magnet. He was pulling me to him somehow. Anyways we got to his house. I was so scared thinking that he'll hurt me but he didn't. He pretended to be busy while I was sitting on his couch like a shy wife or something. Haike I heard a shower running. And I was like ‘really dude?’ The next thing he called my name I gasped and remained seated. He called my name again

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I gasped and remained seated. He called my name again and this time around his voice was laced with menace. So I stood from the couch and trudged to where the shower is. He ordered me to strip I did then stepped inside and he started washing my back I flinched at his touch” he says closing his eyes as if he's replaying the scene in his head.

I shake my head not believing this. This man is too much of everything. Everything that I don't like but hey who am I to choose for Lwazi who not to date or who date? But then again it wouldn't hurt to talk to him and make him see that this man is not good for him yeah? What if he stops being friends with me? And by the look of things it seems like ghost is a well-known player and knows his way around girls? What if ghost was using him? It's possible right?

Lwazi bangs the table bringing me to the current life. I shake my head.

“Sorry choma I got lost for a second there. You were saying?”

“Well we had shower sex and it wasn't soft it was rough sex something out of my comfort zone. I cried pleaded with him to slow down but he never listened. He continued fucking me choking me and squeezing my balls and I-I-” his voice trails off.

I close my eyes remembering what Lihle did to me. Lwazi was raped too just like me fuck. Thinking about it stirs anger inside me no tears to cry but anger that keeps on stirring & stirring with no hopes for it to end. I can feel the tremors of my hands but I ball them into fists breathing in & out. I open my eyes when I feel Lwazi's eyes trained on me I tilt my head and watch him wiping his tears.

“He raped you?” I ask in a whisper.

“No.” He shrugs. “It was rough sex but I told him afterwards that I didn't like it. He und—”

“Bullshit!” Banging the table. “That’s utter bullshit. He raped you Lwazi. Stop justifying it by saying it was rough sex just stop okay? And I know that you’ll not get him arrested. Let’s just drop this whole topic I don’t want to engage in it anymore!”

He shakes his head. “I’m not justifying anything. He didn’t rape me. I went with him to his house knowing very well that it will end up in us having sex we did and unfortunately his sex was not my kind of sex. But he made up for it for the past two days.”

I chuckle shaking my head. I’m not going to respond to him because I’ll spew nothing but poison his way and it won’t end well. So I’ll just keep my mouth shut just to save our friendship. I also have things of my own that need to be taken care of a lot of things; like making sense of my dreams and shit. Lwazi is a grown man he knows what’s right and what’s wrong.

A knock comes through at the door I attend to it and it’s some kid here to buy cupcakes. I serve her and she thanks me giving me the money and she leaves. I still hide my money very far not even in my room but somewhere outside.

“Started with the business already?” Lazwi asks putting his phone on top of the table.

It’s a new phone iPhone what-what. I’m a Samsung user so I’m not familiar with iPhones. Anyways it’s obvious that ghost bought it for him. Interesting.

“Yes I have.”

“Good move. I’m happy for you.”

“Thank you. But I thought you'll join me once we have our own stall or a zozo.”

“I know but I can't assist you when I'm free. I've gotten a job.”

“What? Congratulations to you choma” I hug him.

“Thank you choma.”

“So what kind of a job is it and where?”

“Personal assistant for ghost at DMG Electronic Enterprise” he says with a huge smile plastered on his face.

“Urhmm okay. So you working for him won't interfere with the relationship between the two of you?”

“No. We are keeping it professional.” He bites his upper lip and blinks.

“What is it? Your expression just changed.”

“Well.” Clearing throat. “He has a girlfriend there they eat lunch toge—”

“Whoa. Back up a bit TF did you just say?” I narrow my eyes at him. “He has a girlfriend? And he eats lunch with her? Please don't tell me that you order their meal too please Lwazi.” He drops his head in shame. “Wow just great. And how is he treating you when at work?”

“He acts like he doesn't see me other than being his assistant who he sends from pillar to post without any complaints.”

“Why would you even complain? I mean you're doing your job mus.”

“I know. But it wouldn't hurt for him to at least acknowledge me or something. And after what happened the past few days it's very difficult for me to work with him. And seeing him with his girlfriend works me up for real.”

“Haike haike. Slow down chile. Why would you get worked up over your boss spending his time with his girlfriend? And you've been working there for like what? A day? And you're already acting like a jealous partner? I mean are you even an item or just fuck buddies?” I cross my arms over my chest glaring at him.

“Well I don't know what we are choma. I really don't.” He sighs.

“Then stop acting like a jealous bitch and focus on your job before the girlfriend jumps on the radar. Get yourself together remember that you have a family to feed and support. Keep your crush or whatever you have over ghost at bay.”

He groans. “It's not that easy choma.”

“Then kiss your job goodbye.”

“Fuck. It's a mess and I—” My phone rings disturbing him.

“Hold that thought” I say lifting my finger to answer Mam'Dzedze's call. “Mama.”

“Hey my baby. I know it's short notice but I need your help. Can you please bake for me 10 20l of scones cupcakes actually bake the varieties and we need them tomorrow around 17:00. Will you be able to do it?”

What? Tomorrow? I'll need to buy more ingredients mus and I'll also have to deprive myself of sleep. But money is money so I'll work.

“Okay I'll do them.”

“Thank you for coming through for me I knew that I can count on you. And don't worry you will be paid very well.”

“Okay let me get started then.”

“We will send someone to fetch them. And while at it do you know how to make platters? And if you do can you please make them for us for Sunday?”

“Yoh can I get back to you on that one?”

“Of course. Keep well.”

“Thank you. Bye.” I disconnect the call and breath out.

“What is it? You look like a bag of stones has just been dropped on your shoulders.”

“I just received an order of 10 20lt of varieties which is needed tomorrow and I have another order of platters for Sunday yoh and those I can't do. I'll be ti—”

“I'll help you don't worry. I'll just need to go home and fetch my clothes.”

“No you will buy them in the town. We need to go now we need more ingredients.”

“You sure?”

“Yes I'm sure.” I look at the time on my phone and it's just after 13:55. Wait. “Why are you here because it's still 13:55?”

“Ghost left with his girlfriend to some date. So I was sent home. I'll only go back to work on Monday. You can use my hands all you want.”

“Thank you so much choma.” I hug him one last time.

“I know choma. And you still need to tell me about Mpendulo.”

I laugh rolling my eyes. “Yes when we come back from town.”

“Fine.”

“Can you watch the pan for me while I go and freshen up real quick?”

“Of course choma.”

I nod hurrying to the bathroom...

★»★«

MPENDULO

I've taken unpaid leave for the whole weekend since I was scheduled to work I told them that I have a family emergency to attend to and it'll take the whole weekend they understood hence they allowed me to knock off early too. Samke is the one who fetched me from work and since I brought my bag along we didn't go to my house.

Getting to my father's house there are already 6 sprinters parked outside the yard and you can hear kids making noise inside the yard and some laughing from the other women. Smoke going up high in the air. The gate slides open after Samke pressed the buzzer. I'm only here to greet and meet then go and see munku I did tell her that I'll come and see her today I just didn't say what time. We step out of the car and Luniko my aunt's 13 years old daughter runs to me she hugs me then Samke. Luniko loves uncle Samke simply because he gives her money I never gave her money since I wasn't working but now I can. Still I won't give it to her she'll only like me because I give her money so nope I'll pass.

I make my way inside the house greeting some of the elders sitting in groups drinking African beer and beers. When my father buys booze he makes sure that he buys enough for everyone. I bump into Nonkolosi as I'm making my way to the room that Samke & I use when we are here.

"Whoa why aren't you greeting me?" She looks at me from head to toe.

"I was thinking excuse me" I push past her and I hear her clicking her tongue as I ascend the stairs of the second floor. Mxm.

"Son you came?" My dad asks the obvious stepping inside the room.

I turn to look at him and he looks irritated. I don't know if he's irritated by my presence or something else.

“Yes I've arrived.” I arch a brow.

“Dammit. Your presence is heavy for me. What did you do?” He asks taking a step towards me but stops midway touching his forehead. “Stay the hell away from me all this weekend! You've been with her her scent is—” he screams in frustration leaving the room and slamming the door shut.

What the hell was that all about? I've been with her? He doesn't know about Nomzamo. I'm sure he's talking about Khutso if only he knew that we broke up.

“Mjita what the hell is wrong with your taima? Hhey that man is acting like a crazy man. Yoh.”

“I think it's one of those days where he loses his mind.”

He laughs. “Damn you're savage!”

I shake my head. “That man is crazy I swear and we will see more of his craziness this weekend. I want to drive him crazy this whole weekend him seeing me ticks him off and makes him go insane.”

“Say what?”

“You'll see this evening.”

He whistles shaking his head. “Ku rweff papa. Ku rweff.”

I laugh plopping myself in bed facing the ceiling.

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INSERT 22

NOMZAMO

I'm so exhausted! The coffee put me straight to sleep instead of keeping me awake as it should've done last night. I'm just grateful for Lwazi's presence because if he wasn't here I'd probably have burned down the kitchen along with myself. We've managed to do six buckets so far and there are still four more to go. I pray that we get them done before 14:00 since I overslept but you can't blame me since I slept at 02:00 I couldn't keep my eyes open for long and Lwazi went to bed before 01:00 upset about the pictures of ghost and his girlfriend on Instagram accompanied by beautiful captions. Hhey Lwazi better forget about ghost that man looks happily in love with his girlfriend or maybe he was putting up a facade just to fool everyone that he's happy knowing very well that he ain't. Or maybe he's happier when with Lwazi you'll never know. This life thing is very strange very very strange.

Hmmm being in the closet must really suck hey. Imagine not living your best life and embracing who you are simply because of what will the people say? People talk all the damn time be it that you do good bad or average and some are just never satisfied. Sometimes you need to look at yourself in the mirror and tell yourself that you're not living for society or anyone else you're living for yourself now and not seeking shelter under someone's shadow. And believe you me when I say; I'm going to do my own

thing without caring about what people say. It's time I lived my life angeke ngizincishe I nice time. Not everyone lives for approval from the community & others start by approving yourself and fuck everyone's else doubt of approval about you because you've already approved yourself stamped it and you're proud of it.

Argh look at me getting carried away with yapping and yapping.

Anyways Mam'Dzedze said that they'll fetch them around 15:00. Oh and kids will be sleeping over at aunt Norah's just for this weekend I told her that I have lots of orders to do and she was shocked by how fast my business boomed. I further told her that I'll tell her everything once I'm done with the deadlines and I've also made big money in just a weekend. Who would've thought? God works in mysterious ways if things go according; I might open my own bakery sooner than I have anticipated. Mam'Dzedze didn't even complain when I told her about the prices she disconnected the call and a few minutes later my phone beeped notifying me that I have a message boom it was a payment message and it was extra with a couple of thousands. Damn whoever I'm baking for must very be loaded with money but I'm not complaining and I already know what I'm going to do with the money and buying beds for the kids it's my first priority. I'm sure it's some business mogul having drivers and guards guarding him & his family 24/7 even when they're sleeping just so thieves can not steal him joke.

Mpendulo called last night and apologized for not coming as he promised me he got caught up at his father's house as he was helping out since they have a family gathering. I don't remember us having one though but I think I will organize one too in the near future. Anyway he promised to see me today. Let's hope he'll keep his promise this time around.

“Since coffee is not working for you I've brought you a pack of guarana to boost you with some energy you need it” Lwazi tells me stepping inside the kitchen.

“It's half 7 in the morning for Christ's sake Lwazi. Where did you buy the alcohol and who drinks so early in the morning?” I stop mixing the dough.

“Ask no questions. Hear no lies. And besides throat doesn't have opening time duh” he says rolling his eyes dramatically.

“Couldn't you at least brought me Mofaya Monster or any other energy drinks?”

“No choma. You need this one.”

I shake my head. “And what's your energy boost?”

“Viceroy.” He whispers.

“What? Thought you said you never drank before until last weekend. So enlighten me here choma; when did you start drinking viceroy?”

“Yes I never did but after the crazy weekend my life changed big time. You know mus—” he gestures with his hand not wanting to say it out loud that he tasted it at ghost's house.

“Yeah sure. Whatever. Let's get done here and maybe we might go window shopping if we get done early. And please don't get yourself used to drinking alcohol too much

maybe once or twice will do. And no I'm not an expert. I'd just hate to see you losing yourself in alcohol.”

“I won't go down that route I still have a lot of things to do and I know that alcohol ruins live.” He closes his eyes and looks up. “I've seen it with my father shit don't make me visit the past choma it's not pleasing. Clicking back to it makes me sick to my stomach” he says crunching his nose.

I wonder what happened in the past that he has fear of visiting. And picking up in his voice he sounded pained. Seems like each & every one of us has a sob story to tell but are people willing to allow us to relay it to them? Are we willing to go out there and expose ourselves only to be judged and then drive ourselves straight to depressionville because we can't take the judgments thrown our way and end up committing suicide? Damn we're fucked. That's why I decided to pen everything troubling me.

I'm sold for that idea knowing that you'll be the one buying me what I find interesting.”

“If you're going to pay me back double of course then I won't mind buying you anything that interests your eyes.”

“Choma? Which one is this one now?”

I laugh shaking my head. “It's the best friend tyra thing you dig?”

“Yeah and of which it's not fair but I'll let it slide since it's you.”

“As it should be” I say putting a pan in the oven. “And we still need to go over the platters menus since you said we're going to do 8 different of them.”

“I know choma. But now I'm hungry. What do you feel like having?” He asks opening the fridge and skimming through.

“A little bit of everything to keep me full the whole day.”

“Got it and please pardon me I make fatty foods.”

“I'm not dieting. Do whatever you need to do.” I say yawning.

Damn I'm exhausted. I rub my neck trying to loosen the tightness of it. Sleeping with Lwazi is world war whatever he can't sleep. I mean he doesn't know how to sleep. He puts his legs over mine slapped me he snores and speaks gibberish while sleeping. And oh the one thing that kept me all night was his farting. Lord your chile farts a malodorous fart even. Tonight we will have to make sleeping arrangements because wawu I khant with him. And now his sleeping problem boils down to... Laughter escapes my mouth when I think about it fuck this.

“What's funny?” Lwazi asks not looking at me.

“I was just thinking out loud sorry.”

“Thanks God. I almost called the mental hospital and told them that a lunatic just attacked me in my house and I've locked her up in the toilet.”

I laugh. "You're so stupid choma!"

"And so are you."

We both laugh. I'll never trade Lwazi for anything well except Mpendulo of course. Lapho ke it'll be "boyfriend over best friend." Hehe mjolo the pandemic madoda.

★»★«

ENHLE

Goodness me Lord! The multiple headaches that I've gotten since everyone got here have made me look older than how I'm actually am I'm tired. Plus I cried a lot last night after being made to wash more than 50 dishes it was just me & Lenah. The others have already retreated to their bedrooms and some watched TV while some went to sit around the fire outside. No one even volunteered to help us they just passed us and we were washing them outside mosquitos were having fun with us. How many more are they going to be today? Tonight? Tomorrow? Sunday? And they still won't help us I bet you. The only thing they know is allowing their kids to make endless noise and even

now this very morning we were woken up by them that includes my siblings too and cousins. Much as I was looking forward to seeing them I regret it they might as well go back to where they stay because wow.

I massage my temples. Today I don't want to overwork myself I'm not planning on running around or maybe this is some kind of a payback because when we go to their houses we don't lift a finger to help them. We just sit down drink wine and wait for them to serve us. I chuckle the tables have turned and I'm not happy with the way they turned. Just great much as I hate to admit it this will be a lesson learned. The door of my room flings open and my mother steps in.

“Good you're awake” she says walking straight to drawing my curtains apart allowing the sun to come inside my room. “As a married woman you should've been long awake and already started with making breakfast. You're embarrassing your husband the Khuzwayo elders are speaking ill of you. But I don't blame them. You act like a hooligan these days arghh. What has gotten into you Enhle?” She peels the covers off me.

“Good morning to you to mother” I mumble putting my feet on the carpet.

“You better be done in 15 minutes. The food won't cook itself outside putting my feet on the carpet.

“You better be done in 15 minutes. The food won't cook itself outside” she looks at me up & down revulsion painting her face. She clicks her tongue then turns on her heels and steps out of my room leaving the door open.

Mxm. I get up from the bed and drag my feet to my room. I stop in my tracks when I hear kids running inside my bedroom laughing. What the hell? I turn to look at them and I don't even know them yet here they are jumping on my bed.

“Futsekani! Get out of my bedroom!” I yell at them and they look at me then burst out with laughter.

My nose flares and their parents will not dare tell me shit when I hit all of them. I walk up to my heel closet and I come out with a pointy heel. I don't care who it will hit and make them bleed I just want them out of my room. I throw it their way and they laugh lifting my comforter making it their shield.

“Fucker!!!!” One of them says as they leave my room laughing.

I groan in frustration. It's going to be a long weekend. Tears blur my vision dammit.

“I'm so over this weekend already!” Nonkolosi yells stepping inside my bedroom. “These kids are driving me insane!” She throws herself on top of the bed.

“Yeah I know what you mean.” I'm deflated.

“Anyway is it only now that you wake up?” She asks sitting upright.

“I've long been awake. The kids woke me up.”

“You're lucky that you got woken up by the kids. My mother woke me up at 06:00.”

“Why did she wake you up so early?” I ask sitting on top of my dressing table.

“I don't know and all the wives were already awake by then and finished bathing. They were getting ready to start with breakfast. I don't want to lie to you I was embarrassed walking into the kitchen to find all the wives even Mazana & Lenah were amongst them. Do you think the city changed us?”

“It's not the city that changed us. It's the lifestyle that we are living that changed us.”

“Well I hate to say this but it fucked us up.”

“Yeah it sure did. Do you still want kids?”

“Kids? After how I saw how rebellious they are? No I don't want any kids. I don't think I'll survive them they're just too much and they make my skin crawl.” She shudders.

“My sentiments exactly. Anyway” standing from the dressing table. “Let me go and take a quick shower before my mother comes back and pours me with hot water.”

“Oh okay. Let me also go and pretend to be aligning with the dull wives.”

I laugh. “Enjoy. So Belinda didn't say anything nasty to you?”

“Nope. She didn't even greet me when we bumped into each other.”

“So she was waiting for you to greet her first? Hhe.” Clapping hands.

“Actually she disregarded my greeting. She just shot a glance at me and continued walking.”

“She did good and she better not try talking to us this weekend. Let me dash to the shower quickly I'll join in a few.”

“Of course you will” she says stepping out of my room.

I strip off my pajamas and step inside the shower. I tilt my head and twist my lips when I remember hearing Mpilo breaking things in his bedroom he was acting like a crazy person he refused to be helped. Lord he scared us and it all started with him leaving Mpendulo's room. I wonder what conspired between the two of them and whatever it is it must've been big to get him triggered like that. Hhe hhayi we're going to see a lot this weekend. It's going to go down.

★»★«

MPENDULO

The two cows have been slaughtered and now the wives are cleaning the insides I'm tired. Yesterday we had to go and collect woods in the forests that will last us the whole weekend. Oh and Mpilo still hasn't come out of his room after what happened last night I'm still trying to understand why he behaved the way he did and whose scent did he exactly smell on me because I've been taking baths as usual after sleeping with Nomzamo? There's no way that I still smell of Nomzamo or maybe he was just high on something. Belinda came to my room last night and questioned me I told her exactly what happened and she too just like me was confused. Clearly a lot is going on in that mind of his he has demons living in his mind that's for sure. Today I want to see if he will react the way he did last night. Sokhe sibone.

“Mjita my mother has asked us to go and fetch some scones orders for them later today around two. You game?” Samke asks joining me in uncle Deso's car.

“Yeah sure I'm game. But we better be back early I have to go and see Nomzamo later since I didn't go last night as I promised I would.”

“And you must not go there empty-handed. Buy her flowers chocolates or better yet send her money R1 500 at least and reference it as 'I'm sorry' she'll forgive you on the spot. Girls love shit like that.”

I shake my head. “A girl who really loves you will forgive you even if you come empty-handed guaranteed that you really have nothing to offer not even a slab of chocolate or

lollipop. Y'all just love putting pressure on people for no apparent reason. A person must work with whatever works for them mjita and not all girls love that shit. Some can afford those things wena snai.”

“Ay mjita whatever you say but a woman must be spoiled.”

“I'm not denying that but what happens when you can't afford her anymore?”

“I move to the one I can afford. Anyway I've never bought anyone shit and don't think I ever will. Some women demand a lot especially those unemployed ones hhayi.”

“Yet you still want to sleep with her without giving her anything knowing very well that she's unemployed? The least you could do is to give her money to buy toiletries or better yet help her with a Job find out what qualifications she has and take it from there. And trust me when I say once she starts earning her shit she won't bother you anymore. Simple.”

“See? Dating is a lot of work. I fuck give you R100 or buy you booze then I move on I don't slap the same pussy 3x.”

“And you'll die big brother. Fi fi. Six feet under you'll go and I will spit some bars when I read your obituary.” Stilo Samke's little brother says standing next to his brother.

Stilo is still in high school doing grade 12. He's a skrrr krrr nigga and a heavy stoner too but his grades are very good. Ntwana e focused this one.

“Voetsek Stilo. Go and play with your peers or something.”

“Calm big brother. Calm your big belly I was just tugging your leg.”

I laugh and Samke clicks his tongue. Still whistles facing towards the gate.

“Damn aynser bruh. Is that ya shawdy?” TF is “aynser?” This boy is crazy.

I step out of the car to see who she's asking me about only to find Khutso talking on a phone facing our direction. She's finally leaving the life she always dreamed of living I'm happy for her.

“Mxm.” I get back inside the car and take out my phone from my pocket.

I smile looking at my lock screen Nomzamo's face is filling the entire screen smiling at me.

“Munku” I mumble putting the phone on my chest and laying my head back on the seat.

“Man.” Samke shakes me. And I pivot my head to look at him. “Did you see how hot your girl is? She's fire man. You need to claim her back.”

“Nah I'm much more content where I'm at now. Khutso is no longer my problem and to tell you the truth nothing shifted inside me” I tell him shrugging.

“Wait you're telling me that you don't feel anything for her at all even after all the transformation?”

“Zilch.”

“Hha yes. I vum you.” He pats my shoulder. “So you don't mind if I try my luck mus?”

“Khuleka boy feel free.”

“Mjita?” He shakes his head.

“Qondile.”

“Malum' Mpendulo gogo Noni is asking for you” Yentle tells me and takes off.

“Samke are we using your car or uncle Deso's?”

“Let's use Simo's bakkie.”

“Okay then” I say stepping out of the car.

“Mpendulo.” I hear Khutso's voice calling my name but I don't dare stop. “Mpendulo!” This time around she raises her voice. And still I walk.

I don't have time for her. She finally catches up with me and puts her hands on my shoulder but I remove it.

“Don't do that.”

“Wow Mpendulo. No need to be cold I was just greeting you.”

“Hey Khutso.” I walk ahead leaving her behind and get inside the house.

Luckily for me I bump into aunt Noni in the kitchen making tea.

“You asked for me?”

“Yes I have. You need to go and fetch the scones the girl called and said they are ready. This is her address.” She gives me a piece of paper.

“I'll get right on it.”

“Thank you my boy. And why does your girlfriend look depressing wearing an expensive outfit?”

I laugh. "I don't know and she's no longer my girlfriend we broke up."

"Good. I never liked her for you. Hope you find someone who compliments you."

I smile. "I already have found one and it's only a matter of time before you meet her. She's a loving soul and very humble too. Hhe and when it com—" I arch my brow and laugh. "Let me just leave."

"I was still waiting for the juicy part."

I laugh stepping out of the house. Geez this old woman loves news. I alarm Samke and Stilo decides to tag along with us leaving his mates behind ai. I might as well text Nomzamo and who knows? Maybe she stays close by.

INSERT 23

ENHLE

Khutso has been bawling her eyes out ever since she got here. She's mad that Mpendulo didn't spare her his second of his time just to acknowledge her presence. What was she expecting? Was she expecting him to jump at her? Kneel before her or what? She's the one who played him for a fool to begin with she has only herself to blame and no one else. Guess Mpendulo is really over her well that was quick. Imagine someone getting over you just like that? I'd cry no lies.

"Nonkolosi did you check up on Khutso?" I ask Nonkolosi chopping the 4th cabbage. I'm annoyed.

“No I did not. She'll be fine. I don't even know why she's crying over that loser” she responds rolling eyes. Yena ke she's busy grating carrots.

“Maybe she still loves him you'll never know” I respond to her shrugging. “It might happen that much as she's no longer with him she feels the void he left in her life.”

“Even though I don't know her that well I think she finally realized that money expensive gifts and all that material things are not everything that there is to this life. Love & stability is also needed and having a man with money is just a bonus” Luyanda Thokazi's wife puts her unwanted opinion.

Thokozani is Mpilo's second brother. He owns farms and a few taxis. It's better than nothing as long as they are happy & content. Luyanda is basic she doesn't do weaves nor put nails or a little mascara. She's always on a doek and aprons but she doesn't look unbothered. I don't think I'll survive being her she's too rural and just by her talking I already smelled goat & chickens. She was better of not saying anything. I don't know man but basic women rub me off the wrong way. And the atmosphere in the kitchen changes when Okuhle steps inside.

This woman is very influential her presence alone screams for you to avert your attention to her stopping you from whatever you were doing and focus solely on her and her alone. She's single no kids but she has more money than Mpilo. I don't even know what kind of a job she does or how many businesses she owns. But she's happy and she's very humble too. I wonder how does she do it because if I was at her level I don't think I'll even associate myself with average people like us. Yeses.

“Good day everyone” she greets a big smile plastered on her face.

“Hi.” We all respond to her greeting.

“Well anything I can assist with?”

And that's another thing about her always ready to help without being asked. Argh.

“You can come and help me with peeling the green beans that's if you don't mind”
Luyanda tells her.

“Of course I don't mind.” She walks up to her and Luyanda hands her a knife.

I watch her as she gracefully sits down without any care in the world. I should've asked her to come and help me with the cabbage. But Luyanda already called for her. Anyway Mazana was instructed not to touch any pots since she lost her baby and now she's in her bedroom with her sisters keeping her busy. I wish I was with her and not doing any of this nonsense.

“Enhle the elders are asking for tea outside please attend to them” Nobayeni tells me stepping inside the kitchen with the last bucket of biscuits.

Sighing. “How many are they?”

“12.”

“Whoa whoa you're expecting me to make tea for 12 people?”

“You heard her right. Or you don't want to make it for them?” Mpilo's voice comes over.

I swallow. “I I was just making sure Baba. I'll get right on it” I say leaving the kitchen with my head slightly bowed.

Stepping outside I take out a deep breath. Damn you Mpilo. Mpilo is making my life hard right now and pretending to be a very good helpful wife is starting to drain me. I need some wine to get through the day but thanks to Mam'Dzedze for hiding them from us just what I need awesome. I take out 12 cups from the big drum filled with water and put them on top of the table.

“Can I help?” Bria my little sister asks.

“She's doing fine you can go and check on the stew” my mother's voice comes over.

Bria walks away after mouthing sorry. My mother is really being impossible right now and I don't understand her demeanor towards me I really don't. I won't even bother asking her about it because I know that she'll not answer me. And to think that I was looking forward to seeing her mxm I regret it. This weekend can end already.

I put in the first six cups an enamel kettle filled with tea bowls of milk & sugar in a tray and take it to them well I'll just put it on the floor and they'll pour for themselves.

“Young lady and where exactly are you going to put that tray?” My mother's voice stops me from taking any steps further.

My nose flares and I turn to face her attempting to look calm but with the way she's looking at me right now she's making it impossible for me to keep calm.

"What mother?" I ask through gritted teeth.

"I said; where are you going to put that tray?"

"On the ground."

"Is that how you serve elders?"

"Ma. Those elders are sitting outside in a circle. Where else can I put the tray if not on the ground?"

"There are many tables here. And I'd suggest that you take one and go and set it up in the middle of them those old women won't bend they'll hurt their backs."

"Why are you treating me like this Mama?" Tears blur my vision.

"Because you refuse being treated like a human since you behave like an animal. You've changed I don't even recognize you. Keep it moving don't keep the elders waiting because some of them need to take their medication" she tells me and turns to leave.

I blink away the tears and turn on my heels walking back to the table. I put the tray back on the table and wipe my tears. "Don't cry baby girl. Don't let them see you breaking down." I assure myself but no what I'm actually doing is lying to myself because more tears come out confirming my own lies. I hurry to the house looking on the ground not wanting anyone to see my tears until I get to the bathroom. Locking the door I balance my hands on the basin and silently cry. Fuck. Is this how that waiter felt when I embarrassed him? It hurts too extensively. I never thought I'd see the day where the woman who gave birth to me will make me cry. There is a first time for everything of course.

I look at my reflection in the mirror and my make-up is ruined I need to wash my face and reapply it before anyone catches on. Sighs.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

We finished baking an hour ago and now we are waiting for the person that's said that he's on his way to fetch them. We cleaned up the place and all I need now is to sleep but then Lwazi & I are going to the mall to eat out. And now I'm looking for something to

wear something simple yet stylish. Lwazi is already set just waiting for me while busy taking pictures in the lounge. I look at the time on my bedside table and it's nearing 14:30 dammit. I end up settling for boyfriend jeans oversized cartoonized t-shirt and sneakers.

“We Thando;

Engani nguwe owangithembisa

Kuthi ngeke ungishiye

We Thando.”

The music blaring outside the yard makes me peep through the window and there's a bakkie parked right at the gate. Guess it's the people who are here to fetch the scones. I move from the window and pull up my jeans Lwazi will give them to them. I throw in a t-shirt when my door flies open and Lwazi steps in smiling.

“Wena ungukhethiweyo ngabaphansi

K'dalaaa Ngizulazula ngifuna wena

baby.”

Lwazi sings out of tune.

“My pride & joy

Ungubambo lwami.”

He takes my hands and dances with me still singing.

“Choma what's wrong with you? Viceroy already kicking in?”

He laughs. “Better than that choma. Wena bambolwami I want to show you something.”

“Let me put on my shoes first.”

“The shoes can wait this is important.” He's already pulling me by my hand.

“At least let m—” I stop talking and my eyes go wide when I see Mpendulo leaning against the door frame.

He looks shocked too but then a smile breaks out of his lips and I smile too releasing my hand from Lwazi's not so tight grip.

“Don't be afraid sondela munku come to daddy” he says opening his arms for me.

I giggle running up to him. He's wearing a very dirty overall. I wrap my arms around his waist laying my head under his chin. He smells like a cow.

“Well you sure love to snuggle considering that I smell horrible” he says kissing my head.

I snort. “Only with you.” Pulling out from the hug. He puts his hands on my cheeks and kisses me.

“Thanks for the romantic show but we don't have much time” Lwazi says thumping his feet.

“Wait for your turn Mr. Ghost” he teases and Lwazi laughs.

“Shut the hell up. Just take your orders and leave.”

“Why don't you help to take them to the bakkie to avoid the romantic show?”

“That's not a bad idea plus you can drop us off at the mall. Are you riding with Samke?”

“Yeah I am. And what exactly are you going to do at the mall?”

“To scout for men with moola.”

“You can scout them by yourself my baby ain't going to scout any man he has me and I'll provide for her.”

“If you say so.”

“Hold up a sec. Does ghost know that you are going to the mall to look for loaded men?”

He laughs. “He doesn't and it better stay that way.”

“So

Sponsored

and it better stay that way.”

“So the two of you are really dating?”

“I should be asking you & Zamo here. Are you two dating?”

“Yes.” We answer same time as if we were on cue. Then we both laugh.

“Well congratulations. You guys make the cutest pair ever. Anyway let me take these buckets to the bakkie and don't do your sex here.”

I laugh. “Choma please.”

“Yeah yeah. Out of the way ke.” We step out of the kitchen and he steps out heading towards the gate.

Samke hoots and I wave at him.

“So munku. What is it that you're going to do at the mall again?”

“Window shopping then have lunch and we come back home.”

“I see. Since you already have plans with Lwazi can I come and see you later?”

“Of course you can. At least now you know where I live.”

“Yeah and I didn't think that I'd find you here. God works in mysterious ways indeed. If I knew that you were the one baking I'd have come and helped.”

I laugh. “Really?”

“Yes by eating the dough of course.” He winks.

“Gerara here man.” He laughs. “Let me go and put on some shoes and take my purse I'll be back.”

“Bring your shoes here I'll help you wear them.”

I narrow my eyes at him. "Qondile?" He nods smiling.

I hurry to my room to get my shoes. I pick up my purse and step out of my room locking it. My stock is in my room I still don't trust Nonjabulo.

"Sit" Mpendulo says taking the sneakers from my hand.

"Are you trying to be a gentleman or what?"

"I'm trying to be one. I'm securing what's mine here."

"Possessive much?"

"Yeah. One of the traits I never knew I had until I met you."

"Whoa am I safe though?"

"Very safe I'll protect you with my life."

"So you'd jump on the train for me?"

"And leave you with these losers? Nope I will not or we will jump together."

I laugh. "That could work."

"All done and ready to go." He rises from the floor and I stand too.

Lwazi & Samke have taken all the buckets outside. So Mpendulo & I step out of the house. Lwazi comes back and asks Mpendulo to take pictures of us. Samke hoots.

"Is'khathi baba! Time." He yells.

We ignore him and continue taking pictures I'm now taking them with Mpendulo. Well we have enough pictures now.

"Let's get going guys" I tell them.

We all walk out of the yard and go to the bakkie. Stepping inside a smell of almost everything muthi hits my nostrils.

"Who's traditional healer's van is this?" Lwazi asks.

"Uncle Deso. He's not a traditional healer but he knows his way around imithi" Samke answers him.

"Does he know a very powerful love portion that works with immediate effect?"

“Choma!”

“What choma? I'm just making a conversation.”

“I don't like the conversation. Change it to something else” I tell him.

“Well it doesn't hurt to try” he responds shrugging.

“I wonder why are you asking about love portions. Or do you want to? You know mus” Mpendulo says.

“He'd never do that. He's not desperate” I respond to him.

“Hope so because muthi never works on ghost. He is muthi himself don't try to feed him anything if you still value your life” Samke says and my body shudders.

Mpendulo rests my head on his chest. “I want you to smell of cows and smoke. No man will get close to you there at the Mall.”

I snicker. “Men on mission won't care about the smell.”

“You're right but I trust you munku.”

“Of course you should.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Guess we are now official. Boyfriend & girlfriend we are. Or did I move on too soon? But it feels so right.

★»★«

MPENDULO

After dropping Nomzamo & Lwazi off at the mall we drove back home since Noni was busy calling us telling us to come back because people are waiting for scones. And I must say that Nomzamo knows how to bake one of the buckets is no longer full and it's Samke's doing. He was busy doing the tasting ai. We unload the buckets off the bakkie.

Stilo told us to drop him off at the park saying he's meeting with his friends as we were going to fetch the scones.

“Finally we've been waiting since like forever” Gog'Dorothy says opening one of the buckets. “I want to taste if we didn't waste money.” She takes the first bite and she moans. “Take the 5 buckets to your room and lock the door don't allow anyone in. These are not for everyone some will just have to wait for Ncumisa's rock scones.”

Samke laughs. “But Noni said she bought them for everyone njena.”

“I know but not everyone deserves fine things these are just too good. Melting moments” she says looking around. “You know what let me take a few to the ladies for tasting even though they've already eaten.”

I shake my head. “I'll be taking these to the room” I say picking up 2 buckets and heading to the house.

Stepping inside the kitchen I find Khutso dishing up for herself the others are just talking over a cup of tea. The fantastic four is not around I'm sure they're in Enhle's room gossiping.

“Hey” she greets as I pass and I nod. I feel a hand on my wrist. “Mpendulo wait. Look I'm sor—” she stops talking sniffing my overall. “Where do you come from? You smell of Endangered.”

“Just release my hand and stop asking me questions that don't concern you Khutso.”

“No I want to know Mpendulo. Ubuyaphi? Who is she!” She raises her voice grabbing every women's attention towards us.

“She's a woman. A woman better than you in so many ways now that you've found your answer let go of my hand.”

“You're hurting me Mpendulo you're hurting my feel—”

“Khutso Israel is waiting for his food” one of the women tells her.

I chuckle as she releases my hand from her grip and I start walking. So she's dating one of my father's associates? I should've known and it now makes sense what my father said to me over the phone. I hope she doesn't regret her decision of dating old married men hhayi. Slay Queens. I'm about to step inside my room when Mpilo growls behind me I pivot and I find him looking at me eyes so dark and luckily for me he's with one of my uncles. He starts banging his head against the wall.

“Leave my presence Mpendulo Leave!” He roars.

I smile putting the buckets down and walk up to him. He takes a step back and uncle Tito stands in between us.

“Why Baba?”

He grunts pushing uncle Tito to me and he runs outside still grunting.

“What the hell is wrong with your father boy?” Uncle Tito asks me.

“I don't know. Or maybe I look like a monster to him” I say shrugging.

“Bullshit! He's crazy. You look normal son I think he needs to get his brains checked. Go and do whatever you were going to do I'll have a talk with him. Hhe Mpilo?” He shakes his head walking away.

I open the door and step inside with the buckets I plop myself on the bed but then I stand and walk up to the window. Parting the curtain slightly I see all my uncles who were drinking African beer rising from their seats. I'm sure they are going to attend to my father. My presence is really ticking my father off and I don't even know why. I know that he never liked me but this? This is too much. The door opens and Samke steps in shaking his head.

“Boy your father is deranged. He just poured down the whole pot of stew in the fire he's going crazy saying things like; he doesn't want you here you are a bad omen wara wara. He's unstoppable.”

Just then my phone beeps notifying me of a message and it's from Nomzamo.

“Please come and fetch us we are in danger. I think there are people following us please hurry you'll find us at Wimpy.”

“Shit! Dude please borrow me your car keys I need to go and fetch Nomzamo at the mall she says they're in danger.”

“What? Let's use uncle Deso's bakkie he's using my car.”

I nod already walking out of the room Samke on my heels.

“Mpendulo” Belinda calls me.

“Not now Ma. I'm rushing somewhere.”

Getting outside my father is still at it he's breaking cups & dishes. I shake my head. Samke hurls the keys at me I catch them and we both step inside the bakkie. Roaring it to life a brick land on the windscreen almost shattering it. Mpilo needs help.

“I don't think I'll come back here” I tell Samke speeding off.

“Whoa! Don't kill us man slow down.” Samke shouts in my ears but I don't heed him.

I need to save my woman and her best friend. I don't think I'll forgive myself if something happens to them. And who on earth is following them?

INSERT 24

MPENDULO

Getting to the mall I WhatsApp Nomzamo asking her where's she's at a second later her message comes through she sends a live location. I've been ignoring the calls & messages from family members who are busy blowing up my phone don't they get it? I don't want to talk to any of them. They better focus on Mpilo. I step out of the bakkie killing the engine then hurry to Burger King where Nomzamo is with Lwazi. Samke is on my tail his beer belly is making it impossible for him to hurry or run.

Getting to Burger King I scan my eyes around looking for Nomzamo and they're sitting by the window laughing mxm. I shake my head in disbelief? Really? I walk up to them ignoring the stares of the customers. Samke has finally caught up with me breathing heavily.

“So eating burgers & fries and laughing is the danger that you are in?” I can't bring myself to be mad at her I just can't.

She stands from her chair and hugs me. It's like she knows that I need one and I feel at peace. It's all weird to tell you the truth.

“I texted you because I sensed that you were not okay wherever you are. The environment that you were in made my blood cold. I'm sorry I just want to see you happy smiling and most importantly carefree. Now that you are here with me you don't have to walk around as if you're walking on eggshells afraid that they might crack” she says pulling out from the hug.

“H-how did you know that?”

“I don't know.” She shrugs. “I just sensed it and I felt the urge to make you leave that house.”

“Thank you munku. Things are tough at home my father is uncontrollable. He goes crazy when he sees me yoh. I knew that he didn't like me but I never knew that it was this intense.

“Why does he loathe you? My bad please sit.”

I pull the chair from the empty table and put it next to Nomzamo then sit down. Samke is already eating.

“I don't know why munku. He has hated me ever since like forever and he was never part of my life growing up.”

“Well you don't need him. You're a grown man now as long as you have those couple of people who genuinely love you you are good. I bet your father is an affluent man.”

“He is and he's greedy too. He's no different than his wives they are all just too big in their own shoes. Always treating people like shit simply because they have money and can buy anyone or whatever they want.”

“He is a polygamist?”

“Yeap. He has four wives.”

“I see. So you're also a polygamist?”

"I'm not. We don't practice that shit at home. He did it out of his own accord."

"Strange."

"Very."

"So you didn't bathe?" She asks changing the topic.

"No it's just that when I got home my father went crazy and you also texted me saying that you're in danger so I had to drop everything and hurry to you." She giggles hiding her face on my arm.

"Argh you guys are just the perfect pair. I'm so jealous of both of you" Lwazi says in his dramatic voice.

"Well jealousy is a disease like a what-what said Beyonce once upon a time not me" I say.

Laughter fills our table.

"So you listen to Beyonce too?" Lwazi asks.

“No. Well yes back then. I used to listen to her because I loved singing but as time went by I've outgrown her and dished music altogether.”

“Yeah he was our South African Usher Raymond” Samke adds. “We were in a band but alcohol & women made us lose interest in music we saw it as a waste of time. It still is though” he says shrugging.

“Given the chance will you ever go back to singing?” Lwazi asks.

“I don't know about Samke but I'm never going back there” I tell him.

“Me too.”

“And you Lwazi? What did you love doing growing up?” I ask.

“Poetry & music. I still write poems though.”

“And you munku?” I turn to look at her.

“Cooking baking & reading. I still do all of them even now. All three of them are my passions” she responds taking a bite of her burger.

“I can attest to that baking part. Your scones are the best I don't like scones or biscuits but yours? I ate them even before we got home. If it wasn't for your boyfriend here who

reprimanded me I would've finished that 20lt bucket alone” Samke says laughing. “Trust me when I say they'll finish them before tomorrow.”

She laughs. “Well I can't take the praises alone Lwazi did most of the baking to tell you the truth. I was exhausted and I almost burned down the kitchen” she says laughing.

Lwazi laughs too shaking his head. I wonder if he & ghost are dating I mean I asked Lwazi earlier on but he threw the question back at us. Ai I don't imagine ghost getting it on with a guy? But hey weird things are happening lately guess it's normal.

“So Lwazi you & ghost; what goes?” I finally ask.

“Nothing. Ghost has a girlfriend and I'm his P.A” he answers shrugging.

“You're working for him?” I ask.

“Yes and it's only been a day. Monday I resume work.”

“So he got tired of fucking Alison and decided to ditch her? I'm not surprised he does that all the damn time after all.” Samke asks & answers himself.

Nomzamo laughs and Lwazi snicker rolling his eyes.

“Lwazi keep it to yourself. Don't open any hole for him if you want to keep your job and he's a very aggressive boy. Don't allow him to sweet talk you. Fine you might've done

the deed of which is the reason why you've gotten the job but from now on going forward don't open any hole for him okay? Even if you are into him and trust me when I say he'll mash your heart. Ethan is bad news Lwazi. Very bad.”

This is my first time hearing Samke giving someone solid advice it doesn't happen often. Phela Samke is always on the bad side of good things. He forever derails and taking everything as a joke. But this Samke that I'm witnessing right now? Hhe. I stan it'll go down in the history of one of the substantial advise his given in his entire life.

“Wow. I didn't know that you can positively advise someone.” I compliment him I'm so proud of him.

“I have my days and besides Lwazi is a good guy he doesn't deserve an asshole like ghost. He deserves someone better.”

“You might be shocked. Some people love bad & toxic people. You can advise them all you want and the minute you divert to another topic all that you've said to them have been forgotten like old gossip. This organ of ours that pumps blood is sometimes useless” Nomzamo says wiping her mouth.

“You're right. Much as you advised him right now it'll be entirely up to him what he does about it.” I add.

“Inhliziyo ifuna loku ekufunayo.” He quotes Sjava's Inhliziyo . “I understand you and I promise to not lose myself on him and his advances but guys have you seen his panty-dropping smile?”

“Haikhe!” Nomzamo claps her hands laughing.

My phone rings after it being quiet for a couple of minutes.

“And we are off to spur” Lwazi says and I excuse myself to answer Belinda's call.

“Mama.”

“Thanks God you're okay. I was worried sick about you.”

“I'm okay Mama. I'm sorry for worrying you.”

“It's okay boy. As long you're safe. Is Samke with you?”

“Yes we are together” I look at them as they stand to leave. Guess spur it is then.

“Good. And Mpilo is back to himself he's laughing as if he didn't go bazak on everyone a couple of hours ago. He's behaving strangely especially in your presence. Why is that?”

I sigh closing my eyes. “I don't know and by the look of things I don't think I'll be joining you the entire weekend for everyone's sake and peaceful gathering” I say pulling Nomzamo by the back of her t-shirt as she passes and she comes in contact with my chest. “I'll fetch my bag later on.”

“What? You can't do that Mpendulo. You need to be here to help around. These other boys are lazy!”

“I know but my sanity matters too. I can't hide in my room afraid that Mpilo will have an episode when he sees me or smells my scent.”

“Fine. I understand and I'm sorry. This is going to be a boring family gathering without you.”

“I know. Listen tell everyone that I'm fine they don't have to worry about me.”

“Okay I will. I love you.”

“I love you too.” I disconnect the call. “That was my grandmother aka my mother.”

“She's worried about you isn't she?” She asks as we trail behind the others.

“Yes she is. And can you accompany me to fetch my bag when we're done here?”

“Is that what you want?”

“Yes it is what I want.”

“Okay then and thank you for being here with me.”

“No thank you for rescuing me.” I kiss her temple.

“Why didn't I met you first instead of my ex?” She asks looking up at me.

I smile. “God saves the best for the last or however the saying goes. Everything has its own time and this is our time.”

“Of course it is.” She hops on my back and people are busy staring clearly wondering why I came to the mall wearing overalls.

But as long as Nomzamo doesn't complain I don't care about the others. They can only stare and not say anything.

★»★«

ENHLE

Yoh

Sponsored

Mpilo is really showing us a 3D movie with his confusing and on & off behavior. The next minute he's fine and the next minute he's acting like a wild animal on loose chasing us around breaking things. The last straw was when he poured ash inside the pot of rice Jesus. After all the effort and the food ready to be served those who were cooking had to start over. Mpilo went to town to buy more ingredients. But now what I don't understand is why does he behave as an animal let on the loose only when Mpendulo is around? Or maybe there's a possibility that is bewitching him. He is a jealous earning peanuts loser after all. Argh young boys and trying to compete with their elders.

My mother is still on my neck making it impossible for me to rub it and she's boring me right now yet she doesn't see that. Belinda is really trying by all of her means to avoid us and it's working. It stings when she passes us like she doesn't know us I don't want to lie but is best this way.

“Have you tasted the melting moment's biscuits that Mam'Dzedze ordered?” Lenah asks sitting beside me near the fire.

“Not yet but I heard praises about them. Are they good?”

“They one of the best. I don't remember enjoying melting moments the way I did like these ones. 6 buckets are already empty and they were supposed to last us until Sunday.”

“Did you spare some for me?”

“Of course I have. I didn't want you to be left out you've been going up & down. Your mother annoying you again?”

“Yeah. I even wish that she can just leave but she'll still be here for two more days and I'll have to endure her presence and ordering around until then.”

“At least your mother talks to you. Mine can't even look at me in the eyes. She's so disappointed in me at all of us Enhle. She gave me a mouthful leaving me crying uncontrollably she spitted nothing but facts. I felt so awful and I still am feeling awful. This is one full of drama hatred pretending family gathering we've ever had.”

“I know what you exactly mean.”

Belinda comes to where we are with a Tupperware in her hands I wonder what she's going to do with it. She walks up straight to Imile.

“How is the stew coming along?” She asks her.

“It's coming along slowly. It'll be ready in 10 minutes or so.”

“Yhhi. Okay. Can you dish up enough pap & samp here for Mpendulo & Samke.”

“Why? Are they held up somewhere?” Imile asks taking the Tupperware from her hand.

“No they'll not be joining us for the rest of the weekend and they are on their way to fetch their bags.

“What?” I ask standing knowing very well that I'll not get an answer.

“Haibo Belinda. How? Those two must be here as they always were like every other family gathering we've had. We will not be controlled by them Belinda. They are still kids!”

“Imile it is better for everyone if they aren't here trust me. And not that I need to explain myself or them to you. So are you going to dish up for them or what?” Her voice is laced with annoyance.

“Unfortunately no. I'll not be controlled by young boys. Those boys better get their asses here. I'm not dishing up for anyone.”

“Very well then” she says turning on her heels leaving without even looking back.

Wow the Belinda I know would've told her where to get off. This one is too calm for my liking I hope she's not planning anything bad. Nah she'll never sabotage her son's gathering like this. Ayi this is getting weirder & weirder as days go by. What more is going to happen in the next coming two days? Yoh I'm not prepared for any of it shame.

“That was not a wise thing to do Imile.” One of the elderly women tells her shaking her head. “Not wise.” She shakes her head as she starts walking in the other direction.

Imile's chest goes up & down clearly scared. She swallows and walks towards the kitchen.

“Wow this is just too much Enhle. I don't know about you but I'm scared of what is going to happen in the coming two days. This gathering feels so wrong.” Lenah sounds very worried and I'm worried too. No not worried but scared of the unknown.

“Hmm.” Is all I manage to say.

My heartbeat escalates when I see the old woman whom I once pushed looking straight at me expressionless. I drop my gaze to the ground fast as I can. “The kingdom will crumble.” Those words keep on playing in my mind and considering everything that's happening I don't know how I feel about this. Or is this the end of an era for us? No it can't be it's too soon.

“Enhle are you okay?” Lenah's concerned voice comes next to my ear.

I shake my head and muster a genuine smile. “Yeah I'm okay. Urhm how about we go and have a bite of those tasting moments?” I'm already on my feet.

“Yeah let's go” she stands too.

We bump into Imile with the Tupperware that Belinda had in her hand as we make our way towards the house. Guess those old woman's words got to her. Stepping inside the house a vociferous roar comes out from upstairs. I shoot my eyes open. A lion?

“Don't allow him out guard the door. Bonani! Go and call the uncles fast Mpilo is going wild again and this time he's worse than before. Everyone else out of the house now!” Mlondi yells standing in the middle of the staircase.

Bonani runs outside to call the uncles and we are standing here in the kitchen frozen.

“Fuck! He overpowered them! Hold him still!” Mlondi calls over.

The uncles push past us bumping us not caring if we get hurt or what.

“Out now!” My uncle Nsimbi yells pushing us outside.

What the hell is going on?

★»★«

NOMZAMO

The back of my hair stands and my body shudders when we drive down the street of Mpilo's home. I keep on fidgeting on the seat I can't sit still. The darkness floating in one of these houses makes my stomach churns and everything that I've eaten starts to seethe in my stomach. I don't know what causes all of this and why. I mean I've never experienced such before. This is new to me and scary too and it seems like I'm the one who's feeling like this.

“Munku are you okay?” Mpendulo asks sounding worried.

“I can't go in further any further than this. My body is dismissing me from continuing this journey with you. There's a house not far from here covered in darkness that house is a devil's playground. You can drop me off here” I tell him.

“No munku. We can't drop you off here. What if that darkness-covered house has spirits roaming around their yard that will take you away when they see you standing alone? No munku I'm not leaving you here rather we park outside my father's yard. Hopefully uncle Deso is back with Samke's car okay?”

I nod leaning back. Lwazi & Samke are not even focusing on us. My body runs cold and sweat starts prickling from my back when we approach this enormous house. I can hear & feel all the evil spirits surrounding the house and the man harboring them. This house belongs to the devil straight I breathe in & out trying to calm my nerves down but it's not helping.

Whoa so this is Mpilo's home? His father's house? If it really is then why is it surrounded by an evil spirit— oh hell no. It can't be or is it?

“Sthandwa my journey ends here we can't drive with you inside. Please just leave Lwazi & I here then you and Samke can drive in together you will find us here” I tell him with a very convincing smile plastered on my face.

“Hmmm okay then. Don't run away?”

I laugh tapping Lwazi on the shoulder. He removes one earphone and turns to face me.

“Let's wait for them right here while they drive inside” I tell him.

“Okay.”

I'm thankful as he's not protesting. We both open the door and step out of the bakkie.

“This place is cold all of a sudden” Lwazi comments rubbing his arms.

“Yeah” I respond and start pacing up & down.

The second the gate slides open deafening squealing sounds comes out of the yard. I cover my ears blocking them but it's not helping. I shake my head and start running in the direction we came from leaving Lwazi standing there. Guess not because I can feel his footsteps behind me. I finally come to a halt when I no longer hear the voices.

“What the hell were you running away from?” He asks panting. “You almost killed me I can't your swine.”

I laugh. "I'm sorry. Wena what were you running away from?"

"I don't know. I mean I saw you running and I followed you."

"Almost forgot that when a black person sees a black person running you run too without asking any questions. You'll ask later on what were they running away from. I love my people."

He laughs sitting on the paving. "Houses here are very big here."

"Of which makes me wonder who their owners are and how some attained them" I say shrugging.

"They brought them choma. Duh."

"I guess" I respond to him absentmindedly.

Is Mpendulo's father a ritualist or what? And if he is does that mean Mpendulo knows about it? No I doubt he is. He did say his father hates him and when he said that he was impassive. Dammit and if that's the case; then what does it have to do with me? How does all of this involve me? It doesn't make any sense.

"Sponono sami

We lovey wa-hami

Sondela mama we

Ng'qhawule nga'qhawule

Ngak'thanda ngiqala ukuk'bona

Ngagcwala ngothando lwakho

Sondela mama we.”

Madlokoza x isponono is blaring from Samke's car as they drive up to us. He pulls up beside us and we walk to the car. Their moods have changed. I shake my head as I step inside the car.

“What are you doing here?” Mpendulo asks not looking at me his hand on his thigh. He's tapping them.

“We were jogging so we ended up here.” I lie.

“You know munku. I'm glad that I'll not be spending the rest of the weekend with those people. Everyone is acting so strange and my father was having another of his episodes

at least this time around I was not the one who triggered him to set off” he tells me chuckling.

“It's official mjita. Your father needs to be sent to a psychiatric hospital because he will end up hurting people” Samke says.

“The elders can do that themselves. You heard what he said you were there. Anyway my mother dished up for us. Where to from here?”

“To my house. You need a bath and after then we will decide what are we going to do. I'll call my girl over and maybe chill over a couple beers and play pool.” Samke.

“Sound like a plan” he pulls me to him. “I love you munku. I love you so much.”

“I love you too sthandwasami.”

I wonder what went down between his father & him. Hmmm family politics.

INSERT 25

NOMZAMO

Mpendulo is all bathed up and is in his simple distressed jeans & plain black t-shirt. They are sitting outside under a big umbrella playing music with Samke's car some of Samke's neighbors joined them. I realized that Samke loves Madlokoza's music a lot but I don't blame him though the guy is very good even though I learned about him tonight. And I think he's going to be my favorite artist too after Azana. Anyway Samke did call his girl over and he came with three more of her friends I don't even understand

why she has more than two friends and you might find that they all have best friends. I mean it happens all the damn time. Samke's girlfriend and one of her friends are in the kitchen cooking pap that'll be eaten with the meat that Mpendulo was given by his mother it'll be enough for all of us...

"How are the beers coming along in the fridge?" Asks Tebogo one of Rabebe's friends.

Rabebe is one of Samke's many booty calls from what I've gathered from Mpendulo when I asked him; why is Samke giving me his phone to hide it. Samke is the captain of the fuckboy team. Anyway the ladies are very accommodating people hey no nasty attitude and all that. I wonder if Rabebe knows that she's one of many Samke's booty calls but I doubt that she knows. No girl can stand such absurdity heybo. And Rabebe is a very humble bathong with the sweetest smile ever a cute lady she is. Ae she deserves much better not Samke. I mean Samke is in the same group with his friend ghost and it might be possible that ghost is the coach.

"All set & ready to drink!" Busisiwe responds from the kitchen.

"Bring us some!" Tebogo tells her.

"Haibo. You have hands Tebogo. Come and get them yourself" Rabebe says.

"Fine" Tebogo grumbles as she stands from the couch.

Lwazi & Sibongile are busy typing away on their phones not concentrating on us. I shrug and lean back on the couch closing my eyes and all I see is darkness. Dammit I

flutter them open only to find Tebogo looking at me creepy. I look around and it's just the two of us.

“You must help them Nomzamo. They are depending on you. I know that you're confused right now and you're thinking that you are seeing things or starting to get crazy but it's not that. This is deeper than this Nomzamo. Lives are at risk here because if you don't help them then they'll die and painfully so. Save them they are too blinded the material things that she showers them with have made them blinded from all of his evil doings. One of them is gifted just like you and unfortunately they took her gift of seeing things because she was the one who was supposed to save the others but she didn't. She wouldn't have lost her gift completely if she was not taken by the money she saw and the gifts she was showered with the second she agreed to marry that evil man. Well the first wife is just impossible. She's the oblivious one out of all the three.”

She looks out of the window and I follow her gaze she's staring at Mpendulo and tears fill her eyes.

“That young man has been through a lot he never experienced father's love he never really got the chance to grow up like any other normal child. He was called names while growing up but he'll tell you all about it one day well and that's if and only if the tw—” her voice trails. “There'll be tears shed spilling of blood is going to be chaotic love must be fought for. And death will occur a lot will be lost but new hope will be brought forth. And he truly loves you after all you are the only girl who loves him for who he is and the only girl he has truly ever loved. But unfortunately not everything is as it seems.”

“What th—”

“Choma!” Lwazi's voice sounds so distant. “Choma!” I flutter my eyes open jolting from my seat.

Dammit. I look around me and they are all staring at me with concern on their faces. Tebogo emerges from the kitchen with a glass of water in her hand.

“Oh she's awake” she says putting the glass on top of the television stand.

“Choma are you okay?” Lwazi touches my shoulder. I nod. “You scared us there for a moment. You were refusing to wake up.” Shame man my friend sounds really worried.

“I must've passed out unexpectedly considering that I didn't get enough sleep last night.” I fake a smile. “I'm sorry for worrying you.” I apologize.

“Well thank you for waking up because I couldn't stand your friend's here glittery eyes. He really loves you friends like him are very rare” Sbongile comments.

Now what I don't understand is why; is Tebogo acting as if like nothing happened yet she was the one I was talking to? Or was it all just in my mind? This is just crazy. What the hell is wrong with me?

“Munku are you okay?” Mpendulo asks pulling me to him. “I'm sorry I wasn't here. I went to the shop and I just got back now.” He pulls out from the hug and puts his hands on my cheeks scanning my face.

As I'm looking at him straight in the eyes the topic about his childhood rises. I don't know if whether what Tebogo said about his childhood was true or what. Ae this doesn't

make any sense at all. It's like I was dreaming yet wide awake. Wuhhh Jeso. The pool of confusion in my mind will fill up and I might purge some water because wow.

“Munku.” Mpendulo blows air in my eyes. I close them & open them smiling.

“I'm fine sthandwasami” I assure him.

“Phew. Thanks God. You can come and sit with me if you like.”

I laugh. “No I'm fine here sthandwasami go and chill with the boys. I'll do just fine with the ladies they are good company.”

He looks at them debating whether to agree or not. I nudge him.

“Fine. If they get too much tell me okay?”

Lwazi clicks his tongue. “As if we will get too much. Hamba la Mpendulo. Your girl is in good hands.”

“I am I promise you. And if I feel like sleeping I'll come to you yeah?”

“You promise?”

“Yea I promise.”

“Okay I love you.”

“I love you too.”

He kisses me then pulls out and wipes my lips with his thumb.

“Be okay for me yeah?”

“Yeap.” My lips make a popping sound as I enunciate the p.

“Are you sure?”

I giggle. “101% sure.”

“Alright then. I'll come and check up on you every now & then. No debate.”

“Yes dad” I say plopping myself on the couch.

“Good.”

I watch him as he leaves reluctantly shoulders slouched.

“God bless me with a man like this one and I promise you that I'll be a good girl. Damn Zam you've found yourself a man right there” Busisiwe says getting settled on the carpet with a plate of snacks in her hands..

“Me too bruh. I also want a man who'll worry about me like he did but hey we're dating pharas. Men who don't care about dinner dates & picnics. We're dating abo please call 'phuma' rha!” Tebogo says jokingly.

We all laugh.

“Mine is the worst he only calls me when he needs to fuck and do all the house duties for him but I still love him” Sibongile says.

“Well I do a long-distance relationship so my boyfriend can't care about me while far plus I have needs and they must be met” Busisiwe says throwing peanuts in her mouth.

“And I don't know whether I'm dating or single it's forever complicated. But I jump when I'm called for sex or maybe it's desperation” Rabebe says. Her voice is laced with sadness but she's hiding it behind a fake smile.

“And as for me I'm freelancing here & there” Lwazi says. “But knowing how shitty men are ai cha. I'm doing just fine in my freelancing department.”

“Guess I'm one of the lucky girls in the world to get a man who'll walk on thorns for barefooted. But don't give up ladies you'll find your men tailored for you one of these

good days. I was in a shitty marriage before meeting with Mpendulo don't give up" I assure them.

"In my case is fucked up because the one I want doesn't want me. He's still full of games and I don't think he'll ever grow up." Rabebe.

"Don't you think it's time you spread your wings to greener pastures? I just don't understand why we as women always settle for less whereas we can settle for something more not all obviously but those who do. I mean men love themselves too much to settle for bullshit. Why can't we be like them and don't give amafakhi?" I question

"Maybe it's because we are desperate and sometimes is just that we love too much. Plus women are supposed to withstand anything thrown their way and sometimes is simply because we're desperate and scared to be alone" Busisiwe says.

"Life." Rebaba huffs. "Let me go and dish up." She stands.

"I'll come and help you." I offer.

"And we will continue drinking" Lwazi says spanking my ass.

"Voetsek!"

He laughs. "I spank better than your man habe!"

I laugh getting to the kitchen. I can't with Lwazi chisos he's too much.

"I love your friendship with Lwazi. The two of you are incompatible in a good way; you're humble & sweet while he's boisterous & loquacious. And you can't even say that he's the very same person that was embarrassed by those rebellious wives a couple of weeks ago."

"Yeah he didn't let what they did get to him. He dusted himself up and didn't allow to be soiled."

"He did well."

"Yeah. So how long have you been dating Samke?" I ask setting the plates on the table.

"Dating Samke?" Chuckling. "Oh no love I'm not dating him. I'm just-I'm just his booty call that's all." She shrugs.

"And you're fine with that? I'm sorry if I'm prodding."

"No it's okay we are having an innocuous conversation after all. Anyway to answer your question no. I'm not fine with that but there's nothing I can do about it because I love him."

"Did you ever tell him that you love him?"

She nods. "Yeah I have. Countless times. And he told me straight up that I'm good for sex only he doesn't want anything more than that and if I can't live with that then our arrangement is off."

The conversation alone builds up a sour taste in my mouth. Samke makes me nauseous and Rebabe nauseates me more. How could she accept such rubbish? And why would she settle for being a sperm dish for Samke? I mean Samke made it clear from the very beginning that he only wants sex from her Samke made it clear from the very beginning that he only wants sex from her nothing more and she agreed to that rubbish without a second thought? How desperate is she wanting to be loved? Iyoh it can never be me. Wuuhh hair air.

"And you agreed to be available for him for sex?" I don't know if she can detect the sudden annoyance in my voice.

"Yes I agreed with hopes that he'll eventually fall for me but he never does. It's been two years now" she tells me blinking away tears.

"What?" Banging the table. "I'm sorry I didn't mean to snap. I'm just pissed off that's all."

At least no one came rushing to the kitchen guess I didn't bang it too loud.

"Yeah you sure as hell are and it's kind of cute."

Despite the anger bubbling up in my stomach I find myself laughing.

“Whatever. But on the reals though you deserve better. It's obvious that Samke doesn't see you as someone he'd want to spend the rest of his life with. He only sees you as his sex slave and think about all the diseases he'll bring you even though he already is bringing them and brought them? So do yourself a favor and call it to quit. In fact block him everywhere for your own peace and sanity. Try staying a week without contacting him and if he comes to your home don't come out. I'm not an expert when it comes to relationships but try avoiding him and if you survive the whole week without seeing or communicating with him then you'll do just fine the following weeks.”

“You reckon? And about diseases you're right he infected me with one that's stuck with me forever while some I've managed to treat.”

See? Despite getting diseases from him she still comes back for me ai.

“Yeah I reckon. And I read somewhere that; to get over a man you need to get in the sheet with another man” I say laughing. “The one diseases that's stuck with you forever doesn't kill not unless you'll allow him to infect you over & over again.”

“I am treating myself and try by all means to prevent falling pregnant for him. So that's what you did? Getting in the sheet with another man to get over your ex?” She asks grinning.

“Since I've mentioned it I believe I did.”

We both laugh. She dishes up the chakalakala. Well the boys brought more meat to last us until tomorrow afternoon. Geez kana we have platters to do ai.

“And it worked. I'm definitely going to try it.”

“That's my girl.”

“Thank you for the talk. It's time I remind myself that I'm worthy and reclaim my life back. This is the last time Samke sees me here.”

“Promise?”

“I promise.”

“Ukudla bo! Food!” Lwazi yells from the lounge. “Or someone stole the meat?”

“Yes! They stole yours.”

“Kunganyiwa sos nou! My food please!”

“Lord. But Lwazi is so dramatic” I say rolling my eyes. “I'll take the food to them and you'll serve the gents.”

“Yes boss.”

Rebabe was loved by God so much that he decided to bless her with more meat on her body obviously God gave her a portion of my meat kidding. She's beautiful and can get any man she wants. I just don't understand why she settled for being Samke's sperm dish. But ke "u Thando al'boni" Sjava once said. I'll have to talk to Lwazi he knows his way around fashion I'm sure he'll transform her into something magnificent.

I hand the ladies their food. Gosh Mazwi & his live videos.

"We are live guys say hi to my viewers" he says.

"Haisuka!" I flip my middle finger and he laughs.

Seems like his real personality has resurrected it's good that he's enjoying life and he's no longer the sad Lwazi that I first met. I love seeing him this carefree...

★»★«

ENHLE

Yabo le eyenzeka la today ang'yazi. I don't know it all. It's shocking hhayi I'm still trembling from what I witness it's just too much and too traumatizing. The kids are locked up in one of the rooms they are traumatized from what they saw. Mpilo was behaving like a beast even his roars were animalistic they made my blood run cold. Two of the uncles have been taken to the hospital due to the senseless beatings Mpilo gave them. He didn't care whether they are his brothers or what and it's unfortunate that Zandi one of the uncle's wife lost her 6 months pregnant after Mpilo kicked her to the wall using too much force she hit the wall with her tummy and I don't know what happened next because everyone was running around the yard looking for cover. When all was said & done Zandi was found on the ground passed out bleeding. Okuhle drove her to the hospital and unfortunately for them they got there too late. She lost both her twins it was discovered that she was carrying twins when they were operating her to remove the babies. Bhekani left after spewing strings of insults & curses to him.

Now those who remained behind are locked up in their rooms scared of Mpilo no one ever witnessed Mpilo like that. He was totally someone else it was like someone was controlling him ordering him to cause devastation. Belinda and some elders left the minute everything died down. I doubt we'll still have the gathering. Mpilo ruined it all for us and of which is a good thing If you ask me. I mean we're going to have a peaceful weekend after all.

The sun has already set. I walk up to the window and look at the fire that's still burning. I see a figure there standing facing it and it's very clear that it's Mpilo. The remorse in his eyes when he saw the aftermath of his doings broke my heart. Tears were filling his eyes and he couldn't face his mother as she left clearly shocked & disappointed by her son's violent behavior. If she truly loved her son she'd have seen that her son wasn't himself but he was controlled by something bigger than him. She should've sought her son help first before leaving without finding the reason behind her son's behavior is.

A knock comes through at the door yanking me out of my thoughts. I move off from the window and attend to the door. Opening it I find the same woman I once pushed. Her strong stare makes me shudder.

“Can I help you?” I ask her sizing her up & down.

“Out of all the wives you are the gullible & stupid one. You're so blinded by the material things and flashy lifestyle that you don't even know how it came about. You don't even see even when danger is approaching you ignore the signs and child sweet child how I pity you & worry about you. Blood will be spilled who's blood will it be? Who will spill it? Why? Will you be standing by your husband when the kingdom crumbles down? It's so close yet far. It'll be by grace that you remember what I said to you at this very moment when you wake up tomorrow morning. Blessed night.” She stares at me and I take a step back when her eyes change to red within a second.

I shut the door close heart beating out of my chest. I walk to the window and there's no sign of Mpilo and the fire has been put off. What the hell did that old woman say? Goodness me! She freaks the hell out of me. “Will you be standing by your husband when the kingdom crumbles down?” The question is stuck in my mind. And who's blood is it going to be spilled & why? Thinking about it makes me shudder I don't think I'll sleep tonight. I look at my bed then take in all my room and there's nothing out of the ordinary. Everything is as it seems. Hmmm.

What the hell is happening? I'm in the dark.

★»★«

MPENDULO

My day went better than how I expected it to be but how could it not when I'm surrounded by people who love me and making sure that I'm having fun. What more can I ask for? Anyway Belinda called me a few minutes ago telling me that they are on their way back to Gazu (made-up location) where I was born & bred. Things at Mpilo's house took a different turn as he wreaked havoc and she said a lot of harsh words were exchanged between families. So this means the gathering is no longer happening. She sounded very hurt over the phone so I promised to visit her next week and that uplifted her mood a little.

Nomzamo is having fun with the ladies I didn't think that she'll enjoy herself after what transpired earlier on. I had to leave Tshego at the bottle store and run here when Samke called and told me that Nomzamo has passed out and she's refusing to wake up. I hanged up and ran here only to find the ladies surrounding her and when I saw her awake my heart started beating normally again. I was so worried about her. I love her too much I don't think I'll function without her. Yoh even if it means fighting for her and my life depends on it then I will.

Samke's phone rings in my hand and ghost name flashes on the screen. I scan for Samke and he's not around I answer anyway.

“Sam's phone hello.”

“Ek'se Mpe is that you man?”

“Yeah it's me. What's up?”

“Who is that motherfucker that's dancing with Lwazi? And where in the fucking hell are you guys at?” His furious you can tell by his hardened voice.

I move my eyes to where the ladies are and Lwazi is twerking for some guy and the guy is spanking his ass. I suppress a laugh.

“I don't know who is it man but he's having a lot of fun.”

“Fuck that! Tell Lwazi to answer his damn phone! He better not piss me off.”

I laugh. “Enjoy your vacation with your woman man and let Lwazi enjoy his life.”

“What did you just say?”

“You heard me. Let Lwazi enjoy himself. You'll see him at work on Monday morning. He works for you after all isn't he?”

“You son of a bitch!”

“Leave my mother out of this ghost. Crystal?”

“Hade man. Just please tell Lwazi to call me or at least answer his call.”

“Before I tell him. Do you love him?”

“TF dude? No I don't. I mean he—”

“Babe I'm ready for you!” Kenya's voice comes over.

I chuckle. “Enjoy man.” I disconnect the call and just then Samke plops himself next to me looking deflated.

“What's up man?”

“Rebabe is refusing to sleep with me can you believe it? Even after I threatened her that I'll call another girl I won't beg her. She said I must go and call whomever maybe she might partake in the threesome.”

I laugh. “Serves you right. You're getting served your own medicine.”

“And I know who's stirring her they've been pretty close for the past couple of hours” he says looking straight at Nomzamo.

“And the sad thing is that you won't do anything to her. Anyways here's your phone. Call one of your other booty calls” I tell him.

“Mxm I'm no longer in the mood for sex. My sex mood has been dropped to zero.”

I laugh. “Perfect. Guess we're going to be up all night drinking habashwe.”

“It's hoekay mjita. It's finooo make fun of my situation. Enhlek let's get drunk I'll go and fetch the whiskey” he says standing.

“Okay” I respond staring at Nomzamo who's being taught how to dance by Tebogo. As if summoned she looks at me smiling. She winks and I chuckle.

“A rare gem you got yourself there.” Cin Samke's neighbor says joining me. He just comes back from his house.

“Indeed. I'm lucky neh?”

“Very lucky. So have any idea how can I get the numbers of that lady?” He points at Rebabe.

“How about going to her and ask for them?”

“Well uyang'shisa. I'm scared of approaching her.” He admits.

“Then you'll never get them forget.”

“Let me drink another beer and muster the courage to go to her.”

“Spirit mjita. That's the spirit.”

I wonder what will Samke do if he finds out that his neighbor wants his fuck buddy. Hhe he doesn't deserve her after all and maybe this will make him change his ways. Well he might even not because he can be stubborn as fuck too.

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INSERT 26

NOMZAMO

“Wakey wakey sleepy head!” Lwazi wakes me up jumping on the bed. He can be childish at times but I love him like that.

I groan picking up his pillow and cover my head with it. I have a headache from all the drinking I did last night and my body is in pain from all the dancing I've been doing. I don't want to lie I had fun lots of fun. Lordit I was missing out on a lot of things mus. Anyway we had to leave because Samke was starting to get aggressive. After all Rebabe was entertaining Blake his neighbor. He was so furious and started throwing tantrums and theatrics not to mention the strings of knotted insults. Mpendulo had to calm him down mxm futhi ke Samke doesn't deserve Rebabe I swear. Rebabe deserves a man who'll love & appreciate her and Blake seems like that man. Well no I can't put it

past him besides I don't know him that well to conclude that he could be the one for Rebabe.

“Choma maarn wake up! Ghost has been sending me throngs of messages since last night and blowing up my phone like creditors.”

I laugh slowly removing the pillow from my head.

“Why would he do that?” I ask slightly lifting my head.

“I don't know. Anyways I blocked him but fuck I miss hearing his voice.” He hurls himself on his bums on the bed.

Rolling over. “Yeah?” I face him.

“For reals choma. But after seeing his recent pictures with his fiancé I—”

“Hol'up. Did I hear you saying fiancé?” I ask sitting upright and rubbing my eyes.

“Yeah fiancé.” His voice is laced with sadness. “He went on this trip to propose to her” he says shrugging. “I'm such a fool for thinking that he loves me. Anyways it's a good thing that we were not serious and much as it hurts I'll have to—” he sighs closing his eyes.

"It's fine choma. You deserve better. Ghost doesn't deserve you nor your tears. Don't cry for him."

"I won't. But how about when I get to work on Monday? How will I face him?"

"Well you'll have to act like a professional. Don't let your emotions get the best out of you. Yes the fiancé will flaunt with her ring at the workplace and they'll congratulate her and it'll hurt mtase. Uzoba hurt very badly you'll even want to cry but put up a strong facade don't let him see you weak. It'll eventually blow over in 2 days' time everyone would've forgotten about the proposal and moved on to new gossip if there's any. Don't allow him to see you vulnerable because then he'll take advantage of you and use you to satisfy whatever demons he's harboring inside him. I hate the fact that he's living a lie he's not being true to himself. Remember choma you have a family to feed you can't afford to lose your job over some dick. Don't wallow for him."

"Thank you choma. What could I be without you?" He pouts.

"No one maybe? But on the reals choma you deserve better. Stop playing hide & seek with ghost he's no different from Samke. They were both cut from the same cloth."

"Yeah I deserve better and you know what? You're right. I'm not going to cry over some dick that gets in each & everyone's hole. And as for Samke? That one ombore! Omborile shame. I just don't understand why he had to cut the chillas short with his childish behavior. Rebabe did well leaving with that man sies. Samke yinja! But I had fun."

"Exactly! So what's for breakfast?"

“I don't know. But I'm craving for voetkoeks mangola & atchaar.”

I pick up my phone from the bedside table and check the time. It's after 10:00.

“Do you think you will find voetkoeks at this time?”

“Nah but it won't hurt to try.” He disembarks from the bed. “I'll go and buy them while you take a bath yeah?”

“Cool” I respond unlocking my phone. I need to call my mother.

“Be fast!” He's already out of the door.

I punch in my mother's number and press the dial button. It rings rings rings ri—”

“Nana.” The excitement in her voice can't be missed.

“Hi Ma. Unjani?”

“Ngiyaphila Nono. How are you?”

“Same here. How's dad?”

“Your dad is doing well we both are and I have umgosi for you. You aren't busy mus?”

I laugh. “You know I'm never busy for some gossip. Come on woman. Tell me.”

She laughs. “Wehhh hhayi let's drop it the person I want to gossip with just entered the yard. I'll call when she's left & done bragging.”

I laugh. “Okay I love you.”

“I love you too” I disconnect the call.

I wonder who is she talking about. Gossiping with your mother is the best they gossip about us too. I disembark from the bed leaving my phone on top of the bed. Dammit Lwazi took my slippers and now I have to walk barefoot something which I really don't like because my feet will become painful like I was walking in thorns or something then it'll start itching. No I'll settle for my sneakers.

Stepping into the bathroom I fill up the bathtub with water. I strip off my pajamas as the water gets filled up I pour in some bubble bath. Once satisfied with the amount of water I close the tap and step inside it sinking to the base.

What Tebogo said at the chillas replays itself in my mind the minute I close my eyes and I can feel myself going into another dimension. Aww ngeke I try opening my eyes but they aren't budging. I try screaming but my voice gets caught in my throat and my body starts shaking. There's nothing I can do I can't even move my feet.

“Calm down Nomzamo. Stop being dramatic. I'm trying to help you here.” The calming voice says. “You're drowning in a pool of confusion and a bundle of nerves for not getting any answers or clear messages.”

“Wh-who are you?” I finally find my voice but there's something strange. The water is pure yet I'm still in the bathtub.

“My name? Don't worry about who I am. I am no one and I can be anyone you want me to be.”

“Hmm.” I can't even see the person that I'm talking too and there's nothing around me except for the bathtub.

“You have a great gift Nomzamo. A gift that no one can easily acquire especially if they are not spiritually gifted or hails from a lineage of spiritually gifted people. See those who bestowed the gift on you searched your heart first and they saw the pureness of it and how humble you are. You were the perfect candidate for the gift but not all people who have the gift can resist temptation. Some fall straight into the temptation without taking pre-measure cations and then their gifts get snatched from them because the pure can't associate with the stained it never works.”

“What does that all mean?”

“Your love story is unfolding beautifully it's so promising and natural. You're not forcing it you love each other deeply and it's beautiful to witness.” There she goes not answering my questions. “But while enjoying the newly found blossoming love bear in mind that

there are people who need your help. People that you need to free from the cage of perdition. Women who gave away their souls to a reincarnation of a devil simply because of money. They don't even know how he got the money what he did to get the money and how many souls he took to get the money. They don't bother asking how he acquired everything because the second he opened his mouth and declared their love for them wearing an expensive suit and flaunting the big car they agreed on the spot. Money is the root of all evil that is known. But everyone needs money the rich want more money and the poor want money and it also depends on how one gets the money. Some rob & kill for it. Then there are those who sacrifice the innocent the souls of those who don't know anything who were robbed of life. Now there's you. The person who needs to save these people from themselves because—” her voice trails. “Difficult sacrifices will be made hearts will be shattered blood will be spilled. Tears will be shed. Are you ready to lose it all?”

“I—”

“Nomzamo! I'm back!” Lwazi's voice comes into my ears.

I flutter my eyes open and the water has gone cold. Dammit. What the hell was that all about? I don't like this it's becoming too much now I need to tell my mother. All these people that come to me with different riddles monologue will end up making me crazy. And none of them give me an answer what to do or how to help those people! It's frustrating honestly.

“I'm coming” I yell back stepping out of the bathtub and draining the water.

I look at myself in the mirror and I'm still the same. Does Mpendulo experience what I experience too or is just me? I mean I can't approach him and tell him about this he'll probably think that I'm crazy or making things up. Sighs. “Are you ready to lose it all?”

What's all? If it means my parents Mpendulo Lwazi then no I'm not ready to lose it all. I'd rather not help those people I'm no one's savior!

"Are you sure about that?" The little voice in my head asks.

Am I?

★»★«

MPENDULO

Samke takes the trophy when it comes to being dramatic hhayi fok. He ruined the night for us. Anyways he chased me out of his house too so early in the morning when he came back from the club with some dirty woman with a very unpleasant smell wearing an ANC T-shirt and oiled jeans. She was smelling all kinds of dirty yeses. I wonder how he managed to get through the morning with her and I don't want to think of the smell that she'll leave in his house as she leaves once they're done having sex. Thinking about it nauseates me. Sies.

“Beer?” Blake asks. I came here to his house after Samke kicked me out it was late and I had nowhere to go. He welcomed me. Rebabe and the other girls were sleeping in another room.

“Sure.”

“And I'll also pre-heat the last night's meal. Rebabe managed to sneak in some leftover meat & salads. Are we going to cook pap or bread will do?”

“Pap will do.”

“Ayt let me get started. So how did you & Nomzamo meet?”

I smile. “One morning I was job hunting I walked up to her asked her how much her scones costs and she told me. I didn't have money so I left feeling ashamed. She stopped me and gave me scones plus R100 on top and wished me luck. Fast forward we met at Samke's friend's house warming after searching for her almost every day and one thing led to another.”

“I bet you fell in love with her the second your laid your eyes on her.”

I laugh. “Yeah I have. Man she sent all kinds of electricity into my body and she was married then.”

“Wow. Her husband is a fool for letting her go. She seems like a kindhearted girl.”

“She is one and loving too. I know that my mother will love her. She's nothing like my ex and I like the fact that she's business-minded and works with what she has.”

“What does she do?”

“She bakes. That's all I know for now.”

“And what are her future dreams? I mean does she dream of owning a bakery one day?”

“Yes she does. And right now she wants a zozo where she can sell her scones.”

“Well I might be able to help with that. But only if she's serious and willing to work hard. I work in a company where we help small businesses with starting capital. But they must have a company name and how many employees they are going to start with and we will take it from there. I'll give you my business card and you must give it to her she must call and I'll tell her all about what we do. And when she blows up the two of you better thank me with a million.”

“We will man.” I smile shaking my head.

“And you? What are your plans? I'm sure you are not planning on working for someone all your life right?”

“Well.” I scratch my head. Starting a business never crossed my mind up until now.

He bellows. “Let me guess starting a business never crossed your mind. All you were focused on was getting a 7-5 job work 29-30 days in a month get paid once. You wake every month just to get paid for 12 months arh. Anyways we aren't there. I want to give you a task are you game?”

This man is a serious businessman mus and he means business. And who am I to say no to a task? Who knows maybe I might buy my dream house cars and become rich with the money that I've made myself and not given by Mpilo.

“Shoot.”

“Find a business that you think will work for you and generate a lot of money then contact me. Okay?”

“Yeah I'll do.”

“Or you can still continue working while making money on the side. Kill two birds with one stone.”

“I'll sit down and think things through then I'll get back to you.”

“Sure.”

My phone rings on top of the table and Samke's name pops up on the screen. What does he want now?

“Samkelo?” He asks putting a pot on top of the stove.

“Yeah.”

“Answer him you can't avoid him forever. He is your family.”

“But his behavior towards me last night was out of order I didn't like it.”

“Understand that he was angry. I was making advances at his territory and trust me when I say I wouldn't have approached Rebabe I would've stayed clear and gulped down all the feelings I had for her.”

“No you did well. Samke doesn't love Rebabe. She's one of his so many booty calls. Rebabe also deserves to be loved and if you can give her love why not shoot your shot? And besides she seemed interested in you too. I saw how she was looking at you this morning while you were preparing them breakfast.”

He chuckles. “Stop it man. I'd hate to have bad blood with Samke. He's the only neighbor that understands me and chills with me every now & then.”

“Screw that. Get the girl and give her all your love until she starts complaining. Make her happy she deserves it.”

“You reckon?”

“What do you have to lose?”

“Nothing.” He shrugs. “Nothing at all.”

“Then go for it. I'm sure this will teach Samke a lesson he'll never forget. A lesson that if a man don't appreciate a woman then there's another man who's willing to jump on the wagon for her and treat her like a Queen that she is.”

My phone rings again and it's Samke. Let me just answer him. I put it on the loudspeaker and don't say anything.

“Mjita I'm sorry for my behavior last night. I was out of order. I shouldn't have chased you out the way I did and bringing that woman who left my whole house with a very acidic repulsing smell. Mjita I regret bringing her here. Now I have to do a spring cleaning.”

I stifle a laugh and when I lift my head to look at Blake he has his hand over his mouth laughing tears coming out of his eyes.

“Come on mjita and I'll apologize to Blake too. And if you forgive me and come help with cleaning then I'll allow him to date Rebabe.”

“And if not?”

“He can still have her. I'll swallow the bitter pill. Besides I still have other booties to call except for this stinking one.”

I laugh. “Fine I forgive you and I'll come I'm waiting to eat.”

“You at Nomzamo's?”

“No I'm at Blake's.”

“Perfect. The two of you can come and help with the cleaning and when you come please. bring my fo- no I'll come and eat there. See you now now.” He disconnects the call.

“He's crazy!”

“Very much so.”

“Well at least you got heads up. Shoot your shot.”

“I will. Hope she won't reject me.”

“She won't. But wait are you not seeing someone?”

“Nope been single for 3 years and no no hookups in between.”

“Good. You still know how to kiss and have sex?”

“Tsek Mpendulo.” He throws a dishwashing cloth at me and I laugh.

“What's with the violence now? I was just asking.”

“Asking my foot! Mxm. I can kiss your girl and you'll not do anything about it” he says shrugging.

“You're right. I won't do anything about it but I'll wear your blood as perfume and kiss Rebabe smelling of you then watch her repulse and smear my body with her blood.”

“Fuck Mpendulo!”

I laugh. “I'm pulling your leg man. I know that you were just joking.”

“Phew thanks God.”

We both laugh... I whip out my phone and send Nomzamo a WhatsApp message.

†•†•

“Can I see you later?”

“Yes what time?”

“I’ll call you 15 minutes prior. Or are you busy?”

“I can never be busy for you. I’ll even leave the pots to burn just to attend to you.”

I laugh and Blake’s looks at me with an arched eyebrow and a mischievous smile plastered on his face.

“That’s why you are mine. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

†•†•

“Man you are whipped! I think you need to see a sangoma and puke whatever she fed you” he says teasingly.

“Nah. I can’t let her efforts go to waste. My woman worked so hard to claim me as hers forever.”

“That's the kind of love I need. I hope Rebabe will offer me one. I'm willing to go all out for her and prove to her that I'm serious about her.”

“You'll never know unless you try.”

“Yeah you're right. And if I die I die.”

I smile. He's such a cool gent hey. Friendly & welcoming. I can do with friends like him friends that will build and motivate me to be a better man & vice versa. Not these friends that want to party 24/7 plan trips and chase girls all over the world. I need friends that I will learn a lot from...

INSERT 27

ENHLE

Despite what happened last night Mpilo has managed to bring back some of the family members to proceed with the family gathering as planned there was no way that he was letting all of his hard work go to waste. He has spent a lot of money for this gathering to take place. The Khuzwayo's that lives back in the village didn't come only the ones who stay close by are the ones that came. My family Mazana's & Nonkolosi's are not here and sadly my family said they'll never step their foot here in this yard ever again that hurts no lie. But I still have my sister wives with me & Mpilo. What more can I ask for? Besides they are more present than my family has ever been for the past 10 years I've been married.

And then there's this thing nibbling at the back of my head it's like I was told something important last night but I just can't remember what. I woke up with that nagging feeling

seeing that I slept with a whirlwind of questions running in my head last night but I can't tap into that one particular conversation. It sounded so important and for me to forget it just like that it's just not me. I mean I never forget conversations no matter how drunk I was I'd still remember all conversations we had. But with this one? I can't locate it. Damn it fuck my life.

"The carrots won't grate itself you know" Nonkolosi's voice rings in my ear jogging me out of my thoughts.

I shake my head. "Sorry."

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah I'm okay just a little exhausted that's all."

"You couldn't sleep?"

"Yeah I couldn't bring myself to close my eyes no matter how sleepy I was."

"I understand. I couldn't sleep myself."

"Yeah hopefully we will survive the whole day without dozing off."

"Hmmm but I don't think it was wise for Mpilo to continue with the gathering without the other family members especially his mother & uncles it doesn't make any sense."

“It makes perfect sense Nonkolosi. This goes to show who his real family is and it's those that came here again despite what happened yesterday. Now these are the people we should consider real family not the ones who didn't look back when they left.”

“Either way. This is just wrong and something about all this gathering is off something is just not making sense I just don't know what.”

“What do you mean by that Nonkolosi?” I'm getting peeved now.

“I mean after what happened yesterday these people here were so sure that they will never set foot here ever again but look at them now laughing and chatting over alcohol. Something is just off Enhle. I can feel it and I'm afraid of the aftermath of it all.”

“Shut up Nonko. You're just babbling rubbish. These people here are here because they know what the word 'family' actually means unlike others. They know that even in tough times the family must stick together.”

She shakes her head. “Something big is going on here Enhle. And the way Mpilo reacts to Mpendulo's presence here makes me shudder with fear but I don' expect you to understand what I'm telling you. You're too gullible.”

“Are you insulting me?”

“If it feels like that on your end then yes I'm insulting you. Anyway did you know that Mpendulo came here with his girlfriend yesterday when that whole drama with our husband started unfolding?”

“Girlfriend? What girlfriend are you talking about?” I ask putting the carrot back in the large enamel dish.

“Yes what girlfriend Nonkolosi?” Khutso's raspy voice comes from behind us.

She comes and stands before us and she looks like a mess. Her hair is out of place and her make-up is smudged all over her face and she looks drunk she reeks of alcohol & weed and she's still in her yesterday's clothes.

“Hello to you too Khutso.”

“Cut the bullshit Nonkolosi. Answer the damn question! What girlfriend?” She raises her voice grabbing a few eyes to us.

“Why does it matter to you that Mpendulo has a girlfriend?” Nonkolosi asks sizing her up & down crinkling her nose.

“Because he's my boyfriend my boy-fri-end Nonkolosi mine.” She burps.

Nonkolosi chuckles. “Yes you're right he was yours but not anymore. He dumped your arse. Did you actually think that he'll wait for you to get done whoring? You must be out of your damn mind. In fact this should tell you that Mpendulo was no longer in love with

you he fell out of love with you a long time ago but he stayed simply because you were supporting him. He was using you for financial assistance.”

Well we all know that's not true. The two were very much in love once upon a time and they went through a lot together.

“Yo-you're lying. Mpendulo loves me and I'm the only woman he's ever loved.”

Nonkolosi sarcastically laughs. “Babes wake up. You no longer hold value in his life you're insignificant in his life. Heck he doesn't even dream about you nor do you cross his mind when he's unwinding and I'm sure he's long forgotten about you and your entire existence.”

“Shut up Nonkolosi! Shut the hell up!” She shouts.

“He has found better. Someone that actually captured his heart it's quite sad that you paved way for the new girl in his life after so much trouble you've gone through for him and supporting him through it all. Guess you were building him for another woman and I hope that she's far much better than you and will love him the way he deserves to be loved” a devilish smile plasters on her face.

Wawu change of tune and I thought they were best of friends I wonder what changed.

But Mpendulo has a girlfriend? Was she always there all along and waited for the perfect moment to crawl into his bed? And the second she heard that Khutso has up & left she didn't waste any more time and just jumped in. What a bitch! Women like her make me furious nxa. Homewreckers I'm sure she's bewitched him if only she knew that

he's useless & broke nobody she wouldn't have bothered her grandmother with asking her for love portions.

A loud slap lands on Nonkolisi's cheek bringing everyone to stop what they were doing and focus on our mini crew. Nonkolosi cracks up.

“How dare you?” She asks black tears rolling down her cheeks thanks to the mascara for giving color to her tears. “I-I thought you were my friend.” Her lips are trembling.

“I'm not friends with women who can't keep their legs closed. I'm a married woman and you're just a basic whore trying to fit in where you don't belong Khutso. All these rich men that you open legs for will just sleep with you to satisfy their lust and throw you away like tasteless bubblegum once they are done with you. And trust me when I say no men will ever look your way ever again. You'll be dripping worms from your smelly vagina useless bitch!” She spits on her and turns on her heels to leave.

Wawu! Hectic. Taking a look around me everyone has their mouth hang open shock expressed on their faces. Khutso lets out a gutturing sob and takes off running.

“Well was that the end of a 4-year-old friendship?” Lenah asks sitting beside me.

“Seems like it.”

“That was intense. Have any idea why Nonkolosi said all that she said to her best friend?”

“I have no flipping idea. It all started with Nonkolosi telling me that Mpendulo has a girlfr—”

“What? You mean Mpendulo is already seeing someone?” She asks cutting me mid-sentence.

“Yeap he is seeing someone else.”

“Wow. That's all I can say. But why is Khutso worked up then? It's not as if like they were dating and Khutso did confess proudly so multiple times to us that she doesn't love Mpendulo”

“Guess she still loves him maybe she's realized that now and it seems like it's a little too late for her.”

“Well whoever the girl is I hope that she'll make him happy and love him the way he deserved to be loved. I hope she's not into material things. I think it's time Mpendulo dated according to his lowlife standard and leave the women he can't maintain.”

“Really Lenah?”

“What? Mpendulo deserves to date an average girl with no future or something like that.”

“So you're saying that this bitch that's dating Mpendulo did well by dating him? She's a homewrecker!”

“So Mpendulo & Khutso were married in your eyes?” She lifts her brow then rolls her eyes.

“No they weren't but still. What if she used muthi on him? You know how much these ghetto lowlife-dirty bitches love using muthi to get men.”

“She did well if she got him using muthi. I fully support her a job well done to her. Everyone uses what works for them and secures their relationships. Excuse me I need to check on my pots.” She pats my shoulder and walks away.

I heave out a sigh. I can't believe that Lenah is supporting this sham of a relationship argh. I need to have a talk with Mpilo he'll know exactly what to do. Mpendulo is his so— arh almost forgot he can't stand his presence. This is going to be harder than I thought but then again let me mind my own business.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

“So what are you planning for your birthday choma?”

Lwazi's birthday is in 3 weeks time and he did mention to me that he's never celebrated his birthday in his life and his parents were the only people who'd wish him a happy birthday. But this year we are changing things for him he needs to enjoy his 31st birthday party to the fullest and create lots of memories that he can reflect back on years along the line.

“I don't know choma. Or we can always do lunch at least now I'll have someone to go out with.”

Nope not happening. I know we don't have many friends but I already have a plan on what we're going to do on his birthday it's going to be a surprise. I mean we always do lunch for fun and when we feel like it. We need a change of scenery.

“I see. So do you have anyone we can go with? Cousins that you get along with I'm sure there are those cousins that you talk to every now & then.”

“Yes but they are uppity bitches.”

I giggle. “It matters not as long as they're toleratable.”

“I guess. Let me call Mino and hear what she says.”

I nod and watch people going up & down the streets and I'm counting hours before I go and meet up with Mpendulo. He's taking me out later on I hope that he's taking me to a shisanyama or something not in a fancy restaurant. I'm in no mood for fork & knife and half-cooked steak with beef sauce.

“Hey Mino it's Lwazi.”

“Yes it's Lwazi.”

“Yes what are you doing on the 25th?”

“Well you know it's my birthday and I was wondering if you'd like to come and celebrate with me and my best friend.”

“No you'll not be coughing out anything. You just bring yourself your stomach and your throat.”

“You can say that and please tell Shirinda too.”

“Okay bye.” He disconnects the call. “Those are the only 2 cousins I get along with they weary me because they like gloating even when unnecessary.”

“Then they’ll be bragging to a wrong person because I don’t care about what they have.”

“Hmmm I trust you to handle them.”

“Exactly.”

“Anyway want to go clubbing tonight? It’s Saturday night after all and I’m not looking forward to spending the night indoors.”

“We can only go if Mpendulo comes with us I don’t want to be groped by different men and bear them slur their speeches.”

“Deal. He'll be playing bodyguard after all and Samke will have to be our driver. And speaking of Samke I think we should also invite Rebabe and the girls it's going to be epic.”

“Yikeees plus they are a vibe and a half.”

“I know right. Let me go and refill our glasses” he says standing from the blanket that we've spread on the grass picking up our glasses.

I tense and flare my nose when I see Willow standing in the front opposite house of aunt Norah glaring at me he's with 2 of his friends who are chatting with the girl staying there whom I don't remember greeting let alone saw since I moved here and I'm not planning too. I can feel his anger radiating from him miles as he is away from me he's bubbling inside.

One of his friends follow his gaze as he was nudging him but he didn't pay attention to him. The friend draws his eyes together and trains them on me and my heart starts beating out of my chest I don't even know why. There's just something off about him too he's too broody for my liking but maybe I'm overthinking things.

Willow crosses the street yanking his hand from his friend's grip. I clench my teeth and suck in some breathe. He jumps over the fence since the gate is locked as I've predicted he would and just then Lwazi steps out of the house laughing and his laugh stops Willow from coming near me.

“I'll ruin you” he mouths turning on his heels and jumps over the fence.

“Don't tell me that that son of nuisance was here” he says sitting down training his eyes on Willow.

“He was.” I take my glass from him. “Thank you.”

“What did he want?”

“He said he'll ruin me.”

“And he will. Willow is bad news choma. Hot and such a turn-on he is. Stay away from him.”

I shrug. “He's the one who should stay away from me he's the one after me not the other way around.”

“You don't seem to be scared of him. Willow doesn't make idle threats choma. He lives up to them.”

I laugh. “Good for him.”

I can feel his stare on me but I don't look at him I lock eyes with Willow instead. Well he better crush whatever plans he has for me with the heel of his boots because they won't prevail I have a lot of dump on my plate right now and entertaining any thoughts of his threat is not one of them. I shrug and he sneers bringing his feet to move following his friends.

“That was intense” Willow states.

“Hmph.” I finally tear my gaze from the street and turn to face him. “So what are we going to eat? I’m starting to get hungry.”

He laughs. “You & food when drunk. How about dunked wings or Nando’s?”

“Nando’s will do and order hot wings too.”

“Chicken licken?”

“Yes.”

“Well those are not hot wings it’s just fried winglets with lots of spice.”

I laugh. “Come on choma. It’s not as if like you’re going to eat them.”

“I know but still.”

“Just order choma.”

“Fine.” He rolls his eyes and I chuckle.

My phone beeps notifying me that I have a message. I pick it up from my lap and I don't recognize the number. I view it.

“I meant what I said. I'll ruin you. I'll wreck your life and you'll regret ever coming here Nono. And once I'm done with you you'll never be able to get back up. No one will want anything to do with you. Ask about me.”

I heave out a sigh and shake my head as I start typing a response. And where the hell did he get my numbers from?

“Bring it on Willow. Bring it on.” I press send.

Mpendulo will deal with him on my behalf. If I knew earlier that he was a lunatic I wouldn't have entertained him to begin with but since I was desperate to socialize and make friends I hopped straight on a deranged lunatic himself and I think it's time I meet up with his girlfriend. But how will I even reach out to her? Bleh.

★»★«

MPENDULO

Chilling with the gents and catching up on last night's game is refreshing. We are at Blake's house Samke's house still has a foul smell. The woman he was with clearly has some pungent odor the smell alone was nauseating. We had to go out for some fresh air every now and then I never knew that a person can smell this horrible a woman for that matter sies. I hope this situation has taught Samke to not pick any random woman in a club or pub anymore but knowing Samke he'll do it over and over again. He never learns. He doesn't want to.

"So what are we doing tonight?" Blake asks opening a can of beer.

"Mathousand is hosting a one-man show at Santos I don't know if you'd like to go to a place like that" Samke tells us.

"A place like that?" I prod for more.

"Yes. A place where you dance and drink with women old enough to be your mothers. Women who'll grind on you making you hard steel and smile at you showing their 5 teeth left and some show you gums."

Blake & I look at each other and burst out laughing.

"Samke mfethu. Why lie?" Blake asks as he continues to laugh.

“I'm not lying. That place is like a wild jungle with scary animals wandering around the jungle looking for their prey except that that place is filled with people.”

I laugh. “And I bet that's where you got that pungent smelling woman from.”

“Hhayi mjita please don't kill my vibe.” He clicks his tongue and I laugh Blakes joins me in laughing.

“So you're trying to tell me that you didn't pick up her smell all the way from the club and straight to your house?” I ask stifling a laugh.

“Tsek Mpendulo maarn tsek!” He taunts standing from his chair. “The beer is suddenly tasting bitter in my tongue and it's all thanks to you mjita. I'm trying to forget about this ordeal and you keep bringing it up.”

I laugh. He's pissed off and I enjoy seeing him this pissed off he used to make fun of me back then when I was still a groovist now it's time he tastes his own medicine. He staggers off.

“Where are you going now?” Blake asks him.

“Out. I need some air and possibly rinse my mouth while getting some fresh air” he responds disappearing to the kitchen.

“You're going to rinse off her juices?” I push.

“Tsek Mpendulo! Uyinja saarn!”

“Leave him man. He's still traumatized” Blake berates me.

“I'm still hung up on the fact that he didn't detect any repulsive smell all the way from the club to his car and straight to his house.”

He chuckles. “Let's blame it on the alcohol I think it's best that way. But if it was me I would've long detected the smell I could've detected it before I could even approach her. In one sharp inhale I would've turned on my heels without any second guess” he says frowning.

“I hear. So are we attending this one-man show?”

“With me? No I'll pass. I'm not in the mood to see pink & black gums I'll be traumatized for life.”

I laugh. “I'm sure it's not that bad Blake. Let's just go and check it out.”

“And I thought you had a date with your mia Bella.”

“I do. It won't take the whole night mus and she'll come along with me. I'll not go clubbing and leave her at home to sleep while I enjoy myself no it doesn't work like that.”

“Are you sure that she didn't feed you anything?”

I smile. “She only fed me scones.”

“I bet you ate the whole packet. But it's good to see a fellow man genuinely in love. These days a lot of people are using muthi to keep relationships it's rough out there kwa world.”

“Some have no choice but to use them especially married women. In fact those are the people who are supposed to be using muthi but instead the mistresses are the ones using the muthi. A lot of households have been broken because of this people go through a lot out there.”

“It's a cold & sad world indeed. People no longer have a conscience it has died. And it sickens me to know that there are men who use muthi too to trap these women to be with them forever while they're busy messing around with other women and things like these lead to GBV.”

I wonder how did we get so deep in this conversation. Now that he mentions men who use muthi to trap women I wonder if my dad is using muthi too it's possible because his wives are so loyal to him and none of them find interest in other men except him.

Samke hurries to the lounge and heads over to the window. I stand wanting to see what he's running away from and a laugh escapes my mouth when I see what he's running away from. Arhh it's his fetid one-night stand. She looks clean today and she has changed her clothes.

"I regret bringing her to my place. Look now she comes anytime she wants and I didn't even tell her to come. What did I get myself into?"

Blake laughs. "It seems like she has finally found her soulmate. She even took a proper bath just for you. Sweet."

"Shut the hell up Blake. I don't want anything to do with that woman she was just a one stand gone wrong" he seethes.

"Serves you right. This should teach you to stop picking up any woman from a club and leave with them" I state.

"Hha I change places. I'll go to a new club and find a new stocko. Life will go on. I'll not lose out on free pussy just because of some woman who has dick attachment issues."

See? I did say that he'll never learn and it's clear that he doesn't want to grow up maybe he'll grow up when he starts wearing a nappy and bedridden.

My phone rings from the coffee table I take to step to pick it up and munku's picture pops up on the screen she's video calling me.

“Mumu” I answer. She doesn't look well. “Are you okay?”

She sighs. “No I'm not baby. Urhm can you maybe come and fetch me 30 minutes earlier I'd like to discuss something with you.” She sounds down this is not my always happy to talk to me munku.

“Why not tell him now? This is serious choma.” Lwazi's voice in the background comes in an octave.

“Munku what's going on? Talk to me. You know what since you don't want to talk I'm coming there now.” I disconnect the video call without waiting for an answer.

“What's going on? Where are you going?” Samke asks.

“My woman needs me I need to leave.”

“Here you can use my car.” Blakes throws his car keys at me.

“Thanks man” I thank him already walking away.

I hope nothing bad happened to her...

INSERT 28

NOMZAMO

“Munku!” That's Mpendulo calling me all the way from the gate.

I giggle getting on my feet and head to the kitchen to open the door for him and he is banging the door like crazy as if I didn't hear him calling my name. I turn the key and yank the door open.

Thank God you're alive. Are you okay? What's going on?”

I open the butler for him and he pulls me to him the second he steps inside the kitchen.

“I'm okay baby.”

“You smell of alcohol. Were you drinking?” He pulls out from the hug.

“Yeah I was. Please sit.”

“Not before you tell me what's going on. You sounded worried over the phone.”

I nod and hand him my phone. Willow sent more than 6 threatening messages on my phone different threats and in one of the threats he said they'll rape me and leave me to die in the bushes then they come after Abigail and that one made me shudder with fear. But not more than the one that said they'll rape Lwazi then kill him because he is possessed by demons after that message Lwazi instantly sobered up and immediately left. It's obvious that he knows that Willow lives up to his threats he doesn't make them for the sake of making them.

“Dammit!” He roars throwing my cellphone against the wall and I watch it split in two. “Who is this twisted Willow dude? Where the hell does he stay?” He asks looking at me straight in the eyes his stare so cold and dark. “I. Asked. You. A. Question. Munku. Who is Willow?” Menace drips in his voice

“I-I it's som—”

“Speak the hell up!” He bangs the table and I jump up.

“Some guy from around the area the first person I got to know before Lwandle. I don't know where he stays” the words come out quicker than I've anticipated.

I didn't expect his reaction to being like this but then again I don't even know how I wanted him to react. He's very furious I don't know if I like this side of him it scares me but somehow it also soothes me knowing that he'll go all out for me. Talk about being confused.

“But he knows where you stay? How is that possible and you also gave him your number?” He asks rubbing his face with his hands.

“Please calm down. You're scaring me” I plead.

He groans. “Look munku. I'm sorry for scaring you but when it comes to you. When it comes to you munku I—” he puts both his hands on my face and presses his forehead on mine. “When it comes to you munku; know that I'll burn every fucking bridge for you.

I can even paint this whole hood with crimson if it needs to. I'd lay my life for you when it comes to you I'll risk it all just for you. Seeing you sad & afraid it's what I don't want I want to always see you smiling." He breathes out and steps away from me. "Pack your things we're leaving."

I shoot my eyes wide open and look at him in disbelief. He's not serious is he?

"You should start now munku. Or do you need any help?"

"But my love I just can't leave. I'll have to tell aunt Norah that I'm leaving." I divert my eyes to where my phone is and I shake my head there's no fixing it.

"You know her numbers by head?"

"I've written them somewhere let me go and get the book."

"While at it start packing I need to make some calls."

I nod and hurry to my room. I close the door and lean against it breathing out. That was intense. I finally move to my drawer and my window shatters I scream when a brick settles on the floor.

"Munku?" Mpendulo knocks in my bedroom inviting himself in. "Why are you scre—" he trails off.

I'm standing in one position trembling with fear. I see Mpendulo hurrying to the window he draws the curtain apart and I hear him curse.

"Are you okay munku? Damn of course you're not okay. How sensitive of me." He clasps my shoulders.

"Th- brick" my voice comes out as a whisper as I point at the brick.

He walks up to where the brick is and picks it up.

"I'm coming for you Zamo. I'm coming for everyone you're close with and then I'll go after your boyfriend. I'll hunt him down then kill him. Then you'll be mine you're my new obsession."

He finishes reading out loud and a sob leaves my mouth.

"Fuck this! Sit down and I'll go and get you a glass of water" he says leading me to the bed.

I cover my mouth with my hand and my stomach turns and bile bubbles up stopping at my throat when I think of the fact that Abigail & Lwazi's lives are in danger because of me. They'll be living in fear because of me. Damn you Willow. If only I knew that he was this twisted and a psycho I wouldn't have entertained him but then people don't come with stickers stating how sick they actually are.

Mpendulo comes back with a glass of water and he looks pissed. I don't know if he's this scary looking if usually pissed or what.

“Drink up I'll start packing your clothes so long okay?”

I nod taking the glass from him.

“Nomzamo! Yewena msunu wakho! Why are you turning my mother's house into a brothel?” Nonjabulo yells all the way from the gate obviously wanting everyone to hear.

I look at Mpendulo and he's busy clearing my closet. I have so many clothes I don't even know where I'm going to put them seeing that I only have one traveling bag. Sighs.

“Nomzamo sfeb—” she halts talking when she sees Mpendulo cleaning out my closet. “What's going on here?” She steps inside my bedroom.

“I'll go and put these in the car” Mpendulo says picking up a pile of my clothes.

He pushes past Nonjabulo. I put the glass of water on the bed nightstand and heave out a sigh.

“What's going on?”

“I'm leaving.”

“Thank God! About damn time!” She claps her hands and dances. “A breath of fresh air finally.”

I stand from my bed ignoring her. I look around the room then at my bag on top of the bed. Puffs. I take my toiletries from the dressing table and throw them inside my bag.

“Need some help?” She asks.

“No we got it” Blakes's voice comes behind her. “Come here Mia Bella” he pulls me into an embrace and I let it all out. “It's going to be okay.”

“What's going on? Nomzamo what's happening?” Nonjabulo asks now she sounds concerned.

“Take her to the car I'll finish up here” Mpendulo orders Blakes.

“Sure case.” He leads me out of my bedroom.

“Somebody please tell me what's going on? Is it her parents? Did something happen to them?” Nonjabulo prod.

“Her parents are fine it's something else” Blakes tells her.

“I deserve to know what is it! I hope her baggage didn't follow her here because if it did then sizoba nenkin—” she cease talking.

“Go on.” Samke's voice comes over.

“Urhm hello Sam.” Her voice comes out sultry.

I don't hear Samke's response as we leave the yard. Blake helps me to step inside the car. I balance my head on the window the second he closes the door and I close my eyes.

I don't know but I have a feeling that this is the beginning of more horrible things to come. I can just feel it and I don't even know how to feel about this to react to this and not knowing what it is makes my heart beat faster than its normal rate.

Mpendulo loads the last batch of clothes and steps around the car to get to the driver's seat. Blake & Samke will follow behind us. I look at the house one last time and I see Nonjabulo looking at Samke's car tears clouding her eyes I wonder what's the story between the two of them.

“Ready to go?”

“Yeah but I still need to call aunt Norah.”

“You can use my phone and call her now I'll buy you a new phone tomorrow.”

“Thank you.”

He kisses my cheek and roars the car to life taking off. I look behind me and I spot Willow watching the car attentively his creepy friend next to him for sure he's memorizing the number plates and that alone makes my blood rush and the hairs of my skin stand.

★»★«

MPENDULO

“Anything to drink?” I ask Nomzamo. We are at Blake's house.

So after we left Norah's house I drove us straight here but later on Samke will take us to my house we will be staying there until we find this twisted bastard who's planning to make my woman's life hard. Who the hell does he think he is threatening my woman? The woman that I love? But I will find him that's for sure.

I can't honestly blame Nomzamo for befriending that psychopath. She had no idea that he was twisted I guess he painted himself well on her and she got sold. And this should teach Nomzamo not to trust anyone easily. Not everyone who comes into your life is coming with good intentions some are agents of satan sent to destroy your life.

"Tea will do. Thank you." She gives me a faint smile.

"Okay. I love you okay?"

"I love you too."

I turn on my heels and head to the kitchen to make tea for Nomzamo. Blake & Samke went to town to buy some essentials. This weekend was hectic no lie. I could use with some break and unwind just a little bit having munku lying on my chest and talking about our future plans but it didn't work out as I've planned. Sighs.

I finish making the tea and take it to her. As I get to the lounge from the window I can see Leah's cousin getting inside Samke's yard I chuckle shaking my head.

"What's funny?"

"Your sister. I don't think she gets the message" I respond placing the mini tray on top of the coffee table.

"What message?" Her gaze meets mine.

“That Samke is not interested in her services.”

“Thank you. Services?” I nod. “What’s the story between the two of them anyway?”

I sit next to her. “They had a one-night stand and I guess somewhere down the line your sister suddenly had dick attachment issues.”

She shoots her eyes. “What? You mean a whole fuckboy like Samke got it down with Nonjabulo?”

“Yeah and I hate badmouthing people but your sister munku your sister sm—”

“I know. I’ve even given up on her I hope Samke has used a condom.”

”He doesn’t use any condoms.”

She chokes on her tea and wipes her mouth.

“So they did it raw?” I nod. “Wawu unbelievable. That’s just being reckless.” I laugh.

“What’s funny?”

“We also did it raw wasn’t that reckless of us too?”

“Gosh it was. But this one is different. My cousin sleeps with every man who buys her beers and Lord knows what kind of diseases she contracts out there.”

“And Samke sleeps with every woman that's lured by cheap alcohol. And your cousin was here in the afternoon looking for Samke.”

She raises her brow. “That's a first.”

“Yeah she came back bathed and all dressed up. She was nothing like that smelling woman she was when Samke brought her home and left a very unpleasant odor.”

“God. I wonder what's her story.”

“Maybe she saw a boyfriend in Samke.”

“Maybe.” She shrugs taking a sip of her tea. “But they'll never work out. They are too different.”

“Yeah. Totally different. And I've been thinking munku. I don't know how you going to feel about this but it's just a suggestion.”

“What is it?”

“Blake & I have been talking and he suggested that we allow Abigail and her siblings to go and stay with his mother until we find this Willow guy. He says that even though you've left Willow will still rape Abigail just to hurt you and that will have you blaming yourself for that ordeal. He said you'll feel like it's your fault like you're the one who endangered their lives simply because of some twisted psycho who's suddenly obsessed with you.”

She heaves out a sigh. “I don't think Nonjabulo will like that but I'll have a talk with aunt Norah and this will require us to meet face to face.”

“Okay we will deal with everything tomorrow.” I look at the time on my wrist. “Drink your tea so that you can rest. And you will have to call your parents too and let them know.”

“I will. Thank you for everything baby.”

“No need to thank me. I'm just doing my job as your man. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

I pull her to me and rest her head on my chest and she sighs. You can tell that she's tired.

★»★«

LWAZI

I've called Nomzamo 10 times and her phone sends me straight to voicemail. I'm very worried about her and my stress level is shooting up with every passing second especially not knowing where she is or if she's okay wherever she is. Willow's threat sobered me up in an instance and like a coward that I am I ran and didn't look back. The last time I was threatened like that the threat became reality and it's sad because a family member did this to me intending to turn me straight and remove all the demons possessing me. The incident ruined me for life.

I was a free child growing up even though I never had much but I was grateful for the little that we had at home. Sometimes we would go to bed hungry but you could never tell the next day because we never showed nor displayed our struggles to the entire community.

I was 10 years old when the incident happened and there was a family gathering in one of our relative's houses. So my uncle asked me to accompany him to the shops seeing that I was playing alone. I thought that he was pitying me and didn't like seeing me sad so like a good boy that I was I obliged he was my favorite uncle after all and I never thought that he'd harm me in that manner. I never thought that he was going to be the one to break the little fragile skinny boy like me and grate my heart. Guess it's true when they say "never say you know a person" I've witnessed that first hand. I didn't know who my uncle was at that moment.

Anyways we didn't go straight to the shop but we passed by his friend's house and all of a sudden I was feeling uncomfortable.

"I'll wait here" I said to him.

"Why?"

"I just don't feel right going inside the house" I said my eyes dropped on the ground.

He sighed and crouched to level up with me.

"Do you trust me?" He asked and I nodded. "Then don't be afraid nothing will happen to you okay?" I nodded again. "Now smile for me." I grinned and he smiled too.

Stepping inside the kitchen he led me to the lounge where six of his friends were sitting drinking beer and eating pork head. They all turned their attention to us and one of them grinned standing up. He was a large man larger than my uncle.

"Follow me." He told my uncle and my uncle nodded still holding my hand.

We followed him to one of the bedrooms and my uncle flung me on the bed. I screamed and tried getting up but my uncle covered my mouth and flipped me around shoving my face on the bed his grip tight on my neck. I felt like I was losing air and that's when his friend pulled my pants. I kicked but I guess not hard enough because I felt his friend putting his large hand on my butt and he parting it apart.

“Now let's make you a man” he said bringing his weight on my tiny body and that's when my uncle let go of my nape laughing.

The man forced himself in and I screamed lifting my face only for it to be pushed back down. He started moving inside me roughly and the pains that I felt were too much I don't even know what to compare them with. They took turns with me. I cried till I had no tears left to cry and I was numb to everything. They continued raping me and I passed out in between. When I wake up from it I'd find them still busy with me. It was one horrific incident for me that'll always be engraved in my heart head and mind.

I woke up 5 days later at the hospital with machines all over me. And no one asked what happened and I remembered my uncle threatening me that if I tell a soul about this he'll kill me and rape my mother. Fearing for my life and my mother's life I kept my mouth shut and I became a full introvert keeping things to myself. No one in my family knows that I was raped but they know about my status because they always make fun of it even during the people saying that I'll infect them and they'll die.

My uncle is still alive and things are going well for him. He has his own family and a good-paying job. He broke me and not once did he apologize to me he pretends as if like I don't exist. I've also learned not to let it get under my skin anymore. Reliving it brings a lump to my throat but I push it down. I will not cry.

I try calling Nomzamo again but her phone still puts me through voicemail. Damn it Nomzamo. What's going on? I hope Willow didn't abduct her because if he did then I'll never forgive myself and that will make me a terrible best friend.

I was supposed to be with her and not leave her sight until Mpend— wait a minute maybe she's with Mpendulo. I can only hope that she's with him at least that will give me a sense of relief.

“Lwazi!” My mother calls my name from the kitchen.

“I'm coming Ma.” I wipe my tears and step out of my bedroom.

My mother is busy cooking. Ghost gave me money before he went on his vacation. So I took it and bought the groceries electricity to last us for 2 months and some essentials. I even got my mom all the medication she needs I also bought my siblings' new school uniforms at least now they'll look like all the kids and never be made fun of again.

“Ma.”

“I'm about to dish up. The food won't be long.” I nod. “So what's going on with you? And don't tell me that it's nothing wrong because something is definitely going on.”

“Nothing it's going on Mama.”

“Don't give me that nothing is going on nonsense. You got in here as if someone is chasing you. I'm your mother Lwazi. I worry about you.”

I chuckle. “You worry about me? Why didn't you worry about me 21 years ago when you found me at the gate of your sister's house looking half-dead and bleeding profusely from behind? Why didn't you worry about me then? You never even cared to ask what

happened? You watched me sink into depression and did nothing. You never cared about me. It was always about you and pleasing your sisters Mama.” Tears veil my eyes. “What about me? I needed you!”

I didn't mean to shout but my mother is infuriating me right now.

“Don't you dare raise your voice at me Lwazi! I'm not the one who sent you to galavant at night with boys 5 times your age because you didn't want to play with your cousins. I'm not and quite frankly you deserve what happened to you 21 years ago because I gave birth to a boy not some confused gender!”

I yelp shaking my head. My own mother spewing such to me? I thought she understood my lifestyle and accepted how I lived. Clearly I was wrong she was only tolerating me simply because I had no one. I chuckle in disbelief.

“Mam—” my voice gets stuck in my throat. I can't even talk. My mother is hurting me.

I search her face for some sort of remorse but I find none. I'm met by a disgusted face and eyes full of loathing. I blink and trudge to my room not believing this. I don't know how I'm going to move on from this. How I'm going to stay in this house after all that my mother has confessed? How am I going to look at her after here? Fuck this hurts.

I shriek throwing myself on the bed and a thought that I thought I've dealt with crosses my mind. I get up from my bed and step out of my room after opening the door. I get inside the toilet and open the cabinet I skim it then take three bottles of pills and head back to my room.

I look out the window and the sun has already set. I twist the caps open and pour a handful of different pills into my hands.

“God please welcome my soul.”

My phone rings on top of the bed as I'm about to throw the pills in my mouth. I pick it up and it's numbers I don't know. I let it ring until it stops.

Opening my mouth my phone rings again I clench my teeth and pick it up. A part of me wants to throw it against the wall but the other part is disputing that.

“Choma.” Hearing her soft voice soothes my heart and new tears make themselves known. “What's wrong? Why are you crying?” She sounds concerned.

“Cho-ma ple- help m—” a loud sob escapes my mouth.

“Don't do anything stupid we will be there in a few. I love you.” She hangs up and I look at the pills in my hand.

“I love you.” The three words echo in my mind. “Hang in there she's coming.” The inner me says.

I sit on the bed still looking at the pills in my hands.

“You deserve what happened to you 21 years ago because I gave birth to a boy not some confusing gender.”

My mother's words overtake Nomzamo's I love you. I open my mouth bringing my hand to it but I no longer have the courage to do this. I don't even know how I'm going to recover from this.

INSERT 29

ENHLE

It's finally Sunday thanks to God the stressful and weird weekend is over. People have left for their homes only those who want to see the pots clean and alcohol finished remained. At least we're less than 15 now by the time the sunsets it'll be only me my sister wives and Mpilo left.

“Well the weekend is finally over. Tomorrow morning I'll have to go to Reina's for pampering” Nonkolosi says joining us in my room. “My body can do with some relaxation.”

“I know what you mean. I feel the same too. My body is so tense and while at it we need to call the fumigating company to come and fumigate the house for any germs left by those rural people” I add and they laugh.

“Gosh tell me about it. I thought we were going to end up smelling like them. Heard that shit is very contagious” Nonkolosi says crunching her nose in disgust.

“You ladies are making it sound as if like it's a bad thing or something being from the village” Lenah says. She sounds unimpressed.

“Of course it's bad Lenah” I tell her.

She shakes her head. “If you say so. But still you ladies are exaggerating. I wonder why you never smelled like Mazana seeing that she's from the village too.”

Mazana sneers then scrunches her face. She has not been herself since she lost her surprise pregnancy. She hardly spoke much and when she did she only spoke one word and continued zoning in her own world. Losing the pregnancy really ruined her and Mpilo doesn't care about her withdrawal from everything. Or maybe it's still too soon guess we have to give her a month or two to recuperate. Even Nonkolosi's innuendos don't get to her anymore that's how closed up she has become.

“Argh that one was bathed by money but there's still a stench of goat smell to her.”

“That's not a nice thing to say Nonkolosi. She's going through a lot spare her some time” Lenah reprimands her.

She rolls her eyes. “We've all lost our babies nothing new there. And we're all doing just fine. She's just being a drama queen as usual.”

I swear Nonkolosi finds pleasure in taunting Mazana. She's made it her hobby and Mazana never entertains her. I look at Mazana and she's drinking wine her deadly stare trained on Nonkolosi as she laughs at nothing. Yabo if looks could kill Nonkolosi would've been dead by now.

I clear my throat. "So Mazana. What would you like to do tomorrow?" I ask looking at her then at the ladies.

"I'd like to remain indoors."

"Well that's boring. You've been indoors the whole weekend aren't you bored at looking at the 4 marbled walls?"

She shakes her head. "I find solace indoors more than outside."

"I did tell you that she'll get tired of this flashy and glamorous lifestyle that she doesn't deserve."

"Geez Nonkolosi. Tone it down you sound like a bitter bitch. Don't you get tired of provoking Mazana? I mean sis is not giving you the attention you're fishing from her."

"Lord Lenah! You sound like an old woman reprimanding their kids. Besides I enjoy taunting her."

"Admit it Nonkolosi. You're obsessed with me and you just can't hide it. I swear your day is never complete without mentioning my name or craving my attention. You'll probably die if you were never given the chance to talk about me or drag my name to keep yourself sane. Your life is really boring Nonkolosi. Grow the fuck up and stop behaving like a toddler. Let your standard of living match with your brain" she says perusing her. "And again you should divert your obsession or whatever you call it into eating more fats you can use with some weight. You scrawny bitch!"

“How dare you call me a bitch Mazana? How dare you!” Nonkolosi bangs the kitchen countertop in indignation!

“Because you're behaving like one. Leave me the hell alone. You don't want to feel my wrath and in fact I'm going to make your life a living hell. You'll regret ever provoking me. You wanted my attention right? Fucking right you just got it.” She bangs the kitchen countertop and stands from her chair.

The words are laced with a serious warning and I'm not liking any of this not even a little bit.

Nonkolosi nervously laughs. “Bring it on Mazana! Bring it on.”

Mazana's lips curve into a sinister smile and that smile alone makes my blood instantly cold.

“Very well sister wife. Let the games begin.”

Lenah & I exchange glances and she too just like me is scared of the unknown. The threat sounded so flipping real and I don't even want to imagine how will Mazana make Nonkolosi's life miserable. Well she's from the bundus after all and muthi is her middle name. Maybe that's how she got Mpilo to marry her. She used muthi on him tsks.

A soft knock comes through at the door.

“Who is it?” Lenah asks.

“It’s Luyanda.”

I groan. “What the hell do you want?” I ask bored.

“I came to say bye we’re leaving.”

“You didn’t have to bother yourself it’s not as if like your presence made a difference. In fact it’s good riddance to rubbish. Go and never come back here ever aga—”

The door flies open cutting me midsentence and Mpilo steps in looking very furious. I swallow standing from the bed and rubbing my palms on my dress.

He looks at all 4 of us and we are all standing to attention.

“Enhle. My office right now. As for the rest of you go and say your proper goodbye to Luyanda and the others right now!”

The 3 women scurry out of my bedroom leaving me trembling with fear. He shoots one paralyzing look at me and turns on his heels leaving my room. My legs are wobbly but I trail behind him still. I don’t even know what he’s going to do to me.

“Close the door” he orders rounding off his ornate table to sit down in his brown leather weird-looking chair. The chair has mini horns as decorations.

I close the door and tears roll down my cheeks. He didn't even touch me but I'm already crying.

“Wipe those tears I'm not going to hurt you.”

I stare at him. Not hurt me? This is Mpilo for crying out loud! He'll hurt me either way.

“Sit down I need to discuss something very important with you.”

Relief washes over me. I wipe my tears and take for steps inward and sit down facing him.

“I'm going to take another wife” he says nonchalantly.

I shoot my open. “A-another wife?” My voice coming out barely a whisper.

“Yes another wife but it's going to be difficult to win her over since she has her own money.”

“So?”

"I want you to befriend her make sure that you make her feel welcomed she'll be here in two days' time."

I swallow. "Why do you want another wife? Aren't we enough for you?"

"Who gave you the permission to question me?" His voice so everly firm.

"I-I'm sorry I'll never ask again. I'll tell the other wives."

"Good. And know that even if they don't accept her I'll marry her still."

I nod. "Understood. And Mpendulo? Does he know that you're taking a 5th wife?"

"Why are you mentioning his name?" He hisses.

"I'm sorry. But I'm asking out of concern. He gets under your skin when he's here and you act like a maniac why is that?"

He sighs. "I don't know how but that boy is connected to someone who'll perish me and all that I've worked hard for and I'll be damned to allow that to happen!" He snaps.

"What do you mean by perishing you?" I ask genuinely confused.

“She'll be the end of me and this whole empire that I've built. This lifestyle that you're currently living you'll point it from afar while you're broke and useless. You are excused.” He opens his laptop and I'm dismissed just like that.

I slowly stand from the chair and head to the door with questions running in my mind. Who is his end and why would she want to end him? How is this so-called perisher connected with Mpilo's empire? This doesn't make any sense. And if she manages to destroy Mpilo's empire that he built from scratch through tears and sweat then this means tha— oh hell to the fucking no!

I invite myself into Lenah's bedroom and all 3 eyes bore into mine.

“And now?” Lenah asks.

“Mpilo is taking another wife.”

“What?” All three of them shoot up on their legs from the bed.

“Yeap and he said she'll be here in two days. We need to accommodate her.”

Nonkolosi laughs. “That's bullshit! Mpilo can't bring in another wife! It hasn't been a year since he married this ugly-looking village girl and now he wants to bring us another sore in the eyes to look at woman? Pathetic!”

“You should be glad that she's not bringing your doomsday anytime soon” Mazana says shooting daggers at Nonkolosi.

I turn to her and ask. "Doomsday? You mean the one who'll make us perish as Mpilo said?"

"Exactly her. You're lucky that he warned you. Now be wise about this. Do what you have to do to secure your future because when the time comes?" She shakes her head. "Excuse me" she says and heads to the door.

The three of us look at each other as the door shuts close behind us.

So she knows about this woman too? Why are we in the dark? And why would Mpilo talk to her first before me? It doesn't make sense.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

We were supposed to have gone to Mpendulo's house yesterday but with this Willow issue meeting Norah today and Lwazi's attempt at committing suicide we had to sleep

over at Samke's house but Mpendulo slept at Blake's house together with Samke. So now we are all at Blake's house eating lunch after here Mpendulo will accompany me to aunt Norah's house to discuss a way forward.

Lwazi's mother insulted us yesterday when we went to fetch Lwazi. I couldn't believe that my ears heard such sickening words from the woman whom I held highly and saw as a hero for loving her son and understanding his lifestyle despite what the people said about him the things she said about him are cringe-worthy. She even went as far as saying that if only she knew that she was going to give birth to a confused child she would've long aborted him or burnt him alive after giving birth to him. Yoh she's very evil shame my Lord. A whole mother who carried him for 9 months getting sick having sore feet and sleepless nights because of him now he wishes her only son nothing but misery & death in his life.

Anyways Samke has agreed for him to stay with him until he finds himself a place to stay since he works around here.

“Are you okay?” I ask placing my hand on top of his.

“No I'm hurting choma.” He drops the fork on his plate and rubs his temples. “My heart is still in anguish I'm wounded. I still can't believe that my mother said all those hurting words to me? She even wished that I get raped again and this time around get killed in the process. How could she? I love that woman choma. But after this? I don't know I really don't” he says his lips quivering and blinking away tears.

“Don't worry choma. You'll be fine as time goes by all four of us here will be with you every step of the way. We will make sure that we make you forget about your troubles and all the poison your mother purged on you. I know that she said a lot of hateful

things that are already engraved in your head. If only she knew that verbal abuse scars one emotionally she wouldn't have spew such."

"She'll miss you once the grocery has run out. Just relax and let God take control of the situation

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" Blake tells him. "And cry it all out. Cry till you have no tears left to shed you are stronger than this Lwazi. Don't let what your mother said deter you from living your best life."

"Yah and I'll buy you daiquiris every week. If you feel like crawling back into the deep dark hole go to wherever you keep them and take one and trust me when I say you'll forget about creeping back into that hole. Live your life to the fullest Lwazi. Don't limit yourself. In fact let's go to the car wash after here to chill there maybe seeing beautiful people more than us your spirit will be lifted. I mean aren't you tired of seeing our ugly asses?" Samke asks as he pouts.

We all laugh. Argh Samke is such a tease.

"Speak for yourself Samkelo. I'm one handsome motherfucker!" Blake tells him.

"Yeah right. So Lwazi car wash?"

"Why not? I'm game."

"Well we will meet you there after the meeting with my aunt" I announce.

“Even if you don't come it's fine. Lwazi will be in good hands besides Rebabe and the girls will be there. He won't feel out of place I assure you.”

“Haibo Samke. What do you mean? There's no me without Lwazi and vice versa.” I narrow my eyes at him.

“Oh child. Who lied to you? Besides the sooner Lwazi lives his life without you the better. You will get married one day and I don't think Mjita here will allow Lwazi to move in with the two of you.”

I turn to look at Mpendulo and he's far away with thoughts his fingers softly tapping the table.

“Baby.” I nudge him.

“Munku. Ready to go?” He asks not looking at me.

“Yes I'm ready to go. But are you okay?”

“No. I'll never be okay until this Willow is found and has been dealt with. I'll never be fully okay as long as he breathes and roaming the streets. Let's go and meet up with your aunt because by the time the sun begins to set we will have to go I have work tomorrow” he says pushing his chair back.

The thought of being left alone doesn't sit well with me but I can't really tell him that. I trust that I'll be safe in his place but what if his ex-girlfriend shows up there

unexpectedly and demand to know who am I and what am I doing in her boyfriend's house? Geez.

“We did say that we will deal with this Mpe. Don't worry” Blake assures him.

“I know just be fast about it.”

“Yes sir.”

He smiles. “You're such a fool. Let's get going we will catch you later.”

“Choma will you be ok—”

“Just go choma. I'll be okay don't worry about me” he says a smile spreading across his face.

I huff. “Okay then. Catch you later.”

I follow Mpendulo out of the house and out of the yard we go. We're going to hail a taxi walking hand in hand.

“Munku.”

“Sthandwasam'.”

“I love you.”

I giggle. “I love you too.”

“And I promise to protect you at all times okay?”

“I know and so will I.”

He laughs. “I know you will munku. I know you will.” He kisses the top of my head and I smile.

A few hours later we're stepping inside the yard where aunt Norah lives and it's quiet I wonder where are the kids. It's a four-roomed house with a well-kept lawn and beautiful flowers. A barking dog it's what lures me out in my admiration of this yard. I don't like dogs I don't even know why.

“Hello Zamo” she hugs me. “Mpendulo.” He shakes his hand. “Please come inside I was making tea. Care for a cup?”

“Yes I'd love one thank you.”

“I'm good thank you” Mpendulo says.

“Men and not loving tea. You can proceed to the lounge I'll join you shortly.”

We sit down in one of the double couches.

“Her home is lovely” Mpendulo compliments.

“Very. She's always loved modern design furniture and keeping her house clean.”

“I hope ours will be like this too. My place is so dull.”

I laugh. “Dull? I doubt that.”

“You'll see for yourself tonight.”

“Mmmm.”

Aunt Norah sets the teapot sugar & milk holders accompanied by 2 saucers containing cheesecake before me.

“Thank you Auntie.”

“You're welcome.”

“Thank you Ma.”

She sits down. “You're welcome. So to what do I owe the visit?”

I sigh. “Well I have a situation ncane. I'll not get into details but I'll just scoop it from the top.” She nods. “Willow has been sending me threatening messages.”

“What? Why on earth did you associate yourself with that son of a devil? Do you have any idea how dangerous & ruthless he is? Nomzamo maarn what did you do?”

“I didn't know that he was dangerous. He didn't come with a sticker ncane” I defend myself.

“Yeses! Waze wazibulala izingane zami!” (You've killed my kids)

“How so?” I ask. “How did I kill them?”

“God Nomzamo. I'm sorry for yelling at you but my ex-husband and Willow's father had unfinished business. Things didn't end well between them and unfortunately he h—” she trails.

“What?” I prod.

“Nothing. Nothing you need to worry yourself about.”

She's hiding something. Why is she not telling me what it is? Maybe we might use whatever she has against Willow and his family. I'll have to find out what it is I have a feeling that it's something that will flip her life or Willow's father's life upside down.

“Please tell me ncane. What is it?” I implore

“Forget I said anything Nomzamo. Just save my grandkids for me. They've been traumatized enough in the hands of that family once upon a time. I don't want them to go down that route again this time around they won't survive. The first time it was a warning but this time around? Lord have mercy!”

“Since you don't want to tell me what's the deal with Willow I'll let it slide for now but I'll find out what the story is very soon. I'll not push you. Anyways you've just made things for us. So after Willow's threat one of Mpendulo's friends suggested that we take the kids to go and live with his mother for their own safety until Willow has been dealt with.”

She laughs. “Dealt with? Who's going to deal with that son of Adonis? No one survives that boy's wrath! I'm sure you guys never heard about his second in command Jetro.” She shakes her head vigorously. “Save my grandkids Nomzamo please” she kneels tears already rolling down her cheeks. “In fact come and fetch them tonight. Don't tell their mother anything and I'll go somewhere. To your parents' house for a time being.”

She looks so frightened. Mpendulo & I exchange glances.

Who on earth is Willow and what's his story? Who the hell is Adonis? Because the only Adonis I know is that one that's loved by Aphrodite? Or maybe it's his father's real

name? And this Jetro person is obviously his creepy dangerous friend. Or are they demons living on earth?

“We will do so ncane. I promise you.”

She nods wiping her tears then looks at Mpendulo.

“Please protect her with all your life fight for her. She has tapped something in the spiritual darkness world. She has awoken the sleeping demons.”

Not this again. Argh. When will I catch a break about this spirit savior what what shandis?

“What? What are you on about ncane?”

“You becoming one with Mpendulo has rattled som—”

“Nomzamo!” Ashanti runs up to me cutting her grandmother mid-sentence.

“Hey baby” I pick her up and put her on my lap as aunt Norah rises from the floor.

“I’ll go and clean up sorry” she says leaving the room.

“Munku what was your aunt talking about?”

“I have no idea.”

“Damn it. Or maybe our meeting wasn't a coincidence? What if we were destined to meet at some point?”

“Either way seems like we have a lot of obstacles in our path. I'm scared.”

“We will conquer whatever comes our way munku. I promise you.” He takes my hand and kisses it.

I nod resting my head on his shoulder and Ashanti lays her head on my chest she's only 3 years old after all.

What's awaiting us out there in this cold evil scary world? Are we ready for the brewing storm though?

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INSERT 30

MPENDULO

I can't sleep. I've been tossing & turning the conversation I had with Nomzamo's aunt is what's keeping me awake. I'm still hung up on the fact that “Nomzamo has tapped something in the dark world.” How did Nomzamo tap them? Who exactly is Nomzamo and what kind of a gift does she possess that rattles the world of the wicked? Because it's quite evident that she's someone special in the spiritual world. And Willow? Now

that's one person whose name was mentioned that made my heart stop beating for a second and my blood cold I don't even know why but uvalo lungishayile.

I look at the time on the bed nightstand it's just after 02:00 am. Munku is sleeping peacefully next to me guess exhaustion got to her and lack of sleep over the weekend. I had to change the bedding there was no way I was going to allow Nomzamo to sleep on the very same bedding that Khutso used to sleep on. All the remaining clothes & shoes of Khutso I've stuffed them in the vacant bedroom before allowing Nomzamo into my room. I didn't want any trace of Khutso on sight and all the gifts that she has brought for me I've put them in a rubbish bin. The municipality truck will come tomorrow for the trash. And that brings me to do some grocery damn.

"Can't sleep?" Nomzamo asks still facing the window.

"Yeah. I've been tossing & turning."

"You should get some sleep sthandwasami. You have an early morning."

"I wish I could but I can't."

"Is it because of what my aunt said?" She lifts on her elbows.

"Yeah it is. It just doesn't give me peace" I say rubbing my face with my hands.

“It should but that doesn't mean you must deprive yourself of some sleep. We had a long stressful weekend all we need right now is to rest. Everything else we will discuss when you get back from work.”

“Guess you're right.”

“Damn right I am.” She lies back down. “Hold me and let's sleep we have like 4 hours left for you to wake up and prepare for work.”

“Right.” I snuggle her burying my face on her neck. “I love you munku.”

“I love you too baby.”

•♥•

The sound of my alarm makes me groan in annoyance eyes still closed. I don't even know how I fell asleep because the last thing I remember was telling Nomzamo a funny story about my childhood and her softly laughing. I ignore it knowing very well that it'll ring again in 15 minutes and that gives me enough time to just stare at Nomzamo. Thanks to the blue sky for some light.

She stirs in her sleep. I wish I can just kiss her and give her morning glory. I laugh at my silly thoughts damn.

“Stop being creepy” her soft voice comes over.

I laugh. "I'm sorry I just couldn't help myself."

"Yeah right!" She sits upright and stares at me with her big eyes. "You so cute when you've just woken up" she teases.

I blush. "Stop it munku."

"Hey now. Are we blushing or what?" She blinks.

"Men don't blush munku." I kiss her nose.

"But I saw mine blushing a second ago and I found it cute." She pouts.

I laugh. "Munku please stop. In fact go back to sleep."

"No will do. Let's wake up. I still have to prepare you breakfast and fix up your clothes."

"I can do that myself munku. Just sleep."

She peels off the covers. "No will do." She plants her feet on the tiles and yawns.

"Fine." I peel off the covers too. "I'll show you the ropes."

“Fine by me” she says shrugging and standing from the bed. She's wearing my T-shirt.
“Let's go and brush our teeth.”

I watch her with my cup of coffee in my hand as she's busy preparing breakfast and lunch for me. She's doing it so effortlessly and she keeps humming different songs. I don't think Khutso would've done this if we were still together. She wouldn't have done any of these things for me. Matter of fact she'd still be sleeping by now but not this woman comfortable in my kitchen.

“Breakfast is served.” She puts a plate of greasy food before me.

“Thank you munku. I appreciate this.”

“I know sthandwasami. Let me go and put your lunchbox in your bag then I join you.”

“I'll start eating so long.”

She nods walking away. I could use waking up to this every day. My phone beeps on top of the table I swipe the screen bringing it to wake up and there's a message from a number I don't know. I pick it up and view it.

“I will find you and I will kill you. I will get my woman and I'll ruin her and break her. You may run and even cross borders but I'll find you. I am the devil's advocate after all. You don't run from me and you don't hide from me. I'll find you soon.”

I chuckle. This boy is seriously crazy. I have no doubt that he can do all that he says after what Norah said about him but I'll not sit around and wait for him to strike first. This boy is clearly on a mission of flipping our lives upside down.

I push the plate away from me I'm no longer hungry. The text made me full instantly. And where on earth did he get my numbers from? Shit this is messed up.

"Are you okay?" Nomzamo asks placing her hand on my shoulder.

"Yeah I'm fine." I muster a smile.

She sighs. "I'm not a fool sthandwasami. Talk to me. How are we going to make us work if you can't tell me what's troubling you? The most important thing in a relationship is communication."

"I'm sorry. Anyways I received a message from that twisted boy."

"What? What did he say? Where did he get your numbers?"

"I don't know where he got my numbers from but he said; he will find me kill me go after you ruin you & break you."

She shoots her eyes open. “What? How well is this boy connected?” I can see fear in her eyes. “Oh God. I've endangered your life too I'm sorry. I-I didn't know that he was this twi—”

I pull her to me and hug her hushing as she wets my shirt with her tears.

“Shhh munku. It's okay. We will find this bastard and he won't do anything to any of us. I'll forward Blake the message. He has to speed up things and munku please don't blame yourself. You did nothing wrong” I assure her.

“I'm sorry sthandwasami.” She lifts her head from my shoulder. “I'll go and look for another shirt for you.”

“You don't have to munku. I'll go like this.”

She stands a meter away from me and squints her eyes.

“What?”

“People will look at you wondering why you're wearing a stained shirt to work.”

“So what? Let them wonder. I don't mind walking around with the stained shirt with your tears all day munku. At least I'll be walking with a part of you with me today.”

She giggles wiping her tears. “You're so crazy.”

“Only for you munku.”

She takes one step and looks at me. She tilts her head and smiles.

“I love you sthandwa sami.”

“I love you too munku.”

She puts both her hands on my cheeks and brings her lips to mine. I part mine and we kiss tongues dancing in each other's mouth. My hand traces down to her butt her thigh and finally putting it underneath the t-shirt. She moans in my mouth.

I capture one of her boobs and fondle with it pinching her erect nipple and she moans in my mouth. My dick swells in my pants. Fuck I want to take her right now. With my free hand I unzip my jeans. I don't wear a belt I don't even own one.

“You'll be late baby” she speaks in my mouth.

“I have 10 minutes left.”

She nods taking a step back then she takes off the t-shirt leaving her with only her panties on. Boobs standing to attention.

“Damn munku.” I stand too dropping my pants to my knees.

She gives me her back and she bends fingers on her knees showing me her pussy on her full display. I gasp seeing how wet it is. Pre-cum leaks. Shit! I walk up to her and position myself behind her. Hands on her waist.

I push myself inside her pussy and she slightly gasps I start moving inside her. Upping my pace my balls slightly slap her clitoris. She moans. I spank her ass and she yelps. Sweat start forming on my forehead. Urh she shifts a little as I go deeper into her pussy.

My body stiffens as my dick grows inside her. I spank her ass again harder than the first time and it jiggle. Damn I look up groaning and before I know it I release everything inside her.

We stand in this position for a couple of seconds before I withdraw my dick from her pussy drops of cum hitting the floor.

She stands to her full length breathing heavily.

“Let's go and freshen up I mean you can't go to work smelling like sex.”

I lift a brow. “Well that's not a bad idea sweetie.”

She laughs rolling her eyes. Her laughter washes all my worries. I wouldn't mind listening to her laughing all day every day. I can even take her to my workplace just for her laughter.

"Morning dreaming maybe?" She asks and I laugh.

"Shut up munku. It's all your fault."

"Right. Anyway you're left with 3 minutes" she announces.

"Tf?" I quickly pull up my jeans and hurry to the lounge to get my bag.

The bus is most probably approaching the bus stop. I'll shower at work. I hear the bathroom closing.

"Goodbye Wifey. I love you!" I yell making my way out of the house.

Luckily for me there are only two people left to climb it. Thanks God.

★»★«

LWAZI

It's going to be a long day today here at work. Ghost and his fiancé are back from the vacation and sis here has been flaunting her diamond ring since she got here a very beautiful ring that is. If the engagement ring is looking like this then how will the actual ring look like? Hmmm I bet you it's quite expensive. But hey ghost has money after all. Ghost didn't even greet me the minute he stepped into the office he just sat in his chair. Lord I don't even know why I'm sharing an office with him.

After the weekend I had and all that my mother said I need to relax and not think much about a lot of things. If Nomzamo didn't call me that fateful day and assuring me that she loves me I would've long taken my life but then God sent me an angel in a human form and I'm grateful for her. I jumped up dropping the pills in my hand when she opened the door and my mother's string of insults following her. She pulled me into a tight hug a bringing forth river of Jordan(tears) kind of a hug.

I cried on her shoulder and she allowed me to. I swear I heard her praying in my ear calming me down. Once calm she led me out of my room with a bag full of my clothes. My mother continued insulting us saying how much she regrets giving birth to me and that I'm the reason my father left. He knew that I'm a curse and that I'll be an embarrassment to the community and bring shame to them saying how much she regrets giving birth to me and that I'm the reason my father left. He knew that I'm a curse and that I'll be an embarrassment to the community and bring shame to them that's why he left when I was 5 years old. She called us names until we got inside the car well she also said that I'm no longer his son. I'm dead to her it stung yes but I'll survive. Nomzamo and the gang are my only sanity now.

Someone banging my table brings me back to reality. Lifting my head I'm met by a very furious ghost. I drop my gaze pushing tears back.

"I'm waiting for my coffee you whore!" He roars and I flinch.

"I've ordered it a long time ago. I don't know what the delay is."

"Then call! Do a follow-up. Or you don't want your job anymore? I have a long list of women willing to drop down to their knees just for this job. I can replace you in a second Lwazi. Pull up your fucking socks!" He bangs my table.

Tears water my eyes but I'll be damned if I break down in front of him. I take a deep breath.

"I'll do just that" I tell him picking up the phone from the table.

"Fian—" Kenya cease talking when she sees her fiancé at my desk looking very angry.

"What did this confused son of a bitch do to you love?" She asks coming to us.

"He didn't order my coffee. Think he's still in a dick haze from over the weekend" he responds to her not moving his eyes away from me.

I swallow dialing Sivi's café.

“Oh that. I told B to give it to one of the workers.”

“Why would you do that?”

“Because we're going to eat out for breakfast. I've already made reservations.”

I put the phone back on the table and turn on my laptop. She has saved me.

“How thoughtful of you. Go and wait for me in the car I need to discuss something with Lwazi.”

I tense upon hearing those words. What does he want to discuss with me?

“Oh okay.” She kisses his cheek and strides towards the door.

“Who is he?” He asks loosening his tie.

“Who is who?”

“Don't bullshit me Lwazi! The man that you were dancing with Friday night!”

“None of your business.”

“Bullshit! Who is he?”

I ignore him and focus on the screen of the laptop.

He chuckles. “You're playing dead now? No one ignores me Lwazi. No one!”

In one fast pull on my hand he sends me flying to the wall. I scream out and he walks up to me. He strangles me tears roll down my cheeks.

“If I ever and I mean ever seeing you chatting up any guy or smiling with them. Lord knows what I'll do to the two of you. Don't you fucking ever talk to any man except Mpendulo & Samke. Am I making myself clear Lwazi?”

His eyes are full of hatred anger and something else. I quickly nod.

“And don't mention this to anyone because I'll not be held responsible for my actions when someone confronts me not even that best friend of yours. Clear?” I nod. “Good. Fix yourself up I'll be back in 2 hours.” He drops me to the floor and spits on my face. “Don't wipe that shit.” He fixes his jacket and walks towards the door.

I crawl to the corner near my table I sit down bringing my knees to my chest and weep. Lord what did I do to deserve this? How the hell did I end up having a psycho taking interest in me? It's scary and now I have to keep this shit to myself. This is bullying on another level.

My life was fine all along I had no psychos threatening me people bullying me my mother disowning me and regretting giving birth to me until Nomzamo stepped into my life. Ever since she came into my life my life has been filled with nothing but fear tears surging forgotten old memories and threats. I can't help but wonder if she's not a curse in my life? What if everything that's happening to me is because of her? I mean it makes perfect sense when putting two & two together. But no she's not a curse. That girl has been nothing but good to me and she's a good friend too. Fuck! I'm conflicted.

I stand from the floor and settle back on my chair. I pick up my sling back opening it I take out a small mirror and look at myself. I'm a mess my eyes are red and still clouded with tears. Sigh. I take out my wipes and wipe my face then re-apply my make-up. My heart is still heavy.

“Pray when you get too overwhelmed. Tell God all your problems give them all to him.” Nomzamo's words fill my head. She told me this when she woke up and found me crying.

I close my eyes and breathe out. I've never prayed before I don't even know where to start. What do I say?

“Dear God...” tears roll down my cheeks as words fail to form.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

Catching up on soopies it's all that I've been doing after I finished cleaning. Mpendulo was right when he said his house is dull it could use some feminine touch. It makes me wonder why his ex-girlfriend didn't turn this house into a loving and warm home or maybe she liked it simple as it is. Anyway I wrote down things that will make this house to be more welcoming. We will turn this house around in the few months to come. I can't wait to do all that with him turning his house into a home.

Blake borrowed me his old Huawei phone to use until I buy myself a new phone. The phone is still in good condition and it has no scratches none. He told us that he only used it for 2 days and he didn't like it so he brought another brand. Anyways I punch in my mother's numbers. I miss her voice it's been a while since we spoke.

“Hello.”

“Hey Mama. Unjani.”

“Nono. How are you child? Where are you? Why is your phone off? What's going on? Do you have any idea how worried we were about you? Your father & I were planning to drive down there this evening.”

"I'm sorry for worrying you Ma. I've been going through a lot and my phone broke."

"As long as you're okay Nono. Now what on earth is going on that side? Aunt Norah called me last night and asked to come to stay with us for a couple of days she sounded very worried."

I pinch the bridge of my nose. "Yeah a lot is going on Ma. And I experienced something weird over the weekend."

"What? What is it Nono? Should I be worried?"

"No not really. But first promise me that you won't be mad."

"Mad? Why would I be mad? I'm your mother Nono. Speak up."

"I'm seeing someone."

"As in you have a boyfriend?"

"Yeah Ma." My voice comes out low.

"That's good. Your happiness matters and if it'll make you happy and not feel like you're cheating on your husband. Lihle signed the divorce papers."

I scream in excitement. "What? Are you for real Ma?"

"Yeah he brought them here Friday night."

"Oh my God. Those are good news Mama."

"I know I know. And he has moved to Cape Town."

"Wawu that's good right."

"Very good Nono. Now this boyfriend of yours?"

"Well he's so good to me Ma. He makes me very happy and he loves me so much he sees to it that I always have a smile on my face Ma. He's loving me the way dad loves you." I blush as I think about our morning sex.

"Now that's a man for keeps. We will talk more about him when you come to visit us when you get time. Anyways what happened over the weekend?"

"Urhm I think his father is a ritualist."

"What?" Her voice comes out in an octave.

"Yeah here's how it goes..."

“What? And Ndulo doesn't know that?”

Ndulo? Did she just give him a sobriquet? I softly laugh.

“Yeah he doesn't. By the look of things his father was and still is never there for him. His father lives in a mansion but Ndulo stays in some four-roomed house in the hood working 7 to 4.”

“What an evil man. But this thing of you being married to some man doesn't sit well with me. In fact who's that man? Does Ndulo know about this?”

I sigh. “No he doesn't.”

“What? You should tell him Nono. He needs to know. Your dreams are seriously stressing me but I'll keep on praying for you Nono and I'll tell your father to consult.”

“I'll tell him tonight Ma. And there's another thing Ma.”

“What is it Nono?”

“There's a g—”

“Hold on a sec there's someone at the door.”

I hear some shuffling then a key turning.

“Nono it's one of the ladies from church. Can we discuss this later?”

“Yeah sure. I love you.”

“I love you too and please tell Ndulo about your dreams.”

I laugh. “Yes ma'am.”

“Bye Nono.” She hangs up laughing.

Hmmm. Will Mpendulo believe me though? Phew. I lie back on the couch and close my eyes.

INSERT 31

ENHLE

Mpilo ordered us to change the bedding in one of the bedrooms to accommodate his important guest that will be arriving tomorrow. In fact he made us change the whole bedroom and added things that weren't there in the first place. The bedroom looks much better than the four of ours he's going all out for this woman that he wants to win. I wonder what's so special about her except having her own money. Gosh Mpilo will make me age quickly.

“How's your face?” Lenah asks Nonkolosi as she steps into the kitchen.

She woke up her face swollen and covered in scratches. She says she doesn't know what happened to her when we ask her she looks very messed up. Not even make-up can hide her scratches. Mpilo dismissed us when we told him claiming that he has things far important things to do than to deal with our futile drama. This man is stressing us yasis!

“How can you ask the obvious Lenah? She's getting worse can't you see?” I question.

“Sorry it's just that I don't know what to say. She's worrying me and Mpilo not entertaining any of this frustrates me. It's like he doesn't care about our health anymore. Firstly it was Mazana who almost bled to death before he reacted and now he's doing the same thing to Nonkolosi turning a blind eye as usual. How dare he? And on top of that he's bringing another woman to stay with us. I'm not pleased with any of this. How many more women are we going to accept all in the name of his a polygamist?”

First time hearing Lenah being vocal like this. She sounds very hurt I pity her and unfortunately for her there's nothing she can do about this than to accept everything thrown in our faces by our dear husband with fake smiles plastered.

“All women he finds interest in of course and as for Nonkolosi I'll call Dr. Mondlane for her.”

“Nonkolosi will be fine she just needs to damp her face with warm water and take some aspirin or any painkillers” Mazana speaks up.

“You reckon?” I ask tilting my head.

“Very much so.” She glances at Mazana who is looking at her. Staring contest.

“I still wonder what happened to her. How did she wake up with a swollen face as if she was fighting last night? It doesn't make any sense.”

“Yeah it doesn't. Too bad Mpilo doesn't care about any of us here. When last did he spend some quality with us? Had dinner with his wives? And let me not get started about the inadequacy of sex. Mxm this is nonsense!” Mazana says standing from her chair.

“Well we can complain but there's nothing we can do. I'd hate to anger Mpilo.”

Lenah laughs. “Bullshit! Mpilo doesn't take us seriously. I mean the dude couldn't even call us all in one room and told us about this new woman he wants to bring to us. Yes we're married to him but we can't just agree to everything he says. Our voices are not heard no matter how much we raise them he still doesn't want to hear our voices. I don't know about you but I'm tired of this marriage I no longer enjoy it. Things are no longer the same they've changed drastically and I can't keep up anymore it's too much.”

I roll my eyes. “So what? Just be grateful that you're still married to him and he's still providing for you.”

“Grateful? There's nothing to be grateful for here when we get hurt over & over again and tossed around. All of this is bullshit. I don't know about you but I'm not going to accept the woman that'll be joining us.”

Lord Lenah is annoying now with her runny mouth. I don't understand why she's fighting because she knows very well that Mpilo can have as many wives as he wants long as he showers them with money and expensive gifts. Our duty is to support him in every fucking thing.

“You're right Lenah. I'm also not going to accept her besides I have a lot on my plate currently so for Mpilo to bring another woman here it's going to be somehow.”

“Well Mazana. You'll get used to her eventually because she's going to be here for a very long time with us you'll warm up to her. I mean we did with you right?” I arch a brow.

“Not really. Nonkolosi here hated and still hates my guts I've accepted that. So why not return the same courtesy to the new coming wife? We all have a right of choice. We choose who we like and now I'm telling you that I don't like the coming woman and I'll not accept her.”

“You'll just be wasting your time. Mpi—”

“Oh please Enhle!” Lenah cuts me mid-sentence. “Cut us the crap about Mpilo! Mpilo this Mpilo that; aren't you tired of defending him? Yasis the way you going on about him it's like he's this perfect somebody and feared by everyone. Enough! You stand up for him too flipping much! Yeeerr excuse me I need some air because I'll blow up if I hear you mentioning his name one last time!”

I blink countless times not believing that Lenah blew me up. What the hell? I always thought that I mea— damnit I don't even know what to say. Looking at Nonkolosi her eyes are wide open clearly not believing this. I blink and slowly turn my head to look at Mazana and she's smiling looking impressed.

Turning to Lenah. “Yo-you—” words get stuck in my throat.

She huffs. “Exactly. I'm tired of being a carpet excuse me” she says looking at me. “You're such a fool.” She turns to leave...

The swinging of the door opening makes her stop halfway. Mpilo steps inside wheeling a suitcase and a very petite yellow woman follows behind him. This one is older than the four of us combined she's close to Mpilo's age. A threat I don't like this one bit. Hair & make-up on point no trace of a smile on her face not even a fake one.

“Where are you going?” Mpilo asks Lenah.

“Out. I need some air I need to breathe.” She's not backing down.

“Air? Why would yo—”

“Move out of the way Mpilo. I need some air before I blow up” she fists her thick hands.

I hear Mazana gasping next to me and the new woman rasps.

“Lenah” he warns. Rage covering his face.

“Mpilo.”

“Let her be she needs a breather. Move out of the way” the woman says calmly.

“Lindah please excuse me I need to have a talk with my wife. Enhle please show Lindah her room.”

“I don't want to talk I want some air. This kitchen is suffocating me.”

“Lenah” he warns again.

I get off my chair and walk up to him to take the suitcase from his hand.

“Who is she?” Lenah asks shifting her gaze from Mpilo to Lindah.

“None of your concern.”

“None of my concern?” She chuckles. “You bring a woman to our house and when I question you tell me that it's none of my concern? You sick. It is my concern because I also live here. You didn't even have the decency to call us into one room and tell us about you bringing in another woman. Instead you tell your precious wife here. Are we

not important? Are we not your wives too? Are our views not worthy of being heard by you? You know what don't answer that. Now please excuse me.”

Mpilo tilts his head and looks at her. Nose turning red from anger. He drops the suitcase to the floor and backhand slaps Lenah making her stumble. Lenah yelps and steadies herself.

Lindah picks up her suitcase and wheels it going to stand next to Nonkolosi expressionless.

“I want a divorce!” Lenah says taking us all by surprise. Mpilo even. “I'm tired of all this! I'm tired of everything this is just too much for me just free me release me Mpilo.” A sob escapes her mouth.

“No. You're not going anywhere and you will not be granted a divorce I'll fix everything” Lindah says.

“And who are you? Mother Jesus?” Mazana asks her.

She turns to look at Mazana. “It doesn't matter who I am darling.”

I see Mazana stiffening and parting her lips. I wonder what is she seeing.

“I want a divorce not to fix things” Lenah corrects her.

"I'm not one to engage in senseless debates with a youth. Go and get some air then come back when you've calmed. There's a lot we need to discuss. Enhle please come and show me my room I need to freshen up then rest a bit I had a long trip" Lindah tells me.

I nod and beckon her to the stairs. I don't turn to look at Mpilo because I have a feeling that he's not done with Lenah as yet. Guess Lenah couldn't contain the ghetto bitch in her any longer she let that motherfucker sprung free and went wild. Now she's going to get severely punished for having a big mouth. I just don't understand why is it so hard for her to support Mpilo as she vowed before God? She's just dramatic.

"There you go" I tell Lindah opening the door of her bedroom.

"I can tell that you are a naive woman Enhle. You're all talk and no action chile. You still have a long way to go and I don't think You'll survive what's coming it's so sad. You can take your leave."

I shake my head and step out of her bedroom without asking any more questions. What's coming? Naive? Me? She must be out of her damn mind! She doesn't know me like that to begin with a problem she's going to be.

Passing Mpilo's office I hear things falling. Sighs. I shake my head and walk back to the kitchen. The ladies are not around I wonder where did they go.

I take out a bottle of wine from the wine cellar. I need a glass!

"The devil's wife has graced your house it's about time." A voice comes over.

I look around and I see no one. Damn it I'm sure I'm overthinking things right now. Relax brain relax.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

Spending the whole day sleeping was the order of the day and I'm glad to say that it was a peaceful one. No weird dreams or jumping from fright in my sleep. Maybe a change of scenery was what I needed. Well not entirely because Willow's threats still overrun the good thoughts in my mind every now & then. Chisos what did I get myself into? It's a mess.

Anyways Mpendulo will be back from work in an hour or two from now. So I'm busy with the pots I'm cooking for him oxtail & rice with mashed potatoes. My phone rings on top of the table as I throw in the cubes I wonder who is it. I take a peek and Lwazi's photo fills my screen I smile picking it up.

“Choma” answering.

“Choma.”

I bring the phone to my face to look at him very well and he doesn't look good. His eyes are swollen and he seems like he's in the bathroom judging by his background.

“Choma? What's going on? Who made you cry?”

“It's just some eye allergy choma. It's nothing big.”

“Why are you lying Lwazi? I'm your friend talk to me what's going on? Is it Samke? Ghost's fiancé rubbing the ring all over yourself?”

“It's nothing. I miss you.” He sniffs.

“Is it ghost himself?” He purses his lips together. “What did he do?” My nose flares.

“I ch—” he trails looking at the person approaching him. Fear radiating through his face.

“Get off the phone Lwazi!” Ghost's warning voice comes over.

Lwazi blinks and tears stream down his cheeks.

“Ghost!” I call him out.

“What the fuck Lwazi!” He roars. “You’ll pay for this.”

“No you’ll pa—” the screen goes blank.

Dammit! I don’t bother calling him back but I call Mpendulo instead.

“Munku.”

“Sthandwasami I need your help. Lwazi is in danger ghost has done something to him and—” my voice trails as tears start burning my eyes.

“Munku calm down. Breath and tell me what’s going on.”

“Ghost please call—”

“I’ll call Samke and tell him to go to his workplace to check up on him since they work close by stay put. I’ll be home now I love you.”

“I love you too” I hang up closing my eyes.

Ghost will pay for whatever he’s doing to my friend. I did warn Lwazi about this ghost person. The red flags were there but he ignored them. But still that doesn’t give ghost

the right to treat Lwazi in a bad way. What if he's—? Argh fhuck this. I don't even want to think about it Samke better find Lwazi alive & kicking.

I rub my temples and switch off the stove as I'm no longer in the mood to continue cooking. Lwazi's video call soured my day. Lord why is everything bad happening to the people around me? What form of a curse is following me? I mean this is not normal. I me—

The hard knock at the door jogs me out of my thoughts. Whoever the person is is persistent. I put my phone on silent and just stare at the door they'll eventually leave once they get tired of knocking.

“Open up this door bitch! I know you're in there!” The voice sounds familiar. I've heard it before a couple of times that is I just don't recollect where.

Yoh whoever the person is can wait until Mpendulo comes back because I'm not about to entertain her I have a lot on my plate as it is already.

“Open this damn door bitch! I'm not going anywhere until you open it do you hear me?”

“Women & drama” I mumble to myself as my feet carry me to the lounge.

Wiping my tears I sit down and stare at my screen then close my eyes...

“Dear God.

I'm not asking for much

But please protect Lwazi

From the hands of that man

I believe that it is done

Amen.”

I open them and lie back on the couch and stare at the screen of my phone with hopes of receiving a message or call telling me that Lwazi is safe and sound.

★»★«

LWAZI

My face is swollen and one of my eyes is shut close. I'm also bleeding from the anal not just bleeding but serious bleeding and my dick is painful ghost squeezed my balls and stomped on top of them.

So after he found me video calling with Nomzamo he lost it. He took my phone and smashed it against the wall and it shattered beyond recognition. He then dragged me to the floor and started punching kicking and insulting me calling me all sorts of degrading names. I cried screamed begged him but it all fell on deaf ears.

He stood and went to lock the door I thought he was leaving but clearly I was wrong because he came back taking off his jacket. Anger was written all over his face. He took one of the glass flower vases and threw it on my face it broke and shards flew all over and some got in my eyes even though they were closed well half-closed. Anyway he continued to assault me drowning the banging of his office door and his fiancé's asking him to open the door.

He yanked me up and threw me against his file cabinet. I screamed as my back came in contact with it and that angered him because he rushed up to me and kicked my balls I groaned but he kept on hitting me everywhere I was bare to him.

The last straw was when he pinned my head on top of the table squeezing it making my lips twist and he took a scissor laughed before he cut my pants. I tried freeing myself from him but he was strong too strong for me. I was no match to him. Reminding me of my uncle's friends who overpowered the young fragile me.

He roughly inserted the scissor in my arse and I cried out he kept on inserting it and removing it. He was basically sexing me with it. He kept saying that he owns me that I'm

his property and he'll do whatever he wants with me. Lord then he raped me continuously until he was satisfied. Once done he spat on my face and hauled me on his shoulder bringing me here in this underground car parking lot obviously leaving me to die and I will die if help doesn't come soon.

Death will do me good honestly. I'll rest in peace and never have to suffer again. Besides a lot of people will be happy that I'm dead. Nomzamo and the boys are the only ones who'll be affected by my death.

"Lwazi!" I can hear Samke's voice from the distance. "Lwazi!" He calls again and I grunt.

I can't open my mouth and form any words because my upper lip is swollen and ghost made sure that he puts me in a secluded area where no one can see me. It'll be by luck that they find me.

"There's no one here" I can hear Samke notifying whoever he came with.

If only he could just turn around and turn on his left take a few steps then he'll find me because if they leave without finding me then I'm as good as dead.

"Dear God

Please let him find me

Let him see me

I beg you." Saying a short prayer in my heart.

"Keep on looking Samke! The guard did say that he saw ghost coming down here with him" Blake's voice echoes thought-out the empty parking lot.

"Let's just go and ask ghost himself. It seems like your guard lied."

Samke is such a fool though.

"Keep looking Samke! He's around here somewhere. Find him before Nomzamo kills us!"

"Give me strength Lord."

I stretch my legs since I was in a fetus position and turn on my stomach. I groan when excruciating pains radiate from my body. Damn ghost did me bad here but I have to survive just for Nomzamo.

I propel myself forward ignoring the pains radiating from everywhere in my body just one more push and I'll be in the view.

"Ae there's no one here Blake."

I look on my left and there's a little stone before me. I get hold of it and lift my hand high as I can and hurl it to the nearest zinc bin it makes some loud noise.

“Wait I think I heard something.”

I can hear footsteps coming my way and relief washes over me when I see Blake hurrying to me. I drop my head and close my eyes.

“In here Samke! Hurry up!” He calls out to Samke. “Don't worry Lwazi. Ghost will pay for doing this to you he'll pay” he says picking me up bridal style.

“I'll bring the car around” Samke tells him. “Fuck ghost! What the hell did you do man?”

“Just bring the car Samke. Lwazi needs medical attention” Blake orders him. “Hold on Lwazi. Do it for Zamo if not for yourself.”

★»★«

MPENDULO

I click my tongue when I see an uninvited guest in my yard. I hope she didn't get into a confrontation with Nomzamo because I'll not be held responsible for my actions. She looks nothing like herself her hair is plaited in Benny & Betty and she's wearing leggings with pumps and plain white round t-shirt it's like she was cleaning or doing laundry. She can't tell me that she's gone broke so fast this woman was swimming in money. Plus she's associated with one of my father's friends. Her looking like this it's shocking to me.

“So it's true?” She asks the second I open the gate.

“What are you doing here?”

“What am I doing here? What kind of a sick question is that?”

I shake my head. “See yourself out and don't ever come back here. My girlfriend wouldn't appreciate you coming here as if you still stay here. You made your choice live with it and stop being a nuisance. Don't follow me.” I push past her.

Stepping inside the house after Nomzamo opened for me she throws herself in my arms.

“I'm here munku. I'm here.”

“I know. Just hold me please.”

I embrace her without saying a word. I'll ask her about Khutso later.

"Thank you" she says pulling out from the hug. "How was your day?" She asks taking the bag from hand.

"It was okay just missed you a lot. How was yours?"

She sighs. "It was fine before receiving Lwazi's call."

"I'm sorry."

She shrugs. "You did nothing. You can relax while I run a bath for you."

"Thank you munku. That's sweet of you." I kiss her on top of the head and she giggles.

I take out my phone from my pocket as she disappears into our bedroom. I send Samke a text.

"Any news?"

"It's bad man ghost really fucked him up bruh. We're at the hospital now and things are not looking good for him. We can only pray that he survives because what ghost did to him is atrocious. And please do me a favor don't tell Nomzamo about this. We did tell her that we found Lwazi but we did not go deep into details."

“I will.” I put my phone back in my pocket and kiss my teeth.

“I’ll continue to cook while you take a bath. And just so you know Lwazi has been found.”

“Mmm that’s good. Let me go and have a quick bath then.” She nods as I perk her lips.
“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

I wink causing her to giggle. She strides to the kitchen while I head to the bathroom.
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