

Road to Royalty

A NOVEL
FICTION



AllNovelWorld.Com

AllNovelWorld.Com

Chapter 1

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Her heart jolts at the sound of a door knob turning she knows it's him. As crazy as this may sound her spirit senses his presence even before he shows himself. She has been with him for so long that she is familiar with the sound of his footsteps she can recognise his snuffles his sneeze and the sound of his cough. Her soul is so familiar with everything he is that if she were blind she is most certain that she would point him out in the midst of a crowd.

Just as the door opens Amara sits on the bed where her clothes are scattered and a suitcase in the midst. Their eyes meet for a brief second and he's greeted by an accusatory glare rather than a usual smile from his darling wife. His eyebrows knit for a moment questions fly around his head like paper planes before he lets one slip out of his mouth.

“What’s going on?” Funny how his words never falter no matter how nervous or terrified he may be. The couple had a fight before Amara jolted to their bedroom to pack her bags she had come home upset and in tears. When he asked what the matter was she threw insults at him and how she has been a devoted wife to a man who has taken advantage of her love. Randall has been confused since.

Amara does not provide an answer she opts to look away from him. She can see from her outlying vision that he is staring directly at her.

“What is this Amara? Why are you packing your bags?” Randall is not one to raise his voice but he is compelled to right now. His wife is angry for a reason he does not know she’s packing her clothes and it is a bloody big suitcase.

“Isn’t it obvious? I’m leaving.”

“Why?” This is the calm before the storm whatever that phrase means.

Still not wanting to explain much to him Amara reaches for her phone that’s charging on the bedside table scrolls through the pictures she

received while on her way home from work and gently hands him the phone.

Confusion is like a slap in the face... His eyes widen as shock envelops the entirety of his face it's as if he can't believe what he's looking at. Randall probingly stares at the pictures of him in bed with another woman who is clearly not his wife. He searches his memory of what he observed that day nothing much comes to him. Some visuals are vague he can familiarise with a few things in that hotel room.

Like the bed covers the lamp on the bedside table and the grey carpet on the floor. But the naked woman in his arms is a stranger he doesn't know her. He cannot remember having any sort of conversation with her neither can he recall taking her to bed. The memory of her savaging every part of him is there while he lay on the bed unable to move and high on ecstasy.

Nausea tugs at him he wants to throw up at the memory of him moaning and groaning with pleasure. Him being unable to get his hands off

of the strange woman who was straddling him and making him feel good although it was against his will. The pictures make him angry he wants to smash the phone against the wall. But who took these pictures? And why did they send them to his wife? His heart is pounding so fast it could stop at any time.

“Amara!” His eyes become shifty and for the life of her Amara cannot make out what the look means.

The Mrs stands to meet her husband’s height he’s way taller than her too tall that she has to stand inches away so not to strain her neck while looking up at him.

“Tell me it’s not true Randall tell me this is all a lie. Tell me it is photo shop that there is someone out there who wants to destroy us. Tell me these pictures of you in bed with another woman are fake and I swear to our kids I will believe you. Even if it’s a lie I will believe you.”

Randall is silent why is he not saying anything?

Amara's heart jerks at the silence her insides churn robustly. The thought of her husband with another woman is disgusting. She can't stomach it even if it were presented to her in a form of chocolate cake.

Randall's furrowed brow pulls with a question. What is going on? She can almost mentally hear it. His lips part readily his voice standing at attention.

"Say something dammit." She screams in frustration pulling his black shirt. Randall stares blankly at his livid wife he has answers for her but he is not sure if she will be able to take them.

"Amara I'm sorry. Don't go please you can't leave me." He is pleading for mercy.

"I'm leaving and there's nothing you can do to stop me." Amara sizzles and continues with her packing.

"What about the throne?" Randall's enquiry snaps her head back to him.

"What about it?"

"You're my queen everyone knows you as my queen. You are to sit on the throne beside me

Amara. How will I go back to Ghana without you? What will I tell the elders? What will I tell granduncle?”

“How about you fucked another woman

Sponsored

while your queen was waiting at home for you?”

Hell hath no fury... listen to the words spoken by the fuming wife.

Amara has no control over her words anymore anger has dominated her. She believes the pain eluding from Randall’s eyes is not on her he is to blame for this. At this point she regrets taking his surname maybe she should have stayed a Buthelezi even after marriage.

“Amara.” He calls with concern etched on his face. “It’s me... your husband. Are you really going to speak to me like that? Do I not deserve respect from you at least?”

Not with that resentment enveloping her heart. She denies him an answer... and the packing continues awkward silence has filled the room.

“Me hemma! (My queen.)” He calls.

His voice is soft and soothing. "Don't leave like this please we can fix this."

"I doubt it Randall." Yep she has made up her mind. "I'm taking the kids with me." Amara finishes.

Liyana their daughter goes with her everywhere and Randall knows that. Amara raised her from when she was nine years old she only knows Amara as her mother.

He kneels in front of her his hands on her knees. The touch has Amara shuddering but only with disgust. These hands were meant for her thinking they touched another woman makes her cringe.

"Don't touch me" she whisper snaps and it hits him like a ton of bricks hurt flashes in his eyes. It is brief making her think she is seeing things that are not there.

"You can't stand my touch now?" It doesn't matter how tough he can be pain has no favourites.

"Yes Randall I can't stand your touch." His jaw clenches and unclenches at the sound of his

wife's bitter words it is enough to have him pull away from her and stand to his feet. She stands with him.

"We have never been apart let's not start now. Please we can get through this like we've gotten through everything else." Randall pleads.

The feeling of defeat is overwhelming it's frustrating how he can't snub it away. How can he make her see that he loves her? That his love is deeper than what she is seeing?

"Not this time Randall you have hurt me in ways I never thought you would." Amara is clearly blinded by anger she is convinced in her heart that Randall is just like all men not the prince charming she thought he was. This is the first time that Randall is caught in such a predicament and the feeling of losing his wife is scarier than anything he's ever known. He can lose it all but not Amara.

"I didn't do anything please." Desperate and his brain befuddled Randall steps closer to his wife. You'd think she would move but he's giving her that look that renders her weak.

Wrapping his arms around her he holds her close. Her heart jerks at the feel of his breath on the crook of her neck the sensation of the mild kisses rush to her knees to weaken them. Amara knows she will fall the second Randall lets go. After so many years she still trembles at his touch. "You know me better than this Amara." This is how a desperate husband pleads.

"I- I thought... I did." She succeeds in responding without losing her breath and as hard as it is Amara slowly slips out of her husband's arms and lest she falls she sits back on the bed. "I guess I was wrong."

"Dammit Amara" he shouts. "Why are you so stubborn? Why won't you listen to me?" The anger is expected he is human after all. What Amara does not expect is Randall slamming a fist against the dry wall. She flinches and stifles a low scream eyes wide with shock and disbelief.

He realises that he's upsetting her and feels a need to apologise but she doesn't give him a chance to do so. A terrible thought has forced its way into her head it brings about her insecurities.

Playing with her fingers her lips part hesitating to release words. Randall sees the question in her eyes he would ask but opts for her to speak whatever is stuck on the tip of her tongue.

"Is..." the start is good at least she managed a word. She cages her hips on the bed as she presses her hands on the mattress her teary eyes leering up at the man she will never stop loving even if she were given the whole world. Their eyes lock nothing is said within the next few seconds until impatience pulls Randall causing his furrowed brows to elevate.

"Is that the reason you don't touch me anymore?" she finally asks.

Randall's heart sinks and cracks this is not what he wanted. He didn't mean to pull away from her it hurts him as much as it hurts her.

.....

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 2

Randall is taken back to the day after he came home from a business trip. He wasn't himself Amara could sense it as well. For the first in his life he became sensitive to a whole lot of things Amara especially. He spent more time in the shower an hour was too little a time. Baths were no longer an option till today which was a surprise to Amara considering the man loved taking baths with her. He avoided looking at her naked body passionate kisses and would jolt up when she would start seducing him. Randall would run to take a shower and spend hours in there.

It was sleepless nights after another he would groan cry and mumble words that didn't make sense in his sleep... This took a toll on their marriage the only thing Amara could think of

was that her husband did not love her anymore that he was disgusted by her.

The couple would argue for hours until they wore themselves out as much as they hurt each other nobody wanted out of the marriage.

“I love you.” Randall says standing a bit far from his wife now. He doesn’t want to hurt her and he might if they continue arguing like this. “That means nothing to me right now Randall.” Amara snaps she’s exhausted.

“So you’re going to give up on us just like that? Like we never meant anything?” Randall shouts he cannot understand how this is possible.

“You gave up on us when you cheated Randall you tossed our love away when you lain in bed with another woman.” Her voice is louder than his.

“I told you I didn’t do anything.” Surely there has to be a way to make her understand this yelling must be giving them a headache.

“Then how do you explain these pictures Randall?” Might as well stand on the rooftop so everyone can hear that the Okolies are waging war against each other.

Amara snatches the phone from the bed and throws it at her husband he sees it coming and ducks but still manages to catch the mobile. Randall is a trembling mess his sensitive side is emerging. He doesn't want that he doesn't want to break down in front of his wife. What will he say to her? How will he explain his tears?

“Maybe Kenneth would have loved me better...”
Okaaaay! That came out too fast and too loud. Randall's eyes spasm with something unsettling it sends cold shivers down her spine. He frantically grabs her arm and pins her against him a gasp jumps out of her mouth as her chest collides with his upper torso. Eyes widened and heart racing Amara glares up at her husband. Randall does not act like this he's never acted like this. Yes he can be possessive but to hurt her is new.

“Don't fucking say that to me” he seethes between gritted teeth an inscrutable expression painted on his face. “Don't you talk to me like that Amara I am still your husband.”
“Oh really?” She yells.

He lets her when she slips out of his tight grip and steps back her face creases while she rubs away the pain on her arm.

“Did you remember that while you were on top of another woman?” The wife is going to great lengths to have him hurt as much as she is hurting.

“Amara!” He shouts stepping closer with a threatening glare.

“I am done Randall” Amara yells back.

What Amara does next has Randall’s eyes widening in shock his blood runs cold. Never in his life did he think he would see his wife remove her wedding ring. He is still shockingly scrutinizing her left hand when she grabs the suitcase and starts lugging it towards the door. Arms wrap around her waist from behind as she touches the door knob stopping her on her tracks. His warm breath tickles her neck shivers ripple through her and like a fool she trembles at the warmth of his body pressed against hers.

“Let me go Randall.”

“Don’t leave please.” His voice is a desperate whisper an undertone that stabs her cold heart a little. “I’ll go this is your house. It’s R.J and Liyana’s home I will stay in the guest room for tonight. Just... don’t let my son leave his father’s house please Amara.”

Amara hesitates a bit before shifting from his arms and turns to face him. To assure him that she is not leaving she gives him a nod.

Sighing in relief Randall slides past her to get to the door. His feet falter as if he doesn’t want to leave the room. Her heart jumps to her throat when he turns to her studying her with unforgiving judgement.

“One more thing Amara” his voice relapsing into a grating rasp. “Don’t you ever mention Kenneth Mkhize to me again. You know I can be ruthless... me hemma (my queen) and I don’t want to tread that path.”

Randall slowly turns and walks out leaving Amara in shock. Bringing up Kenneth a man who once pursued her while she belonged to Randall was a bad idea although she knew what she was doing. The plan was to hurt him

not make him angry enough to go on a killing spree.

ZITHA-

“I understand your concerns Zitha however keeping your mother here will only be a loss on our side. There is nothing we can do for her anymore you need to take her home.”

“No please Melikhaya you’re my only hope right now. My mother can’t be crowded in that house you of all people should know how small it is and my aunt will...”

“Zitha please do not make this my problem. I already did my part the only reason I was able to extend her stay here is because of our friendship. I risked my job for you you can’t possibly ask me to further your mother’s stay at this hospital.”

“I’m desperate please. Don’t you think you owe us this much? Remember what my mother did for your parents a long time ago? If it we’re not for her your father wouldn’t be this big shot he is today.” Melikhaya’s face tightens in disbelief maybe I should not have said this.

Okay I know I sound like a selfish prick then again who wouldn't when their mother is involved? She's all I have taking her out of the hospital means death for her. If my mother had a voice she would complain about going in and out of the hospital. This place is basically her second home

Sponsored

she would complain about going in and out of the hospital. This place is basically her second home sounds terrible I know. I don't mean to nag Melikhaya she has been of great help over the past months and I can never thank her enough.

"I'm sorry Khaya you know I have a big mouth and I can't control it."

I can be annoying when given a chance and here I am annoying the poor woman she huffs as she plunges her hands in the pockets of her doctor's white coat and judges me with a single glare.

"I'm done Zitha you're on your own now." I watch her walk away I would call her back and

demand that she helps me. It seems she has forgotten that seventeen years ago my mother helped her father get a job at a big company and that's why they were able to pay for her studies. I'm not as mean as I sound I'm desperate and out of options.

“Sorry sisi” someone taps my shoulder from behind I turn to a nurse wearing the most arrogant face I've seen so far. She holds me a paper and pen.

“Please sign and take your mother home we have a patient who needs the bed.” I should record her arrogant voice and send the complaint to her bosses but I'm a nobody. Reluctantly I sign the damn thing she snatches it back and catwalks down the hallway.

“Just wait there someone will bring your old lady to you.” She arrogantly tells me while walking away.

May she trip and break a tooth or two. I should have pulled that ugly wig off her head and ran with it nonsense...

“Hey hey careful.” I shout at the male nurse pushing my mother’s wheelchair towards me why the clumsiness though? He gives me a funny look if he wasn’t cute I would return it ten times. Beautiful men intimidate me I dribble on my words if not on my legs to fall underneath them.

“This is not a trolley from Shoprite she’s human man.” I tell him.

Thank God I got those out usually I bite my tongue and ask for their numbers. The nurse does not seem to care about my dramatics he lets go of the wheelchair and stands with hands folded across his chest. God come see this thing you created it wants to seduce me without actually doing anything.

“Don’t take the wheelchair home with you we don’t run a charity here.” Eww!!! Major turn off how dare he think I will steal a bloody wheelchair.

“I know because this is your uncle’s hospital right?” The bastard frowns at my remark I’m turned off by his arrogance so my mouth is on fire right now.

“You’re too forward for a pretty lady.” Come on now... did Mr. Nurse just call me pretty? Wait don’t get too excited Zitha he said pretty not beautiful. Pretty is ‘you have a big nose but your eyes are to die for.’ Pretty is ‘you have long legs but they look like chicken drumsticks.’ Basically pretty sounds like an insult. I should write a letter to whoever composed the English vocabulary to rid of that word.

My mind takes me back to my mother who is sleeping on the wheelchair. How am I going to get this woman home? It’s late at night and the only option I have is to request an Uber.

“Listen...” I move close to the cute nurse a frown is his response. I don’t care I need this wheelchair more than he does. He’ll probably be riding it down the hall through the entire nightshift.

“Say... I borrow the wheelchair and...” his eyes chase my hand that’s drawing circles on his chest.

Oh Shembe! A hairy chest? Send help now... I choose to look into his eyes than the bit of hair

peeking through his shirt they are rather dreamy. The man does not look pleased is he gay or what? Here's a whole woman trying so hard to seduce this boy can't he at least pretend to be turned on. I'm bloody trying here. "No!" he says and gently pushes me before I lay down my offer we might as well close the country. Men are not seduce(able) anymore. "Hey you didn't even hear what I had to say." I'm extremely offended.

"I don't care sisi please leave the wheelchair outside."

"Argh!" I draw back and fold my arms across my chest. "Is this your father's wheelchair?" He laughs mockingly. For that stupid cute laugh. I will steal this wheelchair they will never see me again.

"Whatever go to hell." I snarl at him.

I'm annoyed and stranded. Although my mother lost a lot of weight over the years she's still heavy. To top it off she is tall. How will I carry her into the house? That's if I have enough money to pay for an Uber.

I curl my hands on the wheelchair turn my back to the nurse and make sure my flat ass pops out enough for him to see what he's missing. Not that I would've given him any. Dammit I should've worn tight jeans. Who said loose pants are always cute? The idiot chuckles as I shake my hips from left to right while pushing the government wheelchair. I'm taking it home he can't tell me nothing.

I would say the evening breeze is bliss but not today. Today it reminds me how broke and miserable I am. Just as I thought my wallet is empty. I'm standing outside in the cold the jersey my mother has on barely keeps her warm. Melikhaya should have prepared me for this I would have brought warm clothes for her. There's a car coming it's an Uno. The driver stops right in front of us he jumps out before I could check who he really is.

"Are you Zitha?" Oh Lord! Who is this creepy looking man? I cling on to my mother's wheelchair and my bag. The man frowns when I start pushing the wheelchair backwards.

“I don’t have money bhuti please...”

“Ulwazi sent me here she said you’ll need transport.” The man says and I am flabbergasted. “I’m her brother.”

He hands me a phone I hesitate but the look he gives me chastises me.

"She wants to talk to you" he sounds scarier with each word he speaks. If he really is Ulwazi's brother I will never forgive her for sending me a man who looks like he walked out of serial killer documentaries.

With shaky hands I take the phone and the first thing my friend does is explain the scary looking man standing in front of me.

“You do know he has an eye patch and a big scar across his face? How do you expect me to travel with him?” I complain to Ulwazi over the phone. I need to check the list I wrote God when I asked for friends. I don’t remember crazy being on the list. The man heard me he scoffs and stabs me with his one eye.

“Just get in the car he’s a marshmallow that one.” Ulwazi insists she’s laughing.

I don't see a marshmallow I see Papa-Action from Yizo Yizo. Beggars really can't be choosers it's either we go with this scary man or sleep here.

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 3

“Call me when you're done I'll come and pick you up okay?”

“Okay papa.” She unbuckles the belt enthusiasm filling her up.

“Hey wait I'm not done.” She stops at the sound of his reprimanding tone her father is strict so strict that he wants to know where she is and what she's doing at that time. “No boys princess.” His words have her wanting to shy away she is not about to discuss boys with her father. Not him... Never.

“Eww papa” The girl sings.

Her father would believe the sour face taking over her facial features but he is too woke not to know what girls her age get up to.

Liyana grew up so fast turning nineteen in a few months. If Randall could turn back time so she can be that innocent little girl who followed him everywhere he would.

“Okay be careful princess. Love you.”

“Love you too papa.” A kiss on his cheek and she flies out of the car the wind blows her away before he could remind her again to be careful. Being a father is not easy maybe when Liyana was a little girl. But now she is growing she wants to be everywhere at the same time. She follows the latest trends wants the latest gadgets. And who knows? His little girl might be having a crush on some boy with hormones that of a dog.

If only Randall knew where his daughter is headed he would drag her back to the car lock her in her room and throw away the damn key.

Liyana Okolie has grown up to be a strong-willed young woman her parents Randall and Amara are beyond overprotective of her and that alone aggravates Liyana to the core. It stops her from living her best life experiencing new things and living on the edge.

Lying to her parents has become a norm sometimes it bothers her that they might find her out. She wishes that she could be free and gallivant around town showing off her love. Yes her love. The man in bed next to her captured her heart after months of trying.

Her father thought Liyana was meeting up with friends at a mall but the girl had a date with her boyfriend. Zwelethu Mkhize a man who spent months courting the girl. This is the fellow Liyana is with most of the time when her parents assume she is with her friends. He is the reason behind her lying tongue.

She is at his house on his bed ready to have sex with him.

He's a twenty nine year old experienced man and Linaya is so sure that she's ready to give

herself to him. It's the only way she can prove her love. Giving him her innocence.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" His voice is exotic and sensual she is new to this. The feelings rushing through her veins the hot flashes and today her heart thumps in an extraordinary way.

"I love you." she replies to his question with these three simple words that pull a smile to his face.

"I love you too." His response makes her smile but it doesn't reach her ears. It's a nervous one she is about to let a man inside her. Two years they dated without anyone knowing secretly meeting. Liyana loves everything about Zwelethu his mature nature the way he holds her in his arms. The spark in his eyes when he looks at her.

His touch is gentle soft and promising. It's filled with love his hands burn with desire. His kisses wet with dew drops of love a type of worship that leaves her awed.

Zwelethu takes his time to undress her his gaze kept on her to make sure she is okay. He's been waiting for this moment for this woman to give herself to him completely.

"I love you" he says slowly tattooing her face with placid kisses. Her body is trembling under his touch that she has to clench her teeth to stop the quavering. Her top goes first revealing her breasts. He's already hard from having her close to him and can't imagine how it will be like to finally taste her. His erection throbs with excitement he's experienced and if it were with any other woman he would be on the joy ride. But this one is delicate this is her first time and he has to be gentle.

Liyana is nervous the drips of sweat forming on her forehead are evidence. Her body is trembling she's not sure if it's from fear or the cold breeze smashing against her naked skin.

She gulps nervously he hears it and almost chuckles.

He leans in to place a kiss that'll help her calm down it's slow... gentle... barely there but

passionate in all ways. In such a way that it brings about tears in her eyes.

Zwelethu grazes her collarbone with wet kisses her body whimpers under him. He's pushing against her until she's lying flat on her back she's afraid to touch him she doesn't know what to do; this is a first. How does she even do it? What if she does it wrong? What if she freezes?

“Relax sthandwa sami I've got you.” He whispers against her mouth and she releases a long breath a whimpering mess she has become. His mouth hands and skin worship her this way the kisses will distract her and she won't be as terrified.

Now that she's naked he moves back kneeling on the bed as if kneeling before a queen. His red-rimmed eyes adoring every inch of her uncovered body Liyana has never exposed herself to a man before.

Naturally her arms rush to cover her nudes and shies away from his perverted gaze.

“Don't” a gentle whisper leaves his mouth while he removes her hands from her breast and

vag!na. "I want to see you I want to cherish this moment. So I will relive it when I miss you and one day when we're old." The thought of growing old with Zwelethu puts a smile on her face. "You're beautiful." The man is a master at uttering sweet nothings he is Zulu after all and rumour has it they have a way with words.

Leaning in Zwelethu kisses Liyana like it's the first time. After he's satisfied with his kisses he jumps off the bed and casts his clothes away leaving him as the way he came into the world the day he was born he wants her to see him as well.

There's a condom where his phone is the man prepared for this day. He wears it while looking at the young woman on the bed she smiles at the sight. He returns it but his is too short and barely visible to be considered a smile.

Zwelethu climbs back on the bed

Sponsored

she smiles at the sight. He returns it but his is too short and barely visible to be considered a smile.

Zwelethu climbs back on the bed hovers over Liyana and gradually lowers his naked body on top of hers making sure he doesn't squash the poor human with his big built. A few more kisses to calm her down arouse her and get her to a comfortable position. Liyana winces when he slowly pushes his erection inside her nether regions she pulls back and that puts Zwelethu back to square one.

“Hold on to me Liya I will never let you go and relax your body it will hurt if you're tense.” He says kissing the corner of her mouth before linking his eyes with hers.

Liyana believes him he's never lied to her before. Another try and slowly he pushes in it hurts like hell. She winces and clenches her arms around him.

This sex thing is strange her friend told her it wasn't bad. If Liyana remembers correctly; her friend said sex is like a rollercoaster ride. It's scary for the first few seconds until you're up high that's when everything fades away and all

you can think about is reaching your happy ending. For her eighteenth birthday the same friend bought her a dildo just for practice. She went as far as to demonstrate it for her Liyana wouldn't try it. The box is hidden away in her room somewhere where her mother would never find it.

"Is it supposed to be as painful as this?" She can't take the pain anymore he doesn't answer. Typical horny man has lost focus he wants to get in. He has to penetrate her or he will lose his mind. Her nails dig into his shoulders as he continues to push in. Zwelethu almost jumps from the pain but that might scare her.

"Are you okay?" He's back it must be the scratch that snapped him out of his lustful ride. His own question puts him on the hot seat she has to be okay.

"Yes." She replies.

Her eyes suddenly widen her body freezes and hands fall to her sides.

"Shit shit." Zwelethu rumbles smashing a fist on the mattress. He knows what's

happening to her the incident occurred before. About a month ago they were making out on his couch when suddenly she froze. He didn't know what to do so he sat there praying to God and his ancestors to help Liyana. It took almost a lifetime for her to snap back to reality but this time it could be different. It's surprising that her ancestors let it go this far question is will she ever get up?

A thought suddenly comes to mind as he pulls his member out and slowly covers her naked body.

"Zitha." The name escapes his mind and pools out of his mouth.

Zitha is Liyana's closest friend more like a sister and she is the only one who knows about their love affair. Zwelethu finds his phone on the bedside table he scrolls a few names down till the name pops up on the screen.

"If you're Tshepo drop the call now before your mother curses the day you were born after I have insulted you. If not then you have the wrong person no I am not on Tinder and no

that's not me on that picture I don't do nudes. If you're a billionaire then darling you're not lost." Zitha speaks without greeting.

He rolls his eyes at the lady blabbering on the receiving end.

"Should I accept the fact that you will never save my number?" Zwelethu asks preparing to deliver the bad news. He hears an exasperated sigh from her.

"Oh it's you you're not dead... yet?" Zitha spits back her tone carries nothing but boredom. One can tell she is not a fan of the man she's talking to.

"Can we put our differences aside? Liyana needs help." Yep! He said Liyana the one Zitha tends to be overly protective of.

"What have you done to my friend this time? Need I remind you I know how to get away with murder."

"I didn't do anything we were making out and she suddenly froze." Zwelethu feels embarrassed having to explain his private life to his girlfriend's best friend.

"Oh great I should have known. Tell me Zwelizwe or whatever your father named you.

How high is your sex drive? Because from where I'm standing you're a porn star who can't get enough of..."

"Insulting me will not help Liyana."

"Oh relax it's not like you care about her anyway. You wouldn't have risked her life if you did. When are you going to stop trying to smash my friend? Do you know who she is?" Zitha knows that the Okolie ancestors are possessive of their daughter no man will ever touch that girl if they have anything to do with it and if Liyana continues to deny them she will never have her happy ending.

"Listen" Zwelethu snaps annoyance in his tone. There is no time to entertain Zitha's insults. "I'm looking at a frozen Liyana as we speak." He's panicking although he's been faced with this situation before. Zitha finds humour in his words the young lady can't help but laugh at the circumstances.

"Oh my poor friend now I will have to teach her how to masturbate or she will never know what an orgasm feels like not that you were going to

give her one. Do you think her ancestors will freeze her hand if she starts touching herself?" Zitha asks and quickly gives an answer before Zwelethu could say anything. "I don't think so too although I'm starting to think they have a problem with sex"

"Zitha please this is an emergency." Zwelethu is clearly exasperated. She giggles she is having fun at her friend's expense.

"You don't play with the underground gang Zwelisha then again you're an Mkhize. You lot think you know better." She gets the name wrong again.

"Are you going to help me or not?" Aggravated Zwelethu barks at her. Zitha hates it but she doesn't voice it out. Liyana needs help she will deal with the angry Zulu man later.

"Do this take her outside and make her stand on soil barefooted. Take a handful of it from where she was standing make sure her shadow is there when you scoop the soil. Place it in a

bowl add water and let it boil for about two minutes then help her steam her body she should be okay after that.” Zitha knows this well there is nothing about Liyana that she doesn’t know. Zwelethu though has been told to solve for X why does life have to be so difficult? When will he catch a break?

“I don’t know how you’re going to do all that just don’t bend my friend she is not a blow up doll.” Zitha finishes just to piss Zwelethu off. He knows Liyana’s situation yet he still provokes her ancestors.

“Thank you?” He sends his gratitude he doesn’t give Zitha a chance to reply.

He tosses the phone on the bed throws his clothes on. He'll dispose of the condom later it's not important right now. He has to help Liyana into her clothes he finds a morning gown in the wardrobe and drapes her with it. The task won't be easy and he's not sure if it will work but keeps his fingers crossed.

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 4

AMARA-

People think being a wife is easy... sigh! He is still around he didn't keep to his word of leaving and I haven't mustered up the courage to oust him out. He told me a bunch of mumble jumbo about how R.J will be affected by our separation.

I can't think straight with him around I need space I need time alone. I need to be away from him surely I am not asking for too much. His presence has me confused about a whole lot of things like when I see him play with the kids. Randall the cheater is wiped away from my eyes and I start to adore Randall the family man.

"Mom I can't find my soccer boots." He doesn't knock when he enters my room nor does he greet.

"Hey what did I say about knocking?" He's standing in the doorway smiling up at me why

am I falling for his charms? R.J is his father's child.

"Sorry mom." He murmurs below a whisper and tramples in barefooted he throws himself on my bed which is something I have warned him about.

"What is it R.J?" I have to abandon my things just to accommodate him.

The little boy sits up Indian style and pats the empty space beside him. I can't entertain him I'm late for work. So I scold him with a single glare that has him puckering his lips.

"I can't find my soccer boots mom" this child is forever losing his things what am I going to do with him? Sighing in frustration I decide to give him my full attention. It's a good thing I'm ready for work R.J can be a very big distraction.

"You're kidding me right?" Lord this child. What he's wearing drains all the strength in me and he has the audacity to shrug his shoulders as if he's oblivious to what I'm observing. "R.J you're not even dressed for practice yet?"

“I can’t find my boots” he’s lying we go through the same thing every Friday afternoon where R.J hides his soccer boots and I spend an hour looking for them. I don’t know why Randall had him take up soccer the boy clearly hates it.

“Why don’t you quit?” I have suggested this before and he plainly declined I don’t know what he wants.

“I don’t want to” this is what I’m talking about. He won’t quit yet he hides his shoes.

“R.J mom needs to be at work before 5pm. Please work with me baby. Get your shoes so I can drop you off.”

“My tummy hurts can I skip practise today?” His hand suddenly finds a possible pain on his stomach honestly I do not have time for this.

“Fine I have work. Chioma will take care of you.” The boy regards me with cartoon eyes a desperate look of some sort.

“Please stay with me mommy.” He pleads flapping his eyelashes. Mommy? This child is nine the only time he calls me mommy is when he wants something.

“You know I can’t miss work” I tell him grab my handbag and get ready to head out but R.J scampers off the bed and blocks my path. He is looking up at me with his Bambi eyes.

“Please” he sings and for the life of me I am tempted to stay.

“I’ll be home before dinner I promise.” This should make him smile and he grins like a Cheshire cat.

“Yes!” The boy rejoices throwing a fist in the air. “I’ll tell Liya you’re joining us for dinner.”

With this announcement he pounces out of the room in excitement. I thought he wasn’t feeling well Randall has to talk to him regarding this soccer thing. I don’t want my son doing things he doesn’t like.

Now I have to go to work and pretend to be sick so they send me home.

RANDALL-

Randall faintly smiles at his son running to him he almost bumps into the coffee table but

manages to dodge it and jumps on the couch with his feet. He would chastise him but he's too eager to find out what Amara said. The smile on the boy's face could only mean one thing... mission accomplished.

"And?" A curious Randall asks the young prince who jumps on his lap and suffocates him with a hug he can't help but chuckle at R.J's cuteness.

"It worked dad it worked. Mom will be home for dinner." R.J happily announces he pulls back from the hug and looks up at his father. Worry splashes in his eyes his small hands start drawing circles around his father's eyes. The sudden contact is random hence the inquisitive look on Randall's face.

"What is it Kwame?" Of course dad has grown curious.

"Liya told me what these circles mean dad you haven't been sleeping. Are you and mom still fighting? I heard you guys arguing the other day."

“The last time I checked you were nine not sixteen.” It bothers Randall that his kids are growing up given a chance to make a wish he would freeze time for an eternity. That night he fought with Amara he went to his son’s room. Watching him sleep Randall decided that he would fight for his family even if it meant not respecting Amara’s wishes. Leaving the house is the same as giving up on his marriage and kids and that’s something he’d never do.

“Liya teaches me a lot of things she’s also been teaching me self-defence.” He jumps off his father’s lap and starts practicing random kicks careful not to knock off objects in the lounge.

“Look how high I can kick dad.”

Randall chortles at the sight he grabs his son by the waist and sits him back on his lap.

“Why is your sister teaching you self-defence? Is everything okay Kwame?” R.J drops his head and falls into a series of thoughts it’s not a secret that the child has something in his mind.

“Nothing is wrong dad” his answer has his father furrowing his already puckered brow he senses something and there’s an urge to push

the conversation further. He decides otherwise knowing R.J will tell him when he's ready.

"Hey!" At this Randall cups Kwame's face. The little boy timidly looks up at him his innocent eyes make Randall's heart clip. He can't imagine anyone hurting his baby. "Who is there for you?"

"You dad."

"Who will always protect you?"

"You."

"Who loves you more than anything in this world?"

"You."

"Good." Randall finishes and pastes a soft kiss on his forehead the little boy's nose crumples up and he falls into giggles as he sends a hand to wipe the wetness away.

"Eww dad" he whines shying away from his father's loving gaze.

"I thought you'd be used to this by now."

Randall kisses him again and envelops him in his arms. The hug is tight R.J is not complaining moreover he loves it when his father babies him.

“I love you Kwame.” Randall proclaims tightening the hug and loving the giggles emanating from the little boy.

“I love you too Uze.” R.J adds a tease and earns himself a scolding stare from his father. “I mean dad I love you more dad.”

The boy’s wide grin melts his father’s heart.

ZITHA-

“So what does this mean? Is my girl still a virgin or Mkhize broke the glass?”

“I don’t know we didn’t go that far. Or maybe we should ask the ancestors since they know everything.” Liyana snorts.

When I called her she wasn’t in the mood to talk. She expressed how she feels embarrassed and has been avoiding that fool she calls a boyfriend for three days now.

“What were you thinking Liyana? I thought you said you’ll wait till you’ve figured out what they want from you.”

“Well...I thought since Zweli loves me they won't interfere.” Yeah right.

“Like they didn't interfere the number of times you two were making out? You should know better than to risk your life you're lucky they haven't put you in a comma.” Me and my big mouth I have probably given them an idea. “Oh no do you think they are listening? Liyana someone in the underground is taking notes.”

“Come on Zitha” she's laughing hopefully not at my stupidity. “I doubt that is possible I think they do those things because they want attention.”

“They want you to accept your gift babe.” I retort.

Isn't that the reason why the dead decide to invade our lives?

“I'm not ready they'll want me to wear beads and ancestral clothes. I will have to live for other people I'm not ready to give up my life just yet. I'm still young

Sponsored

I'm not ready to give up my life just yet. I'm still young can't they wait till I'm like fifty or something?" I almost laugh at Liyana's words. "What life are you talking about virgin Mary? Is it not you waiting for Saint Gabriel to come and tell you that you are with child."

"But Zweli and I have tried to do it many times and they interrupted us. I would be experienced if it were not for them." This girl is not getting me geez innocent girls can be a pain in the anal.

"That's boring Liya one man is not enough. But forget about that don't be me. I can do whatever I want you have a crazy father who will castrate any man who tries to stab your cake." I tell her the truth and nothing but...

"Papa is better grandpa is the problem. It's bad enough that he can see everything from wherever he is. Ancestors do not care about privacy they watch us like hawks." She grumbles.

"True babe they do as they please. When they roar you better listen. The calling does not go away it only gets louder. Maybe you should do

some kind of ritual to appease them.” I’m a genius I know. I hear Liyana sigh in defeat upon my suggestion.

“They won’t accept it this whole charade started when I was R.J’s age. They have waited for too long but it’s my life. I will live it as I please.” She sounds like a spoiled brat I should call her out on it.

“Yeah right you know that’s not how it works. You’re black babe don’t give them that model C attitude. They don’t understand that am I allowed to pity my friend? If it’s not your ancestors it’s your father acting like Chuck Norris. That man is a different kind of ancestor he’s got surveillance cameras on you.”

Mr. Okolie scares me sometimes I think he knows about Liyana’s relationship with Zwelethu. The last time I was at Liyana’s house he was glaring at me like I grew a pair of horns. I swear I almost told on Liyana I was ready to give him Zwelethu’s address cell number... his father’s name and where his grandparents are buried. And probably help him pick the murder

weapon boy when Mr. Okolie finds out about that relationship all hell will break loose.

“I can take care of papa don’t worry about him.”
Liyana.

My cousin charges into my room just before I could deliver a hefty comeback. Her nostrils flare as she eyes me like I’m covered in shit.

“Who is going to watch your mother when you’re busy gossiping on the phone?” Yoh this girl’s words are sour. She probably sucked lemons from her mother’s breast as a baby. I nod and gesture that she leaves. She walks out with a tongue click swaying her uneven hips.

“I have to go my mother needs me” we have been talking on the phone for too long.

“Okay I’ll call you in the morning.” I’m not happy about Liyana’s proposal.

“You and your morning calls don’t you need time to recharge after waking up maybe until 12pm?” I tell her to have her laugh at my question.

“I’ll text you then” sounds better that way I will take my time to respond. “Kiss your mother for me.”

“I am not doing that” I dispute maybe they do it in Ghana not here. We shake our parent’s hands or greet while standing five feet away from them.

My mother is sick no one knows what’s wrong with her not even doctors. It was a sudden sickness it began with her crying of painful joints. One day she woke up and couldn’t move her body gave up on her. Doctors gave up on her two years later she is still bedridden. I have to feed her and clean her. We live with my aunt and her daughter Sizakele in Orange Farm. Aunt is a nurse she works night shifts most of the time. Sizakele is two years younger than me we are not really best of friends we butt heads a lot like my mom and aunt used to before she fell ill. I’d like to think they are still at daggers drawn because despite being a qualified nurse aunt refuses to touch my mother. She claims that she’s forever tired even on her off days.

I bid my friend goodbye after she reminds me about her parent’s anniversary party Liyana is throwing the don of all parties for her parents.

Her words not mine. She says it's going to be the biggest party ever thrown amongst the elites. Where there are beverages I am there and nope I am not talking about Oros.

I met Liyana during the second semester in Varsity we've been friends ever since. When I was in primary school I was accelerated for two years. The joys of skipping two grades because you're too smart for your peers... I have lived hey...

Seriously I have to slaughter a goat for my ancestors just to thank them for giving me brains. Maybe go to church for two Sundays to thank God as well. Christmas and Easter will do. What more will they want from me I would've completed my task in life.

I graduated with a degree in Marketing although I wanted to further my studies money became an issue but mostly my mother needed me. I'm a nineteen year old unemployed young South African.

I head to my mother's bedroom the house has four bedrooms. It's an RDP house belongs to

my aunt. She renovated it four years ago we've been living with her for as long as I can remember. I have hated it here my whole life Varsity was my sweet escape.

My mother's eyes meet mine as I walk into her bedroom she would smile at me if she were not a vegetable.

"Mama." I kiss her cheek to realise that her skin is cold. There's an extra blanket in the wardrobe I use it to drape her body. My mother can't speak she can only hum. It pains me to see her in this state if only my father didn't decide to die maybe things would be different. The man chose the wrong time to die before I was born. Maybe the thought of meeting me killed him... what other conclusion should I come up with? No one wants to tell me how the man left this earth and I've never seen pictures of him.

My mother would have gotten proper medical help if he were alive. When you're not privileged society turns its back on you.

My dream is to work hard make something of myself and help this woman. When she is better I will give her everything she wants. I will spoil her... Isn't that what everyone wants for their parents? To live lavishly without any worries.

As I lay down beside my mother Sizakele walks in. The look on her face says she is here to complain.

"I'm hungry" she spits as if I keep food in my room.

"So?" She should not try me tonight I might just bark and bite her.

"You haven't cooked Zitha what am I supposed to eat?" This girl is tickling me in all the wrong places.

"If you're lazy to cook drink water and go to bed." This is what I have to live with since my mother's predicament. "Or should we call Gordon Ramsey? He'll cook for you while serving you with a bunch of curse words isn't that what you like Kele?" She frowns at my remark I am just about ready to punch her flat nose. I would have told her shit but my mother can hear everything. Out of respect for this

once Shembe freak I have to act like a lady. But my thoughts are a childish boy's thoughts.

"I will tell mama about this we'll see if you'll still have that big mouth of yours. Ugly bitch."

Sizakele throws insults I can take them. I mean she can do better. I want to tell her that the ugly bitch is her mother I'll keep that for later. Right now I need to think of a way to make her pay for her dirty mouth.

Forgive me Lord for I am about to sin.

Chapter 5

AMARA-

Here I am keeping the promise I made to my son. I didn't think my husband would be joining us at the dinner table he knows I don't want him anywhere near me. This must be a game to him Randall is not taking me seriously. He's been throwing glances at me eyes filled with nothing but adoration. Pity I'm not that naïve Amara

anymore who melts just from mere sweet nothings.

“May I please be excused?” Liyana asks with a strained voice. She looks a bit pale and wacked.

“Are you okay baby?” She nods at my question and drops her fork in her plate emanating a sigh that displays fatigue. Her eyes are on the barely touched food before her.

“I’m just tired” her response gets Randall’s full attention.

“How are you tired? You’re a child who spends most of her time on the phone surely that cannot tire you Liya. When do you get time to study?” Lord this man... I was hoping he wouldn’t say anything upsetting.

“Randall” I quietly reprimand him he cannot be doing this now. His eyes briefly run to me he doesn’t care really he’s so bent on chiding the child.

“You failed your first year Liyana plus two semesters this year. I’m basically throwing money down the drain.” His voice doesn’t rise it

never does when addressing the kids. But the soft tone he uses is enough to scare them.

Liyana's eyes snap to me there's an emotional expression lain on her face and her brows are knitted together. She wants me to intervene however disputing with Randall over this in front of the kids would be wrong.

"That wasn't on me papa you know how hard I studied."

"Clearly you didn't work hard enough I've been lenient with you let you do whatever you want. It's enough you need to take your work seriously Liyana. How will you have a future without an education? Your mother and I are not always going to be here."

"You're not listening to me" her voice crashes as she blinks away tears pooling into her red eyes. I've noticed how she hasn't been herself lately but I've been too caught up in my own troubles to give her any attention.

"Liya are you sure you're okay?" I ask her again and she gives me two assuring nods.

"May I please be excused?" Her voice is stern this time reminding me whose child she is.

“Go ahead baby.” I excuse her and Randall shoots daggers at me. I’m over it... Liyana grabs her plate and heads out of the dining room.

“You didn’t have to say that to her you of all people know how hard she’s been working.” This is me letting him know how bothered I am by his careless words.

“I also know how she’s been failing” he pauses as his eyes find his son across the table. R.J is only bothered with the food on his plate. “If she fails again this year I won’t sponsor her studies. I will cut off her allowance she will have to get a job.”

That is something I will not allow he’s crazy this one and I am not going to justify his absurdity with an answer.

He is busy conversing with R.J when his phone beside me lights up displaying a text message from a certain Caroline. My eyes run to him to find that he is oblivious to the text curiosity knocks and my insecurities let it in. I quickly

read the text while it's still on home screen display.

WE HAVE TO TALK...

My heart violently thumps as pain tides through my veins. Who the hell is Caroline and what is this message about?

I see in my outer view that Randall saw me reading his texts his clearing of a throat startles me a bit but I compose myself and act like I did nothing. He snatches his phone as I start playing with my food and replies to the text before placing the phone on the other side where I can't reach.

Could that be his side chick? My mind is not at rest I can't afford to stress again. It will affect my work my personal health as well and that is something that means a lot to me.

For years I thought Randall was different from other men Lord knows I was convinced he was my Romeo. All men are the same; women have sang this song for decades and I guess it is true.

From a prince to a troll that's what he has become in my eyes. It is stupid of me to let him stay however he is right about R.J.

My baby would crumble if his parents were to break up Liyana is a big girl now. I believe she can handle anything if I decide that we go our separate ways then maybe she will understand.

“Amara!” I hear a whisper that pulls me out of my muddled mind I turn to see Randall worriedly staring at me. His face is too close that it has me wanting to pull back but R.J is watching. “Are you okay?”

Hell I am not okay the nerve to ask me this after what just happened. I know most of Randall's friends his circle of friends is not big at all and one thing I know about my husband is that he doesn't befriend women. How he fell into this one's trap is a mystery.

I push my chair back and stand “are you done?” I ask while grabbing his half empty plate and toddle to the kitchen without waiting for a response. I leave the plates in the sink and

head to my room my body is numb. I'm insensate to any feelings for days I have been walking around with a heavy heart. There is no way that I will ever forgive Randall for what he did to me.

A shower should help me calm down it usually does. There is a knock on my door just upon my departure from the bathroom thinking it is Randall I ignore it. He is the last person I want to see right now.

"Mom open the door" R.J demands from the other side of the door.

"I'm coming baby" I cover myself up with a gown R.J's innocent face puts a subtle smile on my face the second I open the door.

"Why did you lock?" Listen to this unemployed nine year old tenant.

"Who are you? My husband?" He grins at my question.

"I am your son who is way more important than your husband" with this declaration R.J reveals a plate of cheesecake and holds it to me.

"Dad's idea" he grins.

“I am not hungry baby.” Randall is trying to soften me up with desert that man is a lost course.

“You know he won’t like it when I go back with this?” R.J flaps his eyes pleading that I accept the food. “Don’t finish the cake Kwame save some for your mother. You know that’s her favourite.” He mimics his father’s voice throwing me into a fit of laughter.

“Fine I’ll take it. Thank you.” My appetite depleted when I saw that text message either way I take the plate.

“Do you want milk with that?” My son and I turn at the sound of Randall’s voice to find him standing with a glass of milk in his hand. “You like your cake with milk remember?”

“Go find Chioma and ask her to prepare your bath.” I excuse R.J not wanting him to witness the coldness I feel towards his father. With a pout on his lips he marches away and the moment he’s out of sight I turn back into the room and shut the door.

“Amara!” Randall painfully calls. “At least talk to me let me explain.”

He wants to explain? This better be good I want to hear his explanation so I open the door. He’s standing right at the doorstep looking down at me. Damn him for that unreadable expression on his face

Sponsored

looking down at me. Damn him for that unreadable expression on his face can’t he let me in just this once?

“Are you going to tell me who Caroline is and what that text was about?” He’s biting his bottom lip while I wait for an answer.

“Is it her?” A question leaves my mouth when I feel like I have waited a lifetime his answer is taking too long to come and I am losing my patience.

“I love you Amara. I don’t want to lose you please.” What the hell?

“Is that all you’re going to say to me Randall?” I’m snappy yes he’s getting on my bloody nerves.

“I’m trying to protect you.”

“Protect me from what? I don’t need a hero Randall I’m not that girl you rescued anymore. I can take care of myself.” I’m so angry he lies to me and cries hero.

“So many things have happened Amara I wish I could explain it all to you but...”

“But you’re protecting me right?” This man must think I’m a fool gosh searching his eyes is giving me a terrible headache. He intends to hide it all from me.

“I love you.” his hand touches mine I snatch it back before he could intertwine our fingers together. I shake my head and take two steps back.

“Stop saying that stop telling me you love me.”

“It’s all I know Amara” He gets into my personal space. “It’s the only truth I know.” His large hands cup my face as he declares his love he leans down and presses his forehead on mine. I know he loves me I believe he does. But love is not always enough. What about trust? What about loyalty? This is the same man who has told me time and time again that he hates lies

yet here he stands before me unable to tell me the truth.

There is an urge to pull away from his touch pain flashes in his eyes when I do he doesn't want to let go. But I can't do this anymore being in his presence aggravates me.

“Give me time I promise I will fix this.” He sounds and looks desperate I'm done with his empty promises. As if he can sense my stream of thoughts Randall frowns at me and for a moment his eyes are glued on mine. He puts his hand out gesturing I take it I'm too upset to let him touch me again.

“Remember when I told you that if you cheat on me I will leave you? I wasn't kidding Randall when the time is right I will tell the kids everything. We're not going to leave this house but you will.”

The proclamation comes as a shock to him I turn back inside the bedroom and close the door on his face.

Honestly I feel nothing. I can't make out if he is genuine or not if his words are true or not. The worry in his eyes the concern in his voice and how he effortlessly takes care of me as it's a norm for him. Having him close to me will only make me more angry. I can't stand the sight of him right now and it saddens me that I can't get away from him.

RANDALL-

Randall pushes back a flinch when Amara shuts the door on his face. If he could tell her what is really going on he would. He had promised to be a good husband he didn't promise her perfection. Perhaps Amara expected too much from him that she is failing to look past his flaws. He thinks of knocking but that will only aggravate her more. Going to bed and sleeping it off would be best. As he turns his eyes find his son standing in the corridor. Shoulders slumped head slightly dropped and tears streaming down his face.

“Kwame!” The name is covered in shock he’s praying he didn’t hear anything that was said between him and Amara.

“Are you two getting...” he struggles to finish the question. It can’t be true that his parents are separating what will become of him and his sister if that ever happens?

“No” Randall catches on and interjects him straightaway he can’t have his son think that. He marches to him and quickly scoops him in his arms. R.J does not hold him back when he embraces him instead he stiffens his body. The boy shuts down when upset or hurt and this is what’s happening. “Your mother and I will never be apart I promise.”

This he knows for sure and no one can tell him otherwise.

“Let me take you to bed.” He says and trolls to his room R.J has not said much. He doesn’t plan to say anything his heart is broken beyond and his parents are the culprits.

ZITHA-

“Mama come home please.” Cries a seventeen year old over the phone her half naked body is soaked in sweat and curled like a ball on the tiled floor. These are the effects of eating food that is not prepared by you I decided to play the maid she wanted me to be and prepared a very special meal for my dear cousin. For the past thirty minutes she was camped in the toilet having a meeting with mother-nature. She should be glad I didn’t put rat poison.

“I don’t know mama my stomach hurts.”

Sizakele continues to cry while I’m laid back on the couch catching up on the River. I should stop watching this show I’m starting to think like Lindiwe.

Sizakele must have run out of airtime the phone is slightly tossed to the side. If she were rich she would’ve smashed it against the wall... you know soft life.

She is rolling on the floor now too dramatic if you ask me girl is so stupid she hasn't put the puzzles together as to why she has a runny stomach.

"Please keep it down I'm watching TV." I'm enjoying this next time she pisses me off I will make her kiss my ass.

"Shut up!" She screams.

I think I didn't add enough how is she able to yell? To piss her off any further I open the windows and door as late as it is. She gives me a foreign look.

"Don't look at me like that I can't breathe lethal gasses." I tell her as I cover my mouth and nose. Sizakele is one angry girl right now. Wait till I tell Liyana about this let me take a video for evidence.

"What are you doing?" She questions my reason for aiming a phone at her.

"Smile cuzzy you're on camera." I have to clench my teeth to stop myself from laughing this is funnier than I had imagined. Tomorrow I

won't be laughing though. My aunt is going to deal with me but heck I only live once.

“Zitha stop you did this to me.” Oops! “What did you put in my food?”

“Don't be stupid Kele we ate the same food. I was sitting right next to you it must be something you ate earlier.” Listen to me I can convince Jacob Zuma into giving me his Nkandla homestead.

“I'm going to bed please close the windows and lock the door when you're done. Enjoy your time with mother nature.” She groans at the sound of my announcement.

Mess with me again and I will do this once more and block the toilet.

Chapter 6

AMARA-

What normal person calls at this time of the night? I should know better than to sleep with

my phone not on silent mode. I stir on the bed a couple of times in hopes whoever is calling would stop. Seconds go by and I have counted two missed calls it rings again I want to scream.

I'm so used to having Randall sleep beside me that I pat his side of the bed with my eyes closed so I can ask him to answer the phone. The emptiness instantly reminds me that he hasn't slept in our room in days. I flick my eyes open and blink away the murkiness blinding my vision to meet a darkened space the blaring phone is right on top of his pillow and the caller ID just puts me in a gloomy mood.

What does Uncle Jonas want now? He usually calls when something has gone wrong or there's a family meeting.

"Hello" my salutation is glazed with boredom.

Why call me at this time?

"Give the phone to your husband" no greeting whatsoever.

Randall is sleeping in the guestroom but of course I can't tell him that.

“He’s sleeping malume” I tell him.

“Wake him up” I don’t think I like the tone of his voice. Something is up.

“What happened malume? Is everything okay?” I wasted my breath this uncle won’t tell me anything. Jonas is too old school patriarchy becomes him.

“Amara you know I don’t mind driving over there at this time.” He says in a chastising tone. I believe this is a threat either way I have to run to the guestroom.

I tell him to hold my feet are slightly wobbly as I scurry to Randall’s current room I knock twice and the door slides open. His eyes widen a little when he sees me and fall back to normality in seconds my presence is shocking to him.

“It’s uncle-Jonas.” Hesitantly he takes the phone as I hold it to him. His eyes are filled with questions I don’t have answers to. So I shrug my shoulders and cross my arms.

Randall hardly has the phone on his ear a jiffy before he gradually hands it back to me this dark skinned man ladies and gentleman has suddenly become pale. He is staring at me as if

an alien stands before him I'm waiting here stunned as to why he didn't say a word to my uncle.

"Did he drop the call on you?" I might as well ask or we'll stand here till morning.

"He wants us at the house first thing in the morning" is his chest heaving? Trust my uncle to terrify the likes of Randall I'm not okay with this. He's still my husband and sure the sight does not sit well with me.

"You hardly held the phone against your ear how..."

"Your uncle can be a dictator when he wants to his exact words were 'I WANT YOU IN EVERTON FIRST THING IN THE MORNING' and hung up." Randall says.

Ordering people around is uncle Jonas' favourite thing to do.

"Did he say anything else?" I need to know so I can sleep like a baby.

He shakes his head crosses his arms on his chest. The eye contact is too intense almost intimate that my body yearns to be in his arms. A voice at the back of my head urges me to ask

him to come to bed with me it is what I want. Him close to me and never far. What good will come out of that though? I will wake up in the morning with no answers and a broken confused heart.

“I’m going to bed” my eyes blink to avoid his sensual stare. “Good night.” My last words to him as I take a step back and tiptoe my way back to my bedroom.

‘You’re not Amara when you come to our home but Mashenge. So I expect you to dress accordingly not tight dresses or those pants you’re fond of. Wear a head wrap and cover your scrawny shoulders. You’re a wife act like one. Don’t shame the Buthelezi clan please.’

That’s the message I woke up to this morning and that time she’s a Buthelezi by marriage. Aunt Petunia knows how to ruin one’s day. It’s the scrawny shoulders that got to me and the implication that I’m a skimpy dresser. Okay it’s not undisclosed that I prefer pants over

dresses. However the anger infested in that text message was redundant.

“You know why we are here right?” I might have an idea he looks as nervous as I am. We’re parked outside the gate in Everton this is where I grew up where my childhood was taken from me. I’ve been here a couple of times over the years to visit my aunt and uncle it doesn’t scare me as much as it did before.

“Maybe” I answer browsing the outside. However I can feel his eyes on me... heavy probing and lingering.

“Amara...” His hand is on mine and that has me turning to him. There’s a look of desperation glazed in them he wants to grovel again. This is not the time uncle Jonas has most likely sensed that we are here and is on his way out. I hear the gate open and quickly claim my hand back. Thank God I did my aunt would call this an atrocity. Her daughter and son in-law holding hands is something that should be done in the bedroom.

She smiles and waves as our eyes meet I hear Randall release a sigh undoubtedly aggravated. He hates being summoned by my family he says uncle Jonas is too nosy. I know my aunt to be forward and her opening my door proves it. "Mashenge." I was always Amara to her until Randall put a ring on it she takes my marriage too seriously.

It could be that I'm married to royalty aunt is as rural as they come. She and uncle Mhambi lived in Pongola all their lives until nine years ago when my kidnapping saga began.

I'm greeted with a reprimanding glare while Randall gets a handshake mixed with a smile. All thirty two teeth out I try to converse with her as she ushers us towards the house. My efforts are tossed away when she acts like I'm not here.

There is absolutely no need to use the front door we could have entered through the kitchen. It would have given us time to breathe before meeting these six eyes stabbing us. The two brothers Jonas and Mhambi are seated on a two seater and I am dazed by Maphikelela's

attendance. He's their cousin from their father's side. Looks more like uncle Jonas skeletal and naturally rude.

No one can ever take him seriously with that bright yellow Skhothane two piece that's plastered with Sponge Bob's face. He's complimented the outfit with orange Carvela shoes and an orange cap. In point of fact this is his life. Spends money he doesn't work for on expensive clothing. Has someone told him how he looks like a clown in that outfit?

Randall sends his greetings as he settles down on a couch Jonas and Maphikelela nod in return. Only uncle Mhambi is human enough to ask about his wellbeing. The two engage in a short conversation about work and life nothing serious.

I'm perched up next to Randall waiting for whatever this is to begin so we can go home. This is not how my Saturday should be going as I listen to Randall and Mhambi's miniscule conversation I feel heavy eyes on me. They force me to lift my gaze and turn to my left my heart twitches when I meet my aunt's

judgemental stare. Why is she sitting next to me? There are enough seats in here.

“Are you going to sit and not serve your husband something to drink?” Am I not a guest as well? She’s burning holes into my forehead looking at me the way she looks at a live chicken before she slaughters it.

Turning to Randall I clash with his furrowed brows eyes mysterious. His forehead is boiling forming dribbles of sweat. Good I’m not the only nervous one here.

“Mashenge” she pinches my thigh and that gets me on my feet. I scuttle to the kitchen without giving Randall a once over. Jonas and Maphikelela look ready to chow him I hope they grill some sense into that big head of his... grill him until his cagey eyes give out every little secret he’s holding in.

“Is this what has become of you mntaka Vusamazulu?” I pivot on my heel with a wet cloth in hand to find her standing in the doorway looking blankly inscrutable. Searching her eyes

is pointless because there is nothing except the raised brows that paint me with displeasure. “Aunty?” I’m confused honestly maybe I’m not. I might have a clue as to what she’s on about somebody snitched on me and Randall. Not that I wasn’t going to tell them I needed time and the story would have sounded better coming from me. I was going to paint Randall with all shades of gold and not taint his image in their eyes. He’s still the father of their grandson.

“Nywanti nywanti.” She sputters.

No one prepared me for the ambush that’s coming her lips curl in disgust while sneering at me.

“Tell me Amara. How does it feel to walk around without your wedding ring on?” Ah! There it is... She’s spitting fire making me feel like I’m the evil queen of the housewives of Johannesburg. Her eyes should pierce my left hand right about now... she’s still staring sweeping my figure with her fiery glare. I hide my hand with the dish cloth why am I feeling shameful? Randall is at fault not me. I don’t

have a riposte for her so I stand ground leaning against the kitchen counter and wait for her to hit me with her best shot.

“Finish up here and come to the lounge” her voice is sharp she’s gone before I can answer. Jerrr... it’s too early to be snappy.

I should be able to hear the conversation from here

Sponsored

she’s gone before I can answer. Jerrr... it’s too early to be snappy.

I should be able to hear the conversation from here but all that’s brushing through my ears are mumbles and laughter. Randall is laughing as well way to go uncle Jonas... However I’m most certain it’s as fake as Maphikelela’s gold tooth. Randall doesn’t drink tea a glass of water should be good but Petunia will definitely slit my throat. She is back minded that aunt believes in treating a husband like a god.

Too many eyes are looking at me when I enter the lounge did they think I’d cook a feast? This

tea will do just fine it has milk and that's better than nothing.

“All I'm saying is my sister should not have married outside the country. Living in Joburg was a bad idea to begin with it's infested with foreigners. There was nothing wrong with Pongola.” Oh it seems the meeting began while I was in the kitchen. Firstly I am not his sister. He thinks he can call me that because we are two years apart him being older. As for that toothpick sticking between the seams of his lips. Argh! Maphikelela is a joke and a half.

“I don't understand why you're here Maphikelela” I twitter positioning myself next to my aunt my life has nothing to do with him. The same man he's looking down on is the one who helped him when he was down and out... you help a stranded lion and it eats you once you have set it free.

“Why are you here Mashenge? Your husband is the only one that was summoned this matter should be discussed amongst men not women.” He says using his tongue to twist the disgusting toothpick in his mouth.

“Oh please you’re a boy not a man.” I will not let this kid stand on my head the bastard doesn’t know anything except stocking boxes of Ultra Mel.

“You see uncle this is what I’m talking about. OMashenge are not this disrespectful we don’t nurture impudence in this family. This arrogance comes from somewhere” an unfilled smile and it’s directed towards Randall. And Randall... well he’s lofty. He hasn’t said much and that’s out of respect for these men. He’s acting normal when in all fact this is an ambush. He should have been warned that there would be three men against one and let him bring his plus one. Wait till his brother hears about this...

“Maphikelela...” I almost jump to my feet his name sizzling out of my mouth. A hand pulls me back down. It’s my aunt her eyes are narrowed reproaching me as if I am a child. This fool they call a cousin is practising his xenophobic shit on Randall I won’t allow that.

“Shut up Amara” she hisses beneath her garlic breath. “This all your fault why is your husband the only one wearing his wedding ring?”

Great! Might as well call Moja Love and put me on one of their shows.

“That is beside the point Petunia” uncle Jonas chirps in his voice lifting a little. “Amara is a child what does she know? She was by a hair's breadth into the outside world and this man tied her down before the wind could touch her. I was against her getting married young I knew what I was talking about. Now look at the results.”

“I agree with Jonas” Maphikelela does a two-step into the conversation. “I support this divorce” he says.

Irritation drapes every edge of my skin making me want to lash out on him. Randall is calm too calm for a person who hates being trampled on.

“What divorce?” That’s Randall my aunt clears her throat and joins her hands together. The motion shows reverence which is so typical of her. A husband is a deity you don’t question nor

argue with him. This is the mantra she lives by meditates on it like bible verses.

“Kwame called me last night the boy could not speak due to tears.” My aunt introduces Randall and I exchange dazed glances. This was not meant to be out there yet especially here. My family is crazy if that is even the right word to use.

“I don’t know what Kwame told you but my wife and I are not getting a divorce.” Randall again there is sincerity in his voice. He’s looking right at me and his eyes tell me he means what he’s saying.

“That is not what we heard.” Uncle Jonas a twinge of arrogance in his voice.

I know Mhambi will not be budding in unless needed to. He’s the angel of the family the quiet one who prefers to raise the flag than wage war.

“With all due respect gentlemen” Randall starts and I am afraid of what might come out of his mouth. He shifts on the chair eyes roaming about between Jonas and Maphikelela. He

gives the yellow two piece- wearing guy a warning look and looks at my uncle again. “My squabbles with my wife have nothing to do with you will I be summoned each time we engage in conflict? I do not run a circus but a customary household like most of you here.” Randall.

“Are you saying the boy lied?” Jonas questions voice unpleasant.

“That is exactly what I am saying sir Kwame is a child. He probably eavesdropped on a misinterpretation between his mother and me and came to his own conclusions.” Wow! He sounds convincing.

“Okay” Jonas nods doubtfully. “Tell us then why your bride is not wearing her wedding ring?”

One more question... How did I forget to put my wedding ring on knowing we were coming here? Everyone looks at Randall for an answer and get nothing only I can answer that.

“I took it for cleaning malume” my tongue does not even falter when I spew lies. I get an endearing look from Randall he’s a jerk. However he is still the man I have always loved and I will not kick him while he’s down. The

couple Petunia and Mhambi are persuaded it's Mordecai and Rigby who need further convincing. While Maphikelela is giving my husband dirty looks Jonas shakes his head in disapproval before he stands to leave the room. His doppelganger follows him bouncing with each step he takes.

“I think we are done here” uncle Mhambi says. Why did his brother feel a need to meddle in to begin with? Aunt Petunia could have come to me privately and I would have dished her with a bunch of lies I bet my bed in hell is getting bigger with how I have just lied to my late father's brothers.

“My son” she's referring to Randall by the way. “Forgive us for wasting your time we know you are a busy man.”

“It's okay aunt I understand your concerns. Amara is your daughter and it's normal for you to want the best for her I assure you that our marriage is not on the rocks.” He looks me in the eye from across the coffee table and continues “Till death do us part right Amara?”

The tone of his voice says he's not asking but telling me. A confirmation that he will never let me go and I have no say in it.

"Ah! That's good that's the way it should be."

Petunia adds.

Why is she giggling?

"If there is nothing more aunty we will take our leave." I'm in a hurry to get out of here I know she has a speech for me. Her smile fades when she looks at me.

"Go ahead and please behave Mashenge."

Hehehe! This woman does not know anything.

"This marriage is not only about you but your children as well respect your husband."

I have done nothing but respect him. I'm exhausted hence I settle for a head nod. We are excused we send our goodbyes and head out of the house.

My... I don't if he's a cousin-uncle or uncle-cousin... whatever he is is standing at the gate. He smiles upon seeing us looking way different from the arrogant bastard who had a smart mouth inside the house.

“My in law how about a hundred rand there?”
Maphikelela extends an open hand towards
Randall. Seriously? I am not staying for this I
leave them conversing he’ll find me in the car.

Chapter 7

AMARA-

Nothing out of the ordinary has happened this morning it’s the usual silent daybreak. Randall is the first one up he’s currently in the shower. Yes I said first one up because he moved back into our bedroom the day we were ambushed by my family and the ring is back where it belongs.

We haven’t been talking much to begin with lately so the silence is nothing to be stressed about. Randall is a man of very few words but our mornings were usually filled with light conversations.

Now we barely maintain a lengthy one I know he has things to say to me I see it when he looks at me. It's as if the tip of his tongue falls numb the second his mind conveys something to his mouth.

“How sure are you that those pictures are legit?” I didn't expect a call from my friend so early in the morning. She claims she called to wish me a happy anniversary that's when I told her what had happened.

“Are you taking his side Ayize?” I know her like the back of my hand Ayize has been cheering for Randall from the day she set her eyes on him. In her eyes Randall can do no wrong she might catch him in bed with another woman and I bet you a million bucks she would claim that it is not him but his mirror image.

“I'm not taking sides Amara but I know you sis. Jumping into conclusion is what you do best besides being a wife.” The sound of her soft laughter tickles my ears from the other side of the line. “See what I did there?”

She's still laughing.

"You're a good wife Amara the best wife any bastard could ask for." In this case Randall is the bastard. "If Randy baby married me as well none of this would be happening." She concludes.

"Don't let Neo hear you say that" I give her a friendly warning.

Neo is her crazy husband the man freaks out about almost everything.

"Seriously Amara don't let eighty years go down the drain. Talk to Randall and sort this out."

"Eighty years?"

"Well that's how I plan for you guys to be married. If you two fail in this marriage thing then there is no hope for the rest of us." Ayize says.

This is what I'm afraid of people expect too much from us.

"What if it's true? What if he cheated on me? The thought of him touching another woman makes my skin crawl."

"What if it's not? This is the same as saying you don't want to give your life to Jesus because

heaven and hell are not real. What if you die and find that they are real?" Sometimes I forget that this once party animal is a pastor in the making. "Today is your anniversary talk to your husband. Kiss and make up have lots and lots of sex until you pass out."

"You're still as crazy as ever I thought Nigeria would have changed you by now." Ayize and her family decided to... no scratch that... her husband Neo wanted to tour Nigeria. The man has been obsessed with the country for as long as I can remember I'm surprised Ayize went with the idea. It's been three years and she says she loves it there.

"Yeyi stop that you little shits." She yells over the phone it must be her triplets fighting again. Did I say she's a pastor in the making? I lied...

"What happened now?" My lips are pursed as I fight against a laugh boy am I glad R.J is grown and no longer a pain in the arse.

"I have to go babe I'll call you tomorrow. Don't forget to have sex lots of it." Her statement

throws me into a fit of laughter. “Yeyi zinja. Come here.”

Oh my God only she can swear at her kids like that. The line goes dead before I could hear the rest of her cuss words.

“Let’s go out for breakfast” Randall says walking out of the bathroom his chiselled body draped in nothing but a towel that’s hanging low enough for me to see his v-cut abs.

“Breakfast?” The word seeps from my mouth in a shaky gasp.

“Yes me hemma.” (My queen.)

Lord stop this man he’s walking towards me and I am a trembling mess. My eyes are not disciplined as they lustfully stare at him like he’s a snack. I turn away from his structure and fiddle with the pillows on the bed he’s close behind me. His fresh scent is hovering in the room and Lord I am salivating. I miss my husband so much it hurts. I miss the way he smells I miss his obsession over me I miss being in his arms everything he is.

“Today is our anniversary” he mentions and I quickly turn in a way he hadn’t anticipated and

our eyes meet. His hand is on the small of my back I see him now not the blank page he likes to project.

“Are you okay?” He asks.

The corner of his mouth twitches into his cheek. That little rise in the corner of his mouth he’s probably oblivious to has my body shuddering almost in a violent manner.

“I was thinking we could spend some time with the kids Liyana has been feeling a little rejected.” This is a blatant lie from me she’s more jolly lately. I’m trying to avoid awkward moments between the two of us.

“Well your two brats have something planned for us.” He reveals only he would call his kids brats. I give up. His arms tighten around my waist as if letting go would kill him.

“Something planned?” How did I not know about this?

“A party I heard them talk about it last week. They think it’s a surprise.” That’s his explanation.

“And you just ruined it for me?” I grumble.

He really does not care now I will have to act surprised.

He's looking into my eyes I'm rendered weak whenever he looks into my eyes.

"Well I might have slipped when talking to R.J. They made me promise not to reveal anything to you rather I was given a task to keep you busy today." He mentions as his hand slides down to my butt and gives it a little tight squeeze I am extremely comfortable with this.

"What time does it start?" I ask giving in.

"6pm I think so we're staying away until that time. Spend the day with me you'll look at a few dresses go to a spar. Get your hair done these braids should start complaining by now." Lightly he pulls one of the strands just as I move out of his arms.

"Should I be offended?" Offense has already made a home in my heart. The smirk comes to play again however he looks serious too.

"You've had these braids since last Christmas Amara and that was what... seven months ago." He's teasing me.

"Well excuse me sir. These braids are new."

“Really? How old?” Why is he giving me that look as if I escaped from a mental hospital?
“Three months” and I am confident about my answer.

“Okay let me change. We need to deal with your 3-month-old braids.” He turns with a smile and heads to the closet leaving me in the company of hilarity and harmony.

LIYANA-

“Liya Liya wake up.” R.J screams in Liyana’s ear I would say it’s a norm however Liyana would have killed him on the first day he tried it.

“What is it Kwame?” She groans tossing and turning in bed as she struggles to open her eyes.

“Wake up Liya.” An impatient overexcited R.J yells once again shaking his big sister awake. He can’t wait to get the day started it’s the day they have been waiting for. Frustration brushes over Liyana it is enough for her to want to

smack the brat... her brother I mean. Her head almost splits into two as she sits up

“Liyana come on” he whines annoyingly bouncing on the bed his voice unaware of the splitting headache his sister is fighting.

“I’m awake

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Sponsored

his voice unaware of the splitting headache his sister is fighting.

“I’m awake stop shouting.” Liyana whisper-snaps while massaging her temples to get rid of the headache that is threatening to unite her with her great grandfather. Too soon she is not ready to meet that controlling old man.

“It’s mom and dad’s anniversary.” R.J excitedly exclaims his sister’s mind is far from his announcement and that compels her mind to fall into a confused state at first.

Think think Liyana. The world does not evolve around whatever you’re going through.

“Shit!” Her eyes finally pop open they widen at the boy who is holding a nervous expression on his face.

“It’s finally here.” The nine year old happily chirps his final remark pulls Liyana into a train of excitement.

Today is their parent’s anniversary planned by the two Okolie brats... The duo thought it would be nice to throw their parents a party.

“Are they home?” He shakes his head at her question.

“I saw them leave together a while ago dad’s got this.” He gives an answer.

“Have you had breakfast?” she asks brushing his head. He squirms at her touch and grins like he always does.

“I was waiting for you Liya” the thought of food makes the Liyana want to gag she hasn’t been able to properly eat anything since the stunt her ancestors pulled. If she could speak to them and ask them to stop she would. But those ones are like rain during summer they come when they feel like it. Sometimes Liyana is tempted to let her parents know about this but

where would she begin when she is not allowed to date?

Her heart is heavy she needs answers as to why her ancestors are punishing her.

“How about you go and have your food I’ll join you just now.” He nods and pounces out of the bedroom. Liyana’s thoughts begin to hover around Zwelethu if he is okay after what happened. It’s been more than a week and they haven’t spoken the plan to avoid him is working but hurting her also. When he found out about her unfortunate state he didn’t run. She thinks herself lucky to have him as a lover.

Her late great grandfather is usually the one who comes forth to relay messages on behalf of the ancestors he seems to be the one behind the wheel. And lately the old man has been awfully quiet. Must be nice in the land of the dead.

ZITHA-

My feet hurt and my head throbs I swear it feels like my veins will explode.

All this dressing up for what? I was stood up by a bloody old man. Grandpa-ugly of all people. Does that fool know how expensive an Uber is from Orange Farm to Sandton? The bastard knows I will come running again next time he calls and he was supposed to buy me a dress for the anniversary party. I had to use the last cents he gave me the last time I saw him and buy a reasonable dress at Mr. Price.

Tshilidzi Mulaudzi does this every time he thinks I'm a call girl he can push around when he wants to believe me when I say he was never like this. He was sweet at first I fell for his charms although he is old enough to have fathered me and I don't know how I looked past that. I guess he swept me off my feet with the way he cared for me.

His cautions and charisma changed when he had a taste of my body for the first time suddenly it became about him having me and ravishing my body whenever he wanted to. I wanted out but felt like I would lose the one thing that made me agree to date an old man

financial stability. The stress of taking care of a sick mother who can't move speak or feed herself and being unemployed would kill anyone young or old.

It's already dark outside when the taxi drops me off a few houses from my aunt's. The streets are packed as usual however walking in this nosey neighbourhood in heels and this short tight dress I have on is a bad idea. These people are looking at me like I was having illegal sex where I came from it would make a difference if I cared what they think about me.

I walk into the living area to find my aunt watching Rhythm City and Sizakele curled up with her feet on the couch glued to her phone. I am not even allowed to sit like that she would start shouting and calling my feet dirty. I remove my earphones to pick up the aroma of food just in case the music is blocking my nostrils. I don't smell anything. These people didn't cook? I hope they are not waiting for me to start with supper. I have a PHD in burning pap if they want to go bed hungry let them start with me.

“My people” I greet.

It's the ugly looks for me... my mind is suddenly planning evil things I feel like ruining someone's day.

“Has Suffocate slept with that woman yet? Can you believe he cheated on Puleng again? Men are trash aunty neh?”

There's that look I was waiting for she clicks her tongue and changes to 7de Laan. I know Afrikaans I will ruin this one for her as well.

I don't have time though there's a party waiting for me.

Whoever invented bathing was bored as hell for the life of me I hate taking baths. Five minutes should be enough for me so I time myself with a song. To look like a lady eight minutes is an adequate amount of time. Usually I moisturise my body and lotion in the bathroom it's quicker for me like this. The way to my room is through the living room I have to tiptoe my way there lest my aunt sees me. Good thing the TV is loud she misses my steps when I dash to my room while hiding behind the long couch.

A few more touch ups and I'm ready to head out on my way I pass my mother's room. She's sleeping I will see her when I get back. Now the part I've been dreading telling the aunt where I'm headed to.

"Aunty" she gives me a dirty look before leaning back on the couch clearly waiting for me to continue. I move closer to the door ready to walk out just in case she plans to stop me. "My friend invited me to her parent's anniversary party."

"Is it written fool on my forehead?" She scoffs clearly vexed.

My cousin finds her mother funny she's laughing like a donkey.

"You think I don't know that you're selling your body for money? That's why you're able to afford all these nice clothes. It baffles me really because with all this money your blessers are showering you with you are still ugly. The least you can do is put the money to use and fix your face." Her voice rises unnecessarily.

The only face I should be fixing is hers.

I have vitiligo it's a condition in which the pigment is lost from areas of the skin causing whitish patches. There's no cure for it it's a lifelong condition and no it's not contagious. Apparently that's not what my aunt and cousin think Sizakele won't let me touch her or wear her clothes. She says I'm cursed the stupidity in this place is real.

"I don't have a blessing aunty..." I will deny this for as long as I live.

"YEY VOETSEK WENA THULA." (Shut up) Haibo! Arguing with her is always a waste of time is it safe to tell her she's half past to her grave? Shouting like this is not good for her health nurse or not.

"Can we talk about this later? I have to go aunty I'm running late."

"Who's going to cook?" Is this an ask or an insult? Her already creased face creases into an ugly frown. My phone beeps the Uber is here.

"Don't cook then I'll bring leftovers. Take care of mama for me." I say and run out the door I hear her shouting out my name as I close the gate.

My aunt is not the one I need to revisit my prayer I asked for Madea not the wicked witch of Orange Farm.

*****©

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 8

AMARA-

The story of how I met Randall is long and unpleasant. It started with a kidnapping or human trafficking rather. My uncle Moses who sexually abused me from the time I was twelve sold me to him for a million rand. The exchange was done by Randall's closest friends Styles and Nkomo. I was kept in a room with no food or a toilet to relieve myself.

In a week Nkomo tried to force himself on me and for a reason I couldn't understand Randall lost his mind. He beat him to a pulp that's when things between us started to change he became overprotective and possessive. I could swear he lived for me and nothing else.

In time I saw Randall with different eyes. My heart started warming up to him I fell for the guy hook line and sinker.

That's when I found out that my uncle had actually pawned me to a taxi boss who was old enough to be my grandfather and the only way Randall could rescue me from him was by offering my greedy uncle money.

The road to marriage was not easy it was full of thorns. But we had each other and here we are nine years later celebrating our anniversary. I still remember the day I said I do it feels like it was just yesterday.

“Wow Amara.” My baby Liyana says standing behind me. Our eyes meet in the mirror reflection. “Papa is going to fall in love with you all over again when he sees you in this dress.” That is the plan a smile creeps upon my face. Now I'm more eager to see him he hand-picked the dress I'm wearing. Nothing fancy casino royal is the theme.

“Thank you my love”

Is it too soon to say I am happy?

“I can’t believe he ruined the surprise and told you about it” Liyana chimes bouncing her way to a chair close to the bed and lowers herself down.

“It’s my fault really” my big mouth sought attention and I ended up telling Liyana how excited I was about the party.

There’s a knock at the door he’s been doing that a lot lately maybe trying to check if I’m dressed. He still won’t make love to me although he’s making progress with the kisses. The signals Randall gives are that of someone who was sexually molested the thought has crossed my mind many times. Then again this is Randall Okolie we’re talking about. He’d kill anyone who dares to touch him.

“What do you think?” I ask him a smile dancing on my face. He’s standing in the doorway eyes sparkling. The last time he looked at me like this was the day I stood before him in my wedding dress. He pulls me into a quick tight hug. I hear him sniffing is he crying? He lets go

and looks into my eyes there is so sign that he shed any tears.

“I’m happy me hemma thank you for choosing me.” I would choose him over anything in this world that’s how much I love him.

“Okay okay. Let’s go before I die of diabetes.” Liyana yelps clapping her hands to gesture urgency.

He takes my hand and escorts me out of our bedroom I can hear noise as we approach the flight of stairs. The guests must be here.

“Where is your little brother?” My question finds Liyana who shrugs her shoulders annoyance daubed over her bored expression.

“Probably stuffing his face with sweets” she waves her hand making the matter trivial. “You guys go ahead everyone is waiting for you.”

We do as told and move down I’m still waiting for Randall to tell me how I look. He wants me to remind him like I do everything.

“So you don’t like the dress?” Yeah I’m getting upset. He looks at me as if I’m the most stupid person he’s ever met of course he won’t say but

his eyes convey a thousand emotions. I'm able to read a few when I'm lucky.

"I wouldn't have picked it if I didn't like it" an unbothered tone sashays out of his mouth. This is the right time to yank my hand back.

"But you haven't said anything about it." Calm down Amara and breathe.

"I did before we bought it. Don't you remember me hemma?" How do you say God in Akan? Maybe he will hear my prayer when I pray in the husband's language.

"The dress was draped on a mannequin not on me." No funny looks I want to complain about this matter or he will never learn. Seriously? He can't keep getting it wrong. His hand slides to the small of my back as we reach the bottom of the set of steps. Everybody gathered in the entrance hall smiles and applaud us I guess it's for surviving nine years in war. I find Randall beside me he's staring back. He leans in and whispers...

"You look better than the mannequin don't worry about it."

I am done spent and depleted. There's got to be classes where they teach men how to be romantic mine is a hopeless case.

The party commences I spot a few familiar faces and smile when obligatory. Randall won't let me out of his sight apart from the new found sensitivity he has become clingy. Although his touches are limited. He pulls me with him to every person we approach. The majority are business partners I need to have a talk with Liyana. How did she pull this off?

He moves in to deliver something to me as we close in on an old man elegantly dressed like most of them here.

"That's Tshilidzi Mulaudzi." He says.

This one looks more expensive than anyone we've spoken to Randall tells me he's a new investor in their company. His eyes are glued to me I'm getting uncomfortable and that smirk on his face is giving me weird vibes. Randall notices and pulls me closer to his side a sign of protection.

“Are you sure you’re ready to never look into your wife’s eyes again Mulaudzi?” Randall queries as soon as we’re within earshot voice void of humour.

He grimaces at the old man who doesn’t look intimidated at all instead laughs his heart out. Creepy if you ask me.

“Get your eyes off my wife” a warning from Randall.

“My apologies Okolie” the old man chortles. I don’t care about his apologies I’m still uncomfortable. There’s something creepy about him his eyes somehow remind me of uncle Moses. Men like him always have diabolical thoughts running through their heads. The conversation moves to business I shouldn’t be standing here.

Mulaudzi seems to spot someone in the crowd his eyes widen or I could be seeing things. Curious as ever my eyes follow his gaze. I don’t see anyone but Liyana and Zitha across the room. They are oblivious to the eyes scrutinising them. He excuses himself and

saunters towards them he better not be lusting over those kids.

“Happy anniversary you two” my attention is jerked away by an acquainted voice. That’s Styles and his wife Sethu I must have missed them earlier. They manoeuvre through the crowd to get to us Sethu as usual has this smile on her face. Her sister Ayize hates it she says people tend to take advantage of you when you look like a popeye. Her words not mine.

“Did you guys just get here?” I question them. It really doesn’t matter the most important thing is that they are here. Styles means the world to Randall and him being here is everything. Randall’s twin brother Nqabayomzi and his wife Thandiwe could not make it she is undergoing spiritual training in Swaziland. There seems to be a lot of spirits hanging around us... deep breaths...

“Sorry we’re late” Styles jumps in giving Randall a look I can’t puzzle together. I follow his eyes he’s looking at Sethu’s stomach or... belly?

“Oh my God are you pregnant?” I almost half-scream... this girl. What a way to shout ‘I’m pregnant’ anyone can spot it with that tight dress she’s wearing. Only now she squeals in excitement reminding me how bubbly she has become. Styles must be giving her something Sethu was me once upon a time... boring and dull with no life in her. Now she glows like she eats d!ck for breakfast.

“Wow you guys sure know how to keep a secret huh?” The thought runs to my mouth. I’m kind of hurt Ayize didn’t mention this to me unless she’s being kept in the dark as well. Sethu accepts my hug. “Congratulations.”

This is the second person I know who is expecting it makes me wonder if the universe is playing a trick on me my gaze unconsciously moves to Randall and find him staring back. Maybe he’s thinking the same thing.

“Thank you” Sethu articulates. “Sixteen weeks.”

She reveals before I could ask her smile widens as she rubs her small bump. My heart is

suddenly heavy no I'm not jealousy... I would know if I were.

“You know how we've been trying to have baby since Sihle was four? So we decided to try again and wanted to be sure and safe before breaking the news to everybody.” Styles enlightens placing his hand on Sethu's back. “I'm happy for you brother.” That's Randall the two shake hands.

I know what is running through his mind the two shake hands.

I know what is running through his mind there is nothing he wants more than to have another baby. As crazy as it sounds he wants a house full of kids.

Over the years he's randomly brought the topic up and it's not happening. I don't know why I am not conceiving if we didn't have R.J I would have cried infertile. When God wills it then we will have more kids.

When his father died he was set to take over as King of the Ashanti Kingdom back in Ghana. He's postponed it for way too long sometimes

his words make me believe that he has no plans on going back. That would be a mistake too risky his ancestors can be crazy when provoked. Maybe that's why they refuse to grant him his wish.

“When are you guys giving R.J a play mate? With Liyana grown he must be lonely.” Sethu just had to ask this man next to me is eyeing me probably waiting for an answer. He should ask his fossil grandfather not me.

“That's a personal question Sethu don't you think?” Thank you Styles.

ZITHA-

His hand is painfully clasped around my wrist his steps heavy with anger. He's stomping in the direction of the exit door dragging me with him to god-knows where. He's out of breath and rasping in between inhalations. Must be the excess fat I would think he eats more than he should. With the rate he's going he'll be a perfect candidate to represent a typical BEE. I

don't know what Tshilidzi does for a living just that he's into politics.

This party is a little crowded so no one is paying attention to this man manhandling me he grabs the front door open and I'm slammed against the wall the second we step outside.

"Ouch!" A cry jerks out of my mouth. "What the hell is wrong with you?"

He doesn't give me an answer but clutches my cheeks with his hands. I cannot understand the anger that's directed towards me.

"What are you doing here Zithobile? Are you following me?" Yeah right imagine. The only thing I would follow is his bank account.

"Why would I do that Tshili?"

"Then why are you here?" He grunts voice stern and unkind.

"My friend invited me it's her parents' party."

Why am I giving him an explanation?

"Don't lie to me Zithobile. Why the fuck are you here?" His teeth are gritted veins on his head throbbing in unsaid anger. His hand clutches around my neck pressing and depriving me of air. This is the first time that he's acting like this

with me my ancestors must be turning their backs on me.

“Let... go...” the desperate plea is forced.

“Are you trying to ruin me you b!tch?” This man sprays when he speaks spitting venom along with durable words. It’s getting hard to breathe and I’m losing my strength while trying to get his hands off me.

“Pl...ease.” This plea should work my brain is deprived of oxygen and that has my eyes burning with unshed tears. The bastard finally releases me and I hunker down coughing and winded. A hand grabs my hair forcing my face up. Oh God this is a devil in disguise. His words do nothing to me but his eyes are the scariest thing right now.

“Stay out of my way Zithobile or you’ll beat your mother to the grave.” He snorts and forces a sloppy kiss to my lips before pushing me. The force is strong enough to throw me to the ground... Look at that son of a bastard walking back into the house like he just completed his greatest task in life.

“You bastard I will deal with you one day.” He thinks he can treat me like trash and I’ll let it go? I need to clean up or Liyana will cause havoc when she finds out what happened.

AMARA-

Oh here comes Liyana prancing her way across the floor an enthusiastic expression resting on her face. A sigh of relief takes ownership over my lips Sethu has been talking about nothing but her pregnancy I need a break.

“Papa they want you to do a speech.” Liyana. She is more animated than any of us are I love to see the smile on her face. And then? Why is this one puckering a brow? You would think he has stage fright.

“What’s wrong?” I ask him failing to curb my twitters.

“I’m not doing that.” He’s whispering by the way Styles and the crew hear his complaint and fall out in laughter.

“Stage fright huh?” Styles teases and pats his shoulder. What am I saying? That’s not a pat

it's a punch. "The great Randall Okolie afraid of a little crowd."

"Shut up Styles I'm just not up for it and there's no need either." Randall sounds like a big baby hands dig into the pockets of his pants and I know they are not coming out anytime soon. This is him trying to intimidate us. It's going to be hard to persuade him. I will let his friends and daughter do the convincing I already have a hard time getting him to sing my praises.

"Come on it's your anniversary." Liyana hurdles in. "Right Amara?"

"Yeah I think you should do it." We might spend the entire night going back and forth so I take his hand and guide him to the crowded lounge where everyone is waiting.

He can't say no now that I've put him under the spotlight he glances at me and meets my smiling face. I also should teach him how to return a smile.

"Thank you all for coming" great start Randall.

"And my beautiful wife." He reaches out his hand to me and I take it. "Thank you for loving a

fool like me for the family we have built together. Liyana and Kwame.”

He brings my hand to his mouth and starts pasting lingering kisses on my knuckles. “All this means nothing without you Amara. Thank you for being my best friend and lover. Till this day I wake up in the morning and can’t believe that you’re really mine and you’re here with me. I want you to know that when you walk into a room I can’t see anyone but you and absolutely have no desire for any other woman because you’re the only one for me.”

He must have read this somewhere the Randall I know would never. An applause rings from the crowd followed by mumblings. I’m too engrossed on him to pay attention to what they are saying.

“Rand...”

“How can you make me love you more than I already do?” Oh! He’s not finished? “You’re so good to me I won’t trade you for anything else. I love you my queen.” This is what Beyonce must have meant when she said drunk in love I’m not

complaining I love this man. His hands wrap around me in a tight hug.

Randall doesn't give me a chance to breathe when we pull apart his lips smash against mine and we're suddenly locked into a steamy kiss. Till date I am not a fan of PDA but this man has a way of getting me lost in his kisses.

His soft plump lips are mesmerising an addiction I have come to love over the years. His hands move to my jaw they graze my collarbone and down my sides. The warmth has me shivering against him as he deepens the kiss.

Gradually the noise diminishes. We're instantly thrown into a world where it's just the two of us. I feel his hands gently caress my back and lock my arms around his neck to bring him closer.

"I love you" Randall manages to release these words his lips so close to mine I can barely breathe. He sucks my lower lip before I could respond and I downright lose my edge when his tongue plummets into my mouth and starts a

sexual war with my tongue. I can hear myself moaning my body covered in heat.

My legs give up the will to hold me up the feeling rushes down to my knees making them wobbly. I think Randall senses it because his arms tighten around me he's holding me as if I will slip out of his arms. My toes curl there's a crazy twirl in my belly. I don't know what to call it but it has me trembling like a leaf.

"Okay... cut cut cut." I know that voice I try to pull out to confirm the girl shouting next to us. Randall nibbles on my lips one last time and leisurely pulls away his lips brushing on mine barely a touch.

We're both chasing our breaths. Heat has travelled to my face if I were lighter I would be beet red. Thankfully Randall is still holding me up. I doubt I can stand on my own.

"Wow... that was... something." I knew it could be none other Liyana's friend Zitha. The child can be forward. Liyana is standing next to her with a big smile on her face her eyes gleaming. I know this is what she wants for her parents to be together. The guests are cheering some

send us smiles while others mind their business.

“I love you” my husband declares for the second time his lips playing on my ear. I purse mine to suppress the giggle that wants to spurt out of my mouth.

“These words are starting to sound foreign you’ve been saying them a lot lately.” My sally puts a smile on his face.

We’re interrupted by my phone ringing it’s too loud here so I excuse myself and scurry to the empty kitchen.

“Hello.”

“Amara... it’s me...”

“Thanda?” She’s crying.

“I’m sorry I know today is your day. But you’re the only one I could call I’m in trouble Amara.”

“What happened?”

“He found me I’ve been hiding for hours and I’m afraid he will find me here. Please help me I don’t want to die.” Her voice is panic-stricken.

“Send me your location I’ll be there now.” She agrees before dropping the call.

I met Thandaza on my first day at work she's an intern going from one piece job to another. I guess there was a click and we've been friends since. I think of telling Randall that I'm heading out but he won't let me go if I do. I'll send him a message and explain the rest later when I get home.

***** ©□

Chapter 9

ZITHA-

So much for wanting to drink tonight that son of a... deep breaths... Tshilidzi has ruined my night. I haven't seen him since he practiced his martial arts on me. I'm slouched on the couch wondering if everyone in this party is as dejected as I am.

“Oh Zitha I am so happy.” A vivacious drawl from my friend. I turn to see her happily pouncing my way. Well that just answers my question. Different people different dlozis. Look how content this girl is.

A buzz in my pocket startles me it's my phone. Sizakele should have said so if she wanted to

tag along. She won't stop calling doesn't she have homework or something?

When Liyana throws herself on the couch she falls right on my lap and laughs like a drunkard. There's a problem with that the only thing she can drink with her father around is water.

"What do you want Kele?"

"Zitha hurry it's aunt she's not breathing." There is absolutely no alarm in her voice so I'm failing to untangle what's really going on.

"Don't tell me you fought with your mother and killed her." It's the only conclusion I can come up with. Liyana smiles and shakes her head that's resting on my lap.

"You're such an idiot" did she just call me an idiot? This child is disrespectful. "Your mother is the one who's not breathing."

"What?" Disbelief clings to my voice as I jolt to my feet the quick move nearly throws Liyana to the floor. "What do you mean she's n... not breathing?"

Sizakele is explaining gibberish her voice slowly fade away into the background. The only thing I catch in her muddled speech is the word 'dead.' An excruciating pain consumes me at the realization that I might have lost my mother an ear-splitting sound tackles my ears and my body gives in to shock. It has me staggering backwards I virtually fall but Liyana grabs my waist and helps me to sit back down.

Tears stream down my face while my whole body trembles with fear.

"Babe what's wrong?" Her hands are gripped on mine.

"That was Sizakele my mother is not breathing. I have to go to the hospital now."

"Let's go" she's on her feet before I could dispute. Orange Farm is far from Johannesburg north her father will have a problem with her driving me considering that it's dark outside.

"Can't you ask one of the guards to take me? It won't be safe for you to drive back alone." I don't want to get in trouble with Mr. Okolie.

“Let’s go Zitha we’re only wasting time.” The order is uncompromising she’s taking long strides to the door. I run behind her after checking if her father is anywhere close by.

My friend here is a slow driver she’s trying shame. Nevertheless I’m subsequently growing anxious. My mind is scrambled mostly filled with thoughts of my mother.

“I shouldn’t have left her alone Liya” I’m an idiot my aunt has been saying it and I called her bluff.

“She’s going to be okay” she doesn’t look at me she never looks sideways when driving unless it is required. That’s how much she fears driving right now she looks like a tortoise with her back hunched and head leaning forward.

“I’m sure those witches did something to her how is it that she suddenly can’t breathe? We just came from the hospital the doctor had permitted me to take her home. I can’t lose my mother she’s all I have.”

“She’s going to be okay” this is how Liyana is. That awkward look on her face comes during

such situations it's because she doesn't know what to do or say. Let me keep my thoughts to myself not everyone is born to be Dr. Phil.

We arrive an hour later my butt hurts from sitting for too long. I'll complain another day right now I need to find out where my mother is. We meet a nurse who shows us where to go. The room is not that far ahead.

"Time of death 9:58pm." Someone says when we dash into the big ward there are a line of beds on both sides of the wall each filled with patients. My mother's bed is close to the entrance door the doctor who muttered those dreadful words is standing next to my aunt and Sizakele. These two look impassive that it worries me.

I shift my gaze to my mother her eyes are shut and she looks... I don't know... she doesn't look alive. I'm not familiar with this burning feeling in my heart I've never lost a loved one before. It's always been just the two of us.

“Doctor how is my mother?” I ask the plump woman in a white coat she shakes her head indifferently and I feel a surge of heat rush through my body.

“I’m sorry we couldn’t save her.” That’s all she walks out as if she will be implicated in my mother’s death. She is probably more worried about that long weave on her head. My feet give up their job to hold me still Liyana is here to catch me again.

“Zitha are you okay?”

I’m not there right now I want to know what happened to my mother. She was fine when I left the house.

“What did you do to her?” I shout at my aunt and her daughter their eyes speak of repulsive things. They lack remorse and grief.

“Stop being dramatic please we all knew this day was coming.” Sizakele barks I feel the animosity and hear the sadism in her tone. The windows to her soul are no better she is as cold as the woman stationed beside her.

“You bitch!” Everything causes me to do something new something I have never done

before. Her hair is in my grip in seconds I'm pulling with all my might while she screams for her mother to help her.

"Don't touch her let her go." I can't see Liyana with how busy I am but that is her voice probably pulling my aunt back. The old woman's arms are wrapped around my waist lugging me backwards.

The chaos in the room is obviously not allowed there is sudden noise and many voices. A strong force accomplishes in getting my hands off Sizakele's hair as I look up I see a security guard.

The man is fuming and glaring so is my aunt. The guard gives us a warning and goes to stand at the door. Liyana moves to my side when I try to jump at my cousin again I need to release this anger that's eating me inside.

"Let me go Liya I'm going to kill this witch."

"Zithobile!" That's my aunt chiding me like a child Sizakele cries on her chest. What is going on? He sister just died her cold heart won't let her shed a tear. Even one will do...

“Zithobile yani aunty? My mother was fine when I left. Something must have happened she wouldn’t give up like that. She wouldn’t stop breathing just like that.” I’m still screaming I would crumbled to the floor if Liyana were not here holding me.

“How do you know? Are you God?” If I were God I would wipe you and your frog of a daughter off the face of the earth. I’m about to retort when I notice a nurse drap my mother with a white sheet.

“NO NO. NO!” I shout as I push her away and hover over my mother’s lifeless body. She can’t be dead not my mother. How am I going to live without her? “MAMA MAMA.”

Pain knocks on the door and twizzles in like a hurricane uninvited it sinks through my veins causing me to howl out in its arms. Tears well from deep inside and course down my cheeks as I shake my mother’s body desperate for her to open her eyes.

“Mama” my hands cradle her face. Her eyes are tightly shut she’s irresponsible. “Mama vuka

ngiyacela mama Ungangishiya.” (Mom wake up please don’t leave me.)

I can’t get her to wake up her body is like that of a dummy. Why can’t I get her to wake up?

“Zitha...” Liyana’s voice doesn’t get through to me I have shut out everyone and everything. I’ve lost track of her words that abruptly sound like clanging cymbals.

“Mama ngiyacela. Ngizoba yini ngaphandle kwakho?” (I can’t live without you)

My soul is bleeding and I’m having a hard time breathing. She’s not supposed to be dead there has to be a mistake. Liyana's arms enfold around me the embrace is tight and comforting. “I’m sorry babe” I fall back into Liyana’s chest unable to curtail my screams and cries.

AMARA-

What is Thandaza doing at an expensive hotel like this? Do interns earn so much? I have to double check the address just in case and...

this is it. I don't bother going to reception so I rush to the lift just as it opens.

A woman walks out she regards me with a soft shifty smile and I return with a weak nod. The familiarity she holds tickles my curiosity when I turn to double check if I had seen her before she's already gone.

I make it to the 8th floor in peace one knock and the door opens. Thandaza looks like she came out of a tsunami evidence of tears are tattooed on her face. She's wearing a white bathing robe and her eyes tell a story of misery and torment.

"Amara

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Sponsored

evidence of tears are tattooed on her face.

She's wearing a white bathing robe and her eyes tell a story of misery and torment.

"Amara please come in." The stare she gives me is notifying and probing she steps aside paving the way in for me. My brows knit together at how she's scanning the foyer fear

overspread on her. Impatience knows me best mainly when I'm kept waiting.

"What happened Thanda?" She has a habit of biting her nails when anxiety claims her.

"He found me Amara." She locks the door goes to sit on a chair situated by the window and curls up. I'm standing in the middle of the room unable to grasp everything that is happening.

"I thought you said he couldn't get a visa because of his criminal record."

"That is the truth" she answers without granting me a single glimpse. Her eyes are engrossed outside the huge glass window. "I don't know how he came here I found him waiting for me when I got home last night. I don't know what he would have done if I wasn't with a friend."

"He can't hurt you here Thanda he's an immigrant in this country. He can't do as he pleases." Thandaza is from Malawi she came to South Africa after her husband tried to kill her many times. She says he's abusive and very manipulative.

"You don't Know Nthunzi he's very smart. He can outsmart the law he's going to kill me. You

have to help me Amara.” What can I possibly do to stop that man? If he is as insane as she says then he will most likely kill us both.

“The only way I can help you is by going to the police.”

“No Amara you don’t know that man. He’s probably bribed them by now I wouldn’t be surprised if he knows my current whereabouts.”

Thandaza seems to be giving this man credit he can’t be that good. We’re startled by a knock at the door her face alters a prolonged flicker of dread dances in her eyes as she glances at the door. Eyes out on stalk Thandaza sits up her hands palmed on the chair.

“W- What if that’s him?” Her voice quavers I can hear her rapid breaths from where I’m standing.

“Room service.” Oh! Thank God.

Thandaza runs to open the man smiles upon seeing me and I don’t have the zeal to return it. I’m away from my husband on our anniversary he probably hasn’t noticed my absence or he would be blowing up my phone.

That reminds me I have to text Randall and tell him. As I bring my face up I catch the waiter staring Thandaza is too busy sniffing the food to notice. He averts his intent look and leaves closing the door behind him.

“You had time to order food?” So much for someone who is running for her life.

“This is for us I thought you might be hungry when you get here since I dragged you out of your celebration.” She tells me I am dazed by how she has an appetite at a time like this.

“I’m not hungry” the truth it would be weird dining here. Thandaza wheels the cart to a table by the bed the food does smell nice but I don’t plan on staying.

“I need to go back will you be okay?” Great she gives me that look that makes me feel like a bad friend.

“Please for a few more minutes Amara I’m still scared. I never told you this but your presence makes me feel safe. You’re the best friend I never had.” Best friend is taking it a little too high we have known each for a while but not enough to wear such big titles.

“I didn’t tell Randall I was leaving he must be worried. I have to go I’m sorry”

Sadness is wiped off her face as disappointment takes over how long do I have to ride this train of guilt? It can get exhausting. I know I don’t owe her anything but Thandaza is a good person. She doesn’t deserve whatever is happening to her.

There’s a persistent silence as she starts nibbling on sticky ribs she looks up at me her lips glazed with source.

“Don’t just stand there join me.” Her order.

“I’ll just have a sip of this then I’ll go.” I pick the bottle of water on the table.

“Okay” she grabs one as well and pops it open.

“We’ll toast with water.”

“What is the occasion?” This woman can be strange.

“Life clearly I’ve got a few days left in this world.” She laughs... alone like she cracked a joke which I don’t find funny at all.

“Don’t say that Thanda.”

“Okay I’m sorry here’s to our friendship.” She lifts the bottle up before taking a long gulp while I manage a few sips.

“You know Nthunzi was never a bad person” Thandaza starts how do I tell her I need to go without sounding rude? In addition I don’t have time to listen to her story.

For some reason the room suddenly feels hot I have to remove my shoes as my feet feel sweaty.

“What happened to the air con? It wasn’t this hot when I got here?” My query is snubbed by a sweltering Thandaza dribbles of sweat are oozing down her face.

“Amara...” she heaves hand covering her mouth I think she’s going to vomit. In a split second she’s on her feet sprinting to the bathroom I hear her throwing up. I have to check on her but I can’t move. My body feels heavy the dress as well so I strip it off. It’s not long till my knees fail me they bring me down unexpectedly I can’t get up and my head hurts like hell.

“Tha... Tha...” My voice has given up on me it’s unreachable and so is my phone. I can see my bag on the bed if I could get to it and get my phone. I need to call for help... anyone...
Randall.

Thandaza comes back to find me trying to get up she looks like a mess. Her eyes heavy-lidded through my blurred vision I notice how she’s struggling to walk as her feet move slowly and reluctantly.

In a very small amount of time her eyes roll to the back of her head before she comes crashing down I mentally scream for help.

Trying to keep my eyes open becomes a mission I’m trying so hard with all my might but something is pulling me into darkness. Gravity pushes me down clothing my body with immensity. All of me complies as my eyes give in and my world becomes dusky.

KENNETH-

“Mr Mkhize your appointment is scheduled for Monday 10am. Are you sure you want to have your vasectomy reversed?”

“I’m not getting any younger doc.”

“Well whoever will mother your children will be one lucky woman.” Hold it right there doc let’s control our hormones. Kenneth frowns like there is no other expression he can conjure up. Suddenly a heart wrenching cry of a woman catches his attention she’s on the floor screaming like a mad person while two nurses are trying to restrain her. The hospital lobby is clothed with her lamentations for some reason her cries get to him they touch his soul and nothing has ever tickled his soul like this. Not even her... the one that got away. Her name has been archived somewhere in Kenneth’s heart the man wouldn’t remember where he put the keys if you were to ask him.

“What happened?” Curiosity nudges him he questions the female doctor who is observing the same scene. His eyes remain on the woman as her exclamations of agony continue to dig deeper into his soul.

“Poor thing she just lost her mother and she’s all alone now. It’s strange how she was sick but her results always came back clean each time.” The doctor tells.

“What do you mean?”

“Her test results showed that she was perfectly healthy but she couldn’t speak walk or even move a finger. The young lady has been caring for her for years her body finally gave up. Poor thing is an orphan now.” If pity came with bags of money the world would be a rich place.

“Mmmhhh.” Kenneth hums adding a head nod of some sort.

He fails to understand Dr. Linda’s explanation. Is that even possible? There must be an enlightenment to this sickness doctors must have missed something. He feels a great force pulling him towards the wailing lady and an urge to go comfort her. Something just doesn’t sit well with him watching her rolling on the floor. Clearly the nurses are struggling to keep her restrained.

Woah! Where are you going Kenny?

He's moving towards the strange girl and stops as the doctor injects her with something. He sees how she flinches at the slight pain and slowly fades into oblivion. She is put on a stretcher and wheeled away.

"Thank you doc." He doesn't wait for the doctor to say anything but takes a different direction.

***** ©□

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 10

WARNING: This chapter contains scenes of sexual assault which may be troubling to sensitive readers. Reader's discretion is advised.

RANDALL-

His wife has been gone for too long her phone rings unanswered. It's no secret that Randall has been locked in his own world a place where he allows no one but his demons. Randall

rushes to the kitchen the last place he saw her headed to. He finds the maid there bustling about. She turns and smiles at a worried Randall.

“Have you seen Amara?” He sounds a bit rude but she’s used to it.

“No I haven’t spoken to her today.” At this Randall frowns. Where could Amara be? She never leaves without letting him know. As he muses in worry his phone buzzes it displays a text or some kind of MMS. He swipes to unlock the screen the only people that have his WhatsApp number are his family and close friends. The unknown number raises questions Randall still opens the message.

‘If you want to know what your wife gets up to behind your back follow this address.’

The text is accompanied by a location to the Four Seasons hotel in Westcliff. This is nothing the trust he has for his wife cannot be broken by anything right? That woman defines purity in its deepest form.

However this is the only way he will find his wife she can't be in trouble can she? Amara is a smart woman who is very much capable of taking care of herself. Either way something does not feel right and he can feel it.

He forwards the number to Styles asking him to track it down.

Most of the guests have gone home argh the guests are the least of his worries. He leaves the house with a mission to locate his spouse while trying hard not to entertain the message as it claws under his skin tickling him in all the wrong places.

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

KENNETH-

There are many reasons why people join cults and for him it was to put bread in his sister's mouth. He was making money money he didn't know the source of where it came. It could've been blood money or magic he was the least bothered about the inconsequential things as long as the brotherhood provided.

From a shack to a mansion in a space of a year who said there was no easy way to the top? He found it although it came with sacrifices he was willing to hold on to it until... until... heck forever if possible.

Things were going good his plates consisted of great cuisines. A typical South African dish like pap doesn't have to grace one's plate every night.

He went from riding taxis and would sometimes be a rand short to owning multiple taxis. It was goodbye to the South of Johannesburg and hello to the north.

Life was a bliss until he set his eyes on a woman who belonged to another he counts it as one of the biggest mistakes of his life. A war broke out between him and the man who had claimed the woman first.

Enemy lines were drawn with a red marker that even scotch bright could not remove it. It came to a point where he had to leave the country after a bullet was pierced through his lower abdomen almost claiming his life. He knew he

had to get away and it was the only way he could keep his distance.

Holidaying in China for close to two years didn't help heal his broken heart upon his arrival loneliness welcomed him and sadly kept him company for the entire stay. He tried to mingle with the people of the other race tried to make friends and maybe find a little Asian woman for himself who will give him babies with long-strong black shiny hair.

His cold demeanour stood in the way of that moreover the love he had for Amara. His heart and soul were filled with her she was like an Avon perfume stubborn on clothes and strong on one's nostrils. Although he tried to forget her it didn't happen as per his request.

Kenneth decided to expand his businesses in China shake hands with the big guys and sign contracts that would make him wealthier than he already was. Not that he needed the money it was not an issue for him as he had more than enough overflowing in his many bank accounts.

He had a little sister to fend for all they had was each other it was imperative that he puts her above anything else; above the woman he loved.

Two years later he made a decision to go back home. Had he not been home sick and missed his sister he would've extended his stay in China until his weary heart decided it was time to go back and face the past.

Avoiding Amara has been easier than he thought it would be besides Johannesburg is a nation itself. Chances of them bumping into each other are very slim.

Years have gone by and Kenneth has managed to take steps forward without Amara invading his mind. His taxi business is going great thanks to his friend Sipho Mndeni who foresaw everything in his absence.

It was nine years ago when Styles Sishi came to him with a plan to steal taxis from a sworn enemy Bangizwe Mkhize. The prominent and dreaded taxi boss. Forget that they bear the

same last name he didn't know the old man and had no blood relations with him.

Kenneth had found the idea perfect especially since he had planned to leave the cult. He along with Sipho thrived in attaining Mkhize's taxis leaving the old man with nothing but cents and holes in his pockets.

Sure he didn't work for those taxis who cares? No one in the taxi business baths with a bottle of honesty before going to bed at night.

He's been at the hospital the whole day running errands confirming schedules and sealing deals. He's tired and can't wait to get home. He shakes hands with his business partners after a meeting that took almost three hours five of them bid their goodbyes and leave the boardroom to go to their respectable homes. His mind instantly leaves him like it had been doing during the course of the meeting. The grieving girl seems to haunt his thoughts this is the first time that he's thinking about another woman after Amara. He's confused what could

be the reason that he's engrossed on that stranger?

"Kenneth!" The voice sounds far in his head but still pulls him back to reality. He blinks and stands from the black swivel chair when he realises that he must have drifted off. "Are you okay?"

He nods his head the man with him is also a business associate. Kenneth offers that they walk together to their cars. It's close to midnight the hospital corridor is a tad empty. There are a few nurses doing rounds.

"The meeting went well I didn't think the shareholders would like the concept. This is going to make us a lot of money."

"Knowing you Mhlongo it's all about the money." Kenneth states as they stride down the hospital corridor.

"And I will not dispute that." The grey haired man chortles at his own sally. Kenneth is not there anymore his mind and gaze have wandered off to the woman running towards

them. She appears to be not watching where she's going. He's dumbfounded for a minute and by the time he decides to tell her to watch her steps the woman collides against him. Her hands wrap around him as she tries to stop herself from falling head on his chest. She is heaving and soft snuffles occasionally escape her mouth.

Kenneth is annoyed for someone who does not like being touched he sends his hands to her upper arms and gradually detaches her from him. She doesn't raise her head.

"Watch where you're going" finally he gives the warning he'd been wanting to give since he spotted her running. Something is not right though the woman is crying.

"Are you okay?" He probes while trying to catch a glimpse of her face. Something tells him he's seen her somewhere... a closer look shows him the young woman who lost her mother the one who's been running through his mind for hours. She manages to pull away from his hold.

"Sorry" her apology is a whisper. She takes off running headed for the exit door.

“Who is that?” His business partner can be snoopy sometimes.

“I’ll be back.” Kenneth.

Never did he think he would live to see the day running after a woman is something out of his character. There is no sign of her outside he vacuums the whole parking lot to find nothing.

“Dammit what the hell am I doing?” It’s normal that he chastises himself. He is a man who has never let a woman in his life Amara could have been the ideal partner for him.

His heart remains dark with no one to warm it and creep inside. An ice box is what his friends would call it what will their reaction be when they find out that he felt a few drops dripping from it today after seeing the grieving girl? What is it about her that makes his curiosity rise like this? The urge to want to know her and the impact she suddenly has on him.

He gives up the search what will their reaction be when they find out that he felt a few drops dripping from it today after seeing the grieving girl? What is it about her that makes his

curiosity rise like this? The urge to want to know her and the impact she suddenly has on him. He gives up the search the girl is gone like a ghost in the night.

AMARA-

Amara is woken up by the coldness kissing her body she raises her heavy eyelids half way only for them to fall shut. An excruciating burning pain in her stomach attacks her the minute she raises her eyes again she tries to wrap her arms around it to suppress the pain but can't move.

Her body is weak eyes heavy and head twirling possibly faster than a golf ball rolling on the ground.

At this point Amara is aware that she's laying on the bed naked as the day she came into the world.

At first she is insensible to her surroundings until she hears sexual sounds of moaning one belonging to a female and there seems to be other creatures as well. They might have been spotted in the national geographic channel it is

said they are male species and have the power to reduce a woman to nothing. Shame and ridicule her until the world believes she is who they have painted her to be.

The heaviness in her body still lingers but now it's different. She is sure there is someone on top of her she blinks to clear her cloudy vision and spots two men on the bed with her. One is kissing his way up to her nether regions the other planting satiated kisses on her lower belly.

The heart is one strong organ although her body has been made weak her heart reacts. The thud is too wild for a human to handle.

Who are these people? What are they doing to her?

Though her speech has failed her tears fight the girl in question's battles. They flood on the corners of her eyes and wet the pillows. "Hel..." her mouth slightly opens she's going for a scream. But her throat is on fire nothing can

come out of it not even a smudge of saliva. She can't move drowsiness has made a home in her body.

Amara feels a soft hand on her abdomen her chase reveals a naked Thandaza hovering above her as well. The woman appears to be high she clearly is not in her right state of mind. There's a huge bump on her forehead that could be from the previous fall. Amara can't understand why Thandaza is doing this why all of them are doing this.

It's just too crowded on this bed. She tries to get them to stop but she's numb.

It's wrong all of this is wrong.

But there is one problem her body is not against it. It likes what's being done to it something has to be terribly wrong.

She is a queen to-be for Pete's sake and a married woman.

Her muscles are sleeping and mind disarrayed. Uncontrollable waves of desire overtake Amara she suddenly feels muggy. Her clit throbs

pulsating as the erotic sounds made by these three push her to the edge.

She suddenly feels something warm and wet touch her on her nether regions one guy is licking and sucking her most sacred place. "S- stop..." releasing words is excruciating he hears and lifts his eyes that betray his intentions and none of them are noble. His stare is uncomfortable and icy there is no emotion behind it but animalistic lust. He forces her legs open and continues to harass her nether regions more tears brush out of her eyes when she shuts them. She's unconsciously moaning and whimpering and stopping at this point is inescapable. The man makes her cum a feeble satisfied smile plays at his lips before he rolls off the bed. Guilt and disgust fill Amara up after the wave of ecstasy dissipates. Death is surely better than this she's crying more than she's ever cried in her life. Her body is not done with her though nor are these men.

Thandaza straddles one of Amara's thighs and grinds on it her moans elevate with each move getting louder and louder.

That has Amara wanting to release the pleasurable feeling again her second orgasm is close. It's out of her control.

Her racing heart is telling her to stop her brain finds logic but it has nothing against the sexual feelings that keep burning through her veins.

She can't control it no matter how much she tries.

There's an undeniable need to touch herself her p#ssy calls desperately for attention wanting to be filled. This has got to be the most disgusting thing she's ever experienced. Randall will be devastated shuttered beyond words.

"Stop Amara you're so disgusting." She mentally chastises herself cursing her own body in the process. Thandaza collapses like a corpse on the other side of the bed after her orgasm envelops her.

The second man has just finished stroking himself he alternates to kissing Amara's breast

running his filthy fingers where ever he can. It feels good to the flesh however her whole being cries for help.

“No stop please. Don’t do this.” It all happens in her head no words are able to come out of her mouth.

She doesn’t want to do this she can’t betray Randall. The strange man is groaning while harassing her nipples. He looks familiar but her head is too dizzy and vision hazy to put the puzzle together. Amara wants to swallow the moans however they emit from her mouth regardless. Her body craves for this but her heart calls out to her husband.

“No” no is enough right? It should be enough darn it it is enough. Why is he not stopping? Her heart violently drums on her chest when she accepts another wave of orgasm from the nipple stimulation it engulfs the entirety of her body.

Randall comes to mind the only man who has ever made her feel safe. She should have never left his side self-blame takes centre stage. She curses herself a million times

repulsion covering her soul body and mind like an eclipse.

All of a sudden waves of nausea twirl inside her stomach her head feels like it will swell beyond its normal capacity. The fire in her throat is too obvious to ignore now and her stomach lurches and bubbles.

The anguish in her heart brings about the smell of death and the grave that's how close she feels it. Once upon a time she had called upon death and this time it is ready to come uninvited. The thought of dying has never felt so good better than facing her husband after this. Better that than living with this shame.

“Stoop” finally words allow her access and at the mention of this powerful word Amara manages to push the man off her and because he also seems out of it he rolls off the bed as if his trance has been halted.

With weak limbs and strength that of an ant she flips herself over on the bed and lands on her stomach. Attempting an escape her heart rate rockets. It's robustly thumping hard she can feel

it bouncing to her throat she's left alone on the bed.

However getting to the door seems like a mission impossible. Her life is flashing before her and at any given time she will succumb to death. Amara slightly lifts her head it spins immediately compelling her to drop it. She blacks out before she could attempt to move again.

***** © □

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 10

RANDALL-

'If you want to know what your wife gets up to behind your back follow this address.'

He can't get the message out of his mind for a careful driver he sure is driving like a mad man. At first the message didn't really register until Amara's words echoed in his head. Why would

she randomly mention Kenneth Mkhize during their argument?

“I should have killed him when I had the chance” he seethes under his breath as anger clings on to him. The distaste he has for Kenneth is unexplainable he had to rent a room to hold his extra hatred for the man. He remembers the day he shot Kenneth without any regret the bastard walked out alive. In all probability he’s been after his wife since. Who else could it be? Amara is so naïve that the word no is foreign to her tongue.

Is it possible that she ran into Kenneth again? They got talking and one thing led to another and... no no giving such thoughts a room in his head is utter torture.

The thought of Kenneth touching his wife is stomach-turning his heart can’t handle it. His hands clutch the steering wheel as he presses the accelerator and increases the speed.

He has to get to the hotel fast this is not how he imagined spending his anniversary although he hasn’t been able to have sex with his wife at least they would have been together kisses are

better than nothing. Dammit he was making progress.

Suddenly with the hotel insight he presses on faster. At this point he is not thinking straight. Anger controls him like a puppet directing his steps and actions. He arrives at the hotel and doesn't give a damn about parking he grabs his gun and his phone and dashes over to the room.

His heart is beating faster every second as he stands before the hotel room. He thinks of knocking but chucks the idea. Something doesn't feel right and he can't seem to get the stupid message out of his mind.

With luck the door swings open with one twist he steps in daring it all. The scene before him seems all but familiar there are three people sleeping on the bed. A man in the middle and two women sandwiching him their heads on either side of his chest.

Randall moves closer stepping on clothes scattered on the floor. His wife's dress is among

those clothes he recognises it. Her face comes to light with each step he takes his heart stops beating when he sees her in the arms of the strange man. What the f*ck? A threesome?

An incredulous gasp escapes his mouth he staggers backwards unable to decipher what his eyes are bearing witness to. No it can't be Amara cannot do this to him.

He really cannot believe what he is seeing right now Randall grabs the bedsheet and tosses it across the airy room. Their naked bodies are revealed the sight brings about tears in his eyes.

His hands find the back of his head he stands in this position narrowed eyes piercing the humans on the bed... heart going on its own escapade and veins on his forehead popping out one at a time.

Wrath knocks in his broken heart he wants to let it in but that's when he's the most dangerous. An angry Randall is a menace to humanity.

For the first time in his life he's hyperventilating and he doesn't know what to do. Rage...pain... he's not entirely sure what he's feeling. The balcony catches his attention he runs outside in an attempt to catch his breath and probably blink away the images of his wife naked in bed with those people.

Randall leans against the wall and chases his breath it's not working. He wants to cry scream or spill blood. But whose blood?

Thinking this is all but a terrible nightmare he turns back to peek inside the hotel room only for reality to hit him in the face.

He immediately diverts his gaze carries his hands in his head and sinks down on the floor. His heart aching like it's been ripped out of his chest.

“Amara...” a whisper of disappointment emanates from his mouth followed by a muted sob he covers his mouth to push it back down his throat. The woman in there cannot be his Amara. It can't be his innocent Amara.

Think Randall think...

He fishes in his pockets and catches a box of cigarettes puffing out one or two helps when he's highly stressed. Yes he never quit. He should have when his wife asked him to years ago but he would go crazy without it.

The smoke lingers in the balcony forming thick clouds. A heavy smoker he's always been the man is smoking like it's a matter of life and death.

With this pacing he's doing he'll eventually burn holes under the soles of his shoes.

Then he remembers... he has a gun he takes it out and a mobile phone. His conflicted mind is of no help right now. Kill or call for help? He opts to call the one person he trusts with his life the one who has been there for him since he came to South Africa from Ghana at the age of seventeen.

“Where did you and Amara go? You disappeared leaving the guests unattended.” Styles speaks without sending his greetings that's the least of Randall's worries.

“I’m about to kill my wife” are his cold words to Styles who knows this emotionless voice and that he should never take it lightly.

“Why?” Styles sounds too calm for someone whose best friend just told him he is about to commit a grave sin.

“Love is a joke” he’s said these words before. Love is Amara that’s the only definition of love he knows. If she is not real then love has got to be a joke.

“What is going on Randall?”

Randall is able to narrate everything to his friend he’s now standing before the trio gun loaded and aimed at them. If he remembers correctly there are three bullets in there what a coincidence. His heart is suddenly cold as ice his mind closed off that nothing can possibly pass through. So reasoning with him would be a waste of time.

“Randall get her to the hospital now.” A command from Styles. He must be stupid to be suggesting such a thing hospital for what?

“I haven’t pulled the trigger yet Styles and when I do I’ll make sure she doesn’t survive.” This can only be his broken heart talking.

“There’s a high possibility that Amara was drugged with ecstasy. An overdose may result in loss of blood flow to the brain and other organs. She will die if you don’t...” Styles explains but it’s impossible right?

“W – What?” The darkness in his eyes shifts a little letting room for the love that always dwelt there. A frown transforms his angry features.

“How do you know?”

“What is wrong with you? Don’t you know your wife anymore?” He purposely raises his voice this friend of his can be one stubborn being and right now he is blinded by anger and pain.

“Fuck!” A frustrated scream spurts out of his mouth unable to take the sight before him he diverts. “Styles

Sponsored

he diverts. “Styles she’s... she’s naked and in the arms of another man...”

“Stop being an idiot Randall and fucking get that woman to the hospital or you better have a good explanation as to what happened to her when your children ask.” Randall has no answer for Styles.

He curses under his rapid breath and turns back. His heart breaks each time he sees his wife there.

“Styles...” A pained whisper that brings a lone tear down his cheek.

“I know Randall I know.” Sympathy lies in his voice.

“Sh— she’s my wife Styles. My wife” Do these tears know who they mock? This man is royalty... “They touched her they fucking touched my wife.”

“Look I can only imagine what you must be feeling. But this is no time to let your emotions control you Amara will die. Get her out of there I’ll call an ambulance for those two. Get your head in the game don’t mess this up.” Styles is the only one who can talk some sense into him apart from his twin brother.

“By the way I can’t locate that number. Whoever sent the text destroyed the sim card don’t worry I’m on it though.”

Styles ends the call and Randall knows he has to act now come to think of it Amara has not moved with all that racket he’s been doing. He hurries to her side and rapidly scoops her naked body from the bed he notices trails of blood from where she was lain and his mind finally grasps what is happening.

“Amara” he lays her on a couch and checks her pulse point. Okay there’s a thud it’s very weak but it’s there. Anger is for a minute and love is forever this would be the perfect illustration. His irresolute heart is beating again warming up to his humanity.

“Stay with me baby I’m here and I’m sorry. Stay with me me hemma.” (My queen.)

He’s got his arms wrapped around her upper body as he pulls her into his chest. He finds a gown and puts it on her.

As he stands in the doorway with his wife in his arms Randall takes one last look at the people sleeping on the bed. Was his wife part of a threesome? The thought is disgustingly stomach churning his jaw clenches. He has to get out of there as his head screams KILL a murder at a hotel would be a mistake too stupid.

Speeding it doesn't take much time for him to get to the nearest hospital. Styles is there first waiting near the hospital entrance his friend never ceases to amaze him.

Styles approaches with two nurses and a stretcher as he pulls up. Randall scoops an unconscious Amara out and lays her on the stretcher meanwhile can't help but frown at Styles next to him. No words are said between them they follow behind the nurses taking long strides as they wheel Amara to the ER.

"You can't come in." A tiny Indian woman wearing glasses bigger than her face stops Randall as he attempts to follow them inside.

“My wife needs me.” Of course he’ll grunt he’s frustrated seething and worried.

“Right now there’s nothing you can do for her. Let us do our job.” The look on the doctor's face reprimands him he wants to dispute but his common sense; Styles squeezes his shoulder.

“Save my wife please. She’s bleeding there was so much blood.” Randall pleads defeat and regret washing over him. The doctor gives him her mundane doctor’s smile which Randall frowns at. She walks into the ER and shuts the door behind her.

His knees fail him causing him to stagger towards the rear his steps halt when his back hits the wall. Randall cradles his face in his hands as he tries to block all the emotions engulfing him. Standing becomes a task as his knees sway like overcooked spaghetti he’s forced to sink down on the floor.

His anger has a life of its own he can feel it rising from the depths of his stomach. If it could it would jump out and stand right next to him. He has to fight it he can't afford to lose control while Amara is fighting for her life.

Over the years Randall has been able to curb his anger lately it seems to be teasing him threatening to consume him completely.

Anger is not that big of a deal right? Wrong not where Randall Okolie is concerned the man unravels. He kills anything he sets his eyes on anything that threatens his family and the love he fought so hard to keep; Amara.

A firm hand grabs his shoulder forcing him to look up.

"Stop worrying she'll be fine." Styles is too calm for this situation like he is certain everything will be as he says.

"Where are those two?" The fact that he's asking through clamped teeth is no surprise to Styles sure Randall plans to find out what really happened in that hotel room and those two have the answers.

“Sent them to a different hospital.” Clever boy... Randall does not seem to think so.

“Why? What if they run?” He barks out a whisper.

Styles slides down next to his friend their eyes meet as he prepares to answer Randall’s question.

“Believe it or not Randy they are as badly injured as Amara. You will get your answers I promise.” Styles’ promises are the type that stand if promise Keeper had a face it would be his.

“What happened in there Styles? How did my wife get involved in something so disgusting? I should never have let her out of my sight how will I look at her after this?”

“I know what you’re thinking Randall and you need to stop clearly someone is behind this. Amara won’t need your judgemental stares when she wakes up.” He knows his friend too well.

Randall growls lowly while rubbing his head he is letting the anger claw at him once again.

“You’re going to continue loving that woman the way you’ve been doing the past nine years.”

Of course he will but will he be able to touch her after what he saw? The gnawing image is imprinted in his head and no matter how much he shuts his eyes Randall can’t get rid of it.

“Excuse me” he’s on his feet in a second.

“Where are you going?” Styles.

“I need air I can’t breathe in here.” He responds denying Styles a once over. He’s thinking of going for a drive hopefully the stupid drive will help him calm down.

“I don’t want you to unravel and start killing innocent people that’s why I have to find the forth guy who was in that hotel before you find out about him.” Styles murmurs to himself while watching Randall disappear down the hallway.

*****©

Chapter 12

AMARA-

I'm a little dazed and in excruciating pain when I open my eyes at first I fail to grasp my surroundings until my brain comes back from wherever. I'm in a single hospital room adorned with flowers and get well soon balloons and cards.

The gesture fills my heart with warmth and security until my mind tortures me with flashes of me in bed with three people Thandaza being one of them. I can't point the other two out. Shame settles in calling me all sorts of bland names. An unknown feeling slices through me it's unexplainable.

Moreover it's sucking me empty and dry leaving nothing but a dark hole. I'm alive but I can still feel the cold embrace of death tightly clinging on to me like hail storms to rain never leaving my side.

Various emotions attack me at once I try to at least fight one and dismally fail. Misty-eyed I ring the buzzer next to the bed and seconds later a female nurse walks in. Her black 3inch

shoes make so much noise on the cemented floor that my head screams in pain.

“You’re finally awake” there’s no smile on her face she’s leering at me like I shouldn’t have woken up. It would have been for the best if I hadn’t I can’t snub this heavy feeling. It feels as though there’s a force pressing down on me and my soul surrenders to the pressure drowning me to rock bottom.

“Water” I would say please but my throat hurts. She pours a glass and helps me to drink.

“How are you feeling?” How do I answer this question when I have no clue? All of me is numb broken to say the least.

“Shame poor soul.” I hate being pitied and that’s what she’s doing. At least this is what I’m gathering from her tone and the look in her eyes. “You’re lucky you were not raped and your husband found you in time.”

She knows? I’m about to ask her when an elderly woman glides into the room a senior nurse I presume. Her uniform is different from

this one's and she's got boss written on her crinkly brows.

“Our patient is awake sister Gloria?” Her statement stands as a question. The young nurse nods applying a smile on her face.

“I was telling the patient how lucky she is that she wasn't raped” she says it like the gods are smiling down on me.

And with that a replay button is pushed in my memory box. I see the images again I see their naked bodies... mine... the sloppy kisses... myself moaning while those men have their way with me. The images keep flooding in suffocating damning and revolting. Calling me characterless and a disgrace. I'm able to recall everything I remember my body going against me and everything I believe in yet my soul cried out for help.

“Sisi” the older nurse snaps me back by clicking her fingers to my face. I raise a question with my eyes. “I said you and the baby are fine.”

My hand flies to my chest I feel my stomach twist and goose bumps embrace every inch of my skin leaving no room for air.

Did she just say pregnant? I'm unable to comprehend what I just heard so I stare at the nurse who broke the news.

"You didn't know did you?" The same nurse continues with a question. Skipping my periods is normal for me I would skip two months and start the following month. They have always been irregular and since I couldn't get pregnant for years pregnancy never came to mind when I would skip a month.

"Sisi are you okay?"

I can't move nor make a sound. I can't be pregnant not after everything that has happened. My husband is a proud man I wish I could say he is no friend to vanity. But... Oh God how will he bond with his baby knowing what I did.

"It's normal to be shocked you and the baby are okay like I said."

“How long have I been here?” I drag the question out it still hurts to speak.

“Three days the man who brought you here said he’s your husband.” Nurse Gloria is quick to respond. “You’re a lucky woman you know that?” So she keeps saying and I am about ready to call her out on this nonsense. How am I lucky?

“I was on duty the night you were brought in and...” Gloria again she seems to be the most informed. “Your husband said you were hijacked and molested in the highway while driving home from work the doctor had to check if there was any forced penetration.”

Despair sets in as I’m reminded once again about my terrible ordeal it pushes hope out to make room for itself. I suck in air as if it has become thick and is now almost difficult to draw in.

“Where is he? Does he know about the pregnancy?” I change the topic not wanting to talk about that night.

The two nurses share a look something I can't make out. Talkative Gloria clears her throat she's getting ready to talk while the older nurse checks the drip.

"I haven't seen him today I haven't seen anyone actually and it's almost lunch time." Gloria says as she pulls a chair and... she's sitting down.

Why is she sitting down?

"A doctor was assigned to you he's currently busy. He will come and explain everything. I will let him know you're awake." That's the older nurse her shoes cluck loudly as she struts out leaving me with the curious one.

"Uh! There was a... a woman." I start wanting to know what happened to Thandaza.

Impatience dawns on her face she is waiting for me to make sense of what I'm saying her brows crumple arrogantly.

"Was there someone else admitted that day?"

My eyes are everywhere doing everything to avoid hers so she doesn't see the shame illuminating from my eyes.

“This is a hospital people are admitted every day.” She says.

Fair enough I’m prattling here. Perhaps I should wait for Randall if he’s the one who brought me to the hospital then he must know where Thandaza is.

I’m a little taken aback when she leans back on the chair and starts reciting a tale about how she’s been working four grave night shifts in a row.

“I’d like to go back to sleep if you don’t mind.” I interject her life story wincing in pain at the throbbing headache.

“Sure get some rest.” The nod I give her is very much visible silence hovers over the room when she walks out.

It’s barely ten seconds and the door opens... Great she’s back. I’m just going to lie here and pretend to be sleeping before she starts jabbering again my eyes shut as I dictate my breathing.

Why is she not moving?

There's a heavy presence in the room it forces me to open my eyes and my heart sinks at the sight of him it's concretely thumping against my chest moving closer to my throat with each beat.

He's erect at the door hands hiding in the pockets of his pants intensely glaring and I fail to decipher his emotions but can feel mine overwhelm me and in a second I'm going to burst into tears. I don't... the tears are not even halfway to my pupils

Sponsored

yet I'm empty. I can't cry even if I want to.

"R-Randall." My body refuses to sit up every limb hurts. "Where have you been Randall?"

Compassion rebuffs my despairing call I messed up. I'm ruined and judging by the fire in his eyes he knows or saw what happened. I need him now more than ever I want his attention but it's not coming and I don't understand it. This man freaks out at the sight of my sadness it drives him crazy when I'm

closed off but right now— right now he doesn't seem to give a rat's arse. It's breaking my heart fuelling my emotions.

“Why are you not saying anything?” I question his silence.

With hands plunged inside his pockets he saunters into the room. Angry eyes glaring and giving a warning like a drawn sword they tell me that he has activated his emotional indifference. He stops right beside the bed.

I don't want to look at him anymore but my eyes betray me by following his gaze. He's scowling at me discontented. His eyes harden they are dark and vindictive.

“You know what happened don't you?” This I have to ask the tension is killing me and this man does not plan to say anything. His stubbornness refuses to let him utter a single word.

There's something eerie about Randall something I have never seen before and it sends chills down my spine. I can count times

when I've been scared of this man although the anger was not directed at me.

"R—Randall" the lump on my throat makes it hard for me to speak like a normal person. A frown plasters his hardened face as if he is disgusted by my voice he knows... he knows...

"I'm... sorry Randall. I'm sorry."

Maybe this will get him to talk... he doesn't move when I reach out for his hand. The rejection throttles me clogging my lungs.

"Pl... please talk to me say something." His eyes flap... once...twice and in a millisecond they are red. He's blinking away tears jaw clamped and body inflexible. I'm not going to cry over this.

Feeling ashamed and vastly overawed I turn away and the only thing my feeble brain can do is to fiddle with my fingers while trying to calm myself and think of how I will face him when I decide to face him. He's still here glaring at me I feel the deep cold stare piercing through me

so I cover my head with the sheet. Call me coward I don't care.

I hate myself for everything that happened and I hate him for not caring that I'm hurting. I can still feel his heavy presence behind me and the yearning for his arms around me elevates to a hundred.

ZITHA-

My heart is as dark as the grey skies today I don't plan to get out of bed. I'm numb and in terrible pain I don't know which part of my body hurts. My heart seems to carry the heaviest load and it hotspots other areas. My head hurts that I can't blink without wincing in pain.

“Yey wena Zithobile” yoh! Yoh! Yoh!
Headache... This habit she has of budging into my room without knocking has got to stop I don't care if it's her house. I'm forced to sit up from the bed when she pulls the blanket and throws it on the floor. “You've been sleeping since you got home. Who's going to organize the funeral?”

One day that's all I ask just one day of peace. Then again that would be asking for too much in this house.

"I don't feel good aunty" I mumble through my pain.

"I don't care VUKA!!!" Gosh she's yelling. "You have to clean this house people are coming." Those people were supposed to be here the morning after my mother died goes to show how little her siblings cared about her. I blame their father for planting his sperms all over the nation.

"Your mother is useless even in death she didn't have a funeral policy. What was she good for anyway? All she ever did was sleep and eat my food."

What else was she supposed to do? She couldn't move for Christ's sake. This woman has always been jealous of my mother she hated her with a passion and never hid it.

"My mother and your sister was sick you know that." I will always defend my mother no matter what.

Her face scrunches into an ugly frown before she furiously grabs my ankle and pulls me to the end of the bed.

“Aunty what are you doing?” I yelp and scoot back as I see a slap coming my way. I wonder if there’s boiling water in the kettle I’m in the mood to burn a witch.

“Don’t ever talk back while I’m talking you useless child. Get up and clean this house and when you’re done I want you to bake some scones. Fill a 20litre bucket a lot of people will be coming. I won’t waste my money buying food since I have to bury that good for nothing I called a sister. That witch.” That’s it I’m adding too much salt to her food tonight. How can she say such things about her own sister? How can she be so heartless?

“Aunty aunty please. Huh! Yoh! Stop saying that. Your sister just died respect her memory.” I’m shouting while standing on the bed don’t ask how that happened.

If this woman wants to act like street trash I will treat her like street trash. I can tolerate anything

but not a word against my mother. She shoots me a deadly stare I've been dished with plenty of those to feel intimidated by them.

“Yeyi back hand manje...” (I will smack you.) She yells and misses when I dodge her hand the move throws me down on the bed. “I want this house clean in 30 minutes and those scones done in an hour. Another thing you're paying for the funeral because if those useless uncles of yours fail to contribute your mother will be buried like a dog. I'm not father Christmas.”

This demon from Sodom and Gomorrah. It's confirmed she hates everyone. I feel them... the tears are trying to push through my pupils. Two drops plummet from my eyes giving me no chance to negotiate the woman cackles... it's mocking and disrespectful.

“There's no time to cry save your tears for the funeral.” With that she walks out she will replace my door if she continues to bang it like that.

There's one person I can think of who will help me it's not something I am proud of. Tshilidzi has been taking care of my mother's hospital bills while I gave him my body in return.

Disgusting I know...

I hated it at first but grew into it with time one thing I still can't shake off is the pang of guilt I feel each time he takes a piece of me leaving my soul in darkness.

Desperate times call for desperate measures right? I'm not proud of myself the man has reduced me to nothing but a sex slave.

I leave the bed to get my phone from the charger and send the darn text...

'My mother is gone I need money for the funeral.'

Would you look at that? The fool just logged in as if he was waiting for me my blood boils as I see that he's typing.

'I'd love to help you but you know what you have to do sweetheart.'

Throw up that's what. I might as well dub myself a sex worker. I don't reply to his text I know where to meet him and have to be on time or I won't be getting anything.

*****©□

Chapter 13

RANDALL-

I didn't mean to treat her the way I did god knows I love that woman more than anything I have ever known. It's not a lie that what I saw has ruined me probably traumatised me for life. No man would be normal after seeing the woman he loves in bed with another man. Those people did not only taint Amara they tainted my ego as well.

It angered me even more when I couldn't kill them right there and perhaps that would've stroke my ego.

Three days have gone by and I'm losing my mind by the second not knowing anything is driving me insane. What really happened that

night and how is Styles not able to get the CCTV footage?

“You will go insane if you keep thoughts to yourself” he pulls me back from the fictitious world of thoughts. Something tells me Styles is a little rusty it’s been years since we’ve been in the game.

This man was always quick on his toes the soft life got to him. Being married to Sethu and raising Sihle has birthed dire consequences look at us looking like idiots. Our enemies are undoubtedly laughing.

“We’ve been driving for ten minutes now when are we getting to the stupid hospital?” I’ve been sitting in the car for about that amount of time but it feels like an eternity.

I’m sick of this car the lazy song emanating from the radio and Styles’ terrible driving skills. Since when does he qualify to drive old Mrs. Daisy? You would think we’re going to a funeral.

“Would you relax?” Styles shoots me a glare 'not everything has to be fast in life that's how people crash and burn... his mantra since Sethu and their daughter happened. Marriage should not change people this way. I want my friend back he's getting too old and slow for my liking.

“Relax?” Do I even have it in me to relax when my life is falling apart? First it's that bitch Caroline thinking she can blackmail me. If it wasn't for the hold she has on me I would've slit her throat the second she put me on a pedestal. And now I have to deal with my wife being molested.

“How can I relax when I feel like I'm losing my wife?” Yes I'm taking my anger out on Styles. Somebody has to receive what I spew out or I will explode with fury.

“Whose fault will that be Randall?” His question comes in a calm manner yet annoys me still.

“What are you talking about?”

“I saw what you did back at the hospital Amara is your wife not some girl from the streets.” His

tone is stern like a father chastising his rebellious son. I am not going to take it from him.

“I don’t want to talk about that right now” I tell him.

“I don’t believe you you say you’re afraid of losing her. Yet you sit on the throne of jerks.” Styles.

“I am not going to take insults from you Styles.”

“Fine do as you please. Don’t come crying to me when everything goes south.” Styles retorts.

“Nothing of that sort will happen I might have been too comfortable and let things slip out of my hand. I won’t let it happen again.”

“Are you sure?” I don’t like the condemnatory looks he keeps regarding me with. “After what she did to herself last night I don’t think you have things under control.”

Amara had a mental breakdown last night I was with Styles when I got a call from the hospital that she tried to take her life. We’re going through a storm right now I believe and we’re

going to be okay... she's going to be okay I just know it.

“I am going to protect my family I don't care what I have to do. They touched my wife Styles. That is something I'm never going to forgive they are all going to pay heftily.” My exclamation is a solemn promise one I intend to keep. “It's been too long since I've tasted blood maybe I can play with it a little before I accept that damn crown.”

“Oh! So you're considering it?” Styles asks disbelief lurking in his question. He's complained about my negligence for way too long he must be one happy bastard.

“What choice do I have? When my father died I knew that I would have to go back to Ghana and lead my people.”

“Well that's great news.” I called it. “My boy is growing up” I ignore his quip. He can be an idiot sometimes.

Styles takes a turn on Perth Rd I didn't think we were coming this side of Johannesburg.

“Really? Auckland Park?”

“The further away from you the safer she is.” He said she? I catch the pronoun and blink in confusion. As far as I remember there were two people in that hotel room.

“Don’t tell me you sent them to different hospitals. I’m not going to annihilate them... yet.” I say keeping my voice neutral. I won’t let death find them that easily. Styles steals a brief look before turning his gaze back to the road he’s such a careful driver it’s irking.

“The guy was dead when you arrived at the hotel he was stabbed and left to bleed to death. The blood you saw did not belong to Amara it was his.” Styles delivers as he drives through the gates of Helen Joseph hospital.

“But you told me they were both at the hospital.”

"I did."

“So Amara was...” part of a corpse sandwich? I mentally finish the nauseating statement.

“Whatever you’re thinking is true it had been hours since he died.” Styles interrupts. “Amara is traumatised already she should never find out

about this. Whoever is behind this shit is good they covered their tracks pretty well. I'm impressed actually no one has ever challenged me like this."

His tone is sadistic yet stained with a twinge of amusement.

"I want them dead Styles every one of them."

"I know me too." That's new he's always the one to put me in my place. "There's a wild fire Randy and someone keeps pouring gasoline with an intent to burn everything down someone is out there to destroy you. You were such a bastard back then that you earned yourself many enemies."

"Cowards you mean?"

Finding a parking space takes longer than anyone of us can endure the search is unsettled. I want to get in there interrogate the woman and go back to Amara. Sure I'm upset with her and may never be able to get over what I saw that night at the hotel but that doesn't mean I love her less.

"What about the girl? Who is she?" I ask.

He parks the car grabs his phone and hands it to me. There's a picture of a young black woman.

“Twenty five year old Thandaza Chitawo from Blantyre Malawi. She came to South Africa two years ago running away from an abusive husband. Got a Job at SABC as an intern I presume that's where she met Amara. Her contract ended six months later I managed to hack into her phone and all her social media accounts.”

“And?” He doesn't answer but steps out of the car. I follow behind trailing his slow steps.

“Typical Jesus freak shares and uploads nothing but bible verses. The girl is a ghost I couldn't find anything incriminating. She keeps her circle small most of her time is spent in the Lord's house.” He finds humour in his statement the light chortle has me shaking my head in amusement.

“It could be a cult she sounds too good to be true.”

I have come across the goody-too-shoes type they hide behind the thickest bible they could find and walk the earth like fallen angels.

“Maybe she is maybe she’s not. The pastor seems legit his background checks out. But just in case I missed a spot I asked Neo to do spring cleaning.” He cackles to an inside joke that has me standing at attention with curiosity. “He wasn’t happy about the job he said he’s moving to Ethiopia after this and will make sure we never find him.”

Why am I not surprised? “Let’s hear what this girl has to say.” My steps are suddenly faster it’s midday and I need to get to Amara before lunch.

We’re not allowed to enter her room apparently she’s in a comma and there’s a man dressed in foreign army clothes guarding the door. Styles pulls me aside when the doctor leaves us his brows are knitted together into a frown.

“Someone powerful is protecting this girl I’ve let my guard down Randall. This is bigger than I thought.” Yeah only now he says.

“I don’t care Styles we need to get in there. I didn’t come here for nothing” this is fucking bullshit.

“Something is off man she wasn’t in a comma a few hours ago. I need to make a call.” He pulls out his phone swipes it open and leaves me standing by the door. I can’t see anything from here there has to be a way to get into this room.

“I’d be damned” he’s back looking upset.

“What is it?” Defeat does not suit him I don’t like where things are going.

“Apparently someone reported her case to the Malawian embassy they are protecting her.” I am shocked by his revelation who is this girl?

“Let’s get out of here we’ll be back.”

Damn right we will.

This is definitely something I will never admit to anyone but I am terrified. Fear of the unknown has clung on to me and I have no idea how to shake it off.

AMARA-

There are voices in the room undertones and giggles. They are trying so hard to keep their voices soft but these are the same whispers that woke me up.

Great! I really don't feel like company especially not after how Randall treated me I almost died but he didn't show any concern instead looked at me like I am SA's most wanted criminal.

A tidal wave of emotions overwhelm me as my mind journeys back to a few days back it appears there is no escaping these thoughts. I'm afraid they will forever refuse to depart from me. To say my tears are stubborn is dry sarcasm really because they pleat up a lump balls on my throat.

Misguidedly I clear it and immediately hear a feminine voice say "She's awake."

The declaration forces me to open my eyes Sethu and Styles are looking at me. Randall is here too my eyes densely run to where he's standing and my heart sinks. He's gazing out the window with that annoying habit of tucking

his hands into the pockets of his pants. I have a feeling that he's been standing like that for a while now and has no intentions of turning around

The black clothing has defeated me I have come to terms with the fact that it is a part of him and no one can ever change that.

"Amara thank God. You had us worried

Sponsored

thank God. You had us worried how are you feeling?" Styles is trying to break the thick air in the room he feels it too. His dubious eyes keep finding Randall who's still looking out the window. Mine too what's he gazing at out there that he can't even look at me?

Sethu has moved to my side she must like these tight dresses.

"We're glad you're okay Amara you scared us." Sethu.

The smile on her face has not found me in the right frame of mind. My moods are doing a number on me.

"Randall was the most scared right Sethu?"

Styles intervenes.

His arm drapes around her waist he looks at her like she's the only woman in the world. I remember when Randall used to look at me like that it was also just a few days ago. Randall is starting to annoy me what happened to him? Did he suddenly become mute?

The smile hasn't left Sethu's face I smile back genuinely this time and again my eyes dart to Randall then back to her. She notices and clears her throat.

"I think we should leave you to rest Liya and R.J wanted to see you. I told them to come tomorrow." She says. I'm grateful for that I'm not in the right space to entertain them.

"It's good to see that you're okay Amara you should take care of yourself." Kind words from Styles.

They set out after bidding me goodbye leaving me with that man over there. I need to see his face hear his voice anything.

"Uze."

I don't know what to call him anymore or if baby would do. It feels like just yesterday when he

was asking me to use endearments when addressing him when we were happy and the future seemed bright. Now... now I'm standing in front of a tall black wall with nowhere to turn. My heart is thudding against my chest it feels like it wants to push right through my bones and skin.

“Are you going to talk to me or just stand there?”

I don't know if he will turn or the man is dead on the spot and if he does turn will I see those dark eyes I saw yesterday? I'm not sure I'm ready to have him look at me like that again it will just break whatever is left of me.

“Do you need anything?” Good! He still has a voice.

“N... no.” I want to say ‘you’.

“What happened to your wrist?” Okay he's going to interrogate me.

My eyes unconsciously run to the bandage on my wrists.

I had a little drama last night after I woke up from a nightmare I never thought those memories would be so imprinted in my head

that they would haunt me so much. The images didn't go away after I woke up I was reliving every single terrible event of that night. I don't know what happened to me but the next thing I was tearing this room apart looking for anything to wipe the disgust and anxiety away. Pills scissors or jump out the window.

The devil isn't so bad after all the bastard presented an opportunity and I took it. A pair of scissors were left abandoned in the bathroom I slit my wrist and hid my disgusting body under the shower. The last thing I remember is someone shouting 'she's in the bathroom' before blacking out.

"Are you in pain?" He asks... that tone?... Ai no.

"N... no." He has me stammering.

"Do you love me Amara?" Okay where is this coming from and where the hell is it going? Yes I love him. No one has ever loved anyone the way I love him he has become a big part of me and I can't imagine loving anyone else. But I don't tell him that. I'm at a loss for words my

bottom lip is quivering and the stupid tears are bullying my eyes.

He turns his hands are still jammed in the pockets of his pants and that look I dread is embracing his poker-face. His eyes are still dark and daunting as they were yesterday. He strolls towards the bed and my heart sinks to the depths of my soul.

Does he have to be so unfazed? I almost died for goodness' sake.

“I’m not going to repeat myself.” He grunts in a dark tone he’s scaring me. I’m a whimpering mess and I don’t know what to do or say. So I dig my nails into my palms an attempt to calm my nerves. That’s the only thing my brain can accommodate at the moment. What is wrong with me? I have been married to this man for nine years how am I suddenly petrified by his mere presence? The devil is a liar I refuse to give in.

“Are you going to leave me?” Cold-shouldering his question I throw him with one as well. I don’t know where it comes from his face remains

unmovable. He's standing there still glaring at me... Jesus fix this mess of a man you have given me.

He shouldn't forget what he did to me yesterday I'm still angry about that. I start playing with the bandage on my wrist and suddenly feel his hand on mine stopping me from fiddling with it. I look up at him and meet the scowl on his face. He lets go takes one step back raised brows calling me on my naivety.

I know that look he wants an answer and he hates being kept waiting.

"I- I do." Why am I stammering?

"You do what?" Great he wants me to spell it.

"I lo... love you." Yeah I'm a nervous wreck.

Maybe I'm afraid that he'll ask for a divorce maybe I'm reading too much into things.

Randall goes quiet on me for a second he's glaring. The look has me unsteady with fear this time not fear that he would hurt me but that I messed up and I just realized it.

"I love you too." Huh!

He says with the same dark tone well at least he said it. I'm still loved by him that's good.

"I have never loved anyone before you're the only woman that has managed to tame me. You're the only woman who has taught my heart to love never in a million years did I think I would find myself committed to anyone. I was a skirt chaser treated women like trash. I would sleep with them then humiliate and throw them away."

Okay! Why is he telling me this? I hate history I hated it at school and even more now that he's telling me this.

"But you... you came along Amara and made my heart a home. You taught me that a woman has to be respected and treated like a precious jewel. You changed my perception on women and for that I will forever be grateful to you and love you more."

Randall removes his hands from his pockets and hovers over me. For a second I'm thinking he's going to kiss me with the way his face is so close to mine but his dark eyes lack gentleness they hold on to the darkness.

He grabs one of my wrists it hurts so much that I wince in pain. I chase the soreness the bandage is red. I'm bleeding.

"Look at me" Randall demands his voice willing me to obey.

I raise my teary eyes they meet his unkind fiery gaze. Why aren't these witless tears doing their magic? The man who just declared his undying love for me just seconds ago is hurting me his face as dead as a rat from Alex.

"If you ever try to take your life again I will kill you Amara and wipe your existence off the face of the earth. It will look like you never existed even your family will forget they once had you. Don't ever test my love for you again because you do not want to find out how far I can go for it."

No no no. This is not my husband my Randall is not a psycho. He can be crazy but not this. I'm shocked... perplexed by his threats and I find myself nodding.

"That is not an answer" he hisses.

“Yes... I hear you.” I say as fast as I can so he lets go of my hand which he does leaving a burning pain where his hand had applied pressure. I don't know if I should be happy or scared that this man loves me this much. Any normal person would run and never look back but I love him.

It's not like he's abusive or anything he just loves me a tad bit too much while I complicate his life with my childish selfish behaviour and my stubbornness. His possessiveness is different he's dominant like nothing I had ever known he expects me to be submissive... report my every move. As hard headed as I am we are probably going to have a hard time.

Randall rings the buzzer seconds later a nurse dashes into the room.

“Her hand is bleeding.” That's all he says like he doesn't care he's back to the posture he was in a glower on his face and hands struck into his pouches.

“What happened sisi?” The nurse queries she looks irritated and pissed. Thinking Randall will answer my eyes run to him. One day when I get

to heaven I will make sure to ask God what was on his mind when he created men because wow. He is standing all potent and mighty in all his splendour and you know what? It's the black clothes yes I am changing his wardrobe. Not in my house Satan you will not rule.

“It was itchy I couldn't help but scratch.”

Yes I'm still stupid.

“You shouldn't scratch sisi I can't keep coming here to fix your bandage hau. You're not the only patient here haibo! This is the problem with you rich...” the complaints fly in.

The nurse changes the bandage while mumbling words I can't make out and when she's done walks out slamming the door behind her. Honestly I don't care about her. It's this man I'm worried about I'm failing to understand how he can be so angry yet still remain calm. Not once has he yelled screamed or shouted since he opened his mouth.

“Are you okay? The baby?” This man has got to be kidding me.

“I’m hungry.”

“You haven’t eaten anything proper in days they were supposed to bring you food this morning.”

He says.

I’m not sure who ‘they’ are but I’m guessing the hospital staff.

“They did it made me want to throw up so I didn’t eat.” Randall always looks at me like my brain is filled with water.

“I’ll ask Styles to get you something.”

“No don’t bother him please. I’ll wait for lunch I’m sure the lunch is not as bad as the breakfast.” I flash in a smile he doesn’t return it. His gaze lingers on me he’s studying my eyes as if to see beyond my soul.

He makes the call to Styles sometimes I forget stubbornness runs in his veins.

“Yeah... Please get Amara something to eat... who?... What? ...”

He makes a slight cluck of frustration his basic mentality has suddenly come out to play. What did Styles say? This man was starting to loosen up. Gosh!

“It’s okay it was bound to happen...” he says as his eyes run down to my belly then back to my face. “No let them be I’ll sort it out...”

Randall drops the call and the sigh he emits shouts ‘aggravation’ the way he rubs his forehead tells me he’s one nervous man. “Your uncles are here” finally he speaks. Uncle Jonas probably has a machete with him I would run if I were Randall.

Chapter 14

AMARA-

The door opens I see uncle Jonas first then uncle Mhambi and aunt Petunia follow in behind him. They stand on the left side of the bed while Randall is on the right uncle Jonas is... well... uncle Jonas.

This uncle better not be here to start trouble he doesn’t look happy to see Randall. I can’t twig this part right here was he not the one who accepted lobola from this man towering over

everyone in this room? I don't understand what else he wants.

Like a good son in-law Randall composes himself. God I'm a sinner but not a bad- bad sinner. Maybe ninety nine percent one and one percent good; that should count for something right?

"Mashenge!" Uncle Jonas salutes the look in his eyes says he hates seeing me in here. I appreciate the love he has for me.

"Shenge Sokwalisa. Oh Jehova bawo." (Clan praises)

There is absolutely no reason for my aunt to be so dramatic then again this is Petunia Buthelezi. "Oh my child what have you done to yourself?"

Damn I forgot to ask Randall what he told them. Do they also think I was hijacked or they know about the attempted suicide?

"I'm fine aunty" maybe I shouldn't have said anything. Her eyes are reproaching.

“You are fine? I didn’t ask how you’re doing Mashenge how could you be so careless? Yazi uzofa Amara uzofa?” (You will die.)

Her voice rises it borders on crossness and discontent.

“You think you have the right to take your life? Are you God now Mashege? What did you think was going to happen to your children?” She’s not going to stop is she?

I look to Randall for assistance then again I’m wasting my time. This woman is his cheerleader he probably wouldn’t want to get into her bad books.

“Kwanele nkosikazi.” (That’s enough.)

Thank you uncle Mhambi dammit I love this man. If it weren’t for the hand he just placed on her shoulder she would continue chiding me.

“My child how are you? We came to see you yesterday but you were sleeping.” Uncle Mhambi says voice so gentle it touches my heart. This man not only looks and talks like my father but he reminds me of him. His attributes

how he cares and loves me like I were his daughter.

“I’m fine baba” I tell him. A smile graces his face as he looks at Randall.

I hope he’s planning on acknowledging the family he must shove his anger into those pockets he’s always digging his hands into.

“Greetings!” Randall salutes he’s trying to look okay but I know he’s not.

“Mfana.” (Boy)

Mfana? Mfa... Sigh!

Did this uncle just call my husband a boy?

Uncle Jonas though what is his problem?

“How are you uncle?” That’s my polite husband don’t mind my words. I’m that wife...

Randall extends his hand out for a hand shake but Jan Van Riebeeck just looks at it completely flouting him. I see Randall blink away the disappointment before clearing his throat and does that thing he always does that disrespectful thing. His hands shy away and hide in his pockets I wish he can stop and try to respect these men.

My aunt is not a happy mother in-law if she could she would shake Randall's hand just to show him that he matters in this family hence the nudge she's giving uncle Mhambi.

The tension in the room is thick and I don't like it. Everything is going wrong I need to speak to my aunt find out what the antagonism towards my husband is about.

"Okolie!" Uncle Jonas.

At least he didn't call him boy again but why is he shaking his head? This can't be good.

"I don't like you" can we gag this uncle already?

I thought he approved of him Randall isn't going anywhere and my uncle has to get used to him. He'd say the same thing I just know.

My eyes search for Randall he's blank so my gaze travels back to the old man who's glaring at the father of his grandkids like he wants to murder him.

"Bafo now is not the time." Uncle Mhambi intervenes he's against whatever his brother is doing.

“No bafo. We entrusted him with our daughter and this happens? Should we count ourselves lucky that she is not dead? Nonsense!” Jonas. “But she’s alive bafo we should be grateful for that.” Beautiful words from my favourite uncle I’m buying this one Ferrero Rocher. I hear old people love chocolates.

“It’s not his fault malume I was...” that’s me of course I have to fight for this man I call a husband. However I don’t get to finish my excuses because uncle Jonas shuts me up with a raised hand.

“We will talk about this some other time Mashenge right now focus on getting better so we can take you back home. You need to spend time with us Amara for your sanity.” Maybe S’dumo would have made a better uncle I’m exhausted... spent. Is he trying to ruin my marriage?

“Home?” I ask mouth ajar and eyes dewy. Bear in mind that’s where I was molested my whole life. Sure I can do visits as long as I get to go

back to my house to Randall and the kids. Spending the night at Moses' house will awaken old wounds.

“She’s not going back there” an imposing tone swans into the room his unyielding eyes are riveted on the stubborn uncle.

No no Randall no. You don’t know this man standing in front you be angry but keep it tucked away. Smile like an idiot in front of him if you have to I don’t want my uncle hating on the man I’m married to. Our eyes meet I shake my head to get him to calm down but he’s not getting the message. Instead looks at me briefly then back at uncle Jonas straight-faced and eyes as cold as a mid-winter’s night.

It’s over I am done.

“What the hell did you say boy?” Yoh! Uncle Jonas.

Lord send an earthquake Noah’s flood even Pharoah will do.

“Do not call me boy and Amara is not going anywhere with you.”

Forget Pharoah I never liked him anyway. Take me now Lord these people are trying to kill me. Can Randall just lose that daunting tone? He's making things worse.

"Amara is our child and she is coming home with us" my uncle deadpans.

"Amara is an Okolie now have you forgotten that uncle?" Randall reminds him of the obvious truth it's the way he says it that does not go down well. I hate this tug of war they are playing and Mhambi is quiet. One thing I know about my uncle Mhambi is that he loves peace. Plus Jonas is his elder brother even if he wants to he can't argue with him.

Someone is breathing heavily in this room it's my aunt. She's on the verge of calling uncle Jonas out on his dictatorship the look she keeps giving him when he's not looking is something to be afraid of. If you want to be in her good books leave Randall alone.

"We didn't come here for this bhuti please calm down. Fighting will only crack the strong bond we have built with the Okolies." She was bound

to add her opinion which is very much appreciated.

“Please stop Randall don’t argue with him please.” I plead with him his head gradually moves back and forth in total disagreement.

Can his anger pass already? I miss the old Randall he’s with me right now but his heart is locked up somewhere else. Knowing Randall he’s not willing to back down.

Also it’s that glare and the clenched jaw and the anger scraped on his face. The hands that still linger in his pockets there must be gold in there. Why else would he take such a standpoint in front of my uncles?

“Sir with all due respect.” That’s a nice way of saying ‘I’m about to disrespect you

Sponsored

with all due respect.” That’s a nice way of saying ‘I’m about to disrespect you so brace yourself.’

“Amara is my wife I believe I pointed this out the last time we spoke. She belongs with me and

our children I don't understand how you think you have a right over her." Randall retorts. What did I say? Maybe he would sound less disrespectful if his voice were a little louder. The soft tone he's using is so wrong arrogant and hostile.

"Are you saying I have no right over my daughter boy?"

He's still calling him boy this only means he will never accept him.

My uncle Jonas is a gentle human I've seen him. He loves people and the fact that he cannot gel with Randall means he never will. It also means I'm doomed no way am I living without this man. I refuse. Uncle Mhambi has found a chair to sit on he's depleted and I don't blame him. Of course his wife moves with him she's standing beside him like a security guard. "I would never entertain such thoughts uncle."

Randall sounding human thank God.

"Then why..."

"Malume please" I interpose I'm not trying to experience another mental breakdown. "Cut him some slack Randall is a good husband.

He's a good man we're married malume. You can't keep talking to him like this.”

His irritation flares as he crosses his arms anger is not for old people.

“Mashenge you would not be in this hospital bed if your husband was as good as you say. You almost died and I will not let that happen again. If I have to keep you away from him then so be it your safety comes first.” Okay who is supplying my uncle with nyaope? I have to intervene it's getting out of hand.

“Malume I don't know what you really mean by the things you're saying. But I can't let you do this you know I'm married to this man. He has rights over me please stop.” He turns his gaze to me and huffs I think he's trying really hard to behave.

“I have said my part and I will not argue with anyone about this one day all of you will mark my words.” Bitter words escape uncle Jonas' lips. I have one thing to say about that... back to sender.

Randall looks like he's over everything. He looks defeated by this stubborn uncle no one has ever stood up to him before and seeing him tongue tied like this just proves to me that no one can defeat Jonas Buthelezi. He will never let it happen this man is... he's... let me not ponder upon that.

"I think we should leave bafo you need a breather." Uncle Mhambi is my guardian angel... get your brother out of here.

"We'll be back to see you again Mashenge" the stubborn uncle promises. Oh it's a promise alright.

"Get well soon ntombazane and stop getting yourself into trouble." Ah yes only my aunt would think everything is my fault. Uncle Mhambi strokes my hair with love-filled eyes he's not going to say the words. However I know he loves me.

The minute they shut the door behind them the husband exhales deeply. He's frustrated I watch him as he slowly paces around the room. He better not be planning something against my uncle.

“Are you okay?” I ask.

His feet take rest he pivots on his heel and glances over at me with daggers shooting faster than bullets at war. A sadistic smirk grazes his lips his pupils dilate as his eyes become dark. A bone-chilling expression I’m yet to figure out what it means.

“Your uncle is a funny old man” he delivers his sally with a dark tone. What is running through this man’s head? My brain will explode with all this thinking.

ZITHA-

It’s been over a week since I buried my mother I say ‘I’ because my aunt kept to her promise. She didn’t contribute a single cent to the burial including her other siblings. Toxic family.

Tshilidzi came through for me and that was after he got what he wanted he wouldn’t let me go that night as he went on and on savaging my body. He hit me when I protested that I was tired and sore the bastard didn’t care. I was dropped home around 4am and had to sleep at

Ulwazi's house friends that are there when days are dark.

My mother just died and there I was sleeping with a man I don't even love I still cringe at the thought of him touching me.

Is it possible to drop dead from a broken heart? Nothing compares to a mother's absence in one's life I don't care how old you are. I feel the void her absence cuts deeper than a sharp blade. She was my first love my best friend. The one who taught me how to live but didn't teach me how to live without her.

My aunt's house feels like a mortuary it's cold and eerie from the second you walk through the gate. Although mom was bedridden her warmth still filled that house.

For some reason someone out there or up there still wants me in this world. But I'm tired I don't have the strength to carry on.

Tshilidzi has been distant and I'm not complaining I've been thinking of breaking things with him. But I can't that man will slice

me into pieces. He once told me that if I leave him he will kill me before he lets another man have me. He factually told me that I am his little obsession and he will never let me go.

The sight of him lately makes my insides churn the sound of his voice and everything about him is revolting.

“It must be nice being you hey?” My aunt’s contemptuous voice pulls me out of the world I have locked myself in my eyes find her standing in the kitchen doorway. Hands pasted to her waist eyes piercing and stone cold.

“My pots are burning and you’re busy day dreaming” her voice is glazed with violence and brimming with hostility.

“Zitha don’t test me... don’t test me Zithobile Mthombeni.”

What the hell? The stupid pots are not burning.

“Sorry aunty” I’m not.

To have her stop from damaging my eardrums I check the food. Everything looks fine to me

everything but her. I can see her ogling at me from my vantage point and turn to face her. How can a woman hate her sister's child? This part does not make sense to me.

“Sorry my foot. Go buy cold drink at the garage I'll watch the pots. And don't buy at the Indian shop I know the difference.” She barks she's always shouting. I think she's forgotten how to speak like a normal person.

“Yebo antiza” (yes aunt) there's dry sarcasm in my voice. She hands me the exact amount of cold drink twenty five rand.

“Buy Fanta orange and I want my change if there's any.”

“There won't be change aunty” what is she talking about?

“If there is change I want it Zitha. I'm not an atm siyezwana.” She argues.

All this for ten cents change? Jesus is coming...

“Yes comrade” my feet carry me out the kitchen door just as she shouts after me.

“Voetsek!” That woman is loud. (Piss off) It’s a Sunday today other people’s aunts are at church.

The sun is hot and I still have fifteen minutes of walking I should have brought an umbrella. How did I forget it? Sunburn is a severe risk for my skin condition

Phathu once convinced me that no man will marry a girl like me they’ll just puff and pass whatever that meant.

I never had a boyfriend in high school while my friends changed them like they change their WhatsApp statuses.

Five minutes into my walk I notice a black Range Rover Sport with tinted windows driving behind me this is not the first time seeing it. I started spotting it the day my mother was buried I first saw it at the church then at the burial site.

The reason I took notice of it is because no one in my family has such a car we are not that fortunate.

My uncles hired taxis when they came to the funeral the important family members drive old bakkies. They are important because having a car with your name on it is considered an achievement in the Mthombeni family. I know two who travel with bicycles to work their opinions don't matter during family meetings. Their job is to sit quietly at a corner and chew chicken bones.

The car drives slowly behind me I'm not afraid of it anymore and I have a feeling the driver is not afraid of me as well considering how he's unashamedly following me. If whoever is in there wanted to kidnap me they would have done it already.

"Excuse me ousie" a little boy materializes from behind me I hate being poked. "They said I should give you this" he hands me a black umbrella.

"Who?" He points at the car it drives off just as I turn to look at it.

Okay that's... weird. I don't believe in witchcraft or the supernatural so I reluctantly take the umbrella my skin needs to be protected.

***** ©

Chapter 15

ZITHA-

Today is the day I will lose my life my aunt is not going to spare me. Well at least I plan on going back home unlike those fathers who go to buy cigarettes and lose their way home only to return thirty years later.

Unfortunately I met the devil on my way home from the petrol station. He got me to get in his car and because I'm not free from the shackles he's bound me with I followed him to hell.

I hate this hotel or is it a motel? Of all the hotels in Johannesburg this is where we meet when he wants to do it in bed. We're at Royal Crown Guesthouse in Yeoville you heard right.

Tshilidzi is dead drunk he's snoring like the drunkard he is and I have exhausted myself trying to get him to wake up. He has to take me back home.

It's past 8pm I don't know how I will get home. I had to switch off my phone after receiving

multiple calls and texts from my aunt. The woman has a way with her tongue ordered straight from hell.

Searching Tshilidzi's pockets I find R50. It will be enough to get me home. A taxi from Yeoville to Noord is probably R7 the only thing I have with me is my phone and the umbrella I grab those and run out of the damned place. Jesus I feel like a prostitute. My mother must be turning in her grave.

Now that I'm in a taxi I conjure up the courage to switch my phone on. It rings immediately I'm embarrassed by the stupid ringtone. 'Sister Bettina' was once a song of the decade these taxi commuters have no right to look at me like I'm giving the driver a lap dance.

"What?" I ask the old lady seated next to me she has condemned my very existence and ancestors with that look. I pay her no attention and swipe the phone to answer.

"Aunty don't call Khumbulekhaya I'm on my way." I'm trying to soften her hard heart not that it's possible. (Local TV show.)

“Don’t bother coming home wenja sleep wherever you are. Slyness has consequences Zitha you will reap what you sow.” And with that she drops the call on me. She’s bluffing if I don’t go home where will I go?

As usual the queues are long and there are no taxis at Noord. It’s too late to take a taxi to Bree taxi drivers are more serious about their work on that side of the world.

They have more nyaope (weed) boys here than they have taxis one of them is looking at me. How do I forget not to take out my phone in this place? I push it inside my bra and cross my arms this umbrella will come in handy should he try anything.

“Don’t you have two rand for me my ma se kind.” He says.

I am not his mother’s child and why is he standing too close? I start to move away and bump the man standing in front of me. He turns with a serious tongue click he watches too many Nigerian movies this one. I give him an apologetic look... the nyaope boy is still here.

I'm not comfortable with how he's looking at me.

"I don't have money" can he move to the next person already?

"Is dit so? You're carrying such an expensive phone mos?" He says.

Why am I his target again?

"Did your grandmother buy it for me?" He frowns at my question.

"Chill ma se kind" if he calls me ma se kind one more time... "I'm only asking for..."

"I said I don't have hau?" My voice rises and of course everyone judges me with their stares. Shouldn't they be helping me or something?

"Get out of here you short shit" I slightly turn in search of the man who just scared the hobo away. How does God make them so tall and enthralling? My mouth drops don't drool Zitha it's disgusting.

He's staring with a frown carved on his face the bright yellow spoti-pantsula hat catches my attention. Who would miss it with that blaring colour?

“Why do you entertain him? Does he interest you?” I’m baffled by his question stupid is too tame a word to describe him and this pantsula outfit he has on.

“Forget about me what about you? I thought we left amaTrompies back in the 90’s.” Yes I said it how dare he insult me. His brows elevate his eyes are confused a jiffy. I think he’s getting it because they run down his body and a smirk leans on the left side of his face.

“Smart mouth” he scoffs and shakes his head in disbelief before turning to everyone in the queue. “Three people going to extension 4 get in that white car.”

His hand points to the left while I follow the direction of his hand a stampede takes place. Almost everyone in the queue rushes to the Toyota Yaris I hear a chuckle. It’s the pantsula freak he’s glancing at me eyes calling me thoughtless.

“You’re so slow yeses.” He quips this man is more annoying than that nyaope boy. “Ngicela ungene emotweni” (Please get in the car.)

“In case you haven’t noticed there are five people cramped inside your car.” I squelch.

God-knows I need a ride these taxis will take forever. He doesn’t observe what I tell him but starts walking towards his car.

“Let’s go” he yells when he’s out of earshot.

I have a crazy aunt who is probably standing on the rooftop screaming my name I need to rush home now. Here I am following a stranger how we’re going to fit inside that car; only heaven knows. Three women and two men are confined inside they look so ready to go home and the look on their faces say they are not getting out come hell or high waters. Maybe they haven’t met the stubbornness of a taxi driver or is he a taxi marshal?

What the heck?

There’s more of us if he is a serial killer I’ll be running for my life while he kills his first victim and it sure won’t be me.

I’m standing behind this tall man waiting for him to put his plan into action. As he opens the passenger door a chubby woman leers at him.

“Get out” his voice is gentle as he says this. However dissatisfaction covers the lady’s face. I don’t see the look he regards her with but shame moves smoothly over her face. She hugs her big handbag to her chest and leaps out of the car. I’m told to sit inside before he orders one more person out. There are four of us now I don’t quite know what’s going on. Why this man chose me... favour is not fair but someone’s got to have it hey?

Maybe he’ll ask for my number he’s eye candy and my number familiarises with such men. Although they never call me back... we’re finally moving thank God.

“The name is Siphon and yes you’re paying” it comes out as an order. It doesn’t take long for the money to move forward I collect it. Siphon frowns when I hand it to him I’m not sure what I did wrong.

“Your money” he better take it I don’t want to be accused of theft.

“That’s yours” what?

“Why?”

“Just keep it” his tone is dismissive. The passengers don’t hear him because he keeps his voice low.

“Is this your way of asking me out? You can just ask for my number and I’ll...”

“You’re not my type” he intrudes and his serious facial countenance tells me he’s not playing. Was Tshilidzi right about men not wanting me? I am offended honestly the nerve to say it without any hesitation.

“Then why are you giving me this?” I’m angry and make sure he hears the anger in my voice.

“I’m only doing a favour for someone just take the money and stop asking me questions.” This man is rude I don’t like him... anymore.

“Is it Tshilidzi? This must be his way of apologising for being an asshole is this how little he thinks of me? A lousy R80 that won’t even buy me a pair of decent shoes from Small Street.”

These are thoughts that unconsciously escape my mouth Siphon considers me with a black stare. My words seem to have angered him his

jawline clamps and his hands tighten around the steering wheel now we're speeding on the freeway. I take the money it's not like I have any. Maybe I can bribe my aunt with it.

We are in Orange Farm in less than thirty minutes he drops the three passengers at a robot. They are told to walk while I'm taken to the gate of my aunt's house.

"Tell Tshilidzi I said apology not accepted" with an attitude I shut the door. Siphon speeds off he didn't look happy with my statement.

The lights are out and I don't have my keys with me I walk through the gate thinking of a lie to tell my aunt. The living room window opens just as I'm about to knock my aunt's angry face appears. She's wearing sleepwear and a black stocking on her head.

"Go back where you came from" she spits. I pull the saddest face I could and dash to the window.

"Aunty I'm sorry. I was kidnapped by two men on my way to the garage they took your twenty five rand and..."

“I said go back wherever you came from if you knock on this door again I won’t spare you.” A grim expression swipes across her cold face.

“You should have died with your mother that useless woman left me with a burden... uthuvi” (Shit.)

Her words sting but I don’t let them faze me. My biggest worry at the moment is finding a place to sleep.

When she’s satisfied with herself she closes the window. I’m not one to hate on people but my aunt is pushing it.

Life can be brutal and unforgiving I must have done something wrong in my past life. Ulwazi is probably tired of me

Sponsored

my walk of shame to her house takes less than five minutes she doesn’t ask questions when she opens the door but lets me in.

AMARA-

I can't really say it's good to be home it doesn't feel like home at all. Things are never going to be the same again the tension that dwells amongst us is a thorn in our flesh.

It's a Friday and Randall didn't go to work today I haven't seen him since we had a silent breakfast this morning. The man is throwing tantrums I'm the one who was molested. I didn't ask for it yet he acts like I cheated. His silence is killing me and I can't take it anymore. I have to swallow my pride and finally apologise to the man or else he will sulk till we grow old.

I'm craving pap so that's what I'm making for supper and it is after all his favourite meal. He's been locked up in our bedroom and I miss him so much. He sure knows how to go quiet on someone jeer he definitely deserves an Oscar.

I'm done preparing supper and I need to find Randall we haven't spoken about that night. My feet are telling me to stop as I troll up the flight of stairs to find him it baffles me how I'm suddenly afraid of him. It must be his stony deportment and the dark fire in his eyes.

I'm outside the bedroom and my heart is thumping against my chest it's so quiet like no one's in there. I can hear the soothing sounds of jazz music playing softly at least he's still alive. But since when does this man listen to jazz?

I hope no woman has anything to do with it I cringe at the thought of it.

I need to control my breathing first I do that then knock.

Whoah! My heart just did a funny thing there as the thought of hearing his voice crosses my mind.

Relax Amara relax. There's no answer so I go in. Suddenly I'm nervous. My stomach churns it happens a lot when I'm nervous.

He's sitting on an antique wood arm-chair a glass of whiskey gripped in his hand. His head is bowed and has a fist plastered to his chin. The black clothes he has on add to the gloomy mood in this room.

One day just one day I am going to burn those clothes.

I take one step in leaving the door open my body trembles as I don't know what to expect. The last time I tried to speak to him he was irritable his anger scares me sometimes. I'm thinking he's going to look up upon feeling my presence in the room but I'm lying to myself. Desperate for his attention I plod towards him.

The wooden tiles sing to my bare feet making soft thumping sounds it's the sweat caused by my nervousness. My eyes are on him hoping he looks up. I'm half way there when he does and... Shit!!! The look in his eyes makes me want to turn back.

A look that says 'get the fuck out' so I stop to rethink my decision is this what our marriage is going to be like? He instils fear in me and I tremble and stay out of his way lest the animal in him is let loose?

No Amara you have to be brave you can't go back now. You have come so far might as well finish what you started. I know I should back out and let him calm down knowing how angry he is but I need to talk to him and my heart is stubborn it won't let me leave.

His compassionless dark eyes are piercing through my soul but that doesn't stop me from plodding towards him. I need to apologize I need to feel him.

The moment I get to him I straddle him without wasting anytime he allows me and I almost sigh in relief.

My forehead lightly presses against his it feels good to smell and feel this man. To bask in the moment my eyes shut close while my arms circle his neck. His scent deliciously fills my nostrils and in a subsequent amount of time his strong big hand touches my waist. A smile almost creeps up on my face but it's quickly replaced by a tear.

It feels so good to be held by him after so much time of yearning for his touch my heart jumps with joy as I feel his other hand on my waist.

I guess he put the glass of whiskey on the table and just when I think he's about to hold me in that long vindicated hug I have been craving for he stands up with me still straddling him. My arms are still around his neck he gently

places me down. Slightly pushes me to the side and walks away leaving me in utter disbelief. I can't let him walk away again it's bloody exhausting.

"That night..." his feet falter at my words he doesn't turn though. I have to continue we can't keep living like this. It will break our marriage.

"My friend called me she was in trouble and... I had to help her."

Randall turns around and I leisurely regret saying anything at his stare down he crosses his arms and with the coldest tone says;

"Is that a good enough reason to leave our anniversary party and attend to your so-called friend?"

"She was in trouble Randall and..."

"I am not disputing that Amara the least you could have done was tell me."

"I knew you wouldn't let me go."

"Damn right I wouldn't have let you go." He snaps as his words barely escape his mouth.

“This is the problem Randall” I yell his ignorance irks me so much. “You order my steps I have to move at your beck and call.”

“Where am I wrong in that Amara?” He steps forward and I have to ground myself so I don’t stagger I must have offended him with my words his gaze is chiding. “You know where you come from what you’ve been through. Haven’t you learnt anything from your past Amara? The enemies that are watching us like hawks waiting for a chance to strike? How stupid can you be?”

“Don’t you ever talk to me like that again I am your wife.” I bark.

How could he say that to me?

“Then start acting like it” the remark grinds out of his mouth. He’s hurting me with his indifference and he doesn’t even realise it. “Not only did you get yourself in deep shit you were fucking molested Amara.”

“I know that” if you would ask me the taste of anger I would tell you. This man does not

regard my feelings when he speaks he's an insensitive bastard. "I was there I remember every bloody disgusting thing done to me and I hate myself for it. But you don't have to be a bastard about it can't you at least pretend to care? Not so long ago you were begging me to understand you won't you do the same for me?"

"I'm sorry if I'm not perfect Amara I'm sorry that I did not clap after seeing you naked in bed with another man?" The words are out there they hurt and I will never forgive him for this.

The sting in my heart has me slapping him across the face his head barely moves but my hand hurts like hell. Shock covers his hard face his eyes widen as if he can't believe what I just did. I can't believe it either I have never in my life laid a hand on this man. I want to take it back but also want him to writhe in pain.

"Amara?" Disbelieve seeps out of his mouth.

"Why are you saying these things to me Randall?" I'm shouting also taking advantage of the fact that we're home alone. "Have I not been a good wife to you? I have done nothing

but respect you and you go and say such things to me? How could you be so heartless?"

"Amara..." I move back as his hand attempts to grab me.

"You have no right to touch me" I sizzle frustrated and boiling with anger. "I know I messed up I'm not stupid like you deem me. That shit happened to me Randall. I can't look myself in the mirror without seeing those people harassing me I'm disgusted by my own body. I've lost my sleep and about close to losing my mind. But unlike you I'm trying to make this marriage work and I expect you as my husband to meet me half way dammit. But all you do is give me silent treatments throw slurs at me and act like a five year old."

"Are you calling me childish Amara?" He keeps his voice neutral and I am going to scream if he continues like this.

"I'm done" I snort in defeat and scepticism.

"That's all that got through to you in everything I have said?"

A scream is what I offer as I try to push past him he grips my arms and pulls me back into the room.

“We’re not done talking don’t walk away from me Amara.” A growl surges out of his mouth a dark flame residing in his eyes. I don’t know this man standing before me.

“I say... we’re done” I’m not usually ratty.

Randall acknowledges my reluctant response with a deep sigh and nothing further.

“Maybe we shouldn’t have gotten married” anger must be an enemy because here it is destroying us. His jaw clamps at my words eyes indecipherable his face is so impassive.

I can’t see his heart neither can I feel it. His poise straightens hands find their favourite place and he takes a step back that the small distance between us births fear in my bleeding heart.

“Maybe... we shouldn’t have” his words are a bucket of water on a fire so quickly they extinguish my blazing heart. Anger ceases to live in it but excruciating pain.

Honestly I didn't expect him to say it back he looks at me like the fire in his eyes has been stub out with water if anything it makes the brown in his eyes more pale. I'm not used to it as it frightens me.

Shock widens my eyes and my heart screams in agony when he turns around and walks out of the room. He bangs the door with so much force that the windows cluck at the impact I'm not going to cry... I don't want to cry. But here I am seated flat on the floor with wet eyes and the sound of a broken heart echoing in the room.

***** ©

Chapter 16

AMARA-

Ever since Chioma went back to Nigeria taking care of the house has been nothing but strenuous. She worked for Randall before I came into his life he and Styles found a mother figure in her and so did my kids. No one takes care of this house better than she does I will

need to find a temporary replacement until Chioma is ready to come back.

The click of the door opening and closing sounds so familiar it has my heart leaping to my throat he's home. Two days have passed since the argument and no one has dared to mention it once we carried on with life as if nothing happened.

Negative actions create negative chaos and negative chaos is destructive. When I look at the situation between us I see these simple truths at the heart of the matter. We're at a cliff and no one is holding the other's hand lest we fall and burn I'm tired of the anguish. It has to stop if only Randall could meet me centrally.

"You know I didn't mean it right?" I jump at the sound of his voice and turn from the stove to face him.

"Randall!" He frowns at my reaction.

"Were you expecting someone else?" He regards me with a suspicious look like he caught me committing a sin. Seriously?

“No you startled me.” Why am I alarmed again? Oh yes this man has not said anything to me in days.

He’s toddling towards me I have no idea what to expect. If only his eyes could tell me what’s on his mind I’m stationery on the ground with no plans to move. My eyes follow his face until he’s standing in front of me so close I could smell and touch him. The heart flips when he leans down to steal a kiss for the life of me I did not expect this. My stupid- self gasps for air when he pulls out.

And in this moment I’m reminded of the words we shot at each other words said out of anger and a pang of guilt flashes over me.

“I don’t regret marrying you I don’t regret us.” He murmurs glancing down at me. He hasn’t touched me yet his hands are hidden on his back. “This thing that we have is beautiful and I’m glad you’re my wife.”

“I don’t regret it too” I confess.

What is happening with this man and his mood swings?

The happy moment quickly transitions into awkward silence I can count times this has happened. The difference now is that he's looking into my eyes his eyes are blankly impenetrable. However they aren't as cold and eerie. Hastily a hand casually presses on my lower abdomen. For the first time he's touching the obscure tummy his fingers gently caressing it. I'm not going to be emotional over this I'm now certain that he will not abandon the baby. "Octuplets." Did he just say what I think he said?

Forget the excitement running through my veins. "That's not going to happen" my protest plants a smug look on his face.

"Everybody is doing it you know?" I want to return that subtle smile but my mind is still collecting data.

"Who's everybody and since when does Randall Okolie follow what people do? I thought you were a trend setter?"

"I read about a woman who had ten other people's husbands are lucky I wonder how they

do it...” He steps back crosses his arms on his chest. He better be kidding about this...

“Then ask that woman to give you ten babies” bad joke I scold myself mentally. His eyes are dubious a while clearing his throat Randall racks a hand on his nape.

“I think the best part about having kids with the woman you love is that she’ll nature them in her stomach with so much love.” His hand finds my cheek the touch is soft and gentle like his words. “I can’t wait I can just see them running around the house making so much noise. They are going to be the happiest bunch.”

Great everything was going perfect. He just had to put weight on the pronoun.

“Randall Okolie we are not having octuplets.”

He’s laughing it’s light but here and I love it.

“Come sit with me” okay we’re serious again.

“What’s wrong?” I hope this is not another fight coming. “I have to finish up here.”

“Leave that and come to the living room” he says.

I don’t gripe when he takes my hand and leads us to the lounge. My palms are sweaty nerves

start to dominate over me as I position myself on the couch next to him.

“Tell me about this Thandaza woman” his beginning has me wriggling on the seat. The mention of her creates a rift between us and I am tired of fighting with him. “What is she to you?”

“We worked together she was an intern. She would buy me coffee every morning and I thought it was sweet of her that’s how we became acquainted.”

“What else do you know about her?”

“Uh! Well... she’s married back in Malawi her husband is here though. He’s after her life she’s been on the run for a while now.” It doesn’t look like he believes the story I’m telling him.

“I see” that’s all he offers.

His hands start to trail my arms as he nuzzles his nose into my neck my skin feels overheated at his touch. He guides me to straddle him his fingers are experimental. I’m not complaining this is what I need.

“I have missed you” he confesses lips wandering on my neck and collarbone.

“Not as much as I have missed you” a breathy moan comes out of my mouth.

His arms are tightly wrapped around me the feeling is overwhelming. He’s slowly stroking my back the gentle touch is driving me insane yet it is calming and brings me so much peace.

“I created a mess and I’m sorry can we go back to being us?” I request.

My hands nestle his face his eyes are normal again reflecting nothing but love.

“Just so you know that’s not what I have been waiting for.” He says.

I thought he was waiting for an apology.

“We’re going to work through this together I’m not losing you Amara. At first I was so angry that you left the house without informing me only to find you...” he stops his gaze irresolute before he looks at me again. “So much has happened and it’s all driving me insane I thought it best to stay away from you because I was afraid of what I might do to you out of anger.”

Okay! Is that supposed to make me feel better? Why does his love have to be dangerous and possessive? Can't he be like other men out there?

"I'm not perfect and I can't do this without you. I don't want to go back to the man I was before I consumed your love portion only you can help me be a better person. Make me feel good me hemma" (My queen.)

Randall places his hands under my shirt and reaches for my breasts the lustful smirk on his face causes me to frown debatably.

"And then?" I want to know what's going on in that brain of his his lips press against my throat and a soft moan slips out of my tongue. His mouth leaves hot kisses on my throat compelling me to tilt my head back in order to give him more access.

I can do this I know I can. He's my husband not those men... he loves me and would never hurt me this I am certain of.

But I can't shrug away the images of that night as he continues to worship my body with

kisses. My build stiffens it's a slight jolt that he barely picks up. He stops and my heart screams as our eyes meet I'm afraid that he will notice how uncomfortable I have become. However his eyes are lustful promising and expectant.

"MaShenge" he's never called me that before. "Clearly you can't be sitting on my lap like this and not expect me to get aroused?"

This is the Randall Okolie I know.

"Aroused?" I ask trying not to burst into an embarrassing horse laugh. A ghost of a smile grazes his lips it's not hard to tell what he's thinking and I am terrified. For the first time in my life the thought of my husband buried deep inside me terrifies me.

"The things you do to me without even knowing" his voice is a seductive petition.

His hands are still discovering every corner of my skin while mine are hooked around his neck afraid to touch him and feel him like I have been wanting to.

He claims my lips in an enticing kiss and in just a few seconds I feel his tongue plummet into my mouth increasing the sound of my moans. "I love the way... you hold me..." I hum against his lips and feel him smile through the kiss.

Great there goes my heart getting carried away and again my mind cheers it on or else I wouldn't have uttered such. Then again this is me trying to clear my head of the images harassing me.

I open my eyes to find his closed this way I won't hunker back to that night. We're both breathless when his lips leave mine his eyes are diffident... fighting a war I know nothing about. He forces a faint smile before capturing me again this time the kiss is wolfish unmodified. He flicks us over so that I'm lain on the couch he's in between my legs tattooing every inch of me with even-tempered kisses.

This can't be right it can't be. I shouldn't be swamped in fear like this I should be enjoying him. Reluctantly my hands press against

Randall's chest with the intent to shove him away but my fingers take hold of his shirt. I shudder under him as his tongue darts out across my skin causing me to gasp and clasp my grip on his shirt.

"I love you..." he releases the words under a raspy tone. Usually I'd respond so flawlessly to his endearment but I'm at war with my mind and body that's reacting in ways I never thought would be possible with him.

Randall gradually moves his lips against mine and my eyes flutter shut which is a bad idea as I'm now watching contaminated scenes of myself with other men in my head.

My already heated skin becomes hotter when I feel his tongue against my bottom lip... I want this... I want this... I repeat the mantra as I try to calm myself down and fight the images haunting me. Ghostly my lips part granting his tongue access. Every limb in my body solidifies when his tongue finds mine I thought I could do this.

He stops his gentle kisses his face falls on my neck. We're slouched on the couch bodies flush

together breathing rapidly and waiting for god-knows what.

“I’m sorry” he speaks lips touching my neck. I should offer an apology as well but I will burst into waterworks if I dare open my mouth. My body gains its normal weight when he gets off me and I almost miss his brisk steps as he ambles towards the backyard he’s going to smoke. I know he hasn’t stopped maybe that will help him calm down. Something tells me he was having a difficult time with this as well.

ZITHA-

“I promise I’ll be quick.”

“No Tshilidzi I said no.” I push his hand that has been going up my skirt for the past five minutes this is why I hate wearing skirts and dresses but he insists that I wear them whenever he comes to see me.

We’ve been sitting in the back seat of his car for an hour now parked behind my aunt’s house the streets are full but no one can see inside the car because the windows are tinted and it is

night time that helps hide my shame. I hate this car and everything it represents we've done it plenty of times in here and each time I walk out living my dignity and self-respect behind.

"You know I'm tired of you rejecting me" he seethes eyes filled with rage and overflowing with lust. "I drove all the way here to shag you Zithobile not to listen to your childish objections. You think I spend all my money on you for you to deny me of what is rightfully mine?"

Please tell me he did not say what he just said I know he treats me like his little whore but a little respect would be nice.

What is rightfully his is that short thing between his legs I swear rich people can get away with anything. Show me a cheque and I'll call your small d!ck a hosepipe add a few zeros and I'll take a picture of it and send it to an art gallery. Mama taught me to treat people with kindness.

"I'm not feeling well Tshilidzi please." I whine extremely browned off.

He's been trying to 'shag' me for the past thirty minutes.

Does this man know how much he makes me sick? The reason I am still with him is... well... Argh...

I haven't been lucky with getting a job no one wants to hire me.

All my job interviews end with them asking me about my skin condition and if my family is okay with me looking like 'this'.

Since I have vitiligo society treats me the same way as it would treat anyone else who appears to be different. I'm started at or subjected to whispered comments antagonism insults and isolation.

"I have a headache my stomach hurts I think I'm getting corona." Anything to get him to stop touching me the man's scoff dubs me slow-witted.

"That's an excuse and I'm tired of it" he grunts as he leans over to force a kiss. Disgusted by his lips touching mine I tilt my head to the side. I hate his kisses they are nauseating.

"I want it from the back baby" at his announcement he turns me on all fours. My eyes widen with shock when I feel him flip my

skirt up exposing me. I'm on my knees and hands trembling like a leaf defeat laughs in my face when his hands tightly grip my hips to pin me down as I start to move away from his hold. "Tshilidzi stop... I'm... I'm on my periods." I lie. It usually works it has to work. Men can be very narrow minded.

Why is he not stopping? I guess it didn't work because his hand is pushing into my underwear I'm going to throw up any second now. I reach out to push his hand off just as he grabs the hem of my underwear however my strength is nothing compared to his because he pulls it down and I die a little inside when I feel his tongue start grazing my butt cheeks. He's licking me like a bloody dog not accepting defeat I squirm on the leather seats until he flips me back to face him.

The look in his eyes is that of a hungry lion ready to devour me. My body almost quavers at the sight.

"I change my mind" he licks my cheek. "I love your face when you orgasm I'd rather watch that than your flat ass."

As if he's ever made me orgasm.

"Wait" my hand presses on his chest as he leans down for another sloppy kiss he pulls back a little not enough for me to breathe. But enough for him to see my eyes his are heavy-lidded filled with lust. Bloody pervert.

"I'm still mourning" yes good excuse. "My mother just died we can't have sex for about a year or else bad luck will follow you."

This should buy me enough time... or not. The idiot flashes a grin his shifty eyes are hinting at something debauched.

"I'm not an idiot Zitha" his tongue comes out first before he attacks me with a greedy kiss not giving me time to adjust to the hover machine he calls a mouth. No one kisses like this I bet you a crazy man would win against this one for best kisser.

"Stop" I don't want this I'm not in the mood today. He's not stopping his hands are everywhere on my body harassing me. His

touches are rough and disrespectful they dub me loose and characterless.

“Stop.” I scream at him tears and all as I push him off of me. No woman wants to be treated like this no one should be treated like this.

Tshilidzi stabs daggers at me I know that look. I’ve seen it before he’s angry and he’s about to act.

“You bitch who the hell do you think you are?” He hisses before slapping me senseless I yelp as I send my hand to caress my flaming cheek. “You’re mine and I will have you when...”

The fool doesn’t finish talking because the door on his side pops open and in a split second something slurps him out of the car. I hear groans and thumping sounds it’s enough to have me inspect the scene. There’s a man on top of him and he’s throwing violent punches I swiftly don my underwear and skirt before peeping out the open door again.

I can’t see who it is there’s one street light here but it’s too dim to show me anything plausible. To top it off the man is wearing all black which

makes it hard for me to see him clearly. What if he's here to rob us or worse kidnap me for human trafficking? I've always wanted to go to Brazil but not as a sex slave.

The sight of a defenceless Tshilidzi brings about an alien feeling of happiness in my heart this is not the time but dammit I take pleasure in seeing him in pain and almost out of it. This is by far the highlight of my day.

"This is amazing" oops! That was too loud the man in black stops and with one turn he's looking at me. I still can't see him though I can make out the long hair or dreadlocks rather. I really can't tell but there's a dark aura surrounding him that has shivers rippling through me. My body begins to tremble in fear I should have ran towards my aunt's gate. Tshilidzi is a big man he can take care of himself.

What about me? I'm a woman for Pete's sake and this giant man shadowing me is... he's petrifying. How do I fight him off? He's moving

closer I want to step back. My feet won't let me
it's my knees; they are wobbly.

God he's going to sell me off I can't be a
prostitute. My mother will rise from the grave
not only her but the father I have never met.
They will tag team just to come and reproach
me.

Lord I'm going to miss my aunt's shouting I'll
miss my fights with Sizakele. I haven't told my
crush I like him if I survive this I'll confess on
Moja Love.

“Go!” Huh!

I can't move fear has me paralyzed. I run my
eyes to where Tshilidzi is and he's still groaning
in pain. He looks weak like he's about to pass
out people are walking by with their
rubbernecks and no one dares to intervene.
This society though...

“Go!!!” He grunts the second time and that
alone brings my strength back I jump out of the
car and scuttle around the corner headed for
the house. The black car the Range Rover
Sport is parked across the streets... odd I don't

recall seeing it when Tshilidzi came over around 9pm.

Am I evil for wanting that man to kill Tshilidzi? The thought of him becoming an ancestor excites me in a strange way.

*

*

*©□

Chapter 17

ZITHA-

I hardly slept last night Tshilidzi's phone has been off since. I don't know if he's alive or dead somewhere. The first thing I did when I woke up was check if there was a dead body behind the house and I am a little disappointed that I found nothing.

The least God could've done was send an inkabi to kill that bastard not a tall black man drenched in dreadlocks and a frown. Some people are born to be disappointments a waste of oxygen.

There is no sign that an attack had taken place there basically there is no crime scene.

Nonetheless I still want to know who the mystery man is.

My aunt asked about the black eye; you heard right Tshilidzi gave me a black eye. I had to lie and say I had a fight with Ulwazi. I have known that girl for as long as I have known Liyana two lonely neighbours met and here we are. We used to argue till we lost our voices funny how we couldn't stay away from each other although we couldn't stand each other.

Ulwazi lives down the streets with her grandmother and two little brothers about the ages of nine and fifteen.

We're meeting at Eyethu mall for lunch she's actually paying for lunch. Sizakele is at school and aunt went to work so that makes it easy for me to sneak out for a few hours. The woman gave me a curfew since I have been coming home late or sleeping out when I want to. I don't understand how she cares about my whereabouts.

I see the friend at Chicken Licken she's already seated with two cans of fanta orange. She sees

me smiles and waves I wave back as I walk in.

People stare and whisper from the moment my feet enter the premises but I don't care I'm used to it now. There's nothing I can do about my condition and people will always have something to say.

"Dali" Yes that's what she calls me. Strange I know. This one is straight from KZN she grew up playing with bricks on the dusty streets of Umvoti village.

She came to Johannesburg before she could complete her grade 11 my friend could pass off as a guy. She walks talks and dresses like one. If it were not for her bulky chest and very feminine voice you'd swear she is a man.

I'm pulled into a suffocating hug until I feel my lungs crash a little.

"I knew it... you called me here to kill me." I express grunting through the tight hug. She chortles and I whimper when her hands glide down to my buttocks and delight in a light squeeze. If this wasn't a norm I would be freaked out. I manage to escape her hug just as

she nuzzles her face on the crook of my neck
her hugs are weird.

“You smell good” she says running her tongue
over her bottom lip and this girl is undressing
me with her eyes people.

“Where is Thobeka?” Her girlfriend of six
months I should ask because that look can only
mean she is sex starved.

I shift away from her stare she makes me shy
sometimes by how her eyes linger on me.

Ulwazi shrugs her shoulders bringing Thobeka
up is never a good idea for some reason. “Does
she know that you’re a pervert who is lusting
after her best friend?”

“She thinks we sleep together” she provides an
answer a smug look taking place on her face.
By the way she’s a ‘chair opener.’ There is no
use in castigating her she has stubborn Zulu
men tendencies.

“Sleep as in share a bed or sleep as in ‘going to
Dubai (have sex)?” My query tickles her.

“That girl thinks we’re having sex” Ulwazi does not seem bothered by the assumptions. In fact she is sipping that fanta orange as if she gets paid to do it.

“You should set things straight I don’t want to be the cause of your break up. Tell her I’m not your type.” I demand.

Her brows furrow the look she regards me with is strange. I stand corrected but I spot disappointment in her eyes.

“Haibo! Njani?” (How?)

Is she shocked or am I seeing things?

“Because I am not your type Lwazi.” No seriously I insist.

“But you’re my type.” This girl...

“But you’re not mine and stop playing around Lwazi don’t mess with other people’s children.” I warn her Thobeka has a grandmother who knows African science. She knows about trees and what to use them for you don’t mess with that woman.

“Whatever you can’t tell me about types. You’re just a female version of a fuckboy.” She grunts. That stings but I’m okay. She’s the blunt type tells you like it is and I have grown to take her

slurs. There is no lie in what she's said I give and take. I have a vag!na and if it pays for my shoes then why not make use of it?

"Words of a thirsty woman keep going babe."
My answer is an ignorant quip. My head shakes as I can't grasp why she thinks we would be paired perfectly. Even if I was a lesbian or bisexual I wouldn't go for my best friend. Dating your friend is a recipe for disaster.

Her eyes linger on me scrutinising my face. It's the black eye she's spotted it and this girl seems angered by what she's looking at.

"You know I would never do you like that?" I'm already tired of this conversation.

"Yes because I would kill you and bury you in your backyard" my retort finds her smile.

"Why do you let him treat you like this Zithobile? You don't deserve this shit" her voice rises and gets us attention. I don't get to respond as my phone blares it's Tshilidzi. How is he alive? Witches never die anyway what a waste of excitement.

"Who is it?" Ulwazi snaps a question a frown appears. Her nose wrinkles in distaste when I

show her the caller ID she hates him as much as I do.

“Where are you?” That’s the first thing he says bloody fool has no manners.

“Eyethu mall with Lwazi.” She cocks a brow at my response and leans back on the chair. “Are you okay?”

Not that I care.

“You sent your boyfriend to come and beat me up now you’re acting like you care. Don’t piss me off Zithobile you seem to be forgetting who I am.”

“Hey I don’t know that man. Maybe...” I try to explain but he cuts me off.

“I want you at the flat in an hour you’re taking me for a ride little girl.”

“Forget it I’m not coming Tshilidzi.” He must think I’m a fool.

“I’m not playing Zithobile you better be at the flat when I get there or you will pay back every cent I spent on you with interest.” I know he

means it with that vile tone. What have I gotten myself into? I need to think of a way out of this.

Ulwazi looks irritated now like she doesn't want to be here anymore. Her eyes are waiting and interrogative she will judge me again. This girl has no idea what that man is really like given a chance Tshilidzi will not hesitate to kill me. He's a powerful man with connections and that means the bastard will not taste jail.

"I have to go he wants to see me." I tell an already angry friend.

"You don't have to you know that right? What if he hits you again Zitha? No one will be there to protect you." The worry in her voice has me thinking twice about going to meet him on the other hand I'm broke and have nothing to my name. Tshilidzi does not make empty threats what on earth will I pay him with?

"Can you hook me up with a gun?" I enquire voice void of humour. Ulwazi shakes her head her brows knit into a frown.

"If anyone is going to kill that son of a bitch then it's going to be me." She declares her lower lip

curving into a haughty smirk. “Akabaz abantu uTshilidzi I will...” (Tshilidzi thinks he’s clever.)

“No” I interject. “Killing someone is not the same as killing those cockroaches at your house. What you think you will spray him with doom and he’ll shrink into his demise?” I’m serious though Mulaudzi is a dangerous man. “My brother will help me I don’t want you involved in any of this Zitha. You still have your whole life ahead of you if I get caught I will serve my sentence. I have nothing to live for I don’t even have matric.” Her words are making me emotional Ulwazi is crazy.

“Stop talking” I whisper covering her mouth.

“You can’t talk about such things in public.”

“No one is listening Zitha I need you to know that I’m here. I will do anything for you.”

“Bathathe sgaqagaqa” (way to go tough guy.)

“I’m serious” she snaps and I know she is hence the fear lurking in my heart. I won’t forgive myself if her life is ruined because of me.

“Yoh Lwazi my stomach is boiling. You’re making me nervous with this talk please stop.” Her eyes follow me as I stand to my feet. “I’ll go to the toilet before I leave please don’t eat my food. You know how to get into my house right?”

I’m given a reluctant nod.

“Put the food in my room under the pillow. That demon I call an aunt will be home later tonight so make sure to be there before 6pm. If she sees it she will demand money for a braai pack.”

“Why are you like this Zithobile?” Ulwazi cracks her hands slamming on the table. I’m done with people staring at us. “This is your life not a game. Can’t you be serious for once?”

“I am serious Lwazi I’m dead serious.” I leave her with these words I’m dead serious.” I leave her with these words my mind considering her plan. Perhaps going to jail for a few years won’t be that bad or we can come up with the perfect murder. I know where to hide a dead body and Ulwazi is the perfect accomplice.

RANDALL-

Over the years we have accumulated a variety of trucks. The trucking company has grown tremendously so much so that we have extended the business to other provinces and two neighbouring countries Lesotho and Swaziland.

This is the life I'm comfortable with not indolent on the throne waiting for villagers to present their troubles. However that is my destiny one I cannot change even if I wanted to.

I'm preparing to head home for lunch when a knock at my office door catches me off guard it opens without my permission causing me to scowl at the disrespect. My eyes nearly widen at the sight of the intruder however I settle for a glower instead.

"What the hell are you doing here?" I play it cool this woman thinks she scares me. The smirk on her face is evidence my eyes follow her steps as she strides towards my office desk.

“Is that how you welcome your future wife?”

The white woman sports a grin swirling with confidence and added arrogance as a garnish. Not having time to spare especially for people like her. I stand from the swivel chair with the intent to throw her out of my office.

“You are playing with fire Caroline” my eyes narrow in annoyance the scrutiny I emanate has her blinking away from me. But the witch gets back up before she burns.

“I like fire Randy and I want you to burn me till I scream with pleasure.” Her voice is erotic it’s purely disgusting. Her feet slowly lead her behind the desk she stands a few feet from me eyes lustfully uncloaking me. If I could I would pull out my gun and shoot her right here without any hesitation.

“Are you kidding me Randall?” her jaw drops in false shock and she places a hand on her chest. “I got all dressed up for you but you haven’t bothered to look at my body. I’m sure you must be tired of your wife’s...”

I don't let her complete whatever her mouth is about to spew her eyes are wild as I have her pinned to the wall.

"Mention my wife again you piece of shit. I dare you" a sharp growl escapes my mouth this woman is not deterred. She smiles taking pleasure in this moment. I don't know what's going through her twisted mind and the look in her eyes screams lust.

"Oh Randall" her lower lip finds refuge in between her teeth. Her body squirms on the wall and I feel bile rise up to my chest at the realisation of what she's entertaining.

"I love it when you play rough" at this breathy saying her filthy hand runs down my chest. "We can do it here I bet you've never done it in your office."

"Don't you have any shame? I'm a married man." My hands release her shoulders frustrated by her I step back. "I am not fucking doing this with you you hear me?"

"Argh don't be boring. Just once Randy please touch me just once." Her hands are touching me again unashamed and with a mission to

unbutton my dress shirt. Disgust scrapes through my veins.

I will never do my wife like that I'd never cheat on that woman. With one shrug from me Caroline stumbles backwards. However she manages to grab my arm and quickly enfolds her arms around my waist.

"Get your filthy hands off me" I push her a little harder this time. She falls ass first onto the ground and gets back up in seconds her stubbornness irks me. This is not the first time I have rejected her besotted advances her mulishness always lets me know that her lust for me has returned. I cannot express how much I hate this woman.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" A scream erupts through her lips.

I knew she would eventually snap getting her riled up excites me. But not as much as the thought of seeing her drowning in her own blood.

“You touched my sister before why can’t you touch me? What did she have that I don’t?”

“You don’t excite me Caroline neither did your sister. She was a loose whore just like you.”

“So you were drunk when you released your sperm inside her and got her pregnant?” Her question and the tone she uses mock me she has the nerve to address me with such disrespect?

“You bitch” I snarl at her remark grabbing her hair in a tight grip. She yelps but it’s not from pain.

This woman is vile and has some sick twisted fantasy that I will leave my wife for her. The hold she has on me gives her this confidence god... it makes me sick.

“I can be anything you want me to be Randy.” She releases a sensual response her curious hands mapping my chest down to my torso. “I can be your bitch you can pull my hair tie me up. You can go all fifty shades of grey on me I don’t mind.”

Repulsion can’t even begin to describe how I feel right now I’m a man and of course have

been attracted to other women other than my wife. The wedding band does not clog one's hormones however the love I have for Amara has kept me grounded.

Until that awful night...

Caroline is a leech that sucks you till you're dry.

Another push from me sends her crashing onto the ground with a low scream she raises her head tears welling in her eyes.

"Why are you doing this to me?" A frantic shout from her.

"I told you to stay the hell away from me if you ever come at me again I will kill you."

"Like you killed my sister?" Again she shouts and I snap my head back at the door if the wrong people hear her I'll be in trouble.

"Trust me you don't want to take me on." I crouch to grab her chin she winces in pain when I force her head up so she's looking at me. "I can be your worst nightmare Caroline. You claim you've seen a footage of me

smothering the life out of your sister right? Then you must know what I am capable of.”

I tell her softly yet at a volume that reaches inside and instils fear in her. Her eyes retreat it's as if something in her wavers but she blinks it away.

“I- I'm... not afraid of you” this is one stupid fierce woman. “You can't touch me I can destroy you with just a touch of a button. One word from me to my friends and your perfect little life will come crashing down Randall.”

I need to calm down or this woman will leave this office in a body bag I remember having a box of cigarettes in one of the shelves. My nerves are kicking in and it's not good for me to let them out. Hiding behind a strong face is not an easy thing to do sometimes I want to crumble... fall apart and have someone hold me up.

“Surely we can come to an agreement” I announce as she stands to her feet and regards me with an inquisitive glare. “How old are you Caroline? Twenty... twenty one?”

“I’m twenty four” there’s an attitude in her voice and posture.

“Yeah whatever.” Puffing the cigarette I wave her response off like it’s nothing. “You’re a high school dropout blacklisted you have no one and can’t afford yourself a slice of bread.” I reason while letting her into my personal space I did say she’s a stubborn one.

“I don’t want your money Randy I want to be your wife. You’re acting strong but I know you’re terrified. You don’t want anybody finding out what you did and I won’t tell if you take me as your wife. Leave your wife for me Randy. Make me your queen.”

Caroline presses a hand to my chest instead of withdrawing I let her be. Her arms encircle my waist her eyes gazing at me with lust filled orbs. My fingers cradle her cheeks the touch is gentle barely there. She’s getting comfortable so I take this opportunity to clasp my fingers on her cheeks and force her face up to look at me. Fear has not known her eyes yet I would love to see them drowning in terror. I throw the

cigarette butt on the floor and snub it with my foot.

Caroline parts her lips and closes her eyes when I start to bring my face closer to hers. In a millisecond her arms tighten around my waist. Our faces are so close that the bridge of my nose brushes against hers the whole time my eyes are open watching... probing.

My lips shift closer to hers as I mildly trail my hand down to her neck her breath hitches at the sudden clip around her neck. This has her eyes widening with shock I tighten my hand around her neck depriving her of oxygen as I pull her closer to whisper in her ear.

“Hit me with your best shot bitch.” I push her off of me the third thrust is not so vicious. She stumbles growling like a crazy person and manages to stop herself from falling. Her head whips over to me eyes stabbing and glaring.

“I’m going to ruin you Randall Okolie you’re going to pay for this.” She threatens ironing her skimpy dress with her filthy hands.

“Yeah whatever.” The nod I give her seems to drive her insane I see how she’s so close to losing it. “Get out.”

With the authoritative dismissal Caroline huffs and strides out of my office. I need to find those footages before sending her off to her sister.

*

*

*©

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 18

ZITHA-

His car is parked outside so I know I’m late. I hope he’s not in one of those foul moods he becomes a beast when he’s angry. But who am I kidding? The man was barking over the phone.

The security guard runs to open the door as he sees me approaching it’s embarrassing really because everyone opens their own doors without his help.

“Nkosazana” I almost roll my eyes at his salutation. Does he have to be so extra? It’s Tshilidzi’s money that’s making him act like a highly paid fool I have nothing against him. It’s the attention he’s bringing to me now the tenants are glaring at me obviously wondering why I’m getting special treatment.

“Thanks” I say and hurry to the lift or he will start a conversation that will eat up my time. The flat is on the 8th floor I’m still confused as to what this place is. If the residents are permanent or people who come to shag and be shagged like some of us.

Flat number 85 here I am standing outside the door with no gun. He wouldn’t dare though right?

I shrug the depressing thought away before opening the door something forcefully grabs by hair and pulls me inside. The door slams shut as I release a scream.

Before I can see or fathom what’s going on a hand collides against my cheek and I’m thrown to the wall. My body hits the floor with a loud thud my mind is blank everything is happening

so fast depriving me a chance to run or fight back.

I can't see what's happening due to my head spinning but there's someone he pulls my hair forcing my feet up. It's him he's standing in front of me breathless with anger. Fire in his eyes and a raised fist he bites his lower as he throws a punch that sends me to the ground screaming in pain. There's an excruciating burning sensation on my cheek I'm seeing double of everything while tumbled on the floor like a wet cloth that fell from the washing line.

"Tshi... Tshilidzi" my voice is that of shock as I'm trying to grasp what is really going on.

Strange how shock can clog a person's mind depriving them of sight and logic.

He snatches my hair and this time my mind registers what's really going on I get that there were slaps before the pushing and offences.

But this? This is all new for the first time since I've known him Tshilidzi is thrashing me like I am nothing.

“Stop!!!!” I scream trying to get back up with the need to run out of the flat. He kicks me on my stomach when I’m on all fours the impact has me gasping for air as my lungs clog for a good second.

God is this how I’m going to meet my mother? How will I explain the bruises on my face? I doubt they give you free makeup in heaven before they let you enter the gates how will I hide my scars?

What excuse will I give her? That a Venda man who was meant to be my Azwindini turned out to be vho-Gizara? I refuse.

“Tshilidzi Stop!!!” Another scream I don’t want to die.

God I know I thought about following my mother but that was a secret thought even you were not meant to hear it. I didn’t mean it... I’m only a woman frail and without a muscle to open a jar of mayonnaise.

He hasn’t said anything yet but I hear him growling and panting as if he’s ploughing

dough. I should've tied this synthetic hair up he has it in his hand and the grip is so tight I feel a few strands snap. I grab his wrist to get him to stop my mouth feels heavy and wet with warm thick liquid.

Blood slicks to the ground in sickening speed in this moment my nostrils are filled with the smell of blood and there's a lurching in my stomach. Twilight is a lie they forgot to tell us that blood tastes terrible it's not edible.

His back hand collides with my face once more the pain sends me screaming as I hit my head on the wall and tumble to the floor the man won't stop.

"I'm going to kill you Zithobile." He roars his feet thundering on the ground headed my way.

I can't breathe and I'm losing strength but I have to fight while I can still fight. If I die today I will die having put up a good fight. As he grabs my hair again I send my fingers to scratch his eyes. I knew there was a reason I was too lazy to cut my nails I'm never cutting them again.

Tshilidzi growls and covers his eyes he doesn't last long in agony because he slouches behind me and snakes an arm around my neck choking me. My eyes bulge out as my mouth hangs open a strangled scream emerging from me.

His arm continues to squeeze stopping my breath I could feel my gorge closing. I sag to the ground kicking my legs and grunting. His grip is too strong to wriggle out of instant fear engulfs me. I'm not ready to die Lord save me.

Shembe my mother Nomalanga Mthombeni used to call on you. I am her daughter Zithobile Mthombeni do not let me perish in the hands of this evil man.

Desperation to breathe takes over me my head spins as I try gasping for air. I can't move no matter how hard I try the immense pressure on my throat causes my mind to grow hazy. I'm going to die I haven't tasted Roco mamas yet. I haven't gone sky diving I still have to learn how to swim.

Despite the pain I begin to thrash and buck under his vicious touch. However he's ten times stronger than me the edge of my vision darkens and my hands fall to my sides as energy abandons me.

The door literally flies open it crashes to the floor... Cheap motels.

There's a man he's wearing all black has long thick dreads that are tied in a ponytail. I think I've seen him somewhere but I can't remember where my vision is vague and all I can think about is surviving this attack.

"Shit!" I hear Tshilidzi cuss a shaky breath leaving him.

"Let her go." The stranger's voice rumbles like thunder on a stormy night.

Tshilidzi's hand detaches from my neck and I fall to the ground with yet another loud thud hitting my head in the process. Pain seems to love me since my mother died every limb in my body hurts like hell. I don't even try to move an inch breathing already hurts and I'm chasing my

breath as my life depends on it. I'll probably die if I attempt to get up.

“Look man I don't know who you are but this has nothing to do with you. This is between me and my girlfriend.” Tshilidzi you son of a bitch ‘thunder fire you.’

“Shut up.” The man calmly snaps though I don't miss the authority in his voice.

“You know what I hate the most Mulaudzi? Nonsense and stubborn people.” The man declares.

Well I hate people that talk too much did God not send him to help me? I'm going to die in the presence of fools.

“Zitha this is what you do to me? After everything I have done for you the money I spent...” Yoh this man he doesn't care that I might meet my mother soon. Me a sassy ancestor? I'm not ready for that role.

He's not given a chance to complete his stupid complaint just one punch one punch sends him to the floor. He falls face first right in front of me

I'm dazed by how he's fainted after one punch. What have I been sleeping with? Because it is not a real man.

Mr. Dreads bends over and whisks me up in his arms I don't know this man but I'm in his arms and he's taking me somewhere. I think of squirming but something is holding me back something that says I'm safe.

My eyes are heavy and refuse to stay open but they are as stubborn. I want to see this person I want to see his face but it's indistinct. Damn you Tshilidzi to hell.

I send my hand to his face it lands on his cheek. His skin is soft his facial hair feels rough against my palm. I feel his eyes on me as he stops moving there's another presence here. All my useless eyes can make out is a silhouette

Sponsored

there's another presence here. All my useless eyes can make out is a silhouette it hurts when I blink.

"You know what to do" this tall giant says. I don't hear anything from the silhouette it moves so do we. I'm an over thinker and right now I

see my dead body abandoned somewhere in a ditch and later my aunt and Sizakele dancing to Sithi Sithi on my grave.

RANDALL-

Coming home to his family is something he always looks forward to. It's past 8pm he made it just in time for dinner with the family. He finds his wife bustling in the kitchen the aroma gives a homey feeling. It's comforting and warm. He loves it here and he loves the woman standing behind the stove dressed in a short white dress and a head wrap that makes her look more 'wifey.' She's bare footed the sight is breath taking that it births a smile on his chiselled face I guess she hasn't heard him walk in or feel his presence. Or maybe she's deep into thought.

His feet are careful as he tiptoes to her his arms wrap around her waist from the back and she flinches in shock but his scent is quick to work as it alerts her that it's none other than him the man she's married to.

A smile moves stealthily to her face as he tightens his arms around her. “Why am I turned on by you standing behind the stove?” He whispers erotically into her ear causing her body to react.

“Because you’re not like anybody else you’re a special kind.” Her response has him gasping in feigned shock. It’s not long when he sighs in exasperation his face finds refuge on the curve of her neck and his arms tighten around her waist holding her like it’s the last time.

“Are you okay?” It’s an uneven drawl she knows him when he’s bothered.

“Me hemma” his lips are against her neck. She tries to turn in his arms to face him but he doesn’t let her. “Something big is coming the ride is going to be shaky for a while. We’re going to fall me hemma a lot of times.”

“What’s going on Randall?”

“I will need you to be strong for you and the kids promise you will do that.”

What the hell? He's scaring her where is all this coming from? They are going through the worst surely fate can't be cruel to set them on fire.

"Strong for what?" she snaps a question. He's not making sense and it's getting her worked up. "Let me go."

Amara is wriggling in his arms he has no choice but to release her from his hold. With a swift turn she's locking eyes with the man. This man standing before her must be Randall's double he's blinking a lot for someone whose eyes are forever hardened.

"What is going on Randall?"

"It's nothing I can't handle Amara" he says stepping a foot away from her. His eyes are shifty now hiding something. Amara takes his hand into hers they are sticky which has her ogling down at it.

"Is that blood?" Sure he's dark skinned but black skin cannot mask the colour of blood. Randall yanks his hand back and shoves it in the pocket of his pants.

“No” his voice is laced with confidence. This is the same man who does not dribble on his words. “It’s grease the car broke down on my way home and...” he doesn’t finish talking as he rushes to the sink to wash his hands.

“Baby...”

“We interrupt this programme to bring you breaking news” Amara is cut short by a feminine voice bursting through the small TV near the microwave. “Four bodies have been found buried in shallow graves in a farm in Vanderbijl Park three bodies are decayed beyond recognition. The authorities believe they are the three young women who went missing six months ago.”

“Oh my God” her heart leaps on her chest. Liyana had once told her about the three young girls from her class who disappeared without a trace. Could it be them?

“The forth one is a body of a Caucasian woman who could be in her early twenties” at this announcement Randall pivots on his heel to

catch the news anchor behind the TV screen. “It is said that her death occurred three to eight hours earlier today...”

He’s close to the TV and takes the chance to switch it off.

“I was watching that?” Amara complains.

“I don’t want R.J to walk in on that he’s still a child.” And... that’s all. He leaves her to go change into something comfortable.

LIYANA-

One minute she’s in her father’s house in the comfort of her room safely tucked under the covers of her queen-sized bed. How she got to the towering dark—wooded area is a Jane Doe the blackness is eerie full of mystery and fear. So this is where terror dwells a place where no human should tread. Her eyes are bulging trying to take in the dark tree trunks and clumps of bushes. The moon shines through a lettuce of leaves the stars are barely visible she can only see glimpses of them.

“Where am I?” Her voice cracks beneath shattering teeth and is swallowed by the wind slipping through trees and snapping twigs caused by her faltering steps on the ground.

“PAPA! PAPA!”

She exclaims this time heart slamming against her ribs but there’s no one to answer to her cry. She slows her steps until they come to a halt and gulps at the air trying to slow her quick breathing. How cold can this place be? Her body shivers as the wind roughly slaps against her skin the short nightwear does nothing to keep her warm.

Unexpectedly there’s a sound coming from behind. Fear staples her to the ground she wants to turn to whoever is behind her but is she brave enough? Then again this is a matter of life and death she will perish if she lets fear play her like a puppet.

Liyana slowly turns and there stands an unfamiliar old man dressed in white his head is covered with grey hair and face hiding below a scruffy beard. Her eyes widen and she starts trembling with fear.

“Be still” the man says in a hushed tone and surprisingly Liyana’s body falls into placidity. “Follow me.”

He does not wait for a response but leads the way. Unconsciously she follows him like a lost puppy. It feels like forever since they have been walking along the narrow trail of leaves she’s tired and sweltering.

After what feels like a lifetime they reach a familiar house. A place Liyana knows too well it is surrounded by dark mist.

“That’s my house” amidst of the dark cloud surrounding her house the girl chirps with excitement. There is no place like home and right now she wants to run into her father’s house and take refuge.

“Why can’t I move?” She mumbles to herself when her legs refuse to listen to its master. The old man hears but does not provide an answer. He’s stationery beside her gawking over at the two-storeyed building. “What’s going on?”

Just as she questions the mysterious old man what she sees next widens her eyes. The

house she grew up in is on fire it starts from the ground spreading up with brutal intentions.

“No no!” She yells in horror fighting to get her legs to move. The kind of screams that bypass the ears to pierce the heart erupt from inside her house.

No God no. Those voices she knows the people in there. Randall Amara R.j... they are screaming for help.

“No papa Amara Kwame.” Liyana flounders her arms as she strains to loosen her feet from the ground. “Help them please my family is in there.”

Her screams fall on deaf ears why is this man not doing anything?

Flames swallow the house rising into the night as if challenging God to come down and witness their glory it doesn't feel real for a while. However the heat and smoke choking her lungs give her a wakeup call.

“Nana! (Grandfather.)”

Instinctively Liyana calls on the man who has always helped them in times of need. He's an ancestor that's always there or so she thought. "Nana your king is dying. Help him nana help him."

She's not sure if he can hear her the man has been marked absent for years. How do you pacify a sulking ancestor?

The old man beside her turns and begins his walk back to wherever he came from leaving the young girl screaming her lungs out.

"Liya wake up. Wake up Liya."

Her eyes snap open and the first thing she does is try to breathe as she feels suffocated it causes her to cough.

"Liya drink this." The same voice that woke her up says for a while she's unaware of her surroundings until her dewy eyes start to take in her bedroom and the figure before her. Her little brother is holding a glass of water waiting for her to take a sip. Liyana does not care about the water her brother is alive. Tears come as an overwhelming grief engulfs her she pulls her

little brother into a tight hug grieving as if she has lost a dear one.

*

*

*©□

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 19

RANDALL-

With Amara asleep I sneak out of the bedroom to have a smoke. I need one my mind has me incarcerated tonight. Perhaps it's the storm that's coming I'm not quite sure.

The house is deadly silent and the lights are out which makes my feet a bit dizzy as I attempt to stop my footsteps from echoing while I pave my way to the living room.

My mind wanders off the moment I indulge on a smoke there are so many secrets hidden within these walls they are painted with the blood of my father and brother.

I can't be blamed for the actions and decisions I took in the past everything was done to protect my family.

“Papa” her voice is barely audible I almost shoot up from the couch but shift to stub the cigarette into the ashtray.

“What are you doing up?” she frowns at my question and tilts her head—confusion sprawled on her face.

“You smoke?” I don't think that's any of her business but;

“Yes and you shouldn't.”

Liyana is too experimental for my liking she shakes her head before joining me. Her legs hang over the floor as she moves to the far end of the couch.

“Smoking is disgusting” I like the triviality in her voice she will never touch a cigarette in her life. Her head finds refuge on my shoulder as she perches herself closer and radiates a dense sigh.

"I had a bad dream it's not clear anymore but I remember that our house was on fire. You Amara and R.J were inside screaming for help. I can't remember the rest of it or where I was." Liyana introduces.

"That's a strange dream to have" I don't know what to make of it. Grandfather doesn't hide behind riddles he shows himself and says what he wants.

"Papa!"

"What is it?"

"Where is my mother?"

"Sleeping do you need anything?" She sits up eyeing me with an inquisitive- fleeting look.

"Not Amara my birth mother." My eyes bulge out of my head while my heart knocks on my chest.

Suddenly I trail off my mind taking me back to the day I promised Olivia that I will make sure Liyana forgets her existence. I made sure she

found a mother in Amara and kicked out any craving she could have for her real mother. That woman did not deserve my daughter. Where did I go wrong? Why ask about her now after so many years?

“I don’t know where she is Liya” I lie to her like I did years ago when she asked about her. It was the first and last time she brought her up hence I thought it was a thing of the past.

“You said she moved to Europe with some guy.”

I turn my head to her direction wanting to grasp why Olivia has suddenly come to mind. Did she have a dream about her?

“I said that?” My eyes aren’t really looking directly at her I’m never this fearful. How am I letting things fall apart? I hate it when I’m not in control of my surroundings.

“Yes papa” desperation in her voice. Her lashes kiss her upper cheeks as she rapidly blinks. I know she’s about to cry when she does this.

“What’s going on princess? Why the sudden curiosity? Hasn’t Amara been a good mother to you? Where has she gone wrong that you feel a need to replace her?”

She glances up at me as she uncomfortably shifts in her seat “I- I want to change my surname.”

I’m not sure I heard right “what?”

At my question she scoots a hand’s length away drops her head while fondling with her palms. She’s taken up silence and I’m getting agitated. “Liyana!”

“I want to change my surname papa.” Her voice slightly trembles at her absurd announcement.

“I don’t want to be an Okolie anymore.”

“Where is this coming from?”

“I’m tired papa I want to be free from our ancestors.” I can’t imagine what my baby must be going through I see her point but changing her surname is out of the question.

“Perhaps it’s time you go to Ghana and learn about your roots what you’re telling me is not

done Liyana. Where have you ever heard such?”

“I don’t want to go there.”

“Then stop this nonsense are you trying to bring yourself bad luck? The Okolies are a proud clan Liya royalty. It is an insult to want to renounce your own people your family.”

She buries her face in her hands the sound of her frustrated growl fills the living space.

“I am not renouncing them I just don’t want to be an Okolie anymore.” Liyana manages to stop her voice from rising.

This child is still wet behind the ears if she were mature these foolish thoughts would not find room in her head.

“You’re not taking that woman’s name you’re an Okolie period.” Maybe I sound a little too harsh.

“I dont want to carry whatever it is they have made me carry.” The tone of her voice is slowly transitioning into a disrespectful tone the look in her eyes daring and hard. Funny how she reminds me of myself but I can’t let her climb the boat of impudence I am still her father. “I can’t even have a normal relation...”

The syllables start to fade and shock visits her widespread eyes as she spots a blunder in her statement. “I- I mean I want to be a normal person papa and the only way is for me to change my surname.”

“Who told you that? Do you even know the woman whose surname you recklessly want to claim?”

“She’s my mother I have a right to take her last name. You two were never married so culturally I’m supposed to be carrying her surname. My name should be Liyana Botha.”

“Liyana!” The loudness of my voice makes her jump from the chair. “Don’t ever say that again do you hear me?”

“Why not papa? Is she not my mother?” Spare the rod spoil a child. I am witnessing it. “She gave birth to me and...”

“And that’s the only good thing she ever did I don’t want you associated with that woman.” My build towers over her as I stand to my feet I am dumbfounded by the hate illuminating in her eyes.

“Papa please I need this. I need her help me find my mother.” Her body sags against the armrest face crinkling as if calling upon a river of tears. However Liyana hardly ever cries. Her tears are cried beneath what the world cannot see she would cry over a sad movie but not a drop for herself she doesn’t express her own pain that way. It’s as if there’s a blockage maybe it’s functional as she has been through a lot.

She doesn’t move when I reach out to touch her shoulder rather her body solidifies at my touch. “Go to bed it’s late now.” I tell her with a gentle expression.

Her head whips up eyes wide as a deer caught in headlights as if she can’t believe the words that have escaped from my mouth. Her hand finds mine and with one motion shoves my hand from her shoulder.

“I will find her myself” she’s off running before I could reprimand her.

Dammit Liyana! I have experienced her stubbornness before but nothing like this. How do I tell her that Olivia died when she was a little girl? How do I tell my baby that I killed her mother? Liyana can never find out about this and now that Caroline is gone it will be hard to find that footage.

AMARA-

Randall is not in bed when I wake up which is not a surprise he's an early bird. Having my husband sleep next to me and not be able to touch him or have him touch me is hell itself the man does not believe in therapy if I dare suggest it he will surely dismiss me. I look around the room and there's no sign that he's in the shower nor do I hear the water running.

I leave the bed to take a quick shower I'm hungry so it has to be nippy. Lazy to change into anything because my stomach is complaining I grab one of his dress shirts and wear it instead. Chioma is not around I'm safe

from prowling eyes and a speech about how a wife should look even when at home.

Liyana has not found her way into the kitchen yet I don't know how I didn't teach her the basics. Forget that she's royalty what if she is taken by a commoner? She can't feed her family microwave meals and KFC every other night.

Heading to the kitchen I realise that someone has beat me to preparing breakfast.

The smell of freshly baked blueberry muffins lures me towards the pantry Randall doesn't bake unless Chioma is back from Nigeria.

Confusion slaps me hard in the face when I find a strange woman full of commotion in my kitchen. She could be in her early 50's I'm hailed with a smile the second she turns. Perplexed and my head forming a million questions at once I fail to return it.

"Good morning." Oh aren't we chirpy so early in the morning?

“Morning” my answer is an undecided response. I don’t move from the doorway waiting for her to tell me who she is.

“Breakfast is ready I already told the king.” The king? No one ever addresses Randall with such a big title I smell aunt Petunia here!

“He said he’s waiting for his wife I’m guessing it’s you. He said he didn’t want to wake you up because you were sleeping peacefully.” The look she’s giving me...

Where is this going? Sometimes I sense things and this is definitely going somewhere. Her lips press into a thin line and she crosses her arms. Why does her stand remind me of aunt Petunia? In fact she’s all I see. The difference between them is that this one is short and a tad bit chubbier than my aunt. Leisurely

Sponsored

she’s all I see. The difference between them is that this one is short and a tad bit chubbier than my aunt. Leisurely her eyes sweep down my body. I’m about close to huffing when she brings them back up clearly peeved. It must be

the shirt I'm wearing it is the shirt. She's a Petunia I just know it.

“Let me give you advice on ‘Umendo’ sisi (marriage).” Oh wow maybe I should grab a chair and get comfortable. “Never let your husband wake up before you he will think you're lazy and find someone who knows how to wake up early to cook and clean for him.” She thinks she's clever neh? I know the likes of her let me have mercy on her old soul. It's barely 8am how early is a woman supposed to wake up?

“I'm not sure we've met.” I try to at least sound respectful a smile takes flight on her face.

“My name is MaNtombi.” Great another Ntombi. I wonder how lethal this one is. “I'm the temporary— executive house keeper.” She pats her chest it's the prideful smirk for me.

“Thank you for your advice ma but my husband loves me and whatever you have convinced yourself will never happen.” Yep I'm that confident he made me this confident.

Nonetheless I don't like how her brows elevate as if mocking and calling me bluff.

"Don't be so sure about that sisi." Eh! "That's one mistake women make thinking your husband will never leave you because he worships the ground you walk on. I've been around for too long and..."

...and she's starting to annoy me.

"Thank you ma." I slide in between her useless guidance. "But your advice is not needed I've been okay without it and I will continue to be okay."

Jesus! I don't even know this woman. The itch to click my tongue and shove her words down her throat... but... I don't want to stain Randall's image by coming across as disrespectful towards elders.

"Excuse me."

A little attitude is added to my voice at this point I don't care if she thinks I'm rude. I refuse to wake up to bitter old women who have nothing better to do with their time than give stupid advice from the 1920's. I'm followed by a loud

cackle and before shock embraces me I hear her clap once. I'm firing her as soon as I speak to Randall.

KENNETH -

Here stands a world plagued by a bunch of species who define themselves by masculinity domination and stubbornness. A realm that lacks adequate self-control. Men cannot be this cruel but again we are a sad human race. God must be ashamed of us.

The chase huh? Look where it has gotten me a battered stranger in between my bed sheets.

I don't know why I brought her here but I had to get her away from there. The first place I should've taken her is the hospital controlled by a full range of emotions I drove like a mad person then found myself parked in my garage. The girl has been out of it since yesterday however I am convinced that she will be okay. She's stronger than she looks; put me on a stand in front of a judge and make me swear on

the Holy bible and I will prove with no doubt that this is the strongest person I've ever met.

I have been watching her every move I can't really say why but... she's here... in my bed.

“How is she doing?” Ah yes! She's also here... Fezekile Mkhize or MaMkhize as she is known is my father's eldest sister. I still don't know what she's doing in my house. Isisa wants her here this woman managed to crawl into my little sister's head and convinced her that she needs a mother figure in her life. Her tricks won't work on me I see right through her.

“Who did this to her? How can people be heartless to do this to a little girl?”

Oh please do not let her sympathy dribble you this is how she kisses ass.

Zithobile's face is not too bad thankfully. One eye is swollen there's a cut on her bottom lip and her nostrils bear congealed blood. The girl suffers from a fractured rib nothing major that needs urgent medical attention.

“She’s not a little girl she’s a woman.” I correct MaMkhize I haven’t looked at her since she walked in here. I hear her footsteps getting closer she’s standing on the other side of the bed in seconds carefully studying the woman sleeping in my bed.

“Mmmhh! Angazi ndodana kodwa kee she looks like a little girl to me.” (I don’t know but.) Says MaMkhize as if trying to knock some sense into me.

“Why are you in here?” I question her presence ready to oust her out of my bedroom.

“What should I prepare for lunch?”

“I told you to stay out of the kitchen.” I don’t trust her she might poison us.

“You make me taste all the dishes I prepare before Isisa eats them so I don’t understand why you’re complaining. Besides you don’t eat my food.” Not only is she not allowed to cook for us she is not allowed to enter my room.

“I’ll order in” nonchalantly I tell her. I’d rather have a stranger cook for us.

With a wrinkled nose she shakes her head disapproving of my decision.

“Junk food again? That’s a bit unhealthy.” The woman grumbles.

I’m not in the mood to entertain her she notices my blank stare and shamefully lowers her gaze.

“If you say so Kenneth.” I don’t like her tone. “I’ll cook for my niece till she goes back to varsity.” “And when she does you pack your bags and leave my house. You’ll come back when she visits I don’t care.” I throw the words at her and she receives them with an eye roll.

Zitha stirs a bit a soft moan escapes her mouth my feet reluctantly move toward the bed. The impact doesn’t last as I bring myself to a halt at the realisation of my detectable concern. This is not me at all but this young woman has done something to me I have been following her because I needed to find out what it is that’s pulling me to her direction. Till now as I’m glancing at her I still can’t figure it out.

“You need to take her back to her house she can’t be here. She does not belong here.”

MaMkhize advices now sitting on the edge of the bed leering down at this innocent lady. Her eyes have that look of disgust as if what lies before her makes her sick Fezekile Mkhize does not come with peace.

“This is my house” and I’m ready to throw her out.

“This is Isisa’s house too think of her Kenneth. You can’t bring some girl that you picked up from the streets she could be dangerous.”

She’s still talking and has me springing a sigh of frustration.

“Fezekile if you know what’s good for you you will leave this room now.” I snap.

She releases an incredulous gasp cackles and walks out without arguing. That woman is getting on my nerves I see her agenda. It’s the lifestyle and the money she’s after. Don’t get me wrong I’m all about family and loyalty but I hate deceivers fake people.

MaMkhize was bent on sending me to jail after I killed her brother Balungile Mkhize she was all

about getting justice for her useless brother. She sang about how Isisa lied about the months of molestation and that her precious brother would never hurt his blood.

My sister and I— we didn't fall from a tree we have a mother alright. That witch Shiyiwe is in hiding she ran away the day I killed her husband in cold blood after I walked in on him sweaty and groaning on top of my sister while she watched. I curse her existence till this day.

MaMkhize knows the story so well but still pushed to have me thrown in jail. Family meetings were led by her the uncles were on her side. I just couldn't let it happen though I couldn't leave my sister alone with those vultures. So I did my research found their little secrets that could destroy their families. It was left for- he without sin to cast the first stone and well here I am a free man.

Now MaMkhize is here pretending that she cares about us she probably came to finish what her useless brother started.

*

*

*©□

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 20

This chapter contains strong language and insults that may be offensive to some readers. Reader's discretion advised.

BAMBINDLOVU-

He's dressed in Umblaselo his everyday attire. Who cares what people think? He dresses for himself and as a proud Zulu man he feels a need to show off his culture. Over the years he lost his heavy Zulu accent somewhere between the streets of eZola and Hillbrow. The perks of being surrounded by the whole of Africa in one small town.

When he speaks he uses that one signifying coder-slang—kasi slang otherwise described as tsotsi-taal. The language has a flavour of its own a mixed variety of official languages of

Mzansi. Although a proud Zulu man he has embraced the language as part of his culture.

To add final touches he grabs a half empty container of his mother's Ingrams Camphor and applies it on his face. The smell makes his insides turn it's not like he has an option; he's run out of Blue seal. Now he has to go around smelling like Camphor and Lord it's the green one the smell is so strong that it brings a person unnecessary attention.

Either way he looks good and he knows it one thing is missing though the 'Zulu Rolex'...
Isiphandla (animal wristband.)

That connection with his ancestors... having it would mean the world to him. He knows his roots where he comes from. He's been in contact with his ancestors when his father was in his life the age before he could count up to 100 without skipping a number or two. That was before his father's eyes wandered off their compound before the big man decided to take another wife.

It's a must to have Isiphandla his birth right. However he will need his father's family to achieve that the same people his mother forbid him from meeting.

"Even if you dare dream about those people Bambindlovu I will forget I ever gave birth to you." His mother's threat is forever imprinted in his mind he shivers at the thought. Selling his soul to the devil is always an option but living without his mother would be a sin.

"Ndlovu!" An ear splitting scream harasses his ears compelling his face to wrinkle as frustration takes over. He turns to his little sister by the door her relaxed hair pointing in all corners of the earth as if she was struck by lightning. The brat's face is covered in dry porridge eye gunk and a grin that sends him rolling his eyes.

"What's wrong with you?" He knows what's wrong with her her goal in life is to make his life difficult. Why wouldn't she? The unemployed twelve year old has nothing better to do with her time.

“Mama wants her lotion” the attitude in her voice is on a mission she folds her arms across her chest taking on an unrelenting head shake.

“Did I say I’m leaving the country with it?” He retorts throwing her with a scolding look.

“Ok’salayo you should have your own.” This kid...

“What do you want mubiza? (Ugly)” It’s not the first time he questions her presence in his room.

“Mama is calling you Mr. Elephant.” The child speaks with so much insolence.

“Is this why you didn’t go to school? So you can spend the day looking like Somizi’s mom with a dash of madluphuthu and Vegeta?” He hits a nerve with his quip the little girl rolls her cartoon eyes.

“Flaunt sisi asinamona.” (Continue we’re not jealous.)

“You’re one to talk” she deadpans. “You’ve been stuck on the 24th of September since you

were eighteen it's embarrassing. People don't wear heritage every day."

He wants to laugh at her remark but that would stroke her ego.

"You disrespectful little shit" she ducks with a scream erupting from her mouth when he swings a hand at her.

"Mama!" The little shit... sorry the little girl screams. Bambindlovu quickly covers her mouth knowing he will get in trouble with their mother. Thandikela Mbele does not play when it comes to her children the woman would lay down her life for them.

"If you dare snitch on me I will call the police and tell them about the 50 cents you stole in my bag last week. Jail is not a nice place for children." Her eyes swells at his threat before he knows it crocodile tears are streaming down her crusty face.

"But... you said... you won't get me arrested bhuti." Now he's bhuti and not an elephant?

"I won't if you mind your own business and stop calling me Ndlovu." He triumphs in putting a

smile on her face the child sprints out lest her brother changes his mind.

The three bedroomed flat occupies about eight to nine people he shares what was initially a sitting room with his mother and sister. They had to divide it into two bedrooms using a curtain the kitchen and bathroom belongs to every tenant in the flat.

The cooking space is not far from their room he finds his mother seated on a chair packing away scones she smiles and shakes her head as her eyes take in his clothing.

“Uyaphi?” (Where are you going?)

He takes this as a compliment a miniscule simper graces his face.

“I’m going to fetch the kids it’s almost 3pm.” He says.

The scones look and smell so scrumptious that he has to grab one and stuff it in his mouth.

“Ah. Ah. Ah Thandikela my love you’re not done using the stove? I need to cook swirathi (sweetheart) you’re forgetting that we share this

stove as a nation.” Jokes a fellow tenant with a thick Malawian accent materialising from the dim passage. His jest is accompanied by a deep chortle that annoys Bambindlovu to his deepest core.

He wants to wipe that creepy smile directed at his mother with a slap. Bambindlovu can't have it no one talks to his mother like they are climbing down a tree. He doesn't care about the stupid friendly face the guy is showcasing it's fake anyway. He's always been short tempered thus pushing the undersized man against the wall is nothing new.

“Yey brika msoonu.” Bambindlovu seethes.
(Stop right there asshole.)

The poor man gasps in shock he can't understand why he's being attacked. He just wants to cook his food eat and go catch up on Emzini Wenzinsizwa. (Local TV show.)

“Speak to my mother like that again and ngizokunquma isbhamu somdoko mdidi.” (I'll castrate your d!ck.)

Bambindlovu tosses a warning his hand tightly pressed on the trembling man's shoulder and body towering over him.

“Oh Nkosi yami Sokalisa stop your nonsense.”
(My God.)

Thandikela manages to pull her son back.

“I don't like this mama this idiot is disrespectful. Is this how he speaks to his mother?”

Bambindlovu grunts shooting the man with an evil glare. “Ngizom'thethisa nge Alfred Khuzwayo.” (I'll shoot him down with an AK-47.)

Thandikela buries her face in her hands this is not how she raised her son. It's days like these she regrets moving to Johannesburg the petite man finds a chance to scurry out of the kitchen like a scared little mouse.

This is one over protective son and that's okay. She's here today because of his protective nature he's only twenty four yet has old man tendencies.

Or rural tendencies per se the ladies that have been introduced to his queen were forced to wear a doek cover their shoulders and adorn

their bodies with a garment a woman should naturally wear; a dress that covers her knees.

Some stayed while some couldn't take second place in his life. His longest relationship lasted about three months not that he's an ugly duckling. His looks are a ten it's his mother and sister that are a problem according to the ladies.

Ah yes! And the fact that he doesn't have a bank account that is overflowing with Mandela notes. Correction! He doesn't have a bank account at all poverty has never given him a chance to walk into Capitec. He receives his R1200 in a special brown envelop sealed by a Taxi owner using his tongue.

“Hurry back I have to go and sell these before dark.” She declares packing the scones into a five litre Tupperware container. Bambindlovu is not happy about his mother's announcement especially knowing she won't be selling anything after 3pm.

“

“No. No. No Maolady I can’t let you do that. Rather give them to me the school kids will buy them and if there’s any left. I will sell them at the taxi rank.”

She nods in agreement.

“Hurry back

Sponsored

the school kids will buy them and if there’s any left. I will sell them at the taxi rank.”

She nods in agreement.

“Hurry back if you lose this container don’t come back home.” His mother dishes a warning with a warm smile.

“Hau mama my life is worth iskhafthini?” (A lunch box?)

“This is not a lunch box it’s years of collection. You’re a man I wouldn’t expect you to understand.” He’ll never understand the greedy relationship women have with Tupperware.

“Okay sthandwa sam. Let me run.” A quick kiss is pasted on her cheek before he heads out.

The caravan is parked across the streets he loves this car. It’s not his but he’s made a place for it in his heart. Perhaps one day his boss will

wake up in a good mood and gift him this baby for being a consistent transport driver.

♪ Mina I know people abak'dleli 'jealousy
Bak'thakathe ngenhliziyo
Izinto zakho ma 'ihlangana ♪

The song blasts through the speakers as he drives away singing along word for word.

He's parked outside Saint Martin's School in Rosettenville the grounds are buzzing with little brats scuttling about. In no time the caravan is filled with not only kids but noise that give him a splitting headache.

With everyone settled he starts the van. He's got the song on replay it's louder than the snorty rich kids. There's sudden silence in the vehicle as if the song playing offers curse words this is how he likes it.

Before he drives off the door slides open and there stands a tall lady. Her eyes sweep over

the astounded school kids annoyance taking over her facial features.

“Kwame what are you doing there?” The lady yells at one of the boys seated at the back.

“Come here now.”

The little boy grumbles and jumps out of the caravan.

“Why are you in there? Are you crazy Kwame?” She scolds him.

“You were taking too long Liya so my friend suggested that I go with him to his house.” Oh children are so gullible it’s cute.

“You should’ve called me you don’t just follow people R.J. What if I got here and you were already gone? Don’t ever do that to me again.” Liyana articulates pulling her little brother into a tight hug. He winces and immediately draws back fear visits his eyes as he hugs his body.

“And then? What happened?” She enquires. He retreats once more when she extends a hand to touch him.

“N- nothing Liya.” Is his hesitant response.

“Hey who are you?” Bambindlovu is standing behind her demanding answers.

“Who are you and where were you taking my brother?” She questions staring down at him.

“Excuse me this is a school transport. I’m running a business here.” He speaks clearly.

“A Business of kidnapping kids?” That’s a nippy response from her.

“I’m not surprised it’s because I’m black right?”

“Are you calling me racist?” Liyana spits.

“I don’t know” he shrugs his shoulders. “If it butters your bread.” In addition he regards her with a bored look. Her mouth hangs open in disbelief.

“I could get you arrested for false accusation and preying on children” she’s pointing a finger at him and he’s not okay with it. No woman points a finger at him his ancestors would slap him across the face for allowing such.

“Go ahead I have B.C on speed dial.” There’s arrogance in the way he delivers his retort and he’s not even guaranteed that she will not call the cops.

“What?” She is confused and this has him smirking and drawing nearer to her. The lady’s eyes flap a few times as she tries to move away from him but her movement is limited the car has become a stumbling block. Nothing smells so delicious than a nervous woman.

“Don’t look at me in a rush sisi my clothes don’t define who I am.” He lies through his scone smelling breathe. “When I say malume Bheki Cele answers.”

He finds himself funny I see. The man is laughing as if he won best male comedy but sister here is not amused. The tongue click speaks on her behalf.

“Liya let’s go.” R.J pulls the hem of her jersey he looks ready to go home. Bambindlovu’s stare is holding her captive his eyes are probing and soft. Something suddenly does not add up something in him familiarises with this girl.

“What are you looking at?” He is used to rude girls like her and knows how to handle them.

“So you’re the spiritually gifted girl?” There can’t be a mistake there never is a mistake when it

comes to these things. Sure his father abandoned him but his ancestors remained loyal. They have been with him to this day whispering people's secrets in his ears.

"What are you talking about?" Her brows furrow as she glares at him she pushes her little brother behind her as if hiding him from a predator.

"You have weird dreams of people you've never met you dream of water and being at school. Sometimes you see shadows around you but you brush it off thinking it's in your imagination." He clarifies.

"How do you know all of this?" She questions his facts it's not a first. Some people have gone as far as calling him a witch after prophesying over them.

"Moloi (witch) at your service" he jokes to receive a snort from her. On a serious note; "you have a calling mfethu (my brother.) If you don't attend to it things will go South and fast. You need to get cleansed and then taken to the water so that you're able to communicate and connect with your ancestors. If not you will fall

into depression and start having suicidal thoughts.” This is not the life he chose for himself invading strangers’ privacies. His ancestors are sure having a laugh where they are if it were up to him he wouldn’t even be entertaining unfamiliar persons.

“But that’s not what I want” she argues.

“Look I know it’s not easy for you to accept this but if you don’t your family will pay the price. I can help you find direction if you like.”

“What’s the catch?” Come on Liyana not every guy wants what belongs to your ‘precious’ Zwelethu.

“I don’t want anything from you mfethu.”

“I am not your brother stop calling me that.”

Liyana breaks.

“Whatever... mfethu I’m just passing on a message and seeing how conflicted you are I thought you’d need help. Do whatever you want. I don’t care I don’t know you.”

He opens the passenger door grabs the bucket of scones from under the seat.

“My suster since you look like money. I’ll sell you this whole bucket for R300 750 includes the Tupperware.” Mr. Chance-taker negotiating is one thing he’s good at and any normal person would fall under his spell. The lady in front of him looks like she eats lemons for breakfast.

“Special offer mfethu take it or leave it.”

“No thank you” is that a look of disgust? Or is she annoyed by his informality?

“Come on look at your little brother nkare ke Sid oa Ice Age one or two scones and he will gain weight fast-fast.”

Evidently irritated Liyana snatches her brother’s hand and ushers them to her car.

Bambindlovu is left with his mouth sagging open he wonders if she will heed his advice. He didn’t sign up for this being a mediator for ignorant people who refuse to accept their gifts.

In his dreams he would hear the sound of his father’s feet his rumbling laughter and spur-of-the-moment humming. In that time peace would reign in him until his eyes flap open forcing him

back into the real world. A world where his father chose another woman over him and his mother. This strange gift he has; could it be a punishment from his ancestors for being away from his father? Because it darn feels like one.

*

*

* © □

Chapter 21

STYLES-

This is the third time he's sent back without meeting the woman who possibly has the answers he needs. Her good girl image was wiped off when the men in uniform thought it best to keep her protected. Who is she that she would need the Malawian government to shadow her?

If Thandaza is a big shot back in her country then how is she running from an abusive partner? Couldn't the same government protect

her from this so called husband who aspires to be Mike Tyson?

He rented a small office space in Randburg near Cresta mall two IT specialists are working under him. Nothing valid has come up yet they are still oblivious as to who has drawn the enemy lines. The people who have tried and tested Randall Okolie are still in hiding and that has Styles restless.

He walks in to find the two young men conversing over fat cakes and... it smells like Joko in here. These people look too relaxed for people who have a deadline. He regards them with a frown and discharges a loud exhalation. "What do you have for me?" He's shuts the door loud enough to depict the amount of anger pulling at him they sit up each sliding his swivel chair in front of the computer.

He's not in a good mood he hasn't been in days since the investigation began. His other men have to walk on egg shells around him they don't know him to be vile and ratty. Then again

they don't know him much to actually predict his mood swings.

"Nothing has come up yet Styles." His face hardens upon hearing this. It's what he's been hearing the entire week and he's getting fed up. He knows what's coming there has to be a way to avoid it.

"Maybe I should fire you lot and get people who really need this money you're here all day doing absolutely nothing."

"Well it's not easy..." Oops wrong choice of words. Styles considers the man with a glare.

"How long do I have to listen to your excuses? You come highly recommended only to give me a bunch of bullshit. How hard can it be to find a man who walked in and out of a bloody hotel?"

How hard is it exactly? It's not like he's a ghost or is he?

"I think we should call it a night I can't function under a lot of pressure." One of them introduces rubbing his eyes like an innocent little boy ready to retire for the night. This is

what happens when you hire babies fresh from Wits they are still teething and only care about spending the money they haven't worked for.

His phone rings and he has to step out of the office to take it privately his wife has left multiple missed calls. It's late in the night and he not being home is a big problem. They have argued about his late comings and working himself to exhaustion.

"Yeah" that's not how he usually answers her calls. 'Kitten' and 'my love' have been placed on hold since their last argument he's still too upset to regard her with those endearments. He's always been the soft one amongst his friends the rational one who brings peace in the brotherhood.

"Sihle wants to speak to you" yep she's equally upset.

"Really Sethu? It's past her bedtime why is she not asleep yet?" Never has he used a deadpan tone when speaking to her.

"Maybe she would be asleep if you were home" here we go again. The wife and her nagging she wouldn't be a wife if she wasn't irritating. I

He feels a presence behind him and doesn't have to turn to know who it is his scent gives him away.

"I have to go" he drops the call not giving her a chance to say whether they are done or not.

"How is she?" Randall asks as Styles turns to face him.

"Fine" his voice is unbothered. Sethu is more than fine that's what he has convinced himself.

"How are you?"

Yes he's more worried about his brother. Who cares that they don't have the same DNA?

They love each other like brothers.

"I'm a big man" his reply. But Styles sees right through him he's not as okay as he wants him to think.

"You killed her didn't you?"

Random aren't we Mr. Styles? Let's keep our voices low shall we?

Randall folds his arms across his chest a furrowed brow claims his forehead.

“How did you know about her?” Randall casually asks. His demeanour is that of a man who is free of troubles.

“Is it not my job to make sure you don’t get your hands stained? What did I say about spilling blood Randall?” Styles reproaches him like a big brother... forget that Randall is older.

“My hands remain clean till this day” he raises them to show how blood free they are.

“Then who did it?” Styles questions he knows how stupid his brother can be sometimes.

“Since you’re so informed shouldn’t you know?”

Dammit Randall we’re getting agitated here. Give us something to work with.

Styles doesn’t say anything he’s waiting for Randall to grow up and he better do it now Styles does not play hide and seek.

“Believe me Styles I would’ve loved to strangle her to death.” The king finally cracks. “But it wasn’t me who killed her.”

“Okay I believe you.” Sure he does. “So what’s this hold she has on you?”

“Proof of Olivia’s death” he keeps his voice near to the ground walls have ears after all.

“I’d be damned the witch has a hold on you even beyond the grave.” Disbelief is laid in Styles’ voice. “What did she want?”
“My last name.” Randall answers.

“What have you gotten yourself into Randall? I told you back then that killing Liyana’s mother was a bad idea.”

Really Styles? Was it really a bad idea?

“I don’t regret what I did Styles I would do it again.” He hisses. “She fed my child drugs made her watch things a child should not see and who knows what else that bastard she called a boyfriend did to Liyana.”

“There’s no use in arguing we need to do damage control. Find the footage and destroy it.” Styles introduces.

“Yeah somehow I have a bad feeling about this.” Styles does too but he doesn’t voice it.

“We should go home and rest those idiots in there are so useless. I need to replace them.”

Thinking back Styles clicks his tongue at their stupidity.

Randall is quiet for a while staring into space as if a thought entered his mind.

“Where is Mkhize?” His question is random it has Styles inquisitively raising his eyebrows.

“Last I heard he’s herding cows in Msinga.”

Styles smirks loving the thought of his enemy drowning in poverty.

“When last did you check up on him?” Randall’s questions have a purpose.

“Do you think he’s behind all this mess?” Styles offers a query rather than answering one.

“That old geezer has always been smart I wouldn’t be surprised if he is.”

“I doubt it Randall Mkhize has nothing to his name but a pair of torn socks. He’s powerless you would need money to pull this off.” Styles could be right the two men fall into deep thought. A poor powerless former taxi boss is like a poisonous snake with no fangs. Probably that’s what Mkhize has become.

ZITHA-

I don't know this place the last thing I remember is being carried away by the black Bruce Lee. One day when I'm old and grey living my last days on earth I will tell my children about the life I lived.

It's a movie.

There's pain everywhere as I try to move that bastard Tshilidzi... I know a lady at Noord Street who sells rat poison for R5 I hear it goes down well with beer and Tshilidzi loves his beer.

Where is this place though? I don't recognize this room. I'm tucked under greyish bedding the room is too spacious for a bedroom. It's so manly and adorned with grey and black. From the walls to the curtains.

The floor is carpeted with the same dull colours. It looks more comfortable than my squeaky bed something I would sleep on the whole night. It smells nice the room smells nice.

I recognize this scent it brings a déjà vu feeling. But I have never been in here before. I can't even dream about such luxury my aunt always wakes me up just when the dream starts. I realise I'm wearing a black t-shirt it's big on me and has a manly scent. I hope he closed his eyes when changing my clothes I'm not happy about my rolls and love handles. There's two doors in here one of them is open. I hope it's the bathroom I'm pressed and need to release so I push my painful body out of bed. It's difficult to walk with all this pain it has me limping. I think Tshilidzi broke my ribs.

The open door is the bathroom alright... and... okay... I have never seen anything like it this person must love these dark colours. It's raining stainless steel in here.

The enormous bathtub in the middle of the room is charcoal black I'm a little disappointed as I was expecting a bathtub that's gravitating a few centimetres from the ground. I know people who are moneyed can buy anything including gravity? I've seen it on TV. There's a shower at the far end corner and a toilet seat not far from

it I'm happy and so is my bladder. The plan is to make it quick and get out of here.

Okay! This is what us normal people would call a bathroom cabinet only ours is a small tiny cupboard that can only accommodate toothpaste your toothbrush disinfectant and probably Handy Andy for those who find it necessary to have one.

This one is big my curious self has me taking a peek inside. How many towels does one need? I bet you a million he's never used any of these.

That's okay waste money rich people. While we turn our sofas upside down looking for 20 cents to add to the money for bread.

Everything is here from body lotion deodorant fragrance you name it. It smells like him whoever he is. Suddenly my mind takes me back to when he carried me in his arms.

Enough snooping.

There's an old woman sitting on the couch when I come out her unfriendly face forces my feet to come to a stop.

"Hi." I have to greet first right? But her face is still not kind. I know that look my aunt wears it a lot.

Seeing she's not responding I tread back towards the bed.

"Yeyi yeyi yeyi. Don't sit there." She shouts making me jump as I'm startled by her voice.

"Who are you and what do you want with my son?" She asks coldly. She must be talking about the man who saved me from death now I'm waiting for a big cheque with the reference 'stay away from my son.'

"Can you repeat your question ma because I don't understand." I'm lying.

"Do I look like your mother girly?" She's snappy.

"Do I look like I can ever give birth to someone like you? What do you want from my nephew?"

Dammit! She's one of them

Sponsored

now I'm waiting for a big cheque with the reference 'stay away from my son.'

"Can you repeat your question ma because I don't understand." I'm lying.

"Do I look like your mother girly?" She's snappy.

"Do I look like I can ever give birth to someone like you? What do you want from my nephew?"

Dammit! She's one of them the judgemental ones the mockers the haters. I know how to deal with her kind.

"Aunty didn't daddy tell you?" Her eyes contract at my question I am going to enjoying seeing her stumble in my nonsense.

"Your father? I don't know your father besides you look like the fatherless type." Ouch aunty that hurts honestly but I don't care. I have been fatherless my whole life and I have gotten over the pain of not having one.

"You're right I don't have a father." My teeth are in the mood for a show and tell I conform showing her all thirty two of them or is it thirty? I remember losing two at a party last year I got

drunk as usual fell face down and lost my teeth. By God's grace it wasn't my front teeth. There's a picture of me trending somewhere on Facebook.

"Then what are you talking about?" I love curious aunties my feet start moving towards the bed. Honestly I am not going to miss a chance to lay on such a comfortable bed.

"Your nephew I call him Daddy." There is that priceless shocked expression I have been waiting for. Let me lean back and enjoy the show seriously can her eyes go any wider?

"What are you talking about you pathetic girl?"
Wow.

"Careful aunty daddy hates it when his baby girl is being insulted. I would hate to be the one to separate you two." I really don't care who she is to this man she talks about I am leaving this place after her blood pressure has sky rocketed.

"Lalela la ntombazane (listen here girly) this is not Soweto. Can't you see you don't belong here?" She's pointing at me with her forefinger.

“People will spot you from a distance you’re like a stain on a pure white cloth. Gather whatever it is that belongs to you oh wait... you came here with nothing right? Leave as you came and when you see my son turn the other way because I will not hesitate to make your life hell.” She’s barking like a toothless dog.

“I’m not going anywhere your son brought me here. He should be the one to take me home.” I tell her as I stretch my legs on the bed.

“He’s not going to take you anywhere do you see him around here?” Are all aunts this loud?

“In fact he told me to tell you to leave as soon as you wake up.”

The woman covers her hand with the sleeves of her shirt before grabbing my arm and pulls me to my feet.

“Hey you’re hurting me.” I whine yanking my arm away. “I don’t have a disease okay the only contagious thing here is your attitude.”

“Whatever I want you out. I doubt you’ll be able to find your way out of this big house so let me make things easy for you. Follow me and make

sure you don't touch anything I still have to purify this room." She says.

"I'm leaving vele it's not like I want to be here." My comeback is ignored this woman couldn't care less. At least my shoes are here I'll come back for my clothes.

We pass through the kitchen the evening breeze embraces my body as she swings the door open. It's dark outside I don't know where I am. Where do I catch a taxi and with what?

"Aunt who is this?" A girl about my age appears from nowhere carrying shopping bags. There's a man behind her with more of those.

"Hi." She chirps.

How do you return a stranger's smile again?

"Are you my brother's girlfriend?" Woah! Your brother wishes I was his girlfriend.

"She's no one baby" aunty swiftly jumps in.

"She wanted an ironing job." Lies aunty lies.

I give her a rebuking stare parents lie so easily. This one and my aunt same WhatsApp group. They should open a stokvel together.

“Oh bhuti can give her the job please wait for him. Maybe join us for supper too.” Oh! I like this one this bhuti she’s talking about must be the man who brought me here.

“No no Isisa baby. You know how your brother can be he doesn’t like strangers. He will go crazy if he finds this girl here. Besides it’s getting late she won’t find a taxi.”

“But your nephew brought me...”

“You should go sisi” the aunt interrupts her voice rising above mine. “It’s not safe for a young girl to travel alone at night.” Like she cares.

“Okay in that case Mandla will drop her home.”

Isisa to the rescue pointing at the tall man behind her.

Shouldn’t he be bhut’ Mandla? He’s old this man old enough to father this child.

“I’m sure Mandla has to get home to his family.”

The aunt again.

Why is she so bitter? Did I sleep with her husband? I think I would know if I did.

“No he doesn’t mind. Where do you live sisi?”
Isisa asks.

Yoh. Yoh now I must give rich people my location? Lord you said you will not give me a burden too much to carry this one is too heavy. Give it to Sizakele let her feel the heat bra God. “It’s okay I’ll send bhut’ Mandla the location in the car.” I say covering my poverty.

Of all the places God could’ve put me in Orange Farm suited him best. The things our father in heaven does...

The aunt next to me is boiling like potatoe wedges on a wedding day.

Speaking of aunts mine must be breathing fire where she is. I don’t have my phone with me and it’s probably off. My life is a marathon I will have to explain myself when I get home...

Jehovah set me free.

“Mandla please drop her home.” I can’t say no can I? I don’t want to be stranded here and I don’t have money on me. “Put the bags inside

and drop her off.” She instructs him I can hear the aunt’s fast breathing she’s about ready to explode.

Drama I tell you.

“Here wear this.” Isisa wraps a warm cardigan around me. “It’s cold we don’t want you getting sick.” Whose child is this?

I want to protest but the aunt beats me to it as she grabs the jersey from me.

“You are such a kind soul my child but no you can’t be this kind. People like her will take advantage of you you cannot give away your clothes like that.”

“It’s fine aunt I don’t mind. There’s more where that came from usisi is trembling.” She takes the jersey from her aunt and puts it over me again I quickly wear it before the aunt takes it.

“Sisi I can’t accept this I’m sorry.” Listen to me respecting money. This is how we get in think and grow rich. I’ve read the cover of the book I didn’t need to find out what the contents say. The title told me everything I need to know. Should I ask for my clothes? Leaving them here

would be a ticket to come back let me refrain from asking.

“Okay I’m lending it to you then.” She smiles and I want to kiss her I’ll buy her fat cakes tomorrow. Three will do I have a budget.

“Do you eat amagwinya?” (Fat cakes.)

The question is random hence the confusion dancing on her face.

“Yeah my brother is a fan.” Her answer is hesitant I know she is lying to me. That rich mouth does not know the deliciousness of an oily hot fat cake.

“Okay I will bring them for you next time.” I say. I am definitely coming back to this house her brother could be my ticket out of Tshilidzi’s life.

Mandla comes back he looks ready to go.

“Take care of her Mandla.” Isisa instructs he nods. “Bye.”

“Thank you sisi I’ll see you next time.” I tell her much to the aunt’s annoyance she clicks her tongue and slithers into the house.

After bidding Isisa a final goodbye I follow Mandla to the car a smile creeps up on my lips when he opens the back door for me. I could get used to this.

“You don’t have to do that.” Hehe! I love this life.

“You are madam’s guest.” That’s all he says. She’s a madam? At her age? Soft life...

“Well thank you bhuti.” I fake an English accent only to have him chuckle.

The car is black inside as well. It has tinted windows no one can see from outside. It’s beautiful and big and it reminds me of that car that’s always following me. These people live like devil worshippers all black everything.

*

*

*©□

Chapter 22

18+ For those who would never miss a chance to read explicit scenes you may want to listen to Adele’s Make You Feel My Love while you indulge.

AMARA-

“Where did you find MaNtombi?” We’re slouched in bed a distance between us.

“Some cleaning agency I figured with Chioma gone you’ll need a helping hand.” He’s engrossed in a book since when does he read books?

“Do they teach them to give marriage advice at cleaning agencies?” He tilts his head to look at me and I can guarantee you he thinks I’m losing my mind. “She gave me a speech on how to be a good wife.”

“Oh!” Oh? Why is he not bothered by this?

“Is that all you’re going to say?” I raise a question.

“Is there anything more?” He’s not looking at me why is he not looking at me.

“Yes help me complain Randall.” This man is not a complainer I know.

He places the book on the bedside table and sits up facing me with a furrowed brow.

“Baby since when do you care what people think?” Uh! Since forever.

“Since I was told my husband might find a woman who wakes up early to take care of him.” I could swear he just rolled his eyes.

“This is weird I’m not familiar with the insecure Amara. You’re freaking me out me hemma.” He says and I’m hoping it is a joke.

“I’m not insecure” I dispute. “It’s just that a seed was planted in my head and I happened to water it now it’s growing like an infection. Especially after what we’ve been through.”

“Meaning?” He asks should I dare say it?

The cheating topic always creates a rift between us and I don’t want that. To rid of the elephant in the room I straddle him and initiate the first kiss. He holds my hips and instantly kisses me back hungrier than I am.

We break for air my eyes on him and his on me. Both of us are breathing yearning sick of waiting... there is no going back even if we want to. There’s a smirk eyes heaping with lust.

He's making me nervous and I'm struggling to hide my bashful smile.

I know what is going through his mind I want it too... I want all of him buried deep inside me.

His hands relax on my neck and he rubs his thumbs along my jaw he closes his eyes as he slowly leans in mine close as well. How will it feel to have him kiss me like he used to? I feel his lips against my cheek a light brush that sends shivers through my nerves... shivers that make my whole body tremble.

"Tell me now if you're not comfortable me hemma." He whispers in my ear.

I don't respond I guess he finds an answer in my silence. His mouth brushes against the bridge of my nose "Tell me now if you want me to stop Amara."

At this Randall grazes my cheek down to the corner of my mouth it's torturous I want him to claim my lips already. So I hold his face in my hands and swallow the rest of his words as I lure him into a wolfish kiss. But Randall being

Randall does not allow me to dominate over him not even through a damn kiss.

The man slows down the contact kissing me gently cautiously. Hunger rises inside me I want more than this. A soft groan escapes him when I knot my fists in his t-shirt and pull him against me. His arms enwrap around me gathering me into him. The way his tongue seems to disappear inside my mouth as if he needs a part of me to breathe. He rolls us over on the bed scrambled together still kissing.

A deep moan graces the room it's mine. His hands discover the tightness of my ass squeezing kneading. I feel him smile as he continues biting and sucking my lips while his tongue dances with mine.

His hand continuously runs down my thigh inviting shivers and pulsating heat all through my body. With my help Randall undresses me my nightgown is tossed to the side.

I'm naked and shivering under him and he's looking at me a small smile spreads across his

features before he attacks me with yet another slow tormenting kiss.

Why is he not giving me all of him? He lets me remove his t-shirt we're still held in a kiss my hands move up and down the length of his back the need to touch every part of him is uncontrollable. I allow myself to get lost in the moment in his slow kisses his hands mapping my skin. He stands to get rid of the pants he's wearing and is back to sucking my face.

Randall squeezes my inner thigh before letting his fingers find their way to my neither regions lightly he brushes my clit and I shudder at the feeling. The lips of the man I love take on another smirk probably at how wet I am. My heart thrums in my chest and I feel myself grow weak when I feel the tip of his length where his fingers had been.

As he gradually pushes himself in my mind stops working for a second... don't freeze Amara you can do this. Cheering myself on is an epic fail the memories are here again hovering over my head... unasked-for. The only thought I want to entertain is how much I need

Randall right now so I hide my fear against his mouth kissing him like I'll die if I don't.

He's inside me savaging my body with gentle strokes and this is what I wanted what I've been craving for. The air around us is thick with lust and desire my eyes close as I breathe it in as I breathe him in. Perhaps this way his touches and kisses will erase the painful memories the shame threatening and bullying me.

But... but why is it not working? They come flooding in more powerful as if an evil force is blowing them towards me.

"Pl... please" a raspy breath from me. "Please love me Randall. Make me pure again."

He's buried deep inside me as I say this his strokes agonisingly slow while kissing me like I'd break if he went faster. He brings his head up to look at me eyes drunk with worry.

"Are you okay?" A whisper dances under his breathe. "I can stop."

That's not what I want he makes me feel better. To get him to continue as I fail to release words I ambush him with an unquenchable kiss. He

purrs like a kitten and I feel him shake a little above me when I send my tongue to find his.

I want to complain when he breaks from my mouth and his perverted whacked eyes find my breasts the man simpers as he scrutinizes them. He buries his head between them and inhales deeply my hand finds his nape to brush it as he alternates to sucking my breast. He comes back with a naughty smile on his face and whispers.

“You taste good me hemma... I love you.”

Darn it if this can't make me feel better then buy me a coffin because I'm a goner.

“I love you.” I whisper back.

Randall claims my lips my whole body becomes his territory. I'm completely his my nails sink into his back. The plan is to keep it as quiet as I can but it's impossible I'm seeing flames and possibly losing my mind and all my mouth can do is desperately call out his name his heavy breathing and warm breath on my neck seduces me to an extent.

My hands still intact on where I had placed them I dig my nails deeper on his flesh as my body opens a red-carpet for an imaginable earth-shattering orgasm.

Just when I think we are done the husband keeps going my moans elevate with each stroke. My mind has kicked out every toxic thing brought by this world it's blank... Randall is inside me and nothing matters but getting that toe curling experience.

His heavy breathing matches mine.

Our lips touch for a brief moment I bite his lower lip just as he pulls out of the kiss and boy do I love the simple smile on his face.

My mouth denies me a smile but gladly accepts loud moans of pleasure. I feel electricity surge through my entire body and tighten my legs and arms around him he knows I'm close to the finish line.

"Wait for me me hemma." He says voice sounding like it's coming from a bottomless pit. I don't think I can hold it anymore not when it feels this good.

“I- I can’t... I need to... let go.”

My voice seems to be encouraging him to go faster. I’m getting too loud so keeping in mind we have kids in the house I cover my mouth with my hand to stop myself from screaming but he removes it and goes faster. His sexy groans sound like music to my ears birthing chill bumps on every inch of my skin.

This is the part where I become selfish and let go or I will explode which I do. My body shudders under him as I give in to the orgasm.

I look at him consuming my whole being he’s so gorgeous. The facial expression on his face and the way his mouth moves as he’s groaning relishing every fibre of my being the sweat on his body. There’s a soul connection tears escape my eyes. Only now I’m reminded that I’m addicted to this man and everything that he is.

“I will always be yours Amara” he says moving faster to reach his ending.

That tickle... that kiss... that last push... It's all bound up in this perfect splendid twinkling and I lose control of all my senses.

“F#CK!”

He cusses followed by a loud groan then collapses on top of me. We lie here for a while trying to catch our breaths. His head is buried on the curve of my neck and his warm breath dancing on it. He raises his head after what seems like a minute and a smile creeps on the corners of his mouth. I can bet what he's thinking we did it. We did it and it feels like the best thing I've ever done.

My introverted ass has me burying my face in my hands and I fall into giggles then a hearty laugh escapes my mouth.

His smile turns into a chuckle and before I know it we are both laughing our heads off. His lips meet mine they linger on before he flips us over putting me on top of him and his arms clasp around me. I rest my head on his chest my lower body between his legs. If you ask me

what just happened I'd probably lie... but here I am naked on top of him.

"That was wild." He says.

"That was something did you forget we have people in the house? You didn't have to make me lose myself like that" I can't stop smiling.

"I didn't hear you stopping me." Sure he'd say that.

I love him and in need of another kiss so I pucker up.

"Do you think she heard us?" She hasn't been here for a week and I have noted how nosy MaNtombi is she wants to be James Bond—that woman.

"Who?" Really? Is he not the one who said she could have Chioma's room?

He's confused "MaNtombi." I put his mind at ease.

Let's hear what he'll say I bet it's not what any normal person would say.

"Does it matter?" Gosh! Just like I expected.

"Really Randall? Can't we have her stay in the outhouse?"

“With the guards? That won’t be appropriate Amara.” What’s he talking about? She’s an elder it’s not like they’ll hit on her. His hands are busy on my back it’s not like they’ll hit on her. His hands are busy on my back drawing placid circles. Let’s just say I’m loving the sound of his heartbeat.

“Seriously Amara you worry too much about what people will say. This is our home and we can be as loud as we want.” He declares "Next time don't hold back from screaming."
His hand slides down to my ass and squeezes. I strike it and he removes it with a quiet laughter.

KENNETH-

“Where is she?” Zithobile better be somewhere in this house or I swear... There’s no sign of her in my room this woman watched me stride there and not once did she stop to tell me that Zithobile is not here.

“Who?” She has a stupid- confused look on her face.

“Don’t piss me off Fezekile where is she?”

“She went home” she shrugs waving her hand like it’s no big deal. With no care in the world she is comfortably settled on my couch sipping tea while that girl is out there all alone.

“You told her to leave didn’t you?” I’m ready to kill someone.

“Why would I do that? She was your guest son she wanted to leave so I didn’t stop her.” This woman is lying to me and it’s pissing me off the ignorance she possesses puts the final nail on my anger.

“I know you Fezekile.” I take a step to have her stand to her feet eyes alarmed and wide. “You ousted her out of my house my house. Where do you get off?”

“No I...” I see a story coming and interject just in time.

“Think about what you say next you will not like what I do to you if another lie spews out of your mouth.”

“Bhuti don’t talk to her like that.” Dammit Isisa. My eyes follow her quick steps as she marches towards me.

“Stay out of this go back to your room.” I snap I swear I’m losing my patience.

“She doesn’t belong here Kenneth that girl is a gold digger and...” MaMkhize pronounces.

“Go pack your bags and leave my house.” This could also be my chance to throw her out.

“What? No bhuti you can’t do that.” Isisa should not be here right now she rushes to stand beside MaMkhize.

“I was trying to protect you and your sister.”
What the hell is she even saying?

“Who said we need your protection?” I ask.

“I need it bhuti I need a mother. Aunt is the closest I have to a mother.” Isisa cries.

“Oh really? Where was she all those years when I was raising you alone? She didn’t think that you needed a mother back then. Ask her why she’s here now go ahead.” The girl blinks away tears her eyes hesitate a minute.

“Bhuti please if she leaves then I’m going with her.” Her arms circle around MaMkhize my sister is starting to get on my nerves too.

“Isisa you know I hate nonsense you’re not going anywhere” I tell her.

“I will go where my aunt goes.” She insists glaring and daring.

“Here’s another thing I hate repeating myself.” If I have to drag MaMkhize out I will. “Fezekile is leaving my house.”

“All because of her Bhuti?” Isisa cracks considering me with innocent eyes. Dammit!

“You’re turning your back on your family because of some girl who’s probably after your money.”

This does not sound like my sister this is MaMkhize speaking but the words are coming out of Isisa’s mouth. She would never disobey me nor look down on people.

“ISISA!!!” I yell.

MaMkhize slides in front of her shielding her from my hand that’s ready to collide with her cheek. I have never laid a hand on my sister but hearing her insult Zithobile stirs something in me.

“Wenzani Kenneth?” (What are you doing?) MaMkhize shouts giving me a disappointed look.

“Now you’re hitting me because of that girl bhuti?” I hate how she keeps referring to Zithobile as that girl.

“You better shut up Isisa I don’t want to do something I will regret.” I love her but right now I will not allow a word against Zithobile. “I’m going to look for her wena be gone when I get back and Isisa if you dare follow this woman you will taste my wrath for the first time in your life.”

I’m not even joking about this.

“Bhuti please I’m sorry okay.” She bounces to me and locks her arms around my waist. “I didn’t mean to disrespect you I met her when I got home and I didn’t know that she was your guest. I asked her to stay for supper but she said she had to go so I asked Mandla to drop her off. She’s probably home by now she said she lives in Orange farm or something. You can check up on her tomorrow I’ll go with you. Just don’t let aunt leave this house I need her bhuti please.”

This child knows which buttons to press to get me to do what she wants.

“You’re lucky Fezekile or you’ll be out on the streets.”

This is my final warning but I don’t tell them. Breaking out of my sister’s hold I leave them and head to my room.

Zithobile is so innocent but she doesn’t know it yet. However I see it I also see that she’s carrying a heavy burden. That girl does not need stress in her life she’s already going through so much.

I can smell her in this room she’s everywhere. On the bed in the bathroom the closet. I pull out her shirt from the top shelf I had to change her dirty clothes when I brought her home. I’m oblivious as to why I thought it best to hide her clothes.

I can smell her on it funny how I’ve become so addicted to her scent and I’ve only been in contact with her twice. An urge to see her arises but I can’t not now at least. It’s late she’s probably sleeping.

AMARA-

“Mom open the door” R.J’s distressed voice throws me into a sea of worry. My gaze darts to Randall as I sit up he jumps off the bed and quickly throws on his boxer shorts. I find something to drape my body as he rushes to open the door.

“What’s wrong?” Worry resounds in his voice he has a sobbing little boy in his arms.

“Liya is not home I wanted to sleep in her room after I had a bad dream. But she’s not there dad.” He’s explaining through tears.

“She’s probably in the bathroom or the kitchen.” Liyana loves late night snacks there can’t be any other explanation.

“She’s not here mom” R.J expresses.

Randall steals a look I see worry in his eyes. He places R.J down and rushes out of the room.

The boy clings on to me I want to follow Randall but can’t leave this one alone. Where is Chioma when you need her?

“Liya! Liyana!” That’s Randall calling out to her I can hear from the tone of his voice that he’s

growing anxious and frantic by the second there must be no sign of Liyana. It's very late the girl is not so rebellious to have run off.

"Where is Liya mom?" I sit him on the bed his gaze is fixated on me fearful.

"Stay here baby I'm going to check if dad has found her." I tell him.

"What's going on?" MaNtombi is here I remember telling her this morning not to enter my room.

"Have you seen Liyana? We can't find her anywhere." She shakes her head.

"Madam was the first one to go to bed she had come to ask me for painkillers saying she had a headache." I'm astounded by MaNtombi's words Liyana always comes to me when she's not feeling well. "What's going on?"

"Please take Kwame to his room." There's no time to explain I paste a kiss on his cheek.

"No. No!" The boy yells and hides under the blanket. "Don't leave me alone please."

"R.J what's wrong?"

“I’m not a bad boy mom” his voice quavers. “I’m a good boy please don’t leave me alone I will behave I promise.” Is he crying under there?

“Baby what is it?”

“I’m a good boy mom. I’m a good boy.” He’s clinging on to the blanket not allowing me to pull it from him. I win and the second he’s revealed he jumps into my arms and clings his arms around my neck. That’s odd he’s trembling.

“He’s not used to me yet sisi” MaNtombi. “Give him time.”

“Thank you ma.” I dismiss her.

Randall walks in just as she strides out of the room. She releases a disbelieving gasp upon seeing him half naked and covers her face her feet rushing her out of the bedroom. Great just bloody great.

He’s on the phone R.J tears himself out of my arms and runs to him. I can’t help but notice how fearful he’s become Randall pays him attention and scoots him up. The boy snuggles in his father’s arms.

“Okay let me know if you find her. I’ll head out now.” Randall finishes the call he’s looking at me but not directly. Hopelessness has taken centre stage. “The guards say they saw her leave about an hour ago she took off by foot.” My heart sinks that doesn’t even make sense. “And none of them found it strange? That’s insane Randall.” My voice rises he frowns giving me a warning look and strokes a hand down R.J’s back. At this point I’m not bothered by anything I just want my baby home.

“Where is my baby Randall?”

“I’m going to find her” he says however I can’t hear the promise in his voice. “She couldn’t have gone far on foot.”

I’m not stupid this is South Africa. Women are always a target to predators.

“Take him I have to go look for her.” As he places R.J down Randall dashes to the closet to change he doesn’t say anything when he leaves the room. Those guards are going to hear it from me how stupid are they?

*

*

*©□

Chapter 23

ZITHA-

“And then wena?” Sizakele says as soon as she opens the door. I’m surprised she’s still awake at this time. I ignore her and walk in aunt is sitting on the sofa hands folded across her chest and face flooded with rage.

“Uphuma ‘phi Zithobile?” (Where do you come from?)

The murderous stare almost brings me to my knees this woman can be scary and today is one of those days. Not that I don’t respect her but my life has been a mess since my mother died. Perhaps I need cleansing. I hope she notices the bruises on my face and takes pity on me I don’t want to be a victim of her wrath.

“Aunty listen to me let me tell you what happened.” Where will I start?

The only thing I can do right now is lie. I can’t tell her what actually happened she won’t believe a single word.

“I was kidnapped they locked me up and demanded money. They only let me go when I told them I’m a poor girl from Orange Farm who doesn’t even have a cell phone.” Why do these lies taste so good?

“That’s a lie mom did you see the car that dropped her off just now? You have a blesser Zitha?” Frogs have voices now I see.

“That was an Uber a good Samaritan helped me escape and they requested one for me.” Another lie escapes my mouth.

“Stop it you think we’re stupid.” Sizakele woofs and no I don’t think they are stupid I know they are stupid.

“Aunty I swear. You can call Lwazi she knows what happened. I called her after I was mugged and she came with her white friend that’s why the car looks expensive. He’s a doctor and...” I’m explaining too much and realise when it’s too late that my story has changed. Sizakele’s loud laughter startles me.

“Enough.” Aunt shouts. “I got home from work Zitha to find the house cold. Windows were

open there was nothing on the stove. You were expecting me to stand behind that stove and cook after a long day at work?" Haibo! Where was her daughter?

"No aunty." In my most modest tone I argue. I guess it must be a joke because my cousin cackles.

"You don't sleep at home anymore you come and go as you please in my house." Aunt grumbles. "You're full of it wena mtwana ndini your days in this house are numbered." (You brat.)

She clicks her tongue and walks off to her room. Thank God.

"Yeah s'febe." (Slut.)

The bully I call a cousin pokes my head she's too close for comfort and I might just bite.

"Don't touch me." I snap.

"So your sugar daddy did this to you? What did you do? Huh?" She's in my face and I don't have the strength to fight her I'm tired and frustrated.

"If you want to keep your teeth stay far away from me."

I'm about this close... this close.

"I want the truth you will tell me where you got these expensive clothes. I know your clothes they are old and washed out. So where did you get these and why do you smell like an expensive man?"

I swear she's stupid ladies and gentlemen I have a dumb cousin.

"Say my dear cousin is your mother not giving you enough love and attention that you forcefully want to milk it out of me?" My question puts a frown on her face her expression says she wants to strike me.

"I don't blame you I blame your loose mother." Wrong button dear cousin. "The apple really didn't fall too far from the tree you are your mother's daughter."

"Trust me you don't want to go there right now." I warn her.

"Or what Zithobile or what?" She's shouting. I'm not going to entertain this it's late and I'm in pain. She blocks my path when I try to manoeuvre past her rage evident in her eyes.

“I’m still talking to you” she barks testing my patience.

“Don’t start something you won’t be able to finish little girl I’m not one of your friends. I will mop this floor with your ass.” I grunt trying to stay calm and collected ignoring the anger scraping in my veins. The cousin huffs daring me to act on my words.

“You’re so pathetic Zithobile gosh if only you knew how much I hate you. Your father probably hated you too that’s why he left.”

“What did you say?” Shocked as I am I manage a whisper to have her sneer at me.

“Oops” sarcastically she covers her mouth. “I guess the secret is out my bad.”

“What secret?” I ask and get another huff from her it’s labelling me witless.

“Your father is alive” she reveals. “Your mother had an affair with a married man and was stupid enough to fall pregnant thinking he will leave his wife for her. She should’ve had an abortion it would’ve been better than giving birth to someone like you. Why do you think your

skin is like this? That's her punishment from God a punishment for opening her fat legs for a married man."

The warmth from my body abandons me as she drills a hole in my heart and shatters my soul into a million pieces. This cannot be real my mother would never lie to me. She told me he died before I was born. She was a devoted Christian the kind God was proud of. She meditated on bible verses not lies I trusted her from the moment I sucked milk from her breast. That woman never seasoned her words with lies hell would've frozen over had that happened.

I want to press my hand to my chest and stop this sharp pain in my heart instead I grab the boiling kettle. I don't remember walking into the kitchen and turning it on but I'm here and there's a kettle of boiling water in my hand and my feet are leading me back to the living room.

"Mama!" Sizakele screams when I throw the kettle at her she manages to dodge the

appliance plus the water. It crashes to the floor and cracks water spilling all over. I'm not okay. I want her to hurt for the soreness she's instilled in me I want to see her screaming in pain.

"What's going on?" My aunt's voice forces me to turn to her eyes and face wet with tears. It doesn't help chiding the waterworks they force themselves out of my eyes.

"My father is alive aunty?" I ask impassively and the woman rolls her eyes.

"Mama Zithobile threw a kettle of boiling water at me." Sizakele is next to her arms wrapped around her mother's round waist. In place of safety my aunt's eyes show danger and a capability of cruelty as she looks at me.

"Don't worry about this bastard child Sizakele she's already drowning in pain and I guarantee you that she won't last in this world." Aunt coldly says. "Mark my words Zithobile if you don't become a nyaope you're going to follow your mother." In her glare is an expansion of a cold emptiness a complete disregard for my wellbeing. She takes her daughter's hand and

leads her out of the room leaving me drowning in the pain she spoke of.

Their previous words torment my soul they sink into me for just long enough to drive me insane. I cover my face and scream before dropping to my knees and crying out in agony.

BAMBINDLOVU-

It started with a bad dream ask him what it was about and he'll stare blankly at you. It's exactly 3:02am there is no sign of him ever going back to sleep. The betrayal of his eyes... they are wide open with no promise to shut closed anytime soon... they are not even itchy or burning to alert him that he needs to go back to sleep.

“Witch!” He hears the insult and many angry voices that pull him out of bed his ears perk trying to make out what is being said outside his door. How did he miss this commotion? Wearing only shorts he springs up flings open the curtain separating his room from his mother's. There Thandikela is on her feet

wrapping a morning gown around her. Their eyes clash the noise outside seems to elevate.

“What’s going on?” The mother asks a flurry of emotions swiping over her face.

“Stay here I’m going to check.” Thandikela doesn’t listen but follows her son out.

A crowd of people are gathered at the open door full of heightened emotions. Pots and pans in their hands they are all saying something each fighting to be heard. Their words directed at someone or something outside the door.

“What’s going on?” Bambindlovu questions one of the tenants.

“We caught a witch trying to break into the flat” the man says rushing towards the crowd with a spatula in hand.

“A witch?” Thandikela queries.

Mother and son frown as disbelief etches in their faces leaving his mother behind he weaves through the people to get a closer look. This can’t be he knows the girl standing in the doorway. She’s in what appears to be a trance.

Scruffy appearance clothes shabby and covered in filth.

“What is she doing here?” He’s asking himself but a woman next to him gives an answer.

“I was on my way to the bathroom and heard something continuously bang against the door. I called my husband to come check it out and we saw her she hasn’t moved or said anything since. It could mean one thing she’s a witch.”

The lady finds her statement indisputable as she speaks with confidence.

“She’s not a witch.” Bambindlovu argues.

He’s only met her once but is certain that she is not what these people say she is.

“I agree she can’t be a witch she’s too young. Look at her dirty clothes I think she’s a hobo.”

Another woman somewhere in the crowd adds her opinion which is a mistake. Without a word said Bambindlovu glares at her

Sponsored

letting his eyes sweep through her body from head to toe. She squirms as a rush of discomfort washes over her.

“A hobo?” He speaks through gritted teeth regarding her with the coldest look he could summon. “Don’t say that don’t. That’s a person if you have nothing better to say shut up and go back to sleep. Or afford her the dignity of her own humanity.”

Like the Israelites crossing the red sea he splits through the two men standing in front of him. Shields the lady in question as he faces the idiots who think God left them in charge of the world.

Attacking is for cowards that’s how it’s always been. Heroes stand their ground and defend... protect.

This is the road Bambindlovu has taken he is a Buthelezi... it’s in his blood. His mother would testify of it.

“You people think are clever? Huh?” He starts pointing a finger at them. “You can’t even protect your children from the rapists you call boyfriends and husbands all for the sake of warming your beds at night. But you have the

audacity to attack a young woman who is oblivious to her surroundings.”

“Nonsense” a macho voice at the back yells.

“We are not children Bambindlovu don’t try to feed us with lies. We know a witch when we see one.”

“Do you have proof that she is a witch?”

Bambindlovu throws a question at him. “People sleepwalk it’s bloody normal. You can call her appearance dirty if you require such a cheap ego boost but do not call her a witch.”

He pauses studying their stupid faces. These bloody idiots are so dumb they’ll believe anything that comes out of his mouth and he knows it well.

“If anyone dares to attack my girlfriend I will burn them alive not even your grandmother’s sorcery will save you from me.” There’s silence confusion and worry loiters in the air. Did he just say girlfriend? The tenants seem to be wondering what this is all about.

“Do you think I’m stupid not to know that the woman I’m dating sleepwalks?” Okay... it’s

working. They are eating the lies he's feeding them. "I've taken her to doctors le bo Jack Bemel (witch doctors). Maybe your grandmother will do a good job ousie Maki?"

The woman gulps surprised at the sudden question.

"M- my grandmother is not a witch." Why so defensive sister Maki? It's only a question.

"Yeah and my girlfriend is not a witch." He retorts and serves them with a heavy tongue click.

He sees the guilt engraved in the tenants' faces in how they realise they have done a grave sin. Bloody dot-to-dot thinkers. (Morons)

As he takes a step hand in hand with the young lady the people step aside and no one dares to argue with him further. He has so many questions for her. How did she get here why is she covered in dirt and how did she know where he lives.

"Place her on the bed I'll get her something to drink." Thandikela says.

She would side with her fellow tenants but they can be unreasonable. This child looks like nothing like a witch.

“What are you doing?” He questions his sister yes she’s awake very inquisitive and has her big head dipped under her mother’s bed.

“Checking if the salt and vinegar is still under the bed I put it there before I went to sleep to trap witches.” Her answer tangles his already tangled mind.

“What?”

“Yes I...” Sindisiwe stands to her feet ready to give her brother a long explanation.

“Shut up” Knowing she’s going to confuse him further he shuts her up. He squats in front of the young woman eyes probing... this is her alright. The girl he prophesied over why is she here though?

“Lili” he’s not sure but he remembers the little boy calling her that just the other day or was it Lilian or Lindi?

“Is that her name?” Doesn’t this little brat have school in a few hours?

“Go back to sleep Sindi” he doesn’t give her a once over as he’s looking at the ‘zombified’ young maiden seated in his mother’s bed.

“Shame you bring a zombie into my house on my bed and expect me to sleep?” She’s swinging her head as if her neck has loosened.

“She’s not a zombie stupid.” He pushes her head and she falls on the bed but gets back up in a flash.

“Can I take a picture of her? I’m trying to gain followers on TikTok and Insta this news will make me famous.”

“Sindisiwe!” Thandikela chides her little gremlin she’s back from the kitchen carrying a cup with steaming beverage inside. It’s a motherly thing. The girl turns to face the wall because she can’t let her mother witness her award winning eye roll.

“I made her tea” mom says. Really though? “Is she okay?”

“I don’t know” Bambindlovu steps in gaze on the cup held by his mother he’s trying to grasp

what tea will do to help this poor soul. "Sindi get me cold water from the fridge."

The girl's eyes snap open wider than they usually are.

"Whose fridge?" She murmurs "because your mother does not have a fridge and I don't remember you saying sis Sindi change your clothes we're going to Joshua Door to buy a fridge. And I know you are not talking about Ousie Maki's fridge."

"Yey voetsek voetsek." The brother pushes her again. "Just bring the water now."

"Mama listen to your son." Sindisiwe whines.

"Ousie Maki doesn't want us touching her fridge."

"What do you want to do with cold water Sokalisa?" Thandikela.

"What do you want to do with this tea MaOlady?" In suspense he waits for an answer with a raised eyebrow. His mother does not deliver.

Taking a head shake he saunters to the kitchen and yes Bambindlovu does not care who

bought the fridge. The water belongs to the government not Maki.

He's back with a jug of ice cold water ice cold because he added blocks of ice inside. Without any hesitation he splashes it on Liyana face.

"Sokalisa?" His mother chides him.

"Oh god this is better than Korean drama."

Sindiwe sings her phone directed at the young woman. That's right she's recording everything. Someone call the cops on this brat. "I'm finally going to be famous look at God. He sure works in mysterious ways."

"Why did you do that ndodana?" (Son.)

"This is why?" He points at a coughing Liyana who alternates to gasping for air. He didn't think it would work a proud simper visits his lips.

Liyana's eyes are wide with terror flicking from side to side trying to grasp her surroundings and how she got here. She wants to move but feels as though she's welded to the surface she's settled on.

"What's going on? Where am I?"

Her disorganised thoughts become disorganised words and sentences sweat beads on her forehead or is it the water that guy over there viciously poured on her face? Her chest heaves as she struggles to breathe. “Hey calm down” seeing the expected panic he keeps his voice soft lest he frightens her. “Where am I? Who are you people?” Her eyes widely dart around looking for an escape. Her movements mirror her words giving an impression of not knowing which way to turn. Bambindlovu stands to grab her hand it’s a soft touch but Liyana flinches yanking it back.

“Don’t touch me” fear has vacationed in her voice.

“We’re not going to hurt you sisi you came here by yourself. There are witnesses outside this room who can attest to it.” Thandikela says as she has gathered the girl’s thoughts. Liyana’s eyes seem to relax when she notices the little girl who is clinging to her mother’s skirt they look like decent people and that’s more than enough to get her to calm down.

“Ho- how did I get here?” She would move from the door if she were comfortable around them.

“You tell us last time I saw you you were glowing like Kelly Khumalo. Flaunting amashwang-shweng.” (You had beautiful hair.)

Liyana dodges his hand that’s coming for her hair “But today you look like Whitney Houston on drugs.”

“May her soul rest in peace” Sindisiwe adds to her brother’s mention still not brave enough to leave her mother’s side.

“Stop it you two” Thandikela reprimands her brats. “Come sit.”

She brings Liyana to the other side of the bed. “I feel so tired my body hurts.” Liyana complains.

Could she have walked from Houghton to Hillbrow? The child is barefooted dressed in nightwear and looking like she survived a hurricane. Bambindlovu leans on the wall and stares at her.

“How did you get here?” The question belongs to him.

“I don’t know the last thing I remember is resting in my bed and....” her explanation fades as she jolts to her feet “I have to call my father. May I borrow your phone?” She’s asking Thandikela who nods and fishes for her mobile under the pillow.

“I don’t have airtime you can send him a please call message.”

Liyana frowns not because she’s complaining her father won’t see the message if he does he won’t respond to an unknown number.

“You’ve got airtime Sokalisa give the girl your phone.” Bambindlovu scowls at her suggestion.

“I owe Cell C about R50 mama where will I get anytime. Sindi is loaded with airtime.” He says scratching the back of his head.

“I used it to buy data.” That’s the little sister she adds a yawn on top of her excuse. Before his mother could complain he pulls the one he bought at pep for R200. This one is for emergencies might not be fancy but it’s as important as an iPhone. It has airtime makes and receives calls and to top it off Hillbrow thugs will never ask for it.

Liyana makes the call she explains what she knows to her worried father who asks for directions.

“Please give him directions” she holds Thandikela the phone.

“We’re in Hoofman Newyoker between Kaptain and Quartz.” She tells him the name of the building and street. The king knows the streets of Hillbrow like the back of his hand as it was once his humble abode he sends his gratitude and drops the call.

*

*

*©□

Chapter 24

BAMBINDLOVU-

Thandikela finds a knitted jersey inside the china bag next to the bed “Here you’re shivering. I would lend you my clothes but they won’t fit you.” Liyana takes it with a grateful smile. “Sokalisa give the child a pair of pants. You’re a size 30 they won’t fit but they will do.”

Bambindlovu gives her a look it's not every day his mother asks him to lend his clothes to strange girls. It never happens not even his last girlfriend had the chance to wear even a sock and she was his mother's favourite. He doesn't argue but obeys.

Now where did he put those formal pants he wore at a friend's wedding two years ago? He flips the mattress over and finds them right under it wrinkled and smelling mouldy. However they are new he wore them once. Giving away his t-shirt as well won't hurt.

"You can change in there" he points towards his room after handing her the clothes. Beggars can't be choosers reluctantly Liyana stands to do the needful.

A mousy laugh erupts in the room when she comes back looking like a coat hanger that's holding Bambindlovu's clothes. Sindisiwe has left her manners in her sleep laughing at adults is not okay.

“Don’t mind her my child.” Thandikela says taking note of Liyana’s shyness. “You look fine come sit down.”

Her eyes remain on the ground when she treads towards the bed she’s suddenly become shy... It could be that the only man in the room is staring mouth ajar. He’s not sure what to think about what he’s seeing what he is sure of is that it’s a sight he’d look at for days on end.

“Sokalisa go make a cup of tea for our guest so she keeps warm while waiting for her father.”

Thandikela brings him back to life he runs his hand behind his neck and nods

“Give me your phone “ he snatches his sister’s phone and deletes the video that will make her ‘famous’ flushing her chances of being Mzansi’s next queen B down the drain.

“No Ndlovu don’t delete it.” The child is crazy with anger tears fill her eyes but this brother gives no care whatsoever. “I knew you don’t want to see to me shine don’t be that brother Mr. Elephant.”

“Sindi don’t talk to your brother like that.”
Thandikela.

“But mama my life is ruined. My entire career was in that video.” Sindisiwe complains looking ready to throw a tantrum.

“I see was that your backup plan just in case you fail school?” Bambindlovu has put the puzzle together.

“School is not for everyone” the girl replies under her breath.

“Go to sleep doti and don’t think you will stay home tomorrow because you slept late. You’re going to repeat grade 7 mark my words wena.” And with that he ushers Liyana to the kitchen.

Who said Zulu men don’t know their way around the kitchen? Not this one of course he’s skilled in making tea. He’s not Thandikela’s son for nothing.

Blue and yellow metal mugs are placed on the small table at the corner of the kitchen the tea is black and piping hot. Perhaps she would drink it if it were not served in an enamel mug she’s not about to nurse a burnt tongue for the next three to five days.

He opens a cupboard takes out a half-loaf of white bread and a container of Rama. He picks out four slices of bread and spreads the Rama on them. Yes yes they can also butter bread like pros. Do not judge this Zulu man.

“Eat” he orders voice suddenly deep as he puts the plate on the table and settling down in the opposite chair.

“I’m not hungry” she tells him. It’s bloody 3am in the morning who has an appetite at this time?

“Suit yourself” he shrugs and grabs two slices joined by the yellow spread. Folds it and squashes the bread in his hand until it is one hard roll and dips it in the yellow mug. His head starts to move to no sound as he chews his life away evidently enjoying what’s in his mouth.

“There’s nothing like black tea and white bread ngathi ngiyaphupha.” (Feels like a dream.)

Not that she cares but oh well... the words are out there.

“Is it not too early to eat?” She’s not judging him it’s a simple question.

“I didn’t know our stomachs were given curfews.” That’s his answer? Really? Come on Bambindlovu make it believable at least. “Try the tea.”

“How did I get here?” Her mind is still there it’s normal. Anyone would be shocked she’s tired drained and her legs feel numb. Bambindlovu pauses his chewing session takes another sip of heaven to help push down the bread and stares at Liyana.

Okay... it’s getting uncomfortable in here.

“You said the last thing you remember is going to bed right?” He asks and she nods in response. “What’s your surname?”

“Okolie.”

“What kind of surname is that?” This is Bambindlovu Buthelezi the tsotsi –taal speaking umblaselo wearing black tea lover-overconfident proud Zulu man.

“My father is Ghanaian” she leans back on the chair and folds her arms across her chest.

“I see what are your clan names?” Too many questions from this man they dribble her mind leaving it mystified.

“Is there a purpose to this interrogation?” She asks.

“Yes I want to know how you call upon your ancestors. When you acknowledge their presence you should recite clan praises. They love it it makes them happy.”

“We don’t practise that my great grandfather usually comes to me in a dream or manifests through me. That was a long time ago when I was young.” There’s dread in her voice a glint of sadness.

“When you were young and innocent” his words. “You’re either stained with something they don’t approve of or you have done something they don’t like. It’s your fault he hasn’t come forth in years. What have you done Lili?”

“None of the above” his words seem to annoy her. Who is he to criticise her like this?

“Don’t bite my head mfethu it’s just a thought.” He takes a long loud sip and moves in closer. “Look some ancestors can be very possessive

especially when they want you all to themselves. Do you have a boyfriend?”

“That’s none of your business” who is he to ask her such a personal question?

“Mfethu umuhle kakhulu to have this attitude. You asked me a question and this is me trying to add 1 and 1 so we get to 2. So far we’re getting 7.” (You’re too beautiful.)

He’s making sense although he too has no clue why the girl came to his house.

“It really is kind of strange that we met once and now we’re sharing bread in my kitchen. There’s a purpose for that.”

The only reason she nods to his explanation is because he speaks like a man who is sure of what he’s talking about. He seems like the type she would follow to wherever if he were to convince her it’s in the way he carries his words and himself like a grounded warrior at war.

“I think your ancestors brought you here”

Bambindlovu finally sheds light. “The old man is he your maternal taima or paternal?”

“He’s my father’s grandfather” she says. “But why am I here? Why bring me to your house?”

“I wish I could tell you Lili abaphansi are on holiday right now. I would call but I hate it when I’m sent to voicemail.” To think he was making sense now the man has gone back to speaking gibberish.

“Can you speak like a normal person so I can understand you?” Liyana is getting upset.

“Give me your numbers I’ll contact you when they decide they want to speak.” Now you’re talking sir.

Liyana calls it out without any hesitation he dials the number.

“It’s ringing” he tells the lost-looking girl. “Most girls give the wrong number so I had to check.”

“I’m not most girls.” Damn right she’s not.

A maskhandi song resounds in the tiny kitchen too loud for a man who shares the flat with a rainbow nation.

“I think it’s your father” he tilts the phone to show her the unsaved number. She takes it and swipes to receive her father tells her he’s outside and that she should hurry.

“I have to go” she’s stands eager to get out of the flat.

“I’ll walk with you the lift isn’t working and it is said you hear an extra pair of footsteps on the stairs when walking at night.” There really was no need to utter such Liyana’s eyes expand with fear. “You’re lucky you were a zombie when you came here your ancestors are brave hey. Hillbrow is not a kind place for shiny girls like you.”

He calls his mother to accompany them and explains how Liyana’s father will probably kill him thinking he’s her boyfriend.

Like Bambindlovu had said

Sponsored

your ancestors are brave hey. Hillbrow is not a kind place for shiny girls like you.”

He calls his mother to accompany them and explains how Liyana's father will probably kill him thinking he's her boyfriend.

Like Bambindlovu had said the stairways are creepy and dark. Thandikela leads the way while he walks behind her with Liyana clinging on to his arm. She did that when they entered the fifth floor and hasn't let go since. It's dead silent that he can hear her heart thumping against her chest.

"I lied about the ghosts relax." He mumbles to her when her hand tightens around his biceps. Liyana ignores his statement there's no way she's letting go. The escapade comes to a halt when they get to the reception.

"I'll stay here mama you go ahead. We don't want to give the old man a heart attack."

Thandikela hums at her son's suggestion. "Lili save my number when you get home and don't hesitate to call me. Maybe I'll fetch you next time you feel like visiting me in the middle of the night it's better than walking from the north."

He's kidding the faint smile on his face says so. But because he is an idiot...

"It's Liyana" the correction is not coming from a bad place. "...and thank you."

He doesn't say anything in response to her remark.

"You can keep the pants but the t-shirt and jersey have a name Lili." This is not what he really wants to say. "Return to owner."

We've already pointed that he's an idiot.

Amusement plays in his voice and eyes. Liyana flicks her brows in acknowledgement before walking away with Thandikela. Bambindlovu watches them until he can't see them anymore. What a way to start one's morning.

ZITHA-

"Zitha wake up wake up Zitha." That's my mother's voice but how? She's dead... "Vuka

Zithobile there's someone in your room.
Zithobile Vuka."

Her soft tone quickly transitions into an aggressive one it jolts me out of a deep sleep. "Jesus!" I scream the second my eyes snap open.

What is my aunt doing here? She's standing at the foot of my bed glaring at me coldly. She has nothing on but a black cloth wrapped around her. She looks terrified and a little lost.

"Aunty what's wrong? What happened?"

She frowns clicks her tongue and walks out leaving the door wide open. I know I'm not her favourite but a little respect would be nice. I leave the bed to close it and get a muscle spasm on my left leg the moment it hits the floor. It throws me back on the bed and an unexpected scream flies out of my mouth.

The pain shoots all through my body making it hard for me to move for a minute. I'm thinking aunty or Sizakele will come but nothing that's how loud I was. A little prayer later it starts to

fade. Finally I'm on my feet I close the door and feel a need to lock it for some reason.

The time on my phone says it's 4:30am. Why was aunt in my room at this time? If she wanted something she should've told me.

"Brah God you're not sleeping are you?" He better not be sleeping. "Look I know it's quite late and I haven't been around for years. I would also get annoyed if someone knocked at my door at this time. But listen my favourite father in the world. Daddy dearest."

Suddenly I am taken back to the words I spewed to Isisa's aunt.

"Okay I know I called another man daddy. Don't be mad just grant me this one wish. I promise I will start watching T.B Joshua from tomorrow. Protect me daddy God. The daddiest of daddies. My one and only jy is my hart se punt. Thank you I love you. Good night."

(You have a special place in my heart.)

AMARA-

“Mom can I not go to school please.” R.J says to me when I pull up outside the school gate.

“Why? Are you okay?” Maybe if he told me this before we left the house I would have granted him the request I’m feeling overprotective since Liyana gave us a scare last night. He’s sitting on the passenger seat engrossed on the school grounds. It’s flooded with school kids rushing inside the gates.

“I don’t feel like school today” not a good enough reason to miss school.

“Nice try I’ll walk you to the gate.” I dash out of the car it takes him a minute to follow me. “Why the long face Kwame? Is there something I should know?”

The boy is dragging his feet he shakes his head without looking up at me.

“You don’t have to accompany me to the class mom.” He’s suddenly timid withdrawn.

“Are you afraid I will embarrass you in front of your friends?” No answer. “And I thought I was a cool mom.”

“It’s not that my teacher...”

“Mrs. Okolie.” Mrs. Chala appears from the classroom wearing her usual big grin. She’s a short chubby light-skinned woman round in all areas of her body including her cheeks.

“Morning” I salute.

“What a pleasant surprise” her eyes fall on R.J who is perched up against me he drop his head and offers a low;

“Good morning Mrs. Chala.”

“Since when are you shy?” I ask him.

“He’s not the first one my class is filled with bashful students. I’ve been with them for three months they will open up with time.” She adds smiling down at my son. “I love children and teaching just as much and because of that children open up to me with ease. I believe Kwame will do the same he’s a good boy.” Her expression comes with her rubbing his head R.J does not respond to the touch however he grabs my hand and tightens the grip.

“I’ve heard how the student counsel praises your work and experience” I say.

“Well I’m glad you’ve heard nothing but good things.” That’s her answer.

“You were a mayor once upon a time the community loves you and looks up to you. We need a good mentor for our children and you are it Mrs. Chala.” The woman nods still grinning.

“I’m glad you have trust in me Mrs. Okolie and it is an honour to teach your son.” She proclaims.

“You may go to class Kwame.”

With this he runs into the classroom no goodbye or anything.

“I guess that’s my cue I will take my leave now.” I bid her goodbye and take off.

I’m meeting up with Sethu at a café close by it’s her birthday tomorrow and she wants to have a little get together. There’s a problem though Styles advised against it. She wants my help something about asking Randall to tell Styles to take a break from whatever they are doing. I’m yet to hear what she has to say about the matter.

I find her settled inside sipping on coffee. Her facial features are changing her nose is growing bigger- face becoming fuller... things I hate about pregnancy.

“Should you be drinking that?” I ask as soon as I’m within earshot.

“I will go crazy if I don’t.” We share a brief hug.

“Would you like anything?”

“I’m okay I had breakfast before I left the house.” I respond positioning myself opposite her.

“How is Liyana?”

Liyana was still sleeping when I left the house Randall stayed with her after they got home early this morning and hasn’t left her side. Her explanation was that she couldn’t recall how she got out of the house and whose house she went to. Sethu nods and hums as I explain Liyana’s situation I happen to notice how she’s not entirely with me.

“You seem jumpy is everything okay?” I have observed how cautious she is to her

surroundings. If she's not scanning the entrance she's browsing the area.

"Do you ever get that feeling like you're being followed?" She keeps her voice low as if afraid of being heard.

"You're being followed?" I reply with a question.

"I'm not entirely sure maybe I'm being paranoid." She leans in closer. "Don't make it obvious but see that woman behind me? The one in black?"

I see the person she's talking about she's on her phone minding her business.

"What about her?" I ask.

"She comes to my work place every single day at 12pm and only orders a cup of tea. She would sit there for hours without any company don't you think that's strange?"

"People do that" as far as I know.

"But why is she here though?" Sethu stops turns to glance at the woman then back at me.

"I bumped into her at the mall yesterday and now she's here. Something is fishy Amara."

Sethu finishes with a deep exhalation you know that feeling you get when people are talking about you? Yeah I think it just visited that woman because she raises her head and our eyes instantly meet. My mind works overtime trying to figure out where I have seen her I know I've seen her somewhere.

Don't ask me why I'm still looking at her she's also bold enough to keep the gaze.

"I said don't make it obvious Amara" Sethu chides me with a whisper. But I can't remove my eyes from her then it hits me the memory flashes in front of my eyes.

"Oh my God" I jump to my feet as the realisation smashes against me. "It's the woman from the hotel."

I remember bumping into her in the elevator.

"What?" Sethu doesn't know the full story but she turns to her direction. The woman stands eyes still on me. She winks and the creepiest smirk I've ever seen plays at her lips.

Wanting to ask who she is my feet move towards her but she grabs her belongings and hurries out of the café.

“Hey wait.” I trail after her Sethu’s voice follows me telling me to come back. It’s painted with worry I don’t pay her attention. There’s no sign of the woman outside she has disappeared into thin air as if she was never here. How will I find her in this crowded place? Dammit!

*

*

* ©

Chapter 25

ZITHA-

Waking up at 5am to prepare breakfast for aunt before she goes to work is a profession in this house. But today today I have taken my time choosing not to be a slave in 2021. I’m not sure what time it is the sunrays bursting through the kitchen window tell me it’s past 8am.

‘Sis May and Thoko’ are still sleeping they think life is a film those two. Wait till Karma pays them a visit.

The oats are almost ready to be served. There’s a sudden presence that compels me to turn my aunt is standing in the doorway eyes

too shifty for someone who is forever glaring with confidence.

Hatred nudges me as I'm looking at her how can a woman be so heartless? My mother was a total opposite of this one.

"Aunty!" Yes I'm boiling with anger till now. I thought today was her day off... whatever it is better that she stays away from me today. She doesn't look at me but opens the fridge and takes her lunch box. She's headed for the door now...

"Aunty your porridge is ready."

She clicks her tongue without turning to look at me then storms out banging the door behind her. Yoh! What's wrong with her?

"What did you do to my mother?"

What makes her think we're on speaking terms after what she did? I decide to start with last night's dishes Sizakele takes the plate that was meant for her mother and dishes up for herself. Does this girl know how to prepare porridge?

"What's wrong with you? I asked you a question." She comes to stand next to me and

leans against the counter it's the fact that she's eating the food I prepared with no care how it got in the pot.

"Are you still upset about last night?" Lord this girl better not be talking to me.

"I need to clean the house wash that plate when you're done. I'm not your maid bloody fool." I won't be saying anything further and the smell of oats is making me sick to a point of wanting to throw up then again it could be Sizakele's face.

I leave her in the kitchen entertaining a tongue click.

Liyana has been distant lately I need to call her. Zwelethu better not have turned my friend against me or I will slice his balls into a million pieces. The door in the sitting room opens and the first thing I see is a big head.

"Dali!" Ulwazi walks in the girl never knocks when my aunt is not around. You'd think this house belongs to her grandmother.

“Too early for visits don’t you think?” I’m not entirely shocked by her sudden visit she’s standing in the door way eyes popped out. I know what this is about to think I almost forgot about the bruises.

“I’m fine Lwazi you can close your mouth.”

“That bastard.” She shrieks rushing over to inspect my face. “I’m taking you to the police station you’re going to report him. That bastard is going to pay for this.”

My cheeks are buried in her rough hands and she’s looking into my eyes hers holding on to anger.

“You can let go now I’m fine hau. You don’t have to be dramatic.” I claim my face back Ulwazi is fuming with rage which I completely get.

“Let’s go Zithobile.” She grabs my hand and starts pulling me towards the door I take control of my feet and stop them from moving.

“I told you I’m fine Lwazi.” Her insistence causes me to snap my bruised face is the least of my worries at the moment.

“You’re fine? You’re fine Zithobile?” She shouts. “Have you seen your face? You look like a battered housewife. That man does not deserve you why are you still with him?” She’s getting louder.

“We’re not dating you know that. He’s just my source of income that’s all. Must you shout? Yoh I’m not in the mood.”

This whole Tshilidzi issue drains me I’d rather not talk about it till I figure a way out without going broke. I'm not about to start asking my aunt for money to buy sanitary pads last time I did that I was given R4 to buy tissue at the local tuck shop.

“Not in the mood huh? You won’t be in the mood when you’re lying dead in a coffin.” She’s probably right he might end up killing me.

“What are you doing here?” Sizakele’s voice slithers into the living room the sound of it makes me cringe. Ulwazi’s demeanour changes she frowns at the cousin and I’m reminded how much these two hate each other with passion.

“Zithobile I thought this demon had gone to school otherwise I wouldn’t have come here.”
Ulwazi.

“Who are you calling a demon?” Sizakele is always shouting like her mother.

“Wena mthakathi.” (You witch.)

I can see she’s just about ready to fight her. This friend of mine is bigger than Sizakele and that will not stop her from beating up this little girl black and blue.

“Get out of my house.” Sizakele demands.

If it were a day I was not emotionally drained I would have given her a piece of my mind. The friend puts her stubbornness to practise she finds her way to the sofa crosses her legs and folds her arms. The look on her face right now... too dramatic and extra.

“One day is one day wena.” Sizakele dishes an empty promise.

“Oh I’m waiting honey we can even make it today. Someone needs to panel beat that ugly face of yours.” Ulwazi.

She's still a woman underneath the mannish posture. Ulwazi is dead serious I see it in her eyes Sizakele sees it too and she's afraid of her.

She snorts and walks out of the house.

"Witch!" Ulwazi hisses I love this girl. "I'm late for work. We'll talk when I get back." She stands up and gathers me into her arms the hug is so warm makes me feel like I'm not alone. I'm in the verge of breaking down but opt to swallow my emotions this one would burn down my aunt's house with her and Sizakele inside if I tell her what happened.

I find myself a bit clingy holding on for a little longer when she lets go.

"What's wrong?" She knows me I'm not usually this insecure.

"Nothing" I move out of her arms eyes darting from place to place to avoid shedding tears.

"Just thanking you for what you did to Sizakele next time add a punch or two and I'll probably kiss you."

My heart does a summersault due to the smile she offers a head shake later she kisses my cheek and leaves me alone to drown in my troubles. I need some distraction something that will make me forget my mother and father's betrayal. I wonder where that mama's boy Tshepo is yawning under him is better than anything right now.

There's someone tickling my door the knocking does not stop until I open it to see the 'Umbrella' kid looking like he just woke up. His crusty boogers-filled face smiles at me.

"Dumelang." He greets and hands me what I recognise as my bag a peek reveals my belongings.

Wait... Am I kicked out before actually moving in? Why did they bring back my stuff? I know wealthy people don't have time for us but he could've brought it himself.

"Where did you get this?" I ask and he points towards the gate.

As I step out

Sponsored

I see the Range Rover today I'm finally going to meet him. My stomach tosses nervously at the thought.

The kid scurries out the gate and I plod after him.

Today he's brave enough to park across the street. For a second I think he will drive off but doesn't. Instead the driver's door opens. One foot pops out black shiny formal shoes the second one follows. I don't know if I'm over excited or it's something I ate but my stomach starts acting up as I approach the car my head spins and everything becomes fuzzy.

I stop in the middle of the street to shake the dizziness off someone is rushing towards me. It's the man who got out of the car. Before he gets to me I feel my body fall but I don't hit the ground a pair of arms catch me.

AMARA-

Randall has been working on finding out what actually happened that day at the hotel the woman I saw probably knows something. It

can't be a coincidence that I bumped into her again and that look she gave me was too suspicious.

I hurry back inside to make a call.

"Why did you run after her Amara?" I will give her answers when I'm done talking to Randall his phone is ringing.

"Me hemma" he answers.

"I saw her" there is no time to greet. "The woman from the hotel was here Randall."

"Where?" He asks I could hear him moving.

"Where are you?"

"At a café in Rosebank she's gone. There's no sign of her anywhere." Sethu frowns while staring with an inquisitive glower I'm yet to fill her in on what happened that day. The only person I've spoken to about the matter is my husband it's a really sensitive topic.

"Go home Amara I'll meet you there." That sounds more like an order.

“I’m with Sethu we’ll go once we’re done.” The man I love sighs making sure I catch how frustrated he’s become.

“Go home Amara now.” He gives a final order and hangs up.

“What’s going on? How do you know that woman?” Sethu.

“Come home with me I’ll explain everything there.” When Randall says move you have to. It’s times like these I’m taken back to his controlling ways some say he’s over protective while some say it’s the leader in him. You don’t tell him what to do rather he tells you. His twin brother Nqabayomzi and Styles are an exception they can get away with pushing him around.

Thankfully Sethu doesn’t ask questions. She pays for her coffee and we head out while she complains about the mysterious woman being pregnant and the father of her kids.

RANDALL-

It's a good thing Styles was with me when Amara called he opted we check out the café before meeting up with Amara. We're here standing before a displeased young cashier must hate her job.

I was left stunned when he handed me a fake police appointment card "We're going in as detectives." He said.

Over the years I've learnt not to question the things he does. You need to be a certain somebody in order to get to the TV room the cards should come in handy. The woman frowns at it when I swipe it over her face fast enough she doesn't get to see the details on it. "Do the surveillance cameras work?" Styles asks pointing at the two cameras in the café. "I think so." The lady says bored expression set on her face. "The manager is not around he'll be back after 12pm."

"Okay" Styles delivers with a deadpan tone.

"Where is the security room?"

The woman rapidly blinks at the standoffish manner emanating from Styles I'd be nervous

too. She clears her throat and tells us to follow her. We enter a storeroom kitchen looking place. Storeroom because it's flooded with boxes and Kitchen because there's a microwave and tea sets. They have a desktop as well Styles is on it in a jiffy.

“Please hurry I will get in trouble with my boss?”
Stupid.

“You may leave” I dismiss the nervous looking lady and shut the door when she steps out.

“Wow” Styles sighs grudgingly. Stands back from the desktop and... I know this head nod. He does this when he feels defeated or has been dared.

“Please tell me we found her” he shakes his head and chuckles incredulously.

“I don't know what we're up against Randall but the sons of bitches have challenged my intelligence.” His tone is cold face impassive.

“They beat us to it?” He nods at my question.

“The footage is dated till last night at about 11 everything that happened today has been wiped clean. There's not even a sign of Amara

and Sethu being here.” Anger dwells in his voice.

“The idiots are not so smart after all their first mistake was to delete everything. Unless it was intended they want us to know that they are here and watching us.”

“You might have something there” he says. “I hate this game Randall and only because I didn’t start it.” He grinds his teeth as he exhales a long sigh of frustration.

“Doesn’t matter we don’t have to follow their rules Styles.” I pat his shoulder to get him to relax the man does not work well when frustrated.

Styles looks at me eyes mischievous. I know this man not to be a quitter I have stood in reverence at how smart he is. His tenaciousness is something to boast about.

“We have to get Thandaza out of that hospital” he states. “Dead or alive.”

“Relax Peter Parker what help will a dead body do?”

“Let’s get out of here we can’t have this conversation in here.”

He’s right we head out. I can’t say I’m not disappointed. Gone are the days when things were so easy those were the days I took Amara right under Mkhize’s nose. The old man was sly as a fox but had nothing on us.

“Mkhize.” Styles steals my thoughts just as he starts the car.

I am going to kill Mkhize and everyone who has his blood running through their veins. The memory is still clear in my head when he came to my house demanding Amara as if she was a bag of mealie-meal.

His obsession over her has always been dangerous and I believe he hasn’t gotten over her. He might be down and out but that doesn’t mean his desires died with his riches.

“Are you sure Mkhize is where you say he is?” I ask.

We have to keep our eyes on him one small mistake and we’ll trip and fall.

“I have no doubt it’s him or that’s what he wants us to think.”

“I say we pay him a visit.” I tell him.

It was years ago I suggested we kill Mkhize I was willing to do it myself. Styles was against it after finding out the man fathered his wife he opted to strip the old man of everything he had. If he had listened to me we wouldn't be in this situation.

“I say we do it.” Styles.

I thought he wouldn't agree. I guess we're doing this and if I'm lucky I will get to put a bullet through Mkhize's head. *

*

*

* ©□

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 26

AMARA-

“Sisi you're home early?”

Since when does this one open the door? The smile on her face has me almost taking an eye

roll should I blame the hormones for my dislike towards her? Randall refused that we get someone new his explanation was that we can't have people coming and going with kids in the house.

“Someone called in your absence she said her name is Ifeanyi. She wanted to speak to the king.” MaNtombi says following Sethu and I to the lounge.

“Did she leave a message?”

Why would Ifeanyi call on the house phone? She knows where to find her brother when she wants to speak to him. The only person who makes use of the house phone is Randall's granduncle. He's the one standing in for Randall back in Ghana.

Randall had asked him to take over as king forgetting that's not how things work. Not even his twin brother is worthy to sit on that throne apparently a calamity would befall any intruder. Like Randall you would have to be elected by the ancestors.

“No she said she’ll call later.” MaNtombi answers my previous question.

I didn’t think Randall would be home this early Styles is with him. At their presence MaNtombi rushes out of the room. Am I the only one who finds it strange that she doesn’t greet? In fact she hardly looked their way.

“You replaced Chioma?” That’s Styles eyes following the woman marching toward the kitchen.

“Chioma is irreplaceable she’s here for the time being.” I answer standing to greet the husband who denies me my right to see his smile.

Grumpy Randall is a worried Randall he’s not upset with me is he?

“You’re angry?” I ask only to receive a furrowed brow.

“We’re going to KZN tomorrow.” Something tells me this ‘we’ includes me. “Pack our things.” I knew it.

“Why?”

“We might have a lead” he’s not going to continue is he?

“Wait is this about what happened to Amara at the hotel?” Look at Sethu asking with her happy-go-lucky attitude. I happened to fill her in on everything on our way home.

“It is” Styles answers.

“You two can’t miss my birthday celebration can’t you postpone it?” I almost forgot about Sethu’s small gathering and why does Styles have that guilty look on his face?

“Your birthday will have to wait Sethu” Yeah hey! This is how a man digs his own grave the look Styles is getting from Sethu...

“We’re not postponing anything Styles” pin drop silence in the room and tension too thick it would need a bulldozer to remove it. “My birthday is tomorrow and we are celebrating it tomorrow.”

Eh! Is this Sethu or her sister speaking through her?

“This trip is important we can’t postpone it.” Styles says settling down beside his wife is a mistake too many this woman is fuming. That’s the thing about short- quiet girls they are innocent and cute when at peace. But start at them and they explode like bombs in Iraq.

Sethu stands so does Styles. I’m not comfortable with how they are looking at each other. Where is the love?

“I don’t care” Sethu releases the words through clamped teeth. “You’ll go after the dinner I don’t care. I want you at my party Styles and that’s it.”

“It’s just a birthday party Sethu you’ll do it when we get back.” Someone tell this husband of mine to shut his mouth.

Sethu raises a hand to dismiss Randall’s opinion she’s looking at Styles as she does this and I am not sure if this is a right move on her part.

“Stay out of this Randall” Okay... I’m definitely sure this is not a right move. Did she just dismiss him like that?

Should I call for backup?

There's a look on Styles' face I'd probably get it wrong if I were to describe it.

"We don't do that here Sethu." Styles says too calm and collected it has me clearing my throat seconds apart Randall clears his as well.

"You will have to choose Styles Randall or your family."

How long has Sethu been married to Styles Sishi? As long as Randall and I have been married and I am surprised by how she does not know that you don't do that you don't separate these two men.

Before Randall and Amara before Styles and Sethu there was Randall and Styles or Styles and Randall. Whichever way you want to put it I myself have never dared put Randall in such a position. Afraid he'll choose his brother over me and I have to give it to the Miss. She has one hell of a nerve.

"That's absurd nothing like that will happen."
Randall says.

“I’m waiting Styles” Sethu disregards Randall’s authoritative tone. Let’s be thankful her eyes do not shoot lethal laser or she would be a widow right now.

“We’re going to KZN tomorrow” Styles answers nonchalantly. Sethu’s face expresses pain. A deadly glare is thrown at Randall by the one and only. She storms out I would follow... but...

“Dammit!” The expression from Styles sounds painful he looks at Randall. Are these two having a silent conversation?

“We’ll go the day after tomorrow” Randall proposes. I’m a proud wife.

“No Sethu is being childish. We’re leaving tomorrow the enemy does not sleep.” Styles replies before following Sethu.

Is this Styles choosing Randall over his wife? My assumptions were trailing on the right path there’s trouble in paradise.

“What was that about?” I’m curious but this man does not provide an answer. He shrugs takes

my hand and starts leading me to... Where are we going really?

ZITHA-

The smell of a hospital always takes me back to the day my mother died it comes with the pain and déjà vu feeling. My eyes open and of course I'm in the hospital a private one. That's the first thing my mind registers. I hate it here. Ulwazi is here watching me. Is it too soon to say it's kind of creepy?

“Hey how are you feeling?”

“Did I have a near death experience?”

Otherwise why is she here? Ulwazi is supposed to be at Checkers shouting ‘next customer please.’

“Apparently you fainted and someone brought you in.” She answers.

Now that I remember I was headed towards the Range Rover and then everything went blank.

“Where is he?” Why am I asking her this? She looks confused.

“Who?”

I don't know who but I want to know where he is.

“Do you mean the person who brought you in?” Ulwazi queries. “I got a call from someone telling me to come to the hospital I don't know where they got my number. When I entered your room there was a man he didn't say much nor accept my greeting. He left without a word.”

What is his problem? Till when is he planning on playing hide and seek? I've hated the game since I was a little girl I have a phobia of being alone.

To think he's helped me a number of times and I have never truly seen his face come to think of it there were no pictures of him in his room.

“What did this person look like?”

“Arrogant as fuck.” Lord! Is that jealousy I sense in the tone of her voice? “There was something dark about him and the fact that he was in all

black did not help. I have to admit that I was startled at first I stood at the door like a frozen full chicken.”

“Can you go see if he’s still around?” I have to see him.

Ulwazi does not approve she frowns.

“I’m not doing that what’s with you and old men? I know you don’t have a father but take it down a notch.” This witch.

“Sometimes I hate your blunt tongue you’re an idiot Ulwazi you know that?”

“I’m your idiot and you love me” she’s smiling.

“I’m serious though you need to stop. Those men come with ten children and women from each province.”

“Relax

Sponsored

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

I only want to thank the man not let him into my pants... yet.” She shakes her head jaw clenched.

What did she think I would let money on legs pass without tasting it? According to my senses that never lie he smells too good. It's mouth-watering and if he is Isisa's brother the man must be good looking because she's a looker herself. I see it... I see myself on top of him having my way with him. Vision is vague but I see it. The thought of it has my p#ssy excited. "Slut" Ulwazi taps my head predicting my thoughts. "Get your mind out of the gutter lust is a sin just so you know."

Then I would happily bounce to hell because there is no way I'm going to withhold from salivating over that money-smelling man.

The door opens and a nurse walks in I feel a pang of dissatisfaction as I was hoping to see him. Man like being disappointments.

"How are you feeling?" Nurse.

"When can I go home?" I don't want to be here.

"The doctor will be with you just now."

Speak of the devil he walks in just at her announcement.

"How is our patient?" Doctors and smiles... jeer.

“I want to go home.” I tell him.

“You can go home if you like but I suggest that you stay we have to keep you overnight for observation.” Doctor.

“What’s wrong with me?” What observation? I feel fine unless I have a life threatening disease I got from my father’s side of the family. Curse that man.

The doctor looks at Ulwazi then back at me.

Clearly he has something big to say and is not sure saying it in front of Ulwazi is a good idea.

“She’s my friend bhuti. I can’t afford this place so staying overnight is not an option. Can’t I give you my numbers and I’ll keep you updated on my health via WhatsApp?”

Ulwazi chides me with an icy glare yoh this girl. I’m not flirting with the doctor he’s Indian and I see them as brothers from another mother.

“The bill has been paid Mrs. Mkhize.” Haibo! Mrs. Mkhize? Me Zothibile Mthombeni is a Mrs. Mkhize?

“You’re mistaken doctor she’s not married.”

Ulwazi is a dream crusher I don’t envy her life.

“I’m sorry I thought since Mr. Mkhize paid the bill...”

“Can I pay you to continue thinking doctor? I really like the way you think.” He looks confused.

Listen it’s not every day I get to play a married woman.

“Do you realise there is a serious matter at hand?” The dream crusher says. “Zitha I know you like hiding behind this crazy behaviour. But one day you will have to come out and face the music. Now stop stalling the doctor and let him tell us why you can’t go home.”

I hate her...

“The baby’s heart beat is faint hence we have to keep an eye on you.”

Wait!!! Ba... Did he say baby?

“What baby doctor?” I’m going to die this is worse than a life threatening disease.

“You’re five months pregnant it’s been too long and I thought you knew.” Five months pregnant? And he says it like it’s normal. There’s nothing normal about any of this.

“No someone paid you to say this right?” My voice cracks I’m a trembling mess. I’m not a fan of surprises or pranks.

“I don’t understand ma’am” he says he doesn’t understand. What is going on in this country? I knew I voted for the wrong party.

Ulwazi looks spooked out normally she’d be yelling at me and telling me how irresponsible I am but she’s too quiet.

“Look bhut’ dokotela I would know. It’s my body I would know if I’m pregnant. I just had my period last month and the month before.”

I did right? Yes yes. I remember clearly.

“I was kicked a number of times by a size 10 foot there’s no way I’m pregnant. My stomach is not that big that I wouldn’t notice a change in it.”

Frustrated I flip the bedsheet open and pull the hospital dress up revealing my flabby stomach. Did you catch that? I said flabby baby bumps are round and hard and there’s occasional movements in them.

“Where is this baby you speak of there is nothing in here.”

He smiles what the hell is he smiling about? He sees my death doesn't he?

“Please relax this is normal. It's completely reasonable for a woman to make it to 30 weeks without looking pregnant.” Doctors must fall I refuse. “This is called hidden pregnancy. One in four hundred women are this far along before they realise they are with child and some women make it all the way to labour before they understand they are going to have a baby. Mental health problems bipolar disorder stress depression are common causes.”

“That does not make sense Zithobile cannot be pregnant.” Ulwazi finally speaks.

“Do you want me to recommend someone to talk to?” He's asking me shit. I want this to be a dream. “We can also do a scan.”

“I don't want to see anything I can't be pregnant. Oh God my aunt is going to kill me.”

“I recommend you try and get some rest an upset mother means an upset baby.”

“Whose mother?” I snap he better not be calling me a mother. I didn’t sign up for this position bloody hell I didn’t ask for a womb. Why must such things happen without my permission?

“I’ll leave you to think about this try and relax okay.” The doctor says before walking out.

“Why is he forcing this pregnancy on me?” I ask Ulwazi.

That look better not be directed at me.

“How did this happen Zitha?”

“I don’t know I didn’t want this I don’t want this Lwazi. I’ve been careful I took my contraceptives. I hated it when he touched me he never wanted to use protection. He said no other man will have me but him and that there was no point of using protection.”

She’s looking at me like I was going house to house asking for people’s husbands to make me pregnant.

LIYANA-

Sleep is the most peaceful feeling in the world or is it taking a dump? But some say death is the most peaceful thing on earth. Liyana cannot relate in her sleep she's never alone. Nor when she's awake there is forever a presence with her.

Like in this case Liyana is woken up by the feeling that there's someone in the room. She doesn't want to open her eyes but thinking she's being paranoid she opens them to find a stern looking man and woman seated on both ends of her bed staring at her. If anger comes in human form then they are it personified.

They look like they are from the mid 1800s judging by their clothes. The man looks well in his early thirties he's wearing a brown suit and a flat cap but the outfit somehow looks a bit unkempt. The middle-aged woman is wearing a

royal blue short sleeved pinifa and a white head wrap.

Liyana has grasped that this is not a dream. She feels blood throbbing through her veins gulps down a ball of fear as she prepares to release a record breaking scream. Her mouth opens it's in her chest but nothing is coming out.

*

*

*** A Lots of African Novels Available Here**

www.allnovelworld.com

Chapter 27

LIYANA-

Imagine the worst nightmare you've ever had then imagine you're unable to wake up from it because you're already awake. All those strange things that make sense when you're dreaming because you know it's a dream start to make sense with your eyes wide awake.

They have to be mystic beings it's the only coherent explanation not only have they filled her with fear they have taken her vocal sound. The two beings stand to their feet eyes still kept on her as if waiting for her to move.

Unconsciously Liyana glides out of bed. They don't waste time but start walking backwards without turning their backs on her nor removing their angry eyes from her. Phantom footsteps resound on the floor.

Like magnet Liyana trails after them her feet don't belong to her anymore she has lost control over them.

Without tripping or stumbling they make it down the flight of steps headed to the backyard.

"Miss Liya" MaNtombi calls out to her she rushes back to the kitchen to leave the washing basket. She was asked to keep an eye on the princess and here she is running after her.

As she gets to the sliding door she finds it shut which is odd. This door is never shut during the day one pull and it won't budge. The maid panics her boss not Amara... she has not seen

that woman past an ordinary girl who is married to a king until then the respect she is ought to give the wife would have to remain tucked away somewhere in her busy head.

Her salary payer... her landlord gave her strict instructions to keep watch over the girl outside but how can she now when the stupid door is standing in her way and she can't see anything beyond the sudden fog? Talk about strange happenings.

The daylight loses to darkness the skies become grey and hazy.

Liyana looks up at the sky unaware of the bodies that have suddenly materialised from under water not only are there two dead bodies inside the pool there is blood in the water.

She should be afraid screaming for help. But there is nothing in her that tells her to do so instead her eyes wander off to the two beings who are now squatting over the pool. They wash their faces with the unclean water about three times before looking up at her.

Their grim faces have suddenly changed she is now looking at Randall and Amara blood leaking from their eyes in miserable streams. That's right they are crying blood. Now disguised as her parents the couple join hands and cautiously tread down the five steps leading inside the pool. The bodies are no longer there what remains is the bloodied water.

It's as if she has forgotten to scream her emotions have been switched off although she watches them submerge into the water and does nothing to stop them.

Unexpectedly thunder resonates and lightning charges bringing her soul-pulses back into a steady and strong rhythm as if her heart needed a jumpstart.

Liyana covers her eyes it takes a few seconds to take a peek and to her surprise it is daylight. There is nothing out of the ordinary the pool is as clear as the blue skies.

Her eyes whisk around searching for the people who brought her out of her room her parents as well and there is no one in sight.

Amidst of everything that has happened she remains calm. It's not a surprise to her that she has a gift the girl has seen worse.

“Miss. Liya.” MaNtombi has finally made it outside. “Are you okay?”

“Did you also see that?” Liyana asks.

“See what Miss. Liya?”

Don't waste your time Liyana she does not have the answers you seek.

“I have to go” Liyana announces and pounces off into the house a thought has come to mind. She knows who to call.

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.com

ZITHA-

There is no rest for the wicked. I have heard this saying many times in my life and boy have I been wicked and this is my punishment. Will I ever know peace?

Ulwazi and her heavy presence are still here she's more upset than I am. I tried talking to her but was given a black stare. I need someone to tell her that we are not an item and there is no way under the face of the earth I will ever consider her as a potential lover.

There's a sudden knock on the door it opens immediately after and Isisa walks in. The girl smiles the moment our eyes meet I would return it but my heart is sitting on my throat. "Hi" she sings.

Must be nice to always be this happy some of us can only dream about it. We return the salutation and fall into silence she senses it and clears her throat.

She's carrying what appears to be bags of food.

"I brought you food I thought you might be hungry considering that hospital food tastes like cardboard." She says placing the bags somewhere in the room.

Right! About telling Ulwazi that I am not her girlfriend I need that done sooner than Mandela

was freed from prison. The girl is glaring at poor Isisa mind you she has no clue who she is.

“Hi I’m Isisa.”

I’m grateful for meeting intelligent people who know that introducing themselves is a must because I was not going to do it.

“I met Zitha the other day at my house.”

“Wow how many are we Zithobile?” God heed my cry. My ancestors have turned against me. Ulwazi embarrasses me sometimes.

“Control yourself please I don’t want to be a laughing stock.” I whisper enough for her to hear she’s not getting rid of that frown anytime soon.

“Ulwazi her best friend.” She says folding her arms and suddenly deep-voiced. Who is she trying to intimidate?

The look on Isisa’s face tells me that she senses she’s not wanted by this thing I call a friend her smile fades as she sits on the edge of the bed. She’s not going anywhere... I like...

“A little birdy told me he’s worried about you.”
Isisa introduces. I don’t need Einstein to tell me
who the little bird is.

“Your brother?” The question was at the tip of
my tongue why not let it out?

“Yes I believe you two have met.” I wouldn’t
say.

“Is he afraid of women?” I must know maybe
the man plays for the other team.

“No” sure she would defend her brother. “He’s a
little busy.”

“A little huh? How come I haven’t properly met
him then?”

“I can call him and give you the phone so you
speak to him.” She says.

I find Ulwazi who shakes her head no it’s too
late to stop Isisa not that I was going to.

“It’s ringing” she tells me flashing a faint smile.

My palms start to sweat it’s strange for me
because nothing makes me nervous.

My eyes are undisciplined they linger on the
door with an urge to catch a glimpse of him.

Just a glimpse will be more than enough for me.

“He’s not answering” Isisa says also taking note of my wandering eye.

Why do I get a feeling he’s doing everything to avoid me? Not being wanted is not a first I have grown used to it. However it hurts every time.

LIYANA-

Every good thing he’s learnt was on the other side of a curious wandering. He’s only nine and exposed to everything the world can offer.

Good or bad if he’s lucky he’ll stay hidden under his father’s wing. If not he will crush and burn with the rest of us.

Liyana sees him and scuttles out of the car to meet him halfway she’s always excited to see her little brother.

Getting out of the house was a decision she made after speaking to her new found ‘friend’ over the phone the two agreed to meet up where they first met. The school.

“Why are you wrinkled Kwame?” She reaches to iron out his school shirt and tuck it in but the boy flinches and draws back. Eyes wide and fearful.

“And then?” Of course she doesn’t know him to be jumpy she’s basically his second mother some days she baths him before bed.

His “nothing” is a whisper. He keeps his head low nervously playing with the slings of his back pack.

“Kwame...” The boy winces at the sound of his name.

“I prefer R.J please don’t call me that.” He says not looking up to see the shock painted on her face.

“Since when? I’ve always called you Kwa...” R.J clenches his eyes and that has Liyana biting her tongue. “What’s going on?”

He doesn’t answer but drops his school bag on the ground. He kneels not minding the dirt and fishes into it.

“What is this?” Liyana questions the A4 paper he hands her it’s printed with a school logo at

the top a stamp and a signature probably from the principal or class teacher.

R.J hangs his school bag over his shoulder eyes curious and probing while his sister silently reads over the document. He too has no clue what is written in it.

“A movie night on Friday and it’s compulsory?”

A frown grows on her mystified face as she reads from the paper.

“Can I not go Liya?” He’s frowning like his father a splitting image he is.

“It says here it’s compulsory.” Liyana mumbles.

It’s hard to understand why a movie night is compulsory is it educational or something close to that?

“I hate movies I hate everything that has to do with movies.” The boy grumbles he’s about close to throwing a tantrum. “It’s disgusting Liya it’s disgusting. Please I don’t want to watch movies I hate them.”

He’s getting loud and gaining himself attention from bystanders.

“Hey sweetie it’s okay. You don’t have to go but I will have to speak to your teacher first.”

At this promise R.J hides his face on his sister’s tummy arms tightly wrapped around her waist.

“You really don’t...”

They are interrupted by loud music booming from a white caravan that’s not supposed to be speeding in the school premises Liyana pulls her brother to the side lest the senseless driver hits them with the car.

“What an idiot” she whispers to herself.

The idiot parks the caravan two vehicles away from hers and dashes out of the car. He’s flaunting his favourite attire; umblaselo a pair of what used to be white chucks looking like he washes them in mud. They have seen better days.

The man dodges a few of his short and loud passengers as they run to the caravan as if they will be left behind.

“Never having kids no thank you.” He decrees watching the brats with a curled lip. “No offense kortess.” (Short person.)

The act of repentance is directed to R.J.

“Wise decision I’m sure no one wants you as a father.” Liyana feeds him his own medicine he replies with a huff.

“Mfethu did you bath?” What is he on about? Liyana scowls she remembers bathing and sees nothing wrong with her.

“I’m not here for a makeover” she reminds him and her retort brings a smile to his face.

“Okay tell me what happened?”

Down to business because well they are not really friends. To get comfortable Bambindlovu leans against Liyana’s car and folds his arms.

“Wait in the car R.J” what she has to tell him can’t be heard by her brother he already has a hard time sleeping at night. Kwame does not look pleased. A little frown builds up on his features as he drags himself inside.

“Like I explained on the phone there was an angry man and woman and...” Liyana recites

the vision to him again leaving nothing out. Bambindlovu nods in understanding.

“I’m not a seer we should get that out of the way first. They tell me things I should repeat to certain individuals no visions so far. I have nothing right now but dreaming of bodies in water stained blood could be considered an omen that something bad is going to happen to you or someone close.”

Let’s not make a mistake he is not a sangoma hence the assumptions.

“Okay something has to be done to stop that right?” The thought of her family hurting is unbearable.

“Yes but like I said I’m not a seer. I can’t tell you how to prevent the omen from happening.”

“Great” she’s disappointed. There has to be another way out of this. Bambindlovu stands in front of her and looks down at her brows puckered.

“I can still help you find direction.” That’s better than nothing right?

“I would appreciate that.”

“Okay you will need to buy a white cloth.”

“What kind of white cloth?” She asks seeing nothing but silk.

“You wouldn’t know where to get it I’ll get it for you.” We’re being generous today. “You will need to pray over it for seven days before using it.”

“What is it for?”

“To cover your head when you pray and...”

Someone just released a chuckle it’s the Okolie’s first born. Bambindlovu waits for her to share the joke.

“I don’t know how to pray where will I begin?”

She’s graced the walls of a church before some days Amara would drag her with her. However Liyana never showed interest in being a Christian.

“Praying is easy it’s a conversation with God. Like what we’re doing now.”

Not that he’s a prayer warrior but he’s heard his mother’s late night and early morning prayers. The woman would present her children to God before anything else.

“The cloth will get rid of the bad headaches you think are migraines. This is the first step you’re going to have to wake up at 2:30 or 3am to pray. Don’t forget to wear the doek when you sleep and when you pray.” He makes it sound so easy.

“Also try listening to Zion or apostolic songs. You need that drum in your ears it helps with the ringing sound you sometimes hear.”

“Okay will things be fine after that?” Liyana queries but the man disappoints by shaking his head.

“You still have a long way to go Lili. Be careful don’t allow anyone in and don’t trust people with your gift always listen to your gut.”

“Can’t I go to those ‘I receive’ churches and have them pray for me perhaps all of this will stop.”

That sounds good who would’ve thought of that?

“You can’t pray away amadlozi you think they are angry now? Try and chase them away and you will see how powerful they are.” Why does this sound like a threat? It’s the way he says it. “Great I think I’m going crazy.” She grumbles. “You’re not this will pass. You will be okay Mfethu.” His hand lands on her shoulder to show support. There’s a little staring contest and it’s not going anywhere.

“LIYANA!”

Shit!

She knows that angry voice it can only belong to one person. The one who is not only after her heart but her clit as well. She turns and there he is Mr. Push and Thrust. To think Bambindovu will remove his hand from Liyana’s shoulder and step back... he doesn’t move an inch.

*

*

* © □

A Lots of African Novels Available Here

www.allnovelworld.comThanksssss