



HLENGWE
MATHEBULA

THE
MAFIA
KING &
ME



BOOK 3 OF THE
MAFIA SERIES

The Mafia King & Me

By Hlengiwe Mathebula

© Copyright Hlengiwe Mathebula 2019

This e-book is an authorised free edition from www.obooko.com

Although you do not have to pay for this book, the author's intellectual property rights remain fully protected by international Copyright laws. You are licensed to use this digital copy strictly for your personal enjoyment only. This edition must not be hosted or redistributed on other websites without the author's written permission nor offered for sale in any form. If you paid for this book, or to gain access to it, we suggest you demand a refund and report the transaction to the author.

Chapter 1

I don't want to wake up, it's my birthday and I thought by now I'd be successful. But well life has other plans and sadly they don't match with mine.

My phone pings there's a new text.

Baba: Happy Birthday my princess. Hope you'll continue making me proud. Love you always.

When I'm about to reply I receive another text from an unsaved number. I hope it's Zweli.

Unsaved number: Happy Birthday. I hope you'll have an amazing day

Mom.

Did Nonhle have to say mom? My phone pings again when I'm about to put it on the bedside table, I bought yesterday.

Sizwe: Happy Birthday dearest. May you grow wiser and stronger. I hope you're okay.

This puts a smile on my face. I reply to both my dad and Sizwe. I won't reply to Nonhle's text. I look at the time it's 2am. I haven't slept well in 2 days. And I've been tossing and turning for the past 8 hours makes me wish I had a TV.

I must've fallen asleep because I'm waken up by an incoming call. It's Mpumelelo.

"Hello" I answer sleepy.

"Birthday girl you're still sleeping at 12pm?"

"My eyes fly open and I look at the time from the watch just above one of the couches. My God.

"I haven't slept in days. I'm exhausted"

"We are taking you out"

"We?"

Yes, me, mom and Sizwe"

"Oh" and we are silent for some time. I was hoping that Zweli would come with.

"We'll be there in 30 minutes"

"Okay no problem" we hang up. I honestly don't want to go out especially with Zweli's family but I have no choice. 30 minutes later I'm sitting outside the door and a red Range Rover stops and then Sizwe tells me it's time to go. I get in the car and I'm greeted by a hug and they all sing so beautifully which almost has me in tears. We travel to some park and then Mpumelelo and Sizwe carry baskets, blankets and presents. We walk for about 5 minutes we find a perfect spot by some lake. We sit down and we chit chat and then time for presents. I can hardly wait. I open the first present it's from Mrs. Khumalo. She bought me a beautiful knee length yellow dress. I hug her. I don't have many dresses and soon I'll be working. Never been in an office environment before but I'm looking forward to it. Another present is from Mpumelelo, he bought me Spa ticket plus a gift card from Woolworths and a laptop. Just what I needed. And the last present is from Sizwe and Anthony, I smile at the thought of them going to buy me a present. I open the box and I see a long rectangular box. There's a necklace and bracelet with pearls and diamonds. These are the best gifts. I can't help but cry. I hug them until they complain that they can't breathe.

We sit until it gets dark. We all don't want to leave but we have to. The thought of going to that back room alone makes me sad. I get home after 8pm and I see missed calls from some of the family members and a text from Momo. I call everyone back. I talk longer with my grandma. After hanging up I read Momo's text.

Momo: Happy Birthday my little princess. I can't believe you have grown so much. I am so proud of you and thank you for accepting me in your life.

Love you always.

I read the text and I smile. I reply once again saying thank you for choosing us and that I also love her.

I'm sleeping when my phone rings at 10pm, it's Melo and I'm not in the mood to talk to him so I just switch my phone off. I just had an amazing day I don't want them spoiling it.

I'm brought back to the presence by my ringing phone. It's my dad.

"Yebo baba"

"Nkosazana how are you doing?"

"I'm okay. But you don't sound okay"

"It's Momo's ex-husband. She's still legally married to him and he won't sign the divorce papers" he sighs.

"I didn't know Momo was married"

"That was 26 years ago and they separated within a year".

I tell him I'll ask someone for him. Sidingo works part time at some law firm maybe she can ask a colleague for me. But the problem is that I don't have Sidingo's digits. I try calling Zweli he's not picking up. He'll have to forgive me but I need those digits and I'd rather go to Zweli's house than Ayanda's house. I take a bath then I take a taxi by the gate. An hour later I'm walking inside Zweli's house. I was scared the guards wouldn't let me in. I run up the steps and I open his door without knocking it's not like I've never seen him naked and right now getting those digits is more important. I didn't think this through.

I find him in bed with some girl. The girl quickly pushes him off her. I stay rooted at the door. *God I'm so stupid.* When he looks at me I see regret but the emotion is quickly wiped off his face makes me think I had imagined it.

"What are you doing here?" He shouts. This is the first time I hear him raising his voice. I feel tears in my eyes and I run towards the steps and out of his house to the street. The guards are looking at me with pity. I'm so stupid my God.

I'm walking to the taxi route when my phone rings I'm too scared to answer the call from an unsaved number. I let it go to voicemail. And then it pings it's a text.

Unsaved number: Hey u must b busy. This is my number. I hope u gud. Sidingo.

When I'm about to reply the phone pings again. It's Momo

Momo: Hey dear. My ex-husband decided to sign the papers. I hope you're okay.

I reply telling her that I'm happy he agreed.

I take a taxi back to my back room and I find Ayanda sitting at the door. I turn back thinking he didn't see me.

"I'm not stupid or blind"

"Oh I didn't see you there"

"Like I said I'm not stupid" he replies. "What were you doing at my house?"

I tell him what my dad told me.

"And you thought you could just walk in my house without my permission?"

"I was desperate. I am so sorry"

"Next time I'll hurt you" he tells me and walks away. I quickly unlock the door and lock it once I'm inside.

As if seeing Zweli and his new gf in bed was not enough. They walked in an hour earlier. I didn't want to come here but Zweli's brothers and mom begged me so I finally gave in. Anthony is also here and Mpumelelo is here with his gf or date.

Seeing Zweli and his floozy doesn't hurt. What hurts the most is how their mom is acting right now. I thought I was the daughter-in-law but she has been ignoring me like I'm not here when she's one who invited me here. I wanted to leave but the brothers begged me not to. There's a buffet and these people hardly eat. All the food will go to waste. When it's time to eat everyone dishes a small portion of food but I don't. I'm too hungry.

"Don't you have food where you stay?" Zweli's floozy asks me. I ignore her. I continue eating.

"Zweli talk to your gf" Sizwe warns.

"I'll leave. Thank you for inviting me"

"Yes please leave" Mrs. Khumalo replies.

"No. She's not leaving" Mpumelelelo and Sizwe say unison. I take my bag by my feet, stand up and leave. The brothers follow me except the one I would've wanted to follow me. I'm so heartbroken. I can't hold back the tears any longer I cry and Sizwe stops the car and they both get off. Sizwe hugs me trying to consoling me but I cry even harder and then Mpumelelo pulls me towards him and they keep saying sorry. Once I stop crying we get in the car and we head to my back room. I let them in and we sit in silence. I can tell they want to talk but they stop once they open their mouths.

"Can I ask you something" Sizwe finally speaks.

"Shoot"

"How did my brother convince you to marry him?" If he asked me this weeks ago I was going to lie because I was starting to be happy but now I'm so mad at Zweli. I tell them how I agreed to marry him. When I tell them about Bonga they don't even flinch. Maybe they knew.

"You knew?"

"Nope. But knowing Zweli that's what he'll do" Sizwe replies looking at his hands.

"And how did you lose the baby and what really happened the last time we find you at the hospital?" I go mute. I shared too much I look at my hands.

"You can trust us" Sizwe tells me rubbing my back and then my shoulders shake and once again. Twice within an hour I can't hold back the tears. I tell them everything through the tears. And when I look up I see tears in Sizwe's eyes and then he hugs me so tight. And we just sit and they change the topic I'm thankful. I've shared so much for today. I must've fallen asleep because when I wake up. The boys are cooking. I'd kill for brothers like that. I remember that I also have brothers but oh well they won't talk to me.

I open the door to go out when I see a package at my door step. The wrapper looks like the one I used to wrap Mrs. Khumalo's present. My heart sinks I take in and then I go to the nearest mall and it's so full. Festive is approaching parents are already buying clothes for their kids. I'm sitting at Spur eating my burger and minding my business when I hear some guy saying

"You're acting *bitchie* lately and I'm not sure I want to be friends with you anymore. First it was Zweli's wife and now Bova's gf?" He comments sounding angry. But I continue eating my meal when I hear another guy talking.

"You've changed. You look down on people. You weren't like that" comments the guy. Well she's been *bitchie*. I eat in silence I pay my bill and leave. I'm walking towards the entrance when I see Mrs. Khumalo and Zweli's gf being the person that I am I greet her but she just pass like she didn't hear me. Well at least I tried. I think I'll go home for the next 2 weeks. I'm packing when my phone rings it's Mpumelelo.

"Hello"

"Hey. It's Mpumelelo. I've been meaning to ask you but you were applying for editing jobs. If it's okay with you. Can you kindly help me at the practice...."

"I'd love that" I reply. "When can I start?"

"Tomorrow"

"Okay no problem. I was packing but I guess I need the money"

"You should've told us"

"Nah. I prefer working for my money". I hang up with a smile on my face. I'm just happy I'll have something to do before January. And maybe I can move to a flat before I start at work. I put back the clothes I forgot to ask what time I'm expected there. I send him a text he tells me to be ready at 8am he open at 9am.

At 8am Mpumelelo knocks my door. I'm wearing all black. We walk out to his black GLE 35Pd Mercedes Benz. I love this car. Sizwe is also here and they are unusually quiet throughout the 15 minutes' drive. I have a feeling they feel bad about what their brother did and I'm not mad at them. He trains me for the remaining 40 minutes. I hope I won't mess up even though he'll be paying me. He's still doing me a favour.

The week goes by very quick. Before I know it it's Friday and I work from Monday to Friday. Sizwe told me I'm getting paid today and I wonder how much he'll be paying me. I'm going home today. As soon as I knock off I'm taking a bus home and luckily I knock off at 12 today. The practice closes at 12:30.

"We are also going to Joburg. We can drop you off at home" Sizwe tells me. I know they are lying. And I hate the fact that they pity me.

"No. You're not". My phone pings. Mpumelelo paid me R5 000. Which pisses me off.

"Look guys no need to lie" I look at Sizwe. "And no need to pay me that much" I tell Mpumelelo. I leave they follow me.

"You paid me more than I deserve. So I'll take a bus home. Don't fetch me on Monday. I'll come here from the depot. Enjoy your weekend" I tell them and stand in the taxi queue just outside the medical centre which is next to a shopping centre.

Buses are full except for Intercity. I don't like the bus but I don't have a choice. I call my dad to tell him that I'm heading home and I ask him to come fetch me at Parktown Station. I sleep throughout the journey. It's been a long week. I'm waken up by the bus driver he tells me that I need to get off he wants to go sleep. I walk out to call my dad and I bump into him and Momo. I'm so happy to see them.

"You look thin. Is that boy not treating you right?"

"Might be going back to my maiden name soon" I tell him and he frowns. Not the answer he expected but he doesn't say anything else.

I spend the weekend at home with my dad and Momo and they don't bring the maiden name thing up but I can see that they are curious but too scared to ask anything. I hate to leave but I have to. I travel all night and I get to the depot at 7am. I take a taxi to the practice. I get there 20 minutes later I find the boys sitting in the office and Zweli is with them. They are arguing about something when they see me they go mute. I greet them and I walk to the bathroom to freshen up since I couldn't go home to bath.

"No. I won't" I hear Mpumelelo's voice and then Zweli's gf walks in with his mom. They just sit as if they don't see me I also ignore them.

"Mama. I can't help you. Please leave"

"Is it because of her?" Mrs. Khumalo asks pointing me. So now I'm just *'her'*.

"She has a name mom. Even if she wasn't working here I wouldn't treat Zweli's floozy. Zweli has a wife what kind of a person would I be if I treated his gf" Mpumelelo replies. But I tell him I don't have a problem. He can't send a client away because of me. They both say no. Both Mpumelelo and Sizwe. I honestly don't have a problem. Even when I tell them they refuse. They eventually leave but not without giving me nasty looks. The guys look mad and they ignore me the whole day. I just don't have the energy for another drama so after work I take a taxi home. And when get home I take a bath and head to bed.

Chapter 2

Ever since I asked Zweli's brothers to give him the package they've been acting offish at work. So yesterday I decided to submit my resignation letter. I'll never forget what they did for me but I couldn't say there any longer. The silence was too much I felt like they

didn't want me there any longer. So I'm heading home I want to help Momo with the wedding preparations. I'll work on the workshop for now then I'll come back a week before I start at work. I'm packing when my phone rings it's an unsaved number. I wonder who that might be. I ignore the call, I'll call the person back.

A week ago I read a facebook post about forgiveness and all and I thought of Nonhle. I'm still mad at her but she did come back even if it's after 20 years. So I've been typing and deleting a text I wanted to send her. It's going to take time for us to have a normal mother and daughter relationship. But Momo will always come first. So maybe I'll call her when I get home. I still have most of my stuff back at home especially my overalls. So I pack a few things, I can't believe I'm going to spend 2 months with my dad. I leave the room and I feel like running to the bus depot. I asked my landlord to look out for me while I'm away, I even gave her the food so that it doesn't spoil. I even gave her rent for the next 2 months. I get to the bus depot 30 minutes before the bus departs and I can't sit still, I'm so happy I'm going home.

And like always I sleep throughout the journey. I get to Joburg at 9pm. I find my dad and Momo waiting for me and I hug them. Twenty minutes later we are home, I'm so tired but I want to start planning the wedding with Momo. I go to bed when my dad tells me that Momo is not going to plan the wedding without me even if I sleep the whole day tomorrow. I kiss her goodnight and head to my room.

I wake up the next month in a happy mood. I guess being at home can really lift a person's mood. I make breakfast for me and my dad and I leave some food for Momo incase she decides to come over. I walk to the workshop. And I find Simon's nephew I forgot his name and I ask him again he look offended. But he reminds me that he's Samkelo and I help him with admin work and I work on other cars. It feels so good to be back at the workshop makes me wonder why I continued studying. At least I was my own boss and I didn't have to report to anyone. If I didn't land the job then I was going to come back here because Durban has nothing else to offer my whole family is here. I've been working from 7am and I haven't ate since then. It is now 2 in the afternoon, there are so many cars and Samkelo is a little lazy. Maybe after a year I can quit my editing job and come back here. I didn't bring lunch and I'm hungry. I look around for Samkelo I want to go buy a can of coke. I'll leave in 2 hours. He's not here I decide to work on the remaining 3 cars. Ten minutes he comes back with *ikota* (bunny chow). I'm so grateful, I

haven't eaten one in years, but I take it. I thank him and I rummage in my bag for my purse to pay him. When I give him the money he won't take it. I take my money back and I make a mental note to buy him something tomorrow. I've never felt comfortable with other people buying me stuff except Bonga.

At 4pm I head home, it's been almost a year since I fixed a car and I'm tired. One would swear I was lifting the cars not fixing them. I find my dad sitting with Momo under one of the trees. Momo is laughing at whatever my dad said. It's so good to see them so happy. I greet Momo and I head to my room for a quick shower to rinse the sweat off my body. I haven't had a chance to talk to my dad, I've been tired and I doubt tonight I'll be able to keep my eyes open again. I take my phone hoping Nonhle didn't change her digits. I'm glad I didn't delete that text.

She picks up after the first ring.

"Zekhethelo?"

"Nonhle" I don't think I'm ready to call her mama she has to work hard for that name.

"How are you?" she asks me. She sounds so unsure.

"I'm good thanx and yourself?"

"I'm okay. Did something happen to your dad?" she asks.

"What makes you think I'd call you first?" she doesn't reply so I tell her the reason I called.

"I want us to meet"

"Really?" she asks sounding unsure.

"Yes really. I'm back at the workshop so I'll be free at 4pm" I tell her. She tells me we can meet at the Mall. We hang up and I hope she doesn't bring Joe or the boys. I just need to talk to her alone and hear her side of the story.

I turn to tell my dad that I just called Nonhle and I find him and Momo at the door both smiling at me. I'm glad Momo is also smiling.

"I'm glad you called her" Momo tells me folding me into a hug.

"You'll always be my mom" I tell her getting emotional. I still can't believe my dad is going to marry her.

Nonhle keeps calling me every hour asking if I'm still meeting her. I decided on a sleep over I'm sure my dad won't mind.

"I decided to spend the weekend at Nonhle's place" I tell my dad when I find him in his bedroom. He's always smiling lately. He tells me that he's proud of me. He knew I'd come around and try. After packing and taking a shower, I take my dad's car and some tools, I might get clients around Nonhle's place.

I find him waiting for me, and she brought Joe along. What's wrong with Nonhle? I ask to see her and she brings another person. Husband or not, I don't want Joe. After hugging her, I tell her that I want to spend some time alone with her and that I'll be spending the weekend at her house. She screams with joy and Joe leaves. It's a little late and I'm hungry so I hope she's also hungry. I asked her what she'd love to eat. She tells me that she'll buy me lunch.

"No, you have the whole weekend to feed me. So let me buy you lunch" I insist and she gives in. We decide to go to Spur. Spur has always been my favourite restaurant. Momo brought me here a lot in the past. Especially as a kid when I did well at school. I always saw longing in her eyes. After eating, we buy ice cream and we talk about general stuff and we have so much in common. Now I see what my dad saw in her. She's an intelligent woman, I have a feeling she felt my dad is too poor for her. Joe had successful spaza shops and cars with a very big house. Reminds me of Zweli, I really miss him but he made his choice and I'm going to respect it.

After 3 hours Nonhle complains about sore feet. We've been sitting most of the time, which makes me think she just wants us to head home. She wants me to officially meet Joe and spend time with the boys.

"I don't like Joe and I'm going to talk to him because I want to build a relationship with you. But always know that Momo is the special woman in my life." I tell her on our way to her place. She tells me that it's okay as long as I get to spend time with her.

We drive for some time. I don't know how long we've been on the road. We are busy talking and there's so much to talk about 20 years is a very long time.

We get to a RDP house. Oh wow I expected a big house like the one Joe owned when I was little. I wonder what happened to his businesses. Serves him right for stealing his friend's wife. When we get inside, the old people who came to my house twice are also

here and the twins. I'm just not in the mood for the crowd. I wish Nonhle would've asked me but it's okay they are here. All I can do is to greet them. I hope they don't kiss me. I just sit down when they want to hug or talk they will come to me.

They start crying. I roll my eyes they are too dramatic. Why can't they just talk to me. I hope they are leaving. They start singing hymns, sounds like a funeral not reconciliation. I wish they could just stop and leave. They introduce themselves for the first time. I just tell them that I'm happy to meet them and they start crying again. Another woman walks in they introduce her as Joe's mother, she looks sweet makes me wonder how she gave birth to a bastard like Joe. We sit until midnight and they leave. There isn't enough space here. I have to share one of the bedrooms with the boys. They are so quiet it's like they don't know what to say to me. They want to sleep on the floor but I tell them they can join me. We stay up until 4am. They apologise for how we parted the last time and they go mute as if waiting for my apology. Oh well they'll wait forever. I'm not going to apologise. My alarms rings at 6am. I'm a visitor here I can't sleep until 10 like back at my house. I find Nonhle and Joe in the kitchen he's helping her make breakfast. I don't think I'll like Joe but I'll tolerate him.

"Sanibonani" I greet them. Nonhle tells me to go back to bed but I decide to take a bath once. When I'm done I watch TV, I don't know when the last time I watched TV was. I'm going to buy one when I get back to the backroom. The landlord has been so good I'm even having doubts with moving to a flat. I can always save the R 3000 difference and buy a piece of land. The boys join me, I tell them they can change the channel. I honestly don't know what to watch and IDX is playing stuff I watch a year ago. Soon Nonhle starts serving us and the food is delicious. I can't help but smile. She tells me she decided to rent movies so we can watch. But I want to talk to them get to know them except Joe. As if reading my thoughts he leaves. Lindo takes out his cards we start playing crazy 8, it was mkhulu's favourite. Not a day passes that I don't think of him. I miss him so much.

Joe returns after a long and lovely day. I didn't know that Nonhle is so funny I laughed until I almost peed on my pants. Joe asks to take a walk with me and I don't feel comfortable with taking a walk with him alone. Girls get killed. Nonhle and the boys volunteer to accompany us but they'll give us space.

Once we are out the gate, Joe asks to take my head but I shake my head no.

“I wanted to apologise to you. I was wrong to have an affair with your mother which resulted in her leaving you behind at a tender age. I also wanted to thank you for trying to build a relationship with us...”

“I decide to build a relationship with Nonhle and the boys. They are my family. I don't like you and I'm sure you can see that but for their sake I'll tolerate you. What you did to my father hurts but he's over that now. I just hope we'll get along for their sake”

“Thank you” and we walk in silence and I can see that he's relieved and he's no longer tense. After some time Nonhle and boys join us and we walk back to their house.

It's been a very great weekend but I have leave them.

“I got to love and leave you guys. Thank you so much for the great weekend. I hope we have more of them” I tell them giving them hugs. Joe wanted to shake my hand but I hug him instead. The fact that he acknowledges that he wronged me and my father and he apologised means the world to me. The hug shocks everyone. I drive away with the promise to tell them when I get home.

Chapter 3

My dad and Momo couldn't get married in October because Momo's family used some of the money that was meant to buy some of the stuff and there were so many disagreements. So Momo asked that they postpone the wedding to December they were supposed to start with traditional wedding on Saturday then have a white wedding on Sunday but they decided to postpone the white wedding. My aunt was saying they should get married tomorrow but my dad and Momo said no. I got married on the 9th of December last year so they can't married on the same day. I see nothing wrong but I think I understand their point.

At least I'm not going to the workshop tomorrow. The business has been slow and Samkelo hasn't been coming to work for the last 4 days. He called in sick but I know for a fact that he's lying. I think he hates working at the workshop and the clients have been complaining. They asked me to come back but I can't. At least if I didn't have a job waiting for me. January is almost here and I'm not ready to go back to Durban but I have to.

I'm busy talking to one of the clients when Nonhle, Joe and the boys walk in. I wasn't expecting them and I can't say I'm happy or not with them just coming here without telling me.

"We wanted to surprise you" Nonhle tells me as soon the client leaves. I can't help but smile back at her. That's so nice of her. My stomach grumbles when she tells me they brought me lunch. I don't want anything heavy. I still have 2 more hours to go.

"You don't look okay" Joe comments. I lie, telling him that I'm tired. I'm a little irritated that he of all people can see that I'm not okay. I miss Zweli and his family especially maShezi. I'm tempted to call her at times but I stop myself. They bought a lot of food, Nonhle says it's because I eat a lot. There's chicken, red meat, wors, bread, rolls and chips. I dish up everything and I eat. They leave after an hour and I'm grateful because I also want to head home. Joe offered me a lift but I don't think my dad will appreciate Joe dropping me off. So I politely decline. I get home just after 3pm and I'm so tired both emotionally and physically. I told Samkelo to go back to the workshop tomorrow as I'll be resting it's been the longest 2 months of my life. I find Momo and my dad cooking. I tell them to wake me up when supper is ready I'm full. And then I tell them that Nonhle and her family came by. I also tell them about Joe offering to drop me off but I declined.

"Supper is ready" Momo tells me when I open my eyes. I don't think I'm hungry but I follow her. I eat a very small portion and I see my dad and Momo asking each other what's wrong using their shoulders. A lot happened last month around this time. Few weeks ago we buried Bonga and I thought I'd visit his mom on the day of his death but I got so busy maybe I'll see before I head back to Durban. After supper I wash the dishes and I head to bed. I wake up at 4am and I take a bath and I take my dad's car to the workshop because I know I won't be able to sleep. Since there are no cars I decide to clean, this place hasn't been cleaned for months. I even clean the windows and I finish around 10am. I keep looking at my phone maybe Zweli will send me a text or something.

I drive home and my dad isn't here. I decide to send Zweli flowers. I know it's dumb but I miss him and I've been wanting for an excuse to contact him and I can use our anniversary to contact him. I call one of the florists near his place after I searched for florist in Durban. I don't know what kind of flowers to send him. I've never heard of guys receiving flowers, I hope he'll like them like some girls do. I've been so busy, I forgot to check up on my landlord for 2 weeks now. I'll call her later, maybe I can get her

something nice for her too and I doubt she'd want flowers but I can't think of something else to send her.

"Zweli you have a delivery" maShezi announces walking towards him with flowers. He almost choke on his lunch, who'd buy him flowers?

"Sihle did you buy me flowers?" he asks his girlfriend. She shakes her head looking pissed.

"Maybe you have a secret admirer" Mandy announces. Sizwe tells him that there's a note. Zweli takes the flowers and he can't help but smile. He smells them like woman do and then she opens the envelope.

Zweli

Forgive me for being forward but I thought of you today and I remembered it's the day we got married. I couldn't think of anything I could send you. You already have everything except for flowers. HAPPY ANNIVERSARY.

Zekhethelo

Zweli can't help but smile. He thought she forgot their anniversary.

"Who sent them?" Sizwe asks sounding very interested.

"Zekhethelo. I thought she forgot our anniversary"

"So why are you still with her when it's clear you miss her?"

"I can't leave Sihle"

"Why not?"

"She's pregnant"

"So?" Mpumelelo asks.

"What do you mean so?" Mrs. Khumalo asks Mpumelelo

"I can't do what dad did to my unborn child"

"How sure are you that it's yours?" Sizwe asks.

"Don't you dare" Mrs. Khumalo comments standing up. Sidingo, Melusi, Mandy, Musa and Ayanda stand to leave. This is a family discussion, their business is done here.

I'm lying on the couch when my phone pings and Zweli appears on the screen. I quickly unlock the phone with a smile. I didn't think he'd reply.

Zweli: Leave me alone. Sihle is going to give me a baby. Something you couldn't do.

I stop breathing for a minute. How dare he when he's the one who killed my baby? I regret sending the flowers. That was so stupid of me. I decide to go visit Bonga's mom.

"Zeh" she screams when she sees me. We greet each other and I tell her why I'm here and we talk about Bonga the whole day. I enjoy her company, I always did.

"I thought you were going to be my *makoti*" she tells me when I open the door to leave. I almost tell her that I was actually her son's girlfriend for 4 years. I stop myself because I got married within a month of his death and now I have to explain how and why I married Zweli.

"I loved him as a brother" I lie.

"Where have you been?" my dad asks me when I get home. I tell him I went to visit Bonga's mom and he goes to lecture me about leaving the house for more than 5 hours without telling anyone is wrong. Yet he also disappeared for time without telling me.

"Anyway Momo wants to talk to you about something" he tells me when I go mute. I walk over to Momo's house and I find her cooking. I hope they didn't have an argument with my dad because I don't understand why she's cooking when my dad is also cooking.

"You don't look okay" she comments when she sees me. And I can't hold back the tears any longer. She consoles me.

"What's wrong?" she asks in a low voice.

"Everything" I reply without expanding. I really don't want to go into detail right now. I want Momo to focus on her wedding plans. I tell her we'll talk after the wedding. She doesn't want to wait but she agrees eventually.

"What did you want to talk about" I ask her after some time.

"I saw that you aren't okay, so that's what I wanted us to talk about" *awww* this woman. I really hope God keeps her for a long time.

I wake with a massive headache. I must've fallen after 4am. My pillow is so wet. Stupid fat tears, wouldn't stop falling. It's been a long week. I know I'm happy for my dad but I can't help but think of my failed marriage. And to make matters worse, Mrs. Khumalo got here yesterday. I wish my family didn't invite her and the boys, I'm just not in the mood for them worse today of all days. I take a bath at Momo's house since our house is full. I haven't seen Momo's parents for more than 15 years and I couldn't remember them, I felt really bad. But we are now family I'm going to visit them as much as I'd love to. I can't wait they seem like nice people wonder why they don't visit their daughter.

I run around making sure that everything is in place. I'm talking to one of my aunts when I see Zweli looking super handsome. I wish I could hug him or touch him but I'm going to back off like he told me. They stand there with his brothers looking at me expectantly. If they think I'm going to play polite host they thought wrong. I go around making sure that everything is in place, because I want to be there when the ceremony starts.

"You need to go out. The ceremony is about to start" my aunt Busi tells me. I quickly run to my room to change to my traditional outfit. I walk over and the only seat left is next to Zweli's mom. Makes me wonder why she's sitting in front. She's not family. I take the chair and I sit next to gogo and the ceremony starts. Momo is so good at ukugida you'd swear she's not Tswana. The smile on my dad's face is priceless. Momo looks nervous and she's sweating. I see my dad walking towards her. He takes out his handkerchief and he wipes the sweat and people scream. I can't help but look for Zweli in the crowd and I find him staring at me. An hour later the ceremony is almost over. My dad and Momo are sitting down and Momo's dad is talking. I don't know what he's saying but I know that she's sending her off or something like that. And when he's done one of uncles welcomes her to the family. We get emotional because this is mkhulu's part. Gogo's shoulders shake and I try to console her but I end up crying. I walk to my house for a glass of water and when I come back I find Zweli sitting next to gogo wiping her tears. I can see that he's still wearing his ring. Makes me think he wore because he was coming here. Sihle his gf wouldn't allow such thing to happen.

"Can I sit" that comes out rude and he looks shocked but he leaves.

We head to the tent when my uncle is done. Time for speech. Gogo is too emotional to speak but she welcomes Momo to the family and she wishes them a long and happy marriage. My aunts are also emotional so I decide to talk.

“I’m so happy I can’t even sit still” everyone laugh and nod in agreement. “I’ve been waiting for this day from a very young age. Almost everyone knows that my mom walked out on us when I was only 5 and Momo has been a mother to me. I always knew I can always count on her. I wouldn’t be here today if it wasn’t for her. I’m so happy I finally get to call someone ‘mama’. From now on you’re no longer Momo but you’re mama. Thank you for choosing us. If I had to choose a mother in all the women in the world always know that I’d choose you. You’ve always been my greatest supporter, motivator, cheerleader, my walking dictionary, my teacher, my role model and most of all my mother I practised my speech since my dad told me he’s marrying you but I can’t remember a thing. I always knew that I can call you at 2am when things weren’t going so well and you always answered. You always know what to say, when to say it. If I don’t be half the parent that you are then I don’t deserve those kids. Baba” I start looking at my dad in a shaky voice. “I know you’ll make mama happy” Momo weeps as soon as I call her mama. “And I know she’ll also make you happy. I know you’ll protect her like you protect me. Thank you for choosing her...”

I want to continue but I’m getting emotional and Zweli’s mom puts her hand on my shoulder.

“Take your hand off me” I tell her in a low voice and she does. I see her sons looking shocked. I just wish they could just leave. When it’s time to eat, I walk to my house and Zweli follows me.

“You send me flowers and then you ignore me” the nerve of this guy.

“Leave me alone, I left you alone” I reply and I close the door behind me but not without seeing confusion written all over his face. I hope I don’t bump into him back in Durban. I’ve had enough.

Once everyone leaves I help the catering company clean up. I’m glad the day is coming to an end. It has been a lovely one. At 10pm the place is clean. It’s like there was never a wedding. My dad and Momo are busy packing away their presents. I will give them mine tomorrow morning.

“Hello sis” I turn to see Melo standing behind me. I smile at him. I thought they didn’t come.

"I thought you didn't come" I hug them including Joe. The twins help me clean up while Nonhle and Joe join my dad and Momo. Once we are done they also leave with the promise to keep in touch and visit me soon. I think I'd like that a lot. I enjoy their company so much. I go inside the house to give Momo and my dad their present, I hope they'll enjoy their honeymoon. I heard my dad complaining saying they can't afford to go to one so I bought them plane tickets to Mozambique. A lot of people are visiting the place so I thought they might like to go there. They seem very happy, I'm glad I'm the reason for their joy. They are leaving tomorrow morning for a week. I'm thinking of visiting Nonhle and the boys. But I'll decide tomorrow night. I help them pack I'll drive them to the airport.

Their plane leaves at 10am. By 6am we are up. We leave the house 2 hours before and we have breakfast before they board a flight. I'm on my way home when I receive a call from an unknown number. I decide to pick up. It's maShezi.

"Yebo sawubona"

"Have you seen Zweli's mom?" she asks panicking.

"No, I haven't seen her" I'm not even sure why she's asking me. How would I know where that woman is?

"We thought she might be at your house"

"What would she be still doing here?" I ask getting angry. I know it's wrong to take out my anger on maShezi but she's the one who called me to ask me about someone else's mother. She asks me to call her if I see her. And I hope I don't see her. I'm sleepy, it's been a long day yesterday and my family is still here. I forgot about them, I was so focused on making sure that my parents don't miss their flight. Yes my parents.

"Muzi tells me that you visited your mom last week" my grandma comments when I open the door. I don't know why she does that. She doesn't wait for someone to come in before she asks or say something to them. It makes me mad at times.

"Yes, I did. And I really enjoyed spending time with her and the boys. Joe even apologised for what he did to me and my dad" she nods, it looks like she wants to say something but decides against it.

“And your dad also told me that you no longer live with your husband” she comments when I head to my room. I didn’t tell them because I don’t want to discuss that with them. I’m a grown woman, I make my own decision.

“Yes, I moved out almost 3 months back. Things haven’t been good at home. I was left with no choice but to leave”. She just says hmmm. I head back to bed.

I wake up 5 hours later. I have a new text from maShezi telling me that Zweli’s mom is home she was abducted but Zweli and his brothers found him. Funny how no one found me.

I’m now counting days till I head back to Durban. I feel like dying. After taking a shower I walk to the lounge like my grandma summoned me.

Chapter 4

It’s time to go but I don’t want to. My dad and Momo are going to visit my grandma. I really wish I could go with them but I have some shopping and cleaning up to do. To save some cash I decide to take a bus back. I doubt I’m going to look for a flat, the back room is okay. I leave after my dad and Momo. This time Nonhle and the boys are taking me to the bus depot. I think I’m going to miss them. I head towards my bus after hugging Nonhle and the boys. They all promise to come visit me. I’d love that.

I travel all night and I get to my place at 8am. I’m exhausted, I didn’t even sleep like I always do. I can’t help but think about Zweli and the last text he sent me. I want to delete it but I also want to keep it so that it serves as a reminder that he has moved on and I need to do the same.

I go inside to tidy up so that I can go see my landlord. I hope she really liked the flowers I sent her. She sounded happy on the phone. I don’t get women’s obsession with chocolate and flowers. I clean the room for 3 hours straight. I take a bath and I head to the main house. I find mother and son watching TV. I greet them and she tells me how much she loves the flowers. And I can tell that she’s telling the truth. I stay for 10 minutes.

“Oh I forgot to tell you...” Sihle the landlord’s son comments when I’m walking towards the door.

“We received a package for you on the 9th but some powerful guy came and demanded it back” It’s Zweli he must’ve sent me a present when he received the flowers and then took them back. I thank him and I head to my room. I toss and turn for an hour. I decide to buy groceries. The day after tomorrow I’m starting at work. I head to town for shopping. I buy groceries for me and some few things for my landlord. She’s been very sweet. She has a spare key to my room yet I find everything in its place. And I think she swept.

I head home after 2 hours. It’s clear that it’s January the shops are empty.

“You shouldn’t have.” She tells me in a very shaky and then she pulls me into a hug. Sihle tells me that the situation is not very good at home. His mom is struggling financially she’s still repaying loans his dad took 10 years ago. The bank threatened to reprocess the house and the car Sihle is currently driving. I wish he told me that when I left I was going to take him with me. His mom can take care of herself, she’s not that old. I feel bad because I can’t help him. I tell him I’ll ask around and I’ll get back to him when I find something.

I hope he knows how to fix cars. We can always open a mini workshop here. As if reading my mind, my phone rings. It’s an unsaved number.

“Hello?” I answer.

“Zekhethelo I got your digits from Zweli. This is Melusi if you can, can you come over, there’s a problem with my car” I only heard the first part.

“Did you hear me?” he asks.

“Can you please repeat that” I reply and he does. I tell him I will come by today because tomorrow I need to rest and I take Sihle with. When we get to Melusi’s place everyone is here. Zweli, his girlfriend, Sidingo, Mandy and Ayanda. I’m wearing overalls I borrowed from Sihle. He looks so uncomfortable. I don’t blame him we are in a mafia’s house. I greet everyone.

“You’re a mechanic?” Zweli’s girlfriend comments in a nasty tone.

“At least I work for my money. I don’t need to sleep around” I reply in a nastier tone. I’m so tired of this floozy.

“What did you just say?” she asks standing up.

“You heard me” I reply heading towards her. “I’m so tired of your shit. Just because I’m quiet doesn’t mean you have to walk all over me. I’m here to work” I tell her. She looks scared, she didn’t expect this from me. People think I’m quiet because I’m intimidated by them and I’m not. I just prefer being quiet. But I’m tired. I ask Melusi to see the car and he leads the way to his garage. It’s bigger than my whole house back home. His Audi Q3 is the one giving him problems. His clutch got burned. And he has all the things needed for the car. I show Sihle how to do this and he can’t wipe the shock on his face. I get that a lot, I wonder if people will get used to it. After we are done we head to where the crew is sitting. Melusi asks for my banking details, I give them to him and we head out. He offers money for petrol and I politely decline. I hope they aren’t thinking I don’t have a cent on my account. We head back home. Melusi sent me R5 000, it’s too much. I wanted to send R3000 back but Sihle needs the money so I give him R4 000 he won’t take it but I lie saying I got R8000. He still won’t take it saying I did the work and he just stood there. But he needs the money even though I don’t tell him that. I hate it when people pity me and I don’t want him thinking I’m doing the same. I’m helping them because they are good people and they need the money. His mom hugs me crying. These women and being emotional. I head to my room, tomorrow it’s my first day at work so I will sleep early I don’t want to be late. At least I’ll be working from 9am to 4pm. I hope I’ll cope.

It’s Friday, I can’t stop staring at the watch. It’s been a great week and I received a warm welcome but I can’t wait for the weekend.

“Stop staring at the watch” Siya whispers in my ear. I’ve been focusing on the watch I didn’t even see or hear him coming in.

“I want to go home” I tell him. He’s been very sweet teaching me almost everything. He’s the owner’s son, he didn’t study he’s working so that he can get money for clubbing every weekend. Talk about privileges. But one thing I like about him is that he’s not spoiled and his dad treats him like everyone. And almost everyone calls him dad here. He’s so involved with his employees they can even talk to him about anything. On Fridays I knock off at 1pm and it’s 5 to 1. I can’t wait to leave. I’m taking Sihle with me to Joburg. We will work at the workshop for extra cash. My dad and Momo aren’t back yet. At 1 O’clock I take my bag and I run towards the door. I hear everyone laughing.

When I get home, I find Sihle waiting for me. I can't help but laugh he looks like a 5 year going on a trip. I hope he didn't think I'll leave without him. I just take my bag I will take a bath when I get home. I decided that we'll fly to Joburg. Driving is a bad idea especially when we'll be heading back. I think we'll be very tired. Sihle has never really worked especially with cars. And I've never driven for more than 2 hours.

We get to my house at 5pm. I don't know why but I trust Sihle so he'll be staying at my house. After eating, we walk to the workshop and I find the roller door closed. Samkelo said he's working when I called him this morning and I could hear that he's lying. I can't come to Joburg every weekend. I need to rest. I can't afford to make mistakes at work.

I find my old regulars waiting.

"Since you left the boy hasn't opened the workshop for 2 weeks. I had to take taxis to work the whole time" one of my customers complains. I tell them to wait for me. I open the door and the workshop is packed about 15 cars are here and there are about 7 people outside. I quickly clean the place and Sihle helps me. I sort out the paper work for the first 15 cars and then Sihle tells me that he will take care of the 7 cars outside. I don't know which car was here first I just find all the information in different papers. I'm so pissed it's going to be a long night. I hope Sihle is prepared. One of the owners offers to take us home when we are done since his car is the last one.

Three hours and 7 cars later, Sihle asks to take a break and I let him. He must be exhausted. He's not used to this kind of work I guess and he takes 10 minutes break. He's a fast learner and he's so determined. But I don't think he's ready to work alone in this place. I take a break when I'm done with the cars I found inside the place. I look at the time it's just after midnight and Sihle looks tired. They sleep early. By 9pm the lights are off at their house. I tell him to sleep on the couch but he doesn't want to. I force him and he finally gives in. I try to be a little fast on the remaining cars, but I finish just after 5am. I wake Sihle up, we have to go home now. The owners will fetch their cars in the afternoon.

"When you're hungry rummage through the cupboards and fridge. Eat as much as you want" I tell Sihle when we get home. He nods. I head to my room for a shower and then I head to bed. I wake up around 12 and I find Sihle on the couch and the TV is off. I ask if he ate and he shakes his head no. When I tell him that I told him to eat he tells me that he didn't feel comfortable. I don't know what to prepare for him, I'm busy looking when someone knocks. I tell whoever to come in and Nonhle and the boys come in with

3 baskets. Thank God, I hope it's food. I introduce them to Sihle and then I take the plates to the lounge and we dish up and dig in. The food is delicious. Nonhle's good.

"I'm coming to Durban in 2 months. I was hoping I could crash at your place" Lindo tells me. So unlike him, but I am happy that he didn't decide to stay in a hotel while I'm also in the city. I tell him I'd love that and Melo also tells me that he's coming along. And I'm happy I'll get to spend time with my brothers.

It's been a month since I started working and I've been spending all weekends at home with Sihle. I think he's ready to work alone but he insists he's not. So we've been travelling back and forth. It's tiring and sometimes I don't feel like going but then again he needs the money. It's been a long 4 weeks but at least we make enough money and Sihle was able to pay their monthly instalment and the errors. It feels good to be able to help.

"Are you ready?" Sidingo asks as soon as I pick. Well except for my parents, she's the only person who knows that I'm sending divorce papers to Zweli and I don't know why but for some reason, I know I can trust her. Sometimes I wish I could text the Khumalo brothers but I can't. If they wanted to keep in touch they would. I still worry that once Zweli gets the divorce papers he will threaten to kill my dad like he did when we first met.

"Yes. I am"

"You don't sound so sure"

"The thought of being a divorcee at the age of 25 depresses me"

"If you ever feel depressed. Just think of me having to spend some time with Ayanda's only wife" she replies laughing. I can't help but laugh too. I'm just glad we won't run in the same circle anymore. We talk about Mandy for some time then we hang up.

Chapter 5

I never thought I'd cry in my life especially for a woman. Even when mkhulu died I didn't cry. Yes it hurt me but I never shed a tear. So why would I cry over divorce papers?

Because you love her dumb head.

"Did I really push her too far?" I ask no one in particular. I didn't expect Zekhethelo to file for divorce especially after the flowers she sent on our anniversary. God knows I love her but I just can't treat her right.

"Yes you did. And you have to let her go because she deserves better. You destroyed the only chance of spending the rest of your life with the woman who loves you even when you didn't deserve her love" Sizwe replies. I know he's right but I won't let her go. I'll kill for her.

I've been trying to call her since I received the papers 2 days ago. I haven't signed them, and I'm not planning to.

"So what are you going to do?" Mpumelelo asks me.

"Fight for her. Show her that she means the world to me"

"That's too late don't you think?"

"You sounded sick on the phone. What's wrong?" my mom asks me giving me hug.

"You look like shit. The last time I saw you like this is after we lost dad" she comments looking at me with eyes full of tears.

"Zekhethelo filed for divorce" Sizwe tells her and I see a smile on her face.

"That's a good thing. I never thought I'd live to see the day. You can marry Sihle and raise the baby with her" my mom comments. I thought she knew me more than anyone in this world. I don't want Sihle I want my wife back home. I guess me hooking up with Sihle was my way of making Zekhethelo jealous so she can come back home. But I think it pushed her far and she filed for divorce. Does she even love me?

"When did you receive the papers?" Sizwe asks me.

"Two days ago"

"And you're only telling us now?" he asks sounding shocked.

“I needed time to deal with this alone” I tell him honestly. He doesn’t say anything he just nods.

“What are you going to do?” Mpumelelo asks again. I don’t really have a plan. And then I remember the promise I made when she was struggling to get a job.

“I’ll buy her a company like I promised her” I reply smiling.

“Do you actually think Zekhethelo is impressed by money? That girl is a hustler. She doesn’t need your money” Sizwe replies. “You clearly don’t know her that well” he continues and walks away. I just want to be alone and I know they won’t leave. So I head to my bedroom and I try calling her one more time.

“Zekhethelo’s phone hello?” answers a woman’s voice.

“Can I speak to Zekhethelo?”

“No you can’t” the woman tells me and she hangs up. She must be in Joburg. I walk back to the lounge and Sizwe came back.

“Please try to find the company she works for” I ask looking both Sizwe and Mpumelelo. They just stare at me and I know they are not going to help me. I’ll hire someone to do that for me. I call Lwanele I’m sure he’ll be willing to help. I know I’ve been busy.

He picks up after the first ring. He doesn’t want to help me at first but I tell him it’s not my mafia business. He decided that he wants nothing with the mafia business after we went to Zekhethelo’s house that night.

I keep staring at the watch. Ten minutes later he send me a text telling me that Zekhethelo works for Sunshine Publishers. The company is owned by Mr. Sibiya and he’s thinking of closing the company due to financial issues. I smile thinking maybe it’s my chance to buy the company for Zekhethelo. I honestly hope this will work because I have no plan of running a publication company.

I keep looking at the clock. I sent the divorce papers 5 days ago. I wonder why Zweli hasn’t signed them. It must be what he wanted from the minute I walked out of his house.

“It’s 7 hours before knock off time. Quit staring at the watch” Siya whispers in my ear like he does almost every day. I love my work but I can’t wait for the weekends. I

thought I'm a mechanic because I had to pay the bills. But since I started working here I realise that I love fixing cars more than I love this job. The corporate world is just too much for me. I'm sitting at the kitchen during lunch time when Zweli walks in Mr. Sibiya's office. I hope he's not here to cause a scene. I wonder how long he's been here and then he walks over to where I'm sitting with the rest of the employees. I hope he won't cause a scene.

"Can I talk to you?" he asks in a low voice. Now that I decide to file for divorce he wants to talk to me? Fuck that. I just ignore him.

"Is this guy giving you any problems?" one of the security guards asks me. I shake my head no.

"Do you know him?" he asks. I don't think he's supposed to be asking me that question. He's curious like everyone else that has been staring when he stood next to me. I nod and he asks how I know him and then I realise that everyone is dead silent. I think I noticed how he walks into a room and suddenly everyone is quiet.

"He was my husband" I reply and I hear people gasp.

"Was?" Zweli asks in a defeated tone. When I don't reply he turns to leave.

"You didn't tell me you were married" Siya nudges me once Zweli is out the door.

"I just don't like talking about it" I tell him and shake my head when he opens his mouth to ask more question. I'm not in the mood for this.

When it's knock off I take my bag and I run out the door like I always. I'm heading to Joburg but I'm visiting my parents and Nonhle.

I take a flight home and I get to OR Tambo International Airport after 7pm, Nonhle and the twins are waiting for me. I'm so happy to see them. I've been so busy with whatever's going on in my life I even forgot to check up on them like I promised but we do talk once in a while. It's not much but at least we do talk. We head to their house and Joe is also not here. We sit and watch TV while Nonhle is dishing up. I'm so hungry I decided not to eat so that when Nonhle offers food I don't decline or eat a small portion of food. After eating we watch TV until after 12. I'm so tired I decide to head to the boy's room. They still want to watch TV. Nonhle tells me that I can sleep in her bedroom, Joe is not coming home. I see Lindo's face changing when his dad's name is mentioned. He's so protective of his mom. I don't feel comfortable with sleeping on Nonhle's bed so I head to the boys' room and I fall asleep before my head can even hit the pillow.

I wake up very late the next day. I look at the time it's 10:30am. Nonhle will have to understand I was tired it's been a very long week No actually it's been a long 25 years. I need a break. I head to the kitchen and I find Melo eating. I mix water then I head back to their room to bath. Lindo is not here. When I ask Nonhle after joining her she tells me that he went to see his girlfriend. Apparently they have been fighting. We sit and watch TV. Okay I've known Nonhle for almost 5 months now but I can tell that she's not okay.

"What's wrong?" I ask her. She tries to hold back the tears but she can't. She ends up crying and Melo jumps from the kitchen. I hope my kids will love me like this. I hug her. She cries some more when I try to console her. I keep saying shhh and rubbing her back like Momo used to when I was crying. I can't wait to see her tomorrow.

"I'm sorry I messed up your shirt like that" Nonhle tells me once she stops crying.

"Oh no ma it's okay". Melo smiles and he jumps at me.

"What's wrong?" I ask him. Nonhle is no longer crying she's smiling. Eeh what's going on with these 2?

"You called me ma" Nonhle tells me smiling. Sadness all gone. I didn't realise I called her that. But I think it's a normal thing for us Africans to call an old woman mama or gogo even if you're not related. I just say oh and I doubt she heard me she keeps staring and smiling at me. I feel so uncomfortable now. But I'm glad she's no longer mopping.

"Anyway Joe left. I kicked him out 2 weeks back"

Two weeks back. We haven't talked in 2 weeks.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner. It's just that I just needed to deal with it alone"

"Oh no it's okay. I've been caught up in my own problems I didn't even check up with you guys like I promised" I reply feeling guilty. Why am I even feeling guilty? Maybe I have forgiven her.

She tells me that Joe impregnated a friend of hers. She found out 2 weeks ago. Joe's mother is the one who told her. She said she didn't tell her to hurt her. But she's been telling Nonhle that her son is a bustard and she's been telling her to leave him before she gets sick. But she just thought she was trying to break them up because she never approved of their relationship because of how they met. I could tell that that woman is a good person but she gave birth to a heartless bustard. But I hope Nonhle feels the pain

my dad felt when she left him with his best friend. The taste of her own medicine but I'm not going to rub it in.

I don't know why but I also tell her that I filed for divorce a week ago and Zweli didn't sign the papers. We chitchat the whole day about marriage and problems. Before we know it it's 5 in the afternoon and we haven't ate. We didn't even see or hear Melo leaving. I guess our relationship is improving. Lindo returns home looking stressed. I don't even want to ask what happened. He'll share when he's ready. I'm not going to be the pushy big sister some guys complain about on facebook.

"I can see that you guys are getting along well" Lindo comments smiling at us.

"She called me ma" Nonhle beams. Lindo also smiles at that. I know it means the world to him that we are trying to build a relationship. We watch TV and we laugh a lot. I head to bed after 2am. I can't keep my eyes open any longer.

I wake at 8am the next day. I bath and pack my bag. I want to head home. I can't be in Joburg the whole weekend and not go home.

Ten more minutes to go before I knock off. Just when I'm packing Zweli and his brothers decide to grace us with their presence. And everyone keeps staring at me like they did all day. Since I first got here I've been sitting with Siya but today almost everyone wanted to sit me and it's so annoying. No one has been nasty since I got they all helped where they could but we didn't sit on the same table during lunch or even try to talk to each other about anything except work.

"Ladies and gentlemen I'm not going to keep you for long. Can I have a few minutes of your time. The company has been struggling financially after the scandal. And I've been looking for a buyer and these guys made an offer I can't refuse. I'm sad to announce that I'm leaving by the end of the month. I hope you guys will continue working hard making me proud. The gentlemen promised that no one is going to lose their jobs. I promised not to take too much of your time. I'll step back and let them introduce themselves" Mr Sibiya announces. I'm sitting hoping it's some sick joke. I'm not going to work here.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm Zwelibanzi Khumalo. I am the new owner of the company but to be honest I bought the company for my wife. I made a promise to her that I will buy her a publication company when she was struggling to get a job and I kept my

promise. There'll be no change within the company. Everyone will keep their jobs, the hours will still be the same. The only thing that's going to change is the ownership and some of the management stuff. I will be coming to the office for the rest of the month to see how everything works and learn a little more about the company and its employees. Whenever Zekhethelo feels ready to take over then she will thank you for your time" he smiles and steps back.

"Any questions?" Mr Sibiya asks and I raise my hand.

"Yes Zekhethelo" and everyone turns to look at me. Zweli and his brothers are smiling. I wonder what they are smiling at.

"I'm sorry if I may sound rude. But can I leave. I have something important to do" I reply. He look at Zweli, Zweli nods the smile wiped off completely from his face. I take my bag and I leave. I hear footsteps behind me. I don't turn to look. It might be Zweli.

"Zekhethelo" it's Sizwe. I continue walking towards the taxi route. I'm exhausted.

Ten minutes later I'm home. I pack my bags. I go to the main house to tell them I'm leaving for a few weeks. Sihle will join me this weekend because it's short notice.

I take a flight home. I find Momo and my dad waiting for me. They don't ask why I'm here on a Monday. They just help me with the bags. I don't know why I packed almost all my clothes when I have clothes here at home. I head to bed as soon as I get home.

My alarm rings at 6am. I search for resignation templates and I send my resignation.

February 12 2018

Mr. SS Sibiya

Chief Executive Officer

Sunshine Publishers

556 Simon Street

Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal

Dear Mr. Sibiya

I am writing to notify you that I am resigning with immediate effect at my position as a book editing intern.

I appreciate the opportunities I have been given during my time with your company, as well as your professional guidance and support.

I wish you and the company the best of success in the future.

Warm regards,

Zekhethelo Mazibuko

signature

I know Zweli hasn't signed the divorce papers but I'm using my maiden name.

Chapter 6

I walk into the office with a smile. I'm going to see Zekhethelo the whole day. When I don't see her I think she's running late or she went to the bathroom.

"Good morning *bab'* Sibiya" I greet him with a smile. I hardly smile but the thought of seeing Zekhethelo makes me smile for no reason at all.

"You need to see this" he replies looking at me and my brothers. And the look on his face tells me that we not going to like this. He shows me an email.

"And I was going to promote her after 3 months. We have no deputy editor and she was going to be one. She's a fast learner and she works hard. Since she got here she edited 4 manuscripts a week. And my other employees submit 4 per month" he tells me looking sad.

My day just went from the highest of highs to lowest of lows in a matter of 30 seconds. I thought buying this company for her will make things right? What else does she want from me? I'm trying to make things right here. I take my phone out. I know she won't pick up so I call her dad and he picks up after the first ring. As if he's been waiting for my call.

"Sawubona baba"

"Yebo"

“Things have not been well between me and Zeh. I think she went back to Joburg and I want to make things right. Can I come over later today for a family meeting” I ask hoping he’ll agree.

“Makes me wonder what took so long to try and make things right. You can come over but be warned since you don’t know my daughter that well. She’s stubborn and if your way of making things right involves money then think of another plan” he warns and hangs up. I was hoping he’ll give an advice or better yet talk to me. I don’t know what to do. Even when I call the meeting what am I going to say? I walk back to the office and I tell my brothers that we are going to a family meeting in Joburg. I don’t want to take my mother with but Zekhethelo’s family is so strict I doubt they would allow me in without any elder. I’m so desperate I’d even call my father.

“I’m not going to that house” my mom tells me when I tell her what I’m planning. I beg and she gives in.

Almost 6 hours later I’m at Zekhethelo’s house. We greet everyone and we sit down. I’ve never been this nervous. I look around I see her parents and grandma so glad the whole family isn’t here. She walks in looking all pissed with her dirty overalls.

“Aren’t you going to cover your head?” her grandma asks her.

“No”

“Reason being?” my mom asks. She doesn’t answer her she just sits next to her stepmom.

“Can we start?” I ask.

“We’re still waiting for Nonhle” just after she tells me that there’s a knock on the door. She quickly stands up and she opens the door and once she sees the person she smiles and she moves aside. It’s her mom, they must have fixed things. The last time I checked she couldn’t stand the woman and now she’s all smiles. And I see that everyone in the room is also smiling. The woman greets everyone and then she sits down.

Once she sits down they all turn to me and for the first time. I don’t know how to start.

“I don’t know what to say” I comment.

“Then why did you call us here?” Zekhethelo asks. I can sense annoyance in her voice and for some reason, I think I deserve that. My mom and brothers all turn to look at me. I wish one of them can say something.

“If you’re not going to talk. Then excuse me I have cars to fix”

I sigh I’m so bad at this.

“I’m here because I want back home” I tell her and she just sits there looking at her phone. As if I didn’t talk to her. Sizwe nudges me. Why is this so difficult?

“Zeh I know I’ve been a terrible husband. I need back home. I shouldn’t have let you walk out...”

“But you did. All along you didn’t say anything. And now that I filed for divorce you summon us here?”

“I didn’t summon you here. I called your dad and I asked for a family meeting.” I tell her. She just looks at me.

“So you call my family and ask for a family meeting? Who the hell do you think you are?” she asks getting really pissed. I’ve never seen her so mad and no one is really helping me. She stands to walk but her grandma stops her.

“Hear what she has to say. He just asked you to forgive him” her grandma tells her.

“He didn’t say he’s sorry now did he?” she asks her grandma. And I realise my mistake. I don’t think I’ve apologised for anything in my life. That’s why the words never crossed my mind.

“Will you forgive him?” her grandma asks.

“No”

“Why?” my mom asks. And Zekhethelo looks at her like she just realised that she’s in the room.

“Did your son tell you how and why I agreed to marry him? Did he tell you how the baby was conceived and did he tell you how I really lost the baby. Because I’m sure as hell didn’t fall down the steps. Someone pushed me down the steps. Before you ask me why I won’t forgive a monster like him ask him. But then again who knows maybe you know and just maybe you sent him to do all the stuff. I never wanted your son from the beginning. I was forced into marrying him” she replies. And for the first time I see how

wrong I was and I'm ashamed. Everyone in the room is so quiet. I don't think they've seen Zekhethelo this mad.

"Zeh, are you okay?" her step mom asks she doesn't say anything but I can see that she's shaking.

"I think it's best if you leave" her dad tells us and he goes to the kitchen. He comes back with a cup of water.

"I said leave" he screams at us pointing the door. We all leave.

"I told you this girl is crazy" my mom comments when we get to the car.

"Mom please stop. This girl has been through a lot" Sizwe sighs. I can see that they have so many questions to ask but they don't know where to start. We decide to sleep on a hotel and come back tomorrow we'll keep coming until my wife decides to come home.

When we get to the hotel, my brothers follow me to my room. I'm not in the mood to talk. I try to close the door but Mpumelelo blocks it.

"What did Zekhethelo mean when she said 'did he tell you how the baby was conceived'?" Mpumelelo asks me once we're inside. And I can't answer him because I'm ashamed.

"You raped her didn't you? You fucken dog" Sizwe screams in my face. And I can't look at my brother in the face. He punches me so hard, I almost lose my balance. Just then my mom walks in.

"Tell me you didn't rape that girl" my mom begs me through tears. "So I gave birth to a rapist?" she asks in a low voice. I don't think I've seen her this hurt. I don't know what to say. I consider lying but I can't.

"I'm done with you" Sizwe tells me and he leaves the room. Mpumelelo is standing there looking at me like he's seeing me for the first time with tears in his eyes. He doesn't even bother to wipe them.

"You ask me to accompany you to Joburg when you knew very well that she has every right to leave you" that's my mom. She sounds so weak. "I can't believe I gave birth to a rapist" she comments and she leaves the room. Mpumelelo hasn't moved from where he was. I turn to take my phone. But before I can answer the call I'm on the floor. Mpumelelo is kicking me, and I don't fight back. I deserve this and more.

I'm in the workshop with Nonhle when Mrs. Khumalo and the boys walk in. They have these guilty looks on their faces. Nonhle excuses herself, telling me she'll deal with the paperwork and we both know I did all the paperwork when we got here this morning.

"Were you going to keep the baby?" Sizwe asks me.

"Yes"

"Even though..." I don't let him finish I know where the question is going.

"It was my baby and I was going to keep and raise the baby. Even when it was conceived under such circumstances" I tell him. "And now if you'll excuse me I have stuff to do" I tell them and I continue working. They stand there for more than 10 minutes they are talking but I decided to block them out and focus on the car. I can't make mistakes. They leave and Nonhle comes back to help. I'm glad she's here.

"I wish I was strong like you" she tells me.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you left your husband even if he's rich. The honest reason I left your father for Joe is that he was loaded. He treated me like trash most of the time but I stayed because he was wealthy. His mom told me to leave him but I didn't listen. I thought it's because she doesn't approve but she knows her son" she replies looking at the floor. "Your father treated me like a queen and he loved me. We started dating when I was 15 and I had you a year later. My mom forced me to drop out but your dad and his family disagreed saying they'll look after you while I went to School. When we finished School he paid lobola and we got married." She tells me but I already know the story. And I suspected she left my dad for Joe because of money. I don't say anything to her. I just continue working on the car.

"My father would've forgiven you" I tell her after some time.

"I know I was just ashamed. I'm glad you left that guy. When you're ready to talk about what really went down, then you can always talk to me" she tells me and I can only nod. I'll never tell a soul about the rape. I don't want to stress my family.

"Time to go" I tell her and we head out. We decide to walk she takes my hand and I allow her. We walk in silence. She stay over at Momo's house. My dad forgave her but he didn't feel comfortable with her staying over at our house. I understand. The twins

are coming over this weekend. I forgot to check on Sihle and his mom yesterday. I was so tired and angry.

Chapter 7

It's been 2 months I haven't heard or seen my family. I know I messed big time but I never thought they'd turn their backs on me just like that. I'm a disappointment just like my dad. I tried reaching out to them after we went to Zekhethelo's house. I also have not seen or heard from her. I had to ask Mr. Sibiya to run the company because I know nothing about it and I bought it for my wife. He advised me to fight and never give up. The look on his face and the tone of his voice tells me he knows what he's talking about. I don't want things to turn out like that.

"You've been offish lately" Sihle comments rubbing my shoulders.

"Didn't I tell you to leave?" I ask her. I no longer want her here. If the child is really mine then I'll take full custody. I just don't know why I went out with her to begin with.

My phone rings and I answer. With the hope that it's some good news.

"I thought you were fixing things with my granddaughter" comes an old voice once I press answer.

"Yes, I am"

"So she's been hospitalised 2 days after you came here with your family. Yet you haven't come to check her" and then she hangs up.

I quickly pack a bag and then I book a flight and I drive to the airport like a madman. And lucky for me there's no traffic.

Almost 3 hours later I'm at Zekhethelo's house. I was so scared I'd get lost so I called his dad for directions he was hesitant at first but he eventually gave me the directions. And I've never been in a taxi before. My granddad made sure that we were never poor like he had been when my mom was young.

"Right on time. We are leaving in 30 minutes" her step mom tells me when she opens the door. The atmosphere is so sad it's like someone died.

“What happened to Zekhethelo?” I ask her mom who doesn’t answer me. Her grandma does.

“She started complaining about a headache. I gave her pills but pain wouldn’t go away. The morning she was taken into the hospital she told me that she feels like someone hit her with an axe. She said it’s like her brains are multifunctioning. She acted a little crazy. She was diagnosed with depression”

“That’s why I thought you shouldn’t know since you’re the cause of that” her step mom tells me.

“And I’m ashamed” I tell her bowing my head in shame. Maybe I should sign the divorce papers. I mean the girl had an amazing life before I came along and ruined everything.

I don’t know what to do or say. Seeing Zeh like that breaks the heart I never thought I had. She keeps looking around as if she’s expecting something or someone. I don’t know why but I expected her to be in a public hospital but she has a medical aid which means she’ll get the best care in the world. I know the hospital she took mkhulu to is a public hospital and they really helped him. Maybe if I found out sooner who she is I was going to treat her better. I know she’s lying here because of me and I want to take care of her. Like she took care of mkhulu.

“I feel so helpless” I tell her family. I know by the looks on their faces that they feel the same. Zeh keeps staring at me. I excuse myself I can’t take this any longer. But after 5 minutes of leaving I feel bad and I go back. I see Zeh smiling at me and I smile back at her.

“Who are you?” she asks me. I don’t know how to feel. I’m happy because she doesn’t remember me the person who put her through so much she ended up here. Or I should be sad because she doesn’t remember her husband even though she sent divorce papers. I look at her Doctor who has been busy since we got here and he nods. I walk over to get. I take her hand.

“I’m your husband” I tell her. She looks at her wedding band it’s not there and she looks at mine. It’s there.

“I married a handsome guy *mos*” she comments and giggles. Both her mothers sniff and they leave the room. It’s so sad seeing her like this. Soon it’s time to leave. Zeh tells me to come back tomorrow. I wish the real her would say that. I smile and I kiss her forehead.

For the second time, I do something I never thought I'd do. I cry as soon as I get home. I haven't been to this house since mkhulu died and I'm glad I didn't sell it.

"What's wrong?" my mom asks me. I haven't heard from her either. And she's here with my brothers.

"What's wrong?" she asks again.

"Why are you crying?" Sizwe asks. And I tell them.

"You're the reason she's in there. You better stop crying like you're the victim and make things right with her" Sizwe tells me. He's still mad and I don't blame him. I'm also mad at myself.

"What really happened to the baby?" my mom asks me. I don't know if I should answer her or change the subject. Once the stupid tears stop. I tell her and she wails.

"I can't believe I've been so nasty to her *kanti* the reason she lost the baby is you" she pokes my head so hard I think it might fall off.

"How could you do that to her Zweli?" she asks still wailing.

"Why did you marry her?" Sizwe asks me.

"I love her" I tell him. It's the truth.

"Don't feed us that bullshit we won't eat it" Sizwe tells me getting more pissed.

"You don't abuse the one you love" Mpumelelo comments. He's been quiet the whole time. I didn't think he'll talk to me.

"I'm sorry" I apologise to no one in particular.

"Your sorry ass won't fix the things you did. You better hope that girl forgives you once all of this is over" my mom comments. I stand up from the floor and I walk into my room. I know I won't be able to sleep even if I take sleeping pills. I toss and turn. I'm exhausted but I can't sleep. I take my laptop out and I search for the best hospitals in the world. I have the money so I don't see why I can't help Zeh. Even if she insists that I sign the papers I will but I'll keep taking care of her from afar. I hope she recovers because I won't be able to live with myself if she didn't. I know I've done bad things in my life and I have never had any regrets so for the first time in my life I'm ashamed and I have regrets.

I don't know when I fell asleep but I wake up with a massive headache. I take a shower and I go to the nearest mall. I want to buy stuff for Zeh even though I don't know what. When it's almost time I go back to the house to fetch my mom and brothers.

When we get to the hospital, we find the whole family there. My mom wails as soon as she sees Zeh, and I can't blame her. Sizwe joins her, I always thought he's soft.

"It's going to be okay" Zeh tells my mom. She looks like she's about to cry.

For the past 2 weeks she's been getting better. And each time I get worried thinking she'll tell me to leave. When it's time to leave she asks me and my family to stay behind she wants to talk to us.

"I appreciate you guys coming here" she tells us. I can sense but. "But I'd appreciate it if Mrs. Khumalo and Zweli stop coming. I don't want to play the blame game with you guys but I don't need more stress. Because that's the reason I'm here today. Sizwe and Mpumelelo you can come as much as you want" she tells them with a smile. I saw this coming. I leave with a heavy heart. My mom looks like she's about to cry and I'm not in the mood for her wailing. But she holds back the tears and I've never been so relieved.

For the first time I don't feel like sharing a car with my family. The drive home is so awkward.

"I don't blame her but gosh her words hurt" my mom comments.

"You've been nasty to her since Zweli met that floozy" Mpumelelo tells her, rubbing salt in her wound. I can tell that she didn't expect him to say that. I keep quiet, I don't feel like talking.

"I'm just glad she's recovering. Whatever she decides regarding our marriage, I'll support her" I tell them honestly. And we don't say anything after that until we get home. I find Ayanda, Bova and Mandy by the gate.

"We heard about Zekhethelo so we thought we'd come by" Ayanda tells me when I get off the car.

"I appreciate it, but she asked me to stop coming to the hospital" I tell him.

"I'm sorry to hear that" he tells me looking sympathetic. I get in the car and we all get in. When we get inside everyone head to their rooms with my visitors. I wish they didn't

come today of all days. I don't feel like talking. Sitting with Mandy makes me see why Zeh doesn't like her and it makes me wonder how Ayanda copes. She's too much. At 8pm after eating supper that I had to cook I show them the guestrooms. It's been a long day I head to bed.

"We're heading to the hospital" Sizwe announces.

"We're coming with" Mandy replies. I really think it's a bad idea but I don't have the heart to tell her. So she'll have to hear the words from Zeh. I packed her some lunch I hope she'll enjoy the food.

"Wakey wakey" Sizwe wakes me up. I open my eyes and I see Mandy, her husband and Melusi. I look around the room and I see my family.

"You thought we wouldn't come?" Nonhle asks me.

"Yeah" I reply. Sizwe sits on my bed takes my hand and he asks me.

"What happened?" I sigh. I can see pity or sympathy in his eyes.

"I don't know but I was started to get easily depressed." I honestly don't know how to explain this.

"We thought we should come see you" Mandy comments sounding unlike Mandy.

"I'm grateful" I can't help but smile. We chat the whole time. They leave after an hour.

"Zweli made you lunch" Sizwe tells me when they leave. Just then my stomach grumbles. He's a good cook. I feel bad about telling him and his mom not to come by. I thought he'd come by even if I told him not to. I thank them for coming.

"So sweet of him" gogo comments smiling. My grandma loves Zweli makes me wonder if she'd still think he's sweet after everything he put me through. I'm sleepy but I can't sleep and leave my family sitting here. It's rude, I know they'd understand but I open my eyes wider. I know it's stupid.

I wake up an hour later, they are not here. I feel so bad. I call my dad to apologise and he tells me it's okay I was tired and they understand. I know for a fact that they left at 4 even though I've been sleeping for an hour. I decide to eat. There's so much to choose from. There's a burger, sandwiches, rice with chicken, papa and beef stew and dumplings. So thoughtful of him.

I decide to eat the rice and chicken. I haven't had such a big portion for days.

Me: Thank you for the food. It was delicious.

I hit send and he replies instantly.

Zweli: I'm glad you enjoyed the food. And you're welcome.

Me: Why didn't you come?

Zweli: I thought you said you don't want me and my mom there.

Me: I also thought you said you wanted to fix things

Zweli: I wanted to give you space. You don't need more stress.

I know what I said, but I was hoping he'd fight for the stupid marriage. I decide to sleep. I sleep a lot lately. I wish I had something to do.

Chapter 8

"I'm so glad you're better" Sihle comments when he sees walking in the workshop.

"It's so good to be back" I comment looking around. I trust Sihle but for some reason I had my doubts about him being here alone. But the workshop is still in one piece up and running. He walks over to hug me. Oops the hug shocks me. I don't know when the last time I actually hugged a guy was.

"What are you doing today?" I ask him once I take a seat.

"Nothing. Just thought I should spring clean the workshop. There are no customers today" he tells me while reading some documents. I want to help but I can't. I just don't have the energy to help. So I think I'll leave. Just then Sihle's mom walks in. My dad told me she came by for the first 6 weeks but she had to go back to KZN.

"Oh dear child. I'm so happy you're okay" she comments giving me a hug and kissing my forehead.

"Thanks for coming to the hospital"

"Oh child you don't need to thank me. I know you'd do the same for us" she comments looking at Sihle. I'm glad I could help them when they needed it. Sihle asks if I have some time so he can show me the books and deposit slips. For the next hour we go

through the books and everything balances. He didn't take his salary since I was hospitalised.

"You should've taken the money. You worked hard for it" I tell him feeling bad. I'm going to give him a bonus. If it was someone else I bet he would've taken the money and sold all the tools. But he waited for me.

"I'm grateful" I tell him when I'm out the door. He replied but I can't make out the words. I drive home and the whole family is here. Even Joe and Nonhle keeps smiling. I'm not going to say anything. When I say everyone. I mean Mrs. Khumalo and the boys are also here. I'm too exhausted and I tell them. My dad tells me that I can go sleep. But Gogo tells me I have to stay up since my husband and my in-laws are here. I'm not in the mood for them right now. I just give my dad the keys and I walk towards my bedroom. Gogo keeps shouting at me and for the first time I ignore her. I lock my door and I head to bed. It's going to be a long day. I need the rest. I must've been sleeping for more than 5 hours. I don't know why but I'm so tired. I can hear voices. I doubt anyone left. I go back to sleep and I wake up at 4pm. I head to the lounge everyone is still here except Nonhle and her family. The only space left is besides Zweli's mom and I don't like this woman so I go fetch a chair in the dining room. She looks offended and I don't care.

"You don't look good" Momo comments looking worried.

"I don't feel good" I tell her.

"Is it the headache again?" she asks me looking scared. She was here when I was admitted and the way my dad describes the scene she has every right to look scared.

"No but emotionally and physically I'm not well. I don't know what's wrong exactly but I feel like I need to rest"

"Even when you slept for that long?" Mrs. Khumalo asks. Pissing me off.

"Do you have a problem?" I ask her. Gogo shakes her head no.

"No Gogo, I've had enough of this woman. Didn't I tell you that I don't want to see you?"

"Zeh *yehlisa umoya*" (calm down) my dad begs me. The nerve of this woman. I decide to head to bed before I can say something I can regret. I say goodnight and I head to bed. I fall asleep immediately. I wake up in the middle of the night to find Zweli sitting next to the bed staring at me.

“I told you I don’t want to see you” I tell him turning over to face the wall so that my back is facing him.

“I’m not going to leave. I’m going to take care of you like I promised”

“Oh so now he wants to keep his promises. You fucken dog” I scream so loud my head begins to pound. Nxa selfish bastard. Momo comes running into my room. She asks me what’s wrong. I just point Zweli because the stupid fat tears won’t stop falling.

“I never thought my heart could have so much hatred. Especially for a person I married. I hate you so much. You and your mother. I had a peaceful life before you came along and forced into marriage. I hate you so much it hurts” I tell him through the tears. They stay rooted. His annoying witch of a mother wails making my head pound some more. I ask them to leave and never come back. Gogo tells them to stay. Then I’ll leave. I toss and turn almost the whole night. All I ever wanted was a peaceful life full of love and joy.

When I wake up the next morning I find them up.

“You’re leaving?” my dad asks in a defeated voice.

“If they don’t leave then I will” I tell him. I know it’s wrong for me to take out all the anger on him. But he also let them stay.

“You’re not leaving” my grandma screams at me. I’m tempted to say watch me. I head to the door. It’s locked I turn to look at my dad he looks like he doesn’t like what is going on but he respects his mom so much he can’t fight her. And I’m not mad at him. I return to my room and I leave through the window. I don’t think I’ll come home anytime soon. I look back when I’m at the gate. One last time. They’ll suffer for choosing the Khumalo’s over me.

Chapter 9

Zweli’s POV

“She’s not here” Zeh’s grandma screams.

“You shouldn’t have stayed” Sizwe turns to my mom. We all go mute. Her dad tries calling her.

“She’s not picking up” he tells no one in particular. And then he sighs looking defeated and worried.

“She’ll come home” her grandma tells us.

“Then you don’t know her” her dad comments. He keeps calling but clearly she’s not picking up.

Thirteen hours later she still hasn’t returned and she’s not picking up. Makes me think she is doing this on purpose. She wants us to know that she’s ignoring us. Her words still haunt me. I don’t think I’ll forget them.

“I never thought my heart could have so much hatred. Especially for a person I married. I hate you so much. You and your mother. I had a peaceful life before you came along and forced me into marriage. I hate you so much it hurts”

I’ve heard people expressing their hatred towards me even my dad but the words didn’t hurt this much. We should’ve left and she’d be home safe. I shouldn’t have insisted on watching over her when she told me she doesn’t want me near here. But then again those texts she sounded like she needed me. And we can’t leave them all alone.

We keep calling her the whole night and she’s not picking up. I try all my contacts. Her phone is tracked to Cape Town. I call my private pilot. I need the jet. I never liked using the private jet since mkhulu died but today I need to. We all take my car to the airport once the pilot tells me she’s almost here. Reminds me of how mkhulu tried to hook us up when she first applied for the job. Almost 2 hours later we are at the Airport the Jet is there.

We head to Cape Town. The jet takes forever to reach Cape Town. Makes me think if I ran all the way, I was going to get there first.

“She gave her phone to this woman” the guy who tracked the phone tells me.

“Where did she go?” I ask her almost screaming. Zeh’s dad puts a hand on my shoulder and he tells me to calm down he’ll talk to the woman.

“I don’t know. I ran out of airtime and I needed to call my husband. She offered me her phone and said I should keep it. I don’t know where she went” she tells us honestly.

“What have I done?” Zeh’s grandma wails and all the woman join her. I’m too stressed to even move let alone console one of them.

I tell Shakes the guy who helped me track the phone to try and see if she took a flight and where went.

Ten minutes later he tells me she took a flight to Free State.

“Do you have a family in Free State?” I ask her dad and he shakes his head no. We prepare to fly to Free State. I have a house there we can rest there while trying to find her. And for some reason. I know finding her won't be easy.

When we get to Free State no one has seen her. It's 4am and everyone is tired now. We head to the house. They head straight to bed but I can't sleep without knowing where my wife is. And also knowing I'm the reason she left home. We shouldn't have stayed.

Shakes calls me 2 hours later no one knows where she went but some guy saw her hiking and he didn't even look at the number plate because it's common for people to hike in this area. I don't know what to do and who to call.

“*Mkhwenyana* (son in-law) you need to rest” Zeh's step mom tells me when she walks into the kitchen.

“It's my fault” I tell her.

“Maybe or maybe not. But I know she is safe she's just mad at us” she tells me. That's what I suspected.

“It's been 2 weeks” I reply feeling weak.

“I shouldn't have insisted on you guys staying. It's my fault and I won't be able to live with myself if something happens to her” her grandma tells us crying. She's been crying since Zeh disappeared and I think she'll get sick.

“She just sent me a text” her dad comes running into the room with tears of relieve.

Zeh: I know you guys are worried about me. But I'm okay. I will come home when I want to.

“That's her old number. Didn't she give that lady her phone?” her grandma asks frowning.

I explain sim swap to her. I know she's still confused but she nods anyway.

We call the number it goes straight to voicemail. I know she's mad at us but right now she's being childish. She needs to come home and talk to us like the adult that she is.

“Can't that guy trace her?” her dad asks me.

“He can but I really doubt she’s still in the same location” I tell him and he nods.

“Can we at least try?” my mom asks me. And I lead the way to the garage. Shakes tells me the text was sent from Durban. And the location is where she rented. I can’t believe her landlord hid her from us. We called her every day for the first week. We also asked her to tell us when she sees her and she promised. Or did she want money?

I’ve never been one to follow road rules and today is no exception. I will deal with the law later.

Five hours later we are in Durban. I’m so mad at this lady I feel like kicking the shit out of her. When she opens the door she looks shocked. She’s either shocked or she’s a good actress. She opens the door and she moves aside welcoming us in.

“Zeh’s last text was sent from here. Why did you lie to us? Or did you want me to pay you?” I bark at her.

“You don’t come to my house and bark at me like that. I knew you were coming when Zeh sent the text. I was ready to help you but since you don’t have any manners I won’t” she tells me opening the door for us. Zeh’s dad tries to apologise but she refuses to help us and we have no choice but to leave. I’m so ashamed of myself. Sizwe has been nagging me for years saying I need to learn to control my temper. I wish I had listened. My mom keeps giving me nasty looks. Everyone avoids looking at me. I know I need to apologise but it’s hard.

“I’m sorry” they don’t say anything they just head to the cars. Zeh’s dad and mothers tell me they will take a taxi home. I messed up big time. After 2 hours they head back to the house taking me with saying I have to apologise to the lady. I try to apologise but she wants me out of her house. Both families beg her and she eventually forgives me. She takes out her phone and she dials Zeh’s digits and she picks up instantly like she’s been waiting for the call.

“Ma I’m sorry I had to put you through all of that. I know Zweli is there and maybe he threatened you. I’m sorry” she says that when she answers her phone.

“Zeh we are worried about you” her grandma wails.

“No gogo if you were worried about me you wouldn’t force me to be in the same house as Zweli and his mom. I have my reasons why I didn’t want them there. But you went on and chose them over me. So now you’ll have to live with them” she tells her.

“What about your dad?” she asks.

“I’m not mad at him he was respecting your wishes.” She replies but still that doesn’t make him feel better. He’s still worried.

“Stop trying to find me. I will come home when I want to. Now live with the Khumalos like you wanted” she tells us and then she tells her landlord that she’ll stay in touch.

“And oh Zweli that guy that keeps trying to find me. He’ll have to do better because you won’t find me here” and then she hangs up.

“What have I done?” Zeh’s grandma wails again. I’m just not in the mood. I walk to the car. They follow me after a while. The drive to Joburg takes forever.

“I give up. She’ll come home when she’s ready” I tell them when I drop them off. I head to my house I need to sleep. I haven’t slept for days.

“It’s your fault. If something happens to that girl know that you’re responsible” Mpumelelo tells my mom.

“No it’s my fault” I tell them.

“For the first time. I wish you weren’t my mom and *wena* you weren’t my brother. I’m so ashamed of you” Sizwe tells us and they storm off leaving us standing in the kitchen. Their words hurt. But Zeh’s words hurt more.

.....
Zeh has been gone for almost 3 months now and I’m still trying to find her. I suspect she’s here in Durban. That’s why I moved back here. I still patrol by her landlord’s house and sadly I haven’t ran into her. My phone rings and I jump. It’s Sihle. I decide to answer.

“The baby is due next month” she reminds me.

“Funny how you were pregnant since December yet the baby is due next month” I answer and she goes mute. This floozy thinks she’s clever. Just then maShezi walks in with flowers. I wonder what the occasion is. She leaves them by the bed and she walks out. There’s a note. I quickly hang up and I rip off the envelope.

I know this is dumb. But I think I miss you even though I hate you. Okay just thought of you on your birthday and I thought I should send you these. Happy Birthday may love, joy and success know you by name. I don’t know if it’s okay to say this I know I’m going to regret this but...

Love you always

Zekhethelo.

I don't know how to feel. She hates me, she loves me and she misses me. I don't deserve her love but at the same time I hope she comes home.

Chapter 10

Zekhethelo's POV

It's been 3 months since I left home. I have punished them enough. Gogo is sick the stress and worry will make her more sick. I'm at Park Town Station I wanted to call my dad to come fetch me but I'll take a taxi home. It's so good to be back. Mam' Thandi, my landlord has been great to me.

"Zekhethelo" Momo screams when she sees me. She has lost so much weight and she looks stressed. She folds me into a hug and she cries. I can't help but cry too. My dad, gogo and Nonhle come running towards me. They all looked stressed.

"I'm so sorry" gogo wails hugging me. I just keep quiet. She knows how I feel about Zweli and his mom yet she insisted they stay in my house.

We all walk inside. I walk to my room. I went to so many support groups during the 3 months. I came back home because I felt I'm ready to forgive and let go. But seeing gogo makes me forget all the peace and forgiveness I learnt to master all this time.

I take a shower and I head to bed not without locking the door. I wake up and I hear my dad talking to another male person. I walk to the kitchen for a glass of water and some food. When I pass the lounge I see the Khumalos.

"They are the reason I left. I haven't been home for 24 hours and you called them here" I turn to my dad. And he tells me my grandma did.

"What do you want from me?" I ask her.

"I thought..." she starts and I don't let her finish.

"You thought wrong. That was my decision to make not yours" I scream at her. Nonhle tells me to calm down. I'm too mad to calm down.

“No Nonhle. Gogo keeps taking their side over mine. Does she know why I don’t want them here?” I ask her. I go back to my room. I take my bag ready to leave.

“*Mzukulu* (grandchild) I’m sorry”

“Too late for that. I’ll come home when you learn to respect my decisions. I lost the baby because Zweli pushed me down the steps knowing very well that I was pregnant. I’m not even going to tell you how the baby was conceived. The abuse and then you call them over?” *this woman*. She starts to cry but I leave. I will talk to Zweli and her mom when I’m ready not when she wants me to. I was going to call them over. My dad stops me at the gate. He looks like he’s about to cry. He needs to talk to his mom stand up to her.

“I was going to call them over when I was ready.” I tell gogo. “I’m so angry right now I can’t stand to be in the same room as you” I go sit under a tree. Momo brings me *icansi*, a blanket and pillow. I thank her and I ask her to sit with me.

“So Zweli killed your baby?” she asks me. I can only nod.

“Yet you continued to stay with him?”

“I didn’t have a choice”

“I always thought he’s offish. I know you dated Bonga and I found it strange that you’d marry someone else within a month of his death. And I know for a fact that you weren’t happy but you stayed. I wanted to ask you but it wasn’t my place. Even the day you got married when you broke down. I know it wasn’t cold feet and the way he kept rubbing your shoulder gave me chills. I know he was threatening you and I couldn’t say anything because if his threat made you marry him it shows it wasn’t an idle one. But you can talk to me.”

“I really wanted to talk to someone but he threatened my dad” I tell her.

“How was the baby conceived?” she asks me. I knew the question was coming. I won’t tell anyone about the rape.

“I won’t discuss that part with you. But I said that to hurt him” I lie and she believes me. I don’t want them hating Zweli because the hatred will eat them alive while he goes on with his life. We stay under the tree and we talk about Zweli’s mom why I dislike her.

“I’ve never liked her” she tells me whispering.

“She was a good person until Zweli met with that floozy” I tell her honestly. After some time Zweli comes. Momo gives him a nasty look.

“Did you tell her how the baby was conceived?”

“I just don’t have the heart to tell my family. They will hate you forever. The hatred will eat them alive. And besides how do I tell my dad that my very own husband raped me? You have no idea how my dad loved you. You’re like the son he never had. You just didn’t spend time with him. The 2 minutes you spent together meant the world to him. But then again how would you know?” I don’t know why I’m suddenly angry. He also looks confused. I tried anger management classes they didn’t really help. I never knew Nonhle’s absence in my life affected me so much until I attended the support groups.

“I’m sorry for everything”

“Those are the words I wanted to hear” I tell him. Saying sorry means the world to me. If everyone could say sorry my life will be better.

“But we still have a long way to go. First I need to need to deal with whatever you put me through. But for now it’ll be better if we don’t talk” I tell him. I’m sleepy, I need to sleep.

“I don’t know why but I feel like this is it. But I respect your decision” he tells me. I thought he’ll leave but he joins me and I let him. God will have to forgive me for being stupid but right now I need my husband. He falls asleep before I do. He looked exhausted so do I.

I wake up 3 hours later he’s still sleeping. And I hate myself for falling asleep besides him. I go to the house and I head to my bedroom and I lock the door before I go to sleep.

“Zeh open up it’s me” Zweli tells me from the other side of the door.

“Leave me alone. I left you alone” I yell. And I hear him leaving. I just remembered the text he sent me when I want the flowers.

After some time I walk to the kitchen and my dad looks worried. I wonder what’s up. Gogo is so quiet and it’s so peaceful in the house. She asks me if I’m okay and I nod. I decide to go to the workshop. I hope there are cars to fix. I need to take my mind off things. And fixing cars keeps me sane. I walk to the workshop alone after an argument

with the family. They think I'll run away like I did. I told them if they don't back off then I'll leave and never come back. That made them back off.

I find Sihle busy with some papers.

"You're back" he rushes towards me and he folds me into a hug. We catch up and he shows me the books and receipts even when I tell him it's okay. I trust him with my life. After an hour I help him fix the remaining cars. It's been a busy week I can tell by the paper work and the books. We work in silence. Just what I needed. Doing what I love in silence. I leave the workshop at 10pm. I'm tired but I need to walk and besides there are no taxis. Sihle lives opposite the workshop. He wanted to accompany me but I wouldn't allow him. It's not safe and I wouldn't forgive myself if something happened to him. Just then I see a car driving towards me. I'm not even scared. I know how to fight for myself. Bonga taught me some skills so I can defend myself when I need to. I'm sure as hell can take out 2 guys at the same time or maybe I watch too much TV. It's the twins.

"Mama told us to come fetch you. You look thin" Lindo comments. I don't know what to say so I just get in.

"How have you been?" Melo asks me. I tell them I'm good and we drive home in silence. It's so unlike Melo to be silent. But I have so much on my mind right now to even ask if he's okay.

Chapter 11

"I think I'll go visit Nonhle and the boys"

"When do you want to leave?" my dad asks me.

"This afternoon"

"Did you tell her?"

"I did"

"And you look so much better. You're the Zeh I know" gogo comments when she walks into the kitchen. I apologised for disrespecting her and she also apologised for the things she did. I actually feel so much better. I have joined this online group where people discuss social and domestic issues that affects them. And I have made friends even though I know we'd never meet in person. I'll forever be grateful. I guess it's true

that talking with a stranger really helps sometimes. I think Joe fixed things with Nonhle she's been all smiles lately.

At 12 I leave. I'm heading to Nonhle's place but I'm meeting her at the Mall then we'll go home later. Momo accompanies me to the bus stop. I think she wants to say something but she stops herself each time.

"You'll always be my mother. My go to person" I tell her before I get inside the taxi. I think me visiting Nonhle made her think I'll choose Nonhle over her. Sometimes water is thicker than blood.

I get to the mall almost an hour later. I find Nonhle standing there waiting for me.

"I wanted you to visit me but I was scared to ask you" she tells me after a hug.

"Why?" She tells me that she feels that such decision should be taken by me. I just nod. We walk to Spur I haven't been here for almost a year. I'm eating when my phone pings. It's Zweli. I know what's in the text. I don't know if I'm ready to mother someone else's child. But I want to fix things with Zweli. Sizwe was mad at me saying I can get any guy I want. I don't have to stay with his abusive monster of a brother. I know I love that monster but the thought of another person walking out of my life depresses me. I just told him thanks for caring but I love his brother. He went to tell me that he doesn't deserve me and stuff like that. I know he's right and I'm being stupid for staying but I really want to stay. My phone pings again. It's Zweli.

Zweli: Can you name her?

Shit I think I stop breathing for a second. Me? Name his daughter? Wow I don't know how this should make me feel but I'm so happy. Zweli just asked me to name his daughter. WOW. I have so many names in my mind. I wanted to give the names to my child.

I download the picture he sent me. I think I like babies because Nonhle says she looks like an alien. But I think she's cute.

"It's because you're inlove with her father" she tells me laughing. It was hard for my family to accept that Zweli has a kid. But I'm glad I'm with someone who understands what I'm going through. Gogo thought it was about the money. Nah it was never about the money. I can provide for myself.

Me: Sibusisiwe

I reply

Zweli: Such a beautiful. I have issues with Sihle. Would you mind coming over in 3 days?

Me: I'll be there.

After eating we head to Nonhle's house. We find Joe standing at the door carrying a baby. There are some clothes outside and I get a feeling they belong to Nonhle. She stops walking once she sees what's going on. I'm so confused Joe knew Nonhle went to fetch me and he's doing this to embarrass her.

"What is going on here?" Nonhle asks Joe.

"She's back with the daughter I was telling you about. This one is a gold digger like her mom the only difference is that she's educated" Joe tells some woman. It's sad hearing someone saying that about Nonhle. I'm not even angry that he called me a gold digger. I work for my money. Nonhle starts wailing and then she begs Joe saying she'll be a very good wife and stuff like that. I let her say all those things.

"This one left her loving and supportive husband for me because I had money. Even when I treated her like the trash that she is she stayed. At least her daughter left that rich boy" he screams so that the people who are listening can hear. Nonhle walks towards the door she kneels down holding his feet and he kicks her so hard on the chest she gasps and tears run down her cheeks. I won't let him treat her like this in front of me.

"Apologise to Nonhle" I tell him in a calm voice. He laughs in my face and he spits in my face. I punch him so hard he almost loses balance. And then he screams all sort of insults. I ask the neighbours for plastics so that we put Nonhle's stuff. The other woman comes towards us and she cuts some of the plastics. I tell her to stop it but she doesn't. I push her so hard she falls and she stands up and she slaps my back. I return the slaps until one of the neighbours stops me. She won't disrespect my mother like that. She's the other woman she has no right to do this. She should've learnt from Nonhle. Joe will leave her like he left Nonhle. What goes around comes around. Nonhle learned that the hard way.

We get to my house almost 3 hours later. I called the boys and updated them. But I asked them not to go home. They should leave Joe alone. I know they are angry but they should calm down.

When we get home, the car is not there. I forgot that Momo and my dad went to North West her mom is sick and she's been asking for her. I can't let Nonhle sleep over, so we'll sleep over at Momo's place. I'll send a text and explain things. I know she won't mind but it's the right thing to do. I don't want her to feel like I'm taking advantage of her kindness.

The boys get here after 30 minutes they are fuming but I tell them not to let anger control them. Joe is still their father, he disrespected their mom I understand. But they can keep quiet before they do something they will regret in the future. I was also wrong to punch him but he deserved the punch.

It's been 2 days since Nonhle left her house. I'm lying on the couch watching Single Ladies, the one I was watching the night Zweli first came to my house. And then he chooses that time to call me. And I laugh, Nonhle looks at me in confusion. I tell her I'll explain to her once I'm done.

"Zeh please come over. The baby is crying I don't know what to do. Sihle disappeared and I can't reach my mom and maShezi. Please come home" he's panicking. I don't know anything about kids so I give Nonhle the phone and I hear her telling him what to do, while I'm busy running around trying to pack Nonhle's stuff and book a flight. I'm taking Nonhle with. Thank God I took a bath not so long ago. I ask one of my clients to drop us off at the Airport. Fifteen minutes later we are on our way to the Airport. I keep trying to reach Zweli and he's not picking up. I'm also panicking now. The car takes forever to get to the Airport and once we get there it's time to board the plane.

"I'm nervous. I'm scared of heights" Nonhle tells me once the plane takes off.

"Why didn't you tell me?" I ask her.

"I didn't want you to think I don't want to come with" she tells me. I thank her for putting her fears aside. It means the world to me. We may get along but I feel like we still have a long way to go.

We take a taxi to Zweli's place. I find him by the door. The baby is screaming her lungs out and Zweli also look like he's about to cry. I take the baby away from him and I walk

to his bedroom. By the time I'm at the door the baby is no longer screaming. I check the nappy and it's wet. Once I change the nappy and I feed her the bottle Nonhle gave me she stops crying.

"That was simple" Zweli sighs. God knows what made that baby stop screaming. Nonhle's stomach grumbles Zweli tell her he'll make her something to eat. She doesn't want to but he insists and she finally gives in. After an hour the baby is still sleeping and Zweli and Nonhle still haven't returned. I know they are discussing something. I don't want to walk over to the kitchen just in case Sibusisiwe starts crying again.

There's a soft knock on the door. I walk over to the door. It's Nonhle she tells me there are people downstairs who are here to see the baby. Who does that? Unless they aren't Africans. The baby can be seen by other people after 10 days or more. I walk downstairs. It's Mandy, Ayanda, Melusi and Sidingo.

I greet them and then I wait for them to say something.

"We're here to see the baby" Mandy tells me.

"Uhm I thought you guys know that the baby is only 3 days old" I reply looking at her.

"You can come back after 3 months" I tell them. And I see Zweli looking at his hands.

"Oh" Mandy replies. I don't like her. I don't think I'll ever like her. I walk to the kitchen for a glass of water and she follows.

"Do you have a problem?" she asks me raising her voice.

Okay I'm not in the mood for this. When I leave the kitchen she pulls me back. Clearly she's the one who has a problem. I won't let her disrespect me in my house.

"Why would I have a problem. Unless you were raised by animals you know that you cannot see a baby who's only 3 days. As her mother I make the rules and I'm telling you now. Come back after 3 months"

"Mother of the baby?" she asks in a mocking tone. I knew people were going to make such comments but I just didn't expect them this soon.

Ayanda takes his wife and they all leave.

Zweli and Nonhle stay rooted and they look worried.

"I guess I deserve that. What did I expect I'm going to raise a child fathered by my husband while we are still married? It's on you" I tell Zweli and I go to the bedroom.

It's been a week since Mandy came by but her words still sting. I'm so mad at Zweli for doing this to me and letting that woman talk to me like that in our own home. So much has happened since then. Mr. Sibiyi came by so we can discuss the company. I told them Sibusisiwe is still young, I'll start working once she's a year old. Mr. Sibiyi will have to teach me the ins and outs of the company but for now he can continue running the company. I haven't thought of changing the name. He left with the promise to keep in touch.

I think I'm learning to forgive Zweli but we sleep in separate beds. I told him to buy a new bed I won't sleep in the same bed he used with his floozy and he did. Nonhle is using one of the guest rooms opposite the main bedroom just in case I need her help at night.

Zweli's family has been ignoring his calls and texts. I told myself that I won't interfere but I feel sorry for him now. I send them texts asking them to come to Zweli's house I kind of moved back. They all video call me to make sure I'm not lying and I make sure that I hold the phone so that they can see the baby.

An hour later they knock. Mrs. Khumalo wails when I open the door.

"Since when do you knock?" I ask them. I can't hear what they are saying because Mrs. Khumalo is crying. They won't come to the bedroom to see the baby and I feel bad for Zweli. I can see the hurt in his eyes.

"Look I'm the one who started this and I think I'm the one who can end it. I tell them leading them to the lounge after Nonhle offers to look after the baby.

"Guys I don't want to destroy the family bond ya'll had. I don't think I'll be able to live with myself. I want you guys to try and forgive Zweli. I'm not saying I have forgiven him but I'm trying. Ma you always wanted a grandchild and this is your chance. Don't look at who the mother is. I don't know anything about babies. I'll need your help. I don't know how long Nonhle is planning to stay here. And remember how you wanted a granddaughter? This is your chance to raise the girl you always wanted. I'm also angry at Zweli for having a baby while we are still married but let's not punish the innocent child. Forgive others so that you can also be forgiven. Talking about forgiveness. I'd like to apologise to all of you for putting you in the middle of my marriage problems and disrespecting your mother. I'm sorry ma" I look at her when I say the last part. I

practised the whole speech in my head but now I don't know what to say. I feel like I'm not making sense but if they get the message then it's okay.

Mrs. Khumalo doesn't say anything instead she hugs me and she weeps and I can't help but join her and the boys join me. She promises to help me with the baby. We all walk to the bedroom and the baby is up. Nonhle was about to change her nappy. Mrs. Khumalo asks to change the nappy and she lets her.

"What's her name?" Sizwe asks.

"Sibusisiwe" I tell him.

"Such a beautiful name" Mpumelelo smiles looking at me. I smile back at him.

Mpumelelo doesn't talk much like Zweli. Sizwe is the only one who talks a lot. I think he takes after his mom.

"What do you want for your birthday?" Nonhle asks me the day before my birthday. I can't believe I'm turning 27 tomorrow.

"I don't know Nonhle. I have everything I need under one roof" I tell her. My dad, Zweli, Sibusisiwe, Sizwe, Mpumelelo, Mrs. Khumalo Momo, gogo, Nonhle and the twins are here. What else could I ask for?

I'd like a new house, this house has so many bad memories.

"Ayanda is asking for you" Zweli tells me handing his phone.

"Ayanda"

"Zekhethelo. I'm calling to apologise, what my wife said that day is wrong and I feel responsible because I'm the one who asked her to come with" he explains.

"No need to apologise. But I don't want your wife here ever again. If it happens that you come with her. Leave her outside the gate" I tell him. He doesn't say much he apologises some more and then he hangs up.

"I hope I don't turn out like her"

"Happy birthday" Zweli whispers in my ear. I smile at him. Such a small gesture but it means the world to me. He tells me that he has a surprise for me. I run to the bathroom,

I take a bath. I hope we'll be back soon. I can't stand to be far from Sibusisiwe for long. I don't know how her mother copes. We drive off to Morningside.

"What do you think about this house?" he asks me once we finish going through every room. I can even picture the room Sibusisiwe can use once she's old enough to sleep alone.

"I love it" I tell him smiling. This is the best present I could ever receive. But having the whole family under one roof tops everything money could buy. I tell Zweli and he grins at me. I can't wait for us to move here. New beginnings. It's going to be a very long way to forgiveness but I'm ready to heal, forgive and let go.

The End