



## **501**

I couldn't believe my ears, in a minute I just got overwhelmed with uncontrollable emotions and I didn't know whether I'm relieved or angry... Like, how does he sound so chilled after everything I've gone through njenga leveki inye? Like siziyeke ezinye iintsuku, just this past week. Has he forgotten that I'm pregnant? Ndizobelekela phi? What about his family? I mean, the people are literally mourning for him eMonti.

"Mntase you need to breathe...Hey, S'bongile... S'bongile breath"

I shut my eyes and had a blackout, about an hour later I woke up in bed, inside the jet, but on a bed and Soso was watching over me. I sat up and wore my shoes without saying a word, went to the mirror ndakhe ndazijonga ... it felt like a dream yonke nje lento. Still standing there I felt a bit dizzy so I quickly returned to the bed and sat down

Soso: "you hungry"?

Me: "yes but I think I'm mostly thirsty"

He left me, returned with a bottle of water and a carton of orange juice. I drank water and breathed.

Me: "Are you going with us"?

Soso: "no we'll drop you off at the airport and return to SA"

Me: "I need a huge favor from you, and you know I trust you more than I trust myself"

Soso: "shoot"

Me: "I need you to go to my house..."

Soso: "you don't have a house anymore, itshile. Remember"?

Me: "I know that but I'm quite sure ayitshanga ibasement"

He looked at me...

Me: "don't look at me like that, uzongena ngelacango lilaphaphantsi with the steps leading to the underground electronic door. Nqaba gave you the basement codes, right? I need you to go there... at the end of the room there's a globe;

Earth globe that's on a black marble-stand. Behind it, there's a door, you can only open it once liyazivala within sixty seconds"

Soso: "ndiyothini pha? You know it's risky... right"?

Me: "that's why ndcela wena you'll find a way to pull it off"

Soso: "mh"

Me: "inside that door, there's about four bookshelves against the wall nothing else; go straight to the one on your left as you enter and push it backward. You'll find twelve brown leather briefcases, I'm gonna need them"

Soso: "is it money"?

Me: "yes"

Soso: "twelve ye brief-cases yonke"?

Me: "it's the money I took from Nqaba's clubs before burning them down"

Soso: "yhu uyafihla Trinalique. What if those guys cracked the code to the basement"?

Me: "I don't think they even thought of that, anyway they wouldn't find it even if they tried. So, can you do this for me"?

Soso: "do you trust Yarees"?

Me: "you wanna work with him"?

Soso: "kinda ... I think mna naye no Laa can pull this off without entirely involving dad or his people"

Me: "but bra Landile is too soft"

Soso: "not anymore... look don't stress, we'll get your money and bring it to you ASAP"

Me: "enkosi mntase. So izothini into yoo Marc"?

Soso: "hay suka he'll be fine, inguye no Bullet no Ranger. They have to deliver the message to Ghost, and we didn't really wanna kill your brother-in-law. He's still your husband's brother"

Me: "and the rest"?

Soso: "the rest will surely die... or are surely dead. Oh no Glenda ugodukile wethu, she's useless"

Me: "I used to be shocked at how casual Beast would talk about killing people... until now"

Soso: "you'll be fine, you just need a warm bath ube grand"

Me: "I need more than a bath Soso, that man has a lot of questions to answer...ngoku not ngomso. Tyhini bethuna, yaz now that I know that he knew all along, umbuzo wam kuba ebezothini if I had miscarried kuyo yonke lento"?

Soso: "don't be hard on him, he's had a lot to deal with too"

Me: "uphilile Lwandiso"?

Soso: "Mntase akukholula ukwamnkela that the same man you shared warmth with for nine months, same man you share everything with is actually the one okungcoleleyo. That's why he had to go away, in his betrayal he knew being with his father would somewhat bring him healing but akanilibala nani hence we're here"

Me: "mxm"

Soso: "my dad only agreed to get involved kuyo yonke lento because of his loyalty to your father-in-law and apparently your husband's the favorite son amongst the two"

Me: "he can't be a favorites on kodwa waziwa eyedwa engenawele"

Soso: "he's gonna elaborate on that, but I hear that u Ghost lo umnke emoshile kwalapho niyakhona. He blew their cover"

Me: "tyhini lendoda! I was even starting to like him"

Soso laughed... seriously. His relationship with his son, yiyole ibidlala ngamehlo wam.

Me: "nimshiyephi uOwe"?

Soso: "simse Kunina... bawubona ba mabenzenjani"

Me: "and we don't know if naye akekho kule plan yendodakhe kwalo Chuma"

Soso: "yeah"

Phew

Me: "please bring me my kids"

Soso: "sure"

He left, I took my phone and checked messages. My mother in-law had called a couple of times, but I didn't wanna respond to her yet ... I first had to find out what Nqaba's plan was ngayo yonke lento. Soso returned with Uvelile.

Soso: "Uba is in the cockpit akafunuphuma"

Me: "uqheliswe ngu Mo noyise"

I took Uvelile and laydown with his head on my chest...

Me: "Uqumbeleni mntanam"?

Uve:"funutatam"

Me:"awumfuni yena umamakho"?

Uve:"amfuna...notatam"

Me:"we'll see him just now okay"?

Uve:"kay"

He just closed his eyes savela salala sobabini. They came to wake us up when we landed, sohlika... yep, DRC it was. I didn't know whether to be excited or anxious.

Yarees: "masambeni"

They carried our little luggage, and my sleeping sons as they led us to an already waiting Ranger.

Me: "and this"?

Yarees: "This is Clive, he'll take you to a hotel. Your husband will meet you there"

Clive: "He's still busy in a meeting but, I'll make sure you are safe ma'am"

Me: "How do I trust you"?

Clive: "Let me try calling him"

Me: "please"

He dialed him on loudspeaker...

Beast: "Clive, I told you I'm going to a meeting"

Clive: "I know"

Beast: "Then what's up? Why are you calling me"?

Clive looked at me I just rolled my eyes...and got in the car. Clive got in and drove us to the hotel, we were booked into a family suit then he left us. I checked my phone, its network said: out of range so now I had to change my number too? Mxm. I charged all the electronics we had, put the kids on the bed then I locked the door and went to bath. When I was done I looked through the menus for

food... anything familiar that we could nibble on. I ordered lamb stew with steamed veggies and pap at least. Along with 2 litres of sealed fruit juice then I waited for Nqaba... In anticipation because I didn't know how I was gonna react xandimbona. The food came through but the kids were still fast asleep so ndatya ndabashiyela and stored theirs in the microwave provided in the room. Then I napped... about an hour or two later, the landline in the room rang....

Me: "Low"?

Beast: "Nd'cela uvule"

Me: "Hm"?

Beast: "Ndcela uvule"

Me: "Use your own key"

Beast: "I tried but you bolted from the inside"

Me: "Mh.kay"

Beast: "Sharp"

I got up, pulled a gown from its hanging rack then I went to open for him ndashiya ndivulile and went to the bathroom. Minutes later, he walked in... even from the bathroom I could smell his scent, hadn't changed one bit. I flushed and walked out to him...

Beast: "Good morning, welcome to the DRC"

Me: "Really tatakhe"?

He smiled and walked up to me for a hug, I melted in his arms. Suddenly I became overwhelmed by emotions I just broke down he kept his cool and rubbed my back.

Beast: "I'm sorry"

Yhu waxolisa uNqaba!!!!

It was like he knew that's all I wanted to hear, sorry. I didn't need him to break it down I just wanted him to say it. Meaningfully. He took us to sit on the couches on the other side of the room then he cleaned my face.

Beast: "I'm really sorry I put you in that position"

I just sniffed

Beast:"Nalique"?

Me:"hm"?

Beast: "Please say you forgive me. Before anything else I just need to know you forgive me"

Me: "You could have at least told me he's after you"

Beast: "I wasn't entirely sure until I got this side"

Me: "But you knew, and you left us to open-risk Nqaba. Your children could have been dead"

Beast: "Not that it makes the situation any different but he wouldn't have gone that far..."

Me: "You clearly don't know your brothers the way you think you do"

He kept quiet... I exhaled. I was relieved he's fine on the physical level but I could see that his emotional state was something to be concerned about. I just threw my arms around his neck and hugged him.

Me: "I guess all that matters for now is that we're here and safe. Right"?

He sniffed, his head buried on the gap between my head and shoulder, the hug tightened.

Me: "hey babe... it's okay. Silapha sonke mos. Its okay"

We just kept the hug, I was praying banga vukingoku enje abantwana bakhe because bona bafuna  
Utatabo back not this emotional wreck.

## **502**

"I brought you guys food"

I smiled at him, he was back to being himself in a matter of seconds. Kanti kunzima ukuba yindoda I swear, because they don't wanna be perceived as weak or vulnerable but at the same time they're hurting.

Me: "We can eat ovuka koo Uba, right now you and I need to talk"

Beast: "Baby that sounds serious"

Me: "Because it is"

He sighed and surrendered.

Beast: "Okay, how do we go about this?"

Me: "I wanna know everything you know"

Beast: "Hay ba-"

Me: "You're not going to tell me it's dangerous to know everything. Are you"?

Beast: "Uhm no...I withdraw my statement"

Me: "Good. Now I'm all ears"

Beast: "So kulo mtshintshiselwano besiwenza all our lives Marc and there's to f the team were firstly his people, I had my own people this side. It happened that kulo process I met you, when he got back I wasn't really expecting him because it wasn't time yet on top of that I hadn't gotten a chance to tell you about this part of our lives. I tried talking to him ndisamfihlile but he wouldn't talk ba ubuyiswe yintoni before time then nawe ke wasibhaqa so he got a chance to get away with whatever that he did here. Fast forward: throughout the years that I've been leading these people I had noticed their change of heart and their tactics on daily basis but I didn't want them to know, you on the other hand... when you noticed, you wanted to act on it. Immediately. Impulsively. Starting from lanto yoo X noo Ocean"

Me: "so you killed X"?

Beast: "No"

Me: "Who did"?

Beast: "Ghost did"

Me: "Hay come on, where was Ghost then"?

Beast: "He was here, but somehow he heard what X did so he ordered his guys to execute him"

Me: "His guys being oo Marc"?

Beast: "yes"

Me: "Mh"

Beast: "So ta Legend called me about my "recent visit" but I knew I hadn't paid him a visit in a while so in my confusion he did his own research and found out that there's actually two of us then I saw him in Cape Town. He was telling me my brother paid him a visit but he wouldn't tell me what the visit was about then I heard from the other guys...in fact they just asked me what my brother was up to, and again I was clueless because he had engaged "my" right-hand men in this plan of his so, all in all, I was kept in the dark purposefully because I was to be overpowered eventually. I did my own digging and found out their plan, then I



called the team that I had left this side kuba I kind of felt uneasy about a lot of things and they told me how he scattered everything. Not just the gang but he also misused my money, cut ties with my long-term investors, clientele, and then ran off to South Africa. Of course, at the time, they didn't know it wasn't me because they only knew one of us existed so I had to make a conference call to explain things to them bephelele. They weren't so sure of my story so I called dad and told him everything hoping he'd step in kweli cala le business and maybe rescue my ruined reputation"

Me: "You told him everything"?

Beast: "Yes, even about you"

Me: "But you said-"

Beast: "I know what I said"

Me: "Okay let me guess, he advised you to come to this side"?

Beast: "He wanted to go to SA to sort this thing out but I stopped him, I initially wanted to know for sure where I stood with these guys and so he suggested this whole new plan"

Me: "He suggested the whole new plan for you to move and to have me deal with this mess? Alone"?

Beast: "I know it was immature of me at some level or to some extent but I trusted you, trust me, I knew deep down that I was gambling with your lives but I couldn't think of anyone else but you to deal with this"

Ndakhe ndamjonga u Nqaba... Was he seriously serious? Like, for real?

Beast: "I know I may sound a bit insensitive or unmanly right now, but it played out well in the end"

Me: "You know I love you, right"?

He nod

Me: "But shame that was so dumb of you. Stupid even. Do you know that Karoo chased us out of our house... wait, no, our home in the wee hours of the morning before burning it down? Ndangus'thubeni neentsana zakho past three ekuzeni kusa Nqaba? Sahamba silala kwimizi esingayaziyo... like... I don't know how to feel right now. Yes I'm grateful si safe eventually but I'm so mad at you awuna idea"

Beast: "I'll understand if you need some space for a while, I won't put pressure on you. That's why nifikele apha instead of endlini, I wanted us to sort things out first, you to rest a bit then we can go ndiyokwazisa"

Me: "Bra khawume ngee introductions; tell me, ubuzothini ukuba bendiphume isisu kule ngxuba kaxaka undifake kuyo? Knowing how risky that kind of life is yet you put your unborn baby right in the dangers eye. Ngoku benincokola notatakho didn't you mention it to him that I'm pregnant maybe? That I'm actually more at risk than you"?

Wathula...

Me: "Awuzokwazi ke uthula, because you did this to us. To me. Yes, I understand you're hurting, in fact, you feel betrayed by your brother and in this sense... brothers because kwala Bullet unfit yinkazana nje but honey I'm not gonna sit here with you and pretend like I'm happy for what you put us through when I'm not. You're the one who said you'd do anything and everything to protect us but when we needed to feel safe, you ran to daddy. Now tell me, baby, how am I supposed to feel with you right now"?

He looked down at his feet...

Me: "Nqaba?"

Beast:"Luu"

Me: "Please... talk to me"

He just shrugged...

Me: "Haikengoku"

After a moment of silence he got up to go and stand by the window, he stood with his back facing me but I watched him wiping his face with his hands.

Beast: "I know I failed you and trust me, it hurts. It hurts so bad to realize how much I've failed you as a husband and how much I've failed my children as a father. Each and every day that I spent here was torture because I knew kungasa kuthethwa enyinto though I was praying about y'all day in, day out. I know this ain't no excuse but I gotta say it: akhonto ibuhlungu ukodlula ukungcatshwa ngumntu ubumthembile, ligazilakho, someone you spent nine months of your existence with. I couldn't tell you the details because yes, I wasn't really sure of what was going on but mostly because in my own mind I thought I was protecting you"

He turned wandi jonga...

Beast: "Luthando you know better than anyone else that I'm far from being perfect. You don't mention my name and perfect in one sentence...With that being said, I'm not trying to hide behind my imperfections but I know one thing that I love you and that I don't want to lose you"

He came back to sit down next to me... taking both my hands into his own.

Beast: "I am sorry for everything I have put you through in my absence. I'm sorry baby for putting your lives at risk if there was another way to have done things - I'd have taken it. I am sorry Nalique please find it in your heart to forgive me"

I just looked away, I couldn't stand the pain written all over his face and I didn't want to cry now, the moment was all about him.

Beast: "It doesn't have to be now mntu wam but please do..."

I failed, it was as if we were exchanging "crying moments" as now had automatically become my turn to cry. He pulled me into a tight embrace where I lost all control of everything that I had been packing lonke elixesha ebengekho.

Beast: "Ndcela uxolo Luu"

"Tatam"

Seriously? So one of his kids decided to wake up, now of all times?

Uba: "Uve ukhona hanku tatakho zombona"

I really couldn't understand bavukele ntoni ndisathuthuzelwa. A part of me felt like banomona abantwana baka Nqaba but a part of me understood, I got up and went to clean myself up while they hugged their father.

## **503**

I returned from the bathroom besa bukana and just went to bed, I needed a moment with myself. He needed a moment with his children. They needed a lot

of time with their father. They made a noise chatting and laughing on the other side until I fell asleep, when I woke up, we were all on the bed and they were fast asleep softly snoring while both their heads were on his broad chest. I got up and went to look for food, the food he said he'd brought us when he walked in. My heart did flip-backs at the sight of chicken wraps, goodness gracious! How did this man know what to bring?

I plated two large wraps, the cheese dipping and potato chips, I sat down with a bottle of water and covered my legs with a shawl as I allowed myself to enjoy the moment. Well, the moment being food, right? Ndatya ndahlutha then I just lay on my back rubbing my belly, only realizing that moment that Nana had been neglected for the past few days.

Me: "Utatakho uyagula shame yaz mntanam, izinto azixelela umamakho ziyothusa"

Ugula nyhani uNqaba, I still couldn't fathom how he believed that in my condition I'd be able to handle everything I handled. Unjani lomntu? Then he expects me to just be "okay" with it? With him? How? Yes I handled it, at the expense of blood shedding right in front of my eyes, I lost two bloody brothers in that process. Even if they didn't matter that much to me, they were still my father's sons. In fact they didn't matter at all. I wasn't even interested in seeing his family anymore, somehow a piece of me just wanted to go back home. At least there I'd know what to do with myself... I'd find comfort even in this uncomfortable situation. After sometime I heard him walking towards the lounge so I just looked up and our eyes met.

Beast: "Hey"

Me: "Hey"

He came around and lifted my feet, sat down and put them on his lap massaging them.

Beast: "Utyile"?

Me: "Yeah, you'rehungry"?

Beast: "Nah I'mcool"

Me: "At some point you have to eat, you know that. Right"?

He nod

Me: "I don't have service on my phones, and I need to call Lwandiso"

Beast: "You can use mine, I'll get your sim cards tonight xandiye endlini. I forgot them in my room"

Me: "kay"

He gave me his phone and I called Soso... I needed to be updated.

Soso: "Bigguy"?

Me: "It's me"

Soso: "Hey babes, how's the other country"?

Me: "Mxm...I'm good. Yourself"?

Soso: "You're not good, what's going on"?

Me: "I'm good. Seriously... I'm just checking up on that favour?"

Soso: "Its sorted, we retrieved err'thang but andikho sure if I'll have time to visit you this week. I'm needed at the plant, Sihle and Yarees are sorting out a couple of things in the businesses in Cape Town and I still have to check on Owe"

Me: "Okay... I'll call you again, ndizokhe ndthethe no tata Ka Uba"

Soso: "Okay sure. Ube right man"

Me: "Love you too"

I hung up and dialed Chuma... but before I could call her, I remembered that someone was actually "dead" here and we couldn't have nosy people in our business right now.

Me: "Can you make this call private"?

He took the phone and pressed some buttons then gave it back to me. I dialed Chuma

Chuma: "Private hello"?

Me: "Hi, ukude ku Owentando"?

Chuma: "Nd'thethanabani"?

Me: "Trina"

Chuma: "Ooh okay... gimme a sec, I'll call him"

Me: "Sure"

I waited, this guy was still busy with my feet

Owe: "Mama"?

Me: "Hey boy, unjani"?

Owe: "I'm good. I miss you guys, niphi? Uthi utata dad passed away. Is that true"?  
uTata being Ntando and dad being Nqaba.

Me: "We're currently away, but I'll come see you obuya kwethu"

Owe: "Are you in East London"?

Me: "Ha.a boy"

Owe: "Ooh, so is this true about dad? Is that why I'm now living with Chuma"?

Me: "Last time I heard from your dad he said he's going on a business trip, as usual ke uye anga fumaneki oko so I haven't heard from him nor have I heard what you heard ngotatakho"

Owe: "Haike maybe it's a lie, why would he tell me before telling you"?

Me: "I'll call him ndimbuze boy maybe it's true"

Owe: "Baphi ooUve"?

Me: "Balele boy, I just wanted to check up on you and make sure you're okay"

Owe: "I'm cool, utata organized a contract to take me to school so I don't use public transportation"

Me: "That's thoughtful of him"

He laughed... I missed him though.

Me: "Bye bye ke boy"

Owe: "bye bye ma"

I hung up...

Me: "Your brother told Owe you're dead"

Beast: "I'm not surprised"

Me: "Organized contract to take him to school"

Beast: "Let him be, soon he'll have more than a contract to organize"

Me: "What do you mean"?

He shrugged, still focusing on my feet.

Me: "Tatakhe"?

Beast: "I have a guy at the school's financial office who's gonna return yonke lamali siyibhatale phaya and send them letters to pay up school fees"

Me: "No Sino"?

Beast: "Yep"

Me: "But you know Anelisa can't afford R30000+ just for school fees, right?"  
Beast: "Ranger can, he makes triple that amount in one night"

I decided to shut up...

This was his way of removing himself from them, this was his way of fighting his battles.

Beast: "I uhm, have to go... but I'll be back in the evening"

Me: "Uyaphi"?

Beast: "Ndiya endlini, oko bendithe nifikile while I was still at the meeting"

Me: "Hamba nabantwana bakho ke please, I need to rest"

Beast: "Are you sure? I mean, those people might be family but they are still strangers in a way"

Me: "You think they could be in danger"?

Beast: "I know how you are when it comes to them, I just wanna make sure you're okay with me going with them that's all"

Me: "If anything happens to them I'll have to kill you kaloku Nqaba, simple as that"

Beast: "You're serious"

Me: "Can you guys go already? I really need to rest"

He laughed, shaking his head then he went to wake them up ndabanxibisa basitha, he took his phone and went out nabantwana bakhe. Hay andinokonasa noba ukhona kaloku yhini andibulewanga. After they left, I just stuffed myself with food until I got sleepy again ndaphinda ndalala only waking up from a ringing phone. The telephone in the room...

Me: "Mh"?

Beast: "Uthi utata mandibashiye abantwana"

What?!

I rubbed my eyes ndiqond'ba ingaske aphinde, maybe, bend'saphupha.

Beast: "Uyandiva"?

Me: "Uthini"?

Beast: "Kuthwa I should leave the kids behind, bazolala nedyani I can fetch them in the morning"

Me: "You think that's a good idea"?

Beast: "Well we need that time together, obviously I support the idea."

Me: "Wena awufuni usole ulala apho? Nize k'sasa nonke"?

Beast: "See you just now"

Me: "Uyaphi Nqaba"?

Beast: "Ndizakuwe"

Me: "Khawulale kokwenu nabantwana bakho bra"

Beast: "Andifuni Luthando"

Me: "Mxm"

He hung up.

Why was he forming?

Andisakubaweli ucengwa bawo phof nanku umntu ingathi sekruqukile ndim already. I undressed ndanxiba nightie and went to make myself green tea, I heard the key on the door then he walked in with food again. I could smell mutton aroma as he passed me, I went to sit in the bedroom with my tea ndamshiya pha, he went to shower then he came to bed with the home-cooked meal. Pap with mutton stew and steamed veggies, he got in bed and put the tray on his lap with my spoon on my side of the tray...

Beast: "Let's eat"

Me: "I'm not hungry"

He put the tray on the bedside pedestal and lay on his back... why wasn't he begging me? Like, siphazanyiswe esandithuthuzela, nam ndisatefa earlier on so why couldn't we continue from where we had left off?

Beast: "Luthando"?

Me: "Hm"?

Beast: "What else should I do to show you that I'm sorry"?

I didn't answer him mna, I just looked at the ceiling. Just like him.

## **504**

When I was done with my tea I pulled the covers ndagqumathela.

Beast: "Luthando"?

Me: "Goodnight"



Wathula.

Oko bendilele imini leyonke so obviously I couldn't fall asleep, when I heard him softly snoring, I took his phone and went to the lounge with the shawl. I called his mother...

Ma: "Hello"?

Me: "Ma, unjani"?

Ma: "Luthando mntanam niphi? Kunini ndikuzama efounini? Kwenzeka ntoni kuwe? Baphi abantwana?"

GoodLord!!!!Somanyquestions??

Me: "Si right mama"

Ma: "Ni right niphi Luthando? Seside sense inkonzo yesikhumbuzo ningekho nje ni right niphi"?

Me: "Inkonzo yesikhumbuzo"?

Ma: "Ewe kaloku asikwazi ukwenza umngcwabo kungekho mzimba"

Me: "Yho"

Ma: "Luthando"?

Me: "Mama I'm away on business, kuye kwafuneka ndiye e Portugal to attend to one of my husband's businesses sondilapho but abantwana bakuKeri"

Mama: "Bonke"?

Me: "Ha.a oo Sino bakoomama babo, ngamawele odwa aku Keri"

Ma: "Ooh okay, yhu usibeke exhaleni kaloku sisi"

Me: "I'm sorry ma, ndamnka ngokungxama"

Ma: "It's okay, I understand ukungxamiseka komsebenzi ingakumbi xa umntu wento engekho"

Me: "Ewe mama"

Ma: "Don't overwork yourself ke sisi, you're pregnant so you must rest in between"

Me: "I will ma, bendinitshkisha nje"

Ma: "Bye bye mntanam"

First problem solved...

And it was a bit of a relief, even if I had to lie to her. Again.

I called Keri...

Keri: "Hello"?

Me: "Big sis, how are you"?

Keri: "Trina??? Where have you been? Marc has been asking for you"

Me: "What does he want from me"?

Keri: "He's your brother, who am I to ask"?

Me: "He's acting, look I just wanted to tell you that I'm good and safe where I am. I'll probably come to your house but I will definitely call you when I'm coming over"

Keri: "Did you two fight"?

Me: "Us two"?

Keri: "You and Marcus Trina"

Me: "No we didn't, he's just a hissing snake I don't wish to see anytime soon"

Keri: "Mh, what happened to your house? I was in PE last week"

Me: "It got burnt... I still don't know how or who did it"

Keri: "Where were the kids"?

Me: "They were with me, we're safe Keri"

Keri: "Okay... I'll probably wait for your call again because your phone is always on voicemail"

I laughed...

Me: "Patience will do"

We later hung up, I warmed the meat then ndatya yona yodwa whoever cooked it must have been a great cook.

"So you'd rather eat alone in the middle of the night instead of eating with me"?

I plainly ignored him.

He sat next to me, I could tell Nqaba was slowly fading away but his alter ego "Beast" was awake. Awake for who kengoku? Tchi!

Beast: "I apologized to you, again and again. I'll do it futhi without hassles if that's what you want" Ndathulamna...

Beast: "Luthando"?

Me: "Go back to bed tatakhe"

Beast: "Don't tell me to go to bed ndithetha nawe ngoku"

Me: "Don't you think the timing is off a bit"?

Beast: "We're both up, so why not have a conversation. Even if it means a rather depressing one"

Me: "So I depress you now"?

Beast: "That's not what I said"

Me: "Uthini ke? Because that's what I heard"

He shook his head...

Beast: "I don't wanna fight yaz Luu, not today and not now torho"

Me: "Who said anything about fighting apha"?

Beast: "That's what you try to do right now"

Me: "So first I'm depressing, then I'm hearing impaired, now I'm brewing up fights? Wow"

Beast: "Uyazibona"?

Me: "Ubundisaphi apha xa uzakudikwandim Nqaba? Because you could have just left me in SouthAfrica xa kucaba I'm a nuisance"

Beast: "Luthando"

Me: "Don't Luthando me Luthando torho, if udikwe ndim just go to bed. Or better yet, go home. Go to your father undiyeke mna"

Beast: "Haikengoku"!!!

I pulled my shawl and went to the bedroom, he followed.

Beast: "Luthando Gwala"

Me: "Mnxim"

He got hold of the shawl, I easily let it go.

Beast: "Luthando wam"

Me: "Luthando khandiyeke torho Yhini ngobusuku"

He tossed the shawl on the stool across the room then followed me, in silence. I stole a glance at him he was falling right into the trap.

Me: "dude can you just give me some space? You don't have to be following me around."

He walked straight up to me while I removed the gown and slippers

Me: "And stop gawking at me I'm not a-"

His lips interlocked with mine, and for a second I froze.

What was he trying to achieve? He moved back, still holding my face with both hands.

Beast: "Forgive me, please"

I just looked down phof my heart was doing backflips!

Beast: "I'll do anything you want me to do, just say you'll forgive me. Please"

Me: "N'dcela undiyeke nd'funa ulala"

Beast: "I'm not gonna do that, you're mine and I'm yours so if you're not forgiving me right now I'm gonna nag you until you do"

Me: "Is that a threat"?

Beast: "It's an assurance"

He pecked my lips, brushing featherly as his hands slid down the contours of my body, his eyes fixed on mine.

Beast: "Please"

His lips brushed on mine...

Beast: "Nalique"

Yaass...

Me: "I forgive you, now can I sleep"?

Beast: "No"

With that he kissed me full on the lips, pulling me towards him as he reminded me who he was, just in case I had forgotten. Slowly, ever so slowly I realized that I was losing myself in the moment. At the end of the day, I had been missing him. He lay me down, not separating the kiss then he worshipped my body from head to toe. In a second yavela yaxola nje intliziyo yam... guess siyafana ngo thanda i-attention and sifuziwe by our offspring.

Beast: "I love you"

Me: "I know that"

Beast: "You sure"?

I nod

Beast: "But you're not acting like it"

Me: "Then you don't know me as much as I thought you do"

Beast: "You think"?

I shrugged

His hand slowly slid down my baby bump, the destination was clear.

Beast: "Even so... I know that somewhere down here something is screaming my name"

We made love alright, then I just lay my head on his arm burying my face onto his chest as he covered us salala. In morning when I woke up, he was wide awake, staring at me.

Me: "Morning"

He kissed my lips without a verbal response. I tried getting out of his embrace, he pulled me back ndahleka, but still he didn't speak up. He just raise da brow.

Me: "Dude I'm hungry"

Beast: "Utye inyama yonke ngobusuku, but uvuka ulambile"?

Me: "I'm eating for two, remember"?

He just kissed me.

Beast: "yintoni le ubuyenza last night"?

Me: "I did quite a lot of things lastnight"

Beast: "You know what I'm referring to"

I just laughed, hay makandiyeke mna nd'vusa ngo chuku kuvukwa.

## **505**

He kissed my lips smiling

Me: "So... when am I meeting the family"?

Beast: "In a day or two"

Me: "Reason"?

Beast: "Akekho umamekhaya and I don't want them to be using you bekwehlisa bekwenyusa"

Me: "Uyephi"?

Beast: "Uyothenga istock eChina"

Me: "Ooh"

His hand was on my bare belly, drawing sweet nothings all around.

Beast: "Uyatefa yaz"

Me: "Ndiyatefa? Xa bekutheni ngoku"?

Beast: "You think after so many years sithandana ndingangakwazi xa ufuna i-attention nje"?

Okay I laughed, I thought he wouldn't have noticed.

Beast: "Zijonge uya-blusher ngoku"

Me: "Ndcela undiyeke wethu Luu"

He laughed

Beast: "This name sounds so weird xalibizwa nguwe"

Me: "I think I'm getting the hang of it"

He just blushed, like I was finally happy in a moment after a long time of strategizing and planning on how far can I got to protect my children in the absence of their father. I had to enjoy this moment and bendizotefa to the point of no return, ukhona kaloku ngoku so makucace. Anyway, we had real issues to deal with...

Me: "Babe"

Beast: "Hm"?

Me: "What's the way forward ngoku"?

Beast: "We pick up the pieces and move on"

Me: "Do we go back anytime soon"?

Beast: "Okwangoku andiyazi mamakhe because I don't have money in SA, sey'yeka Ghost ngoku, if siyabuyela immediately I'll have to start from scratch"

Me: "But you have businesses nje phaya I'm sure we'd manage just fine"

Beast: "Ngoku ndithetha nawe I have about six businesses left under my name, kungathi kusisa ngomso ndibe ndingenayo nenye"

Me: "Is that even allowed"?

Beast: "I'm dead, remember"?

Me: "Abana evidence tatakhe"

Beast: "Akhonto ixaka igintsa Luu... And I don't wanna go back there ndibe ndiba chukusha ngemali or their gang. Let him take everything, I'll start over if I have to because I honestly can't expect you to live here indefinitely"

Me: "I'm here with you, our kids are here with us... what else do I need"?

He looked at me, removing a hair strand out of my face...

Beast: "Kodwa ndiyakuthanda mntana womntu... awumsokolisi umyeni wakho"

Me: "Oh tatakhe, remember we said through thick and thin nje"

Beast: "I know but I feel like I'd be asking too much of you coz ndikuqhelise a certain life standard"

Me: "I have two successful businesses under my name, I know it's not a lot but it would be enough for the four of us while sisazama uqalela"

Beast: "Luu imali yakho yimali yakho uyayazi nawe lonto, I'm supposed to be the provider here"

Me: "Baby cummon"

Beast: "Icebo lizakuzakha man mamakhe"

Me: "What if I told you I have a couple of thousands stashed somewhere to get something off the ground"?

Beast: "You have a couple of thousands? Don't tell me you wanna use your savings"

Me: "Phendula mna kqala: if I said I have a couple of thousands to get something off the ground, would you start something that would be of great profit in the long run"?

Beast: "Well..."

Me: "Dude"

Beast: "Hypothetically speaking, yes, I would"

Me: "Then I do have some money you could use"

Beast: "Uyithathaphi"?

I laughed... how do I say this?

Me: "That's not important"

Him: "Luthando?"

Me: "Okay...practically speaking, yeyakho"

Beast: "Mh"

Me: "I took the money from your clubs before burning them down... ngokuya"

Beast: "You're kidding ,how much "?

Me: "I never counted it but it's about twelve briefcases"

Beast: "Luthando Gwala"!!!

I laughed at his exclamation

Beast: "Iphi"?

Me: "Soso is gonna bring it here when he gets a chance"

Beast: "Soso? Argh why am I surprised kanene"?

Me: "He didn't know until we got here, I had stashed it in the basement so I asked him to go fetch it wathi uyifumene"

Beast: "Geeez!! Baby you're something else! Nana umamakho"??

Me: "I love the enthusiasm in your voice"

Beast: "Baby... each briefcase carries close to two million and you have twelve? Mamakhe how can I not be enthusiastic? I'm happy? I'm on cloud nine..."

He kissed me full on the lips, guess I made his day ngezindaba.

Me: "Then we can go home, start afresh and live our lives like there's no tomorrow"

Beast: "First... lemme sort out my gents this side so that I can be sure they push ispani noba andikho then I can just come and check-up on them every now and then xasimnkile"

Me: "Do you think you still have contacts in your businesses"?

Beast: "I've been communicating with the international ones' ever since I landed here, I gave them a brief summary of this situation we're in so I'm safe kwelo cala le business as long as I deliver"

Me: "So you're not entirely broke"?

Beast: "Not yet"

Me: "Mmkay"

We later got out of bed, showered and had breakfast then he had to take fresh clothes to his kids abavase pha, I asked him the Sims he was supposed to bring for me wazifaka, loaded the phones with airtime then he left. After he left I put my phones on private ngala tracking app yabo fully knowing that even if they tried, they'd still never track my whereabouts then I looked for Glenda's number and called her.

Glenda: "Hello"

Me: "You cannot have a roof over your head and expect me to be homeless, I want my house"

Glenda: "Who's this"?



Me: "I'm your worst nightmare, I'm giving you one month Glenda Oliphant. One month then I expect my house build, and furnished in full or you could gather the five point four million its worth"

Glenda: "Trinalique Smith"

Me: "One month, or you'll lose everything close to your heart that's left after your husband" Then I hung up... asoze sibe broke thina sinemali esebantwini. I called Anelisa just to check on her daughter.

Lisa: "Private hello?"

Me: "Hello, ndim u Trina ndcela u Sino"

Lisa: "Trina, ucela uSino? Uzamthini"?

Me: "Excuse me"?

Lisa: "Stop pretending like you actually cared for her because you didn't, you actually pretended to love her when you thought ngowo myeni wakho"

Oh-kay...

Lisa: "If you loved her like you always claim ubungasoze umngcolele kanjena umntanam"

Me: "Ndimenzeni uSino Anelisa"?

Lisa: "Umgxothelentoni kwakho kanti uyamthanda?"

Me: "Hay kodwa aw'usoze uphinde ubhadle, kuthini ukugxotha umntana"?

Lisa: "Ndibhadle gqithi mna Trina I know you, tyhini ogqiba kwakho uvale iphone"

Me: "I guess uyabuva ubunzima bokuba ngumzali ngoku, nyamezela sisi kusezobanzinyana. In fact, usezobasentweni isengamaqalela lana"

Lisa: "Rhhaaa yaz' Sibon-"

Me: "Enjoy parenting a soon to be teen girl-child sthandwa sam, issa handful"

Then I hung up...

My mind went straight to Ghost. I contemplated for a minute but then I followed my gut and called him... he picked up after four rings;

Ghost: "Private"?

He even sounded like my husband

Me: "Ntando Ntabeni"

Ghost: "Luthando?? Is that you"?

Me: "Yaz' bendicinguba ungumntu kanti uyinja"

Ghost: "Where are you"?

Me: "To think I was actually starting to like you kanti uyazazi you have some sick agenda"

Ghost: "It's not like that yazi Luthando"

Me: "To think that you'd go to such extremes just for money and status? Caba ubuzaw' futha ngegazi labantwana bam qha ufike ndihleli waphelela pha kumntakwenu umlalisa uboya ucingba akakuboni ukuba uyinyoka"

Wathula...

Me: "Good luck uyevha Ghost, coz trust me, you're gonna need it"

Then I hung up, called Soso to keep an eye on both my boutiques ndamxelela angangxami ngemali Nqaba will see how it can come to us yena makaqiniseke qha ba Ghost doesn't get the businesses that are still under my husband's name. Ukuba uzakuyenza njani lonto andimazi nam.

## **506**

I lay on my back and just browsed through social media, searching for news about hubby but I couldn't find anything. Nqaba called...

Me: "Nqabayomzi"

Beast: "Ndikuphathele ntoni"?

Me: "Abantwana bam"

Beast: "Nothing else"?

Me: "Nope"

Beast: "Okay. Love you"

Me: "Sharp"

He hung up, I wanted to go out a bit, take a walk and see around the area so I wore slippers and went to the poolside... people were speaking French I was sooo lost that five minutes felt like five hours. I quickly went back to the room and called him back he had to explain this to me haibo!

Beast: "Mamakhe"

Me: "Dude, kuthethwa isi French apha, like literally"

Beast: "Yes, that's the official language kalok"

Me: "Uyaxoka"!!

And he just laughed at me like...

Beast: "Dad speaks approximately fifteen languages, most of the family members speak between four and six, so relax there won't be no communication barriers"

Me: "Sendicingela abantwana bam"

Beast: "They seem excited, andazi noba kuba beququzelelwa ngumntu wonke na"

Me: "Bafuzile kaloku ngothanda i-attention"

Again, wahleka ...and this time I just smiled to myself. Kumnandi kum ukumva ehleka ngentliziyo yakhe not just to make me stop nagging but because he's simply happy.

Beast: "We'll be there in a minute"

Me: "Sure"

I hung up, tyhini uNqaba.

French is the most romantic language that I know of yet he just casually says: its an official language yalapha iminyaka engaka lendoda ndihlala nayo kanti indivimba into emnandi kangaka? Uzakusithetha ke ubonanje akaqhashanga tu. I heard them from a distance, the kids were probably running because I made out steps. They walked in and looked for me, Uve found me first...

Uve: "No tan'khulu ma"

Uba: "Heh"

And then? U Uba why was he dull?

Me: "Uphi utan'khulu wakho mntanam"?

Uve: "Shiyekile phaya endlini yakhe"

Me: "You like him don't you"?

Uve: "mama! (He exclaimed with both hands almost covering his mouth)

Tan'khulu wambiza lowana uMama yafana ne aunty Fats wenzela Ubawakho i-waffle"

Me: "Mmh, kengoku utyentoni wena"?

Uve: "olelet"

I looked at their father for clarity on the "olelet"

Beast: "Omelet baby"

Me: "Ooh okay, uqumbele ntoni kengoku omnye u Young King"?

Uve: "Kafuni kuza kuwe kalok uyena"

Uba: "Tatam yangxola aneh uUve wakho"

Me: "Uba"?

Uba: "Hm"?

Me: "Utheni ndoda"?

Uba: "Afunu wamba siye Kutan'khulu"

Me: "So you didn't miss your mother"?

He blushed

Me: "It's fine Ubabalo wamba kaloku uye Kutan'khulu wakho"

Uba: "Haike mamam siwambi thina hlalile apha nawe"

Me: "No its fine go"

Uba: "Tatam siwambi neh"?

His father just laughed and joined us on the bed, he whispered: you're blackmailing my son. I just laughed and listened to more conversations from the Kings.

Me: "Baby yaz ndiyabawela uthatha iwalk and do some sightseeing"

Beast: "Awuzodinwa"?

Me: "Haibo just nje around the hotel"?

Beast: "Nxiba izihlangu ke sihambeni"

Uba: "Siyawamba utan'khulu tatam"?

Me: "Ngelishwa asiya kwa ndawo"

He sulked

#Lwandiso

We dropped the Gwala family then went to drop dad in Switzerland (he was on vacation with his queen when we called him, so he kinda sacrificed right there) after that we went home.

Yarees: "I need to sleep, yho"

Me: "We have one more job to do"

Yarees: "Dude I'm tired ngoku can't we do it ngomso"?

Me: "We have to do it tonight, okanye singakugodusa if you like"

Yarees: "Mxm its fine bra masambeni"

We went to Trina's house, went to the basement using the route he sketched out forms aphuma nama chankura, loaded everything in the car and drove away. We took Yarees to the airport our pilot was to take him to CT then sashiyeka eBhayi sayophumla. First thing I did the following day was to check up on Owe, and the only possible way was to take him to schools so I drove there ndafika esatya ipapa.

Me: "Molweni"

Chuma: "Ufuna ntoni apha ekseni kangaka"?

Owe: "Bhut'Soso, morning. Are you taking me to school today"?

Me: "Sure case ntwana, I would have taken you for lunch but I have a busy day ahead"

Chuma: "Well he's got a driver"

Me: "I know that ... enza boy sihambe"

Owe: "Okay bhuti"

Chuma: "Heh Soso"?

Me: "Chuma"

Chuma: "Kutheni ngoku uzakuzenzela unothanda emntaneni wam, kwam"?

Me: "Ambothatha ubhaka ntwana umfake emotweni"

Owe walked away...

Me: "Uzazi nini ukuba ungu mama ngoku Chuma"?

Chuma: "What"?

Me: "Mamelake, uOwentando usengumntana ka Ta Beast so I will come check up on him whenever I feel like"

Chuma: "Uphi lo ta Beast ngoku? Dude, wena no S'bongile need to get out of this fairytale you live in because uOwe unabo abazali babini and your Beast is not one of them"

Me: "Ulibala msinya nontombi futhi ke izakuchana lonto"

I walked out and drove Owe to school, sancokola... He's a bubbly yet respectable young man.

Me: "So, how have you been settling in"?

Owe: "Yho bhuti... you don't wanna know"

Me: "Cummon, it can't be that bad"

Owe: "Can't be that bad? Bhuti, first of all apha akuthengwa zinto za lunch and as you can imagine our tuckshop is very expensive so I just end up eating all the things umama said I shouldn't eat"

Me: "Dude you're just being dramatic"

Owe: "Okay bhuti, do you know I sleep on a sponge apha? Akhobhedi"

Me: "Kaloku awukhange ulungiselelwe, I'm sure when she gets paid uzakuthengela"

Owe: "And you still think I'm being dramatic"?

I just laughed, there's a bit of his father and of ta Beast in him. I dropped him at school and gave him money then I went to work... I knew Ghost was around but he was playing hide and seek may be checking our next move, well he better do that while I make sure that he doesn't get his filthy hands on ta Beast's "legit" businesses. I worked the whole day until about eleven ebusuku, noticing the time because umfazi Kata Beast called. Ndiyamazi ke umntase i-patience wafika seyiphelile. Sihle flew to Cape Town to assist Yarees on an outbreak that happened just out of the blue, I on the other hand was working 24hrs back to back until the day Marcus paid me a visit with Ghost and Bullet. They walked into the building, leaving about eight of their guys outside at the front of the building... I just watched them on the monitor in front of me. They walked past the reception causing the workers to look a bit shaken, as soon as they got into the elevator leading to my temporal office I braced myself but continued working. I had Hugh Masekela playing on the iPhone dock softly as they walked in in to the office without knocking so I continued working nam, the closed the door with a bang, I didn't budge one bit ndasebenza mna. I heard someone cocking a gun, I

just continued working at my own pace... at the corner of my eyes I got a glimpse of Ghost shooting the vase on my desk well, we gat moola, we gonn' buy more.

Ghost: "Titus"

Me: "Ntabeni"

Ghost: "I want us to talk, like men"

Me: "You call yourself a man yet you lack manners"?

Marc: "Watch your tongue"

Me: "Or what"?

All this while, my eyes and hands were fixed on the computer in front of me... I had companies to save, they had time to waste. Levels.

Ghost: "Mamela ke mjita, that cockiness is not gonna work with me. Ndize apha to have a word with you, and we're gonna do that right now"

Me: "Did you make an appointment"?

Bullet: "Tyhini Soso"

Ghost: "I don't have to make an appointment in my own company kwedini now shut the fuck up and listen to me"

Me: "On your way here you passed something called a front desk or reception, there's a lady by the name Clarissa who can make an appointment for you if you're really serious about this talk you want"

Ghost: "Heh, iyaqhela lentwana"

Marc: "sy's full of kak"

Me: "Enjoy your day gentlemen, let the real man get back to work"

All three of them cocked their guns, I looked up and smiled while dialing the security...

Me: "So we came prepared for war huh"?

Ghost: "Get your arrogant ass off my chair and get the fuck out of my businesses"

The security guys answered...

Me: "I have trespassers in my office and they're armed ... Okay thank you"

Just as I put the phone down, the clowns voluntarily walked themselves out, cursing.

The fagots still had the nerve to call themselves thugs?

Seriously?

## **507**

#Lwandiso

After they left ndaqhubekeka nalento bendiyenza. I didn't care who his father was or what he's capable of, I knew where I stood and Ghost wasn't about to shake me... instead I'd shake him up a bit. He's becoming too comfortable with his brother not around. I tracked Bullet down and decided to keep tabs on him, uMarcus didn't necessarily exist to me... sefanele uTrina to deal with. I wanted to get Bullet eyedwa and show him a thing or two ngalento acing'ba uyiyo yaz, nje ukumothusa ...in fact ukumvusa because I'm not a gangsta. If I were, they'd all be dead including Ghost. Xandizakuphuma I received a call from ta Beast... uyalenza ke uvalo lo bhuti I'm not sure whether it's because he's supposedly dead or what...

Me: "Grootman"

Beast: "Titus. You good"?

Me: "As expected. You guys"?

Beast: "Surviving. Is it possible for us to meet in Mpumalanga tomorrow night"?

Me: "Tomorrow night? Why? What's up"?

Beast: "My wife told me about the money and I don't want you to have an overload of responsibilities so I'd like to take it ibelapha kuthi"

Me: "Oh sure no akho stress, I can organize that"

Beast: "I appreciate that"

Me: "Are you guys considering uhlala apho for good"?

Beast: "Yamaz uLuthando would never survive here, we'll come back at some point but not now. Let Ghost get comfortable"

Me: "He already is... ebelapha eofisini with his lapdogs"

Beast: "Don't let him bully you"

Me: "I can handle him just fine, and besides... he's a coward. He'd never cross dad"

Beast: "Well good luck. See you morê"

Me: "Affirmative"



We hung up

I locked the office and went to the bnb... I don't have a home in PE so a bnb was my home for now. When I got there I called Lindo I missed her qha ndiyamazi umntu wam nge drama sokhesiqale silwe kuqala.

Lindo: "Lwandiso"

Me: "Hey, how you doing"?

Lindo: "Ndiright"

Me: "I'm good too in case you're wondering"

Cwaka...

I knew right then that "yaqala ke inkathazo" madoda!

Me: "Oh-kay, good night"

Lindo: "You just called to say good night? Seriously"?

Me: "Uh... ngathi you're not in the mood to talk kaloku so I don't wanna pester you"

Lindo: "Lwandiso Titus uphi?"

Me: "Ndise Bhayi nje baby benditshilo"

Lindo: "Oku ubuse Bhayi Lwandiso? Yintoni le ingaka kweli Bhayi le ingakubuyisiyo? Am I still valuable phofu kuwe? Are we even still dating"?

Me: "Andiyazi ke ba uthi mandiphendule omphi umbuzo kulembuzo mingaka"

Lindo: "Phendula yonke"

Me: "Oh-kay let's see: Yes; Work; yes and yes. There, I think I answered you"

She snorted but uLindo uzazi bulala ngentliziyo emncinci, yintoni ekhweletisayo?

Lindo: "You're unbelievable yaz Soso"

Ndayeka same time kengoku ukuba ngu Lwandiso?

Me: "Ndenzeni ngoku baby"?

Lindo: "Unesibindi sokuthi baby after umnke apha ungumntu ozobuya ngok'ngoku"

Me: "But I texted you"

Lindo: "Soso"

Me: "Mntu wam"

Lindo: "Ungavuya wena xandinoveske ndimnke for two months ndibendimnke kuwe ndithe ndiyabuya ngok'ngoku"?

Me: "I'm sorry babe... A lot happened but I wasn't in a space to tell you everything in detail yabo"

Lindo: "Then tell me now, everything"

Me: "Andizokwazi babe man, it's a secret task. For your own safety"

Lindo: "Then this conversation is over"

Me: "Lindo"

Lindo: "Xa ucingile, and uready to talk to me in honesty, then you'll call me or even better... you know where to find me"

Then she hung up... I dialed Libo (yes uLibhongo ka Vince lo ufunwa ngu ta Ghost) she was even online on WhatsApp... we weren't best of friends but because she's close to Tee we've been working together closely after Tee left ngenxa yezi boutiques and we enjoyed each other's company so to speak.

Libo: "Soso wa bantwana"

Me: "Miss LB... U grand"?

Libo: "I'm good chap, wena"?

Me: "I'm great, why are you up so late? U-online nako WhatsApp"

Libo: "Stalker vibes or secret admirer"?

Me: "Choose le izakuncumisa"

She laughed...

Libo: "What's up bra"?

Me: "I'm coming to Jo'burg tomorrow, are you game for late lunch"?

Libo: "How late"?

Me: "Four to five'ish late"

Libo: "I close the boutique at six so let's do six to seven'ish"

Me: "Alright. See ya"

Libo: "Sharp sharp"

Well I'm a man...

And I can have female friends right? I then took a shower then ndalala. Ekseni ndavuswa ngu Sihle

Me: "Dude, ixesha"  
Sihle: "litheni?"

I closed my eyes for a minute then sat up, he was having coffee Sihle is a fizzy person, I'm the coffee freak.

Me: "What's up"?  
Sihle: "Karoo's wife is rebuilding Sibob's house"  
Me: "Huh"?  
Sihle: "Umamakho gave birth to quadruplets"

My eyes almost popped out, I went to the bathroom, washed my face and rinsed my mouth then I went back to Sihle.

Me: "Uthini bra"?  
Sihle: "Karoo's wife is busy rebuilding indlu Ka Sibob, bukhe wayokroba"?  
Me: "You said something about my mother and triplets"?  
Sihle: "No ubuphupha ndoda,ndithetha ngendlu mna"

I exhaled... I knew idlalangam le chap.  
I knew what I heard.

Me: "I don't trust them, even if they do rebuild it kuzofuneka ithengiswe"  
Sihle: "My thoughts exactly"  
Me: "How was CT"?  
Sihle: "It was cold as usual, and Ghost was apparently out of town so we were dealing with his goons. I mean stupid goons"  
Me: "What was the ruction about"?  
Sihle: "Business takeover as predicted, but Yarees is a fast thinker, he Skype'd the lawyer and asked him to read the will for the boardroom and shareholders. So for now we've kinda managed to calm things down"  
Me: "Who's supposed to take over now that Beast is dead"?  
Sihle: "Ndim no Kuhle and since I was there, the shareholders seemed to be on board qha ingxaki kengoku kuba kuzofuneka ndise Kapa fulltime until this whole thing dies out"  
Me: "Is Yarees okay with not being in the books"?"

Sihle: "He understands that this is not inheritance, umntu wezi businesses usaphila its just a temporal thing"

Me: "Mmh"

I was hungry...

He passed me the brown bag ndakhupha ukutyandatya.

Sihle: "Kuhle is in hospital"

I almost choked from the sosatie I was eating...

Me: "What? What happened"?

Sihle: "Ghost happened"

I looked at this guy...

Why was he calm? I was supposed to be the calm one, why was Sihle's character confusing me this morning?

Me: "Wenzeni uGhost? Why the hell are you speaking half sentences"?

He laughed at my frustration!

Sihle: "Well Ghost sent his goons to roughen him up a bit, I think just to scare him"

Me: "Is he hurt"?

Sihle: "He says he's not that bad, so I don't really know but ndizophuma aphantsi eDurban no Mo"

Me: "Kanti uMo ukweliphi icala"?

Sihle: "As far as I know ngoka TaBeast, the second jet and pilot belong to Ghost, but you can never be sure with these guys"

After eating I went to bath and prepared to go to work so we rode together. He checked the books for about two hours then he flew to Durban, I received a call from Laa...

Me: "Lwandiso Titus"

Laa: "Heh Landile ucinga ugoduka xakutheni"?

Me: "Andina nja, andina kati, so ndizothi ndigoduka ndileqaphi"?

Laa: "Mfethu don't say that"

Me: "I know you miss me, just confess it"

Laa: "Look ntwana I've organized a flat for you e Motherwell uSiya will drop off the keys at your bnb tonight"

Me: "You have organized a flat for me? Wait...who am I talking to"?

Laa: "Yaz most of the time I give you benefit of the doubt but honestly, ukhe ubemuncu kanene"

Me: "bra! I'll just ignore the rest of what you've just said... thank you ngeflat"

Laa: "Maybe you could invite Lindo for a weekend abone ba you're actually working awuna cherrie kwelo Bhayi"

Me: "Ngubani othe andinayo"?

Laa: "Intoni"?

Me: "iCherry"

Laa: "Titus hayi"

Me: "Enkosi nge flat mntuwam, I'll call you to organize a housewarming party as soon as I move in. Love you"

Laa: "heh L"

I hung up.

Akho Landile uzakundixelela nga relationship mna unayo yena irelationship?  
Tshini!

## **508**

"Tatama funqule u-Ubawakho"

Yatsho iphakamisa iingalo la chap as expected.

Beast: "iKing iyazihambela nje ndoda uyi king enjani xa uzafuna ufunqulwa"?

Uba: "Ha.a mna u-Uba wakho kaloku ngoku"

Beast: "Awuyo Young King"?

Uba: "Ndiyiyo kaloku tatam pha ekhaya not apha"

He looked at me I just laughed...

Ubhadle ufun'kophulwa u-Ubabalo and I wasn't gonna involve myself. We walked till we reached Kinshasa's nganda (restaurants, with a greater mix of ethnicities, are ethnic restaurants serving food from specific parts of the country, as well as Western imports such as bread and beer) the kids and I had Soso na Loso (Chicken and Rice) and he had to choose between Ntaba or Nguluyakotumba (Grilled goat, Pork). Uba and Uve ate the peri-peri chicken like nobody's watching. It was too hot for me but them? Haibo!

Me: "Khajonge abantwana bakho bra"

He looked at them and laughed, I was shocked bona babebethe cwaka besitya qha!

Beast: "They should come here as often as possible, they'll get to learn how to speak French at an early age"

Me: "Bazoza nabani mhlawumbi"?

Beast: "Nam"

Me: "As if"

Beast: "Haibo babe, now that the family has seen them kuzofuneka simane sibazisa"

Me: "Hm"

I wasn't gonna argue about that...

But I didn't see myself just coming here njee'space'ini, we'll have to talk about eyabantwana bam xakufike eloxesha.

Me: "So tell me, where exactly are we right now"?

Beast: "Brazzaville"

Me: "So zikhona iilali apha"?

Beast: "Yeah but just like SA, Congo is urbanized. Most people live in towns"

Me: "So even in the rural areas they speak French"?

Beast: "French is the official language here mamakhe however, there are other native tongues such as Lingala and Munukutuba but they rank just behind French as national languages. But for easy communication everyone would rather speak French than ke thina bantu who do business with outsiders speak English"

Me: "I don't do business with you though"

Beast: "Well you and I are connected by matters of the heart"

Me: "Eshe"

Beast: "I meant to tell you that in two days I'm taking you home, prepare yourself"

Me: "For what exactly"?

Beast: "To being pampered, dad seems kinda excited to see you"

Me: "Did you tell him who I am? Biologically"?

Beast: "Yes I had to, I don't want no nasty surprises. You've been through enough already"

Me: "Better remember that last sentence for the rest of your life"

He laughed.

What's the joke kulento ndiyithethayo?

Me: "I'm serious bra. Like... if you ever decide to play around and maybe cheat on me again in this lifetime, I'd kill you baby I don't wanna lie. I'd kill you with my own two hands, no gun, no knife, no other form of weapon"

Beast: "Uyaxoka, you love me too much"

Me: "You don't know the woman I've become in your absence. Try me"

Wathula...

I wasn't joking at all. He must get the message and encrypt it in his heart. I knew he's Beast and maybe I'd never be able to be above his capacity and I knew my place as his wife... but he better nje.

Me: "Now that kukhono nana on the way, I have three people to live for, so I gotta make my own life decisions with them in mind. When a time comes and you believe with all your heart that you've had enough of me uboze uthethe nam kakuhle, sihlale phantsi and draft our own divorce papers kunoba uyokuzigrumbela ikhwemhemhe yamankazana ongazowapasa because awusoze upasse mna kqala ndidedwanje"

Beast: "Oh-kay... Baby how did we get to this part of the conversation"?

Me: "I've just had a lot of time to think... And besides, I think kungona thina siqalayo ubomi bethu bomtshato mos ngoku? On a clean slate, no more secrets?"

Beast: "Yes no more secrets. I told you everything mamakhe, there's nothing else that I'm hiding from you. Promise"

Me: "I'm giving you until tomorrow night to think back, come to me and confess anything else that you haven't told me yet"

Beast: "Yes ma'am"

Me: "I'm serious"

He was smiling.

Beast: "I know"

Me: "Then why are you smiling"?

Beast: "Ndiyachazeka nje nguwe mntu wam, kuba worse xa ubossy... uyand'vuselela. Its clear I made the right choice by putting a ring on it"

Tyhini zinkosizam, iright lendoda?

Nda suka ndatyhafa.

Beast: "I'm meeting with Titus ngomso to take the money"

Me: "That's good"

Beast: "Do you think you wanna give birth here"?

Me: "I haven't really thought that far"

Beast: "Oh-kay... kuzofuneka ucinge fast so that I can organize the family doctor for the homebirth"

I looked at him, did he just say home birth?

Me: "Ndikuve kakuhle tatakhe"?

Beast: "Yes. Homebirth"

Heee ihambo ngumbona nyhani.

When we were done eating we headed back to the hotel room and we all went to lie down. The kids fell asleep almost immediately sashyeka sisa jongene.

Beast: "I think I should probably take the boys home again tonight"

Me: "What? Why"?

Beast: "Utamkhulu wabo is happy to have them running around the house, and I'll be able to spend more quality time with you and nana"

Me: "I don't want your dad or your entire family to think we're forcing them with kids as if we're irresponsible parents"

Beast: "Babe"

Me: "Okay tatakhe ungabasa"

Beast: "Stop overthinking things"

I kept quiet...



My overthinking saved us from whatever ambush Ghost and his friends had planned out for us, but that's cool. I closed my eyes and relaxed, all this time here had been a breath of fresh air yaz. I now realized how much I needed this other side of life...

Later on, he helped me bath the kids, sabatyisa then he took them home leaving me to bath and get ready for bed. On his way back he called me...

As usual...

Me: "My love"

Beast: "Ndikuphathele ntoni"?

Me: "Nothing ... oh wait. Chocolate cake"

Beast: "Hm,so late"?

Me: "Awufuni"?

Beast: "Andikhange nditsho, I'll bring it"

Me: "Thank you"

Beast: "Is there something called emotional bullying"?

Me: "Haha ngelishwa ayikho boy"

Beast: "Soze ingabikho..."

I just laughed and hung up, I'm no bully. He knew very well that I'm the sweetest person ever. I called Titus while waiting for this guy to come back with my cake...

Soso: "Titus"

Me: "Please save my number, I can't deal with this serious you"

Soso: "Hahaha oh my person, unjani? You sound better though"

Me: "Let's just say I'm in a good space"

Soso: "That's a good start, how are my boys adjusting"?

Me: "Abekho baye ku tamkhulu wabo"

Soso: "As in... that guy?"

Me: "Yes Soso, that guy"

Soso: "Wow. Awiboyikiseli"?

Me: "Izondi nceda phi lonto mntase? It's not like he injects gangstarism into peoples blood, people see it and choose it"

Soso: "That's a point"

Me: "And they are already kinda fond of him, worse u-Uba"

Soso: "Attention seeker kalok lowo inoba baphathwa okwamaqanda"

Me: "Imagine... how are things on your side"?

Soso: "All's good, Glenda has people rebuilding your house"

Me: "Ah, she listens"

Soso: "You told her to"?

Me: "Yes"

Soso: "Don't tell me you trust her... uzohlala kuyo"?

Me: "I'm not really sure what I'm gonna do with it right now but uright ayakhe mntase. Her husband destroyed it, she must use his money and rebuild it exactly the way it was"

Soso: "Hm... so nibuyanini"?

Me: "Yhu asikayicingi lonto"

Soso: "Umamzo eMonti nithini ngaye"?

Me: "We'll deal with all of that xasibuyile bra, okwangoku we're still working on us."

Soso: "I understand, well good luck with everything"

Me: "Thanks bud"

We hung up...

Tatake walked in and put the cake next to the bed wakhulula wayo vasa. By the time he returned, I was almost done eating.

Beast: "Umntanam uzakuba ne grunanti"

Me: "I love you too"

I responded without even lifting up my head, he got in next to me, I smiled and gave him the last piece. He took it, finished it off and came in for a cuddle, not forgetting to peck my lips.

Beast: "Earlier you said you have three people to live for"

Me: "Mh"

Beast: "What about me"?

Me: "Your mother is still alive, living for you"

He kissed me, sucking in my bottom lip

Beast: "But I live for all four of you, maybe five of you"

Me: "Really"?

Beast: "Really"

Me: "Maybe I need a lil convincing"

Beast: "Hm"

With that the kiss went deeper, the cuddle tighter, then his one hand grabbed my behind causing me to moan from my throat.

Beast: "I'm a convince you alright"

Whatever else he said after that was a blur I was too mesmerized by what he was doing to me to listen to every word he was saying.

## 509

Nana kicked...

Beast: "Haibo... nana wenzani"?

Ndavela ndaphela yintsini, I wasn't ready.

Lol, we both weren't ready.

He stopped and sat on his heels next to me looking at my stomach and we could actually see movements on it, this moment would have been one of those awkward ones but because nana has two crazy parents it was actually hilarious!!!

Me: "Dude your child"!

Beast: "Ha.a baby, your child just stopped me from... Heh, andisekho shocked,"  
Ndasuka ndamhleka.

There was no way we were going to proceed with this, he cleaned me up sisahleka then we cuddled. My lips kissing his chest, one of his legs between mine and one of my legs over his thigh...

Beast: "Ndiyakuthanda yaz"

Me: "Uthandwa ndim"

Beast: "Nyhani"?

Me: "You think I'd be here if I didn't love you"?

He looked at me in silence...

I didn't lift up my eyes but I could feel his eyes boring on me.

Beast: "Do you honestly still love me, after everything"?

Me: "Yes"

Beast: "Why"?

Okay then I looked at him... what's up with these questions?

Me: "Because I love you"

Beast: "Why"?

Me: "Why would I not love you? Bra we've been through this conversation before,"

He just looked at me quizzically,

Me: "I promised to love you for better, for worse. In richness and in poverty and that's what I'm doing. Loving you"

He didn't blink...

Me: "And anyway, I have loved you even before we said our vows so I don't know what you are hoping to hear entsha namhlanje"

Beast: "I just feel privileged"

Me: "By what"?

Beast: "For having you love me regardless of our continuous situations"

Ndathula...

Uyadika uNqaba with his emotional unattractive side, where the hell was the tough dude in him? Where's Beast?

Beast: "I want you to promise me one more thing"

Me: "Mmkay"

Beast: "Promise you'll always have my back...you're the only person I trust with my life right now. Just promise me you'll always have my back no matter what"

Me: "I promise"

Beast: "Don't just say it Luthando, think about it first. If ever we decide to return to SA... in fact, when we decide to go back it's gonna be war. I know I can trust you, but I need affirmation"

Me: "Wait, are you saying you're doubting me"?

Beast: "No, I just need to hear you say it"

Ndakhe ndathula... guy needed counseling. He needed therapy, because after yonke lento he was betrayed by the people he trusted. His blood brothers. He needed to go for counseling or else I'd be the victim of his trust issues coz ngama qalela azo la.

Me: "I promise I'll always have your back"

Beast: "Thank you"

He kissed my lips, holding the kiss ndasuka nda emotional I felt tears trickling down my cheeks. He stopped and looked at me, wiping my face.

Beast: "Ulilelani"?

Me: "You need to consider therapy"

Beast: "I don't need therapy, I'm cool"

Me: "Babe... soon we'll be battling with trust issues in our own relationship because of this. I don't wanna be on the receiving end"

Beast: "Trust me, I'm cool mamakhe"

I gave up.

Kissing him on his broad chest as I closed my eyes.

Me: "Night"

Beast: "Night"

K'sasa I woke up to bath, he joined us (nana and I) in the bathtub filled with bubbles. He was in a good mood, but somewhere in his eyes I saw some darkness looming in. He was planning something, I didn't know what but he was definitely planning something huge. Maybe some revenge?

Me: "So...what are we doing today"?

Beast: "What do you wanna do"?

Me: "Shopping"

He laughed...

Me: "Uyaz'bona ke baby"?

Beast: "You wanna go shopping, apha? Are you serious"?

Me: "Kaloku I don't know what is appropriate to wear ngomso xandisiya kokwenu so maybe we could go around and see something culture-fitting"

Beast: "Nxiba lento unayo man baby, ababantu uyakubo are not fussy"

Me: "I'm a woman tatakhe... So I naturally fuss about appearance"

Beast: "Okay...we'll go shopping uphuma kwethu apha emanzini"

Ndaphakama immediately kemnake

Beast:"haibo"!

Me: "Haikaloku singaphuma nangoku tatakhe"

Beast: "Hehe hayini uLuthando"

Andabanda!✱

I sat back down in the water playing with the bubbles in silence.

Beast: "And here I thought Uba was the only dramatic being in this family"

Me: "Uyadika shame"

Beast: "I love you too"

Me: "I don't love you right now"

Beast: "I love you nonetheless"

Me: "Tatakhe sudika torho"

Beast: "Ooh bethuna...Uyazazi ba umhle kangaka nani Luthando? Or have I reminded you as of late"?

Me: "Dude, ndadibana nawe ndimhle. I'm very much well aware, come on"

Beast: "Ha.a wawungekhomhle kangaka man, unochatha ngoku. Noko umsebenzi wam uyabonakala"

Me: "Luu sukuziqhatha torho. Wadibana nam ndimhle, futhi ndiqumqum ndinjena... uthi watsalwa yintoni kwawena"?

He burst into laughter

Me: "Tshini! Wabaseleka ngoku"

Beast: "Awundiva yaz baby.Undigalela amanzi"

Me: "Tell yourself the truth nawe...Wadibana no Sibongile Trinalique Smith eyigolide Z'khali"

Beast: "Ndiyavuma golide yam emenyezelayo"

I just looked at him with squinted eyes, wahleka u Nqaba.

Beast: "You should stop this acting tough'ish aphenndlini, ayizokusebenzela"

Me: "Itheni? Iyaku intimidater"?

Beast: "Nah, ndincedana nawe coz izokwenza uyilibale indawo yakhon njengo mnkam, uzibone ungapha kwam"

Me: "Tyhini"!

Beast: "No jokes"

I wanted to say "mnxm" but ndaqonda ukuba makhe ndithobe ngoba kaloku kuthetha indodomzi utatekhaya intloko the head. Lol. Mnxim.

Me: "So shifting to the other news, obuya kwethu siyabayeka nyhani ooOwe ebazalini babo"?

Beast: "Definitely"

Me: "You honestly think that's a good idea"?

Beast: "I couldn't careless"

Me: "Sithetha ngabantwana obakhulisileyo as your own here baby"

Beast: "I know"

Heee Thixo!

Beast: "I played my part and moved on, it's time their own parents takeover. I thought we had this conversation already nje"

Me: "I see"

Beast: "Don't let them guilt trip you"

Me: "I don't even communicate with them"

Beast: "I hope kuhlale kunjalo okwangoku... until sibe grand ngento yonke"

Me: "Yessur"

His phone rang...

Waphuma emanzini and went to answer it, I followed suit and drained the water cleaning the bathtub. When I got to the bedroom he was still on the phone pacing up and down and he was angry. Livid. Ndithe ndisabukele leyo ndevango "thwahla" we phone idibana nedonga ndothuka ndamjonga.

Me: "Dude"!

Beast: "Please gimme a sec"

I left him, closing the doors behind me. I sat in the lounge and tried relaxing myself...

My own phone rang... only Soso had this number but this wasn't his number.

Me: "Hello"

Ranger: "Ghost is on your trail"

Me: "How the did you get this number"?

Range: "That's not important, all I know is that he's organizing means to follow you guys"

Okay... what's really going on here?

Me: "Why are you telling me this? How do I trust you"?

Range: "You don't have to trust me bra, I just did my part and warned you qha"

Me: "Why kaloku? Because sewucacile ukuba ukweliphi icala kuyo yonkelento yenzekayo"

Range: "I owe it to you and my daughter"

Me: "Is this really Ranger"?

Range: "Bye bye Tee"

He hung up, I dialed Soso...

Soso: "Bra... ukufumene uRanger"?

Me: "Ewe, ithini lento"?

Soso: "Apparently Ghost received school notification regarding imali yomntana yeskolo ekucaca ukuba angakhutshwa month end umntana if akabhatali so bathike uye waphambana now he's looking for y'all. He's actually on his way over there"

Me: "Wait, so this guy is actually tripping over his own child's maintenance? Is he okay?"

Soso: "I think nala frustration yongakwazi u-access'er iifinances zika TaBeast is getting to him coz ubethe uKay so all out going money has been frozen. He's actually broke right now inoba sencedwa zi gigs zobugintsa if zikhona kwazona"

Me: "Hayini! Ubethe uKuhle just for money? Bra u Ghost makayiyeke intsango, indala kuye"

Wasuka wahleka uSoso...

Soso: "Awuna ngqondoke wena ungamxelela"

Me: "Mmh so uzofika ngomso...Okay. Thanks"

Soso: "Ithini iplani kengoku? I mean nizothini"?

Me: "Andiyazi bra...Nqaba is just too angry right now,"

Soso: "Nizame ukuba safe bra, worse wena. Ungazifaki nozifaka futhi xabesilwa if it comes to that"

Me: "Bye mntase"

I hung up and went to the bedroom, he was sitting on the bed busy on his tablet.

Me: "So what's the plan"?

Beast: "Kuzofuneka ndikuse endlini tonight where I'll know you're safe"

Wandiphendula engandijonganga nokundijonga, I knew kushubile mandizincede ngokuvala umlomo wam ndaphinda ndamvalela pha kularoom and ordered breakfast so long.



**510**

#Ntando I had just organized transport for Owentando when I received a mail from Owe's school saying I owed R46000 in school fees and extramural activities, half of which needed to be in the school's account before the month ran out. I looked at the letter and read it again... Just then, I got a call from Chuma.

Me: "Chum-"

Chuma: "What is this letter talking about"?

Me: "I'm in Durban, you're in PE. How am I supposed to know what a letter that's in front of you talking about"?

Chuma: "Ntando Ntabeni I do not have the time for your shit. Please not today"

Me: "I'll sort it out"

Chuma: "You'll sort what out Ntando"?

Me: "The letter, I'll sort it out".

Chuma: "heh Ntando, did you kill your brother?"

Me: "What"?

Chuma: "Akhange kube kudala after the family meeting where they asked us to be also responsible for our kids and be involved in their lives... And then he was announced dead. On national television? And I've seen you in distress before, but ngoku uyinto engathi ipower-hungry"

Me: "I don't understand your theory but to answer your question: no, I didn't kill him. I'd never do that"

Chuma: "Then explain to me why all of a sudden we owe the school close to 50K??? Because if I remember correctly Sibon said that icala le fees li covered already"

Me: "Undenzela esinye istress njewena Chuma yaz"

Chuma: "You better make a plan ke bhuti because I cannot afford this money, ndanditshilo kwakuqala. Make a plan fast because if your child gets removed from that school, he'll hate you for the rest of your life akhumbule ukuba wayenotata who took really good care of him before you decided to pitch out of nowhere and ruined his life. Just remember that"

Then she hung up... my head was throbbing...

Chuma can talk yho, worse she's got a naturally commanding and big voice. I tried accessing money from the companies Beast owned when he was here but then I was blocked. I called my IT guy to try and find out what the problem was, he came

back saying all funds from all companies previously owned by my brother had been frozen right after Kuhle was hospitalized...

Me: "Kuhle? Hospitalized? What for"?

Him: "Apparently you beat him up because you wanted money from him, well not money as such but you wanted him to sign over the companies your brother left under his name"

Me: "WTF???? No man, there must be a mistake"

Him: "So you didn't beat him up"?

Me: "Fuck no! Why would I do that? He's my fucken brother for fucks sake"

Wathula lomjita he didn't believe me.

Me: "Look, I just had a conversation with the laaitie and obviously he was mad that I've replaced Beast so we got into an argument. As any set of brothers would, out of anger...I slapped him across the face and walked out when I realized that his nose was bleeding. That's all"

Him: "That's not what he said to the police, I'll send you his picture right now"

Me: "Tyhini uKuhle"

I hung up and waited...the guy sent two pictures and I was shocked. Like, I wouldn't do that...

This was clearly a setup and no one could convince those twins on anything besides Beast so I called him up, his number went to voicemail. When I left Congo I didn't freeze any money for him...

Me: "Well, there was actually no money to freeze"

Business hadn't been as good as it normally is, hence I left kwamsinya before the agreed time. I think I might have roughened and raffled up some feathers but it wasn't something Beast wouldn't be able to fix. That's what he's good at, fixing things...The worst part was that I couldn't go up there by myself because I kinda had a fallout with dad when I left...

But I needed to speak to my brother... a man has got to survive nook akanondiyekela siphuma esibelekweni esinye. I called Titus...

Soso: "Ta Ghost"

Me: "I need to speak to my brother khandiza munge number yakhe"

Soso: "Andinayo"

Me: "Titus I'm not in the mood for this bullshit, I know you're communicating with him. There's something urgent I need to discuss with him"

Soso: "I can pass on the message but into endingenayo yi number yonika wena"

Me: "Heh kwedini kutheni ingathi uyazilibalanje ukuba ulibambela? Don't let the fancy office get to your head"

Soso: "Was that all"?

I tried calming myself...

This chap had a way of working on my last nerve without even making a noise about it. He had this calmness... Beast's calmness and it irritated the shit out of me.

Me:"Titus..."

Soso: "I have work to do yaz ta Ghost, a company to run. I don't have time to spend talking on this phone the whole day"

Me: "Then gimme the number I'm looking for, that's all"

Soso: "Throughout this short conversation we've just had, we've been communicating in English and Xhosa and it's becoming clear that you have a slight problem in understanding both languages, Grootman. Andikwazi ke uthetha isi-French but in case you didn't hear me... I do not have the number you're looking for. Uyayiva kengoku? Or should I go to Google Translate"?

Me: "Fuck you uyevha kwedini, fuck you"

Soso: "Asoze, bekhona ooChuma nooLibo"

Me: "Heh Lwandiso Titus, ndakuqhekeza kwedini sukundiqhela uyevha? Idlala ngengqondo yakho lent'ba uyazi we respect your father! Kanti ndakukhanda unye mna ndiske ndi dealishane no yihlo stabane ndini"

Soso: "Andinaxesha lamankazana afana nawe kemna ta Ghost, when you decide to wear your man-pants, you know where to find me"

Then he hung up.

Something in the depths of my stomach boiled...

I didn't wanna go over there yet because kusekho lento ka Kuhle ndingayaziyo ukuba ibheka ngaphi, I didn't wanna have another unforeseen circumstance hovering above my head but truth be told, I had to speak to my brother. So I called Marc'O'Polo...

Polo: "Spook-Man"

Me: "Hey laaitie, hoe gaan dit"?

Polo: "Lekker my toppie, met jy"?

Me: "Bra, I need cash... like a whole lot of it"

Polo: "But you have access to Beast's businesses, right"?

Me: "That's the problem... I don't. And the finances have been frozen because apparently I attacked Kay"

Polo: "Apparently"?

Me: "Dit was net 'n klap... but somehow he landed in the hospital and now the police are involved"

Polo: "Do you think it's some sort of a trap? I mean look at Titus comfortable in anyhow he decides to address you"

Me: "Eish Polo my broer, I don't know. All I know is that if I don't get a hundred stinaz by the end of the week my son may be thrown out of school by month-end"

Polo: "Yho, tis hectic...Kyk man, I think I might have like fifty stinaz here"

Me: "Hay Marcus bra, ek nie jou geld borrow nie. Ek sal 'n plan maak"

Polo: "I'll keep it, just in case".

Me: "Don't you have your sister's number"?

Polo: "Who Trina"?

Me: "Yes"

Polo: "Her phone is voicemail, I've been calling her ever since that day"

Me: "I think she might be in Congo because she's not in East London"

Polo: "And she's not with Keri... But she called to tell her she's safe. With a private number"

Me: "Fuck"!

Luthando being in Congo was obviously gonna mess up my plan, she's got this thing of reading between the lines way of reasoning and speaking to my brother that whatever someone else says emveni koba ethethile Nqaba will still hear her voice at the back of his mind. Maybe it's because she's a lawyer by profession.

## **511**

He later came out so we could eat breakfast...

Beast: "You look worried"

Me: "Shouldn't I be"?

Beast: "No"

Me: "Hm"

He continued eating ndancama ndatya nam coz he seemed "cool" about this whole thing. When we were done, I went to rest a bit... Somehow I had minor pains in my lower abdomen but they weren't severe AND I didn't wanna scare him ene-stress somntakwabo. So, I drank a bottle of water ndalala while he went out. After two hours he called me...

Me: "Hm"?

Beast: "I'm sending someone over to come fetch you"

Me: "To come fetch me? Kanti uphi wena"?

Beast: "I'm busy"

Me: "I'd rather wait for you"

Beast: "Baby"

Me: "Please"

He sighed...

Beast: "Okay... Please pack so long. Ndizoza late kakhulu though"

Me: "Fine by me"

Beast: "Sharp"

When I had hung up I went to pack-up to leave the hotel for his home...I wanted to ask more of this "supposed plan" but I decided to let him be. He's been doing this for as long as I've known him and far beyond so I had to trust that he knows what he's doing. He later came to fetch me ehamba with six cars and a whole lot of men.

Beast: "Baby"

Me: "Love"?

Beast: "Masambe"

I checked the time, 22:45 nanku umntu ezongena nge back door emzini sekulelwe, Thixo izinto esihamba sizifaka kuzo ngenxa yothando. I gave him all the bags ndithe cwaka and just followed behind him, we got into the car and drove in silence for a distance...

Beast: "You okay"?

I just nod...

Honestly speaking now, how does one be "okay" in such a situation? I kept quiet throughout the drive, got to his home (a big castle-like mansion) that had guards all over the place, the massive gate opened and the three cars in front of us drove

in first kwalendela thina and the rest of his troops. I was shocked by the beauty of the place, but I could see the sense of style (he bought my PE house ndingekho) ba isukaphi. Two guys came to fetch the luggage salandela slowly behind them... We walked such along and dark passage only to realize sisaya elounge safika kukho an exact Ntando/Nqaba lookalike, but obviously an older version of them. Our eyes locked then I immediately dropped mine in shock bayafana abantu balomzi bawo! Iindlebe zooSihle, impumlo KaVince, ntloko ka Bullet. I could see all of them in that one man. He spoke up first...

Nqobimpi: "Ah, Ntombi ka Bonginkosi. Undiqhathile u Nqabayomzi, akhange atsho ukuba umhle kangaka"

In any normal circumstance I would have blushed at such a compliment but taking the fact that I was still mesmerized by the resemblance he shared with his sons, I was also shocked at how fluent he spoke my home language after so many years living in a French speaking country. And he had a sense of style and admirable choice in fabric and color in the clothes he wore and the home-deco...Sleek and clean shaven, as he extended his hand for me to shake, my nostrils caught his scent goodness! Immediately, I understood why he's a renowned ladies man.

Nqobimpi: "The room is ready for you, I know its late but what would you like the chef to prepare for you"?

Me: "I'm fine tata thank you"

He chuckled and looked at his son... I silently hoped I didn't seem disrespectful for declining his offer. But it was too late for me to eat anything.

Nqobimpi: "Nqaba please tell Florence your wife's preferences in everything"

Beast: "Sho taima, I'll be right back there's something I need to discuss with you before I go"

Nqobimpi: "Okay, Mme Gwala, you'll meet the rest of the family tomorrow morning"

Me: "Enkosi tata... Bendicela ubuza balelephi ooUba"?

Nqobimpi: "Baye bakhethe ukulala nam, bazoziswa kuwe ksasa"

Me: "Okay thank you"

Nqobimpi: "Have a good one"

I smiled faintly as Nqaba led me by hand to my room.

Hey what a room yangathi ndikulo Landilee Kapa. Nqaba just put the luggage in and opened the covers for me helping in laying out the extra blanket on top of the cover. I was still standing on the doorway, star-struck yiyo yonke lento... kuphele tu no buthongo.

Beast: "Babe..."?

Me: "Hm"?

Beast: "Izolala kaloku"

Me: "Hamba bra I'll be fine"

He sighed...

Beast: "Baby"

Me: "I don't think ndiyafuna ukulala like right now and I know you have somewhere to be"

Beast: "Okay, ndithi ufunantoni Ku Florence? Something that will help you sleep"

Me: "Chamomile tea. Please"

He walked out...

I got in bed and closed my eyes for a minute. How did we get here though? Like, this whole thing was in fact tiring...I thought ndizophumla when I got to the other side kanti ndisezonyonyoba ezinzulwini zobusuku. The inner being in me wanted to handle this Ghost ngokwam kuzophela yonke le mfitshimfitshi, but I had to trust my husband in this. Like... I HAD to, I didn't want to but I had to.

Beast: "Here's your tea"

Me: "Thanks"

He put it next to me and waited for me to open my eyes, I just looked at the ceiling, he sat next to me holding my hand.

Beast: "I'll fix this. I promise you that"

Me: "I trust you. With my life"

He kissed me and walked back out, I had my tea ndazama ukulala. Ekuseni I was woken up by a nun seriously? A whole freaken nun? With that freaky black and white uniform! She had brought my kids but akathethi. She just made gestures and smiles... qha. I concluded that she was dumb ke.

Me: "Anise bahle, animkhumbuli umama wenu"?

Uve: "Vasile thina wutan'khulu"

Me: "Univase ngokwakhe"?

Uve: "Ewe, ebhafuyakhe enkuuuulu ofana nepool yako Uve pha kude"

Uba: "Uzohlala apha nawe mamam"?

Me: "Yes"

Uba: "Uph'tatakhoyena"?

Me: "Usemsebenzini"

Uba: "Hayini utatakho! Yawamba eselenzini yakhe nalapha kude?"

Uve: "Zobuya nini kengoku"?

Me: "Andimazi nje"

Uba: "Heee! Yafuna umbona tan'khuluwam mamam"?

Me: "I saw him last night, have you guys eaten"?

Uve: "Yes ma"

Uba: "Mbonile phi tan'khuluwam?"

Now I had to explain the whole thing Ku Uba, past ten, I woke up to make the bed then I bathed, leaving the two playing on the bed. I then got dressed in a comfortable, decent dress and pumps thinking that I might actually need to see the other people. I wasn't gonna lock myself up in the room imini yonke... Besides, I wanted to see umama womzi (that's if umnye ) maybe she'd have a better knowledge of the strange pains I was occasionally feeling. I took a deep breath as I contemplated on whether to go out of the room or not...Then I heard a knock. I went to open...

There she was, smiling warmly.

Paulina: "Good morning Mrs Gwala"

I smiled back...

She looked hippy, fresh and maybe ten to fifteen years younger than her husband. But I wasn't in a place to judge. Mdala nala Nqaba kum.

Me: "Good morning ma'am"

Her: "Ma'am? Oh my goodness, please call me Nana"

I nod, still smiling.

Her: "I came to fetch you, we're having breakfast in the garden"

Me: "Oh...okay"

She poked her neck behind me...

Her: "Juniors"??



Uve came running...

Juniors? Wow.

She picked him up, taking Uba by hand and led the way. Thank God it was shorter than lebesize ngayo ikhe yaqala elounge. We got there, the kids joined the rest (about twelve of them) playing in swings and slides. In my head ndithi: hehThixo ndingayimela le ye playland in my backyard? The noise they were making on the merry-go-round, we walked a short distance from them and then I saw our breakfast table. There were three other women there chatting lively and laughing...

Paulina introduced me to them..

Her: "This is Nqaba's wife Luthando or you can call her Trina its much easier, right darling"?

I just nod, undwebile nanku umfazi!!!

Her: "Great, this is Aunt Chimeze, Lornà, and Ugo... they are my sister-wives."  
Ndothukela ngaphakathi...polygamy e peaceful kanjeyana uyenza njani latata?  
Rhaaa u Nqaba angakhe aqale azombhele ingcwaba k'qala! Yhu!

## 512

#Lwandiso

I had the key to Ta Beast's apartment so when I gotto Jo'burg I went to dust off here and there, ndatshayela and opened the windows because...I was hoping to bring a friend over for dinner now. Late lunch cannot be six-seven'ish. When I was done I arranged to be taken to Mpumalanga to drop off the chankura... When I saw the big guy, for a moment I almost shivered in my pants. Le chap ligintsa right through, his presence alone had become darker and dangerous...

Andayazi kutheni ndasuka ndamtatazelela and he could feed off my fear. He could feel it.

Beast: "Is this all of it"?

Me: "Tes. Twelve briefcases, still locked. Haven't been touched"

Beast: "Thank you"

Three guys carried them to their jet...

Beast: "I trust you're handling my assets carefully there"

Me: "I'm trying my best... your brothers are helpful too"

Beast: "Hm. Brothers"

He said that with a smirk

Me: "Kuhle no Sihle, your brothers"

He looked at me... a deep, dark yet stern look

Beast: "Let me repeat myself Titus: I said, I trust that YOU are handling my assets carefully there"

Me: "Yes ta Beast. I'm doing my best"

Beast: "In such cases I'd advise you to do more than your best. Plan ahead, be on your toes and trust no one"

Me: "Noted"

Beast: "That's all I wanna hear. Thank you for these..."

I just nod, he signaled the salutation and walked away... I called after him: "How's your wife coping"? He stopped then turned...

Beast: "She'll be fine"

Me: "I trust you'll do everything in your power to protect her. Right"?

Beast: "You have no other choice but to trust me"

I nod and walked away. There was something dark about this guy... he made me feel like a whimp. I returned to his apartment and freshened up, ordered a lot of food (and just two carry packs of booze for myself) and took a power nap. I needed it. I actually needed a bottle of Hennessy... Andiyifuni into yokoyika enyindoda the way endoyike ngayo la Ta Beast earlier. Fifteen minutes past six Libhongo called...

Me: "Hm"?

Libo: "Don't tell me you're sleeping. Or did you cancel"?

Me: "Hey Libo... No we're still on. I just took a power nap"

Libo: "Oh... you must be really tired though. Why don't we reschedule for tomorrow"?

Me: "No don't worry about me I'll be wherever you want me in a flash, anyway I'm returning to PE tonight"

Libo: "Ooh, hookay. I'm closing up the boutique ngokuso ufuna sidibanepi"?

Me: "Are you driving"?

Libo: "No"

Me: "Ndilinde at the boutique I'll pick you up in a few"

Libo: "Sharp"

I quickly washed my face, fa-fa nje i-cologne ene mouth wash then I drove to town. I went past KFC for a Very Berry Krusher then I stopped in front of her, she got in... Kanene How did Vince let go of her? What was going on in his head? She looked her ass in that dress! Damn!

Libo: "Hey"

Me: "Hey... I sure do look a little underdressed"

She looked at my shorts and laughed

Me: "Wasuke wandihleka uLibhongo"

Libo: "Kaloku andiyazi siyaphi and if ubona mna this is how I practically dress on a daily basis"

Me: "You lie"!

Libo: "And jeans of course but bekushushu namhlanje so..."

Me: "Are you somehow walking around err'day hoping to bump onto Vince and make him jealous? Or maybe, make him regret why he let go of you? OR... you just want him back"?

She burst out laughing, her laughter wass so loud and ratchet ingathi yeka Bonang.

Libo: "No, no and...Definitely No. This is just me being me andiyenzeli mntu yonke lento"

Me: "So you say there's no man you're tryna please"?

Libo: "Soso you're nosy rhaa!"

Now was my turn to laugh...

Me: "Fair enough! I only know landawoyo Vinceke apha for good meat"

Libo: "Yho ha.a I'm not in the mood for fake people please"

Me: "Well I have food endlini enough for the both of us or you can alternatively choose a plek ngokwakho ke I'm game"

Libo: "Kuphi endlini"?

Me: "Kwa ta Beast"

Libo: "As in... yhu Soso awoyiki?"

I gave aside look with a bit of smile...

I didn't wanna laugh at that. She obviously believed he's dead...

Just like everyone else.

Libo: "Don't gimme that look"

Me: "You're too old to believe in ghost stories bra"

Libo: "Whatever! Ikhona inyama pha"?

Me: "Yes ma'am"

Libo: "Ngcono siyekhona but you must know uzandigodusa"

My response was just a smile as I drove to the apartment, parked and carried her handbag for her, I'm a gentleman like that homie when we got inside she removed her heels and flopped on the couch with a loud sigh...

Me: "Long day"?

Libo: "Yhu this was the longest of all long days. Mxm if bend'sekhaya ngendi khulula le bhodi. Yerr"

Ndothuka ndamjonga she rolled her eyes at me ndasuka ndamhleka such realness though? I warmed up the food I had bought earlier, gqiba ndakuzisa konke e-lounge along with the drinks.

Me: "I see a smile creeping upon your face"

Libo: "I see chicken salad... Very thoughtful"

Me: "Soso takes a point"

She just laughed satya sancokola about general information while watching a movie, occasionally she'd laugh and her head would land on my shoulder, then as if reality kicked back in she'd quickly remove it may be because of embarrassment, blood gushing to her cheeks enabling her natural blush to glow. Wait... what am I saying?

The movie still playing, I popped a can for myself yaphela in a flash so ndangena kweyesibini ndathi chu, I still had to drive her home... eyam ne Bhayi wasn't necessarily a "must". I could sleep here and fly out k'sasa.

Libo: "Ukuvimba akufani nawe"

Me: "You're working tomorrow"

Libo: "And you're not"?

Me: "Akho wine or champagne though"

Libo: "You have two carry packs in front of you: Heineken and Strongbow"

I laughed...nanku umntu ufuna unxila midweek bethuna.

Me: "Libo please khayeke, let's just finish the movie ndikugoduse. It's getting late,"

Libo: "That's bull... but you can take me home ngoku xakucaba ndikudikile"

Me: "That's not wha-"

She was already taking her shoes with her bag in one hand, I quickly grabbed her wrist xa ezovula emnyango.

Me: "That's not what I meant... I'm sorry it came out that way,"

Her eyes dropped to her wrist, I slowly let go of it and snaked my arm around her waist, I heard her gasp but I didn't give her a chance. I kissed her right that moment and she responded with so much hunger and passion... Then she pushed me back a bit.

Libo:" ...Soso"

Me: "Don't over think it"

Libo: "We can't do this..."

I kissed her again, deeper this time. She moaned, almost grabbing my neck... But I ended up taking a step backwards.

Libo: "Soso, you have a girlfriend bra, please. Let's consider iifeelings zomntanabantu"

Me: "I have a girlfriend, I'll handle her but right now I want you"

I took two steps forward so we almost breathed the same air.

Me: "Libo, I'm not promising you a forever but I am promising you right now that tonight, if you allow me, I'm gonna make so much love to you, ulibale noba you've ever been hurt before"

I kissed her, cupping her face...

Me: "I just need you to allow me... That's all"

That came out as a whisper but she heard every word because in a second, I heard the shoes and bag fall and her hands circled my neck as our lips locked.

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We kissed for a while, obviously the most important place I wanted to grab was her behind but not immediately. I continued playing around with her, our tongues in collision it actually felt right and then eventually I grabbed her behind, along with one boob and to my satisfaction she let out a moan. I broke away from the kiss, put the Heineken on the coffee table ndabuyela kuye. I think she was shocked by her own reaction to this situation, the look in here yes was of shock and fear... But I could still tell she was horny.

Me: "Do you want me to take you home"?

Libo: "I've been cheated on before...I know how it feels. I don't want Lindo to have low self-esteem ngenxa yam"

Me: "Uzova ngawe"?

Libo: "The truth always comes out. One way or another, it always does"  
Ndakhe ndathula...

Libo: "Honestly speaking if I could erase her image from my mind right now, I would. But with every kiss and every touch... I see her bubbly face at the back of my mind"

Me: "Ndiyakuva"

Libo: "I'm sorry"

Me: "Don't apologize for expressing your feelings, I understand and I'm sorry for putting you in a difficult position"

Libo: "Yeah"

She checked her time...

Libo: "I should get going... hopefully they haven't locked me out"

Me: "Kokwenu"?

Libo: "Yeah"

Me: "Well... There's a guestroom here if you want you can crash here"

Libo: "I thought you were going to PE tonight"

Me: "I can fly in k'sasa... I won't leave you stranded"

Libo: "Lemme call my cousin first and see if ukhona uzandivulela"

Me: "Sure"

She took her phone and headed to the kitchen what the fuck was that all about? Geez Lwandiso! Landile would laugh his lungs out if he were to hear this and he'd probably talk about it unyaka wonke.

Libo: "Uhm... I hate to do this to you yaz"

Me: "What's up"?

Libo: "My cousin is with her boyfriend... And I only have the house key. Not the one for the gate"

Me: "Then you're crashing here for the night"

Libo: "Thanks"

She uneasily sat down, I went to clean up the guest room, I was gonna sleep in the kids room anyway then I came back to her.

Me: "Why do you look anxious"?

Libo: "I can't go to work with the same dress though... actually never mind. I'll make a plan k'sasa"

Me: "U-sure"?

She nod...

Me: "Oh-kay, let me show you your room then"

She followed behind me, ndambonisa the room then I went to clean-up the lounge and kitchen before heading to my own room. I had to take another shower, a cold ten minutes shower to cool myself down and most proly erase all that just "almost" happened from my memory. The minute I got in bed, my phone rang...

Me: "Baby"

Lindo: "Soso usand'thanda? Like manyhani"?

Me: "Haibo babe yintoni lento undibuzayona? Is everything okay"?

Lindo: "How can everything be okay when you don't communicate with me xa usenza izinto yet you still reckon we're still in a relationship"?

Not this again...

Not now torho...

Me: "Unjani"?

Lindo: "Ndinjani? Ifanba ndinjani xa ucinga wena"?

Me: "How's school"?

Lindo: "Hay fokof man Soso stop patronizing me, what exactly are your intentions? Ithini kanye kanye lento siyenzayo"?

Me: "Lindo"

Lindo: "I feel like undenzela nje i-favour of some sort ngokuba kule relationship nam and I hate that feeling because we both know awundenzeli favour"

Me: "Lindo"

Lindo: "I'm not desperate for love but you know that I love you and you're here exploiting me for that. Kutheni unjena nje Soso? Utheni? Ufumene enyi cherrie with bigger hips and bigger ass? Yilonto ingathi awusandikhathalele"?

Me: "Lindokuhle"

Lindo: "Kanti ndiyakucela yet again, xa udi kiwe ndim itsho so that ndizozazi bandithini ngobomi bam instead of waiting on you"

Me: "Are you gonna gimme a chance to talk"?

Lindo: "No I'm not – if you wanted to talk you should have called me ungalindi mna"

Me: "I called you, wandigcwalisela and hung up on me. Remember"?

Lindo: "Heh, so you want an apology kengoku"?

Me: "Akhange nditsho"

Lindo: "Yazi Lwandiso..."

I immediately put my phone on the pedestal next to the bed faced own ndalala. I wasn't gonna listen to another lecture ndizithele futhu kamnandi mna ndakumphendula angazazi ebeyiqalelani lento. I didn't even sleep yaz, so after about two hours of tossing and turning ndavuka and went to the kitchen ndaphumela elounge ndayogqibezela iibeers zam watching some Sci-Fi movie on low volume ndingabi inconsiderate omnyumntana ephangela k'sasa. I decided to wake Landile up noba uzakundithuka.

Laa: "Yintoni ebsuku? Yintoni"?

Me: "And they say I've got drama for days"

Laa: "Landile ufuna ntoni? Did you see the time"?

Me: "Ucing'ba I'd call you ngephone enexesha and not see the time? Ubuzityile iipilisi"?

Laa: "I'm gonna fucken hang up, what do you want"?

Me: "Andifuni nto I'm just lonely"

Laa: "So is your girlfriend in Cape Town"

Me: "Whose brother are you"?

Laa: "Hayini bethuna nali ithunyelo ezinzulwini zobusuku"

Me: "What were you doing"?

Laa: "I was sleeping Landile, why aren't you sleeping"?



Me: "Uyaxoka uy'thathaphi i-energy yothukisela kanti ubulele. What were you doing"?

Laa: "Lwandiso Titus"

Me: "Ngumntu waphi lowo? Stop trying to run away from the question, kutheni ufresh kangaka nje? Ubusenzani"?

Laa: "Bendifundiswa ukhwela umtshayelo"

I just laughed...

Me: "Awumuncu"

Laa: "On a serious note kengoku, what's up witchu? Why aren't you sleeping? And I know it has nothing to do with work"

Me: "I just had another quarrel with Lindo"

Laa: "Cut her some slack"

Me: "Should have known uzamthethelela yet again. Mxm fucken sellout"

Laa: "Uyaz'bona phof ba u-sexually frustrated"?

I almost choked on my beer...

Me: "Usazelaphi isilungu Lwandiso? Uwafundiswe ngubani lomagama"?

Laa: "I'm gonna ignore that but here's my advice: take a weekend off uzombona. She just wants you to make time for her"

Me: "Okheyi Dr Phil"

Laa: "Take a pillow and cuddle, while some of us get to cuddle with real people. Goodnight"

Me: "Hay yhima, une cherry uqalanini wena"?

Laa: "I love you too"

Me: "Landi-"

He laughed and hung up on me, I was left staring at my phone in shock.

Me: "issalie"!

After a couple of minutes I heard Libo walking down the stairs, I pretended to be focused on the movie, she just walked into the kitchen... I followed with the empty beer bottles kuba ndizakuzi lahla ndiyolala then I bumped onto here phuma with a bottle of water, the water fell ndamcholela.

Me: "I'm sorry"

Libo: "It's cool"

We stood there in utter silence for a whole minute. I tried to walk in, she tried to walkout but we ended up getting in each other's way... this wasn't helping at all

coz she just had a sheet wrapped around and covering her body and my mind had ran a thousand miles already.

Me: "Hay man Libo"

Libo: "But nguwe osendleleni bra"

We both laughed, I stood aside so she stepped out ndatsho ndangena and threw the cans away. Again I turned off all the lights and walked up to the room I was sleeping in...

"Soso"

I turned around...

Libo: "Nd'cela undichargele iphone"

Me: "I'll bring the charger in a minute"

Libo: "Sure"

I went to my room, retreated with the charger and went to knock on her door.

Libo: "Ngena"

I walked in and gave her the charger, then I walked towards the door. I knew she was following me kuba ezovala so I abruptly turned sagilana and our eyes locked.

Me: "There's just one more thing I wanted to give you"

Libo: "Oh-kay... what is that?"

I kissed her pursed lips.

I don't know why we were speaking in whispers.

Libo: "...Soso"

That was no longer a whisper but a sigh which actually made me want more, something about her was very seductive and I knew that if I could evoke some feelings earlier, I could do that nangoku. I cupped her face and kissed her again, this time she gave in. I closed the door and pinned her against it, she lifted up one of her legs and I caught it as I pushed my body closer to hers.

Me: "Are you sure about this"?

She just pulled my head and smashed her lips onto mine...

Uyabathwala abakhe uThixo yazi!

Ngubani owayesazi?

Getting her naked was easy, she wasn't dressed anyway and she let me in so easily, together we travelled to the forbidden land and later fell asleep in each other's arms. I woke up first, something shifted in the depths of my heart. Something I've never felt before, I looked at her natural sleeping beauty...but uVince yi bharu yi wohlukana njani nomntu onjena? She legit knew and understood her body, I could tell by the confidence and comfortability she oozed while we were making love. I stopped myself from looking at her any further, I wore my boxers, took the rest of my clothes that were on the floor ndayovasa in my room, then I went to wake her up...

Libo: "hm"?

Me: "Wake up"

Libo: "Mh"

I walked out and went to get dressed, there were no breakfast items in the house but I knew that if singaphuma apha ngo seven sizokwazi ukutya, then ayotshintsha at the boutique bengekafiki abanye or the other way round coz bavula unine bona. When I was almost done, I went to check on her but she had her head covered. I sat next to her, maybe she was embarrassed about the dealings of the early morning...Women! I slowly uncovered her and our eyes met...

Me: "Vuka kaloku"

Libo: "Yeah...Uhm...sure"

Me: "Ulele kakuhle"?

Libo: "Yeah...you"?

I just kissed her dry lips and kept it for a minute then I retracted, looking into here yes.

Me: "No regrets about earlier this morning, right?"

Libo: "Eish Soso bra..."

Me: "Mh, vasa k'qala we'll talk more during breakfast"

Libo: "Kay"

I walked out ndayo gqibezela then I cleaned up the room and everywhere ndakhupha nomgqomo then I waited for her to finish up. She came out an hour later fully dressed and ready to go...

Me: "Ugqibile"?

Libo: "Yes..."

Me: "Masambeke, we'll have breakfast in town"

Libo: "The uhm... sheets. I removed them from the bed because zizofuna uvaswa"

Me: "Oh, I'll handle that".

Libo: "Sure"

We walked out, got in the car and went to have breakfast kwa Wimpy, she was awfully quiet...

Me: "Libo"?

She lifted here yes...

Me: "Ucingantoni kangaka"?

Libo: "I just have a lot in my mind"

Me: "I know...but what exactly"?

She sighed...and here I thought we had a great night.

Libo: "I won't make time if ndingagoduka ngoku ndiyotshintsha because of e-tolls"

Me: "Mmkay"

Libo: "And...(Sigh) I kinda have mixed emotions about last night. This morning rather"

Me: "Mh"

Libo: "I think its guilt...I dunno, but I think it's just guilt"

Me: "Mh"

Then she drank her coffee...

Me: "Did you enjoy it"?

Libo: "That's beside the point"

Me: "Libo"

Libo: "Soso"

Me: "It's a simple yes or no question: did you enjoy the time we spent together"?

Libo: "Yes I did but that doe-"

Me: "And so did I now that's settled, uLindo as you said is my girlfriend I'll deal with her not you"

Libo: "Hm"

Me: "You have the key to the boutique, right"?

Libo: "Yes"

Me: "Then you'll change there. I'll pay" She looked at me...that "you're kidding" look.

Me: "What"?

Libo: "Do you do this to all your one night stands"?

Me: "You're an exception"

Libo: "Wow"

Ndatya kemnake, what answer did she expect though? She asked me a question ndamphendula. I prefer honesty at all times and I give honesty too as raw as it is most times, hence I ignored Lindo last night because I know I'll give her just one answer ahambe ezibuza ukuba ungubani. Yes I love her but I don't like being bombarded with the same questions oko, the insinuation, the exhausting insecurities, the tantrums... It's endless. Maybe I should take Landile's advice... Speaking of that one uTitus uqomile! Iyandiphosisa ngezinto lento yalamaxhego mabini afanayo aseCongo alwela izikhundla zobugintsa, stru! When we were done, I paid sahamba. We got to the boutique sangena and closed the doors since it was way before their opening time...

Libo: "Uzandilinda nditshintshe kengoku"?

Me: "Not necessarily but I'd love to see that one piece on you"

Libo: "Jumpsuit"

Me: "What's that"?

Libo: "It's called a jumpsuit"

I just shrugged with a smile, she must just be glad I didn't say yirompa qha. She went to change, keeping the shoes she worn yesterday... After about twenty minute sengaphumi I went to knock on the fitting room door.

Libo: "Mmh"?

Me: "Kanti umntu onxiba into enye uthatha how long"?

Libo: "I'm also properly applying my make-up kaloku bhuti"

Me: "Heh waah"!

She laughed...

I just smiled and went to wait for her on the other side. While waiting, I texted Lindo: Good morning Lonwabele usuku lwakho, Lwandiso loves you. I knew she proolly looked at it with a "mxm" escaping her lips but that's fine I kinda do deserve it.

"...I'm done"

I lifted my eyes ndasuka ndangathi ndinombilini, I actually couldn't explain how I was feeling.

Libo: "You don't like it"?

Me: "Umhle"

Libo: "Are you sure? Your first reaction..."

Me: "I'm star struck mfondini...You really are beautiful"

A smile crept upon to her face, she actually glowed. I got up from my seat and went to the counter kuba ndizobhatala, she got behind the counter and processed the payment.

Libo: "Thanks"

Me: "No thank you, for making my time worthwhile in this concrete jungle"

Libo: "As if"

We both laughed...I removed four hundred rands (notes) from my wallet ndazisonga and put them in her palm ndasivala isandla sakhe.

Libo: "Ha.a keSoso what is this now"?

Me: "Mali ye lunch"

Libo: "I have money to buy my own lunch thank you"

Me: "I know that, but I'm adding kule yakho"

Libo: "Soso I don't want your money, please"

Me: "No problem, uzuphise ngayo omnka kwam"

Libo: "You do-"

Me: "And I have to leave you... should I call you ofika kwam? Or you need time to ease the guilt"?

Libo: "A text will do; just to know uhambe njani"

I smiled, kissed her cheek and walked out, drove to the airport and left the car to be picked up by one of Beast's people later on. Instead of going to PE I decided to go to Cape Town, immediately after I landed I took a cab home not to my flat but when I got there bekungekho bantu luckily I had my own key. I made alcohol (specifically: rum) infused smoothie, ndaqhiza and went to the pool with it and my phones. Instead of texting, I called Libhongo...

Libo: "What happened to texting"?

Me: "I wanted to hear your voice"

Libo: "Tyhini Soso"

Me: "Ndirongo ndaw'ni"?

Libo: "Uzothini umntu wakho xa uzofunana namazwi ethu"?

Me: "Uyayazi likhona ixesha lokuba kufunwe elakhe ilizwinje"

Libo: "You live in your own world shame"

Me: "I didn't thank you about last ni- I mean this morning"

Libo: "I'm trying to forget, I suggest you do the same"

Me: "Trying to forget what? How? Is that even possible"?

Libo: "Try it uzobona izosebenza"

Me: "Who are you tryna convince Libhongo? Me or yourself"? Wathula...

Me: "Yazi given the opportunity, I'd do it all over again, and again and again"

Libo: "Don't say that bra...please"

Me: "In fact nothing beats the moment you dug your nails in my arms, calling my name between clenched teeth as you orgasmed for the umpteenth time"

Libo: "Bra...Don't do this. Please or I'll just hang up on you"

Me: "I'll be a popular in your city uqalanguku, please don't be a stranger"

She laughed and just hung up.

I knew I got her right where I needed her.

"Ufike nini"?

I looked up, there was my twin, ndavuyela nje ukumduba.

Me: "Khawume Lwandiso, une cherry and I don't know about that?"

Laa: "You want pizza or burgers?"

Me: "Lento ifunwa nguwe, now answer me. Ngubani lomntu ukuvumileyo"?

Laa: "So that's burgers and soda... khome ndiyabuya"

Hehehe! The Landile Titus rubbish yasuka yandibandisa ndifuna iindaba .

## **515**

Landile came back with the food so I got out of the pool satya...

Laa: "What's really going on with you and your girlfriend"?

Me: "I don't know"

Laa: "Do you think you still love her"?

Me: "I think so...But..."

Laa: "But what"?

Me: "I think I should let her go...it's not working ngoku instead ndizakuzibona ndingumntu endingenguye and at some point she'll end up being hurt and I don't want that"

Laa: "So you're not even gonna attempt to work on it,nizokwehlukana nje just like that"?

Me: "The only possible way we could possibly try to work through it is for me to be here oko which is not gonna happen"

Laa: "Usamthanda seriously lomntwana mfethu"?

Me: "Landile I'm not like you, I don't have to constantly be up in your face for you to know that I love you. Yes when I have time you'll know without a doubt but naxandingenalo ixesha the least I expect is for you to understand"

Laa: "You don't expect women to understand ke Soso that's just that. You have to be present...emotionally present emntwini wakho"

Me: "When last did I see mom? Is she constantly blowing up the gasket kuba engandiboni? No"

Laa: "Faith and Lindokuhle are two different names belonging to two different individuals. Don't compare them"

Me: "Heh...Uqalenini Landile ukubangu Doctor Phil? Okanye uprektizela apha kum"?

Laa: "Abantu abangakwaziyo bazakuthi undim, so I have to school you boy boy, unghambe undihlalaza"

Me: "Bendikhe ndatsho ba umuncu yaz"

He laughed, yintoni ehlekisayo kulento ndiyithethayo?

Laa: "So you're here for how long? And why are you here, not at your crib"?

Me: "I'm here for as short as I possibly can; I wanted time to think before ndiye Ku Lindo"

Laa: "Is it safe for you to be here"?

Me: "Ghost is on his way to Congo and the rest are just hood-rats tryna be gangsta so akhobungozi bungako. But, you can never be really sure"

Laa: "Mamakho uzofika nge weekend"

Me: "Unfortunately uzofika sendimnkile"

Laa: "Hm"

After eating I went to take a nap in my room but decided to call Lindo first...

Lindo: "Hm"?

Me: "U-grand"?

Lindo: "What do you want Lwandiso torho"



Me: "I want to see you"

Lindo: "You know where to find me"

Me: "okaykendiyeza"

Lindo: "Wait... you're in Cape Town"?

Me: "Yes"

Lindo: "Why am I only hearing this now? Ufike nini? Uphi"?

Me: "Ndiyafika ngoku"

Lindo: "Oh"

Me: "Sewuphumile eklasini"?

Lindo: "Ewe I'm on my way to the flat right now"

Me: "Okay, I'll be there in a few"

Lindo: "Kay"

We hung up.

Eish bekungona ingathi ndine hang-over, my body and mind needed a lot of resting time but I got up ndanxiba and took the car keys ndaphuma. I went to buy food k'qala then I drove to the crib... She was with two of her friends.

Me: "Molweni"

Them: "Ta Soso...yhu awunqabe"

Me: "Ibalulekile lonto ungasoloko unguphuhlu ebusweni babantu dekucaba uyabadika abantu"

They laughed...

I put the food in the kitchen and went over to the bedroom where Lindo was packing impahla yakhe. I tried hugging her, she stepped away.

Me: "Kuyiwaphi"?

Lindo: "I'm moving back to rez"

Me: "Oh... I thought you liked it here"

Lindo: "Thought so too, but now I don't"

Me: "Mh, mkay"

I sat on the bed and just watched her, wapakisha wagqiba then she went to give her bags to her friends zahamba. She came back wahlala phantsi and looked me straight in the eyes.

Lindo: "Guess I should be grateful that you finally arrived after so many unheard cries because ke ubuzova ngabantu that I'm no longer living here"

Me: "Ndiyabona"

Lindo: "I'm tired mna Soso I won't lie"

Me: "Mh"

Lindo: "And the most painful part is finally realizing that you never actually forgave me for aborting though at first you kinda made me believe you have...your actions as of late speak otherwise"

Ndathula...

Lindo: "I'm not gonna force you to be with me and I apologized ngalanto so I'm not gonna dwell in the past and live in regret because right now, just like when I did it, I still feel it was the right thing to do. Ngendiphi ngoku with umntana wakho while you're busy living life to the fullest in Port Elizabeth"?

Me: "Hm"

Lindo: "So I've finally decided to tap back into my pride and dignity, and give you what you want: your space"

Me: "Mh"

Lindo: "If we continue, we'll continue. If not, then it's still cool. Yonke lonto ixhomekeke kuwe ke"

Me: "I see"

Wathula...

SO I guessed she was done.

Me: "I appreciate your honesty in all of this and I'm glad I caught you today..."

Lindo: "Mh"

Me: "I should guess we are on the same page because I came here for us to talk about the future, going forward but I was kinda afraid of hurting your feelings"

Lindo: "I'm grown, and momma raised a soldier"

Me: "I can see that..."

Lindo: "So you mean this is it"?

Me: "It looks like it"

Lindo: "Okay...Uhm...Okay"

Suddenly there were glasses emehlweni wakhe.

Kanti wasn't she breaking up with me a second ago?

Lindo: "Is there someone else"?

Me: "No"

Lindo: "I don't believe you"

Me: "I'm telling you the truth"

Lindo: "Then why ungazange undibize eBhayi oko wayohlala phaya"?

Me: "Ku dangerous and I was tryna protect you that's why; Trina no longer has a house apho besiqhele ukuyakhona, yatsha. I lived in a bnb for a couple of days after she left, ndisando zanyelwa i-flat ngu Landile not so long ago so I'm still settling in"

Lindo: "So you didn't think I'd understand if you communicated that with me"?

I breathed...

Nantsi lento bendingayifuni. This digging deep and trying to see who was to blame while I knew I played my part she must realize without me pointing it out that she played hers too.

Lindo: "You know we emotionally lost each other way before now neh"? I just looked at her, I wasn't about to confirm into endingayaziyo mna.

Lindo: "And I thought I was being paranoid but kuyacaca ba I should have listened to my instinct kwangokuya. Maybe I wouldn't be feeling like this"

Me: "I thought you actually wanted things to be like this"

Lindo: "Haibo are you serious? Like really serious"?

Me: "Lindo I caught you leaving my house without informing me, a minute ago you brokeup with me not in so many words but you did...xandikungqinela uyachiphiza"

Lindo: "You were not supposed to ukundingqinela dammit"

Me: "Haibo"!

Lindo: "Umuncu lomhlobo na Lwandiso? I wanted you to beg me not to go, promise me that we'll work things out, reassure me that usandithanda. Is that so hard to register? Ayo rocket science mos"

Me: "Lindo uyayazi xa umntu ethetha nam they speak what they mean and mean what they speak, andinalo iixesha lo guess'a ba when you say this, you actually mean something else"

Lindo: "That's because you don't care kaloku because if you cared one bit you'd know when a girl says this, she actually means this"

Me: "Andiyo ou KaThabisa Lindo ndingeyo ou Ka Kgothalo. Ukuba nithi xanithetha ngathi niqhathane ngendlela ebekumele iirelationships zingayo I'm not gonna be part of that. When I have time, when I'm in a good space, when everything is smooth you know how I treat you. You know better than anyone how much I love you, how I spoil you but ngethutyana endithe ndaxakeka ngalo you suddenly doubt me. Don't get me wrong I understand two months is a long time but I find

your attitude suddenly strange because you weren't like this ndise Portugal a time longer than two months"

Lindo: "Portugal is different, ulapha ngoku just a couple of hours away but kunzima nobuya just one weekend?"

Me: "How is it different? I was working in Portugal, I'm still working in PE. How is that different"? She sighed... Waphakama, I followed behind her.

Lindo: "Fighting and arguing about this is actually pointless now. You've already made your choice"

Me: "I'm sorry for hurting your feelings and wasting your time holding on to nothing"

Lindo: "Yakhe yayi something before...so it's cool"

Me: "Can I drop you off"?

She nod looking the other way, I took the bag of meal sangena emotweni then I took her to the rez ndamnika okwakutya besizokutya before we broke up.

Me: "One last hug"?

She hugged me, I kissed her forehead and watched her go.

## **516**

Me: "Good morning"

Aunt: "Bonjour, hévousavezl'airtrèsenceintequand êtes-uoudû?" (Good morning, hey you look heavily pregnant when are you due?) I looked at Paulina for assistance...

Nana: "She's asking when are you due"?

Me: "In a month or two" Nana translated to them in English satya then those nuns attended to all the children. I later went to take an afternoon nap, I actually loved the peace exhumed in this house it was actually relaxing. I slept until almost dinner time, ovuka kwam I decided to go look for other people so I roamed around the house untill heard voices...Familiar voices so I stopped to listen:

Beast:"Pouvez-vous traitez avec votre fils, s'il vous plaît?" (Can you deal with your son, please?)

Nqobimpi: "Pourquoi? Avez-vous soudainement peur de lui maintenant qu'il vient réellement?" (Why? Are you suddenly afraid of him now that he's actually coming?)

Beast: "Non papa, j'ai vraiment peur de ce que je vais lui faire si j'en occupe celui.  
Si vous aimez toujours quelqu'un d'entre nous, peu importe qui vous aimez  
... Traitez avec lui" (No dad, I'm actually afraid of what I'll do to him if I deal with him  
myself. If you still love anyone of us, doesn't matter who you love... Deal with  
him) Nqabayomzi was fuming and his father was as chilled as Beast would be. I  
quickly walked past that room and found Lornà playing with the children, I stood  
by the door and just watched until one of my sons looked up and saw me, he got  
up and ran to the door pulling my hand to join them. I walked in and sat on a sofa  
in the corner, heeee uUba was khumshing like nobody's business I was surprised. I  
suddenly felt jealous of the two older ones who spoke fluent French I imagined  
Uba and Uve conversating like that in SA .

Uba: "Mama"

Me: "Baby"

Uba: "Utatakho kabuyanga selenzini"?

Me: "I think ukhona yaz"

Uba: "Asiye kuye. Afuna yena mna"

Me: "He'll come to you when he's done, he's busy with tan'khulu"

Uba: "With tan'khulu"?

Me: "Ewe ndoda"

He smiled and ran out, I bet he knew where his grandad normally hung out. I just  
prayed that it was safe for him to go there...

"Baby"

I looked up, Nqaba and his son were at the door so I got up and went to them,  
Uba went to join his brother and the rest. Guess he just wanted to see his dad  
azoxola. His dad and I got to my room and sat on the bed...

Me: "U sharp"?

Beast: "I'm okay, bakuphethe kakuhle oomama balapha"?

Me: "Talking about that..."

He laughed at my dramatic exclamation.

Me: "Suhleka baby man"

Beast: "Okay sorry"

Me: "Please promise me you'll never even attempt to think of getting a second, or  
third or fourth wife"

Waphela yintsini lo bhuti

Me: "Baby this is not funny torho, I wouldn't survive"

Beast: "But baby, aren't they surviving"?

Me: "Braaaa! Look at them, they've obviously accepted this"

Beast: "Communication is key at all times, and kaloku umntu ungena apha eyazi into azoyenza nento azifakakuyo"

Me: "Good thing aw'zange undixelele ngasithembu kemnake AND awuzondixelela sesilapha phakathi tu"

Beast: "But admit it, baphila grand and in peace"

Me: "I agree but..."

Beast: "Kutheni unomona baby? What happened to people shall share"?

Me: "Ooh? That means you wouldn't mind having brother husbands' nawe"

Beast: "Brother husb- bazohlalaphi"?

Me: "Kule ndawo bazaw'be behlala kuyo abafazibakho kaloku"

Beast: "Hay man baby siright thina soy'thu"

Me: "Hay'mntu wam si enough shame. Yhu. Ngomphi lo ebese China"?

Beast: "Ngu Nana"

Me: "Mnk, unana unomakhulu ongu Nana"

He just smiled at me...creepy.

Me: "And that"?

Beast: "You're comfortable here"

Me: "Maybe it's because I have not been in your dad's presence"

Beast: "He'll be joining you guys for dinner"

Me: "Uzabe ungekho wena"?

Beast: "No...I have to be on the lo-excuse me"

His phone was ringing so he cut that sentence short to answer it, I just rubbed my belly in waiting. It wasn't long when I heard him blurting out: "Vous feriez mieux devons réveiller! Laminuteoù Ghost metlespiedsdanscetteville, j'aibesoinde savoir. Jenepeuxpastepayerpourfairetontravail quejefinisparfairemoi-mêmeàcausedeton incompetence" (You guys better wake up! The minute Ghost sets foot in this town, I need to know. I can't be paying you to do your jobs which I end up doing myself because of your incompetence) Nqaba had shocked me ke ngalento yakhe nesis French asikhupha ngeempumlo because akazange akhe abhude nakanye endlini infact ever since I've known him...yazi isenokwenzeka kusekuninzi endingekakwazi ngalomntu ndinaye. He hung up abruptly and sat back down wakhe wathula for a few minutes...

Beast: "Ghost has crossed the borders"

Me: "Mh"

Beast: "I have to go now"

Me: "Good luck"

He kissed me on the lips, then the forehead gqiba waphuma. Now I wasn't in the mood for dinner with the family knowing my husband could be fighting for his life, money and legacy with his own twin. Having a family dinner in such a situation didn't feel right, it felt like a celebration of some sort. I lay there until I was called to join the rest of the elders and as expected, Sir Gwala Senior welcomed me.

Nqobimpi: "Unjani umazalawakho pha eMonti"

I cleared my throat he's asking of another woman who happens to be his ex and the mother of his first borns in the midst of his wives? Great.

Me: "Uyaphila tata"

Nqobimpi: "Bendikhe ndancokolelwa ngoo Uve ukuba ninabo abanye abantwana that you left behind"

Me: "Owe no Sino, ayingobethu but they've been living with us"

Nqobimpi: "I believe omnye ngoka Ntando"

Me: "Ewe tata, uOwentando"

Nqobimpi: "lo uyintombi ngoka bani"?

Me: "Ngoku Anelisa"

Nqobimpi: "Anelisa...Anelisa....UAnelisa intombi Ka Bonginkosi"?

Eish le conversation was heading somewhere else and I wasn't in the mood to discuss my dad's shenanigans here.

Me: "Ewe tata" Helaughed...Mnk!

Nqobimpi: "Unjani yena uyihlo? I heard he's been out for a while now"

Me: "I heard too"

Nqobimpi: "Ah i-soldier emadodeni. Your father was the man mntanam, hahaha he was the man I tell you. Qha ukunyoluka komntu kuyamthumelela umntu lowo esihogweni"

Haike ndathula mna... andiyingene yonke le athetha ngayo.

Seeing that I went silent on him, he shifted the conversation to his wives, aunt Chimeze being the first wife and Nana obviously the last or youngest. Bancokola bonke behleka...

Me: "Oh my God"

That exact moment everything stopped, they all looked at me.

Nana: "Honey are you okay"?

I couldn't believe what had just happened, ndasuka ndoyika ba ndizayiqala ngaphi le into indehlelayo engekho no Nqaba.

Nqobimpi: "Luthando yintoni? Thetha mntanam, uyalunywa"?

Me: "My...water...just...broke"

Immediately, all four women jumped to my attention, they walked me to my room and closed it. Lornà was more nervous than the rest as she tried calling the family doctor while Ugo helped me undress...

Lornà: "Aunt Chim, Doctor Julia says she'll be here in an hour"

Aunt: "Nana run the bath so long"

Me: "Bath"?

Ugo: "Yes"

Me: "I bathed already"

Ugo: "It's not for bathing you, it's for water birth"

Ndavela ndalunywa into ekhaw'lezileyondakuvale waternton-ntoni.

Ugo: "We all gave birth through water birth don't look so worried, it's safe and aunt Chim knows what she's doing"

Me: "She's gonna be delivering the baby"?

Lornà: "She's gonna be assisting the doctor, she's a midwife by profession"

Aphela amathemba esibhedlele tu kengoku I had no choice but to trust these people but kuyo yonke lento I couldn't ignore the fear of giving birth to twins again (hypothetically speaking) and then bambe omnye umntana wam bandinike one, just like they did with Ntando and Nqaba.

I couldn't think past that fear.

## **517**

Thirty minutes later, I was in the bathtub with just Aunt Chimeze in the bathroom and the other women were waiting for instruction I guessed, in the bedroom, I wanted to call my husband to come back home abekhona but I knew he couldn't.



That would distract him and would most probably sabotage his plan, whatever the plan was.

Aunt: "Trina, you should breathe...try slow breaths. They always help" she said. I was teary, I wanted my husband.

Me: "I need to call my husband. Please"

Aunt: "You don't need your husband right now, all you need to do is to breathe. Work with me here, try to breathe in and out slowly. That will help you relax," I tried hey...but I'd gotten so used to having Nqaba next to me in almost everything that it was literally impossible for me to concentrate on this breathing task I was asked to do. Then a white woman walked in with a Congolese youthful looking woman...

Doc: "Good evening MrsG..."

Aunt: "Julia, thank you for coming in at such short notice... this is Trina, Nqaba's wife"

Doc: "Nice to meet you"

I just nod...

Bekungona ndilunywayo nyhani kengoku ndavela ndanomsindo ndane cheek into ekhawlezileyo. She set out in the open all her tools waqala umsebenzi, she did the diameter checks to see how many centimetres were left...

Doc: "Oops, I think I just touched a head"

Siriyasli?

Doc: "Okay Trina, let's do this. In the count of five, push"

I was ready.

I was ready to get this over and done with already. They counted down, I pushed. I pushed...and pushed... yep, and pushed until I heard a "dyumpu" sound of something dropping in the water followed by a soft lazy cry. A tear left my eye, I was relieved. Doctor Julia touched my stomach, I knew from the look in her eyes that I wasn't done. Paulina walked in to take the baby to Julia's assistant who was waiting with a small bath tub to assist in bathing the baby and then I started pushing again, a second baby came out, more lively than the first one... And I was asked to do the final push and to every body's surprise: there was a third baby. I broke down immediately after delivering the last one, I was in my rightful minds I knew I'd given birth to three healthy babies and I couldn't believe it myself. How could that be possible? I obviously wondered bebehleli njani in there?

After a couple of stitchings and proper bathing I got dressed and went to my bed. All three of them were lying there so small and cute, I couldn't hold back my tears, I was so overwhelmed and in pain but mostly I was excited and sad at the same time that baby wasn't there to witness the bliss and joy I was basking in. I sat on the bed almost lying down but actually supporting my back with a continental pillow, Lornà sat next to me and gave me the first child to breastfeed. As soon as I gave him the nipple, he started suckling until they told me to stop and move on to the second and third one. They were dressed in warm fluffy rompas... Nana had the first one, Ugo the second one and Lornà the third one; they were trying to burp them bazobalalisa. I dozed off ndisababukele. This was so shocking and overwhelming, we didn't get the sona because we wanted to be surprised and surprised we were... well I was. Because daddy wasn't there to see these little miracles he made with mommy. Aunt Chimeze woke me up to change, breastfeed the kids and eat. I was surprisingly very hungry but I couldn't bring myself to eat solids...

Me: "Aunty"

She was cleaning one of the babies' eyes

Aunt: "Madame"

Me: "Can I please get a smoothie, even if it's just vegetable soup"

Aunt: "Okay, I'll get that in a minute"

I put the tray next to me while I drank the coffee that had accompanied my meal.

Lornà walked in just as I was getting off the bed to go change the sanitary towel, on my return, my father-in-law was there smiling from ear to ear for his new name-carriers.

Nqobimpi: "Ngendisithi uyihlo ndakumthengela inqawe ntombam, qha ndamgqibela engatshayi"

I just smiled and got next to my sons.

Yep, three set of boys.

Nqobimpi: "Kuthwa awukaba thiyi"

Me: "Bendicinga ulinda utata wabo tata"

Nqobimpi: "Ooh hay kuhle, hey uzise uvuyo no chulumanco kwelikhaya. Zange yasehlela le nyewe yamadoda amathathu ngaxeshanye"

I blushed...the old man was really happy, I was happy. And afraid.

Ndizobakhuliselaphi ababantwana kulamagintsa mangaka ebomini bethu no

Nqaba? I couldn't even make out ba lo tata uvuya kangaka uvuyiswa bubukho babantwana okanye kubona ukuba obubomi bakhe bunabantu abazokubuhuba? People who were going to keep his name relevant in the "game" for a long time? I looked at them and wondered "ndingaba fihlaphi Thixo?"

Nana: "You know you'll have to make birth certificates for them here, right"?

Me: "Here"?

Ugo: "Yes, they were born here so they are actual Congolese citizens"

I looked at their husband, hay kaloku he must organize something or someone in SA for this. My South African children couldn't have Congolese birth certificates.

Nqobimpi: "Don't worry about that right now, just enjoy the moment"

Yep, he understood my look.

I knew uzakwenza iplan noba uyenze nini, njani.

Nqobimpi: "I hope you have communicated your food preferences"

Aunt: "Yes I've attended to her papa don't worry"

Nqobimpi: "Alright then, I'll leave you to rest"

Me: "Enkosi tata"

He left us, his wives later followed him out leaving Chimeze who said she'd sleep on the mattress to watch over me but I told her to go andinike her cellphone number I'll call her when I need help wahamba engafuni ncam but linsisted. I need a moment with these little people. In the wee hours of the morning I heard the door slowly cracking open so I looked up because the light was left on, I saw Nqaba by the door.

Beast: "Hey"

Me: "Hey"

Beast: "Did I wake you"?

Me: "No...I wasn't sleeping"

He walked in without closing the door, came near my head and he was about to kiss me when I suddenly realized the slight change of scent.

Me: "You changed your perfume"?

Beast: "You noticed. Do you like it"?

Me: "It's... Let's just say the previous one still does it for me"

As our lips were about to meet, another "Nqaba" walked in. In fact, the real Nqaba walked in "That's because that's not me," I quickly turned to look at his direction ndabanda ngaphakathi. I tried sitting up ndajonga uNtando, what level of witchcraft and cruelty was he onto? To even attempt to kiss his brother's wife?

Me: "Ntando"?

Ghost: "Umntu wakho umazi nangevumba. Classic"

Me: "Can you excuse us"

Ghost: "Why? I got here first"

Beast: "You ought to leave nyhani"

Ghost: "Asikho kwakho ngoku ndoda, stop throwing your weight around"

Beast: "Mafemmeatraversél'enfercesdernières semainesettuneluiaspasvraiment facilité lavie, jenevaispasm'asseoiricietbavarderavectoi...Je

vousdemandedequitter Ghost, deretourneren AfriqueduSud.Àprésent." (My wife has been through hell these past few weeks and you haven't really made it easy for her, I'm not gonna sit here and chit-chat with you. I am asking you to leave Ghost, go back to South Africa. Now.)

Ghost: "Vousn'avezpasàmedirequoifaire,vous êtescelui quiaenfreintlesrègles.Vousavezfoirétoutecette affairemaintenantfuckenmanupman!" (You don't get to tell me what to do, you're the one who broke the rules. You messed up this whole thing now fucken man up man!)

Beast: "Jenesaispasquelleautreexplicationvous pouvezcomprendre.Ohj'aioublié,tunesaispasce quec'estqued'aimeretd'êtraimé...tun'asjamais étéamoureuxavant.C'estpourquoilestsidifficile pourvousde comprendremapositionquandils'agitdema femme." (I don't know what other explanation is there for you to understand. Oh I forgot, you actually don't know what it is to actually love and beloved back... you've never been in love before. That's why it's so difficult for you to understand my position when it comes to my wife.)

Ghost: "Vousn'étiezjamaisdestinéàtomberdans cettermerde,arrêtezdevousenvantercommesi c'étaituneréussite.Tum'astrahi,tum'asmentiettu asdétruit cequej'aivécutoutemavie.Avez-vous honnêtementpenséquejeprendrais cette

merdeassis? Huh? Fucken réponds-moi" (You were never meant to fall for that shit, stop bragging about it as if it's an achievement. You betrayed me, you lied to me and you destroyed what I have lived for all my life. Did you honestly think I'd just take that shit sitting down? Huh? Fucken answer me)

Me: "Will you two just shut the fuck up?"

Ghost: "Hay S'bongile don't talk to me like that,"

Me: "I will talk to you any how I want, now listen here both of you; I'm so fucken tired of this childishness between you two now I'm not gonna get involved but both of you better pray that kuyoyonke lempambano yenu none of MY children get hurt"

Ghost: "hehehe! Yatsho intombi ka Ta Bongz. Sisi, you don't scare me, if that fagot you call a husband trembles at your commands, don't expect nam to do so"

Me: "Try me Ntando Ntabeni uyeva? I permit you right now to try me"

He shook his head and walked out, Nqaba was already closer to the bed. He uncovered the babies wothuka, but smiled as he kissed each one of them. I just looked at him, he came to my side of the bed and tried kissing me, I stopped him.

Beast: "Haibo, aw'seva ne cologne yam kengoku"?

Me: "Remove your T-shirt. And'sathembanga kwanto ngoku"

I knew kungona inguye lo but I wanted to be sure, I saw his birth mark and the tattoo with our names then I kissed himback.

## **518**

I watched him watching his new-born babies with so much love and adoration.

Beast: "Heee, uNana can't come"?

Me: "uNana is on a strike sana"

Beast: "Udlalile ngathi uNana...abasebahle man mamakhe"

Me: "Bafuze mna obviously"

Beast:"umhlekanenenawe,Ialmostforgot"

Me:"youalmostforgot?Awnantlonikanene"

I felt his lips on mine followed by a mumbled "thank you" I just sucked his bottom lip and kissed him. This was such a relief, but also stressful. Uba and Uve are a

handful nje, now we have three more to this picture? How will I manage? Hay kuzofuneka mhla sagoduka sidlule ngo Fats e-Jo'burg. Khona sigodukelaphi?

Beast: "Nalique"

Me: "Hm"?

Beast: "Ndiyakuthanda"

Me: "Say it in French kaloku baby"

Beast: "Uyazibonake"?

Me: "Ndiyadlala man, I love you too"

Beast: "So what have you named them"?

Me: "Yaz'ndilambile"?

He looked at me then at his watch...

Me: "I only ate soup last night"

Beast: "Okay, mandiyokujongela ekitchen"

Me: "No meat or gravy and no bread"

Beast: "Inoba uzotya ntoni kengoku Luu"?

Me: "Andiyazi love I'm just telling you my preferences as of now"

He laughed and walked out shirt-less, Ghost walked in ndamjonga nje ndamlinda athethe.

Ghost: "You must be wondering what exactly is my game plan"

Me: "You actually reckon you have one"?

Ghost: "I just want what's rightfully mine S'bongile. That's all"

Me: "What exactly is rightfully yours ke Ntando"?

He walked towards the window...

Ghost: "Everything he owns in East London yaqalwa ndim, the least he could do is to share fifty-fifty"

Me: "With everything that he left here how much have you shared with him"?

Wathula...

Me: "Wait, how much is actually left? Is there anything left to share at all"?

Ghost: "I know you hate me for what Karoo did to you"

Me: "If I hated you you'd be dead just like him"

Ghost: "So you like me"?

Me: "I tolerate you because of Nqaba, he loves you despite your stupid witchcraft tendencies and unlike him, I see right through you but you already know that. Right"?

Ghost: "I'm not as bad as I've been painted out to be"

Me: "You're worse neh"?

Ghost: "All I want is to be listened to, to be heard, and for once that's what dad is doing. I'm not Nqaba and I'll never be him, if only we could stop being compared"

Me: "So that's why you're here? Daddy came to your rescue? Yaz' u-pathetic kanjani talking about comparison yet it's clear ungoyena umuncu but still u-power hungry. Yaz' i-power iyambulala umntu Ntando"?

Ghost: "I'm not p-"

Beast walked in and looked at his brother who had turned at the sound of the door.

Beast: "Ngoku uyihlo ebekuthatha pha ebethe yizaKu Luthando"?

Ghost: "I just wanted to have a word with her"

Beast: "Ulibonile ixesha"?

Ghost: "Excuse me"

Beast: "You're excused"

He walked out. Nqaba gave me a tray with a fruit smoothie, chicken schnitzel plated with roasted potatoes in mushroom sauce and chamomile tea.

Me: "Thanks"

Beast: "Mh"

I took three gulps down and breathed.

Me: "I thought you said you were gonna deal with him"

Beast: "Utatakhe ufike k'qala"

Me: "And"?

Beast: "We're supposedly gonna have a meeting ngomso. Just the three of us and come to some sort of agreement"

Me: "With regards to what"?

Beast: "With regards to his claims and rightful what nots... can we just focus on us right now? Sendidikwe nayile Congo mna"

Me: "Right...Baby names"

Beast: "What were you thinking"?

Me: "Before that... there's a very important matter I wanted us to discuss"

Beast: "They'll have South African birth certificates. Don't worry about that"

Me: "How did you know I was gonna talk about that"?

Beast: "Your father in-law can be as forward as Ghost"

Me: "But at least he's forward with some brains. Andilazi eli wele lakho"

He didn't answer me, he just kissed all three of his sons, he had conversations with them until I fell back asleep ndavuswa ngu Chimeze ekuseni ba mandiyovasa ndizovasa nabantwana.

\*\*\*Three Months Later\*\*\*

We were packing and ready to return to SA, Nqobimpi had settled the feud between his sons with that fifty-fifty split of gangsta wealth only. Ntando had no claim or share in any of Nqaba's legit businesses because Nqaba single-handedly built those ngamandla wakhe. My husband actually willingly gave his brother all the rights to his gangsta side businesses in South Africa, all except those that were in Johannesburg then for the last three months he had re-established his own Congo gang back and it was more powerful and hard-working than before. After the feud was settled, Ntando left for SA uyifumene mos yonkinto ebeyifuna so there was nothing else to do in Congo.

Me: "So Tatakhe thina siyaphi, seeing we no longer have a home"?

Beast: "Sizofikela e Jo'burg for now... nd'sakhangela indlu though"

Me: "Uyikhangelaphi"?

Beast: "eBhayi"

Me: "And'funi uhlala eBhayi mna ngoku"

Beast: "But Luu awufuni nohlala e-Jo'burg so sithini ke sikhangele indlu eKapa"?

Me: "No baby eJo'burg singahlala but not at the apartment. An apartment is not a safe place for children, i-worse keleyana indawo has university students"

He just looked at me...

Caba ndiyamxakekisa shame umntanomntu

Me: "And we'll be closer to Fats, I could also transfer Libo back to PE while I handle the boutique in Jo'burg and most probably open another one or work something else"

Beast: "Okay Luthando"

Me: "Uyayiva mos babe? And, izokusebenzela nawe in a way"

Beast: "How so"?

Me: "You won't see your previous crew members oko, nam andizomane ndibanentliziyo ebuhlungu when I pass my house"

Beast: "Talking about the house...how did Lwandiso get the money to buy it"?



Me: "His savings from when he was working in Portugal and he took a loan from his dad for ukongeza. At least that's what he told me"

Beast: "Do you believe him"?

Me: "Lwandiso would never steal from us if that's what you're getting at; now answering your question: I don't really care as long as I won't be living in it anymore"

Beast: "I'm sorry...I know how much you used to love it"

Me: "It was a gift for Junior, it followed him. Now I'm waiting for the gifts I'm gonna get for Ikho, Iyakha and Iyazi"

Beast: "Goodness! Kusekho nalonto kanene"

Me: "Kuba ndicingelana nempokoto yakho I won'tgo over the board babe sungxama ngokhala"

Beast: "Seems like you already know what you want"

Me: "Yes...I've had quite enough time to plan"

Beast: "Balisela indodakhoke"

Me: "I'd like to own a club or two, extend the Jo'burg boutique. We have enough space for that, and then... upgrade my Jaguar"

Beast: "So ucingelana nempokoto yam...right"?

Me: "You know I could have asked you to build me a hotel if I wanted to? Or buy me a yacht? Right?"

Beast: "I know I know...Let's first get to Jo'burg and then we'll start with the boutique. Eye clubs into we'll discuss it later"

Me: "And you wonder why I love you so much"

Beast: "But I want to buy or build a hotel as a long term investment anyway,"

Me: "We'll check that out ofika kwethu pha...now another thing"

Beast: "Mh"

Me: "Umama"

Beast: "Eish...yenye keleyo"

Me: "She'll never handle this, kwakunzima ufika kuka Ntando, and then you supposedly died, kanti all along ubuphila? Bra she's gonna take it bad I'm telling you"

Beast: "Okoko sithe siyagoduka I've been thinking about her"

"Don't worry yourselves about that, I'll deal with your mother"

Saphakamisa iintloko same time...

Beast: "You'll deal with her? How"?

Nqobimpi: "I'm going to South Africa nani and I'll tell her yonkinto. Ngokwam"

Nqaba looked at me surprised...

What game was the old man playing?

\*\*\*\*\*

## **519**

Me: "You're going to South Africa tata? Nathi"?

Nqobimpi: "Yes"

Me: "To visit umama, nathi"?

Nqobimpi: "Yes"

Me: "Are you sure that's a good idea? I mean...She hasn't seen you in years"

Nqobimpi: "A good time to reconcile, andithi"?

Hay ndanikezela!

Nqaba took our bags to the cars waiting to transport us to his new business PJ that he bought ngoku siph eDRC, Mongezi was in China with the Congo crew. I sat on the bed fixing my little babies and the older two were just watching...

Uba: "Mamakho ntana yakho zawamba nathi"?

Me: "Ewe kaloku ndoda"

Uba: "Le, nale,nale"?

Me: "Sawamba sonke baby"

Uve: "Zolala ebhedini yabani"?

Me: "Kweyam no daddy until we buy them their own beds"

Uba: "Mna zolalaphi engoku mamakho"?

Me: "In your other bed kaloku Uba nje"

Uba: "Uba funulala nawe nje"

Uve: "Uve yena zolala notatakho qha"

The apartment was really not a long time option, akhongxaki if besizofikela khona nje BUT we needed a bigger house. Sibaninzi and we're already squabbling ngolala sisese Congo? Hau. Daddy took his last trip of luggage while the four grannies bid goodbye to us and their husband. Wayeligqubusha kodwa kwalatata yilonto benjeyana abantwana bakhe man. We boarded the jet, mna nabantwana bam sashiya umntu noyise sharing a glass of scotch sayolala. Two months ago

when uncle Soso called asking me about my intentions regarding the house I didn't tell him I've given birth already, in fact no one in SA knew besides Ghost. I wanted to surprise everyone, and most importantly I just wanted to enjoy ubudlezana bam in peace .When we woke up, we were told we're about to land so I changed the kids nappies and got us ready for Johannesburg and its noisy, busy traffic. Nqaba walked in ndigqibo ncancisa ulyazi, wamthatha to burp him while I took Iyakha and breastfed him.

Beast: "Sizofika emini eRhawutini"

Me: "Mh"

Beast: "Will you be okay ushyeka wedwa nabantwana"?

Me: "Uyaphi wena"?

Beast: "Sizoyothatha uNtando eKapa then head to East London, I suggested kutata that xasekhona yena futhi volunteering to explain everything then there's no need for all of us to go to East London, we should leave you behind. You need to recuperate nje kancinci"

Me: "And I can't be traveling up and down nabantwana abangaka..."

Beast: "Yeah"

Me: "No I'll be fine but I'm gonna need to call sis Fats and find out if she's available to help me out immediately in case kufuneke nilale eMonti coz andikwazi ukuba hoyo bonke at the same time"

Beast: "Okay, please jot down things you're gonna need I'll send Vincent ayozithenga"

Me: "Sure"

He lay Iyazi down and took Iyakha while I breastfed the last one: Ikho.

Me: "Utatakho u-serious ngalento uyenzayo babe"?

Beast: "I don't know why I feel like uzofuna i-loveback yaz'baby"

Ndamhleka, his facial expression.

Me: "But siyahleba"

Beast: "Mandikushiye futhi"

Me: "Baby yhima...nizohamba noo Uba ukuya eMonti mos"?

Beast: "Should we"?

Me: "Please bro"

Beast: "Ndizobathinca pha ku tan'khulu"

Me: "Yhu thank you"

He lay his second son down and kissed my cheek on his way out. When we touched down we immediately got in to the cars, utata ka Nqabayomzi decided that he needed to gallivant around the city a bit so he was driven in a different vehicle while we headed for the boutique, apparently Beast asked Soso to leave the key either to uLibo or uVince so uSoso wakhetha u Libo. I didn't know where mine was, maybe satsha nendlu eBhayi andiyazi. When we got home it actually looked cleaner than I expected...

Me: "This is strange"

Beast: "Ku clean"?

Me: "Ingathi kuhlala umntu"

Beast: "Kalok lentwana ibilala aphaxa ize kwi meetings kwelicala"

Me: "That explains it. Please put those two in their room upstairs"

He went to the kid's room with Uba and Uve while I prepared the couch for the younger trio, who were carried by daddy's goons from the car to the house. I carefully placed them next to each other on the couch and covered them with the fluffy fleece granny Nana bought for them then I went to open the kitchen and bedroom windows also changing the bedlinen.

Beast: "Baby la list"

Me: "It's on the coffee table"

Beast: "okay" When I was done I returned downstairs and found him talking to the triplets I just watched them in silence until he was done wabaphuza and took his bag ne travel case you Uba...

Beast: "Baby"?

Me: "I'm right here"

Wahleka, ukhwaze engandibonanga.

Beast: "We'll come back to fetch oo Uve hopefully bazobebevukile, but for now nd'saya pha ku Vince"

Me: "Then you should bring us meat"

Beast: "Okay"

We hugged, kissed for a moment then he left.

I sat down and changed my foreign sim cards to my normal numbers so that I could call Fats and the other people I needed to call.

Fats: "Hello sisi"

Me: "Hi sis Fats unjani"?

Fats: "Ndiyaphila iNkosi inam unjani wena"?

Me: "Ndiyaphila nam. Sis Fats I wanted to find out your availability, I really need your help"

Fats: "Yhoo Luthando sisi, ndisejob'ini ngoku"

Me: "Oh, you've found a job"?

Fats: "I had to sisi...kunzima ukuhlala njee"

Me: "Ngu permanent or ziintsuku"?

Fats: "Zintsuku ezimbini evekini ndenzaiwashing qha"

Me: "So ngu namhlanje nanini"?

Fats: "Wednesdays and Saturdays...nibuyilena"?

Me: "Ewe sisi we're actually here in Jo'burg"

Fats: "And'sabakhumbuli abantwana bam"

Me: "Sebolekelwe nangabanye kengoku"

Fats: "Haibo! Uphinde amawele"?

Me: "Ade amathathu"

Fats: "Yhu yhu yhu! Yinto ezothwani le? Hay ndizakuzanibona ngomso after church"

Me: "Okay sisi no problem, have a good day"

Fats: "Nawe sisi"

Eish... but I could work out my schedule around these two days zakhe if she's willing but first things first: I needed to find kindergarten for the older two baqale ngo July ndiyaziba ndizojongana naba bathathu only on Wednesdays. I sent three pictures of them on the Smith family group on WhatsApp, then sent two to Soso, the uncles in KZN and then I called Libhongo.

Libo: "Hello sisi"

Me: "Hey, how have you been"?

Libo: "I've been good, business has been great. How are you"?

Me: "I'm great. I'd like to see you so if you get a chance ngomso please come to my house I'll send you the address"

Libo: "Aph'e Jo'burg"?

Me: "Yes. I think wakhe weza no Vince man apha"?

Libo: "Pha ngase rez"?

Me: "Yes"

Libo: "Okay I'll come right after church"

Me: "Thank you, see you tomorrow"

Libo: "See you"

I hung up and exhaled.

Ingathi kuyaxokwa ubasibuyile.

Uve: "uTata Uve uwambile"?

Me: "Hey, come join mommy"

He walked down looking a bit upset. I lifted him up so he sat on my lap...

Uve: "Kazobuya engoku"?

Me: "He went to buy meat kwa uncle Vince"

Uve: "Uzobuya"?

Me: "Uzobuya azothatha u-Uve and go to EastLondon"

Uve: "uTan'khulu yena"?

Me: "He's also going"

Uve: "Washiywa wena nentanazakho"?

Me: "Yeah"

Uve: "Sorry vha"?

Me: "Thank you baby, now hug mommy"

We hugged, his brother also came to join us kwabe sekubuya notate wabo, he took them and they left for East London along with their notorious grandfather. I ate the meat and bread that was brought for me in waiting for the groceries that Vince was gonna buy. Later, he delivered the groceries and left...uncle Sos called;

Me: "Uncle Soso"

Soso: "Triplets bra? Tripuletsi? Uta Beast utyantoni? Hayini nina ayikho normal lento yenu"

Caba ke ndizobuliswa second half.

Maybe.

Soso: "Bebhelelphi abantwana abangaka bra? Yhuyu! Guys"!

Me: "I thought ndizobuya i-drama yehlele kancinci"

Soso: "idrama yile yozala abantwana abathathu at once, now that's drama. But guys... No man, I really need to buy ta Beast a Cognac soze angandihlebeli ukuba wenzanjani. Three yonke Tee mfethu? Like one, two, three? That kinda three"?

Ndasuka ndacinga u-Uba esithi: le, na le, na le intana zakho?  
But uSoso no Uba are just one person!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

## 520

I even missed food that I prepared with my own hands, into yokuba nee chefs sometimes i-ba right xa une events not on a daily basis. I cooked dinner enough for myself, abantu ubabona ngomnka neempahla uyiqonde kengoku ba akubuywa nyhani but I wasn't complaining at all.

The trip was worth it, it needed to be taken and for once I wasn't in the hot seat to answer questions I have no answers for. After eating I did two trips carrying my babies to the bedroom, I undressed them, bathed them and fed them salala. Phof' balala coz I was wide awake just watching them sleep, they were cute. Adorable. Daddy called...

Me: "Babe"

Beast: "Mntu wam, nihleli njani"?

Me: "We just had a bath, satya then, salala"

Beast: "Fatima nimfumene"?

Me: "Yes and no"

Beast: "Oh-kay"

Me: "She has a part-time job that she's doing, but uzoza apha tomorrow after church I think we'll talk more then,"

Beast: "Mmh"

Me: "How are things on your side"?

Beast: "Umama uses'bhedlele"

Me: "Yintoni ngoku"?

Beast: "Uthi ugqirha yintliziyo so she's under evaluation for the night"

Me: "Aw man, I'm sorry tatakhe"

Beast: "Well we kinda anticipated something like this would happen"

Me: "Yeah hey. How's your dad kengoku? Uthini u Noxy no malume"?

Beast: "Uthi umalume sinemikhwa sifuze lenja ingu Nqobimpi, phofu akamhlebi utsho ekhona"

He was laughing...

Me: "But why uhleka"?

Beast: "Ucing'ba idyani myekile? Baby besise filimini apha"  
But he's still laughing?  
Heee!

Me: "Hay man tatakhe. Your dad is inconsiderate though"

Beast: "Lento bendimxelela yona after his argument with umalume, otherwise bonke ba-right but I think it's still hard to believe that I am actually alive"

Me: "And your brother"?

Beast: "He's been quiet ever since the diagnosis ndimyekile ke nam, maybe he needs time alone"

Me: "People around you are stressed wena uyahleka..."

Beast: "Baby common it was funny, and besides that; umama won't automatically just wake up without the heart nton-ntoni just because we're outchea somber and sad"

Me: "Where are my kids"?

Beast: "Aphiwe took them sizodlula ngabo xasiphuma apha"

Me: "Okay...yho bra. I'm really sorry man, I hope avuke msinya"

Beast: "I'm just praying that it's not a heart failure or any severe attack...like, I'm hoping it could be something treatable"

Me: "Nyhani yazi"

Beast: "Kiss my babies for me"

Me: "Who's gonna kiss me"?

Beast: "We'll save those for when I come back"

Me: "Mmh, goodnight"

Beast: "Night"

In a long time I realized that I haven't prayed so that night I knelt down to pray, for the protection of my family, the health of my mother in-law and just our businesses entirely then I slept. In the morning I was woken up by Keri's call:

Me: "Big sis"

Keri: "CONGRATULATIIIIIIIOOOOOOONNNNNNNNS SSSSSSSSS"

Okay where did Keri get such bubbly energy so early in the morning?

Like I didn't have that kinda energy, in fact I've never had it in my life kude kwaworse mvanje ndilala with one open eye cos I had three other people who I'd be sharing a bed with.



Me: "Thank you sis"

Keri: "Where are you I wanna come visit"

Me: "We're in Jo'burg"

Keri: "Text me your address I'm in Pretoria"

Me: "Okay... are you coming now"?

Keri: "Yes Trina, wake up"

Me: "Mmmhkay"

I woke up and mixed water to bath them in their little portable bathtub, got them nice and cosy, batya then bazidlalela on the bed as I cleaned up the room. After an hour, I heard a knock downstairs... Now I had to leave them on the centre of the bed and go open for aunt Keri who came baring lots and lots of Gifts.

Me: "When did you get time to shop"?

Keri: "I bought them last year I thought I was gonna organize a baby shower for you but you vanished into thin air"

Me: "Riiight"

I helped her carry other gift bags as we went upstairs then I got a chance to bath and prepare breakfast. We took them to the lounge as we indulged in the food and in conversation, obviously I wasn't about to dishout iindaba zethu ezishady so I tiptoed around the truth but unlike Eve, Keri takes what you give her abe right.

Me: "So what exactly are you doing in Pretoria"?

Keri: "Well...we live here"

Me: "You? And Joe? Live in Pretoria? Never"!

Keri: "I told him you'd say that"

Me: "What happened in Kimberly"?

Keri: "We sold the house right after he bought a hotel and a house this side"

Me: "Wow! Congratulations"

Keri: "And I opened my own kindergarten at the beginning of this year and its growing graciously"

Me: "I'm actually looking for a kindergarten for the twins, how convenient"

We both cracked up

Me: "But the drive to Pretoria would kill me"

Keri: "I'm opening another one here in Jo'burg next year. I bought an abandoned building so I have people working on it right now"

Me: "Keri what happened to Keri"?

Keri: "Keri realized that no matter how much Joe enjoyed handing out money to his wife every pay day, truth is: Joe's money is Joe's money so, she got up and worked her ass off"

Me: "I'm so proud of you. How does he feel about the new you"?

Keri: "He's actually very supportive you know, I think I surprised him at first with those charities and business expo's I was attending but now he's actually more eager for me to engage in more community development programs"

Me: "Well, I'm glad you found this Keri in there, I love her more than the housewife Keri"

Keri: "Thank you baby"

Me: "When last did you speak to Eve"?

Keri: "Last month..."

Me: "How is she"?

Keri: "Her husband took a second wife"

Me: "Hm"

Keri: "And she's still coming to terms with that, she was in a really bad space shame"

Me: "I think I'll call her tomorrow"

Keri: "Why not tonight"?

Me: "I have to prepare my spirit for Eve Keri, yho unless I want us to end up fighting over the phone"

Keri: "I can imagine. Heee, tell me; what's the story between you and Marcus"

Me: "Yhu Keri please let's not talk about that one"

Wandihleka uKeri kanti ke I really wasn't ready to talk about him or talk to him yet.

We basically spent the entire day together and she cooked lunch satya ne cake that she bought, drank a lil chaza in celebration of the new things that were happening in our lives then Fats arrived, saw the kids and agreed to work for me u sleep-out while we're still in that apartment on her other free days then she'd work the two kula job yakhe and I was cool with that. U sleep-in we decided that sizothetha ngaye xasendifumene indlu, I asked Keri to drop her off as she was leaving.

I later bathed my kids again kuba sizolala ndabatyisa balala then I finished off the food Keri cooked for lunch, as my dinner... kanye xakufika uLibhongo. I offered her tea ne cake as we discussed the new changes

Libo: "So basically I move back to PE, get the boutique in order, and"?

Me: "And when things are in order and the extension on this one is done then ungabuya for good"

Libo: "I'll still be a manager naphaya eBhayi"?

Me: "Yes sisi"

Libo: "Okay akhongxaki, but I have a request for you"

Me: "Oh-kay"

Libo: "I'd like to be a permanent manager in the Port Elizabeth boutique"

Me: "Ufuna ukuhlala eBhayi"?

Libo: "Yes sisi, yho Jo'burg is too busy for me"

Me: "Okay ke I'll draw up an agreement for that, but uzokwazi uqala next month"?

Libo: "I don't see a problem coz ndizobe ndihlala e khaya so I won't be looking for a flat"

Me: "You've saved me Libo, yet again. Enkosi mntanomntu"

She blushed and finished up her cake wayobeka izinto ekitchen, she returned kuba ezohamba. On her way out, I noticed that akahambi yedwa losisi but last time I checked she wasn't even dating...but then again, I've been absent for a while.

Me: "Libo umithi"?

She stopped at the door and turned.

Libo: "Hay andimithanga mna sisi"

Me: "Hay Libo, khulula le jacket nd'bone"

She laughed at my shock and left with a "bye-bye sisi" I swore Libhongo was pregnant, I would know a pregnant woman when seeing one.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **521**

Lwandiso

After breaking up with Lindo things weren't as "normal" as I'd have thought they'd be. For instance, this other day a month later I found myself at the front gate of her rez... I called her:

Lindo: "Soso"?

Me: "Unjani"?

Lindo: "I'm good, you"?

Me: "I'm okay. Can you talk"?

Lindo: "I have nothing to say to you"

Me: "I'm outside"

Lindo: "U right kaloku"

Me: "I'll wait here...coz ndizobona wena apha"

Lindo: "I don't have time for this"

Then she hung up.

I stayed there for four hours waphuma sendivuka nasebuthongweni, she knocked on my window so I rolled it down

Me: "Hey"

Lindo: "Ufuna ntoni Lwandiso"?

Me: "I just wanted to see you"

Lindo: "Undibonile kengoku, hamba"

Me: "Yes ma'am"

I started my car and left her, I think I just had to confirm that I had made the right decision ngale breakup. I went to drop-off the car then I went to PE, I had bought Trina's house but the sale wasn't concluded yet so that meant I was still living in a flat. When I got home I just lay on my back and deleted everything from pictures to messages in all my devices. Then I just lay there...thinking. Libo called:

Me: "Miss LB"

Libo: "Hey...Unjani"?

Me: "I'm good, Soso is always good. What's up with you"?

Libo: "I'm good. I was just checking up on you"

Me: "I'm glad you did, I've been a bit pre-occupied lately, I'm sorry I didn't"

Libo: "You don't have to apologize though, awunyanzelekanga"

Me: "But a friendly check-up wouldn't have hurt Libo"

Libo: "like I said before, akho need. I understand you're busy and you have a girlfriend so there's actually no need for you to apologize for not checking up on me"

Me: "Had"

Libo: "Had what"?

Me: "Had a girlfriend"

Libo: "Don't tell me you broke up with uLindo bra"

Me: "Wel I Libo I'm not sure who broke up with who, but the fact is: we're no longer together"

Libo: "Yho"

Me: "Yaz this whole thing has made me realize that I'm actually not ready to be in any romantic commitment right now"

Libo: "Mh"

Me: "It's draining bra, even when you know kudala yaphela lanto uzibona sew'senza izinto nje ngesiqhelo just for the other person"

Libo: "Well, maybe you do need to take some time off"

Me: "Yeah hey... listen; I'll be in Jo'burg next weekend. Do I get to see you"?

Libo: "Are you looking for a re-bounce now"?

Me: "I'm looking for a friend with whom I can spend valuable time"

Libo: "Haha yeah right. I'm not sure about my availability bra. I'll be working"

Me: "Then I'll come check you out at the boutique xandilapho"

Libo: "Mmkay. Have a good one then"

Me: "You too"

After that phone call I prepared myself for the following work day, I took thirty minutes just to meditate on what Beast had said last time I spoke to him: "I trust you".

Just those three words and how he said them made me wonder if he at all trusted his brothers. I didn't want to disappoint the guy, nor did I want to lose myself in all of this so I braced myself up and went to bed early just to be refreshed the following day. Four days into the week I was then preparing for the business summit that was to be held in Jo'burg on the following day, then a CFO's meeting on Saturday morning, and a business gala dinner same Saturday then Sunday I would rest and return to PE. Trina called me as I was packing...

Me: "Baby momma"

Trina: "Hey babes. Unjani"?

Me: "I'm tired bra, nibuyanini"?

Trina: "Sizo buya soon, how are you really holding up?"

Me: "I won't lie, I enjoy attending these business meetings but its draining hey, do you mean to tell me that uta Beast wayehamba ezizinto naye"?

Trina: "I know he used to attend business meetings, I'm not sure ba what kinda business meetings"

Me: "Bra, I have to attend a business summit, followed by a meeting then a gala dinner. In one weekend! Lendodakho iyithathaphi i-energy nengqondo yezizinto"? She just laughed at me...like, I was seriously curious.

I wouldn't be able to handle this if I were to do it for a living... for life. I'd never manage.

Me: "I know you didn't call to hear me cry like a baby, you obviously called for a reason"

Trina: "Yes... I called with great news: the sale has been processed and you'll receive your title deed in the following month"

Me: "Yooooow!!!! Bra you have just made my day"

Trina: "I'm glad mntase"

Me: "Yho! Landile won't believe this, I actually own a house"

Trina: "Don't go rubbing it on him now"

Me: "He just got a car bra, ewe ke he didn't rub it in but instead uye wandizamela iflat aphe Bhayi"

Trina: "Uyithathephi kengoku yena imali"?

Me: "He graduated so dad bought him a car, and gave him a job in his CT based company. Umjita u settled ngoku"

Trina: "Well, congratulations to both of you"

Me: "Thanks mntase. Now, nibuyanini nyhani ke"?

Trina: "Nqaba and Ntando have kinda made peace so maybe sizobuya soon, I just don't know how soon"

Me: "Wait...Beast and Ghost have made peace"?

Trina: "I'm not fully detailed on this issue so I think its wise to wait on utatakhe to inform you before you start overreacting"

Me: "But it's possible that they've made peace"?

Trina: "It's possible yes, but...Wait on my husband to fill you in Soso"

Me: "Tyhini Thixo, so it is true that blood is really thicker than water"

Trina: "Lwandiso"?

Me: "No, ndikuvile mntase ndizomlinda uta Beast"

Trina: "And don't tell him I said anything"

Me: "Of course"

Trina: "Bye bye ke, congratulations on the house"

Me: "Thank you babes. Buyani nd'funa ukwenza ihouse warming mna"

Trina: "Andinolunga mna mntase, I don't want anything to do with that house right now"

Me: "You mean to tell me you'll never visit me kwam kengoku"?

Trina: "Maybe in a year or two, but definitely not now mntase, ngekhe"

Me: "Oh hay phofu I understand. Bye bye man"

Trina: "Sharp"

We hung up ndaqhubekela nalento bendiyenza mna then I went to bed, before sleeping I texted Laa just to see if he's awake, he called me back.

Me: "Dude"

Laa: "Wassup"?

Me: "I just bought myself a house"

Laa: "You just bought yourself a house"?

Me: "I just bought myself a house. Yes"

He screamed...then stopped when he heard that I was also screaming with him. We burst into laughter together...

Laa: "How did that happen"?

Me: "I used my savings then asked dad for a loan, hopefully xakubuya uta Beast I will be able to pay him off. I don't wanna be reminded of ityala err'time I ask for something"

Laa: "You think you gonna get paid by ta Beast"?

Me: "I don't know bra but there should be some sort of compensation, phofu uzazibonela when he returns how I've been managing his assets"

Laa: "Don't put your heart into it uzoba disappointed if he doesn't compensate you"

Me: "I know that...but for now, let's talk real house warming"

Laa: "Hahaha itshamba lidlala ngawe! I'll come Saturday ndizoyibona"

Me: "Andikho yiza nextweek"

Laa: "Awukho uyaphi"?

Me: "I'll be in Jo'burg no Yarees uqala ngomso, I'll probably be back Sunday afternoon or night"

Laa: "Mmkay. Tell me, have you thought of what you'll do when your boss returns?"

Me: "I haven't thought that far, I'm kinda living in the moment"

Laa: "You should think about it...before he comes back because he will and its not really guaranteed that he'll give you a permanent position"

Me: "Neh"?

Laa: "I'm just saying, think about the future. Think ahead"

Me: "Kay. Thanks man"

Laa: "Sure boy. Ndizakuphathela i-Hennessey Cognac next week"

Me: "Hahaha uyathanda uzenza umntu kanene Lwandiso, kanti ke usengu Popeye! Uyazelaphii cognac"?

Laa: "Soze uyeke ubamuncu mntaka Faith mawuncanywe"

I hung up engekagezi kakhulu!

## 522

Lwandiso

I flew to Jo'burg Friday afternoon, attended the business summit and did a lot of networking, advertising the business to new potential clients and Yarees was on his toes too doing the same, then hours later we headed to the Shisa'Nyama hoping that akukavalwa. As luck may have it, they were still open. We found a table ndamshiya pha and personally went to the kitchen to make my order. I actually wanted to fetch the key from Vince.

Tshego: "Sorry, customers are not allowed in here"

Me: "I know"

Ndatsho ndihamba, I found a waitress ndamnika our order gqiba ndayokhangela uVincent.

Tshego: "If you know then why are you in here"?

Me: "Andikwazi negamalakho, ungubani"?

Tshego: "My name is Tshego and I'm the new assistant manager"

Me: "Congrats boy-boy"

I left him at the door to Vince's office gqiba ndavala.

Vince: "This is a nice surprise, Titus kwedini"

Me: "Vincent. Who's this Tshego you have here"?

Vince: "He's my assistant"

Me: "He needs to slowdown hey. He's too much"

Vince laughed.

Vince: "You are too much, now ubona abantu aba too much? Cummon"

Me: "Mmh. Khas'thengele inyama asinamali"



Vince: "Says the man holding a multibillion dollar company afloat"  
Me: "That doesn't mean I'm the billionaire kaloku. I thought you're schooled bro, why are you disappointing me?"  
Vince: "Don't start."  
Me: "I need the key to the apartment please"  
Vince: "Sure. How long will you be here?"  
Me: "The entire weekend"  
Vince: "Great, I have tickets to the Chiefs match for tomorrow"  
Me: "You should take Yarees, I'm attending a business gala dinner and I don't have a date"  
Vince: "Uze la no Yarees?"  
Me: "Yes"  
Vince: "Hawu, umshiye kuphi?"  
Me: "Outside"  
Vince: "Heee! This guy"

Waphakama and walked out, I took the key and followed him ndafika bebulisana. We sat together, our order came through satya and didn't pay sayolala. I took the kids room yet again ndamnika the guestroom, last time I was there we had soiled the sheets ndabuya ke right after dropping Libo off and took the sheets to the dry cleaner then asked Vince xa ephuma espan adlule ngawo so I wasn't shocked to see them on the couch. I took them to Yarees uyawzifakela if there were none on the bed, after settling in I decided to call Libo...

Libo: "Titus"  
Me: "Hey, why are you still up?"  
Libo: "I just got home from work, sivale late namhlanje. Why are you up?"  
Me: "I just got in bed from a business summit"  
Libo: "Mh, better you than me"  
Me: "Hah, you don't know what you're saying"  
Libo: "I've attended summits before, on behalf of your cousin and there's not much to do there besides taking notes, networking and socializing"  
Me: "You make it sound enjoyable"  
Libo: "It's better than being on your feet from the time you clock-in to the time you clock-out"  
Me: "But I thought you're the manager, baphi abasebenzi?"  
Libo: "Xa kubusy bra akho bu manager, I have to help out kaloku"

Me: "I feel you. Well if you were here I'd massage those feet of yours"

Libo: "Mnxm"

Me: "I'm serious"

Libo: "Why would I allow you to massage my feet"?

Me: "Because that's what friends do: help each other in times of need"

Libo: "Well I'll survive the night, thank you very much"

Me: "Haiké suit yourself. I'll come see you tomorrow after my meeting"

Libo: "Good night wethu Soso"

Me: "Sharp"

I hung up.

Why was she suddenly cagey? Or was it touchy?

Don't tell me she's actually catching feelings now.

Next morning I woke up first and prepared for the meeting I was attending with Yarees, we both left the house past ten and got to the overcrowded venue just on time...

Me: "Aba bantu ba serious ngo life"

Yarees: "You still don't feel these things nangoku sekukudala uzihamba"?

Me: "Bra..."

He laughed at me.

Yarees: "The upside is that you're actually good kuyo yonke lento and, you're not only pushing ta Beasts businesses but you're making a name for yourself. Outside your father's shadow"

Me: "Yeah...that might come in handy in the future"

Yarees: "Now put up that Titus charisma sibangene"

So ebekade ebaphi xandihamba ezimeetings u Yarees?

I needed people like him around me. He's so calm and it was even surprising that he's not even intimidated by the big men with bigger wallets and bigger grammar. We sat in the CFO's meetings and it felt like forever... one, I was bored. Two, I couldn't wait to see Libhongo she was great company last time and I needed a date for the business dinner. Yarees easily ducked out of that one, he simply didn't RSVP for it. When the meeting was finally over we headed back to the apartment just to rest our minds.

Me: "Since you're not going to the dinner, what are you gonna do with yourself"?

Yarees: "I'm going to the game with Vince. Wena uya nabani kwi dinner"?

Me: "Ndiya no Libo"

Yarees looked at me in silence.

Me: "Yintoni"?

Yarees: "Libo as in i-ex KaVince"?

Me: "Yep"

Yarees: "Is it just dinner"?

Me: "What kind of question is that"?

Yarees: "Titus"!

Me: "Hewethu Yarees phumakim"

Yarees: "Duuude! What happened to the bro-code"?

Me: "What bro-code"?

Yarees just blurted out intsini.

Me: "I never signed no bro-code petition"

Yarees: "Bra, number one rule: you do not date your friend's ex"

Me: "Who set those rules? And who said I'm dating Libo? Who even said Vince is my friend"?

Yarees: "Heee Good Lord! So now because a woman is involved you're suddenly not friends with Vince"?

Me: "Vince is my friends' brother, Vince is my cousin's brother in-law, Vince is my potential boss's brother and Vince is just that. Vince. Iphelele apho...why are we even discussing this? I'm only going to ask Libo to accompany me to the dinner, I'm not gonna ask for her hand in marriage"

Yarees: "Wait; you're so sure you're going to the dinner with someone you haven't asked yet"?

Me: "Khawulale Yarees uzaw'betha ngoku uthree we match"

He laughed at me he was getting on my nerves.

I left his room and went to lie down in my own room...

Me: "Utheni na uYarees? Tchin"

I lay there and texted Libo...: I'd like to bring you lunch, sewutyile?

Her response: Thank you but I can't take a break, Ku busy apha. I'll proly eat after work.

Well I decided not to text her back, she did mention that ku busy so that meant she couldn't sit on the phone all day texting back at me. I took a well-deserved nap and later woke up to prepare for the dinner, Yarees had left a note on the

coffee table that he went to watch the match with Vincent. They must have left in his (Vince) own car because the car keys were still on their hanging spot behind the door. I drove to the boutique looking all fab and when I got there, she was locking up.

Me: "I'm right on time. Kwa Xhosa kuthiwa xakunje imfene iphala kakuhle"

Libo: "Aw'semhle bra, I have never seen you in a tux before. So what's the occasion"?

Me: "I'm going to a business dinner and because you said you've attended such...I figured since I don't have a date; why not ask you"?

Libo: "So you decided to come all dressed up for the occasion, without asking me if I wanted to actually go with you or not"?

Me: "Kaloku bendicingba ndizakuxelela ngoku bendizakuphathela ilunch but you said you're busy so I didn't want to disturb you"

Libo: "Ubuzakundixelela"?

Me: "No bra, bendizakucela. The wrong choice of words"

Libo: "Lwandiso"?

I stepped closer to her and held her one hand, she was eyeing me with a raised brow.

Me: "I'm sorry I just bombarded you like that, could you please be my date tonight? I know it's short notice and you're obviously not prepared for it but I'm sure we could find something around town if not in here"

Libo: "I'm not going to no dinner with you Soso"

Me: "Libhongo ndiyakucela"

Libo: "You obviously RSVP'd a long time before now, if you really wanted to be accompanied by someone you'd have taken the courtesy of informing that person on time. To be prepared"

Me: "I wasn't sure you'd agree so I wanted to ask you in-person"

Libo: "And you reckon now is the perfect time to ask"?

Me: "No its not, but it's the only time we both have and ndiyakucela out of a good place ndcela undikhaphe bra"

She kept quiet.

## **Lwandiso**

Me: "Pretty please"?

I could see she was contemplating...

Me: "Just do me this one solid I'll do anything you want afterwards, I'll even wash your feet if I have to. I just don't wanna go out there and be bored the whole night"

Libo: "Shut up Soso begging doesn't suit you"

Me: "See what you've turned me into"?

Libo: "Me? Uright bra"?

Me: "Dude besendizixelele bandihamba nawe, if begging is what it will take then so be it"

Libo: "Even if I agree to go with you andinanto yonxiba"

Me: "Ayongxaki leyo we still have enough time to buy something"

Libo: "Haike I'm no charity case Soso, stop splashing your money at me"

Me: "I'm not. Seriously"

Libo: "Last time you were here you bought mean outfit, now you're here again and you wanna buy me an outfit. What do you call that"?

I sighed...why was she hard to get all of a sudden?

Ikhona lanto ithi she's "playing" hard to get, she wasn't playing...she was literally being hard. Making me sweat.

Me: "Ndizama ukhawlelana nawe, nexesha. Just like the last time. If you feel like I'm unreasonably splashing my money on you, and it offends you then I apologize"

Libo: "Soso kutheni une pride mvanje? Don't tell me the position is getting to your head now"

Me: "Come on Libo, I'm still the old Soso"

Libo: "Mnk"!

So I waited for her to open the door kuba ezokhangela an outfit, ndiyibhatale but she left me standing and went to the passenger side of the car I was driving. I didn't want her to change her mind so I just opened the car ndamlandela. She directed me to another boutique that was (by luck) closer to the dinner venue so I wasn't complaining much ngexesha. I waited for her in the front of the boutique while she went to change and apply make-up.

Yarees called...

Me: "Kwedini Yarees"

Yarees: "Uthini uline wakho"?

Me: "Ndisindleleni eya kule dinner bra"

Yarees: "Uvumile unantsika"?

Me: "Yarees, what's my name? What is my name boy boy"?

He laughed...

Yarees: "I forgot the key ke yaz"

Me: "Buza lomjita uhamba naye ba akanaso na esesibini zishiywa kuye mos"

Yarees: "Akanaso... no don't stress ntwana yam, I'll just sleep over at his place"

Me: "He doesn't mind"?

Yarees: "I'm family"

Me: "Mxm. Uzuthi makayokubonisa afumanekaphi ama cherry eJo'burg uyeke ushumaneka oku"

Yarees: "Fokof Titus"

Now I laughed at him as we hung up, waphuma u Libo and my jaw-dropped. Until now, I hadn't noticed how beautifully glowing her skin was. She was radiant...and the mint gown she had on was complementing her in every possible way.

Me: "You look beautiful. Radiant"

Libo: "Yeah...masambe I think we're late already"

Me: "Please"

I had already paid so I allowed her to lead the way, I drove to the business gala dinner still in awe of the beautiful woman next to me. Goodness! The night seemed short-lived, I think I was over enjoying spending time with Libo and that was kinda confusing because 1: we're just friends and 2: even if there were benefits in this friendship, I wasn't ready to be romantically involved with anyone. She knows that. As we left, I drove her home in silence, she just gave me written directions safika kucinywe nezibane...

Me: "Do you have the gate key"?

She shook her head but she was dialing someone so I figured yila cousin yakhe. She called three times but the phone would just ring on its own ndambona uyancama, I didn't wanna suggest ngokwam ba siye endlini ibengathi that was the plan all along so I turned the ignition and the head lights off. She tried calling someone else who answered and said he's not home but her cousin was, so she

called her cousin again to no avail. I could see she was in distress so I just started the car and drove to the apartment akathetha until I parked ndamjonga.

Me: "Uyaphangela ngomso"?

She shook her head...still not looking at me.

Me: "Then please sleep here, I'll take you home ksasa"

Libo: "I don't think us sleeping in the same house is a good idea"

Me: "We're adults Libo"

Libo: "We're horny adults Soso, I'm not sure I want the repetition of the last time"

Me: "Wait; you're admitting to being horny"?

Libo: "That is beside the point"

Me: "Okay ke I'll just get you comfortable ndihambe ndiyolala ko Yarees, as long as you're safe"

Libo: "...cool"

We got off the cars angina endlini, I told her to go to my room coz kukho izinto zika Yarees kuleya wayeleli kuyo. I gave her around neck T-shirt to sleep in then ndamshiya and went to boil water for coffee, she came down wearing that T-shirt and the tights she had worn emini.

Libo: "Is the foot massage offer still on"?

Me: "Sure"

I went to fetch ivaskom in the bathroom, poured warm salted water in it ndafaka iinyawo zakhe, went to fetch her coffee with muffins ebesizitya no Yarees ndamnika.

Libo: "Thanks"

I quietly rubbed her feet, they were a bit puffy especially around the ankles and Libo being light skinned/fair in complexion her veins were very visible. When I was done she told me she had an ointment in her bag so I went to fetch it to rub the feet with it, I cleaned up then took my charger and car keys ndalungiselela uphuma.

Me: "Thank you for tonight"

Libo: "Please text me your bank account"

Me: "You don't have to pay me back bra, please"

Libo: "I know, but I want to"

Me: "Libo"

Libo: "I don't wanna feel indebted to you Soso, and right now I do. Let our friendship be without shady corners please"

Me: "Okay, I'll text you ofika kwampha"

Libo: "Thanks"

Me: "Please don't hesitate to call any minute you feel unsafe here, uyayazi indawo enabantwana beskolo"

Libo: "I'm a big girl bra"

Me: "Mmkay big girl, come and lockup ke"

She got up to lock, I walked out and waited till I heard the lock sound then I drove over to Vince's house and hooted outside. Ezizibhanxa just opened the gate without asking ndingubani kodwa ikhonai intercom, kule war iphandlapha who does that? I parked ndayonkqonkqoza emnyango and Vince opened up.

Vince: "The businessman himself"

Me: "I need a bottle of Viceroy"

Ndatsho ndidlula, when I got to the lounge ndafika kugcwele amajita ne girls, I looked at a grinning Yarees ndaphela yintsini.

Me: "Molweni"

Bavuma

Me: "Yarees"

Yarees: "Akho need yalento ucinga ukuyithetha boy, itya kuyatyiwa"

I just laughed, ezimoeren actually took my advice gqiba zenza itheko without informing me? Vince gave me a shot, I downed it in a second, he gave me a second one I downed that one as well and breathed.

Yarees: "You look like a rejected man ntwana, what happened"?

Vince: "Ungene sefuna i-Viceroy"

Yarees: "Hahaha Titus confess' a ndoda"

Me: "I think I need a cognac...Kutheni ninxila cheap nje Vincent"?

They were laughing at me so hard I had to shift focus ndabashiya ndayoncokola nabanye abantwana, I mingled with the people but with caution as to not over-drink. I didn't see myself sleeping there at all, bendingavuka imali yakwa Titus



ingekho ngamarhumsha ase-Goli. Xasendinxila ndinxila clever drinking a lot of water in between...

Past eleven, my phone rang...I got up and went to answer in the kitchen, phofu kukho lomntwana umane ezojaivela ngakum.

Me: "Hey, what's up"?

Libo: "Bra...you need to come back, as in now"

Me: "Okay, but why are you whispering"?

Libo: "Because someone is trying to get in"

Me: "What? Okay...don't move, ndiyeza"

She kept quiet...

Me: "Libhongo, uyandiva"?

Libo: "Nd'cela ukhaw'leze torho...ndiyoyika"

I hung up, went to fetch my blazer e-lounge.

Yarees: "Haibo"

Me: "Hayi kaloku bendingazonxila ubusuku bonke"

Vince: "You're not thinking of driving under the influence now are you"?

Me: "Inoba nifuna ukundivuthelisa"

I grabbed the keys and drove to the apartment but I didn't see anything shady in the parking, but as I got out of the car I saw two shadows at the door, I reached behind my seat and took a gun (apparently zonke iimoto zika ta Beast had a gun or two). I took one shot ndamchana emlenzeni and the other one grabbed his arm as they ran off limping. I wanted to return the gun to its place but I couldn't shake off the feeling that I might need it so I went to the house with the gun at the back of my waist and walked in. They had already managed to open, I tried locking up with a bolt and a padlock then I went up to her room and knocked...

Me: "Libo"

She quickly opened the door and threw her arms around me

Libo: "I heard gunshots... Bra I was so scared"

Me: "It's okay...I'm here now"

Then she broke down.

**524**

**Lwandiso**

Me: "Please stop crying Libo...andikwazi uthuthuzela mna"

She immediately stopped crying and laughed at me, I just smiled. She took a step back and cleaned herself up.

Libo: "Now you're the Soso I know"

Me: "Come let's have tea downstairs"

Libo: "It's a bit chilly downstairs and, you prolly should go to bed, aw'na meeting ngomso"?

Me: "Nah, si off sonke ngomso"

Libo: "Mh, luckyfish"

Me: "Sooo, you want me to bring the tea up here"?

Libo: "First things first...uzophinda uhambe"?

Me: "I don't think you'll be safe but if you still feel uncomfortable with us in the same house I'll go"

Libo: "Mh"

Whilst she was thinking about it, I went to make the tea for both of us accompanied by choc-chip cookies then I went back up to her room and walked in, gave her the tray, took my cup and sat down next to her.

Libo: "Who was trying to get in here"?

Me: "I don't know..."

Libo: "You don't know? Who fired the shots"?

I kept quiet...

She stopped drinking her tea and looked at me as if a light bulb just went on.

Libo: "Soso are you in some kinda trouble? Are we in any danger by being here?"

Me: "Your tea is getting cold"

Libo: "Please don't do that"

Me: "As long as I'm here then you won't be in any harm, I can guarantee you that"

Libo: "Are you in some sort of danger na"?

Me: "I don't know Libo, I could be. I mean, I'm handling ta Beast's businesses so obviously that's not an easy task and it could be accompanied by dangers nje on its own. On top of that, sikwakhe...so one can never be sure"

Libo: "I understand, I'm sorry. I just...panicked"

Me: "You panicked because you thought I was in danger or because you thought you could be in danger because of me"?

Libo: "Both"

Me: "Hm...tell me; ungena what time kokwenu? On a normal day"

She chuckled

Libo: "Ngo seven iyavalwa igates ndiphuma u six, then quarter to seven or five-to sometimes ndiyangena endlini"

Me: "But last night"?

Libo: "Most of the time during the month-end times I count on my cousin for the gate key coz there are only two, the one esikuye nesisi kubazali bakhe"

Me: "Kutheni ungazihlaleli"?

Libo: "Bendizihlalela when I first came back, Trina got me a flat but things didn't work-out so I had to go back to my aunt's house"

Me: "Trina got you a flat"?

Libo: "Yeah, yeyomfazi Ka brother wakhe...Sive I think. But irent inyuke three times ndazibona ba ndizophangelela yona nendlela qha"

Me: "I see"

Libo: "Why the interest"?

Me: "I'm just curious that's all, I mean...it's not every day I see a grown woman in Johannesburg being locked out of her home because of some curfew"

Libo: "Well my uncle is strict, kwa umntana wakhe lo unestixo sakhe stole the main key wayozisikela"

Me: "Yingqawaleyo"

We just laughed about this, it was a more relaxed environment than before and honestly I was growing a soft spot for her. I don't know how that happened.

Libo: "So kunjani ukubayi boss"?

Me: "Stressful but I enjoy the challenges"

Libo: "Do you think Trina will give you the job permanently? I mean, it's her decision to make mos now that her husband is no longer alive"

Me: "Uhm... I'm sure the board will have a say in whatever decision needs to be made"

Libo: "But wena uyafuna ukuba permanent"?

Me: "Of course bra"

Libo: "Then work your ass off, show her and that board that they need you. Be invincible and irreplaceable"

Me: "Aha! So that's your secret"?

Libo: "It's working for me alright"

Me: "I'll take that advice...very valuable. Thank you"

Libo: "You're welcome"

When we were done I took the tray down to the kitchen ndabuyela kula room ka Yarees and prepared the bed, changed into PJs then I went over to her...

Me: "I guess this is good night"

Libo: "Where you sleeping"?

Me: "Kula room ka Yarees"

Libo: "Good night then"

I winked and closed the door ndayongena ezingubeni. Past one, I was still wide awake tossing and turning so I got tired and sent her a text: are you asleep? She responded: no. I got up and went over to her room, I just walked in and closed the door then I flopped next to her on my back, she just looked at me and laughed her lungs out.

Me: "Uhleka ntoni Libhongo"?

Libo: "Hewethu wasuka wazozenza serious in my room?"

Me: "Hay ndibored mna"

Libo: "You're supposed to be sleeping uzothini ungabi bored"?

Me: "So if wena awukho bored kutheni ungalelanga"?

Libo: "I'm still a bit shaken man, I don't know what could have happened to me if ubungakhange ufike kwangalamzuzu"

Me: "Stop thinking about it"

Libo: "It's not that easy not to think about it...You wouldn't understand though"

I lay on my stomach supporting my body with my elbows and both the palms of my hands under my chin, she looked at me and tried to fake a smile.

Libo: "Don't worry I won't cry on you, I was just thinking"

Me: "I'm sorry"

Libo: "It's cool bra, it's not your fault"

We just stared at each other until she just broke the stare and looked at her hands, I got up and sat close to her lifting her chin so our eyes could level up.

Me: "Do you trust me"?

She nod

Me: "Are you sure"?

She nod again I kissed her, she kissed me back so I pulled back and looked deep into her eyes.

Me: "Then believe me when I say as long as I'm here, nobody will hurt you"

Libo: "I believe you"

Me: "Do you believe me when I say I love you"?

The shock in her face... she shifted uncomfortably.

Libo: "I don't believe you...you love Lindo bra don't do this"

Me: "Libo I've been trying to deny this even to myself too"

Libo: "Because you know awundithandi and I'm okay with that"

Me: "Then how do you explain this"?

Libo: "I said it already, we're horny. Both of us, akho love apha"

Me: "Who are you trying to convince"?

Libo: "I'm just being blunt and honest Soso bra...yes we had sex, maybe we'll have sex again I don't know but please let's not mistake it with love"

I looked at her...she was hurting.

Now, I didn't know whether she's hurting because of me or because of her past relationships.

Me: "Deep down, you know the truth to what I'm saying but you're too hurt to allow it to sink in"

Libo: "I only have one heart and it was broken before, I'm not ready for another heartbreak"

Me: "Undivile Libo? I said I love you. Just that"

Libo: "Ndikuve kakuhle and I'm telling you, you don't love me, we both know who you really love. Lento yenzekayo when you see me is just an infatuation coupled by lust, not love"

Me: "Can I prove you wrong"?

Libo: "You're actually asking for permission to play with my feelings? No bra, not gonna happen"

Me: "Libo"

Libo: "Soso, I can't bra...I can't go through the hurting, the arguing, the fighting, the insecurities and everything else all over again. I just...I can't. Please just...go find the real person you love who's gonna love you back, who's prepared to love you phofu because I'm not. I'm really not shem yhu"

She was crying...whatever happened in her last relationship must have hurt her so bad.

I pulled her close and hugged her, it was all I could do.

\*\*\*\*\*

## 525

On Tuesday and Wednesday of that new week I started my search for a well recommended construction company to conduct the extension of my boutique, once I got it I called the team that did my interior décor and booked them giving the Laura chick my new idea of the boutique and she said she'd conduct more research on my requested theme. As the plans to extend the boutique were coming together, I realized that we were practically starting over. Not literally from scratch but we actually were really starting over. That gave me hope that maybe this time things will get better but at the back of my mind I knew that the mere fact that my husband was still a thug at heart (if that's even possible) then we're actually going round in circles. I decided to call Evelyn just to find out how she's been in my absence...

Eve: "Wow! Happy new year, congratulations...I guess"

Me: "You guess? Wow. How are you sis"?

Eve: "Where have you been? What happened to your house? Who got you pregnant"?

I sighed... who else could get me pregnant?

Eve: "Did you really block me from your phone? I even tried sending you dm's on Twitter and Facebook to no avail"

Me: "I was out of the country..."

Eve: "I see"

Me: "How are you doing"?

Eve: "I've survived the worst, so I guess I'm good"

Me: "You don't sound good at all"

Eve: "Would you be fussing about sounding good when there's another woman with whom you're sharing your husband"

Me: "...I don't think so. Maybe not"

Eve: "Exactly"

Me: "So LD has a mistress"?

I didn't want to tell her I knew already because kuye izobangathi Keri and I were gossiping about her neengxaki zakhe so I just let her tell me ngokwakhe.

Eve: "He has a second wife and I'm not in the mood to talk about it. Are you guys back in Port Elizabeth"?

Me: "No, we're in Joburg"

Eve: "Joburg? Oh, until when"?

Me: "I'm not really sure, we're actually looking for a house this side"

Eve: "Oh, but you don't like Jo'burg. Why the sudden change? Hopefully you are not running away from your late husband's scandals"

Just then I heard a hooter outside...and then a knock downstairs. As I was listening with one ear to that, just then my other phone rang and I thanked the holy angels for rescuing me from this conversation.

Me: "I uhm have to go, I have another call on the line"

Eve: "When do I get to see you guys"?

Me: "I'll call you again. Bye now"

Eve: "Bye bye"

I hung up and answered my husband

Me: "Baby"?

Uve: "Mamam vulele"

Me: "Haibo"!

Uve: "Heee umamakho"

I hung up and ran down the staircase, opened the door widely thinking I was being pranked kanti they were really back. Uba jumped from his dad's arms to me while Uve just walked in like a boss, I kissed Uba's cheeks and he was enjoying the attention then we swiftly moved out of the way for daddy to walk in with the luggage.

Me: "You guys didn't bother telling mommy niyabuya"

Uba: "Khumbulile mamam kaloku"

Me: "Ooh baby"

Uve: "Mamam uphi ntana yakho"?

Me: "Balele"

Uve: "Phi"?

Me: "In my room"

Uve: "Thengelanga bhedi zakhe"?

Me: "Azikho e-shop"

Uve: "Haike solalaphi hoku thina"?

Me: "You guys have your own beds in your room nje ndoda"

He looked at me as if ndiphambene then he took a remoter and turned on the TV, I put Uba down and went to my husband in our bedroom ndafika ephuza abantwana bakhe so I just stood there watching them in admiration until he looked up and called me in ashes at up. I walked to him and stood between his opened legs as his hands found holding places around my waistline, our lips met and we held our breaths for that second before breaking the kiss...

Beast: "I missed you so much"

Me: "Tell me about it"

Our lips found each other again and then we kissed, not minding the three people behind him it was just us.

Me: "Why did you guys come back so soon"?

Beast: "My agent called uthi masiyobona indlu ngomso"

Me: "Phi"?

Beast: "Well ziy'three: Pretoria, Sandton and Joburg South"

Me: "Mmkay. Lemme try and whip up something to eat, quickly"

Beast: "Enkosi mamakhe"

I left him and went to the kitchen, I made a 15 minute meal, dished out for them coz bendihluthi mna then I called my husband to come down azotyia and as expected he wanted to bring the triplets down too but I convinced him otherwise. It was definitely nice having them back but their timing was wrong I was busy here tryna turn my boutiques around now with five kids in one apartment I didn't see any work in progression at all. Uba started telling me how nice it was kwa Gogo but then gogo left them and went to the hospital, aunt Aphiwe baked choky muffs (chocolate muffins) for them while daddy and tankhulu went to see makhulu.

Uve: "Mamakho uphii-Owe, ambonanga pha endlini yakamakhulu"?

His dad cleared his throat...

Usually ngu Uba lo ubuzakangaka, uyandothusau Uve.



Me: "uOwe uhlala nomamakhe"  
Uve: "Awu mamakhe wena mamam"?  
Me: "Ndinguye nam but he has another one who lives in PE"  
Uve: "Yho uOwe nomama bay'thu"?  
Uba: "noSino mama nomama bay'thu"?  
Me: "Yes ndoda"  
Uba: "Shame..."  
Shame ntoni?  
Yintoni efunisa ushame xa abantu beno mama ababini? Mnk!

Me: "Nimshiyephi utankhulu"  
Baby laughed...  
Uba: "Simshiyile pha ka Makhulu wam"  
I looked at my husband...Wasuka wahleka haibo?  
Me: "Tatakhe"?  
Beast: "Uthe masimshiye baby"  
Me: "Why"?  
Waphela yintsini uNqaba ndasuka ndayihleka name, kanti lotata wenzani kanye kanye? Angayenza lonto yofuna iLove-back eshiye iwoopy abafazi kula Congo? Khona, uzayiqalangaphi lonto egula ngoko umama ngenxa yakhe nabanyana bakhe? Like...

Beast: "Besidlule ngakwi boutique yakho yaz'ngoku sizayo"  
Me: "Ukhona uLibo"?  
Beast: "Ewe...Bungathanga uzamsa eBhayi"?  
Me: "I decided based makahambe next weekend xakuzoqalwa ukwandiswa i-building"  
Beast: "Ooh. There's something I kinda noticed pha kuye, but I might be wrong"  
Me: "What's that"?  
Beast: "Ingathi umithi"  
Me: "Oh...I noticed that too but she denied it. And anyway, it's none of our business. She's old enough"  
Beast: "Hopefully uright lomjita whoever he is...Libo is a nice person and uyakunceda I wouldn't want to see her get hurt"  
Me: "Aw my baby has a heart, common now"  
Beast: "Heee"

When they we're done eating I bathed the twins, got them in PJ's then badlala. When I was done I ran a bath for daddy, he went to soak himself in while I changed Iyazi who was wide awake, Uba walked in and played with Iyazi's cheek strying to make the little one laugh and he was succeeding. I could see he was pleased with himself...

Uba: "Mamam look, wahleka ntanayakho"  
I looked at him smiling, he was pleased with himself nyhani.

## **526**

Nqaba came out of the bathroom and joined us, Iyakha was up and just minding his own business...

Uba: "Tatam look intana ya mamam"  
Beast: "You love your little brothers heh"?  
Uba: "Heeee utatakho mama."

With that he clapped once and just dramatically walked away to go find his twin brother ndashiyeka ndiy'hleka notatakhe. He lotioned his body and got into his own PJ's, I was the only one ongekavasi and I didn't want to but I couldn't do that to my husband efika. I had to bath.

Beast: "Ndibawela inyama yaz' love"  
Me: "I'll do sausage and pork just now for supper"  
Beast: "Ayikho ibeef? Or mutton"?  
Me: "Sekulate kalok tatakhe for ezo...but I promise ndizakwenzela ngomso"  
Beast: "Okay..."

Ebengatyi lomntu kokwabo?

Bendingazimiselanga kupheka kaloku mna, in fact I was just gonna drink a cup of coffee with two rusks and that would have been my supper...Ndehlise, bancance abantwana bam,silale.

Me: "I don't think your Young Kings will want to sleep alone in that room"  
Beast: "Eish... I'll have to go sleep with them for tonight and maybe nangomso"  
Me: "Two days yonke?"  
Beast: "What other choice do we have"?  
Me: "I don't know..."

I mumbled that...

I also missed him kaloku I would have also loved to share the bed with him, sivuke sibuke abantwana in the middle of the night, and just have our time. But I had to be a big baby...

Me: "...but it's okay wethu."

Beast: "Or, sizothatha the matrass in that bed sondlale here"

Me: "No akhongxaki babe, go sleep in that room"

Beast: "Siyanikhumbula kaloku nathi mamakhe"

Me: "Kaloku andifuni ude ulale phantsi yhini ubiza intsokolo sesiyibaleke ngo ngcip'ngciphu"?

He kissed my lips smiling...

Beast: "I don't mind AND asisokoli. Asoze sisokole, kodwa ke even if singasokola kungcono ba saw'be sisokola Sisonke as a family"

Me: "Mmh"

Beast: "I'd never allow us to be poor, just like you never allowed us to go begging. I gotcha bud"

Me: "I belie'dat. I know you gat me buddy"

We kissed, ah goodness.

I really didn't realize how much I had missed the guy, his hands were touching the right places, his scent penetrating the right inner parts of my soul. We stopped and just stared at each other smiling...

Beast: "You're beautiful yaz'mnkam"

I blushed...

Beast: "Haha! Ude ublush'e kodwa you know you're beautiful"

Me: "Xa kutsho wena ibangathi bendingayazi kaloku"

Beast: "I'll live to remind you"

Me: "Let me go cook your meat before I drown myself eku blush'isweni nguwe"

He chuckled and watched me go...

I first checked the kids room. The twins were playing cars together on the floor, maybe they wouldn't really mind sleeping here though? But we already had an option two anyway. I silently walked away ndayokwenza I supper: pork and beef sausage marinated in sweet and chilli homemade sticky sauce, steamed veggies

and creamy, fluffy pap. Pity there was no red wine to go with it... But anyway when I was done I called him down, he carried two of the triplets then went for the last one while I was serving the twins. Then he took his tray, I sat with him as we ate. Kwatsho i-knock kanye xandiqala utya, I looked at him and he shrugged as he got up...

Me: "Before you open...who knows you're back"?

He gave me then "I don't know" look. The knock came again.

Me: "Hlala phantsi babe and let me open"

Beast: "Oh-kay"

I got up ndavula...

I just laughed. That was the best surprise ever.

Soso: "I wonder uhleka nabani"

Me: "Sthandwa sentliziyo yam...Uba nanku Soso"

Uba left his food, Uve followed as they came running to the door. We were laughing and hugging, he pushed me aside and picked the boys up... I grabbed his luggage (one traveling case) then I closed the door. I went to plate up for him ndabuya efota abantwana bam.The fresh batch of them. And, my husband was in tears kuhleka...

Me: "Ukho lo sathana umthethileyo ke Lwandiso ufika"

Soso: "Haibo"

Me: "Look at my husband"

Soso: "Ndirongo ke xandibuzaba utya ntoni? I want my own triplets mfondini makaze nee recipe"

Me: "Tshini. Uzawathini amawele uLindo"?

Soso: "Mmnk! Heh bethuna anisebahle, ni sure benise Congo"?

I kind of felt like he purposefully avoided my question but I ignored that...

Maybe I was reading a lot into nothing. Clutching on straws.

Me: "Kuma suburbs ase Congo sani, I'll show you pictures zoo Uba"

I admired how the twins just allowed us to make conversation with uncle Soso without pruding and disturbing us though we all knew they were very much fond of him, nook I could say ndiyazama uqeqesha, well I could see that. While we had our conversation, they finished up their plates. Now because we had an

unannounced but most welcome visitor I had to whip up a dessert, I collected all the plates and took them to the kitchen ndazama into ebu dessert and served the people.

Beast: "Xa ulapha ubutyebi bam ubushiye nabani"?

Soso suddenly became a bit uncomfortable...I chipped in, to save him.

Me: "Uzumbuze ngomso baby between eight and four, myeke ngoku"

Beast: "Kuzobe kutheni ngomso"?

Me: "Izobe ilixesha le business, ngoku it's family time. Allow a guy to breath"

Beast: "Aw'selociko. Uyambona phofu u-Titus uphants'uzenzela kule couch"

I laughed, Soso joined in.

Soso: "I hate you ta Beast. Yaz uyazazi ba u intimidative kanjani and now you're abusing that"

Beast: "No, I was just making conversation"

Soso: "Haike if you must know, bendize on business kwalapha but my hike will pick me up as early as seven tomorrow morning"

Beast: "Cancel"

Soso: "Cancel? Cancel what ta Beast...I mean Mr Gwala"?

What effect was baby really having on Lwandiso? This was the first time ever to hear Soso call him "MrGwala"

Beast: "Your hike...I have a couple of things to discuss with you ngomso but sizogala kwi house viewing"

Soso: "Ooh-okay...Wait, y'all are buying a house here"?

Me: "Yep"

Soso: "But you don't like Jo'burg nje mntase"

Me: "I know...But I hate Port Elizabeth. Bad memories"

Soso: "Mmh, I understand"

After a long string of chatting I went to prepare indawo zolala giving him the spare room.

Me: "Baby, usezomthatha mos u matrass"?

Beast: "Yhima baby...Uba, nizolala phi ndoda"?

Uve: "Zolala ne Soso ma tatakho"

Uba: "Nam"

Beast: "See"?

Me: "Alright, that's settled then"

Soso: "Heee! Abantu balomzi are peculiar I swear."

Me: "We love you too"

He shook his head as he walked to his room, Uve called after him.

Uve: "Solala nawe Soso ebhedini yakho ngoku aneh"?

Uba picked up his car and followed Soso...

Uba: "Shame uSoso wabantu Uve"

Hubby couldn't contain his laughter...

I, on the other hand, was mesmerized yile attitude and atmosphere intsha kulendlu. It was refreshing I won't lie. I loved it, I enjoyed it...I enjoyed seeing Nqaba laugh, hearing him laugh. For once in a long time he was stress free negeza eliqalayo uraka could see that we were in a happy and peaceful place...

Okwangoku.

## **527**

Following day I woke up first to prepare breakfast for err'buddy. Realized that ukutya akuzosanela for lunch and supper, we needed a little shopping spree, so after eating, I bathed the triplets and made them comfy and warm right next to their father then I bathed myself and got ready to go shopping ooUve baw'vaswa nguyise wabo...

Me: "Baby"?

He looked up with sleepy eyes...

Me: "What time are we viewing the houses kanene"?

Beast: "ngo10:00"

Me: "Okay, hopefully I'll be back by then"

Beast: "Uyaphi"?

Me: "Mall of Africa. But I'll try to be back before ten. You can go back to sleep, but, breakfast is ready"

Beast: "Mmkay, please bring me my wallet"

I went to the trouser he was wearing the previous night and gave him his wallet, here moved his card wandinika.

Me: "What's this for"?

Beast: "Aren't you going shopping kanti"?

Me: "Well...I kinda do have money yaz' babe"

Beast: "I'm sure you do, but you can use mine"

We weren't about to argue ngemali so early in the morning tu.

Me: "Enkosi tatakhe"

I returned his trouser to where it was, kissed him and the minions then I called one of his guys to come pick me up (then I left my phones charging next to his tablet). We didn't have personal cars but luckily we had drivers; driving us around in "business" vehicles. The guy came and took me to town, I filled up the trolley and returned to the car to load, went back to the mall just to do my hair and nails bekukudala ngoko and I knew baby wouldn't mind, uzovuyela nalento ndenze intloko ngemali yakhe instead of my own. When I was done I made way back to the car...

It was obviously waaaaay past ten but, as I approached the car, I saw Marcus Smith. I knew he saw me first by the way he was acting so, I decided to help him ndenzangathi andimbonanga nam. He was with Linda and she kept on looking at me, xandibajonga ajonge kude. Mnk. I walked straight to my ride ndagoduswa... The guy helped me offload and carry to the apartment then he left, I unpacked and packed into the cupboards and fridge then I went to change my platforms into slippers, then I joined the gents in the lounge.

Uve: "Mamam phathele ntoni etown"?

Me: "Phathele chocolate cake, chocolate custard and chocolate sauce for your ice-cream"

Uve: "Xelete tatakhe, xelete mamam zobuyane chokilet"!!!

Soso wahleka...Nqaba was kinda pissed off .

Uba: "Mma"?

Me: "Phathele icarrot cake, vanilla Ultramel and caramel sauce"

Uba: "Yho...Ayikho inyamakho tu tu tu"? heee!

Me: "Ikhona baby mamakho will cook it for dinner"

Uba: "Ooh, thank you mamakhe"

Me: "You welcome baby"

Then he ignored me...

Just like that. I quizzically looked at Soso, he smiled and cleared his throat.

Soso: "I'm sure your watch ain't working?"

Me: "Andinayo kwa watch ke yaz' mntase"

Beast: "What happened to your phones"?

Me: "Zise charge in your bedroom, yintoni ingxaki"?

Beast: "We're two hours late...For the house viewing"

Me: "Ooh sorry. I thought ndizokhaw'leza yazi love but...I'm sorry. Can't we reschedule"?

Beast: "I already have...Sizoya ngo three. Hopefully we make the time this time around"

Me: "We will...Nisahluthi"?

He ignored me, my sons shook their heads so I got up and went to prepare lunch. Soso came to join me...

Me: "Siqumbele ntoni kengoku"?

Soso: "Kudala sikufounela iiphone zakho zisifaka ku Vicky"

Me: "Heh... But he should have seen my phones in the room ngoku ebesondlula"

Soso: "Haike inoba akondlulanga"

The thought!

Soso laughed at my frown.

Soso: "He'll be fine wethu, guess he was just stressing kuba engakufumani not because of the time"

Me: "Yeah well...Unjani uLindo"?

Soso: "Uright"

I looked at him...

He chuckled and started wiping clean the plates and rinsing glasses.

Me: "I'm waiting"

Soso: "For what"?

I looked at him waiting...

Soso: "Well, we broke up...And no, well yes...In fact I don't know who broke up with who but before you say anything: it was bound to happen. Bekufike ixesha" I kept quiet...

He was confirming into ekudala ndayibona ba izakude yenzeke but I was surprised that he's so calm about it. Maybe they weren't as emotionally attached as I assumed anymore, maybe they grew apart because of his work, which was because of us in a way.

Soso: "Say something"

Me: "Are you happy"?

Soso: "Yes. I don't know how to explain this but I really am"



Me: "Then that's all I care about, your happiness. Hopefully you did the right thing whoever broke up with whoever phakathi kwenu...Don't want you to live with regrets"

Soso: "The only regret I have is not ending it sooner... Pulling her along when we both knew that it was long over"

Me: "So who's the new chick"?

He blushed and quickly manned up, toughened up.

Soso: "I'm single and looking, but, career first. I've got bills to pay"

Me: "Kodwa uqale wabobotheka"

Soso: "Haike undiyeke mna ndithe ndisingle"

Me: "Mnk. Zuhlale u-single wethu sikufuna usezingqondweni when handling ubutyebi bu ka tatu Gwala"

Yho akayihleka!

Me: "Uhleka ntoni soso"?

Soso: "Umntu onomntu akabikho sezingqondweni"?

Me: "Hay khawujonge ubaby, wena ucing'ba usezingqondweni xa equmbele ukungandifumani kwii phone azishiye pha eroomini yakhe?"

Wasuka wanyumbazeka uLwandiso Titus, I heard one of the triplets crying so I asked Soso to finish up the chicken salad I was making while I went to attend to my son... As I walked in elounge, three of them started crying.

Beast: "Nank'umama wenu mxeleleni nifuna iibhotile zenu"

Me: "Nank'umama ufikile nebhotile zabantu"

I took Iyazi and Ikho ndabafaka bobabini while he tried calming down Iyakha.

Me: "Veve?"

Uve: "Ma"?

Me: "Nd'cela uthi ku Soso acime istovu"

Uve: "Kay mamakhe"

He took a couple of steps towards the kitchen then stopped and turned facing us...With a frown.

Uve: "Ntana zakho zanca zoy'thu kuwe mamam"?

Me: "Ewe Uve, now please go to Soso"

Uve: "Akuhlungu"?

I rolled my eyes at him, he shrugged and went to deliver the message waphinda wabuya

Uve: "Uthini mama"?

Me: "Makacime istovu"

Uve: "Okay"

He went back to the kitchen waphuma no Soso...

Soso: "Uthini bra"?

Me: "Uthini kant u-Uve"?

Soso: "Uthinina u-Uve nyhani...Something about ilofu wethu"

Me: "Tyhini Thixo, and here I thought...Mxm, please switch off the stove for me"

Soso: "Lofu > stovu. Okay I see, yes wena Veve"

Nqaba laughed at his confused son, I gave him lyazi to burp and took lyakha.

When all of them we're full I went to dish up for the rest of the people then I sat with the hubby just drinking juice, I wasn't hungry. After a while esitya he laid back, caba uyetyisa umhlekazi then I felt his fingers going through my new hair ndancuma without saying a word.

Beast: "Yak'fanela le way"

Me: "Nyhani"?

Beast: "You know I wouldn't say it does, when it doesn't"

Me: "Ndiyabulela Z'khali"

He tried so hard not to smile, enyinto no Soso ebengaqhwanyazi tu I understood my husband wanting to play the "tough guy" so much. He enjoyed keeping people on their toes.

Period.

## **528**

As we were just chilling...

We heard a knock wayovula uNqaba and just stood there in utter silence sade sajongana no Soso.

Me: "Tatakhe"?

Beast: "Hm"?

Me: "Who's at the door"?

I heard a "mxxim" escape between his clenched jaws then he walked up to where I was without closing the door and took his phones...

Me: "Uyaphi"?

Beast: "Bedroom. That should be your visitor"

He took two of the triplets and looked at Soso, automatically Lwandiso got up to take the third child as Marc walked in followed by his girlfriend nda naar in an instant. I looked at them as they sat down wondering bayaphi...

Marc: "Hey...Uhm...I know the last time we saw each other wasn't-"

Linda: "Trina... We came to make peace between you and your brother"

Mnk! Wakanda joke was that?

Who would sellout their own sister and still be comfortable being called her brother? Leliphi elicuba belitshaywa ngu Marcus nam ndingcamle? I just sat there...

Linda: "I know andingeni ndawo yinto yenu lena as a family but I know with first-hand experience that this whole situation hasn't been easy on Marcus. He's ashamed of his choice of actions, he's ashamed to even think about the past few months and he's deeply sorry"

Me: "So ndingenaphi mna"?

Linda: "Ndicela umxolole torho S'bongile, I know inzima lento ndiyicela kuwe. In fact siyicela kuwe and we don't expect you to forgive him now, take your time but just consider it"

Me: "If he's so sorry why can't he speak for himself"?

Linda cleared her throat and moved back in to her seat allowing Polo to speak up.

Marc: "Tee...I know you hate me right now and I don't blame you. I deserve it"

Me: "Then why are you here"?

Marc: "I wanted to apologize to you"

Me: "Apologize huh? For what exactly? Tell me Marc, what exactly are you here to apologise for"?

Linda: "Can we not dig into the past please? We all know what happened"

Me: "I thought you said awungeni ndawo"?

Linda: "I did but kaloku ayizonisa ndawo lento yokuba makugrunjwe ipast ngoku"

Me: "Heh Linda"?

She looked up at me...

Me: "Nize apha to tell me how and why I should forgive Marcus, infact nize apha to dictate to me? Or y'all came here to apologize, please I need clarity"

Linda: "All I'm saying is-"

Me: "Mamela ke madam: I don't care what you're saying, that's the issue I'm having right now Linda. I don't care"

Linda: "Oh-kay"

Me: "Ek waag vir jou boetie, se vir my what exactly are you here to apologize for"?

He took a deep breath...Uba came down the stairs. I didn't even notice them leaving, they must have followed Uncle Soso.

Uba: "Mamam ntanayakho funi bhotile"

Me: "Oh, okay...Excuse me"

Uba noticed Marc wamjonga for a couple of seconds gqiba wahleka.

Uba: "Marc'O'Polo"

Ndayihleka ndise kitchen, I made the lukewarm water mixture for the triplets then I took them upstairs ndafika bezidlalela notate wabo.

Beast: "You good"?

Me: "I'll be fine"

Beast: "U sure? I could ask them to leave if you are not ready or comfortable with them right now"

Me: "Enkosi tatakhe but its better I face Marc ngoku and completely move on after this"

Beast: "Good luck"

Me: "Yeah whatev's"

He threw me with a pillow as I raced out of the room, Uba was asking Marcus a lot of questions but I could tell it was funny coz they were laughing.

Me: "Yabizwa ngu Tatakho Ubabalo"

Uba: "Okay mam"

He fist-bumped Marc and left...

I looked at that couple and thought mnk, washiywa tuu Lizard ngu Linda sijongile. Linda was clearly good for Marc, wife material kinda good. Naku ezokwenza uxolo, but then again...

Marc: "I was under a lot of pressure. I had to choose loyalty and...Yes I regret my choice of loyalty though I was rewarded but because of it I lost you. I am sorry I chose money over family,"

Me: "Why are you sorry? I mean, family isn't necessarily family by blood or choice. Ghost is your family too so why apologize for being in his corner"?

Marc: "Trina we both know how I handled things was wrong and I am here today to apologize to you hoping that you will find it in your heart to forgive me"

Me: "Give me one reason why I should forgive you, and don't mention family"  
Wathula...

It was awkward that there seemed to be no other reason besides that of us being a family, which to me didn't really count when it came to him because he didn't think twice when he had to stab me in the back. He did it anyway just to prove his loyalty to Ghost? I didn't mind him betraying my husband, andingeni ndawo mna kwizinto zabo zobugintsa but Nqaba knew that family is family. He might not trust family but he knows family is family.

Me: "Apparently there's no other reason, you see"?

Linda: "But family Trina...Family. You guys need each other more especially right now"

Me: "Yazi Linda...These past few months have showed me that I'm my own family. People in this world, on this earth would do anything and everything in their will power to get what they want, no matter the cost. For instance: Marcus decided to choose Ntando who happened to be his boss over Me whom he called his sister"

Marc: "Trina..."

Me: "I remember vividly how we drove throughout the streets of Port Elizabeth in the wee hours of the morning just to get a roof over our heads because his friend and associate Karoo, decided to burn our house down. Marcus knew about it, but instead of giving me the heads up he decided to turn a blind eye to the fact that his pregnant lil sister and her entire family could be in deathly danger. You don't do that to family, people you claim to love. He knows I'd never do that to him nor would I ever do it to his son"

Linda: "Before we start acting holier than though, remember how you chased Evelyn, your sister out of your house when she needed you most"

Wait what?

Marc: "Linda, don't"

Me: "No please Linda, do. I need to hear this one because it's clear there's a lot I don't know about myself that y'all know"

Linda: "Eve came to you, last year ezophozisa ingqondo and instead of listening to her you called her husband to come fetch her wamdiselela ngemali onayo and the places you were gonna travel to ngemali yegazi. All she needed was your time and sympathy"

Me: "And she told you this"?

Linda: "Yes...And no andixabanisi apha ungayombuza lonto I was just pointing out that sonke sinazo iziphoso zethu. You included"

Me: "I see"

So after how Eve treated me kwam I was now the villain in the whole situation? I asked her what was wrong instead she kept on judging and being bitter... But all of that was somehow my fault? Tyhini Thixo.

Linda: "I'm sorry...I shouldn't have said that Eve part"

Me: "I'm glad you did, at least now I know that I'm being discussed behind my back by people who claim to be family. But what amazes me in this is that y'all chose to believe her and never bothered to hear my side of the story"

Linda: "As I said, I wasn-"

Me: "I have an appointment that I should be preparing for in the next thirty minutes... If y'all don't mind"

She cleared her throat and looked at her boyfriend.

Marc: "I'll be in Joburg for the entire week, just incase you need to see me"

Linda: "Please consider lento besizengayo... Family is important especially when it is all you have"

I got up ndabavulela umnyango...

They followed each other out. I closed the door, went upstairs to fetch my phone ndabuyela elounge and called Eve...

Eve: "Hey lil sis"

Me: "So after you left my house with your husband you went behind my back to discuss me with Marc and Linda"?

Eve: "What are you talking about"?

Me: "I am talking about you Evelyn, discussing me with your brother, how I made you feel unwelcome in my house, how I didn't listen to you when you needed me most, and the cherry on top: how I bragged about my blood money and chased you out of my house. Remember that"?

Eve: "That's not how I said it"

Me: "I find that hard to believe"

Eve: "So you're gonna fucken believe them and not me"?

Me: "The fuck Eve? They believed you instead of approaching me and hear my side of the story"

Eve: "I don't have time for this...When you wanna talk like a fucken grown-ass woman, call me"

Me: "Hm. Don't count on it big sis...I'm good"

I hung up...

"Luu your other pho-"

Me: "Not now tatakhe"

He walked down and came to sit with me, we sat in silence for a couple of minutes then he pulled me in for a hug still without saying a word.

## **529**

I moved away from his embrace and actually left him there ndaphuma phandle...I just needed some air. I took a walk down the road, up the other street at the back and back to my doorstep ndabuya ingqondo nook ithe ham. There was no one in the lounge or kitchen so I went straight upstairs ndafika belele. I sat down and just watched them sleeping peacefully...

Beast: "Uvelaphi"?

I squinted my eyes looking at him, his eyes were shut closed or he heard me walk in, or it could be my scent? I didn't answer him... I took my phone and went back down the stairs to the kitchen, bebathe bafuna inyama mos then I'll make them meat. I marinated steak then put it in a bucket ndalifaka in the fridge while cooking the rest of the food...I decided to call Keri...

Keri: "Hey little one, how have you been"?

Me: "I've been good hey, you"?

Keri: "What's wrong"?

Me: "Noth-"

Keri: "Trinalique Smith"

I sighed...

I lowered the stove and sat down.

Me: "I just found out that Eve has been bad mouthing me to Marcus and his new girlfriend"

Keri: "Is that why you and Marc are not talking"?

Me: "No... That's a different story altogether"

Keri: "I've got all the times in the world"

I didn't wanna tell her...

UKeri uright angazingeni ezizinto zethu but then again, Eve had Marc in her corner.

Me: "Okay but I won't go into details"

Keri: "Okay"

Me: "There was something that happened before I disappeared last year, Marc knew about it but he didn't warn me"

Keri: "Does it have anything to do with your husband's business dealings"?

Me: "Uhm...It does, and our lives were in danger. I mean, all he could have done was to give me the heads up, I'd have done the rest but he chose to be loyal to someone else instead of someone he calls his sister"

Keri: "Uuh, now I understand. Okay moving on to Eve... "

But wait...why did I feel like Keri knew a lot more than I thought she did?

Me: "Yho uEve Keri"

Keri: "Who told you about this bad mouthing business"?

Me: "Linda...I think it kinda slipped"

Keri: "She needs to know her place though, this is a family business. She might be Marc's girlfriend but she's not his wife. She needs to mind her tongue and stick her nose where it belongs"

Me: "Oh well..."

Keri: "I'll talk to Eve..."

Me: "Please don't. It will only fuel up this whole thing"

Keri: "Trina we're family, we can't keep on fighting each other instead of standing together."

Me: "Keri..."

Keri: "I'm gonna talk to Eve and call a meeting for the three of us, if needed, I might also call Marcus"

Me: "Mar-who? Sis, there's no way I'm sitting in another meeting with Marc. No way"

Keri: "I love you...But you will make a way. Bye bye, kiss my babies for me"

She hung up on me...

Hee Soso walked in carrying a shopping bag...



But he seemed a bit disturbed.

Soso: "Hey you"

Me: "Buddy"

He put the bag on the counter and drank three glasses of water.

Me: "We good"?

He shook his head in silence, I poured him juice and just waited for him to be ready to talk. Just then, hubby walked in.

Beast: "Sizohamba nabo abantwana mos"?

Soso: "I'm staying behind so akho need, but you can take the triplets I'll stay with the twins"

Me: "You're not coming to view the house with us"?

Soso: "I won't be good company man mntase, ikhona nje into endiphazamisileyo"

Beast: "So you'll be okay ushyeka noo Uba"?

He just nod...

Nqaba looked at me I just shrugged ndenza le bendiyenza then I went to prepare abantwana bam, after that, we left. We arrived at the first one...Was in a good area, but it wasn't my cuppa tea. It was too glam for me...Even my husband didn't like it so went to the next one: Pretoria and it stole my heart sisangena at the gate.

Nqaba: "Heee, awusabobotheki"

Me: "Babe...This might be it"

Nqaba: "An hour's drive to Joburg where both our businesses are? Wow"

Me: "Optimism is the key right now my love"

We went inside and it truly stole my heart, I loved it. Yes there were a couple of things to change...

Like the bathrooms and the master bedroom but the kitchen plan was what truly stole my heart. It was huge and spacious...I knew I'd cook up a storm in such an environment but I understood my husband's concern though I was also happy that my kids would go to Aunt Keri's kindergarten. I tried my best to convince him that this was it, we didn't need to see enye ngoku, I was okay with that one. He submitted then made payment arrangements while I outsourced an interior designer for my lounge, dining area and kitchen including Bed and bathroom. After that we left with our keys...

Beast: "There's something I need to take pha ko Vince"

Me: "Go with your kids and drop me off at the boutique"

Beast: "Go with which kids"?

Me: "Haibo"

Beast: "Ndizabaphatha njani abantwana abathathu"?

Me: "Then siyagoduka sonke ke baby, including you. U Vince uzambona ngomso"

Beast: "Baby kutheni uyi bully nje"?

Me: "Haibo tatakhe, aw'nondiphekisa mna gqiba ufune ukuyakwa Vince knowing uzofika wamkelwe nge plate yo mojo"

Beast: "But love...Uyayazi xandingafuni kutya kwenyindawo besides home andi kutyi"

True...

Me: "Okay ke... Nd'cela uyosibeka then you can go"

Beast: "Asiqumbanga mos"

Me: "Ha.a"

He stole a look at me ndamhleka as he went to drop us, I was bothered ke yaz ngu Soso. Something was wrong. We got home, he helped me carry the kids inside then he went to his brother...I wondered though how he handled the stares from people who saw him on the news that he was dead but being Nqaba inoba akababoni nobabona abobantu. Soso was playing PS3 alone, my kids were fast asleep next to him.

Me: "Utheni mntase?"

He ignored me, I turned off the TV and just looked at him. He sat up looking straight ahead then he laughed nervously...

Soso: "Khayeke man"

Me: "You know I won't be dropping this, right? Utheni"?

Soso: "Ndimithisile"

Me: "Congratulations"

He laughed again...

Shaking his head.

Me: "And you're not excited"

Soso: "I am...Kanti I am mntase. Just that..."

Me: "Umithise uLindo"?

Soso: "Nope"

Me: "Haibo, une cherry that I don't know off"?

He got up and walked to the window and just stood there for a few seconds in silence.

Soso: "It was supposed to be a one-night-stand kinda thing"

Me: "She caught feelings or she trapped you into pregnancy? However that happens"

Soso: "Actually, I caught feelings"

I laughed...

I didn't believe him.

Soso: "Somehow we did the deed again, and I told her I wanted more but she didn't wanna have it. She's fragile bra"

Me: "So...Pregnancy"?

Soso: "Ndakhe ndathikuye I'm not ready for a relationship or any responsibility. That was after ndohlukene no Lindo"

Me: "Oh you contradicted yourself"

Soso: "I was in denial mfethu..."

Me: "So lemme guess, she didn't tell you she's pregnant because she feared you'd run away from your responsibility"?

Soso: "Yes. Uthi in fact she wasn't gonna tell me because she knows we're not in a relationship, she only kept the pregnancy because kudala wamfuna umntana but she wasn't emotionally ready and now she is"

Me: "I see"

Soso: "Bra...I've been given a second chance at being a dad. I'm not gonna be an absent father mna, nd'funa umntanam akhule with both parents, in a warm and loving home"

Me: "Did you tell her that?"

Soso: "She locked herself in her office after our mini argument, now she's not taking my calls"

Mnk...

Me: "Who's this girl Soso"?

Soso: "That's not important mntase right now, what's important is that ngo four I'm going back there. Soze ndikwazi nolala namhlanje... I need to talk to her"

I looked at the guy...

I knew very well that he loved his ex, Lindo, very much but right that moment I could tell that he was in love. I had never seen such glow and passion in his eyes before...

Me: "Uyamthanda neh"?

He chuckled and sat down looking at me with a smile.

Soso: "Is this what love feels like"?

Me: "Bra, you're smitten"!!!

We both laughed.

### **530**

After some time I realized that I missed my husband but I didn't wanna be a nuisance and call him ezonwabele no brother wakhe so come dinnertime, ndaphaka ndakufaka kwi oven okwakhe ukutya then I served my sons and Uncle Soso.

Soso: "I meant to tell you, your husband has given me the position on a permanent basis"

Me: "Uyithathile"?

Soso: "Yes...Do you even have to ask"?

Me: "Kaloku I wanna be sure uyaw'funa you're not just taking it because of desperation"

Soso: "I've grown to love this job bra...And, he lets me do things my way as long as it's legit and brings in profit"

Me: "Well congratulations then"

Soso: "I'm still waiting for the contract from his lawyers then we can celebrate properly"

Me: "Mmmkay"

Soso: "And...I've been back-paid for the three months y'all have been away"  
He was all smiles...

Soso: "That means, I can buy myself a car and save some for my unborn baby"

Me: "This baby is lucky to have you as a father, s/he's gonna be spoilt rotten"

Soso: "Ndizam'spoilela nee mini ezininzi bra yhu, ndaw'spoila nonina"

Me: "Ubude waya khona kuye"?

Soso: "No, I decided to give her space, ndizodlula kuye ngomso xandihamba"

Me: "Well good luck"

Soso: "I'm gonna need more than luck pha, she's stubborn ingathi nguwe" I just laughed at him, my spirit was suddenly unsettled but I didn't want to spoil the moment for him. After dinner I went to bath my kids, all of them while Uncle Soso

cleared up and washed the dishes. After tucking the kids in I called my husband and his phone sent me straight to voicemail so I tried his brother, Vincent, it rang once and then it went silent. I knew something was wrong but I obviously didn't know what exactly... and I didn't wanna look paranoid but I was really unsettled. I got in bed and waited... Past eleven ndazincama and called him again but still to no avail, I tried Vince ndancama. I got up ndanxiba, as I was taking a beanie, my phone rang. Not the one I was calling him on...

Me: "Tatakhe uphi"?

Beast: "Nd'cela undiphathele ijersey nee boots eziblack from my closet I'll text you the address just now"

Me: "Did you see the time? Uyayazi sinabantwana apha endlini I can't just up and go"

Beast: "Titus will keep an eye on them"

Me: "Tatakhe kwenze kantoni? Uphi"?

Beast: "I can't explain further Luthando, I'll text you the address"

Me: "Wh-"

He hung up on me ndasose ndigqibezela ukunxiba and looked for his hoodie and black boots then I called the guy who's supposed to be driving me around wathi uphandle ulinde mna I went to Soso and told him I was going out ndcela amamele abantwana, he didn't ask much so I left. The text came through, I gave the guy la address that I was texted and he took me to the deeper ends of Soweto. I called Nqaba when I was outside...I was a bit scared of the place, it was dark and shady. Scary. He came out shirtless, and, he had a bandage on his arm ndeva kusithi krunqu entliziyweni kum ndanesingqala. Kanene sibuyele lento... I just gave him his things ndithe cwaka, there was no need to ask anything. That was his life. Nothing new.

Beast: "I'll be out of sight for a couple of days, nd'cela undenzele ifavour"?

Me: "Mh"

Beast: "Go to Keri's house. Uhlale pha until I come back"

I wanted to ask him how do I go to Keri's house ngobusuku nabantwana nje out of the blue but I bit my tongue...

Beast: "Uyandiva Luthando"?

Me: "Mh"

Beast: "I'll call you k'sasa to check if nise safe..."

Me: "Sure, is that all? I need to get back before they notice I'm not in bed with them...Your kids I mean"

Beast: "Don't do that"

Me: "I'm not doing anything but kalok we can't be chit chatting here kukho lento ikhoyo ndingayaziyo abantwana bonke sibashiyengaapha kude"

Beast: "Yeah that's all"

Me: "Sharp"

I turned to walk away...

I wished he'd grab my wrist, hug me and assure me that it's nothing much, you know? It's just my imagination going wild but he didn't, he watched me leave. I got home and called Keri, she actually wanted to come with Joe bazosithatha I had to convince her we'd find our way she just had to give us her address...When she did, I went to wake Soso up ndamxelela lendawo ndiyixelelweyo nam so he helped me pack then carry the luggage to the car, gqiba wathi yena uzoshiyeka, he's going to PE anyway k'sasa. I let him be...

He had become a man in my absence. If anyone could handle that Ghost rubbish then they most probably can handle anything we got to Keri's house sayolalisa abantwana bonke in one room including the triplets then I took another guestroom, Keri brought me chamomile tea.

Me: "Thanks"

Keri: "Wanna talk about it"?

Me: "There's nothing to talk about really...He just said we should come here, he'll call me in the morning"

Keri: "Do you think there's danger anywhere"?

Me: "His left arm is bandaged so...Maybe"

Keri: "Okay...Well y'all are safe here. Drink your tea and get some rest"

Me: "Thank you...Please apologize to Joe for waking him up in the middle of the night"

Keri: "No don't worry about that, you know he'd do anything for family"

I just smiled... She kissed my cheek and walked out closing the door behind her. I drank my tea and cuddled myself to sleep, that was all I could do. Following day, I woke up to eight missed calls from my husband, but the most shocking thing was to realize that it was a couple of minutes past eleven I jumped out of bed and went to the kids room, found it empty. I heard noises in the background so I went

to the window and saw all of them playing with Keri... I exhaled and went back to my room, I sat on the edge of the bed and redialed my husband.

Beast: "I've been calling you"

Me: "Good morning"

Beast: "Why weren't you answering your phone"?

Me: "I was still sleeping"

Beast: "Wena? Kude kubethe u10:00 Luthando"?

I didn't know ke ba ufuna ndithi bekutheni ukuze ndingayibambi iphone coz ndiyamxelela so I just kept quiet...

Beast: "Baby"?

Me: "Hm"?

Beast: "Uyayazi ba this is our life, right"? So kufuneka ndingqine?

Beast: "I noticed you were hurting last night when your eyes saw the bandage, andonzakelanga it's just a bullet grazing le ikule ngalo"

Me: "Mh"

Beast: "I tried pushing lamntu wempepha zendlu so there's a possibility that we could have the title deed by Thursday"

Me: "Tatakhe"?

Beast: "Mamakhe"

Me: "You left me eight missed calls just to tell me about indlu that we have keys for"?

Beast: "No, I wanted to know y'all are safe, and now I know so ndidlulisa umyalezo kengoku"

Me: "Kwenzeka ntoni Luthando"?

Wathi cwaka...

Me: "Ayizokwazike ukwenzeka le uyenzayo into, soze uthule tu"

Beast: "Akhonto intsha nje Luthando, uyayaz nawe zikhona iimini ezinje"

Me: "Are you gonna answer me"?

He sighed...

Beast: "Vince got shot last night, use s'bhedlele and now I'm looking for the people who shot him. I have caught two already so kushota three"

Me: "uVince ligintsa ngoku naye"?

Beast: "Awulogintsa njen awe"

Me: "Hay don't compare me to Vince, I did what I did to protect my children"

Beast: "Well, he got shot protecting my assets, same difference"

Well...It made sense.

Me: "So uyaziwa ba usaphila"?

Beast: "No...And I'm using that to my advantage"

Me: "Mnk mnk, you should have been Ghost. Anyway bye bye"

Beast: "Don't forget to mention me your nigga in your prayers"

Me: "Yeah whatever"

He chuckled as he hung up, I'm yet to see someone who loves family okudlula uNqaba. Luke loves his family nangona esinqabele mvanje but he loves us no questions kwelocala kodwa, he doesn't matchup to my husband. Maybe that's another asset that attracted me to him. I took a shower and changed clothes then I went to the kitchen ndazenzela icereal. Khangekubekudala ndisitya kwa ngena icall from Landile...

Me: "Hello"?

Laa: "Yho, I was trying my luck with this number...Bra, andizobuza nempilo. Uphi uLwandiso"?

Me: "Ifan'ba useBhayi, what's going on"?

Laa: "There's an emergency esidingayo eMonti and andimfumani on his cell, emsebenzini wakhe kuthwa use Joburg"

Me: "He might be on a flight to PE, but nam ndizokhe ndimzame"

Laa: "Uyaw'be undincede kakhulu mntase"

Me: "I hope whatever the emergency ayiko kufa or ukugula komntu"

Laa: "Well, andiyazi nam...But strange enough, ndifounelwe nguDabs wethu and when I tried calling mom and dad to ask what's this about, their phones were off"

Me: "Yho...Khame ndizame lomfana"

Laa: "Sharp"

We hung up, I tried Soso...Voicemail.

I texted him on WhatsApp, logged in onto Facebook kuba ndizomshiyela i-message ku messenger ndasuka ndagangwa yiheadline that there was a plane crash three hours ago...The plane was from Jo'burg ijongise ngaseMonti.

Ndasuka nda stuck, andayazi noba bendiyothini ku Facebook in the first place.

## **531**

Nqabayomzi



Before we went to view the house, I had received a call from Vince saying that some gang had gone to the ShisaNyama, took everything including my electronic devices. But, I couldn't just tell Lu nje like that I knew she wouldn't let me go without an argument so after siyibonile indlu I dropped them at the apartment then charged towards the hospital ndayojonga le chap. He wasn't badly hurt, just one shot below the shoulder...Would have been fatal had it been an inch lower than where it already was, but we thanked God.

Me: "Did you get to see those guys"?

Vince: "No...But I..."

Me: "Take your time" He took a couple of breaths in.

Vince: "They were all wearing balaclavas but I recognized one voice"

Me: "Who"?

Vince: "uMabhuti..."

I looked at him... Hoping he'd say he's mistaken.

Vince: "I know what you're thinking, but...it was him"

Me: "Did he get to see that you recognized him"?

Vince: "No...I made sure akangbonikuth' ngimbonile"

Me: "Good. Lemme dash...I'll come back to check on you later"

Vince: "Hawu"?

Me: "Akhona amajita who'll keep an eye on you... Chill"

Wathula...

I could tell he was scared but he had to man up, I had bigger fish to fry. Mabhuti? Diving back into the ocean depth a bit, Mabhuti yibrother kaYanga...Was he tryna fight his brother's wars now? Or he's just taking chances because he knew I was no longer around? When did he become a gangsta? Last time I heard of him he was just a local criminal, just a lousy dirty thug...Now ukwazi uxhomisa a well known joint? My joint? I took one guy leaving the rest to watch over Vince ndayokhangela uMabhuti, I got two of his guys but he fled...Andazinoba kukothuka or he thought I was Ghost but he managed to hide ndabe ndisure ndimchanile either eqatheni or embandeni. We spent the night looking for him to no avail...But I knew how to get to him, just like I knew how to get to Yanga: women. I drove straight to his crib, and just scouted the yard. I found out that umamakhe ukhona, and three other people...I needed something, someone endisure that if ndithathe yena he would be forced to come out of his hiding place. As I drove out of his mother's place with my headlights off, I heard a silencer cutting through my window and into my arm but not literally into the

skin, the bullet just grazed me kancinci. I stopped the car ndayomkhangela, ndayijikela landawo kwasa phandle and in anguish I decided that I needed a solid plan to take on this guy, maybe he wasn't such an amateur as I made him out to be. In the early hours of the morning I left and went together with the guys at the warehouse. Tera came in ekuseni...

Tera: "Grootman"

I looked up from my computer...

Tera: "Ikhona enyijita bendikhe ndaringa nayo gester, ind'bhelele vandag le jita uMabra ulapha"

Me: "Ulapha phi"?

Tera: "Ulapha eGomora grootman"

Ndabuyisa iingqondo...

So uMabhuti ufuna ukusivingcela in our own territory? Wow. Ndimnke nje iThree months apha ndibuya sezenza indoda lentwana...

Me: "Where exactly"?

Tera: "I can take you...Ndiye ndashay'round just to be sure. Ndambona"

Me: "Masiyendoda"

I went to the backroom where the other guys were resting...

Me: "I need three guys; four packets of spikes, ntshiza two per person and three extras. Fill your bags ngestuff...And, don't forget uqhusa"

I left them besapakisha.

Trusting "certain" people in a team yandibonisa kakubi so ndayeka kwa lento yocenga, if you wanna be among the three endiyifunayo uyakutshongokwakho...At the end of the day umntu ubhatalwa ngokomsebenzi awenzileyo, ooRanger taught me a lot ngokuthemba umntu. Wasn't gonna go through that route again .Sangena sonke kwitrans ndakhwela nalechap izand'khombisa, I saw him at a distance and called the other cars behind us to take the other route bamqhaw'lele because I knew if usibonile uzophinda abaleke and kengoku andilogeza noko andinomphosa kaninzi ngentshiza. Ndibe ndimfuna ephila... I stopped right in front of him, Tera quickly grabbed him wamfaka emotweni ndaphephetheka back to the warehouse while they fought at the back passenger seat. When we got to our location, ndohlika ndabashiyapha, the rest of the guys went to assist uTera bangena naye, tied him up into a chair while I fixed my tools on the table then they stood back. Though I was facing the other way, I

could feel the way they were thirsty for him...All they needed was my go ahead and bendizobanika but not ngoku.

Me: "You can go"

I heard izihlangu zamadoda zigxwashuza ukuphuma, I didn't turn until I heard the door locking itself. I took a gas burner (the one used for welding), turned it on yavutha then ndaguquka... For a moment he froze.

Mabhuti: "Ta B...No man...Ta Be-you're d-"

Me: "Dead"?

He vigorously nod, I chuckled blowing soft air into the burning fire on the tool in my hand.

Me: "Utheshela bani kwedini"?

Mabhuti: "Hay grootm-"

Me: "I just need a name, then you're a freeman"

Mabhuti: "Ta Beast"

Me: "Three..."

He tried wriggling himself free from his chair.

Me: "Two..."

Mabhuti: "Grootman please..."

Me: "One. Your time is up"

I wore earplugs that would prevent me from hearing his cries as I burnt the chains on his wrists until they were red wabe ejubalaza...

I stopped and pulled down the plugs ndamjonga. He was sweating wet ngathi lingamla emdyarhweni.

Me: "Okay..Let's start from the top. Utheshela bani Mabhuti"?

Mabhuti: "Bhut' ta Beast grootman bhoza yam... Ndcel'xolo grootman. Ndcel'xolo grootman yam"

Me: "Three..."

Mabhuti: "Sure ta Beast bhuda, mamela ta yam..."

Me: "Two..."

Mabhuti: "Please don't do this big guy.... Ndizakuxelela ke bhut' ta Beast bra. Yho yho yho haaayi yatshisa lekaka bra"

Me: "One"

I covered my ears ndatshisa amachain la mna ndizikhalisela umlozi wam, when I had had enough of his wrists I bent down to the chains around his ankles ndayeka xa ingathi ziya melt'a.

Me: "Awukafunuthetha nangoku"?

He was crying, the skin around his wrists was burnt, the chains almost sinking into it.

Me: "You know I can do this all night, right"?

He continued crying at the top of his voice, I put the burner down and went to fetch a pliers ndambona ejubalaza as I knelt before him ndaqala kuciki ndajija waphuma ndaphakama ndambonisa oko ndziculela igwijo lam ngomlozi.

Me: "Next could be your tongue, or ear...or your manhood"

Mabhuti: "Ndcel'xolobhuti, ndcel'xoooolo yhooo"

Me: "Usebenzelabani. That's all I wanna know"

Mabhuti: "Ibiyi once-off bhuti...andimsebenzeli he paid me just for this job bhuti"

Me: "Who paid you"?

Mabhuti: "Ngu Ta Zakes grootman" Zakes seriously?

Me: "Ufunanton ieGoli uZakhele"?

Wathula...Phofu wagcumela ngaphakathi.

Me: "I don't believe you, uZakhele uyayazi indaw'yakhe. Why would he even send an amateur to do his work"?

Mabhuti: "You can take my phone uyofunda ku WhatsApp bhuti if you don't believe me"

I pocketed him, found his phone and read the conversation he had with Zakes...Wow. Umntu unyamalala for a while kuvele iitruue characters zabantu, come to think of it...I needed to pay Zakes a friendly visit.

Me: "Ayt...See you when I can't avoid to see you"

Mabhuti: "Ha-bhut' ta Beast. I thought you said you're gonna let me go"

Me: "You thought wrong"

Mabhuti: "Please bra...Ndizohlala ndenzentoni apha"?

Me: "I'm sure lamajita will make your time worthwhile,"

Gqiba ndamshiya, I permitted the gents to be great hosts to him.

Noko lingabinesithukuthezi indwendwe lethu bekhona.

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## 532

Nqabayomzi

I drove to my apartment and got cleaned up I took Mabhuti's phone and looked for Zakhele's address and number then I did my short research on him... Things that might have changed in my absence then I loaded my bag ndangena estratweni. I drove straight to his house...I had two pistols on both calf's, two in both boots, one on my back and three pocket knives, and obviously a screw driver. As I neared the hours I stopped the car, got out and removed the registration number coz ezakhe iimoto zihamba ngaphandle kwe number plates...I hooted at the gate once yavuleka. There was one guard by the door, I parked and just sat in the car waiting to see what exactly will the guard do. After ten minutes he spoke in a walkie-talkie, after a few seconds he removed a gun from its pouch on his waist then walked straight to my car. I attached the silencer on the front of my gun, opened the door and fired the first shot wawa phantsi. I walked up to the front-door anda nkqonkqoza ndavela ndagaleleka okwamanzi omthombo ophuphumayo...

Lihle: "Ha-...TaB..."

Me: "Lihle"

Lihle just froze.

I looked at her, then both our eyes raced to the phone on the coffee table ndayiqondabasicinga intwenye so to avoid drama, I just fired a shot yaphasalaka yazi pieces gqiba ndamjonga.

Lihle: "TaBeast...Ak-uZak-"

Again she just froze, I watched in silence as urine dripped down her grey tights to the floor.

Me: "Tell your boyfriend to look for me andifumane before the end of today...Ukubandikhe ndamkhangela ngokwam uyaw'kwenza intwengaphezukoz'chamela"

Then I walked out, I bumped onto another guard at the door. He pointed me with a gun on the forehead.

Guard: "You've crossed the line..."

I chuckled...

Ndaske ndeva uLihle behind me calling this guy: "Philani myeke...He's just looking for Zakes"

Guard: "He shot Reebo Lee, Reebo is dead obviously nguye. I'm gonna blow his mind too"

Lihle: "Phil bra...Please. Zakes will deal with this"

Guard: "Ta Zakes trusted us with your life Lee... Uyayaz' ikaka endizobakuyo when he gets here and finds Reebo in a pool of blood"?

Lihle: "Uyayaz'ikaka ozakubakuyo if you don't let ta Beast go?"

Wagxadazela wabuy'umva uPhilani wandiqwalasela, blinking kaninzi.

Guard: "But ta B...Hayman Lee sudlala kanje...like, U sure this is him?"

Me: "Congratulations Philani you've literally wasted fifteen minutes of my time"  
Waske wankonka...

Me: "And this is for holding me at gunpoint..."

Ndamfaka intlamvu phez'konyawo waxhuma...Nje umothusa, uyaw'hamba nge crushes for a while but he'll definitely remember my face for life. I got in my car and drove out... I missed my babies, all of them, especially the new batch but I couldn't see them ndinomsindo onjena. Singavela silwe no Luthando...and I didn't want that. At least when I called her earlier ubuhlile nook lamsindo wobandithe mabayekwa Keri ngobusuku...

Nokwana uyacengeka umnkam. Xa ethanda.

I went straight to the Shisanyama ndathi makuvalwe... Then I went to the office, everywhere was empty besides the safes so I emptied them ndaphuma. Ndagileka kuPolo.

Marc: "Bigguy"

Me: "Marcus Smith"

Marc: "You look good"

Me: "Thanks to your sister"

Ndithetha ndisiya emotweni yam mna, he was following behind me.

Me: "Hoe kan ek jou help"?

Marc: "I just wanted to apologize to you too...For choosing Ghost over you"

Me: "We're not in preschool Polo, you're a grown man and I'm sure you had your reasons. You don't owe me an apology...Life's a jungle, a mans gotta hustle"

He looked shocked, then cleared his throat.

Marc: "So we good"?

Me: "As far as I know yes"

Marc: "Thank you"

Me: "Cheers"

I drove out esame phaya, sigqibile mos uthetha ayikho enye incoko yethu. I got to the apartment and called my wife after downing three shots of Hennessy.

Luu: "Luthando Gwala"

Me: "Luthando Gwala wam"

Luu: "Uphi mfondini"?

Me: "I'm at the crib...Sorting out a few things. Nise grand"?

Luu: "Seriously"?

Me: "I miss my babies"

Luu: "Uright kaloku. Baby what's going on ngoku?"

Me: "Don't stress yourself about this, it's nothing I can't handle"

Luu: "So you won't tell me what's going on"?

Me: "I'm tryna protect you here mamakhe, you and the kids. The less you know, the better"

She mumbled something but I wasn't gonna ask ba uthini seyi right ndingayiva.

Me: "Awundikhumbuli kengoku wena baby"?

Luu: "Ndizokhumbula ntonina kuwe Nqaba"?

Me: "Haibo, ungand'xeleli ba uJoseph sekuzamele i-ou yomlungu kutheni awayazi ba mawukhumbule ntoni emyenini wakho"?

Luu: "Ndizay'thin ii-ou yomlungu izoconfuser abantwana bam"?

Me: "Nyhanike"

Luu: "But ukhona londiyomphakela right now, he's a Zulu businessman noko noko akakudanga ncam apha kuwe"

Me: "Don't even waste his time baby...Akanolenza ixesha"

Luu: "He's been asking for my number yaz'baby oko efikile and I was thinking of giving him yours"

Me: "No mnike eyakho mntuwam, give him the first three letters umxelele ba the next four ifumaneka kwa Jaguar, and the last zifumaneka kwa Land Rover"

She cracked up I don't know what her laughter was doing to me, immediately ehleka I just felt warmth deep inside.

Luu: "So uyandi pimper baby"?

Me: "No baby but asinamoto common now, xa usithi he's a businessman noko makazame u-line ocacayo kaloku"

Luu: "Phofuke, noko I've grown past the flowers and chocolates. In fact, ngumsebenzi wakho lowo"

Me: "Kwaye ndiwenza ngomzimba ongenaxhala"

Luu: "Mh, ndizoyenza kanti lento uyithethayo yaz tatakhe. Inga kuxaki ke"

Me: "Baby ube sure ke iimpepha zithi wena kuyo yonke lonto...Njeng'ba nawe usithi mna, nam ndisithi wena. U businessman makakhuphe imali qha yena"

She laughed again, why was Luthando laughing at me? I was serious though.

Obviously Joe and Keri must have told their friend that Luthando is a married woman but ubusinessman (if he really exists) uyashela anyway, makashele ke.

Sizodla ngaye thina no baby we need cars no we don't need em, we want cars. If we needed them we'd have them already we can actually afford them. After talking to her I took a nap...Waiting on this guy to show up.

My phone rang...

Me: "Zakhele"

Wathi cwaka...I hung up. Being "dead" had been a privilege to me in this case, it was working on my advantage. Zakes called again,

Me: "I don't have all day ke ndoda ngokubendishiya umyalezo I said ndikhangele...You decide to call me"

Zakes: "Ta Beast grootman...Uhm, singadibanaphi big guy. I got your message"

Me: "Uqalenini ungandazi apho ndihlalakhona"?

Zakes: "Asinodibana in a public place ta Beast"?

Me: "The only public place I know off is my Shisanyama which is closed because you decided to dip your hand where it doesn't belong. Or, ufuna ndizekwakho"?

Zakes: "Ha.a no, no, no ta Beast. I'll come to you"

Me: "You have 3 minutes 27 seconds"

Zakes: "Yh-"

I hung up, didn't have time for sissies.

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## **533**

Nqabayomzi



I got up and geared up for this guy...I wasn't joking kanti, 3 minutes and 27 seconds was all I could give him. After 3 minutes I locked my house, got in my car and used that 27 seconds driving out of that parking lot as I drove off to his house...I planted four explosives on all four corners of his yard, poured diesel fuel at his front gate then ndayohlala emotweni yam at a fair distance. Exactly after fifteen minutes he called me...I picked up the call and just listened

Zakes: "Ta Beast...Grootman I know you gave me three minutes, but bhut'ta yam uyayazi itraffic yase Joburg"

I checked my watch...Mh.

Zakes: "Nd'cela uvule I'm at the door"

Me: "Nd'cela uvule I'm at the gate"

Zakes: "Gate? Gate...Haibo grootman you're at my crib? Please, please tell me you're not at my place bhudda yam grootman"

Me: "...and you have 10 seconds to open this gate or, I'll open it myself"

Zakes: "Oh hay ta Beast bra yam...Hay bra yam yho hay ndyak'cela grootman don't do this"

Me: "Your time is up"

I hung up, revved my car and activated the explosives.

I took a look at my rearview and I could see the fires blowing up on all four corners of the mansion, I'm sure it was new. Umnkakwam apha u Zakhele ndamshiya engahlali apha tu...Caba urheme uzenzele ulife eJoburg in this short period mnkq. As I drove off, I saw a car driving towards me on highspeed and I knew it's him uleqa probably ujonga uLihle or he didn't believe that I really was at his crib. As soon as his car neared, I brightened my headlights obviously blinding him on purpose then I watched as his car swerved out of the road, rolled downwards and stopped near a tree. I revved back, rolled down my window and watched him crawl under it because the wheels were greeting the clouds...

Me: "Zakhele"?

He stopped and listened...I brightened my headlights yet again and watched him cover his eyes.

Me: "Money has gotten into your head huh"?

Zakes: "Gro-ouch. Ta B-...I tried to make your time but-"

Me: "Zusole uy'ncokolela uBra Killa lonto"

I removed one more explosive, activated it and threw it at his car, he was just at arms-length from it and judging by his position ngoku ebendiphendula one of his

legs was still stuck under the car...He prolly was gonna meet his ancestors sooner than he imagined. I drove away and heard is'thonga kublasta into , I wouldn't know ke bayintoni because now my focus was Vincent, I went to buy him Nando's family meal and headed to the hospital. Kanye xandingena in his ward, I noticed that the family was gathered when did they arrive? Bafikelephi? Bavengabani?

Taima: "Heh Nqabayomzi Luthando Gwala"???

Mama: "Ubungenomlinda angene mhlawumbi"?

Taima: "Heh khawume nantsika...Heh Nq-"

Mama: "Ungakulingeke unditshatshalaze mna"

Ndasuka ndaxakwa emnyango...

Sihle was standing next to Vince looking worried, Kuhle wasn't here.

Ghost: "Ngena ndoda, ignore them. Oko bebesenza lento"

Taima: "Ignore us? Heh kwedini"

Ghost: "Haike taima"

Vince was grinning, caba umandelwe yilento yenzekayo apha.

Me: "Molweni...Ndiyanibona nisemandleni"

Taima: "Kutheni elelapha uVincent, Nqabayomzi"?

Me: "You can call me Nqaba taima, akubikhongxaki"

Taima: "Ndikufake impama ulibele kukuba cocky, now answer me"

Mama: "Yhu awusena drama, aw'sena drama Nqobimpi yintoni"

Me: "Ubumtyisantoni emonti namakhulu usuke watyheli umhlekezzi"

The guys laughed...

He knew why Vince was there, I wasn't gonna break it down before the family.

Mother dear never raised a thug, she raised a business mogul so I wasn't gonna discuss my shady shenanigans in front of her tu. It was actually "nice" having the whole family in one place but I had things to do and being here was just a waste of time for me xabekhona.

Me: "Ntwana ndizophinda ndishaye iround pha es'khathini, mandibaleke"

Vince: "Sure bra"

Mama: "Haibo uleqaphi ufika"?

Me: "Makhulu ikhona enyindawo bifanba ndiqale kuyo qha ndacinga le chap ibingena kutya"

Taima: "Mnkq mnkq"

Ghost: "Mandikukhuphe"

Me: "Uncle Sish'le masambe"

He got up without saying a word, the three of us walked to where my car was parked.

Ghost: "What really happened"?

Me: "Ungakhabe ungena chap"

I opened the car for Sihle wayolinda pha while I explained to Ntando what was really happening. Uyathandake ubaseleka he was busy efuna uhamba nathi but I refused...I can handle my own shit thank you very much.

Ghost: "Ndizay'nyisa ubonanje lantwana uZakhele"

Me: "Usele usenzela nathi but he's not worth the time, I have other things to focus on"

Ghost: "Like"?

Me: "You"

Ghost: "Me? Ndenzeni ngoku"?

Me: "Nizobalapha for how long? I'm still dead kaloku mjita and you being here will blow my cover" He laughed...

Ghost: "Abazali bakho wanted to see the kids before bajike but I'm flying back tonight"

Me: "Before bajike...Kanti uhamba nini utatakho ubuyela ebafazini bakhe"?

Ghost: "Uzumbuze...Andicingi uz'vulela ilitye elinembovane mna"

Me: "Andina ndawo yolala ke mna ubaxecele, and uLuthando nabantwana bakwa Keri...Khangenitsho futhi baniyeza"

Ghost: "Mh, andingeni ndawo I'll tell nozala to call you...Yheman before you go, when last did you see lamntana uLibhongo"?

Me: "Not so long ago, why"?

Wakhe wathula...

As if thinking.

Me: "Earth to Ntando please"

Ghost: "I think I saw someone who looks exactly like her, but omithiyo"

Me: "Could have been her, she's pregnant"

Ghost: "haibo"!

Oh-kay...

Ghost: "Lamntana une ou ngoku? Please don't tell me ubuyeleku Vince! Do you know who's the father"? Ndavula imoto yam...

Me: "Nope... And I don't care. She's a beautiful woman, hopefully whoever the nigga is...Ngumntu ogrand, cheers"

I drove off ndimbona ba he's disappointed.

But...I didn't recall him telling her how he felt about her, he didn't really expect her to just wait around as if an angel was gonna send her a man enguye straight from heaven. I drove right into town and stopped at McDonald's sohlika nale chap oko ithe cwaka, we ordered a meal then waited.

Me: "U sharp"?

He nod...

Me: "U-sure"?

He looked up and faked a smile.

Me: "Izaba grand le chap don't stress yourself about him"

Sihle: "I'm not worried about him, I'm worried about us"

Me: "Oh"?

Sihle: "How safe are we kula Durban bra? We know xa ezizinto zenu ziqalile no one is really safe...Kukho nale loose cannon on the other hand"

Me: "Loose can-who's that"?

Sihle: "Bhut'Ntando. Yho azandimbone umntu ongena self-control like that guy"

Me: "We're created differently to be different"

Sihle: "Guess you understand him better, he's your twin after all"

I didn't wanna ask wenzentoni uNtando but I could tell ikhona.

My concern was Sihle's own twin.

Me:"whydidn'tUncleKaycomeup"?

Sihle:"abavanincamnobra...He'llcomeupinaday ortwo"

Me:"whathappenedbetweenthem"?

Sihle: "Grudges I think...Andifuni noy'ngena because xabephinde bavana bazovana ngabantu"

Me: "I see"

We had our meal then I called my wife...I didn't want Sihle to spend so much time with Vince, or his dad. Luu: "Nigga"?

Me: "Nigga y'all still good"?

Luu: "We survivin' you"?

Me: "I'm cool...Look, I'm with Uncle Sish'le can I drop him off kuni I'll come fetch him later"?

Luu: "Is everything okay"?

Me: "All's good mamakhe, he just came to see Vince. I just don't want him to be in that depressing environment the whole day"

Luu: "Ooh, I'll text you the address just now"

Me: "Thank you...See you just now"

Me: "Sure"

We hung up, I then went to drop him off kwa Keri and I got to see my wife who made sure that she sends me to every errand running she could think off but I wasn't complaining. One of the errands was to go to the new house and check on the interior decorators progress...Wasn't gonna do that at all, but bendingazothetha lonto kuye. I'd like to believe xa ufuna into entle, and perfect you become a lil patient. She knew that, but I bet she was just frustrated yilento yohlala komnyumzi...And I understood that frustration, I missed my family. My phone rang ndisaphephetheka, I didn't even get to check through caller ID I just answered...

Me: "Sure"

Owe: "Tata...Is that you"?

Now...The tricky part in all of this playing "dead" situation was that I never really asked baxelelwe ntoni abantwana. Obviously Owe wasn't calling his "dad" but me...So maybe he knew I'm alive.

\*\*\*\*

## **534**

Nqabayomzi

Owe: "Hello"?

Me: "Hey big guy...Une phone nangoku"?

Owe: "Ewe tata, yho okowawu mnkile wathi umama you're going away on business awaphinda wabuya" So I wasn't dead to him that's a relief.

Me: "Yho ndoda yaz'ndiyafikangoku"

Owe: "Yhuuuu tata ixesha elingaka"?

Me: "Well, that's what really happens when you grow up"

Owe: "I see...So when can I visit? I miss ooUba no mama"

Me: "Erh...I'll have to talk to your mother first. Lo uhlala naye"

Owe: "No akho need tata, I'll tell her myself. Just ask umama to fetch me from school" I laughed at this guy...At the back of my mind this hurt me kancinci because it felt like he "needed" to get-away from his home I could be wrong, it could only be because he just missed us but I couldn't ignore what I was feeling. Owe is not like Sino...He oozes maturity wodlula nabantu abadala that I know off.

Me: "Kaloku ndoda we're in Joburg okwangoku...If you come here it'll have to be the December holidays uhlale ke wonene"

Owe: "Wait...Nise Joburg? No mama? You guys relocated"?

Me: "Yes big guy, we sold the house to uncle Soso"

Owe: "Oooh okay. Yho tata akakude uDecember"

Me: "Lets strike a deal..."

Owe: "Mmmkay"?

Me: "I'll come by and see you this weekend, on one condition" He screamed for a split second gqiba yaz'buyisa lanto ya calm as if nothing just happened.

Owe: "But tata you can't be giving me conditions"

Me: "Haike..."

Owe: "Okay okay...What's the condition"?

Me: "Ask your mom to drop you at the airport, I'll pick you up and bring you back Sunday evening"

Owe: "Done"

Me: "See you Saturday then"

Owe: "Yes sir, please save my number ke tata but know I'm not available during school hours, and after eight...Just putting it out there"

Me: "Noted"

He chuckled and hung up, kutheni ingathi ukhule over nje ngalomzuzwana?  
I called Luthando...

Lu: "Hm"?

I could hear one of the babies crying but I didn't focus on that.  
Kwa ihlobo eku satyelwe ngalo iphone ibizixelanje kuxakekiwe...

Me: "uOwe wants to visit us for the weekend"

Lu: "No can do"

Me: "I already said I'll fetch him nje baby"

Lu: "uRight kaloku"

Me: "Usewathetha kabuhlungu yazi mamakhe"

Lu: "Uzobakhona wena nge weekend? By then sizobe sihlalaphi"?

Me: "I don't know for sure yet bu-"

Lu: "Mamela ke sthandwa sam, first be sure ukuba sizobe siphi AND uzabakhona then you can fetch him otherwise I'm not gonna babysit six children ndedwa"

Me: "Baby"

Lu: "Hm"?

Me: "Awumkhumbuli uOwentando"?

Lu: "Baby I'm pretty sure uyamva ba uyakhala ulyazi apha very soon kuzotsho i-choir so I have to hang up ngoku"

Me: "So ndiyomthatha neh"?

Lu: "Mnk"

She hung up so now I was forced to drive past our new house to see the progress, lento bendingafuni ukuyenza yile bendiyenza only because it made sense lento ebeyibuza ubabe. Ndimsaphi uOwe behlala emzini kwabona oLuthando? Later that day I went to check it out ndafika begqibe ilounge, kitchen and dining area qha. The rest of the house was probably gonna take them about four to five more weeks because my wife had a 'specific' feel and theme that she requested and most of the items needed to achieve that were only arriving in the next week. Well, I couldn't cancel with Owe ngoku... Senethemba and I wasn't gonna crush him. I continued with my business as normal then I took a drive to the warehouse later in the night...I walked in and the guys were polishing weapons kuthe cwaka, but I could smell zigqibotshaya.

Me: "Gents"

Them: (mumbling)

I went to the middle of the room where Mabhuti was, he was sleeping so I left him and went to the bar fridge on the other side of the warehouse ndakhupha i-bucket lamanzi abandayo and added ice blocks ndayakuye ndamvasa ngawo wothuka wakhala.

Me: "Mnk mnk, awumanzi Mabhuti yintoni ngathi awuyondoda"

Mabhuti: "Yho hay ta Beast bra khayeke grootman"

I took a cigar, lit it up and pulled a chair sajongana.

I took a couple of puffs and chilled just looking at him...

Me: "Uyaw'makhela nini unyoke usitya imaliyegazi namankazananje"?

He looked at me as if trying to search for something.

Me: "Kuqhuqheka ne paint caba yayi peach ngoko"

Mabhuti: "Ukwazelaphi ekhaya...Wait"

Me: "Yaz' awungomzekelo Mabhuti, lamfazi wakuzala wakukhulisa esokola uthi wobhadla ubhadlele naye"

Mabhuti: "Ta Beast..."

Me: "And here I thought unengqondwana kanti fokol... But don't worry, I'm gonna school you boy boy"

I smoked half the cigar ndayicima, I called two guys to help me chain him against the wall arms spread apart. He was making a noise hauling and crying, I took a sjambok and beat the hell out of him and only stopped when the guys brought in buckets of iced water bamvasangawo.

Me: "Mabhuti"

He was hauling, his voice even getting hoarse.

Me: "Ndizak'biza okok'gqibela ke kwedini...Mabhuti?"

Mabhuti: "Ta-ta-taB-B-Beast"

Me: "Who are you working for?"

Mabhuti: "A-a-and'spaneli mntu bra yam"

Me: "Undenza is'bhanxa"?

I sjamboked him again, andizogezelwa ngoo Mabhuti in my game.

I knew very well that he wasn't working for Zakhele alone, baninzi and kwa the mere fact that they target MY spot that meant baninzi and bazithembile. I beat him up until I was physically tired, my arms ached then I just watched as the guys splashed ice cold water on him. When we were done we went to the table and gathered around...

Me: "Ni grand"?

Them: "Moja grootman"

Me: "Good, because you have work to do"

Them: "Sho Ta Beast"

Me: "First of all, I need to know who was giving Zakhele orders; secondly I need y'all to bring that person to me...Lastly, fumigate the city. I can't have rats like Mabhuti sniffing up my businesses. Make sure you do a thorough clean up...Ezizinja mazyazi uba zisemhlabeni werhamncwa for real"

Zavuma iintwana zam...



Me: "I need three volunteers to go to Cape Town"  
Kwathicwaka...

Me: "Andizocenga ndoda ke ndimshiye ngaphakude umnkam, if you know why you're here uzakuzifunela ngokwakho ukwenza umsebenzi...Xazikhona ezo volunteers zind'tatshe" I grabbed my car keys and looked at Mabhuti then back to the guys...

Me: "Punish him...Kodwa ndimfuna esaphila k'sasa"  
Then I walked out...My phone rang

Me: "Mamakhe"?

Lu: "Baby uSoso ukuwe"?

Me: "uTitus akayanga Bhayi kanti"?

Lu: "Heh...His phone is on voicemail"

Me: "He's probably flying kaloku nje, why do you sound anxious"?

Lu: "There was a plane crash, Landile called me kuba engamfumani uSoso...It's a long story tatakhe but I need to get hold of him. Like...As in yesterday"

Me: "Okay, ndizokhe ndimzame"

Lu: "Enkosi babe"

Me: "Sharp"

We hung up...

I tried calling the nigga but yangena straight ku voicemail so I called Yarees...

Yarees: "Big guy"?

Me: "Nigga u sharp"?

Yarees: "Moja kuwe"?

Me: "Moja skeem, umgqibele nini uTitus"?

Yarees: "Earlier today, ebengumntu osendleleni eya e airport"

Me: "Hm, his phone is on voicemail, uLuthando uthetha nange plane crash"

Yarees: "Hay man...Yaz'khange ndiy'hoyekelento yale plane crash, and heeee... He could have been in that flight yaz' big guy"?

Me: "Eish...Don't you know any friends of his aph'eJozi endinomkhangela kuzo"?

Yarees: "Khanimbuze kuLibo, mhlambi ulibaziseke phaya mphosa iflight"

Me: "Libo waphi? Please send her number"

Yarees: "uLibo bra lo upha kula shop ka Mrs"

Me: "uLibhongo? Hay suka uzawmazelaphi ba uphi uSoso"?

Yarees chuckled...

Yarees: "Long story bruh yam"

Ndakhendathula...

Me: "Mmkay, sharp"

Yarees: "Sharp ta"

I drove straight to the boutique...why would Yarees say maybe uSoso ulibaziseke ku Libo?

Baqalenini ubazichomi?

Me: "Heh uTitus...angayenza na lonto"?

What if he's the father of Libo's unborn child?

Heh!

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### **535**

So I continued my quest in trying to find Lwandiso but I was really limited because as far as I knew uSoso wazithina aph'e Joburg and, I didn't know this girlfriend of his emithiyo so...It was some kind of a whirlwind search. When I couldn't locate him I had to call his brother...

Laa: "Tee"

Me: "Andifumani uSoso"

Laa: "Haybo"

Me: "I also just found out that there was a plane crash earlier today...Flight from Jo'burg to East London"

Laa: "Hayman...Khayeke khendikhangele uYarees bra, maybe uyamazi ba angaphi"

Me: "Please call me back if umfumene"

Laa: "Will do"

We hung up I went to Keri, I was worried kengoku nguSoso wabantu.

Keri: "Heey"

Me: "Hey...Uhm, where's Joe"?

Keri: "He went to view the construction site he'll be purchasing. Why"?

Me: "I'm trying to get hold of Soso...I'm not sure where it could be"

Keri: "Tried his cell"?

Me: "Yes it's on voicemail and, the plane that he was supposed to be in crashed earlier today"

Keri: "What? No...But...I'm sure his family would know if he was in that crash"

Me: "Well his twin called me...He doesn't know"

Keri joined me in the solemn mood I had just acquired I didn't want to think the worst but I was very uneasy about this whole thing, I took my phone and walked to the porch. Uyaw'ze umdinge uNqabayomzi abe engekho tu I sat down and called him... Wasabela sendincama.

Beast: "Mntu wam ndlelale ndib-"

Me: "Sure"

I hung up sgqukru ebendinaso emva koko.

Why couldn't he just hear me out ogqiba emvakoko atsho ke ba ubusy? I know he's busy, I know I told him about Soso earlier but now this is more serious and we couldn't just be busy zezethu izinto singamazi unyana ka Titus uphi when Sir Titus dropped everything and came to our rescue during that Karoo saga. We just couldn't. He dialed me back...

Me: "Hm"?

Beast: "Haibo why did you hang up"?

Me: "Didn't wanna disturb you"

Beast: "Luthando"

Ndathula...

Bendihlupheke nyhani emphefumleni ubonanje. The thought of not seeing Lwandiso I couldn't even fathom it. Ndizophilaphi? Njani, nabani? I couldn't Lord knows I couldn't be able to handle life nje without Lwandiso.

Beast: "Ulilelani ngoku Luthando?"

Me: "Have you found Soso yet"?

Beast: "Ha.a nd'samkhangela but isekhona into endibusy yiyo right now. I'm pretty sure he's safe man baby wherever he is...Stop worrying yourself"

Me: "Okay Nqaba"

I forced that answer out, and I knew he felt it.

Beast: "Luu kaloku"

Me: "Look it's okay enzalento uyenzayo ugqibe, I'll keep on trying him too"

Beast: "Ndiyeza"

Me: "Don't...Please"

Beast: "Ndiyeza"

He hung up, goodness. I returned to Keri, she was crying but as soon as I walked in wavela wakhaw'lezisa and wiped her tears with the back of her hand.

Me: "Big sis..."

Keri: "Sit down"

I sat right across her...

She looked at me, then at her hands.

Me: "What's going on"?

Keri: "I uhm...I just spoke to Joe...He's uhm, he confirmed that there really was a plane crash"

Me: "And"?

Keri: "Soso was a pass-"

Me: "No"

Keri: "I'm sorry baby"

Me: "No Keri no. Who told Joe? How sure are they? I refuse to accept that"

Keri: "He checked at the airport departures, Titus Lwandiso was among the passengers who boarded the plane"

Me: "Keri no please..."

I tried to summarize everything she just told me and just as if a light bulb went on I felt tears streaming down my face. I knew it was possible but I didn't wanna believe it. She moved from her seat to my own and hugged me tightly.

Keri: "Hey, we don't know for sure what happened to him. Let's not jump to conclusion"

Me: "Keri what happens when there's a plane crash"?

Keri: "It's possible that he didn't die Trina"

Mnxim u Keri.

As I was still crying, we heard a hooter outside. Keri looked at me...

Me: "Could be my husband"

Keri: "He knows this place? Or you directed him"?

Me: "I didn't...But he did say he's coming"

I cleaned myself up...

Pointless because I was just a mess nje.

Beast: "Hey"

I looked up...He sat down next to me, I glanced over his shoulder and saw Keri in the kitchen.

Beast: "I'm sorry"

Me: "For what"?

Beast: "I just came from the airport uSoso-"

Me: "Soso isn't dead tatakhe, you people just need to dig a lil harder nizomfumana"

Beast: "Luu"

Me: "Yaz'ba ndinohamba ndiz'khangelele uLwandiso ndingamfumana?"

Beast: "I didn't say he's dead, I said he was on that plane that crashed. Kutsho ii officials at the airport mamakhe"

Ndalila ke mna...

I was in a terrible state. Why were they giving up so easily? Soso wouldn't...

Me: "I need to call Faith"

Beast: "I don't think it's a good time"

Me: "It's the perfect time"

I dialed Faith...

Her phone rang without anyone answering, I tried again three times, I tried her husband but no one was answering. Suddenly now I was having difficulties with breathing...

Me: "Tatakhe nd'cela uzame utataka Soso torho, you don't have to say anything I'll talk to him"

He took his phone out and called Sir Titus...Wazama wancama, I called Landile ndamncama kwayena. I swear ibingathi ndiyaphambana kwavela kwakho isizungu kwakulendlu.

Keri: "Here's chamomile tea"

I got up and went to "my room" ndanxiba, Nqaba followed and just watched me ndanxiba ndagqiba oko ethe cwaka. Until I headed towards the door...

Beast: "Sibongile Trinalique Luthando Gwala"

I just looked at him without saying a word.

Beast: "Khaw'hlale phantsi"

Me: "Tat-"

Beast: "Please"

I sat down, looking at the window.

Beast: "Uzawfika uthini kulendawo ufunuyakuyo xa uthe gqi ngesidumbu sika Titus? If he's not dead, he's probably at the hospital, kwezizingaka kweli Rhawuti uzoqala kwesiphi umkhangela? That's if he's admitted kwakuzo. Look, I know you're hurting but can we please be rational here?"

Me: "You don't understand yaz' Nqaba, problem here is that you don't understand"

Waphakama wavula ucango and looked at me...

Beast: "Hambake, but do me a favour ungandifouneli mna when you can't handle whatever it will be le uzaw'gilana nayo"

Me: "You're not being fair"

Beast: "I'm being rational. Lento ungafuniyo ukuyenza"

I sulked...

I had this huge lump in my throat, I didn't wanna cry ngoku but the tears were just pushing and pushing ndasuka ndaphakama and went to the bathroom ndazivalela phayana for about three minutes then Keri came looking for me ndamvulela sahlalapha sa jongana.

Keri: "I'm sure someone will call you if anything has happened to him"

Me: "It's the waiting that's getting to me"

Keri: "Hang in there..."

I sighed...

Me: "Keri what if Soso is dead"?

Keri: "Let's not think ahead of ourselves baby, he might not be"

Me: "It's hard not to"

Keri: "I understand, go talk to your husband. He's stressed too...You shouldn't be fighting each other right now"

Me: "Yho Keri...I feel like I'm failing Soso by just sitting here"

Keri: "We understand but, there's not much to do right now. All we can do is wait" Solindantoni bethuna?

Umphanga? But why ababantu babini bebengayiva lento ndiyivayo mna? We left the bathroom, Nqaba was talking on his phone so Keri just left us alone. I sat there and waited until he finished.

Beast: "Sir Titus called..."

Me: "Oh...Uthini? Please tell me ugrand uSoso apho akhoyo"

He just came to sit next to me, and attempted to hug me I pulled back.

Me: "Babe...Please neh...Ndiyakucela"

Beast: "He confirmed that Soso was indeed involved in that plane crash.

Bafounelwe nabo by the authorities so they are on their way beza aph'e Joburg"

Me: "Okay...but like, uSoso yena usaphila"?

Beast: "He wouldn't say"

I looked at Nqaba...Uxelewe nje inyani.

Why would he be stressed kanti akayazi what happened to Soso? He was definitely hiding something from me.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **536**

I closed my eyes trying my best not to over think yonke lento, I tried my best to be rational as Nqaba was saying but ha.ana man: I was failing. My mind was my stronger yet weakest link, it was over working that exact moment. I got up and paced up and down for a couple of seconds then I stopped and looked at Nqaba.

Me: "Please call him again"

Beast: "Who"?

Me: "Tata ka Soso, nd'funa uthetha naye"

He looked at me for a whole minute before dialing then he gave me the phone.

Me: "Hello"?

Titus: "Sibongile, unjani sisi"?

Me: "I'm not okay...Taka Soso please be honest with me, kwenzekantoni"? He sighed...

Titus: "We are not sure mntanam"

Me: "Uphi uFaith"?

Titus: "Ey, andimazi. I've been trying to call her naye akafumaneki"

Me: "Haibo...Ebephi last time you checked on her"?

Titus: "Ndimazi eseChina mna, but she's supposed to be returning home either today or tomorrow morning andiyazi kengoku xa engafumaneki on her phone too"

Me: "Is there nothing you can do"?

Titus: "My people are on it, don't worry yourself"

How could I not worry?

Mnk. I exhaled and sat on the edge of the bed.

Me: "Can I come with you kulendawo uyojonga kuyo u Soso"?

Titus: "Sibongile..."

Me: "Please tata I'm going insane here"

Titus: "Which is why you need to be at home, whatever the outcome uzova ngam"

Me: "Mr Titus torhwana"

Titus: "Mntanam, I understand your frustration but take my advice and stay at home for now, I promise I'll call you xakukho into ebambekayo esiyifumanayo"

A tear ran down my naturally blushed cheek, I was defeated.

Seriously. There was nothing more to do, to say.

Me: "Okay. Thank you"

Titus: "Alright"

I hung up and gave Nqaba his phone, I went to stand by the window and wept in silence. My heart was in a million pieces why would God do this to me? To Soso? Esandova ba uzoba nomntana nogal? Hay ingaba urongo kodwa uThixo. I felt strong arms wrapping around me, that's when I had a total breakdown, I couldn't think further, I couldn't think past...I was just stuck and the most painful part in all of this was that I couldn't do anything. I had to sit here and wait for something, whichever thing it was I had to sit and wait for it.

Beast: "Sssh!"

I broke down immensely, it was really hard. He turned me around so my face was buried in his chest.

Beast: "Thula kaloku sthandwa sam"

Me: "He can't d-"

Beast: "Ssh okay, it'sokay"

He allowed me to cry my heart out then he went to fetch me a glass of water and painkillers, phofu ngoku asamnkileyo the triplets decided it's now "their" time bavela balila bonke ngexesha elinye. Yhu ndaphola aph'entloko as I took Iyakha first changing his nappy and breastfeeding him while the rest were hauling and scratching their vocal cords ngolilela into abangayaziyo. Their father walked in with Aunt Keri mntu ngamnye wazibambela owakhe wathuthuzela without even asking bakutheni ndingabahoyanga. Guess under the circumstances it was understandable. I exchange done after the other bade bahlutha bonke then utatabo wabalalisa while I went downstairs with Keri...



Me: "His dad's here, confirmed that Soso was really a passenger in that flight but he'll call me once kubekho anything"

Keri: "Okay"

Me: "But now, he can't get hold of his wife: Faith"

Keri: "Where is she"?

Me: "She was in China, apparently she's supposed to return today or tomorrow morning"

Keri: "I hope she wasn't in that flight hey"

I looked at Keri.

Me: "Heeee! I hope not too yazi"

Sajongana... Hay this was bad though.

Beast: "Baphi ooUba"?

Me: "Backyard"

He went to them..Wabuya nabo bonke.

Uba: "Mamam sawamba utatam thina"

I looked at their father.

Beast: "Ndizobabuyisa late"

Keri: "That's a good idea"

Me: "Whoah, ubasaphi?"

Beast: "Ndiyakuphungulela umthwalo Luu, we'll find somewhere to go to. Bakhe babethwe ngumoya nabo"

Keri: "Lemme clean them up for you"

Keri took all the kids to their room, Nqaba was gonna take Keri's kids too. Fear yam kuyoyonke lento is safety, simnke kwi apartment because he had reason to believe asikho safe but ngoku ufuna uthatha abantwana? Ubasaphi?

Me: "I thought akukho safe out there"

Beast: "Ku better"

Me: "I don't want a repetition of what happened in East London ke baby please"

Beast: "Yes ma'am"

I knew uvumanje kuba engafuni si argue'ishe lo.

Otherwise.

He came to stand right in front of me, opening my legs since I was sitting on the barstool (highchairs), his one hand draped around my waist while the other lifted my chin.

Beast: "Promise me you will stay here until I come back, ungayi uyokhangela uSoso I'll go to his father ndibuye ndize kuwe with whatever news he'll tell me" Ndakhendathula...

I didn't wanna be quick to answer ogqiba ndenze i-opposite.

Beast: "Baby"?

Me: "Hm"?

Beast: "I know you're hurting and I understand you feel like you're failing Titus by just sitting here but mamakhe ndiyakucela just don't go anywhere today. Please"

Me: "What are you afraid of"?

Beast: "Andiyazi xa enofumaneka uzobe ekwimeko enjani lomfana, you don't need another traumatic experience. Let me handle it"

He was right I wasn't ready.

Me: "Kay. I promise I'll wait to hear from you"

Beast: "Thank you"

He kissed me, we kissed then held a tight hug in silence.

Uve: "Utheni lilile nje umamakho"?

I giggled from his dad's embrace, banomonake abantwana bakhe. As much as they have a caring side to them.

Uve: "Tatakho"?

Beast: "Young king"?

Uve: "Wathuthuzela umamakho"?

Beast: "Ewe ndoda"

Uve: "Utheni"?

Beast: "Funu hamba nathi"

Uve: "Yho shem. Siwambe naye kaloku"

I felt Uba touching my thigh...Ndamkroba underneath his father's arm smiling.

Uba: "Mamam"

Me: "Hm"?

Uba: "Ulila kaloku, zoshiyeka nentanazakho ne Aunt Keri qha"

Uve: "Shem mamakho Uba"

Uba: "Siwambe nentana za baby wakho tatakho"

"babywakho" sifike nini apho kanene?

I was holding my laughter wasuka wahleka uNqaba, ndaprutshuluka nam kengoku.

Uba: "Heeeee kalilanga umamakho Uve"

Bahleka, Keri came out with her kids then we strapped them emotweni and watched them leave. Sangena endlini and took a nice cream tub sayohlala elounge.

Keri: "Did you know that Lu is divorcing"?

Me: "What"?

She chuckled and ate the ice-cream in silence. Oko ndimjongile waiting for her to say she's joking but no sana, watya uKeri Smith. Now, I know my brother...

Akenzanganto and'funi nova akenzanga nix. If it was Marcus I'd say he's in the wrong but I knew how Luke loved Sive...if anything, ngu Sive oberongo ngoku ndingeyazi yonke. Naku kwakunzima uxelela uLuke ba unomntana, wade waxolela ukuba kungatshatwa kuba esoyika uthetha inyani to a point that I had to intervene surely nangoku nguSive orongo shame.

Me: "I wonder what happened"

Keri: "He said he'll tell me everything when he's here"

Me: "When are they coming"?

Keri: "Sive had been here since last year already" I looked at Keri...Like, what? Here phi?

Keri: "Don't ask"

Me: "Mnk, ay I won't ask shame. I have enough to stress about right now I'm not gonna add them too" Khange kubekudala... My husband called...

Me: "Babe"

Beast: "Uphi uKeri"?

Me: "Nanku, why"?

Beast: "Khamnike iphone"

Me: "Hay tatakhe thetha, kwenzeka ntoni"? Wathula uNqaba...

Me: "Tatakhe sundoyikisa torho"

Beast: "Eish baby mani, ndcela unike uKeri iphone sthandwa sam"

Me: "Baby ufile uLwandiso? Yhi lonto le inzima"?

Beast: "No mamakhe... Yazi Luu..."

Me: "KHAWUTHETHE Nqaba haibo"!

Beast: "Your aunt...Faith, was in that plane too"

Me: "Uyaxooooka"!

Beast: "Umzimba wakhe ufunyenwe...Sengasaphili"

Ndabanda ngaphakathi...

Beast: "Luthando"

Me: "Uphi uSoso"?

Beast: "Kusakhangelwa yena ngoku"

Me: "...thanks for telling me"

Beast: "Uzaba right"?

Me: "Yeah...Bye"

I hung up, uKeri ndamxelela in between tears. I couldn't believe it yazi. I couldn't.

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### 537

I sat there praying and crying at the same time, Keri being Keri was crying with me. After a couple of minutes of prayer we just waited in silence... My phone rang...I just looked at the screen and sighed, I wasn't in the mood for Evelyn so I just muted the phone. Keri looked at me I ignored her, my phone rang again ndavela ndayinika uKeri she looked at the screen and switched it off. Her phone rang, Eve again...Wayicima nayoleyo gqiba watya-tyum! After a while I went to the kitchen, I defrosted steak and ribs, marinated them ndiphole aphentloko. I couldn't depress myself any further ngalento, I had to do something. Anything. I knew Keri wouldn't assist me, she's not that kinda woman xa enestress uKeri une stress ke qha uyawsuke andibuze qha ba ndisithathaphi isibindi sopheka inyama ndine stress? I grilled the meat with the marinade sauce, added chunky vegetables on the grilling rack. I went to the cellar and removed a bottle of ripe red wine, ndakhe ndagongqoza two glasses at once then the third one carried me throughout my cooking session.

Keri: "You and cooking"

Me: "You can clean the house big sis, it's gonna help you distress"

Keri: "Don't be Joe please"

I smiled at her, akekho as close to the Titus's but she feels the pain I'm feeling ngabo as if ngabantu bakhe naye. I appreciated Keri just nje ngobuntu bakhe, she didn't do things just to please me or anyone else she just stood to her true self. She left me wayongqengqa nabantwana bam while I cooked up a storm, I kept on checking my phone with hope that Lwandiso will call ehleka yonkelento yenzekayo. In between the cooking I decided to call Luke, yhini umntase ade alahlwe nandim at a time of need.

Luu: "Heeeeey you"

Me: "Hey, you good"?

Luu: "Obviously better than you, what's up"?

Me: "I'm okay..."

Luu: "I know you're not, but I'll leave you to tell me when you are ready"

Me: "So, what's up on your side"

He dramatically laughed at me, probably at how I swiftly changed the subject from me to him in a second.

Luu: "Well, all's good good"

Me: "How's your wife and kid"?

Luu: "I think they're fine"

Me: "You think"?

Luu: "Yes...Well they were fine last I checked on them"

Me: "You're not living together kanti"?

Luu: "Well I moved to New York a month ago"

I laughed, I would've screamed had I been in jolly mood but...

Me: "I see you're living le good life"

Luu: "Le good life is permitting little one, but I'm coming over in December"

Me: "Really? What are you bringing me"?

Luu: "Honey, you're no longer that 'little' anymore. I'm only bringing gifts for my nephews"

Me: "But I haven't seen you in ages, and the fact that I have my own little ones doesn't mean I'm not your little sister anymore. Don't rob me of my privileges please"

He burst in laughter he happened to be in a better space than I expected. Which is good, my bad space was enough we didn't need his too.

Luu: "I'll see what I'll do but, I'm not promising anything"

Me: "Mh, you better"

Wahleka sancokola for a few minutes then we hung up, I missed my twin boys and I tried my best not to call their dad despite the urge. When I was done cooking I just went to watch cartoons alone in the lounge, bahluthi mos oo lya so nam mandiphumle. I decided to call Libhongo...Updates kaloku on my businesses.

Libo: "Mrs Gwala, hi unjani"?

Me: "Ndiyaphila sthandwa unjani wena"?

Libo: "I'm good too, ndingakwenzela ntoni"?

Me: "You could update me on anything new that I need to know about, I'm just doing a random check-up unga stress'i"

Libo: "Ooh-okay, ndse Bhayi right now ndizoqala e ofisini kweli cala Monday but I went to check on things izolo ofika kwam"

Me: "Kunjani"?

Libo: "There's quite a lot of paperwork to attend to, but I'm sure it's nothing major. Somehow, akhozikhalazo nakubasebenzi"

Me: "Ooh-okay, thank you sisi"

Libo: "Kubulela mna...Nd'celaxa une chance uze ngapha there's something I'd like to show you aph'eBhayi and maybe propose something else regarding lento ndizakubonisa yona"

Me: "Hewethu awsazithethi iiparables ufunantoni Libo"?

Wahleka...

Libo: "Uzaw'bona xa uzengapha kaloku sisi"

Me: "Yhu mnk, okay. Bye bye"

Libo: "Bye bye"

We hung up...

I was curious but I knew when it came to her, it could only be another business venture mhlawumbi she spotted an available site or vacant building. Anyway, I later resorted to calling my husband to bring the kids kanti ebesefikile so I opened the gate for him walandelwa ngu Joe and two other cars. I went to wake Keri up azokwamkela umyenakhe after such a long day ndikhona for owam. Joe walked in followed by the kids, all of them ran to me, I hugged them babalisa bebesiwephi and then my husband walked in followed by Mr Titus and Landile. I looked up ndomiwangamazwi, Keri welcomed them and lead them to the lounge leaving my husband with me on the passage while the kids ran along after Joe who was going upstairs. I walked up to Nqaba.

Me: "Nimshiyephi uSoso baby"?

He planted a feathery kiss on my lips, wiping off something on my cheek in silence.

Me: "Tatakhe"

Beast: "Masambe sohlala ngaphaya ebantwini"

Me: "Come on baby, please tell me torho"

Beast: "I haven't spoken to them kaloku sthandwa sam, they called for directions to where you are ndabanika"

Me: "Wazinjani babezangoku"?

Beast: "Ndibabuzile so I decided I should be here, just for moral support"

Mmkay...Makes sense.

Me: "okay...Masambeke"

Beast: "Yhima kaloku"

Me: "For nto-"

He kissed me, I almost bit him because for a second I wanted to laugh then as fast as my mind remembered where we are, that's as fast as I remembered that there are people in the lounge who could be here with the worst news. I stopped him and tried to calm myself down before holding his hand and walking with him to the lounge. We walked in and sat on one couch, Keri was serving tea, sabuzanje impilo then I waited anxiously for Sir Titus to speak. Akanosuka andfune kanti akhonto azanayo...

Titus:"S'bongile"?

Me:"tata"?

Titus: "As we promised earlier that sizokunika whatever we find out malunga nalento ka Lwandiso, sizelelonto ke apha nangoku"

Me:"ooh"

Titus: "I think your husband has already told you about Faith" I nod, eyeing Landile he was shattered but trying his best to be strong njenge ndoda.

Titus: "Regarding uLwandiso kemntanam asizi nanto ibambekayo"

Me: "What do you mean anizinanto ibambekayo? Kanti uphi uSoso tata? Landile!?"

Titus: "uSoso asimfumenanga, almost bonke abantu who were in that flight bafumanekile nguye and just a few aba bangekabonakali. But,theres cue team and my people are still searching for him"

Me: "So it's possible that he didn't actually board the plane, right"?

Titus: "We can't say, because we actually did find his luggage scattered kula ndawo yengozi neza banye" Somehow, I was having difficulty understanding this report back.

Titus: "It could happen that umzimba wakhe uwele somewhere else, or he's totally crushed beyond recognition"

Me: "No...No"

Nqaba hugged me tightly as my body shivered at the thought... no. It couldn't.

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### **538**

The room suddenly became too cold even for me. The silence was gradually getting me worked up, maybe I was too stressed I don't know but it was getting to me. I wiped off the tears on my eyes with the back of my hands and just walked away from the lounge, I went to the backyard and just stood there looking into space...I didn't know what for think, how to even think it and where to begin even attempting to think it. I could smell my husband's scent nearing so I turned and looked at him, he held my waist on both sides.

Beast: "For what it's worth: I don't believe he's dead, we'll find him. I promise you that"

Me: "Please don't make promises you know you won't be able to keep" He lifted up my chin so our eyes levelled. I realized that he wasn't joking, he wasn't just saying all of this to make me smile, he meant every single word.

Beast: "Trust me, we will find him"

Me: "You don't believe he's dead"?

Beast: "I will believe that when I see his lifeless body but for now, no" I was relieved yazi, yes him not believing that Soso is dead doesn't automatically mean Soso isn't dead but just for him to say it...

Me: "Enkosi"

Beast: "Will you be able to move from here to our new home right now? It feels like we're crowding ooKeri with all of this"

Me: "Igqityiwe ideco"?

Beast: "They'll be done in a day or two but I pushed them nje kancinci"

Me: "Masole ndihlala le two days, I don't want sloppy work kodwa ndiyabhatala kaloku"

Beast: "You're sure"?

Me: "Yeah, Keri doesn't really mind"

Beast: "Okay ke...Let's go inside"

Me: "No hamba, I need a moment"



He kissed the side of my head and left me there, I wanted to cry but not in his presence. I needed to get it all out before I could go face Landile and his father, and before I could even face my children. I needed the strength...

Me: "Oh Lord..."

Asuka aphela emqaleni it was so painful.

My heart was bleeding immensely and I had no more faith to press on, I sat on the ground and just lay on my back allowing my tears to just flow as I cried in silence. I heard cars driving out and I knew ngutata ka Soso no Nqaba...I stayed there for an hour or two then I went inside the house ndafika uKeri engqengqile on the couch looking all defeated. I kissed her cheek smiling, she sat up.

Me: "Where are the kids"?

Keri: "They are sleeping, want some tea"?

Me: "Nope. You good"? She nod

Me: "We'll be moving in to our new house in two days"

Keri: "You guys bought a house"?

Me: "Haha yes, and once everything is settled I'd like to register the minions for day care"

Keri: "I thought you were concerned of the drive to this side"?

Me: "What if we bought a house this side"?

Here yes almost popped yi excitement, we kinda hugged in that moment. Funny how one can be an emotional wreck ngoku and then you're out here laughing through the next minute. That Saturday morning Nqaba called me while I was dressing up too Uba after our bath...

Me: "Tatakhe"?

Owe: "Mama? OMG ngo Uba ababangxolayo in your background? Okay wait, unjani mama"? My heart smiled, the excitement in his voice melted something in me.

Me: "Hey young man, it's good to hear from you. How have you been"?

Owe: "Surviving. Uthi utata you have a new house in Joburg"?

Me: "Yes boy we're moving in ngomso"

Owe: "Wow, can I please visit ngo December? I miss you"

Me: "You can only visit me if you promise to pass with three distinctions minimum"

Owe: "The aim was to pass with five ke yazi mama because I didn't do well last term so I wanted to redeem myself"

Me: "Oh wow, kutheni ukhule msinya na Owentando!"?

Owe laughed while iindlebe zika Uba zivele zathi ntaa wayeka nalonto ebeyenza once he heard his brother's name. I wanted to laugh at him but I was still surprised ngulo ndithetha naye...

Owe: "Ndimdala nje mama"

Me: "Heee mnkq, when last did you see your sister"?

Owe: "Two months back besiyekwa makhulu"

Me: "Haibo, that long"?

Owe: "Kaloku she changed schools mama, ingathi umamakhe couldn't afford so bamsa kwesinye"

Me: "Yho...kwamnandi ke kwamakhulu"?

Owe: "Yho sabona utamkhulu, akasafani notata. Well both of them"

Me: "Usekhona na utamkhulu"?

Owe: "Last night I spoke to him ingathi uzohamba next month" Tyhini lo tata!

Owe: "Nd'cela unike ooUba iphone mama"

Me: "Sure"

I put the phone on hands free then gave to the twins while I dressed the triplets.

A week later...

Moving into our new home wasn't too much of a hassle as we didn't have furniture to move, we had bought everything and half of the furniture was built in by the interior deco team already even before we moved in. And ifurniture ka baby ye apartment yakhe wasn't going anywhere yeyaphaya kwi apartment, ayoyomzi wam. Hubby suggested that I register the older kids ku Keri kwangoku then mna ndijongane nezirenovation zam zeboutique nababantwana bathathu. It had been a week after the disappearance of Lwandiso Titus and still no evidence that he's dead nor evidence that he's alive. Burying myself in work was the only thing keeping me sane, in a week's time we were to attend umngcwabo ka Faith the thought of us burying umamaka Soso without him hurt me the most but there was nothing I could do I literally felt like a part of me was missing, I think seeing how my husband was also affected by this gave me solitude. I held onto his promise. I didn't have strength to start looking for uSoso ngokwam... Maybe I needed them to give up k'qala... I don't know. While we were at Keri's house I saw a hotel in Durban was on sale kwezi online property updates and applied for a quotation, the property owner responded so after making my calculations I forwarded the email to my husband so that enze ezakhe izibalo. In response, he

just said that if I feel like it's worth putting our money in, then I should go ahead with purchasing it. Obviously I wanted to ask if he's sure na but the thought of him re-calling on this I decided no I won't ask him so I scheduled to go see the place before buying it so that ndizobona umonakalo futhi uzaw'tya kum kangakanani. After the date was set, kwangona ndicingayo ba kanene ndinabantwana abathathu that I take care of iimini ezi, ndizobathini kengoku? I called Nqaba...

Beast: "Maka Uba"?

Me: "I'm going to Durban on the 6th"

Beast: "Three days after your aunt's funeral"?

Me: "Ewe baby, it's quite urgent,"

Beast: "Oh-kay...So why do you sound anxious"?

Me: "I don't have a nanny"

Beast: "Uzolala"?

Me: "Mna? No. Ndiyojonga la hotel qha ndibuye. Or you can go on my behalf and take pictures for me"

Beast: "No baby I'll make a plan...Confirm'a if you haven't already. I'll make a plan"

Me: "Okay thanks, love you"

Beast: "Luh'you more"

Minus one✓ now all I had to do was inform uKeri that I might fetch the twins a bit later than usual, ndizoyazi emvakoko that I'm sorted. Just as I was starting to smile, Evelyn Smith called... immediately I felt energy leaving my body.

Me: "Hey sis"?

Eve: "Hey, you good"?

Me: "I'm okay...You"?

Eve: "I'm pretty good, so how are the little ones treating you"?

Me: "They are behaving hey"

Eve: "That's good, I'm coming to Jozi next week Thursday on a job interview. I might spend the weekend so I'm hoping to see y'all"

Me: "Eish...We won't be here next week. We're going to a burial in the homeland"

Eve: "Don't tell me your mother in-law passed on"!

Me: "Actually it's Faith. Mrs Titus"

Eve: "Mrs Titus as in...Soso's mother"?

Me: "Yep"

Cwaka uEve...

Me: "You still there"?

Eve: "Yeah uhm...Are you sure you heard right"?

Me: "What do you mean I'm sure I heard right? Her husband told me a week ago"

Eve: "So Faith died a week ago? Heh, hay I must be going crazy"

Me: "What are you talking about"?

Eve: "I saw Faith yesterday, here in Cape Town with that chick...Kamva's mother, I forgot her name"

Me: "Okay lemme get this right: you're in Cape Town"

Eve: "Yes"

Me: "Yesterday, you saw Faith with Landile's ex"?

Eve: "Yes. They were having lunch at John Dory's"

Me: "Are you sure Eve"?

Eve: "Dude come on, I even went to greet them because Faith is your aunt I didn't want her to think I'm up stuck or something"

Ndasuka ndamuncu, what the hell was going on here?

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### **539**

After I hung up from Eve I called Landile...

Laa: "Hey"

Me: "Hey...How you holding up"?

Laa: "I don't know hey...But I'm here, guess that's a sign that I am at least holding on"

Me: "I'm sorry"

Laa: "Thank you mntase"

Me: "I uhm... I wanted to ask: umgqibele nini unina ka Kamva"?

Laa: "Yhu ndamgqibela nini? Yho and'sayazi"

Me: "Ooh okay"

Laa: "Why do you ask"?

Me: "Hay wethu I'm just asking kuba bekhe ndamthi tshe"

Laa: "Oh yho undinqabele"

Me: "Mmmright then, I was just checking up on you"

Laa: "Enkosi bra, means a lot"

Me:"shondoda"

We hung up.

I dialed my husband, I knew uzodikwa ndim but I had to .

Beast: "Babe"?

Me: "Ndc'ela undiphe inumber kaTat'Titus"

Beast: "Sure"

Me: "Enkosi"

I hung up...

He called me again.

Me: "Love"?

Beast: "uGrand"?

Me: "Yeah...Why do you ask"?

Beast: "I'm not sure...U sure ugrand"?

Me: "Come on baby I'm okay"

Beast: "Okay...Ndiyeza phofu"

Me: "Uze nenyama eyojiweyo torho mntu wam"

Beast: "Sendithenge uNandos nje mamakhe"

Me: "Oh okay, no problem"

Beast: "And ke ayikavulwa nale ShisaNyama yo Vince"

Me: "It's okay tatakhe, uNandos akasikhuphi maqhakuva"

He laughed but I was being real, asikho allergic inyama yinyama qha.

Beast: "Okay bye bye I'm driving"

Me: "Drive safely"

Beast: "Sharp san"

We hung up.

I looked at my kids, Iyazi and Iyakha were cuddling, the third one was playing with my phone ezincokolela. How I wished Soso was here...Just then, hubby sent Mr. Titus' number ndamfounela.

Titus: "S'bongile"?

Me: "Tatu Titus...Unjani"?

Titus: "I'm good sisi how are you holding up"?

Me: "I'm okay...I guess sew'gqibile ngama lungiselelo? Akhonto sinokuncedisakuyo"?

Titus: "Hay mntanam sesigqibile yonkinto, nizofika ngolwesingaphi nditsho ku Landile anilungiselele iroom"

Me: "Speaking about that...I got a call from my sister who is in Cape Town, uthi ubone uFaith ehleli nomama ka Kamva having lunch"

Titus: "Unina ka Kamva loka Landile"?

Me: "Ewe tata"

Titus: "That's impossible kodwa ke because uFaith is dead"

Me: "That's what I said nam but Eve knows your wife, she wouldn't say it's her when it's not"

Titus: "I don't know yazi...Okay, lemme go down to Cape Town then I'll see if I can find unina loka Kamva"

Me: "Please do tata before we bury umntu womnyumzi kanti uFaith ukhona uyaphila"

Titus: "Thank you mntanam...I'll inform you of anything I find"

Me: "Alright tata"

We hung up.

I went to fetch ooUve coz daddy said he's on his way home, the triplets were on the sponge elounge Uba joined them wateketisa. Uve took my phone from the coffee table and gave it to me to open the pattern...

Uve: "Mamam vulele phone yakho"

Me: "Why"?

Uve: "Zofounela uUncle Kay"

I took the phone and dialed Kuhle...

Kay: "Aw, madam"

Me: "Uncle Kay, unjani"?

Kay: "Ndiyi mess nje, zange nitshoyaz bakunjena uzala"?

Me: "Ngoku ifanba sekungcono njengoku noko bayakhula mos"

Kay: "Yho Tee mfethu, ndiyazama yazi. But then kukho eligeza lingu Sihle...Akafuni nondi ncedisa"

Me: "Utheni? Are you babysitting"?

Kay: "Umamabo will be graduating soon so ndimbambele namhlanje kuba eyokwenza idress fitting"

Me: "Ncooo Uncle Kay, you're growing kodwa nje"

He laughed...

Me: "Oyena mntu who wanted to talk to you ngu Uvelile ke nanku undijamele caba ndincokola kakhulu ngoku"

Kay: "Oh yhinii-young king, please give him the phone"

I gave Uve the phone and watched his face light up, I don't know what Kuhle was saying but my child was just soooo happy, umbone umntu uyaziblush'ela. Noticing that I'm watching him, he ran out to the porch wancokola no Uncle Kay wakhe. I wasn't gonna prepare for a funeral kanti uFaith is busy living it up in Kaapstad I had more important things to do...Like growing the businesswoman in me, expanding my sight, nurturing and spicing up my marriage, and enjoying motherhood those were the most important priorities in my life that exact moment. Kubekukho ooFaith abadlala ukuz'fisa sibusy no life. My other phone beeped, hubby needed uphathiswa apparently someone decided to go shopping ngaphandle kwethu. I went to the front of the house and caught him offloading a couple of bags ndamjonga with a raised brow trying my best not to smile and failing at it. Dismally.

Me: "Since when do you go shopping without me"?

Beast: "Since I'm the King of this castle I happen to know that I can go shopping without you. And it went well...See"?

Me: "Luthando"????!!!

He burst out laughing at my exclamation, put down one last bag on the ground and reached for my waist kissing my cheeks and I was refusing.

Me: "Dude, you went shopping without me gqiba kwakho utsho kanje? Really now"?

Beast: "I love you"

Me: "Hay I don't love you tshi"

Beast: "Because I went shopping without you"?

Me: "No! Because you realized you actually CAN go shopping without me, that's cruelty baby"!

He picked me up swinging me around in circles [Was I THAT light weight], I was now laughing uncontrollably. I caught a glimpse of Uba watching us at the door smiling, his father finally put me down also laughing.

Uba: "Tata"!

Beast turned and laughed at an excited Ubabalo.

I grabbed a couple of bags ndabashiya phaya sharing hugs and their own kisses and fistbumps. We did a couple of runs with the shopping bags then he joined the kids in the lounge while I prepared him a warm dish of hearty food. I served him with juice then sat next to him with a cup filled with ice cream...

Beast: "I spoke no Fatima regarding le way yakho yase Durban"

Me: "Umfumene"?

Beast: "Yep, she'll be here"

Me: "Oh thank you"

Beast: "And, she'll probably be back for good this time"

I looked at him...How did he convince her to quit her other job for us? He knew I was looking at him but he decided to ignore me because he most probably didn't wanna answer my leventin questions right.

Me: "Well I don't need her fulltime, soon all the kids will be registered eskolweni. Uzohlala enzentoni imini yonke? Everyday"?

Beast: "She'll help you ekseni when you're preparing the kids for school, clean the house, do laundry, run your errands, make lunch/dinner and help you prepare the kids for bedtime"

He had this all figured out...and fighting him wasn't gonna get me anywhere.

Me: "Uhleli ezobhatalwa nguwe phofu"

Beast: "Exactly"

Ndatya i-icecream yam kengoku in silence, he ate his food making small talk with his sons, Uve was telling him about his phone call conversation with Uncle Kay. It's not like I didn't want sis Fats back, but when I literally needed her she wasn't available and I understood because savela samshiya. But what did Nqaba say to her ngoku azode abe available for good? Well I hoped he didn't threaten her or ambush her into being with us because it's not by force.

Beast: "I need a favour, obuya kwakho eDurban"

Me: "Mkay"?

Beast: "I want you to refurbish the ShisaNyama, add a lil spark...Then organize a grand re-opening event"

Me: "Oh...Okay. I thini budget"?

Beast: "You've never stuck to a budget even if ndiyakunika. Just do your best, I'm sure we'll make there turns in the long run"

Me: "Yessur"

Niqqa was beginning to see my potential and he trusted me with his business? Wow! We've certainly come a long way...

Beast:"ndimfumeneuTitus"

I choked on the icecream I was eating, I sat up ndamjonga.



Me: "He's still alive? Right? Uphi? Umshiyephi baby"?

He put his tray on the coffee table taking his juice, in silence.

Me: "Love kaloku thetha"

Beast: "Usuke ubuze yonkinto at once nawe"

Mxm.

Beast: "He's alive, but badly injured. I left him with a doctor to nurse his wounds"

Me: "Where is he"?

Beast: "He's safe Luu. That's all I can say right now, I need to go down to Cape Town. Uthi utatakhe he needs me there"

Me: "Mr Titus needs you? For what"?

Beast: "Andikho sure, couldn't ask questions he sounded a bit aggravated and I was already on my way here!"

Me: "I see...Well, apparently Faith is alive. Living it up in Cape Town"

Wahleka uNqaba...He gave the "are you serious" look and laughed even more.

Me: "Uhleka ntoni tatakhe"?

Beast: "So I could be going down to Cape Town to help MrTitus catch his ghost wife? Seriously"? UNqaba!

\*\*\*\*\*

## **540**

I watched him pack a mini luggage bag as he was about to leave for Cape Town, it's always not easy for me to just let him go especially when it connects with CT. That place is just like PE kum, holds bad memories. After packing he came to sit next to me taking my hand and kissing my cheeks smiling like a kid in a candy store.

Beast: "I know you don't really want anything to do with Cape Town but I owe Mr Titus quite a lot. We owe him a lot...yilonto nditsiba xa efuna uncedo. He helped y'all in my absence and for that I'll forever be grateful"

Yeah well...

Soon we'll have to return favors naku Legend because he also helped us through the Karoo saga.

Beast:"Luu"

I looked at him...

Beast: "I am not a child, baby, I can't be cooped up aphenlini oko"

Me: "I know..."

Beast: "I know the dangers that await me, but I'm a man. I have to face them, I have to face them like a man"

I sighed...

Lomntu ebengathi he's going to Cape Town because ubizwa ngu Tata ka Soso? And, akayazi ubizelwantoni? Now why the hell did I feel like he's going down there to fight? UNqaba doesn't think twice when it comes to war. Blood wars, not just wars but umntu akabotshelelwa. Indoda endala ayibotshelelwa... As much as I wished I could tie him up, for his own good.

Me: "Ndiyayazi tatakhe"

Beast: "Then why do you look so worried about me going to Cape Town"?

Me: "You're a big boy wethu Nqaba, I'm more worried about Soso"

He chuckled I wasn't gonna give him the satisfaction tu.

Me: "You're very important sthandwa sam but not right now. Harde"

Beast: "I gotcha bud"

Wahleka as he took his bag, and opened the door for us. I carried his laptop bag for him as we walked down the stairs...

Me: "Baby uzand'phathela ntoni eKapa"?

Beast: "Isiqu sam esinuka ulwandle"

Me: "Andifuni wena mna mfondini"

Beast: "That's all I can bring you ke sthandwa sam"

Me: "Actually, you will go shopping for me. I need a new bag, and an extra pair of shoes never hurt anyone"

He laughed, almost hysterically.

As we got down the stairs he dropped the bag and went to his kinsmen. After an intimate moment with the young ones, I walked him to the waiting car.

Beast: "Ukhona umjita ozay'buyisa"

Me: "No makayigcine. I'll call xandiyidinga"

He raised a brow. I shrugged...

Me: "Andfuni amajita wakho aqhelane nendlu yam fondini. Next thing you'll be here hosting celebratory parties and dinners? Cha ngiyabonga"

Beast: "You think you got meal I figured out huh"?

Me: "blood shoes ke baby vha, blood shoes"

Beast: "You're ignoring me on purpose"?

Me: "If you don't know them uthi ufuna iired bottoms. Thank you very much, journey safe and please find my ghost aunt"

He laughed, grabbing my waist as we kissed. I totally ignored his remark on purpose.

Me: "I'm gonna miss you"

Beast: "That's good, you have to miss your husband when he's gone"

Me: "This is not a joke Luthando"

Beast: "I know...I'm not joking too"

I let go of him and fixed my clothes.

Me: "Bye bye"

Beast: "Love you"

Me: "Sure"

He looked at me for a whole minute before getting into the car, then watched me go back inside. I closed the front door and heard him driving out... Just as I walked inside, my phone was ringing and Uba got to it first so I just watched him coz ebendizele ngomva

Uba: "Hello-phandle mamam-tatam wambile motor yakhe-okay. Love you too Sish-Le..."

Then he laughed

Uba: "Awu Uncle nje wena-haike bye bye tchi"

Then he put the phone down, walked back to where the rest of his siblings were and continued playing. I walked in, took the phone and called Sihle back:

Sish: "Ooh uyakwazi no founa ngoku Uba"?

Me: "Hey Uncle Sish"

Sish: "Yho I thought it's still the young King, unjani madam"?

Me: "I'm good bro, you"?

Sish: "I'm okay...Ninqabile. Kuthwa ninendlu entsha, inini ke ihousewarming"?

Me: "Yhu hay wethu Sihle the house is warm enough"

Sish: "Haibo!"

Me: "And besides, I don't want people all over my space. Last time we had something like that I found your brother's mistress roaming around my house like a hungry retard"

Sish: "Oh-hoo. Makade aphilile uSoso ndiyamazi uzaw'yenza yena. And you won't say no to him"

Me: "Uphi khona, do you have his contact number"?

Sish: "Uyamazi nje umyeni wakho...Oh crap. There's a reason why he didn't tell you"

Me: "Obviously, hence ndibuza kuwe"

Sish: "Well I can't tell you much, what's important is that he's recovering"

Me: "Contact details Sihle"

Sish: "Andinazo ma'am"

He was lying...

Sish: "Bye now, I was just checking on y'all"

Me: "Okay. Thanks"

We hung up.

Ufihlelwani kanti uSoso? I was really determined not to go looking for him but this secrecy was sending me straight to go look for him on my own. Like...I know he's badly injured wherever he is but, surely he needs people who love him around him not some stupid gangstas ezizomjamela when he whinces in pain.

I dialed my husband...ha.ana kalok it ain't fair.

Beast: "Baby I can't talk right now"

Me: "Nqabayomzi Gwala"?

Wakhuza...

Me: "Don't you think it's a bit unfair on Soso ba nimfihle ebantwini nimhlalise in a secluded place where there's no warmth and love? Things that naturally speed up a person's recovery? I mean..." I heard him sigh...

Beast: "Where do you suggest we take him then"?

Me: "He has a home"

Beast: "He won't be safe kokwabo"

Me: "Then bring him here, I'll take care of him"

Beast: "And put your life in more danger?"

Me: "But we can't just not be there for him because soyika ukuba in some danger tatakhe. This is Lwandiso we're talking about"

Beast: "I'm there for him, the guys are there for him, his father and brother are there for him. So, how are we not there for him"?

Me: "Mxm you don't get it. Infact, you don't wanna get it"

Beast: "Ungakulingeke uyokhangela uTitus Luthando. Do yourself that one favour because uright uLwandiso kulandawo akuyo"

Then he hung up on me.

I looked at my phone...

"Utheni uSoso wakho mamam"?

I looked up, Uba was standing a foot afar from me. I sighed...

Me: "he's fine baby "

Uba: "nyhani"?

Inod...

Uba: "simfounele azobona indlu yakho"

Me: "akazokwazi kaloku he's busy"

Uba: "hah! Kazoza ngoku kaloku zoza when he's not busy"

Me: "oh"

Uba: "founake"

I actually dialed Soso's number knowing that ayizophumela...

Oko ibikwi voicemail mos. Then I got the surprise of my life when it rang once and someone answered... "Sibongile Trinalique Luthando Gwala" I couldn't immediately recognize the voice but I knew it definitely wasn't Soso.

"UBeast lo akamameli neh? Why wasn't he Ghost? I mean...Lekaka uy'gqibela ifile, phalaphala he's roaming the streets of Joburg ngobusuku. Maybe xa kutsho wenauzaw'mamela...Mxelele ke marara ukuba ndithi the clock is ticking. Tick-tock...Tick-tock"

Then he hung up...

I looked at the phone, then at Uba I wasn't confused one bit, but I was shocked. Ngubanikanti lo uthathe iphone ka Soso? The clock is ticking for ntoni?

\*\*\*\*\*

## **541**

I looked at my phone for a minute then decided to tell Nqaba, andithuke ngoku ndphelelwe lixhala so I called him...Knowing uzandilaxaza.

Beast: "Luthando"

Me: "Can you talk"?

He shifted...Then there was total silence.

Beast: "Okay, talk"

Me: "uUba overheard me talking to you, somehow he managed to speed dial inumber ka Soso and accidentally called him"

Cwaka...

Me: "When I gave him my phone apparently I didn't lock it...I didn't know he'd actually call him. And ke last time I called Soso iphone yakhe ibingaphumeli" Cwaka...

Me: "Tatakhe"?

Beast: "Hm"?

Me: "Oh usekhona? That's all I wanted to tell you. Bye"

I hung up...He called me back.

I took a couple of breathing exercises before trying to be modest as I answered. Not wanting to give away that I'm actually kinda scared...

Me: "Love"?

Beast: "Wenzi"?

Me: "Mna"?

Beast: "Luthando"?

Me: "Baby"

Beast: "What have you done? What have you done"?

I was now nervously biting my nails. The way he was so calm was scaring the shit outta me.

Me: "I didn't do anything tatakhe I told you what happened nje"

Beast: "If these people decide to trace you and track you down, be sure that you alone will deal with them. Okay"?

Me: "Whoah wait...Which people are we talking about"?

Beast: "The people who answered that phone"

People? He knew? The hell?

Beast: "Andizobaligeza mna Luthando going back and forth, brace yourself sthandwa sam. It's about to get dirty"

Me: "Tatakhe don't say that...Why uthetha ngathi it's my fault that your son called uSoso"?

He exhaled...

Me: "If I knew uzamfounela nyhani I would have locked the phone kaloku, even better, if I knew iphone ka Soso is with some people I wouldn't have entertained Uba"

Beast: "What's done is done"

It was my turn to keep quiet uNqaba angayenza nyhani lonto?

Like...Would he really allow thugs to hurt us because of my supposed stubbornness? What about his kids ke? Surely he cares about them noba yi piece.

Me: "Ndcela uzame umntu azothatha iintsana zakho ke while I brace myself because andiyaziba ucing'ba ndizomelena njani naba people uthetha ngabo ndiphinde ndigadane ne safety yabantwana bakho abahlanu at the same time"

Beast: "I'm not sending anyone anywhere Luthando"

Me: "Then tell your mom I'm bringing the kids over, tonight. If your thug friends decide to trace me ke mabafike ndindedwa, ndaw'bona ba mandithini"

Then I hung up.

I called Mo and told him makazond'thatha...

Few minutes later he called me back to tell me that umyeni wam akavumi ba makeze eJoburg. The fu\*\*\*??? I decided to not be haste, nook asoze asiyekele ebungozini u Nqaba maybe he just wanted to scare me off well I hoped that was the case anyway. Fatima wafika ngala 6<sup>th</sup> so I left for Durban, somehow after the successful meeting and showcase of the property I decided to spoil myself a bit. Khendibethwe ngumoya nam...I bumped onto Kuhle ndisabethwa ngulomoya waseThekwini.

Kuhle: "Uyafana ke lomntu nomfazi wase khaya"

I turned and looked at him recognizing the voice.

He laughed as we hugged, then joined me as he ordered his own cocktail.

Me: "Awumhle, you're enjoying ukuba ngutata"

Kuhle: "Bra don't mention it...Ufuna ntoni apha? Where are the kids"?

Me: "The kids are at home, kaloku Uncle I'm a business woman I'm always on the lookout for ungeniso mali"

Kuhle: "Mmh uphi ubhuti"?

Me: "Uyokhangela umfazi wesibini eKapa"

Kuhle: "Wamvumela"?

Me: "Tyhini lifumanekaphi iyeza lemfuza"?

Kuhle: "Haiman Tee, ndiyakwazi wena asoze uvume lonto"

Me: "Kuhle, apha kwa department of love xa ushiywa shiyeka or else uzokonzakala...I have five people who need me sane"

Kuhle: "Kungashiywa wonke umntu not wena, iyazfela lajita ngawe"

Me: "Bangaphi abafazi baka tatakho? Siqalenje apho"

We laughed at that he later volunteered to take me to the Airport, I boarded and returned to Jo'burg but as soon as I landed I decided to not go straight home

quickly, okwangoku ndine chance why not pay Vince a lil visit? Instead of calling my supposed driver I called a cab and first went to buy him some goodies then I headed towards the hospital. Upon arrival, he was with his girlfriend so I waited outside...It was really late but I didn't want to just walk in and disturb them. As I was waiting... Tataka Uba called I put the phone on silent. Nqaba has a secret skill of ruining people's moods nje. After leaving four missed calls he texted: "We are waiting for you at the airport, kanti lomhlangano wenu uphuma what time"? So now that ecacile funeka ndicace nam kodwa oko ebendivimbe uMongezi ndade ndakhalala ndaziyela eDurban. Wow.

I didn't answer him, but decided to go into Vince's ward because beku late already and I was thinking of my kids ngoku.

Me:"molweni"

They both looked up...

The girl got up yaphuma without saying a word. Weird.

Me: "Oh-kay"

Vince: "Don't mind her"

Me: "Mh...Unjani"?

Vince: "Recovering pretty fast..."

Me: "Do you know who did this to you"?

Vince: "Your dad"

Me: "My dad"?

Vince: "Crap! You were not told...I'm sorry"

Me: "Yhima...How sure are you about this"?

Vince: "Ta Beast knows the details I'm sure he will tell you when the time is right"

Me: "I see..."

After that we had a lousy conversation then I headed home.

As I walked in, I could tell that akukalalwa... The noise that was coming from the sitting room was just beyond me, just as I closed the door, Nqaba called again.

Me: "Mntu wam"?

Beast: "Uphi na fondini"

Me: "Ndiyangena endlini ngoku, what's up"?

Beast: "Use Joburg"?

Me: "Uh-yes"

Beast: "Wow...Yaz'ndiqond'ba makhendizenze romantic and spontaneous ndizokuthatha"



Me: "Hay kaloku baby aw'zenzi tu qha utyiwa sisazela sakho"

He laughed...

Me: "Futhi ke ungabiseza apha ukuba awundiphathelanga zonke ezanto bendizicelile"

Beast: "lintloni ziyamnceda umntu"

Me: "Saaa gqitha kulo level...Bye bye futhi, abantwana bam bayanditsala-tsala iyaqala ubehlela le yongamboni umamabo xabe buya eskolwni"

Beast: "Ningalali I'm on my way"

Me: "Sure"

We hung up, I picked Uve and kissed him as we walked into the lounge, Uba came to want his own mfunqulo then I went to the younger bunch. Sis Fats had already bathed all of them.

Fats: "Besingeka pheki ke sisi"

Me: "No akhongxaki sisi, you can go to your room. Enkosi ngonamhlanje, undincede kakhulu"

She smiled and walked off...

I got comfortable and went to cook for my boyfriend funeka aqale ahluthe before ndimbuze ngo Bonginkosi and the true whereabouts of Lwandiso Titus. Kuthwa indlela eya entliziyweni yendoda is through his belly!

\*\*\*\*\*

## **542**

The way I was tired from the traveling I would have opted to just make salads but...I chose to marry a true African man who would never eat salads for supper so I cooked for him. Uba decided to come join me...

Uba: "Mamam pheka ntoni"?

Me: "Nyama"

Uba: "Sityile thina inyama ko skolo sa Auntie"

Me: "Kaloku utatakho uyeza so ndiphekela yena"

Uba: "yabuyatatakho?"

Me: "Yep"

Uba: "Zobuya ne tan'khulu"?

I looked at Uba he shrugged.

Uzamsaphi uNqaba latata apha?

If they missed him mabaye eMonti but on the other hand I didn't want anything to disturb their newly found routine. So maybe angafane eze nje ngenxayalonto but mna ndfuna agoduke lamfana ayeko oNana haibo kunini ehleli apha? Okanye wenza into ayiqhelileyo?

Uba: "Zopheka wedwa ke ndawamba mna"

Me: "Uyaphi"?

Uba: "Ndodlala kaloku"

Me: "Ungalali ke utatakho uyeza...Xelegele no Uve"

Uba: "Mmh"

Then he walked away, "mmh" yinto yaphi?

Heh! As I was cooking my phone rang...I looked at the screen and decided not to answer. It was "Soso" but obviously not him...Ngaba "people" baka Nqaba. Then Ntando called...

Me: "Ntando"?

Ghost: "Mrs, ugrand'?"

Me: "Ndisharp wena"?

Ghost: "I'm good...I hope andikuphazamisi ufunwa nguSino"

Me: "You mean Owe"?

Ghost: "No, uSino ulapha for the week,uthi uyanikhumbula"

Me: "Ooh, mnike iphone" The phone exchanged hands...

Sino: "Hello mama"?

Me: "Hey baby unjani"?

Sino: "I'm okay mama...Ndiyanikhumbula. Uphi utata he's not answering his phone"?

Me: "Call him tomorrow sisi, he's probably on his way from Durban right now"

Sino: "Ooh...Baphi ooUba"

Me: "Bakhona bayadlala"

Sino: "Ndcela zubanike iphone"

Me: "Okay...So how's school"?

Sino: "Kumnandi njee...I have new friends"

Me: "That's good"

Sino: "But I miss my old school...I only see uOwe a few times ngoku. Nizobuyanini siphinde sihlale nani mama"?

Me: "Akumnandanga na uhlala nomamakho"?

Sino: "uAnelisa mama? Hay mna ndfuna uhlala nani... Okanye ke notataka Owe no Owe"

Me: "uOwe akahlali nomamakhe kanti"?

Sino: "Mama ka Owe moved back to Cape Town kaloku mama, so Owe lives with his dad"

Me: "Yho...But mntanam you have to give your mom a chance naye. Don't shut her out"

Sino: "I'm not shutting her out, I don't wanna live with her. I don't mind visiting every holiday but uhlala naye oko? Ha.a mama"

Me: "Uthini utatakho"?

Sino: "Tata kaloku akayibambi phone yakhe"

Me: "I mean your other dad"

Sino: "I don't speak to him. He's not my dad anyway"

I sighed...Kusuke kwathini kanene? And kengoku unoske ibekanti ndingcolile, I wasn't gonna take umntana womnye umntu ndihlale naye after all the bull I went through, on top of that we are still trying to adjust kwa thina...Hay bingazokwazi ukwenzeka leyo into.

Sino: "Ndizophinda ndcele iphone ku tata ka Owe so that I can call dad tomorrow"

Me: "Okay ke babe, bye bye"

I took the phone to the twins ndayogqibezela iimbiza, when I was done I went for a quick shower just to be fresh for the niqqa then I joined the kids elounge. Two of the triplets were fast asleep already...

Uve: "mamam zobuya nini uSoso ne uncle Kay"?

Me: "next month"

Uve:"unini lowo"?

Me:"andikho sure yazi Uve ba unini u next month, zubuze kutatakho ofika kwakhe"

Uve:"uphutatakho yena"?

Me:"uyeza"

Uba: "oko esiza lotatakho mama? Yho ha.a silaleni ngoku"

I couldn't, just then, I heard a car driving in ndabajonga, Uba was the first one to run to the front door the rest of us pretended like asivanganto...Well until they walked in carrying each other, Uve ran to his dad, I just looked up unfazed.

Beast:"molweni"?

Me: "Eweke"

Beast: "Uqumbele ntoni"?

Me: "Siphilile unjani wena"?

He chuckled and went to kiss the triplets then he came to sit next to me kissing my cheek

Beast: "Uqumbele ntoni umamakho Uba"?

Uba: "Qumbele tatakho nje kaqumbelanga mma"

Beast: "Oh ebengaqumbanga"?

Uba ignored him waya ekitchen Uve followed...

Nqaba looked at me smiling then kissed me on the lips.

Beast: "Undiqumbile nyhani ngoku ndikukhumbula kangaka"?

Me: "Ambovasa babe ndizophaka so long"

Ndatsho ndiphakama...

I could feel his eyes feasting on me as I walked away.

I was not going to give him the satisfaction tu, uy'qhelile lonto yoba masixabane qho xa ebuya kuladolophu yeentlanzi. As soon as I got in the kitchen...There was someone standing by the open fridge, the twins were busy trying to tear open chocolate bars, ndakhe ndema ndiqond'ba ndiyabila ngaphakathi. UNqaba uzanjani nomntu endlini engatshongo, gqiba nangoku sefikile akatsho on top of that, lomntu ugqogqa iifridge zakwam? Lastly, who gives toddlers chocolate bars ebusuku? Haibo!

Uba: "Hay man Soso ayifuni tu vuleka lento yakho"

Haibo uSoso wabhitya kangaka!

He closed the fridge door and turned to attend to Uba but then our eyes locked and he faked a smile while I cocked a brow...Ndinazo neendawo ezifunu lila kengoku.

Soso: "lookwho'shere"

Ndaskendaxakwa...Ndomiwangamagama emqaleni.IfeltNqaba'spresence...

Soso: "Surprise"

Beast: "I figured for you to stop snooping, lemme just bring him umbone aphinde ke ahambe"

Without saying another word I just turned and ran off to my room, locked myself in there and bawled. This was so flippen unfair, uNqaba should have warned me khona kutheni wabhitya kangaka uSoso? What were they feeding him?

"Baby vula"

Me: "I don't wanna talk right now torho"

Beast: "Okay...But vula anyway andizokuthethisa"

Me: "Nqaba there's a shower in the other rooms too"

Beast: "Luthando, khawuvule ucango. Haibo"

I ignored him.

Tchini, iphelelephi ngoku intoba we'll be in danger xa eze apha uSoso? Hay man uNqaba uyathanda nyhani udlala ngengqondo yam. When I was done crying I washed my face, opened the door ndaphuma, he wasn't at the door so I just went to dish out gqiba ndaba serv'a in silence.

Me: "Before utye ndcela uyolalisa oo Iya"

Beast: "Nd'zaw'bathatha xasiyolala mamakhe"

I said before atye, ndazithathela abantwana bam one by one then after all of them had taken plates, I took it upon myself to feed the twins because besekulate and bebezosokolisa mna ksasa so I just wanted them to eat and go to bed. Uba was being fussy and I wasn't in the mood...I had a lot of questions for both these men, khona uphi uFaith?

Uba: "Funutyiswa nguwe"

Me: "Ndizakukhaba ke mnake"

Uba: "Afuni mani mamakho"

Me: "Ubabalo Gwala don't start with me, please. Not tonight" Wazidlikidla umntana ka Nqabayomzi wazilahla phantsi.

Beast: "Iza ndoda kutatakho"

Wavela wasothula isikhalo umntu, ndamjonga ndamhleka...

UUba akayaziba le drama andenzela yona is nothing a shoe couldn't fix.

Soso: "Tee"

Ndamjonga nje...

Soso: "I'm sorry"

Me: "For nto? Staging your own death"?

Beast: "Luthando"

Me: "Mnxim"

Ndashiya apho ndayolalisa uUve, it was all becoming clear now. Soso's death was indeed staged...For what? I don't know. But why embi kangaka kengoku? Ebengatyi pha kulandawo bebemfihlekuyo? Mnxim mani bloody gangstas!!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

**543**

Soso walked into the kids room wavala...

Soso: "I know you're angry at both of us...But lemme explain"

Ndamjonga...Waiting kaloku.

Soso: "It was a trap...The plane crash. Working for your husband has its perks but it's also dangerous mmtase nawe uyayazi lonto and then on top of that my dad is...Well you know"

Me: "What I wanna know is ubuphi all this time? Uphi umamakho? Who has your phone"?

Soso: "After the crash I had a blackout ndavuka e Pietermaritzburg apparently uncle Bongz saved me and took me to a safe place"

Me: "Bong'nkosi"?

Soso: "Yes...It felt like a coincidence that he was there exactly that moment but I later realized that he only helped me because he needed leverage with dad...And, he wanted information on ta Beast"

I don't know man...I was too slow for this conversation

Soso: "He kept me captive but made demands kutata naku Ta Beast ke...To cut a long story short, I'm in hiding for a while because your husband's men found me bandiqhweshisa"

Me:"Soso please...Please make me understand-"

Soso: "uTa Beast will tell you yonkinto when the time is right...I don't have much time here but I need a favour"

Me: "You have a nerve"

Soso: "Ndiyakucela mntase, ndcela ufounele uLibo umbuze ba unjani. That's all"

Me: "Ndifounele uLibo? Uzamthini ba uLibhongo unjani?"

He sighed...Nervously playing with his fingers.

Soso: "I just...I need to know umntanam uright nah"

Me: "Mntanakho? ULibo uzawmazelaphi umntan- oh fuck Soso! Nguwe utatomntana ka Libo"??

Soso: "Yes"

Haibo! So casual kwale response yalomntu?

Haibo u Libo! I gave him my phone without saying another word gqiba ndamshiya kularoom. Ubabalo was still crying, throwing tantrums phofu kwa utatakhe umbukele.

Me: "Ubabalo uzogqiba nini ukutya"?

Uba: "Afunutyiswa uwe mma"

Me: "Kengoku yitya kaloku"

Wakhala

Me: "Uzovusa abantwana mani Ubabalo Gwala"

Uba: "Right tchi, right mani tchi"

I took my flop, held his one hand and gave it to him.

Zoba si spoilt brat phakude, ndambetha yaphelatu icheek gqiba ndamtyisa ngoku avuza imikhunyu neenyembezi oko uyise ethe cwaka. I took him upstairs to his room, Soso was still on the phone with Libo so I just tucked Uba in ndamshiya enesosingqala. I went to clear up the lounge ndayovasa izitya... Nqaba followed me.

Beast: "Akazozivasa kanti uFats izitya k'sasa"?

Me: "Mbovane"

He took a dishcloth wosula...Eyeing me, ndazithanda ndavala umlomam.

When he couldn't eye me any longer he spoke up...

Beast: "Don't be hard on Soso...He was just following instructions"

Me: "Instructions given by you"

Beast: "Nam bendiziniwa by his dad"

Me: "Mna ndisesismuncu sakho usigrogrisa nge danger yamagintsa who will track me down for calling Soso's phone instead of telling me what's really going on.

Ndimuncu mna crying and worrying about Soso kanti uyamazi aph'akhoyo undithele nqa ndiqaqanjelwa ziintloko upholelwe ngamalanga. Qhuba

Nqabayomzi uyeva? Qhuba ndoda"

Wathi cwaka...

Me: "On top of that, awutsho ba uBonginkosi is also involved kuyo yonke lento including Vince's shooting funeka mna ndihambe ndisothuka xandisiva ngabanye abantu who actually don't know that you don't tell me such things ngoba kaloku ndisesi sibhanxakazi sakho singena ngqondo. A trophy wife as a matter of fact, who you throw money and gifts at as u-shatap! Qhuba Zikhali"

I drained the water, while he packed. Soso came in...

Soso: "Uthi u-"

Me: "Uphi umamakho Lwandiso"?

Soso: "Kuthiwa use Kapa"

Me: "Yazi phakwa Titus niphumelele apha ebomini? Y'all have made it s'true"

Beast: "Ntwana go get some rest...Noba uleli kweyiphi iroom I doubt you'll be attended to kulomzi"

Me: "Sundikwekwa Nqaba"

Beast: "No baby ndizama ukhaw'lelana noTitus seeing that you're still busy"  
Indenza muncu le way.

Soso walked back up the stairs, I took a mop and a bucket ndakorobha.

Beast: "Ndikwenzele i-tea baby"

Me: "No"

Beast: "Ice cream"?

Me: "Hayi Nqaba"

Beast: "Okay, ndikwenzele ntoni ke"?

Me: "Leave me alone"

Beast: "I'm leaving you alone in the next...Seven hours don't worry"

I lifted my eyes ndamjonga...

Me: "Ubusayaphi"?

Beast: "Ndikhumbula abantwana bam"

Me: "Ubabonile ke phindela apho uvela khona"

Beast: "Ndikhumbula ulala kwi bed yam"

Me: "Uyandilinga yazi wena"

Beast: "Uvumelantoni ulingeka kengoku"?

I looked at him and chuckled...

I felt like ukumvasa ngela bucket lamanzi okoroba

Beast: "Inoba ucinga ngondithi qu ngalamanzi. Shame mntu wam...ndi dustishe while ugqibezela ukorobha"?

Ndaske ndatyhafa, he was mocking me.

I decided to ignore him qha qwaba, cleaned my house and went to my room.

Iyakha was up playing alone mumbling things only known to him, by himself.

Ndakhulula kanye xa engena utatakhe, he slowly closed the door.

Me: "There's fresh linen in all the spare rooms, go help yourself"

He cleared his throat, I turned ndamjonga with a raised brow.

Beast: "Okay fine I'll sleep in the spare room but nd'cela uthatha ibed yam ke coz benditshilo ba ndikhumbula ulala kuyo"

Me: "Yithathe"

Beast: "Nabantwana bam"



Me: "Bathathe mfondini"

Beast: "Usole undiboleka nomfazi wam ke because andizolala ndedwamna"  
Ndakhulula ndangena ezingubeni zam in silence.

He followed suit and joined me...

Beast: "Uyayazi that I don't discuss business at home, Titus might be your cousin but I'm still his boss and his almost death experience was work related. Vince's shooting was also work related...that's why I couldn't tell you these things...I don't want you to get involved kwizinto ezinjena. You should know that by now"

I wanted to answer him but decided not to...Wasn't worth it anyway. He cuddled me from behind, kissing my shoulder...

Beast: "I love you. Even if you're mad at me"

Me: "Good night bruh"

Again, he planted a kiss on the same spot salala.

Well I didn't really sleep ngqondo yam was over working trying to add things up...Uphi uFaith? How is she involved in all of this? Ithini ntoka MrTitus? After about two hours ndicinga into engadibaniyo I turned to face him, he was also wide awake. I didn't care to know why engalelanga kodwa "ukhumbula ibed yakhe"

Me: "Uphi uFaith"?

Beast: "Use Kapa...It's a long story babe. I'll tell you some other time"

Me: "We have time now"

Beast: "I could think of a lot of other things to do and talking bout your aunt ain't none of'em" I loudly exhaled, he laughed at me.

Beast: "Awungo superwoman man baby...Stop acting like one. Soso is back andithi? Instead of questioning me about his return you should just be grateful that he's alive to see his baby grow"

Me: "Grateful neh"?

Beast: "Ewe baby, grateful"

Me: "Yaz ndinentloni zokuhlebelaba uyagula wena shame, ifanba uzalwa pha kwaTitus...lingqondo zenu ziyafana. Infact iingqondo zenu xaninonke zinenkwethu s'trubob"

Beast: "Khaw'be uqhuhla leye ndodakho ke Khwalo"

Uyaw'be aphinde abe right ke umntu onje?

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I decided to just let him be uzixelele mos kulento ayenzayo and the aim is to frustrate me. Wasn't gonna give him the satisfaction right now...

Beast: "Sucimela kaloku sisathetha"

Me: "Night"

Wahleka and just pulled me close, we both knew that what they did to me was unfair qha he didn't wanna admit ngoku ndisacaphukayo for obvious reasons. Ek'seni ndavuka mna ndivukela abantwana bam kanti sevukile wabalungisa usisFats so I just made lunch boxes and porridge...Upon waking up, I did notice that Nqaba wasn't in bed but akhange ndiy'nike attention lonto until the kids left.

Fats: "Ndisaya ngase town sisi akhonto uyidingayo"?

Me: "Ha.a sisi...Ndcela uhambe nes'tixo ungabuya ndingekho"

Fats: "Yhu uzahamba nabantwana, akushushwanga ncam phandle"

Me: "Ndizobashiya notatabo I have to meet with some contractors and go check on the progress of the boutique"

Fats: "I don't think ukhona umyenakho, ngoku bendivuka imoto yakhe ibiphuma" I looked at Fatima then at the door...It wasn't too far-fetched, lendoda ibitshilo ba izophinda ihambe and I didn't take him serious.

Fats: "But ndingaya nange weekend etown akhongxaki"

Me: "It's okay sisi...I'll take them to Keri"

We assisted each other in preparing all of the kids, ndavasa then I took them to school, dropped her at the bus stop then ndayonxiba ndafika uNqaba ekhona esitya. I just went to my room and got dressed...Ripped skinny jeans, leopard printed stilettos and matching off shoulder bodysuit topped with a beige blazer and matching bag. He entered the room while I was applying makeup, phofu he's carrying a glass of whiskey while finishing off a sandwich.

Nqaba: "Kuyiwaphi"?

Me: "Kuyaphandwa eGoli"

Nqaba: "But I just got home...Can't you reschedule"?

Me: "nope"

Nqaba: "Baby ufuna ndibe lonely kulendlu ingaka? I'm not used to a big house...Ndiqhele iiflats mna"

Me: "I know mntu wam...Icebo, zuhlale apha or elounge so that ungalahleki kulendlu"

Nqaba: "Uzamnka uphekile mos"?

Me: "There's food in the fridge, marinated raw meat ebhakehini in case you feel like a braai...And, there's more rum in the cellar. You should be fine baby"

Wathula... I did all my touch ups and looked at him for approval

Me: "Ndilungise ndaw'ni"?

Nqaba: "I think ungamhle xa unonxiba iteki neskupa esimhlophe"

Me: "Nyhani neh?"

Henod

Me: "Oraayt. Love you vha"

I kissed his cheek ndaphuma, I heard his footsteps behind me but I ignored him as I grabbed an apple and car keys ndamshiyapha. He stood at the door watching me, I hooted as I drove out ndaqala esalon for my hair and nails, went to meet with the contractors and discussed the plan for the Durban hotel...They were the headquarters of a construction company I was gonna use. Afterall was on the dotted line ndahamba ndayakwa Land Rover I wanted a car...A brand new car in fact. Big girls play with big toys. I purchased a brand new Range that wasn't even in stock that moment...It was yet to be ordered but the features endiziboniswe ngulatata uyisales agent goodness me! After that ka shapa round at my boutique and my heart melted...It was coming to life. My vision was gradually coming to life in that building. After spending more than two hours I decided to go home. Ndaske ndafounelwa ngu Libo....

Me: "Libo"

Libo: "Hi sisi...Can I please speak to Soso"?

Yay'bona ke lanto?

Me: "uSoso uphinde wahamba sthandwa sam... Akhonto i-urgent"?

Libo: "Uhm...Don't you have inumber afumaneka kuyo"?

Me: "No but ndingazama aw'fumane umyalezo wakho"

It felt like she's crying yazi...

Me: "Uright Libo"?

Libo: "Yeah uhm...I just need to talk to him"

Me: "Andimazi noba uphi ke sisi ndivuke semnkile kwasendlini"

Libo: "Okay...Enkosi"

Then she hung up.

I still drove home though I felt it was a bit too early to be couped up with my husband endlini. I parked and got out, walked in kwabe kuthe cwaka...

Me: "Baby"???

Nqaba: "Akekho"

Me: "Oh hay mand'buyele apho ndivelakhona mos"

I opened the door and walked out, he came to the front door...Shirtless and barefoot with just shorts on.

Nqaba: "Uyaphi"?

Me: "Ndiyokhangela ubaby"

Wahleka

Nqaba: "Yaz'Luthando...Mh"

Me: "Kaloku uthe akakho so ndonqena ubhoreka ndedwa kulendlu"

Nqaba: "Ina ndikunikele kulo baby wakho"

Me: "Andifuni"

Without even knowing it ndimbone sesiza so I ran to the other side of the car, he chased me...For three rounds then caught me. My stomach was painful from laughing he carried me on his shoulder ukungena endlini and put me on the couch.

Nqaba: "Yhuu uyasinda man Luthando"

Me: "So lilonke ndityebile"?

Nqaba: "Hayi khangela nditsho"

Me: "Oh well, I'll join the gym next month then"

He poured me a glass of wine as he carried my legs on his lap.

Nqaba: "You don't need the gym...Uright ngoku unjena"

Me: "uSoso ufumaneka njani"?

Yaphela incoko

Me: "Okanye uLibhongo ndimnike inumber yakho because Soso called her on my phone yesternight now today she calls me because she urgently needs to speak to him...And andimazi noba uphi or ufumaneka njani"

Nqaba: "I'll tell him to call her"

Me: "Mmmh"

I removed my shoes and went upstairs to remove the jeans for sweat pants...While upstairs a naughty thought crept in so instead of changing...I decided to just take another bath. Fifteen minutes later, he came looking for me.

Nqaba: "Umntu uvasa kangaphi ngemini"?

Me: "Depends ba akhiwaphi amanzi"

Nqaba: "Yintoni le ingaka ivaswayo because I'm sure ubuvasile ksasa"

I just laughed at him...Inoba ucingba ndivasantoni yena?

Me: "I'll be done in a minute man baby"

Nqaba: "You haven't answered my question"

Me: "Ndivasa umzimba haibo what kinda question is your question?"

He took a good look at me, even flinching his eyes.

Nqaba: "Unendoda Luthando"?

Ookaaay!

Me: "Ewe Luthando"

Ndatsho ndidraina amanzi.

Nqaba: "I'm not joking kengoku...Une ndodana"?

Me: "Ewe Luthando ndinendoda haibo, ucing'ba ndiwenze njani amazipho nee nwele ndingakhange ndifune mali kuwe"?

Nqaba: "Awuna mali yokuzenza intloko"?

Me: "Wandiqhelisa ukundenza ke bhuti qha into endingazomelana nayo kumane ndicela ube ubona ba I need a renewal"

Nqaba: "Luthando Gwala"

I stopped and looked at him...

Nqaba: "I'm gonna ask you one last time...Unendoda nah"

Me: "Tyhini Thixo, ewe baby ndine ndoda. Sitheni na isiXhosa sam asivakali namhlanje"?

I could see him getting worked up, pay back for last night. I wrapped my body in a towel and went to my room. Obviously, he followed...Then my phone rang:

Kuhle...

Me: "Hey"

Kay: "Madam...You good"?

Me: "As usual...You"?

Kay: "I'm good...Hey I need your help man"

Me: "With"?

Kay: "My baby momma wants sole custody for the kids accompanied by maintenance only because I told her I will not breakup with my girlfriend"

Me: "Oh-kay...How does your girlfriend feel about this"?

Kay: "Haven't told her yet"

Me: "First talk to her, then I'll see what to do. I'm sure ukhona umntu onos'nceda kwezitshomana zam"

Kay: "Okay...Okay I'll call you again"

Me: "Sharp"

We hung up...

Nqaba: "Lendodakho also has a girlfriend"?

Me: "Andiboninto ifani kulonto"

...ndathambisa he stood behind me in silence, I wasn't moved tu.

I lotioned my body ndagqiba elibele kubayi bodyguard yam. Then I turned and faced him, featherly kissing his lips.

Me: "Kudala u sexy kanje"?

I could feel his body heat escalating...I didn't give a damn!

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I kissed him again and he just stood there, but I could feel his body vibrating umsindo ngowantoni mhlawumbi?

Me: "Yazi bendikukhumbula kanjani love"

He mumbled "ubukhumbula nto" I reached out to him again, now standing on my toes as I wrapped my arms around his neck our eyes locking in an intimate glance then our lips met without removing the eye contact.

Me: "I missed this..."

His body heat was now affecting me, in a positive way of course. I initially found my hands roaming all over his torso as the kiss deepened. He grabbed my behind aggressively as he pulled me close so our skin rubbed together...Then he suddenly stopped I looked at him.

Nqaba: "You know I love you...But...baby khaw'thethethe inyani man une ndoda"?

Me: "Can we talk about lendoda after undinike iimfanelo zam as your wife"

Nqaba: "Luu"

I pulled him close and kissed him, pushing him onto the bed. UNqaba must know that I respect him as my head, leader and husband but makangandiqheli. I don't recall how his shorts flew across the room but as soon as I saw his glory I felt butterflies in the lower parts of my belly...He allowed me to take the lead in the first two rounds then he fully took control. As my nails dug deep in to his flesh he went deeper in to the tunnel making me cry out loud in ecstasy, eventually making a silent prayer that Fatima mustn't come back kwamsinya I needed more

of this therapy. We cuddled in silence as our bodies cooled down, I lay my body on his body covering us with a duvet. His one hand was caressing my behind while the other had a firm grip on my thigh.

Nqaba: "babe"

Me: "hm"?

Nqaba: "Your brothers requested a family meeting"

Me: "mh"

He kissed the crown of my head knowing that andimva mna lento ayithethayo.

Nqaba: "Nalique"?

Me: "Five minutes baby, please"

Nqaba: "Kay"

Cwaka emva koko...Just then my phone rang, I sneaked my hand out and rejected the call without even having looked at the screen. I knew he'd be suspicious but I didn't care...As I put the phone under the pillow on which his head lay...It rang again.

Nqaba: "Phendula iphone"

Me: "Don't want to..."

Nqaba: "Why"?

Me: "I'll get back to him ovuka kwam"

Nqaba: "Uhlelingoku"

Me: "Mh".

I switched the phone off sixoxe leyo ke. After a couple of minutes I felt him leave the room ndakroba and felt for my phone, it wasn't where I initially put it. Good thing it has a password and pattern. Izomfratsa more. I just lay there for a few more minutes then decided to go find him ndafika ese lounge. I had just his oversized vest on.

Me: "Baby"

Nqaba: "Kutheni iPhone yakho itshixwe kangaka nje ngoku"?

I looked at him...

Me: "Phone kabani"?

Nqaba: "Yakho"

Me: "Ufuna ntoni kengoku wena kuyo"?

Nqaba: "Luthando phendula umbuzo, kutheni phone yakho ine locks ezingaka endingazaziyo"?

Me: "Andoyiswe...Baby sizenjani kanene kulendawo sikuyongoku"?

Nqaba: "Unendoda ngoku woyiswa ndim"?

I squatted on him smiling....

Me: "Nd'cela one more"

Nqaba: "Luthando"

Me: "One qha baby"

Nqaba: "Suyenza lento uyenzayo...I serious lento ndithetha ngayo"

Me: "Eyona i-serious yile yam baby...Xase undihoyile nda grand then I'll answer all your questions"

Nqaba: "Yi joke ku wele?"

I kissed him, he pursed his lips ndamhleka.

Me: "Izakuxaka kelento uy'qalayo"

Nqaba: "If you are not cheating then why do you have such security on your phone"?

Me: "So uzixelele ba uzandivimba just because you think I'm cheating"?

Nqaba: "Andikuvimbanga nix mna umlomo lo wam uwufunayo ngulo ndithetha ngawo"

Me: "Good, so that means I can make use of the rest of your body as long as I don't disturb your mouth"

I got off him and knelt down between his legs sneaking out his person from the hem of his shorts, whatever else he said wasn't meant for me. I was busy with my own mouth so I couldn't answer him too. I got up and removed his entire shorts ndatsho khona, lomntu ebengathi akafuni ngoku was groping my ass, suckling ukudla kwengan'zami, calling my name as if ndiyotheza bloody perv! He was obviously too close but I was still far off...So I did my shit and motivated him to keep up and he did, until we hit up the climax together. Just then I heard icango lemoto phandle and I knew it could only be Aunt Fatima so I quickly got off the dude.

Nqaba: "Who's that"?

Me: "Fatima"

We quickly grabbed our clothes and ran up the stairs like teenagers ezingafunubhaqwa I went straight to the shower...He joined me there and we just washed each other saphuma, got dressed...

Nqaba: "uFatima can drive"?

Me: "Cab"

Nqaba: "Mmh"



Me: "You said something about my brothers"?

Nqaba: "Yes...Bafuna nibene family meeting"

Me: "They don't have my number"?

Nqaba: "Its only respectful to ask a husband's permission"

Me: "Utheni ke wena"?

Nqaba: "Ndithe uzaw'bakhona but I still have to talk to you"

Me: "Izobaphi imeeting leyo"?

Nqaba: "Haikhe"

Me: "Haikaloku awzoza ne information engaphelelanga kum"

Akand'phendula...

Nqaba: "Another thing, ooSino bacela ukuza apha ngo December"

Me: "Ndizaw'be ndibusy tatakhe"

Nqaba: "Haibo"

Me: "Immediately bevala ooUba ndizobasa kumama eMonti bonke then ndibuye ndijongane nomsebenzi. I can't babysit seven children ngefestive season when I'm supposed to be making money"

Nqaba: "Bayakukhumbula abantwana Nalique... Ingathi sibalahlile"

Me: "Mabaye eMonti kaloku baby, I'll prolly spend a week there"

He shook his head...

Me: "Or if uzaw'bakhona wena then bangenza apha for that one week u babysitt'e ke mntwam"

Nqaba: "Ndiyaphuma nomsebenzi mna"

Me: "Baxebele ke ukuba saw'dibana e Monti"

Ndamshiya...

I was hungry. I had no problem having the kids there but him forcing it wasn't gonna work. He's seldom home ngo December now he wants me to be couped up endlini nabantwana abasixhenxe? I have a hotel in Durban that's under construction, I have a boutique in Sandton that I needed to plan a grand opening for...after that I have to rework the one in PE and maybe work on something in Cape Town...I literally had my hands full and I was enjoying it.

I made a chicken stir-fry and Greek salad ndamphakela sayohlala by the poolside eating. I texted Libo just to find out if she's fine but she didn't respond immediately so ndamyeka. Hubby must have decided to drop the "boyfriend" issue or he was secretly planning to trap me shame. His phone rang...Wathetha then gave it to me, I checked the screen first:

Me: "Mama"?

Mama: "Makoti awunqabe, unjani"?

Me: "Ndiyaphila mama unjani wena"?

Mama: "Ndiyaphila nam...Wasilahla na ntombi yase Mazangweni"?

Me: "Hay mama kubusy qha..."

Mama: "Uzabazisa nini abantwana bam"?

Me: "Uzohlala nabo bonke uDecember wonke mama"

Mama: "Yhu hay besendizokhwela ndizobathatha ngokwam ngoku"

I laughed at her dramatic exclamation...Guess she missed us shame. After talking to her I gave Nqaba his phone back...

Nqaba: "Let's go for a ride"

Me: "Lemme go change"

He looked me up and down then gave me that "haibo Luthando"look!

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Libhongo called me ndisamandelwe yi ride...

Me: "Hello"?

Libo: "Hi Sibho...I really need to speak to Soso torho ndcela wenze indlela"

Me: "Uzakufounela sthandwa bendiwudlulisile umyalezo"

Libo: "You can't give me his number"?

Me: "Andinayo nam ngutata ka Uba umntu o communicater naye"

She sighed...

Me: "Is there anything you need urgently endinokunceda ngayo"?

Libo: "No uhm... I'll be fine"

Me: "Libo"

Libo: "Mrs Gwala"

Me: "If you need imali yokuya kwa gqirha or you're craving something ongena mali yayo yitsho I'll give it to you...Soso's absence doesn't mean akho bantu and when it comes to his baby...Please and'funu xoxa into endingayaziyo thetha...Ufunantoni"?

She said something in muffled sounds then she hung up...I looked at my phone then at my husband waske wandihleka.

Me: "She hung up on me kodwa ndifuna umnceda"

Nqaba: "Hormones baby"

Me: "Eshe"

We drove to his closed Shisanyama, parked and got out.

Me: "We are here why"?

Nqaba: "Ndiyakubona nje ingathi you don't include this on your priority list but its still your project"

Me: "Andilibelanga kaloku I'm gonna work with the team that's working on the boutique"

Nqaba: "Good...Izobona ke"

So le ride was a "business/work" ride?

Tyhini andizimisele andimhle even matching to him kanti ndizoplaniswa umhlaba.

He walked me to the back and told me what he wanted to see xasewuqalile umsebenzi so obviously I had to take notes to show that I'm interested kulento ayithethayo. After fifteen minutes I put my phone away and just followed him edwaba until he realized that I'm no longer taking notes.

Nqaba: "Ndikudikile"?

Me: "I thought you're taking me out for a movie or something not lento undenzisa yona"

Nqaba: "This is important too, aw'satefi umdala unje"

Me: "Ndakushiya apha kemnake tatakhe, asoze undikhuphe endlini for this"

Nqaba: "Okay masambe"

I smiled and skipped right behind him, we really went to watch movies and had a snack emvakoko then we went for a light cocktail and chilled.

Me: "Uzophinda uhambe nini"?

Nqaba: "Ndiyaphi ndifika"?

Me: "Haikaloku uqhelufika udlule mfondini"

Nqaba: "Andihambike"

Me: "Mmh so ndingaya eBhayi mos"?

Nqaba: "Entweni"?

Me: "I have a business eBhayi Nqabayomzi Gwala"

Nqaba: "Sihamba soy'thu"

Me: "Abantwana bazothini because ndizolala pha yilonto ndfunukuya ngoku ukhoyo"

Nqaba: "Aw'zolala Bhayi Luthando, sizoya sobabini siphinde sibuye sobabini...UMo ukhona uzaw'phinda asise xakucaba lento uyoyenza ay'nokwenzeka ngemini enye"

Me: "Mnk okay"

I had forgotten that I have a "man" until about a few minutes later sesisiyothatha abantwana ecreche ndasuka nday'hleka yilonto ndikhatshwa mos? Kucingwa ngalendoda ndinayo? Kanti ke I also wanted to check on Libo, I might be mad at Soso but uLibo needed someone on her side in his absence. Pregnancy ain't no child's play ndiyazikum. Ndi worse kemna ndandivele nditefe qha ndaanikwa umyeni owuqondayo umcimbi. When we got to Keri's kindergarten Eve was there, I didn't know how to react and I could feel Nqaba's heart though we didn't do our usual eye communication. Ukhubone umve umntu ekucenga ngaphakathi nangona engekho verbal? It was that kinda situation. Sangena sabulisa ndaya ebantwaneni bam mna while he asked impilo koo sbali bakhe, I missed abantwana bam so much. Iyakha wangathi kudala efununina waxhuma-xhuma as soon as I approached his cot...The others were fast asleep except for the twins of course, who were both pulling their father's legs for attention.

Keri: "I wanted to tell you that she's here but I didn't have a chance"

Me: "No problem sis"

Ndamphendula ndingam'jonganga ndipakisha izinto zabantwana bam. She let me be and went to pack my kids bags wandinika...

Me: "Si-ready taka Uba"

Nqaba:"oh"

Ndatsho ndimkhombisa oolyazi, ndabhabhayisa koo Keri then I went to strap my kids emotweni. Eve must have followed behind me coz ndijike ngaye...

Eve: "I was hoping I'd have a word with you but I can see y'all are in a rush"

Me: "Yeah hey"

Eve: "When do you think you'll have a chance for coffee? I won't be here for long"

Me: "I'm not sure sis, I'm supposed to be going to PE tomorrow but I'm still depending upon my husband"

Eve: "Ooh I see"

I nod...There was nothing else to say, as soon as hubby was done I bid my last goodbyes sagoduka. Xasifika there were two cars waiting in the driveway.

Me: "You are expecting people"?

Nqaba: "Nope"

We parked bohlika kuqala ooUba, knowing the kinda lifestyle he lives I rushed right after them leaving Nqaba with three kids yawzibona ba ubaphatha njani. What if abantwana bam bangene endlini kukho amadoda who are ready to

shoot? Fatima was making tea...so we followed emva kwakhe only to find uNqobimpi, Bonginkosi, Legend and Sir Titus in the lounge.

Me: "Erhm...Molweni tata"

Nqobi: "Molokazana...Tshini, nali Ikamva lakwa Gwala"

Uvelile was already on his lap, uUba was trying to read faces ubajonge boooonke then his eyes stopped kutata ka Soso.

Uba: "Ngu tata kabana wena tata"?

Titus: "Ndingu tatakho nawe kwedini"

Uba: "Heh, angotatam fondini. Ngutatakabani? Mamam, ngutata kabana aba"?

Ndaguquka kwangoko ndayoncedisa utatakhe phandle.

He looked at me trying to read my face.

Me: "Utatakho uze no Ta Legend"

Nqaba: "Bayaphi"?

Me: "No tataka Soso"

He closed and locked the car...

Me: "No tata ka Gudda"

Then he stopped wandijonga...

Me: "I'm not sure why you're giving me that look"

Nqaba: "Ndilinde uthi you're joking"

Me: "Unfortunately I'm not...Ndiske ndamuncu uzuqonde"

Nqaba: "Heh, abantu bavela bagaleleleke nje emzini wabantu bengatshongo"?

Me: "Ngoo tatabakho, ambobahoya"

Wahleka nje as we walked in, kwafuneka ndiyopheka kengoku because "baw'zala" as I was preparing to cook...gqi uNtando out of nowhere.

Me: "Baby ndcela undiphathele ired wine for ibeef"

Wancuma...So I looked at him one more time.

Me: "Ntando...ufikenini"?

Ntando: "Couple of hours ago...Indawni I-wine"?

Me: "Cellar...Just down the passage"

Ntando: "Coming right up"

Now Nqaba appeared looking navy'ish...

I knew ikhona emcaphukisayo but I wasn't gonna say anything.

Nqaba: "Uthi utatazala wakho ufuna inyama yenkomo, uthi utatakho ufuna ipork uthi utata ka Soso no Legend bafuna igusha"

I looked at him in silence.

Nqaba: "Uphi uNtando"?

Me: "Cellar"

Nqaba: "Ndcela ufounele uMongezi umxelele abe ready to take these men to Congo...Abazolala apha"

Me: "Bonke"?

Nqaba: "Ewe"

Gqiba waphindela kubo, I didn't wanna talk much so ndapheka yonke lanyama as instructed, Ntando gave me the wine and joined ooyise. Now the confusing part kuyoyonke lento is: ufunantoni apha uBong'nkosi? Why are they here playing family bonds? Kwam, bengatshongo kuthi phof I won't even ask how they got directions. Because it's clear Nqaba didn't know bayeza...As far as I knew, no one else knew about our new house.

Uba: "Mamam uSoso wakho akazi kokwenu"?

Me: "Andimazi Uba ambobuza pha kutatakhe"

Uba: "Kutatakho"?

Me: "Tata ka Soso Ubabalo"

Uba: "Uphi yena utatakhe"

Me: "Upha elounge"

Uba: "Womphi"?

Me: "Lo bumbuza ba ngutata kabani"

Uba: "Tyhiiiiini"!

He quickly ran back to the lounge...In a matter of seconds engenile ndeva intswahla yentsini.

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## **547**

I needed help but Fatima was looking after the triplets and the twins were with the older folk, so I sucked it up. When I was done ndabenzela uself service at the dining table, asked Nqaba to call them gqiba kwam ndathatha abantwana bam ndayobavasa bonke.

"Uyabizwa"

Me: "I'm busy"

Nqaba: "Baby"

Me: "Bra, ixesha Labantwana lolala kudala lidlulile ngoku ndim ndedwa uzosokoliswa ngooUve ekseni"

Nqaba: "Yizosabela kaloku"

Me: "Uzoshyeka ubagqibezela"?

Nqaba: "Awuzohlala Luthando haibo"

Me: "Haike Luu andizi ke.Tyhini,and ndidiniwe mna"

Wandiyeka...Ndakhupha abantwana bam and prepared them for bed gqiba ndayocela uFatima to clean up ogqibakwababantu yonke lanto bayenzayo. I changed, turned off the light ndalala... Don't know what time it was but I was woken up by cars and gun shots. The first thing that came to my mind was: abantwana bam! I ran to their room ndafika uFatima ehleli nabo...Confused as to why was she even faster than me to reach the room I went to look for Nqaba but he wasn't there so I called him.

Beast: "Can't talk right now"

Me: "What's going on"?

Beast: "Call you later"

Then he hung up...I called his brother

Ghost: "Madam...Can't talk right now"

Me: "Mnxim"

I hung up...I could feel a soft breeze coming through so I followed it and found the front door wide open, and the front gate. And there was someone on the ground right at the gate but I wasn't gonna go out there and see who it was. Risk my life for who? I locked my doors and turned off the lights, went to check on my kids ndafika belele no Fatima engekho kubo so instead of going back to my room I joined them ndalala pha. Ekseni I prepared the twins for school and buckled them up in my car phofu utatabo and his brother were washing something by the gate, uba babuye nini bazazi bodwa. I told Fatima I'd be out for the rest of the day so I needed her to keep an eye on the triplets then I drove the kids to school first gqiba ndaya e airport and flew down to PE. Ndaqalakwa Spar and bought Libo a couple of things then I went to my boutique, the excitement on the other guys when they saw me kude kuthwe "yho haike madam sitsho sanethembha noko" ithemba lelonyuselwa ke alikho elinye. After liaising with most of them I went up to Libo's office and knocked "Come in" Her response was frail and tired I opened the door slowly peeping my head first and waited until she looked up, the shock on her face when she saw me. Wazama nophakama, I walked in...And we hugged ndamnika ooplastic bakhe. Phofu ndiqokelele yonkinto endandiyitya throughout all three of my pregnancies because I didn't know specifically what to buy her.

Me: "This office looks and feels so warm hey!"

Libo: "Haha I'll take that as a compliment but...What brings you here"?

Me: "Ndizobona wena"

Weh cwaka...

Me: "Unjani"?

Libo: "I'm okay sisi"

Me: "Libo"?

Waphakamisa nje amehlo ethe gwanti.

Me: "How are you holding up, how's the pregnancy treating you? Have you been to a doctor yet"?

Wasuka walila umntu, ndaxakwa noba ndimthini because uhleli behind her desk.

Libo: "Ndiright sisi it's just...I miss him so much. I know at first I didn't wanna bother him ngam or ngomntwana because I didn't wanna lie to myself fully knowing we were never in a relationship but..."

She was inlove and hurting, I knew that feeling all too well but I felt like she was in denial nge feelings zakhe.

Me: "Uyamthanda"?

Libo: "We're just friends"

Me: "Uyamthanda nah"?

Libo: "Sisi you don't understand, it's not about me loving him yazi"

Me: "Libhongo uyamthanda uLwandiso"?

She looked down and mumbled "yes"

Me: "Does he know that you love him"?

Libo: "He doesn't need to know it, I know uyand'thanda mna that's enough"

Me: "Uthando is a two way journey and exchange kaloku, and it's important that both parties involved know where they stand with each other ingakumbi if you wanna co-parent"

Libo: "I cannot afford to get hurt all over again Tee, uright and'thanda yedwa. The minute he knows I also love him sizoba kwi relationship and I'm not strong enough for that right now"

Me: "Kanti nikwi ntoni ngoku"?

Libo: "Simithisene qha, askhokwinto"

Me: "Aw'zazi shame wena ba ufunani...Kodwa ke kuyo yonke lonto remember that you cannot have your cake and eat it AND ungakulinge upanishe umntasekhaya ngenxa yezono zika Vincent"



Wahleka... At least I made her laugh. I checked on finances before we went to checkout a building she had secured for the growth of the business. The way she was prepared with a pitch and presentation as to why we should actually buy this building...It pleased me to see someone else so passionate nge vision yam. After checking the entire building out I gave her the go ahead with purchasing it.

Libo: "Kuzofuneka ke ukhangele imanager because soon I'll be on maternity leave ndizoshiya uNontombi"

Me: "Bekhe ndacinga no Eve qha yho izobangathi I'm rubbing it in kuye..."

Libo: "Your sister"?

Me: "Yeah"

Libo: "Talk to her...If she needs the job she'll be grateful"

Me: "Aw'mazi uEve wena Libhongo, yho lantombi"

Wandihleka... Eve gives me heart palpitations I do wanna help her, I really do.

We're sisters, we're supposed to help each other and as far as I know she actually needs a job. Unless ke ude waphangela. But the thought of being Eve's boss? Yho!

Me: "Khaw'be uthenga le way, I'll have a word no tata ka Uba regarding this"

Libo: "Should I scout for interior designers"?

Me: "No I already have a team le ibusy eJozi, bazokwenza iShisaNyama then beze apha. At least I know they understand my sense of style"

Libo: "Alright then...Now I wanna propose business"

Me: "Haibo"!

Libo: "Ewe kaloku sisi...I need space to sell weaves kule boutique yakho intsha"

Me: "Une supplier"?

She cleared her throat, ndamjonga becoming more curious.

Libo: "Wayethe uSoso xandinofumana indawo e stable that will be easily accessable and that's a guarantee in attracting customers then angandithengela eChina...I'm hoping that still stands"

Me: "Mmkay...Draw up a professional business plan and proposal then we can talk"

Libo: "Yes ma'am"

Oh wow.

I decided to take her out sayoty a iLunch, sisamnandelwe wafouna uNqabayomzi. I wanted to reject his call but ndacinga iintsana zam...

Me: "Luthando"?

Nqaba: "Uphi na"?

Me: "Ndisemsebenzini"

Nqaba: "Komphi because silapha kule boutique yakho kuthwa khangе uze apha"

Me: "Ndisemsebenzini out of town Luthando"

Nqaba: "Abantwana bakho bayakukhumbula... Uzobuya nini"?

Me: "Can I call you back later, I'm actually busy right now"

Nqaba: "Siyeza"

Me: "Hehehe niza niyaphi bra"

Nqaba: "Siza kuwe mfondini"

Me: "Okay. Bye bye"

I hung up...Libo eyed me.

Me: "Thetha"

Libo: "U ta Beast...I thought he's a mean guy until I saw him with you"

Me: "He's mean alright"

Libo: "No he's not...Somehow lo ta Beast simaziyo ngaphandle is a totally different guy from the one you get to see xasikwakho"

Ndas'ke ndamhleka...

Libo: "And the way you two love each other...Isinika ithemba shame that basekhona abantu aba right out there"

Me: "Hehe sisi...You don't know what you are talking about"

Libo: "Sisi most men don't want independent women, he supports you kodwa he proly has enough for all of you"

Me: "Nyhanike...I always say I'm not lucky I'm blessed"

Shame akhonto indihlekisa ngathi ngumntu obona iiroses and chocolates xa ebona mna no Nqaba. Iyandicubhula nje lo part.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **548**

After lunch I took her out on retail therapy, being pregnant and alone ube uminxwe nazezimpahla zakho zangoku ubungeka mithi phofu kwa lomntu ukumithisileyo just went AWOL...ndamshiyela imali yokuya kwagqirha then I went back to the airport. Akhange ndithi ndifuna ukulandelwa mna, and I don't own a private jet so umntu onendlela yosuka eRhawutini aze eBhayi just for fun wenzela isiqu sakhe. I took a flight home, but first went to check on Vincent and bumped

onto Lizzy ephuma pha... Confused me kinda froze because kaloku, wasn't thaaat girl his girlfriend? Yes the weirdo. She (Liz) was churpy and all...

Liz: "Trina! Wow, where have you been? You look good...Wow"

Me: "I've been around and you don't look too bad yourself"

Liz: "We should do coffee some time...I'm sure the twins are all grown"

Me: "Sure...Old number"?

Liz: "Yes"

Me: "I'll call you"

I wasn't gonna call her though...I hoped she knew I wasn't gonna do that ish. I had a lil chat with Vince wabesithi uzaw'phuma in a week's time, naye ndamshiyela imali and a plastic full of goodies then ndagoduka...I was tired and I missed my kids. I had this firm belief that when you help someone in need, don't expect them to help when you're in need. Do it because you want to, because it feels right and because you're human. Help a stranger knowing fully well you prolly will never meet again, uyatyala elohlobo and the only person who can reward you is God. Qha! Xandifika endlini...Oo Uba bathathiwe eskolweni, both their dads were home kudlalwa ibhola. I paid the cab driver and walked straight into my house, I knew bandibonile mos but I wasn't in the mood for any of the twins all I wanted was my three bundles qha.

Sihle: "Wangena umfazi wase khaya madoda"!!!

Kuhle joined him...I thought I'd escaped the twins outside kanti no, kukho naba. I took a breath in, and smiled bahleka.

Kuhle: "Shame, bungayazi ubasikhona"

Sihle: "Nathi besingazazi ba sikhona Mrs don't fret, you're not alone"

Yazi into edikayo ngalamawele walapha oonke? Bayafana...Uzigqibela umklokhile ulife ngokwazi ubohlula uphinde uz'bone umuncu ba worse when they decide to wear the same matching clothes. I just shook my head chuckling gqiba ndabashiya pha ndayokhulula, went to check on the triplets ndabathatha ku Fatima sayolala enursery saz'ncokolela. Iyazi was the attention seeker, Iyakha and Iya were the IDC's of the pack but Iyakha was a foodie. I realized I had left my phone in my room so I went for it, ndasole ndiyifaka e-charge ndakhupha ekatatakhe ndahamba nayo...As the kids enjoyed my presence I went through iPhone le yomntu.

Me: "Shame, iya behavior le chap...Wonder what happened to Nomsa"  
Ndisancoma njalo ndagilana ne message's from Chuma:

Her: yho uyakhumbuleka yazi Beast... He didn't respond to that one...A week later she contacted him again and qho nge odd times:

Her: Beast

Him: Ufuna ntoni Chuma?

Her: Ndifuna wena. I miss you, I miss us mfondini. You remember the promises we made to each other, our child? Well before you had a clone?

Him: Andiyontsangu ke suqhunyelwa kum ngobusuku.

Her: Remember you once had a fantasy of 50 shades; I can make that a reality.

Him: Thank you for the offer but my wife can go 50 shades darker.

Yaphela eyalomini...Three days before abuye lentombi sent him a nude, well half nude captioned: "this could be all yours again, Sibongile doesn't have to know"

Him: Ifufunyana lakho can't handle ghosts but thinks it can handle beasts, xandirholisiwe ngulamama wakwam ndaw'kuqhekezela and buy you bio oil for stretch marks namashwababa noko awnokogqithwa ngu baby enabantwana abahlanu. Then below that he sent another one..

"You also need shapewear uzame int'ebufigure kanje indimoshile into yoqhela uqamela endaweni eflat not kwezinduli ndizibonapha. Enyinto ke sendiy'lentanga ye healthy diet nontombi, andityi nje nanjani"

I've never heard isigezo esikule level! Ungafunga uthi bekuphendula uSoso apha and somehow, Nqaba thought it right to take screenshots and send to his twin brother yhu ndacima kwa lo phone. Yhu, bendifuna ntoni kuyo in the first place kanene?

"I thought we agreed sizoya kunye eBhayi"

Me: "You thought and concluded wedwa, I thought yi suggestion elenga-lengayo"  
I didn't even bother myself ngomjonga, is that how you greet your wife ongakhange umbone imini yonke? Tshi! He walked in and picked up Iyakha who was closer to him, wamteketisa.

Beast: "Uyageza umamakho ndoda uyambona? Usile lomama wenu"  
Andamphendula... Akathethi nam uthetha nonyanakhe.

Me: "I need the budget for your ShisaNyama oo Lauren sebezogqiba pha"

Nqaba: "Siqale nini udiscuss'er ibusinessse ndlini kanene"?

Me: "Ooh sorry, ndim orongo sir. Meet me at the ShisaNyama tomorrow at 09:30 ke so that you can give me the budget to work around,"

Nqaba: "Igcwele idiary yam, and my day is already planned out for tomorrow anyway"

Me: "Oraaaayt. Ndaw'vangawe xa ines'khewu. Mabakhabe besiya eDurban ooLauren mos"

I dialed Lauren on his phone...

Ndamxelela that when they are done pha kum (which they'd be done in two if not three weeks) bazoya eDurban, thereafter baphumele eBhayi. She seemed excited knowing fully well that I had an option of using people who were already in Durban but I chose them because I've been working with them since the birth of the businesswoman in me. I wasn't gonna beg umntu ngexesha lakhe for ibusiness yakhe, even if he was joking uzoyazi ba I don't joke nge business, I don't joke ngexesha, I don't joke ngemali. Nanini na. I could feel his eyes feasting on me but I wasn't bothered, endaweni yalonto I took selfies nabantwana bakhe aba baphantsi.

Nqaba: "Ifuna ntoni iPhone yam kuwe"?

Me: "Bend'senza lanto ubuyenza kweyam"

Nqaba: "Luthando iyakugezisa lendoda unayo neh"?

Ndaphakama ndizomshiya pha nabantwana bakhe enyinto ndiyicinge sendiphendule unothanda intokuba ingandivingcela kule nursery lendoda. Wes ngokusey'cinga iyatyelwa angandikrwitsha afune igama ne address!

Me: "Ina iPhone yakho wethu, I'm done with it anyway"

He just looked at me, ndaphuma nayo ke nam ndayibeka kulandawo bendiythathe kuyo then I went downstairs ndayogqogqa ifridge for icecream then I went to watch soccer with Kuhle elounge. Yazi oo Kuhle bandibona ndihleka nabo bacinge ndilibele ba wandinyela kwam engenise intombi singekho gqiba waphendula udothi xandinovusa olochuku akunolalwa kulomzi...Including esas'thunzela sabo singenangqondo. Bangalalaphandle.

Kuhle: "Uyakhumbuleka yaz uLukas"

Me: "Umkhumbule sezobuya"

Kuhle: "Uphi kanti"?

Me: "Andikho sure, he's a travel junkie asoze umazi apho akhoyo kanye kanye"

Ntando walked in with the twins, Nqaba wangena yedwa.

Uba: "Mamam! Uyephi ngo ungekho"?

Me: "Bendiye emsebenzini"

Uve: "Tatakho kayi yena selenzini yakhe"?

Me: "Usebenzaphi k'qala lotatakho"?

Uba: "Tatakho uphi selenzini yakho"?

Nqaba: "Ndiqeshwe ngumamakho"

Uba: "Uphi apho"?

Nqaba: "Buza pha kuye"

Uba: "Mamakho up-"

Me: "Uyakukhumbula u Iya ndoda"

Wancuma wabaleka waphuma, Uve followed bahamba bayodlala e nursery.  
Bashiyeka behleka aba...Nqaba came to sit next to me uzenza ulovey dovey.

Nqaba: "Khawenze kaloku"

Me: "Ndenze ntoni"?

Nqaba: "Lonto unayo...Ziyabukwa iindwendwe"

Me: "You expecting visitors"?

Kuhle: "Sithi iivisitors"

Me: "Mnxim, andilibali nithetha ngabantu aba serious...Andidinwe guys,  
khanithengeni ipizza"

Nqaba: "Yi supper leyo"?

Me: "Ubucinga upheka baby"?

Wandijonga biting his lip oko mas'tshaye, he knew fully well that I wasn't going to cook. Not after yesterday.

Ntando: "Ufuna ey'phi pizza Mrs"?

Me: "Sweet and sour chicken, triple decker please. Utatakhe uthanda u something meaty ke xa ecacile so I don't know nizothenga njani"

Sihle: "Bhuti ucacile for ipizza ngoku? Okanye sikuthengele uSteers"?

Nqaba: "Zikhona iiribs pha efridge"

Sihle: "Ooh so ufuna ukuzenzela iiribs"?

Nqaba: "Ndinomfazi mna andingo bhulu"

Ntando: "Umvile uthe udiniwe, ungazo abuser u Luthando sikhona. Especially not after last night"

Me: "Enkosi Ntando shame, umane esenza ngathi uyand'thanda lo kodwa akandicingeli tu"

Nqaba: "Ungenaphi Ntando"?

Kuhle: "I've just ordered two pizza's, 9kg of ribs and chips ne drinks. Free delivery"

Watyiwa yivote umntu elibele kuzenza clever ngam.

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## 549

Sancokola sonke having dinner, kwamnandi...Then Uba walked in with my phone

Uba: "Phone yakho yathetha umntu mama"

Nqaba: "Sapha ndoda"

Uba: "Hayi hayi yo phone yakho tatakho"

Kuhle: "yes Uba !"

I took my phone, it was Sima so ndaphakama and went to the porch.

Me: "hello"?

Sima: "hey sis...Unjani"?

Me: "Ndiright Simamnkele unjani"?

Sima: "I'm cool...Uhm...Ubusy kangakanani next weekend"?

Me: "Andikho sure, why"?

Sima: "Senza igraduation aphenndini incorporated with mom's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday so besibawela uze nawe"

Me: "Yhu"!

Sima: "We know what happened between you and Gudda, dad told us but...That still doesn't change that ungu dad'wethu and instead of holding on to the past, we want to move forward as siblings"

Me: "I don't think it's a good idea bra...I'll send gifts akho problem but I don't think I'll be comfortable kokwenu, with your mom...Kwakhe phofu"

Sima: "Umama uyamazi uGudda ebengumntu onjani... Yes she was hurt but when she heard the whole story she understood"

Hay never!

Yi traple !

Me: "Can I at least think about it"?

Sima: "Of course. Ndizova ngaweke"

Me: "Okay...Thanks for the call"

Sima: "Sharp"

I hung up ndakhe ndema pha...

Kanene I'm a murderer who killed her very own brothers in front of their father. What if God decides to avenge their blood ebantwaneni bam, seeing that ndizele amadoda odwa into a gangsta demonized family?

Nqaba: "It's cold out here"

Me: "I know"

He walked closer and held my shoulders in silence.

Me: "Yazi nothing gives me panic attacks like the thought of my children turning out like you"

Nqaba: "You mean our children"?

Me: "Whichever sounds nice to your ears,"

Nqaba: "They can never turn out to be gangstas ukhona, you'll steer them to the right path"

Me: "Tatakhe...You are a gangsta, your twin brother is a gangsta, your half-brothers are gangstas, your father is not your kinda gangsta. He's a ganglord, all gangstas bow at his feet"

Nqaba: "You're not a gangsta, you're a qualified lawyer, you're a clear headed businesswoman, you're a visionary... Surely that's enough for them to learn from"

He made it sound so nice.

Me: "You don't get it"

Nqaba: "I get it alright, I understand your fears but I know your capabilities and I know none of our children will ever take this route. I'm working my ass off so that we can build legitimate businesses for them...Proper inheritance"

He kissed my neck...

Nqaba: "Naba ooKuhle ba right, your brothers oo Sima baright. Not all's spilled milk"

Me: "Yeah...Uhm, ubuya nini uSoso."?

Nqaba: "Babe"

Me:"ULibo uyamdinga baby akekho right, it's her first pregnancy she needs a support system"

Nqaba: "uSoso uyazazi ba umithisile baby, he knows he's supposed to be with her but he's not in a position right now"

Me: "You're not answering me"

Nqaba: "In six months time"



Yhu! Ndabindeka...I loosened his hands ndangena endlini, went to run myself a bath ndabiza ooUba ndavasa nabo salungiselela ulala leaving utatakhe nabantakwabo. After ndilalise ooUve Eve called

Me: "Low"?

Eve: "Hey...Hoe gaan dit"?(How are you)

Me:"I'm good, you"?

Eve:"I'm good. Ek wou uitfind wanneer kan ons meet"?

(I wanna find out when can we meet)

Me:"I don't know...I might be going to Durban in the next few days. When are you going"?

Eve: "ThisSunday...I know you're busy and I'm sorry for just popping out of nowhere but I really needto see you before I go"

Me: "Okay...Let's meet at Mocha at 10:00 then"

Eve: "Thank you"

Me: "Sure"

We hung up ndalala...

I texted Luke a good night text. Ndamva uNqaba xa ezolala but I wasn't in the mood to have a pillow talk and he knew that I'm not asleep kwalento angene ezingubeni and cuddle me gqiba abuze "ulele nyhani" I didn't answer him.

Nqaba: "Umama uyokwenza i-operation yentliziyo phesheya next week. Uzofikela apha then fly from here"

Me: "Kutheni isenziwa phesheya"?

Nqaba: "i-ou yakhe found a best heart specialist pha"

Ou-yakhe? Utat'Gwala heeee!!!

Me: "Ngumzimba kabana lo beniwushiye at the gate izolo"?

Nqaba: "Mzimba"?

Me: "Ligazi lika bani eli benilivasa k'sasa"?

Nqaba: "besiklina nje there was no blood"

Me: "Goodnight"

Nqaba: "Haibo sisathetha"

Andamphendula.

Halfway through the night ndaphelelwa bubuthongo so instead of waking him up too ndavuka ndayokwenza iplan yeShisaNyama yakhe elounge, from the rebranding to the parking space, the tables outside and the VVIP Area at the back and of course a brand new kitchen and office. It was beautiful on paper and the

only team I trusted with the exact execution was Lauren's team. They're not just a deco team...They have builders kwapha kubo, they have eco ambassadors, they have painters so most of the time they use their own skills to execute my vision and bring it to life. Imali yam andiyikhaleli xandiba bhatala...

Ntando: "You're overworking yourself"

I lifted up my eyes ndaqoshela kwa lo gown, xa uhleli wedwa uhlala nje nanjani but when there's another man, who happens to be your husband's twin...It's a different story.

Me: "Be useful and make me hot chocolate"

Ntando: "Yes ma'am"

He went to the kitchen wabuya ephethe neyakhe, he looked at what I was working on.

Ntando: "This is beautiful...Kudala ndibuzaba lamhlaba umngakaya eback why ungasetyenziswa"

Me: "Bendingawazi kwa wona mna until a few days ago"

Ntando: "He's lucky to have you...I hope he knows that"

Ndathula...

Ntando: "Udadwenu lo ngumntu onjani"?

Me: "Which one"?

Ntando: "Anelisa"

Me: "Yho hay andimazi"

Ntando: "Umntanakhe undenzela iworry man, she hasn't adjusted to the changes and I think yonke lento is affecting her naseskolweni"

Me: "Ranger must step in kaloku and be a father to his daughter"

Ntando: "Sino akafuni nova...Uvele umshutte out whenever he tries to reach out to her"

Me: "Nothing patience, therapy and counseling can't fix"

Wathula...What did he expect me to say?

That ndizomthatha? Ain't gonna happen. Ba right aba bam bahlanu, bandanele.

Me: "Kuthwa uhlala kuwe uOwe"

Ntando: "Yeah...Chuma wafumana another job eKapa wemnka, Owe wathi akahambi so ndamthatha"

Me: "Ushiyeka nabani when you go on business trips...njenga ngoku"?

Ntando: "I have a live-in nanny egoduka xandikhona noba yiveki"

Me: "That's good...At least you're playing your part"

Ntando: "You guys did a great job in both their lives... Ndimane ndimothuka uOwe the level of wisdom"

Me: "Mama did all the work, Nqaba was there but not always. Ndifike sebebhadlile mna I can never take credit"

Ntando: "You don't know what you're talking about"

I decided to kill this conversation too...Ndanceda coz I heard the door to my room open then Nqaba walked down the stairs eshixiza.

Nqaba: "Anisekho cozy in the middle of the night"

Ntando: "Lelona xesha lokuba cozy kanye eli"

He walked towards the table wabuka ezi plan that I was working on...

Nqaba: "Utshata nini Ntando"?

Ntando: "Ndizotshata bani uLibo emithiswe zezikaka zakweli Goli lenu"

Nqaba: "Ambhokhangela umamontanakho"

Ntando: "Ingxaki ke iqala apho because andiyazi indlela eya eBhofola"

They both laughed...

I couldn't laugh because I was still stuck kulant'ba akakayazi nangoku uNtando that Soso is Libo's baby daddy? Ligqubusha uNqaba, why engamxelelanga? Ndapakisha izinto zam besammandelwe yincoko.

Me: "Good night'ini"

Nqaba: "Good night kwedini"

He walked right behind me, safika sangena ezingubeni in silence.

Nqaba: "Intle le plan uyenzileyo...Do you think aba bantu bakho will be able to execute it"?

We don't discuss business at home, right?

I wasnt gonna answer him ke I just buried my head in his chest as his arms pulled me close, ndacimela ndalala. Uyaw'zicingela impendulo.

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## **550**

Ekuseni ndavuka ndayovasa...

I had an appointment with Evelyn Smith, the royal wife. Had I been in the mood I'd dress up for her majesty but I was drained, the traveling I was doing kula veki really drained me. I wore black jeggings, black long sleeve t-shirt and an olive green coat and matching boots. The weather was allowing. When I was done ndavusa lobhuti ndincuma naye...

Nqaba: "Mh"?

Me: "Nd'cela uzuhoye abantwana, I'll be gone imini yonke but uFatima uzobakhona emvako 2:00pm"

He sat up...

Nqaba: "Uyaphi"?

Me: "I have a 10:00 am meeting, emvakwayo I'll be in another meeting in Joburg South then after that I'll be at the boutique"

Nqaba: "Siyahamba ngo 4 ke"

Me: "uFatima uzabe sebuyile"

Nqaba: "Wena"?

Me: "I said I'll be out for the rest of the day...If you wanna see me before you go then you'll come to the boutique"

Nqaba: "Sure"

Me: "Sharp"

I kissed his lips ndamshiya, now I drove myself noko I was just going around here. Kanye xandiphuma, u Range Rover wathi imoto yam ifikile ndingayoy'thatha yhu the excitement!!!! But then...I wanted to fetch it engekho utatakhe so I scheduled to fetch it on Monday then ndaqhubeka with the rest of my plans. Eve wafika sendizi ordele ibreakfast...

Eve: "Hey, sorry I'm late..."

Me: "No problem"

I called a waitress then she placed her own order.

Eve: "I feel like there's bad blood between us...As I recall our last telephone conversation"

Ndamjonga

Eve: "Linda was out of place for telling you those things yes but not all of them were true" Kwafika ukutya kwakhe ndisathule ndijongeyena qha. Kuthwa xa umntu efikelwe kuhlambulula sumphazamisa uzambhudisa.

Eve: "Firstly I want us to clear this: I'm not jealous of you or your life because I know how dangerous it is, I'd never live as peaceful as you if I'd find myself living that kinda life but you are okay with it because you walked into it knowingly. Okay phew...it's just that even when you don't do it intentionally sometimes it looks as if you're throwing it to my face. I'm older than you but nothing seems to be going well for me, I'm not working, my husband took a second wife making me feel like I'm not enough...I don't know Trina, but I'm battling with self-esteem, self-confidence...I have issues and you always seem to be the right person to takeout

my frustration on because everything is working well for you. You and Keri are living the best life and I'm here living in the villages securing the title of being the first wife to a loveless marriage. Lwando has stripped me off my power, my strength, my independence. I'm now dependent on him and that's so frustrating...I'm sorry"

I couldn't judge her, she bared her heart.

I couldn't trample on it now...But at the back of my mind I kept on hearing: THIS IS EVELYN, CAREFUL.THIS IS EVE! Yey!

The worst part, she was crying. That hurt me so bad, it cut deep.

Me: "I'm sorry"

Eve: "I thought me agreeing to him taking a second wife things would get better, but I don't know...I really don't know"

Me: "You look pregnant"

Eve: "Six months...He still hasn't given me money to buy clothes and all"

Me: "Why"?

Eve: "He thought his new wife would be pregnant by now...Apparently she's on a five year contraceptive and now I'm taking the fury"

Me: "What do his parents say"?

Eve: "Which parents? The same parents who suggested he take a second wife"?  
I sighed...

Eve: "I'm not telling you all of this so that you feel sorry for me...I just, I wanted to apologize for my behavior"

Me: "So you're leaving tomorrow to where"?

Eve: "His family home the villages"

Me: "Why are you rushing when you're unhappy there"?

Eve: "I said I'd be back by Monday"

Me: "You keep treasuring these people who treat you like trash... Why Eve? As if you don't have a family anymore"

Eve: "You don't just leave someone you love because of a couple of problems...I still feel like somewhere somehow, he's gonna realise his mistakes and apologize"

Me: "And you think you being a housewife who depends on his handouts is gonna motivate him how"?

Wathula... This is the exact same reason why I thank God ngomyeni wam, he wants the best for me, he motivates me to reach greater heights, he sees and recognizes my potential. He's not shaken yi success yambe cause he knows my success is our success, he will also benefit from it. One way or the other. Hay le into. Tyhini Thixo!

Me: "Eve, if Lwando loved you for real then he wouldn't be intimidated by your independency instead, he'd encourage you to stand on your own two feet"

Eve: "You wouldn't understand"

Me: "I wouldn't understand because my husband encourages me to be independent. He is not threatened by my success nor does he belittle me... Why do you allow yourself such humiliation"?

She sighed...

That moment I realized that she really wasn't ready to stand on her own two feet, unyanisile xesithi she's lost all confidence in herself. Andimazi enjena mna...

Me: "I uhm, I have another meeting in the next two hours, if you want we can go shopping for die kleintjie and Booboo"

Eve: "That won't be necessary but thank you"

Me: "You just said you haven't bought anything"

Eve: "I'm not here for your handouts Trina"

Me: "I know that, but I wanna help you as I think had positions been exchanged you would help me too"

Eve: "Of course...But still, keep your money. We'll be fine"

Me: "Ookay ke"

Iphelile kum ke imeeting yekofu, I paid for breakfast yethu ndambizela icab then I went to my second meeting. I wanted to do a surprise birthday party for Nqabayomzi and his twin brother eKapa but I had found a company in Joburg that had another branch in CT so I was meeting with its owner to lay out my ideas and specifications of the party. As I drove out of that place, as expected, hubby called...

Me: "Tata ka Uve"?

Nqaba: "U busy"?

Me: "I'm driving buddy"

Nqaba: "Ubheka ngaphi"?

Me: "I'm going to the boutique...Senizohamba"?

Nqaba: "Bamnkile...Ndisendlini mna"

Me: "Oh, I thought uyahamba nawe"

Nqaba: "Baske balila kakhulu ooUve I decided to stay behind no Sihle"

Me: "Oh...So you want me to come straight home"?

Nqaba: "Ewe baby"

Me: "Mmh"

Nqaba: "Ndcela wongeze isausage iphelile"

Me: "Nizay'dinga namhlanje? I don't have money apha kum"

Nqaba: "I'll do a transfer...USihle ingathi ebebawela umojo"

Me: "Mnike imoto kaloku tatakhe ayothenga inyama..."

Wathula haikaloku I cannot drop my plans for him ndiphinde ndiyofola es'larheni bethe dekre endlini! Never. Ibekanti bendisayekela ntoni ukuya kwi boutique? Doesn't make no sense.

Nqaba: "Uyezamos"?

Me: "Ewe tatakhe, and sendikufuphi"

Nqaba: "Sharp"

He hung up.

Kutheni enditefela na mvanje uNqaba?

Obviously I know I'm not pregnant so yintoni ngoku ndane sana elidala? I drove in as Sihle was driving out, hooted and went to park my car. Ndangena endlini isezimbizeni le chap, shirtless.

Me: "Mmh, molweni"

Nqaba: "Mammie"

Yhu, I got swept off my feet and swung around what have I done? A kiss found my laughing lips, and more kissing flooded in.

Me: "Okay you can stop now"

Nqaba: "And'funi..."

"Yhu kamdala umamakho wafunqulwa"

uUbabalo!

He put me down laughing at his son, I went to check what he was cooking: pap and chakalaka.

Me: "So siya braa'er vandag, ithini occasion"?

Nqaba: "Akho occasion tu, we just wanna enjoy this nice life"

Me: "Nice life yobuxoki...Wow"

He squinted his eyes at me

Nqaba: "Uyathanda uba negative kanene"

Me: "Blah blah blah...Uba where are my kids"?

Uba: "I'm here"

Me: "I can see you, baphi abanye"?

Uba: "uAunty Fats eroomini yakhe"

Me: "Mmh"

As I took my bag to go...

Nqaba: "You have a visitor"

Me: "Iphi"?

Nqaba: "Lounge"

Me: "Kay"

I took my bag ndaya elounge...

There sat a woman who looked like my mother, would have said it's her had I not seen her going six feet under.

Me: "Molo ma"

She lifted her eyes and kinda froze...Immediately, her eyes filled with tears.

Her: "Yho yho yho! You're an exact replica of your mother"

Me: "...And you are"?

Her: "I'm her twin sister..."

Wait what???

My mother was a twin?

Seriously? And she never told me why?

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## **551**

I sat down, I still didn't believe her. My mother would have told me that she had a twin and, where was she all those years? All those years when I needed her or anyone else for that matter, especially from my mother's side of the family? Where was she? Why come now? Now that I don't need anyone but my little family, now that I've managed to outgrow the pain of losing a parent, now that I've accepted that I'm an orphan, now that I'm well established, she pops up? Hell no!

Me: I uhm... I'm not really sure what to say to you ma'am,

Her: I understand, it's a lot to take in...

But even then, I couldn't chase her away.

I saw my mother in her, I saw myself in her and besides that, Nqaba would be upset if I chased her away. He made her wait for me because he believed he was doing the right thing, and him being so much of a family man, he would be mad



nyhani.

Me: Do you mind if I uhm, prepare a room for you? Then we can maybe talk about this tomorrow morning when the kids are gone and when you've uhm, rested?

Her: Oh there's no need mntanam, I've booked myself into a hotel already, I'll just call a cab and le-

Me: Please ma, sleep here tonight. My husband will be upset with me if I let you sleep at a hotel when we have more than enough rooms in here.

Her: I don't want to impose sisi... I just rocked up on you guys, I know nawe you're still in shock, now you want me to also sleep here? No mntanam,

Me: Please ma.

She smiled, wiping a tear.

A part of me rolled my inner eyes at that act, yet another part was touched.

Her: Okay ke, but what about my luggage at the hotel?

Me: I'm sure my husband can organize it to be fetched, don't worry about it.

Her: Enkosi ke MamZangwa.

I got up and went to make her coffee with rusks, then I went to prepare a room for her. When I was done, I took her to it so she could freshen up while I prepared dinner. My husband walked into the kitchen...

Nqaba: Everything okay?

Me: Yeah uhm... I prepared a room for her, told her we could talk in the morning.

Nqaba: Oh-kay, that's nice of you. The room I mean.

Me: Can you arrange for her luggage to be fetched from the hotel? Please?

He nods, I returned my attention to my pots before I felt his hands around my waist and his lips on my cheek.

Nqaba: I love you.

Me: I love you, Z'khali.

Nqaba: I'm here for you, remember that.

I smiled to myself, but I knew he's been there for me. Qha u Nqaba whenever I

don't vocalize my emotions, he feels the need to probe at me.

Nqaba: I'm going for a quick drive, I'll pass by the hotel and fetch her luggage.

Me: Go and ask for her details kaloku k'qala baby.

Nqaba: Sharp.

He kissed my cheek again and walked away. I knew he'd get her details without even ask her but I didn't want to expose him to her as yet, he had to go and ask. Like any normal person would. He came back, all dressed up, I knew there was no quick drive apha, he was onto something but I wasn't going to ask him anything. I still had to wrap my head around the visitor, and the possibility of having a mother figure in my life besides my mother in law and Keri of course because she became more than a big sister when Mrs. Smith died, she became the deputy parent to all of us.

I was almost done with the pots when Lwandiso called, he had a new number after his phone was hacked by whosoever hacked it. I had to sit down because I wanted to tell him about the new addition to the family, even though I didn't know the deets as of yet.

"Hello?"

Lwandiso: You sound upset, what's up?

Me: I'm sure that's not why you called, what's up?

He laughed, he was nervous about something.

Me: What have you done Lwandiso?

Lwandiso: What do you mean what have I done?

Me: You sound nervous.

Lwandiso: I need a favor.

Me: Mh.

Lwandiso: Can you please, please, give me your doctor's number.

Me: Which doctor? Why?

Lwandiso: Chetty or something.

Me: I'll forward it to you, now why do you need it?

Lwandiso: Libo says she's is in pains, but it's not her due date yet.

Me: What happened to your family doctor?

Lwandiso: Andithi we chose to grow up and make women pregnant? Sir Titus cut us off the medical scheme.

Me: Suxoka!

I bawled, laughing at him.

Lwandiso: Suhleka ndine stress torho Sibongile, he said that he's cutting both of us off, then wafaka u Kamva now apparently kulindwe u Libo abeleke kuzofakwa umntana in my place.

Me: Reasonable enough though, I mean, nibadala anyway. And both of you can afford your own medical bills, come on now.

Lwandiso: Well I can't afford medical bills right now, andithi nam ndingulo use under some medical attention as it is.

Me: You need to come back ngoku, Libo needs you.

Lwandiso: I know... I'm just waiting for the final checks with the doctor who's been attending to me then I'll be back. That's why I want to book Libo to your doctor, I don't want her to suffer because I'm not around.

Me: Okay, let me book for her. I'll forward her the details when I'm done.

Lwandiso: Thank you mntase.

Me: You're welcome,

We hung up.

My news wasn't as important as Libhongo, so I booked an appointment for her, sent her the details and she responded back with a "Thank you" text. After that I served dinner, my husband wasn't back obviously, so we had dinner with our guest and then we went to our separate rooms. Uba and Uve acting up a bit, but Fatima took care of them while I went to bath the triplets and prepared them for bedtime. Once I was also in bed I called Nqaba...

"Baby?"

"Uyabuya?"

"Ewe, but I'll be a bit late."

"Kay, goodnight then,"

"Ukufumene u Titus?"

"Yes"

"Alright then, see you in a few hours"

"Don't get hurt, please"

He chuckled,

"I won't, love you"

"Love you too,"

I turned off the light in my room and breathed. I didn't know how I'd attend to the woman in the guest room the next day, I didn't want to think about her, but every time I closed my eyes, I saw her face, I saw my mom. It was exciting and daunting at the same time. Yes, I was excited that my kids were about to have another grandmother but... Ay!

I didn't hear Nqaba coming back, but when I woke up in the morning he had one of the triplets on his chest with a changed nappy next to them. I must have slept right through the night then, I took a quick shower, went to prepare porridge for the school kids, and made lunches while Fatima bathed them.

Uba: Tatam buyile?

Me: Good morning to you too,

He smiled,

Uba: Goo'morning mama. Tatam buyile?

Me: Ewe, usalele.

Uba: Sosiwa ubani kengoku e'kolweni?

Me: Nine contract nje.

Uba: Safuni usiwa utata kengoku.

Me: Ambomxelela ke.

He left his bag on the counter and went to my bedroom, Uve didn't even come to the kitchen. He was glued to the TV screen, Tellie-Tubbies were playing and they seemed to be his fave. I packed their lunches, fed him porridge and just as I was about to call their driver, their dad walked down with Uba on his shoulders. He was sleepy and tired yes, but he was being a father to his kids.

Nqaba: Masambeni Uvelile.

Uve: Sasiwa uwe Tatam?

Nqaba: Yes sir.

They came to kiss me, walked out and daddy drove them to school. My mother's twin came out of her room looking fresh and beautiful, smelling good as well. I served her breakfast, joined her as she asked if she could eat outside, by the poolside.

Me: How did you sleep?

Her: Like a baby, I think I was tired from the long flight, and it didn't help that you have such a comfortable and warm home.

I smiled,

Me: So, how did you find me?

Her: You're a businesswoman, married to a well-known businessman. Finding you was not that difficult.

Me: I see...

Her: I recently found a letter that your late mother sent me many years ago, she was working for the Smiths back then. So I capitalized on that surname, then I got hold of your Smith brother, Luke and he asked for my number so he gave it to your husband who then called me and brought me out here.

Me: My husband brought you here?

Her: Yes, please don't be upset with him, I'm sure he didn't want to tell you anything because he also wasn't sure about me.

I nod...

Nqaba knew about her and he didn't tell me? Seriously? For how long did he know?

Her: You've done so well for yourself Sibongile, I'm sure Ndumi would be so proud of you.

Me: Thank you...

She sipped on her coffee,

Me: Where were you all those years? She practically had no family at her burial except for the Smith's but where were you?

Her: I was overseas, I didn't know about her death until about five years ago. My uhm, kids found out about you on social media and the Smiths.

Me: Your kids?

Her: Yes, I have a family there.

Me: I see, so you moved overseas and you what, forgot about your twin?

She put her cup down,

Her: She was always the conservative one.

I didn't answer that, that wasn't what I asked her.

Her: She never wanted that kind of life, the traveling, and stuff, she was content with the little she had. And then she had you, she couldn't just up and leave, like the rest of us.

Me: I see, so what's your name?

Her: Nonzukiso, but you can call me Stella, that's what I'm called by close friends.

Nondumiso, Nonzukiso... Sounded legit.

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## 552

Me: I hear what you're saying, but I still don't understand why you never came back even after hearing that she passed away. You knew I was left alone here, but you decided, you made a choice to still not come check up on your sister's daughter. Why?

She sighed, but did she think I was going to jump up and down and not ask these questions?

Stella: I guess I was too caught up in my own world I forgot about anyone and everyone else.

Me: I like your honesty, so why now? What happened to your world that made you come looking for me?

Stella: Your mother has been bothering me in my dreams...

I stopped eating and I looked at her.

Stella: I know she must have gotten a well deserved funeral from the Smiths but, her spirit is not resting.

Me: What?

Stella: She wants to be taken to her ancestors land, where both our parents were buried, that's why I had to come back. That's why I came looking for you.

Me: Wait wait wait, you mean you came back because you want to dig up my mother's remains and move her to another place, and then re-do an entire funeral?

Stella: Yes.

Me: You must be joking.

She didn't smile, she didn't wince. Oh she wasn't joking at all, not by a long shot.

Me: I don't believe this.

Stella: You mother wasn't a Smith Sibongile, she needs to be buried amongst her people.

Me: But where were her people when she needed them, when they had to bury her, where were they?

Stella: I'm here now and I'm going to do things right, with your help of course.

Me: My help? With all due respect sisi, I'm not gonna be part of that, I buried my mother a very long time ago, I'm not gonna go back to that graveyard and dig up her rotten remains just because you've decided to be her family again.

Stella: It's not like you have a choice, or a say in this, I'm the one dreaming of her, I'm the one who's having sleepless night, not you. I'm not asking you for money or any sort of donations, I just need you to show me where her grave is, and then be present at the ceremony thats all. I'll do the rest, I came prepared mntanam, don't stress.

I got up and walked away from her... How could she? How the hell could she?  
After all those years?

I found my phone in the lounge, I grabbed it and called my husband,

"Baby?"

"You better come back and take this woman away from me before I kill her with my bare hands,"

"Oh-Kay, what happened?"

"Are you coming back?"

"I just dropped the kids off, yes I'm on my way back,"

"Great,"

I hung up.

She walked in and sat down on the couch across where I stood.

Her: I understand this must be difficult for you mntanam, but it has to be done.

Me: I won't be part of it.

Her: Sibongile....

Me: You should have come when she was sick, you should have come when she needed you, you should have come when I needed you, when she passed away and I had no one to take care of me. You should have come then. It's not like the Smiths had a choice, I was already their burden so they took me in anyway. You should have come then, she wrote you letters you say, but you ignored them and now that she supposedly appears in your dreams you wanna act like you cared? Seriously?

Her: I cared, I ju-

Me: Save that! Save that for someone who actually cares, because right now? I don't.

She didn't respond.

Me: Do you know what upsets me the most? You, you said you didn't know about her death until five years ago. But what did you do about it when you found out? Five years ago?

She didn't respond.

Me: You did nothing, you knew your sister had a child before your kids found me on social media. You knew about me, but you didn't care... And now because you want to, you want me to be involved in your little scam? Yho hay mark me absent ma'am.

Stella: I'm sorry.

Me: No you're not, but I am. I'm sorry for opening up my home to you.

I left her there and went to my room, I slammed the door and threw my weight onto my bed, crying. I actually don't know when Nqabayomzi arrived but I felt his strong arms around my body as he hugged me until the tears subsided. I sat up and looked at the window in silence....

Nqaba: What happened?



I didn't answer him, I didn't want to answer him. The thought of reliving the pain of my mother's passing, to think I blocked those feelings all my life and then this woman rocks up and thinks she's gonna revoke them? Uphambene!

Nqaba: Uhm, your aunt asked me to take her to the hotel.

Me: Call her cab.

Nqaba: I'll take her to the hotel,

Me: I said, call her a cab.

Nqaba: You know I'm not gonna do that, ngu makazi wakho lona and I'm gonna treat her like the family she is.

Me: Yey! Andina makazi mna!

He didn't respond, he got up, took his phone and walked out of the room not forgetting to close the door behind him. I curled up in bed and cried some more, when I was content, I got up, went to wash my face and got dressed for a business runaround. I grabbed my keys on the counter and called for Fats, told her I'm out ajonge abantwana and then I was gone. I had a Tshisanyama to plan, boutiques to run a hotel to work on. I didn't have time to mope around and bury myself in unnecessary depression...

Nqabayomzi called...

"Gwala?"

"Uyaphi, I just saw your car?"

"I'm going to the ShisaNyama, then I'll head over to the boutique when I'm done there,"

"What was so urgent, akhobantu basebenzayo mos?"

"I needed to get busy, and get out of that house before I ran crazy,"

"Okay, I'm right behind you,"

"I don't need company,"

"You said for better for worse,"

"Akhonto ibetter, akhonto iworse namhlanje, so chill your tits out bhuti,"

"Ok'salayo ndiyeza,"

I sighed and hung up.

He was going to come anyway, I shouldn't have told him ndiyaphi. Even though he was going to track me down anyway, I should have just let him do the work

instead of giving him the easy way out. I stood on that open plan and envisioned the finished product, it looked beautiful, lavish, classy... in my head of course. I heard his car in the driveway, and he was talking to someone but I couldn't make out whether it was on the phone or he was actually walking with another person. I walked to the front yard, where he was and saw Yarees walking beside him. I smiled, he laughed.

We hugged.

Last time I saw him we murdered people in Cape Town.

Me: Dude, I'm so happy to see you.

Yarees: You sure do look happy, and I know I have nothing to do with that.

Me: I could say I'm in a better place than the last time we spoke.

Yarees: That's good to hear,

Me: What are you doing here?

Yarees: Abantu got promoted kaloku when someone decided to come back from the dead, so I have summits to attend this side, the whole weekend.

We both laughed, someone from the dead just shook his head and walked away from us. We continued with our conversation as we walked to my car, I opened it, Nqaba got inside, the passenger seat and closed the door. I looked at Yarees quizzically...

Yarees: He's giving me his car, for the next couple of days.

Me: Kengoku kutheni engatsho?

Yarees: He's mind seems to be elsewhere yazi.

Me: Mh, awuyoyiki?

Yarees: Nah, I'll handle it and it's perks just fine.

Me: And you know how to, I don't doubt you one bit. Thank you once again, for everything.

Yarees: You're welcome, any day.

We hugged again, I got in my car and drove out.

Nqaba: She's sorry that she upset you.

Me: No she's not.

He bit his tongue, I drove in silence, I didn't want to fight with him but I needed to know how long he knew about her.

"She said you brought her here,"

Nqaba: Not really,

Me: Oh?

Nqaba: She contacted Luke, he gave her my number and gave me hers. I didn't use it until she called me and asked about you, after doing a couple of searches I allowed her to come see you.

Me: Allowed?

Nqaba: Ewe baby, I wasn't going to take chancers kaloku, I had to find out if she was legit or not.

Me: Baby uthe lamama you brought her here, wena uthi you allowed her to come here. Those are two different stories.

Nqaba: Well, she's married to one of the richest men in the States, why would I bring her here when she could actually afford to hire an entire private jet just for herself?

I didn't answer him, but I couldn't think past the "brought" one of them was lying. But it didn't matter, she was here now and she seemed to be a rich ass bully!

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## **553**

We drove in silence for a while, I looked at him, he had his eyes closed. I felt sorry for him, uvuswe engafuni ngabantwana bakhe but I didn't really feel sorry yazi. That was parenthood, waking up early and sleeping very late in the night, not his sleeping very late. His was different, he didn't sleep late, he slept in the morning.

He waited for me at the boutique, I spent at least two hours there then I went back to him in the car. Started off the ignition and stole a look at him, he looked tired.

Me: Grab a bite?

Nqaba: Asinotya endlini? I didn't eat my dinner.

Me: Mmh.

I drove back home, he was up by now. Inoba ulele la two hours ebendilinde phandle ngayo wonela.

Nqaba: About the ceremony, did she at least tell you what needs to be done?

Me: Who?

Nqaba: Your mother's twin.

Me: No.

Nqaba: Did you ask?

Me: Baby?

Nqaba: Mh?

Me: I am not interested in digging up my mother's rotten remains. Not today, not tomorrow.

Nqaba: Well she seemed kinda determined to go ahead with it, whether you're interested or not.

Me: I'll have her arrested then.

He turned to look at me.

Me: She wasn't there when mom needed her, now she rocks up ngexesha lakhe lothanda and expects me to say "yes ma'am" kulempambano aza nayo? Miss me on that rubbish, count me absent.

He didn't respond.

I knew he wanted to say something but because I seemed a bit upset, he chose to not push the conversation and I was glad. I didn't have the energy. My phone rang as I drove into my parking endlini,

Me: Libo?

Libo: Mrs Gwala, I know u right wethu, I can't get hold of Soso again.

Me: Oh...

Libo: When you get to talk to him, please tell him I said thank you. Ndihambe kakuhle kwa Gqirha.

Me: Oh okay, besendilibele nalonto. Kuthwa utheni? The pains I mean...

Libo: It's high blood, I need to stress less, eat healthy foods, drink lots of water, exercise or take a walk, and blah blah blah

I laughed at that, I had a picture of her in my head, rolling her eyes with each blah.

Me: I'll pass on the message when he calls babe, ube right. And make time to rest.

Libo: Will do, thank you very much.

Me: Alright, bye.

Libo: bye.

We hung up, my husband was looking at me. I shrugged

Nqaba: Who was that?

Me: Oh, u Libo?

Nqaba: Has she given birth already?

Me: Nah, she had pains and her boyfriend called earlier on to ask for Dr Chetty's number, but I ended up booking for her so she called to say thank you.

Nqaba: Mmh.

Me: And asked me to pass on the message since she can't get hold of Soso.

He nodded as we followed each other inside the house, I could hear the triplets having a cute conversation in the lounge and my heart smiled. It had not been easy leaving them for an entire day but I had to work, I had projects that I was entrusted with. And even though Fats wasn't as healthy as before, she still managed to do her best. I was actually worried about her health, but she always pulled a brave one on me whenever I brought it up.

Me: Titus?

Lwandiso: Mrs Gwala, thank you.

Me: You got her message?

Lwandiso: Yes, she left a voice message.

Me: Alright ke, ubuya nini?

Lwandiso: Before the end of next week I hear.

Me: So that means u right, totally?

Lwandiso: Yes, and noko ndityebile this time around, awuzondithuka ngokubhitya.

I laughed, Nqaba eyed me.

Me: And sana!

Lwandiso: Baphi oo Uba?

Me: Base skolweni, kukho oo Iya.

Lwandiso: Those ones don't even know me.

Me: Which is why you have to come back, and because I wanna plan a little baby shower for your girl.

Lwandiso: Are you serious?

Me: Yes, she's a hard worker bro it's the least I can do, and I'll have to release her for her maternity leave soon so ingaske nawe ubengathi uyakhaw'leza kulento ndingayaziyo uyenzayo.

Lwandiso: I love you Sibongile! Yho I love you shem, and you don't even have to respond to this because I know you love me back, you've shown me countless times that you do.

Me: Asizolila mos thina?

He laughed, I joined in.

Lwandiso: No, we're not. But I really dig you.

Me: I know, cheers.

Lwandiso: Cheers.

We hung up.

I smiled, looking at my screen. The baby shower news were not discussed with anyone and I expected Nqaba to be quizzical about them but he just turned on the TV and took two of his sons bangqengqa kuye as he watched sport. I went to change, and then prepared dinner for the family because very soon the duo would be back kwenziwe ii homework kubeyi chaos nje. My phone rang again, I went to take it from the lounge, answered it as I made my way back to the kitchen.

Me: Hello?

Stella: Sibongile, please don't hang up.

Me: Oh God...

Stella: I have spoken to Luke and Marcus Smith, they are willing to show me your mother's grave if you are okay with it.

Me: Did you tell them that I am not okay with it?

Stella: No.

Me: Then tell them.

Stella: Sibongile, do you really not understand what's happening here? I didn't just decide to come to South Africa, your mother's spirit has forced me to. Please sisi, work me here.

Me: Can't you ask my mother's spirit to work with you? I mean, you two seem to have a tight relationship.

Then I hung up and called Marcus... He answered immediately.

Marc: Kleintjie? Hoe gaan dit?

Me: You are not going to show Stella my Mother's grave.

Marc: Uhm...

Me: Marcus Smith?

Marc: Trinalique Smith.

Me: You are not going to show that woman my mom's grave, are we clear?

Marc: But, doesn't she want to do some ceremony or something? She said something about your mom's spirit not resting and stuff.

Me: If the spirit is so powerful to take her from the States and bring her here, surely it can still direct her to the grave. Do not get involved!

He went silent for a second.

Marc: Isn't she your mom's twin?

Me: Where was she all those years when she was really needed?

Marc: Kleintjie I know you're hurting, but please man, please allow her to do this.

Me: How much did she pay you?

Marc: What? Okay fine, I won't show her. I'll wait for your approval.

Me: Thank you. Yho!

I hung up.

The spirit must lead her to the grave, if not, then she might as well just go back to her family. I didn't need her.

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## **554**

A week later, Titus was back and we started planning the baby shower. I met with Libo's cousin, well Soso took me to her home and I met her cousin and aunt who

introduced me to two of their childhood friends then we worked together. Libo wasn't a "friend" person so I had to add some of her colleagues from Joburg and the ones she was working with, in Port Elizabeth to the list. Once the date was set, and invitations sent, I called Faith...

Yes, she was alive and back at her household as nothing happened. No one seemed to be fussing about the fake death, so I didn't even bother myself ngayo too, it was none of my business.

Faith: Trina, hey baby, how are you?

I rolled my eyes at that fake excitement and breathed slowly,

Me: Faith, I'm great. Unjani wena?

Faith: Good good, long time hey?

I chuckled, I wanted to say "last time I heard of you you were dead" but I couldn't say that. I was also married to a dead man, right?

Me: Listen, I've planned a surprise baby shower for Lwandiso's girlfriend and I was hoping you would come.

Faith: Oh really, what can I bring or contribute with?

Me: You can bring a gift, and contribute nge catering if you can, we will have around 17 guests so you can make it twenty.

Faith: I will most certainly do that, can I also bring Kamva? She lives with us now.

Me: Baby showers aren't children friendly, but, you can bring her. I'm sure she will be happy.

Faith: Alright then, where's the venue?

Me: Your son's house in Port Elizabeth.

Faith: Your old house?

Me: Yes.

Faith: Oh okay, please text me the date so that I can forward it to his father to book the jet and maybe he might also want to chip in something.

Me: I've mailed you your invitation already.

Faith: Mmh, alright then, thank you, baby.

Me: You're welcome.

We hung up, I called Landile.

Laa: Mrs. Gwala.

Me: Titus, how are you?



Laa: I'm tired, fatigued, and and and...

I laughed at him, he sounded tired nyhani.

Me: Well I need you and your girlfriend to come to Libo's surprise baby shower, I've emailed your invitation already.

Laa: Argh, le baby shower kuthwe booze is on me lena.

Me: Andingeni ndawo etywaleni mna, all I know is that your brother will be happy if you make it so please diarize your life properly.

Laa: Yes ma'am, what else can I do besides the booze and gift of course?

Me: Okwangoku I'm not sure, but I'll create a Whatsapp group with you and the guys in KZN for efficient communication.

Laa: Sounds great, thanks ke neh?

Me: Sharp.

The last person would have to be Yarees, they had grown closer after Nqaba left them in charge of his businesses. I called him and his phone went straight to voicemail but right after that, I got a call from Titus, Lwandiso...

Me: Soso Wabantu?

Lwandiso: Andidikwe.

Me: Yintoni ngoku?

Lwandiso: Faith is upset that you're organizing my baby's baby shower instead of her.

Me: Heh haibo!

Lwandiso: I don't get it, maybe it's women stuff. Please talk to her, find out what she wants or what she would have done differently.

I didn't answer him,

Lwandiso: I know you planned this because she's your employee and because you love me, and I do believe if she had close friends maybe they would have done the same. Faith is not Libo's friend, they don't even know each other for that matter but I have no energy to argue mntase, please just do this one favor for me.

Me: I'll call her.

Lwandiso: If you're upset, rather sleep on it and call her ngomso. Seku late anyway.

Me: I'm not upset but I'm shocked, kodwa ke it's okay wethu. I'll call her just now.  
Lwandiso: Enkosi. Love you.

I hung up.

Ibiyi baby shower ebendiyikhathalele ngantoni lena when I never even had one for all my kids? Nxa! I called her, she took her time answering but she eventually answered,

"Trina?"

Me: Faith, I just spoke to Lwandiso.

Faith: I didn't mean it in a bad way baby, but as his mother, it doesn't sit well with me to be just informed sekugqityiwe ngezinto ezenzeka ebomini bakhe.

Me: Kaloku ngokokwam ukwazi such things are planned zi friends and close family members to the girl, which I have involved her cousins ke kwi planning. I didn't know that no mama ka baby daddy had to be part of the plans as well.

Faith: Lwandiso is my son, and I've seen how excited he has been about this baby even though he hadn't introduced the girl to us.

Me: I'm sure he has his reasons for that, uyamazi nawe u Soso unjani.

Faith: But you know her?

Me: Yes, she's my employee,

Faith: Ooh, I didn't know that.

Me: It's okay, when do you think you will have time to come up to Joburg so we can sit down and go over everything?

She didn't respond...

Me: We cannot change the date because I'm capitalizing on her last day at work, four of her friends will also be available on that date. But I'm sure we can uhm, go through everything else and you can add or subtract whatever you see unfit.

Faith: Okay, thank you. I will come on Sunday.

Me: Great, see you Sunday.

Faith: Okay, bye.

Me: Bye.

Kanti eneneni I had never heard of the baby daddy's family being involved in planning a baby shower for a girlfriend they didn't even know existed, but, we were about to do that because we were a peculiar family. And with Faith

involved, it wasn't going to be the small and intimate celebration I had planned, she loved lavish and extravagant. Those two words fit the Titus surname so well. I went to my room, hubby was working in there, I was working in his study.

Me: Baby?

Nqaba: One sec...

I closed the door and waited for him to type wagqiba and then he looked at me. Smiling.

I walked up to him and sat on the edge of the bed, my back towards the window,

Me: Nd'cela undiphe imali.

Nqaba: Uzayithini imali so late?

Me: I wanna go shopping ngomso for Libhongo's gifts.

Nqaba: Ooh that, ithini budget yakho? Uyamazi u Titus ngoo Gucci nee Jordan's.

Me: I wanted to return the favor with those Jordan's he bought for Junior, and maybe add a little something noba yi nappy bag but I'm not really sure yet.

Nqaba: Yi boy umntana?

Me: He's been praying for a boy, even though he'd be okay noba yintoni. Last time I checked they didn't know the gender.

Nqaba: Ingathi bebeye kwa Gqirha namhlanje, call Libo and ask her.

Me: Okay I'll do that.

Normally he would have said "take my card" but after we came back from Congo he had developed a sharp eye on what our expenditures were and I didn't blame him. We weren't poor, but we weren't exactly where we used to be financially... Yes, I still had my own money, which he never really asked why I didn't use it because he felt that my own money was for girls trips and toiletries and his was to take care of me and the kids. He did the transfer, I smiled at the notification and kissed his cheek as I left him.

Nqaba: When is Lauren and her team coming back from KZN?

Me: I will check on them after the baby shower, I won't be able to be hands-on kubo xabelapha with this baby shower thing hanging.

Nqaba: Okay.... Uyopheka?

Me: I was gonna order pizza yazi.

Nqaba: Ukuba ikhona eye mutton baby I'm game.

I rolled my eyes at him, that was him practically telling me that he wanted to eat inyama yegusha and not ipizza.

Nqaba: Please call Uba for me.

Me: Sure.

I walked out and called Uba for him, they obviously followed each other no Uve. I checked on the triplets on my way to the kitchen, cooked his mutton stew with pap and roasted veggies then I made apple and butternut puree for the triplets. I learned that ku Aunt Chimeze...

And it saved us quite a lot, we only bought yogurts then made our own purity from home and the kids loved it. Fatima had caught on with it as well because what she was very good at making was inembe, she taught me how to make it then in exchange I taught her how to make the puree.

"Mamam ina phone yathetha u Owe,"

So Ubabalo really expected me to stop what I was doing and go to him, at the top of the staircase just for a phone? Seriously?

Uba: Mamammmmm?

Me: Ubabalo Gwala!

Uba: Ina kalokuu.

Me: Ndizele wena mna?

Uba: Tshini hayike Owe, Mamam kafunuzothetha nawe.

I heard his father laughing from inside the room, the door wasn't closed. I expected Uba to say that, he had no patience whatsoever, got that from me.

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## 555

Ntando called me on my phone, I figured it was Owe so I answered,

Me: Owentando?

It was him, he just laughed and I joined him

Owe: Unjani mama?

Me: I'm good baby, unjani wena?

Owe: I'm okay, I miss you.

Me: I miss you too, I might be in PE next week. I can arrange to take you out for lunch.

Owe: Seriously? No Sino?

Me: I'd have to call umamakhe.

Owe: No need, if you come this side nge weekend then she'll be here.

Me: Is she always there on weekends?

Owe: Yep, dad told my driver to always fetch her Friday after school then we drop her off Sunday evening.

Me: That's a good gesture, uyabhadla utatakho xa ethanda.

He laughed.

Owe: You're actually on loudspeaker ke mama.

Me: I don't care, hi Ntando.

Ntando: You first diss me and then greet me? Wow!

Me: Please buy your son a phone so we can have private conversations without having unnecessary monitoring spirits.

Owe: Monitoring what?

And then he burst into laughter, his father joined him. I just listened to the two of them, smiling like a retard. Owentando had kind of changed Ntando, he was becoming more human than when he first arrived.

Ntando: He has a phone qha akabambeki xandimnikile so he'll get it after matric, okwangoku he doesn't really need it. ikhona ne land-line apha endlini when he wants to call his mother and I'm not around, and no, I don't monitor those. At all.

Me: Kodwa uyabhadla nyhani mfethu.

Owe: Hahaha! Yho ha.a mama

We all laughed,

Me: Okay ke, I'll come nge weekend and then take you and Sino out for lunch then ndibuye late.

Owe: Okay that will do, now, how do we schedule for December holidays?

Me: That... Will have to wait kancinci. I'll be in East London for a week or two ngo December, maybe we could meet there, but I will be busy right through the festive season and both your dads are normally not around that time so I won't lie and say yizani. Nizoshiyeka nabani when I'm not around?

Owe: sis Fats yena uyaphi?

Me: Uzogoduka abuye ngo January xakuvulwa eskolweni.

Owe: Okay, it's fine. Ngo December we will see you guys in East London, but ngo June next year mama we are coming.

Me: Andicelwa ngoku.

Owe: Mama I have Uncle Mo's number, just so you know.

Haibo!

His father and I both laughed out loud.

Me: Okay Owentando Ntabeni. Ndikuvile.

Owe: It's Owentando Ntabeni-Gwala mama kaloku.

Me: Ey, ndiyayilibala mna lento ye surname ezininzi. Noted ke big boy.

Owe: Alright bye bye ke,

Me: I love you,

He mumbled between intsini u I love you too wam. His father took the phone.

Ntando: He really misses you guys, oko ethetha ngani this week.

Me: We miss him too, but with five kids guys kunzima to just call abanye abantwana to add. Fats is not so young anymore and you know your brother.

Ntando: I understand, and I'm sure he does too qha ke kuba ngu Owe.

Me: Yeah hey... Unjani u Sino?

Ntando: She's okay,

Me: You don't sound convincing.

Ntando: She's not coping Lu, but ubangcono xa elapha. Ndidlula ngaye xandisisa u Owe kumama eMonti naye ahambe, bendimthathile nango June wazohlala nathi, ugoduke etyebile noko.

Me: I'll call her just now.

Ntando: Please man, I know she's your niece but bra she needs you. I don't think she'll ever adapt into the new life. Well, her new life of having two dads, and then finding out that the two dads actually aren't hers, then get introduced to another dad whom she had known just as her dad's friend. It's a lot to take in, on top of that, I don't understand your sister... Or her idea of parenting, but what I gathered lately shame is that uyazama. Phofu ndiva kwi conversations zika Owe no Sino.

Me: Yho bra, makazame u Anelisa mfondini. Nawe uyazama mos, sonke in actual fact siyazama.

Ntando: Maybe if you can, you know, talk to her...

Me: You think Anelisa would listen to me? Hah! I'd love to see that day.

Ntando: If not for the fact that yall are siblings then at least try it for Sino's sake, you know the child loves you.

I sighed...

Why was I allowing Ntando to guilt-trip me into that? Why?

Me: Alright I will try, cheers.

Ntando: Sharp.

We hung up...

I continued cooking, because Nqabayomzi wasn't going to eat phonecalls then I heard him walking down the stairs, I looked up, he had Uve on his shoulders and Uba in his arms.

Me: Niyamsinda umyeni wam.

Uve: Eshe umamakho Uba.

We laughed at them, Uve wasn't even smiling.

Uba: Sawamba thina.

Me: Niyaphi?

Uba: Sothenga i pizza yethu no tatam.

Me: i pizza?

I looked at Nqaba and he quickly looked away, so uyakwazi ukuyothenga ipizza xa ifunwa ngoo Uba yet when I wanted it he wanted me to cook, i-mutton nokwenza? He kissed my cheek and went for his car keys,

Nqaba: We're going for a drive s'thandwa sam.

Me: Nam ndiyahamba ke.

Uve: Haibo mamakho!

Uba: Hayi mamakho asiwambi nawe!

Me: I wasn't talking to you guys.

Uve: Kodwa 'siwambi nawe mos?

Me: Kanti ndiyahamba ke bonani ba manithini.

Uve: Uphi utatakho kanti mamakho?

Me: Nanku,

Uve: Ha.ana man, owam lona utatakho. Uphi owakho?

Uba: Kanaye kaloku mamakho owakhe utatakho shem.

Uve: Mama, yalila ntana yakho.

Uba: Ewe mama yalila lya wakho.

Me: Sanuxoka Uve oo lya balele, and ukhona u Fatima she will attend to them.

Uve: Mamela mama, yalila omnye u lya ow'one.

Nqaba was in stitches, I was shocked at the stunts and tactics his sons were pulling just so I wouldn't go with them. They seemed too planned out for their age too.

I felt defeated, they really didn't want me to go with them so I didn't force it. I watched them leave, turned off the stoves to allow the food to simmer then I went to play with Iyazi who was really up, he wasn't crying as his brothers suggested, but he was up. Playing by himself. I gathered courage and called Anelisa so that I could speak to Sino,

Lisa: Hello?

Me: Unjani?

Lisa: Ndiphilile unjani wena?

Me: I'm good, ndicela uthetha no Sino?

Lisa: Sibongile?

Me: Yes.

Lisa: Bamba...



Then she called her, she must have been outside or in another room coz she sure took her time to come to the phone. Her mother was moody, but better that than being lectured again about not loving uSino, like the last time.

Sino: Hello?

Me: Hey baby, unjani?

Sino: Oh my God, mama!

I laughed, she really sounded excited.

Sino: Wow! Andisanikhumbuli mama, nizoza nini ngapha? Okay when can I visit you? Utata uphi?

I laughed, she screamed on the other end of the line.

Me: I'm not sure about the whole lot of us being that side, but, I'll be that side next weekend, we could meet up for lunch?

Sino: Really? I'll ask Tata ka Owe to bring me to you then.

Me: I already spoke to him, akanangxaki uzanizisa kum no Owe.

Sino: Yhooooo okay, yho andisavuyi.

Me: Ndivuya nam, how is school?

She didn't respond,

Me: Sinothando?

Sino: Mama?

Me: Uqhuba njani es'kolweni?

Sino: Not so well mama... But I'm improving ngoku.

Me: Bekutheni k'qala?

She cleared her throat, I figured that call was also monitored,

Sino: We'll talk face to face mama.

Me: Okay ke baby, I love you uyevha?

Sino: I love you too, undibulisele koo Uba.

Me: Abekho right now but I'll do that.

Sino: Okay ke mama, thank you for the call.

Me: Okay sisi, bye bye.

Sino: Bye.

The phone exchanged hands, I didn't want to hang up kanti u mamakhe wanted to say something so I held on.

Lisa: Are you still there?

Me: Yeah, what's up?

She sighed... Yep, she wanted to say something. She was just like Evelyn, you wouldn't know whether to expect a tantrum or a curse, but you just had to be expectant of something.

Lisa: I hate doing this, but can you please bail me out.

Me: Okay, what do you need?

Lisa: Asinakutya and I don't wanna call Ranger, he already pays for her fees. In fact yonke into edibene nesikolo he has it sorted out, I'm supposed to manage the rest.

Me: Okay...

Lisa: I know that's not why you called, but please.

Me: It's okay wethu, but andinamali right now, can you guys manage until ndize kwelocala next weekend?

Lisa: Yeah we can, akukho empty-empty, but okukukhoyo bekungazofika imonth-end kusekhona.

Me: Alright then, see you next weekend.

Lisa: Enkosi.

Me: Sure.

We hung up,

Why didn't she call her dad and asked him to bail her out? Or her Aunt Faith? I mean, they both had enough to spare, I didn't. You know what, it didn't matter. I already promised I would so...

I basically had nothing else to do other than waiting for Nqaba and his sons to return from their pizza drive. I took his laptop and went through some of his latest paperwork, it wasn't my job to do that, nor was it my place but I didn't really care. After that Karoo saga, I couldn't afford any more surprises. I saw that Yarees and

Soso were permanently employed, with benefits, everything tallied up in all the Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Durban accounts.

But there was something up with the Johannesburg one, he had someone or a business that he had been paying a couple of thousands of rands since six months before his disappearance. I tried tracing the account, but it was untraceable, knowing Nqaba, he could have encrypted some passwords in it and obviously notifications that would alert him if anyone tried to touch the file. Just like when I first met him. So instead of giving up, I tried copying everything from that file's account into my flash but... Yeah.

I eventually gave up, but my spirit was very uneasy.

## 556

Friday night,

The twins were with Aunt Keri, I was busy preparing dinner for Nqaba and his brothers. He had called me earlier to tell me that his brothers were in town, by brothers I thought that would be the KZN twins, not a whole lot of brothers. But I prepared enough food to feed a soccer team and when about six cars drove in, I patted myself on the back! It would have just been a disaster to cook according to my assumption.

"Baby?"

I turned towards the door, he was smiling from ear to ear as he walked in. We hugged, and then I took a step back,

Me: You look good, iyapheka le nanny ka Owe.

And then the rest of them walked in laughing, my husband followed after Vincent and he was in stitches, Ntando, who had pretended to be Nqaba was standing right next to me disappointed. Nqaba came to kiss my lips and hit his brother on the shoulder, still laughing.

Ntando: You could have at least pretended, you know?

Me: I'd have fallen for the trick.

Ntando: How did you know?

Me: The cologne bro, the cologne.

Ntando: But I used his, come on now.

Me: You overused it, he should have shown you how he does it coz now it's so extra. And, he doesn't smile like a retard,

Ntando: So I'm a retard?

Me: That's not what I said, dude! Welcome home?

He shook his head and walked away.

But why would they continue to do that? I would think they knew that I knew my husband way better, I mean, I could differentiate them beze ngomva first day I met them so what made them think I wouldn't be able to recognize my husband eze ngomphambili? I saw Sihle going to the cellar, and then a car hooted outside, Kuhle went to open. He actually walked out of the house and when he came back, he was with Lwandiso. They were both loud, noisy...

Lwandiso: Mzala,

Me: Ubuyile uSoso Wabantu!

Lwandiso: Baphi abantu baka Soso?

Me: Bangamandwendwe kweminye imizi.

We laughed as we hugged, he went to the lounge and in a few seconds engenile, the room roared with laughter.

"Mam'Gwala?"

I turned back, Landile was at the door, as meek as ever. He smiled and walked in, we hugged.

Me: You look so grown up, dude! And you're fit!

He laughed,

Laa: Well, kuyakhulwa in a space of four months, look at you.

Me: Ukhatywe ke ngu baby!

Laa: Haha! He doesn't intimidate me anymore, he knows that too.

Me: Mmh, I'm not sure how you wouldn't be intimidated by a man from the dead, but I hear you.

We both laughed then he left me and went to join the rest of the men. Well, his brothers. I guessed it was a brotherhood reunion or get together of some sort

because even Yarees was there, the only person short was Bullet. Understandably. I plated up for all of them, served them, and then went to eat in the study. I had work to do, I had Faith to prepare for...

"Can I come in?"

I looked up, Nqaba. He walked in, closed the door, and sat down across me...

Me: What's up?

Nqaba: I should be asking you that,

Me: Me? Why?

Nqaba: Kutheni uzotyela apha? Wedwa?

Me: Niyangxola, and besides, I have to get my ducks in a row for Faith. She's coming here Sunday for us to go over the Baby shower plan ka Libo.

Nqaba: Ooh okay, other than that akhonto?

Me: Not that I know off.

He didn't seem convinced, which made me wonder if he knew that I touched his stuff. But I wasn't going to lead him, if he wanted to ask that then he could just ask that. But he didn't, he got up from his chair and came around the desk, I laughed, he looked sneaky.

Me: Uyaphi kengoku?

Nqaba: So I'm not allowed to kiss my wife now?

Me: You kissed me when you walked in haibo.

Nqaba: I'm not sure why we have to count how many times we kissed, but I pretty much don't really care. Come here, phuza igintsa lakho!

He grabbed the armrest and swirled me around, planting kisses all over my face, causing me to giggle, and then when I had loosened up a bit, he kissed me full on the lips, suckling my bottom lip, and then we just breathed the same air. My hands flew over his head as he lifted me up, placing me onto the desk and standing between my legs. I pulled my head back and looked at him, wiping the corner of his mouth with my thumb...

Nqaba: Have I told you how beautiful you are?

Me: Lately, nah, you haven't.

Nqaba: You're beautiful Mam'Zangwa, and I know one day you're going to give birth to a beautiful baby girl. Just like you.

Me: u One day uxele ilanga kekodwa Zikhali, uyazi nje lonto.

He laughed, kissing the tip of my nose.

Nqaba: I actually came here to tell you that your father-in-law is in town.

Me: Is that why your brothers belapha bonke?

Nqaba: Yes, he wants to see us ngomso.

Me: You know I have an appointment with the kids in PE mos ngomso?

Nqaba: Yes, that's why you have a helper engu sis Fats kaloku baby.

I sulked,

Nqaba: So, will your meeting be over by dinnertime? Nana will kind of expect you to welcome her into your home the same way she welcomed you into hers.

Me: Wait, Nana is here too?

Nqaba: She's landing,

Me: Oh wow... I must prepare them a room. Bangaphi?

Nqaba: Just ask Fatima to prepare all the spare rooms, and have all extra blankets in an accessible place andikho sure ithini into yaba after le meeting nala chap.

Me: Okay...

Nqaba: Akhonto ishotayo?

Me: Private chef maybe?

He laughed, well kokwabo kukho i-private chef and I wouldn't know how to cook their food overnight.

Nqaba: Don't worry about that, they know we don't have a private chef here.

Me: Where's your dad sleeping tonight?

Nqaba: He's with Titus Senior noontanga babo, but I'm sure he'll only come here ngomso.

I nod...

He gave me his bank card, I knew what to do. Grocery shopping, to entertain our guests.

Me: Enkosi,  
Nqaba: Soso would like to speak to you ke when you're done.  
Me: You can send him here,  
Nqaba: Okay, love you.  
Me: Love you too.

He kissed me one last time and walked out, Lwandiso followed just fifteen minutes after he left. He also closed the door and sat where Nqaba had previously sat.

Me: And then?  
Lwandiso: We bought her a car, Landile and I.  
Me: Who, Libo?  
Lwandiso: Yes. Do you think she'll take it?  
Me: Well, she doesn't like handouts, but I'm sure she'll appreciate it. Dude, I hope awuzifakanga matyaleni ke.  
Lwandiso: Not with the banks, I have a walking bank pha ekhaya.  
Me: Haha! Your dad, oh usengxakini latata nguwe.

We both laughed, and then his mother rang me up. I looked at him, showing him the screen and he suggested I put her on speaker...

Me: Faith?  
Faith: Hey, how are you?  
Me: I'm okay, yourself?  
Faith: I'm well... Listen, my husband is already in Jo'burg and he won't be back until next week Friday. Can we reschedule until then?  
I looked at Soso, he shook his head vigorously.

Me: Uhm, asizokwazi Faith kaloku. That will give us one week to get things together which is not enough especially since we're all not based in PE.  
Faith: Which comes to my next point, why didn't you guys just hire a planner to do all the work?  
Me: We don't have money.  
Faith: Isn't Lwandiso the one paying for this?  
Me: No, I am.  
Faith: Oh, that's weird.

Me: What is?

Faith: You, paying for someone else's baby shower, I mean, as the father what has been his input ke at least? What has been his contribution besides being tasked to buy the gift?

Me: I thought I mentioned this before, I decided to do a baby shower for this lady, and I teamed up with her cousin and aunt. They don't have much, but they chipped in the little they had which I really appreciate bu-

Faith: Chipped in? Trina, you do understand that this is a Titus baby, right? We don't need people to chip in anything, we have enough. We can manage my dear.

Me: This is actually not a Titus baby, her mother is not married to your son.

Faith: That doesn't change the fact that my son is the father.

Me: I know, but then, have you asked Soso if he's paid the damages yet?

She didn't respond, I looked at Soso and he shook his head.

Faith: No,

Me: Maybe you should, and then when you're done you can ask your husband what rights does he think you, as a family, have on the child.

Faith: That won't be necessary, I get the point.

Me: You don't get the point Faith, please don't say you do and then go behind my back to call Lwandiso about this telling him izinto endingazaziyo. You and I both know you don't get the point, go to your husband and ask him this. If kwayena ngumXhosa enough then he will tell you the truth,

Faith: Okay.

Me: Great, good night.

Faith: Night.

I looked at Soso,

Me: You haven't paid the damages yet?

Lwandiso: I have, dad and your husband was my representatives but she doesn't know that.

Me: My husb- you know what, never mind.

Lwandiso: He also didn't tell you?

Me: It doesn't really concern me, he would have, if you'd have asked him to.

Lwandiso: Well I also didn't see the need, and anyway I was still gaining Libo's trust so my head was all over the place.



I nod,

Lwandiso: So what do we do ngo Faith?

Me: If she doesn't come through ngomso then we proceed with the plans that we already made.

Lwandiso: I'm okay with what I've seen, Libo doesn't really fuss about the things mom fusses about.

Me: Exactly my point to your mom.

Lwandiso: But I'm sure she didn't get it because the baby in question is a Titus.

Watsho ephakama, as we laughed at that statement. He threw his hands in the air with a loud sigh, I just watched him walk out of my study.

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## 557

When I was done preparing myself for Faith, I grabbed the car keys and drove out, I had to prepare for Nana and her husband. I was nervous ke kona because in as much as I knew utata wasn't fussy, I knew very well that there was a reason they had a private chef kwakhe.

About ten kilometers from the shopping mall, yacima imoto in the middle of the road, apparently I was out of fuel. I didn't even know why I didn't check it before leaving home because I had passed about three garages where I could have filled up. I had to put the hazards on because the cars behind me were hooting and some drivers even swearing at me... understandably so. I called my husband, ndingamazi noba ke uzofunqula igarage eze nayo kum or what, but I called him.

Nqaba: Baby?

Me: Tatakhe... ndcela ubeyi life saver yomkakho chap.

Nqaba: Haha, utheni wadinga ilife saver? Uphi?

Me: I just left home, now ndiphelelwe yi fuel endleleni.

Nqaba: What do you mean endleleni? Uphi?

Me: I'm literally 10 km away from the shopping center and imoto yam iphakathi endleleni.

Nqaba: Ku safe?

Me: Kind of, but dude, this is so embarrassing.

He laughed,

Nqaba: Okay ndiyeza.

Me: Enkosi.

We hung up.

I lay my head on the headrest and breathed.

After a few minutes of waiting, someone knocked on my window, I looked at him, a stranger but he looked like he wanted to help so I lowered my window.

Zamani: Hi sisi, is everything okay?

Me: Uhm, hi, everything is fine, thank you.

Zamani: Are you sure? I mean, your car is in the middle of the freeway.

Me: Oh that, I ran out of fuel but don't worry about it, help is on the way.

Zamani: Which fuel do you use? I might be able to help.

Me: Unleaded.

Zamani: Okay.

He walked away, I looked at him through the rearview, he went to his trunk and emerged with two 10L and a funnel. I opened my door and went to him, he just poured the fuel into my car without even making small talk and when he was done he returned his empty containers to his car and came back to me.

Zamani: That should take you to the nearest petrol station.

Me: Enkosi, how much do I owe you?

Zamani: Coffee?

Me: Haha, coffee?

Zamani: I can see the ring on your finger, don't worry about it. It's just innocent coffee.

Just as I was about to respond to that, I saw my husband's car stopping behind his car.

Me: And here comes my husband.

Zamani: Mh,

We stood in silence, Nqaba walked up to us with this cold look on his face. He kissed my cheek, and greeted the stranger I was standing with.

Nqaba: Looks like you're sorted?

Me: Yep, this gentleman came to the rescue.

Nqaba looked at him and shook his hand asking how much we owed him, Zamani said the same thing, that we owed him coffee and that was it. Nqaba looked at me, I didn't even know what to say.

Nqaba: Mh, so you want us to buy you coffee or you want my wife to take you out for a cup of coffee Mr?

Zamani: Zamani Ngqulana.

Nqaba: Mr Ngqulana.

Zamani: Whichever works for you guys.

Nqaba looked at me, I shrugged.

Zamani removed his business card and gave it to me, I took it trying my best to not look at my husband, with another handshake from Nqaba, Zamani walked back to his car and drove off with a little hoot.

Nqaba: Oh-kay.

Me: Weird.

Nqaba: Did he just ask you out on a date, right in front of me?

Me: We could have bought the coffee simnike kwangoku ebeme apha sohlukane naye.

Nqaba: Eshe, awusatsho kamnandi kodwa ubuthule ngoku ebelapha phambi kwakho.

I laughed and walked over to my seat, he came to my window.

Nqaba: I don't like him.

Me: He's too cool for you?

Nqaba: He's too confident.

Me: Well, you don't have to like him but you might have to compensate him, he helped your wife.

Nqaba: So I'm supposed to buy him coffee?

Me: That's what he wants.

He chuckled, I just smiled at him.

He looked cute, in his jealousy.

Me: I have to go, bye bye, thank you for coming through.

Nqaba: Mmmkay, I love you.

He kissed me before I could respond, then he walked away, I laughed at him as I started my car and went ahead with my day, as planned. After the shopping, I went to grab coffee for myself, while waiting, I heard his voice from behind me.

Zamani: I guess you're buying?

I turned and looked at him, he had this warmth around him.

Me: Of course, what are you drinking?

Zamani: Hot chocolate please.

Me: Hot chocolate? Not coffee?

Zamani: Hot chocolate, Mrs?

Me: Mrs Gwala, but you can call me Luthando.

Zamani: Won't your husband kill me if I call you by name?

I laughed, that was a very good question.

I knew he probably didn't even mean it literally but he would definitely kill him, literally, if he were to see him, or us that very moment.

Me: He might, unless you have some superpowers of some sort.

He laughed,

Zamani: Let me rather stick to Mrs Gwala, I can't afford to die just yet.

I chuckled and placed his order for him, paid for it and when mine came, I thanked him again and left. I had to be home in time for my father in-law. I was surprised Nqaba didn't constantly check up on me, when I got home I started with the preps and halfway through, I saw the entourage.

Like, my father in-law came through with his entire entourage, to be honest, that very moment ndizive sendisithi uFaith should have just married Nqobimpi David Gwala. They had quite a lot of similarities especially in their expensive taste. He had this fine linen on, and had a, smelt very expensive and he had this comforting gangsta charisma.

Nqobimpi: Makoti, yey, umhle mntanam. Uyabona, uNqaba akaziqhathanga apha kuwe.

I blushed and welcomed him in after the hug, Nana followed with a bottle of wine, we also hugged and then she followed her husband. I served everyone welcome drinks and snacks then ndabashiya and went to prepare the main course.

Ntando: Kuthwa unendoda wena.

I turned and saw his stupid smile,

Me: Le ifana nawe or ikhona enye?

Ntando: Mfondini kuthwa unendoda entsha, ifuna ikofu.

Okay I laughed, I should have known.

Ntando: Suhleka Luthando, yeyaphi ke?

Me: Andiyazi mfethu, indincedile qha and I think that's all that matters.

Ntando: Sencede wahamba yedwa u Nqaba shame, bendizoyiqhuqha inkwethu mna londoda yakho.

Me: Une drama kaloku wena, u baby uyakwazi ukuziphatha.

He looked at me for a while and turned back into the lounge, Lwandiso walked out talking on his phone, after a few seconds he hung up and raided my fridge.

Me: Sewumanzi, already?

Soso: Bumnandi mntase utywala, ingakumbi xa ungabubi.

Me: Nimoshakele, nonke ke futhi.

Soso: Asiyogqithi landodakho ibuye ikhefuzela ba wena unendoda entsha enxiba ii suit ezi brown.

I laughed, he was smiling, for Soso to even smile at that, he must have laughed at Nqaba when he told them.

Me: Ukhathazekile na lobhuti yilendoda?

Soso: Uyinyama, andimhleka, yho ndambona ba uyacaphuka.

Me: Akamuncu.

Soso: Nguwe umenza muncu Ta Beast!

I didn't respond to him, someone buzzed the gate, he took the remote, and then two more cars drove in. We were hosting, and I didn't have extra hands.

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### **558**

My house was fully packed, the environment was the best, everyone was having fun and laughing, it had to be the best. Yarees and Lwandiso were tasked to start a fire for a braai, Sihle and Kuhle had to go and fetch more people from the bus station. In as much as I didn't understand the fuss about the whole (and sudden) family day thing, I enjoyed abantu abaninzi in our space.

Somewhere, somehow, Faith decided to steal me aside, because well, she was Faith. I walked her to my study...

Faith: So uhm, I think kuba sendilapha wethu singakhabe siqhaw'lisha malunga nalamcimbi.

Me: The baby shower?

Faith: Yes.

Me: Okay, where do we start?

Faith: Okay so, why don't we book out a hotel? Or restaurant at least? I mean, this is both their first child, right? So I think we shouldn't hold back kakhulu.

Me: uLibo akayithandi into enabantu abaninzi, ungumntu othuleyo and akana friends zininzi kwayena so into yo book'isha an entire restaurant or hotel won't really work hence ndiye ndacinga usebenzisa indlu ka Lwandiso because yindawo azoba comfortable kuyo.

Faith: So how do we do the deco and stuff phaya?

Me: Akahlali khona mos, Soso will fetch her kokwabo when we need her.

Wakhe wathula...

Faith: Okay ke, I'll pay for the food and deco.

Me: Okay.

I noted that down,

Faith: Umntana kuthwa yintoni?

Me: Andiyazi, ubaby said I should ask Lwandiso but last time I checked nabo bebengeka yazi.

Faith: So sizokwenza ideco enjani if we don't know the baby's gender?

Me: e Unisex kaloku faith nje.

Faith: Hay sana you seem to have this all figured out.

Me: Because I do and Faith sana ingaske kwanguku ukuba uyandibona ba ndikuthobela umgangatho ngalento ndiyenzayo ungayingeni. You are permitted to organize your own lavish babyshower, one that will meet your standards undimeme ke kuyo ukuba uyafuna.

She looked at me shocked.

Me: Otherwise, I wouldn't be surprised wethu noba ungandi exclude'a.

Faith: Haibo, uyalwa sisi ngoku.

Me: Because you undermine every little thing that we have come up with.

Faith: I do not undermine anything, but as I have said before, I don't understand why we were not involved kwi planning as ifamily ka Lwandiso ngomntwana wethu.

Me: I am not sure how many times I will have to say this or how simple I have to explain it, but, umntana ka Libo ayingowenu as nimbanga nina because u Libo akatshatanga no Lwandiso. Secondly, as far as I know, ii babyshowers ziplan'wa zii friends and family zentombi not kulondoda then ibengabo who include indoda apho nalapho.

Faith: Uqale nini kewena ukuba yi traditionalist?

Me: Really Faith?

Faith: Send'tsho, there are so many things that need us to attend to them traditional way but this one is not one of them.

Me: If you knew u Libo you would understand why we are approaching yonke lento kanjena. She is a very intimate person.

Faith: Yazi Sibongile ngewukhe uhambe uyokhangela lamakazi wakho nibuyise umphefumlo kamamakho azophumla ngoxolo ayeke ukuhle esenyuka apha, instead of ukuzifaka uthi gabhu kwizinto zika Lwandiso ndikhona ndingu nina. If I

didn't know better ngendisithi uyamfuna qha and ke kwabe kanti kudala wamfana, qha ndixakiwe ba niyazalana.

Me: You know what, voetsek!

Faith: Uyandithuka.

Me: Khaw'phume futhi, hamba, phuma.

I opened the door and waited for her to walk out, then I followed her. We bumped onto Lwandiso as we made way to the lounge, he eyed both of us and walked up to me, I diverted my way and walked to the kitchen only to bump onto Nqaba who seemed to have been watching us from the study down the passage.

Nqaba: U right?

Me: Ewe.

I took his glass of water and drank in silence, he came to stand behind me, hugging me in silence and Lwandiso walked in.

Soso: What happened up there?

I ignored him,

Soso: Mamakhe?

Me: Mh?

Soso: Nenzene ntoni no mama ka Landile?

Me: Ask your mother.

Soso: Ndibuza kuwe.

Me: Nd'cela undiyeke torho mntase, please.

He walked back to the lounge, I had a lump in my throat but because we were hosting I couldn't just take my car and go for a drive. I had to sit it out. Hubby on the side, was busy kissing my neck, cheeks and just being lovey-dovey in silence.

Me: Have you checked on the kids?

Nqaba: Ba right.

Me: So you have checked on them?

Nqaba: No, if bebengekho right besizokwaziswa.

I sighed.



Nqaba: What happened?

Me: She said instead of involving myself kwizinto zika Soso mandihambe ndiyokhangela la mama and ufuna siyogumba ii remains zika mamam so that umamam azophumla ngoxolo ayeke ukukwehla esenyuka.

Nqaba: Did she say that?

Me: Ewe nje nditsho, and that if she didn't know better ngesithi uLwandiso ndimfunela kum ngendlela endiqhuba ngayo.

Wathula...

Me: Ndimthukile ke, I told her to voetsek and if your father wasn't here, bendizomtsala ngala wig a-voetseke nyhani kwalapha kwam because uyandiqhela!

Nqaba: It's okay, calm down.

Me: I'm calm.

Nqaba: Are you sure? Or you need a glass of wine and a drive?

Me: I'm sure tatakhe, hamba futhi and join your brothers. Kuzothwa yintoni wathi nca kum oko.

Nqaba: Ndaziplitela ndedwa sisi, umntu ongazange andincedise has no business asking me kutheni ndithe nca kuwe oko.

I laughed at that, he kissed my lips and walked away.

I finished that glass of water and followed him outside, people were having fun, Soso was having a heated argument with his mother and Landile was approaching them. I just went straight to Nana, my stylish mother-in-law.

Me: Still okay?

Nana: Yes baby, you look flushed, are you okay?

Me: I'm fine, just had an unpleasant conversation with Faith, but I'm okay.

Nana: She seems like trouble that one.

I laughed, it felt like we were gossiping.

Me: So, are yall sleeping over?

Nana: I wish, Faith asked us to sleep over at her place.

Me: Oh.

Nana: And I couldn't decline, because hubby seems to have some serious business to discuss with her husband.

Me: Good luck, one thing I know for sure is that you will be pampered just fine, they have a private chef, a driver and everything you're used to.

Nana: I can actually do without a private chef, you know? I can actually cook my own food, just that when you marry into the Gwala family you get used to these perks.

Me: Then enjoy the perks Nana.

She smiled, with a sigh. Or is it the other way round?

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## 559

I just couldn't wait for everyone to leave, I guess what Faith said about my mother stung a bit. I had blocked everything about Stella after she left my house but for some reason, I kept replaying her words in my head:

"It's not like you have a choice or a say in this, I'm the one dreaming of her, I'm the one who's having sleepless nights, not you. I'm not asking you for money or any sort of donations, I just need you to show me where her grave is, and then be present at the ceremony that's all. I'll do the rest, I came prepared mntanam, don't stress."

Just as I remembered that I remembered what Nqaba said:

"Well, she seemed kinda determined to go ahead with it, whether you're interested or not."

Now because of that, I wanted to check up on her and see if she had actually gone ahead with the deed or not. Yes, I was still going to have her arrested if she went ahead with her plans after I told her not to, or better yet, I would have her deported back to her husband.

We cleaned up, the guys were not leaving, only Mr. Gwala Senior, his wife, Titus Senior, and his wife left. A whole lot of everybody stayed behind and I just left them pha phandle right after the elders left, I had babies that needed their mother.

Uba: mamam?

Me: Ubabalo Gwala.

Uba: Uwambile utamkhulu?

Me: Ewe ndoda.

Uba: Wasishiya thina kengoku?

Me: Ebezonisaphi mhlawumbi?

Uba: Kumakhulu.

Ay, I didn't even have the energy for that conversation. I just bathed them, got them ready to eat their dinner, and once they were done I attended to the triplets. Once that was in the bag, I went to freshen up, all this time I was avoiding being in the same space as Lwandiso. I just didn't want to talk about his mother, I just didn't want to. Nqaba knocked in our bathroom, opened, walked in, and sat on the toilet seat.

Nqaba: You okay?

Me: Tired.

Nqaba: Do you want me to join you?

Me: What do you want to do?

He smiled,

Me: No, I'm okay, go back to your people.

Nqaba: You're my person nje.

He was drunk,

Me: I know, but go join your other people.

Nqaba: You're not thinking about what your aunt said, right?

Me: And if I am?

Nqaba: Ignore that ish baby man nawe, wena yonkinto uvele uyifake entliziweni kanti sometimes all you have to do is pretend like you're listening to the person and when they're done talking, walk away and continue with your life.

I laughed at that,

Me: Is that what you do when I argue with you?

Nqaba: Sometimes.

We both laughed,

Me: Advice appreciated, now go.

Nqaba: Why are you chasing me away? Ufunukwenzani apha?

Me: Ndifunuvasa mfondini, haibo.

Nqaba: Kengoku ndikuvalele entweni kodwa ndihleli kude kunawe?

Me: I don't need a security guard ke yazi tatakhe.

Nqaba: Oooh hay uyandigxotha nyhani. It's fine Luthando, ndiyahamba.

He got up and walked out, I laughed because ebekhalala, which I didn't really care about. I took my time, reflecting, and when the water got cold, I drained and cleaned the tub, got into my pjs and went to bed.

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I woke up the following day and the house seemed unusually quiet, and the human being I share a bed with wasn't in bed. I went to the nursery and the triplets were awake, having conversations with themselves, I got them out of bed and went to check on the twins who were not in their rooms.

Me: baphi na abantu balapha?

Ikho: Itatam?

Me: Noba nguyey lowo.

Iyazi: Uba yam?

Okay, I wasn't going to do that with them so early. We went to the lounge, nobody was home so I had to go back to my room for my cellphone. I called Nqaba,

Nqaba: Baby?

Me: Niphi kanti?

Nqaba: Oh, ya'll are up?

Me: Mfondini niyephi, kutheni savuka indlu ithe cwaka kodwa besilele kukho abantu?

Nqaba: We went out for breakfast.

Me: Nasishiyelani kengoku thina?

Nqaba: Benilele.

Me: Mnkq.

I hung up, went back to the kitchen and made breakfast for the three of us, didn't even bother looking for Fats. I fed the kids, and then Faith decided to call me, that very moment. I woke up grumpy, but the minute I saw her name on my screen, I felt even grumpier and so I ignored her. Flat. She called three more times, and I just didn't answer her phone call and then her husband called, I knew there was a 90% that it was Faith but ke I respected her husband enough to answer it.

Me: Hello?

Faith: I tried to call you.

Me: Good morning Faith, I know.

Faith: Oh.

Me: Bye.

I hung up.

She called again, I just blocked both their numbers. I didn't want to talk to them, to her and I didn't care about Libo's babyshower, we were going to do it ngalendlela that we had planned kwakuqala and if it wasn't good enough for her status then she was more than welcome to organize another one.

I didn't even feel like looking pretty, let alone take a bath, when the kids had eaten, I just chucked their bowls into the sink and went to watch TV, still in PJ's. The little ones decided to just make a noise, while I watched TV, which I didn't really mind, because they weren't necessarily bothering me. My phone rang, their dad...

Me: Tata ka Ubabalo.

Nqaba: Uyafunwa ngu Dabawo wakho.

Me: Undifuna kuwe?

Nqaba: Ewe, she just called uthi akakufumani kwi phone yakho.

Me: Uyaziphambanisa u Faith torho, I blocked her, mxelele ba I blocked her from my phone.

Nqaba: Hayike.

Me: Or just block her, kuphele uchuku once.

He laughed, but I was serious.

Nqaba: Uyabuza u Lwandiso akuphathele ntoni?

Me: Mxelele makagoduke.

Nqaba: Haibo baby.

Me: Yintoni?

Nqaba: Can you just answer the question? Please.

Me: Nothing.

Nqaba: Nakum awufuni anything?

Me: I want money baby, and everything nice.

Nqaba: I am everything nice, there's money in the safe, what else?

Me: Where's Fatima ke?

Nqaba: She went home, she needs a break too.

Me: Okay, ndcela nikhawuleze ke nam ndizohamba.

Nqaba: Uyaphi kengoku wena?

Me: Ndiyotyia imali yakho, ndedwa.

Nqaba: Mna imali yam ndiyitya ne family, wena uyitya wedwa?

Me: iFamily ayiphelelanga when you leave your wife and three kids behind, and yes, ndizoyitya ndedwa.

Nqaba: Mnkq! Siyeza.

Me: Okay.

He hung up, I just lay there. I didn't want to go anywhere at all.

After about an hour, they came back, I heard the noise from the lounge, they walked in, greeted and opened the sliding door to the patio.

Sihle: U grand mamakhe?

Me: Yessur!

Sihle: Bekuthwe usiqumbele for leaving you behind.

Me: Ndiqumbele yena, not nina.

Sihle: Oh haike, thina sizodla iyouth yethu, qumbelanani nodwa.

I just laughed at him, hubby walked in with Lwandiso and he lifts my feet and sits right there whilst Soso walked over to the other couch. Nqaba gave me a brown paperbag with cookies, I smiled and touched his head, he blushed. And Uba walked in sisancumelene,

Uba: Heee umamakho.

Me: uthule Ubabalo!

He laughed and went to play with one of the triplets.

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## **560**

Me: Nd'cela undenzele ikofu baby.

Nqaba: Kuhleee???

His brother walked in and just looked at us, I looked at Nqaba, bendicela yena mna.

Nqaba: Nd'cela wenzele lo sisi ikofu.

Kuhle: With milk?

Nqaba: Yes please, three sugars.

Kuhle: Sure.

He walked out to the kitchen, I looked at his brother and he shrugged. I started eating my cookies in silence. I could tell Soso wanted to say something but I didn't want to talk about his mother, not at all.

Soso: So, uthi kwenzeka ntoni kuwe no Faith izolo?

I ignored him, my husband pinched my foot and I ignored him too and just as he was about to pinch me again, Kuhle returned with my coffee.

Soso: Mntase?

Me: Lwandiso.

Soso: What happened?

Me: I told you to talk to your mother.

Soso: I spoke to her, but I want to hear your version of the story.

Me: My side of the story is not important bra, can we actually not talk about this?

Like, I'm tired, I'm having a weird morning and I don't really wanna talk about Faith tu. Please mntase.

Soso: So will we talk about her ngomso?

Me: No.

Soso: Nini ke?

Me: Soso torho.

Soso: Kaloku si busy Luthando, organizing a baby shower, I need to know what's happening ndingotuki ngalamini nisenza idrama mna.

Me: Okay.

After that I ignored him, why would I want to ruin Libo's baby shower nge drama? I didn't want to talk about Faith because I was avoiding getting angry and that was it. He got up, walked out to Sihle and Nqaba just looked at me, I ate my cookies in silence, and that very moment I actually wanted to leave them pha ndihambe ndiyotyia imali yomntu qha.

Nqaba: That was uncalled for.

Me: Okay.

Nqaba: Luthando Gwala?

Me: Luthando Gwala.

Nqaba: That was uncalled for, this whole thing is affecting uTitus more than your two egos. If you know you don't want to work with Faith, tell him. Just don't shut him out.

Me: Okay.

Nqaba: You're irritating me kengoku.

Me: Okay.

He stopped talking and just looked at me.

I ignored him, yazi oo Nqaba would blackmail a person to just let go umntu engayazi the pain of being told umphefumlo kamamakho uhla esenyuka, not even being told, but having that thrown at your face? Yhu!

I got up and walked away from him,

Nqaba: Uyaphi?

Me: My room.

Nqaba: Awubaweli uqala ku Titus?

Me: Andizothetha no Lwandiso baby, iyandicaphukisa into ethethwe ngu mamakhe and andifuni uthetha into ezomkhubekisa so ndiyakucela nawe don't force me to talk to him right now.

Nqaba: Okay.

I walked away, got to my room, and lay on my back, on my unmade bed.

My phone rang, Nana...



Me: Nana?

Nana: Hey sweetie, how are you doing?

Me: I'm okay, how are you? How was your night at the palace?

She laughed, I just smiled.

Nana: I would know a palace when I see one, but, I'm okay boo.

Me: Hahaha! Okay, noted.

Nana: What are you doing? I wanna go shopping for a bit.

Me: I'm actually lying in bed, with my legs up the wall.

Nana: We're going shopping then.

Me: Great, should I pick you up?

Nana: We have a driver, my dear, you know your father-in-law wouldn't allow me to not have a driver.

Me: Nice life problems, okay, let me drag my body to the bathroom then.

Nana: See you in an hour.

We hung up, I dragged myself to the bathroom, came out and made the bed, went to my closet and searched for anything that wouldn't look too shabby, or wouldn't feel too heavy on me because seriously, I was feeling drained but I liked Nana I couldn't say no to her. Nqaba walked in ndisaxakwe yinto yonxiba, he stood there and just watched me in silence so I decided to ask for his opinion.

Me: Jeans or dress?

Nqaba: Jeans.

Me: Heels or sneakers?

Nqaba: How long will you be gone?

Me: I'm going shopping with Nana so I don't really know.

Nqaba: Sneakers.

Me: And here I was thinking heels, okay.

Nqaba: Your feet will get swollen and then what?

Me: Haibo, ukhona to massage them.

Nqaba: I'm getting drunk sisi, I won't have time for that.

I stopped and looked at him, did he really say he won't have time for me?

As if reading my mind, he laughed.

Me: Don't tempt me.

Nqaba: nxiba iJean and sneakers man uzoba grand baby.

Me: Thanks.

I grabbed a pair of jeans and sneakers, a loose-fitting padded shoulders vest that I could tuck in on the side and started getting ready, I was given an hour. He watched me until I was done, I went to stand in front of him and kissed him on the lips.

Me: Watch over your kids, nguwe othe u Sisi makagoduke.

Nqaba: Okay sisi.

Me: Love you.

Nqaba: Yinto yaphi leyo?

Me: I love you, geez.

Nqaba: I love you.

He kissed me again, I grabbed my bag and walked out before he could suggest I talk to Lwandiso about Faith, again. As I walked into the lounge, to kiss my babies, Lwandiso walked in and smiled.

Soso: Aw'sanuki kamnandi.

Me: Enkosi mntase, funeka umntu azame ukuziqoqosha xa ehamba no Nana mntakabawo.

Soso: Oh, you're actually going with them?

Me: Huh?

Soso: u mamaka Landile said she's going shopping with your mother-in-law.

Me: Uyaxoka.

Nqaba walked down laughing, I took out my phone and called Nana, haibo, I wasn't going to go shopping with Faith mna.

Nana: Hey sweetie, we're fifteen minutes away.

Me: Okay, are you with Faith?

Nana: Erh... yes.

Me: Yhu, hayike.

Nana: I'm sure we will have fun, cheers for now, see you in a bit.

She hung up, I looked at Nqaba, Lwandiso just walked out, laughing. To him, the whole thing was sarcastic because I didn't want to talk about the whole Faith thing yet I was going shopping with her. Sarcastic.

Me: This has got to be the worst day of my life.

Nqaba: I still love you.

Me: Baby, seriously?

Nqaba: I'm sure you'll know what to do, Nana also knows what she's doing.

Me: Gosh!

He side-hugged me and left me standing there, defeated.

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## 561

I sat down, not knowing whether to cry or undress. A minute later, Landile walked in and sat across me, I looked at him, blankly so because I really didn't know what to do. I was having a bad day, and they were in my house, having the time of their lives.

Landile: I don't know what really transpired yesterday, but please don't allow her to get between you and Soso.

I sighed,

Landile: You know he loves you and he wants you to be part of his baby's life.

Me: I will be part of his baby's life, I just don't want to discuss his mother right now. I am angry, I am upset and I want to pull her teeth out.

Landile: Well, you're going shopping with her, can't be that bad.

Me: Ambushed would be the right word, had Nana told me that Faith was coming along I wouldn't have agreed to join them.

Landile: You already agreed, what now? Are you going to cancel because of Faith?

Me: Maybe...

Landile: Then you will agree with me when I say she's got power over you, a stronghold to be exact.

I wasn't going to agree to that, haibo Faith would never have such a strong will-power over me! I snapped,

Me: No, I will go to that shopping spree and have fun futhi, ngubani u Faith? Ngumntu waphi? Ndimazelaphi mna?

He laughed as he stood up, offering me a hand and we hugged. I needed that, and because it came from him not Lwandiso, meant a lot. I fixed myself up right after he walked back out, and prepared my heart. If Faith was going to give me trouble, then trouble she was going to get back. A few minutes after that, I saw their car coming through so I smiled and walked out, Nqaba walked me to the car with his hand on my waist and I wanted to laugh because that was really unnecessary. The driver opened my door, I kissed his cheek and walked in, sitting right next to Faith because Nana was in the front passenger seat. I greeted, while Nqaba was talking to and laughing with the driver.

We left, in silence.

Well until Nana started the conversation asking about oo Uba and how they felt when they realized their grandad had left them, Faith was focused on her phone the whole time, ndaqhabalaka kemnake ndancokola.

We got to the shopping center and all three of us walked alongside each other but Faith seemed like she was in a world of her own, until we got to a lingerie shop yey, ndabona i-excitement all over her face as she went from aisle to aisle. I was obviously uncomfortable, viewing lingerie with my aunt and mother-in-law but I just enjoyed watching them getting excited and hyper over it. They bought a couple of pieces and then we left, there's no shop that we didn't get into and when they were satisfied, we went to eat. I was the last one to order, so I ordered wine as well, I needed wine mntakabawo!

Me: So, how was your night at the Titus Mansion, Nana?

Nana: Very pleasant my dear, Faith is such a lovely host.

Faith: I try, I know it's not what you're accustomed to but I try.

Nana: What do you mean? You did a great job, even my husband said that this morning.

She loosened up a bit right through that conversation, and right through the brunch, around 2pm we were headed home and I was actually happy that I decided to join them. Even though I didn't buy much, I just bought sneakers and jackets for my children really, I didn't want anything. And I knew I'd be questioned

about that because I said I wanted money and everything nice but I didn't buy anything nice for myself. They dropped me off at home, Nana got out of the car to hug me,

Faith: oo Landile baselapha?

Me: Looks like it.

Faith: Ndcela undibizele yena.

Me: Okay.

I walked away without hugging her, walked to the backyard and only Lwandiso was there so I walked inside and found Landile playing with the triplets.

Me: Uyabizwa ngu Faith.

Landile: Sure.

He got up and left, I walked around the house looking for my husband and he was nowhere to be found. I found Uba in the garden playing with a shovel and a bucket.

Me: Uphi utata ka Uba kanene?

Uba: heee, mamakho ubuyile?

Me: Ewe bhuti, where's your dad?

Uba: Uwambile lowo!

Me: Wait, lowo? Ngubani lowo?

Uba: Tatakho.

Me: Haibo Uba, you can't call your dad "lowo" ayontanga yakho u Nqaba.

Uba: You can't call my dad Nqaba nawe, ayontanga yakho utatam.

That was my cue, I left him right there and went to look for his twin, found him playing with Sihle.

Me: Uphi umyenam?

Uve: Uwambile no Uncle Kay, nabanye.

I looked at Sihle, he swallowed hard before even attempting to look at me. I knew something was wrong.

Sihle: He left with the guys, I'm sure they should be on their way back kodwa.

Me: bayephi?

Sihle: They didn't say.

Me: Nyhani?

He nodded, I could see right through his lie. He was lying to me, I quickly turned and walked away so I could call Nqaba. I found my phone endlini, sat on the armrest and called him. He didn't answer immediately, but he eventually answered.

Nqaba: Baby?

Me: Uphi?

Nqaba: I uhm.... Ufuna ntoni sthandwa sam?

Me: Nqabayomzi Gwala uphi?

Nqaba: Ndise Tinarha baby, ufuna ntoni ke?

Me: e Tinarha? What are you doing there?

Nqaba: I had a little something to sort out, but I am on my way back home ngoku.

I kept quiet, why was I feeling uneasy? And then my mind went straight to Zamani!

Me: Nqaba, please tell me the truth, uphi and what are you doing?

He laughed, and then I knew my gut feeling wasn't lying to me. I hung up and looked for Zamani's card, found it and called him. His phone went straight to voicemail, I called his office and went through.

Zamani: Ngqulana?

Me: Uhm, hi, it's Luthando Gwala.

Zamani: Mrs Gwala, what a nice surprise. Unjani?

Me: I'm good, you don't sound bad yourself.

Zamani: I'm okay, well, I was until your husband decided to pay me a visit.

I felt ice down my spine, why would Nqaba do that? Kutheni ezosijongisa nje lomntu bethuna?

Me: He paid you a visit? Where?

Zamani: He just left my office a few minutes before your call.

Me: What did he want?

Zamani: He wanted to pay me back my fuel, I guess. Does he have a twin?

Me: Yes, was he the re too?

Zamani: Yep, and a whole lot of others.

I sighed, why would Nqaba do that?????!

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## 562

Me: Did they say anything else besides wanting to pay you back your fuel?

Zamani: No, nothing else. Why are you suddenly sounding anxious, is there something I should know?

Me: I don't know, I just... I know him, okay?

Zamani: Well, I don't get intimidated that easily.

Me: Can I call you back?

Zamani: If you're willing to actually go out for coffee with me, then yes.

Me: Go out?

Zamani: It seems to me that your husband was intimidated by me helping you out, so, what if I want to push him a bit further and see what he thinks he can do if I do take you on a coffee date?

Me: I know what he will do, and I don't want you to be at any risk so please drop it.

Zamani: I have your number, I'll send you the location for our coffee date.

Me: Heh bethuna!

I hung up as his laughter echoed through the phone speakers, he didn't know who he was messing with. Well he wasn't really messing with him, but... I called Nqaba again, and someone else answered his phone.

Kuhle: Mam'Gwala?

Me: Ndcela umyenam Kuhle.

Kuhle: Usaphumile, can I take a message?

Me: Uphume uyaphi? In fact niphi Kuhle?

Kuhle: Silapha around sisi, ufuna sikuphathele ntoni?

Me: So anikho se Tinarha?

He coughed, hehehe! I hung up, and called Nqaba's business phone and he answered.

Nqaba: Gwala

Me: Gwala my foot mani wena, uphi?

Nqaba: Haibo, ufuna ntoni kule phone?

Me: Inoba ndizokufumanaphi when you decide to leave your phone with your brother?

He laughed, he was finding this funny.

Me: Nimenzeni u Zamani, Nqaba?

Nqaba: Who's Zamani ke baby?

Me: The man whose office you visited a few minutes ago, the same men who helped me when I was stuck on the freeway without fuel. That's Zamani.

Nqaba: Why are you calling him with his first name again?

Me: Can you answer my question?

Nqaba: I can, but I won't answer it. Ufuna ntoni Luthando?

Haibo I chuckled, he waited and I could sense his irritation but I didn't care much.

Me: Mamela ke, kuyo yonke into oyenzayo with your brothers please do not go around undijongisa mna. That man helped me, yes you were coming to help as well but he helped me ndisengxakini and that's what matters. He did say he didn't want to be repaid back his money so I don't know why you had to go visit his office namhlanje, but do me this very important favour Nqaba and do not go around embarrassing me.

Then I hung up, he called me back but I ignored him until they came back home. I was in bed, I had not even cooked, I was just in my feels as I had been since I woke up. Sihle was doing a very good job in taking care of his brother's children so I allowed him to continue in peace. Nqaba walked into the bedroom just as the Titus landline was calling me, I ignored the phone and just closed my eyes. He opened the covers over my head and looked at me in silence before leaning down, kissing my lips and waiting for a reaction. I just opened my eyes and looked at him in silence.



Nqaba: Uyagula?

Me: Leave me alone.

Nqaba: I will leave you alone, are you sick na?

Me: I'm not sick.

Nqaba: Why are you in bed emini?

Me: Are you still going to leave me alone?

Nqaba: Yep, going to Cape Town in a few minutes.

I sat up and looked straight into his eyes, he was going nowhere.

Me: Uthini?

Nqaba: I'm leaving, in a few minutes.

I got up, walked to my closet and started packing.

He followed me in shock,

Nqaba: And then? Why are you packing?

Me: I'm leaving too.

Nqaba: You're leaving? Where are you going?

Me: I'll find somewhere to go, you can't just give Fatima time off and then leave me with five children without warning me or preparing me.

Nqaba: But Luthando, what's new? This is how our lives have been, this is how my business is.

Me: Business? Great, I'll go attend to my own businesses too. Fair game.

He didn't respond, I packed and then looked for shoes ndanxiba. He did say "few minutes" mos so I was working with that. I found him on the edge of the bed, waiting patiently for me. It was only then that I saw his own bag right next to the big mirror, I tossed my own next to his and waited on him, smiling right in front of him. He pulled me by the waist so I stood a breath away...

Nqaba: Luthando Gwala...

Me: Luthando Gwala...

Nqaba: Since when do we compete ngoku aphenndlini?

Me: Since when are we inconsiderate ngoku aphenndlini?

Nqaba: And we're back-chatting each other too?

I didn't respond, I just played with his head.

Nqaba: baby?

Me: If you're leaving, I'm leaving too. That's all I'm saying.

Nqaba: Okay.

With that he showered me with kisses, that "okay" wasn't an "okay masambe" type of okay, but it felt like "Okay we'll see" and kengoku I was ready to show him. The smothering was disturbed by my ringing phone, I looked over his shoulder and decided I would ignore it. He saw that, and took the phone, looked at the screen and sighed.

Nqaba: She's been bugging me the whole day, kanti khange nithethe when ya'll went shopping?

Me: Uzothetha nabani?

Nqaba: Baby!

Then his phone rang, I gave it to me without even looking at the screen so I answered her, because she would think it was him cutting the call.

Me: Faith?

Faith: Oh hey, I've been trying to call you.

Me: I know, but don't you see that I don't want to talk to you?

Faith: Aw'sena drama mntanam, mamela ke-

Me: Faith nd'cela undiyeke ndisakhangela lamfazi ufuna ukugrumba umzimba kamamam so that umphefumlo wakhe uyeke ukwehle usenyuka aph'esithubeni.

She didn't respond immediately.

Me: Besides pestering my husband the entire day, was there anything else?

Faith: Your dad is sick, he's been hospitalized.

Me: Great, make sure you bury him at his rightful land when he dies. I don't have the energy of digging rotten bones now, I will not have it fifteen years later when he decides to appear in your dreams. Bye!

I hung up and moved away from Nqaba.

Nqaba: Who's dying?

Me: Bonginkosi.

Nqaba: Oh, utheni?

Me: Why would I be interested?

Nqaba: Ndiphoxelwani kanene mna?

Me: What time are we leaving?

Nqaba: Oh, we're leaving too?

I folded my arms and watched him removing his shoes and getting in bed.

Me: You said you're going to Cape Town a minute ago!

Nqaba: I changed my mind a second ago, come lay down with your husband.

I watched him for a second and left him there, I rather opted to make dinner. That was more therapeutic than what he wanted, or rather what he was offering.

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## **563**

I sat in the kitchen, chopping veggies in silence.

I didn't care about Bonginkosi being in hospital, my worry was what Nqaba and his siblings did or said to Zamani when he didn't even bother me but was of great help at a time of need. Lwandiso walked in and sat right across me,

Soso: What did you do to Ta Beast?

Me: Me?

Soso: We were supposed to leave for CT today, Mo just called to inform us he cancelled.

Me: Mh, good for him.

Soso: So you had nothing to do with it?

Me: Not that I know of, but then again, I'm his wife so I do think to some extent I should have everything to do with his daily plans... but I wasn't part of the CT ones so, I don't know.

He nodded, smiling.

Me: What?

Soso: How far are we with the preps?

Me: I will inform you once I get my ducks in a row.

Soso: Any word from your aunt?

Me: Nope.

Soso: How was the shopping spree?

Me: I had fun mntase, nothing special but I had fun.

Soso: mmh... okay, bye!

Then he got up and left me right there, I shook my head and continued with what I was doing then I remembered that I left my phone in the same room with my psychotic husband. I put the knife down and ran upstairs, did I not find Nqaba and his sons playing with my phone? I walked in, took the phone and walked back out without saying a word. I browsed through 'recently visited' apps on my way to the kitchen, when all was checked safe I put my phone in my pocket and continued with what I was doing. Ntando walked in and sat across me, right where Soso sat. I ignored his presence, because I was avoiding coming across as defensive to the Zamani issue.

Ntando: What are we cooking?

Me: Food.

Ntando: What kinda food?

Me: Food that will be eaten by normal people kinda food.

Ntando: Are you perhaps mad at us or him?

Me: All of you.

Ntando: I just wanted to see your new man, I didn't do anything to him.

Me: So who did what?

Ntando: Well, Titus threatened him, your husband uhm, almost slapped him, and then Kay slit his tyres. But that's all, I swear. He's unharmed.

Me: And what were their reasons for doing all of that?

Ntando: They said he should have just allowed you to pay him instead of requesting for a coffee date. Enyinto ke you are our wife Luthando, so we are kind of protective over what belongs to us, you know?

Me: Mmh, nice.

Ntando: Nice?

Me: Yeah, nice.

Ntando: Okay you're really mad now, aren't you?

Me: I am actually going to call him right now and take him on to that coffee date he requested, I want to see what ya'll think ya'll will do. I am actually going to provoke the animals in you all because all of that was really unnecessary. But do you care? No, as long as you protect one of your own, and in this case I didn't need no protecting.

He kept quiet,

Me: When are ya'll going back to your respective homes?

Ntando: Home is respectively wherever he is.

I looked at him, he wasn't even joking.

Me: Guess I'll just have to leave ya'll here then.

Ntando: If he follows you, we follow him. Simple.

Me: Rha anindidike!

Ntando: Just let him go to Cape Town, then we'll be out of your hair.

Me: As I told him, if he's going, then I'm also going.

Ntando: You're not even his twin, why would you want to go anywhere with him?

Me: I'll answer that after you've taken a wife.

Ntando: Aw'sekho bitter, yhu!

He got up and walked away and I just laughed at him.

I continued cooking in peace, I didn't really want them to leave, my children were happy with the many options of having all the uncles under one roof and Nqaba was happy too. Zamani sent the location for our "coffee date" and I felt a bit of excitement, and then guilt engulfed me. Why was I getting excited over coffee with a stranger? Heh! I tucked my phone away and plated up for everybody, then I went to checkup on my love and his loves ndafika belele. I shook him, he didn't open his eyes so I left him, just as I walked out, Zamani called. I quickly closed the door and walked quietly away from it before answering him,

Me: Zamani, hi?

Zamani: Mrs Gwala, I trust you received my text?

Me: Yes, thank you.

Zamani: Will you setup time or should I?

Me: I will, just not today.

Zamani: Understandably so, it's already late.

Me: Yep, I will most definitely hit you up when I have time though.

Zamani: I will await that call, hopefully your man and his clones won't kill you.

Me: They might actually kill you, not me.

He laughed,

Zamani: As I said earlier, they don't scare me.

Me: You're asking another man's wife on a coffee date and you're not scared?

Mh!

Zamani: I'm a man Mrs Gwala, unfortunately other men don't scare me so I'm cool whenever you're game.

Me: Mh, okay. See you when I do.

He chuckled and hung up.

"Who's asking you on a date?"

I smiled, that wasn't Nqaba nor was it Ntando but it was a Gwala! The unintentional command in his voice gave him away, I turned around and saw Sihle, standing by the entrance.

Me: A friend.

Sihle: A friend?

Me: Yep.

Sihle: You don't have friends.

Me: Now I do.

He helped me take the food to the lounge, because nobody was going to eat in the dining room, half of them were drunk. Comfortability was more of an important issue than protocol that very moment. When we were done I asked him to go and wake up his brother, they came back together, with all the kids then I called everyone that was outside. We had a family dinner, Soso and Kuhle washed the dishes and cleaned up the kitchen before half of us started playing card and the other half went for chess. Because we live our lives expecting drama, the very next moment wasn't a shocker, we had intruders in our yard, armed intruders to

be exact and for some reason none of us was moved. Ntando only stood up when a bullet went through the kitchen window and hit the cupboard, but his brother was glued to his seat with all his children around him.

Ntando: Bendiythethile kelento yenu yohamba nihlokolozwa abantu bezihlelele, jonga ngoku nipholelelwe ngamalanga kodwa siyadutyulwa sihleli nabantwana.

He mumbled as he walked out of the lounge, to the kitchen. I looked at Nqaba, he was playing with Ikho and Iyaka and they were laughing, having the time of their lives. Sihle had Iyazi on his lap but he looked nervous. The rest of them pretended like nothing was happening, so I joined the crew and blocked everything out.

Ntando was dealing with whatever it was, right?

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## **564**

A few minutes after Ntando didn't return, I got up and went to check on him, because no one else was following him. I literally took three steps towards the door before we heard another gunshot and I froze on my tracks, turned and looked at Nqaba who wasn't even paying attention. Yarees looked at me and sighed, he got up followed by Kuhle and they walked out to sliding door to the patio. I walked out the kitchen side, well, there was a gun behind the First Aid Kit that I wanted to take. Unlike them, I wasn't going to check out a gun infested scene empty-handed.

I found Ntando sitting down on the stoep, smoking. I sighed, and sat down next to him, my gun next to his. He looked at it and laughed.

Ntando: And that?

Me: What's going on?

Ntando: Where?

Me: Don't make me stupid, please.

Ntando: I don't know.

I looked at him, not planning to argue with him but showing him that I could see right through his lie.

Ntando: I think your new man is retaliating.

Me: You think?

Ntando: That's the only explanation I have right now, and seeing how chilled your man is. I mean, he would usually jump at stuff like this.

Me: Or, ya'll asked your men to do this so that this story of my new man would scare me off him ndingayi kula coffee date. Sounds familiar?

Ntando: What? You really think so little of us?

Me: Your brother would have jumped at the first sound of the gun, especially with all his kids in that lounge unprotected and unaware of what is going on. But he didn't move a lash, why? Because he knew we wouldn't get hurt.

He didn't answer me...

Me: Why do you guys enjoy starting trouble for me? Why do all of you enjoy such? Kutheni nine drama bethuna?

Ntando: Yho hay uyabuza nawe Luthando tyhini, can I please smoke in peace? Please?

Me: Whose house is this?

Ntando: Hay suka!

He got up and left me there, I followed right behind him laughing. I took two of the triplets, and went to tuck them in bed, one was awake and playing. Thereafter, I went to bed myself. There really was nothing else to do kula lounge besides being angry with all of them. I lay in bed, with all the lights off and eventually dozed off. Halfway through the night, I felt someone in bed, immediately woke up to see Nqaba getting in bed with his son: Iyakha.

Me: What's the time?

Nqaba: 11:30 pm

Me: Baphi abanye?

Nqaba: Balele, this one is kind of heating up.

I went to the loo, came back and took the child from him. He was really heating up, I undressed him and went to their room for meds while he slept peacefully on my chest. We returned back to his dad, who was just lying on his back with his eyes closed.



Me: What did you give him?

Nqaba: Panado and just warm salt-water mixture.

Me: Why didn't you wake me up? Uqale nini umva ba ushushu?

Nqaba: Should we go to the doctor?

Me: Mve!

He opened his eyes and all of a sudden, I saw panic in his eyes.

I gave him his son, went back to that room and pulled out the emergency hospital bag, by the time I walked out of that room he was already down the stairs with his son on his chest and a small blankie covering his naked body. I followed them, he wasn't going to drive, obviously because he opened the car and got in the back passenger seat. Waiting for me. Wow. I locked the house, got in the car and drove straight to the hospital. We got through to the ER and a doctor quickly attended to us... halfway through that, my phone rang and it was Sihle.

Me: Sish?

Sihle: Niphi?

Me: What's that noise behind you?

Sihle: Ndivuswe ngu Uba, abantwana bayakhala and they are heating up. We've tried everything, niphi?

Me: Ndcela uzame u Soso akukhapha I'll send you location, sisesibhedlele.

Sihle: Okay.

Then he quickly hung up, I sighed.

That was the crazy thing about multiples, one gets sick, all of them get sick. Nqaba didn't even bother asking what was happening. As expected, nothing was wrong with the child. The other two came through and the same story was given to us so my last resort was to leave them in that room and go straight to the reception. The receptionist was kind enough to go through the registry for me, I was more familiar with the whole thing. The twins did that to me when their father was in hospital after his car accident...

Receptionist: Unfortunately ma'am, I can't find anything in the system.

Me: Okay, thank you very much.

She smiled, I walked back to Nqaba and sat down, calling Nana. There had to be someone in hospital, or in danger, or something. She didn't answer her phone,

Nqaba: Who are you calling?

Me: Nana.

Nqaba: It's past midnight Luthando, yeka abantu balale.

Me: The last time your kids pulled this stunt on me you were admitted in hospital after you drank your brains out in East London. Shoot me for wanting to check on YOUR family!

Sihle shot his eyes at his brother and he swallowed whatever he was going to say next, I put my phone away and waited in silence and anticipation for the doctor to release us. A few minutes as we walked out to the parking lot, his phone rang and he was carrying on of his sons so he asked Soso to take it out of pocket and answer it. I got in the car that I drove to the hospital, and we had to wait for Soso who was still talking on the phone just outside the car. I watched the road ahead in silence, I knew someone was either dead or hurt...

Soso: Uhm, that was your mom.

Nqaba: What's the problem?

Soso: She says your aunt in East London was admitted in hospital two hours ago, and she's actually in a critical condition.

Nqaba: Okay, thanks.

He took his phone and we drove home, a few minutes of driving in silence he cleared his throat...

Me: Need water?

Nqaba: You were right, I'm sorry.

Me: You know she's not just critical but dead, right?

Nqaba: Hayi Luthando, you're taking it too far now.

I didn't respond to that, I just plugged in my phone to the car and called his mother...

Mama: Luthando? Niwufumene umyalezo?

Me: Ewe mama, kwenzeke ntoni?

Mama: Uvele wathi unyukelwa sisihlunu, u Aphiwe wazondithatha ke.

Me: Mh,

Mama: Xandifika pha yey ha.a umntu ubile umanzi xhopho, so we took her to the hospital.

Me: Kuthwa utheni?

Mama: Ey mntanam,

Me: Okay, so how is she ngoku?

There was a long moment of silence... I looked at hubby on the rear view, and he didn't even blink. He had this stern look camouflaging his true emotion.

Mama: We were too late, she passed away on our way here. I just didn't want to say that to Lwandiso.

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## **565**

I looked at Nqaba and I saw his heart through his eyes, I couldn't even imagine what umama was going through. I sighed, hoping the guy behind me would answer but he didn't, understandably.

Me: Yho mama, uxolo.

Mama: Ey mntanam, I'm still shocked but I'm worried about Aphiwe. She's not taking it too well.

Me: I will try and call her in the morning mama, and I'll see when we can come down.

Mama: Okay sisi, nilale kakuhle.

Me: Nibe safe ma.

We hung up.

I drove home in silence.

We got home, the kids were fast asleep, I mean the triplets that made us drive to the ER in the middle of the night, yes, they were fast asleep. Once everyone was in bed, I joined Nqaba in our own bedroom and found him just sitting there. I didn't know what to say to him, firstly because I was careless about the issue earlier on and secondly because I knew how much family meant to him.

Me: I'm sorry.

He didn't even look at me, I closed the door and moved further into the room, closer to him. I didn't feel like he was ignoring me, he wasn't there. Yes his physical body was, but his mind had traveled. I opened his arms, wrapped his arms around my waist and kissed his head as I hugged him. Nqaba didn't even give me an emotion, I lifted his head so he faced me and kissed him on the lips.

Nqaba: Masilale.

Me: I'm sorry.

Nqaba: Okay, now masilale.

Me: You don't want to talk?

Nqaba: There's nothing to talk about.

Me: You just lost your aunt...

Nqaba: There's still nothing to talk about.

Me: Okay, masilale ke.

I got in bed, and waited. A few minutes later he followed right behind me and we lay in silence. I didn't sleep much, and I knew very well that he also wasn't asleep. I decided not to bother him, he didn't want cuddles so that was my indication that I shouldn't even try pestering him. Uvelile woke up around 4am and decided that he wanted to finish the rest of his morning in our bedroom.

Uve: Tatam?

Me: Come this side.

Uve: Funutatam ma.

Me: Fine, but come this side.

He mumbled as he walked over to my side of the bed, I lifted him up and helped him get onto the bed. He obviously rolled over to his dad's side and lay his head on Nqaba's chest. The weirdest ish I had realized about having multiples was that they could feel stuff, seeing him in that mood was proof enough that he was feeling his father's mood. I looked over at Nqaba, he was fast asleep, which was shocking because he couldn't sleep since we got in bed. Around 6 am I left them in bed, bumping onto Ubabalo on his way to the bedroom.

Uba: Tatam?

Me: Ngena.

Uba: Uphi Uve yena?

Me: I said ngena Ubabalo.

Uba: Eshe!

And then he walked in, and didn't forget to slam the door behind him. I was left wondering what the hell happened to Ubabalo that entire week. Like, he said his dad was a "lowo" and now he gave me attitude? At 6 am? Haibo!

I went to make porridge, and breakfast.

I proceeded with what I had woken up to do, past eight, everything was done and ready for people to indulge. I didn't want to set up the dining area for breakfast so I just dished up for my babies and went to their room, they weren't up so I just put the bowl there and went to fetch food for the bigger babies and took it to the main bedroom. They were up, having conversations with their dad.

Me: Molweni.

Uba: Morning mamam.

Uve: Morning baby.

Nqaba: Huh?

Uve: Ubaby wakho mos?

Nqaba: kengoku why are you calling her baby?

Uve: U baby wakho asi baby wethu nathi?

I just smiled, and gave their dad their bowl and attempted to walk away from them.

Uba: Sotyiswa ubani kengoku thina mamam?

Me: Nihleli nabani?

Uba: Daddy not feeling well.

Me: Ndingenaphi mna Ubabalo?

Uve: Haibo baby!

Nqaba burst into laughter, I joined in but didn't stop. I left them pha and heard their dad talking to them right after I closed the door. Kuhle dished up for himself and joined me in the lounge, I was just having tea, thinking of what Aphiwe and her siblings must be going through. The shock, the trauma and the denial of losing a parent unexpectedly.

Kuhle: You okay? Are the kids okay?

Me: They're still sleeping, but they were fine on our way back from the hospital.

Kuhle: Utheni ugqirha?

Me: Abananto.

He looked at me waiting for something more, and I just laughed at him.

Kuhle: Abananto? Njani?

Me: Njalo nje.

Kuhle: Wow!

I wanted to take a jab at him for not understanding how twins worked yet he was a twin, with sextuplets. But I decided to let that slide.

Me: U sis Noxie passed away last night, well, early today.

Kuhle: Noxie as in umama ka Aphiwe?

Me: Yes.

Kuhle: Haibo!

Me: We received a call from umama on our way back from the hospital.

Kuhle: Ah, so that's what these niggas were feeling.

Me: Possibly, yes.

Kuhle: Yho... how's he? I know how much he has a soft spot for her.

Me: He's not taking the news too well, but he's obviously being a man about it.

Kuhle: Is he still sleeping?

ME: No, he's feeding the twins.

He got up and left me there, bumping onto Sihle and walking with him to their big brother's bedroom. It was cute, their closeness and the fact that Kuhle wanted to console Nqaba in private, without the rest of us seeing or being present. After a few minutes, the rest of everybody woke up, dished up for themselves and joined me in the lounge. I didn't tell them anything, they'd have to wait on their brother. Nana called xandiyokwenza ukutya ukuzotywa after breakfast.

Me: Hello Nana, good morning.

Nana: Good morning sweetie, how are you?

Me: We're good, yourself?

Nana: I'm okay, listen, I thought I was going to take you out for breakfast today but we're on our way to East London right now.

Me: East London?

Nana: Yes, your husband's aunt passed away earlier today. You haven't heard?

Me: Oh we heard, just that... why are you going to East London?

Nana: My husband wants to pay his respects, I guess.

Me: Oh...

That was weird, but it probably wasn't, because he knew Noxolo and the elderly actually did things their ways. But I felt sorry for Nana because umama was still an ex. Well, if that word existed in the old folk vocabulary.

Nana: So, can we reschedule?

Me: Of course, we should be heading to East London later today too.

Nana: Alright then, see you.

Me: Bye.

I was left staring at my phone, because for one, I didn't know we were going out for breakfast, and two, she sounded like she was crying out for help.

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## 566

Kuhle and his twin walked down, I left the pots with Soso and went to Nqaba. I wanted to know when we'd be leaving, singashiyeki ngemva kodwa we know that umama will need help with organizing everything. I walked in and found them in a heated argument, them being him and his sons. I watched in silence, because I wanted to understand what the argument was about, but I couldn't even make a word out of it because the twins were really irritated and angry, and he was just making them angrier and laughing at them at the same time. Ubabalo saw me, and huffed, sliding down the bed, making his way towards me. He grabbed my leg and tugged at it, giving me puppy eyes.

Uba: Asiwambi thina, xelele lonto utatakho torho.

Me: Kuyiwaphi k'qala?

Uba: Uthi sawamba siye eMonti.

Me: Oh, we're going.

Uba: Hayi mama!

Uve: Asiwambi mos thina nje!

Me: Mmmh.

I loosened my leg from him and went to my husband. I planted a kiss on his lips and sat down next to an over irritated Uvelile.

Me: Breakfast will be ready in a few.

Uve: Sityile thina.

Me: I'm talking to my husband.

Nqaba: Thank you, why do you look sad kengoku?

Me: You don't wanna talk to me nangoku?

Nqaba: But we're talking right now.

Me: Babe...

He kissed my cheek and got off the bed, leaving us for the bathroom. Ubabalo rolled his eyes at me as he tried to get on the bed pulling the covers. I helped him, and waited.

Uve: Mama asiwambi nyhani thina.

Me: We actually have to go, sonke, so I don't understand your stance in not wanting to go.

Uba: But mama, we mus' go to school.

Me: We will report to Aunt Keri that you won't be able to attend school for a week or two.

Both: TWO????

Me: Yes, now can you please get off my bed so I can start cleaning my room?

Uba: u rongo wena mama.

Me: Okay.

Uve: Urongo no baby wakho futhi.

Me: Okay.

Uba: I don't love you.

Me: Okay.

Uve: Nam futhi I don't love you.

I rolled my eyes and watched them leave, made the bed and waited for their dad to come out of the shower. When he eventually did, I asked him about us leaving



and he said I should stay behind with the kids but him and his brothers were leaving that very moment.

Me: But I also want to leave, uzothini umama when you rock up alone?

Nqaba: I have told her awuzi because of abantwana.

Me: We could call u Keri and report ba we have a bereavement, it won't be such a big deal.

Nqaba: Okay maybe you will follow ngomso ke, but for now I want to leave with the guys.

Me: Why kaloku?

Nqaba: Luthando please.

Me: Mxm.

I sat there in silence, umama uxelele mna ba uswelekile umakazi but kwamna I couldn't leave with him? He was in his feels, and I understood, but shutting me out was the pits. He got dressed, in silence and I just sat there watching him. When he was done, he came to join me on the bed and kissed my lips.

Me: Khasuke kum!

Nqaba: Ayiqumbisi kodwa lento Luthando.

Me: I also want to go to East London.

Nqaba: You will go to East London, noba ku ngomso ke.

Me: Kutheni singahambi sobabini?

Nqaba: I have to check out the area first, I have to make sure its safe to bring the kids, I have to make sure that yonkinto igrand for nina then ya'll can follow.

Me: Baby, umakazi died of a heart related problem, not gang-related stuff.

Nqaba: I know, but that still doesn't mean it's safe to just rock up without inspecting the area.

I sighed,

Nqaba: Trust me?

Me: Yeah whatever.

Nqaba: I love you.

Me: You're supposed to.

He laughed, kissed me once more and walked out. I followed him, served the breakfast, and watched them leave. I bathed the kids, dropped all of them with Keri and went on my coffee date with Zamani.

Zamani: Does your husband know you're here?

Me: Is he supposed to know?

Zamani: I don't want to get you in trouble.

Me: Do I look like I could get in trouble?

Zamani: You look like you know what you're doing, so I will relax, for the benefit of the doubt.

I laughed, we had coffee and chocolate cake.

A couple of business insights, nothing hectic. He walked me back to my car, I opened my door and looked at me as he waited...

Me: Thank you for today.

Zamani: Thank you for coming through, and at least you allowed me to buy you that coffee this time around.

Me: I was just allowing you to show me more of that gentleness.

Zamani: I have more of that.

Me: I'm pretty sure you do, but, I've seen enough, thank you very much.

He laughed, we fist-bumped, he closed my door and watched me drive out. I hooted and left him there, going home to pack because I was waiting for a call to go to East London. As I drove into my yard, I noticed hubby's car was in the yard. I parked next to it, and quickly walked into the house kind of nervous.

Me: Baby?

Nqaba: Lounge.

I rushed to the lounge, he was just sitting there, eating braaied meat downing that with whiskey. I stood a few steps away from him, wasn't he supposed to be in East London?

Me: You okay?

Nqaba: Uvelaphi?

Me: Andiva?

Nqaba: Uvelaphi?

Me: Uhm, bendise abantwana eskolweni.

Nqaba: Mh.

I sat down, my bag on the other couch.

Me: Why are you still here? I thought you left for East London k'dala.

Nqaba: Luthando Gwala?

Me: Baby?

Nqaba: Uvelaphi?

I breathed.

Me: So I must count the places I've been to the whole morning?

Nqaba: If you prefer to.

Me: I don't prefer to tatakhe, can I eat with you?

He chuckled, and moved so I could sit with him. The Trina in me knew that was risky, he could strangle the lights out of my stubborn ass, so easily. But the tamed Luthando that I had become risked it all for food and jumped right next to her husband ndatya! After a few seconds of just watching me eat, he laughed and shook his head, watya naye.

Me: So, what are you doing here?

Nqaba: I came to fetch you and your children.

Me: We're going?

Nqaba: Yes.

Me: Mmh, meaning you didn't actually go to East London?

Nqaba: Ntando said he'd do the work. Apparently you looked upset.

Me: Apparently?

Nqaba: You wouldn't be upset and still have time for coffee dates Luthando.

Me: Mh, you also know about that don't you.

Nqaba: Sukundiqhela Luthando.

I swallowed, he meant that.

I would have answered, but he wasn't joking, he meant that.

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**567**

I poured myself a drink, from his whiskey in silence, he watched me without uttering a word. Drank that and got up, fixing myself as I made way to my kids rooms. Yes I was nervous, I mean, it was just the two of us in that house but, I had packing to do. I packed for the triplets in two cases, then the twins in one case and put the cases outside their rooms so he would take them. Then I went to pack for myself, he walked in ndisakhangelala ii qhiya nee scarfs...

Me: How long are we going to stay there?

Nqaba: A week, you have to be back for the kids.

Me: Huh?

Nqaba: I don't want them to miss school unnecessarily, you'll come back with them immediately after the funeral.

Me: And you?

Nqaba: I have a couple of things to do there.

Me: And from there you'll go to Cape Town?

He didn't respond, I stopped and looked at him.

Me: You're not going to answer me?

Nqaba: Is there a need?

Me: Okay fine, what's your problem ngoku?

Nqaba: What are you doing with that nigga?

Me: Which nigga?

Nqaba: Don't play dumb with me Luthando.

Me: Uthetha ngantoni kaloku?

Nqaba: Ndithetha ngo Zamani.

Me: Oh, uthi utheni ke u Zamani?

Nqaba: Luthando sukundenza isibhanxa sakho, not today please.

Me: But nguwe ozenza isibhanxa right now, ukhweletela umntu that we just met a minute ago? Yho hay baby.

I continued packing,

Nqaba: Zamani is not your friend Luthando, he's an enemy and he's been stalking you. That day wasn't a coincidence at all.

Me: Okay baby.

Nqaba: Are you even listening to me?

Me: He's an enemy, he's been stalking me, he finished the petrol emotweni yam so he could stalk me, rock up behind me in the freeway and become my hero.

Ewe baby I'm listening to you.

Nqaba: So this is a joke to you.

Me: Nope, it totally makes sense baby. I'm actually done packing, we can go if nawe uready.

My phone rang, he took it and looked at the screen before giving it to me. I looked at it and just left it with him, it was Zamani the enemy, so he had every right to answer it. I grabbed the bags and walked out, he answered it and I didn't even care uzothini. Makathethe nee enemies zakhe, yena mntu who goes around making enemies for us angasixeleli.

\*\*\*\*

We arrived in East London, a little later than the planned time, but Aphiwe was just glad to see me and that was refreshing for me. I resumed my "Makoti" duties immediately after changing my clothes, the last time I saw the kids was when we walked into the house, thereafter, they were everyone's children. A week into the emergency family visitation the arrangements for the funeral were done, oo Ntando didn't even want to wait for the policies to pay out, they wanted the whole thing to be over and done with then oo Aphiwe would claim the money for themselves.

"You've been neglecting me ever since we got here"

I turned around and saw Nqaba, with a plate in his hand.

Me: Khandiphe?

Nqaba: Cela.

Me: Ndicela undiphe...

He walked in and sat on the kitchen counter, I was making dinner, we had visitors coming later that night, Aphiwe's aunts and uncles from her father's side. I closed

the pots and went to stand in front of him, eating from his plate. Oo Nqaba had been eating meet since we arrived, oko kwakuxhelwe a day after we arrived and it looked like that was going to be the vibe until the funeral. I was just glad that they weren't getting drunk and causing drama.

Me: You know you're gonna get it if mom walked in and found you sitting on the counter, right?

Nqaba: Yup, gimme a kiss.

Me: Cela.

He chuckled as he got off the table, we kissed for a moment. Yes I missed him, but we were busy. We had duties that needed each of our attention, we had to be mom's backbone. I had to be the family backbone, being the first wife to the first sons, yes we didn't have much say because it was another family (Noxolo was married so her inlaws had the final say) but our presence, wallets and hands was much appreciated.

Me: I miss my sons, haven't seen them in a while.

Nqaba: The twins have been going up and down with Aphiwe and Lunga, I think the triplets are with the grandad.

Me: Utata is still around?

Nqaba: Yep, you should check on Nana, your father-in-law has been cozying up with igriza lakhe it's not even funny.

Me: Did you just call umama igriza baby?

Nqaba: Look at mom, and then look at Nana baby, li griza umamakho mfondini.

I cracked up, he wasn't laughing but smiling at me.

Me: I will call her later tonight.

Nqaba: Okay, so when are you coming home?

Me: After the funeral.

Nqaba: Haibo, bakhona mos abantu balapha.

Me: And they've given me the keys so I kind of have to be here oko, and it doesn't help that u Aphiwe uhleli engekho most of the time.

Nqaba: Mmh, so wendele nakulo Aphiwe ngoku?

Me: Ufuna ntoni kum bruh?

Nqaba: Ndifuna wena, intsha ngoku lonto?

Me: Ungandidiki esingcwabeni wethu bhuti ka Aphiwe.

He laughed, heading towards the sink. I followed and hugged him from behind, and that cracked him up. Lunga walked in,

Lunga: And I said this, yangathi ndiphambene, Sakhiwooo... nanku apha lomntu umkhangelayo.

I didn't even move from my husband, he just turned around drying his hands, facing his cousin who was waiting on Sakhi who was also a cousin. Sakhiwo walked in, with a case of brandy. Untouched, my heart sank. Bendisancoma!

Sakhi: Aw bhuti,

Nqaba: Uthi ebetsho ntoni lo?

Sakhi: That I'd find you where your wife is.

Nqaba: Uyazazi iinkomo zokulobola Lung aba zingaphi?

Lunga: Bhuti, can I get your car keys please?

Nqaba: Answer my question first.

Lunga: No bhuti, I don't.

Nqaba: Great, I do. I paid the full amount for this dime.

Lunga: Was stalking her part of the package?

Nqaba threw the dishcloth at him, I laughed and got off his back to pay attention to my pots. They walked out together, laughing and mocking each other, not leaving behind the case of brandy. The expected people arrived, and so did the work. Yonkinto yangathi iyaqalwa, but I expected that, for some reason I expected isigezo but they were cool people.

“To be honest, I really don't know what you see in him, but who am I to judge? A beast will always get the beauty.”

I froze.

That was Zamani Ngqulana, no doubts!

\*\*\*\*\*

I turned around, and saw his face drenched in sweat. For a second I didn't know what to say.

He walked in and pulled a chair, I just stood there, feeling a tad icier than when I recognized his voice. You know when Nqaba says something, and then I mock him, only to realize later that he could have been right? I was in that zone and unfortunately, in as much as people were walking up and down, all around the house/yard, no one was paying much attention to us.

Zamani: Mrs Gwala, you look refreshing in your makoti attire.

Me: Mr Ngqulana, what are you doing here?

He chuckled, I felt scratchy somewhere!

What the hell was he doing kulo Aphiwe? Why was he so confident?

Zamani: He didn't tell you, why am I surprised?

Me: He didn't tell me? My husband knows you're here?

Zamani: Yes.

Me: Okay wait, you two know each other?

Zamani: Yes, we've met each other before that office encounter, past life I guess.

I kept quiet...

Zamani: We went to the same high school together.

Now knowing that Ntando was the one who grew up here, I didn't know how much he knew of the story so I just nodded.

Zamani: Nqaba, not Ntando, if that's what you're thinking.

Me: Oh, you even know the twin?

Zamani: Yes.

Me: And yet you still called to ask me if he had a twin?

Zamani: I just wanted to make sure, I went to school with Nqaba in Congo. That's where I also grew up.

Me: So ya'll know each other from way back, so he was right about you.

Zamani: We might know each other from way back but I ain't no gangsta.



Me: Who said anything about being a gangsta?

Zamani: He is one, so just because I said we know each other doesn't mean...

Me: Are you two friends?

Zamani: No, but we're not enemies either.

Me: I see... but what are you doing here?

Zamani: Apparently his aunt married my uncle, just found out today.

Me: Really now?

Zamani: You don't have to be hostile, I didn't really have to explain anything to you. Your husband does.

Me: Nice, okay, so what can I do for you?

Zamani: I just came to say hi, didn't want you to think you're hallucinating when you see me around the yard.

Me: That's considerate of you, enkosi.

Zamani: You're welcome.

Then he got up and walked out, Nqaba had a lot of explaining to do.  
Lwandiso walked in, and sat down.

Soso: Who's that man?

Me: You saw him.

Soso: Okay fine, what's he doing here?

Me: Makazi was his uncle's wife.

Soso: Uyaxoka.

Me: Okay.

He looked outside and then back at me, then he took out his phone and did something. After a few minutes of silence he brought his attention back to me.

Soso: Mntase, you mean to tell me that Zamani Ngqulana is family? Well, not really, but you get my drill.

Me: Yes.

Soso: But ta Beast said he's an enemy of some sort.

Me: And you don't believe him now?

Soso: Well...

I laughed at him.

Me: Believe him.

Soso: Do you?

Me: Doesn't matter what I believe, but believe him. That will do you good.

Then I left him and attended to what needed my attention, I suddenly wanted the funeral to be over and done with so that I could just go home. The sudden arrival and relation of Zamani was making me uncomfortable but I couldn't really go back to Nqaba and ask him what he meant when he said Zamani was an enemy.

#### AFTER THE FUNERAL...

We went back to my mother inlaw's house, we were going to spend the night there and leave the following morning because "the kids couldn't miss school unnecessarily" as their father put it. There were so many family members, so the only option was to just sleep in Nqaba's old flat outside. I had just taken my bath, ready to get in bed when my mother inlaw knocked and walked in. we sat on the bed together, I knew it was the sleeping arrangements thing, which I didn't have an issue with, honestly.

Mama: U right apha mntanam?

Me: Ewe mama.

Mama: U sure Luthando? You could sleep in my room if you want?

Me: Si right kanti mama, and kugcwele endlini. Just take your grandkids qha wena, mna ndi right nyhani.

Mama: Okay ke, ulale kakuhle.

Me: nani mama.

I walked her out, locked the door and got in bed. I knew not to expect Nqaba anytime soon, kukokwabo apha and he usually gets lost azonwabele nee cousins zakhe xasilapha. A few hours into my sleep, I got an international call... I obviously ignored it, chucked my phone under the pillow and resumed back to my sleep. The phone vibrated again, so I answered, with irritation.

Me: Luthando speaking, good evening.

Ziyanda: Hello sisi, how are you?

Me: I'm okay thank you, yourself?

Ziyanda: I'm well thanks, sorry to call you so late but this couldn't wait.

Me: And you are?

Ziyanda: Oh sorry, my name is Ziyanda and I'm Nonzukiso's youngest daughter.

Nonzukiso... oh crap!

Me: Okay, what can I do for you?

Ziyanda: I just wanted to tell you that mom got the papers to exhume your mom's bone and she's really determined to go ahead with the process even without your consent.

I sat up, my blood already boiling.

Me: What did you just say?

Ziyanda: Your aunt, who happens to be my mom, she got the papers to dig up your mother's remains and she's planning to return to South Africa in two weeks' time to go ahead with the process. With or without you being involved.

Me: She must dare try! She must dare try, I will kill her with my bare hands.

Ziyanda: You will get arrested, just go and get an affidavit stating why you don't want her to do that, otherwise you're fighting a losing battle sis.

I hung up and called Marcus, his phone went straight to voicemail, so I moved on to Luke, same thing, and Keri. All their phones were on voicemail, understandably because it was very late in the night, but that added to my irritation because I wanted to vent and my husband was also nowhere to be found.

I got in bed, and waited to fall asleep. That damned Ziyanda broke my sleep and then disappeared back into her cocoon! Flip!

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## 569

I didn't sleep a wink, I couldn't.

Nqaba walked in, around 3am and I watched the door as he tried the latch first and then used his own key. He walked in and saw me looking at him, he removed his jacket with a chuckle before joining me in bed with a kiss.

Nqaba: Why aren't you sleeping?

I didn't respond to him, he looked at me again and then charged his phone. He pulled me close, for some reason it felt like he knew I was going through something, I mean, I could have been mad at him for disappearing on me on our last day at his home. But, he just pulled me close so I lay on his chest and then I cried. That was a shock, even to myself, but I let it all out.

Nqaba: Haibo baby, what's going on?

I didn't respond to him, I just cried until I felt better and then I pulled the covers and closed my eyes.

Nqaba: Luthando?

Me: Nd'cela ulala the few hours that are left torho.

Nqaba: Why are you crying?

I didn't answer him, and he let me be.

I woke up that morning and he wasn't in bed, I went to boil bathing water for myself and got ready to hit the road. Nqaba walked in with his sons, also ready to leave and put them on the bed.

Uba: Semhle mamam.

Me: Good morning baby.

Uba: Sawamba thina?

Me: Ewe mntanam.

Uve: Yawamba nathi daddy?

Nqaba: Ha.a boy.

Uve: Haibo, zoshiyeka nabani?

Nqaba: Haha, this is my home Uvelile, ndizoshiyeka nomamam nam as you'll be leaving with your mom.

Uve: Hayi daddy, this is not your home. This is gogo's home.

Nqaba: Gogo is my mother Uve.

Uba: Sawamba nawe wethu daddy.

Nqaba: Unfortunately mntanam I'm not going anywhere.

I sensed some tension between all three of them, ndabashiya pha before I get dragged into a conversation I knew nothing about. I went to tell umama that we were leaving, then Nqaba packed our bags into the car. He was driving us to the airport, we didn't talk, uzigqibele nalento yakhe yongagoduki nathi but I wasn't about to ask him anything. I had pressing issues than him and his "missions" mntakabawo!

As we walked to the car, I carried Ikho and he carried Iyazi and Iyakha while the other two walked together behind us, Zamani drove in with Lunga and Aphiwe. I obviously pretended like I didn't see them, because, I wasn't in the mood for anything stupid. They parked next to us, Nqaba was busy strapping his sons, and I was checking for my charger in my handbag...

Aphiwe: Sisi, niyahamba?

Me: Molweni, yes baby, iskolo.

Aphiwe: Oh mani, enkosi for everything.

We hugged, she peeped inside and had a chat with Uba and Uve. I looked behind me, Zamani was looking at me, not saying a word and that made me uncomfortable but I didn't show him. I smiled and greeted,

Me: Zamani.

Zamani: Mam'Gwala, akazange aziqhathe kodwa umzala, umhle mfondini.

Me: Enkosi bhuti, usezohlala kwelicala?

Zamani: No sisi, I'm leaving tomorrow night, but ndizoqala eKapa.

Me: Oh okay, nisale kakuhle ke bethuna. Ninxile nge timing.

He laughed, with a nod as they walked inside. Lunga was just standing there smiling from ear to ear. I got in the car, and waited for Nqaba to do whatever he was doing at the back, once he was done we hit the road. The drive was a very quiet one, for the first fifteen minutes. He eyed me, and cleared his throat...

Nqaba: Baby?

Me: Mh?

Nqaba: You okay?

Me: Yes.

Nqaba: u sure?

Me: Ewe bruh, I'm okay. I just want to get home.

Nqaba: Why were you crying?

I didn't answer him, I just looked outside the window.

He went to McDonald's because the twins were acting dramatic, fighting with each other. The fights died down immediately when they received their food so we drove to the airport in silence, his jet was obviously waiting for us, Mo to be exact. I got out, and took Iyakha and a few bags sabashiya oo Nqaba nabantwana bakhe. They caught up, two guys went to help him with our bags. I settled in, and tried calling Marcus again because he hadn't returned my calls. He answered, sounding either drunk or tired.

Marc: Polo.

Me: Polo my foot!

He laughed,

Marc: I was going to call you back, it's still very early kleintjie.

Me: When can you be in Jo'burg? I need to see you.

Marc: I am in Jo'burg as we speak.

Me: When are you leaving?

Marc: Probably tomorrow, what's up?

Me: Please be at my place tonight, we'll talk then.

Marc: But are you okay?

Me: I'm fine, bye.

Marc: Oh-kay...

I hung up, Nqaba looked at me and sat down. I dialed Luke, I was doing my best trying to avoid having an argument with Nqaba so keeping myself busy was the best option. He grabbed my phone as I was calling Luke, looked me in the eye and waited for me to explode. Which I didn't, I just looked at him and waited.

Nqaba: What's going on with you today?

Me: I am not in the mood for this, please give me my phone.

Nqaba: Luthando Gwala!!!

He almost roared, I understood his frustration but he didn't have to raise his voice at me. My eyes filled up in a few seconds and I walked away from him. He followed me, grabbed my arm and sat me down.

Nqaba: Baby, what is going on?

Me: That woman is proceeding with exhuming my mother's remains Nqaba, now can you leave me alone? Please?

He didn't respond, my phone rang, he looked at the screen and gave it to me. It was Luke...

Me: Luu?

Luke: Hey baby, are you okay?

Me: No I'm not okay, I need to talk to you. Urgently.

Luke: Okay, I'm kind of busy right now, can I call you back in three hours?

Me: Okay, I'll be home too by then.

Luke: Okay, love you.

Me: Love you too.

I hung up and breathed.

Nqaba: Why didn't you tell me?

Me: Not now please.

Nqaba: Okay fine, what are you going to do? Who told you?

Me: I am going to get her arrested Nqaba, I told her andithi? I will show her that I am not a liar, I keep my word.

Nqaba: But baby...

Me: Andinaxesha lalento uzoyithetha ke, if I cannot get her arrested then I will kill her myself. Andizoqhelwa lixhekwazi elinemali mna ngomamam, makayohlaziya intakatho yakhe ngabantwana bakhe and leave my mother alone.

Nqaba: Let me talk to Mo, I'll be back.

Me: Mxelele ndiyaleqa, ndcela sihambeni.

He didn't respond, I was just hoping he'd go through with his Cape Town plans because I didn't want him to come with us. He was going to be the "voice of reason" kula meeting with Marcus and I didn't need that, I needed someone with the same views I had. To avoid delays.

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## **570**

He came back, told me he would follow us later on in the day because he needed to finish up some things with his mom before leaving. I obviously just said “okay” not even asking about his Cape Town plans. We arrived home and I fed the babies, put all of them in bed for a nap while I worked on my strategy and presentation for Marcus. I didn’t know how to fight that woman, being a legal graduate that can come across as stupidity but nonetheless, I didn’t want to fight her legally. I wanted to cripple her, I wanted to suck life out of her and send her back to hell. Ntando called as I was taking a break from the drafting...

Me: Tata ka Owentando?

Ntando: Mamakhe, nihambe njani?

Me: We’re safely at home.

Ntando: That’s good to know, lotata uthi he’s coming back to you guys but he doesn’t want to tell me why.

Me: He isn’t even needed here ke yazi.

Ntando: Is there something going on? Or niyatefelana nje?

Me: There’s nothing much he can do, but apparently my mother’s twin is coming back again in two weeks to go ahead with exhuming my mother’s remains. We found out today.

Ntanod: Oh crap!

Me: Yeah, but I’m meeting Marc in a few so we’ll see what to do.

He went silent,

Me: Please convince him to go with you, uyadika u Nqaba Ntando uzobe efuna sibe “reasonable” about this whole thing kanti ke uyandiqhela la mama ngesiXhosa esiphandle.

Ntando: Unfortunately I have to allow him to be there with you, this whole thing is emotionally draining you will need him present... okay wait, kanene kutheni singavele simbulale lomama?

Me: Good question! Dude, are you sure you don’t want to swap with your brother kuze wena apha umshiye apho yena? Just for the next three weeks at least?

We shared a good laugh, then he hung up.



Luke called just as I was making myself food,

Me: Lulu?

Lu: Little one, what's going on?

I told him the whole story, he asked what I wanted him to do that Marcus wouldn't do and I didn't know. Honestly, I just wanted his advice, input, nothing else. He promised he'd talk to Marcus and Keri about it and then revert back to me because he didn't want any of them going behind my back to help that woman. Under no circumstances.

I had no choice but to wait on them, while waiting, I got a call from Zamani which I didn't answer. There was no need for us to talk, I had a lot on my plate, I didn't need him to be part of that too.

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Nqabayomzi Gwala really flew back to us, I thought he would change his mind, because Cape Town seemed to be very important to all of them. I woke up around 8pm to Uve's laughter, he sounded like he was with someone older than Ubabalo and the rest of the siblings. I got up and went to the nursery, having noticed that my door was slightly ajar, I had totally shut it before taking a nap. Iyakha and Iyazi were snoring, but everyone else was not in sight so I went to the lounge, found them with their dad... and Marcus.

Me: Molweni...

Marcus: Kleintjie

Me: Unjani? Where's Uba?

Marcus: Kitchen...

Me: Mmh.

I went to the kitchen, Uba was sitting on the floor eating cookies. Who eats cookies at night? Who gives umntana cookies at night? He looked up smiling at me, his chest messy.

Uba: Mama, uvukile wena?

Me: Who gave you cookies?

He froze, looked at cookies, his hands and then looked at me. I walked back out, I didn't have the energy for him.

Me: Kuzotywa ntoni tatakhe?

Nqaba: Food is in the oven.

Me: Thanks,

I went back to the oven and found my own plate, I looked over at the sink, they had already eaten. I took my food and went to sit with Marcus. He allowed me to eat half that plate before bombarding me with questions, questions that I also didn't have answers to. I stopped eating and looked at my husband,

Me: La mama once said you brought her here, and I asked you about it wathini wena?

Nqaba: Ndathi she contacted me, not the other way round.

Me: Something still doesn't add up yazi kulento yenu.

Nqaba: You don't believe me?

Me: Iyafana nawe baby into yokum'contact'a lamama, you would do that because you are family orientated. You love everything about a solid family and I know you would want me to have a relationship with my mother's twin sister, just that you might not have expected the angle she came with once she got here.

He didn't respond,

Me: I don't blame you, if nguwe nyhani who made the first contact, I understand lento ubuyizama but babe, I have told you countless times that I'm okay with the family that I have made for myself. Omnye nomnye umntu is really not needed baby torho.

Nqaba: Okay I get that, but silapha ngoku, ithini way forward?

Me: We kill her.

Uve: We kill her who mamam?

They both looked at me, I sighed, why was Uvelile even there with us?

Marc: Where's your brother Vee?

Uve: Eating cookies in kitchen.

Me: Yiya kuye ke ndoda.

Uve: Okay...

He got off his dad and took three steps, stopped and looked at me with squinted eyes.

Uve: Mama, we kill her ubani kaloku?

Me: We kill her u Snoopie Uve.

Uve: Hayi mama! Zokuxela ku Aunt Keri.

Me: U right, now go away!

He walked away, cheeky and I sighed.

Nqaba: That can never happen again ke Luthando.

Me: I know, xolweni.

Marc: Who's Snoopie?

Me: Keri's dog.

He laughed, it wasn't funny.

It was the only thing I could think of at that very moment.

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## **571**

Marcus suggested we just wait for her to land, then we hear her out before acting on anything because "we are not sure as yet to what she has," and obviously Nqaba supported him. He spent the night, because the twins wanted to sleep in his room, they actually led him to the spare room.

I went to bed very late, even after hubby had gone to bed.

I had work to do.

As I was packing up, I received a call from Linda, looking for her boyfriend.

Me: Hello?

Linda: Trina, unjani?

Me: I'm okay, unjani wena?

Linda: Cool, ulapho kuwe nyhani u Marcus?

Me: Ewe.

Linda: Oh, and Liz?

Me: What about Liz?

Linda: They were seen together earlier today so I was wondering if abazanga kwakho bobabini na.

Me: Caba indlu yam yindawo yometshela Linda?

Linda: That's not what I said,

Me: But it is what you implied, mamela ke sisi, u Marcus no Elizabeth banomntwana, they are co-parenting. That means you will hear almost everytime that they were seen together because that's what coparenting requires most times, for parents to meet up and discuss umntwana wabo.

She didn't respond,

Me: In fact if you have a problem with Marc meeting up with Liz please direct it to him, andingeni ndawo mna kwi love-life yakhe.

Linda: Andikwazi yintoni ebangela ugcwalise because I was just asking.

Me: Hay fokof ke, tshi!

I hung up, switched off the lights and went to bed.

Nqaba wasn't sleeping, he was in bed but not sleeping.

Me: Usahleli.

Nqaba: Ngubani lo umthukayo?

Me: Yho, undive ulapha? Ayingo Linda ka Marcus Smith?!

Nqaba: Ufunani?

Me: Ufuna indoda yakhe, don't ask me why engafouneli yona ke.

Nqaba: Yintoni ethukisayo kengoku?

Me: Undiyeke ke nawe torho.

He chuckled, shaking his head.

I joined him in bed, and breathed.

Nqaba: What happened today can never happen again Luthando, you don't talk about killing people in front of the kids, you don't talk about guns or anything relating to such phambi kwabantwana.

Me: Are we really going back to that?

Nqaba: Luthando Gwala?

Me: Okay baby I am sorry, it slipped okay, uxolo it won't happen again.

He didn't respond, I tried kissing him and he moved back ndamjonga,

Nqaba: Ndiyeke.

Me: Yintoni uyanqumnka?

Nqaba: Ndakukhaba Luthando.

Me: Utheni kaloku, why are you grumpy? Oh wait, you want to go to your brothers?

Nqaba: Can you leave me alone Luthando?

Me: Leave you alone? Kwabani? Phi? How?

Nqaba: Luthando...

Me: Hay hay baby sukusa ngobusuku! If you want me to leave you alone then hamba, leave me in peace bhuti.

He laughed, and turned to face the other way.

Haibo lendoda.

Me: Heh Nqabayomzi Gwala?

Nqaba: Nd'cela ulale sisi.

Me: Nqabayomzi Luthando Gwala?

Nqaba: Ndicela ulale Luthando torho, haibo!

With that he pulled the covers over his head, and slept. I laughed, and went even closer to him, going under the covers too and laying my head on his shoulder. His phone rang, he didn't answer it so I extended my hand and reached for it.

Nqaba: Uyeke lo phone.

Me: Nqaba's phone hello?

Yarees: Sisi, uphi lobhuti?

Me: He's sleeping.

Yarees: Andisamdingi, nd'cela umvuse just for a few minutes.

Me: Andikho sure if he's gonna take the phone ke Yarees, ebesithi I shouldn't even answer his phone.

Yarees: Hay, what have you done to him?

Me: I don't know too... he's moody, maybe one of his sides fell pregnant.

He laughed, I looked up and put the phone on Nqaba's ear, he reached for it and hung up. I chuckled and ignored him too, still cuddled onto him. I really didn't care about his mood swings, he was in my bed anyway.

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The following morning I woke up and prepared the kids for school, he was still sleeping. When they were done eating, I drove them to school, on my way back I passed by the chemist and bought him flue medication. He must be sick, he was never an over-sleeper kaloku, he must surely be sick.

His mother called as I drove in endlini,

Me: Mama?

Mama: Luthando, unjani mntanam?

Me: Si right mama, unjani wena?

Mama: Ndi right sisi, oko ndizama indodakho ke andimfumani efounini yakhe.

Me: He's still sleeping mama, I will tell him to call you back.

Mama: okay sisi, enkosi.

Me: Bye ma.

I walked in endlini, umntu was busy making himself oats.

Me: Umama is trying to reach you.

Nqaba: Mh.

I walked past him, his phone was not even in the lounge. I put the meds on the coffee table and went to fetch his phone upstairs, it was only on one percent charging so I left it and went back to him.

Me: Baby?

Nqaba: Luthando?

Me: Awubaweli ufounela umama ngoku, you can use my phone.

Nqaba: I'll talk to her later on.

Me: Oh okay, did you make enough for the both of us?

Nqaba: You can have muesli.

Me: oh, so you cooked for yourself?

He didn't respond, I made my muesli in peace and left him there, I honestly hated his mood. He walked past the lounge, straight to his bedroom and closed the door. Heh! I called his brother,

Ntando: Mamakhe...

Me: Dude, your brother is moody, nimenze ntoni?

Ntando: Oh he's still moody?

Me: What do you mean still?

Ntando: He had an unpleasant conversation with umamakhe about his behavior after you left izolo, I guess ayamtya amazwi kanozala ke.

Me: Haibo, what did he do to her?

Ntando: Ha.ana ke Luthando, he will tell you when he's ready.

Me: Must be big, you never hide anything from me.

Ntando: I hide a lot of shit from you because I'm not obligated to tell you anything, your emotional blackmail is not going to work today.

I sighed,

Me: Okay, thanks for nothing.

I hung up and ate my food in silence, when I was done, I went to prepare for work, leaving him couped up in his bed.

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## **572**

I left Nqaba in his house, along with his nasty mood swings.

I spent half my day at the boutique and only left when it was time to fetch the kids, Nqaba wasn't going to "graduate" kulento aqiqalele yona, to not even call me for the whole day?

When I got to Keri's house, the kids were already fetched...

Keri: I thought he had arranged with you.

Me: He didn't, but it's okay sis.

Keri: You guys aren't fighting, right?

Me: Nope, we're okay.

Keri: you sure?

Me: Yes.

We hugged, I drove out of her place and went straight home. They were in the lounge, eating and lazing around. I walked in, went straight to my bedroom, changed and then went back out bumping onto Ubabalo on the stairs.

Uba: Hayi mama Mholo.

Me: Hey baby, how was school?

Uba: Nice, uyaphi?

Me: Going out, gimme a kiss?

Uba: Nam funa going out nawe...

Me: No can do, stay with daddy.

I walked past him, past his daddy and straight into my car. Just as I was about to drive out, I heard a gunshot, followed by a window smashing. I hit the brakes instantly but didn't move, after a few minutes of sitting in silence I saw Nqaba coming out of the front door, alone. Two steps out of the door, another gunshot flew right past my car, hitting the pole right next to him. That man walked straight towards my car, barefoot and unfazed... I held my mouth, praying that whosoever was shooting wouldn't shoot again because he was without cover. Nqaba was just carelessly walking towards my car, three more gunshots and then two cars screeched.

He came to my car, opened the door and looked at his frightened wife. I was stuck in the car, fear had me paralyzed and for some reason I feared for him more than myself. I mean, he could have gotten shot, I could have gotten shot... leaving five children orphans. Damn!

Nqaba: Yhiza,

Me: What's going on?

Nqaba: Luthando...

He was still moody, I got out leaving the keys where they were. I slowly stepped out of the car and then took his hand. He walked me to the front door, opened closed the door behind me and walked back to my car. I heard him driving out, Nqaba left us endlini and drove out chasing after whosoever shot at our home, barefoot! Yikes!



I looked at my kids, they were so focused on what they were doing that I actually looked and felt stupid for being frightened. It was as though they didn't hear anything.

Uba: Ubuyile ngoku mamakho?

Me: Ewe Ndoda.

Uba: Ukhona ukutya kwakho ke.

Me: Enkosi...

I sat down and waited anxiously, looking at the kids my heart broke. They were really not safe with us, I was not safe too but what could we do? I chose the life for them and even though days like this one were rare, deep down I knew that one day shit would hit the fan. It was inevitable.

Uve: Uphi utatakho?

Me: Umnkile.

Uve: Uzobuya?

Uba: Ikhona phone yakhe eroomini yamamakho.

Uve: Hayike uzobuya.

I just smiled.

About an hour later, Vincent called.

Me: Vince, hi?

Vince: Hey, I can't talk much. I'm on my way over there, your husband wants a bag that's in the laundry basement.

Me: Okay.

Vince: I won't come in though, I don't want the Young Kings to see me.

Me: Cool.

Vince: Thank you.

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Nqaba came back ebusuku, I wasn't sleeping, I was waiting for him in the lounge. He walked in, still walking barefoot and just sat across me, I got up and went to get him food.

Nqaba: Come eat with me.

Me: I'm okay, thanks.

Nqaba: Please.

I didn't feel like arguing in the middle of the night so I went to take my own spoon, and sat next to him eating from his plate. We ate together in silence, when we were done he went to fetch scotch from the cellar and poured two glasses. I took a sip, and put the glass back as he pulled me towards his chest.

Me: Are you going to talk?

Nqaba: Ndiyakuthanda.

Me: I know that.

Nqaba: So what are we going to talk about?

Me: What is going on?

Nqaba: Nothing I can't handle.

Me: Luthando please don't start that nonsense with me, what is going on? Who shot at us? Who did you go after, leaving us alone after our home with our children was paraded with bullets?

Nqaba: Can't a man have a glass of scotch in peace emzini wakhe?

Me: Baby, this is peace, you see this? Me on your chest? This is peace.

He laughed,

Me: Now answer me, what the hell is going on?

Nqaba: Your Zamani is going on Luthando.

Me: My Zamani? My Zamani Nqaba, really?

Nqaba: Isn't he your friend?

Me: Mxm you know what, good night.

I attempted to leave but he tightened his grip around my body, I looked at him and saw this darkness in his eyes. He obviously knew I wouldn't be afraid of him but something in me felt chills looking into his eyes.

Me: Nd'cela undiyeke.

Nqaba: You wanted us to talk, now I'm talking. Sit down.

Me: Nqaba don't command me, I'm not your employee, I'm your wife.

Nqaba: Then start acting like one!

Yhuuuu!

I laughed once, and then I laughed again.  
Haibo!

Me: Start acting like one? Uthini bruh?

Nqaba: Ndingu bruh wakho uqala nini?

Me: Hey hey hey ungandikruquli ebusuku mna, what do you mean I should start acting like one? So all this time I've been acting like your concubine? Huh? Is that what you are-

Nqaba: Will you shut up?

Me: Shut up? Mna? Hay fokof Nqaba rha!

I got up and left him there, he even had the nerve to follow me.  
Bloody agent!

I got in bed, he followed and lay right next to me, smoking a cigar.

Me: Can you not smoke phandle? In the hallway, study and anywhere else but my bedroom?

Nqaba: Uyayazi Luthando that we could have avoided yonke le mess yenzekileyo namhlanje had you listened to me when I said stop whatever you were doing with that boy?

Me: Mnxim, uyeva? Mnxim.

Nqaba: Our children could have been caught in that mess, you could have been shot but kuyo yonke lonto your mother-in-law thinks I'm the irresponsible one kule relationship. You know what, I'm tired of being the bigger person Luthando. I am tired of having to clean up everything, I am tired of taking the fall for everything even if I did not have a hand in it. I am tired.

Me: Great, so uzothini kengoku?

He didn't respond, he just looked at me in silence.

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## **573**

We lay in that silence, I was getting angrier with each minute. Kanti why couldn't Nqaba just talk like a normal human being when he was bothered by something, anything? Why was it difficult for him to communicate with me like the grown ass man that he was? Did we really have to argue for him to blurt out everything that

he blurted out onto me? I wasn't even responsible for half the crap he was talking about, I know I had his back when no one did, I was there for him when his brothers turned against him, I stood up for him against my own flesh and blood. I was there when no one else was but that still wasn't enough for his bloody ass? Yerrr!

I got up, grabbed clean linen and went to sleep in another room, making sure to lock it just in case he followed me again. I obviously didn't sleep much, I kept tossing and turning the whole night and I didn't even wake up to prepare the kids for school. I just lay there looking at the ceiling, trying to figure out what was going on with him and Zamani. It was surely bigger than what I was presented with...

“Mamakho?”

Argh!

I tensed a bit, hoping Uve would go away.

“Kokoko”

I got out of bed and opened the door for him, he was dressed up and smiling.

Me: Hey baby.

Uve: Morning mamam.

Me: Aw'semhle.

Uve: Sawamba eskolweni thina.

Me: Nihambe safe.

Uve: Mmh, bye bye ke.

I bent down and kissed him, watched him walk away and returned inside still making sure that I locked the room. The room was a bit further into the house so I couldn't hear the car leave, but an hour later, I got out and went to make myself food. The kitchen door was left open, I walked towards it but my eyes caught a glimpse of a box that was on the top step. I bent down, slowly looking around just to make sure I wasn't being watched. I quickly picked up the box, walked back inside and shut the door placing the box on the kitchen counter. Because I think I'm Gabhadiya mos, I opened the box and my eyes were greeted by two bullets,

one engraved with Ntando's name and the other with Nqaba's name. You know when you're so used to the bad life that even such tactics don't scare you anymore, that's when you know you're deep in it. There was an envelope too... I didn't even bother with it, umntu we package would do the honors on his return.

I went to take a shower, then, got dressed and walked out because I had to go to work, my boutique needed me. Did I not realize that moment that Nqaba took my car? Oh, and I didn't have the option of taking his car because the garage was empty. I called an Uber, had to wait at least fifteen minutes, which I didn't really mind. The guy introduced himself as Frank, a nice ride it was. When I got to my office, I decided to call umama.... I needed to know what went down between her and her son.

Mama: Luthando, mholo mntanam.

Me: Good morning mama, unjani?

Mama: I'm okay sisi.

Me: Okay, mama I have a question torho...

Mama: Mh,

Me: What happened between you and your son in East London?

Mama: Enjani mntanam?

Me: He's been in a foul mood oko sibuyile and when I asked his twin uthe it has something to do with you.

She laughed,

Mama: Uphi yena ngoku?

Me: He took the kids to school mama.

Mama: Mamela ke, ungamxeleli ba ndikuxelele.

Me: Oh-kay...

Mama: Umyeni wakho apha ndimbhaqe kathathu etsala-tsalana nentombi ka Khwetshube, ndimnqanda ke because uyazalana no Thabisa, noba bebengazalani u Nqaba akanozokudelelisa ngamantombi kwa Noxolo ube u busy wena ubila usiquma silusapho. I asked him about this, because Aphiwe reported him to me, as expected he denied the whole thing. Wabuya after you and the kids left, then I caught him red handed, ndamgcwalisela ke.

Me: Hehehe! Wow!

Mama: Nqaba ke will never own up, he kept on ducking and denying even ngoku sendimbhaqile. I guess he took offence when I said he had taken after his father's irresponsibility and infidelity, and I only said that because that's what his father like.

Me: I think he's still like that, ungandixeli torho.

We laughed about that, then concluded on the conversation. Call ended.

Just as I hung up from that call, the culprit called and I was determined to be a pain in his neck. Where the hell did he get the nerve to be moody at me kodwa nguye o rongo? I didn't necessarily entertain anything on Zamani's side, anything ezomthethela to be groping at women kokwabo ndikhona...

Me: Luthando Gwala speaking...

Nqaba: Uphi?

Me: Who am I speaking to?

Nqaba: Luthando, uphi?

Me: Who am I speaking to?

Nqaba: Luthando I am not in the mood for this yazi.

Me: Sir, when you want to communicate properly please do call again, I have a meeting to get to. Bye.

I hung up and waited, a few minutes later he called me again, using his work number. I didn't respond, I said I had a meeting to get to, right? He sent a text, I didn't even open it, his brother called, I didn't answer the phone. Two hours later, I returned his calls...

Nqaba: Hello?

Me: Hi, I'm returning your calls.

Nqaba: Only now?

Me: I run a business Nqaba, I won't always be available for calls kaloku, the least you can do is appreciate that I actually took the time to return your calls. Haibo!

Nqaba: Uphi ke businesswoman?

Me: Ndise Sandton, what can I do for you?

Nqaba: I have to go to Cape Town.

Me: Oh.

Nqaba: Oh?

Me: You called, texted, and called just to tell me you're leaving? Really?

NQaba: When I don't report you have a problem, when I do, you still have a problem? Kanti what do you want from me?

Me: Hey uyandiqhela kodwa Nqaba xa ucingile, yazi uyandiqhela futhi undiqhele sendizenze isicaka kokwenu undiqhelise nangamankazana wakho.

Nqaba: What are you talking about?

Me: I am talking about u Thabisa Nqabayomzi Gwala, that's what I'm talking about.

He didn't respond,

Me: Please be gone by the time I get home.

Nqaba: What?

Me: Ndithi make sure that you are not in my house when I get home, awuva ndawoni kulonto? Nx!

I hung up, I wasn't even angry.

I just laughed at his stupid ass after hanging up.

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## **574**

"Mrs Gwala"

I looked up, it wasn't Zamani the enemy but instead, it was Glenda Olifant.

Me: Wow, what an unpleasant surprise, what can I do for you?

Glenda: Can I come in? Please...

I nodded, she walked in, sat across me and breathed.

She didn't look well, frail and fragile would be the correct description of the image that was before my eyes.

Me: Water? Drink? Tea?

Glenda: Tea please.

I got up and made tea for her, served her and sat back down. Waiting.

She took a few sips, then fixed herself.

Glenda: In Cape Town that day you uhm, killed him, you said that the two of you were siblings.

Me: Yes, we shared the same dad.

Glenda: I never really got closure, Trina, I'm still haunted by everything you put us through. I know you were basically returning the favour but...

I just looked at her.

You know, I was going through my own marital bull that very moment, she couldn't have chosen the worse time.

Glenda: My kids are going in and out of therapy, we've even lost half our assets, nothing seems to makes sense anymore.

Me: I hear you, but what do you want from me?

Glenda: Why did you kill him?

Me: I was protecting myself, and my children. Next question?

Glenda: Trina why are you so cold?

I sighed, bad timing personified.

As if that wasn't enough, she suddenly became hysterical. I just sat there, watching the drama, Nqaba walked in and stopped on his tracks because she was throwing herself all over the place. He looked at me, then at her, then he slowly closed the door and walked against the wall towards my desk.

Me: Glenda?

She started screaming, crying, and then as if nothing happened, she went silent. She got up from the floor, dusted herself and sat back down across my seat.

Glenda: I'm sorry... I just, Trina you destroyed our lives! YOU destroyed our lives Trina and you're here living your best life with this dog you call a husband. You know he's no better than my husband right? You know that he's no better than your dad even.

Me: I think I'm well aware of everything you just said, but, you still haven't answered my question. What do you want from me?

Glenda: I want help.

Me: You want help?



Glenda: I came here to ask you to help my children, we've been managing just fine all this time but now I'm failing. Please help me.

Me: Okay, what do you need help with?

Glenda: School fees, therapy bills and everything else.

Me: Okay, now do me a favour, go back home or where you have booked yourself, write everything down, all your debts and the bring proof as to where I can pay the money to.

She looked at me surprised, even Nqaba was surprised but I wasn't about to explain anything to either of them.

Me: Do yourself a favour and be honest in whatever you do, I don't like schemers. I don't respond well to be lied to.

Glenda: Okay, can I come and see you again tomorrow?

Me: Take my business card at the front, call me so we can meet in a public place. I don't want you coming here as you please, this is my business and it cannot be associated with unruliness and whatever it is that manifested a minute ago.

She nodded, and stood up.

Glenda: Thank you for your time.

Me: Be safe.

One more nod and then she walked out.

I went to the bar fridge, grabbed a bottle of wine and poured myself a glass. Drank half of it still standing by the fridge and then I walked back to my desk in silence.

Nqaba: And that?

Me: Ufuna ntoni apha?

Nqaba: huh?

I looked at him, he moved from where he had been standing to the chair that once sat Karoo's wife.

Me: What are you doing here?

Nqaba: Since when do I get questioned for visiting my wife emsebenzini?

Me: Don't act smart on me because I'm really not in the mood to entertain you, what do you want?

Nqaba: I want us to talk.

Me: I don't want to talk to you.

Nqaba: Haibo baby.

Me: Baby, I want you gone when I get home. I thought I made myself clear.

He laughed, I took a sip from my wine and just looked at me.

Nqaba: Who told you about Thabisa?

Me: Is that why you're here?

Nqaba: Yes, and no.

Me: Are you confused with yourself?

Nqaba: No.

Me: Why are you here then? Ufuna ntoni Nqaba?

Nqaba: Baby... okay Luthando yhima do you realize that I'm your husband? Like, ndikuve usithi ndiyakuqehela, do you realize that I am still your husband?

Me: Heh! Ndiyalingwa namhlanje stru, ukhona lo hili uqunusele kum.

He laughed, he was finding this funny.

Me: Should I call security to throw you out?

Nqaba: You wouldn't dare.

Me: Are you sure?

I asked picking up my phone, not removing my gaze from him. He grabbed the phone and looked at the door, the alarm was right next to the handle. I just chuckled and commenced with my work in silence.

Nqaba: Nothing happened, we were just catching up sagqibelena kudala.

I didn't respond.

Nqaba: I know either it's umama or Aphiwe who told you, akekho omnye umntu and to be honest, they were also insinuating. It's not like they caught us having sex or something. I don't get why there'd be a hype around this.

Hehe!

A man offered to buy me coffee, not buy my time for sex or whatever but he blew a gasket ngalonto. Now that it's him, there's no need for us to get hyped because they were catching up, caba umama is that stupid ba angangamboni umntu oncwase intombi.

Nqaba: sthandwa sam...

Me: Please close the door on your way out, and don't fetch the kids. I'll call Keri and tell her to put them into aftercare.

Nqaba: The kids are at home already.

I stopped working and looked at him.

Me: Uthini?

Nqaba: The kids are at home, I fetched them before coming here.

Me: Ubashiye nabani?

Nqaba: With Marcus, he came with his son. And Linda.

Me: Oh hell no! Seriously? Yerrr!!!!

I gave up.

I was officially having a bad day, the same Linda I exchanged words with over lo Marcus was at my house? Playing happy families nendoda yakhe, nomntwana wayo, kwam? Yho!

Nqaba: About the Thabisa thing baby neh...

Me: I don't want to hear it torho, if uyamfuna u Thabisa Nqaba you know how to get her. Please leave me out of it.

He stopped and looked at me quizzically. I shrugged,

Nqaba: Uzivile?

Me: Ewe tatakhe, I heard myself giving you the go-ahead to chase after Thabisa.

Nqaba: Why? Are you sick or something?

Me: My mental health comes first tatakhe, you're old enough to be able to differentiate between right and wrong, I'm not going to nurse you ngalonto. Not now, not ever.

He didn't respond,

Me: I know she recently moved to Cape Town too, but before you leave please make sure si safe. We don't want bullet deliveries on our doorstep every morning while you're busy busking kwi morning glory e Sea Point.

He didn't move, not even an inch.

What I had realized ngaye was that he enjoyed our little quarrels, what defeated him the most was me agreeing with his nonsense and actually suggesting ways to make his nonsense make a little bit of sense. That frustrated him, he always thought I gave him the go-ahead because I had another plan in mind, which I didn't, I just didn't want to argue. I was having a bad week already.

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## **575**

I packed up my bags, and left with him.

Me: Where's your car?

Nqaba: It's with Titus and Yarees.

He was still driving mine.

I sat in the passenger seat and took his water, he drove in silence, eyeing me every now and then. My phone rang, an unknown number.

Me: Private number mholo...

Thabisa: Hi Mrs. Gwala, unjani?

Me: I'm good, yourself?

Thabisa: I'm good thanks, is this the right time to talk?

Me: Depends who's asking.

She breathed, I looked at Nqaba.

I knew it had something to do with him and that girl of his, my problem was who would give out my humber without informing me kqala.

Thabisa: My name is Thabisa, I saw you in East London last weekend at aunt Noxie's funeral.

Me: Oh okay, what can I do for you?

Thabisa: I uhm, I recently moved to Cape Town in search of umsebenzi but I don't like the area at all. I was wondering if you have any job openings either in PE or apho e Jo'burg?

Me: Uthi you want to leave Cape Town because you don't like the area?

Thabisa: And because it's dangerous.

Me: I'm sure it is not as dangerous as working for me though.

She coughed, I smiled.

Thabisa: Uhm, I thought you had boutiques sisi, I didn't know working in a boutique is that dangerous.

Me: It becomes more than that dangerous when you're after a married man or the married man is after you, other than that hayi sisi it's not as dangerous as I make it to be.

Thabisa: Oh my God u Aphiwe! Sisi I'm not after u Ntando mna... Oh wait, ngomphi omphi?

I laughed, how was I supposed to know? Next to me, the culprit was drenching in sweat.

Thabisa: We were just catching up, we used to be friends years back. I didn't even know he was married until his mother scolded us. I swear it was just innocent play sisi.

Me: Ask whoever gave you my number to give you my email address I will look through your CV.

Thabisa: Oh, okay. Enkosi.

Me: Bye.

I hung up, and looked ahead.

The plan was to employ u Thabisa yazi, keep her close right under my nose, right at Nqaba's reach and see how innocent is their innocent. I was about to give a child candy and ask them to keep it safe and not eat it, phew!

Nqaba: And that?

Me: None of your business.

Nqaba: Utheni u moody na Luthando?

Me: Ndi moody mna? Uyekile kaloku wena ngoku, now it's my turn.

Nqaba: That's so childish.

Me: I'll show you childish Nqaba uyeva? I will show you childish, bukela nje.

Then I shut up, he drove home, parked and left me in the car. I lowered my chair and rested a bit, then decided to call Ntando. Nqaba grew up in Congo, Ntando in the South, so who exactly between the two of them was an old friend to the Thabisa woman?

Ntando: Mama ka Uba?

Me: I have two questions, then I'll be out of your hair.

Ntando: Straight to the point.

Me: Between wena no baby who exactly was Thabisa's friend?

Ntando: Both of us, but I knew her first. He had to befriend her because he was basically me, I hope you get what I mean.

Me: Got it, did you sleep with her?

Ntando: Yes.

Me: Did he sleep with her?

Ntando: That's a third question, you said you only had two.

Me: Well I have three ngoku, did he sleep with her?

Ntando: I don't know, mbuze ngokwakho. He has nothing to hide, he's a married man ngoku.

Me: Ntando please don't act smart on me please, just not today. I know the two of you shared women before, you almost shared me too so it's not a shocker. Now please work with me here, did your brother also sleep with this Thabisa friend of yours?

He didn't respond, he was calculating his answer.

Me: Thabisa called me ufuna umsebenzi, someone gave her my number and you know what, ndizomqesha.

Ntando: Don't... Don't do that Luthando please.

Me: Why not?

Ntando: Nqaba is gonna kill me for this, but yes, he slept with her as well.

Me: Thank you.

I hung up, I was going to hire u Thabisa kanti either way. I didn't know what her game plan was but I wanted her closer, I wanted to monitor her every move... Well, not necessarily hers, but I wanted to observe Nqaba.

I grabbed my bags as soon as I saw Uba coming out the front door, got out of the car and walked towards him.

Uba: Ukhona Polo no Junior yakhe.

Me: Uyavuya ke ngoku?

Uba: Wamphoxa kengoku Uba wakho?

Me: Haibo njani?

I laughed, bending down to pick him up. His dad was in the kitchen, I put Uba down giving him my handbag to take to the room while I opened the fridge for a cool drink. Nqaba was busy marinating meat, I poured my glass in silence, he was eyeing me, eventually stopped and came to stand right in front of me. He took the glass I had in hand, put it next to him and then he kissed me. Now I've been his wife long enough to know he wasn't just kissing me. Nqaba had his ways of apologizing and that was not it... he stopped,

Nqaba: Ndcela ungalwi naye u Linda.

Me: Huh?

Nqaba: Or me as a matter of fact, can we please not fight tonight? Especially now that we have visitors?

I rolled my eyes at him, permitting him to kiss me again. I broke free from that kiss and walked to the lounge, he wasn't asking me to not fight, he was telling me he doesn't want to fight.

Me: Molweni.

Marc: Trina,

His son ran to me, I lifted him up, throwing him up in the air. And he was laughing uncontrollably. I sat down with him on my lap, Uve joined us and he lifted himself up reaching for the second lap.

Me: Ninjani?

Marc: Lekker En jy?

Me: Lekker, how long have you guys been here?

Marc: Around 2pm, but we knew you're working. Junior said he was missing the twins so I figured we could come through and maybe leave him for the night if you don't mind.

Me: Leave? Waar toe gaan julle?

Marc: Around, and I have to pick up your brother from the airport tomorrow around 4 am.

Me: Lu is coming home?

Marc: Yes. He said he spoke to you about coming back.

Me: He didn't, oh my God.

He laughed at my excitement, well who wouldn't be excited? I didn't even recognize Linda's presence, I was just happy that both my brothers dropped everything for me, because Lu was coming back to come sort out lamama. Right?

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## **576**

“Baby!”

Uve looked at me smiling, Marcus laughed at him as I got up and went to hear Nqaba out.

Me: What's up?

Nqaba: Khand'phuze?

I kissed him on the lips, he was just testing me and I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction tu.

Nqaba: Awubaweli ugqibezela kaloku? Marcus and I will start the fire and braai outside.

Me: Kugqityezelwa ntoni?

Nqaba: Salads or ipapa.

Me: Sure, let me go and change.

Nqaba: Maybe you can also ask Linda to help you?

Me: You can go and start the fire baby, I'll change and take over apha.



He smiled, kissing me again.

Nqaba: I love you.

Me: Uright.

Nqaba: Awundithandi wena?

Me: You're becoming more sloppy as you grow old baby, I love you but hey hay man, undenza weak ngoku.

Nqaba: Not now please.

Me: Not nangomso sthandwa sam, soze thina silwiswe zi tshomi tu. Asizolwiswa ngu Zamani, asizolwiswa ngu Thabisa.

He smiled, I walked away from him.

I changed, got into my baggy clothes and went back to the kitchen, Linda was doing fine looking over the kids pha e lounge. I made pap and gravy, I didn't want to eat salads mna, I wanted inyama yodwa so the pap was for them.

Uba: Mamakho yakhala phone yakho.

Me: Yiphendule.

Uba: Okheyi.

I heard him answering, and then his laugh echoed through the entire house. He walked into the kitchen still talking and my guess was that uthetha no Sihle or no Lwandiso.

Uba: Okheyi ke bye bye.

He gave me the phone, I smiled, Soso.

Me: Uncle Soso?

Soso: Usaqumbile?

Me: Ndiqumbele ntoni kanene?

Soso: u Mrs Titus?

Me: Oh ewe, but yonkinto iready for the babyshower, don't worry.

Soso: Okay, I'm coming ke. Ndihamba no Yarees no Kuhle.

Me: Niyaphi nonke?

Soso: Sizisa imoto yendodakho sisi.

Me: Mnk, okay Lwandiso.

He laughed and hung up.  
Nqaba walked in,

Me: Titus and everyone bayeza.

Nqaba: Who's everyone?

Me: Andikho sure, I think he mentioned Yarees andiyazi nabani omnye.

Nqaba: Must be u Kuhle no Vincent, okay.

He took a bowl and walked out, he knew they were coming, and he could have been the one who said they must call and inform me. He was tiptoeing around me and winning. Linda came to the kitchen as I was finishing up,

Linda: Do you need extra hands?

Me: No, thank you.

Linda: Okay...

I switched off the stoves and walked past her to the lounge, she followed and looked at me as she sat down.

Linda: About the uhm, other night...

Me: Mh?

Linda: I just wanted to know, it's not like I wanted you to spy for me or however that came across your mind.

Me: Is that your idea of apologizing?

Linda: Okay I'm sorry.

Me: Sure.

She went on and on, I wasn't even listening to her. I kept on saying "mh" for the sake of doing so otherwise I wasn't listening at all. Lwandiso and his friends drove in, he came to me leaving everyone outside by the fire. Linda excused herself, joining the men outside.

Soso: And that?

Me: Don't ask.

Soso: Mmh.

Me: Do you still remember u Glenda?

Soso: Glenda? Ngowaphi and why is she important?

Me: Widow ka Karoo.

Soso: Ooh yes, what's up?

Me: She came to see me today, she wants help with money.

Soso: Uyakuqhela, rhaaaa!

I didn't respond...

Soso: Please tell me you're not considering ukumceda Sibongile!

Me: Abantwana abenzanganto Lwandiso.

Soso: Hay hay hay fokof man! Abakho babenze ntoni to deserve what that animal put them through? Haike ungandiphambanisi mna please.

I laughed at him, he was really getting mad.

Me: I will help her, but not with my own money. I don't have much to waste on them anyway.

Soso: Why are you even willing to help them? Don't give me that abantwana abenzanganto crap, why are you helping them!?

Me: That's the only reason I have mntase.

He didn't believe me...

Soso: So what's your plan ke?

Me: I'm going to have Bonginkosi send them money, those are his grandkids and he needs to take responsibility as a father.

Soso: Okay you're confusing me.

Me: Karoo was his son, Karoo is dead, killed by his father's daughter so as a father Bonginkosi must pick up where his son left of and feed his grandchildren. He must be the responsible father that he never was.

Soso: and if he doesn't want to? You can't force people into other people bruh!

Me: Don't worry about that, I know how to handle him.

He shook his head and walked out.

I called Bonginkosi...

Ta Bongz: Sibongile.

Me: Ta Bongz, unjani grootman?

Ta Bongz: Ndiyaphila, unjani wena?

Me: I'm alright, listen, how free are you tomorrow? I'd like us to meet for coffee.

Ta Bongz: Text me the time and address, I'll be there.

Me: Nazoke, I'll do that tomorrow morning. Thank you.

Ta Bongz: You're welcome.

We hung up.

I got up, went to join the others outside and we chatted away, only going inside when the meat was ready. Kuhle helped in plating and serving then Yarees and Soso cleaned up. We played games for a while and then later in the night, everyone left. Marcus left his son, as scheduled. I went to join Nqaba in our bedroom, well I just wanted to take a shower and then leave him again. I showered, got into my pj's and then walked back to the spare room. He followed me, but I had locked the door.

Nqaba: Luthando?

I didn't respond,

Nqaba: Luthando Gwala?

I didn't respond,

He went to his bedroom, called me from his phone and I just laughed as I answered the phone.

Me: Gwala?

Nqaba: What's going on with you?

Me: I don't follow.

Nqaba: Yintoni ebangela ulale apho ikhona ibedroom yakho?

Me: I need space away from you, just like I needed space away from you last night. Nothing has changed.

Nqaba: I thought we spoke about this earlier on.

Me: I thought I made myself clear when I said ndifike ungekho kwam, did you listen? No, so ndicela undiyeke torho. It's been a long day.

Nqaba: Ndikuyeke? Kwabani? Hay sundiphambanela Luthando ebusuku.

Me: Okay.

I hung up.

He must have searched the entire house for the spare keys because I heard him trying different keys, i wasn't even sleeping. I watched the door until he finally got the right key, opened and walked in to be met by my wide awake eyes.

Nqaba: Can you please come to your bedroom?

Me: I'm fine right here.

Nqaba: Fine.

He closed the door, and came to join me.

I expected that, that's what he does best. He'll never understand the importance of giving me space when we've had a misunderstanding, I had to accept that kuye everything must be nice and smooth the minute we talk about it. Unlike him, I liked processing things first before moving on from them, to make sure that we're both on the same page and that the agreement wasn't one sided.

I sighed, as he pulled me onto his chest, switching off the lamp besides the bed.

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## 577

A week before Libo's baby shower, and I had to get my ducks in a row.

I called her cousin as I was preparing to go to work, and we scheduled to meet later on in the afternoon because we had to wrap up the preparations. Her mother was aware of what we were doing, and her close friends had already RSVP'd so we were on the right track.

I made food for the kids and their dad, took my keys and left for the office.

I had a busy day ahead, a meeting with Glenda, her father in-law and the wrapping up of Libo's babyshower. I was literally swamped, and to make it worse I wasn't in the mood for people at all. I must have woken up from the wrong side of the bed.

I opened up the boutique and went to sit in my office, at the back of the building. Two hours later, Nqaba called...

Me: Tata ka Ubabalo?

Nqaba: Uphi?

Me: Good morning mfondini, yho.

He chuckled, okay, he was in a better mood than yesterday.

Nqaba: Good morning mamakhe, uphi ke?

Me: I've at work, breakfast and lunchboxes are already prepared and ikwazanga ke ukubavasa I was already running late.

Nqaba: Okay, thanks.

Me: Why did you call?

Nqaba: Ndivuke ungekho mfondini, ogqiba ukundilalisa kwi bed e uncomfortable.

I laughed, but I didn't force him.

Me: Mmh, please wake up and prepare your kids for school ke. I might be home late today, take Junior to Keri as well if Marcus doesn't arrive in the next hour.

Nqaba: He just called, he's on his way here with Luke.

Me: Okay, I'll see Luke later on. I really have a tight schedule today.

Nqaba: Okay, I might be out of town ke Luthando namhlanje, but I'll communicate if I won't be back on time to fetch them from school.

Me: Uyaphi?

Nqaba: Ndiya e Kapa, Ntando has been on my back since two days ago.

Me: Mmh.

Nqaba: Ndizobuya.

Me: I didn't ask.

Nqaba: I know what you're thinking, I will come back later today.

Me: Do what you need to do torho, I am also busy here I can't really tie you to my waist in as much as that would be cute to an outsider.

Nqaba: But irritating to you?

He asked, laughing, I just laughed back at him.

Nqaba: Ndiyakuthanda ke Mam'Zangwa.

Me: Aren't you going to bring me kisses kengoku on your way to the airport?

Nqaba: I might.

Me: I'll be waiting.

He chuckled and hung up.

A few hours later I went to meet up with Glenda, Nqaba called while I was in that meeting, he came by, with food and flowers then he left. I called Bonginkosi as soon as Glenda left, I had a huge pile of her debts in front of me and he was so

gonna pay for every bit. He came through, driving a Merc SUV, mh. He greeted, ordered himself some coffee and then just looked at me.

Me: Unjani?

Ta Bongz: I'm good, you look better than the last time I saw you.

Me: I feel better too.

His coffee came,

Ta Bongz: So, why am I here?

Me: I need your help.

Ta Bongz: What has Nqaba done again?

Me: Nothing, it has nothing to do with him.

Ta Bongz: Oh, are you in trouble?

I slid the pile of debts right in front of him, he opened the first file...

Me: Glenda, your son's wife is in debt and she needs help. I don't have that kind of money lying around but I also cannot turn a blind eye on her kids as much as I hate her guts. Abantwana bakhe abenzanganto.

Ta Bongz: Mh, this is a mess. How have they been surviving all this time? Didn't he have some property or investments?

Me: I don't know, I never asked.

He went onto another file, I just watched in silence.

This was his mess too, had he been honest to his children about his children we wouldn't be where we were at that point. Maybe Karoo wouldn't have taken the deal of attempting to kill me if he knew we were siblings and maybe I wouldn't have succeeded in killing him. A lot of maybe's in the air.

Ta Bongz: You say she came to you and asked for help?

Me: yes, she was hysterical. Andiqondi u right man kwayena, I suspect depression of some sort.

Ta Bongz: You can't go around diagnosing people Sibongile.

Me: Are you going to help her?

Ta Bongz: Of course, zikhona ii banking details kwezi files?

Me: Yes, everything you need is there.

Ta Bongz: Thank you.

I smiled, he packed everything in his briefcase and looked at me as he finished up his coffee.

Ta Bongz: you look happy, I guess he is the right man for you.

Me: I am happy, but, we both know better than to discuss my marital issues. You don't like my husband, he doesn't like you but for some reason respects you, you and I have no relationship whatsoever and I am okay with how things are right now. I only reached out to you because I don't want your grandchildren to suffer when we both know you could make means for them.

He nodded, still not removing his eyes from me.

Ta Bongz: When last did you speak to your sister?

Me: We haven't spoken in a while, but I know she's good.

Ta Bongz: Look mntanam, I know we don't have to have a relationship and I will not force it. But please reach out to your siblings or if they do reach out to you, please don't push them away ngenxa yam.

I didn't answer him...

Ta Bongz: Thank you for bringing this to my attention, but I have to dash.

Me: Thank you for making the time.

He made one last nod, grabbed his briefcase and walked out.

I settled the bill and also walked out, my day becoming a lot better than envisioned. I got to my car and all my tyres were slit. I couldn't even become angry, I just felt defeated. I opened the car, sat inside and called my husband knowing fully well that he was on the other side of the country.

Nqaba: baby?

Me: Someone slit my tyres kesana.

Nqaba: Someone? Uphi?

Me: I just finished my second-last meeting 10 km away from the boutique. I could call an uber, I just wanted you to know.

Nqaba: Don't move, I'll call someone to come and fetch you.



Me: Can't I just go, and then ke that someone can just fetch my car?

Nqaba: Ha.a Luthando, you cant leave your car unattended, even if it's in a public place.

Me: Okay ke, enkosi.

Nqaba: I'll call you back in a few.

Me: Kay.

I hung up and waited.

The cycle had started, we just had to brace ourselves, someone was thirsty for blood and they were certainly going to get what they wanted.

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## **578**

I waited, for almost two hours, cwaka abantu baka Nqaba.

And I was not getting hungry but I was getting bored, I still had to meet up with Libhongo's cousin so I called him back.

Nqaba: Mamakhe.

Me: You know how much I love you, right?

Nqaba: I think I'm aware.

Me: I've been sitting in this car for almost two hours, waiting for someone to come and fetch me as you promised?

Nqaba: Haibo, akakafiki u Khinda?

Me: Who the hell is Khinda kengoku?

Nqaba: Yhima baby I'll call you back.

Me: But wh-

He hung up, just as he hung up I saw two familiar cars driving near to where I was parked. They parked on either side of my car, now I knew all too well to not just jump out of the car just because the cars looked familiar. Abo bra Killa and abo Titus Senior shared the same taste in cars like Nqaba. Black SUV's, Black Jeeps, Black Mahindra's and the works were their cars. Nothing special. I watched them, in all the mirrors, one of the three guys was talking on his phone as they walked closer to my door. They knocked on the window, I lowered it enough to hear what they wanted to say,

Nguni: Sho sisteri, we came to fetch you neskori sakho.  
Khinda: Nguni hayi man! Molo sisi, unjani?

I looked at both of them in silence, the second one to speak indicated with his hand that I should lower my window as he wanted to give me his phone. I took a minute and did so, took his phone and listened to the expected caller on the other end. While listening, a towing truck came through as well...

Nqaba: Mamakhe?

Me: Dude?

Nqaba: Uzohamba no Nguni for the day, u Khinda will go with your car ne tow truck.

Me: Where are they taking the car kanene?

Nqaba: Home, I want to look at it obuya kwam.

Me: Okay, can't I just get a car? I still have one more meeting to go to.

Nqaba: Nguni will drive you around Luthando, I don't want to risk with your life. How do we know whoever slit your tyres aint following you around?

I didn't respond,

Nqaba: If it were up to me I'd suggest you just go home for the day, fetch the kids and stay in one place until I know what's going on. But I know awuzoyenza lonto so take Nguni with you wenze ke ezizinto zakho.

Me: Okay, yho uyamgcwalisela umntu man.

Nqaba: I love you too, now nika u Khinda iphone.

I gave the guys his phone, got out of the car taking all my things and waited to be directed to whichever car was going to be my Uber for the day.

Nguni: Uzovaya nam sisteri.

Me: Ngeyiphi imoto?

Nguni: That Jeep over there, need help with your bags?

Me: No thank you, I'll manage.

Nguni: Ah, iSkhulu chose Miss Independent right here.

I just walked ahead of him, he quickly caught up and opened the front passenger seat, I opened the back one, got in and watched him close the front door, walk all the way to his drivers' seat waqhuba.

Nguni: My name is Nguniweja, you can call me Weja or Nguni and I'll be your driver until your car is fully fixed and ready to be on the road sister.

Me: Okay Nguni, nice to meet you.

Nguni: Are you always in this mood or namhlanje is an exception because of your car?

Me: And what mood is that?

Nguni: Ingathi you don't want to talk, ukwatile.

Me: Let's see tomorrow, I'm also not sure.

Wahleka, Nguni laughed at me and asked ndiyaphi. I gave him Keri's address sayothatha abantwana bam then he took me home. I gave him iaddress ye cousin ka Libo, I wasn't going to cancel but it was safer for us to meet in my house than anywhere else at that very moment. Luke was in the lounge, working on his Laptop.

Me: Lukas!

He looked up, laughed and we smashed into an intense hug, he dropped me and couped up the twins, followed by the triplets. The twins knew who he was, the triplets were still too young.

Luke: You're a workaholic! Seriously!?

Me: Always have been, you look good, dude!

We hugged again, I left him with the kids and went to put my bags in the room, changed into slippers and then joined him in the lounge so we could catch up. After an hour of catching up, I just ordered food because Nelisiwe (Libo's cousin) has arrived. I walked her to the study, just as I was sitting down, Uba came to call me.

Me: I am busy Ubabalo, go play with your brothers.

Uba: Eshee, ubizwa ula bhuti semotweni yakho.

Me: Oh, okay.

I excused myself and followed his cheeky self out to the front door, my car had just been brought back and Nguni was waiting for me at the door.

Me: Nguni.

Nguni: Yah sisteri, ikhona enye into that you'll need from me today?

Me: Uhm, no. Ufuna ukuhamba?

Nguni: Yes madam, I can't really camp out here now can I?

Me: Nd'cela inumber yakho ke, I'm going to need you to take the lady you brought here back home later on.

Nguni: Ndizobuya around 6, no need for my number.

Me: Should I ask Nqaba to give it to me?

Nguni: Ngubani u Nqaba kengoku sisteri?

Me: Your boss?

Nguni: O u Skhulu? Hay akho need, kodwa ke you can do as you please, angithi nguwe ifirst lady?

I looked at him, trying my best to not say anything offensive to him, he chuckled and walked away. Then stopped before he got to the car.

Nguni: I'll be here around 6 sisteri, please make sure you'll be done with your friend. Bye.

He got in his car and drove out, they even had remote controls? Wow. I called Nqaba still standing on that same spot.

Nqaba: Baby?

Me: Baby lo Nguni wakho is he just disrespectful nje okanye he's just testing my patience?

Nqabayomzi Gwala burst out laughing, I stood there not knowing where the joke was. I waited for him, he called his brother who seemed to have been in another room wambalisela what I just asked, he also burst out laughing.

Me: Share the joke, please.

Nqaba: Nguni is a psycho baby, don't give him much attention.

Ntando: Nguni will drive you nuts Luthando, take it from me.

Me: So you trusted a psycho with my life? Really?

They both laughed,

Ntando: He's actually good at his job, just let him be. Don't allow him to see that he irritates you, and don't give him one word answers.

Me: Yho andadikwa bethuna, ubuya nini Nqaba uzolungisa imoto yam?

Nqaba: We'll be there tonight mntu wam.

Me: Thanks, yho!

I hung up besahleka, what the hell was this hype around Nguni? Because that wasn't being psycho, that was plain disrespectful.

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## 579

I went back to Nelisiwe,

Neli: So, everyone has RSPV'd as you already know, have you spoken to Soso about his mother?

Me: Yho ha.a u Faith makazenzele eyakhe ibaby shower Neli.

She laughed, yho ha.a I wasn't even going to fake that I wasn't going to beg Faith. I didn't want her there, she was well aware of that, I even gave her the go-ahead to make her own lavish baby shower for her grandson.

Neli: Okay, lastly, food?

Me: I have paid for the catering already, so that's sorted. I just have to make sure Lwandiso takes her away from Thursday up until Saturday afternoon when we need her. The deco team will arrive Friday Afternoon and work throughout the night if need be.

Neli: Okay, then everything is sorted.

Me: Great, do you have the registry with you?

Neli: Iku Qhama pha eBhayi, she has all her ducks in a row too.

Me: Haike, we are good.

I invited her over to the lounge and we snacked on the food I ordered while waiting on Nguni to come and fetch her. Luke requested that I cook umphokoqo for him and I gladly did so, keeping in mind that the man of the house was going to ask "kengoku akukho neqathana" after eating umvubo. That was always the case, even his kids had adopted that from him.

\*\*\*\*

A week later, few days before my departure to Port Elizabeth for Libo's baby shower, Nana rocked up at my front door. Alone. On the day that I was going to have a meeting with my Smith siblings regarding my late mother and her sister. I made her refreshments and joined her e-lounge, Luke was out with Marc, they were going to come back with Keri so we could come to a conclusion together.

Me: So, what brings you out here? Unannounced? Not that you're not welcome, by any means, just that you normally announce your arrival.

Nana: I needed a break.

Me: A break? From what?

Nana: Rather from who!

Me: Is it that bad? Okay wait, did you tell him you're here?

Nana: Why would I do that? Yes I know he will know but, no, I didn't tell him.

Me: I don't want to know what he did, but please just let him know you're safe.

Nana: I'm sure he won't miss me, his baby momma is keeping him warm and fuzzy.

Ooops!

I nodded, knowingly.

Nana: Do you mind if I just zone out here? Just for a couple of days?

Me: I don't really mind, and, you don't have to zone out at all. You and I are going to a baby shower in PE, then we will come back and pamper ourselves. Maybe after that I will allow you to zone out.

She laughed, I prepared her room for her, and allowed her to rest. My siblings arrived an hour later, and the much anticipated meeting commenced.

Luke: Okay, so from what I know, this lady has managed to get her hands on all the relevant documentation that she would need in order to proceed with exhuming the body?

Me: Yes.

Luke: And all of this you heard from her daughter?

Me: Yes.

Marc: I would still suggest we wait for her to come here, and see or rather hear her out before we do anything drastic.

Keri: What Trina wants is for us to be prepared, waiting for that woman is not a problem but we have to wait prepared for anything.

Me: Exactly what I've been trying to communicate to Marc, I'm not saying he should have guns and bombs ready to attack. I obviously wouldn't mind that, sorry Keri, but what I want is for us to also take legal steps. For us to be ready to counterattack legally.

Luke: That shouldn't really be a problem though.

Keri: Great, so Marc?

He sighed, he wasn't on board and it was irritating me.

Marc: I'm behind y'all, whatever you guys see fit.

Luke: Is that all you're going to say?

Marc: Thing is, Linda said that that woman could be sincere you know? You can never really lie about ancestors and stuff, like those spiritual things aren't farfetched. They are real.

Luke: Wait, you spoke to your girlfriend about this?

Marc: Yes.

Keri: Are you serious Marcus? This is a Smith matter, we don't need your too opinionated girlfriends input on this.

Marc: And that's the problem, this is not a Smith matter, this is another family altogether. Tina's mother wasn't a Smith, she was working for the Smiths and Trina became a Smith by adoption.

The house went silent, I felt a lump in my throat and in that exact moment I heard Nqaba at the back of my mind saying "suzenza weak Luthando man, boss up!", so I cleared my throat.

Me: In case anyone feels uncomfortable by that statement, we all are not Smiths by blood. The whole lot of us were adopted so breathe, not even one of us here is a Smith by blood.

Luke sighed,

Marc: I didn't mean it in an offensive manner.

Luke: It is actually offensive, you didn't have to take it that far. We all know that Tina's mother was a Smith employee but you didn't have to bring that up. You could have made your point, using something else as your example.

Marc: You guys are just being emotional about this whole thing.

Keri: Okay fine Marcus, good grief. This is not a Smith matter you say, so we let Trina fight this woman alone because it's none of our business? Is that your suggestion?

Marc: My suggestion in the first place was to wait for the woman to come back, here her out and then take it from there.

Luke got up and walked outside.

He was pissed.

Me: Okay, suggestion noted Marc. Keri?

Keri: I'll call uncle Larry's son back in East London, maybe he will be able to give us a way forward.

Me: Uncle Larry?

Keri: His son is a mayor in the area where we buried your mother, I will speak with him tomorrow morning and then get back to you.

Me: Okay, so we will hear Luke when he's cooled down. Other than that, thank you guys for dropping your busy life and coming through for me. I really appreciate it.

Marc: Is Lu going to be here for long?

Me: I don't know, we hadn't spoken that far.

Marc: Mh, okay.

He finished his glass and excused himself leaving Keri looking at me, furious.

Keri: Why would Marc discuss family things with that chick?

Me: Because it's not a Smith issue, it's my issue.

Keri: And that part grates my tits! Where the hell did that come from?

I laughed at her, Luke came back and said he would leave with Keri and maybe spend a week with her as well. I didn't mind, I was going to PE and my kids were going to Keri's house for that weekend.



Keri left with Luke, I started packing for my weekend, packed for the kids and then entertained Nana making sure that she was as comfortable as I could afford. She wasn't a visitor in my home, but she was a prominent family member that had gotten used to the high life.

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## **580**

After they left I went to the garage, Nqaba had been busy there with his brother and their mechanic fixing my car. I watched them for a few seconds in silence, Ntando saw me and he smiled.

Me: Not even one tyre?

Ntando: Don't worry, we'll be done in no time mamakhe.

Me: We should have just taken the car kokwayo ilungiswe phaya yazi, niyandilibazisa nina.

Ntando: Uzoya ngayo e Bhayi?

Me: No but, I normally leave it at the airport ndibuye ngayo on my return.

Ntando: You have Nguni to drive you to and fro, yintoni istress sakho?

Me: Ntando, i'stress sam ngu Nguni!

All three of them laughed, I still didn't get the joke. I looked at them in silence, Nqaba walked over to where I was standing and tried to hug me, I stepped back, he was still laughing at me.

Nqaba: Can I hug you? Andingeni ndawo kuwe no Nguni mna.

Me: Iyandicaphukisa mna lento ndithi ndinibalisela my frustrations nihleke.

Nqaba: But Nguni likes you, he gave you ii compliments on your first day with him.

Me: Oh God!

He smiled, pulled me in for a hug not forgetting to kiss the side of my head as we stood together.

Nqaba: Uthini u posh mazala?

Me: Uthi she needs time to cool off, so I'm going with her to PE.

Nqaba: Her husband called, ndithe andimazi I'm not home he must call you.

Me: Hayi Nqaba.

Nqaba: Hayi baby, kaloku I didn't even know she wants to be known ba uphi. As long as she's here, she's safe mos.

Me: So you want me to lie to your father?

Nqaba: Or you could tell him the truth, ixhomekeke kuwe mntu wam.

Me: Mnkq! Udenza isikhuni sokoja.

He smiled, walking back to the car.

I walked out, prepared dinner and served the family.

\*\*\*\*

The following day, we were woken up by u Nguni.

He wasn't necessarily bothering anyone, he just rocked up at my house, uncalled and unannounced, parked his car where he usually parks it and played his soft jazz smoking weed. Nqaba smokes cigars every now and then, obviously I would smell the difference. I had been awake for a while, doing laundry because I wasn't going to be home for the weekend, so when I smelt weed I walked all the way from the washing line eback to the front of the yard and saw him chilling there.

Me: Nguni?

Nguni: Aw sisteri, uyavuka mos. Sewuvase nempahla ngelixesha?

Me: Dude why are you smoking weed in my yard? I have children here.

Nguni: Weed is a herb sisteri, it's good for your mind too.

Me: Next time ndicela uze sewutshayile ke, and not smoke here.

Nguni: Yabona ke sisteri such things are unpredictable, what if ndfike apha ndanqanqatheka?

I looked at him, a punch in the middle of his face would do.

Me: Please?

Nguni: Don't worry sisteri, weed is good for your mind, alcohol is not. And fortunately for you, I don't drink. They even call me Sober Minded.

Me: Great, and you're early.

Nguni: That's great, it actually means I'm in time for breakfast. I like my eggs very well done, bread not toasted, and no tomatoes please.

Wow!

I walked away, went to finish what I was doing, then I went to prepare breakfast and the kids for school. Uvelile saw Nguni and went out to him, I watched from the kitchen window as he picked him up, put him on the bonnet and they had this funny conversation that made both of them laugh every other second. Ubabalo must have heard them laughing because he walked to the door, stood there for a few minutes and then came back to eat his breakfast.

Me: And that?

Uba: La bhuti ubani?

Me: Nguni, your dad's new friend.

Uba: Yangxola moto yakhe.

Me: Mh, I know.

Uba: Uphi tatakho yena?

Me: Bedroom.

He got up with his bowl and went to my bedroom, I focused on the triplets, once everything I was done I plated up for the adults, yes, including Nguni. Then ndambiza as Ntando and his brother walked to the lounge. He stood at the door, waiting for me to say something.

Me: Ngena,

Nguni: Ndi right napha emotweni sisteri.

Me: Ntando khawuzoxelela le chomi yenu to come inside torho, yho!

Ntando giggled, coming to the kitchen. They fistbumped,

Ntando: Uzotyela emotweni nyhani kwedini?

Nguni: Ndikukhabe kemnake Skhulu photocopy, Ndikukhabe kuphele ukundweba!

Utsho ngendevu ezishotayo apha.

Ntando: Khawungene uzotya nabantu, we know you're used to having senseless conversations with your zol. Come and try something different, you'll like it.

Then he left him, after a few seconds, Nguni walked in and followed Ntando. I served them and then served Nana in her room gqiba ndayovasa. Came back with the kids bags, packed them in Nguni's car and went back to the house.

Nguni: Ugxothiwe sisteri wapakisha kangaka?

Me: And who's going to chase me out kanene?

Nguni: Le motherfucker you call a husband.

Me: When you look at him do you think he is capable of chasing me out?

He looked at him for a couple of seconds, looked at me and then shook his head.

Nguni: Nah, he's not capable. Eny'into wamdliisa wena uSkhulu sisteri.

Me: Iyadliisa indoda Nguni, nawe usezodliisa one day.

Nguni: Ndaw'litshisa ngentsango liphele elodliso mna, rha, whomst am I? My name is Nguniweja Magumbi sisteri, don't look at me and conclude uyeve? I'm the incomparable yet recognizable, the incompatible yet down to earth nigga from the hood sisteri. Yey, don't look at me once, take a jab and a third look before you come to a conclusive decision about me sisteri. Eish awundiva wena, ndithi ungandithathi kancane mna sisteri, Nguniweja one skhathi!

I smiled and walked away, he was a character of his own. Nqaba and Ntando were just sitting there, laughing their lungs out. Uvelile was just like his fathers, laughing at everything Nguni was saying while Ubabalo was kind of pissed off. He wasn't even entertained by this new character, he wasn't even moved. When the kids were done, Nguni took them to school and I called Keri regarding their luggage because I didn't trust Nguni to remember to also drop it off. While they were gone, I started preparing for my trip too. Nana was done done packing, just waiting for me. Nqaba walked in as I was getting dressed...

Me: Ndicela undigcinise icard lakho torho.

Nqaba: What for?

Me: In case there's a shortage of something.

Nqaba: But benithe everything is ready, izovelaphi یشortage?

Me: When you work with human beings Nqaba, no matter how much of a perfectionist you can be, you should always be expectant. Of anything.

He smiled, removing two of his bank cards from his wallet. Wazifaka zombini in my own wallet, not forgetting to search my bag in that moment.

Me: Akhonto yakho apho.

Nqaba: Okay.

He continued to search, found Jelly Tots and took them wangqengqa and just watched me.

Nqaba: You and your aunt, naye na right?

Me: Nope.

Nqaba: Yho, is she going to be there?

Me: Pretty much don't care, she RSVP'd, so she might come, but I honestly couldn't care less.

He didn't respond to that, but I could see he wasn't pleased with my response. Unfortunately for him, I wasn't going to beg Faith to be part of her grandson's shower, I wasn't going to beg Faith for nothing.

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## **581**

We flew down to PE, we being Nana and I.

Her husband had not called me yet, but I suspected he wasn't going to call. She was old enough to go anywhere, and he was wife enough to know she'd be safe wherever she was. That's if he at least cared about her well-being. I knew Nqaba would have turned the whole of Johannesburg up-side down looking for his wife, he'd have crushed the entire South Africa like paper in his hand. But, different strokes for different folks.

We rested a bit on Thursday, Friday the work began. We had to clean Lwandiso's house. It was clean, spotless clean, but not clean enough for an event. Nana automatically became the supervisor, which suited her very well because she didn't come across like the type of woman that cleans her own space. She had helpers in all her homes anyway. The deco team arrived, we assisted here and there, and then as if the devil could smell the peace in the house, Faith rocked up. I opened the front door and just stood there.

Faith: Lwandiso said I'd find you here, ndingangena.

Me: Sometimes you greet people, even if they're not in your level of intelligence.

Faith: Molweni wethu yhu.

Hehe!

I stepped aside and let her in, we were using the dining area leading to the back. It was the biggest room in the house, and we had opted to use the inside because the weather wasn't promising to be kind to us. She walked around, with her nose in the air, came back to where I was standing and folded her arms.

Faith: So you call this a baby shower? Lento niyenza apha is supposed to be my grandchild's shower?

Me: Yebo.

Faith: Sukuthi Yebo Sibongile kodwa uyasijongisa. Yintoni lento? Khajonge, khajonge. Yhu.

I didn't respond,

Faith: Khon'ba kuthwa u Libhongo uthanda izinto ezi simple this is so bland.

Me: They're not even halfway through the deco and it's already bland? Hay Faith khasiyeke ngo chuku torho.

Faith: You're doing all of this to spite me, aren't you?

Me: But why does everything have to be about you? Seriously woman!

Faith: Or you're trying to prove a point to Lwandiso? Like I don't get it, I really don't. This has nothing to do with Libhongo, you're just being spiteful, selfish and unreasonable. What will people say about us? Why are you making us look poor Sibongile? I told you I didn't mind booking out a restaurant for this, it would at least look a lot more classier than this rubbish.

I looked at her, from her head to the well-groomed toes. She called our efforts rubbish, unsugar-coated, unprovoked.

Faith: You've got nothing to say? Huh?

Me: Exactly what I said the last time we spoke about this, go and organize your own.

Faith: You cannot seriously be undermining my money here, who the hell do you think you are? This is my grandchild, this is my flesh and blood, I will be involved on this one if I want to, anyway possible even and trust me Sibongile you will not stop me.

Me: Great, are you done? We have work to do.

Faith: You call this work? Look at this, these balloons are falling already. What the hell are you doing? Hey hey sisi we faskoti epink, what the hell is wrong with you?

I just stood there, my arms across my chest, Nana walked in, she was coming from the other room with Neli. I knew she heard everything, but she was going to be very diplomatic about it. I saw Faith's face softening as they smiled at each other, and I laughed, how convenient.

Nana: Mrs Titus, how are you?

Faith: I didn't know you're here, when did you land?

Nana: This morning, I couldn't miss this for the world.

Faith: You flew in specifically for this babyshower?

Nana: Of course, Luthando needed an extra hand and I actually had two so I figured, why not.

Faith: That's so kind of you, I'm so happy to see you. Where are you sleeping? You know you have a room in my house, right?

Nana: Don't worry about that, Luthando already has me covered.

Faith: Are you sure? I don't trust these hotels.

Nana laughed and walked her out, they spoke for a while next to Faith's car and then she left. Nana came back, sat down next to me and took my hand.

Nana: You're doing great, this deco is beautiful, everything will turn out perfectly tomorrow. Don't mind her, she's just upset that someone else is doing this and not her.

Me: I don't really care about Faith, honestly, she can go hang herself for all I care.

Nana: That's the spirit, now let's finish up.

We worked halfway through the night, and when everything was in order, we went to bed. Lwandiso woke me up nge phone call the following morning,

Me: Dude?

Soso: Nise right?

Me: yeah.

Soso: I got a call from your aunt last night.

Me: I expected.

Soso: I didn't know Nana was also attending the shower.

Me: I didn't too, but she's here now. Is that going to be a problem?

Soso: No no, that's not what I mean. I'm just surprised that's all.

I didn't respond to that...

Soso: Enkosi mntase, I really appreciate what you're doing for us.

Me: Nibe ready with more gifts, your mom is going to organize her own.

Soso: Sizozithenga ngemali yakhe kaloku, asinamali thina.

Me: When is the car arriving?

Soso: It's there already, the back garage key is behind the First Aid kit.

Me: I'll check it out later, I have to wake up and check with the caterers ngoku.

Soso: Okay, we'll be back around 2pm ke.

Me: we'll be done by then.

Soso: Sharp.

I hung up, lay down for a few minutes before jumping into the shower and getting my mind ready for the busy day that was ahead of me. I texted my kids' aunt while getting dressed, texted their dad and then commenced with my day.

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## **582**

The caterers arrived just in time, they set up their buffet so I let Neli and Libo's sister deal with their needs while Nana and two of Libo's friends arranged the chairs and games. I had to go and fetch Libo's mom, but my first stop was the boutique which wasn't really a good idea because I wasted an hour there attending to things that Libo would have attended to if she wasn't on leave. Once that part was done, I went to fetch her mother. She was excited, I dropped her off endlini and took a short drive going to fetch Libhongo's dress. On my way back from the seamstress, Glenda called.

Me: Glenda?

Glenda: Hi, hoe gaan dit?

Me: I'm okay thank you, yourself?

Glenda: I'm okay, I just wanted to say thank you. I got a call last night that everything has been paid up, and thank you for the R30 000 deposit in my bank account. I really appreciate it.

Me: You're welcome.

Glenda: Have a good day then.



Me: You too.

She hung up, I called her father in-law....

Ta Bongz: Sibongile?

Me: I just spoke to Glenda, uyabulela.

Ta Bongz: Is she aware that I paid her debts?

Me: Hay njani kaloku? I'm the superhero in this movie.

He laughed, for the very first time ever, since I've known him, he laughed!

Ta Bongz: Fair enough, I'm glad I could assist. Assist them out of debt and you into obtaining that superhero cape.

Me: Hahaha! Nice try, bye.

Ta Bongz: Sharp.

I hung up and drove home, everything was coming alright.

Nana and her team were done, the caterers were finishing up. We were on the right track, all I had to do was check on Landile and then check on the car in the garage. Dust/clean it up.

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"I am so sorry Mrs Gwala, you know I wouldn't do this to you, but we were ordered by Mrs. Titus to remove you from her son's property."

It was literally one hour before the babyshower, and we had six men carrying guns, evacuating us from Lwandiso's house because his mother wanted us out of there. Nana looked at me feeling defeated, everyone was looking at me, and I had no plan B.

Me: Uhm, can I please make a quick phone call to the owner of the property?

Frank: Of course.

I dialed Lwandiso, he didn't answer as immediate as I would have liked, so I hung up and tried again and he answered.

Soso: Mntase?

Me: We are being chased out of your house.

Soso: What?!

Me: Your mother sent security guards, they are right in front of me, chasing us out on her command.

Soso: Ukhona u Frank apho? Can you give one of them the phone?

I looked at Frank and gave him the phone, they spoke for a while and then Frank gave me back my phone.

Me: Sithini.

Soso: Continue, I'm just waiting for your friend she went to the bathroom apha kule garage. We'll be there any minute.

Me: Kay.

Soso: Please don't sound so defeated, I will sort everything out once lento igqithe.

Me: Sure, bye.

I hung up and looked at Frank.

Frank: I'm sorry Mrs. Gwala...

Me: It's okay, you are just doing your job.

Frank: Sharp.

I watched him and the rest of his team drove out, Landile drove in. The rest of the ladies returned back to the house while I just stood there, wondering the lengths this woman was willing to go to uku stop'a into ka Libo! Sies.

Landile: What was Frank doing here?

Me: He came to evict us.

Landile: What? Uphambene u Soso?

Me: Your mother sent them, not Lwandiso.

He looked at me, not blinking.

Me: oo Soso will be here any minute now, come let's go inside.

He didn't move an inch, and then told me to go inside he would follow. I went to the ladies, assured them everything was fine and then my husband called. I was emotional, but I had to be strong. This wasn't about me, this was about Libhongo and Lwandiso. Not me. I took a very deep breath as I stepped into the other room so I could speak privately with the Big Guy.

Me: Baby?

Nqaba: I just spoke to Mr. Titus, are you okay?

Me: I'm fine, yho baby can this day be over already? Like, I've had it. Ndi enough!

Nqaba: Nguwe o enough mkam?

Me: Ndim baby, in my entirety, ndi enough shame.

He laughed,

Nqaba: Just do what you have to do nibuye, ulapha utatazala wakho uzokhangela umkakhe. I didn't want him to hear what's happening down there because I know angafuna sizonithatha ngoku.

Me: Okay, I won't tell his wife until after the event nam.

Nqaba: Sure, I love you.

Me: That's all I need right now, to be loved, or else I'm gonna go crazy.

We laughed about it, hung up and then Libo's baby shower commenced. She came home, was surprised to see all of us there, her cousins and friends from Gauteng, and the dress I had bought for her, well, it was specifically made for her. Everything went very well, Lwandiso and his twin were out of sight until the very end of the babyshower when I actually called them because they had to bring the car out to the back yard and present it to Libo. He texted me saying they are ready...

Me: Okay guys, this is the end of such a lovely day. I just want to take this time and appreciate every one of you, you dropped everything when I called and made Libo's day a priority ndiyabulela kakhulu. We will give her a chance in a bit, for her to give us feedback but for now I would like all of us to take a short walk to the back yard.

Libo: Backyard?

Me: Yes, backyard.

I asked her mother to walk her out, so they led us, then the rest of us followed behind them. Her scream said it all, everyone else didn't know about the car, so it was a surprise to everyone.

Landile: Awuzolila ke apha, please, ube usijongisa nge chomi zakho.

Libo giggled, with tears in her eyes.

I watched her boyfriend in admiration, he could hold himself. The minute she cried, he left his brother came to embrace her, taking her from her mother's hands! Just like that!

Landile: Libza, mfethu, you have not only made esosiphukuphuku sisecaleni kwakho a happy man but you have made the entire Titus family happy. This little toy right here is our gift to you and our baby, don't worry about the size of it, we will surely redeem ourselves when we have to officially welcome you to our family. Kodwa okwangoku, we just want to say thank you for that gift you're carrying, thank you for loving that mad man next to you and thank you very much for having a heart of gold. I might not say these things to you on a daily, but from now on just know that I, Landile Titus, appreciate you. Umsebenzi wakho and your presence ndiyawubona ebomini buka Lwandiso.

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## **583**

Libo and Soso said their own appreciation words, everyone toasted and then the day ended for most of us. Everyone else was joining the Titus twins for their own after party, I wanted to go home and Mongezi was already waiting for me at the airport.

I tapped Nana and followed each other to the room that we had been sharing since we got there,

Me: We're leaving, your son sent his PJ an hour ago.

Nana: Phew thank God, I was starting to think what if Faith comes here or sends back her goons since her plan didn't work earlier.

Me: She won't come, she's a coward.

Nana: Let me pack.

When my bags were packed and ready, I left Nana and went to find Lwandiso.

Me: Mntase,

Soso: Hey, I was looking for you.

Me: Can we talk, ecaleni?

He led me outside to the patio, closing the sliding door behind us.

Soso: Thank you so much for today, Libo has been beaming.

Me: I'm glad you guys liked it.

Soso: Liked? Dude, I loved everything you guys did. But I'm sure that's not why you wanted us to talk?

Me: No, nd'cela usise e Airport, Mongezi has been waiting for us for the past hour.

Soso: Haibo, you're not staying for the after-party?

Me: No mntase, kunini ndimkile endlini? I miss my kids, Luke is back I need to attend to him as well, my father-in-law arrived today naye. Please torho.

Soso: Luke is with Keri and so are your kids.

Me: Lwandiso?

He sighed, haibo!

Soso: I understand mntase, I can drive you.

Me: Thank you, let me check on Nana then we can go.

Soso: Sure.

I went to check on Nana, she was ready.

We packed our bags in Lwandiso's car, hopped into the car, ready to leave.

Did his mother not personally rock up at the gate as we were driving out.

Lwandiso stopped the car, but did not get out of it, he just lowered his window enough to communicate.

Faith: Baby boy, unjani? Uyaphi so late?

Soso: Mama ka Landile, uyaphi wena so late?

Faith: I came to check on you, kutheni kungxolwa kwakho kodwa uyaphuma?

Soso: We're having an after-party, we missed you at the babyshower.

Faith: Baby-shower? Wasn't that canceled?

Soso: By who? Frank?

She didn't respond,

Soso: Ndileqa e airport, will you still be here when I come back?

Faith: Are you picking up someone?

Soso: I'm dropping of Luthando and Mrs. Gwala Senior.

Faith: Oh, they're in there with you? I thought they'd have left by now?

He sighed...

Faith: Okay I will wait for you.

Soso: Great. Bye.

He drove out, we just sat there in silence, Nana eyed me and I just smiled and looked outside.

I wasn't about to entertain Faith nor was I about to entertain her son, I did my job and they were satisfied with it. Just as we arrived at the airport, Mo called...

Me: Hi Mo,

Mo: Hi sisi, how far are you guys?

Me: We're 2 minutes away.

Mo: Oh okay.

Me: Sorry for making you wait.

He chuckled, as we hung up.

Lwandiso helped us with our bags, we boarded and then left Port Elizabeth as though we never landed. My God! I breathed! I finally breathed.

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Nana didn't even sleep at my house, her husband was waiting for her at the airport, with Nqaba. The minute we touched the ground, she boarded the flight back to Congo, no communication whatsoever. Hubby carried my bags, I just dragged my body behind him. I got in at the back, lowered my chair and rested. He packed my bags in the trunk, then joined me in the back passenger seat as well.

Me: Who's driving kanti?

Nguni: Saw'bona sisteri, didn't he tell you iskori sakho asikalungiswa?

I pulled my chair back up, looking at Nqaba.

He just pulled me closer to his chest gqiba wathi cwaka, I decided to not say anything. I had enough drama in Port Elizabeth I didn't have it in me to cause any more drama. Nguni fixed his rearview mirror, chuckled at what his eyes landed on and then drove out, playing jazz. Flip!

Nqaba: You're heating up.

Me: I'm tired.

Nqaba: I mean you're heating up, awuna headache or something?

Me: Mh.hm.

We arrived endlini, bags offloaded and then Nguni left.

The house was empty, too quiet.

Me: I thought you'd have fetched my kids.

Nqaba: You're tired, you need to rest k'qala. We can always fetch them ngomso.

Made sense, I showered, got into PJ's and got under the covers. He came to bed with food, we ate together, I was listening to him, not saying much and eventually fell asleep ndimamele yena namabali wakhe with his father. I must have slept four less than six hours, I could smell blood. Being an AUB survivor, anything that had a blood stench was a scare for me, so as expected, I jolted up from the bed and the very first place to look at was my bottoms. They were clean, the sheets were clean, but my nose was burning hot. I looked at my pillow, it was full of blood. Nose bleeds, really?

I got out of bed, went to clean myself up, removed the pillow and soaked it in water. Nqaba was up the minute I walked into the bathroom the first time, he looked worried but didn't want to say anything in case ndimphoxe.

Me: I'm okay, it's just nose bleeds.

Nqaba: You've never had those before.

Me: It's really nothing hectic baby, please bring me ice or any frozen veg you can find.

He went to the kitchen, came back with frozen country mixed veg, grabbed a towel from the bathroom and wrapped the veg with it wayibeka ngokwakhe on my forehead. I lay down a bit, my eyes closed.

Nqaba: Benditshilo ba ubushushu bakho abukho normal yazi.

Me: And I didn't listen, but I'm not dying tatakhe so you can relax.

Nqaba: If this thing doesn't stop ndikusa kwa gqirha k'sasa.

Me: Okay baby.

He looked at me in silence... and that very moment, my phone rang. He reached for it, checked the screen and frowned.

Me: Ngubani?

Nqaba: I don't know, but it's a foreign number.

Me: Phendula kaloku.

Nqaba: Hay ina i-phone yakho.

I took the phone and answered...

Me: Hello?

Ziyanda: Hello sisi, did I wake you?

Me: Uhm no, ngu Ziyanda?

Ziyanda: Yes, you recognized my voice. Wow.

I rolled my eyes, putting the phone on speaker for Nqaba to also hear.

Ziyanda: I wanted to update you, mom is flying out Sunday evening, with dad. So if there anything you're going to do with what I already told you then you better be ready because dad is a well-connected man.

Me: Oh-kay...

Ziyanda: Uhm, do you know of a person called Faith? She's been talking to that person a lot lately.

Me: Did you manage to get a surname?

Ziyanda: I did, but I forgot where I wrote it, along with her number.



Me: Does Titus ring a bell?

Ziyanda: Yes! That's her, apparently she's your aunt? Your dad's sister if I'm not mistaken?

Me: Yes, she is.

Ziyanda: She will be accommodating mom.

I looked at Nqaba, aphela emqaleni.

Kanti u Faith Titus nyhani undifuna ntoni?

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## 584

I cleared my throat, the silence had been longer than intended. For one, I really appreciated Ziyanda for the efforts she was making for me. She was going over and beyond, updating me unprovoked, I really appreciated that.

Me: Did they say how long they'd be here for?

Ziyanda: They'll only come back once they're done with exhuming the body and doing the necessary ceremony to appease your mom's spirit.

Me: Okay, thank you Ziya so much. I really appreciate what you're doing.

Ziyanda: I am glad I could help, my siblings and I don't support what mom is doing so if we can't stop her at least someone else can try.

Me: Thank you sisi.

Ziyanda: Alright then, have a good one.

Me: You too.

I saved her number, looked at Nqaba and chuckled. He was speechless, for once in his life he was speechless. I got up, went to wash my face in the bathroom and came back, the blood in my nose coming out kancinci than when I woke up.

Me: You better get me a gun Nqaba, that tactic in my car ain't gonna do the job. Get me a goddam gun!

He didn't move, just sat there looking at me in silence. I sat next to him, still on my side of the bed.

Me: And you know what's worse baby kuyo yonke lento? What's worse is that I'm going to kill Faith before that woman's feet touch the South African soil. My problem with Faith is that she thinks ndiyamoyika, in her stupid rotting mind she really thinks I'm scared of her. Rhaatis!

I pulled the covers underneath him and tried to sleep, but that was pointless, there was no way I was going to fall asleep with that much anger. He went downstairs leaving me fuming in our room, came back a few minutes later with two glasses, his scotch and my wine. We drank the first two glasses in silence, each staring at the walls...

Nqaba: We have to be strategic about this whole thing yazi baby.

Me: Two bullets, one gun, one car. That's all I need, that's the only strategy I have for Faith. One bullet in her chest, the other straight into her forehead.

Nqaba: Uzobanjwa.

Me: Uzovumelani ndibanjwe kengoku wena?

Nqaba: Luthando I know you love me and you have faith in a lot of things that I do but andingo Thixo mna, I am not even a magician.

Me: If you were able to keep Chuma out of jail for everything she did all those years, I'm pretty sure awuzoxakwa kukhupha mna ndibulele umntu omnye qha. Anyway I'll be a first time offender so the law won't be too harsh on me, meaning you won't have much to work on.

Nqaba: Luthando, you're not going to kill your aunt. Stop thinking like that.

Me: Nyhani yazi baby, instead of just killing her, I should kill both of them at the same time. That will save me a lot of time and resources.

He looked at me, shaking his head as he drank the third glass, closing the cap kwi scotch sakhe.

Nqaba: Mr Titus is in Nigeria for the entire month, he's working on a huge legal project there. So it makes sense for Faith to want to accommodate these people from Sunday, he won't be there to ask much questions.

I just looked at him, I hated it when he became all logical and weird. I wanted the Beast, for once in my life I wanted him to be the Beast that he was known to be. I needed him to be ruthless...

Nqaba: What we could do thina, is to kidnap u Faith and delay your aunt's flight from the UK or, steal her luggage from the airport. Anything, just to buy ourselves time.

Me: Or we could plant drugs in their luggage.

Nqaba: That's going to be difficult... there are cameras at the airport and the sniff-dogs could catch lomntu sizobe simthumile engekafiki kwi luggage yabo. It's not worth risking.

I looked at him, poured myself one last glass, closed the bottle and looked at him one more time.

Me: Can you do me a favor sthandwa sam?

Nqaba: Anything.

Me: I need you to work your magic right now, I really need you to work your magic.

Nqaba: Work my magic?

Me: Yes tatakhe, I need you to work with me right now. Work your magic and switch from this loving husband of mine to Beast. Please.

He looked at me acting confused, as confused as he was acting, I saw a glimpse of excitement, a twinkle of excitement in his eyes when I mentioned Beast.

Me: My problem with you right now is that you're not necessarily being logical, but you're thinking with your heart and to be honest, I really need you to think with your head. I need Ta Beast to work with me right now, I need the murderer in you to strategize, I need the killer on you to be thirsty for blood Nqabayomzi Gwala I need the lunatic in you unleashed... Can you give me that?

He didn't blink, didn't move, didn't say a word.

Which was understandable, I have never asked him anything close to what I was asking from him.

Me: There's no time to think with emotions right now, I have an old hag stepping on my toes and I feel like I'm about to explode. If you don't want her blood on your hands then step aside and let me deal with her, it's fine. I don't have a mother, and if her twin's presence in my life is going to make me suffocate in my own spit then what's the use of having her breathing? She's polluting the air mos.

He shifted, uncomfortable.

Me: Get in bed, ulale. But keep in mind that I need Ta Beast right now, sobuya sikhale, sizisole, cuddle and have mind-blowing sex when all this is over. One thing I'm not going to do is sit here and act like I have it in me to be logical when I know I don't. Kakade ndindedwa kulento nabo Marcus bendithembele ngabo bathi this is not a Smith matter... In fact u Marcus uyandicalula, hehehe! Nigga forgot that we are all not Smiths, it totally slipped his mind that he's also not a Smith, that he was also adopted, nje ngam. But it's fine I'll fight my battles ndedwa if I have to.

I pulled the cover over my head ndalala, leaving Nqaba looking like a statue. About an hour later, I felt him getting in bed and moving very close but not cuddling against me. For some reason I wasn't even emotional, I didn't even have tears, my mind was on how I could get Faith eyedwa nje, ndimvingcele eyedwa, ndimbhuqe ngenduku aphume amafufunyana la anawo kqala before ndimcakacele izinja.

She didn't deserve to be buried like a human being, if God could grant me the opportunity to kill her, I'd slice up her body while she's breathing, make sure that she feel every pain. I'd make her eat her own flesh, fry some parts and make her watch dogs eat it up. That's what she deserved, a slow painful death, just for being a constant pain in my ass! Bloody agent!

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## **585**

When the day dawned, I woke up to an empty bed.

I didn't bother looking for him in the bathroom because there was just total silence there, I went out of the room and straight to the kitchen, because I could hear someone humming from there.

Nguni: Aw sisteri, use grumpy na today? Or you're just not a morning person?

Me: What the hell are you doing in my kitchen?

Nguni: Good morning to you too Mrs. Gwala, I'm making myself breakfast. Is that okay with you?

Me: Nguniweja, do not irritate me namhlanje, just do me that one favor neh?  
Don't.

Nguni: This is what happens when married people fight instead of having sex at night. Yhoooo Thixo wes'rhalamuncwa!

He walked out, with coffee in his one hand and buttered bread in the other. I sighed, Nqaba must have gone out. I went back to my room, because I wanted to talk to him and my phone was in there. I dialed his personal phone, went straight to voice mail, I dialed another one and it rang in his closet, so I dialed his work phone...

Nqaba: Gwala?

Me: Hey...

Nqaba: Hey, you slept well? How's the nose bleeding?

Me: I think it stopped, I didn't sleep much. Wena?

Nqaba: I couldn't sleep at all, so I decided to take a drive.

Me: You should have woken me up so we could take the drive together.

He didn't answer me.

Me: Babe?

Nqaba: Andiphazamanga for not waking you up, I needed to breathe, away from you.

That sent a sharp pain in my chest, away from me? Seriously?

Me: Haibo baby!

Nqaba: You're dangerous to yourself right now and my only instinct is to protect you, from destroying yourself more than anything.

Me: But that doesn't necessarily warrant you to want to breathe, away from me. That hurts.

Nqaba: You provoked the beast in me last night Luthando and I'm not sure if you're aware of the dangers of doing that.

Me: So you seriously left me with Nguni because you felt provoked? Come on tatakhe.

Nqaba: I don't feel provoked, you provoked the beast in me. I'm okay, but for some reason I am restless and that's not a good thing so I really cannot be around you right now.

Me: You're restless?

He breathed, a heavy breathing that was.

Me: Baby what will it take for you switch off your emotions, have your people drag Faith from Port Elizabeth to Johannesburg and lock her up in a room with just the two of us inside? Two of us being me and her, not you. That's all I'm asking from Ta Beast. Bring me Faith, then I'll stop provoking you. I'll handle her myself.

Nqaba: Baby, you're angry. The prison is full of innocent people like you who acted out of anger and did the unthinkable, I don't want you to be part of those statistics.

Me: Baby...

Nqaba: Sthandwa sam, listen to me.

Me: I am listening to you, you're the one who's not listening to me.

Nqaba: Yazi this is the very same reason I never wanted you to be exposed to this life, yerrr Luthando!

He hung up, but I called. Not the other way around.

I allowed him to breathe far away from me, at least he was around Gauteng noba uphi ke. The saddest and most frustrating thing about the Faith issue was that I couldn't ask her son to help me, I couldn't ask Yarees to help me because he knows her as Lwandiso's mother. He'd never do anything to harm her... So I had to do it myself. I had to man up!

I got up, made the bed and freshened up.

Luke called just as I was coming out of the shower,

Me: Lulu?

Luke: Hey, how are you doing?

Me: I'm well thank you bro, yourself?

Luke: I'm okay, is it possible to see you today? If you're back from PE.

Me: Uhm, I'm back, got back last night. Is it urgent?

Luke: Yes.

Me: Okay, I don't want to fetch the kids as yet. Do you mind if I just pick you up?  
Or you can ask Keri to drop you off at my house, we'll have enough privacy here.

Luke: They've given me a car, let me rather come to you.

Me: Alright then.

Luke: Make breakfast so long.

I was about to argue, he laughed and hung up.

Heh!

I got dressed, went to make breakfast for at least four people, in case Nqaba returned while we were eating. A few minutes later, Nguni walked in with his cup and went straight to the sink, he rinsed it, dried it up and put it back into the cupboard.

Nguni: Zithini ii plans zakho for the day Mrs. Boss lady?

Me: I'm waiting for my brother, I'll confirm everything omka kwakhe.

Nguni: I need to be in Soweto, do you mind if ndiya ofika ko brother lo wakho ke?

Me: No I don't mind.

Nguni: Okay, sharp.

He walked back out, Luke came through an hour later driving Joe's Porsche. Nguni opened the gate for him, I met him on the front door and we hugged. Just as we were about to walk back into the house, I saw Nguni walking briskly towards me. So I ushered Luke in and waited for Nguni.

Nguni: Sisteri, u sure yi brother yakho le ngamla?

Me: Ewe Nguni, he's my brother.

Nguni: Akho need yo khumsha, or ufuna asive ba siyamhleba?

Me: Siya? Hewethu nguwe ohlebayo apha.

Nguni: Yhela sisteri uyi ngamla or uxubile? Kutheni uzoba ne brother ezingamla nje ngoku?

I sighed, I really wasn't in the mood for him.

Nguni: Do me one favor ke sisteri ne? Yenze le way uyenzayo qha ungabhaqwa, kumnandi ukusebenzela futhi ungumntu ogrand kodwa andisoze ndifele is'moko sakho mna. So be vigilant, Ta Beast has eyes and ears everywhere.

Then he walked away, I looked at him, smiling. He really thought I'd cheat on Nqaba and still bring the man to Nqaba's house? Do men really have that little of minds?

I joined Luke inside, he had already plated up for himself, so I played for myself sayoty e lounge.

Luke: I've been thinking about your new aunt from the UK.

Me: Mh.

Luke: What if we stopped her from getting into the country?

Me: hat if we just deal with her permanently? Oh and she's working with Faith on this whole thing, her daughter confirmed last night.

Luke: Faith Titus?

Me: Yes.

Luke: That one we can kill, bury inside her house and go on with our lives.

I laughed, he was serious.

I looked at him, Luke was always the reasonable one, along with Keri. Then the rest of us were the crackheads of the family.

Me: You don't even know how to handle a gun Lu.

Luke: Desperate times call for desperate measures.

That moment was supposed to get me excited and hyped up, but it didn't. I kind of felt there was more to Luke's change of character than what he was willing to share with us. Killing and Luke? No, that wasn't him.

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## **586**

We sat in silence, his last words lingering in the air. I could feel his eyes feasting on me, but my mind had drifted away from him, away from us. Something was wrong with him, something must have happened while he was away. Marcus Smith was the Gangsta of the family not Luke, it didn't make sense.

Luke: Marcus is on Titus' payroll Trina, he's not going to help you.

Me: Okay wait, what did you just say?



I snapped, I literally heard payroll and snapped out of my fuzzy bubble.

Luke: Marcus Smith is on Titus' payroll, he's not going to help you.

Me: How do you know that?

Luke: He slipped when you were in PE and said something about a well paying job Mrs. Titus gave him, and then quickly changed saying Mr. Titus gave him the job. So he knows Faith is involved in this rubbish, and I bet he's also helping them.

Everything made sense...

Nothing made sense, yet everything made sense.

Luke: I told Keri, and she said she's on our side, whatever we choose to do, she'll back us up.

Me: We need to go to Port Elizabeth.

Luke: I'll ask Joe to lend us his jet when I get home tonight, but for now, we need to decide on whether we're doing this legally or illegally and strategize accordingly.

Me: South African law is really not dependable Lu, I have no faith in it whatsoever.

Luke: So we're going in ourselves?

Me: Are you up for it? It could get messy.

Luke: I'm here, mind, body and soul.

I smiled, feeling a whole lot better. That short sentence made a whole lot of difference.

Luke: Is your husband on-board?

Me: No.

Luke: No?

Me: He wants us to strategize and stuff, he's just being emotional about this whole thing because it involves family. You know how Nqaba is when it comes to family.

Luke: You're his family, you should be priority right now.

Me: I'd like to believe he's well aware of that, but it's still family. Don't worry yourself about him, if he doesn't come around, we're leaving him behind.

He nodded and finished up his meal, I collected and washed the plates then we sat down and strategized our trip to Port Elizabeth. We had a bigger problem,

Nonzukiso, but we needed to sort Faith out first. I had been squirming in silence for far too long, something had to be done to her. She had to be brought back to her senses.

\*\*\*\*

Nqaba came back home hours after Luke had left, I was alone, Nguni had been gone for a while too. He did say he wanted to go to Soweto and I didn't bother asking how long he intended to be gone for. Normally, I would have cooked his favorite meal, welcome him into his home with a kiss and a glass of whiskey on the rocks. Unfortunately, he walked into his home and got welcomed by the aroma of my favorite meal, as he walked into the lounge his eyes landed on my glass of wine with two chocolate bars next to it.

Nqaba: Good afternoon...

Me: Gwala.

He mumbled and walked away, straight to his bedroom. I sat there, wrapping my head around the plan Luke and I had come up with. I had no time to beg Nqaba, if he was in my shoes, we'd be cleaning up blood using buckets and vacuums, but because I'm Luthando his wife, we had to be strategic about it. Okay then, I had a strategy and he wasn't going to stop me. Not by a long shot.

I got up, went to dish up for him, and Nguni even though Nguni was still not back from his Soweto trip. I took Nqaba's food to our bedroom, he was in the shower so I just put the tray on the pedestal that stood on his side of the bed. Then I walked back out...

My phone rang, Keri as I walked down the stairs.

Me: Sis?

Keri: Hey, I just spoke to Luke.

Me: Mh,

Keri: I think it's best if I just keep the kids with me for a while, well, until you're done with this plan of yours.

Me: Really? You don't mind?

Keri: I don't mind, and even if I did, who was going take care of them?

Me: I was going to call Fatima.

Keri: No don't worry, they're happy here so just go on and do what you have to do. I'll keep an eye on them.

Me: Thank you so much, I love you.

Keri: I love you too, good night.

Me: Night.

It wasn't even night-time yet, well it was after four, and they usually have dinner at 4 at her house. So she was justified. I got to the lounge, switched on the TV and lay on the couch. I didn't necessarily want to watch anything I just wanted a distraction, something to make a noise while I got lost in my thoughts. And as expected, I fell asleep on the spot.

“Luthando? Luthando?”

I opened my eyes, shut them close in the next second because the light was too bright.

Me: Hm?

Nqaba: Come to bed.

Me: Oh, is it bed time already?

He just looked at me, irritated.

I got up and led the way. He turned off the TV and walked right behind me to our room, I undressed, got into his vest that was just lying on the ottoman behind the door ndangena ezingubeni. He followed, switching off the lights.

After a few minutes of silence, I could tell he was deep in thought, so I turned around and faced him.

Me: What's bothering you?

Nqaba: Marcus is working for her.

Me: Faith?

Nqaba: Nonzukiso.

Me: How do you know?

He didn't respond, I sat up and switched on my lamp.

Me: How do you know?

He reached for his drawer, removed a file and gave it to me. I looked at the file wondering how long it had been in that drawer because... Wow! I opened it, impatient, and read through the contents. There were bank statements of his payments, pictures of secret meetings between Faith and Stella in the UK, WhatsApp conversations, phone records.

I felt my stomach turn, I knew Marcus was a traitor but the extremes were sickening. When I was done, I closed the file and gave it back to him. He put it back inside the drawer, in silence, and then looked at me.

Me: Are you now ready or should I just go ahead without your back-up!?

Nqaba: Go ahead with what?

Me: Good night ke baby, I love you.

I kissed him on the lips, switched off my lamp and covered my head looking the other way. He didn't move, he didn't utter a single word, and I was okay with that. I was content knowing who and what I was going against. I defeated Marcus when I defeated Karoo and Ntando, he wasn't that much of a threat and to be honest, I wasn't really moved by his involvement with my enemies. Just that the extremes they had all gone through just for this one lousy person were shocking, sickening, disgusting. Other than that, I could handle him, just like I could handle all three of them in one go.

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## 587

I had a peaceful night, slept right through.

When I woke up, he wasn't in bed, yet again so I just lay there looking at the ceiling.

“Hey, you're up?”

I quickly turned to be met by his naked torso in sweatpants walking barefoot, but, with a breakfast tray in his hands. I sat up as he put the tray next to me, kissing my lips as he sat down.

Me: You made breakfast?

Nqaba: Wothuswa yintoni kengoku?

Me: Baby, you? You made breakfast?

Nqaba: No yenziwe ngu Nguni.

Me: What?!

He laughed, I smiled and ate a piece of bacon by hand.

Me: Enkosi mfethu.

Nqaba: It's just breakfast Luthando, why are you making me feel like a bad husband?

Me: Ha.a ke mntakabawo, I don't know how to make feelings. That part is on you, sundifaka kwi personal problems zakho.

Nqaba: Uyeke nini wena ukuba personal kum kanene?

I blushed, he smiled leaning forward for a kiss. He was in a peaceful mood, he was the old hubby, lovey-dovey being his middle name, he was happy, at peace, chirpy, calm and... wait, he was calm? I retracted from the kiss and looked at him quizzically. He frowned,

Me: Are you okay?

Nqaba: Yes, haibo baby.

Me: No tatakhe, silele une stress apha because of my brother, now all of a sudden you're making breakfast for me, you're laughing and you're this chilled? Even walking barefoot? Where are your slippers?

He laughed, got up from where he sat and opened the windows still laughing at me. When he was done he walked out. I sat there looking at the door in silence, Nqaba was up to something, and his mind was made up about whatever that something was. I breathed, and took my tray up to my lap, started eating. He walked back in with his bowl of oats and he shifted the whole conversation to his kids and how much he missed them. I missed them too, so I obviously vibed with that conversation until he broke it with a:

“I've organized an empty warehouse for you, and Nguni is available at your command.”

I stopped eating and looked at him, was that the go ahead I've been longing for?

Me: You've... Yhima baby, you've organized a warehouse for me?

Nqaba: Yes.

Me: And Nguni is available to help me with whatever I need?

Nqaba: Precisely.

Me: And you chose Nguni because?

Nqaba: Because Lwandiso can't help you, it's his mother that you're fighting for. Yarees cannot help you either, he's very close to Lwandiso.

Me: So you're not going to be part of this? I appreciate the effort, I appreciate you, but I want to know... Are you not availing yourself for this?

Nqaba: I'll be there with you, as your backup of course, but this is your fight and I want you to fight it however way it will make you feel better.

I put the tray aside and threw my arms over his head, squashing his face into my chest. His hands automatically finding home around my waist.

Me: I love you bighead, yho I love you mfondini!

Nqaba: I love you too stubborn head!

Me: I'm not stubborn, I'm just passionate.

Nqaba: Passionate my left big foot Luthando, you're stubborn qha qwaba!

Me: And you love me either way.

Nqaba: Do I really have a choice?

Me: Nope, you're stuck with me nigga. I'm here forever, I'm gonna bother your big head forever, I'm gonna blow up in your face, burn your cars, smash your phones and do whatever it takes to bring you back to your senses... FOREVER baby!

We both laughed, I squeezed him tighter a second longer. Eventually taking a moment to look down and kiss him. We kissed for a while, well, until his phone disturbed us. I reached out for it, gave it to him and walked out with my tray and his bowl.

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I called Luke to come to my house, Nqaba was still on his phone and he sounded aggravated so I just grabbed my stuff and left him up there, went to wait for Luu in the lounge. Faith called while I was waiting, using her house's landline.

Me: Faith Titus?

Faith: And the aggression?

Me: Can I help you?

Faith: Yes, help me understand what was going through your head this past weekend?

Me: I don't follow...

Faith: I sent out a team of men to evacuate me from my son's house because I didn't want you to continue with that sham of a baby shower, but you went ahead with it anyway.

Me: Because, I don't care what you want. I'm not your husband.

Faith: Sibongile?

Me: Sibongile Trinalique Smith, yes, that's me.

She burst out laughing, and I just sat there waiting for her to calm down.

Faith: Smith? Smith my smart ass, do you even know who you are? Do you even know where you belong? The fact that you were adopted by the Smith's doesn't make you one. UngumXhosa Sibongile and your father is a rapist, a jailbird to be exact.

Me: My father is a rapist, a gangsta, a thug, a jailbird but most importantly he is your mother's son. This actually has a nice ring to it, YOUR MOTHER'S SON IS A JAILBIRD!

Faith: And you think I care? I wasn't born out of rape, and I don't have a jailbird as a father. I have a bit of class honey, and if you weren't hellbent in fighting everything I do I could actually teach you a thing or two about class.

Me: Mna Faith ndifuna nje lentsango uyitshayayo that makes you think you have class. Listen ke nontombi, my mother was raped by your brother and I was born. Your brother is all the above-mentioned but you know it gets even deeper than that, right? I married a gangsta, whose father was your brother's mentor, even your own husband was mentored by Nqobimpi and that gangsta that I married will do anything and everything to make me happy.

She didn't respond,

Me: What you don't realize is that unlike that gangsta husband that I married, I do not mind spilling blood, I mean family blood. Ask your brother, I killed his son right before his eyes. In fact, in that one day he lost two of his sons and there was nothing he could do about it. But wait, why am I sending you too far? Ask your

husband, he was there, he organized everything that I needed for that day, he was my blesser. He watched me pull the trigger and applauded me with so much awe and admiration because I handled gangstas like I was handling day care toddlers. Now my dear aunt, that's class. That is one helluva class that I could never be able to teach you unless I could have you strapped in an electrocution chair.

I could hear her breathing, and that was fuel to my engine.

Me: So you see, Faith Titus, before you start acting smart on me please do your research. I will roast your ass up and feed you to your dogs without thinking twice and honestly, Lwandiso is the only reason I haven't slit your throat for all the bullshit you've been throwing my way. Now with all that gibberish being said, do yourself a favour and stay out of my way, or I will slit your throat and drink your blood undiluted. Bloody parasite!

I hung up.

If she didn't take that as a warning then I didn't know and didn't care, I had fervently done my part, whatever else followed was on her.

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## **588**

Nqaba walked out, fully dressed in black denims, high neck t-shirt and boots. Simple, yet fully dressed and one look at him I could tell some crazy stuff were about to happen. He meant business.

Me: Kuyiwaphi nam ndihambe?

Nqaba: I have a little something that I need to check on, I'll be back in about two hours max.

Me: So awuzohamba nam?

Nqaba: You can go visit your babies in the meantime.

Me: Wow... dismissed would be the right word.

He smiled, walked over to where I was sitting and kissed me softly on the lips and forehead taking his car keys and walking out. I followed him but stopped at the



front door, just watching him get in his car, his scent still lingering around my nostrils. He lowered his window, looked at me and chuckled a bit.

Nqaba: I'll be back haibo, stop sulking.

Me: Nam ndifuna uhamba mfondini.

Nqaba: I know, but it's better if you stay behind. Or better yet, if I need you I'll send your friend to come and fetch you.

Me: Nguni is not my friend baby.

Nqaba: He likes you, uthi your English ithwe swe-swe ihoney.

He laughed at his own joke and drove out, I closed the door, and waited for Luke who came exactly two hours after my husband left. I told him about hubby's offer, he got excited that at least we had a solid back up and then we went over our plan of torturing Faith kqala before even attempting to block Nonzukiso's entrance to the country. Our first problem or rather task was Faith.

Four hours later, Nqaba called... Luke had already left for Keri's house.

Me: Tata ka Ubabalo Gwala?

Nqaba: In my closet there's a brown box behind my shoe shelf pha e back, go there and take two guns, make sure you don't touch the guns with your bare hands. There should be gloves underneath the box itself, wear them and take those guns, Nguni is on his way to fetch you.

Me: Erhm...

Nqaba: Are you backing down?

Me: No, of course not, I would just appreciate some greenlight or something along those lines.

Nqaba: I don't have time, I'll brief you once you get here. Just get what I'm telling you to get and be ready for Nguni.

Me: Okay.

Nqaba: And dress appropriately.

He dropped his phone before I could respond, obviously, I knew I couldn't take guns and still wear heels and a dress. I knew that, common sense. I went to fetch the two guns, changed into black tights, black sneakers because boots were uncomfortable and a black vest with a hoodie just over my shoulders. When I was done I went to wait for Nguni outside, but instead of seeing his car, I saw two red

Merc's pulling up and then two shots flew over my head. Instantly, I grabbed one gun and fired straight to the human figure I could make out behind the trees at the gate and he fell down, I fired another shot and hit the tar, one car screeched its way out of that situation and the other people who must have been in the second car tried to get the fallen man inside the car. I ran towards the gate, my gun ready to shoot and a lady in the front passenger seat saw me. She screamed, I let go of one bullet and it landed right in her forehead. By the time Nguni got there, I had three bodies, and one injured man. I only saved him because we would need him to talk. He jumped of his car, with two guns in the air, leaving the door open and the engine running as he ran towards me. I was just standing there, no gun in sight.

Nguni: Aaw sisteri, aaw bhoza yama Beastes! Yazi I didn't believe them when they told me you killed Oliphant? But vandag? This? Hay this is groet sisteri.

He blew whistles, laughing at the same time. I walked over to the front door, locked and took my phone, then I walked back at him. He was packing the three bodies into the red Merc, then he strapped the injured man in the back passenger seat.

Me: What are you doing?

Nguni: You never leave evidence unattended to, that's the very first lesson you should learn wena Gangsta wife if you wanna live long in this game.

I nodded, walking towards the car he was driving.

Nguni: I'll tell the story, I know the Gents won't believe me when I tell them that u ma-Beastes single-handedly killed three thugs and injured one, in one go. No help whatsoever.

Me: Nguni, please stick to calling me sisteri. At least I'm used to that now, aba Gangsta wife naba ma-Beast are really not cutting it.

Nguni: Uyazibona ke izinto zojola namagintsa aniziqheli ii compliments, whoah, abantwana beengamla!!

He turned and walked to the red car, leaving me looking at him confused. I called after him.

Me: Where the hell are you going to?

Nguni: Taking your evidence to a safe place, surely you know how to drive a Mahindra??

Me: Wait, so I'm supposed to drive myself?

Nguni: Do you prefer to drive these dead bodies maybe?

Obviously not, I didn't respond, but I got in his car and followed him out. He was witty and a tad bit arrogant, everything that I was but would never admit.

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## 589

I slowly followed behind him, obviously slightly frightened because I just single-handedly killed three people in my front yard. But I comforted myself saying “It was either them or me” and that wasn’t on the cards. I had five little human beings to live for, I couldn’t afford to die just yet. We got to a busy crossroad, and I saw familiar men, they were just sitting by the road but they looked suspicious, making me uncomfortable. I decided to keep my eyes on Nguni, I was following closely behind him, one car had intersected between us but I was still in the right distance behind him.

Nqaba called just as the car indicated to go opposite direction,

Me: Gwala?

Nqaba: Follow that car indicating to go left.

Me: Uhm, am I not supposed to follow Nguni kanene?

Nqaba: Follow the silver car in front of you.

Me: Oh, okay.

He hung up, I looked at Nguni’s car one more time and followed the silver car in front of me. Obviously Nqaba was watching my every move, as uncomfortable as that was, it made me feel a bit safe. We were in an empty an open road, but the driver in front of me was driving slower than he was a few minutes ago. Next thing he opened his window and fired a shot in the air, I almost hit the breaks in shock.

Me: What the hell is this?

I reached for my gun and just kept my distance from the car, he hooted, driving even slower but I just kept my stance.

“Siri, call Baby”

I waited anxiously as the phone rang for a couple of seconds, then he answered.

Nqaba: Mamakhe?

Me: What the hell is going on here? These people are firing shots.

Nqaba: I know, I’m watching you.

Me: You’re watching me? Nqaba who are these people?

Nqaba: Those people are your worst enemies right now, your job is to come out of that road alive and not wounded. Can you do that?

Me: What? You set me up?

Nqaba: Luthando Gwala?

Me: No baby, no. You set me up? Intentionally?

Nqaba: I said this is your fight, I will be watching from the bench and that’s what I’m doing. Now remember, you have six human beings that need you alive. Whatever happens out there, no matter how tricky the situation gets, remember that there is an Uba, Uve, Ikho, Iyakha, Iyazi and a Nqaba that need you alive.

I breathed, my eyes focused on the car in front of me.

It was no longer slow, but it had stopped, so I hit the breaks and stopped a short distance from it.

Me: I hate this life.

Nqaba: I hate it too, but what can we do?

Me: Guess the only option we have is to fight for survival?

Nqaba: It’s either us or them, and I never married a weakling.

Me: Ndikuvile kwekwe!

He laughed and hung up, Nqaba still found humor in setting me up kwi death trap? I married a thug for real. I took a deep breath, watching the car closely. Two men walked out of the car, each with a gun in hand. My only option was to trust Nguni’s car would have been bullet proofed otherwise I was dead meat. While they were still a distance away from my car, one of the guys fired a shot and the

bullet bounced, I smiled, with satisfaction. I lowered my window, and fired one shot hitting the other guy on the knee and he fell to the ground. I had no bullet proof vest whatsoever, but the minute he fell to the ground, I opened my car and stepped out with both guns in my hands.

Kuranya: You're dead Trinalique Smith! You're fucken dead today.

I shot both his back tyres with one gun while the other was still pointed at him and his friend. There was someone in the car, I heard a scream when I fired the shots.

Me: Who sent you?

Kuranya: Who the fu-

I shot his friend's head, and blood splattered all over Kuranya. Dude died on the spot. That was my moment, I saw fear in Kuranya's eyes and that was all I needed. One thing I had learnt from Nqaba was to never back away from an enemy, make sure they feel your presence, and then pounce on them like a beast!

I slowly walked closer to the car, my eyes still fixed on Kuranya as he was trying to get up. He reached for his gun that was a few centimeters out of his reach, I shot his hand and he jumped in shock.

Me: I'm going to ask you one more time, who sent you?

Kuranya: Fuck you!!!

Just then, a phone in the car rang, I slowly opened the door and reached for it (the ringing phone) and that's when I saw a young lady at the back passenger seat. She was sweating, tears and snot all over his face.

Me: Hi, unjani?

Michelle: I'm fine, please don't kill me. I don't know who sent them.

Me: It's okay, just behave, I'm not a monster.

She frantically nodded, I looked at Kuranya who had torn his t-shirt and was trying to wrap pieces around his bleeding hand but still trying to make sure I don't get closer to him. I looked at the ringing phone, again, the person was persistent.

Me: Who sent you?

He mumbled, so I answered the phone.

Me: Hello?

Stella: Kuranya? Wait, is that you Michelle?

I looked at Michelle... and brought the phone closer to her so she could speak. She cleared her throat understanding what I needed from her.

Stella: Michelle?

Michelle: Ma?

Stella: Where's Kuri?

Michelle: He's uhm, he just stepped out of the car.

Stella: How far are you guys with the task? I don't want any mishaps.

Michelle: I am not really sure, but the other guys went to her house about two hours ago and they haven't called yet.

Stella: Tell Kuranya to call me, Trina is way to clever. I cannot have her on our tail right now, I need a clean job.

Michelle: I'll do that ma.

Stella: Did anyone get hold of Beast? His phone is still on voicemail...

Michelle looked at me, I cocked a brow, she didn't budge, so I stole one look at Kuranya and he was already on his feet pointing his gun at me. I didn't think twice, I didn't care that I would give away my cover kulomntu who was on the other end of the line, I opened fire, three bullets right in the chest and he fell backwards his gun flying up in the air. Michelle screamed...

Stella: What the hell was that? Michelle? What the hell was that?

She was now crying hysterically, she could talk, that was my cue to introduce myself in the conversation.

Me: Hi Makazi, unjani?

Stella: Trina!!!

Me: In person, why do you sound frustrated? Didn't think I'd come to play?

Stella: What have you done?

Me: I just killed your Kuranya, and I'm about to kill Michelle because she lied and said she didn't know who sent Kuranya.

Stella: You're making the work easy for me you know that right? With you behind bars, I will commence with my plan, and no one will be able to stop me.

Me: Nyhani? Wanna bet?

Stella: Hahaha! You're funny mntanam, you don't know who you're dealing with. Do not make the mistake of underestimating me.

Me: I guess this is where we say Qhude manikiniki, right?

She hung up, I looked at Michelle.

She knew I was coming for her, and her only resort was to fight me with whatever she could lay her hands on. I felt a sharp pain on my shoulder and groaned, next thing she was trying to get out of the car using the other door. I pulled my arm out of the car, feeling pain and heat on where I had been stabbed. I looked over my shoulder, she had stabbed me with a screwdriver. Seriously? Are we in high school?

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## 590

I took a deep breath, looking at her as she did her best running away from the scene. There was literally nowhere to run to, we had an open road ahead of us and an open field with burnt grass on both sides of the road. I took a very deep breath and pulled the tool off my shoulder and the pain shot straight to my heart, unfortunately for me, I couldn't tear anything and wrap it around my shoulder. I had to breathe through the pain...

I walked back to my car, with tears on my face and dialed Nqaba. I couldn't go further than I had come, he had to at least come drive me or send someone to fetch me. I was injured, my shoulder was bleeding. I didn't care about Michelle, I wanted my husband to come and save my ratchet ass from the mess.

Nqaba: Luthando Gwala?

Me: I have a stab wound on my shoulder, please come and fetch me.

Nqaba: How many dead bodies are there?

Me: Two.

Nqaba: Where's the third one?

Me: She's running away, I don't have the strength.

Nqaba: Which is why you have guns in your possession, the bullets are supposed to do the work for you.

Me: Baby I'm in pain... my arm is weak, I am hurting.

Nqaba: Luthando?

He was stern, I breathed, I knew that very moment that wasn't going to fetch me.

Me: Ta Beast.

Nqaba: Kill that woman and get yourself out of there in the next thirty minutes.

I didn't respond to him, I looked over at Michelle, she was still running. I stepped out of the car, aimed at her and fired three shots, she fell to the ground.

Me: Roger.

Nqaba: Go and check if she's really dead, because if she's not, you could get into trouble. She could talk, and we don't want that now, do we?

Me: No.

Nqaba: Good, call me when you reach the other side.

Me: Roger.

I hung up before he could, I knew he wasn't going to applaud me on that, his darker side was on activation and all I could do was follow the orders and come out alive. Simple. I made my way towards Michelle, it took me forever to reach her but I eventually did and she was still moving. I kicked her shin and she cried out loud, and that's all I needed, I shot her from behind and walked away. A few steps away from her, I felt nauseas so I bent down and let it all out. Wiped my lips and walked back to the car. I drove, with difficulty to the end of the road, there were two security guys who didn't even ask for my ID but just lifted their hand in greeting. I hooted at them, and drove past and that's when I was able to breathe. I made it to the other side, alive. Once I saw a bus stop, I stopped my car and cried my heart out. I was having flashbacks of everything, starting from the shooting at home, to the conversation with Stella, to everything else that transpired. I couldn't think past the fact that she disrespected my kids' home, she really sent people to kill me, in my own home, where my kids live... and she thought she



would get away with it? Over ingcwaba lika mamam? Over my mom's rotten body? Seriously? I went through all of this over a dead corpse?

“Luthando?”

I looked at my window, there he was, in his handsome self gawking at my stupid and messy face. I cleaned myself up as I opened the door and tried getting out, he didn't even wait for my feet to hit the ground, he opened his arms and embraced me. I broke down on his chest, I didn't care about his men that were surrounding us. I was just happy to be in his arms, to feel safe in his arms. That was all that mattered.

Nqaba: Take your guns, we'll ride together.

I didn't have to respond, I grabbed both my guns and walked with him to his car. One of his men got in Nguni's car and led the way. He helped me get inside the car, went over to his side and we drove between a fleet of black cars. He looked over at my shoulder, then fixed his eyes back on the road.

Nqaba: You came out alive.

Me: You were not begging me.

Nqaba: There's no time for that right now, sikwi war baby.

Me: And you called me baby? Wow!

He laughed, I just smiled. I was in pain yho!

Nqaba: I'm proud of you, Nguni might give you a little more respect going forward. Oko emane ekhuza yedwa.

Me: Yho, akandiphoxa lowo.

Nqaba: He was mad at me, he wanted to handle these people on your behalf and I told him you're capable makakunike imoto akuyeke uzihambele.

Me: Yho oo Nqaba bethuna, busy gambling with our lives nje.

Nqaba: And I wasn't lying, you handled the situation quite well.

Me: I'm hungry futhi mna.

Nqaba: We need to take care of that shoulder first, we still have more work to do. Well, you still have more work to do.

Me: There's more? Dude!

He chuckled and focused on the road, I closed my eyes and said a short prayer. I had seen enough blood for the day, I knew I wouldn't be able to stomach more. I couldn't.

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## 591

We arrived in Soweto, the house looked decent from the outside but the smell was very unpleasant. He parked and looked at me, his head resting on the headrest behind him.

Nqaba: I have informed Keri and Joe of what's happening, including Polo's involvement in the whole issue.

Me: O-kay.

Nqaba: Luke is here, working with the guys. Joe has availed his PJ as camouflage for us to work with if and when we need to.

Me: Luke is here? Hayi Nqaba, what does Luke know about guns and bombs?

Nqaba: I don't know and I don't care, he's the only person who reached out to me wanting to help you. Eyoba akakwazi uphath'intshiza andingeni ndawo, we'll give him a machete if we have to.

I laughed, an entire machete!?!

We got out of the car, and walked together to the main door. Nguni walked out laughing, and in a split second he froze as though he had seen a ghost.

Me: Nguniweja.

Nguni: Usaphefumla Ma-Beastes?

Me: Yep!

He looked over at Nqaba, and without saying another word, he bowed at him and walked away. I looked over at the same Nqaba and there wasn't even a smile on his face...

Me: And then?

He pushed the door open, and led me inside. I followed, until we got to a room that looked like it belonged in a clinic. I didn't need no instruction, I removed the

hoodie leaving the vest on. The guy who had been working in that room turned and faced me, smiling.

Nqaba: You have fifteen minutes, I'll be in the next room.

He walked out without even looking at me, the guy wasn't much of a talker too, he got on with his work and I held onto the edges of the bed for my dear life as the spirit stung deeper. He cleaned the wound, dressed it and showed me where to find my husband, I walked into the room and saw Luke. We just hugged, without exchanging words and then he was called by someone outside. He walked out, leaving me with Nqaba and three other guys.

Nqaba: Is it still painful?

Me: Yeah.

Nqaba: Masambe siyotya ke.

Me: Finally.

He held my hand as we walked out to a different car, we went to his ShisaNyama, he went inside leaving me at our table, I only ordered a cocktail because I knew he was going to order the meal for us. While waiting, I saw Frank, not the Uber driver but Frank lo ka Faith. Frank who was sent to evacuate us from Lwandiso's house... he also saw me, and walked briskly to where I was sitting.

Frank: Mrs. Gwala, about the other day...

Me: It's water under the bridge my guy, I understand you were just following Faith's orders.

Frank: I was surprised you didn't tell Ta Beast.

Me: I told him, right after you left.

Frank: Hau, he pretended like he didn't know what I was talking about yesterday when I saw him.

Me: He has a lot on his mind, it must have slipped.

He nodded, just as Nqaba was walking out of the office, luckily for him, an elderly man called Nqaba and that was Frank's cue. He smiled and walked away, I watched in admiration how the ruthless man who set me up in a bloody shootout a couple of hours ago as he engaged with respect with the old man. They were

laughing like old buddies. He finally came to our table, not forgetting to kiss my cheek as he sat down...

Nqaba: Our food will be ready in a few.

Me: Sure...

I sat there, quietly.

I needed my bed, I needed my children.

I was just...

Nqaba: You okay?

Me: Why do I have to suffer in life before I can get anything?

Nqaba: Babe...

Me: That woman threatened me Nqaba, andimoyiki ne, but the fact that she threatened me ngomamam? Where the hell did she buy the liver? Who the hell made her god?

Nqaba: You spoke to her?

Me: Yes, she called and spoke to Michelle, then we spoke.

Nqaba: What did she say?

Me: She just said I was making things easier for her, with me behind bars she would easily commence with her plans and that I don't know who I'm dealing with, and that I should not make the mistake of underestimating her.

Nqaba: Okay...

Me: That's it.

Nqaba: Luke is working on delaying her arrival, so we have that covered. We are obviously aware that her husband calls the shots, so we have two guys working on him, just to divert his focus.

Me: You said Luke?

Nqaba: You need to believe in Luke baby, he has good connections and they are willing to help.

That was my "shut up" cue.

I had known Luke to be innocent my whole life, the new Luke was really new to me, it was going to take a while to embrace him. Our food came through and I started digging in, my shoulder felt numb but my arm and hand was functioning just fine. The antibiotics were working their magic, I felt a bit hazy and dizzy, I knew I couldn't go ahead with any more plans that he had for me for the day.

Me: Baby?

Nqaba: Mh?

Me: I feel dizzy... I need to nap for a bit.

Nqaba: I'll take you home when you're done eating.

Me: So we're done for the day?

Nqaba: Yes, we will just be on guard for anything your aunts might decide to surprise us with.

Me: Mh, how weird can life be?

Nqaba: Mh?

Me: My paternal aunt, teaming up with my maternal aunt just to exhume a rotten female body. Well, we know that the other one just wants to see me suffer.

Nqaba: Maybe one of those aunts is going to cash out, you never know.

Me: Says the man who believed the dream story, ceremonies and shit.

He laughed, I just continued eating.

When we were done, we headed home. I noticed that my driveway and front yard were cleaned, a relief. He ran me a bath, heated the room and waited for me to get in bed. He sat next to me in silence.

Me: You can go, I'll be fine.

Nqaba: I just want to remind you that I really do love you, and that I will do anything in my power to make sure that nothing and no one harms you. That includes those two bastards you call your aunts. You know more than anyone how much I value family but when it comes to you and my children, all hell will break loose.

I closed my eyes, taking in each and every word he had just said.

I felt the words deep in my heart, and I knew he meant what he had just said.

Nqaba: Today was just to show you that we are at war. Yes I will allow you to fight your fight, but I will be right next to you. This is probably the only shot you'll ever get at ordering me around, ever.

I smiled, he laughed.

Me: Enkosi tatakhe, I hope it doesn't get to us spilling family blood though.

Nqaba: Ngale pace ndiyibonayo mna anything is possible.

Me: Again, it's either them or us.

Nqaba: You're a fast learner.

With that, he kissed my lips and walked out, closing the door behind him. I breathed, I had accomplished something for the day, as bloody and deadly as it was, I was still proud of myself.

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## 592

I zoomed out, my body wasn't just tired it was crying for a rest. I wouldn't know how Nqaba and everyone else in his life deal with such, everyday, because I felt dead. It must have probably been seeing so much blood, and the knowledge that I was the cause of the blood. It must have taken its toll on me, mentally.

When I woke up, the house was very dark, I sat up, gathering my thoughts and trying to familiarize myself with the surroundings. A second into looking around, I smiled, I was in my own space, my own house and I was safe from all the bullets that has earlier threatened to take my life. I stepped into the loo, eased myself and then turned on the lights on my way out of the bedroom. I called Keri as I was making my way to the kitchen, I really missed my babies.

Keri: Trina? Hey

Me: Hey, you okay?

Keri: I'm okay, just worried about you.

Me: I'm fine, I just miss my maniacs.

Keri: The younger trio is already fast asleep, let me take the phone to the twins.

Me: Thank you.

I listened to her footsteps as I put the kettle on, and then I heard the soft voices laughing, she must have been very close to their room.

Keri: Uba, here's your mom on the phone.

And then phone exchanged hands.

Uba: Mamakho?

Me: Hey baby, where's your brother?

Uve: Hey baby!  
We laughed, the three of us laughed.

Me: Ninjani? I miss you.

Uve: We miss you nathi, uphi tataka Uve?

Me: Can we focus on me right now, please?

Uve: Okay mama k'qala uphi utatam?

Me: He's at work.

Uba: Ya work'a esuku utatam?

Me: Yebo, now focus kum kaloku, I called haibo.

Uba: Esheee.

Me: Ndikukhabe!

Uba: Haha zokhatywa utatam nje nawe.

Uve: Hayi Uba, akakhabi utatam ku mamam. Zobanjwa wa polisa.

Uba: Yhoo shem.

I just smiled, accepting defeat. Yes they missed me, but they missed their dad more, I made peace with that. Aunt Keri took the phone, we spoke for a while, I grabbed my tea and went to sit in the lounge as we conversed. After that heartwarming phone call I called my husband.

Nqaba: Sthandwa sam?

Me: I know you're busy, but I have a question.

Nqaba: Shoot.

Me: Am I going to sleep by myself?

Nqaba: Eish...

Me: It's a very simple "yes" or "no" question.

Nqaba: My problem is that I don't want to make empty promises, I know that will backfire.

Me: Okay, so that means I will spend the night alone.

Nqaba: It's already late yazi baby, can you just take tonight then ngomso I promise I'll make it up to you. Please?

Me: Okay.

Nqaba: Asiqumbanga mos?

Me: Ha.a tatakhe.

Nqaba: Okay, I love you. Ulale kakuhle.

Me: Enkosi, be safe.

We hung up.

I had my tea, and headed back to bed, making sure to drink two painkillers.

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There was a greasy odor around the house, I immediately concluded that Nqaba was home. I heard familiar voices as I walked out of my room, yep, he was home with the multiples (Soso and Laa, Sihle and Kay) but I could hear other voices from the patio, I didn't even attempt to check who the voices belonged to. My head was still spinning from drugging myself to sleep, and from the nightmares I had.

Me: Molweni.

Kuhle: Mrs Us, coffee?

Me: A glass of wine maybe?

Soso: Yho hay uvuka?

Me: Where's my husband?

Sihle: He's in his study talking to Nguni and some other guy.

Me: Is there something wrong?

Kuhle: Not that we're aware of, it could be business.

I nodded and went to make myself cereal, they were eating breakfast already, which explained the grease. Nguni walked out of the study, sweating... he didn't even look at me, he mumbled "sisteri" as he passed me. I walked out, and sat on the stoep, eating.

Lwandiso came out, sat next to me with a glass of whiskey in his hand.

Soso: Are you okay?

Me: Yeah, yourself?

Soso: I'll ask again, are you okay?

Me: I'm okay Lwandiso, I'm just tired.

Soso: You haven't spoken to me after the baby shower.

Me: And you have?

Soso: Why do I feel like you're hiding something from me? You and your husband phofu.

Me: I don't know ke babe, I know I'm superwoman in y'all eyes but trust me when I say I don't know how to activate other people's feelings. Whatever you're feeling is on you, capitalize on that.



Soso: And uyandiphoxa?

Me: It's really early for this conversation.

He got up, and walked back into the house. I ate my cereal, left the bowl where I was sitting and then took a walk around the house, leading to the backyard. It was a beautiful morning, refreshing. I heard cars driving out and concluded that Nqaba and his people had left, but a few minutes later, his scent attacked my nostrils. I turned around and saw him watching me from a distance. The minute he realized that I had seen him, he walked towards me and I towards him. We met by the pool area, I just went straight to his chest and placed my head on it. His arms embraced my body into a warm hug.

Nqaba: Are we PMS'ing?

Me: No, we're just seeking attention.

Nqaba: Husbands need to get paid, just for being husbands.

I giggled, kissing his neck, all the way to his lips. We stood there, kissing and reconnecting. There was something refreshing about him, yet at the back of my mind I couldn't help but see Nguni's frustrated and sweaty face and wonder what the morning meeting in the study was about.

Nqaba: Seriously baby, utheni?

Me: I love you.

Nqaba: I know that, but utheni?

Me: Andinanto, I'm just enjoying the beautiful weather and my handsome husband.

He didn't believe me, I could tell by the way his eyes were searching for the truth in my eyes. His arms still around my waist, he kissed my forehead after a few seconds of uncertainty.

Me: What's the latest? How long are your brothers staying?

Nqaba: They're waiting for your father-in-law, apparently he's taking all four of them to the DRC today. And no, don't ask, andiyazi nam.

I laughed at his last line, I was really going to ask.

Nqaba: The latest on the issue we have at hand is that Polo is snooping around, he's restless. I think he knows that I know about his dealings, he just doesn't know how to ask me and he certainly doesn't know how much I know.

Me: Marcus can go hang himself for all I care, I have bigger problems.

Nqaba: Faith is coming to Johannesburg in three days, your Stella's strip is on Monday as scheduled but she might delay by three weeks if not a month.

I didn't even want to know what would make her delay, or what they did to her schedule if anything. I was just glad that we had approximately a month to sort ourselves out before facing the bull heading on.

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### 593

We walked back to the house, I grabbed my bowl from the stoep as we walked in. The multiples were playing PS4 and making a noise, I noticed that Soso wasn't really in it and Nqaba also noticed that. He looked at me, I sighed, I knew Soso took offence to the way I responded earlier.

Me: Nimenzeni u Uncle Soso?

Kuhle: He's been like that since we got here.

Me: Mnikeni utywala kaloku abe right.

Sihle: Une bhotile yonke nje, inoba ufuna obuphi?

Me: Hayike Landile founela uLibo aze endodeni yakhe.

Laa: Akaliwanga nguyey na mntase?

We laughed and he just looked at us, shook his head and walked out. Hubby nudged my rib, indicating that I should follow him out and I did. Not that I wanted to, but I felt like I should. He was still walking, towards the kiddies playground that had swings and slides at the far end of our backyard. I followed him, sat on the swing opposite his and we just sat there in silence. Well until I couldn't anymore...

Me: What's bothering you?

Soso: Nothing.

Me: So you're moody for no reason?

He sighed, looking up.

Soso: I don't know, I just feel a bit off.

Me: Have you spoken to Libo today?

Soso: Yeah, I called her when we got here.

Me: Mmkay.

Soso: Are you sure you're not hiding anything from me? Or maybe your husband is, I don't know man I feel like something is off between us.

Me: If we're hiding anything from you then you're not supposed to know. I don't think we'd hide anything from you that would need your attention.

Soso: So there is a possibility that ya'll are hiding something?

Me: Not that I'm aware of, but I'm sure Nqaba communicates when he needs you for anything. Likewise nam ndenza njalo mos.

He nodded, breathing out loud.

Me: Besides us, what's really bothering you?

Soso: I don't know, maybe I'm nervous about Junior's arrival.

Me: Mh?

Soso: And Libo doesn't want to marry me.

Me: Ouch.

Soso: Her family told her about the way u mama ka Lwandiso treated you and she doesn't want to be part of that, understandably so.

Me: So uyancama kanje?

Soso: I don't know what else to do, I begged and begged, umama ka Landile on the other hand seems to have a problem with you and kwayona andiyazi yinto evele nini because last time I checked, beni right.

Me: Your mother is the problem, has always been, but we are aware of that.

He didn't respond, which was good because I wasn't in the mood for arguing, I pat his back and left him there. I wasn't going to promise him that I would beg Libo on his behalf, I wasn't going to do that, her family experienced Faith's character first-hand. And there was nothing for me to do other than just leave him to sort his mess out, his family mess that is.

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“Pack a weekend bag sihambe”

I looked at him, confused.

His dad had just picked up his brothers, they were leaving for Congo as I was told, now all of a sudden we were leaving too?

Me: Siyaphi?

Nqaba: Cape Town, and maybe East London on our way back.

Me: Why?

Nqaba: I have a couple of things to do in Cape Town and I don't want to leave you behind, e East London we will just spend a night, umakhulu ebekubuza.

Me: Oh, okay.

Nqaba: You don't have to be suspicious of everything all the time Luthando.

Me: Kaloku you don't usually want to leave with me when you have things to do e Kapa, so I kinda do have to be suspicious.

Nqaba: If I leave you behind, and you call ndingafumaneki won't you assume and conclude that I'm with Thabisa kula Cape Town and I'm ignoring you on purpose?

Me: Baby, I don't care about your Thabisa, I thought I even gave you my blessing on this.

Nqaba: Trust me, you care. I don't want you abusing Mo in the middle of the night kufuneke azokuthatha because I'm unreachable.

I laughed, wow!

Uyafundwa umntu yindoda xa ine chance.

Me: Fine.

Nqaba: Thank you, pack for me as well, please.

Me: Anything specific?

Nqaba: No.

I walked up to our room and packed for both of us, normally, I would pack for him if he had boardroom meetings because he trusted my ensembling. I wasn't about to ask him more questions, I was happy to tag along, even if we were just going to Limpopo I would have been happy to tag along. As long as I was just traveling with him. When everything was ready, he packed the bags in the car and drove to the airport, Nguni was there, sharing a cigarette with his colleague.

Me: And then, lona?

Nqaba: Uzolinda imoto azojika nayo.

Me: Mmh, nixabene or what? I saw him leaving your study the other day engekho right.

Nqaba: They messed up on a mini-mission I gave them, I had to finish it myself.

Me: And you what? Scolded him?

Nqaba: I dealt with THEM accordingly.

Me: Dealt?

He eyed me, turned off the ignition and got out leaving me hanging. I knew he wasn't going to respond to that, but I pushed the conversation since he was carelessly responding, with hope that he would slip up.

I followed behind him, helping with one bag that wasn't heavy at all.

Nguni: Aw, Skhulu!

Nqaba: Nguni.

Nguni: Uba grumpy noba sew'vela ku Ma-Beastes na Skhulu? Kanti nenzani emtshatweni? Yintoni le iniqumbisayo oko?

Nqaba: Get married, come back, and tell us.

Nguni: No thank you, I've seen how marriage changes people, people being you. Hello sisteri, u shap?

Me: Hi Nguni, I'm okay thanks.

Nguni: Nam ndi okay yazi, thanks.

Me: Glad to hear that...

Nguni: Okay you're not really grumpy today, well, you're better than the other days. Niyaphi ke?

Nqaba: None of your business, carry this.

He gave him a bag to carry, I giggled at Nguni's expression. I was starting to like him, well his character.

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## **594**

We landed, and the weather wasn't as pleasing as I had hoped. It was raining cats and dogs, while I had packed for a sunny and beach worthy weekend. Nqaba really had commitments, meetings to get to and people to see. As soon as we landed, his phone started going off.

He dropped me off at his place, bought food for me and then went to his first engagement. My stupid ass, “checked in” on Facebook right after he left me and within a blink of an eye, I got an inbox from Thabisa and that was shocking, I didn’t know that she was following me on social media as well, well I wasn’t even active much. I ignored the message, didn’t even open it, so she decided to call me.

Me: Thabisa?

Thabisa: Uhm, sisi, hi.

Me: What can I do for you?

Thabisa: I just saw on your Facebook that you’re in Cape Town.

Me: And?

Thabisa: I was wondering if it would be possible to meet up, so that I can give you my CV.

Me: I thought we agreed you would email it.

Thabisa: Yeah uhm, I know, but seeing that you’re here now I thought we could uhm, do it in person. In case you have questions to ask.

Me: Ingxaki yakho ku thought’a kengoku.

Thabisa: Oh.

Me: Me being in Cape Town doesn't concern you, shouldn't concern you one bit.

Thabisa: Oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable.

Me: Apology accepted, and you're not making me uncomfortable it's just unprofessional. Please email your CV, I will have a look at it when I have time and call you if I have any questions.

Thabisa: Okay, thanks.

I hung up, and deleted the post on Facebook, it was really out of excitement yet unnecessary. I warmed the food, got into comfortable warm clothes and then called Libo, I wanted to hear what Soso was saying, from her.

Libo: Sisi, hi?

Me: baby mama, unjani?

Libo: Haha, I’m resting, that should be good enough.

Me: And you better rest, there’s no resting when the little one gets here.

Libo: Yho sisi! Phofu his dad wants me to stop working.

Me: Oh, and you don’t want to?

Libo: Hayi sisi yhu, uxhomekeka emntwini ngemali yakhe, no thank you.

Me: But you know he would take really good care of you.

Libo: He can take care of me while I'm making my own money, I don't mind. I can't be dependent on a man sisi, not now and certainly not in the next lifetime.

I laughed, it felt like I was listening to myself. Honestly.

Me: I understand baby, and that's exactly how I feel too.

Libo: I know, yhu, I studied you and I have always loved how your husband supports every little idea you have. He's not threatened by your independency.

Me: But trust me, he would love to see me at home, being a housewife and knitting or doing some gardening.

We burst out laughing,

Me: Has Faith made any contact with you after the baby shower?

Libo: Yhooo sisi that woman!

Me: Haha! That woman is going to be your mother in-law one day.

Libo: Yhu sisi, yhima ndikubalisele. She called kaloku, I think a day after. But her timing was bad, my cousin was telling me about the evacuation drama so obviously I wasn't interested in anything she had to say because I was angry. How could she do that to you? After everything you put together?

Me: Don't be angry, I'm over it.

Libo: Sisi, it's the audacity for me, how dare she? And then she calls me saying she has organized a more decent and befitting baby shower for me, she threw in the expensiveness of every word in her vocabulary and I told her where to get off.

Me: Hayi Libo.

Libo: Then Lwandiso decides to not only question my decision, but also try to convince me to go along with his mom's baby shower. Hayike ndamxelela uphambene kwayena and I told him if he wanted he could just go there and put a cushion under his vest to make a preggy-belly, caba he was planning to propose kula baby shower ke.

Me: Oh Libo Ntombi, how did you find that out? The proposal.

Libo: He told me a few days ago, I told him I was glad I didn't go to it because it was going to be an embarrassment on him. He was upset ke, I guess he was expecting me to be jumping up and down the minute he mentioned marriage.

Now I laughed, why was I feeling like I'm listening to myself talking to myself?  
WHY?

Me: He's still upset.

Libo: He'll be fine, the trip to Congo will do him good.

Me: You don't even care?

Libo: We are expecting a baby sisi, anytime now. If he thinks I'm going to be bullied by his mother or his unthoughtful decisions then he can take a hike. His relationship with his mother is currently on the rocks as we speak, yet he wants to marry me instead of trying to fix it?

Me: I hope you're aware that when it comes to Faith there's no fixing relationships, it's going to be a lifetime struggle my dear.

Libo: I am aware, now Lwandiso either has to be honest with himself when it comes to her or andiyeke mna. I really hate what she did, and she didn't even apologize kengoku even when I told her I didn't like it.

She still sounded upset, so I just laughed it off as we swiftly shifted the conversation to the arrival of her baby. By the time that conversation was over, she was laughing.

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## **595**

I cleaned up after eating, and decided to watch some movies. Nqaba called exactly 20 minutes into the movie...

Me: Boyfriend ka Sibongile?

He laughed, and I waited, smiling from ear to ear.

Nqaba: Wenzani?

Me: I am chilling, why?

Nqaba: Are you game for dinner? At some fancy'nyana restaurant?

Me: Because you asked nicely, of course I'm game.

Nqaba: I thought you were going to complain about the weather.

Me: I'll complain on our way back baby, for now, how much time do I have?

Nqaba: An hour.

Me: Great, bye!

I hung up before he could change his mind, shut the laptop off and went to the bedroom to get ready for the dinner date. It was exciting, we had been so caught



up by the children and the busyness of our professional lives that we forgot about date nights altogether.

An hour later I was ready for him, he came to pick me up and we drove to a restaurant that he had already secured at the Sea Point. He booked the whole restaurant for the two of us, I looked around, there was not a single person in sight except for the waitresses and waitors. I blushed at the set-up, the background music and the atmosphere as a whole. He pulled a chair for me, I sat down and breathed as he went for his chair, I was just mesmerized, taking in the moment.

Nqaba: You look beautiful.

Me: Thank you.

Nqaba: Not just tonight, but you look beautiful, all the damned time. I don't know how you do it, even when you're angry you still exude this beauty from within, that even one look at you I fall for you all over again.

Me: You're not going to make me cry, we just got here!

He laughed, pouring wine in my glass, then in his.

Me: This is nice, but I can't help wonder why now?

Nqaba: I would have loved to buy you a new car, but I remembered you'd wonder why now, so I thought this wouldn't be as extreme as buying you a car.

Me: I would have appreciated the car yazi, phofu I appreciate the dinner. When last did I even wear make-up? When last did I even go out nawe, sihlale kanjena?

Nqaba: I think we last did something like this before we had the triplets. And I'm sorry for that, I guess we were both just trying to find our feet again and settle in, but I am sorry for ignoring this part of our relationship. I know how much you love these things.

Me: I love you, very much in fact.

Nqaba: Uthandwa ndim Mam'Zangwa.

A waitors came to take our orders, added more ice to the wine bucket and then our night began. I fell in love with him all over again, head over heels. Three hours later, we headed back home, loved up and cute like lovesick teenagers. The minute our feet hit the tiles in his place, his hands ripped the clothes off my body, throwing them all over the place. He smothered me with kisses as I clung onto him, giving him access to every corner that he needed in my body as we made our

way to the bedroom. We got to the door, and he pinned me against it, shoving his tongue deeper into my mouth and grabbing my behind. I moaned a softly at the sensation his touches were sending to my belly.

He managed to finally open the door, we walked briskly to his bed and that's where he lay me down, kissing from my lips, down to my toes. He kissed every sensitive nerve, every unnoticed curve and every hidden dimple and cellulite. He showed appreciation to the body that carried all five of his children, made love to the wife of his youth and made sure that the night would leave a permanent mark in my mind. .

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I woke up in his masculine arms, I didn't want to move, the rain hadn't stopped, there really was no reason for us to get out of bed.

Nqaba: Good morning.

Me: Mh, morning.

Nqaba: Let's go and make food, I'm hungry.

Me: Five minutes nje.

He smiled, kissing my forehead and then he let me rest a bit on his chest. A few minutes later, I woke up and went to make us breakfast, he was on his phone, his phone call woke me up and it sounded serious. I put my phone on the other counter as I made oats, there was no way we were going to be eating eggs and bacon on a cold plate, I needed warmth in my insides. Same way I needed his warmth on the outside. My phone rang, it was Nguni, and no I never gave him my number. Caller ID displayed his name on my screen...

Me: Nguni?

Nguni: Sisteri I have a little something that might help you out with that project you're busy with.

I was confused for a second, but my mind quickly went straight to the warehouse project.

Me: Oh, are we working overtime already?

Nguni: I work hard for my money.

Me: I see, I'll call you when I'm home.

Nguni: Roger.

I hung up, for some reason I got excited about the "little something" that didn't even have a name.

I took our food to the bedroom, and we had breakfast in bed. I could tell something was bothering Nqaba but I didn't want to pry, he was legible to inform me or rather to engage with me whenever I was needed.

Me: Do you have plans for today?

Nqaba: We're going to East London in the evening.

Me: Can't we go ngomso?

Nqaba: What's wrong with tonight?

Me: I want to spend more time right here, in your arms. You know how busy we get when we visit East London, sometimes I don't even see you until the day we have to leave.

Nqaba: Haibo baby.

Me: I'm not complaining, but it's the truth.

Nqaba: Okay can I go to East London and quickly sort something out? Then ndizobuya ke siye sobabini anytime tomorrow.

Me: You have to sort something out, now?

Nqaba: Yes, if I leave now I'll be back by lunchtime.

Me: Okay.

Nqaba: Okay, as in I can go, or okay as in uyandiva?

Me: You can go tata.

He laughed, I've never called him tata and I also laughed. That, I didn't plan, it just came out. When we were done eating, he took the tray back to the kitchen, and cleaned up. I made the bed, took a shower and went back to bed again. He came back, showered and got ready for his traveling, he sat on the edge of the bed looking at me.

Me: And then?

Nqaba: I love you.

Me: I know that.

Nqaba: I know you know that, but I want to remind you right now, during this time of uncertainty in your life, that I love you and I have your back.

Okay, I didn't respond to that, I thought we were just going to have fun and not get sentimental or emotional. I closed my eyes for a second, avoiding to cry because that's where I was headed.

Nqaba: Ndiyakuthanda Mam'Zangwa and if you ever doubted me in having your back or assisting you with anything, today just know that for you I will be Beast and for you I will be Nqabayomzi as long as you're happy, safe and in good health. I vowed to love and protect you, every day and that's what I vow to continue doing even now with the fight against your aunts. I'm here, for you. You can rely on me, for anything and everything.

I felt tears in my eyes, that's what I needed to hear, honestly. I knew he had my back, I knew I could rely on him but I didn't mind being reminded every day. I didn't mind being reminded that very moment. I wiped my eyes with the back of my hand as I threw my hands over his head pulling him even closer for a hug, words were certainly not going to do me any justice.

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**596**

**#Nqabayomzi**

The minute Stella told Luthando that I brought her to South Africa, whereas she made contact first, I got the red flags. I didn't for one bit doubt that she was her mother's twin, I had done my research as expected. I knew Luthando would expect me to have done my research before allowing a stranger into our lives, our home.

But then, her demeanor threw me off on that first visit.

Nguni: Skhulu, ziyathini?

I snapped from my drifting mind, we had work to do.

Me: Come in, sit down.

He walked in, sat down and took out his notebook.

I had tried, Ntando had tried and also failed at making Nguni use the iPads everyone in the team was using. The old man in him was just okay with lesser

technology, except when it came to new machines (guns) he was the first one to test everything. His fascination always motivated me to source out new machines.

Me: Who's that?

I asked, giving him my wife's picture.

Nguni: Uhm... iyafana nala ntwana yakho ingamameliyo le sisteri.

Me: That's his mother.

Nguni: Oh, yi vrou yakho Skhulu? Yey, mhle shame, she looks cheeky though.

Me: You're not going to tell me that my wife is cheeky now are you?

Nguni: Why is she frowning?

I sighed...

Me: Your new job post is to be her driver, and everything else that she needs in my absence.

Nguni: I will be her driving, no problem, everything else will have to wait for you to come back Skhulu, andizokwazi.

Me: I am telling you Nguniweja, that you will be her driver, and everything else that she needs when I'm not available.

Nguni: Skhulu, I have a wife, nengcosi so le everything else in your absence uthetha ngayo andiyingeni mna. As I said before, I will be her driver and that's it.

I laughed, I didn't mean it like that, why would he even think of that?

Nguni: Next thing you'll tie me up onto an electric chair because I tried to be everything else in your absence ulibale ba you actually asked me to do that. Hay hay sundichukela Skhulu.

Me: Okay fine, be her driver ke.

Nguni: What is she like? Character, moods and stuff like that?

Me: She's very sweet, just don't step on her toes.

Nguni: Wenzani if I step on her toes?

Me: Ask Ghost.

He literally took out his phone and called Ntando, I just laughed at him. I really like and trusted him because of his dedication ever since he joined the team, and of course because of his charisma.

Ntando: Wenja!

Nguni: Photocopy, z'khiphani?

Ntando: Nix ndoda kuwe?

Nguni: Ndine stress.

Ntando: Wena? Ne stress? Uphelwe yintsango?

Nguni: uSkhulu uthi I'm going to be his wife's new driver, ngumntu onjani la wife Photocopy? And be honest.

Ntando burst out laughing, I couldn't help myself, I joined in.

Nguni: Yaz'bona ke photocopy?

Ntando: Okay harde mfethu, which side of Luthando do you want to know?

Nguni: All sides mfondini.

Ntando: She's very sweet, very caring and doesn't really like talking too much unless it's with her husband or Titus. Just do your job wena mfethu and don't step on her toes.

Nguni: That's what Skhulu said already, what happens when I step on her toes? That's what I want to know.

Ntando: Do you remember Karoo?

Nguni: Ovias, inja ye game.

Ntando: She killed him.

Nguni: Uyaxoka, and Karoo died same day with Gudda, where was Skhulu's wife then? And where were you on that day?

Ntando: Ask anyone in the crew they know they story, she was the mastermind behind that assassination. That shouldn't come as a surprise though, she's Ta Bongz's daughter anyway.

Nguni: Ta Bongz? The Ta Bongz that I know?

Ntando: The one and only.

Nguni: You mean to tell me that she killed her brother? Gudda?

Ntando: Apparently Karoo was her brother too...

And then there was silence, Nguni looked at me, I pretended like I couldn't feel his eyes. He cleared his throat, and swallowed, Ntando laughed.

Nguni: So you say she handles machines?

Ntando: More than machines, but not on a daily, hence I'm saying do your job and do not step on her toes.

Nguni: Roger.

He hung up, I stopped what I was doing and looked at her.

Nguni: So you're setting me up for death Skhulu?

Me: Haibo, I'm giving you a job to protect my wife whilst driving her around. How's that a death trap?

Nguni: Uyandazi ngo joker Skhulu, what if she doesn't get me? Yho ndizofela emanyaleni mos mna.

Me: I bought you new toys, and grab a bottle of whiskey on your way out. Everything else regarding your new job will be communicated soon. Sharp.

He got up, hesitantly, and walked out grabbed the box of his new toys and the bottle of whiskey on his way out. With that being sorted, I needed to find a way to make Luthando agree into having a driver without being suspicious. Now that was the toughest task.

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## **597**

### **#Nqabayomzi**

I couldn't go to Ntando because I didn't want to leave Luthando alone, or rather accessible so I called Ntando to come up. We had a task of looking for a home for dad and his wives. Apparently the move to South Africa was in process but he wanted to buy a house in Soweto first. He came in earlier than I expected him, so we went out for lunch and I told him about what was going on, my plans with everything and waited for his advice.

Ntando: Thing is, your wife is too calculative, she'll see right through you when you approach her with the driver idea.

Me: Which is why I'm asking you to help me.

Ntando: Get someone to mess with her car.

Me: Huh?

Ntando: Get a guy to mess with the wheels or the engine, or something. Anything that will have the car in the garage and then stall when fixing it. In fact, tell her you'll bring a mechanic endlini because I know she's going to tell you to take it to Range Rover to be fixed there.

Me: Let me see where she is right now.

I tracked her location, found the car and then sent two guys to go do exactly what Ntando said. Slit the tyres. They came back and told me she was having lunch with her dad, that was strange, because last time I checked they were not talking, but I couldn't ask anything about that. Ndizothi ndiyivephi?

After that was done, I left Johannesburg for Cape Town and waited for her call. I expected her to be mad and crying as she would normally be, and then she just called me sounding defeated and tired. Nguni was already aware of what was expected of him, but, he also had to install new cctv cameras at home while Luthando was in town. I needed to be aware of everything that was happening at home, but I couldn't let Luthando know every little detail. She'd panic. Her aunt's husband was a well-known businessman in the UK, and a well-known thug in our streets. Yes he was no match, but he had a reputation which I didn't really care about because I had a reputation of my own too. I was once a dead man, I also went to prison for no reason at all, and every morning we'd wake up with fresh corpses, I had a reputation and I was okay with another man having his own but I wasn't about to let my pride affect my wife or my children. For their sake, I had to practice all kinds of safety measures, and then deal with whosoever doesn't get the message, personally.

Ntando: Why are you so quiet?

Me: How do we not tell Titus that his mother is involved in Stella's shenanigans?

Ntando: Wait, what do you mean Faith is involved?

Me: Faith has been communicating with Stella behind Luthando's back, they're working together on this, she's even offering Stella free accommodation during her stay here. It's like she thrives in seeing ubaby suffer, to be honest I actually don't understand that family.

Ntando: You don't have to tell Titus anything if he wants to know then he can go and ask his mother. Your main priority right now is your wife, anyone else can take a hike. Protect Luthando, and the kids. Enye nenywe soyibona when we get to it.

Me: Marcus is on their payroll as well.

Ntando: Hayike fokof! Fokof!



I laughed at his frustration, it wasn't funny but I laughed. I knew very well how it felt to be betrayed by family, your blood so Marcus betraying Luthando again wasn't a shocked. Money was indeed the root of all evil, whoever wrote that knew what he was talking about.

\*\*\*\*

Ntando: Hey mfondini, Andixakwe ngu Owe.

I looked up, we had been in the warehouse for the last three hours, cleaning the machines because the guys had a mission out of the country later that night. I was just present for logistics, he was there because he was leaving with the guys.

Me: Utheni?

Ntando: He has two girlfriends.

Me: Two? Eqala nje?

Ntando: Apparently I'm supposed to be the cold dad ke, and meet them. Andixakwe bafo andiyazi ndiqale ngaphi and I can't really talk to Luthando about this right now, especially with everything that she has on her plate.

Me: Haha, Luthando is a cool mom ke. She'd be excited to meet those girls. Wait, do they know that they're sharing?

Ntando: I asked the same question, did your son not tell me that they don't have to know. That he'll sift along the way and see which one of them is right for him.

I laughed at his sweaty face, why was he panicking though? Owentando was a Gwala, through and through and he was a curious child from a young age so this whole thing wasn't farfetched.

Me: Meet them, then advise him on which one to put the effort in the most. Parents most of the time can spot those things. Even if he'll pursue the one you didn't choose, because that's what he's gonna do.

Ntando: After all of this, he needs to visit you guys, Luthando needs to school the boy on the sex talk and shit. I'm not ready to be a grandfather just yet.

Me: You're not ready? Dude, I'm not ready too.

Ntando: Uxelele u Luthando ke ba she needs to clear her schedule after this whole thing, she's got work to do.

Me: In the meantime, buy a box of condoms and keep them handy.

Ntando: Hayi hayi Nqaba, Owe is too you for that kinda shit.

Me: Keep a box of condoms handy Ntando, that's all I'm saying.

I wasn't ready to be a grandfather too, heck!

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## **598**

### **#Nqabayomzi**

Once the team left, I called my wife just to check how she was emotionally before heading home. She didn't answer her phone, I tried two more times but with the same results so I grabbed my bag and headed to the airport anyway. Both jets were out of the country, so I heard to wait for a commercial flight which I was apparently an hour early for.

"Ntando or Nqaba?"

I looked up, Thabisa.

Me: Depends who's asking.

Thabisa: Haha, funny. What are you doing here?

Me: Waiting for a flight to Jo'burg. What are you doing here?

Thabisa: I'm waiting for my brother, he should be landing with the next flight.

Me: Oh okay.

Thabisa: I heard Nqaba had private jets so for you to be waiting for commercial flights you must be the other twin, Ntando. No offence intended.

Me: Haha, none taken. Yep, you're right ndingu Ntando.

And that very moment I thanked the gods of AmaQocwa! She sat down, and started an entire conversation with "Ntando" while she waited for her brother to land.

Thabisa: So why aren't you married? Your brother looks happily married and content.

Me: Marriage is not for everyone, I'm sure that's why you're not married too.

Thabisa: I just haven't found the right one.

Me: Oh so you do want to, some time?

Thabisa: I think I want the stability of it, the idea of it. I'm just not sure if I'm emotionally ready for it.

Me: Well, while you're waiting for the right one, just make sure you have a blast! Life is fun when you want it to be.

Thabisa: Best advice ever!

We laughed and joked around for a couple of seconds and then she got sentimental on me, well on Ntando.

Thabisa: I know what I'm about to ask may come out rude, or wrong, depending on how you look at it. But, I think your brother might still have a thing for me.

Me: Mh, a thing?

Thabisa: Yes, I thought he was you in East London and started up an entire conversation, only to realize it's actually the married one... but we connected man, like old times.

Me: Or he was just being nice.

Thabisa: I can differentiate between being nice and flirting.

I laughed, so I was flirting with her basically.

Which was why umama no Aphiwe decided to tell Luthando about her, wow!

Thabisa: I saw the wife too, she uhm... I don't know how to put it nicely.

Me: Put it exactly how you want to put it, she's not here.

Thabisa: She just doesn't look like the women he'd usually go for, I don't know, I could be wrong.

Me: Trust me, she's the right one for him.

Thabisa: Haha, you just like her, but you know the truth.

Me: Kaloku Thabisa a wife will always be different from a girlfriend, she built that Nqaba that you saw in East London. He has a heart because of her, which is something that I still don't understand too because the Nqaba that I know doesn't have a heart.

Thabisa: Mh, well, this is something I'll have to see for myself then.

Me: Make sure you have a funeral cover.

Thabisa: She doesn't scare me.

Me: Unfortunately I am not telling you to be scared of her, all I'm saying is make sure you have a funeral cover, she doesn't play nice. I know what I'm talking about.

She laughed, yho, umntu umnike iwarning ngomkakho knowing fully well what you're talking about asuke ahleke? What do we then say unto such things? I bought her coffee, and left because my flight came before the one she was waiting for. I couldn't wait to laugh at her stupidity with Ntando, but I couldn't wait to see her try whatever she thought she was going to try with Luthando. One thing I knew about my wife was that she was an observant old soul, nothing ever took Luthando by surprise and Thabisa wasn't about to be the first.

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## 599

I flew to Jo'burg, landed and went to see the set-up of the warehouse Nguni and his friends prepared for Luthando. On my way there, I called her again. It was unlike her to not answer her phone and not return my calls...

Lu: Babe?

Me: Ndisenaye umfazi?

Lu: Mfondini, kubi, andikho sure nam.

Me: Ungakulinge undenzele lonto mna, what's wrong? Why have you been mizing me?

Lu: I've been busy tatakhe, I was going to return your calls a bit later on.

Me: Oko ndimkile you've been busy?

Lu: I know you miss me, but sana?

I chuckled.

Me: I miss you nyhani ke yazi.

Lu: Come home.

Me: I'll be home later today, are the kids still with your sister?

Lu: Yes.

Me: I'll have to go there first before coming to you.

Lu: Do a little shopping ke, you know how your kids are.

Me: I'll send someone, I won't have time.

Lu: Okay, that someone mustn't forget about me.

Me: Wow Luthando.

Lu: I love you too, but I have to go. Can I please call you later?

Me: Sure, I love you.

Lu: Love you more.

She hung up, tracked the car Nguni was driving for her, it was at home so must have been busy at home.

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Our visitors, well, family had just left for Congo and I had to attend a board meeting for Ntando in Cape Town. The only option I had was to leave with her, and knowing how much she loved her mother-in-law, I also had to promise we'd go via East London on our way back.

“Pack a weekend bag sihambe”

She looked at me as though I was insane, and in as much as she asked a lot of questions, she was happy to travel with her husband. We hadn't done that in a while. We left Jo'burg, landed in Cape Town and then I left her alone for my first two meetings. I had an intense meeting with Lwandiso's father, last time I checked he was out of the country, and I didn't quite get why he would want to meet me in Cape Town when he knew very well that I lived in Jo'burg. He welcomed me with a bottle of Whiskey and a box of cigars, as expected. We laughed as we made our way to his study, he was cracking jokes. We sat down, him right next to me not behind his desk.

Me: You look distressed, what's eating you up?

Titus: Mfondini, ndiyindoda.

Me: Doda ke xhego!

Titus: I need help, you know I can do this myself, I just don't want tongues wagging and this person suffering in my name. I have at least tried for the past five years.

Me: Okay, this sounds serious.

Titus: I have a daughter, her name is Rosette and she needs a job.

Me: Oh-kay.

Titus: She's an accountant, just graduated. All I need from you is to give her a little something, she'll work her way up.

Me: A little something can only be an internship, is she keen on that?

Titus: I told her to not expect anything fancy and she seemed okay.

Me: Okay, I'll have a word with Yarees and get back to you.

Titus: Thanks ndoda, I owe you.

I lit my cigar,

Me: Does your wife know that you have this kid?

Titus: No, and I don't think she needs to know anytime soon.

Me: Really? You're going to hide an entire human being from your spouse?

Titus: She has a son that she thinks I don't know about, I don't really owe her any explanations at this point.

Me: Ouch.

Titus: We chose this life my boy, so we live it!

Me: Well I must say I'm glad you didn't abandon your daughter, we can't grow up in broken families and still subject our children to that too.

Titus: Even if I wanted to abandon her, I wouldn't be able to. She's a smart kid, she'd wipe my name in one blink!

Me: Too much credit.

Titus: If you do have an opening, watch her closely, you'll see what I'm talking about.

I nodded, he sounded like a proud parent. Something I knew very well even though my kids weren't that age yet. Owentando was currently the only capable child to wipe our names, hence we kept him away from anything and everything. He's a smart kid, and school was the only place he was allowed to be smart at, nowhere else.

After my meeting with Mr Titus I took my wife to dinner, then we left for East London the following day, just to check on how the old lady was doing and then later that very same day we went back to our nest.

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The warehouse was ready for her, with every tool, every weapon, every gun, and everything one could think of that a gangsta would have in his or her possession. I think Nguni got a little bit too excited when he was organizing, half the things that were on that table I hadn't seen in a while, not even in the market.

Nguni: Is she aware that you've organized this?

Me: I'm not sure.

Nguni: So you didn't tell her?

Me: Khawume Nguni, is everything in order?

Nguni: Yes, our friends are on their way as we speak.

Me: Great... what do you need from me?

Nguni: To bring your Mrs, here.

Me: Sharp.

I walked out and went to fetch Luthando.

She was in the swimming pool, with a glass of wine next to her towel. I watched her for a while and when she saw me, she swam towards where I was standing.

Lu: Baby daddy!

Me: Mrs Wife, awonwabe kwakho.

Lu: Kaloku besides those two witches I call aunts, I actually have nice life problems.

Me: Come out, I have a nice treat for you.

Lu: Did you bring me money? Or Faith's dead body?

Me: Why would I spoil the surprise?

She rolled her eyes as she got out of the water, grabbing her towel. I carried the wine and glass for her. We got inside, I put the bev on the counter and followed her as she made her way to our room. Having caught up with her, I wrapped my arms around her waist from behind and kissed around her neck.

Lu: Mmmh, umntu amke abuye sengu lovey-dovey.

Me: Am I not naturally a lover kanti Luthando?

Lu: I wasn't complaining though.

Me: Mmh.

I continued kissing her, softly, and her skin was mesmerizing on its own. Once we shut the bedroom door behind us, she turned around and smashed her lips onto mine, her leg going up against the length of my body, caging me in her possession.

That was the beauty of coming home to a happy wife, the mind-blowing welcoming that I was receiving that very moment.

We lay next to each other, no space between our bodies, yes that mind-blowing welcoming led us to bed and we did a lot of adulating exercises right there.

Lu: Yah ke baby!

I chuckled, turning to face her.

She kissed me again, she was most certainly in a better mood since I reassured her that I had her back.

Lu: I love you.

Me: Uthandwa ndim, now are you ready for the surprise?

She jumped from the bed, and ran for the shower. I decided not to join her because we wouldn't leave the house, when she was done, I went in and freshened up.

Lu: Tatakhe, are we doing restaurant or dealership kind of surprise?

Me: You can wear comfortably, you'll be playing with some dangerous toys.

Lu: Ah, shooting range!

I just laughed at her sudden excitement and got dressed. When we were done, we took the short drive to the warehouse, I didn't even go in. Nguni walked out to meet us halfway...



Nguni: Aw sisteri.

Lu: Nguni, you look excited.

Nguni: I'm always excited, come on!

Me: I'll pick you up when you're done, have fun.

Lu: Haibo, kanti wena uyaphi?

Me: Ndiya ko Vincent.

Lu: Oh... okay.

I kissed her on the lips, she reluctantly got out of the car and followed Nguni inside. I started my car and left.

\*\*\*\*\*

**600**

**#Luthando**

The long table was full of different kinds of guns, knives, blades and every possible and thinkable weapon. Nguni outdid himself, his accuracy and attention to detail surpassed my expectations. Three chairs had three human beings right in front of me, their heads covered with brown paper bags, arms and ankles chained onto the chairs. That very sight took me back to Cape Town when Nqaba was in Congo and his brothers had turned their backs on him. I was working with Lwandiso then, and we got introduced to Yarees whom my husband had trusted with driving me around and handling some crazy shit for me. I was heavily pregnant with the triplets at the time, and I was only fighting for survival, for my kids' safety.

I smiled as I felt energy, excitement, rushing through my veins. The two guys who were at the door looked at me, quizzically, I just gave them a nod and they walked out leaving Nguni at the very far end of the warehouse waiting for me to give a command. I went to Faith, she was in the middle chair. I removed the paperbag from her head and smiled at her frustration as she recognized my face.

Me: Aw, Mrs. Titus.

Faith: Sibon-

Me: Relax, you're not going to die yet, well not today at least.

Faith: Stop flattering yourself, you don't have what it takes to kill me. Don't let them fool you mntanam.

I laughed, she huffed in frustration as she tried to wriggle her wrists free from the bondage. I walked very close to her and slapped the lights off her silly head, I slapped her the second time and when I looked at her, I saw blood streaming out of one nostril.

Me: You see Faith, you underestimate my abilities and capabilities.

Faith: You think I'll start shaking because of two slaps? Grow some balls Sibongile and do what you think you're capable of doing to me. Show me exactly what you think you can do.

I looked at Nguni, he jumped from his seat and came towards us walking briskly as though skipping. I grabbed a 5l bucket of water and poured it over Faith's head while Nguni connected the cables. He asked me to step aside as he clicked on the activation button, Faith's cry almost smashed the windows at the far end of the warehouse. After five minutes of watching her screaming and crying, Nguni looked at me, I ignored him.

Nguni: Siyambhodisa kanje sisteri?

Me: No.

Nguni: A minute is enough kule shandis, more than that hay uyambhodisa Ma-Beastes.

I turned it off and squatted right in front of her, I could feel my ego creeping in. I mean, I had Sir Titus' wife in an electrocution chair and he was somewhere in Africa making more money for her to spend or making more babies. Who knows?

Me: Are you ready to cooperate?

Faith: Futsek!

I grabbed a scissor from the table and went for her head. She had a sewn in weave, I cut the weave off with her real hair, and because she was fighting me, wriggling and trying to be smart, she suffered some cuts and little stabs. Nguni took one look at her and burst out laughing, I couldn't help but giggle too, it was an awkward and ugly sight.

Me: Since you don't want to cooperate, let me tell you why you're here. Number one, you're here because you think you've made it in life, you think you're better than the rest of us and so for this week or two that you'll be spending inside these walls I want to take you back to your past. I had the honor of getting my hands on your abusive late father's pictures and so because I'm very thoughtful I decided to create a sideshow for you. Trust me, you'll enjoy it.

Nguni started setting up the projector...

Me: Number two, you're here because you thought you could get rid of me. So, because I'm such a kind person, I decided to introduce you to a side of me that you haven't met yet.

Nguni was done, just waiting for me to give him the go-ahead.

Me: Lastly, I want you to give your bestie, Stella, a message for me. Tell her that my name is Sibongile Trinalique Smith and I don't eat shit! Nguni, press play and let her reminisce.

I activated her chair for five minutes again, her father's images on the big screen in front of her and then I walked out with Nguni. He looked nervous, but that wasn't my problem nor was it my concern.

Me: I don't trust you Nguni, why's that?

Nguni: Ndingenaphi mna xa une trust issues kengoku sisteri?

Me: Nguniweja?

Nguni: I'd never betray you kodwa sisteri yintoni le undenzela yona? Sewufuna lendodakho indikrwitshe ngoku?

Me: Uyambona uNqaba apha ngoku?

Nguni: No.

Me: Andonqeni ke ukuzikrwitshela indoda mna, try me once, ndaw'kukhama uhambe uzaneka!

I walked straight to my car and left him drooling. When I got home, the six men of my life were playing in the lounge, Uba saw me first and came running. I picked him up, kissed his cheeks and did the same to his brother then I went to my room. I needed to shower off the warehouse stench.

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Two days later, I paid her a visit again, and hubby decided to not just drop me off, but actually go in as well. I was just wearing denim shorts, boots and a vest nothing as serious as the work that I was about to do. I removed the paper bag from both her acquaintances and the look of on her face stirred excitement from the depths of my belly.

Me: Merry Christmas ma Comrade.

Frank: Mrs. Titus? Mrs. Gwala? What are we doing here?

Nku: Trina mfethu...

Me: I should have bought popcorn yazi, I feel like today I'm going to have fun.

Nguni laughed out loud, he had this weird ghetto laugh that made me wanna laugh too.

Me: Nkululeko, I think you've met Faith before and obviously you work with Frank occasionally so there's no need for introductions there.

Nku: What's going on? Why am I chained here?

Me: Are you aware that Faith Titus is actually your mother?

He turned his head and looked at her, her eyes were shut.

Nku: Mrs. Titus?

Faith: Don't.

Nku: Tell me she's lying.

Me: Khawenze eza way zakho kaloku Nguni.

The projector before us started the slideshow of pictures. Young Faith and young Nkululeko, short videos of them in the park...

Me: I know you were a bit young when you were taken away from your home, but surely those pictures trigger a memory or two.

Nku: I remember the last two, I just didn't realize it was her. I actually have the last two in my crib.

Me: You must be wondering who your father is, Faith, do you want to do the honors or should I?

She didn't respond, but I saw tears streaming down her already messy face. I had her exactly where I wanted her.

Me: Let's see how we do this. She named you Nkululeko, because she thought you would be her freedom.

Nku: Freedom?

Me: See Faith was molested by her own father from the age of 12 until she got pregnant with you at the age of sixteen. Her mother took her to her aunt's house because Faith didn't want to abort you, to avoid people asking questions, she had to be taken away from home.

Faith: Shut up Sibongile! Shut the fuck up, you know nothing about my upbringing.

Me: I'm actually doing you a favor here, either you shut up or I gag you.

She just wept, which I didn't mind. She wasn't making a noise.

Me: Okay let's fast forward to when you were five, Faith, your mother, met Mr Titus and she didn't disclose to him that she actually has a toddler. That's when you were left behind and... You probably know the rest.

Nkululeko looked at Faith, tears cascading his own eyes. He was innocent in the whole situation but I had to bring him in for leverage with his mother. He was the plan I had up my sleeve for leverage against Faith.

Nku: You left me behind, knowing fully well that I wasn't well taken care off, you left me behind.

Faith: I sent money to you every month, I didn't abandon you.

Nku: You sent money? I didn't need money, I needed you. I needed my mother just like your other kids needed you and you availed yourself for them.

Faith: I had to get a better life for myself, for us. I'm so-

Nku: You're one selfish bitch! You're a witch, Faith Titus, you're one helluva witch, bitch! You deserve to rot in hell for eternity!

There was total silence, I walked closer to Faith and breathed looking deep into her eyes. She was broken, she had no power anymore and that's what I needed. That's the state I needed her to be in.

Me: I have a jailbird of a father because his sins caught up with him, yours is not a jailbird because selfish, evil people like you and your mother protected a rapist for food, money, lifestyle. This is where I remind you to never underestimate the lengths I'd go to for my message to get through your thick skull.

She opened her mouth to speak, but words failed to come out, instead she cried even harder.

Me: You're going to call Stella, and tell her that she's not going to exhume my Mother's bones or I'll kill your son right now and give you a spade to dig a hole for him, right here. I have options over there, see that table? I have all kinds of tools and weapons that I could use to ensure that he has a very slow and painful death, at least something that will take seven days, eating him up from the inside, while you sit right next to him and watch until he takes his last breath.

They both cried harder, and louder.

Me: You have 24 hours to think and come to a well-informed decision. Uyanuka ke futhi, ingaske ucingisise so that ukhe udibane namanzi. Ndizobuya ngawe Frank, I haven't forgotten about you.

\*\*\*\*\* **END** \*\*\*\*\*