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PROLOGUE

“Yeyi Voetsek man !!”

My mother shouted at the barks that are disturbing her while she is watching tv,I looked out of the window as our dog was barking at the gate. I laughed as I watched him trying to open the gate but the dog isn't giving him any justice. He opens it slowly and it pounces but he closes the gate quickly and runs off while whistling.

“Who is that ?”

My mother asks me. I turn to her removing my hands from the curtain. She is glued to the night news at the moment, she doesn't want to miss any details on the news and doesn't want any disturbance, she is not looking at me at the moment even.

“Bayede”

I move from the window and I wear her big slippers.

“I am going to check what he wants” I say.

She waves her hand shushing me and I walk out. My dog is sleeping at the corner by the gate. I look at him and he picks his head up

“Rexy, what are you doing to my friend ? ” I say

The dog looks at me as I walk out of the yard and I walk down the street. The music from Jiava 202 is loud enough , it's a Thursday and that's when the weekend starts at this township. I see him standing with his friends as they are laughing. Probably narrating what had happened, everything is a joke to Bayede even on serious situations.

“Bayede!”

He turns to me.

“Ekse Ngizonibona majita (I will see you guys)” they do their hand shake and he comes to me.

“Mpilo”

He places his hands in his pocket, the smell of Nicotine on him can't be missed as well. It's in him , his smoking habits have been with him since he started high school. It's over 6 years

now but he still goes on. I don't like the smell of the smoke , I don't think I will ever get used to it.

“My mother was shouting. ”i say

“I know. I didn't see you today. How are you?”

He puts his arm around my shoulder and we start walking. You would think we are lovers when we are just friends. I have never seen Bayede like that but only as my big brother. He had his own women, ladies round about his age from here eKasi that suited him and his shady personality.

“I am ok” I say

“Nana told me what happened at School today” he says.

Nana, the forever faithful sister. His sister and my Bestfriend. She always informs her brother about anything that happens around us

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I am the only child and I automatically fall under the sibling wing in their family. Whatever happens to us , Bayede has to know. Today at school , I was cornered by some boys. Luckily I escaped. I was scared that I told Nana and Nana spilled the tea on her brother.

“Nothing happened ” I say

“Nothing , Nono ungangicasuli (don't irritate me)”

“I have to go home. I can't stay”

I turned around and I walked off.

“I will see you tomorrow!” I nodded and ran home.

My dog barked as I got in but only to notice me. I went inside the house and my mother was standing on her feet while putting her hands on her hips.

“Your father wouldn't be pleased to find out you went outside at this time ”

I told her I am going out but I humble myself.

“I am sorry” I say

“Go to your room”

I walked slowly to my room. I threw myself on my bed, I took my books and started studying.

Going to school was tough , we had to catch trains to go to school , we went on the other side of eKasi. That is where our school was based. I always went with Nana , we were always known for Nana and me Mpilo , the only person who called me Nono was Bayede.

“You told Bayede what happened” I said as soon as we hopped inside the train. We were walking to the back.

“I am sorry”

“How is Fana?” I ask her.

It's her boyfriend. I turn and she smiles while we stop then keep on walking

“He is good ”

“I am surprised Bayede doesn't know about your relations with a boy”

“I am not stupid ”

I stop and we get to the other side . Our stop is coming soon so we will hop out.

“You speak too much ” she pushes me.

“Mxm”

I laugh. The train stops and I hold onto my bag and I hop out and she follows. Gun shots were fired and we ran off and so as people on the train.

“Nana ! ” I held her hand as we ran.

Our slippery school shoes weren't helping but we held a firm grip as we could hear more shots. The police have arrived this time, we get to the stairs and we run down them and jump.

“I can't run anymore ” Nana says.

“Come Nana ” she is tired, not fit enough yet I have more meat than her.

We stop to take a breather a bit and I feel a sting on my shoulder. Nana covers her mouth and no one speaks to anyone. We just run for our lives . My arm hurts but I suck in the pain and keep on running till we are out of sight. We get to a bush, we are late for school and our principal won't be pleased. I undo my shirt and my boobs are exposed. It's stained with blood only turned red taking it away from it being white.

“How does it feel?”she refers to my wound

“It hurts ”

She takes a stick from the ground and holds my arm. She takes off her shoe lace and ties it around my arm .

“Be strong”

She plunges the stick in my arm taking the bullet out and I cry.

“Sorry”

She is done and it's out. My arm is throbbing from everything. I put my shirt back on.

“Lets go” my shaking voice says

We walk off. I am shaking as we are walking to school. The blood has stopped flowing because of the shoe lace

“I feel weak Nana ”

“Mpilo”

I collapse there and there.

This is the beginning of my story.

CHAPTER 1

A FEW YEARS LATER

“Abanye banomona

Abanye banomona

Ngeke bawuthinte umuzi wami...”

The music played on the little stereo in the kitchen. I am making super and he should be home anytime soon. I hear the van and I step away from the kitchen after lowering the music. I run my fingers through my skirt and I wait for him to walk in anytime. I check if I am fine and the door opens. He looks tired and his heavy looking boots seem to drag him more. He throws his blue cap on the couch and I move towards him ready to offer any service he needs. It's what a wife should do.

“How was your day?” I ask

“I am tired.”

He sits on the couch and I look at him before breathing out. I try my best. Yes we are arranged but that doesn't mean that we can't try. My mother told me that I will love my husband. She told me he is a police man and will take very good care of me.

After that shooting I have a huge scar left on my arm. It was very deep and that rod made things a bit worse but I got treated ok. It's been 3 years in this marriage and we haven't brought a child. I wanted us to have one and maybe we would be as happy.

“Is the food coming?”

“Yes”

I moved from the kitchen and I went to serve him.

“Can I get you anything else?”

“I want to find you on the bed naked”

“Ok” I walked off to the kitchen.

I put everything away and I went to our bedroom. I undressed and I laid there on the bed looking at the ceiling. My mind Jots to the day I mistakenly gave my virginity to Bayede. Yes ! I did and I don't regret it. I went back for more and more. This was before I got married. Before his death. My heart aches as I think of the way he died. I was visiting Nana that day and his mother was away to the city. She stays there and sends money most of the time. Nana was under Bayede's care. He has always been shady and his shadiness caught up with him that day. The day we learned Bayede was selling weapons and did hits around the area. The day the Community took matters in their own hands and killed him.

I remember him saying

“Nana stay here. I am coming”

He went to his bedroom, I followed after him as I saw Nana was distracted with watching Brenda Fasi on the tv. She admired music at that. I got in his room and saw them on the his bed.

“Baye..”

He closed the door behind me and shut me up with a kiss, pinning me on it. Oh his touch did wonders that I never thought would happen before. He breaks it and moves to pack the guns.

“They are coming” he said.

“Who ?”

“Take care of each other Nono”

I didn't understand. He was packing rather too fast and got done. He threw the bag under his bed and pulled the long cover to cover it.

“Bayede what is going on?”

He kissed my lips again and held my waist.

“I love you ” he said.

I loved him too. Only wish I told him before he died, maybe It would've been better accepting that he is gone.

We heard commotion and he opened the door and walked out. Nana's eyes were out peaking through the window and she closed the curtain.

“What is going on ?”

Nana asked.

“Just stay here, I have got everything go to your rooms and hide ”

He walked out, we went to Nana's room and stay there. We sat there and obeyed , we never went against Bayede's comands.

“Something is burning outside”

We rushed out and went out of the gate. It was the community marching and we pushed our way. Bayede's screams haunt me every night. He was burning , a tire over his head was the last image I had of him and it haunts me till this day.

He never met his son nor knew I was pregnant. I never knew I was until birth, but my son stays with my parents. My mother didn't want me to take him with me and my husband didn't agree. I miss him and when I look at my son I see his father.

“You are ready”

I snap out of my deep thoughts and he takes off his clothes and gets on the bed. He kisses my neck and also my lips. It's not the same as way he is touching me but I push my thoughts at the

back and participate. He takes a condom and gets between my thighs and holds my waist. He thrusts in once he is prepared and I am waiting. Waiting for everything to be done.

He has left and I have made Fatcakes ready to sell. I am thinking of passing by my home just so I can see Nkosana , my son. I have missed him so very much and it's not normal anymore. I wish I can take him and run away somewhere. I take my bag and the plastic container filled with the food and I walk out of the house. It's clean and vibrant. My husband has left for work. When his friends come over I am the most amazing thing to have with him. Clearly my trying is not going anywhere but I was taught to stay and not go anywhere but I am unhappy. I wish I could go back in time. I get to my mother's house and I knock on the door. Oh REXY seems tired. I miss my dog very much. I miss home so much

“Mama ”i say as I put the container down.

She appears and she has a frown on her face.

“Haibo what are you doing here?”

“I came to see Nkosana ”

He appears. My joy , life all in one . I go to him and crouch then give him a warm hug.

“How are you boy boy kaMama ”

“I am fine Mama.”

“When are you going to school ? ”

“Next week”

“Ok , I will take you to school ok”

He nods and I take out my wallet and give him some money before kissing his lips and he giggles while rushing off. I smile .

“His grandmother wants him”my smile fades and I stand up looking at her.

“She wants to live with him”

“Mama ”

She shrugs and walks off. I sigh and take my things before walking out. I take out my Nokia and I make a quick call .

“Sisi wami(my sister)”

“Nana ”

I say. I am sure she is happy and living her best life in Johburg.

“When are you visiting me ?”the noise in her background can't be missed.

“I will ask my husband ”

“Argh Mpilo, stop boring. Come here man ! ” she says.

“I will see. I will call you” I hope she is ok”

“Ok ,call me. I love you”

“I love you too”

She hangs up and I put my phone away and go around , people would stop me and buy the fat cakes while I am walking around , looking for people to buy some fat cakes from me. They got sold out and I went back home. I wish that I can have my son around me every chance I can get. He has grown now into a big guy and I really love that he loves me as well ,I try to be the best mom I can be to him. I get home and I go and wash the container. I don't know when Xolani will be back. He never mentions but I am always prepared for him.

My son is finally going to grade 1. I am happy that I have witnessed this day. I wave at him after giving him so much kisses on his face , His giggles made my heart skip a beat. I took him to school today and I made a nice lunch box for him on his first day. He wave back and shouts “Ngiyakuthanda Mama (I love you mom)” I feel happy each time I see him. I hold onto my cardigan as I see him disappear with other kids. My parents have never dropped me at school or witnessed my first day at school. We walked with Bayede on our first day in primary. He knew the way as he was in grade 7 when we started grade 1. My mind dogs from those thoughts and I turn around and leave the place once my little one has disappeared.

I make my journey home. Today I am not selling anything. I am dedicating this day to my son. I haven't told my husband about visiting Johburg. I do miss Nana so much and I haven't seen her in the past 2 years. After I got married she left but we kept contact.

I get home and I throw myself on the couch.

“Where do you come from?” I look up and it's him.

“I took Nkosana to school” I thought he will come back home at noon.

“Should I cook for you ?”

“No, I will buy something. I am in duty. Just needed somethings” he says.

“Xolani” he stops his tracks by the door.

“Can I go and visit Nana ? she needs me ”

He is silent for a moment.

“We will talk when I come back” he walks out. I breathe out.

He didn't turn me down but I expect anything right now.

CHAPTER 2

I hold onto my bag and suit case ,The guy smoking at the corner looks at me with lingering eyes and that makes me hold everything I have very close to me. He gave me a week to be here and I am happy, I know that it will give him time to be with his mistress. I know , the sweet scent and lipstick on his neck can't be missed but I don't say anything. Never question your husband my mother said and I never question him. I try as much to obey and please him at the same time. I keep on walking away and I take out my phone. I have little airtime to call but I call her.

“Nono !” she answers.

“I have arrived” I say while scanning my eyes around. I am scared and wish that I had stayed home .

“ok wait there I am coming ”

She hangs up and I wait there for her I couldn't move my eyes from the guy who was looking at me by the corner. Finally Nana arrives and I run to her , She takes my bag and I am so happy to see her. I am not happy of the way she looks. I am worried. We share a hug for a moment before breaking it off

“You look old , we need to change that.”

She says putting my bag in the car and gets in the back. Is this her new boyfriend? The guy doesn't say anything and neither does she. I get in next to her and the car drives off.

“You look...”

“New , I know ”

“Definitely new.” I don't know how she looks but this is not the Nana I know from back home.

She lights up a cigarette and opens the window.

“You smoke ?”

“Yes, alcohol is nice as well”

What is going on ? She smokes at that tip.

“How is Nkosana ?”.

She usually doesn't talk about him or see him. Even ask about him before , I guess it's because he reminds her of Bayede.

“He just started grade 1”

“Isn't he 6 years?”

“We started when we were 5 ” she giggles and throws the cigarette away after the last puff.

“Where do you live ?”

“Naturena” I nod.

I don't even know where that is. This is my first time being here , I look outside the window and watch the tall buildings pass us by , I am facinated and also want to explore my visit here. We get to the area and the car parks Infront, of some house and she gets out and I do the same. She takes my bag and she swings her sling bag to the side and takes out money and gives it to the guy. Oh he is the cab driver. We walk inside.

“You live alone ?”

“Yes , Rodney got me this place”

We got inside and it looked nice. This is Nana's style I guess.

“Who is Rodney?”

“Are you hungry?”

She is ignoring my question but I let it go for now.

“I need to call Xolani and tell him I arrived safely”i say and she rolls her eyes and goes away. I ignore her and I take out my phone.

I make the call and he takes time to answer.

“Mpilo”

“i have arrived safely”

“Ok , bye ” he hung up after that.

That was very quick of him to hang up like that . Nana appears from the passage and she comes to me.

“Go and change we are going somewhere real quick”

“I am fine ” I look at myself.

“Don't you have jeans atleast Mpilo?”

“I do”

Only one pair that I bought a long time ago and I am not sure if it even fits me.

“Go and wear them ”

“I am fine ” I say and she groans.

“Fine let's go ”

She grabs her small bag and I take mine and we walk out. I can't go anywhere without having my bag there. She is on her phone and it looks quiet fancy, those touch screen type of phones that Xolani has as well while I have the small button one. It's what I can afford and most things I buy myself. Xolani only buys for me when he is in the mood to otherwise. Everyone for themselves.

“How is your job?” I ask Nana .

We are now waiting outside the gate for the unknown.

“My job is a job

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you want to work here?" she asks.

"Is it a good job ?"

"It pays bills, has good money when done right "

"What kind of job do you have ?"

A car parks in front of us and we get in the back and it starts moving. It's a cab , that I have collected. She ignored my question once again. She started asking me about my marriage and I told her that everything is fine. I know she doesn't like my marriage but there is nothing she can do about it. We start talking about the years we missed together. Mostly asking about things from home but doesn't touch on her arrival and how she ended up in that nice two bedroom house. Maybe Rodney is her rich boyfriend. We get to our destination and it's a club. She pays and grabs my hand as we walk inside. It's has minimal people in here just to eat. She keeps on walking through until we reached a group of men.

"Rodney" I am about to see this Rodney

A dark skinned guy stands up and she throws herself at him and they share a kiss , one too nasty when he squeezed her butt almost revealing her butt cheek from that small dress. I am traumatised. I hold onto my bag tightly as we are around men I don't know.

" Who is this baby girl ?"

His accent gives away that he is not from here , it's different , maybe from some country around Africa.

"My sister Mpilo" she says

"Oh she is going to work for us "

Work for them ? I am here to visit.

"No , she is here to visit me Rodney "

I look at them. He looks at me and brushes his beard.

"We should talk later"he says

"Come and sit next to my friend there sister. He doesn't bite "

"Nono sit down "

I am scared. Nana had already made herself comfortable ontop of Rodney's lap. I slowly make my way and sit down on the empty seat. I feel uncomfortable while Nana is having the time of her life. They start speaking about Nana saying she has to go to Europa hotel tonight but can't leave me alone. It's all whispers between Rodney and her but I can hear bits of what they are saying. I feel a hand on my thigh and my heart starts beating. I hold my bag tight and press my thighs together.

"Relax " the guy next to me says.

He is smiling but its not sweet but lustful. He pours a drink and hands it over to me.

“Have a drink. You will be ok”

“I don't drink ” I say after trying to get my voice in order.

“Try it . ”

I look at it and he gives it to me. I take a sip of it and it doesn't taste nice.

“It doesn't taste nice ” I say.

“Kedp on drinking ” he says and gets his own drink.

I don't like it but I take another sip. He comes closer to me and I am feeling uncomfortable.

“Where are you from ?” he asks.

“I am from Ladysmith” I say

“Kzn?”

I nod and drink this thing so I can put this glass down once and for all.

“I have been there once ”i nod.

“My name is Benjamin” he says.

“Oh nice ” I faintly smile and he chuckles.

“What is your name ?” he puts his hand on my thigh and I remove it. He places it again.

“Relax. I won't hurt you” he says. I look at where Nana is and she is a bit far from me with Rodney.

I pour more water into the sink and I pull my sleeves up more so I wouldn't wet myself. She walks in and it's 9 am. That's not the time a lady wakes up, she is still in her pyjamas and hasn't bathed.

“Good morning” I don't know when she arrived yesterday.

After the club situation we were brought home. She bathed and changed and told me she is going , she will be back. I will officially say that my first day was not as nice as I thought it would be. I feel like my friend has changed but she is still my sister.

“You woke up late” she presses on the kettle and looks at me as I wash the dishes.

“What time did you wake up?”

“5 am ”

She clapped her hands.

“i can't shame. Your husband is not here Mpilo” she says.

“Still”

She shakes her head.

“i made porridge”i say.

“Oh , I will dish up ” she says.

“When did you come back ?”

I look at her and she turns off the kettle.

“Stop asking me questions Mpilo. We work !” she finishes up and walks off.

I didn't mean to upset her with my question. I will just keep things to myself from now on. I get done with the dishes and I am done with cleaning. I went to take my phone and went outside. I got lucky and bought airtime yesterday just so I can call my mother. I do so and she answers it.

“Mpilo Mntanami (my child)”

“Mama how are you?”

“I am good ”

“Did Nkosana go to school?”

“Yes. You can come and see him ”

“I am away from home a bit ”

I bite my lip. I am in for an earful I know.

“Where are you?”

“eGoli mah (Johannesburg)”

“Ufunani lapho ?!(What are doing there ?)”

“i am visiting Nana ”

“You are a married woman for goodness sake Nompilo ! Go back home to your husband ”

“He agreed for me to be here ”

“Yeyi Voetsek. Come back home ! ” I sigh, I regret calling.

“Ok” she clicked her tongue and hung up.

I sighed , I called Xolani but it went to voicemail. I will call him later on. I went inside and found Nana sitting in the living room while watching tv.

“I am sorry for snapping at you but don't ask me alot of questions about my job”

“Why ?” what does she do Kanti?

“Unless you want to move here and get on the job”

I look at her.

“It pays well. Let me show you ”

She got off the couch and she went away to the bedrooms she came back with a brown envelope and took out a stack of money. I gasped.

“Nana where did you get this kind of money from ?”

“My job. That's R2000”

“R2000 in one day?”

She nods.

“Yes or more. ”

“Uhm wow ”

“Lets put this away. Think of Nkosana , selling fat cakes back home and your lousy husband ” she walks away. I am left in thoughts.

She comes back and I am still rooted at the same position.

“Ben called ” she sat down.

“Who is that ?”

“Benjamin , Rodney's friend. ”

That one kept on touching me.

“Oh ” I say

“He wants to take you out today. ”

“I don't know him ”

“Relax. He won't do anything. He has money , take the opportunity Nono and eat his money ”

“He is not my boyfriend ” she rolls her eyes.

“He will show you around and stop with your boring tendencies. Live a little, dress nice not like you are 59”

That stung a bit. I looked at myself and touched my hair. It's not like hers and the nails as well. She looks pretty I will admit. It would be nice to fit in like other Johburg ladies.

CHAPTER 3

Nana went to bath herself while I stayed to cook lunch, I don't know her Benjamin friend and I don't want to be involved with a guy like him. A knock from the door disturbs my thoughts and I turn the stove heat down and I wipe my hands before I went to see who is at the door. I opened and he smiled at me. He has a bottle of wine in his hand, the way he dressed and smelled shouted expensive .

“How are you ?” he reaches to kiss my hand.

I look at him at that moment and remove my hand from his hold. He chuckles and puts his one hand in the pocket.

“Oh Benny come in ! Nono why are you not letting him in ?”
Shouts Nana behind me

The fact that I don't like and trust him ! Breathe in Mpilo and let the guy in. I move out of the way and he walks in. I close the door and they have settled on the couch having a chat , Nana takes the wine and she stands up saying she is going to pour some. I walk away from the living room and I went back to my pots. Nana hits my shoulder lightly.

“Why are you a fool wena ?”

“In what ?” I ask.

“ Benjamin do you know that he can spoil you more than you lousy husband would ” she places her hands on her hips.

“Xolani is not lousy. He is my husband Nandipha !”

“Lower your voice hawu. Angilwi(I am not fighting)” she says

She was , why does she want me to be involved with this guy so much.

“Go with him and see how he is , if you don't like him then it's fine. I will let you be i promise”

I huff and turn to her

“Ok” she smiles

“You look bad but I am sure he will take you shopping”

She lowers the heat and pushes me out of style kitchen and he smiles when we return. Seems like he was on his phone. I faintly smile.

“You can go ” Nana says excitedly. He stands up

“Thank you ,shall we?”

“Uhm let me get my bag ” I say

“No Baby girl. You don't need it ”he says

He takes my hand

“Enjoy ” Nana waves at us as we walk out.

He places his hand around my waist and looks at my butt.

“We should get you some new clothes”

“What for?” I ask.

“To show that beautiful body for papa” I just nod.

The way he kept on touching me, made me uncomfortable but he kept on telling me that I should relax and it's normal. I tried to relax though , we were at the mall in Sandton and he bought me clothes that I know My mother nor Xolani would approve. I should be respectful and dress appropriately like a wife and mother I am. The short dresses, shorts , tightening clothes. Those he went for and high heels. After he was done buying he paid and the bill almost made me faint. On that store alone he spent over R20 000 on probably 10 Items if I counted properly.

“How are you feeling about your new style baby girl?” he asks

“That was pricey . I wouldn't shop in that kind of store. I don't afford to “ I say

“Nonsense , You have me now . I will take you everywhere and give you the best life”

“I am married ” I say

“Your husband doesn't know how to take care of a lady then ”

I am silent while we are walking. We get to the next shop and he is still at it , buying what he thinks will be fit for me. It's not my style but I guess it doesn't hurt to try something new right ?I was exhausted and we went to eat, I was quiet hungry. He liked finer things in life and I wonder what he does. We settled and I looked at him.

“What do you do for a living?”

“I am head of a recruitment agency with Your sister's boyfriend”

“Rodney?”

He nodded and the waiter came.

“What kind of recruitment do you do?”

“We recruit young women like yourself. You mostly work around hotels ”

“Doing what?”

“Entertainment. It's very easy to be recruited and it pays. Lets say 15 - 25 per month”

“Rands ?”

“Thousand Rands Baby girl” he says.

“Wow that's alot”

“You start small though but stick with me and I will get you to top recruiting ”

“I see ” I sip my water.

So Nana makes that kind of money a month? Got me thinking what I could do for my son.i could take him to a great school with good education , give him everything he desires in life. This job sounds interesting .

I drop the shopping bags on the floor, Ben just dropped me off and gave me some money on top of everything that he did for me today , Nana lowers the tv volume and she takes the first bag as I throw myself next to her.

“Wow! Ben is a gentle man !” she says

“It was quiet expensive ”

“Thats nothing to him. You are very lucky you know , they don't just do this for any girl. He sees something in you”

“He told me about the recruitment agency. Your job sounds fantastic!” I say she shy smiles

“Yeah, You want in?”

“It means I will have to move here , leave everything behind ”

“Is that bad?” she asks.

“My marriage , I am married Nana ” I say she rolls her eyes and throws the dress on the couch.

“You and this marriage of yours bore me ” she goes and pours some strong poison and then takes out a cigarette and lights it up.

“Its what I am given ”

“Can your husband buy you these clothes Nompilo?”

“He is not rich like Benjamin”

“Exactly !” she says and smokes while drinking.

I become silent.

“I am leaving tonight again. ”

“Night shift ?” I ask.

“Yes”

She puts her cigarette in her beverage and puffs out the smoke.

“I love you Nana ” I say.

“I love you too Nono. I am always looking out for you. You need to secure the bag ” I nod.

“I will think about it ”

“Think about Nkosana. You won't start where the rest started. Ben has got you. He will give you the best” I nod.

She walks away leaving me in thoughts but I have to speak to Xolani about this. I take the shopping bags and go to the room that I am using while I am here. I put them on the bed and I take out my phone and try him again but it doesn't go through. Maybe he is busy or with his mistress. Christmas arrived early when I left. I call my mother and by luck she answers. I ask to talk to Nkosana and she gives me a chance to. I ask him about his day and he tells me everything, I love hearing what he has to say and he is very talkative like his father. We end the call when my airtime is about to exhaust. I lay on the bed and look at the ceiling, how would everything be if Bayede was still alive, I wonder. The knock on the door disturbs my thoughts and I sat up. Nana walked in dressed in the type of outfits Ben bought for me. I don't like it by the looks because it looks , revealing.

“I am gone ”

“Oh bye ”

“Come lock up”

Doesn't she wear a uniform. I wonder but won't ask, we walk out of the bedroom and she walks out of the main door. I lock and watch her from the window going out the gate. The car is

different from the one from yesterday , she did mention her boyfriend has money. Maybe he has more than one car as well.

It's the 3rd day at the City and it has a very busy life shame. I am trying to get used to it while I am still here. The husband called me today. It was brief and was cut off. I was kneading some dough in the kitchen. I thought It would be nice to make steam bread and some oxtail stew as well. Nana hasn't came back home and I am worried about her. My phone rings and I went to wash my hands before answering it.

“Hello”

“Baby girl”

Where did he get my numbers? That's a bit alarming.

“Ben?”

“Yes Baby girl” he says

“Where did you get my numbers?”

“From your sister ”

I will kill Nana. How could she hand my numbers out like that to strangers

“Oh”

“Where are you ?”

“Naturena ”

“Ok , I am coming to fetch you. Wear one of the things I bought yesterday ”

“Uhm ok”

He hung up. I took the dough and went to take a plastic. I guess I will cook this tomorrow. I then put it inside the fridge. I clean the kitchen up before going to the bedroom. I look for what is suitable in these clothes but I see nothing. I hear the door opening and I went to peak and it's Nana.

“I was worried ”

She looks rough, like she has had a rough night or fought with someone.

“I am tired ”

“Ben is coming to fetch me ”

“Enjoy ”

I watched her walk away , she didn't look ok and the way she walked was like there was pain between her legs. I followed her.

“Nana are you ok ? You don't look fine ” I say banging on her door.

“Nana ” she is silent. I let her be.

I go to finish my business. I find a dress I think is suitable and I wear it.

He has arrived and I don't like the dress. It's holding me tightly but Nana said it looks nice on me and Ben will like it , I don't care I am just uncomfortable. She told me about fitting in and here I am in Ben's car putting my hands over my thighs. He steals glances off them and smiles while looking at me.

“You are good baby girl ?” I nod.

“Where are we going?” he is as good as a stranger. I have just known him for two days.

“Lonehill” he says and I nod.

We reach a nice Estate and I think we finally reached his place. It is nice and very beautiful . Nana was right , he does have money because this looks wow. He gets me out of the car and I look around.

“Wow ” I say.

“You like it baby girl ?” he says

“Its nice”

He pulls my waist towards the place. We get inside and it's more classy and clean. It's beautiful.

“Let me get us something to drink ” he walks off.

I settle on the couches and he comes back with brandy and white wine.

“I don't drink ”

I say as he hands it to me and sits next to me.

“Just one glass baby girl ”

I take it and take a sip and he smiles.

“Thats it baby girl. You need to get used to these things”

“Johburg things ?” I ask.

“Yes” he takes a sip off his brandy. His scent intoxicates me.

“Where is your wife ?” I ask looking around.

“I don't have a wife ” he places his hand on my thigh and traces it up my dress.

“Oh” I shift a bit.

“Don't be scared”

I drink the Wine ”

“What are we doing ?”

“Enjoying each other's company”

I felt a bit dizzy as he spoke.

“I don't feel the wine anymore ” I place it down.

“Are you ok ?” he asks , I hold my head.

“I feel dizzy”

“Let me show you the bathroom ”

He places his drink on the glass coffee table and he takes my hand. My bag is left on the couch as we walk up the stairs. He is holding my waist, we reach the last step and his hand moves to my butt.

“You look Sexy Baby girl” he says and pins me on the wall. I tried to get him off but I feel weak.

“Dont resist. I didn't give you those things for free.”

He kisses my neck. I feel numb as he holds me and his hand moves between my thighs.

“This is Johburg , you pay for the good life. ” he says and picks my thick body with ease.

“I promise you will enjoy” he goes to the bedroom and I am crying.

“Let me go please” I say softly as he lays me on the bed. He takes off his belt from his pants.

“Don't cry baby girl , you will be ok ”

My heart is beating very fast.

CHAPTER 4

The engine is killed and I feel numb at the same time, my soul is not here yet my body is in the car. He takes out his wallet and takes out a few hundreds and hands them to me. I look at it and then him , my eyes are glossy. I feel so empty inside at the moment.

“Take baby girl” he says in an intimidating tone.

My hands are shaking as I take the money slowly, I feel sick as I hold it. I don't want to take it.

“I will call you” he says and kisses my cheek.

I hop out of the car and I close the door. The walk from the gate to the door seems to be dreading and long, feels like it took me centuries to reach the door. I open it and I find Nana laying on the couch , she has a blanket over her and there are tissue's on the table. She sits up and wipes her face, I try to hold my tears at that point.

“Hey, you didn't come back” she says. I look at her.

“He...he slept with me ” I say softly and she is not moved instead her eyes wonder around.

“I am sorry Nono ” she says and tears stream down my cheeks.
A sob escapes my lips.

She embraces me and pulls me to the couch.

“I am sorry ” she repeats it again.

My chest is paining. I hold onto her as I sob on her chest, I can't believe what had happened. He pleased himself while I was numb on the bed , I wonder what he put in my drink yesterday.

“I have to report this to the police” I say standing up and she does too.

“No you can't ! ”

“He raped me Nana ! ” I sob.

She is across me.

“I know ok? But you don't know how dangerous he is. He is friends with these police that you want to run to!”

I cry.

“You can't do anything. You just have to follow his orders ”

“I don't want to see you at the moment ”

I walk away from her and went to the room I use. I close the door and I slid down crying . It hurts me and I would have done something but this is hopeless.

I changed after crying and got myself in bed and I slept. I have just woken up and I haven't went outside. I take my phone and I make a call with the little airtime I have. It goes through , right now I need security at the moment and feel safe I guess through words.

“Hello” a woman's voice answers. Must be his mistress. A lump forms in my throat.

“Hi , it's...it's ” I hang up and put the phone on my chest.

I breathe out and the tears fall on either side of my face and I I blinked them and I wiped them away. My phone rings and I take it. It's him , I look at it till it dies down and it starts again. I swallow the lump and I answer the call.

“Hello”

“Open the door baby girl” My heart skips a beat.

“Be..B”

“Come ” he hangs up.

Oh god what have I done. I get off the bed and I slowly go to the door

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I unlock it and he is standing in front of it. He wipes my tears and holds my chin and kisses me.

“Why are you setting your beautiful face ?” I swallow.

“I miss home. I am going tomorrow” I say.

It's decided. I don't want to be here anymore.

“Mmmmh” he says.

My phone rings and I go and take it. It's Xolani , I look and Ben who is looking at me as I answer the phone call.

“Hello”

“What did you want ?” he asks.

“Oh , I was informing you that I am coming back tomorrow”

“Oh ok. We will talk” he hangs up.

I look at Benjamin and I want him out right now. He turns and he sees that I want him gone and walks away. I breathe out.

I didn't see Nana when I left, I would say we left in sour terms. I got a cab on my own and it took me to Park Station. I stayed there and waited for my bus and I then went to hop in. I watched it leave the place of dreams and aspirations where people find themselves or break. I look at the bag beside me and it has so many clothes. I left some at Nana 's house. I will

visit her if Benjamin won't bother me anymore. I closed my eyes along the way home.

I got home and I was happy , I will see Nkosana later I just want to check on Xolani and make sure that everything is well as his wife. I am glad that Benjamin used a condom butthr doesn't do any justice to me. I am scared of telling my husband so I would rather be quiet with such news. I open the door and I get inside. It's dirty and clearly his woman just left. The sweet scent is there but he is no where in sight.

I went to our bedroom and I opened the curtains and I took the bedding and I changed it. I will wash it . I get done and I go and wash and hang it outside. I start cleaning while cooking and I hear the Van from outside and I peak and it's him. He gets out and comes inside the house. I move to the kitchen while at that. He walks in.

“You are back?” I nod.

“Yes”

“Oh ” he watches me as I cook.

“We need to talk ”

He says and I look at him.

“Ok” I stop cooking and I move away from the stove. I went to the living room and he follows after me. He sits down on the couch and I do as well.

“Nompilo” he says

“Yes ?”

“I don't love you ” he says and my heart squeezes. He has never said he loves me but hearing those words shattered me.

“Oh” I say.

“I want us to divorce” I feel tears prickling my eyes. I went on my knees.

“Don't do this Xolani. I will obey everything you say please”

“Thats the thing. You are boring and weak , Pack your things I want you out”

“Xolani please ” I beg

“I will send the papers. Don't expect anything ” he says standing up and he walks away.

I sat on the floor and I cried. What is happening in my life?

I called my mother while he packed my things , he was throwing me out for real and I am hurt.

“Are you at your house?” that's the first thing she asks.

“He is kicking me out ”

“What ?”

“He said he doesn't love me ”

“Angithi uyagalavanta igoli Lelo (You are galavanting Johburg)”

“Mama ”

“Ayi Voetsek Nompilo !” I cry.

“I don't want you here , fix that marriage ” she says and hangs up.

I carry on crying, he comes and places my bags Infront of me.

“Xolani...”

“Leave Slindo”

I stood up sobbing. I took my bags and I slowly walked out, he was really kicking me out. Those years didn't mean anything. I know they are short but .. is it done on the pavement. I have no one to call besides Nana. She answers

“Nono ”

I sob.

“I need you ”

“Where are you ?”

“Lady smith. ”

“Shuu Uhm ok, I will come give me time ”

I nod and she hangs up. I sit there crying and people are looking at me as they pass by.

It was getting dark when I saw a car approaching me, it stopped Infront of me and Nana came out of the door , she came and hugged me and I just cried.

“He kicked me out” I say

“He doesn't want our marriage anymore” I say

“Everything will be ok ”

She says and takes my things. I don't know how to feel because I feel very numb at the moment. I don't know how to process everything right now.

CHAPTER 5

She hands the glass over to me and I take it slowly as the nerves kick in and I take a gulp from the glass. She is smoking and she puts her stud in the whisky Infront of her and she sits opposite me on these white leather couches. She folds her legs and lays back on the couch.

“They are coming. I am sure that they will recruit you ”

“I can only sing you know that ” she laughs.

“Baby girl , that's not the kind of entertainment we deal with ”
She is a bit drunk

“What is it Nana ?” she keeps quiet as they walk down the stairs.

Ben and Rodney that is. She came with Rodney to fetch me and we are here at his house. I need a job so I can provide for myself and take Nkosana with me. Rodney sits next to Nana and they are facing me. Ben as well .

“Whats her body count ? ” Ben asks while looking at me.

“Two , three with you ” she said looking at Ben

“She is like you when you came ”

Nana nodded. I don't even know what is a body count , I am not 3 kg if that's what they mean. Argh this is confusing.

“What is happening?” I ask and drink.

“She will start tonight , she is taking Carlos”

“But that's my biggest Clients Rodney ! ” Nana says standing up.

“amarradayda miyaad diidi?(Ae you defying me ?)”

She shook her head. Does she understand what he said.

“Go and prepare her ” Ben says.

“Come ” she takes my hand and I put the glass down and I went up the stairs following her. She is silent and also myself.

We get into a bedroom and it's nice and big , smells manly and I assume its Rodney's. She went to the closet and took out a dress and came back with it and placed it on the bed.

“Go and bath there. You are leaving soon ” she didn't sound ok

“Are you ok ?”

“Yeah , go and bath ” I put my bag down and I went to the bathroom that she showed me.

It looks like a little white heaven. I open the bathtub and I look at myself through the mirror. I am going to work now. I hope the environment and people are as friendly , I close the water and then I dip myself after I have made the water warm. I start

bathing and I get done after some time. I walk out and Nana is sitting on the bed waiting for me.

“We need to do nails tomorrow ”

“How will I work with nails ?”i ask.

“Work with me here Mpilo ”

“I am sorry”

She gives me lotion and I lotion. She helps me get dressed and the dress is a bit tight especially by my hips , I can't even walk properly. She takes heels and I look at her.

“Wear them. It's all part of the job ”

“I can't walk in them ” I say

“You will learn ”

I pull the dress down. She has a wig in her hand and removed the doek from my head. She shakes her head when she sees my benny and betty. She puts it on my head and she brushes it.

“And this too?”

“You want a job or not ?”

“I want it ” I say

“Then stop asking questions”

She finishes brushing it and then she take a little bag from her bag and it has make up. She does my face. I keep still and don't ask questions at all. She gets done in a quick one and she then looks at me.

“Carlos is a client who likes things his way. Clients are always superior than you are. You have no say ”

I nod

“Come ” she gives me a small bag and we walk out.

I am struggling to walk as we get down the stairs. They stand up and look at us

Rodney kisses Nana 's cheek.

“You look beautiful Baby girl” Ben says while licking his lips.

“Come here ” he says and I walk to him. I am scared of him and after what Nana told me I don't want to cross him .

He pulls me by my waist and I feel his boner poking my abdomen and he smells my neck. My heart is beating fast. He takes a sip off his whisky that is in the other hand and he smiles looking at me.

“A goddess”

“Surely ” Rodney chips in and Nana is looking at me.

”Behave yourself ” Ben says and I nod.

“Come let me drop you off ” he puts his glass down and takes my hand. We walk out of the house and he pulls me and my back is incontact with his chest. He kisses my shoulder.

“I don't want to let you go” he says.

He has to let me go so that I can work and be introduced to the staff. It's going to be a long day he lets go of me and his hand goes to my butt.

“Lets go ” I swallowed as we walked to his car. We got inside and he drove off.

We arrived at some place and it looked like a house more than it is a Hotel. Shouldn't I be at the hotel working as an entertainer ? I look at Ben and he is concertrated on the road. He parks and he looks at me.

“I will fetch you in an hour ” he says.

“Is it that quick ?” so entertaining takes an hour a day then you go home ?

“Yes. Don't disappoint me. This is the biggest client we have. He brings in alot of money ”

“I won't ” I got out of the car slowly and looked at him. I closed the door and struggled my way to the door.

I rang the bell and looked around. It looked scary to me because we are in a house. Maybe they are hosting an event

here and I have to entertain. The door opens and a muscular giant opens. I swallow hard and peak behind him if there are any people or am I just early.

“The new one , mmmh exciting” he has a very weird accent.

“Come in Bella , don't be shy” I walked in and he closed the door behind me and I turned.

“What kind of entertainment is done ?” I ask.

“Lets start with a drink ”

“Water is fine ” I say.

“Wine will relax your muscles” he says

I go and sit down and he pour the drink Infront of me.

“Whaf is your name ? I am used to Nana” he says

“Nompilo” I say

“Oh Mpilo. You are new?” I nod

He smiles and comes to sit next to me.

“We are going to have fun”

“Fun?” I drink my wine and he leans to kiss my shoulder and I jump up .

“I think I need to leave ”

He gets off the couch and comes to me.

“I paid a great deal for you tonight. ”

“What ? ”

“Take that dress off !” he says.

“No !” I say and he slaps me. I fall on the floor and hold my cheek.

“Its either you co operate or we do this the hard way” I am scared and shaking So Nana is a prostitute and she signed me up for this too ? I can't believe I am such a fool.

I sob and he comes and grabs me up.

“Now go on your knees and take Papa” he says.

“I ... I don't know that” I am shaking.

“Go on your knees” I do go on my knees .

“Wipe your tears” I do so and he pulls down his shorts and takes out his dick and it's looking at me. I swallow.

“Suck on it ”

He says while getting closer to my face. I feel a lump on my throat and I take it in my hand and I put my tongue on it. I have never done this before. He groans and lays his head back at the same time.

“Fuck baby. Put it all in your tiny mouth” I swallow and I move my head and I put it in my mouth a bit and he holds my wig and he pushes my head to take in his whole dick. I gag and take my mouth out. He looks at me.

“Lets do this again ” he puts it in my mouth and he moves my head so it can go in and out of my mouth. He is groaning and enjoying that's for sure.

He shoots his load in my mouth when the time comes and I spit it out. It's disgusting and I have never done this before.

“Come ” he says and pulls me up.

He takes off the Gucci slides and his shorts and he then turns me around and undresses the dress. He zips it down and kisses my neck. I am not drugged and it's going to happen. Tears stream down my cheeks.

“Stop crying ” he says and wipes my tears.

“I can't wait to devour you” he says so hungrily. I am left in an underwear and bra. I feel his warm breath on my back and he turns me around and kisses me. I have to respond before I get in trouble. He loves it by the groans. I feel his shaft poking my abdomen and he picks me up with ease and puts me ontop of his black piano.

“Lay on your back”

I lay on it and he takes off my underwear and then bra. He picks his lips and he then dives between my thighs. I felt a bit of pleasure as it felt so wrong. He went on eating my Nuna roughly now and it wasn't as nice. I was shaking. He stopped and pulled me by the edge. He wore a condom and he then lifted my leg before he pushed inside of me. I cried out a bit in pain as he thrust.

“Fuck baby you taste fucken good !” he said. I wish he could finish and stop right now.

The water was feeling warm on me when I got in the shower and now it feels cold , I don't care because it mixes with the tears in my eyes as they run down my cheeks and end up down the drain. I switch off the water after some time and I feel a bit cold but not as cold as I feel within. I take the towel and I wrap my body with it and I walk out of the bathroom. He is standing by the dresser sniffing the white substance up his nose with a R100 note. He rubs it and turns to me. I am looking at him and he comes to me and pulls me by my waist. He had fetched me from that man an hour ago and I was a sobbing mess , he didn't talk and Nana hasn't called me , I don't want her to call me because she sold me for this !

“Do one line and you will be fine. You will forget ”

Forget. I want to forget what they both had done go my body. I nod slowly and is perks my lips as I hold onto my towel tightly.

“Thats it Baby girl” he takes out another pack from his pants and he spills it on the dresser. He takes out a card and does the lines. He is done and he gives me the note.

I take it and look at him.

“Do it slowly don't rush too much you will be fine ” I nod and start with the first line. I do it and I close my eyes and shake my head while running my nose and I cough a bit.

“You will be ok”

“Should I do another ?” I asked.

“Yes” he looks at me and places his hand on my back. I do another one and I feel a bit lighter.

“Thats it for today ”

I closed my eyes. Taking in everything. He picked me up and placed me on the bed, he kissed my lips and removed the towel slowly , I opened my eyes and look at him. He caressed my boobs and I closed my eyes once more.

“You are Mine Mpilo” he says .

“I am not a man to be messed with ” he says and I swallow.

This was now my life , This was how IMPILO yami turned out to be.

CHAPTER 6

“Nompi come to bed ” I did a third line and I took the brandy in front of me and I gulped it down and let it sting me a bit.

I turned around and I went towards the bed and I got on it. My body is relaxed and my mind has accepted and given in to my now reality. There is no escape and I am under this man , Benjamin ! The man that Nana put in my life to control all my being. Our relationship was rocky after those encounters but as time went by we fixed it again. I am in a relationship with Ben and also work for him. I do get a share of the money I work for. Let me rephrase that. Sleep my way for and it's a very good share. He has a brothel in Hillbrow and we mostly work in Europa Hotel or Hillbrow Inn. There are a lot of us. Nana and I are the privileged ones. We don't stay at the brothel house nor do we go on the street and wait for the next man at night looking for a girl to fuck. A prostitute, no we are classy he says. We deserve better treatment meaning better clients, Mafia bosses, Blessers of the game . You name it all.

I place my done hands on his thighs and I take off the silk gown slowly. He groans and I see he is excited to touch me. I run my

hands over to his torso and get closer to him. I crawl over to him and get ontop of him and I lean down and kiss his lips.

“You are getting Naughty ” he says and I lean by his ear and blow air softly and he groans.

“Its sexy !” he says , I know that tomorrow morning I will be spoilt like a queen.

His fingers run over my black lacy lingerie and goes to my boobs. He then moves his hands to my butt and he squeezes it and I gasp then giggle a bit. I am tipsy at the same time and it's only when I relax is when I am a bit drunk. He smiles and spanks it and I moan in pain a bit.

“Let me put it in ” he says

I lift myself up and move my g-string to the side and he takes the condom from the side and inserts it on his shaft with my help. He is done and rubs my clitoris so that I can get wet quickly. I do and I feel the tip of his shaft and I slid in and he groans digging his nails on my waist area. I place my hands on his chest and I start moving.

“Thats it baby girl ” he says.

In over 2 months of starting this , I am a quick learner. Nana is the one who taught me and she once said, we pay with our souls to have this kind of life and here I am in debt of it. I know he will get kinky after this. My wrists are a bit sore but I don't

complain. Rule number one , never complain . Nana said and I obey that rule.

I woke up and my whole body is in pain. I feel like I was run over by something , a car even a truck as well. My weave is by my eyes and I move it away. He is not in bed , gone Maybe to Hillbrow or some shady business meeting. I get off the bed and there is a note by my bed side with a card and I take it.

“I booked you a Spa , spoil yourself Baby girl ” it says and I crush the little note.

I take my naked self to the bathroom and I get inside and opt for a bath , I need one after the crazy night we had. He pulled Spanked , choked me , pricked me and did everything his heart desires on me. I got done and I got out of the bath tub. I walk to the wardrobe and I open it and take out a dress , I feel like a loose one so I can let my body feel loose as well. I haven't called my mother since two days ago and I feel worried. I do send money and she never asks where I get it from. All she wants is for me to go and beg Xolani to take me back. It was better off there I guess.

I take my phone and bag and I walk out of the bedroom after keeping it clean. I asked Benjamin that the main bedroom be kept private. I am the only one who cleans it and he accepted

my request. The helper can clean anywhere else she wants. She comes once a week but most of the time we are not both at the house. I got a cab and it came to fetch me. I got in and it drove off. I called my mother in the process.

“Hello” I say

“We got the money” she says.

“Ok , how is Nkosana ?” I ask

“He is well he went to play” I breathe out and look out to the city of Johannesburg.

“Where are you working that's alot of money” she says.

“I work at some recruitment company ” that's what I was first told when I came here ”

“You left your husband really?” she says

“Mah ” I don't have energy for this.

“i have to go ” I say and hung up.

I sigh and I look out of the window while at that. The driver is not making any small talk and I am happy that he is not because I am not in the mood of conversating. My phone rings and I take it from my lap and it's Ben, I answer it.

“Babe ” I say

“How is your body today?” he asks.

“It hurts ” I lie. I know that if I say I am fine. I will work. I am tired really.

“Ok , go to the spa and rest baby girl ”

“Ok ”

He hangs up and I put my phone away. I get dropped off near Bree taxi rank. I walk through and I check the text from Nana , she said that she will meet me near here and I don't know why ? Maybe her client will drop her here. I stand there and wait for her to arrive. I send a text to her but she doesn't respond. This is not competent at all. Finally she arrives and she looks a bit messy but still good. We share a hug and I look at her , a rough night she had by the looks.

“Dont ask. Let's go to the spa ” she says.

“Sure” We get another cab and it takes us away.

“I bagged 5K last night ” she takes the money out and the driver looks at us.

“Mmmh ” I don't like talking about this.

We had our spa day. Nana started to relax and she didn't mention anything that relates to what we do for a living and I was glad. The only thing she mentioned is that Rodney is thinking of buying her a car. I nod at that while listening to her.

I am trying to loosen up as well. We get wine and I kill myself with it. We get done and Nana looks better by the time we walk out of the place. We decide to go and have lunch and we do , we sit down and my phone rings at that moment.

“You still have that phone ” Nana says. I ignore her and answer the call.

“Hello”

“Nompilo” it's Xolani.

“Xolani ” Nana shoots her eyes at me. A part of me is happy that he is calling me.

“My lawyer has the divorce papers. When can you come to sign them ?” he asks.

I swallow and feel a lump in my throat and I push it down.

“You can divorce me without me being there ” I say.

“Ok then ”

He hangs up and I still have my phone by my ear. I turn and put it away.

“I hope you are done with him or Ben will sort it out ”

“Just leave me alone ”

“Hey , you are eating here because of me. Get yourself in check ”

I keep quiet. We eat the food and I ask for a bottle of wine and the waiter brings it back. Nana and I keep on pouring glass after glass and I feel a bit tipsy by the time we are done with the bottle.

“Let me call Rodney” she says and rummaged through her bag.

She locates her phone and she calls him. He says he will come and we wait for him. A few moments later he is Infront of us and he pays for our bill. We grab our bags and walk out , we get in his car and he drives me to Lonehill. I look out of the window and zone them out as they are talking. We get to the house and I get out without saying good bye. Nana is not considerate at times. Did I love Xolani ? A bit. I had feelings for him. He was my husband for God damn sake and ...and ..

I grow myself on the bed as soon as I get in the bedroom and I sob on the pillow. I am heart broken to be honest. I feel a hand on my back.

“Baby girl” I sit my butt up and I wipe my tears.

He is wearing sweatpants and a vest. When did he come back ?

“How was your day?”

“Ok”

“Carlos wants you tonight” he says

“But I haven't healed ” I say

“This is money NOMPI. You will heal along the way”

“You are cruel” I say. I wipe my tears sniffing and he holds my jaw tightly making me look at him. It hurts.

“Don't ever talk to me like that !” he says.

”Ok ?” I nod and he lets go of me. I rub my jaw line.

“Get your ass ready!” he says and I stand up and walk to the bathroom. I close the door and I rub my jaw. He really squeezed it. I went to get ready.

“The sexy Mami” he says as soon as he opens the door. It's the second time I will be entertaining him and he is Nana 's client usually.

He makes way for me and I walk in holding the dress and the little clutch bag. He spanks my butt and then closes the door. I settle on the couch and he stands Infront of me.

“I want you to be my regular now. The other one is not as nice as you ”

I look at him. He puts his drink down.

“How about you come kiss Papa ” he says.

I stand up from my seat and I walk to him. He pulls me by my waist and runs his fingers on my painted face. He smiles and

then smashes his lips onto mine and his hands go under my little dress and holds my butt. I moan softly as he pulls me closer to me. He squeezes my butt cheeks and groans.

“I missed you sugar ” he picked me up and walked up the stairs. Today it's not an hour , he wants me to spend the night , that's what Ben said to me.

CHAPTER 7

I can't move my legs or my hands anywhere. His shafts swinging around as he goes to put the key on the table and he comes , he takes the bowel filled with oil and he pours it on my body. He puts the bowel away and he runs his fingers on my upper body and squeezes my boobs in the process. It's the 4th round and after midnight. I checked the clock. We are both tired especially me being on top the last round.

“You are such a good girl”

He goes to my private area and I feel his tongue there with his finger. I moan in the process of that. I won't lie that feels good , I bite my bottom lip and he goes a bit rough than he is doing. He rubs my clitoris vigorously and I feel my legs weakening and about to shake. He stops and he kisses it before he gets ontop of me. I am staring at him straight in the eyes. The shots from earlier are making me ease up. Alcohol helps alot in this situation.

“Come ” he untied my legs and I am free. He holds them over his shoulders and he reaches by my side and he takes a condom and he removes it. He then puts it on , one thing I am glad of is that they all put condoms and they don't make a mistake. I feel him inserting himself and I moan.

“Moan for me ” I do as he tries to slam deeper.

I close in my walls and he groans

“Fuck baby ” he says. I officially hate the word Baby or baby girl. Those two disgust me.

He reaches his point and then pulls out and collapses next to me.

“That was amazing ” ,

I am silent and he untied me. My wrists hurt but I don't say anything either than rubbing them. He goes and disposes the condom and I sit by the edge of the bed. He comes back and throws himself on the bed. A few moments later he is snoring like the world is coming to an end. I stood up and made my way to the bathroom and closed the door.

I didn't get rest after that. No ,I had more clients. 2

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3 , 4 or 5 a day. Make that 6 with Benjamin. I was now a certified Prostitute and it has sink in. He would send me out , if the called I was always available. They would do anything to me

and I was too high or tipsy to even feel any dignity in me. It faded and I lost it. I was now Meat to everything called man.

We were at Rodney's club. I have found out that Rodney and Benjamin are from Somalia and moved here I don't know when but they made an underground street name for themselves. They take me and Nana everywhere. We are their ' image ' as Ben has mentioned before. I haven't called my son in the past week but I send money. I was ashamed. How can I speak to him while feeding him dirty money but it kept him going.

“You are such a hypocrite” Nana says and I snap out of my thoughts. Soft music is playing.

“I am a hypocrite in what ? ” I say while drinking some Hennessy.

“You stole all my important clients. ”

“Oh ” I drink more and she looks irritated Infront of me.

”Dont forget I made you and I can break you ”

“Its not my fault you brought the best in the game ” she clicked her tongue.

“Listen here ” I put my glass down and lean forward to her.

“You broke Nompilo. I have no consious. The best in the game wins ”

“Oh I will win alright ”

“Don't be intimidated by me Best friend ” I smile. She looks irritated. Ben and Rodney come back holding brief cases.

“Lets go ” Ben says and I grab the whole bottle of Hennessy.

“You should tone the drinking down ” he says softly by my ear.

“I will ” I say.

We say our good byes and we walk away . We get to the car and he puts the brief case at the back and he fiddles with his pockets and takes out a bag of white coke. He shook the packet first and he gave it to me. I opened it and I dipped my pinky finger inside and I tasted it. I close my eyes and open them. He takes the book and he puts it on his lap while undoing his pants and his shaft springs out.

“Sniff then suck” he says and I pour it on the book and he does the lines for me and gives me the note. I lower my head and I sniff two lines and it feels so damn good. I lift my head up and moan in the process. I look at him and he runs his fingers on my arm and bless to my shoulder.

“I want to do another ” I say.

“Do it baby girl. ”

I lower my head and I do another line and I feel much better and lighter. He takes the book and throws it at the back. I take

his shaft and I put it in my mouth , I take it all and I take it out and spit on it before running my hands up and down on it. I look at him as I give him a hand job and he does the same. His hand goes to my hair hair and he holds it. I put his shaft in my mouth again and started sucking. I hear him curse but I don't get the words or what he is saying.

“Yes baby girl that's it ” he says. I keep on going.

“Oh fuck baby girl !”

The way I hate that word but I don't say anything but keep on going. He cums rather too quickly this time and I sit up and wipe my lips. He takes the tissue box and he wipes his dripping cum. I am not about to swallow that. I take the tissue and I wipe my lips.

“You will cancel Michael tonight. I want you to myself ” he says and I nod.

“Come let me kiss those tiny lips ” he pulls me to him and we share a brief kiss.

“Good girl ”

We cleaned up and he then starts the car and drives off.

We get to the house and Ben has an emergency. He tells me to behave myself before he leave. Good , I should cook because it

really has been a long time since I have cooked. I went upstairs to clean myself up and I then went down to cook. I will make something simple and very quick. I go to Ben's wine collection and I take out the Allée Bleue Isabeau. I walk to the kitchen and I carry on with the chopping. I down the wine down and it goes down very perfectly well.

Soon enough I am done with cooking and there is someone at the door. I went to open and I was attacked by police. The one officer holds me and I want to be set free. The detective looks around.

“Check the place ” he commands the others and stands Infront of me.

“Who are you ?” He asks.

“Nompilo” I am scared of the police. I became sober one time.

“Where is the owner of this house?”

“I don't know. He ...he went out ” I say.

“Did he say where he is going ? ”

I shake my head.

“found anything ?! ” he shouts.

The other officer shakes his head and he sighs.

“We will be back. Tell the owner that ” I nod and they let go of me. I close the door as soon as they are gone and I breathe out. I rush up the stairs and I call Benjamin but it doesn't go through. I get frustrated. I went to the wardrobe and search inside moving our clothes. I saw a bag and I took it out and placed it on the floor. I opened it and it had stacks of Cocaine inside. I looked around and I was in awe , where did he buy this much. I take out one and it seems heavy. Probably weigh 1 kg. I stood up and I went with it down the stairs.

I got in the kitchen and I put it on the counter and looked at it. Wow , I wonder how much it costed. I take the knife and I am about to cut through it when someone speaks behind me.

“What are you doing ?” i jump and turn. He is here.

“The police were here ” I say

“I know. What are you doing ?”

“I just want to... ”

He grabs the knife from my hands.

“You don't touch stuff you are not supposed to ”

”You give it to me all the time ” I say with a bit of an attitude and he slaps me and I hold onto the counter then place my hand on my cheek.

“You are becoming disrespectful ”

“Isn't it a bad girl vibe ?” he pulled me by my hair.

“I made you Nompilo. I can break you !” he shouts

I swallow. I shouldn't have provoked him at all.

CHAPTER 8

I am standing in front of the small mirror in the bathroom. I look at myself and tears have dampened my cheeks, I touch my left cheek and it has a bruise. I look at my forehead as well and I touch those places and I stopped. I placed my hands inside the water and I splashed it on my face and I softly sobbed while holding onto the sink and I put my hand in my chest. A knock on the door is loud enough for me to hear and very aggressive. I am scared and there is nothing I can do, I tried running last night. I managed to get out of the gate when he started hitting me. I was running and I managed to get a lift from a stranger. The stranger was concerned. I didn't care what Nana said. Ben didn't have power in my defense but I was very wrong. As soon as I was dropped off the police station he was there coming out with the same detective. All he said was.

“Let's go home baby girl” I was defeated. When we arrived home he showed me who he really is. I swallowed the spit that is quiet hard to swallow and I drain the water and I went to open the door.

“The doctor is here. Get dressed” he says and I went to the wardrobe. He grabbed my arm roughly and turned into him.

“Don't double cross me ever” I nod.

“Drop that attitude and we won't have these problems ” I nod again and he perks my lips.

“We don't want to ruin your beautiful face again ”

He walks out after that and I slid down and I cry while craddling my legs. I put my hand over my mouth and I sobbed , the door opens and I look up. Nana looks at me. She is dressed in tracksuits. She drops her bag and comes to kneel Infront me and pulls me in a hug. I sob more than I did before.

“Its ok , obey him and everything will be ok”

My whoke body. My whole being is in pain and I don't know how or where to start removing it. I hold onto her as I sob.

“Everything will be alright. ” she says.

“I don't want to be here Nana ”

“You have nowhere to go. It's better being here just listen to him and don't disobey his orders and you will be ok”

She pulls me up

“Come let's wipe those tears and get you dressed. The doctor is here for you ” she sits me on the bed.

“Have you gone through this too?” I ask her.

“Yes , the first time but I got used to it. Just obey him and everything will be in your favour ” she says and starts playing with the weave on my head.

“Make up was created for this reason ” she takes the foundation from the dresser as I look at myself through the mirror. I don't know this lady Infront of me.

“It will transform you ”

She is busy with it.

“I miss Bayede ” I say and she looks up to me through the mirror.

She is silent and doesn't say anything. He would've protected me from this I know, non of this would've happened and I wouldn't be in this situation all because of his sister.

“Don't bring him up please ” she says softly and outs the foundation down.

“You will find me downstairs ” she walks out banging the door. I place my head on the dresser and I sob.

I hear the door opening slowly.

“You should be ready now ” I look up and he is leaning by the wall watching me.

“You need another beating? ” I shook my head.

“Get your ass ready then !” I stand up from the dresser and I wipe my face full of tears.

I walk to the wardrobe and I open it. I take out tracksuits.

“Take out a dress” he says and I take one out and I drop the towel around my body.

I slip it on and he comes and takes my hand swiftly.

“Behave ” I nod and we walk down the stairs and Nana is having a drink while the doctor is sitting opposite her.

The doctor stands up and his eyes have pity for me , I can see. I look away and Ben sat me on the couch. He places his hands in his pocket. The doctor takes his kit and opens the bag. He puts on his gloves and he holds my face. He is poking every part of my body and I can't stop moaning in pain.

“I have to take her to the hospital to check if she doesn't have any internal bleeding or any broken bones ”

“That won't happen. Give her something to heal fast ” Ben says and I look at Nana who looks away.

“Ok”

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the doctor says and he rummages through his bag. I swallow and he takes out a note pad and writes down on it then rips it off and gives it to Benjamin.

“You have to get that prescription”

“I will” , the doctor nods and he packs his things away.

He walks out and I stand up from the couch and I run up the stairs , I could feel the pain pressing harder and harder against my bones as I am running. I get to the bedroom and I open the drawer next to the bed and I find it. I need to forget and feel less of the pain. I spill it on the dresser and get a card and a note. I do the lines and two up my nose. I lift my head up as I lean against the bed and I open my eyes and he is looking at me.

“Thats enough for today” , he comes and puts it away and cleans up. He then picks me up and lays me on the bed.

“Rest” I lick my lips as I close my eyes slowly. I feel better now that I have had some coke.

I later woke up and there was no one in the room. I got of the bed slowly and made my way to the bathroom to pee. I walked out of the bathroom after I was done and went out of the bedroom and made my way down the stairs and I find him on the phone while looking out of the sliding door with one hand

In his pocket. He was speaking in his language. I looked at him , how can a man be this cruel in life? He wraps up the call and turns to me.

“Food is in the kitchen ” I nod and I was about to walk off but he pulled me to him and held my waist.

“I didn't want to mess up your pretty face” he brushes my cheek.

“When that fades you are going to work” he means the scar on my cheek. It will remove I know but with time.

I nod.

“Carlos wanted you tonight ,he offered to double and I am tempted ” he kisses my lips and I return the kiss and he squeezes my butt.

“Go and eat.” he says and I walk away to go and eat.

“How is school?” I ask

“Its good Mama ” I smile. I miss him so much

“Know mama is working for you here. When she has everything she will come and take you ok?”

“Ok ”

“I love you”

“I love you Mama ” I hang up and I look at my phone.

Last night was a rollercoaster night. My first time having a 3 sum and it was something else. I am enjoying the sun outside while I am having lunch. The helper is here today. My scars have faded. I have been here for 5 months and it has been quiet official. I decided to call Nkosana and check how he is and I miss him. I miss Bayede at times but I have pushed his existence at the back of my head and just blocked that he was ever in my life. I sigh as the breeze kisses my skin. I stand up when I am done from the chair and I walk back inside the house. I get to the kitchen and I wash my dishes and make my way upstairs.

I take off the robe I am wearing and I went to the drawer and there is a new stash. He out it this morning I assume. I take it and prep it . I sniff two lines and I feel good. I put everything away and I took the wine bottle and a cigarette and I light it up while I stand by the balcony , whoever sees me will seemein my underwear . I took the first puff. Nana once said that it helps release stress and I take anything that helps me cope in this life. My phone rings and I gulp some wine before going back I side. I take it and I look at it ,it's Nana.

“Mngani ”i say

I take a puff and put the wine away while sitting on the bed.

“Ben and Rodney just got in an accident ”

“Accident ? What ?” I was praying inside.

“Rodney is critical”

“What about Ben? ” she heaves a sigh

“I am sorry. He died at the scene ”

I dropped the call after that and laid on the bed looking at the ceiling.

CHAPTER 9

I felt like my body was numb , like what Nana just told me was not true. No he can't die quickly , there is a catch. Maybe it's a test as well. I am downing his whisky in his study , He never allowed me here but here I am having access to every fucken thing in this office. I take the land line and I make a phone call to his phone and it doesn't go through. How can he die ? How did he die ?is this some ,argh I can't even figure it out. I take another gulp and i put the glass on the table. I stand up and I make my way out of his office and walk to the stairs slowly.

He should walk in at any moment now , I wait a bit but nothing. It hasn't sunk in. Don't celebrate while it's still early , celebrate ? Who celebrates one's death ? This is pure evil Nompilo ! But then I am free from this life and hold, am I ? Yes I am ! He is no more. There is no one who can control me. I run up the stairs and I got in the bedroom. I went through the wardrobe searching for anything at all. I take my suitcase and I load things inside it and push them further inside. I try again and look through the wardrobe at the same time.

“Damn it !” I cuss and bite my bottom lip.

Where could he keep his money ? I need money to go home with. Money to start a new life with, I get up and went to take

my phone. I want to call Nana but I think again. I pull the covers. Yeah on tv it's under the bed. I pull it up and Bingo ! Wow so much money . What ..where did he get this much. I feel rich as it is . I take the stack of cash and I hold it in my hands. I stand up and I go and pull my suitcase. I start packing everything inside.

“What are you doing ? ”i turned around to see this man I don't know , he is standing by the door. I stop putting money in my bag.

“You bitch is trying to steal my brother's money !” he charges towards me

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Brother ? Benjamin never mentioned to have a brother nor Nana.

He grips my hair painfully picking me up from the floor and slaps me and I fall on the bed. I could taste the blood off my lips. He takes off his belt and I am sheilding my face

“Daniel Stop! ” he turns to the door. It's Nana and she is breathing heavily.

“She was stealing money ” she looks at me.

“She will work for it ” I look between them.

“On the streets ” she continues and looks at me.

He is skeptical with the suggestion but he puts his belt away and I am shaking while looking at them.

“I will be down stairs ” he walks out banging the door. Nana comes to me and hugs me. I cry in her arms.

“Everything will be ok” she says.

“I want to go home Nana. That's all I want ” I say

“You can't go home. You have to pay for the debt ” what ? I look at her and sniff.

“I am tired. I don't like this ” I say

“You have no choice ” God help me. I sob and she hugs me

“Its ok , you will be fine ”

It will never be fine. This is not fine, she craddles me in her arms , rocking me back and forth.

“Go and bath” she says

I know what that means

“Ok” I get off from her hold and I went to the bathroom.

I close the door and I slid down and I cried my heart out. I wanted what I am feeling to be gone at the moment and

everything to be ok. I stand up and I open the shower and I look at myself on the mirror. I heard a bang on the door.

“Hurry up !” I strip what I am wearing and enter the shower.

“Get her done ” he stands by the door

I don't know who he is but he did mention he is Benjamin's brother after all. Nana puts the powder away and she then looks at me .

“Come ”

She pulls me from the chair and I look at myself. She takes my hand and we walk out of the bedroom. We walk down the stairs and we reach Benjamin's brother on a phone call. He wraps up the call and turns to me.

“That was Carlos” Nana doesn't look pleased.

“She won't get the good clients anymore until she pays for trying to steal while Ben hasn't been dead for a day ! ” she says and I look at her.

“Take her to Hillbrow” she nods.

“Come”

I follow after her and she opens unlocks the car and we get inside. No one is talking to anyone at this moment. I don't want

to talk I just want to go and be with Nkosana right now. I am tired of this City already. We get to the streets and she parks the car. There are other woman waiting in the dark. I look at them and I look at Nana.

“Get out and make money”

“Nana please I want to go home ”

“Daniel won't let this go. Go and make that money” I wipe my tears and I get out slowly. I close the door.

“Bye ” she drives off after that. I am scared as I am here , how will I get back even. I stand by the corner and the other ladies are talking to each other.

The other one is smoking at the same time. I mind my own business at that moment. One car stops and the window rolls down. The lady next to me goes towards it and leans inside. They are talking and she is flirting. I see her turning around and she looks at me.

“New one. Come !” I look around.

“Haibo zwakala !(Come)” I walk slowly to her and she pulls me. She smells of Nicotine.

“She is R200 ” she pats my back. What ?

“Come baby girl” that name. I hate it with passion.

“Go”

She says and I walk slowly around and get inside the car. He touches my thigh running his fingers on it.

“Fresh ones.” he smiled and started his beat up car and drives off. The street lights are much brighter now and it's more darker.

“Where do you come from ?” he asks and I am silent.

“Don't be scared ”

I swallowed.

“Do you have a cigarette?” I ask.

“No ” bummer. I need something that will calm me down.

I have the heels in my hands as I am walking through the taxi rank. People are looking at me as I am passing by. I need a bed, I need wine and most of all I need cocaine at this point. I am craving it and if Benjamin was here he would have gave it to me at this very moment. I see a lady selling and I go to her. I take out some money and ask for a cigarette. I get one and also matchsticks. I light it up and I take my change and I walk off smoking. My phone rings from my bra and I take it out. It's Nana.

“Where are you ?”

“Taxi rank” I say

“I hate you ” I say

“Well tough” she hangs up. My mind jogs back to last night. We slept in his car , I felt degraded than I already am. Hooting brings me back to reality

“Yewena Sfebe Suka ! (you Whore move !)”

It's a taxi driver.

“Uwe lowo(That's you)” I say back loud enough.

“Uthini ?(What did you say)” he jumps out of the taxi holding a knobkiri.

I swallow but suddenly I had some courage. He came my way and someone came between us.

“Mphembe Ndoda yehlisa umoya (Calm down man)” the guy says.

“I want to hit this bitch!”

“Hit me , Woza Sibone !(Come let's see)” I shout over the guy throwing my cigarette away.

People were looking at us now.

“Mphembe ulayishile. Hamba Ndoda iyobonana (You have passengers , go .I will see you later)”

He pointed at me with a Knobkiri.

“I will catch you ” he walks off and gets in the taxi and drives off.

“I suggest you don't ever come back to this taxi rank ” the guy says. Who is he ?

My phone rings and it's Nana

“eyi awungieyeke wena !(leave me alone)” I say to her.

“You are talking to me like that ?”

“Who is calling ? Please give me some space” I hang up.

“I am taking a taxi here and you or anyone else won't stop me ” I walk off to go and catch a taxi.

I am irritated as it is when I get inside. People kept their stares on me as I got inside. I sat there and minded my own business like they should with theirs.

I get to Nana's place and I opened the door walking in. She was sitting on the couch wearing a white gown. She stood up and came to slap me.

“Dont ! I mean don't ever talk to me like that. You have the guts to talk to me like that now huh?”

I am silent .

“Don't try me because Nkosana will be found in a ditch of you do ” she says.

“I wish Bayede punishes you wherever he is ” she slaps me again and I slap her back.

“You don't know me ” She points at me .

“Hambo geza uyanuka (Go and bath you stink)” she clicks her tongue and walks off. I hold my cheek and walk to the bathroom.

I close the door and I slid down crying.

“We learnt colours and different kind” i smile through the phone.

“I miss you ” I honestly say.

“I miss you too Mama ”.

A tear drops from my cheek.

“Mama uyakuthanda kakhulu yezwa ? Ungakhohlwa lokho (Mommy loves you so much, never forget that)”

“I love you too Mommy” the white woman speaks.

“I have to go. I will call you ok ? ”

“Ok , bye ”

“Bye Mfana ka Mama (Mommy's boy)”

I hang up and I turn the other side of the bed. I haven't eaten or went out of this room. Just slept to avoid Nana. She is something else now that I don't understand and she has changed completely. I wipe my tears when there is a bang on the door.

“Wake up and get ready for work ! Time is money !” she shouts.

I sniff and close my eyes. God I wish to get out of this situation but I just don't know how to. Help me please.

CHAPTER 10

Benjamin was buried in dignity. I won't lie, I will miss him a bit. Maybe it's the way he treated me, it seemed better than what Nana is doing to me. Cocaine has become my friend, alcohol my best friend and smoking my comforter. I have found reliability and therapeutic things in those things. Nana has been out in charge of the operation until Rodney recovers. How is he? Well he is going well and he will come back that's guaranteed by the doctors.

It has been a month of my life being torture after torture and let me say. Me and Taxi drivers, we are enemies now. Yeyi those people can put you in your place but it's nothing I can't handle. I haven't talked to Nkosana in a week and soon he will close from school and need some new clothes. I have budgeted those for him and school stationary.

“I told you to not come back”

I look at him as I try to light my cigarette up after another hectic night.

“The taxi is about to get full” he says and I leave lighting my cigarette up and shove it inside my small bag.

“Sho ” I walk off and he follows me with hands in his pocket.

I keep on walking and I get to the taxi and hop Infront as it is the only seat available. If money is being counted they should not even being it to me because I will shove inside my boobs and save it for myself. I let out my hand and he hops inside. He is driving this one today ? Oh ok. I look out and the taxi moves. I pay and focus on looking at the city where dreams are made or kill people's soul. People start getting off bit by bit as it moves. It's good that the money was given to the driver himself because I wasn't playing when I said I will take that money and walk off.

“I should say , you are trouble ” he speaks.

“Usually I am not ” I say looking out the window.

“Where are you getting off ?” I shrug. I don't know if I want to get off and be exposed to the world again. To all it's bad deeds creeping in to catch me.

“Where do you live ?” I ask him.

“I am everywhere” he says.

“Mmmh”

“Where do you live ?” He asks me my question

“Naturena , with a friend ” I say

“You are beautiful” he says randomly. I look at him.

“Are you hitting on me ? ” I ask

“I don't have time for games ” he says

I am silent. We get to my stop and I hop out. He looks at me and smiles.

“Sobonana Ntokazi,uziphathe kahle Nompilo (I will see you my lady.)” How does he know my name ? I don't know his just his face.

The taxi drives off after hooting and I hold my shoes and walk away.

“Wake up ” she hits my thighs and sits next to me. She is holding Steers paper bags, she looks fresh as well.

“I have been calling you ” I sit up and take off my bra , I feel like a mess , I am a mess and my clothes are scattered on the floor.

“I don't know where my phone is ” she hands a burger to me and I take one and start eating. She looks at me.

“I got you a pack” I stop eating and look at her. She fiddles in her small bag and she takes out the cocaine. I put the burger down and I took it from her hands.

“Behave yourself and I will get more ” I nod

“Thank you” she stands up.

“Oh and Mpilo” she looks at me.

“I am not evil ,just looking out for you” she walks off after. I eat my food and then after I take the coke and I do some lines.

I feel better after doing them and good. I went to bath and cleaned my room a bit, my body did feel tired when I came. I changed and looked at myself through the mirror. Ngaze ngavithika , yazi UMhlanga usungishayile manje ngendlela engyiyo (I look so bad). I sigh and I walk to the kitchen. I take out the cooking ingredients

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I feel like a home cooked meal and it has been long since I have cooked food before. I move around the kitchen and Nana walks in while she is on her phone

“She is not available but I am ” she says to the person she is talking to.

“Carlos !” she now has a frown and looks at her phone.

“Did he just hang up on me ? ” she bangs her hand on the wall and looks at me.

“This is your fault. I am loosing good clients because of you !” I keep quiet.

“Fuck you Nompilo!” She walks off.

“Fuck you too Nandipha !” I click my tongue. I make small portion of food for myself and I get done in a short space of time.

I dish up for myself and she goes to the kitchen. I hear her groaning , she is frustrated and I know. To believe this was once my best friend , is she one ? I don't know and it hurts me what she is doing.

The vehicle is at halt and he takes out his wallet, he takes out the money and hands it over to me. I take it and shove it in my small bag and he touches my cheek.

“I will see you again neh ?” Men ! Nx

“Sharp”

I take out my cigarette and I get out of the car and I close the door. I pull my dress down properly and I light my cigarette. Today is an indecisive day, The sun shines for a few seconds then it gets cold. If it should rain then it should rain. I kept on walking down the street while I am smoking and pushing through people till my cigarette was finished. I took out a small perfume and sprayed myself. Nana insulted me last time and said I don't smell very pleasing after smoking. She can really say anything to break my feelings and I am trying to not be as sensitive and vulnerable to being hurt. I get to the taxi rank and

I pop some gum in my mouth as I am walking through. A few chews and I have had enough of it so I throw it away.

“Unjani Nompilo?(How are you Nompilo?)” I stop my tracks and turn to the side.

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

“It doesn't matter ”

“To me it does, that's something personal”

“You are on your way home?” he changes the topic.

“Yes.. yeah” I say,he nods as I watch him eating pap and livers.

“Uyaphuthuma ? (Are you in a hurry?)”

My mouth runs before I could even think.

“No”

He points at the passager side of the front seat.

“What should I do ? ”

“Get in ”

He focuses on what he is having , I look at him as he is telling me what to do. He looks up to me.

“Khona inkinga Nkosazane?(Is there a problem ?)”

“Ngi... (I..)”

“Get in Nompilo”

I huff and go to the other side. I get inside the taxi. He gets done the other taxi drivers greet him. He then hops in the taxi and he looks at me.

“What?”

He shook his head and I swallowed, he laid back on his seat.

“Arent people supposed to be getting in ”

“They will ” I sniff my nose and rub it.

My phone rings and I take it out. It's a number I don't know.

“Hello”

“Sugar”

“Who is this?” he hops out of the taxi and starts calling on people.

“Its Carlos Sugar” oh God No.

“Uhm....” I got tongue tied.

“I need some of you tonight. I am in town at my place. ”

“Nana is the one who is head of the everything ”

“it was hard finding your numbers. I want you Sugar" he says.

“R 30 000 cash. One night” that's alot of money.

“I will call you later when I have thought about it ” it's better than the R200 Rands I get for one night.

“Don't be too long Sugar.” I nod and hang up. I sigh and look outside the window. Should I go against Nana ? It's great money by the way.

The taxi gets filled with people and off it goes, I paid and have been in thoughts since that call. I don't want to go home because I will be at my little hell that it is. I miss my son, a tear drops from my cheek and I wipe it then take out my phone.

“Ninjani ?(how are you ?)”

“Imali ? Kwenzakalani Nompilo ? (money ? What is going on Nompilo)” my mother answers me.

“I didn't get paid yesterday , I will send it today” I swallow.

“Nkosana is gone to school”

“Xolani usemithisile (Xolani has impregnated)” she carries on.

“I am happy for him” I faintly smile.

“Why didn't you have a child with him ?” he put me on a pill. Speaking of one

“I have to go. ” I hung up before she could talk further and the silence in here confirms everyone was listening to my conversation.

I hold onto my bag as everyone gets off and gets in. I get to my stop and I hop out.

“I will see you Nompilo” he says and I just nod and close the door

I walk away and the taxi is still there. I get inside the yard before it drives off. There are two cars parked out of here and I don't know who they belong to. I walk I side the house and Nana is sitting on the couch counting money with Daniel there. I walk past them.

“Don't you greet?” Nana says

“Sho ” I walk off.

I got in the room I am using and I took out my phone. I called Carlos with the little I have.

“Sugar”

“I will do it but not at night. We can spend the day” I say

“I will Add more to that ” that's good to hear.

“Fetch me in an hour”

“You will find me there ” I hang up and Nana budges in.

“I don't like your stinking attitude ”

“Ok” she clicks her tongue.

She walks out banging the door. I take out the little coke I have. She doesn't buy more like she promised. I have to get some on my own. I did the line and I push my head back. Little blood came out of my nose and I took my top and wipe the blood. I then walk out to go and take a bath.

I close the door and he kisses my neck, smells good as well. His kisses goes to my chest as well.

“What have they been doing to you sugar?” he looks at the marks on my shoulder and chest.

“Are try treating you well?” I shook my head.

“Carlos is here.He will sort you out because he likes your action ” he squeezes my thigh and starts the car.

He drives off and we are in a Austin Martin from what I saw. It's quiet fancy than the cars I have ridden these past few times to service.

We get to his place and it looks more beautiful during the day. As we are inside he gets me wine and I am happy , when was the last time and it seems like I have been struggling. I am the first one to kiss and hug him. He drops the glass filled with his

Beverage and holds my butt. He picks me up and goes up the stairs kissing me away.

“I missed you sugar” he says.

My arms and legs wrapped around him

The shower waters making my body feel so good than it already is feeling after such a nice wash. I get out after I am done and he is sitting on the bed looking at me. I drop the towel and I start lotioning then get dressed. He spanks my butt and groans.

“You look sexy Sugar” he says.

“I have sent in the money for such a good time ” he kisses my neck.

I take my phone and there is an SMS. R45K. Wow

“Thank you” I get done and kiss his cheek before I leave. A cab is already waiting for me outside

My phone rings and I look at it before I answer. It may be important.

“Nompilo it's Qaphela ” who is that ?

“I ...” I am interrupted.

The call is cut and I look at my phone and put it away in my bag.

CHAPTER 11

She sits down and she looks at me and she looks at the tests in front of her. She then looks at me. I am nervous and I don't know what the results represent.

“You are not pregnant” I nod. That is a relief, condoms do burst at times.

“Having HIV is not the end of the wor...” I cut her.

“Just tell me the results.”

“You are HIV Negative” I sigh of relief.

“Thank you ” I stand up taking my bag and I walk out of the clinic.

It's going to be 3 more months before Carlos comes back and he gives me good money than what I get. I don't know why. I have sent money and I am going to go down this December and see my son. I have to and I miss him no matter what situation I am in right now. I am not proud of who I am right now but that doesn't change me from loving my son unconditionally. I need to take myself out to the mall. I get a taxi from the clinic and it went off.

I got to the mall and I went inside. I went around and see what I like and I didn't find anything that interesting. I just went to eat

some food at Spur. I need to spoil myself really now. I settle with the menu. I scan my eyes through it, my phone rang and I take it and look at this number I don't know. I answer it.

“Hello”

“Nkosazane” where did he get my numbers?

“Where did you get my numbers ? ”

“I have had them for a while” he says. I didn't ask that.

“That's invasion of privacy” he chuckles

“Intozenu Zabelungu,uyaphila ?(your white people language. Are you well?)”

“I am ok”

“I don't see you here anymore ” I haven't went on any job since Carlos two weeks ago. I need a break.

“Where are you?” he asks

“At the mall”

“Ok” he hung up. That is very weird. I put my phone away and I started ordering what I like.

Having time to spend on yourself is not all bad. Actually I needed that. My phone vibrates and its a message from Nana.

“Rodney is Awake and you are in trouble ” I swallow. I ask for the bill and pay for it.

I get out of the Franchise and I walk out of the mall. I am panicking a bit or maybe things will get a bit ok but Rodney is on Nana's side. I don't know her anymore. I send a message.

“Ok , I don't care” I send. I breathe in and out.

I see him having a conversation with other men at the uncertified taxi rank near the mall. He looks at his phone and they part ways with the others. He looks at me and places his hands in his pocket. He crosses from where he is and I am walking seemingly towards the direction he is coming from yet I need that taxi so I can go.

“Mama” he stood Infront of me.

“I need to go ” I say , I try to duck to go behind him

“I came to fetch you ” he says , fetch me ? With what ?

I fold my arms and look at him. He looks at me and then walks off. It means I should follow him and here I am following him to the parking lot. We get to a white Opel Corsa and my mind has questions but he is standing there waiting for me to get inside as he has opened the door. I get inside and he closes the door. I

look around and my eyes land on a pack of gum and on the gun in between us. I swallow , this is a big mistake. He gets inside and he takes it and puts it in his track pants behind him and pulls his top down.

“I won't harm you” that's what he says seeing that I am having thoughts now. I just nod, I am traumatised and scared that he has a gun in his presence.

He starts the car and it drives off. He has isphandla (Goat skin)on his left wrist , must be a traditional man.

“Who are you ?” I have to ask.

“Mashiyamahle ” he replies looking ahead.

I am going to assume that his surname is Ngcobo

“Qaphela ” he adds after some silence.

“You...” he cuts me.

“I called you the other day” he says

“You are beautiful” he says randomly

“Thank you” i say.

“Why don't I see you anymore ?” he has a frown waiting for my answer.

“You told me to never come there ”I lie , well I didn't. He did say that when I was not getting along with the taxi drivers

there. I only ridden the taxi that he drives the rest didn't want me.

He tucks his bottom lip under his teeth like he is thinking. He has a frown on his face, he looks handsome though with his dark complexion. He is tall as well that I saw.

“Who is driving the taxi today?”

“Umzala (My cousin)” I nod

“I heard things about you” my stomach turns.

I kept quiet and just look out of the window. What did he hear? I am sure I am known now about me being a Prostitute.

“I am hungry” he says as we are reaching KFC.

“What would you like ?” he asks

“I have eaten already ”

He orders through the drive through, he takes a bit long but gets done. He drives to pay and collect.

“Can you cook?” He asks

“Yes I can ”

“What can you cook?”

“Anything ” I say. Really cooking is my thing or was because I don't cook often now.

“And Making Zulu beer?” He asks

“Yes, I am from Kzn ” Why is he taking me for something else ? I can do those things. My mother taught me.

“Ukuthi uphuma eKzn akucazi lutho. Bakhona abangazi (That you come from Kzn doesn't mean anything. There are many who don't know)” ouch !

“Bona(them)” he is silent.

He gets the food and then he drives off, he takes the cold drink and he literally gulps it.

“Take one ” he says after downing such a load of acid down. I take out a cold drink. It is hot anyway.

“When are you going to come and visit me ?” to visit and do what ?

“And ?”

“Cook for me and my aunt” he says

He lives with his aunt ?

“I don't know ” I am not even sure I want to come. I don't know him well either than him being a taxi driver.

“Friday” it's not a suggestion it's a confirmation.

I am silent after that. We get to Naturena and he stops a house away from where I live.

“I will see you Friday Nkosazane ” He says

I nod and open the door.

“Don't forget your food” my food ? He pushes the KFC paper bag to me. Wasn't he hungry.

“Take ” I take it and I say my good byes.

I walk inside the yard and the car is still parked there. Who's car it is

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I didn't ask that. He will humble me very quick and it's non of my business. I walk inside and Nana is here. Doesn't she have a life ?

“Who is that ?” She asks

“It's non of your business”

“You don't want to anger me. Don't have a boyfriend ”

“Who said he is my boyfriend ?.” this one is forward.

“I am hungry” she says. God be with me please. I go to the kitchen and place the Food and walk off with my cold drink.

My phone rings and I take it out of my bag. I answer it.

“Nkosazane ” he says, his voice is nice when he says that.

“Hi ”

“Ukahle ?(You are well?)” he just dropped me off a few minutes ago.

“Yes, thank you”

“Can I call you later?” did he ask for my numbers? No! so what's going to stop him from calling me.

“If you want” I say

“I will call you.” he hangs up. No good bye , Manners lacked there.

Nana went to the hospital to see her Boyfriend , such a hypocrite this one. A snake that strikes without you even being ready for it. I am planning on going home this December and I am going to do that. I will have to spend as much time as I can with my child. If Rodney is awake now my chances of going are very slim I know. I am watching some tv while having KFC. I am hungry once again when the door opens. I look at it and Daniel walks inside. He throws a bag of Cocaine on my lap.

“Test it ” he says , he didn't even greet.

“What is going to happen ? ”

“Test it !” he shouts and he gives me what I need. I make the lines. It's quiet alot as well , I do the first drag and it's enough to cause me a seizure.

“Its strong ” I say while wiping my nose.

“What do you feel ?” he asks.

“Heavy” I say laying back on the couch. I look up the ceiling. I feel numb at the same time. He takes off my pants and undo his as well. He takes a condom.

“I will be quick ”

He massages my clitoris and he positions himself when he feels ready he pushes it in. I could feel the bit of pain but I didn't feel anything after. He groaned.

“I can see why They love you, Shit !” he groaned. My heart sank and felt very painful than it did before.

I couldn't move and I wonder what he put inside that stuff. Tears streamed down my cheeks as I cried.

10 missed calls , 6 messages and A day later in my room. I have been cooped up in here crying myself. I can't take this life anymore. The cocaine is not helping me , I don't have it as well. My phone flashes for the first time this morning and tears just stream down my eyes. I don't want to talk to anyone at the moment. It stops flashing. Nana gave up on telling me to come out.

I let out a loud sob from my lips and I take my phone and dial the number. It goes through

“Nompilo” I sob softly.

“Nompilo Mntanami urite ?(My child are you ok?)”

“Ca..can I speak to Nko..”my voice breaks and I hang up after that.

I wish I could die and kill myself but where is the courage. I don't have the courage to do so. My phone rings and I let out the lump on my throat. It must be my mother. I clear my throat trying to calm myself down. I hold to my gown tight as I am sitting on my bed.

“Nkosazane ngabe sesigxabene ?(Have we fought with each other ?)”oh it's him , I have been trying to avoid him since the last encounter.I sniff.

“Cha(No)”

“So, Why are you ignoring my calls ?” he says

“I can't talk right now ”

“Ngiyeza (I am coming)” he hangs up before I could say anything.

Where is he coming to ? I don't even know how he will enter because I won't let him in. People need to be transported. I end up sleeping on the bed while trying to comfort myself.

I was woken up by an aura around me. It felt like someone is watching me. I open my eyes and met him looking outside my window, I sat up and he turned looking at me with hands in his pocket.

“How did you get in ? ”

“It was open” I removed the cover.

“Where is Nana ?”

He looks confused.

“I won't stay long. I am not supposed to get in people's houses like this ” he says

I keep quiet.

“If I did something wrong Dali Cela ungixolele (Please forgive me)” When did we get to Dali ?

“You didn't do anything ”

He looks at me.

“Please can you leave ” I say

“This is what will make us fight. You not telling me anything and chasing me away ”

“Its sensitive Qaphela. Please leave ”

“I am not leaving ” he says

“What do you want from me really ? From someone like me ?
Someone who is raped left right and center , someone who is a
Prostitute . What do you really want ?!”

He looks at me.

I just broke down, I am tired of this life

CHAPTER 12

I am nervous and I don't know why I should be. I tried my level best to look decent and wore the longest dress I have and sandals as well. I didn't wrap my head because I am not married to anyone. The car parks and he gets out first, I sit there and look at this house. He comes by my side and opens the door for me and let's his hand out. I take it as he pulls me out and I hold onto my bag as the door is closes. I sigh.

“Don' t worry” he says

“I am not” I am. He shakes his head and holds my hand

I don't know why but it seems to calm my nerves down. I don't know why I am nervous because I am not his girlfriend as far as I know. He knocks once and pulls me inside. We hear people talking.

“Sesifikile (we have arrived)” he says and everyone is silent looking at me

What I know is that he lives with his aunt and has two cousins , One is a girl and the other is a Nyaope recovery because he used to do drugs. He now works as a taxi driver. He didn't go much into detail with regards to his family and I haven't said anything about my life. All I know he is originally from ESkhawini in Kzn. He didn't touch on his parents story.

“Mamncane , This is Nompilo. She will help you around here” I look at him, is he giving me a job to be a helper here ?

The woman stands up.

“Nice to meet you , Ngaze niyjabula kuzoba noMakoti layikhaya (I am so happy there is going to be a bride in this house)” I didn't know what to say.

“Yebo(yes)” that's all I settle for before looking at Qaphela and he doesn't look at me.

We settle. Drinks are brought and his little family is nice, conversations are flowing and his aunt says how proud she is of him. The house is beautiful and seems to be still in the process of being finished , just minor things.

Food is served and I am being drilled with questions. They are not too personal but I would like to keep what I do in the closet. I have been not working but keeping busy with cooking and I think I will start selling food again.

“It was so great to have you here Nompilo. Please visit ” the aunt says as soon as we are up and about to leave.

“I will” I shy smile.

“We have to leave ”

We are escorted out and good byes are said. We get inside the car and I look at him.

“And then ,the Makoti thing you” he interrupts me. There he goes with his bad manners!

“I will marry you” he says and I am quiet.

“Don't you want to see how much isdwaba will suit you and me in ibheshu” I imagine him in one. His Zulu roots will come out for sure.

“You didn't ask me to be your girlfriend” I fold my arms.

“You want to be my girlfriend?” He asks.

“I don't know ” I don't know really.

“What do you know ? ” he asks with a frown

“I...i ” I don't know really.

He starts the car.

“I love you” he says that and I look at him. He doesn't look at me. He loves me ? He knows who I am but ...this is some trick from those Taxi drivers !

I am silent looking out of the window.

“Dali ” he says , I look at him.

“Mmhh?”

He is silent after that. I look at him and he is focused on the road. He doesn't touch me , argh so much for being a boyfriend ! Boyfriend , is he my boyfriend. This person just proposed marriage skipping the most important stage. Nompilo you are thinking too much. I keep my eyes on him while he is tapping on the steering wheel to the music. I have known this man for almost two months and it has always been on rides occasions.

We get home and he parks the car on the other street. It is silent.

“Bye” I say

“Nompilo” I stop moving.

“I got you a new place” he says , I frown looking at him.

“I don't like that friend of yours ” he says not pleased at all.

“You didn't even talk to me ” I say

“I did ” he says

“When ?”

“Now , we are talking ” I throw my hands in the air. This man !

“That's nice of you but this is my own battle. I have to do it on my own ” he frowns. He is not happy with what I am saying.

“Ungabaza Amandla ami Njenge Ndoda yakho ?(are you doubting my strength as your man)” My man

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this man . Gosh what is going on with this Zulu man ?

“No , I didn't say that”

“What are you saying then ?” are we really fighting ?

“Lets not fight. Please”

He pulls me to him and kisses me. Our first kiss. He places his hand on my cheek and in this kiss I am taken he breaks it like that and places his hands on the steering wheel.

“I will see you ” he says and I look at him and get off the car, I walk towards the house and got in then the car drives off. Did I do something wrong ?

I get inside and it's quiet. Nana is not here then, good because I am not in the mood for her. I throw myself on the couch and I sigh.

I look at it. Once more , he hasn't texted or called for the past two days and I have been trying to call him but it goes to voicemail. After that kiss we haven't talked , what did I do wrong ? He finally saw that getting himself with a prostitute is

not good. I am trying to quit that life , actually I want to and start by selling something to eat. I have some money to start the business. I will be selling in town and guess where my little african cuisine is situated. Next to the taxi rank. I don't have a choice really.

“That is R4000” I sigh and take out my card. My phone rings and it's Carlos I need to cut this one.

“Carlos” I say giving the lady my card.

“Sugar. I am back in town”

“I quit Carlos. I am not there anymore”

“Sugar where will I get another you?”

“I don't know.” the transaction is done and I push the trolley and someone is assisting me as well.

“I have never liked this job so I am following what I love now ”

“Need assistance?” he asks.

“Why are you nice ?”

“I am fond of you” he says

“No , I will make it on my own ”

“Sugar”

“Thank you ” I hang up . We get to the cab and the groceries are loaded inside. I pay the guy who help load and I get inside.

The cab drives off. We drop the food first before I am taken back home.

I pay the driver and I get out and get inside. Nana is with Rodney , oh he just came out? Well good for him

“Hey” I greeted them .

“Carlos called” Rodney says

“Oh”

“He is my client Rodney” Nana says.

“Nana can take him” he looks frustrated.

“Nx” he walks out banging the door.

“You look nice today” Nana says.

“Thank you” I sat down and opened the tv.

“You are going to Hillbrow today?” I shake my head.

“No ” she looks at me.

“Dont expect me to feed you ”

“I don't” she walks off.

I love hearing my son speaking. It gives me true satisfaction.

“Mama bye bye ” he says.

“Bye ” he hangs up. I try his number again and it goes to voice mail. I sigh and decide to let him be.

Nana walks in the kitchen as I am cooking and she peaks over. She has a new hairstyle and nails as well. She looks at the food.

“That smells nice” I just nod

“Nompilo” I look at her.

“You know I have tough love for you” she says. I won't let a snake bite me twice.

“Sure”

“We are friends” she says smiling.

“Ok” she sighs and walks off. I am not about to take her as a friend again.

I turn the stove down when I am done and my phone rings , I look at it and I switch it off.

I dish up my food.

“Nana !”

I leave her food on the counter and I went to sit down. She joined me and we sat in silence while watching tv. Her phone

rang and she stood up saying baby, it must be Rodney I guess. I finished my food and I went to wash the dishes. I went to sleep after that. I am really feeling tired.

I woke up early and did my laundry before anything else. Nana will take care of her's. Seems like she is not around because it is quiet. There was a knock on the door as I was cleaning around. I went to open the door and I tried to close the door but he held it .

“Baby” Baby ? Oh we are taking steps here. This one is taking me for a ride.

“What do you want?”

“Can we talk?”

“When it suits you , you want to talk? I don't think so ”

“Please , I am sorry” he says and I am trying to calm down.

“How did you get in ?” the gate is locked I know.

“I jumped over” he says

I look at him before I open the door wider.

“Come in. She is not here ” He looks like he hasn't slept.

I watch him walk in and settle on the couch , i close the door.

“I have last night's left overs. Would you like that ?” he nod

I walk to the kitchen and I open the fridge. I take the food from yesterday and I dish up for him and out it in the microwave. I took a bowl and put some liquid soap and warm water. I took a cloth and I went out to him. He was now relaxed on the couch but as soon as he saw me he sat up. He washed his hands and I handed the cloth to him. He wipes his hands and I went to get his food and gave it to him.

“What will you drink ?”

“Water” I nod and went to get him water.

I left him there and I carried on with cleaning. He walks in the kitchen after he is done.

“Place them here” I point in the sink and he does. I go and wash his dishes. He is standing behind me while watching me.

“I was busy” that's what he says.

“To even send a message.” I turn to him.

“Ngiyaxolisa(I am sorry)” so he is just going to apologise ?

“I am damaged and I ...”

He pulled me by my waist and kisses me. I kiss him back as well placing my hands around his neck. He breaks the kiss.

“I love you, everything will be ok” he says.

I nod and rest my head on his chest sighing .

CHAPTER 13

He went out and waited outside , yes I am going with him to God knows where. I freshened up and changed into something a bit better and comfortable. I took my bag and locked making my way outside. I get to the car and close the door. He is resting as the seat is down. I look at him for some time and he opens his eyes and sits up. He adjusts his seat and he looks at me.

“Something wrong ?” I ask while looking at my outfit.

“No, you look beautiful” , I shy off.

“Did you rest?” I ask him

“A bit” he starts the car.

A bit as in how many hours did he rest ? I am worried because his eyes are red.

“How long did you rest?” I ask.

“An hour ” That's not rest that's a nap.

“No you need to rest. What were you doing that you didn't sleep?” he is ignoring me.

“Qaphela ” he looks at me.

“Dont worry, I am fine. I had something to keep me awake” He points at the back and I take the plastic. It's energy drinks inside.

“This is not healthy” I don't like it.

“Ok, I will go and rest” He says

I ease up a bit.

“Thank you”

“I enjoyed your food. Will you cook for me ?” he looks at me. He wants me to by the way he is looking at me. I can't say no.

“I will cook for you” He smiles.

This one will be the death of me. He passes by the petrol station and he gets his car filled up. He gets out of the car and stretches himself. He comes by my side and leans by it.

“Should I get you anything ?” he asks

“Don't get energy drinks”

“I won't Dali wami” I smile and he walks off going to buy whatever.

My phone pings at that tip and I look at it. It's a message , I open it.

“Don't think you are off the hook and can do whatever.” The message says, it's from Nana.

I ignore it and wait for Qaphela to come back. He comes carrying a plastic and he gets inside the car. He places it on my lap and pays for the petrol. We are driving away soon.

“I didn't know what you liked” I open the plastic and there is a mixture of treats and juice , cold drink , water as well as flavoured water.

“You couldve asked. Thank you ” He nods

“Aren't you having some ?” I ask as I pull the chocolate out.

“I don't like sweets ” He says with a frown and runs his fingers on his face and hair.

I nod and carry on with what I am having, Xolani has never done this for me before. Not that he cared to do so but it's a nice gesture.

He closes the door and takes off his top and shoes. I sit on the bed and he comes and lays next to me. I take off my shoes and lay down as well and look at him. He smiles and runs his finger on my cheek.

“Ekhaya ikephi Ntokazi (Where is home?)” He asks.

“Ladysmith” I say

“Kunezinkomo ekhaya ezikababa

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ngicabanga ukuziletha ngithathe uMakoti(There are my father's cows at home. I am thinking of bringing them to take a wife)" I giggle and he chuckles.

"I have a child , a son" We have never spoken about that. I have never raised it but seems fair to do so.

He is silent and I feel like he wants me to go on and I do.

"He is 6 years old. His father passed on before I knew I was pregnant with him" I look at him

"Where does he live?" He asks after long silence.

"With my parents " I say.

"I love you"

I smile as he pulls me to him and gives me a kiss.

"I love you too"

He closes his eyes and is consumed in sleep. We are at his home that is where we are but in his flat. It has a little kitchen and bathroom as well that is cosy enough. His grip around me doesn't loosen and I don't want him to let go. I feel safe in his arms at the moment. I close mine and I sleep as well.

I woke up later before him and I went to rinse my mouth before I checked what he has. He doesn't have much but Its something I can work with. He just bought these items on our way here. I making something more traditional but modern for him at the same time. Sami is included as well, I am making maize meal mixed with brown beans

My phone rings as I am cooking and it's Nana.

"If you think Rodney will let you by then you are wrong. I told you to not have a boyfriend now you are quitting. This is not good "

"Its my life Nana and I don't want it "

"I stashed some coke in your bag, check it then we will speak " I am tempted.

"Ok"

She hangs up. I leave the pots a bit and I go to my bag. I search all pockets and I find it inside, it has been long and it's a big stack. My nose is itching to take a sniff at this moment.

Someone grabs my hand and snatched it from my hands . I turn around and he is walking to the bathroom.

"Qaphela " He flushes it down the toilet and I went on my knees.

“Angizwani ne Nonsense mina Nompilo. Uphinde ufake umsangano emakhaleni ngizokubonisa !(I don't tolerate nonsense Nompilo. If you ever put anything up your nose you will know me)” He points at me shouting as I am sobbing on my knees.

“Why are you crying ? Wipe those tears ” He pulls me up and I hit his chest.

“I hate you ! Nx uyinja Qaphela !(You are a dog)”

He lets go of me and I rush to my bag. He grabs it faster than me and faces it upside down and things fall out.

“I want to go, I don't ever want to see you again. ” I wipe my tears vigorously .

“Don't test me Nompilo. Don't ” He keeps on warning but ignore him.

“Or what?” I hate him for throwing my friend down the toilet.

He takes a belt and pulls me up. The first strike comes and I get on the bed. He pulls my legs and the next one follows. I am trying to fight him.

“This will be the last day you take drugs Nompilo !”

I am defeated and all I do is cry. There is a knock on the door .

“Qaphela umsindo owani? Kwenzakalani?(Qaphela what is the noise for ? What is going on ?)” It's his aunt.

He clicks his tongue and throws the belt on the two seater couch and he opens the door walking out. His aunt comes in and I keep on crying .

“Oh Nkosi yami(oh my God)” She pulls me in a hug and I cry on her chest.

“Phephisa Mntanami (I am sorry)”

She keeps on rubbing my back.

I am in the main house, I don't know where he left to or when he is coming back and I don't care. His aunt has been nice and comforted me , she offered some food and I ate after her forcing me to. She suggested that I calm down and after I can take any decision regarding her nephew.

“Are you ok?” His cousin sister comes in the bedroom. Her mother's bedroom

She sits on the bed and looks at me.

“Qaphela has never done this before” She says and tears stream down my cheeks.

“I am sorry” She brushes my back.

There is silence. I wipe my tears and then a knock on the door comes. It opens and she stands up.

“Turn back and go out. She doesn't need to see your face !” She is livid.

He looks at me.

“I just want to talk to her ”

“Couldn't you do that , no ! So leave ”

“I am older than you” He points at his cousin.

“Are you going to hit me ?” she is being brave. He sighs

“Thuli, I just want to talk to her.... I ...”i interrupt him

“Its ok”

Her cousin looks at me and I nod.

“I am right next door. Scream” She looks at her cousin and walks out closing the door.

I look at him as he has his head looking down. He doesn't look at me. I get off the bed and I went to him and he wraps his arms around me , I sob in his arms. I don't want to move.

“I am sorry Baby” He says.

I keep on crying.

“No matter how angry I am , I shouldn't have ...” he can't even say he hit me like a child.

“I am sorry ”

CHAPTER 14

Water splashes on my face and I am met by a slap and I am held down by big guys. I gasp as I lay on the soaking bed , sheets. My heart is beating fast at the sight of Rodney Infront of me with two big guys holding me down. He places the bucket down and lights up his Cigar. He then looks at me. I swallow my spit.

“You said you quit” He takes a puff.

“Who told you that you can just quit?” He puffs the smoke out.

“Huh?!” he shouts and I am scared.

“I don't want to do this anymore” I mask braveness.

“You don't want this anymore” He laughs and slaps me. I squirm.

“You grew some livers” he says and my cheek is throbbing.

“You won't leave this room until the next client comes” He signals for his guys to let me go and they all walk out. I get off the bed and rush to my cell phone.

I am crying at the moment and done with this life , with Nana and everything. I locate my phone and I get to the number. I call it and it gets answered.

“Mkami, I am on the road ...” I let out a cry

“What is wrong ? Why are you crying?” Tears make him panic.

“They are going to kill me. They locked me up ” I cry.

“Where are you?”

“Naturena, they are here”

“Sure” He hangs up.

He didn't says he is coming nor anything. God I am in trouble, in very big trouble. I sit on the bed and do a short prayer. I hear Rodney's voice shouting and I am shaking on the bed.

A bang on the door startles me and I am holding onto myself and the door is unlocked. Nana is pushed in first and she lands on the floor. I look at her and the guy who walks in pointing a gun at her.

“Nkabi yami (My guy)” I know this guy from somewhere, yes the taxi rank. We used to hate each other.

“Hey , you don't just throw me like that ! ” Nana shouts.

“Shut up , ngizokuhlakaza ubuchopho lobu (I will blow your brains)”

He appears and I get off the bed and rush up to him. He gives me a hug and a quick forehead kiss. I am so happy to see him.

“You will regret this Nompilo ” Nana says.

“If your boyfriend comes near her , he will know me ” Qaphela says and he pulls me out.

He gets me inside the taxi and his friend in the other one. He looks at me.

“Thank you”

He is silent. Is he angry at me ? If so then I am really sorry.

“Ngizokubona manje , ngisahambisa intokazi (I will see you now. I am just dropping her off)" His friend nods and off we are going.

There is silence between us and no one is talking. I start crying and he looks at me.

“Ukhaliswa yini ?(Why are you crying ?)" this Zulu man should be comforting me not asking me why I am crying !

“I almost got killed ” I am being dramatic but Rodney would've killed me.

“You didn't die ” God please take this man away !

“How could you say that ?”

“I am sorry" He doesn't mean it. I click my tongue

“Ngeke sizwane ke(We won't get along)” He gives me a stare. I look out of the window.

He drops me off his home and I go to his flat. He has to go back and work , that's what he said and I wasn't stopping him at all. I went to take a bath and got done , I got on the bed and I rested a bit and perished my thoughts away. Nana , I trusted her with my life at some point. I always sheilded her from harm but she put me on the firey line.

A knock on the door wakes me up and I groan. I don't want to be disturbed. I get off the bed and I took a towel

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I wrapped it around my body but still and I went to open. It's Qaphela's male cousin. The Nyaope recovery, he has Nandos in his hands.

“Here” He gives it to me.

“He will call you later” He turns and walks off. I thank him as he disappears.

I close the door and I open the bag. It's a full chicken, I go and dish up for myself with some coldrink from the fridge.

Surprisingly I have never seen Qaphela drink any alcohol but I have just recently known him and yet I come with so much drama. It hasn't been that long but it feels quiet long.

I sit down and eat the food. What is he going to call me with because I forgot my phone? I think I should apologise ,I was not in a good space earlier but he should as well ! This is the

toughest relationship I have ever been in. I finish eating and I wash the dishes. He has no TV or what so ever. I get bored and just keep on sleeping.

I look at him and he looks at me. He takes his top off and undresses. He is left in boxers before he joins me in bed. I look at him and he looks at me straight in the eyes.

"I am sorry about earlier " I say first.

"I was insensitive" He said.

"I am learning here " He continues.

"Thank you " I perk his lips.

"You should take one of my tshirts and put it on " It's hot yoh.

"But it's hot .."

"You are tempting me " I look at him. I get off the bed and he pulls me to him.

"You are angry?" I shake my head.

"No"

"Kiss me then " I turn to kiss him and he places his hands on my waist, it's growing , he is groaning. I let go of him.

“Let me get dressed” He nods and I went to get dressed. I joined him in bed again.

He holds my arm and looks at my scar and runs his fingers on it.

“What happened here?” he asks.

“I was shot on my way to school with my friend ”I say

“Mmmh”

“Have you eaten?” I get of the bed.

“Yes” what has he eaten. I turn around to him.

“Oh” I say.

“Pap and liver” I frown. I am not happy about the food he had.

I place my hands on my hips and he looks at me.

“What?”

“Thats not right ”

“Well I have eaten. It fills my stomach like any other food” I sigh

“Ok”

“You are living with me ”

“I will find a place to stay and do something else. I can't just sit here”

He looks at me.

“Sell food. I do have some little money”

“Did I say use your money?” haibo

“Uhm no”

“I will pay for what you need. There is a spot by the taxi rank”

“Oh ok”

“Rest.” he should be the one resting.

We keep on talking about anything that comes to mind. He asks me about my childhood and I tell him. He doesn't touch up on his life just mine alone and I like how he makes me feel open with him.

A month passed and I am in fear that Rodney would catch me one day but Qaphela assures me everyday that I shouldn't worry. I have started selling home cooked meals and things are going well. I love cooking and money is rolling in quiet well. R50 a plate and the taxi rank near by is what gets customers for me especially since my boyfriend works there.

Qaphela is the most amazing yet complicated man I have ever met. He is mysterious yet he isn't at the same time. I don't know maybe it's something I can't pin point.

“Thank you sisi” the lady says and she walks off with her take away.

He walks in followed by his cousin and two more guys. I have their food ready. They come in here everyday , they settle on the chairs. We both chipped in to the business and I hope it grows. Just chairs, Gas stove , food and a fridge , kettle as well and utensils that I needed. It will eventually grow and I can make it look more presentable but for now it's very clean and neat.

He comes my way and I move from the counter and went to him and he gave me a hug and took off his cap.

“How are you?” I didn't see him this morning

“I am good ”

“Your food is ready, I will bring it right now”

“Can't I have you” I move away from his arms and went bend the counter.

“I am not on the menu” I say.

“Can't an exception be made” I laughed and shook my head.

“Your food is coming up, what are you guys drinking ?”

He turns to the others.

“Niphuzani Madoda(what are you drinking ?)” they opt for a cold water.

“Ok, I am coming. ” he follows after me as I walk into the kitchen.

“I didn't make it plain this time. I made it hot" He nods and I take their food.

“You can take the cold water bottles”

He goes to the fridge as we walk out. He takes the water and comes with it. They all settle.

“You can cook shame, hayi bafo abaphansi banawe (The ancestors are with you my brother)”

“I hope you enjoy”

“We always enjoy" Qaphela says.

I nod as they start indulging in their food.

“I will see you” He says softly for me to hear and I nod.

I walk away and get in the kitchen. I go and check how much food i have left. I clean around and went back to the counter when I am done and they are gone.

CHAPTER 15

I have washed the pots and the food has been finished for the day. I placed them away and went to the counter to take the money and I placed it in my apron. The sound of heels is what makes me look up and she walks in and looks around. She comes my way and she is looking at me or not ? I am not sure as she has shades on. She places her bag on the counter and I look at her.

“What are you doing here?” I ask her.

She removes her shades and she has a blue eye. I swallow and I walk around the counter as she breaks down. Curse my soft heart for wanting to hug her and I do.

“Nana , what's wrong ?” I ask.

I pull her to the table and I sit her down. She takes a tissue and she blows her nose and I watch her without saying anything.

“I am sorry” She says and I don't say anything.

“I was angry at you ” She looks at me. What did I do to her? I was nothing but a good friend to her.

“Angry for what?” I ask.

“Look around Nono, everything is going well in your life right now ” She throws her hands.

“Well? You just think everything just falls into place. We try Nandipha z we do the best we can and you. I trusted you because you were my friend , my best friend , a sister to me and you would me to the highest bidder, got me on drugs and kept on feeding me them. I didn't know anyone but you here and you put me through misery but I won't let that happen forever”

She swallows.

“I am sorry Nompilo" she says

“I forgive you but I don't want any relation to you ever again besides being Nkosana's aunt. That's it ” I stand up and she does the same as well.

“Nompilo ” I shook my head.

“Bye Nandipha ” I walk away from her. She stands there for a while and wears her shades before she turns and walks out.

I hope Bayede protects her wherever he is, she needs him and so as Nkosana. I hope he is looking down on us.

I locked the place and I walk to the taxi rank , I am greeted here and there by taxi drives through my clan name. It is official that

I am a taxi Queen. I used to squabble with these people some weeks ago so I can get in here and take a taxi. I don't see Qaphela anywhere but I get the taxi that I need to take. I get inside and it's filled up, soon it drives off.

I fold the clothes and place the basket where it is supposed to be. I take them and place them nicely in the wardrobe. I have bathed and have had my meal, the aunt cooked for us today and it was more than enough. We sometimes eat at the main house or we cook separately. The door opens and he walks in. He kisses my cheek and throws his cap on the bed and sits on it.

“You seem tired” I say

“Its my back , I have been driving for too long today.”

“Let me dish up for you and then give you back massage” I say

“Ok”

I dish up for him and serve him. He eats his food and frowns a bit.

“You didn't cook this ” he says

“Aunty did ” I say

“I miss your cooking ” He just ate food cooked by me a few hours ago

“Drama ” I sit on the bed and he is done. I wash the dishes and I then went to massaging his back.

“Your tiny hands feel soft” He says and I look at him.

“They are soft” I say

“You aren't domesticated enough” Haibo

“And yet I cook, clean and wash and iron your laundry. Take care of you” I say

“You take things too personal ” He says and I sigh. He turns around and looks at me

I lean to kiss him and he holds my waist. We have never went as far as having sex before. It just ended with kissing and cuddling as well. We even went to check and we were both negative. He gets on me and lay me on my back on the bed and keeps on kissing me and caressing my body.

I place my hands around his neck as I am kissing him. He undresses me and kisses my collar bone and goes down with it to my stomach and comes to kiss me once again. He grabs a condom after he is undressed as well.

“We are good” I say

He doesn't listen to what I say but wear it and I have no problem in that as well. He looks at me.

“I love you” I gasp as he goes in and my hands go to his back.

He goes in thrusting and keeps on kissing my forehead.

He went to dispose the condoms in the toilet and I laid there in bed looking at the direction he went. He came back to bed after flushing and he lays next to me. He pulls me to him and I lay on his chest.

“I love you” He says and I look at him and smile.

“I love you too Mapholoba” He holds my waist and I snooze off to sleep.

Morning came and I had to prepare for Qaphela's departure at wee hours of morning before I went back to bed. I woke up a bit later and I also prepared to leave and I went to catch a taxi after that. When I arrived in town I quickly went to my place and I opened it. I got inside and I went to the kitchen placing my bag at the back. I started taking out the ingredients that I will need. What am I going to make today ? My mind runs full of ideas but I settle for one dish I will do.

It took me 2 hours and I was done with making food. People were coming in already to buy some food or juice or cold drink for those who are walking along the way.

“I am becoming a regular now. I need a discount ” Ziziwile says. She is from the salon near by and they usually buy their food here as well.

“Kumele yazi(you should)” We laugh as I hand the food to her.

“Thank you. I will be back ” she waves and I nod

I put the money away and someone claps their hands loudly.

I look up and it's Rodney. I swallow , my heart is beating fast. Daniel follows after him and they have 2 more people with him. He looks around and spins around the place. He speaks to Daniel in his language and they turn to me. I haven't moved where I am and I am scared as well.

“You are a smart one huh?” He lights his cigar and they sit down on the plastic chairs.

“Bring us the best bottle of your whisky ” He says

I keep quiet and don't do anything. They look at me.

“Bring her here ” I turn to run away but they catch up to me.

“Leave me alone ! ” I scream and Daniel kicks me in the stomach and I cough.

“I see your sister didn't tell you who I am” He says

“Please. I don't want this , please let me go ” I say as tears stream down my cheeks.

“Shut up and wipe those tears ! ”

“Maybe we should've bid you overseas ” I shake my head while crying.

“Stop crying pretty face. You made us alot of money, surely we will get alot from the aution” Rodney touches my face. I am disgusted and traumatised.

“We need two plate tod...” I am so relieved and a bit glad they walked in.

“Nompilo” Qaphela tries to come to me but they push him away.

“Ungangithinti , ungalinge ucabange unigibela ekhanda wakhe uN3 (Don't touch me , don't thing of starting your shit with me)” He says.

“Let her go ” He places his hands in his pocket.

Rodney looks at his goons and Daniel. He spits on the floor and throws his cigar there and stomps it while looking into Qaphela's eyes who does back down.

“We will be back NOMPI” Rodney says.

“Do come near her and I will show you why you should've stayed where you came from ”

They let go of me.

“We will meet again ” Rodney says and they walk out. I sob and Qaphela rushes to me and he takes me in his arms. This is my fault.

“I am sorry” I say

“Its ok, let me take you home. ” I shake my head.

“I have to work I ...” he gives me a look.

“Come ” He is not having any of it. We get my bag and his cousin locks the place. No one asks anyone questions.

I call my son in the process of missing him and wanting to talk to him. We are on our way to home and there is silence in here. No one is angry at anyone we are just in comfortable silence.

“Nompilo" that's my mother.

“Mah , ninjani ?(How are you?)” I ask

“We are well. When are you coming back ? I miss you ” she says

“Nkosana misses you too” She adds. I miss them too, maybe I should go back home now. It's needed.

“I will come soon, hopefully” I say , Qaphela is looking at me. I look away

“Where is he ?” I ask.

“He is here. Let me call him ” I nod and there is silence.

“Mama !” I smile as tears stream down my cheek. I am such a disappointment , to my son the most.

“How are you ?” I wipe my tears.

“I am good. When are you coming back ? Will you bring sweets and toys for me ?” I giggle a bit.

It brings great joy to talk to him. He is my therapy that I have someone to push and live for and that's him.

“I will come back before you know it and I will anything you want” I say

“Really?” I nod.

“Really” he seems excited. I sniff

“I will call you later ok?”

“I love you Mama ” My heart warms.

“I love you too Mfana wami. (My boy)” He hangs up and I look at my phone. I wipe my tears .

The ride is still silent. We get to Qaphela's home and he parks the taxi. We both get off and we walk inside. He is following after me as we get inside. I want to rest and cry my lungs out until I am ok.

“Nompilo” I look at him.

“I come with too much baggage. I know. I am sorry” He comes and crouched Infront of me and holds my hands.

“Uyazi ngikuthanda kangakanani (you know how much I love you)” He says and I feel relaxed.

“I love you too” I say

“I will marry you” He says

I smile and kiss his lips and he responds. We soon break it off.

“Those tears shouldn't be in your eyes ” He says wipping them off.

“I have to go ” He stands up and looks at me.

“I have the letter ready, I am just waiting for you to give me the go ahead” He seems serious.

“We will talk later” He nods and kisses my forehead before he dashes out. I feel blessed with him honestly. It's like I don't even deserve him or to be here but here I am trying to find peace again in my life.

CHAPTER 16

I close the pot and I wipe my hands, I slept a few minutes after Qaphela had left and I woke up just so I could cook. I don't want to see anyone at the moment, I just want to be alone for a while. The door opens when I turn down the stove and he walks in. He closes the door locking it and I turn to him.

“How was your day?”, He lays his body on the bed and sits up taking his shoes off.

“It was ok, how are you feeling?”, he asks.

“I am ok too”, I dish up for him.

“it was cooked by you?”, I nod. He smiles

“Your aunt wouldn't appreciate hearing that”, I hand him his food.

He chuckles and I took the dishes I used and put them in the basin.

“Ingoba ngitshela wena (it's because I am telling you)”, he says.

“Naku aunti uyakusho lokho kite ngingekho ngami (You also say that to aunty when I am not around about my cooking)”, I say

“Sthandwa Sam, no one can cook better than you, that's why I love your food”, he says and I shake my head.

“Ngiyakuthanda (I love you)”, he says out of the blue.

He has finished and places his dish with the others. He kisses my neck and I smile while he holds me.

“Nompilo”, he says

“Qaphela ”, I respond.

“I want to send my uncles down to Ladysmith month end ”, I turn to him and look him in the eye.

“There after we can find a new place to accommodate our new family. A child can't live here and we need our space”, he continues.

“Child ?”, I ask.

“Nkosana ”, he says.

“Uhm I...”, he holds my cheeks.

“Its hard growing up without parents , especially if you are a boy. He needs a figure to guide him ”, Parents. He never speaks of his parents, I guess he is talking from his upbringing.

“Have you thought this through? Are you sure about this ?”, I say

“Don't worry , I am sure about everything Sthandwa sam” ,he says.

I nod and give him a kiss. He holds my waist , he picks me up and places me on the bed and gets ontop of me. He goes to kissing my neck and trails his kisses nicely. Our clothes are nowhere to be seen after that moment. He positions himself and thrusts in.

It's a Saturday and I am spring cleaning to create some space and also keep the place clean. I take out the washing that needs to be wash and I go and wash it outside.

“Makoti Ninjnai?(how are you?)” , Qaphela's aunt says bringing her washing.

I have rinsed mine and I am hanging it on the washing line.

“I am well Mah and yourself ?”

“I am well, you and Qaphela hide yourselves. ” , she says and I laugh.

“I will come and cook for you ” , I say

“I would love that , my brother is coming today. UQaphela ungitshelile ukuthi ufuna ukuyocela ekupheleni kwenyanga (Qaphela told me that he wants ask for your hand in marriage month end)” , she says while washing. I nod.

“I am happy he is settling down and going to have his own family. My brother would be happy”, she says with a smile.

“I am still cleaning. I will come and cook when I am done”, she nods as I walk away leaving her to her washing.

I get inside the out building and I start cleaning up the place, I didn't realize that it actually needed this spring cleaning. I opened the side draw and I cleared it out. It has some condoms and pills. I looked at them and I sat on the bed.

“What is this?”, I stood up and I packed everything away in its place.

I lost my energy to carry on spring cleaning. I placed everything where it was and I went to take a shower. I was lost in thoughts while in there. I got out and changed, I had to go and start with the cooking. I walk out after I am done getting dressed and went to the main house.

“Oh Makoti usulapha (Oh you are here.)” I smile faintly.

“I will start cooking” I say and went to the kitchen.

I took out the ingredients that I will need and started cooking.

“Sisi how are you?”, Thuli walks in placing her bag.

“Ngikahle (I am done)”, I smile faintly. I am done with the pots.

“You have been bugging yourself”, she says

“Things have been happening in the business ”, I really don't want to talk today.

I dish up for her mother and went to serve her. She thanks me and tells me to dish up for me and Qaphela. I nod and I go dish up for us and say my goodbyes. I can't stay and socialise. I don't have the energy to. I walk outside and it seems he is back, too early though or he will later on leave ? I don't care really.

I walk in and he is sitting on the bed , the pills next to him and he has his head burried in his hands. I close the door and he looks at me . He stands up.

“Nompilo ...”

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I raise my hand to tell him to stop talking.

“Baby can I explain ?”, he says.

“Explain what ? That I find these here in your drawer ? That ...”, I didn't know how to even talk.

He tried to come close.

“Stand there please”, he does.

“Nompilo please listen to me ”, I look at him.

“Just answer yes or no. Are you taking ARV's ?”, he looks down.

“Qaphela ”, I say softly.

“Yes”

“We tested and everything came out clear ”, I say

I don't understand , I look at him and he is just silent. I want to slap him so he could give me answers.

“I didn't cheat on you”, he says quickly as my thoughts conclude that.

He sighs and looks down.

“I was born with HIV and my parents died from it. I take care of myself everyday that's why it wasn't detected that I am HIV positive my viral load is low”, my head is buzzing.

“Why didn't you tell me? Don't you trust me ? I would've told you as well that's why I suggested we go and test. Qaphela I ...”

“I trust and love you Nompilo ngiyaxolisa (I am sorry)” , he says.

I can't believe him , I thought that we communicated well and trusted each other.

“How long were you going to keep this away from me ? Till a mistake happens and ... Oh no ” , I place the food down.

“How can we be so careless , how can you be so careless Qaphela ! ” , tears stream down my cheeks.

“Nompilo”, he says.

“Stop saying my name. We didn't use a condom last night !”, I say throwing myself on the bed.

“I will fix everything. ” , he takes his keys.

“I hate you Qaphela. ” , he swallows and walks out .

“You take them until this pack finishes sisi”, I nod. I take my bags.

“Thank you ” , I throw one pill in my mouth and I stand up after drinking it.

I look at the PEP that the nurse handed to me , she said if I drink them it will prevent me from getting infected. It was careless and I am scared as well , my heart is heavy at the moment.

I take my bags and the nurse walks away. I have switched off my phone, I walk out of the clinic and the cab is waiting for me. I got inside and told the driver to drive to the bus station. It's

time I went home now. It's time I stripped off this whole life, I thought I found something but I didn't. If he could hide such a huge thing in our relationship what more can he hide from me. He doesn't trust me , him saying he loves me seems pointless if he can't share important things like our health like that. He risked the both of us ,me the most. Who said I don't love him anymore ? I still do. He made me love him with my heart and got used to the idea of him being around me. Nana , She disappointed me and betrayed me. He also disappointed me .

I look at the city as the car moves, My son. He is the only person who I would still love and wouldn't stab my back. I love Qaphela but circumstances push us back home. I have overstayed my welcome in Johannesburg.

My phone rings and it's him. I ignore it and it stops after some time. I sigh. It pings after.

"I am sorry", the message says and i swallow a lump and grow my phone in my bag v

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"Mama !", Tears stream down my cheeks as soon as I saw him.

I drop my bags and go on my knees hugging and kissing him.

“Unjani Mfana kaMama (how are you my boy ?)”, he looks grown.

“I am good. did you bring sweets ? ”, I nod.

“Take from my bag ”, I say

He rushes to my bag.

“You are back”, I stand up and my mother hugs me.

“I was worried about you”, I sigh.

“I am here”, we break the hug.

“We got a letter from the Ngcobo family, your father wanted to talk to you about that ”, already ?

“Uhm , I need to rest”, I say

“Xolani wanted to talk to you ”, she says

What does he want ?

“ufunani ? (What does he want ?)”, I ask.

“I don't know”,she says.

“Don't entertain him ”, I walk to my old bedroom.

These men should just leave me alone.

CHAPTER 17

His family didn't come, I told my father that they shouldn't come and he sent a letter back. His family came down to try and talk to my father but he was very hard headed. It has been a few months since I have been home and I am doing well, I don't want to lie. Xolani wants us to get back together but I told him off. Qaphela , I miss him . I really do and I still love him , it's hard to get over what we had. It was there , one mistake destroyed us. At times I would want to up and leave and just go back to him. Forgive him and maybe find a way forward but I am moving back to Johannesburg with my son. I have been selling food this side and it has been doing very well now I want to go and expand my food business. I am not moving alone though, I am moving with a great unborn spirit.

“Mama uzoboya? (Are you coming back?)” he asks . I nod

“Yes and I will take you with me ”, he nods and I kiss his cheek.

“Go well”, my mother says and I nod.

I wave at them and I hop inside the taxi. I sit by the window and watched them as they wave at me and I wave back , the taxi moves.

I took my bags and went towards this little house I got at a great price here in this township. I hope that things go well. I went past town just to buy a bed and the rest I will see tomorrow. I can't sleep on the floor right now.

I get inside and I close the door after my bed was put in my bedroom. I lock the door and I went to my room. I didn't put on the lights , it late and the vultures from a near by tarven will see me as target. I am a fragile woman they can steal from , I lay on the bed and call my mother.

"Hello , how are you?", She asks.

"I am well. I am ok", I say.

"That is good. I will call you in the morning. I am resting ", she says

"Ok", she hangs up

I get myself in bed so that I can rest.

I woke up in the morning, I got myself cleaned up and I didn't have something to eat either than yesterday's chicken licken. I pop that into my mouth and run my stomach , kicks . I haven't felt any since yesterday but at the clinic they said he is ok when I went there before I departed. I take my bag and I walk out locking.

“Eske sisi wami ukahle ? (are you good ?)”, it's my neighbor I guess.

He moves from his car and gets out of his yard. His yard is fenced and so as mine.

“Yes I am well thank you ”, he comes close.

“I am Lindokuhle. You are new here ?”, he asks.

I don't want to say anything. What if he gets his troop to rob me.

“Ska wara sisharp. Lah eKasi akho safe so mele ngikubhekele nje ngo Makhelwami omusha yabo ? (don't worry we are good , it's not safe here in the hood so I have to look after you as my new neighbor)”, I nod. He looks shady.

“Skar ! ”, a lady in a skimpy dress walks out of his house.

We look at her and she looks at us.

“Kwenzalakani ! Ubani wena ?(what is going on ? Who are you ?)”, she stomps our way.

“Relax aksi cherry yami(Relax it's not my girlfriend.)”, he points at my house.

She clicks her tongue and gets in his car.

“I will see you ...”, he snaps his fingers trying to remember a name I didn't give to him.

“Nompilo ”, I say

“Sho sho Mpilo”, he walks away.

I walk away as well to go and catch a taxi. I get one and it goes to town.

I find myself at Makro. I will buy my groceries here and also do some home shopping. I walk around and the sales person helps me in choosing what I want. I want my place to look nice and me , I don't know what I really like but I will get what I like and is in my price range as well.

I get all that I need and decided to add a baby cot as well. I have to do a little shopping as well before I run out of the money I have saved. It's negotiated that my things are going to be delivered. I walk out of Makro and I have called a cab to take me home already.

“Nompilo !” , I freeze and she comes and hugs me. I hug her back.

“How are you ? You look beautiful ”, she smiles.

“Thank you, how are you ?” , I ask.

“I am well”, she says.

“What happened to you and Bhuti?”, oh god. Why did I have to bump into one of them on my second day back ?

“Stuff”, I say.

“Oh , sorry . I don't mean to be nosy”, you are .

“I will see you

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I have to go. ”,I say.

“It was good seeing you. ”, I nod and walk to the delivery truck to check if everything is in order before I leave as well.

I get to my place and I am helped with the placing of the big things. The rest is done and I thank everyone and they leave. I unpack the groceries and everything , by the time I am done I am tired. I start with the pots as well. I am hungry and I eat big portions , this baby gives me so much appetite.

I called my mother and we had a chat, so as Nkosana. He is doing so well in school and I am proud of him. We end the call and I am done with making food. A knock comes from my door and I went to open.

“Sho Neighbor”, he says.

“Lindo, it's late ”, it's after 6pm

“I brought this as a welcome gift”, he shows me a romper.

“Oh thanks , something to drink ?”, I don't want to seem rude.

“Do you have a beer?”, I shake my head.

“I am good then. If anyone troubles you from here tell me neh?”, protection. I have earned myself that .

“I will tell you ”, he turns around.

“Sho !”, I wave and I close the door. I locked and made my way to eat.

“Um' izinkinga

Zikukhungathile, ifu elimyama

Likuhlasela , okomhlaba

Kukulandela , bheka konke

Kujesu wakho ...”

I open the windows as I put everything I want in place. I play the radio listening to music , I have applied to do some schooling for next year through NSFAS. I am so glad that I qualified to do so. My parents don't have much and my father is the only person who works. He doesn't have a descent job but. Ijob ijob .

A knock comes from the door and I turn the music down.

“I am coming ”, I open the door and I look at him. I peak out if Lindo is anywhere.

“How did you find me ?”, That's the first thing I ask. He places hands in his pocket.

“Thuli”, he says.

“I came every Friday to lady smith but I couldn't get through to you and your father threatened me ”, I don't know what to say.

“I changed phones”, I move out of the way and let him in. He looks around and sits down.

I went to the kitchen and I made some juice and came back with biscuits. I put everything on the coffee table and sat on the opposite side. He doesn't move but sighs after an intense stare.

“I lied , I know. I broke your trust , I should've told you ...” ,

“Why did you tell me ? ”, I say

“I was stupid. I know , I am sorry and I know it won't turn everything back. I have done the damage”, he says

“I am still clean. I went to the clinic after ”, he nods.

“At some point I wanted to give up on trying I was pushing a loosing battle ”, he says.

“Oh” he wanted to give up on us.

“Congratulations I guess”, he masks a weak smile.

I look at my stomach and touch it.

“After you I didn't get up with anyone ”, I say.

He looks at me and blinks. There is silence. He stands up and places his car keys on the coffee table and crutches in front of me. He runs his fingers over my dress and holds my stomach like it is a ball.

“Mapholoba ,Mashiya amahle ...” he swallows. I think he is getting emotional there.

“Please don't cry.I will cry”, he chuckles.

“I am a Zulu man. I don't cry", I roll my eyes. There we go.

He stands up.

“Do you need anything ?” he asks

“Come back after work ”, I say

“Ok", I walk him out as he leave. I went back to what I was doing.

CHAPTER 18

When everything was in its perfect place for me, I called my mother and we talked for a while, our relationship is really improving and she is understanding that I am old enough to do things on my own. I am trying to piece my life all together so I can fetch Nkosana and he can finally live with me. The sun is going down and I am cooking while snacking on a sandwich. I need more of these and Qaphela with myself need to talk about this baby situation and a way moving forward regarding the baby. I get done and there is a knock, I go and open and he is standing there with his bennie in his hands. I move from the door and I let him and close the door. He goes to settle down and I move to the lounge as well

“Can I get you anything to drink?”, I ask

“Water”, he says

I walk away and I get him something to drink and end up dishing up for him. I go and serve him and ask him to come and wash his hands and he follows me. He does and I hand a swab to him and he drives them. He goes back and I dish up for myself and I join him. We are eating in silence. No one is talking to anyone at the moment, we get done and I take the dishes

and wash them. I want the kitchen left neat Incase I wake up a bit late tomorrow. I go to the lounge and I sit down and there is complete silence.

“Nompilo”, he says

“I want you to be honest with me Qaphela. You owe me that much”, does he now ?

“I know. I should've told you Everything and the whole truth., I was stupid ”, he says

“You were ”, I say and he sighs

“I educated myself more ”, he looks at me.

“Do you take your medication everyday ?”,I ask.

“I do ”, I nod.

There is a bit of silence and he heaves a sigh.

“I miss you ” , he says

I miss him too. He was an amazing partner until this issue.

There is a knock on the door and I stand up and go to attend it.

I open the door and it's Lindo.

“Lindo , unjani ?(How are you?)”

“I saw this car outside. Ngizokucheka ukuthi Ugrand nah(I am checking if you are ok)”, he says

“I am ok, thank you ”, he nods

“Ok, if you feel unsafe you've got my digits ”, he says

“Yes , I will let you know thank you”, I say

“Sharp ke Mpilo”,I nod and he turns and walks off while I close the door.

I walk back to where Qaphela is seated and he is looking at me. I settle down and look at him.

“Is there something wrong ?”, I ask.

“Who is he ? ”, he asks.

“My neighbour , I met him yesterday”,I say

“I don't like what he is doing”, he says

“He is just looking out for me. I am new and a lady in a township environment. Pregnant as well if you forgot that , things happen ”, I say

“Things happen when he manipulates your hormones and want to get in between my woman”, he says.

“Don't be dramatic. He has a crazy girlfriend. ”, I say

“Come here ”, I stand up and go to him. He pulls me to his lap.

“I still want to marry you”, he looks at me and runs his fingers on my thigh

“I still love you so much Nompilo”, it's funny how he has never saw the need to shorten my name.

I still love him too. His fingers started navigating and going to places, it reaches my Nuna and finds his way to finger me while I am on his lap. I bite my bottom lip and gasp after.

“Qaphela”, I say breathlessly and softly. He stops and looks at me.

“I should go, it's getting late”, he says

We both stand up. He takes his keys and his hat as well

“Thank your for the food”, he says.

“You don't need to thank me ”, he nods.

I kiss him and he responds to the kiss , oh I missed him so very much

“I love you ”, I say through the kiss.

I don't want us to stop but eventually we do.

“Can you please stay?”, I say

“Ok”, I smile and he returns it.

I woke up early in the morning and prepared for Qaphela's departure, he had to go and change as well before hitting the

taxi rank. I made breakfast and also dished up some left overs for lunch. I want my lunch box back though. He was still getting dressed while I was doing that for him. Last night, yoh . I don't want to talk about it . He walks in the kitchen and stands behind me before landing a kiss on my neck, it sends tingles.

“Breakfast is done. You can eat”, I say

“Thank you ”

I nod and we move to the lounge and he is seated. I am going back to bed after this.

“Nompilo can we talk ?”, he says and I nod.

“Ok , yes”, he puts his plate down.

“I want to know where we are right now. ”, where are we ?

I don't know where we are

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. I am silent and he can see I am very silent

“I want us to still get married that's what I want. I love you and want to have a family with you Nompilo”, he says

“We can get married”, I say . He smiles

“So I can resend the letter?”, I nod.

He carries on eating.

“Tell me more about yourself”, I say. I am actually digging if there isn't anything hidden about him.

“There is nothing else that I am hiding”

I nod. He gets done with eating and kisses me good bye.

“Nompilo, how are you?”, my mother asks.

“I am fine. How are you guys that side?”, I ask as well

“We are doing well. I hope everything is working out well for you”, she says

“Yes it is. Ngiyazma nje (I am trying)”, I say

“That's good, we do miss you”, she says

“I miss you as well. So very much”,

“I will call later on. I have to be somewhere”, She says

“Ok, bye”, she hangs up.

I carry on with what I am doing and I am thinking of going to the clinic to check how I am with the pregnancy. I haven't felt a kick for some time now and that worries me a bit. I send a message to Qaphela. I don't want to scare him though but it wouldn't end nicely when I don't inform him.

“I am thinking of heading to the clinic tomorrow”, I sent.

I place my phone down and sigh while running my stomach. I hope everything is fine. My phone pings and I take it. Its him !

“I will take you to the doctor tomorrow”, he says . I don't think it's necessary to waste money on something I might think it's paranoia but this is Qaphela and he has said his final piece.

“Ok”, I write.

“I love you ”, I recieve the message. I am smiling and feeling a bit happy as well.

I love him too. He knows I do love him.

Paranoia, I was being paranoid indeed ! I have the right to be paranoid. The baby sddenly stops kicking and I can't feel anything. Anything can happen , he looks at me and I look in the little trolley then him as well. He places his hands in his pocket.'

“Is that all you need?”, he asks

“Yes”, Who needs treats ? They are wants and not part of our daily needs but now they are mine.

“Ok , let's go and a pay ”, he says and we go to the till area.

“I was so scared that something was happening ”, I touch my stomach.

“Everything is ok now that we know ”, he says

“You know that...” , I saw Nana passing by.

“Nompilo” , he snaps me out of my "World"

“Yes ? ”, I say

“I don't like your neighbour. You seem to be getting too close with him ”, he says

“Lindo is harmless. He is just looking out for me ”, I say

“I can look out for you. I am going to be your husband not him.
”, his facial expression says everything.

“Ok, I will cut down on our neighbour bond ”, I say

“Or don't have one at all”, ok that's a bit dramatic. It's not like I like Lindo like that.

We get to pay and walk out of the mall.

“Aunty was wondering if some day you can come for dinner ”,
he says.

I look at him.

“I would love to come. I missed her ”, I say

We get inside the car and soon we are leaving.

“How is Nkosana ?” , he asks.

“He is good , growing daily and it scares me ”, I say

“Why does it scare you ? ”, he asks.

“I feel like I will always miss the important parts of his life. He will be doing things on his own , get married , have kids and leave me ”, I say

He laughs.

“Kodwa Sthandwa Sam. Akukho okumele engage uzikhathaza ngakho (there is nothing you should worry yourself with)”

“But think about it ”, I say

“He is 7 and doing grade 2, you still have 10 more years before varsity. You still have your whole lives together. Even after he is married and has kids you will still be there for him ”, he says

“10 years ? Oh my God he is leaving me sooner than I thought”, he laughs.

“Don't laugh, Qaphela ”, I say

“You want some ice cream ? ”, he offers. I nod slowly.

“Look it at my way”, he says

“I don't know ”, I say

“When he moves in with us you will see what I am talking about. Don't stress yourself. ”, he says

The years will pass by really quickly and sometimes you don't notice. Just 7 years ago I was giving birth and now he is grown and going into grade 2 .

CHAPTER 19

Here we go ,the problem. My father , that is the problem. He didn't want to take the letter that was sent by Qaphela's family after convincing and crying my lungs out and a bit of swearing a here and there . From him though he agreed for the negotiations to happen. It has been a month and things are going very well at the moment. I am loving where I am with Qaphela and we are growing stronger and stronger. Actually he is my saving grace. I have been off drugs for a year now and also pushing my own side hustle and soon to go and study. That's the type of growth he has brought into my life and change.

We are going to his home to have some lunch with his aunt. It's a Sunday and we have been delaying the visit but now it's time we went ukuyovela kancane. I look at my self through the long mirror and turn around. This maternity dress is nice , I actually didn't like it at first. Qaphela bought much more clothes for me to wear and I appreciate his support in this pregnancy, I am actually enjoying it so very much.

“Nompilo !”, he shouts. I take my bag from the bed and walk out.

He is having some water , still I have never seen Qaphela drinking alcohol ever since I have met him. He looks at me and places the glass on the coffee table.

“Take it to the kitchen Qaphela. I don't want the glass there ”, I frown .

“Yes Mama ”, he goes to the kitchen and comes back.

He kisses my neck while holding my waist.

“Let's go. ”, he says and we move out.

We get into his car and I am nervous, I don't know why when I have met his aunt before and she is a good woman. I am just scared of her reacting to me being with him again after I up and left. He starts the car and I look at him.

“I am scared”, I say

He looks at me and holds my hand in assurance and I feel a bit better for a moment.

“You shouldn't be ”, he says

“I know , it's just ...” he shakes his head

“Calm down ok ? ” , I nod.

“Lets go ”, he says

“Can I get a kiss Mapholoba?”, he smiles and leans to give me one.

“Ungibiza kahle Mama (You call me well)”, he says

Now he expects me to call him by his clan names Everytime. It will sound boring , it's best using it once in a while.

“Kodwa uthi Nompilo kimi Mapholoba (But you call me Nompilo)” I say sulking. He chuckles

“Your name is Nompilo nje ”, I gasp

“Qaphela !”, he chuckles lightly.

“Sthandwa Sam ”, he says

“Thats too common , ngithinte emanonini Qaphela (Make me feel butterflies Qaphela)”

“Is it the pregnancy bothering you now ?”, I frown and face the other side.

“What did I do now ?”, he asks.

Mxm, he should just leave me alone

“Leave me alone ” , I say

He keeps quiet , he is not even begging and making sure if I am really fine and what is my mood change. Argh this man !

Where did I find him ? Oh yes the taxi rank that's where I found him. We pass by the store for me to get somethings before we go to his home. Soon as we are done we are on our way there. We haven't talked to each other since and now I am pissed. He

doesn't care about me ? Really ? We arrive at his home and we both get out. He takes the little things that were bought and we make our way to the main house. We knock before he enters the house and we hear some talking .

The anger subsided and I feel nervous as ever. He is not holding my hand , I quickly grab his and he looks at me then chuckles lightly.

“What ?”, I ask

“Weren't you angry at me for nothing ?”, he asks

“You were imagining things ”,I say

“Qaphela!”, his aunt says

“Lets go ”, we walk further into the lounge. Thuli stands up very fast and comes to hug me.

“Hey sisi, I missed you. How are you kodwa ? The little one? How is he treating you ? ”, she speaks very fast

“Give hera moment to breathe Thulisile ”, Qaphela's aunt says.

“Sorry”, I smile.

“Woza lah sisi, Kade ngakugcina (come here my child , it's been long)” , Qaphela's aunt says.

Qaphela let go of my hand and his aunt pulls me into a hug. My stomach is preventing us to get any closer.

“You look beautiful”, she smiles

“Thank you Mah”, I say

“Nompilo bought something”, Qaphela says

“Thank you, Thuli go place it at the kitchen”

She leaves us. We settle down and Qaphela next to me.

The lunch is coming on well, we are laughing and talking at the same time. Qaphela's other cousin is not here but at the taxi rank. The food was amazing and my stomach is quiet full from the feeding me so very much.

“Are you sleeping over Nompilo?”, the aunt asks.

I look at Her then Qaphela. He is waiting, they are waiting for me to reply with my answer.

“Yes” I say after a short pause.

“Great, we need to talk. You are sleeping with me tonight”, His aunt says

“Aun...”, Qaphela was about to protest.

“It's just one night. You won't die Qaphela” she says.

He is not happy about the idea and it's visible. I am just scared, I am sure this sleep over is accompanied by a long lecture I am

sure of it. My mother would do that to me when I started having something with Bayede in my teen years. She knew she knew that I was seeing a boy now. "A mother always knows", she would say. It's to pinch me and give me a longspeech and death threats of which some she would fulfil and that is giving me a good beating to get that evilness out of my system.

"Let me go do the dishes ", Thuli says

"I will help out ", I try to stand up.

"No

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sit down. I have this under control", She smiles and move away.

I sit my ass down. We carry on interacting with the aunt. She asks us what we planning on doing after the Negotiations. I don't mind if we go and just sign for our marriage and the rest will come later on. Qaphela agrees to that as well then Membeso will be done right after. We haven't really talked alot about that but eventually we will and we are straight forward about everything we want.

I am looking down. I don't know why she is this nice to me even after I up and left her nephew but she is. She is pampering

me , I feel bad because a person who is older than me just washed and massaged my feet before I laid myself on this bed. She is at the kitchen making tea for the both of us. It's coming with a lecture. I will not be able to control my bladder. My phone rings and I take it . Qaphela is in his room outside , his aunt told him to leave as it's late and we need to sleep. I answer.

“Baby” i say

“My aunt is not my favourite at the moment. Call me when she is asleep. I will fetch you ”, he says

“No , good night ok?sleep well”, I say

“Nompilo !”

“Qaphela ? ”, he heaves a sigh.

“I will fetch you ”. He says

“Sleep Qaphela , I will see you tomorrow. It's just a few hours. Good night”, I hang up.

His aunt walks in with a tray and it has biscuits and tea. I sit up and she places everything on the dresser next to me. She takes the tea and hands it over to me.

“I found these as well”, she planned them I know but I am not there.

“Thank you mah”, I sip on my tea.

“Qaphela is my son , he may not have come from me but he is ”, she says.

There it is. She is starting. I sip my tea and nod lightly.

“The day you left, I have never seen him like that. Broken I would say”, she sucks in her breath.

“You are the first woman ake angibonisa yena. Owathi kimi 'Aunti sengimtholile umsizi wami '(that he has brought to me , that he said ' Aunty , I have found my wife ')", she smiles.

Her hands move to my thighs and I breathe out.

“He told me everything. He told me that he wasn't honest with you and was scared to loose you when he didi for his stupidity. I am sorry on my behalf. I feel like I contributed somehow. I didn't raise him to be a liar, my brother left him in my hands to take good care of him and I am happy of his growth. Buka manje useyashada umntaka Mfowethu(Look now my brother's Son is getting married)” , we both share a giggle.

“Bless you my child ”, she says.

“Thank you Mah ”, she smiles.

“Call Qaphela to fetch you. It's dark ”, she says.

I take my phone and text him. We sit and sip our tea while conversating. She asks me if I know the gender since these new machines can tell you that and I told her I want it to be a surprise she asks about Nkosana and how he is. My face just beams when I talk about my son and the fact that Qaphela loves him as well is just too much for me. We are Disturbed by a knock and we both turn our heads to the door.

“Aunty...”

“You two can leave. I will take these to the kitchen ”, she says.

I say my good byes and goodnights. We walk out of the door together, he is beaming and seems less grumpy that he will be sleeping alone.

We get inside his flat and I head straight for the bathroom. I pee and get done , wash my hands and I am out. I get on the bed.

“I feel bloated ”, I say

“You look beautiful”, he says. It sounds nice and I rarely hear it but he loves me and that I love hearing.

“Don't you want us to rock the bed a bit ”, oh this man

“Kancane nje ? (just a bit ?)”, I am amused.

“Just a bit ”, he says and leans in to kiss my lips.

I nod and he is on top of me running his fingers on the cloth I am wearing and getting under it to my skin , taking it off bit by bit. He is arousing me and already I am wet. He takes the condom from the bed side and undresses. It has been long since we have been intimate. I have been scared but now I am not.

He is on me once again and I look at him

“I love you ”, i say

I have become a regular with shops and buying something. Cravings ! They call me so much and I am happy that my fiance spoils me with no hassle or anything. He is happy, this is his first child. It's exciting as well.

We are at Edgar's getting more clothes for me to have. I think the ones I have at home are enough but no , here we are. I am looking at this dress when I feel a tap on my shoulder. I turn around and I feel my heart beating fast. Her eyes go to my stomach and I put my hands over it. Where is Qaphela ?

“Nono ”, she says

“Nandipha”, i say

“I heard”

“Mmmh ”,I give her a look.

“Carlos?”, she asks.

“I am not that life anymore. I am engaged”, I say

“Oh , does he know about your old life ? ”, she says with a smirk.

“It doesn't concern you ”

“Baby are you done so we can pay ?”, It's Qaphela. He narrows his eyes and looks at Nana.

“Didn't I warn your boyfriend to never step on my territory?”, he is pissed off by the looks. I hold him.

“Lets leave”, I say

“Nx ”, he takes my basket and walks off.

“Stay away from me Nandipha ”, I say

I walk off and follow after Qaphela. He is by the till area. I am huffing as I reach him and out of breath. He is silent but the look on his face says so much.

“Calm down ”, I say

“I won't be reliable of alot of actions when coming to protect you or my kids ”, he says. Kids ?

“Who is that other child ? ”, He mustn't test me ,I can't believe him !

“Nkosana ”, oh

“Oh ”, he narrows his eyes.

“Next please! ”, we move.

CHAPTER 20

Its hot, I am feeling very hot under this blanket. I can't take it and it's itching me as well. I look at my side and he is sound asleep . I can't get over him or tired of looking at him. I wonder how this one would look like ? Me maybe ? I can't both my kids looking like their fathers. That absolute ! Betrayal. I run my hand on his leg and move it. I can't hear anything beyond this door. I am alone and no one has came to check up on me ? If I am hungry or not. I take my phone and send a quick text.

“I am hungry”, sent.

I am hungry, I am the one who is going to eat that food and the baby benefits off it. I am excited as well about everything that is happening at this moment. I hope my uncles nor my father ruins anything. My phone pings disturbing me from my thoughts.

“If I am seen with you I will have to pay a fine ”, what ?! No he has to feed me.

“I am hungry Mos ”, I am sulking and want to cry at the moment.

I go to the door and I lock it. They won't call me that I know. I open the window and look at myself. I take a chair and step on it and try getting out of the window. I land safely down and rub my bump. I check the coast before I walk to the gate that separates our neighbour and us. My dog, oh my poor dog had died when I was young. It was out of the gate and a car murdered it. I miss my dog so much. I would have to get a new one when we have settled contently. I get out of the neighbour's gate and I move around the street, where am I going anyway? Oh yes to buy something. I have R10 on me and I could get maybe fries and a fat cake. As I am walking down the street I see him. He is speaking with his cousin maybe worried or frustrated as I am. I walk towards the car and his cousin taps him. He bolts out of the car and I fold my arms like I caught him doing something when in actual fact I am grumpy from hunger.

"Sthandwa Sam what are you doing here?", he asks

"I am going to buy something. You didn't want to get me anything to eat", I sulk

He runs his fingers on his face

"How is it going in there?", I ask

"Your father is having a hard time", I knew that old man would do me like that!

“I hope he doesn't sabotage us because I will run away ”,he chuckles.

“I will send someone to go and get you something from the shop quickly ”, he says taking out his wallet and calls upon his cousin. He is out of sight in a flash.

I kiss his lips and he responds before breaking it.

“Just a few moments before you are my wife ”, he says.

That sounds so amazing. It's like I am getting married for the first time when I am not. Only difference is that I love the man Infront of me with all of my heart. His cousin is back and I thank him. I kiss him good bye and rush off to the house. I hope I don't get caught and good thing Qaphela didn't ask how I got out because he would've flipped and dragged me back through the main door.

Everything went well. The Lobolo negotiations that is. Now i can be someone's wife. I am happy and thrilled about everything and how it finally came together. I am packing the bags , I have to leave with them. Qaphela and the rest that is. There is no point of mw staying here any longer .

“Mama are you coming back ?”, My son asks.

“Yes , mommy loves you ”, I give him a kiss and he smiles.

My mother walks in my room and looks at me.

“I hope that boy treats you well”, she says

“He does. I have to go ”, I zip my bag and I take them.

We walk out and they stop by the gate. The bags are put in the car and they walk back inside. My feet hurt and I feel like they are swollen. Qaphela is still talking to Abakhongi bakhe as I wait. He comes after some time and he looks at me.

“What ? ”, I ask.

“Hambo landa ingane (go and fetch the child), we are not leaving without him ”

“I thought he would be moving with us once we have settled ”,
I say

“Nompilo”, I know he is serious.

I nod and make my way inside the house. My uncles are still drinking their beers while my father is talking. I walk into the kitchen and my mother is there.

“Qaphela says we are taking Nkosana to live with us ”, she looks at me and so as my aunt's.

“I thought he will forever live with me ”, she says

“He will visit ”, the sadness is masked on her face.

“Hayi , kulungi (it's ok) ”, she walks off.

I need a chair. I grab one and I sit down ,I am tired of everything right now and it's still going to be a road drive back. I am going to sleep the whole way, he will have to forgive me. My mother comes back with Nkosana and his bags.

“I didn't pack everything. I left some stuff ”, she doesn't want to let go.

“Mama Ngihamba nawe ? (Mom am I going with you ?)”, I nod with a smile.

“Yes , come. Uncle is waiting ”, I don't even know how to act. I have never lived with Nkosana before.

“He should take his antibiotics. ”, I know. He has a flue but it's better.

“Ok,I will call”, I say

“Ningamhlukumezi Nompilo. Uma ekuhlula mbuyisele (Don't abuse him Nompilo, if he is too much. Being him back)”

“I would never let that happen ”, she nods. She comes and hugs me

We kiss her good bye and we leave. Nkosana is excited. He sees one of his friends and says:“Weh fish , ngiyahamba nomama ngeke ngisabuya (Fish , I am leaving with my mother. I won't come back)”

I laugh at that as Qaphela opens the back door. I take out his jacket and dress him before I buckle him up.

“Unjani Mfana ? (How are you boy ?)”, Qaphela asks.

“Ngiyaphila Malume, uzosithatha sinomama ngiyohlala naye ? (I am good uncle. You are taking me to go and live with my mother ?)”, he nods.

The excitement on my child's face is priceless and he can't contain himself as much. We close the door and get inside as well. Finally I can be able to rest.

“I am sleeping ”

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I warn

“Nkosana will keep me company ”, I want to kiss him but the child. He is amazing

“Ok then ”

I lay the seat a bit back and I close my eyes as soon as the car moves.

We arrived. Nkosana slept at the main house with Qaphela's Aunty. She was excited about him. Everyone is like he is a new gift. I needed to wash our clothes before Qaphela goes back to

work tomorrow. I take all our clothes while he is asleep. I woke up early and cleaned a bit before I could wash. I walk out and Aunty is already washing as well.

“Sawubona mah (good morning)”, I greet.

“Hello, how did you sleep ? ”

“Well ”, I settle my things

“Nkosana is a chatter box ”, she lightly laughs. He is

“He is , ufunze ubaba wakhe (He takes from his father)”, I say

“Kodwa kugcaluze ingane layikhaya.”,she says and I giggle.

“Ugangile kodwa (he is naught though)” I say

“All kids are naught. We have to apply school for him this side ”, yeah. The holiday will be over soon.

“Yes , I will talk to Qaphela. Thank you ”, i say

“Let me wash those for you. You go and rest ”, she says

“No it's fine. I can handle it ”, i say

“No ,Give those to me ”, she says and takes my basket.

“Thank you ,eyi ”, I get up and my dress is wet.

“Ngabe kunenkinga ?(Is there a problem?)”, I don't remember peeing.

"I don't know. ", I really don't know.

"its ok to slip. We all did ", she says

"But I don't remember peeing ", she wipes her hands.

"How far are you ? "

"I should be 9 months in a few ",I say

"Mmh ,I think iskhathi (it's time)",she stands up.

"Go and wake Qaphela up. We are taking you to the hospital ", she rushes around.

I walk off and get in. He is sitting by the edge while running his eyes.

"Good morning ", he says yawning

"I need the hospital ", I say . I am not sure if I need it or not.

"Whats wrong ? ", he asks

"The baby ", that's all I can say

He springs out of the bed and I feel soft contractions. I hold my stomach as he wears his track pants and hoodie really quick. He slips in some slides and rushes to the bathroom before he comes and takes my bag. He holds my hand.

"Calm down", I am telling him.

His aunt is already waiting for us , changed and with her bag.

“Thuli will look after Nkosana ”, I nod.

I feel like I am sweating or it must be the sun. I get inside the car and I close my eyes as I try to not feel these contractions that are coming on softly.

Another boy, Too many of them. They don't even look like me even one bit , I look at him sitting with them. Giving them equal attention and love , I am mesmerised how a man like him would love the whole me. I was a prostitute and have been damaged "goods" in terms. I have a son but he loves Nompilo and her package. I came with alot but he still wanted to marry me and make me his wife.

“You are awake ”, he looks at me.

“Mommy I have a new brother. He will play with me everyday”

“Your brother is not a toy Nkosana ”, he keeps on flicking his cheeks too much.

“How are you feeling? ”, He asks.

“In pain but ok”, I say

“We are trying another one ”, yho not now.

“Not so soon. The 3 of you are enough. Where is aunty ? ”, I ask

“Thulani Fetched her to buy some baby clothes ”, he says

I am hungry ,I look beside me and there are nice treats. I could lay like this all the time.

“Thank you ”, I say

“We are leaving with the baby. You are staying ”, Nkosana says and we laugh.

I keep on looking at them. Qaphela smiles at me and I do the same as well. Argh we haven't kissed and it's these kids stopping us ! Why can't they close their eyes and let us kiss.

CHAPTER 21

The only sound that is consumed in here is the sounds of the noise from outside, I feel tired already though I get as much help as I can and I am grateful for that. I have decided that I will rent my place out while I am here and I am sure Qaphela's dignity wouldn't let him move in with me. He wants to start things on his own. He is the man after all.

My phone rings and I groan as I am woken up from my sleep. I shoot my head up to see how the baby is doing and he is sound asleep in his cot. I grab my phone quickly before I answer.

“Hello”, my raspy voice is stronger and so as the sleep.

“Ekse Mpilo , K'hamba kanjani ? (Mpilo, how are you ?)”, oh it's Lindo.

“Lindo , Uhm. Everything is ok ”, I sit up immediately.

“I don't see you here anymore ”, he says.

The door soon opens and he is walking in , holding some plastics at the moment.

“I moved out yazi. Phela I got married ”, I say

Qaphela's eyes are on me as they narrow. His ears itching to hear the whole conversation I am having.

“Ha! You don't invite me and my girl to come and enjoy the festivities. You are wrong ”, he says

“It wasn't something big really. ”, I say

“Ngizokubhelela neh. Ngikukhonzile. (I will call you , I like you)Mawudinga usizo don't hesitate to call me. ”

“Thank you for the check up. ”, I say moving my eyes.

“Sure ”, he hangs up.

“You are now friends ”, he places everything.

I get off the bed.

“No, he was just checking up on me. You can even call him ”, I say

“Honestly I don't like it”, he says

“He has been peaceful since you left ”, I move away from the subject at hand.

He turns and holds my waist.

“Thats a first ”, really it is.

“Yeah, phela ufunze wena (he takes after you)”, I say

“You are the biggest baby here ”,i gasp and he kisses my neck.

“I can't believe I married you ”, he says

“Compliment or shock ? ”, I ask

“Its good. I love you Nompilo”, he says

“I love you too Qaphela ”, I turn and smile at him.

“Kodwa ingane zagogo madodoa (Grannies kids)”, Qaphela's aunt constantly makes sounds as she listen to Nkosana telling her unbelievable stories while she is holding the baby for a while.

“Does he bother you ?”, she looks up at me.

“During the day. At night he is ok”, I say

“Nkosana go and play ”

“But mama , I want to play with the baby ”, The aunt laughs.

“The baby is not a toy ”

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he is not happy.

“Leave him alone. He loves his brother ”, she says

Thuli walks in carrying her bag. She works at a supermarket as the manager.

“Sisi, how are you ?”,she greets first.

“I am holding up ”, she laughs. I sip on my tea.

I swear this grandma here loves her tea because that's all we have these days and a show to look at the baby sleep or make any sounds.

“I should go and back. Maybe Qaphela needs me. ”,I stand up.

“I will bring the baby later ”,They can't get their hands off the baby.

“Nkosana ”, he doesn't even look at me.

I can't believe my children don't want me ! I walk out of the house making my way to the flat. He is sound asleep as I get inside. I am glad he is using this time to rest. Maybe it's because he is used to me forcing him on sleeping when he is supposed to. I check things for what I am going to cook as my phone rings. The number is unknown as I look at it for a while and I answered.

“Hello”

“I am coming for you Nompilo ”, I fold my arms.

“Should I come and make things easy for you Nana ? ”,she clicks her tongue.

“How the hell did you get my number wena ?”

“I have my ways. My life is turning upside down and you need to help me. ”, I laughed.

“I don't owe you anything ”, I say before hanging up.

I sigh and look at the phone.

“I don't like these phone calls that make you angry”, I turn around and shove the phone on the counter.

“Its nothing ”

He looks at me.

“Nompilo”

“Qaphela ”

“Sondela Dali (come close)”, I go to him and get on the bed.

He holds me in his arms and kisses my cheek. I sigh and look at my hands and he holds them in his.

“I bought a site ”, he says

“You finally did ? ”, he nods

“I feel ...”, I become silent.

“Tell me ”, he says

“I am happy with you ”, I say

He chuckles and I laugh.

“You are just saying ”, I hit his chest.

“Haibo , what kind of a husband are you kanti ?”, I ask

“The special kind ”, he says

I run my fingers on his chest and I touched his thigh

“Dont start something you wouldn't finish ”, he says

“I didn't do anything ”, I say

“You are thinking of it ” he says

“No I am not ”, he looks at me.

“I need to get things for Nkosana before he starts school ”, I say

“We will go with him tomorrow”,I nod.

I laid my head on his chest and closed my eyes.

It's the following day, gone on an outing with just the three of us. Nkosana is excited and pointing everywhere where he sees what he likes while on Qaphela's shoulders. They are stuck in their own world, isolating me on the side.

“This one or this one ?”, Qaphela asks Nkosana.

“Babe I think that's enough toys for the day”, I say

“Mommy, no please ”I gave Nkosana a look.

“Lets take them both ”, Qaphela says.

I give up on the both of them.

“Well can we go and eat after this. I feel like I was shopping with girls ”

They don't even hear what I am saying. I am done with the both of them.

CHAPTER 22

I wipe his face with a cloth as he looks at me with his beady big eyes that he has. We are already a bit late but we will move in time if we get to beat the traffic very fast.

“Nkosana !”, he comes running from the bedrooms and takes his bag.

I stand up and give him his brother's towel.

“Go and put it away and let's go, we are late !”

He rushes off and comes back. I take this one with me as I walk to the car and we get inside. My phone rings and I rummage through my bag looking for it then I found it and answered.

“Sthandwa Sam ”, I say

“I am on my way to the school ”, he says

“Wait, we haven't moved from home but we are on our way ”i say

“Nompilo you know the traffic ”, he says

I start the car.

“I know. Nkosana delayed me ”, I say

I reverse out and drive off down the street

“I will talk later. I am driving ”, I say

“Ok, I love you ”

He hangs up. Still needs work on his manners but I loved it over the years.

The 9 years we have been together feels like the first time Everytime. The kids have grown and everything is just going in my life. We moved from his aunt's house and built a house of our own. I studied teaching and now I am a teacher for a senior phase. Today is going to be a sports day for Nkosana. I can't believe he is 16 years old now. Sometimes I find myself crying because it's only a matter of a few years before he leaves us and goes on his own.

“Mommy are you crying ?”, Simphiwe asks

I wipe my tears and Nkosana groans.

“She is probably pregnant”,

“What do you know about pregnancies?”, I ask looking at him from the side.

“Nothing but you cry alot these days ”, he says.

“Dont you see you are going to leave us soon. I don't want that ”, I say

“Oh this again. I am in grade11 there is still a year left”, he says

A year. That's even worse and we are in the middle of this year.

“You are making it worse ”, His brother giggles alone.

I sniff while he shakes his head.

“Can we visit gogo in Kzn?”, Nkosana asks.

“I will talk to your dad about that ”, he nods.

We get to his school and we get out of the car. Already Qaphela is waiting for us. I grab my bag and we go towards him.

“Were you crying ?”, he asks as soon as he sees me.

“She was”, The little one says

“Its nothing serious. ”. I shrug.

“Lets go. I am late please ”, Qaphela takes my hand and i take Simphiwe's.

We walk into Nkosana's school. We get to the indoor basket ball court and settle down on the bleachers. I hold Qaphela's hand and he kisses it. Is it even normal to love a man this much ? Should I tone down a bit on the love. No , I trust him so very much.

“Ungibukani ?(what are you looking at ?)”, he plays with my ring

“I am looking at my husband”,I say

He chuckles.

“There is Nkosana baba”, Simphiwe pats his father for attention.

He just bursted our bubble. The players are getting ready for everything. Over the years we also had grown financially. Qaphela loves Nkosana like his very own son and they are very close than me and Nkosana. I believe he favours him more than me but he denies it. I know so though. The game starts and we keep on watching. I don't understand what is really going on here but Qaphela seems to know. He comes more often to Nkosana's games than I. Mainly because Nkosana tells him about his games more than he does to the both of us.

My son is passionate about basketball you could see it in the way he is playing.

“Go Nkosana !”, A school girl shouts and he smiles looking down.

“Did you see that ?”, I ask Qaphela

“Ini Mawakhe ?(What ?)”

“He just blushed when that girl chanted” i say

“I didn't see anything”, he says.

I huff and give Simphiwe some beverages. The game is over now and I don't know the score but I know that my boy's team

had won, the same girl went to Nkosana and they seemed to have a conversation because he was blushing very much. Qaphela pulled me away as I was watching them. We get away from the bleachers and leave the court.

“You are stressing ”,he says

“I don't want him to have you known what. I am too young to be a grandmother”. I say softly

He chuckles.

“I will handle it , will that make you happy?”, he asks.

“Yes. He is your Bestfriend after all”, he chuckled.

“Are you jealous?”, I shake my head no

“No, I have Simphiwe”, he comes close to my ear and he whispers.n

“I think it's time we made a princess Mam'Ngcobo”, I felt tingles go through my body.

“Oh”, I was speechless.

Nkosana finally came out and he had showered and all cleaned up. He was whistling while smiling.

“Do you have a girlfriend?”, he stops his tracks .

“Mawakhe ”, Qaphela says.

I sigh.

“No ... Uhm no ”

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Nkosana replies.

“I am watching you ”, I say.

He sighs.

“Nkosana is coming with me to the taxi rank ”, Qaphela hands his gym bag to me.

“Can I come too?”, Simphiwe asks.

“When you are older. For now let's go Spur and treat ourselves”, I say

“Cool, bye”, he waves.

We say our good byes and we went to the car.

“How are the kids?”, I am on call with my mother.

“The kids are ok, They want to visit but ngizokhuluma no Qaphela kuqala (I will speak to Qaphela first)”, I say

“You know he will agree. I am just happy you have lasted in your marriage. That man loves you ”, I jot back to the times we first met.

“I am lucky to have him ”, I say

“Simpfiwe is growing. ”, oh here is the baby talk

“Eh mah I have some marking to do. I will call you neh ?”, I hang up before she says anything. I sigh.

My phone rings and I take it from the counter. Simphiwe retired to bed as soon as we came back from our trip. It's Sonto, Lindo's girlfriend.

“Hey Mngani”, did I mention we have become friends ?

Well we have and she is very nice. Lindo and I are still friends though Qaphela thinks he is super shady of which is true from what I see.

“Hey, how are you ?”, I ask

“I am good. How is uMkhwenyana wakwami?(How is my son in law?)”, I laugh

“He is good and asleep ”, I say

She has a daughter who is 3 years younger than Simphiwe.

“Well my baby is having a birthday party next month.”, she says

“Oh , usekhulile (she has grown)”, I say

“You know. So I will send the date ”, she says

“Sure. Bye ”, she hangs up.

I take out a wine bottle and pour some wine. I drink and put the glass away. I wonder how Nana is wherever she is. We used to be tight and now all of that went down. I don't want to go back to that life ever again. I am happy where I am.

“we are back”, Nkosana walks in first with take out

“Oh, I was about to cook”, I hug and kiss his cheeks.

“Mah , you should be doing that to dad not me ”, he says

“You are my baby”, Qaphela follows suit.

“I will be in my room ”, Nkosana rushes off.

I wrap my arms around my husband and give him a kiss.

“I have been waiting for one all day”, I say

We don't kiss Infront of the kids, it's something we do.

“Hoq about I send Nkosana to the shops and let's go to our bedroom?”

“Or let the kids go to Kzn these holidays ”, I suggest

“Perfect! We will have a daughter in you by then ”, I laugh and hit his chest lightly.

“Take out the plates please”, I move from his hold and I go and set up the food.

“Nompilo”, I turn around.

“Yes?”, I say.

“I love you, nothing will separate us, he says.

I go and hug him.

“I love you too”, tears prickling my eyes.

.....**The End**.....

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