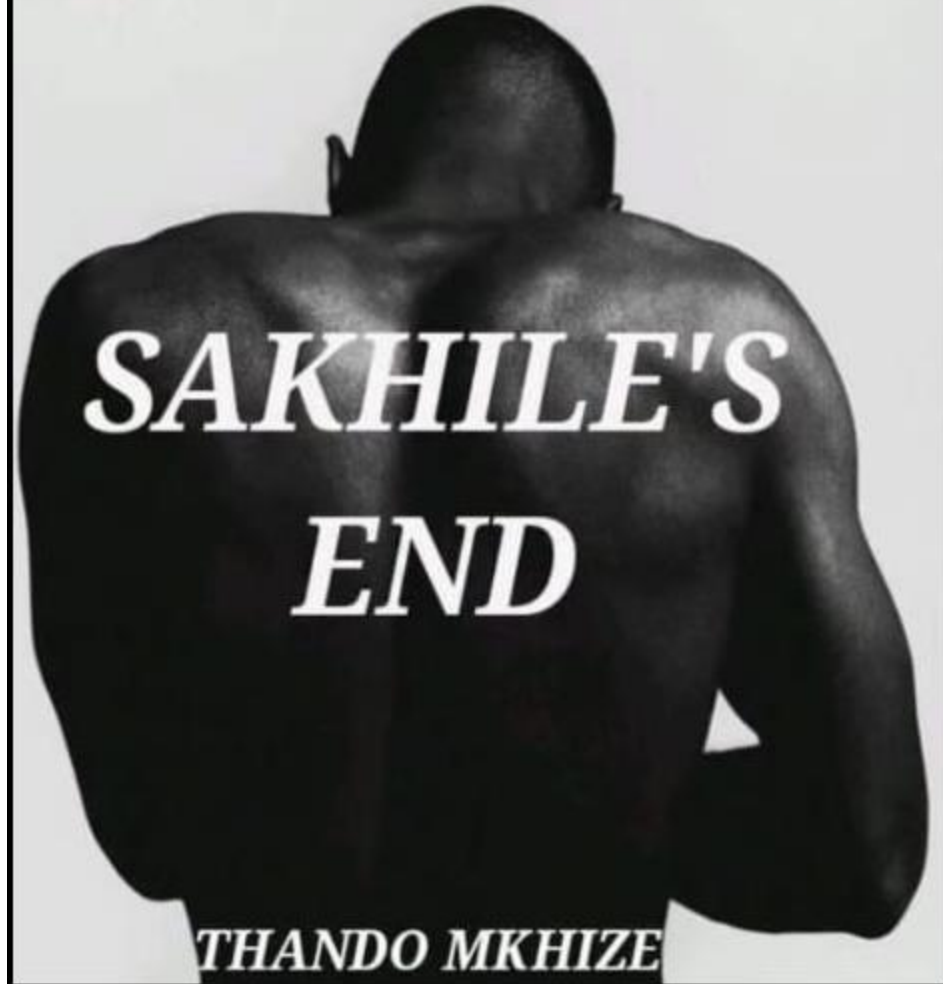


He is my beginning and End...



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CHAPTER 1

I couldn't believe everything that I was hearing. A part of me wasn't believing anything that is coming out this officer's mouth as they are all standing here Infront of me with their hats off.

“Please leave ”, I say softly while pointing towards the door.

“Ma'am•••”

“Leave my house now !”, they all look at each other.

They nod and turn to leave. My hands are shaking and my heart is beating very fast.

“I am sorry for your loss”,the officer says before he leaves.

The door is shut and there is silence. No one is talking to anyone at the moment. No one has said a word after what had happened, a sharp pain surface from my chest and a lump is released as I sob. He catches me in his arms before I could even hit the ground. Only my cries are heard throughout the whole house. Sane goes through the kitchen and brings back water for me and I can't even drink it. He picks me up and carries me to the master bedroom as I am crying.

Why am I being punished in this manner ? He is coming back. He promised and that he loves me. He wouldn't leave us while

he still loves me. We are going to grow grey together that I know.

—

I woke up later. The time is 7h48 pm in the afternoon. I slowly get off the bed and I look around before making my way to the bathroom and wash my face. I look at myself and it's visible that I have been crying my eyes out. I get out and make my way down the stairs. I could hear the tv from where I am. I get down the stairs and I see all of them still here. My eyes move to the tv and I see the headlines. I close my eyes and hold onto the rail way before I fall down.

“Sue them ”, I said softly.

They turn to me.

I open my eyes.

“He is not dead ”, I look at them.

“Slindo...”i raise my hand.

“I know my husband Ntozakhona and Nazo is alive. He is coming back so sue this broadcasting news Anchor by tomorrow”,

Lange's phone rings and he answers while moving away from the rest of them.

“Sakhile ”, he stands up from the couch and places his hands in his pocket.

“Slie”, he answers.

“Please get the kids for me ”, I say

“I don't think that's a good idea for now Slindo”, Sane throws in her comments. I look at her.

Who does she think she is for her to think what is a good idea and not a good idea for my children to be with me or not.

“They are my kids and I want them here ”, my voice is breaking.

“They don't need to see you like this Slindo”, Sakhile mentions.

“Get me my kids Sakhile , I want my kids with me !”, I place my hand on my chest before I cry.

“No”, he walks off.

“I hate you ”, I whisper after him.

Lange comes back rushing in.

“I have to get back to Kzn things are bad that side ”, he says.

“Whats wrong ?”,Sane asks concerned.

“Sis Snikiwe committed Suicide”, he says typing away on his phone probably booking the next flight out.

“Oh my God”, I sit down on the stairs.

“She is not dead but it's critical as Bhuti Afika mentioned”, he says.

“I am coming with you ”, Ntozakhona says.

“Me too”,Sikelela

They all speak and I stare back at the tv. His pictures displayed and the news woman is talking. I close my eyes shutting everything around me.

They all soon left. Sane was left with Sakhile who I don't know where he disappeared off to. I was tucked under the covers staring into the blank wall. I switched off my phone before anyone calls. I told the security to not let anyone in through the gate to feel any sympathy for me or whatsoever.

A knock on the door surfaces and it opens. Sane peaks her head in and looks at me.

“Can I come in ?”, I keep my silence and she walks in with a tray full of breakfast.

“I brought food”, she says.

“I am not hungry”, I quickly say.

“Slindo you have to eat", she pleads with me.

I look at her. She sighs and places the tray aside and comes closer.

“I know your pain••”, I interrupt her.

“Sikelela is still alive. Don't tell me you know my pain ”, I snap.

She stands up from the bed.

“I will leave you to it then ”, she gives out a faint smile and walks out.

I close my eyes shut and I let out a sob . I hold onto the pillow that he rests his head on and let my tears drop onto it. I miss him and want him right here next to me. I take my phone and open it. Messages and missed calls flood in. I go to his number and dial it. It takes me to voicemail. I try again and it does the same again. He always answers his phone. I was hoping to hear his voice and know that everyone else is lying.

Another knock comes from the door and I shoot my head up and the door opens. I sit up from the bed and he looks at me.

“Are my kids downstairs?”, I ask

“No. His body has arrived”, he says.

“I don't want to see it. ”, what if it is really him ?

“Its the only way you will have peace”, he says.

“I don't want to believe he is gone forever ”he clenches his jaw.

“I am sorry Slindo”, tears stream down my cheeks.

“We will wait downstairs for you”, I sob more as he closes the door.

I just wish we as people can stay in the world we created. I can't believe he won't see our boys get married one day. I can't believe that God decided to rob my ending just like that.

“Thats enough”, they close the body bag up and I sink to the floor.

I stay there a bit and scream my lungs out as I am crying. Sane couldn't enter because she said she would be traumatized. Only Sakhile and I are the ones who entered. He lets me be as I cry and after some time he comes and picks me up.

“We are moving it to Kzn”, he tells these people who had brought my husband from overseas.

“Tell me I am dreaming Sakhile ”, I sob softly.

“Its ... It's not a dream Slindo. I am sorry ”, he says softly.

I cry my lungs out. Why did Nazo leave me ?

He pulls me out and Sane gets up from the chair and comes towards me. I fall in her arms and we both cry.

“Its him Sane. He is quiet. I called for him and asked him to come back”

“I am sorry Slindo”

she breaks into a sob.

“It hurts ”, I feel like I am dying.

“I am sorry Slindo.”, she kept on saying as she rubs my back.

We leave the airport and get into the car. Sane stays with me at the back as Sakhile drives us off. We are all silent. A lot of bad things have been happening in our lives in a short space of time. Ciyela divorcing Sakhile for a new Fling. We thought it would work and we tried our best to help save their marriage. I thought we did but no we didn't. To Afika losing his only daughter to a physco nanny and his fiance being hospitalized and now my Nazo following my Owami.

After so many years of losing someone close to me I had never thought I would feel this feeling again. I thought this time Nazo and I will grow grey and that was the initial purpose of it. I find myself lost in thinking of our love. It was beautiful. Very beautiful filled with our kids and his favourite girl Linathi. My daughter, I feel for the heartache she will feel once she learns that her Papa is no more.

“Everything will be ok”, Sane whispers.

I don't know if everything will be ok in my life. I just close my eyes and rest on her chest as she caresses me softly making me a bit drowsy.

The road to From Johburg to Msinga was very long. We arrived very late and everything was prepared for me with the mattress. My grandmother has been informed about the news and she will be here 2 days before the funeral. She is very old now and can't be as active as she was years ago. I settle on the mattress and the blanket is over me. I hate that I have to entertain people who would say they know how I am feeling when they dont know. I heard a cry in one of the bedrooms I was passing and It was piercing. It triggered my own tears as well but I pushed them back. I have cried enough now.

“How is Sni?”, that's the first thing I ask when I see the distraught Afika walk in the doors.

He drops on his knees Infront of me. Qiniso rushes to him as his shoulders move.

“I can't loose them all Slindo”, he says in his breaking voice.

He roughly wipes his tears.

“Come ”, Qiniso says helping him up.

A stench of Alcohol is there and his drinking has exceeded more than the time Thingo was lost. What made me at peace with Owami's death was that she got sick and I saw it but with Thingo. She was murdered and thrown away like trash. I am sure Snikiwe blames herself alot that is why she tried to commit suicide. I hope she recovers because Afika can't survive without her. His love for her is quiet dangerous. It could destroy him as well.

“Have you eaten Makoti?”, I look up and it's Nazo's father.

As much as the grey hair is there but he is an exact copy of Nazo.

“Cha baba ”, he nods

“You need to eat. Kuzolunga ”, he walks off after that.

Food is soon brought to me and I am eating just to keep up for the sake of my children. As much as Samkelo has grown but he still needs me as well so as the others.

“Ungcwele ...”, the women have started coming in with the singing.

As much as I am irritated but I put on a fake smile as they get in.

—

“Oh there you are ”, I couldn't keep up with the mattress issue.

“I don't want to see people ”, she comes and Sits next to me.

“Dont feel any pity for me Cholo”, she sighs.

She is the most fragile one yet stronger than us.

“I know you don't need our pity but we are supporting you and Afika in this difficult time ”, she says.

“He is broken like me ”, I say.

“I know. Something's we have no control over like death”, she says.

I keep my silence.

“Do you need anything? ” she asks.

“I just want this pain gone ”, I say

“I am sorry ”, she stands up and makes her way out of the room. I roll on the bed and close my eyes for a moment.

Days have passed and it's the day we say good bye to the man I love. The media wanted to be here and take care of broadcasting the funeral on tv. Obaba didn't like the idea. So am I so we asked for a private funeral in laying my husband in peace. After all of this we are to go and get cleansed because it's believed Sinefu elimnyama manje.

“Mommy ”, Linathi runs to me and hugs ms.

My dress is wet and I know she is crying.

“He loves you. Don't cry”, I say.

“But I won't have 2 daddies anymore ”, she says.

“But daddy is there ”, I say

I move her head and wipe her face.

“Wipe those tears ok?”, she nods.

“Where are your brothers?”, she tells me they are with their uncles.

I sigh and nod before giving her a forehead kiss and asking her to brush my hair of which she is happy about.

This is the last good bye my love.

Everything went well and so as the media respecting our wishes as a family. Especially my wishes regarding his funeral and our last mourning moments to be private. As the men around the area threw the soil into his grave I stood up and took my clutch bag. Afika wasn't there but he was at the hospital. He came in a short while and left to be by Snikiwe's side and I understood. I just couldn't believe it. That he is no more and I would never hold my husband in my arms anymore.

We got inside the house and everyone was busy dishing up and serving the neighbours. Nazo's father asked for me and I

followed after him into one of the bedrooms inside the house and there was a woman . She smiled as she saw me and stood up fiddling with her fingers like a shy little girl.

“Dali wami”, Nazo's father said to the woman.

I have never taken him as someone who would finally call a woman more or less his age like that. I always thought he would end up with one of the young girls. That is what they are all good at but Sakhile's father. I have never seen him with a woman ever even those sugar babies.

He takes her hand into his and kisses her cheek. She blushes shyly.

“Makoti this is MaCele. My wife”, he says.

Wife? Where has she been all this time.

“I am Snazonke's mother”, I am shook.

I feel like I am getting a bit dizzy. I take a few steps back and land on a chair still dumbfounded.

“Nazo's mother?”, She nods.

“My Nazo?”, she smiles and comes forth.

“I have been gone for years. ”, gone for years ?

I look at her.

“Why did you come back now? Do you know what they did to him?”, I am a bit pissed off.

“I know”, I chuckled bitterly.

“Makoti”, His father says.

“No baba how could she abandon him and rocks up when he is dead. Did you hate him!?” , I am angry and hurt.

“Makoti it's enough! ”, He says sternly.

“Qaphile don't shout at the poor child”, she warns softly and he relaxes a bit listening to her .

I am shook. He even listened to her. He never listens to any woman who he has been involved with but with her he just submitted.

“Please leave us ”, he is hesitant but he finally does.

My chest is burning.

“I know everything and I know you and that you have been there for my son. I wish I came back sooner and be there for him but I couldn't that is why when I heard he is no more that I come back and atleast spend time with my kids and grandchildren”, she sighs.

“I was unfit years ago Slindokuhle. I have been stuck in a mental institution because I was depressed and also suffered trauma

and anxiety. Over the years I got a bit better but I was scared of relapsing and coming back again so I stayed there. I loved my son so much. He was my pride and joy. The proof of what his father and I went through with our love.”, she says sadly but in her eyes you could see a deep story to tell.

“I need to process this”, I stand up a bit.

“Sure you can”, she says politely.

I leave her in the room and lean by the wall. I start crying as I think of all the things Nazo left me with. It is too much at this point.

CHAPTER 2

“Mrs Ndlovu”, the lawyer looks at me and pushes the brown envelope towards me.

I look at him and take it slowly with my hands shaking.

“I will contact you with the assets in the next 30 days”, he says.

I sniff and nod slowly getting up from the chair. I drag myself out of the office and tears cloud my eyes as I make my way down the stairs. A sob escapes my lips and soon enough I am held by some man who hands a handkerchief to wipe my tears.

“Are you ok?”, he asks after some time of me calming down.

I nod my head and I hold onto the rail way from the stair case. He places his brief case on the stairs and I wipe my tears and look up to this polite man and thank him. He asks if he could call someone for me but I want to be home with my kids at the moment. I don't want to go back to Sandhurst in that house all alone. It's too big for me. I just need my kids.

I made my way to my car after that saga and took out my phone and called the assistant. She informed me about my departure to pietermaritzburg and the time the I should leave. I thanked her and hung up. She has been with us for years and is

a very great person but she has no use for me now. She was there for Nazo not me. I sent in a letter to the hospital that I can't work for now. I don't want their pity eyes. I got in the car and drove off to the airport.

I reached the airport and made my way in after taking my bags. I have to be strong for my kids if not for me.

“Hey”

She engulfs me into a hug and I sigh. I appreciate her support more than anything. Sane has been a sister to me after I lost Nosi. The older sister that I have always needed and had at difficult times.

“Where are my kids?”, I ask softly.

She breaks the hug and looks at me.

“In Sweetwater”, I nod.

She pulls me away going to the parking lot where her husband and Sakhile are waiting for us.

“How is Snikiwe?”, I ask looking at Sane

“We don't know as yet. Lange says Afika is sleeping at the hospital. He is refusing to leave”

In all the years I have known this family, I have never seen Afika's vulnerable side. The side where he becomes a little boy and breaks down. We reach the men and they give a head greeting to me. I prefer that than anything.

“Zabelo has been asking about you”, Sakhile says

I miss him. I thought him and I wouldn't be close and I would be with Samkelo but I was wrong. Sakhile and Samkelo are unmatched and Zabelo is Sakhile. He inherited his habits and didn't leave anything which worries me when he starts dating. That worries me.

“I miss them”, we get in the car and it's silence.

No one is talking to anyone. The drive from the airport to home wasn't as much felt as I thought it would be. I was consumed in nothing. My mind wasn't here. I couldn't register what is happening. Still is happening. I haven't talked to Nazo's mother since the funeral. I don't have the guts to, a part of me is angry with her. I don't understand her reason to abandon her children for years. The lies as well! I am angry at her and her so called husband ! He should've told his children about their mother and where she is and I know Definitely Nazo would make sure to visit her even if she wasn't good enough to come out. What an excuse !

“Come sisi”, Here I am again lost in thoughts.

The door already open and Sane reaching out for my hand. I step out of the car and look at my home. It's different. From the 4 roomed house we grew up in to this big yard that is greatly fenced. I am happy that I got to fix my home and make it proper the things that are missing is Nosi and Owami. She would've been much older now. A lump stuck in my throat as I reminisce my daughter. It has been 19 years since the passing of them but it still hurts and now It's Nazo. You don't get over death but you learn to live with it.

Sane pulls me to the door and already Sikelela and Sakhile are inside seated Infront of my grandmother. Linathi sitting on her father's lap as old as she is. Snalo comes to me and I give him a hug letting go of Sane.

"Sawubona Gogo (Greetings)", she sits next to her husband.

"Awu Mntanami unjani?(How are you my child?)", She speaks to Sane.

My grandmother had grown over the hate she had for Sakhile or any of his family members because I have kids there. She is very civil with him for the sake of the kids.

Snalo pulls me away to the bedrooms. He looks just like his father so as the triplets. I smile at the thought. I did something for Nazo and that is giving him little replica's of himself. He sits me down and looks at me.

“Mama uyabuya ubaba ?(is Dad coming back?)”, tears prickle my eyes.

He is 10 years but it hasn't registered in his head. The voice of one of the triplets play in my head as they asked why is their father going down in a hole. They don't understand. They can't understand because they are too young for it !

Nazo why did you leave me so early ? I have to explain why you left us in such distress.

“Ubaba uyakuthanda. Baphi obhuti bakho?(Daddy loves you, where are your brothers?)”, I ask

“Samkelo and Zabelo took them ”, oh god where did those two take my kids to?

They are only 6 years to be roaming around with teenagers. I ask Nalo to go and get my phone so I could call Samkelo. Sane enters the room and sits right next to me on the bed.

“Slindo”, she holds my hands.

“We have been thinking that you get admitted”, she says

“Get admitted where ?”

“A mental institution”, I look at her.

“I am not crazy Sanelisiwe!”,

“You are not but you need Help Slindo you lost a husband for goodness sake who was in another country. You need to do this for your kids. I know how it drives a person crazy to loose someone close to them I know it Slindo just please”

“Get out”, I said look away from her.

“Slindo”

I kept quiet and looked towards the window. She sighed and stood up

“Your appointment with a psychologist is next week. Sakhile will fetch you ”, she mentions before walking out.

I look towards the door where she had disappeared off to.

Waking up to realise that what you thought was a dream is reality is a very hard pill to swallow. I got of the bed and made my way to the living room as I see my grandmother's helper handing some tea to my grandmother. She hates it when people do stuff for her. It's only the tea situation that she accepts the rest she does it herself even after I have told her how many times she is old for that.

“Good morning”, I greet

“Good morning Sisi”, the helper greets.

She makes her way to the kitchen.

“Is Samkelo and Zabelo here?”, I slept before I could even call them and ask them about their whereabouts.

“Seba hlala estolo labo(they sit at the tuck shop)”, it's so early for this !

“What do they do?”, I ask curious as to why they would sit there at early morning.

“I don't know. They can't be reprimided. It's difficult", my grandmother says.

I turn my heels and go to wash my face in the bathroom before I changed. Linathi asked where I was going and I told her I would be right back. I left all of them in there and made my way to the tuck shop on foot. I wonder how Amahle is now. We used to be friends but things changed and she distanced herself for some reason she wasn't the person I out to know her to be.

Her home looks renovated. It's much bigger than the last time I saw it. I hold my jacket closely to my body as the cold wind tries to invade it. I see Mam'Zikhali doing some washing in her phinifa and I raise my hand in greeting.

“Hawu Slindokuhle uwe lowo?!(Is that you?)”, she shouts

“Yebo Mah(Yes)”, I now have to stop.

She gets up from her chair with a bit of a struggle and comes my way. We meet by the fence .

“You are so beautiful. ”, she says.

“Thank you”, she then let's out a sigh and holds onto the fence.

“I am sorry about your husband. I heard . It was bad enough that I couldn't make it. Kodwa usamncane kanje ulahlekelwa indoda ngesihlungu usale nezingane ezinganaka uSathane wodwa.(You are so young to be a widow and look a husband in this cruel manner leaving you with alot of kids)”

“Yeah, there is nothing we could do. I have to go”, I quickly left.

I couldn't stand her pity eyes. They brought more pain than any help.

I carried on walking till I reached the store. There they were amongst other boys who were smoking. Shock hit me as I looked at them exchanging it with them. I marched my way towards them and grabbed the cigarette from Zabelo's hands. Samkelo stands up quickly as the other boys complained on their lost cigarette.

“Mah”, he says.

Zabelo stands up as well.

“Ekhaya manje(Home now)”

“Eh mamzo yehlisa umoya”

Advertisement

Who is this ugly weeded boy?

“Home now and wena mfana ungangi jwayeli kabi angise unyoko(And you boy, I am not your mother)”, I clicked my tongue and the two dragged their feet Infront of me.

So this is what they get up to ? I feel so angry at the moment , dumbfounded and couldn't believe what I saw.

“Akusheshe Nina !(Hurry up)”, they picked up their pace.

I pulled my jacket closer to my body. We got home in no time and they walked to their bedroom.

“Sies ninuka umcamo(You smell like shit)”, my grandmother comments.

“I found them smoking Gogo. Ngizobabulala(I will kill them)”, I say

I click my tongue and walk off to my bedroom. I found the kids Infront of the mirror and Linathi was playing with Ase's hair. He quiet liked it and it has disturbed Sakhile and promotes him to play with boys and not Linathi.

“You will look pretty”, Linathi compliments as she brushes his hair

“I'm pretty”, he says after Linathi.

Linathi looks up to me and smiles.

“Hello Mami”, Ase says.

“Hello. I didn't see you yesterday”, I smile.

He adapted to calling me that from a young age. I guess he heard his siblings saying Mom to me and thought I was his mother. I love him like my own child regardless and was very happy when Sakhile married Ciyela. I thought finally he would have someone else to call mother and a mother figure but it was short lived. A lot is happening and I wonder how Sakhile is taking this divorce issue. He can be something else and can make Ciyela miserable for thinking of leaving him.

“Don't mess with my stuff”, Linathi nods.

I take my phone and I walk out. I make a call hoping it would go through as this is urgent in my books and I can't handle two boys alone. It rings and gets answered then.

“Hello”, he says

“Your kids are now smoking and sitting with weed boys”, I say

“Who?”, he asks.

“Samkelo and Zabelo. I found them at the store so early”, I say

“Ngiyeza(I am coming)”, he says then hangs up.

I shove my phone in my pocket and go to their room. Zabelo sits up and I look at them.

“Your father is coming”, I say

“We are sorry”, I shake my head.

“Your father will handle this”, I walk away.

He came. Quicker than I thought he would. I was doing some cooking for today just to get my head out of this and distract myself. I talked to Sane and she still reminded me of the therapy session she has booked for me. I don't think I want to go there not until I am ready. I wiped my hands and asked the helper to switch off the stove for me. I told those two to bath because I don't want that smell in this house. I went to their room where they have been cooped up and knocked before opening the door.

“Your father is here”, they stood up and followed each other out.

I followed after them and passed my grandmother who was watching some tv.

“Sakhile is here”, I say

“Engathi angabashaya (I hope he hits them)”, they look at my grandmother before walking out.

I open the gate and we walk out. They stand a distance from Sakhile who doesn't look as pleased as I was when I saw them huffing and puffing the smoke.

“You smoke now?”

“We are sorry”, Samkelo quickly says but Zabelo doesn't.

“Zabelo”, I say

He looks at me then his father before looking down. You see ! This Sakhile tendency of not apologizing and seeing his wrong. I smack the back of his head.

“Ouch mah”

“Get in the car”, Sakhile says

“Where are you taking them?”, I ask

“They will be back and this smoking tendency will be gone ”, he says

“But you smoke and so as Bab' Afika”, Zabelo defends himself.

I have no words. I didn't see that coming in any way. We are both silent for a moment taking in what Zabelo has said.

“You don't talk like that to your father!”, I scold him.

Sakhile steps Infront of him. Fear in Samkelo's eyes yet Zabelo can look straight into his. It doesn't help that he is as tall as

Sakhile is. This child is disrespectful and that's final I can't believe it !

“Usuyindoda manje ? Usukhuluma nami kanje?(You are a man now? You talk to me like that?)”, Sakhile says.

His hands are bury in his pockets looking at his son.

“I was stating the truth is that wrong?”, he says back at Sakhile.

Sakhile lightly chuckles before Zabelo is down and a knee is on his throat. Samkelo jumps and we both didn't expect that punch. I rush to them as Zabelo is struggling to get his breath.He is grunting and fighting for this man to get off him.

“I am not your friend. I can take you back to where you come from”, He says pressing his knees.

Zabelo cries out but his voice is fading.

“Sakhile uzongibulalela ingane (Sakhile you will kill my child)”, I try to pull him off.

“Uphinde futhi mfana wami ukhulume nami engathi uwehla emthini uzobona (talk to me like you come from a tree again my boy and you will see)”, he said getting his knee off Zabelo.

He coughs placing his hand on his throat and I kneel Infront of him. Samkelo is rooted in his place. Tears stream down my cheeks at the thought of almost loosing yet another child of mine.

“Slindo stop crying.”, Sakhile says

“You almost killed my baby”, I tell Samkelo to go and get water inside.

My hands are shaking as I try to help Zabelo breath.

“I will kill him next time he thinks he can talk to me like that”, Sakhile clicks his tongue after.

Samkelo has been quiet since yesterday. All he kept doing was to apologize but Zabelo wasn't having any of it. Where was I going wrong with him? Very soon the schools will re open and they would have to go back. I don't know what I am going to do with the triplets and Snalo. Their inheritance will be released once they turn 21 and the money that Nazo left would eventually run out. I still have to find a school for them this side. I am selling the house in Sandhurst as well. There is nothing for me in Johburg. I want to apply for a job and maybe keep myself busy. With the rest of the kids I am not worried about them. Sakhile takes care of them and it is more than enough. The taxi business grew so much for him and grew as a business man for him. I could say the Ndlovu family runs Kzn through it.

My phone rings and it's Cholo. I haven't spoken to her in a while. People like to check on me like I am going to die when I am just fine. I don't need their pity but I answer the call.

“Hello”

CHAPTER 3

I haven't been here in years. A few weeks in the city and already in the same court I was in years ago. It was when I was fighting Sakhile for Samkelo's custody of which I won. I jot back and think of Nazo and how he was an amazing person. The way he loved me I still feel it in me and in my heart but today we are here in support of Sakhile. Yes , I am also supporting Sakhile. I have seen him cry over Ciyela and we thought when things are bad they could be fixed. I thought Sakhile maybe cheated on her when she wanted to leave the first few times but no. It was all on the new meat she found better than Sakhile.

She saw something else , regarded us as rubbish in her eyes and she drew the line where she aired the family laundry on her social media. I have never seen Snikiwe ready to kill in that manner. I guess when she touched on Thingo who was just found dead, it angered her. She shouldn't have said the things she said about Sakhile. She is who she is because of him. If he didn't love her and pay for her education she wouldn't have met this lawyer dude she is suddenly in love with over Sakhile. I had my reasons but I had never aired Sakhile badly on my socials networks ever. Instead he is now a wonderful father to his children and loves them all to bits. He grew up !

“That gold digger nx”, Sane says in disgust.

I have never went to court with Sakhile mainly because I didn't want any of his assets. Just the kids of half I got. I don't understand why Ciyela is fighting this. It's a losing battle and she is here in front of the judge claiming she didn't know that they signed a prenuptial when they got married. He was smart. If she really did want to leave she wouldn't be fighting his money like this.

“I am sorry mam there is nothing we can do”

She huffs and puffs in frustration. What did she think ? That she will get half of the things and they go on vacation with her new boo? Not with a Ndlovu.

The case was dismissed and we all walked out. Ciyela with nothing and she would be leaving with her suitcase, her qualification and dignity if she doesn't step on Sakhile. He is ruthless and can break you if he wants to. Experience taught me that. Sakhile is now a bachelor once more at this age. Qiniso gives him a shoulder pat and he nods. He is not crying like he used to cry before. I didn't believe him at first when he said he never cheated on Ciyela and now I believe it.

She comes our way with her little attitude. I wonder what happened to this woman. New dick got her crazy to this point.

“I hate you Sakhile”, she spits.

He walks closer and I hear him whisper.

“I will break you”, I instantly cringed. There it is. She swallowed before moving away from us.

“Lets go and eat”, Sane suggests

“How is Snikiwe Lange?”, I ask as we walk out.

“She has woken up.”, that is good news.

We will see her when she is out of the hospital. We are still giving her and Afika time to go through their things before we come and disturb them. After this Afika wouldn't let both of them out of his sight. Nannies will be a thing of the past and I know where ever that nanny is must be dead. You cannot let it past these men.

“I heard Sakhile beat up Zabelo”, Sane says.

“He is too much for me to handle now and he is only 16 years old. He looked Sakhile in the eye”, she laughs

“Sakhile met his match”, he sure did in a small package.

We go to the cars and Sakhile gives me his car as I want to leave. I thank him before I say my good byes and leave. I wouldn't be joining for lunch. I am tired and I just want to be alone. I am trying to cope but I cry myself to sleep when I think of Nazo. The boys will grow up and give me the same problems as their older brothers then what? Who would reprimided them when they are misbehaving. I am not ready for it. I get in

the car and I lay my head on the steering wheel and I cry for a moment before I start the car and drive home when I am done.

“Mommy!”

Is the first thing I hear as I get out of the car. I have calmed down from the crying I have been doing earlier. When I look at my children I remember why I still have to push forward despite. I don't know where I would be if they were not in my life.

“Mkhulu was here”, Linathi announces first.

“Which Mkhulu?”, I ask walking inside the house.

She follows after me.

“Sawubona gogo”, I greet.

“Nazo's father was here. He wanted to talk to you”, talk to me ?

“Oh, I will call him and ask. Where are those two?”, I ask

“They are doing Gogo's garden ”, Linathi says and picks up one of the twins before she goes away.

She smothers her brothers so much and the boys are too heavy for me to carry them at this age but they love being smothered by their older sister. I don't know why she doesn't play with

people her age. She also worries me as well. She prefers playing with these little ones than people her age.

“What should I cook?”, I ask.

“Go and put your bag down then come back and sit down. ”, my grandmother says

I nod and make my way to my room and place my bag down before I go to the lounge and sit next to her. She looks at me and I look at her.

“I know you are trying to act strong Mntanami and it's part of being a woman but•••”, she pauses a bit.

“You are not ok Slindo. Sanelisiwe told me that someone can help you”, she says

“I can't get over Nazo just like that Gogo. He was my husband, I loved him ”, I say holding in the tears.

“I know. ”, I stand up.

“I don't want to talk about this again”, I say

“Ok”, she watches me disappear to the kitchen. I get some water before I start on the cooking. In the process of that I call Nazo's father to hear what he has to say. I haven't spoken to him since the funeral and meeting Nazo's mother. I was trying to process everything of which I haven't succeeded.

“Baba”, I say as he answers the phone.

“Ndodakazi. I was there to see you”, I know.

Can he get straight to the point ? I take the knife and start the chopping.

“MaCele••• she wants to talk to you about seeing the kids”, what?

I am silent for a moment. She can't just come and want things done her way! She may do it to Nazo's father and control him but not me!

“I am not comfortable with that at the moment. I have to revisit the idea later”

“I am asking because of her. I wouldn't because they are my grandchildren”, this old man

My tongue wants to slip but I hold myself.

“I will see baba”, I hang up right after clicking my tongue.

I am tired of this family's sagga. I should've bought wine for me to distress. I need to distress. I take off the apron.

“I am going out”, I announce my departure early.

I go and bath before I get dressed and took the car keys and my bag. On my way out I bumped into the boys who were going inside the house.

“Mom”, It's Zabelo.

Samkelo greets as well and I do the same. Samkelo leaves.

“I am sorry”, he looks down.

“We will talk later ok?”, he nods disappointed.

I kiss his cheek before I leave. I need to get out of here before I go any crazy.

It's the weekend anyway, perfect time to let loose with people you hardly know. I have my drinks close to me and I have joined a group of people I don't know. Some gay, lesbian some as well straight. I have kissed a stud that I just met for almost an hour now. We are being touchy in the process of it all and I love it ! It makes my blood rush as this age. I feel young and childless at the moment. I am not worried about the kids because they can take care of themselves. That's why my grandmother wanted them to live with her to have people to order around.

“I need more alcohol ”, I shout through the music while getting up.

I am not in a skimpy dress no. I am still a mother despite anything so jeans work better but a stiletto works perfectly with any given outfit.

“Let me accompany you”, my Stud stands up taking my hand.

She is hot! Her cologne is manly and pulls you in her trap of wanting to devour her much more. I have never found a woman attractive before until today. I mean you only live once right?! I am young and about to enter my 40's. As they always say 'Life starts at 40' so as mine.

"Get us two shots each", she waves her hand to the bartender.

Even her watch is attractive. Everything about her oozes sex appeal in my head. The shots come our way and on three we gulp them down and I squeeze the lemon juices in my mouth and groan after that.

"Do you want to stay?"

she asks.

"No we can leave", yes we can , I want to see where this goes.

She takes my hand and places the other on my waist. We go back to her friends and she tells them we are leaving. She takes my bag and checks if everything is inside. It's bad that she is taller than me by nature but she can hold me as long as she wants. We leave after, I tell her about my car and she takes my car keys and we go to the car. It's not mine, just Sakhile's but I have no time to tell her that. He said he will fetch it tomorrow. I don't know why he doesn't want to get Samkelo a car. He has the money to buy any car he desires but he doesn't want to. He

says it will ruin him if we give him things on a silver platter or better yet he will be a Snob.

We are driving through the night going God knows where. I am too focused on the conversation we are sharing. I learned that she is an Accountant at Nedbank. I don't go into my life as much and she understands. We arrive at a block of flats and she finds parking before we get out. She is holding my hand and I am following after her after that. Her skin reminds me of Nazo. Nazo, a pang of guilt surfaces as I am here with another man or woman but I push it back. It could get me later shame.

We enter her place and it's neat, smells too masculine and looks the part as well. She takes off her jacket and throws it on the couch.

“I am about to make you feel good”, she says

I nod, make me feel good.

She comes and holds my cheeks before kissing me. I gasp a bit and she finds an opportunity to get my tongue. I am enjoying the kiss. I feel like that innocent clueless girl I was when I was younger. I fist on her t-shirt and she pulls me closer to her holding my butt before she squeezes it and I moan. She pulls back and smiles looking at me. God damn this woman is just amazing. I don't waste time before I dive right back to her lips again and she accepts me. She starts running her hands under

my top and goes to my bra and unclips it slowly before she caresses my breasts. I remove myself from her and take off my top before the bra is discarded on the floor as well. She comes forth and cups them while holding me from behind.

“I will show you a new world Pumpkin”, she whispers next to my ear before kissing my neck.

—

I am cold.

I open my eyes to meet this woman next to me with sheets over her body. She is not naked as I am no, she is in a white vest and boxers. I pull the sheets from her to cover myself and she groans while at that. I get off the bed and I only see my jeans. God damnit she gave it to me last night. Her fingers and tongue are magic. I always thought people just lied about women being the best at that but I experienced it yesterday.

“Hey pumpkin”, I am startled.

She sits up and stretches herself before she gets out of the bed and kisses my forehead.

“You are sneaking out?”, she says

“I didn't go home last night. My kids might be worried”, I say

“Oh••”, she is silent for a moment.

“I enjoyed last night”, I am flushed with her.

“Me too”, I say honestly.

She smiles satisfied with herself. I am even more embarrassed that she is younger than me. Well I learnt that last night.

“Leene I have to leave”, I quickly rush to take my things.

She helps me and my bag is ready for me when I am done getting dressed and fixing my breath and face. She wears her flops and says she will accompany me to the car. Such a gentleman. We talk and exchange numbers and another kiss as well.

“Slindo!”, oh god.

How did they get here? How did they know I am here? I am scared a bit but a bit of anger surfaces at the thought of how they found me. Guns are pointed at Leene and here I am being a shield Infront of her.

“What are you doing here?”, I ask

“Eyi you don't ask us questions get in the car”, Sakhile speaks first before Qiniso.

“No”, I say.

I turn to Leene.

“I will call ok?”, I say

“She is a wife and has kids. If you know what's good for you don't call”

She walks off without saying anything. He just had to ruin it for me. I click my tongue.

“Put those away before you get arrested”, I tell them.

I am pulled away to Sakhile's car and we are inside. Soon enough it drives off and there is silence inside. I haven't said a thing and so as he.

“The kids are panicking that you may be somewhere injured kanti you are under some man-girl”, he speaks in disgust of Leene.

I shoot a look at him.

“Are you dating women now?”, He asks

“If so then what?”, I ask

“My cousin hasn't been buried for you year Slindo. You have kids to disappear at night like that and to find out that my car is somewhere unknown it's something else.”,he says

“They are old and I needed to distress”, I say

“Distress at home”

“Now that's unfair. You can do whatever. I take care of the kids,your kids and all of them. I sometimes need a breather”

“Well just grow up Slindo. We all needed to do that!”, He hits the steering wheel.

I suddenly shed tears.

“That's insulting me Sakhile”

“I am just stating the truth”, I click my tongue.

“You know I hate that”, he says.

I ignore him and wipe my tears.

“I am talking Slindokuhle “

“Just leave me alone. Go on , you are the greatest father angini?”, I wipe my tears

“Face your problems Slie that's all I am saying”, he is calm now.

“I need a car”, I say after the silence.

“I will buy you one ”, he says

“No, I will pay for it”, I argue

“Save the money Slindo. Don't use it unnecessarily”, I keep quiet.

“Don't control me Sakhile”

“I'm not”

There is silence between us.

“And give me a school fees budget for all kids Slindo. All 7 of them”, he says

“But..”

“Slindo let's not argue. They are my kids as well. Nazo is my cousin so they are my kids too.”, I sigh defeated.

I just say “Thank you”, and move on. He turns the radio on and we are occupied by it.

CHAPTER 4

“Baby, I want to do

All of the things your man won't do

I'll do them for you••”-Joe Thomas

It's one of those days that I get to spend time with my children. I am taking them all out to the mall and just have a day together as a family. I told Mam'Zikhali to let Amahle's daughter come with us and she was so happy. She gets along very fine with Linathi and I am happy that she would atleast play with someone her age now. Linathi is vulnerable and likes being a smother to the younger ones. Her fathers impacted in her unusual behavior. It's been three months and the kids have started schooling this side of the city. I have contacted an agent about the house in Sandhurst and already there are potential buyers. Sakhile is paying for the kid's school fees. I think it's too much baggage on him but he seems to not mind. I went for a session with the psychologist and it was hard. I haven't went back since then. I am trying to take this one at a time especially regarding Nazo's mother as an issue. Snikiwe ? Well all I can say is she is alive but dead. She is glowing and getting chubby but you can see she is a broken person. Afika is trying to be there for her and their unborn child. We went to see her in Durban

and she didn't speak. She just looked at us and sobbed before running to lock herself in her room so we decided to give her a bit of space. I am still in contact with Leene and it's too sexual if you ask me. I find myself imagining her doing all those things she did to me that night. God that woman is something I have to keep.

We are walking inside the store. I had to get an Uber to take us here so we can enjoy our day very well without any taxi's. I don't know when was the last time I actually took a taxi and went somewhere. Linathi is dragging her friend around while the boys go and scout what they want. I get a seat and wait for them to come back with whatever they find. I get busy with my phone in the process.

“Hi, may I help you?”, I look up to find him looking at me.

“No, my children went to get what they need”, I say

He nods and walks away. I carry on with what I am doing. The kids come back and the boys have shoes in their hands.

“Did you get the right size for them?”, I ask the older ones and they nod.

We go and pay for everything before we go and watch a movie then go to get donuts and also ice cream before we eat food after. They are enjoying and I am happy to see my children enjoying. Ase is seated with the girls much attached to his

sister. Sakhile needs to get his son before Linathi makes him her puppet. My phone rings and it's Nazo's father. I have been trying to avoid him for a while now and it seems to be not working out for me.

“Baba”, I answer as politely as I can.

I will say I am still thinking about it when I am not even for once thinking about it. It feels like I will betray Nazo with his children.

“Makoti we need you to come down to Msinga for a meeting tomorrow”, tomorrow?

“Baba I•••”

“I will send someone to fetch you all”, he hangs up before I can process anything.

This man just commanded me there. I can't believe it ! I just look over my kids and suck it up. He will not ruin my day. I wonder what the meeting is about at this point.

It's a cold early morning. I am freezing and the sun is showing but in the rural areas you can't feel it until it's a bit later into the morning. Everyone is here even Snikiwe who is not emotionally stable. I saw her sitting ontop of Thingo's grave stone and we let her be in this cold morning. It's the way she

finds healing maybe. I don't think she knows that she has another baby to take care of in her womb. That's Afika's fear that she might be in too much distress to carry this baby to full term. I got to the main house and I see Sane. She comes and hugs me so as Cholo. The kids just be somewhere. Naledi is with Linathi that I know. She is more into having people who are her age around her more than Linathi. Sakhile enjoys it when she doesn't fit in her own crowd. He says it's safe for us in that manner. They wouldn't date with the kind of father's they have.

"I am almost done with breakfast", Sane says.

I nod while helping her. We get done and go to serve everyone. Nazo's mother is seated with the aunt who was overseas all this time. They get along very well with the way they are talking. It seems like she is very familiar with her.

"Hello Slindo", Nazo's mother greets with a smile.

I give her one and she smiles even wider. I greet the both of them and she looks at me.

"Are you well?"

"Yes mah I am well, here is breakfast", they accept and I walk away.

I hope Zabelo and Samkelo are not up to anything they shouldn't think of recruiting their cousins in such utter

nonsense because their uncles will kill them. I go and get some breakfast and Snikiwe joins us. We make sure that she is well fed and ease up Afika's worries Abit.

“Are you excited about the baby?”, Sane asks her.

It's too soon to ask in my defence. She might be touching the wound here. She starts to tear up and Cholo holds her close to her body.

“I am scared”, She quivers those words.

It's understandable. I was once scared to have children after Owami. I don't think I would've had them if it wasn't for Samkelo. I let my guard down on him and just let things be.

“I miss Thingo”, she babbles wiping her tears.

We are in silence comforting this fellow woman. We get done and wash the dishes before this big meeting we were urgently called for starts. Nazo's father is heading it and I hope he doesn't throw any shade on me. My phone rings and it's Leene. Everyone has their eyes on me and I apologize promising to switch off my phone and I do.

“There is alot that has been going in the family these past months. The losses and also gains”, he starts off.

He looks at me before he continues.

“My brothers and sisters know who is the woman next to me. It's my wife Bafana bami. Nazo's mother. I know there is a lot of explaining and there would be. ”, we look at each other but keep our silence.

“Snikiwe Mntanami. You are part of this family ,it doesn't need paper to be stated that you are a Ndlovu. Thingolayise was our pride and joy, it's tragic how she left us but the life inside you still needs you KaMahlanga”, she sobs in her hands and Afika pulls her to his chest.

He faces me and I swallow.

“Slindokuhle”, he says

“Baba”

“Thank you”, I am confused but I nod.

He takes a deep sigh.

“As the elders we came to discuss a serious matter. Loosing Nazo and also Sakhile's divorce. You both have kids together and you parent very well.”

He is dragging this really.

“Sakhile and Slindo should get back together”

I could hear that beeping sound through my years. That one that shuts everything out. I see Sakhile standing up and he

seems like he is shouting yet my brain is telling me to not listen. What ? What ? Did I hear him correctly ? They know what I went through with Sakhile yet they are doing this ?

“That won't happen. If you want to punish someone punish me and not Slindo”, He is pissed but pleading with them.

“Who decided this?”, I say softly lost for words.

My chest is feeling some burning sensation. I want to cry and scream at this old man for them making such decisions but I want to run off from here and don't surface again.

“The whole family did”

“I am sorry Slindo”, I look at Sane and she looks down

She knew? I can't believe this !

Sakhile left after that with his car keys and his father and his cousins follow after him. I can't get myself to stand up and leave instead I let out a sharp cry to release the pain that I am feeling. It's awfully too much for my liking. I am crying for my husband. Why did he leave me? We were supposed to be together forever.

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I left the place. I couldn't stand being there. The kids are with me , all of them including Ase because Sakhile is no where in sight . No one knows where he went after he stormed out . He

will get him at my grandmother's house if he returns. I didn't wait for anyone to say anything to me before I left. I have been lost in thoughts that I couldn't feel the journey back home. When we arrived I paid the driver before walking inside the house. Everything was just a blur for me. I cried in my grandmother's arms and she hushed me without uttering even a single word. I hate that everyone of them set me up. I didn't answer their phone calls. Even Cholo's and Snikiwe. She looked shocked but they might be using her to get to me. I want to cut ties with this family because they went overboard but I am reminded that I can't and they will forever be in my life. I sigh after crying my lungs out on my grandmother's chest. I don't want to tell her what happened.

“Should I make tea you?”, she asks.

“No, hold me please”, I say

“I have to go in an hour to Mam'Zikhali's prayer meeting.

She is old now , she can't be as active as she wishes.

“But Gogo ”, she shakes her head.

“I will take the kids with me. Those boys need deliverance”, that's true.

I sigh and hold her closer to my body.

“I love you”, I say.

She kisses my head. I stand up and go make some supper for tonight before they could leave. My grandmother will leave with her helper Incase anything happens. She doesn't want to age and she hates sitting around but she is now lazy because I had forced her to take a break now. I make some tea for her and she drinks it up as I prepare supper. The phone calls are still coming but I ignore them. My grandmother tells the kids to bath and get ready to leave. The boys try to protest but she doesn't have any of it. I just need to lay my head down on the pillow and just sleep.

Dreams are made. Well dreams help one escape reality for a moment and grasp on her happy thoughts and feelings. I was feeling great from escaping my reality at the moment. The vibration is what disturbed me , it's a habit I can't get rid of and that is sleeping with a phone under my pillow. It was weird for a while but I couldn't let it go even after 2 marriages. I groan in annoyance before I grab it quicky from under the pillow and I answer.

“Hello”,I say

“Please can you come and check up on me”, he sounds drunk.

I sit up and go to switch on the lights.

“Check up what?”, I am confused.

"I am injured", oh no don't tell me he got himself shot.

"What?!"

I get off the bed trying to get out of my sleep.

"I am outside"

He hangs up before I could utter anything. Right now I need a Leene magic to release the tension in my body honestly I can't do this. I grab my silk gown and wear slippers. They are not back as yet. I grab the keys and I go outside and open the gate. He hops out of the car as soon as he sees me and his top is has some blood drops but his forehead is bloody.

"What happened?!", I ask

"Fight"

"You are so grown up for that"

"Please fix it", he is drunk. Blood shot red eyes are a clear indication of such.

I am hesitant but I nod.

"Give me the keys", he does and I park the car inside the garage before we go inside.

I tell him to follow me and I sit him down and take my first aid kit. I get warm water and first clean his wound. On his face and clean his face.

“Did they stab you?”, I ask

“Its just scratched me”, he said.

“Where were you?”, I ask

“I drove off and got here. I went to 033”

“Oh my god Sakhile the could've killed you ! ”, I press on the wound angry.

He groans and fries in pain removing my hand. I put a aid patch on him and pack up everything.

“I am fine”

he says.

“No Sakhile you are not. What if you were stabbed to death then what about the kids mmmh?”, I shoot him a look.

“Ok, I am sorry”, he says

“Take off that too I will get you a clean one in the boy's room”, I say

He nods.

“Before you leave are you hungry?”, I ask

“No”

I walk out. What was he doing in Imbali anyway? He is a Richmond crest baby . A suburban child not one from a

Township. A dangerous one for that matter. Couldn't he get drunk at other safe places? I get him one of the boys t-shirt. They always wear those big ones thinking it's a style. I give it to Sakhile and he wears it. I take his and throw it in my washing basket. He stands up and walks to the door.

“I'm sorry Slindo••• about everything including Nazo and Owami”, my heart clenches at hearing their names.

I keep quiet.

“Its not your fault”

He nods pressing his lips together. He walks out and I follow after him to go and lock. I open the door and see my grandmother locking the gate and the kids coming towards the door. I shut it close and push Sakhile towards my bedroom before closing the door.

“Everyone is back and they can't see you in here”, I say quickly.

“Why?”, he questions.

“How are we going to explain what you are doing here at 23h35 Sakhile!”, I say lowly.

He scratches his head.

“You should've went to the hospital and not come here. ”, I am pacing up and down.

I can hear their voices loud enough in the house. My grandmother is ordering the kids to go to bed. Great! I will just sneak him out then.

“Slindo”, I freeze by the door knock.

She is here and I am panicking. Sakhile holds me and signals I should be quiet. I do as he says.

“Are you asleep?”, she keeps on knocking and trying the door nob. My heart is pulsing very fast.

“Calm down”, he whispers.

I am trying to. She eventually leave the door but then I hear the kettle making noise. I breathe out a bit after she is done and I don't hear any movement, I turn to Sakhile.

“You need to leave”

He plumps my cheeks and sucks on one before he captures my lips.

“Sakhile”, I cry out in between the kiss trying to move away from this man and figure out how to get him out.

He doesn't budge one bit. His hand moves to my but and lifts up the little gown I have on. He groans pulling me closer. His cold hands meeting my warm behind. He spans it a bit before he picks me up swiftly and places me on the bed. His hands

travel to my koochie and his fingers invade it. I want to cross my legs but instead they don't.

“You feel so warm Maka Zabelo”, he says diving for my neck.

I am wet, I am a wet mess and I know it. My body is screaming to be touched. He thrusts his fingers in me quickly and looks at me being a little mess. He undoes my gown slowly and it's open . I should've worn pyjamas with my panty on! I hate sleeping with them on and the night dress was what I found first to be fair. That is why he could easily get me here. Wet and under his little mercy. He knows this too! I used to do it even when we were married.

He rests his head between my thighs and his tongue is working with his fingers. He thrusts the tongue In and out my koochie feeling his warm tongue. He rubs on my clitoris and I gasp while moaning softly trying to subside my noise so no one could hear me. My knees soon shake and he is up on his feet.

“I want to do things to you Slindo”, oh my God.

The lights are off and he comes to open the curtains. The lights from outside shine in the room through the lace curtain. He pulls my legs and removes everything that is a cloth on me.

“Stop me Slindo”, he says kissing my chest and sucking on my nipple.

“Say Sakhile stop”,

He unbuckles his pants while caressing me with the one hand. He takes off his top and kisses my lips and I hold his neck in the process.

“Say it Slindo”, he whispers closely.

His tip runs up and down on my entry way to my clitoris and back down making me wetter. I close my eyes biting my bottom lip and touching myself while I feel this pleasure. He enters a tip.

“Say it Slindo”, he says

“Sakhile••• Sakhile don't stop please”

He pulls out and thrusts in.

“Fuck !You are warm”

He starts moving slowly while rubbing my clitoris slowly. He thrusts and thrusts

“Stop me Slindo”, he says.

He lays ontop of me but keeps on thrusting. My legs wrap around his waist while feeling the pleasure.

“Don't stop Sakhile”, I say softly

“You don't want me to stop”

I shake my head. He shares a kiss with me to muffle my moans as his thrusts increase.

I wake up remembering last night. He is still here and asleep. I can't move my legs at the moment. I am still shaking like I am under his mercy still. It's like he was showing me or punishing me in some way. Maybe I am overthinking. In my whole life I have only slept with 2 men, this one here and also my late husband. I can't compare them. I thought I could but I can't. God damnit they are both good at this thing. He is in my bed resting. Just yesterday his family was setting us up. If I knew I would end up under him the whole night yearning to scream his name as loud as I can then I wouldn't have answered his phone call. His hand rests on me and I turn to him. He opens his eyes and looks at me.

“You need to leave”, I say

He squints his eyes for a moment before opening them again.

“Firstly are you ok?”

“Yes, I am still shaking but... Sakhile that shouldn't have happened”

“Well it did so?”, god

“Lets get up”, I say

“How am I going to leave then?”, I don't have a strategy.

“I don't know”

He pulls me to himself.

“I enjoyed last night and I am clean. We can check”, he says

He tries to put my mind at ease considering his record with women.

“I tied my tubes after the triplets”, I say . We got rid of our issues.

“Sorted then. Nothing to worry about”

He kisses my shoulder.

“Sakhile”, I say

“Just two rounds for the road Slindo. I will never bother you”

“|●●●”

“Ngicela ukudla kamnandi Mama, hawu ngacina nini?(When was the last time?)”, he says

“You had a wife”, I say

“She wasn't as good as you are”, What?

“You can't say that”

“I just did. Please Slindo. I can't get enough of you”, he says

God be with me , what was I doing anyway? I should've stopped him but no Slindo had to open her legs for him.

I finally got rid of him. He couldn't take his car so an Uber worked in our favour. He couldn't call one of his cousins as well. What would they say when he is sneaking out the house like a thief in the night. It would raise flags of what we have been up to.

“Slindo!”

I am startled by my grandmother. She moves me away from the door way and we stand outside.

“Ungivimbela imali(you are blocking money)”

Old people myths. I sip on my coffee and look at the kids rolling all over the grass and chasing each other.

“Who's car that is in the garage?”

“Sakhile's. He said I should use it”

She is silent for a moment looking at me before she places her hands at the back.

“You were crying yesterday. What happened ?”

I am silent for a moment on how I should tell her that the Ndlovu family wants Sakhile and I back together. I sigh and look at her before I shy away.

“The Ndlovu family decided it was best that...”, I can't find the words.

“What?”

I swallow

“Gogo can I ask?”

She nods

“What do you think about Sakhile?”

She narrows her eyes and looks ahead. I swallow waiting in anticipation of her answer.

“I don't know Slindo. I tolerate him because you have children together”

I nod and gulp the rest of my coffee.

“Ok. Let me go inside”

I leave her there and breathe out. My phone rings and I go attend to it. I hope it's not Sane , I trusted she wouldn't do this but she did but to my surprise it was Sakhile. What does he want now ? If I could I would cut him off but possibilities of that happening are Zero.

“Yini?(What?)” I am irritated.

“You want your car delivered or you want to fetch it?”, I sigh and suck my breath.

“I will fetch it. Samkelo is going to university soon”, I put that out glad that we are not mentioning what happened earlier.

“I have it sorted.”, I narrow my eyes.

“It better not be something shady”

“Can you trust me?”, I sigh

“I’ll try”

“Ok, I will check up on you later”

I just nod before he hangs up. I lean against the counter and cover my face. It has been proven! I just become this naive woman when it comes to Sakhile. It irritates me at the moment.

CHAPTER 5

I keep on reminding myself that He and I are not together. I have just lost my husband but what eating me is the fact that I just give in easily to everything. I remember when I used to fight Nazo on my marriage yet here I am being easy on another man. Leene and I went on a date and I got some of her magic once again. It's not magic anymore no. I have come to realize that women and I are not one to be in any sexual or romantic relationship if it's for the long run. It was fun and games but it's not for me.

“Mama”, Linathi taps me out of my thoughts.

I am seated Infront of this tv. I have come to realize that staying at home is best than going out to work. I wouldn't spend much time with my children and the boys have proven that they are trouble some if not under great watch. The house in Johannesburg has been sold and Nazo's P.A already on another job after the great recommendation I gave for her. She was a wonderful person assistant. Money isn't a problem as I thought it would be instead there is more of it than I thought there would be.

“Yes baby?”

“You are being called outside”,she walks out after.

I get up from the couch and follow her out. It's Sane waiting anxiously by her car. I look at her for a moment before I let a sigh out and make my way towards her. As much as I was angry at her but I love her despite anything.

She wraps her arms around my body as I reach her and she exhales.

"I am sorry, I know you are mad at me"

I want to blabber but I end up hugging her back, we stay for a moment before she lets go of me.

"I am here to take you somewhere", she says

"Where?"

"I don't know. It's orders. Go and change"

I give her a look and she hushes me inside the house to go and change and I do so. I let my grandmother know that I am gone for a moment and she nods. I get out to Sane and we get inside her car. She looks at me before starting her car and I give her a puzzled look.

"You are gaining weight", she points that out.

"Staying at home."

"I thought you were going to go and work"

“Well I..”, I restrain myself from mentioning that Sakhile is taking care of literally everything.

“What?”

“I don't see the need anymore”, I am not worried.

I sink in my seat and she nods before she changes the conversation. We catch up on a lot that has been happening in our lives but Sakhile is not coming out of my lips instead I tell her about Leene and how she is. She beams and tells me to enjoy it and shouldn't worry about anything. I only live once right?

She suddenly stops the car and blind folds my eyes. I am questioning this sudden trip that we are taking. She says her good byes and I ask her where she is going but there is silence after the door closes.

I huff, this woman is out to get me I swear ! What is Sane up to this time?

“Good day Mrs Ndlovu”, it's a woman's voice.

“Uhm... Good day”

The car is moving. Where are we going? I want to ask

“Where are you taking me ?”

“I am not supposed to say Mam”, I huff.

“Why?”

She is silent after and not responding. I feel like taking this blinding thing off but knowing Sane's knots it would be difficult. Already my eyes are aching to see the journey we are taking.

Could this woman play some music then if she would not reply to any of my questions ! I am frustrated but eventually calm down. There is nothing I can do at this point.

“We have arrived at your destination”

She announces. Good! I have been waiting to remove this thing. I feel a hand pulling me and it's accompanied by a sweet scent. She instructs me to walk with her when I can't even see but I lay my trust in this stranger for a moment. What if Sane set me up for kidnapping ? What if ? No she wouldn't. She loves me as much as I do and wouldn't cause any harm. The hand that has been holding me let's go of me and I am at a stand still.

“MaNgcolosi”

I haven't been called that in years! It has always Mrs Ndlovu or Mam'Ndlovu to a point where I have forgotten how being called by my maiden surname feels like.

I know that voice anywhere, I could identify it in my sleep as much I would identify the voice of my children as well. I can differentiate from their high pitched voices to the deeper groomed ones.

“Gatsheni”

He chuckles lightly and a hand is on my shoulder.

“I haven't been called that in years”, I want to roll my eyes.

“Oh please”, I say

“It doesn't feel the same ”, he says

“Why am I here?”, I want to know that.

“You will see”, he says

“And no, no one knows we are here”

“I...”, I am interrupted by him.

“I am removing the blind fold”

Finally this thing would be removed !

He removes it and I rub my eyes from the itch. I gaze my eyes on the car Infront of me, I don't even know what is its name and model but all I know is that it has four wheels and is at the center of this car dealership.

“Its a Mercedes-Benz GLC Coupé”, he says.

I turn to him in disbelief and he hands over flowers to me and takes my hand into his and pulls me towards it.

“Sakhile”, I am lost for words.

“I promised you a car MaNgcolosi”, this is too much

He opens the door to the front and I look at the interior before I turn to him once again.

“I can't accept this Sakhile...”

“Slindo please, I am not buying this car for you having some sort of agenda. I am buying it as a form of gratitude. I may have not shown it but I am thankful. Despite everything I had did in my life and the choices I have made but you are the best of it. The best mother our kids and Nazo's kids could ever have and I am grateful for that. For loving Samkelo and Ase as well. Ngithi nje ngiyabonga MaNgcolosi, kukhulu okwenzayo and Kuyabonakala (I just want to say Thank you MaNgcolosi and what you do is big and admirable)”

Tears stream down my eyes and I am sobbing. He engulfs me into a hug and I let out a sharp sob. I wish I had a chance to show Nazo how grateful I was of being his wife. He was nothing short of greatness. The memory of him I keep on pushing it at the back of my brain like he had never existed so I wouldn't miss him much but it keeps on surfacing. He existed and still will through the kids.

I remove myself from Sakhile and I wipe my tears.

“I am keeping it forever. You can't take it back”, I say wiping the tears.

He chuckles and places the keys in my hands before he buries his hands in his pocket.

“Its all yours”

I hop inside and run my fingers on everything.

“You seem happy!” ,it's Sane shouting through the music.

I am letting loose and channeling my happy spirit at the moment.

“I am happy ! ”,I say with a smile.

I mean I got a car today. Not just any car but a Mercedes-Benz as a gift. What's not to be happy about that ? I am appreciated.

“Is it your lesbian Girlfriend?”, I shake my head and swing my arms in the air.

I move my body side to side and enjoy the music.

We are at a club and we met the rest of them here. Snikiwe is surprisingly here as well but she is having water. Afika is keeping guard over her at the moment.

“I saw your Instagram. Congratulations on the car!”, Sane says by my ear and hugs me.

“Thank you love !”, I turn around and we keep on dancing.

“Sakhile is starring at you ”, She says

I look at her then where they are seated and he sips his beer before turning to Qiniso who is conversating with him.

“He was probably thinking..”,I say

“Of Undressing his baby mama”

“Oh my god Sanelisiwe!”,she laughs.

“There is no Ciyela anymore”, I shake my head.

“I need a drink”, she says.

We move away from the dance floor and make way to the bar.

“Can we have a 12 pack off..”, I turn my head.

“Samkelo?”,

“Oh shit!", He quickly moves away.

Oh my god this child. I quickly grab Sane's hand and we follow after him. We see him by the hubbly section going towards Zabelo and Andile.

“I am going to kill that child. What is he doing here?!”, Sane Shouts.

They notice us and Zabelo removes a girl who is ontop of him. My god I am furious. We walk towards them.

“Yeyi Nina Voetsek !”, Sane says to the girls and they grab their things and run away.

“I hope you are prepared because your fathers are here”, I say tears nearing my eyes.

They look down.

“Wozani lah Nina, nidla imali yethu nefebe (You guys come here! You spend our money with hoes)”, Sane pinches their ears and hits their heads.

I walk away from them and make my way to where we left our bags. Tears overflow and I make a turn to the bathroom. I get into the latrine and I burst into tears. I thought that they were good behaving children. I don't know where I went wrong. Am I a bad mother? Is there something I did ? Maybe I am neglecting them ? I think of how their fathers will react and quickly wipe my tears. I get out of the bathroom and go to find them. Snikiwe is left and she sees me and she is relieved.

“They are outside”, I nod and take my bag.

We walk out of the club. We go to the parking lot and Sikelela is already shouting ontop of his already deep voice.

“R20 000 on alcohol ?! You are goddamn 16 year olds!”

“Get in the car now ”, Afika instructs them.

So these two recruited Andile in their schemes. Sane is having a fit from finding her son clubbing and girls lap dancing on him like he is some blesser. Sure they were blessers tonight ! They spent 20K on Alcohol today. I think the allowance should be cut off. How did they even enter the club?

“Where is Sakhile?”, I ask when I don't see him.

“He wanted to calm down before he kills them

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he went for a smoke”, I nod.

They don't apologize this time.

“Nizoshawa lah nizofika khona niyangizwa ?! Ngizokwenza sho nxx(You will get a beating wherever you are going you here me ? I will make sure)”, Sane Shouts while They are walking to Afika's car slowly but Samkelo stops and he looks at me with tears in his eyes.

“Slindo is not my mother so she has no right”, my heart stops.

My hands suddenly shake. Did I hear him correctly ?

“Are you talking to us like that Samkelo ?!”, it's Sane

“Who is my mother Slindokuhle ?”, never in my years of raising him had he ever called me by my name. I thought this would never happen.

“Samkelo how can you ask me that?”, he is my son, blood or not.

He scoffs.

“Dont you dare disrespect your mother Samkelo get in that car!”, it's Sakhile.

I look between them and he looks at me before getting inside the car after clicking his tongue. I move away from everyone and go to my car. Tears are blinding my eyes as I try to open the car door. I get inside and Sakhile is running towards the car signaling I should stop but I drive off anyway.

This phone has been ringing since yesterday. I didn't have it in me to go home as to face anyone that I knew. I booked myself into Stay easy hotel and drowned myself in yet rounds of Alcohol in there before I passed out on the bed. I pull it from under the pillow and look at it as it rings. It's my grandmother this time. I don't want to worry her so I groan before I answer.

“Gogo”, I say

“Oh Mntanami. We have been worried. Sanelisiwe told me what happened yesterday yazi ngizobabulala ngezami izandla Laba fana(I will kill them with my own hands)”, she says

“Gogo Samkelo said I am not his mother. He asked me about her”, I could feel by voice breaking. She partially knew. I am sure she suspected at some point that Samkelo is not entirely mine but she never spit it out and now I have spilled the beans that he is really not my son.

“I am sorry Mntanami. Come back home”, I swallowed and wiped my face.

“I will soon”

We say our good byes and I hang up. I get off the bed and drag my heavy body to go and take a cold one. I take a cold bath to wake my body up before I check out. I wonder how he found out that I am really not his biological mother? The look on his face still pains me even now. I check out after that and I drive off to Sakhile's place. I am sure they are all there. I get there and the gate gets opened for me. I park and hop out of the car and make my way inside.

“Slindo thank God I was worried”, Sane hugs me.

“I am sorry”, she says

“Where are they?”, I ask

“Sikelela and Sakhile dealt with them”, she says

“And Samkelo?”, I ask

“He called his apparent mother. Yazi he is ungrateful after you raised him mxm!” ,she says

No one knew Samkelo wasn't really mine except for Sakhile's father , his grandmother and Nazo. It must have come as a shock yesterday and I thought that would never be brought up.

“Sane” , she looks at me.

I ask to sit on the couch and I do settle down.

There is a buzz and she goes to take the intercom. She then comes back and sits next to me.

“Everything will be ok”

“My life is falling apart. If it's not loosing Nazo it's the boys”

“Slindo..” , I shake my head preventing myself from crying.

“Good morning I am here for Samkelo. I am his mother” ,I raise my head up.

She has grown. From that 17 year old that was impregnated by Sakhile back then. I would never forget the face of the woman who put me in a tight spot in my marriage. The woman who gave me Samkelo, she looks at me and swallows and pulls her bag up her shoulder and holds her car keys steadily. If it wasn't for my open arms and my convincing of Sakhile accepting Samkelo she wouldn't be here claiming him.

“Samkelo is my son not yours!”, I hiss.

“You took a situation of a naive teenager who was pregnant for your husband so you can have my child. You are cruel ! How do you sleep at night knowing you stood my child from me ”

“Ngizokuniphiza mina kuphele lokhu ukuzitsela kwakho (I will smack you and end you)”, I stand up.

“Try me,I am not the same Zitha I was before. Money won't move me this time”, I want to strangle her.

“Yet it made you today. My money ”, she clicks her tongue.

“I told myself I would stop at nothing until I have my son back”,I was about to slap her when they walked in the lounge.

“Mom”

We turn and Samkelo rushes to Her. She places her hands on his face. My heart breaks. He is already calling her mom.

“Oh my god what happened to your face?”, She faces us. It's all bruised up and I know Sakhile did something.

“Its nothing”, Samkelo says.

I hate this sight. I hate it very much.

“Zitha what are you doing in my house ?”, It's Sakhile.

“I am here to fetch my son. What did you do to him?”, I just want to Shoot her Everytime she says My son.My son ?

“I don't have your son here so please leave while I still have my sanity in check”, just shoot her so we can bury her and she could be forgotten.

“Sakhile you know what you did to me so please don't tell me about your sanity here”

“Mom let's leave”, it's Samkelo.

“Samkelo..”, I plea softly.

He looks away from my face. I am hurt.

“Wasn't it your family who wanted to get rid of him and demanded money from us? They didn't care who raised him as long as your family's reputation isn't tainted!”, he is getting pissed.

“Samkelo let's leave ”

She pulls him.

“Walk out of that door mfana wami(my boy) and you would forget you are a Ndlovu.”, I look at Sakhile.

“Sakhile that's harsh”, I say

He looks at Samkelo.

“And remember this. No woman would love you as much as this one would. Mark my words”, he says.

Sane is watching in silence so as the rest of them.

“You lied to me baba, I don't think I can live with that”, Samkelo speaks after so long.

“Then leave my house and never look back”, Sakhile says.

They look at us before they walk out. The door closes and tears stream down my cheeks.

“Slindo don't cry ”

“He is gone Sakhile and it's all your fault!", I throw my hands in the air and grab my bag.

I pull Zabelo's hand and we walk out.

“Slindo come back here ! ”, he shouts but I ignore him.

“You are my mother right?”, it's Zabelo.

“If you want to stay with your father say so. Ungangidini(don't annoy me) please”

He keeps quiet and gets in the car. Sakhile comes out of the house.

“MaNgcolosi”, he says softly.

“I can't Sakhile. I want my child back please”, he is silent.

I get inside the car and start it before driving away.

CHAPTER 6

It has been two months. It was supposed to be Samkelo's 18th birthday celebration soon but it is not happening with Sakhile cutting him off in life. Zitha is a teacher at some primary school. It's dull without him here and I really miss him everyday. I didn't fight his father for me to lose him again. I begged Sakhile to try and get him back but he is not having it. He is not hearing any of it. A Ndlovu man's pride is too much for me that I can't deal with it!

I receive a message from a number I don't know and I open it. "Can I have money for Samkelo's varsity fees and Application or we will meet in court", I click my tongue and Call the number.

"Tell Sakhile I need the money. Approximately R500 000", this leech

"Samkelo is going to be 18 soon and he is your responsibility now.", she clicks her tongue.

"I will see you in court", she hangs up.

I breathe out. The kids are at school and it's quiet during the day. I send a message to Sakhile doing about his whereabouts and he tells me he is at the taxi rank today. I quickly change to tracksuits and take my car keys. I will buy some goods for my grandmother when I come back from my visit.

I drive to town and get to the taxi rank and hop out of my car after finding a suitable parking spot.

“Cela ungiphe ishumi sisi wami noma utwo rand(Please can you give me one rand or two rand)”, it's the parasite next to me asking.

I am scared of them and the last time they pulled a knife on our throats.

I rush inside the busy Taxi rank and it all comes back. The shouting of places. It takes me back to when I was a school child. Before marriage when I used to take taxi's and before I owned a thing called a car and taxi's were forgotten about. I rank entsa!(the new taxi rank) it got its name when people the old taxi rank just beside it which is now a park for those school kids who smoke weed ! My god I get creeps even seeing our daughters there. Anyway the old taxi rank was close and this one was new. Yes some taxi's are there but when you need to take a taxi you get in here and get the one you need. I see the Sobantu sign and I look for Sakhile. I ask the taxi driver's upfront and they call him from the back for me. He gives Zethule the clip board who waves at me and i wave back. He comes towards me and stands Infront of me.

“Ningamubuki uhamba nami (Don't look att her she is with me)”, Sakhile warns.

“Aw'mhlonishwa ukugeza amehlo akulimazi(Looking at something good doesn't hurt)”, they laugh.

“Nizoxoshwa ke hayi lah madoda(you will be fired. Not here my men)”,they laugh.

“Come ”, we walk off.

“Where is your car?”, he asks.

“I parked it by the municipality”, he nods.

“Gatseni 118 eyakho!” one guy shouts.

“Sho sho!”, he says.

I don't even understand. I am not here for some taxi rank what not conversations.

“I am going on a round through Sobantu. Would you go with me ?”, What choice do I have because this is important.

I nod and we go to the taxi. It's loaded already.

“Ngisacela ungene emuva sisi wami(please go to the back my sister)” Sakhile says and the lady jumps out of the front and I get in.

He closes the door and goes into the drivers side and he hops in before he drives off. People are passing money and there is no conductor. I hate this! I am not good at Taxi maths. Sakhile sees this and he chuckled but doesn't help.

“Sibawu 4 ku R100(there are 4 of us in R100)”, one says.

Ok try and be steady and count Slindo.

“Don't tell me my kids struggle like this at school”, I shot him a look and he chuckles.

“They Excell if you have to know”, he takes the money and starts calculating while driving.

He distributes the change back. Let me say I respect taxi marshalls shame because I can't. I hated passing money even in high school. I always avoided those seats that required me to do so.

He opens the Maskandi music after the money distribution and I lay back on the seat.

“Samkelo is going to university next year. We need to apply for him and get everything set”, Sakhile chuckles.

“He chose his mother so she should pay for everything”, he says

“She will take us to court Sakhile. She has the right too and he has the right to education and we are responsible. You and I”, I try to keep it low.

I check behind me and this lady is looking at us.

“Short left !”, He slows down and then the person gets out.

“Your love for him irritates me even when he needs to be punished”, he scratches his face frustrated.

“You made me love him”, he smiles.

“I will think about it ”, ok that's something.

“Thank you Gatsheni”

It was fun being a 'Taxi driver's assistant' today. Well all I did was sit around and pass time before the kids come back from school. Sakhile left with me so we could fetch them. Leene called and we talked a while. She wants us to be serious from the look of things but I want to have some fun with her. I am not looking for something serious with her in anyway. Maybe I should clearly out that out there. We fetch each and everyone of them and I kiss the boys all around their faces. The triplets wouldn't stop blabbering and shouting 'Malume' every now and then to get Sakhile's attention. He gets them food and soon after that they are asleep while the teenagers are on their phones.

“How will you get back home ?”, I ask

“You will drive me home ”, he says.

He looks at the kids through the review mirror.

He takes out his phone and taps on it before placing it on his lap. It pings on mine and I take a look at it, it's a message from him.

“You are still with that Girl boy?”

I send one back.

“Yes

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we are still at it ”

He sees it and types a message.

“She can't do what I can do though”

I gasp. I don't know what to say so I keep my silence. We get to sweet water and the kids hop out. Linathi wakes up her brothers while Zabelo carries the other and they walk inside.

“Sakhile we are just parents nothing more”, I say

He chuckles and comes close whispering in my ear.

“I want to feel you like last time”, I swallow.

“l..l..”

“And make you Cum”, he says with a smirk.

“Stop it. That was once off, it shouldn't have happened”

“I told you to stop me”, he says

I am silent for a moment.

“Tonight?”

“Let me get my bag”, he smiles even wider.

“Only if you will agree to what we talked about ”, he nods.

I get out of the car.

“MakaLinathi”, I open my eyes as I am being called.

He is starring at me and too close. He smiles and I sit my butt up and stretch myself, it's bad enough I didn't get any. Please don't judge but what I thought I was here for I wasn't here for. It's unlike him. All he wanted was to cuddle Me and hold me.

“Mhhm?”, he gets right into bed again.

“You didn't want to wake up”, I groan.

“Sakhile”, he pulls me to him and I rest my body.

“Are you angry at me?”, I shake my head.

He is silent for a moment.

“It feels so good to have you in my arms”, he says

I am a bit sleepy. I feel a sharp pain from my abdomen and I sit up then place my hand there.

“Are you ok?”, the pain is a bit unbearable.

“Its unbearable”

“I am taking you to the hospital”

He changes quickly and dresses me as well then scoops me up.

I feel so worried. This time I am left shattered with the news more than shocked.

“I will leave you to it then ”

The Doctor walks out leaving the both of us in silence in this ward.

“I am sorry”, I say first before anything.

There is silence. I don't know what I am sorry for and also the possibility of this. A rare case. Why did I have to be a rare case? To prove some point that not all is impossible. He sighs and finally turns to look at me.

“I don't know what to say Slindo”, he says

“I didn't plan this Sakhile!”, I am frustrated as it is.

“We both didn't and as the doctor said, it's a rare case for pregnancy after tying your tubes”, I close my eyes.

“Let me call the doctor in ”,I nod then open my eyes.

He walks out of the room and later comes back with the doctor.

“Have you decided?”

“Is there a possibility for the baby to be moved from the tubes and to her womb?”

The doctor shakes his head.

“I am afraid not Mr Ndlovu. The only solution is abortion. As she is feeling pain in the Fallopian tubes it's because the Zygote can't pass through and rest in her womb”

He scoffs and clenches his jaw while looking at me as if I have committed a crime before he sighs and runs his fingers on his head then looks at me again.

I have never in my whole life thought of having an abortion. It has always been against my beliefs that I had. Every child deserves to live and that's what I believed. Still even now I am caught between a rock and a hard place. We didn't plan this. Pregnancy shouldn't even have come between this situation and made it seem worse. It might seem like abortion can help

us escape the questions from everyone that we would be getting but it's far worse. His family is the problem.

They are a traditional family and after the abortion a cleansing has to be done or we would feel the wrath of the ancestors. I am not ready for that. I am not ready to explain to my grandmother that I went back to sleep with the man who tormented my young days. I was supposed to have fun with sharing Leene and Sakhile but no. It seems to be failing when it was just starting.

“Slindo”, he snaps me out of my thoughts.

I look at him and as hard as this may be but we don't have a choice.

“This wasn't planned but I wish we didn't have to go down this road”, I wish I could say the same but I am mixed up with what will people say.

“Have you made the final decision?”, The doctor asks.

“You can go through with it Doctor”, I lightly say.

He nods.

“I will be outside making calls ”, Sakhile walks out.

He is hurt and it's very visible.

“I would like for you to drink this pill and call a nurse when you start feeling any cramps”, the doctor says while handing the pills and water to me. I drink them up and he walks out.

I lay on the bed and close my eyes.

CHAPTER 7

Maybe it was for the best is what I thought but I kept on being tormented from time to time As if I planned on killing our child. It makes me feel guilty and haunted when there was nothing we could really do. I expected Sakhile to be distant and maybe cruel and blame everything on me but he wasn't. He isn't but gentle and some what supportive. I am packing my last bit for the road trip ahead to Msinga. We had to reveal what we have been doing and my grandmother didn't have any say. She didn't say anything at all but comforted me of my sudden loss. I could still feel the pains though they are not there anymore.

“Mah, ubaba usefikile(Mom,dad is here)”, I turn and it's Zabelo.

“Come here”, he walks inside slowly.

I tell him to sit down on my bed and he does while looking at me. He looks and acts just like Sakhile and Sakhile is always trying to clean up his act just like how he was before he grew into the person he is now. I am afraid for the other families daughters that he would play. I am hoping he wouldn't do so.

“How is Samkelo?”, for one I know that they talk and secondly I can't seem to reach him anymore and it hurts me.

“He is ok”, he looks away from me and I crouch Infront of him.

“I love you guys. Everyone of you. Samkelo and Ase may have not come from my womb but to me they are my world just like you guys are. I am your mother Zabelo and never question that ok?”, he nods.

“Lets go”, I say

I stand up and he does

“What is going on between you and dad? ”, I don't know how to answer that.

“I...I don't know ”

“Well even though he is a pain...”

“That’s your father Zabelo”

“I know but I would rather have him than any other man that would replace Bab’Nazo”, he says

“You are young for this type of conversation.Let's go”, I push him out.

“I am 16 !”, he tries to defend himself

“Same difference”

He chuckles and we walk out. My grandmother is outside with Sakhile. I wonder what she is saying. He looks flushed and it looks like she is scolding him. I want to rush there and stop her but I decide against it. I protected Sakhile so much in the past

it's time for him to be on the first line and actually feel my grandmother's wrath. I walk out of the gate and Zabelo hops in the car while I load my things. My grandmother steps closer to Sakhile and she points at his Crotch. I rush to them.

“Ngizokuthakathe uhlanye mfana wami ungangibhemi mina (I will bewitch you and make you crazy my boy. Don't try me)”,She says.

“Yebo Gogo”, he says.

“And stop impregnating my daughter”, Sakhile nods.

“We have to leave gogo it's a long journey”,I say

“I will call you and talk to Nazo's father. So as yours Sakhile”,What does she want to talk to them about ?

“For what ?”

“Its non of your business. Sakhile I am serious. I will kill you”, she points at him.

“I promise you I won't hurt the kids or Slindo”

We bid good bye and she goes back inside. Sakhile breathes out and I laugh. It was nice to see him squirm a bit and actually be threatened. If I had an older brother I am sure he would've done worse. I think of Nosi and how crazy she was to kick Sakhile on his balls one time.

“Your Grandmother is scary”, I laugh.

“And she will do all she said she will.”, I say

“Lets go. Are you good?”, I nod.

We get inside the car and he starts driving off, the kids are at it with making noise at the back.

“Mami will you buy lipgloss like Linathi for me?”, it's Ase who keeps on talking my shoulder.

“Yes I would honey”

“Can I have the same lipgloss as Linathi?” Sakhile frowns.

“No..No boys play with cars not lipglosses!”.

“Its your daughter that is influencing him. They spend so much time together”, he huff's.

“Mami Mami!”, it's Ase again.

“Yes ...”

He is silent for a moment and goes back to laying his chest on Linathi who is on her phone acting like a teenager she is.

“Can we pass by a store so we can buy snacks for the road ?”, I ask Sakhile while searching if I have everything in my bag.

“Sure”

Linathi giggles and I look at her.

“Ugigithela bani lapho?(Who are you giggling for?)”, it's Sakhile.

Is it a crime to laugh now ? With Sakhile everything is wrong.

“Uhm it's a friend..”, she says

“Doesn't that friend have a name ?”, Sakhile

“Just leave her to be”

“Its Bolton baba”,

“Ah Ase !”, She scoffs.

“Give me that phone ”, it's Sakhile

“Mom!”, I raise my hands up.

“Now!”, she hands it over to Sakhile.

He scrolls through it and he chuckles lightly and hands it over to me and stops the car. I scheme through her WhatsApp and the conversations between her and this boy are not that serious.

“You are overreacting”, he looks at me.

“Linathi ufuna ukumitha ubuye neKula(Do you want to get pregnant and come back with a white baby?)”

“Now that's being dramatic Babakhe!”

Advertisement

I say

“I am asking Linathi?”, she looks down.

“Can't you talk?”

“Calm your man down mah”, Zabelo intervenes.

Oh my god he is not my man! I sink onto the seat

“I thought I was your man Mah”, It's one of the triplets.

Sakhile is silent for a moment and starts the car before driving.

“I am keeping this phone”, he says

“Mah do something”, it's Zabelo.

I can't with Sakhile's kids shame. I am done for today.

We have arrived in Msinga and I am as nervous as one could be. I feel like everything is spinning for a moment and my heart is pulsing so very fast. Yet again I am causing drama in the family. The kids are out of the car and grabbed their bags before walking off.

“Oh batwana!(Oh kids)”, it's Nazo's mother.

She is here and is surfacing more than I can even think straight. She hugs and kisses the kids before asking sulking Linathi what

is wrong with her. Sakhile closes the door I have been standing next to and looks at me.

“Hey, I am here ok?”, I nod.

We walk together towards and she smiles while looking at us.

“Sawubona(hello)”, I softly say while looking down.

She hugs me catching me off guard but I relax in her arms. She rubs my back up and down slowly.

“Konke kuzolunga Mntanami(All will be well my child)”, she says.

I want to say something but I hold myself. She lets go of me and Sakhile is already gone. She pulls me inside the house and everyone is looking at me. I am so ashamed of myself at the moment. It's more that the time Nazo and I decided to pursue something between the both of us after my marriage. This is very different. We are all seated.

The meeting starts and things are addressed firstly about others that are minor in my eyes.

“Sakhile and Slindokuhle”, I look down when my name is mentioned.

“We are shocked and disappointed to hear about Samkelo.”

“He should be back in these yards soon”

“He is not a Ndlovu anymore. He chose his mother and practically swore at Slindokuhle !”, Sakhile's temper gets to me. Can't he just be calm for once ?

“Sakhile”, his father is stern.

“No, that boy pisses me off. Slindo went through alot with him and uzombonga ngoshidi(And he thanks her with shit!)”,he says

“He didn't know Sakhile.”, it's Nazo's mother.

She has a platform to place her thoughts now?

“She is right Sakhile. He didn't know and we didn't know”, Sakhile keeps his silence but he is not pleased.

“We all know what we are here for I believe ”, Nazo's father says.

Some shake their heads in disagreement. Well tough if you don't know !

“Some don't know Bhuti. Please brief them”, it's Sakhile's aunt.

“Slindokuhle lost a child. Sakhile's child”,

It comes as a shock to some especially the lady cousins. Yes I have kids with this man and he is my ex so what ? Please can we just do this and get back with our lives?

“Tomorrow we are cleansing you Slindo”, I nod.

We get dismissed and Nazo's father asks to talk to me and I am led to a room. It has Sakhile and some of his cousins with his father and Nazo's mother. I am good to sit down and I do so.

“Sakhile informed us about the loss of the child and what was the reason of such loss”, I look down.

It's like I am in an interrogation room under police watch.

“When did this happen?”, Sakhile's father asks.

“It was a mistake•••”, I quickly say

“It wasn't a mistake baba we fucked and the baby happened.”, Sakhile says

Fucked? Couldn't he say we fell into sin. That sound more calm and not brutal.

“But both of you defy the family's suggestion and then you go and fuck”

“It just happened baba and we are sorry”, I say

Sakhile is looking at me. I know he is not sorry by his expression but right now I am appreciating his silence.

“What is going to happen tomorrow is we will do a cleansing for Slindo and also Sakhile and they must apologize to Nazo for their sin and announce to him that you want someone else”, Nazo's father says

“Honestly we were just having fun with Sakhile. Nothing is serious”, I quickly say

“Slindokuhle!”, Sakhile looks at me before walking out.

What did I do?

“You have to tell Nazo that you don't want him anymore Slindo for you to be free. He will hold you back trust me”, Nazo's mother says before everyone else walks out.

I am left there alone

It's the next day. Already I am drained after the cleansing. I am glad that it is over right now and everything could go well without disturbances or any form or punishment from the ancestors. I also had to dump Nazo which was a bit difficult but I did it as instructed. We apologized and I would say everything went well.

We were now cooking the food for this festivity that we have. It's not something big but with the Ndlovu family it may seem like a big celebration. As I am busy Sane pulls me out of the kitchen.

“We need to talk”, she says

“Oh ok”

She release a sigh

“Please don't be mad at me for what I am about to say”

I nod with much curiosity.

“Slindo I know your history with Sakhile but he has changed and he loves you so much”, I chuckled.

“Yes we slept together and yes we are ok with each other but I won't be a fool too many times Sane”, I say

“So you would rather be fingered?”

“If so then it should happen. Sakhile is wonderful for another person but never for me ”, I say

“Ok”

She says a bit defeated.

“Yeah. Let me go and check if the kids have eaten something”, I say.

I walk away from her. One thing just complicated everything.

CHAPTER 8

How is life after a loss ? It's unpredictable in my defence. It's unknown and you may never confirm it as you would like to do so. Well how is my life? It's going? It's ok? Is it bad? Well I can't put it into words of how it is really. It has been a year since the death of the beloved husband I had. He left me and I was left a mess creating one along the way. It's a few months after the death of my child and also a few months of a rocky relationship I had with Sakhile.

The fun ended. It was for the best in my defense. Well for all of us as well because Sakhile moved on. He is dating right now. Yes it's been a month relationship and I can't find myself in moving on. Sane tried to set me up with men online but I wasn't really interested in that. People met online are more shady than the people met face to face so I am fine for now. One thing is I used to enjoy being a mother. I still do but it proves to be difficult especially with Zitha concerning Samkelo. Sakhile hasn't changed his mind. He is still determined in his choice and decision. I do miss Samkelo so much but I am forbidden from talking to him by his father. It's still a 'Punishment' to Samkelo and Sakhile is making sure to punish him and his mother. Where is Leene? I distanced myself from her and it was for the best as well. Fun should end for now and

she wanted something serious of which I couldn't offer even if I wanted to at that moment. I am preparing the kids for their weekend visit at Sakhile's. He is trying that I would give to him. He is not trying to replace the boys father but he doesn't want them to feel the void of a missing father of which is why all 6 of them are going this weekend and that gives me time all to myself.

I pack the kids clothes and tell them to change out of their school uniform as soon as they enter the doors. Snalo keeps on telling me about his day and I keep on listening attentively while trying to make sure everything of theirs is packed. I take their bags and make my way to the lounge where Sakhile is seated with my grandmother. He stands up as soon as he sees me with the bags and comes to assist me while the kids are busy changing.

“Usale kahle gogo(Stay well)”, he says to my grandmother.

“Bye”, we walk out.

We go to his car and load everything inside. Big family cars are an option to go with when you have such many children, sometimes they get too much for me. Yes parents can get tired of their kids from time to time and I am happy as one can be right now to have them packed away and gone for the weekend. We get done with loading everything in the car and Sakhile closes the boot.

“Bye ”,I say

“Sure”, I walk inside the house.

“Bye mom”, Linathi comes and hugs me before walking out.

The rest come following each other and they say their good byes before they walk out.

“I will miss their noise”,My grandmother says

Me too. I will miss them this weekend but I am free for a moment.

“I am going to bake, do you need anything?”

“Nothing at all thank you. How is those talking things you do?”, she asks.

“Uhm well. I am going in tomorrow”, I say

She nods. I walk to the kitchen and take out the ingredients before I start with baking.

It is quiet in the house without the kids running around. I helped the helper with cleaning the house and we went to make breakfast together. She is a sweet woman just like Zama,Nazo’s former P.A. I was going to a therapy session today and so far it is going well than before. I am comfortable and

making progress. I was going to take a bath as my phone is ringing. I went to take it and answer.

“Hello”

“Ngiyaxolisa Mah (I am sorry Mah)”

“Where are you?”, I am panicking.

“I am in Scottsville”

“Ok, I am coming”

I hang up and quickly went to take a bath and changed. I only have 2 hours before I go to Therapy. I took my bag and car keys before I left.

“Gogo I am gone”

“Ok bye bye”, I nod and made my way out.

I went to the garage and hopped into my car before I drove out.



I got to Scottsville mall and he was standing by the uncertified taxi rank holding a back pack. I hopped out of the car and go towards him before I engulf him into my arms and he breathed out.

“I am sorry for what I said ”, he says

“I am not angry at you. Come let's go”, I say.

We get into the car and he buckles up.

“Are you hungry?”

“I didn't eat”, I start the car and drove off.

“Where is your mother?”, he looks at me and looks away.

“She is there”, he says

I just wonder how she found him. How he found out about me not being his mother.

“She sent a DM on Instagram telling me about•••”

“I know. We never meant to hurt you. We love you Samkelo, I do and I have never wanted to treat you like an outsider when you are not.”

There was silence between us. I went to steers and we went inside to get him something to eat.

“Mah”

I look at him.

“I don't blame you for anything. They wronged you and I am sorry I was the result of that”, I pull him to me.

“Never he sorry for that. You are the greatest gift your father gave me. I love you ok?”, he nods.

We break the hug and go and get his food. I am happy that he is ok and coming back home. I just don't know how Sakhile will take this but this is his child. We got everything we needed and left the place. I can't drive home and drop him so I have to just go with him to my therapy session.

“Is Dad mad?”

“He will be ok”, he nods.

“Can I see him before anything. I want to apologize”, he says

“Uhm, Ok but we will go after my session”, he nods.

I ask for my phone and he gets it. I call Sakhile and it rings a few times before it is answered.

“Slindo”

“Hey, are you home we need to discuss something”

“Yes I am home”, I look at Samkelo.

“Ok. I will come by after an hour”

“Sure”

I hang up and hand my phone to Samkelo.

We get to the Practice and go in together. I tell him to wait for me outside while I went inside. He obeyed and did so. I greeted the doctor as I walked in before I was seated down.

I was done with my Therapy session and I drove to Sakhile's house. I just hope he calms down and talks reasonably with Samkelo. I am happy that he is back and wonder what made him come back but maybe it is because of a life style change or he was just angry and now he is ok. We get there and I ring the intercom and the gate opened. I parked the car and hopped out with Samkelo. We get inside the house and there is alot of noise.

"Mommy", They run towards me and all hug me.

They move to hugging Samkelo as well and Sakhile appears from the kitchen.

"Before you say anything can we go outside and talk", he looks at Samkelo before he moves outside.

"Stay here, where is Zabelo?"

"In the bedroom Mami", Ase says.

I nod and walk outside.

"What is he doing here?"

"Thats your child Sakhile. Samkelo will always be our child so he has the right to come back", he chuckles.

"But he●●●"

“No buts please.Let's move on from this”

“Move on? Some of us can't move on”, he says

“Well atleast try”

“Try how?”

“I don't know ”, he chuckles.

“You don't get it Slindo”,I look at him.

“Get what?”

“You, that I want you”, he says

“Sakhile I don't want to go back to the past just please we have kids for goodness sake!”

He shuts me up with a kiss and I am here trying to catch my breath. He sees an opportunity to slip in his tongue as we are kissing. He breaks it after a while and looks at me.

“Don't do this lady wrong”, I say

“I will leave her just give me a chance. I am not the same old Sakhile”, he says

He comes closer and sooner I am against the car. He moves his hand under my skirt and circulates it on my thong.

“Sakhile the kids might see”, he smirks.

He moves the thong to the side and slips the fingers in. I close my eyes while moaning. He thrusts them in and out while I am intoxicated by his scent at the same time.

“Sakhile”, he places his other hand on my waist and presses me on the car.

I feel my legs failing me as I cum. He looks at me as I take a deep breath in and he goes on his knees pulling my thong down

“Sakhile stop it”, I say

“Take it off”, I step off.

He takes it and places it in his pocket.

“I will fetch you at 6 be ready”, he walks away.

God damn this man! What is he playing at ?

It's late and I left Samkelo with Sakhile. They needed to ‘talk’ and I think that is a great idea just to iron things out. I hope that everything goes back to normal and becomes well. My phone rings as my grandmother and I are watching some TV. I take it and it's a number I don't know.

“Hello”, I answer.

“Hello Slindo how are you?”, it's Nazo's mother.

I sit up and move away from the TV.

“I am good how are you Mah?”

I ask

“I am well. I would like to see you tomorrow”, she says

“I should come to Durban?”

“Yes if it is possible for you”

I want to hear what she has to say.

“Sure I will come down and bring the kids”, I say

“Its fine. I just need you to come”, she says

“Ok”, we hang up and I go and sit next to gogo.

“Nazo’s mother wants to see me. I am going to Durban tomorrow”, I say

“You are dramatic just like your mother sometimes”, she says.

“How is she?”

“I don't know. Her kids are just ungrateful that I know”, she clicks her tongue.

“They are your grandchildren”

“Zabelo and Samkelo are better than those things”, I shut my mouth.

“Go and make some tea for me”

I get up and I go to make some tea. My phone rings and I take it into my hand. I look at it until it stops ringing. I pour water into the kettle and open it before I take out some biscuits. I hear people talking in the lounge and I take everything after I am done making tea and walk to the lounge. He looks at me as I am walking in the lounge.

“Slindo put that down,Sakhile asked to borrow you for a few hours”, I look at her.

When did she start letting this loose around Sakhile. What is he doing here?

“Uhm but gogo I'm●●●”

“Go and change.”

I drag myself and I go to take a quick bath before I change into something warm. After that I took my bag when I was done and walked out. I found them chatting a storm up talking about what I don't know. Sakhile stood up when I appeared and my grandmother looked at me.

“Bring her back”

“I will gogo. Stay well”,she nods.

We both walk out and he looks at me once more.

“You don't seem happy”

“I didn't want to go out”

“And I like the way you are dressed. Come here”, we stop at the passenger side of the car and he removed the strand of my weave back before he smiled looking at me.

“Come let's go”, he opens the door and I get inside.

“Where are you taking me ?”

“Anywhere”

I just nodded.

It's the following day and I am prepared to take my trip up to Durban. Last night was a good night. I actually enjoyed dinning out with Sakhile yesterday. I asked him how Samkelo is and if the fixed their differences and he said he would handle it. I didn't like hearing that because Sakhile is capable of anything. I am now done with everything and I take my car keys.

“Gogo I am leaving”, I say

“Ok bye safe trip”

I thank her before I get into the car. My phone rings and I take it out of my bag and answer.

“Sakhile”

“MaNgcolosi how are you?”

“I am fine and yourself ?”

“I am good. I wanted to ask if Nazo’s mother called you”

“She did why?”

“You are going to Durban too?”

“Yes why? What is going on?”

“Mmh ok. Let's drive together down there”

Tempting. Very tempting

“Ok fine”, I hung up and soon left after the conversation heading to his house.

I got there and hopped out of the car as I parked. I went inside and hugged all my kids before their father appeared. He was dressed casually and so was I.

“Let’s go”, I say my good byes and we left.

We got into his car and he drove off.

“Welcome. I am glad you could come”, Nazo’s mother says as soon as she opens the door.

She is a woman who you could see was beautiful in her youthful days. We were ushered to the lounge and Same with Sikelela were also here.

“My husband is not here at the moment but I am happy you are all here”, she says.

We settle down and wait in anticipation as she stood before us.

“I would like to apologize for just coming back and not fully explaining why I was gone. Sikelela I am sorry that I failed you. I failed your father and mother by leaving you but I wasn't fit enough to be a present mother. I was danger to my little Nazo as I suffered Depression after birth•••”

“Post Natal Depression”, I said.

She nods.

“You have grown and I am happy you have your own family.”,she smiles.

“Slindokuhle. I understand your anger and frustration that I abounded Nazo. His father told me what he went through and I felt useless that I couldn't be there for him. I am deeply sorry”, she says.

“It's ok”, I say

It's time I moved past this. After all she birthed my Nazo. The man of such calibre that I had.

“Can I hug you all?”, We nodded and she came to hug us one by one.

“I will be back in a moment. Please get yourselves anything to drink and whatever you like. This is your home don't feel uncomfortable”, she smiles and walks away.

We look at each other.

“Are you good?”, Sakhile asks while holding my hand.

I look at him and nod at that.

“I will go and get us something”, Same says while standing up.

“Ok”, she walks to the kitchen and after that Nazo's mother surfaces.

She is carrying boxes in her hands and Sikelela helps her place them down.

“I never thought I would use these one day. My husband saw the necessity to keep these for me”, Same comes back.

We get our drinks and I gulp down my juice. I am nervous.

“Each of you take a box and look through it”, she says

She settles on a single couch and Sakhile takes a box and opens it. There is a camera inside and a photo album inside. He takes it and opens the album. We look inside.

We see two women and one is Nazo's mother. The other woman is some 80's slay queen by the looks but she is very beautiful than Nazo's mother.

Sakhile runs his fingers on the face of this woman and a year drops before he wipes it away. He pages through the next and clears his throat as we get to see more of this woman. She looks like a ball of fun. Is this her best friend? Her legs are showing off more and she has beautiful legs as well. Damn this woman was a black Barbie if I could say.

"Sakhile are you ok?", We are all now looking at him.

He looks up to Nazo's mother.

"Where did you get these pictures?"

"I used to take them and some were taken by your fathers", she smiles.

"I remember how excited she was to have you. She was my best friend. The only friend I had when I came to the city and she is the one that helped me through everything. I would forever be grateful for her kind heart", she says.

So this is Sakhile's mother? Shoot me please that I don't know my mother in law well. I have never saw a picture of her anywhere it's like she never existed before. No I am lying I have seen her picture before but I couldn't just recognise her. She looks very different from the photo I once saw.

“Do you want to take it home?”, She asks.

“Please”, she nods.

She opens another box and takes out another album. She hands it over to Sikelela and takes the one he has in his hands.

“I don't have your mother's photo but I do have your fathers. We were really close until his death bed.”, Sikelela looks at her.

“What happened to him?”

“He was HIV positive. There was no cure or treatment taken that time and I tried as best as I could to help him. Heal him. He was excited that you would be going to school soon and forever was grateful to me. When your mother died after birthing you I took you in and named you Sikelela meaning you were a blessing and you are. You were a ball of energy and loved everything. You were inseparable with Sizwe there as well”, they chuckled.

Who is Sizwe? This family has secrets because they hide things like this

“Thank you Mah. I have always wanted to know where my parents are and what happened to them.”, he says.

She nods smiling before she offers a hug to him. She is a hugger and very loving as well.

“You can keep that one”, she says.



We left after having lunch with Nazo’s mother and it was good. She is a kind woman I wouldn't dispute that. We booked into a hotel as we left late and Sikelela with Sane are already there. We took a route to the beach just for Sakhile to clear his head. His mother has always been a sensitive topic. I guess it was more bad that maybe he didn't remember how his mother actually looked like. He is sitting on the sand and I am watching from afar. It's dark and there are no people roaming around the beach. I take off my shoes and quickly rush towards him and stand behind him before I settle next to him.

“Are you ok?”, I ask

“Yeah”, he lets out a faint smile.

“Your mother was beautiful”

“You see where I get the looks from”, I roll my eyes.

“Oh please So much cockiness in one person”

“But that is true”, he says.

I look at him and smile.

“You are handsome”, he smiles.

“You agree?”, I nod.

He comes closer to me and he is too close.

“Give us another chance Slindo. I will treat you better I promise with my life”, he says.

“Sakhile••I am scared”, I say softly.

“I am sorry Sthandwa sami” , he kissed my lips and I close my eyes.

Gosh this man!

He breaks the kiss and runs his thumb on my lips before he smiles. These Ndlovu men and good looks can't go missed.

I had my legs wrapped around his waist as he placed me on the bed with my back on it. I could feel his Gatsheni poking my abdomen ready to do its job. He lays me down and opens my legs before he goes down on me and I am squirming at his mercy. He is taking his sweet time and savouring what he is devouring. He gets done and he gets up and comes my level

before he kisses my lips and he licks his after. He gets on top of me and kisses my forehead.

“I love you so much”,he says before going thrusting in.

CHAPTER 9

It's one of those days where you are just consumed in happiness with no apparent reason. Today is one of them and I just woke up a bit happy. It's a school morning and I am preparing the kids for school. They came back just a few days ago and Ase couldn't be left behind. He is very attached to his sister. I am in the kitchen packing their lunch in their bags with the help from the helper. My grandmother walks in the kitchen and ties her fluffy gown as she walks in.

“Your kids are making noise Slindo”, she says opening the kettle.

“They will leave soon. Sakhile said their ride would be here soon”, I say

“I want to talk to you after you are done”, she says and I nod.

“Please bring the tea to my bedroom”, she says to the helper and she nods.

Snalo rushes in the kitchen with his bowel and throws it in the sink.

“You will break the dishes Snalo”, I scold.

“Sorry Mommy”

“Go and take your towel then call the triplets ”, he runs out.

“I am done”, the helper says.

“Thank you so much Sisi”

I am not used to doing so much in the morning. I usually took care of the triplets and Snalo sometimes or someone would do so when I had overslept or Nazo would help since the boys were this side and Only Linathi stayed in Johannesburg with us. When the boys were grown up in their teen years they suggested to move and Live with my grandmother to be close to their father and my grandmother was happy to have people to send around. She says that's what “Abazukulu(Grandchildren)” are for.

Today I have a meeting to attend at Samkelo’s school before I go and meet Zitha. He hasn't been there for some time and I have to know what is happening. All I know now is that I have to get him a private tutor for him so that he could pass grade 12. Snalo comes back with his towel and the triplets following after him. I leave whatever I am doing and I start wiping their faces clean.

“Is Ase still good?”, I ask

“Yes Mommy”, they rush out after I am done.

“Mah! dad is here!”, Linathi shouts.

“Umsindo emnyango hayi lah!(Noise outside not here!)”, it's my grandmother.

She is cranky this morning and frankly seems to not be in the mood for anything.

“Come and get your things”, I say

They come and take their food. Zabelo shoves his lunch bag in his bag and I take his bag. It's light and has only one book inside.

“Where are your books?”

“It's here Mah. We have to leave”, he says

I push them out and hold one of the triplets hand open the gate and they hop inside the taxi and Zabelo gets in the front.

“Samkelo please behave at school”, I say

“I will mah”, he hops inside.

“Bye Mami!”, Ase screams waving as the door is closed.

This is too much. These kids are too much and alot of them. I should've just stopped having children after Snalo. Even at Zabelo I should've stopped because this is too much. I go to the driver's side and he leans by me.

“I will fetch you after dropping them off”, he says

“Okay. Talk to Zabelo”, I say

He looks at him and then me.

“What did he do ?”

“He doesn't have books in his bag. Can't you see?”, he chuckles and start the taxi.

“Relax. He is passing that's all that matters”, I roll my eyes.

“You know I don't like that”, he says

“Well you are being supportive of something that I don't see being worth supported”

“Will you call down? I will be back to take care of you”, I move away from him.

“Say bye everyone ”

I turn to look at him as the kids shout from inside.

“Just leave”

He hoots before they are gone. I close the gate and walk back inside the house and it feel warm than the coldness outside. I go and clean up before I go to my grandmother. I knock softly before entering and she is having her porridge. I sit on her bed and she looks ate while she is slowly eating.

“Gogo”

“Tell me what is going on”, she says

“Gogo I●●●”, I know what she means.

I look down and fiddle with my fingers.

“You are old Slindo and what I want to say is that make decisions that will make you happy despite what anyone says. You know I love you and would never abandon you for a boy.”
I smile.

“Thank you. Let me go and clean before leaving.”

She nods and I stand up leaving her there. I love my grandmother and I thank God for keeping her for me this long. I don't know what I would be without her in my life.

I keep on looking at the mirror since I got in the car and it's frustrating Sakhile at the moment. He has been making sounds since I got in here.

“I need to put some powder here”, I rummage through my bag for my cosmetic bag.

“Are you going to a meeting or impressing the principal?”, he asks more annoyed than ever.

I look at him and scoff before grabbing the powder.

“Jealousy doesn't suit you Gathseni”

I apply the powder and he steals a glance from me before placing his hands on the brush.

“I think that's enough”, he says

“Sakhile”

“I don't see why you have to put make up because you are ok to me”, he says.

“Well I like it”, I finish up and put the powder away.

“Sakhile how do I look?”

“Let me stop the car”, he says

“What for?”, he stops the car by the side of the road and looks at me.

“You look very beautiful MaNgcolosi”

“Thank you”, I say

He moves my braid back and smirks while looking at me before starting the car again and drives off.

“What ?”

“I am glad I made you pregnant”, he says

“Oh my god Sakhile don't say that”, I say

”I mean it though. I mean there are Minnie you and me out there”, he says.

“They are not miniature anymore”

He places his hand on my lap while I pack everything up in my bag. He takes my hand after and looks at it.

“Your hand looks weird without a ring”

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he says

“Siyajola (we are dating). Don't even think about it”, I take my hand.

“Are you sure about that?”, I nod.

“What are you implying? Did you do something?”, I ask

“Yes years ago. You are still my wife traditionally”, I want to laugh.

“Well dreams do come true”, he chuckles.

“Ouch”, we go back and forth with talking.

We arrive at the school and we both hop out of the car. Sakhile places his hand on my waist and we start walking up to the office. We got there and greeted the white lady. We informed her of our appointment and we were told to be seated on the couches. This school looks beautiful and proper. The view here to the little garden by the office is beautiful. I am sure Sakhile

feels his money here. A child passes by us and he waits before he could pass and greets us politely before walking off.

We are seated there waiting until we are called in the office.



“Slindo calm down”, I can't believe it !

Zitha is going to know me today. She first takes my son away from me and now wanted to destroy his future. That blood money sucking leech. We get to her work place and I couldn't wait for her to get home after that meeting. I had to beg for Samkelo to start grade 12 all over again in that school. I am a bad mother as well. I really am.

Sakhile parks the car and I jump off the car not caring how uncomfortable these heels have become. I walk to the office and asked for her. The reception lady said she would call her from the staff room.

“Slindo”

“Don't even start me Sakhile”, he raises his hands up in surrender.

He stands there with hands in his pocket. There is a lady looking at us as we are standing here.

“What are you doing here?!” , it's Zitha coming with the reception lady and some of her colleagues.

“Wena uyangijwayela yazi!(You are shutting on me)”, I release a slap on her face and she tries to return it to me.

I drop my bag on the floor and attack her . We both fall on the floor and she is fighting me as well.

“You first sleep with my husband and now I raise your child you want to destroy his future sathane !”, I try to hold her hands as she screams.

I hang her head on the floor as she tries to get up and she over powers me. She manages to throw a punch and I pull her weave off and push her off me before I return the punch to her and Sakhile takes me away from her and some teachers hold her down as she is crying.

“Ngizokutrappa unye mdidi (I will fuck you up)!” , I say

“This is unruly behaviour and this is a professional place”, A man says.

“I am sorry sir”, She cries as she utters those words.

“Lets go Slindo”, Sakhile goes and takes my bag and we walk out.

I huff as we are walking out.

“I am not done with her”, I quickly say

“I know Sthandwa sami”, he kisses my lips and we are on a stand still.

The anger I am feeling just vanishes in a matter of seconds and wraps his arm around my waist. He pulls me close to him and I wrap my hands around his neck before we break this kiss.

“Are you calm?”, I nod.

“I am hungry”, I say softly.

He smirks.

“Let’s go and buy some food for you and some condoms”, he says

I shy away from him and bury my face on his chest before breathing out.

I am lying in bed in a room that has a bunch of flowers and so as some food wrappers somewhere. All of this accompanied by a manly scent and my sweet one. Sweat and everything unpleasantly supposed to be smelling is overpowered by the manly scent. I look at him and he hasn't changed. He is just grown from the man I first saw at the taxi rank. I wonder what he saw in me ? I wasn't one of those girls who went to Maritzburg girls high school who were known for dating boys in his league . He was a collage boy, the hat and blazer from a very

good school and good family home. He has everything he wants and desires and he went for me. Married me through lies. If he didn't hit me that day. If I didn't feel the fear of being killed by him then I Wouldn't have left him. I don't think I would've stomached being able to do that. I remember Pamela. How she died and wondered what really happened to her.

I look at him before I slowly get off the bed and go towards the flowers. I wonder when did they arrive. While I was asleep or what? I take a card when I have found it and I scheme through it. I smile as I read the message and put it away. He is becoming a romantic Man. He always was one. Sakhile was always a material showerer. He always bought things as his way of showing affection and love while Nazo was hands on. He wouldn't keep his hands to himself. He would whisper things, make me blush out of the blue and be random. They are very different from each other but this Sakhile I like. He is different and putting effort to everything. Makes time, does not get any weird phone calls. He is present and makes me feel appreciated more than ever and I appreciate it.

A phone rings and I go and take it leaving the flower. I look at the screen and it's Ciyela. I haven't spoken to her since she left Msinga after her stunt. I hope she is living her best life as she has always wanted. I answer it.

“Hello”, I say

“You couldn't wait did you? To jump back into Sakhile’s bed. How could you?”

“Don’t start with me Wena. You left not the other way around. Enjoy your man there and leave me alone”, I say

“I want Sakhile back”, I laugh

“Ok let me wake him up for you”, I went to him and shook him.

“Mmh?”

“Your Ex is calling”, he sits up and rubs his eyes before taking the phone.

“Mmh?”, he pulls me back into bed and places his hand on my tummy.

“I wasn't playing when I said what I said. You wanted this and stop calling me Slindo doesn't appreciate it”, he hangs up and kisses my neck.

“The kids might come out of school anytime now”, I say

“I will ask Zethule to fetch them. Come”, he says

“And do what?”, I ask

“I want to touch you baby”, he kisses my neck again

“I love you Slindo”

I close my eyes.

“I love you too”

“Mami I am done with it”, Ase shows me his drawing.

I look at him and give a high five for the good work. Sane is coming over today with Naledi while the boys would be leaving and going to their uncle's house. I have talked to Samkelo and told him that they would let him repeat grade 12 next year but he is determined that he will pass. I just don't get Zitha and why she thought it is best to not take Samkelo to school just because she was with him. Sakhile was paying school fees for nothing all those times. I just get mad and want to stangle her as soon as I see her again.

CHAPTER 10

“Ngifuna ukubona isthandwa Sami weh(I want to see my love)”

His horrible singing isn't cute at this moment but he finds it amusing as I make my way to him. I have seen Sakhile being a bubbly happy person but this? This is something I don't know and have never known before.

“You are making noise”, I say

“You are just jealous mawabo”, he opens the door for me and takes my bag.

I need to move out from home. I don't want to disrespect my grandmother but she is not mindful at all. The kids have gone to visit in Durban to Nazo's mother. I just hope they don't bother her and she was overly excited with them coming. Sakhile says she almost swallowed the boys with kisses when he dropped them off. I know he is exaggerating.

He gets in the car as well and we share a kiss before I run my fingers on his head and look at him. He is smirking and looking at me with question.

“What is wrong?”, he asks.

“Nothing, Its just I appreciate this Sakhile”, I really do.

He just stops everything when it comes to the kids and I. All of them included and he stops at nothing. The triplets had a cricket game at school and we went together. Bought snacks for when they are done. All he said was “Zizolamba ingane Slindo asithenge ukudla(The kids will be hungry Slindo, let's buy some food)”. He is a hands on father/uncle and I appreciate that very much. It's Owami's birthday this weekend and she would've been in her 20's now. A day doesn't go by without missing my daughter and wish that she lived longer for me to see her grow but the pain of losing her would've still have been the same despite when I had lost her. We are heading to Msinga right at this moment just like every year. It was Sakhile's suggestion to do this every year and that was before I married Nazo. He was ok with it and the 3 of us would go down to Msinga with the kids sometimes or alone.

“I would do anything for you and the kids”, he says

I buckle up as the car moves and get myself on my phone. I stumble on tweets written hashtags to it and my name. I check it out and I am being dragged by people I don't know.

“What?”

Sakhile looks at me with a questioning look.

I keep on scrolling and I see two tweets they just get my blood boiling. I burst into tears and Sakhile stops the car quickly

taking me into his arms as I cry. What have I done to these ladies to deserve such? Is this what I got for loving an innocent child. Is this what I get for loosing Nazo?What have I done to them?

“Tell me what is wrong Slindo and I will sort it out baby I promise”, Sakhile says.

He is trying to comfort me and also find out what is making me cry in this manner. I am red all over my face now from the crying. He cups my face as I am trying to calm down.

“Tell me what is wrong Slindo please tell me”, he says

I just hand my phone over to him and he reads everything. They have over 9 thousand retweets and the fact that there is a video of me hitting Zitha and how she looks now after the fight is worse. I look at him as he clenches his jaws and curses under his breath before throwing the phone on hi lap and punching the undeserving steering wheel.

“I will sort these two out. They don't know me”, He starts the car and drives off.

The speed is not good and his anger is very much visible. I know Ciyela started all of this and Zitha must've stumbled upon the tweet and saw fit to ruin me in the process. “Minister of Safety and Security's wife under Assault accusations”, the headlines of every news anchor says.

I try to take my phone but he doesn't allow me.

“We will go to Msinga Later I will drop you off at Sane’s”

“Where are you going?”, I ask

“To sort this out. Don't worry about anything.”, he says

“What are you going to do Sakhile?”

He is silent.

“Sakhile what are you going to do?”

“I am sorting this out don't worry Slindo”.

I look at him. He takes my hand in his and kisses it before heaving a heavy sigh. I decide to keep my silence. Cholo should be keeping her sister in check really.

Sakhile dropped me off at Sane’s house. There is no other woman who enjoys being a house wife like Sanelisiwe and she is not ashamed of it. The love her and Sikelela share no one would be able to understand but them. They understand each other perfectly well.

“Hello aunty”, it's Naledi.

She is a blabber mouth much like Sanelisiwe. You wouldn't say she is not the fruit of her womb the way they behave the same way. Andile is more like his father. These boys are all of them

and it's bad enough that they are photocopies of their father and now they copy and pasted their behaviours as well.

“Hello Nana, how are you?”

“School”, she goes back to watching some TV.

I go to the kitchen and Sane is taking out a glass from the cabinet.

“Hey”, she leaves everything and rushes to me.

“How are you feeling? Loh Zitha. Wakhona umshaye mancane yazi (and that Zitha, you fit hit her enough)”, she says.

“She makes me angry and so as Ciyela being a bitter ex wife”, I say

“Sakhile is all yours and you don't have to worry about anything”, she says

“Yeah”

“Come let me make some food for you and get you wine”, she says

We go and get some food for us and drink some wine while we are distressing about everything. I tell her where the kids are and talk about other things as well planning to go to Durban to see Snikiwe and how she is right now. I am sure she is close to her due date anytime from now on.

SNIKIWE

“Your stress levels have decreased Cuz, I am happy about that” Zee says.

I nod and wipe my stomach.

“In a few weeks you will be delivering your baby”, I smile.

“How is therapy?”, she asks.

I sit up from the bed and cover my stomach as she throws her gloves away.

“It is good. I feel better and We are ok”, I say

I really appreciate my cousin and the fact that Afrika agreed to take therapy with me was something that meant a lot to me.

“I am glad. I want happy parents”, she says

“I miss Thingy from time to time”, I look down.

“You shouldn't forget about her but accept that she is no more and don't blame yourself Cuz”, she hugs me and I hold onto her.

“Come I am sure that man of yours is outside driving himself crazy”

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she says laughing.

I take my bag and she accompanies me out of her office. Afika rushes to me as soon as he sees me and embraces me quickly.

“I am ok with the baby. He was just turning”, I say

“I was worried.”, he looks at me letting me go.

“Buy some ice cream for her. She is behaving and doing good”, Zee says.

“I will, come let's go”

We say our goodbyes to Zee and we walk out. I am glad that Zee came to my rescue. I thought I was dying and she was laughing her lungs out while I was in pain. “Zalani asinamona(Have babies I am not jealous)”, is what she said to me.

“I was talking to my aunt earlier”, I say

He helps me in the car and I thank him. This gentle man of mine. He gets in the car as well and starts it.

“mmh”

“She was suggesting I live with her until I give birth. That I go back home”, I say

“But you are a Ndlovu manje ”,he says.

“I know, it was just a suggestion”, I say

“I am just scared. We have lost enough”, he is admitting it.

I hold his hand.

“Hey, I am still here and I won't go anywhere. We are married well traditionally”, I say

“But we still are. What ice cream do you want?”, he asks.

“Tin roof would be fine”, I say

“We will pass there then”

He starts at McDonald's and gets some ice cream for me before going to Woolworths. I am enjoying my ice cream and he looks at me. I blush while looking away

“You make me happy”, he says

“I do?”

“Very much and I love you”, there is his random I love you. I love it! Afika is the best thing that has happened to me. Despite the big age difference I love him as well.

SLIDOKUHLE

He came back late and looked like a mess. I just wonder what happened and how he sorted all of this out. One thing about Sakhile he is honest about his shady dealings and wouldn't hide anything if I ask him apart from the cheating flings I have stumbled upon he is half an honest man. Sane showed us to one of the extra room in the house and we are now closed up inside leaving tomorrow. He is in the shower while I am preparing the bed. I get inside and wait for him to come out. He does and wipes himself before slipping in some boxers and gets in the bed.

“I have sorted everything out”, he says.

“You killed them?”

“I wish but it will lead back to us and I don't want that for you”, he says

“I hear you. These are your mistresses”, he laughs.

“Hawu you say so?”

“Yes. I just had two husbands and one of them I just lent him around”, he laughs more closing his eyes.

He places his hand on his torso as his deep voice echo's through the room as he laughs.

“Sakhile stop it”

“Dreams do come true Slindo”

“Don't use my line on me”

“I just did”

“Mxm”, he carries on laughing.



It's the next day and we have arrived in Msinga. Today is Owami's birthday and I am happy that we are here. We bought cake as well just to eat while we are here. We get inside and and Sakhile's aunt is all over me hugging and kissing me.

“Yoh anivakashi ngisho nokuvakasha Nina (You don't even visit)”, she says.

“We are sorry”, I say

“It's ok. These kids are disrespectful just like my sister's you know”, she clicks her tongue.

We have settled in the lounge area now.

“We are going to head to the grave soon”, Sakhile says.

“You need to do umemulo for Owami Sakhile you know that”, Sakhile looks at me.

“But she is no more”, I say

“Yes I know but it's tradition and Linathi will stand in for her since she is the only girl child”

“We will talk about that after we have come back”,Sakhile says and we nod.

We eat a bit before we leave. We got to Owami's grave and we first clean it up before I go on my knees and look at it for some time. We are both silent and Sakhile sprinkles something around her grave before he crotches next to me and he sighs.

“Happy birthday Nkosazane kababa ,Mafungwase wami (Princess)”

I break down and he holds me to his chest. I miss Owami so much. I miss my daughter so very much.

Mafungwase:(First born daughter)

CHAPTER 11

One thing I would never be good in even if I try as much as I can to learn how to do that but I wouldn't be able to and that is dancing. It would never be something that I am good in. Sakhile doesn't give up though. No matter how he ages he doesn't let some of his youthful habits go. I don't think he wants to and would never let them go until he dies. He says they make him fresh as he is now. I simply think he doesn't want to accept that we are growing old. What do they say again? Oh yes “Kuguga othandayo(The one who wants to age will age)”, it's a phrase used by people who simply don't want to grow old just like Sakhile. He is adapting habits now, habits I would think are for white people but surprisingly I actually love them as much.

We are in Msinga just visiting for Christmas very soon. Schools have closed and Samkelo is waiting in anticipation of him passing or not and repeating the grade. It's at night too and we are watching Nazo's parents who were stuck in their own bubble. I have never seen Nazo's father behaving in this manner. He is soft, gentle and caring as well. Usually he is rough and aggressive and can be kind but this, this is something else that I have never witnessed and that is old love. They are slowly dancing to some song from their time. He keeps on

kissing his wife's forehead and softly touching her afro. It's a great sight to witness.

“This is beautiful”, Sane says

I look at her and nod. Really it is.

“Very beautiful”, Cholo comments.

It is indeed. At the moment we just feel like we are not in any relationship or ours is nothing like theirs, just a perfect thing to watch.

“Where is Snikiwe and Afika?”, Sane asks.

“They are asleep. Sni is tired ”, Cholo says.

I nod and sip on my juice. We keep on looking at the old couple as Nazo’s mother is swirled around and she giggled softly before resting her head on her husband's chest. I wish Nazo was here to witness the love between his parents. The men come our way and the husband's sit next to their wives.

“Let’s go and join them”, Sakhile says.

He pulls me up.

“I can't dance and you know it”, I say

“It’s simple Slindo. I mean how hard can it be?”, well he can dance more than I can.

I place my juice down and he places his hand on my waist and moves me slowly once we are close to the lovely old couple.

“Relax”, I breathe out and try to relax.

“Look at me ”, Sakhile says and I do he smiles and I giggle.

“What ? Is there something wrong?”

“We should do this everyday”, he says and pulls me to lay my head on his chest and whispers into my ear.

“For the rest of our days on earth”, he continues.

“Sakhile”, I heave a sigh.

“Yes Baby”

I start to feel comfortable in his embrace as we are dancing.

“I love you Gatsheni”, I say softly.

I have been trying to avoid saying that at times simply because I felt like I am betraying Nazo but I have to accept that he is no more and would never come back.

He kisses my forehead.

“I love you more than anything MaNgcolosi”

I close my eyes and listen to the music and his thudding heart.

“Do you want me to spin you around?”, he asks.

“No”, I quickly shake my head and snake both my arms around his waist and he chuckles.

“That’s not where your hands should be Slindokuhle”, he teases.

“I want to hold you like this”

“Ok”

I keep my eyes closed as we are moving. It's very soothing if I may say so myself. After the dancing I was feeling tired and I told the older boys to go and rest when it's time. The little ones were already put to sleep in the main house with Sakhile’s aunt. We said our good night's to everyone before we went to retire ourselves to sleep.

We get into the flat and I take off my clothes before I slip in a silk night dress and get in bed. Sakhile joins in after while I let sleep consume me.

The Ndlovu’s have become a very big part of my life for years. I would never have started over bonding with another family when I lost Nazo. It would've been by choice to just try and avoid that as much as I can.

I love auntie Nokwenkosi. She is a ball of energy that is filled with Kindness. A very talkative woman as well but is reserved at

some times. It's the next day, the day before Christmas and we are in the kitchen making some food while stories of these old woman's youth days were like. We are listening to auntie's U.K experience.

“Hawu aunty ngempela ?(For real?)”

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it's Sane verifying Aunty Nokwenkosi's story.

“I am telling you Sane, Right now in Italy somewhere I have a proof of me dating a white man”, she giggled and her smile slowly fades but she regains it.

“Are you ok Mah?”, I ask

“Yes I am”,she carries on making the dough.

I look at her and I go and check on the pots. Snikiwe walks in the kitchen and she greets, we respond. She places the baby bottle on the counter and rests her head there.

“The baby is already draining you?”, Sane asks.

“You have no idea. He only calms down when Afika holds him”, She sulks.

“Atleast he is there”

“But I don't think he likes me”, we share a laugh.

“He is just young. He loves you though”, Sane says.

She is not hearing it and has concluded that her child loves Afika more. I wonder when will they get married but they seem content with what they have and that is being traditionally together. I am just glad that they are ok now and have learnt how to live with the pain of loosing their child. We carry on with cooking while sharing some conversations.

NOKWENKOSI

I was sitting on the be while scrolling through my phone when a light knock came from the door. I looked up and shouted a "Come in". The door opens and Khethiwe walks inside closing the door before she comes and sits next to me. It has been years since I last saw her. I wasn't a frequent person to come back home but I did when my mother passed on and so as my father. I couldn't be stuck overseas.

"Hey, are you ok?", she asks.

Tears are formed as she asks those words but I nod and look away.

"Who is that?", she points to my phone.

"It's••It's••His name is Dante Barnes",I smile a little.

"Your white man", I nod slowly.

She giggled and looks at me.

“Tell me more about your stay overseas”, she seems interested.

More interested than my father was when I came back and told him about Dante. He didn't want to hear it and I knew it would be difficult for him to accept a white man considering that he has never wanted his daughter to love one in the first place but he swept me off my feet and within a matter of months he wanted us to get married but we never received blessings from my father. My mother was ok with it but not in so many words. My brothers were always occupied by their lives but they knew and let me be. We never married but lived together for years until we separated and he left going back to Italy.

“What do you want to know?”, I ask.

“Do you love him?”

“Yes”, I wouldn't lie.

“Where is he now?”, she asks circulating her fingers on the screen.

“He is in Italy. He left when I was planning on coming back”, I say

“Why did you leave?”, she shoots her head up.

“I missed home Khethiwe.”, she nods.

“I understand”

We sit together.

SLINDOKUHLE

Everyone is scattered around the yard and the kids are playing all around getting themselves dirt without any care at all. I have done all the chores needed to be done and I am now resting in the bedroom a bit before we go and dish up for the afternoon. Sakhile enters the room and looks at me before sitting by the edge of the bed and takes my feet placing them on his lap.

“You look tired”, he says

“I am tired”

“Rest for a while”, he says

He kisses my forehead. I close my eyes.

CHAPTER 12

It's Christmas day today and as you know every special day in this family is always celebrated in a big way. Not your ordinary birthday's or Christmas days. A cow was slaughtered for this day and we have cooked it in the pot making the whole main house smell unpleasant but will be enjoyable in taste. The kids have bathed and there is a stretch tent that is hired with chairs and everything to make the tent look wonderful.

“Mami”, It's Ase.

He rushes up to me and hands his towel to me and I wipe his face.

“Did you finish your food?”, he nods.

“Yes Mami”, I nod.

I hand his towel back and he runs out of the room closing the door. I take my phone and shove it inside my apron pocket. Sakhile comes out of the bathroom at that moment.

“Good morning”, I say

“Good morning Sthandwa Sami”, he holds my waist.

“Merry Christmas”, he chuckles.

“I love this Christmas. So what did you get for me?”, he goes and gets himself lotioned and dresses up.

“I gave you kids so that's a life time gift”, he chuckles.

“I also gave you children but I got you something for today”, I look at him.

“Well I am a big enough gift on its own”

He laughs and I hit him lightly with a swab.

“I am going to the kitchen. Need anything?”

“Nothing for now”, I nod and I go and give him a perk on the lips.

“Run while I still am intact”, he says.

I rush out laughing. Everyone is up and down the yard and some of Sakhile's aunts and uncles who are younger than his father are here from their busy lives. I greet whoever I see as I make my way to the kitchen.

“Sanibonani”, I greet and Sane hands a glass of red wine to me.

“Aunty said we can drink”, oh wow ok.

I place my glass around as I go and help out with the chopping. Conversations are flowing within the women in the kitchen and the noise is visibly there.

“Cholo how is the meat going there?”, cholo opens the pot.

“Its coming together. She takes a fork and tries the meat out.

“It's starting to soften up”, she closes the pot after that.

“Ok Slindo please take this outside”, Nazi's mother points at the bucket filled with Zulu beer.

Snikiwe helps me with the bucket while her child is being passed around like a piece of paper. We place it outside and cover the bucket when we see a black car pulling up at the gate. We turn our heels and go back inside the house. Snikiwe takes her child and moves on to feeding him. I don't know if it's a syndrome or what but Snikiwe is giving birth to fat babies but this one is better than how Thingo was rapidly getting fat.

“Ophuzayo!

Ophuzayo!

Ophuzayo!

Ophuzayo kulawomanzi akayomi naphakade qha!”, the singing has started and it's the tipsy ones that are making the most noise.

Sane has joined them in and now they are forming a single line while dancing around the kitchen. Snikiwe is recording and laughing at the scene in front of us joined by Nazo's mother who is also singing along.

“Madre!(Mother!)”,we look at this white tanned man infront of us followed by a very beautiful slim lady who has curly brown hair.

“Oh my God Andrea, Siena”, Aunty Nokwenkosi rushes to hug them.

We are all standing in the kitchen watching them as they hug. She touches their faces and tears just stream down her cheeks as they embrace her.

“Mamma don't cry please”, These are her children? Wow I mean wow. Someone should've had 7 Italian kids before anything.

I am just joking I love my children but these one are too perfection. The lady just shouts grace as you look at her, Elegance at it's best.

“Where is Carlo? How did you get here? Did your father agree?”

“Father is outside talking to some man”,she looks flushed and then looks at us.

We are all silent looking at the scene before us.

“Andrea ,Siena Uhm these are my siblings and the young ladies are your cousin's wives and some of your cousin's”

“My name is S-a-n-e-l-i-s-i-w-e”, Sane says it slowly.

“It's Sanelisiwe. Say it properly please”, Aunty says.

“Hello”, they wave shyly.

“Eh Sine take a glass”, one aunt says

I already knew one or these old women would say their names incorrectly.

“I will be back. Make yourselves comfortable”, she smiles and walks out.

We stay seated with the beautiful Siena. She seems shy but lets loose as Sane starts talking to her.

NOKWENKOSI

I went outside the house with my heart thudding and my palms feeling sweaty. I look at him standing next to Zaba and Qaphile. He seems me and comes my way and I embrace him. It has been a year since I last saw them.

“Mamma”, I smile as I inhale his scent.

We break the hug and I hold his face.

“You have grown so much”, I say

“I video called you yesterday”, he says.

“Digital and real life is different Carlos”, he chuckles.

“Has your father been taking care of you?”, he nods.

“I am not a child Madre”, I nod.

“Ok, I will tone it down”

“Yes he has been and Siena babies me ”

“Good. I am glad your sister has been looking out for you”, he looks around.

My brother's come our way and stand in front of us.

“Carlos these are your uncles I always tell you about”, I say

“They are rough”, he whispers and I giggle.

“Kukhuluma isingisi kodwa lokhu?(Does he speak only English?)”, Zaba asks.

“Kancane isizulu nesakubo kababa wakhe Bhuti(A little and some Italian)”, He shakes his head and they move away taking Carlos with them.

I look at him from a distance and he hasn't moved from where he is.

“Won't I get a hug Bella?”, I shy off and go to him.

He embraces me and I lay my head on his chest. He kissed my forehead.

“Merry Christmas Nokhwe”,he chuckles.

“It's Nokwenkosi”

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I say

“I know.”

We break off the hug.

“You didn't tell me that you are coming”, I say

“I wanted to surprise you and Andrea got us here”,he says.

“I missed you so much.”

“Me too”, I say

He kisses my forehead again and I take his hand.

“Come, My brothers can't speak English well so you will interact with the young ones”

“I figured that out. They are intimidating”, I giggle.

“You would be fine”

“Ti voglio bene(I love you Nokhwe)”

“I love you Dante”

I feel happy. When we went our separate ways he wasn't too happy that I wanted to come back home. He wanted us to

retire in Italy but I wanted to retire home. That was the issue, we didn't leave in good terms but I always missed him.

SLINDOKUHLE

Its fascinating the kids that there are people of a different colour than our skin but they are still Ndlovu's. Obaba are not holding much conversations with Aunty Nokwenkosi's man. One of their younger brothers or Qiniso if not Afika is the translator between them for some words. The tent was beautifully decorated and now the festivities of Christmas have started. Any form of gifts that would be presented will be given after eating. Cholo and I went to get to get cold drinks and came back. I say next to Sakhile who was looking at his newly found cousin Andrea across the table.

“So Miss. Are you my cousin?”, Andrea speaks.

He is looking at my direction.

“No, I am•••”

“She is mine pretty boy don't even think about it”, Sakhile hisses.

I place the cold drink on the table.

“Sakhile”, he doesn't look pleased.

“I was just asking”, Andrea raises his hand up.

We close our eyes and start praying before we indulge in our food. Conversations are flowing around the table and I can't just stop looking at Siena. She looks like a person who doesn't try to be beautiful but is just beautiful even if she woke up from a rough day. She is well spoken as well. We are done with eating and the gifts are now being shared among everyone.

Sane gets an all paid expense trip to Tanzania by Sikelela and she is very happy about it. I am very happy for her really. We share a hug while at that moment of being happy.

“Thank you Gatsheni”, she lets me go and goes to hug her husband.

“I am glad you are excited”, Sikelela.

“I mean it's a trip my God!”, Sane says.

The gifts are still passed down until everyone received their gifts. I got one from my kids and I really love it.

The afternoon comes and music is playing. We have washed the dishes and packed what needed to be packed away. Sakhile and Afika are showing off their moves with the young ones.

“Ngingaphuka mina ngipequka kanje (I would break my bones of I tried doing that)”, Snikiwe says and we laugh.

“This is what they do in every family gathering”

“Looks fun”, Siena says.

“Maybe you should join them?”, Sane says

“I can't dance that.”, we laugh.

We sip on our drinks as we watch these men try to break their bones. The song changes and Where I wanna be plays, The ladies go crazy.

“Ezasebusheni bethu ke lezi(These were our jams when we were young)”, Sane says.

We start joining in the dancing as bad as we are. I remember how I used to listen to this song while I was still a newly wed. I was still very young. Time really flies ,the times when going to Durban in December was much fun when we were young.

“I'm where I wanna be

I'm where I should be

In your arms, in your heart.

Is where I should be ”-

Sikelela starts fumbling his way into dancing and Sane is cheering on his two left feet man much to the embarrassment of their kids. Sakhile comes my way and moves with me just a little.

“You used to love this song”, he says.

“Very much. I was pregnant with Zabelo that time”, I say.

He kisses my neck and I giggle.

“Stop it Sakhile”

“I love you Slindo, know that ok?”

I nod my head. I could feel his warm breath by my neck tingling me so much.

“Marry me again MaNgcolosi”, he says.

I pause a bit.

“I promise I will be a better husband”, he says.

“Sakhile”, I turn to him and he goes down on his knee and pops out a ring.

I look at him and everyone who is around us. They now have their attention on us.

“I have to go”, I quickly put my drink down and rush off.

“Slindo!”, I hear him call me as I walk away.

I have been sitting on this rock for some time now not knowing if a snake will appear and strike me or not. Not caring about

anything at the moment. My face feels dry and my eyes also feel heavy.

“Slindo”, I look up and Sane rushes up to me with a torch.

Cholo with Snikiwe and Siena stand In a distant from where I am holding their phones as flash lights.

“Come here”, she takes me in her arms.

“Everything will be ok”, she says.

“I shouldn't be doing Nazo like this”, I say

“Nazo is no more Slindo. He won't come back and you are happy with Sakhile right?”

I sniff.

“Let go of Nazo.Please”, she says.

I nod my head.

SAKHILE

Slindo disappeared on us. On me, I thought maybe this is the step that we are ready for and I am ready for it. I have been here in the grave yard and stood before the tombstone that is

infront of me. So many deaths have strike in this family. Time is limited with one another and you wouldn't know who is next.

“Ndoda(man)”, It's Sikelela.

We both look at the tombstones infront of us.

“How many children do you think Sizwe would've had?”, he asks.

“50”, we chuckle.

“I was expecting that from you”

“I know”

There is silence between us.

“Don't worry much”, I look at him.

“What if I rushed everything and she comes back and doesn't want anything anymore. You know how Slindo Is like”, I say

“Give her time”, I sigh and nod.

“I will”, we keep our silence.

CHAPTER 13

I came back and Sane accompanied me to the bedroom and I got in there after sharing a hug with her and just after she was making sure that I was ok. I took off my clothes and went to the little bathroom in this outside building. I got inside the shower and let the water flow on my body as I took a bath. When I was done I got out and took the towel wrapping myself with it. I got in the room and took my cosmetics and lotioned my body before I slipped into a night dress. I got in bed and I look at the side. I hear the door opening and there is some shuffling before the door closes. The footsteps come closer to me and he stands in front of me with hands in his pockets.

“Can we talk?”, he asks.

“Okay”, I nod my head and sit up.

I cover my lower body with the cover and he sighs before he starts speaking.

“I am sorry for my stupidity. I don't know what I was thinking when I just popped the question without knowing if you are comfortable for us to take things back to the next level again. A difficult one. I have realised that you have recently lost Nazo and the wound might be fresh and us getting married would trigger that.”, he sits next to me and pulls me to his chest.

"I am sorry baby", I breathe out and hug him.

"I am just overwhelmed by everything", I say

"Do you love me or you feel pressured to move?", he asks.

I keep my silence before I look at him.

"I do love you Sakhile."

"I don't want you to feel obligated to say that", he says.

"No, I do really."

He smiles and kisses my forehead.

"Are we ok?", he asks.

"Yes we are very much", I say

"Should we lay off the marriage topic?", he asks.

"It is just lawfully. Basically you are still my wife", he says.

"Eversince we got back together you don't fail to remind me that", he chuckles.

"You have to know that and that's everything I do is for my wife and kids", he says.

"Mmmh I hear you"

"Keep the ring without any solid decision because I will loose it"

"Sure"

We stay in the position that we are in just in silence. I love Sakhile and I am just afraid of things but we have gotten this far without trouble. I will just have to let his past be his past.

We stayed for a week before we left Msinga going back to our busy lives. Well their busy lives when mine is not busy at all. It is just busy during the holidays when I have to take the kids out somewhere for them to enjoy some time away from home. Right now we are going to go shopping with Linathi for groceries at the mall. I hardly drive my car these days and the purpose was to travel with it alot. We get to the mall and I park the car and take my hand bag before we both hop out of the car and lock it before we make our way inside the mall.

“Mom when am I getting a new phone ?”, Linathi asks as soon as we pass Game.

“Your father said no cell phone for you until you finish Grade 12”, I say

“But that's like 2 years from now”, she says.

“Yes that's what he said”

She sulks. There is nothing I could do and Sakhile has made up his mind about the matter. She shouldn't have talked to boys knowing the kind of a father that she has in her life.

“Go and get the trolley”, I say as soon as we enter the grocery store.

She goes and takes it before we get inside and start with our shopping. I take what is needed and throw it right inside the trolley.

“Slindo Hi”, I turn around and it's Ciyela.

I didn't know what to do or how to act but I just smiled her way despite anything else.

“Hi, how are you?”, I ask

“Hello Linathi”

“Hi Aunty”, I look at Linathi and she walks away from the aisle.

“What can I help you with Ciyela?”, I ask.

“I just wonder what you have over these Ndlovu men . Have a nice day”, she walks away right after.

I follow after that and went to find Linathi. We get what we need and we go and pay before leaving with our things. I am just glad that Ciyela didn't cause any drama at all. I have kept Sakhile's ring back home in its box. It's good that he knows himself and that he would loose such an expensive ring. He misplaces things alot and is forgetful where he last placed them at times. We get in the car after loading in everything and drive off on our way home.

“Mom can I ask a question?”, it's Linathi.

I wonder what she really wants to ask. I am curious yet I am not really ready for her question.

“Yes you can ask”

She sighs and breathes out.

“Why are you with Dad?”, I didn't expect that one at all.

“Uhm, you don't like him?”

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I ask.

“Well it's not that I don't like him, I mean he is my dad but I am just asking. When I was young you said you could never go back to him because you have daddy Nazo.”, I don't know what to say.

“Yes I did”, I say softly.

“Don't get me wrong mom but I feel like you are telling me that it is ok to go back to you ex when you certainly had reasons of breaking things off them. Shouldn't you be moving forward with that?”, she asks.

“You are still young Linathi and you wouldn't understand”, I grip on the steering wheel.

She keeps her silence. I do the same as well.

“I love daddy Nazo. I also love your father Linathi. What happened between him and I years ago it is between me and him. You are a child and you shouldn't be involved in what your father and I are doing. He is not ill-treating you right? And he loves you with all of his heart”

“I know. He is a great dad but is he good to you?”, I look at her and smile.

“Yes he treats me well. Don't worry”, she nods.

I sigh right after that.

The boys have helped with unloading the grocery and I have started with the cooking today giving the helper some time off to enjoy tea with Gogo. They are watching a show together that I have learnt is their favourite show together. Sometimes when I look at my children I just can't believe that I have groomed them and brought them this far. I never thought that I would be where I am in life. My one wish when I was growing up is to have many children as possible with my husband and have a good home and loving parents for them and I did get living parents for them in a long run and a warm home with Nazo, though as time went by the boys wanted to live closer to their father but the parenting we did was quiet well. My phone rings

and I go and take it. I answer while stirring the pot and checking if everything is still in order.

“Gatsheni”, I say

“Mkami, How are you?”

“I am fine. I am just•••”

“What?”

“I think we need to sit the kids down and tell them about the changes and us. They are confused”, I say

“I hear you and you do have a valid statement there”

“So swing by after work?”

“I will, do you need anything else?”

“No I am fine thank you”

“I love you Slindo. I really do”

“I love you too Sakhile. Let me go, my pots are burning” he chuckles.

“Let them burn.”

“Haibo Wena how can you say that?”, he laughs.

“I will come and assist you with cooking”

“You and cooking? That is a never ”

“You are hurting me Slindo”

“That is the truth. Sakhile I have to go”

“You don't love me anymore”, oh my god he is being a baby now.

“I love you Gatsheni. You know that”, I say

“I love more than anything. I will see you later my love”

“Okay later then”

We hang up and I carry on with the cooking. Linathi comes and helps here and there and I should say this daughter of mine is too spoilt she can't do a thing. I have to teach these kids the basic skills of life. Atleast Samkelo and Zabelo know how to make some stuff courtesy of my grandmother. Linathi is the princess of everything and Nazo wouldn't let her lift a finger unless it's to carry something precious. I know what you are saying, but she has a gold heart.

We get done and later on Sakhile arrives. He is here now with my grandmother at the lounge speaking whatever that they are speaking off. I go and dish up for everyone and so as him included and we all sit together. Joining in the conversation here and there with the helper as well. After everything is done the helper takes the dishes and my grandmother says her good byes to Sakhile before she goes to bed. I ask the kids to stay

and they are all seated down as we stand in front of them. I am nervous and scared at the same time.

“We have something to tell you guys”, I say

“Are you pregnant?”, It's Zabelo.

“No, I am not”, I say

“Your father, Uncle Sakhile and I are together now”, I say.

He holds my hand for assurance that he is here.

“You love him just like daddy?”, one of the triplets ask.

I nod.

To much of their understanding I was glad that we were able to sit them down and talk about this.

“Ok You can go now, it's late”, I say

They all stand up and say their goomy dbyes before disappearing.

That went well actually. I accompany Sakhile out of the house to his car and he holds me close to him.

“When are you coming to visit me?”

“Anytime is fine with me”

He kisses my lips and forehead.

“Okay fanele ufike ngikuvale (You should come)”, I hit his chest lightly.

“Haibo”

“If I don't do it to you then who?”

“true”

He gives me a kiss.

“I will see you tomorrow my person ”

We let go of each other and I left going inside the house before he got in his car.

CHAPTER 14

I put my hands in the air as I am moving around as smoothly as possible. It's the end of the year now, the last day of this year and approaching a second one from Nazo's death

I am in my element at the moment. I won't lie, no I wouldn't lie and say that Sakhile didn't possibly make this relationship enjoyable between us, I feel like I am his Queen. His everything just the centre of his world. Maybe I am exaggerating but that is how I feel.

“You can't dance”, I can hear his voice through this music.

We are at Sakhile's house majority of the Ndlovu's , mainly his cousins and their wife and kids are here to enjoy New year's Eve together before we hop into the new year. I have had about 3 glasses of Wine now and I am feeling free. I have checked on the kids and they are still well by the jumping castle. Yes we always get entertainment for them so they wouldn't feel bored or left out. While growing up we used to light a steel wool and Swing it around when it was New year's with Nosi and after that we would go and sleep. No cooked food or family members home. I don't know my uncle as he died when I was 2 years old but my grandmother loved him. He cared more than my mother did I guess.

“I can, see”, I dance and he laughs.

We dance together and while some are of them are having conversations and some are dancing with us. The new cousins are also here as to know and bond with their cousins. I believe that this next year would be wonderful and refreshing as it should be. I really hope so.

“I am going to get another glass”, I say

“Let me accompany you

I nod and we move to the inside of the house. I get in the kitchen and take the wine bottle and I pour some wine while Sakhile quickly dashes to through the passage. I take a sip of my drink and keep on drinking waiting for him until he comes out and takes his drin

“Let’s go”, we go out.

We go and sit down. The guys start to braai the meat. We have already cooked and put everything on the warmer waiting for the clock to strike 12 and we are into the new year. It has been a long one and the wait for Samkelo’s results is making me feel anxious as well but it is fine. He will start all over again.

“Sthandwa Sami”, I look at Sakhile.

“Yes?

“What are you thinking of?”, he kisses my forehead.

“Just things.”, he nods his head.

“Sakhile leave Slindo and come help us”, Qiniso complains.

“You live with your women, I don't”, Sakhile says

They chuckle.

“So Andrea are you married?” ,Lange asks.

“No, I was engaged but it ended”, He says.

They conversate with Lange and they speak about their profession and also how long they would stay here before going back to their lives.

Ase comes running towards me with Chiliza's child behind him.

“Mami !

“Mami, Can I have some chips ?”, he asks.

“Go inside the house and take them from the counter”, he nods.

They run inside the house and get what they wanted before running out. They get done with the meat and they go and place the meat inside the house.

It's the morning of a new year and I feel so tired and drained. I felt like I couldn't move anything and if it wasn't for Sakhile

suggesting I drink water before I sleep then I Wouldn't be able to wake up from this side. I scan my eyes around the room and they land on this man next to me. I shake him a bit and he opens his eyes. I fall into his arms and he groans as he accepts me in them.

“Good morning

“Good morning how are you?

“I am good, how are you?”, he asks.

“I slept well

He trails his hand on my skin.

“I feel a bit tired”

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I say

“It's the drinking”, he says

I yawn a bit while he kisses my forehead.

“Sleep”, he says.

“No, I need to wake up”, I get up and go and take my gown

I wear it and weary slippers as well before heading to the bathroom and brush my teeth then wash my face before going out of the bedroom.

I get to the lounge and the kids are already up watching some cartoons that are playing. I greet them before their concentration goes back to the screen in front of them. I go to the kitchen and check the left overs before I warm them up. I am tired to make any breakfast at the moment. Snikiwe walks in the kitchen carrying a baby bottle in her hand.

“Goodmorning”, I say

“Good morning. How are you?”

“I am good and yourself?”, I ask

“I am good, sleeping more than before

I nod and make food for the kids while she makes the bottle for her child. She walks off after she is done and I serve the children. The older ones wake up and they come and make their own food. I take some food as well and go back to the bedroom. I get inside and close the door. The bed is not made and Sakhile is still laying there on his phone. He sits up when he sees me and I get on the bed as well.

“Here is some food”, I give it to him.

He thanks me and starts eating. I look at him as he does so.

“Is there something wrong?”, I shake my head.

“No, there is nothing wrong”, I say

“Talk to me

“I love you and it scares me at times”, I say

“Is this about Nazo?

I shake my head.

“It doesn't have anything to do with him. I have accepted that he will never come back

“I won't hurt you Slindo, I promise”, he says.

“Thank you for that

“Let's eat and go somewhere together

“Where?

“You will see”, he says

I nod and we start eating together before I take the dishes to the kitchen. By then everyone is up and about. I went back to bath with Sakhile before I told Sane that we are going out for a little while and we would be back soon. I wonder where we are going really.

We are at the taxi rank. I don't know why Sakhile brought me here really and what is the purpose of it.

“Stand here

I stand where he tells me to stand and he comes behind me and holds my waist slightly.

“You were standing here when I saw you”, he says

“What was on your mind then?”, I ask.

Then I was taken by the man who passed me and had a cute moustache on his face. A high school girl like me taken by him.

“That I wanted you

“Were your intentions true in the beginning?”, I ask

“No

He answers honestly.

“But they are now”, he says

I turn around and look at him.

“I am Slindokuhle Bhengu”, I say

“Sakhile Ndlovu Ntokazi, Does your boyfriend know how lucky he is to have you?

I laugh.

“I think he does since he proposed”

“I guess I am late then

“You just made it in time”, I step forward

I give him a kiss and he returns it. We hear some cheers and claps forgetting that we are in a taxi rank. I break the kiss off and shy away from all the attention that is now given to us.

“Wadla Gatsheni!

They don't subside for a minute.

“Why are you acting all shy?” Sakhile asks.

“Stop it please

“You started it

“I hate you right now”, I say

“I love you just as much

We left the taxi rank and went to get some food before going back home. I love this Ndlovu man and the time for me to move on is great. Nazo will have to forgive me. He had given me the best of everything and now Sakhile is doing the same as well.

CHAPTER 15

CHILIZA

I was stuck under the work that is in front of me. My leave was short lived after that I had to get back to work and busy myself with it. I love my job very much but being a mother of 3 and Also having a busy day ahead is too much at times.

“Hello Sisi would you need anything?”, I peak over my laptop.

It's the helper. She is in her thirties while I am in my late 20's soon I would be thirty as well.

“No, thank you”, she nods.

“Your sister is here”, I nod.

“Please tell her I am here in my office”

She nods and walks away. Honestly speaking I love the interior design of my office, Qiniso's designer knew what she/he was doing here in this house. I broke up with Amy a few years ago when I had my second child of which is Qiniso's first child. It was all a mess but I really loved that woman. I don't know where we would be now If I didn't do what I had done but I don't ever regret having my kids in my life.

“You are deep in thoughts”, It's Ciyela.

“How are you?”, I stand up from my chair.

She throws her hand bag on the couch and drops her body there while heaving a sigh.

“I am not ok”, she looks at me.

“What is wrong?”

“My relationship failed. It didn't work out as well as I thought it would”, she says.

I quickly rush her side and drop myself next to her before I pull her for a hug and brush her back.

“It's ok. Sometimes things just don't work out”, I say

“Yeah”

There is silence between the both of us. I break the hug and look at her while smiling.

“There are plenty of men out there for you to have”

“How is Sakhile?”

I look away from her face and fiddle with my fingers.

“He is ok”, I say

“I love him”, she sighs and buries her face in her hands.

“It's late now. He has moved on”, I say.

“With Slindo right?”

She asks then looks at me. I nod , I can't sugar coat it and I won't tell her that he proposed to her and that they might be back to being married to each other again.

“Yes, they are happy and content”

She nods biting her bottom lip, my phone rings and I go and take it. I answer it while turning my back on Ciyela.

“Hello”

“Can you open the gate for me, I forgot my keys”

“Sure”

I hang up and grab the gate keys from my table.

“How are my kids?”, Ciyela asks.

“They are fine. They went out with their father”, I move from the room and walk out.

I go outside and see his car parked at the gate. He gives a hoot before I open the gate and he drives in. It comes to a halt and the kids jump out so as my little rascal. Qiniso does the same and picks up the little one as the other two take things from the boot.

“Hey guys did you enjoy your day out with dad?”

“Mommy ! Daddy bought a car for me”, my second born shouts.

“Really?”

He nods.

“Go inside quickly”, they hug Qiniso before running inside.

I am grateful that he doesn't exclude my daughter out of the outings he does with his kids.

“Thank you”, I say

“They are our kids, no need to thank me”, he says

I nod.

“I have to go”, I try and take the child.

“We need to talk Chiliza. This ain't it”

“About what?”

“Us, we are adults we have children together. We can't wait for drunk attraction to happen in order for us to show what we feel for each other. I want you. You know that”

“I know but I can't give you what you want. I am sorry”, he nods

“I will see you”

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he hands the child to me and kisses my forehead.

He walks away and gets inside his car before he drives out. I close the gate and walk inside the house. I can hear the kids chatting up a storm with Ciyela and probably telling her about their outing with Qiniso.

SLINDOKUHLE

“Pack up quickly and put those toys away unless you are playing outside with them”, I say

The boys start packing their toys away while I help them out. They finish up and take their toys away.

“Ningcolisa kwami(You are making my house dirty)”, I turn around and look at him.

“I told them to go and play outside”, I say

“I am joking”, he places the car keys on the coffee table and kisses my neck.

“I missed you”, he says

“I am here until friday”

“That’s in a few days. It's not enough”, he says

“Haibo that's big”

“But Slindo”

“You are such a baby Sakhile”

“I am your baby”, he says.

“I know, come let me go and make food for the kids and you are helping”

“I guess being father of the year isn't as nice”, I gasp and lightly hit his chest.

He chuckles at that moment.

“I am joking”

“You better be”

“Come let's go”

We go to the kitchen and I take out the ingredients that we will use to make food for the kids. I have never seen Sakhile hands on in the kitchen so this will be out to be interesting.

“Its so Amazing to be loved”, The person who came about that line was very much truthful in that.

It is so amazing being in love. I am about to enter my biggest year on this earth with children as grown as mine but I still feel

like I am at the first sight of love. Love is about learning right and so have we learnt and grew from what we were Previously before. I am laughing more and smiling more than I thought I would at this time. Behaving like kids at times. Is that love ? happiness clouding a person? I don't know how to describe the feeling but it is there.

“Sakhile stop it”

We are rolling over the bed behaving like children when we are supposed to be sleeping. There are enough children in the house already for us to behave in this manner is something that is not supposed to be happening.

“Ha, ah Slindo it's my turn to play”, he says

“But you made me loose”

We are fighting over his phone. For a measly game called Candy crush. He only let me play if I become a good sport but right now I am not one at all. He disturbed me in my defense but he is not taking lightly in that.

“Slindokuhle Ndlovu”, he is more firm now.

“Give me a chance again. It's your phone you play everyday”, I say

“That’s it!”, he pulls me by my legs.

“Ah! Sakhile!”

“You are making noise”

“You are pulling me”, he gets on top of me and locks my hands before taking his phone.

“Now it's my turn”, I giggle and he chuckles.

“I love you”, he states into my eyes as he utters those words.

“I love you too.”

He leans in and gives me a kiss on the lips which further deepens. My hands go to his head and hold there. The phone to be forgotten about when his hands go about navigating around my body. We break the kiss and only our heavy breathing is echoing around the room.

He rolls himself to the other side of the bed and sighs. I sit up and look at him.

“Are you ok?”, I ask

“Yeah I am”, I nod.

He keeps this silence for the time being.

KHETHIWE

“It's time to rest now Dali wami”, I turn to look back at him.

“I will be there in just a minute”, I close the box in front of me filled with some beads.

“You are back at it?”, I nod my head.

I am not as good as I was back then but with more practice I will be ok”

He comes and sits on the couch and takes my hands into his.

“I am happy you are here. I have missed you so much”

“You saw me everyday”

“Yes but didn't sleep next to you everyday”, he says

“I understand”

He leans in and kisses the corner of my lips.

“Stay here I am coming back”

I nod as he stands up and walks away. He comes back with hair products and a doek, he takes a cushion and places it on the floor before I sit on it and he sits on the couch. He starts touching my hair in the process while combing it. He always loved doing that.

“Your hair is still soft”

“I never relaxed it ever again”, he chuckles.

“You used to love perms”

“Do they still do them?”

“Not anymore. Not alot of people do them”, I nod.

He takes a doek and wraps it around on my head

“There you go”

“You got better at that”

“Oyi was my doll”

I laughed.

He helps me up and goes to the radio. He plays some Jazz and comes my way.

“May I have this dance?”, I nod.

He takes my hand and dances with me slowly. I lay my head on his chest and listen to his beating heart while closing my eyes. I imagine him and myself by the river when we were young. The young herder who had a very deep voice is my husband now. The father of my children. The man who gave everything to me that was beyond my dreams and for him to still be my husband today. I am thankful for that.

“I love you Qaphile”

He kisses my forehead in the process of it all.

I will love him till I take my last breath.

CHAPTER 16

I have left Sakhile's house just a few days ago. Honestly speaking I do miss him and his silly cuddles and also us fighting over playing Candy crush on his phone when I should've downloaded one on my phone and left him alone but I love playing it in his phone. Waking up in the morning and to find him curled up next to me instead of an empty bed side and only be left with his scent. It's the little things that had me miss him and love him more than I thought or would've thought I had loved him before. See how bad I am right now?

We are just a few weeks before Sakhile's birthday meaning another year added onto his life and meaning how much he is getting old now. He doesn't seem to see himself growing older. The things and habits that he now does say something else. He is more clingy now than he has ever been before. He is definitely getting old but he is aging finely. Already the grey hairs have popped out but grey looks great on him am I am even scared the little girls will find him as attractive as I see him.

I am currently planning something for his birthday. I want it to be something memorable and remarkable for him. Life is too short and we only have to give the fullest than holding back. I am not holding back on anything now and I am a certified

house girlfriend now. You can call me that actually a certified house baby mama with a pinch of being a girlfriend. I am so old for this but I am enjoying it. Please don't judge. I have taken the time and actually got myself a job. Planning a big celebration for a man like Sakhile can be tough and I want everything to be perfect, he is a man of taste and great calibre and that needs to be shown all in his celebration.

I am busy in my room with a laptop on my lap and looking for any possible good designs and party ideas for a man who will be approaching 50 in the next coming years. Yes he still has years left in him before he approaches retirement years and he has a 10 year old son as his last born but he takes Ase as him being young. Unless they are all in their 20's in Sakhile's mind he is still young and fresh.

“Mom”, I look up from my laptop and it's Linathi.

She walks in and plops herself next to me and points on the laptop.

“I like that”, she says.

“Mmh what do you want?”, I ask

“I am bored and Ase is not here to play with me”, true.

He left going to see his Maternal grandmother. He doesn't usually visit his mother's side of the family mainly because they don't care about him but are more interested in Sakhile's

pockets. You see money attracts spirits that are not even needed.

“How does this look? Will your father love it?”, I turn the laptop to her showing her the set of flowers set up on Pinterest.

“Are you planning a wedding?”, she grabs the laptop.

“No”

She types away and then a few suggestions pop up.

“Old man party plans”, she says with much satisfaction.

“If your father hears that he will bite your head off”

“He is old though”, I shrug her off.

She stands up and schemes around in my room while I am busy browsing here. She takes the small velvet box into her hands and opens it.

“Where did you get this?”, she asks.

I look up to her and she takes another one as well.

“Don’t loose any of those”, I say

“You have about 5 rings here mom!”, I sigh before placing the laptop down.

“Two are my wedding rings and one is from Christmas”, I say

“The one dad gave to you before you ran off?”, oh great. She knows the story.

“And one is from Daddy Nazo. It's my wedding ring”, she takes them and comes sits next to me.

She placed the rings in front of me. I take one and look at them.

“This one I got from your dad when we first engaged”, I say

She takes the ring and plays around with it before I opened another one.

“This is from when I got married to your dad”

“Mmmh, they look Shiney”, of cause they should look Shiney. I keep things well.

She smiles as she holds the rings in her hands and looks at me before it fades a bit.

“What is wrong?”, I ask

“Will you marry dad? Does that mean we will live together?”

I sigh and tuck my lower lip behind my front teeth.

“I don't know.”, I keep my silence there after.

“You know mom, A wise man once said to me that love is like a rose with thorns”, I frown.

“What does that mean?”, I ask.

She picks up one of the open boxes.

“The rose is what you want and the thorns are the challenges and disappointments accompanied by love.”, she says.

“Who is this wise man?”, she is hesitant with the answer.

“Bolton”, she heaves a sigh.

I raise my eye brow in question.

“Your boyfriend?”, I see her blush a little.

“I wish one day he would be”, I am in awe with what she says.

I feel frightened and honoured that she is sharing this with me. Her mother without any fear at all. Feelings, a bit of emotions are going through me and tears want to come out. Joy is the word, I never had the opportunity to sit down with my mother like this and talk about boys and dating and love and wise men we meet. I had Nosi who was also longing for guidance from an older female figure who has been through it all.

“You•••You are telling me about a•••A boy Linathi”, she quickly looks at me.

“Are you going to tell dad? Am I in trouble?”, I shake my head and wipe the corner of my eyes.

“No, I am happy to hear about all of this. You are growing, feelings develop”, I say

“And you loved dad at 18, will I have a boyfriend when I am 18?”

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with the kind of father you have, you should be looking at 35.

“No, I was young and stupid then. I want you to go and study before having a boyfriend, any boy you want”, she smiles.

“I will wait for Bolton then”, she really likes this boy.

“Where did you meet this Bolton?”

I have to ask because she schools in an all girl's school so where could she possibly have met this boy.

“It one of my friend's brother. I haven't told him I like him though”, she says

“Good, don't act on your feelings”, I say

She nods.

“Go and put those away”, she stands up and goes to put everything away.

I get lost in thoughts for a moment there after.

****(FLASH BACK)****

“Are you going to Sobantu this weekend?”, it's one of my school friends.

We always told each other our Friday plans which revolved in me trying to squeeze myself in my mother's new family just to feel like I was part of the family since I was young. I was trying to bond with my siblings as well as they are the only siblings I have. I don't even know where my father could be in this place called earth, alive? Dead? We may never know.

“Not this weekend. I have to be home. Gogo is complaining”, our shoes already covered in dust from school.

Our teachers today we're behaving some what and it was already the grade 12 pressure on them. The slow learners being the most of which should've been out of school from the time my mother finished her high school year but they are still here hitting on us young ladies and bullying the other kids. The teachers are tired and they can't kick them out. Everyone has the right to education. When we started grade 8 there were about 60 to 70 learners in a class and now we have been reduced to 50 learners. Some we left in other grades and some got pregnant and dropped out. It was part of the warnings we got about high school.

We exited the school gates that moment.

“Who is that?”, my eyes wondered to his direction.

There he was, the man I met at the taxi rank 2 months ago and last weekend at my little brother's welcoming ceremony. My cheeks feel heated just by thinking of the way he kissed me last week. He asked me to be his girlfriend and I agreed to what foolishness that I don't know. How would I see him? I have never had a boyfriend before and he seems too proper for him to want me but I agreed anyway and he is now here on a Friday after I last saw him last week.

“Sakhile”, It almost came out as a whisper. I clear my throat now lost for words just by seeing him.

He is handsome oh God he is handsome. Simple in his jeans and a t-shirt, the hat is not to be missed and his neat moustache that makes him look grown at the age of 24. He is 6 years older than me, my new boyfriend is. Nosi would faint just by hearing that but she always with men older than her and it doesn't bother her one bit so he might be an exception. He is next to a car that he was leaning on but has now stood up right when he got a glimpse of my chubby face.

“I...I have to go”, I look at my friends who are looking at this man.

He is handsome. Is he really my boyfriend or maybe he is here to break things off as he realised I am not mature and old enough to be with him. I am just a high school girl that is too young to be his woman. His girlfriend.

I make my way to him and he smiled, gosh that smile makes my heart beat faster than anything. I could feel myself getting nervous and my palms sweating as I hold onto my sewed on bag. I look down when I reach him. I am embarrassed that I don't look half as decent. My hair has a messy Benny and Betty that I brushed so well in the morning but during the day it has ran out of it's beauty. My back pack cannot hold more than 5 heavy books as it will break and be the end of my grandmother's hard work of sewing the straps together. Nosi bought it for me at some cheap China store last year and it only costed below a hundred bucks but it didn't make it to 2 months before it started breaking. I didn't buy new shoes this year and the hole underneath it makes me feel each and every rock I step on. Nosi tried with the uniform. It was better than anything that I had on now but when I asked for money from my mother it's always the same story that I have up. "I will ask my husband", she would never get back to me.

"Hey", I look down.

He is greeting me with a smirk on his face.

"Hello", I say softly.

He chuckles and comes closer to me making my heart race even more.

“Hawu Slindo you are shying away from me now?”, I look at him.

He still had that stupid smirk on his face.

“I came to fetch you”, he says

“And take me where?”, I ask

“Out to eat Sthandwa sami”, I blush. I am flushed with what he said.

He opens the door to his car and I look around. My friends are still standing but a distance away. I get in the car slowly and seat myself there. He wasn't disgusted no but had the stupid grin on again. He closed the door and got inside the car then held my hand.

“You look beautiful Sthandwa sami”, I shy away

I looked away from him as the car started and he drove off with his hand hooked in mine.

“Sthandwa Sami”

Yes I am with this stupid fool that I call the father of my children. We are together in his car and I have been pulling this gown over my thighs since I got in the car. We are supposed to be talking about the yearly school budget and what the kids may need before starting school again and still we are waiting for Samkelo's results before we plan anything else after that

but his man has is not making this talk easy. He has shifted his seat and mine to his own comfort so he can torment me with his fingers.

“Sakhile ”, he plants a kiss on my plump cheeks and pulls back.

“Wow ! What a baby mama I have !”, he says more dramatically.

I am blushing at this fools exaggeration.

“What a stupid baby daddy I have”,I say

“But you love him”

“I do, how was your day?”

He lays his head on my lap before heaving a sigh.

“It was long and tiring. I was doing the driving today”, I nod.

“I am sorry, you are used to it now”,he nods.

“Yes, I am just here to drop off the card and go and rest.

Tomorrow I am fetching Ase from his grandmother”, the last part he says with much annoyance in it.

“You are a great father Sakhile”, he looks at me.

I smile and kiss his forehead.

“Thank you”

CHAPTER 17

FLASH BACK

We were at Mc Donald's, I had never been inside but have eaten food from here brought by Nosibusiso from time to time after her dates with her man. Today I am sitting down in front of this man who has been looking at me for so long. I felt uncomfortable at some point but his eyes never shifted as we waited for our order. That's when I started looking at the party next door. Yes there is a group of children with their parents playing and it seems like it is some 2 year Old's birthday and they are here to celebrate. I have been smiling while some cute faces wave my way and smile at me. It felt heart warming. I would love to have children one day and be the best mom that I can be. I want to be an involved parent in my child's life.

“Look at me Slindo”, My heart pulses fast as he says so.

My eyes are still glued at the children who are playing in the play area. I see a group of Alexandra high school students walking in Mc Donald's after a long day of school and some cars Queued for the drive through. They enter the place and soon looking sharp and neat with their maroon blazers on. My eyes have moved from the kids that are playing but are on them

now than looking at Sakhile who has instructed me to do so. Their English sounds prime and proper. It should be considering that they get taught by white people of which English is their language. I have only wish to attend a school like that. A model C school where everything is green a beautiful, where your classroom window is not broken and left like that, where we schooled with people our age and not someone's uncle who keeps on tormenting us, where English is not taught in isizulu but actually in English and not mixed. Where there is a swimming pool and get to do swimming as a sport and not end with splashing ourselves when we were 12 in rivers. I wished for that as well. I look at Sakhile and wonder which school he went to. I am sure he attended those nice schools as well.

My attention shifts from the Maroon wearing students who are ordering their meal but lay on Sakhile's face.

"Where did you school in high school?", I am curious.

"At Maritzburg boys collage", I knew it !

The hat, the blazer and rugby freak. I know those kind of schools where 'Bruh' was a thing with Afrikaans lessons as an option of language learning. Yes in these proper schools there is that. He is a hat boy. What does he see in me? Shouldn't he be interested in those girls from Maritzburg Girls High or Epworth if not Russell high school in the middle of town, those kind of girls not Slindokuhle from a school in sweet water where some

of these girls don't even know is there. A girl that has the right hair products and actually looks neat still after a long day of school. Not the one who has dusts collected on her uniform after school everyday, who gets fetched by parents or lives in town and not somewhere away from the city. I am exaggerating but it's a bit further from the city. A girl who knows a Mc Donald's menu by the back of her hand and not someone who saw foreign words and pictures when she was asked what she liked. A girl who is used to these kind of things and spoke proper English.

“Oh”

He tilts his head to the side and a frown is on his face. He is looking too much now and it makes me feel uncomfortable. Our order gets called and I am saved from the intense stare.

“I will be back”, I nod.

I hear laughter behind me and I look there. It's the Maroon children and they are having a blast while waiting for their order. Sakhile comes back with a tray and places it in front of us.

“Slindo look at me”, I finally look at him at his command.

“I love you, No one else”, he says

I am gobsmacked, he what? It's my first time hearing a boy say that. A mam actually. Even my mother's husband has never said he loves me.

"You love me?", he nods and takes a fried chip and pops it in his mouth.

"Why?"

"Why shouldn't I love you?", he asks.

"I am not the ideal girlfriend", he chuckles and takes a sip off his cold drink.

"You are ideal for me."

"I have never had a boyfriend before", I say

He stops sipping and looks at me.

"I am honoured to be yours Sthandwa sami", I blush.

I was taken, God damnit he swept me off my feet and sold me stars and fairy tails that I needed and made me sleep well at night. He swelled my heart and put warmth to it just by his words.

"Afted this we are getting a phone for you", I nod at that before taking my burger and I open it. I pick it up and take a bite.

It fumbles up and breaks apart leaving a mess on the table. I look away as I am embarrassed. I hear some laughter behind

me and it's the Maroon kids. They are looking my way laughing at me. I am red in embarrassment and tears were nearing.

“I will buy another one for you. Do you want ice cream to calm your nerves?”, it's Sakhile.

“I am not hungry anymore”, I try to clean up everything

“Leave it, I will buy another burger and ice cream. You love ice cream?”, he is smiling now.

He is beautiful, if a man can be beautiful. It's convincing.

“MaNgcolosi”, ah he got me there !

“Let’s get Ice cream Gatsheni”, he is smiling like an idiot. He chuckles just as he couldn't contain it. Was he blushing? He is looking away from my eyes. Oh my god he is shying away! He is blushing!

“No one has called me that”, he says

“I will call you that”, he is trying to suppress his sudden blush moment.

It's lovely to see. A man blush that is.

I didn't think I would fit in this dress after having 7 kids but I fit in like a glove. I look lovely I must say. I turn myself around as I observe myself in each angle and I sigh while at that. A knock

surfaces from my bedroom door and the door opens. It is my grandmother. She walks in and sits on my bed while she is looking at me.

“That dress is beautiful”

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just like the day I wore it.

“I want to sell it”, I say

“Mmhh”, I finish looking at the mirror and take off the dress before throwing it on the bed.

“Zabelo told me you and the kids are planning a party for Sakhile”, I nod.

“Yes just something for his birthday”

“You never stopped loving him huh?”

I look at her as I grab something to wear off the washing basket.

“Please gogo don't start”

“I am just asking. I am not saying anything”

“I have to go and do some cake arrangements”, she nods.

“You look pretty by the way”, I smile

“Thank you”, she stands up and walks out.

CHILIZA

This headache has got me down today. I couldn't complete what I wanted to complete in terms of work but at least I got some things done and the conference meeting was done yesterday or I wouldn't have gotten through it. I am at bed rest at the moment, I thought it would be gone if I sleep but right now it's not going anywhere.

I sit up on the bed as the cold air from the aircon fills the room. The hot temperature may be the cause of everything. I get off the bed and take my phone. It has some missed calls from cholo and Ciyela. I will call them later. I am planing of going to Nongoma just to visit my mother once again. It's good that she lives with one of our cousin's children than being all alone. That is what worried me the most before.

“You are awake”

I look at him as he is leaning by the door. He has a new hair cut and seems like he went to trim some of his facial hair. He looks good, really good and it was long overdue. He needed the cut really.

“Did you get a hair cut?”, he touches his hair and smiles.

“Yes I did”

“Finally!”, he chuckles.

I roll myself on the bed and he gets in as well. He lowers himself next to me.

“Did you drink pain killers?”, I shake my head.

“I didn't want to take them”

“Take them because this head is bothering you”, I sigh in defeat.

“I will”, he looks at me.

His hand lays on my cheek as he looks at me and I do the same.

“I want to kiss and hold you in my arms so bad”

I sigh while closing my eyes. It came out as a whisper from his lips but I heard him. I drag myself to his chest and lay there. He is dumb struck with my sober minded move. He wraps his arms around me after some time and kisses my forehead.

“I am still the man for you”, I laugh

“Oh really?”

“I am”

“Okay Qiniso”, he chuckles lightly.

“How a work?”

“Its tiring”, I respond.

“Lets take a vacation to somewhere”

“Port Elizabeth?”

“Wait you are inviting me?”, he is shocked with what I am saying.

“Yes as parents”, he chuckles.

“Mmmh Parents”

What is he thinking?, I close my eyes for a moment after that feeling the cold air in the room.

SLINDOKUHLE

I am here at Miguel's Bakery down town to place an order for Sakhile's birthday cake. I already have a picture for how I want the cake to look like and how many layers do I want. 3 is enough for a birthday cake right? A set of silver and gold rose icing sugar cupcakes by the side should be enough decoration for the cake. Yes that's the plan. I have met up with who I needed to meet up with and I bought some cake as well. I went to pay for it before leaving. I have dragged Zabelo and Samkelo on this trip and they are not impressed with that. Since I am

down town maybe I should pop in the taxi rank and say hello. Maybe leave some cake for Zethule as well while at it.

“Slindokuhle Bhengu!”, I hear someone call me.

Wow it has been so long. It is one of my old high school friend's. She is pregnant and looks heavily as well. Isn't this the age where menopause should be approaching for us but I won't judge. She comes and squeezes my body against her stomach. She went to university and they saw it best that I wasn't the cut since I was pregnant and didn't do well. My baby daddy left me high and dry.

“Oh my god how are you?”, I am given a chance to breathe after.

“I am well how are you?”, I ask

“Pregnant but good. Who are these cute boys?”

“My sons”, I smile.

They are my pride and joy.

“Oh you had more children after that one from high school.”, she smiles.

I am a bit annoyed but I compose myself.

“Yes”

“Mmmh, I will see you. Bye”

I nod and we part our ways. I open the back and Zabelo jumps inside as well.

“Guard this cake”

He nods and I close the door. Soon enough the old mate comes out. A man comes out a ‘Beyond recognition’ of what should be a Chevrolet car. The beyond recognition is Sakhile’s term for a car that can still take you from point A to B but has been roughened up a bit. If a car gets in a slight accident he sells it and buys a brand new one. He is one dramatic human but I guess he has all the money for it anyway.

“Mom let's go!”

This child! I am not his friend. I get in the car and start it before driving off. I look through the review mirror and Zabelo is enjoying some of the cake I bought and so as Samkelo.

“Are you nervous about the results?”, Samkelo nods.

“Don't worry”, I smile.

He does the same. We get to the taxi rank and I park the car. I tell these kids to get out as we make our way inside. We see Zethule and they rush up to him while I am looking for the man I came to say ‘Hello’ to and I find him.

He looks distraught and tired as he is seated on the driver's seat of a taxi. I get to him and he hops out.

“Slindo”, he smiles.

“I want us to get married again”, I didn't come to say that here but his smile just took me back to why I loved him in the first place.

“What?”, he is shocked first or is he confirming what I am saying?

“I love you”, that's all I say before I kiss him.

Whistles and cheers round up in the taxi rank but he doesn't care. He is kissing me back just the same way I am.

CHAPTER 18

Love, what is love? Do we know the pure meaning of it or we just feel it and confirm the feeling as love. As old as I am I still can't get a clear definition of what love is but the feeling of it. You can't properly define it but feel it. It's a different feeling from all feelings. Sometimes it is confused as lust or simple infatuation. Fatal attraction as well but it's deeper than that or is it?

I pulled away from the kiss. Still in his arms I felt safe that moment. His breathing pattern can only be heard by me as it is accompanied by his beating heart but fear clouds me. Then again if I let fear come between the things in my life then I Wouldn't be where I am . Life is all about taking risks right?

All eyes are on us, the stares not moving from us and so as the little cheers and whistles haven't subsided. I am even feeling afraid to look up and look around at the people who have just stopped and stared at us kissing like they have never knew what a kiss is and they are curious.

“Baby”, he says softly by my ear.

“Mmh?”, I look up to him and he smiles.

He holds my cheeks and chuckles lightly.

“I love you so much”, he says it softly.

He is not smiling anymore. He swallows as I look at him.

“I am not perfect, I never was but...”

He swallows once more before heaving a sigh.

“You are the most perfect thing in my eyes. I don't have regretful moments with you but I regret some of my actions that led you to someone else. I never realised what I had until you were gone. I love you so much and I am never letting you go ever again”, I smile.

“I love you too Gatsheni”

“Let's go and get ice cream”

I laugh at that.

“What? Why?”

“Why not?”

“Your work, the boys. I came with them”

“They are old. A few hours with you won't hurt them”

“Haibo hours Sakhile just for ice cream”

“Ok, just a few moments”

“Where are we getting ice cream?” ,I ask.

He looks up like he is thinking than back at me.

“Mc Donald's. We will get a meal as well”, I bury my face on his chest and he laughs out loud.

“Stop laughing”

“That was 22 years ago Sthandwa Sami and you are still embarrassed about it?”, I nod

“You looked cute out of place”, he lifts my chin up.

“You enjoyed watching did you?”, he nods.

“When you told me that I am your first boyfriend I felt happy. I wanted to experience alot of firsts with me”

“And it was my first time being at McDonald's”

“I noticed”

I shy away embarrassed and he keeps on laughing.

“Come let's go, people are watching us”, I remove myself from him and look around.

He goes to the taxi and takes his things before he speaks with one of the driver's before coming towards me.

We walk out of the taxi rank and actually walk to Mc Donald's. He is holding my hand and is not letting it go by any chance. We get there and I stare at the menu.

“What do you want?”, he asks.

“I will have ice cream first”, he chuckles and orders for the both of us.

This place has changed alot over the years. I look out of the glass wall and hoping to see maroon dressed kids but then I remember it's the holidays.

“Here is your ice cream”, I thank him before we go and sit down while we wait for our order.

After that little date I bought food for the boys before making our way back home. I am getting the hang of this party planning. Maybe they should put me in charge of all the events planned within the Ndlovu clan. I am just kidding but I really having nothing to do so I might consider doing it as a hobby. Already aunty Nokwenkosi is pestering us about doing Umemulo for Owami and Sakhile is still considering about that.

“You two wake up”, I don't know if it's the food or the rank buzz that has made them feel this tired.

I hop out of the car and they also do the same with the cake I bought. I make my way inside the house and it feels warmer than outside. I could hear the TV and some of the kid's noise. I go and greet gogo before making my way to the kitchen and place the cake there.

“I am tired I am off to sleep”,they are ignoring me.

Not caring if Slindo has said something or not.

There is no care in this house when they are watching TV with their grandmother. She is very Strict when it comes to that time. All silence or we listen to you if you are talking. That is how she is.

KHETHIWE

It has been close to two years since I came out of the mental institution. I feel better and haven't had any episodes or feel any down. Actually I feel utmost joy since I came here. Oyi has been visiting more frequently mainly because she lives around here in Durban. We are getting there with bonding and I heard that Joyce is still alive and she still lives around here. She is pensioning right now. I am happy with how all of them grew up and have kids and are successful. From how the Ndlovu's are now you wouldn't say they had a tough upbringing.

I still love the ocean. The love for it never died just like my love for Qaphile didn't instead I yearned to be at the beach. The ocean breeze that is here. The sounds of the waves is just calming and attractive to me. I love it ! The sun is going down. I

can see a ship right further into the ocean. It must be coming from the harbour.

“Are you feeling cold?”, He asks but still places the scarf over my shoulders.

He sits next to me on the sand and pulls me to his chest. He doesn't go to the taxi rank anymore. He says that the boys will handle it.

“I still love the ocean”, I say

“You scared me when you ran towards it”, I lightly laugh.

“It feels good”

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He shakes his head.

“At times I think where would I be if you weren't in my life”, I look at him.

“You were our motivation to work harder Dali wami. To give you all that you deserved”, he kisses my forehead lightly.

“And you deserve everything Ndlovukazi yami”, I giggled

“Oh Qaphile”

He rests me back on his chest. We look at the young ones packing away to leave from the beach while we are still seated and wouldn't move anytime soon.

SLINDOKUHLE

Being a mother is one thought task that we all don't know how to do at first but master along the way. No one is the best or the worst I believe but we all try differently In our different ways that makes mothering easy for us but to get 7 kids out of the house right now is quiet a hassle but we all have to leave in order for everything to go well.

“Everyone out now or you are staying with Gogo!”, I shout ontop of my lungs.

“Mom•••”

“Snalo I will hear your complaints in the car right now move”, he sighs and runs off.

I get my bag and take my car keys and rush after them. My hair is a mess but atleast it has a better Benny and Betty on my head. They are all out and have hopped inside the car. Already Zabelo is plugging in his phone and music blasts there. I sigh as there is nothing I could do now but to just drive off.

“Who is that?”, I ask

"J.Cole", Zabelo answers.

"He is boring mommy", it's one of the triplets.

"It's not boring Wena", Zabelo pushes his head.

"Stop it Zabelo. Eyami lengane Hayi eyethu (It's my child not ours)".

"Put some Music we can vibe with then Zabelo that's not fair", Linathi sulks.

"Samkelo likes it", he says.

"Be Fair Zabelo", I say

"If you have a phone I will let you plug in", he smiles.

Conniving son of a Ndlovu. He knows Linathi doesn't have a phone anymore.

"That's not fair", her voice is breaking.

"Take my phone and download the music you want then we will plug in", I say

"But Mah••", the boys complain.

"No buts, my car, my phone, my everything", Zabelo looks out of the window.

He is furious and Linathi is now happy.

"Dad Is better than this"

“Excuse you, do you have a car that your father bought for you?”, he looks at me and rolls his eyes.

“Zabelo Ndlovu don't start with me because I won't tolerate your attitude right now”, I look at the road before stealing a glance at him.

This child! My god I was never like this and this attitude has Sakhile all over it.

We get to Richmond crest and I park the car. Sakhile is with his father and the kids jump off and rush off to their grandfather. I hop out as well before making my way towards them and I greet.

“How are you Ndodakazi?”

“I am well baba and yourself?”

“I am good. Let me leave you two”, he walks off.

“Your son is giving me a headache”, I say while throwing myself into his arms.

“Which one?”

“Zabelo. His attitude is too much”

“I will sort it out don't worry”

Please before I am charged for hitting a child. Phela kids of today use the right of child abuse when you try and set them

straight. Back then when we used to grow up there was no such thing. Whatever was in the parent's hand that time was going to be used on your body. It shaped us and taught us things.

CHAPTER 19

I am in excitement today and also stress of how Sakhile would feel when he sees what I have planned with the kids today. Right now I told him that we should meet at The secret Garden. It really took alot for me to get a spot there and for it to not be booked today. It has enough space for everything and already the catering company has called me and told me that they are there already. The kids are away and they were fetched by Zethule after I have prepared them. I just want everything to be perfect today just for Sakhile. It's the least I could do so far.

I am about to leave the house as I am taking my bag and phone Sane calls me. I answer the phone.

“Where are you?”, she asks.

“I am on my way out”

“I hope you look proper phela We will be taking pictures and posting them”

“I am looking proper”

“Okay come then”

I hang up after that and I take my car keys. I lock up the door as everyone has left and wen to the venue. I go and hop inside my car before driving off. I am sure my grandmotjer invited

Mam'Zikhali to Sakhile's party. I am sure the trio is there and they are not to be separated. In her defence she needs someone to talk to. I have a very dramatic grandmother but I didn't mind at all. I connect my phone to the car system through bluetooth and made a call to Sakhile.

“MaNgcolosi”

“Babakhe where are you?”, I ask

“I am still home but I am about to leave, what is special about this?”, he asks.

“Nothing much. I am thinking of venturing into events planning and maybe I could look at good venues before starting and I need your support”, I change gears before I indicate to the right and check if any cars are coming from the left or right before making a turn.

“No baby I support you. You know that”

“Mmmh”

“I don't like that, Sesixabene muntu wami?(Are you angry at me?)”

“No I am not. Call me when you go to your car”

“Okay, I love you

“I love you too”, the call ends.

I need to get to the venue before Sakhile does. I won't go through town that would be a long route, I say to myself. I play some of Linathi's music just to keep me company through the journey.

I got here on time and there is not a sight of Sakhile's car. He just called me telling me that he has left home and is on his way to me. I make my way in and get a greeting from this nice lady. I am taken to the the hall where the birthday lunch will be hosted and it looks amazing but it's not the theme I had wanted. It should be Black with a pinch of Gold here and there not turquoise and creme with a pinch of powder pink.

“What is this?”

“It's what you•••”

I can feel my armpits inching from the frustration that I am feeling right now. I grab my phone from my bag and make a call to Sane while walking out of the hall.

“Dadewethu(My sister)”, she answers.

“The hall, did you see it?”

“Yes, I thought you wanted Gold and Black”, I put my hand on my forehead.

“Well it's not. What am I going to do about this ? Sakhile is on his way”

“Come to where we are and I will ask Sikelela to go and stall Sakhile while we fix this”

“Please and I don't see the welcome board as well. God be with me”

“I am coming”, I hang up after that.

I don't know what to do at this point. I should've come earlier and observed the decorating team while they came with their drapes and cloths, runners and all. This is a mess and I don't need this kind of stress for such a wonderful event I had planned out. I feel like crying at this point.

Sane finally comes and she looks splendid. She can see my stress and she tells me to calm down and Sikelela is on it. I am happy and a bit relieved that Sakhile will be stalled a bit while we fix this. I hope the cake is still ok and I ask Sane and she assures me it looks just like the photo I showed her. I am happy that something is right here. We walk away from the hall and we cross a little wooden bridge taking a walk while I am making some calls for those people to come back and fix this mess. I didn't order those colours and they were best recommend on Instagram and their decorative style captivated me. Social media and lies at this point!

I haven't checked on my kids as yet, if they are hungry or still fine. I know some of them would be hungry anytime soon now.

"I didn't ask for those colours. Please come and fix it", I sigh and pinch my nose bridge.

I sigh when they say they would call back in a minute before hanging up.

"Come let's take a walk. Fresh air will calm you down", I try to call Sakhile but his phone rings unanswered.

"Sakhile is not answering", I say

"He will answer. Don't assume the worst"

"I am not assuming anything bad Sanelisiwe"

"Okay fine I was just saying", she raises her hands up.

I try again and it goes through.

"Sthandwa sami"

"What is wrong, you sound like you are panicking", he says.

"I am fine. I just have a flat tire so I passed by the panel beaters"

"I am coming there, which Panel beater?"

"No, I am almost done", he chuckles.

“But Muntu wami how come you can't change a tire. I mean women can do anything now. Angithi nithi ubani?(You say it's what?)”

“Black girl magic”, he laughs.

“Yes that”

“Cela ungiyeke tuu Sakhile(Please leave me alone)”, I feel a bit calm now.

I am smiling as I am talking to him and walking. Sanelisiwe Ndlovu only to be forgotten about.

“Did I tell you I love you today?”, he asks.

“Yes”

“Maybe I didn't say it enough. Ngiyakuthanda yezwa?(I love you)”

I nod while blushing and Sane is scoffing next to me.

“Everything I do for you and the kids.”

“Sakhile”, I am a bit speechless.

“Yes, So I love you MaNgcolosi”

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I hear his voice behind me.

I turn around and he is standing in front of me. Sane is nowhere to be seen anymore.

“Sakhile what are...”, the surprise is now ruined

“I have been waiting for you Sthandwa sami”, he comes closer to me. He is in nice formal black pants with a crisp white shirt that has no tie and a black blazer.

He has flowers in his hands, he hands them to me and I thank him. I don't know what to say

“I am the one who ruined your little decor”, he says while looking at me. I feel small at this moment. Speechless the least.

“How did you know?”

“Zabelo can't shut up about anything”

That child! I am going to get him after this.

“Let's get married MaNgcolosi”, he says

“We will-”

“Right now, the pastor is waiting for us”

“What?”

“Come”

He pulls me away, we see a man standing from a distance and he has a Bible in his hand. I assume it's the pastor. We reach him and we stand in front of him. I am still flabbergasted.

“Do you want us to pause for something greater?”, Sakhile asks.

It's his birthday and what the heck. We were going to do get married again at some point.

“No, this is perfect”, he smiles.

I can't believe we are getting married.

I am Mrs Sakhile Ndlovu once more. Gosh this feels better than the first time I did marry him. It is like I am getting married for the first time when it is the third time. This all feels too perfect and I mean it. We went to join our family after that and now we are at the hall. It still hasn't changed but I don't care anymore. The people have eaten and now we have hit the dance floor with the old folks as well. I am sure Nazo's father is showing off to his brothers that like “Hey everyone I am in love”. He can't seem to be separated from his wife. Wherever she goes he is there and it's sweet in my defense.

“When you're worth more than gold.

Girl you look like a diamond

I love the way you shine

Hundred million dollar treasure

I will do anything to make you mine

I'll put a string of pearls right in your hand.

Make love on a beach of just like sand

Outside in the rain, we can do it all night”

He softly sings by my ear as we are moving to the sound of the jazz music. He kisses my neck before making me spin and pulling me closer to his body.

“Do you love it?”, he asks as I look at my ring.

It looks pink. Unusual for the rings I know.

“Its different. Not silver or Gold”

“It's a 375 Rose Gold Morganite Swarovski Crystal Baby”, he says.

“Wow you know it too well”

“I poured my heart into choosing it”

“Where did you buy it?”, even the diamond is pink.

“It was imported from Germany 2 days ago. I am glad it fits your fingers”

“I am impressed”

“30 grand is small compared to what I want to give you Slindo”

I look at him and he smiles like he just didn't say that my finger costs R30 000.

“Oh my God Sakhile so much money just go a ring”

“Its more than just a ring. You are my wife, turn for me”, he spins me again and pulls me back to his body.

“You are everything to me and you deserve it all Sthandwa sami”

He gives me a perk.

“I love you”

This man!

“Let's leave”

“But the cake”

“We will get it tomorrow. Let's sneak out”, I smile.

“Okay”

I let go of him and walk away. I go to my grandmother and tell her I am going to the bathroom before rushing off outside.

I take off my heels and wait for Sakhile. He comes out after some time and we lock hands before running off.

“Your car keys?”, he asks.

“Here”, I hand them to him.

He quickly takes them and we hop inside my car as soon as we get there. He starts the car and drives out soon after. The sun is starting to set at that moment.

“We need to pass by the garage and get some fuel”, I nod.

He drives to the garage and we greet the petrol attendant before everything is done. Soon enough we are off on the road. I play some of songs and Sakhile frowns.

“I didn't know you listen to this music”

“It's Linathi's”

“Well she is not here”, I change the music as well. I was just tolerating it for their sake.

I am not about Nicki what what and who What else. I choose a selection from my Apple music and a song comes on. Sakhile starts to roll the window down while he whistles.

“I just got married and it's my birthday! I am 46 today!”

“Haibo Sakhile”

“Haibo baby yayikhumbula lenumber?(You remember this jam?)”, he turns the volume up and starts dancing.

I am laughing now instead of feeling embarrassed.

“Hey magasman uya joroza ,Hey magasman uya joroza

Ka meropa, ka di phala, ka di gong di tshipi,Re tla wotla. Ayi baby iyizwe(Hear it)”, he keeps on tapping on the steering wheel while he sings the lyrics and fumbles the words but the part he knows he sings it well.

“A man can't be this happy man”, he whistles again

I am looking at him and I laugh and look at the side.

“How about we drive to Durban?”

“Haibo Sakhile that is a long distance drive”

“Just an hour fela baby”, I giggle.

“If you have energy”

“I always do”

He keeps on bobbling his head back and forth.

“Enjoy the moment Slie”

“You know I can't dance”

“That doesn't mean anything”

He is really enjoying. I decide to join him as well by moving my body a little and so as my hands. I feel like a child on the moment as well. Another song comes on and we start singing.

“Don't make me wait”

“Don't make me wait”

“Oksalayo siyajola”

“Oksalayo siyathandana”, I say that part.

I move more freely and we both laugh.

“I was in the middle of high school when this song was out”, I say

“I used to love it”

I wasn't a fan of the artist as much until the song of the year that was released the year before and I loved it. Even now I still do.

CHAPTER 20

“Food is here Sthandwa Sami”, he disturbs from my view viewing moment.

I turn around from the glass window and I look at him and he pushes in the trolley full of all the mouth watering breakfast treats that you could find. Strawberries included so as pancakes.

“I am hungry”, I smile.

“Let's feed you then”

He takes some grapes and pops some in his mouth and another into mine. I smile and look away

“You should wear a gown more often”, I giggle after saying that.

“I look good right?”, I nod.

He comes and wraps his arms around my body and kisses my cheek.

“Good morning Mrs”

I look at him.

“Good morning Mr”, he kisses my cheek again.

“How are you feeling this morning?”

“Wonderful, Something's are not believable”

“I know, I don't believe it as well.”

I close my eyes and breathe in and out.

“The world is yours baby”, I open my eyes and turn to look at him.

“We should check on the kids”, he kisses my forehead.

“I have already did that. We will be back tomorrow”, he says

“We don't have clothes here”

“Its ok, we don't need clothes”, he smirks

“I am hungry”, I rush off to the bathroom.

I come out and Sakhile has already dished up for us, seated on the couch. I take my phone and sit myself between his legs after taking my food.

“Thank you”, I say

“Pleasure baby”

I get on my phone while eating and scroll through social pages. I see Sane has posted some of the pictures from yesterday captioning “What a fateful day”. Everything looks wonderful if I

could I would reverse back to yesterday. I switch off my phone and carry on eating.

“What will we do all day?”

“What lovers do”

“And that is?”

“What lovers do”

I shake my head and laugh.

CHILIZA

The tingling sensation I felt was what woke me up from this sleep but he wasn't stopping with playing with my hair.

“Mmmh”, I moan as I woke up.

I am still clamped in his arms on his chest. I don't move for a moment and check if I am still in yesterday's clothes and I am not but changed. All I remember is him trying to change me out of that dress I was in and then it was light out after that. I was tired and glad the kids are away with their grandmother. Nazo's mother is really hands on with every child in this family so as their aunt.

“You are awake”

I have gotten used to him saying that everytime I wake up.

“Yes”

I am fully awake now and I look at him.

“You look like a beautiful mess”

“Thank you”

“I was waiting for you to wake up so I can take you out for breakfast”

I nod.

“Let me go and refresh myself”, he nods and loosens his grip around my body.

I get off the bed and go to the bathroom. I pee before I brush my teeth and quickly get inside the shower. I am out in a quick one and I wrap a towel around my body.

“Your sister is here”

Is the first thing he says before he walks past me and goes to the bathroom.

I take a gown and wear it before I leave the bedroom. She is pacing up and down. The helper went home this weekend and I am assuming she came with that wine bottle because I don't keep wine in my house. She is gulping it like there is no tomorrow.

“Hey”, it's so early in the morning for visits.

“I can't believe you didn't tell me”, she says looking at me.

“Tell you what?”

“Sakhile and Slindo being married again”

I keep my silence for a moment.

“I feel betrayed. You didn't tell me you are my sister!”

“I am sick of this Ciyela okay. You ended your own marriage I didn't nor did Slindo do that so••”

She scoffs and claps her hands.

“We all make mistakes. You know Sakhile is my first everything”

“And he did nothing but give you the best but you thanked him with shit. Please it is not our fault. I love you but get yourself in check. His world wouldn't stop because you want it to stop for you”

“I wish Cholo was my sister because right now you are not being supportive of me. I am hurt here and instead of comforting me you are supporting someone else. I am so glad Malume raped you because you are bitter right now”

My heart beats fast.

“|•••”

I felt a lump form in my throat.

“Get out and never set your foot here”, It's Qiniso's voice.

“Stop being Chiliza's saviour she doesn't want you”, Ciyela says.

“Get the fuck out before you leave in a body bag.”, he says a bit firmer.

I am holding in the tears. I don't want to cry in front of her. I never thought she would rejoice my pain in that manner honestly. She quickly takes her things.

“You will remember me once these Ndlovu freaks dump you high and dry nx”, she walks out.

The door closes and I stand there staring at it for a while.

“Babe”

His hands are on my shoulders. I swallow before he turns me to look at him before he pulls me to his chest.

“I love you okay?”

Tears stream down my cheeks. I am a sobbing mess right now. He moves me and wipes my tears.

“Don't listen to her. That is our daughter and she is the best thing that has ever happened to us”, he says.

“It hurts”, I softly say

“I know. I am sorry Baby”

I nod, I quickly wipe my tears.

“Look at me”, he holds my face and makes me face him.

“We are in this together. I won't desert you and the kids ever, don't think that okay?”, I nod.

“Now be the amazing thing I know”

“I don't want to go out anymore”

“Okay we will stay in. I will order in”, I softly giggle.

“You are not romantic”, he chuckles.

“I don't have to know how to cook to be romantic”

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I look at him.

“A person who can cook is everything”

“Or is it those social medias influencing that?”

“It's the truth”

“Well in that case the boys will learn how to do that”, I shake my head

“I know you don't feel the same way but I love you Chiliza. So much”

I shy away from his eyes.

“Can I kiss you?”, I look at him.

“Please”, he pulls me closer to him.

I look at him as he lowers his head and his lips slightly touch mine. I breathe slowly before he rests his on mine. I close my eyes slowly before he starts kiss me and I return the favour. He picks me up and I place my hands on his face before we break the kiss.

“Let’s get you dressed up”, he says

“Okay, put me down”

He does and I walk to the bedroom. He follows shortly as I start getting dressed.

“Silamanisa Nini futhi mama?(When are we having another child?”, I look at him.

“Haibo Qiniso”

“A sober baby that is”, I look away from his eyes.

“I am not your baby machine of incubator ”

“You are not. You are mother of my kids”

“Dont smother me ”

“I am not”

I get dressed.

“Lets wait for the kids to grow a bit”

He smirks.

“Thank you”

SLINDOKUHLE

I kiss his lips again for the second time now seated on his lap.

“Sakhile look at me”, I say

“Wait baby I am still wrappping up with ,Zethule then I am yours”, he is in his phone.

I kiss his lips once more and he returns it. I undo his gown belt and move my hands on his chest down to his torso.

“Sakhile”

“Baby“

“Are you done?”

“Yes baby I am done”, he says placing his phone down.

I kiss him once more before I giggle.

“Hey”

“Hi”

“I love you”

“I love you too”

I run my hands all over his body and he pulls me to him.

“We have never tried it on the couch before”, he whispers.

“You reckon?”

“Yes”, he kisses my neck.

“Okay then”

“Take off that gown”

I take it off and he whistles.

“I love this”, he touches my body. I turn my head to look at him as he strokes his fingers everywhere.

We are back home now and we have just parked the car and hopped out. We make our way inside the house, we haven't talked about the living arrangements that would be done since now we are married again. The kids and all of that.

“Gogo hello”, We greet.

“How was your stay?”, she asks as soon as she hugs me.

“Wonderful, I quiet enjoyed everything”, I smile.

“I am glad you did”

We seat ourselves down.

“Eh, gogo we have something to talk about. The kids and living arrangements”, Sakhile speaks.

I hold his hand just to calm him down.

“You should call the kids in as well”, he nods.

She calls them and they come in together. The little ones come and hug me and jump on our laps. They finally calm down and seat themselves down.

“Kids as you know your parents got married again.”, they nod.

“Yes, we are not sure of how we are going to do things from now on but•••”

“We would like you guys to come with us.”, Sakhile interjects me.

“All of us?”, Snalo questions.

“Yes all of you.”

“I don't want to leave Gogo all alone”, Zabelo says first.

“Me too Dad”, Samkelo comments.

I knew these two wouldn't want to leave.

“Okay”, he settles for that.

“Do anyone want to stay?”, I ask.

“No we want to go with you mommy”

“Okay then”, I love my kids so much and the fact that Sakhile loves them all the same just amazes me just like Nazo did with his.

CHAPTER 21

The car comes to a halt and Sakhile gets out and comes to help me out. Linathi also hops out with the boys from the back.

“Good day , you must be Mr Sakhile Ndlovu”, The woman comes towards our way.

“Yes,this is my wife and kids”, Sakhile gestures.

“Nice to meet you”, she smiles as we share a hand shake.

“I hope the space is enough because we have alot of kids”, Sakhile says as he looks around the place.

“It is don't worry. It is costly though”

She walks off and we follow after her.

“Money is not an issue”, Sakhile says.

“We will view our options then decide”, I interject.

He looks at me and I shrug. We walk into the lounge and it's very open.

“This house has two lounges, A wide open kitchen plan and the floor is off wood. There is are two bedrooms downstairs here and one bathroom. Upstairs we have a little study then 3 bathrooms and 4 bedrooms.”, the sales agent says.

“This way we have a large yard and pool as you have requested”

“Pool?”, I ask and look at Sakhile.

“Yes baby a pool”

“Yes Mommy”

We walk out through a sliding door and it is very quiet.

“Schools are 10 Km away from here ”,Sakhile nods.

“What do you think Sthandwa Sami?”, he turns to me.

“It’s a lovely place but I think we should weigh our options”.

“That’s perfectly fine”, the agent says.

“My wife has spoken but I think that the place is really good for our family”

We looked around the place some more before leaving and promising to call the agent once we have weighed our options.

“Baby”, he puts his hand on top of mine.

“What are you thinking?”

“Why don't we build a house our own way you know”, he nods.

“I see what you mean but you know also the place you buy your house in guarantees great fortune for when we are gone”

That is very true. I still have the money I have from Selling the house in Sandhurst.

“We will talk properly at home”

“Let's go and eat out at Spur”

“Okay”

CHILIZA

“Hey Mom”, She waves as she passes me before going to the boot and dropping her bags in.

“Hey mommy”, he runs up to me and I crouch and hug him.

“Hey baby,how was cricket practice”, I wipe his face with my hands.

“We have a match my teacher said I should give you this”, he hands a paper to me.

I take it and read it.

“Uhm okay, I will send this to your father”, he nods.

“Get in the car”, he takes off his bag and gives it to me.

I take it and he hops inside the car and I close the door before placing his bag in the boot. I get inside the car and I drove off

while they talked at the back. I had just gotten back from work and I am very tired. Having a helper at home has its perks at times. She looks after my little one and I always make sure if I am leaving for work that at least I cleaned and if I am tired I may ask that food be cooked. I haven't talked to Ciyela since the day she said what she said. I have talked to Cholo and I didn't even bring up the fight. When school closes I want to go and visit my mother. I really miss her so very much. She is all I have that calms my sanity at the moment.

“Mommy look out!”, I hit the brakes before anything happens.

The car in front of me comes to a halt and I quickly turn to check on the kids.

“Are you ok?”, I ask.

They both nod.

My hands are shaking. There is a knock on my window and I open it.

“Hey are you ok?”, I nod.

I didn't expect this, I expected someone to go off on me.

“Yes, yes I am fine”, I say

“You seem shaken. Let me call someone for you”

“No I am fine. I will be fine”

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I smile faintly.

“I can't leave you like this. Atleast let's park the car on the side”, I nod.

She moves away and I move the car to the side of the road. She gets out of her car and comes my way.

“I am sorry I almost knocked into your car”, I apologize.

“Its ok, no one got hurt and I too have been absent minded on the road. Don't you have someone to call?”

I think of anyone I could call.

“Call dad mommy”

I look at the kids.

“Can we call him?”, the lady asks.

“Uhm Okay”, I sigh and grab my bag.

I search for my phone and I go to his number before handing the phone over to her. She starts speaking and I bury my head on the steering wheel.

“He said he is on his way and i shouldn't leave as yet”

“Thank you”

“Pleasure”

We sit for a while waiting for him to arrive. After some time of waiting I see his car pull up behind mine and he hops out. It seems like he came from the taxi rank. He is in his sweat pants and hoodie with sneakers and a Bennie to top it off. He comes towards the car and the lady jumps off her's. I open the door and get out of the car.

"Hi, I am the lady she almost crashed into"

"I deeply apologise , did anything happen to your car. I will pay for it"

"No nothing happened. I was just worried about her"

"Thank you for looking out for her", they say their goodbyes and she says good bye to me as well.

"Are you okay?", I nod.

"Yes, I was just deep in thoughts. I am sorry", I say

"Should I ask Lange to book those therapy sessions for you?"

"I am fine Qiniso you don't need to worry. I want to get home"

I hop inside the car. He stands there for a while before he goes to his car and leans by the window. He then comes back and gets in.

"I am sleeping over", great.

"We are fine and alive"

He looks over to me before he drives the car off.

“Are you hungry guys?”, he looks at them through the review mirror.

“Yes can we have burgers dad”, She moves from her seat and leans between the space between the front seats.

“Okay Nkosazane kababa(Daddy's princess)Wear your seat belt”, she moves back and wears her seat belt.

“And you?”, I look at him.

“Anything is fine”

“Wimpy daddy!”

“No, we always Wimpy when we are with you.”

They start arguing with where to eat.

“Stop arguing”, I say

They stop and I sigh deeply and lean by the window.

“Can we get take away I feel a headache coming”, he nods.

He drives through Nando's and orders. We get what we need and he takes the orders after they are done. We leave the place and he drives straight home.

“How are you feeling now?”

“I am tired that's all”

He keeps his silence until we get home. The kids hop out and we follow after them. I greet the helper and go for my son. I take him and go to the bedroom. I seat him on the before I start undressing my clothes and wearing my pyjamas.

“Can we talk?”, I look at him.

“Sure”, he walks in and takes his son. He sits on the bed and looks at me.

“You remember what you told your sister about Sakhile not waiting for her?”, I nod.

“Do you want me to wait for you until when?”

“Excuse me?”

“I want us to be a family Chiliza you know that. All my brother's are married and they have a family. I want that as well and I want it with you so until when do you want me to wait for you?”

“I can't talk about this”, I take my clothes and dump them inside the washing basket.

“We have to talk about it so I clearly know where I am.”, I turn quickly to him.

“You want to leave?”

“No”

“I don't see the need for anything else then”

He puts the baby on the bed.

“You see this is what I am talking about. You are comfortable with me but you don't want to open up to me and let me be there and love you. It's like you think I will hurt you”.

“Relationships hurt Qiniso look at everyone around us!”, I throw my hands in the air.

“We are not them”

He steps closer.

“I have been faithful to you since I got you pregnant. Waiting on my children's mother when I could've gotten another woman but I didn't because I want you and I love you”

“Qiniso”, he comes and kisses my forehead.

“Think about it. I will give you a day”, he walks out after that. I sigh.

SLINDOKUHLE.

House hunting is a bit tricky but we have finally come to a conclusion of buying a house than building our own. It will save us some time and energy but we can renovate the house we

are buying and I am ok with that. Sakhile said he won't sell his house but he will rent it out and I advices him to put everything under his children's name. I haven't officially moved in with him but I am just staying here for the time being. My grandmother said she doesn't harbour a married woman so the kids are all in sweet water for the time being.

“You will burn everything with that phone”, he says walking in the kitchen as I am cooking.

He goes and washes his glass and then comes over to me and takes his phone.

“I am still playing”, I sulk.

“You had many turns it's mine now”, I fold my arms as he walks away. Really Sakhile is a buzz kill.

“Have you called the Agent?”

“I have”, he responds.

I go and attend my pots.

CHAPTER 22

Today we are embarked on a journey to go to Durban to Nazo's home. His mother had invited us all to have lunch cooked by her. It has been years since she was in that institute so I am wondering what she would be making for us today.

“Get in the car kids we are late”, they rush out of the house and hop inside the car.

“We will see you when we come back Gogo”

She waves our way as they hop inside the car. I hop inside and the car and I buckle up.

“We can go”, I say

“Okay”

He starts the car and I take a packet of chips and open them. Sakhile enters some kwaito music before driving off. I know they wouldn't complain with the music choice. This is Sakhile and he doesn't take any nonsense.

“You did take the bottle ontop of the counter right?”, I ask

“Yes I did. Don't worry”, I nod.

“I am just checking”

“You worry too much”

“If I don't then who will”

“I will worry about that”, I roll my eyes.

“You know I don't like that”, he looks over to me.

“What is on your face?”, he rubs his thumb by the cheek.

“What is it?”, I ask

“Let me see again”

He rubs there again before he perks my lips.

“It's now gone”, I lightly hit his shoulder.

“You are sly”

“You liked it”

“The kids might be looking”

“They will forget about it.”

“Mmh”, I pop some chips into mouth. Sakhile is whistling a bit while tapping on the steering wheel.

It's a nice weather for today and when we arrive in Durban it would be even better.

CHILIZA

We are going to Nazo's home. His mother invited us for lunch and I am also included in those festivities but Cholo asked that we meet up first before we go to the lunch and I agreed.

Tomorrow I am going to visit my mother. I miss her so much and I can't even hold it in anymore. I decided to wear a dress as it is funny today and put on a sun hat before leaving. Qiniso came to fetch the kids and I will meet them there. I hopped in my car and started it before I drove off to where Cholo would be.

My phone rings and speaking of which it is her. I answer.

“Hello”

“How far are you?”

“I am just a few meters why?”

“Oh okay should I order for you?”

“No just juice please”

“Okay then”

We end the call. I am quiet curious with why she wants to see me this early”

I arrive at the place she is in and hop out of my car. I walk towards inside the restaurant and see her then go to her. She is seated with a beverage.

“Hey you look beautiful”, she hugs me.

“Thank you, You look wonderful as well”

We break the hug.

“This old thing”, she chuckles.

We seat ourselves down and I take my juice. I sip and place the glass down.

“What is happening between you and Ciyela?”

I keep my silence.

“I don't want to talk about her”

“She is your sister. Can't you guys solve whatever it is? She is sorry”

“Why are you her spokes person Cholo? I don't want to hear her apology and she can keep it to herself. Keep up being the bright sister to her because you don't want to tell her the truth of her being silly. You always support her no matter if she is wrong so be supportive and exclude me please I have my own problems”, I rummage through my bag and take out my wallet. I place a R50 on the counter.

“Wait Chiliza”

“I am done Cholo”

I stand up and walk out of the restaurant. I am not ready to see her at the moment, Ciyela that is. What she said is giving me sleepless nights and chest pains. I am pained that my own sister who I shared a womb with said such to me. Cholo can sort it out but she has to exclude me. I open my car and drive off to Nazo's home.

SLINDOKUHLE

We have Arrived in Durban and the weather is just perfect. Sakhile drives to Nazo's home as we are scheming our eyes trough the city.

“We are visiting gogo?”, Ase asks.

“Yes baby we are”

He nods and sits back down on his seat.

“Are we late?”, Sakhile asks.

“No we are still on time.”

He holds my hand as he is driving. We get to Nazo’s home in no time and we park behind a car before we all hop out.

“Awu izingane Zagogo sezifike Zonke(Grannies kids have all arrived) come and give gogo a kiss”, they go over to her and she holds and kisses them.

“You see I wasn't lying when she swallowed them last time”, Sakhile whispers into my ear.

I hit his chest.

“Please behave yourself”

“Hello Slindo and Sakhile”, she greets us and we greet back walking towards her.

“The others are inside. They have arrived”

“How are you Mah?”, I ask

“I am well. I am enjoying my last days on earth well”

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old people will scare you with these kind of statements.

We walk inside and already people are laughing over cold beverages and juice. The ladies are seated which is unusual because usually we are always stuck in the kitchen having some wine and chatting but today we are not. I hug and greet everyone else and join in.

“How are you Mrs Sakhile?”, it's Sane.

I smile and take a sip off my wine.

“I am good.”

“Sure are, look how beautiful you are”

“Ah ihaba Sane”

“No I am serious”, I wave her off.

There is a knock coming from the door.

“Is there someone left?”, Nazo's mother asks.

“It might be Cholo and Chiliza”

“Oh let me go and open”, Lange puts his beverage down and goes to open the door.

These type of family gatherings are what brings us more and more together. Lange walks back in.

“Who is it?”

A man walks in. He is wearing a pair of sweat pants with a hoodie and leather jacket on top with a cap. In such a hot day, I wouldn't.

“Can we help you M••”, Sakhile asks with a frown.

The guy takes off his hoodie and cap. He drops his black bag on the floor. The men seem to go in complete shock. Sikelela is the first one to stand up from the couch. Silence invades the whole room as we are still trying to find out who this is in front of us.

“How come?”, It's Baba who speaks.

“I was helped to run away to Eswatini after everything. I have been there for the past few years”

“We buried you Ndoda this can't be”

“You didn't. I am sorry for everything. You know oBlade wanted umzila kababa(Dad's route)to Portshepstone so they thought it was best when I am gone. I had to protect myself and everyone.”

“Do you know what this has to be some joke, baby this is a joke”, Sikelela is in a verge of breaking down.

“Gatsheni what is going on?”, I thought Nazo's mother would know.

“Mah”, the man moves closer to Khethiwe.

“Mah you are here”, she looks confused for a moment.

The man swallows.

“It's me Mah your Sizwe”

Tears cloud her eyes.

“Sizwe•••Sizwe”, her hands are shaking as she moves them to his face.

He lowers his head to his hands.

“Its me Mama”

She touches him and tears rolls down her eyes. She quickly let's go of him and puts her hand on her chest. The next thing she is about to faint but Nazo's father quickly catches her.

“Khethiwe”

Everyone is panicking. She is placed on the couch.

“Someone get some water”, the man is by her in the next second giving our instructions as Snikiwe rushes to get water.

“This is all your fault Sizwe!”, Sikelela is now angry.

“I was protecting everyone's damn ass”

“Fokof man no swearing in my house ! Khethiwe Dali wami wake up”, Snikiwe shows up with water.

They sit her properly before she is battered and she flutters her eyes.

“Knock knock”, Cholo gets in and Chiliza follows.

“Oh my God”, She drops her bag.

Does she know him? My God someone explain who this is.

Ntozakhona rushes to her.

“Calm down”

“What? What is he doing here looking like Sizwe?”

Oh she knows him, great. The guy turns to Sikelela.

“I am sorry”

That all it took for him to have tears rolling down his cheeks. He roughly wipes them and walks out of the house. I believe they were close.

“Sizwe”, Nazo's mother softly whispers.

He goes forth and she pulls him to her chest and wails in the process.

“I am sorry I was not here my child I am sorry”, she keeps on repeating those words.

I have never seen this before. I have only heard stories about this. Is the world coming to an end or is it?

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The end *