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PROLOGUE

A screaming woman can be heard by the whole village as Phindiwe Mavundla gives birth to her first child. Her husband is outside the rondavel pacing up and down worried about his wife.

Khaya: Will you sit down already. Geez ndoda you're making me dizzy.

Lwazi stops pacing and gives him a death stare before he continues pacing.

Khaya: I get it you're worried about you wife and child but you know MaSibiya is the best when it comes to delivering babies. I've got 4 of them healthy at home cause of her. Trust me when I say she's in good hands.

Lwazi sighs and takes a sit next to his friend.

INSIDE THE RONDAVEL

MaSibiya: Push Phindiwe.

The old woman cooed slapping her thighs but she shook her head crying

Phindiwe: I can't mah

MaSibiya: Yes you can sisi. Now push.

She screamed pushing as much as she can.

MaSibiya: I can see the head.

Phindiwe: (crying) I can't do this mah

Her breath comes in short pants as she closes her eyes.

MaSibiya: Don't you dare close those eyes Phindiwe.

MaKhumalo: You're suffocating the baby if you keep doing this. Push before you kill the poor baby.

Phindiwe shook her head with tears stream down.

MaSibiya: Good then that means we are on the same page. Now I want you to push as much as you can. Can you do that for me?

Phindiwe: (crying) Yes

MaSibiya: Good! Now push.

She screamed pushing giving her all.

OUTSIDE

Lwazi was losing his mind.

Lwazi: I can't take this anyone.

He stood up from the bench he was sitting on and march inside. Khaya stood up too about to stop him but the scream ceased. Lwazi's heart thudded on his chest. He can hear the two women talking inside but what's making him confused is that they are not just talking but shouting at his wife while the baby is wailing.

MaKhumalo: It's a b-

Her sentence is cut by the baby's skin as MaSibiya wipes Phindiwe's sweat. Her eyes widen.

MaSibiya: Maye!

She clapped her hands.

Phindiwe: (crying) Mah can I please see my baby?

The duo ignore her and walked outside with a baby wrapped in sheets. Lwazi was expecting the two women to congratulate him or at least smile but the look on their faces told him something was wrong.

Lwazi: Mah what's going on?

MaKhumalo: I suggest you take this thing of yours and leave this village before the king banishes your family. We don't want to fall on the curse because of something we could have prevented.

Lwazi: (frowning) Mah I don't think I can follow.

MaSibiya hands him the baby and spat on the ground.

MaSibiya: (yelling) We are suffering from draught and we don't want this curse to fall upon us. Our crops and live stock will die if the rain doesn't fall and it's been month. If we keep this abomination in our village things can get worse I suggest you get rid of it.

She clicks her tongue and walk away. Lwazi decides to peek over the sheets and his meet by a baby whose sucking on his thumb.

Khaya: Ndoda what's going on?

Lwazi furiously stormed inside the rondavel and found Phindiwe sleeping and the sheets covered in blood.

Lwazi: (shouting) What is this Phindiwe?

Phindiwe opens her eyes hearing her husband's angry voice. She smiles but her smile quickly vanished into tears as she see her baby is an albino.

Phindiwe: (crying) No! No! The king will banish us.

She sat up whimpering and furiously wiping the tears.

Phindiwe: We have to go before the come looking for him.

MaSibiya: Don't bother running because rumors have reached the king that you're in labor.

She muttered walking in followed by MaKhumalo who has a basin full with water.

Phindiwe: (crying) Please mah you have to help us. Please I have to feed him.

She pleaded with the old woman but MaSibiya couldn't care less she wanted that abomination out of their village before the suffer.

Lwazi: (shouting) Are you out of your mind Phindiwe? If we keep this people will know that my wife's womb is rotten.

Phindiwe's lip quiver as tears fell down on her chubby cheeks.

Lwazi: I'm not going to mention the King cause he will slaughter us alive for such thing.

He shook his head defeated.

Lwazi: Mah can you help us?

MaSibiya: I know a way to get rid of it but I don't think your wife will like it.

Lwazi: Phindiwe doesn't have a say in this matter mah.

MaSibiya: Very well then. Gogo Thobile can help you.

Phindiwe freezes on the basin.

Phindiwe: (sobbing) No! No!

Lwazi: Gogo Thobile the witch?

MaSibiya: Yes go now before the king's guard come here.

Phindiwe as Lwazi walks out of the rondavel with a baby she didn't even hold in her arms. She only saw him from afar.

Phindiwe: (screaming) Lwazi please come back with my baby.

MaSibiya roughly shoves the pacifier in the baby's mouth.

The door shuts behind him. She sinks on the basin screaming. Khaya leaps up to his feet with a frown.

Lwazi: Asambe ndoda.

He spins on his heel with the baby in his arms while Khaya follows behind him quietly looking back at the rondavel as Phindiwe's screams echoes outside.

1

“ We shine the light on whatever’s is worst Perfection is a
disease of a nation
Pretty hurts, pretty hurts (Pretty hurts)
Pretty hurts (pretty hurts)
We shine the light on whatever’s is worst
You’re tryna fix something
But you can’t fix what you can’t see
It's the soul that needs the surgery.” Beyonce – Pretty hurts.

Khaya: You know you will regret this right?

He finally breaks the ice as the come into a halt in front of Gogo
Thobile’s house.

Lwazi: It’s not like I have a choice.

Khaya: You have.

Lwazi: I don't! The king will murder us and I'm not about to become a laughing stock because of her.

Khaya: You can just live in the village it's quite easy. I'm sure your parents can accommodate you two.

Lwazi ignored him and knocked on the door.

Voice: Can I help you two gentlemen?

The voice came behind them. They turned and found none other than Gogo Thobile. She arched her eyebrows

Thobile: Well?

Khaya smiled politely.

Khaya: We are sorry to bother you I'm sure we knocked on the wrong door. We will take our leave now. Lwazi let's go.

Lwazi stood his ground and shook his head.

Lwazi: Excuse my friend for being rude. We were sent by MaSibiya.

Gogo Thobile nodded encouraging to him to go on.

Lwazi: We-

He stretched his nervously stretched his head.

Thobile: (snapping) Khuluma ndoda.

Lwazi: She said I must give you this.

He unwrapped the sheet revealing a sleeping baby whose still sucking on the pacifier. Gogo Thobile's eyes lighten up.

Thobile: Is that what I think it is?

She muttered moving towards them.

Khaya: If you mean a baby albino yes.

Gogo Thobile laughed like a maniac clapping her hands.

Thobile: I don't know when was the last time a blessing was born.

They duo frown not understanding her words.

Thobile: You just give me a blessing to be more powerful than ever before.

They only nodded still not following.

Thobile: Name anything I can give you to show my gratitude.

Lwazi: No we don't want anything. We just want to get rid of that curse.

Thobile: (nodding) Can I?

She gestured to the baby with a creepy smile. Lwazi handed him to her. The baby woke up and started crying.

Thobile: Go and never look back.

They rushed out of the yard leaving the baby crying.

Khaya: Man that woman gave me creeps.

Lwazi: You can say that again.

Khaya: I felt my skin crawling when I think what she will do to that baby.

Lwazi stopped on his tracks.

Lwazi: (snapping) I don't care what she does to that thing whether she feeds it to dogs as long as I don't get to deal with it.

Khaya sighed and started walking. He was done convincing him what his doing is wrong. If it was him he would have chosen to be banished than to let his own flesh and blood go through that.

Khaya: You do realise you will regret this in the future right?

Lwazi: Don't!

He snapped picking up his pace and leaving him behind.

MARIKANA MINE- RUSTENBURG

Basetsana slowly followed her friends as they walk towards the mine. The mine has been closed for a while now due to a shoot out that result into more than twenty mine workers losing their lives.

Tsidi: Are you coming or you're going to stand there?

She seethed narrowing at her eyes at Basetsana who kept pulling down her skimpy dress looking so lost. The dress was just under her butt and it was making her uncomfortable. This was her first time coming here and to say she saw scared was an understatement.

Palesa: No need to be harsh on her. It's her first time coming here and she has every right to be scared.

Tsidi: Scared?

She scoffed in disbelief.

Tsidi: She's a grown adult we didn't force her to come here. I'm tired feeding her.

She clicked her tongue and walked away.

Palesa: Don't mind her she's just agitated that you're a new girl and they might prefer you over her.

Basetsana only nodded and followed behind Palesa. They found Tsidi with two other girls laughing. Tsidi's mood immediately changed when she saw Basetsana fiddling with the hem of the dress.

Tsidi: Palesa tell you friend to stop pulling the dress down.

She scolded

Girl 1: And then? Ngubani lo mafikizolo?

Palesa: This my home girl Basetsana she will be joining us.

Girl 2: Joining us where? Does she know what we are doing here?

Setsana: Yes we're here to dig the gold, right?

They threw their heads dying in laughter.

Tsidi: I always knew you're dumb but this takes the cup.

Girl 2: Nana have you seen people digging gold wearing what we're wearing?

Setsana: I thought we pose as prostitutes so that the guards won't be on us.

Palesa dropped her eyes and look the other way when she fills her gaze on her.

Tsidi: Palesa wee you should have filled your friend here what we do. Where does she think we get the money, food

clothes and rent we spend on her?

Basetsana eyes widen.

Setsana: I thought it's the bursary since we don't have the same sponsor.

Tsidi shook her head.

Setsana: (low voice) Palesa?

Palesa: I'm sorry.

Tears blurred on her vision.

Tsidi: You can do the pity later we have customers waiting for us let's go.

They turned and walked inside where they found a guard waiting for them.

Guard: Ladies mantombazana.

Them: Hey

Guard: And who is this fresh mami?

Basetsana cringed when she saw the guard looking at her with a creepy smile plastered on his lips.

Tsidi: She's new and no you can't have her.

The guard sighed.

Guard: My payment first.

Palesa: Can you get us down first before we can pay?

Guard: Safety first ladies.

He whistled walking away and a few minutes later he came back with boots and safety helmets that have torches attached to them. The girls quickly changed their shoes and replaced them with the boot and the helmets while Basetsana stood there afraid to bend down because of the dress.

Tsidi: Basetsana change the damn shoes and stop wasting our time.

Basetsana quickly bent down and changed her shoes. She felt a spank on her butt. She flinched leaping up on her feet.

Guard: I want her as my payment.

Palesa: No you know we don't work like that.

Girl 1: New girls are saved for the big sharks not for you.

Guard: I'm sure you can make an exemption on this one or else I'm not about to let you step inside.

Basetsana's heart beat thudded on her chest. She shook her head moving backwards to the entrance but was blocked by Tsidi.

Tsidi: I'm not about to go stand on the long lines to get bursary again. I did that on my first year and look where that got me.

Palesa: (scoffed) It's not you're choice to make. We don't work like that.

Girl 2: I'm with Lesa on this one. We can't feed the poor girl to the wolf on her first day.

The guard chuckled as they go back and forth. He didn't care whether it was her first day or what the only thing he knew is that he wants her.

Guard: Are you done?

Tsidi: Yes we are done. Basetsana is yours but after we get underground. Time is money and we don't want your bosses question you right?

The guard nodded and led them to the lift. Palesa hooked Basetsana's hand in hers and squeezed it slightly with a smile for assurance. Basetsana weakly smiled back as they go underground. They turned on their torches and walked down the corridors of the mine. Basetsana kept looking backwards as they walked in further. Her mind was filled with questions and one of them is that if they are selling their bodies then who are their customers. Her inside question was immediately answered when they get inside a shaft that was filled with people. Some were sleeping on their man made beds some were just chilling, eating, playing cards while others where digging what it looks like gold from afar from the group. Their helmet used as a source of light as they dig.

Tsidi: Boys

Her cheerful voice and whistles snapped her out of her daze.

Man 1: (whistling) Is that fresh meat?

Tsidi smiled and pushed Basetsana forward.

Tsidi: Only the best.

Man 2: 10K for the whole night.

Palesa: (snapping) 10K? You must be out of your mind.

Basetsana kept looking at all the miner's eyeing her. She could smell their sweat and armpits. She clenched her jaws as her stomach churned forming a gag. She couldn't believe that her friends do this in order to get money. She always saw them wearing expensive clothes and flashing money on her every time her sister didn't pay her rent. She always thought they just dig out gold and sell it in order to get the money they have to sustain their lives.

She envied them and asked them to join in so she can stop

depending on them. She also wanted to have that kind of money they have.

Man 3: 30K

Palesa: That's too little.

On the far corner of her eyes she gagged when she saw Tsidi sucking on of the man's cock while one of them was hitting from behind.

She felt a light tap on her shoulder. She turned and found one of the zama-zama's staring her.

Man: How much?

Palesa: 50K

The man nodded started to walk to where he usually sleeps.

Palesa: (whispering) Follow him. Just shut everything out.

Basetsana blinked the tears threatening to come out. Palesa gave her an encouraging weak smile. She nodded and went to where the man was.

She slowly stripped her clothes and let them fall at her feet. Laying flat on the blanket she looked up in the cave. If she was in a room she would be counting the corners of the room or try to distrust her mind by counting how many zinks it took to form a roof but she couldn't do that. She saw underground in a mine that was long closed with a zama zama on top of her groaning like a wild animal. This place was damn how do they manage to stay in a ppace so hot for a very long time. She pushed the thought of the mine collapsing on the back of her mind.

A tear escaped her eye, before she could stop herself she silently sobbed.

Setsana: Mama said you're a beautiful girl. What's in your head it doesn't matter.

She kept chanting the song over and over again until the man finally reach his climax. He pulled out panting heavily and rolled over to the side to catch his breath. He sat up and drag his back to him, fishing for something he took out a stuck of cash and handed to her as she wear her clothes

Man: That's more than what we agreed on. Take this and never come back here it's not your seen.

Basetsana nodded taking the money. The money stood up and pulled his boxers and pushed her to the others.

Setsana: (sniffing)The boots?

Man: Leave them here.

She nodded and walked barefoot.

Man: Sduki is going to accompany you outside since his going out today. Remember what I told you prostitute is not your seen don't do things just to fit in. If they were true friends they

would have not come with you. Next time you won't find someone calm and relaxed as me.

Basetsana nodded sniffing.

Man: Tell my girl I said congratulations on the car.

Sduki nodded and shoulder bumped the man and picked up his bags

Sduki: Let's go.

Basetsana murmured a thank you to the man and walk with Sduki to other entrance. One thing she told herself was that she was never coming back here again. She was sure her parents were turning on their grave while her sister will be so disappointed in her.

2

BASETSANA

Fresh tears run down my cheeks as I think what happened a few hours ago. Anger rising from the tip of my stomach as I think about it. I storm to the bathroom and fill the bathtub with water. Stripping naked I get inside the tub and start scrubbing my body. I scrub off the scent of that place

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the scent of that man that was on top of me until the water started to get cold. I step out and wrap a towel around my body and open the lid. Stumbling to my room I immediately look for my bag and start shoving all my clothes. I feel so broke and so dirty.

I scream and sink to the floor as I see the money that I was paid for my service. My dignity flew away the minute I accepted that money. I crawl to the side table and furiously take the money and leap up to my feet and march to the kitchen. I open the garbage bin and threw it inside. The door creaks open and the two she devils walk in laughing with a plastics in their hands. Their laugh died down when they eyes land on me.

Tsidi: Girl why do you look so depressed?

I sniff back the mucus.

Palesa: Can we talk?

Me: Absolutely not. I can't believe you two sold me like that.

I spat raising my hoarse voice. Tsidi start packing the grocery on the cabinet while Palesa was still stand on the door.

Tsidi: We didn't force you to do anything you didn't want. If I remember correctly nobody pointed a gun at you so stop acting up.

She muttered dismissively and walk towards me and push me aside opening the cabinet and took out a plates.

Palesa: Look I'm sorry you had to find out what we do that way.

Tsidi: Would stop whining and acting like a child. You're an adult Basetsana this is the real world. Wake up and smell the coffee not everything is black and white the way you see it.

I scoffed.

Tsidi: The bright side you got yourself some moola

She shrugged her shoulders.

Me: You're a snake Tsidi. A poisonous snake that when it bites you the venom easy kill you.

She rolled her eyes and warm the leftovers.

Tsidi: So i've been heard.

I shook my head and avert my eyes to Palesa.

Me: I hope you see her for who she is. She will kill you slowly and by the time your eyes open it will be too late.

Her eyes filled with tears as she dropped them. I turn and walk back to my room and look for clothes in the pile on the floor. Tsidi storms in with the money in her hands.

Tsidi: Are you out of your mind Basetsana.

I ignore her and lotion my body.

Tsidi: The least you can do is give it to us who know what it is for.

I walk towards her and snatch the money.

Me: Even if you were the last person on earth I wouldn't give you.

I clicked my tongue and placed the money inside the suitcase. I was not planning on using it but I'll rather die than knowing

Tsidi will be using it. I toss the dress over my head and close the suitcase.

Me: I'm moving out.

I announce wheeling the suitcase to the kitchen leaving her in my room.

LWAZI

The meeting with the king went better than I expected it to be. He was so sympathetic to our loss not knowing what really happened and I wasn't going to tell him either what happened. I can't lose my dignity and respect have for because a matter I could have handled.

Me: The meeting went well.

I muttered to my wife who was sitting outside on the grass. She raised her eyes and immediately when they locked on mine

tears fell down. My blood starts to boil. I'm sick and tired of her crying for that thing.

Me: Get your shit together Phindiwe.

I hiss and walk in the kitchen looking for food. I can hear her sobs as I walk away. Opening the pots they are all empty. I clicked my tongue and walk outside screaming her name.

Me: Phindiwe! Phindiwe!

She wipes her glossy eyes and stand up.

Me: You're useless at everything. Why isn't there any food in the kitchen?

Phindiwe: (low voice) I lost track of time. I'm sorry.

Me: You're sorry?

I chuckled.

Me: What are you really good at Phindiwe?

Because as far as I know you're incapable of being a wife. You fail to do your duty of taking care of me and you also fail to bore me children.

She snarls and wipes her tears with the back of her hand.

Phindiwe: (hissing) I did not fail anything, just because I didn't cook on time doesn't mean I fail to do my duties.

I chuckled shaking my head.

Me: If you didn't fail to do your duties tell me this. Why is this yard so quiet? Where are the children?

Phindiwe: (screaming) I gave birth to one yesterday but you cho-

I raise my hand silencing her.

Me: Watch your mouth when you're talking to me. I'm still your husband the head of this household what I say goes. Don't count that thing as a child because in my eyes it's not. Your womb is rotten if it can give birth to that thing. You're same as a barren if you count that as a child.

PHINDIWE

My heart shatters into pieces as my husband's words replay in my head. I was willing to leave everything behind me and start afresh with my baby if the king banished us. I was willing to work everyday even if I was working as a maid to some family as long I had my family but my dream shattered right before my eyes before I could even grasp it.

A sob escaped my mouth as I look at the picture of parents.

Me: (crying) Why didn't I die with you two that day? Baba why did you save me? You should have let me die with you.

I scream slamming the picture on the wall. The frame and glass scatter on the floor.

3

PHINDIWE

Lwazi walks in just as I finished sweeping the glass that was scattered on the floor. I sigh as he hold a bottle of beverage in his hands. His footsteps are sloppy and careless indicating his drunk.

Lwazi: Phindiwe!

He burps and giggles dropping in front me as I discard the glass on the trash. I shake my head as he rises to his feet and stumbled his way to the bedroom with me on his heels. He lays on the bed with his back facing the roof. I grunt as the liquor he has on his hand spill on the duvet. I quickly rushed to snatch it but he shoves my hand aside.

Lwazi: Do you know how much I love you?

My heart swirled at his confession as I think about his words

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atleast he still loves me. I shake my head.

Lwazi: I love you Mkami.

I smile with tears blurring my vision. He still considers me his wife. I kneel in front of him and remove his shoes.

Me: I love you too Lwazi.

Lwazi: (mumbling) If you loved me you would have made me a father.

My blood boils at his statements. I yank of feet and leap up to my feet.

Lwazi: (mumbling) I sometimes question myself if you were the right choice in the first place. What did I really see in you?

I feel a ping in my heart. I bit my bottom lip as it trembles, annoying tears fell from my eyes. I don't know how many times I told myself I wouldn't let his words get to me but every time

he opens his mouth issuing insults my way it's like the first time hearing them.

BASETSANA

I place the dishes in the cabinet after washing them. I can feel my sister's eyes burning holes on my back as I move around the kitchen.

Tsholo: Did you want me to dig out of you or you will tell me?

I wince at her harsh voice breaking the silence that was lurking in the air.

Me: What are you talking about?

Tsholo: Getting a phone call from my landlord telling me that my sister needed a key to enter my flat. I had to come home as soon as I can because I thought something bad happened to you.

I shrugged and continue wiping the countertop ignoring her.

Tsholo: (snapping) What the hell is going on Basetsana and don't you dare lie to me?

I sigh and narrow my eyes at her.

Me: The girls and I had a fall out.

Tsholo: About?

Me: They complain that they were tired of feeding me. The money you send every month it's not enough. Varsity life is expensive and I understand between paying for your rent to mine sometimes plus your monthly expenses and mine also a quite taking a toll on you.

I look at her sucking in a breath as I lie through my teeth. I don't want to tell her the real reason I'm here because she will go

berserk if she ever found out and what she doesn't know wouldn't harm her right?

Me: They were really on my case. I just had to move away from them until they calm down. If I had another place to go I would have went there because already I'm a burden in your life.

Tsholo: Never call yourself a burden Basetsana. You my sister you can never be a burden for me. Mom and dad left me with you knowing fully well I can take care of you.

Tsholo: Come here.

A lump forms in my throat as I walk in her embrace. I never meant to emotional blackmail her but knowing Tsholo she would have dug deeper into the matter until she found out what really happened. The real question remains what am I going to do with the money?

A WEEK LATER

PHINDIWE

My grumbling stomach wakes me up from my slumber. I sigh as I sit on the bed and look at my left side. I bit my lip suppressing any tears to fall down. Lwazi didn't come home last night. It's been like this for a week now. Either he comes home drunk and insult me or he doesn't come home at all. I quickly make the bed and walk to the kitchen to make breakfast for myself because these days he doesn't even eat my food. I don't know where he spends most of his time at or where does he eat. I curse as I find the cabinets empty.

Lwazi: What are you looking for?

I jumped startled by his voice. His leaning on the door frame with a six pack of castle lite.

Me: Well there is no food. You haven't given me money for grocery this month.

He scoffed and slam the bottles on top of the table.

Lwazi: I don't have money to buy food.

I screech clicking my tongue.

Me: How come you don't have money to buy food but you have money to buy alcohol?

Lwazi: That's because you don't deserve any food Phindiwe.

He burps and open the cap of the beer bottle with his teeth and gulps it.

Lwazi: You think I would feed someone who fails to give a baby.

He clicks his tongue.

Lwazi: You must be out of your mind.

I swallow hard as a lump forms on my throat. I hold back the tears that are threatening to fall.

Me: Lwazi please you can't punish me like that. Food is a need not a want.

He shook his head.

Lwazi: Not my problem.

I shift my gaze outside as a car honks. I stumbled to the window and peek. A man emerges from the car and walks towards the door. Lwazi leaps out to his feet and opens the door before he can knock.

Lwazi: Don't ask I'm ready.

The man nodded and walk back to the car while Lwazi walks towards the room. I stood there with a frown.

4

He walks out of the room with a bag on his hands and passed his wife going to the door. He yanks it open and turns back to take his six pack on the table.

Phindiwe: (breaking voice) Lwazi what's

She swallows hard taking a deep breath blinking rapidly stopping the tears from falling. He ignores her and walk to the door ready to leave but Phindiwe hold his hand.

Phindiwe: Baby what's going on?

He clicks his tongue and yank his hand off her. Phindiwe quickly stand in front of him blocking him from leaving.

Lwazi: Move Phindiwe

He muttered in a firm tone.

She shook her head no with tears streaming down her cheeks. He pushes her aside and walk out of the house and slam the door after him while Phindiwe falls hard on her butt. She screams leaping up on her feet as she hears the engine roaring outside. She rushes outside screaming.

Phindiwe: Lwazi! Lwazi!

Again Lwazi ignores her and close the boot of the car and stumble to open the front passenger door. Phindiwe holds the door just as he was about to shut it.

Phindiwe: (crying) Lwazi please don't do this to me baby. Please I beg you.

Lwazi: We have a long drive ahead of us. Rustenberg is very far.

He calmly said not bothered by her hiccups and tears. As for the driver he sat there waiting for the drama to end as he felt sorry for Phindiwe. She froze when she heard where his destination was. Lwazi chuckles as he see's the confusion written on her face.

Lwazi: Oh I forgot to tell you that.

He chuckled.

Lwazi: See if you were woman enough I would have told you where I'm going. You would have known that my father has TB and can't work in the mines anymore. You would have known that he wanted me to take his spot while he takes his early retirement because of his health.

His chest moved up and down as he was getting angry while Phindiwe stood there tears gushing out. Her heart shuttered at how low Lwazi thought of her. She asks herself what went wrong? They were madly in love in fact inseparable

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nothing shook their love. What really changed? She came back from her thoughts when she heard the car door closing.

Lwazi: Let's go

He muttered to the driver. She screams running after the car as it drove off the dusty road leaving her behind. The driver looked at the view mirror and shook his head looking at her.

Phindiwe: (crying) Lwazi! Lwazi!

Lwazi: Hit the gas man.

The driver stepped on the gas. Phindiwe sink on the ground screaming as she saw the car driving off in full speed. She heard people mumbling close to her. She raised her head and saw almost half the of the village looking at her. Some had pity faces on them while some were laughing rejoicing at he misery.

Lethu: (giggling) Isgodi sincane kodwa abantu bakhona.

She clapped her hands walking away laughing with her friends on her heels.

Lethu: (mumbling) I always knew that they portrayed was an act to us single ladies.

She turned and looked at Phindiwe.

Lethu: Don't worry Phindi sobayishimane sonke.

They bursted in laughter.

Mbali: (mimicking Phindiwe's voice) I'm happily married mina.

Lethu clunched her stomach dying in laughter.

Mbali: Happily married yoknuka. Yiyo le ihappily married.

She sat there crying as they mock her. She felt someone helping to stand up.

Voice: Come sisi. Ignore them badliwa umona.

She raised her head and found Lwandle Khaya's wife helping her while others went on their business like nothing happened.

5

5.

PHINDIWE

Lwandle wanted to stay over with me but I assured her that I will be okay. I didn't want her to stay in a house with no food while she left her own house that has food. Sniffing back the mucus I blew off the candle and cuddle his pillow bursting into tears. How could he do this to me? I always thought nothing could break or shake us. Our love was what made most woman to hate me in the village. Their envy is what made them to hate me. I swallow the lump in my throat sniffing.

Me: His just angry Phindiwe he will be back.

I convinced myself snuggling more to his pillow and hold it tight.

Me: Lwazi is short tempered mah always told me that.

I quickly sat up and wipe the tears away with the back of my hand as that thought crosses my mind. The corner of my lip curve into a smile.

Me: Silly me look at me crying like the world is ending.

I shook my head.

Me: I should be ashamed of myself for crying like this. Lwazi did me a favor by loving me the way he did. He saved our family from dying in the hands of the cruel king. I should be grateful to him not crying like a widow.

I scold myself for being naïve.

Me: His doing what any man would do which is to protect his family

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that is why he gave the baby to Gogo Thobile.

A sigh escape my lips as I think of everything. This is his way of lashing out if he was any man out there he would have done worse than what he did. I fish for my phone under the pillow and fire a text to him.

Me: Baby I get it now why you did what you did. I'm sorry it took long for me to understand it but I finally did. Thank you for loving ne and choosing me to be your wife. Thank you for getting rid of that baby I guess the labor pains and hormones were still playing their part when I disrespected you like that. The village would have seen you half a man if were caught with that baby. I'm even ashamed to call myself your wife for the half of the things I did and said. You're my everything Lwazi I just hope we will go back to where things we before it all started. Don't forget about me when you get there. Just know I will sit here and wait for you to come home to me like the good wife I'm trained to be. I love you baby and I'm sorry.

I sigh and send the text before switching my phone off to save the battery since it was 15% and place the phone under the pillow. My eyes shift on the dark room with my mind all over the place. I wish I handled things better maybe none of this would gave happened if I didn't act like a spoilt brat. I clicked my tongue mad at myself as I think of my behavior. I'm sure my

parents are turning on their graves and ashamed to even say I'm their daughter. My mother would be so disappointed at me. She would have slapped me back to my senses for disrespecting my husband like that. As for my dad he would've asked me who was the head of the household. I scream muffling my screams with the pillow. I'm glad they are not here to witness this. May their soul rest in eternal peace. I close my eye and let to take over me.

Stomach cramps wake me up from my slumber. I kick off the blankets and make my way to the bathroom. I flush after I did my business and stumble to the room. The bright light of the blazing sun hit my eyes as I open the curtains and windows. I quickly shut my eyes and move from the window to make the bed. Stumbling outside with the basin in my hands I fill it with water from the tank and walk back inside. I strip naked and take a cold bath whimpering as the cold water contacts my skin. I lotion and opt for a demon dress and sandals after I brush my teeth. I make my way outside to discard the water and place the basin under the bed. The stomach cramps get intense as my head fell light headed. I sit on the bed closing my eye and wait for my vision to become clear.

This is my punishment I should take it like it is and stop being weak. I did this to myself, if I behaved like a good wife I would have bathed with hot water with a cupboard full of food but there is no use of crying over spilt milk the only thing I could do now is to wait for my husband to come back. Once my vision becomes clear I leap up to my feet and take my phone on top of the bed and walk out of the house after locking it. I don't even know where I'm going but I'm going to look for a job. I never worked a day in my life except help out in the village garden. I just hope I will get something quickly before I die of hunger. My phone beeps notifying a message just as I pass the village gossip queen laughing. Mxm.

Lwazi: Took you long enough. I knew you would understand baby. I was doing it for my selfish reasons but for our family. Everything I do is for us. Mah will be coming month end to keep you company and I will try to send you money when I reach there. Remember we lost the baby that's the story people will know. We are taking this secret to the grave. I love you.

I suddenly feel full as the zoo in my stomach push the hunger away. I turn back going home with my head held high passing those gossiping queens.

6

LWAZI

It's the early hours of the morning when I arrive at Rustenburg. I shiver as I step out of the taxi and make my way to the back to retrieve my bag and stand there looking around. Mthunzi left me in town after driving me from the village to catch a taxi here. The taxi driver honks once and he sped off away from the taxi rank. I just hope my brother is on his way to pick me up or already here cause it's freezing. I began to shiver, my teeth chattering as I pull the jacket closer.

Voice: Look at you shivering and shit.

I turn back and find my little brother with a smirk plastered on his face.

Mpilo: Short in winter really bro?

He teases arching his eyebrows. A smile curves on my lips as I look at him. He's grown from the last time I saw him. Mpilo and I

a 4 year apart but the little fucker likes to make himself older than me.

Me: Voetsek Mplip I'm dying here.

He giggles as we share a hug.

Mpilo: Seriously bhuti what were you thinking?

Me: Where I'm front it's hot ndoda it's not my fault that you guys live in the north pole so leave me alone.

He chuckles picking up my bag and walking to the car parked not far from the rank.

Me: What kind of brother are you? Borrow me atleast your coat and the bennie.

He laughs shaking his head and open the car. I stop on my tracks frowning as he tosses my bag on the backseat and step inside. He opens the door on my side.

Me: (shocked) You have a car?

Mpilo: No

I sigh and slid in.

Me: Then whose car is this?

I sternly muttered.

Mpilo: A friend borrowed me since the taxi was going to take long like I knew you were freezing a shit.

A sigh of relief escape my lips. He chuckles stealing a glance at me as he steps on the gas and turn on the heater.

Mpilo: (amused) Who did you think it belonged to?

I shrugged leaning on the head rest.

Mpilo: How is sis Phindi?

My body stiffens but quickly compose myself.

Me: She's fine

I muttered dismissively clenching my jaw. Just think about her makes my blood boil.

Mpilo: I'm sure she got her hands full now with the baby.

I choose to ignore him. Thank god the car stops before this awkward conversation can prolong.

Mpilo: We're here.

We step out of the car and my mothers screams are what welcomed me first. I haven't even had the chances to look at the house.

Mom: My baby. Fano wami

I chuckle as she engulf me.

Me: Mah I can't breath.

Mpilo roars in laughter.

Mpilo: Mama's boy.

He teases lean on the car.

Mom: Haisuka leave my baby alone wena Mpilo. Do you know what I went through to bring him in this world?

I inwardly roll my eyes smiling.

Me: Here we go again.

I murmur.

Mom: six hours twenty nine minutes and three seconds to get this big head out.

I shake my head while my brother laughs.

Mom: How are you baby?

Me: (sigh) I'm good mah I'm just worried about dad. When I got that call from Mpilo that he is in hospital I got worried.

She scoffed.

Mom: Mavundla can even die today I wouldn't be amazed.

She muttered walking inside and we follow after her with a mortified look plastered on my face. I sit on the barstool and watch her move around the kitchen.

Me: (gasping) Mah?

Mpilo bursted in laughter invading the fridge.

Mom: What?

Me: (shocked) You can't say something like that especially about your husband. People will think you killed him.

Mom: And I wouldn't care less what people say. Mavundla has TB but he acts like his on his last stage of cancer.

We laugh.

Mpilo: (amused) Trust mah to say that.

I shook my head chuckling.

Mom: Look at you baby you're so chubby. Phindi is feeding you and I trust my daughter in law at that.

She wiggles her eyes pinching my cheeks. Mpilo smirks.

Me: Mah I had a long drive and I'm tired and cold.

Mom: Of course boy Mpilo show him to his room.

I stood up and follow my brother.

Mom: Before you go to sleep Lwazi show me the baby. Hawu kanti wena unjani?

I freeze on my steps at her enthusiastic voice

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quickly compose myself to break her heart.

Me: We lost the baby mah.

She gapes and quickly rushed to my side.

Mom: Oh my baby how are you baby?

I shrugged as Mpilo pats my back. Honesly speaking I feel nothing in fact I know I did the right thing.

Mom: (gasping) Phindiwe.

I clench my jaws balling my hands in fists.

Mom: Nkosi yam I wonder how is she? Oh I have to go home and be with her. She needs someone at this time

I shrugged. Mah shouldn't even bother herself at that useless thing. She should focus on dad instead. I shift my gaze to my brother who looked worried too.

Me: Mpilo the room.

He nodded turning back on his heels as I follow close behind him. He opens the door and stand aside allowing me to enter. My nostrils flare smelling the fresh lavender scent of the air freshener and liquid detergent. Mom probably changed the sheets and clean the room yesterday.

Mpilo: I'll leave you to it.

I nodded and bend down to untie my shoe laces as he closes the door behind him. I sigh and skin in the bed and fish it my phone in my pocket. I clicked my tongue when I see the text I got from my wife last night and decide to read it. A smirk lurks on mu lips after reading it. I text her back, that's the wife I know not that hooligan.

7

BASETSANA

I slap my thigh biting my lower lip as I struggle to relieve myself. These are the side effects of eating soil. I'm sure Tsholo would be laughing her ass off and tell me I told you so but I can't help it. Every time I see soil I just craving for it. I wouldn't be surprised even I would be diagnose with appendix.

Me: God!

I groan shutting my eyes tight. I suffer each time I have to go to the bathroom. I start to despise the bathroom.

Tsholo: Setsana you're going to be late.

She shouts banging the door.

Tsholo: I told you stop eating soil.

I wipe my sweaty face.

Me: My stomach has knots you know how nervous and anxious I become when I'm writing exams.

I shout back lying through my teeth. Well it's half a lie because I always have a running tummy when I'm writing or even worse losing my weight.

Tsholo: Come sis you've been writing exams since when you were in Grade 4. You should be used by now.

She shouts back on the other side of the door.

Me: I'm one of those people who will never get used to them.

I flush the toilet and wash my hands

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quickly fixing myself before I walk out.

Tsholo: Damn you look like shit.

She laughs. I faintly smile and try my best not to groan when I walk as the excruciating pain from my butt comes back.

Tsholo: Here it will minimize the diarrhea.

She places a glass of coke on top of the table. I raise my eyebrows.

Tsholo: Ask no questions tell you no lies.

I giggle and taking a sip a sigh in content.

Me: What time is it?

Tsholo: 07:00

I choke on the drink and start coughing hysterically.

Me: (shocked) What?

She nodded biting her lip to hide the smile on her lips.

Me: I'm late Tsholo.

I quickly rush to my room and take my stationary on top of the desk and stumble to the kitchen to look for my sister. I turn back and make my way to her room when I find the kitchen empty.

Me: Can I please have fare?

She points to her purse. I rush to it and retrieve this money before running out of the house.

MPILO

Mom: Wish there is no mayonnaise.

She slams the cabinets and sigh. I concentrate on the TV and ignore her.

Mom: What am I going to do? I want my baby and to eat his favourite dish when he wakes up.

I sigh and stood up stumbling my way to the kitchen.

Me: What do you need mah?

She smiles widely and quickly rush to her bedroom. I chuckle and shake my head. My mom is manipulative and I know I just fell into one of her traps.

Mom: Here.

My eyes widen as I see the list in my hand.

Me: Mah I thought you said mayonnaise.

She shrugged her shoulders shoulders and pat my back.

Me: I hate crowded places mah and you know it.

Mom: Yet you go to the pub each weekend.

Me: (chuckling) That doesn't count.

Mom: I would have went shopping myself baby but.

Her bottom lip quivers and tears stream down her cheeks.

Mom: (sniffing) You father is stressing me Mpilo. I'm stressed I can't even remember the last time. I can't hear my own thoughts when I think.

She embraces me bursting into tears. My jaw drops. WTF happened. Mom knows her tears are my weakness.

Me: It's okay mah I'll go even though I hate it.

I mumble breaking the hug and take the money on top of the counter and walk to the lounge to take my phone and car keys before walking out.

Mom: Don't forget the fresh meat from Roots butchery.

She shouts as I step inside the car nodding. She knocks on the window I roll it down and she leans on it.

Mom: I just remembered something.

Me: What is it?

I muttered through gritted teeth.

Mom: There is a sale at Spar and most of the things in that list you will find them there.

I scoffed in disbelief pinching my bridge nose.

Me: That means it's a crowded place.

She grins nodding her head walking away. I curse bringing the engine to life and drove away. I can't believe I fell for that.

8

She starts to panic when the invigilator announces 1 hour left before the session of the exam ends. Beads of sweat forms on her forehead while her head was pounding from the hangover. She thought she could just shut her heavy eyes and rest her head for a few minutes but it seemed like she wasted hours sleeping. Looking at her question paper in front of her Tshidi couldn't even differentiate whether she was writing practicals or maths.

Her vision becomes blurry each second she stares at the paper. Shifting her gaze to the left she frowns when she sets her eyes on Palesa who had a grin plastered on her face when she continues to write on her answer sheet. Her mind was roaming around with questions and one of them was how come Palesa was enjoying the exam and didn't look like a person who has a hangover while she was dying from it. What she didn't know was that Palesa has been secretly seeing Basetsana behind her back and they left the past focusing on their future meaning Palesa saw she was just a venom snake waiting to poison everyone who is close to her just like Basetsana warned her.

Palesa only saw Tshidi's true intentions when she sold her to some guy who promised to buy drinks for them at a local tavern. Palesa couldn't believe what her friend did just for a six pack of Bernine Blush they could buy themselves. She felt hurt and mostly betrayed. She only understood how Basetsana was feeling at that moment they sold her at the mine. She reached to her and asked for forgiveness and since then her priorities where he school work nothing else.

Tshidi: Pass!

She murmurs to Palesa who didn't even spare her the time of the day. She knew she didn't study like she was suppose to instead she chose to go to the pub drinking her life away and came back at 3am shouting and singing for the whole neighborhood to hear her drunk voice.

Tshidi:Pssss!

She drags the s making a hissing sound like a snake gaining attention from other candidates who gave her a death stare. She ignores them and use her rule to nudge Palesa.

Tshidi: Pssss Palesa!

She winces at her own voice.

Palesa: Mmm?

She responds annoyed.

Invigilator 1: Is there a problem?

Tshidi winces at the loud voice booming. She quickly shakes her head as the invigilator passes then continuing walking around the room. Heavily sighing she nudges Palesa again.

Tshidi: Shift your paper to the end of the table. I'm struggling here. What are we even writing?

Palesa chuckled shaking her head. She couldn't believe what she asked her to do. If they got caught they might be suspended or even worse expelled and she couldn't allow that. She will be a nurse one way or another cause many people at home depend on her.

Tshidi: (whispering) Palesa

Her blood starts to boil as she ignores her.

Invigilator 2: 30 minutes left.

She murmurs quietly. Tshidi jumps startled by the time left. Dragging her body to the end of the table

she quickly snatches Palesa's answer sheet as she placed down after going through it. Palesa gasps drawing her attention to the invigilators.

Invigilator 2: What's going there? Are you two cheating?

Invigilator 1: I thought people left those tactics in high school.

Palesa panics shaking her head at the possibility of her not achieving her degree while Tshidi kept copying her every answer Palesa wrote to her own paper not even aware she also wrote Palesa's name and surname as her own.

09

Palesa's heart thudded on her ribcage as the invigilator from the front to them. She could feel a shiver running down her spine while sweat forms on her forehead with her hands trembling. She snatches back her paper and use her hand to iron the wrinkles when the invigilator shifts her gaze from them.

Tshidi: (gasping) Palesa marn!

She bangs the table.

Invigilator 2: What going on here?

Palesa gulps nervously. The invigilator scrunched her nose in disgust as the smell of alcohol hits her nostrils.

Tshidi: Nothing.

She snapped narrowing her gaze on Palesa who couldn't stop trembling.

Invigilator 2: Then what was the commotion all about?

Again Palesa gulps tongue tied.

Tshidi: Sorry I just reminded her not to leave me behind I lost my keys.

The invigilator nodded in understanding.

Invigilator: This is an exam room you're disturbing others. Don't do it next time cause it won't be me.

They both nodded and Palesa couldn't help but exhale loudly unaware she was holding her breath.

Palesa: (whispering) Sorry it won't happen again.

Invigilator 2: Are you done?

She nods while the invigilator moves to the front and comes back with the register. She signs out and takes her stationery on her desk and walk out of the exam room sweating with Tshidi's burning gaze on her back.

Palesa: God!

She places her hand on her chest balancing with the wall calming her heart.

Inside the session ended and the invigilator collected the answer sheet while students sigh the register.

Tshidi was the last one to walk out of the room. She couldn't care less whether she finished writing or not the only thing in her mind was her bedroom but that will happen after confronting that backstabber she called her friend. She snapped out of her daze when she feels a light tap on her shoulder.

Invigilator 2: You forgot to sign the register. Aren't you Matshidiso Tsulo?

Tshidi: No!

She muttered smugly.

Tshidi: But I can find her for you. I know her.

The invigilator nodded and she proceeded walking out. Looking around she spot Palesa talking to Basetsana. She rolls her hands into fists and stumble towards them.

Basetsana: Why are you suddenly angry?

She asked what got her friend to worked up. She left the exam room before them.

Palesa: If it isn't that leech Tshidi who else do you think can make ke this angry?

Setsana: (sigh) What did she do now?

Before Palesa could tell her Tshid pulls her aside. Palesa yanks her hands off her.

Palesa: (screaming) What?

Tshidi: They request your presence inside.

Palesa's eyes popped out of her sockets. She starts to trembling.

Palesa: What do they want from me?

She asked with a shaky voice. Smugly Tshidi shrugged her shoulder.

Setsana: Go I'll wait for you here.

Palesa nodded with a tear escape her eye. She enters the exam and find the invigilators waiting for her. She could feel her heart about to leap out her chest.

Palesa: (crying) I didn't do it she snatched my paper. Please don't expell me my family depends on me.

The Invigilators frown.

Invigilator 1: What are you talking about Ms Tsulo?

Palesa: I swear she just snatched my paper and started copying everything I wrote.

She rambles. The invigilators look at each other frowning.

Palesa: I know the consequences of cheating of an exam are but I didn't do it. She did she it.

By the time she finished rambling the invigilators understood what was she saying.

Invigilators: Who cheated?

They say in unison.

Palesa: Tshidi did.

She wipes the tears and mucus with the back of her hand.

Palesa: She cheated because she had a hangover. I could quite say she was drunk because she slept at 05:00 this morning.

Invigilator 1: So if it you're not Matshidiso Tsulo then who are you?

Palesa: I'm Palesa Molise. Matshediso Tsulo was the girl you asked to call me outside.

Their eyes popped out of their sockets and they both sprint to the door screaming her name. They found her as she was about to walk out the premises after asking around.

Invigilator 1: Miss Tsulo lying and deceiving us will place the other person in unfair situation.

He muttered panting snapping at her. Tshidi winces at the loud voice and inwardly roll her eyes.

Invigilator 2: Do you know its considered a criminal offence under the Indian Penal to cheat on an exam?

Tshidi: Blah blah blah can I go now?

They gasp in disbelief.

Invigilator 1: You know since you have a stinking attitude I will make sure you're expelled.

Tshidi: Yea whatever.

She muttered walking away. She didn't care anymore. The only thing she has to do is to find a man who will take care of her.

[4 MONTHS LATER]

10

4 MONTHS LATER

PHINDIWE

I squint my eyes and wipe my sweaty forehead as I help Lwandle prune the weeds out. She walks out of the house with a jug full of juice and two glasses..

Lwandle: Come sit for a minute.

I stumble towards her and lower myself on a bench next to her. She pours the juice and hands it to me.

Me: Thank you.

I sigh gulping it down.

Lwandle: It feels like we are in Limpopo the way the sun is so hot.

I giggle nodding. Its been 4 months without my husband but it doesn't feel like his not next to me. He makes sure he calls everyday in the morning and before I go to bed. His just been amazing.

Lwandle: So how is your stay with the in laws?

Her lips curve into a smile. I've been living with my in laws but it doesn't feel like so. Mah is treating me like an egg.

Me: It doesn't feel like I'm staying with the in laws instant line my own parents.

Lwandle: I thought they are suppose to make your life a nightmare especially mother in laws.

Smiling I place the glass in my lap and turn to her.

Me: Well not my mother in law. Mah straight up told me I'm not a maid but her daughter in law so I don't have to wake up at the crack of dawn to make breakfast for them and since my husband is not here I must take this as a vacation.

I gushed dreamily as I tell her about my life.

Lwandle: You're so lucky my mother in law and I are like two bulls in one kraal.

I bursted in laughter

she joins in. My phone rings in my pocket. I smile widely when I see my husband's name flashing on the screen.

Me: Excuse me I have to take this.

She nodded and fill the empty glasses.

Me: Hello

Lwazi: Mkami how are you?

Lwandle giggles as I blush and lower the volume of the phone.

Me: I'm good and you babakhe?

Butterflies roam around my stomach. I shift one foot to the other writing his name on their ground.

Lwazi: I'm good now I'm talking to you.

Me: How was work today?

After his training I thought it would take him months to get the job but I guess I was wrong.

Lwazi: Work was work baby you know your man got this.

I can't help but laugh at his cockiness. I can feel him smugging on the end of the line.

Me: Aren't we being cocky Mr Mavundla?

He laughs and I smile. I don't when was this last time my husband and I were this happy and on the same page.

Lwazi: (chuckling) Not at all Mrs Mavundla.

My cheeks heat up again as I blush.

Me: (sigh) I miss you Lwazi.

He heavily sigh. I suddenly feel sad we had to fix our problems via text instant talking face to face like we used to do.

Lwazi: Don't be sad baby I miss you too. Remember I'm trying for greener pastures this side and soon you will be enjoying them with me. Just give me this year.

A scream shoots up on my lips. I can feel my eyes getting moist.

Me: You mean I can come and stay with you in the city?

I look at Lwandle who smiles at me while Lwazi laughs.

Lwazi: Of course baby who do you think will take care of me.
You know I'm nothing without you.

Me: Damn right you are.

I giggle blinking the tears away.

Lwazi: I gotta go baby we will take later. Mpilo is hosting a small get together for me to meet some of his friends I didn't meet the last time.

Me: Don't drink too much you know how you are.

Lwazi: I won't baby. I love you.

Me: I love you more.

He disconnects the call and I turn to look at Lwandle who wiggle her eyebrows grinning.

Me: Don't even say it.

I muttered with a stern tone as she raise her hands in surrender.

LWAZI

It's an hour before midnight when we enter the pub and already I'm a bit tipsy. Mpilo invited his friends over the house earlier. Sanele one of his friends has been nagging us to come here and here we are.

Voice: Mpilo.

We turn around looking for the voice. A girl waves at us leaping up to her feet making her way towards us. They curse under their breath.

Johnny: At least she didn't see me. I will catch up with you guys later.

He muttered disappearing on the crowd as the girl nears us.

Girl: (smiling) Hey guys.

Mpilo: What do you want Tshidi?

He coldly muttered making the girl's smile vanish.

Tshidi: I was just greeting.

She mumbled dropping her eyes.

Mpilo: Then greet and pass.

He pushes aside bypassing her. They follow suit with smirks plastered on their faces. I stand there disappointed by my brothers behavior. I give her a tight smile.

Me: Sorry about my brother his a little bit cranky this evening.

Tshidi: (smiling) That's alright I'm already used to Mpilo's PMS moods.

I bursted in laughter while she giggles. I can't believe she just said that.

Me: Lwazi.

I say bringing forward my hand for a handshake. Her small cold palm covers mine before she grins.

Tshidi: Matshediso but everyone calls me Tshidi.

Voice: You meant to say Tshidi the whore.

A voice chimes in beside me. Tshidi flinches smiling weakly. I scowl at my brother.

Tshidi: Well let me get back to the girls. It was nice meeting you Lwazi.

Me: Likewise.

She spins on her heels stumbling through the crowd.

Me: What was that all about?

Mpilo: Nothing you should worry yourself about come on.

My eyebrows furrow as he walks us to the table where others were.

Me: That was a bit harsh.

He shook his head.

Mpilo: Trust me it was not when it comes to her just away.

I murmur a thank you sipping on the beer he handed to me.

Me: Is she popular or something?

Mpilo: Yes being a whore. Her and her friend Palesa but I haven't seen her in a while. Do me and yourself a favour by staying away from her she's bad news.

I nodded in understanding taking a sip. Johnny makes his way our way holding some girl's waist. They greet others before turning to me.

Johnny: Lwazi this is my girl Olwethu.

Me: Hello

Olwethu: Hi

She shyly muttered.

Me: Nice to meet you.

She gives me a tight smile. The crowd goes wild when the DJ switch to Amapiano. Mpilo and the others go to the dance floor with Johnny and her girl behind them. I sit and watch them dancing.

Voice: Aren't you joining the others?

A feminine familiar voice draws off my attention from the dance floor.

Me: Unfortunately i've got two left feet. If I try I'll probably end up at the hospital.

She giggles while I chuckle.

Me: Why are not dancing?

Tshidi: I saw you alone and I thought why not keep you company.

She shrugs.

Me: (chuckling) Well that was very brave of you because my brother said a mouthful things to say about you.

She heavily sigh taking a sit in front of me.

Tshidi: Let me guess Mpilo warned you about me?

I nodded opening the second beer.

Tshidi: Why am I not surprised.

She sarcastically muttered rolling her eyes. I chuckle

Tshidi: (shocked) Wait is Mpilo your brother?

Me: Yes his my little brother why do you sound so shocked?

I arch my eyebrows sipping the beer.

Tshidi: I'm shocked it's just that you two are way different from each other. I wouldn't say.

Me: We get that a lot.

I shake my head blinking rapidly as I try to stand up going to the bathroom.

Tshidi: Are you okay?

Her voice is laced in concern.

I nodded leaping up to my feet stumbling backwards. She quickly rushes to my aid.

Tshidi: Woah easy buddy.

Me: I'm okay I just need the bathroom.

Tshidi: Let me accompany you.

She drags me outside. My skin rise in goosebumps as the cold air hits my skin.

Me: I thought you're taking me to the bathroom.

I mumbled unbuckling my belt and push the pants down.

Tshidi: You will find those toilets full or dirty at this hour.

I nodded standing under the tree relieving myself. Just as I buckle my belt she lowers her shorts and couch down to relieve herself too. I stand frozen on my spot looking at her. My cock throbs tightening the pants. I gulp biting my lower lip.

Tshidi: Shit I peed on my pants.

She groans disgusted.

Tshidi: Can you umm.

She trails off. My mind tells me to lower my pants and fuck her so hard right here.

Tshidi: (chuckling) This is so embarrassing. Can you please borrow me your shirt.

Her voice snaps me out of my daze.

Me: My house is nearby.

I blurt out and she smiles mischievously.

Tshidi: Then what are we waiting for?

Me: (smirking) I'll be right back.

I quickly turn on my heels stumbling inside the pub. Passing the dancers grinding on each other on the dance floor and walk where we were sitting. I find Sanele sitting alone with no sign of my brothers and the others.

Sanele: Hey man where have you been?

Me: Outside just needed some air. Where is my brother?

I narrow my eyes at the dance floor looking for him.

Sanele: Somewhere around do you need something.

Me: Yeah the house keys.

He smirks knowingly and dips in her pockets and toss them to me.

Me: I'll see you guys back at the house.

He nodded still smirking as I stumble outside. I find Tshidi pacing outside.

Me: I'm here let's go.

I take her hand in mine and we walk to the house.

11

LWAZI

We arrive at the house and she immediately strip naked. I curse scrutinizing her body up and down.

Tshidi: Where's the bathroom?

Me: S-s-second door on the passage.

I stutter feeling my blood rushing through my whole body. She sways her hips making her way to the bathroom. I lower myself on the couch heavily sighing and stroke my cock over the jean.

Me: (groaning) She's going to be the death of me.

I must have fallen asleep after beating my meat. I feel someone shaking me. I flip my eyes open and find her standing on top of me stark naked. I swallow hard dragging my body to lean on the couch she immediately straddles me capturing my lips. My

hands move to her butt and squeeze it. I feel my boxers getting damp with precum. The kiss gets heated and I move to her jawline before moving to her neck. She tilts her head to the side giving me more access. Her hand lowers to my pants and unbuckle. I stop assaulting her neck and hold her waist lifting my ass a little so she can pull them down. She sinks herself moaning and biting her lip. I groan helping her to move.

PHINDIWE

I discard the water outside after washing the dishes. I'm a little bit agitated and cranky. Lwazi didn't call like he always does. I've been trying to call him all morning but his phone rings until it takes me to voicemail. I know how he gets when his drunk I don't know what was Mpilo thinking when he bought him alcohol because that man doesn't know how to handle his alcohol. The last time his was drunk he came home with a bruised face and broken arm. Since then he vowed he will never touch alcohol again until he recently left.

Mom: Phindi sisi can you please make me some tea.

She shouts on the living room. She was watching one of her Indian Series while baba was resting. We just ate lunch but you can't separate Mah from her tea no matter what time of the day is.

Me: Okay mah.

I shout back and walk outside with a bucket and fill it with water from the tank before making my way back inside to let it boil. Placing the ingredients on the tray after rinsing the cup I fill it with boiled water and stumble to the living room.

Me: Mah should I pour everything or you will do it yourself?

She smiles sweetly at me. I can't help but smile back at her. Her smiles are contagious.

Mom: I will do it myself thank you sisi.

I nodded standing up about to leave but her words stop me.

Mom: He hasn't call right?

I sigh nodding.

Mom: Don't worry baby maybe his just busy or probably asleep. I know how tired they become after they come back from work just give him time he will call you.

Me: I'm trying mah but it's hard.

Mom: I know baby trust me I know but that's one of the reasons I packed my everything and went to live with him there because I couldn't handle feeling sad everyday. It was also starting to affect my children especially Mpilo that is why I left with him.

I wipe the tear that escape my eye.

Mom: Why don't you go rest sisi I will prepare dinner tonight.

Me: (breaking voice) Thank you mah.

I sprint towards her and embrace her. She places a kiss in my forehead. My phone rings.

Me: That must be him.

I smile and press the green button not looking at the caller ID.

Me: Hello

Caller: Get yourself an incredible deal with.

I groan hanging up and click my tongue walking to my room and slam the door. This was not the call I was waiting for. I try his number again and it rings until voicemail. A thought comes to mind.

Me: Oh God what if something happened to him?

I start to panick calling him again.

LWAZI

I groan as someone wakes me from my slumber.

Voice: Lwazi phone.

I turn facing the other side away from my vibrating phone. The caller is so damn persistent why doesn't he/she give up.

Tshidi: Lwazi answer you damn phone. I'm trying to sleep here.

She bellows shaking me violently. I ignore her and continue to sleep. She mumbles kicking off the blankets.

Tshidi: I'll go sleep where I won't be disturbed.

She clicks her tongue walking away and slam the door after her. I sigh pulling the blankets over my head. The door cracks open. I'm sure it's thrown off the hinges. I rise my throbbing head from the pillow and look at the intruder. My body stiffen while my eyes widen when he pushes the naked Tshidi by her hair in the room.

Tshidi: (screaming) You're hurting me Mpilo.

She stumbles back and balance with the wall as she was about to collide with it. Jumping off the bed I rush to her aid clenching my jaw as my head pounds.

Me: What the hell Mpilo?

I hiss at him taking Tshidi in my arms shielding her from preying eyes as she burst into tears.

Mpilo: What the fuck is this bitch doing here?

Me: It's okay baby.

I coed at her kissing her forehead.

Me: Tshidi is my guest and you will treat her as such.

I muttered through gritted teeth. They gasp.

Mpilo: What?

He seethes at me in anger, daring me to repeat my words. I roll my hands into fists looking away from his furious eyes.

Me: I didn't stutter did I? You heard me how if you don't mind I'll like to attend to my guest.

He chuckles mockingly.

Mpilo: Didn't I warn you to stay away from this bitch?

He roars at me. We flinch at his loud voice.

Me: Refrain from using that word on her.

Mpilo: Or what?

Me: Mpilo lower your voice.

Mpilo: Lower my voice.

He muttered sarcastically.

Mpilo: The only thing you care about is the booming of my loud voice? In case you forgot you have a wife back home waiting for you.

He spat in anger and turn on his heels pushing his friends from the door and walk out the room. Few minutes later I hear the front door being slammed. I look at the spectators.

Me: Close the door on your way out.

12

BASETSANA

I clapped my hands in disbelief.

Me: You lie

Palesa: I'm telling you tsala she didn't come home yesterday and I hope she stays wherever she is. Even if she died I wouldn't cry for her.

I nodded in understanding. She smacks her mouth with her palm.

Me: (frowning) What?

Palesa: God forgive me for sinning against you on this beautiful Sunday.

I giggle and she dramatically pray.

Palesa: Stop laughing we just come back from church and here am I already speaking I'll about someone else. I swear I will end up in hell. I have stop my prayers from entering the gates of hell.

Clutching my stomach I bend down holding my wobbly knees.

Me: Tsala stop it you're killing me.

She giggles as I strengthened my spine and wipe the tears.

Palesa: Is it me or you've gained a few kilos?

Me: You're not the first one to say that. Tsholo also mentioned that this morning when she saw me on this dress. I snack a lot especially at night maybe that's why.

Palesa: Maybe.

She shrugged as we come into a halt on the stop sign. I wave for the taxi.

Me: Remind me which scripture where we reading from?

Palesa: Matthew 21 vs 44 and Corinthians 2 chapter 3 vs 2 grandma.

I giggle and embrace her when the taxi stop in front of us.

Palesa: Call me when you arrive.

She kisses my cheek breaking the embrace.

Me: Will do.

I muttered stepping inside the taxi and take a seat on the second row. Passing the money to the passenger in front of me

I lean back on the chair feeling my muscles relaxing. The taxi doesn't take long before it reached my neighborhood.

Me: Stop sign.

The driver nodded pulling on the stop sign. I step out of the taxi closing the door behind me before making my way home. Just as I turn a corner that is near my house I bump into someone. I bit my tongue stopping myself from screaming as my sensitive breasts come in contact with his chest. They are so sore and tender these days. Stumbling he held my wrists preventing me from falling. I feel a tear drop to my cheeks.

Him: You?

I frown wipe my face with my free hand.

Me: Do I know you?

Him: I don't even know why am I suddenly surrounded by whore.

He seethes in anger yanking his hands of my wrists. A scream shoots up from my lips as I fall on the pathole with a thud while the dirty water splashes on me. Tears just fall freely from my eyes. He clicks his tongue and walk away.

Me: Jerk.

It takes me a few minutes to compose myself before standing up and wiping my teary face making my way home. The gawking eyes on me I ignore them picking my pace. Judging by how wet my underwear is I wonder how dirty the dress is from the back because I hate my clothes being washed. I'm one of those people who avoid washing an item that I have once worn just to maintain their color.

I push the door and walk inside sniffing. The house is awful quiet. I clear my throat and wipe my face.

Me: Tsholo?

Tsholo: I'm here.

Me: Can you believe some jerk bumped into me and call me a whore. How dare he.

I follow shuffling sound and frown when I see my bedroom open. She hardly comes to my room whatever she was looking for must be important. I freeze when I see her with my empty suitcase on top of the desk while my clothes are scattered on the floor.

Me: (stuttering) W-w-what are you doing in my room?

My feet drag me to where she is and snatch the money on her hands and collect all my clothes on the floor and place them in the suitcase before closing it.

Tsholo: Where did you get such money Basetsana?

She places her hands on her hips like mother's do when they about to scold their toddlers too bad I'm not one.

Me: What were you doing in my room in the first place?

I snap feeling my chest rising and falling. The anger from earlier on comes back.

Tsholo: Stop avoiding the question.

Me: (snapping) If you were not invading my privacy-

She cuts me off by raising her voice.

Tsholo: I was not invading your privacy I was just simply helping you since you kept saying you're lazy to pack your clothes in the closet every time I asked you. You're ungrateful.

Me: (snapping) I didn't ask you too.

She chuckles

Tsholo: You seemed to forget this is NY house I have every right to search the whole house if I want to.

I chuckle in disbelief.

Me: Yea neh!

I start packing my books that were on top of the study desk and place them in the bag. Stumbling to the bathroom I slip of the dress and wear the tracksuit that was on the laundry basket and walk back with my clothes that were on the basket. I open the suitcase and shove them before closing it. She heavily sigh.

Tsholo: Look I didn't mean it like that I was just angry that you kept such money in your room that I'm not aware of.

Me: The message was loud and clear Tsholofelo no need to justify your words. Thank you for your hospitality I won't be needing it anymore.

Tsholo: (shocked) What do you mean?

Me: I'm moving out of your house since you can't respect my privacy.

I emphasize on that.

Me: I think I over stayed my welcome.

Her jaw drops open like a fish out of water.

Me: Like you said this is your house and you had every right to search it if you feel like too. I'm sorry I over stayed.

I turn back on my heels with my luggage after using her own words against her. If I knew she didn't know the meaning of privacy I would have moved out earlier. Her light footsteps approach me as I walk out of the passage to the front door.

Tsholo: Don't be ridiculous Basetsana you know I didn't mean that. I was not kicking you out.

Me: Sure felt like that to me.

She scoffs.

Tsholo: We both know you turned this whole thing into reverse psychology.

Me: Don't know what you're talking about.

I open the door pulling my stuff outside and turn back to look at her.

Tsholo: Batswana bare phoso e tsamaya le mogatisi.

Me: Goodbye Tsholofelo.

I shut the door sighing before embarking on my journey.

MPILO

I feel like screaming my lungs out after I saw who the girl was after bumping into her. I thought it was that community slut Palesa but it turns out she was not. I've seen her twice with them and I assumed she also joined the crew but I guess I judged the book by its cover. I always wanted to talk to her but since she was with them I scratch those thoughts out. And I just ruined my chances.

Me: Fuck

I curse frustrated with myself. Lwazi and her bitch ruined my day in the morning. I warned him nicely to lay off that girl but he did the opposite. I knew from her constant stares on my brother that she will sink her claws at him. I took my eyes off her once and she saw the opportunity of a lifetime. I expected better from my brother since he's married but it seemed like he's the type whose moved by new pussy.

My phone rings breaking my trail of thoughts. I took it out of my pocket and rub my face frustrated. She's been calling the whole dat and I'm sure that stupid husband of her's has been ignoring her calls. Debating from answering and ignoring it I decide to put her mind at ease.

Me: Sis Phinidi ninjani?

I cheerfully muttered.

Phindiwe: Not good Mpilo I have been trying to call your brother the whole day where is he?

I swallow hard at her sad tone.

Phindiwe: So I was right to think his hurt?

She rambles sobbing.

Phindiwe: How bad is it? You can tell me Mpilo I'm his wife.

Sensing her distress I say the first think that comes to mind.

Me: His fine but at work. Someone asked to swipe shifts with him.

She sighs with relief. I hate lying to her especially when his husband is acting like a dick right now.

Phindiwe: That explains why he didn't answer his phone.

Me: Bastard.

I mumbled under my breath.

Phindiwe: What was that?

Me: Never mind sisi look I have to go go send my love to the rents.

Phindiwe: I will take care of each other. I love you both.

I sigh hanging up. I hope Lwazi comes back to his senses before it's too late. He should be trying means to get pass on the loss of their baby instant his shoving his dick on that bitch. I clicked my tongue. His lucky to have her.

13

BASETSANA

I vowed to myself that I will never come back to this place after I left but here am I in the same place I loathe. If I had a choice I would be staying somewhere but what choice do I have?

Palesa: What are you thinking about?

Her voice chimes in breaking my trail of thoughts

lowering herself next to me on the couch. Heavily sighing I turn to her.

Me: I'm thinking about everything. How I went from having a roof over my head to being homeless within a blink of an eye.

Palesa: You're not homeless.

She scolds frowning at me. I chuckle.

Me: You know when I left this place after that incident I made a promise to myself I will never set my foot her no matter how desperate I am.

Palesa: Promises are meant to be broken that's how life is.

She shrugs. I shook my head.

Me: This house brings me memories that I buried deep down on the back of my head.

I weakly smile at her wiping the tears that are falling.

Me: You know this morning when I went to the bathroom I saw myself on that night. On how distraught I was. How vulnerable I was and how dirty I felt as I scrub myself his scent off me over and over until I felt my skin burning. Everywhere I go I'm carrying that memory with me and even fought with my sister because of it. Hypocrite much?

I smile through the tears feeling vulnerable for second time in my life.

Palesa: Hey don't be hard on yourself. What happened that night left a scar that wouldn't be mended anytime soon. I get why you became defensive on your sister when she asked you about about and why you moved out when you found out about what we do. I would have done the same thing if I was in your shoes.

She pulls me in her arms and let me just cry my heart out. Our moment is ruined by sound footsteps. I break the embrace wiping my tears away and look at the door leading to the kitchen. My mood just dropped when I see the she devil walking in.

Tshidi: (smiling) Well! Well! Well look what the cat had dragged.

She throws her back bursting in laughter. I ignore her and take my phone from on top of the table and narrow my eyes to Palesa.

Me: Tsala I'm going to take a nap I don't have time for trash.

She nodded.

Tshidi: (frowning) Nap where? Don't tell me you came back again.

She laughs.

Tshidi: I knew you wouldn't stay away even though you pretended to Maria from the bible. I knew there's a slut behind that wanna be maria act.

I stumbled towards her and slap her so hard. She gasps while Palesa smirks.

Me: I'm not your friend Tshidi and I will never be one if your friends let you talk to them like that I'm not one.

I snapped at her clicking my tongue and make my way to the room I'm assigned to.

PHINDIWE

I kick off the pumps and rub my aching feet. The parents and I just come back from town to buy grocery and to say I'm tired would be understatement. Mah dragged us to each and every shop to look for sale and special. It's the end of the month and the stores were all full but mah didn't care. I look at my phone hoping for any text or missed calls from him but nothing. Today is the most important day of my life the day my parents were laid to rest. I would have appreciated if he called to console because he knows how this day means to me. Laying on top of the soft mattress I moan as my sore muscles untangled. I feel a lump forming on my throat.

Mah: Phindiwe.

She shouts knocking on the door and push it open. I just off the bed alarmed and rush to her ignoring my feet. Her usual smile is plastered on her lips. I clear my throat.

Me: Do you need something mah?

She shook her head.

Mah: I'm not handicapped Phindiwe I'm just aging like fine wine if you know what I mean.

I giggle as she winks at me.

Mah: I'm capable of taking care of myself baby don't worry about me.

I frown.

Me: But mah it's my job to worry. I'm the daughter in law of this family and it's my duty.

She smiles engulfing me.

Mah: Lwazi is so lucky to have a wife like you.

I teary smile. She breaks the hug placing a kiss on my forehead. I close my eyes and salivate on this moment. The last time I got a kiss from a mother figure was before my parents were killed by a drunk driver and never looked back after crashing on them.

Mah: I'll always be here for you my baby don't forget that. I know that it might not be much but I'm also your mother. They left you in my care.

I nodded biting my lip suppressing a sob to escape my mouth. I clear my throat.

Me: Do you need something mah?

Mah: No but you have a visitor.

My eyebrows furrow.

Me: Who?

Mah: Come you will see.

She turns on her heels disappearing on the corridor. Judging by her smile it's someone who will cheer me up. What if his here? Oh God his here. My husband came back for me. I quickly slip on my pumps and rush back to the lounge.

Me: Lwandle?

I tightly smile at her disappointed.

Lwandle: (smiling) Hey.

Me: Hi

I awkwardly muttered.

Lwandle: I hope I'm not disturbing you.

I shook my head.

Lwandle: Can we talk?

She narrows her eyes at mah and baba who were watching TV.

Me: Of course follow me.

We stumble to the kitchen.

Lwandle: Here.

She hands me a flyer. I frown.

Me: What is this?

Lwandle: A guy was handing them out near the supermarket.
He didn't want to the king to see him.

I gawk the paper in my hand reading it.

Lwandle: (cheerfully) So we are going right?

Me: I can't

She frowns.

Lwandle: Why?

Me: (snapping) Because I can't leave my family and go work as
a maid at some white man's house.

Lwandle: Why the hell not?

She snaps back placing her hands on her hips.

Lwandle: This is a opportunity for you Phindiwe to work for yourself and stop depending on people.

Me: (snapping) I'm not like you Lwandle I respect my husband's opinion too. I have to speak to him first if he doesn't agree then I'm sorry I can't go with you.

Lwandle: Don't you get tired of your mother in law buying you toiletries? (snapping) Your husband this, your husband that don't you get tired of this spineless pathetic submissive wife you are?

I clicked my tongue and make my way to the door and yank it open.

Me: Get out.

I hiss at her dragging her outside. How dare she?

BASETSANA

The commotion going on outside my bedroom made my nap to be short. I yawn dragging my feet to find what the commotion is all about.

Tshidi: How long is she staying?

Palesa: She can stay as long as she wants.

Tshidi: She has to pay rent like everyone else if she wants to stay here.

Palesa scoffs.

Palesa: I will cover her damn rent if I have too.

Tshidi chuckled

Tshidi: I wouldn't be doing that if I were you.

Me: Why the hell not?

I muttered folding my arms to my chest making my presence known.

Tshidi: Because darling I'm moving out you two will have to share the rent.

Palesa: Thank God I don't have to sleep with one eye open from now on.

She sarcastically muttered. I chuckled while Tshidi clicked her tongue making her way to her room and few minutes later she comes back dragging her suitcase.

Tshidi: While you two act like God's deputy I'll be planning my wedding.

She stumbles to the door and turn to us after opening it.

Tshidi: Don't worry I'll save you guys some invitations after all you're about to be my maid of honor and bridesmaid.

She blows a kiss at us before walking out.

Tshidi: Bye bitches.

She laughs shouting on the other side of the door.

Palesa: She's delusional.

I chuckled.

14

NARRATED

Lwazi closed the door after walking in. He just came back from work and the only thing on his mind is his bed. He passes the living room hoping to see his brother so they can talk but he was not there. Mpilo was hardly home and that bothered Lwazi a lot.

Tshidi: Hey sexy.

Her voice breaks his trail of thoughts as he walks inside his room. There she was laying on her back naked. Her legs were wild open and he was staring at her pussy. He sucks a breath biting his lower lip. A smirk creeps on his lips.

Tshidi: Are you going to stand there or what?

She muttered seductively closing her legs. Lwazi slammed the door behind and quickly stripping his clothes.

Lwazi: I could get used to this.

He took his calculated steps towards her. Tshidi giggled pecking his lips. Her dream came true early than she thought. She was sure it would take time for her to finally claim someone as her's. The only thing on her bucket list was getting that ring on her finger since she got the man and the house.

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He had his bag pack on his back as he walked down the street to the stop sign where he will meet his coworkers. It's been a couple of weeks since went to work. His main reason was to his friends was that he was still making sure his brother was settling in well before he can continue working. He didn't want Lwazi to be on his case so he opted to be left behind everytime his coworkers went to work.

He came to a halt when he saw her bending on the pavement. His palms starts to sweat as he approaches her. He stands hovering over her but she doesn't acknowledge his presence.

Basetsana tossed the soil in her mouth and moaned when it hits her taste buds. He cleared his throat gaining her attention. She raised her head and frown when her eyes fell on him.

Mpilo: Hi

He awkwardly muttered waving his hand on her face. Basetsana glanced him up and down before shifting her gaze back to the ground where she was digging. Her knife in her hands she spotted another treat she slightly shifted and start digging and shoved the soil in her pockets after digging. Mpilo stood over her like a lost puppy not knowing what to say. He cleared his throat again.

Basetsana: What?

She muttered coldly leaping up to her feet and wiping her lips. Mpilo extended his hand towards her.

Mpilo: Mpilo.

He said expecting her to shake his hand but she just looked at him.

Basetsana: So?

His heart thudded on his chest at her cold voice.

Mpilo: I just want to say I'm sorry for being rude the other day it wasn't my intention to take out my frustrations on you.

He rambles nervously stretching his head.

Mpilo: Can we start over?

Basetsana: Mpendulo y-

He cuts her off chuckling.

Mpilo: It's Mpilo.

Basetsana: Same shit makes no difference.

She shrugged turning on her heels making her way home. Again he chuckled following her.

Basetsana: First impression last longer.

He stopped on his tracks heavily sighing.

Mpilo: Look I'm sorry we meet on different circumstances but it's what we do that's how we make money.

Basetsana: Oh bumping to people and being rude to them is a way of making money you should have told me a long time ago I would have did the same thing.

She sarcastically muttered throwing her hands on the air dramatically. Mpilo stopped on his tracks frowning.

Mpilo: What are you talking about?

She halted turning to look at him.

Basetsana: You bumped into me and insulted me.

With each step she took Mpilo could feel her anger brewing up.

Basetsana: You're the one who bumped into me not the other way round. You had no right to talk to me like that.

He shifted to the side holding her wrist as she launches the knife in his chest.

Mpilo: Woah woman I didn't mean to upset you but I still value my life.

She clicked her tongue yanking her wrist off his hand spinning on her heels. She stopped walking gasping.

Mpilo: What is it?

He asked alarmed.

Basetsana: Something inside me moved.

Her voice came as almost a whisper as she hold her belly. Mpilo follows her actions. Her mind races with scenarios of what could have caused that and her only fear was that it could be cancer or worse a worm growing inside her like she always see on TLC. She screech with tears blurring her vision.

Mpilo: Are you okay?

She jumps startled by his voice. She wipes her tears on the back of her hand and marches home leaving Mpilo frowning.

Mpilo: She doesn't remember me.

He murmurs watching her walking away.

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Phindiwe yawns fixing her gown stumbling outside her house with her in laws on her heels. Her eyes widen while her breath hitches when she saw the king dragging two women and a baby to the center of the village by their hair. Their scream is what woke up the whole village at the crack of dawn.

Phindiwe: What's going on?

She whispers to one of her neighbors.

Neighbor: Apparently her daughter gave birth to a baby who has an albino and she was planning to run away but they caught them before she could leave the village.

She whispers back looking at the scene in front of them.

Mah: I curse the day they made that boy to be our king.

She spat venom lacing on her tone

Mah: Those tears tears falling on the ground are being watched by the one who has a right to judge us all.

She chuckles.

Mah: And I feel sorry for him because the day he decides to answer for them.

She shook her head walking back to her house with her husband. Phindiwe's eyes twitches Her heart beat thudded on her chest.

Old woman: (crying) Please my king spare my granddaughter's life.

The King scoffed pushing the old woman on the ground

King: You thought I wouldn't know what your daughter gave birth to? You thought I wouldn't know you were planning to run away?

He snarls taking predators steps towards her. The old woman shook her head crawling backwards.

Old woman: (crying) Please my king.

King: Shut up woman.

He roars at her making the villagers to wince at his loud booming voice. Phindiwe could feel a shiver running down her spine. The king turn turned to his second who has his fists on a young woman hair.

King: Burn the house down with the baby inside.

The two women scream while the villagers gasps. The servants walk inside the house with the baby while others have a bottle of petrol. They pour the petrol all around the house and set it on fire.

Old woman: (screaming) Please!

She crawls to the King's feet begging him but it fell on deaf ears. The mother of the baby thrashes trying to break free from the second's grip but it was too tight. She screamed sinking to the ground while the baby's piercing cry echoes the whole village. Phindiwe closes her eyes as tears stream down her cheeks. The scene in front of her opened old wounds she thought they were healing. Who knows if her husband didn't act immediately where would they be today?

Unedited

PHINDIWE

I whimper jumping off the bed. Beads of sweat dripping on my forehead and my face. I kneel down and remove my phone from the charger and look at the time. Its 06:40am which means I only sleep for 40 minutes, that's the longest time I've ever slept since the nightmares began. The eyebugs and fatigue are a clear indication that I have been loosing my slumber. I even concluded that I despise night time. I place the phone back on the floor connecting the charger.

My lip quiver while my whole body shook as I think of the nightmare i've been having for the past three weeks. Ever since I saw that baby being burned to death I can't seem to sleep at night. It's the same nightmare everyday but sometimes the scene changes from the two women who were watching to me watching as my own baby burning down. The piercing cry that could wake up the dead from the baby is what echoes in my own ears. I place a hand on my ribcage to calm my heart from leaping up. My wobbly legs make their way to the bucket that is near the window to pee. I wipe myself and make my way to the toilet outside to discard the urine and rinse the bucket.

I walk back and bump to the baba on passage.

Me: Morning baba.

Baba: You didn't sleep again did you?

I shook my head dropping my eyes. I have a feeling they he the answer even if I lied.

Baba: It's the nightmare again?

I nodded closing my eyes. I can feel my eyes begin to water. I'm tired and I can use to some sleep even if it's just few hours.

He sighed.

Baba: How about you go join your husband in Rustenburg for this remaining months? I'm sure they could use to someone

cooking for them while they are at work even though I know you won't be seeing Mpilo for months.

He mumbled the last sentence in almost a whisper. My eyebrows furrow at his statement as I wipe my tears but decide not to question him.

Me: I'll call him and let him know.

He nodded making his way to the kitchen while I make my way to my room. Scrolling down on the contact list and placing a call hoping he will pick up this time cause it's been a while I spoke to him and I really miss him.

He picks up his phone after the fourth ring.

Me: Hey baby

I cheerfully muttered. I can't seem to wipe of the smile on my face.

LWAZI

The strike has been going on for a couple of weeks now. The workers and the union are demand the mine to increase the wages but the mine is having none of it. It's taking a toll on everyone especially me since I started working there but my colleagues assured me that the strike will cease before November. I trust their judgement cause they have been working there for years now that me as if that's last of my problems my brother decided to go MIA. I have been trying to call him for weeks now and his phone is off. I even went to the police station to open a missing person's case.

My vibrating phone take me off my trail of thoughts. I pick it up without checking g

the caller ID, hoping it was Mpilo or Tshidi since she woke up early and went to the clinic. She's has been crying about her abdomen being painful.

Me: Hello

Phindiwe: Hey baby

I remove the phone on my ear and look at the caller ID. I curse under my breath while my mood turned sour.

Me: What do you want Phindiwe?

She gasped.

Phindiwe: Haibo Lwazi is the way you speak to me now.

Me: You haven't answered my question. What do you want Phindiwe?

She heavily sigh.

Phindiwe: I'm not copying Lwazi. Everything is just getting to much for me. This place is suddenly making me insane.

I chuckled arching my brow.

Me: So what do you want me to do?

Phindiwe: The parents and I were speaking and baba suggested that I visit you for this remaining months then we will come back together in December.

I bit my lip choking on my laughter.

Phindiwe: He said a change of scenery will do me good beside I'm having nightmares and I think just being close to you I will sleep comfortable.

Me: That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard.

Phindiwe: Don't insult my intelligence Lwazi.

Me: Tell me something Phindiwe why are calling me?

She clucked her tongue.

Phindiwe: Didn't you hear anything I said to you. I just told you I will be come there just to take my mind off things.

Me: If you would be coming here where would you be staying? Because I'm not sure you would be not staying with me.

She scoffed.

Phindiwe: Of course where do you think I will be staying?

Me: I don't want you here Phindiwe.

She sighed.

Phindiwe: Look baby I understand that was not part of the plan and we didn't discuss this but I miss you Lwazi. You hardly call

these days like you're used to what's going on? You don't even pick up my calls.

Me: Can't you read between the lines Phindiwe?

I hiss getting pissed.

Me: I don't want you anymore I found someone better who is not weak and stop stupid like you. I realised I have never happy than I am now. You were holding me back Phindiwe. I just met her but she makes me happy which is something my own wife I have been married to for the past 5 years failed to do.

I spat getting pissed.

Phindiwe: (breaking voice) You don't mean that.

I huffed chuckling.

Me: This is the main reason I can't be with you anymore you're too weak to handle anything. The only thing you're good at is crying. Your tears don't move me anymore in fact they infuriate me. I honestly don't know what I really saw in you. Your stupid, pathetic and you lack ambition Phindiwe and I can't seriously be with someone like that.

She burst into tears on the other side of the line making me to inwardly roll my eyes.

Phindiwe: (sobbing) Lwazi why are you hurting me like this?
Baby it's me Phindi. Your Phindiwe.

I clicked my tongue.

Me: My Phindiwe died the day she carried that curse in her womb. Do me a favor and yourself a favor don't you ever call me again do you hear me. I don't think my woman will appreciate that.

I disconnect the call clicking my tongue. It rings just as I place on toss on top of the couch.

Phindiwe: (crying) Baby please don't do this. Lwazi I'm begging you I need you the most. You can't abandon me on my time of need.

Me: Stop calling me Phindiwe I don't want you anymore.

I yell hanging up and block her number.

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She places her hands on her lap as she sat on the bench on the local clinic. Her eyes wonder around the people inside the clinic. She keeps checking if anyone she knows will be there but she sigh in relief when she saw none of the people there knew her. Tapping her fingers on her lap she shifts to the next bench as the queue keeps moving.

Voice: Next.

The receptionist muttered. She leaped up to her feet and dragged her feet to the desk placing her ID on top of the desk. The receptionist took her ID and got busy on the computer

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after a few minutes she was handed her folder and she went to last door to check for her BP. She exchanged greetings with the nurse and let him do his job after she replied to some questions he asked.

Nurse: That would be all please call the next patient in.

She muttered a thank you shutting the door after her. She was glad the hallway was empty with no other patient. She knocked on the first door on her right and heard someone yelling come in from the inside. She pushed the door open and walked in.

Tshidi: Hello

Nurse: Hi how can I help you today?

Tshidi: I have a pain on my abdomen and a rash all around my neck.

She removed the scarf she had on her neck revealing the rash.

Nurse: When was the last time was your period?

Tshidi: I haven't seen my periods in a while.

The nurse jointed down on her folder.

Nurse: When was the last time you checked your HIV status?

Tshidi shrugged her shoulders shifting uncomfortable on her sit. She didn't understand what does all of the nurse questions related to what she came here for.

Tshidi: I never bother testing.

She nurse nodded still scrambling on Tshidi's folder.

Nurse: Do you use a condom?

Tshidi shook her head. After a few minutes the nurse dropped the pen and open her cabinet drawers. She took out two testing kits and surgical gloves and handed Tshidi a cup.

Nurse: Go pee on this cup.

Tshidi sigh leaping up to her feet and covering her neck with her scarf before taking the cup, stumbling to the bathroom she shut the door and pee on the cup. She washed her hands and walked back, placing the cup on top of the desk she sat nervously sat down. The nurse wore the gloves and open the test kit. She dipped the stick in the cup and told her to discard the remain pee on the sink and rinse the cup. Tshidi did as per instructions and sat on her sit.

Nurse: Okay while we wait for the pregnancy results let's check your status.

Tshidi could feel her palms sweating. She nodded faintly smiling at the nurse.

Nurse: Alright before we start just know HIV doesn't mean the end of the world. Statics have shown 6/10 people live with HIV as long as you take your medication on time and visit the clinic regularly like you should then you could live a lifetime. HIV only kills when you don't take your medication like you should or even visit the clinic. It's not something that can be hidden now our days because people are more aware of it than what it was before. The stigma is not bad than what it was on the 80's.

Realising a huge breath Tshidi nodded feeling very uncomfortable that the nurse will know her status. The nurse smiled at her encouraging and open the kit.

Nurse: Can I have your hand please?

Tshidi brought her hand forward and felt a slight pinch on her middle finger. She whimpered as the nurse gave her a wet wipe to wipe her finger.

Nurse: Okay the results should take about 5 minutes.
Remember what I said HIV can be manageable. If it happens you're pregnant and also have HIV the child can highly be born without it.

She nodded chewing her inside cheek, a sign of her nervousness.

Nurse: Congratulations you're pregnant.

Tshidi smiled widely brushing her stomach. She couldn't wait to get home and share the good news with Lwazi. She could imagine his facial expression when she tells him. The smile on his face was what she could see on her mind but her happiness was short lived when the nurse's next words made her freeze.

Nurse: You're HIV+

She gasped jumping to her feet.

Tshidi: (shocked) What?

The nurse gave her a pity look.

Nurse: I'm sorry but remember what I told you.

Tshidi sank to her seat bursting into tears.

Tshidi: How?

She sobbed painfully.

Tshidi: How did I get HIV?

She screamed banging the table.

Tshidi: You're lying you're test kits are old that has to be your explain.

The nurse was tongue tied about her outburst. She looked at her folder for her name and take of the gloves and discarding them in the bin on her feet before rounding the table and embraced her.

Nurse: Look Tshidi I now it all comes a shock to you but if you just take you meds everything will be alright.

Tshidi raised her head, her eyes were bloodshot red while her hands trembled. She pushed the nurse from her body shaking her head.

Tshidi : (screaming) You're lying to me. I'm not HIV+. I can never be.

She screamed at the nurse.

Tshidi: I can never be.

She repeated the words over and over again trying to convince herself.

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Her sobs could be heard at the receptionist. The nurse tried to assure her that HIV can be manageable if the patient takes good of his/herself but Tshidi was having none of that. She couldn't believe her at all people could have that kind of illness. The nurse has surely gave her the wrong results that were not hers. Concluding on that she wiped her tears and fixed her gaze at the nurse.

Tshidi: I know that you a lying. Someone must have paid you to say that so I'm going to ask you who?

The nurse frowned taking a seat on her chair.

Nurse: Look Tshidi i've seen mothers who a positive but give birth to negative children. Knowing your status comes as a shock especially to someone pregnant. Some loss the pregnancy at all and some go to depression due to shock not wanting to accept the situation.

Tshidi rolled her eyes from boredom. She was sure that the nurse was paid by someone to lie to her. She couldn't accept the garbage she was spewing.

Tshidi: I'm going to ask you again who paid you?

She snapped banging the table with her palm. The nurse jumped startled.

Tshidi: Is it Palesa?

The nurse shook her head frightened by the sudden change of mood.

Tshidi: If it's not that bitch who?

She spat venom lacing on her tone.

Nurse: I would advice you to come down. Stress it's not good for the baby and since we don't how far along are you I

wouldn't want to disturb a pregnant woman on her first trimester. It can be dangerous.

Tshidi chuckled furiously wiping away her tears with the back of her hand but the tears kept falling.

Tshidi: It's Mpilo is it? I knew he didn't like me but to ask you to lie about something this big.

Her lips quiver as she muttered. She shook her head blinking rapidly refusing the tears to stream down. The nurse only gawked at her sympathetically.

Nurse: (sighing) I understand how you're feeling. No one expect his/her status to be positive. Everybody wishes their status to stay negative but some circumstances forces the status to change. I would advice you to tell your partner to come to the clinic so he can also be aware of what his status say.

Tshidi shook her head bending down her head to her hands and burst into tears.

Tshidi: He doesn't have to know.

She mumbled raising her head and wiping away her tears. The nurses eyes widen.

Nurse: It's best you tell him before it's too late. He deserve to know so he can protect himself if his negative or he can start his treatment immediately if his also positive.

Tshidi: Are you insinuating we would be using condoms for the rest of our lives? (snapping) The damn rubber hurts are you aware of that?

The nurse heavily sighed.

Nurse: I'm aware of that but don't be selfish this is someone else's life you are gambling about.

She muttered through gritted teeth getting pissed. Every patient react in a different way due to shock she understood that but this one in front of her was just ignorant to everything she said. She was not aware how dangerous it is if she doesn't take her medication on time to protect the child she's carrying. It was not only about her but two people dependent on her now but she can see that Tshidi was one of those selfish people who wanted things to go their way no matter what the circumstances was and doesn't care who she hurts in the process as long she was okay anyone else can fuck off.

Nurse: Matshediso it's not only about you anymore, don't you understand that?

Ignorant people were pissing her off. She wished they could keep their opinions in.

Tshidi: (frowning) Two people?

Nurse: (shouting) I'm taking about that baby in your womb and your boyfriend. That baby deserves a healthy life. A life where he/she wouldn't need to take medication every single day just

because his/her mother was selfish to prevent that from happening. Your boyfriend also deserves to know so he can know also get his medication on time before it's too late.

She clicked her tongue opening the folder and start jointing down asking her questions.

Nurse: (shouting) Condoms are damn free here at the clinic if you can't afford them. Stop wanting to spread your disease on others. (yelling) Stop being selfish.

Tshidi tried to avoid some of the questions but the nurse gave her a death stare while shouting at her. She had no choice but to answer the questions. She could see the friendly face the nurse had when she first entered in the room was gone replaced by a rude woman who kept yelling at her. The spent the few minutes in awkward silence.

Nurse: The rash and the pain on your abdomen are symptoms of HIV. You will get the others like lack of appetite, loss of weight and others as the time goes by.

She closed the folder and handed to her after writing her prescription.

Nurse: At the dispensary they will give you your medication. Call the next patient.

Tshidi took her folder with her shaky hands and made her way to the dispensary. Placing her folder on top of the others she took a seat at a near bench. A few minutes later she heard her name being called she dragged her feet their and took her medication after listening to all the instructions she was given. She looked at the corridors making sure no saw her as she shoved the medication in her bag and made her way home.

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The sound of the front door being slammed makes his jerk up. Making my way to inspect the sudden intrusion he finds Tshidi sitting on the floor. Quickly rushing to her Lwazi kneels in front of her.

Lwazi: Baby what's wrong? Why are you crying?

The first think he notice when she raise her head was that her eyes were puffy and swollen.

Lwazi: Tshidi why are you crying? What did they say at the clinic?

Tshidi: I'm pregnant.

She blurts out tears on the verge of streaming down while her lips trembles. Lwazi froze, his eyes popped out of their sockets.

Lwazi: W-what?

He stuttered stumbling backwards. Tshidi smile with tears stream down.

Tshidi: I'm pregnant.

Lwazi's lips curve a smile as Tshidi leaps up to her feet. He crushes her in a hug.

Lwazi: What did you say?

Tshidi: Well at the clinic they said I'm pregnant.

Lwazi laughed cupping her face and smash his lips on her's.

Lwazi: I'm going to be a father?

He absently muttered to himself caressing Tshidi's flat stomach after breaking the kiss.

Lwazi: I'm going to be a father?

She nodded at his question sniffing the mucus back.

Lwazi: I'm going to be a father. You're carrying my baby.

His voice shook as he muttered

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tears threatening to fall on his cheek. This was the best day of his life.

Lwazi: You're to best thing that has ever happened to me.
Thank you.

He pecked her lips. Tshidi wiped her tears biting her trembling lip suppressing a sob to escape her mouth.

Lwazi: Baby you seem upset.

Tshidi shook her head faking a smile.

Tshidi: I'm just happy. These are tears of joy.

She lied through her teeth.

Tshidi: I'm going to lay down a bit.

She weakly smiled at him pecking his lips. Stepping on her heels she quickly rushed to the bathroom and shut the door behind her. She opened her purse and took out the pills she got from the clinic.

Tshidi: Me Matshidiso Modise HIV+?

She poked her chest unscrewing the cap of the bottle which have the pills.

Tshidi: Mxm wa gafa o. (she's mad this one)

She clicked her tongue and threw the pills in the toilet before flushing them down.

A FEW MONTHS LATER

MPILO

My limbs feel numb as I dig. Today is the last day before we all go back home. If it was up to me I would stay here forever avoiding seeing my brother with that bitch but the heat gets too much as the day progress.

Sanele: Who will get to chew your money this time since you broke up with Sindiswa?

I pause narrowing my eyes at him. I smirk shrugging before continuing digging. I bet he can't see the smirk due to darkness but I'm not about to spill my shit on him.

Me: My parents and sister in law.

I muttered placing the tools down and taking a seat on the ground. I move the only source of light to the side since it was blinding my eyes. He makes his way to our bags and retrieve a

bottle of cold water that we recently bought from the security guard.

Sanele: I can't believe he charged us R100 for cold water from the tap.

He muttered taking a sip and pass it to me. I chuckle.

Me: Why are you complaining for a mere R100 yet you don't mind paying R25K for sex.

He chuckled pushing my shoulder lightly.

Sanele: I've got needs.

I laugh mimicking his voice.

Sanele: I noticed you haven't bought anyone since we got here. What's going on is the machine not working?

He smirks wiggling his eyebrows. I laugh shoving his shoulder.

Me: The machine is working perfectly fine but none of them attracted me.

He snorts.

Sanele: It's not about attraction but satisfying your needs. A player doesn't get attracted. You know how the game works.

I scoffed leaping up to my feet and dusting my overall.

Me: Let's get back to work man so we can get the hell out of here.

I muttered changing the subject. I don't expect him the play boy to understand that I'm in love. Sometimes growing up means cutting ties with your usual habits. I don't want her seeing me as the guy she slept with underground just for sex or a player

but see me as an equal. A lover someone who can protect her, maybe some day when every has once settled I can put a ring on it. I sigh picking up my tools and got back to work.

Our footsteps become heavy alerting the guard we are ready to live as we approach the entrance of the mine. The first batch that is near the exit point walks out first after the guard let's us know it's safe to come out. My anxiety picks up as we grew close to the exit. I can't wait to see her even though our last encounter she was rude. I wonder how will she take the news when I tell her I was that guy. Will she take the money that I will give her? Or will she give a chance to show her that just because I'm a zama zama doesn't mean I don't have feelings also.

I exile loudly calming my nerves. As much as I'm scared of her reaction I'm just happy to see after a long time not seeing her, my woman. I smile at that thought picking up my pace. The ground of the mine starts to shake just as we about to walk out.

Voice: Mpilo look out!

The voice shouts pushing back inside as the rocks fall where I was standing. I groan standing up, a commotion broke down as we see our only exit blocked by the rocks.

Me: Fuck we are trapped.

I murmur to the others while my shoulders slump. There goes seeing her again because I don't know when will we get out.

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Unedited

17

BASETSANA

My breath comes in shallow as I whimper dragging my swollen feet to Palesa's room. My whole back is on fire and with each step I take the pain increases. Tears fill my eyes as I knock her on her door.

Me: Hey tsala do you have extra pads I could borrow. I think my period are approaching.

I murmur leaning on the door frame. She jumps off the bed and rushes to me.

Palesa: What's wrong mmata you look sick. You're even sweating are you okay?

Me: My back hurts a little. I think it's the period pains.

Palesa: Unfortunately honey I used all my pads but I can buy one for you at the spaza shop.

I nodded dragging my feet to my room and fish for the money in my jean pocket. I walk back and hand it to her.

Palesa: I'll be right back just check some pills in the last drawer in the kitchen.

She mumbled striding to the door and walk out. I make my way to the kitchen and fill the glass with water before looking for the pills. I take two and threw them in my mouth and gulp the glass of water. I sigh wiping my sweat forehead walking to the living room to watch TV. Just as I seat down the remote slipped out of my hands as I feel a sharp pain on my lower back. I close my eyes waiting for the pain to subsidise but it becomes worse.

Tears streamed down from my eyes blurring my vision. I bent down to pick up the remote but I feel a liquid running down my thighs. I scream falling on my knees holding my throbbing back. I've never felt my period so intense and so painful like this. Why are they so intense? Am I going through menopause

at a young? If so then I don't want to be a woman again if I survive this.

I don't know how long was I on the floor thrashing and whimpering alone. Why was my roommate taking so damn long? I might die here without her. I slip off the shorts with my underwear and lie on my back. Using all the strength I have left I push out whatever it is that wants to come out of my vagina.

PHINDIWE

I count the money and stumble to the living room. I place the money on top the table diverting their attention from the TV.

Ma: What is this?

Me: This is the money you guys borrowed to buy the stock I have. I know it's not enough or even half of the money you gave me but I'm willing to pay it back bit by bit.

Ma shifts her gaze to her husband and narrows her eyes back to me after lowering the volume of the TV.

Ma: I thought we spoke about this Phindiwe. We gave you that money from the bottom of our hearts.

Baba: We didn't expect you to pay us back.

I shock my head.

Me: You have done a lot for me and I couldn't just ate all your money without paying back. Please mama nawe baba allow me to pay you back

it's the east I could do. Don't refuse my advances.

Baba: (sigh) It looks like we can't change your mind.

I nodded.

Baba: Okay we will take it.

I smile leaping up to my feet, rounding the coffee table I kiss both their cheeks and walk back to the kitchen to pack my stock.

The past few months have been difficult for me. I couldn't eat or even want to see anyone. I was drown into a pity party that left me numb with my eyes dry without no tears to cry anymore. After Lwazi told me he doesn't want me anymore I cried each and every day asking myself what did I do wrong or where was I lacking? It didn't help that I had sleepless nights due to the nightmares. I felt like I was loosing my mind. I didn't even know what was real or not. I lived with everyday hoping he would call and say baby I made a mistake and I would take him back like I usually do because I love him but the one hopeful call didn't came. Instead I saw that he blocked me everywhere. I tried calling him using the parent's phone but everytime he would hear my voice he would immediately disconnect the call.

The last straw was when a woman answered his phone. I still remember that conversion like it was yesterday.

Me: Hello

I murmured through the phone hoping he wouldn't hang up.

Lwazi: Hello?

The feminine voice muttered on the end of the line. I had to remove my phone from my ear to make sure that I did correctly dialed his number.

Me: Who is this?

Voice: Who are you to ask that in my man's phone?

I nearly choked on my own spit. I could feel my eyes becoming moist.

Me: I'm Phindiwe her wife. Can you please give my husband his phone I would like to talk to him.

The woman snorted on the end of the line.

Woman: So you're the wife. Didn't he tell you already that he doesn't want you?

I bit back my tongue from lashing out.

Woman: He made it clearly that he doesn't want you. He got himself a real woman who will make him a proud father not the curse you gave birth to. What did you expect him to do when you gave birth to that abomination?

Tears slipped out of my eyes before I could hold them. I didn't expect Lwazi to tell her everything about us. The least he could have done was to respect me that much by not telling his mistress about our business. I wiped the tears with the back of my hand sniffing.

Woman: Are you crying?

She chuckled enjoying my misery. I could feel my heart being ripped out of my chest.

Woman: That is the one of the reasons Lwazi can't be with you because you're weak.

Rage raises from the tip of my stomach consuming my whole body.

Me: I'm not weak.

I yelled sniffing. A giggle escapes down her throat tormenting me.

Woman: You are weak. If you knew how to hold a man your so called husband wouldn't be laying in my bed and indulging on me every day. Stop calling my man farm Julia.

She clicked her tongue and disconnected the phone. I screamed sinking on the floor bursting into tears.

I scream snapping out of my thoughts as my hand contacts the burning pot. I whimper shoving my hand in the bucket of cold water.

Ma: Phindiwe are okay there?

She yells on the other side.

Me: I'm okay mah I just burnt my hand.

Ma: Phephisa sisi.

I remove it from the bucket and inspect in. The burnt marks have been formed but it was not too bad. I switch off the stove and move the pot full of popcorns to the sink. I sigh and taking a seat on the bar stool looking at all my stock. If I continue working hard like I do I should be able to build myself a house and move from here. I know selling sweets and popcorns to

school children it's not much but I taught myself to be independent since from that faithfully day my husband's mistress answered his phone.

BASETSANA

I open my eyes quickly close them as the bright light blinds them. Slowly turn to my side I try to open them again adjusting to the light. The first thing that caught my eyes was the white room with beeping sound.

Voice: Hey you're awake.

I shift my gaze to the voice and find Palesa sitting in a chair next to my bed.

Me: What happened?

I wince as I feel my throat dry as the dessert. She quickly pours water in a glass and help me drink it. I sigh in content and try to sit up. I frown when I feel my body sore.

Palesa: (smiling) How are you feeling?

Me: Sore what happened?

Before she could reply the door creaks open and a nurse walks in with an baby in his hands. My palms starts to sweat my my breath hitches on my throat.

Nurse: Hey mommy how are you feeling?

He muttered making his way towards me. He places the baby in my chest.

Me: What's going on?

I muttered panicking.

Nurse: Congratulations mommy you gave birth to a health baby boy.

My eye popped out of the socks. I shift my gaze to Palesa who has her lips in between her teeth.

Me: (stuttering) W-what is he talking about?

Palesa: When I found you earlier on you where close to giving birth on the living room.

I feel my head try to grasp what she saying but nothing made sense. I would have known if I was pregnant. I was not pregnant why are they lying to me?

Palesa: The head was already out when I arrived. You were trying to push and lucky I saw an ambulance passing by and stopped it.

She elaborates further when she see's the confusion dancing in between my eyes. My lips wobble as I narrow my eyes to the little king in my eyes and scream frustrated.

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MPILO

My body is drenched in sweat

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we have been trying to push the rock that was blocking the exit since it fell but our efforts go in vain. I was looking forward from walking out of here and enjoy the scorching sun hitting my skin. It's been months since I last so it and it feels like a lifetime.

Being stuck here is worse than being in jail. You don't even know when you will wake up the next day or much worse a rock will fall on top of you squashing the life out of you while you're looking.

The worst part is that even if you survive you become incapable of fulfilling most of the things you used to do before. It sucks out of your soul and live you dry. You become a shell of what you're used to be before. The pain becomes worse when you're injured while you're down here with no one from the outside

looking for you. I'm pretty sure my useless brother wouldn't even waste his time looking for me.

Looking at my fellow brother's that have been stuck with me from the being hurt I conclude to myself that our job is dangerous and risky. Hopeless looking at them now groaning in agony I feel useless and thank the man above for being with me until now. I don't know what would have happened if Sandile didn't push me out of this way. Maybe I would have been groaning in agony to like them or much worse I could be died. I could feel my mother's piercing scream echoing in my own ears as I think about the worst.

LWAZI

Me: Babe are you sure you're be okay?

I muttered tucking her in bed.

Tshidi: Yes I will be fine go.

Her lips curve into a smile showing her perfect white pearls. My weakness.

Me: Are you sure?

She nodded coughing hysterically. I'm a bit skeptical living her alone especially at this condition she's in. But we have a meeting with the union so they could tell us a way forward with a strike. We've been on go slow since the union came back to us the last time and told us the mine was offering us a quarter of what we were looking for but we didn't cease the strike but decided for a go slow.

Me: I can stay behind if you want and ask someone else to record for me.

She shook her head coughing. I quickly rush to the kitchen and fill a glass with water before making my way to the bedroom. She drags her body to lean on the pillows and take a sip of the water.

Tshidi: I'm okay baby you don't need to worry about me.

She squeeze my hand assuring me.

Me: How could I not worry about you. Your pregnant with my child I have every right to be worried about you.

She smile weakly.

Tshidi: I'm grateful to have a man like you. Not most man out there would take care of their woman when their sick. Most men would have ran and never looked back.

Tears streamed down her cheeks. I cupped her face and wipe her tears.

Me: You're my woman and I won't leave you.

Tshidi: (sobbing) Let's not full each other Lwazi. You left your wife who is not sick and choose me. What if she's the one who

bewitched me to be like this. What if she's the one whose flying on top of our heads at night chanting my name for me to be sick so you can live me and go back to her.

My eyebrows furrowed.

Me: Phindiwe is a scorned woman but I've been with her for 5 years and she has never used witchcraft before. Why would she start now?

She scoffed snatching the glass of water from my hands. She gasps when the water splashes on her face while the other drop spill on the duvet.

Tshidi: Are you defending her Lwazi? Is that what is it now?

Me: Of course not baby I'm not defending her but I know Phindiwe she's not that heartless to hurt others with witchcraft.

She shook her head choking on her cough. A disgusting look plastered on her face.

Tshidi: Maybe me and my baby are not important in your life like you're to me.

Me: (chuckling) Don't be ridiculous baby of course you're important to me. You and the baby are my number priority.

Shaking her head she muttered words that makes me freeze while my eyes popped out of their sockets.

Tshidi: It doesn't seem so. Maybe it's best I abort it would do both of us a favor.

I swallow hard kneeling in front of the bed.

Me: Baby I would do anything you say but please don't abort the baby. Please I'm begging you.

Tshidi: (smiling) Anything?

She softly muttered. I nodded.

Tshidi: Divorce her. I want to be Mrs Mavundla.

BASETSANA

Flipping my eyes open I feel so disoriented and numb. I keep slipping in and out of conscious and Palesa had to leave. She promised she will come visit when she comes back from the campus after submitting our assignments. The doctor had to sedate me last night since everything overwhelmed me. I still can't believe that I gave birth to a baby. The doctor did explain to me earlier this morning that since I'm a chubby woman the baby was mostly hiding himself in the fats that are in my body.

Many signs were mostly there but I chose to ignore them. The argument went further and he explained to that since my body used to carry more weight that is why I couldn't spot the change in my body.

I feel like the biggest fool for not noticing the signs earlier. I still remember I once panicked when I felt something moving inside me thinking it was a worm. The whole week I damn neglected my body even when I felt tired I didn't dare take a break because I wanted to know what was happening to me. Palesa had to hide my laptop charger in order for me to step back in reality. I was so obsessed of finding what was inside even though the movement happened once.

Looking at my baby boy now in my arms. I caress his head and plant a gentle kiss.

Me: Mommy is proud of you baby for holding on even though I once neglected you. You're so strong a brave baby I will always cherish the gift of giving birth to you.

I smile breathing a sigh of relief. He was strong as an ox.

Me: Lesego

I nodded feeling proud of the name I gave him. His my lucky charm from now on.

Me: Even though mommy doesn't know daddy I will always protect you. Your birth was not by mistake but written in the stars by the God's.

NARRATED

Whimpering and sniffing Tshidi could feel her intestines about to leapt out of her throat every time she coughs. She's not willing to accept her status nor willing to tell Lwazi. She believes that Phindiwe has something to do with how she is right. In her own mind there was no way she could have caught the disease. She's always had been careful over the years, why would she start having it after she met Lwazi? This shows that his wife had something to do with it. Her stomach starts to grumble indicating she needs the rest room, she tries to move her legs to the edge of the bed so she could rush to the bathroom but fails. Tears of frustration blurs her vision as she tries again but fall flat on the cold floor. Her stomach can't hold in anymore it needs to be released now.

Tshidi: (crying) Lwazi?

She tries to crawl to the bathroom but due to her body being weak she falls again.

Tshidi: Lwazi are you there? I need to use the bathroom.

She yelled screaming for help. She was not sure whether Lwazi was at home or not. She fell asleep before he left for his meeting and only woke up now by her grumbling stomach.

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Flash lights blinds their eyes. He groans placing his hand on his eyes before he opens them.

Voice: Madoda asambeni.

The voice booms on the dark tunnel of the mine alerting them that help has arrived sooner than they anticipated. Mpilo quickly took his backpack and strap it on his back. Finally he could get out of this hell and go home. Sleeping on the ground made him cranky

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he missed his bed and needs a hot shower.

Voice: Let's go people before the authorities arrive. They have been alerted the mine has collapsed and they would be here later on to assess the damage.

Whistles and cheers booms on the dark tunnel. They were happy to be going home back to their loved ones and Mpilo couldn't wait to be out there so he could see the girl whose been living rent free in his mind. He was sure after his ex that he will never fall in love again but here he was in love with someone whose not even aware. Someone who is similar yet different from his ex. The ex his was sure was going to be the mother of his children, his future wife. He was so disappointed when he got back home from his illegal hustle and find the flat they rented together empty. She only left a letter telling him he can't do this anymore.

He spent each and every single cent she had on that girl. He sent her to school bought her a car with this illegal hustle but she was able to write in the letter that she can't date someone whose doing illegal stuff forgetting she is what she is today because of the illegal money. Such a shame she gave up now

she was one step closer of being his wife but worry not he found someone better than her.

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Sitting in front of her is none other than her sister. The last time she saw her they parted badly. Harsh words were exchanged and neither of them was willing to give the other a chance. Now here they are like strangers meeting for the first time.

Basie: I'm sorry

She breaks the ice casting her eyes down. She could feel Tsholo's eyes on her but she's too ashamed of her behavior to meet her gaze.

Basie: I'm sorry about lying and disrespecting you. It was not my intention but I didn't want you to find out what I did. I was ashamed and I'm still am.

She takes a deep breath when she hears her voice creaking. She's becoming emotional for the first time since she had Lesego. Her mind was still trying to grasp everything that was going on that day she gave birth and screaming seemed the only emotion she could react with.

Wiping her tears she raised her head and find her sister smiling to the baby in her arms.

Tsholo: His handsome what's his name.

Basie: Lesego.

Tsholo's smile widen. She places her lips in his forehead and plant a kiss. She smitten by him.

Tsholo: I'm mad at you for being careless. Basetsana you're my sister and I love you. Mom and dad left you in my care knowing I was capable of taking care of you. You're my responsibility until I die.

Tears stream down on Basetsana's cheeks. She sniffs wiping them.

Tsholo: Imagine how it made me feel when I got a call from Palesa telling me my sister gave birth. If it was not her I wouldn't have known and you were not going to call me were you?

She shook her head dropping her eyes to her lap. She fiddles with her fingers silently sobbing.

Tsholo: We are all from different backgrounds and we're not the same. Appreciate the little you have because that's what I could afford as your sister. Being envied of your friends is okay and normal. It's part of growing up, the only thing you can do is just appreciate what you have. Not many people have what you have some asleep under the bridge as we speak some selling their bodies to put food on their table becomes circumstances forced them to do that but you.

She scolds her raising her voice. She was angry at her sister for being careless and reckless. What if something worse would

gave happened to her. What if her friends stole the money she was suppose to be paid to her or much worse the mine collapsed while she was still in there where was she going to start looking for her?

Basie: (sobbing) I'm sorry

Tsholo: (shouting) You're starting to piss me off with your crocodile tears. You knew what you were doing at that time. I took extra shifts for you so I could send you the little I have. Spent my weekends at works and public holidays working for you.

She exhaled loudly to calm herself before she could wake the baby.

Tsholo: (chuckling) My boyfriend left me because I was to obsessed working my butt off for my ungrateful little sister.

Basetsana bit her quivering lip to suppress the choking sob wanting to escape her mouth.

Basie: I'm sorry

Tsholo smiled teary. No matter what she does she loved her sister with every fibre in her being. She wiped her tears and leapt up to her feet and engulfed her crying sister.

Tsholo: I forgive you because you gave birth to this yummy little man in my arms.

They both giggled breaking the embrace.

Tsholo: Let's get out of here before they admit you again.

Basetsana laughed stand up. She took the baby while her sister took her bags and they walked out of the hospital room.

Tsholo: So what are you going to do with the money you have?

Basetsana shrugged her shoulders.

Basie: I'm going to start a salon for Lesego's education. An investment that will benefit the both of us for now abs years later in future.

Tsholo nodded in understanding.

Basie: (sigh) It's like his father knew I would need the money for later that is why he paid me more than the actual agreement.

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His in caught up in between a rock and a hard place. He knows his parents will never accept the baby Tshidi is carrying let alone allow her to be his wife. In their eyes they only see one person whose capable of being his wife and that person is none other the woman who choose to embarrass him by giving birth to that cursed baby.

Closing the front door behind him he makes his way to the bedroom to tell Tshidi about his decision. He was not going to let his kid grow up without a father. They will be a family him, Tshidi and their baby will be the family he only needs even if his parents do not approve.

He pushes the door of the bedroom and quickly close his nose using his hand. The smell makes his want to puke. He frowns and walks further in the room.

Lwazi: Tshidi what's that smell?

Tshidi: (crying) Lwazi.

His eyes popped out of their sockets.

Tshidi: Please help me clean up I couldn't make it to the bathroom.

He halts in front of her and moves his hands from his nose and quickly place it back.

Lwazi: Hai Tshidi uzinyele?

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LWAZI

Tshidi is getting worse day by day. I don't know what's wrong with her and she refuses to go to the clinic. I'm just worried about the baby since she doesn't want to eat any food.

Me: Don't you think we should go to this hospital?

I muttered tucking her in bed. It's the only place she feels comfortable and being herself.

Tshidi: No I'll be fine as the days go by.

I scoffed.

Me: That's what you said the other day.

Tshidi: You're just worried about nothing.

She weakly smile.

Me: I'm worried about nothing?

I inquiry shoving her hands off me.

Tshidi: Babe stop fusing about that. I just told you I'm okay.

Me: You're okay? Tshidi the other day I had to clean up your shit.

She drops her eyes when I start yelling.

Me: If that's your definition of being fine means I have to clean up after you everyday then it means we don't have the same definition.

Her lips quiver while she swallows hard. I see her eyes glistening with tears. Nope I refuse to be here when she starts crying. I'm dealing with a lot right now

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I juts don't need a grown woman to add up on my problems.

Tshidi: Where are you going?

I stop halt when I hear her shaky voice.

Me: Out. I need some air so I can think.

I murmur dragging my feet out of the door of the bedroom. Her sobs follows after me.

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Her hiccups are the only thing audible in this room. She's been crying her lungs out since he left. Everything she worked hard for is starting to crumble right before her eyes. She didn't think

her health will get in the way of her relationship. She took everything the nurse told her the other day for granted. Now she needed someone to lean on as she falling deep into a hope she dig up herself into. She needed a friend but she didn't have one. There one's she had they didn't get along with her. She couldn't call her sister because she always acted like a snob around her and she definitely can't call her mother, that could send her into an early grave. She wipes the dry tears on her cheeks and lay on her side and close her eyes.

Her bladder wakes her up on her slumber. Tshidi frowns when her eyes land on the curtain being blown by the air. It's already dark outside and there is no sign of Lwazi anywhere. She drags her heavy body to the headboard and lean on it. Heavily sighing she bites her quivering lip harder to stop herself from crying. She didn't think it will come to this. Everything that has been happening she thought she could manage but it got worse when she couldn't take herself to the bathroom. If only she took the nurses advice and took her pills in time none of this would be happening right now. She regrets flushing those pills down the toilet. Maybe living with HIV is not bad as she thought it was. Maybe if she gave the nurse a change to give her counselling none of this would be happening right now.

Her shoulder shook as she silently sob. She's going to die because of her carelessness. She sobs louder when she thinks Lwazi will eventually go back to his wife after her death. Will he remember him or will he move on with his life like she didn't exist? What will happen to her baby when she dies. She screams crying harder as those questions fill her mind. If she can turn back the hands of time she would have done things the right way.

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A grin is plastered on Mpilo's face as he makes his way home. He left his friends behind because he wanted to catch a glimpse of her. She's been living rent free on his mind and it was time he tells her how she feels about her.

He stands in front of the front door of er house. His palms starts to sweat while his heart thudded on his chest.

Mpilo: You can do this Mpilo. You just need to calm down and tell her how you really feel.

He murmurs calming himself and wipe his sweaty palms on his overall. He didn't get time to change clothes. He just wanted to out of that mine and see her. He sucks in a breath and raise his hand ready to knock.

Mpilo: You got this boy. Just knock.

His eyes popped out when he heard laughter coming from the other side of the door. Her laughter sounded melodic in his own ears.

Mpilo: Who am I kidding I can't do this.

He mumbles to himself and place the plastic with stack of cash on the stoop and spins on his heels making his way back home hoping she will see the money he left for her.

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Tsholo placed baby Lesego in her chest. She was smitten by her. Her eyes twinkle when she looks at her.

Basie: His beautiful right?

She cooed softly smiling at sister. Tsholo nodded placing a kiss on his head.

Tsholo: Can I take him with me home?

Basetsana giggled shaking her head.

Basie: Make your own sis. This one is mine.

Tsholo chuckled leaping to her feet. She hands the baby to her sister and takes her bag on top of the couch.

Tsholo: I will see you guys Friday and I'm sleeping over.

She mumbles walking to the door while Basetsana laughs. Lesego brought them together and she was happy that her sister didn't hold a grudge against her. She smiles kissing Lesego's head. He was everything to her and she promised herself she was going to make sure he doesn't lack anything.

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She just walked out of the house and she when her eyes land on the plastic on the stoop. She bends down frowning and pick it up. Carefully observing she decide to open it before and eyes breath hitch while her eyes popped out. She doesn't know whether she should call Basetsana or just keep it in case someone is trying to frame her baby sister. She looks around making sure nobody can see her before she shoves the plastic in her bag and walk out.

[A FEW MONTHS LATER]

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A FEW MONTHS LATER

LWAZI

She smiles weakly.

Tshidi: Hey.

It came as almost a whisper as she mutters this. You can see it took everything in her to say just those three words.

Me: For the love of God Tshidi can you please tell me what the hell is going with on you?

Tears streams down her cheeks. She furiously wipes them with the back of her hand. Looking at her right now my breath hitches to my throat. What if she has a deadly disease and she's scared to tell me. I quickly rush to her and engulf her in my arms.

Tshidi: Lwazi I have-

I cut her short.

Me: It's okay baby you don't have to explain anything to me. I understand how you feel right now. We will fight this cancer together.

She breaks the hug with a frown plastered on her face.

Tshidi: (shocked) Cancer?

I nod.

Me: Yes baby cancer and there is no need for you to be ashamed about it. There are many survivors out there and you my darling you will be counted among those survivors. We will beat this.

She fakes a smile nodding. I look at my wristwatch and sigh leaping up to my feet.

Me: Look baby I have to go. I left the baby next door.

Her lips quiver as she nods. I place a kiss on her forehead.

Me: I love you okay and stop crying.

I walk to the door and turn to look at her. My heart breaks into pieces as I look at her. She's not the Tshidi I used to know. The IV attached to her arms shows she's really sick.

Me: I asked my brother to take the baby back home.

She nods faking a smile.

Tshidi: Thank you baby. I love you.

I sigh and walk out shutting the door behind me.

MPILO

My phone beeps indicate a message snapping me out of my trail of thoughts. I fish for it in my pocket and unlock the pattern.

Lwazi: Bafo can you please come home. I need to talk to you.

I frown and slip the phone back in my pocket and pick up speed. I just wonder what the hell does he want. If people were able to choose family members I wouldn't chose Lwazi as my brother.

Me: Bafo?

I yell closing the door. The piercing baby voice comes first before I can see him.

Lwazi: Shh!

I bypass him walking to the kitchen and take out a bottle of water.

Me: You said you wanted to talk so what's going on?

I open the cap and gulp down the water down.

Lwazi: I'm desperate bafo and I need your help. I wouldn't be asking you this if I wasn't this desperate.

I cross my ankles and lean on the countertop sipping my water.

Me: What do you need?

Lwazi: Can you please baby with you when you go home this evening. Tshidi is not responding to the treatment. The doctors say it's too late.

I frown trying to grasp what his trying to say. After a minute of silence I burst into laughter.

Me: (amused) You sure knows how to creak a joke bafo.

I mumble walking throwing the bottle on the dustbin.

Lwazi: You're my last hope.

His starting to piss me off right now.

Me: You want me to take this bastard child home to your parents and wife?

Lwazi: Don't call my child a bastard Mpilo.

Me: Are you out of your mind?

I roar at him.

Lwazi: Can you please lower your voice.

The baby starts crying and he give me a death stare.

Me: Forget it I'm not about to take that-

He cuts me off

Lwazi: I dare you to call my baby a bastard child.

He places the baby on the countertop and stand in front of me head on. I push him off and walk to the door while he staggers.

Lwazi: Bafo please I'm begging you.

I ignore him and open the door.

Lwazi: (chuckling) She was right was she?

I stop dead on my tracks and gawk at him.

Lwazi: Tshidi. She once said that you want her that is why you have been this bitter towards her.

I throw my head back and roar in laughter.

Me: I wouldn't fuck her even if she was the last woman on earth. That deep mine shaft that you call pussy every guy has dipped on I don't even dream about it.

Lwazi: (hissing) Don't insult my woman Mpilo.

I smirk raising my hands in surrender and shrug my shoulders.

Me: If the shoe fits bafo.

He heavily sighs.

Lwazi: I wouldn't want you niece to grow up resenting you because you didn't want to help her while she was young. Look Mpilo Mah and Phindi are going to give a stable home which is something I can't give her right now. Please thumbu lika baba.

I exhale loudly. I can't believe I'm falling right on his trap. His emotional blackmail is working.

Me: (snapping) Fine I will come and fetch her later on just get her ready.

He cracks a smile.

Lwazi: Thank you bafo you don't know how this means to me.

I walk out and slam the door on his face.

PHINDIWE

I take back the dishes to the kitchen and start washing them after breakfast. It's Saturday today and it's my day off. I just want to lazy around the house but I know that won't happen. My customers will be here demand cupcakes and sweets. Mah taught me her recipe of baking biscuit and cupcakes and I'm happy to brag that idea made my business to boom. I managed to buy myself a plot. Lwandles's boss was selling it and he gave me on a discount. His been my biggest customer so far.

A car parks in front of the gate. I wipe my palms with the dish cloth and walk outside. The door opens revealing Mpilo. I smile and rush to him and crush him into a hug.

Me: Look at you looking all grown up.

I tease him breaking the hug. He chuckles slipping his hands on his pockets.

Mpilo: How are you sis Phindi?

I smile sighing. If someone would have asked me this question a long time ago I would have lied through my teeth.

Me: Never been better
you?

He nods in understand and shifting to the boot to take out his luggage. He avoids eye contact as he does this. I frown looking at him carefully. His a little bit on the edge and his eyes are all over the place.

Me: Mpilo?

He glimpse at me once and drops his gaze to the car. I frown and walk towards and open it. I smile and take him in my arms.

Me: Oh my God Mpilo his is cute.

I gush kissing his hands while he sucks on them. Mpilo chuckles

Mpilo: She. It's a she sis Phindi not a he.

I giggle feeling tears moist my eyes. I blink rapidly stopping them from falling. I just wonder what kind of mother would I have been if my baby was a normal baby and not a curse and abomination as they call people with albinism in this village. Would I be smitten like I am right now or would I be a terrible mother?

Mpilo: Sisi Phindi are you okay?

His voice snaps me out of daze. A smile nodding.

Me: Where are her bags and what's her name?

I fire the question walking to the house leaving Mpilo behind.

Me: Mah look who decided to visit us.

I mumble walking to the lounge.

Mah: His so cute who are his parents?

I giggle.

Me: It's a girl Mah and its Mpilo's daughter.

Mpilo walks in and Mah rushes to place kisses on him. I giggle and look at the baby in my arms. She flips her eyes and make those cute baby sounds. I melt feeling tears moist my eyes again. This baby has me wrapped out on her tiny little fingers.

LWAZI

I greet the receptionist and walk down the corridors to Tshidi' room. I just came back from work and I haven't went home yet to relax. I push the door and walk inside the room and find a nurse changing the sheets.

Me: Morning sister. Is she taking a bath?

The nurse frowns.

Nurse: Who?

Me: My girlfriend. I'm asking if she's still taking a bath.

She shakes her head.

Nurse: I don't know what you're talking about bhuti. I just came in and they told me to clean the room apparently the patient died a few hours ago.

My head start to spin while my heart beats faster on my ribcage.

Me: No that's impossible. Are you sure?

Nurse: I'm sure you can confirm it on the doctor who was appointed for the patient. They have been calling the next of kin of the patient but the call sent them straight to voice.

Me: (panicking) No! No! She's still alive I know.

She gives me a sympathetic look and stumble to the door.

Nurse: I'm sorry.

She murmurs and walks out of the room.

BASETSANA

I place Lesego on his cot after feeding. My baby is growing so fast I can't believe his one year already. It feels just like yesterday when I thrashed around the living room floor thinking my periods are approaching. His the biggest highlight of the year I had last year. I spent my Christmas and new year alone with him not believing his truly here and mine. I haven't seen my sister in months and Palesa was at home for the festive session. A giggle snaps me out of my daze. I turn and find Palesa leaning on the door frame.

Me: What?

Palesa: What kind of birthday boy is he?

She giggles walking inside the room to stand next to me in front of the cot. We both hover over Lesego as his sleeping.

Palesa: Who sleeps on his birthday?

I giggle and playful punch her arms. She laughs.

Me: Leave my baby alone his tired.

Palesa: (giggling) He only spent 15 minutes in there and demanded food. His guests left early because Mr party was crying his lungs out wanting to eat and sleep. His a food killer this one.

I chuckle nodding.

Me: It's like food is the only thing he knows. I just when he wakes up he will be hungry.

We cease our laughter when he starts to stir up.

Palesa: (whispering) Let's go.

We tiptoe to the door and leave it half closed so we can hear him when he cries.

Me: (sigh) I'm not looking forward to clean the mess outside.

She heavily sighs throwing her head back.

Palesa: Same here darling but we have no choose to do it now while his asleep.

She shakes her head dragging her feet outsiders. I stand still in the middle of the living room looking at the dirty dished in the sink. A smile creeps on the corner of my lips. My baby is no longer a baby anymore. His growing up fast and my biggest fear he will start to asks about his father someday. What will I tell him?

Palesa: (shouting) Bassie.

Me: I'm coming.

I yell and make my way to the kitchen. Thank god she took me out of my depressing thoughts.

LWAZI

Doctor: I'm very sorry for your loss.

I swallow the lump and clear my throat. I'm sitting in the doctors office wanting to know what the hell happened.

Me: (breaking voice) I don't understand I thought show was recovering.

Doctor: It was too late for her.

I sniff and wipe the tears staining my cheeks with the back of my hand.

Me: I thought we still had time for chemotherapy. She was suppose to hold on until then

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unless she lied to me about how much time she had.

A frown creases the doctor's eyebrows.

Doctor: Chemo?

I nodded sniffing.

Doctor: What are you talking about?

Me: Tshidi had cancer. That's what killed her right?

The doctor shakes his head. The look on his faces says I just said the stupidest thing his ever heard.

Doctor: Matshidiso didn't die from cancer.

Narrow my eyes at him I snap.

Me: Then what killed her?

He heavily sighs.

Doctor: It looks like she didn't tell you.

Me: Tell me what?

I yell while my palms starts to sweat. What was this big secret she couldn't tell me?

Doctor: She was HIV +.

I jump from my seat shocked.

Doctor: It was detected early on her pregnancy but she chose not to take her medication on time which made the disease to spread leading it to AIDS.

The word AIDS echoes in my ears. I feel myself suffocating, struggling to breath. I sink back to the chair and bury my head in my hands.

Me: D-d-d

I stammer feeling the lump in my throat rising. He knocked the air out of me.

Me: (sniffing) Does it mean my baby will also grow up with it?

Doctor: If the mother took her medication she would have at least had 50% of not having it but in your case yes the baby does have it.

I raise my head narrowing my bloodshot eyes at him with tears streaming down. This has to be a joke. A dream in fact I will

suddenly wake up from and everything will be back to normal but the sympathetic look plastered on his face just makes me realize this is my reality. His pager went off. He raises to his feet and wear his coat and stethoscopes.

Doctor: I'm really sorry you had to find out like this. My advice to you is get tested to know where you stand. Excuse me I'm needed at the ER.

I drag my wobbly legs to stand up. As I walk out of his office I feel like I'm carrying the world up on my shoulders. I wish I could scream so loud with no care. Damn you Tshidi how could you?

MPILO

Breathing the fresh air of this place just calms me. There is nothing more peaceful and calming than being home where your forefathers lay. The busy city life cab be stressful sometimes.

Voice: It's quiet and peaceful right.

I nod as my father stands next to me looking at the village. The atmosphere is so calming I just wish I can stay here forever. We both fall into comfortable silence.

Baba: Tell me Mpilo whose baby is that?

I heavily sigh and slip my hands in my pockets. I knew this was coming it was just only a matter of time.

Me: Baba the thing is-

The vibration of my thigh interrupts our conversation. I roll my eyes when I see the caller id.

Me: Baba excuse me I need to take this.

He nods as I walk to stand far away from him.

Me: (annoyed) What?

He sniffs in the other side of the line.

Lwazi: She's dead man.

I frown.

Me: Who died Lwazi?

My breath hitches to my throat while NY heart beats like a drum on my ribcage. She can't die without knowing I love her.

Lwazi: (sniffing) Tshidi. Tshidi is dead man.

I sigh in relief placing my hand on my ribcage normalising my unsteady heart. I feel my blood boil after I grasp what he said.

Me: So what? What do you want me to do?

Lwazi: (yelling) I just lost the mother of my child Mpilo can you stop being insensitive.

Me: You didn't answer my question what do you want?

Lwazi: Can you at least tell me or my wife. I need her more than ever.

I chuckle in disbelief. Is he for real?

Me: Are you kidding me?

Lwazi: Please Mpilo.

Me: Good riddance to bad rubbish.

I click my tongue disconnecting the call. The nerve of this guy.

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PHINDIWE

I lower myself on the bench under the tree and sigh.

Lwandle: You look tired.

She murmurs eyeing me suspiciously. I giggle nodding.

Me: You have no idea. I didn't know taking care of a baby is so much work my God but I enjoy doing it. It brings this new motherly feeling I didn't know I had.

She scowls.

Lwandle: Baby? What are you talking about?

Me: Mpilo arrived this morning with a baby. She's so cute I thought she was a boy.

Her frowns deepens.

Lwandle: Where is the mother of the baby?

Me: He said that she was in hospital, too sick during her pregnancy.

She nods still scowling.

Lwandle: So that means you will take care of the baby? What about your job?

Me: Honestly I don't mind. I can juggle both my daily job and her. It's not that difficult, all I need to do is bake when she's asleep.

I muttered dismissively.

Lwandle: Why don't the grandparents look after her? You have a lot on your plate.

Me: (sighing) I don't want to stress them. Mah has her hands full with Baba's health I don't want to stress her over this. The least I could do is look after her while her mother is still at the hospital. I'm sure it's temporary thing.

She nods still not convinced. I don't expect her to understand. The Mavundla's have been good to me since I can remember. They took care of me when I lost my parents.

Lwandle: Honestly I don't like this one bit. I feel like they are taking advantage of you. You're going to put your life on hold for them? What about you? Your dreams?

Me: I'm still staying under their roof Lwandle while they feed and cloth me every month. The least I can do is to be useful while my house is still being built. It's the least I can do for them I owe them that.

Lwandle: Argh!

She stands up and storms to the gate. Haibo what did I say?

NARRATED

Lwandle storms out of the yard. She doesn't understand how her friends mind work sometimes. Yes they might have been there for her in times of need but she doesn't owe them anything. If they were not leeches they wouldn't demand anything back from her because whatever they did

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they did it from the goodness of their hearts. She slams the door as she walks in her house startling her husband.

Khaya: And then wena yini?

Lwandle: One word Phindiwe.

Khaya heavily sighs and walks back to the living room and sit on the plastic chair while she's hot on his heels.

Khaya: What did she do?

Lwandle: Can you believe Mpilo came with a baby from the city and dumped it on Phindiwe.

She paces up and down rambling. She couldn't sit down. She felt like if she sits she won't be able to speak.

Khaya: I told you Lwandle stop meddling in her business.

She stops pacing and scoffs.

Lwandle: No Khaya those people are taking advantage of her. They know she doesn't have anyone that's why they are doing this to her.

She seethes in anger. She hates people who takes advantage of others.

Khaya: This has nothing to do with you. Stay out of it.

She gives her husband a death stare and click her tongue. Of course he wouldn't understand because his a man. He sees the world as black and white nothing wrong about that. She wouldn't bet on her last cents that her husband wouldn't be supportive should she decide to go back to school.

Lwandle: This has everything to do with me. Times have changed and people of this village are still backwards. I don't know who gave you'll the mentality of a women are just tools to use and discard. We have feelings and emotions too just like you men.

Khaya furrows his eyebrows. Are they still talking about Phindiwe here or his missing something cause his not following where the sudden danger towards men come from.

Khaya: Are we still on Phindiwe or?

She scoffs.

Lwandle: Of course we still on Phindiwe. The poor girl lost her parents at a very young age. She finds comfort in Lwazi who promised her heaven and earth while she's vulnerable. She believed each word he utters and gives him a chance. Years down the line in their marriage he starts to be abusive.

Khaya's eyes popped out. His friend might be anything but his not an abuser. His ready to defend his honour but his wife beats him to it, elaborating her statement.

Lwandle: I'm not saying abuse physical but I'm talking about emotional abuse. We saw the last time Lwazi was here did. He humiliated her like she was nothing in front of the whole village. Months later he calls to tell her how he doesn't want her. He found better blah,blah,blah after everything she has done for him. The least he could have done was to tell her face to face not to send his girlfriend to insult her. If he was man

enough he would have faced her and not emotionally abusing her. He knows Phindiwe is kind hearted and lacks for parental love. She seeks it from him and his using that against her.

She exhale loudly.

Lwandle: She recently got a job and is doing well for herself after her husband ditched her for someone else. Now she has to put her life on hold because brother in law comes back with a child and she as a daughter in law has to take care of it. What about her job? What about what she wants? Argh this whole thing is pissing me off. They are selfish shame and they can't even hide it. I just want to smack some sense in Phindiwe's head so she can see they are using her. They are holding her back on purpose. Argh I hate this.

She storms to her bedroom leaving her husband's jaw hang open. In their years of marriage Khaya has never seen hjs wife so livid.

PHINDIWE

My ringing phone wakes me from my slumber. I groan flipping my eyes open. I just put Ntandoyenkosi to sleep and I was taking advantage of that. Can you believe the poor thing didn't have a name and her father didn't seem to care about that. I took upon me to name her Ntandoyenkosi but I call her Yenkosi and God the child can cry. I swear the whole village knows by now that there is a new born in the house.

I click on the green button sitting up.

Me: Hello

I yawn whispering.

Voice: (crying) She's gone.

I frown removing the phone from my ear and look at the caller id. It's a number I don't recognize.

Voice: (crying) She's gone Phindiwe she will never return.

Me: (frowning) Who are you?

Voice: Mkami she's gone.

I immediately recognize the voice. I have every right to not know his number. He changed it after he blocked me. I'm surprised he still have my numbers on his phone.

Lwazi: (sniffing) I know that our last encounter was but I need you now more than ever Mkami.

He sniffs on the end of the line.

Lwazi: I need my pillar of strength. I need you to go through this difficult time.

God knows I've been longing to hear such words.

Lwazi: (sobbing) I'm sorry baby.

He cries painfully on the end of the line.

PHINDIWE

How the mighty has fallen. Who would have thought he would be calling me crying after the insults he and his girlfriend spew at me. To say I'm shocked would be understatement. I don't even know what to say. A part of me yearns and screams at me to forgive him but another remarks with sarcasm. God knows how long I've been waiting to hear him say that.

Lwazi: Baby I'm sorry. Please forgive me.

I sigh listening to him crying. The old naive me would have been smiling like a retard and tell him everything is going to be okay but this new me doesn't take shit from anyone .

Lwazi: (sniffling) Phinidi are you still there?

Me: Yes.

He exhales audible.

Lwazi: I want to come home to you Miami so we can be what we were before. You respected and loved me with all my flaws. Our home was my sanity but I messed that up. Please don't shut me out just because of this one silly mistake. In a relationship 90% of the time us men tend to do a lot of mistakes.

I chuckle listening to his ramble. His uttering pure nonsense. His not even remorseful for what he did

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his just using emotional blackmail to me forgive him.

Me: (calmly) What do you want me to do?

Lwazi: I want to come home.

I screech rolling my eyes.

Me: So what holding you back? Because the last time I remember this was your home. I'm just a guest you came with but got dumped along the way.

Lwazi: (breaking voice) Don't talk like that baby you're not a guest there. You're the daughter in law of that family. My wife.

My eyes rolled involuntary.

Me: Really? I don't feel like one right now.

I don't know where I got this sudden bravery from but I'm definitely loving the new confident me.

Lwazi: Don't say that baby. You're my wife the mother of my future kids. My life partner and missing rib.

I throw my head back bursting in laughter. He sure knows how to crack a joke.

Me: Lwazi when you think about me you think I'm a fool right?

Lwazi: (gasping) Of course not baby how can you even say that?

Me: (chuckling) I'm saying this because you make me feel like one. When was the last time you called me and asked how am I? When was the last time you send me money for necessities and expenses?

Lwazi: (low voice) I'm sorry.

Me: (shouting) No! No! No! You don't get to be sorry. I'm not your toy you can use and discard as you please.

My chest heave while my nostrils flare. The quivering of my hands indicate I'm angry.

Me: I've got feelings and emotions too just like you. Where did yiy think that relationship of yours with that girl will end up? In that tiny brain of yours you assumed I'll be sitting at home waiting for you?

Lwazi: Don't insult my intelligence Phindiwe.

I scoff while he sighs.

Lwazi: I'm sorry I didn't think things through.

Me: That's what your problem is you don't think Lwazi. Every time you mess up I have to clean after you after that I have to forgive you and welcome you with open arms right? Fuck what Phindiwe feels I should just toy with her.

I click my tongue.

Me: You must be delusional than I thought.

Lwazi: Look baby I get it you're angry and I will give you time to sleep over it.

I disconnect the call clicking my tongue. My eyes get moist but I promised myself I will never shed a tear for that man. My tears are too precious for me to waste on him.

I let my phone ring after a while I answer it.

Me: What?

Lwazi: Baby I'm sorry.

Me: Do you really want me to forgive you?

Lwazi: Yes baby I will do anything.

Me: Anything?

Lwazi: Yes.

Me: Then it wouldn't be hard for you to find where my baby is.

Lwazi: (shocked) What? But-

I interrupt him.

Me: You said anything.

I hang up and immediately block his number so he won't call me again. I'm trying to build my damn life here not to destroy it. He should just let me be.

BASETSANA

A slap on my face makes me jump out of the bed. My eyes widen when they land on my giggling son.

Me: Don't do that to mommy baby you will give me a heart attack some day.

He giggles with no care while I rub my stinging cheek. His hands may be little but that slap could make a person deaf. Wait a minute how the hell did he get on my bed? My eyes popped out of their sockets when I catch a glimpse of his cot laying on the floor. Panicking I rush to him and engulf him in a hug.

Me: Oh my god Lesego do you want me to die young?

He giggles trying to break free from my embrace.

Lesego: Mama.

He will kill me one of this days. He crawls to the edge of the bed and attempt to jump to the floor. I scream catching him.

Me: (panicking) Lesego.

He giggles. I swear my stomach was in knots while my heart is about to leap out of my chest. His one for godsake where the hell did he learn to do that. The neighbors kids should kiss him

goodbye I'm not going to allow them to see him again if they teach him this.

Lesego: Mama.

I can't help but cry. His growing up so damn fast. Isn't there any formula to keep him as a baby forever? Wiping the tears off I walk to Palesa's room.

Me: My son is forbid to play with those kids again.

I muttered pushing the door of her room. The room is empty. I sigh and walk to the kitchen. The note and the R20 note on the countertop catches my eye.

Palesa: He was already awake when I walked in your room so I fed him. I forgot to buy bread can you please buy for me. I know it was my turn.

I sigh in relief and drag myself to my room to brush my teeth and change my clothes and slip Lesego in his sleepers.

Walking hand in hand with him to the spaza shop he keeps showing me ecag and every car passing by. It looks like he will be a lover of cars when he grows up. A frown creases my eyebrows when h stops walking. I look at him.

Me: What's wrong baby?

I cooed softly. He doesn't speak but Hus gaze is fixed on something in front it us. Shifting my gaze from him I look at the man standing in front of us looking at Lesego in awe. I've been consumed in my own thoughts I didn't see him.

Me: Excuse me abuti.

He glances at me up and down and shift his eyes back to my son.

Me: Can you please move aside you're del-

Man: Whose the father of this child?

I gasp widen my eyes.

Me: What?

Man: Whose the father of this child.

He repeats still locking eyes with Lesego. The sound of my own heart beating like a drum is audible in my chest.

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NARRATED

Her clothes are suddenly drenched in sweat, she didn't even notice that.

Lwazi: I asked you a question lady.

Basetsana's tongue is tongue tied. Her mind screams it's none of your business but her tongue is on the roof of her mouth. Lwazi smiles crouching down to Lesego's level.

Lwazi: Hey buddy.

Lesego shyly hides behind his mother. For the first time since he heard about Tshidi's death he chuckled opening his arms for him.

Lwazi: Woza.

Hesitantly Lesego takes his calculated steps to him while his mother is still frozen on the spot. Lwazi spins him around and kiss his cheek, Lesego giggles.

Lwazi: Mfana ka malume

MPILO

My father's questioning eyes find mine when my phone rings for the umpteenth time. I let it ring and fix my gaze on my breakfast.

Baba: For godsake Mpilo answer the damn phone.

He bangs the the table startling us.

Me: He will eventually get the message baba.

The scrutinizing eyes he gives me but I couldn't care less. I don't want to talk idiot and I just know he will ruin my morning.

Baba: Tell me Mpilo are you in some kind of trouble or what?

Me: Of course not baba how can you assume that?

Baba: Then answer the phone. You're ruining our peaceful meal.

I sigh and drag my feet to the kitchen to answer the call.

Me: Sdididi ufunani?

Lwazi: Fair enough I will take that.

Me: What the hell do you want Lwazi?

Lwazi: I'm looking at a younger version of you now.

Me: (confused) Huh?

I shift my phone off my ear frowning.

Me: What are you talking about?

Lwazi: I'm talking about your son.

I chuckle.

Me: Son? What the hell are you on about?

Lwazi: I said I'm looking at a younger version of you right now.

Me: (chuckling) I'm not you I don't go around dipping my dick on every skirt I across with.

Lwazi: I'm dead serious Mpilo.

Me: I'm also serious. I don't know what you're talking about. I've heard grief does that to people

making them believe everything their mind tells them even though it's not true. If it's a new drug you're smoking leave it now mfethu before it messes with your mind.

I hang up shaking my head. I don't know which drug his smoking. I wouldn't be surprised if his smoking nyaope. This is the same guy who asked me yesterday to tell his wife that his side chick is dead.

PHINDIWE

I hang my bag over my shoulder and make make my where my plot is. I left Yenkosi behind with her parents. She's such a sweetheart, reminding me the time I found out that I was pregnant. Lwazi and I were over the moon. I chuckle as I remember how he used to spoil me. We would have been a family now if my baby wasn't seen a curse in this village. I furiously wipe the tear that escape my eye. I shouldn't be blaming others because I'm partly to blame. I also believed the baby was a curse but I was scared that the king will kill me should he find out that I give birth to such a child.

The sound of the car honking draws me out of my thoughts. I quickly wipe my face and compose myself. The front window of the passenger seat rolls down revealing Lwandle's boss.

Mr Smith: Phindi I thought that was you.

I smile and stand next to the opened window.

Mr Smith: Your mind seems far.

I fake a smile.

Me: It's nothing I can't handle.

Mr Smith: Where are you going I can drop you of.

Me: Oh no you don't have to bother yourself about me Mr Smith. I was just going to see my house.

He flashes me the most beautiful smile I've ever seen before. His wife is lucky to have such a beautiful man as her husband.

Mr Smith: Don't be silly Phindi I can drop you off I don't mind.

Damn it! It should be a sin for a man to have such a beautiful smile. Lwazi's smile is just a smile but this in front of me it's like he went to school for it. I swear my heart just skipped a beat.

Me: Okay.

He open his side of the door and comes my way. He opens the door for me and helps me buckle up. Okay another tick for him. His such a gentleman.

Mr Smith: Are you always this quiet?

If you only could hear my thoughts you would know I'm not this quiet as you say. I just have been oppressed to be timid that's all. I nod smiling. I don't know when was the last time a man made me this shy.

Mr Smith: Worry not baby once I fuck you, you won't be this shy.

I gasp widen my eyes. Did this man bravery say to that?

Me: (shocked) Mr Smith.

Mr Smith: Call me Kevin.

I squirm in my seat. I could feel my cheeks heating up.

Mr Smith: I'm straight as a ruler I don't like beating around the bush. When I want something I go for it and in this case I want you.

I gulp my thick saliva. Dear God I'm a dreaming or what? I thought no man would look my way.

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PHINDIWE

The car came to a halt in front of my house. A smile graces my lips when I look at the builders working.

Kevin: You should smile more often. You have beautiful smile.

His such a charmer shame. I'm a bit giddy, I want to jump out of this car and inspect my house.

Kevin: Shall we?

I nodded unbuckling the seat belt. The last time I was here it was just a fresh wet foundation.

Me: They are so fast.

I murmur as I close the car door. His phone rings before he can reply.

Kevin: Beautiful can I answer this.

Me: Of course.

He winks at me and moves far away.

Me: Sanibonani.

I greet the Baba Sondlo who is the head of the project.

Baba Sondlo: Ndodakazi.

Me: I hope I'm not interfering with your work. I can't help myself I'm excited.

He laughs.

Baba Sondlo: Not at all. I love customers who are hands on.

Me: Judging from where you guys are now how many months do I have to wait before I move in?

Baba Sondlo: If the rain can have mercy on us

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it can take approximately 6 weeks.

I nod.

Kevin: Sorry about that beautiful.

I grin turning to him. I forgot he drove me here.

Me: It's okay.

Time ceases as we lock eyes. His beautiful eye are not shying away from mine. Baba Sondlo clearing his throat snaps us out of our fantasy. I swear we were in our own bubble.

Baba Sondlo: Ndodakazi it was nice of you passing by but I have to get back to work.

Me: Oh thank you baba.

Baba Sondlo: Don't be a stranger though.

He leaves as standing there staring at each other. He clear his throat.

Me: I have go home. I have orders waiting.

Kevin: Hop on.

I walk back to the car.

MPILO

For the first time in my life I'm lost of words. I booked a flight as soon as Lwazi sent me a picture of the kid he was talking about. I wasn't aware that I was a father. Honestly speaking I'm mixed emotional. I have this huge urge to cry. I missed on my son's life. The mother how cruel was she? She robbed me something I can't replace. I've always wanted my first born with the woman I love. I guess sometimes what we wish for can't be fulfilled.

Finally the damn uber reaches my place. I pay the driver and bolt to the door. I barge in.

Me: (shouting) Lwazi? Lwazi?

I find him sobbing on the living room staring at something on his phone.

Me: Where is he?

Lwazi: I don't know.

Me: (hissing) What do you mean you don't know? Who is the mother? Did you at least get her name and number. Where does she stay?

I fire those questions at once. He wipes his tears.

Lwazi: I don't know ndoda. I've got a lot of shit to deal with.

I scoffed.

Me: (yelling) You don't even get her name?

He raise to his feet and slip his phone in his pocket.

Lwazi: No, no and no Mpilo I didn't ask anything.

Me: You can be useless at time.

Lwazi: I just saw a kid who looks my younger brother and forgot about the mother. He was the only thing that caught my attention at that time before the mother rudely snatched him from my arms and ran like she's been chased by dogs.

I run my hand on my face frustrated. How the hell am I suppose to find them now?

BASETSANA

Voice: (frowning) Why was the door locked.

I jumped startled by the voice. I sigh in relief as I see Palesa with her hands on her hips frowning.

Me: Thank God it's just only you.

I move to peep through the window as heavily sigh.

Palesa: (frowning) Tsala what's going on?

Me: Nothing.

I muttered grimacing. I blink rapidly.

Palesa: Try something else mmata. I know you like the back if NY hand so out with it.

Tears involuntary fell down my cheeks. She quickly rushes to me.

Palesa: (panicking) What's going?

Me: I'll lose him.

Palesa: Huh?

Me: I can't my baby Palesa. His everything to me. What if he wants to take him away from me?

I bite my quivering lip suppressing a sob to escape my mouth.

Palesa: Come here.

I sob in her arms. The man didn't say much but I knew he knew something about Lesego's paternity. He assured me that by the end of the day I will hear from Lesego's biological father. I don't even know what I'm going to say to the man. Lesego was conceived in a way I don't want to remember. I thought I have erased that day from my mind. The man groaning on top me while I laid there on a floor of a mine that could have killed me anytime. I sob louder as the memory of me silently sobbing.

Palesa: Shh!

She coed softly stroking my back gently.

Me: I-

Palesa: Shh! Don't say anything.

She stands up and disappear to the kitchen. A few minutes later she comes back with a glass of water and hands it to me. I gulp it down sniffing.

Palesa: What happened babe?

I hiccup narrating everything that took place this morning.

Me: That man has man Palesa. You saw how much money he gave me that day. I don't want my son being dragged through courts just because he wants custody.

Palesa: You don't know anything about him. He might surprise you.

I give her a death stare. She shrugs raising her hands.

Palesa: I'm just saying tsala. You might be stress over nothing. The man might just want to be part of his son's life nothing more. You saw how generous he was when he gave you that man. You also said it yourself that he gave you an advice, not most man can to that.

I shake my head burying my head in my hands and burst into tears.

PHINDIWE

He keeps stealing glance at me and smile as we drives me back to the village. Gosh I feel like I high school teenager right now and I'm loving the feeling. My stomach starts to grumble. I press my bag and hands to subside the noise. He looks and me and roar in laughter. Can the ground swallow me right now.

Kevin: (smiling) Someone is hungry.

Me: I was to excited to sit for breakfast.

I muttered embarrassed.

Kevin: There is no need to be embarrassed sweetheart. Let feed that hungry lion.

I place my hands on my face giggling.

Kevin: Where do you want to eat?

I shrug my shoulder shifting my gaze back to the trees pass by. Being the person I am I didn't have the privilege to take myself out to eat in such fancy restaurant. The only restaurant I know is KFC because mah and Mpilo always bring me one when they went to town. Lwazi didn't give a damn about that. His response was that R32 of streetwise two we can add in on something else. I would throw a tantrum but he would ignore me.

Kevin: Burger King.

I fake a smile nodding. I just hope I won't embarrass myself further more. The drive doesn't take long. He parks the car and walks to open my side. I thank him and close the door of the car. Walking in a high pitch voice screaming his name waving her hand at us stops us dead on our tracks. A beautiful woman launches herself on him before we can reach their table. I frown trying to recall where I have seen her before.

Woman: God I thought my eyes were deceiving me.

Kevin: (chuckling) It's me in the flash.

Looking at myself and this woman I feel so under dressed. The dress I'm wearing I bought it last week when I went to town to buy the ingredients for the order I had. It was only R100 at Mr Price. I feel so cheap compare to what she's wearing.

Kevin: What are you doing here?

Woman: Well the hubbies lost a bet and Phiwe and I lost a bet to Lumi so we decide to take a road trip to see uncle Kev.

I sigh in relief. God I was ready to walk out of this store after bashing him. My beating heart once again finds its rhythm and beats normal. I hide my trembling hands on my back.

Kevin smiles and arches his brow.

Kevin: So where is the rest of the crew?

Voice: Right here.

I turn and find two identical men and another beautiful woman and three children staring at us. He smiles wider.

Kevin: The Ngcobo brothers. I still wonder how do your wives separate you guys.

They chuckle as they fist pump. I feel so out of place.

Woman: Oh sweetie when they are together they don't even acknowledge someone else in the room.

She muttered kissing my cheek and engulf me in a hug. Okay.

Woman 1: I'm Sne. Snegugu Ngcobo.

My eyes widen when I finally locate where I know her from. She's a TV personality. I gasp when I see the two identical man laughing with Kevin standing far from us. Those are the two of the triplets that were kidnapped from the hospital many years ago. Their story was all over the TV and painful.

Woman 2: (smiling) We get that a lot. Uluphiwe Ngcobo but please call me Phiwe

Me: Phindiwe Mav-

I stop myself before I can say that. I can feel their piercings eyes on my skin. I cough clearing my throat.

Me: Sorry. I'm Phindiwe Sibiyi and you can call me Phindi.

It feels so damn good to say my maiden surname.

Sne: Nice to meet you Phindiwe.

Me: Likewise.

Phiwe: Okay lovebirds we know once you guys start we won't eat and I'm starving.

She muttered dragging who I assume is her husband inside the restaurant. We laugh and follow behind them.

Kevin: Still a food killer I see.

Phiwe: Nkosi knows my first love is food before him.

Nkosi: That's the abuse I face everyday. If it's not my mother in law being giddy in front of me it's her.

They laugh while I feel so lost. Phiwe stuck her tongue out.

Phiwe: Khethile khethile ntanga.

We laugh

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SEASON FINALE

BASETSANA

Lesego cries throwing his toy truck on the wall as he sees his friends playing outside.

Palesa: Don't you think you've punished the poor child enough.

I ignore her and try to pick him up but he thrashes around screaming.

Palesa: You know what you're doing is not fair.

Me: (snapping) I don't expect you to understand because you're not a mother.

Palesa: Wow!

Her voice is inaudible as she mutters. She spins on her heels walking back to her room. I sigh.

Me: I'm sorry I didn't mean to snap at you. I'm just frustrated and scared at the same time.

Palesa: I understand your concerns but what you're doing is abuse. It's been a week since the incident and keeping the child on lock down just because of your issues is not fair. He's young and he needs to play with the others.

I shake my head biting my lower lip.

Me: Lesego is my baby and whoever his father is doesn't have rights over him. I'm his mother and father.

She chuckles shaking her head.

Palesa: Tsala Lesego will grow up someday and he will surely ask about his father what will you say?

Me: I'll cross that bridge when I get there.

I muttered dismissively shrugging. I don't understand why is she making this a big deal.

Palesa: OK let's say you keep hiding him from the world for years to come, what if his father's side of the family has a certain ritual they do for their children when they reach a certain age?

I arch my brow

Me: And how is that affecting my baby?

She heavily sighs.

Palesa: His one of them.

I shake my head and take the my phone on top of the table and log in on Instagram.

Me: Lesego will never be one of them not now, not over.

Palesa: You know I'm sick and tired of your attitude.

I gasp narrowing my eyes at her.

Me: (shocked) What?

Palesa: You're so selfish Basetsana and you can't even hide it. This is not about you but you child but as always it's about you. (shouting) Every fucking is about you even if is not. Lesego will grow and start asking about his father and what will you say? Will you say I locked you inside the house for the whole week after your uncle told your father about you?

Me: You don't understand.

Palesa: I understand everything perfectly. There are many women out there who will kill for this opportunity to have their baby daddies caring for their children. Raising a child as a single mother especially a boy is not easy. Don't deprive your child his father's love because of your issues he doesn't know about. Stop being selfish and do the right thing.

She furiously spins on her heels and pick Lesego and walk outside leaving me with my jaw on the floor. She slams the door on her way out.

PHINDIWE

Kevin: I was hoping you will say yes but I won't rush you. Take your time beautiful I'll wait until you're ready.

I smile as I read the text and place my phone on top of the armrest.

Mah: I wonder who is making you smile like that. It's been a while since I saw that smile.

I shift my gaze from my phone startled by her voice. I can't seem to wipe the smile of my face.

Me: It's Lwandle Mah.

Mah: Mxm I wasn't born yesterday. I know that's not Lwandle.

I drop my eyes fiddling with my fingers.

Mah: I've been observing you for months sisi and I can see you're no longer the Phindiwe I know. You hardly speak about Lwazi and he also doesn't speak about you. What's going on?

I sigh biting my lower lip and ignore my beeping phone.

Me: Mah I don't know how to say this but-

Mah: He left you didn't he?

I nodded avoiding eye contact. I've been keeping everything away from them. Most of the things their son did I swept them under carpet and it's about damn time I set myself free.

Mah: (chuckling) I knew that place will change him. I'm not even surprised by that but the question is why are you still Jere?

My eyes widen as I raise my head to look at her.

Mah: Don't look at me like that. You're still young Phindiwe and deserve to be happy. I'm not going to force you to stay and fight for you marriage if you're not happy. I understand we as woman have been spoon fed to believe that we have to fight for our marriage but what are we fighting for if the person is not willing to meet you half way?

I blink rapidly as my eyes glisten with tears. I didn't expect her to talk like this. I thought she will turn a blind eye and side with his son like all the typical mother in laws do.

Mah: This is me setting you free because I know he won't instead he will expect you to you to continue being his wife even though he knows his not faithful to you. He will bring you all kind of diseases from that city and he will again expect you to understand that his a man. You've been his doormat for far too long my baby and it's time to take charge of your life.

I just break down crying.

Mah: Crying is step one of healing. You have to forgive yourself first before you can forgive. You didn't do anything wrong don't blame yourself for a failed marriage. It was not your fault and it will never be. Marriage is a two way street. It's all about compromising, fairness

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loyalty, honesty, faithfulness and trust between two people but if one fails to do so the whole the whole thing collapses. You've been doing all those qualities I've shared above alone and it's

time you do what Phindi wants. Search through your soul and seek what you want.

My lips quiver as I nod. She pats to an empty space next to her. I sniff leaping up to my feet and sit next to, she engulfs me in a hug and stroke my back gently.

Mah: Don't mind people cause they will always talk. You don't have abantu bazothini syndrome and that shouldn't stop you from living your life. Do what make you happy my baby and I want you to know I'll fully accept whatever decision you take.

After what feels like hours I broke the hug and wipe my tears.

Me: Thank you Mah.

Mah: You're not a dog that is chained. You're free to do anything you like but please Phindiwe I'm getting old I need grandchildren phela.

I giggle and bury my face in my hands.

Me: Mah.

Mah: Don't Mah me. I'm not getting any younger I need little Phindi running around here.

I shake my head laughing.

Mah: Before that my baby can you please make me my tea and give me those yummy cupcakes of yours. I'm sure the customer won't notice three missing.

I roar in laughter stumbling to the kitchen after taking my phone on the armrest.

Me: I'll love to go on a date with you.

I hit the send button before I can change my mind.

MPILO

I feel like I'm losing my mind. It's been a damn week since my brother told me I have a son out there. I haven't sleep all week looking for him high and low but it seems like he disappeared on thin air.

Sabelo: You look like shit man.

Me: I feel like shit.

Sabelo: What's going on?

Me: I have a son bafo out there.

He frowns puffing the cigarette and pass it to me.

Sabelo: Son? What do you mean?

Me: I mean just like that.

I feel myself calming down as I puff the cigarette.

Sabelo: Where is the child and who is the mother?

Me: (chuckling) That's the thing bafo I don't know.

He furrows his eyebrows.

Sabelo: What do you mean?

He whistles as I narrate everything to him.

Sabelo: What are you going to do?

Before I could reply to him my heart skip a beat as I see him running down the street. I close my eyes and take a deep breath. My eyes are probably deceiving me. I must be

hallucinating, when I open my eyes he won't be there. I just have to face reality and stop holding onto hope that someday I might find him.

Voice: Lesege.

I force my eyes to open as I hear the sound of someone giggling like me. Sweat runs down my spine as my heart beats like Zion drum. I want to scream and ran after the woman but I can't find my voice and I'm frozen on my spot. The only thing audible is my beating heart.

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Unedited

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SEASON FINALE

MPILO

Sabelo shakes me violently snapping me out of my daze.

Sabelo: Where are you man?

Me: There.

I muttered still fixing my gaze on my boy. Tears involuntary spill down.

Sabelo: Huh? What the hell is going on with you?

He snaps frustrated. I ignore him willing my tears and force my legs to run after them.

Sabelo: Mpilo?

He shouts after me as I run. I might seem like I'm losing my mind but at this point I don't care. I just want to see my boy. I tap the lady's shoulder panting. She turns around with a scowl on her face. I nearly fainted when I see who it is.

Palesa: Mpilo.

That's impossible I cannot have a baby with this woman. I refuse to believe it.

Me: God why are you punishing me like this?

She screeches frowning.

Palesa: What's going with you?

Me: Please tell me you're not the mother of that boy.

She folds her arms across her chest and gawk at me. I can tell her bitchy attitude is about to pop out.

Palesa: What does that have to do with you?

Me: Listen here Palesa I don't have time for your shit today.

She rolls her eyes and walks away. I click my tongue and follow her.

Me: Are you going to answer me?

She ignores me at scoop my son on her arms picking up her pace. I pick up my own pace. People are looking at us with curious gaze but I don't fucken care. There is no way in hell she could be the mother of my son, even if she is the is no way in hell I'll let my son be raised by her.

Me: Yeyi Palesa don't test my patience.

She stops dead on her tracks

Palesa: What is to you? Why are you so bothered by a child you barely know?

Me: (snapping) That's my son dammit.

Someone gasping make me tear my eyes from Palesa. Her eyes are popped out of their sockets.

Bassie: Did you just say your son?

Dammit! I'm sure she won't bat her eyelashes at me again and where the hell did she come from?

Palesa: Are you not going to answer her?

I blink once, twice but nothing comes out of my mouth. I'm suddenly tongue tied. Her facial expression matches mine.

Palesa: Tsala.

She rolls her eyes.

Palesa: Well since neither of you are going to say anything to each other. Tsala meet your baby daddy Mpilo and Mpilo meet your son Lesego and baby mama Basetsana.

My eyes widen as my breath hitches. Her hands tremble while tears stream down her cheeks. She spins on her heels and rush back to the house.

Palesa: You might be Lesego's father but she's still her mother and the night you guys created him still haunt her.

I swallow hard nodding.

Me: Can I hold him?

A smile creeps on my lips as I hold my boy for the first time.
Tears glisten on my eyes but I refuse to let them fall.

Me: Hey boy boy.

Palesa screeches rolling her eyes.

Palesa: His name is Lesego.

I ignore and follow the mother of my child. It's time we have a
chart.

BASETSANA

My worst nightmare comes to life. This is what I was afraid of.
Rocking myself back and forth tears fell down from my eyes.

Voice: Can we talk?

I cease my sobs and stand up wiping the tears away.

Me: You have no right over him. Give me back my baby.

His eyebrows furrows as I snatch Lesego from his arms.

Me: What are you doing here?

Mpilo: Woah! Calm down I didn't mean to upset you.

Me: Well you just did.

I sarcastically inspecting Lesego.

Mpilo: Oh come on you think I would hurt my own child?

I shrugged and continue inspecting him.

Mpilo: His my son too and I would die before someone can hurt him.

I clicked my tongue and place Lesego on hip and stumble to the kitchen. I can hear Palesa singing on top of her voice in room. How I so wish I was her right now. She's having nice life problems.

Mpilo: (sighing) I was hoping we can talk and have a way forward about Thando.

I stop dead on my tracks and place Lesego on the floor.

Me: (hissing) His name is Lesego and again you have no right over him.

Mpilo: (shouting) You know I'm sick and tired of your attitude. I was hoping we would sit down like two adults and discuss a

way forward about our son but I can see we're not getting anywhere so I will leave.

Me: Vele tsamaya that's what you're good at. Leaving

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buying woman and throwing them with money is one of your specialities.

My chest heaves while my hands tremble. The confusion on my baby's face is plastered on his face and I hate doing this to him but this is the only chance I would have and I'm snatching it with both hands.

Palesa: Seriously guys?

We both shift our gaze to her. She picks the crying Lesego on the floor. I don't even know when

Us: (snapping) What?

Palesa: You don't do this in front of a child. What kind of parents are you?

Us: The kind that loves our child.

We say in unison. I give him a death stare. His the reason I can't even hear my baby crying. His presence is infuriating me.

Palesa: Emotions are high I get that but never. I mean never yell in front of the poor kid. You're traumatising him and exposing him to such things his not suppose to be seen at this young age.

Shifting my gaze from her I gawk at him.

Me: He shouldn't be here.

Mpilo: Where am I suppose to be? Put you damn feelings aside and think about your child for once and stop being selfish.

I chuckle and fold my arms over my chest and arch my brow.

Me: I'm the selfish one?

I pock my chest.

Me: Me Basetsana I'm selfish?

Palesa: Yes and you're selfish.

I gasp widen my eyes.

Me: Tsala?

Palesa: No Bassie his right this is not about you but your child. You're a mother and mother's always put their children first. I expected that from you.

I drop my eyes and fiddle with my fingers. Tears glisten on my eyes blurring my vision.

Palesa: And you Mpilo you have no right coming here demanding this and that. I get that his your son too but the way you're doing things right now is wrong. Yelling and screaming at each other is okay but not in front of the child please.

She turns and stumble to the door.

Palesa: We're going to take a walk. Hopefully by the time we came back you would have reached an agreement.

She opens the door and close it behind her.

LWAZI

I unfold the letter and use my head to iron the wrinkles out. Clearing my throat I narrow my eyes to the letter.

Me: You hid from me while I was still looking the other way.

The lump in my throat rises again making me to swallow hard. Mpilo refused to attend the funeral and I have no one to support me on this time of need.

Me: I was still looking forward of many years together but baby you chose to leave me behind to face the world alone.

I sniff and wipe the tears away.

Me: I was hoping this was a dream I would wake up from. When I woke up this morning I was expecting to see that beautiful smile you always had but I was greeted by my hollow eyes staring back at me on the mirror when I thought about the day ahead of me. If I didn't see you on your last day at the hospital I would be in denial that you're really dead.

I shift my eyes from the letter and pppgrew a heavy breath blinking rapidly.

Me: What am I suppose to tell our daughter when she starts to ask about you? You were suppose to hold on Tshidi and see her growing up to be the woman you are.

I shake my head and furiously wiping the tears away.

Me: I have a lot to say and I could take the whole day. One thing for sure is that this is not good bye. Rest in eternal of peace my love until we meet again.

I close the letter and step down the podium with tears blurring my vision. It's a bitter pill to swallow but I have to accept that she's gone. I won't see her again.

The pastor announces it's time to go to the graveyard. My knees become wobbly as we make our way to the cars. It only sinks in now that she's gone and I will never see her again.

NARRATED

The trip to the cemetery was short. Through out the journey Lwazi kept asking himself why didn't she tell him about her status, maybe she might still be alive today if she spoke out. They would have worked something out even though they that means using condoms when they are intimate but that didn't matter to him. He breaks out his trails of thoughts when a convoy of cars blocks their way. Just as he was about to step out of the car, a knock on the window startled him. He rolls it down fixing his gaze on the man outside the car.

Lwazi: Man what's going on? Can you please tell these people to move their cars aside so we can pass.

The man shook his head.

Man: I'm afraid I can't do that sir.

Lwazi's eyebrow furrow.

Lwazi: Why the hell not?

Man: Because I was sent by the king to take back his wife's body home and he also demanding your presence.

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SEASON FINALE

NARRATOR

Lwazi erupted in laughter. He clutch his stomach tapping the the seat in front of him. The man outside the door and the driver share a confused look.

Lwazi: You sure know how to crack a joke.

He wipes his imaginary tear.

Man: Sir it's not a joke.

Lwazi: Yeyi ndoda stop wasting our time. Tell your people to move their cars aside.

Man: Like I said before sir I can't do that.

Lwazi: Because the king said so right?

The man nods while he rolls his eyes.

Lwazi: Okay take me to this so king of yours and he better have good reason for causing such scene.

He opens the door and slams it after him.

Man: After you sir.

Lwazi: I'll be back just tell the pastor to continue without me I'll catch up later on.

The undertaker nods his head. The man escorting him shakes his head. In his years serving the royal family he has not once come upon this. This man was sleeping the king's wife and that's a crime enough but he seems like he doesn't care. King Morapedi doesn't take such matters lightly and his afraid on his

behalf. In the years the King ruling he has been a ruthless leader. His community lives by the rules and no one breaks them, should one break them he/she will be punished.

Matshediso was given a chance to go to school and pursue her dreams because she was still young when they got married. The king gave her the benefit of the doubt when she left Botswana to come and study in South Africa.

The stories he heard about how young girls behave in South Africa were enough to make him be harsh on her but the tears and swearing he heard everyday from her mad him to change his mind. Tshidi promised him to be always be the Matshidiso he know and not change but that changed the minute she stepped on that flight. She forgot all about her morals and ethics. She forgot that not only was she a princess at that time but also a future queen of the kingdom of Batswaneng. She forgot she was someone's wife and lived her life according to her own way. She wanted to live her life according to her own rules and choices not rules forced to her by an older man whose the same age as his father. Her wings were clipped the minute he chose her as his wife.

Arriving at their destination. The guard knocks on the window and waits for it to be rolled down. A man in his late 60's appears on the other side of the car.

Guard: As you requested my King.

He bows and moves aside for Lwazi.

King: Boy who taught you to sleep with married woman?

He calmly muttered looking straight at Lwazi's eyes. He stare sent chills down Lwazi's spine. The King opens the door and fix his suit and lean on the door after closing it. He arches his eyebrows waiting for his response but Lwazi's tongue was rooted on his mouth. The King chuckles and shift his gaze to the guard, the guard nodded and tapped Lwazi's shoulder snapping him out of his daze.

Guard: The king asked a question sir.

Sweat ran down Lwazi's spine while his heart thudded on his ribcage. His eyes widen as the king pins him to the car strangling him. He gasps for air trying to remove the king's hand on his neck.

King: When I ask questions I expect you to answer them. Are we clear?

Lwazi quickly nods her head while the king removes his hand from his neck. He coughs greedily gasping for air.

King: I'm waiting.

He slides his hands on his pockets.

Lwazi: I don't know what you're talking about.

The King looks at the guard and erupts in laughter.

King: (mimicking his voice) I don't know what you're talking about.

He clicks his tongue.

King: I don't take lightly to disrespect boy. When you talk to me you address me with my status and kneel while your head bow your head. I'm not a commoner.

He hisses clicking his tongue.

Lwazi: I don't know where do you think where this is but it's not the Bundu's where you come from.

The King chuckles. His never been this disrespected in his life.

King: Boy I suggest you give me back my wife's body so I can bury her with dignity that she deserves and I'll be out of your hair.

Lwazi smirks and steps on his shoes.

Lwazi: Read my lips. Over my dead body.

He clicks his tongue and walk back to the graveyard. They watch him until he disappears into the crowd.

Guard: His says over his dead body we can definitely arrange that.

The king chuckled leaning on the car and cross his ankles.

King: No this time we don't strike while the iron is still hot. Let it cool down and forget then that's where we will strike. He will give me back my wife's body whether willingly or forcefully even it means I hurt his loved ones. I want you to follow him and report back every single detail he does.

Guard: Yes my king.

King: Let's go.

They step inside the car and drove off. Lwazi clicks his tongue when he sees the car speed off. He will be dammed if he can let anyone spoil this day for him.

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The room is dead quiet, the only thing audible is their heart beats. Mpilo heavily sighs and sit next to her.

Mpilo: I don't know where to start.

Bassie: You can start by apologizing for making feel so cheap.

Mpilo furrows his eyebrows.

Mpilo: I don't think I'm following.

She chuckles leaping up to her feet and furiously wiping the mucus.

Bassie: Right! Why am I not even surprised.

Mpilo: Can you elaborate your statement.

Bassie's blood starts to boil while her lips and hands quiver.

Bassie: You throw me with cash after you were done having your way with me. You made me feel so cheap.

Tears rolls down her cheeks.

Bassie: Everyday when I look at Lesego I remember that day that I sold my body for a quick cash in the mines.

Mpilo's eyes popped out of the socket. He stands up and start pacing around the room cursing. No she can't be that girl from that day. The universe is playing a trick with him and he refuses to accept the challenge.

Mpilo: You can't be that girl.

Bassie screeches and storm to her bedroom swearing at him. She bends down and retrieve the suitcase under the bed and walk back to the living room

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she finds Mpilo still pacing. She kneels and opens the suitcase and gesture topilo to look at it.

Bassie: R50K and more like you paid but it's a pity I used some of it because of your sons needs.

He sinks to the floor and bend his knees placing his head on his eyes at closing his eyes. This is what he didn't expect. No wonder the woman doesn't spare him the time of the day. He took a part of her she will never forget.

Bassie: Cat got your tongue now?

He nods raising his head with his eyes still closed. His too ashamed to even looking at her.

Mpilo: (low voice) I'm sorry.

Bassie: You're sorry?

She erupts with laugh while the tears spilling blurs her vision.

Bassie: I'm the one who gets nightmares sometime. I'm the one who can't open my heart to anyone because I'm afraid he will throw me money after his done with me. He will dump me on the thrash can like a used gum that I am.

She bit her lower lip and swallow the lump in her throat.

Bassie: Sometimes I can't even look at myself on the mirror without feeling dirty.

Her silent sobs turned into a full blown. scream. Mpilo stands up and crouch next to her and place her head on his chest. She tries to break free but his grip is too tight, eventually she gives up and wrap her own arms around him crying.

Bassie breaks the hug hiccuping. She dropped her eyes embarrassed after seeing Mpilo's shirt soaked with her tears.

Bassie: (raspy voice) Sorry for messing your T-shirts.

Mpilo smiles and shook his head and lean in on her face. He cupped her face and use his pad of a thumb to wipe her tears.

Mpilo: You got nothing to be sorry about. I'm the one who should be sorry. Hey look at me.

Bassie raises her tears eyes to him. They lock eyes.

Mpilo: (softly) I'm sorry.

Tears stream down her face. Mpilo wipes them and lean in and smooch his lips on her.

Bassie: No

She breaks the kiss and slap him so hard.

Bassie: Who do you think you're?

Mpilo: I'm so-

Bassie: Don't even say that cause you're not sorry. You will never be sorry.

Mpilo heavily sighing and runs his hand on his face.

Mpilo: I'm sorry for what happened that day and I will regret it for the rest of my life but one thing I'm not sorry about is my son and kissing you right now. I've always wanted to do that for a very long time but you didn't spare the time of the day.

Bassie: (frowning) What?

Mpilo: I've been in love with you for a while now. That day we bumped into each other and I was rude at you I thought you were Palesa. After seeing it was you I cursed and swore at myself for acting that way. I wanted to chase after you and apologize but it was already too late, you were long gone.

Bassie places her hands on her face and sit down defeated. She's suppose to be angry at this man. She should be killing him not sitting next to him and not having such conversion. Where was the anger she has been harbouring inside her all this time?

Mpilo: I hate the word sorry because some people don't mean it. They just use it for the sake of using it. If there was any word I would have been using it but there is none.

He softly muttered. Bassie chuckled wiping the tears that keeps falling.

Bassie: You know everyday I always rehearse what I want to say to you the day we meet again. I wanted to tell you how much you made me hate myself, how I can't look another man and see them as a pervert. In my mind all man are like you.

She lifts her eyes and look at him. Mpilo's eyes soften when he sees her puffy eyes.

Bassie: I should be hate you but I can't because through that you gave me a beautiful gift no one can give me. My beautiful baby boy.

She smiles teary.

Mpilo: His quite handsome young fellow that one. He will make all ladies lose their minds.

She giggles nodding.

Mpilo: His a charmer just like his father.

She scoffs rolling her eyes.

Bassie: Arrogant much?

Mpilo stands up and twirl in front of her.

Mpilo: Girl have you seen me? I'm a snack even you grandmother might want me.

They lock eyes and burst into laughter

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Phindiwe rocks Yenkosi back and forth. She's been restless since last night and she barely slept. She's tired and exhausted,

all she wants to do is sleep. She has an order she needs to finish and the customer is a crazy woman who doesn't want excuses when it comes to her. She also has a date with Kevin later today but she doesn't see herself going.

Phindi: (yawning) Mommy is tired baby what do you want?

She heavily sighs and place her on top of the bed. Yenkosi screams while she sinks to the floor leaving her crying her lungs out.

Mah: Did she eat?

She murmurs walking inside the room. Phindi shake her head.

Mah: Are you okay sisi?

Concerned laced in her tone as she crouches down to her level. She shakes her head with tears streaming down.

Phindi: I'm tired mah. I desperately need to sleep but I can't. I have an order I need to finish.

Mah: It's alright sisi I'll take her so you can nap for a while. I'll call Mpilo later on he has to take responsibility for his child. He can't dump her here and expect you to take care of her while her mother is gallivanting her skinny legs on the street. She must know she has a baby and she needs her mother.

She clicks her tongue and picks up Yenkosi.

ah: It's okay mzukulu wam gogo is here. I don't know why god gave your parents like them. Who dumps a child at their patents without saying anything. Sometimes I wonder how does Mpilo's mind work.

She mumbles walking out. Phindi heavily sighs and remove her phone from the charge.

Phindi: Something came up I'm sorry for cancelling at the last minute.

She sends the text and throws herself on top of the bed and sigh in content when her head hits the pillow.

Phindi: Finally peace and quietness.

[MONTHS LATER]

EPILOGUE

A FEW MONTHS LATER

NARRATOR

His chest close up as he cough blood. This has been his daily routine and he was forced to take leave at work. His frial finger wipe the blood away and tries to make his way to the kitchen to drink water. He stops dead on his tracks when he sees the person sitting on the plastic chair.

King: We meet again.

Lwazi gulps staggering. He uses the wall to balance himself.

King: You know I've been looking at you for months now and you made a very big mistake by borrowing money from the loan shark just to bury my lovely wife. You wouldn't be hiding in this dump if you just gave me her body like I've requested.

He shakes his head while Lwazi feels a hot liquid runs down his legs. He drops his eyes to the floor and nearly faints when he sees he peed on himself. The king disgustedly stood up to his feet and walk towards him.

King: I want you to remember my face when you take your last breath.

Lwazi's feet dangle while he tries to remove the Kings hands from him. His choking and he can feel his fading away.

King: Never ever mess with something that is not yours boy.

He squeezes tightly on his neck. Lwazi thrashes until he gives up. The king throws him on the floor just as he was giving up.

King: Death is too easy for you. I'm going to torture you until you decide to kill yourself.

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She threw her head back dying in laughter.

Phindi: Stop it Kev my stomach hurts.

He chuckles and raises his hands in surrender.

Kevin: Did I tell you how gorgeous you look tonight?

Phindiwe blushes nodding.

Phindiwe: You don't look bad yourself although it looked like you were trying to outshine me and steal my spotlight.

Kevin gasps and playfully places his hand on his chest.

Kevin: You sure knows how to hurt people's feelings.

Phindi giggles. It's been a blissful months for her. She finally moved out of her in-laws house to hers. She was the talk of the whole village. Some assumed they kicked her out that's why Lwazi hasn't been home since he went to work in the mines while others assumed she was a barren. Nobody took the time to ask her the real reason why she was moving out but she didn't care anymore what people say. This was her story and she was going to write it the way she see fit it.

Kevin: You're doing it again.

He mutters kneeling on one knee. His fishes for the box in his jacket and opens it.

Kevin: Babe

She snaps out of her daze and her yes popped out of her sockets when she sees the sapphire stone in front of her.

Phindi: (stuttering) W-w-what's going on?

Her voice came almost as a whisper. Tears stream down her face.

Kevin: (chuckling) Don't cry beautiful.

She shakes her head and raise her head to the roof blinking the tears away.

Kevin: The first time I saw you-

She crushes her lips on his. A smile curves on Kevin lips as he stands up with her on his arms. The kiss gets heated but Kevin breaks it.

Kevin: I haven't said anything yet.

Phindi: I don't want to hear what you're saying. You're going to save those words for our wedding.

He laughs and pecks her lips.

Kevin: For a second I thought you wouldn't agree.

Phindi: I will be out of my mind if I didn't agree to your proposal. So Mr Smith can I have my ring please.

Kevin: (laughing) I fucken love it when you're being sassy.

She giggles while Kevin slide the ring on her finger. She sighs heavily looking at the rock glistening on her finger. If someone told her she would be here today she would have laughed on that person's face.

Phindi: (teary) You know everyday I keep asking myself what did you saw in me.

Kevin: I just wish you can see yourself in my eyes baby then you will get your answer.

Phindi: You just love seeing me blushing are you?

He chuckles and pecks her lips once again.

Kevin: That's what I want for you and this is my promise to you baby you will never shed any tear from now on. Only tears of joy.

She smile and look her ring one more time. The beautiful ring in her finger makes her want to cry. She never thought she would also be this happy some day.

Kevin: You know sometimes I get jealous when you get lost in your head.

Her cheeks heat up.

Phindi: Sorry baby just that I'm thinking about Yenkosi. I have been stopping mah from calling Mpilo to take her but now I think it's time he knows he has a daughter who needs her love too.

She takes her phone on top of the table and scroll down the contact list. She places a call after finding the number she was looking for. It rings for a few minutes.

Voice: Hello

A female voice mutters on the other side of the phone. Phindi frowns.

Phindi: Hi I'm not sure whether I dialled a wrong number or what but I'm looking for Mpilo.

Voice: Yes you dailled the right number. His in the shower right now can I take a message?

Phindi: It's about his daughter. I think it's time you come and take your daughter she needs you.

Voice: Daughter? Whose daughter are you talking about?

Phindi: Yours. Yours and Mpilo's.

Voice: I'm sorry but I don't have a daughter. I only have a son.

Phindi: Well then tell Mpilo to come and take his daughter.

BASETSANA

I close my eyes and hold my growing belly. I feels so stupid for giving him a chance. Not only did I gave him a son but also carrying another one in my stomach. Throwing the phone on top of the couch without hanging up I storms to the bedroom and start packing our clothes. The front door creaks open and the sound of giggles is audible. My anger shoots up and I furiously shoves the clothes on the bag.

Mpilo: Mamakhe where are you?

I ignore him and continue with her packing. The door creaks open and father and son walks in. Mpilo frowns as his eyes land on the bags.

Mpilo: What's going on?

Tears involuntary stream down on my face.

Mpilo: (panicking) Baby what's going on?

Me: (screaming) You lied to me.

Mpilo: (frowning) Huh?

Me: When you look at me do you perhaps see a fool?

Mpilo: Of course not mamakhe what's going on?

I click my tongue and walk to the bathroom to pee. I washes my hands after her busy and find Mpilo leaning on the door frame.

Mpilo: What's going on? Why are you crying? Are you in pain?

He fires all questions at once. Pushing him aside and I walk to the bed and try to pack Lesesgo's clothes but Mpilo snatches them.

Mpilo: Do I have to choke it out of you?

Me: The love you preach about is all nothing but fake.

I marches to the living room to sit down. My back aches but I soldiers on. I can't look him on the eye

I'm suffocated being in the same room as him.

Mpilo: I never faked anything from you.

I scoff and wipes the tears.

Me: You did. Maybe you're waiting for the mother of your daughter to come back to you. Maybe I'm just a rebound that reminds you of her.

Mpilo's eyes furrow.

Mpilo: Daughter? I only have a son and you know it.

I chuckle teary.

Me: How long where you planning on hiding her from me.

Mpilo: I'm not hiding anyone from you. You know everything about me so I'm not sure what are you on about.

Me: (sobbing) Lies. A woman just called you a minute ago demanding you to come take your daughter.

Mpilo: A woman? Did she say who she was?

I click my tongue. The audacity of this man. Who asks such nonsense when they are being caught red handed?

Me: Was I suppose to ask her who she was?

He walks towards me and kneels in front me.

Mpilo: I think I might know what you're talking about. The child is not mine I swear it's Lwazi's and Tshidi daughter. He asked me to take her home because Tshidi was still in hospital at that time he couldn't take care of her.

Me: You think I'll believe that.

Mpilo: I know it how it sounds but I swear on my children's life she's not my child.

The door opens and a man barges in.

Man: Where is he?

Mpilo: Hey you can't just barge in our home and ask that. Who the hell are you.

The man rolls his shirts revealing a gun on his waist. I whimper as I feel cramps on my abdomen.

Man: I'm going to ask again where is he?

Mpilo: I don't know who you want.

Man: Maybe this might motivate you.

He cocks the gun and fire the first shoot. I scream closes my ears with my hands.

Man: I'm going to ask for the last time where is he?

Mpilo: I don't know.

Man: Wrong answer.

He shoots again and Mpilo screams. I shift my gaze looking for my son. Who did he shoot? I pray he was just trying to scare us and didn't shoot anyone.

Man: That's should teach him a lesson. The next time he borrows money from me he must know to pay me back before I get pissed.

He turns on his heels and walks to the door. He stops and looks at us one more time. I don't like the look on Mpilo's face.

Man: They don't call me bra Joe for nothing.

I gasp frowning as the room starts to spin. I've heard stories about Bra Joe the loan shark but I've never seen him before. He slams the door after him.

Me: Is it me or the room is spinning?

He catches me before I can hit the floor.

Mpilo: (crying) Shh! Stop talking. I want you to keep your eyes open. I going to kill that bastard the minute I find him.

Stay with us baby. Think about Thando and the one you're carrying.

Stay with them? Why wouldn't I stay with them.

Me: Baby I'm sleepy.

Mpilo: (crying) No mamakhe you cannot close your eyes.

A tear rolls down my cheek and it finally sinks in that I'm the one whose shot.

Me: My baby Mpilo.

He shakes his head and places a kiss on my lips.

Mpilo: Stop talking.

Me: Lesego.

Mpilo: (crying) Shhh!

Tears rolls down my eyes as I choke on my blood.

Me: You're a great father and you doing this boyfriend thing so much easier. Take care of our son and yourself too. I love you.

Mpilo: (screaming) No you're not dying on me. I'm not accepting that.

I cough out blood as I tried to chuckle.

Me: Always so stubborn. I love you.

I close my heavy eyelids while he screams.

.....**THE END**.....

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