

LACED



Laced
THATHU CONCO

NAMBITHA'S STORY

LACED

CHAPTER ONE

Nambitha Zungu

“You can just leave those there, thank you so much.” I said turning and scanning the place, pride seeping out of my pores.

This is my place. MY place.

I’ve worked so damn hard to get here, and whenever I think of where I was two years ago, and look at where I am now, tears burn my eyes.

NamNam’s Pamper Spot officially opens in two weeks, it has been a dream of mine since things didn’t really go the way I wanted them to go, and my husband has supported me throughout it all.

My husband, lol.

“Mrs Zungu.” his hands snaked around my waist.

I was met with a massive smile when I turned around.

“This place is looking good already.” he says moving to stand next to me.

“I know right, I’m so happy.” I say as we stand and admire the spot.

There are only a few finishing touches that need to be added, and then we will be ready to be up and running in the next two weeks.

“You’ve worked hard girl!” he says slapping my shoulder.

“I know, and your money played a big role too.” he laughed.

LACED

“I have champagne in the back, I think we should have some!” I squeal excitedly.

I made my way to the office, my office, and opened the box with the sealed champagne and glasses. It was a gift from one of our suppliers. Knowing Muzi got me all these connections with the best people in the industry, that’s why coming up has been so hassle free. It’s one thing to struggle to find suppliers and sponsors, but its another to have them fighting over you.

“So what’s left now?” he asks when I appear.

“They will come back on Monday to install the mirrors, and then the plumber needs to come back because there is no hot water coming out the taps. I can’t have my clients’ hair getting washed with cold water.” I explain as I open the bottle of champagne.

“So basically everything else is set?” he asks.

“Yes, everything is ready. Now I have to get ready for the launch.” he sees that I’m struggling with the bottle so he takes it from me.

“Are you inviting your parents?” he asks me.

I clear my throat. My parents and I are never in a good space, and in my defence, it’s always their fault, they do this. After what I went through, I know how to cut someone off, if someone is in no way beneficial to my mental health, then I let them go.

It’s a pity my dad has to suffer too, sometimes it’s not even him. But mom is so toxic, and I thought she would change, I really tried to give her a chance, but she showed me multiple times that she doesn’t deserve it.

LACED

So am I really going to invite them? I don't know. It's something I'll have to think about.

"Don't shrug your shoulders. You know I don't like the way you treat your parents."

"I'm not going to bow down to my mother Muzi. You of all people know how she is, and how she treats me. A person like that doesn't deserve me. I know better, please. I don't want to have this conversation. I may tell my dad about it, but I don't know if I want her to be there." he lifts his hands in surrender.

He pops the bottles, and I hold the glasses out. He pours the bubbly inside and puts the bottle on the counter. He looks at me and lifts his glass.

"Okay, let's toast before you bite my head off. To you, Mrs Zungu, for making your dream into a reality, for working tirelessly for this place to be what it is today, it looks amazing. I'm so proud of you, and how far you've come. To bigger and better opportunities, and more establishments all over the world."

"To NamNam's Pamper Spot." I say and raise my glass.

We click our glasses and I take a well deserved sip, while he downs the whole glass.

"I say let's bless this place." he says pulling me closer to him.

"You are starting." I say giggling.

He leads the way to my office, not forgetting to pull me along with him.

"Muzi the door is not locked!" I say to him.

"I'll go lock it, and I better come back and find you naked bent over this table." my whole face heated up.

LACED

He didn't waste any time, he rushed out the door.

How do I begin to explain the kind of relationship Muzi and I have? I always struggle to explain it to people. Yes we are married, but we are nowhere close to being in love with each other. We were friends for a long time, and it was only a marriage of convenience since he needed to take over his father's businesses. We are still very much good friends even now, just with additional benefits from those that were in the marriage contract, sexual benefits.

He makes me feel so good, he makes me feel like a woman, and he made me enjoy sex. Now I'm a liberated sexual being. That's why I'm here, bent over a table completely naked waiting for him to come give it to me.

"That's my good girl." he says spanking my bum.

He grips on my waist and uses his one hand to separate my folds, and he plays with my clit. I moan in pleasure. My body always reacts to his touch, it's an instant feeling, and it never fails me. He's pumping his finger in and out of my body, and it's quickly arousing me.

"Do you like that?" he asks in a husky voice.

He knows I do, he knows I like anything he does to my body.

"Yes, don't stop." he does the opposite, removing his finger.

I stand up and look at him. He seductively licks my juices from his fingers before he moves closer to me, picks me up and places me on the desk. He's still fully clothed. His hand wraps around my neck and he devours me in a hurried kiss, and my hand explores his body as he pushes his tongue inside my mouth. I need him naked and inside of me as in yesterday. Funny he was the one who wanted to "bless the place".

LACED

My hands find his pants and I don't hesitate to pull them down. He breaks the kiss and lifts his t-shirt over his head before he continues to kiss me cravingly. I stroke his dick and he grouses in my mouth like a horny teenager. He grows hard in my hand and when I can't take the sultriness and tingle between my thighs, I guide him to my opening.

His hands pull my waist closer to the edge of the table before he gently slides into my wet opening with ease. He locks his eyes with mine and starts to move slowly. It feels so good, but I'm not that girl.

"Please fuck me like you have somewhere to be." I say to him.

He chuckles and grips on my ass, and pushes the rest of his length into my core. Shit!

He starts ramming into me, his hips grating in a fast rhythm that's sending me quickly over the edge. He knows I like it fast, hard and rough, and he's giving me all three of that at once.

I bite his lips before sucking on them to stifle the moans, but he breaks the kiss.

"I want to hear those sweet sounds mama." he says and he lifts me off the table.

One thing about Muzi, he is strong and able, this man is fucking me while he stands on his two legs, and he is hitting a spot up there that I never knew existed.

I mean I discover new spots every time we have sex. We don't make love no, we have sex.

LACED

Blustery, adrenalizing sex that always leave my legs temporarily paralyzed. He made me this sex machine monster that enjoys rough sex. Or maybe Nkululeko did.

But the slow sappy shit makes me sick to my stomach. I can't stand it. The only time I enjoy it is when he's giving it to me like this. Just like this. Muzi brought out the squirter in me, when I discovered this side of me, I finally understood why Amile enjoyed sex so much.

It doesn't happen all the time, but when it does, trust and believe he has done me very well, and I won't need anything more from him.

He's tired of standing so he places me on the couch, and we change positions. He enters me from behind and his fingers find my clit as he continues to fuck me undone. He's quickening my peak by doing this, that's how I know he's close, but I'm not complaining, I'm enjoying every second of it.

He starts grunting like a wounded animal behind me, and his hands sinking into my skin, burning me, and he goes faster and faster. He's stimulating my clit even faster, hitting a spot, and that quickly makes me cum undone.

He's still going, but he's close, he doesn't stop stimulating my clit, and I feel that feeling, my legs are still shaking from the orgasm, I feel another one coming.

Unexpectedly, we cum together, and he presses on my clit, which ultimately has me gushing out liquids all over my brand new couch.

"Shit shit shit!" he groans as his seeds fill me up.

Mr Zungu has done it again!

LACED

• • •

I got home and took a well deserved shower. My joints were locked after that session at the spot. I wanted to come home and cook, but now I'm too tired and I've gotten cozy so I opt to order in.

It's just me in the house tonight. Muzi is out and about as always. It's a Friday night, it's like his pants itch when he has to stay home on a Friday. This partying thing hasn't outgrown him, in fact, it seemed to get worse when he got richer than what he was when I met him for the first time. After he took over his father's company, he became a millionaire, and now he spends his money on girls in clubs most weekends if not many.

It's his life, he's always lived it. I can't really judge him for it because there is not a single thing I lack since I live with him. As long as I am working and I have something to gain in this relationship, he can do whatever the fuck he wants.

I'm glad the public is not aware of our relationship status. His reputation is bad, it has always been, imagine having people know we are "married" and then people viewing me as a sad wife who gets cheated on every weekend. I don't want that, I don't need that.

His sister knows about our weird situation. She's a cool lady, and she often comes to visit and we always get drunk out of our minds together inside the house. We both aren't the going out type, so she sometimes leaves her boyfriend and we chill here. She's significantly older than me though, she's almost 40, but we get along like a house on fire. In a way, she's so much like her brother, she's also a little wild, so I'm guessing it's a family thing.

LACED

I've been living in this house for three years now. I became the madam here, and made my presence felt. I changed most of the interior in this place, and now it feels more like Nambitha's home. It is my home, it's Muzi and I's home, although he's never in it.

I need to start finalizing my plans for the launch. I got a party planner to sort everything out for me, but there are some things I need to do myself. Like our outfits, Muzi and I. Believe it or not, he insists on being dressed by me when we go to these events, whether it's a work thing, or a family affair. Not that he attends family things that much anymore.

They haven't been hosting much since Mr Zungu, my father in law passed away last year. It was so sad. I had never seen Muzi like that in the time I had known him. Not only was he dealing with his drama with the Mfusi's, but his father's passing just hit him even more. I don't think he would have survived if I wasn't here. He tried to kill himself, he almost had a drug overdose and drank himself into a stupor three weekends in a row, the one of this father passing, the one of his burial, and the one after.

I was there, I cleaned up his vomit, I washed his bedding and cleaned his room. I made him food and forced him to eat even when he didn't want to. He eventually became better though, I asked him to attend therapy but he obviously refused. I guess he didn't have to because he cleaned himself up.

Not that he's not doing his coke and drinking every weekend, that's the normal Muzi. He's just doing it cautiously.

My food arrives and I opt to enjoy it straight from the container, I don't have the energy to wash dishes right now. I sit on the couch and grab my laptop.

I'm mindlessly scrolling on Pinterest looking for ideas. I need to find something to send to my designer because she's going to shout at me if I send it

LACED

any later. My phone rings, and I rush to get it. Who's calling me in the evening? I never get calls, ever.

"Hello." I answer.

There is a lot of noise in the background, music to be precise.

"Hi is this Nambitha?" this person is shouting over the music.

"Yes it's her, who is this?" now I'm also shouting, I don't know why.

"Muzi's friend." this can't be good.

I hope it's not to tell me he's floored and he needs to be fetched, I've done that before, I don't want to do it again. And, it's not even ten pm yet!

"He says you are his girlfriend and we don't believe him." I sigh.

They are drunk, that's why they are asking me stupid questions.

"Okay, I'm going to hang up now." I say.

They burst out laughing, much to my irritation. I drop the call and slam the phone on the couch.

Let me finish my food and go to bed before I get irritated further.

● ● ●

LACED

I have not slept a wink, I kept tossing and turning, and the only time I actually fell asleep, I was jolted back to reality with a nightmare, only to find that I had closed my eyes for a few minutes. That's when I woke up and decided to go get myself a glass of water, and realized Muzi wasn't home.

Why am I worried about Muzi?

He does this all the time, and quite frankly, I never worry about him. This is the same person that can go MIA on me the whole weekend and I still wouldn't be worried that he won't pitch on Monday. Yes he plays the disappearing act too, but I've grown accustomed to it, it is Muzi after all.

But I find myself anxiously sitting in the lounge, getting heart palpitations whenever I hear a sound in the distance. I tried calling him because I'm still worried, but obviously he didn't answer. I know he's drunk wherever he is, I hope he...

He's here!

I can hear the door opening so I rush down the stairs to give him a piece of my mind. He's standing in the kitchen, where it's pitch black, I don't know what his problem is.

"Where have you been?" I ask him, I can feel the irritation taking over me.

I think more than anything it's the fact that I wasted my time to sleep worried about him.

"Sesishade okwangampela yini?" he doesn't in the least sound drunk.

That is so odd.

"No, but I couldn't sleep because I was worried about you." I say walking to the light switch.

LACED

“Since when do you lose sleep over me?” I turn on the lights.

He looks...normal. He looks like he's had a rough night but he looks normal.

“You weren't answering your phone, and I got a weird call from your so called friends asking me if I was your girlfriend. Why are you going around telling people we are dating Muzi?” he looked at me questioningly.

“Why are you answering unknown calls at night?” he looks mad.

“I don't know, I can't not answer when I don't know where the fuck you are in the middle of the night!” I shout.

I'm really getting frustrated.

“I wasn't out partying tonight, I went to visit my mother.” he say, wiping his face.

“Okay then, good.” I say and turn around.

“So are you angry at me? You know this isn't a real marriage right!” he says behind me.

I wasn't angry, but now I am. I stop to turn and face him.

“I know that very well.” he's frowning at me.

“I think it's time you get some friends and stay out of my business, right.” that was mean, but this is Muzi.

He gets defensive when he's hurting about something. But he said I must butt out his business, so I don't hesitate to turn on my heels and walk back to my room. It's not even that long before I hear something smashing, and then a painful scream follows right after.

LACED

He just told me to butt out, but what if he's hurt.

I run back down to the kitchen. He's crouched over groaning in pain, his hand covered in blood.

I hurry to get the first aid kit and a bowl of water to clean his hand.

"What is your problem?" I ask him, taking his hand so I can tend to it.

He doesn't answer me. There are broken glass pieces on the floor, some stuck in his hand.

I'm no doctor or paramedic so I'm trying to be as gentle as I can. He's putting on a hard face but I know he's in pain.

He uses his other hand to reach for his other pocket and he takes out his snow, that's what he calls it. He's trying to open the packet with the one hand available to him because I'm busy bandaging the other one, but it's proving to be impossible, and I can clearly see the frustration on his face.

"Can you please do that when I finish here."

Aside from him being stubborn for no reason, it makes me uncomfortable when he does his drugs in my presence.

"Are you also going to control me? Like everyone else in the world!" I look at him, he doesn't look okay.

"Muzi I'm not against you here, do you get that? I know we aren't dating, but we are friends right, and I care about you. So when you start acting like this, I get concerned." he sighs and drops his head.

I finish with his hand and then I move the things aside and sit next to him. He gives me the cocaine packet for me to open it for him. I do as told and he

LACED

reaches for the little scoop thing in his pocket, and sniffs the drugs, both nostrils. I sit there awkwardly and watch him. When he offers me, I kindly decline.

“I’ve got shit going on Nambitha, lot’s of it. I’ve associated myself with the wrong people and they’ve gotten me in shit I don’t know how to get out of.” that makes my heart race, and I feel my body temperature rise.

There are so many things going through my mind right now, what shit is he talking about? He was okay earlier, and all the other days before that. What’s going on!?

“What have you gotten yourself into?” I ask shifting to look at him.

He doesn’t answer me.

“Muzi!” I’m frustrated.

“The company is losing money, and not just bits of it, lots of it. They are trying to investigate the source, but they can’t really stop it.” oh God no.

“So why do you mean when you say you associated yourself with the wrong people Muzi?” my body is heating up, these warm pyjamas are suffocating me, I can’t breathe.

“I made bad business deals okay, they tricked me, or scammed me. I don’t know, I just know that I’m in shit and I may lose everything.” he says taking out the cocaine again.

“Muzi Muzi Muzi can you stop with the drugs for a second!” I say slapping it out of his hand.

He can’t drop this bomb on me and then smoke like nothing is wrong.

LACED

“What are you going to do about it? Nothing! So let me sniff!” he says and stands to fetch his beloved snow.

I can’t believe this, I actually can’t. So he may be going bankrupt, and he’s going to lose everything, I’m going to lose everything. All of it! What about The Spot?

Someone please pinch me and tell me it’s a horrible dream!

CHAPTER TWO

Nambitha Zungu

He's sleeping like a log in my bed. I don't know why he followed me here instead of going to his room, but here we are. I have not slept a wink, aside from the fact that he's a terrible sleeper and he's crowding all my space, I'm stressed because we are BROKE!

I may lose this luxurious life that I've grown accustomed to, how am I ever going to recover from that? The cars, this beautiful house, the clothes, the shoes, I don't think I'm ready for that. My spa, it's not even open yet, will I lose it too? It's all really a lot for me to digest right now.

Sure I sound like a materialistic air head in this current moment, but for someone who didn't experience any of this growing up, to having it served to me on a silver platter, I'm bound to feel like everything is crumbling. I'm Mrs Zungu, being Mrs Zungu doesn't matter without all the materialistic things, I mean that's the reason I got married in the first place.

I look at the red tomato sleeping next to me and I immediately climb on top of his lap.

"Wake up." I slap his cheek so he can wake up.

His eyes flutter open and confusion dances on his face.

"What's wrong?" he asks clearly drunk of sleep.

"How do you sleep peacefully knowing you are going broke!? What's your plan?" I ask him.

LACED

He groans and rubs his face.

“Not this, not now.” he’s frustrated.

“No Muzi, now! What are we doing?” I ask him.

“We? What do you know about finances and companies, you only know how to paint people’s faces.” he says gripping on my waist.

“Muzi I can’t be broke, I’m too pretty to be broke. That’s not why you brought me here, and made me marry you. So whether I know something or not doesn’t matter, as long as we find a plan!” I say to him.

“Why are you so feisty in the morning huh?” this man is seriously not biting his lip at me.

“Look, I’m going to go to the office today to try and save this. For now, my little gold digger, I want you to bounce on this dick. I won’t let you suffer, I made a promise.”

“Why don’t you ask your brother for help.” I suggest to him, ignoring his stupid plan.

“I don’t have brothers, you know this.” he says through gritted teeth.

I hate that he’s being literal.

“Mvelo, your brother, or you nephew if you want to be literal. Ask him to help you, you always told me he’s smart right, and he’s business minded. He can help.” he looks displeased with me.

“You saw how he almost killed me, do you really think he will want to help me?”

LACED

Yeah well he kind of fucked up, we can't really blame Mvelo for reacting the way he did. Muzi made a move on his pregnant wife when they were going through a separation. I don't really know the details because Muzi didn't tell me anything, I was just startled when I had to separate two grown men beating each other up in the lounge. Mvelo came all the way here to tell him to stay away from Chris, and ultimately that was the last time we ever saw him. I stayed behind and nursed his bruises, he didn't want to talk about it, but I assumed he made a move on her. I know I didn't know Mvelo that well, and his wife, but from what I had observed, him and Muzi were tight, like super close. He was hurt, I could tell, but we just never spoke about it.

"Did you ever apologize?" I ask.

"No I didn't." I sigh.

"Look I don't even know what you did to him for him to hate you and try to kill you, but you need to apologize because you were wrong. You need his help, we need his help. I can't be broke Muzi! So if you don't call him then I'll do it on your behalf." I scold.

"Come on baby girl." he says flipping me.

"I'm serious. Will you call him?" I flap my eyelashes at him.

I actually need to go refill them before we go completely broke.

"I will if you give me head." childish much.

I roll my eyes as I make my way out of the bed.

"Nambitha!" he calls out to me.

I head for his pants that he discarded on the floor last night and search for his phone. I find it in one of the pockets and hand it to him.

LACED

“That’s not part of the deal.” he says looking at me.

He thinks I’m stupid.

“Make the call.” I say crossing my arms.

“Fine!” he takes the phone and dials.

I climb back on the bed and he sits upright and wait for him to answer.

“Mntaka sisi.” he says first.

“Muzi what do you want from me?” Mvelo answers, displeasure evident in his voice.

“I was just checking up on you, you know we haven’t spoken in a while.” I slap his arm because he’s being fucking stupid.

“I told you to stay the fuck away from me.” Mvelo responds.

“I know, listen I fucked up, and I should have apologized to both you and Chrissy...”

“Don’t call her that.” Mvelo through gritted teeth.

Damn!

“Okay I’m sorry bafo. I should have apologized to you and Christine about my actions. I deeply regret them, and I’ve changed. So I just want the opportunity to make things right, so things can go back to normal.” much better.

“It’s too early for your shit Muzi, do you hear me. I don’t ever want you near me or my family...”

“Please...” I can see him cringing, one thing about Muzi, he can’t beg.

LACED

“I’m being genuine. I know our trust is broken, but we are family, and I need you bafo. Can we please just meet up and talk things out.” he negotiates.

I’m so proud it’s turning me on. Maybe I might give him the head he wants.

“I want to think about it first.” he says.

“Sure...take your time.” I was about to stroke his magic stick but he’s here spewing nonsense.

Mvelo ends the call and he stares at me.

“Really? Take your time? We don’t have time!” I say to him.

“I did what you wanted right! I can’t force him.” he says.

I guess he is right, but I can’t stand to be in this house otherwise I’m going to get depressed staring at these walls.

“Hey where are you going? You promised me a blowjob!?” he questions.

“Get out of my room Muzi!” I say heading to the bathroom.

● ● ●

I checked my bank balance, and my zero’s were still in tact, which didn’t worry me too much. But I was still very much stressed about everything so I needed something to relieve the stress.

LACED

First thing on my list was to have my lashes refilled, and then I would do some retail therapy, of course using Muzi's credit card that I stole from his car because there is no way I'm using my money after this.

He decided to go to the office, I hope they can work something out as quickly as possible.

I get to the salon and it's very busy. I can't help but imagine what it's going to look like at the Pamper Spot when it's officially up and running. I know I have the best team on my staff, and I'm also going to be working myself for the first few months so I can ease them into it, but will I also be this successful? My almost large Instagram following is working in my favour, my followers are really excited about the Pamper Spot, and that is basically free marketing. I'm yet to dive further into the other details of my social media.

I spot Mimi, my lash tech, and she's busy with a client. I head to her station.

"Mrs Zungu, you are on time." she says looking up at me with a smug look.

I laugh. I have grown to be known to be the late comer, that's not a good thing.

And yes, I am Mrs Zungu. Many people know I'm married, that I am Mrs Zungu, even on my social media platforms, I am Nambitha Zungu, quite frankly, I got rid of any ties to the Makhathini family. Home affairs only knows Mrs Zungu, and I am perfectly fine with that.

Now thing is, people are so obsessed with seeing my husband, and I'm maintaining the private life status. It's a bit difficult because Muzi is almost a public figure in the business world, it's not long before people start piecing things

LACED

together and start figuring out that the Manzini I'm 'married' to is thee Manzini, Muzikayise Zungu.

"I'll get you a glass of bubbly while you wait." she offered.

I won't decline.

It took me a long time to adjust to the rich life, I'm not even going to fool myself. The first two years I was still caught up in the poor people mentality, and I didn't really spend on myself and my wants. But Muzi didn't hesitate to spoil me, he would take me shopping for his work events, and swipe without looking at the price tag. When he got me my own credit card, I also started feeding into the lifestyle, and now I live like a rich housewife.

It was only last year that I decided it was time I do something with my life, and I planned to open the Pamper Spot, and it has been my baby since then.

We honestly can't be going broke.

When my bubbly arrived, I took a picture for my social media, and tagged the salon. That's what I always did.

I had a ton of direct message requests and I normally surfed through them from time to time. Many of them were story replies from random people telling me how pretty I looked or how much they admired me. It was all just heartwarming, until you run into those few weird ones of people who deserve to be blocked.

There was one in particular that made my blood chill.

"Jah, ntombi kaMuzi. Watch your back." I looked at the account and it was a ghost account, the handle was even weirder.

LACED

My mind went back to last night's call, and Muzi's response to when I told him about it. Is this something to do with the business losing money? I'm worried.

I screenshot the message and forward it to him. He didn't hesitate to call me back.

"What is this?" he asked, panic lacing his voice.

"I don't know, it was in my requests on IG. It could be from anyone." I said.

"I'll do some investigating, but you need to be careful. Maybe I should get you security." he said thinking out loud.

"Is there really a need for that?" I lower my voice.

"I don't know Nambitha!" he's frustrated.

"Does this have anything to do with the company losing money?" I asked, lowering my voice even more.

"Maybe. Look, can we talk at home." he spoke very quickly.

"Muzi!" he didn't give me a chance, he hung up.

Damn shit!

...

LACED

I got my hair done as well, and after swiping that credit card, I got the most unpleasant text from Muzi. That has never happened. We really do have a serious problems on our hands.

I ignored him because I knew I still wanted to go do a little shopping and have lunch. So I switched my phone off and went on my jolly shopping spree.

I am now sitting down having a solo late lunch with a chilled glass of wine. I was craving for a seafood boil, and I got that.

I always enjoy sitting alone in restaurants, it has never been a problem for me, but today feels different, it feels like I'm being watched. I keep turning around to try and see, and I'm not seeing anyone. Everyone seems to be minding their business, and no one seems suspicious. I finally decided to turn on my phone and there were a few missed calls from Muzi, I didn't really feel like returning them so I just scrolled through my apps.

I still couldn't shake the feeling that someone was watching me, but this time I was too afraid to lift my head to look and see who it could have been that was staring at me to the point where I could feel their eyes piercing my skin.

"Hey..."

"Shit!" I jolted out of my skin when I felt a hand on my skin.

"Omg I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to scare you." she apologized.

My heart is racing, I put my hand on my chest and exercise my breathing, I'm drawing attention to myself. I need to stop being so paranoid.

"Are you okay?" I finally lifted my head to look at her.

She is so gorgeous, a natural beauty, I feel so artificial standing next to her. I grabbed my glass of wine and took a gulp to calm me down.

LACED

“Yes I’m okay.” I said gesturing for her to take a seat.

“Look I’m sorry for startling you, it wasn’t my intention, I just couldn’t help it.” I furrowed my brows in confusion.

“Couldn’t help what?” I ask.

She giggled sweetly. Her giggles sound so angelic.

“You are so beautiful, I just had to come over and say it, but silly me almost gave you a heart attack.” she says getting comfortable on the seat.

“It’s okay really, and thank you for the compliment.” she nods and proceeds to stare at me.

I can feel her eyes boring into my soul, she has a sharp stare, and I can’t help but feel that maybe she was the one I kept feeling was staring at me. That feeling was so strong I couldn’t ignore it.

“Sorry, where are my manners, I’m Zama.” she extended her hand for a shake.

“Nambitha, nice to meet you Zama.” she continued to smile.

This is a little awkward, especially because she is holding onto my hand for longer than she should.

My phone rings on the table and Muzi’s name flashes on the screen.

“Sorry, I need to take this.” she nods and lets go of my hand.

“Where are you?” he asks.

I can feel his wrath over the phone.

LACED

“I’m at the mall having lunch.” I explain.

“It’s way past lunch time. Come home.” he says flatly.

“Since when do you dictate my life?” the nerve of him.

“Nambitha just come home would you!?” he sounds frustrated.

“Okay fine!” I say and drop the call.

The only reason why I’m leaving is because this lady, Zama, is staring at me like a piece of meat.

“That was my husband, I need to go.” I say standing up.

Luckily I had left all my shopping bags in the car. All I needed to do was pay the bill.

She stood up too and was looking eager to follow me.

“Husband huh? Tell him I said hello.” what the fuck?

That was my cue to leave. When I started walking fast towards the reception, she followed behind me.

“Nambitha wait, I didn’t mean to scare you. I would like to be your friend.” she says standing behind me.

“The bill please.” I say to the man standing over the counter.

“Nambitha.” she calls out my name.

I turned around. She had such a hypnotizing smile, and her eyes were alluring and lustful.

“I’m not short of friends, but thank you for the offer.” I say.

LACED

Everything about her just rubs me off the wrong way, I don't know. The man gives me the bill and I tap the credit card.

"It was nice meeting you." I say as I walk out the restaurant.

She's just standing there looking at me.

I don't think I ever want to go out alone ever again!

LACED

CHAPTER THREE

Nambitha Zungu

There is music blasting on the speakers in the lounge, it's so loud in this house I can't hear myself think. Muzi is definitely drinking his poor liver away.

I leave the shopping bags by the door and make my way to where he's sitting. He's on the porch watching the sun set, and he has a glass of whiskey safely tucked in his hand. He looks like he's far away in thought. I go back inside the house to fetch the remote and turn off the music.

That finally grabs his attention because he turns to look at me. His eyes are red, he's intoxicated. Highly intoxicated.

"Have you eaten?" I asked drawing closer to where he was once again.

He shook his head and gave my puppy eyes.

"Do you want to feed me?" he asked placing the glass on the side table.

He proceeded to pull me to his lap. He reeks of alcohol, I'm guessing the reason he was calling me so much and demanding me to come home is because he is drunk, and possibly horny. Muzi develops like a thousand more personalities when he's drunk, and I meet a new one everyday.

I think this is the lovey dovey one.

"I brought you some takeout." I tell him.

I didn't get it at the restaurant I was dining at because I had to leave, that Zama chick was weird. But I passed by one of his favourites and got him food because I'm not about to cook.

LACED

Yes I cook for the man, and I know his favourite restaurant. We have been living together for almost 3 years, I know him. It's not weird.

"I wanted you to come home so I can bury my dick inside you. I didn't really feel like finding random pussy today." he slurred.

I just chuckled because he's so drunk.

"What were you drinking?" I asked caressing his cheek.

He had a red pimple on it.

"My expensive brandy. I figured why not treat myself, I'm broke and useless already." he said and patted the table for his glass.

He almost knocked it over, but I quickly saved it and took it for him. He cackled. I've never seen him like this. I know a drunk and high Muzi, but this Muzi, I've never seen him before.

"What did you find at the office today?" I know I'm wasting my time by asking him while he's in this state.

He snatches the glass from my hand and drowns the contents down his throat. No wonder he's so drunk, he's drinking brandy at room temperature with no ice or dash.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing. I'm fucked Nambitha." his voice breaks.

He's being vulnerable with me right now, and it's hard to see through it because he's kak drunk, but I know Muzi, he would never say any of these things while sober. I lift his face so he can look at me, there are tears forming in his eyes.

He quickly uses his hand to wipe them and pushes me to get off him and scrambles around for his bottle.

LACED

“Let’s take this to the bedroom.” he says picking it up, taking a swing before stumbling back inside the house.

It’s in between he’s going to pass out before I even make it to the bedroom, or he’s going to last a mere minute in the sac and I’m going to be left unsatisfied. I don’t think I want that right now.

I go take my shopping bags from the lobby, and head to the kitchen to drop off his food. I leave it on the counter before rushing to my room to leave my shopping bags. I’m surprised to find him passed out in my bed, once again. I fail to comprehend how he could possibly leave his own room and decide to come fall asleep in mine.

His phone is next to him and it’s unlocked. Curiosity gets the better of me, and I find myself taking it. I want to find out what the cause of this bankruptcy we are facing is, I know he has probably spoken to someone about it on the phone.

I start in his gallery, and I immediately regret it because I don’t know how many different vagina’s and boobs I see on this phone. I exit immediately and make my way to WhatsApp. The first chat I open is one between him and Julius, his business associate. I’ve met him a few times at these company parties, he’s a nice man, a little older than Muzi.

Julius: *why the hell are the investors pulling out Muzi!?*

What’s going on?

Are you going to answer me?

Muzi: *I’m going to call you.*

They literally hardly ever interact on this chat, but as I scroll down, more information appears.

LACED

Julius: *can you identify these fuckers?*

He sent a view once, shit! The conversation abruptly ended there, I'm assuming Muzi called him.

I look through more of his chats with other business associates, and there is literally nothing. It seems as though Julius is the only one in the loop about everything going on, he's still trying to buy face with the other people.

This shit is deeper than I thought it was. Muzi is sinking in bullshit, and I'm right there with him.

I steal a glance over at him, he's fast asleep. I slap his leg.

"Muzi, go to your bed." I say.

"Mmmh." he grunts before he stirs and farts.

Damn shit!

"Sies man!" I take his phone and leave the room before it's infested with the horrible smell of a mans fart.

I sit in the pyjama lounge and continue scrolling through his phone in the hopes of finding some, anything.

And then it suddenly hits me when the name pops up on the screen.

We need help. I know he's well connected, I mean his surname says it all, yeah sure he's not his father, but he's close enough. I can't sit around and wait for Muzi to make the first move otherwise we are seriously going to go broke if we let him 'take his time.'

I copy the number onto my cell and call it right away. He also answers right away.

LACED

“Mfusi hello.” is this how rich people answer the phone?

“Mvelo Mfusi, this is Nambitha, you might not know me but I’m Muzi’s wife.” I introduce myself before he can ask.

“Muzi’s wife? Muzi doesn’t have a wife.” he chuckles.

“If this is one of those scams and you are trying to get me to send you money it won’t work, goodbye.”

“Wait Mvelo wait please hear me out!” I beg.

I don’t like to beg, but when my riches are on the line, I’d grovel.

“Look I know you and Muzi are not on speaking terms right now, and you probably hate him, and I get it, I would also be mad. But it was such a long time ago, and he’s over it. It was a mistake on his part, and I apologize on his behalf. We need your help. I really need to talk to you about something urgent though so can you please just put the past aside and lend a helping hand.” I continue to beg.

“How can I trust you and what you say?” he asks.

“I can send you a picture of my wedding certificate, I’m Mrs Zungu, Muzi and I are married, and I promise he will never ever hit on your wife ever again. Can we please meet up, I can even fly up to Johannesburg.” I say.

“What is so urgent you can’t say it over the phone?” he asks.

“It’s just important. So when are you available?” my patience is running thin.

“I’m in Durban, I’m leaving on Tuesday, but I’m only available tomorrow. If you can we can meet over breakfast.” he suggest.

“That’s okay, thank you so much, I appre...” he hangs up.

LACED

Rude if you ask me.

But I could care less, maybe I can get a chance to fix things!

• • •

It's late now, Muzi is still fast asleep in my bed, which ultimately means I have to go sleep in the guest room. I drag my throw off the couch and go to my room to fetch my pyjamas.

I find him awake. I switch on the lights and he groans as if he's in pain.

"That's what you get for drinking in broad day light." I say.

"What time is it?" he ask covering his eyes.

"It's 12 am. Go back to sleep." I tell him.

"Shit, I feel messed up." he slides out of bed and he walks to the in-suite.

Now that he's awake, I'm contemplating whether I should tell him about my meeting with Mvelo.

Maybe I shouldn't.

He grabs my waist and rubs himself against me.

"Clearly you aren't messed up enough if you still want sex." I say moving away from him.

"It's either that or snow." he says.

"You know you can't threaten me with drugs, I could care less about your drug addiction." I say turning around.

His eyes are red and hooded, he still looks very much drunk, and he reeks. His hand wraps around my neck, but not in a violent manner, and he brings me closer to his lips.

I'm so tempted to bite his pink lips. I need to sleep, it's been a long ass day. Tomorrow is going to be even longer.

LACED

He attacks me with a violent kiss, forcing his tongue into my mouth. I can taste the alcohol and the mouth wash he just used. He's such a good violent kisser, if that's even a thing.

I'm already giving in, and he didn't even have to do much. I grab onto the neck of his t-shirt and struggle to lift it up over his head so I find myself tearing in down the middle.

In my defence, it's a light material.

I caress his bulky chest as he fondles my breast and kisses my neck. He unties my robe and sneaks his hands under my bra to play with my breasts even further. I love it so much when he does that, so much that I'm moaning and I'm pulling his pants down.

He stops kissing me and I throw the robe on the floor before I follow it, going down on my knees to meet his length.

I can see the excitement on his face as I begin to stroke him up. He's one lucky bastard, I have only ever given blowjobs to him. I absolutely refused to give Nkululeko head when we were together, but that was only because he also complained when he would have to give it to me. And maybe I can count on one hand how many times he did it.

And why am I even thinking about him!?

Muzi grips onto my hair as I start to deep throat him. He taught me how to do it so he can enjoy it, and I can safely say that I'm almost perfect at it. He's crying like a little child.

"Oh yes baby." he groans and pushes my head down his cock.

I can't breath, I'm gagging. He's done this before, and I can't really say I've gotten used to it because I always feel tears prickling down the sides of my face whenever he does it. I'm losing my shit, and when he finally lets me go, I'm a coughing mess.

He finishes it off his his hand and ejaculates all over my boobs, his face turning red from all the pleasure.

"Oh fuck yeah!" he says as the rest of his semen sprays on my boobs.

Yeah I can never get used to this.

*

LACED

There is a burning sensation on my cheek, this idiot slapped me. I look up to his face and his evil eyes are boring into mine, his nostrils are flaring with rage and his chest is bouncing up and down.

Whatever I must have done to anger him this time around must have really done the trick because he's not even smiling with me. His rather large hand reaches for my neck and he squeezes it, cutting off my air supply.

"Jaama!" I try to scream.

I'm trying to free from his harsh grip but the more I move the tighter he squeezes. His eyes are darkening.

"I'm sorry!" I mutter, although my voice is barely audible.

He lifts me up and bites my bottom lip so harshly I start to bleed.

"Bitch! You belong to me!" I nod vigorously hoping he's going to let me go, and he does.

I can breathe again!

*

Fuck!!!

I sit up and scan my surroundings, I'm safe, I'm in my room.

I hate him, I hate him so much!

I'm trying to regulate my breathing but my heart is racing and I can't seem to calm myself down.

"Okay Nambitha, he's not going to hurt you, he's not here, he's not going to find you." I reassure myself.

For the first time it doesn't work, it's not working.

I try remember all the things I learned in therapy, I must think about something I love, something that makes me happy.

"Money. Money makes me happy, shopping makes me happy." I put my hand on my chest, my heart is still racing, and my air supply is running short.

LACED

I can still feel his hands around my neck. As I start to regulate my breathing the thought of us going bankrupt creeps up in my mind and I feel sick all over again. I don't have money anymore. Damn!

I roll out of bed and rush to the bathroom to get some water. I splash some on my face and look at my face in the mirror. My eyes are bloodshot red, and my face has turned pink as if I'm out of breath.

I'm slowly calming down, but it's going to take a little more for me to be really okay. I hurry back to my bedroom, pick up my slippers and scurry to Muzi's bedroom.

He's fast asleep, he's even snoring. I have an internal battle with myself as I continue to stare as him sleep. I draw closer to the bed and look at his pinkish face, I definitely want this. I remove the covers off his body and he's naked, good.

I remove my pyjama bottom before going to stroke his dick. He starts groaning in his sleep, and it's not long before he's hard.

"Oh yes." this is exactly what I need.

I slowly lower myself on him and my walls stretch to accommodate him, and before long, I'm grinding on top of him.

"Muzi wake up!" I prompt and slap his chest, the amount of pleasure I'm feeling, it has to be accompanied by the pain.

"Fuck Nambitha what..."

"Shh." I lean in and bite his lip violently.

He seems to be wide awake now. His fingers sink into my skin so much it starts to burn. The sensation feels amazing. He starts to fuck me from under.

"Harder!" I scream.

He flips us over and lifts my legs to his shoulders before he goes in deeper and starts thrusting into me, shifting my insides.

"You sassy little vixen." he compliments me as he fucks me to oblivion.

This is exactly what I needed.

LACED

CHAPTER FOUR

Nambitha Zungu

I am naturally an early bird, I never hesitate to wake up, no matter how late I sleep. I barely got any sleep in the early hours of the morning because I just had to get rid of that aching feeling that dominated my loins. I'm late and I'm covered in bruises.

Muzi is asleep, he's probably going to sleep in the whole day today because not only is he hungover but he fucked me senseless in the early hours of this morning, I don't expect him not to be tired.

I had promised to meet Mvelwenhle at eight, it's almost eight thirty and I'm only half way done with my breakfast make-up. I absolutely refuse to leave the house without make-up, it's against the rules of a rich bitch.

I'm wearing this expensive Gucci dress I got last year in Cape Town when I went for a solo vacation because it covers my neck and my arms. Let's just say, when Muzi plays rough, he leaves his mark. He certainly did that, and a girl is not complaining. I checked the weather outside and it looks a tad bit warm for my attire, but I'd rather look good than to be found looking shaky.

I grab my phone and call Mvelo, praying that he hasn't forgotten about our meeting.

"Good morning Mr Mfusi."

"Muzi's wife right?" he ask in a sarcastic tone, what was the reason?

"Yes this is she, and her name is Nambitha. I wanted to remind you of our meeting this morning, and possibly get a meeting spot as we had not agreed on one." I say.

"I hope you don't mind but I had to take my daughters out for breakfast, so if you can, you may pop by and we can talk then. If not we can reschedule to late lunch." he says.

I HATE KIDS. I don't like those little menaces, they wreck havoc wherever they go and they are nothing but a nuisance.

"I don't mind, just send me the location and I'll be there in no time." I say, feeling a fit of disgust surging through me.

LACED

I'm so desperate, I've never ever been this desperate before, but I need this. I need to find a way for us not to go broke, and if it means tolerating a man's kids just for a few hours, I'm going to have to do it.

Again he hangs up on me, further proving just how rude he is.

I'm done with the make-up, and as I stare at myself in the mirror, I feel pride emanating from my bright clear skin. I'm a gorgeous woman, I'm a beautiful, smart young woman who has gone through life's trials and tribulations and made it out stronger. Not many girls make it to where I am.

When you are abused, you become a prisoner of your thoughts, you live in a state of self-doubt and you lose your self-esteem. Although in my abusive relationship, I was hardly ever subjected to the degrading words, but the way he treated me, it made me think I wasn't special. Oh I was so wrong. The Nambitha I am now knows how special she is.

"You are beautiful, you are strong, you are resplendent and forever slaying!" I affirm.

I tend to do this all the time when I feel like I'm going to relapse and sink back into my state of self-hate. That dream I had about Nkululeko last night just brought back all those negative feelings I tried so hard to bury over the years. The rough sex helped, it always does, but this is for my inner self, for the parts I can't heal with the roughness of a man's touch.

I found it to be the best way to cope with many things, hence I hate the feeling of slow love making, it makes me sick. Yeah sure many people might look at me and think my trauma is attached to it, and so what, we heal differently.

I grab my purse and make my way down to the kitchen to grab a water. I'm extremely late.

"Hey where are you off too looking so sexy?" why is he up so early in the morning?

"You're up?" I don't know why but I sound extremely guilty.

"Yes I'm up, where are you going?" I was about to answer him when I remembered that he's actually not obliged to know about my whereabouts.

In fact, it's none of his business.

"I'm going out on a breakfast meeting." I tell him anyway.

"Oh okay." yeah he doesn't care.

LACED

“Be careful, I’ll call someone to keep an eye on you.” he says.

I’m really running late but he’s trying to start things.

“Keep an eye on me? I’m not a baby, I can take care of myself.” I say folding my arms across my chest.

“It’s not about you Nambitha, you kept receiving weird texts and calls, I don’t want any weird shit happening to you, and I can’t keep you from going out so I’ll get you security. I’ve made up my mind and you won’t change it.”

“Okay Mr bigshot, I’m running late though so I’ll see you later.” I say rushing towards the door.

Before I can even reach the door, he pulls me back and I crash against his chest. He attacks me with a sloppy kiss, ruining my lip combo. Am I really complaining? No, he gives the best kisses.

And where the hell did that come from?

“You look too sexy for me not to do that.” I rolled my eyes.

“Bye Muzi.” I freed from his grip and march towards the door.

If I don’t leave now, I never will.

● ● ●

I’m having breakfast at Spur! SPUR!?! For crying out loud I’m too old and way too classy for a joint like that. I should have been suspicious when he said he was with his kids. Obviously those menaces would want to go out and play.

I’m wearing my shades as I make my way through the busy restaurant. I hope I don’t run into anyone I know, or worse, anyone that knows me. Imagine my reputation.

I spot him sitting alone just outside the play area with a cup of coffee in front of him. He’s busy typing something on his phone, he can’t even see me coming.

“Mr Mfusi.” I grab his attention.

He looks up to me and gives a subtle smile, more like a mocking smile.

LACED

“Nambitha right?” he asks me.

I hesitantly pull down my shades and look at him.

“Yes, we spoke over the phone.” I introduce.

“Take a seat.” he points me over to the empty space across him.

I take the seat I’m offered, although I feel tingles dancing around my body. I can already feel the germs sticking onto me. We are so close to the play area, I can smell the sweat and feet from here.

I try to distract my mind from that and I take a second to take in the man sitting in front of me. I’ve never met him in person like this. I have, but it was only the day where he came to beat up Muzi. I don’t really count that as an encounter. I didn’t get the opportunity to drink in his handsomeness like I am now. What a handsome man.

“I think I know you from somewhere.” he says shifting to look at me intently.

“You do, as Muzi’s wife.” he cracks up as if I’m making a joke.

“Come on now, I want you to be honest with me. We all know Muzi fucks around, he could never ever have a wife. So I just want you to cut the bullshit and actually tell me why you are here.” he’s not the friendliest.

A waitress comes to our table and offers to take my order. I get a passion fruit and lemonade, I don’t feel like eating yet.

“So?” he prompts after the girl leaves.

“Yes Muzi is a whore, we all know that, but he married me.” I say proudly.

“So where’s your ring?” he asks looking at my hand.

Shit! I’ve never thought about wearing a ring, ever. Maybe convincing Mvelo won’t be as easy as I thought it would be.

“I forgot it at home, I was running late.”

“Yeah right, and how long have you been married?” he asks.

“Three years. I didn’t come here so you could question my marriage.” I say feeling annoyed by his doubt.

LACED

“Okay then Mrs Zungu tell me exactly why you are here.” he says, clearly mocking me.

“Look Mvelo, I don’t grovel to just anyone...” he doesn’t let me finish, instead, he breaks out into a fit of laughter.

“Grovel? Why are you grovelling?” he asks.

“I know we don’t know each other like that, but I know how close of a relationship you had with Muzi, he told me all about it.” he interrupts me once again.

“And did he also tell you how he wanted to fuck my wife, how he shoved his disgusting tongue down her throat? Huh did he tell you that?” this man is still angry, damn!

“He told me,” I lie.

“He also told me just how much of a mistake he made, and how much he regrets it. It cost him his relationship with you, his closest brother, his only family and friend.”

“Funny how I never heard this from his mouth.” I want to roll my eyes so badly.

“Obviously because you almost beat him to the pulp and proceeded to ignore him when he reached out.”

“Does he know you are here?” he asks me, completely diverting from the topic of how he ignored Muzi’s efforts.

“No, he doesn’t. And he doesn’t need to, at least not for now.” he chuckles.

“I still don’t believe you.” he says leaning in.

“I mean the Muzi that I know was too afraid of commitment...” it’s my turn to interrupt him.

“That is why we are in an open marriage. But we love each other.” It took everything for me not to gag when I said that.

He still looks doubtful. I pull out my cellphone and look for a picture of Muzi and I together.

LACED

“I mean there isn’t much context in this photo but it was last year at one of his work functions. He never takes any of his whores to work.” he looks convinced.

Jackpot!

My drink arrives, along with two little plates, I’m guessing they are for his daughters.

“Must I call them for you sir?” the waitress asks.

He offers her a mother of all smiles. Clearly she is flirting with him and he is buying right into it. She then sways away and Mvelo diverts his attention back to me.

“So you aren’t one of his whores, and maybe you are married to him. Then why are you here, grovelling to me for? Last I checked, Muzi had his own riches, and judging from your appearance, you look well maintained.” he scans me up and down.

I did say this man is rude.

“The company is going bankrupt, Muzi made some bad business decisions and that has led us into a sinking hole.” I say, lowering my voice.

He looks interested, I can see by the way he is raising his eyebrows.

“He didn’t tell me exactly what it is that he did to get here, but he doesn’t have a plan and we are losing money.”

“You keep saying ‘we,’ are you also an investor in the company?” he asks me.

“No, but I own 30% of it and if it goes completely broke then I lose my money. Look at me Mvelo, I’m way too pretty to be broke, living a mediocre life. We need your help?” he just laughs in my face like I’m stupid.

Before I can get a word in, his bratty daughters come running in.

“Hi daddy!” they both shout.

Why are they so bouncy and energetic so early in the morning? Mvelo thanks the waitress and instructs his brats to sit down. I’m feeling very uncomfortable now, they are striking up a conversation with him, luckily they didn’t acknowledge my presence. For other people that would most likely anger

LACED

them and think they are disrespectful children, but with me, oh I'm so glad they don't breathe my way. Kids make my skin crawl.

"Eat your food girls." he instructs them.

"I don't like this daddy." the one with the blue eyes says.

"Then don't eat it Paloma." he says and rubs her hair.

They are a bunch of beautiful children though, no matter how annoying they are.

Finally, he remembers that I exist and looks up at me.

"What makes you think I want to help you and your so called husband? That bastard fucked me over and declared himself my enemy when he hit on my wife." he's speaking through a hushed tone because his children are here, and he's using vulgar language.

Through the hushed tone though you can still hear the anger and resentment he holds.

"It's been three years dude! He's moved on, he doesn't even speak about your wife, not that he ever has. I'm in the picture, I'm his wife and he loves me. Like I said, it was an honest mistake and he's truly sorry and regrets it. But right now, we need your help, that's all we need, please Mvelo." I beg him.

I hate what I am doing with my heart and soul, and I can see the glint of satisfaction in his eyes. He's enjoying this.

"What's in it for me if I help you?" he asks.

"You will rekindle your relationship with your long lost brother." he rolls his eyes.

"Not good enough for me, sorry. It was nice meeting you though." he shifts back in his seat and takes a long sip of his coffee, which I'm sure went cold a long time ago.

"Okay what do you want then!?" I don't know what he could ever want from me, he has his own riches.

He smiles deviously. I can't believe him.

"I want revenge." I frown.

LACED

“Revenge?” he looks at his daughters and they are having a conversation of their own.

“One night with you, do the same thing he did to me.” I’m shocked.

Not that I wouldn’t mind fucking Mvelwenhle Mfusi but damn, I thought he was a family man.

“But he never slept with your wife.” I defend Muzi.

I can’t really be easy, I have to at least maintain the lie of ‘We are in love’

“I don’t care, he hurt me, and what is a better way to hurt him back than to get a taste of what he loves the most?” if only he knew.

“You want to cheat on your wife?” I lower my voice.

“What goes on in my marriage is none of your business. So if you want my help, you will do as I say.” I can’t believe this.

I actually need someone to come pick my jaw up because what is this?

“Fine, I’ll do it. Just name the day and time.” I have to pretend like I don’t want to.

Deep down, my heart is jumping for joy because it’s not a regular thing where KZN’s sexiest male wants you in their bed. Who am I to say no? Sleeping with Mvelwenhle is a small price to pay to save my wealth. And it’s a price I’d pay without thinking twice.

LACED

CHAPTER FIVE

Nambitha Zungu

As soon as I got home, the first thing I did was stalk Mvelo on social media. It's nothing new to me, I've been on his page before, and I've drooled over his pictures a few times, but the main purpose today is to actually look at the little details.

His wife and children are all over his social media. He's an amazing present dad, judging from what I witnessed today, and his social media. He's also not afraid to publicly show his affection for his wife, which is so cute. But this facade he is putting up, I don't believe in it anymore. He sleeps around, I can't possibly be the first woman he's asked for sexual favours. He seems like he's done it multiple times, and he's really not ashamed of it.

But he is a man at the end of the day, and men can never be fully satisfied. And I don't really blame him, his wife has the flattest ass ever.

"Why are you looking at Christine's pictures?" my heart almost stops beating.

I shut my phone off and turn to look at him.

"You are even zooming in, do you have an obsession with her?" he comes to sit next to me.

I still can't feel my heart beating, Muzi can't casually creep up on me like that and expect me to be okay.

"You fucking scared me!" I shove him.

"You are being sus, why are you looking at pictures of Christine?" I take a deep breath.

He's actually not laughing, he looks pressed that I was looking at pictures of his crush.

"Do you still like her? Why are you so pressed about me looking at her pictures?" I shift in my seat to get a better view of him.

"Come on that is ridiculous." he's brushing me off.

He's doing that thing with his nose, that's how I catch him out.

LACED

“You sly bastard you still like Christine! And I’m here working on trying to get Mvelo help us.” he scrunches his nose.

“I didn’t ask you to get Mvelo to help us. I had my reasons why I stayed away.” he admits.

He can’t even look at me.

“Well, I met up with Mvelo today, he thinks we are a happily married and in love couple. He agreed to help me on the condition that I sleep with him to avenge you.” I break the news to him.

“He what!?” his face turns red instantly.

I don’t know if his reaction is fueled by the fact that he still has a crush on Christine, or the mere fact that his brother wants to cheat on his precious wife.

“Wait hold up, Nambitha what are you playing at here?” I can’t tell if he’s angry or he’s shocked.

“I’m not playing at anything, I want to save the company and our riches. And the only way we can do that is through Mvelo. Now because he thinks we are in love, he wants to avenge himself by sleeping with me to hurt you the same way you hurt him, in exchange for his expertise” he clicks his tongue.

Okay he’s mad.

“That bastard, he doesn’t deserve Chrissy.” he says through gritted teeth, turning as red as a tomato.

“Oh and you do? No Muzi none of you deserve her, you are a bunch of scumbags.” I tell him the honest truth.

Like what in the name of fornication is this anyway.

“So I’m guessing you declined the offer to sleep with him.” of course not!

But I’m not going to tell him that, never days! Especially now that he’s told me that he still has a crush on Christine and he seems mad about this whole thing.

“I said I would think about it, and I obviously wanted to run it through you first.” I actually wasn’t going to do it.

But it might work in my advantage in the long run. Kill two birds with one stone, gain more than riches.

LACED

“Play along, lure him in. Make him think he will get a chance to sleep with you and while you are playing the long game, he will be giving in to helping us. That way, you won’t have to sleep with him and we still get our company back.” that is actually an amazing idea.

But what if I do want a piece of that handsomeness?

“That way, no one gets hurt.” he continues.

I can’t help but stare at him. This little crush he has on Christine, it goes beyond a little crush. I think maybe Muzi is in love with her. He has never cared for anyone the way he does for this chick, even I, his so called wife.

I don’t know how I feel about that.

“You are one smart woman.” he smiles deviously and gives me a big kiss on the cheek.

Yeah right!

● ● ●

My planner called me today and actually reminded me that I have a store launch in less than two weeks and I don’t know anything about it. Luckily she’s a hands-on lady and knows her way around these things so mostly everything is sorted, she just needs me to approve a few things.

“So obviously we are surrounded by competition, and we need that competitive advantage over those other salons.” she says.

“But that’s the nice thing about us, we aren’t just a salon, we are a pamper spot, so we offer everything, massages, make-up artists, hairstylists and nail and lash techs. Already that has us at the top of the food chain. I’m actually a mastermind.” now that I think of it.

“You really are. But the main aim with this is to build the customer base first, gain our loyal customers, introduce them to what we offer and get them on our side before we can branch out. That is why we should lower the prices, gain customer loyalty and then gradually work on increasing them.” she’s also a very smart woman I see.

“That is a good one, and it might work as long as it doesn’t affect the profitability of the company.” money is most important honey.

LACED

“It’s a strategic plan if implemented correctly. But that’s not my job, my job is to plan this launch chile!” if she wasn’t such a successful event planner I would hire her to be my brand strategist.

She continues to brief me about the proceedings of the evening. The theme is quite simple, it’s all that sparkles because I’m girly like that.

“I contacted your stylist and she told me you haven’t spoken to her.” she scolds me.

“Oh shit it completely slipped my mind, I’ve been so occupied.” how can my mind possibly function when I have money problems.

“It’s okay, I sent her the dress idea, I also emailed you your husband’s outfit idea, I’m leaving that in your hands. We also need to head down to the shop with the flower guys because they need to check out measurements for...”

“Invite them to dinner!” the door opens and Muzi springs in like a jumping jack.

Where is all this energy coming from?

“I’m in a meeting!” I shoo him off.

“Must I call you back?” Nombuso asks.

Muzi doesn’t look like he’s willing to leave and let us continue so I tell Nombuso to call me back. He comes to sit on the edge of my desk and stares at me with bright eyes. Something is bubbling in his little mind.

“I don’t like being disturbed when I’m trying to make money.” I scold him.

“More like spending money, my money.”

“What do you want Muzi!” I’m frustrated actually.

“You should invite Mvelo and Chrissy to dinner. Tomorrow evening.” I frown.

“What?” why did I even tell him this?

“Invite them. Make this thing more believable, that way he will actually see that we are in love.”

LACED

“But we aren’t.” I remind him because somewhere in his little imagination he forgot that.

“I know but we can pretend, I can always just sex you up with my eyes and it will pass off as love, nothing too hard for me.” I can’t help but laugh.

“So let me get this straight, instead of sitting wherever you were sitting and thinking about how to stop your company from going bankrupt, you are busy thinking of ways to convince Mvelo we are in love?” I stare at him attentively waiting for the answer.

I know it’s going to be a stupid one.

“Come on Nams, you were the one who came up with this idea in the first place, and I actually like it.”

“Is this not becoming a revenge streak for the both of you to get even? Do you even remember why we are doing this?” I ask him.

“To save the company obviously, and you yourself said we need Mvelo’s expertise. I agree with that, he’s a smart and powerful man in the business world, I could use his connections, but this, your plan, it’s genius Nams, you came up with a gem.” he genuinely looks happy about this.

“You are not out to destroy his marriage because of your crush on his wife right?” that’s definitely not what I want.

I may be greedy and love money but I’m not a home wrecker. The plan was to just sleep with the guy once off.

“No, why would you think that?” I’m not convinced.

“Come on Nams.”

“Stop calling me Nams, it’s weird.”

“Okay fine. Just please invite him to dinner, tell him to come with her. I’ll play my part, apologize to him and get him to help me without you having to spread yourself like a chicken. You should only be doing that for me.”

“That was unnecessary.” I scold.

“I’m sorry.” he gives me a tight smile.

“So will you?” he begs.

LACED

“Fine, but stay away from his wife!” I warn.

“Got it.” he says and gets up.

“Wait before you go, come look at your outfit for the launch next week.”

“It’s next week!?” he’s shocked.

I don’t know why he’s shocked, I’ve been speaking about this for ages.

“Today is Sunday so technically it’s a new week my darling, and that brings the launch closer than we anticipate. Come see.” I pull up the email and show him.

“I’m not wearing this crap.” ah this man child!

“Muzi!?”

“What colour is your dress?” he asks me.

“It’s silver.”

“Get me black fitted pants and a white shirt.” I can’t believe he is turning down a tux to wear a shirt and pants.

“No, it’s my launch my rules.” I frown.

“My money my rules wifey. Still love you though.” he kisses me on the cheek once again.

He’s mocking me! He leaves me in my office in a pickle. There is no way I’m letting him wear pants and a shirt to my launch, I’ll just pick another suit for him.

Anyways let me schedule this dinner with the Mfusi’s. I hope this doesn’t give him any ideas. I decide to call him for the second time today. The phone rings only twice before he answers.

“Do you want me in bed already Miss?” his voice sounds so fucking sexy over the phone, damn!

But I’m not here for his perverted ways, I’m here still trying to recover from the fact that he’s a whore.

And then he has the audacity to call Muzi a whore, at least he’s not committed to anyone.

LACED

“No not yet, but I took your advice, and told my husband about our meet up today.” I try not to match his sexy energy.

“Did you tell him what I want to do to you?” he asks, still maintaining the sexy voice.

He’s so flirtatious. It’s hard not to flirt back.

“That’s our little secret Mr Mfusi. He only wants a proper chance to apologize to you and your wife, and what other way than dinner. We are opening our home to you guys tomorrow evening, that’s if you are free.” I butter him up.

“We’d love to Mrs Zungu.” that was easy.

I actually wasn’t expecting him to agree. He just made things a lot easier.

“Okay then, we will see you then.” I don’t wait for him to respond, I immediately hang up.

I learned that nasty habit from him.

I’m only paralyzed with shock when a text comes through from him.

‘Wear something sexy, my eyes will be stuck on you’

Damn!

CHAPTER SIX

Nambitha Zungu

I figured since I would be hosting guests at my house, it would be courteous of me to cook for them. I love showing off, whenever given the opportunity to do so, I grab it with both hands. I have it now, and I need to make sure that I go above and beyond to show off because these people that I'm hosting need to understand something.

We might be desperate for their help in the current moment, but we certainly know how to hold our own.

I did a little shopping after my meeting with Nombuso and the guys doing the flower arrangements, and I can safely say everything is coming along. Also, the water problem was fixed and the mirrors were installed, so almost everything is ready for the launch.

After this whole spectacle of a dinner we are hosting tonight, I want to schedule a meeting with all the hired staff for a little chit chat.

Because I had done my monthly maintenance during the weekend my day only revolved around shopping for missing items in my pantry to make dinner tonight.

From my knowledge, Muzi is at work, so I'm very much confused when I pull up in my driveway and find his everyday car parked in the same spot I left it.

I leave the groceries in the boot of the car to suss out what's going on first. I find him in the kitchen making food, there's a big mess on my white marble counters, the smell of oil is making me sick to my stomach. He's in the same shorts he wore to bed last night.

Dear God let me be dreaming.

"Oh you are back!" he says over the loud sizzling of the oil.

"And you seemingly haven't left." I don't know why but I'm agitated by his behaviour.

"It's a Monday afternoon Muzi, why aren't you at work?" I ask through gritted teeth.

"I'm on paid leave." maybe my ears are deceiving me.

LACED

“What? Paid leave how when the company is literally sinking!?” my voice rises above normal level.

“Hey what’s riled you up so much? Relax would you. I’ve been working from home.” he says nonchalantly.

“Muzi you have never worked from home a day in your life, and now is the time you decide to do it, just when the company is going bankrupt?”

“You know maybe I shouldn’t have told you this, because now you are going to use it for every single little thing, chirping around like you work hard for any of the money you have.”

“That’s unfair of you to say and you know it!” he actually just hurt my feelings.

“Don’t come here to pick fights with me Nams, especially not about money. I know you are a little gold digger, and I blame myself for it, but you are doing too much now. I’m doing my best, I just need you to believe in me, and I won’t let you go poor or broke or hungry, I promise.” he says and cups my face in his hands.

“Now don’t forget that we still have to play happy couple tonight Mrs Zungu, and happy couples don’t bicker.” he says before kissing my pouted lips.

“I love you.” he says mockingly.

“Yeah fuck off!” I shove him off me and laughs hysterically.

Oh how I love to hate our relationship.

“Do you want food?” he asks me as he saunters back to the stove.

“I’m watching my figure.” I report.

“Which one?” yeah that’s Muzi for you.

“Clean my kitchen you idiot, I want to come make dinner!”

He laughs again. Tonight promises to be quite interesting. And did he really call me a gold digger? He should be glad I wasn’t paying attention, I would have given him a piece of my mind, but the moment is gone now.

• • •

LACED

Dinner is ready, it's waiting for the guests to come eat it. I don't know why but I'm a little nervous. Maybe if it was just Mvelo coming over I wouldn't be too scared but Christine is also coming over, and she kinda looks intimidating. It doesn't help that her husband wants to bed me, and he is actively flirting with me only after one meet-up.

I just hope I don't pity her when she shows up, aside from her physique, she is a beautiful woman, and she has given him gorgeous brats, I'm pretty sure she doesn't deserve this behaviour.

I've done my make-up, and now I'm struggling to choose an outfit. The dress I initially had in mind is open chested with no sleeves, and I still have hickeys on my chest.

There's a knock on my door. He doesn't wait for me to grant him access, he walks in and he's already dressed. He's wearing blue jeans and a navy golf shirt. Muzi can effortlessly make the most plainest outfit look gorgeous.

"You aren't dressed?"

"Yes I'm not dressed because someone gave me hickeys on my chest and now I can't wear my dress." he blushes.

"Mmh, I don't think it's something to hide my love." he says walking closer, grabbing my waist.

He removes the satin robe from my shoulders, revealing my chest and my full breasts housed by a white lacy bra.

"Now people should know that you belong to me." he says and proceeds to kiss my neck.

"Your acting skills are top tier." I say caressing his head.

"You think I'm ready?" I nod.

That boosts his ego ten fold.

"How much time do you think we have?" he asks sneaking his hand in my underwear.

"Not much." I say below a whisper.

"I'll be quick then." say no more.

LACED

I could never honestly get enough of Muzi, or turn him down, especially when he looks this good, smells amazing and touches me and whispers like this in my ear.

I don't waste time unbuckling his jeans and pulling out my favourite thing in the world after money. He doesn't even take off my underwear, he just shifts it to the side, picks me up and pins me on the dresser before he slowly enters me.

"Don't smudge my make-up." I reprimand him.

"You got it princess." he's not going fast and hard today, he's just going fast.

Normally I would grab his shoulders and sink my perfectly manicured claws into his soft skin but he's fully clothed still and I can't pull too hard and ruin his expensive shirt. But as always, he's doing me so fucking good.

He firmly grips on my thigh and goes balls deep and groans and further quickens the pace of his strokes, this was supposed to be a quickie, he's lasting way too long.

"I'm going to cum before you." I announce.

"Be my guest." he uses his hand to stimulate my already swollen clit and that sends me over the edge.

He's still pumping inside of me when I hear a car pulling up in our driveway. The gate is open so I'm not surprised they entered without a hassle.

"Muzi the gue...ah fuuuuck!" an orgasm ripples through my whole body.

Ooh that had no business feeling that good!

He finishes right after me, and when I open my eyes to look at him, he has sweat all over his forehead.

"I think you should go get the door." I say in half a breath.

He nods, I made him speechless. He pulls out and puts it back in his pants before he lets me down. Such a gentleman.

"I'll be down right now." I say taking off my underwear, I can't possibly wear them now.

He nods and leave the room. I go with my original dress choice, the royal blue tight wrap dress that hugs all my curves. It's also quite short, more on the

LACED

casual side with spaghetti straps and a low-cut neckline. I'm pairing it with my short pumps from Gucci because I'm in the comfort of my home and I don't want to be strutting around in stilettos all night. It's my first time wearing this dress but I can't even take pictures with it because I'm late. I quickly cover the visible hickeys with some make up and hope that it doesn't stain my dress.

I can already hear the chit chatter downstairs meaning our guests have been welcomed in. I look for my fake ring that I got today and slide it on my finger, and carry Muzi's in my fisted hand before making my way out the room. The aim is to convince them we are happy and in love, and that's exactly what I'm going to do.

I didn't mean to make a grand entrance as I descend the stairs, but all eyes are suddenly on me and the room has gone silent, dead silent. Even Muzi is staring as if he didn't just see me less than 2 minutes ago. I round the staircase and meet them at the bottom.

My eyes land on the lady first. To say I'm appalled would be an understatement! Why is this woman in my house wearing jeans!?

JEANS?

To make it worse she's wearing a striped dress shirt and her hair is all over the place. It's as if she was woken up against her will and forced to come here. She didn't even bother to put in effort, she looks like she doesn't like and take care of herself, everything we see on social media, it's definitely a front.

Now I really don't blame Mvelo!

"Hi, welcome. I'm sorry for making you wait." I reach for Mvelo's hand first, but he pulls me in for a hug.

"It's okay, we didn't wait to long. This is my wife, Chris, Chris, this is..." I interrupt him, I can introduce myself.

"Nambitha, Mrs Zungu." I give her the hand with the shining diamond.

She stares at it at first, but she quickly takes it in an awkward shake.

"It's lovely to meet you." she says.

I can't say the same about her.

"Likewise." she has such a stoic face, I can't even read her.

LACED

She's just a walking mess, every make-up artists worst nightmare. Firstly, her eyebrows are bushy and unkempt. She didn't even bother to brush them at least before she came here. Don't even get me started on her oily face. But I'm not here to judge her, I guess this is what Mvelo likes...

"Honey, your forgot this." I say brushing Muzi's chest.

I hand him the wedding band, and at first he feigns confusion, but he quickly recovers. He better not mess this up for me.

"Thank you baby." he says and kisses my cheek.

Ooh the look on Mvelwenhle's face is priceless. 1 point for the Zungu's, 0 for the Mfusi's.

"Can I offer you a drink?" I say leading them to the lounge.

I set the table a long time ago, I just want to go warm up the food before I can invite them to the table. I made some cute cocktails I saw on tik tok. They look aesthetically pleasing and they also taste amazing.

"Does this have alcohol?" Christine asks when I offer her the drink.

"Yes babes it's a cocktail." guess what, she's slow too!

"I don't drink, sorry." I can't help but look at her husband.

I slaved off for these drinks.

"Come on fluff, just one drink won't hurt right?" he brushed her thigh.

She gave me a tight smile before taking the drink. Good.

"Baby come sit down for a second." Muzi says as I attempt to walk out.

I'm playing the good host, like I said, I love showing off. But I don't fight him, I make my way to sit next to him. He puts his hand on my bare thigh, looks like I'm not the only one who likes to show off.

"I still can't believe what I'm seeing." Mvelo says.

The atmosphere is a bit thick with tension, mostly between Mvelo and Muzi. Muzi is very tense next to me, although he's trying to act cool.

"What, the fact that I'm married?" Muzi asks.

LACED

“Does mom know?” it seems as though this is bothering him.

“She didn’t ask.” Mvelo is annoyed, he’s rubbing his nose bridge.

“No Ma knows, she just didn’t tell you.” Christine says to her husband.

“She just wanted to meet you, but didn’t know how to go about that because you guys are so private.” she continues.

So everyone knows our business, great!

“She never calls me, she never checks on me, so that is news to me.” Muzi says, and takes a sip of his drink.

“You also don’t check on her.” Mvelo defends his mother.

“She’s older, she’s supposed to check on me.” Muzi is definitely the last born.

“She has her own family to worry about, she can’t be thinking about grown ass men like...” Mvelo spits, but Christine interrupts.

“Okay that’s not necessary.” she scolds him.

Okay this is so awkward. I immediately get up.

“Let me go warm up the food.” I’m just trying to give them space to speak about the elephant in the room, hopefully they address it now, I really don’t want to be a part of it, genuinely.

I get to the kitchen and prepare all the food, warm it up and dish up the other delicacies onto my fancy bowls. I hardly ever host, let alone serve people in my home, so I’m pulling out all the stops. I finally understand how African parents felt whenever they had visitors. This is enthralling!

I’ve put everything on the table, and I’m ready to go call them to sit at the table. I stop at a good distance when I hear that they are having a serious conversation. Christine is the one speaking actually.

“Both of you. There is absolutely no reason for you to be still mad at each other. Mvelo, you know we had this conversation before, what happened was a mere mistake, and it wasn’t supposed to happen. Kanti wena inhliziyi yakho ayixoli yini?” she speaks isiZulu so fluently.

I wouldn’t put it past her, she looks like she can’t speak any.

LACED

“Cha, inhliziyo yami ayixoli. I was betrayed.” I’m eavesdropping.

“And I tried to apologize for my betrayal but you refused to take it. That possibly can’t be my problem.” Muzi should really learn a thing or two about begging.

“Muzi, awuziphathise okomuntu ozisolayo nawe.” she reprimands and he keeps quiet instantly.

Wow. He never does with me. That fucker!

“Dinner is ready, please join me at the table.” I disrupt.

Their conversation was getting on my nerves.

Mvelo is staring at me longer than he should, and that instantly makes me regret looking this drop dead gorgeous! Oh but who am I kidding, I love the eyes!

The first person to stand is Muzi, and he leads the way for his guests. I’m astound when Christine walks past me, and I realize we are wearing the same shoes. Not my favourite Gucci pumps chile!

Great, that’s a sign for me to burn them! I can’t be caught owning the same pair of shoes as my husband’s crush, who so happens to have a terrible sense of fashion. I don’t care how expensive they are, I’d rather be dead!

Who is she anyway? Mxm!

CHAPTER SEVEN

Nambitha Zungu

“Are you okay?” Muzi whispers in my ear.

Is it really that obvious that I feel out of place?

I nod anyway.

“Did you make this?” Mvelo asks with his mouth full food.

He seems to be enjoying it.

“Yes, I did.” I say with a little prideful smile.

“Fluff you should get this recipe from Nambitha, it’s so good right?” he says consuming another mouthful.

Damn! So not only is she careless about the way she looks, but she also can’t cook.

She looks a little flushed, but she clears her throat and takes a massive sip of her water before she casts her eyes up to me.

“So where did you guys meet?” she’s looking at me.

Even a blind fool can see, but Muzi thinks it’s his job to answer.

“At work...”

“At the mall...” we answer at the same time.

The only problem is now we look like idiots.

“We met at work honey, not at the mall.” I correct him.

“Which work?” Mvelo asks.

“Mthiyane Construction. I worked there I think for 3 months four years ago, and that’s when he started courting me. Although then he just wanted to bed me. Right Manzini?” I ask giving him lovey dovey eyes.

He chuckles, trust Muzi to break character like this.

LACED

And yes I had to throw in the clan name to make it a little more believable.

“Really, I don’t remember you working there, and I knew all my interns.” Mvelo adds.

“I was in interior, and I came quite late in the year, and I also left early.”

“It was around the time you were busy planning your wedding.” Muzi tells him.

“So round about the time you were messing around with Naomi?” Muzi rubs his head in shame when Christine brings up that name.

“Yeah, it was.”

“Mmh.” that’s all she says.

Damn, he looks like he was rained on. I wonder who this Naomi chick is.

“So how did you come to the decision to get married?” Mvelo.

He’s too curious.

“He told me he loved me and asked me to be his wife.” I summarize.

More like too nosy.

“Is that how it happened Muzi?” Mvelo ask, this time shooting a death stare in Muzi’s direction.

“Yes, that’s how it happened, and three years later, I still love her like I did then.” he says before he leans in and kisses my temple.

Muzi should get an Oscar for his perfect performance! Mvelo’s eyes are glued on him, it’s getting awkward.

“So basically, you guys we together already when you made a move on my wife?” he asks through gritted teeth.

“It was a silly mistake...”

“Mvelo please.” Christine warns.

“Did you know about that Nambitha?” he sits up and shifts his eyes to me, he’s wearing the most serious face ever.

I clear my throat because I feel like my voice won’t come out.

LACED

“Yes, I knew. We were still on and off.” I lie.

He shoots me another death stare, Mvelo that is, and this one actually threatens to end my existence.

“But he told me, and he apologized.” I look at Christine.

I don’t know why she’s nodding but I guess she’s playing along. Or maybe Muzi really did apologize.

“It’s in the past bafo, I want you to forgive and forget, singavumi ukuxabaniswa into engekho. Just give me another chance.” Muzi says.

His voice is monotone, he doesn’t sound like he’s begging, let alone genuine. But Mvelo buys it, or is it a front.

“Finally, now things will stop being awkward.” I say and stand up.

“On that note, I’d like to raise a toast. It’s been so hectic for my baby the past three years without his brother, he shared his struggles with me, and the regret he felt. It makes me so happy to see you guys seated here, and I hope that there will be even more occasions that we can sit like this together, and just enjoy each others company. So, I’d like to toast to family, business, and most importantly, money, because what are we without money!?” Muzi is the only one who laughs.

I am his little gold digger, he gets me.

They cheers anyways, okay, so now that’s out the way, let’s get to the money!

• • •

At least she’s good at something.

She helped me clear the table and she’s washing some of the pots and other things that I can’t fit in the dishwasher. I didn’t realize how exhausted I was until I actually got to sit down.

LACED

I'm sitting on the island drinking a glass of champagne, she's finishing off the last of the dishes left. We are "getting to know each other" while our husbands discuss business. They disappeared into that office with a bottle of Irish Whiskey, one of the most expensive on Muzi's collection, I swear they will drink more than discuss.

There has been more silence in this kitchen than getting to know each other. I literally have nothing to say to her, and clearly she doesn't too. What could I possibly say to someone who has bushy eyebrows?

"How old are you, I've been meaning to ask." oh she's playing the age card.

"I'm 22, how old are you?" she chokes.

"Are you okay?" I feign concern.

Lord knows I don't give a damn!

"Yeah I'm okay, I didn't expect you to be this young." she says.

"Well yeah that's what happens when life forces you to grow up." she has no idea the life I've lived.

She probably had her perfect life, married the prettiest rich boy. He most probably took her virginity on a bed of roses and then took her on all these fancy trips around the world.

Some of us never had that, the bed of roses. Yeah some things I live to regret them.

"How old are you?" I ask again because she clearly didn't hear me the first time.

"I'm 26." she says.

She definitely doesn't look 26. And I'm not saying it in a good way.

"What did you mean you were forced to grow up?" she asks.

Now I regret saying that. The last thing I want to do right now is talk about Nkululeko. I take a big sip of my drink.

"I was in an abusive relationship at a young age." I say.

LACED

She turns and looks at me with pity. There's something in her eyes, it looks like tears.

"Me too." she confesses.

"With Mvelo?" I can't help my intrusive thoughts.

"No, not him, my first boyfriend." now would you look at that.

"Was he older?" I ask her.

For the first time I'm actually interested in what she has to say.

"Yeah, way older than me. I had no business dating him. I was only 17 and he took advantage of that." she chuckles.

"And how did you get out of it?"

"It helped that we moved to a different place so I was able to lose contact with him like that, but he found me years later, and I had already met Mvelo by then. He tried to rape me again because I was naive and stupid. But man I never saw how abusive he was until I was much older. He took my virginity against my will, he spoke down to me, he controlled me and treated me like shit." this needs a huge sip of alcohol.

"I think we dated the same person." she shakes her head.

"You went through the same?" she ditches the dishcloth and comes to sit next to me.

She looks concerned.

"Yes, exactly the same. Maybe it was the same person."

"It can't be, Tshego died on my wedding day." okay maybe it's not the same person.

But those characteristics are surely the same.

"His name was Nkululeko, but everyone called him Jama. He was 33 and I was 18 at the time. He raped me on several occasions, abused me physically and emotionally. The last time I saw him, he tried to kill me. He locked me up in my room and forced me to go back home with him, he held me at gunpoint and beat me. I don't know what would have happened if Muzi didn't come that day." I've never spoken about this to anyone except Muzi and Amile.

LACED

Not even my parents know, and if they do, they were probably told by Amile. But I never gave the details.

“Were you the intern that was almost kidnapped at the intern blocks?” she inquires.

Damn, she knows about that?

“Yes, I am.”

“I’m guessing that was him. Did he also die?” oh damn, I was speaking about him in past tense.

I don’t even know if Nkululeko is still alive. I never heard anything about him ever again after that day. I know he was possibly shot after he tried to fight the police, but maybe he survived. Amile never told me anything, and Muzi also didn’t know. I’ve never run into him anywhere, which is a good thing, and chances of that happening are slim, no one knows where I live except my mom and dad.

“I don’t know, I’m just glad I got away from him.”

“I’m so sorry you had to go through that, as someone who went through it too, it makes me so happy to see that you were able to make it out alive, and find love. Muzi is an amazing man. Deep down, if you look past the drinking and the unfunny jokes, he’s a good guy, and I’m happy for the both of you.” yeah right!

I made a promise never ever to fall in love ever again, and so far so good! Not even Muzi is on that list. Imagine being in love with a man like Muzi.

“Thank you.” I grab the bottle and drink straight from it.

As we are basking in the silence, the men fill the room with loud laughter, they sound happy, and happy equals drunk.

“Are you ready to leave Fluff?” Mvelo asks going to kiss his wife.

She’s giggling like a teenager, Muzi and I both look at each other. Yeah we aren’t doing that.

“You guys look bored.” Muzi says draping his arm around my shoulders.

“No, not at all. We just had some girl talk.” Christine says.

I don’t really consider that girl talk, it just came up that we both were in abusive relationships, that doesn’t make us besties.

LACED

But I'm not rude so I smile.

"It's late now, and we have an early flight, so we better get going." Mvelo says.

"Thank you for the lovely food Mrs Zungu, and it was such a pleasure meeting you." he says and kisses my hand.

"The pleasure is mine, and thank your for coming." I fake a smile.

Honestly, I'm tired and they weren't the best company. So much for my showing off.

Christine pulls me in for a hug.

"Bye girl. We should plan something together when I'm in Durban again." yeah and maybe I could take you to fix those horrible eyebrows.

"Hey Nams why don't you invite them next week." I was hoping he wouldn't.

"My wife right here is opening her own Pamper Spot next week." he continues to brag.

"Ooh that sounds interesting." Chrissy says.

Now I'm forced to invite them, great!

"I'll send you guys the invite tomorrow." I say to close the topic.

"I can't wait!" she says hooking her arm around her husband.

She's so clingy. Muzi and Mvelo fist bump.

"Bafo, sokhuluma." Mvelo says.

"Alright, let me walk you guys out, Nams looks tired." he says kissing my cheek before walking them out.

Yes I am exhausted, and not only that, but for the first time in years I spoke about Nkululeko and my heart is beating out of my chest. I'm still not over it like I thought I was.

I don't hear Muzi come back, so much so that when he places his hand on my shoulder I'm startled.

LACED

“You look exhausted, you should go sleep.” I nod.

I take another swing at the bottle, I want to finish this so I can sleep peacefully.

“The meeting with Mvelo went great! He agreed to get me his contact and he promised to pop in one of the days at the office to see how operations are running.” he seems excited.

Deep down, I am too. Our plan worked, the company might be saved, and I didn’t have to sleep with anyone.

Muzi is making his coke lines on the counter as he narrates what they spoke about with Mvelo. Somewhere somehow I get lost in my thoughts.

“You want some?” he offers.

There were four lines, he sniffs two with no hesitation and looks up in satisfaction. I’m not that brave to take drugs. Especially cocaine, it looks addictive, Muzi can’t go a day without it. And I don’t think I want anything up my nose, what if I choke and die?

“No thank you.” I decline.

I always do, and I don’t think I would ever not decline. He does the other two lines and jumps up and down.

“Oh yes baby! I feel good. Let’s go swimming!” he comes to pull me.

“No Muzi I’m tired.” I say.

I’m tired and a little drunk. I’m trying to resist but he’s pulling me.

“Muzi!” he’s not listening to me.

I’m having flashbacks of that night Nkululeko dragged me on that tar road as he tries to pull me towards the pool. I hate this, I hate it so much. Why was it so easy for one simple conversation to drag me back to such a dark place in my life?

“Muzi please stop!” I beg.

He stops immediately, and concern on his face.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to hurt you.” he says remorsefully.

LACED

He can see the terror on my face. I close my eyes and take in a deep breath to try and calm myself down. I can't be going back to that dark place, not now.

I feel his hands scoop me up and he runs.

"MUZI I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!" I scream.

He throws me in the pool of cold water.

My dress! My hair! My make-up, oh my goodness!

"Muzi!" he's standing outside the pool laughing like an idiot.

"When I catch you it's over!" he takes off his shoes.

"Catch me." he says and throws himself in the pool, also fully clothed.

"You are absolutely crazy, do you know that!" I say to him as he rises from the water.

"I know, but I'm happy! We did it!" he says pulling me closer and stealing a kiss on my lips.

"You need to stop doing drugs." I say to him, he chuckles.

"I love you too grumpy ass!" grumpy ass my foot!

CHAPTER EIGHT

Nambitha Zungu

I'm glad I drank that much last night because I slept peacefully, and I wasn't disturbed by any nightmares. The only downside about sleeping drunk is that I always wake up early, and now I can't seem to go back to sleep.

I feel hungry so I stand up and leave my room to go to the kitchen. I'm craving for last night's roast, it was so good, I certainly put out my foot for that one.

Muzi is also up. I think he's going to the office, and none of this paid leave business. I'm glad Mvelo was able to offer his help, I think Muzi was starting to feel depressed, that is why he didn't go to the office, who knows how many other days he wasn't going to the office without my knowledge before yesterday.

He's in the kitchen warming up the leftovers. He looks so smart in his work suit.

"Morning." I say with no enthusiasm.

I'm still enervated.

"Morning Nams, are you happy I'm going to work?" he asks mockingly.

"Yes I'm very happy Muzi." I say going to the fridge.

I can't see the dish where I put the roast.

"Where is the roast?" I ask.

"I finished it last night." he says nonchalantly.

"What, why would you do such a cruel thing?" I feel like screaming, I was really craving for it.

"You outdid yourself last night, you should cook like that all the time." he says coming to kiss my cheek.

As if I don't cook like that on a daily basis. My food is good nonetheless. He's avoiding my question, so that means no roast for me.

LACED

“You know we aren’t pretending to be really married right.” I say closing the fridge door, I’m disappointed.

“I know.” he says packing his food in his lunch bag.

“I enjoyed last night.” he continues.

“And I didn’t.” I say blatantly.

“I could tell. But next time is going to be better. Yesterday was awkward because of the lingering conversations we needed to have, but after that everything was nice. And we got what we wanted.” he says.

Next time? He’s in a jolly mood indeed, I don’t want those people back in my house.

“Oh did you send them the invites?” he asks turning to me.

“No, it was too late last night. I’ll send them later today.” I say.

I really don’t want to, but it means a lot to him so I will.

“And your family too, don’t forget them.” he reminds.

I sigh. I thought we had this conversation.

“Don’t sigh. Please call your dad at least and invite him. He’s going to be crushed if you don’t.” he begs me.

“Okay I will.” I turn and look at him.

There is blood dripping down his nose, and I can’t help but panic when I see that.

“Muzi...” I can’t even get the words out my mouth.

I point to his nose, he touches his and sees the blood on his fingers.

It registers in my mind that he’s actually bleeding so I rush to his side after taking a paper towel.

“Look up.” I tell him and put the paper towel inside his nostrils to block the blood.

I’m trying so hard to stop my hand from shaking.

“I’m okay, it’s the change of season.” oh please.

LACED

“We both know that’s not true Muzi, please, stop doing cocaine.” I beg him.

“I don’t want you to die.” that comes out in a whisper.

I really didn’t mean it to, but deep down in my heart, I’m so scared. This has never happened before.

He laughs.

“Why because you won’t have money?” he asks, he doesn’t think I’m serious.

“No, because I’ll lose my best friend.” I say.

I only regret saying that out loud after I’ve said it because of the look he gives me. He looks guilty, and I think I look traumatized. At least that’s how I feel on the inside.

“You won’t lose me Nams. I’m sorry, I’ll try cutting down.” I know he’s addicted, and I know it’s going to be difficult for him, but for his own health, he needs to.

He keeps his head tilted and I rest my head on his chest. He uses his other hand to rub my back in reassurance.

I may say everything about Muzi, but to be completely honest, he’s the only one who actually cared for me after that whole Nkululeko ordeal happened. He was there for me when no one was. I don’t know how I’d cope if I were to actually lose him. He’s a good friend, although he’s an ass sometimes, he’s my friend nonetheless. I really can’t lose him, I don’t know how I’d navigate this life thing. And it’s genuinely not just about the money.

● ● ●

Immaculate came in today, and I’m so glad the girl is here because I’m low-key battling a hangover and I don’t have the strength to be doing chores.

I’m working from home today, technically, I have nothing to do so I’m working on nursing this hangover. Immaculate made me a hangover breakfast, grease and all. I thoroughly enjoyed it, but I’m full now and I feel so unhealthy.

LACED

“Thank you for that, it was delicious. I don’t know what I should do today.” I spoke.

I often bother her about my humdrum life, and sometimes she comes up with some proper ideas. Quite frankly I enjoy her company. It’s good to have a girl around the house once in a while.

“You haven’t uploaded anything on your Instagram in a while, why don’t you do that.” you see!

“I could do that but I feel hungover.” she laughs.

She still hasn’t lost her thick accent, but I understand her better than I did when I first moved here.

“You still look beautiful ma’am. Make something like a vlog and do your make up.”

“That’s actually a good idea. I’ll do a live and do a make-up tutorial, you are so smart Immaculate! Let me go exfoliate my face and set up!”

My followers appreciate a live once in a while. I never understood how people get so invested in other people’s lives. Okay sure I went through a phase in my life where I was also obsessed with the royal family, and I knew everything about them, but I stopped that immediately when Amile started dating Mandlenkosi because I didn’t want to give off fan girl energy around them.

But being on the other side, being someone who could be considered a public figure, people are so invested in my life. Sometimes it makes me uncomfortable, sometimes I like it. I try by all means to make sure that I don’t involve them in my personal life, to avoid many things, like scandals and unnecessary press like those other South African celebrities do. Muzi already has enough of that going on for himself. I don’t want any part of it.

I don’t do those vlog things, or do tours around my house. The best I can do is take scenery pictures, pictures of myself and the places I visit. Other than that, I don’t want the public to know.

I’m in my bathroom prepping my skin for the make-up. With the money I have now, I’ve gone and done extensive research I’ve and improved on ways to master my make-up, and what I’m doing now, it’s my little secret to make my make-up look boss.

The little girl Nambitha who used to do people’s make-up with cheap products from China mall would be so proud of me.

LACED

My phone is ringing in my room in the charger. No one ever calls me during the day, unless it's Muzi, which I know it isn't because he has a different ringtone.

It's my father.

"Hi tata." I haven't spoken to him in over a week.

I always forget to call him and as a result I feel guilty. He's a good dad, he cares for me and shows that he loves me all the time, but his wife, his wife is the problem.

"My little sweetpea, how are you." my dad changes these pet names every time he calls.

I can't help but chuckle.

"How are you?" I ask.

"I'm good mntanami, how are you?"

"I'm also good tata. I actually wanted to call you but you beat me to it."

"I had to call you. You don't call us, and I miss you, my last born." I giggle.

"I'm so busy tata, it always slips my mind." I say guiltily.

"You should come visit us, it's been a while." yeah I don't know about that.

"I'll think about that. I actually wanted to invite you to my launch. I'm opening my Pamper spot next week and I'd love for you to come."

"Aww my love those are great news! I didn't know you were working on something. So what is it, a pamper spot?" my dad ever so clueless.

"It's like a salon, but we do more than just hair, we also do nails, massages and make-up." I explain.

My dad is always ready to listen to me, and that's why I love him so much. He always has time for me.

"That is super creative, I knew you had big brains my girl! I'm so proud of you, you are making us proud, me and your mom." yeah right as if mom is proud of me.

LACED

She judges me any chance she gets, as if her life is any better than mine. My mom is a hypocrite and she has favouritism. In fact, she's jealous of me. What other words could be used to explain why she would chose to write me out of her life and not my sisters when I didn't bring her family name any shame like they did. I heard Zimkhitha had another baby with another man and she's still dick hopping and not working. Janet still lives in a rented backroom with her three kids.

Out of all the Makhathini children, I'm the most successful, and she chooses to hate me? I finished my matric, I may have not have done any further schooling, but I have millions worth of investments to my name and I'm about to become a successful business owner. Was my mistake not giving her breathing burdens? Well tough on her, I'd rather be a motherless millionaire than to have a breathing human being calling me their mother, over my dead body.

"Tata I don't want her to come, she's going to ruin my night." I speak my heart.

I really don't want her there. From the bottom of my heart, I don't. I know the moment she gets there she'll find something to criticize, and I don't want that on my big night, it's my night.

"Don't say that Namnam, she won't ruin your night." he defends his wife.

"You know what mom is like tata, she's unreasonable, she doesn't like me. I don't need that energy around me that day, I don't need her there so she can call Muzi a skhotheni and criticize my tight dress. You remember what happened at the house warming party. You know she can't close her mouth and keep her negativity to herself." he sighs.

"Dlulisa mntanami, she apologized for it, she showed remorse. I promise I'll make sure that she behaves."

"Look tata, I'd be happy to have only you there, but if you can't come because your wife isn't, I completely understand, but I'm sorry, I can't invite mom." these are just some of the harsh truths he has to accept.

"If those are your wishes then I have to accept them. I'm going to speak with your mother and hear what she says." obviously he will.

"Okay tata. I'll call you back later then, and tell me your outcome soon so I can get you a tux." he chuckles.

"Okay my little sweetpea."

"Where did you hear that word!?" he laughs.

LACED

Overall, all I can say is, I love my dad, and I'm grateful for him being in my life. My mom, not so much. I wouldn't trade my relationship with my dad for anything.

I get back to prepping my face before I go to check if Immaculate has finished setting up for me. She always finds joy in doing that, and I'm really not complaining, she does it well.

This time she set up in the kitchen, but I'm not entirely sure about the lighting here.

"You said you want them to be in suspense ma'am." she reminds me.

"That's exactly what I said Imma. They've never seen this part of my house. Okay let me try it out."

I set up my phone to see if the lighting works.

"Imma you are a genius!" she really is one.

I look so radiant, I can't help it. I start the live, and as it's not even two minutes later before the whole comment section is swarmed with people throwing compliments and all other things.

"I haven't been here in a while, and I thought why not come here and do a young make up look, and update you on my new project." people love me.

And I'm not saying that in a snobby way, no, they really do love me. It's so heartwarming to think that a little girl like me, who never thought was even pretty enough growing up and throughout her high school career would ever be loved by people like this.

I was never popular, actually none of my friends were. Okay maybe Amile and Yonela were a little popular, especially among the boys. They were always hotter than me, I always made sure of it with my make-up skills, they also dressed way better than me because their parents could afford to. Not that mine didn't, but they were already paying so much for the school I was in. The boys hardly looked in my direction when I was with them. If I was another girl, I would have lost all self confidence, thankfully I didn't. But I was so awestruck by the attention Nkululeko gave me. Now that I look back, I was a little too desperate and I ended up in the shit I was because of the attention.

"NamNam's Pamper Spot is officially launching next week and I'm so excited! The guest list is guest listing, the who's and who's of the industry have been invited and it promises to be an amazing launch."

LACED

Many questions are popping up and once and I'm trying to answer all of them at once.

"Will I finally reveal my husband? No you bunch of nosey people! He will be there but you won't see him!"

"The store is officially opening the following day to cater for all your needs, your support will be highly appreciated."

This seems to be the most chaos free live I've ever hosted, I'm peacefully doing my make-up, taking them step by step through it and answering some of the appropriate questions that they ask.

I'm almost done with my lip combo when I get disrupted by Immaculate walking in being followed by a delivery guy carrying a big bouquet of roses, red roses.

Who in the world sent me flowers?

"Ma'am, this order has come for you." she reports.

The flowers look heavy, I'm assuming that's why she let the guy come inside my house where strangers aren't supposed to enter.

"Who are they from?" I look at the guy.

"There is a card ma'am." he says politely.

I receive the roses and place them on my lap. A little gift bag follows after that and I can't help but wonder.

I don't know why and how, but my mind races to Mvelo. Could it be him making these big grand gestures? He does strike me as the type that buys flowers. But why would he do that? The only person he should be doing that for is his wife.

But that's if it is him.

The comments are going wild.

"Aww hubby is so cute"

"Such big roses"

"When are we meeting mystery man!"

"Open the card!"

LACED

I can't help but laugh. It's so funny that all of them are assuming that they are from my so called husband. Muzi would never! He doesn't have a single romantic bone in his body.

I grab the gift bag and look for the card. I open it.

"I'm going to try be a better person Nams, I'm sorry you had to see me like that. And I promise you won't lose me. Thank you for being such a wonderful best friend, and an amazing wife."

Or apparently he can.

Fuck I have tears in my eyes!

"Is it from boss?" Immaculate asks.

I can't seem to get any words out so all I can offer her is a nod. She smiles sweetly before she leaves.

"When I catch this man, I'm never going to forgive him for making me cry in front of you guys." I can't believe him.

He even bought something, there's a box in the gift bag. I take it out and open it.

Now this is the Muzi that I know childish and unserious. He put a rolled bundle of cash in there, with a note.

"Go spend my little gold digger." I read it out loud for the people on the live.

Now I'm excited to actually get off this live and call him. He really and truly caught me off guard, and he made me cry! No one makes me cry, ever!

"I'm honestly waiting for the day where men will understand that they work so we can spend their money. My husband calls me his little gol..." still caught up in my moment of happiness, a dodgy comment catches me off guard.

Two of them pop up, and I can't help but panic when I see them, both from dodgy accounts.

'Jah ntombi kaMuzi.' the one reads.

'Watch your back.' Panic surges through my whole body.

LACED

I turn around hastily and see a paper stuck on the kitchen window behind me. It's written 'RUN' in big bold letters.

My heart gets stuck in my throat. Someone was here, in this house. Someone was in my fucking yard, and they are watching me...

CHAPTER NINE

Nambitha Zungu

I'm losing my shit, and in the midst losing my shit, I couldn't bear to stay in that house alone. I don't even know how or who was there, and why!

This clearly has everything to do with Muzi, this shit he has himself in, and now it has everything to do with me, and I don't want to be involved. Now I'm fearing for my life. They clearly want to get to Muzi through me, whoever they are.

I didn't wait for Immaculate to knock off, I asked her to finish what she was doing, and offered to drive her home. I wanted to do anything to be away from that house that I now was too scared to stay in alone. I'm not going back there alone, that is why I'm driving like a maniac to Muzi's office, I've never been scared for my life like this.

When I get to the building, it's empty and dead silent. The only thing I can hear is the loud clicking sound of my heels as I make my way down the hall to Muzi's office.

I can hear footsteps behind me, and that immediately alerts me to turn around. My heart almost comes out my mouth when my eyes meet with hers. Already I'm panicked, and now seeing her here, it sends me over the edge.

"Nambitha hi." she greets with her friendly smile.

The fact that she still remembers my name is creepy. What did she say her's was again? And what the hell is she doing here?

"Hi..." I drag it out.

I'm uncomfortable, and I hope she can see that.

"Zama, the one you met at the restaurant on Saturday." shit!

"What are you doing here?" I'm so skeptical about her.

Her behaviour is weird to me. She smiles a lot, she's also very touchy, like right now, she's reaching out for my hand.

"I work here, I'm Mr Muzikayise Zungu's PA." she speaks with so much enthusiasm.

LACED

Can she not read the room?

“What happened to Pearl?” and Muzi doesn’t tell me this?

“I started yesterday and he wasn’t here. Pearl got into a really bad accident and she can’t work.” nope, nothing is adding up.

Why is this office so damn empty? Two and two is not making four.

“Where is Muzi?” I ask.

She give me a broad smile, this chick is weird.

“In his office, in an important meeting.” she puts emphasis on important.

As if I care. Nothing is more important that what I have to tell him.

“Wait! You can’t go in there!” she’s pulling my back as I try to go to his office.

First of all why is it so damn quiet in this building and secondly what’s wrong with me seeing Muzi. No matter how busy he is, he always makes time for me.

“Let me go!” I snatch my hand from her grip and take off running in the direction of his office.

Running in heels is a skill only a few people can master. I’m one of those people, and she behind me trying to catch up, but she can’t. I get to Muzi’s office and quickly opening the door, letting myself in.

He’s not inside. Well, he’s not sitting in his chair, but his coat is there and it smells like him, like he was here just a second ago.

“Muzi!” panic surges through my whole body.

What did they do to him? Where is he?

“Muzi where are you!?” this is all becoming too convenient.

Did they kill him? Who are they? Are they the same people who want are stealing money from the company?

“Hey Nams, calm down, what’s wrong?” it feels like the walls are closing in on me.

LACED

He's standing behind me, I can smell him again. I feel light headed all of a sudden. He catches me, and when I look up, Zama is there too, standing at the door. Everything is spinning, I'm seeing two of everything before the room goes dark.

• • •

Why is it so bloody cold here, and I'm not covered in anything. I can also hear voices, they are having a serious conversation.

My eye sight is blurred and my neck hurts, why am I sleeping on a couch, where am I? When did I even go to sleep?

"You're up." I open my eyes and a tall figure is standing in front of me.

It's Muzi.

"What happened?" I ask him.

"You passed out before I could ask you what was wrong, you came in here in a panic." he crouches down and touches my face.

My mouth feels numb. How long was I passed out?

I remember the live, and receiving the flowers from Muzi, but everything else after that is a blur. How did I even get to where I am, I know I'm not at home.

"Where are we?" I asked him.

"In my office, you came here frantic Nams, are you okay?" I shake my head.

"I don't remember anything. How did I get here?" he frowns.

"You drove here." why the hell would I drive to Muzi's office?

A second face appears behind Muzi.

"Oh, you're up. We were worried about you." this girl.

LACED

I remember her from that day, that creep at the mall. Why is she here?

“Zama, I’m his PA, we met earlier.” she can see the confusion on my face.

“No we didn’t.” she frowns.

“She may be suffering from amnesia.” she whispers to Muzi.

She wasn’t really trying to whisper because I could hear her loud and clear.

“I can see that.” Muzi says standing up.

“Call a doctor please.” she scurries away.

He goes to pour me a glass of water and he comes back with it.

“What do you mean you don’t remember anything?” he says squeezing next to me on the couch.

“I don’t. I don’t remember how I got here, or why I even came here. I just remember you sending me flowers and being on that live.” he frowns.

“What live?”

“I was doing a live on Instagram when the delivery guy brought the flowers. Everything is a blur after that Muzi, it’s like I went to sleep or something.” he touches my forehead.

“A doctor is going to come a check on you, you are scaring me.” he says patting my cheeks.

“Was it really you that sent the flowers?” I ask.

I was really doubting that it was him, Muzi isn’t romantic at all.

“Yes, it was. Did you like them?” he smiles.

“Yes, I loved them. And I accept your apology.”

An awkward silence passes between us. I don’t know why he’s quiet but I’m here cracking my brain trying to figure out what the fuck happened to me.

“The doctor is coming.” Zama reports.

“Thank you Zama, and could you bring us some sandwiches from downstairs.” he says.

LACED

“Yes sir.” she’s staring at me.

I stare right back. I can’t read her look, I don’t know whether she’s lusting or she judging. But her stare is intense.

When she leaves the office, I stand up to stretch my tired limbs. Muzi leans back and stares at me.

“What happened to Pearl?” as far as I know, she was the assistant, not this Zama chick.

“She was involved in an accident and she’s hospitalized so the agency sent a replacement.” he explains.

“She’s weird.” I confess.

He just laughs.

“She seems fine to me.”

“What time is it?”

“Half past four.” what!

“How long was I out?”

“About 30 minutes. Why, do you remember something?” he sits up.

“No, but Immaculate, she’s supposed to be knocked off by now.”

“Let’s call her and ask where she is.” he stands and goes to fetch his phone.

I’m trying to understand just how it is possible for me to just lose my memory like that. It feels like I’m forgetting something important. Especially because I ended up here. I wouldn’t have come here if it wasn’t important. But what could it be?

“Immaculate, hi.” he speaks.

“Hi boss, is ma’am okay?” why is that the first thing she asks?

“Why do you ask?”

LACED

“She said she saw that someone was in the house, and was watching her. That’s why she drove me home and said she’s coming to you because she doesn’t feel safe at the house.” now I’m even more confused.

“Okay Immaculate, did you perhaps see anything?” Muzi is looking at me questioningly.

“No boss, I didn’t.” he keeps quiet for a while.

“Alright, thank you. We’ll see you on Thursday.”

So I felt unsafe, that’s why I came here. But who was watching me?

“You still don’t remember?” he asks me.

“No, I don’t. In fact I’m even more confused.” he sighs.

“Okay, just relax, take a deep breath and let’s wait for the doctor.”

I nod and take deep breaths in.

● ● ●

“From what I’m observing, this is an extremely rare case of TGA. I could be wrong but all the signs point to it. It’s extremely rare though because it never happens to persons younger than 40.” The doctor explains.

I’m so confused.

“What is TGA?” Muzi asks before I can.

“Transient global amnesia. A temporary issue in your hippocampus. TGA could be a result of lack of oxygen flow to your brain or seizure activity related to your brain. Have you ever had a seizure before?” he asks me.

“No, not that I know of.”

“Have you participated in any strenuous activities in the past few days, or been stressed out about anything.” I’ve definitely been stressed out by the whole bankruptcy thing.

The amount of sex I’ve been having these days is also beyond normal.

LACED

“Is it that doctor?” I ask.

“Possibly, but it’s something I have to look in to. As I said, this is a vary rare case, it never happens, especially to people your age. I’m going to have to do some research on this. Are you feeling any pain?” he’s already checked my blood pressure and all those other things.

“No nothing at all.” I’m perfectly fine.

I just don’t remember what happened.

“Studies show that you are most likely to regain your memory in 6-8 hours so you shouldn’t worry too much about that.”

“Thank you so much doctor.” Thanking him is really just a formality at this point.

He didn’t do squat to help us. He also seemed just as unsure about what he was saying as we are. I could have easily searched on the internet what he was saying.

Muzi walks him out, and when he comes back, he sits on the couch and gives me his blazer.

“Please don’t tell me you are stressing about this whole thing with the company losing money. That shouldn’t be stressing you Nams.” He says rubbing my shoulder.

“I can’t really help it Muzi. I’m worried about my business, I’m worried about your health, and on top of everything it’s these recurring dreams about my past and trauma. I can’t help being stressed.” I confess.

I’ve really been feeling like shit the last few days.

“I told you Nams, I’m okay. I’ll cut down on the snow if that’s what you want, I don’t want you stressing about me. The Pamper Spot is perfect, everything is running perfectly, and you’ve got everything under control. You are a super woman, don’t let yourself go back into that dark hole that you’ve worked so hard to get out of. I’m proud of you.” I nod and give him a tight hug.

“Thank you. I don’t know why you don’t date people because you are such a good boyfriend.” He breaks into a fit of laughter.

“Nah, I’m not boyfriend material, don’t let this fool you.” I laugh.

LACED

“But on a serious note, thank you for the reassurance. And yes I’m a little difficult sometimes, but you believe in me and I wouldn’t be here if you didn’t. I love you just a little.” I show him with my hand.

“I love you a lot.” He says.

“That’s cringe, don’t say that.” He chuckles.

“Let’s go home and get you rested Mrs Zungu.” I for one am ready to go home.

I need a nice shower and warm pajamas, maybe some ice-cream. But first I need the loo.

“I’m going to the toilet.” I say standing up.

“Okay, hurry.” I do as told.

I scurry out the office barefoot down the passage. Now that I’ve actually spoken about my sudden need to pee, I feel extra pressed. I’m about to enter the bathroom when someone pulls me back.

She pins me against the wall, not violently, no...

“What are you doing?” I ask.

Her hand placement is not rough, but it’s very firm.

“Look Nambitha, I want you. I think you are the sexiest woman I have ever laid my eyes on.” WHAT?

Can this day honestly get any weirder than this? I don’t think so.

And why did she have to do this when I need to pee so badly.

“Say something.” she probes.

She’s looking at me lustfully. I don’t know how to react. No woman has ever made a pass at me, never!

She lowers my chin and captures my lips in hers. I freeze. She smells like fruits, I’ve never kissed a girl before, her lips are so soft.

She’s really going at it man, and I must say she’s a good kisser, I’m slowly falling weak. Her touch on my breasts, my ass...damn!

LACED

“Stop, please.” I caution.

“Please give me a chance...”

“I need to pee...” I’m really pressed and if she doesn’t let me go, I’ll pee right here.

“Oh shit sorry.” she moves away and I scurry to the bathroom.

I almost have pee running down my legs, and as soon as I sit on the toilet seat, I relieve myself.

Only when I’m done my brain registers what just happened.

I JUST KISSED A GIRL!

And I really hate to admit it, but I think liked it.

CHAPTER TEN

Nambitha Zungu

Daddy agreed to come to the launch!

I don't know what sort of agreement they reached with mom but she clearly agreed to stay behind because he called me and told me that he will be there. Now my excitement is shooting through the roof!

I've been running errands all day, going with my designer to shop for the right material for my dress. I insisted to be there, I couldn't not bear to stay in suspense like that. She wasn't pleased with me, but I'm Nambitha Zungu, I get whatever I want.

I also found a place where I'll be buying dad and Muzi's tux. I had to go to extremes to find this place but I'm glad I did because I'm so happy with it. They also helped me with designs and I can safely say that what I got for them, I definitely aligns with my vision.

The excitement for the launch is actually kicking in now that I'm getting things done. It's becoming all too real that next week I'll officially be a business woman!

Can you imagine my excitement?

I'm at the store with my new staff, and I called them in just so they could familiarize themselves with the new spot. I also wanted to brief them about the itinerary for the launch, and everyone seems to be on board with everything.

"I honestly cannot wait to go on this journey with you guys. I'm so grateful that we made it this far, but the we are yet to take the real journey! I'm thankful for your presence too..." we are closing off our meeting with a little toast.

But my train of thought is disrupted when a familiar face pops up on the glass window outside. I don't know what she's doing here, she looks so out of place. This is a sophisticated affluent area, did she not get the memo?

"Excuse me for one moment." I could choose to ignore her but she's staining my window with her dirty fingers.

LACED

She's staring inside the spot, she wants to see what's going on inside. As soon as I reach her I grab her arm and pull her to a side where no one will see her. A place where no one will see me with her.

"What the hell are you doing here?" I ask through gritted teeth.

I can't for the life of me think of a reason that would bring her here. Last I checked she hated me for not listening to her when she warned me about dating an older guy.

But I'm sure her mother told her.

"Mom told me that you have a new shop and that you didn't invite us to the launch party. You've done well for yourself and you are ditching your family huh Nambitha?" I cross my arms across my chest.

"You can't possibly mean to tell me that you travelled all the way from Durban, from whichever ditch you live in, and came all the way here, to my territory in Margate to bitch about not being invited to MY event?" I thought I was far away from them and had done a good job at it, clearly I didn't.

"Mom was right about you being a snob!" she scans me from top to bottom.

She's the last person to do that to me. She's wearing a pair of old faded jeans and a tired shirt, her outfit combined doesn't even amount to a single item of clothing on my body, even my underwear is more expensive than that. She's let go of herself, she's not the pretty lady she used to be. Her hair looks months old, not even weeks. I won't even speak about her skin.

I won't say I looked up to her because she wasn't a good role model, but looks wise, I wished to be as pretty as her at some point in my life. Now I don't even dream of being known as her sister.

"I need money. I know you have lots of it so you can give me some." She's not being serious right now.

"Zimkhitha we haven't spoken in years, you've never had the decency to call and check up on me and you come here demanding my money? No, I don't want to give my money." she has audacity.

Liver they say in my language.

"I didn't see a need to speak to you, now I do. Come on Nambitha don't be ungrateful. I'm your big sister." She has some nerve.

LACED

“I don’t want to make things ugly, and only for the sake of uTata. So stay away from me and don’t make me get a restraining order against you. You have some nerve coming here demanding my hard earned money, you have some entitlement! Rhaa!” she didn’t think this one through.

I leave her standing there.

They must think again if they think they will make me their money market. They will not be milking me, I worked too damn hard to be where I am now! I don’t see them waking up everyday to ensure that their businesses are up and running. I’m not a cash cow for their poverty stricken lives.

And yes I wouldn’t have this without Muzi, but it’s my business, and everything that it is now, and everything it’s going to be in the future will be my hard work, mine only. I don’t want to share that with them, they are ungrateful bitches!

“Ma’am your phone has been ringing.” The youngest staff member on the team comes to me when I return.

She’s 19 or 20, fresh out of high school but she’s very talented, and can use her hands very well. She’s going to be one of the braiders.

“Thank you.” I accept the phone.

It has obviously stopped ringing now, but I have a few missed calls, all from one person.

She’s an adamant woman. I dial her back.

“I thought you were avoiding me.” I chuckle awkwardly.

“No, I’m not.” I say trying not to sound as weird as I feel inside.

“I made a reservation for us at Freeways Hotel tonight, six thirty. Will you join me?” I mean we did speak about this briefly, but I didn’t think she was serious.

I’m chickening out. I’ve never done something this crazy before.

“Sure, I’ll be there.” I agree nonetheless.

She didn’t really say why she wants to meet up so badly but judging from how forward she is from our last meeting, I should expect more than just dinner.

LACED

She got my number from her boss, and she confessed her ‘feelings’ for me. I’m still unsure if it is sexual feelings or ‘feelings’ feelings. She’s been texting me ever since.

I would be lying if I said she wasn’t lingering in my mind after that knee buckling kiss she gave me. Yeah sure my knees might have only buckled because I desperately needed to pee, but damn, girl was a good kisser. I’ve been thinking about her fruity scent and soft lips ever since.

“Great then! I’ll meet you there.” she says excitedly.

I’ve never had an interaction with a woman, let alone a sexual experience. Although I’m a little nervous, I’m also a tad bit excited. I want to see what tonight has in store for me.

...

“I made a friend and she’s taking me out.” I don’t know since when, but Muzi is sitting on my bed watching me do my make-up.

He looks like a 5 year old watching their mom get ready for a girls night, crying in agony because they have to stay behind.

“I’m going to have security on standby.” I roll my eyes.

“You always speak about this so called security, I’ve never seen them.” I’m actually convinced he’s saying all these things to sound dangerous.

There is no security.

“I always have someone watching you when you leave the house, especially after that incident where you lost your memory. Imagine that happens again and you aren’t in my presence. They are always there, you just won’t see them but they see you.” he’s still hasn’t healed from that trauma.

It’s crazy that the doctor assured us that I’d remember what happened in a few hours, but it’s been 4 days and I still don’t remember, it’s like a gap in my memory that I cannot seem to fill.

LACED

We tried to watch the live, but all I saw was me looking shocked, and quickly ending it. That still didn't seem to jog my memory.

"That is creepy." it's giving stalker.

"It's for your safety. So...tell me about this friend. Is she hot?" Muzi is forever horny and chasing pussy.

I don't want to tell him who this new friend is because I don't know how he's going to feel about it. He might not be comfortable with it.

And I'm not even entirely sure if he hasn't made a move on her and possibly slept with her. Muzi doesn't have self control, he asks anyone with a vagina out. And Girl didn't really clarify her sexuality to me as of yet. Maybe she swings both ways.

"Nope, she's off limits." he laughs.

"I'm joking Nams. Go have fun with your friend, and when you come back, we have to have a serious conversation about our finances." he suddenly goes serious.

Muzi doesn't go serious often. I can't help but frown, I know this is going to ruin my mood.

"What about our finances?" he must not test me.

"We have to cut down on a few things to accommodate this plague we are facing, you understand right?" I shake my head no.

Not because I don't understand, but I don't want to understand, I wish I didn't understand.

"I know you don't like this conversation and you dread having it, so go have fun, we will do this later." I'm still waiting for him to say he's joking.

"There's a lump stuck in my throat. I feel like crying, I can't even find the words to answer him so I finish doing my make up, and get dressed.

All the while he is staring at me.

"Are you mad now?" he asks the obvious.

"No, I'm not mad." clearly I'm mad, even a blind man can see.

LACED

There is no Nambitha without the finer things in life. What does he mean when he says we have to ‘cut down’?

“Okay, you clearly are mad Nams. This is what I didn’t want.” I shake my head and turn to face him.

“I don’t understand, you got Mvelo to help.” he stands and walks to me.

He’s trying to get me to calm down, that is why he’s putting his hands on my waist.

“Yes we did Nams, but the company still lost lots of money, and we are still losing more, just not as much as we were when we first discovered it. Until we uncover the real reason behind this shit, we will continue to lose money, investors are pulling out. It’s going to take a whole lot to recover from that, so I’m going to need you to be patient with me, hold my hand and help me surf this violent wave. I know it’s not part of the deal...”

“It really isn’t. I can’t be broke, poverty doesn’t suit me.” he chuckles.

“Yes it doesn’t, so in order to make sure we don’t go poor, we have to sacrifice some of the things we don’t need. Please.” he kisses my lips.

“You are ruining my lip combo.” he smiles.

“Go have fun, and don’t think about this. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

He takes my purse for me and offers to walk me out. It’s not everyday where Muzi is so nice to me, he’s really desperate for me to co-operate. I won’t lie though, I could get used to this. He buckles me up and bids me goodbye.

We don’t live too far from Freeways Hotel. It belongs to Mrs Zuzile Mfusi, who I was shocked to learn is Muzi’s half sister. I officially met her at Mr Zungu’s funeral. Lihle was the one who actually told me who her sister was because Muzi never bothered. I knew he was related to the Mfusi’s somehow, but I never knew he was related to the classiest lady in Margate, a lady married to business mogul Kabelo Mfusi.

And amidst it all, I am married to her brother, and her son wants to have sex with me. This place is truly too small for all of us.

I quickly arrive at the hotel. I’m conflicted between making my way inside and calling to find out where she is. I chose the latter, I don’t feel safe going into public spaces alone like that anymore.

She answers almost immediately.

LACED

“Go up to reception and say you are Zamanjilo’s guest. They will give you a key to the room.” she instructs.

I’m shocked. I thought we would be having dinner first, but I guess we are skipping that part to the good bit. Girly doesn’t waste time, she gets straight to business.

I go to the reception and do as I was instructed. The look the lady at reception offers me though did not in the least give me any peace. I couldn’t help but think that Zama was a regular here, and she was known for the exact reason that I have come for here. What other reason could explain her judgemental look.

I find my way to the room nonetheless, and quickly unlock the door. The hotel room is quiet, but there are bags in the corner so I’m assuming she’s already here. This place is absolutely mesmerizing.

I’ve visited the establishment a couple of times, mostly to dine at the restaurant or attend an event in the conference room, but I’ve never been in any of the rooms. This hotel is like the Raddison Blu of Margate. Now I get why the Mfusi’s are so bloody rich. Zuzile also owns fifty percent of the shopping centre down the road. She is basically woman goals, and I wish someday to get to her level of success and riches.

“Oh. You are here!” she’s coming out of the bathroom draped in a towel.

She sounds excited to see me.

“Sorry I came straight from the office so I wanted to shower first.” she explains herself.

She’s making her way towards me. She pulls me closer and gives me a lingering kiss.

“You look beautiful.” I’m still stunned that I don’t find any of this weird.

She’s a woman, this is a woman kissing me.

I haven’t even gotten a word in, she’s already dishing out the compliments, and her kisses, wow!

“Thank you. I thought we would have dinner first.” she gives me a lusting smile.

She’s definitely horny.

“Are you hungry?” her hands are dancing around my hips.

LACED

Now that she's asking, I'm really not that hungry.

"I'm sorry but all this pretty make up is going to go to waste." I'd never leave the house with a bare face, so no make up look ever goes to waste.

She reaches for my lips and kisses me again, but this time, she deepens it. She is overpowering me, dominating me with her confidence. I don't even have the ground to say no as she leads me to the bed, not breaking her lips from mine.

I'm the one to break the kiss, I need to catch my breath. We are going so fast and I'm falling behind, I can't catch up.

"What do you want to do to me?" I whisper.

"Why should I tell you when I can show you?" she attacks me with another kiss.

But no...

"Wait Zama..." we literally have not spoken about this and we are rushing to bed each other.

What is this anyway? Okay I get she wants to bed me because she likes me, but why me?

"I've never done something like this before. It's so crazy and now everything is just moving so fast." I say, my voice filled with doubt.

"And I've done it before, so you are in good hands. I like you Nambitha, that's why you are here. I feel this undeniably strong sexual connection and I just want to..." she stops speaking and bites my bottom lips.

That was sexy. She really wants this, I can see it in her eyes.

"Are you only into women?" she sighs.

I'm annoying her with all these questions, but I have to know before we go any further.

"I'm into people, not genders." is that even a thing?

"I'm pansexual." okay it has a name.

I will never get this thing. What happened to plain and simple gay, lesbian, or bisexual. We were adjusting quite well to that as a society.

LACED

“Okay, so you sleep with anyone you are attracted to?”

“Yes, and I’m attracted to you so can you just...” she’s not a fan of finishing off her sentences I guess.

She lets her lips do the speaking. She gently tightens her hand around my neck and pushes me on the bed.

She drops her towel, exposing her nakedness, and I take a moment to drink it all in. She has a beautiful body. You can tell that she is a gym junkie. Behind all the pantsuits she wears, she hides radiant smooth chocolate skin with hard toned abs and what looks like extremely firm thighs. I’ve seen a woman besides myself naked before, but this, it has a different feel to it.

She leans back in to kiss me tenderly, and begins to softly moan in my mouth. She guides my hand to fondle her breast, and I start to massage her nipple. I’m doing it the way Muzi does mine because I know it always sends me over the edge. Her moans grow needier. Her hands begin to explore my body.

It’s a foreign feeling having soft feminine hands exploring the crevices of my body.

She helps me out of my clothes and leaves me in my underwear. She sits on the bed and calls me to sit on top of her. I do as told and our lips lock once again. I play with her hard nipples once again, because I now know that it sends her, and I gently start to grate my hips.

It feels so different, not feeling anything hard under me, just soft skin. Her fingers travel to my sacred place. She shifts my underwear to the side, and she begins to rub my nub.

“Oh yes.” I continue to grate along to the rhythm of her hand.

I’m slowly flowing down a river of pleasure, and I can feel her fingers getting drenched by my pleasure juices.

She starts to pleasure me with her fingers, pumping them in and out of my body.

She is so gentle, and on another day, I would be so fed up with this, but I’m not. She’s not a man.

She doesn’t need to be rough with me for me to really enjoy what she is doing to me. She is already sending me over the edge with just her fingers.

“Do you like that?” she asks softly.

LACED

I can only offer her a nod. She starts quickening her pace.

“Oh goodness!” I cry out, chasing my finish.

I am still unable to fathom how she’s doing this so effortlessly, making me feel so much pleasure in a way I never thought possible.

My body starts to shake, and I cover her fingers with my cum.

I cannot believe I just did that. She looks at me with a look of sheer pleasure.

Now am I expected to do it back to her or what? I’ve never fingered anyone in my life but myself.

Instead she lies on her back and looks at me with her lustful hooded eyes.

“Come sit on my face baby doll.” oh so it’s not over.

This definitely promises to be an interesting night.

LACED

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Nambitha Zungu

“When I said see you in the morning, I didn’t really think you’d come back in the morning.” he’s up and he’s ready for work.

We lost track of time last night. We talked, we laughed, drank a shitload of champagne and fucked like rabbits. I can safely say that was the best night of my life. Wild yes, but the best. I did things I never thought I would do.

“I was too drunk to drive back so my friend got me a room.” I give him a half truth.

“And this friend, does she not have a name?” since when is Muzi this nosey?

“Her name does not concern you. I need a shower and some sleep please. Go to work and mind your business.” he turns and looks at me.

Dammit! I’m appalled when I see his face.

“What the hell happened to you?” he’s fucked up.

I leave him for one night and I come back to him bruised like a tomato. He has a busted lip and his eye is almost swollen shut. I don’t even think he can see properly.

“I got into a fight.” he says as if it’s not a big deal.

Clearly he didn’t win that fight because he looks like this. I go up to him to inspect his face closer.

“With who Muzi? Why are you getting into fights less than a week before my launch, how will you look in the pictures.” this idiot is smiling at me.

“I owe Jimmy some money and...” oh hell no.

“What are you owing Jimmy for? Muzi I though you agreed to stop using.” he just sighs.

“You know he’s dangerous Muzi, why would you put your life in danger like that? Pay him back his money!”

LACED

“I was stressed yesterday and I needed a fix, but I didn’t have any cash on me, and I had exceeded my spending limit on my card, and couldn’t pay him, so he sent his junkies to beat me up.” he lost me at spending limit.

“Since when do we have spending limits?” I’m shocked, or confused, either of the two. I can’t pin point this feeling.

“Come on Nams, we spoke about cutting down last night...”

“Yes, cutting down on things we don’t need, you don’t need cocaine Muzi. This thing is going to get you killed. And this limit thing, is this your idea of ‘cutting down’? did you also put a limit on my card.”

“Yes, I had to.” my ears are deceiving me.

Breathe Nambitha.

“How much a day, or a month?” I can feel my heart beating in my ears already.

Whatever he says, I’m not going to like it. I don’t like being limited to the amount of money I spend.

“2k a day.” is he crazy!?

“What am I going to do with two thousand Rands in a day Muzi? This is no way to live. I’m not a barbarian!” I can spend that amount in one sitting.

Fuck, that’s the cost of one pair of shoes at Gucci! How can he possibly expect that money to last me the whole day, it’s practically petty cash.

“Muzi please, I can’t live like this.” I can feel the tears burning my eyes.

He’s not budging, he’s dead set.

“Nambitha I’m late, I need to get to the office. I have an important meeting to get to. I’ll come back early so we can discuss this further.” and just like that, I’ve let another man break my heart.

It feels like I’m losing my will to live. Without money what am I?

● ● ●

LACED

My phone is ringing, and whoever it is that is calling me is Lucifer's agent because who gave them the right to wake me up from my nap.

Oh goody, it's the same person who kept me up all night in the first place.

"Hi." I greet trying not to sound half dead.

"It's midday, why are you sleeping?"

"You kept me up all night, I'm trying to catch up on some sleep and nurse this hangover." she laughs.

"Lucky you have the opportunity to nurse it. I can't, your husband is sending me from pillar to post, it's as if he doing it on purpose because he knows I was the one that stole you from him last night." I can't help but laugh.

"Shame girl! How are things going there anyway, what are the developments?" Since Muzi doesn't want to tell me exactly what it is that is going on, I got her to tell me.

She also doesn't know much because she just joined the company, and Muzi is working tirelessly to keep things under wraps. He doesn't want this to get out, but at the rate things are going, he might make headlines soon.

"He had a meeting with the auditors and the finance department earlier. He came out of that meeting very pissed. He's okay now but two people were fired so I don't know what that could mean. At this point I'm trying my best to thread carefully and not be on his bad side." damn.

I know him when he gets like that, he's just unbearable. The same way he can be goofy and funny, is the same way he can be pissed and tell the whole world to just fuck off.

"And what the hell happened to his face?" I was waiting for her to ask.

This whole thing with Muzi is really stressing me out.

"When I asked, he said he got into a fight."

More than anything I don't want to be dealing with Muzi's bad attitude right now, so I hope he doesn't come home with his negative energy, he must leave it where he found it.

"Hectic. I just wanted to check on you. He's back in the office so we will talk later." she seems edgy all of a sudden so I say my goodbyes and end the call.

LACED

I would be lying if I said I wasn't concerned about Muzi and his well-being. He says he has it under control, but he seems like he doesn't. Firing people and losing his temper is not having it under control. I feel like everything is slowly falling apart.

I'm wide awake now and these thoughts just won't leave my mind. I feel like I need to intervene, I need to do something about this.

The only person who I trust enough to give me the answers I need in this moment is Mvelwenhle. I need him to tell me what the hell he is doing with this plan they came up with because I am not seeing any changes, instead I'm seeing destruction.

"Mfusi hello." he answers coldly.

It's either he's really busy or he doesn't want to talk to me.

"Mvelo, hi..."

"If this is about what we talked about, it's not really the time." he interrupts me.

"Are you busy?" I hate this.

"Yes, I am." a little part of me regrets not sleeping with him now.

Is this how he treats everyone who rejects him.

"Mvelo *Sengwayo Logistics* is losing money, Muzi is losing his mind. I don't know what to do. And he told me he had it under control, but he doesn't."

"Everything is under control Nambitha, you don't need to worry your pretty little head about anything. All you need to do is just support your husband. Oh and my wife is still waiting for those invites." this one really doesn't take me for shit.

"How can I believe you when Muzi is putting limits on my daily spending?" he chuckles.

"That should be the least of your worries." what does he mean by that?

"What do you mean by that?" I choke out.

He just laughs.

"Bye Nambitha, don't forget those invites." bloody stupid man!

LACED

He hangs up on me. Now I'm starting to wonder if involving him in any of this was a good idea in the first place.

• • •

He's back and he's not speaking to me. He's walking all around the house with his nose up, he looks grumpy and he's slamming things all around. I also haven't said a word to him. I don't want to end up on his wrong side too.

My phone rings, people love me today. It's an unknown number. I don't like answering numbers I don't know, but I take the chance.

"Hey Mrs Zungu, it's Chrissy." I could just hear from the voice that it was her.

And why does she keep referring to me as Mrs Zungu, it's so weird.

"Please call me Nambitha. How are you?" I ask.

"I'm great! I was calling to thank you for the invites, it promises to be an amazing event indeed, and my husband and I will surely be there." it's not like I wanted to invite you.

But anyways...

"You are welcome, I'll be expecting you." I buy face.

"Hey, I know you are busy and it's probably stupid of me to ask you this a few days before your event, but I'd like to take you out before the event. I'm just hoping you have time." I have all the time in the world.

I think maybe I'll start going crazy on Friday when the event is drawing closer, but for now, my planner has everything under control.

But do I really want to go out with Mrs Bushy eyebrows? I don't know.

"Were you thinking of coming down early?" I ask her.

"Yes, tomorrow in fact. I was just waiting for you to send the invites before I could ask, I didn't want to be forward. I feel like you and I could be good friends." she is super forward.

LACED

“I don’t mind, we can go out, but it has to be before Friday.” today is Tuesday.

“That leaves Thursday then. I’ll see you then!” she sounds excited.

I haven’t had a friend since Amile. I don’t really consider her my friend anymore because I don’t even have her contact number, and she’s too caught up in royal affairs to be worried about silly friendships. I saw they are building roads in Zululand with her husband, it’s been overdue, and I’m so proud of them. That leaves no room for me.

I’ve been okay without friends. Money has been my only friend, and so far, money has been kind to me.

“Come to my bedroom.” I turn around.

He’s standing behind me topless. He’s only wearing baggy basketball shorts and he’s barefoot. I take a second to look at his body.

He has changed so much, the abs he used to have are gone. He doesn’t go to the gym as often as he used to, and he doesn’t take care of himself like he did when I first met him. At least then he would drink his alcohol and do his drugs while still going to the gym to keep in shape. Now it’s as if he eats, drinks, sniffs and repeats. I can see the repercussions on his stomach. He has a little potbelly.

“Why are you ordering me around?”

“Just come to the room.” he says and turns around to leave.

Muzi thinks I’m his plaything.

I stand up anyway, and discard the blanket on the bed. I make my way out my room and walk down the hallway to his bedroom. When I get there the door is slightly open, and I can hear hard rock music playing on the speaker, but it’s so soft you can barely hear it.

Hard rock? He only listens to hard rock when...

“Come inside and lock the door.” he instructs me.

I’m in deep shit.

I do as told, although my hands are trembling. I don’t scare easily, I never allow myself to, but I will never forget the last time we did this.

LACED

He told me about it, his crazy little fiend, and I was down to try. I wanted to try because I wanted to seem cool, explore all the colours of sexual pleasure.

And oh boy did we do just that. I needed two days to recover from it. I was battered and bruised for days, I couldn't take a step without feeling vibrations all over my body. The true definition of breaking back.

It was amazing in the moment, but the aftermath was hell. He felt so bad for me he promised never to do it with me again. And he never did.

But here he is...locking me in his bedroom, his red lights are on and he has all kinds of weapons laid on the table.

"Muzi..." I look into his eyes.

He smiles deviously before he takes a few steps back, and reaches for something on the table. He's holding a joint.

"Let's play with a little fire." he doesn't look all sexy with his eye almost closed shut.

"Muzi my launch is on Sunday."

"Nothing a little make-up can't fix right." he lights his joint.

The smell of weed fills the whole room immediately. I'm not complaining though, it's way better than the smell of cigarettes, those just bring me trauma.

"I'm being serious, I can't." he ignores me.

"Give me your hands." I put them out, hesitantly so.

He takes them, and turns me around, tying them behind my back. I can feel his crotch on my bum, and the heat of the joint in his mouth is burning my neck. He's wrapping something wet around my wrists, and he puffs out a cloud of smoke in my face. I'm trying to stop myself from choking.

"Give me words." he whispers.

"Dragons...stop."

"Mmmh..." he kisses my neck.

"Fairies...don't stop." he chuckles and makes me turn around.

LACED

I'm still trying to understand why the thing on my wrists is wet. He takes another pull of his joint before he brings it to my lips. I take one pull, and it fills up my lungs immediately. I cough.

He takes it away from my lips and brings it to the seam of my dress. It catches the little flame and it starts to travel. I'm trying not to panic but there is fire on my body.

He's looking at me seductively, my dress is burning and his eyes are glued to mine.

"Muzi I'm scared, put it out." I whisper.

I can feel the heat, and I'm panicking even further. He uses his hands to put out the little flame, putting his palm on the seam. He proceeds to rip the material down the middle, leaving me exposed. The lust in his eyes screams danger, we are really playing with fire.

He draws nearer and licks my lips before he starts to bite my bottom lips. I want to grab him so badly but my hands are restricted, he's teasing my lips with his soft warm lips. I want to kiss him properly, I also use my teeth to bite his so I can grip onto his lips.

He chuckles and spans my ass so hard I can feel the burning sensation.

"I like you." he whispers before he actually gives me a real kiss.

I'm squirming, I want to touch him. He's gently rubbing my ass and it's starting to arouse me. He pulls me towards the bed, without breaking the kiss and when we stand in front of it, he pushes me to sit down.

"Lie on your back." he instructs.

I do as told, and close my eyes. He's shuffling about the room, I don't want to look at him.

I can feel his presence in front of me again. He places his hands on my thighs and he kneels.

"Daddy has to take his medicine first..." he's talking to himself.

He's doing coke. He's putting it on my body, he's making his lines on my stomach. I'm super ticklish so I can't help but squirm and giggle when he touches my stomach.

"Dragon! You are tickling me." he holding my hips.

LACED

“I’m almost done.” he continues doing the ticklish thing.

I almost pee on myself from holding myself, but he starts sniffing and the tickling stops. He does three lines before he licks the rest of the snow off my stomach. When I look at him, he looks like a happy man.

It doesn’t take much to make Muzi happy.

He starts to slide my panties off. He then proceeds to turn me to my side and unties the wet cloth on my wrists and frees my hands.

“Shift up to the head of the bed.” he tells me.

I do just that. He turns and takes something from his little table of seduction. When he comes back to me, he is carrying nipple clamps, which he gently places on my nipples, causing me to squirm.

My hands are free so it gives me the ability to start playing with myself. He loves it when I do that, it turns him on with zero effort. I moan softly as I start to massage my clit. He is just standing there looking at me in awe.

“Don’t just stand there, come have me.” I call him.

He takes off his shorts, and climbs onto the bed.

“I want to tie you up and spank you. I want to fuck you so senselessly that you will learn to listen to what I say.” he says, his voice sounding gruff.

I don’t remember doing anything to anger him, but he clearly isn’t happy with me. He ties my hand on the bed post, and leaves me with just one hand. He proceeds to spread my legs open, and makes me lift my knees to my chest.

“If I remove the limit from your card, do you promise to learn to spend wisely?” oh this is what it’s about.

The fact that I was bitching about the limit. Obviously I don’t like being limited to how much I spend.

“I can’t promise that.” I’m being realistic with the man.

He starts playing with my nub. He’s rubbing it gently, and it feels nice, it’s different.

“Then the limit stays.” he grunts.

LACED

I knew it was too good to be true, I can never enjoy the slow and gentle. I use my free hand to hold his and direct him in the way I want to be touched. He lifts his eyes and locks them with mine and begins to grin at me, casually biting his bottom lip.

“You are so beautiful.” he compliments.

I can’t help but blush. He removes my hand from my nub and starts rubbing faster, quickly getting me aroused.

“Is that better?” I just offer him a nod.

I can feel my toes starting to curl, and he can see it too so he stops and replaces his fingers with his dick.

I’m already wet and I want him to stop teasing me already. I pull him with my free hand, gripping on his butt cheek and probing him to enter.

“Patience my dear.” he teases my opening.

I can’t stop squirming, I want him inside of me already.

“Stop knocking and come in.” he laughs.

He only slides the tip in, and I can feel him grunting.

“Deeper honey.” I probe.

I open my legs wider to give him more access. He smiles mischievously and he starts to slide deeper into my core. Oh this feeling, I don’t think I could ever replace it with anything.

I start to match his rhythm when he starts moving inside of me. I don’t know whether to grab onto the sheets or sink my nails into his skin. I always feel so close and connected to him when I touch him. One hand isn’t enough, this is exactly what he wants.

“It’s so hot in here.” he grunts while biting my neck.

He means inside of me, he’s losing himself, and we haven’t even started playing with fire.

When I start clenching my walls around his dick, securing him in place with my thighs, he overpowers me.

“You are a sly vixen you.” he says and starts to twist my nipples.

LACED

“Fuck you Muzi!” I scream, both at the pleasure and pain.

“You already are!” he kisses me, his hand clenched around my neck.

I feel him pull out just as I am about to cum. Oh it’s going to be a long night!

CHAPTER TWELVE

Nambitha Zungu

I hate last minute problems that spring out of nowhere, especially now that I'm running low on cash and have to 'spend wisely.' I absolutely hate this life.

A pipe burst at the spot, and somehow I'm glad it happened before the launch because that would have been absolutely embarrassing. I woke up and rushed there immediately after I got the call, I didn't even get a chance to actually shower.

I had to wait for the plumber to finish the job so I could lock up. The place is a mess now, especially my office. His boys tried to help me clean up but there was only so much that I could do. The wall paint is also ruined from the pressure, and now I have to repaint it. These are the kinds of problems I don't need.

I'm sitting in one of the chairs waiting for them to finish up. My phone rings, it's Muzi.

"Is everything okay?" I've been holding back these tears since I arrived here.

"No, it's not." my voice cracks.

"Okay, don't cry, how bad are the damages?" he asks.

As if he's going to give me the money to fix it.

"My office furniture is ruined, so is the paint. I also still have to pay these people fixing it. How am I going to do that with your stupid limit." he sighs.

"Calm down Nams. Just pay the guys, we will sort out the furniture after the launch right, no one goes into your office, it's just you." if the company wasn't losing money I wouldn't be stressed about this so much.

In fact, new furniture would be on the way as we speak, but nooo, Muzi just had to put us in debt.

"Are you at work?" I ask him.

"Yes, I am, I might be back late today." he adds.

I really don't care.

LACED

“Don’t forget to pick up your suit today at lunch please. Yours and tata’s.”
I can hear him fidgeting.

“I’ll get Zama to get them. Bye Nams.” he says and hangs up.

I’m having the worst morning ever!

My phone is ringing again, and I get irritated thinking it’s Muzi but nope.

I remember how I made a silly promise, she really doesn’t forget.

“Hi Nams.” so now everyone is calling me Nams.

“Hi Chrissy.” I hope she can hear that I’m drained.

“I hope you are good, I just wanted to remind you of our plans today, I also was thinking maybe you can take me shopping for an outfit for the launch.”
what’s the point of getting excited over retail therapy when I’m broke as fuck!?

And I expected all my guests to wear custom made, what is this buying business.

“What time were you looking at because I’m still held up and I don’t know how long I’ll take.” she sighs.

“Maybe in the next two hours, but if you can’t, I understand.” she suddenly sounds disappointed.

She’s making feel like a terrible person. Now I’m obliged to go out with her.

“Meet me at my place, I’m hoping I’ll be done by then so we can drive together.” I humour her.

“Alright, that’s great! See you then.” I know I don’t know her like that, but everything about her screams desperate for friendship.

She picked the wrong one shame.

● ● ●

LACED

I'm done doing my face and girly is still not here. Immaculate picked out a cute outdoor outfit for me that I've never worn before. She said she's been waiting for me to wear it. Talk about having a personal stylist.

"Ma'am there is someone at the gate." I'm guessing that is Mrs Mfusi.

We really flex with these surnames. I can't believe I'm going to hang out with a Mfusi wife.

Nothing about her screams Mfusi wife though, maybe today she will put in a little more effort than she did the last time.

"Please open, it's Mrs Mfusi." she smiles, I'm guessing they know each other.

Or maybe she thinks I'm talking about Zuzile.

I pack up my handbag and also start making my way downstairs. And there she is, wearing a satin skirt and a crop shirt with no sleeves. She got her hair braided so she looks much cuter now. She put in just a little effort, but to no surprise, her eyebrows are still bushy as ever.

"Ooh girl look at you." she compliments me.

Obviously I always dress to impress and stand out.

"Thank you." she pulls me in for a hug, and I don't contest.

She's so comfortable around me. It's as if she's known me for ages. Me on the other hand, not so much.

"Are you ready to go?" she asks.

"Yeah let's go."

We are taking my car, it's bigger and spacious. We settle inside and as soon as I turn it on, there's a beeping sound.

"What is that?" I ask her.

My car has never ever made that sound.

"Petrol..." she whispers.

LACED

Petrol? My car never runs low of petrol. Muzi always fills all the cars in the yard up every Monday, maybe it slipped his mind, we were too occupied with the plans for the dinner.

“I’ve never even seen this before, I never thought it happened.” she just laughs.

“Oh yeah it does, Mvelo forgets to fill the car up all the time, I always do it myself.” well my husband doesn’t.

“Muzi never forgets, maybe he’s just been too stressed, we will go fill up.” I say searching for the petrol card.

There it is! Now we can be on the way.

“I still can’t believe you got Muzi to settle down.” she says fixing her shades.

I’m sure this has been burning her, she wants the tea.

“When you love someone, you do anything for them. He couldn’t stand to lose me, and he had to stop his shit to keep me. That’s how we ended up here.” she’s smiling.

“That is true though, Mvelo was just like him...not with the girls and stuff, but he was very much emotionally unavailable, and it took him a while to actually open up to me. They are good men, both of them, they make mistakes but they are good people.” yeah sure.

Ones a drug addict and the other is a serial cheater.

We arrive at the garage, and I ask for a full tank.

It’s so cute how much faith Chrissy has in her husband, the same man who told me in bold he thinks I’m sexy and he wants to bed me. Muzi also told me some of their dirty secrets the other day, how they almost got divorced three months after they got married because he cheated and gave her an STD. And she continues to trust that man?

“Ma’am it’s not working.” the petrol attendant says giving me the petrol card.

“Try again.” there is no way it’s not working, it always works.

“I’ve tried three times ma’am.” this is embarrassing me in front of Chrissy.

LACED

I pull out my credit card, praying and hoping it doesn't decline.

"Insufficient funds." he says hopelessly passing the card back to me.

This is so embarrassing, how could this happen to me.

"I've got it, don't worry." Chrissy pulls out her own card and taps it.

I didn't even get a chance to contest.

"I don't even..." I try to explain as soon as we leave the garage.

"It's okay love, we all have bad months." the moment I see Muzi, I'm throwing hands.

I don't think I will ever recover from this embarrassment.

...

I'm alone at the table, Chrissy excused herself to go freshen up at the toilet.

This is my opportunity to call Muzi and tell him where to get off. How dare he subject me to such embarrassment. I was so ready to go off at him but the call gets answered by Zama instead.

"Where is your boss?" I'm fuming mad.

Today hasn't been my day, it really hasn't.

"He's in his office." she says, sounding a little scared.

"Doing what? Put him on the line Zama, I don't want to talk to you, I want to talk to him." she keeps quiet.

I don't like quiet, especially when I'm angry.

"Zama!" she startles.

"Okay, he's with someone in his office, there's this lady he's with." fuck Muzi!

LACED

Always busy thinking about fucking at a crucial time like this.

“He’s a bitch, tell him that.” she chuckles.

“I don’t want to lose my job, but you can tell him that.”

“Alright then, I guess I’ll call him later.”

“When am I seeing you again?” she lowers her voice seductively.

That alone gets me feeling something. Thoughts of our night always linger in my mind.

“After the launch, I promise.” I tell her.

I can see Chrissy approaching.

“I want you to sit on my face again.” damn!

That was honestly the best experience ever. I’m sure I’m turning red, I don’t want Chrissy to start having suspicions.

“Bye Zama.” I say and quickly hang up.

“I hope you weren’t giving Muzi hell about what happened earlier.” she says sitting down.

I wanted to, but idiot is probably buried balls deep in some nasty coochie.

“No, I was talking to a friend.” I tell her.

We proceed to order lunch and get our drinks. Chrissy is a talkative girl, but you only see that once you spend time with her, and she gets comfortable with you.

“Have you ever considered becoming a stylist, you are so good with clothes and styles.” yes I picked out an amazing outfit for her for the launch.

One that compliments her flat ass.

“No, not really. I don’t think of it as a career.”

“But many people need stylists, people like me who can’t dress to save their lives.” I laugh because it’s true.

She doesn’t know what to pick that compliments her body shape.

LACED

“Nah I’m okay in the make-up and beauty industry, it’s what I like and what I’m good at too.”

“So if you liked make-up, how did you end up at Mthiyane Construction?” I forget that she’s an interior designer.

“I did well in Engineering and Graphical design in school, so I thought why not take interior as a career, but I continued to push my make-up hustle as much as I could. Well that was until I couldn’t. I actually forgot about my love for make-up, but I found my passion for it when I started living with Muzi. He would force me to glam myself up when we would go out.” she’s smiling like a Cheshire cat, she’s really intrigued.

“I’m glad you are doing what you love. And your business idea, it’s amazing!” yeah I’m a genius I’ve been told.

“Thank you. And what do you do since you moved to Joburg?” she giggles.

“Currently, I’m sitting at home just raising my daughters, Mvelo is the one that works.” oh she’s a housewife.

I thought she worked, for the longest time. Now I’m really judging her, she has no excuse not to take care of herself.

“I’m a qualified Interior designer though, I think I worked at Mthiyane Construction for a year and a half before we uprooted to Johannesburg. Hubby is manning the new offices there and we agreed that I would stay at home for the time being and focus on being a mom.” she’s so smitten for her man, it’s cute.

Sad, but very cute.

“Are you and Muzi planning on having any kids?” she’s really coming on strong.

I hate kids, nothing will ever change my mind. But you can never tell that to a mother.

“No, we both agreed on that.” he has his vasectomy, I have my tubes tied.

That’s one thing we both agreed on. When I met him he had already gotten a vasectomy, man really wasn’t planning on settling down, and when we started fucking, we had a serious conversation about how he doesn’t want any mistakes because he will tell me to abort if it happens. So we went for double protection, sometimes vasectomies don’t work.

LACED

We've been fucking for two and a half years, with no pregnancy scares to date, it's such a stress free life.

"Aw why? Kids are amazing, and you two combined, with those looks, could make the cutest babies." I just laugh.

"Yeah no, we don't sail in that direction."

"I get you though. At one stage Mvelo and I were also against having kids, but everyone around us was just having children and we became so broody we made our own." cute but no.

Never! Hard pass!

Nkululeko's children traumatized me to no return. I don't even dream of those little devils in my nightmares. Children make women so bitter, they take away so much from one, I cant possibly put myself under that.

"That's sad man, my kids won't have any more siblings, Andile also doesn't want to have children." they wouldn't be siblings either way, Muzi's children would be their uncle or aunt.

Our food arrives and she immediately starts to dig in, she's really hungry.

"Ma tells me you didn't invite her." is she talking about my mother?

How the hell does she know my mother?

"No, I mean my mother-in-law, Muzi's older sister." oh shit.

I don't have her number, I mean she isn't just anyone, she's thee Zuzile Mfusi, I didn't think she'd want to attend such a small event.

"Getting Zuzile Mfusi to attend my event would be a dream, but I don't know her like that, and why would she want to attend such a small event?" she just laughs.

"She loves her family, and does everything to support them. You are her sister-in-law now, so you should have invited her. She was actually devastated, even at the fact that Muzi didn't tell her that he was married, but Aunt Lihle knew." haha she calls Lihle 'Aunt'!

I know she's significantly older than me but I don't dream of ever calling her Aunt, she's my drinking buddy, the real sister-in-law I know.

LACED

“I don’t mind having her there, it would be an honour. Please extend the invite to her.” I don’t whether to feel excited that Zuzile wants to attend my event, or feel like an ass because I didn’t invite her.

“I will, and I will give her your number so you can speak to her.” I feel like screaming.

I’m trying not to fan girl, but damn, imagine meeting thee Mrs Mfusi!

Something steals my attention...more like someone.

“Who are you looking at?” Chrissy asks.

Now I know him from anything, he is the first man that I ever loved, I know him in every state, shape and form. The body structure, although he’s wearing gray sweats, with a hoodie covering his whole face, I couldn’t miss Nkululeko, I know him.

“OMG are you okay?” she’s standing up.

My chest is closing in on me, I’m losing my will to breathe...I...

“It’s...uyena.” she looks back at the man.

He’s standing by the door, talking to the waiter. I can’t see his face, but that structure.

“Is he...” I just nod before she can finish her sentence.

“Must I call Muzi?” she’s rubbing my back.

I don’t want to draw attention to myself so I take in a few deep breaths. He’s walking inside the restaurant, he’s getting a table, although it’s far away from where we are, he’s still here, I know it’s him!

“I want to go home, I don’t feel safe.” I tell Christine.

She immediately stands up, and as we do, our waiter comes rushing to our table.

“Is everything okay?” he asks.

“No, you have just let in a dangerous man and my friend is uncomfortable with his presence.” she scolds the waiter as if it was his fault.

Okay maybe we can be besties. The waiter is stuttering.

LACED

“Dangerous, ma’am...”

“That man over there wearing those gray sweats, he’s a criminal and we can’t and we won’t be served in the same place as a criminal.” she’s going on a rant.

“Ma’am please, I can call my manager...”

“No, we are leaving.” Chrissy grabs my hand.

We didn’t even pay for the food we had started eating, the waiter is so scared he looks like he’s about to piss himself.

We couldn’t have made it out of that place any quicker. As soon as we get in the car, it is as if a tap of tears gets opened, and Chrissy can only comfort me.

“I know how it feels, seeing him for the first time, especially after you parted in such a horrible way. I’m so sorry love.” she rubs my back.

That could have been anyone honestly, but I have this gnawing feeling that it was Nkululeko, I felt it in my spirit. How could he have found me, I thought I had done a good job hiding from him.

It’s probably the same way he found me when he almost killed me. Maybe it’s him who’s stalking me, sending me these weird messages...

RUN!

I REMEMBER!

I remember what happened that day! Fuck it’s him! He’s stalking me, he found me!

“Okay I’m calling Muzi.” Muzi can’t help me in this situation.

“No, no don’t call him.” I protest.

“You are having a panic attack Nambitha.” okay maybe I am but shit I don’t need a man next to me right now.

I need to know for sure where he is. I need to know if he’s alive wherever he is.

I need my phone, I need to call Amile.

“What are you looking for?” she’s also scrambling.

LACED

“My phone.” I’m shaking and crying.

She helps me look in my purse and quickly hands it to me.

I’m quickly crossing my fingers that Amile hasn’t changed her number, the only number after my parents that I had memorized, I still remember it.

It’s ringing!

“Hello.” she answers.

There is so much noise in the background.

“Amile...it’s...”

“Nambitha? Nsuke stop making a noise!” she can still recognize my voice.

I forgot she’s a mom.

“Yes it’s me.”

“What’s wrong, you are crying, are you okay?” we haven’t spoken in years and when we finally do, I’m a crying mess, she’s probably shocked.

“What happened to Nkululeko?” I ask over the tears.

“Nkululeko? Jama, I don’t know, baba never told me. Is he back?” I’m shaking.

I can’t put the words together so I just break down, Chrissy takes the phone from me. I can’t even think straight...

It’s him...

LACED

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Nambitha Zungu

“Thank you for bringing her home safely.” he’s brushing my head and kissing my forehead gently.

“I know a very good psychologist that she can attend, she needs to deal with this.” it’s a pity I’m heavily sedated, I can’t even speak because I would tell them where to get off.

She gave me these strong pills, I feel heavy, I can’t even move, but thing is, I can’t seem to fall asleep.

“I’ll talk to her about it when she’s okay. I know she won’t appreciate it if I go behind her back.” he knows me too well.

They continue to discuss me as Muzi walks her out. They would have made an amazing couple had they been together. She’s short, just the perfect height for him. Unlike me, I’m a tall girl, and I like my heels. When I stand next to Muzi, I can look him dead in the eyes.

I have a little more movement power when he waltz back into the room. He has a spring in his step, and he looks happy. I know I’m drowsy but I’m not an idiot. He’s head over heels for this girl.

He comes to sit next to me on the bed and rubs my head.

“How are you feeling now?” I raise my thumb to show him.

I’m extremely calm, so calm its impossible to panic.

“What happened?” he can’t ask me such a vague question when he knows I can’t speak.

“Jama, he was there...I saw hi...” it’s as if my voice is gone.

“I thought the police shot him. Bastard survived. I’m sorry you had to see him. I think for the next two days you just need to stay at home and take it easy.” I have so many things I need to tell him.

Firstly I need to bite his head off for what happened to me in the morning, that was absolutely embarrassing. Secondly, he’s fucking other women in his office during the time where he is supposed to be working towards getting our

LACED

riches back, and most importantly, I remember what happened that day I passed out.

“Get some rest, I’ll tell Immaculate to make you food and you will eat when you wake up.” he kissed my forehead again.

Let me try to get some sleep.

*

Hey! I can walk again. This feels amazing. I make my way down the stairs to the kitchen, my stomach is so empty. I waited and waited for him to bring the so called food that would be made for me.

He’s in the kitchen, shirtless. His back is facing away from me. His chocolate skin is glistening, it’s as if he used oil to moisturize it.

“Baby.” I go and hug him from behind.

He smells amazing, the smell of nicotine. He turns around and cups my cheeks.

“I was about to bring your food.” I look up into his eyes and smile at him.

He smiles back, graciously so, with his pearly white teeth, I love him so much, I really do.

He leans in and captures my lips in a soft gentle kiss, it feels like I’m floating on a cloud. He’s so gentle, he’s taking his time with me, even the taste of nicotine on his lips is not bothering.

He pushes me against the counter and lightly caresses my thigh with his rugged hands. He proceeds to lift me up onto the counter and his hands play around my inner thigh. My hands are dancing on his back, caressing his soft skin.

His hands start fondling with my clit, and I begin to fall apart under his touch. He’s being gentle, exploring the crevices of my body like he has never done before.

“Give it to me Nkululeko.” I moan in his mouth.

He parts my thighs, and he finds a comfortable position before he positions himself to enter my sacred place.

My nails dig into his skin as he gradually begins to fill me up.

LACED

“Mmmmh...” it feels like home, it feels right.

*

“Nams, wake up.” he’s kissing my face.

His lips are so soft. I flutter my eyes and I almost jump out of my skin when my eyes meet with a light skinned bruised face instead of the dark skinned one I was making out with in my dream.

“What’s wrong?” I sit right up.

He’s dressed for work. How long was I asleep?

“What time is it?” confusion is dressing my face.

My mind is at war.

“6am. You didn’t wake up last night and I let you because you were heavily sedated.” okay but how did I fucking dream of my abuser making love to me?

And I was enjoying it! That’s the worst part. Nothing makes sense to me, it doesn’t. I can’t get it out of my head, it’s dominating my thoughts, I can still feel his hands on my skin, how he was holding me, the burn of his skin on mine.

“Muzi kiss me.” I probe.

He looks confused.

“Touch me, kiss me.” I grab his hand on put it where Nkululeko had his, where I can still feel the burn.

It doesn’t feel the same, his is cold. He brings his lips closer to mine and he starts to kiss me, but in a hurried manner. It’s a struggle to get his tongue down my throat, it doesn’t feel as special as it did in my dream.

But I’ve awoken a beast, and he’s pushing me back on the bed, he wants more.

● ● ●

LACED

I haven't felt this shitty about having sex since I last slept with Nkululeko, and now that I fuck him in my dreams, and proceed to wash away those thoughts with the real sex, the sex I enjoy, I begin to hate it even more.

Muzi didn't do anything wrong, he gave it to me the way I like it, rough, hard and fast, but for the very first time, I hated it with my heart and soul. I don't know how many times I stopped myself from telling him to stop, from trying to push him off me, and strangle him to death.

I'm broken.

I'm alone in the house so I go and make myself some breakfast. This is exactly the spot where he...I felt him inside of me.

My phone is ringing on the counter. It's Amile calling me, how convenient.

"Hi chomie." she sounds all chirpy.

"Hello Ndlunkulu." she laughs.

I'm shocked she still considers me her 'Chomie'.

"I'm calling to check up on you? Did you sleep well?" I definitely slept well.

So well I had an illusion of Nkululeko being the best sex I have ever had. I definitely was dreaming.

"I did. Chrissy gave me these anxiety pills and they knocked me right out." she already sounds so preoccupied.

She's walking around and fidgeting. You would swear I was the one that picked up the phone and disturbed her from her busy life.

"Mh, okay great..." I get why we aren't friends anymore.

"I actually wanted to tell you that I asked baba where Jama went and what happened to him." do I really want to know?

"He didn't want to tell me for the longest time, even yesterday he was a little hesitant but I told them what happened yesterday so he was forced to spit it out. So from what he knows, he had him arrested for about a month or so, and he had him released on the condition that he would leave Zululand and get therapy for the sake of his kids. Baba then called his little sister and she said that he's living in Johannesburg with Azande." that rules out any possibility of it being him.

LACED

The man I saw at the restaurant, it couldn't have been him. Maybe I was being paranoid.

"I made him get a private investigator to make sure he is in Johannesburg, maybe Sibongile was lying and covering up for him." I don't even know Sibongile.

She's his younger sister, we were round about the same age as he said. She lived with their grandmother in some township in Durban after their grandmother died. I never saw any of her pictures, or ever heard him speaking to her. He hardly ever talked about her, which was also just weird to me.

"I appreciate that, thank you so much, and thank Bayede for me."

"I'll do just that chomie. Look I have to go, Nsuke is making a mess here. Bye." she says enthusiastically. She has too much energy.

Well damn, I don't know how I feel about this. Do I really want to know where he is? I'm very emotional in this very time, nothing is stopping me from going to wherever he is to get the answers I want.

I'd want to get the answers for the questions I have, why he treated me like shit? Why he didn't love me the way I needed to be loved? I want to see if he's a changed man and realizes his mistakes. These thoughts have never crossed my mind. I never thought there would come a time where I see him. I never thought I would want to know how he is.

All those emotions are taking over me, and if I know where he is, I know I will never be okay until I know the answers.

I thank her and drop the call. I continue making breakfast as to distract me from the burning questions in my mind.

Just as I am finishing up in the kitchen, there is a loud hoot at my gate. It's so freaking early in the morning. Whoever it is that is at the gate, is extremely disrespectful and uneducated about suburb etiquette

I'm storming out the house to open the gate and possibly tell off the person who is disturbing our peace.

It's tata's car. Well, it's their car, they share it. Confusion dresses my face as I watch the car drive up my driveway and I see my mother chilling in the front seat with big cockroach shades and a beach hat.

LACED

Dad is the first to come out the car and he goes to open the door for his wife. She looks holiday ready with her small street sandals and KwaDunusa sarong. she's strutting towards me, attitude on her face, handbag on her arm.

Daddy quickly follows behind her and he comes to stand next to her.

"Hi Namnam." he gives me a tight hug, I don't hug him back.

I'm confused.

"Daddy, what are you doing here?" I don't even want acknowledge miss attitude staring at me.

"You and your husband offered us a place for the weekend." huh?

Me and my who? Why would I agree to both my parents coming to stay with us for a whole weekend, more specifically the weekend before my big launch. I don't need them stressing me, especially my mother, not her.

"And since you didn't invite me to your launch, why not go on a vacation, on the sandy beaches of Margate." but it's winter.

"I didn't agree to any of this, Muzi didn't tell me anything. I haven't prepared a room." and if she really was on vacation, she would have booked herself accommodation.

Oh I'm going to kill Muzi.

"It's okay, we are not here to sleep now, you have the whole day. Jabulani bring the bags." she's making her way past me.

I look at my father.

"She insisted because she wasn't invited, and I thought you knew." he looks guilty.

"You could have called and asked me tata!" I'm so frustrated.

But that woman is in my house without me, so I leave him there and head back into the house.

She's already scrutinizing everything, scanning the area.

"Why is this place so messy." she's standing in the middle of my kitchen, where I just made breakfast.

LACED

Obviously I haven't cleaned up, but that's not good enough for Mrs Makhathini.

"You are living like pigs, I didn't raise you like this." she takes off her cockroach shades.

I like to keep quiet when she does this, because I can never openly disrespect her like I did before, otherwise she will cause a scene and be dramatic. This is specifically why I didn't want her there.

I silently go to take my food and put it in the microwave, clearly I won't be eating any time soon.

I knew Muzi having my parents' number was a terrible idea.

Dad comes in carrying their luggage, they clearly look like they are here to stay.

"Are we sleeping downstairs?" the lady asks.

"Yes." I answer involuntarily.

I DON'T WANT THEM HERE!

Dad knows his way around so he goes to the room. As soon as he disappears, she corners me.

"I raise you and this is thanks I get? A plate of shit?" she rumbles through gritted teeth.

"Ma you are toxic, I gave you so many chances but you just gave me even more reason to cut you off. These are consequences for your actions." I spit.

She holds her chest, pretending to be shocked.

"Well that's what happens when you disrespect your parent, they become toxic to you the same way you were toxic to them."

"You are the one standing in my kitchen, inside my house, I don't want you here, but you keep forcing yourself into my life. If you don't like me the way you say you don't, you wouldn't keep trying to squeeze yourself into my life." she irritates me so much.

Firstly she couldn't apologize for the way she treated me, now she acts entitled to everything I have just because she's my mother? It really doesn't work like that.

LACED

“Okay owner of this house, we want to go swimming, call us when breakfast is ready. Hopefully the kitchen will be less filthy.” she says and struts away in the direction dad went.

Uggggh!

Muzi better have a good explanation for this.

“Hi Nams...”

“You better have a very good reason as to why my fucking parents, including my monstrous mother whom you know I cannot stand, are in my house as we speak with big suitcases, claiming that YOU told them they can stay. You better have a fire explanation for that Muzikayise Zungu.” I’m fuming.

I’m bursting at the seams with rage.

“I thought you’d want them around since you weren’t feeling well and your launch is in two days. Who better than your parents to celebrate you?”

“Firstly, we are having serious financial crisis, because of you, and you decided to bring the one person you know will rejoice at my expense. I don’t understand Muzi, I really don’t.” he sighs.

“I thought I was doing something nice for you.”

“Well your something nice has brought about extra misery and stress in my life. You better come home and sort your shit out.”

I hang up. Fuuuuuck!

● ● ●

“Calm down. Maybe she will tone it down.” no way he’s the one telling me to calm down.

“She won’t tone it down, especially because I didn’t invite her to Sunday’s launch.” every chance she gets, she will remind me, without a doubt.

“That’s your fault, I told you not to do it.”

LACED

“And you were the one that brought them here! I will never forgive you for this.” I scold him.

“It’s only two days and then they are gone.” two days too long.

I pick up the casserole dish and carry it to the dining table where they are sitting. I didn’t take out my fancy dishes, I have no one to show off too, this dinner is not special at all. I was forced to cook even though I was feeling tired as shit. Everything happening right now is against my will.

Muzi comes to join the table, he’s sitting at the head of the table like the owner of the house he is.

“I’m happy to have you here, you are my in laws and it’s not a good thing that you haven’t visited our house properly.” traitor, idiot.

If I could strangle him, I would.

“It’s really not a good thing. At least one of you is level headed.” my mother says.

So I’m not level headed. Wow.

“You guys can dish up.” I don’t even feel like joining them.

“Come sit next to me Nams.” he says patting the chair next to his.

I really don’t want to, but I see tata begging me with his eyes.

This seems planned. I take the seat anyway, and Muzi, ever so sweet, dishes up for me.

“Who said I want to eat?” I ask him.

“Is that how you address your husband?” the chirpy marriage expert chimes in.

I’m tired of biting my tongue today. I’m absolutely fed up. Muzi puts the plate down.

“You are a rude little brat. He’s not even supposed to be doing this, it should be the other way around.” she continues.

“It’s okay Ma, I don’t mind doing it for her.” Muzi defends.

LACED

She shakes her head in disapproval. I hope Muzi can see the shit he has put us in.

“Mawabo I think it’s time I address this back and forth between the two of you. The way you speak to your daughter is vile, that’s not how a parent addresses their child. In order for your child to respect you, you have to respect them back. Nambitha has been nothing but respectful towards you...” mom cuts him off before he finishes.

“Lo!? Respectful? Does she even know the meaning of that word?”

“We are not fighting. This child is suffering and all you care about is giving her a hard time. Yes she defied you, and made a mistake as a child, but why can’t you just forgive her, she was young.” this is why I didn’t want to sit with them.

Muzi’s hand is squeezing my thigh in reassurance, tears are welling in my eyes.

“Nothing you say will convince me that she’s a respectful child. Not after she just spoke to the man who provides for her in that tone. She goes on to call me toxic and says I didn’t do my job well as a parent, is that respectful?” she’s lying through her teeth.

“I never said that.” my voice is breaking.

“I won’t allow to be told how to parent by a barren child who only knows how to open her legs and spend money...” that’s it.

I stand up and leave the table. One of these days, I’m going to kill myself, I swear.

I hope Muzi is happy.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Nambitha Zungu

He grips onto my ass before he lifts me up to give me strokes from under. My fingernails are scratching his back as I rejoice at the pleasure and pain from his hard strokes.

I'm trying not to scream the whole house down because my parents are downstairs, but Muzi is giving it his all, and I thought this quickie was for me. A celebratory quickie for making it to today with talking back to my mother.

He sticks his finger in my mouth when I start shaking violently from that rippling orgasm he gives me. He rolls us over and goes on and on before he spills his cum inside me. It's not long before he flops to the side, panting like an animal.

Today is the day of my launch! Although things are going wrong in all aspects of my life, at least I get to dress up and attend an event.

"You know what would be crazy." he begins.

"What?" I humour him.

I know he's going to say something stupid, that's Muzi for you, especially when his mind is still in sex mode.

"Having a threesome." WHAT?

"Muzi I'm already a sinner, I might not be going to heaven, but I still have the possibility to and I don't want to mess it up." he laughs.

"Well I know I'm not going to heaven, and I might need some company in hell so why not take you with me, and continue having blustering sex." oh wow.

"Have you ever had a threesome before?" I ask him.

"Yes, two girls, best shit I've ever done. I want to do it again." I don't know how I feel about that.

"You can get a girl, someone you are comfortable with. As long as she's hot and she has nyash like you." he spans my ass.

"You are serious?" I was still waiting for him to say he's joking.

LACED

“Yes I’m serious Nams.”

“Muzi you love pussy too much.” he’s not even ashamed of it.

“And so far, yours is the best I’ve ever tasted, I never do seconds, but with you, damn girl.” oh wow.

“Should I be flattered by that?” I ask laughing. I’m trying not to blush.

“Yes, like I said, Muzi doesn’t do seconds.” that’s means I have something going for me.

“Get up then, and go run my errands for me, I’m going to have a busy day.” I say rolling to the other side.

Today is a big day, I don’t want to be thinking about my problems, whether it’s money or my parents, or even this whole Nkululeko issue. I just want to have fun, let loose and launch myself into the beauty industry with class and elegance.

Muzi is still lying on the bed naked as I’m rolling out. My phone is ringing so I ask him to pass it to me.

“I know this number.” he says as he passes it to me.

If it’s unsaved on my phone how does he know how to recognize it?

“Give me.” he hesitantly hands it over and I answer immediately.

“Hello.”

“Hello Nambitha, how are you sisi?” confusion.

“I’m good, who is this?” she chuckles a little.

“It’s Zuzile, Muzi’s sister...” my eyes grow wide like saucers as she explains herself.

Muzi is asking me who it is. I mouth ‘YOUR SISTER’ now we have the same look of shock.

“I got your number from Ntombiyelanga, she said you extended the invite to us.” Who the fuck is Ntombiyelanga?

“Yes, I did extend the invite.” I don’t even know what to say.

LACED

“I wanted to just say thank you, and congratulate you on your endeavour. Unfortunately my husband and I won’t be able to make it because it was a little last minute, but I sent a gift along.” she’s so poised, she’s such a lady.

“It’s okay, I understand, thank you so much for the gift. I would also like to apologize for not inviting you initially.”

“No worries my love. I’d like to meet you in the near future, Muzi has never said anything about you, I had to learn about you from the grapevine. But that’s in the past now.”

“Definitely, I’ll stay in touch and maybe we can go out for lunch.” I suggest.

I’m picking my words very carefully. I have so much pressure to be as perfect as she is. Muzi on the other hand is staring at me in anticipation.

“Perfect, ngizozwa ngawe. Bye for now, and have fun tonight.”

“Thank you so much. Bye.” I drop the call.

I can’t believe this!

“What did she want?” he asks, sitting on the edge with his penis dangling everywhere.

“Cover up Muzi man! Chrissy told me that she was disappointed that she wasn’t invited to the launch and I extended the invite to her, but she can’t make it because it was obviously last minute.” he pulls the sheet and covers himself up.

“Typical Zuzile.” he spits.

“What did she ever do to you?”

“I’m always compared to Zuzile “Zuzile this, Zuzile that,” why can’t I be myself?”

“So why do you hate her for that?”

“I don’t hate her, but just being around her, with her flaunting her perfect life, it bores me.”

“So it’s safe to say we are both the black sheep in our families.”

“Lastborns too.” would you look at that.

LACED

I don't think our families even realize just how much they scar us. That's why we are the fucked up human beings we are today.

• • •

I look like a complete angel. My designer outdid herself, the head piece, the detail on the dress, everything is perfect.

"I can't believe you didn't want to have a wedding, you snatched the opportunity to give you away from me." tata says admiring me.

Mom is quiet, she won't dish out any compliments because she's petty.

I ended up letting her come to the event, tata and Muzi begged me and I eventually gave in so they could get off my case.

"Thank you tata, you also look so dashing." I only offer my compliments to those that compliment me back.

"What are we waiting for now, let's go." she finally speaks.

She's so bitter.

"Let me call Muzi." he left here to cut his hair.

He's been gone hours now, and he needs to get dressed.

"Where are you, we are waiting for you." I snap.

I don't need anything to ruin my mood.

"I'm approaching now, wait for me outside." is he crazy?

"You haven't dressed up, your tux is here!"

"Why are you shouting?" he's doing this on purpose.

"Muzi please, not today please." already he's going to appear in pictures with bruises on his face because he decided to play Rambo.

He can't show up and shorts and flops, because last I checked, that's what he was wearing when he left.

LACED

“Phuma uze emnyango wena.” he drops the call.

I’m frustrated but I go outside anyways. I wait for about a minute and I hear a hoot down the road, it’s loud, someone is excited. It’s a convoy of cars, and the first one that appears is a Mercedes AMG GT 4 Door Coupe, the car I have been obsessed with for years unending. It’s the one going crazy on the hoot, and it’s driving into my yard.

I’m at a loss for words when I see the registration: *NamNam*.

Muzi is the one driving it, first he leans out the window and smiles at me. There are more cars piling up in the yard, and out comes Mvelo, and some other guys.

My heart is sitting in my throat. Muzi jumps out the car carrying a big bunch of flowers. I swear I’m going to kill him, that’s if he doesn’t kill me first.

“Muzi?” I don’t even know what to say.

He dangles the key in my face.

“How? Why?” he chuckles.

“I’m so proud of you my little gold digger, you really made it happen. I know I’ve fucked up a lot in the past and it has gotten us in shit, but my heart swells with pride when I see the woman you have become. It assures me that I did something right. It’s yours, you deserve it.” I have so many questions, but I’m sure they can wait.

This is huge, and since when is Muzi this mushy, kind man? I take the flowers and hug him tightly.

“Thank you.” I whisper to him.

I’m in a hard state of shock.

“You look majestic.” he compliments.

That’s not a word I thought existed in his vocabulary.

“Thank you.” he pulls out the hug.

All the people accompanying him are dressed smart, and he’s still in shorts.

“Sizwe will chauffeur you tonight. I’ll meet you guys there.” he says.

LACED

I had hope we would make our entrance together, but we are late and if we wait for him, I'll miss it.

There are three guys, one white, the other is Mvelo. I'm assuming the other guy is Sizwe. So this is who he invited, aside from Mvelo who was a late invite.

"So you are Mrs Zungu." the white man with the thick Afrikaans accent says taking my hand to kiss it.

"Sydney van Vyk, a friend. It's lovely to meet you." he introduces.

Muzi has never mentioned him. Sizwe also introduces himself and says he's going to be my driver and Sydney is driving my parents.

Mvelo is undressing me with his eyes, and I'm trying to ignore him but it's so difficult because he's so close to me. I thought he had moved passed that.

"I'll go call my parents." they are still inside, they didn't come out.

I'm trying to run away from Mvelo's piercing stare; it's burning my skin.

...

"WELCOME TO NAMNAM'S PAMPER SPOT!" I cut the ribbon and Nombuso opens the doors to the spot.

My future clients are here, all those instagram baddies and influencers were invited, as many as I could get. My suppliers, the staff and Muzi's friends and their spouses are here, his mom is here, so is Lihle and her fiance. What a beautiful event.

"I'm so proud of you skwiza, congratulations." Lihle comes to hug me.

I haven't seen her in a while.

"Thank you skwi." I'm so overwhelmed with emotions in this current moment.

Excited yes, but so overwhelmed. I also can't believe that it finally happened. Nombuso outdid herself. The decor looks amazing, it looks nothing like it does during the day. The equipment was moved to accommodate the guests.

LACED

There are also stations for the guests to get a taste of NamNam's Pamper Spot.

"You did it!" Chrissy sneaks up on my from behind.

She squeezes me in a tight hug.

"And you look absolutely gorgeous." that I know.

"Thank you babes, you too." she cleans up well.

She did her make up, although she went for a simple look, she looks amazing.

"Ma told me to give you a gift from the Mfusi's to apologize for not being able to make it." oh yes, Mrs Mfusi.

"She called me this morning, I was so shocked." I'm guessing she is Ntombiyelanga.

"I told you I would give her your number." she's laughing at me.

She hands me the envelope. I'm guessing this is the gift. I take it and open it right away.

It's an all expenses paid trip to the Maldives for two.

"Shut up!" I hate Muzi for keeping this woman away from me for so long.

"I think you and your husband deserve it." I'm guessing she was in on it too.

"Thank you." I gave her a hug.

I'll also have to thank Mrs Mfusi. I wonder how Muzi will feel about this since he doesn't really like Zuzile.

"Let me go find him." I say and excuse myself.

I search around the room for him, and I can't seem to find him. Another thing distracting me is the fact that people are pulling me, asking me questions and some are taking pictures with me. But I'm distracted, I need to find Muzi.

I go outside and there are a few people socializing, most of them smoking, but no sign of Muzi.

LACED

I go back inside and head to the bathrooms to look for him.

Found him!

He has his tongue down another bitch's throat. She's wearing a short dress and his hand is fondling between her thighs. They are so immersed in what they are doing they don't hear me come in, or leave.

I gently bring the door to a close and lean against it for courage. My heart is sitting in my throat, I feel betrayed, seeing that, it hurt more than it should have. I know Muzi sees other people constantly, but having to see him with another person, especially on my day, it's a bitter taste in my mouth.

"Miss Pamper Spot." I turn and look at the person speaking.

"Are you okay?" he asks.

"I'm great." I fake a smile.

He takes my hand and leads me to my office door. It's not locked, I left it open after the whole water issue.

We get inside and lock it from the inside.

"I've been waiting for an opportunity to be alone with you." he says pushing me against the door.

His breath is warm against my face. Dammit does he have to be so sexy. My heart is now sitting in the pit of my stomach.

"We are playing a dangerous game, both our spouses are out there." I warn him.

His hand caresses my hip.

"I like danger..." he bites my bottom lip before he starts to nipple on it.

He kisses me hurriedly.

"Did I tell you how hot you are, how sexy you are?" his hand is sneaking up my dress.

I don't answer, I'm out of breath. He's gotten to me. At first I was thinking about Muzi, and how I've never slept with any other man aside from him since three years ago, but that image of him kissing that woman, it came to me, and removed all the guilt I felt about what we are about to do.

LACED

He's leading me towards the table, not breaking the kiss. When I have my butt against the table, he turns me around and starts to undo his pants. I don't hesitate to bend over for him.

He straps himself up with protection before he starts rubbing himself on me, then slowly inserts himself. I bite my lower lip to suppress the moan.

He's moving fast, paying no attention to my body, it's as if he's rushing his own orgasm and not want to give me mine.

It still feels good, but I feel a disconnect to him, it feel like it's just sex. I thought I always have 'just sex' with Muzi, but it's not. It feels different, this feels like just sex.

He's also rough, grabbing my neck and covering my mouth when I scream, but it still feels different.

I clench my walls around his dick when I feel my orgasm nearing, but that only makes him cum, leaving me extremely horny, hornier that I was before he even fucked me.

"Damn I get why he's so obsessed with you." he says pulling out.

He ties up the condom and throws it in the bin. He then proceeds to take the wipes on my desk and gives them to me.

Wow. What a mediocre experience, so much for fucking Mvelo Mfusi.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Nambitha Zungu

I woke up to an empty house. The parents went home yesterday after the launch; I couldn't have been any happier, and Muzi, well he didn't even bother to come home.

Today is the first day of business at the spot, but I feel like shit; I don't even feel like going there. This is what I get for wanting to be a badass bitch that goes around fucking everyone. I've never done it, and now that I have, I realize I'm honestly not made for that life.

Mvelo made me feel like a slut, a sperm dish if you may. I've never felt that way with Muzi. I thought what I feel when I have sex with Muzi is casual meaningless sex, but it isn't. What we did in that office, it was meaningless sex, I didn't even cum.

Immaculate is here.

"Ma'am I was watching the live stream, and wow, the place looks amazing, congratulations."

"Thank you Imma." she hands me my smoothie.

"I can't wait to go there when boss gives me a bonus." I can't help but laugh. She's so sweet.

I have a headache, and I know it's the bubbly I consumed last night.

"Boss left a message, he said please come see him during lunch." Immaculate reports.

"Was he here?" Muzi never leaves this early.

"Yes he was, but he was in a rush." I just nod.

I don't want to call him and ask him what he wants to see me about, I'll just go.

I go chill by the pool and just surf social media to see people's post about last night. Most of the influencers are happy with the spot, and hopefully customers will start flocking in. The social media pages likes have also gone up, looks like today will be a busy start to the week for the girls and gworls.

LACED

My scrolling is disturbed by a call, it's the queen of Zululand. I'm sure she has an update for me, and I'm low-key dreading it.

"Ndlunkulu, hi." she's not faffing today, it sounds quiet where she is.

"Hey chomie, how are you?" she asks.

"I can't really complain, how are you?" she sighs a long sigh of relief.

"Nsuke is gone with his father, so I have a few hours to myself, I haven't had that since he was born." she sounds exhausted.

"Seems like you are enjoying the mom life." I mock.

She chuckles.

"Look chomie, baba's PI got some information about Jama. I emailed everything he got to you so you can check it out. Everything is in there, addresses, phone numbers and recent whereabouts." she explains.

My heart starts beating fast.

"Is there anything I should worry about when I see that file?" I ask just to be sure.

"Depends on what makes you worry." that's not good at all.

"Okay, thank you chomie." she hangs up.

I need to check this folder, I don't even want to leave it to later. I go grab my laptop, and sit in the pyjama lounge.

I take a deep breath to prepare myself for what I am going to see.

Okay so, Nkululeko Dlamini, 36 years old. He got married.

He's married to Nontando! She finally got the ring she wanted! I can't say they weren't meant to be, they were; they deserved each other.

Okay, they also moved to Benoni in Gauteng, and they had another child. He works a 9 to 5 at an accounting firm, there are even pictures of him leaving his office building. These are obviously recent because this PI was only hired last week. It convinces me that it couldn't have been him I saw that day.

Next page; his sister Sbongile Dlamini lives here in Margate, crazy. Maybe I've run into her before, but I wouldn't know it's her because I've never

LACED

seen her. There isn't any picture of her here. I go on social media to look for her, and absolutely nothing comes up. She's a ghost.

I look up Nontando on Instagram, and she quickly comes up first on the list. She has a rather large following, I think almost half of what I have. She looks like she's trying to launch herself into the influencer space. She does mom content a lot.

You would swear she isn't a crazy bitch when you look at her content, it's all centered around her family, especially her children. Azande has grown up so much, and as she grows, she looks more and more like Nkululeko. The other child, a boy, is also a photocopy of Nkululeko, he's just lighter in complexion compared to his sister and father.

Her content is quite boring, or maybe it doesn't appeal to me. There is nothing interesting about posting your family. I continue scrolling until I run into a post about her and Nkululeko. They were celebrating their two year wedding anniversary a few days ago and they were here, in Margate.

That quickly changes my perception. So maybe I wasn't crazy.

My phone brings me out of the trance, it's Muzi calling me. I dread answering his phone call, but I do it anyway.

"Sawbona." I greet.

"What did I do now?" I really don't feel like speaking to him.

I feel so betrayed by him, my blood is still boiling.

"Nothing, you didn't do anything wrong." I say with a sigh.

"Ey Nambitha, not today. Did Immaculate tell you that I need to see you at lunch?" I can't help but roll my eyes.

"Yes she told me."

"Okay, good. If you can please bring me some lunch as well."

"I'm not your real wife Muzi, don't forget that." I think the lines are getting blurry now, we are losing sight.

"Fine, it's okay if you don't want to, just come." he really doesn't care.

I mumble a low okay before dropping the call.

LACED

Now back to this...Nkululeko. He was here, and I don't know how long he was here for, it could have been him, it also could have been a random stranger that looked like him.

I feel like I'm losing my mind. I go back to the first page where there were contact details. His number is on here.

I'm conflicted between dialing it and hearing his voice for the first time in years, or just letting it be, with the hope that I never ever have to run into him ever again. The latter sounds much better for the state of my mental health, but the former, the former is what my heart is screaming for me to do.

My heart is burning with questions, questions that need answers, and I want them, I want those answers.

It's ringing. My hands start to tremble when the realization hits.

"Hello." his voice registers on the speaker.

I regret it immediately.

"Hello?" this was a terrible idea.

"I can hear you breathing and I'm going to track this number, who is it?" I hang up immediately.

Shit! I've messed up big time!

...

I'm driving my brand new car, and the car smell is making me so happy.

I never got the chance to question Muzi about this surprise. How did he afford to buy a whole car in the middle of dire financial crisis? How can he possibly spend millions on a car when I have a two thousand rands limit of the money I spend daily?

Not that I'm complaining about the car; I love it to bits, but I have questions. The last thing I need is to bond with it, and then have it taken away from me because of debt.

LACED

It's way early for me to be going to see Muzi, so I decided to start at the Pamper Spot to just check in, and see how much money we've made since we opened in the morning.

The agreement was this week we would be taking walk-ins, but going forward, its strictly appointment. It's filled to the brim. I'm shocked because it's a Monday morning, why aren't people at work, or at school? I'm not complaining though; the more customers, the more money I make.

I greet everyone with an enthusiastic smile, even though I'm fucked up inside. My staff is so happy to see me.

Everyone at every station is busy; nail techs, the lash lady is also occupied. There are a few ladies getting foot rubs and all my hair stylists are busy. There still a few more clients sitting on the side waiting to be attended. I like this, it makes me happy.

The manager comes to greet me with a tall glass of bubbly and a wonderful smile.

"My favourite boss." uhm, your only boss.

"Hi Nandi, looks like a busy first day." she's so chirpy.

"You have no idea ma'am. We've already had 10 customers today, excluding the people you are seeing here. Most of them came for hair, to wash, do wig lines and install for work." she takes me through

"You see, those master classes came in handy." she giggles.

"They did. At some point, I was also on the floor helping out. Now I'm sorting out the books, and it's looking good. If we can continue like this, you are certain to open another spot very soon." I like the sound of that.

She shows me the books, and I'm quite impressed. I'm getting amazing customers who tip generously. I don't blame them though, the service is impeccable. The bubbly they are serving is from the surplus from the party last night. I had bought a lot in advance, same with the food. I'm just glad everything is going well. I might not need to depend on Muzi for a lot of things now.

I do a few rounds, checking in on my customers, taking content to post on the gram and relaxing before I take off to go to Muzi's office.

I'm feeling a little tipsy as I make my way up the stairs to his office. I know myself, I do stupid shit when I'm drunk. I won't be able to keep up with

LACED

this angry act with Muzi and tell him what's actually in my heart. I'll try to keep it in but it won't be easy, I know it won't.

Zama is not at her desk when I walk past so I go straight to his office. He's sitting alone, he looks immersed in whatever he is doing, he even has a crease on his forehead.

It's not often you see him this serious, so this, it's sexy, it's a turn on. But I'm angry at him.

"You are late." he speaks without even looking up.

"I was at the Spot." I don't even know why I'm explaining myself like a little girl.

"Take a seat." I take it is something important he wants to discuss, that's why he's so serious.

I place the Nando's bag on his desk. Yes, I felt bad and bought him lunch on my way here. He looks up.

"Thank you." he takes it and puts it on the side.

He then closes his laptop before he leans back and adjusts his tie. The bruises on his face are slowly healing, but they are doing so slowly.

"So...?" I asks.

He's just staring at me and it's getting weird.

Okay, he's actually angry.

"You slept with him." he says in a calm voice.

He's not asking me, he's telling me. My heart automatically sits in my stomach, but I put on a brave face after swallowing a large chunk of saliva to wash down the lump.

"Who? I didn't sleep with anyone." I defend.

The guilt is all over my voice. Is it not enough that I already feel like shit for it.

"Did you enjoy it?" his tone has changed.

"Muzi I don't know what you are talking about."

LACED

“What do you need a reminder?” shit!

“Okay fine, I did it...”

“Not on the same fucking night I bear my heart and soul out to you Nambitha!” he raises his voice.

I startle, automatically shifting back. Regret flashes in his eyes for an instant.

“You also kissed another girl, I saw you.” he groans and rubs his forehead, he looks frustrated.

Why are we having a couples squabble? We are everything but a couple.

“Would you believe me if I told you that I haven’t fucked any other woman in the past five months except for you? That I haven’t been able to go further than kissing another woman because they aren’t you? You are driving me crazy Nams!” he sounds frustrated.

So is he confessing his feelings or what. I don’t believe that.

“Whether you haven’t been doing it for months or not Muzi, you did it last night, and I saw you. It was the most painful thing I have endured. I never let my heart take control, but these days, it’s just taking over, I blame you. And yes, I didn’t fucking enjoy the sex I had last night because it wasn’t you, but I was hurt, and I couldn’t even hide it.” he breathes out a shaky breath.

“Do you know how I found out? That pervert recorded everything and sent it to me to hurt me, and guess what, it did. I didn’t even fuck that bitch Nambitha, but you did, you fucked him!” oh he’s fuming.

I can’t believe I was so naive, I should have known better, it was all planned. Him asking for revenge, it was planned.

“Did you even stop to think about Chrissy? She considers you a friend, and you slept with her husband.” damn!

Not once did that even occur to me who I would be hurting. I buried my head in my hands. I feel horrible.

“Does she know?” I ask him.

“No, and she won’t know unless one of us tells her.” that sounds like a threat.

LACED

“Muzi please...” I beg.

He interrupts me.

“I won’t do that. I care about her, unlike the both of you, selfish human beings.” he spits.

I suddenly feel dirty, that’s how he’s making me feel right now, dirty.

“So what now?” I ask, referring back to the tape and the shit he said about me driving him crazy.

“You slept with my brother.” he sounds wounded.

“And I regret it for so many different reasons...”

“I don’t know how I will move on from that.” he says.

“What happened to the tape?” I can’t afford to have a sex tape trending at this time in my life.

“I destroyed it, idiot gave me the only copy.” he speaks through gritted teeth.

I don’t even know what this means for them, are they going to continue being okay? What about the business?

“How do you feel about me?” I ask him.

He pushes his chair back and pats his lap. I hesitantly stand and go sit on it, hoping he doesn’t strangle me to death; he looks angry and hurt. He turns me around and puts my legs on either side of his body. I can’t stand to look him in the face, especially in the eyes, but he lifts my chin and forces me to look at him.

“I like things the way they are...I love you, a lot, but I don’t want things to change.” I swallow hard.

He loves me? Like love love?

“I suck at relationships...”

“I don’t want a relationship.” we both speak at the same time.

He only smiles, then he brings my lips closer and captures them in a kiss.

“Please forgive me.” I say, feeling tears wetting my face.

LACED

“I forgive you, but I’m still disappointed in you. I still want that threesome.” he’s caressing my ass.

It’s something, I’ll take what I can get. And this threesome talk, I thought he had forgotten about that.

“Muzi where the hell are we going to find someone who want to have sex with us?” he rubs his nose on mine.

Before he can answer me, the door opens, and Zama comes in, disrupting our intimate moment. I try to get off his lap but he holds me tighter against his hard crotch.

“MaNjilo.” Muzi acknowledges.

She only clears her throat. I turn and look at her, and embarrassment flushes my face. She returns it with a smile instead.

“Sir your meeting starts in 30.” she says.

“Okay great!” he says enthusiastically.

She quickly excuses herself. I know she’s still holding me on that offer to fuck again, but I don’t know how that will happen now, Muzi is a jealous one.

Unless...!

“I think I have someone in mind.” I tell Muzi.

“Who?” he has excitement in his eyes.

“Zama.” I tell him.

“MaNjilo?” he asks, confusion dressing his face.

“So you haven’t made a move on her?” he laughs.

“No, she’s intimidating.” I burst out laughing.

“You, Muzi Zungu, intimidated by a female!?” he rolls his eyes.

“Why are you suggesting her?” he asks, interest dancing on his face.

“Because she’s good in bed.” he frowns.

It hasn’t registered in his mind, but it quickly does and his frown turns into a sly smile.

LACED

“You are such a vixen!” he tickles me.

“So you guys know each other beyond these walls?” he asks inquisitively.

“Yeah, we met before she started working here, and at first she gave creepy stalker vibes, but I only learned later that she was attracted to me. That night I was out, I was with her.” he shakes his head in disapproval.

“I don’t know whether to be happy or mad at you.”

“Do the latter, I didn’t owe you anything then. I still don’t owe you anything now.” his face changes.

“I’m joking.” I place a gentle kiss on his lips.

I guess this is us now. We aren’t in a relationship, but we are exclusive and he loves me. We are being delusional, but it’s okay, because no one has to understand except for us.

“I want to fuck you so badly right now...” he says in a low voice.

“Do it.” I probe.

I know he probably doesn’t want to, I mean it hasn’t even been 24 hours since I slept with Mvelo, and he just forgave me for it, but he can’t help himself, I’m too sexy.

He lifts my dress and takes off my underwear while I unbuckle his belt.

“We need to get tested before the threesome.” he mumbles.

We get tested twice a year, and we’ve only done it once this year. Both of us are clean, or at least the last I checked.

My walls gradually stretch to accommodate him, and a sense of familiarity hits me. This...better than last night, better than anything I’ve ever had with any other man...but not as good as that dream.

I take the reigns and give him the best strokes, grinding my waist, while grabbing onto his big shoulders. He’s hungrily biting my neck as I moan out his name.

That’s definitely going to leave a mark.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Nambitha Zungu

I haven't been taking any of Chrissy's calls, guilt has been eating away at me for what happened, and although Muzi forgave me, it's really her that I wronged more than anyone.

I blocked and deleted Mvelo's number from my phone. I hate him so much for using me like that; not that I expected anything more from him, but to record me? It's very low of him. I don't want anything else to happen between the two of us, I don't want him calling me or texting me. It's not like I enjoyed his mediocre sex anyway, he's just handsome for show.

I'm going to the spot today, I'm planning on spending the whole day there, maybe get my hands dirty on the floor. Muzi is cuddling me, it's a cold and wet day today, the perfect weather to cuddle, but we don't have that luxury. He needs to go to work and get us out of debt, and I need to go make even more money.

I relocated to his bedroom since we started doing whatever we are doing, and this is how I've been waking up every morning since then.

"Wake up Muzi." he's fast asleep.

He only sleeps like this when he has taken drugs. I know he's struggling to stop; I've monitored his behaviour over the past couple of days and sometimes I find him shaking because he's craving for coke. He always downplays it, but he's an addict, and I think sooner or later, I may have to enrol him in a rehab.

"Muzi!" I shake him.

"Can't you be just a little gentle?" he groans sleepily.

"I've been waking you up! It's late, you have to get to work." he rolls over and covers himself with the duvet instead.

"I'm not going."

"What do you mean you aren't going?"

"Nams I want to sleep okay, I'm exhausted." he grumbles.

I don't understand why he's so tired all of a sudden, he was okay all these other days.

LACED

“Muzi are you still sniffing?” he sits up.

He doesn’t look happy with me at all.

“What’s with the million questions so fucking early in the morning?” I’ve gotten my answer.

Muzi always gets defensive when he’s guilty.

“I’m worried about you, and your health.” he sighs, and his eyes soften.

“I told you, I’m okay. It’s just one of those day where I feel exhausted, and I just want things to slow down for a moment. So, I’m taking a day off, everything is okay at work, you don’t have to worry.” he says cupping my cheeks.

He’s looking deeply into my eyes, and he slowly starts to smile at me. I know what he wants to say.

“Don’t say it.” he just offers me a hearty belly laugh before he squeezes my face and my lips pout.

“You know I do though, right?” he asks.

I nod.

“Yes, I do.” he kisses my pouted lips gently.

This is fun and all, but I’m not like him, I actually have to get off my ass and go do some work! That’s what I planned for the day.

● ● ●

As I was driving to the spot, I received a call from my very excited manager, telling me that thee Zuzile Mfusi is at the spot to do her hair and lashes.

I couldn’t help but laugh because we have these famous Instagram baddies coming in and out every single day, but she’s so excited for her.

I just arrived at the spot, and she’s the first person I see. They gave her the best seating, she’s currently doing her hair, braids to be specific. Now that I’m seeing her, I’m a little nervous. I’ve never met her in person, and she looks intimidating. She’s sitting there quietly pressing her phone mindlessly.

LACED

I go up to her, after fixing myself.

“Mrs Mfusi, welcome to NamNams Pamper Spot. It’s such a pleasure to have you here.” she smiles at me, ever so warmly.

“Hi NamNam.” she opens her arms for me.

I go in for the hug.

“I finally get to meet you! You are so beautiful.” imagine she’s telling me that I’m beautiful.

“Thank you so much Ma.” she’s old enough to be my mother so I give all due respect.

“Come sit with me, I want you to tell me everything.” she’s such a jolly soul.

I grab a stool and place it just next to her. I know I’m about to be grilled.

“The service here is amazing, muhle umsebenzi wakho dali.” (Your work is commendable darling.) she compliments.

I feel honoured.

“Thank you, Ma, our customers' happiness is our priority.”

“That’s the first step to running a successful business, you are going far.” imagine a business mogul telling you are going far, it’s blessings.

“How is my baby brother? He doesn’t answer any of my calls, he hasn’t answered them in the last three years, and he hasn’t bothered to return any of them.” oh so he was running away from her.

“He changed his number quite a couple of times in the last three years, maybe that’s why you couldn’t get a hold of him.” I don’t know how to answer the first question.

How is Muzi? He’s battling a drug addiction, and he’s facing company debt. He says he’s okay, but he’s not; I know he isn’t.

“Ever since he fell out with Mvelo he’s been distant with all of us. I didn’t even know he got married to such a beautiful woman. I’m so glad they fixed things, and that you and Ntombiyelanga are friends, otherwise I wouldn’t have gotten the opportunity to meet you.” she really wanted this, I guess.

LACED

I feel a little special.

“Yeah, he shut everyone out, it got even worse when Mr Zungu died, and we sort of formed this little bubble.” I remember she didn’t come to the funeral.

I think that also made Muzi upset, but he never said anything about that. He bottles things up, but we’ve never opened up about our shit to each other, we only fuck and move on with life. Maybe things will change now.

“I missed the funeral because I was out of the country. It was so unexpected, and it broke my heart that I couldn’t be there for my siblings. But Muzi shut me out, at least there was an open line of communication between Lihle and I. I think he’s mad at me.” he is.

I think as siblings they need to sit down and have a serious conversation about how they feel. There is a miscommunication somewhere somehow, and the other is not clued up about how the other feels.

Muzi needs his family more now than he ever has needed them. I’m here for him sure, but sometimes you need your people, your family.

“I think he would appreciate it if you reached out.” that’s all I’m going to say in this instant.

“Give me his new number, I’ll call him. If he doesn’t answer me, I’ll call you.” I guess she now knows that she’s being ignored.

“So, any babies yet?” she asks curiously.

“Oh no. We don’t want any.” the kids conversation.

It looks like it’s a serious thing at the Mfusi family. I know most of them have more than 3 kids each, which is crazy. I know Zuzile has 5 of her own, which is just absurd to me. I don’t even want half a child.

“How could you not? That’s sad, but I guess it’s because you guys are young. Did you have a wedding?” oh so she’s grilling me.

“No, not really. We just went out to lunch with his parents.” which we did.

I still remember how petrified I was when I was going to meet his parents. At that time, we obviously weren’t doing anything, we weren’t even fucking yet, but I felt like I was under the pressure to pretend as though Muzi and I were actually in love.

LACED

Although he told me several times that his father didn't care, I just felt like it would buy him, and he would really get off his back. And it did. Mr Zungu loved me, may his soul rest in peace. He was a wonderful man, so generous and joyful. Muzi is much like him, he's just Muzi.

"Even my mother didn't bother telling me that my brother got married, I'm really an outsider in my family." she says it as a joke, but you can hear the hurt.

She's a Mfusi though, she's been married for years. Her real family is the one she made with her husband.

"So, are you ever going to have a real wedding?" I don't see the need.

I mean Muzi and I only started exploring our feeling a week ago, we've never spoken about a wedding. I also never pictured myself in a wedding dress getting married, it's just never been a part of my life plan.

"No, I don't think so." she looks more shocked than she was about me not wanting to have babies.

"How? It's every girl's dream to have a wedding! No ways! I can take not having a baby; those are expensive, but a wedding?" I can't help but laugh.

She's a funny woman.

"I've never seen a need, Muzi and I have better things to do with our money." we are broke now, but even when we had money, it wasn't on our minds.

"As if you are short of it." she says jokingly.

I shouldn't be mad at her for saying it because she doesn't know our situation, but damn it stings.

Her phone rings before I can answer, and she picks up with a big smile.

"Hi sisi, guess where I am." I don't even know who she's talking to.

It's as if she read my mind because she puts it on speaker phone, it's saved 'My Daughter'. I wonder which one it is.

"Where are you Ma?" shit!

It's Christine.

LACED

“Okay maybe that’s a little vague. Guess who I just met?” I feel like a celebrity.

“Oh, you are at NamNam’s Pamper Spot! Is she there?” she sounds excited all of a sudden.

“Yes, here she is!” dammit!

I’ve been avoiding talking to her, ignoring her calls. I can’t run now, what explanation will I give for avoiding her?

“Hi Chrissy.” I say softly.

“Girl I’ve been trying to call you!”

“My service provider has been giving me problems.” when in doubt, blame your service provider.

“Okay that explains it then! I see you guys finally got together. I was actually calling Ma to ask if she would want to join me for lunch, I’m at Palm Kloof.” now I have to see her, great!

“With the kids too?” Zuzile asks in excitement.

“Yes, they said they want to visit for the school holidays, they really don’t like Gauteng. So, we left Mvelo that side, we will go back before schools open.”

“That’s great then, Sanele will be so happy. I will definitely come for lunch after doing my lashes”.

“Nams you must also pull through.” there’s absolutely no way for me to get out of this.

“Alright.” I say against my will.

Zuzile is excited, she’s even telling Sonto to hurry up so we can leave. What have I gotten myself into!?

...

I don’t know if Christine was lying to me when she said she doesn’t drink because she’s going hard on the white wine, and she’s awfully getting drunk.

LACED

Both her and Zuzile. Imagine drinking with your mother-in-law, discussing marriage problems. Chrissy has it easy. I'm also drinking with them, but I'm still just a little tipsy.

"Mvelo must stay there in his Johannesburg, my kids hate that place, I don't like it either." yes, they are bashing their husbands.

Zuzile was just exposing how her husband always wants to work although he's retired and should be resting, how his work is affecting his health. I haven't shared anything; I don't want to share anything; Muzi wouldn't forgive me for that.

"First he made me quit my job, and although I enjoy sitting at home and spending his money, it gets boring." Chrissy continues.

"It really does, take it from me." Zuzile says.

"Might start a business like Miss Nams." I just give her a light chuckle.

I'm surprised she hasn't started one. And then they call me the gold digger.

"You must just put your foot down about what you want, be open about it. If he knows that you and the children are unhappy, he won't hesitate to move." Zuzile advises.

Chrissy only sighs and gulps down her glass of wine. Trouble in paradise. I'm not surprised, her man sleeps out; maybe it's an everyday thing. This is exactly what I don't want out of a relationship; stress!

My phone rings, and it's my very own husband! I excuse myself to answer, but I don't walk too far from them because they saw who was calling and they are curious. Their ears are sharpened.

"Manzini." Muzi just laughs over the receiver.

Biggest idiot!

"Who are you pretending for there?" I shake my head.

"I'm with your sister and Chrissy." I know they are listening.

"HI MUZI!" Zuzile shouts loud enough for him to get it.

Okay she's drunk.

"You guys are best friends now?" he asks.

LACED

“She was at the salon and Chrissy invited us for lunch.” I explain.

I don’t like explaining myself, I really don’t, but I get why he would be frustrated with me spending time with her, he doesn’t necessarily get along with her right now, although she doesn’t know that.

“Okay, and when do you plan on coming home? I have something exciting to show you.” I don’t think he means sex; I know it isn’t.

But I’ve had a shitload of wine and that makes me burn up on the inside, it makes me want to ride his dick.

“What is it?” I’m excited now.

“Come home and you will see.” I giggle like a little schoolgirl.

“Give me 10 minutes, I’ll be there.” I turn and face the ladies.

“I’m counting, you have 9 minutes.” oh wow.

I hang up and hurry back to the table.

“You’ve turned red in the face!” Chrissy points out.

“I’m sorry ladies but hubby calls, and I answer!” more than anything, it’s the wine talking.

“At least one of us is going to get some good rounds.” Chrissy mutters, taking a huge gulp of her wine.

Zuzile and I burst out in laughter.

“Make that two of us, I’m calling Kabelo to fetch me.” she says proudly.

Oh wow, old people also have sex!

“Ma ngilahlwa uwena! It’s okay, leave me, I guess it’s me and my dildo.” this girl cracks me up.

I don’t judge her though, maybe she sometimes has to finish things off herself because her husband does a half job.

I say my goodbyes and quickly get on the road. Our house isn’t too far from where they live.

LACED

I'm on the road and I'm not really paying that much attention to what's going on behind me, I'm jamming away to my playlist, anticipating the surprise Muzi has for me, I love surprises. But something fishy is going on.

This car has been following me since I turned three stops ago. I continue to drive but the car persists. I can see that it is a male in the car, it's white and it has no license plates. I feel unsafe in an instant I slow down to see if it's really following me, and it does the same.

I speed up, but he's still driving slowly. I'm still not convinced so I don't stop speeding, hoping he doesn't pick up his speed and find me again. It's only when I run into a roadblock that I instantly regret speeding.

Obviously, I'm the first person they flag down.

Fuck! I'm drunk.

"Miss you are speeding in a 60 zone." he looks bribable, I can get away with it.

"I'm sorry sir. There was a car following me and I felt unsafe." he leans against my window.

"You are drinking and driving, on top of that, you are driving recklessly in a residential area..."

"I'm not drunk, I promise." I'm lying through my teeth.

Now that I have the adrenaline pumping in my blood, I can feel the alcohol swimming in my blood.

"License please." okay maybe I was wrong about him being bribeable.

I take my bag and search for my license.

"I'm so sorry officer, please don't arrest me, I can even get you cool drink." he laughs mockingly.

"You are bribing an officer of the law?" shit!

"No..." I stutter.

I give him the license.

"Get out the car!" shit shit shit!

LACED

I do as told. He grabs my wrist.

“You are under arrest for bribing an officer of the law, drinking and driving and reckless behaviour on the road. You have the right to remain silent...”
wtf!

“Wait you aren’t allowed to do that! I told you someone was following me, I told you I felt unsafe!” I feel like I’ve been tricked.

I see the car that was following me pass.

“There it is! That man, he was following me!” he doesn’t care.

He’s pushing me into the police car.

“Wait!” I shout at him.

“Awuthule umsindo, keep quiet!” he shuts the door in my face.

FUUCK!

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Nambitha Zungu

They are keeping me in an empty cell. I passed by the full ones thinking I was going to be kept with those prostitutes and other nasty ghetto girls in here, but they placed me alone. I don't know whether to be happy or not.

It's been hours since I got here, they haven't given me my phone call like they do in the movies, I've cried till I couldn't any longer. This place smells like pee, the benches are uncomfortable. I want to leave. I'm sure Muzi is worried sick about me.

A female police officer comes to my holding cell, I immediately stand up.

"Please can I make my call, please!" I thought I was cried out, clearly I'm not.

"This is not your palace!" she's so mean.

"Please, I'm begging you, please have a heart." she opens the gate for me.

"Thank you so much!" I walk in front and she directs me to the phone.

I'm trying to regulate my breathing. Okay; I don't know Muzi's number off by heart. I only know Tata's number and I don't want to stress him out like that, I don't want him to know that his daughter has been in jail. The next person on the list is Amile. She's freaking far in Zululand, she's probably busy with her own life.

"Hurry up!" okay okay!

The only other option is Janet, although she's not close but I know she'd help me if I pay her. If I give her my home address, she can tell Muzi and they will come here to help me out

It's ringing. I'm crossing my fingers that she answers.

"Who is this?" she sounds like she's in a deep sleep.

"Janet, it's Nambitha, I need your help. I was arrested and I don't have my husbands number. Please go to my house and tell him, I promise I'll give you money." she chuckles.

LACED

“You are in jail? Wena? Slay queen?” she actually starts laughing really hard.

“Janet please!” I can’t stop crying and it’s annoying me so much.

“Haibo you are serious, okay. Where is your house?” I knew she would have my back.

I give her my address and tell her to tell Muzi where I am. She actually agrees to go there, that’s why I can always count on her, even though we don’t talk!

“Woza sboshwa!” she pulls me violently.

I’m not even a prisoner yet but she’s treating me like shit! She throws me back in the cell and stands at the bars and stares at me.

“So you want your little stupid husband to come save you?” she’s mocking me.

That gets my attention very quickly. I can’t help but think this is planned, why is she referring to Muzi as ‘little’ and ‘stupid’? I stand up very quickly!

“Did you plan all of this?” I ask wiping my tears.

I have snot all over my face, I feel like a mess, I can’t imagine what my face looks like.

“Just sit here, and look pretty wena slay queen. Don’t worry yourself about outside things.” so it is planned.

My heart is racing. I’m worried about Muzi, he’s probably in danger wherever he is. I don’t know what to do, I don’t have much to do from here, I guess that’s why they locked me up.

But who are these people? Who are they and what do they want from me, from us? Muzi has never harmed anyone, he’s innocent, he only lives to party and fuck women. He doesn’t deserve any of this!

I’m panicking, and I can slowly feel the walls closing in on me. My chest hurts.

LACED

● ● ●

“I got you a friend!” she pushes someone in the cell.

She’s a prostitute. She’s even wearing torn fishnet stockings and a short skimpy green sequin dress. I won’t even start talking about her hair, it’s a mess.

But wait, I know this face!

“Nambitha?” she says excitedly.

“You guys know each other! Great!” the police officer says.

I hate this officer so much! She leaves me with the prostitute who I now realize used to be my best friend. She’s coming to squat next to me.

“Are you also in the streets?” she’s actually excited about seeing me.

Aside from the fact that I’m sitting in a holding cell, I’m definitely not excited about seeing my ex best friend who turned into a bitch walking into a holding cell. What about my reputation, now she’s going to let the whole world know that I was arrested.

“No.” I’m actually annoyed.

“Oh so you do the private shit, in clubs right? That’s why you are wearing expensive clothes. They said I wasn’t pretty enough!” is this girl crazy.

It really doesn’t seem to get better, and her breath stinks, she’s so close to me.

“Yonela get out of my face!” my skin is crawling.

I’m hungry and I’m tired. I don’t want to be here, I want to go home to Muzi, I want to be in his arms and I want him to tell me he loves me even though I hate it so much when he does that.

How can it be that I’ve been here for more than 12 hours and no one has come to find out about me. I called Janet in the early hours of the morning, it’s almost 7am and I’m still fucking locked up! Something happened to Muzi.

“I’m sure it’s your first time here then! At least I’m not the only one that fell off, I saw your friend actually became the queen.” she’s really taking me back to high school drama at a time like this.

LACED

“To think I overreacted, maybe we would still be friends if I didn’t assume she was fucking that bodyguard. Hehe, you remember that ugly guy, I wanted him shame.” she’s speaking about Nkululeko.

My heart sinks to the pit of my stomach.

“I’m sure he would have been amazing in bed, his ugliness said it all, I would have given it all to him without thinking twice...” that’s it I’ve had it!

I rush to the bars.

“Officer! Please take her!” I scream as loud as I can.

“Hawu chomie?” oh Jesus she’s standing up.

I need divine intervention to survive this nightmare I’m living in, actually, I’m trapped.

“Officer please!”

It’s not long before she appears carrying the large set of keys.

“You are the most annoying person ever, I’m glad you are leaving.” she says opening the burglar for me to get out.

I can’t believe it!

“I’m free?” I ask in disbelief, feeling the tears filling my eyes.

“Yes crybaby, go and never come back here.” she opens for me and I rush out.

“I’m also coming!” Yonela tries to follow me.

“You are not going anywhere! You don’t listen, you are always back here!” this place is so ghetto and so toxic.

I don’t even know how I survived this long. I get to the front of the station and I don’t see anyone I know, and that confuses me. A man wearing shorts and a vest waves at me.

Who the fuck is this? He has a beautiful smile, but he’s old, he even has a grey beard.

“Hi Nambitha, you must be exhausted.” he’s carrying a black bag on his shoulder.

LACED

It looks heavy, but that's the least of my worries. I'm worried about whether I should trust this man or not.

"Vusi Mfusi, I was told there was a little misunderstanding, I assure you it will never happen again. I'm sorry you were treated harshly. Let's go." What?

Nothing is making sense, and I don't know if I should trust him or not! How the fuck are the Mfusi's even involved?

"How do I trust you? I've never even heard of you." he chuckles.

"Not gullible, I like that!" he fishes in his pockets and takes out a leather pocket.

It's his police badge.

"I'm the ex commissioner of the police force, I came to take you out because Zuzile said you were in trouble, and now we are going to her house." he explains.

Okay so Zuzile is in the know, but why am I going to her house and not my own? Where is Muzi?

"Where is Muzi?" he doesn't answer me.

I feel like screaming, I should be happy that I'm out of this rathole but I can't, it just keeps getting complicated.

...

Zuzile's house is the literal definition of a palace. In my whole life of existence, I have never seen someone's house, a house as big as this one! A house with wings and floors!

The second thing I want to do is go take a relaxing bath, because I can't do the first, which is checking up on Muzi. This Vusi guy ignored me the whole way when I asked about him.

She meets us at the door, and she opens her arms to hug me. She's naturally caring and loving, she loves affection. She doesn't even care that I'm a mess and I probably stink.

LACED

“Oh I’m so glad you are okay. Bhuti, thank you so much.” Vusi nods.

He hands her the black bag when we’ve broken the hug. She cups my face and looks at me, tears just cascade down my cheeks. I’m a softie, I break very easily.

“It’s okay mama, don’t cry, you are safe now.” she reassures me.

“Where is Muzi?” that’s all I want to know.

Vusi avoided my question when I asked.

“Don’t worry about Muzi, go shower and I’ll make you something to eat.”
how can I not worry about Muzi?

“Is he okay?” I just want to know.

“Yes he’s okay baby.” I don’t know how I feel, but I’m not buying it.

I don’t contest though because she has given me what I wanted. She shows me to a room on the first floor. It has an in suite shower and it looks like my arrival has already been prepared for. I thank her and she excuses herself so I can freshen up.

Vusi didn’t give me back my phone or my handbag. I also don’t know what they did to my brand new car. I feel like so much is wrong, I can feel it deep down in my spirit that someone is out to destroy us. It’s all adding up, the threats, the stalking, the bankruptcy and now this, it’s all too convenient.

I try not to dwell too much on it, but as I take my hot shower my mind can’t get rid of Muzi. I can’t help but feel like he’s in danger or he’s not safe wherever he is. I take my time though, I let the hot water soothe my skin and when I step out I feel rejuvenated.

Now I need to sleep, I don’t even think I have the energy to eat, I need the rest.

I’m just about ready to tuck myself into the cozy looking bed when I step out the bathroom and see Muzi’s face.

He’s sitting on the bed, he smiles when he sees me. It’s his warm smile that has me sprinting across the room to engulf him with a bone crushing hug.

“Hi Nams!” he winces in pain.

“Careful.” he’s holding his chest.

LACED

Oh shit.

“Did they hurt you? Are you okay? What happened?” I bombard him.

He just laughs at me.

“You were only gone for a few hours but you were losing your mind.” he mocks me.

“You don’t understand Muzi, everything that was happening was so weird, everything is just...”

“It’s planned. Someone is out for me, and they want to get to me through you.” it’s like he read my mind.

“So I’m not crazy! Is that why I was arrested?” he caresses my cheek.

“I don’t know my angel, but I’m investigating it.” I sigh.

“Okay let’s go home.” there is a flash of sadness in his eyes.

Oh hell no, there’s more!?

“We can’t, our house is destroyed. They broke in, stole most of our things, especially valuable shit and they broke all windows and doors. I’m so sorry Nams.” I feel my heart shatter.

“How? We have tight security! We live in a gated community, how does that happen?” here come more tears once again.

I’m so damn tired of crying.

“Angazi, that’s why I have reason to believe it was planned, you being arrested, it was all part of the plan.” he says wiping my tears.

“There was a white car following me before I was arrested.” I tell him.

I don’t know how that’s going to make any of a difference because I have zero information about that car, it didn’t even have license plates.

“It was probably put there to distract you, and then it so happened that you were arrested. I’m really just as confused as you are right now, but I promise you, I’m going to get to the bottom of it.” he kisses my forehead.

“So now where are we going to stay?” I ask, although we are clearly under a roof and four walls.

LACED

Okay more than four walls.

“Zuzile offered us to stay here, I mean sbali is also helping us investigate what is going on, but if you aren’t comfortable we can find another place.” I’m thinking here...

Muzi has pride; a lot of it. He’s not on good terms with his sister, he wouldn’t just agree to live in her house. That means he’s really under financial strain and he can’t afford to get us an airbnb or hotel for the time being. And I understand, I’m not going to put even more pressure on him and say I’m not comfortable. I actually have no reason to complain so far.

“Have you guys fixed things?” I ask.

He just offers me a sigh, it’s not good enough and I’m not going to let it go just like that.

“No, but she wants us to talk later today.” I nod.

At least let them fix things, I don’t want to stay with them while there is tension between them.

And now that I’m with him I actually can’t believe I missed him so much.

But wait...

“Why were you wincing in pain when I jumped on you?” his face lights up with a smile.

“That was the surprise I had for you yesterday.” he says excitedly.

He shifts me back a bit from his lap and lifts his t-shirt over his head. He has plastic wrap on the left side of his chest, it looks like a tattoo.

“You got a tattoo?” I ask with my eyes wide open.

Muzi doesn’t have a single tattoo on his body, he never used to strike me as the type to get tattoo’s, especially big ones like these, but now he does.

“Not just any tattoo. Open it, but do so gently, it still hurts.” he says.

I don’t know how I’m going to do that with nails but I’ll try. When I uncover it, the first thing I see is a face, on his chest.

This is MY face!

LACED

“Are you crazy!?” I ask giggling.

Deep down it’s exciting, but why would he tattoo my face on his body, on his chest even worse?

“I want you to stay in my heart forever.” he says pecking my lips.

So cheesy but so romantic.

“You are such a rookie in the love department.” I tease him.

First time he says the L-word to a girl and he goes to tattoo her fucking face on his chest.

My face looks beautiful on his light skinned chest though, there is no other place I’d rather see it than here.

“You see why I didn’t catch feelings in the past.” I just laugh at him.

Maybe he’d have several faces on his body, and I’d only be left with a little space then.

“I love you Nambitha.” my heart melts.

I haven’t had the courage to say it back as yet. I know I feel something, but I’m too scared to admit it’s love. He understands though, all I have to do is look him in the eyes and he knows it too; that I feel something for him.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Nambitha Zungu

I know I wake up early, but damn, this family wakes up super early. I can feel myself dozing off to sleep at the breakfast table.

Zuzile on the other hand is chirpy and happy to have us here. She loves hosting; its in her blood. The conversation is flowing at the table, I'm just sitting quietly because I don't have much to say, the family is catching up.

"Tell me sbali, what's wrong with the company." Mr Mfusi asks.

This man is scary and intimidating. He has a lot of tattoos, has a fully white beard and small eyes, very small eyes, you'd swear he can't see. His eyes make him even harder to approach. I wonder how a bubbly woman like Zuzile married a man like this.

"It was a pyramid scheme. They came to me as potential investors in the company." he explains.

Finally I will also get to understand because he has never actually told me.

"And didn't you do your research, check if they are legit?" Zuzile asks.

"I did, they were legit, all their shit checked out. I only started getting suspicious when I was putting out more money than I was making."

"Was there anyone else who was in control of the finances?" Mr Mfusi asks.

"There was a team in the finance department, one of them was a mole and I was able to catch them out and fired them immediately. I'm slowly trying to get things back but now these people are coming for me in my private life." Mr Mfusi shakes his head.

"Don't worry yourself about it any longer, we will find these bastards and they will pay." that sounded scary, like a threat.

Whoever it is that is doing this shit should be petrified. I know I am.

"After breakfast, we are leaving." he states.

LACED

Muzi doesn't protest, he just offers a nod. He looks uneasy and he feels stiff beside me. I put my hand on his thigh and squeeze it, I hope he's okay.

"Nams you are going to have to change your number and deactivate all your social media accounts, these people are possibly keeping track of your movements through your posts." Zuzile adds.

Not my social media.

"No you should get a new phone period, you don't know if the one she has is bugged or not." And it gets worse.

I just got this phone a few months ago, I'm not one to change phones a lot so this is just frustrating, but I guess they know better so I just nod.

I've lost my appetite and Muzi can see that I'm no longer comfortable.

"Can you please excuse us for a bit. Thank you for breakfast." he says and stands up.

He takes my hand and leads me to our designated bedroom. I hope that wasn't rude. As soon as he closes the door, I throw myself on the bed. I can't stand being here anymore, no matter how comfortable the environment is.

"Are you going to leave me here alone?" I actually don't feel comfortable here without him.

"I have to baby, but it will only be for a few hours." even he sounds unsure about that.

"Where are you going?" he sighs and comes to sit next to me.

He's trying to soften me up, that's why he's fondling with my hand.

"You don't have to worry yourself about where I'll be. All that matters is that I'll come back to you, and the people who are messing with us will be dealt with." back up!

"Muzi?" he rubs his nose bridge.

"I hope you won't be involved in any criminal activities." I don't date criminals.

I don't associate myself with criminals.

"No Nams I won't, I promise."

LACED

“Promise?” he puts out his pinky.

“Pinky promise baby.” that gives me a little peace of mind.

I climb onto his lap, putting my legs on either side of his body. I’ve missed him so much, I missed his touch, the feel of his body on mine. I attempt to kiss him, and for a short moment he kisses me back, but he quickly pulls back and cups my cheeks. Is he rejecting me?

“And then?” I’m confused.

“You were in jail, you need to cleanse first.” not this Zulu man shit.

Since when is he a Zulu traditionalist?

“I was in a fucking holding cell, not jail!” I’m actually angry.

“Still baby, we can’t.” he pulls me closer and kisses me.

He knows how much of a hard time I’ve had these past few days. We haven’t had sex in four days, that’s longer than normal, I feel like I’m losing my mind.

“Don’t kiss me if you won’t dick me down.” I scold, climbing down his lap.

He pulls me back.

“Nambitha wait, don’t be mad.” how can I not be mad?

“I promise I’ll make it up to you tonight, Zuzile will give you something okay.” he caresses my breasts and rubs my nipples.

“You are making me hornier and I’m going to be even angrier, just go.” he laughs.

“Come take a shower with me first.” he’s bribing me

“Nope, I’m napping, your family wakes up too damn early!” my eyes are heavy.

I gladly climb off his lap and snuggle on my bed. He’s looking at me shaking his head. He’s not going to make me guilty, this nap would slap even more had he given me a few strokes, but no, he had to be a Zulu man.

LACED

...

I slept for at least an hour before Zuzile came to wake me up. She gave me the so called herbs and I did the cleanse, and now I can supposedly have sex with Muzi again.

It's way past lunch and they are not back. Zuzile looks chilled, she offered me a glass of wine and she's sitting in her lounge staring at her laptop. I obviously didn't decline the wine but I'm so bored, I have no phone, I can't go anywhere and I don't know what to do with myself.

"When are they coming back?" I whine.

She closes her laptop and turns to look at me.

"I'm sorry I'm being such a terrible host. I'm sure you are bored, but we can't leave the house. How do you feel about a movie?" she's avoiding my question.

I just miss Muzi. I'm so used to having him around all the time.

"Yeah a movie is okay." I can't disappoint her.

Who knew living in a mansion was this boring.

It's so freaking quiet here, the hallways are hollow, the house is not as homey as it should be. All her children are in boarding school; it's only the young one around, and he spends most of his time with the helper. I haven't seen him all day, he hasn't even bothered his mom, not once.

"Okay, let us go then!" she springs up.

She always has energy. I follow her to the cinema and I'm mesmerized by the size of this place. They even have a pop corn machine inside this place, no different from a real cinema. Why would they ever leave the house, they literally have everything right here.

She turns on the movie and gives me some snacks before she leads the way to the seats. I know she's here to try and distract me from thinking about Muzi and everything else happening around us, but she's going to have to try harder than wine and some boring movie.

LACED

“Where did they go?” I finally ask.

I know she knows, but she’s probably going to ignore me, if not she will avoid the question or lie to me.

“They went to Mthiyane Construction, Kabelo needs his work laptop to code things.” okay...

“Code what things?” I’m not going to hold back from asking these questions.

“Hack systems and try to figure out who specifically is behind this pyramid scheme. They are working tirelessly to find these criminals, and they will pay, don’t worry.” that sends chills down my spine.

She just said the exact same words Muzi uttered, in the exact same tone.

“Will they be arrested?” I ask out the obvious.

She just offers me a chuckle, and shuts me up by pouring me a glass of wine. There is something suspicious going on.

“When can we go back to our house then?” she looks offended.

“What, you don’t like my house?” this has nothing to do with you.

“No, it’s not like that Ma, it’s just that I’m not used to being away from my home.” she just hums.

She really doesn’t look like she’s keen to answer any more of my questions. I’ve annoyed her to filth. Now I feel bad, she just made me feel guilty.

“The state of the house was dire, it’s going to take a while to fix. With the dilemma you guys are in, it’s going to be more convenient for you to stay here, for the time being.” but Muzi is not being transparent with me.

I feel like I’m in the dark about so many things, I didn’t even see what the house looked like.

“So you are telling me that we can’t even afford to fix the house?” I ask her.

“Namnam don’t worry yourself about any of that okay. Muzi is a man and he’s handling all of it.” I’m fucking tired of this line.

LACED

“But it’s my house too! It’s my life that is being affected too, I deserve to know, maybe I can also help him, but you guys are not telling me anything!” my voice cracks.

I don’t want to cry but fuck this shit! She pauses the movie and comes to embrace me.

“The aim is not to strip you the right to know what’s going on. The aim is to protect you. It’s a cruel world out there, and you are too innocent to be tainted by it. Muzi loves you and he’s doing his best to protect you from all of it. Please don’t be mad at him, he needs your support now more than ever.” obviously she will defend her brother.

“How can I support him when I don’t know what the hell is going on? I had to face constant threats and uneasiness; having my card declining in public, and being arrested for this shit!? And no one has the decency to tell me what it’s all about at the very least? It’s frustrating, everything is changing and I’m staying behind. I feel like a spectator in my own life.”

“It’s not my place to tell you, if Muzi is not ready, all I can do is respect his wishes. All I can tell you is that Muzi loves you, and all that he is doing is to protect and keep you happy. You will understand once it is over, and when he’s ready to tell you, but for now just trust him.”

This honestly has to be the hardest thing I have ever had to do; wait, be patient, and believe in someone.

“Sisi, are you guys in here?” it’s Muzi.

I jerk up very quickly and see him standing at the door.

“Yes we are here.” Zuzile replies.

I quickly free from her embrace and stand up. I don’t even wait for anything else, I go to Muzi. I’ve turned into a crybaby for him and I hate it so much, I hate it with my heart and soul.

“Why are you crying baby?” he engulfs me in a tight squeeze.

I just shake my head, I don’t want to say much to him right now, I don’t think I have the words to say the things in my heart.

He’s protecting me, he’s doing it for me, I have to believe in him.

“Is Kabelo back?” Zuzile asks behind us.

LACED

“No, he stayed behind.” I can’t see her, but I assume she nods because she doesn’t answer.

She excuses herself and leaves us alone in the cinema.

“Nambitha uyakhala...” he points out the obvious.

Yes I am crying.

I free from his embrace, wipe my tears and fold my arms across my chest.

“Yes Muzi, I’m crying. I’m crying because I’m confused and I feel unsafe and left behind. No one is telling me anything. You; my husband are not telling me anything and I don’t know what to do, how to act. Everything is changing and the one person who is supposed to be guiding me through this change, is shutting me out.” I bear my heart out to him

He tries to put a word in but I quickly interrupt him.

“Tell me how to cope with it? How?” he stares at me blankly.

“Come sit down.” he pulls me to the chairs.

I want to protest. I’m tired of hearing his sweet nothings and these half truths. I’m tired of it all, but I go anyway. He turns his body to face me and he holds my hand.

“I didn’t want to come to you with missing information, but I can see how much this is hurting you, so I’ll tell you, and stop keeping you in the dark.” he begins.

He stares at me intently, he wants an emotion or a reaction from me, but I keep my face straight because I don’t want to disturb him from telling me the real truth.

“I was drunk and high when I met those fake investors. They got me roped into that stupid pyramid scheme and I gambled with my father’s company, the Zungu legacy. I was obviously sober when I made the decision to work with them, but I didn’t know the kind of shit I was putting myself into. I tried to stop it when I was losing just a few thousands of Rands at a time, but it just kept getting worse and it got out of control. When you helped me get Mvelo on board, there was a bit of a change, most things I didn’t know were happening came into the light, I fired a lot of people, including Pearl, who was working closely with the black market investors to bankrupt me.” he takes a huge breath.

LACED

Zama said Pearl was in an accident? So was she fired or did she leave because of the accident that Zama spoke about?

“On the day you were arrested, MaNjilo was hijacked in my car by the same white car you claimed followed you, and our house was robbed and destroyed. That led me to believe that the target is not the business, and not me but you. The person that they want is you Nams, that’s why I have to protect you. That car that was following you, they wanted to kidnap you. They turned the house upside down because they thought I was there hiding after they realized my car was driven by MaNjilo. We are all in danger Nams, no one of us is safe out there.” my hands start to shake.

“Who are they?” that’s the question that’s burning my chest.

“That’s what Sbali and I are working on trying to figure out. But I came back here to tell you that we have to leave. We are going to a secret location, out the province, and we might have to take MaNjilo with us because she’s also in danger. It’s only going to be for a few weeks though.” it just keeps getting worse.

“Muzi I can’t just up and leave, I just opened a business, I need to be hands-on...” he interrupts me by kissing my hands.

“I know baby, but we have that all under control, Zuzile will overlook the business, Chrissy is also around, she would love to help. I know it’s not ideal and I know how much the Pamper Spot means to you; it your baby, but this is for your safety, out safety. I need you to believe in me.” he begs.

I now understand what they mean when they say marriage is about compromise. He compromised his safety for mine, the least I can do is compromise my time for business for his safety, our safety.

“When are we leaving?” he gives me a little smile.

“Tonight. I’m going back to Sbali now so I’m going to need you to pack our things. When I come back, we are hitting the road.” I just nod.

“With Zama?” I ask.

“Yes, with Zama baby.” okay.

I hope nothing is awkward. My life has actually turned into a movie.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Nambitha Zungu

“Travel safely. Please be careful on the road.” she says pulling me in for a hug.

It’s 1am, Muzi only came back 10 minutes ago and he is rushing me to go. Zama is already in the car, she’s sleeping in the back, wrapped in a throw. I don’t blame her, it’s so cold. I’m just as exhausted as she is, it’s been a long ass day, and I haven’t been able to sleep since Muzi left the second time.

Zuzile also pulls her brother for a hug, and she’s whispering something in his ear because he’s nodding.

“Please don’t worry about anything, take this time to relax.” That’s Mr Mfusi, squeezing my shoulder.

He’s not a man of many words so I’m shocked that he’s speaking to me.

“I’ll do just that.” I reassure him. He just nods.

“I will find these people and they will pay, I promise.” he says again.

This looks personal to him. How crazy is it that these strangers care so much about me? I feel cared about, loved.

“Thank you.” that’s all I can say.

Muzi says his goodbye to him before he takes my hand and leads me to the car. He opens the front seat for me, helps me buckle up like a little child before he goes to his side. In no time we take off, silence gracing the car.

I have a few questions to ask, but he doesn’t look keen to speak, in fact he looks so miserable.

“Whats wrong?” he asks.

Is he sensing me?

“With what?” I play dumb.

LACED

Of all people, I know more than anyone that you don't speak to Muzi when he looks this miserable because he will snap at you. I don't even want to begin.

"I know you want to ask something or say something, so say it." he says.

He sounds annoyed already.

"I don't want to annoy you." he scoffs.

I give him a side eye.

"Nambitha I don't need your petty drama right now." hayike!

"I didn't even say anything Muzi, you were the one that pestered me, I was keeping my questions to myself because I can see you are annoyed." he just keeps quiet.

I do the same, I'm not in the mood for his mood swings, I already have my own moods, I'm three days sex deprived.

I turn on the heater and cover my chest with my gown before turning my head to face the window.

I need to sleep.

"You can't sleep, you are going to make me sleepy." Muzi complains.

"Pull over and let me go to the back then." I'm not having it.

"Come on Nams." nope, I'm not having it.

Sleep it is then!

...

I'm sleeping in a comfy bed, and the last I checked, I was sleeping in a car, on a dreaded long drive to wherever we were set to go.

I sit up and scan my surroundings, it's a small cosy room, the bed is also smaller than my own bedroom, but the decor is gorgeous. Is this the hideaway house?

LACED

If it is so then I cannot believe I slept the whole way here and did not hear a single thing, I don't even remember being carried into this house. I roll out of bed and make my way out the door. As I stand helplessly in the hallway, I can hear chatter and laughter. I follow the sound and I feast my eyes upon Muzi and Zama.

They look cosy, both wrapped in blankets, drinking hot chocolate. The house is very warm, and the atmosphere is so light. I'm guessing it's still cold outside.

"Finally, you woke up." Zama says smiling at me.

I return the smile and I make my way to Muzi. He opens up the blanket for me and I snuggle tightly in his arms. I'm so tired, but I don't want to sleep anymore. I'm tired of sleeping.

"Are you okay?" Muzi asks, kissing the top of my head.

My hair is a mess by the way, I don't like looking like this.

"Yeah I'm okay. Where are we?" I ask.

"Mpumalanga. We arrived just a few hours ago. I didn't know you could sleep so much." I chuckle and Zama laughs.

"Nams how could you sleep throughout a 9 hour trip and continue to sleep another 2 hours after arriving." Zama asks still laughing.

"I don't know, I was tired I guess." I haven't really had proper sleep since I got out of 'jail'.

"Well I'm glad you are awake baby, you should get something to eat, shower and settle in." Muzi says.

"I'll make you something quick." Zama offers.

Muzi thanks her and as soon as she stands up, he cuddles me even tighter.

"You are one heavy sleeper." he mocks me.

"Okay Muzi I get it...I was tired." he lifts my face and kisses me.

"I missed you while you were sleeping." I've missed him in general, I haven't spent time with him in ages.

LACED

He continues to deepen the kiss, his hands running all over my body, getting me heated up and ready for action. I've lost myself so much that I forget that we have a third person in the house.

She clears her throat and we both startle like kids caught in the act.

"Sorry to interrupt, your food is ready." she puts the tray on the coffee table.

"Thank you." Muzi says before I can.

Now it's awkward, she's staring at me intently and I can't help but shake the feeling that she is jealous.

We had one night of absolute passion, and I had promised her more; another moment of passion to do more than we did the first time. I think she's still holding me to that.

"I'll be in my room." she says finally looking away from me.

As soon as she disappears down the passage, Muzi pokes me.

"You have strong sexual tension! When are you asking her?" is he crazy!

"First of all, husbands don't go around looking for the sexual tensions their wives have with other people, secondly, we just got here, it's already awkward, I don't want to make it worse by asking for a threesome." I whisper the last part and he just chuckles.

"I'm not an ordinary husband. And trust me, I wouldn't be this chilled if it was a man. I'd pay millions to see you getting it on with her." I just shake my head in disbelief.

I can't believe this is the person I chose to spend the rest of my life with.

"What millions? You don't have any." he tickles me.

"Uyaphapha, eat your food." he puts the plate on my lap.

It's barely the first day since we arrived here, if we are to stay for another week or two, we can't make it awkward on the first day. If she says no, the air will turn thick with tension and it will be unpleasant for all of us.

I'd rather not.

LACED

“You didn’t tell me what you found. If you guys came back so late then you must have found something lucrative.” he gives me a little smile.

“So the bastards went as far as registering a fake company to pull this off. The people that approached us were not the supposed directors. So we found the idiots that registered the company, got them to tell us who it is exactly that hired them to do this, and why.” that’s actually a breakthrough.

“And what did they say?” he chuckles.

“It’s a woman by the name of Samkelisiwe Zulu. At first I thought it was one of the girls I’ve screwed in the past and wanted revenge, for whatever reason they may, but as we dug deeper, we found that her name was used illegally and she doesn’t know anything about this company. So now Sbali is working on finding this Samkelisiwe and getting her to speak.” damn.

“Do you have a picture of her?” I don’t know, but that name sounds very very familiar.

“No I don’t.” shit!

And I don’t have a phone, I would stalk her on social media.

“What? Do you know her?” he asks excitedly.

“I don’t know. The name sounds shockingly familiar, I just don’t remember where I know it from.”

“There are a lot of Samkelisiwe Zulu’s in the country, we just were able to find her quicker because we had all her personal details like date of birth, ID number and all of that.” he’s not wrong, the name is very generic.

“How the hell did you get all of that?” that is super confidential information.

“Kabelo Mfusi is a powerful man.” Damn, okay!

“So am I ever going to get a phone?” because I’m really suffering.

This involuntary social media cleanse is not fun.

“You can use my phone if you want to call your dad, and keep up with the latest make-up trends, but for now, you can’t have your own.” Muzi really doesn’t rate me.

Not one single bit.

LACED

“Who said that’s all I do on my phone?” he gives me a wide smile.

“I know my woman.” that has me blushing.

I am his woman, it feels good to hear that. I put the plate of unfinished food on the coffee table and climb on his lap. I think I’ve waited long enough.

“Baby, we aren’t alone...” I shake my head for him to keep quiet.

In fact let me shut him up with a kiss. I can’t wait forever, it’s not like I’m a virgin again. I’ve missed this man, I don’t care whether the president is in the next room and could walk in on us, as long as I get what I need right now.

“Why are you wearing sweatpants with no underwear in the presence of another female?” I ask in between our kisses.

He just chuckles like I’m asking him something funny.

“I thought she’s only into girls.” he answer as he fondles with my breasts.

“That gives you no right to go around showing off my things, it’s my dick.” I reprimand him.

I gently start to stroke it, and he groans, biting my lips.

“Do we understand each other?” I ask, dominating him.

“Yes ma’am.” good!

He lifts my dress and fondles with my underwear and you can tell it’s getting in the way, frustrating him. He roughly rips through the lace with his fingernails. That hurt but it was a complete turn on, I’m not complaining. He puts his hands on my waist, grips on it and lifts me up to sit on it.

I feel a sense of familiarity when my walls stretch to accommodate him. He lets out a loud grumble, so much I have to cover his mouth. His eyes literally roll to their sockets.

“Don’t you dare cum, I’m going to kill you.” I whisper.

He chuckles lowly, more like a grumble.

“Oh baby I missed you!” he flexes his hip and starts to fuck me.

That’s it. I also start matching his rhythm, and I feel his tip gently grazing on my lady spot. He’s already covered in sweat, his face is turning red

LACED

like a tomato, but I don't blame him, we didn't take off our clothes, we have a blanket over us and heater is on. We are adding our own heat by doing this.

"You are so perfect." he says stroking my face.

I can feel my cheeks heating up, or is it the warmth in this room. I'm trying to regulate my moans but my man has a magical penis and how could you possibly keep it down? He shuts me up with a kiss when he sees that it's starting to escalate.

He guides my waist to grind on him faster as his pace slows down and that quickly sends me to the edge, making me cum so hard I scream out his name.

He watches me as my whole body trembles uncontrollably, and he just laughs.

"You good?" he asks with a smirk.

I just offer him a nod. I can't possibly speak after that!

...

Muzi is out getting us supper, I've been trying to avoid Zama since Muzi left, but we share the same bathroom, I just ran into her in the passage. She was going there as I was coming out from showering.

The first thing she did was block me from leaving, she was breathing down my neck.

"How long are you going to avoid me?" she asks, sounding very jealous.

"I'm not avoiding you." I say trying not to look her in the eye.

She's following my eyes. Nambitha you are horrible at pretending.

"I heard you fucking him, you could have at least had the decency to keep it down." I clear my throat.

"He's my husband, I'm allowed to have sex with him, and scream as loud as I want."

LACED

“Not when I’m in the next room. Not when you know I want you. How do you think it makes me feel hearing you scream like that for another person that isn’t me?” I shake my head.

“I don’t owe you anything Zama...” she interrupts me.

“No, you do. You owe me one more night of pleasure like you promised. I want you to sit on my face and scream my name when I eat you out. That’s what you promised.” she speaks so seductively.

Yes she’s still holding me to it!

“Muzi knows about us.” I blurt out hoping it will shake her.

Instead she gives me a big smirk.

“Even better then, now we can share you, and no one has to be jealous.” I’m not a possession.

I remember Muzi’s words from earlier, how he said he’d pay millions to see us fucking.

NO! I’m not easy.

“I’m not an item you two can just pass around.” I say firmly.

She chuckles.

“Fine. We will see how far you keep up this act.” that sounds like a threat.

She’s using this against me because she knows that I’m sexually attracted to her. I have never felt like this before for a woman, but after that night, I haven’t been able to get her out of my mind. She’s such a sexy woman.

“If you keep avoiding me, I’m going to personally ask my boss to give me the right to taste it once again, I know he won’t say no.” damn!

That would be worse then me just allowing her to take me because Muzi is going to bring up this threesome shit.

Deep down, I’m afraid of doing it. I may be a little bit of a freak, but not to the extent of fucking two people at once. All I know I was taught by Muzi, and he has never showed me this side before. Where would we even begin?

LACED

Yoh Thixo! The pressure is getting worse and I have no way to run away from this.

CHAPTER TWENTY

This place is arid. It's extremely wintry and miserable for all of them. They aren't even allowed to go anywhere.

Nambitha feels like she's going to lose her mind. The experience feels ten times worse for her because she has no social interaction with the world, her phone was taken away, all she can do is binge watch movies and series, and occasionally speak to Zuzile or Chrissy, who have suddenly become her friends. But they only call her from Muzi's phone.

Muzi spends most of his time working, he locks himself up in the room for hours and busies himself on the laptop, taking endless calls, shouting orders and everyone. If he's not doing that, he's pounding Nambitha, much to Zama's annoyance.

And Zama...well she just keeps quiet, she observes everything in silence. They say silence is golden, and silence is the key to a sound mind. The aim with being here is to steer clear of trouble, and keep herself focused, and those around her distracted from what's important.

So far, she's done half the job, she has Nambitha right where she needs her. She may still be playing hard to get, giving her the run around, but sooner or later, she will fold. Once she gets her, getting Muzi distracted will be even easier.

And here she comes, wearing the longest face, a face that details the agony she feels.

"Why the long face Nana?" she asks her with a wide smile.

Nambitha looks at her sideways, and her attitude changes quite immediately.

"Don't call me that." she verbalizes her displeasure sternly.

So she doesn't like that.

"Why, it's nice and unique." Zama defends.

"My abusive ex used to call me that. I don't want to think about him." she briefly explains, dumping her body weight on the bed.

LACED

“I’m not him, and I never will be. I like the name Nana on you.” Zama plays with her cheeks.

Nambitha folds and starts to giggle.

“No Zama, I don’t like it.” she says, clearly smitten by the playful nature Zama is giving off.

“Where is Muzi?” Nambitha only rolls her eyes.

Zama chuckles.

“What? Trouble in paradise?” deep down it’s amusing, and she’s not trying to hide it.

“No, not really, but he’s annoying because he’s always moody, as if we aren’t all stuck in this place.” she pulls her closer.

Nambitha places her head on her lap and gets comfortable.

“I understand him, he’s living with a target on his back; that alone is frustrating. To add on to that, he had to leave his natural habitat, and he has to live with a random stranger in an isolated area, he’s not used to it. Just bear with him through this.” Nams sighs in distress.

“Everyone is just asking me to bear with him, yoh I’m so tired of it.” Zama smiles before she turns her face so she can see her clearly.

“Whenever you get tired, just come to me, I’ll try ease the pain.” Nams shakes her head sitting up.

“How do you ease this pain?” Zama cups her face.

“Like this...” he leans in and captures her lips in a kiss.

Nambitha enjoys it, in fact her whole body heats up because this is something she’s been yearning for, something she’s tried to stop herself from doing for a long time.

But it feels wrong still!

“Muzi is in the next room.” she says stopping it altogether.

“I don’t care. I want you.” Zama doesn’t give her a chance to contest, she bites her lip between her teeth and starts to suck on it gently.

LACED

Their hands don't remain in one place, they explore the crevices of their bodies, and their breaths get heavier with every passing second. Nambitha's mind is racing with thoughts, thoughts of Muzi who is in the next room who could barge in.

But the thoughts of him being a freak creep up and scream even louder at her. Nothing is stopping her from going to call him this very instant to come watch them, it would be free of charge, he wouldn't have to pay the millions he doesn't have. She quickly removes them though and focuses on what Zama is now doing to her body.

Clothes have flown and private parts are being explored. Nambitha is trying hard to keep her moans low as Zama gently fiddles with her wet folds, but Zama is not having any of that.

"Why are you holding back nana?" she asks gently stroking her nub.

Nams is so out of it she doesn't even care that she is referring to her the same way her ex used to. Zama pulls away from the hot kiss and continues rubbing her gently. She moans out, and tries to stop herself by covering her mouth. Zama removes the hand.

"Don't be naughty." Zama commands.

Nams giggles and tilts her head back, feeling hot and bothered. She starts to whine her waist as Zama sinks her fingers in her wet core, and sings a melody of praises for the feel of her soft fingers inside her.

The walls of this house are extra thin, so thin that Muzi who is sitting in his own bedroom, trying to focus on his pending work, cannot seem to concentrate on it because he suddenly feel hot and bothered from the sweet sounds of his love coming from the next room. He is quickly starting to feel horny as he listens to her soft moans.

He wishes he could watch it, watch them getting it on, but he doesn't want to make her uncomfortable. He can just imagine her beautiful face as she falls apart. He never believed her when she said she got it on with another woman, but now that he hears it, he's aroused. He's never longed for that threesome more than he does now.

He gets up from his bed, his dick standing at attention and tip toes down the hallway to the next room. The door is slightly ajar, he peeps his head in and watches them. His girl is sitting on Zama's face, she's grinding slowly and massaging her full boobs in a circular motion. His balls are tightening at the sight. They look so fucking sexy to him.

LACED

He won't disturb them because he knows that will make Nambitha so uncomfortable, and he won't expect her to dish out her vagina twice on the same day, so he's going to finish this off with his hand.

He's conflicted between doing it right here with the visual aids, but he won't be able to keep these bellows in.

"Fuck!" he mutters as he struts away from the door.

• • •

Nambitha walks into the room, shame flushing her face, tip toeing like she's guilty.

Muzi is lying face up, staring at the ceiling with his dick hard, the erection visible through his pants. That's the first thing that catches Nambitha's attention. She can't even stare at it, she looks away.

He couldn't go through with it, they were at it for at least an hour and he's been sitting here feeling all sorts of horny. He's so out of it, he doesn't even acknowledge her presence when she walks in.

"Manzini?" she says guiltily.

Muzi's eyes shift. Why is she using his clan names against him. She knows that shit gets to him.

"What do you want?" he sounds cranky, Nambitha thinks to herself.

"Hawu Muzi..." she doesn't even know what she wants to say.

She is battling with guilt though, and the tent on his front is not making it any easier for her. She goes to sit next to him, and places her hands on his chest.

"So you won't speak to me?" she asks in her seductive voice.

"Did you ask her what I asked you to ask?" that's a lot of asking in one sentence.

She lifts her eyes and directs them in every which way, except for his.

"So you cater to your needs but not mine?" he blackmails.

LACED

She climbs on top of his lap, guilt dressing her.

“I’m scared, but I know you want it so I’ll speak to her about it. I promise.” she says and leans down to kiss his lips.

“Seal that promise with good head.” he says pursing his lips.

“Anything for you Mr Zungu.” she says without hesitation.

She was going to do a quick, sloppy job that would leave Muzi floating on a cloud of ecstasy when she was done. With his level of horniness, he didn’t even need the cookie, as long as he busted a nut.

A soft knock appears on the door just as Nambitha is really getting into it. Muzi groans in frustration.

“Go away!” he shouts with a strained voice.

Nambitha can only look up at him and giggle. He looks so stiff, he needs to let go of this building tension.

But the person at the door doesn’t go away, in fact, she pushes the door and makes her way inside the room. As the two caught in the act scramble to look the least bit decent, she stares at them with a smirk.

“MaNjilo...” he says with a little bit of embarrassment flushing his face.

“I was here to find out if would allow me to join you two.” both their eyes widen like saucers.

Nambitha didn’t ask her anything. She still didn’t have the guts to do it although Muzi has been pestering her about it. Well Muzi is happy, but he’s shocked because in his head, Nambitha hadn’t said anything to her.

“I heard you guys speak about it...” embarrassment once again flushes Nambitha’s face.

“Are you sure?” Muzi asks her.

She smirks at them, then proceeds to nod and move closer.

Nambitha’s body tenses up as the realization hits her. This is happening and it’s going to happen now. Muzi on the other hand is feeling excited. He still hasn’t had his turn to cum, he’s looking forward to it, to the thrill of doing it with two women.

LACED

Muzi takes Nambitha's hand and makes her stand up. They share a moment of intense eye contact with Zama.

"We have to discuss boundaries and safe words. Have you done this before?" Muzi leads the conversation.

"Yes, I have." she confesses.

Nambitha can't contain her shock.

"I don't do derogatory terms. Don't call me a bitch or a slut, I'm not any of that. Also, I don't suck dick." she explains.

So this is really happening? Nambitha asks herself.

"Okay, I respect that. I have one only, and it should under no circumstance happen. No one is sticking their finger up my ass." Zama laughs.

Nambitha follows suit, but she already knew this about him, she's just being amused by Zama laughing about it. Muzi rolls his eyes.

"Got it boss." Zama says, still laughing.

They both turn to Nambitha, and they ask her what hers are. She just shrugs her shoulders.

"Well you have to have something you don't want." Zama says.

Nambitha stays clueless. In her defence, she likes it all. With Zama she likes it slow and sloppy, with Muzi, she likes it rough and dirty. Imagine getting both of that at once. She feels like she's going to lose her mind.

"I can't think of anything." she means it, her mind is blank.

"Safe words?" Muzi asks.

"Will we need them?" Zama asks.

Muzi smirks. He knows what he's doing.

"You will never not need them with Muzi." Zama only responds by rolling her eyes, causing Muzi to chuckle.

"Nams are you comfortable?" Nambitha just nods.

"Enough talking." Zama says taking off her top, exposing her perky tits.

LACED

Nambitha has seen them before, they look bloody good still. She can visibly see Muzi lusting over her, and that results in a minor pang in her heart, but she quickly gets rid of it. Muzi also removes his t-shirt and Zama quickly lifts her hand to touch his toned abs. That sends shivers down his spine, and their eyes connect.

She can't hold herself longer, she draws nearer and kisses his plump pink lips. They suddenly feel a strong sexual urge as their warm breaths hit against their skin. Nambitha watches them in disbelief, as they crescendo into their own realm. If she doesn't move quick enough, she will be left behind.

She quickly removes her sweater, un-clips her bra and runs her hand on Zama's back. That quickly signals Zama to move Muzi towards the edge of the bed. She's taking control of the kiss, and Muzi feels different being dominated by a woman, it's quickly turning him on. He sits on the bed and Zama breaks the kiss.

She then moves back and takes off his pants, and is left stark naked. Nambitha does the same, and Muzi looks at them in awe, like a child in a toy store.

"Touch each other." he instructs them.

They don't protest; whilst Nambitha reaches for Zama's nipples, she goes for her lips, and captures them in a kiss. She can clearly taste the muskiness of Muzi on her lips, she did after all interrupt her giving him head. Zama's hands start exploring her cookie, and she quickly separates her folds. She was doing this an hour ago, and she's doing it again, but she's not complaining at all, no not one bit.

Muzi is groaning like a happy bull. When Nambitha breaks the kiss, she opens her eyes to peak at him, and he's also playing with himself. The room has suddenly become hot, and the air is thick. She doesn't keep her eyes on him for too long because she is reveling on the marvelous work of Zama's magical touch. Their moans fill the room, and Zama looks at them, satisfaction dressing her face.

Zama's eyes stay looking at Muzi as he cums all over his hand, but continuing to please Nambitha who's moans keep growing needier and needier. When she's seen that Muzi has calmed down, she gently removes her finger from Nambitha's cookie. She wants this man now.

"I want you to eat me out." Zama says to him, he smirks.

"Come sit on my face beautiful." she grins.

LACED

Nambitha is in awe about how easily they communicate what they want. She's not used to this, but the best way to make a threesome work is to verbalize your wants and desires.

Muzi lies on his back and Zama goes to his side to do as she was told. When Muzi gladly opens up his arms for her, she squats on his face. He tightly grips on her thighs and she starts to whine her waist, releasing soft satisfactory moans.

Nambitha watches with her clit throbbing. She can feel her vagina itching for action as she watches them. She throws her morals out the window and begins to stroke Muzi's now hard dick. He groans, and his lips vibrate against Zama's other lips, causing her to scream out in absolute pleasure.

She climbs on his lap, and when she thinks he's ready, she slowly and gently lowers herself on his length. Her body gets shivers, and Muzi's toes curl as he feels her soft warm walls encircle him. He doesn't stop using his tongue to pleasure Zama, who is also taking control, moaning soundly. Nambitha also grates her hips in a circular motion and arouses herself further, making her a moaning mess.

Muzi's pleasurable grumbles are muffled by Zama wet pussy, but it has become a moaning competition as both woman pleasure themselves and the room gets even hotter. Zama is the first one to cum, riding her wave out by continually grating her hips. When she starts shaking, she collapses on the other end of the bed.

Muzi sits up and takes control of Nambitha, who he flips over, spanking her soft bum and begins to fuck her senseless. Zama gets turned on further by this, and uses her fingers to explore her already wet coochie. She wants the dick too now, she's ready for it. Muzi quickens Nambitha's orgasm by stimulating her clit, but she falls apart so hard she wets the whole bed, wetting his torso. It was only a matter of time.

It's hard to stop squirting, even when he pulls out and stimulates just her clit, her legs continually tremble and she squirts all over the sheets. Zama is in awe, Muzi's dick must be magical if she can lose her shit like this.

Nambitha is all worked out, she has nothing more to offer, and as she rolls over to recover, Muzi pulls Zama by the leg to bring her closer. He roughly spanks her ass before she lifts it up to welcome him. Her tight walls blanket his dick and he starts to fuck her slowly.

His pace begins to pick up and he grips on her braids, wrapping them around his fist. She screams out his name multiple time, indicating that she's

LACED

having the best time of her life, and that puts a smile on Muzi's face. That means he's still got it.

"Fuck! You have the best dick ever!" she cries out, tightening her walls around him.

"What's my name?" he grumbles, quickening his strokes from the excitement.

"Muzi! Oh FUCK, MUZI!" she screams as she creams all over his magical dick.

That doesn't stop him from going on, he needs his finish this, the other is down, one more to go. He takes a few more strokes, his skin violently slapping against hers as her ass jiggles. The view looks great from behind, and when he starts to press against her clit, her whole body shakes again and she has another orgasm rippling through her body.

He does the same right after her, spilling all his semen inside her as his body convulse from the pleasure. She's panting and humming sweetly at the same time as she recovers from that action.

What a pity she can't do that ever again.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Nambitha Zungu

Wow!

I can't seem to come up with better words to describe what happened last night, all I know is that it was wild as fuck! Marrying Muzi has to be the best decision I have ever made. Minus the bankruptcy and the stalkers.

We all slept in the same bed. We took advantage of the cold and cuddled together, it's not like we hadn't fucked the whole night.

I was the first one to fall asleep. I don't know how long they went on for but they surely did because they are still asleep. It's quite early in the morning, barely even 10'o clock, but I'm wide awake and I'm starving.

I get out of bed after deciding to go treat them to some breakfast. Although they wore me out, I had so much fun last night, just exploring the wilder side of life. It felt absolutely brand new.

I have all my ingredients out, I'm craving for the taste and smell of bacon. There's a lot of food in our fridge, Muzi makes sure of that by getting things delivered here because we don't step out even by mistake. After I finish making the drinks, I prepare to start frying, but I realize that I need a scissor to cut these packages. I could do it with a knife but I don't want to because I have the option not to.

I make my way to Zama's vacant room because I know she always uses the scissor for something, and she never, and I mean never returns it where she found it. It's like living with a little child sometimes.

As I am making my way out, I bump my pinky toe on the corner of the dresser and her toiletry bag spills over. I don't know what to attend to first, my aching toe or the mess I've made because I refuse to cut with a knife?

I start with the latter; I bend down to pick up everything and return it in the bag hoping I didn't mess up anything. I know I'm a neat freak, I always keep my things in a specific order that I don't want anyone to ruin. I stop midway when I see two passports inside. I open the one because of curiosity, and it has all her details, and a very shady picture of her, and it looks very recent.

LACED

I open the second one as I stand up to put back the bag on the dresser where I found it. The fastest information I got was Sibongile with a picture of Zama on the side; this picture being a little older than on the first one. I couldn't continue to see the rest because she crept up behind me and snatched it.

"Why are you snooping through my things?" she gets defensive and all of a sudden looks pissed.

Oh jeez!

"It was a mistake, I dropped your bag and things fell out." I explain.

"Next time leave it like that please, I don't like people touching my stuff." she says dismissively.

Now I won't even bother asking her about the other passport with another name, she's clearly pissed at me.

But that name sounds too familiar. Sibongile...

"What are you making for breakfast?" she drags me out my thoughts.

"Bacon, eggs and mimosas." I'm too lazy to make anything else.

"I'll come help you." oh maybe she isn't angry.

She leads the way to the kitchen.

"How do you feel about last night?" she asks smirking at me.

I just giggle and shake my head.

"It was great, I enjoyed every single second of it." she smiles.

"So you weren't jealous when Muzi and I were fucking?" that's such a specific question.

Was that the intention with that question? I'm confused, but I'm not going to lie to her, what's the point?

"At first I was, you guys seemed to have a connection, and the way you were communicating so effortlessly made me feel left out. But I quickly realized that if I wanted to participate, I had to hold my own. Watching you sitting on his face was...wow." she laughs.

LACED

“And watching you squirt, damn girl I didn’t know you could do that.” I cover my face in embarrassment.

I’ve always been a squirter, especially when Muzi is involved. Our sexual connect is intensely strong. There is nothing I enjoy more than being fucked down by him. If it were up to me, he’d stay inside of me forever.

“But I’m glad you enjoyed it, maybe next time you won’t have those feelings.” yeah hopefully.

But do I really want to do it again? Maybe with them I would, but I don’t think I’d want to share Muzi with any other woman.

We finish making breakfast over light conversations about last night, and Muzi still hasn’t woken up. I hope he’s still alive.

“Hayibo why is Muzi not waking up?” I ask her while taking off the apron.

“Big man is tired; we wore him out.” I laugh because she’s funny.

But Muzi doesn’t sleep till this late, ever. Even when he’s off work, he will wake up early and then maybe go back to bed, but never for this long.

“Let me go check on him.” we could never be too sure under these circumstances we are living in.

I get to the room and he’s up; that gives me relief. He’s talking to the phone and he is wearing the biggest frown on his face, listening attentively to what is being said to him on the other end. As soon as he sees me, he instructs me to close the door as quickly as I can, and signals me to come sit next to him.

He opens his arm for me and squishes me in his embrace, at least he looks happy to see me.

“So sbali what happens now?” okay he’s speaking to Mr Mfusi.

He removes the phone from his ear and puts it on speaker.

“Umakoti nontombazane must leave the house. But nothing must be suspicious, they must just take the car and go. And they must also not rush anywhere, do everything you need to do and then leave. Wena sbali stay there, they are coming.” Muzi visibly nods.

Who’s they and why are they coming? Why must I go with Zama and leave Muzi. I came with two people, I’m not leaving with one.

LACED

They quickly wrap up the call and he finally greets me with a big kiss. Not the right time Muzi.

“What does he mean they are coming?” I bombard him.

“Back-up is coming to help me take down these people, they found us.” they what!?

“And you are casually sitting in bed on a phone call? Are you crazy? What if they kill us?” he covers my mouth.

“Shh. You heard what sbali said right, don’t panic. Have your breakfast, shower, change and pack your things and go. I’ll be right behind you guys on the way back home.” I’m so confused.

He’s still covering my mouth, looking at me. I want to speak.

“Don’t make a noise.” he says quietly.

I just offer him a nod, I want him to remove his hand from mouth.

“Does Zama know they are coming?” I ask.

“No, and don’t you dare tell her. I’ll do the speaking.” this just keeps getting weirder.

But I nod. I was told to trust him.

“So who is it?” I ask him.

I’m sure he knows by now, if he was able to get their location, he knows who they are.

“Don’t worry yourself about that.” he dismissed me.

I don’t know how to feel about this. I know nothing about this sits well with me. In fact, I have a horrible feeling about it. But I guess my job is to trust my husband.

...

LACED

Muzi spoke to Zama like he promised, and she didn't seem to have a problem with relocating. I'm just convinced he lied to her, there is no way she would have agreed this easily if she knew the truth. That or I'm just the difficult one.

I've taken my shower, and I'm all packed up. I also packed Muzi's things because I'm going back with them. Zama is in the shower. She left her phone on the kitchen counter and it's been ringing non-stop.

At first I didn't want to answer, I didn't even bother to check who it was that was calling. But this person is so persistent, I finally get up to go check it out.

The caller ID is written *Bhuti* with a red heart next to it. I didn't know she has brother, but then again, I don't know a lot of things about Zama. I contemplate whether I should answer or not, but he finally hangs up.

As I am about to go back to my packing, it rings again, and it's still the brother. Fuck it I'm picking up, it might be an emergency.

"Zama's phone hello." I answer.

The the person on the other end just coughs.

"Where is she?" he asks in a hoarse voice.

It sounds very familiar; the voice I mean. And he's quite rude, what happened to greetings?

"She's showering, I'll tell her to call you back." I explain.

"No, take it to her now." I can't help but feel like the person on the other end, the so called brother, is trying too hard to disguise his voice.

His voice sounds strained, like he's holding back on something.

Maybe I'm going crazy.

"Okay please hold." I walk to the bathroom.

When I knock on the door, she opens, only wrapped in a towel. Looks like she hasn't even started showering.

"Phone call." I say handing her the phone.

LACED

I see a little panic on her face when she sees who it is that is calling her. She snatches the phone from my hand and closes the door on my face.

I'm not going anywhere, I want to hear this conversation. I know it's none of my business, but I'm already suspicious, and she had to make it worse by panicking when I handed her the phone. I place my ear on the door and listen. It's a little hard to make out what she's saying because she's whispering but the door is thin.

"We are leaving soon." okay, nothing suspicious there.

She's updating her brother about her whereabouts, that's very normal.

"I'll sort them out okay, relax." them? Who is them.

"Are you done packing?" Muzi startles me by poking my sides.

I almost scream, and he just laughs like it's a big joke. I don't return the gesture, nothing about what he just did is funny. I instead push him into our room and close the door.

"I don't know if I'm crazy but Zama is acting weirdly." he frowns.

"What do you mean she's acting weirdly?"

"While you guys were asleep, I was in her room looking for a scissor, and I bumped my toe on the dresser. That made her toiletries fall and inside was two passport books. I curiously opened them, and just as I was about to open the second one, she came in and snatched them from my hand; violently at that." he rolls his eyes.

"Why were you opening them nawe mamgobhozi." this man doesn't rate me.

"Come on Muzi! Why would she have two passport books? And another thing, they have two different names but with her picture." okay now he's starting to hear me.

"What was the name on the other one?" he asks more seriously this time.

"Sibongile, I didn't see the surname though because she snatched it..."
Fuck!

FUCK! Sibongile is Nkululeko's sisters name! That changes everything.

"Muzi borrow me your phone, now!"

LACED

“What’s on your mind?” he says reaching for his phone.

I don’t answer him, I just take the phone. I used the fake account I had created on his phone and went to Nontando’s Instagram. I’m searching for the list of followers. I’m going on everyone’s profile with the surname Dlamini.

“What’s wrong!?” he shouts.

It’s my turn to shut him up.

“Sibongile is Nkululeko’s sister’s name.” I whisper.

His eyes bulge out. He quickly makes me turn the screen towards him. There’s one profile in particular, it looks like a finsta account. I tap on it and it’s private as expected.

“Shit, I think this is hers.”

“But baby how sure are you that Zama is related to your ex, seeing the name Sibongile is not enough evidence for you to conclude that it is the same person.” he’s right, I don’t dispute that.

But my gut feeling is coming on strong right now. The voice of the brother on the phone just now was quite weird. I know Nkululeko’s voice very well, whether it’s over the phone or in person. I’m just not sure if that was his because like I said, it sounded disguised.

“I don’t know Muzi. You also don’t want to tell me who it is that’s behind this whole thing! It might be him.” he rubs his head in frustration.

“Of all the names that came up, your ex’s wasn’t one of them, so I don’t know how he could be involved.” shit!

“What names came up?” I’m on a mission now.

“The most prominent one was Samkelisiwe Zulu, her signatures were on everything.” I made a mistake of not searching this person before.

I’m not letting that chance slip again.

“Do you know what she looks like?” he shakes his head no.

“Only Sbali knows because he was the one who interrogated her.” I’m asking because so many matches came up.

LACED

It could be any one of these women here. But one in particular stands out. I remember this lady from somewhere. I continue to scroll through her posts and boom, here is my answer!

“Samkelisiwe Zulu is the name of Nkululeko’s baby mama! Nothing you can say now will convince me that he’s not involved Muzi!” I don’t know how I feel.

He takes the phone and looks at the pictures.

“It can’t be a coincidence Muzi.” he just heaves a long sigh.

“I’m going to call sbali. This throws our whole investigation off. If your ex is really involved then he really knows how to cover his tracks because nothing is pointing back to him so far.” he all of a sudden sounds stressed.

“Just get ready and go Nams, these people are coming and it’s going to turn dangerous.” oh hell no.

“I don’t trust Zama anymore, I can’t travel with her.” he shakes his head.

“Nambitha now is really not a good time to be stubborn.” but I’m not being stubborn.

I have a really terrible feeling about this and I can’t shake it off.

“What if something bad happens to me?” he opens the drawer behind me and takes out a phone.

“You have to go. You will be safer out there than you will be here, alright. Here is a phone, it has everything, my number is saved and it’s loaded with airtime. If you see anything weird on the road, call me.”

“No Muzi, I can’t go!” he’s not listening.

He shoves the phone in my hand.

“Go finish packing, and not a word to Zama about this, do you understand.” he’s so firm with me, I don’t even have room to protest.

But I’m not going to change my mind. I have a terrible feeling about this, and I hope by the Grace of God that Muzi is not throwing me in the sea to swim with the sharks because I will drown.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Nambitha Zungu

The whole point was not to rush, but we found ourselves being forced to get in the car, almost leaving some of our belongings behind. Muzi instructed me to drive, which further threw me off because I didn't even see the way here, I was asleep.

Zama was kind enough to turn on the GPS because she is still under the impression that I don't have a phone. If there is one thing Muzi drilled into my head, it's the fact that I should not say a word of this to Zama.

We are both quietly just listening to the music as we drive. I'm lost in my own thoughts, too occupied to speak. It's a long journey to Margate from Mpumalanga. For all that I know I could be travelling with Nkululeko's sister, and last I checked, Nkululeko wanted to kill me.

How sure am I that his sister doesn't want to give back the same revenge for his brother. Sibongile and I never even met, Nkululeko hardly ever even spoke about her, he just mentioned once in passing that he had a sister the same age as me. However looking at Zama; she looks nothing like Nkululeko. She's dark skinned yes, but she's beautiful, and none of her features resemble Nkululeko's. That puts my thoughts at war with my intuition. I don't know what to believe at this point.

I think we've been driving for almost an hour in complete silence. This place we are driving in is so bare, the only thing you can see are mountains and land. We are finally in a lively area, there are a few houses and pit stops.

"Can you pass by a garage, I want some snacks." she speaks for the first time.

"Alright." I can also use this time to stretch my legs.

The next garage is about 5 minutes away, and I find myself speeding to get there as fast as I can. I'm already exhausted and we've only driven for an hour, how am I going to be at the end of the full trip!?

When we get there, Zama gets out and leaves her bag, only taking some cash and her phone. I also get out of the car to stretch and get some fresh air, but I quickly get back inside because it's chilly. Winter here is not kind.

I fish for the phone Muzi gave me and I turn it on. I call him immediately.

LACED

“Why did you guys stop?” that’s the first thing he asks.

So he’s tracking us?

“Zama wanted some snacks and I needed to stretch. How did you manage driving such a long distance?” he just chuckles.

“You’ve only driven for an hour, you haven’t even left Mpumalanga Nams. Don’t complain too much.” yeah right, I’m not built like him.

“You haven’t picked up anything suspicious so far?” he asks.

“No, nothing yet. But can you believe that we have not breathed a word to each other since we left?” it’s actually unbelievable.

Yeah sure we aren’t that close, we’ve fucked yes, but not close, but it’s so weird to not speak. Like we are strangers.

“Keep it like that. You are suspicious of her, and I don’t trust you to keep it together, so rather you keep quiet.” oh wow.

“Muzi you treat me like a 5 year old.”

“No I know you baby. Don’t force anything, just keep quiet. If you guys stop again, make sure you call me. She shouldn’t see the phone.”

“I’ll make sure she doesn’t don’t worry. I’ll call you later ke, bye.” I say.

I’m a little jumpy. Zama is taking long, but she may appear, so I’d rather hang up now before I get caught.

“Stop acting weirdly! Bye baby, I love you.” there he goes, putting me in that awkward corner once again.

“Me too!” that’s all I could say.

He chuckles and drops the call. I still can’t say it, he has to understand.

I stash the phone and sit and wait for Zama. I look to her side and see her handbag just sitting there. I’m so tempted to look inside. I scan the coast and see no one in sight.

I keep my eyes on the store as I put my hand inside the bag and fish for some evidence. The passports are in here!

LACED

I take them out and quickly read the second one, the one I didn't get to read.

Bingo! I wasn't crazy! She really is Sibongile Dlamini, Nkululeko's sister!

But here she comes, fuck! I put them back inside the bag as quickly as I can, my heart beating loudly in my ears. She has her hands full so she asks me to open for her. My hands are trembling, but I compose myself and I open for her. She climbs in the car with a big smile.

"I got a little carried away, but now we don't have to stop again unless it's for a bathroom break." she says placing the plastics at the back.

Look at her pretending to be sweet with me, bloody witch. I try to grab her bag off the seat so she can sit properly, but she quickly snatches it. I can't help but raise my eyebrow.

"I'm just trying to help." she looks way too guilty.

I don't know how I'm going to get this information across to Muzi. I suddenly feel unsafe all over again.

"Please don't touch my things." I didn't understand before, now I understand.

I keep my mouth shut though and take the takeaways in her hand, and she sits properly.

Back to silence we go. Maybe Muzi was right, if I open my mouth, I'm going to call her out for her shit.

● ● ●

She keeps receiving calls and some she ignores.

Some she takes, and speaks in codes, with the hope that I don't understand. She's lucky I don't, but the more calls she gets, the edgier she gets, and the unsafer I feel.

LACED

I need to call Muzi right now, and the next garage isn't for the next 10 minutes. I don't want to act jumpy because she will be on to me, but my temperature is rising.

"Where are you going?" she asks when I take the road leading to the garage.

She sounds threatening.

"I need to pee, I'm going to the garage." I say.

"No, don't go to a garage, stop here." she instructs.

"On the side of the road? No I'm not doing that." I absolutely refuse to stoop that low.

NEVER! What am I? Two years old? No!

I step on the accelerator so I can get to the garage quicker.

"Nambitha you are deviating from the route." she shouts.

That makes me suspicious, what difference does it make if I take this way?

"But I need the toilet, as if you would pee on the side of the road." now I really need to call Muzi.

Her phone starts buzzing. My heart starts racing immediately. I look at the screen, and it's written Nontando. SHIT! Are they following us?

She looks at me looking at it and she switches it off.

"The GPS said we must use that road, so when you are done, you are going to go back on it, I don't want to get lost in a place like this." I'm not even going to answer her.

I can see the garage, so I increase the speed, I pray that I don't get too many speeding tickets. When we arrive there the first this I do is pat down my seat to find my phone.

"What are you looking for?" shit!

I forgot she's not supposed to see it.

Think of something Nambitha, think.

LACED

“Tissue, I had some pocket tissues here somewhere and I can’t find them now. You know these bathrooms never have tissue.” I try not to sound nervous.

“I have a roll in my bag, must I go take it?” she offers.

“Yes please.” good, she can give me some space.

She gets out the car and goes to the boot. I quickly look for the phone and I find it under the seat, and put it inside my jeans, not my pocket, in my jeans, and cover it with the hoodie I’m wearing, Muzi’s hoodie.

She’s back, she hands me the roll of tissue and I only thank her before getting out the car and rushing to the bathroom. I know I shouldn’t be leaving her alone for too long because she may be plotting my death, but I have to call Muzi, I can sense the danger looming over my head.

I get into a stall and lock it before taking out the phone and calling him. He answers on the very first ring.

“What did you find?” he sounds like he’s also on the road.

“She is Sibongile, I found her passport and she’s Nkululeko’s sister. She keeps on getting these shady calls and she’s speaking in codes, I can’t piece together what she’s saying, I feel unsafe Muzi.” tears start blinding my vision.

“Okay baby, don’t cry. You are safe. Just keep this call connected. Do you have your Buds with you?” damn, I don’t know!

“I don’t think so, I didn’t think I would need them since I didn’t have a phone.”

“It’s okay, just keep it on you. I’m not going to hang up. Put it in your bra or something.” I shake my head and chuckle.

“Okay, I’ll do that. Let me go back before she gets suspicious.”

“Be calm, relax, I’ve got you and I love you.” I nod like he can see me.

It’s like he can feel that I am panicking. My heart is sitting in my throat, I can feel it, and my armpits are sweating; it’s as if the cold winter weather has turned into a sunny summer’s day.

I carefully stuff the phone in my bra after turning down the volume to avoid problems. I hope he can hear clearly from here, his favourite place to be, my boobs.

LACED

I walk out the stall and wash my hands so I don't look too suspicious. When I make my way back, she's outside smoking a cigarette, like brother like sister.

Why is this girl suddenly showing me her true colours? I didn't know she smoked? In fact, the whole time we were in Ermelo she never not once smoked. She puts it out when I walk closer and gets in the car.

Shit now the whole car smells like nicotine. I have no room to complain, I get back on the road, and get on the other route, the one she didn't want me to use. The GPS immediately reroutes, much to Zama, or should I say Sibongile's irritation.

"No, why are you taking the wrong route?" she's asks feeling agitated.

"It's not wrong, the GPS agrees with me."

"But that way was quicker."

"What's the rush? It's not like we have anywhere to be. We can use this time to get to know each other, we've fucked, but I know nothing about you?" she clears her throat.

Cat got her tongue I see. I wonder what Muzi is thinking. I'm shitting my pants with fear, but I'm not going to show her.

"Nambitha go back on that route." she says more sternly.

I should be scared, in fact that should have ran bells in my head.

"No!" I shout unintentionally.

Oh she's not happy with that.

The roads are quiet behind us and ahead of us. If anything happens to me, I'm fucked.

"Get out and let me drive." not even by mistake.

"Why? What do you want to do to me?" I courageously ask.

I think I set her off by that because she grips on the steering wheel and swerves the car.

"Zama stop it!" I scream.

LACED

The devil is finally out. The car is skating on the road like it's on ice. She's furiously gripping on the steering wheel, and doesn't seem like she's planning on letting it go.

"FINE! You are going to get us killed please!" I plead with her.

The tears are freely falling on my face. She stops and I immediately switch off the car, and thank God that I didn't just lose my life.

I immediately open the car door and get out. She does the same and now I'm supposed to go back to the passenger seat.

I have this strong urge to take off running, maybe try to get some people to help me. I can't even speak to Muzi, he can hear me, but I can hear him. I'm in danger. I don't know what this crazy human being will do to me, clearly they have something waiting for us at the end of this route.

I let my intrusive thoughts take over and I take off running, making sure to hold the phone safely as I run.

She's following me, I can hear her footsteps behind me, but I'm too scared to even turn around because that will slow me down. I know if I stop, my heart will stop from fear of what she will do to me if she catches me.

I'm beginning to regret running, but I don't let that stop me because if I can get someone to help, I'll be safe.

"SOMEONE HELP ME!" I scream at the top of my lungs.

It's futile, there are no houses here, just vacant land.

"Nambitha why are you running away?" she's still chasing me.

When I turn around, she's so close by, I feel the urge to give up running because she's going to catch me anyway.

"Muzi I don't know if you can hear me but she's going to kill me, I can feel it." I cry out into my chest.

I trip on something and almost stumble and fall on my face, but I use my palms and land on my knees. That's definitely going to hurt later, but right now, right now, I've just jumped into the hands of my killer.

She picks me up from behind and puts me on her shoulder.

"You are not going anywhere!" she says through gritted teeth.

LACED

“Please let me go, please I beg you! I never did anything wrong to you.” I plead as he walks with me on her shoulder.

In fact, she’s stomping angrily, huffing and puffing like a wolf. I can’t stop crying, I’m starting to hyperventilate. I’m getting flashbacks of that day her brother did the exact same thing.

I start to shake my body violently to free from her grip, but the fucking female is so strong I can’t even move. Instead, the phone that was tucked inside my boobs falls out and smashes on the tar.

At first she doesn’t notice, but when I involuntarily scream, she turns back and see it. She doesn’t think twice before smashing it with her foot.

“Your stupid husband won’t save you this time.” the phone is in pieces.

I doubt Muzi will find me now.

I’m disappointed to see that I didn’t even run that much of a distance, we are quickly back at the car.

She really doesn’t care about me. I see that in the way she violently throws me into the front seat.

“Why were you running Nana?” she puts emphasis on Nana.

Damn I don’t understand how I never figured this out sooner, I’m so stupid.

“What did I do to you?” that’s all I want to know?

I know I might not make it out alive, but I want to know what it was that was so bad that I did to her for her to hate me so much.

She doesn’t answer, instead she pulls the seat belt and makes sure I’m secured to it.

“Please...I’m begging you, please let me go.” I beg.

She chuckles and closes the door. She rounds the car and goes to take the drivers seat. Before she starts the car she pulls something out and puts it on her lap.

Oh dear lord it’s a gun.

“Try a stunt again.” she says non nonchalantly.

LACED

All I can do now I cry silently and pray someone finds me before they end me.

I really shouldn't have taken her with me, I should have listened to my gut.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Nambitha Zungu

We are still driving, we've been driving for 20 minutes. I've been staring at the clock since we left, counting the minutes till Muzi comes to help me.

I hate him for putting me in this situation, even when I clearly told him that I feel unsafe. My instinct was completely right, and I'm never not going to listen to it ever again.

"You know when Nontando told me about you, I didn't think you'd be this gullible." she speaks.

She hasn't spoke since we took off, well at least not to me.

She was speaking to Nontando, unashamedly at that, on speaker phone saying that she's got me, and narrating how I tried to run away. I listened to them laughing about it, and I realized that I was toe to toe with the devil.

I'm still trying to hold on to the hope that Muzi will save me, but that thread is looking very thin, and I'm dangling at the end of it.

"You fucked my brother up!" she shouts, startling me in the process.

I fucked him up? ME? If anything HE FUCKED ME UP!

Nothing will ever convince me that I ruined Nkululeko's life, not when he was the one abusing me, both emotionally and physically. He stripped me of all my dignity as a woman and tried to kill me! I'm sorry; I can't let her tell me that shit.

"You weren't even there! You don't know what happened between us!" I scream loud enough so it registers in her little head.

Nkululeko is no where close to being a victim!

"I will blow your brains out if you speak to me like that again!" she lifts the gun and I quiver in fear.

Guns and I have a terrible history, and it's all because of Nkululeko. I remember when I found out that Muzi kept a gun in the house, I made him get rid of it. He preached safety blah blah blah but I didn't care. The sight of it repulses me.

LACED

“He lost his job at the royal palace because of you! He could no longer afford to take care of me and I had to drop out of varsity.” how is that my fault?

Last I checked, Nkululeko was a qualified accountant by the time he quit working at the palace. In fact, he was driving a whole BMW and lived in Durban in an estate. That’s where he was going to take me the day he threatened to kidnap me. I don’t know what happened after that, but I had absolutely nothing to do with it.

“Nkululeko quit! He didn’t lose his job. It’s also not my fault that he got banished from Zululand because that’s what he gets for being an abusive raping asshole!”

“You know how to run your mouth huh, let’s see how you will do when he takes his revenge.” his revenge?

Is this not already his revenge?

OH Muzi now would be a good time to pop up and save me.

She goes hard on the accelerator and we speed through the quiet roads. It’s so quiet I’m beginning to think it’s also staged.

“You will pay for everything you did.” she says.

I need to save myself, I need a way to get away. I could jump staff while the car is moving, but she’s speeding, I’m going to die trying. The other option is to take the gun.

It’s going to be an intricate operation I have to carry out. I can’t even handle a gun, last time I held it I was shaking like a chicken and I will never forget the look that was on Nkululeko’s face as he watched me. He knew I didn’t have the guts to do it, I knew it too.

But I’m not that girl now. I’m not going to show her my weak side, no matter how scared I feel. I know she won’t fight me for it because she has to concentrate on the road, but you can never be too sure with Zama, or Sibongile.

First up, remove this seat belt. I have to avoid having it make a click sound. At least if it’s loose, I can easily reach to her side.

And I do it successfully without her noticing. I take in a deep breath and say a little prayer before I take the next step which could either save or end my life. I know God is probably wondering where I was this whole time.

I swear God if you spare me now, I’ll pray more.

LACED

Well here goes nothing!

I reach for the gun and she startles so much the car swerves on the road. I'm using both hands but she's also gripping on with one hand while trying to drive with the other.

"You bitch!" she shouts.

I'm not going to give up easily. I know the gun is not cocked, if I want to really get it, I have to find a way to do that.

"Don't make me kill you before we get to Nkululeko, please don't give me the pleasure of doing that." so they are a family of killers.

I'm not giving up, if I don't save myself now, I won't make it.

Click!

Okay, it's active. It now all lies in my hands. We are still squabbling for the gun, and she luckily hasn't stopped driving so she's fighting with one hand while trying to get the car to drive. This is a very dangerous position we are in, if this gun goes off, it can shoot either one of us.

I put my one of my fingers on the trigger and pull, I thought I was aiming for her shoulder but it shatters the window. I scream, so does she!

"Are you crazy!" I'm currently running on adrenaline.

I know the moment this is all over, I'm going to shut down completely. I'm subjecting myself to a lifetime of trauma.

She's losing control of the car, it's going into the rail. I'm a crying mess, and I'm trying to scream for her to take control. I would let go of the gun and steer the car in the other direction but if I do that, she will shoot me. Nothing is an option at this point.

There is a helicopter flying above us, and there is a few cars driving behind us, some speeding past. I don't know what to think, is it her people, are they here to finish me off?

That gives me even more strength, I reach for the trigger and pull it as hard as I can. Bullets are flying, and I have my eyes closed shut.

The car crashes and a hard collision happens, the gun goes flying out both our hands. I feel a stinging in my thigh and the smell of blood all over the car takes over.

LACED

*

“Baby can you hear me?” he’s slapping my cheek violently.

There are different sounds all around me, honks, alarms and a loud ringing I can’t fathom, it’s annoying me to filth.

I won’t even begin to explain the smells and the pain I feel all over my body. I attempt to open my eyes, but everything is blurry. I can see his figure stand over me, I just can’t see any of his features.

I want to know what happened, but I feel like I’m going back into a state of unconsciousness.

• • •

“She’s going to be okay, she just sustained a few head injuries and lost some blood from the bullet wound.” well that explains the pounding in my head.

It doesn’t smell like a hospital, so where the hell am I? My whole body is aching as I try to move my arm. I want to signal to whoever it is that is being spoken to that I’m awake. I’m trying to open my eyes but the speed of light coming in is too much for my already pounding head.

“Looks like she’s awake.” the unfamiliar voice says.

Someone is holding my hand and breathing in my face.

“Baby?” it’s Muzi.

I feel tears burning my closed eyes. He did it, he found me.

“Take it easy on her there Muzi.” the unfamiliar voice again.

I feel his cold hands on my face. He’s wiping my tears. I’m too afraid to open my eyes.

“You are safe Nams, and I’m never going to leave you again, I promise.” he sounds like he’s also crying with me.

LACED

I want to see his face. I flutter my eyelids, and embrace the light, although it hurts my eyes. He looks at me and his eyes have red rings around them.

“I’m going to kill him, I promise, I will.” he speaks through gritted teeth.

“I’m so sorry I let you go out there alone...I...” his breathing hitches.

He’s feeling a multitude of emotions at once, he doesn’t know what to say first, and leave for later.

I try move my hand to put it on his, but I’m struggling. He instead takes it in his and kisses it multiple times. I use my fingers to touch his beard; he has a beard now.

“Muzi.” I try to speak.

It feels like I haven’t spoken in forever.

“Yes baby, I’m here, I’m not going anywhere.”

I have so many questions, so many damn questions. But first, I need some water, this awful taste in my mouth is disgusting. He gets me a glass and helps me drink. My head is still sore.

“Where is this place?” I form a sentence.

This doesn’t look like a hospital.

“Somewhere safe, where no one will hurt you.” okay I don’t need him to be speaking in codes.

“Where is Zama?”he shakes his head.

“Don’t worry yourself about meaningless people...” no, I want answers.

“Muzi tell me.” I demand.

He doesn’t look keen on telling me, but he sighs hopelessly.

“She’s dead. You shot her in the neck, and you shot yourself in the thigh.” my whole skin crawls.

“I don’t want to talk about this now, I just want you to be better.” he looks traumatized at the very least.

LACED

I'm not going to force him to speak if he doesn't want to, but I need the answers and he's going to have to give them to me some day..

So I killed a person?

"It's not your fault baby, you did what you had to do to protect yourself." yeah right.

I don't know how I'm ever going to ever get through this, ever.

"Uphi uNkululeko?" this he owes me.

I need to know where he is.

I see him ball up his fists, anger flashing in his eyes. I don't like this side of him.

"I'm going to kill him, with my bare hands Nambitha I'm going to end his miserable life." I grab his fisted hand.

He looks up at me. All I can do is shake my head no at him.

"Don't." he looks confused.

In fact I see another layer of anger adding on to the anger he already feels.

"No Nambitha, I let him go the first time, I'm not letting him go this time; I won't forgive myself if he pulls another shit stunt like this." I continue to shake my head.

"You are not like him, you don't kill people. That's not my Muzi..." his eyes soften, but not completely.

"Muzi...we can't both be killers." he sighs.

"Leave it to someone else, but please Muzi, I don't want you to be tainted."

"But Nams..."

"Please promise me Muzi. I don't ask a lot from you..." he raises his eyebrow.

Okay, I ask for a lot, all the time. He chuckles.

LACED

“Please...” I plead.

He rubs my cheek and softens his eyes. His stare is filled with so much concern, but behind the concern, I see so much love. I feel so loved by this man.

“I’ll do it because I love you, even though you don’t love me.” I shake my head and laugh.

“Who said I don’t?” he laughs.

“Say it then.” okay he has me.

“Say ‘I love you Sengwayo’.” I laugh and shake my head.

“Ewe no!” he laughs with me and kisses my lips before he kisses my nose and my forehead.

I feel it, I’m just scared to say it, and I don’t know for how long I will be afraid. He just has to bear with me. I will be ready one day.

● ● ●

I’ve been on bed rest for three days now. Muzi takes care of me, he treats me like an egg, and it’s so amazing to watch. It is jocose at times, but such a pleasing sight to behold.

I still don’t know where we are. I hardly leave this room. He sometimes takes me out to the balcony for some fresh air, but even from there, all you can see are trees. He doesn’t want to tell me, every time I ask, he says we are safe and no one will find us.

I’m chilling in bed watching a movie on a laptop he gave me. At least I’m not that bored, when I’m not watching movies, I’m sleeping because I battle with a headache. I suffered a really bad head injury, luckily I don’t have any internal bleeding, but the headaches are terrible.

The door opens and the first thing I see is a big bouquet of roses.

“Mrs Zungu.” it’s Zuzile’s voice.

I haven’t had any visitors except for Muzi. I didn’t know that this place was actually not abandoned land.

LACED

And surprise surprise, Christine is behind her.

“Oh we are so happy to see you alive!” Zuzile says rushing to be by my side.

She gives me a hug, careful not to hurt my sensitive head.

“Dying is not an option for me.” I said closing the laptop.

This movie will catch me later.

Chrissy also comes to give me a hug. The last time I saw her was before my life went downhill. They both laugh at my statement.

“You are not the dying type my darling. How are you feeling?” they both make themselves comfortable on my bed.

I feel so welcomed by these ladies. They’ve given me something I wish I had with my mother and sisters. I still hate myself for betraying Chrissy like I did. If I had given her a better opportunity to get to know her, I wouldn’t have done what I did.

“I’m better than I was three days ago, and Muzi is here, taking care of me. I’m happy it’s all over.”

“And how is your head?” Chrissy asks.

“The headaches are too much, but I have painkillers.” they both look at me lovingly.

“I was so worried sick about you. You know I couldn’t bare to even close my eyes at night knowing that they made you leave with that stupid girl.” I just shake my head.

It’s the mere fact that they knew she was involved. This whole time!

The only people who were in the dark were Muzi and I. Mr Mfusi knew, it was all his plan to get them. When he made us leave together, he was supposed to follow closely behind us before I even figured it out. The trap they had set up for us, was actually a trap for them.

When Muzi explained all of this to me, I was shocked. But I can’t blame him for anything, he was in the dark just like I was.

“I just wish they had told me, or Muzi at least, we both were in the dark.” I tell her.

LACED

“Yeah, when Kabelo gets a challenge, he does not rest until he cracks it, and that he did. I just wish you didn’t get hurt.” Chrissy is awfully quiet.

In fact, she’s just staring into space.

“Me too Ma, but at least I made it, that’s all that matters.” to think I gave myself to this girl.

I gave her my body, I shared my man with her. I’m repulsed at the thought. Next time I won’t be this ignorant.

There’s a knock that sounds on the door before it opens and Muzi walks in. He’s carrying a tray.

“I brought some snacks.” he says with a killer smile.

Yes, this has been him the past three days; feeding and spoiling me. I didn’t even know Muzi was capable of making such good food, and I’ve lived with him for 3 years. In fact, I never gave him the benefit of the doubt because he doesn’t look like someone that can be trusted with pots and pans. He has certainly proven me wrong.

It’s a cute cheese board with cold meats and some wine; my favourite

“Look at you, playing Triphina.” Zuzile says, sending us into a fit of laughter.

“Thank you Muzi, it looks delicious.” Chrissy says welcoming the tray.

I take the wine bottle first, I haven’t had a drink in days.

“Nope, not for you, I’ll bring your juice up now now.” he quickly takes the bottle from me.

“That’s unfair!” I sulk.

I know I’m on medication but I’m sure a glass or three won’t hurt. He comes and kisses my head.

“I love you!” I just roll my eyes.

He leaves the room and when I look at Zuzile and Chrissy, they are staring at me with heart eyes.

“The way you guys are so in love, it’s like you’ve only been married for a day.” Chrissy says.

LACED

Oh please, her and her husband are extremely clingy. Oh and yes, our relationship is still new, so we are in the lovey dovey phase

“Right! I love seeing my brother like this, I never thought I’d see him like this. Thank you Nambitha, thank you for sticking with him and believing that he is worthy of being loved because I know he has a lot of love to give.” he truly does.

Muzi is an amazing man and he has a big heart. Maybe I need to stop being so afraid of the past, and trust him with my love the same way he trusts me with his.

I owe him that much.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

He made a clear promise to Nambitha and he's not ready to lose her trust and break his promise. But they've been keeping him here for days now, and Kabelo is slowly growing frustrated with waiting. At this point, he said it's either Muzi does it like he said he wanted to, or he's going to take over, and it won't be fun when he does that. At least for anyone else who's watching.

He walks into the lounge and finds his sister and Kabelo sitting looking cosy. She's comfortably sitting on his lap while he holds a sweaty glass of whisky. They look like the power couple they are.

He left Nambitha sleeping upstairs, she was complaining about yet another headache, so he gave her pain tablets and cuddled her to sleep. He still feels terrible that all of that happened under his watch. The whole time he was speaking to her that day, he was trying very hard not to sound as panicked as he was feeling inside.

The thought of her not making it that day still haunts him. It could have easily been her that took the bullet to the head.

"Is she sleeping?" Zuzile asks, dragging him out of his thoughts.

"Yes, she was struggling though. I was telling Zweli that he must get her stronger pills." He explains as he takes his seat.

"But you are doing a good job by taking care of her, I'm proud of you baby brother, you've grown." Muzi just chuckles.

"Thank you sis." he replies modestly.

"Sbali that man sitting there is starting to stink up my basement, I don't need him here anymore." Kabelo adds on.

That is Zuzile's cue. As her husband downs the last contents of his glass, she stands, takes the glass with her, and heads to the kitchen.

Muzi is stressed, its evident all over his face, he keeps rubbing his forehead, sighing endlessly.

"Let me do it, just give me the honour please." Kabelo pleads, shifting forward to look at brother-in-law properly.

LACED

“I can’t sbali, I made a promise to Nambitha, I told her I wouldn’t do it.” Kabelo shakes his head.

“No, you didn’t promise to keep him alive, you promised not to kill him with your bare hands. You can’t possibly want to keep him alive. He has proven to you that he is unstable. What’s going to stop him from coming for you now that you’ve killed his sister? He was able to pull off a whole ponzi scheme to spite you. Don’t give him more ideas, please.” More than anything, Kabelo is just baying for blood.

“I want him to suffer first.” Muzi says.

“Standard, he has to suffer!” Kabelo’s excitement is peaking.

“But sbali, I want to speak to him first, while he’s still sane.”

“Do as you wish sbali, as long as I get to make him suffer.” He’s rubbing his palms together.

Muzi stands up. He’s going to do this now. His hands are already trembling from the indignation. He’s going to try to contain himself, for the mere sake that he made a promise he intends to keep. He loves Nambitha with his whole heart; he never thought he would, but he does, and no one is going to take that away from him.

Over his dead body.

He arrives in the basement, and he turns on the lights. Their prisoner is sitting in a corner, tied to two pillars on either side of his body. He’s sitting on the cold floor; his head is bowed, and he looks like he’s about to take his last breath.

Next to him is a bowl and a jug of water. Doesn’t look like he touched his food. He never comes down here. When they found him, he knew the only time he would come here and face him is when he would end his life. He can’t do that now.

He raises his head when the lights turn on, and Muzi unhurriedly sauntered towards him. He looks like he’s about to burst into tears, but Muzi, he feels nothing for him.

And he does so; starts sobbing like a little child. Muzi stares at him, shaking his head. He’s holding himself so badly because he knows if he lets the anger take control, he’s going to end him.

He crouches in front of him and stares at him, disgust dancing on his face.

LACED

“You pathetic scumbag.” he spits.

Nkululeko’s shoulders start to shake as he visibly breaks down into a puddle of tears.

He really is pathetic. He can’t even look Muzi in the eyes anymore.

“Why are you crying? What’s making you cry?” fury dancing on his tongue.

He’s spitting fire. If he had a weapon in his possession, he would end his life here and now.

“Please bring my sister back, please. Aw ingane kaMa.” he sobs.

“Udadewenu lo obolile. Nihlangene ngokwenza izinto ezibolile.” he replies and then scoffs, returning to his feet, towering over his enemy.

He feels a lot of resentment for the man. His girlfriend, or even better; wife, will probably suffer a lifetime of trauma because of him. On top of the trauma she already had and was trying to deal with.

“Why should I bring her back? God doesn’t recognize devils like her on this earth, that’s why He removed her. Now explain to me, Mr Dlamini, why do you think I have powers to bring her back? I’m not God.” no answer from Mr Dlamini.

Muzi chuckles bitterly.

“You know that you deprived me of so much. SO MUCH!” he unintentionally screams.

He needs to cool down, he starts to pace around. Nkululeko is still whimpering like a sissy.

“You took away the only chance for me to feel loved by the only woman I have ever loved. Only woman! I don’t think I’ve ever loved my own mother like I do this woman, but guess what? She can’t love me back because you hurt her, you put her through so much fucking shit she can’t even stand to utter the words “*I love you*” without the urge to throw up in her mouth. Why should you get anything good in this world? You don’t deserve it, not while you ended someones life ephila.” he’s venting.

Saying all the things he doesn’t have the guts to tell anyone else. Nkululeko is no longer crying

LACED

“I’m going to apologize, I swear, but please bring back Sibongile.” this man has lost his mind.

Muzi can’t help but give a loud belly laugh.

“Have you lost your mind? She’s dead! UFILE! Must I spell it out for you? SHE.IS.DEAD! There is no return from hell, it’s a one way ticket.” he looks like a moron.

Truly a deplorable moron.

“Okay, okay. Humour me here Mr Dlamini, how is apologizing going to fix all the damage you have done? Is it going to unrape her? Is it going to unbeat her? Is it going to erase all the mental scars you left? Tell me? Will your apology make her love me?” his response is a mere sniff.

“You don’t deserve to live. You don’t deserve to walk this land where my beautiful princess walks, she’s too special to be haunted by you. But I’m not God, and I never will be, so I’m going to spare you your life. I owe it to Nambitha to be the best version of a man I can be. But that doesn’t stop me from doing the same things you did to her to you.” Nkululeko raises his head, his eyes bulging out in fear.

“Scared of the taste of your own medicine?” Muzi is shocked by this man’s audacity to be scared.

Before he can say anything else, the door opens and Kabelo makes his way in. Nkululeko starts shaking in fear again, and he shifts back into his corner. Oh so this is who he’s really scared of.

“Let’s party now!” he shouts from across the room.

He has a small tray of cocaine. It’s as if he knows that Muzi has been battling to keep himself together the past week without it. He undoubtedly takes the first two lines.

“This is the good stuff.” he says powdering his nose.

Joy spreads through his blood vessels. Oh the rush, the thrill. He missed his friend.

“The best or nothing sbali.” Muzi even takes some and rubs it on his gums.

He could do one more line but he doesn’t want to be too high. He still needs to focus on Nambitha.

LACED

“So are you staying and watching or are you a pussy.” Muzi chuckles and shakes his head.

“No sbali, death is way too easy for him.” Kabelo frowns.

“What do you mean now?”

“No I mean that let him experience the same thing he put Nams through. I want them to rape him, kick and beat him until he cries for his mother.” Kabelo shakes his head.

“Then I can butcher him?”

“No sbali.” he’s not happy.

He’s absolutely not happy.

“You really know how to dampen my mood sbali. But if that’s what you want. I’ll get the rodents to come deal with him.” at least he’s not too angry.

Kabelo sometimes has a few loose screws in his head, and can turn on someone very quickly.

And Nkululeko, well, he’s still stuck in his corner whimpering like a swine. He pats Kabelo’s shoulder and leaves him with him. He wants to check on his woman.

...

She’s stirring. She can feel a presence, someone is staring at her intensely. Muzi does not flinch as she slowly opens her eyes. He looks so lost in thought.

“Manzini.” she calls him, placing her hand on his arm.

He startles and looks at her. His stare softens immediately.

“Hi baby.” he says moving closer to her.

He steals a peck on her lips. She doesn’t let him move away, she cups his round face and locks her lips with his. It’s quickly escalating, he can tell from the way her breath is getting hotter, almost burning his face.

LACED

She misses him, she misses him like that. She wants him like that.

“Baby wait.” he stops her.

She doesn’t move her hands from his face.

“It’s been four days Manzini.” Muzi laughs.

She can’t go a day without sex can she?

“You are still recovering.” she shakes her head.

“My treatment doesn’t have any effect on my pussy. Please.” she pleads.

“Your thigh, is it not sore?”

“We’ll be careful.” she bargains.

He gently searches her eyes. They look hollow. Deep inside her lies a broken soul, and he can see it. She’s trying to cover it up with lust. It’s only so much he can do for her to help her, but the way she wants to cope with it, he doesn’t recommend it.

She’s stubborn; convincing her to go to therapy will be difficult. So he has to butter her up first.

He gently lifts her leg and supports it with his arm so she doesn’t get hurt. She also excitedly lifts the other one and Muzi take off her underwear. He’s shocked to see that she’s already wet, he thought he was going to do some deep diving.

“Were you fucking me in your dream.” she giggles, covering her mouth.

He unties the string of his sweats, pulls them down and takes out his dick. She starts to salivate, and uses her hands to get him hard. It doesn’t take long to do that, and he proceeds to bring her hurt leg up to his shoulder.

“Are you comfy?” he asks just to be sure.

“Please put him in.” he smiles widely.

She’s horny and impatient. He gently positions himself at her entrance and slides in with zero effort. She’s been ready for him, even her gripping skills are failing, she’s enjoying herself. She’s not holding back from moaning.

LACED

He's going in a slow pace, he's not rushing her in any way, he's making love to her. He knows she hates it, but she seems to be visibly enjoying it today. Also, he doesn't want to hurt her.

She's back, she's clenching her walls around his dick, squeezing him in so much he almost cums before her.

"Don't be naughty." she giggles as he gradually starts to increase the pace of his strokes.

"I just love how you fuck me." she says biting her bottom lip.

He reaches for her lips and captures them in a short kiss, but he can't keep up because if he does, he will hurt her. He increases his pace, he's working alone today, but he's not complaining, watching her just take him in sends him over the edge.

She starts squeezing him in once again, and that tells him one thing. He starts stimulating her swollen clit and she screams in tongues.

"Yes baby, yes yes yes!" she says excitedly as she creams his dick.

That was a beautiful sight. He removes it and finishes it off with his hand, and spills his semen on her thighs.

"My sexy little vixen." he says groaning.

He puts down her leg as she giggles sweetly. He rolls out of bed to go get a towel to wipe her thighs. When he comes back, she still has her legs up, her vagina exposed.

"I didn't get enough." she says.

"No way!" he's personally feeling tired.

Being a Triphina like Zuzile said is not easy. Even the two lines of coke didn't give him enough adrenaline.

"What Muzi?" he moves closer to wipe her down.

"I'm exhausted Nams." he confesses.

She looks at him in pity before she signals for him to come closer. She plants a big kiss on his lips and rubs his head.

LACED

“I understand, it’s okay. You already take care of me, I shouldn’t be selfish.”

“No, you aren’t being selfish for wanting more. I’m your man, I’m supposed to give you more, it just won’t be today.” he says flopping next to her.

He doesn’t even have the energy left to take the towel back to the bathroom. She comes to cuddle closer to him, and puts her bandaged head on his chest.

“When are we going home?” she asks.

“After everything is over.” she sighs.

“When will that be? I mean will we ever get any peace while Nkululeko is alive?” she questions.

Muzi doesn’t answer. She lifts her head suspiciously.

“Muzi, you promised.” she scolds him.

“No, I didn’t kill him. He’s alive, here in the basement.” he confesses.

He didn’t mean to utter the last part. He has probably scared her now.

“You mean to tell me I’m staying in the same house as Nkululeko?” her voice breaks.

“No baby, relax please. He’s not going to do anything, not while I’m here.” she keeps quiet.

Muzi seems to have lost her because she is deep in thought.

“Nams.” he calls out.

“Can I see him?” his heart leaps.

And it’s not in excitement.

“Are you sure?” he’s unsure.

What if she’s triggered again? What if she goes back into her shell and he loses the little love he feels from her.

“I’m sure.” she doesn’t stutter.

LACED

He won't deprive her of that moment. It could go to ways, either she gets triggered, or she heals. It's a risk, but he can take it for the love of his life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Nambitha Zungu

Zweli is here today. He's here to change my bandages and dress my wounds. I don't have a lot, the big one is on my thigh, and then it's the bandage on my head. Muzi is leaning against the vanity watching. Zweli is talkative, I've gotten used to him these past few days, he's striking up a conversation.

"Don't look at me now being so clued up about dressing wounds, I would panic when I was in med school." he's a funny guy in general.

His stories are interesting, and I always get excited when he comes to visit, but today my focus is not on him, it's on the man standing behind him. Muzi looks so out of it.

"Manzini?" he looks up.

His eyes look sunken, almost like he's on the verge of losing consciousness. I can't be the only one who sees this.

"Zweli he looks sick." I tell him.

Muzi quickly snaps out of it, and comes to sit next to me.

"What were you saying." Zweli is staring at him intently.

"You look pale." Zweli says.

"I didn't sleep last night." Muzi answers.

He really didn't. He was tossing and turning the whole night. You'd expect someone who was as tired as him to sleep peacefully, but he didn't.

"I have some calming tablets that can make you sleep." Zweli tells him.

Muzi only nods and offers a low thank you. I look at him sideways. I'm suspicious of his behaviour, why is he looking so weak all of a sudden when he looked okay just yesterday? It's not like he did much to tire him out like he is now. Zuzile was here this morning and she made me breakfast while he got a chance to sleep in.

Is he back on drugs?

LACED

I'm not going to question him in front of Zweli so I sit and continue to listen and laugh at his stories while he finishes up with the bandages. When he's done, Muzi offers to walk him out, but he kindly declines, stating that he looks like he's about to faint.

"Please ask Zuzile to come up if she's still here." I ask Zweli.

"Sure! Bye guys." he makes his way out.

He's such a pure breath of fresh air. I shift to sit comfortably and stare at Muzi. He's still looking like he's far in thought.

"Muzi are you using again?" he turns his head in my direction and frowns.

"What? No." his eyes are roaming.

He's lying to me.

"Muzi you are lying to my. Look at me." he looks at me.

His eyes are even sunken.

"Buka amehlo akho!" I unintentionally shout at him.

"Why are you shouting at me?" his voice is sluggish.

Before I can even answer him, and give him a piece of my mind, Zuzile walks in holding a bowl with steaming hot water.

"Sesingafelwa umutnu endlini." okay she's being a little dramatic.

"What's wrong Yise?" she says closing the door.

As she draws closer, I can smell the minty flavour of the water. She comes to touch his forehead.

"I'm fine." Muzi says.

I can't help but shake my head. He's not okay.

"He's not okay Ma, look at his skin." Zuzile visibly agrees with me because she's shaking her head too.

"Is it flu?" I'm guessing she doesn't know about the drug use.

LACED

“I don’t know what you guys are talking about, I’m fine.” he’s so stubborn.

“Awukho right. I bought you water to steam so take off your clothes so you can steam. You’ll feel better.” she’s such a mom.

The mint is so strong, if I can smell it from here, imagine how strong it will be for him.

“Zuzile usuqalile.” Muzi is still being stubborn.

She’s not listening. She goes to take a blanket in the wardrobe, it’s the big thick one. She instructs me to help him take off his clothes, and he doesn’t look willing. I take off his t-shirt, he’s so weak he doesn’t even have the strength to fight me, and then he says he’s okay.

“Come!” Zuzile says pulling his hand.

She’s trying to make this comfortable for him. She put a pillow for him to kneel on. He’s still trying to protest, but she brings the blanket to cover his whole body.

“Ehlisa ikhanda lapho.” she reprimands.

“It’s hot in here.” he whines.

“That’s the point! Stop complaining, you’ll be okay.” they could easily be mother and son, it’s so cute.

She comes to sit on the bed with me. I still don’t know where we are, everyone refuses to tell me. But Zuzile comes here often; if not in the morning, she’s here later in the afternoon. I’m guessing it’s not too far from her house.

“What did Zweli say about your wounds? Are they healing?” she’s checking in.

“Yes, he said they are doing well. He also said I don’t have to bandage my head everyday so I can catch a break. Hopefully by next week, I’ll be walking normally again.”

“That’s very good sweetie. And then when everything is over, you are going to attend therapy right?” I wonder what gave her that crazy idea.

I don’t need therapy. I’ve been to therapy, that on it’s own was traumatic enough.

LACED

“No, I’m not going to therapy. I’m okay.” she frowns.

“I know you are a strong woman, and you were able to conquer the enemy, but that was a traumatic experience, you need to deal with it.”

“I can always deal with it outside of therapy. I don’t want to go back there, that place is dark and scary.” she looks at me, concern dancing on her face.

“I think you need to give it some more thought, it might be good for you. But we obviously can’t force you to go if you don’t want to.” she says ever so calmly.

Yeah I’m not going to give it any more thought. I’m not crazy to go back there. They say wellness centre, I say hell.

Muzi is groaning under the blanket, it doesn’t sound pleasant.

“Are you okay?” Zuzile asks him.

He doesn’t answer so that prompts her to stand and uncover him. First of all, he’s soaked in sweat, secondly, his face is red like a tomato.

“What’s wrong?” I ask him.

He starts gagging, and before Zuzile can respond, he vomits into the dish of water. He’s definitely not okay.

Yoh Muzi!

● ● ●

“I don’t want you to go down there alone.” he mumbles, barely audible.

He’s lying on his side, struggling to even breathe. I don’t know what the hell is wrong with him, but we called Zweli and he’s on his way back as we speak. His whole body temperature has skyrocketed and his skin is losing more colour.

The last thing I need is to be dealing with a sick man while I’m also dealing with my own illnesses.

LACED

“I can go alone Muzi, I’m a big girl.” I’m scared yes, but I have to face him alone.

He told me that we might be going home tomorrow. Our house has been repaired and it’s ready for us. So if we are leaving tomorrow, it means that Nkululeko needs to be dealt with.

Now I have the assurance that my big baby right here won’t be involved in anything that happens to him because he’s sick.

“I don’t want him to hurt you...” he replies weakly.

“He won’t hurt me, Mr Mfusi will be there right, he won’t try anything.” he was the one that told me that Nkululeko was whimpering in Kabelo’s presence.

I brush his pale face, he offers me a weak smile.

“Kanti kwenzenjani?” he can’t answer me.

I’m genuinely concerned about his well being. What if he doesn’t recover?

“Promise me that you will be okay.” I beg him.

He nods faintly. How can he promise me to heal from something he also doesn’t know. I don’t even want to entertain the thought of losing him, that would break me inside. In fact, I’d gladly kill myself if he died, he’s all I live for at this point. Without him what would life be?

“Don’t cry, I’m not dying.” he chuckles.

Muzi is never sick, ever. So seeing this, it’s weird.

There’s a knock on the door. Zweli is back, and Zuzile is following behind him.

“Twice in one day. What’s wrong Mr Zungu?” he already setting up his brief case.

Zuzile eyes me as Zweli goes to check up on Muzi.

“Come let’s go take a walk.” I can’t help side eye her.

I’ve never been outside since I came here, ever. Why today?

LACED

“Come.” she puts out her hand.

I guess it’s for privacy. But Muzi is my husband; I deserve to know what’s going on with him.

I don’t protest, I get up and take her hand. She hooks her arm on mine to help me walk comfortably. I’m still limping, but it’s not as sore as it was when I first got here. Muzi calls me a cry baby, but a bullet wound is no child’s play.

“Muzi tells me that you want to go see the man downstairs.” she starts off.

I don’t know if she knows our history, but judging from how she’s starting out the conversation, she probably knows.

“Yes, I want to.” I tell her.

Muzi better not have sent her here to try and convince me otherwise.

“Are you ready?” she turns her face to look at me.

I don’t know if I’m ready. I mean its been 3 full years. Not so long ago, I had a dream about him, and not just any dream, an explicit sex dream. I don’t know how I feel about that.

“I don’t know ma, but I have to be ready now. I can’t run away from my past forever because it will keep holding me back and I will never heal. I’m tired of being emotionally unstable and unavailable. I can’t even tell Muzi how I feel about him because of that.” I know he doesn’t say anything about it, but I can tell it hurts him.

“I understand, you want to face your fears. I’m proud of you.” I appreciate her for that.

I’m wondering though...

“Can you take me to him now?” her breath hitches.

“Without Muzi?” is she scared?

I don’t want to wait for Muzi. I don’t even know when he will recover from whatever it is that he’s suffering from.

“Yes. I mean I have to do this alone, I did go through it alone.” she stops walking and looks at me.

LACED

“You sure sure?” I nod.

She can’t deny me this chance, not when she just told me that she’s proud that I want to face my fears.

I tell her she doesn’t have to come in with me, she can stay outside. She’s scared, I can tell. She walks me inside the dark room that smells like dried up blood and sweat. She turns on the lights and I cast my eyes in the corner where Nkululeko is tied up like an animal.

Zuzile pats my shoulder in reassurance before she leaves. She doesn’t close the door when she does, lord knows I’d just die.

Back to the man I’m here to see...he looks like he’s passed out. I don’t want to step too close to him, I don’t know how strong he is. I stand there and stare at him.

It’s not too long before I see him stir. He goes through a series of emotions as he awakens, and quickly enough, he starts to shake vigorously and scream like he’s dying. He’s frustrated by the restriction of his arms and legs. I don’t even think he’s seen me standing here.

I don’t dare peep a word until he looks up. His eyes enlarge when he casts them on me. I wish I didn’t look like I do. I always imagined that when I see him for the first time, I would be looking my best; all glamed up looking pretty, so he can see that he didn’t completely break me.

“Nambitha, Nana I’m so happy to see you...” excuse me no!

He goes on his knees and sobs. Muzi wasn’t kidding, he is pathetic.

“Please let me go, let me go home to my family please. They still need me, my sons need me, they need their father. Please Nana.”

“I’m not your nana!” that alone makes my skin crawl.

I’m actually convinced he’s losing his mind.

“I swear Nambitha, I swear I wasn’t involved in their scheme, I didn’t know they were after you.” they they they!?

“Nkululeko your sister and your wife were after me! I have never ever wronged them, how do you expect me to believe they would have a grudge on me and not you?” this is actually making me angry and that’s not what I wanted.

LACED

In fact, I never wronged anyone. What happened to me was unwarranted. It was unjust!

“Please believe me...” he does that thing with his eyes.

There is a little bit of remorse, but I won't buy it. Nkululeko has proven to me more than once that he is a psychopath that cannot be trusted with anything.

I take a very much needed big deep breath before letting it out.

“I'm not here for that, I'm not here to hear you defend yourself for anything that you did. I'm here to tell you I'm no longer your prisoner. I am no longer going to stand being a victim of your psychological hostage! I've had it! I will never ever let you bring me down ever again. I will never let the words you used suppress me, and think I'm not good enough. You don't deserve the power that I have given you over my life and it ends today!” he looks so confused for most of it.

I don't need to get an answer from him. Just staring at him in this current moment, seeing him in the state that he is in just reassures me that I am making the right decision by moving forward with my life. He's a pathetic weakling of a man, I cannot let him control my life when he doesn't even have control over his own.

I turn my head to the door when I hear footsteps, and my heart sits in my throat when I see Mr Mfusi approaching. This man is effortlessly intimidating, I can't even maintain eye contact with him for longer than three seconds.

“Makoti are you done?” he asks, leaning against the door.

I gulp down the lump sitting in my throat.

“Yes, I'm done.” I turn back to look at Nkululeko.

He looks petrified. He's giving me pleading eyes as he stares at me, his eyes filled with tears. Why should I feel remorse for him when he couldn't do the same for me. He would beat me and rape me while I begged him to stop but he didn't. I don't owe him anything, not today, not ever.

“Come let's go.” he puts out his hand for me.

It's quite random but I do need the help because I am limping. As soon as I make my way out the door, I see three odd looking men stand just behind the wall.

LACED

“You know what to do gents.” Mr Mfusi says.

They all nod and squeeze their way past us into the room we just went out of. Before we leave, Mr Mfusi pulls the door to a close, locks it, and slides the key under the door. My heart is knocking against my ribcage, and when he takes my hand into his again, I immediately grow cold.

I hope they don't kill him...

I'm not going to question the man. He's already done so much for me, for us; I don't want to seem ungrateful. I just hope, I hope they don't kill Nkululeko.

As we are approaching the staircase, Zuzile comes rushing down, her face red like a tomato. She looks exactly like her brother.

“We need to rush Muzi to the hospital!”

WHAT NOW!?

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Nambitha Zungu

“I believe it’s perfect for a couple like you, especially because you are certain that you don’t want children.” she says showing me around the kitchen.

It’s a beautiful house, in fact I fell in love with it the moment I walked into the yard. It’s a bit of a downgrade from where we were living, but change is necessary, especially in this case.

It’s a cosy two bedroom house situated in the middle of Pietermaritzburg. It’s far from everyone we know, where we know no one will find us. The only bone I have to pick with it is the outdated style in the lounge and main bedroom. It won’t be too hard to make those changes, but with only one income, some things have to change and they will take time.

“I love it, but I still need to speak to my husband before we make a decision.” she nods.

“Definitely. As soon as you are ready, I’ll fix the forms for the handover.” yeah, we are doing this.

I’m still in shock.

“I’m going to give you some time to look around.” she says excusing herself.

I scan my surroundings and take a moment to take it all in. I wouldn’t mind calling this my home. With just a few adjustments, it can soon look like Nambitha’s home. The previous owners have proven to me that they had zero taste. I hope when they officially move out, they take this furniture elsewhere. Muzi might also like this house, but who am I kidding, he’s agreeing to everything I say. If I say I like it, he agrees.

My thoughts are disturbed by my phone ringing in my purse, it’s Zuzile, and she’s video calling me.

“Hi ma.” she’s lying on the couch relaxing.

She’s been such a great support these last few months, she has been there for me through everything I was going through. She’s also been an integral part of helping me house hunt. She’s done more for me than my own mother ever has.

LACED

“NamNam! Are you at a viewing?” I nod.

She asks to get a tour of the house so I turn the camera and begin to take her around.

“It’s quite small compared to the others that I’ve seen so far, but it’s so cosy and I like that. I mean it is just the two of us, there’s no need for a big house. It has two bedrooms, and the yard is just amazing.” she’s smiling.

“I love the kitchen oh wow! But the lounge looks like crap.” I can’t help but laugh.

“Yeah I also hate the lounge, but nothing I can’t fix. I just hope Muzi will like it. Judging from the house we used to live in, he likes huge spaces. Having to adjust to this might not be easy for him.” and this is just the honest truth.

We lived in a double story mansion with about 4 bedrooms and they remained vacant all year round because he and I didn’t have visitors at all. I think he was used to the privilege of living in a mansion, I mean he grew up in one, it’s what he’s used to.

Me on the other hand, I’m used to tiny spaces. Yes my family home wasn’t this small, but for a family of five and grandchildren who quickly joined the equation, a three bedroom house wasn’t enough.

“He will get used to it, he doesn’t have another option dear. That place is perfect for you guys, and it’s in a safe area, that’s all that matters. It’s the perfect place for you guys to just reset and start over.” that’s honestly all we wanted.

Well it’s what I want. I absolutely could no longer stand being in that house. It had too many terrible memories that I don’t want to take into this new period of my life that I am entering.

“I hope he does Ma.” I turn back the camera.

“When are you going to see him?” she asks.

I sigh.

“Now, after I finish this viewing. He asked me to bring him some good food because he’s been eating the food their for the whole week so I cooked last night.” she smiles.

“He’s such a big baby. Send my regards to him then.” he is a big baby.

LACED

“I will ma. Let me get going before he scolds me.” she laughs.

“Ngoba ave ethethisana uMuzi. Okay go lovie, we will speak later.” I say my goodbye and hang up.

I admire the house one more time before making my way out. Dora is sitting on the porch enjoying a cigarette.

“Dora, I think I’ll be on my way now.” she quickly stands up.

“I’m sorry about that, please be sure to keep in touch.” she says putting out the cigarette.

“I definitely want this house so if hubby gives the go ahead, I’ll contact you.”

At this point, I’m a very happy client. I proceed to bid her farewell and get in my car on the way to visit Muzi.

I’m hoping that this thing of getting the house can go a lot faster so that by the time he comes home, I’ve already settled in and made it comfortable for him to start his life all over again. We’ve lost a lot in the last three months, but we have a lot to be grateful for, at least he didn’t die.

Sengwayo logistics had to be liquidated. The state of debt was too dire to be fixed, and with so many investors, they had to be paid back. He didn’t take it well, I swear if he wasn’t in rehab at that time it all happened, he would have easily relapsed back to drugs, or worse, committed suicide. I’m grateful he was supervised.

When he was admitted, he was considered a high risk. That day we rushed him to hospital, he had overdosed, and he didn’t even know it. Had he told me that he had taken cocaine that morning, things probably would have been different. The doctors even told us that if we hadn’t gotten him to hospital quick enough, he would have suffered anything from a stroke to a heart attack.

What he wasn’t telling us as we sat there telling he’s looking pale is the fact that his heart was beating faster than normally, and he was having cold shivers. I was so mad at him for being that selfish, and I didn’t hold back from letting him know.

With that, he didn’t refuse to go to rehab when doctors suggested it. He told me that he wanted to live for me. By then the drugs were flushed out his system and he was feeling the after effects. I have never cried so much my whole life.

LACED

And it just seemed to get worse from that day onwards; next thing you know, the company wasn't doing well and Mr Mfusi suggested that we liquidate it. Like I said, Muzi was devastated, his father's legacy was flushed down the toilet like it never existed. I felt terrible, like I was also to blame for it because Nkululeko wouldn't have come for him if I wasn't in his life.

And that bastard? He was found hanging by the neck in his garage in their home. I learned of his death on social media through Nontando's unending posts dedicated to her beloved husband, but Amile was the one who told me what exactly happened to him.

They said he left a letter, and prince Mandlenkosi was the only one who had the guts to read it. I was even shocked to learn that they were still friends at the time.

Amile told me he detailed how he was raped and abused by a group of men, and when she did, it jogged my memory back to that day, the day where things changed. Those men who walked into that room with him.

It made me think of Mr Mfusi as a genius. He got a feel of what he made me feel, and he wasn't even man enough to live with it, he chose the easy way out. A part of me felt somewhat bad for his children, but I soon realized that life is so much better without people like Nkululeko in this world, his children wouldn't have gotten anything good out of a man like him. And the best part is he took his own life.

I always need to take a few minutes to take in a deep breath before I enter this place because it's just so depressing. I don't know how Muzi survives.

I switch off the engine of the car and sit quietly, and let my thoughts scatter. When I visit Muzi I try my best to be as positive as I can. He's already surrounded by so much negativity, he doesn't need any more from the outside world. After composing myself, I get out the car and take the lunch bag; I know he's going to be happier to see it more than he will be to see me.

The ladies here already know and love me. Muzi is their favourite patient because he's handsome, and quite frankly, they all had a crush on him. But the reason they love me is because they say I cook the best food, and whenever Muzi gets a package from me, they opt to stand outside while he microwaves it otherwise they will be hungry the whole day.

Sometimes I bring some for them as well, and they appreciate it. Today isn't that day though. I only cooked for my patient.

LACED

“Mrs Zungu!” one of them greets me.

“I see you have the famous lunch bag today, someone is going to be happy.” I can’t help but smile.

“I hope he’s going to be. I made his favourite. Where is he?”

“Last I checked, he was in the common room playing Fifa.” that’s Muzi for you.

We are paying an arm and a leg for him to be here, that’s why he has the privilege of playing Fifa. I already know my way around the place so I make my way through after she pats me down. They have to make sure I don’t have anything on me.

I’m used to it by now, it doesn’t bother me anymore. Like I said, I’m a regular here, Muzi is the most visited patient here, and I don’t even care about visiting hours anymore. At this point they just let me be.

And there he is indeed, he’s playing with a few other guys, he looks happy today, and that’s not an everyday thing.

“Manzini.” I call him.

He looks up and his eyes gleam.

“Ey gents I’ll come back later.” he says standing up excitedly.

The gents all greet me. All these people looks like real junkies compared to Muzi. And I know it’s wrong of me to call them that when they are walking the journey of sobriety, but my man looks nothing like a recovering druggie.

He gives me a big kiss before we exit the common room. He’s so excited to see me.

“Oh this was the cherry missing at the top of my cake.” I’m surprised he hasn’t inquired about the food.

“Looks like you are having a good day.” she smiles.

“The best. The doctor said I could leave in two weeks! Isn’t that amazing!” I want to be excited, but I’m a little scared.

“Are you ready?” I ask as we continue walking to his room.

LACED

“I’ve been ready Nams, yoh staying here has been torture!” I can only imagine.

The withdrawal symptoms didn’t treat him very well. He struggled so much, and having to see him like that was one of the hardest things I’ve experienced.

“I had hoped that we’d find a house first before you come back.” I reply honestly.

I need him to come back to something stable, right now, how I’m living is not stable at all.

“It’s okay if we don’t baby, then we can go house hunting together for our perfect home. What did you bring me?” he finally notices the lunch bag.

We get to his room and I go set the bag on his table. He excitedly pulls the chair and sits down.

“Your favourite; lamb curry and isgwaqane.” his face lights up.

I take out the food and it’s still warm so I serve him with some juice. He’s happily digging in. I love seeing him like this.

“I went to view the house that Dora sent last night. Oh Muzi it’s so amazing.” he chuckles.

“You said that about three different houses already.” I giggle and shake my head.

“No, this one is different, hear me out. I like the area it’s situated in, firstly. Secondly, it’s a two bedroom house, just like we wanted and its just the right size for the both of us. It’s also very affordable, we won’t break our bank paying for it. The gorgeous yard is honestly a bonus.” he nods along with his mouth full.

“Does it have a pool?” as if he ever uses it.

“No and we don’t need it.” there is absolutely no need.

“But baby, remember that I take morning swims now, to help with my cravings.” okay I feel bad for not considering that.

Now I’m sad because that means that house is off the list.

LACED

“No, don’t write it off. Tell me about it, and show me.” he can see how much I like it.

I take out my phone and show him some of the pictures I took.

“Its small.” that’s all he says.

I saw this coming.

“But it’s okay because it’s just me and you.” he sighs.

“I don’t know how I feel about it. The fact that it doesn’t have a pool is also discouraging me, what if I relapse if I stop swimming? And I also can’t go from living in a mansion to a shoe box. I may no longer be as rich as I used to be, but I’m not poor.” oh Muzi.

Still has pride. You would swear roles have been reversed. But it’s easy for him to speak from here, he doesn’t know how hard it’s been to try make things come together. Having to put the house for sale and renting out the maid quarters to generate income while also trying to find a place to rent here in PMB so I can be closer to him.

All of this while running a business remotely. The Pamper Spot is flourishing and I’m not even there most of the time to see it progress. I’m so grateful for my amazing staff for holding it down, and Zuzile who occasionally checks in for me. That money from the spot and the rent money from the tenants in the maid quarters have been sustaining me these past three months; but that’s only been just for me only. I should expect expenses to double when we buy a house and move in together. I’m just grateful to Zuzile for paying Muzi’s medical bills because I know I wouldn’t be able to afford it, so that’s one less thing to worry about.

It’s been extremely difficult. The fact that I made it out alive is all that matters.

“Okay then, I’ll speak to Dora and we will look for something else.”

I’m sad about the house, but sometimes there have to be compromises I have to make. The main aim is to get Muzi better and back on the right track. If a pool is what he needs, a pool is what he will get.

• • •

LACED

Leaving him behind is honestly always the worst part about this whole experience. It always leaves me longing to stay with him a little longer.

I'm driving back 'home' to my cold rental flat. It's a one bedroom flat and its situated quite close to the rehab so it saves me on petrol costs. On other days I can even walk to see him for exercise purposes.

As I'm pulling up to the gates, my phone rings. It's an unknown number, I panic whenever I get a call from an unknown number.

I hesitantly answer though because it could be something important.

"Hello." I greet.

"Nambitha, hi." it's a male voice.

I don't know how to identify it.

"Hi, who is this?" he chuckles.

Immediately it registers in my mind.

"It's Mvelo." damn!

I was doing a good job at avoiding him all this time, I was only keeping contact with his wife. Why is he calling me?

"Hi Mvelo."

"Are you good?" it's been over three months, he's asking me now.

"Yeah, I'm good." I don't even want to ask him.

"I heard you moved to PMB, I'm in the area I was hoping to stop by and talk to you." this feels like a trap.

Him saying he 'heard' that I moved cannot be true. Obviously I speak to his mother about everything, and his wife is my only friend, she knows and obviously tells her husband these things.

Why now? He didn't call when Muzi was in hospital fighting for his life, he also didn't call when he was transferred to rehab because of his addiction. He didn't even call to check up when we liquidated the company, again I ask, why now?

LACED

“What’s so important that you can’t say it over the phone?” I ask him.

“I don’t think I need to explain myself for this. Please send me your address.” who does he think he is?

I don’t want what happened the last time to happen again. Especially not now when I’m going through the longest dry spell of my life.

“Yezwa Nambitha.” fuck it!

“If you don’t give it to me then I’ll ask my mom, simple. I’m coming over though, send the address.” he proceeds to drop the call before I can even protest.

Still rude as ever I see.

I wonder what he wants from me!

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Nambitha Zungu

I sent the address. Mainly for the reason that I didn't want to drag Zuzile into this whole thing. I don't want her asking questions that I won't be able to answer.

I still don't know what Mvelo wants from me, so I'm sitting here in anticipation waiting for him to tell me exactly what he wants.

I took a shower and changed into something light, had a nice warm meal in front of the TV and now I feel ready for bed. I swear if he doesn't come now, I'm going to fall asleep.

Just as I was packing up the last dishes, my phone rang. I know it's him so I answer.

"I'm outside." he reports with his voice low.

Firstly, it's almost ten pm. Why is he out and about gallivanting instead of being home, especially in PMB.

I go stand at the balcony and open for him. I watch as his BMW M4 race through the gate. At this point he's just showing off and wants the whole block to know that he's here. That annoys me because now it's going to attract eyes. He parks next to my car and gets out, leaning next to it and taking out his phone.

I don't give him the opportunity, I call out to him.

"Come up!" he looks up and flashes a smile at me.

I go back inside to open the door and wait for him to come up. I can hear his footsteps, and it's not long before he appears. He's carrying flowers.

Weird!

"KaMakhathini." he greets.

How the hell does he know my real surname? I don't recall any of us ever telling him. In fact, I don't introduce myself as a Makhathini anymore.

Oh but he was driving my parents on the night of the launch.

LACED

He hands me the flowers and leans in to hug me. My body is stiff because I'm shocked by this gesture. He still smells amazing though.

I move out the way to give him way to walk through. I close and lock the door behind me. When I turn back to him, he's scanning the room.

"This is different from your taste." he points out.

It is, but I didn't see the need to make any changes because it was only temporary. And he doesn't know me well enough to know my tastes.

"I don't plan on staying forever. You can take a seat." I point him to the couch.

I go to the kitchen to put the flowers in water. I don't have a vase so I opt for a jug.

"What brings you over Mr Mfusi?" I ask peeping him from the kitchen.

He chuckles.

"You blocked me, why did you do that?"

"I blocked you because you wanted to sabotage my husband and you threatened him." he stands up and walks to where I am.

"Why the fuck did you tape us!?" I'm actually still mad at him for that.

"Is that what he told you?" I frown.

"Are you calling my husband a liar."

"I mean he is a drug addict..." I send daggers his way.

He has the audacity.

"What do you want from me?" he's pissing me off.

He draws closer, and I steadily move back.

"I need your help with Christine." my confusion peaks.

"I know she's your friend, and she might listen to you. I'm fucking tired of her pestering me about moving back here."

"Have you ever taken the time to even listen to her reasons?" he rolls his eyes.

LACED

“What reasons? The one where she says she can’t get used to different surroundings or the one where she cries and says she wants her dad? I can’t stand that! We are adults for crying out loud, she needs to grow up now!” he’s giving off controlling energy and I don’t like that one bit.

“She’s your wife, you have to take into consideration her feelings. She’s raising your children, you have to make sure she’s happy all the time.” he shakes his head.

He looks so frustrated.

“Fuck I’ve never been so envious of Muzi like I am now.” he says staring at me.

He looks at my face, then goes down to my lips, then my boobs. I suddenly feel uncomfortable as he undresses me with his eyes.

“I think allowing you to come here was a mistake.” I say below a whisper.

I hate that my body is reacting to his lustful stare, but that’s only because I haven’t felt any human touch in the last 3 months, it’s just me and my dildo.

“No, it wasn’t. I know you need my help, and I need yours.” he’s drawing closer.

My heart is racing, but that’s only because I’m afraid I will lose control of myself again and disappoint Muzi. I don’t want to do that ever again.

“No, Mvelo please go...” he stops moving, but now he’s almost at arms length.

This kitchen is small, I don’t even have too much space to move around. My breath hitches when he stretches out his hand. He places it on my waist, on my bare skin at that and makes me warm immediately.

“Should I? I swear I’m not recording anything.” he says flashing me a sneaky smile.

“Mvelo Chrissy is my friend, we have a good relationship, I feel guilty enough about the first time it happened.” that’s just one reason.

I have a whole list of reasons why, and it would take me the whole day to explain them.

LACED

“She won’t know. None of us will tell her.” and there he goes again, drawing even closer.

Oh I hate him so much for making me this weak. He’s breathing in my face and his breath smells amazing. My heart is bulldozing my chest.

“I love my husband.” I blurt out.

Great going Nambitha! You can say it to other people, but you can’t say it to him.

“And I love my wife. It’s just sex, just sex.” he spits, gripping on my thigh.

He picks me up and puts me on the counter, I squirm and my eyes almost pop out of their sockets.

“I hate you so much.” I say through gritted teeth.

He chuckles and caresses my thighs. I can’t believe I’m about to betray Muzi again, for the second time. He’s literally here taking advantage of the fact that I’m horny and sex deprived for three full months.

He’s kissing my inner thighs with his soft wet lips and I’m feeling shivers down my spine. My whole body is heating up and I can feel my cookie starting to crumble.

He begins by bringing down my pyjama shorts, and he smiles when he sees I have no underwear on. I hope he’s not about to come and eat me out because there is nothing I hate more than unnecessary foreplay.

He instead picks me up and asks me to show him the way to the bedroom. I’m surprised he’s not struggling to carry me, I know he’s buff and fit but I mean Chrissy doesn’t have all these curves that I have, he’s not used to this.

He get to the bedroom, turns on the lights and goes to place me on the bed. He starts stripping his clothes immediately and I drink in his handsomeness. He’s a sin, but he’s a beautiful sin.

Sculpted perfectly with strong arms and a firm chest. His skin is a smooth light chocolaty colour that I just cannot get used to. As he stands in front of me with his fully erect penis, I stare in awe. I didn’t get to see all of this the first time.

He strokes it a few times and looks me dead in the eyes. He wants me to suck him.

LACED

I get on my knees on the bed and use my hand to familiarize myself with it. Man has a lot of thickness, and I don't know if I'll be able to handle it. I start by playing on the tip, he smiles deviously. It takes me a while to take his whole length in my mouth, and he starts groaning in pleasure. He's not as rough like Muzi, although I like it like that. I'm digging my nails into his firm butt and he begins to fuck my mouth, but he's doing so slowly.

I'm not a gentle lover, I never have been and I don't think I ever will, so this is boring me. I start deep throating him and that brings up the pace because he further starts pushing himself in my mouth. I'm guessing his wife can't take it like I do.

When he's about to cum, he pulls out and spills it on my face, looking at me like prey. I'm annoyed that he did that, but he doesn't even give me time to complain. He flips me over and slaps my bum before he cries out.

"Mmmh, that jiggle mama." he's in heaven.

He's not used to this, I say it again. I jerk up when he starts by separating my wet folds and positions himself at my entrance.

"Condom Mvelo." I probe him.

He groans.

"I'm clean I swear. I'll pull out." he really doesn't have to, I won't even get pregnant.

But I don't want to, I...

I feel him fill me up before I can say anything else. My knees go weak instantly. It feels so good to feel him inside of me, my vagina starts breathing out in pleasure. That sends Mvelo into a fit of laughter, I don't know whether to be embarrassed or laugh along with him, but he doesn't seem to care.

He starts off slow, and the pace begins to gradually build up. He grips on my neck and I feel him going even deeper, if he could he would squeeze his balls in there as well. I think what excites him the most is the fact that he has a full view of my ass and it's clapping against his dick. He leans in and bites my ass with his teeth, he will never get to experience this again, he must enjoy it.

I tighten my walls around his and he groans like a bull. He doesn't disappoint like last time, he fucks me right through it. I'm going to cum soon, he better show up to the party.

"You are so fucking warm, you taste so good." he praises.

LACED

Yeah and his dick game is better than last time. Especially because I can feel the orgasm soon coming to attack me. I tighten my walls again, and that quickly sends me over the edge, as soon as I relax my muscles, my legs start to shake and I feel spasms all over my body. He fucks me through it till he reaches his own.

I feel him pull out, but he's a bit late because there is warm cum dripping out of me, and what he spills on my back are just leftovers. He's lucky I can't fall pregnant!

...

He left early in the morning; in fact, I had to kick him out because he was starting to get too comfortable. Cuddling and all those other things are not things I wanted to do with him. I felt guilty enough.

After he left, I went back to sleep because I was still very much exhausted and sleep deprived. I just woke up now, and it's way past eleven am. I never wake up this late.

The first thing I do is check my phone, and I have a bank notification. I wonder who it's from because it's not month end and I'm not expecting anything from the tenants.

+R50,000 has been credited into your account. REF: M.Mfusi.

Is he crazy!? I sit up immediately and go send him a text.

"I don't want your money, I'm not a prostitute." that's seriously how he's making me feel.

He reads the message instantly, and starts typing just as quickly as he read.

"I didn't say you were. Just say thank you and move on. I enjoyed last night, thank you." idiot!

I suddenly feel dirty all over again. I hate it when I think with my clit, I lose all sense of sensible thought, and that could put me in shit one day.

LACED

I roll out of bed, and strip it so I could take the things to laundry downstairs. Mvelo just had to leave his cum stains all over my sheets, now I have to do unplanned laundry on a random Tuesday.

Just as I finish re-making the bed, my phone rings on the nightstand.

My heart almost jumps out of my chest when I see Chrissy's name flash on the screen. I'm too scared to even answer, does she know already? Oh my god I'm swimming in shit.

I pick it up and answer anyway.

"Hi girlfriend." she says in her normal chirpy voice.

That gives me a little relief, she sounds normal. But I'm not entirely cleared, she might be pretending.

"Hi girl, I haven't heard from you for a while." I say.

She sighs.

"I'm still alive man, just in between JHB and KZN a lot. I hate it but I have no other choice." oh that's why Mvelo was complaining.

"I can imagine how tired you are." she agrees with me.

"I'm finished. I'm actually calling to check on you, Ma told me you were finally settled on a house. How is Muzi doing? Is there progress?" she's being sweet, and shes making me guilty.

"Muzi is doing well, so much that his doctor said he can go home in two weeks. You are actually the first person I've told, but yeah that's what he said. I think in terms of the house, we have to search further."

"Oh that's great news about Muzi, I'm so happy to hear that man. I'm sure you've missed him." I really have missed him.

Now I have to face him after the horrible act I committed last night. I don't think I'll be able to go see him today. I need to cleanse myself.

"I'm heading back to Johannesburg today so I'll be passing by PMB, would you be free to meet for lunch or something?" oh damn.

They must really be having serious marriage problems if they can't even travel together. From my knowledge, Mvelo was coming down from Joburg last night. Why is she going back the day her husband arrives.

LACED

“I don’t mind love.” I’m consumed by guilt, but I don’t want to disappoint her.

I don’t want to give her any reason to be suspicious.

“What’s the closest restaurant to you?” she asks.

“Fire and Vine.” I haven’t really explored this place.

“Oh that’s perfect, I can even come fetch you at your place. Send the location ke, I think I’ll be there in the next 30 minutes.” oh she’s coming now.

“Alright, I’ll send it now.” I need to finish cleaning asap!

I end the call, send her the location and leave my phone in the room. First thing is to go do the laundry so I take all the things in the basket and make my way downstairs to the laundry room. Luckily I find it empty so I just leave it, I’ll fetch it later.

When I get back to the flat, the first thing that catches my attention are the flowers Mvelo bought me. I have to hide these; Chrissy is going to ask too many questions, how am I going to explain receiving flowers while my husband is in rehab.

As pretty as they are, I take them and throw them in the bin.

I love cleaning this place because it’s tiny and everything is in reach. It doesn’t take me hours. I finish right on time, and when Chrissy calls letting me know she’s outside, I’ve done everything. The only thing left for me to do is shower and get dressed.

She looks radiant, her glow man, it’s different! I can’t pin point it. She looks so happy too.

“Girlfriend, you are glowing!” I say as we greet each other.

“You know what they say, happy wife, happy life.” oh.

So they are doing well? It makes me question a lot of things.

“I’m so glad you are happy man! It looks good on you.” I compliment.

Mvelo doesn’t deserve her, he honestly doesn’t. and I don’t deserve her too.

LACED

“Girl go get ready! It’s almost lunch time, I don’t want to be too late.” she probes.

“I was still cleaning. If you want anything to drink you can look in the fridge.” I say as I walk to the bathroom.

“Do you have wine?” oh.

I thought ma’am didn’t drink.

“I have some in the cupboard by the fridge.” I shout back at her.

I’m not going to judge her shame, at this point I don’t know what’s going on in her marriage.

I hop in the shower and thoroughly scrub myself down. I know I’m probably paranoid when I say I still smell like sperm, but I feel dirty and I can’t afford to have Chrissy smelling and suspecting anything.

When I feel satisfied with my cleanliness, I step out the bathroom, brush my teeth and brush my wig lines. She’s going to have to patient with me, I still need to do a diy install.

My eyes land on the pack of sealed pads on the vanity and my heart skips a beat.

No. No Nambitha don’t panic, Muzi has a vasectomy, my tubes are tied. I physically cannot fall pregnant. Maybe it’s just a cycle change.

Fuck it’s been a month since I’ve gotten my period! That’s not good, not good at all.

I’m not going to panic. I ignore the pads and step out the bathroom and head to my bedroom. I startle when I walk in and find Chrissy standing there holding my phone.

“Why is my husband calling you?” I frown and my heart starts bulldozing my chest.

It’s a good question, why is Mvelo calling me?

“No I’m asking because it’s been ringing non-stop, I had to get up and check thinking it was an emergency.” she sounds chill.

LACED

She's not mad. But the phone is still ringing in her hand. It stops ringing and I'm still frozen. She's looking at me waiting for an answer; if I don't answer her now, I'm going to sell myself out.

A text pings and as I try to take it, she holds it firmly in her hand and reads the text.

"See you again tonight?" she says, in a confused tone.

Her eyes are slowly changing.

"Chrissy..." she interrupts me.

"No Nambitha, what are you and Mvelo seeing each other for?" her voice is getting stern.

Another message comes through, it's still from him, but I can't read it because she's snatched the phone from me and I don't want to fight her for it.

If he knew how dire the situation is right now, he wouldn't be texting me.

"Are you fucking my husband!?" okay now she's fuming.

I step back when she steps closer.

Oh damn I don't even know what to do right now.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Nambitha Zungu

“Chrissy let me explain.” I stutter.

“Explain, I’m listening!” she’s enraged.

I’ve never seen her like this. The way her pupils are dilating, and the redness spreading from her cheeks to the rest of her face. Right now, I’m not her friend, I’m her enemy.

“Yes...Mvelo was here last night and...and he tried to make a move on me but I kicked him out. He’s done it before, and I told Muzi and they spoke about it as brothers but now he’s taking advantage of the fact that he’s not here.” she draws closer.

“My husband would never do that.” she spits.

Oh but he’s done worse.

“I swear Chrissy...” she interrupts me immediately.

“Okay so if he was hitting on you before then why did you hide it from me?”

“Because I didn’t want to hurt you and ruin your marriage.” she rubs her face in irritation and steps back.

She picks up the phone from the bed.

“Open this and show me your chats. I want to understand clearly why he would send you a text saying he wants to see your ass jiggle if you weren’t sleeping with him.” FUCK HIM!

Like actually, fuck Mvelwenhle Mfusi!

“He’s a pervert Chrissy, he’s been harassing me the whole night. I had blocked his number but he found a way to get me.” I’m running away from opening this phone.

It has incriminating evidence.

LACED

“Well show me; show me that he’s a pervert.” she continues to spit furiously.

“VULA!” she shoves the device in my face.

It unlocks immediately because of my face ID and when I realize this, I try snatch it out her hand, but she grabs onto it firmly. She’s strong, and we are fighting over my phone. One thing about me, I’m not going down without a fight.

“Why can’t you just believe me Christine! Why would I cheat on my husband!?” she doesn’t stop fighting me.

Instead she exerts force and strength into fighting me, so much that she elbows me in the stomach and I feel immense pain shoot through my whole body.

I fall to the ground unable to support my whole body from the pain. She takes the phone and opens it.

“Ungijwayela kabi wena! I welcome you into my life, I support you through your shitty life and this is how you thank me?” I’ve just brought out the ghetto out of her.

And girly can punch. I’m feeling a series of excruciating pains, even pains in my shoulder, I thought she only punched me in my gut.

She’s calling someone on my phone. I don’t even have the strength to stand up and stop her, I don’t know what’s going on with me. I didn’t even think she hit me that hard.

“Mrs Zungu...” he answers, almost in a sexy whisper.

“Mrs Zungu wokunuka Mvelwenhle!” she screams.

I finally see the anger being replaced by hurt. Tears well in her eyes.

“Fluff? Wait what’s going on?” he suddenly sounds panicked.

I can also hear fear in his voice; it’s quavering.

“Kanti wena ubufebe awubuyeki!” the tears stream down her red cheeks.

“My friend Mvelo!? Your brother’s wife!? Are you not ashamed of yourself?” she scolds.

LACED

My suspicions were correct, she knew about his whoring ways. So why is she throwing such a fit? What's shocking her?

"Fluff calm down, it's not what you think it is." it's too late for that Mvelo.

"What so you are also going to lie to me? Here is Mrs Zungu, tell her your lies, I don't want them!" she throws the phone at me.

If I didn't duck, it was going to hit me in the face. She storms out the room, she's sobbing loudly.

"FLUFF!" he's shouting for her.

I feel paralyzed, I can't move.

"She left..." I groan.

"Follow her man Nambitha!" she shouts at me.

I would but the pain is not allowing me to do that.

"NAMBITHA!"

"She hit me Mvelo...I can't move." the tears are now forcing themselves out of my eyes.

"She wouldn't do such a thing, get up and go stop her!" oh so now I'm a liar.

I push the phone off my chest and try to get up. I remove the robe around my body and when my eyes land on the spot I just moved away from, there is a pool of blood.

"Mvelo..."

"What, did you find her?" he really doesn't care about me.

"I'm bleeding, call an ambulance." he sounds confused as he stutters.

"Nambitha bleeding how? What happened? Where is Chris?" I just told this man I'm bleeding.

I DON'T FUCKING CARE ABOUT CHRISTINE!

LACED

“Christine left, I don’t care about Christine! I’m telling you I’m bleeding and I’m pain, I need an ambulance.” now I’m sobbing.

“Okay okay, I’ll call an ambulance hang in there.” he’s shuffling about.

“Don’t drop the call Mvelo....please.” he sighs.

“I won’t.”

So many things are racing through my mind in this very moment and I don’t know what to think. That pack of sealed pads in my bathroom haunts my thoughts. I no longer know what to believe.

I wish Muzi was here.

• • •

“Unfortunately you will be unable to carry to full term.” the doctor says to me.

More than anything, I want my money back for the thousands of Rands I spent on that tubal ligation procedure.

“You are 13 weeks along, which is considered dangerous for you. Luckily your Fallopian tube did not rupture, but you need to be taken to surgery immediately. The nurses are going to come scrub you in.” I’m confused. Nothing makes sense.

The doctor walks out and leaves me with her. She’s sitting on the other side of the ward, lost in thought.

Mvelo called her and she answered, by the grace of God she put aside her anger and rushed back to pick me up. She was the one that drove me to the hospital because the ambulance was taking it’s own sweet time to arrive and I was losing lots of blood.

She kept apologizing in the car for punching me, the first thing that came into her mind is that I was having a miscarriage. The guilt was consuming her in that moment.

Her suspicions weren’t too far from the truth, I am pregnant, but I like the doctor just said, I need to have it removed because it is ectopic. I’m still

LACED

trying to process how this is possible when I was assured that tying my tubes is the stop-nonsense of stop-nonsenses. How did I even fall pregnant!?

Also, it makes no sense how it could be that Muzi impregnated me when he had a vasectomy. If the doctor says I'm 13 weeks along, that means this pregnancy was made in Mpumalanga.

How this pregnancy survived me being shot and suffering a blow to the head beats me. Muzi has a lot of explaining to do; I wish he was here.

The nurse comes in to prepare me for theatre. Just as they are about to wheel me out, Christine stands up and comes to stand at the foot of the bed.

Her eyes are swollen and red. Today did not go as we had planned it to go. Everything is just pear shaped.

"I'm going home. Ma is on her way here. By the time you come out she will be here." she says so coldly.

I nod, fear dressing me. If Zuzile knows about what happened here and what led to this moment, I don't know how I'd live with myself.

"I didn't tell her." she says.

I don't know whether to be relieved or not. She doesn't even give me room to reply, she walks out the ward. She's a way better person than I could ever be.

*

Zuzile is helping me drink water through a straw.

Chrissy wasn't wrong when she said she'll be the first person I see when I wake up from surgery, and judging from how calm she is, she really doesn't know what's going on.

"The doctor said he can allow for you to be released by end of tomorrow if you get better. But if you do, you will have to go back to Margate with me." I shake my head no.

"I can't leave Muzi here." he's the whole reason why I packed my whole life up and moved here.

"But you just came out of surgery Nambitha. You need to heal properly. The doctors agreeing to release you was only on the condition that I would take

LACED

care of you and have a doctor on standby to care for you. Muzi is okay in rehab. He won't die because you aren't visiting everyday." she's so stubborn.

"I can't imagine what would have happened if Chrissy wasn't in PMB." she says and then proceeds to shake her head.

The story she knows is that I bumped my stomach on something and it triggered the bleeding. She knows that I was alone when it happened, and the first person I called was Christine.

"I'm so sorry you had to go through that. I'm so sorry that you were alone and Muzi wasn't there to hold your hand. I know what it's like losing a child, it's a trauma that doesn't go away easily, but you can always try again, you and Muzi are still young and you have your whole lives ahead of you." it's so cute of her to think I'm devastated about losing this pregnancy.

I'm glad I did. In fact I don't understand how it came to be in the first place. I don't even want to imagine what Muzi's reaction to this would be. We don't want children, and having a child now would be the worst decision we would have ever made.

"I think it's best you wait until he's out of rehab before you tell him." I sigh.

I wasn't even going to bother telling him, but I guess he deserves to know that his vasectomy doesn't work.

"I think this is the time for you guys to take that holiday, you deserve it." she says brushing my head gently.

I look like a mess.

She's talking about the holiday she gifted us with on the day I launched the Pamper Spot. The day where things really started going downhill.

"You've been through a lot these past three months. I don't know how you did it, but I'm so proud of you for being so strong, and standing with your husband through thick and thin. You are a real woman and Muzi is truly lucky to have you." that triggers me.

Am I really deserving of Muzi and the love he gives me? At this point I don't think I am. I feel terrible for what I made Christine feel.

"Ma I don't deserve Muzi. He's a good man..." her face changes.

LACED

“No, no it’s not your fault that you had complications. It happens to everyone.” she thinks I’m saying this because I lost the baby.

No, guilt is chowing at my conscious like termites on wood. I’m a sobbing mess.

“I don’t think you understand Ma. I’m heartless. I betrayed Muzi in the worst way possible and I don’t think I can live with myself any longer.” she freezes.

She immediately stops rubbing my head and pulls away. She’s now looking at me waiting for me to state what it is that I did to betray Muzi.

“I slept with Mvelo.” her eyes widen in shock.

The instant I see disappointment flash on her face, I can’t help but bury my face in my hands and sob.

“Nambitha how could you do such a horrible thing?” her voice is laced with disgust.

I’m too afraid to look her in the eyes.

“I’m sorry Ma. I feel horrible, and I will never forgive myself for it. I don’t deserve Muzi, he loves me and I don’t even know if I love him back the same way he does. I don’t deserve all the good things he’s done for me because all I do is just disappoint him, over and over again. I’m nothing but a problem in his life. He’s lost everything in his life because of me. I just bring problems everywhere I go.” I vent out.

This was honestly the last straw.

“I won’t lie to you and say I’m not disappointed. I thought very highly of you, I thought you were a lady who respected herself, and respected other people. I’m appalled at what you have just told me, and you should feel horrible.” oh she’s not holding back.

It’s like daggers are being stabbed in my heart.

“Muzi loves you. I know this would hurt him, but you leaving him would break him apart. In everything that you decide to do, don’t leave him. He doesn’t deserve this, but his life and him living matters more to me. I’m going to get some air.” her words are thick with resentment.

I’ve just changed her whole perspective of me, and I have no one to blame but myself.

LACED

...

“Mvelwenhle Mfusi I’ve had it up to here with you and your marriage problems do you understand me! Up to here.” she demonstrates with her hands.

I’ve never seen Zuzile this mad before, ever. She’s always smiling, always kind and jolly. I feel like we’ve broken her.

“I’m sorry mom.” he apologies like a fish in water.

His head is lowered in shame. Christine is sitting in the chair next to his, her arms folded like she’s ready for a war. I, on the other hand, am sitting in the corner waiting for my turn. She’s still scolding Mvelwenhle.

“What’s so hard about just keeping it in your pants mfanawami? Does it hurt? Does it burn?” he doesn’t answer.

“Ngiyabuza phela ngane kaKabelo!”

“No mom, it doesn’t hurt and it doesn’t burn.” if this wasn’t so serious, I would shit myself laughing at him.

Where is the ego and confidence now?

“Ntombiyelanga I give you all the permission to leave him. He doesn’t deserve you.” she’s fuming.

Mvelo lifts his head and looks at his mother with pleading eyes.

“Ma no please. Fluff, I’m sorry.” he goes to kneel at her feet.

“Sthandwa sami, please baby please, don’t leave me. You can hit me, kick me, you can even stab me, but please don’t leave me Fluff. I love you, only you. I’ll grow up, I’ll do whatever you want me to do.” he’s crying.

Men are truly pathetic.

“Get off your knees Mfusi.” Christine says.

At a dire time like this she’s speaking to him so softly with so much respect. She’s really better than I ever could be. Mvelo gets up and wipes his tears like a little boy and takes his seat.

LACED

“Muzi would be devastated to find out that the two people he loves the most in this world have betrayed him like this. I don’t know how you two could possibly begin to do this. You have made a mess of this family and nothing will ever fix it, ever. I don’t even know what to say to you.” she sounds defeated.

“Ma can I say something.” Christine speaks up.

Zuzile gives her the floor. I can see that they brought us here to gang up on us.

“I’m not mad at him, he’s always been like this, he cheated on me three months into our marriage, I know I’ve never been enough for him. I’m more hurt that you Nambitha, a stranger I’ve shared my life with could betray me like this. And yes I know you don’t owe me anything; he owes me more than you do, but I called you my friend. I let you into my home, I brought you around my children and welcomed you into my life. This whole thing, it makes me question if you were envious of my life from the beginning. You have a good man on your hands; Muzikayise has always been an amazing person, he just needed to be loved correctly and you took that and used it against him. All of this makes me question a lot about how things have happened in the last five years. But I love Mvelo, he may not respect me, and may not rate me, but I love him and I will always stick by him. Mvelo, you win baby...I’m going to move to Johannesburg and I’m going to be everything you’ve ever wanted me to be, I just don’t need these people around me, ever.” by these people she means me.

“You are not missing out on much here, you have a better man than mine, but I guess we will always envy what we don’t have.” she adds on, staring right at me.

Her words cut deep into my soul, and I catch the drops of tears escaping my eyes.

“Muzi doesn’t need this. Can we all agree that everything that happened here stays here?” Chrissy nods first.

I don’t know how I feel about that. It’s easy for them to say that. They aren’t the ones that will have to face him from here onwards for the rest of their lives. I don’t know if I’ll be able to live with him knowing that I betrayed him at his lowest moment.

“Agreed Nambitha?” Zuzile probes.

“Yes ma.”

LACED

In this little life I live, I do wish for a little ounce of peace.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Nambitha Zungu

We are going to fetch Muzi from rehab today. Zuzile tells me that he's excited to be coming back.

Believe it or not, I haven't seen him since that day I went to bring him food. Zuzile thought it was for the best that I don't see him so she has been the one travelling these two hours at least three times a week to go see him and bring him a home cooked meal.

She had to explain to him that I wasn't feeling very well hence I had to move to her house for the time being, but she didn't go into detail. Whenever she was there, they would video call me and we would talk for hours.

Guilt always consumed me whenever he told me he loved me and that he missed me; I still couldn't say the 'L' word back. I've been dreading seeing him today, I don't know how to face him. If there is one thing that Zuzile drilled into my head, it's the fact that I should not breathe a word to him about what happened; both the pregnancy and my whorish ways.

The Mfusi's; the other ones...they moved to Johannesburg permanently. There is no more back and forth between here and there. They really want nothing to do with me, and I get them. I also don't want anything to do with them. It's for the best that things remain the way they are currently.

I'm sitting in the car waiting for Zuzile to come back from the garage, as as she was getting us water for the road. She's a fast driver, we are almost half way there in just over an hour. It's been an awkward drive though because she's not as buddy buddy with me like is she used to. Our relationship isn't the same anymore, but because Mr Mfusi doesn't know what happened with Mvelo and Christine, we have to pretend to be okay when we are in his presence.

She comes back in the car and instead of starting it, she sits quietly, leaning against the steering wheel. I don't know what's going on with her, she looks like she's battling something but I'm too afraid to ask what it is that's eating her up.

"How are you feeling?" she speaks without lifting her head.

Is she asking me?

LACED

“Me?” I stupidly ask.

“No, the one behind you, obviously I mean you.” I clear my throat.

Yeah I’m not her favourite person.

“I’m okay Ma.” I don’t know how she expects me to answer the question.

She lifts her head and stares at me.

“Nambitha this is the opportunity for you to tell me how you really feel. So don’t tell me you are just okay.” I scratch my head and sigh.

Do I even know how I feel?

“I’m scared, I’m scared about facing Muzi. I’m afraid to look him in the eyes and lie to him. I feel like I don’t deserve him, and I don’t deserve his love. And I know I landed myself in this puddle with my reckless actions, but it’s all just getting a little too much for me to handle and I don’t know what to do. I won’t be able to live with myself knowing our happiness is built on a foundation of lies.” I bear my heart out.

She rotates her whole body and looks at me intently.

“So you want to tell him the truth? Are you ready for that?” she asks in a serious tone.

I don’t know what I want to do.

“I think you don’t have to make this decision now. You don’t know how he will react to this, and the last thing we need is for him to relapse when he’s done so well for himself. If you want to tell him, that’s your decision, and I can’t stop you from doing it, just don’t do it now; for his well-being. Go on this holiday, it’s just a week away from the stress. You both need it to cool off, you’ve been through so much. And when you come back, you both will attend therapy, both separately and together as a couple. It will help you guys.” this therapy talk bores me.

Therapy doesn’t work. I’ve been there, I’ve done it and here I am, still the most fucked up human being, battling skeletons in the darkness.

“Listen to me Nambitha sisi, sometimes you have to make sacrifices. If you want your marriage to work, you will make this compromise and go to therapy to save your marriage. If you don’t, tell Muzi now before he invests his heart more than he already has and leave him the fuck alone.” maybe he’s better off without me then.

LACED

“Think about it.” she says and starts the car.

I’m literally stuck between a rock and a hard place.

● ● ●

He scoops me off the ground and spins me around, kissing my whole face. I giggle, butterflies fluttering around my stomach.

No matter how guilty I feel, or how much I’m struggling to face him in this moment, I missed him. His excitement is slowly rubbing off on me.

“Look at you! Look at that glow!” he praises me as he gently lets me down.

“What glow Muzi? You are delusional.” he brings his lips closer to mine and gives me a fat wet kiss.

“I missed you so much baby. So much.” I smile and look him in the eye.

I try not to waver in my stare, I don’t want him to see that deep down I’m not okay. He’s gained so much weight, his cheeks look so much fuller, and his big eyes look bigger.

“What’s wrong?” he whispers, smiling back at me.

I cup his face and look at him longer.

“I missed you too Manzini.” I whisper back.

His smile grows wider. It feels like it’s just the two of us here.

“Okay love birds we need to go!” Zuzile shouts behind us.

We both turn to her. She’s staring at us with a loving smile. She looks happy to see us like this.

I let go of Muzi and he goes to his sister. He gives her a tight hug.

“I don’t know how I could ever begin to thank you mntaka ma.” Zuzile shakes her head.

LACED

“Don’t thank me baby brother, I would do anything for you.” she opens her eyes and looks at me.

She’s throwing daggers. She’s reminding that I should not ruin this moment.

“I love you.” he says to his sister.

“I love you more, and I’m so proud of you.” she assures.

What a lucky man, what a loved man.

“Okay, where to from here?” he asks blithely.

He was talking about me having a glow, meanwhile he’s the one that’s glowing.

“We are going to see mom.” Zuzile says.

Oh that darling old lady. We haven’t seen her in a while. He looks happy about that decision so we all hop in the car and he takes the backseat.

“So what did I miss out on while I was in that place?” he starts out as we get back on the road.

“Not a lot.” Zuzile says glancing over at me.

She has me on a tight leash. I’m not that unstable, I won’t shout it on top of mountains that I cheated on him while he was fighting a drug addiction in rehab. I see that’s what she thinks I’ll do.

“Lihle gave birth to a baby girl.” I tell him.

He’s shocked because last he checked, she wasn’t pregnant. But she hid the pregnancy from all of us. She was lucky at the launch that her bump was well hidden and it was night time. It explains a lot though about how she wasn’t coming over for our drinking sprees.

“She was pregnant? I’m an uncle again?” he exclaims, joy dressing his voice.

“She hid it from everyone imagine.” Zuzile chimes in.

“When I get my hands on Mncube, he should run.” we both laugh.

It’s so refreshing to see him so carefree.

LACED

“So did you guys plan something for me, surprise welcome home party nyana?” he hints wiggling his eyebrows.

Zuzile and I glance at each other. We didn’t know he would want one.

“Well...” Zuzile begins.

He just chuckles.

“I’m just joking. I don’t want anything, I’m just happy to be alive and have my favourite girls around me.” he leans in and kisses both our cheeks.

Zuzile chuckles.

“Were they feeding you happy pills in there?” she asks glancing over at him in the rear view.

I can relate to her question. He’s so putty-putty and clingy, Muzi isn’t like that. He just bursts into laughter, his laughter is contagious.

“No, I’m just really be happy to be out, and I’m even happier to be alive and given another chance to build up my life with the people that I truly love.” he turns his head and looks at me.

I force a smile, but I keep looking ahead because the guilt is chowing at me.

“We are happy to have you back too Yise, we are very happy.”

...

We are at the Zungu household. His mother cried literal tears when he walked through the door, and she covered him with her hands and prayed her lungs out. That made all of us emotional. She’s a real one for not caring about everything else that happened, she’s just grateful to have her son alive.

It just made it even more real that we could have lost him to drugs and everything could be different today. We have a lot to be thankful for in this moment.

LACED

He asked me to cook for him and I couldn't say no. My job as his wife is to make him happy, and because he already is happy, I have to keep him this happy for as long as I can. I got some help from his mother's caregiver, she was showing me around the kitchen and I was able to whip up some of his favourite delicacies.

Everything is ready, I'm just adding mayonnaise to my salad when I hear footsteps in the kitchen. I turn around and look at Zuzile make her way in.

"Umakoti wakwaZungu wenza njena ke." mmmh.

I don't know whether to take that as a compliment or a jab. You can never be too sure with Zuzile Mfusi, she's the queen of shade.

But I just chuckle lowly and continue to mix my salad. She's opening my pots looking inside, from what my mother taught me, that is the epitome of disrespect, but I can't tell her anything; it's her mother's house and she holds my deepest darkest secrets.

"Do you see how happy he is?" she asks coming to stand next to me.

I sigh and nod.

"Do you really want to take that away from him? I don't think so." she's cornering me.

She knows I don't have the guts to snatch this moment away from Muzi.

"Your flight leaves tomorrow afternoon, Kabelo and I will take you to the airport. Go work on your relationship, it's not over." so now I'm not even being given an option, I'm going on this vacation whether I want to or not.

She taps my shoulder and walks to the sink.

"I'll help you set the table."

Going to an island has always been on my bucket list of travels. I'm a little excited that I get to do it, but I wish I was really in the right state of mind for it. I didn't want to go to that vacation knowing that I don't have a big mess that I've left behind to come back to and fix.

But I guess Zuzile knows better than I do. She's been married for years, and she has a healthy relationship with her husband. Lord knows that I want this relationship to work more than anything else in the world, so I'm putting everything else aside and I'm going to start fixing my marriage. I'm ready for everything that's going to be thrown at me, shade and all.

LACED

Zuzile was the one that told him that she booked us a holiday at the Maldives for a week to just go and be by ourselves, and I could see that he was thrilled. We had a lovely time at dinner, and my mother-in-law couldn't stop praising my cooking skills. If there's one thing I can do, it's cook, and no one can ever take that away from me.

Since our house hunting journey was temporized, we don't have a place of our own to stay. Zuzile opened up her home as always, and my man and I are snuggled up under the covers. We might not be home, but it feels like home wherever he is.

"I missed holding you." he says inhaling my scent.

Three months without being cuddled and snuggled at night was torture for me too.

"Now you can hold me forever and never let me go." I whisper to him.

His chest vibrates as he chuckles heartily.

"Thank you Nams. Thank you for being so understanding. Thank you for waiting for me, I know it hasn't been easy on you too, but you believed in me, and stayed with me through my darkest time, and I will always love you for that." I gulp down the lump in my throat and nod.

Tears burn my eyes as I listen to him. Hearing him calling me all these things that I'm not makes my heart bleed. I can't do this.

I can't.

"Muzi I need to tell you something." I say.

His body tenses up. He turns me around to face him. He locks his eyes with mine, and I see a glow in them. His eyes are filled with so much love.

"What's wrong baby?" he caresses my cheek.

His face is altering into a frown, and I see the happiness gradually begin to fade from his eyes.

I can't stand to hurt him...but I hate lie to him...I...

"I love you." I say in a single breath.

LACED

Tears drop from my eyes and trickle down both my cheeks. His eyes glisten with tears when I say that. My heart is bulldozing my chest, and my whole body is heating up.

He draws in a sharp breath, and a wide smile forms on his face. He pulls me to his chest, and I can't help but sob and hiccup.

"Aw Nams, you finally said it. I love you too baby, I love you so much." he says kissing my head multiple times.

His heartbeat assures me that I made the right decision by not telling him what I almost did. It's not the right time yet.

The right time will come, just not now. I can't do it now. I don't want to take away this happiness he feels.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Nambitha Zungu

“Come on baby we will miss our flight.” I mumble as he swallows my words with a hurried kiss.

I feel like we needed this week away for Muzi to release all his sexual tension because we would not have been able to have all the sex we had here in Zuzile’s house.

I’m a little sad that it has come to an end because we had so much fun! Oh what an enthralling experience.

“I’ll be quick, I promise.” he always says this.

He’s clearly still in holiday mode.

He hoists me up against the wall and shifts my underwear to the side. He presses his big hand against my mouth when I feel him fill me up to suppress the scream.

The thrill about this quickie is the fact that we have locked ourselves up in the paraplegic bathroom stall in the airport and our flight leaves in less than ten minutes. Immediately after check in, he dared me to do something crazy with him, and this is the something crazy.

He’s really going into it, and it’s sending me over the edge, he has his eyes locked with mine and he’s smiling at how I’m losing my mind. If there’s one thing Muzi is good at, it’s fucking!

A knock sounds on the door and I startle, open my eyes widely at the man pumping inside me. The person knocking on the other side of the door does not sound patient at all. But no, Muzi is not stopping, instead he presses harder against my mouth to stop me from screaming.

“My father needs to use the toilet!” the woman says.

“And I’m still using it too so be patient.” he groans out loud, sounding just as impatient.

The adrenaline rushing through my blood is going to quicken this orgasm. How the hell are we going to exit this stall? A poor man is holding in pee

LACED

because Muzi wants to cum, this is really the epitome of crazy. If we don't arrested for this, then we would be the luckiest humans alive.

He lifts his wrist to glance at his watch.

"Five minutes left of boarding time." he whispers to me.

Is he crazy! We will miss this flight and we don't have any money to pay for another one. South Africa is far.

He grips into my skin before he quickens his pace, stimulating my g-spot over and over again. I simply crumble under his hold and vibrate against the wall, covering his dick with cum. He follows right behind me, emptying his sac and quickly lets me down.

My legs are weak, but I have to find balance because we need to make our way out this stall and board this plane.

He looks at me and chuckles, I mouth to him: "You are so crazy."

He zips up his pants as he goes to flush the toilet as though he was actually using it. He then runs the tap, washes his hands and picks up my purse from the ground.

"Let's go." I'm scared.

How are we going to explain my presence in the mens bathrooms? As he is about to open the door, he sees that I'm not moving.

"I'm scared." I alert him.

He chuckles and takes off his flannel and give it to me.

"Put this over your head and run." oh my gosh this is stupid.

I take it either way and put it over my head. He opens the door and grabs my hand.

I'm so embarrassed, I can't even look up. I see a wheelchair right by my feet and my heart sinks.

"Sanibona." Muzi says to the people.

He's so stupid for that because we are in a foreign country where no one understands our language. This could literally be regarded as disrespectful. I suddenly feel him pulling me by the hand, and he starts to run.

LACED

I remove the flannel off my head and look up.

“Muzi you are so stupid!” he cracks up.

“Come, we are gonna miss our flight.” he’s still running.

I’m trying my best to catch up, but running in sandals is not for the faint-hearted. I could feel embarrassed by this running frantically through an airport filled with people but I choose to laugh it away and let my inner child run loose. He looks just as happy as I feel on the inside, and happy people don’t care if people are looking.

We get to the boarding gate huffing and puffing.

“Boarding pass please.” we are such a chaotic couple.

He breathlessly opens my purse and takes them out and hands them to the man. He checks them out and lets us in.

As we run through the tunnel on the way to the plane, he looks at me and smiles.

“I love you so much.” my heart leaps.

“I love you too!”

My heart beats for him. It pumps blood to keep this love I have for him alive. I never want to not experience his love. No matter how crazy it seems.

• • •

Nineteen hours and fifty minutes of flying, we are finally back on South African grounds.

I think the worst part about international flights were the layovers. We had a three hour layover in Doha, and I’m sure one can guess what we did. And I thought I was the sex addict.

I’m trying not to think too much about the shit I left behind that I still need to deal with, but Zuzile and I made a deal. Tomorrow is our first day of

LACED

therapy; Muzi and I. I have to break these news to him today so he can decide whether we are working on us or not.

I didn't want to do it today, especially because we've been so happy in the past week, but Zuzile said the sooner we get it over and done with, the better.

And here she is, holding a sign written in bold '*WELCOME HOME MR AND MRS ZUNGU!!*'

She runs up to us and squeezes us in a tight hug.

"Finally! We've missed you guys!" she's with her children.

I hardly ever see them when I'm at their house, I only ever see the youngest, Sanele. The rest are hormonal teenagers and they really don't show much face.

They all come to greet us with hugs and they all look quite happy to see us. We are getting a lot of questions about our trip and what we got up to. This excess love that we are receiving warms my heart so much I forget for an instant that I still have a hard task ahead of me.

Zuzile asks me to accompany her to get everyone some snacks for the road and we take off, leaving uncle Muzi with his little people.

"How was it?" she asks eyeing me.

"It was amazing ma. We are so thankful for your gesture, we had fun." she smiles and nods.

"So you didn't tell him then?" she asks.

I thought that was the plan.

"No I didn't."

"I didn't think you would be able to hold yourself. I'm glad you did." like I said, this woman is super shady.

I don't know what else to say so I zip my mouth shut.

"I found you guys a house, I know you both will love it. It's in Ballito. Your conversation with him tonight will determine whether he moves to that house alone or not." ouch!

LACED

She just made it clear that she bought that house for her brother, not me. That puts me under even more pressure, and fear dances in my blood stream. If Muzi decides he can't continue with this relationship, I might just be homeless.

"Everything is ready for your move my darling. Tonight, you will go to a hotel and talk to Muzi about it. If all goes well, Dr Williams will be waiting for you call. It's all in your hands now." she says flicking the card at me.

I know I'm not crazy for saying Zuzile is controlling. I feel like now that I've let her into my problems, she feels like it's her duty to help me fix things. Everything that's going on right now, I have no control over, I don't even have a say. Even Muzi's final outcome; it solely lies on him.

If he decides he doesn't want me anymore, then what will happen to me? I'm just going to have to pack up this love I have for him and throw it away? I have never loved anyone like this before, how the hell am I going to get rid of all of it? How am I going to begin to forget that I ever loved him and survive without him?

She continues to talk about how I should start out the conversation, giving me tips and tricks to make him a little more understanding. I honestly don't care what she has to say at this point, the stress of the aftermath has gotten to me and I don't know how I'm going to run away from it.

...

Muzi just came out of the shower, he's standing in front of the mirror drying his hair. My eyes are glued on his muscly back and clear skin. For a man, he has the softest skin, and I will forever be envious of his perfect genes.

"I can feel you staring at me." he says turning around to look at me.

I bring the duvet up to my mouth to cover the embarrassment. He smiles back.

"You can look baby, it's all yours." I hope forever.

It's the moment of truth now. I've fed him, both food and the cookie, he's full. He's taken a shower and now he's ready for bed. Before he sleeps, we need to have this conversation.

LACED

“Get dressed and come join me.” I say and pat his side of the bed.

He still doesn’t suspect a thing. He willingly drops his towel and changes into his pyjamas. I’m the one that introduced him to pyjamas, he used to hate them when I met him. He didn’t wear them as often as he does now though, I think rehab got him accustomed to new things.

He comes to slide into the covers and lays his head on my lap like a little baby.

“I’m so tired baby yoh.” he groans.

“So am I baby, but I think we need to talk about something important.” he rolls over and looks at me.

I gulp down. I want to keep my cool, I don’t want to be nervous because if I do, I’ll lose the ability to articulate myself properly.

“What’s up?” I can see he’s trying to act cool, but he wants to panic.

I caress his cheeks and lean in and kiss his plump pink lips first. It might be the last time I do this so I want to cherish this moment forever.

“It’s about the time you spent in rehab.” I start out.

He puckers his eyebrows, but nods any way.

I take a deep breath to calm myself down.

“Okay, so the reason why I wasn’t coming to visit in the last two weeks of your treatment was because something happened, and to this day, I’m still confused about it. I didn’t want to tell you then and worry you while you were still working on yourself, but now I need clarity. You might not have an explanation as well, but...” he interrupts me.

“Nambitha what happened?” I sigh.

The suspense is killing him, he looks impatient.

“I was pregnant.” I drop the bomb.

His eyes widen and he quickly jolts up from my lap and looks at me sideways.

“Pregnant?” he chokes.

LACED

He looks petrified.

“Was Muzi, the keyword is was.” I say to him.

He’s still not calm. I know he doesn’t want children, but I didn’t think he was this scared of pregnancy.

“How?” he mutters looking at me.

“I don’t know how. The question should be directed at you because you were the one that put it there. Because of my tubal ligation it was ectopic and in turn I had to be operated, so there is no baby.” his eyes start watering.

I don’t know what his reason for crying is because I surely know that it’s not because there is no baby. But this should be the least of his worries, the real bomb is coming.

“I’m so sorry Nams, I’m sorry that happened and I wasn’t there. I was supposed to be there” he says and pulls me into a tight hug.

I’m over it now. I took a few days to process it after it happened and made peace with it. What I was processing was the fact that I even had the ability to fall pregnant, I had a hard time with that.

“It’s okay Muzi, but your vasectomy needs to be checked out.” he laughed and looked at me.

“You still don’t want kids?” he asks wiggling his eyebrows.

“No, never!” he laughs out loud.

I don’t even want to joke around the pregnancy subject. His laughter is quite contagious. I hate to think that this laughter might not last for too long. The hard news are yet to come.

“Okay but there’s something else I need to tell you.” he only nods this time.

He looks a bit more relaxed than the first time. My heart bulldozes my chest.

“I made a big mistake Muzi, and I understand if you can’t forgive me for it, but just know that it was never my intention to hurt you and I deeply regret everything that happened.” he immediately frowns and lets go of my hands.

“Nams?” he says in a questioning tone but to me it comes as a warning.

LACED

“Please promise that you will listen with an open and forgiving heart...”
I plead, bringing his hands back into my grip.

“Nambitha?” his tone becomes sterner.

Now I’m really scared, but I have to rip this band-aid off.

“I slept with Mvelo again...” he doesn’t even let me finish my sentence.

Disgust etches on his face and he throws his hands back at me. I see tears welling in his eyes once again, this time it looks like they will fall.

“I’m sorry Muzi.” I whisper, trying to hold his hands once again, but he pushes me back.

“Muzi...”

“Stop saying my name.” he says and stands up from the bed.

He paces around the room. I don’t want to cry and scream because that would be causing a scene and I don’t want to annoy him more than he already is.

“Again Nambitha? You betrayed me again with the same man I told you specifically not to!” he shouts at me.

I shrivel up under the covers and sob quietly.

“Do you hate me that much! Do I mean that little to you?” he asks looking at me.

His eyes have turned red instantly.

“Muzi I don’t hate you. It was a mistake, it shouldn’t have happened and I’m so sorry. I’d do anything for you to forgive me, just please, please don’t leave me, please.” I say getting out of bed to go kneel in front of his feet.

So this is how Mvelo felt?

He’s looking down at me, his whole face has turned red and his chest is bouncing up and down. He’s angry, I’ve never seen Muzi like this before, never.

“Please baby, please.” I sob, holding his legs.

“Let me go, I need some air.” he says shaking his legs.

LACED

I move away quickly before I get hurt, but that gives him leeway to move to the door.

I hastily get off my knees and go hold onto him, grabbing onto his waist.

I turn him around and make him face me.

“I love you Muzi please don’t leave me.” I beg him, my hands shaking as I snake my arms around his neck.

I pull his head down and forcefully kiss him, he kisses me back and I feel his tears staining my cheeks. He doesn’t kiss me for too long, he pulls out and pushes me off.

“I need to think, I need some air.” before I can say anything else he opens the door leaves the room, barefoot and all.

I don’t even have the strength to run after him. I slide against the door, feeling an indescribable pain in my heart. I was expecting this to happen, but I didn’t anticipate the pain to be this much.

My phone rings from the bed, and I rush to go pick it up, hoping it’s him. My excitement quickly vanishes when I realize that he left his phone here so that thought leaves me immediately. It’s Zuzile calling me.

“Have you told him?” she asks.

How did she conveniently call me right after he storms off?

“Yes.” I snort.

She sighs heavily.

“I take it didn’t go well then.” she sounds just as broken about the revelation.

I can’t help the sob that escapes my lips.

“He’s left, he asked for air, I don’t know where he went, what does that even mean?”

“Shh, don’t cry, he won’t do anything stupid.” how does she know that.

How much surety does she have that he won’t throw himself in front of a car or buy drugs and relapse? He wasn’t okay when he left here, he could do anything.

LACED

“Get into bed and sleep. He’s going to come back.” she reassures me.

I don’t believe her. Every bone in my body is screaming for me to go and look for him.

I drop the call because I’m annoyed and bury myself under the covers and sob.

If he doesn’t come back like Zuzile just promised me he would, I’m going to end my life. I’ll be left with nothing to live for if Muzi leaves me.

...

“Nambitha wake up.” he shakes me violently.

I sit up in shock and scan my surroundings. My head is pounding and my eyes hurt, but that is the least of my worries...

HE CAME BACK!

I don’t know whether to think I was dreaming when I told him or not. He looks fresh, dressed and ready for the day, and he smells amazing. His face though, it tells me otherwise, it reminds me that he still very much hates me.

“We need to check out, go shower and get ready.” he says coldly.

It takes me a minute to register what he’s saying, but when it does, I get up out of the bed and go to give him a tight hug. He doesn’t hug me back.

I’m just glad he’s alive, that he didn’t do anything stupid. Whether he forgives me or not doesn’t matter right now.

He quickly makes me remove my arms around his body and pushes me off him.

“Go!” he commands.

I broke my happy Muzi.

I do as instructed though and take a quick shower. I don’t want to piss him off more than he already is.

LACED

I'm shocked to get back to the room to find my clothes picked out, placed neatly on the unmade bed. He's sitting in the chair across the room, staring out the window.

"Thank you Manzini." I shyly say.

He doesn't even look away from the window. I don't know what to make of this gesture and as I get dressed, a number of thoughts race through my mind. It might not mean anything; he may still decide to leave me. He hasn't said anything about what we spoke about last night and he hasn't said whether he forgives me or not.

He picked out a black short dress and my favourite Gucci pumps for me. When I look at myself in the mirror, I realize that we are matching, with him in his black jeans and black golf shirt. This makes me wonder if he's taking me somewhere special. Why would he want us to match on a random day, especially when he's mad at me?

"I'm done." I report when I'm satisfied with my look.

If I wasn't so puffy in the face, I would say I look gorgeous. My sew in is still in tact and I still look like an exotic babe. But this exotic babe is heartbroken and it's written all over my face.

He stands up and takes my purse and walks out the room. Looks like he's already checked out our luggage because there aren't any bags left in the room. I follow right behind him like a lost tail. The ride down to the elevator is still awkward because he's not talking to me, and I don't know where he's taking me. I just continue to follow silently until we get into a car. We are both sitting in the back and there is a driver in the front seat.

He's sitting on his own side and me on mine. The silence in the car is even thicker, he occasionally presses his phone, and occasionally speaks to the driver and laughs with him. By now, I understand that I'm the problem, and I'm not complaining; at least he didn't leave.

The driver takes the off-ramp to Ballito and my heart leaps. I turn to look at him, but he keeps looking straight ahead. I don't want to assume that he's choosing to forgive me, but if my memory serves me correctly, Zuzile said the house she got us is situated in Ballito.

The drive continues in silence, but its not long before we pull up at this beautiful double story house in the middle of a fancy gated community. He opens the door for himself and climbs out, but the driver is the one that comes out to open for me. He's definitely still angry at me.

LACED

Again he's walking ahead of me, walking fast at that and I have to try keep up with him. The kitten heels I'm wearing don't make it any easier for me. He seems to know his way through the house, so I quietly follow until we reach a serene room painted with neutral colours. It is surrounded with couches and a table in the middle. There is also a fireplace crackling in the midst of it, giving off some warmth in the room.

There is a white woman sitting in the chair dressed in a white two-piece, and she stands up to shake Muzi hand.

"Mr Zungu." he takes her hand and shakes it firmly, acknowledging her with just a smile.

"Take a seat." she says after shaking my hand.

I sit on the far end of the couch, and he does the same. The space in between us is cold.

She stares between the two of us for quite a while, giving both of us a creepy but welcoming smile. At this point my confusion is peaking.

And then she begins.

"Mr and Mrs Zungu, welcome to couples therapy...." she says pulling out her notebook and pen.

So this is what this is...

THE END

LACED

LETTER TO MY READER!

That's it! You have made it to the end!

Thank you so much for taking the time to explore the crevices of my imagination, I hope it was worthwhile!

I would really love to hear your feedback so do not hesitate to hit me up on any one of these platforms

Instagram: @yorahalos.stories

Facebook: Yorahalo's Stories

WhatsApp: +27 83 398 8241

Email: yorahalos.stories@gmail.com

Love Mbhalist!