



HIS AFRICAN QUEEN

BY: ZEKHETHELO NONHLANHLA SITHOLE

To the reader

Firstly hi

And then secondly, I would like to thank you for taking your time to read this baby if mine. I am a mind full of stories, English is not my first language therefore I sometimes alternate to Isizulu. I am a young lady in my early twenties who loves writing. Writing is therapy to my souls and pleasure to the reading soul. It's my way of portraying my imagination.

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Many of the things I wrote about were inspired by other books I have read and conversations with friends. Anyways there are several people I would like to thank (Ayanda Bhengu, Sthabiso Xaba, Nomfundo Mdebele, Njabulo Madonsela, Sindisiwe Khuzwayo, Nhlanzeko Ntuli and Mbongeleni "Dokzin" Mnguni, Samkelisiwe Dlamini and Bazamile "fuzeberry" Ngcobo. Thank you for believing in me and motivating me to write this book. Special thanks to Mncedisi Ndabezitha and Anela Magwaza for making me love reading.

All characters and events in this book are fictions. Any resemblance to real people is purely coincidental.

I have written short stories before, but this is my first novel, I would love to hear your feedback (mostly where should I improve). You can DM me on Instagram (IG: ZERH_JOBE). I got lost in the pages, I hope you will get lost too.

XXX THE AUTHOR

ZEKHETHELO NONHLANHLA SITHOLE

Strong enough to crumble. The illusion that us women are “Imbokodo” an indestructible rock is going to be the death of us. I feel so indebted to the idea that I am strong, I can not even find ways to show that I am defeated. A friend of mine once said “AKUKHO WRONG UKUBA WEAK. UKUBA STRONG LEADS TO SEVERE DEPRESSION”. As you read my stories you will understand that we woman tumble but not crumble, we were never built to break we just bend.]

CHAPTER 1

At church they usually say you are never given more than you can bear apparently somewhere in the bible it says that. That is a green lie, burying my mother is by far the hardest thing that I have ever done. No child should experience this pain.

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There is no love like a mother's love for her daughter. My mom turned me into a lady. My mother was my rock, my pillar of strength, my everything, without her I am nothing.

Last week I received a call from one of our neighbours telling me that my mom was very sick. I dropped everything, took a taxi to Pietermaritzburg. My mother suffered from cervical cancer, she undergone 2 chemotherapies before. The hardest thing was that she was a nurse (sister) and she understood everything about cancer she knew which stage was next. She refused when we wanted to take her to hospital said what is the use? Lets God's will be done.

Goodbye is the saddest word I will ever hear especially from my mother. Before her last breath she held my hand and said "I will forever love you, good bye Mantanani" we then slept. Little did I know those were her last words I thought when she said goodbye she meant goodnight. The following morning, I woke up did my morning routine when I went to wake her up, she did not move.

Today we are paying respect to Iqhawekazi lami. I feel like a part of me has been taken away from me. I feel empty, I am praying that someone wakes me up from this bad dream. There is a void inside of me. I can't fill it with money and cannot fill it with a man. This hole is much deeper than any physical pain. As soon as you start to feel pity for me don't, that is not how you deal with someone's empty hole. Maybe just maybe some places are meant to be empty perhaps they fill with tears.

It surprises me to see my mom's so-called family here praising my mother when they wanted nothing to do with her when she was still alive. Even though I despise them, but I am grateful they came, I couldn't burry my mother on my own. I know nothing about funerals.

There is no place where people lie in like in funerals. So, one of my aunts (mamkhulu Thandiwe) is speaking on behalf of the deceased sisters.

Mamkhulu: my sister Hlengiwe loved God, she never missed church (*that's a lie my mom never went to church. She used to say church goers were very evil her exact words were: bayizimpisi ezigqoke izikhumba zemvu. Weekends were mother and daughter bonding section. She would come to Durban or me to PMB*). she was forever smiling, she wouldn't hurt a fly. She was a true definition of a proverb's 31 type of woman. (*see if we were living in a cartoon world Goldie and bear kanje Mamkhulu would have a long nose by now for all the fibbing / lying she is doing. My mom was what you would call uPhumasilwe. She knew how to stand up for herself. I don't know the saint that mamkhulu was talking about*). If heaven had visiting hours I would visit just to let you know how proud I am to call you my sister. You are every girl's dream sister. Hamba kahle MaGatsheni uyibekile induku ebandla.

After saying that she cried as she went to her seat. People were busy saying hmm nkosi yami, if only they knew those were crocodile tears. The Ndlovu family didn't even come to see mom when she was sick.

MC: May the daughter of the deceased say her final goodbyes to her mother. All eyes were on me as I stood up and made my way to the podium. I was praying that someone wakes me up from this bad dream.

As I walk toward the podium people are singing a song which says "Ubani oyofakaza ngami uma ngiwushiya lomhlaba". Reality is starting to kick in, I am all alone in this cruel world, no mother, no father and no siblings. I hold the microphone to say goodbye to my mother. I cannot find the perfect words to say to her. When words fail me, tears find me. Tears are now streaming. I open my mouth to speak, words still fail me I then settle for singing. A song about Fikile mlomo comes to mind I think it depicts everything that I want to say.

Me: (singing) Ngiyabonga mama wami ngothando ongiphe lona. Ngiyakubonga ngakho konke ongiphe kona. Noma zazikhona izilingo zaziwufuna umoya wakho. Zaziwuhlupha umoya wakho mama. Noma ubaba engasekho emhlabeni awuzange uphele Amandla mama. Wabambelela kuajehova wangikhulisa kanzima engekho oseduze kwakho. Noma zazikhona izilingo ezazifuna umoya wakho. Ngiyakubonga mama ngothando lwakho ongiphe lona.

Not to blow my own horn I am a very good singer. In high school I used to sing solo representing the school, I even went to sing in England when I was doing grade 11. A good voice is one of the traits I inherited from a person I am proud to call my mother. Pity I don't do church if I did bengizocula kusukume izishosha nabantu bafune ukukhetha inkosi okwesibili.

As I was singing I had my head bowed down since I was crying. I raise my head only to find all eyes were on me, most people were wiping tears. I hand over the mic to the MC and I catwalk to my seat.

MC: (looking at me) you redefined the saying which say a leaf doesn't fall far from the tree. Your angelic voice reminds me of your mother. I remember this one time when we were at her work place at Greys hospital I was delivering a sermon there. Your mother...

I could hear he was still talking but my mind was no longer there. I was trapped in my own thoughts. What I hate about funerals is that everyone claims they loved and knew you. The program went on and on until she was taken to the cemetery.

Tears streamed down on my cheeks as the coffin was lowered. I am starting to believe this is not a nightmare as I thought it was. How I long for my mother's touch, for her to hold me one last time, how I long for her to tell me that everything will be okay. At the peak of her life god reminded me that he too wants to enjoy her. I am silently asking God why me? But my inner self is asking me if not you then who? Who am I to stop the one who loaned me my mother at the first place? The only thing I could do is to hold onto the memories that he had left me.

2 hours after the funeral the Ndlovu family was summoned by mom's lawyer Mr Khoza.

Mr Khoza: I am sorry for the inconvenience, but Mrs Ndlovu asked for her will to be read on the day that she got buried on. (why is he saying Mrs? My mom was not married. I wanted to ask but I just let it go. Maybe he read wrong)

Uncle: funda ndodana

Mr Khoza: I Hlengiwe Nkosazane Ndlovu residing in 3465 Acacia Avenue, Pelham Pietermaritzburg declare that this is to be my last will and revoke all the will and codicils I previously made. I direct all my executors to pay my enforceable unsecured debts and funeral expenses, expenses of my last illness and the expenses of administering my estate.

Uncle: can you skip to the part where she talks about money and this house. (konje why is he here vele. Last time I checked him, and mom couldn't stand each other's sight).

Mr Khoza: (chuckles) I leave everything except the house to my 3 children (what 3 children? I asked myself) Sibusiso, Ayanda and Zekhethelo. My children can only get the inheritance if they are reunited. This means

Zekhethelo you must find your brothers. My sons please look after your sister. I leave the house to the Ndlovu family thank you for treating me like one of your own even though I wasn't.

I have never been this confused in my life. Last time I checked I was mom's only child manje bavelaphi labo "my sons"

Mamkhulu: surely you read wrong

Mr khoza: no mem here see for yourself (handing her a piece of paper) and that will be all. Zekhethelo (looking at me) please contact me as soon as you find your brothers. Your mother left millions for you.

Mr Khoza handshake uncle and walked towards the exit he stopped.

Mr Khoza: I almost forgot your mom said I shall give you this. (handing me a letter).

Here I was thinking my mother loved me clearly, I was wrong. I know for sure her evil siblings will chase me out of this house. Where will I live? Most importantly where will I find these so-called brothers? I need to find a job. I thought to myself. Luckily, I was smart I had a bursary for my studies it covered everything from tuition to accommodation, books and food. The problem was it only paid for 10 months since I stayed at a Private accommodation, it also did not give me cash for food I received food vouchers which only restricted me to buy at Shoprite. Mom's death meant I will forever be broke.

As I anticipated uncle chased me out of the house his exact words were 'ixoxo umazigxumele manje usumdala mawumngaka. Angani wena sunama millions. Lenja ewunyoko engena dankie isishiyele lendlu kuphela thina siyayidayisake". If only I had enough money I would buy this house it has so many memories.

After being chased away I took everything that belonged to me, and some of my mom's clothes. It was a struggle since I did not have a car or a licence. I had to go back and forth from my PMB to my flat in Durban.

CHAPTER 2

“PAKISHA UMTHWALO UVELE UHAMBE”. My annoying alarm wakes me up. Flip I am already late. I kick the blankets, did my morning routine and headed to the kitchen. The time is 12: 45, I am writing at 2 pm. I still must take a taxi to campus since I am staying in town. I already missed a test when I was busy with my mom’s funeral. On my way to campus I close my eyes to pray. I hardly pray but today pray asking the lord to please be with me as I write this test. I did not study believe me when I say I tried I just couldn’t concentrate I would find myself shedding a tear.

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I have so much on my plate right now. I still need to look for a job, look for my brothers. Back to the test I need to at least get 40% so that I could qualify to write the exam. I need to ace my exams to ensure that I don’t lose my bursary.

I am so lost in my own thoughts that I don’t even see that I have reached my destination. I feel someone shaking me.

Driver: men are trash (looking at me) what kind of guy stresses a beautiful lady to a point where she does not see when she has finally arrived where she is going

Why do men think the world revolves around them, angisakwazi nokuzicabangela izinyoni zami kothiwa ngihlushwa indoda? I just looked at him, said thank you and walked to my test venue. I guess praying sometimes does help because I found the test very easy.

I hate crowds I am introverted by nature most people say ngiyazitshela. My roommate is the opposite of me. She knows everyone and every club in Durban. Uyaphasa bandla yena ngeke usho ukuthi uyagruva. We’ve been roommates/ friends since first year, I remember I met her when we were both lost when we were doing our first year.

Coming to our flat after along day to be welcomed by noise is not my ideal afternoon. I make my way in. As I enter all eyes turn to me.

One lady: ever heard of knocking

Pha: (pissed) knocking for who? For what when she pays rent. Uphapha kabi ube uyivisitor.

I chuckled.

Me: good afternoon

Them: hi, hello, wola (I rolled my eyes who says wola to a lady?)

One of the gents: Phakeme how come you never told us you have a beautiful roommate

Pha: geez dude since when do you call me using my Id name.

We all laughed, we knew how Pha hated being called Phakeme, mainly because it was a boy's name.

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Pha: Gogo how was your test? I hope you aced it (Pha is my roommate. She kind of showed me around Durban. She is doing BCom majoring in Economics and Management. We study together, party together. I mean she does the partying while I stay indoors and read novels. She is very supportive, she even came to my mom's funeral. She took notes for me updated me one what I missed in school. She's an angel in disguise I tell you).

Me: it was more like stealing cheese curls from a baby

Lo cc ophaphayo: Guys why did we come here? (silence) clearly, we came for different things. (she paused) I know for sure I did not come here to hear about some test. (we all looked at her)

One of the guys: You can leave if you want (silence filled the room)

I decided to break the ice

Me: I am going to lie down for a few hours.

Pha: Ok gogo let me first introduce you.

There were 3 guys and 3 ladies. It was a couple thing. I spotted Lwazi Pha's boyfriend amongst the guys. You can tell from a distance that the guys were loaded, judging by their outfit. The guy that said I looked beautiful was wearing a rolex watch, I recently saw on Instagram. The girls had weaves on. Trust Phaenda to roll with people like that. Pha does not come from a rich family, she is what Beyoncé calls a diva: female version of a hustler.

I got to admit I love how Lwazi grounds Pha, she doesn't party like before. She only goes partying when she is with him. Lwazi is the type of guy you respect without being told to respect him. Back to the introductions.

Phaenda: (looking at me) you already know my other half Lwazi. These are his friends Sabelo and Wandile. (she says pointing at them) and these are their girl friend Nobuhle and Ntombifuthi.

Nobuhle is the hyperactive chick. Trust me she is the opposite of her name. She is what we call "inqumakhanda". She is well structured, she was wearing a

dress that hugged her body. Ntombifuthi was beautiful bandla ukuthi unegama lezalukazi she should have been Nobuhle.

Pha: meet my friend/roommate/sister the beautiful NtombiZekhethelo

Me: its Zekhethelo only (just like Pha I hate my full name) and it's nice to meet all of you.

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Wandile: (out of all the guys he was the most handsome. He looked like Mxolisi from uzalo but darker. Sabelo and Lwazi were both light skinned.) a friend of Pha is a friend of ours. So welcome to the crew.

Nobuhle: didn't you say you were tired, let us not stand in your way of resting after a long test.

I wanted to answer her and ask who said the test was long, but I held myself. I don't like her.

Sabelo: (chuckles) I smell jealousy

Me: see you around guys awuthi nginishiye. (I headed to my room).

Hours later I woke up, remembered that I still had to type my CV and find a part time job. Me finding a part time job is going to be hard since I don't have any work experience. I could also hire a private investigator to look for my brothers since I am a millionaire without the millions. The problem is I don't have money to pay the PI, secondly, I only know the names of my brothers I don't even know their surname. My instincts are telling me they are not Ndlovu's. Just in case you are wondering I have not read the letter that Mr Khoza gave me. I am still angry at my mom for denying me a chance to know my siblings, for leaving me with many unanswered questions.

As I was still lost in my own thoughts Pha disturbs me. Oh Lord konje why am I friends with such a loud person. Why can't I befriend normal people who knock?

Pha: (screaming) BABY GIRL! Guess what

Me: I am guessing you are going to tell me whatever it is that's making you scream

Pha: Your night and shining armour got you a job

Me: (Screams) say what? Are you for real

Pha: Ngiwubani kanti mina? You know I always have your back right. So, I talked to Lwazi and he talked to his friend who owns a pub/ restaurant. What you need to do is get your CV ready and the job is yours. Here is the address (handing me a piece of paper) when you get there ask for Mxolisi.

Remember when I said to call Pha a roommate would be an understatement, I meant that. She is truly heaven sent. After I came back from mom's funeral I told her everything that happened, and she said she will help me get a job. I won't suffer while she is still alive.

Me: (when words fail me tears find me. I couldn't find the perfect words to show my gratitude. I just went to her and hugged her with tears streaming) Thank you MaYeyeye you are God sent. I promise I won't disappoint you. With my first income I will take you to Eyadini lounge. (that is her favourite place)

Her: you better (we both laughed)

I decided to cook her favourite meal just to say thank you. We spent the rest of our evening discussing silly things. We then wished each other a good night and went separate ways.

See I have seen prayer work and I have seen it fail. Which has brought me to the conclusion that perhaps we don't get or miss what we desire because we pray or not. Life happens by design. Everything happens for a reason. Umuntu uzalwa efumbethe, sifumbethe izinto ezingafani. Abanye bafumbethe okuphathekayo abanye okungaphatheki. We are taught to sequence life, to later realise we can not accurately sequence life. To me life is like a book with different chapters some are traumatic while others are sweet. life is not linear, it varies with people and stages. One must strike a balance from the ground up.

With that said who would have thought I would be an orphan before finishing my degree. As I was growing up I always said that one day I will buy my mother a mansion at Umhlanga. Only if I knew that God knew that won't be possible since he had already planned my life. I am assuming that God was laughing at me when I was busy promising mom the whole world. Things are finally coming together, I have got myself a job (scratch that Pha got me a job). So, I am covered for now.

CHAPTER 3

This alarm clock is going to be the death of me. I feel like throwing my phone on the wall. My inner self is saying wake up Zekhethelo no time to slack. I have a 7:45 double lecture. I hate morning lectures especially now since it is autumn and mornings are usually cold. Ingubo isuke ikushushuzela ithi qhubeka ulale. After my class I must meet my soon to be employer.

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By 7 I am out of the shower and getting dressed. Black off shoulder dress that hugs my body and black pumps is my outfit for today. I might as well sell myself to my new employer. Call me sleazy but I believe God gave me these looks and this body for a reason. I think God was saying “banyisa mntanami”. I don’t wear make up (Pha calls me farm Julia wasema surbubsin), I also don’t like artificial hair, but I do cornrows now and again. I prefer natural. I have nothing against all these things.

After my lecture I took a taxi to Mxo’s pub/ restaurant. I walk inside to be welcomed some lady whom I assumed was the hostess. I took a deep breath.

The lady: uhm hello miss table for one?

Me: hi, I was sent to Mxolisi.

She looked at me up and down a couple of times.

Me: Are you going to help me or am I in a wrong place? (I was getting irritated)

The lady: Firstly, Miss it is not Mxolisi to you he is Mr Khuzwayo (was she for real?) secondly, he asked not to be disturbed.

Me: Yabo lokhu ogcine ngakho bekumele usho kona kodwa angazi ungenaphi u “his not Mxolisi to you he is Mr Khuzwayo” (I say rolling my eyes)

The lady: You have no shame wearing revealing clothes to meet a married man. Are you planning on seducing him? (aye ngiyalingwa impela)

I walked away without answering her, without any guilt but it dawned on me that us girls bring each other down. My mom raised a lady, she taught me that not everything deserves my reaction and response.

As I was walking towards the exit I bumped to the 3 ninjas (lwazi, Sabelo and Wandile).

Lwazi: half ka half (he calls me that since Pha calls me her half).

Me: (smile) Good morning, how are you?

Sabelo: we are fine, but you don’t look fine, what is the matter?

Lwazi: did you find Mxolisi?

I could see that they were worried. I couldn't tell them about the incident that just took place. Firstly, because I don't know the lady's name and I didn't know what her relation to Mxolisi was, secondly, I didn't want her to lose her job because of me.

Me: No, they said he asked not to be disturbed

Wandile: who could be busy for a beautiful lady like you. (he was trying to cheer me up bandla)

I just smiled.

Sabelo: Come, Mxolisi is our friend he knows that you are coming today so he is expecting you. Remember we told you that you are now our friend so, Mxo is also your friend before he is your employer. Friends make time for each other, so he can never be too busy for you. (sabelo never strike me as the serious type I expect this from Lwazi or Wandile not him)

We walk to the lady.

Sabelo: Meet the manager of this place Mbali. (Mbali ilo cc okuhlaza). Mbali meet our friend who will be joining you soon, your sister from another mother Zekhethelo. This Pub should be named Ndlovu since kugcwele oMaGatsheni. (Earth swallow me I can't believe I am sharing a surname with this monster)

Mbali: It's nice to meet you (she extends her hand)

Me; (looking at her hand) Oh sorry I don't do handshakes I am a germ freak.

Mbali: I am sorry about earlier.

Lwazi: what happened earlier?

He asked in a voice which said I demand the truth now.

Mbali: I sort of...

Me: (I cut her midsentence) she told me that Mxo was busy

Sabelo: Here I was thinking that maybe she was rude

Me: (faking a smile) no, she wasn't

Wandile: May we please go to Mxo now, some of us have to go to work (here I was thinking you don't work you just have rich parents)

We make our way to a table of six, where only 2 sits were occupied. I assumed one of the guys was Mxo or shall I say Mr Khuzwayo.

Wandile: One would assume that you are busy, the way your employees insist that you don't want to be disturbed. They even chased Zeh cause apparently ubhuti boss is very busy.

I smiled I didn't know how to act or what to say.

One guy: You are beautiful when you smile. I love your dimples.

The second guy: are you not going to introduce us? (this guy command respect just like Lwazi)

Wandile: Yazi dude uyangiphoxa I was saying a few seconds back that they chased away Zekhethelo. So, this is obviously Zekhethelo.

Guy 2: you didn't say that she came back after being chased away. (the level of sarcasm in this place is too much)

Lwazi: (chuckles) Gents this is uhalf ka half.

Guy 1: So, she is quarter?

We all laugh. Guy 1 offered me a sit.

Guy 1: lezi zimbuzi ohamba nazo azifundisekile

Guy 2: we should teach them a thing or two on how to treat a lady.

They fist bumped I concluded this crew is childish.

Sabelo: If I was Lungsta I was going to keep my mouth shut because ngishimile.

Lungsta: Dog I am getting married soon lungisani ama suits.

Wandile: You know you must first have a girlfriend first before you have a wife.

Lungsta: Just know that my future wife is beautiful more than all your girlfriends combined.

I wonder why was lungsta single because he was very handsome. He looked like Maps Maponyane without the moustache. This guy could get any girl he wanted considering the fact that he is rich, and the looks are a bonus. On top of that he had a very nice voice I could listen to him speaking the whole day.

Lwazi: Awuyeke ukuphupha emini. (we all laughed). Back to the introductions this is Zekhethelo Ndlovu, Pha's roommate/friend.

Mxo: Why didn't you tell me she was this beautiful. Nice to meet you Zeh and welcome on board

Lwazi: (looking at me) That was Mxolisi Khuzwayo your new boss. The guy with the imaginary wife (we all laughed) is Lungelo Buthelezi.

Lungelo: Nice to meet you sisi omuhle one-million-dollar smile.

Me: (I smiled) likewise

Lungelo: The saying which says birds of the same feather flock together is true. Look at your friendship with Pha nizwana ngobuhle.

Me: thanks

Mxo: (looking at me) How do you handle her because you seem like an innocent, shy lady and Pha is wild. I am starting to think Pha is short for Maphaphiyosi. Yazi when Lwazi asked me for our job I thought he will bring me Pha's duplicate.

Sabelo: Opposite attracts

Lwazi: Yey wena uPha is not Maphaphiyosi (we all laughed)

Lungelo: Seriously how do you handle her?

Me: Behind that wild lady there is a sweet soul whom I am proud to call a friend

Mxo: Ncooah man

Wandile: That is gay.

Mxo: awu oerna (he says touching Wandile's chin)

Wandile: Angikhahlelani nginomuntu phansi.

We all laughed.

Mxo: we will work on your shifts later to make sure they don't interfere with your school work.

Lungelo: What are you studying?

Me: BCom majoring in Informatics and management

Lungelo: Beauty and brains I like.

Sabelo: Since we are friends can we hack the bank. (he winks)

Lungelo: Awe yeke ingane. She doesn't even know how to hack an email.

Lwazi: She does don't underestimate her

Them: (in unison) really?

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Lwazi nods

Me: I don't

Lwazi: Don't lie cause you the one who taught Pha how to hack an email.

Me: Trust Pha to close her mouth.

They all laughed

Mxo; Go tell Mbali to give you your uniform and 2 tables that you are going to serve. You mess this up you won't come back tomorrow

Lungelo; awu kahle Mxo

I served my tables, and everything went well. Mxo and I discussed my shifts while looking at my time table. I then went to my flat. Told Pha everything and she was happy for me. I then took a shower and went to sleep while she went on a date with Lwazi. I slept like a baby. Good thing is I don't have classes on Thursday so tomorrow I only go to work no lectures. Hooray 😊 more tips for me. My shift starts at 10 am.

CHAPTER 4

Now that I am my own woman with a job allow me to formally introduce myself. I am Zekhethelo Imani Ndlovu daughter of the late Hlengiwe Nkosazane Ndlovu. A 20-year-old young lady studying towards a BCom degree in Informatics and Management (doing my final year) at University of Kwa Zulu Natal Westville Campus. I am an only child let me rephrase that I thought I was an only child turns out I have two brothers. I never met my father, whenever I asked mom about him she would change the topic, so I ended up letting it go. I am what the society label as a caramel bone, people say I look like the famous Jessica Nkosi known as Qondi in Isibaya. I am an introvert in high school I had only one friend Nompumelelo whom we lost contact when she went to study abroad after high school. In varsity I also have one friend who I trust with my whole life (Phakeme). I know I am a beautiful girl I even won iNdoni Miss Cultural when I was doing my first year now I am the brand ambassador of Indoni and the face of Indoni. I am insecure which is why I have one ex-boyfriend whom we only dated for a few weeks and no current bae. I prefer to keep it this way. I personally think love is overrated.

“This is the day that the lord has made I will rejoice and be glad in it”. As I start my day today this is the song that comes to my mind, it is echoing in my ears. I do my morning routine and head to work. Mbali apologised yesterday about that little incident, she assured me that it will never happen again she was having bad day and she took it out on a wrong person. Being a forgiving person that I am I told her it was not a big deal.

She then introduced me to other staff members. Most were welcoming, they said I look good in my uniform. I think I am going to love working here.

Zinzi: (one of the waitresses) Go serve table 3

Me: It is not my table.

Zinzi: The boss asked for you (I look over at table 3 I spot Mxo with 3 other guys, Lungelo was amongst those guys. Doesn't Lungelo work? I asked myself). Fucking the boss will get you the big spenders table.

Mbali: Just because you fucked someone to get this job doesn't mean everyone is, now leave the poor child alone. (after saying that she walked away)

I walked over to the table. I was asking myself who did she fuck.

Guy 1: Mxo you got fresh meat

Mxo: Chill X if you know what is good for you

Guy 2: This must be the “future wife” (why was he emphasising the future wife part. I am no one future wife. Especially not him he looks way older than me)

Lungelo: Fuck off nina zimbuji. Forgive my language Zeh unjani kodwa?

I have concluded Lungelo loves calling people goats. What was that about I asked myself.

Me: I am good can I get you something to drink while you look over your menus?

Mxo: Just bring us 4 bottles of Corona and order us a full chicken with side plates. (I was writing on my mini notepad)

Me: will that be all sir

Mxo: Yes

I nodded and walked away.

Guy 2: Tshisa Mxo or shall I say sir. Where did you find her?

They continued with their conversation I went to the kitchen to place their order. Took the beer, put them on a tray along with their glasses and took it to them.

Me: Your food will arrive in 15 to 20 minutes.

They nodded, and I walked away. They left a tip of R400(perks of being friend with Pha). This meant that I made a total of R789. I knew my looks would come handy in the near future I didn't expect it to be this soon.

After a long day I just needed my bed. I brought burger and fries for supper. Even though going to my flat was a walking distance from work, it was late. I could walk in the morning or when my shift ends early. So, my option was to get a cab to my place. I called Pha asking her cell phone numbers of cab drivers, she said she will send me a message on WhatsApp.

As I was waiting for Pha's message, I saw Lungelo and Wandile approaching the table that I was seating on.

Wandile: Why are you seating here? Didn't your shift end?

Me: Hello to you too and yes, my shift did end I am waiting for Pha to send me cell phone numbers of cab drivers.

Wandile: (chuckles) Ncese bengithi ngike ngakubona. Haven't you heard of Uber?

Me: I have I just don't trust it.

Lungelo: So, you trust cab drivers instead? (I kept quite) I can drop you at your place.

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Me: Thanks for the offer but I will pass.

Wandile: Ngoba?

Me: Angithanda ukuba uhlupho.

Lungelo: (rolls his eyes, yazi I think this guy is gay) I am the one who offered so don't stress come.

Wandile: No funny business njalo ingane leyo.

Lungelo: And who are you? her older brother?

Wandile: I am serious njalo

Lungelo: She is safe with me. Grab your bag lets go.

We walk to the parking in silence, he drives my favourite car Jeep Grand Cherokee. His car is personalised Lungsta ZN. Ok this guy has taste. When we reach the car, he opened the door for me. I sat in the passenger seat, he buckled my seat belt (really this guy, I rolled my eyes). He then went to his side got in and started the car.

Me: I am not a child you know I can buckle my own seatbelt

Him: You are not even 21 years old so that technically makes you a minor.

Me: How do you know my age?

Him: I did my research

I kept quiet.

Lungelo: Yazi it broke my heart to hear you say awufuni ukuba uhlupho

Me: I am sorry (that all I could come up with).

Lungelo: Starting from today I will be your driver from work to your flat. (awunyi perhaps?) I will ask Mxo about your shifts, and I am not taking no for an answer.

I am single because I don't want any guy to tell me what to do. I bet his crew put him up to this.

Me: Please allow me to be my own woman. Ngizokhula kanjani meningiphathisa okweqanda. (I said calmly)

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Lungelo: One day you will thank me. If it was up to me, you wouldn't be working there. So, the ball is in your court either you allow me to pick you up or you can kiss your job goodbye.

Me: You can't fire me, you didn't hire me.

Lungelo: (looking at the road) Try me. Mxo is my cousin and he would choose me anytime.

Me: I hate you

Lungelo: Either way I will wife you one day. Hate me or not I don't care.

This guy is full of himself no wonder eshimile nje. Him wife me? Even though he is handsome, but he is not my cup of coffee. I decided to keep quiet the rest of the way until we reached my flat.

Lungelo: Good night

Me: thanks for the lift.

Days turned into weeks Lungelo continued being my chauffeur just as he said. He is not a bad guy once you get to know him. We became friends let me rephrase that he bullied me into this friendship.

Even though it was not easy being a student plus worker I made the best of it.

Raining or not, tired or not I studied. My June exams were now approaching. During my study week Mxo gave me a week off his exact words were "sacela uhambe uyofunda angifuni uma usuhhaza ukhale ngengane yaQwabe". He told me I shall return to work after my exams. Mxo and the crew became brothers I never had. After my newly found friendship with Lungelo they were all over protective of me.

After all the hard work I put into my studies the exams were easy. I passed all modules and got 3 distinctions out of 4 modules. Pha also passed all her modules. We were so happy. The university was now closed for the June vacation which meant more work for me and more tips for me 😊 😊. Pha had

to leave to go to her home but she lied and said we have plenty of school work. That was a lie since we were semester students and she wasn't repeating any module.

Pha: Gogo you still owe me njalo

Me: No, I don't

Pha: Aybo you never took me to Eyadini as you promised

Me: Oh that, let go this weekend

Pha: Today is Thursday so, let us go tomorrow then Saturday we do shopping. Sunday you will rest since you are working on Monday.

Me: Alright besides we need to celebrate our good marks.

Pha: Jah this calls for celebration. Let's go choose our outfits, I want us to turn heads

After choosing our outfits. We cooked supper. We both knew our ways around the kitchen. That was one of the few things we had in common, we were also clean freaks. You knew you had to take your shoes off without being told when you enter our flat.

The day finally came. Friday afternoon we wore our outfits, same bandage dresses but different colours. Pha did make up on herself she insists that I also do it. She applied it on my face, brows on fleek all the works. I got to say I looked more beautiful.

I am wearing a white above the knee dress with red high heels and a red clutch bag, while Pha is wearing a black dress with a black clutch bag and red high heels. We look very beautiful, we then take a cab to Umlazi. She didn't ask Lwazi to take us to Umlazi because this is supposed to be a girl's night.

As we enter Eyadini all eyes turn to us, we turn heads just as Pha wanted. We find a table for us. I don't like clubs because I don't drink but I don't mind going with my number 1 girl. We ordered our drinks. We chatted, laughing I was enjoying this.

Just across us there were 2 guys drinking. The other guy kept looking at me. I just ignored him, but his eyes were piercing through my skin, I was uncomfortable.

Waiter: Excuse me ladies

Pha: Can we help you

Waiter: That guy over there (pointing at the table across) sent me to come and tell you that you can order anything you want he will pay.

A male voice: Tell him the ladies are fine

Pha and I look up to find Sabelo and Wandile with their girlfriends,

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Wandile: My 2 favourite women. Pha does Lwazi know that you are here?
Since when do you party without him?

I wanted to ask Wandile since when he is Pha's bodyguard, but my inner self told me not to. Sabelo was busy on his phone typing something.

Wandile: Do you mind if we join you?

Us: (in unison) Not at all (we did mind, we just said we don't, so they wouldn't rat Pha to Lwazi)

Sabelo: Let us go and look for a bigger table.

We settled for the VIP area, this meant that my money was saved, drinks were on Sabelo and Wandile. Few minutes later Lwazi, Mxo, Lungelo and a beautiful lady came to join us. The lady was introduced as Mxo's wife. The song which says "ngike ngabona idark elihle" was made when she was born, she was beyond beautiful.

Lungelo has been looking at me all night long laphe he didn't even greet me. Fun was had, we were having silly conversations laughing. They were drinking only Mxo's wife and I were not drinking, we were drinking an orange juice.

Wandile: khona abasiqedela idash ngeke

We all laughed

Mxo: fuck off

Sabelo: Why are you not drinking vele? (he asked looking at me) Are you pregnant?

Me: Ngabe ziyabhakwa izingane. I just don't drink anginaso isizathu.

Wandile: Please be my wife yazi uright on so many levels. (we laughed except Nobuhle)

Later we went separate ways. Trust Pha to leave me, she went with Lwazi to his place, Lungelo offered to take to my flat. Inside his car:

Me: You were very quiet tonight.

He just looked at me briefly and focused on the road. After some time

Lungelo: You looked very beautiful today. Make up suits you but I like you more when you are natural.

Me: Thanks

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Lungelo: NtombiZekhethelo

Me: TJO you hardly call me using my name let alone my full name what's up? What have you done to Lungelo? Are you alright? (I ask touching his forehead)

Lungelo usually calls me Ndalo short for Ubuhle bendalo. He laughed.

Lungelo: can I say something?

Me: Yes, what is it?

Him: I love you

Me: love you too (I laughed he didn't)

Him: (serious face) I am serious I love you the first time I laid my eyes on you.

I seriously thought he was joking.

Me: No Lungelo you can't love me.

Lungelo: Why wouldn't I?

Me: NO Lungelo! Please don't spoil this friendship for us.

Lungelo: what must I do because I can't pretend that I don't love you.

Me: please Lungelo

Him: Please give us a chance. I won't waste your time I promise to marry you

Me: No and please drop this.

The rest of the drive was filled with silence and it was awkward. I was not going to be in a relationship with Lungelo. Men are trash nje period. I tried dating before and I failed.

My father broke my heart before any guy could. Unfortunately, I can never say I am or was daddy's little girl that hurt me. If my own father couldn't give me the love I deserved, what assurance did I have that some guy yakomunye umuzi can give me that love.

So, don't tell me that I am uptight or living in the fantasy world. When you know this pain first hand, you do anything in your power to avoid it ever

happening to your children, even if it means depriving yourself the cool pleasures. You tend to centre your life's crucial decisions around the future of the family you may never even have. You know you are not in full control, but you still assume responsibility for what you could control.

CHAPTER 5

As I begin to love myself I stopped craving for a different life and I could see that everything that surrounded me was inviting me to growth. This is going to be the first vacation without my mother. If she was still alive I would have left for PMB after my exams. Now I am on my own. Now that is what I call growth/maturity.

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Lungelo continued being my chauffeur even after Friday's incident we said we will forget it ever happened. Our conversations were now short, we would greet each other and ask about each other's day and that would be it.

Friday I was working a double shift, it was double peaked. This was because it was month end and schools were closed. I have heard people say they were at a wrong place at a wrong time for me I was at a right place at a wrong time. Just after my shift ended, I plucked my earphones to listen to music. Grabbed my bag and walked inside the restaurant from the staff room.

I don't know what happened, but I felt stinging pain and saw blood. Then it occurred to me that I was shot. Mbali rushed to me. The last words I heard were from a male voice saying, "I told you I didn't like her working here".

I woke up to beeping sounds, I looked around and saw a nurse and Lungelo. Lungelo looked drained like he hasn't had a decent sleep in days.

Me: May I please have water

Lungelo: (rushing to me) Thank God. How are you? (squeezing me)

Me: Lungelo ngomile.

The nurse went out to get me water, Lungelo and I remained in silence. The nurse then returned and handed me water.

Me: Thank you

Lungelo: I am sorry I failed you

Me: It was not your fault so, don't beat yourself about this. It's not like I am dead.

Lungelo: I promise I will find who ever did this to you and they will pay.

Me: Don't

Lungelo: why shouldn't I?

Me: You know you can't turn back the hands of time right so finding them won't undo that fact that I was shot.

Lungelo: Why are you this forgiving?

Me: just don't find them Karma will find them. How long have I've been here?

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Lungelo: 3 days, the doctors had a hard time removing the bullet, you had to undergo an operation.

Me: How long have you've been here?

Lungelo: Since you were admitted. I just couldn't leave you alone.

I looked at him and saw blood stains on his shirt.

Me: Please go freshen up and eat

Lungelo: I can't leave you alone

Me: Please Sokalisa (I know Zulu man go weak over izithakazelo)

Lungelo: (smiling) what must I bring you when I come back?

Me: anything

The nurse got in.

Nurse: Sir may you please leave us for a few minutes I want to do some tests on Miss.

Lungelo: I was on my way out. Pha has been crying please let her know you are fine.

Me: I will, now go and Thank you for everything.

Lungelo just smiled and went out.

After doing the test, the nurse took me to bath. I couldn't walk properly bengifake ukhonkolo kowodwa umlenze. The doctor said I will remove it after 2 weeks. I called Pha she was very happy, she promised to come visit. When visiting hours came Pha came with the whole crew to visit me.

Mxo: I am sorry, I feel partly responsible for this, but I assure you they will pay.

Me: Don't beat yourself, it wasn't your fault.

After that we had silly conversations, they made me forget about all my troubles. I didn't even know which hospital I was in. I made a mental note to ask the nurse, I knew for sure it was not a government hospital. After visiting hours, the nurse came in to give me pain killers.

Me: what is the name of this hospital?

Nurse: How come you don't know your boyfriend's hospital.

I wanted to ask which boyfriend she was talking about because last time I checked I was single. I decided to remain silent.

Nurse: That guy loves you, he made sure you received the best care. I would kill to have a boyfriend like that.

Me: oh

This explains why I could have many visitors at once, "my boyfriend" owns the hospital. I know surgical wards only allow 2 visitors per patient. It then occurred to me that I knew nothing about Lungelo.

Lungelo came around 8 with KFC zinger wings my favourite. He must have asked Pha what I loved. He was wearing a black tracksuit with white lines, I must say he looked very handsome.

Lungelo: How are you this evening?

Me: I am good, now this is the Lungelo I know who is clean and smells nice.

Lungelo: (holding his chest) I am no longer Sokalisa I am Lungelo now.

We laughed.

Me: Oh, please bengincengile awu.

Lungelo: You should beg more often then.

Me: Wouldn't you love that. Sengibona nje ngiyacela Ngqengelele.

He laughed revealing his sparkling teeth, I never noticed that he had a beautiful smile.

Lungelo: I love how you know izithakazelo zami. Uqome kithi yini?

I laughed and ignored him.

Lungelo: I talked to your doctor he said he will discharge you tomorrow.

Me: That is music to my ears

Lungelo: I don't think it will be wise for you to stay at your flat when your legs look like this.

Me: I will be fine

Lungelo: Please be realistic

Me: I will besides Pha will help me

Lungelo: Pha is not a doctor and last time I checked she is always with Lwazi.

Me: You are also not a doctor

Lungelo: (chuckles) I may not be a doctor, but I know many Doctors besides Wandile is a doctor. Allow me to look after you.

Me: When does Wandile work because you guys are always together? How do you own this hospital if you are not a doctor (ok that was a very dumb question, but I needed to know if he really did own this hospital)?

Lungelo: Firstly, I don't own this hospital...

Me: But the nurse said you do.

Lungelo: Musa ukungixubha ngisadla allow me to finish

Me: (smiling) ok carry on

Lungelo: My father is the one who owns this hospital, I just have shares.

Wandile does go to work, he has his own surgery. We usually see him after his rounds that he does in this hospital and others like Addington hospital. (They say never judge a book by its cover. Wandile just doesn't strike me as a doctor.)

Me: I see

Lungelo: So, you will move in with me, and no I am not asking you I am telling you. I know you said you can't date me but please allow me to take care of you. I can't forgive myself if you hurt yourself in your flat.

Me: why are you such a bully?

Lungelo: It is because you are stubborn.

Me: Please don't do something out of your own kindness if you are expecting something in return.

Lungelo: I promise no funny business, I just want to take care of you.

Me: I will hold you to that.

As much as I didn't want to be in a relationship with Lungelo but whenever I was with him I felt butterflies in my stomach, forget butterflies I felt the whole zoo. There was something about him that I couldn't figure out.

Morning finally came, Lungelo came to pick me up. We went to my flat, packed some of my clothes and toiletries. We then drove to Umhlanga, I was asking myself how rich this guy is. I made a mental note to ask him where he works. He stopped outside a very beautiful house, used the remote to open the gate and got in. He came to my side and carried me in.

Me: I can walk myself

Him: I know

Me: Ngehlisa phela

He completely ignored me. We passed the lounge there was an old woman who looked like a maid but more fashionable. I greeted her.

The maid: Yaze yayinhle ingelosi oyiphethe. Oh, Nkosi yami kwenzakaleni emlenzeni.

Lungelo: It's a long story antiza I will tell you after she has settled in. This is Zekhethelo I call her Ndalo because of her natural beauty. (I smiled)

Antiza: She is indeed beautiful, she is a rare flower, eyakwabani intombi?

Lungelo: Uma Gatsheni. Ndalo meet Antiza she makes sure that my house looks clean. Ngiyinsizwa nje enhle ingenxa yakhe. She is my father's younger sister.

Here I was thinking she is a maid.

Me: Nice to meet you.

Antiza: likewise

Lungelo: we are going to rest Antiza.

Antiza: alright I will cook for Ndalo.

Lungelo continued walking until we reached a certain bedroom he opened it using his foot. Wow it was big and very beautiful.

Lungelo: feel at home

He then left me. I called Pha told her I will be staying with Lungelo for a while, she promised to come visit, said that she knew I will be well taken care of.

Hours later Antiza came with lunch as we were eating she asked me where I was from, my age, what I am currently doing in life, I told her.

Antiza: He never does this.

I kept quiet for 2 reasons, the first one is that I didn't know what she was talking about the, second reason is I had nothing to say. Antiza saw that I was confused.

Antiza: he never brings girls home, I think he really does love you (I kept quiet)
I was beginning to think he is gay.

We both laughed. I couldn't tell her that Lungelo and I were not an item. We continued eating telling me stories about Lungelo when he was growing up. She then took a tray to the kitchen and I drank my antibiotics and dozed off.

Lungelo came back later with supper. We ate in silence. he then took the tray to the kitchen and came back.

Me: I am going to take a bath.

Lungelo: I will bath you

Me: (eyes out) Hhaibo.

I went to take a bath, lotioned my body, drank my tablets and dozed off.

The following morning, I woke up, did my morning routine and went back to bed. I didn't know what to do. The last thing I wanted was Antiza to call me ivila or a gold digger. Lungelo came around 8.

Lungelo: rise and shine

Me; good morning

Him: How did you sleep?

Me: I slept like a baby. Thank you for everything.

Him: so, you peed on yourself like a baby? (laughing)

I hit his shoulder playfully.

Him: I am kidding let us go to the kitchen to make breakfast.

Me: here I was thinking you are a gentleman, you will bring me breakfast in bed.

Him: mewulinde ukulethelwa imina kushuthi awulambanga, izolo ngikulethelile ngoba kusho uAntiza.

Me: I fear bumping into Antiza.

Lungelo: (laughing) relax she is at work.

Me: wena don't you work?

Him: If I didn't would I be this rich?

Me: Dude you have rich parents so yes you could be rich without working.

Him: (he places his hand over his chest) Now you are breaking it.

No wonder Antiza thought Lungelo was gay, he is so dramatic.

Me: (I can't help but laugh) My heart bleeds for you

Lungelo: I love it when you laugh you become more beautiful, your dimples complete your look. I am my own boss, so I go to work uma kuphoqa, I prefer working from home.

Me: So, all your friends are bosses?

Him: You can say that. Mxo owns restaurants 3 of them. Sabelo has his own engineering company, Wandile has his own surgery, Lwazi is a CEO at KPMG and owns his own franchise. Dash is a pharmacist and owns his own pharmacy.

Me: who is Dash?

Him: our other friend, he is currently in England. You will meet him one day. He has dimples just like you.

Me: What do you own?

Him: I have my own companies, own 2 hotels one here at Umhlanga the other one in Ballito. I am a lawyer by profession.

Me: how old are you?

Him: I am 25 years

Me: wow I am impressed you still young, and you have accomplished a lot for yourself.

Him: Kusakuncane lokhu I still need to marry the most beautiful lady then zoshoke ukuthi sengiphumelele.

We spent our day watching movies and having sill conversations. He told me that I will no longer work for Mxo.

Me: how will I take care of myself?

Him: I will take care of you.

Me: Now you are pushing it. Angifuni! I want to be my own woman wena umi endleleni yami.

Him: I will give you monthly allowances.

Me: You are not my father so stop behaving like you are.

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Him: I don't wish to be your father you are very ungrateful.

Me: You don't get it do you? I don't want your money.

Him: (calmly) you will pay me after you graduate angikuceli futhi ngiyakutshela.

I was never going to win this Lungelo is a professional bully. I just silenced myself left him at the lounge and went to my room. I woke up hours later very hungry and decided to make myself a sandwich. As I was walking through the passage to the kitchen, in the lounge I saw Lungelo with 3 guys I greeted them and went to the kitchen.

I eavesdropped on their conversation.

Guy 1: Damn she is beyond beautiful.

Lungelo: that is my future wife

Guy 2: Are you guys dating now?

Lungelo: No, not yet. I don't want to take advantage of her, so I am still waiting.

Guy2: You waiting? Lizonetha idanone wena ulinde intombi.

Guy 1: Udlisiwe nje kwaphela.

They laughed.

Guy 3: (I was beginning to think he can't talk) Don't wait too long, we will take her.

Lungelo: You are my cousin and all but touch her I will kill you with my bare hands.

I finished my sandwich and went to my room.

I reflected on how my life has changed since I lost my mother. It dawned me that maybe just maybe Lungelo did love me. I hated how he treats me like a baby.

Chapter 6

As I begin to love myself I found that anguish and emotional sufferings are the only signs that I was living against my own truth. I began to understand that the truth is less scary, less painful if at all when we tell it to ourselves. Perhaps it is for this reason happiness is said to be an inside job, a personal responsibility. It breeds from self being continually honest with self.

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The truth is I really did love Lungelo. He understands me, grounds me even though he is a bully he does respect me.

Its been a week and 2 days since I have stayed with Lungelo, Antiza was hardly around. Lungelo has been supportive, Wandile did come by to check on me. Wandile said that I was fine and 2 days from now ngizowukhipha ukhonkolo.

So today I decided to cook for Lungelo just to say thank you. I called Pha asking her to ask Lwazi what was Lungelo's favourite meal. She texted me a few minutes later telling me its lasagne. I went to the kitchen and started cooking, I cooked enough food to accommodate Antiza. I didn't know whether she will join us or not. Few hours later Lungelo came to the house.

Lungelo: It smells nice in here

Me: I tried

Lungelo: You know you must not overwork yourself

Me: I am fine now, and I did this because I wanted to

Lungelo: Let me go freshen up and join you, sengikhathele utie

He went to his room, showered and within 5 minutes he was back. Trust me this guy has a PhD ekurobheni.

Me: that was fast

Lungelo: akere I am a gentleman I know never to keep a lady waiting

I laughed.

Me: cha uyarobha nje

Him: Not really it just that I am naturally fast.

I then stood up to dish for us.

Him: you shouldn't have gone through all this trouble

Me: it's nothing big

Him: what if you hurt yourself while cooking?

Me: chill dude, besides I have healed, and I did this to say thank you for your hospitality.

He just smiled. I went to sit on the couch because I needed to elevate my leg. He came and sat next to me.

Him: Ngiyabonga MaGatsheni.

Me: You welcome Ngqengelele.

We both smiled and continued eating. After eating he offered to do the dishes. Yazi umuntu uthi uzama ukumspoiler kugcine sekuwuyena ospoiler wena 😊. I went with him to the kitchen to keep him company. He was busy telling me about his day. We then went to watch a movie in the lounge, we sat at the same couch.

Him: Thank you for dinner, it was the best meal I have ever had you not just a pretty face (he said pulling my cheeks, I smiled). That was my favourite meal.

Me: I know

Him: How?

Me: Let just say a lady never reveals her secrets.

Him: Ngiyabonga Boya benye I out

We laughed. I hit him playful, he then tickled me. I don't know what happened but one minute we were playing the next minute we were kissing. I wanted to break the kiss, but my body betrayed me.

Lungelo: Ngiyakuthanda ngampela MaGatsheni, sacela ube indlovukazi yami.

Me: Ngiyakuthanda nami

Him: (hugging me) You just made me the happiest man. I promise you wont regret this, I will keep a smile on that pretty face. I promise to love you.

We continued kissing, he insisted we share the same bed which was his bedroom. He said that I was the first woman to sleep in his room, he always told himself that only his wife will sleep in his bed. I knew better that to trust a Zulu man. We then talked about random things, cuddle until we both dozed off.

The following morning, I was woken up by Lungelo kissing my forehead.

Him: Good morning my Queen.

Me: How are you my king

Him: I am more than good. I should sleep next to you more often, it was like I was in heaven. I still can't believe you said you love me.

Me: Sacela ungangiphoxi.

Him: You are my Queen; do you know how to play chess?

Here I am telling him not to disappoint me yena he is busy asking me about chess. See why I was single. Besides I was good at Chess, my best friend in high school was a Chess Champion and she taught me. I just nodded I was pissed I thought he was going to declare his undying love for me instead he asks me about chess.

Him: Good, you know how the queen is the most important piece in the game?

I nodded

Lungelo: Just like in a game of chess, your job is to always stand by me, fight my battles with me. I know it won't be easy being in a relationship with me, but I want you to trust me. I won't lie to you and say this is my first time being in love because its not. (God knows I wanted him to lie) What I will tell you is that I have been in love before, but this is the first time I have gone crazy over a girl. I could get any girl I wanted, I mean I am handsome and loaded (now he is being cocky, and it doesn't suit him) but after I saw you with Lwazi, Sabelo and Wandile, I told myself that is my future wife. Would you believe me if I told you that since I saw you I haven't ask any girl out?

I just don't trust men in general. I couldn't tell him that I don't believe him, so I just kept quiet.

Lungelo: I love you and I want you to trust me. I only want 3 things from you that is Respect, Loyalty and Trust. Note I didn't mention love or sex since you already told me you love me, so I shouldn't ask for it. I didn't mention sex because I don't want sex to be the only thing you offer me in this relationship. If I wanted sex bengizoya ePoint. Ngifuna ungikhulise in fact I want us to grow together. Ngifuna sikhulisane.

Lungelo was a sweet, loving guy but like his friends you also respected him without being told too. Even his friends respected and feared him who was I not to? I didn't know how to answer him, I wanted this conversation to end as soon as possible. I missed my playful Lungelo.

Lungelo: MaGatsheni wami omuhle will you be able to give me what I want from you?

I wanted to nod my inner self told me that would be disrespectful.

Me: Yes, I will (that was all I could come up with).

We then spent the rest of the day lazing around.

Lungelo and I were officially a couple, we told his friends and Pha, they were happy for us. Things were great between us. Just in case you are wondering I am a virgin, Lungelo said he is willing to wait for me. I consider my virginity to be my most prized possession.

So, this one time I was taking a shower and he joined me a few minute later without telling me. It was the first time I have seen him naked, more like the first time I have seen a guy naked without a towel or trunk covering his private part. Am I not going to have nightmare I thought to myself. My eyes automatically landed on his treasure it was... I don't know. I wanted to cover my body with something. He took the shower gel, squeezed it into the sponge without saying anything started to wash my body. He gently washed every part of my body. He then hungrily kissed me, I was hungry for him too. He lifted me up and I wrapped my legs around him. We kissed and kissed and exited the shower, him carrying me. He gently laid me in his bed his hand moved down my inner thighs up. I stopped him from going any further. He then told me that I should relax he knows that I am still a virgin and he will wait for me till I am ready. He then taught me other things that we can do instead of sex. Said that at the end of the day he has needs and he must be satisfied.

I thank my mother for making me go to virginity testing because they told us that one should not fear being dumped by her boyfriend because true love waits. I was very fortunate to have Lungelo in my life.

Things were great between us, I removed ukhonkolo. Returned to school for second semester (my last semester 😊). I would visit Lungelo every weekend. He gave me monthly allowances as he said he will. Not that I needed it because he bought everything for me. I hated it, I hated relying on a person mostly because I don't trust people. One would do something in their own kindness without you asking and expect something in return.

The only person I trusted was my mom and look how that turned out I have two brothers whom she kept as a secret. Sometimes I wonder how my brother looked like. If they have met our father, if we had the same father. Mostly if they knew about me.

This weekend as usual, I will be spending my weekend with Lungsta. He said he will pick me up after my last lecture at 2. At half past 2 he called saying he is in the parking lot. He baby kissed me.

Him: May you please accompany me?

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Me: To where?

Him: I want to do an HIV test

Me: HIV test? Why are you sick? (ok that was a dumb question considering the that my mom was nurse and I knew about HIV. I knew the importance of HIV testing.)

Him: No, I am not, I just want to know my status that's all.

Me: I last did an HIV test last year, so I guess I will also do it .Mom used to bring HIV tests at home and we would do them, she used to say she was teaching me to be responsible and know my health.

Him: You mom was an intelligent woman just like you. (I smiled) Thank you, for agreeing to do it with me.

He then drove to Clicks I could see he was nervous. The sister pricked us both, we then waited for the results while she was asking questions like are you both sexually active? What will you do if you are HIV positive?

After answering her questions.

Nurse: do you want me to give your results separately?

Us: (in unison) No!

Lungelo: may I please have water?

The nurse stood up took a paper cup and poured water, Lungelo drank the whole cup once.

Lungelo: thank you

Nurse: whatever the results maybe...

Lungelo: Results please!

Nurse: congratulations you are both HIV negative

Lungelo exhaled while squeezing my hand.

Nurse: remember that you must test after 3 months

Us: we will

We stood up Lungelo hugged me.

Him: thank you

We then headed home by home I mean Lungelo's house. I cooked supper, we ate then showered together and went to bed. He hit me with a pillow, I hit him back, he was about to hit me again when I stood up and ran, he ran after me. He got to me and held me by waist and pulled me close to him. We were literally breathing the same air. There was no space between us. I looked down, I couldn't look at him, he lifted my chin with his finger. I looked at him my blood started boiling.

Lungelo: (softly) you have beautiful sparkling eyes they are so sexy, ngathi uyozela. You are so beautiful, and I am lucky to have you in my life

Me: I am the lucky one

Him: I love you

ME: I love you too.

We kissed, we did something instead of sex (angeke nginitshela izindaba zethu zasekamerweni 😊). We then cuddled and slept.

I was woken up by Lungelo kissing my cheeks Why can't I have a normal boyfriend who knows the importance of sleep.

ME: normal people are sleeping

Him: Vuka

Me: I am sleeping.

Him: MY queen Vuka.

ME: ayi Lungelo

He then took the duvet cover and ran.\

Me: (waking up) ave unesdina

Lungelo: I love you

Me: I hate you

we then took a bath. I wore my white mini skirt with a dusty pink off shoulder top. Lungelo wore a white short revealing his brackets with a dusty pink t-shirt. He was uncomfortable with me wearing a mini skirt. He was like "you already got my attention manje ufuna ukubukwa ubani?". I completely ignored him.

He drove to Gateway. We spent the day doing nothing but wasting his money, we first went to watch a movie. I swear he spent more than R5000 on clothes. I love clothes, but I don't like it when a man offers to buy me something, it feels like he is buying me. With Lungelo the more I refused the more he bought. He mostly bought maxi dresses and maxi skirts, he really didn't like short things.

He would point at something and say this will look good on you, he wouldn't even wait for me to answer. He would go and pay. Talk about a bully.

We then went to Oyster Box and ordered.

Me: how do you know these things will suit me?

Him: I have been observing you. What kind of a king doesn't know his queen. Besides I know your size including the size of your shoes and bras.

Me: are you sure you not gay?

Him: You want me to show you that I am not gay (he said that while attempting to kiss me).

We ate our lunch laughing. We then drove home.

We were welcomed by 3 cars. The first one I knew belong to Antiza. The other 2 I didn't know them, the first one was personalized Sokalisa ZN, the second one was Princess.

Lungelo: Shit what are they doing here?

Me: who are they?

Him: My parents and my sister

A part of me was hurt. I asked myself why he didn't want me to meet his parents. Another part of me was scared what if they don't approve of me.

Me: can you please take me to my flat?

He just ignored me, drove in. he went out and opened the door for me. We went inside the house there were 3 ladies and 1 older man. Antiza was not amongst the ladies, I assumed the old man was Lungelo's father.

Me: Sanibonani

The ladies: Yebo

The old man ignored me, he looked at me up and down with a disgust face.

The old man: You must be one of them (he said looking at me, I kept quite).
Ezinye zezidwedwe ezidla imali yomntanami.

Lungelo: Dad please, that is my girlfriend.

Luh's dad: You know you are the future king. What will people say when they see you with a girl who dresses like this (he said pointing at me)? A girl who doesn't respect her body.

I have been insulted before, but this takes the crown. Did he just say future king? Lungelo and I have been dating for almost 3 months now and he never mentioned that he comes from a royal family. I remember when we first dated he was going on about trust and loyalty kanti yena udlala ngami. I saw Antiza's car, but she was not amongst the ladies who were seated here. Who are these women? It was like they heard me asking myself.

One of the ladies: (she looked like a female version of Lungelo) You look beautiful and familiar

As I was about to say thank you.

Luh's dad: Beautiful kuphi khona? When she can't even dress properly. Konje vele wena ninewele lakho nicabanga ngokufana, cha futhi anicabangi qobo.

This day could be more surprising. First, he was the prince, now he is a twin. I wouldn't be surprised if they told me he is related to Jesus.

Lungelo: With all due respect dad, you can't insult me at my own house.

Luh's dad: This thing (pointing at me) is teaching you to talk back. Buka nje nisimele sibadala.

All this time Lungelo and I were standing, he was holding my hand.

Luh's dad: let go of leso sidwedwe, here is your wife (pointing at the other lady). Umuntu okufanele onesizotha. Royalty marries royalty not some girl.

Ok I have heard enough for the day. I whisper to Lungelo to release my hand, he ignores me.

The wife: Are you not supposed to be in school njengontanga bakho? Njengoba ubusy nje namadoda amadala. Aren't you too young to have a blesser.

The thing is I looked younger than my age. After hearing that I yanked my hand of Lungelo's hand.

Me: please open the gate for me

Lungelo: You are not going anywhere

His dad: She is

Me: Look I don't want trouble, please open for me

I went out, Lungelo followed.

Lungelo: let me explain first

Me: you don't owe me any explanation.

Trust my water breaks to betray me, tears were now streaming. Lungelo held my hand.

Me: let me go, go to your family.

Him: I can explain.

Me: Don't, I heard all I needed to know, your wife is waiting for you.

He let go of my hand and opened the gate.

Lungelo: I love you don't forget that, I will come to your flat later to explain.

Me: when you come please bring the rest of my stuff.

Lungelo: angeke ngikwenze lokho.

I took a cab to town, went to my flat luckily Pha was not around. I couldn't deal with her question my face was read from all the crying. I missed my mom. Tuesday was going to be our birthday. Jah, we share the same birthday. I decided to pack an overnight bag and took a taxi to PMB. When I got to PMB I went to book myself at Stay Easy Hotel next to Liberty mall. My phone has been switched off since I left Lungelo's place, I needed some alone time. We introvert sometimes need to recharge. At 8 o'clock I decided to go to the mall to watch a movie which ended at 10 pm. I couldn't sleep all I could think about was Lungelo, how I trusted and loved him. I finally dozed off around 1 am.

Woke up around 9 am, took a bath and signed out of the hotel. Went to the mall to do some shopping, I didn't notice that Luh's dad word had a big effect on me. I only noticed when I was shopping I bought mainly maxi dresses and maxi skirts. Good thing is I don't like pants I think I own 3 if not 2 and I only wear them when I go to the gym. Which I hardly go to.

After my shopping I went to town bought fresh flowers and took a taxi to Mountain Rise cemetery. I cried my heart out to my mom, told her everything about Lungelo. Asked her why she left me alone in this cruel world. Even

though I knew she couldn't hear or answer me, but I felt lighter after talking to her grave. I am a very traditional person I believe that mom would become idlozi elihle, she will look after me even if she is no more. I cleaned her grave and put fresh flowers.

Around 3 pm I took a taxi back to Durban. I found Lungelo's car parked outside my flat. He got off when he saw me. Page | 42

Lungelo: Uphumaphi?

I kept quiet, he then dragged me to his car, I let him be. He also got in and started the car.

Lungelo: Are you going to answer me?

Me: I went to PMB

Him: Uyokwenzani?

Me: I needed to clear my head.

Him: I hope it's clear now

Me: where are we going?

Him: to talk like adults. Yazi if you listened to me none of this would have happened. (was this guy being for real) I told you not to wear that mini skirts but No, you decided to wear it anyway. Kufana nokuthi ngikhuluma ngedwa.

Me: Mawuthi none of this ubala ini?

He kept quite and focused on the road.

Chapter 7

Weak people are always victims, always. They often are the greatest, most subtle bullies.

Me: what ever you do please don't put the blame on me. You are the one who has a wife, you the one who come from the royal family. So how exactly is this my fault.

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Him: Me, coming from the royal family has nothing to do with this.

Me: Trust me it does you should have been honest with me.

Him: Why does it matter? Were you going to love me differently or respect me more? Were you not going to wear that mini skirt if you knew I was the future king?

Me: I would have known not to love you too much because at the end of the day there is no future for us. Royalty marries royalty, right?

As he was about to answer his phone rang, it was connected to those annoying Bluetooth speakers. Sabelo's name appeared on screen.

Lungelo: Sure Sabza.

Sabelo: Lungsta Dash has been shot, please come to Addington hospital now.

Lungelo: I am coming

Sabelo: Sure

Lungelo: I am taking you with me, we still have to talk we will talk when we come back from the hospital.

I kept quite

Lungelo: Are you going to answer me?

Me: You weren't asking me you were telling me.

He kept quite and raced to Addington Hospital. I wanted to stay in the car, I hated Hospitals they reminded me of my mother. The bully that I was with refused when I asked him to stay behind. There were about 8 guys amongst them were Mxo, Lwazi, Sabelo, the others I didn't know them.

Guy 1: really Lungsta (Looking at me) Why did you bring her?

In the back of my mind I was saying awumbuze ngampela.

Guy 2: future wifey, the girl that is making Lungsta weak. I have to say she looks beyond beautiful.

Lungelo: Fuck off

Another guy came in with and older man who looked like him.

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The old man: (looking at me) Are you not by any chance related to Hlengiwe Ndlovu?

Haven't this man heard of greeting. All the guys turned to me.

Guy 2: who is Hlengiwe?

The old man: Musa ukuthanda izindaba Xolani.

Now I remember this guy, he is the talkative guy I met at the restaurant, he also came by Lungelo's house one day. They call him X.

X: My lips are now sealed.

Old man: ngigcine ngibuzile.

Me: We are related.

Old man: How?

Me: She is my mother.

Even though my mom died I prefer to use the present tense when I talk about her. She will forever be my mother dead or alive.

Old man: You look like her when she was your age. She was a very good friend of mine.

I didn't know what to say I just kept quiet.

Wandile came to us wearing scrubs.

Wandile: We managed to remove the bullets, but his condition is very critical. Fortunately, the bullets didn't hit the spinal cord, only the fraction of the axons are damaged but can be retrained to do their job.

Lungelo: Simple English.

Wandile: Dash might experience brain damage. He lots too much blood. That is why I called you all here, I need you to donate blood for him. I know Dot (pointing at the guy that came with an old man) can donate but unfortunately his

blood will not be enough. I think Babomncane (Old man) will also be a match, I can't donate for him since I recently been in an accident.

Babomncane: His father is on his way. Count me out I hate needles.

Dot: You hate needles, or you fear needles?

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Babomncane: Kwake kwashiwo yini ukuthi umuntu omdala uyasaba?

We all laughed.

Wandile: I need to test all your blood to see whose blood type also matches with Dash.

The nurse came in took all the guys blood unfortunately no one matched Dash's blood type.

Babomncane: I think you should also test you blood (he said looking at me)

I went to the nurse and she took my blood.

Few minutes later the Doctor came to us.

Doctor: Zekhethelo you are a perfect match.

X: Sibonge Lungsta for bringing her along.

Doctor: You will start donating since you are the perfect match, then Sibusiso will donate after you. (Sibusiso that name sounded familiar)

We donated blood and the transfusion was a success. While we were waiting outside another man came to join us. I assumed he was Dot and Dash's father. He asked how Dash was, after being briefed about what happened he thanked me for donating for his son.

Babomncane: See she looks like her mother.

Dot's dad: she really does. Do you mind giving me your mother's cell phone number? She was a good friend of mine I want to wish her a happy birthday tomorrow.

Me: She died.

Dot just stormed out.

Babomncane + Dot's father: when?

Me: Earlier this year

Dot's father: So, who do you stay with?

Me: Phakeme

Babomncane: Who is that?

Me: a friend

Dot's father: I meant who do you stay with who is family.

Me: Pha is family.

Babomncane: where is your father?

Me: He died.

Babomncane: who told you that?

Me: I just know

Few minutes later Dot came back, he looked like he was crying. Perks of being a yellow bone, his cheeks were red. He must have been really stressed about his brother. Awu shame.

Wandile came back to us after an hour told us that Dash has woken up and we can come and see him. They all stood up and I remained seated.

Babomncane: Are you not coming with us?

Me: I will pass

Dot: Why?

Me: I have a phobia for injured people.

I lied, I mean I didn't even know this Dash guy. They went in to see him.

Little did I know that I will regret not going in with them. As I was seating in the waiting area 2 criminals with guards came to join me. The criminals wanted to converse with me. Of course, I was freaked out that they wanted to converse with me and rather than letting my fear of the unknown overpower me. I ignored the handcuffs and uniform and had a genuine conversation with them. After 30 minutes of talking, 5 armed men came to the waiting room.

One of them pointed the gun at me, told me not to scream. He told the guards that came with prisoners to release those prisoners. The guards refused, the guy that was pointing the gun at me told the guards that if they make one move I am dead. The guards started shooting. Lungelo and the crew came out of the ward. The guy that had the gun pointed at me, dragged me to their car. I had blood all over me, I was shot in the arm.

As we were walking to their car Lungelo's crew was following us. Dot took out the gun and aimed at the guy, shot him 3 times and the guy collapsed I think he died. Dot then ran to me.

Dot: everything will be alright.

He then carried me to the hospital. Lungelo rushed to us, konje why wasn't he the one who saved me, I asked myself I was angry at him.

Lungelo: I am sorry.

Me: I hate you. (I said while crying)

Lwazi: Give her some space.

Lungelo: I am not going to do that I love her.

Dot: Sacela ungangihlanyisi weLungelo. You the one who put her life in danger. Phumani nonke futhi.

OK I like this Dot guy. Who is he anyway?

X: Why do you care so much about her? Kungabe njalo ufuna ukudla uLungsta izithende.

Dot: Wagwinya impempe wena X.

X: Calm down, no need to be defensive.

Dot: It is Lungelo's fault she is like this, so don't tell me to come down.

I was crying all this time, I think now I have heard enough.

Me: Please get out all of you.

Wandile was my Doctor, he gave me pills. Took tests and told me I will stay at least a minimum of 3 day in hospital. He told me that the police will come take my statement. I can't tell the police the truth. Dot will be arrested for murder. I asked Wandile to call Dot for me. 30 minutes later Dot came with the whole crew.

Me: I asked only for Dot.

After saying that they all went out.

I thanked Dot for saving my life, asked him what I must tell the police. He said he took care of the surveillance cameras, I must tell the cops that I don't remember what happened I was drugged.

I did as I was told.

Little did I know that was only the start of my miserable life. the following day I woke up, took a bath and waited for Dr Wandile. He came and did more test told me I was fine, but he still needs to monitor me.

After Wandile left, Lungelo's dad showed up. It was way before visiting hours, I wondered what he wanted.

Luh's dad: Good morning.

Me: yebo

Luh's dad: I heard you were in hospital and decided to pay you a visit.(dude you wouldn't be here if you didn't know) I want you to stay away from my son. (talk about cruelty, how could he be so heartless. Couldn't he wait for me to be out of hospital first. He didn't even ask how I was doing) If you know what is good for you, you will listen.

Me: (calmly) your son is the one who declared his undying love for me so, if there is someone who must stay away from someone it's your son.

Luh's dad: Nc NC NC you are just after my son's money. I did my research you are nothing but a poor orphan and gold digger. Therefore, I am offering you R100 000 to stay away from my son.

Yazi lomkhulu usengenza isidwedwe ngampela. I rarely verbalise my anger and when it gets to a point where I must, I cry doing it.

Me: (with tears) No need for you to buy me. I will stay away from your son, keep your money. I hope you can leave with yourself.

He then left me.

I cried till I no longer had more tears left. During visiting hours Lungelo's crew without Lungelo came to see me. I was quiet the whole time, I couldn't wait for visiting hours to end so I could be alone, just like I am alone in this world. What hurt me the most is that Lungelo didn't come to visit me.

I guess he didn't love me as much as I thought he did.

After visiting hours, I dozed off. I dreamt of my mother. She was in a very beautiful place, when I tried talking, words couldn't come out of my mouth, I had no voice. She then put her fingers on my lips.

Mom: The worst is over, know that I am forever with you. Please read the letter that I wrote for you, it will help you.

After saying that she left me. I then woke up. The rest of the day I didn't have visitors. The following day I also didn't have visitors. On the third day I remember that my mom had a friend whom I called Aunt Sizakele. I decided to go to PMB to visit her, I was praying that I find her. I needed some motherly love.

I called the Doctor that helped when I was shot the first time, told him to discharge me. Fortunately, enough he said he doesn't see the need to keep me here I was now fine. I passed by my flat to pack 2 bags then went to PMB. Fortunately, enough I found her, she was very happy to see me. She first shouted at me for not visiting her saying I know her doors are always opened for me and I know that she stays alone since her children are studying at Wits.

I told her about Lungelo from the start. She said I should leave him, if he comes back to me he is the one if he doesn't he never was the right one for me. Told me that my mom is proud of me wherever she is, and I should always walk with my head held high. I spent a week with Aunt. I decided to return to Durban, it was almost test week, I needed to catch up with my school work. Lord knows I needed to ace my exams.

Aunt Sizakele was not happy that I was leaving but she understood that I had to leave. Told me to visit every chance I got.

When I reached Durban, I decided to cut my hair, to me that meant new beginnings, new me. Luckily Pha was not around the first thing I did was to take out the letter that my mother wrote for me. I opened it...

CHAPTER 8

TO: MY ONE AND ONLY DAUGHTER (ZEKHETHELO)

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Imagine if the sun was too shy to shine because of it fear of what the moon or other stars and the rest of nature would think of it. The same happens to you when you shrink yourself, your uniqueness and gifts because of what you think others will say about or to you. You diminish your spark not because you were not made to shine but because you don't believe in your beauty. Believe in yourself not because you are better but because you are different, and the world needs you.

In a world said to be owned by man own yourself. As you are reading this I know I will be no more, I want you to be your own woman. You are royalty, so you should always hold your head up high. I never told you this before, but you are a princess, my princess, your father's princess and you husband's queen. You never knew your father because I wanted to protect you. If you don't want to do something don't do it. You will know when to fight.

Your twenties are your building years, if you must be with someone be with someone who is building or at least understands that you are. Now is the time to find balance between building your career and relationship, before either gets to heavy to the extent where it is impossible to balance the lighter one. Careers and relationship have so much to teach each other, when invested in properly. Pursuing one doesn't cancel the possibility of the other.

I know you might hate me because on my will I said you must first find your brothers before you get your inheritance, I meant that. My sister Nosizwe Zulu will help you find your brothers.

Always remember that what you want is out there. It just what wants you will always make you believe otherwise. Go figure that out. Live your truth. It may not resonate with everybody, but it will with the right people, and that is more than enough.

Carry me forever in your heart, I will guard you.

LOVE

YOUR MOTHER

This is just what I needed to sooth the pain I feel in my heart, some encouraging words from my mother.

I am now very confused who is this sister she was talking about because mom had 2 sisters mamkhulu who is Thandiwe and Mamncane Duduzile. As I was still lost in my own thoughts. Pha decided to bless me with her presence.

Pha: You are very selfish. Do you know the pain that Lungelo went through because of you?

Me: OH, please spare me the lecture. Lungelo never cared he didn't even visit me at the hospital.

Pha: has it ever occurred to you that maybe he was busy?

Me: to busy to make time to see me?

Pha: the world does not revolve around you. That is the thing with you orphans, you think we owe you, nenza sengathi ithina esabulala abazali benu.

That hurt me deeply. After saying that she left. I buried myself in my books tried calling Lungelo several times, but he did not answer, I let him be.

Days went by, Lungelo still hasn't called, our friendship with Pha went from bad to worse. We no longer talked, we just greeted each other. I tried to reach out, but she shoved it back to my face, I let her be. I focused on my studies.

I decided to change my wardrobe, I needed summer clothes more miniskirts, maxi things were not my style. I went shopping at Gateway as I was busy walking around I bumped into Lungelo's twins with other 2 ladies.

Luh's twin: I thought you really did love my brother.

Lady 1: which brother?

Luh's twin: Lungelo

The friend: isn't she young for him?

LUh's twin: age is just a number when it comes to love.

Amanga lawo age is a word.

The friend: she is cute, I see what Lungelo saw.

Friend 2: Are you not the face of Indoni?

Me: I am.

Friend 2: I am a huge fan of yours, I love your singing. Yazi I went to Indoni Festival few weeks back that was held near Beach Front, I was hoping you were also going to be there. I love how you pride yourself with your culture.

I was still in PMB when Indoni festival was held.

Me: Thank you, I am sorry I was very busy.

Luh's twin: I thought you looked familiar now I remember where I saw you. You know my brother has been through hell because of you, why did you break his heart?

Me: Your brother never loved me, besides your family should be happy I left him. Angani nathi I was after his money.

After saying that I left them, continued with my shopping. I then went to my flat I was wearing a maxi black dress which hugged my body and my short hair was dyed ruby red. I looked beautiful. My hair colour suited me. I saw cars that belonged to Lungelo's crew in the parking.

As much as I was not ready to face them, I had to me couldn't hide for ever. I made my way in.

Me: Good afternoon.

They all greeted back.

some guy: (I don't know his name, but he was at the hospital when dash was shot) No wonder Lungsta was crazy about you. You are beautiful.

Sabelo: awuziphathe kahle msaypho.

Msaypho: You are really UBuhle bendalo.

Dot: You are beautiful indeed.

Lungelo: No wonder you decided to play hero, you wanted her for yourself.

X: Musani ukulwa okwamakati aserank ebanga udriver.

I left them there and walked to my room. As I was about to close the door Lungelo came in. He looked at me up and down.

Lungelo: you are beautiful, I love your dress.

Me: thank you

Him: Why did you leave?

Me: I needed to clear my head.

Him: you are doing a lot of clearing these days.

Me: I needed to be around people who love me, I needed support.

Lungelo: And I don't love you?

Me: You don't.

Him: Usuyafeba yini?

Me: Is that how low you think of me? I don't even owe you any explanation. You showed me that you don't love me so please stay away from me like you did when I was in hospital.

Lungelo: I can't I love you.

Me: you have a funny way of showing your love. Whatever we had, this (pointing at us) is over.

Lungelo: Please don't do this

Me: I already did.

Lungelo: I guess my father was right about you, you never loved me.

After saying that he left. I wanted to run after him, tell him that I love him, but my pride wouldn't let me. I have had enough of Lungelo's father. This was my time to become my own man (excuse the pun).

Days went by I buried myself in my books preparing for end of the year exams. I had no friend to talk to since Pha decided to turn her back on me. One thing I was not going to do was beg for friendship. A wise woman once said, "one shouldn't beg for love and friendship, those things must come naturally".

My end of the year exams was now a week away, this meant that I had a study week. I joined a study group of 4 people I was the fifth one. It was nice studying with them, it made things easier for me. I spent more of my time with them studying at the campus library.

Friday, I decided to treat myself, went to watch an Opera show at ICC. As you know I loved singing. I was watching the show I felt someone toughing me. I turn.

Male voice: I thought it was you

When I was in High school I used to sing representing the school.

Extracurricular activities were compulsory at my school, since I couldn't play

any sport I opted for singing which I was good in. I would even sing a Solo. So, this one time I sang representing PMB, was selected with 2 boys (Luyanda and Sphe) to sing a trio representing KZN. We won and went to England to represent South Africa, we got 3rd position. I guess music brought us together because after singing together we would talk now and then. Today it also brought us together.

Me: Long time

Luyanda: uyi can't get, I can't tholakala. How are you? (he asks hugging me)
How is life?

Me: I am good, it has its ups and downs, but I am not complaining.

Sphe: we have been looking for you.

Me: Why?

Luyanda: The thing is my brother is having an engagement party. I want the 3 of us to perform there just like old times.

Me: I am game, when is the party?

Luyanda: 2 weeks from now

Me: I think I will be done with my exams. What songs are we going to sing?

Sphe: rehearsals will be on weekends

Me: rehearsals? Kanti mangaka?

we all laughed they knew how I hated rehearsals. When we were singing together I was always late.

Sphe: We will meet on one weekend to rehearse the songs.

Me: Now you are talking.

We then exchanged numbers, they offered to take me to dinner. We went to Moyo's at Ushaka. we talked, laughed for a second, I forgot about all my problems. After dinner they dropped me at my flat. I went straight to bed.

I started my exams on Monday, they were very easy. I think it was because I studied every day, and my study group helped me. I have never heard from Lungelo since that day, his crew doesn't come here anymore. I guess he moved on with his life.

CHAPTER 9

On Thursday I wrote my last paper. Now I am waiting for Degree completed. Luyanda called and said that tomorrow we are rehearsing since the party is on Saturday afternoon.

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I had so much fun during the rehearsals, mostly because we were going to sing Zulu songs.

The day of the engagement party finally came. It was now 5 pm, Pha changed into high heels and a maroon gown. She looked beautiful like she was going to some gala dinner.

Me: you look beautiful, where are you going?

Pha: thanks, gogo Lwazi is taking me out, so I decided to go all out for my man.

Me: uyanyisa girl

She smiled, I could see that smile was fake. Few minutes later Lwazi came to pick her up, he was dressed in a maroon suit, he looked handsome. Sphe called saying he will pick me up at half past 6 since the party starts at 7. Our trio decided that we must wear vintage. I took a shower than wore a short-checked skirt and a white blouse, bow tie sealed my look with a beret.

Sphe came to pick me up and said Luyanda was buy helping his brother. The engagement party was to take place at Coastlands hotel in Mhlanga. We got to the hotel, I spotted some familiar faces. I was now confused, I was thinking that maybe Lwazi was going to propose to Pha, and this was a surprise engagement party for her.

They saw me, Pha avoided eye contact. Ok that was weird.

Sphe: let go to the back stage.

As we were walking to the backstage, Lwazi called Sphe, told him to come with me to them. I was reluctant, Sphe said we must go it will only take a few minutes. Lungelo also couldn't look me in the eyes. Some of the crew members were not there, Wandile, Dot, X, Mxo were not there. Wandile's girlfriend was here.

Sabelo: You look beautiful as always MaGatsheni.

Me: Thanks.

Sphe: how do you know one another?

Sabelo: We are...

Me: my roommate is dating one of them.

Nobuhle: and here I was thinking you and Pha are not just roommates you are friends.

I ignored Buhle. Pha was looking down.

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Sphe: Bhuti Lwazi you called us

Lwazi: I wanted to ask where are you going with the lady and how do you know each other?

Sphe: If I didn't know better I was going to say one of you has a serious crush on Imani.

Them: Imani?

Only my mom called me using my second name said Grandpa named me. Sphe and Luyanda heard Mom calling me once and they have been using it since.

Sphe: yes

Me: it's my second name.

Luyanda came and hugged me.

Luyanda: Thank you and I owe you.

Lungelo: Sphe you were still explaining

Luyanda: explaining what?

Lungelo: Musa ukuthanda izindaba

Everyone laughed besides me.

Sphe: we sing together

Lungelo: (looking at me) Since when do you sing?

I just looked at him and zipped my mouth.

Luyanda+Sphe: (in unison) since birth.

Pha: I remember how you sang at your mom's funeral. (now she can talk, I rolled my eyes)

Luyanda+ Sphe: What?

Luyanda: Sorry neh, I didn't know about your mother's passing, I would have came to the funeral.

Sphe: (hugging me) sorry neh I can imagine how hurt you were. Your mom was your happiness.

Luyanda: Do you remember in England when she said she can't sing she wants to hear her mom's voice.

Sphe: You were such a mama's baby. Please don't remind me of England. You were very dramatic.

Luyanda: Remember when we sneaked out?

Me: You still owe me for covering for you.

Sphe: Your dance moves and looks saved us. That guy loved you

Lungelo: What guy?

Sphe: Some guy she danced with at England to save us.

Luyanda: Do you still dance?

Me: nah I don't even sing anymore. I just did this favour for you.

Luyanda: Sphe did you do the introductions?

Sphe: Turns out they already knew each other.

Luyanda: ok let us go and prepare for our performance.

We went to one of the suites.

Me: whose engagement party is this?

Luyanda: My brother

Me: who is your brother?

Luyanda: Sphe said you already know each other nje.

Me: I don't know your brother.

Luyanda: Lungelo is my brother.

Me: Lungelo (a tear escaped my eyes. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Couldn't he at least have the decency to tell me. How could Pha not tell me)

Luyanda: Why are you crying?

Me: Nothing

Sphe: What is the story between you and Lungelo? This explains why they were interested in knowing how I know you.

Me: Nothing really, I am just happy for him

Luyanda: Yeka amanga Imani.

Me: Ok Lungelo is my ex, happy now?

Both: WHAT!

Luyanda: you are the girl that divided the crew

Me: NO, I am nit

Sphe: yes, you are, Mxo, Wandile and Dash said they were against this wedding.

Luyanda: MXO told us that you are the one that Lungelo loved.

Me: that is a lie, if he loved me he would be marrying me not her. Guys let us prepare for our performance.

Luyanda: Will you be able to perform?

Me: Yes

Luyanda: did you at least love my brother?

Me: I did with every fibre in me, I still do but he is no longer my cup of coffee.

Luyanda: So why are you not fighting for him?

Me: I don't have any more fights in me. He made his bed now he must lie in it. I want him to be happy.

We then rehearsed after 15 minutes we were called to perform. We first did the Khwela khwela dance with Luyanda, then sang with Sphe a song by the late Robbie Malinga and Kelly Khumalo Titled Baby Please. Our trio then sang Inkomo by the Soil. Closed our performance by singing Koloi yatsamaya the choral version. Everyone stood up and gave us a round of applause we then went to the back stage. Lungelo's father came to me.

Luh's dad: You have an angelic voice.

I hated him, I couldn't even say thank you. Call me rude but this man stole my happiness.

Luh's dad: I am sorry how things turned out.

As if that sorry will turn back the hands of time.

Me: Don't feel sorry for me, I am a big girl. At the end of the day you got what you wanted. Your son is marrying the right girl for him.

Luh's dad: You really did not deserve my son. If it was for me you wouldn't even be here, you want to spoil things for him, or maybe you think he will change his mind. No, he won't next weekend we are going to pay the Lobola negotiations for me. Stop embarrassing yourself akasakufuni. Royalty only marries royalty.

Here I was thinking he was genuinely sorry.

Me: I am glad I am not royalty. I would rather be poor than to be royalty and not happy. Use that R100 000 you wanted to pay e to leave him, to buy him happiness he will need it.

A voice: How could you dad?

Luh's dad: I did what I had to do, angani this thing used love partition on my son. Please don't tell Lungelo.

Luh's twin: But...

Luh's dad: No but this will tear the family apart. Wena (looking at me) if you love my son you will stay away from him.

Me: Do you know the saying which says, "when you pray for rain you must be willing to dance in the mud". I will stay away from your son, I hope you both will be happy. I wish him all the best

After saying that I left, called a cab, first went to but wine then told the cab driver to take me to my flat. Switched my phone off.

CHAPTER 10

Cheap wine in coffee mugs. Chilli breeze coming through the open window. I must have forgotten to close it last night.

Last night what an emotional night it was. I haven't seen myself in the longest time. The sit down that took place, was rather agonising than introspective. Haven't felt myself in myself in ages.

It should have been a joyful night, singing after a long time. What is there to rejoice about when a body that was once a whole came back in pieces? Nonetheless I should be happy it came back, some never do.

The wine tastes good. Happiness must be this, blissful, small moments of admiring cheap wine. It should be a good day to go out with a friend, share laughter, share pain. Mxm Friend? What are those?

The only person whom I took as a friend lied to my face.

I can no longer live this life, it is too much for me. I want to go to my mother in heaven.

After reflecting on my life, I decided to end my life. I had two options, either I overdose, or I cut my pulse. Overdosing may not kill me, cutting my pulse maybe be painful. I then settled for both, first drank all the painkillers I had, then went in my bed and cut my wrist. I wanted to sleep peacefully in my bed. The last thing I remember was that I became dizzy.

I was now reunited with my mother, she did not look happy to see me.

Mom: (shouting)What are you doing here?

I kept quiet. She then pushed me back to the way I came from.

Mom: It is not your time yet. Eventually you will end up where you are meant to be and doing what you should be doing. Patience my dear is virtue.

She then left me, I tried following her wangithembisa induku.

I woke up to beeping sounds and people were arguing. I kept my eyes closed to hear their argument.

Person 1: I pray for your sake that she wakes up

Pha: Could you guys please shut up, my friend is fighting for her life.

Did she just say Friend? I need to get her a dictionary so that she will know the definition of a friend. I wondered who were arguing, I didn't know that voice. I

was very thirsty, I decided to open my eyes to ask for water. Some guy I didn't know was holding my hand. I yanked my hand from his and looked at him.

Me: Please get me water.

Pha: We are so happy you are alive. (she hugged me)

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Me: When you say we who exactly are you referring to?

Pha: all of us

ME: (I laughed) Really now? Ave nine drama kodwa. Maybe you all please get out, yazi you should have let me die.

Pha started crying.

Lwazi: You are ungrateful you know, Pha saved your life.

Me: I didn't ask her, now please get out. (I hissed)

They all went out except the mystery guy who was holding my hand. I looked at him puzzled with a face that screamed "and then?"

Mystery guy: Don't even think about it because I am not going anywhere. I'll be your shoulder when you cry, I will hear your voice when you call.

Me: (singing) I am your angel. And when all hope is gone, I am here. No matter how far you are I am near.

Him: (smiling and singing) It makes no difference who you are. I am your angel

Me: (laughing) yazi you remind me of some guy who was courting me. This guy thought he was charming me when he said "ngakubona for the first time ngavele ngasangana ikhanda". I told him that he should try something else because I know that song.

We both laughed.

Him: We just want to see you ladies smile. Besides I was just taking my chances I didn't know you knew that song.

Me: My mom was a huge fan of Celine Dion.

Him: My dad too.

Me: Who are you?

Him: I am Dash, dot's younger brother. (he extended his hand for a handshake)

Me: Nice to meet you.

Him: I must say I thought they were exaggerating when they said you were beautiful, you indeed are.

Me: Thanks

Him: No matter what life throws at you dakha, mewuwa ungawi unomphela. You may tumble but don't crumble.

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Me: I will keep that in mind. You are not only a singer, you are also a motivational speaker. You are full of talents.

We both laughed. As we were laughing Wandile and Dot came in. Dot hugged me, to call this a hug would be disrespecting to hugs he squeezed me. This guy had a serious crush on me.

Wandile: (looking at me) Uyacika yezwa. Why did you try to kill yourself? Lungelo is not the only guy.

DoT: He doesn't even deserve you. (I expected that from him)

Dash: Lungelo said he loved her nje.

Dot: If he did why is he marrying someone else? (I also expected that)

Me: Can we please not talk about Lungelo.

Dot: We should be happy this happened after your exams.

We kept quiet kwangathi kudlula ingelosi. After a while Wandile decided to break the silence.

Wandile: Have you told her?

Dot: Now is not a good time.

Wandile: she deserves to know.

Dash: The more we keep this from her, the harder it will be.

ME: Who is her? Utshelwani futhi?

Wandile: Rata tetaba

We all laughed.

Dot: Zekhethelo (whatever it is that he was about to say was serious, this is the first time he called me using my full name) I hope what I am about to tell you will not change how you see us. You must know that we did what we did to protect you. Our father is the son of Isilo that makes him a prince, our mother is the princess from the Dlamini Family in Swaziland. She is the daughter of King

Mswati. Our parents got married 29 years back. 9 years in the marriage our father's family forced him to take a second wife. Our mom did not agree to that, so she left dad, took our sister who was only a few months old with her. Left us with our father. We last saw them when I was 9 years old, Dash was 5 and my sister was a few months old.

As he was busy explaining I was asking myself ukuthi konje mina ngingenaphi.

Dash: I am 25-years-old, that means my sister is 20 years old now. Our mother is Nkosazane Hlengiwe Dlamini. Does that name sound familiar?

Me: The only Hlengiwe I know is my mother and she was Ndlovu not a Dlamini.

Dot: Our mother later changed her surname to Ndlovu.

Me: It can't be

Wandile: here are DNA results. (he handed me a piece of paper, the paper stated that Dash and Dot were indeed my brothers.

Me: which one of you is Sibusiso?

Dash: Obvious umkhulu uDot, uSibusiso igama lamakhehla.

We laughed.

Dot: Angilingani njalo nawe, ngizokukhahlela (we continued laughing)

Me: So. Dot or should I say Bhuti?

Dot: (smiling) Bhuti sounds better

Dash: You are very dramatic

Me: Dot you knew I was your sister all along, but you didn't even bother telling me.

Dot: I only knew when babomncane asked if you were related to Hlengiwe. The only thing I knew was my mother's name.

Me: Why didn't you look for me?

Dot: We tried, I didn't have the resources, but dad knew you were still alive. Him and mom talked every now and then until mom decided to relocate. It was then hard to find her.

Me: I see

Dot: Just so you know you are my sister and I love you. I will always protect you. I know sometimes I may come to hard but know that it comes from a good heart. You my only sister. Dad does have other daughters from his other wives, but you are the only sister who I share both mom and dad.

Dash: I also love you yize uhlanya nje ucishe wafa ngingakakwazi.

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Wandile: I also love you, mina ngizokushaya nje waphinde wazama ukuzibulala.

I was then told that Wandile is our cousin, he is Babomncane's son. What baffles me was the fact that he also called him Babomncane.

CHAPTER 11

Sometimes the decisions we make, in attempt to rectify our mistakes are stupid. I must admit trying to end my life was very stupid and selfish of me. I exerted so much pressure on myself by worrying what people who knew that Lungelo and I were an item would say. This taught me that I need to reach a point where my skin is thick enough to handle whatever life has to throw at me. I am bound to make mistakes; the world will judge me for both my mistakes and how I handle them.

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I regret trying to end my life because of the love I had for Lungelo. I still do love him, but life doesn't always go the way we want. Lungelo's father hates me but I don't blame him, Lungelo's made his own choice, Lungelo is old enough to stand up for himself. Him throwing an engagement party meant that he was happy with his engagement. Perhaps imina obenziwa isilima. This made me realise that you must never trust a person. All the people I trusted Mom, Pha, Lungelo turned to be the exact opposite of who I thought they were.

One thing I am grateful for is that I found my brothers and a cousin on top.

After being discharged at the hospital Dot forced me to move in with him. He said that he needs to keep an eye on me since I am suicidal. I love my siblings, but Dot is too over protective for my liking. I wanted to move in with Dash instead, but they said I can't since Dash is Lungsta's best friend and the crew can come in anytime to visit him, I shouldn't see Lungelo until I am healed. Apparently, he may still trigger me to commit suicide.

Dot then drove me to my flat, I packed all my belongings. Luckily Pha was not around, I didn't even leave a goodbye note for her. Even though I was still angry with her I thought I owed her a good bye, I mean we were friends for more than 2 years. She was sort of family that became blood, but (like) Dot said I shouldn't write it, Pha behlangene nezitha engikokozela ngemuva. After taking all my things, Dot drove to his place.

He owned a 6-bedroom house in Umlazi. Umlazi is so like him, Dot had that gangster thing going on. The house was very beautiful, big and clean. He showed me my bedroom and told me to rest, said he is going out. I made a mental note in my head to ask where he works. I was still drugged by painkillers, so I went to bed.

Hours later while I was watching tv, Dot, Dash and their father I mean our father came in.

Dash: (pulling my cheeks) Little sis

I laughed showing my dimples.

Father: You look just like your brother Dash when you laugh. Ndodakazi (he said that extending his hand)

I didn't know whether to call him dad or not.

Me: Yebo (that was all I could come up with)

Dad: I am glad IO have my 3 children in one roof. I am sorry for being absent in your life, but you must know my side of the story.

I kept quiet, I personally believe for a child to know his/her father's side of the story the father must be present, but I couldn't say that. I was happy I had a father.

Dot: I am happy I have a little sister.

Dash: I am just happy I am not the last born and my sister turns heads.

We all laughed, the dad explained what happened between him and mom. It a pity that I never had my mom's side of the story. One thing I knew bengeke ngizingene I am going to love my father and treat him with respect. Dad then promised to love me and try to make up for the lost time. I am so happy to have family.

Dash and I went to KwaMnyandu to buy take away. When we came back they told me their funny childhood stories. After some time, dad decided to change the topic.

Dad: (looking at me) When you were born you were introduced to the Zulu family, incense was burnt. You are going to get sick, ancestors are going to fight over you. Your grandmother is a Ndlovu not you. I was thinking that this coming weekend we must do Imbeleko to formally introduce you to the Zulu family. I talked to my father and he agreed he said that the ceremony will take place at the Royal house in Zulu land. After Imbeleko you must go to home affairs to change your surname, it will be easy since your mom and I are still married. You then must take us to her grave for us to get her spirit so, that she could be united with her family. Maybe these suicidal attempts are caused by angry ancestors.

As weird as this may sound I believed all of that I know the power of ancestors. We all agreed that on Thursday we will go to KwaZulu to prepare for the

ceremony that will take place on Sunday. After that Dad said his goodbyes said he will see us on Thursday.

Dash: Lungelo is looking for you.

Dot: Did you and Wandile tell him that you are related to Zeh?

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Dash: No, it was not our place, Zeh must tell him.

Me: I won't tell him, and I would appreciate it if you also don't tell him.

Dash: He deserves to know, besides Lungelo is my best friend

Me: and I am your sister, he doesn't deserve to know.

Dash: He will hate me if he finds out from someone else.

Me: You will live, I will also hate you if you tell him.

Dash: Shouldn't you be happy you are now royalty?

Me: I don't care about royalty, I would choose poverty over royalty anytime. I am happy that I have family. As for Lungelo I don't want him to love me because I am royalty I want him to love the real me, the plain girl he met at Mxo's restaurant.

Dash: He does love you. (I am beginning to think he is Lungelo's spokesperson) I remember when he first told me about you, he was like dude I am getting married, I have found the right one for me.

Dot: I heard that even X was telling me that you are making Lungsta weak.

ME: That is history, he is marrying someone else, besides me and Lungelo are toxic for each other. We would never get married.

Dash: why?

Me: His father hates me.

Dot: Do you love Lungelo?

Dash: She does

Dot: Since when are you her spokesperson? (we laughed)

Me: I loved him

Them: Loved?

Me; Ok I still do just not like before. Sacella siyeke futhi ukukhuluma ngaye uselunywa izindlebe maye. (we laughed)

We spent the rest of our evening watching movies and having silly conversations.

It felt good to have siblings, I am supposed to be angry with my parents, but I am not. Maybe if I met them earlier in my life I wouldn't have this love I have for them. I love my brothers even though I have just met them. Baqinisile mebethi igazi liyakhuluma. Even with Wandile whom I met first, there was connection between us. I know my brothers would move mountains for me especially Dot. Hell will freeze before he allows something bad to happen to me.

The following morning, I woke up, did my morning routine and cleaned the house with my headsets on. I felt someone poking me.

Dot: You know we don't have to do that. I have someone who comes twice a week to clean this house.

Me: I don't mind

Dot: Ngakungcono ukuba ukhuthalela ngasekitchen kwi breakfast.

Me: Don't you have someone responsible for that?

Dot: (laughing) Nah but I do have a lovely sister who will spoil me with breakfast.

Me: lucky you, tell your sister to also make breakfast for me.

Dot: (laughing) Please cc wami

I then went to prepare breakfast for both of us. I asked myself why isn't he going to work? Most importantly does he even work? I then served him breakfast and asked him while were eating, where does he work. He told me he is a police officer, more like a captain at Metro police. This explained the gun that he had I thought he was some sort of a gangster.

He said that he took a day off for us to get to know each other. We went to Moses Mabhida to do activities there such as. I love how big bro was adventurous he made me step out of my cocoon. I saw our mother in him, umfuze wangamshiya. Physical appearance wise they are different, personality wise isame whatsapp group, they are both straight talker abawuthathi udoti kunoma ubani.

After brother and sister day out, we bought dinner and went home. Dot had an early night because he had to go to work the following day.

The following morning, I woke up to an empty house. Decided to cut my hair again and dye it black. I am meeting Isilo in a few days I need to be on point. I know how royalties are judgemental engaze athi uBayede ngiyavutha ekhanda, this ruby red must go. I also need an outfit for Imbeleko and more maxi clothes, I don't want history to repeat itself.

I first did my hair in town then took a taxi to Gateway. I know Gateway has the most beautiful clothes. Did my shopping and decided to buy myself lunch. As I was walking to Rocco Mammass I bumped to Antiza and other 2 ladies.

Me: Sanibonani

Them: Yebo

Antiza then hugged me.

Antiza: You look beautiful as always. Long time I heard what happened I am sorry. How are you holding up?

Me: I am getting there.

Woman 1: Are you not going to introduce us?

Antiza: My bad, I thought you already knew each other. This is Ndalo (I smiled, remembering that Lungelo was the one who named me).

Woman 2: The famous Ndalo, now I understand why my nephew was crazy about you. You are a natural beauty.

Woman 1: Pity looks don't keep a man.

Woman 2: He used to talk about you.

Antiza: He loves her.

Woman 1: Pity love is not enough. Royalty marries royalty.

My inner self was saying but I am royalty. One of these days you are going to bow for me. I mean I am the granddaughter of 2 Kings, Isilo SakwaZulu neSilo SaseSwatini. I said my goodbyes and we went separate way.

CHAPTER 12

Thursday, the day I have waited for the whole week has finally come. I packed 2 overnight bags. My brothers and I were to leave in Dot's car. We first went to KwaMnyandu to buy a few things. You know with Zulu families you can't come in empty handed kwamele ufike nomngendlini.

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We then took the N2 route to the Zululand. I was very nervous as a result I was quiet the whole way. Questions were flooding in my head, I was asking myself, what if this family doesn't accept me? What is my father's other wives mistreat me? Better yet what if his other children hate me? Those questions were yet to be answered.

The drive was very long, we arrived around 4 pm. Babomncane welcomed us.

It was like I was in Nkandla (Zuma's house), the yard was very big with more than 20 different houses in it.

Babomncane told us we were going to sleep in our mother's house. How come my mother never told me she had her own house Esigodlweni? Talk about secrets. Babomncane told us to rest, we will see the rest of the family tomorrow, they will bring supper to us. That was music to my ears I was not ready to meet the family.

Hours later a woman who looked like my mother but lighter came in with our food.

Dot: (hugging her) my favourite woman

Dash also hugged her and kissed her cheeks. She then took my hand and a tear escaped his eyes. Talk about drama.

Her: You look her. (paused) I am sorry, we lost contact and I didn't know about her death.

Who is this woman? I asked myself. It was like she heard me.

Her: I am Wandile's mother.

Me: How come you look like my mother?

Dot and Dash looked at me like I was crazy.

Dot: Now that you mentioned it, she looks like you.

Me: And I look like my mother. So, she looks like our mother.

Dash: This is creepy.

The woman then started crying.

Her: Because I am her younger sister.

Dot and Dash: (in unison) What?

I rolled my eyes, how come they didn't know?

Me: You are Nosizwe?

Dot: Musa ukubiza umuntu omdala ngegama

Her: (Smiling) Yes

Me: How come they didn't know?

Dash: This explains why you treated us like one of your own.

Her: It's a long-complicated story. To cut it short, my sisters and I married brothers. When she left with you (pointing me), she made me promise to take care of your brothers. She loved all of you (paused), sadly she couldn't leave with all of you. She had to take her daughter since she was still very young. She knew her other children were in good hands.

Me: I am happy I found you.

Dash: How did you know the name Nosizwe?

Me: Mom told me in a letter that she left, she said the key to finding my brothers is Nosizwe Zulu.

We then ate our supper, talking about random things. Mamncane said her goodnight.

Dash: I have been meaning to ask you, how come you were working for Mxo because from what I have heard mom was very rich, surely, she left you a huge inheritance.

Me: She left us millions.

Dash: when you say us, who are you referring to?

Me: Dot, You and me.

Dash: So, how come you were a waitress?

Me: On her will she said I will only get the inheritance if I am united with my brothers. I didn't have the resources to find you.

Dot: Maybe she loved us after all.

Me: Never doubt her love

Dash: We must get those millions, I need to buy a new Jaguar.

Me: (laughing) We will have to talk to her lawyer.

The following morning, I woke up and cleaned the house. 30 minutes later when I was long done a maid came in, told me to never clean for myself again. I just rolled my eyes.

Babomncane then came in and told me I was summoned by the King and Queen. I changed into a mxi black dress and followed him. I didn't know whether to bow or not, I opted for kneeling.

Queen: Don't kneel come sit (she pointed at a sit next to her)

6 women including Mamncane joined us, they sat on the mat.

King: (extending his hand) welcome home mzikulu.

Me: (smiling) thank you.

The queen smiled revealing dimples just like mine. Now I see where Dash and I got them from, since neither of our parents has them.

The Queen: Ubuhle bakudala (those are dimples) just like me and Ayanda, you are a true Ndabezitha.

I smiled my inner self was doing back falls 😊.

King: I called you all here to introduce our first princess, daughter of my eldest son Makhosandile and his first wife, the late Princess Nkosazane of Swaziland. I want you to treat her like one pf your own, with love and care. On Sunday we are doing Imbeleko for her, then on the 26th of December we will do Memulo for her if she is still a virgin. (looking at me) These are all your mothers, your fathers 2 wives MaBiyela and MaZwide (pointing at them), Babomncane wife your mothers younger sister (MaNkosi), my other 2 sons wives (MaNdosi, MaQwabe and MaNgcolosi). I want you to address them as mom. *(this was going to be hard, I mean even Tupac saw this when he said "ain't no woman alive that can take my mama's place)*. I want you to respect them and count on them for anything. Address me as mkhulu, my wife as gogo. You are our eldest granddaughter, I pray and hope you will set a good example to our younger granddaughters.

He then dismissed us. My step mothers were not evil, they welcomed with warm hands. I met my other half siblings, I even forgot they names.

This one-time gogo called me and asked if I was still a virgin. She said I must tell the truth because umhlwehlwe uzowa if I am no longer a virgin. I told her I was still a virgin, she was happy but said I will still do the virginity testing before umemulo.

I had tons of missed calls from Lungelo. I didn't even want to entertain him, why would he call now all the sudden.

Imbeleko was a success even though it was raining. Mkhulu said that I was very fortunate, rain in the Zulu culture symbolises hope and success. It means the ceremony was a success, ancestors are happy.

We spent 2 more days in the royal house. On Wednesday we went back to Durban. Thursday, we went to PMB to fetch my mothers spirit, dad went back to Zululand with it.

Friday, I decided to go to home affairs to change my surname. After the long ques I was hungry, decided to grab something to eat, went to the nearby restaurant. I didn't know one of the guys from our study group worked here. We were so happy to see each other.

Him: You are glowing, finishing varsity loves you.

Me: If only you knew, I am dying inside, stress is killing me as I patiently wait for the 15th.

Him: Patiently waiting for that degree completed with Cum Laude.

Me: I wish

Him: Mewusudla inyama uyidla yedwa (he points at my Zulu bangle: Isiphandla)

We laugh.

A voice: We don't pay you to socialise with customers.

I turn my head to find, Sabelo, Mxo and X.

Him: I am sorry sir.

Me: Wow Sabelo, Just wow. Id expect this from your other friends not you. You never striked me as the weak type.

Sabelo: I am not weak.

Me: You should ask Mxo for tips, you can learn a thing or two from him on how you should treat your employees.

I can tell a lot about a person by how they treat waiters and waitresses. Weak people always get confused when they are in position of power, especially if they know if the other person retaliates they could lose their job.

Sabelo: Why are you defending him? Are you dating him now?

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Me: Who I date is none of your business.

X: Udiniwe yini pho?

Me: NO, I am excited that is why I am dancing and jumping.

X and Mxo laughed.

Sabelo: I am sorry

Me: You are apologising to the wrong person.

X: Does Lungsta know...

Lungelo: Does Lungsta know what? (he then saw me) Just the person I needed to see. Why are you ignoring my calls? Where are you now staying?

Me: hello to you too Lungelo.

X: (laughing) I love you Zekhethelo.

Lungelo: (chuckles) Fuck off X

Then Wandile and Dash came in.

Wandile: Dogs.

The crew: sure dog

Lungelo: (looking at me) You haven't answered my question.

Me: I have been busy.

Lungelo: to busy to call back

I kept quiet.

Lungelo: Guys please excuse us

X: (imitating Sbu from Friends like these voice) Angiyi ndawo wo wo

We laughed.

Lungelo: now that you are not busy can we talk.

Me: can I please eat first.

Lungelo: No, I just want to ask you 3 questions. Answer with a yes or no

Dash and Wandile took chairs and joined us.

Lungelo: Question 1: Do you remember when I asked you about a game of chess?

X: No wonder Zeh left you, you were busy teaching her chess instead of loving her.

The al laughed except Lungelo and I.

Lungelo: This is why I said you must excuse us, uwuphawulile kakhulu. I need my answer Zekhethelo.

Ok this is serious than I thought, Lungelo doesn't call me Zekhethelo.

Me: Yes, I remember.

Lungelo: Question 2: Do you remember that you promised me loyalty?

Me: Yes

Lungelo: last question: did my father offer you R100 000 for you to stay away from me?

The crew: What?

Sabelo: Did you take it?

X: I know she didn't

Dash: Did you?

I was disappointed that my own brother would think that I can be bought.

Lungelo: (calmly) This is between me and Zekhethelo, either you all shut up or you leave us. Answer MaGatsheni.

I kept quiet

Lungelo: Zekhethelo!

That strong, deep voice that fills bubbles in my stomach.

X: What difference does it make if she answers you or not? At the end of the day you choose someone else over her. Angani wena uyashadelwa.

Lungelo: dad forced me

X: Come up with a better excuse umdala Lungelo. (this was the first time I heard X speak sense)

Lungelo: Zekhethelo never loved me.

Sabelo: Did she take the money?

Lungelo: She didn't

Wandile: So, why are you saying she never loved you.

Lungelo: she never fought for us.

X: washo like you did fight for her.

Lungelo: You are now sounding like Dot. I chose her, I don't want the throne anymore. After I found out that dad tried to bribe you, I cancelled the wedding. I want nothing to do with him.

Me: If you didn't hear that he tried to bribe me were you going to continue with the wedding? (he kept quiet). You chose me too late don't you think? I thank your father for showing me the real you. Who you build a relationship with is a choice, to sustain that relationship you need commitment. Once you've made your choice you must commit to it. You couldn't commit that is your problem. You made your own bed now lie in it.

I stood up to leave without eating. Lungelo grabbed my hand.

Lungelo: know that I will forever love you and I will wife you.

Me: You are delusional.

Days went by, the 15th finally came. I logged in my student central to check my results. I got that degree completed I was waiting for with Cum Laude 😊😊. I got distinctions for almost all my modules, only 2 that I didn't get distinctions on.

I longed for my mother's presence, to see her proud. I couldn't help but think if she was still around she was going to slaughter a chicken for me. 😊 I told dad and my brothers and Wandile they were very happy for me.

CHAPTER 13

The beautiful thing about growing up is that less and less things affect me. I have become calmer, much more accepting. Problems aside my eyes are scanning for solutions. Challenges aside, the bigger question is always how will I fix this? I am at greater peace, I am happier than before.

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A song that comes to mind is a song by Babo which say:

“Bekungeke kwenzeke konke lokhu okwenzeka empilweni, ukuba wena awunqabanga nempilo yami. Impela awuvumanga unyawo lwamilushelelele. Ngicela ukukubongababa ukungihlenga kuze kube lapha. Bekungekhona ukwazi kwami baba nokuqonda kwami. Ngiphunyukile ogibeni ebengicushelwe lona. Sehlulekile isikhali ebengibekelwe sona, Wena uye wangihlenga, wena uye wangivikela. Bekungeke kwenzeke konke lokhu okwenzeka empilweni yami”.

My life is finally on the right track, I have a loving father, supportive brothers, caring family. What more could a girl ask for? Perhaps I was destined to stay single. I guess I can say I am single and happy 😊.

On the 16th I left for Zululand. In the Zulu culture if you are going to have Umemulo you must stay indoors for at least a week before the ceremony (ukugonqa). You must stay with other maidens. I called one of the ladies I met at Indoni school, who was my mentor when I entered the competition to ask her to organise girls for me. I went to the Royal House with 6 girls. Gogo insisted that we must first do the virginity test before we enter Emgonqweni.

Fortunately, enough we were all virgins, my cousins and half-sisters joined us, we were a total of 17 girls. During our stay we sang traditional songs, did the Zulu dance to prepare for the big day. Our faces were covered with Ibomvu. NO men were allowed to enter the house we were in, food was brought to us.

The day of the memulo finally came. At wee hours we were told to go to the river. God knows I loved my beauty sleep I wanted to murder them. We were forced to bath with cold water. Torture I tell you, apparently bad luck will follow me if I don't bath. We then made fire to keep us warm (who am I kidding they made fire).

Old women with gogo came and told us on how a lady should behave. We did the virginity testing again and they put white dots on our forehead. I was

wearing white beads (isigege) that covered only my bums with a white panty underneath, white beaded necklace, white beads around my ankles, knees and white clothes around my arms. I was told that white represents purity.

Dad and his brothers came to fetch us. We were singing and Zulu dancing all the way from the river to the royal house. When we got home, ubaba wagiya with the help of his sons in front of the gate. The yard was packed with people I don't know.

Mkhulu then took us to a certain rondavel which was said to be indlu yabantu abadala. I kneeled, and he put umhlwehlwe on me. I then went to the crowd, women were ululating.

I think this royalty thing is nit as bad as I thought, all these people came to my memulo to give me money. The procedure is that I poke the spear on the ground in front of someone and that person must pin money in my head. I spot Lungelo's family. Earth open and swallow me.

My husband (mkhulu) was the first to do it, then my father and his brothers and who ever I could find next. I saw Lungelo's crew next to his family I didn't know whether to go to them or not. "you have to go to that side" Mamncane whispered.

I started with Antiza, then Lungelo's twin, went to other people I don't know. Decided to go Lungelo's crew, started with my brothers, my cousin, then X, I knew he was going to talk.

X: Unswempu yezwa ekusineni. How come you never told us you are a princess?

I ignored him then went to Lungelo. He looked handsome I must say.

Lungelo: You look beautiful Mntwana.

I kept quiet and went to the next one. Umemulo is day light robbery. The money I made is too much considering that I don't know almost all these people, perks of being royalty 😊.

After the whole process I changed to a traditional attire made by one of my step mothers. It was very beautiful, it hugged my body perfectly revealing my hips. It was a maxi off shoulder dress made with an orange African print. It complemented my complexion and body structure. I tehn sealed the look with beads on my forehead.

Dad: You look beautiful just like your mother. I love you.

This was the first time my father told me that he loved me. I hugged him with tears in my eyes. He wiped them.

Me: I love you too, I longed to hear those words from you.

Dad: I have always loved you, even in my absentia you were always in my thoughts.

We then walked into the tent which was beautifully decorated. I went to sit on the main table with my brothers and grandparents.

Mkhulu: I would like to thank you all for coming to celebrate this lovely day with us. I know many of you don't know this lady (pointing at me, more like all of them didn't know me). This is Princess Imani, daughter of my son's first wife the late Swati Princess Nkosazane and my son Prince Makhosandile. I know those who know her know her as Zekhethelo, but I prefer to call her Imani. I named her Imani for a reason. Imani means almost the same thing as Hlanganani. Imani means stand together, unite. I named her that because she is the first daughter of the family. My wife and I don't have daughters. When my son told me that his wife gave birth to a baby girl I knew she will bring 2 clans together, just like her mother brought us and the Swati's together. (looking at me) Wherever you go know that you are representing the Zulu clan, always stand by your husband. (nakhu umkhulu engiganisa ngingazi). She had made us proud, she once won Indoni Miss Cultural, she recently completed her degree. (people clapped). As you can see for yourself she is still a virgin I want 500 cows for her. (we all laughed). Once again thank you and enjoy yourselves.

After the ceremony Dot came to me.

Dot: (hugging me) My lovely sister, you are not just a pretty face. You are a true princess who can sing, Zulu dance and still a virgin. I am proud of you. Perhaps Lungelo did love you, knowing him, he would have broken your virginity long time ago.

I kept quiet, it then occurred to me that both Dot and X have unfiltered mouths I wonder how they are friends.

A voice behind us: Bonding without me (he showed a sad face)

Dot: You were still entertaining your friends nje.

Dash: (Looking at me) Abawuvali umlomo ngawe, nawe wangimangazake ukuthi ukwazi kanje ukusina.

Me: never judge a book by it cover.

Dash: Cliché (imitating a woman's voice)

Remember when I thought Lungelo was gay, now I think all his crew members are gay. They are always together, and they have gay tendencies even my brother. Speaking of which I have never heard him talking about a lady.

Me: Bhutiza (looking at Dash) when are we seeing umakoti?

Dash: Whose wife?

ME: Your wife

He just laughed at me and said that was his que to leave.

It felt good to have a family. I felt that sense of belonging. I wouldn't trade my family for anything even my step mothers. I know how the society paint them as evil people, not mine. Mine are sweet and they treat me like their biological child.

After my memulo I gave the girls that were with me R500 each just to say thank you for their help. They didn't even have Christmas with their families because of me. Dot arranged transport to take them to their homes.

My brothers and I were to spend New Year's Eve with the family at the royal house. Apparently, it's a family tradition that as family we must be together to welcome the new year. There will be a huge braai, it will be some sort of a New Year's Eve party.

Dash said he will be bored so he will invite his friends over since there are also in The Zululand at their homes. I was hoping that Lungelo doesn't come. I can't deal with him. Even after so many months he still has that effect on me. My other cousins also said they will invite their friends. I didn't see the need for inviting friends I mean the family is big on it own. This is waste of food.

Around 9 pm on New Year's Eve my brothers and cousin set the fire for a braai. Their friends start arriving, I am already sensing that I will be bored. I want to make this an early night, but my inner self won't let me. I mean this is the first New Year's Eve together. I don't want to appear as a snob. Even though I hate crowds I have to pretend

Dash's friends come including Lungelo. Father God ngenziwani? I made sure that I avoid him by all means. I'd die to be in his arms, but I don't want him to know, he would gain control over me.

Just like any other introvert I was bored mostly because people were drinking. I needed some time alone. Around 10pm I went to sit on the veranda of mom's house. I decided to call aunt Sizakele and wish her happy new year in advance. She made me promise to come visit. After that I stared at nature reflected on my year. Honestly no year has tested me like this year. Having to say goodbye to my mother. I miss how we spent our New Year's Eve It will be just the 2 of us enjoying each other's company. One would call us boring because we use to stay indoors or go to church that was the only day in a year we went to church.

I reflected on how I felt in love with the wrong person. One thing I am grateful for is I found family. I was crying all this time. You know a good long session of weeping can often make you feel better even if your circumstances have not changed a bit. Lord knows how I long for my mother's presence and Lungelo's love. As tears were still streaming down my cheeks I felt someone's hands touching me. I turn my head

Lungelo: (with a concerned voice) Are you fine? (I nodded) then why are you crying?

I kept quiet, he sat next to me, pulled me into an embrace. I didn't protest.

Lungelo: Now tell me why are you crying?

Me: It's nothing, go to your friends.

Lungelo: So, you are just crying for fun?

(I kept quiet) I am waiting

Me: I just miss my mom.

He kept quiet for some time and wiped my tears.

Lungelo: Let get out of this place.

Me: Thanks, I will pass.

Lungelo: As friends, you need to get some fresh air, besides you are bored.

Me: I may be bored but I don't want to die, you were drinking

Lungelo: Haaa (releasing breath) I didn't even take a sip,

I still have to drive back to my home at Ulundi. Now let's go.

He grabs my hand and we went to his car, promised to bring me back as soon as possible.

In his car, while looking directly at the road

Lungelo: So, how come you never told me you are related to Dash?

Me: I found out recently

Lungelo: And you said I mustn't know

Me: Honestly, I didn't see the need for you to know.

Lungelo: (looks at me briefly) Didn't you think I deserve to know that you are royalty

Me: No, you didn't deserve to know, I mean what difference was it going to make.

Lungelo: I love you and I chose you and I would still choose you.

Me: You chose me late, where are you going?

Lungelo: I want us to welcome the new year together. We are going to Ulundi.

Me: What?? Please take me back.

Lungelo: relax we are going to my house not the Buthelezi residence.

I kept quiet, I don't know why I still trust this guy We reached our destination around 11:30 pm. His house was beautiful, but nothing compared to the one at Umhlanga. He opened the door for me.

Lungelo: feel at home. So, do you want beer, wine, juice, drink or water?

Me: Anything if it's not beer.

He came back with a beer for him and juice for me. We stared at each other in silence.

Me: Let's go watch fireworks.

Lungelo: I am not a fan, but we can still go.

Me: I am also not a fan.

He kept quiet for some time.

Lungelo: I am sorry for everything I put you through. I hope you find it in your heart to forgive me. I love you and I always will. Nothing broke my heart like hearing that you tried to commit suicide because of me. I only agreed to marry that girl because I thought you don't love me. You had all the signs that proved that you don't love me. My father poisoned me, told me that you left the hospital with some guy. I tried contacting you for 2 weeks, but you didn't answer. I am sorry for doubting your love, for not being there when you needed

me the most. (he stands up and comes to the couch I was sitting on, holds my hand and looks into my eyes. I was struggling to maintain eye contact. He is my weakness. A tear escaped his eye.) Mntwana, kaMageba please forgive me my queen. I know you may not believe me since I once said you were my queen but treated you otherwise. As we start the new year, may we please start at a new leaf. I want us to build an empire. You know a king is incomplete without his queen just like I am without you, I need you next to me.

I was overwhelmed by Lungelo's words as a result words fail me, and tears found me. Trust my water breaks to betray me in front of Lungelo.

One minute I was crying, next minute he started kissing me, I kissed him back. A slow passionate kiss. My hands are doing things that they are not supposed to be doing. He is pulling me closer and pressing my body against his. He stops kissing me and looks directly into my eyes, we are having conversation with our eyes. We start kissing again. He picks me up and heads to his bedroom. One thing led to another and we were both naked.

Lungelo: This is going to hurt.

He didn't even wait for me to answer. This was the most excruciating pain I have ever felt.

The following day I woke up to a painful body, I met Lungelo's eyes and remembered I broke my virginity with my ex. Earth swallow me, how could my body betray me? Wasn't my first time supposed to be romantic? Like in movies, candles and all the works. I ended up crying.

Lungelo: Look at me. (I couldn't) Can you stop it?

Me: (annoyed) What?

Lungelo: crying and freaking out. One thing that must sink in your head is that you are my queen. I will not make the same mistake twice. I would never leave you. Remember when I said I will wife you one day? I meant that. Thank you for waiting for me, trusting me with your virginity.

I wanted to reply and say Fuseg, but my inner self wouldn't allow me. I knew better than to trust Lungelo. I kept quiet and went to take a shower. When I came back I found him changing sheets. I was embarrassed, maybe because I told myself I was saving my virginity to my husband.

Lungelo: We are supposed to be leaving for Durban, Mxo is hosting a New Year's braai

Me: You can go, please take me home.

Lungelo: (he looked at me like I was crazy) No one is going anywhere. I want to spend today with you. Besides you can't even walk properly, everyone will know you just had sex.

He then led me to the kitchen and warmed my food and fed me.

Lungelo: Do you notice that it has been raining since we got here? (I nod) It's a blessing, oSokalisa noMageba are blessing this union.

I laughed. I then checked my phone I had plenty of missed calls from my brothers and father. I decided to call Dot first, he answered after 3 rings.

Dot: Usulala ama out? (I could sense he was pissed)

Lungelo: (whispering) put him on loud speaker. (I did as told).

Me: Morning big bro and happy new year.

Lungelo laughed I pinched him.

Dot: I better find you home when I come back from Durban.

Me: You will.

Lungelo: (whispering) will not

Me: Happy new bro

Dot: Awungiyeka.

He then hung up. I then called Dash also put him on loud speaker.

Dash: Uphi uLungsta?

Me: No good morning little sister, no happy new year and you are asking me because...

Dash: (laughing) Musa ukuzibuzisa. You left with him last night. Awushoke uphi ubra wami?

Me: call him

Dash: Put him on loud speaker

Lungelo: Ukuyona vele.

Dash: Lungsta dog I pray for your sake my sister is still in one piece. You are my best friend and all but that is my younger sister, my blood. Size singaxabani. (I didn't expect that from him)

Lungelo: Geez dude your sister is my life, if I hurt her I would be hurting myself.

Dash: Good. Zeh call dad he is looking for you. I said you went to your friend.

Me: Okay I will.

Dash: I love you little cc.

Me: I love you more

Lungelo: Hang up already.

Dash: (laughing) I smell jealousy. Lungsta my man I will see you at Mxo's braai and please don't bring Zeh along.

Lungelo: I am not coming.

Dash: Shisa mntaka mah, you have to give me the love portion that you are using on him.

Lungelo: Fusegi Ayanda.

Dash: (laughing) that is not a right way to talk to your brother in law. You should address me as bhuti.

We laughed.

Me: he should start bribing you.

Lungelo: niyanya.

Dash: Lil cc you should get yourself another prince ayikho lento uzofa indlala.

Lungelo: Bye Bhuti Dash

Dash: (laughing) You didn't call me my sister did.

Lungelo hung up.

We spent the rest of the day watching movies and doing sex. We were officially back together. I was happy. I spent 3 more days with him. On the 4th day I went back to the royal house. Dot was very angry I apologised to him.

I lied to dad and my grandparents said that my friend needed my help she recently gave birth and she is an orphan. They gave me a lecture about

ukuziphatha kahle how being a virgin is the most important thing. If only they knew.

I told dad I am thinking of doing my honours abroad, he was not pleased. Last year I applied at UKZN AND Cambridge university for my honours and I got accepted in both places. I am considering Cambridge I want to start my new year at a new place.

When I told my brothers, Dot said “awuyi lapho”. Dash just looked at me. Later I received a call from Wandile asking if it was true that I am thinking of leaving the county, he said I must see him when I get back in Durban.

CHAPTER 14

Living my life from any eyes other than my own forms an illusion that simplifies life to a narrow tunnel with possible light in the end. The longer the illusion the more difficult life will be. Life can be a narrow tunnel, but it can also be a whole lot more, depending on the eyes of the beholder. It is easier to accept what I have invested in understanding myself. Acceptance mothers' peace and liberty. Acceptance without understanding breeds anxiety and frustration.

With that said I learnt to follow my heart and right now my heart is leading me to Overseas. I usually hear people say "new year, new me" for me this year means new place, new beginnings and new and improved me. I badly want to relocate, things between Lungelo and I were good but the question that stuck in my head was for how long? I forgave Lungelo, but it is not easy to forget let alone trust him again.

I still have not told him that I am considering relocating, I am praying that his friends did not beat me to it. I love Lungelo and all, but I can't risk my life by trusting him again. I mean Lungelo has everything a girl could ask for and looks on top. I am beautiful, but I know Lungelo is way out of my league, he is in La Liga and I am in PSL, just an average girl. I know he can get any girl he wants. Girls literally drool over him. I am now more insecure since he broke my virginity, what if he leaves me. You know how royal families have rules maybe he is destined to marry a pure girl unlike myself who just gave away my virginity. What broke my heart is that he didn't even come home to pay damages for taking my virginity. In our culture a guy that takes your virginity must come with 2 cows as damages, one to cleanse the girls the other for my mother. In this case my granny. I didn't bring it up because I thought he was going to man up. I still won't tell him, honestly I don't care if he pays or not. I just want to leave this place before I experience more heart ache.

Today my brothers and I are heading back to Durban. We must talk to Mr Khoza about our inheritance before my brothers return to work. Dash is giving me silent treatment, he doesn't even greet me, and it is too much for me. I miss my bubbly brother, one thing I knew for sure I wasn't going to beg him to talk to me. So, I let him be. He will talk to me when he wants to. Dot on the other hand gave me a cold shoulder he only greeted me and asked how I was, I also let him be. With him it will be hard since we share the same house. Maybe its time I got my own place, one I will use when I come this side.

The ride to Durban was quiet, I was seating in the backseat. We first dropped Dash on his place, he had a house in Umhlanga just like Lungelo. We then went to Umlazi, Dot dropped me and said he is going out with his friends I shouldn't wait for him. This is so unlike him, usually he would stay indoors with me. I decided to look for an apartment online. I needed to get my hands on that inheritance, so I could buy my own house. I called Mr Khoza to notify him that I have found my brothers and book and appointment to see him. Fortunately, he was free the following day.

The following day we drove to Pietermaritzburg. Mr Khoza first needed to confirm if I was really telling the truth, said we, must take a DNA test we will get the results the following day since it was an emergency. He said that he believed me since Dash was my male version, but he needed to follow the procedure. Dot insisted we pass by Mom's grave, we first bought fresh flowers. When we got the we cleaned the grave in silence.

Dash: (breaking the silence) We must do an unveiling for her.

Dot: As soon as possible.

Being in this cemetery reminds me of the day I said my final goodbyes to her. How I was praying and hoping it was all a nightmare. Its funny how life have changed, the day she was buried I was left all alone in this world now I have two loving brothers even though they are acting like drama queens now, and a father on top. Dot went to sit on top of the grave, he didn't even mind that he was getting dirty. He became emotional.

Dot: I am sorry mom, I think I failed you. Just when I thought I was going to be a big brother to her, protect and love her. Hell will freeze before I allow anything to happen to her, how will I protect her when she is miles away? I recently found her I don't want to lose her so soon.

Dash: I also don't want to lose her I would slay dragons for her, but she is stubborn just like someone I know. (he says pointing at Dot)

I laugh

Dot: Mah please guide us and tie us together.

I was touched by their words Lord knows how I missed our laughs.

Me: Mom Please guide us like my brothers have requested. I also don't want to lose them but me being overseas doesn't mean we are not siblings anymore miles will not tear us apart.

Dash: It will not be the same.

Me: all I am asking is for you to keep an open mind. Don't you want me to succeed in life?

Dot: Who said success is only found abroad?

Me: I am just saying besides Cambridge University is way better than any other university in South Africa. One of the best in the world. You should be happy your sister got accepted there. You should be proud of me. (I was becoming teary) Remember during umemulo UMkhulu said I must represent the Zulu clan. Here I am trying to represent the clan, trying to fly the flag of our clan high and you are standing in my way.

Dash: We are ...

Me: (I shouted) Just don't, you hate me to the point that you can't even greet me back. You are my brothers you are supposed to seat down and tell me when I am wrong and not give me silent treatment. I tried reaching out to you, but I have had enough. Now that you are happy you want to talk to me, it doesn't work like that.

Dot: (Pissed) No matter how pissed you are never, I mean never shout at Dash. He is way older than you, respect him.

Me: I am sorry

Dash: no, I am sorry.

Dash then came and hugged me, I cried.

Dot: (looking at me) You don't understand that we love you and

Me: I do

Dot: I was still talking. You recently found us, and we are still trying to make up for the time lost. Why would you want to destroy this?

Me: I am sorry.

Dot: We don't need your sorry, we just want to tell you we are not happy that you want to leave the country. Call us selfish but you can't, and you won't go to overseas. You still young and you need guidance. We were not there when you were growing up, but we are here now. Do you know the pain that dad is going

through? He is afraid of telling you well I am not. Even Grans BP went up when she heard you want to leave. Ngiyakucela Mntwana please don't leave. Do your honours here at UKZN or anywhere in South Africa but not overseas.

I kept quiet.

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Dash: Please my beautiful sister, Mageba omuhle (kissing my cheeks)

I laughed

Me: You should have told me how you felt in the first place.

Dot: angani you are stubborn

Me: Relax I won't go, I will continue in UKZN, but I need to buy my own apartment.

Dot: Why? You no longer enjoy my company.

Dash: This is not about you bafo, ufuna khona uLungelo ezofika noma inini.

I pinched him.

Me: I want to be closer to campus. Umlazi is too far.

Dot: I will buy you a car.

Dash: she must get a license first.

Me: I got my license when I was doing matric.

Dash: how come you never drove for us?

Me: You never asked.

We then went to a BnB at Scottsville. I decided to call Aunt Sizakele and let her know I was in town. She was so happy to hear that, said that we must not leave without seeing her. I told my brothers about her and they said we will see her after we have talked to MR Khoza tomorrow, we then went to sleep.

The following day we first went to Mr Khoza, the DNA results confirmed what we already knew. Then Mr Khoza read the will to us. Turns out mom left R100 000 for me saying that she raised me took me to the best schools, she knows I don't need the money. Left R2 000 000 for my brothers since she never took them to school. She also left us 60 % shares in some company she invested in, so we each had 20 % shares.

After our meeting with the lawyer we went to see aunt Sizakele. She was so happy to see us, mostly my brothers told them this is their second home and told them stories about our mother. We promised to come visit.

Around 4 pm we left for Durban. On our way Dot received a call from X, he phone was connected to his car Bluetooth speaker.

Dot: Sure dog

X: Ntwana where is your sister?

Why would X want me? I asked myself

X: We are trying to reach her, but her phone goes straight to voicemail.

Who is WE?

Dash: Usuplan ukudla uLungsta izithende yini?

X: (laughing) He would bury me alive. ON a serious note I need your sister as in yesterday.

Dot: What do you want from her?

X: Lungsta needs her.

Dash: (looking at me) I did say that you gave Lungsta a love portion.

We laughed.

X: Zeh

Me: Please tell Lungsta my battery died.

X: Where are you?

Me: On our way to Durban.

X: Please come to Entabeni hospital as soon as you get here it's a matter of life and death.

Me: Where is Lungelo?

X: Here and he needs you.

Dash: What happened?

X: You will find out when you get here. Sharp

He then dropped the call. I was scared and praying that Lungelo was fine. I asked Dash to lend me his phone so, I could call Lungelo, but he did not answer. I was very worried. Dot drove like a maniac, within 30 minutes we

reached the hospital. Lungelo's family was there including his aunts and his "Wife", his crew was also there but I didn't see him or his father.

I was still angry at Lungelo's family as a result I attempted to walk back but Dot held my hand and led me to them.

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Me: Good afternoon.

They greeted back

X: Come

Me: To where?

X: You will see

Me: Where is Lungelo?

X: He is fine

Me: I didn't ask if he was fine or not, I asked where he was?

X chuckled.

Dot: ZEKHETHELO

Me: Sorry X

X: Its fine come

He led me to the ward. When we got there Lungelo's father was on the hospital bed, Lungelo was standing next to him, another man who looked like a traditional healer was seating next to the bed. This man who I assumed was a traditional healer was wearing a leopard print vest and had ishoba in his hand. As we made our way in the healer started groaning. I was scared, I almost peed on myself, attempted to leave but X held me.

The healer: Bo Shenge, oSokwalisa, Mnyamana kaNgqengelele, Phungashe, Sondiya, Mnandingamondi, Nina enadla izindlovukazi zamlobolela. Nina zinyawo ezimahhele. Enaganiswa izintombi nanganye nangambili.

This was creepy. Lungelo and his father just looked at me. I looked at my feet.

The healer: This is her, not the one you brought earlier.

I asked my self what was going on.

The healer: Buthelezi, she is the only person who can heal you.

Wasn't this old man briefed, I am not a doctor mina, izinto zoWandile lezo.

The healer: OSokwalisa noNdabezitha are very angry. You need to apologise to her and maybe they might spare your life. Uyena makoti lo not the one you brought earlier. (I wanted to laugh, but my inner self wouldn't let me. I am no one's makoti mina).

Buthelezi groaned in pain, he looked pale. Lungelo didn't look like the Lungelo I know and love.

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Me: No need to apologise I forgave him long time ago.

The healer: No, you didn't, the ancestors see your anger. Didn't you want to leave the country because of him? Because he instilled insecurities in you and now you are scared to love and trust his son.

Lungelo looked at me, I could see he was hurt.

Me: Maybe you are not hearing them properly or they are lying. (There was no way I was agreeing to that)

The healer: Continue insulting my calling I will make you run mad.

I kept quiet

The healer: Buthelezi you must take a goat to her family to apologise for disrespecting their daughter. You princess must forgive the king wholeheartedly because all of this will be waste if you don't forgive him. His death will be on your hands.

I yanked my hand off X's hands and went next to the bed.

Me: Can you please give us few minutes?

They left the room.

Me: I am sorry you are here because of me, I want you to know that I forgive you. I would never hate the father of the man I love with all my heart. What you did to me was painful, but it made me grow. (I paused, trust my water breaks to betray me. I let my tears flow without wiping them). If I could forgive Lungelo why can't I also forgive you. I want you to know that I love your son and I wouldn't do something that could hurt him. I love him more than I love myself and that scares me. Please Sokalisa (He smiled) Please respect our relationship, respect him he is no longer a teenager. Hear him out. I don't want to come between you two and I won't. Please allow him to be happy even if it is with me. Even if ngiyisdwedwe as you once called me, but he loves me as I am. If it's a mistake that he loves me, let him make that mistake. He will learn from it.

Making mistakes means he is growing, allow him to grow. Ngiyakucela Ngqengelele. I forgive you and I wish you a speedy recovery.

After saying that I felt lighter, I didn't even wait for his reply, I left the room. Went straight to Dot, hugged him. They all looked at us.

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Me: Bhutiza may we please go.

Dash: Why are you crying?

I looked at him and ignored him.

Me: (Looking at Dot) Please

Dot then held my hand and we went to his car and drove to his place.

CHAPTER 15

Pity we live in a world where we must bend or hide our own truth, so we can fit into boxes or feel included. It's a form of prison I am grateful I managed to escape.

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After pouring my heart out to Baba Buthelezi. I feel lighter. Now I understand why the healer said I have not forgave him that time. Back then I still had things I needed to say to him. Now my heart is at peace. If he dies it will not be on my hands. I have no grudges against him.

It's been 5 days since the incident and still have not heard from Lungelo. I spent my days in doors mostly sleeping since Dot returned to work. Today just like other day I do my morning routine and sleep. Around 6 pm Dad decides to bless me with his presence.

Dad: I talk to King Buthelezi and he said he is bringing 3 cows to our family. Care to explain?

Me: I don't understand. His healer said he must bring a goat ukuzoshweleza kwabaphansi.

Dad: what did he do since he is asking for forgiveness?

I told him the whole story. He was angry said he deserved to die no one messes with his daughter.

Me: Calm down Mageba I forgave him please also forgive him. Don't confront him, I am no longer angry at him.

Dad: He also said that his son wants to pay damages. Care to explain that?

Me: I am sorry (tears formed in my eyes)

Dad: I don't need your sorry

Me: I am sorry I am a disgrace to the family. I lost my virginity to Lungelo

Dad: Don't ever call yourself a disgrace. You are a princess, my princess besides Lungelo loves you.

He wiped my tears and hugged me. Then my brothers came in. They joined the hug.

Dash: Your hobbies include crying.

Me: Mxm

We laughed.

Dad: Bantabami I love you and its makes me happy to see how you also love one another. Even in my absentia take care of each other. I love you. Shonini ubaba unjani?

We laughed.

Us: (In unison) Ubaba uyasithanda

Dad: Awu don't you love me?

US: WE love you too

Dash: Uze uyazicelela bandla.

We laughed. Dad then said his good byes. After he left Dash came to sit next to me.

Dash: Sisi wami omuhle.

Me: What do you want?

Dash: (chuckles) Ave ungenza umuntu omubi. I want you to be my partner tomorrow, there is a work function.

ME: No problem

Dash: Your dress will be delivered tomorrow, I will come pick you up around 6. Please do you hair.

Me: I will cut it tomorrow.

Dot and Dash: (in unison) NO!

Me: Here I was thinking ngiyanyisa mengigundile.

Dash: Uyanyisa impela but don't buy a weave or something.

Me: I will do cornrows instead.

Dash: Better (I hit him playfully).

Dash then said his goodbyes and left.

The following day I went to do my hair, decided to do straight up. After that I went back home. My dress was delivered around 4 pm. My dress looked like the one I had, the one I wore the first time I saw Lungelo, a black off shoulder dress, the only difference was the cloth type, this was made from velvet. It was beautiful. I got ready. At exactly 6 pm Dash came to pick me. He first took pictures of me with his phone.

Dash: Sisi wami omuhle. Ntwana you are turning heads everyone will want your number, just tell them you are the boss's sister .

I laughed, he then drove to Umhlanga, drove in Coastlands hotel. I remembered the last time I was here, how I almost ended my life. Tears formed on my eyes. He saw that.

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Dash: Forget about the past, focus on the present.

Me: I forgot you are a motivational speaker by profession.

We laughed.

Dash: I am older than you.

Me: Ok mkhulu.

He then led me inside the hotel.

When we got there all his friends with their girlfriends were there, Lungelo's family, dad and babomncane and other people I didn't know. Dad and babomncane came to us.

Babomncane: An apple doesn't fall far from the tree. You are beautiful just like your mother.

Dad: Just like her dad.

We laughed.

Dad: You are beautiful my princess.

Me: Thanks, My King.

Dad: Don't ever forget that I am your first king.

Me: More like my only king.

Babomncane: That will change soon

Dad: Don't remind me

They left me standing there. I went to Dash and his crew.

Me: Greetings

Them: HI

Wandile: My cousin is cuter than yours.

Sabelo: Indeed she is.

Pha: Imagine her wearing a wedding gown she would be 10 times beautiful.
(Sometimes I miss our friendship, but life happened)

X: Forget the wedding gown imagine her in Isidwaba.

Sabelo: Nenkehli.

Wandile: (holding my hand) let leave them fantasizing, come with me.

We went outside. He asked how I was, told me not to leave the country.

Wandile: You are like my younger sister, know that you can count on me for anything. Your happiness means so much to me. Even if you get married don't forget about your brothers me included.

Me: I won't and thank you I love you.

Wandile: Love you too.

We then hugged and went back to others. Lungelo hasn't said a word to me and it hurts. His eyes are piercing through me.

His father came and asked to speak to me.

Buthelezi: I am sorry for hurting you. You know how they say money is the root of all evil. I was also tempted I wanted Lungelo to marry that princess because her father was going to invest in my business. Thank you for forgiving me even though I am not worthy of your forgiveness. Thank you for loving my son. I hope one day you will be serving me tea as my daughter in law. Your words sunk into my head. Don't ever call yourself isidwedwe, you are the future queen, my son's queen. I pray our ancestors bless your marriage. (what marriage?) You are not just a pretty face, you are also beautiful. You have all the qualities of a queen. No one has ever spoken to me like you did. I like your courage.

He then hugged me, and we went separate ways. I was asking myself why everyone was talking about marriage today.

The function started, they were celebrating the success of the companies and their partnership. The program went on and on, I was bored. Then the MC said there was entertainment, someone requested to sing for us. I needed music to get rid of this boredom. Luyanda, Lungelo and Sphe stood up. I never knew Lungelo could sing, this I got to see.

Lungelo started a song by Gerald Levert – I was made to love you.

Lungelo: I would go where we first met, a long time ago. How could I forget the way I felt when I first laid my eyes on you? I remember saying to my friend there is my future wife in there. I took the stand to meet someone who would change my life it had to be my destiny I was made to love you. my hands to touch you, my arms to hold you, my legs to stand with you forever...

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I felt butterflies in my stomach. I fell in love with him again. Sphe and Luyanda backed him.

Lungelo: “ I remember our first argument, our first break up and make up that got us to this moment. Every girlfriend, every one-night stand, every heart break, every heart ache that led me to you”

He then stopped and looked at me, there was a light that lighted where I was seating. Lungelo then came to me.

Lungelo: I lost you once and I am never losing you again. I made a mistake once and I will not let history to repeat itself. You are my African queen. Remember when I told you I will wife you one day I meant that. (He paused) this song I just sang summaries our relationship. I told my friends in Mxo’s restaurant that I was getting married soon to you. I love you Mntwana. I remember when I first laid my eyes on you, I knew you were the one for me, my queen. You were wearing a dress like the one you were wearing today. (I smiled). One thing I learnt is that I can never cheat fate. This (pointing at us) is fate. You are my missing rib. I want to treat you like royalty that you are, I want you to be the mother of my kids. I want us to breed a generation of lovers. Our kids to look at us and know that in this messy world we are in true love does exist. I never want them to be cynical about love. I want them to puke love. (he then knelt before me).

Everyone took their phones.

Lungelo: Mntwana wena kaMageba will you please be my wife?

I kept quiet, a tear escaped his eyes.

X: Zeh please

Me: YES

Everyone screamed, Lungelo picked bridal style and kissed me.

Lungelo: You made me a man amongst men. I love you so much future Mrs me.

THE END OF BOOK 1



BOOK 2

BY ZEKHETHELO NONHLANHLA SITHOLE

Most people think my idea of love is derived from movies and books but in fact it is based on pure reality. See one in my life I met someone who made love the most sacred, beautiful, genuine reality to me. If you want to blame someone for my high standards my refusal to settle, my coming out of the cocoon, the way I wear my skin. find him and blame him.

CHAPTER 1

It has been an amazing 3 weeks. The point of being in KZN is to do things I don't get to do overseas. Be with family walk barefoot on the soil, visit the beach. Fellowship with omama besonto who have been praying for me all my life. I get to bask in love, rest in piece and just enjoy my homeland and it people. Of course, laugh at the famous question from family, neighbours and church folks asking "Uphi umkhwenyana". This time the question is followed by a piece of advice." Kuzomele uxegise" meaning I should be less particular. Is that even possible