

UNFORGOTTEN DREAMS

Thandeka Mamba (Eswatini)



Mabo learnt at an early age that education is the key to success. She figured that education was what she needed to make her dreams come true. And so that is all she ever did – she read and studied. Twenty-seven years later, she decided that maybe it was not true after all. She began to see a twisted perspective of the whole idea.

Mabo grew up in a small village in the rural parts of Eswatini called Salem. She lived with her aged grandfather who brought her up with his wisdom to become a sensible woman someday. She had known him to be her only guardian angel. He was there to pick her up when she fell. His love for her gave him the strength to move around to provide for both of them despite his old age.

When Mabo was seven years old, her grandfather became very sick. He began to move less and his health deteriorated every day. He could not provide for both of them the same way he did before. Mabo felt helpless. She did not know how she could possibly help her grandfather. Grandfather's health became worse and he had trouble breathing. Mabo knew she needed to seek for help. She walked around the village seeking for someone to help her grandfather, but no one was willing to help her. She could not spend all her time searching. She had to go back to grandfather. He needed her. Upon her arrival, grandfather really looked at her, knowing she had done her best, then breathed his last.

Mabo rushed to his mat and shook him severally, calling out to him, hoping that he would wake up. Grandfather did not wake up. She went back to the community to report that her grandfather was no more. To her surprise, everyone was suddenly very concerned about her grandfather. The elders knew what to do, they handled everything after her grandfather's demise. A month later, they took her to her aunt's place at Big Bend. She had met her for the first time at her grandfather's funeral. She had been told that she had to go and live with her for her own safety and also to be enrolled at school so that she can secure her future.

She dreamt of becoming the first doctor from her community. Her grandfather had died because there were no doctors or even clinics nearby. She wanted to end such untimely deaths by providing a quick service to her people. With such big dreams she knew that she had to work very hard in her studies. She dedicated her nights to her books because during the day she was occupied with many responsibilities. Her diligent and determined nature attracted leadership roles whilst she was in her community high school. Her teachers had spotted her great potential and she served as a school prefect in all her years there. She was an influential student who ran successful fundraising campaigns for the clubs she joined in school. Her teachers were positive that she was destined to achieve great things because of the dedication and hard work that was evident in all she did.

Unfortunately for her, her aunt, two nieces and uncle were not happy for her successes, hence they made her life miserable. Her aunt would buy presents for her children and exclude Mabo. Her nieces, although older than her, made her do all the house chores. Eventually she got used to it, realising that she was not a member of that family after all.

Mabo's uncle was the worst of them all. He never ceased to remind her of her misfortune. He often reminded Mabo how her mother had chosen a lavish life over her and had abandoned her at three years old. He convinced her that she was worthless and a burden to everyone to such an extent that he threatened to kick Mabo out of his home if she refused to pay for her accommodation and meals with her body.

One Saturday, as she was cleaning her room, her uncle molested her and with that her innocence was stolen from her at fifteen years. She shouted for help but no one was around to help her since her aunt and nieces had gone to town. She reported the matter to her aunt who instead accused her of bringing it upon herself claiming that her husband was the victim. Emboldened by this, her uncle continued to molest her every chance he got, knowing he would escape with it. As such, life became even harder for her.

Her aunt later stopped paying for her school fees because she was jealous that her own children were not getting high grades as Mabo did. Mabo saw her dream of becoming a doctor shatter right before her eyes. She begged her aunt each day to pay for her studies but her aunt was adamant. She accused Mabo of wanting to break her family. Mabo wept sorrowfully as each day she watched her nieces continue with their education and hoped that her aunt would soften her heart.

When she realised that she was not going back to school, Mabo decided to seek for employment but she did not get any. Her uncle took advantage of the situation to make her his puppet. During the day all she did was herd her uncle's cattle. She was convinced that her life was a mess and even her futile attempts at education had given her more reason to believe that she was not destined for success.

When Mabo was twenty-six years old, her uncle impregnated her and denied being responsible. Her aunt got furious at her and the ill-treatment she received became worse. Her aunt claimed that she was training Mabo to be a wife. She even beat her and it is no wonder that soon Mabo miscarried.

After she miscarried, Mabo decided to return to Salem, the only place she had known happiness with her grandfather. She had been away for over twenty years but she vividly remembered everything about the place. As she walked into the compound, she could not help but notice the abandoned home she so greatly treasured. It reminded her of her abandoned self and she cursed the day her mother had left her.

Mabo decided to rebuild her life and she knew the first step was to forgive herself. As she cleaned the house and dusted the furniture, she remembered the good times in that house. She dusted the portraits of her dear grandfather and hung them where they belonged.

Every day, she worked hard by clearing the yard and working in the garden. And at the end of every tiring and emotionally draining day, she would get comfort in thinking about her grandfather.

'I remember all the wonderful moments I spent with my wise grandfather,' thought Mabo as she sat under the palm tree of her farmyard. This particular maize farm had been passed down to her by her beloved grandfather who had also inherited it from his forefathers.

She remembered how her grandfather tirelessly tilled the soil and was always richly repaid by a bumper maize harvest. Her grandfather was well known in his community and beyond for producing the best maize yields each and every year. His community

always referred to him for farming tips and he would gladly share his knowledge. As young as Mabo was at that time, she picked one or two things about growing the best maize from her grandfather.

After a particularly tiring day, she recalled this one time she followed her grandfather to help him out in the farm. Her curiosity had gotten the better of her and she decided to ask him what kept him motivated to keep working in his farm. He responded by saying, “My child, it wasn’t until I was in my late thirties that I realised I had been trampling on my wealth.” Full of wisdom he had inspired his granddaughter to also depend on her skills to make a living for herself by making her realise at a tender age that she has all she needs in this life at her fingertips.

After two months of toiling hard, Mabo started seeing the fruits of her hard work. Her maize plantation was promising high yields. This gave her motivation to work even harder.

After four months, Mabo harvested her maize which filled more than three silos. Big companies like NAMBOARD came to buy her maize, ensuring a comfortable life for herself.

Mabo realised that her failed educational plans did not render her a failure in life. In as much as she could not attain her dream of becoming a medical doctor, she was still successful. She then made different goals that she aligned to her specialisation. She planned to expand her business by exporting her goods to nearby countries. She would then save some of the money to build her own clinic in the area, naming it after her grandfather, Mr. Maphanga.