

# ONE WOMAN'S QUEST

Albert Kaluwa Ngimu Jr.

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Her name was Lela. She was tall, slender and light in complexion and generally encompassed a well-shaped body structure. She was in her early twenties. She was the first born in a family of two sisters and a brother. Her brother's name was Wilena and her only sister was Jadeya who happened to be the last-born. Lela, with her family lived in a town called Chongi. Lela's father, a Mr. Kahoko, had died a mysterious death when Lela was only 6 years old. That was when the family lived in a town called Luanse.

During that fateful day, in the evening, Lela's father had just knocked off from work and after a rest went to have a cold bottle of a traditionally brewed local wine called *Lutuku*. He did not take long and did not drink much. He came back and went straight to sleep. Kahoko was a quiet good man. Kahoko was a moderate drinker who drunk beer only intermittently. He had a small, shallow voice that could easily be mistaken for a woman's voice.

At around midnight, Kahoko woke up to go and relieve himself outside where the toilets were. Just as he was about to enter the house on his way from the toilet, he felt an iron bar hit him hard on the head. The thump was

with such demoniacal force and brutality that without a shout Kahoko hit the floor, collapsed and died on the spot. His relatives blamed the wife's promiscuity for the gruesome death.

They claimed Lela's mother was deviously subtle in her dealings with men and was going out with many men besides her husband. And that one of the many men could have grudgingly killed Kahoko. Kahoko's relatives, as a result, developed intense disgust for Lela's mother and treated her as downright nonsense. They hounded her out of Luanse town and that is how she and her little children settled in Kasipa compound in the town of Chongi. From that time onwards, Kahoko's relatives had nothing to do with Lela's mother because they were convinced beyond any reasonable doubt that she had caused the death of their much-loved relative.



Minga was almost as tall as Lela was. He was married to Lela. Minga was a fine-looking man and spotted a stylish moustache that virtually covered his mouth. With his powerfully built and tall stature, he looked

stunning and sometimes intimidating. Legend had it that Minga's grandfather, who trekked from a foreign country, had a long waive of moustache that he always tied to his ears. Everyone said Minga had inherited that kind of moustache from his grandfather.



Yakochi was Minga's biological son. He had been born out of wedlock. His father (Minga) was only 18 years old when he begot Yakochi. He was doing his grade twelve when he impregnated one of his many high school girlfriends by the name of Mola. Mola was of average height, calm, dark in complexion and quite lovely. Minga blatantly refused to accept responsibility for the pregnancy that saw

Mola drop out of school. Mola tried several times to terminate the pregnancy, but to no avail. As a result, Yakochi was born sick. Repeatedly he felt something like an earthquake move randomly in his stomach with striking pain. Whenever that happened, he would avoid eating anything. He also felt severe pain in his testicles. However, Yakochi's great grandmother, Mariana as she was called,

a devoted traditionalist and stern disciplinarian claimed Yakochi needed some traditional medicine to be cured. They tried the Ng'angas or traditional healers but there was no luck. The unfortunate part is that Yakochi ended up with a limit on what he could eat.

The herbalist or rather traditional healer commanded that Yakochi should never eat eggs, left over nshima (hard porridge), a particular type of fish and meat from any animal that was male. It became a source of bondage, which brought temporal healing but more sorrow as Yakochi would sporadically fall sick. Yakochi never ate any meat from the butchery: they had to determine whether the meat was from a male or female animal. He found himself eating bush meat most of the time. Yakochi's great grandmother loved him. According to her, he was a vivid reminder of her father who was a valiant chief. Whilst the baby was in Mola's womb, Mariana named it Yakochi, meaning 'wonderful Chief'.

Mola's mother Edani took charge of Yakochi when he was born. Both his father and mother rejected Yakochi at the time of his birth. His father Minga claimed the baby was not his, that he Minga was too young to

father children. Because Yakochi was born with an indescribable chronic illness, Mola his mother could not bear the burden of her child's persistent sickness.

She left Kando village in Mafundi district where she and her family lived. She went to Nado town to live there with her elder sister and search of work. Yakochi grew as he lived with his grand and great grandmother Edani and Mariana in Mafundi. Minga and Mola never got to marry each other.



In Chongi, Minga and Lela met in a bar or drinking place. Minga had just graduated from Lalina Police training school in Lunde town as an officer. To Minga, Lalina Police training school had not only given him a feel of academic rigor but also shaped his life differently, in the direction of accelerated progress. Graduating from Police training school came as a sigh of relief to Minga. He went to Chongi after graduation and stayed in a police camp called Munenga. It was common for Police officers to dwell in Police camps. Minga was an obsessed alcoholic. He thrived on drinking beers and