

When Edna hung herself, I knew how she felt. I felt the sheer desperation and the driving force. I could imagine the need to die. The inner turmoil that Edna suffered at the hands of AIDS was enough to destroy her fragile psyche.

Edna and I had grown up together on a farm on the outskirts of the capital city. She was the maid's daughter and my best friend. My mother had left my father when I was six, so I grew up an only child. My father treated Edna and I with the same discipline and we had a strict upbringing. It existed of morals and principles that carved our characters well. This is why, to this day, I don't know what went wrong.

Edna never knew her father. My daddy told me that Rita, Edna's mother, had run away from home, pregnant and alone. Being a family friend, my parents took her in as a maid just to earn her keep.

When Edna was born in April, I was nine months old. We went to the same school, used the same surname and my daddy paid all expenses. We were literally inseparable and as a result, one of my daddy's favourite punishments was to send us into separate rooms for an hour. Still, that didn't stop us, if there was something naughty to be done, Edna and Laska were there to do it.

When Edna was 16 and I, 17, we moved into the hostel for a year. It was what my father called "A different experience". That was when the trouble started. Edna met Denny and fell head over heels. She was trapped, or even better, obsessed. I noticed that the love was unreciprocated. It

'I know this is selfish'

Short story by [Tuya Lenga](#)

was a well known fact that Denny had been in the game for a long time. Being the son of a minister, he had a lot to be desired, not to mention looks. Edna was just another little fish in his great sea. Denny gave to her and he took from her. He gave her material things and took her innocence. He gave her AIDS and a baby and took her future.

Two months after they first started dating, Denny disappeared without a word. Edna was devastated. She fell into a deep depression. She would sometimes

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sit for hours in a trance-like state, just thinking and barely talking. She confided in me about the baby and the disease tests she'd done. She told me that she had it, "you know, AIDS," she said. She was calm and didn't cry as she told me that after he disappeared, she had had the tests done. She was six weeks pregnant and HIV positive.

Soon the rumours started circulating that Denny had gotten sick and gone home to die. My heart was breaking little by little all this time. She tried to hide it but I knew that she was scared inside. She sometimes spoke about her pain and I pained with her. She had always been quite thin and I wondered how much time she had left. Would the baby even be born? How do we tell Rita and Daddy? I felt like I was dying. I knew I was losing my confidence and best friend.

One out weekend, at home, some days later I heard a scream from the bathroom. I ran in and the tub was red with blood. She screamed, "Laska, I am losing the baby!" Then she cried, "help me please, it hurts." I heard myself calling for help and the next thing I woke up on Rita's lap outside the emergency room. I had actually fainted. We went home without Edna that night. I told Rita and my daddy everything. My daddy just held Rita in his arms while she sobbed softly. Edna was released the next day. We were all happy to see her back and have her near us again.

She was sad about the baby and this time she didn't even try to hide it. We let her have a nap late afternoon and that night when I went to check on her I met the most cruel sight. She had somehow managed to hang herself in her weak state. The letter read:

Dear Mama, Laska and Papa

To the three people in my life that I love the most, I know this is selfish, but I couldn't let you do the dirty work later...

I couldn't finish it and a sound left my mouth that sounded like a scream. I felt my heart being pierced and something big being taken out. ♀

This story was first printed in 'The Namibian'. It was the winning entry to an essay competition on the social effects of HIV/AIDS.