



## **Series Title: "The Cartographer's Heart"**

*A romantic journey through heartbreak, healing, and rediscovery — charted by a young man who tried to map love, one woman at a time, until life led him home.*

# **CHAPTER ONE: The Ending Before the Beginning**

The air felt heavier than usual on May 22, 2025.

Resa sat in silence, staring out the window of his room in Pretoria. The city buzzed beyond the glass — cars, people, movement — but inside him, everything was still. Silent. Torn.

Today wasn't just another day. It was the day Kayla became *his ex*.

He looked at the framed photo on his desk. It was taken in happier times — smiles, laughter, her arms around him at the botanical gardens, sunlight warming their skin. Two years and five months of shared memories, late-night messages, and whispered promises. Gone.

They had fought to make it work. Or maybe he had fought harder. There were moments he felt invisible in the relationship — like he was loving on borrowed time. He had written messages, asked ChatGPT for advice, poured his heart out in hope that love would come back the way he gave it. But love, he learned, can't survive in one-sided silence.

The phone buzzed beside him. A message.

**Palesa.**

A name from a chapter long closed — or so he thought. He hesitated. His heart wasn't ready, but something deeper pulled him toward the screen.

*"I heard about you and Kayla. I'm sorry, Resa. I know how that feels. Can we talk?"*

He stared at her words, the soft familiarity in them. Palesa... the girl who knew him before the world grew heavy. Before loss, before heartbreak, before life hardened certain pieces of his soul.

They had been young then — high school sweethearts caught in a world of dreams and curfews, long walks after class, secret smiles exchanged across busy hallways. It ended in 2020, not with betrayal, but with distance. Time and circumstance had pulled them apart. They drifted. Life happened.

But now, five years later, here she was — reaching out just when his heart was breaking.

Resaobaka picked up the phone and replied.

*"Yeah... we can talk. I think I need that."*

*"Tonight?"*

*"Tonight."*

And just like that, the door to the past creaked open — not haunting, but hopeful.

He didn't know where this road would lead, but for the first time in a long while, something in his heart stirred. Maybe this wasn't the end. Maybe it was a beginning he never saw coming.

## CHAPTER TWO: The Voice I Never Forgot

The streets of Pretoria glowed amber under the city lights as Resaobaka made his way to the small café near the Union Buildings — the one that stayed open just late enough for hearts needing closure... or new beginnings.

He hadn't seen her in person since 2020. A lifetime ago.

As he walked through the entrance, his eyes scanned the room — and then he saw her.

**Palesa.**

She was sitting near the window, nursing a cup of rooibos tea, fingers gently tracing the rim of the mug. She looked up, and for a moment, neither of them moved.

Time didn't rewind — it stood still.

Her eyes met his — warm, familiar, and slightly unsure. Like two souls who had once spoken fluently, now learning to talk again.

"Resa," she said softly, standing up.

He smiled, just a little. "Hey, Palesa."

They hugged. It wasn't long or dramatic. But it carried five years of memories of unsaid words, of quiet forgiveness.

They sat.

For a moment, silence lingered between them. Not awkward — just full.

"It's been a while," she said, breaking the moment.

"Yeah. A long while." He chuckled faintly. "You look... the same. No — better."

She smiled. "You don't look too bad yourself, Mr. Surveyor."

He smiled wider. "You still remember that?"

"How could I forget?" she said. "You always talked about maps, coordinates... and the way you saw the world. Like it had meaning."

He paused. "I guess I tried to map out my life too. Some paths didn't lead where I thought they would."

Her expression softened. “Kayla?”

He nodded. “We ended things today. And to be honest, I’m still trying to breathe through it.”

She reached out and gently touched his hand. “I’m sorry. I know how hard you tried.”

That small gesture — her fingers brushing against his — felt like something returning home. Not in a rush. Not demanding. Just quietly reminding him: *you were once loved here too.*

Resa’s voice lowered. “What happened to us, Palesa?”

She sighed, her eyes drifting to the street outside. “We were young. I was scared. You were chasing your future. I didn’t know how to hold on without slowing you down.”

“You never slowed me down,” he said, almost instantly.

She looked at him, something flickering behind her eyes — maybe regret. Maybe love. Maybe both.

“I used to imagine this moment,” she said softly. “Meeting you again. Just to see if the way I felt back then was real... or if time had blurred it.”

“And?” he asked, his heart starting to beat a little faster.

“I still feel it.”

The words hung in the air, unshaken.

Resa looked at her — really looked at her. The girl from his past, now a woman who had walked through her own heartbreaks, just like him.

He whispered, “Me too.”

Outside, the city moved on. But inside that little café, two hearts paused... and quietly started again.

## CHAPTER THREE: Maps and Memories

Pretoria's streets were quieter now as Resaobaka and Palesa walked side by side under the moonlight, each step echoing memories that neither could put into words just yet.

They passed the park near Sunnyside — the one Resa hadn't walked through in years. A breeze carried the scent of jacarandas and nostalgia.

"You know," Resa said, "you weren't the first girl I gave my heart to."

Palesa looked at him, curious but calm.

"There was Bokamoso back in 2016. She was... gentle. Then Lesedi — 2017 to 2018 — that one shook me. She made me laugh like no one else could. We almost got back together this year, in February."

Palesa nodded quietly, encouraging him to keep going.

"After you and I ended in 2020," he continued, "I dated Oarona. We didn't last. Then came Rose... and Keamogetse. With Kea, things were good, but I was her second choice. I felt it. We ended officially in 2022... but we still kept in touch physically until last year."

Palesa tilted her head slightly. "And then came Kayla."

Resa sighed. "Yeah. Two years and five months. But it always felt like I was convincing her to stay. Convincing her to love me the way I loved her. And I got tired. I lost pieces of myself."

She looked at him. "And what about me? Where do I fit in this map of yours?"

He stopped walking and turned to her. "You? You were the compass. The one that always pointed me back to where I started feeling things deeply. You, Lesedi, Kea... you were the ones who made love feel real. But you, Palesa — you were the one I always measured others against."

She looked away for a second, her eyes glassy.

"I used to wonder," she whispered, "if I was just a chapter in your story. But maybe I was the beginning."

Resa gently took her hand. "No. You were never just a chapter. You were the plot twist. The one I never saw coming... and never really let go."

Silence again. But this time, it was full of truth.

They sat on a bench, watching the stars peek through the clouds.  
Palesa leaned her head on his shoulder, and for a moment, time folded into itself.

They didn't know what tomorrow held, but tonight — *this* night — belonged to them.

## CHAPTER FOUR: The Ones Before You

The stars above Pretoria faded slowly into early morning light, but neither Resaobaka nor Palesa had noticed the time. They were still sitting on that bench — still talking, still unpacking what had been locked inside them for years.

“I’ve told you about my story,” Resa said, his voice soft. “About the women who shaped me, confused me, bruised me.”

Palesa nodded.

He turned toward her. “But I never asked about yours.”

She paused. Something shifted in her expression — the kind of hesitation that only comes when a heart isn’t sure it’s safe yet.

“I only had two serious relationships after you,” she said. “And honestly, I was trying to replace the space you left behind.”

Resa didn’t respond. He let her speak.

“The first one... he was sweet. He listened. But I think I loved the idea of him more than the man. We ended quietly. No big fight. Just a silence that grew too loud.”

Resa could relate.

“And the second...” She looked down. “He was the one I thought I’d give everything to. I did. He took my virginity.”

She said it without shame — just truth.

Resa didn’t flinch. He reached over and held her hand tighter.

“He made me feel like I was finally moving on,” she continued. “But once he got what he wanted... he changed. Cold. Distant. Eventually, gone.”

Tears rimmed her eyes but didn’t fall. “It wasn’t just sex, Resa. It was trust. And I gave it to someone who didn’t see me.”

Resa leaned in, his voice steady. “He didn’t deserve it.”

“I know that now,” she whispered. “But it made me cautious. That’s why when you and I started talking again, I wasn’t sure if I was strong enough to open that door.”

He smiled gently. "I'm not here to repeat the past. I'm here to rewrite the future — if you'll let me."

Just then, her phone buzzed. A message.

She ignored it, but Resa's own phone lit up moments later. **Kayla.**

*"Can we talk?"*

He stared at the screen. The message pulsed in his chest — not because he wanted her back, but because letting go fully sometimes comes in stages.

Palesa noticed. "Is it her?"

He nodded. "Yeah."

"You going to reply?"

Resa thought about it. About the years he spent trying to be enough. About how tired he was of forcing love to fit where it didn't belong.

He turned off the phone.

"No. I'm exactly where I need to be."

Palesa's eyes softened. "Are you sure?"

"For the first time in a long time... I am."

They stood up, fingers interlocked, walking into the slowly rising sun.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: Second Chances Aren't Always Repeats**

Love, the second time around, doesn't feel like a repeat. It feels like stepping into the same house after years — only this time, you notice the cracks in the walls. The light falls differently. And the silence isn't as comforting as you remembered.

For Resa and Palesa, being back together wasn't about picking up where they left off — it was about starting again, with the truth.

They spent more time talking than kissing, walking more than touching. Their relationship was careful now. Tender. Not out of fear, but out of maturity. Neither wanted to break what they were rebuilding.

One Saturday afternoon, seated beneath the old jacaranda at Union Buildings, Palesa asked softly, "Is there anything you haven't told me yet?"

Resa paused.

He thought of December 3rd. The loneliness. The mistake. The guilt that still clung to him like a second skin.

"There's one thing," he said, his voice low.

She waited.

"I... I was hurting. I didn't know how to deal with the silence between me and Kayla. And that night, I made a mistake. With someone I never should have."

She didn't speak.

"She's my cousin," he added, the words almost choking him.

Palesa's breath hitched.

"I'm not proud of it. I've never forgiven myself. I didn't do it out of lust... I did it out of emptiness. But I understand if that changes everything."

She looked at him for a long time. Not with anger — but with a complexity he couldn't quite read.

"You told me the truth," she finally said. "That matters. It hurts to hear, but I'd rather know the broken parts of you than live with a lie."

Resa nodded, relief and shame battling inside him.

Then her phone buzzed.

A message from an unknown number:

**“I think he deserves to know the truth. About everything. – L.”**

Palesa froze.

Resa noticed. “What is it?”

She slowly handed him the phone. His heart thudded as he read the message.

“L,” he whispered. “Lesedi?”

Before she could respond, his own phone buzzed.

**Keamogetse.**

*“We need to talk. I’m late. It might be yours.”*

The world spun.

In a matter of seconds, the second chance he was building began to shake under the weight of the past — two women, two messages, two truths waiting to explode.

He stood up, phone in hand, heart racing.

And for the first time since reuniting with Palesa...  
he didn’t know what tomorrow would look like.

## CHAPTER SIX: Truth Doesn't Knock

Truth doesn't knock. It breaks in.

Resa stood in the middle of his room, two phones lighting up like alarms in his hands — one carrying a message that shook the ground beneath him, the other holding a name from his past he thought was gone for good.

**Keamogetse:**

*"We need to talk. I'm late. It might be yours."*

**Lesedi:**

*"I think he deserves to know the truth. About everything. – L."*

His mind reeled. His heart beat against his chest like a prisoner trying to escape. One message spoke of a possible life. The other hinted at betrayal, or worse — unfinished wounds.

He called Keamogetse first.

Her voice came in soft, but serious.

"Resa..."

"How long?"

"I'm six weeks," she replied.

Silence.

"And you think...?"

"I don't know for sure," she said. "We stopped... but that last time, November. It could be."

Resa closed his eyes. November. He remembered it. A moment of weakness, comfort, confusion... and now consequence.

"Why now, Kea?"

"Because I was scared. Because you were happy with her again. Because part of me hoped I'd never have to say it."

He didn't yell. He couldn't.

"Okay," he said. "We'll do the test. If it's mine... I'll be there."

"Thank you," she whispered, and hung up.

He didn't even have time to process before his phone buzzed again.

**Palesa.**

*"Can we talk? At your place?"*

### ***An Hour Later***

She walked in slowly, her expression unreadable. The weight between them was different now — not just memories, but choices.

He opened his mouth, but she beat him to it.

"I called Lesedi," she said. "Asked her what she meant."

Resa sat down. "And?"

"She told me about February. How you tried to get her back. How you told her she was the one you still thought about."

He blinked. "I was confused. I was alone. She didn't even want me back. It ended before it started."

"She told me you begged."

"I *misspoke*, Palesa. I was desperate for something that reminded me of being whole. I know now... it wasn't her. It was the feeling. The illusion."

She sat beside him. Quiet. Still.

Then, she whispered, "And Keamogetse?"

Resa looked at the floor.

"She's pregnant. It might be mine."

Her breath hitched, just like it had the day he told her about December 3rd.

"I can't compete with your past, Resa," she said, her voice cracking. "I don't want to. I love you, but I can't keep stitching you back together when pieces of you still belong to other people."

He reached out. "I don't want them. I want *you*. I told you everything because I want to be honest this time."

"But honesty doesn't erase consequences."

"I know."

She stood up, eyes glassy.

“Figure out your life, Resa. I’ll be here. But not as a backup plan. Not as someone waiting for your mess to settle.”

And just like that, she was gone.

Again.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: Maybe, Just Maybe**

Pretoria's air felt colder than usual. Or maybe Resa's skin had just grown more sensitive — to truth, to consequence, to everything he couldn't run from anymore.

He stood outside the clinic, fingers buried deep in his jacket pockets. Keamogetse arrived a few minutes later, wrapped in a grey hoodie and shame. They didn't speak much. Just walked inside.

They sat in the waiting room. The television above played some reality show with fake love and louder drama, but Resa barely noticed. His mind was drowning in quieter chaos.

When her name was called, she looked at him.

"I'm scared," she whispered.

He nodded. "Me too."

### **Later that day**

The test had been taken. The results would come in a week.

Resa walked her to her car.

"Will you tell Palesa?" she asked.

"I already did," he said.

She blinked. "And?"

"She left."

Keamogetse looked down. "I didn't mean to break anything. I just... didn't want to carry this alone."

"I know," he said. "And I won't let you."

### **That evening**

He returned to his apartment, expecting silence — but found an envelope on the floor, slid under his door.

His name was written on the front.

Inside: a letter.

**From Lesedi.**

**The Letter:**

*Resa,*

*I didn't come back to cause problems. I came back because I never stopped wondering what would've happened if we hadn't let go.*

*You were young, yes. But you were real. The way you loved me — the way you laughed with me — I carried that with me into every relationship since.*

*When we spoke in February, I saw a version of you that wasn't ready. You were chasing ghosts, not love. That's why I didn't let us restart something we weren't ready to finish.*

*But you deserve peace. And you deserve someone who doesn't doubt it.*

*So this is me... letting go. Not because I hate you. But because you deserve the kind of love that doesn't live in memory, but in presence.*

*Maybe that's Palesa. Maybe it's someone else. But it's not me anymore.*

*Goodbye, for real this time.*

*– L.*

Resa sat in his room, the letter on his lap, the clinic receipt on his desk, and silence sitting beside him.

His phone buzzed again.

**Palesa.**

*"I'm not ready to talk. But I needed you to know... I still love you. I just don't know if that's enough right now."*

He typed a reply.

Then deleted it.

Sometimes the heart has to sit still before it speaks again.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: If It's Mine

It had been exactly seven days since the test.

Resa didn't sleep the night before. He watched the clock tick through each hour, his mind writing and rewriting possible futures — each with a different ending.

At 10:11 a.m., his phone rang.

**"Keamogetse calling."**

He answered without hesitation.

"It's positive," she said.

Silence.

She continued. "You're the father, Resa."

He closed his eyes. No tears. Just quiet acceptance.

"Okay," he whispered. "We'll do this the right way."

### **That evening**

Resa sat at his desk, the sun dipping beyond the city skyline. In front of him was a blank notebook — one he hadn't touched in years. It used to be filled with sketches, song lyrics, and dreams.

Now, it would hold something different.

He opened to the first page and wrote:

### **To My Child,**

*You don't know me yet. You haven't seen my face or heard my voice.  
But already, you've changed me.*

*You weren't planned. You weren't expected. But you're here — and that  
makes you real. That makes you mine.*

*I won't promise to be perfect. I've made more mistakes than I want to  
admit. But I promise to show up. To try. To be better than I was  
yesterday.*



*You didn't ask for your parents' story. But you deserve your own. And I'll be here to write it with you.*

*With love,  
– Your father, Resa.*

He closed the book.

He didn't know what kind of father he'd be. But he knew he wouldn't run. Not from this.

### **Meanwhile...**

Palesa sat on her bed, phone in hand, staring at the last message she sent him.

*"I still love you. I just don't know if that's enough right now."*

She hadn't heard from him in days. But something told her — he was no longer the man chasing his past. He was becoming someone else. Someone solid.

She reached for her own journal.

And for the first time in weeks, she wrote something hopeful.

**"If he chooses to grow, not escape... maybe I can love him there."**

## CHAPTER NINE: Becoming

The clinic smelled like antiseptic and questions.

Resa sat in the waiting room again — only this time, he wasn't confused. He wasn't scared. He was becoming.

Keamogetse walked in a few minutes later. She looked softer than before — maybe because she wasn't carrying it alone anymore.

"Hey," she said, adjusting her scarf.

"You good?" Resa asked.

"Nervous," she replied, with a tight smile.

They walked into the exam room. A nurse greeted them. A heartbeat monitor was ready.

And then, it happened.

That sound.

The rapid flutter of a tiny heart.

Not his. Not hers.

*Theirs.*

Resa stared at the screen. At the blur of life. A beat. A signal. A beginning.

"That's your baby," the nurse said gently.

Keamogetse glanced at him. "Are you okay?"

He nodded, eyes misted. "Yeah. I think I am."

### Later that day

He drove to his uncle's house. The man who raised him like a second father. A man who deserved to hear the truth from his mouth.

Uncle Otantse was on the porch, polishing his boots. "Ke shapo, ngwanaka?"

Resa sat next to him.

"I need to tell you something."

And he did. The whole story. From Kayla to Palesa. From mistakes to the baby.

When he finished, his uncle didn't speak for a moment.

Then: "You're a man now, Resa. Not because you made a baby — but because you owned it. Most run. You stayed."

Resa looked down.

"I'm proud of you," his uncle added. "But being a father is more than showing up. It's staying when it's hard. Listening. Protecting. Loving even when you're tired."

Resa nodded slowly. "I'm ready to try."

### **Meanwhile...**

Palesa stood outside the café where she and Resa had reunited.

She'd read his child journal message — he had sent her a photo of it two nights ago, without asking for anything in return. Just the truth.

She didn't reply right away.

But today, she walked into the café alone.

She ordered tea. Sat by the window.

And for the first time since leaving him, she whispered out loud to herself:

"He's growing. Maybe I still can too."

## **CHAPTER TEN: The Measure of a Man**

Sunday lunch at Uncle Otantse's house was usually loud, with jokes flying and meat sizzling. But today, it was quiet.

Resa sat between his uncle and cousin Tshepang. Keamogetse was coming — not for drama, but for truth. His uncle had insisted: "If you're going to be a father, you don't just meet her in parking lots. You bring her home. Like a man."

The gate creaked. She walked in slowly, a hand resting protectively on her lower belly. Everyone stood.

"Keamogetse," Otantse greeted with grace. "Rea go amogela."

She nodded. "Thank you for having me."

They sat. Plates were filled. But before anyone could eat, his uncle cleared his throat.

"I have only one question," he said. "Is my nephew going to be a father?"

Keamogetse swallowed. "Yes."

Otantse nodded. Then: "Is he ready to be one?"

Resa looked up. "Yes, sir. I don't know everything. But I know I won't run. And I'll never let this child feel abandoned."

Otantse turned to Keamogetse. "And you? Are you willing to raise this child without using it to punish him?"

She blinked. "I... I'm scared. Not of the baby. But of doing it alone. Of being forgotten when he moves on with someone else."

Resa spoke up. "You won't be alone. We're not together, but we're parents now. That means we rise together for this child."

There was silence. And then — a smile from his uncle.

"Good. Now eat. Children don't grow from empty plates."

### **The next day**

Resa stood outside a modest house in Atteridgeville. Lesedi had agreed to meet — one last time.

She opened the door. She looked... peaceful.

"I didn't expect you," she said.

"I didn't expect the letter," he replied. "But I'm glad you wrote it."

They sat outside, under a tree where they once shared a goodbye kiss in 2018.

"I wanted you to know I'm not angry," she said. "And I don't regret you. You were my favorite confusion."

He laughed softly. "You were my favorite almost."

They smiled. Then hugged.

No promises. No sparks.

Just closure.

### **That evening**

He got a message from Palesa.

*"I'm outside. Can we talk?"*

His heart skipped.

She walked in slowly. Looked around. Saw the baby journal open on the table.

"You're really doing it," she said.

"I have to," he replied. "It's no longer about me."

She nodded, then looked up at him.

"I have one question," she said, her voice steady but trembling.

"If I come back... will you ever make me feel second to anyone again?"

Resa stepped closer. No script. No poetry. Just truth.

"No. Because you're not second. You never were. You're the reason I still believe I can be better."

Tears filled her eyes.

"I'm not asking you to fix me," she whispered. "I just need you to choose me... every day."

He took her hand. “Then let me start now.”

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: Name the Star

Resa thought the hardest truth had already passed.

But it hadn't.

It came one afternoon, weeks after Keamogetse's pregnancy was confirmed. After appointments. After promises. After silence.

She messaged him:

*"Can you come? I need to tell you something. Alone."*

He did. And she didn't waste time.

"I lost the baby," she said quietly.

Resa's breath caught.

"I'm sorry," he said, instinctively stepping closer.

But she held up a hand.

"That's not all."

She sat down, eyes heavy, shoulders low.

"I wasn't just seeing you back then. I had... someone else. A boyfriend. I didn't know who the father was."

Resa didn't move. The floor beneath him felt unstable.

"I should've told you," she continued. "But I was scared to lose the one person who was actually showing up."

"And the miscarriage?" he asked gently.

She looked away. "My stepfather. He... he's cruel. He pushed me. I fell."

Resa's hands clenched. Not from hate, but helplessness.

"Keamogetse..." he whispered.

"I'm sorry I lied," she said, finally breaking. "You didn't deserve that."

He sat beside her, not as a partner, not as a lover — just a human being.

"I forgive you," he said. "But I need to let go now. For both our sakes."

She nodded, and with that, they finally ended something that was never meant to last.

## Later that night

Resa sat under the stars outside his uncle's house.

He looked up and whispered, "I didn't lose a child. I never had one. But why does it still feel like I did?"

His cousin Mizo came out, handing him a soda. "You overthinking again?"

Fenzo joined. "Probably crying over Kayla. Or Lesedi. Or some unknown baby."

Resa chuckled despite himself. "Shut up, Fenzo."

"You know I wanted Lesedi for you, right?" Fenzo grinned. "You blew that."

Mizo laughed. "At least Kayla gave us great comedy."

Their banter brought warmth. Then Malebo walked over with a small folded note.

"It's from Omphile," she said softly. "We found it in her room after... after Easter."

Resa opened the note, hands trembling.

*"Resa, don't ever stop being the heart of this family. You feel everything — too much sometimes — but you make us feel too. That's your gift. Be gentle with yourself, okay?"*

Tears filled his eyes.

He looked up. "I want to name a star after her."

Mizo placed a hand on his shoulder. "She already is one."

## Final scene

He texted Palesa.

*"The baby wasn't mine. She lost it... and the truth too. I just wanted you to know. I don't have a child — but I do have a future. And I still want you in it."*

She replied two hours later.



*“Come see me. Let’s name that future.”*