



## The Story So Far...

When the story opens, the Gumbo Family, after years of bitter feuding and fighting between brothers Jacob and Thursday, has decided to make a pact of peace. However, Jacob dies in a car crash immediately following the truce, and the conflict resurges with greater force. Jacob's widow, April, and son, Jackson, take over the family business in Mopani

Junction, and conspire to take the Mopani family property from Thursday and his family.

Meanwhile, the other members of the family are going through difficult life challenges and transitions. Jackson's brother, Luckson, is engaged to Noma, and they recently had a son, JJ. While expecting JJ, Luckson and Noma learned that they were HIV positive. Luckson and Noma kept their status secret from the family, but worked to adhere to the guidelines for preventing transmission to JJ. However, a recent bout of pneumonia put Luckson in hospital, and while there he told his mother and Jackson of his HIV status. April, who already disliked Noma, blamed her for infecting Luckson with HIV, and kicked Noma out of the house while Luckson was still in hospital. Noma was forced to return to her family, the Zulus, without her son. Finally out of hospital, Luckson is now faced with trying to get Noma back.

April's only daughter, Sphiwe, is horrified by her mother's treatment of Noma. As the youngest child, Sphiwe is going through a difficult growing-up period. She struggles with the parental role her brother Jackson tries to adopt with her, and her best friend, Rumbi, is a bad influence. Also, a local teacher tried to lure Sphiwe into having sex with him, as did a couple boys in her class. However, Sphiwe resisted their advances, and is now beginning to set boundaries with boys and assert herself as a grown-up with April and Jackson.

The members of Thursday's family are also struggling with personal issues. Thursday's daughter, Loveness, has just emerged from a complicated relationship with her husband, Misheck, who had a drinking problem and a history of being abusive. After being hospitalized following a beating, Loveness learned that she had contracted HIV from Misheck. After struggling with the decision, Loveness left Misheck and moved with her two daughters to her parent's home. Loveness has disclosed her HIV status to her community and is now trying to help other people in need.

While Loveness is working hard to provide for her girls, her little brother, Benji, is struggling with the rural environment of Mopani Springs. After years of working on the family farm, Benji learned of a job opportunity in the city and left his wife of two years, Blessing, behind in order to take the job. Benji lived with his friend, Feejay, in the city, and got involved in Feejay's partying ways. However, the job offer did not work out, and Benji eventually returned to Blessing. When Blessing discovered that Benji had been unfaithful she insisted that they go for an HIV test. Just as they learn that they are HIV-negative and Benji promises to be faithful, Feejay comes for a visit. Now Feejay is very ill, however, and Benji doesn't understand what is wrong with him.

Benji's cousin, Josh, has also gone to the city. Josh is a talented songwriter, and decided to seek his fortune in the city after his girlfriend, Kristine, broke his heart. Once in the city, Josh had an affair with a music agent, Tamara, before deciding that he wanted to abstain from sex. Currently Josh is dating a girl from his church, Virginia, and they have entered a music contest in which the winners sign a contract with a major record label. Under the surface, however, Josh is growing more and more concerned with his mother's decision to hide the identity of his father from him.