**FINDERS KEEPERS: Rosamund Haden**

**PLOT SUMMARY**

Lufuno Mukwevho is a girl from Johannesburg who has just moved to Cape Town. Her parents have found work in a bread factory. Lufuno misses her best friend, Dudu, and thinks about her all the time. At the beginning, we think that Dudu is still in Johannesburg, but then we find out that she is actually dead.

Lufuno has ordinary teenage problems, such as looking after her annoying little sister, Tshilidzi. Her biggest problem in the story is that she has to go to a new school: Victory High School. Lufuno and her family are Vhavenda. Their skin is darker than most South Africans’. In her new high school everyone speaks isiXhosa, and she worries about being new and different from all the other students.

On Lufuno’s first day a girl named Sindi bullies her. Sindi is jealous that Lufuno is getting attention from a boy, Mandla, the good-looking star of the soccer team and also a chief’s son. Some other students also tease Lufuno about her dark skin and her Vhavenda heritage. Lufuno feels angry and powerless. She concentrates on making up fantasy romantic film stories to tell Tshilidzi, instead of dealing with the difficult things in her daily life. But she soon finds new friends, Chantelle and Noki. These friends show Lufuno how to stand up to a group of boys who harass her, and shout back at them.

Lufuno and Mandla like each other. One day Sindi pushes her down, and Lufuno’s bead bracelet falls to the floor. Mandla helps Lufuno up and rescues the bracelet. The bracelet is very special to Lufuno because her grandmother made it. Mandla keeps it so she has to see him again. Mandla tells Lufuno “Finders, keepers – losers, weepers”. This saying means good luck for the person who finds something, and too bad for the person who has lost it.

Mandla and Lufuno want to date, but both their families do not want them to be together. Lufuno’s parents don’t want her to date anyone. Mandla’s family objects because his father, the chief, is very strict. He wants Mandla to prepare to serve as chief. He and Mandla do not agree on many issues. Mandla is also especially angry with his father and cannot talk to him. Mandla thinks that it is his father’s fault that his sister, Nandi, died of asthma.

Lufuno and Mandla disobey their parents and meet each other secretly. They have both seen someone close to them die: for Lufuno, it is her friend Dudu. For Mandla, it is his sister Nandi. Their love helps them to accept that the two loved ones are gone.

The climax of the story comes when there is a strike at the bread factory where Lufuno’s parents work. The union wants to punish everyone who does not join the strike, but the workers need money to live. Lufuno’s family fears being attacked because they are Vhavenda, and because they do not join the strike. Mandla’s father and Lufuno’s family are on opposite sides of the strike. The strikers attack Baba Mukwevho because he goes in to work, and his leg is injured.

When her parents go in to work, Tshilidzi goes missing. No one realises that she has gone to hide in her own house. Then someone sets the Lufuno family’s house on fire, and Tshilidzi is stuck inside. Mandla comes to check that Lufuno is alright. She is not there, but he goes into the house and rescues little Tshilidzi, with his father’s help. The chief admits that he was wrong to ignore the warnings before, that Nandi was in serious trouble with her asthma. He apologises to Mandla, and Mandla forgives his father. Lufuno’s family is very grateful that Tshilidzi is safe, and the two families realise that they both want the best for their children, and they both want to keep their culture alive. They accept that Lufuno and Mandla are together. Mandla returns Lufuno’s bead bracelet. Lufuno finally understands that she does not have to make up fantasy love stories anymore, because she has her own real love, with her family, her friends, and with Mandla.

**SETTING**

The novel is set in a township in present-day (now) Cape Town. Sometimes, Lufuno thinks about her grandmother’s village (the past) in rural Venda, and misses the landscape, her friend Dudu, and her grandmother.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

There is a lot of competition among people for employment in South Africa. Some urban (city) people worry that rural (country) people and foreigners (people from other countries) will take their jobs.

Unions are organisations that are supposed to protect workers’ rights. Sometimes workers have to strike (not work) until their employees negotiate with them for better conditions (such as more pay or fewer hours). Every worker has to join the strike. Those who come to work during the strike are often punished by the other workers.

**MAJOR CHARACTERS**

**LUFUNO MUKWEVHO**

**IMPORTANT ACTIONS**

1. Lufuno moves to Cape Town and goes to a new school.

2. Lufuno gets bullied, but she learns how to stand up for herself.

3. Lufuno defies her parents, even though they have forbidden her to see Mandla.

4. Lufuno meets Mandla at the playground secretly, where thugs try to scare them, and also where Mandla’s father has to rescue them.

5. After a party, she runs into the road, and Mandla rescues her.

**RELATIONSHIPS**

She is Mandla’s girlfriend; Tshilidzi’s older sister; and the main character.

**PERSONALITY TRAITS**

Lufuno is caring, dreamy, and intelligent. She has an active imagination, and so she makes up stories for films that don’t exist, to entertain herself and her little sister Tshilidzi. Lufuno is also impatient, because she leaves Tshilidzi so that she can go to a party. Lufuno is almost always brave and loving in the book. She keeps the memory of Dudu alive in the stories she tells and the trees that she plants. She is a loving girlfriend to Mandla.

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

Lufuno is dark-skinned, and has cornrow braids. The other girls have complicated weaves and wigs.

**CHANGES**

Lufuno learns how to stand up to the boys who bully her, and shouts back at them. More importantly, Lufuno accepts that Dudu is dead and that her imagination is not as important as looking after her family that is still alive and well.

**MANDLA NKOSI**

**IMPORTANT ACTIONS**

1. Mandla keeps Lufuno’s bracelet so she has to be friends with him. He persuades her to like him.

2. Mandla stands up to Dumi and his crew. He also rejects (says no to) Sindi, even though she is the coolest girl at school. Mandla is not afraid to be different.

3. Mandla disagrees with his father about his duties in the rural areas as a chief’s son.

4. Mandla keeps seeing Lufuno even though his father doesn’t want him to.

5. Most importantly, Mandla is heroic in the fire, because he pulls Tshilidzi out of the burning house.

**RELATIONSHIPS**

He is the chief’s son, and also a main character. He becomes Lufuno’s boyfriend even though she is not popular.

**PERSONALITY TRAITS**

Mandla is resentful, rebellious, and angry because he thinks his father should have done more to save his sister Nandi from her death from asthma. He is also brave and unafraid to be different, both by going out with Lufuno and by defying his father’s plan for him to be chief.

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

He is strong and handsome, as well as athletic, because he is talented at soccer.

**CHANGES**

Mandla learns to forgive his father for Nandi’s death, because he admits he was wrong to ignore her asthma attack.

**THE MUKWEVHO FAMILY - MMA, BABA, TSHILIDZI (AND LUFUNO)**

**IMPORTANT ACTIONS**

1. Mma and Baba Mukwevho get jobs at a bread factory and move their family from Johannesburg to Cape Town.

2. Her parents forbid Lufuno from seeing Mandla, which Lufuno thinks is unfair. They also give Lufuno chores to do.

3. The parents both go to work even though the strike is on.

4. Baba Mukwevho is attacked by the workers and his leg is injured.

5. At the end of the book, the parents accept that Lufuno and Mandla are in a relationship.

 **RELATIONSHIPS**

Lufuno and Tshilidzi’s parents. Tshilidzi is Lufuno’s annoying little sister.

**PERSONALITY TRAITS**

Mma and Baba are caring and hard-working people. Because they work hard at the bread factory, their daughters have enough to eat and a place to live. They are also proud of their Venda heritage. They want to keep some traditions alive, such as not dating outside their community. They are also spiritual (Christian) people: Mma loves listening to her gospel music.

Tshilidzi is a typical playful, loving, curious little girl. She is naughty because she often hides from her family. This gets her into serious trouble when she is trapped in the fire in their house, and Mandla has to risk his life to save her.

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

The whole family is darker-skinned than the community around them because of their Venda roots. They are Tshivenda-speaking. Baba has a hurt leg from the attack by the striking workers.

**CHANGES**

By the ends of the story, Baba and Mma thank Mandla for saving Tshilidzi. They come to accept that Lufuno can make her own decisions, so they allow Lufuno and Mandla to be a couple. Tshilidzi understands that she must be more responsible and not make her family worry about where she is.

**CHIEF NKOSI**

**IMPORTANT ACTIONS**

1. He tries to train Mandla to be the next chief, and takes him out of school whenever he thinks Mandla should be learning how to be chief.

2. He is partly responsible for the death of his daughter Nandi, because he didn’t get her to a hospital and she died of asthma.

3. He saves Lufuno and Mandla from the gang in the deserted playground.

4. In the end he drives Mandla to the Mukwevhos’ house and enables the rescue of Tshilidzi.

5. Chief Nkosi accepts that Mandla and Lufuno are in a relationship.

**RELATIONSHIPS**

He is chief in his community, as well as Mandla’s father. He expects obedience from his subjects (his people) as well as his son.

**PERSONALITY TRAITS**

The chief is powerful, commanding, and dominant. When he speaks, he expects everyone to listen. But he is also polite and forward thinking. He cares about the people in his village, as we see when he studies solar technology to improve the lives of his villagers.

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

He is large; he controls a room when he is in it. People obey him.

**CHANGES**

The chief apologises to Mandla about Nandi’s death. He tells his son that he was wrong to wait before taking her to the hospital. The chief becomes more tolerant of others and accepts that Mandla is his own person. He allows Lufuno and Mandla to see each other, and he is polite to her.

**THEMES AND EVIDENCE OF THEMES IN TEXT**

**THEME 1**

 ► **Difference, prejudice and tolerance**

Prejudice is thinking that a person or a group is bad before you really know them. Sometimes, prejudice leads people to be mean and bully others. Tolerance is learning to respect other people who are different from us.

 ► **Evidence of theme in** **text**

At the beginning of the novel, many of the children at Lufuno’s new school are prejudiced towards her. Because Lufuno is Vhavenda, she looks different. She has darker skin than most Capetonians. She also speaks Tshivenda, while everyone around her speaks isiXhosa. People such as Sindi mock her and make her feel unwelcome. They are jealous of and prejudiced against Lufuno without getting to know her. Mandla stands up to his prejudiced classmates. He wants to be Lufuno’s friend (and boyfriend). At the end of the novel they are a couple, even though they come from very different backgrounds. They have faced the prejudice of other people, both their families, and their friends. They help show others how to tolerate differences.

**THEME 2**

 ► **One person versus their community**

Friends, family, and communities put pressure on people to do things in a certain way. Sometimes, a person can struggle when what they want is different from what their friends want, or what their family or community wants. The characters in the novel struggle to balance what they want against what their communities, families, or friends want.

► **Evidence of theme in text**

Lufuno wants to be with Mandla (individual wants), but her parents (community wants) don’t want her to date. Mandla’s father wants to train him to be the next chief (community wants), and to stick with his own people (not someone like Lufuno). Mandla is not interested in rural life (individual wants). At the end of the novel, the chief realises that his son can make his own decisions.

**THEME 3**

 ► **The healing power of** **love**

Even when terrible things happen, the characters overcome them by not being bitter. Love can help us to heal ourselves and our communities.

► **Evidence of theme in** **text**

Lufuno is stuck in the past because she is grieving for her dead best friend, Dudu (platonic or friendly love). She copes with her grief by making up fantasies and romantic film stories to share with her little sister, Tshilidzi. Mandla’s kindness, as well as realising that Tshilidzi could have died in the fire, make Lufuno realise that the present is important. Dudu loved her and would not want her to grieve forever.

Lufuno and Mandla’s relationship is a good one, because they are honest about their fears and feelings, and take it slowly. They end up happily together. They realise that their loved ones are gone, but they have each other, and they plant two trees as a symbol of their joint feelings. They realise that they must focus on the present (romantic love).

Lastly, Lufuno’s family finally realises that Mandla is a responsible and caring young man, and that he is worthy of being a chief’s son when he bravely rescues Tshilidzi from the fire. Lufuno’s mother thanks him for saving their family. The two families understand that their young people are trustworthy, and that they can be together (parental love).

**STYLE AND STRUCTURE**

**1. STRUCTURE**:

The novel begins with a prologue, a kind of introduction. In the prologue we meet Lufuno, and we are told that there has been a fire. Lufuno’s family will have to move out so that they can find somewhere safe to stay.

Then, there is rising action. Rising action is when a problem (or conflict) builds in the story. The rising action happens when Sindi bullies Lufuno. Then Lufuno and Mandla fall in love. The rising action build and builds when her parents ban Lufuno from seeing Mandla.

The main problem, the climax, of the story happens when the strikers attack Baba Mukwevho. Then Tshilidzi goes missing.

The falling action happens when Mandla and his father rescue Tshilidzi, and the Lufuno's are safe.

In the denouement and resolution, the families decide to trust one another. Lufuno and Mandla are allowed to see each other.

There is an epilogue at the end, to match the prologue at the start. The epilogue tells us what finally happened to all the characters. Lufuno and Mandla plant two trees together. Lufuno tells us that she is happy with her real love of her family, her friends, and Mandla. She doesn’t need to make up romantic stories anymore.

**2. POINT OF VIEW**:

Point of view is when we see the story through the eyes of a character (a person in the story). There are two points of view in this book: Lufuno’s point of view, and Mandla’s point of view.

a. Lufuno starts telling (narrating) the story. She says “I” and “we”, so we know that the story is from her perspective, in the first person. The advantage (upside) is that the reader knows her thoughts and feelings. We get lots of intimate, personal details, and secrets. It is reflective: like a mirror, she reflects on, or thinks about, what happens. The disadvantage (downside) is that it is a biased or one-sided (subjective) view only. b. The second point of view belongs to Mandla. When he talks, the reader understands the happenings from his perspective. Mandla uses third-person narration: “he”/”she”/”they”. The advantage is that we get a more trustworthy, objective point of view. The disadvantage is that there are fewer details. It is more formal than reflective.

**3. REGISTER**:

The writer chooses the language level in the book to make the story feel believable or truthful.

a. In the text, the writer, Rosamund Haden, uses code-switching (more than one language). She does this because this is how people often really speak. We see code-switching when Lufuno says on page 30: “Ndo livhuwa, Mma”. This means “Thank you, Mother,’ in Tshivenda.

b. The writer also uses slang (special language only the in-group uses). This makes the dialogue (spoken language used by the characters) feel real. Lufuno uses slang on page 8, but there are examples throughout the book: smileys (sheeps’ heads); chiskop (a short style of haircut).

**4. FIGURES OF SPEECH:**

When you are working out the meaning, always write down the literal (actual) meaning first. Then write down the second, extra, figurative meaning afterwards.

a. Figurative language compares two things (using metaphor). When you compare two things, you show how they are the same. Here are some examples of metaphorical or figurative language in Finders Keepers.

• a lame ending (page 70): Tshilidzi is unsatisfied with the story Lufuno has told her. “Lame” literally means unable to walk. The figurative meaning is boring, dull, or annoying. • their buoyant spirits (page 93): “Buoyant” literally means light or floating. Lufuno compares her feeling to something that has no heavy weight. The figurative meaning is that she feels that she has no worries, as if it is a balloon that can float away on the air.

b. Sometimes the metaphors are also idiomatic language. The reader has to work out the meaning because it isn’t literal. Here are some examples of idiomatic language (idioms or sayings) in Finders Keepers:

• show you the ropes (page 2): explain how things work • daggers in her eyes (page11): look at someone with disrespect

• the silent treatment (page75): rudely ignore someone and refuse to talk to them

c. A symbol is a real (literal) thing that stands for something else (figurative). In "Finders keepers" there are two symbols:

• The bead bracelet is literally jewellery for Lufuno, made by her grandmother in Venda. But it is also a figurative symbol of her grandmother's love for Lufuno, as well as a reminder of her culture and traditions. The bracelet represents (stands for) love, acceptance, and security for Lufuno.

• The two trees in the Epilogue literally exist. As they grow, they will give shade to the people in the park. But they are also a memorial, like a gravestone, because they are a symbol of their dead loved ones, Dudu and Nandi. When Lufuno and Mandla look at the trees, they will remember their dead friends and family. As the two trees grow their branches will touch and intertwine. They are also a symbol of time passing, as well as Lufuno and Mandla's love growing stronger.

**5. TONE:**

Tone tells us what the characters sound like when they speak. In Finders Keepers, the writer uses parts of speech to give us more information about the tone:

a. Adverbs tell us how characters’ voices sound, so we know what mood they’re in. On page 36, Mandla’s teammates are full of joy because they have won their soccer match. “His teammates shouted jubilantly” tells us that they were very happy. (Look for the –ly ending or suffix on most adverbs). b. Adjectives describe nouns, so they tell us more about what people or things look like. On page 39, Mandla describes his feelings, so we understand him. He says that he should not feel so “defensive” towards his aunt. He means that he feels as if she is attacking him. c. Strong or unusual verbs help us to imagine what people look like, and how they do things. On page 34, when Lufuno and Tshilidzi are making up their romantic stories, Tshilidzi says that Mandla should not jog, but that he should stride. This verb choice shows us that he walked fast, with confidence.