

## AFTER INDEPENDENCE

### May Sumbwanyambe

CHARLES: It must be wonderful to always be convinced you are on the side of good. It saddens me that you feel my actions are causing you pain. But I am not sorry for them. My people's pain. And your pain. Are not the same.

That is the truth.

You asked me to tell you about my family. My memories of my father are vague. I was young when we lost him. My mother, she never used to like to talk about my father. No matter how many times I asked her. It was too painful for her. The loss was always too raw. To find out about my father I had to go into the village. I had to speak to strangers. To the men who worked with him, the people who drank with him. The people who stood beside him when he died. He was a peaceful man, not like many of the others where I grew up, who had suffered so much that all they had was rage. We weren't just deprived of land. It was more systematic. There was harassment in a very systematic way. You think justice has just died in this nation? Some of the men used to curse at the government people and spit at them, try and fight with them without blows. Anything they could do to try and maintain some sense of dignity. But not my father. No. That never made any sense to my father. For him, no matter what the injustice, no matter what the slight, no matter what the indignity or how it made him feel. It was better to be polite. He would smile, he would stick out his hand like this. Just like this. And he would shake his oppressor's hand. And greet them as though they were family. He would say to them 'I wish you well my brother'. That is the man that your people took away from me. So do not compare your land. To my pain. Do not talk to me of injustice from your position of privilege. I learned something from my father's short life; that the only way to achieve anything is not to stand and take what is given to you, but to fight and fight hard for what you know to be right. I won't apologise or feel bad for using the law to fight instead of guns.