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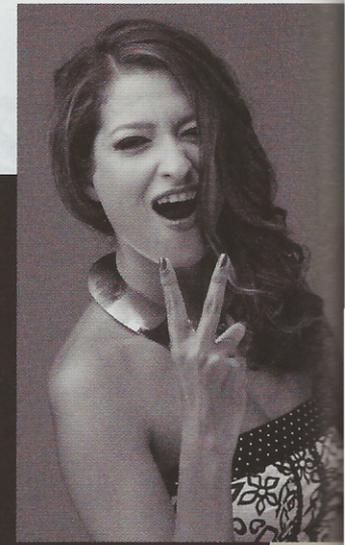
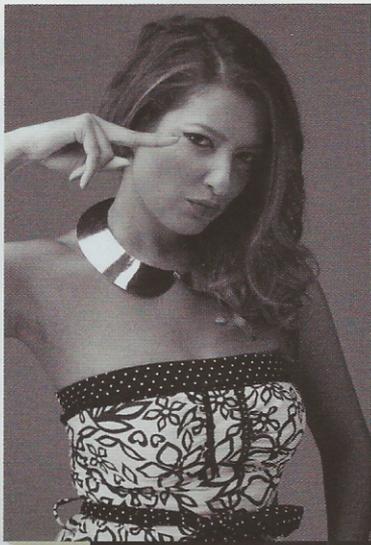
Eve D'SOUZA

'I'M A SURVIVOR!'

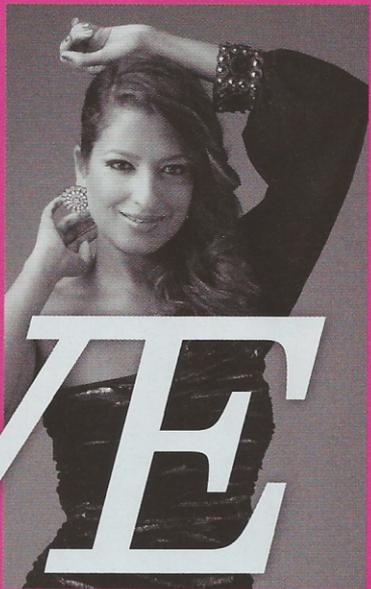
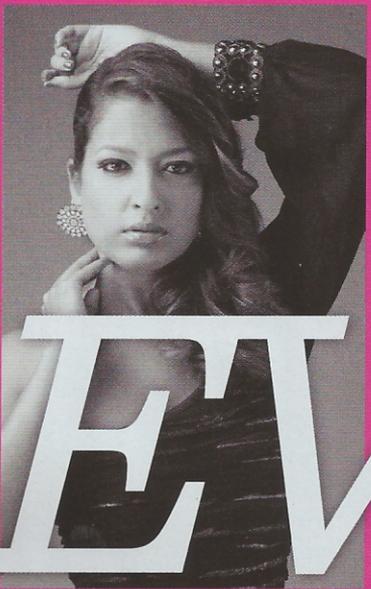
After the worst ordeal of her life, she is finally in a good place

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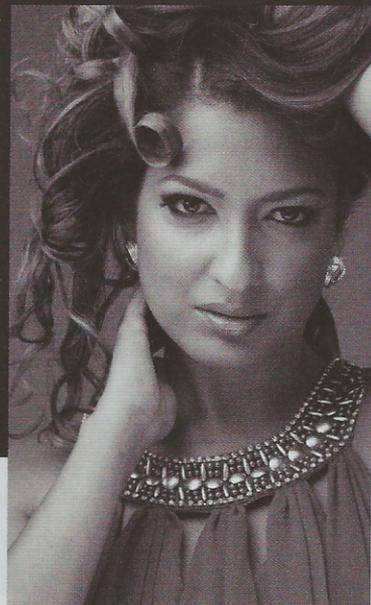




The Other Side of



EVE





With over 54,000 Twitter followers, Eve D' Souza of Travel Diaries is going places. The TV host, producer and entrepreneur talks to **JUDITH MWOBODIA** about shoes, family – and why her darkest days have made her stronger.

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Every woman, even the most put together, has a heartbreaking story to tell.” These are the first words Eve D’Souza utters when we sit down for our interview. I expected her to be a bit like Grace Kelly, cool and unapproachable, but she is nothing like that. She is funny and sweet, smiles a lot, and after being around her for a short while, you feel as if you’ve known her all your life. I watch her taking in her surroundings and gaily respond to the greetings from passers-by who obviously recognise her.

She has just been dropped off at Nairobi’s Jacaranda Hotel by a cab. Her car is at the garage, she explains. Her skin is luminous, her luscious locks held in a high side pony tail. She is a picture of quiet elegance in a short flowered mini and brown mid-calf boots.

This is a far cry from the young lady who hit the airwaves on Capital Fm in 2001. Back then, she favoured baggy jeans, track suit pants and T-shirts.

“Oh, I was the classic tomboy! Comfort was key. And being so into hip hop, that was the right look for me. I loved it.”

So what changed?

“Oh, I have been making up for lost time,” she says with a laugh. “Now I have countless pairs of shoes and I

love shopping. I even had to have a rack made to fit all my pairs.”

This perhaps explains why she arrived at the TRUE LOVE cover shoot with a suitcase full of shoes. I counted 20 pairs.

Eve D’Souza, 34, is not a typical celebrity. Despite being a popular TV star, she shies away from publicity and has managed to keep her name out of the tabloids and gossip shows.

“I am very shy, painfully shy I would say,” she admits. “That is why radio was the perfect place for me. I was able to let my personality shine through as no one could see my face. Well, I was in for a surprise. I soon found out that, at that time, radio personalities got more media coverage than TV personalities! I just had to get used to it. There is really not much difference between a celebrity and a person out of the lime-light – it is just that we have to seem as if we have it all together. It can be very difficult.”

There was a time when Eve did not have things together. In 2005, she was carjacked by two young men at the gate of her Westlands home. She sits in pensive silence, as though gathering her thoughts and slowly straightens nonexistent creases on her dress.

“When the men forced their way into my car, I thought they just wanted to steal from me,” she begins. “I re-

member getting pissed off and giving them a bit of attitude, telling them to take the money and the car and just let me leave. I remember thinking that they were inconveniencing me greatly and I just wanted to go home and sleep. It was 3am on a Sunday morning.

“However, I realised that I was in a lot more trouble when one of the men slapped me really hard. At the time they were driving towards a certain slum. When they reached a certain juncture, they stopped the car. One of the men went ahead to beat me up and rape me, while the other stripped down the car of my stereo and valuables. When done with the car, he came to finish up with me. It all seemed surreal to me.”

Eve sips her hot chocolate.

“When they were done, they threw the car keys at me. I remember crying and screaming as I got into the car. I was crying out to God asking him why me? Why did I have to go through this? They stood a distance away watching me. Frantically, I tried to start the car and back out of the alley, but the car got into a ditch and I couldn’t get it out.

“In a fit of panic – I could still see the men watching me and was afraid that they would decide to come back – I continued screaming, hoping against >>

hope that someone, anyone could come to my rescue. Finally, someone did – a man with nothing on except a towel around his waist. I continued screaming, afraid that he would also attack me. He kept knocking on the door and asking me to open the car door. I finally felt safe enough to open the door when I saw two women come out of the house to join him.

“When my two attackers saw people coming out to help, they ran away. The man and women assisted me out of the car as the neighbourhood guys tried to pull the car out of the ditch. Finally, the man offered to drive me home to Westlands as his workplace, at Sarit Centre, was along his way. On getting home, I was immediately taken to a doctor and put on antiretroviral drugs as a prophylactic measure.”

Were the men ever caught?

“No, they weren’t,” comes the swift reply. “The people who rescued me told me that that area was a hotbed for criminals and that the previous night someone had been murdered at the same spot, and that I was lucky. The police once did summon me to identify two men they thought were my attackers, but they turned out not to be the ones.”

Has she forgiven her attackers? I prompt.

“Know what? I can understand their robbing out of poverty and desperation. After watching Nairobi Half Life, I can say I do get it. But the rape, I don’t understand that. I can’t wrap my head around why they would do it and no, I haven’t forgiven them.”

At this point, a lone man seated at the bar counter walks over to us with tears in his eyes. He greets us, then dabs his eyes. He had eavesdropped on our conversation and felt compelled to come over.

“I am really sorry you went through that Eve. May God bless you so much,” he addresses Eve. Eve walks up to him with tears in her eyes and gives him a hug. He walks away as Eve composes herself. I expect her to be flustered by the episode, but she just wipes her eyes and smiles.

“I can’t believe I cried,” she says. “I really don’t allow myself to be vulnerable or cry in front of people. Heck, maybe I am psychotic and really need that counselling after all!”

As strong and together as she appears, Eve admits that “when I need to, I lock myself in my



EVE WEARS a one-sleeve black dress with silver accents; her own; snakeskin stilettoes with gold heels, Ksh6,000, RTW Stylz; earrings, Ksh800, Mr Price; **EVE WEARS** a black ruched dress; her own; crystal chandelier earrings, Ksh800, Mr Price; pink studded platform heels, Ksh6,500, 2Nu Collection

bathroom and bawl my eyes out”.

It took two years before Eve opened up about her ordeal.

“The first time I talked about the carjacking and rape incident was to Drum magazine, in 2007. I didn’t want to ... I couldn’t even talk about it with my family or a counsellor. I hate being pitied. But a friend convinced me to open up to Drum as it would help many women out there who were going through the same thing and who were suffering in silence.

“Was my way of dealing with it the healthiest way to go about it? No, but it was my way. That said, I wouldn’t advise anyone to do that (not talk about it).

“I feel that every woman has to go through some sort of pain at least once in their life; mine was this, for others it may be abusive relationships, unhappy marriages, insecurities about their bodies. But life has to go on. It is difficult, but you can’t get stuck in your past forever.”

Today Eve is able to help women who have been raped.

“I have talked over the phone to many women. We talk and sometimes even meet for coffee. I try to help them see that rape doesn’t define them, that they aren’t damaged goods. That they shouldn’t let this stop them from fully living. I have been there, and I know what they feel. It does get better.”

How did she deal with the trauma immediately afterwards? I prod.

“The first few days I was numb. My sister Sharon cried about it more than I did. Chris Kirubi and Somoina, both of Capital Fm, were really supportive and came to check up on me. Chris put me and Sharon up at one of his apartments where we would be safer. The Code Red DeeJays, really good friends of mine, came for sleepovers so I could feel safe.

“But I really wanted life to go back to the norm and so I went back to work. I had taken one week off after the incident and felt that I needed to go back. I threw myself into work, spending many hours at work. I was determined to get my life back, move on. I really needed my work to feel normal again.

“Maybe that confused people a lot. Those who had heard about the incident wondered what I was doing back at work so soon; some figured that it actually hadn’t happened at all. Who would guess it anyway, when I was laughing and being my normal self on radio?

“Taking the antiretroviral drugs was difficult and took its toll on me. They made me sick to my stomach but I had to take them. Radio was my therapy. I would laugh and talk and deal with my demons by shutting myself in my bathroom and crying it out. I went to see a therapist once, on advice of my family, but seeing a counsellor agitated me, I felt I was reliving the affair and didn’t like it one bit. I never went back.”

To this day, driving at night gives her the jitters. And she’s changed in other ways.

“Two years after the incident, I broke down in tears when a bouncer physically tried to shove me and a friend out of a popular local joint as we were waiting for our burgers to be delivered. Breaking down is not typical Eve. Typical Eve would not sob; she would stand up for herself. “Prior to 2005, I had never experienced physi- >>

cal violence and now I was experiencing it.”

“Also, I became very cautious about relationships and became closed off. I was afraid of getting hurt and even broke it off with the guy I was dating back then. I only got into a relationship last year and I can say that I am content.”

Who is the lucky guy? I ask.

“Oh, I ain’t telling you that, I don’t even let my family meet the men I date!” she chuckles. “Earlier in my career, I used to reveal who I was dating and it led to lots of external interference. I was young and naive then. I have learned a lot since then. Oh, and sometimes the other person doesn’t want their personal life flouted in public. I totally respect that.”

Overfeeding the media, she has discovered, can come back to bite one. That said, is she happy now?

“Yes, I am. I am in a very good place and can positively say 2013 is a great year for me. My career is going great and I am happy. It may have taken me long to finally be at this place, but I am here now.”

Eve’s journey into the media industry was not a straightforward one. After school, she decided to become a teacher because her parents thought it was a good career path, but while studying education at Catholic University, two lecturers told her she would do great in the media business.

She decided to give it a shot. Kiss Fm and Nation media turned her away, but Capital Fm snapped her up. She hosted the Hits Not Homework show, which became so popular with the youth for its great hip hop music and relatability that people started calling her ‘Mama Capital’. So when Eve left the show in 2010, it was a surprise to many.

“Capital Fm will always be my first love. It is where I learned the ropes. However, I really wanted to do my own thing and not work for someone else. So I left and teamed up with a friend, Lucy Mwangi. We had previously

worked together on Vibe City, and she was also at a point where she wanted to do her own thing. And so Moonbeam Production Company was born.”

Starting a production company was not without its challenges.

“I had left a cushy job with a great salary. So yes, I was a little scared. TV production is expensive and in the first year we didn’t take home any money. But it was such an adrenaline rush for me knowing that when you wake up in the morning, it is your own thing that you are working towards. It hit me how much the business was eating into my savings when I was faced with bills to pay. I was practically living on fumes. But we are now in our third year and doing great.”

MoonBeam Productions has signed on several shows, including *Mentality* and *Travel Diaries* which Eve co-hosts with Nick Wan’gindu.

“Travel Diaries was born out of a passion that Lucy and I share for

“The people who rescued me told me that that area was a hotbed for criminals and that the previous night someone had been murdered at the same spot, and that I was lucky.”

tourism. We wanted to show Kenyans that there are beautiful and affordable places to visit right here. At the time, there were no such shows, so we shot a pilot and showed it to Kenya Television Network. They loved it. We then presented it to Kenya Tourism Board and they liked it enough to sponsor it. We were off to a good start.”

And that is not all Eve has been doing. She was part of the communication team running Uhuru Kenyatta’s presidential campaign.

“When I got a call from TNA asking if I could be in the team, I couldn’t pass that up, and my business partner was great about it. I learned a lot and met a lot of interesting young people.”

Eve D’ Souza has none of the airs exhibited by so many celebrities. During the shoot, she cracks jokes with the team and is a great sport when it comes to striking poses. Her groundedness has much to do with her close ties to her family.

“Oh, I know a bit about living with a man. I live with my younger brother, Jason. He sure does love his video games. My elder sister Sharon has two beautiful kids, David and Jasmine, who are just like my kids. I take them out and do fun stuff with them so I haven’t had any broody feelings yet. And when I do, I wouldn’t mind having two of them either.”

She has an equally close relationship with her parents.

“My parents are the best. My dad Andrew, a retired engineer, taught me the value of hard work. He is exceptionally driven and focused. Traits I like to think I inherited. My mum Martina is the classic media mum. She is very proud of me and I have caught her at the airport asking random people, ‘Hey, do you know Eve D’Souza? She is my daughter!’ It is embarrassing but so sweet. She has been my source of comfort and strength and is my greatest cheerleader. She is a Facebook fan too, but so far I have managed to keep her away from Twitter!”

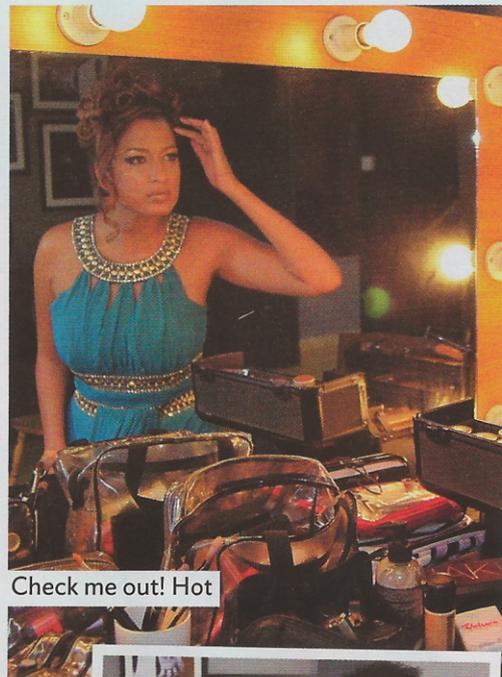
As for the future, Eve’s looks bright – but she refuses to plan for it.

“I have decided to go with the flow. I hate to be asked where I see myself in five years. Great things have popped into my life and I didn’t plan for them. So I am not making any plans.”

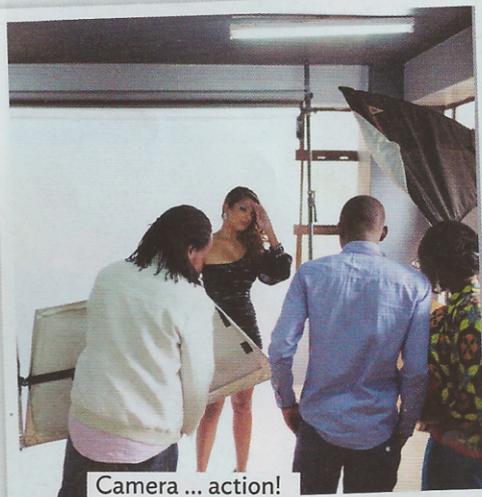
Clearly, Eve D’Souza is a woman who knows that life is unpredictable, but who is determined to tackle anything life throws her way with huge optimism and a smile. We salute her. **II**

EVE'S GARDEN OF EDEN

Our beautiful cover girl raved about the treatment she received during the TRUE LOVE cover shoot: "Over the years, I've grown to love getting dressed up for events, but I've never had such a dolled-up experience as this! Hollywood, eat your heart out! The glamorous makeup, the fabulous hair styles, all the amazing shoes and dresses! Surreal. For just one day, I felt absolutely special."



Check me out! Hot



Camera ... action!



Muthoni doing her thing



Don't I look like a queen?