

LEFT OUT *by the* WORLD

SOME HEARTS AREN'T EMPTY.
THEY'RE JUST NEVER SEEN.

I Q R A G H



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Stories Matter

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Introduction

We are often quick to judge people we do not understand.

When someone withdraws from the world, we call them strange. When they struggle to communicate, we assume they are difficult. When they turn to alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs, we tell ourselves that they are simply looking for trouble or having fun. We see their actions, but rarely stop to ask what happened to them before they became the person standing in front of us.

The truth is that some people are fighting battles we cannot see.

Behind a quiet face may be years of loneliness. Behind anger may be pain that was never given a voice. Behind addiction may be a desperate attempt to escape memories that refuse to disappear. And behind someone who seems lost may be a world filled with experiences that no one else could ever fully understand.

Sometimes, people do not choose to be alone. Sometimes, life pushes them there.

They try to speak, but the words do not come out the way they want them to. They try to explain what they are feeling, but nobody seems to understand. Eventually, they stop trying. They retreat into a world of their own not because they do not care about others, but because they have become exhausted from trying to be understood.

This is the story of one such person.

A person whose life cannot be understood by looking only at the choices he made. To understand him, we must go back to where everything began to the moments that shaped him, the wounds he carried silently, the people who changed his life, and the

decisions that eventually brought him to a place he never expected to be.

There are things about a person that can only be understood when you know their history.

This book takes you behind the behaviour, behind the mistakes, and behind the judgments. It explores loneliness, family, love, heartbreak, addiction, resilience, and the search for belonging. Most importantly, it asks a question we often forget to ask:

What happened to this person before we decided to judge them?

Some parts of this story are fictional, while others are inspired by the realities of life. Together, they form a story about a human being trying to survive the world he was given and trying, somehow, to find his way back to himself.

Before you judge him, get to know his story.

Because sometimes, the person we call *lost* is simply someone who has been searching for a place to belong all along.

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CHAPTER 1

A Childhood Without Warmth

The house was large. Beautiful. Quiet.

Too quiet.

Five-year-old Adam stood by the window, his small fingers pressed against the glass as he watched the empty driveway.

“Dad... when is Mom coming back?” he asked softly, without turning around.

His father, seated behind a desk stacked with files, didn’t look up.

“She’ll be back in a few days.”

A few days.

Adam held onto those words like a promise.

But days turned into weeks... and weeks into silence.

At night, Adam would lie awake, staring at the ceiling.

Did I do something wrong?

Why didn’t she say goodbye?

The questions circled his mind like shadows.

The only light in his world was his grandmother.

She would sit beside him, gently stroking his hair. "Not everything that leaves you is your fault, my child," she would whisper.

"But why didn't she take me with her?" Adam asked one night, his voice trembling.

His grandmother paused. For a moment, even she had no answer.

Instead, she pulled him into her arms. "Because Allah has a different plan for you."

A year later, the house changed.

New footsteps. New voice. New rules.

Adam stood quietly as his father introduced his new wife.

"This is your mother now," his father said firmly.

Adam looked up at her.

She smiled but it didn't reach her eyes.

"Hello, Adam," she said.

"Hello..." he replied, unsure.

From that moment, something invisible settled between them.

Distance.

When his stepmother became pregnant, Adam noticed the shift immediately.

His father laughed more. Stayed home more. Cared more.

Just not for him.

One evening, Adam walked into the living room, holding a drawing.

“Dad, look! I made”

“Not now, Adam,” his father interrupted, without even glancing.
“Can’t you see I’m busy?”

Adam lowered the paper slowly.

“Oh... okay.”

He walked away quietly, folding the drawing in half.

Then again.

Until it fit in his pocket.

When his baby sister was born, Adam felt something new.

Hope.

He stood beside her crib, watching her tiny fingers move.

“She’s so small...” he whispered.

When she cried, he would sit beside her.

“It’s okay,” he’d say softly. “I’m here.”

And in that moment, he meant it because he knew what it felt like when no one was.

The Day Everything Broke

Then came the day everything broke.

The hospital seemed colder than usual that morning. The walls were pale and lifeless, and the sharp smell of disinfectant hung heavily in the air. Somewhere down the corridor, a trolley rattled across the floor. Nurses moved quietly from room to room, their footsteps fading into the distance. Every few seconds, the machines beside the beds gave soft, mechanical beeps.

But Adam heard almost none of it.

He sat beside his grandmother’s bed, holding her fragile hand between both of his.

Her skin felt thinner than he remembered. Her fingers, once strong enough to hold him when he was a little boy, now rested weakly in his palms. Adam kept rubbing them gently, as though the warmth of his hands could somehow give her strength.

He stared at her face.

She looked so small beneath the white hospital sheets.

“Granny...” His voice trembled. “You’re coming home, right?”

His grandmother opened her eyes slowly. For a moment, she simply looked at him. Then a faint smile appeared on her tired face.

“My time here is almost done, my child.”

Adam froze.

“No.”

The word came out almost as a whisper.

Then he shook his head violently.

“No, don’t say that.”

His fingers tightened around hers.

“You promised me you’d always be here.”

His grandmother looked at him with the kind of sadness that made his chest hurt. She knew what Adam did not yet want to accept: some promises are made with love, but life does not always allow us to keep them.

She slowly turned her head towards the small table beside her bed. With great effort, she reached for something resting there.

Adam immediately leaned forward.

“Granny, what are you doing?”

She did not answer.

Her hand trembled as she picked up a small package and placed it carefully into Adam's hands.

He stared down at it.

"What is this?"

"When you turn eighteen," she said, pausing to catch her breath, "your uncle will give this to you."

Adam looked at her, confused.

"Why?"

She smiled faintly.

"Just keep it safe."

He turned the package over in his hands, searching for an explanation.

"Why can't you give it to me when I'm eighteen?"

His grandmother became silent.

That silence frightened him more than her words had.

Adam looked back at her.

"Granny?"

She slowly lifted her hand and touched his cheek.

Her palm was warm, but her touch was weak.

Adam leaned into it instinctively, just as he had done when he was a little boy.

For a moment, he forgot about the hospital.

He forgot about the machines.

He forgot about the fear that had been growing inside him.

All he could feel was his grandmother's hand against his face.

"I will still be there," she whispered.

Adam's eyes filled with tears.

"What do you mean?"

She struggled to breathe before continuing.

"Just not in the way you want me to be."

Adam's heart seemed to stop.

"No..."

His voice cracked.

"No, Granny. Please."

He moved closer to her, pressing her hand against his cheek.

"Don't talk like that. You're going to get better. The doctors are going to make you better, and then we'll go home."

His words came faster now, as though saying them quickly enough could make them true.

"We can go home. You can sit in your chair, and I'll make you tea. Remember? You said you wanted me to learn how to make it properly."

His grandmother smiled through her exhaustion.

"I remember."

"And you promised you would teach me how to cook."

"I did."

"So you have to come home."

Adam wiped his tears with the back of his hand.

"You can't leave me."

His grandmother looked at him for a long moment.

There was something in her eyes that Adam would remember for the rest of his life.

Love.

Fear.

And goodbye.

Tears began rolling down Adam's cheeks.

"Please don't go, Granny."

She reached towards him.

Adam immediately leaned forward, and she pulled him gently into her arms.

He buried his face against her shoulder.

Her hospital gown smelled faintly of soap and medicine. He could feel the slow movement of her breathing against his chest.

"Please," he whispered. "I don't want you to leave me."

His grandmother held him as tightly as her weakened body allowed.

"You are stronger than you think," she whispered into his ear.

Adam shook his head.

"I'm not."

"Yes, you are."

"I need you."

She closed her eyes for a moment.

"I know, my child."

Her voice was barely audible now.

"Never forget that you are loved. No matter what happens. Never let the world convince you that you are alone."

Adam pulled away and looked at her.

"Granny?"

She looked directly into his eyes.

“Promise me.”

Adam nodded through his tears.

“I promise.”

She gave him one last smile.

Then the room became strangely quiet.

The steady beeping of the machine beside her bed continued, but something about the sound had changed.

Adam noticed her breathing had become slower.

“Granny?”

No answer.

He leaned closer.

“Granny, are you okay?”

Her chest rose slightly.

Then fell.

Adam waited.

Another breath.

Slower this time.

“Granny?”

He squeezed her hand.

Nothing.

His smile disappeared.

“Granny...?”

He shook her hand gently.

Still nothing.

“Granny, wake up.”

The machine beside the bed continued its steady rhythm.

Adam looked at her face.

For the first time, he noticed how peaceful she looked.

Too peaceful.

His heart began pounding.

“No.”

He shook his head.

“No, no, no...”

He grabbed her hand with both of his.

“Granny, please.”

His voice broke.

“Please wake up.”

He touched her cheek.

It was still warm.

That gave him hope.

“She’s still warm,” he whispered to himself. “She’s still here.”

He looked towards the door.

“Someone!”

His voice echoed through the room.

“Please! Someone come!”

A nurse rushed inside.

Adam stepped backwards, tears covering his face.

“Please help her. She just stopped talking.”

The nurse moved quickly towards the bed. Another medical worker followed.

Adam stood frozen in the corner, watching them.

He watched them check her.

He watched their faces.

And then he saw something that terrified him.

They were no longer looking at his grandmother as though they were trying to save her.

They were looking at her as though they were accepting that she was gone.

Adam's breathing became uneven.

"No..."

One of the nurses gently placed a hand on his shoulder.

Adam pulled away.

"No! She's not gone."

His voice rose.

"She was talking to me. She was just talking to me!"

Nobody answered immediately.

The silence was unbearable.

Adam rushed back to the bed.

"Granny!"

He took her hand again.

"Please. You said you would still be there."

His tears fell onto the white sheet.

"You promised."

But this time, there was no answer.

The woman who had comforted him when he was afraid, who had listened when nobody else would, who had made him feel that he belonged somewhere in this world, was gone.

Adam lowered his head against her hand.

And for the first time in his young life, he experienced a kind of pain that words could not explain.

He had lost the person who made the world feel a little less lonely.

After the Funeral

The funeral passed like a dream.

Adam remembered people dressed in black.

He remembered quiet prayers.

He remembered flowers.

He remembered voices telling him to be strong.

But he did not know what being strong meant.

How could anyone expect a child to be strong when the person who had taught him how to survive was lying beneath the ground?

After the funeral, everyone eventually went home.

People returned to their lives.

The house became quiet again.

But it was not the peaceful kind of quiet.

It was an empty quiet.

The kind that reminded Adam that someone was missing.

He stood in the doorway of his room and looked around.

Everything was exactly where he had left it.

His books were still on the table.

His clothes were still folded on the chair.

His bed was still waiting for him.

Yet somehow, the room no longer felt like his.

Adam slowly walked towards the bed and sat down.

He looked at the empty space beside him.

For years, whenever the world became too difficult, he had known that he could find his grandmother.

Now there was nowhere to go.

He reached into his pocket and felt the small package she had given him.

His fingers closed around it.

He remembered her final words.

When you turn eighteen, your uncle will give this to you.

Adam stared at the package.

Why had she given it to him?

What had she been trying to tell him?

And why had she spoken as though she knew she would not be there when he needed her most?

Adam wiped his face.

He did not know it yet, but the little package his grandmother had left behind would eventually reveal a secret that would change everything he believed about his family—and about himself.

For now, however, Adam was only a grieving child sitting alone in a house that suddenly felt too large.

He lowered his head.

And cried for the grandmother who had been his home.

His father returned to work.

His stepmother focused on her child.

And Adam...

Adam disappeared in plain sight.

Years passed.

At school, Adam's anger began to show.

"Why did you push him?" the teacher demanded.

"He pushed me first!" Adam shouted back.

"That doesn't give you the right!"

"No one ever listens!" Adam yelled, his voice cracking.

The classroom fell silent.

For a moment, the anger faded and all that remained was hurt.

Later, in the principal's office, his uncle sat across from the staff.

"He's not a bad child," his uncle said quietly. "He's just... alone."

When Adam's father finally arrived, tension filled the room.

"You're embarrassing this family," his father said coldly.

Adam looked down.

"I didn't mean to..."

"Excuses," his father snapped. "You need discipline."

That night, Adam overheard the conversation that would change everything.

"I'm sending him to military boarding school," his father said.

"He needs love, not punishment," his uncle argued.

"He needs structure."

"He needs a father."

Silence.

Adam stood frozen behind the door, his heart pounding.

So this is it, he thought.

He's sending me away.

Later, his uncle found him sitting alone.

“Adam...” he said gently.

“Am I that bad?” Adam asked without looking up.

His uncle knelt beside him.

“No. You’re just hurting.”

“If I stop being angry... will Dad let me stay?”

His uncle hesitated.

And that hesitation said everything.

Adam nodded slowly.

“I understand.”

But inside... something hardened.

On the day he left, Adam hugged his little sister tightly.

“I’ll come back for you,” he whispered.

She giggled, not understanding.

Adam smiled but his eyes didn’t.

As the car drove away, he didn’t look back.

Because deep down...

He knew no one was watching.



CHAPTER 2

Boarding School

The gates of the boarding school closed behind Adam with a heavy echo.

For a moment, he stood still, gripping his small suitcase. Students moved around him laughing, talking, adjusting to their new environment.

Adam said nothing.

This is it, he thought. This is where I live now.

The first month was the hardest.

Adam kept to himself. He sat alone during meals, spoke only when spoken to, and spent most of his time buried in books. While others formed friendships, he built walls.

At night, he would lie awake in his narrow bed, staring at the ceiling.

He missed his little sister.

He missed his uncle.

But more than anything, he missed the feeling of belonging somewhere.

One evening, as Adam sat quietly on his bed reading, a voice broke the silence.

“You always this quiet?”

Adam looked up.

A boy stood near the doorway, hands in his pockets, watching him.

“I guess,” Adam replied.

The boy stepped forward and sat on the opposite bed.

“I’m Henry,” he said. “Your roommate.”

Adam nodded.

“Adam.”

Henry studied him for a moment.

“You look like someone who doesn’t trust people easily.”

Adam closed his book slowly.

“Maybe I just haven’t met the right ones.”

Henry smirked slightly.

“Fair enough.”

That was the beginning.

It took time but slowly, Adam began to open up.

He started talking more in class, joining group activities, and even laughing occasionally. Teachers noticed the change.

“He’s improving,” one of them said during a staff meeting. “Not just academically but emotionally.”

Adam had also begun attending counseling sessions, as recommended by the school and his uncle. At first, he resisted.

“I don’t have anything to say,” he told the counselor.

“That’s okay,” she replied gently. “Sometimes silence says more than words.”

Over time, that silence turned into conversation.

His anger didn’t disappear but it softened.

For the first time, Adam began to understand it.

His bond with Henry grew stronger.

They studied together, ate together, and shared stories late into the night.

One night, Henry spoke quietly.

“I was abandoned when I was little,” he said. “Foster homes... different places... never really stayed anywhere long.”

Adam didn’t interrupt.

“They sent me here because they didn’t know what else to do with me,” Henry added.

There was a pause.

Then Adam said,

“My mom left... and my dad stayed, but... it doesn’t feel like he did.”

Henry nodded.

“Yeah,” he said softly. “That kind of loneliness... it’s different.”

From that moment on, they weren’t just roommates.

They were brothers in pain and in survival.

By the end of the first term, Adam’s efforts began to show.

His report card arrived.

A’s and B’s.

For the first time, he felt proud of himself.

A few days later, his uncle called.

"Hello, my kiddo!" his uncle's warm voice came through the phone. "How are you?"

Adam smiled.

"I'm doing well, Uncle Anthony."

"I saw your report card," his uncle said. "I'm proud of you. You've done very well."

"Thank you," Adam replied. "I'm trying my best."

"And you should keep it that way," his uncle added. "Consistency matters."

There was a brief pause before he asked,
"Are you coming home for Thanksgiving?"

Adam hesitated.

"Not this year, Uncle... maybe during summer."

"Why not?" his uncle asked gently. "You should come and see your sister... your father."

Adam looked down.

"I have a lot to study," he said quietly. "And practice... football, baseball... I want to stay focused."

His uncle understood there was more behind those words.

"Alright," he said softly. "Just know... you're always welcome."

"I know," Adam replied.

Then, almost quickly, he added,
"I have to go the warden is calling me."

Later that day, the warden approached him.

"Adam," she said, "your father called. He wants to speak with you."

Adam shook his head.

"I don't want to talk to him."

She studied him for a moment.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Then, after a pause, he added quietly,

“I also don’t want to go home for the holidays.”

“Why, son?” she asked.

Adam hesitated.

“I just... don’t.”

“Would you like me to inform your parents?”

He nodded.

“Please.”

The warden later called his father.

“Good morning, Mr. Grey,” she said.

“Good morning,” his father replied.

“I’m calling to inform you that Adam has decided to stay at the hostel during the holidays.”

There was a brief silence.

“Did he say why?” his father asked.

“No, sir. And we don’t force students either way.”

“...Alright,” he said finally.

After the call, his father checked his email.

Adam’s report card was there.

He smiled.

For the first time in a long time, he felt proud of his son.

The holidays began.

The campus grew quieter, but Adam stayed behind with Henry and a few others.

They played games, studied, laughed, and shared stories.

For Adam, it felt... peaceful.

One afternoon, the warden called him again.

"Adam, you have visitors."

His heart skipped.

As he walked toward the office, he saw them.

His father.

His stepmother.

And his little sister.

The moment he saw her, everything else faded.

"Isra!" he said, rushing forward.

He lifted her into his arms, smiling genuinely.

"I missed you so much."

She laughed, holding onto him tightly.

He handed her chocolates, watching her eyes light up.

For a moment... he was happy.

Then his stepmother stepped forward.

"Give her to me," she said.

Adam hesitated but handed Isra over.

The warmth faded slightly.

His father gestured toward a chair.

"Adam, come sit."

"I'm okay, Dad," Adam replied, standing.

"I brought you some gifts," his father said. "And your favorite snacks."

"Thank you."

His father looked at him carefully.

"I'm proud of your results," he said. "But you can do even more."

"I'm working on it," Adam replied calmly.

Then came the question.

"Why don't you come home?"

Adam took a breath.

"It reminds me of my mother," he said quietly. "I don't like that feeling."

His father nodded slowly.

"I understand... take your time."

There was a pause.

Then Adam said something that surprised even himself.

"Please don't come here again."

His father frowned.

"Why would you say that?"

"I want to focus on my studies," Adam said. "I don't want distractions."

His father sighed.

"This is your home too."

Adam shook his head.

"No... it's yours."

That sentence lingered between them.

Years passed.

Adam never left the campus.

It became his world his safe place.

He stayed connected to his sister through video calls whenever his uncle visited. But he never reached out to his stepmother.

Now, it was his final semester.

The end of school.

The beginning of everything else.

And Adam was afraid.

One evening, he walked restlessly through the hallway.

Henry noticed immediately.

“What’s wrong?” he asked, placing a hand on Adam’s shoulder.

Adam sighed.

“School is ending... and I don’t want to leave.”

Henry nodded.

“Yeah... I’m going to miss this place too.”

“I’ve spent fifteen years here,” Adam said. “This feels like home.”

Henry looked at him.

“So what’s next?”

Adam hesitated.

“I haven’t thought about it.”

“Where will you go?”

“Maybe my uncle’s place... for a while.”

“And your father?”

Adam looked away.

“I don’t know.”

Henry gave a small nod.

“Whatever you choose... you’ll figure it out.”

The next day was their final exam.

After that came the farewell party.

Laughter filled the air as students celebrated the end of their journey. Promises were made we'll stay in touch, we'll meet again though deep down, everyone knew life would take them in different directions.

Later that night, a group of classmates gathered in a corner.

Someone brought cigarettes.

Another brought drinks.

"Come on, Adam," one of them said. "Just try it once."

Adam shook his head.

"I'm good."

"Just one puff," Henry said lightly. "It's the last day."

Adam hesitated.

Then, slowly, he took it.

One puff.

A small decision.

But one that would echo later in ways he didn't yet understand.

As the night ended, they hugged each other tightly.

Brothers, not by blood but by shared years, shared pain, shared growth.

Adam packed his things the next morning.

He looked around the room one last time.

Fifteen years.

Memories in every corner.

Then he picked up his bag... and walked out.

Not knowing that the world outside would test him in ways he was not yet ready for.



CHAPTER 3

The Real World

The room felt different.

Not because anything had changed but because everything was ending.

Boxes lay open across the floor, filled with books, clothes, and fragments of a life Adam had lived for eighteen years. He moved slowly, folding each item with care, as if packing memories instead of belongings.

He paused, holding an old notebook in his hands.

His fingers traced its worn edges.

A small breath escaped him.

Eighteen years...

His vision blurred slightly, and he blinked, trying to steady himself.

This place had been more than a school.

It had been his world.

Before leaving, Adam walked through the campus one last time.

The classrooms.

The field.

The dormitory.

Every step carried a memory.

Every corner held a piece of him.

He stopped outside his dorm room and ran his hand along the bunk bed.

A faint smile appeared.

“I’ll miss this,” he whispered.

By midday, students and staff had gathered to see him off.

“Don’t forget us!” one of the younger boys called out.

Adam chuckled softly.

“I couldn’t even if I tried.”

He handed out small gifts simple tokens of gratitude. One for the headmaster, one for the warden, and even one for the staff who had quietly supported him through the years.

“You’ve always been kind,” one of them said, holding the gift carefully. “Don’t let the world change that.”

Adam nodded.

“I won’t.”

His voice was calm but his eyes betrayed him.

They were family.

The only kind he had truly known.

As he lifted his bag, an elderly staff member stepped forward.

“Let me carry that for you,” the man offered kindly.

Adam shook his head with a gentle smile.

“No, Uncle... you’ve done enough for me.”

The man smiled back.

“Then go,” he said. “And don’t forget where you came from.”

“I won’t,” Adam replied.

Outside the gate, a luxurious car waited.

A driver stepped forward.

“Adam, sir. Your father has sent this for you a graduation gift.”

Adam looked at the car.

Shiny. Expensive. Impressive.

Just like everything his father ever gave him.

Except presence.

“Did he come?” Adam asked quietly.

The driver hesitated.

“No, sir.”

Adam’s expression hardened slightly.

“...Then he can keep it.”

He turned away.

“Adam!”

The voice stopped him.

He turned and there was his uncle.

Standing there with open arms and a proud smile.

Adam dropped his bag and embraced him tightly.

“Look at you,” his uncle said warmly. “You’ve grown into a fine young man.”

Adam gave a small smile.

“I guess I have.”

“Come,” his uncle said. “Let’s go home.”

Home.

The word felt unfamiliar.

But not painful.

Not this time.

His uncle’s penthouse was beyond anything Adam had imagined.

Spacious. Bright. Peaceful.

“This is your room,” his uncle said, opening the door.

Adam stepped inside and froze.

A large bed. A study desk with a brand-new laptop. Shelves filled with books.

And on the wall

Photographs.

His childhood.

His mother.

His grandmother.

Him.

Adam stepped closer, his voice soft.

“Where did you get these?”

His uncle smiled.

“I’ve kept them since the day you were born.”

Adam stood there in silence.

For the first time in years...

He didn’t feel invisible.

That night, his phone buzzed.

A message from his father.

Why did you return my gift? Why didn't you come home?

Adam stared at it.

Then typed:

I want to stay with Uncle for a while.

The reply came quickly.

Why?

Adam's fingers tightened around the phone.

Because you weren't there.

He tossed the phone onto the bed, frustration rising in his chest.

That night, he slept.

But it wasn't the same.

The bed was too soft.

The room too quiet.

He missed the creak of bunk beds... the presence of someone nearby.

Comfort felt unfamiliar.

A week later, he sat down for breakfast with his uncle.

"Good morning, son," his uncle said warmly. "I haven't seen you much this week."

Adam gave a small smile.

"Sorry... I've been busy."

"With Henry?" his uncle asked.

Adam nodded.

"He's leaving for the States soon."

His uncle's expression softened.

“That’s a big step.”

“Yeah.”

There was a pause before Adam spoke again.

“I want to apply abroad too... maybe Canada or the U. S.”

His uncle leaned forward.

“That’s good. What’s stopping you?”

Adam hesitated.

“I don’t want to take money from my father.”

His uncle nodded slowly.

“So what do you want from me?”

“A loan,” Adam said honestly. “I’ll pay you back after I graduate.”

His uncle smiled.

“You’re my son. You don’t need to repay me.”

Adam shook his head gently.

“I want to earn it.”

After a moment, his uncle nodded.

“Alright. We’ll do it your way.”

Days passed quickly.

Applications were filled. Documents prepared.

Henry often came over, helping him with everything.

They laughed, worked, and spent as much time together as possible before Henry’s departure.

Then came Adam’s birthday.

Morning passed.

No message from Henry.

Adam checked his phone again.

Nothing.

“He must have forgotten,” he muttered quietly.

That evening, his uncle appeared.

“Get ready,” he said with a smile.

“Where are we going?” Adam asked.

“You’ll see.”

Outside, a sleek black sports car stood waiting.

Adam stopped in his tracks.

“This... this is mine?”

His uncle smiled.

“Happy birthday, my son.”

Adam ran his hand across the car, disbelief in his eyes.

“This has been my dream since I was a kid...”

“I know,” his uncle said.

“Come,” his uncle added. “There’s more.”

They drove back to his old school.

Adam frowned.

“Why are we here?”

“Just go inside.”

The moment he stepped in

“Surprise!”

The room erupted with cheers.

His classmates. Teachers. Staff.

And there

Henry.

"You forgot my birthday?" Adam asked with a grin.

Henry laughed.

"Never."

They celebrated together laughing, sharing memories, cutting cake.

For a moment...

Everything felt perfect.

That night, his uncle handed him a letter.

"This is from your grandmother."

Adam's hands trembled as he opened it.

As he read, his expression changed.

Shock.

Confusion.

Pain.

Your father once wanted to give you up for adoption...

But I stopped him.

Your uncle is your legal guardian...

The letter slipped from his hands.

"You knew?" Adam asked, his voice shaking.

His uncle stepped forward.

"No... I didn't."

Adam's anger exploded.

"I was a burden to him?" he shouted.

He knocked things off the table, his emotions breaking free.

"All this time... I was never wanted!"

Henry stepped forward calmly.

“You’re wrong.”

Adam turned, hurt.

“How?”

Henry looked him in the eyes.

“Because someone chose you.”

Silence.

“Your grandmother fought for you,” Henry continued. “Your uncle stood by you. That’s what matters.”

Adam’s breathing slowed.

And slowly...

The anger faded into something else.

Understanding.

The next day, Adam stood before his uncle.

“I’m sorry,” he said quietly.

His uncle smiled.

“You don’t need to apologize. You’re my son always.”

Adam nodded.

“Thank you... for everything.”

A few days later, Henry left for the States.

At the airport, they hugged tightly.

“Don’t disappear,” Henry said.

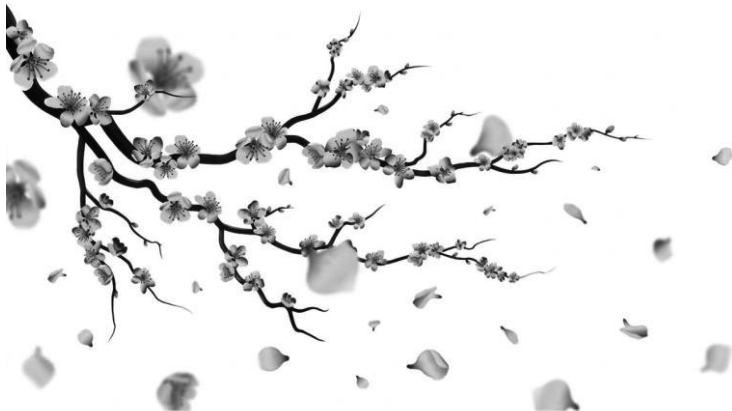
“I won’t.”

Soon after, Adam received an email.

Congratulations... you have been accepted.

Canada.

With a scholarship.
His uncle smiled proudly.
“I’m proud of you.”
Adam exhaled slowly.
A new country.
A new life.
A new beginning.



CHAPTER 4

A Chance Encounter Across Campus

Adam was excited to begin the next chapter of his life. He had been accepted into one of the country's most prestigious universities to pursue an MBA, a dream he had worked tirelessly to achieve.

To make sure Adam settled in comfortably, his uncle rented an apartment near the university. He didn't want Adam to feel lonely while living away from family.

As Adam stepped into the apartment for the first time, he noticed a young man lounging on the couch. He was wearing shorts, listening to music through his headphones, and casually sipping from a can of Coke.

The young man removed one earbud and smiled.

"Hey, you must be the new roommate."

Adam nodded politely.

"Yes, I am."

"I'm Liam," the young man said, extending his hand. "I'm your roommate and also your senior at the university."

Adam shook his hand.

"Nice to meet you."

Liam grinned.

"Before you unpack, there are just three house rules."

Adam laughed. "Go ahead."

"First, we split the rent equally."

"Fair enough."

"Second, groceries and cleaning supplies are shared."

"Sounds reasonable."

"And third," Liam continued, pointing around the apartment, "we keep this place clean. There's no maid, so we both do the chores."

Adam smiled.

"I can live with that."

"Great!" Liam said. "Come on, I'll show you your room."

After showing Adam around the apartment, Liam added, "If you need anything, just let me know. And if you'd like, I'll show you around campus tomorrow."

"I'd appreciate that."

"Don't worry," Liam said jokingly. "We don't bully freshmen around here."

Adam laughed.

"That's good to know."

The following morning, Liam took Adam on a tour of the university. He introduced him to several students both juniors and seniors making it easier for Adam to feel at home.

As they walked across campus, Adam noticed a beautiful young woman standing outside the medical faculty building. She

carried herself with quiet confidence, her smile effortlessly drawing attention.

For a brief moment, their eyes met.

Adam quickly looked away.

She's beautiful, he thought.

He wanted to walk over and introduce himself, but fear held him back.

She'll probably think I'm staring at her.

Instead, he buried the thought and focused on what mattered most his studies and football.

Little did he know that football would soon bring their paths together.

The next afternoon, Adam returned to the apartment after football practice, exhausted.

Liam was stretched across the couch, completely absorbed in a video game.

"Hey, bro," Adam said, dropping his sports bag.

Liam paused the game.

"Hey! You look like you've been through a war."

Adam laughed.

"Just practice. We've got a match tomorrow."

"You playing?"

"Center forward."

Liam nodded approvingly.

"Nice. I'll come watch."

"Really?"

"Of course."

Adam smiled.

"Thanks."

"I'll cheer louder than everyone else."

Adam laughed.

"I'm going to get some sleep."

"You'll need it," Liam replied. The next day, Adam delivered the performance of his life.

He scored twice and assisted another goal, leading his university to a long-awaited victory. It was their first championship win in five years.

The stadium erupted in celebration.

Students lifted Adam onto their shoulders, chanting his name.

Within a single afternoon, he had become one of the most popular students on campus.

After the celebrations, Coach Thompson called him over.

"Adam."

"Yes, Coach?"

"I'd like you to meet someone."

Standing beside him was the same young woman Adam had seen on campus.

"This is my daughter, Mia."

Adam was speechless for a moment.

"Mia," the coach continued, "this is Adam the young man who just helped us win our first title in five years."

Mia smiled warmly.

"Congratulations."

"Thank you."

Coach Thompson glanced at both of them.

"I'll leave you two to talk while I check on the team."

As soon as he walked away, an awkward silence settled between them.

Finally, Mia broke it.

"I've never seen you around campus before."

"I transferred here two months ago."

"Oh, that explains it," she said. "You're Liam's friend, right?"

Adam chuckled.

"Not exactly. We're roommates... still getting to know each other."

"I see."

She smiled.

"Are you coming to the after-party tonight?"

"I'm not sure yet."

"You should."

Before Adam could answer, one of Mia's friends called her.

"I have to go."

"See you later."

"Hopefully."

Adam watched her walk away before returning to celebrate with his teammates.

Although everyone was congratulating him, his thoughts kept drifting back to Mia.



CHAPTER 5

When Silence Break

Two weeks passed without a single conversation between Adam and Mia.

Although Mia called him several times, Adam ignored every call. He couldn't bring himself to answer. He was deeply hurt that she had made such a life-changing decision without discussing it with him first.

After four years together, he believed they should have made important decisions as a team.

Adam had spent countless evenings with Mia's family. He had celebrated birthdays, attended family dinners, and supported them whenever they needed him. Yet Mia had never met his uncle the man who had raised him like a father. She had never shown much interest in meeting Adam's family, and lately, that thought troubled him more than ever.

Unable to bear the silence any longer, Mia decided to visit Adam at his apartment.

She knew he was home because Liam had mentioned it earlier that afternoon.

Standing outside the door, she knocked softly.

No answer.

She knocked again.

Still nothing.

Slowly, she opened the unlocked door.

Music blasted through the apartment. Adam was lying on his bed with the curtains drawn, leaving the room almost completely dark.

Without saying a word, Mia walked over, opened the curtains, and switched off the music.

Sunlight flooded the room.

Adam covered his eyes.

"Close the curtains," he muttered. "I want the room dark."

"No," Mia replied firmly. "Get up. We need to talk."

Adam sighed heavily before climbing out of bed. Without looking at her, he walked onto the balcony and leaned against the railing.

A cigarette rested between his fingers.

Mia followed him.

"Every time something goes wrong, you run away," she said quietly. "And you're smoking again."

Adam stared into the distance.

"What exactly is there to talk about? You're leaving for a year."

Mia folded her arms.

"Why do you keep saying I'm leaving you? I'm leaving for my career, Adam not because I stopped loving you."

"You expect me to believe that?"

"I do love you."

She stepped closer.

"This internship is important. Becoming a surgeon has always been my dream."

Adam finally looked at her.

"And what about us?"

"We'll make it work."

"You say that like it's easy."

"It won't be easy," Mia admitted. "But relationships aren't built on convenience. They're built on trust."

Adam laughed bitterly.

"Trust?"

"Yes."

"You made this decision before telling me."

"I didn't hide it to hurt you."

"Then why didn't you tell me?"

Mia lowered her eyes.

"I wasn't sure I had been selected. I wanted to tell you once everything was confirmed."

Adam shook his head.

"I don't know, Mia... something doesn't feel right."

She gently reached for his hand.

"Nothing is wrong between us. You're letting your fears convince you that history is repeating itself."

Adam remained silent.

Deep down, he knew she was referring to the wounds left by his childhood.

His mother had walked away from his father years ago.

Ever since then, abandonment had become his greatest fear.

Mia stepped closer and wrapped her arms around him.

"I'm not your past, Adam."

He slowly returned the embrace.

For the first time in weeks, neither of them spoke.

They simply stood together in silence until the anger between them slowly faded.

After a long moment, Adam smiled faintly.

"I want you to meet my uncle."

Mia hesitated before answering.

"Okay."

Although she agreed, Adam noticed there wasn't much excitement in her voice.

He chose not to think about it.

He wanted to believe everything would be alright.

A few days later, Adam's uncle arrived from Liberia.

Adam couldn't hide his excitement as he waited at the airport.

The moment his uncle walked through the arrival gate, Adam rushed forward and hugged him tightly.

"My boy," his uncle laughed. "Look at you! You've grown into a handsome young man. You've even grown a beard."

Adam smiled.

"I learned from the best."

His uncle laughed warmly.

"So where's this famous girlfriend I've heard so much about?"

Adam glanced at his phone.

"Mia had an emergency at work. She couldn't make it."

"I understand," his uncle replied kindly. "We'll meet another time."

Adam forced a smile, though disappointment lingered beneath it.

He picked up his uncle's luggage and led him toward the parking area.

"I booked a taxi," his uncle said.

Adam laughed.

"No need. Our car is waiting."

His uncle raised an eyebrow as he noticed several luxury vehicles lined up outside.

"You've been doing well for yourself," he joked.

"Not me," Adam replied with a grin. "Those belong to the company."

When they arrived at the apartment, Liam greeted them at the door.

He froze.

Standing before him was an elegant gentleman in a tailored suit, carrying himself with quiet confidence.

Liam nervously extended his hand.

"Nice to meet you, sir."

Adam's uncle looked at him with a serious expression.

"Is that how you greet a millionaire uncle?"

Liam's face instantly turned pale.

"I'm... I'm so sorry, sir."

For a second, silence filled the room.

Then Adam burst into laughter.

His uncle joined in.

Finally, the older man wrapped Liam in a warm hug.

"I'm Anthony," he said with a smile. "Just call me Uncle Anthony."

Liam let out a relieved sigh.

"I thought I had already offended you."

Everyone laughed.

The apartment instantly felt like home.



CHAPTER 6

Broken Trust

Months passed after Mia left for Scotland.

At first, the distance didn't seem impossible. Adam and Mia spoke almost every day through video calls and text messages. They shared stories about their days, encouraged each other through challenges, and promised that the separation was only temporary.

But as time went on, their conversations became shorter.

The calls grew less frequent.

Sometimes Mia would miss his calls entirely, explaining later that she had been busy at the hospital or overwhelmed with her studies. Adam understood that medical school demanded long hours, yet he couldn't ignore the growing emptiness in his heart.

He wanted to believe everything was fine.

He trusted her.

Still, something felt different.

Rather than allowing doubt to consume him, Adam buried himself in work.

Together with Liam, he had built a small confectionery business from the ground up. They had invested every savings they had, spending countless sleepless nights perfecting recipes, designing packaging, and finding customers.

The business slowly began to flourish.

Every successful order reminded Adam that he was capable of building a future with his own hands.

He had never depended on anyone's wealth not even his uncle's.

Everything he owned had been earned through hard work.

One evening, his phone rang.

Mia's name appeared on the screen.

A smile spread across Adam's face as he answered.

"Hey, babe."

"Hi," Mia replied with a tired smile. "How are you?"

"I'm doing okay."

"I'm sorry I've been missing your calls lately."

Adam forced a smile.

"It's alright. I know you're busy."

Mia laughed softly.

"I'm impressed. I thought you'd be angry."

"I'm trying to change."

"I know."

"But it feels like no matter what I do, you still expect the old Adam."

Mia's smile faded.

"I didn't mean it that way."

"I know."

An uncomfortable silence followed.

Finally, Mia spoke.

"I was only teasing."

"I understand."

Adam ended the call shortly afterward.

Not because he was angry...

But because he knew if the conversation continued, his frustration would spill over onto her.

He didn't want that.

Instead, he grabbed his gym bag and drove to the kickboxing club.

His counselor had once told him,

"When your emotions become too heavy to carry, let your body release them instead of your words."

Those words had stayed with him.

For nearly two hours, Adam trained relentlessly, punching the heavy bag until every ounce of frustration had drained from his body.

It was healthier than shouting.

Healthier than smoking.

Healthier than becoming the person he used to be.

Seven months passed.

Life moved on.

Adam became increasingly occupied with expanding the business, while Mia devoted herself to medical school and her internship.

Their conversations became brief text messages.

"Good morning."

"Hope you're eating well."

"I'm proud of you."

"Good night."

Sometimes days passed without a single phone call.

Adam convinced himself that this was simply the reality of a long-distance relationship.

He trusted Mia.

He had to.

Then tragedy struck.

It happened on an ordinary afternoon.

Adam was supervising production at the factory when one of the employees carelessly discarded a lit cigarette near a storage area containing highly flammable ingredients.

Within seconds, flames spread across the production floor.

Workers screamed.

Smoke filled the building.

Instead of running for safety, Adam rushed back inside.

"There are still people in there!" he shouted.

Ignoring the danger, he helped several workers escape before the roof began collapsing.

A burning beam crashed behind him.

The intense heat scorched his back and arms before firefighters managed to pull him to safety.

By the time Liam arrived, Adam had already been rushed to the hospital.

His hands were badly burned.

His back had suffered severe injuries.

Fortunately...

His face had been spared.

Liam immediately called Uncle Anthony.

The older man booked the first available flight without hesitation.

He also tried contacting Mia.

Her phone was switched off.

He left several voice messages.

"Mia, please call me. Adam has been seriously injured."

There was no reply.

Twenty hours later, Uncle Anthony arrived at the hospital.

"How is he?" he asked as he embraced Liam.

"The doctors say he's stable... but he's still unconscious."

"What happened?"

Liam explained everything.

"The workers survived because Adam went back for them."

Uncle Anthony closed his eyes.

"That's exactly the kind of man he is."

He looked toward the intensive care unit.

"Always saving everyone else..."

Even when it costs him.

The doctor soon joined them.

"The burns are serious," she explained.

"But thankfully, they aren't life-threatening."

Both men sighed with relief.

"He'll need surgery for some of the burns and several weeks of rehabilitation. His lungs were also exposed to a significant amount of smoke, so we'll continue monitoring his breathing."

"Will he recover completely?" Uncle Anthony asked.

"We expect a full recovery," the doctor replied. "But he'll need time, rest, and emotional support."

That last sentence lingered in Uncle Anthony's mind.

Because Adam wasn't only fighting physical injuries.

He was fighting emotional ones too.

And those wounds were far deeper.

Anthony couldn't see this all happening so he went out and hired a detective that they can find mia

Adam was discharge from the hospital He was resting at home but ham saw that he was becoming restless by mia

Anthony was seeing this all difference that he was loosing his mind.

liam asked what should we do he is going out of control

Anthony let me talk to his concealer

liam Yah talk to him and let see what we can do

Anthony I talk to concealer he has subricbed some medicine

liam Yah let give him

They brought the medicine and give him to come him down.

Adam was getting better day by day

Anthony came to know that Mia is a escort and she did all the thing for money there was no love

Anthony kept this as a secret that he shouldn't know that she was a escort and there is no way to make a dam loose it again

Anthony arranged a video from min that I am no longer coming and he can move on in his life that has to be done.

Adam was lying down when uncle entered son I want you to knew this that mia is not coming back she has send a video message she has found someone else

Adam saw that and shattered down and he was so angry out he lost his self that Anthony knew that he would break down by the real truth.

Anthony conciliated him that what happen is the best forget her.

Adam said in anger leave the room I don't want to talk to anyone no longer leave me alone and the did

Liam and Anthony was worried What next stop he will take

But Adam didn't take any step at all he was in his pain and Sadness

They stayed with him for a long time.



CHAPTER 7

A New Beginning

Nearly a year had passed since Adam's painful breakup with Mia.

His life had slowly found a new rhythm.

His business continued to thrive, and together with Liam, he had expanded their confectionery company into one of the fastest-growing small businesses in the region. The long hours at work helped distract him from the memories that still haunted him.

Every few weeks, Uncle Anthony called Liam to check on Adam.

One afternoon, Liam answered another of his calls.

"Hello, Uncle."

"Hello, Liam. How are you doing?"

"I'm doing well. How about you?"

"I'm good. Tell me, how's the business?"

"It's going really well. Adam and I have been working day and night."

There was a brief pause.

"And Adam?" Uncle Anthony asked. "Is he still living the way you told me?"

Liam sighed.

"He still dates occasionally, but nothing serious. He usually ends the relationship after a few months. He's afraid of getting emotionally attached again."

"I understand," Uncle Anthony replied quietly. "At least he's moving on."

"I think he's trying."

Uncle Anthony smiled to himself.

"That's all I can ask for."

Although Adam had become successful, there was still an emptiness inside him.

His smile had returned, but his heart remained guarded.

Love was no longer something he believed in.

Instead, he poured all his energy into growing his company and building the future he had always dreamed of.

Uncle Anthony often encouraged him to settle down and find someone special.

Adam would simply smile and change the subject.

His career was now his only priority.

Four years had passed since Adam last visited his hometown in South Africa.

His cousin Sasha was getting married, and although he initially declined the invitation, she refused to accept his answer.

"You have no excuse," she had told him over the phone. "You're coming to my wedding."

Adam couldn't say no.

The night before his flight, Liam walked into his room and found him packing his suitcase.

"So... you're finally ready?"

Adam zipped up his luggage.

"Everything's packed."

"What about tomorrow's shipment?"

Adam looked thoughtful.

"Should I stay and help?"

Liam shook his head.

"Absolutely not. I'll handle everything here. Go spend time with your family."

"You sure?"

"I've got this."

Adam smiled.

"Thanks, brother."

The following morning, Adam boarded a flight to South Africa.

When he arrived, Uncle Anthony was already waiting at the airport.

The older man embraced him warmly.

"My son," he said proudly. "It's been far too long."

"It's good to see you too, Uncle."

"How's business?"

"We're growing faster than I expected."

"I always knew you would succeed."

During the drive home, Uncle Anthony glanced at him.

"Are you planning to visit your father while you're here?"

Adam looked out the window.

"I don't know."

"And... will you tell him what happened with Mia?"

Adam remained silent for a few seconds.

"Maybe another time."

His uncle didn't press the subject.

Some wounds still needed time to heal.

The next evening, they attended Sasha's pre-wedding celebration.

Adam hadn't realized how much he had missed his family until he saw everyone gathered together.

His cousins greeted him with hugs and laughter.

Music filled the venue as relatives danced and celebrated.

For the first time in years, Adam genuinely smiled.

As he stood holding a drink, someone approached him.

"Hello, son."

Adam turned.

It was his father.

His smile faded.

"I'm doing well," Adam replied politely.

His father noticed the distance in his son's voice.

"Why didn't you stay at our house?"

"Uncle invited me."

"I see."

Before the conversation could continue, Adam's younger stepsister rushed over.

"Brother!"

She hugged him tightly.

"You've become even more handsome since our last video call."

Adam laughed.

"And you've grown into a beautiful young lady."

She smiled proudly.

"I know."

Their father received a phone call and excused himself, leaving the siblings chatting and laughing together.

Despite everything that had happened in the past, Adam still cherished his relationship with his sister.

The following morning, Adam was awakened by the ringing of his phone.

It was Sasha.

"Good morning, bro."

"Morning."

"I need a favor."

"What is it?"

"I'm at the bridal boutique. Can you come pick me up?"

"Of course."

"I'll text you the address."

Within thirty minutes, Adam arrived outside the boutique.

He stepped inside.

"Hi," he said to the receptionist. "I'm here to pick up my sister, Sasha."

Before anyone could answer, a soft voice came from behind him.

"She'll be just a minute."

Adam turned.

Standing before him was a young woman with warm brown eyes and an effortless smile.

She carried herself with quiet confidence.

"I'm Zuri," she said, extending her hand.

Adam shook it.

"I'm Adam."

At that moment, Sasha walked out wearing a wedding dress.

"Bro!"

She smiled brightly.

"I'm almost ready."

Turning toward the young woman, she added,

"Adam, this is my best friend, Zuri. She's the fashion designer who created my wedding dress."

"It's nice to meet you," Adam said.

"You too," Zuri replied warmly.

Sasha glanced at the clock.

"I still need to change into something comfortable."

She looked at Adam.

"Why don't you take Zuri for a coffee while you wait?"

Adam nodded.

"Sounds good."

A few minutes later, Adam and Zuri found themselves walking toward a nearby café.

Neither of them spoke at first.

Finally, Zuri broke the silence.

"I've never seen you around here before."

"I don't live in South Africa anymore."

"Oh?"

"I've been living abroad for several years."

"So what brings you back?"

"My cousin's wedding."

She smiled.

"Family events always have a way of bringing everyone home."

"They do."

When they entered the café, Zuri looked at the menu.

"What are you having?"

"A cappuccino."

"I'll have a latte."

Adam pulled out his phone and texted Sasha.

Adam: What would you like me to bring you?

A few seconds later, her reply appeared.

Sasha: Don't worry about me. I'm heading home with Dad.

Adam smiled and slipped his phone back into his pocket.

For the first time in a very long time...

He found himself enjoying a conversation with someone new.

He didn't know it yet.

But this simple cup of coffee would become the beginning of a new chapter in his life.

Please edit this as a professional writer



CHAPTER 8

A Difficult Choice

Adam was in his office when his phone began ringing repeatedly. His uncle and Sasha had both tried to reach him several times, but he had ignored the calls because he was in an important meeting. When he finally checked his phone, he saw several missed calls. Something immediately felt wrong.

He called his uncle back.

“Uncle, what is going on? Why have you been calling me so many times?” Adam asked, his voice sharper than he intended.

There was a brief silence on the other end.

“Adam, your father has suffered a stroke,” Uncle Anthony said. “His business has collapsed as well. You need to come immediately.”

Adam froze.

“What?”

“Come as soon as you can. We are at the hospital.”

Adam booked the next available flight. Whatever resentment he carried towards his father, the news had awakened something he had tried to bury for years—a small, stubborn corner of his heart that still cared.

As soon as he arrived in South Africa, Adam went straight from the airport to the hospital. He found Sasha crying in the waiting area while the rest of the family anxiously waited for news.

A doctor eventually approached them.

“Your father is out of immediate danger,” she explained. “However, there is a significant blockage in one of his heart arteries. We recommend inserting a stent to restore blood flow.”

Adam nodded. “Do whatever is necessary, Doctor.”

The procedure was successful, and his father was eventually discharged. But the family soon discovered that the financial damage was far greater than they had expected. His father had lost the mansion, most of his business assets, and much of the wealth he had accumulated over the years. He was forced to move into a modest four-bedroom apartment with another relative.

Adam continued staying with Uncle Anthony, but he visited his father regularly. His father was recovering from the stroke and learning to live with the changes that came with his heart condition. Adam never openly admitted how much he cared, but Uncle Anthony could see it.

At the same time, Adam remained involved in his own business. He stayed in contact with his partners and handled many responsibilities remotely while he remained in South Africa.

During this period, Adam and Zuri continued speaking privately. Neither wanted their relationship to become a subject of family discussion before they knew where it was going.

One evening, Adam met Zuri at her hotel. They spent several hours together, enjoying the closeness they had both missed. Their private evening eventually became intimate, but

afterwards, the mood changed when Zuri finally asked the question she had been holding inside.

“Adam, where is this relationship going?”

Adam stared at the ceiling for a moment. “I honestly don’t know.”

Zuri sat up. “What do you mean, you don’t know? Your father is recovering. What is stopping you from introducing me properly?”

Adam turned towards her. “It isn’t as simple as that.”

“Then what is it?” Zuri asked. “I’m Muslim, and you come from a Christian and Jewish background. Is that the problem?”

“No. That has nothing to do with it. You’re looking at this the wrong way.”

Zuri got out of bed and began getting dressed.

Adam sat up. “Babe, it’s not what you think.”

“Then tell me what it is,” she replied. “Why are you so afraid to introduce me to your family? Do you want to keep this relationship casual?”

“Of course not. Come back to bed. We can talk about this.”

Zuri shook her head. “No. I don’t want to pretend everything is fine when we clearly want different things.”

Adam watched her gather her things. “Are you really leaving?”

“Yes.” She looked at him sadly. “We had a wonderful time tonight, and I’m not denying what we have. But I want a serious relationship. When you know what you want, call me.”

She walked out and closed the door behind her.

For the next two weeks, Adam and Zuri barely spoke. Zuri was hurt and angry, while Adam became increasingly withdrawn. Sasha noticed the change almost immediately.

“What’s wrong, bro?” she asked one afternoon.

“Nothing. I’m just dealing with work.”

Sasha studied him. “Come to lunch with me. It might take your mind off things.”

Adam eventually agreed.

Sasha then messaged Zuri. “Hey, girl. If you’re free, come and have lunch with me at the Hilton. We’ll be near the pool.”

Zuri replied that she was busy at her boutique, but Sasha insisted. After some hesitation, Zuri agreed to come.

When Zuri arrived, Sasha greeted her warmly.

“Why are you looking so serious? Come and sit down. Adam, look who’s here.”

Adam turned around and immediately saw Zuri.

“Oh, hi, Zuri. What a surprise.”

“Hi, Sasha. You asked me to come.”

“Exactly. Come and join us.”

Adam pulled out a chair for her.

“Thank you,” Zuri said quietly.

They ordered lunch, and Sasha casually mentioned several of Zuri’s usual preferences. When Adam corrected one of her choices, Sasha immediately noticed.

She raised an eyebrow. “And how do you know that, bro?”

Adam hesitated. “I just guessed.”

Sasha smiled knowingly. “Right. I’m going to the restroom. You two can talk.”

As soon as she left, Adam leaned towards Zuri.

“I’ve been calling and texting you, but you haven’t answered. Please talk to me.”

Zuri looked at him calmly. "What is there to talk about?"

"Us."

"You want to keep our relationship private, and I don't. I've already told you how I feel."

Adam lowered his voice. "Give me some time. I'll figure everything out."

Zuri shook her head. "I've already given you plenty of time. When you're ready, call me."

She stood to leave.

Sasha returned. "Why are you leaving already?"

"I have work to do. Thank you for lunch."

"Sit down," Sasha said. "I know what's going on."

Adam and Zuri exchanged startled looks.

Sasha smiled. "Don't look so shocked. I figured it out a week ago. Adam's phone wallpaper is a picture of you, and he never stops talking about you."

Zuri sighed. "There's no mystery. I just want Adam to make our relationship public."

Sasha looked at her brother. "Bro, what is the problem?"

Adam rubbed his forehead. "I need to speak to Uncle Anthony and my father. You know I don't have an easy relationship with Dad."

"Then find a way," Sasha replied. "I'm happy for both of you. Now, please sit down and eat."

For the first time in weeks, Adam and Zuri held hands across the table. The tension eased, and they managed to enjoy the rest of lunch.

Adam knew the most important conversation was still ahead of him. Uncle Anthony was preparing to return to Kenya to sign

an important deal with a Chinese client, so Adam decided he needed to speak to him before he left.

That evening, Adam texted him: "Good evening, Uncle. I'd like to talk to you. Could you come home early?"

The reply came quickly. "Of course, son. I'll be home soon."

Adam then texted Zuri: "Babe, I'm nervous. I don't know how he'll react."

Zuri replied: "Don't worry. Everything will be fine."

"I hope so," Adam wrote back.

That evening, Adam and Uncle Anthony had dinner together. After they finished eating, Adam finally gathered the courage to speak.

"What's on your mind?" Uncle Anthony asked. "Is something wrong with the business?"

"No. It's something else."

"Then tell me. What is troubling you?"

Adam took a breath. "I've met someone. Her name is Zuri. She lives here in South Africa, and she's a fashion designer."

Uncle Anthony looked at him carefully. "Where did you meet her?"

"At Sasha's wedding. Sasha introduced us."

"The Muslim designer?"

Adam nodded. "Yes."

His uncle was quiet for a moment. "Are you sure about this? You've only recently come through everything that happened with Mia."

"I know. But it has been a year, Uncle."

"A year is not necessarily a long time. Are you sure you're not rushing into another relationship?"

“I don’t think I am.”

Uncle Anthony studied him. “So what do you want to do?”

Adam smiled. “I want to marry her. But I want to propose first.”

His uncle smiled and embraced him. “If that is what you truly want, then you have my blessing.”

Adam shook his head. “Not yet. I already have a plan for the proposal.”

Later, Adam called Zuri.

“Uncle Anthony said yes. I have to go to Kenya for a week, but I’ll be back soon.”

Zuri smiled through the phone. “That’s wonderful. You must be relieved.”

“I am. My flight is at six tomorrow morning.”

“Then get some rest.”

The next day, Adam travelled to Kenya for work and began arranging the proposal. He also purchased the ring. Yet one concern remained: his father still knew nothing about Zuri.

Adam called Sasha. “I’m going to propose to Zuri. I need your help.”

Sasha laughed. “Oh my God! Of course. What do you need me to do?”

“Bring her to the Sheraton. Everything is arranged. I’ve even sent you a dress for her. Please make sure she wears it.”

“Don’t worry, bro. I’ll get her there.”

Adam arranged everything carefully: a violinist, a pianist, roses, candles, and the romantic setting he knew Zuri would love.

When the evening arrived, Adam stood waiting in a tailored suit.

Sasha brought Zuri towards the garden, telling her only that she had a surprise.

“Where are we going?” Zuri asked.

“Just come with me. You’ll find out.”

They reached a quiet spot overlooking the hills as the sun began to set.

“Stand here for a minute,” Sasha instructed.

Zuri turned towards the view. The sunset painted the hills in warm colours, and for a moment she simply stood there, taking it all in.

Then Adam appeared, holding a bouquet of lilies—her favourite flowers.

Zuri turned and stared at him in surprise. “Adam?”

He smiled and embraced her. “Hi, Zuri. This is for you.”

She looked around. “What is all this?”

Adam took her hands. “I know we haven’t been together for very long, but I love the way you take care of me. I love how you remind me to eat breakfast, how you challenge me, and how you make me want to become a better man. I know our relationship is still young, but I know what I feel. Zuri, will you marry me?”

The lights around the garden came on, revealing a glowing sign with the words: Marry Me?

Zuri covered her mouth, overwhelmed. “Adam, this is beautiful. I love it.”

Adam took out the ring.

Zuri laughed through her tears. “Aren’t you going to put it on me?”

“Of course.”

He slipped the ring onto her finger, and they kissed as their friends and family came forward to congratulate them. The evening ended with dinner, laughter, and celebration.

The following day, Uncle Anthony agreed to meet Zuri and her family. Adam expected the meeting to be the beginning of a peaceful relationship between the families. Instead, something unexpected happened.

When they arrived, everyone exchanged greetings. Then Zuri's aunt entered the room.

Uncle Anthony froze.

He recognised her immediately. She was the woman who had once been his fiancée—the woman who had left him years earlier.

“Adam, can we go?” Uncle Anthony asked quietly.

Adam looked confused. “Uncle, what happened? We’re supposed to stay for lunch.”

“I have important work to attend to.”

“What could be more important than this?”

Uncle Anthony did not answer. He politely told Zuri's parents that they needed to leave. They insisted that he stay for lunch, and after some hesitation, he agreed. But throughout the meal, Zuri could sense that something was wrong.

Later, she texted Adam: “Babe, what happened? Why did you leave so early? Is your uncle okay?”

Adam replied: “I don’t know. He’s acting strangely, and I don’t understand why. I’ll talk to him.”

“Please do, and let me know,” Zuri replied.

When Adam returned to his uncle's room, he found him sitting in a rocking chair with an old photograph in his hand. The moment Adam entered, Uncle Anthony quickly hid it.

“Uncle, what are you hiding?” Adam asked.

“Nothing, son.”

Adam stepped closer. “Then why are you acting so strangely? And why did you refuse to speak to Zuri?”

Uncle Anthony finally looked at him. “You cannot marry her.”

Adam stared at him. “What? You just gave me your blessing.”

“I know what I said. But now I’m telling you no. Her family is not right for you.”

Adam’s voice hardened. “Why? What is the reason?”

“I said no. That is the end of the discussion.”

“No, it isn’t,” Adam replied angrily. “You owe me an explanation.”

The argument escalated until Uncle Anthony finally shouted, “If you refuse to listen to me, then leave this house!”

Adam stared at him, hurt and furious. “Fine. I will.”

He returned to his room, packed a suitcase, and called Zuri.

“Babe, I’m leaving Uncle Anthony’s house. I’m moving into a hotel for now.”

Before she could ask more questions, he ended the call.

Zuri tried calling repeatedly, but Adam did not answer for several hours. Eventually, she texted him: “Babe, where are you? Which hotel are you staying at? I’ve been trying to reach you for five hours. Please call me.”

Adam finally replied with the hotel address. “I’m fine. I’ve checked into a hotel. Come and see me. We need to talk.”

Zuri arrived later that evening. Adam explained everything: Uncle Anthony had suddenly rejected the marriage and refused to explain why.

“What do you want to do?” Zuri asked.

Adam looked exhausted. "I don't know. He has been like a father to me."

"Adam, he is your uncle, not your father. Why don't you speak to your real father?"

Adam immediately shook his head. "No. I will never ask him for anything."

"Why? He is still your father. There is nothing wrong with asking him for help."

Adam's expression hardened. "He abandoned me. I won't go back to him just because I need something."

Zuri softened her voice. "Then at least speak to him. You don't have to forget what happened, but you can choose what happens next."

Adam looked away. "I don't know, Zuri. I want to be with you. I know that. But I don't know what happens next."

"Then find a way," she said. "You don't have to stay in South Africa forever. We have a future to build."

Adam sighed. "I know. I just don't know how to handle all of this."

Zuri stood up. "When you have an answer, call me. I want us to be together, but you are making everything more complicated than it needs to be. You just need to speak to your father."

"Okay," Adam said quietly.

Zuri reached the door. "I have work tomorrow, so I can't stay."

Adam nodded. "Okay. No problem."

After she left, Adam remained alone in the hotel room, wondering whether his family would ever allow him to have the future he wanted.



CHAPTER 9

A Promise of Marriage

Adam was completely confused and did not know how to handle the situation he was going through.

After much thought, he finally approached his father and told him that he wanted to marry Zuri. However, his father had already learned about Adam's feelings from his sister.

Soon afterward, Adam's father visited Zuri's family to discuss the marriage proposal. Everything was finalized peacefully. During their discussions, they also discovered an unexpected connection: Zuri's aunt, whom she barely knew, was engaged to Adam's uncle.

Zuri's father agreed to the marriage but placed two conditions.

First, Zuri would continue her career after marriage. Second, there would be a Muslim wedding ceremony because Zuri was a Muslim.

Although Adam did not strongly follow religious traditions, he accepted the conditions for the happiness and unity of both families.

A few days later, Adam's father called him.

"Everything has been finalized," he said happily. "Next week, we will hold the engagement ceremony, and I want you to move back home with us."

Adam smiled softly.

"No, Father. I'll continue staying in my paying guest accommodation."

"Why?" his father asked. "You have your own home."

"I don't want to trouble anyone."

His father sighed and nodded.

"Very well, son. Whatever makes you happy."

Preparations for the engagement began immediately. Adam personally invited his uncle and asked for his blessings. However, his uncle remained silent, stood up, and left for an important meeting without giving him an answer.

Despite this, Adam continued with the arrangements. He invited his two best friends and informed his father that he wanted to cover all the expenses for the engagement himself, including the gifts for Zuri.

His father objected.

"No, son. Let me do this for you. I may not have much, but I still want to contribute."

Adam shook his head.

"I want to do it myself."

His father looked at him emotionally.

"You have spent most of your life away from me. I never had the opportunity to provide for you. You even lived on the money your grandmother left for you. At least allow me to sponsor part of your wedding."

Adam's expression softened.

"If it makes you happy, then you can contribute ten per cent."

His father smiled.

"That is enough for me."

Everything was finally ready. Beautiful gifts and dresses were sent to Zuri. Both Adam and Zuri were excited because their engagement was only a few hours away.

The venue was grand and elegant, exactly as Adam had promised her.

The engagement ceremony was filled with joy, laughter, and celebration. Adam was especially happy when he saw his uncle attending the ceremony.

After the engagement, Adam travelled to Kenya to handle some pending business matters. During his absence, Zuri and his father managed the wedding preparations and regularly updated him through video calls.

Adam returned one day before the wedding.

Everything was perfectly arranged.

Dressed in an elegant suit, Adam waited as Zuri entered the venue in a beautiful white gown with a long veil.

Both families had decided to hold both ceremonies at the same venue. First, the Nikah ceremony was performed according to Muslim traditions, followed by a Christian wedding ceremony to honour Adam's father's wishes.

Although Adam did not strongly follow any particular religion, he respected the beliefs of the people he loved and happily participated in both ceremonies.

During the celebrations, Adam's uncle surprised him with a gift of one million for business purposes.

“This is for you, son,” he said warmly. “Use it however you wish.”

The ceremony ended beautifully.

Liam, Adam’s business partner and best friend, gifted the newlyweds honeymoon tickets to London.

For their first night together, Adam had booked a luxurious hotel suite. He instructed the hotel manager to decorate the room with flowers and candles and even ordered a special cake.

When Zuri entered the room, she was completely surprised.

“You did all this?” she asked, smiling.

Adam nodded.

She felt truly blessed.

Remembering a Muslim tradition that Zuri’s mother had told him about, Adam presented her with a beautiful pair of earrings as a special gift for the bride.

Zuri was overwhelmed with happiness.

“I can’t believe you remembered this tradition,” she said softly. “I thought you didn’t believe in these things.”

Adam smiled gently.

“Just because I don’t personally follow certain traditions doesn’t mean I can’t respect yours.”

He then handed her another gift a necklace engraved with both of their initials.

Tears of happiness filled her eyes.

“It’s beautiful.”

She hugged him warmly.

“Should I help you wear it?” Adam asked.

She laughed softly.

“Of course. You’re my husband now.”

Adam carefully removed her old necklace and placed the new one around her neck. He kissed her forehead gently, making her blush.

The two spent the evening sharing quiet moments together, talking, laughing, and enjoying each other’s company as newlyweds.

The next morning, Zuri woke up feeling safe and peaceful beside him. She quietly got dressed and went to take a shower.

A few moments later, Adam entered the bathroom.

“Why did you wake up so early?” he asked.

“My eyes just opened,” she replied with a smile.

“May I join you?”

She laughed playfully.

“Why not?”

The two spent a romantic and happy morning together.

Later, they dressed and went to Zuri’s family home for lunch.

As soon as they arrived, they received a grand welcome from her family. It was their first visit after the marriage, and everyone was excited to see them.

During lunch, family members asked about their honeymoon plans.

“We’re leaving tomorrow night,” Adam replied.

Zuri’s mother smiled.

“Is everything packed?”

“Yes, Mother. Everything is ready,” Zuri answered.

After lunch, as they prepared to leave, Zuri’s parents handed Adam an envelope.

“What is this?” Adam asked.

“It’s a gift from us,” her father replied.

Adam immediately refused.

“I can’t accept this.”

Zuri smiled.

“Please take it. It’s their blessing.”

Adam gently returned the envelope.

“Your blessings are more than enough for me. Whatever you wish to give, please give it to your daughter.”

Her parents looked at him with admiration.

That night, Adam and Zuri stayed at the hotel one last time before leaving for London.

The next day, they boarded their flight and began their honeymoon journey, spending beautiful and unforgettable moments together.



CHAPTER 10

A New Distance

Adam and Zuri spent their honeymoon creating beautiful memories. For the first time in a long while, Zuri felt truly happy and grateful to have a husband who supported her, cared for her, and always tried to make her feel loved.

However, their happiness was interrupted when it was time for them to return to their separate responsibilities.

On their last day together, Adam handed Zuri her travel documents.

“I’ve booked your ticket to South Africa,” Adam said.

Zuri looked at him in surprise.

“Why aren’t you coming with me?”

Adam sighed.

“I have to return to Kenya. There are some serious issues at the plant that need my attention. I can’t take such a long holiday, and Liam needs me there to finalize the new project. It’s something I can’t miss.”

He paused before adding, “Also, you don’t have a Kenyan visa yet. If you want, I can book you a hotel in South Africa.”

Zuri smiled gently.

“You’re right. I also need to return to work. There’s no need to book a hotel. I’ll stay with my parents.”

Adam looked concerned.

“I hope your parents won’t mind you staying with them. I didn’t get the chance to take you to Kenya, and I still need to find a proper apartment for us. I can’t let you stay with Liam.”

“Don’t worry,” Zuri replied. “Everything will be fine. No one will mind.”

With that, Adam returned to Kenya, where he immediately became busy dealing with problems at the company. Liam and Adam worked tirelessly to solve the challenges affecting the plant, especially the unreliable electricity supply that was slowing down production.

Unknown to Zuri, Adam had taken out a large loan to keep the business running. He chose not to tell her because he did not want to worry her or create unnecessary stress in their marriage.

After some time, Zuri finally moved to Kenya to be with Adam. She wanted to start a new chapter in her life and build something of her own. She had always dreamed of becoming a model and turning it into a career.

At first, Adam had no problem with her plans. He wanted her to follow her dreams. However, as time passed, their situation became more complicated.

Adam spent most of his days at work and often returned home late and exhausted. Seven months passed, and Zuri found herself spending most of her days alone with very little to do.

She tried different things to keep herself busy. She worked on online designs, explored business ideas, and talked about

starting something of her own. But whenever she brought up the subject with Adam, he always found a reason to delay or discourage her.

Zuri could not understand why. She wondered what was really bothering him, but Adam never revealed the true reason behind his hesitation.

Despite their struggles, Adam continued to provide her with everything he could. He bought her expensive clothes and designer bags and made sure she had everything she needed. But material possessions could not replace the feeling of loneliness.

Their new home was far from the city, with very few places to visit. There were not many shopping malls, restaurants, or entertainment options nearby. Slowly, Zuri began to miss her family and the life she had left behind.

Adam noticed her sadness and tried his best to make her happy in every possible way.

Soon, their first wedding anniversary arrived. They celebrated by going to a restaurant together. Although they did not have many married friends around them—most of the people they knew were still single—they decided to enjoy the special day.

They cut their anniversary cake, laughed together, and created memories that reminded them why they had chosen each other.

During the celebration, Zuri noticed that Adam was in a good mood, so she decided to share something important.

“Adam, can I go to South Africa for a while?” she asked.

Adam looked at her curiously.

“Why?”

“There’s a major fashion show happening there. Many designers will be participating, and I want to be part of it. This could be the next big step in my career.”

Adam became quiet for a moment.

“Is it really necessary for you to go right now?” he asked.

“Yes,” Zuri replied. “I feel like this opportunity could change everything for me.”

Adam looked at her lovingly.

“I don’t think this is the right time. Maybe after four months, when the new plant is completed, we can go together.”

Zuri lowered her eyes.

“Adam, I hardly have anything to do here anymore. It has been a year since I’ve seen my friends and family. I want to work on this competition. Maybe it can help me find opportunities in Kenya as well.”

Adam saw the disappointment in her eyes.

“If you really want to go, my love, then go. I won’t stop you,” he said. “I’ll book your ticket.”

Two weeks later, Zuri travelled to South Africa. Her family and friends were extremely happy to see her again. She reunited with Sasha over lunch, and they spent hours talking and enjoying each other’s company.

Zuri dedicated herself completely to the fashion project. She worked hard on her designs and prepared for the competition.

Meanwhile, Adam and Zuri continued talking every day, although their busy schedules slowly made it harder for them to spend as much time together as before.

When the competition results were announced, Zuri received incredible news—she had won.

Overjoyed, she immediately called Adam.

“Adam, I won the competition!” she said excitedly.

Adam’s face lit up with happiness.

“Congratulations, my love! I’m so proud of you,” he replied.

They both celebrated the achievement, happy that they were finally seeing success in their dreams.

Later, Adam travelled to South Africa to visit Zuri. He stayed at his father’s home, where two families were already living together—his father’s family and his uncle’s family.

The house was small, with only three bedrooms, a living room, and a kitchen. Despite the limited space, Sasha happily offered her room to Adam and Zuri.

Adam’s stepmother welcomed them warmly and treated Zuri with kindness. Adam also continued supporting his father financially by sending him money every month, knowing that his father mostly stayed at home.

During his visit, Adam asked Zuri, “Are you coming back with me or not?”

Zuri looked at him lovingly.

“Babe, you know I have to finish this work. This is a very important stage in my career. Please try to understand.”

Adam smiled.

“I understand. Take your time. But I want you to consider moving to my father’s place. It would be better for you.”

Zuri looked at him knowingly.

“You’re saying this because of your mother, right?”

Adam corrected her gently.

“You know she isn’t my mother. She’s my stepmother.”

Zuri smiled.

“Yes, but you love Sasha so much.”

Adam nodded.

“Yes, I do.”

Eventually, Adam returned to Kenya because there were many urgent issues at the company that needed to be resolved.

Meanwhile, Zuri remained in South Africa, fully focused on her career and the new opportunities ahead of her.

Neither of them knew that the distance between them would soon test the strength of their marriage.



CHAPTER 11

The Beginning of the Fall

Liam walked into Adam's office with a serious expression on his face.

"Adam, bro, we need to take these guys out for dinner tonight. They also want to visit the casino. They specifically requested it," Liam said.

Adam leaned back in his chair, exhausted.

"Bro, I'm tired. I really don't feel like going. Why don't you take them?"

Liam looked at him with frustration.

"They want to meet both of us. Why don't you understand that?"

Adam shook his head.

"I'm not in the mood tonight, bro."

Liam sighed.

“Adam, we have to be professional. These people are important business associates. We’ve already signed the contract with them, but maintaining relationships is also part of business.”

Adam frowned.

“Why do we have to take them to a casino and dinner? The deal is already done.”

“Because business isn’t only about signing papers,” Liam explained. “It’s about building trust and relationships. We have to make them comfortable working with us.”

Adam remained quiet.

“Come on, bro. Get up and get dressed. We’re already getting late.”

Adam sighed.

“Okay, whatever.”

That evening, Liam and Adam went to the casino with their business associates. Liam stayed with the group, making conversation and keeping them entertained, while Adam mostly stood aside, uninterested.

One of the business associates approached him.

“Why don’t you play with us?”

Adam smiled politely.

“No, sir. I don’t know how to play, and I’ve never played before.”

The man laughed.

“Come on. We’ll teach you. Just try.”

“No, I really can’t,” Adam replied.

“Come on, be a sport. Start with just \$100.”

The others encouraged him.

“We insist. Play with us.”

After a moment of hesitation, Adam agreed.

“Okay, I’ll play. But you have to show me how.”

The businessman smiled.

“You’re smart enough. You’ll understand quickly.”

They started playing, and surprisingly, Adam won.

Within a short time, he had won \$1,000.

The unexpected success boosted his confidence.

“Maybe I’m actually good at this,” Adam thought.

As the night continued, Adam kept playing. By the end of the evening, he had won \$5,000.

His business associates were impressed.

“You have good luck, Adam,” one of them said.

Adam smiled. For the first time in a long while, he felt excited.

Maybe this was an easy way to make extra money.

When Adam returned home, Liam was waiting for him.

“Bro, where were you the whole night?” Liam asked.

Adam smiled.

“I was at the casino with our business associates.”

Liam looked surprised.

“But I came back with them at 1:00 a.m.”

“Yeah, I stayed and played,” Adam replied proudly. “I won \$5,000 tonight.”

Liam’s expression changed.

“Adam, bro, we only went there to spend time with them. We weren’t supposed to gamble.”

Adam waved his hand.

“Relax. It was just one time.”

“I hope it stays that way,” Liam said worriedly.

He knew Adam had already been through a lot. After losing his mother and dealing with loneliness, Liam feared that this new excitement could become dangerous.

“Don’t worry,” Adam replied. “Nothing will happen. It was just for business.”

“Come on, get ready. We have to go and sign the final documents.”

The next day, Adam and Liam went to the office and completed the deal. Everything was signed successfully.

Later, one of the business associates approached Adam.

“So, are we meeting tonight?”

Adam smiled.

“Yes. Don’t worry. I’ll be there.”

Liam overheard the conversation.

“Why are you going again? The deal is already signed. Why do you need to keep going?”

Adam lowered his voice.

“Shh. We need to maintain the relationship. They just signed a major deal with us, and there could be more business opportunities.”

Liam looked concerned.

“Adam, doing this every night isn’t good.”

Adam sighed.

“Bro, this is the last time.”

Liam looked at him seriously.

“I hope so.”

But it was not the last time.

Adam started visiting the casino almost every night.

At first, everything seemed perfect. He kept winning money, and it made him feel powerful and confident. He started believing that he had discovered an easy way to earn more.

Slowly, the excitement became an obsession.

He stopped answering calls. He became distant and spent less time communicating with Zuri.

One day, Zuri called Liam.

“Liam, where is Adam? I can’t reach him.”

Liam hesitated before answering.

“Honestly, I haven’t seen him today. Most days, he’s at the casino.”

Zuri was shocked.

“The casino? Why?”

“He went there with some business associates. They encouraged him to play, and for the past few days, he’s been going every night.”

Zuri became silent.

“I was going to call you,” Liam continued. “I think you should come before this situation gets out of control.”

“You’re right,” Zuri replied. “I’ll come as soon as possible.”

She ended the call, her heart filled with worry.



CHAPTER 12

The Distance Between Them

Adam's visits to the casino became a daily routine.

What started as a simple evening with business associates slowly turned into something he could no longer control. At first, he believed it was only entertainment something he could stop whenever he wanted.

But day by day, the situation became worse.

The man who had once worked tirelessly for his company and cared deeply about his marriage was slowly disappearing.

Zuri noticed the changes, but she refused to give up on him.

She believed it was only a difficult phase and that, with time, Adam would return to the person he used to be.

Weeks turned into months.

Zuri never imagined that Adam would become addicted to gambling and start risking everything he had built. He began spending more time chasing money and excitement, unaware that he was walking into a trap that could destroy his life.

One morning, Zuri received a phone call from her father-in-law.

Her heart immediately became uneasy.

What happened now? she wondered.

She answered the call politely.

"Hello, sir. How are you? I hope everything is fine."

Adam's father's voice sounded heavy.

"I'm doing well, Zuri, but I have some bad news."

Zuri became worried.

"What happened?"

"I've been trying to call Adam, but he isn't answering any of my calls."

"He's probably at work," Zuri replied. "Maybe he's busy and can't answer."

There was a long pause.

"Zuri... please tell him that his uncle Anthony has passed away."

The words shocked her.

"What? Uncle Anthony?"

"Yes," his father replied sadly. "It happened suddenly. He suffered a heart attack."

Zuri covered her mouth in disbelief.

"Oh my God... when is the funeral?"

"It will be on Monday. There will also be a reading of his final wishes."

"Okay," Zuri said. "I'll inform Adam. We'll come as soon as possible."

After ending the call, Zuri immediately tried calling Adam.

He did not answer.

She called again.

And again.

There were already twenty-six missed calls.

Finally, Adam answered while he was in a meeting.

“What is the emergency?” he asked impatiently. “Why are you calling me so many times?”

Zuri took a deep breath.

“Adam... your uncle is gone.”

There was silence.

“What do you mean he’s gone?”

“Uncle Anthony passed away. We need to attend the funeral.”

Adam’s voice changed.

“No... that can’t be true.”

“I’m booking the tickets. Please come home as soon as possible.”

“Okay,” Adam replied quietly. “I’m coming.”

Liam helped them arrange the tickets and decided to travel with them.

When they arrived, Adam and Liam helped prepare Uncle Anthony’s body according to their family traditions.

At the funeral, Adam stood silently, overwhelmed with emotion.

He was supposed to give a speech about his uncle’s final wishes, but he could barely speak.

The two people standing beside him were the only ones helping him through the pain.

Zuri stood quietly among the family members. She did not enter the burial area because, according to her Islamic beliefs, women did not participate in that part of the burial ceremony.

As Adam watched his uncle being laid to rest, he could not understand what had happened.

Uncle Anthony had always seemed strong and healthy.

“How could this happen?” Adam whispered. “He was only sixty-two years old. How could he suddenly have a heart attack?”

Zuri held his hand.

“Adam, this was Allah’s will. Sometimes things happen that we cannot understand.”

Adam’s eyes filled with regret.

“I should have answered his calls. I should have visited him. Why did I ignore him? Why didn’t I call or text him?”

Zuri tried to comfort him.

“Adam, don’t blame yourself. You cannot change what happened.”

But Adam’s heart was filled with guilt.

“I should not have left things this way.”

They stayed with the family for forty days.

During that time, Adam was completely lost. He barely spoke and struggled to accept that his uncle was gone.

After twenty days, Liam returned to Kenya, but Adam and Zuri stayed until the forty-day mourning period ended.

Before leaving, Zuri’s mother called her.

“Daughter, are you leaving today?”

“Yes, Mom.”

“You should have brought Adam here for some time. Maybe being with your family would help him.”

Zuri looked toward Adam.

“No, Mom. He needs to be away from everything right now. He misses his uncle so much.”

Her mother became concerned.

“What about your work?”

“I’ve put it on pause. Right now, I need to focus on him.”

“Zuri, I hope you know what you’re doing.”

“I do, Mom. I’ll call you later. I’m about to board the flight.”

“Take care of yourself, my daughter.”

“You too, Mom.”

When Adam and Zuri returned to Kenya, they tried to rebuild their normal life.

But Adam was different.

He was confused about his future, his work, and even himself.

Zuri tried everything she could to bring him back to his old routine.

Slowly, he started returning to the office. But even there, he seemed lost.

Six months passed.

Adam tried to spend more time with Zuri and make up for the distance between them. Slowly, things seemed to improve.

One day, Adam received a call from an old friend.

“Bro, it’s been so long. Come and meet me. We need to catch up.”

Adam hesitated.

“I can’t promise. My wife is waiting for me.”

“Please, bro. Just come for a while.”

“I’ll try.”

Adam texted Zuri.

I might be late today.

She replied:

Okay. Are you going out with friends?

Adam answered:

No, I'm meeting a business colleague.

"Okay, no problem," she replied.

For a while, everything seemed normal.

Adam appeared to be coming out of his guilt and pain.

After a week, Zuri noticed something strange.

Adam had also started coming home late.

One evening, she asked him:

"Adam, who are you meeting every night?"

Adam looked confused.

"What do you mean?"

"There hasn't been any new deal or business associate coming recently, has there?"

Adam became quiet.

"No. There hasn't."

Zuri looked at him carefully.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

A thousand thoughts started running through her mind.

Why did Adam lie to me? Who was he really meeting? What was happening behind her back?

She had no one to talk to about it.

As a Muslim woman, she decided to leave everything in Allah's hands. She wanted to confront Adam, but she was afraid.

He had only recently started recovering from his pain, and she did not want to push him back into darkness.

So she stayed silent.

But every day, Adam continued lying.

He would say he was going somewhere, and Zuri would not question him. She waited for the day he would finally tell her the truth.

But that day never came.

Months passed.

Adam started disappearing for days.

Whenever Zuri called, he would not answer. He stopped going to the office regularly. No one knew where he was.

His behaviour became frightening.

Sometimes, he would say things that made no sense.

"You want to kill me."

"You put something in my food."

"You're trying to destroy me."

Zuri was terrified.

Without the drugs, Adam could barely function normally anymore. His addiction had taken control of him.

She was not angry about the money.

She was angry because she had lost her husband.

Most of the money Adam earned was being spent on gambling and drugs. Zuri had been using her own income to maintain their home and keep their life together.

One night, after months of suffering, she finally reached her limit.

“Adam, I’m sorry, but I can’t continue living like this.”

She looked at him with tears in her eyes.

“I’m leaving this house. I want a divorce. I don’t want anything from you.”

Adam was intoxicated. He was not thinking clearly.

Instead of listening, he became angry.

“You have someone else, don’t you? And now you’re saying I’m the bad one?”

“Leave! I don’t need you!”

Liam witnessed everything.

He remained silent because, deep down, he knew Zuri was right. Adam’s actions had destroyed the trust between them.

That night, Zuri packed her belongings.

In the middle of the night, she left the house.

She returned to South Africa.

The next morning, Adam woke up with a terrible headache.

“Liam... can you make me a black coffee? My head is killing me.”

Liam walked out of his room quietly.

“She’s gone.”

Adam looked confused.

“Who?”

“Zuri. She left last night.”

Adam froze.

“What? Why?”

“Bro... do you even remember what you said to her?”

Adam looked away.

“No...”

Liam sighed.

“You don’t even realize what happened. You’re always high. You don’t come to work. You’ve stopped being present in your marriage. What did you expect?”

Adam remained silent.

“It’s your problem now,” he finally said. “I’ll handle it. She’ll come back.”

Liam looked at him sadly.

“Adam... at least call her.”

But Adam said nothing.

Liam made the coffee and walked back to his room.

For the first time, Liam was truly worried.

The Adam he knew had changed.

And he feared that if nothing changed soon, Adam would lose everything.



CHAPTER 13

The Cost of Paranoia

Adam never called Zuri.

Deep inside, he was angry that she had left him at the time when he believed he needed her the most. But Zuri knew the truth—what they had was no longer a healthy marriage. It had become a painful and toxic relationship that she could no longer continue living in.

After returning to South Africa, Zuri spoke with her parents and explained everything that had happened.

“I don’t think I can continue this marriage anymore,” she told them.

Her parents were heartbroken to see what she had gone through, but they respected her decision and supported her choice.

Meanwhile, Adam remained silent.

He did not fully understand the damage he had caused. He was still trapped in denial, unable to accept that his actions had destroyed the life he once valued.

One day, Liam called Zuri.

“Hi, Zuri.”

“Hi, Liam. How are you?”

“I’m okay. How are you?”

“I’m fine.”

Liam took a deep breath.

“I’m really sorry for everything that happened between you and Adam.”

Zuri became quiet for a moment.

“Liam, it’s not your fault. Please don’t blame yourself. Adam made his own choices. He was the one who changed.”

She continued sadly.

“He was always high, always suspicious, and he started accusing me of things that weren’t true. He kept thinking I was seeing someone else. Sometimes, I even felt like he suspected you.”

Liam sighed.

“Zuri, please talk to him. Maybe he can change. Give him one more chance.”

Zuri shook her head.

“I’m sorry, Liam, but I’ve made my decision. I can’t go back to that life.”

Her voice broke.

“That night, when I needed him the most, I was completely alone. Nobody was there for me. You have been a good friend, and I appreciate everything you’ve done, but I can’t risk my future hoping that one day he’ll stop doubting me.”

Liam understood her pain.

“I know you’ve suffered a lot, but I still want to believe there’s something good left in him.”

“I’m sorry, Liam,” Zuri replied softly.

The call ended.

Liam looked at his phone and whispered, “God... why did I make that promise to his uncle? I have to help Adam.”

When Liam returned home from work, he found Adam sitting on the couch.

Adam was barely conscious, surrounded by medication, and completely lost.

Liam walked into the room, angry and disappointed.

Without saying a word, he went to the kitchen, filled a bucket with ice water, and poured it over Adam.

Adam jumped up.

“What the hell are you doing?”

Liam looked at him angrily.

“Get up. Right now.”

Adam wiped his face.

“What is wrong with you?”

Liam threw a document onto the table.

“Sign this.”

Adam looked at the papers.

“What is this?”

“This is your rehabilitation programme. You’re going to South Africa, and you’re going to apologize to Zuri.”

Adam became angry.

“Who gave you the right to decide this for me?”

“Enough, Adam!” Liam shouted. “Just sign the papers.”

Adam pushed them away.

“This is my personal life. Stay out of it.”

Liam stepped closer.

“No, it isn’t personal anymore. It’s affecting everything—including the company.”

Adam laughed bitterly.

“Everything is fine. Look around. The business is still running.”

Liam shook his head.

“No, Adam. Nothing is fine. You’re spending all your money on drugs and gambling. You signed business deals, but now you’re destroying everything you built.”

Adam became furious.

“Take your share and leave. I don’t need anyone.”

Liam looked at him with disappointment.

“If I leave, there will be nothing left.”

Adam turned away.

“Who needs you anyway? You were only my assistant.”

Those words broke Liam’s heart.

“If I was nothing, why have I stayed all these years? You lost your wife. You lost your uncle. And now you’re losing yourself.”

Liam packed his bags.

“I’m leaving.”

He walked out of the house.

Adam did not realize what he had done.

His mind was no longer clear.

He returned to gambling. He lost more money. The business began collapsing.

He stopped taking care of the company. He could no longer pay his employees. Eventually, the authorities closed the business because of unpaid debts.

The man who once had everything was now drowning.

His body began suffering from addiction. Sometimes he felt extremely cold. Other times, he burned with fever. He was losing control of himself.

Then, one day, a court notice arrived.

He was required to appear in South Africa regarding his divorce. If he failed to attend, an arrest warrant would be issued.

For the first time, Adam realized that he could no longer escape.

He looked at himself in the mirror.

“One pill destroyed my entire life,” he whispered.

He broke down crying.

He felt ashamed.

Overwhelmed by guilt and hopelessness, Adam reached a breaking point.

He held a knife against his wrist.

“I deserve this,” he cried.

Before he could do anything, the doorbell rang.

Adam ignored it.

But suddenly, the door opened.

Henry rushed inside.

“Adam!”

Adam dropped the knife.

Henry immediately grabbed it away and pulled him into a hug.

“Everything will be okay. You don’t have to do this.”

Adam cried like he had never cried before.

For days, Henry stayed beside him. He took care of him, helped him receive medical treatment, and supported him through the hardest part of recovery.

Slowly, Adam began becoming sober.

The doctors warned him that addiction could always return if he was not careful.

But Adam was determined.

He wanted to change.

Before entering rehabilitation, Adam wanted to apologize to Zuri and Liam.

Henry looked at him.

“You need to face them. You need to apologize.”

Adam lowered his head.

“What face do I have to go there with?”

“The face of someone who wants to change,” Henry replied.

Adam sighed.

“What about my debts? My life is destroyed.”

“Don’t worry,” Henry said. “Everything will be handled step by step.”

Adam and Henry travelled to South Africa.

When Adam arrived at Zuri’s home, he knocked on the door.

Zuri’s mother opened it.

“Adam?”

“Hello, Aunty.”

Her expression became cold.

“After six months, you remember her?”

Adam lowered his eyes.

“I know I’m late. I came here to apologize.”

Zuri heard the conversation and walked toward the door.

“Who is it, Mom?”

Her mother looked at her.

“It’s Adam... your ex-husband.”

Zuri took a deep breath.

“Mom, please leave us. I’ll handle this.”

Adam looked at her.

“Zuri...”

“What do you want, Adam?”

“I came to apologize for everything I did.”

Zuri looked at him calmly.

“Adam, everything is over. There’s nothing left.”

“Please forgive me.”

Zuri shook her head.

“How many times should I forgive you?”

“I know I made mistakes.”

“No, Adam. You broke my trust. I gave you chances. I stood beside you. But you destroyed everything.”

Adam’s eyes filled with tears.

“Please give me one more chance.”

Zuri looked away.

“I’m sorry. I can’t.”

She handed him the divorce papers.

"Please sign them and let me go."

Adam stood there silently.

Then he left.

Outside, Henry was waiting.

"Adam... let her go."

Adam cried.

I can't."

Henry looked at him sadly.

"You already lost her. Don't destroy yourself again."

"Yeah, I know, bro. Can you take me to Sasha's? I need to talk to her."

They went to Sasha's place, and she came downstairs.

Sasha: "Bro, are you ok?"

Adam: "No. I am sorry I left you, too. I had only one uncle who was a father to me—he is gone, and I want to go. These are the property papers that your father tried to give me. I don't need them, so I want you to keep them. And please, don't try to contact me."

Sasha: "Don't say things like this, please. You are my brother."

Adam: "Where were you guys when I was going through so much? Where was my father? He never cared, so why should I?"

Sasha: "I am sorry, bro. Please forgive us."

Adam: "I had my uncle, and he is no longer with me. Every relationship is gone."

Sasha's eyes were full of tears: "Bro, don't leave me."

Adam: "No, I am not abandoning you. I need peace in my life, so just take this. Please let me go."

Sasha: "Ok, bro. Before you go, can you give me two things, and promise you won't say no to it?"

Adam: "Whatever I can give, I will. Don't worry."

Sasha: "Please give Zuri a divorce. Let her go."

Adam: "I know that I made a mistake."

Sasha: "Fix your mistake."

Adam gave her the papers.

"Take this. Whenever you need me, I will come."

They both hugged each other and parted ways in tears.

After a week of thinking, Adam finally signed the papers.

For the first time, he chose Zuri's happiness over his own pain.

Adam tried calling Liam.

"Bro, can we meet?"

But there was no answer.

Henry looked at him.

"Come on, Adam. It's time for court."

At the court, Adam and Zuri sat quietly.

After several minutes, Zuri looked at him.

"You look thin. Are you eating properly?"

"I'm fine," Adam replied.

He looked at her.

"I just want to apologize one more time—for everything I did, intentionally and unintentionally."

Zuri nodded.

"Thank you for signing the papers."

Adam smiled sadly.

“I want you to be happy. Everything happened because of my choices. I should never have taken those pills. I destroyed my own life, and I hurt yours too.”

Zuri looked at him.

“I’m sorry too. I should have done things differently. But I hope we can remain friends.”

Adam shook his head gently.

“I don’t think I can be your friend. I just want you to have a happy life.”

His eyes filled with tears.

“Goodbye, Zuri. Take care.”

He stood up and walked away.

The next day, Adam entered rehabilitation.

Before leaving, he told Henry:

“Thank you for everything you’ve done for me. When I recover, I’ll find you again.”

Henry smiled.

“I’ll always be here.”

Adam shook his head.

“No. Please promise me you won’t visit me. I need to do this alone.”

Henry became emotional.

“I promised your uncle I would never leave you.”

Adam looked confused.

“My uncle?”

Henry handed him a letter.

“He contacted me years ago. He helped me understand you. He was upset with your choices, but he loved you like a son.”

Adam opened the letter.

Dear Adam,

My son,

I am proud of everything you have achieved in life. I know you became lonely, and I know you struggled. But you must change the things that are hurting you.

I heard that you started taking drugs. If I were stronger, I would have stopped you myself.

My time is coming to an end, and there is something I need to tell you. Your mother had a painful life. She loved someone else, but she was forced into a marriage with your father. She tried to make it work, but she was never truly happy.

Your father wanted love, but she could not give it.

She struggled, and she eventually turned to drugs. Sadly, she lost her life because of them.

My son, please do not follow the same path.

You have a beautiful life ahead of you.

Henry will always support you.

I love you.

Please take care of yourself and the family property I left in your name.

Come back to yourself, my son.

*Love,
Your Uncle*

Love,

Your Uncle

Adam cried.

“My mother died because of drugs?”

Henry nodded.

“Yes. Your uncle told me.”

Adam wiped his tears.

“Bro... I need you to go.”

“Why?”

“I need to find myself.”

Adam spent six years in rehabilitation.

He fought every day.

He struggled.

But he survived.

When he finally came out, he was sober.

He never touched drugs again.

His debts were cleared, and he quietly repaid Liam everything he owed him.

No one knew where Adam had gone or what he had been through.

Years later, Adam and Henry met again.

“Henry, thank you for saving my life.”

Henry smiled.

“I could never leave you.”

Adam shook his head.

“Now it's your turn to live your own life.”

“Bro...”

“Please. I need you to promise me.”

Henry finally agreed.

“I promise.”

Many years passed.

Adam lived a quiet and peaceful life away from everything.

One day, he sat in a rocking chair overlooking the mountains.

A young girl approached him.

“Sir, can you please help me with my school project?”

Adam smiled. Yes why not my child.

He had finally found peace.

No one knew where he had been.

No one knew the battles he had fought.

But Adam was happy.

After losing everything, he had finally found himself.

The End



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